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**Kind Tyranny:
Brother-Sister Relationships in Renaissance Drama**

by
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**Thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Ph.D. degree in English Literature**

**University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Canada**

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Abstract

The study focuses on the social, literary, and psychological significance of the brother-sister relationship to a broad range of Renaissance tragedy and tragicomedy. After a brief historical analysis of siblings, the thesis considers the brother-sister relationship as an important means for dramatists to explore questions of identity, of gender conflict, and of differing understandings of family. It also examines the relationship as a developing literary tradition in the drama of the Stuart period, a tradition which culminates in the works of John Ford.

The first half of the study surveys a large range of non-Shakespearean revenge tragedy and tragicomedy. In revenge tragedy, violent brother-sister strife serves as a symbol of the self in turmoil, as an image of a disordered family and society, and as a focal point for tension over the nature of women. Brothers also subvert traditional family roles in their relationships with their sisters. The avenging brother and sister, joined in shared loyalty to their house, mount a legitimate challenge to the authority of husband and king; pandar brothers become diabolical inversions of father and husband. Proceeding to tragicomedy, the thesis analyzes the brother as a figure of illegitimate authority and considers the privileged position gained by royal sisters, whose noble blood renders them the equal of their brothers.

The latter half of the dissertation reinterprets the plays of John Webster and John Ford. In The Duchess of Malfi, the royal siblings' similarity, close blood tie, and high rank overturn gender difference and affirm the intimate connection between the sexes. The study considers the importance of blood family to the Duchess' self-conception and examines Ferdinand's attempts to create identity by usurping the place of his sister's husband. Ford's two plays 'Tis Pity She's A Whore and The

Fancies Chaste and Noble stand as the culmination of dramatic treatments of idealized and antagonistic brother-sister relationships alike. Both works contrast the opposing nature of physical and familial love and elevate asexual love above sexual passion, presenting a sibling tie which undermines the bond between husband and wife.

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Introduction

In a famous scene from Sophocles' Antigone, Antigone expresses her willingness to die for her brother. She explains why she has sacrificed life, love, and her betrothed for Polynices:

And yet the wise will know my choice was right.

Had I had children or their father dead,

I'd let them moulder. I should not have chosen

in such a case to cross the state's decree.

What is the law that lies behind these words?

One husband gone, I might have found another,

or a child from a new man in first child's place,

but with my parents hid away in death,

no brother, ever, could spring up for me.

Such was the law by which I honored you [my brother]. (904-913)

Her words seem alien to us now, and at first, her avowal appears opposed to the spirit of the Renaissance as well, with the period's growing literary and social emphasis on marriage and on the importance of warm, affectionate ties between man and wife. Yet the sister's words, emphasizing here the contrast between the blood family of her birth and a future family obtained through marriage, have a particular resonance for Renaissance drama. Throughout the Stuart period, non-Shakespearean dramatists focus on brothers and sisters with a persistent, almost obsessive interest, presenting either bitterly antagonistic or idealized sibling relationships and contrasting sibling ties with those between husband and wife.

Yet, despite Renaissance drama's fascination with siblings, twentieth-century literary critics have been reluctant to examine this issue. A few studies, which have concentrated on incest in Renaissance plays, have commented upon sibling relationships.¹ Feminist critics, too, while interested in Renaissance women's social roles and the degree to which women, subordinated by a largely patriarchal doctrine, could define themselves, have been largely silent on the subject of brothers and sisters. Instead, their studies of drama, bolstered by an examination of conduct books, domestic marriage guides, and political theory treatises of the time, have tended to concentrate on the rising importance of the domestic family and the period's growing scrutiny of and interest in the relationship between husband and wife. Following Catherine Belsey's observation that "existing discourses determine not only what can be said and understood, but the nature of subjectivity itself, what it is possible to be" (*The Subject of Tragedy* 5), they have debated what "subject position" (*The Subject of Tragedy* x), if any, women of the Renaissance held, and have attempted to realize new ways of understanding female identity.

Perhaps the best known study of this nature is Mary Beth Rose's *The Expense of Spirit* (1988). Claiming that the period saw a growing idealization of marriage, she studies the ways in which the Protestant praise of wedlock provide wives with a "more multi-faceted sexual discourse" (176) than the earlier, dualizing perspective which casts woman as either saint or whore. She then links these new attitudes towards women and sexuality (116) to a parallel movement in Jacobean drama; playwrights, she argues, turn from public action to a "heroism of personal endurance" that focuses on private rather than public life (95) and that places a high value on traditionally female characteristics (124). If Rose looks at the positive aspects of Protestant marriage doctrine, Viviana Comensoli (1997) focuses on the Jacobean domestic books' uneasy sense of the fragility of the family.

The potential disorder within the household, she contends, is explored by the domestic drama's "interest in the ideology of private life" (16); murderous or transgressive housewives of drama challenge the order and harmony of the domestic realm (Comensoli 65) and reveal the "instability of the early modern household" (Comensoli 16).

Other studies of drama, while examining representations of women, have combined feminism and new historicist approaches. Lisa Jardine (1983) looks at the social and historical issues that indicate the ways in which the period presented "femaleness" (6). Theodora Jankowski (1992) analyses women rulers in Renaissance drama as well as historical texts to create her own picture of early modern "gender identity and gender definition" (9). After stressing the idea that female rulers are presented as anomalies in political texts of the Renaissance, Jankowski analyses the different strategies used by female rulers or political figures of drama to consolidate and maintain their power--the different images they project and the ways they attempt to mediate between their body natural and their body political.

Still other critics, such as Linda Woodbridge (1984), have focused on the very question of feminism in the Renaissance. In her extended study of both dramatic and non-dramatic literature, Woodbridge concentrates on the period's debate about the essential nature of woman. This controversy literature, she concludes, did little to advance the actual position of women, instead deflecting attention from their situation into a largely rhetorical, artificial debate. Nonetheless, the controversy literature studied by Woodbridge provides a picture of the way the period constructed womanhood, identifying certain stereotypic traits as characteristic of either good or bad women.

Two other prominent studies, by Catherine Belsey (1985) and Dymphna Callaghan (1989), offer strongly feminist interpretations of Renaissance tragedy. Belsey contrasts seventeenth-century

man's growing conception of an inviolate, unique self, with woman's lack of a subject position from which to speak and her gradual definition "in contradistinction to man, and in terms of the relations of power in the family" (9). Callaghan adopts a more politicized feminist approach in her book, one which consistently tries to relate her analysis of the texts to the liberation of women in modern society. Embarking on an analysis which, she claims, will empower twentieth-century women through "a knowledge ... of the dominant culture at some of its most privileged sites" (41), Callaghan argues that tragedy is initiated by female transgression and "is constructed as rebellion against patriarchal authority" (59). Like Belsey, she also emphasizes that the period "construct[s] the category of woman" in terms of the gender difference necessary to maintain the male hierarchy (27) and underlines the period's lack of a stable perception of women: they are "a 'shifting' subject ... sometimes idealised and sometimes denigrated ... the progression from transgressive sinner to beatified saint is the result of the constant tension in the dramatic representation of women between the polarities through which they are constructed" (67).

While these feminist critics adopt a range of approaches, depending on their theoretical leanings and the drama they have chosen for analysis, they all study the ways by which Renaissance society was attempting to define and construct women. Largely agreeing with Woodbridge that the Renaissance was a time of active debate about the nature of women, when "definitions of gender, social class, and status were perceived as provocatively fluid" (Rose 1), they focus on the roles which both dramatic and social texts provided for women, analysing the means, as Karen Newman puts it, by which the period fashioned femininity. Feminist critics have also analysed the period's attempts to define and stabilize the concept of the domestic family. Rose examines the growing stature of the private, domestic realm. Belsey stresses the "instability in the meaning of the family" (The Subject

of Tragedy 147) caused by Renaissance society's struggle to regulate and control sexuality through marriage (138). Comensoli, likewise, emphasizes the "instability of the early modern household" (16); in her argument, the murderous housewives of domestic tragedies and the domestic guidebooks' picture of families in turmoil reveal Jacobean England's "severe crisis of order" (Comensoli 65). Other cultural materialist critics have detailed the period's development of an extended analogy between the state and the domestic family, in which a patriarchal sovereign ruled his realm as the father ruled his household (Goldberg, James the First and the Politics of Literature 85).²

The insights achieved by studies such as these have done much to give us a sense of the way in which the period viewed femininity, as well as to foreground gender issues and the domestic family as legitimate areas of critical analysis. Following cultural materialist critics' insistence that a text is permeated by the values and tensions of its society, the "artistic production of a given historical period" (Comensoli 69), these critics have often tried to show that Renaissance drama not only "articulates and represents cultural change but also participates in it" (Rose 1). However, in their studies of dramatic and other literature, feminist critics invariably privilege the nuclear family of husband, wife, and children. Despite the large number of sibling relationships in Jacobean and Caroline drama, they ignore the role of sister as a way of constructing female identity; they also overlook brother-sister relationships as a powerful means for playwrights to explore both gender conflict and the tensions within the period's changing conception of family.

Closely related to their focus on husband and wife is feminist critics' overwhelming emphasis on female sexuality. Whether they perceive female desire as a disruptive force feared by the patriarchy, or the means by which women shape their private identities, many feminist critics focus on female sexuality as the primary, and usually the only, way of evaluating a woman's character, her

position within the play, and the dramatist's attitude towards her. They are not as extreme as Celia Daileader, who explicitly links female passion and selfhood as drama's "central, nagging question" (19) in her examination of off-stage sexual consummations, but they nonetheless tend to equate female identity and sexuality. They criticize discourses which polarize representations of women as images of chaste purity or depraved sexual excess, observing that women must suppress or limit their sexuality in order to be perceived positively. Yet in their single-minded focus on female sexuality, they themselves limit our understanding of femaleness and promote a view of women as purely sexual beings.

By embarking on a detailed study of brother-sister relationships in Renaissance drama, I intend to present a different perspective on the way in which the period constructed female identity: not as wives, rulers, daughters, or widows, not in terms of the saintly-depraved dichotomy of controversy literature, not as the perennial victims of "multiple patriarchal strategies" (Callaghan 41), but as sisters, seen primarily in an ambiguous and unclear relationship to their brothers. At the same time, my analysis attempts to broaden our understanding of the period's conception both of family and of brother-sister relationships within families. However, while drawing on the approaches of previous feminist critics, I place equal emphasis on considering the brother-sister relationship as a central literary convention in the drama of the Stuart period. My study thus examines a broad range of tragedy and tragicomedies in order to trace the development of the brother-sister relationship in Renaissance drama and to explore its thematic, symbolic, and structural significance to the plays. Sharing an intimate blood connection and a close physical resemblance, siblings' often violent strife allows playwrights to present turmoil and division within the human psyche and to structure duality in their plays, using sister and brother to focus a conflict not just between female and male, but also

between good and evil and between Platonic and physical love.

The major absence from this study is the work of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare is too complex to be covered briefly, in the survey chapters which make up the first part of the thesis, and he is not as fascinated by the brother-sister tie as John Webster and John Ford, the two dramatists whose work is examined in the second half of the thesis. For Shakespeare, the relationship does not possess the structural, thematic, and symbolic centrality that it does for Webster and Ford or for many of the dramatists covered in the earlier half of the study. With the exception of Measure For Measure and Twelfth Night, the majority of Shakespeare's plays ignore the brother-sister relationship, or, as is the case in Hamlet, Titus Andronicus, and Cymbeline, subordinate it to the father-child relationship. The thesis thus focuses on the different ways non-Shakespearean playwrights construct the roles of brother and sister.

My analysis also modifies characteristic feminist approaches. In their studies of non-Shakespearean Renaissance drama, many feminist and cultural critics remain within twentieth-century modes of understanding female power and identity, defining them in terms of their own feminist values. Most are not as extreme as Callaghan, who confers honorary victimhood on all women past and present: "[W]e cannot hedge about the historical fact that women were (and for that matter, remain) the diverse victims of multiple patriarchal strategies" (41). Nor are they usually quite as passionate as Callaghan who demands, "How much power did women really have?" (40). Yet many critics tend to evaluate these dramatic women in terms of twentieth-century definitions of what it means to be a success and dismiss traditional ways of praising and celebrating women with contempt, as the ideological mechanisms of control embraced and promulgated by a patriarchal, class-based society. This leads their interpretations to fall into certain set patterns, patterns which invariably cast

women as victims regardless of what they do and which, in turn, narrow our understanding of these female characters. If women act independently, trying to achieve self-definition and autonomy, they are punished by the patriarchal order for defying gender restrictions and subverting the male hierarchy; if they behave virtuously and admirably, they also become victims of patriarchy, this time of the limiting restrictions it places on women.

As well, feminists tend to define power in terms of control, manipulation, and dominance; and their outlook leads them to praise negative qualities in "bad" women simply because these characters challenge patriarchy and try to seize power. Yet, if male incidences of domination, control, and subordination of women must be exposed and "interrogated," "at some of the culture's most privileged sites" (Callaghan 41), why should similar displays of "male" behaviour in women be celebrated? Feminist critics who praise behaviour in women which they would condemn in men as a manifestation of a dominant patriarchy seem to establish a new double standard and betray the fact that it is not the behaviour itself which they would condemn as objectionable, but the fact that women are excluded from its practise.³ Their attitude also brings them to overlook the fact that, in many plays with important female characters, women are punished not because they defy a male patriarchy which would restrict their self-realization as women, but because their behaviour violates the social norms which the period considered appropriate for both men and women.⁴

Sisters, thus, are particularly interesting precisely because many of them succeed in being autonomous and in attempting self-definition without being disorderly or transgressive. Many remain successes, "good women" in the eyes of their society; they are allowed their defiance and freedom because they rebel against brothers, rather than husbands or fathers, and thus question male authority without directly attacking its primary representatives. It is their ability to negotiate the space between

achieving autonomy and yet remaining positive figures by the light of their own society that makes sisters distinctive. As well, the later, Caroline idealization of brother-sister relationships provides an alternative to viewing all male-female relationships in terms of domination and subordination, for many Caroline siblings come close to being presented as equals and so escaping a social dynamic based on hierarchy.

My focus on brothers and sisters also allows me to adopt a different outlook on sexuality from that expressed in many feminist studies. While agreeing with traditional feminist claims that patriarchal societies both control and exploit female sexuality, that such societies link female sexual promiscuity with female freedom and autonomy, condemning both as unacceptable license, and that one of the ways in which men express their authority and confirm their sense of identity is through the sexual possession of women, my analysis attempts to explore other ways besides the sexual to understand male-female relationships and to construct an understanding of femaleness. By contrast with Rose, who discusses the ways in which Protestant marriage doctrine allows an expression and fulfilment of female sexuality to a previously unaccepted degree; Jankowski, who studies female sexuality as both a hindrance and a powerful instrument in advancing power and rule; Callaghan, who sees female desire as a disruptive, transgressive force, defined as "the motivation for change, upheaval, disruption, and crucially, for female tragic transgression" (Callaghan 140); and Daileader, who explores the significance of off-stage sexual encounters to the period's problematic understanding of female identity, I have concentrated on a relationship, that between brother and sister, which often presents women non-sexually. This is not to say that the sexual is not an important, or, arguably, even the most important aspect of the period's construction of women; it is simply to stress that the Renaissance recognised other dimensions to women besides the purely

sexual.⁵ There is no reason to identify sexuality as the sole epitome of womanhood, nor as the only source of female power.

Given the period's profound suspicion of human sexuality, whether male or female, representations which treat women in an asexual way seem particularly empowering. The dynamics between brother and sister present a different way of viewing femaleness, for as Marc Shell asks in his study of Measure For Measure: "[I]s not the 'pure' relationship of brother to sister the human association that most nearly approaches absolute gender neutrality?" (195). Regardless of the original cause of the incest taboo, whether we credit Sigmund Freud,⁶ or Claude Lévi-Strauss,⁷ or Robin Fox's development of Edward Westermarck's argument that it arises out of a natural aversion,⁸ our society has developed a distaste for incest as part of an "inherited psychic disposition that produced rules, conscience, exogamy, kinship, ... and indeed, all of culture" (Fox 81). This taboo largely defines brothers of Renaissance drama; they are rejected as perverse if they show too much jealous interest in their sisters, or, conversely, they are placed in an idealized relationship which expunges the sexual from their feelings for their sisters.

Thus, sibling relationships, in which the fraternal tie between brother and sister is idealized and desexualized, or, conversely, in which the brother is strongly condemned for inappropriate sexual interest in his sister, provide a strikingly different way of constructing femaleness--a way which detaches women from the sexuality, which, feminists so often note, is the means by which they are devalued, exploited, or controlled, as well as differentiated from men. Instead, sibling ties join man and woman not through sex, which provides the legal consummation of marriage, but through the blood connection which forbids sexual union. A woman can be presented simultaneously as a sexual being in her relationship with her husband, even as she embraces a completely different, non-sexual

relationship with her brother, one in which woman comes closest to being perceived as the equal of man: similar because of blood ties and not excluded because of her sexuality.

Women cast as sisters, then, rather than wives, possess a different means of self-definition, one based on blood ties rather than on sexual relationships. Owing allegiance to their house and to a shared joint identity provides women with a different means of perceiving themselves. Rather than relinquishing their identity in marriage or remaining an outsider, related to the lineage through marriage, they are themselves an integral part of the lineage family.⁹ In the conflict between these two understandings of family--one based on marriage and the other on blood--and often figured in the hostility between husband and brother, sisters gain their greatest power, either using their position as sisters to justify their defiance of marital ties or attempting to negotiate between both conceptions of family in order to defend their behaviour.

Brothers, on the other hand, are often images of diminished male authority, and their ambiguous relationships with their sisters allow playwrights both to exploit and undermine the period's political and social emphasis on husband and wife. Without a socially sanctioned position from which to govern their sisters or a clear place within their society's hierarchy, brothers are reduced to copying the two principal social roles which give men identity as well as authority over women--father and husband. In enacting diabolical parodies of these roles, brothers betray their disintegrating identity and approaching madness. In mimicking the father or husband, the brother also overturns the ideal family unit depicted in Renaissance domestic treatises. Attempting to assert authority over his hostile siblings in a variety of unlawful and violent ways, the brother stands in marked contrast to the benign father-husband presiding over wife and family. Further emphasising the inversion, dramatists often replace the father with an ineffectual mother who is powerless to check

the competition between siblings or to limit the oldest brother's illegitimate pretence to authority. The self-destructive hostility between the brother and sister who savagely fight with each other then becomes a powerful symbol of disorder and chaos within the family.

As well, brothers undermine the institution of the nuclear family and expose the family's role in subordinating women and controlling their bodies. Illegitimate figures of authority themselves, they validate their sisters' defiance of their power and allow these women to question the very attitudes that are the basis of the legitimate husband and father's authority. The husband has a legitimate interest in preserving the sexual virtue of his wife, maintaining her body as his personal property, and the father has a legitimate right to match his daughter in marriage, treating her as a possession. Most dramatic brothers, however, are allowed neither of these two privileges. Instead, any attempts on their parts to monitor their sisters' sexuality or to sell their bodies are presented by playwrights as a tyrannical abuse of male power rather than as a legitimate exercise of authority. Pandar brothers then carry the sexual exploitation and control over female family members to an unacceptable extreme: trying not to match their sisters in one profitable marriage, as is the right of their fathers, but to a series of "husbands," they attempt to retain control over their sisters' sexuality. Jealous, incestuously-interested brothers enact a similar parody of dramatic husbands' attempts to preserve their wives' chastity from encroachment by trespassers. In both cases, the brother as a mimicry of husband or father reveals the extent to "which both the normal and the abnormal [incest] are produced by similar, even the same, 'acceptable' discourses [about gender and family]" (Bell 83), discourses which praise male domination as an expression of self and which encourage submission and obedience from female family members (Bell 76).¹⁰ But because tyrant brothers take their behaviour to an extreme unacceptable to their society, sisters have a license to challenge this male

exploitation and sexual domination as illegitimate.

The brother also allows playwrights to construct a different image of male-female relationships. Cast as parodies of the jealous, possessive husband, many brothers of Caroline drama are ultimately reformed, taught to view their sisters in a non-sexual fashion. In doing so, they achieve an ideal, Platonic relationship with their sibling which surpasses, and even replaces, the tie and the love between husband and wife. Sibling love then undercuts physical desire, the asexual love between siblings idealized and contrasted with male-female relationships based on sexual consummation. The sister comes closest to being perceived the equal of her male counterpart because she is not being regarded as a sexual being.

In my study, chapter one begins by placing brother and sister relationships within their social-historical context, as well as within the emerging Protestant emphasis on the nuclear family and its politicization as an analogy of the ideal relationship between king and subjects. If the authority of husband over wife and of father over children both replicates and justifies the king's position over his subjects, where do the adult brother and sister fit into this scheme? The domestic guidebooks and conduct treatises of the time draw up a clear picture of the proper relationships within the family; creating their version of the ideal family, they explain in detail the respective duties and responsibilities shared by husband and wife and by parents and children. They say little, however, about the proper relationship between brothers and sisters, except to present siblings, particularly brethren, as images of equality. Similarly, twentieth-century historical studies, while sometimes focusing on the wider issue of kinship, do not devote much attention to brothers and sisters. Given this paucity of information, the chapter attempts not an extensive analysis of relationships between

historical brothers and sisters, which would necessitate a lengthy examination of letters and wills within families, as well as inheritance squabbles--probably the most contentious issue between siblings--but simply to give a basic framework within which to place the period's conception of brothers and sisters. Thus, the chapter contrasts sibling relationships as they are presented in domestic guidebooks with the relationship between parents and children and considers, briefly, historical accounts of the antagonism and also the affection that could exist between siblings.

In the next three chapters, the thesis analyses a large range of drama, particularly revenge tragedy and tragicomedy.¹¹ Starting with the Tudor play A Nice Wanton, the study extends to drama of the Caroline period and examines a number of different but closely interconnected patterns. The second chapter looks at the increasing importance of the brother and sister to many Stuart revenge tragedies and considers the way in which a focus on siblings supplants the Elizabethan drama's emphasis on father and son. The Revenger's Tragedy and John Webster's The White Devil particularly exploit the metaphoric value of antagonistic and violent brother-sister relationships. By replacing the ideal domestic household of Protestant marriage treatises with quarrelling, murderous adult siblings presided over by a weak and ineffectual mother, dramatists create a powerful image of both self and family at war with itself, an image which reflects the disorder and anxiety widely associated by critics with the Jacobean period.¹² Since siblings are often cast as a part of the other's being or as a second self, brother-sister strife represents chaos at all levels of society: as parts of each other's being, conflict within the psyche; as brother and sister, irresolvable tension within the family; as man and woman, the struggle between genders; and as siblings of a larger Christian family, the disintegration of a unified Christendom.

In other revenge tragedies such as Beaumont and Fletcher's The Maid's Tragedy and Philip

Massinger's The Duke of Milan, dramatists set up dishonour inflicted upon one's house (and hence upon all family, living and dead) as the ultimate wrong to be revenged. Placing the honour of the house, or the extended family, before that of the domestic household of husband and wife, dramatists set the brother in clear conflict and rivalry with the husband and contrast two concepts of family, one based on blood ties, the other on the marital bond. Both brother and sister, by placing loyalty to house above all else, are able to mount a legitimate challenge not just against the patriarchal authority of husband but also against that of his political counterpart, the ruler.

The third chapter's study of Stuart tragicomedies further develops an overall picture of dramatic relationships between siblings and explores how these plays act as an ultimately comic response to the tensions in the family exposed by the revenge tragedies. Plays such as Thomas Heywood's The Foure Prentices, Beaumont and Fletcher's A King and No King, Webster, Massinger, and John Ford's The Fair Maid of the Inn, and Massinger's The Bondman begin with tension between the siblings, but reach a happy conclusion with the reappearance of the father, who often replaces the inadequate mother and restores order, harmony, and love between the quarrelling siblings. In other tragicomedies, such as John Fletcher's The Loyal Subject and William Davenant's The Fair Favourite, dramatists replace an obsessive Othello-like figure with a brooding, overly possessive, and jealous brother, who both parallels and parodies the jealous husband of domestic tragedy. The plays then end comically when the brother learns to embrace a different type of love for his sister, one which stands in contrast to the physicality of the tie between husband and wife.

The royal siblings examined in the fourth chapter are particularly influential figures in Stuart drama and provide sisters with a chance to obtain a status at variance with their sex. In plays such as Ford's The Lover's Melancholy and Love's Sacrifice, Philip Massinger's The Emperor of the

East, and Massinger and Fletcher's The False One, both brother and sister are lifted above the common run of humanity by virtue of their shared blood, and so royal sisters gain a stature which undercuts the period's hierarchy based on sexual difference. More similar to their brothers than to the men beneath him, royal sisters stand in an uneasily tense and potentially equal relationship with their brothers and present dramatists with a particularly effective way of challenging differentiation on the basis of gender.

This survey of brother-sister relationships within mostly Stuart drama then leads into the second half of the study: a detailed examination of Webster's The Duchess of Malfi and John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and The Fancies Chaste and Noble, three plays by two playwrights equally fascinated by the sibling relationship. Considering the Duchess of Malfi primarily as a sister, set in conflict with her aristocratic brother rather than as a wife or ruler, allows us to understand the importance of rank and blood family to her self-conception. Rather than ignoring or attempting to explain away her likeness to Ferdinand, my study emphasizes the siblings' similarity, the way in which blood and rank overturns gender difference and affirms the intimate connection, not the separation, between the sexes. While insisting on his sister's female difference from him, Ferdinand, nonetheless, cannot escape the ties of blood that he himself so elevates. At once identical and dissimilar to the Duchess, he ends up destroyed by their family resemblance, unable to deal with this female image of himself who challenges gender differentiation and his own sense of individuality. Ferdinand's role of brother is also accompanied by a loss of both self-identity and legitimate male authority: lacking a lawful position from which to govern the female members of his family, Ferdinand attempts to usurp the place of the Duchess' husband, becoming a satanic mimicry of Antonio and justifying his sister's defiance of his domestic tyranny.

Ford's two plays, 'Tis Pity She's A Whore and The Fancies Chaste and Noble, gain particular complexity if we set them within the context of sibling relationships in Stuart drama. Not only may we study the ways in which Ford exploits the convention for his own ends, adapting it to fit the changed climate of Charles I's court with its emphasis on an artificial version of Platonic love, we can also appreciate his plays as the final response to the drama's interest in sibling relations and the identity contained within the roles of brother and sister. Although 'Tis Pity is oddly overlooked by feminist critics, a focus on siblings allows an interpretation of the play which acknowledges Annabella's place in this "woeful woman's tragedy." The contrast and conflict between the male and female siblings also provide a valuable means of interpreting both the structure and themes of the play. Joined by their shared blood, brother and sister are identical and yet dissimilar, their contrasting experiences and ultimately antagonistic final confrontation allowing Ford to shape the structure of his play and to oppose differing conceptions of love: romantic and familial, sexual and Platonic, selfish and selfless.

Foregrounding the brother-sister relationship also generates a new interpretation of Ford's undervalued play The Fancies Chaste and Noble. When we focus on siblings, this play, often denigrated for its lack of purpose and pointless titillation, gains structural and thematic coherence and clearly builds on, as well as resolves, many of the tensions between brothers and sisters explored by Ford's predecessors, as well as by Ford himself. In transforming the two brothers' sexualized perception of their sisters, Ford ultimately undercuts the position of the husband and presents a way of constructing male-female relationships that are ideally freed from jealousy because freed from sexuality. Set within the context of earlier drama, the play, along with 'Tis Pity, can take its place as the culmination of Ford's self-conscious, complex, and socially subversive exploration of brother-

the culmination of Ford's self-conscious, complex, and socially subversive exploration of brother-sister relationships.

Both Ford and Webster are invaluable in deepening our understanding of the way the period perceived and presented the brother-sister relationship. At the same time, analysing their plays in conjunction with other treatments of the brother and sister provides us with new insights into one of the most famous women of Renaissance drama, the Duchess of Malfi; an interpretation of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, which restores Annabella's heroic stature, and a reading of a previously unregarded play of Ford's, The Fancies Chaste and Noble. The study also undertakes a feminist-based interpretation of these plays, an interpretation which examines the period's construction of femininity through the figure of the sister rather than that of the wife or daughter.

Although far different from the bond between husband and wife or father and daughter, the brother-sister relationship is as important, for sibling ties are established not in adulthood but in childhood, at the very moment when a person's self-conception is being formed. As Renaissance drama recognized, siblings are a part of one's self and contain crucial aspects of one's own identity, a notion particularly unsettling to the period's rigid hierarchy based on gender and its emphatic differentiation between the male and female. Studying these plays, particularly the works by Webster and Ford, brings together a body of literature remarkable for its explorations of sibling love and valuable for the psychological insights offered into a relationship still largely ignored in modern sociological, psychological, and historical research.

Endnotes

1. There have been articles which explore brother-sister relationships in a single play or the works of a single dramatist, but few which study the relationship more extensively. In her article "The Structural Uses of Incest in English Renaissance Drama," Lois E. Bueler examines incest as a structural device used by dramatists to complicate plots and to explore the relationship between society and the individual (115-116). While she studies a broad range of plays and looks at a number of brother-sister relationships, she does so only briefly and within the context of incest. Charles Forker studies brother-sister relationships in more detail than Bueler, arguing that strong and affectionate feelings were perhaps more prevalent between siblings than among any other family members. Yet his essay "'A Little More than Kin, and Less Than Kind': Incest, Intimacy, Narcissism, and Identity in Elizabethan Drama," still considers only the incestuous elements of the relationship and focuses primarily on John Ford. Marc Shell's The End of Kinship: 'Measure For Measure,' Incest, and the Ideal of Universal Siblinghood offers perhaps the most interesting study of brothers and sisters, particularly their symbolic value as parts of a Christian community, but concentrates only on Shakespeare's play.

2. For more detail, see Jonathan Goldberg's James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries, Dymnna Callaghan's Women and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy, Viviana Comensoli's 'Household Business': Domestic Plays of Early Modern England, and Ira Clark's Professional Playwrights, all of which trace the Jacobean period's extensive paralleling of the private family with the public image of the king ruling over his people.

3. Another difficulty with some feminist studies is the way in which power itself is defined. Callaghan, for example, would claim that women have little power, and she rejects the views of other critics such as Goldberg and Louis Montrose who suggest that men are in some ways vulnerable to female powers (Callaghan 40). Clearly both critical perspectives here define power as the ability to control and manipulate others, or, at its more positive, the degree to which one is free to express oneself through the pursuit of individual desires and self-fulfilment. While I perceive power in a similar sense, I have tried to recognise that different societies may perceive power itself differently and that playwrights present power differently within the contexts of their plays. The prevailing imagery of The Duchess of Malfi creates a world of insanity, in which the Duchess' ability to remain sane clearly indicates her power, not to impose her will on or to control others but to endure suffering, to survive. Again, religious salvation is not an all-important issue for many late twentieth-century critics; yet, for the Renaissance it was unquestionably important. Thus, plays which present female siblings achieving salvation or which create sisters as images of spiritual perfection, in contrast to brothers who suffer eternal damnation, clearly empower the women within the plays as well as provide positive examples for actual women of the Renaissance.

4. In this context, Philip Massinger's The Duke of Milan and John Ford's Love's Sacrifice, provide an interesting comparison to The Duchess of Malfi and reveal how difficult, as well as constricting, it is to explain everything in terms of patriarchy. Mary Beth Rose, Dena Goldberg, Lisa Jardine, and

Callaghan all interpret the Duchess' final fate in terms of her sex; she is punished for challenging the ideology of her patriarchal society. Yet in these two later plays, which clearly parallel Webster's work, two dukes who marry for love are given no special privileges based on their sex. Instead, they, too, are violently abused, and in Ford's play, destroyed, by elitist sisters who detest their lower-born sisters-in-law; they, too, end up paying for following their passions and marrying beneath them. Interestingly, setting the three plays together underscores not the severity of the Duchess' punishment, as this defiant and subversive woman is checked for defying male hierarchy, but the fact that she is actually treated less severely than the two dukes. Being a woman gives her more leeway to pursue love and marriage than her male counterparts, and she remains more sympathetic than either of the dukes who become slaves to their passion.

5 . Catherine Belsey in particular reveals the central importance of women's sexuality to feminists' understanding of female identity: "Women are defined by their difference from men, and the central place of this difference has been the reproductive process" (*The Subject of Tragedy* 148). While not disagreeing with Belsey's claim that sexuality--or more specifically the reproductive process--is the period's principal way of separating female from male, I would question her claim that the Renaissance defined woman exclusively in terms of their difference from men. Playwrights' emphasis on (sometimes close to identical) brothers and sisters simultaneously affirms the difference and the similarity between the two sexes; thus their drama draws together the Renaissance's growing acknowledgement, most evident in humanist works, that women are reasoning and intelligent beings, with the period's continuing suspicion of female sexuality.

6 . Sigmund Freud's famous argument locates the original source of the incest taboo in the guilt, remorse, and fear which the primeval sons felt upon killing their father and seizing his power: "They [returning sons who have been driven from the patriarchal horde] revoked their deed by forbidding the killing of the totem, the substitute for their father; and they renounced its fruits by resigning their claim to the women [mothers and sisters] who had now been set free" (143).

7 . Claude Lévi-Strauss argues that the incest taboo is based on the need for societies to exchange, rather than hoard, women in order to form alliances. Women, he writes, are simply the most important of the gifts whose exchange forms the basis of alliances: "[T]he prohibition of incest is a rule of reciprocity, for I will give up my daughter or my sister only on condition that my neighbour does the same" (62).

8 . Robin Fox develops Edward Westermarck's theory that brother-sister incest avoidance arises out of the aversion that develops between very young siblings who are physically unable to engage in sexual activity (22-23).

9 . Fox's explanation of the difference between matrilineal and patrilineal families helps to explain the lingering power of the sister even in patrilineal societies. In the first, a man's heirs are produced by his sister; in the second by his wife. The one, he notes, privileges the position and significance of the woman, the other diminishes her importance: "In the matrilineal case, she is a 'woman of the lineage' helping to reproduce it; in the patrilineal case, she is a 'wife of a lineage male' ... she has simply reproduced her son 'on behalf of' the lineage of which she is not a member" (Fox 63-65). Fox's

words help to contrast the continuing difference, even in patrilineal societies, between the positions of wife and sister. The wife relinquishes her identity when she marries and adopts an alien sense of self--that of her husband's; she only becomes a part of his family to the extent to which she can subordinate her own sense of self and suppress her past, the earliest family connections which have created her. By contrast, a woman presented as a sister will derive her sense of self not from her brother but from her house, that larger whole of which both siblings, male and female, are an integral part.

10. Cf. Kathleen McLuskie's comment on sexuality in the early modern period, that the church "institutionalize[d] sexual identities based on male exploitation of women ... with a firm gender division between active men and passive women whose bodies are to be known or possessed" ("Lawless Desires Well Tempered" 104).

11. Because of the extensive number of plays covered in this thesis, I have found it most consistent and clear to take all information on performance and publication dates from Terence P. Logan's and Denzell S. Smith's four bibliographical works: The Popular School (1975), The Predecessors of Shakespeare (1976), The New Intellectuals (1977), and The Later Jacobean and Caroline Dramatists (1978). In each case, with the exception of A Nice Wanton, I have given the probable date of performance, as indicated by Logan and Smith, followed by the play's publication date.

12. Una Ellis-Fermor's The Jacobean Drama (1936) is one of the earliest and best studies examining the moral and religious scepticism and the psychological anxiety associated with the Jacobean period. For Ellis-Fermor, a mood of spiritual anxiety and fear darkened the period (3-4), produced in part by political uncertainty over the reign of James I (Ellis-Fermor 2). The period also mourned the loss of a golden age, "the fading of glory and disintegration of faith" (Ellis-Fermor 21). Since her book was published, critical comments on the scepticism and unease of the Jacobean period have become commonplace. This unease involves all aspects, whether social, sexual, political, or cultural, of Jacobean society. Critics have studied the fear and anxiety produced by gender conflict and a dispute over the nature and proper position of woman; by social mobility and class conflict; by religious turmoil, unease, and scepticism; by political uncertainty and loss of faith in the monarchy; by the rise of individualism; and by the decline of traditional moral and religious values.

Chapter 1

Sibling Conflict and Love: Historical Representations

Literary critics and social historians alike have devoted considerable energy to discussing the family in the Renaissance period and to analyzing domestic manuals and conduct books to gain a sense of the period's conception of both family and familial roles.¹ Feminist critics in particular have studied social historical material, particularly domestic guidebooks and controversy literature debating the nature of women, to build a picture of the period's construction of femininity.² As well, new historicist critics have examined the links between the domestic and the public realm, exploring the way in which the period paralleled the role of husband and father with the authority of king and God.³ While the brother-sister relationship is clearly important to Stuart drama, few literary critics consider representations of siblings in domestic writings or drama of the time, nor do they analyze siblings' position within the family. Perhaps it is because Renaissance treatises on the education and upbringing of children and domestic manuals setting out the proper governance of the family say little about the relationship between brothers and sisters; twentieth-century historians repeat their silence. This omission makes it difficult to reconstruct the way in which the period viewed siblings, or to gain an understanding of what the period saw as a characteristic brother-sister relationship.

When the guidebooks do briefly consider siblings, they invariably consider them as children rather than adults and thus deprive the eldest brother of legitimate position and authority. Brothers, along with their sisters, are presented as children and subjects under the instruction of their parents. As well, brothers, in contrast to the absolute authority possessed by their fathers, have a curiously undefined and unimpressive position within the family hierarchy, one which undercuts the influence

of their gender.

While some critics and historians are not as extreme as Lawrence Stone in emphasizing the father's patriarchal absolutism, few deny that the father held considerable authority in the Renaissance household, authority bolstered by Renaissance domestic treatises.⁴ In William Perkins' Christian Oeconomie (1609), the author clearly likens family discipline to the government of the state, with the father as the ruler of his household: "A Familie is a naturall and simple Society of certaine persons, having mutuall relation one to another, under the private government of one" (669). Robert Cawdry's A Godly Form of Household Government (1598) reiterates the comparison, likening the domestic household to a miniature kingdom: "A Household is as it were a little commonwealth, by the good government whereof, Gods glorie may bee advaunced" (1). Further confirming the father's position, he is likened to God (Cawdry 348), while children are sternly informed of their duties to their parents: "[H]erewithall they must know, that they are not at their owne libertie, to do as they list, so long as they have a father and mother to rule them" (Cawdry 352). Particularly underlining the importance of the analogy, James I compares the power and the position of the king over his people to that of the father over his household. In his speech of 1609, addressed to the parliament at White-Hall, James I observes, "Kings are also compared to Fathers of families: for a King is truly *Parens patriæ*, the politique father of his people" (307). Robert Filmer's Patriarcha also uses the absolute authority of father over children to justify the absolute rule of king over subjects and argues that "erection of kingdoms came at first only by distinction of families" (9).⁵ Filmer underlines the power of both private and public institutions: "If we compare the natural duties of a father with those of a king, we find them to be all one ... As the father over one family, so the king, as father over many families, extends his care to preserve, feed, clothe, instruct and defend the whole commonwealth" (12).

Writers also emphasize the absolute obedience that children owe to their parents, likening the father to God, as well as to the king. William Gouge's Of Domestical Duties (1622) particularly emphasizes the unquestioning, passive obedience children owe to their parents. He strongly criticizes children who disregard their parents and who behave "as if their parents authority were an usurped power and not given them of God" (483). Since children, he argues, derive their very being from their parents, they owe them obedience and deference (487) and should follow their commands in everything godly (467). In A Bartholomew Fairing for Parents (1589), John Stockwood provides a similar justification for insisting on children's absolute obedience to parents. Children "do owe their verie being unto those that begat them" (Stockwood 18), he argues, and this makes children their parents' property:

[C]hildren are worthlie to be reckoned among the goodes and substance of their fathers, and that by a more especiall right then any thing els, the which belongeth unto their possession, as those which are more neerlie linked and joynd unto them, and which cost them more dearlie, being flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone, and without whom, they had never bene. (Stockwood 21-22)

Cawdry points out that children gain their "life and beeing" (347) from parents and God and thus incur a profound debt of gratitude: "[F]or life, they [children] owe love: for maintenance, they owe obedience: for instruction, they owe reverence" (353). Likewise, in Bethel (1633), Matthew Griffith insists that children show their parents reverence, feeling "an inward, awfull regard of them" (367) and obeying their requests with a "spirit of meekenesse and love" (372). Similarly, Thomas Carter's Carters Christian Commonwealth (1627) likens the position of the parents over their children to God over Christians and soberly informs any youthful readers that "hee [God] hath cast thee [child] under

the power& authority of them [parents], to obey and serve them in his stead" (sig. M6v).

Thus parents and children, clearly, have a variety of duties and responsibilities they must fulfill if they are both to meet their obligations. Parents must bring their children up religiously, teach them to respect God and king, see them trained in an occupation in which they can support themselves, and arrange honorable marriages for them.⁶ In return, children owe parents deference, love, and obedience. To the siblings themselves, particularly brother and sister, the guidebook writers offer little advice. In an important contrast to the relationship between parent and child, however, writers stress the affection between siblings. The duty of children to each other is simply to love one another (Griffith 376). They are "not to fall out among themselves, but mutually to love and helpe one another " (Cawdry 352). Later, in a striking passage, Griffith particularly emphasizes this sibling affection. He argues that a strong and intense love arises out of the similarity and equality between children: "Now in naturall reason the love of brethren must needs bee the greatest, because of all relations in the world this betweene brethren is the most direct, and equall" (377).⁷ Clearly this equality between brothers gives rise to the strength of their love, and he underlines the pleasantness of love and harmony between brethren (377).

Perhaps more important, while fathers and husbands stand as an image of God and king in their households, replicating in the private realm the authority of king in the public and God in the spiritual, brothers are not extended as images of authority over those beneath them. Instead, they are presented as representatives of equality, shared love, and community. For Griffith, siblings stand as models for all the Christians who, man or woman, are spiritually equal in the eyes of God. Thus, the love that should exist between siblings, who are equal in the eyes of their parents, acts as an example of the love that Christians should feel for one another. All Christians are siblings, Griffith argues,

because they share the same parents: "God is the father of all. And the church ... is the Mother of us all" (376). They also share the same patrimony, the earth and heaven, and the same biblical injunction to love one another (Griffith 377). While father and husband are clear figures of authority, hierarchy, and power, brothers are images of love and equality, not enjoying the privilege of being king and God in their households.

Writers of domestic guidebooks also suggest the potential for contention and hostility between siblings. Partial parents "cause envy, malice, and much contention," writes Gouge, to arise "among children" (578). The Court of Good Counsell (1607) observes that if the father treats one son badly, he will breed discord among all his sons and make the one "beginneth to fall in secret warre, with his brothers" (sig. G4r). In particular, primogeniture inspires conflict, perhaps because it contradicts the very emphasis writers place on the equality and similarity between siblings. Most writers actively defend primogeniture, stoutly maintaining it as "perpetual, and admit[ing] no exception" (Perkins 696), or claiming it to be "most just and equall" (Gouge 576). Yet, in direct contradiction to their defense of this practice, they stress the equality between siblings, effectively undercutting the validity and fairness of primogeniture. Although advocating primogeniture, which he claims shows "no partialitie in affection" (576), Gouge, for example, proceeds to argue that parents should recognize that their children are all equal in the eyes of God (575-576) and treat them similarly. In the same way that God "accounteth all his children deare or beloved children" (Gouge 575), so parents should follow "Gods patterne" (Gouge 575) and have "an impartiall respect to all their children, and perform[ing] dutie indifferently and equally to all" (Gouge 575). He asks, "All our children come from our owne substance and bowels. Why then should we respect one childe above another ...?" (Gouge 575).

On the one hand, then, writers stress the similarity between children, pointing out that they all derive their being from the same source; on the other, they allow the eldest brother a special status, defending his right to inherit the greater part of his family's property. Some writers, however, challenge the authority of the eldest brother directly and reject a family hierarchy which elevates the eldest brother over his younger siblings. In J. Ap Roberts' An Apology for a Younger Brother (1618), the author mounts a strong attack on primogeniture and argues that parents need feel no compulsion to leave their property to their oldest son. Rather, he writes that the father should leave his inheritance to whichever child he pleases and contends that "[n]ature never [did] set downe as a law, that those fortunes should be left to the elder brother or younger, or to anyone in particular ... but to whom the father ... should best devise by will guided by reason" (Roberts sig. B2r). While emphasizing the father's absolute rule in the household, the author casts the eldest brother as a tyrannical figure whose illegitimate power over his hapless brothers and sisters brings the whole family to ruin. With the death of their fathers, "they [the heirs] neglect brother, and sister; yea, bring to extreame misery their Naturall Mothers after their Fathers death by their unthriftines" (Roberts sig. D1v). In earlier days, he observes, devout heirs would see to their dependent younger siblings out of a sense of godliness, but now "an elder brother is found to spend more in a yeare idlie, ... and to suffer their brothers and sisters to shift, which as these times shape, is oftentimes to live either lewdly, or most miserably" (Roberts sig. E1r). A particular injustice, Roberts notes, comes if the father dies intestate. His whole property then goes to his oldest son who is "not to be bound by law to provide for brother or sister, but at his owne good liking" (Roberts sig. E2v).

While Roberts defends the rights of younger siblings, An Apology for a Younger Brother also advances the authoritarian position of the father. Thus, his viewpoint is particularly striking, for he

clearly differentiates between the authority of father and brother and aggrandizes the position of the one in order to undermine that of the other. Because he wishes to justify his critique of primogeniture, he takes pains to argue for brothers' equality and to insist that no single male child be allotted special privileges on the basis of birth order. Yet, he also elevates the power of the father over all his children and presses for the abolition of primogeniture on the grounds that it will enhance the father's authority, permitting him to check his eldest son. Casting all brothers as subjects who owe equal deference to their father, the author emphasizes the absolute power the father should possess over them. "God," he notes, "hath given many priviledges to a Father, as well to reward the well-deserving, as to punish an evill child" (Roberts sig. F2v). Thus, he claims, fathers who hold all their "lands in fee, that is are absolute of themselves" (Roberts sig. D2r), should leave their inheritance to the male child who pleases them the most, rather than feeling bound to leave their property to the eldest: "Fathers may in some cases dispose of their worldly Estates to which of their sonnes shal reasonably please etc for so much thereof as they will; and that to be lawfull by the Law of God" (sig. A1r). Even in cases where the property is entailed, he argues that the father should be allowed to disinherit a disobedient oldest son.

In supporting patriarchy even as he rejects a privileged position for the eldest brother, the author helps to explain why brothers appear as figures of illegitimate authority in the drama. Siblings are perceived as adult children, seen in relation either to each other or to their parents. Consequently, whether or not their father is still living, they appear as subjects without authority, rather than as rulers in the domestic household; hence, it becomes difficult for any one sibling to assert authority over the others.

More emphatically, even, than Roberts' A Defence for Younger Brothers, Thomas Wilson's

The State of England, Anno Domino 1600 attacks primogeniture. His angry words particularly underline the difference in authority of brother and father. While no one questions that the father should rule over his children, Wilson rejects the idea of brother ruling over brother with an angry bitterness:

[My] elder brother forsooth must be my master. He must have all, and all the rest that which the catt left on the malt heape, perhaps some smale annuyte during his life or what pleas our elder brother's worship to bestowe upon us if wee pleas him, and my mistress his wife. (24)

Along with the tension over primogeniture, domestic guidebook writers create an irresolvable conflict when they discuss the obedience which children owe to mothers, as well as fathers. Most insist that children, male and female, should give both parents obedience and submission, according them the deference due to king and God. This position indicates a clear advance in Renaissance society's recognition of the rights of the mother as a parent. In the Tudor Court of Wards, which was established in 1540, a royal ward was sold "sometimes to his mother, more often to a complete stranger" (Hurstfield 18). It was not until 1611 that "a mother or next of kin [was given] ... a prior claim for the ward, if application were made within the first month of the wardship" (Hurstfield 92).⁸

But the mother is clearly not as potent an image of authority as the father is. Regardless of whether or not women gained status through the Protestant idealization and sanctification of marriage,⁹ writers repeatedly emphasize the necessary subordination of wife to husband, insisting on her submission to his authority. She must not only love but obey her husband, putting herself under "the subjection and government of him also" (Carter sig. D8r). She must recognize him as an image of God, submitting "[herself] unto [her] Husband ... as unto the Lord" (Carter sig. E1v). She is "subject

to the head without reasoning" (Griffith 324).

Although the wife is thus subordinate to her husband, Gouge insists that children must show "equall respect to both their Naturall parents" (485). Both, after all, have created them: "Both parents are under God a like meanes of their childrens being. Children come out of the substance of both alike" (484). The weakness of her sex does not detract from the mother's authority as a parent (Gouge 486). Yet even as Gouge acknowledges the mother's authority, he reveals just how differently he perceives the position of father and mother. He indicates his suspicion of a mother's authority, noting that she is more likely than the father to spoil and pamper their children, "Mothers for the most part offend herein, who are so farre from performing this dutie [of punishment] themselves, as they are much offended with their husbands if they doe it" (Gouge 557). He also suggests that mothers did have less position than fathers. In the case of the death of the father, he writes that the mother's authority becomes absolute, "[T]hen is a mother as simply and absolutely to be obeyed in all things, as a father" (485). Although both parents may expect to command their children's respectful obedience, the death of the father brings the mother even greater authority, not as a parent but as a father. She is called on to fill a masculine role; not unexpectedly, many Renaissance plays betray a considerable anxiety over these single parent families and question whether a women can ever stand in for the father.

Similar to Gouge, Robert Cawdry underlines the difference between parents, who comprise both sexes, and father. Since children gain their "life and beeing" (347) from their parents and God, they must not do as they please if they "have a father or mother to rule them" (352). It is the father, however, not the mother, whose authority is confirmed in the social structure. It is the male whom Cawdry likens to God, for he observes that both man and the deity share the title of father (348);

thus, it is the father who possesses a similar authority. How can a female--a mother--obtain a similar authority over her children when she clearly stands in contrast to God the father?

Calling upon the mother to fill a masculine role or a child to stand in for his father then prepares the way for the destructive family unit of many revenge tragedies. Comprised of a powerless, ineffective mother and her quarreling, hostile children, these single parent families become a particularly powerful image of disorder and uncertainty in a world without a police force, where "family discipline was the main guarantee of both public order and private morality ... the responsibility of the father within the family" (Stone, The Crisis of the Aristocracy 591). With the father absent or replaced by an inadequate substitute (either mother or eldest son), the contentious, unruly siblings of drama violate all of Gouge's precepts about the proper government of the family.

The ambiguity of the oldest brother's position in relation to his brothers and sisters becomes even clearer when we consider other social documents of the period. Andrew Kingsmill's A View of Man's Estate ... Whereunto is Annexed a Godly Advise ... Touching Mariage (1574) contains a short section in which a brother offers advice to his sister on her possible remarriage. In this piece, Kingsmill's attitude and position stand in striking contrast to Ferdinand's viewpoint in The Duchess of Malfi. He is eager for his sister to remarry and defends second marriages; he recognizes her right to choose her own husband; and he urges her to choose a poor, virtuous man rather than a rich one. Despite his gender and despite being joined by a blood tie as close as that between father and daughter, he does not assume a paternal authority over her or feel himself to be in a position of power over her. Instead, his introduction indicates that he views her as his superior, and he reveals that she has been his patron and support. "Worshipfull," he addresses her, "as I am not unmindfull, so I desire by these not to seeme unthankfull for those rewards, not small in my purse, which you have

heretofore of your liberalitie diverse times bestowed on me" (sig. I2r). As a return for her generosity, he goes on, he will offer her advice on how to choose a second husband, and yet he does so in a humble, respectful tone that does not press his male privilege. After gratefully acknowledging his debt to her, he justifies his actions as though he fears offending her; and he actually takes the trouble to prove that he does not over-reach himself in counseling his sister how she should behave. "I will aske no pardon of presumption," he writes rather nervously, "whereof I trust there shall be no suspition betwixt brother and sister" (sig. I4r).

Consistent with his deferential approach, the writer repeatedly emphasizes that the final choice in selecting a husband is hers. First, he stresses, he will not even "persuade or dissuade marriage with you, for therein you may best be your own judge" (sig. I3v). Then, with much flattery, he observes that she will have the wisdom and good sense to choose a virtuous suitor over a rich coxcomb, "I trust my poore spirited suter [i.e. suitor] shall not be outfaced, you sitting as a judge" (sig. K8v). As he proceeds to set out the qualities of the ideal suitor, defending virtue and godliness before wealth or good looks, he momentarily forgets his sister, but when he comes back to the issue of choice, he again underlines the difference between his position and that of a father. Rather than actively helping her to choose her suitor or arranging an appropriate second marriage, he concludes by leaving the final decision to her. He may describe the perfect second husband, and yet only God will help her locate this paragon: "This is al, sister, that I have nowe to be said: give your selfe over wholly unto God to be your guide" (sig. L8r). Ultimately, God Himself will assist her in such a divine enterprise as marriage: He "shall send you an husband of his kynde ... God shall sende his Angell to leade that man unto your house" (sig. L8v).

Kingsmill's advice also helps to set in contrast the positions of wife and sister. As he begins,

he specifically points out that the woman whom he addresses is now defined in the eyes of society as his sister; as a brother, he remains respectful throughout the treatise. However, he clearly hopes that she will soon change her role through marriage and strongly defends the godliness of second marriages. Thus his description of her as a sister is closely accompanied by his desire that she will speedily transform herself back into a wife. He writes, "Considering therefore the state of your life, the case wherein you now stande: that is, towards me and the world my sister, a woman once a wife, nowe a widow, and therefore having of God leave and libertie by mariage to become a wyfe againe" (sig. I3r). And, although remaining deferential to her himself, he concludes with a prayer that she will find a husband to govern her: "[T]he Lord (I beseech him) guide you with his holy spirite, and provide you an head for your comfort, graunt you long to live and ever to love together with the encrease of your godly children" (sig. L8v). Wishing to see her re-established in a position where she will again have male guidance, he nonetheless does not feel that he can attempt to control her himself. It is up to her second husband, not him, to become her master.

Both Wilson and Roberts bitterly question the justice of the oldest brother's position of power over his siblings and challenge his authority; Kingsmill provides an example of a brother's deference towards his sister. Twentieth-century studies of early modern families reveal considerable rivalry between siblings of both sexes over the family inheritance. Ralph Houlbrooke underlines the tenuous position siblings held in relationship to their oldest brother and emphasizes their lack of legal support. The Poor Law of 1601, he notes, forced only grandparents, parents and children to support dependents but "[t]here was no generally accepted obligation to support or aid siblings, at any rate once portions or legacies had been paid" (Houlbrooke 48).¹⁰

Thus, in many cases, younger siblings of both sexes were dependent on the good will of their

brothers if they wished to obtain assistance or support. Alan MacFarlane's book The Family Life of Ralph Josselin studies the diary of Ralph Josselin, the vicar of Earls Colne in Essex from 1641-1683. While MacFarlane primarily analyzes the relationship between parents and children in order to question the idea that Puritan fathers were all authoritative and tyrannical (117), he also considers the relationship between Ralph and his three sisters and between the siblings in the Josselin family. Josselin's words reveal the inferior position his sisters occupied in the family hierarchy, as well as the man's sense of obligation towards them (MacFarlane 129-130). When Josselin took in one sister after he became vicar, his diary entry indicates the lack of power in her position and her dependence on him for support: "[M]y sister Mary is come under my rooffe as a servant ... [but] my respect is & shall be towards her as a sister" (August 5, 1644; qtd. in MacFarlane 129). Later, he praises himself for his charity in giving his other sister cast-offs:

My sister Dorothy and her houseband with me; wee gave them such old things as wee any wayes could spare. I paid her 20s. for her legacy and lent her 20s. more. The lord be blessed that enables mee to be a friend to any of my kindred. (October 20, 1647; qtd. in MacFarlane 130)

Clearly, Josselin chooses to aid both sisters out of a sense of moral rather than legal responsibility, and his generosity contrasts with the conduct of another man about whom he writes. This brother, Josselin relates, refused to aid his sister and instead drove her out of his house. Josselin describes "a sad sight of a brother S.B. whose sister fell to the town chardge; he said all in his hand was spent ... he said he would turne out the 4 children ... he seemed to mee void of brotherly and naturall affection" (October 19, 1654; qtd. in MacFarlane 129). While Josselin may feel the brother has a moral obligation to support his sister and her children, the town cannot force him to look after her.

The eldest brother's possible indifference to the well-being of his siblings also carries over to his other brothers, with primogeniture again encouraging fraternal hostility (Houlbrooke 43). While the fourth Duke of Norfolk, in 1572, and Sir William Wentworth, in 1604, may instruct their heirs to look after their younger siblings, giving them "quasi-paternal responsibilities towards their siblings" (Houlbrooke 41), in general, the period's movement towards the nuclear family weakened sibling ties (Houlbrooke 42). In a cold letter (1636) to his sick younger brother James, Henry Oxinden contrasts the loyalty he feels towards wife and children to the indifference he feels towards his brothers. He will let the boy visit him from Cambridge but only grudgingly; he writes:

It is true I doe not desire any more company in my house then my wife, children and servants, yet to doe you a curtesy I shall bee willing of your company during the time aforesaid ... I know by this time you have learnt there is a difference betweene Meum and Tuum, not only amongst strangers but amongst friends and Brothers. (qtd. in Houlbrooke 42).

It could also be difficult for the sister to obtain her share of the family inheritance from her brother. While Lawrence Stone claims that the relationship between brother and sister was probably the warmest in the family (The Family, Sex and Marriage 116),¹¹ he points out as well that the increasing necessity of providing generous portions for sisters placed a considerable strain on family resources (Crisis of the Aristocracy 549). Margaret Lucas, who was born in 1623 and who married the Marquis of Newcastle while he was in exile in France, had trouble obtaining her 200 pound portion from her mother and brother. Her mother offered the disordered state of the kingdom as an excuse for their tardiness in giving up the money (Mendelson 25). Yet Sara Mendelson points out that the family's estates were not sequestered and that Margaret's brother had sufficient money to buy

the title of Baron Lucas. Nonetheless, "Margaret could do nothing, and her portion was not relinquished until two years later" (Mendelson 25).

The Verney sisters of Miriam Slater's study found themselves in a similar situation to Margaret. In this family, birth order, Slater argues, rather than affection, determined the child's "position in the family hierarchy" with the eldest son gaining the greatest share of "power and responsibility within the family" (27). Despite the fact that their family was relatively well-off and that their oldest brother spent ten years in exile in France, Ralph ruled his nine younger siblings, particularly his six sisters, like a surrogate father. Slater paints a grim picture of their dependence on Ralph's good will.¹² The sisters were particularly under his influence, Slater observes, because they had no other means of support: "They were far more dependent in every area of their lives, enjoyed fewer options, and were less able to escape from patriarchal domination than their brothers" (Slater 20). Ralph had, moreover, a number of means for keeping all his siblings respectful and subservient, since they were dependent on him for social support and identity, as well as "for lending and borrowing" (Slater 28). Ralph could "offer or withhold documents in his possession" (Slater 140), advance or ignore his relatives' business dealings, and use his position and prestige in society to promote his kin (Slater 140). Further enhancing Verney's authority, he acted as the family patriarch while his father was still alive and fighting for the Royalists, and served as the intermediary between his father and his younger siblings (Slater 34).

However, the events which Slater chronicles indicate that the Verney sisters viewed their brother with a mixture of deference and defiance and actively contested his authority in order to obtain their inheritance. The oldest sister, Susan, Slater relates, engaged in a particularly acrimonious dispute with her brother over her dowry. Although promised a thousand pound portion, her brother

had borrowed 750 of it from her feoffees, as well as taking another 100 pounds as well. In order to obtain the money she needed to marry, Susan adopted a fairly aggressive course against her brother, writing him bitter, unpleasant letters and enlisting the assistance of an uncle respected by the whole family, her mother's brother, Dr. William Denton. After a year of negotiations and much recrimination, Ralph finally gave his sister 400 pounds of the 600 he still owed her (Slater 100-103). As she fought the man who stood as her guardian, Susan clearly possessed more power than a wife or daughter, and she behaved with considerable strength and independence. But Ralph still controlled her inheritance and could be forced only to relinquish a part of what her father left her. As well, once she had succeeded in marrying, Susan hastened to apologize for her behavior, as though she felt she had gone too far in antagonizing him. Anxious to remain in his good graces, she wrote him, "[Y]ou are too wise a man, to weigh either the malice or the passion of a foolish woman and your sister" (August 21, 1645; qtd. in Slater 103).

Other sisters of the Verney family had an equally difficult time dealing with their brother, and their actions display a similar mixture of respect and anger. Penelope had trouble obtaining the marriage dowry which had been left her by her father, while the portion that Margaret had received from her aunt was taken and managed by Sir Ralph, who loaned it out unwisely. Yet Penelope threatened to expose Ralph as "the most unkind and unnatural brother" (Feb. 20, 1645; qtd. in Slater 39) if he did not advance her marriage. Again, after Margaret separated from the husband who had abandoned her, she rejected her brother's attempts to direct her with a sharp firmness. Writing from his exile in France, Ralph took it upon himself to inform another brother, Edmund, how Margaret must conduct herself: "[A]bove all charge her not to exceed in clothes (especially in light colours) nor to keep much company for it is not fit for a person in her condition ... [to] appear often in public"

(July 30/August 9, 1648; qtd. in Slater 99). But her response to Edmund indicates her unwillingness to acknowledge her oldest brother as a moral guide or to let him take the place of her wayward husband. "Now for my living a retired life," she informed their uncle, "truly I do not know anything I have done as should make me to do so, had I played the whore it had been the fittest course for me, I shall rather give the world leave to talk" (August 16/26 1648; quoted in Slater 99). Her words make it clear that she refused to feel shame for her husband's actions and that she resisted her brother's attempts to make her hide herself as though she had done something wrong.

While Sir Ralph's control of the family finances, as well as his position in the world, gave him considerable control over his sisters, they did not, nonetheless, accord him absolute obedience. The competition between the Wentworth children offers an even more interesting picture of the way in which siblings fought amongst themselves for power, their antagonism subverting the gender hierarchy which casts woman as inferior and submissive to man. As well, this more openly antagonistic family is particularly striking because it is built around a widowed mother and her quarreling, hostile adult children, a family structure of especial interest to Jacobean dramatists. In 1607, William Wentworth began to record the signs of God's favour to his family. One factor in particular founded the Wentworths' fortunes: his mother, the only surviving child of Sir William Gascoigne, was considerably wealthier than his father (26-27). In William's opinion, the marriage of this wealthy heiress to his father was little short of a miracle and he marvels that "my father, being of so smale lyving, should so sone after mary the onelie daughter and heire of that so greate a house" (26-27). Yet he clearly felt little affection for his mother and resented the fact that her riches give her considerable power within the family.

Describing her as a "woman of a great witt and stomacke" (29), Wentworth complains bitterly

about her behavior and criticizes the undue influence she had exerted over his father (29). After her husband's death, her position was enhanced even further, and, much to Wentworth's dismay, this strong-willed and forceful woman refused to be guided or influenced by her only son or to accord him any special privileges in the family. Instead, he insinuates that, as executor of her husband's will, she dealt dishonestly with him, removing much of her husband's belongings to her family home before the estate was settled. She "had befor his death removed much mony, as was verelie believed ... and all the best goods to Gauthorp" (29). More indirectly, he implies that she did not follow her husband's true wishes, for he hints that she was responsible for the mysterious disappearance of money meant to discharge his father's debts. As inheritor of most of his father's land, he was responsible for a thousand pounds of debts which "I [William] do verelie beleve and so manie have said that my father left mony to discharge me of all this debt" (29).

Further adding to his sense of grievance and to the bitterness of the rivalry between siblings, Wentworth's mother, "having then in possession hir whole inheritance, could never be brought to assure hir land unto me [William] after hir death" (29). In just a few pages, Wentworth reveals how complex and even treacherous family relationships could be and he draws a fascinating picture of the intense power struggle between himself and his four older sisters, as they vied for their mother's financial resources. While William himself attempts to detach himself from the Machiavellian manipulations and family quarrels by using phrases such as "I have herd verie credibilie" (32) or "it was verily believed," he appears to have been as active as any of his other siblings in competing for his mother's wealth.

In the malicious way in which William describes Margaret's influence over their mother, he offers a clear sense of the ill-feeling that existed between the siblings. After his mother leased a

manor in Arthrop to her daughter, William observes that she was "aged and giving too much care to those that flattered hir for their own gaine" (31). Even more alarming, in William's eyes, she was almost prevailed upon to give Margaret a twelve year lease on another property, as well as a one year lease on the house and lands of Gawthorpe, her family's ancestral home. William, however, thwarted such a blow to his ambitions by means of a timely alliance with another sister and her husband Thomas Gargrave (31-32). His connection with this godless man, who was later hanged for poisoning his servant (32-33), occasioned Wentworth some unease, and he discreetly hints at his brother-in-law's bizarre sexual relations with his wife Catherine: "This man's most strang courses with his wyfe I omit" (33). Evidently, it does not quite fit the picture he was creating to have someone as godless as Gargrave act as God's instrument in the providential advancement of William's fortunes; neither does he care to admit that he himself actively schemes to gain control of his mother's wealth. Thus, he makes Thomas alone appear responsible for thwarting Margaret's attempt to obtain the leases to the two properties. According to William, his brother-in-law, "grudging att the excessive preferment of my sister [Margaret] Darcie (as the onlie hinderance of his profit) as I have herd," told his mother-in-law that Margaret was planning to marry a "pore gentleman" after her death (32). This revelation prevented the mother from signing the two leases. For all his attempts to appear detached from such striving, William's tone indicates that he, as much as Thomas, was "grudging att the excessive preferment of [his] sister Darcie" (32).

Ultimately, William succeeded in fulfilling his ambitions at the expense of his older sister, Margaret Darcy, and he financed his purchase of Harewood by selling much of his mother's land and Gawthorpe, the family home which had almost been leased to Margaret. However, he obtained the coveted properties only after further scheming with his brother-in-law Thomas. "[A]fter much suite

made by me unto hir [his mother] in vaine," writes the disgruntled William (32), she promised her lands to her son if he would give her some bonds which Thomas wanted and which were in William's possession. Acting as the middle man between wealthy mother and detested son, Thomas, who was "greatlie in hir favor" (32), aided William, secured the bonds for himself through his influence over his mother-in-law, and thwarted the plans of his wife's sister. For all his pious posturing, William's description of this final transaction betrays how the son saw his mother as an antagonist to be striven with and bent to his will. He writes that "she did itt [promised him the lands] upon my delivery of bonds etc. into hir hands for his [Thomas'] use, of which I made no haste till it pleased hir to promise such assurance" (32).

This hostility, envy, and quarreling between brother and sister continued even until the moment of their mother's passing. Gaining intelligence of her death, William rode post-haste to where she was living with her daughter and had to force an entrance into the house. He relates that he succeeded in entering, "albeitt ther was some order given to kepe me outt" (31). While he is not clear as to the nature of his grievance, he implies that he successfully prevented any last minute schemes by his sister.

The relationship between William's son Thomas Wentworth and his sisters Anne, Margaret, and Elizabeth appears more conventional, with the brother helping and supporting his sisters out of a sense of family duty. Unlike William, who had to strive for supremacy, Thomas was clearly the most important and privileged one of the family, and the sisters looked to him for support and advice. Under the terms of his father's will, his two younger sisters were to live with him until their weddings (54-55) and they are not mentioned in his letters. Thomas also helped his older sister, Anne, who was already married when their father died, to retrieve money from her father-in-law, Sir George Savile,

and her husband's grandmother, the Countess of Shrewsbury. In two letters written in 1624, Thomas sets out his sister's claims for the hundred pounds she was demanding, as well as sending a copy of the deed on which his sister based her case. As the most powerful and prestigious figure in the family, he undertook the negotiations for his sister.

Clearly, the Wentworths show the difficulty of generalizing about the social hierarchies of the period, for each family has a different dynamic, determined not just by its socio-economic status but also by the widely different natures of the individuals within the family.¹³ The Wentworth siblings reveal how easily family dynamics can shift with the different psychological make-up of the individuals, as well as with different economic situations. Thus, her study of the Verney family may allow Slater to claim that sisters were powerless in the face of their brothers' patriarchal control (Slater 20) and that sibling relationships themselves were cold and calculated: "Interpersonal relations among the sisters and brothers were marked by a calculated reciprocity which there is no reason to believe was idiosyncratic ... the family and kin were necessary and useful as a means for getting on in the world" (Slater 34). Ralph Verney seems to have exercised his authority with considerable force, not only insisting that his sisters defer to him as the head of the family (Slater 82-84) and follow his instruction (Slater 99) but only reluctantly relinquishing the money due to them from their father's will. Only the need to maintain a good image in the eyes of the world (Slater 39) and his dependence on his brothers to manage his estate while he remained in France seem to have helped check his authority. Yet the rivalry between William Wentworth and his older sister Margaret, who appears from his letters to have been his mother's favourite, suggests that sisters could mount a significant challenge for part of the family wealth.¹⁴

Again, other families display affection between siblings and suggest the relationship's potential

for an ideal friendship. Ralph Josselin's relatively straitened situation made it difficult for him to help his sisters much: first, because he was poor himself, and then because he was concerned with supporting his own growing number of children. Nonetheless, he did his best to help them, taking in the one and finding her a position in the household of his patrons, the Harlakendens (MacFarlane 129), and giving the other such items as he could afford to relinquish (MacFarlane 130). He also, evidently, saw the title of sister as one connoting closeness, love, and warmth, for he felt the spinster who left him land was like a sister (MacFarlane 129). Ralph also showed as much warmth and affection for his five daughters as he did for his two sons and invested almost as much money in their up-bringing as he did for the two boys (MacFarlane 116). He left his daughters generous amounts of money, at least partly because he did not get on well with his only surviving son (MacFarlane 121-123). Most striking, his diary idealizes the affection between two of his children, his oldest son and his beloved daughter, who died within a month of each other. They were, he writes, "loving in their lives and in their death they were not divided, lying in the same grave" (July 31, 1673; qtd. in MacFarlane 131).

Other strong sibling relationships reveal the adult brother and sister's sense of loyalty towards the advancement of the extended family. Both Penelope Devereux, the Stella of Philip Sidney's sonnet sequence, and her sister Dorothy shared an "intense devotion" to their brother (Falls 65). Penelope used her lover, Charles Blount, to assist the Earl of Essex in his rebellion against the Queen (Falls 10). However, when the plot against Elizabeth I failed, the siblings turned on one another, each blaming the other for drawing her/him into the plot. In a letter written by Lord Nottingham to Charles Blount, Nottingham describes the way in which Essex had incriminated both Blount and his own sister. Essex blamed Penelope for relentlessly taunting him with cowardice until he felt

compelled to join the plotting against the Queen. He said, "And now I [Essex] must accuse one who is most nearest to me, my sister, who did continually urge me on with telling me how all my friends and followers thought me a coward, and that I had lost all my valour" (qted. in Falls 153). In turn, Penelope credited Essex's undue influence over her for involving her in the plot, and her words draw an interesting distinction between brotherly authority and idealized brotherly love. The first has little power over her and suggests, again, the brother's lack of position in Renaissance society; the second has too much influence on her. "It is known" she informed Nottingham, "that I have been more like a slave than a sister; which proceeded out of my exceeding love rather than his authority" (qted. in Falls 156).

It is difficult to generalize about the nature of sibling ties without undertaking extensive studies of the letters and wills of the period. Both the domestic treatises and the historical brother-sister relationships studied here, however, do suggest, if not the vague specialness commented upon by Stone (*The Family* 116), the period's sense of the potentially disruptive equality between siblings, who, derived from the same parents, are portrayed as parts of the same being. Brothers, despite their gender, have no acknowledged position in the social hierarchy which places husband over wife and father over children; they also have no acceptable place within the political and religious analogies which equate the absolute authority of father over children and of husband over wife to the authority of king over subjects and of God over Christians and the church. The treatises and actual brother-sister relationships studied also indicate the antagonism and tension which arise when a hierarchical order based on gender and age is imposed upon a collection of equals, the children who have alike gained their "life and being" (Cawdry 347) from their parents. Thus primogeniture, perversely defended in the midst of exhortations about the equality and love that should exist between siblings,

provokes considerable hostility from writers like Thomas Wilson and J. Ap Roberts, the author of An Apology for a Younger Brother. Adopting an equally contentious stance, sisters such as those in the Wentworth and Verney families feel emboldened to challenge their brothers' authority in order to obtain their fair share of the family inheritance.

Endnotes

1. Studies of the Renaissance family which focus on the relationship between parents and children and husband and wife begin as early as Chilton Latham Powell's English Domestic Relations 1487-1653 (1917) and include Louis B. Wright's Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England (1965), James Mervyn's Family, Lineage and Civil Society (1974), Keith Wrightson's English Society 1580-1680 (1982), and Ralph Houlbrooke's The English Family 1450-1700 (1984). The two most comprehensive analyses, however, are Lawrence Stone's The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (1977) and David Cressy's Birth, Marriage, and Death (1997). Cressy challenges many of Stone's conclusions, most notably his idea that the family relationships of the time, particularly those between parents and children, were cold and distant. None of these studies, however, consider sibling relationships in any depth. Cressy does not mention them at all; Stone, in his lengthy study, devotes about three pages to brother-sister relationships. Other studies which do not focus specifically on English families include Jean-Louis Flandrin's Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household and Sexuality (1979), and Steven Ozment's When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe (1983).

Literary analyses which consider social-historical constructions of the family in order to interpret non-Shakespearean drama have been discussed in the introduction. These studies largely ignore sibling relationships in their considerations of the family. The only exceptions to this rule lie in Suzanne Gossett's "Sibling Power: Middleton and Rowley's A Fair Quarrel" (1984), an article which takes into account the sister's place in the family in order to interpret the play, and Frank Whigham's Seizures of the Will (1996), a study of social mobility which considers, among other things, the two aristocratically pre-occupied brothers of The Spanish Tragedy and The Duchess of Malfi. Louis Adrian Montrose's "'The Place of a Brother' in As You Like It: Social Process and Comic Form" (1981) and Marc Shell's The End of Kinship: 'Measure For Measure,' Incest, and the Ideal of Universal Siblinghood (1988) offer two studies of two Shakespeare plays which consider the position of siblings in the family.

2. In addition to the feminist studies (discussed in the introduction) which have focused on the period's construction of women in order to interpret non-Shakespearean drama, other scholars have examined the ways in which non-dramatic literature of the period constructed women and presented femininity. The most comprehensive remains Ruth Kelso's Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (1959). Others include Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson's Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance (1987), a collection of essays which examines women's ambivalent place within Renaissance society; Margaret Hannay's Silent But For the Word: Tudor women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works (1985), a group of essays considering women as writers and translators; Suzanne Hull's Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Guidebooks for Women 1475-1640 (1982); and Constance Jordan's study of Renaissance conceptions of feminism, Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models (1990).

3. One of the most comprehensive studies of the analogies between king and father comes in Jonathan Goldberg's James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries. In Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy, Dymna Callaghan uses many of Goldberg's claims in her analysis of Renaissance tragedy. More recently, Ira Clark, who rejects the

new historicist approach, stresses that the Stuart father's rule "was aligned with the absolute dominion sanctioned by all authorities--legal, political, religious, and moral" (Professional Playwrights 20).

4. Stone repeatedly emphasizes the "despotic authority of husband and father" which was so propagated by state propaganda that it fast became an unquestioned cultural norm (Family, Sex and Marriage 151) and contributed to the diminished status of women (The Family, Sex and Marriage 201-202). While most other historians and literary critics acknowledge the patriarchal nature of Renaissance society, they vary in the degree to which they accept Stone's picture of the authoritarian father. Miriam Slater repeatedly reiterates the "patriarchal, authoritarian, and primogenitural" nature of the family (26); other historians such as David Cressy, Alan MacFarlane (117), and Stephen Ozment (134-135) do not so much question the patriarchism of Renaissance society as emphasize the father's affection for his children and the husband's for his wife.

5. Johann P. Sommerville follows the argument that the earlier version of Patriarcha was written ca. 1628-1631 (Introduction xiii-xiv).

6. See, for example, Griffith 334; Carter sig. 15r ff.

7. While "brethren" means brothers, Griffith uses "brethren" and "children" interchangeably. He begins the section discussing the love children, both male and female, owe one another. Then, in a sub-section, he switches to terming the siblings brethren, only to conclude "Then come yee children" (377). Shortly after, he writes, "When brethren fall out ... I am sure that the childrens dissention is the Parents punishment" (378), suggesting that he uses the word to mean siblings. Of course, when he speaks of children he might mean only sons, though at other times he clearly intends to include both sons and daughters when he speaks of children.

8. The allotment of wardships in the fourth year of Elizabeth I's reign provides a good example of mothers' lack of rights as parents. Out of 70 royal wardships, only ten went to the mother of the ward and only one of those mothers received special treatment in purchasing the wardship of her son (Hurstfield 124). Because women lacked the necessary connections to apply for the wardships (Hurstfield 60), their prospects in obtaining guardianship over their own children, or at least their eldest son, were not very good (Hurstfield 80).

9. Again, scholars debate whether or not the Puritan idealization of the affectionate marriage served to improve women's status. Traditionally, historians such as Wright have argued that it raised women's position in society and gave them more status as wives, an argument adopted most notably by the literary critic Mary Beth Rose. Other historians argue that the increased focus on marriage did little to improve women's position and claim that it was the "changing secular conceptions of woman's character and capacity" that improved women's rights, not a changed attitude towards marriage itself (Houlbrooke 98). Others, such as Stone, contend that the elevation of marriage served to weaken women's positions, depriving them of "the continuing protection of their own kin" (The Family, Sex and Marriage 202) and imposing a heavy cultural and psychological burden on them to be perfectly meek, silent, and obedient wives (The Family 195-198).

10. See also Keith Wrightson who points out that under the Tudor Poor Laws, beyond the nuclear family, grandparents, and grandchildren, people had no formal obligations to support kin (46-47).

11. Stone is disappointingly vague when he considers sibling relationships, observing "there can be little doubt that there was something very special about brother-sister relationships among the landed classes at this period [sixteenth and seventeenth centuries]" (The Family 116), without ever mentioning what that specialness was or considering siblings in any detail.

12. Slater's picture is perhaps too grim, for her study places a strong emphasis on power and considers every human action in terms of the person's role and position in the family. She never acknowledges that there may be human feeling between the siblings which may explain their behaviour, nor that they may be different not just because of their different genders, roles, or birth order, but because of their individual personalities. The siblings should not be regarded as mathematical variables, their every action carefully chosen to consolidate or advance their position in the family hierarchy.

13. Houlbrooke, for example, argues that except for the ties between husband and wife and parents and children, kinship bonds were fluid, determined more by personal circumstance than a respect for the blood tie itself (43).

14. Stone comments on the animosity and hatred between brothers caused by an unequal division of family wealth, but claims that sister and brother would not have felt this rivalry (The Family, Sex, and Marriage 115).

Chapter 2

'Close Pandarism' and 'Brother-rivals': Displacing the Husband and Father in Stuart Revenge Tragedies

Renaissance documents and twentieth-century historians alike may provide only a limited perspective on brothers and sisters and the way in which they were written into their society's consciousness. Renaissance drama, however, explores the brother-sister relationship in depth and provides a comprehensive picture of the relationship's social and psychological significance, as well as its increasing importance to both tragedy and tragicomedy as a dramatic convention. An intensive survey of dramatic brothers and sisters illustrates how their relationship moves from obscurity in Elizabethan drama to become one of the distinguishing marks of Jacobean and Caroline tragedy. More important, it illustrates the ways in which the period presented sibling relationships and suggests how dramatists exploited this relationship, so different from the father-child or husband-wife relationship, to explore both the conception of the nuclear family and the self.

The moral and religious uncertainty and the psychological anxiety associated with the Jacobean period has long been a critical commonplace, engaging generations of critics in discussion.¹ Few scholars, however, explore the links between the psychological and social disorder of the period and the growing emphasis in Jacobean revenge tragedy on brother-sister relationships. Yet antagonistic siblings in Jacobean drama such as Cyril Tourneur's The Revenger's Tragedy (1606-1607; 1607) and John Webster's The White Devil (1609-1612; 1612) allow dramatists to express their anxiety over the period's shifting moral values and loss of belief by using brother and sister as a metaphor for both the soul and the family at war with itself. These plays then show a significant

shift in focus from the earlier revenge tragedies studied by such scholars as Charles and Elaine Hallett. In three of the four characteristic revenge tragedies studied by the Halletts, the playwrights focus on father-son relationships and explore the psychology of revenge.² Madness in these plays, the Halletts argue, arises from the overwhelming grief and passion that drive a revenger to take personal revenge despite his previous allegiance to law, justice, and state. His insanity, thus, is really no more than a form of temporary madness, the "madness of inordinate passion" (Halletts 60) arising in particular from the extremities of grief, hatred, and anger (Halletts 69). The revenger strikes back when he can no longer control his pain.

When the focus in revenge tragedy moves to siblings, however, the plays explore an entirely different conception of madness. The Revenger's Tragedy and The White Devil³ both use brother-sister conflict to explore loss of identity, self-division and self-hate, and intolerable inner strife.⁴ Thus, the antagonism between siblings underscores the brother's internal confusion and loss of self-identity and exploits the symbolic significance of siblings as parts of the same being to suggest the soul at war, destroying itself. Further emphasizing the brother's lack of identity and isolation from society is the fact that he occupies a social role which gives him no fixed identity of his own. Discussing the roles available to men of the Renaissance, David Cressy writes, "Through marriage their [men's] relationship to domestic authority became transformed. As single and dependent persons they had followed orders, but as married householders they issued instructions. Marriage for a man meant autonomy, mastery, responsibility, and the prospect of fathering a lineage" (287). Neither husband nor father, the brother instead attempts to define himself in relation to his sister through a perversion of these two roles. Thus he either disrupts the nuclear family, supplanting or acting in rivalry with the husband, or he stands as an inversion of proper paternal authority, his attempts to pandar his sister

corrupting, rather than protecting, the honour of his house.

As well as depicting the adult brother's lack of a stable role within his family, dramatists exploit a family structure which helps them to emphasize the social disorder of the play worlds. All revenge tragedy, argue the Halletts, presents a society at war with itself (104). But rather than concentrating on the violation of the father and son relationship, The Revenger's Tragedy and The White Devil focus on families presided over by the mother; as the sole parent of the family, her ineffectual attempts to discipline a group of quarrelling, disrespectful, and antagonistic children signal the disintegration of the family and the disorder of society. Without the authority of the father, the siblings, ruled only by their mother, stand as the inversion of the ideal Renaissance family presided over by a stern father. Thus, as well as representing conflict at the level of the psyche, antagonistic siblings suggest both the family thrown into chaos and, at the level of all Christendom, Christian siblings tearing one another apart.

If the brother of The White Devil and The Revenger's Tragedy mocks traditional roles and destroys traditional presentations of family, the sibling revenger of other works mounts a different challenge to the idea of the family. The Halletts primarily focus on revenge taken for the murder of father or son. In their interpretation, revenge, a form of madness, poses a challenge to state authority because the revenger, under the unbearable strain of his grief, throws off the civilizing forces of society that make him honour the rule of law and order (Halletts 9). Revenge is thus an unlawful but entirely understandable action, one which is based on the irresistible desire "to return evil for evil" (Halletts 25). Their study, however, begins to acknowledge a shift in emphasis when they point out that Vindice of The Revenger's Tragedy seeks justice for his sister and his beloved, Gloriana, not his father (225). Other Jacobean plays also change focus to sibling revengers, with an accompanying

shift in the wrong being avenged (dishonour done to a sister), and emphasize the need to redeem one's honour, rather than to ease unbearable pain or grief.⁵ Simultaneously, the brother and sister, holding up loyalty to house rather than loyalty to state, challenge the authority of the husband and the rule of the state.

As early as the turn of the century, plays such as The Tragedy of Locrine (1591; 1595) and Samuel Brandon's The Virtuous Octavia (1598) were introducing the brother as a figure who mounted a legitimate attack on the authority of husband and king. From these plays through to Beaumont and Fletcher's The Maid's Tragedy (c. 1608-1611; 1619) and Philip Massinger's The Duke of Milan (1621-1623, 1623), brother and sister revengers use an older form of allegiance, to house, and a different conception of family, epitomized in their close blood ties as siblings, to challenge the authority and supremacy of both husband and state. Seeking to redeem the honour of their lineage, avenging brothers usurp the domestic authority of husband, asserting that blood ties are more important than legal bonds; in the public realm, they mount a subversive attack on the state, setting loyalty to house above that to state. In all four of these plays, the dramatists' emphasis on siblings marks a challenge to the period's growing focus on the nuclear family comprising husband, wife and children and establishes conflict between two differing constructions of family: one based on kinship ties and blood, the other based on the legal ceremony joining husband and wife.

Whether the brother stands as a parody of traditional authority figures, undermining the family, or mounts a legitimate challenge to the power of the husband, the growing focus on sibling relationships in Jacobean tragedy undermines the stability of the nuclear family. As well, in all of the plays mentioned above, the dramatists' interest in sibling relationships allows a different construction of femaleness, one in which women, as sisters, are not as constricted by social expectations to remain

obedient, meek and submissive. Instead, the female characters become important in their own right, and their ambiguous relationships with their brothers often allow them a chance to assert at least a limited autonomy by identifying themselves with their blood families rather than with their husbands or by questioning the tyrant authority of their brothers. Whether the sister allies herself with her brother to take action against her husband or rejects the controlling attempts of her sibling as an illegitimate abuse of power, she allows the dramatists simultaneously to reject and affirm patriarchal authority.

While siblings thus provide Jacobean dramatists with a means of presenting psychological, social, and gender conflict, by the early Caroline period, the focus on brother and sister has undergone a marked transition. In the plays The Maid's Revenge (licensed 1626; 1639) by James Shirley, and The Cruel Brother (licensed 1627; 1630) by William Davenant, the antagonistic relationship between siblings has become a convention, introduced automatically rather than explored in any depth. Further, in insisting that siblings turn their desire for revenge upon themselves, rather than upon the figures who caused their dishonour or unhappiness, both Shirley and Davenant defuse the potential subversiveness of the sibling revenger and use sibling strife as a metaphor for the subject's willingness to destroy himself (herself) rather than challenge the rule of father or king.

While brothers and sisters appear in a few late Elizabethan revenge tragedies, their relationship is not usually central to the plot. If a brother is present in the play, a woman is still typically seen as a daughter or wife rather than as a sister, while the male character is set out as a ruler, husband, or father. The early political tragedy Selimus (1592; 1594), a play of unknown authorship, contains siblings, but the relationship between the brother and sister is overshadowed by the male characters' interaction with their fathers and by the female characters' identification with their husbands. In

Selimus, the Machiavellian hero-villain rejects all family relationships as “meere fictions ... the foolish names, / Of father, mother, brother, and such like” (ll. 333-341), created as “policie” (l. 345) to check members of society. Throwing off these restraints with outrageous pleasure, he proceeds to kill anyone whom he sees as a threat to his security. The dramatist presents family members in a purely political context, as potential rivals to the throne, and uses their violent deaths only to emphasize Selimus' flamboyant viciousness.

In particular, the focus of the early revenge tragedies and the important family relationship is the tie between father and son. Henry Chettle's The Tragedy of Hoffman (c. 1602-03; 1631), for example, shows little interest in sibling relationships. The plot of the play, like that of Hamlet, centres on a number of father/son pairs: the two Hoffmans; Otho, the heir of his dead father; the Duke Ferdinand and his foolish son Jerome; the sons of the Duke of Saxony and their father; and the Duke of Austria and his child Lucibella. Enraged by the execution of his traitorous father, Hoffman murders one of the sons, dupes his victim's unsuspecting mother, and tricks another son into killing his father. His personal, private loyalty to his father finds an ironic expression through the destruction of other fathers and sons, as well as in his attack on the political rulers who thwarted his father's challenge to the state. The only sister of the play, Martha, is important to her brother the Duke of Prussia in a political context, providing him with an heir who unseats his half-witted son Jerome. When she enters the play, Chettle treats her solely as a mother, a woman of doubtful intelligence who is duped by Hoffman into acknowledging him as her son. The extreme of absolute loyalty to one's father is set against the other, unnatural extreme of son murdering father and subject slaying his superiors; the relationship between sister and brother is perceived as too insignificant to be entered into the equation.

Even when the plays contain a significant sibling presence, such as William Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus and Hamlet, the male and female characters are still viewed primarily in terms of the parent/child hierarchy. Consequently, female characters such as Lavinia and Ophelia are consistently set forward as daughters rather than sisters. Another, earlier revenge tragedy, Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy (1582-1592; 1592) hints at the importance that the antagonistic brother and sister will play in later Jacobean drama. The conflict between Bel-imperia and her Machiavellian brother, Lorenzo, has a striking intensity and foreshadows the violent antagonism shown between later royal siblings. Nonetheless, the focus of the work remains on the grief of Hieronimo at the loss of his son, while Bel-imperia is presented primarily in relation to her lovers and her would-be husband.

While most Tudor drama does not develop the image of disorder contained within brother-sister strife, one play, A Pretty Interlude called A Nice Wanton (1560), introduces many of the sibling tensions explored in Stuart drama and anticipates the later metaphoric and social significance of sibling antagonism. The play's overtly didactic purpose is to illustrate the proper up-bringing of children by focusing on the disaster, disorder, and unhappiness that result from a particular family's lack of discipline. Following domestic guidebooks, the play sets out the parents' responsibilities in raising their children; they must "get learning and qualities [for their children], thereby to maintain / An honest quiet life" (2: 163); teach them respect for family, God and king; and prevent them from following their natural inclination towards evil and vice. More strikingly, the play provides the earliest example of the three hostile siblings presided over by a weak mother acting as an image of an unstable, lawless, and chaotic family. Promising to describe "[t]hree branches of an ill tree: / The mother and her children three, / Two naught, and one godly" (2: 161), the play introduces the

unstable family structure exploited to even greater effect in both The Revenger's Tragedy and The White Devil.

Crucially, both the prologue and the play itself stress the mother's, not the father's, culpability in the downfall of the children, and the dramatist uses the absence of the father to help explain the deterioration of the family unit and the unruly lawlessness of the two siblings, Dalilah and Ismael. The allegorical contrast between the good sibling, Barnabas, and the two evil ones who embrace their degradation and ultimately meet a bad end introduces the basic pattern used in later plays. When a repentant Dalilah emerges at the conclusion, she faults both parents for over-indulgence, observing that "[m]y parents did tiddle me: they were to blame" (2: 173). Yet the play consistently directs responsibility for the children's conduct onto the mother. The prologue criticizes the mother's lack of severity, describing "two children brought up wantonly in play, / Whom the mother doth excuse, when she should chastise" (2: 163). Similarly, the allegorical character Worldly Shame blames the mother for the siblings' lawlessness, telling her that "[m]en will taunt you and mock you, for they say now / The cause of their death was even very you" (2: 180). Even the third, virtuous son cites his mother as the reason for his siblings' downfall. He tells her: "You saw they were given to idleness and play, / Would apply no learning, but live in outrage ... / Ye winked at their faults, and tiddled them alway" (2: 181).

By contrast, the father, though apparently alive, never appears in the play, and his absence seems to provide a partial explanation for the children's lawless lack of discipline. In a passage that shifts the play into the allegorical, the only father who will acknowledge the errant brother and sister for his own is Worldly Shame. Appearing in order to castigate the mother, Xantippe, for her failings as a parent, he taunts the woman with the shameful end of her two children, one dying as a prostitute,

the other punished as a thief. Briefly, he identifies the two as his: "Dalilah my daughter is dead of the pox, / And my son hang'th in chains" (2: 180). Deprived of a true father, they have only worldly shame and a mother to claim them. Thus, even in this early play, the family consisting solely of mother and children seems to signal, for Renaissance audiences, a household deprived of proper discipline; it results in children like Flamineo, who grows up to be a thief and murderer, and Vittoria, who becomes a shameless prostitute. While Cornelia of The White Devil may be more virtuous than Xantippe or Gratiana of The Revenger's Tragedy, she is no less weak and ineffectual. All three mothers are unable to guide and govern their children, unable to check their natural propensity towards sin, and unable to inspire the respect necessary to act as a basis for reverence of God and king.

This inability of the mother to impose order and decorum on her family and the resulting antagonism between siblings plays a notable part in the play. As the antithesis of God the father, benign yet stern parent to all Christian brothers and sisters, Xantippe represents a disastrous disruption of the traditional family, a disruption resulting in disorder and death. From the beginning of the play, the brother and sister are inadequately governed by their mother. When the two act together to beat, curse, and terrorize the other children, the mother does nothing, despite the complaints of another woman, Eulalia. When the virtuous second brother tries to take her place, he suffers from the lack of authority and power consistent with his position as sibling. In vain, he attempts to adopt the role of their absent father and to force his lawless siblings into some sort of semblance of respectful behaviour. Fruitlessly, he chastises them for loud, unruly misbehaviour: "Fye, brother, fye, and specially you, sister Dalilah, / Soberness becometh maids alway" (2: 164). Both siblings, however, rudely discount his advice. Dalilah's impudent insolence, coming as it does from

a female, is particularly shocking. "What, ye dolt, ye be ever in one song!" (2: 164) she responds to Barnabas' reprimand, and her rude words illustrate just how powerless he is to check her.

Clearly, responsibility for reprimanding and controlling the two lies with Xantippe, not Barnabas; she, also, should implement the discipline needed to check their propensity towards sin. By contrast, Barnabas, despite his gender and his obvious virtue, possesses no such authority over his siblings, not even his sister; the brother's attempts to stand in for his father meet with obvious failure. It is only later when Barnabas invokes God, their shared divine father, that he obtains any sort of influence over Dalilah. Stressing "God's fatherly goodness," (2:175), Barnabas sets up the divine in implicit contrast to his actual mother who has brought her children to shame.

When the two disruptive siblings re-enter the play as adults, they still relate to one another in a fashion which emphasizes their overturning of hierarchical respect and order; they jostle, fight, and exchange insults. In a blend of the naturalistic and the allegorical, the brother laughingly taunts Dalilah for having slept with Iniquity and appears quite indifferent to their tarnished family honour; she, in turn, gives as good as she receives. Ignoring their natural ties, she helps her companion to cheat her brother in a card game and then refuses to return the money. The situation dissolves into chaos and discord when her irate brother strikes her and Dalilah, just as quickly, vows to have her friends take vengeance. The mother's inability to discipline her family when they are wild children eventually results in more serious acts of social disorder; from terrorizing other children and refusing to go to school, the two progress to gambling and brawling amongst themselves. Thus the two hostile and antagonist siblings represent disorder at a number of different levels: insulting and fighting with one another, they destroy themselves; mocking each other, scorning their mother, and deriding their brother, they annihilate the bonds of the nuclear family of which they are a part; and turning to

prostitution, theft, and murder, they tear apart the fabric of society itself.

In A Nice Wanton, the violently antagonistic siblings and their weak mother create a self-destructive family unit whose violent instability brings disorder to both the individuals and society. Quarrelling and undisciplined, all four belong to a family without a father; his absence and replacement by the mother and a good brother deprives the family of order and stability. The hostile siblings of A Nice Wanton anticipate the disordered family of The Revenger's Tragedy and The White Devil in a particularly striking fashion. When scholars consider The Revenger's Tragedy (1606-1607, 1607), a work of disputed authorship,⁶ they tend to dismiss the short interchanges between Vindice and Castiza as immaterial to the plot as a whole. They concentrate almost exclusively on the play as a generic example of the revenge tragedy or analyse Vindice as a revenger.⁷ But, in ignoring the siblings' relationship and Vindice's place within the family circle, they overlook a significant shift in the revenge tragedy tradition itself, as well as a key dimension both to Vindice's characterization and to our understanding of him as a revenger. For, as we shall see with both Clermont of The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois and Melantius of The Maid's Tragedy, the dramatist envisions the revenger primarily as a sibling, a development stressed by the seventeenth-century editor who gave the play the alternate title of The Loyal Brother (Murray 202).⁸ Tourneur defines Vindice through his relationships with his faithful brother Hippolito and his chaste sister Castiza; he also indicates that he derives both his sense of identity and his security from his two siblings. Of all the characters in the play, Hippolito is the only one whom Vindice can trust and with whom he shares his plans, while Castiza is his only living connection to virtue and goodness. While the memory of his poisoned beloved may make him go to the court in the first place, Gloriana's murder and his father's abuse at the court make little dramatic impact on the audience. It is Lussurioso's command that Vindice

pander his sister which gives the audience immediate proof of the court's diabolical corruption and which characterizes the nature of the present wrong offered to Vindice. Tourneur figures the potential disgrace and ruin with which the court threatens Vindice in terms of his role as a brother.

Further, in focusing on siblings, particularly brother and sister, rather than on the father-son pairing so popular in earlier revenge tragedy or the husband and wife of domestic drama, Tourneur implicitly rejects the relationships which are supposed to mirror in the private realm the authoritative relationship between the king and subject in the public. By imagining Vindice as a brother, Tourneur makes him stand outside conventional social definitions, neither restrained by his father⁹ nor established in the family as a father and husband in his own right. This leaves him particularly suited for adopting the ambivalent and anarchic role of the revenger, the "isolated and confused" figure (Halletts 122) whose desire to avenge private wrongs leads him to usurp both the state's authority and God's divine justice.¹⁰ For Gloriana's death has the effect of confining Vindice forever to the margins of social identity, depriving him of the opportunity to become a husband and father as surely as the corrupt court denies him the chance to advance. Instead, he is frozen outside society, the quintessential revenger whose disintegrating self-identity is underlined by his nebulous place in the social structure¹¹ and whose usurpation of the state's right to justice in favour of personal vengeance mirrors the usurped father role he plays within his family, as he seeks to corrupt rather than preserve its virtue.

Vindice's attempts to seduce Castiza also provide Tourneur with a powerful metaphor with which to depict the man's violent assault on himself, his identity, and on his family. In their studies of Vindice as the revenger, most critics agree that Vindice is gradually transformed into a figure of evil as he embraces his revenge (Murray, A Study of Cyril Tourneur 209). They concentrate their

debate on the degree and details of his corruption and loss of self-identity.¹² Few, however, consider how closely entwined his relationship with his sister is to his deliberate and wanton destruction of his own goodness. Most obviously, his two conflicting roles, as would-be pimp to his sister and as her protector, reveal the split in Vindice/Piato's self, the struggle between virtue and vice, between being committed to family honour and tarnishing it for monetary gain. But because the scene involves his sister, it does more than just represent his self-division (Murray, A Study of Cyril Tourneur 237). When he decides that he will carry out his new master's request and attempt to corrupt his family, his decision clearly reveals his willingness to attack and destroy himself. In order to carry out the seduction successfully, he must "[f]orget my nature; / As if no part about me were kin to 'em" (I.iii 184-5) and alienate himself from the very connections that give him his identity. That he then focuses the brunt of his assault on his sister ironically reinforces the self-destructiveness of his role as Lussurioso's servant, for she is a part of his being. As his sibling, she is his closest relation and the one most like himself; and yet, as a woman, she, unlike Hippolito, can also appear as his opposite. She stands as the good to his evil and his inverted mirror image, a reflection of what he may once have been and the opposite of what he has become. Thus she, as well as Piato, acts as a symbolical representation of the fragmentation of Vindice's own self, but she, more strikingly, crystallizes the dramatist's sense that Vindice wishes to destroy all that is good in himself. As he senselessly tries to corrupt this image of his own inner goodness, he reveals what happens when the self, as Scott McMillin says, has "become its own enemy" ("Acting and Violence" 280) and is at violent war with itself. More than any other element of the play, the assault on Castiza provides a dramatic depiction of the way the revenger violently divorces himself from the virtuous aspects of himself.

The conflict between the disguised vicious brother and his virtuous sister also allows Tourneur

to rework the allegorical conflict between good and evil in a particularly effective way. When he attempts to tempt Castiza, Vindice clearly functions as a vice figure (Hyland 261), and numerous critics have commented on the play's debt to the morality tradition.¹³ Schuman observes that the play contains evident remnants "of the medieval English morality plays, in which allegorical personifications of vices and virtues battled for the soul of an Everyman" (*Cyril Tourneur* 81-82). Locating this conflict between two siblings is a particularly interesting way of naturalizing the morality struggle between good and evil. It splits virtue and vice off into separate figures, a characteristic consistent with the allegorical tradition. Yet the sibling link simultaneously unifies the two, implying that they are warring parts of the same being. Further, the conflicting gender of the siblings deepens the allegorical nature of the scene, suggesting the female soul under siege fending off its male corrupters. Thus, in depicting Vindice's attempts to destroy his sister, Tourneur has an image of unsettling potency, one which contains within itself an image of the wilful attack on self, on family, and on the pure soul.

Tourneur also stresses the ambiguous nature of Vindice's relationship with his sister and the ambivalence in his attitude towards her. Disguised as the loathsome pandar Piato, Vindice embodies the two opposing ways of presenting the brother in Renaissance tragedy. On the one hand, he clearly acts as the jealous protector of his sister's and family's honour and justifies his actions by seeing them as a legitimate test of his sister's virtue. It is also, presumably, his desire to avenge the insult offered to his family honour that prompts him to murder the Duke's heir. But, as a number of critics have pointed out,¹⁴ he carries out his orders to seduce her with rather too much zeal and is overly enthusiastic in describing the pleasures of the court. At first professing revulsion for his task, he soon loses himself in his role, becoming even more ravished by his picture of court luxury than his weak

mother is. A part of him wants her to succumb not just because of his cynical view of women and because he has been persuaded by his own rhetoric, but because the riches and prestige he describes have a deadly fascination, both enticing and revolting him. His attempted temptation of Castiza, then, is in no way a staged test; it is a real attempt to corrupt her, as well as a deadly attack on the honour of his house which reveals the extent to which he has become a perversion, rather than a replacement, of his family's father. Seeing his sister as disposable property, he betrays his ambivalence towards familial responsibilities. Irresistibly tempted to prostitute her, he is torn between self-interest and loyalty to his family honour. The fact that he acts as both pandar and revenger also indicates the underlying tie between these two extremes, in that both roles are based on his belief that his sister's chastity is his responsibility and property.

Castiza, however, challenges Vindice's conception of her, and her resistance of both her mother's and her brother's temptations show her considerable independence. Usually, critics tend to lump Castiza together with Gloriana as a symbol of perfect virtue, and they consider her only as she influences her brother's frame of mind.¹⁵ But seen in the role of sister, she, like other female siblings, rejects male power and asserts her own sense of identity at the expense of her brother's authority. When she proves her virtue by resisting Vindice's seduction, she also confirms his abuse of patriarchal power and undercuts his right to take over the rule of the family from their father. Hers is not a radical defiance of traditional authority, however, for she resists not father or husband but a brother whom the dramatist presents as an aberrant authority figure, one willing to jeopardize the very family honour that he is supposed to protect and from which he derives his position. His improper behaviour helps to link the brother's power to the tyrannical abuse of authority that is justly defied and allows Castiza to turn to her own integrity and guide herself without danger of censure.

Ultimately, both he and his mother are images of the disturbing absence of authority in the play, mirroring in miniature the destructive state of affairs at the public level. Gratiana, like Xantippe, cannot function as an adequate guiding head of the family, while Vindice, because of Gloriana's murder, remains trapped in his position as sibling and son, unable to wield lawful authority. Both improperly exert their influence over Castiza and thus justify her dependence on herself, rather than on their instruction.

The quarrelling siblings of A Nice Wanton, uncontrolled by their weak and ineffectual mother, re-appear as an image of particular potency in The White Devil (1609-1612; 1612). Even more strikingly than in The Revenger's Tragedy, they clearly stand as a symbol of the loss of authority, order, and stability occasioned by the absence of the father and his replacement by the mother and/or the good brother who is an inadequate substitute for his dead or missing father.¹⁶ The presence of Cornelia, futilely struggling to assert some sort of moral guidance over her wayward children, at once indicates a family deprived of strong leadership and authority. In vain, Cornelia seeks to intimidate her children into moral behaviour; in vain, she strives to control their quarrelling, strife, and bitter violence. As a woman and a mother, she cannot bring order or discipline to her family, and like Xantippe of A Nice Wanton who insanely seeks comfort in thoughts of suicide, she goes mad: not just because of the death of Marcello, but because she cannot bear the sight of her own failure, evinced in her whore-daughter, her murderer son, and her whole family's shame and disgrace.¹⁷

Critics have offered a range of interpretations of both the play¹⁸ and of Flamineo.¹⁹ In studying Vittoria herself, scholars often describe her as discontinuous: a character comprised of a series of roles,²⁰ all of which reveal her essential superficiality, her lack of a whole self. Then, depending on their theoretical approach, they variously claim that this sequence of shifting identities

betrays the essence of the white devil, falseness;²¹ criticises the social constructions imposed on women by their society;²² or indicates her lack of a fixed, essential self.²³ However unstable her nature, Vittoria has one constant in her personality: her relationship with her immediate blood family, comprising her mother and her brothers. Thus, while we see her skilfully adopt a succession of usually false selves--obedient, loving wife to Camillo, coy lover to Brachiano, unjustly oppressed widow, angrily repentant sinner, and newly bereaved wife--we simultaneously view her through the eyes of Flamineo her brother. He manipulates the reconciliation between Camillo and Vittoria; he comments on the clandestine meeting between the Duke and his sister; he watches the trial, disguising his disgrace behind a mask of melancholy and responding with a surprising anger when his sister is termed a whore; he oversees the rapprochement of the Duke and Vittoria in the house of the Convertites; and, most important, he ultimately views her as the symbol of his own degradation which he attempts to destroy. Vittoria's essence--her only consistent inner self--lies within her relationship with Flamineo; similarly, he defines himself solely as a brother.²⁴

As well, these quarrelling siblings invert the Renaissance ideal of family and become images of anarchy, of a chaotic contention between equals without a sovereign to bring them to order. In vain, Marcello, like Barnabas before him, struggles to force his siblings onto the path of virtue, only to have his authority derided and overthrown; his lack of legitimate position is further emphasized by the fact that he is the younger son. Thus, the play develops the disordered family of A Nice Wanton and casts the antagonistic sibling-mother unit as a perversion of the ideal domestic household. Flamineo, as a diabolical brother, actively parodies both the roles of father and husband,²⁵ while his sister Vittoria acts as the site of this perversion, the focus of Flamineo's attack on the defining structures of the self, the family and society. His actions then permit Webster to create his

sense of a society turned upside down,²⁶ while simultaneously casting Flamineo, like Vindice, as a man whose social isolation and confused sense of identity is contained within his role as brother. As a brother he tries to define himself through his diabolical mimicry of the established roles of father and husband but only enacts a parody which unsettles these social institutions while confirming his own lack of self.

In the disturbed family, ordered so ineffectually by the powerless Cornelia, Flamineo clearly enacts an attack on his own father, perverting rather than maintaining the father's role as protector of the family. Unable to control him, Cornelia helplessly reflects on the shame he brings to his whole family "My son the pander: now I find our house / Sinking to ruin" (I.ii.207-208). Flamineo himself refers to his father with contempt and disowns his mother, showing no interest in maintaining family honour or pride in his birth. He reveals his early contempt for society's idealisation of honourable fatherhood when he praises prostitutes: "Nature is very pitiful to whores / To give them but few children, yet those children / Plurality of fathers; they are sure / They shall not want" (I.ii.325-328). His words prefigure his attack on the family to which he stands as a surrogate father. Later, Marcello particularly underlines the diabolical role which Flamineo plays in the destruction of his blood family as a perversion, rather than a replacement, of their father. Addressing his mother, the younger sibling relates that his older brother broke their father's crucifix as a child: "I have heard you say, giving my brother suck, / He took the crucifix between his hands, / And broke a limb off" (V.ii.11-13). He has, from the very beginning, stood in opposition to both their blood father and their divine Father.

In the same way, Flamineo later proceeds to destroy his blood family and siblings. Rather than preserving his sister's marriage, he sets about pandering her, tainting their family honour; rather than aiding Marcello, he turns on and destroys him. Notably, he prefixes his murder of Marcello with

slander to the siblings' parents. Implying their father to be a cuckold, his mother a whore, he forces Marcello to defend his own and his maligned father's honour; he also detaches himself from Marcello, suggesting that they do not share the same father. The younger brother's response, "Those words I'll make thee answer / With thy heart blood" (V.i.203-204), indicates the way in which Flamineo is deliberately attacking their family, provoking his brother to shed the blood that both, as siblings, share. In A Nice Wanton, Barnabas cannot replace their father and watches in horror as his brother and sister run wild; but, as an adult, he finally re-establishes connection with Dalilah as a fellow Christian, emphasizing that both are children of God. Flamineo, however, renounces both divine and human fathers. He attacks himself and his father's other two children; he also isolates himself from the Christian family, seeing himself as unconnected to others, separate, different, with no ties to the human race. His alienation, reflected by his vow to "at myself ... begin and end" (V.vi.255), is even more marked than Vindice's and even more specifically located within his position as brother; his sense of isolation expresses itself as he proceeds diabolically to undercut his father and to attack and destroy his siblings.²⁷

Along with his satanic mockery of fatherhood, Flamineo also stands--again in relationship to his sister--as an inverted perversion of the figure of the husband. Unlike the brothers of Locrine and Octavia who, as we shall see, act in direct rivalry to their sisters' wandering husbands, Flamineo carries out a more insidious, but equally destructive attack on the husband's position. Octavio's and Thrasimachus' plea for the loyalty of their sisters is in some senses legitimate: they cast out their sisters' husbands and usurp their places, and yet their actions are based on the ties of blood which act as a powerful and legitimate counter-force to the legal ties of two arranged marriages. Flamineo, by contrast, challenges his sister's two husbands because he has never truly relinquished Vittoria and

continues to view her as his, rather than her two husbands' property. In this way, he mounts a more unsettling and basic challenge to their rights, refusing to relinquish this potentially valuable resource to its proper owner; as a pandar, he practises what Lois Bueler "terms incest at one remove" (138). Thus his position as pandering brother undercuts the rights of the husband in a fundamental fashion, as he competes, particularly with Camillo, for control over Vittoria as a sexual commodity.

In her sociological study of incest, Vikki Bell argues that incest more often reflects a desire to maintain control and power over female members of the family rather than sexual desire itself (3-11), and her comments offer particular insight into Flamineo's attempts to pander his sister. Though Vittoria has a husband, the brother continues to attempt to control his sister, because he still, like Vindice, views her as family property. In his constant manipulation and surveillance of his sister and in his obsessive care that no one but he should profit from her, he crystallizes the role of jealous, spying brother, who in many ways parallels the jealous husband of domestic tragedies. Just as the jealous husband worries that his wife will share what belongs to him with enterprising interlopers, so the brother is jealous at the thought of losing his sister as a sexual resource: jealous of the husband but more particularly of sharing the power associated with her sexuality. Viewing her as his "path ... to ... preferment" (1.ii.318-319), Flamineo clearly appropriates the husband's right to control his wife's body from the hapless Camillo and tries to use her for himself. With Vittoria's compliance, he succeeds in keeping Camillo from her bedchamber so that she may meet with Brachiano, a deception for which he expects to be richly rewarded and which represents a clear arrogation of the husband's rights for himself. Again, in his later murder of Camillo, he, more obviously, steals the man's rights to Vittoria, so that he may market her to Brachiano. Even when Vittoria undergoes a second widowhood, he still insists that she belongs exclusively to him; he feels that he has the right to

everything she owns, as though she has never been wed, widowed, or separated from him or his family. In refusing to relinquish control over his sister's sexuality and in figuratively usurping the position of her husband, Flamineo deconstructs traditional domestic ties and reveals that their true basis rests in the sexual control of women. Instead of upholding the romanticized love between husband and wife, Flamineo reduces his sister to a sexual commodity, for which he competes with her lawful husband.

Flamineo's relationship with his sister also allows for a metaphoric exploration of self-destruction similar to The Revenger's Tragedy. The partly allegorical nature of the play has been widely commented on by critics, particularly in explanations of Marcello's sudden, unexpected, and violent conflict with his elder brother.²⁸ But both siblings, not just Marcello, represent parts of Flamineo's own self: their continuing antagonism represents the division within Flamineo's own soul, as he struggles with and destroys these other parts of himself.²⁹ His literal attack on his family represents his assault on the structure that gives him his identity, just as it symbolically represents his own self-division, his wilful desire, so similar to Vindice's, to destroy the good within himself.³⁰ When he murders Marcello, he is senselessly murdering a "half of [his]self" (V.ii.56), as well as sundering his connection both to the family that gives him his identity and the Christian community in which he dwells. He will, as he wishes, at himself "begin and end" (V.vi.255).³¹

Flamineo's relationship with Vittoria serves a similar allegorical purpose, for brother and sister embody different parts of the same character. The allegorical dimensions of her presentation as a figure of hypocrisy have often been commented on but have seldom been discussed in terms of her family relationship with her brother.³² If, however, we see Vittoria, like the unlucky Marcello, as a symbolic aspect of a part of Flamineo's being, his attitude towards her becomes more comprehensible.

In the same way that Castiza represents all that is good within her brother Vindice--in some senses even his divine (female) soul, under attack by his human brutishness--Vittoria stands for the reverse: the influence of worldly riches and pride on her unhappy brother, an externalized representation of the greed for material possessions and position which corrupts him. Placing this conflict within siblings is particularly suited to the allegorical tradition in which splintered parts of the human soul contend with each other. Their brother-sister connection suggests their union as warring parts of the same being, the self shattered, divided, and torn by strife, assaulted by a variety of sinful desires. A partially allegorical understanding of Vittoria's relation with her brother then explains Flamineo's attitude towards his sister at the end of the play.³³

After seeing Cornelia insane and viewing the ghost of Brachiano, Flamineo proceeds to blame Vittoria for all the grief, the horror, and the guilt that assail him:

This is beyond melancholy I do dare my fate
 To do its worst. Now to my sister's lodging,
 And sum up all these horrors; the disgrace
 The Prince threw on me; next the piteous sight
 Of my dead brother; and my mother's dotage;
 And last this terrible vision. All these
 Shall with Vittoria's bounty turn to good,
 Or I will drown this weapon in her blood. (V.iv.139-146)

Since he has murdered Marcello on his own initiative and can be held primarily responsible for his mother's insanity, his desire to take revenge on Vittoria for these catastrophes is incomprehensible unless we understand his feelings towards Vittoria as a response to one aspect of himself. He sees

her as an allegorical image of corruption and hypocrisy--the white devil--but also of his own surrender to material wealth and ambition, the part of his being that has sold himself to riches. Thus, in attacking and blaming her for things for which he is actually responsible, he is attacking that part of himself which has surrendered to the corruption which she represents. By the end of the play, he is so filled with bitterness and despair, and so self-divided, that he hardly gives Vittoria a chance to make his suffering good with her bounty. His true intent, as his increasingly frantic behaviour makes clear, is to kill her, as he had killed Marcello, and thus to rid himself of this part of his being whose evil brings him as much pain as his brother's virtue. So possessed is he by his desire to slay this image of his shame and damnation, to take, in effect, revenge upon himself, that he ends by begging his executioners to allow him to murder her. "You shall not take justice from forth my hands; / O let me kill her" (V.vi.172-73), he pleads, more concerned that they will deprive him of this opportunity than frightened by the prospect of his own death.

Thus Flamineo's two siblings serve as projections of parts of himself, good and bad, and indicate his self-division. Marcello represents the more noble impulses of his own soul, constantly derided and finally, violently, wantonly rejected when he runs his brother through with the sword. Vittoria, the other "part of his being," becomes the receptacle of his own feelings of self-contempt and self-hatred. This is particularly evident in the perplexing ambivalence which he, even more than Vindice, feels as he panders Vittoria. The one brother justifies his temptation as a test of virtue, the other embarks on his sister's prostitution with an over-zealous eagerness that only partly conceals the discomfort and shame he feels at his role. Far from being as cynically pragmatic as he appears when he first watches Brachiano and Vittoria together, his pandering reveals his inner conflict and his gradual self-destruction. Before the trial, he enters jokingly, putting on a "feigned garb of mirth / To

gull suspicion" (III.i.30-31), but he is soon defending his actions to his younger brother with a revealing and passionate bitterness. Although he may proceed to adopt a "mad humour for the disgrace of my sister" (III.ii.303), his violent response to Ludovico's comment that "[y]our sister is a damnable whore" (III.iii.107) reveals a genuine anger. Most revealing, he reacts with a quite unexpected fury when Brachiano asks: "Where's this whore?" (IV.ii. 43). "That--? what do you call her?" (IV.ii.44), he responds, and he forgets his desire for gain long enough to deny Brachiano access to his sister. When Brachiano proceeds to dismiss him as well, with the contemptuous command, "[i]n you pander!" (IV.ii.48), he is so angered that he forgets his position long enough to angrily challenge his Duke.

For all Flamineo's apparent eagerness, then, to market his sister for the highest price, his role as pandar serves a purpose remarkably similar to Vindice's: it reveals his inner self-division and his wilful attack on his sense of honour and the identity that he derives from his family.³⁴ Ultimately, he is as reluctant a pandar as Vindice; the necessity of appearing to welcome his disgrace and to be indifferent to the dishonour being imposed on himself and his family only adds to his bitterness. This makes his anger at Brachiano's words all the sharper, for the Duke not only expects him to prostitute his sister--and so betray and destroy himself--he expects him to do it cheerfully, to hide his shame behind the hollow laughter of his "feigned garb of mirth." Thus his famous description of himself as he reflects upon his insane mother, his painful awareness that "sometimes, when my face was full of smiles / [I] Have felt the maze of conscience in my breast. / Oft gay and honour'd robes those tortures try, / We think cag'd birds sing, when indeed they cry" (V.iv.117-120), more accurately captures the ambivalence that underlies his treatment of his sister. The whole play focuses his gradual self-disintegration and alienation from society within the demeaning and dishonourable act of pimping

Vittoria. The more difficult it becomes for him to cope with his internal confusion, the more bitter becomes his hostility towards her and the more he wishes to destroy this part of himself. She is the image of his shame, both literally and as a metaphoric representation of his internal surrender to greed and evil; killing her, he seeks to obliterate this representation of his own self-disgrace.

For Webster, Flamineo's disintegrating self-identity is concentrated within his role as a brother and in his deliberate dishonouring of his siblings, which represents a betrayal of himself. While not the clear-cut revenger that Vindice is, Flamineo, like Ferdinand, nonetheless seeks revenge; he expresses his feelings of self-hate and confusion by trying to take revenge on a part of himself, the part represented by his sister. By casting Flamineo as a brother, Webster thus has a powerful symbolic means of presenting his character's self-division and psychic disorder: at the level of the individual, as he attacks these symbolic parts of himself; at the level of the family, as he destroys the only persons to whom he is intimately connected; and in society as a whole, as he rejects his own "kind," the brethren of Christendom.³⁵ At the same time, his loss of identity and the confusion that accompanies the breakdown of his world's values becomes linked to his position as a brother in a more realistic, social sense. As a brother, he, like Vindice, has no fixed place within his society, none of the socially sanctioned identity of the husband or father. Engaged in an antagonistic and violent struggle with his sister, he is not only warring with an aspect of himself but also inverting the roles of his society as he parodies the behaviour of both husband and father.

If Webster's presentation of the warring, self-destroying siblings invokes a sense of Flamineo's loss of identity and his confusion in a world turned upside down, Webster also offers a different construction of femaleness through his presentation of the sister.³⁶ While Vittoria assumes a variety of shifting roles to suit her situation and to advance herself, we simultaneously and continually view

her in relationship to her brother and her mother. This is in itself interesting, for it indicates that dramatists, despite the rising emphasis placed on the domestic relationship between husband, wife, and children as the primary construction of family, were still viewing blood ties between grown siblings and parents as crucial to a character's identity.³⁷ Towards her immediate family members, Vittoria appears more vulnerable and less able to adopt a persuasive mask to hide her designs. She appears genuinely frightened by her mother's curse, as Layman observes (347), and brother and mother are the two who comment on her true motivations. They are able to see her inner essence, rather than the dazzling front she presents to the world.

More important, the sibling relationship for Vittoria, as well as for her brother, is one which Webster constructs in openly antagonistic terms. The savagery that characterizes their relationship seems to come because the hierarchy between brother and sister, unlike that between husband and wife, is ambiguous and open to re-definition. As the wife to Camillo, Vittoria must at least pretend to obedience and then grief; as the prosecuted widow, she must woo her audience with wit and charm and attempt to prove that she did not cuckold or betray her husband; as Brachiano's lover, she must charm. Although insincere, her behaviour in all of these cases is defined by her society's expectations. In order to control these men with so much socially sanctioned power over her, she must depend on deception and manipulation to undermine their position.

Her relationship with her brother, however, ignores the period's hierarchy of gender. Vittoria perceives herself, clearly, to be the equal of the brother; their similarity, as well as their equality, locks them in a destructive struggle.³⁸ There is no role-playing with Flamineo until the very end of the work precisely because she perceives herself to be his equal. No less powerful than he, she does not have to worry about flattering or deceiving him.³⁹ Instead, she openly discounts him and belittles his

authority, battling him with a frank hostility. Again, when we see her through Flamineo's eyes she appears quite different from the way she presents herself to the world, not, as feminist critics charge, because we are viewing her through the eyes of an inveterate and melancholy misogynist,⁴⁰ but because she responds differently to Flamineo than she does to the other male characters. He is the one person for whom she does not pretend, who is both not worth the effort of a performance and whom she cannot deceive anyway. Instead of being ingratiating, or pretending to a show of virtue, she carelessly reveals to her brother the ugliness that lies beneath her brilliant surface. As reflections of the same self and the same greedy, ruthless desire for wealth, prestige, and power, they cannot hide their true natures from one another and stand exposed, in both cases, to the other's contempt. This casts them at once as images of one another's destruction, of the warring, self-divided self. In their final confrontation they each characterize the other as a devil, reflecting how they have destroyed and corrupted one another: Flamineo, by acting as her pimp, Vittoria by tempting him with the promise of material wealth.

Setting Vittoria in conflict with her brother also indicates the way in which the sibling relationship increases her power, while diminishing Flamineo's authority and confirming the weakness and powerlessness contained within the role of brother. Like Barnabas and even Marcello, Webster presents Flamineo as having no lawful authority over his sister. Cornelia, her mother, can and does shame her; Flamineo's attempts to control her, however, are presented as a travesty of proper masculine authority and dissolve into strife and violence. While initially helping her, so that they may both become wealthy, Flamineo unwittingly destroys the very family ties and the male hierarchy that give him power over her. When Vittoria becomes rich through Brachiano's gift, gaining "the whole state of the dukedom . . . till the Prince arrive / At mature age" (V.iii.77-79), he cannot profit from her

advancement, for he has freed her from the necessity of obeying him and made himself an outcast from their family. When he is no longer useful to her, Vittoria dismisses him with a contempt similar to Dalilah's for both brothers. She treats him with scorn in the House of the Convertites, her words, "Hence you pander" (IV.ii.132), underlining her contempt. The role he played in prostituting her deprives him of his authority. Later, she again uses his betrayal of their family to justify her own defiance of him. After terming him villain, she taunts him with the murder of their brother, refusing to give him anything but "that portion ... and no other / Which Cain groan'd under having slain his brother" (V.vi.13-14). Besides being mirror images of one another in greed and ruthlessness, their hostility is so savage because there is no authority left in the relationship; Flamineo has no means of making her acknowledge his superior position nor, having attacked their family, any claim to her as a kinsman. Similarly, she rejects him as completely as he has rejected the rest of their family and the rest of the world.

If the siblings of both The Revenger's Tragedy and The White Devil suggest a self and a family at war with itself, Beaumont and Fletcher's The Maid's Tragedy (c. 1608-11; 1619) and Philip Massinger's The Duke of Milan (1621-1623; 1624) treat brother and sister in a different fashion. In these two plays, brother and sister mount a particularly effective and subversive challenge to the political power that forbids their revenge. Rather than being tormented by an unbearable personal wrong, driven, like Hieronimo, to take revenge by a "madness of inordinate passion" (Halletts 60), the sibling revengers of the two later plays focus obsessively on the honour of their "house" and implicitly challenge the authority of both husband and state.

Historians of the period provide particular insight into the subversive potential of the brother

avengers of both The Maid's Tragedy and The Duke of Milan; their studies suggest the way in which playwrights such as Beaumont, Fletcher and Massinger, as well as the authors of the earlier plays Locrine (1591; 1595), Octavia (1598) and The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois (c. 1601-1612; 1613), draw on an earlier construction of family to challenge the absolute authority of king over subjects and husband over wife. In particular, their analyses indicate that loyalty to "house" was perceived as a threat to a centralized monarchy, a threat at least partially dissipated by elevating marital ties above the blood ties of lineage families. Thus, the brothers of Locrine, Octavia, The Maid's Tragedy, and The Duke of Milan, who stand as rivals to both rulers and their sisters' husbands (or, in the case of The Duke of Milan, sister's beloved), are particularly well-positioned to undermine domestic and political absolutism.

Historians argue that society was undergoing a transition between two differing conceptions of family: from the extended family to a nuclear unit in which the authority of the father mirrored the absolute authority of the monarch.⁴¹ An "Open Lineage Family," argues Lawrence Stone, was marked by "its members' sense of loyalty to ancestors and to living kin" (Stone, The Family 4); one's lineage consisted of one's "relatives by blood or marriage, dead, living, and yet to be born, who collectively form a 'house'" (Stone, The Family 29). Placing emphasis on the ties of kinship, a house "[gave] very low priority to the short-term quest for psychological or emotional gratification by the individual, and very high priority to the long-term economic and patronage interests of the lineage as a whole" (Stone, The Family 86). More important, loyalty to lineage, to one's lord, and to personal honour all took precedent over loyalty to one's immediate family and to the state (Stone, The Family 90).

In the later Tudor period, however, what Stone terms the "Restricted Patriarchal Nuclear

Family" began to replace the "Open Lineage family" and "loyalty became increasingly focused inward on the conjugal core and outward on the state rather than on kin relatives by blood or marriage" (The Family 124). He details the way in which the Tudors gradually established the absolute authority of the monarchy by destroying lineage-based loyalties and breaking up the great families of north and northwestern England, families such as the Percies, Stanleys, Cliffords, and Nevilles who acted outside the law and stood in opposition to Tudor government, authority, and power (Stone, The Crisis 228-229). While it was easy to contain lower-class disorder, controlling these powerful noblemen was far more difficult (Stone, The Crisis 233), a slow and gradual process whereby "the Tudors taught the lesson that there was a higher authority whose will could in the last resort override that of even the greatest magnates in the realm" (Stone, The Crisis 237). As Elizabeth progressively discouraged tenants' and local gentry's loyalty to surnames rather than state (Stone, The Crisis 251-253), she was able to establish the crown's power over these outlying and previously lawless areas (The Crisis 257). The great nobles were attainted (Stone, The Crisis 265) or replaced by less powerful men who owed their advancement to the court (Stone, The Crisis 256-257) and the tenants turned towards the central government rather than their local magnate (Stone, The Crisis 264).

Similarly, Mervyn James argues that between 1570-1640 England changed from being a lineage society, in which large groups of people--relatives, servants, and followers--were united in group loyalty to their noble house, headed by one family, to being a "civil society" (187). In his focused study of the Durham area, James argues that it was the rebellion of 1569 which gave Elizabeth the opportunity to dissipate the power of the great lineage families of the north. He describes the way in which personal loyalty to the old Northern families, such as the Nevilles, gradually disintegrated, particularly after the defeat of the Neville led rebellion in 1569. As lineage

society, which was built on "the need to assert and maintain family 'honour' ... that the lineage should enjoy a wealth, dignity, and authority commensurate to its inherited status and right" (James 184), collapsed, it was replaced by "a gentry society made up of an association of nuclear families, a 'civil society' of patriarchal family heads ... whose members ... were equal in status before the law" (James 187).

Again, Ralph Houlbrooke links continuingly strong kinship ties to the lawless areas of the marches where the state was striving to establish its authority (50-51); the extended families of great nobles such as the Percies and Nevilles in the north with their "surname loyalty" (Houlbrooke 50-51) conflict with the Tudors' attempts to establish the absolute, divine authority of the monarch, with its accompanying corollary of the nuclear family, in which the father rules not an extended household of kin, retainers, and servants, but acts as an absolute sovereign over wife and children, a small inward-looking household (James 27).

Changing attitudes towards family, both James and Stone suggest, go hand in hand with changing attitudes towards kingship, the decline in kinship and loyalty to one's house (which threatened the centralized power of the king) replaced by increased loyalty to the monarchy and one's wife and children. The increasing importance of the nuclear family, then, with its strong emphasis on close ties between husband, wife and children does not just result from the Protestant sanctification of marriage, as critics like Mary Beth Rose argue, but from the growing centralization and power of the state (Stone, The Family 135). One of the principal reasons for reinforcing the father and husband's authority was to reinforce, as well, the rising absolutism of the monarchy (Stone, The Family 135) and to diminish loyalty to the house (The Family 134-135). The idealization of marital love served a practical purpose: it was an effective way of detaching the couple from their parents

and redirecting their allegiance from family to each other (Stone, The Family 138). As well, the state encouraged patriarchy within families because it helped increase loyalty to absolutism and to the monarchy, submission to king as the father of his people (Stone, The Family 152).

A challenge to the emerging absolute power of both monarch and husband comes in two Elizabethan plays, Robert Greene's Lochrine (1591; 1595)⁴² and Samuel Brandon's The Tragi-Comedy the Virtuous Octavia (1598); both texts centre the conflict between the demands of the "house" and the nuclear family upon the brother-sister relationship. Casting the brother in direct rivalry with both his sister's husband and with his king, the plays explore the struggle between two different conceptions of family and of kingship and anticipate the tension of Beaumont and Fletcher's The Maid's Tragedy. Like Selimus, Lochrine begins by foregrounding the political dynamics between the male figures. Aided by a variety of family members, particularly his uncle Corineus, Lochrine gains control of the throne and acknowledges the importance of maintaining strong kinship ties by marrying his cousin, Guendoline. Clearly, his sovereignty is dependent on the support of his extended family, and as long as he listens to the advice of his uncle, Lochrine rules successfully.

When Corineus dies, however, the king advances his mistress and puts away his lawful wife, the daughter of Corineus and the sister of his loyal cousin, Thrasimachus. In response, Thrasimachus rebels against his king, rejecting Lochrine's attempts to create himself as an absolute ruler and to place himself above his family. Simultaneously, in winning his sister over to revolt against her husband Thrasimachus undermines the obedience that, according to Renaissance doctrine, the wife owes her husband. His relationship with his sister, based on blood ties and kinship, thus provides a focal point for challenging the emerging concepts of family and state in which the absolute authority of king over subjects is replicated in the domestic authority of husband over wife. Brother and sister, two

members of the extended family which has brought the king to power in the first place, succeed in defeating Locrine as both king and husband.

Initially, Guendoline appears important only to strengthen the alliance and loyalty between kin. When she is about to be married off to Locrine, she acts as the perfect daughter and wife: murmuring a few meek words, she dutifully weds her cousin and only re-appears briefly to mourn the death of one of her brothers-in-law. When she expresses her emotions, it is as the loyal and obedient wife of domestic theory that Greene presents her. She takes little notice of her brother, and the only time that she gives vent to any strong feelings is in her anger towards Estrild, the woman who has replaced her in her husband's affections. Thrasimachus is also seen at first only in relation to his father and to his sovereign, unquestioningly advancing the power of their whole family.

After Corineus dies and Guendoline is abandoned by the king, a new dynamic comes to the play. Rebelling against their sovereign, brother and sister conspire to take revenge for their slighted family honour. As well, Guendoline's deliberate decision to define herself as a sister liberates her from her previously confining role as loyal wife. As a wife, she must endure any indignity, even abandonment. When she proceeds to view herself as a sister, she gains a powerful incentive to challenge her husband: the inherited blood that makes avenging the slight to her family's honour as important to her as to Thrasimachus and as great an obligation. Her change in outlook is particularly evident in the means that Thrasimachus uses to convince Guendoline to rebel against her disloyal husband. At first unsuccessful in his persuasion, he wins her over by invoking their filial obligation to their father:

Madame, if not your proper iniuries,

Nor my exile, can move you to revenge,

Thinke on our father Corineus words,

His words to us stands alwaies for a lawe. (1945-48)

He convinces Guendoline that loyalty to their father must take precedence over every other social tie and provides her with a means of justifying her defiance of her husband.

While Greene, then, does little with the actual relationship between the two siblings, he recognises that the position of sister, as opposed to that of wife or daughter, allows a woman to assume a lawful power, autonomy, and equality with the male characters. Unlike Isabella of Christopher Marlowe's Edward II, who rebels against a similarly wayward husband, Guendoline remains a sympathetic character to the end. In accepting Thrasimachus' argument that their father's words must "stand alwaies for a law" to them, she confirms and embraces the basis of hierarchical male-based authority. Yet alliance with her brother and loyalty to the ties of the extended family permit her to rebel against the absolute male authority embodied by her husband and king. When Guendoline chooses to define herself in relation to her father and brother rather than to her husband, she gains considerable autonomy because her decision places her solely in relation to her brother who is, like her, a subject under the law of their father. In their principal scene together, Thrasimachus treats her as a powerful political figure, making it clear that he needs her assistance to unthroned the king. He speaks to her with deferential respect, addressing her first as "sister" and later, more formally, as "madam," and he stresses their joint duty to avenge what Thrasimachus terms "our complaints." Moreover, the death of their father allows the siblings to construct and manipulate the parent-child relationship as they please. By tacit agreement between themselves, they invoke Corineus as a figurehead for their enterprises, who conveniently legitimates whatever they themselves decide to do. Both brother and sister free themselves from authority because they vow loyalty to the

dead who cannot actually govern them. In the conclusion of the play, Guendoline appears on the battle field with her brother, both at the head of their troops. She does not speak to Thrasimachus but, as the co-leader of the forces who have just defeated and killed her errant husband, she appears to the audience as a potent image of power.

A second brother-sister pair in the play, William and Margery, stands as a comical comment on the sibling relationship in the main plot. William and his father, the clownish rustic Oliver, unsuccessfully try to avenge Margery's seduction by the caddish Strumbo. But, just as Guendoline joins the rebellion against her husband, so the belligerent sister/daughter Margery proceeds to avenge her wrongs. Not content to let her brother beat up her seducer, she snatches the staff from his hand and cudgels her erstwhile lover until he offers her marriage. While not developed with any great complexity, the parallels between the tragic plot and comic sub-plot indicate that Greene perceives the figures of the wronged sister and the avenging brother to be one of the main elements of the play.

In The Tragi-Comedy the Virtuous Octavia (1598), by Samuel Brandon, Octavia undergoes a similar but more pronounced transformation from virtuous, meek, obedient wife to loyal sister. Rather than concentrating on the external manifestations of conflict which see Guendoline actually going to battle against her husband, Brandon focuses on the psychological conflict within Octavia. As she struggles to resolve her opposing loyalties to brother and husband and to deal with the parallel clash between loyalty to dynastic blood lines and to the period's insistence on wifely submission, her conflicting positions highlight the vast difference in the autonomy and power of the wife and the sister. When she is married to Antony, she is ignored, insulted, and finally discarded. Her position as sister to Caesar, however, is one of far more equality and respect than as wife to an indifferent husband. In her relationship with Octavian, she is both the person with the closest ties to him, his

"second self" (l.1613), and a necessary ally in his war against Antony. Eager to win her allegiance, Caesar stresses their shared royal blood and the outrage that Antony's disdain has done to their family. He first terms her "worthy branch of brave Octavius lyne" (l.1122) and later, as he tries even harder to win her over, "fayrer issue of renoun'd Octavius race, / My second selfe, Roomes glorious Emprise" (l.1612-13). Clearly, he desires both her personal and political support in his war with Antony, and in his desire to obtain it, he is willing to treat her as his equal.

Perhaps more important, Octavian, unlike Thrasimachus, clearly perceives his sister to be the focal point of both his personal and public rivalry with Antony. Not only does his behaviour reveal a submerged incestuous feeling, arising out of a narcissistic pride in family bloodlines, but he also actively attempts to supplant his sister's husband by appropriating both his role and his language. Throughout the play, Caesar's addresses to his sister are disconcertingly lover-like, quite unexpected in the midst of this political drama until one realises that his aim is to usurp the role of husband, as well as the title of sole Emperor of Rome. Caesar presents himself in terms that emphasize his love for his sister in order to win her public support and her private affection. Linking his love for her to their shared lineage, he describes her more as his beloved than as his sister: "But worthy branch of brave Octavius lyne, / In Caesars thoughts live and predominate / Yours is my kingdom and what els is mine" (l.1122-25). At first, Octavia's sense of duty to her wayward and unloving husband is strong enough to resist her brother's rhetoric; so far from seeing herself as Octavian's second self, she emphasizes that her identity lies with her husband, not her brother: "He is my selfe, his greefe procures my paine" (l.1163). Caesar insists that the true bond comes out of their shared blood. Calling her "[m]y second selfe, Roomes glorious Emprise" (l.1613), he underlines their royal lineage and joint identity, even as he casts himself as her lover and husband, the man who has rightfully

displaced the disloyal Antony. Thus, he attempts to resolve the clash between two conceptions of family, one based on blood lines and the other on the tie between husband and wife, by joining the two in his own person. He appropriates the identity of the husband to strengthen the ties of blood between him and his sister and to bolster his political power.

While Octavia again rejects his argument, she begins to weaken as the act progresses, imagining with horror the possibility of her brother's death in battle. When the messenger tells her that Antony has renounced her, her sense of duty and honour no longer compels her to support her husband and she feels free to express her love for her brother. She tells the audience that her fate is unimportant as long as "My dearest brother Caesar mought be free" (l.1829); he takes leave of her like a lover rather than a brother, assuring her that "Ile never be forgetful of your love" (l.1863) as she wishes him well.

Since the play ends with Octavia's lamentations for her dead husband, she is still clearly torn between loyalty and love for her husband and for her brother. But the play introduces the idea, developed to a far greater extent by Ford, that ties of affection between family members, particularly brother and sister, are often stronger and more intense than those between the husband and the wife of an arranged marriage.⁴³ Renaissance convention forces Octavia to feel bound to love and honour her husband, even though her true affections rest with her brother and her sense of identity derives from her blood family. At the same time, the play indicates the instability contained within Caesar's conception of himself as a brother; rather than the woman deriving her identity from the man, the man here depends on his sister for his identity. She is his only tie to their father and their ancestry, and she is also the only means by which he can appropriate the identity of husband. As a brother, he stands at the overlap of two conceptions of family, one public, dynastic, aristocratic, the other private

and domestic, and he seeks to consolidate them into one role by joining blood and marital ties in a "courtship" of his sister.⁴⁴ Yet, since his efforts are dependent on Octavia's cooperation, he, unlike her legal husband, never gains absolute power over her and he remains a respectful suitor. His self-definition as lover is tenuous, and he must court her rather than command.

Alliance with their brothers, then, gives both Guendoline and Octavia a different means of perceiving themselves, providing them with a valid way of justifying action and taking vengeance (or desiring vengeance) for personal wrongs. This relationship also casts the brother in direct contention with both husband and sovereign and provides one reason why the brother may become such an important figure in later drama. Rather than placing husband or father in direct defiance of his public counterpart, the king, the two dramatists chose to make the transgressor a brother. This is particularly appropriate. He is a fitting representative of an older conception of family, based on extended blood ties; raising an army against his ruler (or co-ruler), he aligns himself with the disappearing belligerence of the great families who resisted the centralizing power of the early Tudor monarchs, even as he challenges the authority of the husband which parallels the growing absolutism of the king.

The emphasis on siblings who devote all their energy to protecting the honour of their family's house and who often contest the power of both state and husband is picked up and developed by a number of Stuart revenge tragedies. George Chapman's The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois (c. 1601-1612; 1613) focuses on three siblings: Clermont, Charlotte, and the dead Bussy. Presented first and foremost as a sister to these two brave noblemen rather than as a wife, Charlotte shares their heroic stature and naturally possesses the D'Ambois' noble and valorous spirit; she is a "brave virago, / His [Clermont's] manly sister" (III.i.98-99). Defining herself strictly in terms of her relationship to her

family, she takes such pride in their shared blood lines that she agrees to marry Bulligny only on the condition that he avenge her murdered brother. When she later finds out that Bulligny is double-crossing her blood family, she has no qualms about leaving him. And even though she is disgusted by Clermont's stoical refusal to take revenge, she affirms her pride in their kinship after his suicide: "Well done, my brother! I did love thee ever, / But now adore thee: loss of such a friend / None should survive or of such a brother" (V.v.199-201).

While Chapman shows a marked shift from earlier tragedy by focusing on siblings rather than parent-child relationships and while he presents Charlotte as a sister rather than as a wife, he appears ambivalent about allowing her an independent role within the play. He satirizes her for her militant obsession with seeking revenge and makes her brothers treat her like the typical vengeful but weak and ineffective woman. For all her willingness to act on behalf of the family, both brothers--living and dead--try to exclude her from the serious business of revenge. When she attempts to goad the hesitant Clermont into action, he dismisses her encouragement with scorn and sends her off for a beauty treatment with Madam Perigot. Later, when she assumes for herself the right to kill Montsurrey, the ghost of Bussy appears and insists that her brother, not she, must take revenge.

Despite this spectral insistence that she remain on the side lines, Charlotte intrudes into the action on the basis of her blood, which makes her duty to avenge Bussy as great as her brother's. The two surviving siblings' conflict over what constitutes the proper course of behaviour indicates the sense of rivalry and equality between them. In the last act, Charlotte contemptuously dismisses her brother's ability to take revenge and tells Tamyra: "They are but words in him [Clermont's promise to take revenge]; believe them not" (V.iii.16). Ignoring Bussy's strictures, she dons a male disguise in an attempt to carry out the revenge herself. When Clermont finally does engage in a duel

with Montsurrey, Charlotte is not to be excluded. In an unintentionally humorous scene, she offers a critical commentary on her brother's performance, making it clear that she feels she could have dispatched their enemy far more quickly. She insists on drawing attention both to her relationship with her brothers and her sense of their equality.

The competition between the indomitable Charlotte and her impossibly Stoic brother, the virtuous Clermont, provides only a faint intimation of the antagonism between the siblings of The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi; yet it focuses attention on the idea of sibling avengers and the shared family blood that places brother and sister on an uneasily equal footing. As Charlotte, Guendoline and Octavia all reveal, the position of sister provides the women with a far greater opportunity for autonomy than the constricting role of wife. At the same time the blood family, as embodied in the relationship between siblings, again rises up to challenge the importance of the relationship between husband and wife. Charlotte marries simply as a means of avenging her brother, while Clermont subordinates his desire for wedlock to his duty to revenge Bussy.

The sole revenge tragedy of the Beaumont and Fletcher canon, The Maid's Tragedy (c. 1608-1611; 1619), particularly indicates the growing significance of the brother-sister relationship to the genre and its accompanying focus on avenging the dishonour of one's house. The bitter conflict between Evadne and Melantius, however, is not the sole concern of the dramatists, and most critics tend to ignore the struggle between the siblings.⁴⁵ Destructive tensions, caused by the evil "devil king," arise within a number of different social relationships: in the trio of siblings consisting of Melantius, Diphilus, and Evadne; in the unhappy love triangle of Amintor, Aspatia, and Evadne; and in the friendship between Melantius and Amintor. Critics even dispute who is the principal female figure, the jilted Aspatia or Evadne, whom we see not just as a sister but as a wife and mistress as

well. The antagonistic confrontations between siblings, though, stand out from the rest of the play for their violent intensity and overshadow the far more comic exchanges between Evadne and her husband. The contentious relationship between brother and sister calls attention to their equality and again presents a challenge to male hierarchical control at its weakest point: between siblings, in which the brother has no legitimate authority over his sister. It also casts the brother once again into direct rivalry with the husband, incorporating two conflicting conceptions of family and family honour.

When Melantius attempts to reprimand his sister, Evadne, rather than being ashamed by his reproaches, refuses to acknowledge her brother's right to restrain her. Secure in the king's favour, she adopts an outrageously brazen manner towards her brother and flaunts her power over both him and her husband. "Unhand me and learn manners," she orders Melantius, when he tries to intimidate her. "such another / Forgetfulness forfeits your life" (IV.i.50-51). She also threatens him with ignominy and dishonour: "If you stay here and rail thus, I shall tell you / I'll ha' you whipped" (IV i.67-68). In her violent confrontation with Melantius, Evadne reveals the true nature of the threat she poses to her brother: it is not her unchastity in itself, bringing dishonour to her blood family. Rather, it is the fact that she uses her sexuality to liberate herself from legitimate male control, so that she may deride the authority of both her new husband and her brother, the living representative of her father. Evadne's physical person provides her with a powerful means of social mobility, freeing her from both their commands; her deliberate insolence threatens male hierarchical order and is part of the social disorder directly resulting from the king's corrupting influence.

Melantius' response to her outrageousness, William Shullenberger argues, reveals the brother's obsession with her sexuality displaying itself in a mounting rage of "incestuous fury" (144). The brother's anger, however, seems far more closely related to the pandering possessiveness of

Vindice and Flamineo; it reveals no personal sexual interest, but rather reflects Melantius' jealous desire to reclaim possession over a potentially powerful resource, as well as to assert control over the sexuality which overturns the family hierarchy and elevates sister over brother. Flamineo encourages the prostitution of his sister and supports her in her designs, until she uses her newly gained position to challenge rather than maintain him. In the same way, Evadne alarms her more virtuous brother because her affair encourages her openly to deride his authority. Thus, when he finally succeeds in frightening her into compliance, he is perfectly willing to continue to see her prostitute herself in order to fulfill his plans. As the king's mistress, she has the power to seduce and then murder him, and Melantius uses her as a weapon to take revenge on his enemy. His fury expresses itself in sexualized terms simply because he views his sister primarily as a sexual resource and because he supplants Evadne's husband as the most powerful male figure in the play.

While both Flamineo and Melantius seek to retain control over their sisters after the women's marriages, Beaumont and Fletcher ultimately view the brother in a different fashion than Webster. In his attempts to use his sister, Melantius disregards the rights of her husband, just as Flamineo ignores the lawful position of Camillo. Beaumont and Fletcher, however, like the playwrights of *Octavia* and *Lochrine*, link the brother's authority closely to that of the father and cast him as a rival to, rather than as an usurping replacement of, the husband. Although Evadne is now wed to the hapless young Amintor, Melantius insists that he must be the one to take revenge for her disgraceful behaviour. He belittles the wrong done to his friend: "Why not so much [dishonour to the husband]. The credit of our house is thrown away" (III.ii.189-90). After he gets Evadne to agree to murder the king, he exultantly characterizes her vow as vengeance on behalf of the whole family: "I will wash the stain / That rests upon our house off with his blood" (IV. ii.289-90). Clearly he views the tie

between brother and sister as stronger than the legal joining of husband and wife; he also sees the wrong done to his "house--" or lineage family--as far greater than the insult offered to the institution of marriage. A defilement of Evadne's blood contaminates the shared blood of all her kin, while leaving her husband and his house unstained.

Thus, despite the cynical mockery the king makes of marriage, using Amintor to mask his illicit affair, it is still the dishonoured house of Melantius that demands vengeance. Melantius thrusts the position of the brother into the foreground at the expense of the husband's, undermining his predominance and pushing his concerns and his feelings of dishonour into the background. He does not, as the brothers in Lochrine and Octavia do, mount a martial campaign against the husband, but he, to a no lesser extent, insists that the claims of the extended family's honour take precedence over the relationship between husband and wife, and he refuses to relinquish his claim on his sister to Amintor. Further, the playwrights tacitly agree with his position by making Melantius, rather than the confused Amintor, the dominating male figure of the play.

When Evadne taunts her new husband with her unfaithfulness, Amintor listens with seething impotence and is so confounded by her brazen impudence that he is powerless to make her obedient. Embarrassed and humiliated by her revelations, he also does not have the strength or the position from which to mount a challenge against the king. The connection between brother and sister, however, is stronger, and the brother's sense of being terribly wronged far more intense. Finding his authority questioned, Melantius succeeds in cowing Evadne into submission by stressing the dishonour she has done to their whole family. He tells her how her actions attack not just him but their father

... whose child thou wert,

Whose honour thou hast murdered, whose grave opened,
 And so pull'd on the gods, that in their justice
 They must restore him flesh again and life,
 And raise his dry bones to revenge this scandal. (IV.i.87-92)

By calling up the name of their father, he frightens her into a recognition of her disgrace and establishes himself as the man's living spokesman, identifying himself completely with the wronged parent. There is no split between the authority of father and brother, for Melantius stands, unquestioned, as the representative of the dead man, and from him he gains the power and authority to terrorize her into contrition. When Evadne weakens and tells him the name of her lover, his angry words, "No more. My worthy father's and my services / Are liberally rewarded! King, I thank thee" (IV i.127-128), again emphasize the connection between the father and the son who are equally degraded by their ruler's ungrateful behaviour. The dramatists depict the brother as forceful and powerful, able to chastise the erring sister in a way that the ineffectual husband cannot manage. Although both are wronged, it is the brother, not the husband, who plots revenge, succeeds in seeing it come to fruition, and powerfully communicates to his audience his sense of being outrageously and cruelly dishonoured. Ultimately, it is also Melantius who is allowed to justify his actions to the new king. In a passage that again links his sense of dishonour with Vindice's and Flamineo's, he describes the way in which the murdered king's behaviour "brand[ed] my noble action with his lust / (That never cur'd dishonor of my sister, / Base stain of whore" (V.ii.45-7).

While Melantius, because of his close tie to his father, does not experience the same sense of social isolation and loss of identity as the brothers of The Revenger's Tragedy and The White Devil, he focuses attention on blood ties and contrasts the position of brother with that of husband.

He particularly underlines the shift in revenger, from father to sibling, and in the type of wrong being avenged, not murder of father or son but dishonour done to a noble "house," a whole family, living and dead. Melantius' conduct also allows the dramatists to contrast two competing conceptions of family: the extended family based on blood ties and the domestic relationship between husband and wife. The brother, as the plays Octavia and Lochrine have already suggested, seems particularly well-suited to stand as the embodiment of an aristocratic conception of family which locates its sense of identity and honour in its shared blood. As a representative of the extended aristocratic families whose powers were, historically, being increasingly curtailed by the monarchy, the brother becomes the ideal figure to challenge corrupt sovereignty, far more than either the husband or the father, whose absolute rights in the private realm paralleled those of the king in the public domain. Thus in his behaviour Amintor the husband, as critics have pointed out, embodies the ideal of submission to one's monarch no matter what the provocation (Bowers 172-173); although humiliated and enraged, he refuses point-blank to kill the king and even tries to discourage his friend from carrying out his plans. He cannot act because in murdering his sovereign for the wrong done to him through his wife, he would be attacking a figure of himself. His absolute power over Evadne, after all, mirrors the power of the monarch over his subjects and of God over Christians.

The brother, though, stands outside these parallels between private and public realms and takes action from a different, earlier conception of family and kingship. For Melantius, maintaining the honour of family takes precedence over all else, and he, like Thrasimachus and Vindice, feels no hesitation about master-minding the slaughter of his sovereign lord. Even more subversively, Beaumont and Fletcher themselves feel no need to punish Melantius for his actions. Unlike other revengers who find themselves killed in turn for usurping the divine justice of heaven and murdering

God's representative on earth, Melantius is triumphant. He succeeds in his plots to have the "devil king" slain, seizes control of the fort, and eloquently and successfully defends his regicide to the new king. Drawing on an older conception of monarchy in which the king is answerable to his aristocracy allows Beaumont and Fletcher to present a revenger who mounts a successful attack on a legitimate but evil king. Melantius' wronged family honour, set in clear contrast to Amintor's position as husband and his accompanying belief that he must not challenge the king, vindicates the brother's actions.⁴⁶

Evadne's portrayal is also more important than may at first appear. Most critics agree that, despite the intertwining complexity of the plot, Evadne, rather than Aspatia, stands as the principal female figure of the play.⁴⁷ For all her picturesque grief, Aspatia has very little importance to either the unfolding of the plot or the overall meaning of the play; instead, she exists primarily as a decorative element on the side lines of the action, an exquisite emblem of forlorn virginity, a "self-conscious artist, who weaves out her history as an emblem of the forsaken woman" (Shullenberger 152-153). By contrast, Evadne has a much stronger position within the play and gains complexity from being seen in a variety of roles: as sister, wife, and lover. Unlike Aspatia who remains a beautiful but unchanging picture through the play, Evadne undergoes a significant transformation when she repents her affair with the king, and her actions govern the outcome of the play.

Critics have commented on Evadne's unlikely transformation from brazen adulteress to meek penitent and offered various explanations.⁴⁸ But if we accept Wallis' argument that Beaumont and Fletcher are not interested in character consistency but in creating a series of theatrically effective emotional conflicts (164), we can understand Evadne in the same way that Vittoria is often interpreted, as a series of roles--wife, adulteress, lover, and sister--rather than as an internally stable

character. This view then allows us to see what characteristics Beaumont and Fletcher assign to each role and reveals how differently the dramatists conceive the wife from sister. It is as a sister, rather than as a wife or lover, that she is first pressed to take revenge, and, like Guendoline before her, she paradoxically justifies her anti-hierarchical behaviour by aligning herself with her family and the dead figure of her father. She commits the ultimate sacrilege against the Renaissance world order (Shullenberg 155), the crime that Amintor had been too frightened to attempt (Shullenberg 155), and yet it is the demands of her blood family, specifically her brother and her father, that move her to confront the king.⁴⁹ Acting as a sister gives her legitimacy and the incentive to murder the king for the same reasons that viewing himself as a brother empowers and vindicates Melantius. Loyalty to the extended blood family allows them both to disregard loyalty to the monarch and state and to use their dead father to justify their actions.

As a wife, however, Evadne is clearly expected to behave quite differently, and she finds herself, like Octavia, imprisoned in the conflicting demands of wife and sister. Since wives of the Renaissance are defined in terms of passivity, meekness, obedience, and submission to male authority, Amintor's wife must adopt an entirely different role from Melantius' sister. There is no conflict apparent at first, for Evadne's insolence appears in relation to both her husband and brother when she mocks their authority. Later in the play, however, Evadne finds herself tragically torn between the conflicting demands of wife and sister. Goaded on by her brother, she murders the king after tying him to his bed. She does it not, however, just for her tarnished family honour but to revenge her wronged husband and to bring him to recognise her as his wife. Yet while Melantius may applaud her action, her deed makes her husband reject her as an unnatural monster. Killing herself, she ends up destroyed by the conflicting demands made on her. As Melantius' sister, she is pressed to take

revenge, and yet as Amintor's wife, her 'manly' act of aggression is greeted with horror by her husband. Murdering the king does not restore her position in Amintor's esteem. Instead, it simply repeats her earlier betrayal of him, paralleling treason to her husband with treason and slaughter of her sovereign.

As a sister, however, prodded on by the angry Melantius, Evadne has a duty and responsibility to avenge the wrong done to her blood. She takes on herself the duties of the revenger, a significant development in a previously male-centred genre and a natural extension of the ambitions of Charlotte D'Ambois. In her climatic confrontation with her seducer, she, like the traditional revenger, refuses to kill her enemy sleeping or unaware. Though waking the king makes the murder more difficult, she explains that she wants him to see his murderer and to regret, too late, his evils: "[M]y vengeance / Shall take him waking, and then lay before him / The number of his wrongs and punishments" (V.i.31-33). Despite her resolution, Beaumont and Fletcher, like Chapman, are ambivalent about how important a role in the revenge they wish to allow her, and the play leaves it unclear who the true revenger is.⁵⁰ Reflecting this uncertainty, the two siblings end up contending with one another for the title of avenger. On the one hand, the sister appears to be little more than the puppet of her brother, coerced and bullied into murdering the king. Melantius gloats over his success in masterminding the revenge scheme, and a lord points to him as the real instigator of the murder, noting that the sister "alas, was but the instrument" (V.i.138). Yet, for Evadne and the audience, the reality is far different. It is not so much that Melantius appears frightened to kill the king, as Shullenberger claims (147), but that he does not have the means or the competence to carry out the revenge. His initial plans to gain control of the fort deteriorate to the level of a bad farce, as he exchanges a series of ridiculous insults with Aspatia's father; most of his revenge-taking consists of less than impressive

posturing. He never actually does anything, apart from threatening his sister, to advance his cause.

Evadne, however, effectively plans the murder and executes it in such a particularly distinct manner that she makes the deed of vengeance her own. Clearly, she feels that she is acting on her own initiative, not her brother's. Her characterization is rather too shallow to merit the claim that she undergoes a "pilgrimage from passion to perception" (Shullenberger 155) but the bitter anger with which she denounces the king shows that her actions are motivated not by fear of her brother but out of a genuine desire to avenge her own dishonour. She has been converted by her brother's eloquence into avenging her family (Wallis 233), not terrified into an act that she does not want to perform. While the brother may see himself as the author of the deed, Evadne herself gives us a completely different perspective on events, one which asserts her own independence and detaches her from the subordinating influence of her brother.⁵¹

The importance of the sibling relationship continues to the end of the Jacobean period as an important element of the revenge tragedy. Philip Massinger's The Duke of Milan (1621-1623; 1623) particularly underlines the extent to which the brother-sister relationship comes to dominate the imagination of the revenge tragedy, supplanting the older focus on father and son. In this play, public disgrace, humiliation, and embarrassment of a man's house through the dishonouring of his sister again replace the death of a father or a son as the wrong to be revenged. At the same time, Massinger also exploits the brother as pandar role so important to both The White Devil and The Revenger's Tragedy.

Like Vindice and Melantius, Francisco is a wronged brother,⁵² anxious to avenge the insult done to his family by challenging the lawful but corrupt authority of the Duke, who has used his position to dishonour and then abandon Francisco's sister. Ironically mirroring the brother-revenger's

commitment to his house, the Duke himself, a second brother, struggles with conflicting loyalties to his family's royal blood lines and to his wife. Marrying the virtuous Marcelia, the Duke pursues the Protestant ideal of an union based on love and compatibility; but in elevating the woman over his family and himself, he betrays his sovereignty. Thus, he finds himself torn between private love for his wife and public allegiance to his honour, which demands that he take revenge on the apparently lustful Marcelia. In a perfectly balanced plot, Francisco avenges his sister's seduction and abandonment by using the Duke's own allegiance to blood family to push him into murdering his wife.

While Philip Massinger explores the conflict between husband and brother and lays particular emphasis on the sibling revenger, the play reveals a shift away from its predecessors in its conception of the brother avenger. The two contradictory aspects of the brother as pander and protector, embodied earlier in *Vindice* and *Flamineo*, no longer reveal the brother's ambivalence towards his sister and his self-division. Instead, the conflict is exploited by Massinger mainly for plot purposes³³ and, ironically, to underline the love between siblings. After his sister's disgrace at the hands of Sforza the Duke, Francisco remains at court and appears to reap the rewards of her dishonour. In fact, Massinger deliberately implies that Francisco has willingly prostituted his sister in order to win the Duke's favour. "O Sir," as one lord cynically explains to another, "He [Francisco] tooke the thryuing course: He had a Sister, / A faire one too" (II.i.19-21). Since both the courtiers and the audience initially accept this explanation for Francisco's rise in fortune, the realization that the seeming sycophant is actually plotting revenge comes as a dramatic revelation. Disguising his anger under a mask of servile acquiescence, he appears to accept his Duke's authority; it is only later, when we see him with his sister, that we realize the depths of his loyalty to family honour. The contrast between the brother's differing roles allows Massinger to depict the dramatic transformation of

Francisco's character from seeming pandar to passionate defender of his sister's honour and to create a movement from the false appearances of the beginning of the play to the true loyalties of its end.

As well, Massinger does not exploit the psychological and symbolic significance of the links between brother as pimp and as protector of his family's honour. Rather, he casts Francisco as a pandar not to destabilize family ties but to idealize better the love and loyalty between him and Eugenia, using the contrast between our initial perception of the brother and the way we perceive him at the end to underscore the importance of loving sibling relationships. This idealized relationship between siblings, which has replaced the more antagonistic family dynamic, dramatically changes the way in which we view the brother as an avenger. Francisco's identity as a brother still works to exclude him from society, casting him as an outsider unwilling to construct the social ties that will integrate him into the world of the court. However, his self-adopted conception as a brother is far more deliberate than someone like Vindice's or Flamineo's, and more stable, for he chooses to perceive himself solely as a sibling, rejecting other potential roles and elevating personal loyalty to his family's honour above all other concerns.

Although Francisco first comes to our attention as the bosom friend of the Duke and the husband of the Duke's sister, both of these relationships are nothing more than shallow pretence: the former deliberately feigned in order to further his revenge, the latter embarked on to secure his position at court. They have no internal stability or security. When Francisco later attempts to seduce the Duke's wife, Marcelia, he not only betrays these two earlier relationships but casts himself in another illusive role, as passionate lover. His declaration of undying love for Marcelia is an equally false pose and part of his plan to betray her to the wrath of her jealous husband.

It is only in his capacity as brother to the dishonoured Eugenia that he truly exists without

disguise or pretence and that he has a relationship which is genuine, secure, and unchanging. It is as a brother that Francisco defines himself, dismissing all the guises that he had previously adopted. The wealth and the status pressed on him by the guilty Duke cannot distract him from his true purpose, revenge for the dishonour done to him through his sister. "Why could'st thou think, Eugenia," he asks, "that rewards, / Graces, or fauours though strew'd thick vpon me / Could euer bribe me to forget mine honour?" (V.i.1-3). In the eyes of both Eugenia and Francisco, the Duke has wronged their lineage, causing "the scandall which can neuer / Be wash'd off from our house but in his blood" (V i.70-71), and both have vowed to revenge this disgrace.

The tie between Eugenia and Francisco, however, does not rise just out of Francisco's sense of being dishonoured but out of their idealized affection, so different from the bitter hostility of earlier siblings. Both Leonora Baldwin and Elizabeth Otten concentrate their attention on the affection between the Duke and his wife and conclude that it is ultimately false and weak. They do not mention that the affection between brother and sister stands in marked contrast to this other, irrational physical passion and that it withstands the tests of the play.⁵⁴ Francisco subordinates all other social ties to his sense of duty as a brother and, despite Eugenia's unchastity, feels no anger or hostility towards her. Directing his fury solely at the man who has ruined her, he displays none of the outraged disgust of other brothers but only support and loyalty. Disguising themselves as physician and servant, the siblings return to the Duke's palace to carry out their plans. At the moment when Francisco reveals himself to the poisoned Duke, he immediately mentions his ruined sister to explain his actions: "Do's it start you Sir? my Sister, / Seduc'd and fool'd by thee" (V ii.235-6). His last boasting words, as he is dragged off to torture, stress his personal loyalty to his sister and his determination to carry out her request whatever the cost. "Farewell sister," he cries, "[n]ow I haue kept my word, torments I scorne,

/ I leave the world with glory" V.ii.251-3).

Although Francisco ultimately finds himself punished for murdering his Duke, the idealized brother-sister relationship, which Massinger holds up as a symbol of the perfect family loyalty that supplants all other ties, helps to validate his revenge. Even the Duke himself dies acknowledging the injustice of his behaviour to Eugenia, and this recognition justifies Francisco's deeds. Concern over the honour of the extended family and the tarnishing of blood lines proves strong enough to mount an effective challenge against the rights of the monarch. That the two siblings love and support one another and that their relationship is positively contrasted with that between the Duke and his wife, serve to further legitimize the conception of family based on blood rather than legal ties, and to vindicate Francisco's behaviour. Closely paralleling Francisco's quest to redeem the honour of his house is the Duke's own internal conflict between loyalty to his lineage family and to his wife. While Francisco consciously rejects the conflicting identities of friend or husband, focusing solely on Eugenia's dishonour, the Duke, in marrying Marcelia, finds himself torn between the duties of brother and husband.

The antagonistic relationship between Sforza, his sister Mariana, and their domineering mother continues the pattern of earlier unbalanced family units presided over solely by a mother. In this play, however, mother and daughter ally themselves in a rivalry against Sforza's wife and engage in a destructive attempt to control the Duke.⁵³ They disrupt the court because their emphasis on blood ties provides a legitimate and powerful challenge to the marriage between the Duke and Marcelia. At every stage the two women contest the privileges of Marcelia and dwell upon their kinship with the Duke, which, they imply, elevates them above the lesser-born wife. The struggle between sister and sister-in-law is particularly important for it again focuses the conflict between two

conceptions of family and contrasts the opposing positions of sister and wife, revealing which social role allows women more power. Backed by her mother, who clearly favours her daughter over her son, Mariana seeks at every turn to assert her supremacy over her sister-in-law. When she is ordered to honour her new relation, she asserts that she is more royal than the woman whom her brother married: "I shall doe / What may become the sister of a Prince, / But will not stoope, beneath it" (I.ii.35-37). When the Duke goes to war, the two women come to blows in their struggle to assert their supremacy. The animosity between the two, with Mariana ably seconded by her mother, is obviously based on their vying for the power possessed by the Duke.

Ultimately, though, Mariana is triumphant, and her success illustrates the period's increasing preoccupation with sibling affection as an asexual counterforce to destructively sexual relationships. Mariana has no sexual power over her brother, and this gives Marcelia an initial advantage by elevating her above her sister-in-law. As wife to a doting husband, she appears to possess the greatest potential authority by virtue of her control over her uxorious spouse. She even taunts the jealous sister with her power: "[T]he Duke being wholly mine, / His power and honour mine, and the allegiance, / You owe him, as a Subiect, due to me" (II. I.159-162). Mariana also recognises the woman's power and feels comfortable challenging her only after her brother's departure. "My Brother," she observes, "being not by now to protect her, / I am her equall" (II.i.108-109). Yet Marcelia's position, based as it is on sexual passion, proves to be insubstantial; Mariana, on the other hand, possesses a quite different and ultimately more secure authority. Her status, as sister to the ruler, is lawful and accepted by the rest of the characters. The fact that she is acknowledged as her brother's heir (II.i.397) confirms her position and provides additional insight into why she might view her sister-in-law with such hate, since her children would ultimately displace her. Unlike Marcelia,

who derives her power solely from her husband, Mariana's authority comes not from her brother but from the very blood that runs through her veins. Consequently, Marcelia the wife is diminished by her husband's absence; Mariana, however, grows in stature and substitutes for her brother as ruler. Their differing positions are shrewdly underlined by the courtier who contrasts their response to the Duke's departure. While Marcelia grieves, "on the other side, / The darling of his [the Duke's] Mother, Mariana, / ... as / Sh'ad no dependance on her brothers fortune, / She ne're appear'd so full of mirth" (I.i.43-48). As well, Marcelia's power is illegitimate, arising out of her too passionate sexual relationship with her husband. It is the Duke's excessive passion for her which makes him outrageously worship her, which causes him to honour and elevate her above his natural family members, and which, finally, brings him to murder her in a jealous rage. Marcelia's authority, derived strictly from her husband's passion, has no basis inside herself and no stability.

Most important, the Duke's own behaviour and outlook confirm the strength of the blood tie which he shares with his sister. Although the Duke may love his wife, Mariana's insistence that he remain loyal to his family honour win out over his belief in Marcelia and help to provoke her brother into confronting and killing his wife. When the Duke is later moved to repentance at his hasty actions and wants to honour his dead wife, he makes a gesture of giving her precedence over his sister. "[L]et her [Marcelia] see me / Compell my mother (from whome I tooke life) / And this my sister, Partner of my being, / To bow thus low vnto her" (V.ii.110-113). Finally and emphatically, he rejects his mother and sister in favour of his wife; yet, ironically, his words betray just how much he has privileged his sister through the play. Even here, remorsefully addressing his dead wife, he casts Mariana as the "[p]artner of my being" and reveals the special status he has accorded his sister, a status which he revokes in a vain attempt to resurrect Marcelia. Thus, while the marriage ceremony

may have metaphorically and legally made husband and wife one person, the sibling tie provides an equally strong consciousness of oneness, with the same blood and same mother making them the male and female side of the same being.

In The Duke of Milan, the stable affection between Francisco and his sister Eugenia contrasts with the violent physical passions of the Duke: first for Eugenia and then for Marcelia. The plot also pits brother against lover as Francisco avenges himself on his sister's seducer, murdering his sovereign lord. In The Maid's Revenge (licensed 1626; 1639), James Shirley, like the earlier dramatists, again casts the revenger as a sibling. Yet he shows an increasing conservatism in his treatment of revenge as a challenge to patriarchal and monarchical authority.⁵⁶ Transferring the wrong to the domestic realm, he makes the sister rather than the brother the sole revenger and replaces the corrupt and absolute power of the ruler with the equally inviolate authority of a cruel father. In the same way that the corrupt rulers of earlier revenge tragedies attack the brother-avenger's sense of honour and block his social and economic fulfilment, so Vilarezo, the father of Shirley's play, thwarts his daughter's natural movement towards love and marriage. Shirley, however, refuses to allow the figure of authority to be challenged or destroyed. Instead of having Berinthia attack the symbol of her oppression and unhappiness, as Vindice, Evadne, and Melantius do, he forces her to turn her desire for revenge inward, making her destroy herself and the brother she loves. The unbearable psychological pressure of absolute obedience to "a virtually unchallengeable elite hierarchy that exalts royalism, ascribed sociopolitical status, paternalism, and male dominion" (Clark, Professional Playwrights 119) finds metaphoric expression in Berinthia's attack on herself and her self's closest representation, her brother, and is literally realized in her insanity.

In the play, the father, Vilarezo, directly motivates the revenge-taking. His obsessive concern

with family honour destroys the friendship between his son Sebastiano and Antonio, as well as the love between his daughter Berinthia and Antonio and acts as a destructive force that wipes out the entire younger generation. Yet since all three siblings, Catalina, Berinthia, and Sebastiano acknowledge the absolute authority of their father, they must redirect their frustration and bitterness into an intestine struggle amongst themselves, attacking each other rather than the true cause of their misery. The consequences of the father's rigid arrogance are particularly evident in the tragic strife between Sebastiano and Berinthia. While the brother actually supports his friend's courtship of his sister, he is forced by his father to break up their relationship and to kill Antonio. Denied any individuality or the right to make his own decisions, Sebastiano finds himself pushed into becoming a younger, more energetic version of his father and unwillingly ruins his sister's happiness. With the death of her lover, Berinthia, in turn, savagely turns on her sibling. While she does not resist him when she is sane, her madness allows her unconscious rejection of his authority and her bitterness at a relationship which casts her as the chattel of her family, to rise to the surface and govern her actions. Insane and grief-stricken, she is an Ophelia-like figure who has moved from the sidelines to become the play's focus, taking vengeance on her brother for blighting her love.

Her response to Vilarezo, however, is quite different, underlining the vast difference in the authority between the two male figures in the play. While he, clearly, is the cause of all Berinthia's woes, first denying her permission to marry and then forcing her brother to retrieve her, she does not dare direct her attempts at revenge towards her father. Even insane, she will not cross this line, and so she makes her siblings, rather than her father, the focus of her mad fury. First, she fights down her natural affection for Sebastiano, reflecting that "[n]ature doth wrestle with me; but revenge / Doth arm my love against it" (1:181). Then, she stabs her hapless brother, before poisoning her sister and

killing herself. Her behaviour, both in her suicide and the murder of her two siblings, indicates how she turns her rage inward, attacking these images of herself, rather than turning on her father. Shirley also associates sibling murder and hostility with madness, the loss of self experienced by Flamineo and Vindice as they turn on and rend these other parts of themselves. However, the characters' rage is never turned outward towards a sovereign but internalized into suicide and sibling killing. Thus while the playwright and the characters may deplore the consequences of the father's unbending pride and wrath,⁵⁷ they accept his right to do as he pleases and never consider challenging him. For Berinthia to confront and massacre her father would be even more shocking than the spectacle of Evadne killing her king, and so her anger is directed at a target that clearly does not possess all of the associations of inviolate authority that her father has. The brother does not command the same reverence and respect that the father, however cruel, does.

William Davenant's play The Cruel Brother (licensed 1627; 1630) takes the conservatism of Shirley's play even further, presenting siblings who destroy themselves rather than seek vengeance on a corrupt sovereign. While Davenant salutes the established convention of the murderous and jealous sibling in his title, he reshapes the tradition to emphasize submission to authority and hierarchy, both of sister to brother and subject to ruler.⁵⁸ To the cruel brother Foreste's mingled horror and delight, his patron, the young aristocrat Lucio, courts and weds his low-born sister; and Foreste spends much of the first part of the play reflecting on the thought that "she, that tumbled in a womb with me, / Shall give your [Count Lucio's] issue birth" (1: 120). But the marriage, while gratifying, also provokes his unconscious hostility, for it raises his sister, like Evadne, above him and threatens his authority. When the young woman is raped by the lustful Duke of Sienna in her husband's absence, Foreste loses no time in punishing her for this entirely unwilling sexual

transgression. Usurping the duties of the husband, he reclaims her as his responsibility and kills her before her husband can return and--quite possibly--forgive her.

The ugly pleasure the brother takes in humiliating Corsa particularly indicates the extent of his hostility and his anger at her social elevation. From the beginning, he takes pains to emphasize that his sister, despite being wooed by an aristocrat, is still his inferior and subordinate. As Lucio praises her beauty and virtue, Foreste repeatedly brings her back down to his level, insisting that she is not worthy of the honour being bestowed on her. After the marriage, he affects deference, saying "[k]neel not to me; you are my patron's wife" (1: 180), but the pleasure he takes in punishing her suggests that he is only too eager to restore his own dominance. He is so intent on humbling her, in fact, that he humiliates her even at the moment of her death. In vain, she struggles to rise to her feet, crying "I come, celestial quire! ... I must ascend" (1: 183); in vain, she appeals to their shared humanity and joint blood lines and begs him to untie her from her chair, so that she may, at least, die with dignity: "[W]hilst I am yet human, / Let me feel some interest in your blood. / What fault of mine deserves impediments / In my last journey?" (1: 183). He dismisses her efforts to die valiantly as the hysterical cowardice of a dying woman, "the mistakes of weakness" (1: 183). He thrusts her back down, refuses to remove her blindfold, and forces her to die with what he deems to be a becoming stillness and silence.

This sister, then, rather than deriving any power from her role, suffers a punishment far in excess of her transgression. Throughout the play, she does not challenge her brother's view of her as his property nor does she seek to assert herself. Yet despite her meek submission, she poses such a threat to him, using her sexuality to rise above him and to arrogate his master's affections to herself, that Foreste has to insist on her absolute subjection to his control and the humiliation of her noble

spirit. Making the annihilation of the sister complete is the tacit approval with which Davenant crowns the secretary's actions, suggesting that the playwright, like Foreste, disapproves of Corsa's social mobility, her temerity in using her sexual attractiveness to advance beyond her birth. The title may seem to judge Foreste, but there is nothing within the play that implies criticism of his behaviour. Even Foreste's confession of guilt, that "I kill'd / A sister to secure a friend. 'Twas ill--" (1:189), arises from his desire to shame Lucio into applauding the murder as an act of self-sacrificing loyalty, not from remorse. Revealingly, his emphasis on the ties of male friendship prevails with the erstwhile doting husband who quickly forgives his brother-in-law. When tested, Lucio's loyalty to his friend is far stronger than his love for his wife, and his quick acceptance of Foreste's actions makes it difficult to imagine that the reader is really supposed to condemn the secretary. In the world of the play, no one cares much about the harshness of Corsa's punishment, and the three men--the Duke, Lucio, and Foreste--die in a rhapsodic celebration of male friendship, differences forgotten.

The change from earlier revenging siblings is striking, underlining, as The Maid's Revenge did, the degree to which the dramatists' attitude towards the brother-revenger has changed. While Melantius, Francisco, and Vindice, as well as Thrasimachus and Octavian, all mount a subversive attack on their sovereign, using personal dynastic loyalty to house to at least partially justify their actions, Foreste sacrifices family loyalty to the ideal of complete and absolute submission to ruler, no matter how cruel, ruthless or lustful. Thus rather than plotting against his sovereign, as his counterparts do, Foreste murders his innocent sister. By contrast, neither he nor Lucio can bring themselves actually to kill the Duke, deserving of death though he may be. Instead, Corsa serves as a potent symbol of Foreste's own self-hate, of his willingness to direct any anger or rebellion inward, rather than outward towards its true cause, and to immolate himself on the altar of absolute obedience

to the monarch. His continual marvelling that the Count could love anyone so low and base as his sister reveals, of course, the depth of his own self-contempt and his own willing abasement before the aristocracy. When he then punishes his sister so excessively for her unchastity, he is actually attacking social mobility, symbolically killing in his sister his own ambitions and underlining to his masters the idea that he will never place personal pride and sense of self before absolute submission to them.

In the luckless *Corsa*, the pattern has gone full circle, from sibling relationships which are given little emphasis, to plays in which the siblings, often cast as revengers, are central, to the moment when the sister is drained of her power and the figure of the possessive, jealous brother has become an exaggerated caricature, cruelly torturing his sister for little reason other than the fulfilment of a convention. Hostile, antagonistic siblings signal a family in crisis, even as the loss of established male authority, often suggested by the absence of the father, allows the sister a degree of freedom unallowed to wife or daughter. Brothers represent an even more significant challenge to order, as they usurp the husband's rights and often parody or pervert their father's legitimate authority. Equally subversive, brothers who elevate house and blood ties above all else stand in marked conflict to the husband and undermine the Protestant emphasis on the husband-wife relationship with a different and earlier construction of family. They also challenge the period's insistence on absolute obedience to monarch, using loyalty to their families' honour and blood lines to justify their revenge.

By the time of Davenant, however, the focus on siblings has become little more than a convention, a useful way for playwrights to depict characters directing destructive impulses inward towards self rather than outward towards society and state. Killing their siblings metaphorically represents the characters' self-restraint, submission, and willingness to destroy themselves rather than

to challenge their rulers or fathers. Again, while the earlier siblings' concern for family honour at least partly justified the revenge they sought against corrupt rulers, their single-minded focus on honour is extended almost to caricature in later plays. Much of the tragicomedy takes this movement even further. Exaggerating the brother's jealous and obsessive concern for his sister to a parodic extreme, tragicomedies defuse the potential threat posed by the brother and reveal the extent to which he is viewed as an illegitimate authority: either an inadequate replacement of his father or a challenge to the happy domestic relationship between husband and wife.

Endnotes

1. Critics of all theoretical types have stressed the social, moral, psychological, and religious disorder of both Jacobean society and drama. Developing the argument expounded in Una Ellis-Fermor's The Jacobean Drama, Irving Ribner characterizes Jacobean tragedy as a reflection of the period's "doubt, confusion, and profound pessimism ... [showing] the uncertainty of an age no longer able to believe in the old ideals, searching almost frantically for new ones to replace them, but incapable yet of finding them" (The Quest for Moral Order 2-3). Robert Ornstein, while rejecting the idea that Jacobean tragedy focuses the period's clash between humanist and anti-humanist beliefs, nonetheless characterizes the drama's principle concern as a search for a new moral understanding and knowledge to replace the medieval vision of reality, a "search for intrinsic values in experience" (6). Likewise, Larry Champion emphasizes the "instability of the traditional moral and social values" (8) in his study of Jacobean drama. For him, the period's lack of stable values gives rise to heroes who achieve no great moment of inner truth or understanding (13). More recently (1988), T. F. Wharton argues that Jacobean plays initiate moral inquiry but in a quest not for order but "for moral disorder" (3); their loss of a sense of stable identity leads characters on an often diabolical and sadistic search to see if there are any absolute moral principles left in the universe (3). Emphasizing conflict, T. McAlindon studies Renaissance tragedy as being based not upon hierarchy but the "clash and confusion of contraries" (5), the strife between opposites kept in uncertain balance (6).

Other, more generically oriented studies or studies which focus primarily on Webster again stress the unease, confusion, and skepticism of Jacobean society. In their study of revenge tragedy, Elaine and Charles Hallett emphasize that the revenge hero exists in and arises out of a society in crisis (106). In an analysis of Webster's relationship to tragicomedy, Lee Bliss argues that the anxiety of a society in transition gave rise to an experimentation with form, reflected particularly in satiric tragicomedy (The World's Perspective 10-13) and developed by Webster (The World's Perspective 13). Richard Bodkte locates the period's anxiety and sense of dislocation in its transition from medieval to modern economics (68) and its tense conflict between the opposing principles of pessimism and optimism, rationality and fideism, and humanism and despair about man's nature (8).

In her psychological analysis, Molly Smith claims that the dark drama of the period represents society's own confrontation with its dark, shadow side in a progress toward integration and wholeness.

Recent feminist and Marxist critics, despite theoretical positions which lead them to reject Ornstein's and Ribner's essentialist humanism, nonetheless reiterate this sense of the Jacobean period's psychological pessimism, religious and moral skepticism, and social instability. For Marxist critics like Jonathan Dollimore, the loss of stable values in Jacobean society does not result in an urgent "quest for moral order" to fill an ethical and spiritual vacuum but rather provides dramatists with the opportunity to explore the "contradictions within those [dominant] forms [of belief]" (Radical Tragedy 168). Ignoring the pain, the despair, and the conflict that comes with a loss of faith, he declares that the drama reflects the dramatists' challenge to "religious orthodoxy," as well as a daring "critique of ideology, the demystification of political and power relations and the decentring of 'man'" (Dollimore, Radical Tragedy 4). Dena Goldberg, in her study of Webster, emphasizes the dramatist's uncertain position, perched between two worlds, the old medieval world of traditional values and an emerging

new outlook and new ideals (3) which emphasized human potential (11) and the fulfilment of individual desire (7).

Other studies examine the effect this sense of social disorder, instability, and flux had on the creation of the family and femaleness. Catherine Belsey discusses the changing conception of selfhood from the medieval period through to the later Renaissance, as well as "the instability in the meaning of family" (The Subject of Tragedy 147). Mary Beth Rose casts the period as a time of "intense cultural conflict" (1) "when ... definitions of gender, social class, and status were perceived as provocatively fluid" (1). In particular, she studies the drama in terms of its often irresolvable conflict between medieval values which cast women in the polarized positions of saint and whore, and emerging Puritan marriage discourse, which was more accepting of female sexuality. In her study of domestic tragedies, Viviana Comensoli stresses the "instability of the early modern household" (16) which she links to Jacobean England's "severe crisis of order" (Comensoli 65).

2. The four principal plays studied by Elaine and Charles Hallett are Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy, William Shakespeare's Hamlet, John Marston's Antonio's Revenge, and The Revenger's Tragedy. Fredson Bowers' earlier study, Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, provides a more inclusive, historically oriented, and descriptive analysis of the genre.

3. While the Halletts do not include The White Devil in their lengthy study of the revenge tragedy, other critics emphasize its ties to the genre. J. W. Lever points out that it re-works the conventions of the revenge tragedy, making us sympathize with the tyrant Brachiano rather than condemn him (81) and forcing us to re-evaluate simple conflicts between good and evil, tyranny and oppression (83). Bodkte points out that the revengers undergo no process of corruption but are violent to begin with (166), existing in a corrupt world with no true justice (169). Antony Courtade observes that Webster uses the revenge tragedy genre to unify his play but alters the tradition, making the revengers neither good nor virtuous and never presenting Flamineo and Vittoria as completely evil (29-30). Wharton emphasizes that Webster inverts the revenge tragedy tradition by making us sympathize with the villain rather than the revengers (58). Roma Gill sees the play as a combination of the revenge tragedy style and conventions and a more realistic psychological analysis of character (43). Charles Forker argues that the play combines the revenge tragedy with love tragedy, opposing love against death and undermining romanticism (254).

My purpose here, however, is not to attempt a definition of the genre; it is to look at the brother-sister relationship within a number of plays often grouped together as revenge tragedy. One of the main weaknesses of the Halletts' study, however, is that they tend to make the revenge tragedy a static form. They seek out only the four plays that they feel most perfectly fit the conventions of the genre, rather than also giving prominence to the plays that alter, challenge, or re-work the standard conventions.

4. My sense of Jacobean madness is particularly related to two studies. Bodkte argues that the madness of the Webster plays is part of "a deep dislocation within the Jacobean world finding its expression in the private illness of the individual psyche" (68). Smith sees the darkness of the plays in Jungian terms, as society's confrontation of its dark, evil, shadow side in its progress towards psychological integrity and the rationalism of the eighteenth-century: "[T]he mind can either confront and overcome its darker self, that is, progress toward psychic wholeness, or succumb to its power,

that is, regress into psychosis" (The Darker World Within 22). Neither critic however, with the exception of a brief reference by Bodkte to Ferdinand and the Duchess (42), links this inner conflict and turmoil to brother-sister strife.

5. By contrast to the Halletts, Bowers focuses on maintenance of honour as the motivating cause for revenge both in Elizabethan society and in the plays. See, for example, 1-40.

6. The question of authorship is still disputed but is largely irrelevant to this study. Peter Murray presents convincing evidence that the play comes from the pen of Thomas Middleton (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 144-90), even while the title of his work emphasizes how hard the tradition of Tourneur's authorship dies. Samuel Schoenbaum gives similar evidence in favour of Middleton (Middleton's Tragedies 153-182). Martin White offers a less detailed argument for Middleton's authorship (166-171). Inga-Stina Ekeblad compares the imagery in The Atheist's Tragedy to The Revenger's Tragedy in order to argue, less convincingly, that Tourneur, not Middleton, is the author. For the purpose of convenience, I shall follow tradition and cite Cyril Tourneur as the author.

7. In their study of revenge tragedies, the Halletts undertake perhaps the most thorough study of Vindice, examining his madness in the context of other Elizabethan and Jacobean revengers. While they examine the conventions of the genre in great detail and note the way in which the play replaces the murder of a father (225-227) with a "perversion of love" (228) as the motive for revenge, they do not consider Vindice's relationship with his sister. Murray studies the play as an example of the Italian revenge tragedy and focuses on the ambivalent Renaissance attitude towards private revenge and Vindice's transformation into a figure of evil (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 208). Samuel Schoenbaum sees the play as a development of revenge tragedy, blending "tragic grandeur, farcical situations, and melodramatic violence" (Middleton's Tragedies 27); while he discusses the elements of the revenge tragedy, he does not comment on the sibling relationship. Samuel Schuman never even mentions Castiza but concentrates on the play as an example of the traditional revenge tragedy in which a virtuous revenger attempts to wipe out evil only to become, in pursuing justice, evil himself (Cyril Tourneur 100). The Kistners study the play as an exploration of the morality of revenge and utterly ignore Castiza ("Morality and Inevitability in The Revenger's Tragedy"). L. G. Salinger argues that the play works as an allegory that explores the difference between heavenly and earthly vengeance and justice (209). Martin White argues that it fuses the morality tradition with the satiric comedy of Marston and Middleton (144), poisoning its audience between horror and laughter (147).

Other critics focus exclusively on Vindice as the revenger, discussing questions of identity and the extent to which he represents the moral order of the play. Peter Lisca, who sees the play as constructed around a series of ironic reversals (244), argues that Vindice is aware of his own duality as an avenger poised between good and evil (250), and of the necessity of his own death (251). Ornstein ignores the goodness of Castiza to argue that Vindice, while not good himself, "represents the only possible moral order, one that is warped in nature and eminently corruptible" (111). Ribner presents Vindice as the traditional avenger, who gradually becomes evil as he usurps God's role in doling out justice (Jacobean Tragedy 80). Roger Stilling, who studies the love-death dichotomy in the play, looks at Vindice as the perfect avenger, one who has replaced the sex drive and sensual pleasure with a delight in creating perfect deaths (209-211). Peter Hyland analyses the question of the way in which we are supposed to respond to Vindice the revenger, discussing whether he is a

good man who adopts various masks of evil or a corrupted individual from the beginning, whose masks are an ironic revelation of his true, evil self (254). Ultimately, he concludes that Vindice's disguises are not the cause but the sign of his corruption (256) and that he is not chosen by God as he fancies himself to be (260). Michael Mooney studies the play in terms of its staging and analyses our response to Vindice's adoption of the different personae of morality figure, satirist, and revenger (162). Scott McMillin sees the play as a treatment of what happens when the revenger becomes "his own enemy" ("Acting and Violence" 280). Smith studies Vindice as an emblem of the melancholy person (63).

Only two critics, Peter Stallybrass and Karen Robertson deviate from this focus and foreground Vindice's relationship with the other sex. But they ignore Vindice's sibling relationships and look, more generally, at his idealized conception of women.

8. Murray points out that this title, which was kept by the editors in 1688, is appropriate because "it focuses so many ironies of the play and reveals important elements ... of the plot" (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 202). However, he tends to compare the different groups of siblings to one another and contrasts Vindice's destructive relationship with his sister to the other two brothers' unwitting murder of Junior (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 202-2), as well as the parallels between Vindice and Hippolito and Supervacuo and Ambizioso (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 203).

9. Murray points out that it is the death of Vindice's father which appears to be the catalyst that makes Vindice take revenge, since Gloriana has been dead for nine years (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 210-211).

10. For a full discussion of the revenger's usurpation of divine and state justice, see the Halletts' The Revenger's Madness. Wharton views the revenger of Tourneur's play as a particularly subversive figure, bringing us to sympathize with him despite his attack on society (44).

11. The Halletts identify a sense of isolation and confusion as the archetypal attribute of the revenger (122).

12. Vindice's loss of self-identity and growing self-destructiveness, as he descends to greater and greater evil and cruelty, is a critical commonplace. Most scholars, however, explain his change in personality either in terms of the Renaissance ambivalence towards the revenger, as has already been discussed, or in terms of his adoption of different roles. Most critics see Vindice's adoption of different identities as the means through which Tourneur suggests his gradual corruption and loss of self. The Halletts point out that Vindice's gradually disintegrating moral character is marked by each of his different disguises (238). The Kistners argue that he begins to lose his true identity when he dons his first disguise (Middleton's Tragic Themes 4); Mooney points out that his identity-shifting reveals his "loss of personal and moral identity" (173); McMillin argues that Vindice loses rather than establishes his identity through his role-playing (289-290), transgressing "the limits of self-identity" (290). Wharton claims that the play presents selfhood in terms of roles (53) and Smith, unintentionally summarizing the general critical interpretation of Vindice's role-playing, claims that the play dramatizes the idea that evil is a lack of a true essence or self (The Darker World Within 69), making it easier and easier for Vindice to change his identity.

By contrast, Ornstein argues that the roles ironically reveal aspects of Vindice's true self

(112). Similarly, Hyland, who claims that Vindice is corrupt from the start, argues that the fact that he continues to view his disguises as masks, rather than as reflections of his inner being, reveals his self-division and lack of self-awareness (258). With the exception of Murray, no one considers Vindice in his role-identity as brother. Even if they are interested in Piato, they focus only briefly on his attempted seduction of Castiza.

13. Salinger develops this idea the most thoroughly, arguing that the whole play works as an allegory to explore the difference between heavenly and earthly justice and vengeance (209). But he focuses on Vindice's donning of various allegorical identities and does not remark on his scene with his sister. Other critics focus more specifically on the scenes between Vindice and his mother and sister, without considering what there is in this family relationship which lends itself so beautifully to an allegorical conflict between good and evil. Howard Felperin, for example, comments on how the family episodes are "so stylized, programmatic, and tangential to the main action of revenge" that they seem like incompletely transformed morality elements (164). Yet he is so concerned with relating what he views as the principal morality aspect of the sub-plot--the reformation of the mother--to the main plot in order to prove Vindice's fitness as an avenger that he does not consider the exchange between brother and sister. Murray sees the different behaviours of Vindice, his sister and his mother as a means of contrasting the courses that lead to salvation and to damnation (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 235). Thus Castiza stands as goodness tempted by evil, Gratiana represents weakness that is saved by grace (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 236), and Vindice, torn between good and evil, is a figure who ultimately moves towards damnation (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 246). Likewise, Schuman sees Vindice as similar to a figure in a morality play, but, rather surprisingly, he sets up Gratiana as the figure of goodness and never even mentions Castiza (Cyril Tourneur 86).

14. White (153) and Ornstein (108-9) both comment on the fact that Vindice is actually fascinated by what he is criticizing. As Ornstein and Hyland point out, Piato is not a disguise that conceals--and opposes--Vindice's true nature, but an ironic revelation of his inner being (Ornstein 112; Hyland 256). Wharton argues that Vindice engages in deliberate moral experimentation with his mother and sister as he scientifically searches for the source of (or absolute absence of) morality (47).

15. Some critics, such as Schuman, Schoenbaum, the Kistners, Ornstein and McMillin do not deal with the women at all or limit their discussion of the female presence in the play to Gloriana or Gratiana. Others describe Castiza's significance as purely symbolic. For Ribner, she is a symbol of "heaven's alternative to the world's corruption and disorder" (Jacobean Tragedy 79). Critics who look at the female presence in the play in more detail discuss Vindice's attitudes towards female sexuality, placing his psychological malaise within his diseased and misogynistic attitude towards women, sex, and love. They are, however, apt either to ignore Castiza or to group her with Gloriana. The Halletts present both women as images of virtuous love threatened by corruption (225). Murray casts sister and beloved as symbols of feminine virtue which Vindice wishes to believe in but ultimately can not. His test of Castiza, rather than allaying his worries, aggravates them, exacerbating his misogyny and undercutting his reasons for taking revenge (A Study of Cyril Tourneur 211-16). In the same way, White comments on the dichotomy in Vindice's attitudes towards women: his simultaneous admiration and contempt (144). Stilling sees Castiza as the principal ethical figure in the play (206) and argues that both Tourneur and Vindice are caught within a polarized view of

woman as whore/saint, linking physical sensuality to everything evil and chastity to everything heavenly and good (207). Robertson claims that the avenger attempts and succeeds in finding a positive ideal in the bodies of women (215). Pure but dead females provide him with "models of heroic virtue that animate his own resistance to tyranny" (216), while the ultimately chaste mother and daughter allow him to "reaffirm ... the potential of feminine agency and evoke ... the living embodiment of chastity who has withstood the assaults and temptations of male the eros" (230).

Stallybrass gives perhaps the most detailed analysis of the importance of women to the play; he, however, like the other critics, lumps Castiza and Gloriana together under the thankless category of the female body. Using heavily Lacanian language, he tends to restate earlier critics' analysis. Thus, the critical observation, begun with Murray, that Castiza is an image of chastity in which Vindice cannot bring himself to believe finds a weightier but similar re-expression: "Vindice tirelessly seeks to find in woman's body the privileged container of an impermeable honour [but] ... he himself is the hole in the familial cell ... displac[ing] the social processes of corruption ... onto the abjectified body of woman, conceptualized as the immutably permeable" (140). To Stallybrass, Gloriana and Castiza join an ideal of chaste perfection with the poisonous--"permeating"--and corruptible--"permeable"--qualities of women; he does not consider the possibility that Vindice might view living sister and dead fiancée differently.

16. Lever also underlines the importance of the family to both The Revenger's Tragedy and The White Devil (81). Dollimore argues that Webster exposes family ties as an artificial social construct, rather than as a natural bond, revealing how easily these ties may break under relentless social pressures (Radical Tragedy 236). Layman sees Flameneo's devotion to destroying his family as a reflection of his larger desire to attack anything sacred (338).

17. Much has been said about the hapless Cornelia and her feeble attempts to cling to virtue in the dark world of the play. She has been variously held up as an image of the boring, powerless nature of good (Lever 83); of goodness' ineffectuality (Ornstein 133; Bodkte 51), irrelevance (McElroy 302), and helplessness (Griffin 61); and of the way in which true virtue can be bested by an attractive and skilled performance (McElroy 306). She has also been cited as an example of the underclass' blind adherence to the very upper-class ideology that ruthlessly destroys them (Dollimore, Radical Tragedy 233; 246); and has even been denounced by some critics for being as corrupt and hypocritical as her daughter (McAlindon 164); for being proud and sanctimonious (Murray, A Study of Cyril Tourneur 40); for acting with "tyrannical inhumanity ... mutely accepting the union between Brachiano and Vittoria which [she] had earlier condemned" (Luckyj 65-66); and for standing as an oppressive representative of the conventional morality which blights the noble love between her daughter and Brachiano (Goldberg, Between Two Worlds 26-27). No one, however, has considered her in the context of other widowed mothers, who are left to discipline their quarrelling children without their husbands' assistance and who stand as images of a socially unstable family.

18. In his early study of Webster, T. B. Tomlinson claims that the dramatist is genuinely confused in his treatment of good and evil (230). Most other critics, however, defend the thematic and structural coherence of Webster's play and then explore the nature of Webster's moral vision. Many argue that the play presents a profoundly bleak view of the world and the people within it. The play presents a world without order, stable belief, or consistent morality (Schuman, Cyril Tourneur 93;

Mulryne 204) in which the ties that should hold people together are gone and only greed binds them together (Ornstein 135); a world in which the evil and corrupt triumph over the weak, powerless figures of good (Lever 86); a world which focuses on the "deception of appearances" (Ribner 99) and which makes it impossible for humanity to know whether goodness and virtue are possible (Whitman 109); a world similar to Tourneur's, in which the hero has to choose between morally ambivalent courses of action (Champion, Tragic Patterns 119); and a world of chaos in which the traditional balance between concord and discord, love and strife, are over-turned (McAlindon 157-159).

Other critics view the play as a study of the evil which arises when humanity elevates individualism above all else (Murray, A Study of John Webster 31) or argue that the work depicts the glorious and unsettling brilliance of evil, in order to create "moral confusion" in the reader (Bodkte 64). Griffin contends that the play is based not on the opposition between good and evil but rather on the ruthless struggle between characters who seek to assert their dominance at others' expense and who use moral positions as masks to aid them (Griffin 61). A similarly nihilistic view claims that Webster presents a world in which all old values are gone and state authorities are openly contemptuous of religious and ethical ideals (McElroy 302).

By contrast, a number of other scholars insist on the more conventional morality of Webster's world. William Dwyer argues that Webster follows the moral and religious philosophy and the natural science of the time (42-44) and that his plays act as "negative examples" of how people should not behave (183). Anders Dallby emphasizes Webster's belief in the old Christian moral order (162). While Webster objectively presents the action of the play without overtly judging the characters' behaviour (Dallby 48-49), he more subtly uses imagery to explore the opposition between appearance and reality and to reveal evil hiding behind a mask of good (Dallby 150-151).

Other critics concentrate on the place of the individual in this corrupt world. Ribner claims that, while depicting Webster's own frantic search for moral order in the midst of Jacobean skepticism (97), the play also celebrates the power of human integrity (100). Antony Courtade argues that the play sympathetically depicts the individual's attempt both to survive in and defy a corrupt society (15-16). For him, morality is subjective and the evil-doing of Vittoria should be judged in the context of an even more corrupt world and even worse wrong-doers (Courtade 43-44; 48). Likewise, Laura Bromley emphasizes the positive quality of Vittoria's attempt to establish her individuality in the face of the patriarchy that suppresses her right to autonomy (51). Again, Dena Goldberg's feminist analysis argues that the siblings' individualistic pursuit of self-fulfilment is presented positively, as an understandable defiance of repressive medieval values (Between Two Worlds 9). Webster, she argues, contrasts the corrupt rule of law and reason with the siblings' more sympathetic attempts to fulfill their natural passions and desires (Between Two Worlds Goldberg 28-31). Dollimore adopts a Marxist outlook to expose the ideologies in the play which he believes the powerful ruling class use to exploit and manipulate the weak (Radical Tragedy 232-234).

Other critics concentrate on the play's imagery or on its generic make-up. Susan McLeod analyses Webster's imagery and suggests that the play is arranged around three principle themes: the contrast between reality and appearance, disorder and order, and "courtly reward and punishment" (Dramatic Imagery 30). Ralph Berry again focuses on the play's imagery to argue that Webster adopts a moral position showing the ironic retribution visited on evil (101-105). Christina Luckyj explores the close links between the play's plot and sub-plot and between Vittoria and Zanche. Lee Bliss studies its ties to tragicomedies, arguing that the play's refusal to fulfill generic expectations increases the audience's sense of moral confusion (The World's Perspective 96-97). Jacqueline

Pearson, in exploring the influence of tragicomedy on Webster's works, argues that the dramatist makes his tragic statement through comic and tragicomic elements such as changing tones, inconsistent characters, and satire (53).

19. Response to Flamineo is varied; curiously, critics who consider his relationship to Vittoria tend to focus only on who should be regarded as the principal figure of the play (rather than studying the two in conjunction). Some argue that Flamineo is the central figure of the play (Bliss, The World's Perspective 97), controlling and creating Vittoria (Benjamin 6); the true image of the White Devil (Murray, A Study of John Webster 44-45); the character who, despite his villainy, is distinguished by his courage and honesty with himself (McAlindon 164-165); the ruthless hero who embodies the play world's "will to power" (Griffin 53); and a divided, confused, and role-playing hero who has to make a conscious effort to shut out good and embrace evil absolutely (McElroy 308-309). Others describe him as a conscienceless villain (Stodder 90) or as a typical malcontent who does not embody Webster's moral philosophy (Dwyer 134) and who is governed by his desperation and violent ambition (Dwyer 139).

Other critics stress Vittoria's centrality and set her up as the focus of the play (Kroll 248-250) or argue that she is not the victim of her brother (Stodder 9-10). Stilling, who focuses his interpretation on what he claims to be the flawed but glorious romance between Vittoria and Brachiano, dismisses Flamineo as a stock misogynist (235); Courtade sees Flamineo as a choric figure, less impressive than the other characters, especially Vittoria, because he allows himself to be controlled too easily (36-37). Bromley's feminist interpretation focuses almost exclusively on Vittoria.

20. See for example Murray (A Study of John Webster 66; 89), Nicholas Brooke (32-34); Bodkte (132-133); McLeod (Dramatic Imagery 36); Layman (346); Bromley (51-59); and Dena Goldberg ("By Report' The Spectator as Voyeur in The White Devil" 77)

21. Whitman argues that Vittoria is utterly false, possessing nothing but emptiness behind her assumption of virtue and nobility (96-99); Murray speaks of her expert performances which make her the ultimate image of the white devil in the play (A Study of John Webster 64-66); McLeod writes of the series of roles she adopts (Dramatic Imagery 36), her seductive appeal only emphasizing the danger of the "white devil" (Dramatic Imagery 53); Dallby stresses, with particular emphasis, the dangers of her appeal, observing that the more alluring she appears to be, the more she is to be feared (127).

Other critics, however argue that the white devil signifies the mingling of good and evil in the same character (Ribner, Jacobean Tragedy 100;106; McAlindon 159-160). Courtade contends that the term white devil actually suggests that Vittoria possesses an element of goodness and underlines her superiority to the other characters who are all black devils (18).

22. Bromley discusses the limiting roles that the men of the play attempt to impose on Vittoria and her attempts to reject them (54). Sheryl Stevenson argues that the work explores the way in which "both men and women define femininity or manliness through a series of projections and imitations of each other, making it impossible to separate utterly the two adaments of any 'differing' pair" (168).

23. Murray, who argues that the play criticizes individualism as an actual loss of self, claims that Vittoria loses her true self to her mask, becoming her performance (A Study of John Webster 111). Whitman reminds us of the empty nothingness that lies behind her assumption of nobility (96). For Ornstein, all the characters, not just Vittoria, are hollow, possessed by nothing but ambition and ruthlessness (137). Stilling argues that Vittoria's sense of her own self-worth and her strength of will allow her to present herself as noble, whether she actually is or not (232). Nicholas Brooke argues that Webster presents her character as an unknowable, complex mystery; she is an ambivalent character, interpreted by other characters rather than ever revealing her true self (Brooke 32-3). Similarly, Gill argues that Webster presents her from many different angles, creating a complex character whom we can never completely understand (43). Lord argues that she has no inner self, but exists as the best actor of all in a world that judges not on the basis of truth but of performance (The Dynamics of Role-Playing 307). Bodkte claims that both Flameneo and Vittoria, a consummate actress (132), enact a brilliant theatrical performance that first makes evil appear glorious but that becomes meaningless in the face of death (92-94). McLeod places the play's characters in a theatrical context, seeing Vittoria as a skilled actress (Dramatic Imagery 36) with Flameneo as a stage director (Dramatic Imagery 39); similarly, Goldberg casts Vittoria as the best actress in the play world with Flameneo as her "interpreter" ('By Report' 77). Dallby and Bruce Franklin both argue that all the characters are skilled and hypocritical rhetoricians (Franklin 51), using sententiae to aid their self-presentations (Dallby 100). Contrastingly, Norma Kroll argues that Vittoria is the only character with stability and integrity in a disintegrating, Democritean world (252).

24. Surprisingly, few critics consider the importance of the two siblings, male and female, together. B. J. Layman is one of the few to do so, emphasizing that the play is centred upon Vittoria's "charged coexistence with Flameneo" (337). In his interpretation the presence of opposing siblings allows the play's contrast between imagination and ugly, corrupt reality (337). The one sibling transforms ugly reality into beauty, while the other acknowledges nothing but ugliness as reality (Layman 342-343). Ribner, who argues for the play's strong ties to The Duchess of Malfi, contrasts Vittoria's integrity of life with her brother's lack of heroism, confusion, and ugly cynicism (The Quest For Moral Order 101-108) and claims that the two embody a life-death opposition ("Webster's Italian Tragedies" 110). McAlindon argues that Webster exaggerates the siblings' initial antagonism so that, at the moment of their deaths, they may become a more powerful symbol of the unity of conflicting opposites (171), using their courage to rise above a chaotic, disunified world (165). Bromley also contrasts the siblings so that she may underline Flameneo's cowardice in comparison with Vittoria's defiant courage as both face the cruel realities of the world (63). Bliss explains the siblings' antagonism briefly, but interestingly, as a reflection of their egotistic desire to stand alone, to be completely individual (The World's Perspective 128-130).

25. Muriel Bradbrook is one of the few critics to point out that Flameneo still views Vittoria as his property, rather than as Camillo's, and that he is the head of the family (John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist 129).

26. Critics of all stripes have particularly emphasized Webster's sense of a confused and disordered world in which moral standards and beliefs are no longer absolute and unquestionable. Schuman argues that the dramatist reproduces the characters' "moral disorientation" (The Theatre of Fine

Devices' 93) in the audience ('The Theatre of Fine Devices' 92-93); Mulryne argues that he presents a world of "moral and emotional anarchy" (204), though he sees this viewpoint as opposed to revenge tragedy; McAlindon sees Flamineo as a representative of the play's prevailing "spirit of division and violence" (164); Ribner studies Webster's search for moral order in the midst of Jacobean skepticism (Jacobean Tragedy 97); Wymer speaks of the way in which Webster brings us to experience the characters' shattered, chaotic world (44); Dallby comments on Webster's diseased world in which evil constantly gives birth to greater evil (157-159), falseness appears treacherously alluring, perverting Christian piety for its own purposes (157), and the loss of established values brings "moral chaos" (161); John McElroy speaks of the loss of ethical and religious ideals in the play, which results in a world without meaning (302-303); and Goldberg argues that the play presents both people and society itself as fundamentally anarchic and self-interested. For her, the play suggests that all social ties are artificial constructs rather than 'natural.' (Between Two Worlds 72-73).

27. Cf. Dwyer who discusses both Flamineo's belief in his own self-sufficiency (139) and the way in which his viewpoint violates Webster's traditional Christian-humanist views (182).

28. Murray claims that Webster draws on the medieval tradition of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil for his presentation of evil (A Study of John Webster 48-49) and claims that Vittoria embodies all three of these aspects of vice (A Study of John Webster 52-53), tempting others to evil (A Study of John Webster 78); Dallby points out that the play contains elements of both a new psychological realism and medieval symbolism (174-175); Goldberg draws the same comparison, only to dismiss the medieval elements as conventional morality, used to restrict and control the characters' individualistic ambitions (Between Two Worlds 9).

29. Cf. McElroy who observes that Flamineo's anger with Cornelia and his murder of Marcello reveals his division (308-309). In her analysis of the play's duality, McLeod comments on the way in which the play's characters act as doubles of each other ("Duality in The White Devil" 280-281).

30. Cf. Edwin who points out that Flamineo, in murdering his brother, kills his better half (8-9). Murray observes, more generally, that he tries to kill the good in himself so that he may survive in a corrupt world (46). Likewise, McElroy argues that Flamineo tries consciously to embrace evil when he murders his brother, to use the act to prove that evil is the only reality in his world (308-309). Ribner contends that Vittoria, like the Duchess, represents good, while her brother embodies the negative force of death ("Webster's Italian Tragedies" 110). Conversely, Luckyj rejects a symbolic interpretation of Flamineo's action in murdering his brother for a more realistic one. She argues that Flamineo is provoked by his brother into striking back: "[T]he murder is a direct response to tyrannical moralism"(64).

31. Cf. Murray's argument which sees the play as condemning individualism in Christian terms, as an excess of pride. He claims that pride leads Flamineo to destroy himself, as he separates himself from both the community and morality (A Study of John Webster 110). Similarly, Bliss argues that Flamineo's and Vittoria's relentless individualism and their "unbridled egotism helped destroy two families and dissolve the fragile legal and religious covenants that bind individual wills to communal purposes" (128). Bliss particularly emphasizes the universality of the theme of antagonistic siblings, pointing to the play's references to Cain and Abel and the sons of Oedipus (133). By contrast, Luckyj

argues that Flamineo behaves relatively heroically in upholding "individual moral freedom" (64) in the face of his family's "tyrannical moralism" (64).

32. Ribner comments on how the two represent the opposition between life and death ("Webster's Italian Tragedies" 110). Layman emphasizes the importance of their sibling tie but does so to contrast the struggle in the play between imagination and the ugliness of reality. In his interpretation Vittoria's hostile contention with her brother arises out of her desire to shelter herself from the ugliness of the world, the ugliness represented by her cynical brother.

33. Other explanations of Flamineo's incomprehensible behaviour include Kroll's claim that his character basically disintegrates through the course of the play, descending almost into madness (250-251).

34. Cf. the Halletts' observation that "[w]horning his sister is a kind of violation of himself" (294), an expression of his self-disgust and hatred (295).

35. Contrast Matthew Griffith's plea for harmony between children within the same family, as well as between Christian siblings (Berthel: Or, Form for Families--1633): "Let there be no strife betweene you, for you are brethren: brethren by nature, and brethren by grace; brethren in the flesh, and brethren in the spirit; brethren by nation, and brethren by Communion; brethren, as having the same Parents, God and the Church; brethren as having the same patrimonie, Grace" (377).

Goldberg observes that, for Webster, "the breakdown of family ties seems to be central to a total breakdown of order" (Between Two Worlds 73). However, she proceeds to argue that Webster, rather than responding with despair and horror to this vision of chaos, instead wishes to expose the fact that all social ties and conventions are nothing more than constructs, created by the powerful few in order to manipulate and control the powerless many (73-75). For Goldberg, Webster's two most famous plays advance individualism at the expense of traditional morality, as part of an "anti-rationalist, anti-idealistic philosophical movement" (12).

The mood of the play is so agonized, however, that it is difficult to imagine that Webster did not view this breakdown--the reverse of the ideal set forward by Griffith--with extreme anxiety. More important, by focusing Flamineo's attack on society and family specifically within his attempts to kill (or dishonour) the siblings who are parts of himself, Webster seems to suggest the reverse of what Goldberg argues. Rather than deifying individualism, Webster indicates that rejection of family and society is a fundamentally self-destructive enterprise, a turning on and destroying of essential parts of oneself; it is also a reflection of self-division and inner turmoil (figured in the quarrelling siblings) rather than psychic integrity.

36. Gill is one of the few critics to study Vittoria specifically as a sister and to point out her similarity to other sisters of Renaissance drama: Bel-imperia, Evadne, and Donusa of Massinger's The Renegado. All these sisters, she remarks, possess "intelligence and courage" (51).

Other critical interpretations of Vittoria vary greatly. Some study her as the product of her society. Dollimore contends that she rebels against social constructions of women as powerless by attempting to appropriate a masculine role (Radical Tragedy 235). Likewise, Bromley's analysis examines Vittoria's largely unsuccessful attempts to place herself beyond the period's conventional definition of women and to escape the limiting and negative roles her society imposes on her.

Other scholars discuss whether or not Vittoria is meant to be interpreted sympathetically. Some argue that she is engulfed by the evil around her (Edwin 17), others that she is defined by her integrity (Schuman, 'The Theatre of Fine Devices' 124) and notable in a changing, Democritean world for "the physical integrity of her mind and body" (Kroll 248). Still other critics describe her as a courageous woman who challenges the hypocritical and corrupt society that denies her individuality (Courtade 18); and a sympathetic and attractive figure forced by a corrupt society into expressing her individuality in unacceptable ways (Goldberg, Between Two Worlds 22).

Other critics particularly emphasize her moral ambiguity. They variously claim that Webster cannot decide whether she is good or evil (Tomlinson 233); that she is a complex blend of good and evil (McLeod 281); that she is a part of an evil world that is not of her making (Lever 83); that she is a figure whom we both approve of and condemn (Whitman 197; Bradbrook, John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist 132); that she is a woman whose courage and self-integrity, paradoxically, arise out of evil (Ribner, The Search For Moral Order 106); that she is a character who dazzles and confuses her audience by the brilliance of her performance, making evil appear glorious (Bodkte 92-95; 132); that she is heroic yet hypocritical (Sensabaugh 353; Champion, Tragic Patterns 131), complex and ambivalent (Wymer 37-38); and that she is both noble and hypocritical, transforming the ugly and sordid into the beautiful through the conscious exercise of her imagination (Layman 340-347). Still other critics present her as Webster's image of evil, hypocrisy, and falseness (Murray, A Study of John Webster 64-65). She is a person whose nobility is completely and tragically false (Whitman 99); a figure of evil who is self-deluded (Dwyer 42-43) and who draws courage from false pride and desperation (Dwyer 43-44); a true white devil, perilous in her appeal (McLeod, Dramatic Imagery 53); and a siren, the more alluring and beautiful, the more false and destroying (Dallby 127; 131).

37. Cf. Bradbrook's observation that one of the connecting themes of Webster's plays is "the mutual rights and obligations of women to their original family and to their husbands" (118).

38. Bliss argues that their antagonism arises out of their egotism and their individualism; each tries to destroy the other in order to preserve his/her self-image intact, while each, equally, tries to attack the self-definition the other attempts to project (The World's Perspective 128).

39. Numerous critics have commented on the play's presentation of a world in which everyone engages in a violent, hostile struggle for power, most notably Lever (83); Bodkte, who envisions the characters as beautiful yet amoral animals savagely striving for power and supremacy (34-35); Courtade, who stresses that power is the ultimate factor in the play (28), the corrupt and evil force against which individuals like Vittoria and Flamineo struggle (47); and Griffin who claims that power is "the chief reality of the play" (74) in a world in which everyone tries to fulfill their desires (74). Perhaps the most emphatic analysis of the importance of power to the play comes in Dollimore's interpretation of the controlling "operations of a criminal society" on its rebellious (Vittoria and Flamineo) and obedient (Cornelia and Isabella) members alike (Radical Tragedy 234).

40. See for example Stilling, who rejects Flamineo as the play's moral commentator and argues that his flawed outlook is that of a misogynist and cynic who cannot grasp the true nature of love (227-228); or Bodkte who envisions Flamineo as a stage director, manipulating characters into behaving in ways that confirm his cynical view of the world (133); or Layman, who claims that Flamineo

attempts to force Vittoria to conform to his view of the world as diseased and repulsive (337); or Bliss (*The World's Perspective* 97 ff.). Bromley particularly dismisses his cynical comments on his sister as "the same tired generalizations" (62) without acknowledging that the period may have viewed his comments about women as legitimate.

41. By contrast, David Cressy's *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, which provides an emphatic rejection of many of Stone's best known claims about the nature of the early modern family, claims that there was no dramatic change in the "structure of the family" through the period (10). All families were "nuclear in structure though fruitfully connected to their wider kin" (Cressy 10). Whether or not one finally follows Cressy or Stone, the rise in domestic manuals and household guidebooks popularized the conception of the nuclear family. These writings also, clearly, linked the rule of the father over his household to the absolute rule of monarch over his state. Further, Cressy, as much as Stone, underlines the patriarchal authority and power which the new husband obtains in the domestic household. He writes, "Through marriage their [men's] relationship to domestic authority became transformed. As single and dependent persons they had followed orders, but as married householders they issued instructions. Marriage for a man meant autonomy, mastery, responsibility, and the prospect of fathering a lineage" (287).

42. Ronald B. McKerrow gives *The Tragedy of Loocrine* an earlier, tentative date of 1585 and ascribes authorship to either George Peele or Robert Greene.

43. In his article, "'A Little More Than Kin, and Less Than Kind': Incest, Intimacy, Narcissism, and Identity in Elizabethan and Stuart Drama," Forker stresses this idea in his interpretation of Ford's plays.

44. The nebulous, undefined place between the extended and the nuclear families which siblings occupy make them particularly well-suited to be the focus of the tension between these two conceptions of family. Many historians are vague when considering what place brothers and sisters held within the "extended family." Both Wrightson and Houlbrooke seem to take the Tudor Poor Laws, which indicate that only grandparents, parents, and children had to support dependents (Wrightson 46; Houlbrooke 48) as the definition of the nuclear family. But they use the term "extended family" loosely, not clearly indicating when a sibling ceases to be a member of the nuclear family or when (s)he becomes a member of an extended kinship network. Wrightson, for example, argues that the extended family was important only for the gentry and nobility (48). However, he places aunts, uncles, sisters and first cousins within the immediate family (47). By contrast, Houlbrooke sees brothers and brothers-in-laws (ie sisters' husbands) as being outside the nuclear family (48).

This vagueness particularly emphasizes the fluid and undetermined place of siblings within the family structure, indicating the close ties they have to both the extended and the nuclear family. When they are children, adolescents, and even wards of their older siblings, they are members of the original nuclear family. When they themselves marry, they generate nuclear families of their own and establish new ties; yet, even as adults, when they are seen together with their parent(s) (the hostile brother and sister of the Wentworth family are a good example), they are remnants of the old family, not an image of an extended household. When they are adults, they become, in relation to their

siblings and their siblings' children, a part of the extended family, and yet their blood ties continue to bind them closely to original family members.

45. Only William Shullenberger's article, appropriately titled "'This for the Most Wrong'd of Women': A Reappraisal of The Maid's Tragedy," gives both Evadne and her relationship with her brother the central place in the play that they deserve. His interpretation differs from mine, however, because he studies Evadne principally as the tragic focus of the play, rather than as a sister. He feels that she is the most striking, intense character of the play (147), but locates her power exclusively within her sexuality (147) and within her metaphoric link to the destroying primordial figure of night (149). As the disruptive tragic heroine, she helps embody the uncertainty of the era, revealing "the crisis of the soul in a patriarchal culture acutely aware of its own unstable purchase on political and metaphysical authority" (133).

Another scholar, Mario Praz, focuses briefly on the play's treatment of the brotherly dishonour theme. He points out Webster's indebtedness to the play, commenting on the similarity of Ferdinand's dagger-waving to Melantius' behaviour when he terrifies Evadne into murdering her lover (255). But he only points out verbal echoes and does not explore the brother-sister motif.

Other critics have tended to concentrate on the structure of the play or its place within Beaumont's and Fletcher's largely tragicomic canon, and they ignore the significance of the relationship between the siblings. T. B. Tomlinson analyses the work as a confused mixture of tragedy and comedy (243). Lawrence B. Wallis explores the play in terms of its relationship to Beaumont and Fletcher's overall tragicomic technique. His argument that the play is ordered around opposing emotions and based on an emotional pattern rather than a logical plot (204-205) is useful for understanding the characters' lack of motivation and internal consistency, and the functioning of the play as a dramatic unit. Yet, even if we accept his argument that consistent characterization is subordinated to the emotional manipulation of the audience, we might still ask why different emotional responses are linked to the different male and female figures such as the brother, the sister, the husband, the wife, and the lover. Similarly, Eugene M. Waith discusses the play in terms of its inconsistent characterizations, arguing that the play is built on a series of emotionally engaging scenes, in which characters are presented as contrasting antitheses (The Pattern of Tragicomedy 22-25). John Danby also focuses on the theme and structure of the play, arguing that it is based on a sequence of conflicts between different absolute principals (186). He thus looks at Evadne principally in relation to the King and to Amintor because, for Danby, this is where the most striking inversions of Petrarchan tradition are located (187). Casually, he dismisses and then ignores the last two acts as conventional (201) simply because they do not fit into his view of how the play should be. While Ornstein points out the play's new emphasis on the female rather than the male (172), he, like Danby, concentrates on the inversion of the courtly love tradition in the play and discusses its role in introducing an altered Petrarchanism into Jacobean tragedy (173).

Critics who have studied the play from a feminist perspective or who have concentrated more specifically on the love aspect of the play still overlook the brother-sister relationship. Leonora Brodwin analyses the play in its treatment of love and argues that Evadne and Aspatia represent "the sado-masochistic perversions of Courtly Love" (140). Molly Smith sees Evadne as a subversion of both patriarchal and monarchical authority (The Darker World Within 142), but curiously does not examine her relationship with Melantius, a relationship which seems to affirm key patriarchal principles such as loyalty to father and family. Anne M. Haselkorn studies her as an embodiment of

the Renaissance's dichotomous view of women as whore and saint and uses this polarity to explain Evadne's transformation from defiant strength to meek repentance (123). Ronald Huebert concentrates his analysis on Aspatia and Evadne, describing them as examples of the figure of "the forsaken woman" whose cry "is one of protest against a social order and a masculine world that expects and condones only stereotypical female behaviour" ("An Artificial Way to Grieve": The Forsaken Woman in Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and Ford" 601). While the other women he studies, Penthea of The Broken Heart and Eugenia of The Duke of Milan, are both sisters as well, he does not comment on their relationship to their brothers.

Finally, Bliss studies the play in terms of the Renaissance interest in art and nature and argues that it shows an overriding loss of faith in both artistic and social order. In the same way that art can impose only a fragile and easily over-turned structure and control on nature, so humanity can impose only a weak order on their amorality ("Tragicomic Romance" 162-3).

46. Cf. Wallis' observation that Beaumont and Fletcher, so far from being servile royalists, challenged political absolutism (136-137). Fredson Bowers, on the other hand, argues that Amintor's staunch defence of the Divine Right of kings helps to defuse the threat posed by Melantius (172-173). Other factors, he argues, that make Melantius's regicide less threatening to James I include his loyalty to his country, his high position within the state, and the fact that Evadne carries out the actual murder (174).

47. Whether they discuss the female characters of the play in detail or not, critics tend to view Evadne, rather than Aspatia, as the principal female figure. Danby claims the play is named after Aspatia, even while pointing out that Evadne controls the events of the play (186-7). In the same way, Waith observes that the play is named after Aspatia, and then concedes that the relationship between king, Amintor, and Evadne pushes the forlorn maid into the shade (The Pattern of Tragicomedy 21). Ornstein again sees Evadne as the most powerful female figure in the play (171), while Smith briefly cites her as an image of the dominant woman who subverts patriarchal and monarchical authority (The Darker World Within 142).

By contrast, Brodwin, who studies the play as an example of false, ideal love (135), concentrates on Aspatia and disregards Evadne, describing and dismissing her as "that rare woman who is totally lacking in feminine wiles" (135). Huebert stresses the importance of both female characters, as examples of forsaken women who "protest against a social order and a masculine world that expects and condones only stereotypical female behaviour" ("An Artificial Way to Grieve" 601). Only Shullenberger places particular emphasis on both Evadne and her in relation to her brother. Not only does he largely dismiss Aspatia (153), but he views Evadne as the tragic focus of the play (155) and studies her relationship to both her brother and her husband.

48. Wallis' and Waith's explanation, that the play is strongly influenced by the dramatists' tragicomic technique, which places plot and emotional effect above character consistency (Wallis 204-205; Waith, The Pattern of Tragicomedy 22-25), is perhaps the most convincing explanation. How else can Evadne's complete and absolute transformation be explained? Danby, though, sees her as being intimidated by her brother's physical violence (198); Haselkorn, viewing her as an embodiment of the two polarized views of women in the male psyche, claims that her personality moves between the extremes of saintliness and whorishness (123); and Shullenberger does not see a character

inconsistency at all but a part of the chaos and the "Jacobean nightmare" of the play (133).

49 . Cf. Shullenberger's observation that "[t]he claim of family, that primary organization of psychic energy, the original patriarchal hierarchy, is the snare in which Melantius catches Evadne" (148-149).

50 . Critics are also divided on this issue. Not surprisingly, those who dismiss the female characters in the play downplay Evadne's role in the vengeance. They see her as her brother's puppet executioner (Danby 198) or stress that Melantius is the one actively pursuing revenge (Wallis 167). Other scholars, however, emphasize her centrality in the revenge. Although Ornstein looks at her in relation to Amintor, not her brother, he sees her as usurping "the traditionally masculine role of revenger" (171); Huebert points out that she, not her brother, actually carries out the revenge, regardless of who might have planned it ("An Artificial Way to Grieve" 606); and Shullenberger argues that Melantius uses his sister because he is too frightened to take revenge himself (147).

51 . Wallis compares Evadne and Melantius to Laertes and Ophelia, for Melantius, like Laertes before him, actively sets about revenging the wrong done to his sister (167). A comparison of the two is significant, however, in that it emphasizes the differences in the treatment of the siblings, not the similarities. Laertes is presented more as a son, revenging his father, than as a sibling; while, in The Maid's Tragedy, as Bliss argues, in contrast to Hamlet, the men "have no fathers, their world no past" ("Tragicomic Romance" 153). Melantius and Evadne are siblings, not children, and are seen in relationship to one another, not their father. More important, Ophelia does nothing to avenge her or her father's abuse, while Evadne avenges her own wrongs far more actively than either Melantius or Laertes.

Ornstein also discusses the similarities between the two plays, claiming that The Maid's Tragedy is a re-writing of Hamlet, with a shift to an emphasis on the female. "Hamlet is reduced (as Amintor) to posturing impotence" while Evadne is the Gertrude figure grown "so powerful" that she "usurps the traditionally masculine role of revenger" (171). In truth, Evadne is a combination of both Ophelia and Gertrude, joining the latter's destructive sexual potency with the figure of the wronged sister.

52 . The few critics who study Philip Massinger tend to focus more on his use of the tragicomic form and his political interests than on either his revenge tragedy or his treatment of the brother-sister relationship. Ira Clark's The Moral Art of Philip Massinger and his Professional Playwrights: Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome offer the most detailed and recent studies of Massinger. But both studies concentrate principally on his tragicomedies, arguing that the tragicomic form allows Massinger to mediate between the extremes of absolute patriarchal authority and revolutionary reform and to "reform and reintegrate hierarchical society on the principle of mutual gratitude" (Professional Playwrights 51). Another relatively recent study by Doris Adler focuses exclusively on Massinger's political sympathies and argues that the play is a political allegory that criticizes king and court (54). Brodwin, who calls the play Massinger's greatest tragedy (309) focuses exclusively on the relationship between the Duke and his wife. An earlier study, by Henri Jacob Makkink, contrasts Massinger with Fletcher in order to emphasize the difference in their world views. Massinger, according to Makkink, is admirable and moral, Fletcher immoral and debauched (92); Massinger is a "staunch royalist" (140) who nonetheless believes in questioning kings (147), while Fletcher preaches "slavish obedience"

(147). Only Don Beecher, in his brief article, studies The Duke of Milan in the tradition of revenge tragedies. He, however, focuses specifically on the development of the scheming Machiavellian, who, he argues, appears in this play as a merging of the courtier figure and the trickster of Italian comedy.

Scholars have, however, tended to comment on the prominence of strong, articulate, and virtuous women in Massinger's drama. As early as 1920, A. H. Cruikshank notices the playwright's liberal attitude towards women and the stirring speeches he allows them. Philip Edwards later argues that Massinger's drama is distinctly feminist, exposing the insecurity and inadequacy of the male characters and "the weak structure on which an ethos of male dominance is founded" ("Massinger's Men and Women" 46). Clark makes numerous comments on Massinger's sympathetic viewpoint on women in his studies of the dramatist's tragicomedies.

53. These two extremes, contained within the same character, may indicate a self-destructiveness in Francisco similar, though less developed, to that in Vindice. At court, Beecher points out, "the courtier is forced to live divided against himself" (77), and this self-division may manifest itself in two conflicting attitudes towards his sister. However, Francisco never appears in doubt about his duty to Eugenia, and Massinger contrasts his false self, as the Duke's creature, emphatically with his true self, which is defined in relation to the honour of his house.

54. Elizabeth Otten analyses the play as a study of a man whose conception of love is really based on narcissistic self-love (147). His worship of Marcelia as an idol finally destroys both himself and her (155). Brodwin, who is concerned with studying different patterns in Elizabethan love tragedy, sees the Duke's love for Marcelia as an example of a false and ultimately sterile love.

55. Of the critics who study Massinger, only Otten considers the perspective of the sister and mother, claiming that the Duke unforgivably neglects them and that they are justified in attacking his sensual obsession with Marcelia (147).

56. For a fuller discussion of Shirley's conservatism and his support of an absolute monarchy, see Clark (Professional Playwrights 119-130).

57. It is for this reason that Clark sees a slight questioning of patriarchal authority in the play, one which disappears in the dramatist's later works (126).

58. Alfred Harbage styles Davenant as the most successful playwright in balancing the demands of public and courtly theatre (Harbage 162-165).

Chapter 3

Kind Tyranny: Illegitimate Fraternal Authority in Stuart Tragicomedy

The few brothers and sisters of Elizabethan comedy and tragicomedy are often presented in a conventional fashion, as dramatists either explore the potential for incest in sibling relationships or style the sister as the lawful property of her brother. However, other, mostly Stuart, tragicomedy exploits and alters the antagonistic sibling relationship of the revenge tragedy to fit the changed genre. Instead of a single-parent family presided over by the mother, many Stuart tragicomedies which focus on sibling conflict and incestuous attraction contain a father, whose legitimate authority contrasts with the illegitimate authority of his son and whose presence is enough to transform potential tragedy into comedy. In a re-working and reformation of the disordered families of revenge tragedy, these fathers either check their sons' attempts to control their sisters or bring peace to violently quarrelling and hostile siblings. The order that their paternal presence brings particularly emphasizes the extent to which the revenge tragedies conceived of the brother as a tyrannical image of patriarchal authority, as well as the degree to which an absent father signals chaos. In such plays as Thomas Heywood's The Four Prentices (1592-c. 1600; 1615), Beaumont and Fletcher's A King and No King (1611; 1619), the Webster, Massinger, and Ford collaboration, The Fair Maid of the Inn (1626; 1647), Ford's The Broken Heart (c. 1625-1633; 1633), and Massinger's The Bondman (licensed 1623; 1624) and A Very Woman (licensed 1634; 1655), the potentially destructive relationship between brother and sister threatens tragedy, but the presence or return of the father and his assertion of authority over the siblings swings the play to a partially comic conclusion.

At the same time, Stuart tragicomedies tend to exaggerate the brother into a comic parody

of the earlier revenger, caricaturing his obsessive interest in and jealousy of his sister. The brother's desire to restrain his sister and to affirm his authority at her expense manifests itself in the traditional terms of an interest in her sexuality; but his over-zealous attempts to displace the husband make him appear ridiculous rather than threatening. Ultimately, the conflict between brother and sister's lover is resolved in favour of the domestic family of husband and wife, rather than the blood family and extended kinship ties.

In Elizabethan plays, dramatists use the threat of incest between unwitting siblings primarily as a plot device, an emphasis which carries over into some of the Jacobean and Caroline tragicomedy as well.¹ In John Lyly's Mother Bombye (1587-1590; 1594), a confusion of siblings at birth almost leads to an unintentionally incestuous marriage. The actual relationship between brother and sister is left unexplored, since they do not even know that they are related; neither do they interact as lovers, for their marriage is arranged. Thomas Heywood's play The Foure Prentises of London (1592-c. 1600; 1615) also focuses on unintentional incest, but the dramatist develops his premise with more subtlety than Lyly. Seeing the titillation of potential attraction between siblings as the principal element of interest in the relationship, Heywood has the four sons of the Earl of Bulloigne fall in love with their sister Bella Franca and then compete with one another for her attentions. While all five of the siblings are disguised beyond recognition, the brothers' desire ironically arises out of the very fact that the girl they are wooing reminds them of their sister. Godfrey ingenuously locates his feelings for the girl within this resemblance: "I do more affectionate, [her] / Because she much resembl[es] my faire sister" (2: 223), similarly, his brother Eustace proposes to her "for her [his sister's] sake, faire Saint, I honour you" (2: 227). Ostensibly, their love arises out of their instinctive desire to protect and honour this woman who reminds them of Bella Franca. But the fact that the brothers are

attracted to her precisely because she appears to be like their sister indicates that the play is exploring unconscious incestuous feelings within the family and using the altered identities to allow family tensions an acceptable expression. Just as their disguises allow the four brothers to quarrel, insult, and fight with one another, giving vent to their animosity and sibling rivalry in a less openly destructive form, so the sister's disguise allows them to verbalize their incestuous desire for her. The transformation of the brothers' feelings from passionate lust to chaste and virtuously fraternal affection when they learn the girl's true identity indicates how it is only the word "sister," as Arbaces says, or social convention, that separates them from their desires. There is no innate or natural aversion within them towards embarking on a physical relationship with their sister. In fact, it is just the reverse, and a remembrance of family connection fuels the attraction. To Heywood, the taboo against brother-sister incest is a social construction rather than a natural decree. It does not manifest itself instinctively or intuitively, but, when invoked, it has the immediate effect of quenching their unchaste desires.²

Other Stuart plays show this same use of the brother-sister relationship solely as a plot element, exploiting the melodramatic potential of unwitting incest. In Middleton's No Help No Wit Like a Woman's (c. 1612; 1657), a two-fold mix-up in identities first leads the brother to enter into an incestuous union with his sister, not recognising her, and then saves him when it is revealed that she and his true sister had been switched at birth. In a similar manner, Shirley builds his whole play, The Court Secret (unacted; 1653), on the unsettling possibility of incestuous unions; he exploits the brother-sister relationship extensively as a plot device, providing a series of complicated twists that arise out of a whole group of confused identities. By the conclusion of the play, two unwittingly incestuous attractions have been revealed and thwarted, one apparently incestuous relationship has

been allowed, and the audience is left bemused as to who is truly related to whom, since so many babies have been switched and/or kidnapped at birth. The tightly intertwining relationships in this play and the continual threat of incestuous attractions also add to the feeling of the court as an exclusive, closely knit circle of inter-marriages where almost everyone is connected to everyone else.

In other plays, both the dramatist and the brother see the sister as part of the family property, to be disposed of as the males in the family see fit. Their outlook ties in closely with the attitude of brothers such as Vindice and Flamineo and extends to a similarly logical extreme; presented as owning their sisters, these brothers can push them into prostitution, as well as marriage. One of the most famous early examples of the brother-pandar comes in the tragicomic subplot of Thomas Heywood's A Woman Killed by Kindness (1603,1607).³ On the one hand, Heywood stresses the strong family love between the siblings, a love that is based both on pride in blood and on warmth and affection. Susan's first long speech indicates how concerned she is with her brother's well-being and how deeply she cares for him: "Your company is as my eyeball dear; / Being far from you, no comfort can be near" (iii.78-79). With the sub-plot's emphasis on siblings comes an accompanying emphasis on inherited family identity. Both brother and sister struggle to preserve the family estate and house that maintains their honour and gives them their joint sense of identity. Charles rejects Shafton's attempt to buy their home as an act destructive to their family both dead and alive:

... this house successively

Hath 'longed to me and my progenitors

Three hundred year. My great-great-grandfather,

He in whom first our gentle style began,

Dwelt here. (vii 15-19)

His sentiments indicate the extent to which he derives his sense of identity from the family which is represented by their ancestral home and perpetuated in the blood lines of each successive generation. His sister reveals the same dedication to their family heritage, toiling in the field with Charles in order "to reserve to us / And our succession this small plot of ground" (vii.45-46). Further stressing the closeness of the ties between the siblings, Heywood makes the sister the only one to remain loyal to her brother in his trials, for all his other kinsfolk and associates--uncle, cousin, friend, and tenant--abandon him in his time of need.

Heywood, then, idealizes the bond between the siblings, depicting it as strong, intense, and able to resist all the forces that assail it. By contrast, the marriage tie between Anne and her husband appears much weaker, is unable to withstand Wendoll's temptation, and is easily overcome. While critics who have compared the sub-plot with the main plot have often commented on Anne and Susan as contrasting parallels,⁴ they have not studied the two in terms of presentation of wife and sister. In Heywood's conception, the sister's loyalty to her brother is so strong because it, metaphorically speaking, has been "three hundred year" in the making and is an inseparable part of her allegiance to the family name and estate of which she and her brother are both integral parts. Anne's union to her husband, however, does not have this depth. Even though it is sanctified by church and law, it is still an artificial rather than a natural tie. While the play may place the greatest emphasis on exploring the tensions between husband and wife, giving rise to the many critical interpretations which place this treatment within the Protestant idealization of marriage, it also, through the plot and sub-plot, contrasts two historical constructs of family: the one based on inherited blood and family estate, in which family members share a joint sense of identity, and the other in which male and female identity are derived from the socially inscribed roles of husband and wife. Although Heywood focuses more

attention on the private domestic relationship between Frankford and Anne, the blood ties prove ultimately stronger. It is easier for Susan to invest her identity in the 300-year family lineage of which her blood makes her a part, than for Anne to surrender up her self to her husband.

Yet despite the strength of Susan's family loyalty, she still remains the property of her brother, no more enfranchised by her position as sister than Anne is as Frankford's new wife. When Charles needs to repay the debt to his enemy, Susan does not question his right to give her body as payment, nor does Heywood, to any great extent, criticize his decision.⁵ While Charles claims to prize his sister's "chaste honour ... above a million" (xiv.107-08), his hyperbole cannot conceal the fact that he views her body as a commodity. So far from being unable to price the worth of her "rich jewel" (xiv.48), he puts a precise monetary value on it of 500 pounds, the amount that he feels he owes to his enemy. Ultimately, he perceives his sister as one more resource to be exploited. Seeing her as of far less value than his personal sense of honour, he has no problem justifying his actions: "Wouldst thou see me live / A bankrupt beggar in the world's disgrace / And die indebted to my enemies?" (xiv.11-13). Confirming his attitude, Susan herself accepts his request and the reasoning that is implicit behind it. She acknowledges that she is part of his wealth, "My brother being rich in nothing else / But in his interest that he hath in me" (xiv.112-113), internalizing his perspective to the extent that she even characterizes their relationship in financial terms.

The ironic contradiction within his request, that he will save his own sense of honour only by forcing his sister into a state of prostitution that will defile his family's name far more completely than the loss of their manorial house, does not appear to trouble him; nor does it seem to bother critics. Laura Bromley and Diana Henderson both accept that his goal of paying off his debt of honour and preserving his family home is noble,⁶ and only Patricia Meyers Spacks observes that he plans to do

so through a different wound to the family name (328). As with Vindice and Flamineo, the brother's personal, selfish interests again come into conflict with the overriding demands of father and family honour, and Susan is offered up as the sacrifice to her brother's intemperance and rashness. But Susan, unlike other sisters, does not use this contradiction to justify defiance of her brother. Instead, she attempts to satisfy both loyalties at once, and this internal conflict between the patriarchal authority of father and of brother expresses itself in her proposed self-destruction. She resolves to preserve both her brother's good name and her family's honour by killing herself after allowing Charles to give her to his enemy. While Susan may obey her male relatives unquestioningly, Heywood's play intimates the potential conflict between legitimate parental authority and illegitimate fraternal authority and suggests the way in which the demands of the brother can undercut the very patriarchal hierarchy from which he derives his own position.

The unquestioned view of the sister as the possession of her brother finds even more explicit expression in Thomas Middleton and Thomas Rowley's A Fair Quarrel (c. 1616-1617; 1617). While Suzanne Gossett's article "Sibling Power: Middleton and Rowley's A Fair Quarrel" argues that the play presents a sibling who is more subversive and rebellious than her other female contemporaries, the treatment of both sisters is actually very conservative.⁷ The Colonel's sister, who is not even dignified with her own name, is quite dependent on her brother. Apparently penniless herself, she is forced by his will to marry Captain Ager if she wishes to inherit his wealth. After a moment of shock that he should desire her to wed his sworn enemy, she agrees to subordinate her own feelings to his demands: "I'll perform / What by your will you have enjoined me to, / Though the world never show me joy again" (IV ii. 107-9). While her brother, at least, insists on lawful wedlock, there is little difference between his demand and Sir Charles', since both insist that their sisters bestow their bodies

on men whom they hate.⁸ Clearly, she is just one more possession that the Colonel gives, in a gesture of repentance, to his enemy and whom he uses to guarantee a successful and legal transfer of his riches to Ager. When the Colonel miraculously recovers and comes on stage to embrace his former enemy, the play further emphasizes the sister's insignificance. Obedient and silent, she does not speak as the two men vie with one another in their expressions of undying love. As Richard Levin approvingly notes, she "is actually just another counter in their contest, carefully subordinated, like the property, to the more important concept of male honor" ("The Three Quarrels of A Faire Quarrel" 230) and trotted out as a token of the Colonel's reformation.

The physician's sister, who is of a far lower social status than any of the other women discussed in this survey, appears even more dependent on her brother. The family relationship of sister, rather than being in any sense liberating, places her below the level of wife or daughter and thrusts her out into the margins of society. The two siblings' shared blood gives her no power or prestige, for they are of the lowest class, and she depends on her brother to support her without being able to claim the legal status of a wife or child. In consequence, she is little more than his slave, anxious to maintain his good will so that he will not cast her off.⁹ It is no wonder then that when Jane Ager asks her who she is, she replies: "He's my brother, forsooth, I his creature; / He does command me any lawful office, / Either in act or counsel" (II.ii.70-2).

Despite viewing herself as her brother's humble and obedient servant, she still, as Gossett argues, remains loyal to her own sense of goodness and refuses to relinquish her integrity in the final test (451-452). Acting as her lecherous brother's go-between, she feels she has little choice except to press Jane to accept her brother's dishonourable proposal of love: "Pray pardon me. I must do my message; / Who lives commanded must obey his keeper" (III.ii.146-7). Later, she alters her counsel,

supporting Jane and urging her not to give in. Her reluctance to comply with the physician's commands when they go against her conscience reveals that even the most miserable and penurious sister does not blindly follow her brother, in spite of economic necessity.

Middleton and Rowley's play offers a useful perspective on the brother-sister relationship not because of its revolutionary treatment of the siblings, but because it emphasizes the importance of the sister's socio-economic status rather than social conditioning in determining her relationship to her brother. For Gossett, the play is so interesting because she feels that Middleton deconstructs the idealized brother-sister relationship to reveal that its true nature is founded on economics and power (454). But the dramatists do not have to deconstruct their society's beliefs because there is no strong ideological underpinning to her obedience or any other sister's in the first place. Wife and daughter are conditioned to obey their husband and father; by contrast Anne's initial compliance arises out of what Middleton and Rowley recognize--and what Gossett emphasizes--to be simple economic necessity, not cultural belief. It is not surprising that she later defies the physician when his demands go against her conscience, for she, like other sisters, is not compelled by the expectations of her society into obedience.¹⁰ What makes Anne different from other sisters is that she is one of the few dramatic examples of a sister from the very lowest classes. Unlike royal and aristocratic sisters, who have wealth or standing in their own right or who, like the Colonel's sister and Anne of A Woman Killed With Kindness, identify with their brothers in order to maintain their own position of privilege or gentle birth, Anne has less vested interest in identifying with him.

The view of the brother as the lawful avenger or protector of his sister's honour offers another traditional and simple view of the sibling relationship. In Massinger's The Renegado (licensed 1624; 1655) the siblings seldom speak together and are rarely on stage together. Yet their close family tie

serves as the background for the action of the story, and their affection and loyalty for one another is a given that Massinger uses as the principal motivating factor of the play. Thus, the play starts with Vitelli vowing to take vengeance on the Renegado for kidnapping his sister Paulina and selling her to the lecherous Viceroy Asamberg. Convinced that to ignore Paulina's sexual slavery "Were in another name to play the Pandor / To the Viceroyes loose embraces" (I.i.134-5), he leaves Venice to rescue her. Motivated by the same sibling loyalty, Paulina later pretends to accept her Turkish captor as a part of a plan to free her brother, who has been imprisoned before he could rescue her. Their sibling tie binds them together, making them unquestioningly loyal to one another, and it establishes them as the male and female representatives of Christian virtue, both of whom are willing to die for their faith.

The Queen of Corinth (1616-c. 1618, 1647), a collaboration between Massinger, Fletcher, and Field, contains this same depiction of the honourable brother concerned with avenging and protecting his sister. After Merione's rape by an unidentified attacker, Leonidas directs his anger at her rapist, not her, vowing to seek "faire revenge" (II.iii.176). While his attempt to take revenge is ultimately questioned, he, like Massinger's Francisco, is sympathetic because he has a genuine affection for his sister. He always accompanies her, seeks to comfort her after her rape, and unquestioningly supports her.

While these plays present sisters as the property or responsibility of their brothers, other Stuart drama depicts a relationship that appears to be a tragicomic response to the self-destructive and isolated sibling revengers. In The Four Prentices, A King and No King, The Fair Maid of the Inn, The Broken Heart, The Bondman, and A Very Woman, the potentially destructive relationship between brother and sister threatens tragedy, but the presence or return of the father and his assertion

of authority over the quarrelling or incestuously attracted siblings swings the play to a partially comic conclusion. The difference between the outcome of revenge tragedies and of tragicomedies particularly underlines how, in both genres, the brother stands as a figure of illegitimate, questionable, or weak patriarchal authority, unable to replace his father adequately. Of equal interest, these plays provide a contrast between the unstable single parent family of some of the tragedies, presided over by the mother, and the stable, balanced family governed by a father. Unlike the mother, the father can bring the quarrelling siblings to order and force them to acknowledge the authority of both himself and the king.¹¹

Thomas Heywood's play The Foure Prentises of London (1592-c. 1600; 1615) provides a particularly good example of the way in which the return of the father can bring order to quarrelling siblings. While the mothers of A Nice Wanton, The Revenger's Tragedy, and The White Devil are unable to prevent the strife between siblings and actually appear to contribute to the brother figure's disrespect for authority, the return and restoration of the father's supreme authority in Heywood's play checks the siblings' potentially anarchic striving for supremacy. The sons of the Earl of Bulloigne are scattered across Europe and then brought together again in the crusade to free Jerusalem. Unaware of one another's identity and convinced of their father's death, they continually quarrel with each other and vie for the hand of their sister, Bella Franca. By the end of the play, however, "every Christian brother prince" (2: 201) is reconciled, just as the four quarrelling siblings eventually come to recognize one another and are brought to order by their loving father. The reconciled kings and harmonious siblings defeat the pagans; the sister ceases to be a cause of dissension and hatred among the brothers; and the rediscovered, "good old Father" (2: 253) presides over a liberated Jerusalem in his "Patriarchs Roabes" (2: 253).

Thus for Heywood, "brethren" denotes not just blood-related siblings but also metaphorically encompasses all Christians; by extension, the father is God, keeping the potentially antagonistic brothers in check. Even when the siblings are adults, Heywood still imagines them as needing the discipline and the restraint of their father to keep them in order, just as the belligerent and quarrelsome Christian kings need the constant guidance of their God to avoid falling into contention. Without their father, they begin to attack the established norms of the family rather than establishing legitimate and ordered families of their own; they quarrel amongst themselves, and they pursue an incestuous relationship with their own sister. Their very similarity, derived through their blood ties, feeds their hostility, for, identical in ability and temperament, there is no clear leader or superior amongst them to dominate and order the rest. However, the reappearance of their father checks their potentially destructive competition as well as bringing about the marriage of Bella Franca to a more suitable husband.

Two other plays, Beaumont and Fletcher's A King and No King (1611; 1619) and The Fair Maid of the Inn (1626, 1647), a collaboration between Webster, Ford, and Massinger, particularly reveal the period's unease with the mother, rather than the father, standing as the head of the family and underline the way in which one family unit stands as an image of disorder, the other of order. In both of these plays, the approaching tragedy is averted when the mother, who can neither discipline nor protect her family, is miraculously replaced by a father who restores order. The elaborately implausible plot of Beaumont and Fletcher's play particularly exploits this pattern. In the beginning, King Arbaces' family is characterized by its hostility and disorder. Arbaces' mother has attempted to kill her own son, while the bombastic and ego-centric king engages in an incestuous pursuit of his sister. Harmony and reconciliation replace anarchy and potential destruction, however,

when the unsettling triad of mother, son and daughter is unravelled by a series of sensational plot twists. Gobrius, the king's wise counsellor, reveals himself to be Arbaces' true father, replacing the murderous and foolish queen as the parent figure. Unlike this rash woman who attempts to resolve her problems by plotting the death of her "son," Gobrius works assiduously behind the scenes to bring happiness and tranquillity to both the kingdom and the tormented Arbaces. Having been encouraged to fall in love with his sister by the wily Gobrius, Arbaces is so happy to discover that he is unrelated to Panthea that he does not even seem to realize that he is no longer the legitimate king. His father's plot is strikingly successful. Arbaces can now consummate his love while simultaneously preserving his kingship through marriage to Panthea, the rightful heir

The absence of the father in The Fair Maid of the Inn arouses similar incestuous tensions between brother and sister and the mother's accession as head of the family causes similar chaos and disorder. Throughout the play, the dramatists emphasize the brother's inability to replace his father as the familial figure of authority. In particular, Clarissa emphatically rejects her brother's attempts to dictate whom she should accept as her suitor; like Dalilah, Vittoria, and Evadne, she flatly refuses to acknowledge her brother's pretensions to authority. In a passage which underscores the siblings' equality, she criticizes her brother's pursuit of the low-born maid of the inn as if she were their father:

If I then borrow

A little of the boldnesse of his temper,

Imparting it to such as may deserve it;

How ere indulgent to your selves, you brothers

Allow no part of freedome to your sisters. (I.i.82-86)

Her boldness in appropriating the father's part reveals the inherent instability in the relationship

between the siblings, since, regardless of their gender, neither will acknowledge the other as an unquestioned authority.

Not only does Clarissa refuse to acknowledge her brother as a figure of authority but Caesario's increasingly violent affection for his sister renders him an illegitimate image of male hierarchical power even before his father disappears. While both Clarissa and Caesario have love interests, their feelings for one another clearly equal their other attachments. Separated by only a year in age, the two share an idealized and enduring friendship described by Clarissa near the end of the play:

Remember with what tendernesse from our child-hood

Wee lov'd together, you preferring me

Before your selfe, and I so fond of you

That it begot suspition in ill mindes

That our affection was incestuous. (V.iii.146-151)

Clarissa's words here underscore the central tension of both this play and Ford's 'Tis Pity, for they contrast two types of affection, fraternal and sexual, and suggest that the one may become closely intertwined with the other. While at first it may be only the ill-natured gossips of society who sexualize their loving relationship, suspecting that it must be "incestuous," Caesario himself betrays the attraction that underlies his brotherly affection for his sister.

At the beginning of the play, the dramatists clearly equate Caesario's possessive jealousy towards his sister with an incestuous feeling that seeks to keep her for himself. Like other jealous brothers, he views her as a possession to be carefully hoarded and frets that he cannot find a case secure enough for his "one Jewell ... no locks, / Though lending strength to Iron doores sufficient

/ To gard it," (I.i.26-30). The difference, however, between him and brothers such as Vindice, Flamineo, and Melantius, underlines the increasing idealization of the sibling relationship in later Stuart drama. The "incest at one remove" of these earlier brothers primarily reflects their desire to maintain control over their sisters as a sexual resource and puts them into conflict with their sisters' husbands. They also, like Caesario, invest their family honour in their sisters' chastity. When idealized affection replaces antagonism between brother and sister, dramatists also exploit the potential for sexual feeling which literally threatens to supplant the husband. Thus Caesario himself acknowledges that he kisses his sister's hand "with more then common ardour" (I.i.52), and Clarissa pointedly criticizes his later embrace: "You are wanton: / Pray you think me not Biancha" (I.i.342-243). Even their early antagonism appears to mask not hostility but attraction as they each snipe at the other's beloved. He seeks to force Clarissa to bring her lover to him for approval; she jealously derides his choice of the low-born maid of the inn, wondering: "And this a Mistris for Albertus' sonne, / One that I should call sister?" (I.i.108-109).

Although Caesario ultimately casts himself as the rival to his sister's wooer and vies with him for her affections, he does so on a purely private, domestic level. He does not court her for her political power--as the wife of his rival--or see her primarily as a resource. Instead, he competes for her affection and loyalty. When he finds that she has been encouraging Mentivole, he responds like a betrayed lover, devastated that she has placed her love for her suitor before him: "Then shall I ever hate thee, oh thou false one; / Hast thou a Faith to give unto a friend, / And breake it to a brother" (II.iii.35-37). Caesario's feelings for his sister become an especially dangerous and disruptive passion, because they merge together a number of different elements. Genuine warmth and tenderness, as indicated by Clarissa's words, arise out of their shared childhood and fuel his romantic love. When

joined with the jealous brother's conventional concern with maintaining family honour, a possessive desire to hoard her sexuality as a useful commodity and an aristocratic desire to preserve the purity of his blood lines, his passion becomes as potentially destructive as Giovanni's. Viewing Clarissa as an extension of himself, he vows to keep her from her suitor: "Mentivole-- / He has too much of my blood already; he has, / And he gets no more of't" (II.iv.62-64); he also attempts, in a passage which prefigures the more striking ceremony in 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, to bind his sister to him by giving her a ring and making her promise to wed no one without obtaining his approval.

The siblings' strong affection for one another, then, and the sense of equality between them that leads to their quarrelling particularly necessitate the presence of a father to prevent the family from crumbling into anarchic disorder. Tellingly, when he is replaced by the children's mother as the family's sole guiding force, the play lurches towards chaos, disorder, and hostility. Caesario at once rashly assumes fatherly authority over his sister: "I shall / In the absence of my father be your Guardian; / His [his sister's lover] Suit must passe through my office" (II.iv.60-62). Worse, his desperate mother, in contrast to his father, unintentionally encourages the incest between the siblings and brings the family close to disintegration. Feeling unable to protect Caesario from the family's enemies, she proceeds to disown him as her blood son, only to see him attempt to wed Clarissa. By this time, the play has been caught up in its elaborate plot twists, clearly parodying the similar revelation of A King and No King and no longer remaining interested in exploring the feelings between the brother and sister. However, the miraculous reappearance of Alberto, who reflects distractedly on "the division of my family" (V.i.17) caused by the inept machinations of his wife, brings order and happiness to the family and the two siblings wed their respective lovers.

In The Fair Maid, the brother then continues to threaten order as an illegitimate figure of

authority, but he destabilizes the family in a different way, a way which reveals the Caroline drama's increasing idealization of brother-sister relationships. His challenge of the husband is still based on the "blood ties" which Caesario holds up as an alternative to marital ties, and yet the emphasis on dynastic family loyalty, as opposed to the love between husband and wife, has diminished. Rather than opposing two conflicting conceptions of family and love, this play, with its corresponding emphasis on love rather than hostility between siblings, begins to see brother-sister affection in a more romanticized fashion. Blood ties and the long propinquity between siblings commented on by Clarissa combine to produce an intense passion that mimics and challenges the feelings between husband and wife. Their love becomes more powerful and more potentially destructive, because it joins, rather than opposes, fraternal and romantic love in the relationship between brother and sister.

The sub-plot of John Ford's The Broken Heart (c. 1625-1633, 1633) again focuses particular attention on the way in which the brother stands as an image of illegitimate patriarchal authority and usurped power. In fact, Ford's sense of the brother as an unlawful family tyrant, checked only by the presence of his father, is so clearly formulated that it suggests that this aspect of the brother had, by the Caroline period, become an established convention. When Ithocles asserts his authority as a brother, he destroys rather than preserves the well-being of his family. Overriding the decision of his dead father, he forces Penthea to wed an unsuitable husband, thus aggravating the hatred between his house and Orgilus' and causing the tragic events of the play. The sub-plot provides a comic inversion of Ithocles' tyrannical actions. While Ford at first suggests that Orgilus will destroy his sister's romance with the friend of his enemy, the siblings' father is still alive, able to promote his daughter's marriage and to prevent his son from acting as an unlawful family tyrant.

Massinger's play The Bondman (licensed 1623, 1624) particularly develops this image of the

jealous, over-protective brother and contrasts his illegitimate attempts to control his family with the father's legitimate authority. His treatment of the brother-sister relationship shows a clear indebtedness to the siblings of revenge tragedy, but the dramatist alters the tradition to fit the genre of tragicomedy and to advance his own political concerns. The difference between the father's and the son's treatment of the heroine, Cleora, contrasts proper authority and tyrannical excess, supporting, as Clark argues, absolute patriarchal authority while emphasizing its responsibilities and duties as well.¹² In the same way that the city's rulers abuse their authority at the beginning of the play, so the tyrannical brother misuses his position. The father, however, through his just, rational, and measured behaviour, illustrates his fitness to rule as the head of the family. While not diverting interest from the siblings, he, unlike the powerless mother, manages to resolve rather than aggravate their conflict. He both exposes the inappropriateness of the brother's actions and permits the play to end comically by defusing the brother's violence and limiting his pretensions to authority.

When The Bondman begins, Cleora is betrothed to Leosthenes, a man whose suit has been advanced with jealous and intimidating violence by both the lover himself and by Cleora's possessive and domineering brother, Timagoras. While her father does not like or approve of Leosthenes, Timagoras has been tireless in advancing the case of his friend. He discredits the noble Pisander and inappropriately influences his father, boasting that "I wrought my Father then," so that "[f]arre fam'd Pisander" was sent "disgrac'd and discontented home" (I.i.28-30). While the siblings' relationship is itself not antagonistic, the brother exerts a tyrannical and excessive control over his sister's behaviour. He refuses to recognise her virtue and her right to at least a degree of independence, regards her as a weak inferior and treats her as his possession, to be disposed of as he pleases. Massinger, however, exposes the arrogance and injustice of his attitude, both by emphasizing Cleora's

virtue and by setting her brother's ever-increasing obsession with her chastity against her father's calm reason. Timagoras no sooner scoffs at the weakness and vanity of his sister, then she stands up in front of the assembled citizens and makes two noble speeches urging the reluctant and hesitating men to war. Far from being vain, she even throws down her own jewels to finance the expedition, much to the admiration of the whole crowd and particularly the general who has come to lead them into battle.

Her brother also becomes increasingly governed by his jealous obsession with his sister's chastity, a concern not shared by his father. On the one hand, he regards his sister with contempt and cannot understand why his friend would ever praise or worship her. He is determined to assert the ascendancy of his gender and reacts with violent disgust to Leosthenes' self-abasement. Advocating dominance rather than worship, he rejects her suitor's Petrarchan catalogue of her virtues: "Euer touching / On that harsh string? she is your owne, and you / Without disturbance seaze on what's your due" (III.iv.80-2).

On the other hand, Timagoras, like Caesario, concerns himself with his sister not just as a commodity to be exploited but in a purely sexual fashion. He becomes inappropriately obsessed with her sexual behaviour and eventually does not even trouble to use his friend as a surrogate for his feelings. Passionately convinced of Cleora's sexual dishonesty, he begins to upstage Leosthenes and behave like a jealous and wronged lover, initiating violent confrontations with his sister. When he discovers Pisander hidden in his sister's bed chamber, he fervidly speculates about what she may have done with the man. As an equally enraged Leosthenes stands by, he orders Pisander off to prison, to be beaten and tormented. Later, when brother and lover spy on Pisander in prison, Timagoras again usurps the role of the suitor, displacing Leosthenes as the centre of attention. Watching in

seething outrage as Cleora comforts the man who had saved her from the rebelling slaves' outrage, he attempts to murder Pisander and nearly kills his own sister, who throws herself in front of the prisoner. Even when Leosthenes begins to repent of his passion and shows signs of reformation, Timagoras' fury continues unchecked. As Cleora is led off to trial, he cries after her for "Vengeance rather; / Whirle-windes of rage possesse mee" (V.ii.91-92) and denounces his friend for being too restrained. Clearly viewing his sister's indifference to his wishes as unacceptable defiance, he remains pathologically obsessed with both Cleora and Pisander, threatening barbaric violence to the virtuous slave-nobleman even in the midst of judgement.

In striking contrast to Timagoras' overbearing tyranny, Archidamas encourages his daughter to think for herself and to choose her own lover. Because his authority is legitimate, he does not need, as his son does, to attempt to usurp the position of a husband in order to control her. As well, the order and harmony he restores between siblings underlines just how disruptive the brother's presence, when unchecked by his father, is to the well-being of the family. He warns Cleora of the dangers of being wed to a jealous man like Leosthenes and counsels her that "[t]hou art thine owne disposer" (V.i.1). More important, he shields her from her brother's wrath. Appearing in the prison in time to prevent bloodshed, he forces his son to check his fury: "On whom is your Sword drawn? are you a iudge? / Or else ambitious of the hangmans office ... you [Leosthenes] are bold too. / Vnhand my daughter" (V.ii.81-84). The differing behaviour of brother and father implies a contrast between proper authority, which confirms its legitimacy by appearing just and measured, and the tyrannical abuse of power, which reveals its very illegitimacy through its potential destructiveness and violence. Further emphasizing the inappropriate nature of the brother's power, Massinger makes his every decision wrong, unjust, or foolish. Leosthenes, Massinger finally reveals, is not only too jealous

to be a good husband, but he is also precontracted to Pisander's sister Timandra and cannot even enter into a legal union with Cleora. Nonetheless, Timagoras remains the man's zealous advocate right up until the moment he realises that he had almost forced his sister into unintentional adultery. By contrast, the father instinctively does not like Leosthenes and Cleora fast cools towards him. As well, both father and daughter intuitively sense Pisander's nobility, despite his exterior, and realize that he will be the perfect husband. Timagoras, however, never penetrates beneath the man's disguise as a slave. Clearly, he is unfit to be a ruler of the family, for he is not only tyrannical in his passions and jealousy but unable to evaluate people or situations.

Thus, The Bondman confirms the potentially illegitimate nature of the brother's authority and does so by building on the theme of sexual jealousy. Neither father nor husband, Timagoras oscillates between the two roles, filling neither of them adequately but adopting both in an attempt to control his sister. As the guardian, he usurps the authority of his father and advances a man who cannot legally marry his sister; as a jealous and obsessive spy, he takes on himself the preoccupations of the husband whose principal fear is that of being cuckolded. Ultimately, he parodies both roles, enacting a travesty that, by contrast, reveals the ideal behaviour of the real father and the reasonable and devoted actions of the lover and husband, Pisander. Only the presence of the father restores order to the family and prevents the play from slipping into tragedy.

Another Massinger play, A Very Woman (licensed 1634; 1655), contains a far more contentious sibling relationship. Although it presents the brother's concerns more positively, the siblings' sense of equality gives rise to disorder and antagonism within the family. The sister of the play, Almira, challenges her brother's authority at every turn, and Massinger himself refuses to give Pedro the strength or the presence to control her. Instead, Pedro responds with an impotent violence

to his sister's defiance and finds himself unable to advance the courtship of his friend. It is up to the father and the lover, Antonio, to work the woman's reformation.

When Almira scornfully spurns the courtship of the Prince of Taren, John Antonio, in favour of the unworthy Martino Cardenes, she is behaving, as the title implies, like a typical, irrational woman. Her brother Pedro is rightly disgusted with her scornful imperiousness and spends most of the first act chastising her. Although Massinger makes the justice of Pedro's comments evident, he also suggests that the brother is overstepping the limits of his authority. Unlike the girl's father, who shows no interest in dominating her love affairs, and unlike Antonio, a kind and patient man, he particularly seeks out confrontations with his sister. In response, she repeatedly attempts to prove that she owes him no obedience. She greets his long lecture on the need for her to display proper courtesy to Antonio with the disdainfully dismissive response: "I know you for a Brother, not a Tutor" (I.i.129); she then criticizes him for behaving like a father. Her insolent observations leave him too angry to do more than make disjointed threats and his final words, "Be yet advis'd, and entertain him [Antonio] fairly, / For I will send him to you, or no more / Know me a brother" (I.i.145-7), betray his true motivations. He forces her to receive her rejected lover not so much out of courtesy as a desire to make her accept his authority.

After receiving Antonio in compliance with her brother's wishes, Almira proceeds to toss his farewell gift of an expensive jewel to a "mere page" of Martino's. Tellingly, the person witnessing this performance is not her rejected lover but her brother, who is moved to fresh paroxysms of disgust. His attempts to counsel her and make her see the folly of her ways aggravate her into acting even more outrageously, in order to prove that she has no intention of heeding his earnest strictures. And it does not matter that his condemnation of her behaviour is richly justified,

for Massinger does not give him enough authority to undertake a legitimate attempt to reform her. He cannot make her accept that he even has the right to censure or restrict her actions. Consequently, the brother's words make Almira's behaviour worse, inciting her to prove that he is powerless to check her.

The antagonism between the two becomes even more pronounced after the duel between Martino and Antonio. Instead of looking to the hostility between the two suitors for the cause of the fight, Almira immediately blames her brother and accuses him of spurring Antonio on: "Thy hand is in this bloody act" (I.i.339). She even urges their father the Viceroy to look beyond the actual duellists in order to punish her brother, who, she feels certain, is responsible: "Force him [Antonio] to / Reveal his curs'd Confederates, which spare not, / Although you find a Son among them" (I.i.365-7). By having her insist on calling attention to her brother, rather than focusing her attention on either her wounded lover or rejected suitor, Massinger again indicates how the conflict and tension of the first act arise out of the power struggle between siblings, not out of the anger between suitors.

Pedro sees her rejection of Antonio as a deliberate slight to him, while his sister immediately perceives his hand in the wounding of her lover.

The fact that Almira later falls deeply in love with the enslaved Antonio seems to confirm that her initial and unreasonable rejection of his suit had as much to do with her desire to defy her brother's attempts to dictate her behaviour as it did with any strong dislike for the man. Her sudden love for him, when he is disguised as a slave, may serve to satirize her fickleness, but it also illustrates the ultimate message of the play, the message that the antagonistic sibling relationship helps to convey. A person cannot be forced to be virtuous and kind; she must realize, as Almira does, her senseless arrogance and resolve to be virtuous out of her own free will. That the person who is trying

to force her to change is her brother, not her father or her lover, Antonio, who is very patient with her excesses, helps develop this theme and leaves her defiance comically unthreatening. The brother's tenuous authority provides Massinger with the opportunity to indicate the futility of trying to force a woman to reform and it allows the sister to be more easily redeemed, since she is rebelling against her brother, not her father.

In the 1620's and 1630's, the jealous, possessive brother has become such a stock character that his treatment often shades into parody. John Ford's tragicomedy The Fancies Chaste and Noble (1635-36, 1638) and William Davenant's plays The Distresses (licensed 1639; 1673) and The Fair Favourite (licensed 1638; 1673), first caricature and then reform the excessively jealous and over-protective brother. Another earlier play shows this same parodic treatment of the jealous brother. In John Fletcher's The Loyal Subject (licensed 1618; 1647) the title character, Archas, sends his daughters to court, accompanied by one of their brothers. While Archas trusts that his ruler will not violate the girls' virtue, his son is less certain, and in the coarsest terms possible, urges the courtiers to make trial of his sisters' virtue. His crude advice to the gentlemen is so ridiculous that he appears a ludicrously exaggerated Vindice, alternately protecting and threatening to corrupt his sisters' honesty. His obsession with the girls' chastity, in fact, so preoccupies him that Fletcher makes it impossible for him to speak to any of the courtiers without referring to the possibility of the girls' seduction. The jealous and protective brother is a figure of fun, richly meriting his sister's reprimand to "bestow [his] fears where they are needful" (II.iv.54).

The sisters' second brother, Archas, who is at court disguised as the beautiful Alinda, enacts another parody of the Vindice figure. Disguised as the maid of the Duke's sister, he, like Pisto before him, tests his sisters with advice on the way in which to behave at court, advice which advances an

exaggeratedly licentious life. It is a ridiculous distortion of more serious dramatic attempts at seduction, made all the more comical by Alinda/Archas' earlier virtue. From being chaste and modest, she suddenly becomes a knowing bawd, directing the two innocent girls to lodgings which "are handsome, / Convenient for accesse / ... For visitation of those friends and servants, / Your beauties shall make choice of" (III.vi.56-9). When the girls reject his advice, his pleased cry that "I joye to finde ye thus" (III.vi.95) is as unconvincing as his earlier attempts at corruption. The contemptible pandar Piatto whose attempted betrayal of his sister reveals his own self-division is now exaggerated into a figure of fun, his pandar persona replaced by the far sillier disguise of an attractive young girl, pursued by both the Duke and his sister Olympia.

While The Loyal Subject and Davenant's later play The Fair Favourite both transform the brother-avenger into a comic figure of fun, they also reveal a more serious pattern which fits both the revenge tragedies and the other tragicomedies discussed. In the same way that the later revenge plays The Maid's Revenge and The Cruel Brother upheld the sovereign's authority and had the avenger turn his rage inward rather than on to his ruler, these two tragicomedies particularly uphold the position and stature of both father and the king. By transforming the brother from a powerful figure who draws on blood ties and the extended family's honour to justify his actions in challenging public authority into a comic buffoon, they defuse his potentially subversive threat to social order. The conflict, then, between loyalty to the extended family, in which adult siblings owe allegiance to the honour of their house, and submission to the monarchy is now overwhelmingly resolved in favour of the sovereign. Archas--the impossibly loyal subject of the title--submits to the arbitrary tests of his fickle ruler, and the ridiculous excess of the monarch's demands underlines the degree of the father's unquestioning submission. But, in behaving with such deferential respect, he confirms his own place

in the hierarchy and, as the head of his family, demands the same utter obedience from his sons that he gives to his sovereign. Contrastingly, both brothers of the play remain outsider figures, potential threats to social order as they strive to protect or test their sisters' virtue. They are not, however, presented ambivalently by the dramatist. Whether threatening to pander their sisters or to kill them to protect private family honour, these brothers present an illegitimate challenge to proper order, and the threat they pose to the state is fittingly checked by their father, the ruler of the domestic household.

Davenant's play The Fair Favourite follows the same pattern, emphasizing the ultimate submission of the brother to his ruler and teaching him, through his sister, to relinquish personal concerns about honour. The only difference from the previous plays is that there is no father to counter the brother's destructive and jealous impulses; instead, he must effect his own transformation. When the play begins, Oramont is certain that his sister Eumena, the "fair favorite," will soon be seduced by the king. After all, the man had planned to marry her before she was kidnapped by his politicians and he was pressured into wedding someone else. So obsessed is the brother that he may, unwittingly, profit from his sister's prostitution that he refuses to allow Eumena to ransom him from the Tuscans, since he feels she will obtain the money from the king. Quite convinced that his sister has been dishonoured, he spends the better part of the play fretting over what revenge, if any, he should take.

This work provides a particularly important sense of the way in which the brother's jealousy can be almost completely non-sexual, representing a diseased and narcissistic obsession with self rather than actual incestuous desire. Davenant repeatedly emphasizes the brother's obsessive jealousy towards his sister, and even the king reprimands him for his possessive attitude towards her. Yet the

playwright clearly characterizes Oramont's jealousy as an obsessive concern with honour more than with the actual person of his sister: a rejection of society in favour of focus on the self. Elevating personal honour above everything else, Oramont devotes himself to preserving the chastity of his sister, which, he is certain, is under attack by the king. But she exists almost purely as an embodiment of his own fears about the way in which his family's personal status is threatened by his ruler and as a representation of the way in which he places his obsession with private honour above all else. Thus he guards her, watches her, and broods over her with a jealous concern that seeks to preserve his honour. But this obsessive concern with his personal dignity betrays true honour, as the king indicates when he criticizes his subject's behaviour: "Thy honour Oramont is forfeited / Already in thy jealousy" (4:223)

As the play progresses, the brother's jealousy increases, continuing to act almost entirely as a metaphor for his own narcissistic self-obsession and his concern to maintain his own sense of self inviolate in the face of the world around him. Although everyone else recognises his sister's pristine virtue--the king, the wronged queen, the courtiers, even Oramont's loyal friend Amadore--he becomes increasingly convinced that the court will destroy him through his sister and that she will taint their shared blood, polluting him through her unchaste wrong-doing. Ultimately, his jealousy affects both his relationship with his sovereign and his ability to form any social ties, for he comes close to killing his best friend in a quarrel over his sister. When Oramont is finally moved to an unlikely repentance, he specifically rejects the jealously protective feelings for his sister which are disrupting both the court and his personal friendship with Amadore. "I ... Repent my jealous thoughts" (4:275), he observes and then tells his sister that there is no excuse possible for his actions: "To say, Eumena, that my jealousy / Sprung from my love, and rumour gave / It growth, were ... fond circumstance" (4:276).

He also vows to atone for his behaviour: "A long hard penance I'll endure, till I / Can expiate my sins of jealousy" (4:280). Clearly, his rejection of his jealousy marks the way in which he finally accepts society and ruler, no longer obsessively viewing them as a threat to family and personal honour. Relinquishing his sister, he not only acknowledges her ability to preserve her own virtue, he also rejects his focus on self rather than state and his paranoid sense that he is under attack by his sovereign. Davenant exaggerates the anarchic alienation of the earlier revenger siblings of Jacobean revenge tragedy and then concentrates their obsessive concern with maintaining self in the face of social attacks into a single-minded jealousy for their sisters' honour. In exaggerating the brother's isolation and transforming his challenge of the state's power into a comically excessive jealousy, Davenant simplifies the concerns of earlier brothers and turns this figure into a caricature of men such as Vindice, Melantius, and Flamineo.

The play also reiterates the shared identity between siblings, an identity which makes the brother's jealous concern for his sister reflect his obsession with self. Oramont, like Ferdinand, dwells a number of times on the shared blood that joins them and that also threatens him with contamination through his sister's actions. At the beginning of the play, he appeals to heaven to "make choice of one that is no kin / Unto the purer part of it [blood], to let / Out the impure. I would not punish her" (4:218). When he later tries to renounce a kinship connection, crying "Fair Favorite; my sister in thy name, / Not blood, take heed" (4:225), he is forced to acknowledge that he is inextricably linked to her, made wretched by her lustful behaviour and caught "[i]n this disease of grief, that poisons all / My blood" (4:233). His sister, however, resolutely rejects his attempts to cast her as a female extension of himself. Although she behaves with proper respect and affection towards her brother and raises his ransom, she denounces his insinuations about her relationship with the king. She also

deals more reasonably with the awkward situation in which she finds herself, attempting to reconcile the conflicting demands of loyalty to personal honour with the respect due to her king. Her moderation and control, then, bring the play to its comic conclusion, for rather than enraging the king by openly rejecting him, she remains his friend, encouraging him to fall in love with his queen. As an image of passive virtue and of submission to the monarch, combined with an existing self-respect that preserves her honour, she stands as an example of behaviour which her brother should emulate. Oramont's eventual acknowledgement of Eumena's chaste perfection, revealed by his repeated apologies, marks his acceptance of the submissive obedience and trust which will allow him to be a virtuous subject to his king.

The threat posed to the state and to gender hierarchies by the brother and sister comes under increasing challenge in later Stuart tragicomedies. Sisters such as Clarissa and Cleora mount only limited challenges to their brothers' authority, their antagonism replaced by an idealized affection that makes them, like Annabella, reluctant to reject or challenge their brothers. More important, playwrights' increasing emphasis on this idealized fraternal love between the two deprives the relationship of most of its subversive tension. Rather than focusing on the antagonism between them, as the sister rejects her brother's authority, or the challenge that the brother, as an outsider from society mounts on the social identities of father and husband, dramatists trivialize the relationship by focusing almost exclusively on its incestuous elements or by exaggerating the brother's jealous concern for his sister. The brother's concern for the honour of his "house," which had allowed him to mount such a potentially destructive challenge to corrupt rulers and permitted him to justify individualistic and anarchic behaviour, is rewritten as an inappropriate and often ridiculous incestuous obsession. As a jealous would-be lover, spying on his sister's antics, the brother appears as ridiculous

as a cuckolded husband without, even, the spouse's legal position; as a challenge to parental authority, he no longer threatens to destroy his whole family but, rather, is easily brought back into line by the presence of the true father. The brother exists in these plays not to subvert authority but to confirm the position and power of husband and father.

Endnotes

1 . For a complete survey of incestuous relationships in Renaissance drama see Lois Bueler's "The Structural Uses of Incest in English Renaissance Drama." In her article, she studies the incest motif as a structural device used by playwrights to complicate plots and explore relations between society and the individual (115-116). Charles Forker's article "'A Little More than Kin, and Less Than Kind': Incest, Intimacy, Narcissism, and Identity in Elizabethan and Stuart Drama" is a longer, more detailed study of the incest theme. The reason, he suggests, for the numerous incestuous or potentially incestuous brother-sister relationships in Elizabethan drama was that, in the midst of cold, arranged marriages, this was the one family tie that might be warm and intimate (22). But his argument works better for 'Tis Pity and The Broken Heart, which are the only two plays he analyses in these terms (24-25), than the rest of the drama

2 . Ironically, then, Heywood treats the incest theme far more radically than Beaumont's and Fletcher's loudly outrageous A King And No King. For, as Philip Edwards points out, in A King the characters seem to fall in love precisely because they are not related; they intuit that the apparent ties of kinship are actually false ("The Danger not the Death: the Art of John Fletcher" 165). By contrast, Heywood's play suggests that it is the subconscious recognition of kinship that sparks the attraction. This, then, makes The Foure Prentices, however silly in its rambling structure, a more interesting early model for the incest of 'Tis Pity than A King.

3 . Scholars of this play have tended either to dismiss the sub-plot as unconvincing and melodramatic, or to study it solely in its relationship to the main plot. An early study by Otelia Cromwell simply ignores the subplot, while other, more recent critics are even less kind, describing it as "lengthy and inferior" (Brodwin 117) and soap operatic (Bowers 295).

Most other critics attempt to refute Frederick Boas' observation that the sub-plot is only loosely connected with the main plot (Thomas Heywood 44). Their interpretation of Susan and her relationship to her brother is then dependent on and subordinated to whatever they feel to be the principal theme of the main plot. For Patricia Spacks, Heywood builds the play around the dichotomy between appearance and reality in both the plot and the sub-plot (323); for David Cook, who sees the play as a critique of Frankford, the sub-plot serves to highlight the ambiguous kindness of Frankford's action in forgiving his wife by paralleling it with Acton's manipulative kindness in succouring his enemy (363); for Barbara Baines, the careful thematic and verbal parallels between the plot and the sub-plot help Heywood explore the idea of honour threatened by an initial act of passion (81) and the nature of kindness (84); for Laura Bromley, the plot and sub-plot work together to deal with the theme of "a man's honor, his loyalty to an explicit code of behavior" (261) which is set out in the aristocratic conduct books of the time (264); for Diana Henderson the two plots are joined by the theme of banishment from home, followed by a return (277) and enhance one another; for Howard Felperin, the stylized, emblematic action of the sub-plot serves to underline the realism of the main plot (152); for Jennifer Panek, who analyses the irony of Anne's supposedly redeeming suicide (373), the false kindness of Acton mirrors the false kindness of Frankford (373-374); and for Viviana Comensoli, Anne and Susan are established as deliberate contrasts (80).

4 . Freda Townsend argues that both brother and sister represent true honour, providing a "dramatic contrast between the chaste Susan and the unchaste Anne, between the honorable Sir Charles and the dishonorable Wendoll" (102). Bonnie L. Alexander, who analyses the play's differing presentation of the two women, claims the two represent "the changing condition and perception of women" of the time (3). Susan is active, articulate, and useful and stands as the emblem of chastity, while Anne is passive, meek, and silent, a household ornament that shatters (3-4).

5 . Critics who look at the sub-plot in any detail accept that the audience is not meant to criticize Sir Charles' decision, though they differ on the degree to which they accept his action. Bromley adopts the extreme view of seeing Sir Charles as the epitome of honour, a man whose virtue is being put to the test by Acton's kindness. His decision to prostitute his sister rather than sell his family home would be perceived by audiences, she argues, as praiseworthy, "a model to be emulated" (270). Henderson simply notes that his decision is not questioned in the play (287), and since it is to save the family home, it is not entirely selfish (285). Patricia Meyer Spacks is slightly more critical of his action, pointing out that he could have used his house to pay off the debt (328). Finally, Barbara Baines attempts to justify Sir Charles and his distasteful behaviour by concocting an elaborate scenario in which the brother's actions are part of his plan to test Acton's virtue. Thus he offers Susan to his enemy because he is certain that Acton will respond to his courtesy by proposing wedlock (88).

6 . Henderson even uses the fact that Charles and Susan derive their sense of identity from their family home (284) to argue that his request that she prostitute herself is not entirely selfish (285), as though giving herself to Acton would not destroy her "social identity" (284) more than the loss of her family's home.

7 . With the exception of Gossett, few critics have considered the treatment of the brother-sister relationships in the play, and instead critical debate has focused largely on the theme of honour and the question of whether or not the Captain behaves honourably. Richard Levin, who studies the three level structure of the play, argues that the Captain behaves out of pure honour (223). Asp, who sees the play as built on "the conflict between public honor and private conscience" (109) again claims that Ager is the moral exemplar of the play (118). Similarly, Holmes argues that the play is constructed around the choice between true honour and the appearance of honour (119).

By contrast both the Kistners and White, while agreeing that the focus of the play is on honour, feel that the Captain's behaviour is being criticized. For the Kistners, the play moves us to reject not just lust and wealth but duelling and the code of honour ("The Themes and Structures of *A Faire Quarrel*"); White argues that Ager is less than perfect (88) and that the duelling code is being satirized (88).

8 . Both Inga-Stina Ewbank, who points out that the Colonel's action shows the dramatists' self-conscious exploitation of the similar situation in *A Woman Killed With Kindness* ("The Middle of Middleton" 157) and Asp (109) have commented on this parallel.

9 . The Kistners observe, in a tone of considerable surprise, that she is "the near-servant of her brother" (31). This is actually an understatement.

10 . My view on sibling relationships is indebted to Gossett's argument ("Sibling Power: Middleton and Rowley's A Fair Quarrel") that the brother-sister relationships of both Jacobean drama and society are usually centred upon the brother's selfish exploitation of his sister, not upon mutual love. But I strongly disagree when she argues that, with the exception of Anne, the sisters of Renaissance drama unquestioningly confirm their brothers' power (449). In contrast, I see the same powerful influence of economics, which Gossett rightfully emphasizes in her study of A Fair Quarrel, as assisting the defiance of royal siblings such as Mariana, Pulcheria, Cleopatra and the Duchess of Malfi.

11 . For a related discussion of the unsettling effect of the father's absence see David Sundelson's Shakespeare's Restorations of the Father.

12 . Of all the critics who have studied Massinger and the other dramatists in this survey, only Clark comments on the contrasting authority of father and brother. In both of his studies of Massinger, Clark argues that Massinger promotes a modified traditional hierarchy (The Moral Art of Philip Massinger 137), where the fathers' and the rulers' right to govern is acknowledged as long as they attempt to do their best for their family and subjects (The Moral Art 165). Thus for Clark, brother and father in The Bondman provide a contrast between excessive and appropriate patriarchal rule, and he points out that Cleora "opts for . . . the reformed traditional hierarchy fostered by her father rather than the absolutist patriarchy commanded by her brother" (The Moral Art 172).

Chapter 4

'A Privilege, Equall to the Male': The Power of Royal Sisters

Revenge tragedies and tragicomedy explore the antagonistic relationship between siblings to illustrate turmoil in self, family, and society and to allow women to challenge the illegitimate authority of their brothers. The position of royal sister provides female characters of both genres with even more independence. Blood ties play an important part in influencing sibling revengers, for they are joined by loyalty to the same house and by the same sense of duty. Because of their shared blood and parentage, the sister shares a close connection with her brother, while he is the man whom she most resembles, whom she comes nearest to being. Only her gender separates her from absolute equality with him. With royal sisters, this strong blood tie becomes even more important and provides the sister with a source of power, prestige, and independence that is much greater than that contained in the role of either wife or mother. Since a king or ruler derives his power almost solely from his bloodlines--the blood that elevates him above his lowly subjects--it is natural that a royal sister is the woman most likely to be acknowledged by her brother as his equal. The solidarity of their blood, which lifts them both above the common run of humanity, counteracts the influence of gender. In plays, then, with royal siblings, the equality between the two expresses itself as respect on the part of the brother or in open rivalry between the two for power. Philip Massinger's The Duke of Milan (1621-23; 1623), The Emperour of the East (licensed 1631, 1632) and The False One (1619-1623; 1647), John Ford's Love's Sacrifice (c. 1632; 1633) and The Lover's Melancholy (licensed 1628; 1629), and William Davenant's The Platonic Lovers (licensed 1635; 1636) all contain a royal sister and, in emphasizing her blood connection to her brother, the plays come close to disregarding the

limitations of her gender. Because a number of these six plays also tend to present the royal sister in a fierce contest with the lower-born wife of her brother, they also provide an effective means of contrasting the roles of wife and sister and underline the strength and power contained within the figure of the royal sibling.

While both the tragedy Lochrine (1591; 1595) and the tragicomedy Octavia (1598) contain hints of the potentially disruptive power contained within the figure of the royal sister, other Elizabethan plays, with the exception of The Spanish Tragedy (1582-1592; 1592), largely ignore her. The relationship between royal siblings is left undeveloped and the concept of sister as distinct from a wife or daughter is given no consideration. George Peele's romance David and Bathshebe (c. 1581-1594, 1599) briefly introduces the two siblings Absalon and Tamar, as well as their half-brother, Adonijah. When Adonijah conceives an incestuous passion for the luckless girl, he entices her to his chamber, rapes her, and then scornfully casts her out. The incident, however, is just one more episode in the rambling tale of David's kingship and has little significance beyond providing the reason for Absalon's hatred for his half-brother. A similarly incestuous attraction occurs in Thomas Lodge's and Robert Greene's A Looking-Glass for London and England (1587-1591) and is just as unimportant. The proposed marriage between the siblings exists only to shock the audience and to underline the dramatists' conception of the over-reaching arrogance of the King of Nineveh. His decision to wed Remilla, almost flippantly declared in the first act, establishes his outrageously tyrannical rejection of natural and moral law, just as Remilla's unhappy fate assures audiences that there is a God who will actively punish flagrant wrong-doers. Struck down by a bolt of lightning almost as soon as she agrees to marry her brother, she has no opportunity to develop a relationship with the king.

Beaumont's and Fletcher's early Jacobean play A King and No King (already discussed above) also accords no special prestige, status, or power to a royal sister and again shows interest only in potentially incestuous sibling relationships.¹ From the beginning of the play to its conclusion, Arbaces views Panthea as a possession, to be disposed of as he deems fit, and he indicates that he expects her unquestioningly to obey his decrees. He insists to Gobrius that "I must have her know / My will, and not her owne must govern her" (III.i.4-5), and he vows to make her marry whom he chooses: "Shee should be forcst to have him [Tigranes], when I know / Tis fit" (III.i.19-20). Arbaces' attitude is extreme, and Beaumont and Fletcher are, as critics point out, satirizing his loudly vainglorious vaunts through the play.² However, his attitude towards Panthea reveals the limitations implicit within the conception of a sister, even a royal one. Since her identity derives from her brother, her closest surviving male relative, her authority is at best tenuous, and she is still basically his property, subject to his rule, if no one else's. When Arbaces orders Tigranes to marry her, he reveals how closely he perceives her power to be tied to his own glory and birth:

. yet were shee odious [in appearance]
 Her birth deserves the Empire of the world.
 Sister to such a Brother,

Nature did her wrong

[To] make no man worthy for her to take,
 But mee that am too neare her. (I.i.160-8)

Although his words raise her above the rest of the world, he makes it clear that her high stature is

simply an aspect of his own sense of privilege. In order to glorify himself further, he stresses that she, despite her gender, is his nearest equal.

The dramatists also severely limit Panthea's individuality; and her behaviour confirms these limitations. Instead of questioning her brother's actions, she remains meekly acquiescent, obeying Arbaces' commands without complaint and never displaying a will of her own. Her sole purpose lies in arousing the incestuous passion that tortures Arbaces and causes him endless torment. In fact, the playwrights view her with such little interest that when the convoluted plot twists are finally unravelled and Gobrius reveals that she, not Arbaces is the rightful ruler, she is not even present to marvel at this remarkable revelation. When she does enter, Arbaces seizes upon her with delight; and the play ends leaving her unaware of her new status as Queen and ruler. Her brother/lover completely overshadows her, for the dramatists refuse to consider her as anything other than the object of Arbaces' desires and a symbol of the narcissistic and violent self-love that threatens to entrap him in an incestuous relationship.

Two other plays, written slightly earlier, do not even exploit the incest angle. Although Thomas Dekker's Lust's Dominion (or The Lascivious Queen) (c. 1600; 1657) contains a potentially unstable relationship of mother, daughter, and two sons, the play leaves the family dynamics largely undeveloped and rarely presents Isabella with either her virtuous brother Philip or her vicious brother Fernando. Dekker's The Wonder of a Kingdom (1623-1631, 1636) displays a similar indifference to the potential complexities of the sibling relationship, royal or otherwise. Piero, son of the Duke of Florence, is the type of jealous brother developed in later drama, but his treatment of his sister Fiametta is given only a cursory glance. After threatening her virtuous lover Angelo, he is then converted to the man's cause for no apparent reason beyond the demands of the plot and ends up

defending him to their father.

Later Jacobean and Caroline plays, however, develop the privileged position of the royal sister and present a clear picture of the equality between the siblings, an equality which is acknowledged whether it is central to the plot or not. The power of Mariana, the royal sister of The Duke of Milan (1621-23; 1623), has already been discussed; her success over her rival sister-in-law illustrates the power particular to the royal sibling. Unlike Marcelia, who possesses a transitory and unstable power by virtue of her doting spouse, Mariana has no sexual influence over her brother. Her status as sister to the ruler, however, is lawful and accepted by the rest of the characters. The fact that she is acknowledged as her brother's heir (II.i.397) particularly confirms her position and provides additional insight into why she might view her sister-in-law with such hate, since Marcelia's children would ultimately displace her. Even the Duke himself recognises the special nature of the tie he shares with his sister. It is Mariana's taunts and jeers about their tarnished family honour which help to provoke him into confronting and killing his wife; clearly her insistence that he remain loyal to his family wins out over love for Marcelia. Even when the Duke wishes to honour his dead wife, he calls attention to his oneness with his sister, revoking her special status in a vain attempt to resurrect the dead woman: "[L]et her [Marcelia] see me / Compell my mother (from whome I tooke life) / And this my sister. Partner of my being, / To bow thus low unto her" (V.ii.110-113). While the marriage ceremony has metaphorically made husband and wife one person, the sibling tie provides an equal or stronger consciousness of oneness, with the same blood making them the male and female side of the same being.

Two later plays by Ford, Love's Sacrifice (c. 1632, 1633) and The Lover's Melancholy (licensed 1628, 1629) particularly develop the privileged status of the royal sister of The Duke of

Milan. Critics have often studied Love's Sacrifice as Ford's re-working of Othello.³ Placing the focus on the tragic love between the Duke and Bianca, however, hides the dramatic shift in emphasis from Shakespeare's play and the links the play has to other brother and sister revenge tragedies. Love's Sacrifice follows the same pattern as Massinger's play, presenting a jealous and doting husband whose proud sister goads him into killing his lower-born wife.⁴ The tension of Love's Sacrifice then arises out of the Duke's conflicting loyalties as brother and husband and culminates in the moment when royal brother and sister avenge the imagined wrong done to their family. Because Ford's play, however, shows a greater political conservatism than Massinger's works (Clark, Professional Playwrights 79), it is not lower-born siblings who challenge their ruler. Instead, the lovers of Love's Sacrifice "submit to his [Duke's] authority as a betrayed friend, husband, and lord" (Clark, Professional Playwrights 79). It is only the Duke's sister who has the position to challenge Caraffa's behavior.

Ford, first of all, creates Fiormonda as a figure of considerable power, making her both the sister to the Duke and the widow of a Marquess. Her pride in her lineage is excessive, while her haughty personality makes her love for Fernando, as Roseilli observes, obsessive and intense: "[H]er proud heart / Is only fix'd on [Fernando] in such extremes / Of violence and passion" (2: 64). When the man spurns her, she proceeds to plan revenge. While her actions may appear, on the surface, to be those of a conventionally vain and proud woman, furious at being rejected for another, Ford makes her motives far more complex. A female equivalent to Ferdinand of The Duchess of Malfi, she hates Bianca and scorns her ignoble birth well before she learns that she is her rival for Fernando's affection. The fact that the man she has favoured with her love prefers Bianca only aggravates her hatred. At the same time, there is also a clear political motive for her sense of rivalry with the

woman, for Fiormonda, like Mariana of The Duke of Milan, is her brother's heir. The possibility that Bianca will bear children threatens her own status; the possibility that she will be disinherited by a child illicitly conceived with Fernando moves her to outrage.

Like Mariana, Fiormonda also contends with her sister-in-law for control of her brother's loyalty and power, and, again, the ties of the extended family prove stronger than those based on love and marriage. In her battle with the lower-born woman who has married her brother, Fiormonda forces the Duke to acknowledge their shared royal status and the honour she feels should be given to their family name. Appointing herself as the revenger, she deliberately goads her brother into a jealous frenzy. Invoking their family's proud heritage and their father's legacy, she demands:

Art thou Caraffa? is there in thy veins
 One drop of blood that issu'd from the loins
 Of Pavy's ancient dukes? Or dost thou sit
 On great Lorenzo's seat, our glorious father
 And canst not blush to be so far beneath
 The spirit of heroic ancestors? (2: 73)

Later, she steels his nerve by underlining their kinship: "Now show thyself my brother, brave Caraffa" (2: 91). When he falters and decides to forgive rather than kill his wife, she urges him not to blemish his "glorious ancestors" (2: 95) or betray his own courage by allowing Bianca's lust to go unpunished.

Since she, aided by her secretary, succeeds in pushing her brother to kill his wife against his true desires, the sister again possesses a power that is stronger than the wife's, based as it is on blood rather than marriage. But the relationship that empowers her disrupts her brother, leaving him

stranded in a limbo between wife and sister, unable to resolve the conflict within himself between loyalty to love and marriage and to his family blood lines. Consequently, Caraffa spends the whole play unsuccessfully trying to shake off his sister's influence and to view himself as a husband rather than a brother. When he finally promises to take revenge, he threatens his sister in a speech that reveals his inner conflict, idealizing their blood tie even as he attempts to defend his wife. He emphasizes their kinship and special closeness: "Thou art near / In nature, and as near to me in love: / I love thee, yes, by yon bright firmament, / I love thee dearly" (2: 75); and yet he immediately sets their affection in dramatic opposition to his feelings for his wife. He warns Fiormonda that if her accusations are false, his first thought will be to avenge his maligned wife:

I vow,
 And vow again, by all [our] princely blood,
 Hadst thou a double soul, or were the lives
 Of fathers, mothers, children, or the hearts
 Of all our tribe in thine, I would unrip
 That womb of bloody mischief with these nails. (2: 76)

His first loyalty, he makes clear, is to his wife even at the expense of his entire royal house; however, the ties that bind him to her are based on passion, not "princely blood," and so are fragile and easily destroyed.

Besides their mutual pride in the noble lineage that raises them above the other characters, the two possess a surprisingly affectionate relationship which foreshadows in its incestuous undertones 'Tis Pity She's A Whore. While both siblings have passionate love interests, Ford implies that they also share a deep love for one another. Since both derive their identity from their "princely

blood," they are unable to construct a stable private role as husband or wife. After the Duke stabs Bianca, he turns to his sister, who had witnessed and encouraged the whole scene, for approval and comfort. More revealingly, in the climactic scene when the Duke and Fernando both kill themselves at the tomb of Bianca, Fiormonda unwittingly betrays the nature of her true affections. Ignoring the handsome courtier she has relentlessly pursued through the play, she cries: "Save my brother, save him!" (2: 106).

Fiormonda also reveals, even more strikingly than many of the other women of the revenge tragedy, the potentially disruptive social and political power contained within the dramatic construction of the sister. As a royal sister, she possesses a masculine power and force of will which she uses to manipulate her brother into murdering Bianca, just as Melantius had coerced his sister into killing the King in The Maid's Tragedy.⁵ Unlike Melantius, however, who is upstaged by Evadne's flamboyantly horrible vengeance, Fiormonda remains the driving force behind the murder. In a scene that depicts her blood-thirsty delight in the downfall of her low-born rival, she watches her brother kill his wife after the rest of the court has been dismissed from the room. Like Ferdinand, she takes a disturbing, gloating pleasure in observing the destruction of the love and the marriage between her sibling and his wife. As Bianca is struck down, she indicates that she feels both herself and her brother are vindicated through his actions: "Here's royal vengeance! this becomes the state / Of his disgrace and my unbounded hate" (2: 96).

She also holds genuine authority as the sister and heir to her brother, and when the Duke stabs himself to death, she immediately succeeds him as ruler. In this one moment, we can suddenly understand Ford's ambivalent treatment of her throughout the play, the simultaneous acknowledgment of her power and the deliberate, rather heavy-handed satire of her excessive

haughtiness and passionate lusts. As a woman possessing considerable status and autonomy, she is immediately a figure of suspicion for both the audience and the playwright. Hence, Ford caricatures her pride in her birth and deflates her hauteur by making her endure the humiliating advances of the court buffoon. Yet he simultaneously underlines her power by the way she spurs on the events of the play, the success which crowns her efforts to defeat her rival, Bianca, and the respect that her brother gives to her--and to no one else—in the play. And, despite her responsibility for the tragedy, she finally triumphs, for she becomes the duchy's new ruler. Thus, while Ford satirizes her, he undercuts his own mockery by rewarding, rather than punishing, her actions. Either he perceives her to be partially justified in exposing the two lovers or he feels that, as a royal figure, she is too powerful to share the torture that befalls her hapless instrument D'Avolos. As sister and heir to the Duke, she has a right, Ford implies, to be concerned with her sister-in-law's behaviour and to be alarmed lest an illegitimate child of Bianca and Fernando succeed to the duchy.

As a sister, ruler, and widow, however, she ultimately holds too much authority. For the play to end with a restoration of the proper hierarchy, Ford restricts her sovereignty. As soon as she is named the successor to the Duke, she turns to the man whom she has scorned throughout the play and, in an unlikely moment, takes him as her husband. Clearly, she does not love Roseilli, since she has spent the whole play deriding him and has even managed to have him exiled from court, but Ford finds such an ending necessary in order to bring harmony to the dukedom. Throughout the play, she has been presented as a powerful royal sister, exerting too much control over the actions of her brother and, consequently, bringing turmoil and destruction to the duchy. Now, as she accepts a husband, she returns to the clearly defined social role of wife, a role that emphasizes submission and passivity. Transformed from a widow and sister into a wife, her personality immediately follows suit,

and she becomes meek and acquiescent, subdued and altered from the proud woman of old. Roseilli, her erstwhile scorned suitor, restrains her in a way that her brother never even attempted, and she follows his orders and accepts his reprimands without complaint.

The final glimpse we obtain of Fiormonda, sadly accepting her new husband's vow to forsake her bed, underlines the paradox of the dynamic between her and her brother. In other male-female relationships, the presence of the male character acts as an obstruction to the independence of the female figure. The sister, though, draws both her autonomy and legitimation from the very existence of her brother. He still acts as a male guardian, preventing her from being viewed with the suspicion generally given to unattached women, and yet he does not exert the same degree of control over her as a husband or father. For her independence within the play to continue, however, her brother must continue to exist--to provide the only space in which she can legitimately obtain authority and define herself as the equal of man. His death necessitates a new male guardian and Fiormonda's chastened final moments illustrate just how much more restrictive a husband is.

Ford's The Lover's Melancholy expresses this same sense of an uneasy and ambiguous equality between siblings. While the haughty and impulsive Thamasta is a mirror image of Fiormonda, her proud lust is made to look comical and she is ultimately reformed.⁶ Like Fiormonda, she disdainfully rejects her loyal suitor and pursues Parthenophil, the young page who has newly arrived at court. When she learns, much to her embarrassed chagrin, that the attractive boy is a girl, she renounces her former pride and turns to her old lover.

Her relationship to Amethus, cousin to the Prince Palador, is not particularly emphasized in the course of the play. He wants her to accept his best friend, Menaphon, and he has spent many hours extolling the man's virtues to his indifferent sister. But he has absolutely no power to force her

to marry the friend he holds in such high esteem and must content himself with persuasion, which his sister ignores. Unlike Ithocles of The Broken Heart, he has no authority over her, and his presence, as an entirely ineffective representative of the male hierarchy, only serves to confirm her autonomy. When he attempts to dampen her haughty pride, telling her it tarnishes her “education and a noble birth” (I.iii.7), she immediately questions his right to instruct her. Her statement, “My freedom is my birth’s; I am not bound / To fancy your approvments, but my own” (I.iii.24-25), goes unchallenged by her brother and illustrates how her high birth gives her a sense of freedom and independence that matches his own. Her pride in her royal rank and her unwillingness to taint her blood by marrying a lower-born man also becomes more understandable. Naturally, she is infatuated with her own sense of royal prestige, because it is this very stature which gives her the freedom to choose her own actions and pursue her own desires, leaving her able to dismiss the governance of her brother.

By the play’s conclusion, Thamasta’s power is drained away through her marriage and her new position as obedient wife. The role of sister, however, again provides Ford with a means by which to present an autonomous woman, and he proceeds to show her own self-transformation. Because she is independent, Ford can present her as reforming herself, as she grows to recognise the danger and the folly of her pride. Her change is not imposed on her by any outside male authority, because, as a royal sibling, she is responsible for her own behaviour. The restraint, which she herself imposes when she realises how foolish she has been in pursuit of the beautiful page, must come from within herself

Davenant’s The Platonic Lovers (licensed 1635; 1636) contains two pairs of royal siblings, the dukes Theander and Phylomon and their respective sisters, Ariola and Eurithea. The play focuses on the contrasting sets of lovers and functions more as a satire of the Platonic love code than being

popularized by Charles I's Queen, Henrietta Maria,⁷ than as an exploration of sibling relationships. Davenant inverts normal beliefs by having Theander reject marriage as a lust of the blood, the goal of the innately unchaste who seek wedlock only in order to fulfil their brutish desires. Even when Theander eventually quarrels with his friend and imprisons his understandably puzzled sister, the tone of the play is too deliberately silly to be taken seriously. Cloaked as a Platonic enthusiast, Theander is a parody of the conventionally jealous and protective brother, and the fact that he jails Ariola in order to prevent her marriage to an eminently suitable and well-born lover--his best friend no less--heightens the sense that Davenant is exploiting the now traditional tension between brother and husband for comic purposes.

The way the two men view Eurithea also provides a useful encapsulation of the dramatist's different constructions of woman as sister and as beloved. After Theander drinks the love potion and his virtuous Platonic passion for the young woman becomes embarrassingly physical, he, like the uxorious Duke of Milan, becomes ready to believe any lies about her honesty. By contrast, her brother, who is admittedly the more sensible of the two men, accepts her virtue without question and will not credit the false story circulating about her. Observing that "Eurithea is / My sister, and the chiefest of my blood" (4. 98), he rejects the tales that slander her and vows to defend her honour even if it means rejecting his friend. Again, the tie between sister and brother remains more stable than the easily fragmented tie between lovers, for the sister is perceived by the brother as his closest representative.

The similarity between royal brother and sister, arrived at through their sense of shared royal blood, also manifests itself in terms of open rivalry as they vie for power and sovereignty. This struggle, presented most strikingly in Massinger's The Emperour of the East (licensed 1631; 1632)

and the Massinger-Fletcher collaboration The False One (1619-23;1647), is different from the antagonism between other siblings because it operates on a basis of near equality. In both plays, the sister is older than her brother and depicted as the more capable, responsible, and resourceful ruler. Identical to her brother in blood and recognised by the people as one of the royal line, the only reason that she is not the sole ruler is because of her sex. With these pairs of royal siblings, Massinger proceeds from an uneasy sense of their equality to explore their contest for rule and to question the nature of both primogeniture and male-based power.

Massinger's The Emperour of the East, which was performed at Blackfriars and the Globe, strikingly emphasizes the potential power of the royal sister. The play uses the relationship between siblings to question the fairness of allotting authority, prestige, and governance to a man solely on the basis of gender.⁸ Massinger first calls attention to the problems of brother and sister inheritance when he introduces Athenais, the "strange virgin" who is befriended by the Emperor's sister Pulcheria and who later marries Theodosius.⁹ As the regent, Pulcheria, dispenses justice to a gathered crowd of complainants, Athenais bemoans the persecution of her brothers. Although these men whom she describes as "my brothers, / Brothers of one wombe, by one Sire begotten" should be her allies, they instead ignore the closeness of their shared ties and "[t]rample on my afflictions" (I.ii.34-36). Seeing her as a rival for their family's resources, they have used their superior legal position unfairly to exclude her from their father's inheritance. When Athenais' father had willed her 10,000 crowns with his dying words, her two brothers promptly denied his dying wish and, in the absence of a written will, allowed her nothing. Then, enraged by their father's prophecy that they would "be proud to pay their service" (I.ii.323) to their sister, they avenged the implied slight by casting her out of the family home "in derision of my [Athenais'] future greatness" (I.ii.333).

Destitute, she does not have the finances to challenge her brothers in the courts or to bribe the judges into favouring her suit, and she comes to the regent for assistance. Her story particularly underlines her helplessness in obtaining her inheritance; the brothers' cruelty in denying her even a roof over her head allows Massinger to expose the potential abuses and the unfairness of a system which awards property to the brothers rather than the sister of the same blood. The dramatist also sympathetically presents the consequences of her attempt to assert herself as the equal of her brothers, since it is her refusal to admit their authority as her superiors which brings them to drive her out of their family home.

More important, Athenais' story, narrated to the sympathetic Pulcheria, sets the stage for Massinger's development of the complex relationship between the giddy young Emperor and his older sister. At the death of her father, Pulcheria is named protector and not only rules the eastern empire with admirable justice and fairness but brings up her two sisters and trains her younger brother "in all those arts, / That are both great and good" (I i 39-40). Far from being incapacitated by her sex, she stands as a paradigm of the ideal ruler, and begins the play by scornfully dismissing the unctuous words of an informer and a group of court flatterers. Her actions are so sensible that she moves Cleon, a returned traveller, to dazed admiration; he comments: "I [think] I am in a dreame, or that I see / A seconde Pallas" (I ii.289-90).

Yet Massinger presents her with an extreme ambivalence. He is unable to resolve the problem of the sister who rules more effectively than her fickle brother, for her capability undermines the very foundations upon which his patriarchal society is built, and his unease expresses itself in an oscillation between satirizing her impossible virtues and elevating her nobility of mind and action. The envious eunuchs, for example, sourly claim that "sheele keepe him [her brother] / Her ward for euer, to her

selfe ingrossing / The disposition of all the fauors / And bounties of the Empire ” (II.i.4-7). While Massinger indicates that they resent Pulcheria because of her impartiality and fairness and because they themselves desire to influence Theodosius, their words force the audience to see her in a less favourable light. She also rules everyone around her with an absolute authority and seems comically tyrannical in her inhuman perfection. Her two sisters are delighted to escape from under her thumb, and her self-righteous anger when anyone refuses her advice pushes her character into a parody of perfect and noble virtue. The dramatist cannot refrain from poking fun at her by making her too aware of her own perfection. At times, he appears genuinely undecided as to how he wishes to deal with her. One moment she is acclaimed as the epitome of justice, the next deflated as too virtuous.

In particular, Philanax, the emperor’s captain, accuses her of appropriating the power that lawfully belongs to her brother. As a loyal subject, he proves a more credible source of criticism of Pulcheria than the eunuchs. He is perfectly willing to honour both Pulcheria and Theodosius, provided that the rightful hierarchy is maintained within the royal family: “I could honour in her / A power subordinate to yours, but not / As ‘tis predominant” (II.i.39-41). For him, the rule of the sister over a brother who has reached adulthood is an unnatural inversion of the proper order; accordingly he responds by trying to goad Theodosius into assuming royal power.

When Theodosius does assume imperial command in the second act, Massinger devotes the rest of the play to exploring the familiar struggle for power between the brother, his proud sister, and his lower-born wife. But, he also explicitly contrasts Theodosius’ rule to that of his sister, the “second Pallas,” and his unflattering comparison arouses tensions which are never adequately resolved. On the one hand, he continues to satirize Pulcheria’s delight in her own virtue. On the other, he does not hide the fact that she had ruled the empire far more efficiently than her brother:

she was a wise and dedicated monarch while he, at best, is a good-natured, easy-going youth and, at worst, a man governed by his passions. Pulcheria had been shown dispensing justice with an equal hand; the extravagant and reckless Theodosius proceeds to grant everyone's suits without considering them. Not surprisingly, Pulcheria becomes concerned for the well-being of the whole empire, and her worries also contrast favourably with Theodosius' selfish pursuit of private pleasures. She is the perfect ruler, concerned, first of all, for the health of the empire and her subjects and willing to subjugate everything to her imperial duties; he is gripped by his frenzied love for his wife.

As well as showing her behave perfectly in her political duties, Massinger stresses that, privately, Pulcheria is superior to her brother in the governance of her passions. She stands as such a superb ruler because she restrains her emotions and never acts less than rationally. Unlike her alter-egos, Mariana and Fiormonda, she forgives both Athenais and Theodosius in act three, while, in act five, she pleads with her brother for the life of the woman who is her principal rival. Conversely, Theodosius is a slave to his passions: first governed by a passionate infatuation and then by his uncontrollable jealousy.¹⁰ For all the dramatist's ambivalence towards Pulcheria, he forces his audience to confront the unsettling spectacle of a woman ruling far more capably than a man. This sight is all the more unsettling because Massinger makes it appear so unremarkable. They share the same blood lines; Pulcheria was appointed the lawful regent; and she clearly enjoys ruling while Theodosius is uninterested in his imperial duties. Only her gender, which Massinger indicates has no real effect on her ability to rule competently, prevents her from being Emperor and makes even virtuous characters such as Polinax reject her as a sovereign.

As Pulcheria gradually manages to reclaim imperial power from her wayward brother, Massinger further underscores her capability as a ruler. In act three, she impresses on Theodosius

the foolishness of his behaviour, asserting some degree of control over him. In act four, she momentarily restores proper order and harmony to the empire when Theodosius gives over the responsibilities of rule to his sister so that he can pursue his private pleasures. "How happie am I," he declares as he goes out to hunt, "in / Your knowledge of the art of gouvernement" (IV.iv.15-16). Finally, Massinger firmly re-establishes Pulcheria's authority when she helps to reconcile husband and wife. Resolving "not [to] blush / Hereafter to bee guided by your consails" (V.iii.186-7), Theodosius' final recognition of her wisdom allows for the happy and harmonious conclusion to the play.

Emphasizing Pulcheria's skill at rule and her brother's incompetence allows Massinger to question the allotment of power and rule solely on the basis of gender. But because this depiction of Pulcheria's ability undercuts the period's patriarchal hierarchy, he simultaneously satirizes her and makes her enraptured by the conceit of her own wise perfection. As well, he locates the woman's privilege specifically within her class, making it clear that the low-born Athenais cannot expect such power. Massinger emphasizes the unique equality between royal brother and sister, an equality which divides the world up not by gender but by birth and blood. Theodosius may not allow his sister to criticize his wife and he forces her to acknowledge Athenais as the Empress. Nonetheless, it is his sister whom he treats with respect and views as his peer. When Pulcheria tricks her unsuspecting brother into signing his wife over to her as a slave, she immediately returns the girl to him as "my second gift" (III.iv.159), a present that he gratefully accepts. As Athenais herself perceives, she is viewed by both brother and sister as a possession being shuffled between them, treatment she can accept from her husband but not from the woman who "[m]ake[s] mee her propertie" (IV.i.1). Although she controls the Emperor to a certain extent, because he dotes upon her physical beauty and would grant her anything, she is not his equal, as Pulcheria is. The real authority still remains in the

hands of the sister, the true Empress of the East. Bitterly Athenais recognises that "I haue only / The title of an Emperesse but the power / Is, by her, rauish'd from me" (IV.i.4-6). This is quite an accurate summary of the way things stand, for Theodosius, even while stressing that his wife stands pre-eminent in his affections, likens his sister to a "partner, and no subiect of my Empire" (IV.iv.18-19).

The rivalry between the two women, just as in the struggle between other sisters-in-law, ends with the sister, rather than the wife, as the decisive victor. The final two acts of the play contrast Pulcheria's genuine stature and royal birth with Athenais' puffed-up belief in her greatness. Pulcheria's angry dismissal of the Greek girl's imperious airs, "Ile not bandye / Words with your mightinesse, proud one" (IV ii.20-1), might be viewed as a satire of her own pride, except that Massinger has Athenais repent her arrogance. Although her husband acts unjustly in suspecting her of adultery, she confesses that she should not have tried to set herself above Pulcheria. She acknowledges Pulcheria's right to rule and finally accepts the fact that the sister has more lawful power than herself, the lower-born wife. The dissension between them, Massinger indicates, has come out of Athenais' assumption of power which inappropriately challenges Pulcheria's imperial authority

The friendship and then rivalry between Pulcheria and Athenais also helps to clarify the striking difference between the way the Renaissance viewed the sister and the wife. While Pulcheria possesses a certain degree of authority in her own right, derived from her father the Emperor, she has no sexual control over her brother. Rather cynically, she attempts to solve this problem by bringing Athenais, her lowborn protégée, to her brother's attention. As the world-wise eunuchs observe, she has "preferr'd a creature of her owne, / By whose meanes she may still keepe to her selfe / The government of the Empire" (II.i.410-412). In fact, if her end purpose was not so noble, she might

appear far less virtuous than she does. When she tries to pressure Athenais into giving her brother “saung counsell” (III.ii.89) and suggests, with a pragmatic cynicism worthy of the eunuchs themselves, that the girl withhold her sexual favours until Theodosius does as she wishes, Massinger indicates the potential weakness of her position as a sister. Unable to wield a sexual influence over him and make him behave as she sees fit, she is reduced to trying to maintain her rule by controlling him through her sexual surrogate.

Ironically, Athenais’ very reasons for rejecting Pulcheria’s advice illustrate the true basis of the sister’s power and reveal why she is so much stronger and more independent a figure than the wife. Athenais refuses to manipulate Theodosius sexually because she says it is her duty as a wife to obey her husband, not rule over him. For her to stay virtuous, she must resoundingly reject such attempts to control her husband. As well, since her only power over her husband is sexual and since the Renaissance perceived such influence to be potentially destructive, she has no legitimate position from which to direct her husband. Her unquestioning acceptance of the wifely submission she owes to Theodosius appears very different from the relationship that both Pulcheria and Massinger envision for the sister. Concerned for the well-being of her father’s empire, the virtuous sister can offer such cynical advice and still remain a positive and strong character in the play. She is given far more room for manipulation and manoeuvring than the wife. Consequently, all of her attempts to guide her fickle and irresponsible brother are treated as virtuous, for the health of the empire depends on her ability to teach Theodosius to rule properly. The competition between the two women as to who will influence the ruler thus ends with Pulcheria’s victory, since her authority has a legitimacy which the wife’s potential sexual influence lacks. Tellingly, the play ends with Athenais vowing not to resent Pulcheria’s influence over her husband. As a wife, her submissive status is confirmed, while

Pulcheria's guiding wisdom is re-established.

The rivalry between royal brother and sister is presented even more strongly, though with less complexity, in Massinger's and Fletcher's collaboration The False One.¹¹ In acts one and five, which were both written by Massinger, Cleopatra clearly presents herself as the equal of her brother and his rightful co-ruler,¹² and Massinger indicates that her perspective is shared by her subjects. Ptolemy's captain of the guard may place the blame for the kingdom's factious and unsettled state on the fact that "Women are not exempted from the Scepter, / But claime a priviledge, equall to the Male" (I.i.15-16). The rest of the characters, however, accept female rule and reject this patriarchal viewpoint. The priest Achoreus stresses that it was their father's will that both siblings should rule the country. Cleopatra's maid comments on the injustice of Ptolemy's attempts to subordinate his sister's royal position to his, observing how humiliating it is "that she that was borne free, ... should be / At the devotion of her Brother, whom / She only knows her equal" (I.ii.24-7). Her guardian vows to help her gain "that you were borne to" (I.ii.82). Even Ptolemy implicitly acknowledges her power by imprisoning her, for he clearly sees her as a threat to his plan to take control of all of Egypt.

When Cleopatra herself enters the play, she establishes her right to the throne by identifying herself as both sister and daughter of a king, wondering how she can be content "while she does remember / Whose daughter she is, and whose sister? O / I suffer in the name" (I.ii.51-3). Since she defines herself principally in terms of her dead father, she does not have to worry about being limited by his presence, for he cannot actually govern either her or the kingdom. The identification is useful to her, confirming her right to rule and her equality with her brother, as well as legitimating her determined efforts to position herself at the top of a male hierarchy. Co-opting the supreme authority of her father to justify her own pursuit of power, she ironically undermines, through a concerted

attack on her brother, the very patriarchal power of which their father stands as a symbol. Cleopatra's lawful claim to rule is also recognised by the playwrights themselves. Devoting all her efforts to defeating her brother and gaining her inheritance, she appears at first glance to be the type of female character common to Senecan tragedy. Passionate, strong-willed, unchaste, and imperious, she sees even the loss of her virginity as nothing "if it bring home Majesty" (I.ii.106). Unlike other dramatic women of this type, however, her character does not become a rampantly lascivious monster or a vindictively cruel harpy; nor are her aspirations punished. She remains sympathetic because she is challenging her brother, not her father, and because she is struggling for the inheritance that is, by long tradition, viewed as lawfully hers. In attempting to establish herself as co-ruler, she is actively carrying out the wishes of her father

Consequently, the two dramatists consistently present her as impressive and even admirable. Rather than punishing her for her transgressions, they indicate that Cleopatra, like Pulcheria, is more capable of governing than her brother. Ptolemy, whom she defies, challenges, and ultimately replaces, is imaged as a cowardly, indecisive back-stabber who betrays his old friend Pompey; he is also cast as the hapless puppet of Photinus, the "false one" of the title. When Ptolemy asks Caesar to arbitrate between him and his sister, his request establishes the two siblings as contending equals, both vying for power. Later, he and Cleopatra struggle to win the undivided allegiance of the Roman so that each can supplant the other through his assistance. Finally, the two's disparate responses to the rebellion incited by Photinus underline their different characters. The weak brother meets an

ignominious end, trampled to death by soldiers as he tries to escape from the palace with Caesar. Cleopatra endures her tribulations with a Stoic bravery and, in response to Photinus' threats, asserts her self-integrity and royal status: "I am still my selfe, / And though dis-roab'd of Sovereignty, and ravisht / Of ceremonious duty, that attends it, ... my free mind / Like to the Palm tree ... / Shall grow up straighter" (V. iv. 22-7).

Most important of all, she achieves her goal of sole sovereignty in Egypt. When Caesar vows to return to Rome where "the Senate, / (Thy brother dead) shall willingly decree / The Crowne of Egypt, (that was his) to thee" (V. iv. 206-8), Cleopatra may appear to gain her power solely through her lover. Yet Caesar's proposed departure indicates that she will rule alone in Egypt. Rather than condemning her as a disruptive woman, her struggle with her only surviving male relative helps to establish her right to the throne and to confirm her in the eyes of the audience as the more capable, courageous, and noble of the two siblings. Ironically, the play is a tragi-comedy, rather than a tragedy, because Photinus' untimely demise is no great loss.¹³ As the dramatists make clear, Cleopatra as sole ruler is better for Egypt than her weak, easily manipulated brother.

The other Massinger-Fletcher play which presents competing royal siblings, The Prophetess (licensed 1622; 1647), shows little interest in the relationship between the Emperor of Rome, Charinus, and his sister Aurelia. The rivalry between siblings remains largely undeveloped because the true conflict of the play expresses itself in the contention between the old imperial blood and the two pretenders to power, Maximinian and Diocletian. Brother and sister do, however, follow the pattern already established for royal siblings. Both, initially, are devoted to their family and to one

another, and Aurelia vows to marry whoever will kill the man responsible for the murder of their second brother. She also derives her sense of her power and prestige from her relationship to her brother. Acknowledging her as his equal, Charinus upholds her right to determine her own actions precisely because she is his sister: "and she, my sister, not to be compell'd, / Nor have her own snatch'd from her" (III.iii.7-8). The Persian ambassador also pays homage to her stature, saluting her as "Fair Prince" (III.iii.13). Likewise, the other royal brother, the Persian King Cosroe, views his sister Cassana even more emphatically as a part and natural extension of himself, calling her "my best Cassana, / Sister, and partner of my life and Empire" (IV.iv.5-6).

After Aurelia marries Maximinian, she loses her independence and no longer sees herself in relation to her brother or her royal family. She becomes focused on advancing the upstart Maximinian's claims to the throne and disowns her brother: "For Charinus, / (No more my Brother) if hee be a stop / To what you purpose, hee to Me's a Stanger" (V.ii.56-9). While setting her husband's pretensions first and defining herself in terms of his ambitions, it is still her identity as the Emperor's sister which gives rise to her "masculine Greatnesse" (V.ii.60) and "soaring spirit" (V.ii.60) in the first place. She is so quick to support her husband, she says, because "I was borne to command, / Train'd up in Soveraigntie" (IV.iv.23-24). Clearly she sees him as a means of achieving her own desires.

Royal sisters, then, come closest to overturning gender boundaries. Joined in blood to their brothers, they present dramatists with an opportunity to depict women who act in near equality with men and who often pose an unsettling challenge to patriarchy. Because of the particular emphasis these siblings place on their exclusive blood lines, they also underline the period's conception of

siblings as parts of the same self, mirror reflections of one another.

Endnotes

1. Apart from commenting on the element of potential incest in the play, critics do not appear interested in Panthea and study her relationship with her brother only in terms of how it affects our response to Arbaces. Early critics tend to study the play as an example of the tragicomic or baroque form. Arthur Mizener discusses how the playwrights use narrative form purely to create intense emotional responses in the audience, arousing "at each step, the feeling which is a psychologically dramatic successor to the feeling aroused by the previous speech" (147). Carolyn Asp discusses it as a type of tragicomedy which resolves itself structurally rather than through the conversion of the characters (88) and which "subverts ethical significance to emotional effect" (91). Eugene Waith discusses how character and thematic consistency is subject to plot and the desire to achieve "isolated moments of powerful feeling" (41). Rolf Soellner studies it as an epitome of baroque passion (301).

Other critics tend to focus on the ways in which we are meant to respond to Arbaces and his excessive passions. R. A. Foakes claims that A King and No King and Philaster both provide a new way of comically dealing with the darker and more unsettling problems of human sexuality (82), but, unfortunately, he does not use this claim to interpret the play in any depth. David Bergeron feels that the play is one of the first to suggest the tragic potential of incest, even though Beaumont and Fletcher resolve the problem in romance fashion (199-201). The play, he argues, influences Ford's Tis Pity. William Woodson views the dramatists' treatment of Arbaces' "innocent childlike character" (320) as both building on the Puritan "doctrine of the immutability of election" (321) and satirizing the "moral anarchy" (325) which can arise out of this outlook. Molly Smith studies the play as an undermining of the authority of the monarchy. Michael Neill explores the contraries of Arbaces' character, which are epitomized in the title of the play and which are a principal aspect of the paradoxical "discordia concord" of tragicomedy ("The Defence of Contraries" 319). Finally, Robert Turner argues that Arbaces' passion is meant to be interpreted positively; the strength of his emotion, rather than being criticized by the dramatists, enables him to prove "himself worthy to be a real king by feeling a love so strong that he challenges all prohibitions" (110).

2. T. B. Tomlinson (251-252) and William Woodson (325-27) both argue that Arbaces is being satirized.

3. Farr links the play to both Othello and The Duke of Milan in terms of their emphasis on the themes "of love, honour and jealousy" (59). She does not comment on the fact that the high-born and proud sister has replaced Iago as the catalyst for revenge.

4. Critics who study this play tend to focus on Ford's treatment of love in the play and disregard the sibling relationship. If they do discuss Fiormonda, it is as a passionate lover, not an affectionate sister, that they usually view her. For Mark Stavig, the play ironically satirizes the characters' diseased outlook on love (122-3) and their glorification of what is actually lust (123); he points out Fiormonda's use of Platonic eloquence to mask and advance her lust (126). For Peter Ure, the play develops the contrast between Fernando, who is a true Platonic lover and Bianca, who is not a true follower and who, consequently wants to consummate her adulterous passion (302-303). For Waith,

who studies the endings of Ford's plays to look at their "exaltation of love," the play ends with a "mood of sacrifice for an ideal love" ("John Ford and the Final Exaltation of Love" 59).

Only Dorothy Farr, in her study John Ford and the Caroline Theatre, emphasizes Fiormonda's role in urging her brother to suspect his wife (62-63). While she, like the other critics, concentrates her attention on the themes of "love, honour and jealousy" (59), she does emphasize the importance of the tie between the siblings. Together, brother and sister challenge Bianca's and Fernando's ideal love, which she calls "the only true relationship in a corrupt environment" (73).

5. Farr, in fact, describes the scene as Fiormonda's "climax of triumph ... the Duke is her puppet" (72).

6. Again, only Farr, who argues that the play presents a picture of people divided against themselves (22), looks at Thamasta in her own right, studying her as a character who changes from an arrogant princess to a more humble and self-controlled figure (21). She also stresses that the woman has no intention of acknowledging her brother's control (21). For Mark Stavig, Thamasta provides Ford with a means of satirizing potentially destructive "heroic" love (79), the love which causes the deaths of Love's Sacrifice.

7. Cf. Graham Parry (207). For a detailed discussion of the Platonic love cult started by Henrietta Maria and its influence on Caroline drama see Alfred Harbage (36) and Graham Parry (184 ff.). Stavig's John Ford and The Traditional Moral Order and George Sensabaugh's The Tragic Muse of John Ford also study the influence of the courtly love tradition on both Ford and the court dramatists.

8. Clark stresses Massinger's interest in presenting "strong-willed women who stand up for their prerogatives" (40) and he cites the large number of women in Massinger plays who hold positions of power (40). He, however, places the site of their power within their chastity, which gives them a staunch self-integrity and the ability to resist unreasonable demands from their men (42). This argument, though, only partially works. Characters like Cleora of The Bondman certainly gain respect and admiration through their unassailable chastity, but they possess no authority. By contrast, three of Massinger's most powerful and impressive women, Pulcheria, Cleopatra, and Mariana, draw their strength from their royal blood and place little emphasis on their chastity.

9. In her brief study of this play, Adler criticizes Massinger's description of Athenais' treatment at the hands of her cruel brothers (89). But within the larger context of the conflict between Pulcheria and her brother the Emperor, these details are neither irrelevant nor pointless and serve to introduce one of the central concerns of the play--the dispute between siblings over family inheritance and power.

10. Clark, in fact, studies the similarities between this play and Othello (58).

11. Contrast the differing treatment of Cleopatra in William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra, in which she is presented as a lover and queen rather than a sister.

12. The two acts written by Massinger depict a far different Cleopatra from the figure in the three middle acts written by Fletcher. They justify the tendency of critics to emphasize Massinger's interest in political issues and his ability to create strong, honourable, and impressive women. In the first act,

Massinger presents Cleopatra as a purely political being, angered by her loss of rule and willing to do anything to gain the co-rule of Egypt; in the last act, she disdainfully confronts her evil fortune with a Stoic's constancy and courage, undaunted by the seeming triumph of her enemies. Fletcher's contributions, however, turn her into a stereotypical woman who has relinquished the pursuit of political power and rule in favour of the pursuit of love. Her royal status only serves to give her royal appetites; in a characteristic statement, she declares:: "I love with as much ambition as a conqueror, / And where I love, will triumph" (IV.ii.126-7).

13. Although the editors of the play identify it as a tragicomedy, Waith argues that it is a failed tragedy with affinities to tragicomedy, with Caesar as the tragically flawed hero (The Pattern of Tragicomedy 125-28). Caesar, however, does not have a noticeably more prominent role than either Ptolemy or Cleopatra and, while he is important in the acts written by Fletcher, his presence is considerably diminished in the sections composed by Massinger.

Chapter 5

'High Blood': Undermining Gender Difference in The Duchess of Malfi

The complexity and moral ambiguity of John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi (1612-1614; 1623) has given rise to a range of critical interpretations as conflicting as the turmoil and chaos within the play itself. Critics of the nineteenth century faulted Webster for his lack of unity, his indifference to Aristotelian rules, and his melodramatic use of horror (Moore 1-55) and were willing to acknowledge only his sporadic great moments and his powerful poetry (Moore 58-59). This tradition of criticizing Webster's dramatic achievement carried over into the early twentieth century and resulted in analyses which emphasized Webster's lack of purpose (Tomlinson 142-143)¹ and artistic incoherence.² More recently, F. H. Langman has revived many of these old criticisms of the play, calling renewed attention to the work's inconsistencies (35-36) and questioning modern scholars of Webster who "want to present inchoate visions as visions of chaos" (38).

Langman, however, is the exception, and most of the early criticisms of Webster have either been discredited or are now ignored. Rupert Brooke's study first argued that the play was held together by its emotional coherence and by Webster's powerful vision of a world in decay, and his observation has now become a critical commonplace. Scholars such as Ralph Berry and Christina Luckyj have devoted whole studies to demonstrating the play's unity of structure, image, and symbol.³

While critics of Webster may no longer feel obliged to begin their articles with a defence of the play's unity or of Webster's moral purpose, the range of their interpretations emphasizes the complex ambiguity of the play. Does Webster affirm Christian values and redemption and the ultimate triumph of a moral universe⁴ or does he, rather, insist on the value of human dignity in the

face of a cruel, indifferent fate and an unknown destiny?⁵ Perhaps, he is despairing, calling attention to the pathetic weakness of humankind⁶ or even advancing a nihilistic view of the universe.

Critics also set out a whole spectrum of possible responses to the Duchess' behaviour, their sometimes polarized viewpoints indicating just how powerful a reaction she can inspire. To some critics, she is a saint (Jenkins 53); a helpless and innocent victim (Simpson 135; Shaw 18); a simple child (Bradbrook, John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist 150); an image of womanhood as perfect as Antonio first makes out (Lever 88-89); or a woman who throws off, with Webster's full approbation, the shackles of reason, law, and order that have constricted humanity since Plato (Goldberg, Between Two Worlds 102-104). Other interpretations view her as a silly, vain, and giddy girl, who must have her womanishness cleansed from her before she can become great (Ribner, "Webster's Italian Tragedies" 113, Courtade 65-67); or as a foolish and gullible woman (Champion, Tragic Patterns 140-142), who must "[u]nhappily ... rely on her own wits" (Dwyer 51). Yet other approaches study her as a ruler who is punished for her single-minded pursuit of lust and private pleasure (Emslie 393; Peterson 66), or who is brought low because goodness is not "politically viable in any significant way" (Griffin 127).

The debate over the nature of the Duchess and of Webster's tragic vision has been further developed by feminist and cultural materialist critics. Some feminists have interrogated Webster's tendency to characterize woman as either saint or whore, locating his depiction of the Duchess within the period's polarized conception of femininity.⁸ Conversely, other feminists have praised Webster's ability to move beyond this sterile and inhuman dichotomy to present a woman who is heroic and sympathetic precisely because of her human imperfections.⁹ Ultimately, the "spirit of woman" is not something shameful, not something which must be cleansed in order to burnish the Duchess into an

image of shining perfection, but a part of who she is and a significant aspect of her greatness.¹⁰

The play has also been considered within the dramatic tradition that preceded it. Earlier critics tend to focus on the play as a re-working of the revenge tragedy,¹¹ while others study its relationship to the tragicomedy and satire¹² or comment on the blending of psychological naturalism with the more stylized medieval dramatic tradition.¹³ In more recent years, critics have concentrated on the play's metadramatics and the ways in which Webster's self-conscious sense of the theatrical shapes his characterizations and treatment of the self. Does the characters' theatricality indicate their "radical alienation from the self" (Felperin 189) and their discovery of the "inescapable theatricality that is life" (Felperin 191)? Or, conversely, does their role-playing mark a positive step towards true self-knowledge, helping to re-define or confirm the character's sense of identity (Lord, The Dynamics of Role-Playing in Jacobean Tragedy 157-159)?

Few critics, however, focus in any detail on the brother-sister relationship in the play. The only scholars to consider the siblings' relationship in any depth are those who embark on psychoanalytic or psychoanalytically influenced interpretations.¹⁴ While these readings provide valuable insights into Ferdinand's sense of self and the symbolic significance of the siblings' twinship, they focus almost exclusively on the brother. Casting the Duchess as an extension of Ferdinand's self, they analyse what the twinship reveals about Ferdinand, not about them both. Thus, when both Charles Forker and Frank Whigham consider the brother's fixation on his sister, they look at the Duchess through Ferdinand's eyes, seeing her as a symbolic reflection of himself that reveals his deep-seated neuroses or his aristocratic exclusiveness. When they proceed to study the Duchess in more detail, as they both do, they consider her solely in terms of her sexual relationship with Antonio, as a wife and mother. For them, Ferdinand's obsession with his sister is crucial to an understanding of

his character, while the Duchess' problematic role as a sister is overlooked.¹⁵

This same emphasis on the Duchess' relationship with Antonio also characterizes many of the feminist and socio-cultural studies of the play. Critics such as Mary Beth Rose, Theodora Jankowski, and Whigham tend to study the Duchess as a ruler or wife, or to examine the relationship between the two. If they do consider the Duchess in relationship to her brother, they downplay the connection's significance, styling their blood ties as a public relationship which they contrast with the private, personal, and more positive domestic ties she establishes with Antonio. Rose places the essence of the Duchess' character within her relationship with Antonio; the new Protestant idealization of marriage, she argues, provides the Duchess with a chance for self-fulfilment, as well as elevating traditional female qualities and transforming marriage itself into a heroic endeavour (155-172). Jankowski concedes that the brothers appear to have a personal interest in the Duchess; nonetheless, she insists that the relationship is an almost purely dynastic, public one, placed against the Duchess' private world and her attempts to fulfill her "body natural" (164-166).¹⁶ Whigham constructs an argument that collapses Ferdinand's public and private interest in his sister,¹⁷ and yet in his interpretation he still considers the Duchess herself solely in relation to what he styles family--a private enterprise--as opposed to "Family" (202)--the public, dynastic relationship (201-202).

These interpretations, however, all distort our understanding of the way in which Webster presents the Duchess and the way she conceives of herself. First, critics such as Whigham and Jankowski tend to characterize the Duchess' relationship with her brothers as a purely public one, when it is evidently her relation to her royal blood family that defines her personally as well as publicly. Second, they insist that her feelings for Antonio are somehow the most important and the truest expression of her being. Yet this view is as narrow as the earlier critics who castigate the

Duchess for her neglect of public duties. Finally, these critics ignore or deny the importance of both rank and royal power to the Duchess' self-image.

Because many feminist and cultural critics of Renaissance drama are closely allied to socialist and Marxist theory, they often view rank and aristocratic privilege in consistently negative terms.¹⁸ Thus they return, again and again, to the Duchess' marriage to the lower-born Antonio, placing this subversive relationship within the changing class dynamics of the late Renaissance and the rise of social mobility.¹⁹ As well, they automatically link woman with the oppressed lower classes, joined in allegiance against the domineering, exploitative male aristocrat, the worst representative of "a corrupt and decadent past" (Rose 166). Yet the importance Webster places on rank seems to undercut such equations, for he as often splits the characters along class rather than gender lines. Again, the source which fuels the Duchess' pioneering quest for a heroically autonomous private life (Rose 163) seems to be her royal status rather than a revolutionary conception of marriage. It is hard to believe, as Dymphna Callaghan claims so emphatically, that all women in Webster, whether noble or base, are presented as inferior to man (129; 137). Likewise, it is far more difficult than these critics acknowledge to differentiate the Duchess from her brother, that arch aristocrat with his diseased and entropic views of class exclusiveness. She, as much as he, is defined by her class.

In praising her for her marriage, these recent critics also create a number of contradictions. They applaud the Duchess' egalitarian union as a radical scheme to challenge class privilege and to overthrow social boundaries; they praise her attempts to establish a private, domestic realm at variance with the corrupt political world; and they lament her failed but heroic defiance of gender barriers; and yet they never adequately address the paradox that it is precisely her royal birth that allows her to behave in such a way,²⁰ just as her self-conception as an aristocrat and prince leads her

to believe that she is free to do as she pleases.

To ignore, downplay, or deny the Duchess' strong links to her brothers, their shared outlook on their society, and her stature as a royal sibling is thus to ignore the principal source of the Duchess' self-image and the source of her ability to make choices, to act, instead of existing passively. Her self-image as a prince of royal blood, which ties her to Prince Ferdinand, provides her with her public persona. Yet her physical similarity to her brothers, as well as their shared aristocratic outlook, also defines her in the most personal sense. The blood running through her veins connects her more closely to her brothers than her marriage joins her to Antonio, for it provides her with both her sense of self and her desire, so similar to Ferdinand's, for complete personal autonomy. In fact, all the characteristics she shares with her brothers are those which, ironically for feminist Marxist critics, give her personal power, not because she successfully appropriates masculine traits and behaviour (Whigham, Seizures of the Will 202) but, more strikingly, because she does not have to appropriate these characteristics which are the natural inheritance of her royal family house. In Webster's hands, her aristocratic outlook blurs the differences between gender, indicating that blood rather than sex confers authority and that family, not gender, determines one's essential personality. As well, the relentless antagonism in her relationship with her siblings, particularly with Ferdinand, stands as the essential element of her attempt at self-definition. Asserting equality with her brothers, an equality gained through their shared blood, the Duchess does not so much undermine gender difference as deny it

At the same time, when we consider the Duchess as a sister, placing her in relation to her brother, we begin to understand better both the way Webster deals with the question of male and female identity and the way he undercuts the gender-based hierarchy of his period. In her book

studying gender categories in the Renaissance, Callaghan claims that the period "construct[s the] category of woman" in terms of the gender difference necessary to maintain the male hierarchy (27). But because "the lines of gender difference frequently become blurred" (Callaghan 103), men have a particular need to define their difference from and superiority over the female (Callaghan 103) in order to create a sense of their unique identity. Considering both brother and sister, we can see how the sibling tie is one of the most powerful ways for dramatists to undermine this gender differentiation. Seeing himself exclusively in relation to his sister forces Ferdinand to acknowledge their similarity and causes his insanity; for he cannot create a stable identity as a man by defining himself as different from his sister. Forced by his excessive pride to see her as his reflection, he cannot resolve the conflict between rank and gender that eventually consumes his mind. As well, casting Ferdinand as a brother aids in what Callaghan terms the decentring of man characteristic of the period's increasing skepticism (25-27). Neither husband nor father, the brother exists outside the roles given to men to define themselves in the private realm. He is also excluded from the political, social, religious, and cosmic analogies (Callaghan 27) that confirmed male power. Thus, brotherly authority is inherently unstable and ambiguous: a perversion of proper authority or a symbol of its unsettling absence. The figure of the jealous brother, left stranded between the roles of the father, protecting the honour of the family, and the husband, guarding his wife's chastity, allows Webster to present hierarchical male power at its weakest point.

By contrast, creating the Duchess as both sister and wife allows Webster to present ambivalently the Duchess' challenge to traditional male authority. It allows her at least to attempt to create her own identity, one which balances the spirit of greatness with that of woman in the conflicting roles of sister and wife and which brings her autonomy. Conceived at the same moment,

she comes closest to being Ferdinand's mirror image; they share one identity that does not subordinate the sister to the brother but joins them equally, in an identity derived from their father and family. Revealingly, the moments in which the Duchess most resembles Ferdinand and the Cardinal are those in which she possesses the most power. Conversely, the more Ferdinand is able to dissociate himself from her and cast her as a woman rather than as his sister Duchess, the more vulnerable she becomes to his attack. Their gender, however, marks them in Renaissance minds as radically dissimilar opposites. It is within this conflict between rank and sex that the necessity of asserting the supremacy of male over female becomes particularly urgent and yet increasingly difficult, ending in Ferdinand's insanity and the Duchess' final attempt to integrate the roles of royal sister and wife.

From the beginning, the depth of the family resemblance between the siblings is a point of considerable dispute, both amongst critics and characters in the play. The one critical extreme, represented by scholars such as Joyce Peterson, makes the Duchess the female version of her brother, Ferdinand: rapacious, ruthless, and utterly selfish.²¹ The other makes her as virtuous and saintly as Ferdinand is vicious and depraved, their outward similarity reinforcing their inner differences.²² More moderate critics, however, have pointed out that she is both similar and dissimilar, a paradox contained within the image of the female twin.²³ It is particularly useful to consider this similar dissimilarity in terms of gender difference and blood ties--to see her family resemblance as the force which challenges her more conventionally virtuous female qualities. If her affinity with her brothers appears to make her less than perfect, it also provides her with her source of power and her active will.

Describing her to his friend, Antonio acknowledges the siblings' physical similarity but hastens to deny any inward likeness between them: "But for their sister, the right noble Duchess, / You never

fix'd your eye on three fair medals, / Cast in one figure, of so different temper" (I.ii.109-111).²⁴ Notably, he tries to differentiate her from her male siblings by emphasizing her ideal female qualities, the qualities that are traditionally used to define and mark off her gender. Although she speaks well she is so modest that she holds it "vainglory to talk much" (I.ii.115) and "penance" (I.ii.116) for her listeners to hear her; although beautiful, she is virtuously chaste, showing "so divine a continence, / As cuts off all lascivious, and vain hope" (I.ii.121-122). So far from closely resembling her brother and undermining gender differences, Antonio stresses the fact that the Duchess embodies all the ideal traits of Renaissance women: she is a female paragon who should stand as a mirror for "all sweet ladies . . . [to] dress themselves in her" (I.ii.126-127).

The reality, however, is far different, and Antonio's early words here suggest his later role in detaching the Duchess from her brothers by underlining her traditionally feminine, non-threatening characteristics and discounting her family likeness and powerful blood connections. In truth, the twin siblings share an uncanny similarity in rank, appearance, and outlook. Not only does Webster repeatedly refer to both as "prince," he also gives them matching titles to suggest their mirror likeness. Rather than linking her to her dead first husband, her title of Duchess connects her to the brother whom Webster deliberately creates as her male equivalent--a Duke, when the historical brother of the playwright's sources was a Marquess (Brennan, Introduction xvii-xviii).

The Duchess also thinks like her brothers, sharing their aristocratic outlook and indifference to those beneath them and their conviction that they have the right to take what they please. All her early actions confirm her kinship with her brothers, underlining her blood as the source of her temporal power and prestige as well as her self-conception as her brothers' equal, rather than as a subordinate woman. The three-way conversation among them, as her two brothers attempt to

instruct her, particularly stresses their likeness. All three are equally caught up in their own concerns, quite unaware of the true thoughts of the other. The Duke and Cardinal earnestly lecture their sister, while she responds to their attempts at instruction with a flippant indifference. "This is terrible good counsel," she observes ironically at one point (I.ii. 232), after Ferdinand has held forth with great passion on duplicity, and when the interview concludes she makes it clear that she has been quite unmoved by their words. She is as imperious in her will as they are in theirs.

Again, she shows her family resemblance when she weds Antonio. Quite indifferent to anything but her own desires, able to shut out or ignore the demands of those around her, she makes a show of deference to her brothers and then proceeds to do as she pleases. Even her marriage with Antonio, which should place her in the position of the subordinate, only serves to emphasize the difference in their degrees of power and the triumph of rank over gender. She initiates the courtship, proposes to him, and despite her conceit of blind fortune takes him to bed. Later, she orders him to leave for Ancona without discussion, and again dismisses him when Bosola and the horsemen are threatening to overtake them. However one may take the nature of the love between Antonio and the Duchess, she never ceases to view him as her subordinate, to be commanded as well as loved and protected.

Even the scene in her bed chamber, which many critics view as a charming expression of warm and loving domesticity, reveals the Duchess' imperious sense of self and her superior rank and power over her husband.²⁵ Carelessly arrogant, she tells her husband how she will have all the court ladies powder their hair white when she herself goes grey. Her position, as she sits in front of the mirror with both her husband and her maid standing behind her, underlines the two servants' inferior social station. Their conversation also shows their uneasy awareness of her high rank, for while they

nervously joke about their breach of proper authority, they both take their cue from the Duchess and defer to her. When the two sneak away, they do so with an air of naughty irreverence that underlines the very hierarchy they pretend to disregard.

Closely tied to the Duchess' resemblance to her sibling is the importance that she, like Ferdinand, places on rank and royal power as a means of self-definition. The Duchess' over-riding sense of her royal status, which establishes her as the equal of her brothers, is the defining aspect of her character and of Webster's treatment of her throughout the play.²⁶ It is not that the playwright wants to explore her figure in a political context, either to condemn her irresponsibility or to study the problems of the female ruler, for he seems singularly uninterested in presenting her in her public role and showing her ruling her kingdom.²⁷ Instead, rank confers upon her an immediate boldness and courage and carries with it an instant association of power that dissolves the differences between her and her brothers while standing in tense opposition to her nature as woman.

Most evidently, the fact that the Duchess is never given a first name indicates the importance of rank and position to her self-definition.²⁸ She never ceases to see herself as Duchess, not because she has no identity of her own but because her personal identity is founded purely on the power that she obtains through her rank. If she ever ceased for a moment to be the Duchess, to have a personal name, she would become simply a woman, powerless. Joined with her title is the designation of "sister Duchess" that follows her through the play, a title that closely joins the prestige and power of her ducal position with her familial and dramatic role as sister. Since her husband is dead, she is immediately characterized by her relation to her closest male relatives--her siblings. She is often described as "sister Duchess" both by characters like Silvio (I.ii.69-70) and, more especially, by Ferdinand who tries to lay claim both to her and the stature he feels fitting for one of his royal blood.

Webster also underlines the siblings' connection to the royal family of Aragon; and the number of times that Webster refers to her as a prince emphasizes her link with and equality to the Prince Ferdinand. In two famous passages, her male siblings dwell on the royal blood that separates them and their sister from the common run of mankind. The Cardinal is hypocritically outraged by the dishonour she has done to their family house, demanding: "Shall our blood? / The royal blood of Aragon and Castile, / Be thus attaint'd?" (II.v.21-3). Ferdinand is even more particular in his sense of the status derived from their shared blood lines, claiming "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" (IV.ii.119-121). But while critics comment unfavourably on their aristocratic exclusiveness,²⁹ the Duchess herself is no less preoccupied and self-defined by her royal blood, a self-definition that links her inexorably to her brothers.

The Duchess' conception of herself as royal defines her actions and self-image and controls others' perception of her as well.³⁰ The very moments when she characterizes herself as a prince are those in which she is able to act most decisively or with complete autonomy. When she begins her courtship of Antonio, she at once stresses her royal stature: "I am making my will, as 'tis fit princes should / In perfect memory" (I.ii.295-296). Later, she bemoans "[t]he misery of us, that are born great, / We are forc'd to woo, because none dare woo us" (I.ii.357-358), and yet it is precisely her stature that gives her the freedom to summon and then pursue the man she has chosen. When she is confronted by her brother in her bed chamber, it is again her sense of herself as a prince and a member of the royal family that gives her the courage to challenge her brother as an equal. Withstanding the terrible shock of her brother's sudden appearance, she assures him that "whether I am doom'd to live, or die, / I can do both like a prince" (III.ii.70-71), and then questions his

judgement: "Why should only I, / Of all the other princes of the world / Be cas'd up, like a holy relic?" (III.ii.137-139). Even her sharply voiced criticism of Ferdinand's violent outrage, that "[y]ou are in this / Too strict: and were you not my princely brother / I would say too wilful" (III.ii.117-119), emphasizes their shared royal and princely status. She will tolerate such treatment, she stresses, only because he is her brother and social equal.

The other principal characters confirm her self-image as, first and foremost, a royal prince. Antonio's complaint, as the Duchess pretends to dismiss him in disgrace, that "[y]ou may see, gentlemen, what 'tis to serve / A prince with body and soul" (III.ii.207-208), ironically describes the real hazards involved in loving a woman of such high rank and underlines the power she holds over him in their relationship, the fact that theirs is not the companionate marriage of the Protestant ideal but simply service. In the speeches that win the Duchess' confidence, Bosola repeatedly styles her as a prince, implying that she is the superior whose rank will command his absolute obedience. Even the pilgrims watching the dumb show wonder at the Cardinal's right to command her: "[W]hat power hath this state / Of Ancona, to determine of a free prince?" (III.iv.27-28).

After her arrest and captivity, it is again her self-conception as a great prince that comforts and sustains the Duchess. Her sense of her own lofty position marks the many gestures that make her appear so noble and impressive. She greets the guards who arrest her with a flamboyant courage: "O, they are very welcome: / When Fortune's wheel is over-charg'd with princes, / The weight makes it move swift. I would have my ruin / Be sudden" (III.v.92-95). Her deliberate self-identification with the great princes of the medieval tradition whose majesty is brought low by the fickleness of fortune suddenly endues her with a tragic grandeur.³¹ The "strange disdain" that so fortifies her and dismays her brother comes from her aristocratic sense of her own greatness, enabling her to transform

suffering into triumph as she refuses to let it diminish her personal sense of her own royal dignity. Thus, whether she is cursing the stars or treating Bosola's attempts to terrify her with ironic hauteur, she never loses her sense of herself as a mighty prince. In fact, the more terrible her suffering and torture, the more, inversely, they confirm her greatness, the lofty height on Fortune's wheel from which she has plunged.

Even her last words before being strangled underline her self-conception as an imperial royal. She first orders her executioners to kill her: "Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength / Must pull down heaven upon me" (IV.ii.226-227), effectively transforming them into servants, doing her will in conveying her to heaven. Then she pauses with a comment that shows how she has viewed herself up until that moment: "yet stay, heaven gates are not so highly arch'd / As princes' palaces" (IV.ii.228-229). Perhaps, as some critics claim, her words are a final gesture of humility, but they also emphasize her perception of herself, as a prince who stoops before no one but God.

Ultimately, rank, for the Duchess, is a state of mind that frees her from the restrictions placed on her sex. Her sense of her privileged position has also become so completely internalized that it creates her sense of who she is, even when she is deprived of her outward position as Duchess. The Duchess, writes Jardine, mistakenly acts as though her financial and aristocratic position gives her the power to determine her own course of action (Jardine 90). However, as a woman she is ultimately powerless (Jardine 90); the conclusion of the play allows "the spectre of real female strength implicit in the inheritance structure [to be] ritually exorcised" (Jardine 92). The Duchess, then, according to Jardine, deludes herself into believing that she can act autonomously, only to be painfully and forcibly confronted with a true knowledge of her own weakness in the face of the male patriarchy. What Jardine's materialist outlook ignores is that the Duchess, as a prince of royal blood, inherits a

perspective on the world that is ultimately more empowering than all the material goods that may accompany her position. Even more markedly than other royal sisters, her stature as an aristocrat allows her to perceive herself as free to make choices, both in her temporal life and towards her eternal salvation, for rank gives all three of the siblings the ability to choose between good and evil. Even with the Duchess' imprisonment, when Jardine views her as so diminished, her mental and psychological sovereignty is confirmed. Her mind is never enslaved and never acknowledges the sovereignty of another, and despite losing the physical power to command those around her, she remains free to choose between good and evil, finally resisting both the despair and the hatred for the world around her that characterizes her brothers. Thus her earlier sovereignty, as we saw her deciding, doing, acting, is not replaced by powerlessness. Instead, it stands as a metaphor for what is finally an even more powerful autonomy and strength--the ability to keep her mind free from the overwhelming pressures of the male characters and of the insane world around her. This is a considerable triumph in a world in which the characters are either mad or see themselves as the helpless puppets of forces and people beyond their control.

Bosola and Antonio, by contrast, are the truly disempowered, and it is in the difference between them, on the one hand, and the Duchess and her brothers, on the other, that Webster particularly indicates the way rank rather than gender confers sovereignty on the characters. In her analyses of the two principal Webster plays, Callaghan claims that "the position of the malcontent in the social hierarchy is below all men and above all women" (129), and she claims that considerations of rank in Webster's plays are always subordinated to gender.¹² But while both Bosola and Antonio are male, their social position marks them off from the Duchess more than does their sex. In the same way, the Duchess and her brothers share the outlook of the high-placed aristocrat who is free to do

as he or she pleases; consequently, as siblings they are far more similar and equal than the four men are to one another. Rank supersedes gender: the power to act is the Duchess' birthright while Antonio and Bosola exist to serve, their lower position in life both causing their powerlessness and acting as a metaphor for it. Antonio, while virtuous, is utterly passive, displaying the same enervated goodness that critics have ascribed to Cornelia and Marcellus of The White Devil. Like Bosola, who is engaged in a similar servant relationship with the Duchess' sibling,³³ Antonio is content to "serve his prince" with body and soul, giving over responsibility for both to the Duchess. Because he never acts but always does as his wife tells him, he is a powerless figure, unable, as critics point out, to deal with the various crises of the play.³⁴ He is thrown into panic when his wife goes into labour and, in his alarm at seeing Bosola, drops the telltale horoscope; he does not dare confront Ferdinand in the bed chamber; and he makes no attempt to remain with his wife and defend her from her brother's wrath

Once separated from the Duchess, Antonio becomes both physically and spiritually passive, weak, and unable to guide himself. He has no will to act, to try and free himself and the Duchess from the brothers' persecution. The only solution he can come up with is to surrender himself to the mercy of the Cardinal. Trusting in the vain hope that his submission and meek expression of "love and duty, / May draw the poison out of him, and work / A friendly reconciliation" (V.i.69-71), he embraces a solution that audiences recognise as almost pathetically futile. His accidental and almost cruelly haphazard death at the hands of Bosola further emphasizes his inability to embark on a meaningful course of action. Spiritually, he is equally inert, for his outlook on life, conditioned as it is by the idea of service to his prince, does not allow him to choose either good or evil. Thus, as he dies, he does not look to either heaven or hell, as the siblings do, but to the blank nothingness that

comes with the absence of belief in choice. Both his life and death rise up in front of him as finally futile and vain: his life a pursuit "after bubbles, blown in th'air" (V.iv.65), his death nothing more than an escape from the incomprehensible and unbearable pain of being alive. He dies, Wharton points out, in despair (82), and without belief, unable to bring meaning to either his life or his death.

Like Antonio, Bosola's birth similarly deprives him of the ability to act and underlines the importance of rank in the play, as an opposing force to gender. While the Duchess and her brothers feel they have the right to do as they please, whether it be good or evil, Bosola views himself as a victim of circumstances beyond his control. Necessity, he insists, and the corruption of the world, force him to spy on the Duchess, just as loyalty to his lord makes him continue on a course of action he professes to find loathsome. The more he agonizes over his behaviour, the more we realise that it is his position and the frame of mind that accompanies his rank which imprison him. His feeling that he cannot do good, no matter how hard he tries, has been discussed by Klinck as a presentation of Calvinist predestination (335; 346-348); other scholars argue that Webster suggests that he does have the ability to do good.¹⁵ When we consider him along with Antonio and the three siblings, it does not really matter whether or not he truly is as powerless as he makes out. The point is that he believes, absolutely, that he is powerless, just as the Duchess believes, even in death, that she is a sovereign. The necessity of submitting himself to the will of those greater than he leaves him without a will of his own, and he contemplates his own damnation with a mixture of horror and puzzled disbelief.

For Bosola, then, even more than for Antonio, his position brings with it a conviction of his own powerlessness. For all his melancholy, and his bitter wit, he cannot really bring himself to believe his own raillery when he mocks the idea that "the souls of princes were brought forth by some more weighty cause, than those of meaner persons" (II.i.104-106). Instead, he shows himself almost

pathetically dependent on those above him for guidance. Just as Antonio rather feebly resists the Duchess' attempts to woo and win him, Bosola proves equally weak in the face of Ferdinand's temptation. Unable to assert his own will against Ferdinand's control, he takes the gold from him as though he truly believes "that to avoid ingratitude, / For the good deed you have done me, I must do / All the ill man can invent" (I.ii.194-196), and he concludes by emphasizing his feeling of powerlessness: "I am your creature" (I.ii.208). Like Antonio, he is trapped within his position, surrendering up his autonomy and his responsibility for his own actions to someone else. His one attempt to resist Ferdinand's domination is quickly and easily quelled and he proceeds to torment and murder the Duchess with a grim zeal. By the end of the play, his subordination to Ferdinand's control extends itself into a fatalistic philosophy that denies the possibility of human choice or action. He portrays himself as a plaything to his destiny: "We are merely the stars' tennis-balls, struck and banded / Which way please them" (V v 53-54). More despairingly, he renounces his belief in his free will, casting himself as controlled by evil, rather than choosing it. Antonio, a passive figure of good, cannot understand the seeming triumph of evil; Bosola, an equally passive figure of evil, conceives of himself as unable to do good.

Elevated rank, by contrast, gives both the Duchess and her siblings, particularly Ferdinand, the power that comes from the belief that they can make their own decisions. The difference between Ferdinand's and Bosola's attitudes, as great as the difference between the Duchess' and Antonio's final ends, confirms the importance of the privileged position held by both the Duchess and her brother. When Bosola tells the Duke about his sister's liaison, the malcontent cannot believe that she might have chosen to give herself to a man beneath her. In his mind, "there hath been some sorcery / Us'd on the Duchess To make her dote on some desertless fellow, / She shames to acknowledge"

(III.i.63-66). Ferdinand, though, greets the suggestion that a person may be controlled against her will with scornful disbelief: "Can your faith give way / To think there's power in potions, or in charms, / To make us love, whether we will or no?" (III.i.66-68). Instead, he most emphatically assigns his sister responsibility for her own actions. "Do you think," he demands, "that herbs or charms, / Can force the will? ... The witchcraft lies in her rank blood" (III.i.72-78). Their completely different interpretations of the same situation underline their disparate outlooks: Bosola, the "tennis ball of the stars," sees the Duchess as similarly powerless, while Ferdinand, the imperious aristocrat, views her actions as entirely self-determined and cannot imagine anyone or anything but herself controlling her will.

The two men's different attitudes also influence their evaluation of their own behavior. Bosola adopts a position of moral passivity, for in the same way that he believes that he has no control over his life, he seems to believe that he has no capacity to choose between good and evil. He envisions himself as a victim from the beginning of the play to the end, made to do evil against his will and prevented, by some agency which he never clearly identifies, from doing good. His sense of powerlessness, however, that he exists in a world where salvation and damnation appear equally unlikely (Leech, John Webster 89), is just that--a sense or attitude rather than a reality born out by facts. Although appointed provisor of the Duchess' horse through Ferdinand's intervention, he could still have been loyal to the Duchess, just as he could have refrained from divulging Antonio's name to the two brothers. Yet even after having the Duchess strangled, he refuses to blame himself and insists that Ferdinand is responsible. Tragically deluded, he complains that he is cruelly prevented from keeping her alive and bemoans the fact that, despite his sudden repentance, "we cannot be suffer'd / To do good when we have a mind to it" (IV ii.353-354). By characterizing himself as a

passive, even unwilling instrument, he seeks to rid himself of the guilt of the deed. Yet in denying that he chose to do evil, he also deprives himself of the ability to choose good and hastens his own damnation through his abdication of moral agency.

Ferdinand, by contrast, acknowledges the evil of the deed and looks with horror on both himself and his servant. While he first tries to explain his actions by saying that he "was distracted of my wits" (IV.ii.273), he almost immediately appreciates the full horror of their deed and accepts their damnation for willfully doing evil. "Where shalt thou find this judgement register'd / Unless in hell?" (IV.ii.297-8) he asks, and his question indicates how he identifies himself and his orders with the devil. It is precisely because he cannot make any excuses for the murder, because he recognises and cannot escape from his own acceptance of evil, that he becomes insane.

In the same way, Ferdinand comes out of his madness long enough to accept responsibility for his actions. He identifies himself as his own destroyer: "Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust, / Like diamonds we are cut with our own dust" (V.v.71-72). As a royal, he and the sister who is a mirror image of himself are the only persons who can defeat him. Similarly, the only force that can overcome the Duchess is herself and Ferdinand, a diabolically distorted reflection of her own proud wilfulness.

Rank, then, rather than gender ultimately determines the individual's power. Not only does it give the characters the belief that they can direct their own lives, but it also shapes their whole moral outlook, providing them with the frame of mind that allows them to make a choice between good and evil. While Bosola is trapped in a socially imposed conception of his powerlessness, the Duchess, despite being a woman, is spared the paralysis of will and action that afflicts both him and Antonio. For all Jardine's belief in the ultimate weakness of the Duchess, her royal blood gives her

the privileged outlook on life of the aristocrat who has always possessed freedom of action and of mind.

She is, however, still a woman, and her royal status and role as sister become the site of an irresolvable struggle over the nature of gender differences, expressing itself in the conflict between the Duchess and her brothers. Feminist critics have discussed how patriarchal hierarchies are built on an insistence upon the difference between man and woman, a difference which justifies the authority of male over female and excludes the woman from the normal range of male activities.³⁶ But blood is a powerful influence acting to counter this differentiation, for it affirms the similarity between brother and sister rather than underlining the differences. Royal blood is particularly subversive in this respect for its exclusiveness demands an even more careful separation based not on gender but on rank. Much of the tension of the play, then, arises out of the conflict between these two quite different ways of ordering society, one based on blood and rank and the other on gender.³⁷ Blood provides Webster with a powerful means to challenge traditional conceptions of women, and he takes up earlier treatments of royal sisters as the only construction of the female in which the spirit of greatness--derived from blood--and of woman can be combined.³⁸

Psychoanalytic critics point out that Ferdinand perceives "his sister as a double of himself" (Wilkinson 52) and discuss what this attitude reveals about Ferdinand's pathological complexes. For Forker, the critic who does the most thorough and persuasive psychoanalytic study of the play, the brother's obsession with his sister symbolically reveals his own insane lack of identity, his self-hatred, and his distance from a knowledge of his self: "his self-alienation ... [is] an aspect of his claustrophobic involvement--indeed almost of his identification with the image of his sister" (The Skull Beneath the Skin 308). For other critics who consider Ferdinand's aristocratic pre-occupations, the

brother's pathological obsession with family honour and power manifests itself in his anxious concern to keep his blood pure and untainted. The unnatural extent of his fervour is particularly emphasized, Whigham argues, by Ferdinand's unconscious incestuous attraction towards his sister, which is an extreme manifestation of his aristocratic pride.³⁹ But if royal blood represents a currency of power which Ferdinand wishes to hoard, preventing its dissemination amongst the lower class and concentrating it within his family, it also immeasurably enriches his sister.⁴⁰ Ferdinand's obsession with his royal blood elevates the Duchess to a position of equality with him. Although he never forgets that she is a woman, her blood makes her his double, his female likeness demanding respect and equality

The dual meaning in the word "blood" particularly helps to capture the brothers' ambivalent and conflicted response to their sister, for they often use it to refer to both the Duchess' rank, which links the three siblings, and her sexuality, which defines her as woman.⁴¹ The Cardinal warns her against rushing into a hasty marriage, counselling her not to let "any thing without the addition, Honour, / Sway your high blood" (I.ii 217-18), and his words refer both to her royal rank and the intense passion of a woman and widow. Later, Ferdinand unconsciously calls attention to this same tension when he rebuffs Bosola's suggestion that the Duchess' infatuation may have been caused by a love potion that controlled her will. "The witchcraft lies in her rank blood," he responds, and the word "blood" ironically encapsulates the opposition between gender and rank. Ferdinand's use of "blood" denotes passion or lust, the traits traditionally ascribed to the weaker sex and--he implies--the only witchcraft needed to make her lubricious. The underlying meaning of blood however is, again, of rank and kinship; it is royal affinity with Ferdinand which allows her to have a will of her own in the first place and which enables her to pursue her passions. Ironically, her blood also gives her the

power to bewitch others, for witchcraft, too, takes on a meaning different from that which Ferdinand intends. It represents not just her own passion but also reflects the deadly fascination that her blood—a metaphor for both her sexuality and her rank—holds for Ferdinand.

Even Ferdinand's famous lines after he imprisons his sister suggest the way in which his aristocratic obsession with blood privileges the Duchess, even as it destroys her. He tells Bosola that "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" (IV.i.119-21).⁴² Paradoxically, his attitude, while making her the object of his unwanted attentions, also empowers the Duchess, for his aristocratic exclusiveness accords her the privileged status of other royal sisters. Although Ferdinand tries to claim possession of her source of power, arguing that her stature comes from "my blood," he still acknowledges that she does possess this power which lifts her above the rest of the world. As the closest female equivalent of himself, he must, perforce, concede to her the same specialness that he claims for himself and the rest of the family house of royal Castilian and Aragonian blood.

The siblings' shared blood, then, which is reflected in their uncanny physical resemblance, gives rise to the tension and anxiety implicit in Ferdinand's violent feelings for his sister. It is not just that their close similarity feeds the Duke's "status narcissism" (Whigham, Seizures of the Will 194), but also that it attacks the difference between the genders necessary to maintain the ideology of patriarchy. Ferdinand's relationship with his sister reveals his confusion over his place in both the family and the gender hierarchy. It also helps to suggest his uncertain social identity.

The difference between the disappearing lineage family and the emerging nuclear family of Tudor and Jacobean society, both Lawrence Stone and Mervyn James point out, is that the former conception of family downplays individuality and instead emphasizes the interchangeableness of

family members who are all linked by their possession of the same blood. Conversely, the nuclear family places a higher premium on individuality, particularly male, and a personal identity based on the man's role as husband and father (Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England: 1540-1700 124, 152-155; James 182-187). Lineage family members exchange individuality for the different advantages of a joint identity, built upon the combined prestige of the whole house (Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage 29; 86-90). Thus, the high blood of noble families gives its members a status well beyond what any one person could achieve, even as it destroys individuality and forces its members, male and female alike, to sacrifice personal happiness for the benefit of the whole group (Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage 86). The Aragonian siblings, however, simultaneously try to exploit the differing values of the lineage and the nuclear family. All three exploit the prestige of their house, and yet they use the power of their royal blood to deny their own connection as a family and to assert absolute individuality rather than advance the interests of their lineage. That is why it seems so inappropriate to focus on the Duchess as a ruler or to argue, as Jankowski does, that the brothers are presented in an almost purely political context. One of the most disturbing characteristics of all three siblings is precisely their and Webster's lack of interest in the governing, effective or otherwise, of the state. Their rank has no political function, instead acting as a private reserve of power, from which both brothers and sister draw to advance their personal desires.⁴³ It has been divorced both of its political responsibilities and of dynastic loyalty to family and is used purely as a means of forging a personal and private identity based on the exercise of the ungoverned will.⁴⁴

This conflict between the demands of lineage family and individuality and between rank and gender creates a double source of irresolvable tension, tension which manifests itself in Ferdinand's tormented and perverse relationship with his sister. He identifies with her as a member of his family

and a part of his group identity, and yet, in the climate of rising individualism, he seeks to detach himself from her, as well as to define himself, as Callaghan would say, by emphasizing her female difference. He and the Cardinal first do this by focusing on the Duchess' sexuality, which, more than anything else, marks her as a woman and counters the power of her blood. Characterizing her as a "lusty widow," they envision her natural tendencies as a woman to be constantly threatening her inherited greatness and the honour which the three share. They warn her against the luxuriousness and lust which they seem to think will immediately possess her and when the Cardinal leaves, Ferdinand is even more explicit. He immediately acknowledges their kinship, saying, "You are my sister" (I.ii.249), even as he uses her sexuality to insist on her difference from him and to underline her weakness, observing that "women like that part, which, like the lamprey, / Hath nev'r a bone in't" (I.ii.255-6). For Ferdinand, her natural inferiority as a woman, revealed through her excessive lustfulness, necessitates the subordination of her will to his.

Bosola's revelation of the Duchess' pregnancy serves further to detach Ferdinand's sense of identity from his sister because the news emphasizes gender over family bonds. He remains fascinated by her, unable to cope with this female reflection of himself; but he and the Cardinal both consciously attempt to exclude her from the exclusive ranks of their family. She once was one of them, privileged to have "Our blood / The royal blood of Aragon and Castile" (II.v.21-22) flowing through her veins. Now her blood is "attainted," outlawing her from the privileges of her royal birth. Ferdinand in particular no longer acknowledges the connection and characterizes his sister's blood as quite different from theirs. Since she has been contaminated, the family must see to "purg[ing] infected blood, such blood as hers" (II.v.26), in order to bring it back to health. As Ferdinand works himself into a greater frenzy, he again uses the evidence of her pregnancy to underscore the rampant sexuality

he associates with woman and to cut the Duchess off from the family. "'Tis not your whore's milk," he rages, "that shall quench my wild-fire / But your whore's blood" (II.v.48-9). In his mind, he transforms her from royal into whore, as far distant from him as it is possible for her to be; yet, at the same time, he cannot rid himself of the disturbing knowledge that his identity is bound up in hers. Lineage families, argues Stone, see family members as being interconnected, collectively (and legally) responsible for the group's actions; this outlook gives rise to the tendency in feuding houses to kill any family member, rather than the actual person who may have caused the vendetta (The Family, Sex and Marriage 126). Thus, after having tried to sever his sense of connection from the Duchess, Ferdinand immediately returns to dwell on the siblings' likeness, clearly tortured by his sense of the joint identity shared among all three. "I could kill her now," he says, acknowledging that she is an unwelcome part of both himself and the Cardinal, "In you, or in myself, for I do think / It is some sin in us, Heaven doth revenge / By her" (II.v.64-67). In this instant, his sense of identification with his sister and, through her, with the uncontrollable sexual desire Renaissance writers so often ascribed to women, is so complete and yet so tortured that it prompts his brother to ask: "Are you stark mad?" (II.v.67). Ferdinand's family defines him, for he derives his sense of self from his pride in his high and royal lineage, and yet it prevents him from being fully individual. He is always a unit of a greater whole, irrevocably joined to his sister through his obsession with blood. Nonetheless, he cannot accept this female likeness of himself, for that would be to deny his own uniqueness and--even more disturbingly--destroy the difference between the genders, the difference that does not really exist, since she lives "in you, or in myself."

Momentarily restrained by the Cardinal's cold reproof, Ferdinand lurches to the other extreme, from a pained sense of complete identification to absolute separation, as he pits himself against the

Duchess and her lover. "I would have their bodies / Burnt in a coal-pit, with the ventage stopp'd" (II.v.67-8), he raves, and, once again, his sister and her sexuality are located safely outside of himself. She is placed with her lover, apart from their royal family, while he desperately reimagines himself as detached from her, able to judge and punish her actions.

When the Duchess reveals that she is married, Ferdinand's split between identification with and disassociation from his sister becomes even more extreme. On the one hand, the fact that she has a husband detaches her both legally and symbolically from her brother; she is no longer his responsibility and, becoming one with her husband, she is removed from their family. Viewing her as dislocated from their royal house, he can subject her to mental and physical torture that dishonour her aristocratic stature. Yet he has become so mentally troubled by their physical similarity that he vows never to look on her again. When Ferdinand later insists on meeting with his sister in the dark, he particularly reveals his intense fear of confronting their family resemblance--of seeing this female likeness of himself who both eliminates the boundaries between the genders and destroys his own sense of individuality. He has to try to establish his uniqueness by either keeping her out of his sight or by killing this part of himself, which, from the tormented perspective of Ferdinand, has inexplicably taken on a life of its own.

His attempts to dishonour her birth and to drive the Duchess insane further reflect his need to dissociate himself from her. No longer content to exile her from their noble family by describing her weak, womanly traits, he tries to make her betray the pride and confidence that she, like Ferdinand, takes in her royal blood. The words that both Ferdinand and Bosola use to describe her demeanour in prison emphasize her royal stature and aristocratic frame of mind. She bears herself "[n]obly" (IV.i.2), showing "a behaviour so noble, / As gives a majesty to adversity" (IV.i.5-6). Even

Ferdinand, puzzled that she is so undaunted, admits that "[h]er melancholy seems to be fortifi'd / With a strange disdain," (11-12); his concession, which acknowledges her aristocratic hauteur and indifference to mere circumstances, indicates that she is behaving royally. In order, then, to expel her from their noble family, Ferdinand has to prove her ignoble not just in behaviour and body but in mind. Disowning her, he tries to locate her in the midst of the people he pretends to believe are her true kin, the base, the low, the insane:

I will send her masques of common courtesans,
Have her meat serv'd up by bawds and ruffians,
And, 'cause she'll needs be mad, I am resolv'd
To remove forth the common hospital
All the mad folk, and place them near her lodging:
There let them practise together, sing, and dance. (IV.i.122-127)

Ferdinand's replacement of her "chargeable revels" (I.ii.252) with a masque which, he implies, more accurately reflects her true being and his repeated insistence on the "commonness" of the unfortunates whom he proposes to transport to her residence show his desire to bring the Duchess low, to make her base in mind and body. He wants to force her, by bringing her to madness and shame, to acknowledge her kinship with "common courtesans" and madmen from the "common hospital," and thus to establish the gulf that separates them, in blood and in gender.

The Duchess, however, retains her high and noble outlook to the end. In death, she forces Ferdinand to face what he has tried to deny throughout the play: the nobleness of blood and heritage that makes her, frighteningly, his equal. Thinking that he has killed "her in him," he imagines that it is now safe to look on her, since he has destroyed this copy that threatens both his individuality and

his sense of gender difference. But seeing her face, which he has hitherto so carefully avoided, only rekindles his sense of identification, and tellingly, prompts him to admit for the first time that they were twins. Instead of finally freeing himself from her, her dead face compels him to admit that she is his "dearest friend" or kinswoman, and forces him to acknowledge his connection with her. His obsession with her, Whigham argues, marks his narcissistic desire to perceive himself as utterly unique, to seek out only that which is identical to himself and to detach himself from the rest of the human race: "In reaching for her he aspires to appropriate the old heroic tag *par sibi*, to be like only himself, excelling, transcendent, utterly other" (Seizures of the Will 195). Yet if we view the Duchess in a literal way, not as a metaphoric representation of Ferdinand's self-love but as his biological sister, we can see that she poses a different threat to him. Existing as an individual in her own right, she reminds her brother that he is not unique but connected through his blood to the rest of their royal family and, by extension of the metaphor, connected to the whole family of Christendom. The final reminder of their link, then, defeats Ferdinand's desire "to be like only himself" and drives him insane because he cannot disconnect his identity from hers. He cannot escape from his family and become fully individual, because his sense of their royal blood provides him with an essentially group identity; nor can he escape from this female image of himself and from the battle between rank and gender that unfolds in his tormented mind.

The fact that it is Ferdinand's posthumous recognition of their family connection which drives him insane further underlines the power that she holds through her blood. Even after death, the Duchess obtains a continuing power from their twinship; just as he had the power to kill her body, so she, through their shared family resemblance, kills his mind and thus ironically fulfils his prophecy that "should I die this instant, I had liv'd / Her time to a minute" (IV.ii.262-3). Since noble blood,

which acts in the play as the primary currency of power, cannot be denied to women, it ultimately raises the sister to the level of her male siblings.

The two, brother and sister, are thus balanced in the play as equals, and their mutual antagonism results in their double destruction. Ironically for Ferdinand, it is his very obsession with rank and birth that creates his turmoil, for the more he elevates blood lines above everything else, the more he problematises the question of gender and nullifies his individuality by confirming his connection with his sister. Like her brother, the Duchess is engaged in a similarly destructive relationship with her own royal birth and family. She is dependent on both brother and family for her power, derived as it is through family blood lines, even as she tries to detach herself from them. Even her marriage and redefinition as a wife rather than as a sister is dependent on the status and privilege she gains from her rank as "our sister Duchess." However, the Duchess, unlike Ferdinand, is comparatively empowered by her royal family and by her role as sister.

If Ferdinand tries to dissociate himself from his sister, escaping from the disrupting equality of their blood by first concentrating on her sexuality and casting her as a whore, and then by focusing on her position as Antonio's wife, the Duchess defines herself almost wholly through her defiance of her brothers. For the Duchess, her brothers represent the boundaries or restrictions imposed by society on female action, and so each time she defies her siblings, she asserts for herself the right to act, insisting on her equality with them.⁴⁵ After the brothers' long lecture on the way she must behave, she responds with an angry and scornful attitude towards their commands:

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 winked, and chose a husband. (I.ii.260-267)

Marriage and a husband are the end, perhaps, but the "dangerous venture" which she casts in such strong military terms is the defiance of her royal kindred. She characterizes her relationship with her brothers as a war; they are the enemy in her "great battle" to be autonomous because they are the only men who are able to check her power; Antonio is nothing more than the prize of victory. The engagement of hostilities over her autonomy is the act that will define her and confirm her heroic status as she, like a soldier, uses the "frights and threat'nings" of her brothers to inspire her to "almost impossible actions" rather than letting them cow her into submission. Thus, it is not the marriage itself which she glorifies, as Mary Beth Rose claims (166); it is the endeavour to throw off the claustrophobic control of her family and maintain freedom of action. It is the attempt to take the power of her rank and use it to offset the weakness of her gender, to establish that she is not subject to anyone's will.

Although the Duchess never ceases to style herself as a royal prince, she nonetheless refuses to consider the blow that her marriage might strike at the base of her family's and her own power. She, like Ferdinand, engages in a destructive attempt to disconnect herself from her siblings, using the power derived from her "high blood" not to further the prestige of her family but to affirm her own individuality and freedom from the ties of family honour, to gain, like Ferdinand, a sense of her

self-identity by simultaneously exploiting and detaching herself from her royal family. Her claim that her marriage has not created "[a]ny new world, or custom" (III.ii.112) deliberately ignores the real destructive potential of her unequal match. While it may, perhaps, be admirable to match herself on the basis of merit, it is the support of her brothers and the dignity of her royal house as a whole that keep her from being a pawn as powerless and pathetic as Bosola and Antonio, buffeted by a fate over which she has no control. Within her family she has an obligation to maintain the dignity and prestige which elevates them above the rest of the world, the exclusiveness that gives her her privilege. That the Duchess is perfectly aware of her familial obligations is shown by the care she takes to conceal the marriage she knows disparages herself and the rest of her blood. It will not just annoy her brothers, it will significantly lower her rank, transforming her from a royal Duchess to the wife of a commoner.

Given the power contained within the idea of royal blood, the power that flows to both brother and sister, the Duchess's downfall arises out of her betrayal of the source of her privilege and power. She does not show herself a bad political ruler, as Peterson argues in her study, for Webster is not especially interested in the practical applications of female rule; nor does she fail because of her inability to reconcile her body natural and her body politic (Jankowski 151). Instead, she embarks upon a course of action that is as inherently self-destructive as Ferdinand's insane attacks on the sister that he loves. "By locating the foundation of identity in merit rather than birth" (Rose 167), the Duchess undermines her own being and source of self, for differing degrees in rank are not "officially instituted boundaries" (Rose 267) that she disregards in order to forge a personal identity based on merit; they are the very basis of her own self-construction. It is her status as a great woman that allows her to court, wed, and live with Antonio in considerable comfort for years; it also provides her

with a mind that is free to make its own choices. In marrying Antonio, however, she undercuts her own power and aligns herself with a perspective that judges not on the basis of birth but of personal merit. This is the perspective to which Bosola at least pretends, while, by contrast, the Duchess' words characterizing the dismissed Antonio as "basely descended" (III.ii.258) indicate the attitude she should, as a Duchess, hold. To ignore birth as a thing of no account and "prefer / A man merely for worth" (III.ii.277-78) is to discount the very aristocratic ethos of privilege and authority that gives her power in the first place.⁴⁶ Because she attacks herself and the source of her authority, Webster characterizes her actions as a form of insanity. Cariola's comment that her mistress' behaviour shows "a fearful madness" precedes Ferdinand's later decision to surround his sister with mad men, "'cause she'll needs be mad" (IV.ii.124). Even the Duchess calls attention to the element of insanity in her marriage, styling her husband as "a lord of mis-rule" (III.ii.7).

The Duchess, however, manages to re-establish herself as a royal through her continued defiance of her brothers and by exhibiting a greatness of behaviour that confirms her status as their equal. If her earlier choice of Antonio "drives a radical, irreconcilable wedge between the natural and social orders, previously regarded as identical" (Rose 167), her later behaviour demonstrates that rank, after all, is not a construction but has an inner substance as well as an outward form.⁴⁷ Critics speak of her being brought to a state of Christian repentance and meekness through the deliberate instruction of Bosola, who makes her realise the hollowness of worldly rank and prestige.⁴⁸ There is, however, really very little of the Christian penitent about the Duchess. Consequently, Lisa Jardine's claim that she is reduced to the safe figure of the stereotypical "penitent whore" (91) draws more on earlier critical interpretations of the Duchess than on an examination of the way she appears in the text. Penitence implies remorse and an acknowledgement of wrong-doing. Webster gives

neither emotion to the Duchess nor does he show her accepting the fact that she has behaved wrongfully. Imprisoned and threatened, she formally apologizes to her brother: "I would ask your pardon" (IV.i.30), and the curt tone is scarcely submissive or particularly humble.

After her half line of apology, the Duchess never again shows the slightest sign of repentance and insists repeatedly on emphasizing her battle with her brothers. Although she accepts the fact that she has wronged Ferdinand by embarrassing the family, she will not renounce or betray the marriage itself or accept his belief that he is justified in controlling and punishing her behaviour. Webster reveals her true attitude when she passionately defends her marriage and her children: "Do you visit me for this? / You violate a sacrament o'th'Church / Shall make you howl in hell for't" (V.i.38-40). When she later gains control of her grief, she challenges her brother more effectively by denying his power to hurt her. Insisting that she be viewed as his equal, she deprives him of the ability to tyrannize over her by, ironically, accepting each of his new tortures as a gift rather than a punishment. She dismisses the terrible noise of the madmen as a kindness: "Indeed I thank him: nothing but noise, and folly / Can keep me in my right wits" (IV.ii.5-6), and she grandly accepts her death at her brothers' hands: "Tell my brothers / That I perceive death, now I am well awake, / Best gift is, they can give or I can take" (IV.ii.219-221). Once again, the Duchess' concern is not to cultivate humble Christian repentance but to emphasize her control over her life and her indifference to her brothers' authority. Thus, death itself is something which she will not let them inflict on her; instead, she freely steps forward to accept it. Her final words before she is strangled, "Go tell my brothers, when I am laid out, / They then may feed in quiet" (IV.ii.232-233), are overlooked by many critics as they consider her new-found humility. Yet the imperious comment fits into the relationship she has maintained with her siblings all along and brings an appropriate end to their familial warfare.

Apparently defeated, she insists on reiterating her sense of equality with Ferdinand and the Cardinal and casts herself as the powerful enemy whose death will finally bring them peace.

As part of her continued defiance of her brothers, the Duchess also succeeds in refusing to let Bosola cow her or make her betray the rank and privileged position which allow her to govern herself rather than be governed by her siblings. Many critics envision Bosola as the Duchess's spiritual instructor, mortifying her spirit and flesh so that she may achieve the salvation of her soul.⁴⁹ While the malcontent may draw on the traditional view of *contemptus mundi* (Whitman 159) and advance a conventional medieval view of the vanity of earthly riches and pomp, he does so not to help the Duchess appreciate her spiritual sickness, as he claims (IV.ii.119), but to terrify her in her last moments and to prove to himself the emptiness of her rank. The Duchess, however, rather than being moved to meek repentance, uses his attempts to debase her to reaffirm the royal stature that Ferdinand wishes to strip from her.

For all his attempts to claim otherwise, royal rank is important to Bosola, eliciting his jealous and bitter respect. It is what motivates him to obey Ferdinand and prompts his jealous sneers about Antonio's baseness. Envy of royal rank also pushes him to try and strip away the trappings of stature, so that he may confirm what he only partly believes to be the truth: that position is nothing but a sham. Watching the Cardinal grovel for mercy, Bosola reflects on the man's cowardice with considerable satisfaction: "Now it seems thy greatness was only outward" (V.v.41). He attacks the Duchess first, however, because he imagines that she is the weakest representative of rank (Callaghan 127) and will betray her birth, showing herself to be a woman rather than an aristocrat. He wants to be able to gloat over her in her terror, and so prove to himself that her greatness, too, is only superficial, a meaningless illusion when confronted by mortality. She does not, then, prove him

wrong by turning to a Christian outlook which rejects aristocratic trappings as earthly vanity, but by showing that she behaves like a royal prince with or without the outward show.

All of Bosola's attempts to frighten her, which she greets with such majestic indifference, are linked to the way he focuses on physical manifestations of rank and ducal power. Clearly, he believes that these are what constitute royal greatness and give the Duchess her appearance of autocratic courage. Take them away and she will disintegrate in fear. In a cruel parody of her earlier royal powers, he styles her coffin as her "last presence chamber" (IV.ii.168). That his real purpose is to terrify rather than mortify her is revealed by the eagerness with which he watches her for signs of weakness as he tries to goad her into admitting her fear. His remark about the presence chamber, while provoking a shriek of horror from Cariola, leaves the Duchess unmoved. Her comment, "Peace; it affrights not me" (IV.ii.169), shows her awareness of Bosola's true intent.

As the moment of the Duchess' execution approaches, Bosola has clearly lost all but physical power over her, and he is reduced to demanding, childishly, whether she is not yet terrified. "Doth not death fright you?" (IV.ii.207) he asks, and when even this blunt question does not work, he persists "Yet, methinks, / The manner of your death should much afflict you, / This cord should terrify you" (IV.ii.209-11). Evidently, he feels that the Duchess should find the manner of her death degrading or humiliating. Her response, "What would it pleasure me, to have my throat cut / With diamonds or to be smothered / With cassia? or to be shot to death, with pearls?" (IV.ii.212-14), reveals again just how clearly she appreciates his intent. He wants the manner of her demise to force her to acknowledge that her rank will not give her a special privilege in the face of death. Instead, she recognises his pre-occupation with the levelling quality of death and derides his conviction that she needs the symbols of her position to give her courage. Ironically dwelling on the pearls, the

diamonds, and the cassia that would be associated with the vanity of her position, she mocks his erroneous image of her as a person dependent on outward show.

Thus, Bosola's futile attempts to terrify her only confirm her as a royal prince, for they provide her with the opportunity to discredit him and to illustrate that she remains the Duchess of Malfi, both inwardly and outwardly. "I am the Duchess of Malfi still" (IV.ii.139), she tells him, and she lives up to her sense of nobility to the very end, proving that her outward greatness, as shown by her rank and privilege, is matched and sustained by her inward greatness, her courage and fortitude.⁵⁰ Her aristocratic stature governs her inner self-conception and dictates how she behaves, fortifying her with the "strange disdain" commented on by her brother. It is misrepresentative to concentrate only on her inner greatness and argue that she comes to her senses because she replaces earthly prestige with a new-found Christian humility and repentance (Whitman 156),⁵¹ nor can we say that she finally acts as a duchess rather just being one.⁵² It is the Duchess' personal consciousness of her rank that makes her so supremely courageous in the face of terror, madness and death,⁵³ and the fact that she acts as a prince to the end confirms the legitimacy of her position, making outer and inner, appearance and truth, one.⁵⁴

Further, her final behaviour legitimates her earlier, imperious actions and explains the unsettling resemblance that she bears to her brothers. It is not that Webster, in his treatment of the Duchess and her brother, opposes Ferdinand's aristocratic exclusiveness with the more egalitarian outlook embraced by the Duchess, as some recent critics argue. Rather, he contrasts the truly great Duchess, whose sense of her own high position gives her both inner and outer identity, with the false greatness of the Duke, whose obsession with rank masks an inner void that tries to fill itself, as Whigham says, through the domination of those beneath him (Seizures of the Will 195-196). She

proves, through her brave death, that her aristocratic behaviour, her imperiousness, and her defiance of her brothers are a true reflection of her inner self, not an empty posture easily shattered. Her arrogant sense of self and independence also withstands the ultimate test: she is able to exist alone, cut off from her husband and children, without becoming insane. By contrast, Ferdinand's aristocratic pretensions are inherently false because they are not matched by an inner greatness; when he is faced with the final test of his sister's death, he disintegrates into madness before the horror of existing alone, unconnected to anyone else in the world.

Complicating the siblings' hostility is Webster's deliberate stress on the questionable nature of Ferdinand's authority over his sister. The degree to which the brother had the right to control his sibling was not much discussed in the Renaissance. As has already been noted, it was the parents' authority over their children which was particularly stressed by domestic guidebooks and which made both female and male siblings subject to the same absolute rule. Conversely, brotherly authority had none of this firm ideological backing, and brothers had no clear ways of establishing their authority over their sisters except in the general sense of a male superiority over female.

Casting Ferdinand as a brother, rather than a husband or parent, both acts as a means of symbolizing his psychological malaise, particularly his lack of self-identity, and as a way of presenting patriarchal power in its weakest form, without the unquestioned authority to control female transgression. David Cressy argues that a young man of the Renaissance gained identity and authority by becoming a husband and father: "Through marriage their [men's] relationship to domestic authority became transformed ... Marriage for a man meant autonomy, mastery, responsibility, and the prospect of fathering a lineage" (287). Without parents or his own family, Ferdinand is thus deprived of the period's main ways of constructing personal identity and establishing proper authority in the private

realm. Instead, he is confined to the nebulous and unclearly defined role of brother. His obsession with his sister further underlines his psychological instability, because it reveals his inability or unwillingness to marry and thus make the "passage into adulthood, a mark of social maturity" (Cressy 288). By focusing all his energies on his sister, rather than moving on to roles by which he can clearly define himself, he condemns himself to a progressively worsening state of mental confusion and loss of self-identity

As well, Webster's presentation of Ferdinand as a brother, rather than as a father or husband, destabilizes his society's conception of proper male authority, replacing the proper patriarchal figure with an inadequate and uncertain substitute. As a male, Ferdinand immediately claims the prerogative of his gender to rule his sister, and yet as a brother, he has no clearly established precedent to follow. The more he attempts to assert his authority over the Duchess, the more questionable he makes his position appear and the more he legitimates his sister's defiance. The fact that the Duchess can question his authority and remain sympathetic while Ferdinand degenerates into a mad man particularly underlines the ambiguity of his role

Throughout the play, Ferdinand struggles to clarify his relationship with his twin sister. One of the ways in which he does this is to attempt to emphasize and delineate the difference between himself and his sister, to establish her difference and her inferiority as a woman. The other way, symbolically representative of his mental confusion, shows him trying to appropriate the authority and the duties of both the father and the husband in an attempt to establish his own identity. In two scenes near the beginning of the play, he tries to establish himself as the living representative of their father, and in both cases the Duchess resists his attempts to claim this paternal authority. First, he promises to use their father's dagger to protect and maintain her honour: "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" (I.ii.249-251). His threat, with its sexual undertones, suggests his attempts to force his way into the Duchess' life as the principal and controlling male. But the father's phallus, which gives him rightful authority over his children since it is the source of their being, can hardly be assumed by Ferdinand. His attempt to identify himself with their father is so violent that it appears an unsettling perversion; thus, the Duchess herself feels free to ignore his commands. Later, he again summons up the memory of their father when he confronts the Duchess in her bed chamber and presents her with the poniard. Rather than admitting her wrong-doing or cleansing the dishonour done to family and father by using the dagger on herself, the Duchess again refuses to acknowledge him as the head of the family, instead stressing their fraternal relationship.

More unsettlingly, Ferdinand tries to assume the identity of her husband in his attempts to dictate her behaviour and to establish his authority in the family hierarchy. Critics have commented on the fashion in which Ferdinand identifies himself with the Duchess' first husband, seeing it as revelatory of his unconscious sexual longing for his sister.⁵⁵ One scholar, Clifford Leech, has even argued that the Duke links himself to her second husband as well, making him curiously reluctant to find out the man's identity and kill him (John Webster: A Critical Study 57). Narcissistically obsessed by his royal stature, he wishes to hoard his family's dignity and prestige by keeping the Duchess within the family ranks and thwarting her exogamous marriage (Whigham, Seizures of the Will 191). Yet his interest in the Duchess comes not just from his narcissistic and aristocratic sense that she is the only woman worthy of his standing and rank but from his need to use her to give form to the echoing emptiness that exists within his outer greatness. With no wife or children of his own and no father or mother living, he exists in society only as her brother: the Duchess provides his sole link to a family

within which he can still have a place.⁵⁶ Antonio is then his rival not so much for the sexual attentions of the Duchess as for the title of husband and the privileges, the identity, and the authority that are recognised by Renaissance society as accompanying this role. Improperly trying to appropriate marital authority, Ferdinand becomes a grotesque and terrifying parody of the jealous husband.

Webster is the first playwright to associate strong sexual jealousy with the brother's descent into insanity. He suggests that Ferdinand's obsessive sexual interest in his sister arises out of his lack of a stable identity, for the brother confuses his proper social roles and becomes an image of the most destructive and violent type of husband. All Ferdinand's actions, Elizabeth Brennan points out, fit the conventional stage behaviour of the jealous husband (493). Like Othello before him, the brother is governed by lurid and vivid sexual imaginings, envisioning his sister "in the shameful act of sin ... with some strong thigh'd bargeman, / Or one o'th' wood-yard" (II.v.41-44). The image so distresses him that he assures the Cardinal that "had I been damn'd in hell, / And should have heard of this, it would have put me / Into a cold sweat" (II.v.75--77). His excessive response to his sister's sexuality betrays the way in which Ferdinand has been viewing the Duchess in his mind; mentally casting himself in the role of husband, he responds without thinking as a husband would to the infidelity of his wife. Yet Webster never allows us to forget that Ferdinand is actually her sibling, underlining our sense of the man's internal confusion. The Duke's final, chilling words in the scene, that "[t]ill I know who leaps my sister, I'll not stir / That known, I'll find scorpions to string my whips, / And fix her in a general eclipse" (II.v.78-80), reminds us of their blood connection. Responding with the intensity of a jealous husband, enraged with a wife's infidelity, yet also casting himself as a justly incensed family member, concerned for the purity of their family blood, he has a doubly destructive potency. For an instant, like Giovanni after him, he combines a man's marital authority with the power of the father within the

figure of the incestuously pre-occupied brother.

Ferdinand's attempts to assume the identity of both husband and father, however, are ultimately unsuccessful and ironically end up indicating his lack of power, as well as confirming his unstable identity. Like the tyrant who attempts to legitimize his reign by appropriating various trappings of lawful majesty, so Ferdinand tries to confirm his position by acting as the husband. Usurping Antonio's place, he pushes away the true husband and tries to adopt his identity and domestic authority. He first seizes Antonio's authority by arresting the Duchess, separating her from her lawful husband and illegally assuming his right to punish and correct her. In a dark and parodic travesty of a marriage ceremony, he then proceeds to re-enact the Duchess' earlier marriage, substituting himself for the true bridegroom. Although his primary concern may be to deride the love between low-born husband and royal wife, the consummate cruelty of Ferdinand's joke depends on the successful confusion between fraternal and spousal affection. In a series of ironic comments, he describes the Duchess' love for her husband in such a way as to deceive her into believing that he is describing their supposedly mutual family affection. Holding out the dead arm which Ferdinand later identifies as Antonio's, he has the Duchess first kiss and then clasp the fingers which she believes to be her brother's. His cruel words actually describe her love for Antonio: "[H]ere's a hand, / To which you have vow'd much love: the ring upon't / You gave" (IV.i.43-45). Yet she imagines that he is referring to himself, not even recognising that the ring on the hand he is holding out to her is not one she gave to him but her own wedding ring. In taking the hand, the ring, and the love of her husband as her brother's offering to her, she inadvertently replaces Antonio with Ferdinand, substituting husband for brother. His words which conclude their exchange of affection, "Pray do: and bury the print of it in your heart. / I will leave this ring with you for a love-token" (IV.i.46-47), mark this final

switch.

While Ferdinand may imagine himself ironically detached from Antonio, because he knows his words' double meaning, he actually betrays his connection with him, his usurpation of his place, as he takes the husband's love, ring, and hand, and ironically offers it back to the Duchess as a brotherly gift. The scene particularly exposes the source of his resentment: he ultimately punishes and kills his sister precisely because this grim exchange of brother-sister love is a too accurate reflection of reality. Throughout the play, she has not "vow'd much love" to her brother, nor buried the memory of him in her heart, nor looked upon the ring she had given him as "a love token." Instead, as Ferdinand well realises and as his cruel masquerade pitilessly reveals, she has directed her affection towards Antonio, not him. His bitter resentment then leads him to construct a scene he feels reflects reality. In the same way that the Duchess has only pretended to vow love and loyalty to her brother, when, in truth, her real devotion, as well as her plighted troth symbolized by the ring, has been given to Antonio, so she now, unwittingly, re-enacts her deceit.

Ferdinand's envious mimicry of the Duchess' marriage to Antonio continues with the anti-masque of madmen that follows this giving of a ring. The belated anti-masque, however, is not Ferdinand's mocking celebration of her marriage to Antonio, as Ekeblad claims (261-262), but the insane conclusion to his own inverted marriage to his sister, the fitting conclusion to his parodic mockery of a wedding. The ceremony then ends not with the "death" of sexual consummation but the Duchess' literal death at the hands of her brother's hired executioners.⁵⁷ For an instant Ferdinand appears to gain absolute possession of her and complete control over her actions; looking on her lifeless body, Bosola emphasizes Ferdinand's mastery: "She is what / You'll'd have her" (IV.ii.251-252).

The brother acting as husband, however, is a black travesty of proper authority, his role as an image of disorder confirmed through his insanity. At the beginning of the play, both brothers' concern with protecting their family's honour may appear to fall within the proper boundaries of fraternal behaviour. When Ferdinand begins to seek absolute psychological and physical dominion over his sister, Webster increasingly emphasizes the illegitimacy of his authority, making the Duchess' attempts to challenge his power seem sympathetic. Jardine cites the pilgrims' comments on the dumb show to show how rapidly the Duchess is stripped of her rank and stature, of how truly powerless she is in this male world that can condemn her merely on "forehearing of her looseness" (III.iv.30) (Jardine 90-92). Yet she neglects to mention that while the brothers may successfully persuade the Pope to confiscate the Duchess' duchy, none of the pilgrims will concede that the brothers' power over their sister is legitimate. Instead, they both emphasize that the pope behaves unlawfully, following not justice but "[o]nly her brother's instigation" (III.iv.34). In the eyes of the pilgrims, the Cardinal violates his sister's right to rule her dukedom by encouraging the pope to take it for himself. Despite her mean match, they will not allow him this authority over her behaviour.

Webster's challenge to the brothers' authority over their sister becomes particularly obvious by the fourth act. As Ferdinand begins to supplant Antonio, usurping his place as husband in the blackly ironic marriage ceremony, Webster begins to characterize his behaviour as tyranny, the unlawful theft of another's proper authority.⁵⁸ Since Renaissance social theory portrays the husband and father as the head of the household in the same way that the king is presented as the head of the commonweal, it is particularly appropriate to cast the brother, who is unlawfully adopting the powers of the husband, as a tyrant. The Duchess' curses liken the brothers to tyrants: "Let them like tyrants / Never be rememb'red, but for the ill they have done" (IV.i.102-103). She also characterizes her

brother as a tyrant when she requests that he leave her with Antonio's corpse: "... and yond's an excellent property / For a tyrant, which I would account mercy, ... / If they would bind me to that lifeless trunk" (IV.i.65-68). In her frightened anger, Cariola further underscores the association, stressing the cruel injustice in Ferdinand's torture of his sister: "'Tis the wild consort / Of madmen, lady, which your tyrant brother / Hath plac'd about your lodging. This tyranny, / I think, was never practis'd till this hour" (IV.ii.1-4). Improper assumption and use of authority, figured within the image of tyranny, have been transposed to the private realm and used, specifically, to criticize the power of the siblings over the Duchess.⁵⁹

Even Bosola finally recognises the illegitimacy of the brothers' authority, though too late. Trying to justify his murder of the Duchess, Bosola attempts to shift responsibility for the deed to Ferdinand, but the Duke only confronts his puppet with the terrible truth. He has no claim to authority over his sister, no legitimacy to sanction the execution:

Ferdinand: By what authority didst thou execute

This bloody sentence?

Bosola: By yours.

Ferdinand: Mine? Was I her judge?

Did any ceremonial form of law

Doom her to not-being? did a complete jury

Deliver her conviction up i'th'court?

Where shalt thou find this judgement register'd

Unless in hell? (IV.ii.292-298)

Bosola is at once confronted with the necessity of taking responsibility for his own decisions and with

Ferdinand's admission that he has no proper authority over his sister, who, publicly, is the regent for her son and, privately, the property of another. Until this moment, Bosola has tried to justify his behaviour by convincing himself that the Duchess, in betraying her rank and revealing the weak lusts of her sex, deserves her punishment and that her brothers are qualified to judge her and impose chastisement. Even his one brief plea to Ferdinand that he "go no farther in your cruelty, / Send her a penitential garment to put on / Next to her delicate skin," (IV.ii.116-118), does not question the brother's right to punish her; it simply suggests that he moderate his wrath. When Ferdinand admits the unlawfulness of his act, Bosola finally realises what the Duchess and Cariola have already emphasized, that the brother is a family tyrant, meting out a judgement that he is not authorized to give. Still trying to win a reward, he now comments on the illegitimacy of Ferdinand's actions in a vain hope of illustrating his own loyalty: "Sir, / I served your tyranny: and rather strove / To satisfy yourself, than all the world" (IV.ii.322-324). When even this does not work, he finally accepts the Duchess' rightful sovereignty and rejects her brother's illegitimate assumption of power. Characterizing Ferdinand as a tyrant, he chooses to fulfill her last request: "Come, / I'll bear thee hence, / And execute thy last will, ... that the cruel tyrant / Shall not deny me" (IV.ii.362-367). Ultimately the Duchess, not her brother, is established in Bosola's mind as his proper sovereign; he finally realises what Webster has made clear all along, that he has been willfully betraying his true mistress. Ferdinand is thus doubly a tyrant. He has usurped the Duchess' political power, suborning a member of her own household into spying on and betraying her, and he assumes a private role in the family which is not, legitimately, his--that of her husband.

While Ferdinand seeks to control his sister by adopting the role of husband, the Duchess insists on maintaining the asexuality of her relationship with her brothers. When viewed from the

perspective of the Duchess, it is precisely the non-sexual nature of her relationship with Ferdinand that ultimately makes it so empowering, for it deprives him of any legitimate means of establishing his authority over her through possession of her body. Because the incest taboo dictates that she should not exist as an object of her brother's desire, the brother-sister relationship gives the Duchess the opportunity to define herself as a person, to question the outlook that insists on seeing women in purely sexual terms. Not only does the Duchess have no incestuous feelings for her brother, but she most emphatically marks off the difference between the roles of sister and wife and resists every attempt Ferdinand makes to blur the line between the two. She seeks to escape from her brother's cloying obsession by pursuing Antonio and she defends her right to remarry. She even, by choosing a husband of a lower-class, denies her brother the chance to advance a suitable surrogate or to identify with her husband. Throughout act four, Webster is concerned with balancing his presentation of the Duchess as both sister and wife, insisting on her concern for her husband, even as he continually underlines her antagonism with her brothers. Her marriage transfers possession of her sexuality to Antonio, her husband. This leaves her free to confront her brother as a prince and sibling, rather than as a woman and to define herself--in relation to these closest male representations of herself--as an equal. Any attempts on her brother's part to control her sexuality are then presented by Webster as a monstrous perversion of proper masculine authority, for Ferdinand has no right to her and no legitimate means of contesting the equality that she evidently feels defines their relationship.

Webster particularly validates the Duchess' spurning of her brothers' authority and places control over her sexual identity in her own hands by having her marry the lower-class Antonio. Critics tend to eulogize the marriage between the Duchess and Antonio, and yet they ignore the

obvious: that the marriage is not particularly ideal, either in modern or in Renaissance terms.⁶⁰ It does not show "her revolutionary concept of what a marriage between a man or woman might be" (Jankowski 173) for the two are clearly never equals; neither does it usher in the possibility of an ideal relationship between man and woman. It simply inverts the traditional hierarchy, replacing a man's dominance with a woman's. Antonio's authority over his wife is never regarded by either the Duchess, her brothers or Webster himself as of much account; the Duchess directs both her husband's public and private behaviour. Although some critics make much of the tender scenes between the Duchess and her lower-class lover, Antonio is never really much more than a prize for the Duchess to win and enjoy. She pulls him to his feet because "[t]his goodly roof of yours, is too low built, / I cannot stand upright in't, nor discourse, / Without I raise it higher" (I.ii.333-35), and she teasingly encourages him to stand with his hat on in her presence. Yet, when she commands him, she expects him to obey.

Clearly, Webster turns the ideal of the companionate marriage upside down. This conception of marriage, popularized by Protestant doctrine and treatise, stresses the need for love between the married couple and holds up companionship, rather than just alliance or procreation, as one of the principal ends of wedlock. The Duchess' union, however, perverts the Protestant companionate marriage, taking it to an unacceptable extreme. She marries well beneath her in rank, takes someone without the approval of her family, and chooses to satisfy her sexual desire.⁶¹ Even more inappropriately, she acts as the head within her marriage, turning a rigidly patriarchal structure, for all its emphasis on affection between man and wife, upside down.⁶² Instead of trying to establish space for a new domestic, private realm (Rose 161; Whigham, *Seizures of the Will* 201), she appropriates the new respectability of the affectionate marriage in order to justify her choice of a

lower-ranking man whom she can rule in marriage. The Duchess' royal stature, which she carries into the marriage, allows her to subvert this most patriarchal of structures, and the misrule elements of a marriage which matches the royal prince and the courtly servant are repeated in the superiority of wife over husband

However, Antonio does function to establish the Duchess as a wife, as well as a sister, and so helps to dissolve some of her brothers' claims to control over her. Both feminists and traditionalists ignore the way she attempts to consolidate her personal autonomy by balancing the roles of wife and sister. While she domesticizes the actions of an earlier character such as Bel-imperia, who simply takes a lover, the two women's ultimate goal is the same. They wish to free themselves from their brothers' control and to keep possession of both their self and their sexual identity. Marrying a man much lower in rank than she leaves the Duchess vulnerable to her brothers, but it is also the only way that she can keep the royal privilege of her family, because her status so outweighs that of her passive husband. The Duchess thus struggles to mediate between the roles of wife and sister in order to gain independence and autonomy for herself. It is not that the residual claims of blood family are negative, as Rose and Whigham imply in their studies, arising out of a decadent, outdated aristocracy, while the new Puritan ideals of marriage are positive. Rather, the Duchess plays the two off against each other: she exploits the power, prestige, and authority of her blood line so that she can remain free from subordination in marriage, even as she tries to dissociate her self from her royal family, represented by her two brothers. She can never quite escape, though, because her brothers are, paradoxically, both necessary and destructive to her enterprise. In their obsession with rank, they are symbols of her royal blood's power and her own privilege, but they are also checks on her attempts to free herself from masculine control.

That the companionate marriage is primarily an instrument to the Duchess, appropriated to allow her to continue ungoverned, is particularly evident when we consider her final death scene. By maintaining her feelings of equality with her brothers and her sense of hostility towards them, the Duchess gains the courage to continue to defy them. On the other hand, at odds with this continuing arrogance and pride, stands her abrupt conversion to Christian piety and her apparent meekness as a wife. Yet her self-abnegation does not finally conflict with her antagonistic contention with her brothers because wifely submission is a pose that allows her, finally, to defeat Ferdinand. For Jardine, the Duchess' final transformation into a heroic and suffering wife is not a triumph to be celebrated; rather it depicts her tragic reduction in stature from a powerful heiress to a powerless woman who is punished for violating patriarchal boundaries (90). She becomes a meek penitent, only praiseworthy in Renaissance eyes because she is now behaving like a conventional woman (Jardine 91). In this argument, Webster makes her sympathetic by taking away her power and transforming her into a patiently suffering female victim, stoically enduring the torture imposed on her by her male tormenters.

This interpretation, however, ignores the Duchess' own contribution to her final moments and the way in which she defeats her brothers by creating a new image of herself as an ideally virtuous wife. Ferdinand and the Duchess both fight to impose their interpretation on the events of the play, and it is the Duchess, not her brother, who emerges victorious. Through pure force of will she succeeds in resisting Ferdinand's attempts to create her as a lust-driven wanton and adopts a socially acceptable role as noble wife that finally moves her audience, her brother, and Bosola to sympathy.

Whatever the affection that might exist between husband and wife, the Duchess' precipitous eagerness in arranging the match and her eagerness to enjoy her husband indicate that Webster wishes

to suggest that the marriage is based on physical desire. Ferdinand's early words, even if taken ambivalently, reinforce this perspective. His suspicion of his sister's behaviour is further replicated in Bosola, the malcontent misogynist who is only too eager to undermine the Duchess' authority as ruler by viewing her as a woman. Disregarding his obligation to her--for he is in her employ and owes her his obedience--he engages in elaborate, misogynistic reflections on her lust. Through to the middle of act four, he accepts Ferdinand's belief that the Duchess should be punished because he accepts the brother's characterization of his sister as a wanton.

The Duchess, however, finally challenges this presentation of her actions and creates her own version of her behaviour, a version in which she styles herself as the persecuted heroine and not the lustful contemptible woman. As she loses the material power of her position, she slowly acquires the different power and prestige that come with being an emblem of female virtue. Of course, her idealization is an extreme as unlikely as Ferdinand's earlier condemnation of her as a "lusty widow," the other side of the polarized view of women so commented on by feminists,⁶³ but this should not make critics dismiss this characterization as diminishing to the Duchess. She is not reduced to this safe, stereotypical role nor is it an ironic reflection of the way in which men insist on viewing her, casting her as either saint or whore. Instead, her heroic achievement lies in her ability to take this role for herself and play it so convincingly that she becomes, in the eyes of both Bosola and many critics, a saintly Christian martyr. It does not matter that the loyal, loving wife and suffering Christian is no longer a combination that appeals to most twentieth-century Western women; it is the most honourable role for the Renaissance woman, one which transforms a despised member of the weaker, inferior sex into a saintly icon. As such, it is not to be despised, but to be seen as an ultimately empowering role in the struggle to direct the audience's perspective on events.

Further, Webster balances this picture of the persecuted wife with that of the antagonistic sister she has been from the beginning. The Duchess recasts herself as the traditionally virtuous woman, using this new role to defeat both her brother and her servant-betrayer, and the final measure of her achievement lies in the gap between what she really was and how she manages to present herself. Just as the arrogant Bel-imperia of The Spanish Tragedy accepts her casting as Perseda, "chaste and resolute," and becomes her role so convincingly that we forget her previous sexual transgressions, so the Duchess, in a slightly more naturalistic fashion, takes on the role of obedient and self-sacrificing wife. Yet both women are acting a part, a part which ennobles them even as it stands in marked distinction to who they actually were. Up until her arrest, the Duchess had been arrogantly confident of the power of her position and wealth to protect her. With her imprisonment, she needs to adopt different weapons. Thus, she uses all the traditional conventions assigned to her sex in order to present herself sympathetically and, in fact, dies with such theatrical flamboyance that we seem to imagine her arranging it for maximum effectiveness, to make the greatest impression on her brother's and her executioners' conscience. From being indifferent and even slightly scornful of religion, she styles herself as a devout Christian (Leech, John Webster 75-76; Wharton 76), assuming with a truly arrogant humility that she will proceed straight to heaven's gates, albeit on her knees. From carelessly dismissing the church as secondary to her own desire to possess Antonio, "'tis the church / That must but echo this" (I.ii.405-406), she passionately lays claim to its sanctity so that she may reprove her brother: "You violate a sacrament o'th' Church / Shall make you howl in hell for't" (IV.i.39-40). From directing and commanding her husband, a man whom she appears to have chosen for his malleable personality, she imagines herself as a paragon of the submissive and self-sacrificing wife: "Portia, I'll new kindle thy coals again, / And revive the rare and almost dead example / Of a

loving wife" (IV.i.72-74). She even, in a brilliant gesture, calls attention to herself as a doting mother, giving last instructions for her children's care even though she has earlier been brought to believe they were dead. Her words here have sometimes been described as a cheap attempt to make the Duchess sympathetic at all costs, an example of Webster's often inconsistent characterizations.⁶⁴ Yet they fit the pattern of her other assumptions of saintly womanly virtue, showing how she continues to reshape our interpretation of her past. Although she may "account this world a tedious theatre, / For I do play a part in't 'gainst my will" (IV.i.83-84), her words nonetheless betray the perspective of someone who conceives of herself as an actress and who is well aware of the importance of acting a part perfectly.⁶⁵ Through her final moments she is playing for the audience, to win their sympathy, for, with her death, they will be the ones to judge her. No longer allowed by her brother to continue to enjoy herself in this world, she attempts to control the audience's perception of herself after her death, to do what was for the Renaissance the most important thing: win for herself eternal fame as a model of feminine virtue. Just as the worse curse she can wish on her brothers is perpetual evil fame, that they "like tyrants / Never be rememb'red, but for the ill they have done" (IV.i.102-103), and the best fate the soulless Cardinal can hope for is to "be laid by and never thought of" (V.v.89), so she assumes for herself the "integrity of life [which] is fame's best friend" (V.v.119), winning eternal glory as a loyal wife and mother.

That the Duchess achieves her goal, acquiring for herself perpetual good fame as an image of personified Virtue and finally defeating her brothers is quite evident from both her brother's and Bosola's response to her death. From reviling and despising her as a weak, lecherous woman, they both abruptly adopt the Duchess' self-creation of herself. While they have had the physical power to kill her, she finally possesses the psychological power to change their perceptions of the world, of her

and of themselves.⁶⁶ Unlike Othello, for example, whose rage towards his wife changes to self-reproach and guilt because he finds out that she is not guilty of adultery, Ferdinand and Bosola have no such concrete reason to justify their change in attitude. The Duchess' past actions have not changed. she was still secretly married a man greatly inferior to her in rank in order to satisfy her own desires. Nonetheless, both Ferdinand and Bosola suddenly accept her interpretation of events, viewing her as the martyred wife and lover rather than the transgressive, arrogant, self-willed sister. They surrender, in fact, so absolutely to this picture of the Duchess that it finally controls their perception of themselves. Thinking of her massacred innocence, Ferdinand moves from seeing her punishment as justice to regarding it as a horrid murder and "deed of darkness" (IV.ii.329). Bosola, who had earlier cast her as a lecherous wanton is so moved by her final performance that he now takes her as an emblem of "sacred innocence, that sweetly sleeps / On turtles' feathers" (IV.ii.349-50) and drives himself to even greater psychological turmoil, convinced by the Duchess of his own predestined path to hell. It hardly matters that Ferdinand's and Bosola's new response to her is as inaccurate as their earlier characterization. Transforming herself into a saint allows the Duchess to exert tremendous influence over them after her death, finally triumphing over her enemies. Sadly, the real Duchess, the one who "is flesh, and blood, ... not the figure cut in alabaster / Kneels at my husband's tomb" (I.ii.369-371), gives way, before her brothers' persecutions, to this very icon of wifely virtue. Yet the Duchess is not diminished because she adopts the role herself in a last and successful attempt to thwart her persecutors. We can never forget that it is the Duchess herself who works this transformation, by refusing to be cowed by her brother's torture, by refusing to relinquish her sense of rank and privilege, and by refusing to let her tormentors remake her into a cowardly, depraved, mad whore. She may become the alabaster figure that kneels at her husband's tomb, but

it is she herself, in a last gesture to win her audience's sympathy and admiration, who chooses to kneel before her executioners and make herself match that figure. Thus this image is not imposed on her by her brothers and Bosola, as Finke claims (366-367), nor is she made over into "a work of art, relegating her value to the state of bodiless, aestheticized inactivity that she had heroically resisted in life" (Rose 171). Instead, her position as an idealized figure of courage and nobility is an achievement of self-fashioning for which she must struggle, and which, in winning, ultimately proves her character far more than her easy conquest of and marriage to Antonio.

It would be impossible ever to know whether Webster wishes his Duchess, a woman without a legitimate male guardian, to be a further symbol of his world's confusion and dark turmoil or a powerful subversion of the traditional gender hierarchy. However, in emphasizing her relationship to her brother, rather than husband or father, Webster provides himself with a means by which to make her struggle for autonomy appear sympathetic and even justified. He mounts a concentrated attack on the brothers' authority, making it appear ambivalent at best and tyrannical at worst, and so appears to give the Duchess' often wilful attempts to assert her freedom from her brothers' control at least partial approval. Whatever the Duchess' faults, Webster stresses that her sexual identity--her honour--is at her own disposal, not her brothers' nor her husband's. When her brothers try to assume control of her body they are cast as tyrants. Alternatively, her husband, whose presence emphasizes the illegitimacy of the brothers' attempts to dictate their sister's actions, does not have the rank to attempt to guide or restrict his wife. The family hierarchy of father ruling over his children or husband over his wife is thus replaced by the relationship between the siblings in which the brother is little more than the shadow of the father and a distorted imitation of the husband. In neither case can he derive a satisfactory identity from his role, which contributes to his psychic confusion, nor can

he legitimately lay claim to these positions' privileges. The siblings' antagonism, then, finds final expression in their competing attempts to impose their perspective on the audience and to justify their actions. The Duchess, at first, acts entirely independently, taking a husband and keeping the status of royal sister Duchess. As a sister, she is in an ambivalent and flexible position, in a socially unconstructed role with the freedom to attempt to define her own role in life. But this position, part of the uncertainty and chaos of the play, also leaves her vulnerable to the perverse attempts of Ferdinand to construct his own role as brother, by taking on the attributes of the husband and father. Finally, she seeks the protection contained within the socially inscribed role of wife, shaping herself into the conventionally self-sacrificing spouse, but she asserts herself as a wife in order to finally defeat her brothers' pretensions to moral authority and power.

Endnotes

1. T. B. Tomlinson describes the play as nothing more "than simply a hectic search for new sensations of whatever kind and at whatever the cost" (129). Similarly, Muriel Bradbrook criticizes Webster for including moments for purely emotional effect (John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist 210) and for not tying the elements of his play more closely together (John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist 211).
2. Clifford Leech characterizes the play as "a collection of brilliant scenes, whose statements do not ultimately cohere" (John Webster 65).
3. Ralph Berry studies the imagery in the play to obtain a picture of Webster's existentialist viewpoint. Other, briefer studies of imagery include Richard Bodkte's analysis of the play's animal imagery and Susan McLeod's focus on the unifying effect of the play's dramatic and visual imagery. Christina Luckyj argues that The Duchess of Malfi is carefully and deliberately structured, unified through "repetitive form, analogical probability, and ceremonial dumb show" rather than a "linear narrative" (A Winter's Snake 27). She particularly explores the close ties between plot and sub-plots and the linking of the Duchess and Julia (A Winter's Snake 77-100). In Luckyj's argument, even the sub-plots of act five are important in making the Duchess's death appear tragic (A Winter's Snake 100-104).
4. Peter Murray is the principal critic to affirm Webster's absolute commitment to Christian principles. Rejecting critics who see the play as an assertion of the meaninglessness or powerlessness of good, he explores Webster's presentation of the Duchess as an affirmation of Christian values. While his conclusions are perhaps extreme, he offers a needed counterbalance to the common viewpoint that the play asserts the frailty and meaninglessness of good. As he points out, it does not matter that the Duchess' goodness cannot physically defeat her brothers' evil, for Christians expect to be persecuted in this world and look to their reward in the next (A Study of John Webster 134-5). William Dwyer argues, in less detail, that the Duchess' transformation shows Webster's belief in a Christian afterworld (188). Interestingly, Celia Daileader gives traditional Christian interpretations of the play and of the Duchess a feminist slant by arguing that the work is a "proto-feminist passion play--haunted by the dream of resurrection for this female sexual rebel" (82).
5. The argument that Webster presents a bleak but ultimately humanistic view of life that stresses human dignity is particularly popular with critics of the 1960's and 1970's. Irving Ribner focuses on the stoicism and the nobility that the characters show at the moment of their death (Jacobean Tragedy 106). While the play advances no divine pattern, he argues, characters are still moral because of their faith "in human dignity" (Jacobean Tragedy 108) and their ability to defeat evil through the strength of their human spirit (Jacobean Tragedy 114-115). The play affirms the value of human dignity and integrity (Moore 166), depicts the triumph of the human spirit in a world of darkness and confusion (Ornstein, The Quest for Moral Order 109), and has an established moral order (Mulryne 222). Likewise, Alexander Allison argues that the play ultimately affirms goodness since the Duchess' legacy has a permanence that the evil of the play lacks (272-3). Antony Courtade emphasizes the

importance of personal integrity and a strong sense of self in "an environment devoid of objective morality" (57). J. W. Lever believes the play affirms human dignity in the face of evil and the powerlessness of good (95).

Other critics emphasize the way that death itself provides Webster with the opportunity to celebrate human heroism. Charles Forker argues that the play advances a stoic view of life (Skull Beneath the Skin 365) in which death "provides the context for the deepest significances available to mankind" (Skull Beneath the Skin 354). Similarly, T. McAlindon claims that the play's focus is "the art of noble dying" (153) which then serves to display a character's heroism (153).

6 Bodkte argues that the play presents an even bleaker world than that in The White Devil, for the evil characters are no longer impressive but loathsome, while the good are still weak and frail (34-35).

7. Gunnar Boklund argues that the play does not advance a moral pattern since both the good and the evil fail (129) and chance finally reigns (130). Courtade sees the play as predominantly nihilistic: while goodness such as the Duchess' may be able to affirm itself, it cannot triumph (93). Berry argues that the play is existentialist (126) and sets forward a world without God (119) in which ironic rather than divine justice opposes evil (126). Perhaps the most completely nihilistic interpretation comes with T. F. Wharton's argument that the play depicts Bosola's deliberate, scientific experimentation on both his own and the other characters' morality. What such experimentation determines, he claims, is that there are no absolute moral values in the world; thus even the Duchess' goodness dies with her, influencing neither Bosola or Antonio (85).

8 The most notable feminist to criticize Webster's treatment of women is Lisa Jardine. While she claims that she will not study idealized, universal female traits, nor engage in a polemic against the masculine viewpoint (1-6) but instead look at the social and historical issues that indicate the ways in which the period present "femaleness" (6) she sometimes deviates from her agenda. She begins her analysis by observing that the play is written by a man and denigrates Webster himself by equating his perspective with Ferdinand's. Often comparing the play to Hamlet, she ignores the difference between Hamlet, the hero, criticizing his mother's sexual license and Ferdinand, the perverse madman, raving about the Duchess' sexual rapaciousness (72). Her feminist interpretation is disconcertingly similar to that most misogynistic of earlier readings. Dwyer's attempt to contextualize the play. The principle difference between the two is that Jardine uses her extreme interpretation of the play to castigate the period's patriarchal oppression of woman; Dwyer, conversely, does not see such patriarchy as offensive.

Laurie Finke briefly considers the Duchess as the victim of man's desire to "paint" women, either to render them perfect but lifeless (365) or to make them into images of contemptible whorishness (366-7). Similarly, Christy Desmet considers the influence of controversy literature in producing a similar, polarized social outlook in drama, an outlook that either attacks or idealizes woman. She proceeds to study the Duchess as woman who is deprived of "both sovereignty and respectable female roles--as wife and mother" (82). Finally, Dymna Callaghan studies the idealization and denigration of women in the two Webster tragedies as the means by which the period constructed gender difference.

9. In an early feminist interpretation of the play, Charlotte Spivack argues that the Duchess is praised because of her ability to seek greatness without relinquishing her female side (124). In this "power struggle between male and female" (Spivack 125), the psychologically whole woman threatens "the one-sided male, who has reached a hypertrophy of consciousness at the expense of the whole man" (Spivack 124).

In her book studying the importance of the Protestant idealization of marriage, Mary Beth Rose argues that the play contrasts two views of women. There is the positive, emerging outlook based on the Puritan elevation of marriage, which allows women to act heroically in the domestic realm and which is characteristic of the Protestant middle class; and there is also the more traditional way of looking at women, the polarized idealization or condemnation advanced by Ferdinand and characteristic of the aristocracy (160-161).

Other critics also praise Webster's presentation of women. Luckyj argues that the links between the Duchess and Julia allow us to appreciate the two women's joyful sexuality: both are "playful, confident, sensual, and direct" (*A Winter's Snake* 88). Similarly, Dena Goldberg reads the play in terms of its opposition between the male idealization of reason, first enshrined by Plato (*Between Two Worlds* 100-103) and represented in the play by Ferdinand the judge and punisher (*Between Two Worlds* 85), and the free-spirited harmony of Nature, represented by the Duchess (*Between Two Worlds* 104). In this confrontation, Webster, she argues, sides totally with "whatever is wild, free, and non-parasitic in nature" (*Between Two Worlds* 79) and creates the Duchess as an example of the "true integration with natural goodness [that is possible] once they [humanity] are liberated from the bonds of rationalistic philosophy" (*Between Two Worlds* 103). At the other extreme from Jardine, who uses her social historical research to depict every woman of the Renaissance as a hapless victim of the male patriarchy, Goldberg fails to contextualize her interpretation. She does not consider the suspicion with which the Renaissance viewed the unbridled pursuit of personal fulfilment that she so praises, nor does she acknowledge that Webster might not unquestioningly favour a hero who challenges the social norm in order to fulfill herself personally (80). In fact, if we took Goldberg's argument to its logical extreme, we would be forced to celebrate the achievement of Ferdinand as well, the man who single-mindedly follows his own private desires and subverts--rather than upholds the law--for his own ends.

Like Goldberg, Kathleen McLuskie assumes without question that Webster wishes to expose the "cliches of conventional morality" ("Drama and Sexual Power Politics" 86) upheld by Ferdinand and to question the brothers' "ideology of oppression" ("Drama and Sexual Power Politics" 78). But while Ferdinand's earnest moralizing may be undercut by his actions, as McLuskie argues, there is no reason to believe that Webster wishes to question conventional morality itself. The contrast between Ferdinand's words and his actions exposes the man's hypocrisy not his "empty conventionality" (McLuskie, "Drama and Sexual Power Politics" 82) and provides us with no reason to reject the values themselves.

Placing the play in a wider dramatic contest, Paula Berggren explores the Jacobean dramatists' interest in female heroines. For her, women's "doomed struggles to win domestic and sexual freedom in a repressive, patriarchal world" (349) appealed to "an era ... [in which] human potential seems thwarted" (Berggren 362). Another, recent feminist interpretation of the Duchess largely ignores the saint-whore dichotomy to argue that the Duchess, a female Christ figure, and her sexually charged martyrdom fill the void left by the period's banning of passion plays (Daileader 20).

10. Joan Lord best captures this viewpoint when she describes the way the Duchess joins "histrionic poise and the warm, impulsive humanity that it subserves" (The Dynamics of Role-Playing in Jacobean Drama 169).

11. Although Elaine and Charles Hallett feel that the tone of the play appears similar to that of the revenge tragedy (282), they maintain that it does not ultimately follow the genre and that Ferdinand's madness has no motivating force behind it (280-296). Conversely, Fredson Bowers concentrates on Bosola as revenger (178-179). A number of other studies have focused on the way in which Webster alters the traditional revenge tragedy of his predecessors. Elmer Stoll particularly notes the way in which Webster makes the revenger truly evil (128-129); Harold Jenkins explores the play as a variation of the traditional revenge tragedy in which the focus and sympathy is not on the revenger but the person being stalked; Courtade views the play as an inverted revenge tragedy in which the revengers are pure evil and their victim virtuous (57); and Elizabeth Brennan points out that the play substitutes revenge taken to avenge murder with a more ambiguous revenge taken to avenge one's honour (488-489).

12. Jacqueline Pearson studies the influence of the popular tragicomedy on the play, arguing that Webster makes his tragic statement "through the language and forms of comedy and tragicomedy" (53). Lee Bliss analyses the play as a combination of tragedy and comedy in which the Duchess, an essentially comic heroine, seeks love and fulfilment but is punished as in a tragedy (The World's Perspective 146).

13. While Muriel Bradbrook and Don Moore criticize Webster for his disorderly and conflicting blend of naturalistic and symbolic characterization (Bradbrook, John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist 194; Moore 163), Inga-Stina Ekeblad initiates an early defence of Webster's play, arguing that it is a successful combination of psychological realism and dramatic convention (254). Robert Whitman examines the influence of moral allegory on the play and the effect of the malcontent and vice traditions on the playwright's treatment of Bosola and Flamineo. Similarly, Catherine Belsey studies the play as a blend of naturalism and earlier medieval dramatic convention in order to answer the "moral questions" ("Emblem and Antithesis in The Duchess of Malfi" 116) of the play. Lord examines the play's place in the earlier dramatic conventions of the times and in terms of the blending of old dramatic techniques with new (The Dramatics of Role-Playing in Jacobean Tragedy 127). She, however, focuses on visual images, studying moments in the play "when visual elements of the scene combine with the dialogue in a significant form" (3). In her feminist interpretation, McLuskie also studies the contrast between older dramatic techniques and the new emphasis on "dynamic action" ("Drama and Sexual Power Politics" 78). She links earlier dramatic conventions, such as set speeches, with a conventional morality that Webster wishes his audience to reject and newer psychological realism with the admirable unconventionality of the Duchess.

14. Forker studies the play in terms of the sexual relationships, which, he argues, are linked to "physical destruction or emotional death or some combination of the two" (The Skull Beneath the Skin 345). He also provides the most extended analysis of the hostile twin relationship between Ferdinand and his sister, interpreting it from a Freudian perspective as representative of Ferdinand's fear of self and of self-knowledge (The Skull Beneath the Skin 376), his "infatuation with and

revulsion from his own ego" (*The Skull Beneath the Skin* 311). Similarly, Wilkinson studies the psychological importance of the doubling or identical twin motif to the play. When considering the siblings' relationship, however, both he and Forker concentrate exclusively on Ferdinand and reduce the Duchess to Ferdinand's double. Interpreted purely in relation to her brother, she has no purpose except to reveal Ferdinand's narcissistic and Oedipus complexes (Wilkinson 62-63). George Whiteside also focuses on the family element of both of the Webster plays, but ignores the fact that the characters are siblings. He argues that both Vittoria and the Duchess act as surrogate mothers on to whom all the characters, not just the brothers, project their incestuous, Oedipal longing.

By contrast, Frank Whigham studies the sibling relationship from both a socio-cultural and psychoanalytic perspective. For Whigham, Ferdinand's incestuous interest in his sister is a reflection of his social obsession with rank and aristocratic exclusiveness (*Seizures of the Will* 191).

15 The only exception to this rule is McAlindon's analysis of the brothers as symbolic representatives of the Duchess' own worse side, the side which she finally defeats through her new-found Christian patience and meekness (177-178)

16 Jankowski's attempt to explain this contradiction ultimately undercuts the rest of her argument. She proceeds to equate the brothers' concerns with the political and dynastic, claiming that there was, as yet, no concept of the domestic family (166). Yet she also claims that the Duchess tries to create this ideal private, domestic realm with Antonio (164-166).

17 Whigham argues that Ferdinand's incestuous response to his sister joins the private and the public, for the incest itself combines a personal, sexual interest with the public desire to retain the purity of his royal blood and his high social position (*Seizures of the Will* 191-194). Incest becomes the most extreme form of elitist endogamy, marrying exclusively within one's social class.

18 Critics such as Rose and Whigham, who both study the play in terms of its emergent and residual beliefs, as well as McLuskie, invariably link repressive attitudes towards women with the outdated aristocracy. Rose assigns that attitude towards women which characterizes them as either saint or whore to the aristocratic and old-fashioned outlook of Ferdinand and the Protestant idealization of marriage, which renders the Duchess' endeavours heroic, to the rising middle-class, represented by virtuous figures such as Antonio (165-166). Yet Antonio's and Bosola's view of the Duchess is as polarized as Ferdinand's, ranging from the idealization of Antonio to the debasement followed by idealization of Bosola. Again, Whigham, who stresses the similarity between the Duchess and her brother in terms of what he calls their "hypertrophy of will" ("Social and Sexual Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*" 171) detaches the Duchess from her brother in their social outlooks. She is a radical, one of those whose pursuit of a (Marxist) dream of equality "inaugurate[s] new conceptual options" ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 174); conversely, Ferdinand is a perfect portrayal of a stagnating "nobility's project for dominance" ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 182). Yet Whigham's analysis is contradictory because he takes such pains to stress the similarity between brother and sister and because he acknowledges that the Duchess' position enables her actions (*Seizures of the Will* 202). Clearly her class and blood are governing her actions. For him, the fact that she chooses a meritorious lower-class man seems to cancel out the problem of her rank when the reverse is actually true: it confirms her aristocratic self-image and her feeling, similar to Ferdinand's, that she is

answerable to no one but herself and her own desires.

19. John Selzer argues that the play sets up the Duchess as a champion of a new system, in which personal, individual worth and merit are elevated over inherited rank (70). Whigham further develops this idea, stressing the play's subversion of both class and gender barriers. Webster, he argues, reveals alternative voices beneath the dominant one, setting out "oppositional gestures usurpingly rewritten ... as womanish eccentricities" ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 182). The Duchess overthrows traditional boundaries, seeking to bring a new importance to the private realm; Ferdinand, that embattled aristocrat, responds to the threat of social mobility by being obsessively interested in keeping his blood pure ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 170). Jardine, who studies the increasingly important role that women played in the inheritance system (83-88), considers the effect of the widow's remarriage on the transmission of property to her son (92). This works well for *Hamlet*, but is curiously out of place in *The Duchess of Malfi*, since the young Duke's displacement by his half siblings and his lower-born stepfather is not a focal point of the play. Nor does Webster ever imply that the Duchess' family dower dispossessed or impoverished her brothers or interfered with the transmission of the family inheritance.

Both Selzer's, Rose's, and Whigham's interpretation of the Duchess' actions are ultimately questionable because they rest on the assumption that her choice of Antonio is a deliberate attempt to promote merit over rank or to reject her brother's paranoid and entropic exclusiveness. Yet since she conceives of herself as an aristocrat to the end, it seems doubtful that she truly pursues some sort of meritocracy. There is also no reason to consider that she is behaving differently from her male royal counterparts. When Brachiano pursues and weds Vittoria or the more admirable rulers of *The Duke of Milan* and *Love's Sacrifice* marry virtuous and chaste women of lower station, no one seriously imagines that these men are trying to establish some sort of class equality or that they have chosen these women on the basis of merit, though both Marcelia and Bianca are far more praiseworthy than the dukes' royal sisters. Since women are perceived in largely sexual terms, the goal of such dukes is clearly sexual satisfaction. When the Duchess pursues Antonio, however, recent critics are curiously reluctant to see sexual attraction as the motivating force. Perceiving Antonio as a whole--not just a body but an admirable and virtuous man--they assume that her relationship with him is based on an appreciation of all his qualities, rather than something as simple as physical attraction.

20. Both Whigham (*Seizures of the Will* 201) and Rose (168-169) comment on the fact that it is precisely the Duchess' rank that allows her the freedom to embark on her marriage with Antonio. Yet Rose consistently argues that the aristocratic outlook is limiting to women, while Whigham argues that the Duchess is deliberately trying to overthrow class boundaries ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 174).

21. Joyce Peterson mounts the most sustained attack on the Duchess, arguing that she shares her brothers' stubborn willfulness and passion (66). Even in the fourth act, when most critics agree that the Duchess becomes an image of goodness, Peterson argues that she is still as egocentric and destructive as her brother Ferdinand (85-86). Bliss sees the Duchess as behaving similarly to her brothers, for all three single-mindedly pursue their own desires (*The World's Perspective* 144). Bliss, however, is less condemnatory than Peterson, pointing out that she acts like a royal prince in pursuing her own desires (144-145). Allison, while emphasizing the Duchess' goodness, also points to the

passionate willfulness (265) that the woman shares with her brother and which leads, in Ferdinand's case, to insanity (265-268).

22. Belsey's study of the emblematic nature of the play offers perhaps the most complete development of the symbolic opposition between the Duchess and her brother. In her reading, Webster presents the siblings as antithetical emblems of good and evil and virtue and vice ("Emblem and Antithesis" 116), in which the parallels between the two serve only to emphasize their differences ("Emblem and Antithesis" 127). Similarly, Sharon Shaw claims that the play presents two absolutely evil men and one perfect, good woman (21). Murray interprets the siblings as a strongly Christian representation of the confrontation between good and evil; the Duchess is a Job figure while her brothers are satanic, trying to destroy goodness (A Study of John Webster 131). Stilling views the Duchess and her love for Antonio as the direct antithesis of her brother Ferdinand who represents the force of death (236-237), evil, and male dominance (239). Champion argues that the play presents a picture of social corruption based upon starkly opposing figures of good and evil (Tragic Patterns 134-136). The Duchess is sympathetic but static (Champion, Tragic Patterns 143), a tragic heroine who shows her greatness not in her own self-knowledge but in her ability to transform the male characters (Champion, Tragic Patterns 150-151).

Other critics have commented in a similar fashion on the dichotomy between the siblings, though in less detail. Boklund sees the Duchess and her brothers as the reverse of one another (164); Courtade emphasizes that she is the opposite of her brothers (59-60; 89); Stodder and Lever stress the contrast between the two depraved brothers and the virtuous Duchess (Stodder 133; Lever 89); Luckyj argues that the two siblings present "[t]he struggle between two polar views of life, between the crudely sexual and the delicately sensual" (A Winter's Snake 83), and Goldberg claims that the siblings represent the clash between oppressive reason and order, which destroys, and natural, free-spirited goodness (Between Two Worlds 79).

23. Critics point out the similarities and differences between the Duchess and her brother without considering the significance of her gender to this apparent paradox. McAlindon argues that the brothers represent the base part of the Duchess' nature, the part which she ultimately defeats through her new allegiance to patience and humility (177-78). Berry comments that she is a blend of light and darkness (54-55), neither perfect nor absolutely sinful; and Whiteside contends that she represents the two sides of the mother: sexual and nurturing (209). Allison argues that the Duchess is similar to her brother in personality but different in integrity (265), while Whigham likens them to two sides of the same coin, both governed by an excessive desire to obtain what they want ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 171), but directing their energies towards completely opposite ends.

24. All quotations are taken from Elizabeth Brennan's New Mermaids edition (1964) of the play.

25. See, for example, Nicholas Brooke who speaks of this scene between the Duchess and Antonio as an entirely sympathetic portrayal of warm, middle class domesticity (50). Similarly, Wymer particularly emphasizes the beauty and emotional impact of the scenes that show the private life and love of the Duchess (60-61), claiming that they represent a welcome antithesis to the corrupt power relations of the court (61).

Describing the two's relationship in general, Belsey speaks of the tender way the Duchess woos and wins Antonio (129); Leech comments on the equality in their marriage (John Webster 53); Linda Fitz describes their relationship as the perfect alternative to Neoplatonic extremes: a happy and healthy reconciliation of body and soul, contrasted with Ferdinand's inability to accept the sexual side of his nature ("Humanism Questioned: A Study of Four Renaissance Characters" 404); Stilling claims that the two lovers unite the spiritual and physical aspects of their love into a harmonious union (238); and McLuskie styles their relationship as a "reassertion of human love and its consummation in fruitful marriage" ("Drama and Sexual Power Politics" 87).

26. Cf. Bliss who points out that she always acts like an imperious royal (The World's Perspective 145).

27. Both Jankowski and Peterson consider the Duchess extensively in her political role as ruler. The focus of Jankowski's study is the extraordinary nature of the Duchess' rule, since the Renaissance had no way of describing or dealing with female rule. Peterson, on the other hand, insists that the whole question of her gender is irrelevant and that we must consider her as a ruler, not as a woman (40-42). Though these two critics reach completely opposing final interpretations of the Duchess as a ruler, both ignore the fact that Webster devotes little time to the Duchess' political responsibilities or her relationship to her subjects. He does not focus on the relationship between sovereign and subject, rather than on the individual (Peterson 15), nor does he suggest that her troubled relationship with her siblings is a political and public one (Jankowski 164-166). Still less does he actually show her engaged in the business of ruling--or misruling--her kingdom. We are never given examples of truly inappropriate public actions, as we are in Richard II, for example; and the Duchess' favourite Antonio, far from being a "caterpillar of the commonwealth," appears to do quite a good job of administering her duchy (as he does in Webster's sources). Her status as Duchess seems to be used primarily as a symbol of her personal power.

28. Similarly, Brooke argues that the Duchess has no name because she plays a series of roles, in which the most powerful and impressive one is that of the Duchess (58).

29. Bradbrook accepts the brothers' sense of aristocratic honour (John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist 150), but most other critics fault the brothers for their excessive and perverted sense of family pride. Even Emslie and Dwyer, who adopt very unsympathetic views of the Duchess, point out that Ferdinand insanely places status and family prestige above the soul (Emslie 399) and tarnishes his family name through his false idea of what constitutes true honour (Dwyer 108).

30. One of Jardine's principal critiques of Webster's presentation of the Duchess, apart from the fact that it is made through a male perspective, is that she is surrounded, interpreted, and judged by male characters (72). But we not only get Cariola's comments on her, we, far more importantly, see the Duchess through her own perspective and actions, both of which are influenced by her sense of her own royal stature.

31. For a discussion of the medieval tradition of the fall of princes, see Whitman (143).

32. Thus rank, Callaghan argues, is used only to make same-sex distinctions, between Cariola and the Duchess and Ferdinand and Bosola (129). But her argument is founded on the supposition that all foundations of order in the period are based on "gender categories" (Callaghan 9). While it may be true that all hierarchical analogies of "State, society, Church and cosmos" are based on the construction of "sexual difference," with the most elemental hierarchy of male over female used as the foundation for all other hierarchies (Callaghan 27), the claim needs more attention than Callaghan gives it and can hardly be accepted uncritically. As well, to argue that the subjection of the female is the basis upon which all other elements of society are founded is altogether as extreme as the conservatives who would deny or ignore the importance of the feminine.

33. Ornstein comments on the similarity between Bosola and Antonio, stressing that neither has the strength to act (142). Peterson also mentions their similarity, arguing that they are both corrupted in order to satisfy their corrupters' personal desires (52-53).

34. Boklund particularly stresses Antonio's weakness, underlining the way that Webster has transformed him from the competent, ambitious, and heroic lover of his sources (95). Stodder comments on the fact that he is the most morally virtuous of Webster's characters, yet totally lacking in any kind of greatness (58); Brodwin notes that the Duchess is destroyed because she ignores her husband's weakness (293); and McAlindon speaks of the man's weak imperfection (183).

In contrast, Stilling claims that Antonio is the most virtuous of men (237), while Murray explains Antonio's passivity as Christian virtue (A Study of John Webster 182-183).

35. Lever argues that Bosola is poised between the goodness of the Duchess and the evil of her brothers, both actor for and victim of the corrupt powers of state (94).

36. For the most thorough discussion of the importance of gender differentiation in maintaining the patriarchal hierarchy, see Callaghan's Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy.

37. Other critics study the conflict between genders and between the lower and upper classes, but do not consider the clash between gender and rank. Callaghan denies the importance of rank in relation to gender; Whigham argues that the play depicts the "friction between the dominant social order and the emergent pressures towards social change" ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 167); Desmet restates his argument with a slight change, claiming that the Duchess herself "is the battlefield over which these social forces [aristocrats and socially mobile underlings] fight" (85); and Spivak studies the play as a clash between the whole, integrated woman and the "one-sided male" (124).

38. Critics of the play like Jankowski, who studies the Duchess as a female ruler, and Callaghan both place the Duchess' power to challenge gender conceptions in her unusual status as ruler, not her role as sister. She is a "phallic' duchess, a woman with political power" (Callaghan 169), and, clearly, her position in the duchy does differentiate her from other women. However, Webster does not consider her in a political context to any great extent, and the Duchess usually characterizes herself as a prince-one of royal blood rather than as the ruler of her duchy. She is a figure who does not need the appropriated symbol of male power, the phallus, to claim equality, for she uses something which is part of her essence, and hence more profoundly disruptive: her blood. As a ruler, she is, as both

Jankowski and Callaghan stress, an anomaly among women and can be dismissed as such. As a royal sister she is a female version of her brother and far more difficult to discount.

39. Critics have long since cited either Ferdinand's violent pride or his incestuous feelings as the motivating factors in his relationship with his sister. Only Whigham, however, has extensively explored the connections between the two, arguing that Ferdinand's incestuous obsession with his sister is part of his aristocratic pride and a defensive mechanism against the encroachments of the socially mobile lower orders.

Leech is one of the first critics to advance the incest theory, though he maintains that Webster only unconsciously implies Ferdinand's incestuous desires (John Webster 57; 100-103). Other scholars who concentrate solely on incest tend to do so with a psychological or psychoanalytic rather than social purpose, discussing what it reveals about Ferdinand's pathological complexes. Thus Courtade identifies the brother's sexual jealousy as simply a symptom of his insanity (87); Brooke sees his incestuous and sadistic fixation on his sister as a reflection of his madness and perversity (61); Whiteside contends that Ferdinand diverts his Oedipal longing from his mother to sister, who is a stand-in maternal figure; Forker argues that the brother's incestuous attraction reveals the way in which he has transferred on to his sister his own conflicting feelings of self-love and self-hate (308-311); Wilkinson studies Ferdinand's obsession with his double as a revelation of his narcissistic and Oedipus complexes (62-3); Empson claims that Ferdinand's incestuous obsession with his sister is the ultimate manifestation of his self-love; and Stilling interprets Ferdinand as a study of the diseased psyche, divided, as he is, between love and hate for his sister (242).

Others have rejected or downplayed incestuous passion in order to emphasize the importance of excessive family pride or narcissism in motivating Ferdinand. Boklund rejects the incest motive, arguing that Webster's source, William Painter, depicts the brothers behaving in the same way (99); Omstein stresses his narcissism more than his incestuous feelings, "his pitiless identification with his sister""(146); Mulryne argues that his incestuous feelings are not just sexual but one aspect of his obsession with the Duchess' appearance (223); Bodkte contends that there are more interesting reasons for Ferdinand's behaviour than lust, such as exaggerated family pride and a sense of her as a part of his self (142); Stodder and Dwyer reject the idea of incest and instead emphasize Ferdinand's violent family pride (107-108; Dwyer 105-106); Lever claims that his behaviour is not incestuous but "a perversion of natural affection by deep-seated prejudices of rank and blood" (93); and Brennan argues that the play undercuts the convention of taking revenge for family dishonour by hinting at the brother's less acceptable motives, such as incestuous attraction (488-489).

40. Whigham also stresses the importance of blood but from a completely different, Marxist perspective. For him, the fact that the siblings share blood is significant because it makes Ferdinand feel contaminated. He is linked, through the Duchess, to Antonio (Seizures of the Will 198). Rose sees blood in a similarly negative fashion. For her, the brothers' tyranny seems to arise out of their obsession with their royal and exclusive blood line (168). But as my study suggests, most brothers who attempt to control their sisters are presented as unlawful tyrants, regardless of their rank. It is precisely the Duchess' blood which allows her to mount such an impressive challenge to her brothers.

41. Cf. Emslie's comment that blood refers to honour, blood, and passion (393).

42. Interestingly, Jankowski claims that this is the only moment in the play that Ferdinand views her "body as complete, rather than simply a vagina" (177). He is so governed by his pride in blood that, for an instant, he does not see her in sexual terms.

43. Critics have long commented on the Duchess' neglect of her public responsibilities, though Webster himself seems largely indifferent to her position as ruler, apart from the power it gives her. A smaller number of critics have commented on her endeavours in the private realm. Bliss stresses the importance of freeing the Duchess from a political context; she does not want to be a ruler, Bliss maintains, and rather tries to live a private, fulfilling life as a mother (The World's Perspective 145-146). Griffin also presents the Duchess as a purely private person, who rejects Machiavellian politicking and manipulation in favour of "natural impulse" and virtue (114). He then places this innocence within the corruption of the public world--the court--that surrounds her and which she cannot transform (113-133). Whigham argues that the Duchess struggles to win the same recognition and respect for the private and personal realm that is given to matters of rule and the public realm ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 172).

By contrast, Peterson devotes a whole book to analysing the Duchess' failure to fulfill her public duties. She argues that the play develops the Duchess as an example of the bad prince who is punished for the misrule of the kingdom. She further claims that the private element does not even exist in the play, for we see the Duchess as a purely public figure (15; 43). Other critics have commented more briefly on the Duchess' neglect of her public responsibilities. Leech argues that she betrays her princely duties in marrying Antonio, putting private before public (John Webster 52); Courtade claims that she betrays her position and her responsibility to maintain a chaste public image (70), as well as neglecting the political responsibilities that would have solidified her position (78). For Ornstein, she is a feckless girl, ignoring the duties that come with privilege (147). Calderwood argues that when the Duchess woos Antonio, she not only abandons the responsibilities of her rank, but uses her stature to advance misrule and passion (139). Dwyer claims that she abandons the responsibilities of her rank (47), while Duer observes that she behaves as a private person, governed by private desires, rather than as a prince (5).

Other recent critics have attempted to join the two realms of the public and private in their interpretations of the Duchess. Brodwin claims that the woman embarks on a heroic but futile attempt to combine her personal life as wife with her public role as duchess (298). Rose claims that Webster combines the public and private, the political and the erotic, in the figure of the sexually active Duchess (162), but Rose still primarily focuses on the Duchess as wife. Jankowski studies her as both a woman and a ruler, in order to argue that the woman is defeated because she fails to combine "her body natural" and "her body politic" (150-151). Her interpretation comes closest to mine; however, Jankowski uses the term political so loosely that it is hard to tell precisely what she means by it. The Duchess behaves politically when she courts Antonio (169); by this, though, Jankowski simply means she exercises power, because shortly after, she is observing that the Duchess' marriage is "politically disastrous," even though it "reinforces her sense of self as a political person" (173). Whether she acknowledges it or not, "political" for Jankowski is often a metaphor for personal autonomy and power, the right to ignore the laws of both church and state.

44. Cf. Peterson's remark that the play embodies the conflict "between ideals of order and the potentially anarchic will" (18) or Calderwood's claim that the Duchess uses "[d]egree to confirm and

sanction the autonomy of private impulse" (139). Webster, however, does not appear interested in exploring the bad ruler in a political and philosophical sense. Instead, as Whigham observes, both siblings are governed by "an excess of will" and desire to obtain what they want ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 171). Webster's play seems to present rule itself as a metaphor for personal power, whether positive or negative, rather than attempt to satirize bad rule in the figure of the Duchess.

45. Susan Baker best formulates this view, for she argues that the Duchess' defining choice is her decision to defy her brothers (346). But she does not focus on the relationship between the siblings; rather, she studies the Duchess as a "static protagonist" (343) who maintains her integrity by staying constant to her decision to marry against her brothers' wishes (346). Marianne Nordfors also emphasizes the idea that the Duchess' challenge of traditional morals lies not so much in her marriage itself but in her going against her brothers' will (235). Similarly, Bliss, who notes the Duchess' likeness to her brothers, observes that she takes her siblings' initial chastisement as a "challenge" to her autonomy (The World's Perspective 144). For my argument, it is useful to make this distinction: to argue that her marriage to Antonio is not the cause but the consequence of her defiance of her brothers. This slant also has the advantage of explaining one of the most notable contradictions in critics like Rose's, Whigham's, and Jankowski's argument. They claim that she deliberately wishes to overturn class barriers without dealing with the problem that she herself is defined by her class and without resolving the paradox that it is her imperious sense of self that propels her behaviour in the first place

46. Whigham particularly stresses the way in which her marriage threatens Ferdinand, revealing as it does how class itself is nothing more than a social construction ("Social and Sexual Mobility" 170). Yet he does not consider the similarly destructive effect that such a revelation may have on the Duchess' power, for she is as dependent, or even more so, on the privilege of class.

47. Curiously, Rose, despite her feminist preoccupations, discusses the Duchess throughout the play solely in terms of her choice of husband, as though this one gesture of wedding a basely-born man is what defines the Duchess. She also ignores the possibility that the Duchess may wed Antonio for the same reason that her male counterparts in plays such as The Duke of Milan (Philip Massinger) and Love's Sacrifice (John Ford) marry lower-born women: not out of a conscious desire to advance merit and virtue above class but out of physical and emotional attraction.

48. Whitman and McAlindon advance the most extended discussion of this view. Whitman styles her as a woman who moves from arrogance to final humility and a strong faith in the reality of heaven, while McAlindon studies the way in which she must learn to overcome her pride and her pagan sense of constancy in order to achieve true Christian humility (182). But other critics also discuss how she progresses from the arrogance of her "I am the Duchess of Malfi still" comment to final humility. Bradbrook likens her imprisonment to a stay in purgatory which brings her to repentance and humility and transforms her into a paragon of saintly innocence (John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist 207-208). Dwyer claims, unconvincingly, that she moves from passion and despair to repentance for her selfish deeds (55). For Emslie, the Duchess acknowledges and does penance for her sin (399-400); Jardine claims that Webster satisfies his male audience by reducing this economically powerful woman, whose status threatens the patriarchal status quo, to the figure of the

stereotypical "penitent whore" (91). Even Wymer, who acknowledges that it is "aristocratic pride" that keeps the Duchess from madness (66), goes on to claim that she progresses beyond this aristocratic disdain to draw final comfort and courage from her position of humble martyrdom (67).

49. Critics have presented contrasting interpretations of Bosola's actions. Some have praised him: Ribner claims that he helps to awaken the Duchess' spirit of greatness and cast out her spirit of woman, and he actually sees the malcontent as benevolent in the tortures and taunts that he heaps on the helpless woman ("Webster's Italian Plays" 113-114). Similarly, Courtade sees Bosola as helping the Duchess to move beyond the vanity of her gender to achieve the "spirit of greatness" (79). Whitman contends that Bosola helps the Duchess to purify her soul and die with a Christian contempt for the vanities of this world (155-157); Murray writes that Bosola leads the Duchess to salvation, turning her from despairing pride to meekness (A Study of John Webster 177).

This view of Bosola is reiterated and developed even by recent critics. While Lord eschews the religious element, she nonetheless gives Bosola credit for the Duchess' end. The malcontent does not taunt the Duchess but assists her in preparing her soul for death (The Dynamics of Role-Playing In Jacobean Tragedy 161), "guiding and controlling the Duchess' reaction to her situation and helping her to achieve the appropriate composure" (The Dynamics of Role-Playing 171). For McAlindon, Bosola is the Duchess' "mentor, comforter, and finally disciple" (184) who teaches her serenity and humility (181) and directs her mind away from material possessions (185).

Other critics, however, have emphasized the malcontent's desire to destroy his victim, and it is hard, for me at least, to see any benevolence--particularly conscious, deliberate benevolence--in his actions or to accept characterizations of him as the Duchess' mentor, teacher or guide with anything but revulsion. (A particular peculiarity of this critical outlook is that it tends to come from critics who see the Duchess as an image of perfect goodness and virtue. And yet, if this is the case, why should she need religious instruction from the admittedly sceptical, divided, vile, and misogynistic Bosola? And why should we see him as showing her how to die so well (McAlindon 184) when he himself perishes so wretchedly?) Bodkte believes that the Duchess converts Bosola to her side precisely because she withstands his attempts to break her down (140-141). Wharton emphasizes that, while Bosola does help the Duchess to die well, he does so not out of pity but out of a cold-blooded desire to observe her in her agony, experimenting with her mental state (86-89). Stilling argues that the Duchess fiercely resists Bosola's contempt of the world speeches which are not intended to bring her Christian acceptance and serenity but to move her to despair (244).

50. By contrast, some critics argue that her famous cry represents a blind arrogance that she has to reject before she can die as a true Christian. McAlindon, for instance, claims that her words betray a pagan sense of pride which she must relinquish in order to die as a true Christian (182).

Others see her words as tragically self-deluded. Leech feels that it is anarchic and destructive, as well as splendid (John Webster 82); Peterson claims that her words are ironic, given her incompetence and irresponsibility as a ruler (6); Jardine feels they are satirically self-deceiving, since her rank gives her no true power (91); and Jankowski views the cry as poignantly ironic since "the Duchess has been violently separated from her sovereign power" (178).

51. There are a number of critics who emphasize the idea that the Duchess' dignity in death does not come from her embrace of Christian meekness. Wharton emphatically rejects the idea of the Duchess

as a humble penitent, observing that "[h]er pride is indeed what she struggles to preserve" (77). For Leech, she is not a passive Christian martyr but dignified and strong (John Webster 62); Berry claims that her self-composure comes from her self-integrity in a nihilistic world (138); for Bodkte she is impressive in death because of her "theatrical stoicism" (138) and undaunted self-confidence; and Stilling observes that, far from dying meekly, she goes out taunting her brothers (244).

By contrast, other critics emphasize her apparent meek penitence or, more interestingly, comment on the mixture of pride and humility in her end. In his emphasis on the strong Christian values of Webster's play, Murray ignores her final arrogance and emphasizes the Duchess' womanly pathos and Christian innocence (A Study of John Webster 122). Far more recently, McAlindon claims that she succeeds in progressing beyond her pride (182) to become an image of constancy and Christian heroism (186), just as Wymer argues that she moves beyond both her aristocratic hauteur and her despair to a final state of martyred humility (67). Forker, however, contends that her end impressively blends her humility as a woman and Christian with an aristocratic courage (The Skull Beneath the Skin 326); Lord describes her death as a "marvellous synthesis of pride and humility" (The Dynamics of Role-Playing 173); and Bliss comments on the strange and impressive combination the Duchess shows of meekness and imperious arrogance (The World's Perspective 155).

52 Berry, for example, claims that she finally makes herself into a duchess through action, rather than through the rank or externals upon which she had previously depended (147). Similarly, Herring points out that her strength, rather than based on the trappings of rule, is internal and so can never be taken from her, no matter what her brother's tortures (321-22). Title and identity, however, are indissolubly linked, for her sense of her rank gives her the indestructible self-identity that allows her to withstand her brother.

53 Cf. Lord's observation that her spirit of greatness comes from "her deep feeling for the ceremony and dignity of being a duchess" (The Dynamics of Role-Playing 166).

54 While Ferdinand's and Bosola's sense that honour is founded solely on fame and aristocratic blood lines (Dwyer 108) is wrong, worth, for Webster, is also not entirely achieved. Selzer claims that the Duchess--who has rejected rank for personal merit--makes her famous cry out of a sense "that her true and unassailable dignity is rooted in inherent worth, not in the external position she has so completely lost" (77). But if this were truly the case, why would she mention her rank at all?

55 Leech is the first to advance the idea that Ferdinand identifies himself with his sister's forgotten first husband, feeling sexual jealousy for his sister's "betrayal" of the Duke of Malfi (John Webster: A Critical Study 32). Bliss observes that the brother identifies with the Duchess' husband but cannot successfully displace him (The World's Perspective 150). Brennan points out, more generally, that he responds as a husband would to his wife's integrity (493).

56 Cf. Murray who argues that Ferdinand lives through his sister (A Study of John Webster 160-61). Murray, however, focuses purely on Ferdinand's interest in her sexual activity, without wondering why he might be so sexually interested in her.

57 Ekeblad comments that she is being prepared like a bride for her wedding night (261-262). Death may be her bridegroom (Ekeblad 262); however, Ferdinand is the living representative of both death and bridegroom, killing her as a form of absolute possession.

58. By contrast, Calderwood argues that Ferdinand manages to give an appearance of proper authority and justice to his actions, transforming "his desire for immediate vengeance into the appearance of public justice ... a confirmation of order" (144). It is hard to see this, though, in the insane scenes in the Duchess' palace.

59. McAlindon points out that tyranny in the play leads to "psychic disunity" (154) in almost all of the characters (153-154). He also mentions that the image of the wolf is often connected to the tyrant (187-188), but he does not link Webster's presentation of tyranny to the social conception of the brother Forker (The Skull Beneath the Skin 301) and Boklund (100) comment on the tyranny of the Duchess' brothers, without considering their behaviour within the context of family relationships. Conversely, Bradbrook does not fault the brothers for their tyranny, accepting as conventional and normal their absolute control over their sister; instead, she blames them for not adequately fulfilling their patriarchal duties by arranging a suitable second marriage for their lusty, weak-willed sister (John Webster: Citizen and Dramatist 149-50)

60 There have been a number of idealizations of the Duchess' marriage. The two most detailed come in Rose's study of the way in which Webster elevates the private, domestic world of women and marriage and with Wymer's even more passionate praise of the relationship between the Duchess and her steward. Rejecting the Marxist and feminist critics who "see personal relations and family life as reproducing and enforcing oppressive political structures" (61), he argues that the marriage between the two lovers creates "a free emotional space" (61) offering a "powerful alternative to the diseased world of the court" (61). His elevation of the private world, however, at the expense of the public is as excessive and limiting as Peterson's opposite extreme. Ignoring her position as Duchess, Wymer would limit the whole scope of her characterization to her role as Antonio's sweet and loving wife and ignore her imperiousness, her self-indulgence, and her indifference to her civic responsibilities. Further, the power relations of the court are replicated in the relationship between the Duchess and her husband, for, in both of the scenes in which they are alone, her rank and her elevation over Antonio are evident.

61. Rose argues that the Protestant marriage guides brought in a more "realistic, multifaceted" sexual discourse (13) based on a "celebration of married love" (22). However, sexual passion itself as a basis of marriage was still regarded with suspicion. Stone notes: "Protestant and Catholic theologians condemned not only extramarital fornication and adultery, but also the introduction of strong sexual passion into marriage itself" (Family, Sex and Marriage 499). Similarly, Cressy, who makes a point of taking issue with each of Stone's main arguments, points out that writers like William Gouge emphasized the necessity of love for a good companionate marriage, but not lust or overly passionate, romantic love (261).

62. Linda T. Fitz emphasizes just how little the idealization of marriage helped improve woman's position ("What Says the Married Woman?" Marriage Theory and Feminism in the English

Renaissance" 8). Similarly, Karen Newman comments on the way in which the idealization of the Puritan wife in literature conditioned women to submit absolutely to their husbands in mind as well as body (17-18; 27). Rose's study, however, adopts a completely different view, arguing that the idealization of marriage greatly improved women's position in society and increased the importance of traditionally undervalued female concerns and virtues.

63. The way in which Renaissance writers polarize presentations of women into the extremes of saint or whore has been a particular focus of feminist criticism, but there has been no consensus as to how Webster should be evaluated. Is he following this dichotomy or criticizing it? On the one hand, feminists such as Newman castigate the whole culture for defining women in terms of the polarized figures of "whore and the housewife" (23). This same dichotomized attitude is applied specifically to Webster by Jardine whose analysis faults Webster for being unable to beyond the saint/whore dichotomy (91); by Finke, who criticizes the male characters' insistence on forcing women into images of either saint or whore and their refusal to allow them to define themselves through language (366-67); by Desmet who sees the Duchess as a woman deprived of the words needed to define herself (85); and by Callaghan who studies how "language which idealises or which denigrates woman functions as that which continually asserts and reiterates gender difference" (109). For Finke and Desmet, the Duchess is disempowered through her lack of access to language, which condemns her to be "painted" by the male characters (Finke 366-67).

On the other hand, Spivack argues that Webster presents the Duchess as a satisfyingly complete woman, one who can pursue greatness without relinquishing her femininity (124). Luckyj contends that Webster presents both Julia's and the Duchess' sexual passion positively, refusing to depict either as whores (*A Winter's Snake* 85). And, in a very thorough study, Mary Beth Rose argues that it is precisely this dichotomized view of women that the Protestant idealization of marriage--and Webster--reject (Rose 176).

Both groups of feminists, however, tend to overlook the ways in which women can use this polarization to their own advantage. There is little point in complaining about the cultural definitions available to women of the Renaissance; it is the way they use these definitions that determines whether they are victimized or empowered.

64. Traditionally, this passage has been cited as one of the examples of Webster's weakness for melodrama and excessive pathos at all costs, a view reiterated more recently by Langman (35-36; 42). Felperin explains the apparent contradiction by arguing that the characters are so theatrical that they have no consistent sense of self (189-191). Whether we accept these words as sensationalism, added by Webster to make the Duchess all the more sympathetic or see it as the Duchess' own theatrical invention, the inconsistency of the remark suggests just how superficial and exterior motherhood is to the Duchess' actual character. Webster, or the Duchess, invokes the image of mother to gain instant pathos and sympathy.

65. Critics as early as Boklund have commented on the Duchess' sense of the theatrical (115-116). More recently, Berry has stressed that we should view the Duchess' end as a noble, public performance (148), while Felperin argues that the Duchess is an essentially theatrical character, able to don so many roles in her death scene because she has no stable self (189).

The most extensive study, however, of the Duchess' sense of the theatrical is Lord's. Unlike

Felperin, she argues that the Duchess' character is naturally histrionic and that her role-playing is a part of who she is. Able to perform self-consciously until the moment of her death, she uses role-playing to detach herself from her suffering ("The Duchess of Malfi: 'the Spirit of Greatness' and 'of Woman'" 313) and to bring structure to her life ("The Duchess" 309). While Lord's interpretation does not focus on the Duchess' social role or on her relationship to Ferdinand and Bosola, her interpretation strongly influenced mine. In contrast to Felperin and the feminist critics who see the Duchess as the creation of the men around her, Lord insists that the Duchess imposes her own pattern on events

66 Little has been said of the Duchess' ultimate effect on her brother except in terms of the triumph of good over evil, but a number of critics have commented on the transformation she works in the self-destructive malcontent. Murray stresses the way in which she deepens her brother's madness and inspires Bosola to attempt goodness (A Study of John Webster 143); Ribner points to Bosola's transformation as the most important element of the play; Boklund maintains that she helps Bosola turn from evil by showing that he does not have to live selfishly (121); and Champion argues that she succeeds in genuinely changing Bosola (148). The exception to this general rule is Wharton who argues that the Duchess does not succeed in influencing either Bosola or Antonio, rendering act five empty of her influence (85).

Chapter 6

'One Beauty ... a Double Soul': John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's A Whore

Unlike the women of John Webster's two plays, *Annabella*, the title character of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore (c. 1629; 1633), has received little critical attention and has been overlooked in all feminist studies of Renaissance drama. Nor has 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, with the exception of Terri Clerico's study,¹ been given the social-historical interpretations popular in recent years. Instead, scholars have focused almost exclusively on the figure of Giovanni and have devoted most of their energy to exploring the moral questions raised by his tragic dilemma. Is he a hero, whose incestuous passion for his sister represents a deliberate challenge to the norms of the corrupt society in which he lives?² Or, are we meant to condemn him from the beginning, turning from him with revulsion as a figure deluded and destroyed by his Faustian arrogance?³ For these critics, and the numerous others whose response to Giovanni falls somewhere between the two extremes, the question is not whether Giovanni is the tragic and moral centre of the play, but the extent to which Ford meant his audience to sympathize with Giovanni's heroic transgression.⁴

In the midst of this debate, *Annabella*, Giovanni's sister and lover is given little attention. First labelled "virtually a moral defective" (126) in T. S. Eliot's essay, she is still widely viewed as weak and passive, without the strength of mind to resist the bullying and blandishments of either Giovanni or the Friar. No matter how differently scholars may view Giovanni, nor how varied their approach to the play, they are almost completely united in seeing *Annabella* as "pliant, vacillating and negative" (Eliot 126). Scholars who praise Giovanni as an aspiring and relatively impressive hero, dismiss *Annabella* as a weak and conventional coward who betrays her brother's defiance of his corrupt

society's norms. She betrays his heroic constancy (Farr 40), destroying "a true and honest love" (Farr 51), and deserves her brutal death as punishment for her "own infidelity" (Boehrer, "'Tis Pity She's A Whore and the Two Cities of God" 368). Other critics, who look with less approval on Giovanni's actions, make Annabella into a hapless victim or view her as a passive object, imposed on by the various male characters of the play.⁵ Perceived as weak and uninteresting, Annabella really only garners critical attention in her final moments: providing a body for the play's bloody and sensational conclusion and allowing Ford to blend death, sexual ecstasy, and religious transcendence (Huebert 36) in an aesthetically pleasing fashion (Brooke 125-6).

At the same time, critical interpretations of the play are also surprisingly silent when it comes to considering the dramatic significance of the brother-sister relationship. It has long been a critical commonplace to regard Ford as the last of the Jacobean heroes; scholars have studied at length Ford's position within the Jacobean tradition which he had inherited, looking at both his treatment of the Jacobean hero and his relationship to Shakespeare. For the two most prominent early proponents of this approach, Clifford Leech and Robert Ornstein, Giovanni is the final figure in the long tradition of Jacobean tragic heroes. He embodies the Jacobean conflict between an acknowledgement of man's potential and of his limitations and isolation (Leech 41), and between scepticism and Christian values (Leech 46). He is cast in the mould of earlier Jacobean heroes, questioning and defying God (Ornstein 204), but unable to set up a new system of values because of the emotional rather than the intellectual nature of his rebellion (Ornstein 207). For Mark Stavig, the play re-works themes of Dr. Faustus, Othello, and Romeo and Juliet from a Jacobean perspective, making them more exaggerated and cynical (238).

More recently, Richard Ide argues that Ford uses his predecessors' works as a rich source of

images, signs, and allusions from which he could draw, either to undercut or to give emotional resonance to his themes (63). Marion Lomax likens the play to a deliberate re-writing of Romeo and Juliet (123). Both characters are victims of dramatic traditions that force them into "various conventional dramatic roles" (Lomax 177) which they can neither escape nor adopt without hypocrisy (Lomax 174-176). While these critics emphasize the importance of placing Ford in his dramatic context, none considers the significance of the brother-sister relationship, which had, by this time, become an established dramatic convention of its own, nor do they analyse the way in which Ford replaces the jealous husband and passionate lover of Shakespeare with the ultimately antagonistic brother of Webster.

Most critics who consider the sibling relationship focus on incest or look strictly at the relationship's structural and thematic importance. Studies of incest tend to analyse Ford's plays only briefly and in the narrowest sense.⁶ Approaches which consider the thematic importance of the brother and sister are more valuable, for they emphasize the importance of interpreting the two characters in conjunction. While they offer few insights into the dynamics of the brother-sister relationship, they, at least, refuse to downplay or dismiss Annabella's presence.

In her early study of the playwright, Joan Sargeant analyses the siblings' different outlooks and behaviour, favourably contrasting Annabella, who loves despite her moral and religious beliefs, with Giovanni, who spends the play rationalizing and justifying his passion (93-96). For Larry Champion, the play deliberately creates dual protagonists who embrace two conflicting perspectives, one based on Christian repentance and the other on heroic egocentrism ("Ford's 'Tis Pity She's A Whore and the Jacobean Tragic Perspective" 79). This split perspective leaves the audience uncertain in its sympathies and ultimately more sceptical of both siblings' conduct (Champion, "Ford's 'Tis

Pity" 80-86). In his study of Ford's interest in the perverse, Robert Heilman points out that the two siblings allow the play to oscillate between the tragic and the decadent mode (42). Annabella "is the essential tragic figure, inclusive enough in her humanity to feel strongly, indeed, both the proscribed passion and the imperative that proscribes it" (41), while Giovanni is "the single-tracked man of passion who is the natural material of melodrama" (43).

With the exception of these critics, scholars have not considered Annabella in any depth nor have they discussed the significance of the brother-sister relationship to an interpretation of the play as a whole. In focusing solely on Giovanni and ignoring the play's treatment of the brother and sister, they present a skewed interpretation of the play, one that not only neglects Annabella but limits our understanding of Giovanni and his actions as well. In order to gain a fuller grasp of both Giovanni's and Annabella's tragic experience, we must first reinstate Annabella at the centre of the play and reject the passive figure of most critics' imagination. Annabella, as the title character of the drama, plays an important role in the action and is, though in a different way, as independent and resolute as the Duchess and Vittoria. Like the Duchess of Malfi, killed in the fourth act, and Vittoria, seemingly exploited by her brother, Annabella often appears to be overshadowed by the physical and verbal presence of the male characters, particularly her brother; yet, her experience is ultimately the only lucid, sane and self-aware one of the play, one which expresses itself most strikingly in her final confrontation with her insane brother. While she does not have the long soliloquies of Giovanni and is physically passive through the play, she, not Giovanni, undergoes a spiritual and psychological transformation and dies with an increased degree of self-knowledge.

At the same time, a renewed focus on Annabella helps us to appreciate both the structural and thematic workings of the play. Critics have focused on the unresolved conflicts within the play,

but with the exception of Champion no one has connected this clash of opposing values to the figure of the brother and sister.⁷ And yet the two antagonistic siblings, alike and yet by the end of the play so different, perfectly embody this dichotomous focus within the play, the contrast not just between skepticism and traditional Christian values but between traditional male heroism and the more passive heroism of endurance and noble suffering which Mary Beth Rose argues to be more traditionally feminine. The brother-sister presence provides a metaphor for the shattering of the one, central tragic figure into two: Champion's different perspectives or conflicting male and female tragic experiences contained within the same play. The active male figure, familiar from Elizabethan drama, is increasingly criticized, and the female Stoic figure, similar to the Duchess, is increasingly exalted.

However, even if we discount Annabella's experience as of little or no value and interest, we still cannot get a complete picture of the play unless we study the two characters' family relationship. Ford's conception of Giovanni and Annabella as brother and sister and his exploitation of earlier dramatic tradition shapes his treatment of their heroic endeavours and his characters' attempts at self-definition. At first, Giovanni attempts to capitalize on the ambiguity of his position as brother by combining the role of husband with that of kinsman and using sexual love to his own advantage. Not only does he seek to make himself all-powerful by gaining absolute power over another human being, he tries to escape from the lack of identity and authority associated with the role of brother. Annabella, by contrast, becomes quite powerless when she views herself as Giovanni's wife and gives him a twofold power over her. When she reasserts herself as a sister, she challenges Giovanni's glorified view of their incest and, forcing him back into the role of brother, accelerates his descent into confusion and madness. For Giovanni, the role of brother is inadequate and limiting, confining him to the margins of authority; for Annabella, conceiving of herself as sister first and foremost gives

her the courage to resist her brother.

As well as building on the earlier dramatic treatment of siblings, Ford, more than any other playwright, attempts to define and exploit the unique nature of sibling love. Drawing on the dual tradition of antagonistic and idealized sibling relationships, allows Ford to contrast the opposing nature of physical and familial love and to elevate asexual love above sexual passion. The two's incestuous affair then ironically re-works the earlier contentions of sibling relationships, suggesting that their physical love is ultimately the deadliest form of hate, an antagonism more destructive even than the struggles between earlier brothers and sisters. At the same time, however, Ford also uses an idealized conception of the brother-sister relationship in order to question and reject the destructive sexual passion which degrades all the male-female relationships in the play. Influenced by the growing Platonism of the Caroline court, which popularized displays "depict[ing] the realm purged of all lustful appetite by the irresistible conjunction of Divine Beauty and Heroic Virtue in the persons of the royal couple" (Parry 191), Ford stands idealized sibling affection in contrast to the relationship between husband and wife and explores the disastrous consequences of the siblings' confusion of familial love with sexual love.

Critics have been unwilling to see Annabella as part of the tragic centre of the play or even to acknowledge her structural and thematic importance as a sister. Viewing her as the moral defective of Eliot's imagination or as a passive helpless victim, they consistently foreground Giovanni and deprive Annabella of an active will of her own. Yet a close examination of the play provides no justification for this dismissive evaluation of Annabella and reveals how it provides an unbalanced interpretation of the play. From the beginning, Ford indicates, Annabella is clearly as infatuated with her brother as he is with her. She treats her numerous suitors with indifference, hinting that she

favours another: "[M]y thoughts are fix'd on other ends" (I.ii.68).⁸ Almost immediately she betrays her love for her brother, launching into an admiring rhapsody when he appears below her: "But see, Putana, see: what blessed shape / Of some celestial creature now appears" (I.ii. 126-7). Clearly, Giovanni does not need to seduce her, as so many critics claim, or lie to her to get her to comply with his request.⁹ Instead, Annabella indirectly encourages her brother and while apparently passive, initiates the declaration of love by seeking Giovanni. Although her "soul is full of heaviness and fear" (I.ii.138), she still chooses to leave the balcony and go below to speak with her brother. She wants to hear his declaration of love, even as she worries about the way he will respond to her presence.¹⁰

Although critics who interpret the siblings' first encounter concentrate almost exclusively on Giovanni and his lengthy and impassioned declarations of love, Ford makes Annabella, as much as her brother, the focus of the scene. He has Giovanni articulate his passionate love in flights of poetic rhapsody; yet he makes Annabella's response no less complex, ranging from shame, to an attempt to divert him, to a fearful, intense, and incredulous joy. With Ford, as R. J. Kaufmann argues in his interpretation of The Broken Heart, it is not through speech and rhetoric that the dramatist creates his most intense moments but through "strange silences" and the unnerving sensation of violent emotions kept--just barely--under control (Kaufmann, "Ford's Wasteland" 528). For Ford, language is "hollow and lacking in genuine body and substance" (Hopkins 99), and his plays reveal the "inadequacy of speech" (Hopkins 100).¹¹ Giovanni's long, melancholy soliloquy as Annabella comes down to him is countered by her single word, "Brother" (I.ii.158), a cry which suggests both her longing and her horror at the incestuous attraction between them as resoundingly as all his tormented eloquence. Her blush when Giovanni first takes her hand betrays her internal turmoil and tension, emotions which Ford then contrasts with her control as he has her question Giovanni's poetic

compliments. Each of her attempts to make light of her brother's flattery, "Troth, this is pretty"(I.ii.190), "Fie upon 'ee"(I.ii.193), "D'ee mock me, or flatter me?" (I.ii.198), reveals her underlying eagerness to believe him and her nervous fear that he is only joking about what are her strongest emotions.

Annabella particularly underlines the depth of her emotions through her self-control and her inability to accept that Giovanni is truly sincere. At first, she refuses to credit her brother's words not just because the love he is declaring is incestuous but because she loves him so intensely in return that she can barely hope that her feelings might be reciprocated. Even as they make their famous vow, she still cannot quite accept that he is in earnest and truly shares her passion, asking: "You mean good sooth then?" (I.ii.256). When she finally throws off her previous restraint, her words describing how much she has loved her brother, "Thou hast won / The field, and never fought; what thou hast urg'd / My captive heart had long ago resolved" (I.ii.240-2), hardly indicate a passive victim manipulated by Giovanni. Although made a prisoner by the strength of her feelings, she has nonetheless made a decided choice to accept her brother's love, and the audience feels her relief at being able finally to declare the depth of her passion. In fact, her love, she argues, is greater and far more passionate than her brother's: "For every sigh that thou hast spent for me / I have sighed ten; for every tear shed twenty" (I.ii.244-45). Ultimately, the suffering and longing that her feelings have caused her is more intense, not diminished, for being kept silent and unspoken.

If we then accept, as Ford indicates in this scene, that Annabella loves her brother as much as he does her, she becomes a willing participant in the incestuous affair, not a coerced victim. Neither weak nor passive, the other aspects of her character become easier to understand, and we can cease to see her as the easily swayed puppet of either her brother or the Friar. This then allows us

to focus on the structural and thematic significance of the siblings; we realise that brother and sister are placed together as much to show Annabella's development as her brother's degeneration, to contrast the rise in self-knowledge and stature of the one with the descent into madness and delusion of the other.¹² They are mirror images of one another, physically identical and yet increasingly different, and this double focus on the two siblings, as Heilman argues, serves to contrast heroism with melodrama and the decadent. Ford does not set up two opposing forms of heroism in order to undercut both their perspectives (Champion, "Ford's Tis Pity She's a Whore and the Jacobean Tragic Experience" 80) so much as to undermine Giovanni's heroic posturing. He exaggerates Giovanni's "egocentric defiance of external values" (Champion, "Ford's Tis Pity She's a Whore and the Jacobean Tragic Experience" 79) to ludicrous extremes, ultimately parodying rather than praising the brother's heroic endeavour and making it so excessive that it becomes melodrama rather than true heroism.

As Heilman emphasizes, Ford presents Giovanni as "the single-tracked man of passion" (43) who concentrates on only one aspect of human life, his passion for Annabella "negating all other imperatives that belong to human wholeness" (Heilman 41). Throughout the play, we see him solely in terms of his obsession, gripped first by his incestuous love, then by his fears that she might betray him, and finally by his jealous wrath towards her. He is turned in completely on himself, isolated from his society and self-absorbed, unable to interact with anyone but his sister. Even his feelings for Annabella are part of his inward turning, for his incestuous love for the person closest to himself is little more than an extension and manifestation of his self-love. Incest is not the cause of his ever-increasing self-absorption and insanity, nor is it the tragic mistake that precipitates his downfall. It is simply the first and most telling symptom of his narcissistic madness.

By contrast, Ford places Annabella within her society, able to function normally within a

variety of social situations. Despite the large number of soliloquies given to Giovanni, Annabella is developed as the more completely rounded figure. She rejects the advances of the simpleton Bergetto with grace and humour, avoiding insult to either him or his uncle, and turns down Soranzo's suit with a similar aplomb. Later, Ford shows her ability to empathize with others besides her brother as pity replaces her anger towards Soranzo. Unlike the bookish and reclusive Giovanni, she is a part of the society whose norms she violates, and her transgression is far more deliberate and difficult than her brother's because it comes despite her integration within her society. The decision to commit incest is not a natural expression of her personality, as it is with Giovanni.

More important, Giovanni's soliloquies, in which he attempts to suppress and then justify his incestuous desire, act more as Ford's parody of the Marlovian conception of heroism than his true or admiring reduplication of it. Tamburlaine's long-winded, boasting reflections upon his own strength and power may appear slightly outrageous, but at least they are grounded in his achievements. He has conquered a large part of the world, has emperors pulling his chariot and may well boast that he has chained Fortune's wheel. For Giovanni, however, to adopt a similar posture in a fundamentally unheroic situation is grotesque, betraying his insane dislocation from reality. While his initial stance may appear impressive, we soon realise that it is based purely on bombastic language and hollow vaunts. The noble enterprise, which "Fate or all the powers / That guide the motions of immortal souls / Could not prevent ..." (V.vi.11-13) and which gives him god-like powers of life and death, so that he may claim "in my fists I bear the twists of life," (V.vi.72), is the murder and evisceration of his unresisting sister. Clearly, the rhetoric that he uses to glorify his actions is an insane parody of earlier heroic stances;¹³ his soliloquies, rather than revealing any growth on his part or any impressive achievement, serve only to confirm his increasing madness and his inability to understand adequately

either himself, his sister, or their situation.

By contrast, the passive and largely silent Annabella, rejected with such indifference by most scholars, possesses the stoical and psychological heroism of the main characters, both masculine and feminine of Ford's The Broken Heart, and her rise to greater self-knowledge inversely mirrors her brother's descent into madness. Although Robert Heilman (39) and Joan Sargeant are the only two critics to see Annabella as more developed than her brother, it is unquestionable that she, rather than Giovanni grows in character. From the infatuated girl who describes her brother as a celestial creature, to the idolatrous lover speaking of her angel-like beloved, she comes, in the final act, to renounce the shallowness of surface beauty. Giovanni never moves beyond his specious argument that, in loving the beautiful Annabella he is loving virtue, and he remains attached to his worship of the physical to the end. But Annabella, who had earlier worshipped her brother's physical beauty as devoutly as he had worshipped hers, finally realises the emptiness of such idolatry and rejects the basis of their mutual love: "... now I confess / Beauty that clothes the outside of the face / Is cursed if it be not cloth'd with grace" (V.i.11-13).¹⁴ She achieves insight into their actions, gaining a "resolution to the tragic dilemma through Christian repentance and submission to God's will" (Champion, Tragic Patterns 84), while her brother is, finally, irrevocably entrapped within his outlook. Glorifying her physical beauty even after he has killed her, he tries to make Annabella's murder into an act of artistic perfection, but the bleeding heart on the dagger, rather than being a symbol of doomed but beautiful love, proves the fitting conclusion to his obsession with physical rather than spiritual beauty.¹⁵

Further emphasizing the importance of Annabella's words, her final insight into her spiritual condition mirrors the very views advanced by Ford in his earlier poetic work Christes Bloody Sweat (1613).¹⁶ Just as Annabella learns that outer grace must be matched by inner beauty, so Ford's poem

criticizes beautiful sinners. Like Annabella, these women are worshipped as celestial angels, and yet their outward beauty is a sham, masking their inner ugliness:

In face as sweete as Angels, dy'd in grayne,
 Of natures Art, fayre Miracle of Features,
 Wonder of beauty, loves delicious trayne ,
 Adorn'd with seeming graces that did shine
 So glorious as they were esteemed divine.
 Women they were, Saintes to behold, in view
 Chast Matrons, but (O frailtyes curst) in triall
 More vain than vanitie, and more untrue
 Then falsehood.(404-412)

Annabella's final perspective is so close to the poem's that her couplet, "Beauty that clothes the outside of the face / Is cursed if it be not cloth'd with grace," picks up and echoes almost perfectly the key words of this far longer passage: face, beauty, grace, and curst.

If Annabella manages to perceive that outward loveliness is not enough and so progresses beyond the blind self-delusion of the beauties in Ford's poem, Giovanni undergoes a reverse progression. While he begins the play aware of the dangers of making love his god, he fast proceeds to convince himself that his passion for Annabella is divine. He moves ever closer to the lustfulness of the lovers condemned by Christes Bloody Sweat, those who "make a God of love" (1074) and who ignore Christ's agony and true display of love. The poem emphasizes:

Love is no god, as some of wicked times
 (Led with dreaming dotage of their folly)

Have set him forth in their lascivious rimes,

Bewitch'd with errors, and conceits unholy:

It is a raging-blood, affections blind,

Which boiles both in the body and the mind. (1081-1086)

From first embracing love for his sister as his god and substituting human lust for divine love, Giovanni's replacement of true religious feeling with "conceits unholy" and "raging blood" finds ultimate expression in his dying plea. Rather than begging for God's grace or forgiveness, he pleads that "Whe'ver I go, let me enjoy this grace, / Freely to view my Annabella's face" (V.vi.107-108).¹⁷

Unlike her brother, Annabella also has the strength of mind to accept responsibility for her choices, and although she welcomes the love of her brother, she does not deceive herself about the nature of her actions. Sargeaunt contrasts Annabella's conscious violation of her moral and religious beliefs with Giovanni's attempts to rationalize his passion and his inability to accept that he sins (93-96). She concludes that "Ford makes the proof of the depth of her love for her brother lie in her very realization of its guilt, and it is her astonishing clear-sightedness as compared with Giovanni's attempts at a rational justification of their conduct that makes her the better man of the two" (186). Aware of the moral wrongness of her act, then, Annabella still chooses to love and never seeks the false comfort of the intellectual rationalizations so employed by Giovanni.¹⁸ In consequence, the play becomes, as she claims, her tragedy, "a wretched, woeful woman's tragedy," and by its conclusion, she has grown in mind and strength enough to be able to accept the consequences of her behaviour. She is not mouthing "language which the Friar ... implanted" (Wharton 102) but rejecting the moral weakness and cowardice that would make another person or God responsible for the choices that she herself has made. Unlike numerous critics, she refuses to blame her brother for her sin, and, more

strikingly, assumes the control over her own moral destiny that her brother has denied himself from the beginning. She realises that "they who sleep in lethargies of lust / Hug their confusion, making Heaven unjust, / And so did I" (V.i.28-30) and so rejects moral passivity and weakness.

Again, the two siblings' positions are antithetical, and Annabella's words, which indicate her moral growth, comment simultaneously on her brother's loss of a moral self. When he cannot stifle his feelings for his sister, he turns to blaming fate and destiny for his predicament, an abdication of control over his own end that sparked Sensabaugh's famous argument that Ford was a moral determinist.¹⁹ After denying himself all power over his own fate, he then reveals the dangers inherent in such a perspective by veering to the opposite extreme, embracing a final megalomaniacal belief that he controls the threads of life traditionally woven by the three fates. He compensates for his early feeling of absolute powerlessness by asserting absolute power over the body of his sister. But while killing her makes him feel that he exercises a godlike power of life and death, holding "the twists of life" (V.vi.72) in his hands, his words are the delusion of a murderer. Both extremes, Ford suggests, are unacceptable. The belief in a lack of control over one's fate gives rise to its perverse opposite, the assertion of absolute and tyrannical power over another: self-deluding passivity replaced by insane omnipotence gained through murder.²⁰

Thus, while Giovanni may appear to begin the play in the ascendancy, as the active, male, articulate figure, his inability to grasp the implications of his actions and his willful blindness decrease his stature as the play progress. His sister finally appreciates the consequences of her early, selfish behaviour; he moves from an initial moral awareness into madness, voicing a beautiful rhetoric which only underlines his insane inability to appreciate the horror and cruelty of his actions. Contrasting yet linked, the siblings allow Ford to structure his play in terms of his two principal characters' ascent

and descent, depicting the journey of one to increasing self-awareness and moral responsibility, the other to ever-growing blindness and delusion; the one to selfless love and willing self-sacrifice, the other to lust, the one towards sanity, the other to madness and confusion.

If we cannot appreciate the one sibling without the other, we also need to consider the dramatic conventions associated with the brother and the sister in order to understand Ford's conception of the characters' tragic experience. Critics argue that Giovanni's attempt at heroism lies in his quest to achieve the absolute power of a Tamburlaine or Faustus. Focusing on the socially and religiously transgressive nature of his incest, some scholars even go so far as to claim that the brother's love affair with his sister simply reflects his desire to challenge his society's norm.²¹ But Giovanni does not commit incest because he wishes to show his (or Ford's) scorn of conventional morality; he commits it despite his belief in this morality, his love for this female reflection of himself outweighing all other considerations. Even at the very end of the play, as some scholars note, he remains committed to the very institutions he professes to reject.²² He first undertakes a "marriage ceremony" with Annabella and then foresees her place in heaven, "... to fill a throne / Of innocence and sanctity in Heaven" (V.v.64-5). The real nature of his quest for power seems to lie not so much in a deliberate delight in flouting tradition but in his attempt to create an all-powerful identity by combining and adopting all the different roles possible to a man in the private domain.²³ Using the ambivalent position of the brother, he tries to reconcile the antagonism and tension between family and husband and find a perfect love, one that will be doubled in intensity because it will be fuelled by the ties of both kinship and marriage.²⁴

While a figure such as Tamburlaine becomes an all-powerful ruler of an empire, Giovanni's heroic enterprise unfolds in the private, rather than the public or political domain and in relation to

women and love rather than rule.²⁵ Despite widespread disagreements, both David Cressy and Lawrence Stone point out in their lengthy studies of the period's social dynamics that the two principle roles which give the individual male his power and identity derive from his place within the family, as a father or as a husband. As a brother, Giovanni seeks to capitalize on his unclearly defined role in order to meld the two roles of husband and brother into one, reconciling the opposing hostility of blood family and of husband and laying absolute claim to the sister-daughter-wife's loyalty, love, and obedience. The disparate roles of brother and kinsman, husband, illicit lover, and father of her unborn child coalesce into one omnipotent whole through his possession of Annabella's body. Absolute control over his sister's person also enables him to attempt to create a super-human, intense, and god-like form of love, combining family affection with the physical love of husband. Both heroic endeavours are ultimately thwarted, however, by Giovanni's inability to maintain all of these roles and by Annabella's final insistence on defining herself exclusively as a sister. Defiance replaces her acquiescence, and Ford ultimately reveals that Giovanni's love for Annabella is as tyrannical and twisted as any of the brothers in whose footsteps he follows.

When the play begins, Giovanni has no legitimate claim to Annabella, the play's heroine, and hence no means of exercising power or constructing a legitimate identity as husband or father. His father is preparing to marry Annabella off, exercising his power as the head of family, and soon one of the three suitors--Bergetto, Grimaldi, or Soranzo--will possess the authority of the husband. Cast and defined as the brother of Annabella, he is excluded from the legitimate exercise of authority and consigned, like Ferdinand, to the fringes of social identity. His very designation as brother emphasizes the psychic confusion that will slowly possess him; again like Ferdinand, the remnants of his self-identity are ultimately swallowed by insanity. The continued existence of his father further

marginalises his position in Parma, for the only firm social identity he does possess is the subordinate and transitional position of son and child. However, Giovanni solves the problem of earlier, equally powerless brothers by wooing, winning, and sleeping with Annabella. In advancing himself as her husband, he supplants her father's right to dispose of her as he chooses; in becoming her lover, he seizes centre stage as the romantic interest and usurps the rights of her legal husband, taking them for his own.

In order to depict Giovanni's attempts to construct an all-powerful self-identity, Ford rewrites and adapts the brother-sister scenes of earlier drama. In these plays, the brother futilely attempts to influence his sister's choice of husband: Lorenzo pleading in vain for his friend Balthazar; the Cardinal and Ferdinand insisting, futilely, that their sister remain chaste; and Pedro pressing the claims of John Antonio, Amethus advancing those of Menaphon, and Timagoras aiding those of Leosthenes. In the courtship scene of Ford's play, however, the brother pleads for himself. Appropriating the affection proper to a husband rather than being condemned, as these other brothers are, to advancing a surrogate, Giovanni succeeds in winning Annabella precisely because he strengthens his position as kinsman through an avowal of physical love. Consequently, the sister, instead of using physical passion for another to justify her defiance of her brother, is disarmed by it and sinks into an appearance of submission and passivity. Conversely, the brother's power, because it is not challenged by his sister, begins to ascend.

Ford then adapts the convention of the ring to underline further the brother's ascension to authority and his mastery over the dramatic forms that had earlier excluded him from power. Flamineo watches, exulting, as the Duke exchanges his jewel for Vittoria's chastity, but he remains an outsider throughout the play and does not, ultimately, gain any of the power that the jewel

represents. The Duchess gives her ring to Antonio, an action which marks her defiance of her brothers' decrees and which Ferdinand later renders as a bitter and sadistic parody, having his sister kiss the ring on the dead hand that she comes to believe is her husband's. Almira scorns her brother by publicly presenting his friend's ring to the page of the lover she has chosen. Clarissa gives her ring to her suitor without first asking her brother's permission, as she had promised. But Annabella willingly gives her ring, which like the Duchess' was to have been presented to none other than her husband, to Giovanni. She reconfirms his power over her and his ability to obtain through sexual love the obedience which the other brothers' tyranny could not elicit from their sisters.

The closest parallel to earlier treatments of the brother and sister, however, comes in the third act, at the height of Giovanni's seeming triumph. Here, as with other dramatic brothers before him, Giovanni hides himself above in order to spy on Annabella's meeting with her wooer.²⁶ Yet Ford inverts the scene: unlike Lorenzo, Ferdinand, or Leosthenes, who all obtain proof of their sisters' defiance, Giovanni is confirmed and--in his own mind at least--empowered by what he views. The brother is no longer condemned to seethe in vengeful silence as he watches his sister turn to an illicit lover, scorning the husband he has chosen for her. Instead, he is the illicit lover and, as close as he can come to it, the husband as well. Thus, everything Giovanni hears elates rather than enrages him and his asides--which in Lorenzo's and Leosthenes' case are threats--celebrate his sister's love for him. Again, it is clear that the love which blends the affection of both family and husband, and which Giovanni deifies, ultimately serves to win the sister's obedience far more effectively than tyranny. Or rather, this form of love enacts a tyranny over women even more powerful than the demands of kinsman or husband taken separately. In Ford's play, as in Vikki Bell's sociological study, incest both assists in establishing male power over female family members and arises out of society's view of

women as subordinate to men (Bell 3-57). Giovanni's establishment of a sexual relationship with his sister is the most effective way for him to gain control over her and win her compliance.

However, in the last two acts, Giovanni's heroic endeavour to obtain omnipotence by being both husband and kinsman to Annabella disintegrates into madness. Competition from the real father and the real husband of Annabella undermines his tyrannical usurpation of these roles, and Annabella herself ultimately challenges his self-definition. From the moment that Florio arranges Annabella's marriage, he weakens Giovanni's assumption of control over the body of his sister and pushes him into a more subordinate position. The father emphasizes that the son has no rights to Annabella, either to dispose of her in marriage or to possess her in wedlock, and so no room in which lawfully to assert his authority

Further, the father uses his position as the head of the family to proclaim Giovanni's insanity in the last act and to cast him out of the family. When Giovanni enters after the murder of his sister, Florio's horrified cry, "Son Giovanni!" (V vi.15), at once underlines their kinship and Giovanni's subordinate position within the family hierarchy. In his mad confusion, Giovanni then seeks to further his self-definition by having his father applaud his incest and murder as worthy family deeds. His crimes, he suggests, have been carried out to confirm his connection to both sister and father and to win a place within the family. He hastens to tell his horrified parent of his exploits so "that times to come may know / How as my fate I honored my revenge, / List, father, to your ears I will yield up / How much I have deserv'd to be your son" (V.vi.36-39), not realising that his inability to recognise the destructiveness of what he has done only underlines the depth of his alienation from his family. Like all the brothers before him, from Vindice attacking the remainder of his family, to Flamineo and Ferdinand, he presents a disturbing image of isolation: neither legitimate father nor husband, he is cast

as an outsider with an ambivalent social position. "Wedding" Annabella, he seeks to escape the social non-identity that being a brother brings and to create the perfect love, but he only succeeds in destroying himself and his family even more thoroughly than the self-destructive brothers before him. While Giovanni finally tries to convince himself that he has done deeds that will integrate him as a honoured member within the family, Florio's horrified response, his insistence that his son is insane, and his death all serve to expose Giovanni's delusions and to expel him from the family.²⁷

While Giovanni's words here reveal his insanity, they also intimately link the 'madness' of incest with the exercise of patriarchal power and the role of the father. Attacking "the very foundations of patriarchal order and power" (Diehl 172), Ford suggests the way in which the family is based upon the sexual domination of its female members and illustrates Bell's argument that incest is a normal rather than abnormal extension of patriarchal societies which exercise their "power over women and children in a sexualized way" (3). Having sex with his sister, Giovanni argues, proves that he is a true son of his father, someone who is an accurate reflection of him; his justification of his behaviour fits Bell's observation that incest is "not so much a deviation from normal familial relations as an illustration of them" (Bell 62).²⁸ Ironically, Ford inverts the traditional pattern of other drama, in which the confused identity of siblings becomes the principle issue in allowing or preventing marital relationships. In these plays, final discovery of one's true father celebrates the power of patriarchy; such recognition brings order and either thwarts incest by establishing accurate sibling ties or, conversely, allows the hero to wed the heroine because he discovers he is not the true son of his apparent father. Only Giovanni proclaims incest to be the true indicator of blood ties, fulfilling Bell's Foucauldian description of the family as the "home of sexuality" and sexual desire (100).

Soranzo also poses a threat to Giovanni's heroic endeavour to shape a new, all-powerful identity, and he unsettles the brother's attempts to use love to gain power. He begins actively to challenge Giovanni for the possession of Annabella's person, and although Giovanni professes he finds "no change / Of pleasure in this formal law of sports ... every kiss / As sweet and delicious as the first" (V.iii.6-9), he is clearly threatened by and jealous of Soranzo's new rights to Annabella. As well as undermining Giovanni's sense of omnipotence, Soranzo's presence and his struggle with his "brother-rival" (V.ii.19) debase the love to which Giovanni has given such transcendental powers. In their struggle to dominate Annabella, her physical husband and her legal one become identical and their love for her, which both men had earlier described in Petrarchan terms, is almost forgotten in their struggle. Clearly, both men value Annabella's affection and loyalty only as a symbol of power, honour, and triumph,²⁹ and Giovanni's increasingly frantic attempts to keep his usurped position reveal how he has used this love, which he has so glorified, to give him an identity based on the subordination of his sister.

When Giovanni finally kills Annabella, he is not concerned with expressing his love or with protecting Annabella from her husband's wrath.³⁰ Rather, his identity is so closely tied up in his continuing definition of himself as Annabella's husband that he must usurp Soranzo's rights as husband one last time.³¹ He wants to establish himself as her true husband by punishing Annabella's disloyalty to him before Soranzo can take vengeance on her. Thus his first thoughts on seeing her dead reveal his gloating pleasure at having forestalled Soranzo. "This sad-marriage bed, / In all her best, bore her alive and dead. / Soranzo, thou hast miss'd thy aim in this; / I have prevented now thy reaching plots" (V.v.97-100). Killing her, he thinks he has demonstrated the validity of their wedding and claimed possession of the "marriage bed," expelling Soranzo as the unlawful interloper. When he joins the

festive group shortly after, he directs his taunts at Soranzo: "Here, here, Soranzo; trimmed in reeking blood, / That triumphs over death; proud in the spoil / Of love and vengeance" (V.vi.9-11). Again, clearly, he wants to emphasize his triumph over his rival and confirm, through Annabella's heart, that he has rightful possession to her, as both brother and husband. Soranzo's outraged response, "Shall I be forestall'd?" (V.vi.16), particularly underlines their rivalry for the power and title of husband; competing with Giovanni for the right of life and death over Annabella, he is enraged because Giovanni has managed to punish Annabella's "infidelity" before he could. Love, for Giovanni, is only the means to keep his sister compliant and to confirm his identity at the expense of Soranzo's, vengeance the final way to express his authority.

Again, both Giovanni's and Soranzo's rivalry and their ultimate similarity support Bell's claim that incest reflects not just sexual passion in itself but an attempt to express the male power over the female enshrined in a patriarchal conception of family. In Ford's play, the more the incestuous brother and the lawful husband blend together, becoming parallel images of violence, brutality, and domination, the more they support Bell's argument that "both the normal [sexual relationship] and the abnormal [incestuous relationship] are produced by similar, even the same, 'acceptable' discourse [about the family]" (83). Giovanni's diabolical imitation of the husband challenges the idea of proper husbandly authority because Ford makes it so difficult to distinguish between the two.

While Florio and Soranzo both threaten Giovanni, it is Annabella herself who ultimately destroys the basis upon which Giovanni attempts to construct his heroic self-definition as husband, lover, and father. Until the end of the third act, Giovanni appears successful in his struggle to mould together a variety of roles in his relationship with Annabella. Ford inverts the traditional antagonistic relationship of brother and sister, allowing Giovanni to exercise absolute control over his sister and

her sexuality through love, rather than through the violence and brutality of Lorenzo or Ferdinand. But if the arrogation to himself of the prerogatives of husband and father confirms Giovanni's sense of his own omnipotence, it leaves Annabella doubly powerless, engaged as she is in a relationship where she is twice a subordinate, as kinswoman and spouse.

When she finally rejects him as a husband and lover, Annabella re-establishes herself exclusively as his sister and escapes from the realms of powerlessness and passivity. Ford himself accompanies her decision to return to asexual family love--the proper love of a sister for a brother--with clear signs of moral growth, strength of will, and increase in dramatic stature. He has her place herself in the centre of the play, as she laments her unlucky actions, "... here stay thy [Time's] restless course, / And bear to ages that are yet unborn / A wretched, woeful woman's tragedy" (V.i.6-8), and her words indicate how she has sets herself up as her brother's equal, responsible for her own fate.³²

He also has her envision herself as the one who drags down Giovanni in her ill-fated ruin, "O Giovanni, that hast had the spoil / Of thine own virtues and my modest fame, / Would thou hadst been less subject to those stars / That luckless reigned at my nativity" (V.i.17-20).

More important, her re-affirmation of her identity as sister, as she tries to renounce her physical passion for Giovanni and love him asexually, moves her into open contention with her brother. After first inverting the traditional antagonism between siblings, Ford returns to the pattern of The Duchess of Malfi and The Spanish Tragedy, placing brother and sister in an ultimately self-destructive combat. From the beginning, Giovanni's love, Ford indicates ironically, has been a form of unnatural tyranny as strong as Ferdinand's; as a tyrant he first expects a slavish obedience from Annabella and, when she will no longer comply, he enforces a terrible punishment. Yet Annabella, finally, resists her brother as fiercely as any of the earlier sisters. Although her brother attempts to

force her to acknowledge and accept his perspective, to deny her, in fact, the right to evaluate and judge events for herself, Annabella challenges Giovanni's interpretation of their affair and, even as she dies, asserts her right to decide upon her own viewpoint. Like the Duchess before her, Annabella destroys her brother's mind, his imagined stature, and his professions of heroic endeavour as thoroughly as he destroys her body.³³

When the last act begins, Ford indicates how dramatically their perspectives have veered apart and become opposing, a movement foreshadowed by their differing response to the Friar. Annabella now condemns her actions as sinful lust, while Giovanni complacently reflects on the wonder of their continuing sexual love: "She is still one to me, and every kiss / As sweet and as delicious as the first" (V iii 8-9). When she denies the beauty of their love, she challenges the viewpoint upon which he has built his conception of self-greatness and brings his delusions of Jove-like omnipotence crashing down about his ears. In the face of her defiance, he reveals how important it is to his sense of self that she idolize him and his all-powerful authority:

What danger's half so great as thy revolt?
 Thou art a faithless sister, else thou know'st
 Malice, or any treachery beside,
 Would stoop to my bent brows; why, I hold fate
 Clasped in my fist, and could command the course
 Of time's eternal motion, hadst thou been
 One thought more steady than an ebbing sea. (V.iv.8-14)

Trying "to shape reality in the image of his desire" (Ide 81), he especially needs Annabella to confirm this reality and to give his heroism substance. Thus he must force her to accept their incest as

beautiful, for his identity as husband, lover, and brother is dependent on her cooperation. She is both the source of his power, allowing him to bring these roles together, and his only audience, the sole person outside himself to know of his achievement and to confirm his sense of his own greatness.

When she then asserts her own identity as sister, insisting that he be her brother, not her husband, she challenges his version of reality, and makes his carefully constructed role disintegrate into madness and confusion. No longer accepting their incest as glorious, she writes the letter urging him to repent and, to his rage, refuses to continue with their affair. In the face of his fury at what he, like Soranzo, sees as her lawless rebellion, she does not recant nor does she let his scorn at her faith in heaven make her question her own beliefs. It is not that "in her ... death scene (V.v), Annabella's mouth is full of the language which the Friar had implanted" (Wharton 102). It is that, for all her seeming gentleness and compliance, Giovanni cannot make her accept his sovereignty if she does not wish to. Instead, she turns to recognising the higher power of her individual conscience, and the only way he can cope with the defiance that challenges his self-perception is to silence her and the voice that denies the rightness of their incest.³⁴

By killing her, Giovanni thinks himself successful in overcoming her challenge and maintaining his sense of all-powerfulness; in removing her heart, he hopes to revert to the earlier state of their relationship, regaining absolute possession of Annabella's body and heart. But Annabella's cry as she dies, "Brother unkind, unkind!" (V.v.93), stresses the unnatural cruelty of his actions, first in loving her sexually and then in killing her. Far from welcoming her death at his hands, she underlines his unexpected cruelty.³⁵ Her cry also re-emphasizes her position as a sister, not a lover, and questions his perspective on events, challenging with her last breath his attempt to make her murder seem an act of love.³⁶ Despite her plea to God to forgive him, her words, finally, disown him, casting him as

an unnatural kinsman and denying him identity as her lover. When Giovanni later appears with his grisly trophy, he feels that he has regained the divine power that her defiance had earlier challenged. Murdering his sister, he claims to have surpassed destiny itself: "Fate or all the powers / That guide the motions of immortal souls / Could not prevent me" (V.vi.11-13); he also styles himself the dispenser of life and death: "For in my fists I bear the twists of life" (V.vi.72). Rather than acting as an image of their love, however, the heart on the dagger silently accuses Giovanni of murder and labels him a madman. A symbol of Annabella's continuing presence in the play, the heart is Ford's final means of revealing the brutal tyranny of his love and confirming the insanity beneath his attempt to structure an all-powerful social identity.

In his depiction of Giovanni and Annabella in terms of their identities as brother and sister, Ford also builds on the tradition of the antagonistic sibling relationships which we have seen in other plays.³⁷ In Ford's play, the hostility underlying the brother-sister relationship is not developed so much to suggest the conflict between genders but rather to allow Ford to explore the destructive nature of physical love and oppose it to asexual family love. Other sibling pairs express a hate which is intensified and made more terrible by the fact that they should, as kin, love one another. Ford, however, ironically inverts this tradition and, exploring the close connections between love and hate, presents a physical love which is made all the more terrible by the kinship ties which should keep them at a distance. Ultimately, their love is more hating and self-destroying than earlier siblings' more open conflict. Closely linked to the submerged element of antagonism in the siblings' relationship, the brother and sister, so identical and yet, by the end of the play, so different, provide a powerful symbol of dichotomously linked principles, not good and evil but agape and eros, self-sacrifice and lust. As the play progresses, the change in their relationship and in Annabella's altering perception of what

constitutes true affection allows Ford to explore the various dimensions of love.

At the beginning of the play, both siblings are unable to see their relationship in anything but sexual terms. While Giovanni glorifies his love through poetic rhetoric, emphasizing that his passion calls forth a union of heart and soul as well as of body, his principle aim is to embark on a physical relationship with his sister. And since neither he nor Annabella seem able to conceive of a love that is not physical, they elevate the physical consummation of their passion above everything else. Thus, their error is not just incest in itself but a single-minded focus on and worship of physical pleasure. Before Giovanni first speaks to Annabella, he acknowledges the idolatrous nature of his worship for his sister "O that it were not in religion sin / To make our love a god and worship it" (I.ii.145-6). Once having won each other, both siblings celebrate the joys of their physical union. For Giovanni, it makes him feel all-powerful, and he imagines himself deriving divinity from the sexual act: "Kiss me.--so Thus hung Jove on Leda's neck, / And sucked divine ambrosia from her lips" (II.i.16-17); Annabella, equally sacrilegious, likens their union to an entrance to Eden: "O, guardian, what a paradise of joy / Have I passed over" (II.i.39-40) ³⁸

But the consequences of their double error in linking love exclusively to sex and then idolizing this conception of love soon begin to reveal themselves in Giovanni's erratic behaviour. If we had not realised at the beginning that Giovanni was concerned only with the possession of his sister's body, Ford makes it quite clear by the end that this is the true nature of his love. In act five, he still attempts to give a romanticized glamour to his feelings for his sister, rhapsodizing to himself: "O the glory / Of two united hearts like hers and mine" (V.iii.11-12). His anger, however, when Annabella denies him her body underlines his true preoccupations. Unable to recognise that she might have loving motives in doing so, he immediately ascribes her reluctance to her husband's superior skill as

lover "Hath your new sprightly lord / Found out a trick in night-games more than we / Could know in our simplicity?" (V v. 1-3) he demands. He ignores her fear for his salvation and her terrified certainty that her husband has discovered them because he is not even capable of viewing her decisions in anything but sexual terms.³⁹ From the scholar who was at least able to recognise the danger of making love his religion, he has degenerated into a person unable to recognise a world or viewpoint beyond his lust.

When Annabella tries to convince him of the reality of heaven, he further confirms his own blindness. Making sexual fulfilment his heaven on earth, he cannot conceive of a heaven without sex. Much to his sister's confusion, he asks if they will be able to make love in her heaven: "But d'ee think / That I shall see you there?--You look on me? / May we kiss one another, prate or laugh, / Or do as we do here?" (V v 38-41). His view of the nature of love is a fore-runner of his absolute madness and of his inability to see beyond the physical and literal, which finds its final horrible conclusion in the way in which he places Annabella's heart upon the dagger.

His type of love is actually hate and madness, and in direct contrast to Giovanni, Ford presents Annabella as coming to embrace a more self-sacrificing love.⁴⁰ Like her brother, Annabella at first glories in the physical pleasures of their love-making and is no less restrained than Giovanni. What she begins to realise, however, is that she has sacrificed his spiritual--and as is more obvious from the actual events in the play--psychological and emotional well-being to her lust. This is what gives her the strength ultimately to reject him. While both siblings begin the play equally self-centred, concerned only with using the other for their own sexual pleasure, Annabella's outlook gradually evolves to become more and more selfless. She grows to understand that their love, as it expresses itself, is actually hate, concerned as it is with each selfishly exploiting the other. The Friar's speech

about the horrors of hell terrify Annabella; yet what truly moves "repentance [to] work / New motions in [her] heart" (III.vi.31-2) are his words describing how the lover-siblings will view each other in hell. Their passionate love, he predicts, will be replaced by passionate hate as they blame each other for their plight:

Then you will wish each kiss your brother gave

Had been a dagger's point; then you shall hear

How he will cry, 'O would my wicked sister

Had first been damned, when she did yield to lust!' (III.vi.27-30)

In this scenario of the Friar's imagining, each sibling reproaches the other for not having had the strength to have rejected the other's advances; they reveal the lack of true love implicit in such weakness in the hate that they will feel for each other in hell.

While Annabella presumably weakens after her initial repentance, she later gains the strength and deeper knowledge to be able to hold to a more selfless sort of love. As Giovanni becomes more and more immersed in the material, absolutely controlled by his own desires, Annabella grows able to subordinate her physical passion to the selfless love she feels for her brother. Still loving him physically and largely indifferent to the physical and spiritual punishment threatening her, she can no longer accept the cost their liaison imposes on her brother

By the conclusion of the play, she has become willing to sacrifice both her body and her soul to preserve her brother's physical and spiritual well-being. Passionately, she pleads that she alone may be blamed for their crime: "O would the scourge due to my black offense / Might pass from thee, that I alone might feel / The torment of an uncontrolled flame" (V.i.21-23). Her repentance, clearly, has not been motivated by a cowardly and conventional religious fear of damnation, for she is quite

willing to accept eternal punishment for herself; it has been occasioned by the depth and intensity of her feelings for her brother, for she cannot bear to imagine him suffering.⁴¹

In the same way, she shows herself willing to be the sacrifice to her husband's rage if it means that her brother will escape with his life. While Giovanni storms over her faithless revolt, furious at being denied her person, Annabella frantically tries to save him. First she insists on his bodily danger: "Why should you jest / At my calamity, without all sense / Of the approaching dangers you are in?" ((V v 5-7); she then tries to convince him of heaven. Indifferent to what will become of her, she urges him to flee "[W]hat d'ee mean / To free yourself from danger? Some way think / How to escape, I'm sure the guests are come" (V.v. 42-44). Finally, she prepares to accept death as the willing sacrifice to her husband's rage, abandoned by her brother in his escape. The two conceptions of love, totally selfless and totally selfish, conflict throughout the scene and end with the final transformation of Giovanni's love into a visible manifestation of his hate. Annabella thinks of his well-being, he rages at her rebuff of his physical advances; Annabella will do anything to secure his temporal and spiritual life, he kills her to satisfy his own rage. Embodied in the two siblings, there could not be two more opposing concepts of love, finding a final antagonistic expression in the confrontation between the two.

That Giovanni's conception of love is ultimately a form of hate finds further emphasis in Ford's linking of sexual love with death and murder "Love me, or kill me" (I.ii.252) the siblings vow at the beginning of the play, and their words set the stage for Ford's exploration of two polarized conceptions of love: the physical passion that leads to death and loathing and the asexual love, associated with the family, that leads to self-sacrifice and selflessness. Kaufmann and Wymer interpret this vow literally: when Giovanni stops loving Annabella he kills her (Kaufmann, "Ford's

Tragic Perspective" 533; Wymer 13). Yet this vow also ties together a series of images that explore the paradoxical nature of love and hate. In the early context of the oath, the siblings clearly mean love to be a physical consummation. Thus, to Giovanni, denying him sexual access means that she denies his love and prompts him, as Stavig says, to avenge himself on her (118). But if we interpret the situation through the Friar's words and Annabella's final actions, we finally perceive the vow in a different light: love also means physical renunciation while killing refers to psychological destruction. In denying her Platonic love as a sister and taking her sexually, Giovanni actually ceases to love her and begins to kill both her and himself.

The Friar's words particularly underline the ironic inversion of Annabella's and Giovanni's initial interpretation of their vow. Their love, he indicates, is actually a hate so virulent that--however it may satisfy their bodies--will kill their eternal souls. Its true nature will be revealed in hell, where they will denounce one another with loathing. By contrast, he argues, an act of seeming hate, the killing of the sibling rather than acceding to his/her incestuous passion, is actually an act of love, saving the soul from sin. This ironic equating of passionate love with hate and death then finds its final expression in Giovanni's murder of his sister. In a terrible reversal of the Friar's argument, he kills his sister not for offering incestuous love but for refusing it. Clearly, the murder is the logical extension of Giovanni's hate for her, not his love. It is not done "to save her further torture" (Oliver 94), but arises out of his anger that she dares to question his will and to affirm, in defiance of his belief, that their love is sinful. His actions are obviously not welcomed or expected by Annabella either. "What means this?" (V.v.83) she cries, as he stabs her, and then, betraying her shock and horror, she questions: "O brother, by your hand?" (V.v.87).⁴² Since she hopes, despite everything, to save Giovanni from physical and spiritual death, his actions cruelly thwart her most fervent wish.

Rather than aiding his salvation, she becomes the means by which he confirms his irrevocable damnation.

As critics have pointed out, the way in which Giovanni stabs Annabella also ironically replicates the sexual act.⁴³ Killing her in a kiss, Giovanni again joins the idea of death and hate to their love, and his replacement of the phallus by the dagger only indicates what Ford has been suggesting all along. His love-making acts as a form of spiritual murder, slowly sucking the life from Annabella's soul and his own until he fulfills its essence, stabbing her to death in bed.⁴⁴ Ford thus reworks the conventional tension between siblings so that it finds its most terrible expression in a hating love which destroys both of them absolutely. Rather than creating a paradise, their love makes a hell on earth, where each sibling, finally, denies the other what he/she most desires and becomes, as the Friar had predicted so accurately, one another's devilish tormentor.⁴⁵

If we had any doubts about the poisonous nature of their physical love, Ford resolves them in his final depictions of Giovanni's madness, showing how his diseased conception of love engulfs him in a fog of insanity. For some reason, critics are quite willing to excuse or even eulogize Giovanni's actions. They tend to overlook his final insanity and to regard the bleeding heart upon the dagger as a final and at least partially admirable attempt on Giovanni's part to give the siblings' illicit love a final, striking beauty and tragic grandeur.⁴⁶ They, like Giovanni himself, interpret "sexual murder ... in terms of a project of 'masculine transcendence'" (Bell 76) and enthusiastically cast him as a second Faustus or Tamburlaine. But in focusing on Giovanni as the consummate aesthete--however perverse--they ignore the simple horror of the act and the way it illustrates the true cruelty of Giovanni's feelings for his sister. No one questions Ferdinand's madness by act four or praises his careful, and indeed quite skilful, arrangement of the waxwork figures in order to torment his sister.

Yet his self-conscious artistry and his delight in creating psychological tortures for his sister is surely as "artistic" as Giovanni's boastfully poetic description of the way he has butchered his sister: "I digged for food / In a much richer mine than gold or stone / Of any value balanced; 'tis a heart, / A heart, my lords" (V vi.25-28). Both brothers' artistic sensibilities, refined and exquisite though they may be, express themselves in acts of madness; both actions--not just Ferdinand's--should be taken literally as an expression of the desire to obtain absolute control over another human being, to achieve transcendental fulfilment and feel all-powerful through the sexualized murders of their sisters.

Despite the horror of Giovanni's deed, critics do not equate him with Ferdinand, nor comment on their similar descents into madness. In not recognising Annabella as the central figure of the play, they become largely indifferent to her fate: more reprehensible, they seem somehow to feel that she deserves her end, first for entering into the incestuous affair and then for not having the steadfast nerve to continue in it. Since it is the punishment they seem to feel she merits, they can applaud and admire Giovanni's attempts to poeticize it, rather than being all the more horrified by his insane justification of the deed.⁴⁷

Ford, however, deliberately makes the brother's action appear horrible--the final transformation of love into hate-- and he builds on the different levels of knowledge of the audience and the other characters in the play to intensify our shocked response to the murder. Having seen Giovanni slay his sister, we understand, as the characters of the play do not, that the heart on the dagger truly is Annabella's. Knowing this, we recognise that his final proclamation of love describes an actual act of hatred, and we can appreciate the terrible incongruity of his poetry, seeing it as the rhetoric of a madman. At the same time, we understand only too well the characters' increasing confusion and inability to grasp what has happened, since Giovanni's glorification of his deed obscures

the fact that he is celebrating the murder and mutilation of his sister. Confirming the stark and very real horror of his behaviour, as opposed to the abstract and symbolic significance often given to it by critics, the siblings' father dies of shock, so ghastly is his son's final madness. If we accept this interpretation of Giovanni's actions, an interpretation that emphasizes his ultimate insanity and his final, devastating cruelty towards his sister, we can see his last action as the culmination of Ford's exploration of the antagonistic nature of Giovanni's love and the dire consequences of being unable to view love in anything but the most physical, and hence to the Renaissance, most brutish of terms.⁴⁸ In killing his sister and cutting out her heart, he is in the most literal and cruel way possible taking forcible possession of first her body and then her love and emotions. But in removing the heart from her dead body, as though this physical act will insure her emotional love forever, he reveals the insane shallowness of his perspective and his inability, increasing throughout the play, to see beyond the material. He reduces love and loving possession to a grotesque travesty that underlines his obsession with Annabella's person and that exposes his feelings as an expression of hatred, cruelty, and domination.

Closely tied to Ford's treatment of love in the play and his development of the brother-sister relationship is his use of incest to present, metaphorically, a picture of self-love and its destructive consequences. Sibling incest works best for a portrayal of self-love because the two lovers, as well as being related, are close in age and appearance. Giovanni stresses this when he first courts Annabella; using their resemblance as a justification and explanation of his love, he makes it clear that his love is directed at his mirror image, who is so like him that she and he appear to possess one beauty shared out between them. Thus at the outset, the basis of his feelings, and of Annabella's, is little more than a narcissistic outpouring of sexual feeling, directed at the female and male versions

of themselves. Sibling incest is the closest possible way of depicting two different people who both wish to love and marry themselves.

When we see Giovanni's incestuous love as an expression of his narcissism, rather than a desire to flout convention, the tragic deterioration of his character and the nature of his self-delusion become more understandable. He does not just make love his religion and god, idolatrously worshipping Annabella. He literally makes himself his god, for love of Annabella is really worship of self in the female figure that most closely, in blood, age, and appearance, resembles him. While Annabella moves away from this destructive and selfish form of love, the more the play progresses, the more Giovanni sees Annabella as nothing more than a part of himself and the more he becomes blinded by his delusions of all-powerfulness, which arise naturally out of his self-worship. It then becomes quite easy for him to murder Annabella, for in his eyes she no longer has any life, or any reason for existing, beyond himself. Annabella, however, wishes to divorce herself from him and, questioning their incestuous love, renounces self-love.⁴⁹ Her rebellion also threatens to deprive her brother of his self worship, his one way of expressing his self-love. By killing her, he hopes to prevent her destruction of their relationship and maintain her as a figure of self-idolization that is actually worship of himself. Tellingly, he transfers reverence from her person, identical to his, to Annabella's heart "in which is mine entombed" (V.vi.28)--again actually worship of himself. But her death deprives him of his only connection, however tenuous, with a world outside himself and his self-love leads to its logical extreme, the solipsistic prison of his insane mind.

At the same time, however, Ford seems to glorify the relationship between the siblings, idealizing their love just as he does the feelings between brother and sister in The Broken Heart and The Fancies Chaste and Noble. Because it is difficult to dismiss Giovanni's words absolutely as a

perversion of courtly love language, many critics see the playwright as sympathizing with and even romanticizing the pair's incestuous affair. This, in turn, leads to the division between scholars as to whether or not Ford wanted us to condemn their incest and to the related argument that he wished us to sympathize with the doers but not the deed.⁵⁰ These opposing positions can be explained if we cease to focus solely on the play's depiction of incest and instead consider its depiction of an incestuous brother-sister relationship.⁵¹ When we place Ford's treatment of Giovanni and Annabella within the earlier dramatic tradition of the idealized brother-sister relationship, as well as within the context of the drama's growing interest in Platonism, we can see how Ford is using their relationship to explore the potentially ideal nature of family love, which he likens to the Platonic, and to set out its destruction by physical passion. Incest simply becomes his means of focusing a disastrous conflict between sexual and chaste, familial love.

As I have already discussed, the intense idealization of the brother-sister tie, using Platonic language, can be found as early as Brandon's Octavia (1598), a play in which Octavia is styled as her brother Octavian's "second self," the other part of his soul and being. Later plays, like Massinger's The Duke of Milan (1621-1623), both idealize this tie even more emphatically and, as in Octavia, explicitly contrast it with the bond between husband and wife. Sibling affection provides, as Forker argues, an appealing alternative to the often sterile or unhappy relationship between the husband and wife of an arranged marriage (Forker 23-25): both Octavia and Guendoline (Lochrine) are poised between a loving brother and an indifferent husband from an obviously political marriage; Susan (A Woman Killed With Kindness) is moved by passionate loyalty to her brother and their house into a connection with a hated stranger; the Colonel's sister (A Faire Quarrel) is set between the brother she loves and the enemy and proposed husband she loathes; Eugenia (The Duke of Milan) is supported

by her brother after being seduced and abandoned by her lover. In all of these relationships, the brother rather than the husband provides the only true possibility of affection and warmth for the sister. They share an ideal bond that makes them exist in shared sympathy to one another.

But this does not mean that the warmth between siblings must express itself naturally in incest, as Forker argues (22-23), for love does not always need to be expressed physically. Thus the idealized, stable sibling relationships of drama stand in marked contrast to destructive sexual relationships. Locrine's lust for Estrild, which costs him his rule, set against the dynastic loyalty between Guendoline and Thrasimachus; Antony's passion for Cleopatra placed next to the loving alliance between Octavia and Octavian; Charles' and Susan's affection, which survives the test of the brother's bankruptcy, contrasted with the weakness of Anne's wifely loyalty in the face of physical passion; and the Duke of Milan's, the Emperor Theodosius', and the Duke Caraffa's irrational, jealous obsession with their wives set against their respect for their sisters. It is crucial to note that the fraternal relationship between siblings triumphs in these plays precisely because, in contrast with the marital relationship, it is asexual, the two made one not through the consummation of the marriage vows but through their shared parentage. Love is based on loyalty to family blood lines rather than physical attraction.

As well, the Caroline court was increasingly popularizing literary representations of Platonic love. Under the influence of Henrietta Maria, "[Platonic l]ove was the unofficial religion of the court" (Parry 190); both masques and the coterie drama of courtier playwrights celebrated chaste, spiritual love rather than sensual passion or desire (Harbage 36-40). This emphasis, in turn, influenced the professional dramatists who were dependent upon aristocratic attendance at public theatres (Harbage 149-150). In 1633, the year in which *Tis Pity* was published, the court masque "depict[ed] the realm

purged of all lustful appetite by the irresistible conjunction of Divine Beauty and Heroic Virtue in the persons of the royal couple" (Parry 191).

Despite their children, Charles and Henrietta Maria had a particular interest in presenting themselves as chaste rather than carnally involved lovers (Parry 191). They imagined themselves as enjoying a perfect spiritual union, forming the "platonic hermaphrodite of the two balanced souls mixed equally" (Parry 184), and even assumed the image of siblings to promote the idea that their love was elevated above the sexual. In a painting by Honthorst, which Buckingham presented to the couple in the late 1620's, the King and Queen are depicted as Apollo and Diana (Parry 226). Construed "individually as heroic lover and the ideally chaste beloved" (Parry 227), they are twin brother and sister as well, precluded from a sexual relationship not just by the fact that Diana is the goddess of virginity but also by their blood ties. This painting of the King and Queen provides a striking example of the association of siblings with the chaste, pure, Platonic love that Henrietta Maria wished to promote, suggesting the efficacy of using brother and sister to figure an ideal union of male and female souls. As well, in connecting the royal couple to the image of twin brother and sister, Buckingham's gift, which was clearly intended to flatter the King and Queen, implies their desire to progress from marital love to a higher plane of Platonic love figured in twinship, to purify, in effect, their marriage.

Ford, on the other hand, inverts this image, presenting a blood tie which becomes increasingly debased, sexualized, and violent, far removed from the rarified atmosphere of the painting of Diana and Apollo, sitting on a cloud and receiving the liberal Arts (Parry 226). The siblings embark on an incestuous union, not realizing that it is the asexual nature of their relationship that makes it ideal, and so they lose the chance of existing in a relationship of two harmonious souls "ever one," where the

woman is not the sexual property of her father or husband but the "equal" of Cleaver's domestic guidebook. Their relationship, described initially in Platonic terms by Giovanni, thus acts as the perfect vehicle for Ford to encapsulate the opposition between Platonic love and physical lust; he depicts the most perfect possible relationship between man and woman, one in which the two are identical in body and soul, and then develops what he felt to be the brutish elements of physical passion, since nothing could illustrate the unreasoning, destructive power of sexual love better than a violent liaison between brother and sister.⁵² The incest element simply intensifies the playwright's conception of the violent destructiveness of physical passion. Further, the two confuse the sibling relationship with the marital and, attempting to unite the two, they not only unwittingly contaminate their ideal bond and bring it into the world of physical lust and jealousy, they also join the traditional conflict between brother and husband within the single figure of Giovanni.

Since most critics ignore the significance of the sibling tradition to drama and the rich and complex tradition that Ford is building on, they invariably see the play as a tragedy about two young lovers who have the misfortune to fall in love with one another, despite being brother and sister.⁵³ What they do not perceive, as they discuss Giovanni's worthiness as a suitor, his superiority to Soranzo and the other wooers, and the tragic irony that two such perfectly suited people should be barred from a fulfilling sexual relationship, is that they fall in love not despite being siblings but because they are siblings.⁵⁴ Their affinity, both in appearance and psychological makeup, arises from the fact that they are brother and sister, and it is this sympathetic oneness that makes their relationship initially appear so ideal. The beautiful siblings, alike celestial and glorious, come as close as is possible to being physically identical. In fact, it is their similarity, derived from their kinship, which, Giovanni argues, explains their love. "Wise nature first in your creation meant / To make you mine;

else't had been sin and foul / To share one beauty to a double soul" (I.ii.232-34). His love is directed at his mirror image, who is so like him that, together, they appear to possess one beauty shared out between them ⁵⁵

Worshipping his sister's beauty, he provides an overt rationalization and explanation for other brothers' only half-stated love:

Are we not therefore [because of their shared parents] each to other bound

So much the more by nature? by the links

Of blood, of reason? nay, if you will have't,

Even of religion, to be ever one.

One soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all? (I.i.30-34)

While the sexual connotation of "one flesh" makes both the Friar and centuries of subsequent critics react with shock to his claim, Giovanni's words also have a non-sexual meaning when taken within the context of brother-sister relationships. If children receive their being from their father and mother, as the marriage treatises stress, then siblings are one flesh by virtue of their joint parents. Thus, Giovanni's and Annabella's shared parentage has joined them already and made possible a perfect platonic union that does not need the physical sexual act to unify body and soul. And, since the incest taboo is observed, Wymer says, in most cultures (123), Annabella should be the ideally unobtainable lady for her brother, inspiring him to transcend the merely physical in pursuit of the spiritual and immaterial. Nonetheless, rather than being able to see their tie as an alternative to the sexual love of husband and wife, Giovanni insists on trying to replace the sibling relationship with a marital one, as though he feels this will somehow legitimate their feelings. He begins describing an ideal love and loyalty that underlies numerous other brother and sister relationships; this earlier

dramatic tradition fuels the intensity of the siblings' love. Yet, ignoring the ambiguity contained within "one flesh," he insists on giving these words their sexual interpretation rather than their familial, and he betrays the Platonic ideal of two identical souls, male and female, existing in perfect affinity

Giovanni and Annabella, while brought together by their kinship, equate love with physical possession, which they see as the strongest expression of affection. Rather than appreciating the difference between fraternal and sexual love, they attempt to unite the two and bring their ideal bond into the world of physical lust and jealousy. When Giovanni questions the Friar: "Must I not do what all men else may, love?" (I.i 19), he disallows the possibility that one may truly love without sexual union. While he later uses their kinship to intensify further his expression of love for his sister, he reveals here how he actually equates love with the physical. Instead of celebrating the affinity of blood that brings them together and places them immediately in sympathy, he perceives it as an obstacle to their realization of true, that is physical, love.

As soon as the two consummate their union, Ford begins to undercut their love's beauty, showing the brutishness and bestiality of any physical, as opposed to a more spiritual, love. By sexualizing their relationship, they destroy the essential difference upon which their relationship rests and transform their love into one more example of a tumultuous and destructive physical passion.⁵⁶ Consequently, their affection rapidly takes on the ugliness of the world around them. This is most evident in the way in which Ford rapidly transforms Giovanni's reverence for his sister's beauty and the devotion shown in their first scene together into a jealous possessiveness and increasingly irrational desire to control her.⁵⁷ By the second act, he is already becoming suspicious of his sister, uneasily certain that she will eventually betray him. He reveals his nervousness with the half-joking,

half-serious comment that "I shall lose you, sweetheart" (II.i.21) and leaves her with the veiled threat "Remember what thou vowst, keep well my heart" (II.i.32). A few scenes later, Annabella's flippant joke about the jewel that she has received from her father's (elderly) friend, "A lusty youth, / Signor Donado" (II.vi.127-8), provokes an inappropriately angry response from her brother, who is no longer capable of seeing anything related to his sister as amusing. In the third act, he must spy on her in order to assuage his fears that she will welcome Soranzo, and by the fifth act, he is intent on taking revenge for what he feels certain is her betrayal.

The ceremony between the siblings, a deliberate reproduction of the marriage vows,⁵⁸ particularly underscores the causes of the destruction of their love. Giovanni seeks to legitimate his passion by casting himself as his sister's husband, but in doing so he relinquishes the position he had as her brother, the special tie that gave them sympathetic oneness and adopts the very role--that of husband--which Ford views with such suspicion.⁵⁹ Telling her, "Come Annabella: no more sister now, / But love, a name more gracious" (II.i.1-2), he disowns his earlier identity as brother and the whole basis of their intense mutual love in favour of his new self-created role as husband-lover. In consequence, Giovanni's behaviour, as he becomes increasingly possessive and controlling of his sister, begins to replicate that of her legal husband. Both men struggle for dominance over Annabella and by the end there is little difference between them.⁶⁰ Like Soranzo, he assumes the right to expect her absolute obedience and submission; also like her legal husband, he becomes jealously concerned with keeping control over her body. When she finally refuses him, he, furious at her faithless revolt, deals with her as cruelly as Soranzo intends. By becoming her husband, he destroys all that is unique in their relationship.

The sub-plots also reflect poorly on the siblings, underlining their similarity to these other,

debased lovers. At first the siblings stand outside the other characters' coarseness, but as soon as they realize their incestuous passion, they become just like them. In particular, Ford reminds us that there is little difference between Soranzo's and Giovanni's eloquent posturing. Ford immediately mocks Soranzo's declarations of undying worship for the beauty of Annabella through the appearance of the seduced and betrayed Hippolita. Yet Giovanni, too, emphasizes the body and outward appearances, rather than showing a true concern with the worship and attainment of virtue that is the real goal of the Petrarchan lover and of the courtly love language that he has appropriated. Ultimately, Giovanni's, Soranzo's, and the buffoonish Bergetto's goals are not much different, only Bergetto does not have the wit, intelligence, or eloquence to cloak his pursuit of Annabella's and then Philotis' bodies behind a mask of high-minded, Petrarchan love rhetoric.

Similarly, Annabella's raptures about her time spent with Giovanni are immediately undercut by Putana's coarse applause, and their union has immediate physical repercussions in Annabella's pregnancy, described again in Putana's coarsely blunt physical terms: "Am I at these years ignorant what the meanings of qualms and water-pangs be? Of changing of colors, queasiness of stomachs, pukings, and another thing that I could name?" (III.iii.10-13). Most tellingly of all, their seemingly rapturous and blissful union ends in an image of extreme cruelty, physicality, and brutishness, with Annabella's bleeding heart impaled on the end of a dagger. Not only is Giovanni insane but the rhetoric which had created Annabella as an angelic creature of heaven is destroyed by this tragic and shocking reminder of her very corporeal presence, her link to the animals, suggested by her dead body and gory heart, as well as to the angels.

In his treatment of the siblings' disastrous affair, Ford draws on and combines the earlier traditions of idealized and antagonistic sibling relationships. While glorifying the kinship between the

siblings, Ford emphasizes how passionate love, whether incestuous or otherwise, leads to violence, destruction, and a love that is actually a form of hate. "You have bloodily approved the ancient truth / That kindred commonly do worse agree / Than remote strangers" (IV.ii.264-66), Bosola tells Ferdinand after the Duchess' death. In the case of Ford's two siblings, the playwright ironically presents the most destructive antagonism of all as a form of sexual passion that attacks the very heart of the family. Relinquishing their ideal non-sexual family tie, the two siblings destroy one another far more absolutely than earlier brothers and sisters.

For Ford, the brother-sister relationship seems to have such value and be of such interest precisely because it should be non-sexual. As we shall see in The Fancies Chaste and Noble, Ford again focuses almost exclusively on the brother-sister relationship and the question of proper brother and sister behaviour. In this play, however, Ford goes a step further and insists on the rigid separation of brother-sister from husband-wife relationships, and the work comes to a comic conclusion when the brother manages to control his jealousy and engage in a relationship with his sister which is untouched by physical passion. At the same time, The Fancies underlines just how important earlier dramatic treatments of the brother and sister are for an understanding of Ford's plays. It shows, perhaps even more strikingly than 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, Ford's self-conscious use of earlier brothers and sisters of drama to shape his characters and their conceptions of themselves.

Endnotes

1. Terri Clerico's article "The Politics of Blood: John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore" comments on the lack of cultural materialist interpretations of the play and proceeds to analyse the social tensions in Parma society. In an interpretation far better suited to Webster, she attempts to show that Ford explores the "hyper-conscious rhetoric of class politics" (414), using blood as a metaphor for formulating class tensions within the play (414). She then proceeds to read class conflict into situations where it is, at best, a nominal element. The marriage between Soranzo and "Madame Merchant," for example, is potentially destructive not because Annabella is pregnant and in love with her brother but because it is an "electric combination of aristocrat and merchant [signalling] ... that apparently well-defined social boundaries can and are about to be transgressed" (415). Even the ominous portents of the wedding ceremony, which culminate with Hippolita's dying curses, arise from the fact that the union is a cross-class marriage (416).

Other critics make a point of stressing Ford's political apathy or his religious affiliation. In his study of Ford, Massinger, Brome, and Shirley, Ira Clark presents Ford as completely acquiescent in the face of absolute monarchical power, observing that "[e]ven rule that is unjust and corrupt goes unchallenged in Ford's works" (Professional Playwrights 79). Conversely, Lisa Hopkins claims that Ford had strong ties with a "Catholic coterie" who tended to challenge the monarchy (10).

2. George Sensabaugh is one of the first critics to argue that Ford uses Giovanni and Platonic love to dismiss the traditional moral order (186-88), but he does so in order to launch an attack on Ford's own morality. In "By Nature's Light: The Morality of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore," Irving Ribner develops Sensabaugh's view by interpreting Ford's lack of conventionality more positively. For Ribner, Giovanni's incest represents his challenge of an inadequate moral order: "He is man in his highest state of excellence, reflected in the beauty of his physical form, man the seeker after truth, and it is his very need to know which is his destruction" (41). Later criticism follows Ribner in seeing Ford's and Giovanni's challenge of conventional morality as positive. Dorothy Farr studies Giovanni as a heroic representation of "the resistant or isolated individual" (36), one who resolutely follows his love to the death (36). T. F. Wharton claims that Ford uses Giovanni to question the absoluteness of traditional moral values (93). Giovanni's "whole career," he argues, "is a quest for moral limits, and he has his author's clear sanction in seeking them" (Wharton 91).

3. Mark Stavig, Kenneth Requa, and Cyril Hoy adopt the other extreme and see Ford as strongly critical of Giovanni from the beginning. Stavig's John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order is a thorough and deliberate answer to Sensabaugh's attack on Ford's morality and claims that Ford questions and then condemns the siblings' "continuing revolt against the moral order" (109). Requa studies Giovanni as a sinner whose tragedy is one of growing self-delusion (146), and Hoy argues that Giovanni, like Faustus, presents us "with the disturbing spectacle of the divinely given powers of reason being employed to justify allegiance to the world and the flesh and, consequently, the devil" (154).

4. Most critics fall in between Ribner, Wharton, and Farr on the one hand and Stavig, on the other, and argue that Ford both sympathized with and ultimately questioned Giovanni's actions. T. B. Tomlinson accuses Ford of being "untrustworthy" (268) and of veering between condemnation of

and delight in Giovanni's actions (270-3); Clifford Leech styles Giovanni as the last Jacobean hero who compels us to both admire and reject him (John Ford 62-63); Robert Ornstein argues that Ford has a clear set of moral values (221), even as he conveys the beauty of the siblings' relationship (211); John Oliver claims that a sympathetic Giovanni falls because the Friar, the representative of traditional moral order, is not convincing enough (90); Nicholas Brooke sees the play as focusing on Giovanni's "intellectual romanticism" (113) which inspires an ambivalent response of disgust and pleasure in the audience (115); Florence Ali focuses on Ford's ambivalent position between individualism and conventional moral values (92-93); Ronald Huebert views Giovanni as an archetypal Baroque sensualist who combines death with "religious ecstasy and erotic fantasy" (38); Bruce Boehrer argues that, while Ford may not agree with Giovanni's incest, he gives the brother such heroic consistency that his actions appear impressive ("Nice Philosophy": 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and the Two Books of God" 370); R. J. Kaufmann studies Giovanni as a characteristic Ford hero who lays claim to a heroic stance that he cannot substantiate and which he tries to reinforce through a tragically inappropriate vow to love his sister ("Ford's Tragic Perspective" 523-24); Ian Robson claims we sympathize with Giovanni and Annabella as the noblest people in their world, even as we recognise their sin, and Ira Clark sees Giovanni as a typical Ford hero, one who commits himself to high personal ideals in a corrupt society (Professional Playwrights 77).

5. Annabella is a victim, tricked by Giovanni's lies (Ornstein 211); she is "passive" (Homan 276); she has a "generally yielding disposition (Huebert 55) and is "led ... into a life of sin by [her brother]" (142); she is seduced by her brother and tricked by the lie that the church approves (Leech, John Ford 59, Wharton 94-96), and she is easily intimidated by both Giovanni and the Friar (Ide 77).

Even those critics more sympathetic to Annabella tend to minimize her importance. Kenneth Requa points out that Giovanni makes his sister a necessary part of his self-worship (16) but still sees him as the sole agent of the tragedy, convincing, as he does, Annabella to sleep with him (18). Denis Gauer observes that she is badly treated by the brother who claims to love her (48) but leaves it at that. Kaufmann condemns Giovanni's treatment of his sister but still excludes her from analysis.

6. For example, Charles Forker's study of incest in Renaissance drama advances the theory that the brother-sister relationship was the principal social tie in the Renaissance in which there was the possibility of intimate and warm feelings between man and woman ("A Little More than Kin" 23-25). But Forker considers Ford's play only briefly and equates warmth with sex. Thomas Begeron's article studies the element of brother-sister incest in three of Ford's plays, but does little more than comment on its prevailing presence.

7. Studies of the play which analyse or at least mention its irresolvable conflict between differing moral perspectives are relatively common. Unlike Joan Sargeant, Larry Champion, and Robert Heilman, however, most critics ignore Annabella's importance and locate this clash of values between two men: Giovanni and the Friar. Ribner describes the play's struggle between moral and religious law, represented by the Friar, and the law of nature, represented by Giovanni (Quest For Moral Order 172-173). Boehrer argues that the play explores the conflict between "scripture and nature" ("Nice Philosophy": 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and the Two Books of God" 361) which Giovanni initiates through his incestuous liaison. Rowland Wymer claims that the play explores the schism between Nature and God and reason and faith, placing this division within the tormented Giovanni (126-7).

Gauer's more feminist study imagines the play to be centred on an opposition between the male principles of speech and the law and the female principles of the body and nature, but he joins with other, more masculinist interpretations in minimizing Annabella's role. Instead, he focuses on Putana as the supreme threat to male control and law, claiming she, as "Desire" represents the chaos "of an indifferent, unstructured world" (49). Finally, Norma Greenfield contends that in all Ford's plays the tragic conflict lies in the opposition between private values and effective virtuous action (3). Virtuous figures find it impossible to act in a way that is an accurate reflection of their character (24).

8. All quotations are from Brian Morris' New Mermaids edition of the play.

9. See, for example, Ornstein, who claims that she is tricked by Giovanni's lies (211); Leech, who accepts that she is seduced by Giovanni's lying words (59); Huebert, who states that she is "led into a life of sin [by her brother]" (142); Wharton and Robson (98-99) who argue that Giovanni tricks her into believing that the church approves (Wharton 96); and Smith, who observes with a curious ambivalence that she does not develop, "[W]e tend to view Annabella as a victim and Giovanni as the instigator of incest" (The Darker World Within 115).

10. Similarly, Wymer, one of the few critics to see Annabella as an active figure, points out that she initiates the marriage ceremony (132).

11. Cf McLuskie's similar observation that Ford's plays reveal a separation between language and action. What characters say and how they act are often profoundly different ("Language and Matter with a Fit of Mirth": Dramatic Construction in the Plays of John Ford" 120).

12. Requa argues that Giovanni's tragedy is one of growing self-delusion (18), but he does not consider the contrasting experience of Annabella. Most other critics have been curiously unwilling to consider or recognise Giovanni's final insanity and prove, as we shall see, strangely callous even when considering his murder of Annabella. The prevailing conception seems to be that Giovanni's actions are sane and consistent and even admirable within the world that he creates for himself, and many critics make his ability to stay true to his own reality the test of his heroism. This is, however, slightly ridiculous for a madman's world may appear quite sane and rational to himself. In fact, the ultimate measure of a person's madness could be said to rest in how completely he believes in his own delusions. Giovanni, believing absolutely in his own solipsistic creation of reality, is thus the perfect madman, but a madman all the same. Only Robert Reed focuses attention on Ford's interest in exploring the psychology of madness (159).

13. Other critics accept Giovanni's heroic language as impressive. Perhaps the most emphatic is Wharton, who observes: "They [heroic allusions] stake Giovanni's own claim, even as he commits himself to a course of extreme violation, to a kind of superhuman power, and to the extreme integrity of the superman heroes who never compromised with the world" (105). Yet the situations which give rise to Tamburlaine's and Giovanni's vaunts are completely different. Hopkins' comments upon Ford's suspicion of language (99-100), a theme which she develops throughout her analysis of his plays, are useful in re-evaluating Wharton's claims.

14. A number of critics question Annabella's words here and downplay their significance. For them, she is only revealing her weak susceptibility to the hellfire influence of the Friar and the way in which she is easily frightened by "conventional morality" (Ide 77). Her words, rather than meriting careful attention, show her vulnerability to the Friar's "brain washing" (Farr 47) and depict a repentance based on cowardice and weakness (Farr 47). But, quite apart from the fact that critics like these automatically assume that Ford would be as contemptuous of Christian morality as they are (in this context it is significant that Farr omits Ford's earlier religious work Christes Bloody Sweat from her discussion of the playwright's non-dramatic texts), their interpretations rest on a faulty initial view of Annabella as quite passive and unable to think for herself.

Other critics, such as Hoy (150) and Stavig (John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order 114-115) see her words as showing a genuine repentance but still focus their attention on Giovanni as the active and interesting figure in the play.

15. Other critics, who focus on Giovanni, respond more positively to the brother's final mutilation of his dead sister's body. Farr and Wharton, who view Giovanni as a praiseworthy hero, are the most extreme. The heart on the dagger represents "Giovanni's ultimate triumph in his claim to possession of Annabella" (Farr 53), indicating how he has finally managed to suspend their love outside time (Farr 53) and making "him live with an energy far more intense than those around him" (Wharton 108). For others, such as Nicholas Brooke (125-128) and Huebert (51), Giovanni's final action has a terrible beauty.

16. While Ford's ideas, clearly, may well have changed in the twenty years between the publication of this poem and 'Tis Pity, the work nonetheless casts doubts on critics who scorn the shallow conventionality of Annabella's repentance while lauding Giovanni's incestuously heroic endeavours.

17. Contrast Huebert's argument that in Ford's play "[e]rotic rapture becomes an end in itself, and sexual passion glows with the resplendent flame of the mystical vision" (76).

18. For a full discussion of Giovanni's abuse of reason in order to rationalize his affair with his sister, see Hoy's "'Ignorance in Knowledge': Marlowe's *Faustus* and Ford's Giovanni." Arthur Kistner also points out that Giovanni's profession of atheism is a means of trying to excuse his behaviour ("The Dramatic Functions of Love in John Ford's Tragedies" 67). Ide, however, argues that both siblings make a conscious decision of will to commit incest, knowing in advance the potential results of their actions (76).

19. George Sensabaugh's book The Tragic Muse of John Ford argues that Ford removes "human activity from the realm of ethical choice" (70). Believing that a character's nature is created by "immutable physical forces" (Sensabaugh 93), Ford equates personality with fate and makes Giovanni's love and his melancholy inescapable (68-70). Other critics have since echoed his views. Hoy claims that Giovanni is helpless in the face of the character which makes him love Annabella (149). He then heroically overcomes his fate by despising it (Hoy 150). Sidney Homan claims that a cruel fate makes Giovanni to love his sister (273). Boehrer acknowledges that Ford may not share Giovanni's view that fate is an all-powerful force, but he argues that Giovanni's unflinching adherence to this conviction, even in the face of death, makes it believable ("Nice Philosophy" 370).

20. Contrast Leech's view that Giovanni's arrogant attitude towards his fate is impressive (John Ford 61) and Wharton's raptures as he considers the magnificence of Giovanni's death scene: "[He] must be granted to have governed his own final fate, and outpaced both human justice and immortal irony" (104). This perspective, however, is hard to accept, unless we view the events of the whole play purely through Giovanni's eyes.

21. This view of Giovanni is no less common in 1960's criticism of the play than it is today. Ribner, for example, claims that Giovanni sins because "his searching, rational spirit" brings him to challenge "the moral order" ("By Nature's Light" 50); he represents "man in his highest state of excellence, reflected in the beauty of his physical form, man the seeker after truth, and it is his very need to know which is his destruction" ("By Nature's Light" 41). Hoy explicitly links him to Faustus, arguing that both "are persuaded to their several presumptions by a false intellectual pride ... both provide spectacular examples of the catastrophe attendant upon the misuse of the divinely given powers of reason" (146). More recently, Wharton contends that Giovanni's "whole career is a quest for moral limits, and he has his author's clear sanction in seeking them" (91). Ali emphasizes his intellectual strength and his questioning of traditional order (21-22). Wymer likens Giovanni to Faustus, arguing that to have Giovanni commit incest defies all forms of authority (123-124).

22. See, for example, Kistner's "The Dramatic Function of Love in the Tragedies of John Ford." He argues that Giovanni's proclamation of atheism is not genuine, but only a means of trying to excuse his behaviour (67).

23. Marion Lomax also studies both Giovanni and Annabella in terms of the roles they are forced to adopt, but she focuses on "dramatic traditions--love tragedy and revenge drama--and also ... dramatic roles, noble hero or immoral villain" (174) and ignores family roles. Clark stresses that Ford's plays "turn on social questions about how people play roles in given situations" (Professional Playwrights 76), but again he does not address the different roles within the family.

24. Brooke also sees Giovanni as trying to obtain an ideal love by uniting familial and marital love, but he views his actions as the intellectual endeavour of a decadent aesthete (114).

25. As Brian Morris notes, the world of the play is "very much a 'domestic' world" (Introduction xvi).

26. In her article, "Horns of the Dilemma: Jealousy, Gender, and Spectatorship in English Renaissance Drama," Katherine Maus studies a number of scenes in which a lover or husband watches his beloved betray him. While she includes both Ferdinand and Giovanni in her study, she does not comment on the rising importance of the jealous brother-spectator to the drama.

27. Molly Smith claims that Ford "deconsecrates patriarchal authority emphatically and completely" (90) by showing Florio's loss of control over his family. Yet there is nothing in the play to imply that Ford views Giovanni's unlawful assumption of family authority positively.

28. Vikki Bell's argument can, of course, be criticized as too extreme, since she follows radical feminists in viewing incest and incestuous sexual abuse as a natural consequence of a patriarchal

construction of the family. While patriarchal power may facilitate incest, it does not necessarily follow that incest is a natural extension of patriarchy as she claims (Bell 61). Instead, brother-sister incest (at least) seems more a distortion or perversion of traditional patriarchy, an illegitimate assumption of authority, as opposed to the legitimate power of husband over wife or father over daughter. Bell herself suggests this when she goes on: "Incest is an abusive way to exercise a familial power that is socially acceptable" (62). The abuses themselves, however, are not confirmations of the system but rather reveal its weaknesses; nor are the abuses perceived within the society as acceptable. Thus Giovanni's behaviour, while destabilizing Florio's and Soranzo's legitimate position within the family, is ultimately condemned as insane.

29. Cf Kaufmann who argues that the siblings' relationship begins to become corrupted when Giovanni "wants more to preserve his rights in his sister than her sense of her own dignity and freedom" (535)

30. Critics have suggested that Giovanni kills her out of love, a final act which expresses his loyalty to her (Wharton 107-108), "to save her further torture" (Oliver 94), or to reaffirm their affair, "justifying his own integrity and hers" through the murder (Farr 51).

31. In contrast, Boehrer takes a different slant, claiming that Giovanni is justified in taking vengeance on Annabella. Whether or not we approve of their incest "both have formally entered into matrimony as specified by Renaissance law" ("Nice Philosophy" 367), and this gives Giovanni the right to view himself as a cuckolded husband (368).

32. Defaye is one of the few critics to notice Annabella's assumption of the "leading role" in the tragedy (39).

33. Annabella, Begeron observes, is Giovanni's double, so that he insures his own death when he kills her (216-217)

34. Cf Forker's interpretation, which evaluates the situation from Giovanni's perspective. He writes, "When his [Giovanni's] projection of self insists on a will and mind of its own, he must destroy it to prevent the implied violation of psychic oneness" ("A Little More Than Kin, and Less Than Kind" 42).

35. Critics tend to imply that Annabella acquiesces in her own murder. See, for example, Huebert (54) and Anderson (209).

36. Conversely, Huebert argues that Annabella's cry is a gentle reproach which attempts "to reconcile two contrary impulses--her constant devotion to Giovanni even in death, and her conviction that he has led her into life of sin" (142). But again there is little in the play to suggest that either Annabella or Ford views Giovanni as responsible for her downfall.

37. Clerico hints at the possibility of a different sort of antagonism between the siblings when she speaks of how Annabella has "essentially usurp[ed] his [Giovanni's] position as eldest son in the power structure of the family" (425).

38. Huebert claims that Giovanni's feelings for his sister, which combine worship with an appreciation of her physical attractions, are typical of Ford's deification of women (38-39). This outlook, however, ignores Annabella's similar idolization of her brother and the violent change in Giovanni's attitude towards his sister when he begins to insist that she worship him.

39. Words like these make it difficult to understand how Farr could argue that Giovanni focuses on the divine and ideal qualities of their love, rather than its lustfulness (39). She claims that he is expressing a reasonable concern over Annabella's loyalty (49), and yet his paranoid fear that she has found a more skilful lover surely reveals where his priorities lie.

40. Defaye is the only critic to emphasize the selfless nature of Annabella's love. In her study of Annabella's pregnancy, she argues that Annabella redirects her maternal feelings towards her brother (38). Later she comments on her profound conception of love (39).

41. This passage is essential to understanding the true motives behind Annabella's behaviour and refuting the critical commonplace that she repents out of weak cowardice and fear. If Annabella fears, it is for her brother, not herself. The terrible punishments of hell that she envisions and believes in may show her conventionality but they also underline her courage, for she does not shrink from these punishments for herself, just as she did not cower before the brutality of Soranzo.

42. The standard critical position is to see Annabella as at least passively accepting death at her brother's hand or even to argue that she welcomes it. She dies "a victim to the last" (Robson 97). But while she is prepared for death, she does not expect it to come from Giovanni. She seems ready to be murdered by the enraged Soranzo, the man she has already urged to "be a gallant hangman" (IV iii. 69).

43. For Smith, the knife is a phallic symbol (90). Farr points out that "the dagger ... is a sex symbol implying absolute possession" (52) while Huebert argues that the knife enacts a metaphor of rape that joins together "the violence of the death wound and the violence of erotic climax" (150). However, this imagery does not move them to see Giovanni's love as being presented negatively.

44. Cf. Orbison who observes that the dagger is a phallic symbol signifying both death and passion (83).

45. Cf. Michael Neill's comment that Giovanni's killing Annabella with a kiss is a "grotesque variation" of the Friar's description of their behaviour in hell (173).

46. Gauer's article engages in an analysis of the interplay between the heart as an abstract symbol of "Love" and the fleshly, physical heart which is linked with desire and death (52-55). Other interpretations of the heart on the dagger range from Wharton's enthusiastic reflection on how the heart makes Giovanni "live with an energy far more intense than those around him[,]... seem[ing] little short of inspired" (108) to Farr's observation that it represents the enduring eternity of their love (53), to a more general feeling that the heart represents something impressive about the strength of Giovanni's passion.

Curiously, few critics see the heart as a grisly confirmation of Giovanni's insanity and insist

on interpreting the heart in symbolic rather than literal terms. It is such a horrible image that they must cleanse it by making it abstract instead of seeing the heart on the dagger as a literal rendition of Giovanni's attempt to dominate Annabella completely. Thus, Neill who terms Annabella's heart "mere raw meat"(161) claims that it must "be read in metaphoric terms" (155). He seems distressed by the fact that the heart threatens to become "a grisly tautology--a piece of offal en brochette, brutally stripped of all vestiges of metaphor" (Neill 165). This reluctance to view the heart as a human organ ripped from Annabella's dead body is characteristic of criticism which ignores Annabella's presence in the play and casts her solely as the object of Giovanni's affection. Even her heart is important only in what it tells us about Giovanni's heroic self-conception.

Only Richard Madelaine, in his analysis of sensationalism and melodrama in the play, points out that the heart is "a symbol of the real nature and literal consequence of this kind of passion" (33). Similarly, Orbison, while focusing exclusively on Giovanni, feels that the heart symbolizes the ethical and spiritual deviance of incest (82).

47. See, for example, Boehrer who seems to feel that Annabella's murder is a justified punishment for her faithlessness ("Nice Philosophy" 368). Not surprisingly, he does not view Giovanni's final actions as insane but as an expression of his impressive ability to stay consistent to his beliefs ("Nice Philosophy" 370). Likewise, Farr implies that Annabella deserves her end for betraying their "true and honest love" (51). Giovanni's actions are not a testimony to his insanity but a means of "justifying his own integrity and hers" (51), allowing him ultimately to triumph (53).

While these two critics present the most extreme view of Giovanni's actions, actually praising his butchery, others overlook or discount his final insanity, primarily because they see nothing horrid in his murdering his sister. They look at the murder exclusively from Giovanni's viewpoint and, ignoring Annabella, overlook the possibility of interpreting her death differently. Thus, the murder is a confirmation of their love: "But to the end their love, in the eyes of Giovanni, is its own--not to say their own--justification. They can die by their love, if not live by it ..." (Hoy 151-152); it is a careful blend of "aesthetic perfection" and horror (Brooke 125-6); it is the tragic result of Giovanni's "searching, rational spirit" which moves him to defy "the moral order" (Ribner, "By Nature's Light 50), it stands as an image of his defiant heroism, allowing him to take revenge on those who have wronged his honour (Champion, "Ford's 'Tis Pity She's A Whore" 80). Perhaps most dehumanizing to Annabella is Huebert's claim that her final moments are important because they allow audiences to enjoy the experience of death; her graphic wounds offer "visual, tactile, sensuous participation in the experience of dying" (36) and create a rapturous moment that blends death, sexual ecstasy, and religious transcendence (Huebert 36).

Even a critic like Ide, who argues that Giovanni's inhuman treatment of Annabella makes us finally reject his godlike striving (81), still sees the actual murder as an expression of Giovanni's continuing defiance, a "tribute to the indomitability of the heroic will" (Ide 81).

Only a few critics argue that Ford questions Giovanni's final actions or that he links them to his growing insanity. Wymer claims that his murder realises the potential egotism of his love and its self-loving need to control (139), while Requa, more emphatically, argues that Giovanni's murder of his sister is the act of an insane egomaniac (14-15).

48. Cf. Ford's description of physical love in Christes Bloody Sweat: "It is a raging blood, affections blind, / Which boiles both in the body and the mind" (1085-1086).

49. For Lomax, the two are not contending for the role of husband but for that of revenger (178).

50. Most critics agree that Ford poeticizes the siblings' relationship, at least in its early stages, but disagree as to how we are ultimately meant to view their incest. The one critical extreme argues that Ford glorifies their love to the end. Ford beautifies incest and adultery by terming it Platonic love (Sensabaugh 189) and directly attacks the traditional moral order (Sensabaugh 186); he presents a play "about a true and honest love, not about a perversion" (Farr 51); he presents an intense love that makes them sympathetic and justifies their actions (Kistner, "The Functions of Love" 64-65); he explores "a moral innocence unconnected with the traditional ethical qualities assigned to certain activities" (Wharton 93); and he consistently accepts sexual passion over conventional behaviour as part of his fascination with the perverse (Heilman 38). The other critical extreme underlines Ford's condemnation of the affair. Stavig emphasizes that for Ford "love outside the moral code results in the moral deterioration of the individuals involved" (John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order 191); while Kaufmann argues that the play traces the destruction of "one's ability to give and receive love" (535).

Most other critics tend to fall somewhere in between these two extremes, arguing that we finally condemn the siblings' relationship and yet sympathize with them and their love because of the ugliness of the world and the other characters. Ornstein argues that Ford does not condone their relationship but recognises its beauty because of their corrupt society (211); Anderson states that he views the incestuous lovers with understanding (95); Ribner points to their contrast with the sordid world around them and "the woeful inadequacy of the very human and divine institutions by which Giovanni and Annabella are condemned" ("By Nature's Light" 40-41); Nicholas Brooke cites our ambivalent response (115); Oliver claims that the lovers, particularly Giovanni, are admirable but that Ford rejects their incest (90-96); Greenfield feels that the incest is horrible but also, in the face of a corrupt society, innocent (18); Ide states that the lovers are ennobled by their society's corruption (75-76); Lomax feels that we sympathize with them (177), and Champion points out that the other lovers are far worse than Giovanni (Tragic Patterns 189-91).

None of these critics, however, sees a potential division in the play between physical and platonic love. For most of them, as for Giovanni, love implies a sexual relationship and so, for the siblings, an incestuous one. Only Orbison hints at a possible separation between the two, observing that Ford praises their love but does not sympathize with their incest (61).

51. Forker is the only critic to look at the liaison specifically as a brother-sister relationship, but he does so only to study the sexual side of the siblings' love and to make much the same point as other critics. Ford treats incest "with considerable sympathy ... as a tragic but humanly comprehensible error, in comparison with which arranged and affectionless marriages are crude, destructive, and even barbaric" (Forker, "'A Little More Than Kin'" 24).

52. Critics have made much of Ford's fascination with variations of Platonism and his ambivalence towards physical passion. Sensabaugh presents the most extended analysis of the platonic love cult of the Caroline court and its influence on Ford. His argument that Ford--and Giovanni--describe love in Platonic terms is interesting, but he seems mistaken when he then proceeds to argue that Ford uses Platonism to justify incest and adultery (188-189), for the very basis of Platonism is, as Stavig points out, its non-physical qualities. Stavig criticizes Sensabaugh's description of the Platonic love cult,

arguing that it did not advance physical love, as Sensabaugh claims, but "rational, non-physical love" (John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order 38). Other critics such as Juliet Sutton ("Platonic Love in Ford's The Fancies Chaste and Noble") and Peter Ure ("Cult and Initiates in Ford's Love's Sacrifice") focus on individual plays. Clark simply emphasizes Ford's interest in courtly values (Professional Playwrights 75). Clerico argues that Giovanni appropriates neoplatonic discourse in order to elevate himself into aristocratic circles (423). While all these critics, with the exception of Sensabaugh, emphasize the non-physical nature of Caroline coterie Platonism, only Sutton considers Ford's possible linking of family love and Platonism.

53. This attitude is perhaps best expressed by Alan Brissenden who analyses love in the works of Ford. For him, the play contains the greatest obstacles to love in all of Ford's plays: the divine and social laws which forbid their incest. He overlooks the fact that it is their kinship which causes the love in the first place. Critics like Stavig and Lomax, who see the play as a re-working of Romeo and Juliet, and Homan, who claims that a cruel fate dooms Giovanni to love his sister, also ignore the crucial role their kinship plays in causing their love in the first place.

54. Cf Robson (272)

55. In contrast, Wharton claims that Giovanni's argument that their kinship makes them love is puerile (94-95) and ridiculous (96). While it is perhaps a weak justification for sex, in the absence of other explanations for their passion, there is no reason not to accept Giovanni's own words.

56. Stavig argues that Ford's prose works reveal a man who is "a neo-Stoic but Christian moral philosopher" who rejects passion not controlled by reason (John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order 21).

57. Stavig argues for a similar deterioration of their initial relationship, but he feels that the "steady decline in the spiritual quality of their relationship" (John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order 109) results because it is incestuous, not because it has become sexual.

58. Critics such as Stavig have commented in passing on the way in which Giovanni's and Annabella's union imitates a marriage ceremony. Boehrer goes further, claiming that the wedlock is legal by Renaissance standards ("Nice Philosophy" 365).

59. Marital relationships in both the plots and sub-plots of Ford's tragedies and tragicomedies are almost inevitably unhappy and loveless, while other passionate male-female relationships are not consummated or not shown after marriage. Annabella and Soranzo and Hippolita and Richardetto of 'Tis Pity, Penthea and Bassanes of The Broken Heart, Caraffa and Bianca of Love's Sacrifice, and Flavia and Fabricio and Nitido and Morosa of The Fancies are all trapped in violent and sterile marriages. This is not to say that Ford glorifies sexual love outside marriage, deriding the marital bond, as Sensabaugh argues throughout his book. Rather, it suggests his suspicion of the physical side of love that is part of marriage and that differentiates it from the sibling relationships that he presents in these same plays (Penthea and Ithocles, Caraffa and Fiormonda, Flavia and Romanello, and Castamela and Livio). Significantly, Giovanni is the only one of Ford's brothers to be both brother and husband to his sister. Within himself, he embodies Ford's conception of the positive and

negative aspects of love.

60. Cf. Stavig's observation that Giovanni ends up paralleling Soranzo (John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order 116), Kaufmann's extended discussion of jealousy in the play, Bohrer's claim that Giovanni adopts the role of cuckolded husband ("Nice Philosophy" 368), avenging himself on Annabella, and Lomax's observation that Giovanni competes with Soranzo for the role of revenger (177-8).

Chapter 7

'A Feare of Husbanding': Idealized Sibling Love in John Ford's The Fancies Chaste and Noble

While critics may tend to overlook Annabella, her incestuous love affair with Giovanni helps to bring John Ford's interest in the brother-sister relationship at least some critical attention. In Ford's later work The Fancies Chaste and Noble (1634-36; 1638), scholars unaccountably overlook the two sibling relationships upon which the play is based. Instead, they tend either to ignore The Fancies with something close to an embarrassed silence or to dismiss it as the most inferior of Ford's plays. While sometimes acknowledging the artistic merit of the sub-plot which follows the tribulations of the virtuous wife, Flavia, they castigate the main plot, in which Livio delivers his sister into an apparent harem, the "Bower of Fancies," for its shameless sexual titillation and its seeming lack of artistic or moral purpose. The play "is silly and rather indecent" (Sargeant 76); an unsuccessful attempt "at bawdy, almost farcical low comedy" (Stavig 193); a deliberate and blameworthy incitement of prurient and "unchaste fancies" in the readers (Anderson, John Ford 121); and a shamelessly coarse display that joins much "that is conventional in the worst Jacobean and Caroline manner" (Oliver 110) with an unforgivable deception of the audience (Oliver 114).

Even the few scholars who wish to defend the play focus exclusively on its romantic and marital elements. Although they argue that Ford has a sustained moral purpose which links the plot and the sub-plot, they neglect the sibling relationships which are of particular importance in understanding the play and present a tragicomic re-working of the incestuous tensions of both The Duchess of Malfi and 'Tis Pity She's A Whore. Ian Robson argues that the play focuses on "misconstruction," satirizing people's eagerness to believe slanderous gossip and salacious rumour

(233)¹ In his essay "Sequentiality and Manipulation of Response in Ford's The Fancies Chaste and Noble," Donald Anderson points out that the play has a careful construction; it deliberately builds its scenes in order to manipulate the audience, to create a mood of "uncertainty and prurience" and to stress the "perils of preferment" (249). Similarly, Ira Clark argues that the play criticizes the audience's own prurience by tricking them into lurid speculation about the Bower of Fancies (Professional Playwrights 81); the play's criticism of scandal-mongers then satirizes status-seekers trying to elevate their social position (81).² Dorothy Farr attempts to explain the play's apparent inconsistencies by arguing that the court which seduces Livio is meant to be corrupt for the first three acts and then to be redeemed through the chaste Castamela's steadfast virtue (130-1).

Even the two most thorough and sympathetic attempts to interpret the play follow in the steps of their less interested predecessors. Ronald Huebert argues that the play deliberately presents a picture of a world in which love is viewed as a commodity (120). This cynical and mercenary outlook informs both the plot and the sub-plots and gives the play a unifying atmosphere (120) that cannot be lightened by the play's comic conclusion (123-124). Conversely, Juliet Sutton, in a variation on arguments by Robson and Florence Ali, argues that Ford offers up a strong defence of Platonic love. Too quick to suspect lechery where there is only virtuous Platonism, audience and characters alike are satirized for their cynical outlook, an outlook which refuses to believe that Platonic love may be anything but an elegant mask for lust (303).

While later critics like Sutton no longer savage the play for its lack of coherence and purpose, its poor construction, and its inadequate hero, they still ignore important elements of the play. Sutton, in her eagerness to prove that high-minded members of the audience would have recognized and accepted the play's Platonic love, ignores the very deliberate attempts by Ford to make the Bower

appear to be a harem and Livio a pandar. Huebert, on the other hand, ignores the more positive presentations of love in the play, particularly Flavia's and her brother's intensely emotional reconciliation. In overlooking the siblings, both critics by-pass the relationship which allows Ford to contrast two opposing views of love: the cynical view of love as a sexual commodity, discussed by Huebert, and the more positive picture of love that is finally established between the two sets of siblings, the ideal love linked to blood family, Platonism, and the elaborate courtly love of Henrietta Maria's circle. Further, despite strong critical emphasis on Ford's self-conscious awareness of the dramatic tradition that preceded him and his tendency to re-work or exploit earlier conventions, few critics study the play's strongly parodic elements.³ Even Kathleen McLuskie, who offers the most extended analysis of the play's reworking of earlier dramatic conventions, overlooks the pronounced parodic elements in the play and its dependence on earlier brothers and sisters of drama.⁴

If we come to the play willing to accept the importance of the brother-sister relationship, many of the play's apparent inconsistencies can be resolved and the drama can be interpreted on its own merits, both as a successful parody of earlier sibling relationships and as a serious work that explores and idealizes the relationship between brother and sister. Critics such as Anderson and Oliver, among others, who complain that the play's main plot and its conclusion are inadequate (Oliver 114, Anderson 124), create their own problems by concentrating exclusively on the play's romantic and marital problems. The final love match between the heroine, Castamela, and the heir and nephew to the Marquess, Troylo Saville, comes as a complete surprise, they point out, for Ford quite neglects to show their courtship. Instead, in the majority of the scenes in which Castamela appears, she is placed with her brother, and Ford shows the couple alone together for only one brief moment, in which, tellingly, they discuss the psychological unbalance of her brother. However,

when we shift the focus of the play from romantic to brother-sister relationships, these problems are not problems at all. Ford neglects to depict a burgeoning romance between Troylo and Castamela because he is more interested in presenting the interaction between brother and sister. Rather than concentrating on Troylo's dilemma in loving a lower-born and penurious woman or showing Livio's transformation into an ideal husband, Ford chooses to focus on the brother's conflict over whether or not to use his sister to advance his own position.

While the plot of The Fancies may be outrageously comical, the play itself serves a serious purpose: to deconstruct and satirize the attitudes that underlie earlier dramatic brothers' attempts to assert authority over their sisters. By combining two of the drama's principal ways of presenting the brother, as pandar and as the jealously protective head of the family, into one character, Livio, Ford suggests the man's lack of identity and his constant internal conflict, his confused understanding of who he is linked to his role as a brother. By then carrying these two seemingly opposing positions to exaggerated and contradictory extremes, Ford parodies earlier dramatic treatment of the sibling relationship. He exposes, through caricature, the excesses of earlier cruel and manipulative brothers and ultimately suggests that there is little difference between the brother's two apparently contradictory positions as protector and pandar; both arise out of the brother's view of his sister as an object and threaten true family affection.

At the same time, The Fancies' obvious focus on the sibling relationship offers considerable insight into Ford's treatment of Giovanni and Annabella in his more famous work 'Tis Pity She's a Whore. Because the play is not as complex or ambivalent as 'Tis Pity but deals with many of the same themes, it offers a clearer picture of the self-conscious way in which Ford deals with the brother-sister relationship. He again places it at the centre of his play and idealizes it, at the expense of marriage,

as the warmest and most incorruptible of social relationships. Yet, while affirming the deep, even intense, affection between brother and sister, he diverts the play into a comic conclusion by focusing on the reformation of the jealous and possessive brother's feelings. He also explores the sister's defiant response to her brother's inadequate and tyrannical authority and depicts her success in reforming her weak, jealous, and irresolute sibling. The sub-plot then fits structurally and thematically into the development of the main plot, underlining the successful way in which both sisters transform their brothers' negative, sexually charged conceptions of them into fancies more chaste and noble. Livio finally proves the depth of his love for his sister not by acting as her husband, as Giovanni does, but by overcoming his incestuous feelings and relinquishing her in marriage. Similarly, Romanello, the brother of the sub-plot, comes to stand in marked contrast to Flavia's two unscrupulous husbands by ceasing to view his sister as a sexual being.

It is in Ford's treatment of Livio that the play particularly explores the complexities of the brother-sister relationship. Even critics like Sutton and Huebert who defend The Fancies and attempt to demonstrate its artistic coherence largely ignore Livio, the character who has no love interest in the play and who is abruptly matched with one of the Fancies at its conclusion. Yet, he is unquestionably the principal figure of the play: the only character whom we see in any emotional depth or conflict and the one whose moral temptations are the focus of the work's main plot. The fact that he is seen only in relationship to his sister should not make us push him aside, but rather acknowledge that the play, like 'Tis Pity, is a drama about sibling relationships, one that explores the nature of true fraternal love, not romantic or sexual love. Through Livio, Ford offers a parody, an ironically brilliant comment on earlier dramatic brothers and sisters which both draws on and satirizes the material of his predecessors. But the satire also functions on a more serious level. It explores

the problems of sexual obsession and jealousy within families, offering a solution that attempts to resolve the tragedy of *'Tis Pity*, and which contrasts idealized sibling relationships with the emotionally sterile marriages that supercede them.

The brother Livio particularly embodies many of the conventions of earlier drama, not the worse conventions, as Oliver so disparagingly puts it, but the traditional elements that give Tourneur's and Webster's plays their dark and disturbing intensity. Like both Vindice and Flamineo, Livio is cast as the would-be pandar of his sister, torn between the desire to advance himself through her prostitution and horror at the dishonour that such actions will bring to his family's name. He is penniless, with no means to advance himself and no assets save his beautiful sister, and he, like Vindice before him, is subjected to the corrupting temptations of the ruler's heir. But rather than taking this situation seriously and exploring its destructive effect on the hero, Ford exaggerates it, transforming the tormented brother into an uncertain, silly, hypocritical dupe who alternates between self-congratulation and breathless horror. Although the sinister extremes of the Jacobean drama are all clearly recognisable here, Ford cannot take them seriously; instead, he draws on these conventions to invoke a certain set response in the reader in order deliberately to deflate them.⁵

When the play begins, Troylo, nephew to the Marquess Octavio, is engaged in a routine "seduction" of his lower-born friend Livio, trying to induce him to send his sister to the court's Bower of Fancies. Since the world is corrupt, he argues, only corrupt people will rise in honour, prestige, and wealth, and he proceeds to disabuse the naive Livio of his quaint notion that merit alone will elevate or enrich him. It is "goodly pandarisme" (I.i.55),⁶ Troylo implies, that will raise Livio to honours, while goodness will bring him nothing but "[a] Thin, a threadbare honesty, a vertue / Without a living to't" (I.i.124-125). Left vulnerable to temptation by his circumstances, Livio is

further weakened when Octavio himself appears and names him provisor of his horse. Unable to resist this material proof of the rewards of compliance, Livio agrees to send his sister and ward to court.

While the play starts seriously, the darkest torments of the brothers of The White Devil and The Revenger's Tragedy are soon subjected to relentless parody. Livio is a reluctant and weak-willed pandar, without the conviction or strength of mind to be either resolutely virtuous or thoroughly villainous. And, unlike the tortured Flamineo, who spends the whole play futilely seeking some sort of material benefit for having sold his soul, Livio's rewards drop, with an exaggerated munificence, promptly into his lap. After agreeing to comply with Troylo's wishes, he appears, "fresh suited," to greet his sister and her suitor Romanello, and he gloats over his good fortune to a ridiculous excess. Posturing and preening, he brags to his sister that he has shaken off "[t]he rags / Of home spun Gentry [to] now appeare in fashion / Unto men, and am receiv'd" (I.iii.55-58). Quite carried away by his own cleverness, he shamelessly wonders why Romanello appears so down at heel and shabbily dressed: "Considering that his sister, new hoist up, / From a lost merchants warehouse, to the titles / Of a great Lords-bed, may supply his wants" (I.iii.63-65). His outrageously crass and evocative language, his delighted pleasure in his own pandarism, and his assumption that everyone will wish to behave as he has, all combine to make the pandar brother a comical rather than a tortured character.

Further, the very issues which had so tormented Flamineo become, when presented in the character of Livio, quite ridiculous. Flamineo must depend upon his own wit to advance himself, and when his mother blames him for being vicious, he savagely attacks her for not providing him with a wealthy father. His poverty, and the helpless powerlessness that accompanies it, fill him with a bitterness that pervades the play. Livio, however, is jauntily undaunted by his poverty. He

congratulates himself on being able to use his intelligence to repair his poor fortunes, airily informing us that "[p]ish, believe it, / Endeavours and an active braine, are better / Then patrimonies left by parents" (I.iii.77-79), he concludes by styling himself, and others like him, as the only figure worthy of admiration, "a man, whose practice and experience / Conceives not barely the Philosophers stone, / But indeed has it, one whose wit's his Indies" (I.iii.94-96). The concerns of both Flamineo and Vindice, their pride in their Machiavellian intelligence, and their pandering or pretense of pandering their sisters in order to further their own schemes, are all concentrated within Livio and exaggerated to such an extent that they become ludicrous. Even their agonized sense that they live in a world deprived of absolute values becomes a breezy commonplace for Livio, advanced to justify his actions and unable to disrupt his sense of well-being and security. "Name and honour," he wonders, "What are they? a meer sound without supportance" (I.iii.102-103).

If Livio initially celebrates the deal he imagines he has struck with Troylo, he soon begins to repent his actions, and this heightens Ford's caricature of the brother-pandar. Even Flamineo, despite his attempts to push the Duke and Vittoria together, knows a moment of cold fury when Ludovico casually calls his sister a whore, and at the trial he attempts to hide his shameful role as pandar by adopting a mask of melancholy. Vindice shows a similar, if reverse, ambivalence. While he only feigns to corrupt his sister, his attempt at seduction becomes too earnest and his enumeration of the benefits that his sister will reap as a court prostitute is betrayingly enthusiastic. In the same way, Ford presents Livio as veering between pleasure at what his sister's prostitution brings him and horror at the dishonour it draws down on himself and his family; but the playwright exaggerates both extremes so that they look equally ridiculous. From gloating, Livio switches to timid and fearful hesitation, horrified by what he has done. No longer the ruthless and vaunting Machiavellian, he is a weak figure

of fun, described by Troylo as "sea sicke a shore still" (II.ii.1) and suffering "such faint stomacke qualms. No cordials comfort / The businesse of thy thoughts" (II.ii.3-5). In order for him to be able even to continue with the scheme, he must be reassured and coaxed along by Troylo, who, unlike his counterpart Brachiano, spends more time reassuring the timid and fearful brother than seducing the virtuous sister. The tormented sibling, whose decision to pander his sister represents his self-destructive attack on his family and on himself, as well as reflecting the ruthless and predatory face of the corrupt society in which he lives, has no currency or relevance to Ford beyond satire. When men do pander their wives, sisters, or nieces, it is in the casually cynical spirit with which Fabricio markets his wife, a pragmatic commercialism that takes small heed of any dark horrors.

As the play progresses, Ford goes to even greater lengths to deflate the brother-pandar figure and to mock his hypocrisy. In an extremely comical scene, dismissed by critics as gratuitously indecent, Troylo convinces the reluctant Livio to continue with his pandarism by revealing, in confidence, details of his uncle's unfortunate condition.

Our great Uncle Marquess,
 Disabled from his Cradle, by an impotence
 In nature first, that impotence, since seconded
 And rendered more infirme by a fatall breach
 Receiv'd in fight against the Turkish Gallies,
 Is made incapable of any faculty,
 Of active manhood. (II.ii.36-42)

His infirmity is so severe, Troylo claims, that any attempt on Castamela's virtue would be more a threat to the elderly man's health than to the girl's, for "no helpes of art can warrant life, / Should he

[the Marquess] transcend the bounds his weaknes limits" (II.ii.44-45). Thus, rather than betraying his sister to physical dishonour, Livio has only to worry about her contending with the Marquess' desire for harmless flirtation, coyly characterized as "what his outward sences can delight in" (II.ii.57). Livio's response to this news is a hilarious mixture of breathless delight and fear, lest a revelation so wonderful should actually be lies: " Good, good-- Troylo. Oh that I had a lusty Faith to credit it, / Though none of all this wonder should be possible" (II.ii.58-60). It is just the information that he has been craving, for it appeals to his weak inability to adopt a course of either good or evil. It also makes his dilemma all the more comical because it diverts his attention away from the morality of his actions and focuses it on one ridiculous and quite undignified question: Is the Marquess really incapable or has Troylo invented the tale purely to gull him?

This is the conflict that comically grips Livio through the rest of the play, sending him lurching between paroxysms of gloating joy and angry suspicion. He is so carried away with relief when he hears of the Marquess' infirmity that he describes the man's plight with a crude indecency:

. . . a' wod now and then be piddling,
And play the wanton, like a flie that dallies
About a candle flame: then scorch his wings,
Drop downe, and creep away, ha? (II.ii.66-69)

But he cannot entirely dismiss the suspicion that the story is too convenient to be believed, and his fears reach a comical climax by the end of the third act. After pressuring his sister to remain alone for an intimate interview with the Marquess, he is horrified when he returns to find the couple smiling and flirtatious. As he watches the overly solicitous Marquess lead his sister off with the words, "come faire one" (III.iii.265), all he can manage is the comically despairing one line: "Oh I am cheated"

(III.iii.266). Adding to the element of burlesque, Ford transforms the lecherous villain of The Revenger's Tragedy, whose rotten lechery embodies an almost supernal state of putrefying decay, into an impotent old goat: "A very grave stale Batchelor ... / There's the conceit" (II.ii.241-242), whose only sexual pleasure comes from idle flirtation and sexually charged jokes.

But Ford also has a more serious purpose in his depiction of the brother. Livio's abrupt, exaggerated changes in attitude allow the dramatist to suggest the emotional and moral confusion of the pandering brother; he shows Livio torn by a conflicting, and only partially acknowledged, desire to keep his sister for himself and to exploit her for as much as she is worth. When the Marquess first enters and appoints Livio to be provisor of his horse, the young man immediately imagines that his new honour is a bribe to encourage him to send his sister to the court. From hoping that he may keep his sister's virtue locked up safe in its cabinet of ivory, he veers to the other extreme, convinced that sending her away will mean her inevitable prostitution: "I must resolve / To turne my sister whore, speake a homeword, / For my old Batchelor--Love, so, i'ts not so?" (I.i.125-127). But it is only so in his own imagination and in his dependence on Troylo's clichéd description of courtly licence. If he sends her to court, he concludes irrationally, he must be pandering her, and so he attempts to don the role of pimp, to behave as he foolishly imagines a pandar would behave. The parody serves a fundamentally serious purpose, revealing his psychological turmoil and his paranoid jealousy whenever he relates to his sister. As a brother, he has no clearly defined idea of how he should treat her; instead, deriving his standard of conduct from earlier drama, he engages in an outrageous mimicry of infamous brothers such as Vindice and Flamineo--the product of his fancy of how a stage pandar should behave.

Ford also mounts a sustained ironic attack on Livio's indifference to his sister's well-being, on

his hypocritically jealous concern with her chastity, and on his view of her as nothing more than a possession, to be hoarded or traded in as he pleases. The brother's jealous zeal to keep his sister chaste, even as he attempts to exploit her as a marketable commodity, is extended by Ford to its logical and absurd extreme with this prostitution which is not quite prostitution. Imagining the Marquess Octavio to be impotent and so incapable of actually having sex with his sister, Livio is quite indifferent to the fact that sending her to the Bower will nonetheless destroy her and her family's honour, as well as her happiness. As long as Castamela remains physically inviolate, he does not care what other things she may suffer or what ugly rumours or gossip may begin to circulate about her. In fact, Troylo implies that it is precisely the girl's good name that Livio is selling, for the Marquess uses the young women in his protection to conceal his impotency. Far from being distressed by the rumours circulating about the Bower, he is pleased that "[r]eport should mutter him a mighty man / For th' game, to take off all suspicion / Of insufficiency" (II.ii.111-113). In fact, the old man is so fearful lest rumours of his affliction come to the public ear that he guards the Fancies with a jealous care, letting no one have access to them. Livio's smirking observation that "all his recreations are in Fancy" (II.ii.115), shows his complacent unwillingness to address the true problem. By sending his sister to the Bower, he ruins her reputation in the eyes of the world and apparently voids her chance to marry decently, as Romanello's rejection of her makes clear. He reveals that he does not truly care about his sister's honour or happiness, but only with keeping her physical person to himself.

He also willingly subjects her to considerable emotional trauma, leaving her unaware of the Marquess' complaint. Made temporarily confident by Troylo's words, he ignores her desperate plea of "Brother" (II.ii.208) and leaves her to the instruction of a coarse and ribald old woman who appears to be the bawd to the Fancies. As Morosa teaches her how to behave around the Marquess,

Castamela has every reason to believe that she is about to be prostituted, just as she does later when, accompanied by her brother, she is left for a private interview with the elderly aristocrat. Given that he has ruined her reputation and callously tormented her, his sudden outrage when he imagines that she has slept with the Marquess after all is particularly hypocritical. He has acquiesced in all the particulars of her prostitution, if reality suddenly matches appearance, he has no one but himself to blame. Just as he has been too concerned over whether or not the Marquess is an eunuch, so he allows himself to be distracted by the question of whether or not she will remain, technically, a virgin.

Given the cruel insensitivity of his behaviour and his willingness to subject her to prostitution, Livio must be made to repent of his treatment of his sister. If he is a caricature of the brothers of The Revenger's Tragedy and The White Devil, he also provides a critique of their attitude and acts as their tragicomic counterpart, one who learns to appreciate the consequences of his actions towards his sister before it is too late. By using his sister to advance himself and leaving her alone with the apparently lecherous aristocrat, Livio, like the brothers before him, violates his familial obligations and shows himself unsuited to be the figure of patriarchal authority. His actions lead Castamela to disown him and renounce their blood ties: "Livio, / I must not call him Brother; this one act / Hath rent him off the ancestry he sprung from" (III.iii.227-229). His behaviour also frees her to ignore his authority, since he has betrayed the very family lines that have given him his power. However, since the play is a parodic tragicomedy, Castamela does not really reject her brother's authority, insolently elevating herself above him through a connection to the ruling class. She only seems to, so that she may teach him that he must be worthy of his authority if he is to expect her to obey him. "The time will come too," she predicts to the Marquess, "[w]hen he (unhappy man) whom your advancement / Hath ruin'd by being Spannell to your fortunes, / Will curse a train'd me hither" ((III.iii.224-227).

Castamela's resolution to teach her brother a lesson for pandering her again allows Ford to fulfill a simultaneously serious and parodic purpose, showing how he plays on earlier theatrical tradition both to amuse his audience and to advance a deeper intent. The girl's sudden imitation of Evadne or Vittoria at their most ambitious, insolent, and verbose proves a devilishly amusing caricature. Yet it is also a brilliant performance within the play, cleverly designed to shatter her brother's complacency. In adopting the outrageous impudence of Vittoria and Evadne towards their brothers and enacting her perfect parody of the whore-sister, engaged in a hostile and violent conflict with her brother, she shows Livio the consequences of his wilful destruction of their family bonds. She mercilessly lays bare each of his hypocrisies, bitterly showing Livio what he has made her and forcing him to confront his responsibility for her degradation rather than hiding behind a fatuous faith in the Marquess' impotence. And because she is adopting a role, Ford can make her more decisively attack her brother and expose his frailties, because she will return, by the end of the play, to her old gentle manner.

As she taunts her brother, each of Castamela's insolently shameless comments goads him at a sensitive spot, underlining just how ignobly he has used her. Beseeking her to "[p]rithee be serious" (IV.i.1), as though he suspects her of playing a game, Castamela immediately dumbfounds her brother with a vaunting reply that both mocks his words, as well as his earlier boasts:

Prithee interrupt not

The Paradise of my becharming thoughts,

Which mount my knowledge to the spheare I move in,

Above this useless tattle. (IV.i.1-4)

Almost more shocking to Livio, she proceeds to console him as though addressing her groom, not

her sibling:

We shall flourish.

Feed high henceforth, man, and no more be streightend

Within the limits of an emptie patience,

Nor tire our feeble eyes with gazing onely

On greatnes. (IV i.32-36)

The astonishing insolence in her "man" is matched only by her later carelessly flippant response to his moral strictures. In a particularly brilliant passage, Ford ironically reverses the situation in which the pander brother, having assisted in the prostitution of his sister, begins to fear that she will keep her riches to herself. Castamela, in contrast to Vittoria, effects to congratulate Livio on his shrewdness in pandering her and, deliberately misunderstanding the cause of her brother's melancholy, hastens to reassure him that he, as well as she, will profit handsomely:

It was thy cunning Livio; I applaud it.

Feare nothing; Ile be thrifty in thy projects.

Want misery? may all such want as think on't;

Our footing shall stand firme. (IV i.39-42)

As a blend of serious criticism of Livio's heartless behaviour and extended parody of earlier dramatic tradition, the scene presents a satiric attack on the brother's attempt to govern his sister. Holding up all his previous foolishness, greed, and self-delusion before his eyes, Castamela forces him to confront the way his actions have changed her and brings him to repent his former greed.

Further, Ford allows Castamela to mount a devastating challenge on her brother's assumption of moral authority. Finding her recalcitrant to his pressures, Livio, like numerous brothers before

him, reflects in elaborate, misogynistic detail on his sister's moral corruption. In words that caricature Ferdinand's insane obsession with the Duchess' sexuality, Melantius' enraged fury when he confronts Evadne with the disgrace she has brought on their house, Vindice's reflections on the diseased nature of women, and Flamineo's hypocritical ponderings on his sister's diabolical corruption, Livio angrily informs his sister that she has:

... false suddenly

Into a pluriſie of faithleſſe impudence,

A whoriſh itch infects thy blood, a leproſie

Of raging luſt .

This fouleneſſe muſt be purg'd,

Or thy diſeaſe will rankle to a peſtilence,

Which can even taint the very ayre about thee.

But I ſhall ſtudie Phyſick. (IV.i.67-75)

Instead of being able to cow her physically or to impose his will on her, however, Castamela is quite unimpressed. After Livio's impassioned denunciation, she responds, with a brevity that mocks his earnest verbosity and an indifference that moves him to greater outrage: "Learne good manners: / I take it you are sawcie" (IV.i.75-76). Thus Ford deflates and then dismisses the brother's black fury and threats of violent, physical revenge; he also destroys him as a figure of authority, for he gives Castamela the chance to berate her brother for his cruel treatment of her. Calling particular attention to his hypocrisy and his responsibility for her present state, she launches a final attack on his morally corrupt authority.

Know I will use my freedome; you (forsooth)
 For change of fresh apparell, and the pocketting
 Of some well looking Duccats, were contented,
 Passinglie pleas'd, yes marry were you (marke it)
 To expose me to the danger now you raile at.
 Brought me, nay forc'd me hither, without question
 Of what might follow. Here you find the issue. (IV.i.80-86)

Of equal importance, Castamela brings Livio to realise the extent to which he has destroyed the blood connection between them. While he may hope to profit from her prostitution, he actually frees her from his control, as well as destroys the affectionate family ties that bind them together. Throughout the scene, Livio seeks to re-establish their blood relationship as brother and sister and the authority that he derives from it. Castamela, just as resolutely, resists his attempts and uses his immoral behaviour to justify her defiance. Since she refuses to recognise him as her brother, she has no need to obey or defer to him, and this question of kinship becomes the focus of their dispute. At first, puzzled and horrified by her insolence, he explains her disrespect in the only way that he can: She has not recognised him. Hastening to confirm their relationship and trying to re-establish his superior position in the family hierarchy, he demands: "Sister, / D'ee know to whom you talke this?" (IV.i.4-5). Her reply not only rejects his appeal to their kinship, it harkens back to the reward that he had received for pandering her, underlining the cause of her coldness: "To the Gentleman / Of my Lords Horse, new stept into the Office" (IV.i.5-6). Her answer reduces him to marvelling a few lines later at her continuing lack of deference: "Thou mistak'st sure / What person thou holdst speech with" (IV.i.12-13). When he finally realises that she is purposefully challenging his authority, he seeks to

win her compliance by reiterating their family connection. He reminds her earnestly that "[o]ur Fathers Daughter, if I erre not rarely, / Delighted in a softer humbler sweetnes" (IV.i.17-18), and he repeatedly emphasizes their fraternal connection, finishing with the plea: "Come home againe, home Castamela, Sister" (IV.i.60). She, in notable contrast, refuses to address him as brother through the whole scene, alternating between the cold formality of "sir," the insolence of the derogatory "man," and the sarcasm of "most gentle signior" (IV.i.50).

Accompanying her refusal to recognise their family ties, she flatly refuses to obey him. She is not just sarcastic and scornful, but openly defies his instructions. To his angry question demanding whether she will leave the court and agree to wed Romanello, she returns: "No surely, Such treatie may breake off" (IV.i.100-101); to his threat of punishment if she challenges him, she is equally unimpressed, responding: "You cannot Livio" (IV.i.103). Defiantly, she renounces his authority, crying: "Ile be no more your ward, no longer chamber'd / Nor mew'd up to the lure of your Devotion" (IV.i.51-52), and she proceeds to demonstrate her resolution to adopt her own path. Even when Livio asserts absolute power over her, threatening, "strumpet / In thy desires 'Tis in my power to cut off / The twist thy life is spunne by" (IV.i.76-78), she is undaunted. Scornfully she expresses the hope that his irrationality is not absolute: "Phew, you rave now: / But if you have not perished all your reason" (IV.i.78-79). Her words are a telling comment, not just on the futility of his threats, but on Giovanni's similar posture in 'Tis Pity. Livio's words clearly echo Giovanni's insane boast that he holds Annabella's "twists of life" (V.vi.72), and yet the heroic cry that some critics take so seriously is deflated in this later play by the sister's caustic and sardonic questioning of her brother's sanity. Despite her affection for him, she, unlike Annabella, has an opportunity to teach him that his belief that he has the right to exercise the power of life or death over her is the delusion of a madman, not

the sane assertion of an accepted authority

For the purpose of the play, ultimately, is not just to parody the earlier treatment of tragically antagonistic sibling relationships and to question the authority of the brother but to show how these relationships may be healed through the transformation of the brother's outlook. Livio's horrified realization of how his greed has destroyed the innocent gentleness of his sister makes him repent his attempt to pander her. But his jealous protectiveness and its sexual undertones are dealt with quite differently by Ford and cannot be resolved as simply. After Livio storms out from their quarrel, Castamela reveals that her words have been counselled by Troylo in order to return her brother to mental health. The only thing, in fact, able to move her to challenge her beloved brother is concern for his moral and psychological well-being. She accepts the pain of defying him and the unpleasantness of conflict in her hope of bringing him to change his behaviour:

. my language

Hath prejudic'd my heart, I and my Brother

Ne're parted at such distance; yet I glory

In the faire race he runs. But feare the violence

Of his disorder. (IV.i.109-113).

This violent disorder which she so fears refers not only to his outrage at her insolence but to his jealous possessiveness, his unwillingness to share her with the rest of the world. For Livio, in an exaggerated form, embodies both of the principle vices of the earlier siblings: like Flamineo and Vindice, he is tempted to pander her, to turn her into a whore, and yet, like Ferdinand, Melantius, and Giovanni, he is also incestuously jealous, viewing her as his property and trying to keep her guarded and confined.

The two positions may seem quite opposed, but they are both rooted in the brother's attempt to maintain absolute control over the sister's sexuality through illicit and socially unacceptable means. Pandering, claims Lois Bueler in her study of incest in Renaissance plays, is a form of "incest at one remove," because the brother, while loaning his sibling out, never completely relinquishes possession of her (138). The jealous brother, such as Ferdinand or Giovanni, tries to prevent her from turning her attentions towards anyone but himself, while the pandar refuses to give her honourably in marriage or to relinquish control over her body to her husband. Even Flamineo, while encouraging his sister to wed Brachiano, clearly views his sister's body as his own personal asset.

This connection between incest and pandering is particularly emphasized in Ford's treatment of Livio. In "Horns of Dilemma," Katherine Maus locates dramatic jealousy within portrayals of husband and wife, and yet, as plays such as The Duchess of Malfi and 'Tis Pity She's a Whore reveal, the jealous brother, obsessed with protecting his sister's honour is a figure of equal interest to Renaissance dramatists, particularly to Ford. The brother's concern over maintaining his sister's virtue often takes on a sexual quality as he attempts to replace or obstruct the husband and indicates how incest itself (or incestuous desire) reflects and arises out of the socially sanctioned forms of power that govern women and children within the family; it is an extreme form of the patriarchal power which exercises its "power over women and children in a sexualized way" (Bell 3). If the jealousy of a husband is destructive, the brother's violent sexual possessiveness is all the more inappropriate, and allows Ford to raise unsettling questions about the degree of lawful control the brother should hold over his sister.

It is not clear at the beginning of the play why Troylo must embark on such elaborate stratagems to bring Castamela to the court, and so critics tend to dismiss the whole affair as a flimsy

and manipulative plot device on Ford's part. If Livio is willing to pander his sister to the Marquess, they reason, as he is in the first act, then surely he would be quite delighted to give her in marriage to the elderly aristocrat's heir. Why must Troylo lure her away to the court, when surely a marriage could be easily arranged if he told Livio his true intentions? Farr offers the solution that the court truly is corrupt until the middle of the third act: Troylo is procuring Castamela for his uncle and the virtuous girl succeeds in transforming the whole debauched court through her steadfast virtue (130). Sutton, on the other hand, claims that Ford concocts the whole scenario in order to offer a defence of Platonic, non-sexual love. But while the Marquess' flirtation is shown to be harmless, Ford embarks on no great exploration of the complexities of courtly love nor does he ever actually show Castamela working the reformation of a debauched and morally debased court. Instead, he seems to construct the whole elaborate and, admittedly, implausible situation to explore the siblings' relationship and to show Castamela's redemption of her brother.

Viewing her solely as a sexual commodity, Livio displays a jealous protectiveness that leaves him unable to believe in his sister's virtue or to allow her any freedom of her own in choosing how to act. He guards her with an obsessive possessiveness: keeping her cloistered, refusing to give her in marriage to Romanello, and being unable to trust her virtue in the face of attempted seduction.⁷ In the scene of Castamela's feigned defiance, the girl rejects the fashion in which Livio has kept her: "Ile be no more your ward, no longer chamber'd / Nor mew'd up to the lure of your Devotion" (IV.i.51-52). She has, her words indicate, been kept in seclusion, but her brother's affection has also imprisoned her psychologically, acting as the bait to keep the woman/hawk content in her mews. When he orders her to leave the court, she goes on flatly to defy him: "Trust me. I must not, will not, dare not; surely / I cannot. For my promise past; and sufferance / Of former trialls hath too strongly

arm'd me" (IV.i.53-55). Her serious and emphatic tone is very different from the flippant insolence found in much of the rest of the scene. For her life to be healthy and for the play to end happily, she "must not, will not, dare not" remain "mew'd up to the lure of [his] Devotion." She has to break free from the too close ties of her brother's love, replacing his affection with a husband's; and she must stay true to her promise to remain at the Bower, where, it turns out, she is being wooed by Troylo.

When we begin to understand the necessity for Castamela to detach herself emotionally from her brother, with whom she "ne're parted at such distance," the beginning of the play becomes more comprehensible. Livio, it is evident, is jealously trying to keep his sister sequestered. She is not at Court--or the Bower--when the play begins, and we first see her making an indifferent response to Romanello's attempts to woo her. We do not immediately question Livio's actions in isolating her, however, since Ford encourages his audience to see the court as a corrupt, dangerous place. Troylo, in fact, deliberately creates this impression by listing all the acts of "goodly pandarism" that have taken place in aristocratic households in Europe, subtly implying that the same holds true at the establishment of his uncle. Yet to believe his words, as Livio does, and to see Castamela's fall from virtue as inevitable, is to adopt a corrupt outlook that refuses to acknowledge Castamela's goodness. It leads to the jealous obsessiveness that strips her of control over her own fate and keeps her locked away from the courtly world. It also leads to a potentially incestuous relationship, as the brother begins to usurp the position of husband, focusing on sexual possession as a means of maintaining control over female family members.

Although Troylo ultimately cures Livio's possessiveness, he starts by playing on the brother's jealousy, showing just how aware he is of the psychological barriers which prevent Livio from relinquishing his sister. In a passage fraught with sexual imagery, he persuades Livio to send

Castamela to court by emphasizing that it will enable the brother to keep her under even closer control and to use the courtly setting to polish her beauty for his own benefit:

Come Ile tell thee,
 A way there may be (know I love thee Livio)
 To fix this Jewell in a Ring of gold,
 Yet lodge it in a Cabanet of Ivory,
 White, pure, unspotted Ivorie. Put case--
 Livio himselfe shall keepe the key on't? (I.i.72-77)

Livio's ecstatic response, "Oh sir, / Create me what you please of yours. Doe this" (I.i. 77-78), underscores just how perceptive Troylo's description of the relationship between brother and sister is. Not only does Livio wish to keep her locked up, but he clearly hopes to appropriate the position of the husband, keeping the key to his sister's cabinet. Thus, imagery traditionally ascribed to the husband is displaced by Ford onto the brother; the dramatist closely links the jealous brother's desire to retain possession of his sister to the actions of a husband. The only way for Troylo to begin to free her from the brother's possessive grasp is to underline the fact that Livio will be able to guard Castamela as strictly and carefully in the Bower as he would in his house.

The other characters also give numerous indications of how carefully Livio has kept his sister hidden from the rest of the world. The three Fancies express their delight at meeting her, and Troylo's words as he greets her indicate that this is the girl's first public appearance: "Your Brother hath indeed beene too much churle / In this concealmente from us all, who love him, / Of such desir'd a presence" (I.iii 156-158). More important, Livio himself confesses that he has been too careful and possessive of her: "My jealousie of thy fresh blooming yeeres, / Prompted a feare of husbanding too

charily / Thy growth to such perfection" (I.iii.124-126). Ostensibly, he speaks these words in order to justify his actions in sending his sister to the court; although his concern for her or "jealousie" has made him take too much care in watching over her, he now remedies previous behaviour by giving her up. His words, however, are profoundly ambiguous and offer considerable insight into his state of mind. His insistence on sending her away is more than just the self-justification of a pandar; he himself realizes the dangers of watching or keeping her too closely. The pun on "husband," with its different meanings of hoarding or accumulating, finding a husband for her, and being a husband to her, particularly underlines his nervous confusion. His fear of "husbanding her" simultaneously suggests his concern that he will watch her too closely, his reluctance to lose her in wedlock, and his barely recognised unease that he will not just guard and nurture his sister's growth to perfection, but attempt to become a husband to it. Given this ambivalent attitude toward his sister, which he himself realises, it is no wonder that the mere action of sending her to the court provokes in him a confused and parodic performance as brotherly pimp. He is so jealous and so unsure of what constitutes a proper relationship with her that even a temporary separation from her causes intense psychological turmoil. Quite in contradiction to his personality through the rest of the play, he proceeds to don the persona of the successful pimp, only immediately to regret his posturing in the next act. In Ford's hands, the shifting roles that Livio dons in such rapid succession, all the apparently inconsistent personae, allow him to capture the brother's psychological confusion and his ambivalence towards his sister.

The "violent disorder" of his jealousy, then, goes hand and hand with his self-image as pimp: first, because his attitude towards his sister persuades him that Castamela's greater freedom will bring her inevitable prostitution, and second, because both outlooks claim absolute sexual possession over

her. At first, however, we do not realize how closely tied his jealousy of his sister is to his behaviour as a pimp. Since we see him adopt the style and outlook of a pandar, we initially criticize, rather than applaud, his decision to cease husbanding his sister's perfection. His resolve to "... no longer / Chamber thy freedome. We have beene already / Thrifty enough in our lowe fortunes. Henceforth / Command thy liberty, with that thy pleasures" (I.iii.128-131) seems as though he is preparing to be too free with her: forcing her to embark on a career of prostitution and spending, rather than protecting, such a treasure. But, as the course of the play reveals, his step in allowing Castamela her freedom is actually positive and a crucial part of the transformation of Livio's attitude towards his sister. He needs to be detached from her, just as Castamela must learn to stand apart from her brother and have the opportunity to meet and be courted by Troylo. It is only his jealousy which makes him perceive such an action as disastrous, while it is his cynical view of her as a commodity, a part of his "lowe fortune" to guard or gamble with as he sees fit, that poisons her invitation to court.

In the second act, Ford particularly stresses the man's jealous distrust of his sister, which leaves him melancholy and distracted when she goes to court. "What ayles thee (man)?" Troylo demands. "Be merry, hang up Jealousies" (II.ii.8). Livio's response:

Who, I, I jealous? no, no! Heere's no cause

In this place. 'Tis a nunnerie, a retirement

For meditation ...

Rich services in plate! Soft and faire lodgings,

Varieties of recreations, exercise

Of music in all changes? Neate attendance?

Princely, nay royall furniture of garments?

Satiety of gardens, orchards, waterworkes?

Pictures so ravishing, that

The great world in a little world of Fancie

Is here abstracted. (II.ii.7-20)

reveals his attempt to convince himself that his sister is in no danger. Ironically, his description of the Bower turns out to be completely accurate; it is a chaste and virtuous paradise, despite the presence of such potentially corrupting pleasures as rich food, plentiful entertainment, and music. But the more Livio tries to convince himself of the Bower's virtues, the less he and the readers actually believe that it is so and the more certain are they that the hapless Castamela has been abandoned in a brothel. Jealousy controls reason and logic, as Troylo understands: "And yet your reason cannot answer / Th' objections of your feares, which argue danger" (II.ii.22-23).

While we are, at first, irresistibly influenced by Livio's violent "fancies," we gradually begin to distance ourselves from his perspective on the situation. We come to recognise that Ford has been criticizing all those in his society who believe Livio's actions necessary in order to preserve the chastity of women, those who, like Livio, feel that allowing a woman her freedom is the prelude to her inevitable prostitution. When he responds with such glee to details of the Marquess' affliction, we realise that the unhealthy quality in his relationship with his sister goes beyond even pandarism to an obsession with her sexuality which colours his attitudes towards her and to everyone with whom she comes into contact. Troylo's revelation, that his uncle is impotent, is a comically perfect resolution to the brother's dilemma which sharply satirizes both of Livio's preoccupations. It is the ideally ridiculous solution for the jealous but would-be pandar: he profits by allowing her to be seen

as a whore in the eyes of the world and yet he still gets to keep her physically untouched, retaining the key to her "ivory cabinet" and keeping her ensconced in the Bower away from other possible seducers. The two differing roles of the brother, linked through their shared emphasis on retaining possession of the sister's sexuality, are comically joined in this absurd scenario.

The depth of Livio's jealous distrust becomes particularly evident to readers after Castamela's private interview with the Marquess. At first, he is eager to leave them alone so that his sister may charm the infirm old man, when they reappear, however, he immediately assumes that she has been physically dishonoured. Since we have actually seen the exchange between the two, we know that Livio's suspicions are unfair to both his sister and the old man and that his violent, irrational delusions reflect the frenzy of a jealous man, whose perspective we now recognise and reject. His decision to force Castamela to wed the previously scorned Romanello then confirms just how determined he is to retain control over his sister and to dictate her every action. He forced her to leave for the court and pushed her to remain with the Marquess, and yet now that she shows signs of liberating herself from him, he resolves to make her marry Romanello whether she wishes to or not.

The transformation of Livio's jealousy and his potentially violent desire to control his sister comes at the conclusion of the play. Castamela's apparent insolence, combined with Romanello's refusal to have anything to do with the girl, make the brother bitterly regret his desire to exploit Castamela materially. The "violent disorder" of his jealousy, however, is redoubled by his sister's new behaviour, and it is only after Troylo reveals that he has become betrothed to Castamela that Livio realizes how inappropriate and unjustified his fancies have been. Far from being a susceptible victim, Castamela has virtuously allowed herself to be courted by the Marquess' heir and has won his fixed attentions. When she tries to apologise for her secrecy, he forestalls her by acknowledging his poor

behaviour and his inability to act properly as a brother: "[You have been] much more worthy / A better Brother, he a better Friend / Than my dull braines could fashion" (V.iii.94-96). By tempting him to be a pandar, Troylo has proven him unworthy of his authority; in confessing his faults, Livio relinquishes his control over his sister and makes no effort to direct her further. The destabilizing effect of the brother then vanishes as he gives up his ambivalent authority over his sister and the empty place of their father is filled by the husband who has an established and recognized place in the family hierarchy. Further reinforcing Troylo's position at Livio's expense is his social rank as the heir to the Marquess. In the public realm, he is the lawful ruler, the symbolic father to all of his subjects, Castamela and Livio included. In deciding on Castamela's marriage, he, not the brother, is the fitting successor to the siblings' father, taking his place as head in both the private and public realms.

Equally important, the underlying incestuous tensions which accompany Livio's desire to hoard--or husband--his sister's virtues too closely are dissipated when he relinquishes his rights to her. She moves away from her original family into a new relationship, and Livio is compensated by being presented with one of the Fancies, Clarella, niece to the Marquess. Critics dismiss this last minute coupling as off-hand or ridiculous, but it is important to mark Livio's symbolic liberation from a too obsessive concern with his sister. Once Troylo succeeds in sundering the close ties between the siblings, which kept them focusing on one another, Livio can now direct all his energy, sexual and otherwise, outward and more appropriately towards his new wife. Giving up Castamela, he receives a more appropriate substitute and can adopt the more stable and uncontested role of husband.

If Livio must learn to give up his sister gracefully and turn to a wife, separating marital from fraternal affection, Castamela must also come to stand independent of her brother. Admittedly, her new autonomy gives her little true freedom, since it is only designed to allow her to wed Troylo. Yet

it is interesting as part of Ford's exploration of the complex psychological ties that bind the two siblings. Like Annabella, who is often criticized by scholars for her docile passivity, Castamela is too much influenced by her brother and too willing, out of love for him, to do as he commands. But her ordeal at his hands and her growing appreciation of his mental instability, teach her to reject his authority. She can resist his orders now and his influence, she tells him in her repudiation scene, because "sufferance / Of former trialls hath too strongly arm'd me [against his threats]" (IV.i.54-55).

Ford has also carefully shown her gradual liberation from dependence on Livio earlier in the play. Twice, she appeals to him, begging him not to abandon her and trying to make him respect their family relationship. When the Fancies appear to whisk her away in the carriage, she attempts to catch his attention. "Brother, one word in private" (I.iii.163). When he ignores her, she insists, futilely, that he, not Troylo, take her arm and escort her into the carriage: "Whether-but-he's my brother" (I.iii.208). Later, it is with just the one word, plaintive plea, "Brother" (II.ii.278), that she tries to move him. On both occasions, she is unsuccessful, and his callous indifference to her, as he seems to push her towards prostitution, painfully breaks her loving dependence on him. After Morosa hints that the Fancies are actually courtesans, "[a] kind of chaste collapsed Ladies" (II.ii.278), and informs the girl that the Marquess was responsible for her brother's elevation, she undergoes a marked personality change. She accepts her new destiny without shrinking: "The chance is throwne; I now am fortunes minion. / I will be bold and resolute" (II.ii.288-89). This abrupt hardening in her nature fortifies her in her defiance of her brother, gives her the strength to reform him, and moves her to enter on a secret marriage contract with Troylo.

While Ford concludes with the proposed weddings of both sister and brother, the whole action of the play denies this final assertion of the supremacy of marriage. In order to transform the play

from potential tragedy to comedy and to eliminate the incestuous tensions between brother and sister, the two must relinquish each other in marriage, but Ford still looks with indifference on the relationship between man and wife. He does not present Troylo, after all, as a lover or potential husband, and in Castamela's only scene with him, she speaks exclusively of her brother and his "violent disorder." It is the siblings, particularly the brother, who come under scrutiny and who succeed in exhibiting the repentance (on Livio's part) and forgiveness (from Castamela) necessary to divert their relationship from potential violence, destructiveness, and exploitation--all the factors which characterize earlier male-female sibling relationships--into an ideal state of love. While they may both be about to head into wedlock, it is the relationship between the two siblings that has been perfected and that the audience has confidence will thrive, particularly now that the potentially sexual element to Livio's protectiveness has been expunged.

Ford's concern with the reformation of overly protective family members and the successful dissipation of potentially incestuous attraction also finds expression in the Marquess' change of heart. Like Livio, the uncle has kept his nieces immured too closely. Placing them in the Bower and allowing none but travelling musicians to see them, he guards the three girls so jealously that all sorts of stories about his harem begin to circulate. His very secretiveness, in telling no one that they are related to him, increases the public's suspicions of illicit sexual relations. But at the conclusion of the play, he dispels the unwholesome rumours circulating about his behaviour by inviting members of his court, such as Flavia and Julio, to see the "Fancies." More important, he, like Livio, comes to understand his error in keeping his wards away from the public eye and vows to let them be courted and wed. After an ironic comment on his subjects' suspicions, "[i]ndeed my Mistresses / They are. I have none other" (V.iii.110-111), he proceeds to invite members of his court to woo the girls:

Now Romanello,

And Gentlemen, for such I know yee all,
 Portions they shall not want both fit and worthy;
 Nor will I look on fortune. If you like
 Court them and win them; here is free accesse,
 In mine owne Court henceforth. (V.iii.112-117)

It is the progress of the principle sub-plot, however, which particularly underlines Ford's interest in the exploration and reformation of sibling relationships. In a careful parallel to the events of the main plot, he depicts the strong affection between the siblings Flavia and Romanello and explicitly contrasts this family love with the sordid exploitation that characterizes the marriages in the play. When the play begins, Flavia has been left almost completely isolated by her former husband's insistence on the illegality of their marriage. "... [C]onceav'd / In all opinions" (II.i.113-114) to be Fabricio's strumpet rather than his wife, Flavia is pursued by lecherous courtiers and indulged by Julio, the second husband who has bought her. Most cruelly of all, she is "shooke off" not just by society but "[e]ven from mine own blood. for Romanello / Mine onely brother, shunnes me, and abhors / To owne me for his sister" (II.i.114-118). Immersed as she is in misery, Flavia ultimately obtains some kind of happiness not by forgiving her first or second husband but by winning back her brother's affection. This is the relationship which Ford suggests may be able to be redeemed and which is less susceptible to becoming a sexual commodity.

Given Flavia's two wretched marital relationships, there is plenty of opportunity for the dramatist to depict a joyful regeneration of Flavia's unhappy marriage. Flavia's first husband, Fabricio, engages in the "goodly pandarisme" described by Troylo, pretending to a pre-contract to

another woman so that his wife would no longer be legally married to him. He then offers her to Lord Julio, a man who, after trying unsuccessfully to seduce her or purchase her favours, "[h]eld it no blemish to his blood and greatnesse, / From a plaine Merchant with a thousand Ducats / To buy his wife, nay justifie the purchase" (I.i.45-47). For all Fabricio professes to mourn the loss of his virtuous wife and for all he cringes under the lash of her angry tongue, he does not flinch from attempting to squeeze extra money from her on two different occasions. Finally, after gaining two hundred more ducats as a bribe, he agrees to give the couple relief and leaves the country.

Though behaving with a generous indulgence to his new bride, Lord Julio is scarcely more admirable than the man he has replaced. Speaking to her first husband, Flavia describes quite unsentimentally Julio's ruthless attempts to win her, attempts which led to the destruction of their marriage and her reputation.

I live happy

In this great Lords love, now. But could his cunning

Have train'd me to dishonour, we had never

Beene sunder'd by th'temptation of his purchase. (II.i.119-122)

Clearly, she realises the bitter irony of events: her resistance to Julio's attempted seduction and her refusal to be adulterous actually leads to the destruction, rather than the preservation, of her marriage. Neither she nor Ford provides excuses for Julio's behaviour, nor do either attempt to romanticize it. Instead, the dramatist has her realise that Julio's actions are those of a ruthless and predatory man who is motivated by lust, not love, in his pursuit of her and who is determined to satisfy his desires regardless of the cost to others. As her words indicate, she also perceives that she is nothing more than a possession: sold by her first husband, the impoverished merchant, purchased by her second,

who uses his wealth to break up the couple. She will not pretend to herself that either of them love her or treat her as anything other than a commodity to be bought by the prosperous and cashed in by the desperate.

Both husbands, then, behave with a mercenary cruelty that Ford does not trouble to alleviate, attempt to excuse, or endeavour to reform or soften. They are both, clearly, irredeemable, and the fact that the gentle Flavia views them both with such a clear-eyed realism casts them in a particularly negative light. Their actions also reveal the potential instability of the marriage contract and the ease with which it can be dissolved. As Huebert notes, they act as an unsettling comment on the potential marriage between Troylo and Castamela (123-124).

Ford further unsettles Flavia's second marriage by making it clear that she still loves her first husband, despite his betrayal. When Fabricio, pocketing his additional ducats, leaves Flavia forever, she cannot conceal her distress. Instead of being pleased that she has shaken off a relentless parasite, she tries to hide her devastation from her new husband in the most famous lines of the play: "Beshrew't, the brim of your [Julio's] hat / Strucke in mine eye--*Dissemble honest teares* : *The griefes my heart does labour in--smarts* / Unmeasurably" (III.ii.98-101). Still loving her first husband, it is hard to imagine that she could ever be truly happy with the man who has cynically used his wealth and position to separate them.

Thus, for the miserable Flavia, the only relationship which is can bring her joy or comfort is the one with her brother. Her blood tie with Romanello cannot be tarnished by money nor treated like any other marketable product, and Ford presents it as more enduring and less corruptible than the purely legal bond between husband and wife. Reconciliation with her first husband is impossible, nor can she gloss over the unscrupulous behaviour of the second, but Flavia never views her brother

with the same unsentimental cynicism with which she assesses both of her husbands' actions. From the beginning, she sets out to win back her brother's affection. Similarly, he, while disgusted with her seeming licentiousness, never categorizes her as an asset which he can use to raise his standing at court, and he refuses to exploit her newly elevated position to increase his own wealth, as Livio so crassly recommends. Clearly idealizing the bond between the siblings, Ford makes the focus of the sub-plot the restoration of love, trust, and understanding between Romanello and Flavia, rather than between the newlyweds.

Revealingly, it is immediately after her first, distressing interview with her former husband that Flavia begins to reflect upon her brother and she resolves to regain his trust with a passionate intensity that she never allows herself to show for Fabricio. "Oh it mads me," she declares, "[b]eing but two, that we should live at distance, / As if I were a Cast-away" (III.ii.127-129). As with Livio and Castamela, the relationship is intensified by the fact that there are only two siblings, and this strengthens her sense that they must stand together in the face of the world. Her unhappiness over their separation also echoes Castamela's plaintive observation that "I and my Brother / Ne're parted at such distance," Ford stresses that both sisters' anguish arises out of separation from their brothers, not their wooers. For Flavia, Romanello is the one person who can partially remedy her feelings of isolation, give her some consolation in her pain, and legitimately offer her love.

Thus, while she can never criticize Julio to his face for coming between her and her true husband, she does dare to blame him for not remedying the coldness that he has caused between her and her brother. Angrily, she tells him that "you / For your part take no care on't [their separation], nor attempt / To draw him hither" (III.ii.129-131). When her aristocratic husband appears reluctant to help her, she momentarily forgets her self-control and the deference she feels she owes him. For

the first and only time in the play, she ceases to be meek and docile and commands him to assist her: "Yea marry must ye, / Or else you love not me. Not see my Brother? / Yes I will see him, so I will, will see him. / You hear't" (III.ii.132-135). As she insists on her right to have, at the very least, a warm relationship with Romanello, Ford suggests the depth of her anger with Julio and her frustration, not just at the loss of her brother but of Fabricio as well. The repetition of "will" emphasizes her determination and her agitated, almost hysterical confusion; the immediate words of apology which follow her attack, "Oh my good Lord, deere gentle, prithee, / You shan't be angrie" (III ii.135-136), betray something close to shocked horror and disbelief at her outburst. The loss of contact with her brother is the only thing that can move her to defy her highly born husband.

When Flavia finally speaks with her brother, her words particularly serve to contrast the social construction of marriage with the natural ties of blood. In the face of Romanello's determined coldness, she cites their shared tie, which, she argues, makes them so alike that it is monstrous of him not to show affection. She demands:

For what one act of mine, even from my Childhood,

Which may deliver my deserts inferiour

Or to our Births or Familie, is Nature

Become, in your contempt of me, a Monster? (IV.ii.14-17)

Their equality on all levels, her argument runs, should bring with it affection, unless ruined by some despicable action on her part. Unlike the tie between husband and wife, which is too easily sundered by the greed of Fabricio and the lust of Julio, her words claim that sibling affection is part of the natural order.

Further, her words suggest how the sibling relationship, unlike the marital, empowers her.

As a wife--a sexual commodity--she is shuffled from man to man; as a sister, she has a right to both demand and expect her brother's loyalty and respect. He might deride her question with the contemptuous response: "You are a woman" (IV.ii.20); yet even this does not daunt her. For if her momentary defiance of Julio elicits an immediate, frightened apology, she actively challenges her brother's attempts to belittle her. And while her first husband, Fabricio, may be able to create her as a prostitute in the eyes of the world by the simple act of inventing a bogus pre-contract, she assumes control of her relationship with her brother. The tie must endure, she argues, unless she by "one act of [hers]" breaks it.

When Romanello persists in rejecting her, she further idealizes their relationship, describing herself as "[p]ensive and unfortunate, / Wanting a Brothers bosome to dis-burthen / More griefs, then female weaknesse can keep league with" (IV ii 20-22). She has never made such an appeal to her husband, nor, hiding behind her mask of "humorous anticknesse in carriage" (IV.ii.43), has she dared admit to feeling "pensive and unfortunate." Instead, she conceals her true sentiments from Julio, pretending to be quite delighted with her new position in life. The scene between the siblings is then so powerful because, after struggling to put a brave face on her degrading situation, she finally finds someone to whom she can confide her grief, despair, and desperation. That it is her brother clearly underlines the high value which Ford places on the relationship.

It is also to her brother that Flavia turns in order to obtain protection from the unwanted attentions of two of her husband's courtiers. Her reconciliation not only brings her a new feeling of happiness, it provides her with a means of security that she is unable to find with Julio. As she explains her reasons for her seemingly indecorous behaviour--to hide her pain at an intolerable situation and to keep the two courtiers at arm's length--Romanello's anger gradually disappears,

replaced by affectionate warmth towards his sister. Her final appeal:

Now Romanello, thou art every refuge

I flie for right to; if I be thy Sister,

And not a Bastard, answer their [the courtiers'] confession,

Or threaten vengeance, with perpetuall silence (IV.ii.75-78)

again centres on the responsibilities of their kinship and holds up family ties, rather than marital, as her protection and support. She can appeal to his sense of duty, as well as his affection, as she cannot to the husband who has degraded marriage to a financial transaction. How can she expect comfort from the man who has purchased her? Making it even more difficult to turn to him is the fact that Julio has caused her predicament. He both tempted her husband to disown her and sent two of his own courtiers to advance his suit, exposing her to the unwanted attentions which continue after her second marriage. By turning her into a seeming whore, he leaves her vulnerable to the men he first sent to seduce her away from Fabricio. The only person she has left--her refuge--is the one person who does not view her as a potential sexual conquest and whose affection, Ford makes clear, is not tainted by exploitation.

Ford then confirms his idealization of the siblings' relationship through the rebirth of Romanello's love for his sister. At first he addresses her scornfully as "great Madam" and "madam" and refuses, like Castamela, to acknowledge their kinship. But in the same way that Castamela reforms her brother by proving herself virtuous, Flavia wins over Romanello by explaining her seemingly wanton behaviour. Her arguments bring him formally to acknowledge their kinship: "My Sister thou hast waken'd / Intranc'd affection from its sleepe to knowledge / Of once more who thou art" (IV.ii.84-86). In then proceeding to defend her and to elicit repentance from the lubricious

courtiers, Romanello actively proves that he is her true refuge and that Flavia's appeal to natural blood ties as her sanctuary was not ill-founded. If both Julio and Fabricio undermine marriage through their lust, greed, and lies, Romanello confirms the enduring strength of the tie that exists between siblings. This relationship is the only one that can be restored, for it is the only one that money cannot destroy.

Even more important, Flavia succeeds in restoring her brother's faith in womankind and in effect, takes the place of a wife, just as he, partially, stands in for her husband. Passionately in love with Castamela, Romanello falls into a bitter melancholy when the young woman goes to the court to join the Bower of the Fancies. Disguising himself as an antic malcontent, he manages to infiltrate the Bower and gives himself over to misogynistic reflections when he sees his erstwhile beloved joyfully cavorting with the rest of the Fancies. Rejecting her and the "thralldom" of his love, he proves, as Troylo says, that his feelings for the girl are shallow and weak. "meere courtship." By contrast, his affection for his sister withstands the test of her apparent licentiousness and is ultimately strengthened, rather than destroyed. He eventually accepts that her "antic lightness" is just a posture designed to hide her pain and to keep the attentions of the court lechers at bay. Thus, in Ford's hands the test does not expose the weakness of his feelings for Flavia (as the similar misunderstanding does with his passion for Castamela); it allows him to recognise and renew his family love for her. He welcomes their reconciliation:

My Sister thou hast waken'd
 Intranc'd affection from its sleep to knowledge
 Of once more who thou art; no jealous frenzie
 Shall hazard a distrust: reigne in thy sweetness,

Thou onely worthy Woman; these two Converts [newly reformed lecherous courtiers]

Record our hearty union. (IV.ii.84-89)

This "hearty union" compensates for Flavia's distant relationship with her husband, and, ironically, replaces Romanello's passionate but insubstantial feelings for Castamela. As a token of the depth of their feelings for one another, Ford makes the man promise to tell his sister the whole story of his love for Castamela, confiding in her, as she has in him. In one of the few scenes of true love in the play, the two turn to each other for mutual emotional support; appropriately, they leave the stage with Romanello's comment: "Lost in one comfort / Heere I have found another" (IV.ii.197-198).

The sub-plot and the main plot, then, are more closely tied together than many critics realise, reinforcing one another's views of love and placing the sibling over the marital relationship. Since Ford clearly believes that passionate feelings have little or no stability, Romanello's romantic love for Castamela is dismissed as "meere courtship," unable to withstand the pressure of seeing her in the Bower, and replaced by a more substantial affection based on inalterable blood ties. Sibling love and a "hearty union" provide the two with some comfort as Romanello sees his beloved marry another and Flavia confesses that Fabricio, the man who betrayed her, is her "onely lov'd Lord." Likewise, the feelings between Livio and his sister, which veer between being too possessively jealous to a desire to exploit her sexually are reformed when Livio believes he has actually pandered his sister. While there is no real hope, as Huebert argues, that the various marriages will last because the view of sexuality in the play is cynical and diseased (123-124), there is comfort and emotional promise in the renewed and strengthened sibling bonds, which are not based on the sexual love which the play views with such suspicion.

In particular, the reconciliation enacted between Flavia and her brother tightens the structural

links between the plot and the sub-plot, inversely paralleling the confrontation between Livio and Castamela. The two scenes constitute the emotional climaxes of their respective story-lines, in which the conflicts between the siblings reach their most intense moments. Both also present the wronged sister working the transformation of her jealous and angry brother and are based on the misunderstandings that arise from the brothers' hasty willingness to judge by surface appearances. Reforming their brothers, the sisters manage to replace their siblings' suspicious views of women with fancies that are truly chaste and noble. However, for Ford only relatives, primarily sisters can work this transformation, because the husband's relationship with his wife will always be sexualized. Hence, the three male family members--two brothers and an uncle--move from a conception of women which perceives them as sexual objects to a perception in which they are viewed as "chaste and noble," the figures of the Platonic worship of Henrietta Maria's circle. Livio lets go of his jealousy, Romanello comes to recognise Flavia's sterling virtue, and the Marquess ceases to keep his nieces immured in a harem-like Bower. By contrast, Ford does not even attempt such a transformation with the husbands. Since the marriage bond is validated by sexual consummation, husbands, he suggests, perceive their wives differently than brothers their sisters, nurturing fancies unchaste and ignoble. Only Fabricio undergoes a transformation similar to the brothers'. Tellingly, the former husband proves his regret for distrusting the virtue of his wife (which had been his excuse for disowning her) by becoming a Capuchin monk, again finally renouncing any sexual claim to her.⁸

The restoration of warm ties between Flavia and Romanello also offers a telling comment on the brother-sister relationship in the main plot by revealing just how important it is that Livio learn the error of his ways. Ford leaves Fabricio and Julio indifferent to the way in which they have treated Flavia. But the sibling tie, Ford indicates, is both stronger and more capable of true affection. As

we see Flavia's and Romanello's "union" strengthened, acting as a bulwark against the evils of the world. we begin to appreciate just why it is so important to Ford that Livio should become a proper, loving brother, even though this means, paradoxically, surrendering her to her future husband. For the dramatist, Flavia and Romanello stand as a model for ideal affection between siblings, affection which counters loveless marriages and potentially violent sexual passion alike.

The second sub-plot further emphasizes the contrast between sibling and marital ties within the play and the negative qualities which Ford assigns to romantic relationships. When the elderly and coarse Morosa weds the young Nitido, they deprive marriage of much of its dignity. The only two people who actually marry in the course of the play, their wedding looks ridiculous because of the vast age difference between bride and groom. Compounding this affront to the dignity of wedlock, Ford focuses on the unseemly antics of this mismatched couple, developing a plot in which Nitido is tricked by Spadone the eunuch into believing that he is being cuckolded by Secco. Unknown to the boy, however, Spadone is not actually physically incapacitated and may be the one who is actually enjoying the favours of the geriatric Morosa. It is, as critics complain, a gross, unsubtle, and sometimes indecent story, and yet it is important for acting as an extended parody of the romantic and marital love in the other two plots. While the marriage between the bawdy Morosa and the young Nitido may appear a grotesque travesty, nothing could be uglier than Fabricio's and Julio's treatment of Flavia, treatment which shows a cynical and mercenary disregard for the matrimonial bond. Although Fabricio disowns her and sells her to Julio, he persists in pestering her for money; Julio "marries" her only after his attempts to seduce her into an adulterous relationship fail. Conversely, the one character who honours marriage and remains chaste, Flavia, is rewarded for her loyalty by being cast off by her destitute husband and publicly labelled a whore.

Spadone's appearance of sexual impotency also parallels the Marquess' condition in the main plot, underlining the deliberately grotesque element in Ford's treatment of all physical passion. Rather than being powerful figures of sexual potency threatening ruin to the heroines, both Spadone and the Marquess are ineffective, comically incapable of performing even the physical act of seduction. The romantic lover, Troylo, is given equally unimpressive treatment. He, like Spadone, reveals no interest in the heroine till the end of the play and behaves in such a measured fashion that we have no idea that he is actually in love. Both the ruler and the virtuous, high born suitor are diminished through their links to Spadone, a connection emphasized by the final revelation that Spadone is Troylo's foster-brother. The coarse crudities of the sub-plot, then, make it difficult to have much faith in the two imminent marriages because the relationship between Julio and Flavia, or Troylo and Castamela, is not diametrically opposed to those of the lower-class characters. Ford leaves only the relationships between siblings unparalleled in a coarse sub-plot and untouched by this disparaging parody.

While Ford may have both Castamela and Flavia marry, thus dissipating the potential for sexual feeling between the siblings, he clearly perceives the two brother-sister relationships to be the ones with the potential for the mutual understanding and warmth that can exist only between equals. At the beginning of the play, Livio congratulates himself on having taken the steps to establish the market value of his sister by sending her to the court. "Then all those glories [uncut diamonds, unworn flowers, and sequestered sisters]," he assures Romanello, "are of esteeme, when us'd and set at price" (I.iii.109-110). However, it is precisely the fact that he cannot set his sister "at price" that causes his torment--only the husbands, Fabricio and Julio, can sell and buy a wife without compunction. Like them, he first regards his sister as a sexual commodity; unlike them, he eventually relinquishes this viewpoint and moves towards trust and affection. Both brothers, particularly

Romanello, embark on a warmer relationship with their sisters, their family ties strengthened, while the husbands are degraded beyond redemption or, like Troylo, left as mere cyphers. Either Ford is not interested in the husbands' relationship with their wives, or he takes too cynical a view of wedlock even to attempt to portray an affectionate marriage.

If the play ends unsatisfactorily, as so many critics charge, it is not because of its prurient deceptions, its lack of focused purpose or the absence of ties between sub-plots and main plot. It is because Ford can never quite resolve the problem of the characters' sexual passion and the necessary presence of husbands. In his work The Tragic Muse of John Ford, Sensabaugh argues that Ford shows an immoral contempt for marriage, elevating instead the pleasures of illicit sexual passion. But he seems to arrive at only half the equation, for it is not just marriage which Ford suspects but sexual passion itself. As almost all of Ford's treatments of marriage show, the playwright appears to view marriage and the sexual consummation which accompanies it as dehumanizing to both husband and wife, causing close to insane jealousy in the former and forcing the latter into little better than the position of a whore. For Ford, the construction of the wife, whom he presents as the sexual property of her husband, seems to be particularly degrading, for he depicts her husband treating her, as we see in the cases of Bianca, Penthea, Annabella, and Flavia, as a prostitute. Hence his three tragedies, Love's Sacrifice, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, and The Broken Heart, and the tragicomedy The Fancies consistently depict the husband as brutish and show the wife seeking comfort in other, non-sexual relationships.

In Love's Sacrifice, for instance, Bianca and Fernando express intense Platonic love for one another. But the closer they come to physically consummating their relationship, the more destructive and violent their feelings become. The attachments between all three of the main characters are based

purely on physical passion and lead to their violent deaths. Just as the Duke fell in love with the lower-born Bianca because she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen and he was compelled to marry her regardless of his family's disapproval, so she, in turn, falls in love with Fernando, who is, she declares, immeasurably better looking than her husband. In neither case is sexual passion being elevated; instead, Ford presents it as both a poor basis for a marriage and as destructive of order and society.⁹ Again, in The Broken Heart, Orgilus' feelings for Penthea remain so beautiful, elevated, and intense precisely because her marriage will not allow them to consummate sexually their mutual love. They are "married" but only in spirit and soul; physically and legally, there is no bond between them, and their relationship remains free of the jealousy, violence, and brutality which characterize Penthea's terrible marriage with Bassanes and which Ford presents as accompanying the physical passion of Giovanni, Soranzo, and the Duke of Pavy.

In 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and The Fancies Chaste and Noble, Ford begins to embark on a new route, one at least partly suggested by The Broken Heart. He begins to concentrate positive portrayals of love within the family, particularly between the brother and sister, setting these relationships in contrast to the marital. Giovanni then embodies both the idealized family love of the brother for his sister, cast in Platonic terms as an union between two souls, and the physical and romantic love of the husband, as he pursues an incestuous liaison with Annabella. When the role of the husband absolutely replaces that of the brother in his character, he becomes as brutish and destructive as Bassanes, the Duke of Pavy, and the callous Julio. The Fancies, one of Ford's last plays, further reveals this progression in the playwright's conception of love. Again, he locates family love within the Platonic ideal, but now he rigorously separates this love from the physical and contrasts it with the sexual feelings of the husband, suitor, and seducer. Thus, Octavio's Platonic

bower of the Fancies, cynically viewed by his subjects and readers alike as a cover for physical license (as it becomes for Giovanni) is precisely as it seems, "a nunnery, a retirement / For meditation." When he reveals that the Bower contains his three nieces, whom he is raising out of respect for his dead sister, his profession of chaste love for the girls is vindicated and clearly located within family love and loyalty. Just as Charles I and Henrietta Maria use the image of brother and virginal sister to illustrate the chaste quality of their affection, so it is only within the family, Ford clearly suggests, that the ideals of Platonic love can be realized. In the same way, Ford contrasts the genuine warmth between Romanello and his sister with the dehumanizing lust of Julio and Fabricio, which effectively prostitutes the hapless Flavia.

Closely linked to Ford's focus on family love in the sub-plot, the dramatist shows Livio undergoing a reverse progression from Giovanni, moving from the potentially incestuous feelings which make him behave like a jealous and violent husband to the final trust and affection with which he, like Romanello, views his sister. Ford's marked suspicion of the brother becoming increasingly "husband-like" indicates the extent to which he adapts sibling relationships in order to construct a different relationship between man and woman, a relationship based on the spiritual union of Platonism and freed from the male control over the female which is based in sexual possession. In her sociological study, Vikki Bell argues that incest reduplicates a traditional male hierarchy which sees female family members as objects, to be controlled through sexual possession. In Ford's plays, brothers acting as husbands are extreme extensions of patriarchal domination; their incest (or incestuous desire) reveals their attempts to exercise power in the socially inscribed fashion. The incest taboo, however, serves to make the incestuous brother, unlike the possessive husband, a figure of revulsion, and thus allows Ford to challenge the institution of the family and the position of the

husband. Because both Giovanni and Livio share an unsettlingly close resemblance to the jealous husbands of drama, Ford suggests that Giovanni's and Livio's violent obsession with their sisters are not as perverse as may first appear but simply characteristic traits of any relationship prefigured on the sexual ownership of woman by man. Underlining the similarities between incestuous brother and jealous, possessive husband, Ford ultimately rejects physical passion and replaces it with an asexual family love which relinquishes the control of sexual ownership.

Yet while Ford refuses to make husbands the central figures of The Fancies and uses them primarily as plot devices, they are still needed in order to prevent incestuous tensions and to stand in contrast to the ideal sibling relationship. Troylo's presence is in itself unremarkable, but he allows Livio to relinquish his sister and to prove that he has overcome both his jealousy and his view of his sister as a possession. In the same way, Flavia needs the comfort and protection of her brother precisely because she is bound in a loveless marriage to a man who purchased her. The husbands, by their very presence, underline the unique affection which the brother shares with his sister, for Ford cannot define or depict the sibling relationship except in terms of its difference from the marital or romantic. The brothers gain their identity by virtue of being set against their brutish or cold counterparts: their sisters' husbands or suitors.

Ford also recognises the rightful authority and power of the husband, presenting the brother who attempts to take his place as a twisted and unsettling caricature of the jealously possessive husband. He acknowledges the husband's legitimacy, while suggesting that such absolute power eventually leads to unhappy and sterile marriages in which wives such as Bianca, Penthea, Annabella, and Flavia live in nervous fear of their violently authoritative or possessive husbands. Ironically, it is precisely the brother's lack of position within this hierarchy of male power which leads

simultaneously to the two extremes explored by Ford: the Platonic love between Annabella and Giovanni which degenerates into incestuous dementia, as the brother insanely usurps the role of husband, and the ideal affection between the siblings of The Fancies which depends precisely on the brother's lack of authority over his sister. In insisting that the brother has no socially recognised identity or authority over his sister, Ford creates a situation in which the balance of power is not so one-sided as is the Renaissance's conception of the proper relationship between husband and wife or father and children. Giving up claim to his sister, as Livio learns to do, or establishing a new, affectionate relationship to compensate for a sterile marriage and a shallow infatuation, as Romanello and Flavia do, allows both brothers to engage in a male-female relationship which is finally free from coercion, force, or the exercise of authority, as well as from domestic tyranny and sexual jealousy. Since their relationship stands outside the rigid hierarchies of Renaissance society and is finally freed from the physical passion which the period viewed with such suspicion, brother and sister can exist as equals, in a relationship undefinable for the time except through contrast with its opposite, that between the husband and the wife.

Endnotes

1. For a similar interpretation, see Florence Ali's argument that the play is about our own misjudgements and our tendency to overlook the truth in an eagerness to believe the worst of people (69-77).
2. Ira Clark's interpretation of this play is heavily influenced by his conception of the playwright as a social conservative actively criticizing those who seek to rise above their appointed position. Thus, ignoring the main plot completely, he focuses on Flavia, the heroine of the sub-plot who marries a lord. He argues that this luckless woman, who is sold by her first husband into marriage with a second, is condemned by the characters because of "her apparently ignoble quest for status" (*Professional Playwrights* 81). But Ford never makes her social climbing, if it can even be called that, much of an issue, and indicates that she is criticized by society for her seemingly illicit relationship with Fabricio, not her status seeking.
3. Ian Robson, for example, claims that the play is too theatrical (235), dismissing the possibility of parody altogether.
4. In her study of the play, Kathleen McLuskie points out that Ford draws on a variety of earlier dramatic conventions and devices in order to manipulate his audience and deflate their expectations ("Language and Matter with a Fit of Mirth: Dramatic Construction in the Plays of John Ford" 111). Yet she completely ignores the long tradition of sibling relationships in earlier drama and fails to place Ford within this context.
5. Cf. McLuskie's "'Language and Matter with a Fit of Mirth': Dramatic Construction in the Plays of John Ford" (98, 111). The set conventions which she concentrates on, however, are not those of the brother-sister relationship.
6. All references and line numbers come from Dominick J. Hart's edition of the play (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985).
7. For a contrasting but related view, see Robson who argues that Livio keeps his sister close not out of possessiveness but to allow her potential as a marketable asset to reach its peak (22).
8. A close parallel of Fabricio and these jealous kinsmen is the obsessively jealous husband Bassanes of *The Broken Heart*. He renounces his violent suspicions of his wife and becomes an image of Stoic restraint only upon her approaching death. By contrast, Penthea and Orgilus share an idealized spiritual union, but their relationship is never physically consummated because of Penthea's legal marriage to Bassanes.
9. Cf. Stavig's observation that *Love's Sacrifice* allows Ford to satirize all three principal characters' diseased outlook on physical, irrational love (*John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order* 122-123).

Conclusion

Brother-sister relationships in Renaissance drama have tended to be overlooked, perhaps because they are not significant to the plays of William Shakespeare. Yet the brother and sister play an important role in the development of Renaissance tragedy and tragicomedy. From Octavia and Loqrine to The Duchess of Malfi and The Fancies Chaste and Noble, the brother-sister relationship allows dramatists to explore questions of identity, of gender conflict, and of differing definitions of family and familial roles. Whether as an important psychological symbol of the self in turmoil, or as an image of a disordered family and society, hostile brothers and sisters gradually become an established dramatic convention. The treatment of the relationship reaches its zenith in the complexity of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore and the parody of The Fancies.

Despite primogeniture, in domestic literature of the later Renaissance children are presented as equals, deriving a shared being from their parents. In the drama, this connection is reinforced and exploited, the antagonism between siblings seeming to arise out of and to be ultimately strengthened by their tense sense of equality and their shared resemblance. Thus, as Cleopatra explains it in The False One, many sisters respond with defiance to the brothers they "only know [their] equal" (I.ii.27). In A Nice Wanton, brothers and sister are "three branches of an ill tree, / Two nought and one godly" (2: 161); in Octavia, the sister is her imperial sibling's "second self" (I. 1613); in The Duchess of Malfi the Duchess is the twinned reflection of her younger brother Ferdinand; in Massinger's Duke of Milan and The Emperour of the East the sister is "partner of [her brother's] being" (V.ii.112); in the Fletcher and Massinger collaboration, The Propheress, the royal sister is "partner of [her brother's] life and Empire" (IV.iv.5); in 'Tis Pity, brother and sister share "one beauty to a double

soul" (I.ii.234), "one soul, one flesh, one heart, one all" (I.i.34). It is this sense of the intimate connection between brother and sister, physically, mentally, and most important, socially, which makes the relationship so powerful to the drama of the time.

Consistently cast as parts of one being derived from their parents, brothers and sisters provide playwrights of the time with a multi-leveled means of exploring conceptions of both self and family. Parts of the same being, sharing the same blood, hostile brother and sister provide a focal point for tension over the nature of women and the period's attempt to assert gender difference: brother and sister, sharing "one beauty . . . to a double soul," bring together a sense of the similarity and yet the difference between the sexes. In particular, royal sisters fulfill the potential and the obligations of their noble house. Instead of unlawfully appropriating traditional male qualities, they grasp the power of their high blood and claim, as Cleopatra of The False One does, "a [royal] privilege, equall to the Male" (I.i.15-16).

The focus on the strong blood tie between brother and sister also undercuts the period's growing emphasis on the husband-wife relationship and the absolute power of the monarchy. Brothers subvert traditional family roles in their diabolical mimicry of the father and the husband. As well, the avenging brother and sister, joined in shared loyalty to their house, mount a legitimate challenge to the political authority of husband and king by hearkening back to an older conception of kingship and to a definition of family built on group rather than individual identity.

Symbolic parts of the same being, antagonistic siblings also provide a metaphor for division and turmoil in the family, society, Christendom, and most of all, in the self. Whether loving or hating their sisters, brothers like Vindice, Flamineo, Ferdinand, Giovanni, and Livio stand caught in a limbo between childhood and adulthood, unable to make the transition to an adult identity gained through

the roles of husband and father. It is no accident then that brothers are consistently associated with madness, lack of position, and loss of identity, for whether they direct excessive love towards these images of themselves, as Giovanni and Livio do, or the extremes of destructive hate, they are pictures of the self fixated on itself. When brothers such as Flamineo, Ferdinand, and Giovanni wilfully destroy or pander the sisters who are parts of themselves, they reveal the destructiveness of their individualism, not just to society but to themselves.

Looking down on the dead Duchess, Bosola sadly observes that Ferdinand has "bloodily approved the ancient truth, / That kindred commonly do worse agree, / Than remote strangers" (IV.ii.264-266). For Ferdinand and Giovanni, the blood that affirms their kinship with their sisters-- that provides material proof of the 'kind' tie that joins siblings-- serves equally well as a symbol of their murderous hate. It is this paradox that informs the brother-sister relationships of Renaissance drama: that it is the very intimacy of the connection--the siblings' shared resemblance, similar nature, and social equality--that creates the potential for not just an ideal love but the most intense of hatred.

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