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**The Deianeiran heroine in six English tragedies, 1603–1703**

**Gay, Richard Roland, Ph.D.**

**The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1991**

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THE DEIANEIRAN HEROINE IN  
SIX ENGLISH TRAGEDIES  
1603-1703

by

Richard Roland Gay

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
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1991

Approved by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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This text comprises a synchronic study of seven plays: Sophocles' Trachiniae, Thomas Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's The Maid's Tragedy, John Ford's The Broken Heart, Thomas Otway's Venice Preserved, Thomas Southerne's The Fatal Marriage, and Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent. The primary aim of this study is to define the female protagonist in each as a Deianeiran heroine, a counterpoint to the familiar Herculean hero. The secondary aim of this study is to enhance the critical reputations of these plays, which have suffered because the female protagonists have been misunderstood. Much of the critical undervaluation of these plays is ascribable to the phallogentric tendency of liberal humanist scholars to consider masculine values as superior to feminine values, at least in the world of dramatic tragedy. Because the heroines in these plays remain true to feminine value systems, they have often been classified as passive victims who wallow in self-indulgent grief. The Deianeiran heroine possesses traditional female virtues--love of home and family and a belief in the sacredness of the vows of love. Coupled with these virtues is an inherited belief in obedience to patriarchal authority, in itself a traditional female virtue. The tragedy in each play is initiated when



the authority figures become corrupt. The heroine, then, must choose whether to remain obedient or to act against patriarchal authority for the preservation of the higher good--i.e., home, family, vows of love. For the Deianeiran heroine, however, defiance of authority violates the "natural" order--i.e., the patriarchal system--and brings disaster, a risk that she foresees and willingly takes. Although the ensuing disaster corrects the corruption in the authority system that caused this conflict, this correction comes too late to save the heroine: she tragically dies in the course of events and loses the things that she has fought to preserve.

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## INTRODUCTION

The following chapters comprise a study inspired by Eugene M. Waith's The Herculean Hero. In his study, Waith examines seven English plays: Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, George Chapman's Bussy D'Ambois, William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus, and John Dryden's The Conquest of Granada, Aureng-Zebe, and All for Love. Although he acknowledges that the plays are "seven separate entities" (HH 11), Waith argues that they share a particular kind of hero, what he calls the Herculean hero. His primary aim is to define this hero and to examine "the special variety of tragic experience produced when the Herculean hero is portrayed" (HH 15). Briefly, the Herculean hero is "a warrior of great stature who is guilty of striking departures from the morality of the society in which he lives" (HH 11). Focusing his readings of the individual plays on the hero, Waith secondarily aims to enhance the critical reputation of these plays, whose "merits have often been obscured by a misunderstanding of the protagonist" (HH 11). He argues that "To study the nature of this hero is to get at the central problems of interpretation posed by the plays" (HH 11).

Likewise, the present study is structured as a study of seven plays: Sophocles' Trachiniae, Thomas Heywood's A

Woman Killed with Kindness, Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's The Maid's Tragedy, John Ford's The Broken Heart, Thomas Otway's Venice Preserved, Thomas Southerne's The Fatal Marriage, and Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent. Each play is a separate entity and poses unique questions, but each shares a particular kind of heroine, what I call the Deianeiran heroine. My primary aim is to define this heroine and to examine "the special variety of tragic experience produced when the [Deianeiran heroine] is portrayed." Briefly, the Deianeiran heroine is a woman whose remarkable commitment to duty evokes an admiration worthy of classifying her as a tragic heroine. And, like Waith, focusing my readings of the individual plays on the heroine, I secondarily aim to enhance the critical reputation of these plays, or at least to prompt the reader to re-think inherited value judgments. Such a re-thinking is necessary, I believe, because these plays--like those studied by Waith--are also subject to a host of negative criticisms which can be traced to a misunderstanding of the heroine.

Although the heroines in the English plays are distinct individuals, each closely resembles Deianeira, the second wife of Heracles, as she is presented in Sophocles' Trachiniae: the heroine experiences a dilemma within the orbit of marriage, a dilemma caused by an "intruder"; she is unwillingly involved in a love triangle; either directly or

indirectly, she causes the death of the primary male character or causes him to long for death; she is initially passive, alternating between discernment and mental confusion characterized by emotional periods of self-scrutiny; she possesses a strong belief in domestic values; she believes in her own innate goodness; she laments the plight of women; and her final attempt to restore domestic stability to her environment ends in suicide. Listing superficial similarities between literary characters is a simple matter of detective work; the important issue, however, is the more complex matter of interpretation. What are we to think of such a heroine? Although there is no critical consensus regarding the individual female protagonists, for the most part critics have been unkind to these heroines: they are passive and helpless, victims of circumstances beyond their control; they are emotionally shallow or even naive simpletons; they wallow in self-indulgent grief and masochism; they are Eve-figures, serving as warnings to the fair ladies in the audience; or they are simply pathetic. These heroines have been reduced to such creatures because critical orthodoxy has awarded a female protagonist in tragedy heroic stature on equal footing with her male counterpart only if she were "hard, approaching the masculine in quality" (Nicoll 158). In this view, a Medea or a Lady Macbeth is worthy of study, while a Deianeira or an Anne Frankford is not. Feminists have

pointed out that this traditional assessment of a female protagonist is, to say the least, phallogentric. Much of the critical misunderstanding and undervaluation of the plays that I will study is a result of scholars approaching these texts with critical blinders--esteeming traditionally masculine traits and concerns while disdaining traditionally feminine traits and concerns.

Katherine M. Rogers explains that the values traditionally designated as masculine include "reason, abstract ideals such as honor and patriotism, assertion of one's rights, friendship, and group loyalties"; and the values traditionally designated as feminine include "sensitivity, tenderness, love, family ties, and the worth of every human life" ("Masculine" 390). In other words, woman is philosophically linked "with emotion and the concrete and man with reason and abstract ideals" ("Masculine" 403n1). According to psychologist Carol Gilligan, such value systems are not innate, but are human constructs:

At a time when efforts are being made to eradicate discrimination between the sexes in the search for social equality and justice, the differences between the sexes are being rediscovered in the social sciences. This discovery occurs when theories formerly considered to be sexually neutral in their scientific objectivity are found instead to reflect a consistent observational and evaluative bias. Then the presumed neutrality of science, like that of language itself, gives way to the recognition that the categories of knowledge are human constructions. (6)

We can conclude, then, that although critics have historically considered their character evaluations to be sexually neutral, they are instead guided by a phallogentric bias. Gilligan concludes: "Thus, when women do not conform to the standards of psychological expectation, the conclusion has generally been that something is wrong with the women" (14). The heroines in this study, I will argue, are worthy of admiration--there is nothing "wrong" with them. Each possesses the female virtues traditionally ascribed to her--love of home and family and a belief in the sacredness of the vows of love. However, coupled with these virtues is an inherited belief in obedience to patriarchal authority, in itself a traditional female virtue. The tragedy in each play results when these virtues come into conflict through a corruption of the authority figures in the play, what Jacqueline Pearson calls "the malign power of fathers and the patriarchal system they create" (81). In this conflict, the heroine must choose whether to remain obedient or to act against patriarchal authority for the preservation of the higher good--i.e., home, family, vows of love. Because she chooses the latter course, she inspires admiration. For the tragic heroine, however, defiance of authority violates the "natural" order--i.e., the patriarchal system--and brings disaster, a risk that she foresees and willingly takes. Although the ensuing disaster corrects the corruption in the authority system that caused



this conflict, this correction comes too late to save the heroine: she dies in the course of events and loses the things that she has fought to preserve. Thus, in her death we are deeply moved.

A related critical problem shared by these plays is one of generic convention. Are these plays tragedies? As in the the character studies, there is no critical consensus regarding the individual plays; but, universally, critics, reluctant to assign the female protagonist heroic stature, have been driven to qualify each play as some kind of tragic sub-genre. Such qualifications include domestic tragedy, sentimental tragedy, tragedy of manners, communal tragedy, political tragedy, revenge tragedy, pathetic tragedy, affective tragedy, she-tragedy, tragedy of a special kind, or not tragedy in the usual sense. Additionally, some of these plays are seen as various hybrids or transitional pieces. I do not intend to posit a new generic category, but I do intend to question the validity of traditional categories and suggest that they are subject to misuse. Attempting to pigeon-hole a play as a pathetic tragedy, for instance, undoubtedly colors our value judgment; the category itself might be a false generic construct causing us to neglect intrinsic merits of the play in question.

Throughout the history of literary criticism, the personal biases of scholars have inevitably been reflected in their criticism of literary texts. In linguistic terms,

if the act of literary analysis--or the critical history of a particular text--can be envisioned as a signifying chain or as a narrative in itself, a text as signifier produces various subject positions for critics in the narrative; thus, the text floats in its signification. For example, the signifying chain or critical narrative of a Sophoclean tragedy extends for over two thousand years. Because individual critics write their character or generic analyses at particular moments when they traverse the signifying chain or enter the narrative, they only see one of the many available signifieds. Critics, then, are often guilty of using a text independent of its meaning; a text assumes the role of signifier only. This linguistic model is instructive because it opens texts and allows critics to focus on other interpretations which have previously been repressed by systematic biases such as phallocentrism and false generic constructs. Although this theoretical approach can be misused if pushed too far--it is possible to formulate an incorrect interpretation which violates the "intention of the text," for a text certainly cannot "mean everything" (Eco 666)--this model is useful as a wedge to pry open the signifying chain.

Other recent developments in the field of critical theory have provided useful approaches to aid in opening the signifying chain; my first chapter will discuss three of these developments--approaches that question inherited

notions of gender, historicism, and canonicity--that are instrumental in defending my proposal to identify a particular kind of tragic heroine: the Deianeiran heroine--a tragic figure who demands admiration, not simply pity or sympathy. Chapter Two is an analysis of Sophocles' Trachiniae, which presents the ancient dramatist's version of the death of Heracles at the hands of Deianira, his second wife. This discussion will serve to illustrate structural and thematic parallels between the Trachiniae and the English plays that follow, but, more importantly, my survey of the critical scholarship on the Sophoclean tragedy will serve as a paradigm for my analyses of critical scholarship in the following chapters.

Again, these plays are independent works of art, and my intention is that the separate chapters on each play will stand alone as literary criticism; however, the chapters are designed to be read sequentially, and I intend that the individual discussions will represent a persuasive synthesis of a distinct literary type, a type that reaches back to the Golden Age of Athens and resurfaced during a one-hundred-year period in the history of English drama. Unlike Waith, who proves that the English dramatists in his study were conscious of the Herculean tradition, I do not propose a conscious modeling of the English heroines upon Sophocles' Deianeira; nevertheless, Waith's study rose to fill a need in the current critical dialogue, and my study

is intended to fill a similar need. Undoubtedly, it will raise many unanswered questions, but I believe that my discussion will provide an added dimension to the study of English tragedy.

## CHAPTER I

## WHY DEIANEIRA?

In 1962, Eugene M. Waith published The Herculean Hero to fill a void in the then current critical dialogue concerning tragedy. He felt that this "particular kind of hero, once popular, now less so and often misunderstood . . . is a legitimate kind of tragic hero" (HH 11,15). He continues:

. . . I do not present the Herculean hero as the typical protagonist of tragedy nor even of heroic tragedy. He differs almost as much from Corneille's Horace or Rodrigue as from Shakespeare's Hamlet or Lear. Hercules and his successors comprise a distinct type . . . . (HH 15)

The Herculean hero differs from these traditional tragic figures in many respects, most particularly in the way that this new figure embodies a unique type of morality. He is a warrior of extraordinary strength, self-assured and self-centered; a protagonist whose dedication to the heroic ideal often leads him to commit acts of savage brutality, but who is also capable of great devotion; a figure who regards himself, and is regarded by others, as the benefactor of humanity, but whose final treatment is usually unjust; a hero whose ability to endure extraordinary suffering evokes a response of wonder, but who also possesses human limitations. Waith briefly discusses the

unique morality of the mythological Hercules, whose "exploits are strange mixtures of beneficence and crime, of fabulous quests and shameful betrayals, of triumph over wicked enemies and insensate slaughter of the innocent" (HH 16). Moving from epic to drama, Waith discusses this hero's portrayal in classical tragedy: in Euripides' Heracles and Seneca's Hercules Furens, which tell the story of the hero's murder of Megara, his first wife, as a result of his madness; and in Sophocles' Trachiniae and Seneca's Hercules Oetaeus, which tell the story of the hero's death, a death unwittingly caused by Deianeira, his second wife.

Waith's readings of both the classical and the English plays are illuminating and valuable, and his study maintains critical importance; nevertheless, I would like to revue Waith's analysis of Deianeira in the Sophoclean tragedy:

Though Deianira is an appealing and moving character, what gives significance and emotional appeal to her story is her relationship to Heracles. Separation from this greatest of men is a torment; the knowledge that she has killed him is unbearable. Instead of turning sympathy and attention away from Heracles, she focuses both upon him. No character could more effectively portray his unique worth. (HH 22)

When Waith's study was published, nearly thirty years ago, the above comment probably caused little concern; however, Catherine Belsey has recently argued that such comments reflect the phallocentric bias implicit in liberal humanism,

"the consensual orthodoxy of the west" (ix). This orthodoxy, Belsey asserts, directs the critic toward an "asymmetrical" outlook: "Man is the subject of liberal humanism. Woman has meaning in relation to man" (ix). The power of this consensual orthodoxy is characteristic of much commentary on the Trachiniae: e.g., "[Deianeira's personality] becomes fully meaningful only by comparison with the absent Heracles" (McCall 143); "[Deianeira] is what she is because of [Heracles]" (S. M. Adams 108). Following the lead of Alice A. Jardine, that one of the programs of feminist studies is to emphasize alternative readings (55-56), I propose, with apologies to Waith, to invert the above comment: "Though [Heracles] is an appealing and moving character, what gives significance and emotional appeal to [his] story is [his] relationship to [Deianeira]." Of course, I would also be showing bias if I privileged my alternative reading, but it is important, I firmly believe, to read literary texts with an eye toward otherness.

Waith recognized the need to compare tragedies from diverse contexts because Tamburlaine, Bussy D'Ambois, Shakespeare's and Dryden's Antony, Coriolanus, Almanzor, and Aureng-Zebe are unique kinds of protagonists, not what critics normally classify as tragic heroes; thus, Waith established an exclusive set of criteria to characterize the Herculean hero. Likewise, my criteria are exclusive.

Traditionally, critics influenced by an asymmetrical outlook see a convincing tragic heroine as one who is threatening to men. Lisa Jardine explains:

[T]he female character traits to which the critics give such enthusiastic support [in Renaissance tragedy] are almost without exception morally reprehensible: cunning, duplicity, sexual rapaciousness, 'changeableness,' being other than what they seem, untrustworthiness and general secretiveness. (69-70)

The same can be said of critical support for heroines in classical tragedy, as represented by the words of Allardyce Nicoll in The Theory of Drama:

The feminine in high tragedy . . . must either be hard, approaching the masculine in quality, or else be relegated to a position of minor importance in the development of the plot. (158).

In other words, traditional tragic heroes are considered positive figures--true to masculine ideals and pure and moral--while traditional tragic heroines are considered negative figures--too aggressive or assertive to be true to feminine ideals and neither pure nor moral. Thus, Waith saw that it was necessary to delineate the Herculean hero--true to masculine ideals and neither pure nor moral--and I feel the need to introduce the Deianeiran heroine--true to feminine ideals and pure and moral.

In contrast, heroines who do not fit the Deianeiran mold are those motivated by revenge, such as Kyd's Bel-Imperia, and the female protagonists in Shakespeare's tragedies, such



as Cordelia, Desdemona, and Ophelia, who are less dynamic than the female protagonists in Shakespeare's comedies, say, Beatrice, Rosalind, and Viola. In her discussion of Shakespearean women, Linda Bamber makes a similar point:

Certainly none of the women in the tragedies--Cordelia, Desdemona, Lady Macbeth, Ophelia--worries or changes her mind about who she is. One of the women, Cleopatra, seems protean; but it is not she who worries about her changes--it is Antony, and us. (7)

On the other hand, "all the [Shakespearean] heroes have moments of dissatisfied self-scrutiny" (6). The Deianeiran heroine, as I will show, not only experiences such periods of self-scrutiny but also undergoes active changes which lead her to a higher moral plane.

The Deianeiran heroine does share one characteristic with the traditional heroine, that of great affective power. Of course, this characteristic is common to many female protagonists; but for the Deianeiran heroine, the ability to generate a pathos which leads to admiration is her prominent trait. The plays under discussion are indeed tragedies and the female protagonists are Deianeiran heroines, not because they excite pity and fear in order to evoke a catharsis, but because, in the Corneillean sense, they purge emotion by raising admiration of virtue. Corneille was attacked by his contemporaries who believed that pity and fear could be relieved through catastrophe only (Nurse 20-27). Writing about his hero Nicomède, Corneille countered:

Dans l'admiration qu'on a pour sa vertu, je trouve une manière de purger les passions dont n'a point parlé Aristote, et qui est peut-être plus sûre que celle qu'il prescrit à la tragédie par le moyen de la pitié et de la crainte. L'amour qu'elle nous donne pour cette vertu que nous admirons, nous imprime de la haine pour le vice contraire. (508)

Thus, Corneille felt that emotion can be purged by raising admiration for the tragic protagonist. Sir Philip Sidney also saw the importance of admiration in tragedy: "that, with stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration, [tragedy] teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded" (166-167). The Deianeiran heroine is admirable because she adheres to what she believes is her duty; in addition, her cathartic effect is heightened by her suicide.

In fact, admiration is a key to understanding all Sophoclean heroes and heroines--Ajax, Deianeira, Antigone, Oedipus, Electra, Philoctetes. G. M. Kirkwood writes: "all of them compel our admiration by their magnanimity, and all of them are devoted to a concept of living and dying nobly" (169). Mary R. Lefkowitz stresses that admiration is the key to understanding the familiar Sophoclean heroine, Antigone, by arguing that she should not be admired because she assumes a masculine role:

But I do not believe that Sophocles or his audience would have seen Antigone's action as unconventional, or have recognized in the play an attempt to define or promote new family structures or modes of

behaviour. . . . Antigone is not trying to avenge or redeem her brother's death, but is seeking only to bury him with appropriate rites for the dead. . . . [In Greek culture, men] avenge murders of kin, women prepare bodies for burial and sing laments over the body. ("Influential" 50)

In Antigone, Lefkowitz contends, Creon is the character who "violates established custom" (50): "Like other women in epic and drama, Antigone wins praise for acting on behalf of her family" (52-53). As I will argue in the following chapter, Heracles "violates established custom" when he brings his concubine home, and Deianeira's actions, like the actions committed by the Deianeiran heroines in the English tragedies, are precipitated by an admirable devotion to domestic duty.

Each heroine in the six English tragedies that I will study demonstrates that she is worthy of admiration: Anne Frankford, in Thomas Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603); Aspatia, in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's The Maid's Tragedy (1610); Penthea, in John Ford's The Broken Heart (1633); Belvidera, in Thomas Otway's Venice Preserv'd (1682); Isabella, in Thomas Southerne's The Fatal Marriage (1694); and Calista, in Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent (1703). In addition to the superficial parallels between Deianeira and the English heroines pointed out in the Introduction (2-3), the English tragedies thematically reflect the Sophoclean tragedy, "that schematic model of gender relations" (Zeitlin 77). It is not my purpose to

argue that the English dramatists consciously modeled their heroines on the Sophoclean portrayal of Deianeira; nevertheless, I feel secure in proposing her as a definite literary type which resurfaced during the seventeenth century.

In The Herculean Hero, Waith is on secure ground in defining his particular kind of hero as Herculean. He points out that the character of Hercules is steeped in epic and mythological tradition, a tradition that was well-known by both classical and English writers, and he draws attention to the many allusions in the English plays, which show that the dramatists "were aware of resemblances between their heroes and Hercules, though there is no indication that any one depiction of him served them as a model" (13). For example, Shakespeare mentions Hercules thirty-six times in his plays (Norton and Rushton 200), and Antony and Coriolanus are compared several times with Hercules, revealing the dramatist's direct obligation to classical example. Thus, Hercules provides an instructive analogy. In addition, I will argue, Deianeira provides an instructive analogy.

The Renaissance dramatists under study do not appear to exhibit direct Sophoclean influence, by way of allusions to Deianeira; however, interest in Greek tragedy during the Renaissance is certainly not without documentation. For instance, Sidney cites Sophocles' Ajax to prove that a

feigned example is more powerful than a philosophical discussion (161), and Charles O. MacDonald points out Roger Ascham's admiration for Sophocles (Rhetoric 98). Still, Sophoclean influence was, at best, minimal during the early English Renaissance, and Seneca has long been regarded as the link between Renaissance tragedy and classical tragedy. In a recent study, Gordon Braden points out:

[T]he generally insufficient knowledge of or even interest in Greek tragedy on the part of Renaissance dramatists is hard to deny, and attempts to affirm the continuity of the Western theatrical tradition at this point have had to focus on the far better documented connection with Seneca. (1)

Braden defends his orthodox position on the ground that classical rhetoric ties Seneca to Renaissance drama: "the dominance of classical rhetoric brackets Seneca and Renaissance drama together against Aischylos and Sophocles on the one hand and most later European drama on the other" (64). In his thesis, Braden views literary history from a traditional perspective by placing the historical emphasis on continuity--on the way that a historical period is linked to the past or on the way that it anticipates the future. I believe, however, that it is important to reject the notion of continuous history by viewing history as discontinuous. Page duBois points out that "Classical civilization is, in fact, discontinuous with our culture; it is fragmentary and contaminated by centuries of interpretation and loss" (4).

Thus, we should "recognize and strive against the tendency to project the present into the past and so to construct narratives of continuity" (Howard 22).

Although England had to wait for Milton's Samson Agonistes as the first drama to show direct Athenian influence, the Greek example is still instructive. Adrian Poole, in his Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example, argues:

Greek tragedy is exemplary in the sense that it provides memorable and gravid examples of the unprecedented--of new experiences for which the available explanations, models and patterns prove inadequate. (12)

Poole explains Greek drama to the uninitiated reader by comparing it with Shakespearean drama: "the example of Shakespearean tragedy may help a modern reader to recognize, by analogy, the peril and originality at the heart of Greek tragedy, of all tragedy" (12-13). Inverting Poole's example, we can take the opposite route and use the Trachiniae as an interpretive analogy. I acknowledge, however, that some readers might find this approach too unorthodox. For these skeptics I would like to invoke Poole's disclaimer:

I do not underestimate the difficulties and dangers involved in passing between works written in diverse languages, and produced out of diverse cultural and historical contexts. Nevertheless tragedy demands comparison, and my appeal to the reader's readiness for mental and imaginative passage, between here and there and now and then, is rooted in the belief that such

passage is essential to the substance and the experience of tragedy. (viii)

In order to make "such passage," my study of tragedy will be synchronic rather than diachronic.

Although there is no historical continuity between Greek drama and English drama, we can speculate on the historical reasons why the Deianeiran heroine reappeared in the early seventeenth century and disappeared in the early eighteenth century. What ties England of the late Renaissance and Restoration with ancient Greece? In an occasional article, commemorating the opening of the new Classics building at Cambridge, Myles Burnyeat points out the difficulty in tracing our classical heritage:

It may be a simple truth that Greece and Rome are the foundation of Western civilization. It is not a simple matter to discover how much of what we now are is owed to them, or to trace the creative transformations that the classical heritage has undergone through the intervening centuries. (643)

If the appearance of the Deianeiran heroine in Stuart England is a "creative transformation" of classical heritage--which I suspect it is, whether intentional or not--we must ask why this creative transformation took place. The answer might lie in the following excerpt from one of Charles Segal's discussions of the Trachiniae:

The clash between the outside world of Heracles and the domestic life of Deianeira contrasts not only action and emotion, but also heroic achievement and the pull

felt increasingly in the late fifth century toward private life. Behind the figures of Deianeira stand the quieter graces of stable, settled life, a life which could cultivate the emotions and the arts which develop them, the arts which Pericles in the Funeral Speech and Euripides in the Medea envisage as a special quality of the new Athenian spirit. This spirit prides itself less on martial energy or on the heroic arete of Homer and Tyrtaeus than on the elegance and refinement of culture which flower within its walls . . . . Over military competence and energy stand "love of beauty" and "love of wisdom" in a fine balance between oikeia and politika, personal and public concerns. ("Sophocles" 121-122)

The above passage is appropriate, particularly with respect to the Herculean hero. According to Waith, the Herculean hero, the model of arete (HH 16), disappeared with the death of Elizabeth and reappeared briefly in the heroic drama of the Restoration. The Deianeiran heroine, on the other hand, appeared at each demise of the Herculean hero. We can speculate that politika (public concerns) instigated by the defeat of the Armada and by the collapse of the Commonwealth was replaced at both junctures by oikeia (personal concerns); thus, politika is characteristically Herculean while oikeia is characteristically Deianeiran.

Both oikeia and politika are patriotic, but the rise of the Deianeiran heroine seems to coincide with a new kind of patriotism, a new quality of English spirit. Even John Dryden, in his Epistle Dedicatory to All for Love, calls for a move from public to private concerns:

The nature of our government, above all others, is exactly suited both to the situation of our country and



the temper of the natives, an island being more proper for commerce and for defence than for extending its dominions on the continent: . . . and the examples of our neighbours teach us that they are not always the happiest subjects whose kings extend their dominions farthest. . . . [T]he model of our government seems naturally contrived for the defensive part, and the consent of a people is easily obtained to contribute to that power which must protect it. (6)

The above citation is particularly appropriate because, although Antony is one of Waith's Herculean heroes--in fact, the last of his breed--Waith acknowledges that the theme of love in All for Love makes the resemblances between this and the other Herculean plays "less obvious" (HH 189). It seems as if Dryden anticipated that his particular kind of hero was already outdated. Ironically, Dryden believed that the development of commerce was compatible with an isolationist policy, whereas the evolution of commerce probably aided in the second demise of the Deianeiran heroine, as the oncoming commercial revolution and the rise of commodity capitalism forced England again into the public sphere when the country assumed a position of leadership in the realm of international mercantilism.

Failure to recognize that trans-historical comparisons are valuable often leads critics to place too much emphasis on ideological concerns within specific historical contexts. Page duBois warns:

The contemporary practice in many fields of cultural studies of considering only the most recent historical periods threatens to trap us in an extraordinarily

narrow definition of culture, leaving us with an impoverished set of possibilities for representing gender difference, or even indifference. (1)

The warning given by duBois has direct implications for cultural critics seeking to explain fictional characters. For example, Laura Brown argues that the female roles in the plays of Otway, Southerne, and Rowe offer

a new kind of heroine, whose victimization provides the essential material of the plot and whose defenselessness constitutes a specific contrast to the defiance of the passionate and ambitious female characters in the preceding heroic play. ("Defenseless" 429-430)

Brown contends that this "new kind of heroine" is a transitional figure in the move from "aristocratic heroic drama" to "bourgeois tragedy," a transition which can best be examined in terms of "the social and economic context of the age" ("Defenseless" 430). Examining these contexts is indeed important--as I have done above--but Brown falls into a duBois' trap by narrowing herself to one historical period, thus presenting us with "an extraordinarily narrow definition of culture, leaving us with an impoverished set of possibilities." My contention is that these heroines are not simply victimized or defenseless; they exhibit a profound psychological complexity--a true heroic stature. This complexity can only be uncovered through a synchronic examination of tragedy.

Developing the proper balance between intrinsic and extrinsic studies is precarious. While I agree with Dymphna Callaghan that it is dangerous to regard a "text in isolation from the conditions of either its production or its reception" (4), I am also aware that dangers lie in "de-privileging" texts. Additionally, it is also important to heed the warnings of William Cain and Edward Pechter: critics who place too much emphasis on extrinsic studies are often "guilty of faulty historical knowledge in interpreting the texts; and it is also possible . . . to present a historical argument . . . without a fair grasp of historical complexity" (Cain 205); and the posited contemporary audience may be "just another myth, another hypothetical construct" (Pechter 292).

Whatever critical approach one chooses, it is important for the contemporary scholar to be open to re-thinking inherited value judgements. Robert Markley and Laurie Fink give sound advice in this regard:

One does not have to embrace the deconstructionist, revisionist, or Marxist philosophies of, say, Jacques Derrida, Harold Bloom, or Frederic Jameson to recognize that examining one's own assumptions about, and approaches to, history and literature may be a significant--and worthwhile--undertaking in its own right. Indeed, this kind of "re-vision" may be valuable precisely because it allows us to focus on both specific literary works and the critical reactions that they have engendered. (1-2)

The "imaginative passage" that I propose is not guided by an allegiance to one particular sectarian methodology; instead, it is engineered by an eclectic approach that will encourage reexamination of personal biases that often repress meaning.

## CHAPTER II

SOPHOCLES' TRACHINIAE

Although not as well-known as Euripides' Medea and Andromache or Sophocles' Electra and Antigone, Deianeira deserves to rank as one of the great heroines in classical tragedy. Her lack of critical recognition, at least outside of classical studies, seems to stem from the fact that her character, unlike that of her counterparts, has been difficult for critics to decipher. One reason for this difficulty is that the more familiar heroines have the distinction of being titular characters; thus, critics readily accept that the tragedy in these plays focuses on Medea, Andromache, Electra, and Antigone. On the other hand, because "Trachiniae" denotes the chorus of Trachinian maidens, critics fail to agree who deserves tragic focus in the Trachiniae--Heracles or Deianeira. Furthermore, this dilemma has led other scholars to conclude that neither protagonist is tragic; thus, the Trachiniae fails as tragedy. Although Bernard M. Knox explains that Sophoclean scholars have failed to uncover who assigned the titles of Sophocles' seven extant plays or when the titles were assigned (2), classical scholars, seeking to define the "real" Deianeira, habitually draw comparisons between her and the more familiar female protagonists. The results of

such efforts are unsatisfactory. For example, S. M. Adams argues that Deianiera neither exhibits the "wisdom" nor demands the "wholesale admiration and respect" afforded Antigone and Electra (109); and Victor Ehrenberg declares that she is "no Medea. It is her tragic fate to be married to a man whose nature she does not understand, and to be involved in daemonic events which she does not understand either" (152). What scholars need to recognize is that Deianeira is unique among her peers, possessing an unusual power to evoke audience-admiration. Only by recognizing this power can we acknowledge that the play focuses on Deianeira and that the Trachiniae is a successful tragedy. I will return to these critical issues below, but first a brief excursion through the play-text will reveal her special power, a power that enables us to rank her among these more critically acclaimed tragic heroines and allows us to rank the Trachiniae among the more critically acclaimed tragedies.

Heracles, who has been absent from home for fifteen months, has told Deianeira that they would face a crisis after this period: he will either die or retire from his exploits. In the first lines of the play, Deianiera's apprehension concerning her future reveals that she is trying to decide whether she should take an active role in determining her husband's future or whether she should allow the prophecy to run its own course:

Men have been telling each other since time  
started: if you're going to say happy or unhappy  
about human life, wait for it to be over.  
Me, though, my life--I don't need Hell to teach me  
the turns in my life or how much it weighs.  
Even when I still lived at home with my father  
Oineus . . . Girls are afraid of marriage,  
you're supposed to be. I was a girl, but nobody  
ever felt the ice I felt. (1-9)

She has always been taught to maintain passive obedience to  
the men in her life, but this passivity has turned inward,  
to self-scrutiny and anxiety concerning the problems with  
her marriage:

We had children, of course.  
He [Heracles] sees them the way a farmer sees his back  
fields:  
he drops a seed and comes around once in awhile  
to check the harvest.  
All right, that was life,  
home, gone, home and then slogging away again  
to labor for some master or another. But now  
he's supposed to have risen above all that  
and now my anxieties are worse than ever. (32-40)

The image of the furrowed field appears frequently in Greek  
literature; however, Page duBois explains that this  
particular use of the image is unusual because it is  
normally spoken "by men of women's bodies and of the act of  
legal, marital, procreative intercourse" (73).<sup>1</sup> By adopting  
masculine rhetoric, Deianeira does not reveal a masculine  
side to her nature, but she shows that she possesses the  
insight to recognize Heracles' view of their relationship.  
For duBois, Deianeira's use of this image makes her a

fascinating character, a wife who internalizes her location in Greek culture, who accepts her place as the static field to which Herakles intermittently returns, but who nonetheless destroys her husband. (73)

This interpretation coincides with that of C. K. Williams and Gregory Dickerson, who characterize Deianeira "as a single-minded domesticating--and domesticated--force" (6). Certainly, she is domesticated in that her social status is defined as Heracles' wife, but she is more than a picture of passivity. By using imagery normally reserved for a male, she assumes a position of power and control. Here, she incorporates what Froma I. Zeitlin calls the "inclusive functions of the feminine in the drama--one on the side of femininity as power and the other on the side of femininity as weakness" (64).

This binary conflict shortly resurfaces. Deianeira, filled with false prophetic hopes for a stable marriage, sends their son Hyllus in search of Heracles, who is at a moment of crisis. Here, she is determined to act to preserve him, not just to passively wait to see how things turn out:

They say: if he survives the there and now,  
his labors will be over. What's left will be  
happiness,  
peace and quiet for his life.

Hyllos, his future  
is in the balance. Go help him. If he's safe,  
so are we. If he's not, we're finished, too. (81-85)



Although she longs for her husband's return, she offers a revealing complaint to the young women of Trachis (i.e., the chorus). Here, her sole focus is the well-being of her husband and her children:

You must have heard about my suffering.  
That's why you're here. But without being me,  
you'll never understand it,  
and may you never have to.  
All the sweet things growing in their good places,  
the sun's burning never touching them, or the rain or  
wind;  
living their happy little joyfulness, until the  
virgin's name  
is wife and then she knows anxiety and the night  
and how to tremble for a husband and  
children. (140-148)

Soon after, a messenger arrives and announces the arrival of Heracles in nearby Euoboea. This message is confirmed by the report of a second messenger, who brings with him a train of captive women taken by Heracles when he sacked Oechalia, the city of his enemy Eurytus. Deianeira's sympathy for the plight of women is further revealed when the captives are paraded in front of her: "And whose daughters are they . . . sad things? / Lord, unless I'm wrong, they should be pitied" (238-39). When she finds that Iole has become Heracles' concubine, she harbors no resentment for her: "Can I blame her? Never, impossible" (435). Neither does she denounce Heracles: "I'd have to be mad to blame my husband / if he's sick for this girl" (433-34). Heracles has taken many lovers in the past, but

Deianeira's only concern is domestic stability--she is not jealous:

What's so terrible in knowing? Herakles  
has loved more women than I can count--  
did one of them ever have harsh words from me?  
And neither will this one, no matter how  
he's burning up for her. As soon as I saw her,  
I felt compassion. (445-50)

Shortly after her speech, however, Deianeira's passivity is replaced by extreme anger because Heracles has brought his lover home--something that he had never done before. Also, she worries that her beauty is fading, while Iole's is blossoming:

A virgin . . . no,  
what virgin? A slut, cheap, outrageous trade,  
has come into my house to weigh me down and now  
we'll all spin under the same blanket.  
That's the reward I have from Herakles,  
my true, good love, for having taken care  
of his home through all this miserable time.  
Am I angry? I don't know how to be.  
He's had the same infection often enough before . . .  
But to have her here! To live with her,  
to have to share him--can I stand for that?  
And she's just blossoming. Men love plucking them  
when they're like that. I'm on the path down,  
drying up. Do you know what I'm afraid of?  
That I'll be calling Herakles husband  
but that child will be calling him to bed. (521-36)

Immediately after this speech, Deianeira realizes that she has violated her own domestic moral code: "anger is wrong for a wife" (538). So it is not in anger that she decides to use the blood of Nessus, who, in his dying words, told her that his blood would function as a love-potion. But she

fears that she is again violating her code; therefore, she seeks advice from the leader of the chorus:

But in this case, if charms or spells can defeat that girl,  
can get Herakles back to me, then I'm ready . . .  
Unless I'm being rash . . . Do you think so?  
Say so if you do . . . I'll stop . . . I will . . .  
(568-71)

The leader advises Deianeira to use the charm if she believes it will work. She anoints the robe, but worries that any act is shameful if it has to be done in the dark. Shortly after, anxiety returns: "I don't know, but I have a premonition / that what I did in good faith is turning evil" (649-50). When she finds that the ball of wool used to apply the blood has vanished because it was exposed to light, she realizes that she should not have trusted Nessus because she was responsible for his death. This realization is unbearable for one who firmly believes in her own innate goodness:

But I've decided. If he falls,  
I go with him. I die, too. How could a woman  
who believed in her goodness the way I did  
go on living if her name meant infamy? (704-707)

Hyllus returns, describes the agony of Heracles, and denounces his mother as a murderess:

Mother, I wanted one of three things when I came here.  
That I'd find you dead. That you wouldn't be my mother  
anymore. Or that you'd be another person altogether,  
with somebody else's heart inside you. (718-721)

. . . . .  
. . . . .  
I hope punishing justice finds you. I hope the Furies  
pay you back. I pray for it and it's right.  
I know it's right because you've crushed the right--  
you've destroyed the greatest man who ever lived.  
(794-797)

Deianeira exits in silence, and soon her old nurse appears to say that she has taken her own life by stabbing herself on her marriage bed. Williams and Dickerson explain the significance of her final act:

There she reaffirms her lifelong dream of domestic peace, carefully making up the marriage bed and slaughtering herself upon it: dead wife dutifully awaiting the return of the dying husband (8)

And, although Deianiera commits suicide offstage and her death is reported by her nurse, David Seale notices that "The nurse's speech stresses Deianeira's involvement with house and home and her devotion to the marriage bed upon which she actually commits suicide" (203). Because her first attempt to restore order to her domestic environment has initiated a catastrophe, the only available means left to her is suicide.

Initially, her suicide leads to a reconciliation between mother and son, but, as in all tragedy, recognition is too late. When Hyllus finds his mother's body and learns that she had acted unintentionally, he blames himself.

Deianeira's nurse reports:

And he knew his rage had made her  
do the thing. He kneeled, howling,  
shattered, and kissed her  
on the mouth and lay down side by side with her,  
crying that he'd murdered her with slander. (910-914)

Heracles now makes his first appearance, three quarters of  
the way through the play, and his reaction toward  
Deianeira's action parallels the initial response of Hyllus:

Son, have pity on your father.  
Take your knife. No one would blame you. Put it  
in my chest. Heal the wild pain your damned mother  
put there. O god, I'd give anything to see her suffer  
this,  
the same destruction, this, she's given me. (988-992)

Unlike, Hyllus, however, Heracles fails to recognize his  
part in Deianiera's tragedy. When Hyllus explains that  
Deianeira's poisoning of the robe was unintentional and that  
she has taken her own life, Heracles responds: "O god, I  
wish I'd done that. She needed me for that!" (1083)

Heracles then orders Hyllus to take him to Mt. Oeta and burn  
him there on a pyre before his agony returns. In addition,  
he orders his son to marry Iole: "You ought to know at your  
age that obedience / to the father is the most important  
law" (1127-1128). Hyllus is incredulous and blames

Heracles' illness:

Who in the world . . . the woman whose fault it is  
that my mother's dead and that you're this . . .  
if someone wasn't swarming with avenging Furies,  
would they choose her? Father, I'd be better off dead  
with you than living with our bitterest enemy.  
(1182-11886)

Nonetheless, he reluctantly consents, bitterly reproaching the gods.

The tragedy, then, focuses squarely on Deianeira. She spends her entire three quarters of the play thinking about Heracles, about home and family; whereas, even after she is dead, he only thinks of Iole. In fact, Heracles is determined to continue to possess Iole after death through his son. Conversely, only Deianeira knows that her suicide will restore their marriage. Mary R. Lefkowitz points out: "In the fifth and fourth centuries (that is, in Sophocles' lifetime and for a century afterwards), it was common belief that families were reunited in death" ("Influential" 51). Only by throwing off the chains of passive obedience does Deianeira resolve the conflict between feminine values and her corrupt domestic environment. For this action she is admirable; and in presenting her suicide, Sophocles successfully completes the tragedy by "stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration" (Sidney 166).

Despite Deianeira's power to evoke admiration, critics ask: Is the Trachiniae a tragedy of Heracles, of Deianeira, a double tragedy, or no tragedy at all? This series of questions has spawned the most critical debate on the play. The following argument by S. M. Adams represents those who favor a Heraclean tragedy:

This is a drama about Heracles. . . . [H]e is undoubtedly the "tragic hero." The appeal of Deianeira

is great and to us in these days may outweigh his own; but she is what she is because of him: from the dramatist's standpoint she is a secondary figure, however much we may be attracted to her. . . . The subject is not Love, but Heracles; and the play is Sophoclean in the contrast, on both sides, between fate and person: the strongest man is slain unwittingly by the least vindictive of all women; and his character determines hers. (108)

Conversely, some critics claim Deianeira for the tragic protagonist because "of all the figures in the end, Deianeira alone is tragic, for her will is the only one involved" (Whitman 112). Herbert Musurillo agrees that "The final catastrophe is surely more hers than Heracles'" (77), and J. C. Kamberbeek writes that her final catastrophe intensifies her tragedy:

[A]s far as Heracles is concerned, Deianeira whether alive or dead is of no account whatever. This fact means a deepening of her tragedy . . . . Our sense of the waste and frustration of Deianeira's life and destiny, never absent in the preceding parts of the play, is confirmed and intensified. (22-23)

Still, others fail to see a tragedy at all. Moses Hadas writes:

Trachinian Women is as puzzling to interpret as it is to date. There is not enough about Dejanira in the third of the play that follows her suicide, not enough about Heracles before his arrival, to make either the exclusive theme. If Dejanira is suitably feminine she is too much a fool, and if Heracles is suitably heroic he is too heroically self-centered for proper tragedy. The tragedy, then, is not in the persons but in their relationship and the tragic effects of that relationship on others, Iole and Hyllus and Lichas. If

the relationship itself is the theme, it is a new thing in tragedy, and the treatment is curiously unsatisfactory. (88)

Adrian Poole disagrees and believes that relationships as the theme in the Trachiniae--in fact, in all tragedy--is suitable:

And the tragedy is not the sole property of the single character in whom the climactic moment of revelation is invested. The coherence of a tragedy is an intricate web in which several diverse fates are woven, Deianeira's and Hyllus' and Lichas' as well as Heracles.' (56)

C. M. Bowra makes a similar point: "The central subject of the play is neither Heracles nor Deianira but the destiny which involves each in the other's ruin" (116). P. E. Easterling, currently the most prominent Sophoclean scholar, agrees with Poole and Bowra and points out that in Sophocles "What matters, evidently, is the way the characters respond to their appalling predicaments" ("Sophocles" 310). For these critics, response to "appalling predicaments," then, focuses the tragedy on the relationship between Heracles and Deianeira, as Ehrenberg succinctly states: "The Trachiniae is a play about two persons, Heracles and Deianeira. This is a simple and obvious fact, and any explanation which evades it is wrong from the start" (148). Or as G. M. Kirkwood writes: "the play is about Deianeira and Heracles in relation to each other, and aspects of the two which do not concern each other have no place" (67). Or



Charles Segal: "Despite the importance of Zeus, the Trachiniae remains essentially a human tragedy, governed by the two interlocking and mutually destructive reaches of Heracles and Deianeira" ("Sophocles" 155).

This final group of critics are partly correct, I believe, in arguing that the issue of relationships carries the tragedy; however, the tragedy itself must be focused on Deianeira. The chief thematic concern of the play is the abuse that women must suffer if they are to retain feminine values and remain passively obedient to a patriarchal system that has become corrupt, as exhibited by the sisterhood between Deianeira and the chorus,<sup>2</sup> between Deianeira and the captives, and even between Deianeira and Iole. Charles Fuqua writes that "Human relationships are the framework from which the action of the drama as a whole proceeds" (67). Thus, we can view the play as the tragedy of Deianeira, set against the framework of human relationships.

If the assertion is correct that the action of the play is framed by marital relations--and I believe it is--it is important to consider why Sophocles chose this particular myth and how he changed it. Although such considerations are highly speculative, a parallel can be drawn between the way that Greek tragedians handled myth with the way that Renaissance tragedians handled history--for the Greeks, myth was history (Ehrenberg 144). Investigating the use of myths

by the ancients, however, poses a special sort of problem. While it is easy enough to examine Plutarch, Daniel, or Holinshed and determine what changes Shakespeare, Marlowe, or Dryden made, examining source material used by Aeschyles, Sophocles, and Euripides is an arduous task. We can recover various versions of the story involving Heracles and Deianeira, but determining the evolution of the myth and particularly what versions of the myth were known to Sophocles and his audience is a different story.<sup>3</sup>

For the most part, classical scholars feel more secure when discussing Sophocles' handling of Deianeira than when discussing the dramatist's handling of Heracles. One scholar writes:

There can be no doubt that the characterization of Heracles is the fundamental reason why the Trachiniae has long been regarded as the great problem play of the Sophoclean corpus. (Fuqua 1)

One of the reasons that the reputation of the play has suffered, I argue, is that critics have placed an inordinate focus on Heracles as the tragic figure in the drama. Waith, for example, argues that the play is undoubtedly a Heraclean tragedy. Although he acknowledges that there is "a troublesome peculiarity in the structure of the play"--Heracles' being absent from the stage for the first three quarters of the text--Waith still focuses on Heracles because "There is scarcely a moment when he is not the topic

of conversation. The end of his labours is the end to which the play always points" (20-21). Fuqua is one critic who makes the same point as Waith:

Although he is not present on the stage until the exodos, his presence is felt throughout, for even before he appears upon the stage he is a basic force behind and frame of reference for the responses and designs of all the characters. (65)

Easterling arrives at a similar conclusion: "this is a nostos play: the return of Heracles is the dominant subject all the way through" ("End" 57). However, for those who argue that Heracles, although he is absent until the exodos, is the center of the play because he is always the topic of conversation, G. Karl Galinsky aptly counters:

What occupies the spectator from the outset . . . is not the labours of Herakles, for they are complete, but the anguish Herakles has caused Deianeira by his frequent absences, which more often than not had nothing to do with his labours. Sophocles dwells in the most explicit way on the reverse of Herakles' adventures: the fears, the pangs, and the agony of his incredibly understanding and patient wife. (46)

In the murky world of myth, the "end" of Heracles' labors is followed by his apotheosis. In order to accept Heracles as the dominant tragic figure in the play, we have to assume that he rises to take his place among the gods, because in Sophocles' text, he does not (Hoey "Ambiguity" 271-272). Thus, the issue becomes one of whether or not the contemporary audience was familiar with

the myth. Although Kirk provides evidence showing that it is difficult to date the story of the apotheosis (179), many critics are convinced that Sophocles intended his audience to assume that Heracles does rise to Olympus, presumably after the action of the play has been completed. Thus, the apotheosis is "implicit" (Musurillo 64) or "indirect" (Hoey "Ambiguity" 272).<sup>4</sup> While I agree with evidence supporting audience familiarity, I also agree with those who argue that Sophocles intentionally suppressed the apotheosis for artistic purposes in order to emphasize "the human qualities of Deianeira," as opposed to the superhuman qualities of Heracles (Kirkwood 118). Ehrenberg argues that Sophocles transformed the myth so that Heracles does not rise above his own nature (150; also Galinsky 27), and, as Seale writes: "the ending of this play is not the deification of Heracles but his death" (208). We can also add that Sophocles suppressed the apotheosis in order to intensify the seriousness of Deianeira's actions.

Other changes that Sophocles incorporated in the Trachiniae suggest that he intended to deflect audience-admiration from Heracles. For example, Heracles' murdering of Iphitus is mentioned in the Odyssey (XXI 14-30) but without personal motive; Sophocles expands Homer's story by making Heracles' killing of Iphitus "petty and vindictive" (Galinsky 47; also Kamberbeek 2). Michael R. Halleran includes a thorough discussion of the history

of this mythical episode and concludes that the contemporary audience was aware of Sophocles' changes in the myth so that they would perceive the tragic irony, "the irony of learning late" (247).<sup>5</sup> Sophocles also made changes regarding Iole, which further suggest that he intended to direct audience-admiration toward Deianeira. Two important Sophoclean inventions are pointed out by Seale: the fact that Deianeira was aware of the relationship between Heracles and Iole, and the meeting between Iole and Deianeira.<sup>6</sup> The latter is certainly an important artistic change, and raises the issue of "which of the two women deserves the most pity" (Seale 193).<sup>7</sup> In his preface to All for Love, John Dryden wrestles with a similar artistic issue, in acknowledging his invention of the meeting between Cleopatra and Octavia:

They [French poets] would not, for example, have suffered Cleopatra and Octavia to have met; or, if they had met, there must only have passed betwixt them some cold civilities, but no eagerness of repartee, for fear of offending against the greatness of their characters, and the modesty of their sex. This objection I foresaw, and at the same time contemned; for I judged it both natural and probable that Octavia, proud of her new-gained conquest, would search out Cleopatra to triumph over her, and that Cleopatra, thus attacked, was not of a spirit to shun the encounter; and 'tis not unlikely that two exasperated rivals should use such satire as I have put into their mouths, for, after all, though the one were a Roman and the other a queen, they were both women. (11)

Unlike the "satire" that Dryden puts into the mouths of his two rivals, the encounter between Iole and Deianeira is

one-sided--Iole remains silent. Although Iole is certainly an object of pity, for both the audience and Deianeira, this meeting allows Deianeira to dynamically expose her nature--to experience a period of emotional self-scrutiny--as she alternates from pity to anger and back to pity in the aftermath of their meeting. Such changes definitely allow for the probability that Sophocles intended to emphasize Deianeira's tragedy.

Psychologically, Sophocles drastically altered the mythical Deianeira, a character who in Hesiod simply "did Dread deeds" (Kirk 178). Sophocles downplays her Amazonian characteristics (Fuqua 66n169) and changes her from youthful to aging (Segal "Sophocles" 118). Williams and Dickerson explain the transformation of the mythological Deianeira, whose name means "Fighter-with-men," "Hostile-to-men," or "Man-killer":

[Sophocles] has given her a rich psychological complexity which makes her one of the more memorable figures in Greek tragedy. But, more important, he has also shaped her to embody humanity's fundamental desire to achieve that secure stability which serves as the basis of civilized life; and in so doing, he has both drastically altered and refined the Deianeira tradition current at the time of the play's composition. (6)

Many critics, however, have failed to acknowledge that Sophocles has given Deianeira a "rich psychological complexity." Wiersma points out that Deianeira is frequently seen either as "the very picture of passivity and

helplessness, derived from social conditions in classical Athens where wives often had to suffer the presence of a concubine"; or as "a simple woman who intends to restore her husband's passion with a potion" (49).

For example, S. M. Adams declares that Deianeira is an "admirable creation," but "it is essentially a minor role she plays in the Trachiniae" (109); Ehrenberg claims that "her tragic mistake contains an element of sheer foolishness" (150); Segal argues that her final act is a total failure, "A moment's misjudgment in a crisis wipes out years of faithful, unblemished devotion" ("Sophocles" 157); Philip Holt claims that, epistemologically, "Deianeira discovers facts" (215), while "Herakles discovers meaning, not simply facts" (216); Gardiner asserts that "she is incapable of independent action" (129); and Marsh McCall, who openly attacks what he calls the "'heroic Deianeira' doctrine" (153), argues that Deianeira is not a "composed resolute heroine" (143), but "a meek and lovely wife, resolved to her lot" (144). The above comments reflect the assessment of critics who are forced to make such judgments to support Heracles as the focus of the tragedy.

But the Greeks seemed to allow women a special place in their literature. Lefkowitz argues:

Even though so few options seem to have been available to Greek women (or men), the Greeks did not hesitate to give "equal time" to description of the human dilemma, as seen from a woman's point of view.

We can tell from the titles of the lost plays that women were the central figures of many tragedies, as they are in the ones that have come down to us. (Women 37-38)

Wiersma agrees: "Sophocles' female characters show themselves as adult persons, acting in society on their own terms, and not pre-determined by their inferior place in society" (55). In particular, Wiersma sees Deianeira as a character who "shows herself as a woman of experience, capable of independent judgement" (50). Other critics agree. Kamberbeek writes:

Her existence is entirely dependent on Heracles . . . .  
But this dependence does not go to the point of  
slavishness. Hers is a noble nature, conscious of its  
dignity as well as aware of the human condition. (25)

On the cruel suffering at her death, Kirkwood writes: "Her nobility is also enhanced. . . . [H]er purely human firmness of purpose and moral integrity acquire a greater poignancy and heightened beauty" (51). Comparing Deianeira with Heracles, Easterling writes that Deianeira is "a deeply sympathetic character--noble, compassionate, modest--involved, moreover, in a morally interesting situation." On the other hand, "Heracles is in no position to take interesting moral decisions" ("End" 60). Elsewhere, Easterling writes that Sophocles creates dignified speech for Deianeira "to avoid the impression of weakness" ("Character" 73).<sup>8</sup>



The above survey presents two schools of thought on Deianeira's character, but both doctrinal centers share the view that "Heracles is almost a complete antithesis to Deianeira" (Fuqua 32), "the rugged, active husband and the gentle, passive wife" (Holt 215).<sup>9</sup> The most important contrast between the two principal characters, of course, is that Heracles is a "superman" (Adams 109), a "Phenomenon" (Winnington-Ingram 88), and:

the portrayal of Heracles . . . is not human . . . .  
[H]is superlative masculinity and force, moving on a non-human level, form a polar contrast with Deianeira's very human womanliness and dependence. (Kamberbeek 26)

Christina Elliot Sorum explains this antithesis thematically:

The themes associated with Deianeira are the opposite of those associated with Heracles: home and family, knowledge and virtue, and anxiety and passivity, versus travel and absences from home, physical prowess and force, and constant efficacious action. (64)

Because "the contrast in personality between Deianeira and Heracles is so violent" (Kirkwood 43), critics have been enticed to assign a diptych structure to the play.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, this antithetical pairing has led to extensive examination of contrasting imagery in the play.<sup>11</sup>

This proliferation of contrasts has also added fuel to the debate concerning the focus of the tragedy. This dilemma leads Segal to write that critics "who have stressed

the interdependence and complimentarity of the two figures . . . are probably the closest to the truth" ("Sophocles" 101), and Ehrenberg to write that their two fates are "indissolubly connected" (152). Yes, their fates are tied, but the play is not only a tragedy of marital relations; it is the tragedy of a woman who attempts to restore stability to her domestic environment when, by a corrupt patriarchy, feminine domestic values are forced into conflict with the feminine value of passive obedience. Deianeira, thus, is forced into violating her own moral code, and she tragically suffers the consequences: "By utilizing the magic potion, she destroys the moral fabric of her world, for her reliance on secrecy and falsehood negates her own standards of virtue" (Sorum 64-65).

On the other hand, Heracles remains static; he continues to be the same self-centered, amoral person he has always been. Before his appearance in the play he has certainly been the primary topic of conversation, but as Ehrenberg points out:

[Heracles] does not appear as the great saviour and liberator of mankind, apart from his own rather boastful self-praise near the end of the play. Throughout the time before he enters the stage we are hearing about him, but all that we hear is about his strength, about some of his deeds which are in fact ruthless misdeeds, and about the harshness and savagery of his nature. . . . [He is] a man who follows his own nature and desires without restraint, commits outrageous misdeeds, and thus becomes a danger and a menace to other people. (153-154)

Bringing a concubine into his home and forcing his son to marry her is simply the continuation of an amorality assigned to him by Sophocles. Before this action, Deianeira had never complained of her husband's amorous adventures. Susan Walker, who draws on reports of archaeological excavations of fifth-century Athenian houses to determine "social customs and contemporary attitudes towards women" (83), explains that "The seclusion of a woman may thus become a status symbol, indulged in by those who can afford it, and emulated by others striving for respectability." This fact explains "the reluctance of respectable men to intrude upon women secluded at home" (81). Thus, when Sophocles transforms the familiar myth by bringing Iole into Heracles and Deianeira's home, he focuses on Heracles' abuse of patriarchy in the same way that he downplays Deianeira's Amazonian characteristics and transforms her use of the philtre. An earlier version of the myth stressed that Deianeira "acted with malice toward Heracles in sending the robe" (Fuqua 66n169). In this version, Heracles made war on Eurytus out of revenge and planned to use Iole as a sacrifice, but Deianeira misunderstood his intentions (Norton and Rushton 205). However, in the Trachiniae, Sophocles portrays Deianeira as a psychologically complex individual who uses the philtre in an admirable attempt to restore domestic stability.

Like the plays that will be discussed in the following chapters, the Trachiniae is a tragedy framed by the issue of marital relationships. Both partners play their parts in the tragedy, but tragic focus is fixed on the heroine. Any admiration we might feel for Heracles has its source outside of the text. In the Sophoclean tragedy, in this dramatist's adaptation of the myth, only Deianeira is dynamic; only she dies in an act directed to preserving a higher good.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup> For example, duBois points out Oedipus speaking of Jocasta and lines 566-69 of the Antigone (2):

ISMENE: What life is there for me to live without her?  
KREON: Don't speak of her. For she is here no more.  
ISMENE: But will you kill your own son's promised  
bride?  
KREON: Oh, there are other furrows for his plough.

<sup>2</sup> Kirkwood believes that the chorus "are not exclusively devoted to Deianeira" (187n9). Likewise, Cynthia P. Gardiner points out that one third of the chorus' lyrics are about Deianeira, with most being about Heracles, and argues that there is a "lack of intimacy" between Deianeira and the chorus; thus, Gardiner concludes that the Trachinian maidens "deflect attention from Deianeira and keep the audience ever aware of Heracles" (132). I agree that the chorus functions to maintain awareness of Heracles, but, as I argue below, references to Heracles before his appearance focus on his misdeeds. Deianeira's conversations with the chorus are important as a means of expressing her train of thought relating to Heracles' abuse of her and others.

<sup>3</sup> G. S. Kirk attempts to sort out the chronology of Heracles' adventures in Chapter 8, "The Mythical Life of Heracles."

<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, Thomas F. Hoey, acknowledging that the apotheosis question cannot be settled on textual evidence alone, discusses sun imagery in the play to prove "cyclicity" ("Sun Symbolism" 140). Others who agree that the audience was familiar with the myth, thus making the apotheosis "implicit," include Robert L. Kane, who argues that the play is structured as a trilogy, and Easterling, who includes a thorough discussion of the apotheosis story in myth ("End"), and Segal, who asserts that "It is inconceivable that the ending of the myth could not have been present in [Sophocles'] and his audience's mind" ("Sophocles" 138).

5 Kirkwood points out many "implicit ironies" in the Trachiniae: "that Heracles, mightiest of heroes, is brought low by a woman; that the dead Nessus should destroy the living Heracles; that the 'rest' promised to Heracles should be death; that the maiden for whom Deianeira's tenderest sympathy is felt is the cause of disaster to Deianeira . . . that Deianeira, whose whole life is devoted to Heracles and whose admiration and love for him are unbounded, should, just because of her love, bring about his destruction" (256).

6 Other changes regarding Iole. Dan S. Norton and Peters Rushton point out that in one version Heracles made war on Eurystus out of revenge and took Iole to use as a sacrifice, but Deianeira misunderstood his intentions (285). Bruce Heiden points out another tradition that has Iole as the prize for winning the archery contest (19), and M. Davies discusses this issue at length to argue that Sophocles intentionally omits Iole from the archery contest, thus changing the myth familiar to the audience so they will be suspicious of Lychas' lying tale (483). J. Kenneth MacKinnon provides a helpful discussion on concubinage in Greek society and argues that in Heracles' dying request to Hyllus, he is thinking of Iole as a concubine for his son, not as a wife (41).

7 For example, Easterling links Iole with Deianeira by declaring that they are both "victims of love" ("Character" 73).

8 Other encomia of Deianeira include Seale, who writes of her "thoughtful dignity" (183); R. P. Winnington-Ingram, who calls her "that most appealing of Sophoclean women" (74); Musurillo, who claims her as "one of the greatest characters in all of literature. A woman of breeding, grace, and beauty" (77).

9 Easterling remarks that the use of contrast is "A major principle of Sophoclean composition" ("Sophocles" 312).

10 Kirkwood discusses this matter and supports a diptych structure (42-54; also Bowra 116). Kane rejects the diptych theory and argues that the play is structured as a trilogy. Others seek for an organic unity. For example, Ivan M. Linforth believes that the play is a "drama of human

fortunes" unified by a "sustained theme of ruinous love" (201). Stuart E. Lawrence feels that the two tragedies of Deianeira and Heracles are unified by a "theme of knowledge" (300). Gardiner argues that the chorus unifies the play by deflecting attention from Deianeira and keeping the audience aware of Heracles (132). Easterling sees the play as a unified whole by arguing that Heracles and Deianeira "share the same fate: both are victims of eros" ("End" 61). Fuqua agrees with Easterling in denying diptych structure, but asserts that "it is simply not appropriate to speak of the play in terms of a single dominant motif or such contrasts as those between male and female principles in the abstract, Heracles and Deianeira in particular" (62). Segal places Deianeira's domestic tragedy in the "civilized realm" and Heracles' tragedy in the realm of "remote mythology": "the play places us at the intersection of both worlds, at the frontiers between man and beast, civilization and primitive animal desires" ("Sophocles" 101).

11 For example, such contrasts include night and day, dark and light, sleep and consciousness, despair and hope, pain and exaltation, interiority and exteriority. See Williams and Dickerson (4), Seale (184), Segal (Interpreting 119), Holt (216-217), and duBois (153).

## CHAPTER III

A WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS

When, in 1938, Hallet D. Smith published the first sympathetic study of Anne Frankford, the female protagonist in Thomas Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness, he closed his essay with the following witticism: "I have merely tried to save Mistress Frankford from being a woman killed with criticism" (147). Smith's defense of Anne was an anomaly in his era; generally, until the 1960s, critical commentary accepted Anne as sinner and her husband, John Frankford, as sinned against.<sup>1</sup> For a time the critical reputations of John and Anne reversed,<sup>2</sup> but recently the pendulum has swung back in favor of Frankford.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the critical debate concerning which of the two protagonists deserves tragic focus has yet to be resolved. Smith's word-play on Heywood's title additionally points to a second on-going critical debate: Is a husband who kills his wife with kindness for committing adultery to be admired or despised? Some argue that John's sentence is kind,<sup>4</sup> while others argue that his sentence is cruel.<sup>5</sup> The issue of adultery raises a third critical question: Why does Anne allow herself to be so easily seduced? Critics have sought to explain Anne's yielding in a variety of ways such as in terms of literary convention, Elizabethan theology,



Elizabethan psychology, or architectonics; while others argue that Anne has no credible motive for yielding.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the above questions have implications in a fourth critical issue. As classical scholars debate the status of the Trachiniae as a tragedy, Renaissance scholars do the same with A Woman Killed with Kindness. Some claim that the play is no tragedy at all, but simply a moral exemplum, while others qualify the play generically as an early sentimental tragedy, as a "tragedy of false romantic love," as a hybrid of Jacobean comedy and revenge tragedy, as an "unshakespearean tragedy," or as a domestic tragedy.<sup>7</sup>

Each of these questions--Who is the tragic figure? What is the meaning of the title? Why does Anne yield? Does the drama succeed as tragedy?--can be resolved by reading the play as a Deianeiran tragedy, a play framed by a marital conflict, perpetrated and compounded by an abusive patriarchy, that is resolved when an initially passive woman transforms into a purposive personality and commits suicide. Anne's method of suicide--starvation--is important because it allows John Frankford to experience an extended period of self-education in order to recognize his error, his abusive treatment of his wife. Anne Frankford experiences no such dilemma. Once she commits her fatal error, she has no doubts that she has sinned; and all of her succeeding actions are directed toward restoring domestic stability to her environment.

Anne exhibits the Deianeiran characteristic of being initially passive and resting her being on domestic harmony. Her first words in the play are in response to Sir Charles Mountford's praise of her beauty:

I would your praise could find a fitter theme  
Than my imperfect beauty to speak on.  
Such as they be, if they my husband please,  
They suffice me now I am married.  
His sweet content is like a flattering glass,  
To make my face seem fairer to mine eye:  
But the least wrinkle from his stormy brow  
Will blast the roses in my cheeks that grow. (i.29-36)

On the other hand, Frankford's view of the marriage is emotionally sterile.<sup>8</sup> He speaks to Sir Francis Acton, his new wife's brother:

Your sister takes not after you, Sir Francis.  
All his wild blood your father spent on you;  
He got her in his age when he grew civil.  
All his mad tricks were to his land entail'd,  
And you are heir to all; your sister, she  
Hath to her dower her mother's modesty. (i.49-54)

Although Frankford is applauding Anne's modesty, he figuratively sees this trait as a commodity, a dower. Sir Charles appears to understand that Frankford considers his wife as a material possession:

She doth become you like a well-made suit  
In which the tailor hath us'd all his art,  
Not like a thick coat of unseason'd frieze,  
Forc'd on your back in summer; she's no chain  
To tie your neck and curb you to the yoke,  
But she's a chain of gold to adorn your  
neck. (i.59-64)

Opening the fourth scene with a soliloquy, Frankford again reveals himself, reflecting on his own life as well as on his marriage in terms of material possession:

How happy am I amongst other men  
That in my mean estate embrace content.  
I am a gentleman, and by my birth  
Companion with a king; a king's no more.  
I am possess'd of many fair revenues,  
Sufficient to maintain a gentleman.  
Touching my mind, I am study'd in all arts,  
The riches of my thoughts, and of my time  
Have been a good proficient. But the chief  
Of all the sweet felicities on earth,  
I have a fair, a chaste, and loving wife,  
Perfection all, all truth, all ornament.  
If man on earth may truly happy be,  
Of these at once possess'd, sure I am he. (iv.1-14)

Frankford believes that it is more important for a gentleman to possess many revenues than to have an inherited title; he considers his intellectual proficiency as riches; and he sees his wife as an ornament--all are possessions.

Frankford's sight of everything around him as potential property even extends to Wendoll, Anne's seducer.<sup>9</sup> When Wendoll arrives with the news of the hawking incident, Frankford observes to himself:

This Wendoll I have noted, and his carriage  
Hath pleas'd me much; by observation  
I have noted many good deserts in him--  
He's affable and seen in many things,  
Discourses well, a good companion,  
And though of small means, yet a gentleman  
Of a good house, somewhat press'd by want.  
I have preferr'd him to a second place  
In my opinion and my best regard. (iv.27-35)

The key to this passage lies in the words "carriage," "deserts," "gentleman," and "preferr'd." It seems as if Frankford believes himself to be a benevolent prince with the power to bestow preferment on deserving courtiers who have fallen on hard times. By doing so, he turns Wendoll into a possession totally dependent on his master. Equally important is the word "second" in line thirty-four, which Van Fossen interprets as meaning "second only, presumably, to that held by Anne." If this reading is correct, as I believe it is, Frankford places his wife and friend in the same social category--they are retainers. In a similar argument, Lieblein believes that Frankford only sees Anne and Wendoll as extensions of himself (191ff). This insight is confirmed when Frankford outlines the terms of Wendoll's preferment: "Please you to use my table and my purse-- / They are yours" (iv.65-66), and:

Choose of my men which shall attend on you,  
And he is yours. I will allow you, sir,  
Your man, your gelding, and your table, all  
At my own charge; (iv.69-72)

Two scenes later, we find that Wendoll is entirely puzzled by Frankford's generosity, and he concludes that Frankford indeed considers him to be an extension of himself:

I never bound him to me by desert--  
Of a mere stranger, a poor gentleman,  
A man by whom in no kind he could gain!  
He hath plac'd me in the height of all his thoughts,  
Made me companion with the best and chiefest

In Yorkshire. He cannot eat without me,  
Nor laugh without me. I am to his body  
As necessary as his digestion,  
And equally do make him whole or sick. (vi.35-43)

In fact, Wendoll seems to be more than an extension of Frankford; his incorporation as a double or retainer allows Frankford to assume Wendoll's admired characteristics--youth and virility, counterpoints to Frankford's emotional sterility.

When Frankford invites Wendoll to reside with him and his new wife, he tells Anne: "Prithee, Nan, / Use him with all thy loving'st courtesy" (iv.79-80). Her reply, again, shows her commitment to domestic duty: "As far as modesty may well extend, / It is my duty to receive your friend" (iv.81-82). During the ensuing seduction scene, Anne also realizes that Frankford has thrust Wendoll into an unwilling position. Frankford, who is not at home, has left Anne with the following instructions for Wendoll, which she delivers in words that illustrate her passivity, displaying a blindness that is rooted in an uncompromising belief in domestic values:

. . . therefore he enjoin'd me  
To do unto you his most kind commends.  
Nay, more, he wills you as you prize his love,  
Or hold in estimation his kind friendship,  
To make bold in his absence and command  
Even as himself were present in the house;  
For you must keep his table, use his servants,  
And be a present Frankford in his absence. (vi.72-79)

Undoubtedly, Frankford did not intend his instructions that Wendoll "be a present Frankford" as an invitation for Wendoll to seduce his wife, but the fact remains that Wendoll has continued to reside in the household at Frankford's insistence. It is important to remember that critics who assign Wendoll the role of Satan in the Frankfords' sealed garden of bliss (see 70n9) fail to realize that Wendoll was invited--the serpent was not.<sup>10</sup>

In the Trachiniae, Deianeira accepts Heracles' extramarital affairs; it is only when Iole is brought into her home that she takes action. Similarly, now that Wendoll, at Frankford's insistence, has upset domestic stability, Anne alternates between discernment and mental confusion. After listening to Wendoll's seductive speech, she says to herself: "What shall I say? / My soul is wand'ring and hath lost her way" (vi.150-151); and she says to Wendoll: "This maze I am in / I fear will prove the labyrinth of sin" (vi.160-161). Wendoll kisses her and they exeunt.

The ease with which Anne succumbs to Wendoll has been considered an artistic flaw on Heywood's part, or, if not a flaw, a scene that requires scholarly explanation. For example, Arthur Clark, Heywood's biographer, sees the seduction as poor craftsmanship: "But only a master of psychological subtleties, which Heywood was not, could have successfully dramatized the fall of such a woman as Mrs.

Frankford" (232). Others explain Anne's yielding in various ways. For example, Otto Rauchbauer sees Anne as a descendant of the fallen women of the morality plays (205); Henry Hitch Adams agrees that "She is primarily employed to teach a moral lesson by her conduct" (157); and Smith places her in the "Jane Shore tradition" (147). Craig believes that she represents the psychological convention of the frail woman put to the test" (132), showing "the ease with which the best of women might fall" (133). Ribner, who finds little to praise in the play, declares that the controversy surrounding Anne's yielding is a "useless debate," since the play is simply a "moral exemplum" of a Christian fall" (52). Likewise, Bromley feels that the issue of her yielding is irrelevant because Heywood was not interested in individual psychology (261). If Anne is seen simply as an adulterer, a stock type that Heywood borrows to educate the women in the audience about the evils abounding in the world, waiting to take advantage of wives who let down their guards, then she is certainly not a heroic figure. Neither is she a tragic heroine if she is seen as a naive simpleton, swept off of her feet by her first experience with a passionate encounter. Some critics characterize Anne in this manner. For example, Kieffer argues that Heywood did not give Anne a credible motive because the dramatist wanted to portray the act as "unequivocally sinful" (87) and that Anne is more concerned

with the discovery of the adultery, not with the act itself (88), a conclusion that is strikingly similar to that made by Samuel Johnson regarding Calista in The Fair Penitent (see 179). Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., writes that "Mrs. Frankford is pathetically unaware of her inner nature; at her first encounter with temptation, it emerges to dissolve her wifely facade" (184). Marilyn L. Johnson (81-83) and Rick Bowers (297ff) argue that Anne falls because she is immature.

This controversy has surfaced because most critics have been reluctant to afford Anne the status deserving of a tragic heroine. However, the issue of Anne's yielding is not that complicated. T. S. Eliot quotes the most emphatic section of Wendoll's seduction:

O speak no more,  
For more than this I know and have recorded  
Within the red-leav'd table of my heart.  
Fair, and of all belov'd, I was not fearful  
Bluntly to give my life into your hand,  
And at once hazard all my earthly means.  
Go, tell your husband; he will turn me off,  
And I am then undone. I care not, I--  
'Twas for your sake. Perchance in rage he'll kill me.  
I care not--'twas for you. Say I incur  
The general name of villain through the world,  
Of traitor to my friend--I care not, I.  
Beggary, shame, death, scandal, and reproach--  
For you I'll hazard all. What care I?  
For you I'll live, and in your love I'll  
die. (vi.125-139)

Although Eliot acknowledges that the metaphor "table of my heart" is "hardly striking," and calling it "red-leav'd"



turns it into a "ridiculous figure," he has high praise for the remainder of the speech:

But in the lines that follow the most skilful use is made of regular blank verse to emphasize the argument; and it is, even to the judicious couplet at the end, a speech which any actor should be happy to declaim. The speech is perfect for the situation; the most persuasive that Wendoll could have made to Mrs. Frankford; and it persuades us into accepting her surrender. (153)

Wendoll's speech is certainly persuasive, and Cook points out that in production the seduction scene "conveys the emotional progression briefly and convincingly" (356). In addition, the seduction is not an impromptu event, a fact which leads Brodwin to conclude: "The inevitable happens. Kept in constant and close proximity to the fair Mrs. Frankford, Wendoll at length becomes violently attracted to her" (104).<sup>11</sup> Even if the seduction is inevitable, we must not excuse the act; but possibly a tinge of sentimentality is appropriate in this context, as Rudnytsky writes: "Because we experience both the sweets of their sin and their moral conflicts, we find it impossible to condemn the lovers completely" (114-115).

Frankford's response to his wife's adultery is easily anticipated. When he learns of the affair from his servant Nicholas, he again reflects on his wife as a commodity:

She is well born, descended nobly;  
Virtuous her education; her repute  
Is in the general voice of all the country

Honest and fair; her carriage, her demeanour  
In all her actions that concern love  
To me her husband, modest, chaste, and godly.  
Is all this seeming gold plain copper?  
But he, that Judas that hath borne my purse,  
And sold me for a sin-- (viii.95-103)

Now, Frankford worries that his gold ornament is "plain copper," and that his subordinate, his Judas, has robbed him. Not willing to believe solely in the report of his servant, Frankford orchestrates a card game, which functions as a play-within-the-play or as a "mouse trap" (Rauchbauer 206), to observe the conduct of Anne and Wendoll. And, like an inverse Hamlet:

Distraction I will banish from my brow  
And from my looks exile sad discontent.  
Their wonted favours in my tongue shall flow;  
Till I know all, I'll nothing seem to  
know. (viii.108-111)

The card game is a brilliantly composed scene in which double-entendres fly, leaving Frankford convinced of the adulterous affair. Thus convinced, Frankford conspires with Nick to make a duplicate set of keys which he plans to use in a ruse to capture the two lovers in flagrante delicto. This plot device causes Alfred Harbage great discomfort:

The most embarrassing feature of Heywood's Woman Killed with Kindness is . . . the sequence of scenes in which Master Frankford grows clever with duplicate keys. We wish he had exposed his wife and Wendoll in some other way. He dwindles in tragic dignity not by exercising self-righteously and loquaciously his moral code, but by becoming an intriguer. (40)

The embarrassment that Harbage feels because of this sequence is a result of wanting Frankford to be someone he is not--a tragic Shakespearean divine; however, Frankford is simply acting in character, as any ordinary man might act.

Cook writes:

Any man might be an Othello in little, but any man might be a Frankford in full. Most of us could say with Prufrock, 'I am no Prince Hamlet'. Could we say, 'I am no Frankford'? Shakespeare's tragedy embraces ordinary people by implication: A Woman Killed with Kindness is about ordinary people. (354-355)

Thus, Harbage should not feel embarrassed; in fact, he makes a key point when he writes that Frankford does not remain faithful to his moral code. In a Bradleyan sense, the Shakespearean tragic hero attempts to restore moral order, whether he goes about it in the right way or not; thus, Frankford fails as a Shakespearean tragic hero. Frankford's error, in this tragedy of marital relations, is that he violates his role as a husband: first when he introduces an intruder into his social setting, second when he adopts the role of intriguer, and third, we will see, when he fails to forgive his wife.

The events immediately prior to Frankford's discovery of the lovers in bed make his intrigue even more distasteful. In the first place, Frankford shirks his social responsibilities regarding the plight of Sir Charles

Mountford in the subplot.<sup>12</sup> The following exchange begins with Cranwell's admonishment:

Cran. Methinks, sir, you might have that interest  
In your wife's brother to be more remiss  
In this hard dealing against poor Sir Charles,  
Who, as I hear, lies in York Castle, needy,  
And in great want.

Frank. Did not more weighty business of my own  
Hold me away, I would have labour'd peace  
Betwixt them, with all care; indeed I would, sir.

Anne. I'll write unto my brother earnestly  
In that behalf.

Wen. A charitable deed,  
And will beget the good opinion  
Of all your friends that love you, Mistress  
Frankford.

Frank. That's you for one; I know you love Sir Charles.  
[Aside] And my wife too well. (xi.23-36)

Frankford, then, cannot be the Christian gentleman as some critics would have us believe (see 63nn1,3); it is Anne who demonstrates Christian charity. In the second place, when Nick brings the counterfeit letter calling Frankford away on supposed legal business, Anne begs her husband to wait until morning. When he insists on leaving at once, Anne asks him to take Wendoll with him, but Frankford refuses, thus encouraging a sexual encounter.

Like Deianeira, who experiences mental confusion after realizing that she erred by resorting to magic, Anne feels powerless. Thrown together with her lover by her husband's machinations, Anne undergoes a Deianeiran period of emotional self-scrutiny in which she realizes her own mistakes and shortcomings. Her words to Wendoll reveal her

helpless plight: "I have done I know not what. Well, you plead custom; / That which for want of wit I granted erst / I now must yield through fear" (xi.111-113). Anne has now recognized that she initially sinned because of her "want of wit"; never having been in a position of power, she can now only be afraid.

When Frankford finds the two in bed, asleep in each other's arms, he is initially unable to act; his self-restraint reinforces his bloodless image--even in responding to the lovers in bed he is a cold fish. Finally deciding that some action must be taken, Frankford cuts a ridiculous figure as he attacks Wendoll with his sword but is easily prevented from dealing any blows by a female servant. He then banishes Wendoll and turns to Anne, attempting to discover her motive in a series of questions. His first impulse again reflects that he comprehends human relationships in terms of materialism:

. . . Was it for want  
Thou play'dst the strumpet? Wast thou not supply'd  
With every pleasure, fashion, and new toy--  
Nay, even beyond my calling? (xiii.107-110)

Anne replies "I was" (110), so Frankford then asks: "Was it then disability in me, / Or in thine eye seem'd he a properer man?" (111-112). Frankford's second question is more humane, because he now addresses Anne as a woman, or as a person with her own self-identity. But after she replies

"O no" (113), he returns to imagery indicating that he believes Anne to be a possession, or an extension of himself: "Did I not lodge thee in my bosom? / Wear thee here in my heart?" (113-114). She simply replies: "You did" (114).

After retiring to his study to consider how to punish his wife, Frankford returns and pronounces his sentence:

. . . I'll not martyr thee  
Nor mark thee for a strumpet, but with usage  
Of more humility torment thy soul  
And kill thee even with kindness. (xiii.153-156)

In other words, marking Anne as either a "martyr" or a "strumpet" would endow his wife with an identity of self. He then relates the particulars of his sentence, foolishly believing that by removing all physical reminders of his wife he will forget her:

Go make thee ready in thy best attire,  
Take with thee all thy gowns, all thy apparel;  
Leave nothing that did ever call thee mistress,  
Or by whose sight being left here in the house  
I may remember such a woman by. (xiii.158-162)

Because Anne has always been an ornament and a well-made suit, he concludes that by physically removing all of her ornaments and by physically removing Anne he will cleanse his house. And herein lies Frankford's tragedy. Although he now has the chance to practice Christian charity or forgiveness, he does not seize the opportunity. Several

critics argue that A Woman Killed with Kindness functions as a dramatized homily;<sup>13</sup> but if Heywood had chosen this approach to his play, he seemingly would have shown Anne as a duly repentant wife--which I believe she is at this point--and have had Frankford forgive her. Those who read the play in strict didactic terms might argue that if the dramatist had given the main plot a happy ending, he would be condoning the act of adultery. However, Anne makes a bluntly didactic comment shortly before Frankford passes sentence:

[To the audience] O women, women, you that have yet  
kept  
Your holy matrimonial vow unstain'd,  
Make me your instance: when you tread awry,  
Your sins like mine will on your conscience  
lie. (xiii.141-144)

The moral point concerning the sin of adultery has already been made. When Frankford passes his sentence, a sentence that results in Anne's death, the play becomes tragic--Frankford's sentence is surely cruel and unkind.

Commentators on the play who have argued that Frankford's judgment is actually kind (see 69n4) draw these conclusions because in the world of revenge tragedy the husband has the right to kill his wife, and in the real world of early seventeenth-century society, adulteresses were forced to do some sort of public penance--e.g., in the pillory--after which the wife became a social outcast

(Van Fossen xxx-xxx).<sup>14</sup> Thus, Frankford is kind in sparing her life as well as in sparing her public humiliation. The above assessments of Frankford's action, however, neglect the tragic irony of the title--the fact that Frankford actually kills his wife with kindness.<sup>15</sup> For example, Bromley, who chooses to ignore ironic implications, argues that "in spite of its title, Heywood's play is really about Frankford" (273). Smith, however, takes an opposite and more logical approach:

The husband who kills her with kindness may interest us more, since his behavior contrasts so strikingly with that of the usual Elizabethan cuckold, but the play is after all about the woman who was killed. She is the tragic hero if there is one. (138; see also Cook 355)

After Frankford passes sentence, Anne seeks to gain control over her own life in an effort to restore stability to her domestic environment, an attempt that ends in suicide. And herein lies her tragedy. Frankford has the opportunity to restore domestic stability when Anne repents. In fact, she is so overcome by the magnitude of her sin that she believes she is beyond pardon:

O by what word, what title, or what name  
Shall I entreat your pardon? Pardon! O  
I am so far from hoping such sweet grace  
As Lucifer from Heaven. To call you husband--  
O me most wretched, I have lost that name;  
I am no more your wife. (xiii.78-83)



At this point, if Frankford is indeed a Christian gentleman, he should pardon his wife, but he refuses. Canuteson points out that "In no Elizabethan or Jacobean tragedy does a character blamelessly decline forgiveness to a penitent" (136). There is, however, an analog in the non-Christian Trachiniae where Heracles refuses to forgive his wife, even though his action corrupted the marital environment--both male protagonists err, and both female protagonists attempt to correct those errors through suicide.

Unlike Heracles, Frankford finally forgives his wife, but now it is too late. When he goes to Anne's deathbed, her plea to her husband reveals that this is the second time that she has asked to be pardoned. Canuteson observes that in the following lines Anne has added nothing to her original plea for forgiveness: "The very fact that he forgives her now, following the same pleas that he heard before, shows conclusively the useless extremity of his revenge" (140):

Out of my zeal to Heaven, whither I am now bound,  
I was so impudent to wish you here,  
And once more beg your pardon. O good man,  
And father to my children, pardon me.  
Pardon, O pardon me! . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . .  
Faintness hath so usurp'd upon my knees  
That kneel I cannot; but on my heart's knees  
My prostrate soul lies thrown down at your feet  
To beg your gracious pardon. Pardon, O pardon  
me! (xvii.82-92)

Thus, our emotions regarding Anne must be moved by admiration, not by pity. Any pity that we feel must be delegated to Frankford, who only too late has recognized his love for his wife. It is only at her deathbed that Frankford understands the consequences of his action:

My wife, the mother to my pretty babes,  
Both those lost names I do restore thee back,  
And with this kiss I wed thee once again.  
Though thou art wounded in thy honour'd name,  
And with that grief upon thy deathbed liest,  
Honest in heart, upon my soul, thou  
diest. (xvii.115-120)

For Frankford, it is a moment of tragic recognition.

Brodwin agrees that this is Frankford's tragic moment: "if and when the lover comes to appreciate the value of the love he has forsworn, this appreciation comes too late" (101).

Anne is the only heroine under consideration in this study who does not cause the death of the primary male character, but she does cause her husband to long for death. Overcome by remorse, he finally delivers his pardon and says: "I will shed tears for thee, / Pray with thee, and in mere pity / Of thy weak state I'll wish to die with thee" (xvii.95-97). As she expires, domestic tranquility is restored. Frankford says: "Though thy rash offence / Divorc'd our bodies, thy repentant tears / Unite our souls" (107-109); and, "And with this kiss I wed thee once again" (117); finally, "New marry'd and new widowed; O, she's dead, / And a cold grave must be our nuptial bed" (123-124).

Although Anne's death restores moral order, many critics have failed to agree that A Woman Killed with Kindness is a tragedy because it is "barren . . . of real cosmic scope" (Ribner 52), or "there is no supernatural music from behind the wings" (Eliot 158). We have already seen that some scholars, reading the play with an eye toward Elizabethan theological treatises, choose to see it as a dramatized homily (71n13). The fact that scriptural echoes abound in the text is undeniable, but many critics argue that the play should not be read as a religious treatise, so they move this sphere of discussion into the secular realm, claiming that the play is a dramatized conduct book.<sup>16</sup> However, reading the play as a conduct book is also misleading. From a biographical point of view, Arthur Brown argues that Heywood "had no particular social, moral, or religious axe to grind (at least not to the extent of turning his plays into treatises . . .)" (329).

In order to reconcile the moral impulse of the play--whether religious or secular--with tragic theory, some see the play as domestic tragedy, as defined by Keith Sturgess:

A domestic tragedy . . . is a play with a sad end which seriously depicts crime and punishment in the lives of ordinary men, often dwelling on the disruption of normal family relationships. It is set in London or the provinces, and it teaches a simple moral lesson. This lesson is brought home to the audience by the authenticity, real or assumed, of the plot material. (14)

Ure makes an important point in this regard:

. . . the playwright's purpose is not the same as the treatise-maker's. . . . The playwright, although he accepts the morality from which the treatises proceed, is concerned with more complex problems. No matter how closely we juxtapose the plays [domestic dramas] with their analogous treatises, we are obliged to remember . . . that the dramatists had to handle character and incident before an audience, and have, therefore, the right to be judged as dramatists and not as homilists. (147-148)

Lieblein also views the play as more than a homily on adultery or a conduct book for cuckolds; however, this critic is uncomfortable with the term domestic tragedy. She points out that A Woman Killed with Kindness is different from other domestic tragedies such as The Yorkshire Tragedy and Arden of Faversham, which draw their plots from accounts of famous murders.<sup>17</sup> In addition, because Heywood collected his source material from the Italian novelle in Painter's translations and did not rely on public documents,

Heywood [had] greater freedom to explore the adultery in relation to its context and to suggest that complicity blurs traditionally obvious distinctions between the sinner and the sinned against, the adulteress and her judge. (194)

Henderson also points out that no source has been identified that presents an adulterous wife being banished from home (286). Thus, in the same way that Sophocles transformed his source material in order to place tragic focus on Deianeira, Heywood transformed his sources to place

tragic focus on Anne. Lieblein acknowledges that Anne is like other sinners in domestic drama because she "recognizes her sin and begs for divine mercy" (193), but this critic also explains how Anne is unique:

However, Anne's realization is of greater consequence, because her repentance comes before rather than after her punishment. . . . It leads her to accept responsibility for her actions and for her own punishment. It also, by giving the heroine autonomy and dignity, makes clear the culpability and complicity of her male partners. . . .

Thus the play creates a complex sympathy for its heroine. (193)

Lieblein's account of Anne's role can be taken a step further: this "complex sympathy," I argue, evolves into a complex admiration. Like Deianeira, Anne achieves tragic admiration by accepting the consequences of her actions and resolving her dilemma by self-inflicted punishment.

Other critics, influenced by Ernest Bernbaum's The Drama of Sensibility, qualify the play as an early sentimental tragedy (Crowell 82, Bowers 225). Such assessments, however, lead to the conclusion that the protagonists are simply caricatures and that the plot is simply directed to show vice defeated and virtue triumphant. Thus, Bernbaum concludes:

[Frankford] shows "kindness" in exiling instead of slaying [Anne], not because he sees anything to exonerate her conduct, but because the protracted bitterness of a lingering exile is a more fitting penalty for her crime than instant death. And the pity which he afterwards feels for her when her end is

approaching, the forgiveness he grants her, is not sympathy for an unfortunate innocent but pardon for a repentant sinner. (36)

Brodwin recognizes that A Woman Killed with Kindness does not fit neatly into established generic categories, so she posits her own, calling the play a Tragedy of False Romantic Love,

[in which] Heywood had established a simple pattern moving from the possession of an unappreciated good, through the loss of this good, to an obstructed return transcended in ultimate tragic redemption. (175)

Brodwin is on target with her assessment of Frankford's tragedy; however, she accepts that the play is about the husband, while I have argued that the play is about the wife. Ornstein also sees a sentimentality in the tragedy, but qualifies his view by asserting that generically the play must be explained as a hybrid:

In Jacobean tragedy, sinners like Vittoria and Beatrice-Joanna meet violent deaths. In Jacobean comedy, faithless wives are pardoned rather than punished . . . Heywood's treatment of adultery ingeniously joins the sentimental aura of comic reconciliation to the retributive impulse of revenge tragedy. (137)

The frustration that Cook felt in defending his production of A Woman Killed with Kindness at the University of London, led him to call the play an "unshakesperian tragedy." It is appropriate to quote his anecdote:

A distinguished scholar who saw one of the performances was talking to me afterwards about the play, which he greatly admired; but, he said, he had ultimately been disappointed because each time an apparent Shakespearian climax is approaching one is conscious of the lack of a Shakesperian flow of poetry. Here I was able to take up the argument on Heywood's behalf with some success; for to react like this seems to me like complaining that there are no apples on a pear tree. . . . I am primarily interested in what Heywood has achieved which is unique. In A Woman Killed with Kindness he has written one of the small number of great tragedies in English, one which stands alone. (354)

What can be learned from the above anecdote is that A Woman Killed with Kindness is a tragedy, and that as a unique kind of tragedy it defies further classification. Terms such as "sentimental tragedy," and "domestic tragedy"--and, later, "she-tragedy"--are examples of scholarly shorthand which often promote violent generic categories. Of course, most literary works are intertextual--a phenomenon that informs the thesis of the present discussion--however, traditional categories are not always appropriate, particularly in a synchronic study. A Woman Killed with Kindness is a tragedy, and it is important to read the play in this manner because phallogentric readings focus the drama on the act of adultery. But A Woman Killed with Kindness is not simply a story about an erring wife and her husband's punishment. It is a play about a woman who is tragically forced into violating her own value systems by a husband who corrupts the marriage bond. Like Heracles and Deianeira in Sophocles' Trachiniae, both John and Anne Frankford play

their parts in the final catastrophe, but it is the husband's act that perpetrates the tragedy. Anne violates her moral responsibilities by her infidelity, but she has been pushed into this violation by her husband who violates his marital responsibilities by introducing an intruder into the household. Additionally, the tragedy is compounded by further marital abuse, first, when John becomes an intriguer and, second, when he refuses to forgive his wife. Cook sees the play in a similar light:

. . . A Woman Killed with Kindness is a tragedy of inadequacy, on the one hand [i.e., Frankford's inadequacy]; and, on the other, of simple acceptance and endurance [i.e., Anne's acceptance and endurance] of the confusion and suffering inherent in the faithful pursuit of an unsophisticated response to life. Frankford's inadequacy is transfigured in self-realisation; and Anne's acceptance is elevated by her remaining true to self and, within human limitations, to her relationships, in spite of the discordant conditions offered by existence. (372)

Frankford's transfiguration embodies a typical tragic progression of recognition, reversal, and catastrophe; but Anne's tragedy is paramount because she evokes the greater admiration by "remaining true to self." In short, she is a Deianeiran heroine.



NOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> Otelia Cromwell: Frankford is "absolutely flawless" and "superhuman" (78); "From the beginning to the end . . . there is not a moment when there is any doubt as to the side in which the poet sympathathizes" (81). Henry Hitch Adams: "Obviously Heywood intended him to epitomize a Christian gentleman" (149). Patricia Meyer Spacks: "Master Frankford is, in short, a paragon" (325). Irving Ribner: Frankford is "a model of the Christian gentleman" (52).

<sup>2</sup> David Cook argues that Frankford is not a model Christian figure: "He will never have any conception of the powerful force which impelled Anne into adultery; he has no awareness of his own insufficiency" (361). John Canuteson agrees with Cook: "Christian terms are to Frankford little more than bywords with which to measure his faith in his wife" (132); and "his aims are those of a man of clouded honor, not of a Christian gentleman" (137). Robert Ornstein calls Frankford "smug," "devious," "sanctimonious," "a trifle sadistic" (128).

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Kieffer admires Frankford for his emotional self-control (91). Laura G. Bromley feels that he exhibits moderation as called for in the contemporary conduct books (265). Rick Bowers calls him "prudent" (297), a character who exhibits "sober Puritanism" (298). And Marilyn L. Johnson echoes Henry Hitch Adams: "It is clear that Heywood intended Frankford to epitomize a Christian gentleman" (84).

<sup>4</sup> Hardin Craig believes Frankford to be an "authorized justicer" (134). Henry Hitch Adams claims that "In sentencing his wife, Master Frankford exhibits Christian mercy . . . as a means to save her everlasting soul" (151). Ribner believes that Frankford acts "entirely out of love for her" (52). Andrew Clark calls his sentence "tender and forgiving" (185). Cromwell claims that Frankford "is at once both just and generous" (75). Bromley argues that Frankford does not have the luxury to consult his emotions; he has to preserve social order and "act to safeguard himself and his children" (267).

5 Ornstein declares that "Frankford's charity [in allowing Anne to live rather than in seeking immediate physical vengeance] is in fact a calculated spiritual torment--a kind of mortification by degrees" (138). Peter L. Rudnytsky argues that Frankford's self-restraint "proves to be a harsher punishment than any physical chastisement would have been. . . . [T]he reader is likely to be struck less by his ostensible magnanimity than by his actual cruelty" (113-114). The best assessment of Frankford's sentence is made by Cook: "It is a harsh judgement on her--and on himself too; for, in spite of all he can say, he still loves her, and will never recover from his calculating action" (363).

6 The issue of Anne's yielding will be discussed at length within the body of the text. Scholarly citations will appear at the appropriate places.

7 The play's status as tragedy will be discussed near the end of this chapter. Scholarly citations will appear at the appropriate places.

8 Frankford's emotional sterility is noticed by Leonora Leet Brodwin, a fact which causes her to consider Frankford to be a "false romantic lover," one who "becomes easily involved in a love relationship but, not understanding either his own emotion or the nature of intimate relationships, he takes love to be a much simpler thing than it is" (32).

9 Many critics see Wendoll as a Satan-figure (Henderson 280, Rauchbauer 204, Doran 304, Stilling 176, Ribner 55). Other negative assessments of Wendoll: he is "a reprobate, not a helpless victim of passion" (Kieffer 87); he "behaves dishonorably toward a friend and benefactor" (Spacks 322); his failure to repent contrasts him with Anne (Wymer 82); he is a "courtly lover, archfiend to husbands" (Stilling 176); and, "The brief struggle of Wendoll to conquer an ignoble desire barely rouses our curiosity, much less our sympathy" (Cromwell 127). Those more kind to Wendoll include R. W. Van Fossen who, in his introduction to the Revels edition of the play, asserts that he is a "mixture of good and evil" (1), and Craig, who concludes that "In him there is a conflict of soul between loyalty to Frankford and his passion for Frankford's wife" (130). Those who defend Wendoll include Rick Bowers, who claims that he, like Anne, is naive but exhibits an "honest

vitality" (297); he is not "the hell-gate demon of the earlier Moralities" (298). Leanore Lieblein believes that Wendoll is forced into sin by Frankford who "does not attribute to Wendoll an independent existence" (191). Rudnytsky agrees that "In seducing Anne, Wendoll is, as it were, only taking Frankford's invitation literally--that is, acting out his role as Frankford's double" (120). Brodwin feels that "He has fought desperately to restrain his passion" (105). Wendoll's most staunch defender is Cook: "Ingenuous, likeable, thoroughly virile . . . . To regard Wendoll as a rake . . . is to misunderstand the medium Heywood is working in. . . . Wendoll is not an unscrupulous cad; he is a passionate, attractive, and weak young man who fails to master his feelings. He is not a psychopath" (355).

10 Spacks points this out: "The tragedy which befalls Master Frankford is in a sense his own fault" (326). However, Diana E. Henderson argues that "Having adopted a contemporary and familiar setting in northern England for his action, Heywood had not the freedom to call on such supernatural intruders as appear in Shakespeare's romances" (282). Henderson bases her reading on the belief that "the play's major endeavor" is "to realize the theological in the everyday" (290). In a similar argument, Kieffer asserts that "the notion that someone is or can be responsible for the moral decisions of another person is peculiarly modern. Such an idea has no basis in the Christianity that informs Heywood's play, and it would have been anathema to the playwright" (97). I believe that these readings are flawed, as I will argue below.

11 Peter Ure defends the brief yielding in terms of architectonics: the play contains three great incidents--the seduction scene, the discovery scene, and the death scene--and "since the play so utterly disregards the unity of time . . . the main incidents . . . [are each] allotted only that share of stage time proportionate to its importance in the total scheme" (152-153).

12 The subplot has little relevance to my discussion; however, it is a matter of critical controversy. Many critics, particularly earlier ones, see the subplot as poor artistry (Arthur Clark 230, Doran 290, Eliot 154, Brodwin 117, Adams 156). Most recent critics, on the other hand, accept that the subplot artfully echoes and reinforces the main plot: they are linked by the themes of honor, virtue and honor, or friendship and honor (Spacks 327,

Van Fossen xxxiv, Townsend 101, Andrew Clark 187, Bromley 261); they link "traditional Christian and new bourgeois codes" (Henderson 227); they are thematically linked "in terms of charity" (Cook 363, Canuteson 126-127); "the criteria provided by the unreal world of the subplot accentuate the subtle complexities of the real world of . . . the main plot" (Coursen 180); "Heywood uses the melodrama of the subplot to create an emotional atmosphere in which extremes of violent emotion and action seem normal" (Ornstein 137); both plots illustrate that "the practice of consistent Christian virtue has the power to destroy evil in the world" (Ribner 54). I agree with Rudnytsky (114) and Ure (149) that the subplot reflects the paradox of the play's title.

13 Theologically, David Atkinson (27) and Marilyn L. Johnson (70) believe that the meaning of the play hinges on a theme of Christian forgiveness, and others point out the pattern of sin, repentance, atonement, and forgiveness (Van Fossen xxxi, Lieblein 195). Henry Hitch Adams is emphatic about the Christian elements in the play: "At every critical point in the play, religious didacticism . . . directs the action of the characters" (146-147). For example, this critic asserts that Wendoll "introduces the idea of divine punishment even as he considers the betrayal of his patron" (147), that the maidservant's preventing of Frankford from doing vengeance to Wendoll alludes to the Biblical rescue of Isaac (150), and that Frankford does not kill his wife instantly because "she could not have repented" (151). Ribner agrees with Adams: "the play in its specific thematic statement reflects the commonplaces of Elizabethan popular theology" (52). Critics also have attempted to allegorize the tragedy. Roger Stilling argues that the opening wedding scene presents Frankford as "a complacent new Adam, innocently delighted with his Eve" (176). Henderson argues: "The primary plot . . . invokes the Christian movement of fall from Edenic bliss into sin" (277); "Christian references abound in the Frankfords' story of temptation, fall, judgment, penance and salvation" (279); "The Frankfords' connubial bliss . . . is jarred by the entrance of Wendoll into their paradise" (279); and, typologically, when Frankford pronounces his "kind" sentence, he "no longer echoes Adam in paradise, but instead follows the second Adam as an imitatio Christi" (282).

14 Atkinson discusses the early seventeenth-century legal and social ramifications of adultery and divorce at length.

<sup>15</sup> Atkinson (23) and Van Fossen (xxvi-xxvii) discuss occurrences of the proverb "to kill with kindness." The most famous occurrence is in The Taming of the Shrew:

This is a way to kill a wife with kindness,  
And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humor.  
He that knows better how to tame a shrew,  
Now let him speak; 'tis charity to  
shew. (IV.i.208-211)

Rudnytsky points out that Sir Francis Acton's reference to Anne as "A perfect wife already, meek and obedient" (i.37) resembles Kate's final portrayal in Shakespeare's comedy: "It thus seems as though Heywood takes up where Shakespeare leaves off, in dramatizing the story of an apparently 'perfect wife' who is corrupted after her marriage" (105).

<sup>16</sup> Madeleine Doran acknowledges that the action in the main plot follows the morality pattern of sinning, repentance, punishment, and forgiveness (367), but she also argues that A Woman Killed with Kindness and other domestic tragedies "suffer distortion if viewed as dramatized homilies" (143). Bromley argues that Anne successfully undergoes a Christian repentance (274), but that Heywood should be viewed "less as a preacher of Christian virtues than as a spokesman for middle-class values" (261). Bromley also argues that "Heywood intended to dramatize a code of gentlemanly behavior for an emerging middle-class audience eager for guidance in the business of living" (260). Rick Bowers agrees: "Rather than viewing the play through consistent theological spectacles, the audience vicariously participates in the subplot injustice, the illicit seduction, and the righteous conclusion, as they would in any bourgeois entertainment" (294n2). Canuteson simply concludes: "[Heywood] could not write anything approaching a homily on the subject of forgiveness and hope to have his play live to see its second performance" (127). Andrew Clark agrees that the play is not "a mere dramatized homily," although it presents a "conventional moral scheme" (180).

<sup>17</sup> Although no single source has been identified for the main plot, critics point out links to various Italian novelle as translated by Painter, to Robert Greene's "The Conversation of an English Courtizan" (as adapted from George Gascoigne's The Adventures of Master F. J.), to medieval miracle plays, to fifteenth-century morality plays, and to anonymous domestic tragedies. Van Fossen provides a summary of such scholarship (xx-xxvii; see also Atkinson).

Max Bluestone's work is also valuable; particularly interesting are his theories regarding the production problems involved in adapting prose sources for the stage. Rudnytsky and Rauchbauer focus on the influence of the morality play.

CHAPTER IV  
THE MAID'S TRAGEDY<sup>1</sup>

Set in Rhodes, The Maid's Tragedy opens with the news of an impending wedding masque.<sup>2</sup> The soldier Melantius has returned from foreign wars to attend the nuptials between his young friend Amintor and Amintor's "troth-plight" Aspatia; however, Melantius learns that the King has instead ordered Amintor to marry Evadne, Melantius' sister. In the wedding chamber, Evadne refuses to consummate the marriage, revealing that her ambition has driven her to become the King's mistress and that she has married Amintor to maintain appearances. Amintor agrees to the mock marriage in order to preserve his reputation:

. . . Methinks I am not wronged  
 Nor is it aught, if from the censuring world  
 I can but hide it: reputation,  
 Thou art a word, no more. (II.ii.332-335)<sup>3</sup>

From the outset, then, Aspatia is a wronged maid, and she finds herself in a Deianeiran dilemma--her values have been compromised by her being forced to submit to a corrupt patriarchy. Initially passive, she undergoes a spiritual transformation during the play and takes action motivated by a desire to restore stability to both the marital and political environments. But even her initial passivity

reveals the inner Deianeiran traits of possessing a strong belief in domestic values, an unclouded belief in her own innate goodness, and an intense sympathy for the plight of woman.

The major charge against Aspatia is identical to that leveled against Deianeira and Anne Frankford: critics accuse Aspatia of being, what is traditionally called, a "flat" character, in this case, a one-dimensional figure who acts according to an outmoded code of love. For example, Shullenberger claims that "She is the self-conscious artist who weaves out her history as an emblem of the forsaken woman" (152-153). But Aspatia's initial passivity is not one-dimensional. In the first scene of the play, she speaks only three lines as she "passes by" a group of courtiers. Melantius, believing that she is to be Amintor's new bride, hails her: "Mayst thou bring a race / Unto Amintor that may fill the world / Successively with soldiers!" (I.i.61-63) Aspatia's terse reply reveals a multi-dimensional psychology: "My hard fortunes / Deserve not scorn, for I was never proud / When they were good" (I.i.64-66).

Aspatia is also typically Deianeiran in that she initially harbors no resentment toward her rival, as Deianeira bears none toward Iole--a fact that is remarkable, considering that Aspatia attends Evadne, Amintor's bride, on the wedding night. She tells Evadne: "May all the marriage



joys / That longing maids imagine in their beds / Prove so unto you!" (II.i.90-92) Likewise, Aspatia is reluctant to condemn Amintor, as Deianeira hesitates to condemn Heracles. In the following lines, she begs Evadne to excuse her grief, discloses how she has been wronged, asks heaven to forgive Amintor, and consoles herself with her belief in her goodness:

. . . Pardon Evadne; would my worth  
Were great as yours, or that the King, or he,  
Or both, thought so! Perhaps he found me worthless,  
But, till he did so, in these ears of mine,  
These credulous ears, he poured the sweetest words  
That art or love could frame. If he were false,  
Pardon it, heaven; and if I did want  
Virtue, you safely may forgive that too,  
For I have lost none that I had from you. (II.i.48-56)

Aspatia then sings.

The contents of her song is one of the major reasons why critics have accused Aspatia of morbid self-indulgence, and it is a difficult point to refute. But instead of condemning her, we can admire her in her weakness, in the same way that we can admire any tragic protagonist for remaining true to moral values:

Lay a garland on my hearse  
Of the dismal yew;  
Maidens, willow branches bear;  
Say I died true.  
My love was false, but I was firm  
From my hour of birth;  
Upon my buried body lay  
Lightly, gentle earth! (II.i.72-79)

Evadne then prompts Dula to sing another song, which counterpoints Aspatia's lament:

I could never have the power  
To love one above an hour,  
But my heart would prompt mine eye  
On some other man to fly.  
Venus, fix mine eyes fast,  
Or, if not, give me all that I shall see at  
last. (II.i.83-88)

Whereas Aspatia has apostrophized "heaven" in her words to Evadne and "Maidens" in her song, Dula calls out to Venus. It has been argued that Aspatia's character functions simply as a symbol of lost values,<sup>4</sup> but it is difficult to agree with this assessment of her character; instead, Dula, who follows the laws of Venus, seems to function as the symbol of archaic values. Possibly, Dula has been schooled in love by the speaker of John Donne's "The Indifferent": she believes that Aspatia is one of a new breed of "Poor heretics in love," who are guilty of following a new fashion--"dangerous constancy." Donne's speaker asks his heretical lover: "Must I, who came to travail thorough you, / Grow your fixed subject because you are true?" (17-18) But Venus comes to his rescue:

Venus heard me sigh this song,  
And by love's sweetest part, variety, she swore  
She heard not this till now, and that it should be so  
no more.  
She went, examined, and returned ere long,  
And said, "Alas! some two or three  
Poor heretics in love there be,  
Which think to 'stablish dangerous constancy.

But I have told them, 'Since you will be true,  
You shall be true to them who are false to you.'  
(19-27)

As a heretic, Aspatia is forced into martyrdom and shows an intense sympathy for the plight that women are forced to suffer at the hands of men. She delivers sarcastic premarital advice to her waiting gentlewomen, Antiphilia and Olympias:

Alas, poor wenches,  
Go learn to love first, learn to lose yourselves,  
Learn to be flattered, and believe and bless  
The double tongue that did it; make a faith  
Out of the miracles of ancient lovers,  
Such as spake truth and died in't; and, like me,  
Believe all faithful, and be miserable. (II.ii.4-10)

She continues her warning: "be sure / You credit anything the light gives light to / Before a man" (II.ii.15-17); and, "But man-- / O, that beast man!" (II.ii.26-27) Now that Aspatia is overcoming her passivity, her grief has begun to take on a harder edge. We can see this transformation when her warning to her waiting gentlewomen turns to cold figuration, echoing Evadne's snake-imagery in her revelation to Amintor:<sup>5</sup>

. . . If you needs must love,  
Forced by ill fate, take to your maiden bosoms  
Two dead-cold aspics, and of them make lovers;  
They cannot flatter nor forswear: one kiss  
Makes a long peace for all. (II.ii.22-26)

First seeing herself as a Cleopatra-figure, Aspatia moves to compare herself with the wronged Oenone and Dido.

The emotional tapestry scene follows, in which she sees herself as Ariadne. William W. Appleton's evaluation of the scene represents typical critical commentary:

As she contemplates a tapestry depicting the forsaken Ariadne, she sees in it the picture of her own fate. . . . The poignancy of her words is real and touching, but it is at the same time unmistakably decadent. She takes melancholy pleasure in her self-projection into the company of deserted women--Dido, Ariadne, and Oenone. (39-40)

Aspatia is undoubtedly melancholy at this point, but she is surely not decadent. Representing a Deianeiran period of emotional self-scrutiny, her character at this point is growing and genuine; it is neither deteriorating nor artificial. Leonora Leet Brodwin sees that, at this point, Aspatia is a character floundering in the gulf amid discernment and mental confusion:

In this picture, Fletcher, in one of his finest poetic flights, has caught that curious mixture of genuine disenchantment and self-conscious pose that characterizes Aspatia almost to the end of her fatally determined course. (130)

Yes, Aspatia is posing, but in the continuing discussion of the tapestry, she progressively gains strength. She orders Antiphilia to alter her needlework to place more fear on the face of Theseus:<sup>6</sup>

Antiphilia, in this place work a quicksand,  
And over it a shallow smiling water  
And his ship ploughing it, and then a Fear;  
Do that Fear to the life, wench. (II.ii.54-57)

Antiphilia claims that such an alteration "'Twill wrong the story" (II.ii.57). Aspatia replies: "'Twill make the story, wronged by wanton poets, / Live long and be believed" (II.ii.58-59). Aspatia's comment is strikingly similar to the complaint of the Wife of Bath that men have always controlled the literary roles of women:

By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,  
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,  
They wold han writen of men moore wikkednesse  
Than al the mark of Adam may redresse. (693-696)

Thus, although Aspatia may have initially been following an outmoded code of courtly love, she now sees that this system has been falsely propagated by men, by "wanton poets"--i.e., another patriarchal abuse. She then instructs Antiphilia to alter her portrayal of Ariadne: "These colours are not dull and pale enough / To show a soul so full of misery / As this sad lady's was" (II.ii.63-65). Aspatia's vision of how the tapestry should appear reaches a fevered pitch, causing Olympias to interrupt her. Aspatia returns to calm, and her transformation is complete. She is now a "new Aspatia":

I have done. Sit down, and let us  
Upon that point fix all our eyes, that point there.  
Make a dumb silence till you feel our sadness  
Give us new souls. (II.ii.79-82)

After the above scene, Aspatia disappears for over two acts, a fact that causes Robert Rentoul Reed, Jr., to assert: "in the background of our imagination Aspatia remains speechlessly grief-stricken, while we, with increasing apprehension, await the news of her death" (95).<sup>7</sup> It is true that in her absence Aspatia remains in our imaginations, but she remains in the foreground; all intervening action results from her being wronged, and Amintor and particularly Calianax serve as constant reminders. Also, instead of apprehensively awaiting the news of her death, we anxiously look forward to her reappearance as a transformed and active person.

Aspatia reappears, disguised as a man, ready to assume control over her own life.<sup>8</sup> But, like Deianeira, she fears that her design might have evil consequences:

This is my fatal hour. Heaven may forgive  
My rash attempt, that causlessly hath laid  
Griefs on me that will never let me rest,  
And put a woman's heart into my breast.  
It is more honour for you that I die,  
For she that can endure the misery  
That I have on me, and be patient too,  
May live and laugh at all that you can do. (V.iii.1-8)

She confronts Amintor, claiming to be her own brother who has come to seek vengeance on Amintor because of "The baseness of the injuries you did her" (V.iii.56). Of course, Aspatia's challenge is a thinly veiled attempt at suicide. Aspatia now realizes that she can no longer live

under a system of values that was designed by "wanton poets," and she further realizes that death is her only course to correct this false value system; thus, she provokes Amintor into delivering a mortal wound. Feeling the power of Aspatia's love, Amintor is moved to finally join her. Freudian interpretations aside--i.e., "death becomes the consummation of love" (Norland xvii)--the double suicide is a symbolic reunion. Only a heroine with such affective power is capable of restoring domestic and political stability to Rhodes:

. . . Aspatia!  
The soul is fled for ever, and I wrong  
Myself, so long to lose her company.  
Must I talk now? Here's to be with thee, love!  
Kills himself. (V.iii.239-242)

The wounds that severed the marriage and diseased the country are healed, but the cure is tragic: Evadne murders the King and takes her own life. When the other court figures arrive, Lyssippus, the dead King's brother, assumes leadership and closes the play with the following lines:

May this fair example be to me  
To rule with temper, for on lustful kings  
Unlooked-for sudden deaths from God are sent;  
But curs'd is he that is their instrument.  
(V.iii.292-295)

This final declamation has led many critics to view the play as a political statement. Such views cover the spectrum from seeing the play as a treatise to show that a

king must be obeyed, no matter how he acts, to those who see the play as a warning to kings who abuse their power.<sup>9</sup> The political aspect of The Maid's Tragedy is indeed an important critical issue; however, we need to be conscious of what Danby calls "the fallacy of treating literature as propaganda" (185). Placing too much emphasis on politics misleads critics into making negative value judgments of the play, minimizing its artistic value. For example, Leech writes: "The Maid's Tragedy is too much caught up in the ephemeral political notions of its time for us now to be easily moved by the play as a whole" (Fletcher 126-127). Although I disagree with Leech's evaluation of the play's affective power, his insight is valuable because it reveals that we should not look to political issues for the tragedy. Craik makes several valid arguments in this regard: the question of regicide "remains curiously separate from the characterisation, and hence from the tragic interest" (12); "Political ideas are not important in the play, as they are in Julius Caesar or in Bussy D'Ambois" (13); and, most significant: "The court of Rhodes is . . . a hybrid of the Arcadian [i.e., the romantic] and the Jacobean, as is the whole world of tragedy."<sup>10</sup> It is a background for the passions of the figures who occupy the foreground" (14).

Another reason that a political route seems to be an inviting avenue for critics is that no scholar applauds Beaumont and Fletcher for their skill as dramatic poets, for



their ability to provide coherent moral systems, for their dexterity in developing convincing characters, or for their significance as serious tragedians; instead, the positive critical reputation of the dramatists lies in their "virtues as theatrical craftsmen" (Neill "Symetry" 185).<sup>11</sup> Thus, Leech asserts that "This is not great tragedy" (Fletcher 126); the play "communicates little sense of suffering" (Fletcher 142). Also Gurr concludes: "It is not a tragedy in the usual sense; it has no single great figure brought low by Fortune's wheel or Aristotle's peripeteia" (4); "The tragedy . . . exists in the situation, the ethical dilemma, not in the characters" (5).

Such critical comments as "not a tragedy in the usual sense" are similar to generic evaluations of the Trachiniae and A Woman Killed with Kindness, which lead scholars to neglect the play's intrinsic merits; likewise, many critics wrestle with the issue of the play's title. I believe that the title points to Aspatia, but Shullenberger feels that it is ambiguous:

The Maid's Tragedy is a tragedy of maids in the generic sense, for both the central women characters are destroyed by masculine court intrigues. Aspatia and Evadne are inverse images of each other. . . . Aspatia's grief sanctifies in perpetuity the maidenhead she wishes she had lost, Evadne murders for a maidenhead she wishes she could recover. (154)

He also argues: "Evadne's story is marked by tragic action and tragic change" (155); "This is a maid's tragedy, and

Evadne is the lost maid who performs it" (156); and, "Aspatia's pathetic story does not frame the play . . . it runs alongside the play, irrelevant to the rest of the story" (152). In two separate places, Finkelpearl agrees that there are two maids; however, he identifies them as Aspatia and Amintor ("Beaumont" 163, Court 184). Eugene M. Waith also posits Aspatia and Amintor as the two maids, but he declares Aspatia's tragedy to be "almost irrelevant" (Pattern 21). Others accept that Aspatia is the maid of the title, but they also downplay her importance. Unlike Shullenberger, Danby believes that Aspatia's story frames the play, but he argues that her tragedy is "subordinate" (186-187): "the central core of the tragedy . . . concerns Amintor, Evadne, the King and Melantius, in their main relations to each other" (201).<sup>12</sup>

The above critical quest--the search for the most prominent tragic protagonist--can be illuminated if we instead view the play as a tragedy of a broken marriage. The critic who comes closest to this point of view is Craik:

Aspatia is very clearly tragic--the title of the play attests as much . . . . But it is Amintor and Evadne who sustain the tragic burden and in whom the tragic interest is concentrated. Of the two Amintor is undoubtedly the more central to the play. (11)

Like the critics cited above, Craik feels obligated to affirm a central figure; and he chooses Amintor. I agree

that The Maid's Tragedy is a play about a tragic relationship, and, as two constituents of the love-triangle, Amintor and Evadne do sustain a "tragic burden"; but I counter that it is Aspatia, the third constituent, whose tragedy rises to greatest heights. Aspatia is more "central" to the play than Amintor or Evadne, and acknowledging her as a Deianeiran heroine affords her status worthy of "tragic interest"--she is admirable, not pathetic. In fact, Aspatia is the only character whose story is suitably tragic. She is the only one who undergoes a spiritual transformation during the play, and she is the only one whose actions are motivated by a desire to restore stability to both the marital and political environments, rather than by self-interest.

Critically condemned to subordinate status, Aspatia is subject to negative evaluations of her character. For example, Norland writes of her "morbid, self-indulgent grief" and her "gloomy pathos"; and he claims that Aspatia is a "diseased picture of unrequited love," a character who "seeks sublimation in masochism and the death wish" (xvii). In his psychological study, Reed maintains that she is "a psychopathic character" (93), a "victim of 'love-melancholy'" (94); and:

Beaumont and Fletcher appear to have preserved her [from the madness that falls on Ophelia and Penthea] primarily for the reason that the play still required a spectacular anticlimax. (95).

Leech feels the same way: "the company of the wronged Aspatia is surely wearisome"; and, in an echo from Reed, "the activities of the last act are huddled and, after the death of the King, rather perfunctory" (Fletcher 126).<sup>13</sup>

Two points need to be made in regard to the above comments: first, while it is true that Aspatia is passive, self-absorbed, and melancholy in the early stages of the tragedy, she does flower into a purposive personality--she is more than "a passive victim of the King's lust" (Norland xix); second, the emotional pitch of the play reaches its peak with the triple-suicide, not with the murder of the King--the action in the final 302 lines of the play is certainly more than a perfunctory addition or an anticlimax.

Only two critics agree that Aspatia's initial passivity transforms into something greater. Craik writes that "Aspatia's passive grief in I.i, II.i, and II.ii is a false scent, by following which we never anticipate her active way of encompassing her own death" (41n48). Brodwin argues that Aspatia's grief in these early scenes represents a "self-conscious imitation" of Courtly Love:

Excessive reading in the literature of Courtly Love, would seem to have developed in her a craving for an intensely tragic love experience which held her more genuine feelings in captivity. (130)

But by the end of the play,

Knowing that she must die, her thoughts are only of Amintor's welfare. . . . [T]he ministrations of Amintor's love reveal a new Aspatia--warm, tender, eager, and artlessly genuine. (145)

Aspatia is forced to transform herself because her values have been compromised by her being forced to submit to a corrupt patriarchy. Of course, the king is the most obvious example of this corruption, but both Amintor and Evadne are part of this system. Because Amintor is forced to break his engagement with Aspatia under orders from the King, it is difficult to condemn him for following the King's command in a world where divine right is the norm. Although many critics see him as being thrust into the familiar duty-versus-honor dilemma,<sup>14</sup> Fredson Bowers (173) and Leech (Fletcher 121) are correct in asserting that Amintor's broken betrothal is surely an error that deserves some sort of retribution. However, previous critics have failed to recognize that Amintor's initial sin is compounded by a second and more reprehensible sin: entering into a mock marriage. By agreeing to live as a cuckold, he allows Evadne to become the intruder in his relationship with Aspatia, and, what is even more reproachable, he enters into a pact in which he helps Evadne and the King continue a social and moral injustice. In other words, the duty-versus-honor dilemma does not surface until after the wedding-night revelation. Amintor errs a second time by refusing to void the marriage contract immediately, i.e., by

following the dictates of both duty and honor. Instead, he chooses to follow a false social code, one that is dictated by a doctrine of self-interest; he simply worries about what others will think of him.

We can see that Amintor is motivated by self-interest when he briefly wrestles with his moral dilemma on the night of the wedding, just before he enters Evadne's chamber. He thinks: "It was the King first moved me to't, but he / Has not my will in keeping" (II.i.130-131). Brodwin believes that these lines indicate that Amintor has the power to dissolve the union if he chooses. He does possess this power; in fact, he had this power when he first rejected Aspatia, but he willingly chose to ignore the effect that his action might have on her. In other words, he later has an opportunity to rectify his sin, but he ratifies it by agreeing to the mock marriage.

When Evadne explains that it is necessary for her to have a legal husband "that my sin may be / More honourable" (II.i.318-319), he responds with the lines cited on the first page of this chapter: "reputation, / Thou art a word, no more." His chief concern is his own reputation; he believes that there is no disgrace, as long as no one learns of the act. He then instructs Evadne how to keep his cuckoldry a secret:

. . . Give me thy hand,  
Be careful of thy credit, and sin close:

'Tis all I wish. Upon thy chamber floor  
I'll rest tonight, that morning visitors  
May think we did as married people use:  
And prithee, smile upon me when they come,  
And seem to toy, as if thou hadst been pleased  
With what we did. (II.i.349-351)

Amintor is a coward; he places how he appears to others above his honor and enters into a fraud with Evadne and the King. He tells her: "When we walk thus entwined, let all eyes see / If ever lovers better did agree" (II.ii.361-362).

Melantius notices that Amintor is troubled, and in the name of friendship draws Amintor into confessing that Evadne "to the King has given her honour up" (III.ii.124). Melantius is outraged at this confidence, but Amintor's primary concern is his own reputation; thus he regrets having confessed to Melantius: "I have quite undone my fame" (III.ii.194). He then asks Melantius to return the secret that he revealed in the name of friendship: "Therefore I call it back from thee, for I know / Thy blood so high that thou wilt stir in this / And shame me to posterity" (III.ii.212-214). Amintor draws his sword and forces his friend to do likewise. Melantius explains that it is his duty to "stir" and asks: "But is not / My share of credit equal with thine / If I do stir?" (III.ii.219-221) Again, worried about his reputation, Amintor explains how taking action differs for each:

. . . No; for it will be called  
Honour in thee to spill thy sister's blood

If she her birth abuse, and on the King  
A brave revenge; but on me, that have walked  
With patience in it, it will fix the name  
Of fearful cuckold--O, that word! (III.ii.221-226)

Amintor and Melantius sheathe their swords, and Amintor faints, presumably from a surfeit of emotion; the fear that he will be branded a cuckold is too much for him.

In his next encounter with Evadne, she comes to him repentant, and he forgives her with a kiss:

The last kiss we must take; and would to heaven  
The holy priest that gave our hands together  
Had given us equal virtues! Go, Evadne;  
The gods thus part our bodies. Have a care  
My honour falls no further: I am well then.  
(IV.i.273-277)

Amintor's forgiving words are certainly distasteful. Craik glosses lines 273-275 as "if only, when we married, you had been as chaste as I was!" In addition, the final two lines show that he is still consumed by thoughts of his reputation. Thus, along with the king, Amintor plays his role in the corrupt patriarchy. Likewise, Evadne plays hers.

As discussed above, several critics believe that the tragic maid in the play is Evadne, whom Shullenberger calls "the most awesome figure in the play" (147). If this critic means that she has the greatest power to inspire "awe," as in dread or terror, he is certainly correct; however, if he means "awe," as in "Dread mingled with veneration,



reverential or respectful fear" (OED), he is misled. Early in the play she is the picture of terror, but by the end of the play she dissolves into something pathetic.

When Amintor attempts to learn the identity of her lover, she is at first evasive: "I do enjoy the best, and in that height / Have sworn to stand, or die" (II.i.296-297). Because she and Amintor so successfully act out their mock marriage, the King accuses Evadne of "infidelity." She, however, succinctly reassures him:<sup>15</sup>

I swore indeed that I would never love  
A man of lower place, but if your fortune  
Should throw you from this height, I bade you trust  
I would forsake you and would bend to him  
That won your throne. I love with my ambition,  
Not with my eyes. But if I ever yet  
Touched any other, leprosy light here  
Upon my face, which for your royalty  
I would not stain. (III.i.170-178)

The King threatens to punish Evadne for her harsh words, but she is not afraid of him, knowing that she can inflict a greater punishment: "Why it is in me, then, / Not to love you, which will more afflict / Your body than your punishment can mine" (III.i.180-182).

The ability to control men with sex, however, does not help Evadne when confronted by her brother:

Ay, Evadne; thou art young and handsome,  
A lady of a sweet complexion  
And such a flowing carriage that it cannot  
Choose but inflame a kingdom. (IV.i.18-21)

Melantius' unsuccessful attempt to persuade her to confess and repent leads him to resort to more violent means, first seizing her and then drawing his sword and forcing her to the ground. When she agrees to confess, he raises her, and she laments, "O, I am miserable" (IV.ii.112), but she still refuses to name her lover. She confesses after a second threat and kneels at his feet in a plea for forgiveness; he agrees to pardon her only if she promises to kill the King, and she relents.

Considering Evadne's sudden conversion as a tragic recognition of her sins proves troublesome. Still, Fredson Bowers argues that "Evadne had been drawn as the villainess of the play, the scornful adulteress without an atom of consciousness of her moral guilt" (174), but her peripetasis, "her eager acceptance of the duty of revenge for mortal injury, undoubtedly formed the high point of the play [in its first production], as it still is today" (175).<sup>16</sup> Brodwin, however, convincingly argues that "Though Fletcher's Evadne undergoes an important change of attitude, her character continues essentially unchanged" (137).

Brodwin continues:

Though she may substitute a new set of values for the old, she cannot change her method of achieving them. Her need for sadistic self-vindication simply changes direction. She becomes the revenger, acting now in the name of all that is holy. (138)

The above comment is a brilliant insight, refuting Bowers' assertion that her transformation and her murder of the King compose the "high point of the play." Additionally, we can counter Shullenberger's argument that she transforms because of her conscience--she "transforms" because of a sword-blade.

As Evadne enters the sleeping King's chamber, her words support Brodwin's argument that her methods have not changed: "I have begun a slaughter on my honor, / And I must end it there" (V.i.23-24); or, she believes that "Sin thus will cancel sin" (Danby 199). She has the opportunity to kill the King at once, as he lies sleeping; instead, she decides that she will wake him first, in order to fully quench her thirst for vengeance:

. . . Yet I must not  
Thus tamely do it as he sleeps: that were  
To rock him to another world; my vengeance  
Shall take him waking, and then lay before him  
The number of his wrongs and punishments.  
I'll shape his sins like furies till I waken  
His evil angel, his sick conscience,  
And then I'll strike him dead. (V.i.28-35)

The method of her murder, tying him to the bed while he is sleeping and then waking him, reveals her character to be what Danby calls "a study in radical perversity" (193). When he wakes, the King believes that Evadne is transporting him into a new realm of erotica: "What pretty new device is this, Evadne? / What, do you tie me to you? By my love, /

This is a quaint one" (V.i.47-49). Perversely, she delivers two stab wounds, each followed by taunts; then, she delivers another succession of wounds: "[Stabbing him] This for my lord Amintor, / This for my noble brother, and this stroke / For the most wronged of women!" (V.i.110-112). We might feel admiration for Evadne if her stroke for "the most wronged of women" were for Aspatia, but it is clear that Evadne is thinking of herself.<sup>17</sup>

Evadne fails as a tragic heroine: her recognition pales because it is precipitated by a blade at her throat, and her transformation is marred because her vengeance on the King belies any internal change in character; thus, her catastrophe fails to evoke pity or admiration. From her first appearance until her last, she remains blind to her crucial fault--ruthless ambition. Similarly, Amintor's conduct throughout the play serves to show that he is no tragic hero. From the beginning of the play until the end, he remains blind to his crucial fault--his continued belief that self-interest is the valid end of all actions. In short, the blindness of both Evadne and Amintor causes them to compound their initial sins and serves to place focus on Aspatia--the tragic, Deianeiran heroine.

In contrast with Evadne and Amintor, Aspatia overcomes her initial blindness, her passivity, through a spiritual transformation that forces her to commit an act of self-destruction in order to reform the corrupt patriarchy

under which she and the citizens of Rhodes have been forced to live. Because of her action, she deserves admiration.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup> On the question of collaboration, scholars agree that Beaumont was chiefly responsible for the play's final form, but Fletcher's hand is clearly visible in four scenes: II.ii, the portrayal of Aspatia's grief; IV.i, Evadne's "transformation"; V.i, the killing of the King; V.ii, Melantius' justification of regicide (Norland xiii, Gurr 1-2, Craik 1-2, Brodwin 380n4). Except in scholarly citations, I will not differentiate between the two writers in discussing separate passages, but simply refer to them as Beaumont and Fletcher, the dramatists, the playwrights, the authors, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The inserted masque is not important to my discussion. The most interesting discussions on this feature can be found by consulting Michael Neill ("Symetry"), William Shullenberger, Philip J. Finkelpearl, and Clifford Leech (Fletcher 121-122).

<sup>3</sup> Both Evadne and Amintor are seen by some critics as the chief tragic figures of the drama. I do not agree and will discuss Evadne's ambition and Amintor's egoism below.

<sup>4</sup> John F. Danby argues that Aspatia remains "remote from the immediate emotional and moral interests," but she is necessary for the mechanics of the play, as a symbol of traditional morality" (205). Irving Ribner agrees: she is "a symbol of the rejected Elizabethan values" (16); and, "in her death there may be, as Danby holds, a lament for the beauties of a world which can be no more" (17). I counter that Aspatia provides the chief moral interest of the play, and I also counter that her death restores moral order.

<sup>5</sup> In the wedding chamber, Amintor initially attributes Evadne's frigidity to "the coyness of a bride" (II.i.159). He even supposes that Evadne is playing some sort of game:

. . . Leave, and to bed.  
If you have sworn to any of the virgins  
That were your old companions to preserve  
Your maidenhead a night, it may be done  
Without this means. (II.i.190-194)

Evadne's response to his conjecture is frequently cited: "A maidenhead, Amintor, / At my years? (II.i.194-195) Evadne then explains the rules of sexual conduct that will govern their marriage: "'Tis not for a night / Or two that I forbear thy bed, but ever" (II.i.206-207). And, in case Amintor cannot believe this succinct statement, she resorts to cold figuration:

You hear right.

I sooner will find out the beds of snakes,  
And with my youthful blood warm their cold flesh,  
Letting them curl themselves about my limbs,  
Than sleep one night with thee. This is not feigned,  
Nor sounds it like the coyness of a bride.  
(II.i.208-213)

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Gurr's interpretation, i.e., "feare." Howard B. Norland interprets "Fear" to be "a personification apprehending danger," T. W. Craik (Revels editor), "a personification embodying frightfulness." Whichever interpretation is followed, Aspatia wants Antiphilia to downplay Theseus' heroism.

<sup>7</sup> Cf., Craik: "Aspatia and Evadne become mutually exclusive, and that when one is on the stage we almost, or even entirely, forget the other" (15).

<sup>8</sup> Paula S. Berggren has written an interesting essay on Jacobean heroines disguised as men and points out that "Only Beaumont and Fletcher appear to have attempted dressing tragic heroines as men, and the change in costume is always a prelude to suicide" (393). Berggren is mistaken, however, in her parenthetical remark that Aspatia's brother is "non-existent" (393). Melantius tells Lyssipus that "She has a brother under my command / Like her, a face as womanish as hers" (I.i.108-109). Reed explains her disguise in Freudian terms: "Freud . . . might have justified her impersonation of a man by the hypothesis that, having lost Amintor, she was symbolizing, as neurotic women sometimes do, the sexual libido that had been so cruelly repressed" (95). Shullenberger writes: "She can only act out her rage, however, when she hides the passive, virginal, suffering feminine in masculine disguise. Her brother's clothes permit Aspatia the psychological room to harass Amintor" (154).

<sup>9</sup> Because King James I maintained a strict doctrine of divine right, Ribner argues that the play reveals the ardent royalism of the dramatists, "their doctrine that the king, no matter how evil he may be, must be unconditionally obeyed" (16). Finkelppearl points out that the word "king" appears in the play at least sixty-four times, and he even sees the opening masque as a vehicle for serving political power: "Masques may be seen not merely as justifications of power but as forces that helped maintain the political status quo" (Court 188). Fredson Bowers points out that the many attempted assassinations of Elizabeth, the Gunpowder plot of 1605, and the recent murder of Henry IV by Ravailac were etched in the minds of the audience (170), but he cites the concluding lines to show that the play serves as a warning for kings to rule with temperance and to avoid lechery (175-176). Lawrence B. Wallis also reads the final lines literally and maintains that the dramatists wanted to show "That God might sometimes bring vengeance on evil rulers" (141). Appleton takes this view a step further and argues that the play presents a "cynical view of kingship" (52). Peter F. Mullany believes that the dramatists leave the issue unanswered by focusing on both sides of "the dilemma posed by the conflict between absolute obedience and the passion for revenge against a tyrant" (84). Gurr takes a similar approach: "The political aspect is more or less that of Richard II, a rightful but unjust monarch confronting his subjects with the choice of suffering in dishonour or taking action against him" (5).

<sup>10</sup> There is no direct source for the play, and some editors simply conclude that the incidents for the plot were drawn from the interests of the audience, "the coterie audience of gallants and courtiers in the private theatre" (Norland xi-xiv; also Gurr 2-3). Craik discusses similarities between Aspatia's death at the hands of Amintor and the combat between Parthenia and Amphialus in the Arcadia, between Evadne's killing of the King and a story from Painter's translation of Bandello, and between the Melantius/Calianax dispute and an incident found in the anecdotes of Valerius Maximus. Craik also points out Shakespearean echoes (3-8).

<sup>11</sup> In comparing Beaumont and Fletcher with Ben Jonson as dramatic poets, T. S. Eliot writes:

. . . we discover that the blossoms of Beaumont and Fletcher's imagination draw no sustenance from the soil, but are cut and slightly withered flowers stuck into sand. . . . [T]he evocative quality of the verse



of Beaumont and Fletcher depends upon a clever appeal to emotions and associations which they have not themselves grasped; it is hollow. It is superficial with a vacuum behind it . . . . (135)

Ribner criticizes the dramatists for their lack of moral vision, which suffers at the expense of craftsmanship: "In the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher we see the triumph of theatricality over philosophical substance" (17). In discussing the characters in the Beaumont/Fletcher canon, Danby asserts that the "stage-personalities are of course people, but they are not characters" (201). Influenced by such commentary in his discussion of The Maid's Tragedy, Mullany writes: "Though The Maid's Tragedy ends in death, it does not possess the seriousness of artistic purpose and the meaningful exploration of the tragic ironies underlying human choices and actions usually associated with tragedy" (98). Fredson Bowers assents that the play "does contain several strong portraits," but it emphasizes "theatrical situations without much regard for consistent characterization, a facile trick which thereafter was the curse of minor playwrights" (169). Wallis provides a comprehensive survey of the dramatists' critical reputation throughout history (3-125).

12 Leech also believes that Aspatia is the maid in the title but that she is still a minor character. Relying on extrinsic evidence, this critic points that it is not unusual to find plays titled after minor characters; he points out two Fletcher plays, The Humorous Lieutenant and The Little French Lawyer (both 1619), in support of his argument (Fletcher 52).

13 In similar commentary, Robert Ornstein compares the deaths of the two female protagonists: "But even as Evadne's lustful passion for Amintor contrasts with Aspatia's purer devotion, the juxtaposition of her suicide and Aspatia's points to the unconscious, morbid sexuality of Aspatia's death wish" (Moral 176). Shullenberger calls Aspatia "The most self-absorbed character in the play" and writes of her "devotion to the pleasures of her grief" (152). Appleton writes that she first appears in the play "like a grief-stricken shadow" (35); "Robbed of will, she moves through the [the rest of the] play with the slow inevitability of a sleepwalker" (39).

14 Ribner, who sees little tragedy in the play, asserts that Amintor simply stands for the commonplace struggle

between duty and honor (16). A few critics accept this assessment and are harsh on Amintor--"weak-kneed" (Wallis 136); "an emotional cripple," a "melodramatic" and "unheroic" figure (Shullenberger 141,142); "a totally unbelievable character" (Mullany 90)--but most agree that he is at least somewhat tragic. Finkelpearl believes that "he has been treated very badly, he bears his suffering well, and he dies penitent. His fault . . . is an uncritical, total acceptance of the litany of the court, its standards, and its language" ("Beaumont" 160). Waith, in a study which precedes The Herculean Hero by a decade, writes: "A victim of circumstance, he suffers for his nobility, physically crushed but morally triumphant. Amintor is in this respect the precursor of the supermen of Restoration heroic drama, who are infinitely more noble than erring" (Pattern 21). Both Finkelpearl and Waith, then, believe that Amintor suffers because he places duty above honor, but each hesitates to condemn him for his false values and instead praises him for his single-mindedness. Fredson Bowers, however, is not so reluctant: "The specific reason for his death is found in his broken betrothal to Aspatia: even at the orders of his sovereign, this was a crime which in tragedy could not go unrequited" (173). From a similar point of view, Leech intuits the dramatists' intentions: "There is no doubt that the playwrights wish their audience to feel Amintor's guilt and to despise him a little for turning his eye so quickly in the direction indicated by the King" (Fletcher 121).

15 This revelation has led critics to compare Evadne with Lady Macbeth (Danby 193), with Gertrude (Ornstein Moral 170), and with "the scandalous Frances Howard" (Appleton 33).

16 Others also accept Evadne's conversion. Madeleine Doran maintains that Evadne's transformation needs no explanation: "Elizabethan psychological theory, as we know, allowed for such dramatic changes, and certain situations by convention demanded certain responses" (332). Shullenberger also agrees that Evadne's conversion is reasonable: "The instrument of moral retribution proves to be her own conscience. . . . Repudiating her sexual aggressiveness, she submits to a moral judgment of which she was once openly contemptuous" (148).

17 The fact Ribner calls the King's murder an "artificially contrived action" (156), probably results because this scholar longs for a transformation on Evadne's

part, but correctly concludes that she does not change; thus, he evaluates this scene as poor art. However, we should not condemn the action simply because Evadne does not qualify as a tragic heroine. Craik does see some tragedy in her story, and he qualifies it well: "Her tragedy is that when she presents herself to Amintor as purged of guilt he can only see that she has piled a second crime upon her first. Therefore her suicide is her final attempt at expiation" (12). Mullany sees that "She believes the rites of murder have won her the freedom that will enable her to share Amintor's bed" (97-98): but she is mistaken. Her "final attempt at expiation," then, is futile--she becomes an object for pity, not for admiration.

CHAPTER V  
THE BROKEN HEART

Like The Maid's Tragedy, John Ford's The Broken Heart is set in Greece and presents a heroine whose proposed marriage is shattered by a corrupt patriarchal system when the heroine Penthea, betrothed to Orgilus, is forced by her brother Ithocles to marry Bassanes, a jealous fool who renders her life miserable. The similarity between Aspatia and Penthea is noted by Arthur C. Kirsch, who writes that "Penthea is in every sense a descendant of Aspatia: she has the same kind of emotional appeal and the same kind of dramatic function" (119).<sup>1</sup> Each heroine's emotional devotion to domestic values dramatically motivates an action that reforms her corrupt environment. However, like Deianeira, Anne Frankford, and Aspatia, Penthea has often been censured by critics who fail to credit her with personal integrity, usually by deflecting interest toward other characters or by focusing on generic constructs.

The strength of Penthea's personal integrity is apparent. Because of her "strong feeling of actual physical pollution" (Wymer 120), she condemns herself as an adulteress, an unusual self-judgment precipitated by her brother's refusal to allow her pre-contracted marriage to Orgilus. Thus, she faces the dilemma of being morally

married to Orgilus and physically violated by her lawful husband.<sup>2</sup> In the first scene of the play, Orgilus explains to his father Crotolon the exchange of pre-nuptial vows that occurred before the death of Thrasus, Penthea's father:

A freedom of converse, an interchange  
Of holy and chaste love, so fixed our souls  
In a firm growth of union, that no time  
Can eat into the pledge. We had enjoyed  
The sweets our vows expected, had not cruelty  
Prevented all those triumphs we prepared for,  
By Thrasus his untimely death. (I.i.29-35)

Orgilus considers the spousals exchanged between him and Penthea to be a contract per verba de praesenti, which "was regarded in ecclesiastical law as an irrevocable commitment which could never be broken, and which nullified a later church wedding to someone else" (Stone 32).<sup>3</sup> Orgilus continues and explains Penthea's dilemma, restating the importance of the contract and realizing the effect that this legal and moral violation must be having on her:

Beauteous Penthea, wedded to this torture  
By an insulting brother, being secretly  
Compelled to yield her virgin freedom up  
To him who never can usurp her heart,  
Before contracted mine, is now so yoked  
To a most barbarous thraldom, misery,  
Affliction, that she savours not humanity . . . .  
(I.i.49-55)

When we first see Penthea, she is with her outrageously jealous husband Bassanes. What is striking about her in this scene is that she is not hostile to the intruder--her

husband--in her relationship with Orgilus. When Bassanes, believing that she is too melancholy, asks if she would like to move to a home nearer the court, she replies: "Whither you please, I must attend. All ways / Are alike pleasant to me" (II.i.108-109). Here, Penthea displays a typically Deianeiran passivity. Her initially passive nature is again revealed in the following scene after she and Bassanes are summoned to court by Ithocles, who asks: "How does Penthea now?" (II.ii.75) She replies: "You best know, brother, / From whom my health and comforts are derived" (II.ii.75-76). In both of these early appearances, we learn that Penthea has weakly allowed her life to be defined by her husband and brother, a situation that does not allow for audience admiration--at this point she is simply pathetic. When Ithocles requests that she meet him in private conversation, Bassanes' jealousy leads him to suspect an affair between brother and sister: "Brothers and sisters are but flesh and blood, / And this same whoreson court-ease is temptation / To a rebellion in the veins" (II.ii.117-119). Such twisted logic on the part of the husband immediately sways audience sympathy to Penthea; given her husband's irrational jealousy, an audience of any age would probably excuse Penthea for a non-incestuous, extra-marital.<sup>4</sup>

Dramatically, once the audience begins to feel sympathy, the next step is for it to feel admiration. But before this change can take place, it is necessary for the

Deianeiran heroine to undergo some sort of psychological transformation which renders her active, rather than passive. Penthea does so in her following scene with Orgilus in Act II; here, she has the opportunity to violate her legal marriage when she meets Orgilus, now disguised as the distracted scholar Aplotes, in the palace garden.

Orgilus lectures:

All pleasures are but mere imagination,  
Feeding the hungry appetite with steam  
And sight of banquet, whilst the body pines,  
Not relishing the real taste of food.  
Such is the leanness of a heart divided  
From intercourse of troth-contracted loves.  
No horror should deface that precious figure  
Sealed with the lively stamp of equal souls.  
(II.iii.34-41)<sup>5</sup>

Orgilus believes that he is establishing a premise for his following argument that, physically at least, they should fulfill the vows of their troth-contract, but his words actually foreshadow Penthea's later resolve to starve herself to death.<sup>6</sup> "Throwing off his disguise," he asks: "What is thy sentence next?" (II.iii.51) This action leads Penthea to reveal that she is much more than a figure of passivity. Her moral code prevents her from transgressing, no matter how justified her transgression might be. In fact, she chastises Orgilus for his recklessness:

Rash man, thou layest  
A blemish on mine honour, with the hazard  
Of thy too desperate life. Yet I profess,  
By all the laws of ceremonious wedlock,

I have not given admittance to one thought  
Of female change, since cruelty enforced  
Divorce betwixt my body and my heart.  
Why would you fall from goodness thus? (II.iii.51-58)

The "Divorce betwixt my body and my heart" echoes throughout the remainder of the play, thus showing the irreconcilability of her dilemma--her pre-contracted, moral marriage to Orgilus and her formal, physical marriage to Bassanes. She expresses the violence that has been done to her: "How, Orgilus, by promise I was thine, / The heavens do witness. They can witness too / A rape done on my truth" (II.iii.77-79). In other words, now that she has lost her "body," she is unclean; if she consents to a physical relationship with Orgilus, she will violate their marriage of the "heart." She tells him:

The virgin dowry which by my birth bestowed  
Is ravished by another. My true love  
Abhors to think that Orgilus deserved  
No better favours than a second bed. (II.iii.99-102)

Because she believes that she has fallen, she counsels Orgilus to take a wife and "Live, live happy, / Happy in thy next choice, that thou mayst people / This barren age with virtues in thy issue!" (II.iii.89-90) When he continues his protestations, she becomes intentionally harsh: "Go thou, fit only for disguise and walks / To hide thy shame" (II.iii.117-118); and, "My good Genius guide me, / That I may never see thee more! Go from me" (II.iii.122-123).



Catherine Belsey explains that Penthea refuses to commit adultery because "the spiritualization of love implies that if true minds are separated there is no solace in the union of bodies" (208-209). Thus, at this point Penthea has resolved to die because she is, in one sense, already dead. Again, Belsey: "The separation of true minds is existential death. Eternally divided from the man she eternally loves, Penthea refuses food until life is extinguished" (209).

But because she believes so strongly in the Deianeiran code of domestic stability, Penthea first decides to help her brother in his suit for Calantha, who, for political reasons, is to marry Nearchus, the prince of Argos. It is curious that she decides to help her brother, because it was he who introduced the intruder Bassanes. Meeting with Ithocles, she reminds him that he has violated the domestic stability of their own family:

Then had you never known that sin of life  
Which blots all following glories with a vengeance,  
For forfeiting the last will of the dead,  
From whom you had your being. (III.ii.39-42)

Then she reminds him that he has violated the domestic stability of her new family--i.e., her "marriage" to Orgilus. She sharply expresses the horror of what he has done: "For she that's wife to Orgilus and lives / In known adultery with Bassanes, / Is at the best a whore"

(III.ii.73-75). Ithocles then reveals his love for Calantha, and she explains their parallel situations:

Suppose you were contracted to her, would it not  
Split even your very soul to see her father  
Snatch her out of your arms against her will,  
And force her on the prince of Argos? (III.ii.106-109)

But she forgives her brother, her words revealing her domestic moral code: "We are reconciled. / Alas, Sir, being children, but two branches / Of one stock, 'tis not fit we should divide" (III.ii.111-113). In other words, Penthea's sense of her duty to family takes precedence over her personal concerns.

Thus, Penthea evolves into a truly admirable heroine. In her moving scene with Calantha, she speaks the typically Deianeiran lament on the plight of women:

Glories  
Of human greatness are but pleasing dreams  
And shadows soon decaying. On the stage  
Of my mortality, my youth acted  
Some scenes of vanity, drawn out at length  
By varied pleasures, sweetened in the mixture,  
But tragical in issue. Beauty, pomp,  
With every sensuality our giddiness  
Doth frame an idol, are unconstant friends  
When any troubled passion makes assault  
On the unguarded castle of the mind. (III.v.13-23)

And, like the other Deianeiran figures under consideration, she realizes that the only way to take active control over her life and her body is by suicide. Calantha argues that there must be a remedy for Penthea's condition, but Penthea

simply remarks: "That remedy / Must be a winding sheet, a fold of lead, / And some untrod-on corner in the earth" (III.v.31-33). Having resolved to die, Penthea asks Calantha to be her executrix. Penthea leaves "three poor jewels" (III.v.49): her youth, "To virgin wives, such as abuse not wedlock / By freedom of desires" (III.v.52-53) and "To married maids, such as prefer the number / Of honourable issue in their virtues, / Before the flattery of delights by marriage" (III.v.56-58); her fame, "To Memory, and Time's old daughter, Truth" (III.v.62); and her brother to Calantha, "Sparta's heir" (III.v.75). The progression of bequests reveals Penthea to be totally admirable; she realizes that political harmony in macrocosmic Sparta depends on harmony in microcosmic domestic relations. The interrelationship of these two realms is seen in Penthea's directive: "Be a princess / In sweetness as in blood" (III.v.91-92). Although she recommends her brother to Calantha, Penthea's final words eerily echo A Woman Killed with Kindness: "I am a sister, though to me this brother / Hath been, you know, unkind; O most unkind" (III.v.105-106). Both Penthea and Anne Frankford are unkindly banished from their domestic spheres by the patriarchs of their families, and both are moved to starvation.<sup>7</sup>

However, Ford treats the final days of his heroine differently than Heywood treats his; before she dies, Penthea experiences a period of madness. Her words during

this period acknowledge that her life was ruptured when Ithocles broke their father's promise that she was to marry Orgilus: "I've slept / With mine eyes open a great while. No falsehood / Equals a broken faith" (IV.ii.74-76). And, in a sentiment that is "notable for its terrible evocation of lost youth and wasted fertility" (Stilling 272):

Since I was first a wife, I might have been  
Mother to many pretty prattling babes.  
They would have smiled when I smiled; and, for certain,  
I should have cried when they cried.--Truly, brother,  
My father would have picked me out a husband,  
And then my little ones had been no bastards.  
But 'tis too late for me to marry now.  
I am past child-bearing. 'Tis not my fault.  
(IV.ii.87-94)

She then turns to Orgilus and reminds him of their meeting in the palace garden, a meeting that marked the turning point in her character development: "Remember / When we last gathered roses in the garden / I found my wits, but truly you lost yours" (IV.ii.119-121).<sup>8</sup> She ironically claims that this is the point when Orgilus lost his wits; although Penthea does not realize it, the audience knows that after they met in the garden the course of his life became dictated by an unhealthy desire for revenge. And it is also ironic that in her fit of distraction, she notes the moment when she found her wits, and this insight reveals her heroism: when she took action, she set her course for her tragic end. She must die because her life is governed by irreconcilable binary oppositions:<sup>9</sup> "There is

no peace left for a ravished wife / Widowed by lawless marriage. To all memory / Penthea's, poor Penthea's name is strumpeted" (IV.ii.146-148). Greenfield's assessment of Penthea's final action would also be appropriate in a discussion of Sophocles' Deianeira:

Penthea's last direct action is to die by her own will to punish herself for the corruption that has overtaken her. One who acts sinfully through her virtue and is stained by her purity, she persists in her virtue by acting to punish its sin. ("Challenge" 22).

Ure compares the death of Penthea with that of another Deianeiran heroine, Anne Frankford:

She dies . . . like Mistress Frankford . . . not only because she is deprived of her chosen love but also because her conscience has been violated. . . . Her last speech makes it clear that she is punishing herself, like Mistress Frankford, for what she considers a wanton fulness [sic] of the blood indulged by her 'adultery' with Bassanes. (163-164)

Although the heroine has died, it still remains for her betrothed to join her in death. When Penthea's body, veiled and seated in a chair, is brought on stage, Orgilus places it between two other chairs, one for himself and the other for Ithocles "in a formal triptych" (Farr 95).

Unfortunately for Ithocles, he "is catcht in the engine," and Orgilus finally gets his revenge. This triptych recalls The Maid's Tragedy where Amintor dies between the bodies of Aspatia and Evadne. However, unlike Amintor, Orgilus does not commit suicide at this point; instead, he waits for

Calantha's sentence, which allows him to choose his own method of execution--to bleed to death and to be his own executioner. Belsey makes an important point in this regard:

In revenge for her death Orgilus kills Ithocles . . . in the presence of Penthea's corpse, and then chooses for himself a mode of death which parallels hers, opening his veins so that the blood flows out of them. (209)

In her discussion of blood-imagery, Greenfield also sees a parallel in the deaths of Penthea and Orgilus, who both "die by process of literal deprivation of blood." This critic cites the following lines spoken by Penthea to show that "Even Penthea's starvation aims at this part of her being" ("Language" 403):

But since her [Penthea's] blood was seasoned, by the  
forfeit  
Of noble shame, with mixtures of pollution,  
Her blood--'tis just--be henceforth never heightened  
With taste of sustenance. Starve. (IV.ii.149-152)

In other words, Amintor is able to reunite with his beloved in death immediately, using the same weapon that he unwittingly used to kill Aspatia, while Orgilus, in order to die in the same manner as Penthea, chooses to die "with an exaggeratedly clinical opening of the vein in each arm" (Greenfield "Language" 403). Farr aptly summarizes the final movement of the love-tragedy: "Euphrania and Prophilus are wedded and the festivities over; Penthea and

Orgilus are reunited, Calantha is married to Ithocles--in death" (98).

Failure to recognize that The Broken Heart is foremost a tragedy depicting a heroine's restoration of moral order to her corrupt environment leads scholars to wrestle with generic issues. Acknowledging the influence of Clifford Leech (Ford), Anderson and others feel tempted to call the play a "tragedy of manners," "For the standards of courtesy and propriety in Ford's Sparta are high, . . . the higher one's rank, the more polished his manners" (Introduction xvi; see also Barton 84-94; Kaufmann 185-187). Fredson Bowers claims that the actions "indicate a softening of the convention of revenge on the stage" (213). Ure reads the play as a "domestic tragedy" because Penthea's tragedy is linked to "the social habits of a particular period" (165). Sharon Hamilton sees the drama as a "communal tragedy": "There is no one character in whose troubles we are absorbed" (172; see also Orbison 115). Charles O. McDonald believes that the play is "a kind of transition-piece between the older Jacobean tragedies of revenge and the new Caroline precieux-dramas" ("Design" 145). In her allegorical reading, Kessel also sees the play as a transitional work: "Ford is clearly experimenting with romance and widening the scope of tragedy to encompass it" (217). Lois E. Bueler claims that the "essential shape and substance" of The Broken Heart is provided by elements of

revenge tragedy, courtly love tragedy, and, what she calls, "the tested wife plot" (343). Farr, maintaining that "Ford was trying to forge a new tragic pattern" (83), recognizes a "fundamental affinity with the attitude of Greek tragedy" and a plot structure which "follows a pattern not unlike that of the Oresteia" (80); thus, the play represents a "fusion of the Elizabethan tragic experience with the classical view of life" (104).<sup>10</sup> Finally, in their recent essay, Vera Ann Foster and Stephen Foster read the play as a "political tragedy":

The "tragic" deaths of the old monarch (Amyclas-Calantha) is subsumed in the rebirth of the kingdom. Nearchus can ascend the throne of Sparta just in the way that James assumed the crown of England--"in a profound peace." (328)

Such generic discussions are indeed important, but they tend to deflect interest from the play's intrinsic value as tragedy. Whatever "kind" of tragedy we decide to call The Broken Heart, the major tragic interest in the play lies in the two stories of broken love--Orgilus/Pentheia and Ithocles/Calantha.<sup>11</sup> The marriage between Calantha and Ithocles is symbolically performed when Calantha places her ring on the finger of the dead Ithocles before she dies. This proposed marriage fails because Ithocles must pay for his error in refusing to allow the marriage between Pentheia and Orgilus, a love story which tragically closes when the betrothed pair is reunited in death.



Because Ithocles violates his patriarchal role as brother, Stuart P. Sherman writes that Ford's purpose "was to present the conflict between the rights of the heart and the conventions of society, and to champion the cause of the heart" ("Stella" 279).<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere, Sherman claims that in this play,

Forde [sic] makes his cleanest, most straightforward stroke at the established order. . . . It is a plea for the rights of the individual against the tyranny of the matrimonial bond. ("Decadence" xi)<sup>13</sup>

Blayney states this case most forcefully:

The most striking motive of The Broken Heart . . . is, of course, the evil of enforcement, especially . . . the forced marriage of a person who has already sworn betrothal vows with another [i.e., Penthea with Orgilus]. The strength of Ford's play lies in showing so poignantly the tragedy arising from such marriages . . . . (4)

The Broken Heart, then, is a play written in protest against the practice of enforced marriage in seventeenth-century society . . . . Tragedy for Penthea and Orgilus and for Calantha and Ithocles results from enforced marriage . . . . (8-9)

While I am reluctant to agree that Ford wrote the play as a social polemic,<sup>14</sup> I readily accept that marriage which is not based on love is tragic, as we have already seen in A Woman Killed with Kindness and The Maid's Tragedy.

Because the play presents two pairs of tragic lovers,<sup>15</sup> one of the major critical debates concerning the play--an issue that serves as a refrain linking the discussions of all the plays under consideration--is the attempt to

determine the central figure of the tragedy. Orgilus is the central figure if we read the play as a revenge tragedy (Hamilton 173); but the revenge story is only one element of the play, as Richard Madelaine concludes:

[T]he revenger Orgilus is clearly the most important character as far as action is concerned, and his activity is crucial to the play . . . but his breaking heart is only one of many, and not the heart of the play's title. (38)

Ithocles deserves attention because he "dies reconciled with his enemy, providing the traditional figure of Elizabethan tragedy who has gained wisdom through suffering and who dies more nobly than he lived" (Champion 204); but we must remember that "the tragedy in The Broken Heart does ultimately arise from that strain of vanity and ambition in Ithocles which led him to prevent his sister's marriage" (Cecil 110).<sup>16</sup> Calantha can be considered the central figure because she is the one who literally dies of a broken heart (McDonald Rhetoric 314); but Frederick S. Boas writes that until the last act Calantha is "a somewhat shadowy figure": "her fate would touch us more had more been made of her living love for Ithocles" (346-347). However, I maintain that the figure in The Broken Heart who is the "motivating force" (Hamilton 173) behind the actions of the other characters and who emerges as the most admirable is Penthea, a character who "behaves with dignity throughout" (Spencer 43), a Deianeiran heroine who "embodies the

absolute of integrity itself" (Farr 88). Of the three characters who maintain the highest standards of personal integrity--Pentheia, Calantha, and Nearchus<sup>17</sup>--Pentheia, alone undergoes a spiritual transformation leading her to follow a course of action that restores domestic and, in turn, political stability to Sparta. Greenfield's reading of Pentheia's transformation serves to define the transformation of the Deianeiran heroine in general:

Although in most of his plays Ford's women usually stand at odds with the social order, or strongly appear to do so, by way of contrast, The Broken Heart gives us from one perspective absolutely conformist women in deeds, strictly obedient to the dictates provided by (male) figures of authority and power, obedient in all they do until a final act of independent self-immolation reveals the fatal sacrifice involved in their compliance. ("Challenge" 20)

Some critics, however, do not admire Pentheia, nor do they recognize that her "fatal sacrifice" affords her affective power. Thus, these scholars condemn her for many of the same reasons that they censure Deianeira, Anne Frankford, and Aspatia. For example, it has been claimed that she is psychologically unbalanced: either she takes a perverse kind of pleasure in her suffering, or she takes a perverse kind of pleasure in seeking vengeance.<sup>18</sup> Phoebe S. Spinrad, focusing on Ford's allegorical list of character traits in the dramatis personae, points out that Orgilus and Pentheia stand for "Angry" and "Complaint": "together they form a destructive force that seems to overwhelm the

constructive efforts of the other characters" (25).<sup>19</sup> McDonald, Penthea's most severe critic, calls her suicide "the most passionate sin of self-destruction" ("Design" 150); and, "Clearly, we are supposed to see Penthea's passionate seeking for suicide as in part reprehensible, a point of view that is still preserved in our own legal and moral codes" ("Design" 151).

However, we should recognize Penthea's power to evoke the audience's admiration and recognize her story as central. She maintains the highest ethical standards, she remains faithful to these standards, and her actions are responsible for the restoration of order.<sup>20</sup> Oliver eloquently summarizes Ford's portrayal of Penthea:

Penthea's first word is 'alas' and it is clear that the dramatist's problem was to present her in her grief as always a pathetic figure and yet not to sentimentalize her. I believe he succeeds brilliantly in the task, and he succeeds partly because he refuses to make Penthea completely weak. She is no Desdemona, willing to forgive all, but a woman of spirit, quite able to make certain that Ithocles realizes the enormity of his action before she forgives him for it; and she never loses her dignity even with the impossible Bassanes. (66)

No, Penthea is no Desdemona--she is a Deianeira, an Anne Frankford, an Aspatia, and, as we will see, a Belvidera.

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup> Ronald Huebert, who identifies what he calls "the figure of the forsaken woman," suggests that "Aspatia and Penthea are blood relations of Otway's heroines (Monimia and Belvidera), and at least distinct ancestors of Rowe's (Calista and Jane Shore)" ("Artificial" 619); the classical ancestors of the forsaken woman "include Procne and Dido, her Elizabethan sisters range from Ophelia to Anne Frankford" (601). Huebert, who comes the closest of any scholar I know to making the connections that I posit in this study, admits that his proposed conclusions are "intrinsically tentative rather than terminal" (619). I believe that the Deianeiran heroine is more psychologically complex than the term "forsaken woman" seems to imply. I will discuss this term in Chapter 8, where Jean Hagstrum applies it to Calista.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Rentoul Reed, Jr., reading the play through Burton's Anatomy, argues that Bassanes is sexually impotent (149; see also Ewing 58-59, Brissenden 95-96); however, Peter Ure disproves this theory (164).

<sup>3</sup> A second form of spousals was "the contract per verba de futuro, a oral promise to marry in the future. If not followed by consummation (which was assumed to imply consent in the present), this was an engagement which could be legally broken by mutual consent at a later date. If followed by consummation, however, it was legally binding for life" (Stone 32). From Orgilus' comments, we can assume that their love was not consummated. Spousals lost their power to legally bind couples after Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753 (Stone 35). The most famous play dealing with the issue of a pre-contracted marriage is Measure for Measure. Ure discusses spousals in detail (158-165; see also Blayney, Morris xx-xxii).

<sup>4</sup> Wallace A. Bacon makes a similar point: "Penthea's feeling that her marriage is actually adultery seems to win Ford's approval. The audience is meant to agree . . . because the argument lies comfortably within the conventional notion that love is the foundation of marriage. No matter what the attitude towards the problem in real

life, in drama our sympathies ordinarily lie in that direction" (184-185).

<sup>5</sup> Line 41 and other lines in the play have led some critics to stress the Platonism found in the play. For example, Marie L. Kessel argues that, allegorically, The Broken Heart "is a dramatization of the neoplatonic doctrine of the soul" (218): Calantha represents "the highest principle of the soul"; Ithocles, "the rational principle"; Orgilus, "anger uncontrolled by reason"; Bassanes, "the appetitive principle"; Penthea, "the rational and the appetitive principles" (220-221). However, I agree with Glenn H. Blayney, who argues that those who see the story of Penthea and Orgilus as Platonic neglect "the importance of the institution of betrothal in seventeenth-century England" (2). Anne Barton, citing Blayney and Ure, makes a similar point: "The work . . . on the status of formal betrothals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has at least rescued Penthea from the old critical charge of being some kind of hysterical Platonic" (79). Focusing on honor, Dorothy M. Farr writes: "By carrying it to extremes in Penthea, Ford explodes the neo-Platonic idea of the love of true hearts . . . [and] takes us a long way beyond the teachings of a coterie or for that matter a code of ethics" (90).

<sup>6</sup> Donald K. Anderson, Jr., discusses food and banquet imagery in this play and in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore ("Heart"; see also Gibson 57, Robson 143).

<sup>7</sup> M. C. Bradbrook notes that Ford also uses "unkind" as an "ejaculation" for climactic effect in The Lady's Trial and 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: "The penetrating quality of the word 'unkind' depends upon a range of feelings to be found in Heywood, Dekker, Shakespeare ('Commend me to my kind lord. O farewell!') and Middleton" (253-254). Ure sees an affinity between Penthea and Anne Frankford (cited on 107).

<sup>8</sup> These lines remind T. S. Eliot of "another fine passage given to a crazed woman in Venice Preserved" (175). He is thinking of Otway's Belvidera, the Deianeiran heroine whom I discuss in the following chapter.

<sup>9</sup> These oppositions are noted by others. Irving Ribner writes: "In Penthea's honesty is her whoredom; in her

fidelity to Bassanes is her betrayal of Orgilus" (158). Thelma N. Greenfield calls her an "innocent fornicatress" ("Challenge" 21). Michael Neill writes: "Penthea herself, wife-whore and widow-bride, is also virgin-wife and married-maid" ("Unbroken" 263); "The final dissolution of her self in starvation is the logical extreme of this dis-integration . . . . The only way for Penthea to undo the knotted contradictions of her being is to undo herself" (265). Barton argues that the "repeated and striking use of [oxymoron] . . . is central to The Broken Heart as a whole" (78). Huebert makes this same point ("Artificial" 614-620).

10 Long ago, U. M. Ellis-Fermor remarked of Ford: "There is coldness and restraint in much of his work; a grave and chill dignity in which the emotions seem to be recollected rather than felt . . . . There is also a quality, at once firm, solid and motionless, which affects progressively his diction, his prosody, the demeanour of his characters and finally their groupings and relations and even the architecture itself of the inner form of the play. . . . [T]he quietness of his utterance robs the play of theatrical, if not of dramatic, effect. At its finest, in The Broken Heart, this distinctive quality deserves comparison with that of Sophocles' drama" (229). Farr and Ellis-Fermor seem to be the only two scholars who discuss The Broken Heart and Greek tragedy in the same breath.

11 However, not all scholars agree. The political reading of Foster and Foster is one exception, and Hamilton believes that the main tragic interest lies in the relationship between hero (Orgilus) and enemy (Ithocles), not between hero (Orgilus or Ithocles) and lover (Penthea or Calantha) (173). Others view the tragedy with a more cosmic scope. Ribner believes that it illustrates "man's inability to find his place in the universe" (157; see also Stavig, Burbridge, Kaufmann); conversely, Michael J. Kelly asserts: "Ford suggests that man's capacity for action may enable him to combat and perhaps even overcome the riddles and irreconcilables of a perplexing world" (158). Neill believes that the tragic interest lies in the "irreconcilable conflicts . . . between ideals and passional reality, political action and private virtue" ("Unbroken" 260). Harriet Hawkins feels that the conflict of the play focuses on "an internecine war between morality and mortality" (129). Eugene M. Waith believes "the struggle for calm . . . contributes to the tragedy" ("Struggle" 166): "Admiration and pity for this struggle are the specific emotions which the dramatic structure of The

Broken Heart is calculated to arouse" ("Struggle" 161). George C. Herndl similarly asserts that the characters represent "the achieving of nobility and dignity by the clear-eyed courage of unflinching submission" (279).

<sup>12</sup> Sherman's comment is from his early source study where he argues that Ford based the Penthea-Orgilus plot on the love story of Sidney and Penelope Devereux. Most scholars are skeptical, but Sherman's thesis is difficult to disprove. See T. J. B. Spencer's introduction to the Revels edition (15-20). Sherman's essay is surely one of the highlights of old-style source study.

<sup>13</sup> Others make similar comments. For Anderson, "The theme of The Broken Heart is that marriage should be based upon love" (John Ford 64-65); for Roger Stilling, "the freely made marriage for love" (275); for Fredson Bowers, "the problem of frustrated love" (213); for Robert Ornstein, "the warping of love that cannot grow and mature" (Moral 216).

<sup>14</sup> Belsey writes: "[F]iction . . . is a signifying practice which can be understood in its period to the extent that it shares the meanings then in circulation. This is quite distinct from the claim that fiction reflects the practices of its period [i.e., the claim of "old" historicism]. That the plays of the early seventeenth century almost without exception condemn enforced marriage does not imply that in the early seventeenth century no parents compelled their children to marry against their will. But the debates about enforced marriages, both on the stage and off it, reveal the meaning and the contests for the meaning of marriage in the period" (4). Margaret Mikesell discusses these debates in her thoughtful analysis of matrimonial handbooks and their relationship with early seventeenth-century tragedy. H. J. Oliver discounts that Ford was attacking convention: "I know of no evidence that Ford had an axe to grind. . . . The more one examines Ford's allegedly daring assaults on conventional morality, the more absurd the charge becomes" (65-66).

<sup>15</sup> The play's third love story between Prophilus and Euphrania is usually considered a subplot, which stands as the model relationship showing love successfully running its true course and ending in marriage (e.g., Hamilton 172, Stilling 173, Fredson Bowers 213, Spinrad 24, Kessel 227, Blayney 5).



16 In an anecdotal discussion of love and marriage in seventeenth-century England, Maurice Ashley writes of one Dorothy Osborne, whose brother informed her that she must be "richly disposed of." She complained: "he never desires that I should love that husband with any passion and plainly tells me so . . . he is of opinion that all passions have more trouble than satisfaction in them, and therefore they are happiest that have least of them" (670-671).

17 Hamilton asserts that Nearchus, in his decision to forgo his suit for Calantha, is Ithocles' foil, thus illustrating the importance of freedom in love (182). Stilling believes that "This gesture is also one of Ford's ways of showing that Nearchus will be a fit ruler of Sparta, one who will ensure the renewed health and vigor of the state" (275).

18 Roger T. Burbridge asserts that "Penthea broods on and distorts her position rather than coming to grips with it, and starves herself to death for no compelling reason. . . . Penthea, in love with her tragedy, has the compulsion to carry her suffering to its extreme" (403). Jeanne Addison Roberts agrees: "Penthea is a walking death wish from the beginning of her play" (323). Huebert maintains that, sexually, "Penthea is the victim of an approach-avoidance complex" ("Artificial" 616), a character who "goes to perverse extremes to exclude even the bare possibility of happiness" (Baroque 98). R. J. Kaufmann argues that Penthea's willingness to promote the marriage between Ithocles and Calantha "is an act of vengeful contagion" (174). Similarly, Hamilton asserts that Penthea's "passivity and pathos have an aggressive and vengeful side" (184). Analyzing Ford's poetics, Coburn Freer argues that "her madness gives the impression of having more sources than simple unhappiness in marriage. Much of her agony has to do with her hardly understood desire for revenge, which the composure of her verse always reins in" (195).

19 Ford's decision to list "The Speakers names, fitted to their Qualities" has invited some interesting commentary. Kessel sees this phenomenon as an invitation to read the play as a Romantic allegory (217). Kirsch believes that Ford's list "amounts to a baroque transformation of the morality play" (117). Mark Stavig maintains that "the characters represent abstractions which they embody throughout the action" (145). However, I agree with Greenfield that the characters are more dynamic than the

above critics assert; they are more than allegorical personifications: "the names signify not fundamental character traits but states of being evolving from action and situation." Thus, "Penthea's name, meaning Complaint, tells her state of mind as a result of enforced marriage," and "Orgilus (Angry) has been a man of love and peace until made angry by the results of Ithocles' ambition" ("Challenge" 398).

20 There are several critics who agree with my view of Penthea. Ornstein argues that she "reaffirms the essential humanity of ethical ideals" (Moral 216). Eliot asserts: "The best of the play, and it is Ford at his best, is the character and the action of Penthea . . . . She is throughout a dignified, consistent and admirable figure" (176); and M. Joan Sargeant agrees that "She is as finely conceived as any of Ford's characters" (82). Stavig sees Penthea's madness and death as "the focal point of the tragedy" (157): "We should admire Penthea's courage, pity her tragic plight, and excuse her irrationality" (158). Larry S. Champion also believes that Penthea deserves admiration: "She herself is clearly above the passions which possess those closest to her; each of her appearances underscores the temptations to which she is subject and the strength of character which enables her to repudiate them" (206). Arthur L. Kistner and M. K. Kistner are two other critics who compare Penthea with those closest to her: "Penthea's sufferings, another result of Ithocles' cruel action, are even greater than those of Orgilus" (75). G. F. Sensabaugh sees Penthea's story as focal: "regardless of Calantha's troubles and death, the significant action comprises Penthea's love for Orgilus, his love for her, and their dilemma" (82). And Anderson stresses her importance: "The central figure of the drama is Penthea . . . ; hers are the most moving speeches" (Introduction xii).

## CHAPTER VI

VENICE PRESERVED

Like The Broken Heart, Thomas Otway's Venice Preserved is another tragedy "set off by an abuse of patriarchal authority" (Rogers "Masculine" 391). As the drama develops, the initial abuse of the heroine Belvidera--her father Priuli's repudiation--is compounded by another abuse--her husband Jaffeir's subjecting her to an intruder--when Belvidera substitutes "husband for father as authority figure" (Milhous and Hume 189). And, like the other dramatists under consideration, Otway portrays a heroine who dies in the attempt to restore stability to her corrupt domestic environment, thereby purging emotion by raising admiration of virtue.

In the first scene, we learn that Priuli objects to the marriage between Belvidera and Jaffeir on economic grounds--the same objection that Ithocles raised concerning Penthea's proposed marriage to Orgilus. Apparently he had taken a liking to Jaffeir as "a youth of expectation" (I.i.16), admitting him into his home as a son. After an incident at sea, during which Jaffeir saved Belvidera's life, the two lovers eloped. Now, three years later, the couple is in financial difficulty, and Jaffeir has returned seeking relief. In the heated argument between

Priuli and Jaffeir, Belvidera's personal feelings are not considered; in fact, the father and son-in-law speak of Belvidera as a commodity. Priuli tells Jaffeir that "[you] stole her from my bosom" (I.i.26), "like a thief you stole her" (I.i.49). For Jaffeir, Belvidera is his "rich conquest" (I.i.42), "my prize" (I.i.44), and, because he saved her from drowning, "for her life she paid me with herself" (I.i.48). Instead of offering parental support, Priuli places a two-fold curse on their marriage: "A sterile fortune, and a barren bed" (I.i.53). After Jaffeir informs him that half of his curse has been "bestowed in vain, / Heav'n has already crowned our faithful loves / With a young boy" (I.i.59-61), Priuli disinherits his daughter, thus abusing patriarchal authority:

Reduce the glittering trappings of thy wife  
To humble weeds, fit for thy little state;  
Then to some suburb cottage both retire;  
Drudge, to feed loathsome life: get brats, and  
starve--  
Home, home, I say.-- (I.i.107-111)

Unfortunately for Jaffeir, he is unable to go home because the doors to his home are "Filled and dammed up with gaping creditors, / Watchful as fowlers when their game will spring" (I.i.114-115). The juxtaposition of hunting/conquest imagery continues, showing that there is third character in the play who abuses the patriarchal system by seeing women as little more than possessions.

Pierre, lamenting his loss of Aquilina, speaks of his beloved as "the lovely game" and "my quarry" (I.i.177,179). Likewise, Jaffeir sees Aquilina as he sees Belvidera: "She [Aquilina] was thy right by conquest" (I.i.167).

Our first physical description of Belvidera is a brilliant piece of irony, showing what has happened to Jaffeir's "rich conquest." Pierre, in a move to recruit Jaffeir into the conspiracy, paints a verbal picture of Belvidera surrounded by their goods, which have been seized and put up for public sale:

Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last  
Thy beauteous Belvidera, like a wretch  
That's doomed to banishment, came weeping forth,  
Shining through tears, like April sun in showers  
That labor to o'ercome the cloud that loads 'em,  
Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she leaned,  
Kindly looked up, and at her grief grew sad,  
As if they caught the sorrows that fell from her.  
Even the lewd rabble that were gathered round  
To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her,  
Governed their roaring throats and grumbled pity.  
I could have hugged the greasy rogues; they pleased  
me. (I.i.256-267)

Three years have passed since Belvidera married for love, but because of her father's repudiation, she is now penniless and reduced to a picture of passivity. Still, we are immediately aware of her great affective power. As Pierre continues to agitate Jaffeir to revenge--"Remember / Thy Belvidera suffers. Belvidera!" (I.i.290-291)--we also see that it is Belvidera who defines Jaffeir, not the reverse. Earlier, in his argument with Priuli, Jaffeir had

acknowledged this power: "You perceive / My life feeds on her, therefore thus you treat me" (I.i.77-78).

The power of the marriage bond is evident in the initial conversation between Belvidera and Jaffeir. Although they are now destitute, Belvidera's words indicate that, for her, the marriage bond is paramount: for example, "I joy more in thee / Than did thy mother when she hugged thee first, / And blessed the gods for all her travail past" (I.i.331-333). Jaffeir asks if she will remain with him even if their misfortunes drive them abroad: "Wilt thou then / Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love?" (I.i.368-369). Her answer foreshadows her fate:

Oh I will love thee, even in madness love thee;  
Though my distracted senses should forsake me,  
I'd find some intervals when my poor heart  
Should 'suage itself and be let loose to thine.  
Though the bare earth be all our resting-place,  
Its roots our food, some clift our habitation,  
I'll make this arm a pillow for thy head;  
As thou sighing ly'st, and swelled with sorrow,  
Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love  
Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest;  
Then praise our God, and watch thee till the  
morning. (I.i.370-380)

Belvidera's resolve is tested when Jaffeir delivers her as a hostage to the conspirators, not revealing to Belvidera that he has pledged to kill her if he betrays them. This act is fatal because Jaffeir--like John Frankford--introduces an intruder into his own domestic sphere, one Renault. William H. McBurney sees Jaffeir's

decision to place Belvidera in the hands of the conspirators as the most important event in the tragedy:

But that, at a midnight rendezvous of the conspirators (and immediately after a quarrel between Eliot and Renault on the subject of whoring), Jaffeir should introduce his wife into their midst, apparently in the charming disorder of night dress, must have seemed to Otway's original audience risible if not incredible. Further excess follows, for Belvidera is delivered to Renault, who leads her back to bed. There . . . she is predictably threatened with her husband's dagger and with rape. Upon this lurid off-stage event the tragedy depends. Here all the basic elements of the play coincide. Love, honor, and friendship are each simultaneously threatened, perverted, and betrayed. (395)

Thus, Jaffeir, like Priuli, plays his part in Belvidera's tragedy; the father precipitates the tragedy and the husband compounds it.

When we later see Belvidera wandering alone, she exclaims against her husband for bringing this intruder into their midst: "He that should guard my virtue has betrayed it; / Left me! undone me! Oh, that I could hate him!" (III.ii.11-12) Jaffeir attempts to calm her, but at this point her husband's misguided act has caused her to experience a Deianeiran period of self-scrutiny. She personifies her heart:

I fear the stubborn wanderer will not own me,  
'Tis grown a rebel to be ruled no longer,  
Scorns the indulgent bosom that first lulled it,  
And like a disobedient child disdains  
The soft authority of Belvidera. (III.ii.22-26)

She then compares herself to Brutus' Portia and begs him to tell her why he is so troubled and why she has been "made the hostage of a hellish trust" (III.ii.107). He agrees to reveal all, but first she redefines the marriage:

Look not upon me as I am, a woman,  
But as a bone, thy wife, thy friend, who long  
Has had admission to thy heart, and there  
Studied the virtues of thy gallant nature;  
Thy constancy, thy courage and thy truth,  
Have been my daily lesson. I have learnt them,  
Am bold as thou, can suffer or despise  
The worst of fates for thee, and with thee share  
them. (III.ii.119-126)

Belvidera's words indicate that she realizes it is up to her to become the active partner in their marriage: Jafeir is too weak.

When Jaffeir confesses his part in the conspiracy and that one of its chief targets is Priuli, she is horrified. Like Penthea, who refused to seek vengeance on her brother despite his abuse, Belvidera, too, refuses to seek vengeance on her father, no matter how he has treated her:

Murder my father! Though his cruel nature  
Has persecuted me to my undoing,  
Driven me to basest wants, can I behold him  
With smiles of vengeance, butchered in his age?  
The sacred fountain of my life destroyed?  
(III.ii.149-153)

Because Belvidera understands this threat to her father, she reveals the attempted rape to open Jaffeir's eyes regarding the corruption behind the conspiracy and to remind him of



his earlier words regarding their love. In other words, tired of being a pawn to both her father and husband, Belvidera's act in revealing Renault's attempt on her body is a Deianeiran attempt to take control over her own life and over her own domestic environment.

Jaffeir appears persuaded by Belvidera's entreaties to leave the conspiracy, and he admits that he has become "fortune's common fool, / The jest of rogues, an instrumental ass / For villains to lay loads of shame upon" (II.ii.214-216). But Jaffeir wavers in his resolve when Pierre chastises him for listening to a woman:

Wilt thou never,  
Never be weaned from caudles and confections?  
What feminine tale hast thou been listening to,  
Of unaired shirts, catarrhs and toothache got  
By thin-soled shoes? Damnation! that a fellow  
Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction  
Of a whole people, should sneak thus in corners  
To ease his fulsome lusts, and fool his  
mind. (III.ii.221-228)

Unable to practice self-control in his following meeting with Renault and his confederates, Jaffeir leaves in disorder, pausing only for an apostrophe to his wife: "Oh Belvidera, take me to thy arms / And show me where's my peace, for I've lost it" (III.ii.371-372).

When Jaffeir goes to Belvidera, we see an interesting twist on the Deianeiran tradition. Belvidera, who has taken active control of their domestic environment, sees Jaffeir

as a potential monument to chastity. He asks, "Where dost thou lead me?" (IV.i.1) She replies:

To eternal honor;  
To do a deed shall chronicle thy name  
Among the glorious legends of those few  
That have saved sinking nations. Thy renown  
Shall be the future song of all the virgins,  
Who by thy piety have been preserved  
From horrid violation; every street  
Shall be adorned with statues to thy honor,  
And at thy feet this great inscription written,  
"Remember him that propped the fall of  
Venice." (IV.1.4-13)

When he hesitates, she reproaches: "Oh inconstant man!"

(IV.i.19) Long ago, Roswell Gray Ham remarked:

Otway's women are even stronger than his men.  
Belvidera demonstrates to Jaffeir that his projected  
course of blood and revenge is a perversion of his  
humanity and his intelligence. She is rational beyond  
all precedent. (193)<sup>1</sup>

Belvidera is indeed more rational than her husband, and her above speech shows that she comprehends the analogy of family and state, as does Penthea in her counsel to Calista (see 105). Jaffeir has the potential to be a monument to those who "have saved sinking nations" and to those who have preserved virgins "From horrid violation." Jack D. Durant writes:

In Venice Preserved, then, Otway sets himself the task of demonstrating through analogy the political realities most basic to domestic quiet. Placing the demands of rash heroic action at odds with the profounder, if less flamboyant, demands of marital and family integrity, he insists that tranquility in the

state presupposes loving mutual trust among the members of the political family, that stability inheres in this trust. (501-502; see also Berman 542)

Belvidera, in her attempt to persuade Jaffeir to turn traitor to the conspiracy, again resorts to domestic imagery:

Save thy poor country, save the reverend blood  
Of all its nobles, which tomorrow's dawn  
Must else see shed; save the poor tender lives  
Of all those little infants which the swords  
Of murderers are whetting for this moment.  
Think thou already hear'st their dying screams,  
Think that thou seest their sad distracted mothers  
Kneeling before thy feet, and begging pity  
With torn dishevelled hair and streaming eyes,  
Their naked mangled breasts besmeared with blood,  
And even the milk with which their fondled babes  
Softly they hushed, dropping in anguish from 'em.  
Think thou seest this, and consult thy heart.  
(IV.i.46-58)

Eugene M. Waith judges that "the piling up of sentiment" in the above lines qualifies Belvidera's plea as "a truly purple passage" (Ideas 251):

The moving description prescribed in the handbooks of Roman rhetoric is here carried to intolerable lengths, with the result that, despite the genuine importance of the issue, what should be gripping seems merely sentimental. (Ideas 252)

However, it is difficult to agree with Waith's censure. The imagery in these lines is dark and gripping, serving to demonstrate that the Deianeiran heroine will resort to any means in the attempt to restore stability to her domestic and, in turn, social environment. It is tempting to

speculate that had these words come from the mouth of a Herculean hero, they would be grounds for admiration. Yes, they are grounds for admiration--for Belvidera, the Deianeiran heroine. Jaffeir realizes that his wife's power lies in her ability to garner admiration:

By all Heaven's powers, prophetic truth dwells in thee,  
For every word thou speak'st strikes through my heart  
Like a new light, and shows it how't has wandered.  
Just what th'hast made me, take me, Belvidera.  
. . . . .  
. . . . . Ah take me quickly,  
Secure me well before that thought's renewed:  
If I relapse once more, all's lost  
forever. (IV.i.69-78)

He confesses: "th'art my soul itself; wealth, friendship, honor, / All present joys, and earnest of all future, / Are summed in thee" (IV.i.80-82).

After Jaffeir releases the names of the conspirators to the Duke, he is overcome with his betrayal of Pierre, which further reveals Jaffeir's weakness, since he admits that Pierre "used me like a slave, shamefully used me" (IV.ii.309). Belvidera, too, wavers in characteristic Deianeiran fashion, fearing that her method to restore her domestic environment may have been incorrect. The following speech could easily have been delivered by Deianeira after she applied the philtre to Heracles' coat:

Whither shall I fly?  
Where hide me and my miseries together?  
Where's now the Roman constancy I boasted?  
Sunk into trembling fears and desperation!

Not daring now to look up to that dear face  
Which used to smile even on my faults, but down  
Bending these miserable eyes to earth,  
Must move in penance, and implore much  
mercy. (IV.ii.282-289)

Her terror is increased by Jaffeir's reaction after she tells him that the conspirators have been condemned. Belvidera's picture of Jaffeir is reminiscent of the physical torture suffered by the dying Heracles: "Oh do not look so terribly upon me! / How your lips shake, and all your face disordered!" (IV.ii.365-366) And, just as Heracles initially cries for revenge on Deianeira, Jaffeir, remembering his oath to the conspirators that he would murder his wife if he betrayed them, draws his dagger to dispatch his wife: "Hark thee, traitress, thou hast done this, / Thanks to thy tears and false persuading love" (IV.ii.388-389). This famous dagger scene, which leads to an embrace between husband and wife, is usually seen as characteristic of the melodrama accompanying pathetic tragedy. The text does allow for this possibility; nonetheless, it effectively reveals the character of Jaffeir and the power of the marriage bond. He admits:

I am, I am a coward; witness't Heaven,  
Witness it, earth, and every being witness!  
'Tis but one blow, yet, by immortal love,  
I cannot longer bear a thought to harm  
thee . . . (IV.ii.413-416)

Jaffeir, then, instructs Belvidera to fly to her father and to plead with him on Pierre's behalf. Her influence over both husband and father is stated by Jaffeir: "But conquer him, as thou hast vanquished me" (IV.ii.430).

But Belvidera's attempt to restore domestic stability has not yet affected her father. At the beginning of Act V, Priuli enters solus, revealing that he has not yet acknowledged any wrong on his part: "The vilest beasts are happy in their offsprings, / While only Man gets traitors, whores, and villains" (V.i.15-16). After Belvidera enters, this scene echoes a similar conversation between Penthea and Ithocles, which demonstrates the affective power of the heroine (see 105). At first, Belvidera is harsh on Priuli, calling him "my inhuman father" (V.i.19), but she shortly after appeals to him as a daughter: "By the kind tender names of child and father, / Hear my complaints and take me to your love" (V.i.37-38). As Penthea reminds Ithocles of former domestic harmony between him and his father, Belvidera reminds Priuli of their own former domestic harmony:

Yes, your daughter, by a mother  
Virtuous and noble, faithful to your honor,  
Obedient to your will, kind to your wishes,  
Dear to your arms; by all the joys she gave you,  
When in her blooming years she was your treasure,  
Look kindly on me; in my face behold  
The lineaments of hers y'have kissed so often,  
Pleading the cause of your poor cast-off  
child. (V.i.39-46)

She continues: "Yes--and y'have oft told me / With smiles of love and chaste paternal kisses, / I'd much resemblance of my mother" (V.i.47-49). She then reveals that she has been successful in her attempt to restore her husband: "I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love / T'attempt his heart, and bring it back to honor. / Great love prevailed and blessed me with success" (V.i.85-87). Although she believes that Jaffeir will fulfill his oath to take her life, her immediate concern is with her husband, not with herself; she fears the effect that being killed by Jaffeir will have on him: "I fear not death, but cannot bear a thought / That that dear hand should do th'unfriendly office" (V.i.107-108). Her words have the desired effect on Priuli, and harmony is restored between father and daughter. He agrees to stay Pierre's sentence and says:

Canst thou forgive me all my follies past?  
I'll henceforth be indeed a father; never,  
Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,  
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,  
Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er  
thee. (V.i.115-119)

Unfortunately, the machinery put in motion by Belvidera's successful attempt to thwart the conspiracy cannot be stopped, as Priuli's clemency is too late to save Pierre.

But Belvidera still maintains a hope that she has repaired her marriage and longs for a future with her husband:

And may no fatal minute ever part us,  
Till, reverend grown, for age and love, we go  
Down to one grave, as our last bed, together,  
There sleep in peace till an eternal  
morning. (V.ii.149-152)

Tragically, Jaffeir knows that "We part this hour forever" (V.ii.179). Belvidera also realizes that her hope for a future together is hollow and asks Jaffeir to leave his dagger with her, presumably so she can take her own life. Jaffeir refuses, demonstrating an unusual--for him, at least--concern for domestic life: "We have a child, as yet a tender infant, / Be a kind mother to him when I am gone, / Breed him in virtue and the paths of honor" (V.ii.209-211). Knowing that her actions have led to the impending death of her husband, Belvidera suffers an emotional collapse. Her words echo those of Deianeira when she learned of Heracles' agony. Deianeira says, "If he falls, / I go with him. I die too" (704-705); and Belvidera says, "To my husband then conduct me quickly. / Are all things ready? Shall we die most gloriously?" (V.ii.239-240)

It is difficult to argue that Jaffeir dies gloriously. Pierre, being prepared to die on the wheel, asks Jaffeir to "undertake / Something that's noble" (V.iii.79-80). Jaffeir assumes that Pierre's wish is that he fulfill his oath to kill his wife, and Jaffeir again wavers: "I have a wife and she shall bleed, my child too / Yield up his little throat, and all t'appease thee--" (V.iii.85-86). However, Pierre



only asks that Jaffeir execute him immediately, so that he will not "Be exposed a common carcass on a wheel"

(V.iii.77). After he kills Pierre, Jaffeir then stabs himself and, in his only admirable gesture, gives his dagger to an officer, saying:

--oh poor Belvidera!  
Sir, I have a wife, bear this in safety to her,  
A token that with my dying breath I blessed her,  
And the dear little infant left behind  
me. (V.iii.105-108)

Finally, Jaffeir comprehends that Belvidera has been driven by a strong commitment to marital integrity. Thus, Jaffeir's dagger is his "token" of this new understanding, one that is indeed tragic because it materializes too late. The attending officer believes that Jaffeir has died gloriously--"Heav'n grant that I die so well--" (V.iii.111).

In the world of heroic tragedy, Jaffeir's death may be glorious, but in a corrupt world restored to order by the Deianeiran heroine, it is she who rises to heroic stature in death. Candy B. K. Schille asserts that Belvidera's final lines are "discredited" because of her madness (47), but even in her distraction Belvidera is admirable. Seeing the ghosts of her husband and Pierre rise from the grave, she sinks to her knees trying to pull their bodies from the ground. But the pull of death is too strong for Belvidera: "My love! my dear! my blessing! Help me, help me! / They

have hold on me, and drag me to the bottom. / Nay--now they pull so hard--farewell--" (V.iv.27-29).

Belvidera is admirable, and this admiration, heightened by her death, is cathartic. Thomas B. Stroup sees a pessimistic irony in her death:

[T]he irony that it is Belvidera's very goodness which crushes her constitute[s] Otway's attempt to demonstrate the perversion of the moral order, or the world's entire lack of it. (73)

However, the irony can be seen in a more optimistic light. As Aline MacKenzie Taylor observes:

Belvidera, who at the opening of the play is the almost passive object of Jaffeir's love, as well as the real object of the injuries intended Jaffeir by Priuli and by Renault, is thereafter impelled to act by filial devotion. (Next 59)

It is this devotion that makes her admirable, and it is ironic that this devotion leads to her death, to the death of her husband, and to the impending death of her father, who warns in the final lines:

Set up one taper that may last a day,  
As long as I've to live, and there all leave me;  
Sparing no tears when you this tale relate,  
But bid all cruel fathers dread my  
fate. (V.iv.34-37)

Like the final lines of The Maid's Tragedy, the final lines of Venice Preserved point directly to the action that sets off the tragedy. However, because the conspiracy is so

important to the play's action, critics often neglect the theme of patriarchal abuse and instead read the play as a political allegory, a play not about Venice, but a play dealing with events surrounding the Exclusion Crisis in England--in the vein of Absalom and Achitophel--in which specific groups and individuals in the play correspond to specific groups and individuals in English politics. In these readings, either the conspiracy represents the Popish Plot directed against the English Parliament or against the Common Council of the City of London; or the conspiracy represents Whig exclusionists conspiring against the English court or bickering among themselves.<sup>2</sup> Some elements in the play are undeniably allegorical; for example, critics universally agree that Antonio is a caricature of Shaftesbury. Otway's French source, Saint-Real's A Conspiracy of the Spanish against the State of Venice, published in an English translation in 1675 and based on historical events in 1618, also encourages political readings.<sup>3</sup> Harth acknowledges that "Seventeenth-century Englishmen were endlessly intrigued by historical parallels" (348); on the other hand, this critic points out the pitfalls inherent in placing too much emphasis on the political elements in the play:

[A]ttempts to show that Otway's presentation of the Venetian conspiracy makes his play a Tory "political document," either as allegory or as parallel, have required considerable critical dexterity. Venice

Preserv'd may, indeed, be interpreted in ways which make it conform with this image, but only at the cost of contradicting the way most readers and spectators over the years have responded to its plot and characters. (355)

Katherine M. Rogers and Robert D. Hume give prudent advice in this regard:

The political background in Venice Preserved is an essential foil to the love plot, set in the external world, where people do not live for love, and suggesting that there are countervalues which have their legitimate weight. (Rogers "Masculine" 401)

And, "The play is a brilliant anti-Whig fable--and, happily, a tragedy which transcends such particulars" (Hume Development 347; see also Powell 164, Waith Ideas 251, Rothstein 109, McBurney 387, Kelsall xiii).

Subordinating the political elements, some critics attempt to make the play conform to generic images by viewing the tragedy as a transition piece, either as a kind of leftover heroic drama, as an early pathetic tragedy, as an affective tragedy, or as an ancestor of eighteenth-century she-tragedies. Venice Preserved certainly contains the love/honor dichotomy of heroic tragedy in the person of Jaffeir, who represents "the drama of the divided soul in which passions become actions under the supervision of the will" (Warner 123). However, David R. Hauser places the heroic elements in their proper perspective: "O'tway does not entirely abandon the heroic

code . . . . But whereas honor is the ideal, it is rarely sustained in the action of the play itself" (483-484). Waith asserts that "The heroic is not entirely gone, but pity predominates over the admiration with which it is mingled" (Ideas 251-252). The pathetic element is indeed strong; nevertheless, there is room for admiration, and the one character who precipitates admiration of virtue is the Deianeiran Belvidera, "the only character untainted by selfishness and cruelty" (Rogers "Masculine" 393). Similarly, if we choose to read Venice Preserved as an affective tragedy, which "drains the heroic play of evaluative efficacy and meaning, and substitutes the affective response of pity for the judgmental one of admiration" (Brown Dramatic 69), we run the risk of succumbing to "the tendency to treat all pathetic plays as conventional melodramas" (Schille 39). Finally, if we read Venice Preserved as an early she-tragedy, "where unmerited suffering--the inevitable plight of the defenseless heroine--is the primary premise" (Brown "Defenseless" 432), we risk neglecting Belvidera's psychological complexity. Rogers counters:

[T]he 'she-tragedies' show little attempt to meet ordinary standards of plausible motivation or reasonable morality. . . . Venice Preserved, on the other hand, in which feminine values are not assumed to be hopelessly subrational, has sufficiently sound basis to satisfy the intelligence. ("Masculine" 401)<sup>4</sup>

In addition to political and generic studies, a third approach to uncover meaning in the play has led critics to focus their discussions on various universal themes, most of which present the world of Venice Preserved as an exhibition of negative value systems. Such systems include betrayal, perverse sexuality, primitive animality, and egoism.<sup>5</sup> Anne Righter even goes so far as to call the play "nihilistic":

Both the Venetian establishment and the conspirators who would overthrow it are hopelessly corrupt. There is nothing to choose between them, and no other alternative. . . . Death, in fact, is the only positive value remaining in the world. (156-157)

Milhous and Hume attempt to reconcile all approaches to Venice Preserved--what they call "a peculiarly centerless play" (198)--by asserting that the drama is a combination of topical political commentary and pessimistic satire:

Our 'happy ending' is the preservation of a Venice rotten to the core. And unless we choose to regard suicide (leading to Belvidera's madness and death) as satisfactory affirmation, that is where Otway leaves us. (198)<sup>6</sup>

But, the world of Venice Preserved is not a nihilistic place void of positive values; and Venice Preserved is not a play in which "The audience are not purged of pity or fear, but left to stew in them" (Stroup 74). Durant agrees that "an important affirmation underlies the cruel tragedy of Venice Preserved, an affirmation based upon the sacramental

integrity of marriage and family relationships" (485). This critic catalogs the variety of issues addressed in the play: "serious moral issues, issues touching the individual in society, the tyranny of corrupt government, the dark call to revenge, the definition of human nature itself" (487).

Durant continues:

As Otway points the drama, however, these issues remain quite remote and philosophical. For a while they show themselves as menacing threats; but the reunion of Jaffeir and Belvidera puts them aside, not philosophically, but experientially, through the overriding certitude of the marriage bond. . . . [T]he play sees order and stability inhering in marital and family covenants. (487,499)

Rogers discusses the menacing threats to marital and family covenants in slightly different terms--"the conflict between masculine and feminine values" ("Masculine" 394):

Venice Preserved is consistently focused on a conflict which is as old as Antigone . . . the conflict between the values of honor, public loyalty, and assertion of oneself and one's rights [i.e., masculine values] and those of love, loyalty to kin, peace, and forbearance [i.e., feminine values]. This conflict is truly tragic because it is universal and inevitable. ("Masculine" 402)

We might also add that the conflict is as old as the Trachiniae.

But like Deianeira in the Trachiniae, Anne Frankford in A Woman Killed with Kindness, Aspatia in The Maid's Tragedy, and Penthea in The Broken Heart, Belvidera has not often received such critical admiration for her role in resolving

this conflict. On the one hand, she is often characterized as being an intriguer, while, on the other, she is often seen as a simple victim who deserves pity rather than admiration.<sup>7</sup> A frequently cited phallogocentric assessment of Belvidera's character comes from the pen of Eric Rothstein: she is "at once Jaffeir's highest good and the enemy of his honor" (107). Rothstein's comment is another example of an asymmetrical outlook from a critic seeking to define a female character in relation to her male counterpart, when, in fact, Belvidera gives meaning to Priuli, her father--who seizes all of her possessions and casts her into the streets because she married Jaffeir against his wishes--and to Jaffeir, her husband--who loses his fortune because of the marriage and weakly enters the conspiracy in an attempt to gain revenge. Rogers notes Belvidera's final effect on her father in the last act: "Belvidera brings Priuli back to his nature by making him see that being a father means to love and cherish, not to dominate" ("Masculine" 394)--the same lesson that Penthea teaches her brother Ithocles, who abused patriarchal authority in The Broken Heart. Hauser notes Belvidera's final effect on Jaffeir:

Ultimately Belvidera is destroyed because she takes upon herself the sins of her husband, but she teaches Jaffeir how he, in turn, can assume the burdens of Pierre, and thereby complete his salvation. (492)



Belvidera is dynamic; she is much more than a pathetic vehicle. Rogers' appraisal of her actions illustrates why Belvidera evokes a Deianeiran admiration:

[Belvidera], while innocent is not passive, for, by pressuring Jaffeir to betray the conspiracy, she precipitates his destruction and her own. Actively promoting the values she believes in, she wins respect as well as sympathy. ("Masculine" 400)

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1 In asserting that Belvidera is "rational beyond all precedent," Ham argues that she possesses a "quality that gave her a new elevation above her elder sisters in tragedy" (198).

2 Phillip Harth provides the best summary of these kinds of analyses, which seek to prove that "the play is really about English, not Venetian, political affairs and its 'meaning' can be discovered only by finding the appropriate key" (347). See John Robert Moore, Ham, Z. S. Fink, Taylor (VP), David Bywaters, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume (173-176), Harry M. Solomon, Jessica Munns, Kerstin P. Warner (48-57,120), Gerald D. Parker, John Robert Moore, and Ronald Berman. The "Nicky-Nacky" scenes have encouraged some scholars, formalistically, to see the political elements in the play in universal terms: e.g., these scenes reveal the play's "primary purpose of creating the atmosphere of corruption in the body politic" (Zimbaro 151); they "make explicit the connection between private lust and the misuses of political power" (Solomon 307); "They grossly actualize that sexuality which is so pervasive throughout the play: a rank symbol of political unhealth" (Williams 61). We have seen similar commentary on The Maid's Tragedy (see 82-83).

3 John Harold Wilson discusses Otway's adaptation of this source (95-108). He quips: "Venice is preserved--but who cares about Venice? Otway focuses all our emotions on Jaffier [sic] and Belvidera, changing his plot and characters to suit his tragic vision" (103).

4 For Rogers, masculine values include "reason, abstract ideals such as honor and patriotism, assertion of one's rights, friendship, and group loyalties"; feminine values include "sensitivity, tenderness, love, family ties, and the worth of every human life" (also cited and discussed in my Introduction 4). Rogers argues: "Masculine values totally dominate early heroic drama; later, when feminine values do appear, they serve only to weaken the hero or the play as a whole" ("Masculine" 390).

<sup>5</sup> On the theme of betrayal: "betrayed oaths, betrayed secrets, betrayed bonds of family and friendship, and, not least, betrayed expectations" (DePorte 245; see also Warner 120, Harth 362). McBurney, however, who sees Venice Preserved as play about sensuality, argues that "Otway emphasizes the verbal eroticism of the play by a staggering number of passionate embraces which, rather than oath-taking, is the key symbolic action of the play" (392). In more graphic terms, Harold Weber compares Venice Preserved with John Webster's The White Devil: two plays that "project a morbid sexuality at the center of the social frame. . . . Both portray sexuality as the chief engine of human motivation, while both envisage a frightening world lost in the corrupt, perverse, and demonic" (30-31). In his Hobbesian reading, which argues that in the play "Otway questions Restoration heroic ideals by suggesting that they are both generated and belied by the animal and primitive aspects of human nature" (437), Derek W. Hughes agrees that the play centers on lust: "The central motif of Venice Preserv'd . . . may most conveniently be summed up as that of man reverting to a primitive and animal state as a result of the triumph of physical impulse over the rational faculties" (437-438). Berman also sees "a fundamental disparity between Nature and society [which] energizes Venice Preserv'd and drives the play's machinery from the first scene on"; and because of this disparity, "the protagonists measure each other and are measured against a standard which reveals their failure to achieve the promise of Nature" (530). Stroup argues that the failure of the protagonists to be "motivated by anything other than personal needs and desires" (73) is a mark of Otway's "bitter pessimism," thus placing "Otway in the long line of bitter men reaching from Archilochus to Samuel Beckett" (75).

<sup>6</sup> Milhous and Hume suggest "four basic production potentialities. (1) Topical political commentary: what was probably central to the original 1682 production is now completely unrecoverable in performance. (2) Pathetic vehicle: the blood and thunder potentialities, emphasizing Jaffair and Belvidera, are obvious. (3) Political manifesto: suitably cut, and with Pierre made the lead character, Venice Preserv'd was turned into a libertarian tract in the mid-eighteenth century. (4) Pessimistic satire: the 'bitter pessimism' remarked by Thomas B. Stroup could be emphasized to qualify or undercut the heroic/pathetic surface of the play. Our guess is that Otway's original idea was a combination of number 1 and number 4" (172-173).

<sup>7</sup> Michael DePorte admits that she is "affectionate, constant, and pure," but goes on to argue that "she is also resourceful and cunning, unscrupulous even, in pursuing what she wants" (247). Hughes, claiming that Belvidera's influence over Jaffeir represents "the dominance of physical impulse" (444), asserts that she "transform[s] her death into an orgasmic experience" (448). Lord Byron's condemnation of Belvidera, along these lines, is often mentioned in critical articles: "that maudlin bitch of chaste lewdness" (Marchand V:203). Approaching Belvidera from the opposite direction, Jocelyn Powell declares Belvidera to be "melting and pathetic" (165), and Warner writes that she is "the quintessence of submissiveness," a character, who "with her frail and tender nature, seems to invite victimization by her very presence" (137). Like Waith and Warner, Hume cites Belvidera as an example of "the virtuous character as victim [who] is likely to yield pity rather than admiration" (Development 172). And Laura Brown sees her as "the most affecting and most obvious victim in the play. . . . [H]er madness and death sustain their pathos to the last possible moment" (Dramatic 89-90). Bonamy Dobree writes of Venice Preserved: "The theme of unfortunate love bulks too large in it, and though Belvidera supplies a necessary element, one cannot always refrain from wishing her away" (144); and, "[Otway's] pity-mongering on behalf of love undermines the emotional structure" (148).

CHAPTER VII  
THE FATAL MARRIAGE<sup>1</sup>

Like Belvidera in Venice Preserved, Isabella in The Fatal Marriage is driven to destitution by a corrupt patriarchal authority which punishes her because she marries for love. Seven years before the play opens, Isabella and her husband Biron were forced to elope because Biron's father, Count Baldwin, forbade his son's marriage to the penniless Isabella on financial grounds--for the same reason that Priuli forbade the marriage between Belvidera and her poor bridegroom Jaffeir. And, in a similar variation echoing The Broken Heart--in which Penthea is forced to marry the domestic intruder Bassanes so that her brother Ithocles will gain financially--Carlos, Isabella's brother-in-law, villainously orchestrates a bigamous marriage between Isabella and the domestic intruder Villeroy so that he will inherit the fortune denied to him under the system of primogeniture. This patriarchal corruption sets the tragedy in motion for Isabella, "a consistent and fully realized moral paragon" (Brown Dramatic 98), whose ensuing actions are dictated by her attempt to resolve the conflict between providing for her family and remaining true to her moral values. She learns that this conflict cannot be resolved in this world; thus, she resolves it in the next.

When we first see Isabella, it has been seven years since she lost Biron, who, repudiated by his father, enlisted in the foreign wars. At this point, accompanied by her son, she rejects Villeroy, her suitor, because she believes that taking another husband will violate her marriage to Biron, even though she believes him to be dead: "My buried Husband rises in the Face / Of my dear Boy, and chides me for my stay" (I.iii.36-37). Villeroy, who is admirable throughout the play and driven in his suit solely by his love for and devotion to Isabella, comments on her true nature:

What can I say!  
The Arguments that make against my Hopes,  
Prevail upon my Heart, and fix me more;  
Those pious Tears you hourly throw away  
Upon the Grave, have all their quick'ning Charms,  
And more engage my Love, to make you mine.  
When yet a Virgin, free, indispos'd,  
I Lov'd, but saw you only with my Eyes;  
I cou'd not reach the Beauties of your Soul:  
I have since liv'd in Contemplation,  
And long experience of your growing Goodness:  
What then was Passion, is my Judgment now,  
Thro' all the several changes of your Life,  
Confirm'd, and settled in adoring you. (I.iii.44-57)

Later in this scene, Isabella, in destitution, goes to Baldwin's home, hoping for succor, as Jaffeir went to the home of his father-in-law; however, the door to her father-in-law's home is locked to her, and she laments the loss of familial obligations, a loss which has corrupted her domestic environment:

Where is the Charity that us'd to stand,  
In our Forefathers Hospitable days,  
At Great Mens Doors, ready for our wants,  
Like the good Angel of the Family,  
With open Arms taking the Needy in,  
To feed, and cloath, to comfort and relieve 'em?  
Now ev'n their Gates are shut against the  
Poor. (I.iii.70-76)

Biron's old nurse finally admits her and tells the porter Sampson that Biron had abducted Isabella from a nunnery, "which she broke out of to run away with him" (I.iii.143-144). Responding to this information, we might be tempted to conclude that Isabella committed an Eve-like sin, thus perpetrating her tragedy. Such is the conclusion reached by Baldwin:

Had my wretched Son  
Marry'd a Beggar's Bastard; taken her  
Out of her Rags, and made her of my Blood:  
The mischief might have ceas'd, and ended there.  
But bringing you into a Family,  
Entails a Curse upon the Name, and House,  
That takes you in: The only part of me  
That did receive you, perish'd for his Crime.  
'Tis a defiance to offended Heaven,  
Barely to pity you: Your Sins pursue you:  
The heaviest Judgments that can fall upon you,  
Are your just Lot, and but prepare your Doom:  
Expect 'em, and despair-- (I.iii.237-249)

Like John Frankford in A Woman Killed with Kindness, Baldwin corrupts patriarchal authority by assuming the role of God, believing that only he has the power to forgive. Despite Baldwin's claim that she is cursed, the nurse tells Sampson that the two lovers received "the Churches Forgiveness" (I.iii.144). In addition, the nurse relates that Isabella

was rejected by Baldwin because "she had settled all her Fortune upon a Nunnery" (I.iii.142-143); therefore, Baldwin hates her because his eldest son married a woman without a dowry. As a result, the Count "disinherited him; took his younger Brother Carlos into favour, whom he never car'd for before; and at last forc'd Biron to go to the Siege of Candy, where he was kill'd" (I.iii.151-153).

Isabella's commitment to her family is tested when Baldwin agrees to shelter her child, but not her, thus separating mother and son--a punishment identical to that administered by John Frankford; however, Isabella refuses to part with her son. Root argues, and I agree, that Baldwin, in his offer to care for his grandson, "is moved to help the child primarily to punish her" (78). For Root, "The plight of Isabella depends on the behavior of Count Baldwin. Although the church has forgiven her, Baldwin has not" (78). It is true that Isabella is still troubled because she renounced her vows to the church--such internal conflict, in fact, increases our admiration of her virtue--but she firmly believes that she has done nothing to violate her marriage vows: "Oh! I have Sins to Heav'n, but none to him [Biron]" (I.iii.236). Isabella even tells Baldwin that he is abusing parental authority: "O! cou'd you be / The Tyrant to divorce Life from my Life? / I live but in my Child" (I.iii.263-265). Baldwin then curses his daughter-in-law in exactly the same manner that Priuli cursed his son-in-law



(see 123): "Then have your Child, and feed him with your Prayer. / You, Rascal, Slave" (I.iii.269-270). And Baldwin's tyranny is further demonstrated when he dismisses Sampson and the nurse for admitting Isabella into his home.

In her following scene, Isabella is mentally tormented as she wrestles with the thought that the disavowal of her religious oath may be the cause of her current destitution, but her conversation with the nurse reveals that she still believes in her own innate goodness: "Do I deserve to be this out-cast Wretch? / Abandoned thus, and lost?"

(II.ii.16-17) In order "To put off the bad day of Beggery" (II.ii.49), Isabella pawns her last remaining possession, a ring given to her by Biron. Shortly after relinquishing this token, she anticipates death: "Whether I Starve, / Or Hang, or Drown, the end is still the same" (II.ii.86-87); and, "Life, and Death are now alike to me" (II.ii.97). But Carlos, who alone knows that Biron has been held captive in a Turkish jail these seven years and hopes to finally ruin Isabella and her son in the eyes of Baldwin, prompts Villeroy to rescue Isabella from her creditors. Villeroy again proposes marriage. She warns him:

. . . my Pleasures are  
Buried, and cold in my Dead Husbands Grave.  
And I should wrong the truth, my self, and you,  
To say that I can ever love again. (II.iii.90-93)

When he continues in his suit, she again reveals a deeply rooted belief in her innate goodness: "'Twould shew me poor, indebted, and compell'd, / Designing, mercenary, and I know / You wou'd not wish to think I could be bought" (II.iii.103-105). Despite her warning, she consents to Villeroy's proposal in order to support her son, the only course available to ensure domestic stability. As Laura Brown writes: "Isabella is morally obligated to save the lives for which she is responsible by marrying her generous and honorable suitor" (Dramatic 98). But she retains her commitment to Biron by telling Villeroy that she will always wear her widow's dress: "On your word / Never to press me to put off these Weeds, / Which best become my melancholly thoughts" (II.iii.131-133). This attempt to reconcile her decision with her previous rejection is typical of the Deianeiran dilemma experienced by all of the heroines in this study. Root accurately appraises this dilemma:

Isabella's distress over her predicament, expressed in a suspicion of her own motives, displays the complexity of her nature. At the same time it demonstrates her unselfishness. (79)

Overcome with rapture, Villeroy promises to honor Isabella's request: "Witness Heav'n and Earth / Against my Soul, when I do any thing / To give you disquiet" (II.iii.134-136).

Villeroy does cause her disquiet, however, when he invites his friends to celebrate with him after the wedding night. Here, Isabella has agreed to forgo wearing her widow's weeds because "Black might be ominous; / I would not bring ill luck along with me" (III.ii.178-179); however, she is uncomfortable and complains to Villeroy that "I cou'd have wish'd, if you had thought it fit, / Our Marriage had not been so publick" (III.ii.187-188). And her mental torment is increased by the present Carlos, who after an exchange of bawdry among the guests, addresses Isabella: "When you are well pleas'd he means, Sister. You are a Judge, and within the degrees of comparison, having had a husband before. [Isa<bella> turns away]" (III.ii.213-215). Throughout the ensuing festivities, Isabella remains distant, and although the marriage has been consummated, Villeroy realizes that she will never truly be his wife: "I shall be Jealous of this Rival, Grief, / That you indulge; it sits so near your Heart, / There is not room enough for mighty Love" (III.ii.316-318).

After Villeroy is called away to attend his sick brother, the conflict that he sees in Isabella's heart materializes when Biron returns. The horror that she feels is apparent when Biron sends his ring to her. At first, she hopes that Biron is truly dead:

This Ring was the first Present of my Love,  
To Biron, my first Husband: I must blush

To think I have a second: Biron Dy'd  
(Still to my loss) at Candy; there's my hope.  
O! Do I live to hope that he Dy'd there!  
It must be so: He's Dead; and this Ring left  
By his last breath, to some unknown, faithful Friend,  
To bring me back again. (IV.iii.15-22)

Isabella's wish that Biron is dead stems from the belief that she has violated her moral values, even if her violation was dictated by the need to support her son.

After he reveals himself and retires because of fatigue, asking her to follow him, Isabella delivers a soliloquy. Root comments that the following lines comprise "a pivotal speech, marking the turning point for Isabella's temperament, the moment she begins a descent leading her inevitably to death" (80):

I'll but say my Prayers,  
And follow you--  
My Prayers! no, I must never Pray again.  
Prayers have their Blessings to reward our Hopes;  
But I have nothing left to hope for more.  
What Heaven cou'd give, I have enjoy'd; but now  
That baleful Planet rises on my fate,  
And what's to come, is a long line of woe;  
Yet I may shorten it--  
I promis'd him to follow--him!  
Is he without a name! Biron, my Husband:  
To follow him to Bed--my Husband! ha!  
What then is Villeroy? but yesterday  
That very Bed receiv'd him for its Lord;  
Yet a warm witness of my broken vows,  
To send another to usurp his room.  
O Biron! had'st thou come but one day sooner,  
I wou'd have follow'd thee through beggary;  
Through all the chances of this weary Life,  
Wandered the many ways of wretchedness  
With thee, to find a hospitable grave.  
(IV.iii.126-146)

Isabella now realizes the consequences of her act: her new bed will be her grave. And when Biron comes to her, she repeats: "I look round, / And find no path, but leading to the Grave" (IV.iii.186-187). The fact that she has become, like Penthea, an innocent adulteress is too unbearable for her; thus, she becomes distracted, but first she pleads: "I beg you, beg to think me innocent, / Clear of all Crimes, that thus can banish me / From this Worlds comforts, in my losing you" (IV.iii.248-250). The crime that Isabella believes she has committed is moral, not legal. Sampson correctly explains to the nurse that "the Law I believe, is on Biron, the first Husband's side" (V.i.38-39).<sup>2</sup>

Regardless of the legal ramifications, for Isabella domestic stability is life; without this stability, she must die:

Can I bear that? Bear to be curst and torn,  
And thrown out from thy Family and Name,  
Like a Disease? Can I bear this from thee?  
I never can; No, all things have their end.  
When I am dead, forgive, and pity me. (IV.iii.267-271)

In another striking similarity to Penthea, a heroine who claimed that her soul was divorced from her body (see 103), Isabella cries:

Villeroy, and Biron come: O! hide me from 'em--  
They rack, they tear; let 'em carve out my limbs,  
Divide my body to their equal claims:  
My Soul is only Biron's; that is free,  
And thus I strike for him, and liberty. Going to stab herself (V.iv.7-11)

Villeroy prevents her from killing herself, but the above cry reveals her belief that her death is the only available means to restore domestic stability. When she says that she strikes for "liberty," she is upset because, previously, in a fit of distraction, she almost murdered Biron while he was sleeping. Thus, "liberty" is used in a twofold sense: both hers and Biron's. But Isabella's action is untimely because Biron has already been mortally wounded by Carlos' ruffians. When he dies, she throws herself on his body, knowing that they will be reunited in death:

. . . Here it lies,  
My Body, Soul, and Life. A little Dust  
To cover our cold Limbs in the dark Grave,  
Then, then we shall sleep safe and sound  
together. (V.iv.62-65)

All that is left to her is suicide, and in her distraction she believes that the dead hand of Biron stabs her--a fact that makes her suicide similar to Aspatia's in The Maid's Tragedy:

Biron has watch'd his opportunity.  
Softly; He steals it from the sleeping Gods,  
And sends it thus, [Stabs her self.  
Now, now I laugh at you, defie you all,  
You Tyrants, Murderers. (V.iv.278-281)

Through her actions, the corrupt authority system has been corrected; Baldwin turns Carlos, "thou poyson son of my Blood" (V.iv.247), over to the magistrate, and addresses his

orphaned grandchild in words that echo those of Priuli (see 135):

. . . My Flinty Heart,  
That Barren Rock, on which thy Father starv'd,  
Opens its springs of Nourishment to thee:  
There's not a Vein but shall run Milk for thee.  
Oh had I pardon'd my poor Birons fault!  
His first, his only fault, this had not been.  
To erring Youth there's some compassion due;  
But while with rigour you their crimes pursue,  
What's their misfortune, is crime in you.  
Hence learn offending Children to forgive:  
Leave punishment to Heav'n, 'tis Heav'ns  
Prerogative. (V.iv.316-336)

In his closing lines, Count Baldwin admits that his actions have perpetrated the tragedy; it has taken the presence of an orphan to teach him that only God has the power to punish.

Because of Baldwin's failure to accept the marriage between Biron and Isabella, nearly all scholars who comment on the play see Isabella simply as "innocent, a victim of forces beyond her control" (Rich 89-90). For example, Dodds argues:

Her part is to suffer, and to die ultimately on the horns of a dilemma beyond her power of escape, rather than to show assertiveness either of crime or of innocence. It is passive endurance on the part of stricken purity and beauty to which Southerne directs our attention. Pity rather than terror is the chief element of his tragic method. (105-106)

Robert D. Hume agrees with Dodds: "the heart of the play is the character of the luckless Isabella, her wild display of

misery and passion, and finally her suicide" (Development 402). On Isabella's decision to marry Villeroy, Geoffrey Marshall asserts that "she has no premonitions that the remarriage is wrong. We are told this but given no clues as to why it should be wrong. She seems neurotic, not prescient" (92). Claiming that Isabella lacks "assertiveness," exhibits only "passive endurance," is simply "luckless" or even "neurotic" inevitably leads to assessments that deny Isabella tragic status and assigns The Fatal Marriage to the world of melodrama.

Similar conclusions are reached by those who apply familiar generic forms to their discussions. In her thoughtful study of women and women dramatists, from 1642 to 1737, Pearson accepts the notion of "sentimental tragedy," in which "the emphasis falls on feeling, especially feelings of pity and sympathy":

"Sentimentalism" is at best a vague and ambiguous term . . . but we surely need a term to describe the consciously reformed drama offered by some writers with its deliberate didacticism and emotional manipulation. (58).

Thus, Isabella is "a conventionally innocent sentimental victim" (Pearson 150). We must assume that "conventionally innocent" means that she does not possess the psychological complexity necessary to take control over her own life. Katherine M. Rogers reaches the same conclusion, but she classifies The Fatal Marriage as one of the



"she-tragedies"--"plays dominated by pathos, tears, and female suffering" (Dammers "Female" 28). Thus, Rogers arrives at this portrayal of Isabella and John Banks's Anna Bullen (Vertue Betray'd):

[two heroines who] are destroyed by simple villainy rather than opposing values, for the only value recognized is romantic love. Pure passive victims of other people's machinations, they are free from guilt and responsibility for their ruin. (400)<sup>3</sup>

The term "pathetic tragedy" is applied by Root: "The Fatal Marriage is pathetic tragedy in exactly the terms that Otway and Banks presented it, except that it is far more domestic in setting" (78). However, Hume counters that "To pigeonhole the plays [The Fatal Marriage and Oroonoko] as 'pathetic tragedy' is easy, but dangerously reductive" ("Importance" 286). In an attempt to overcome such reduction, Brown discusses The Fatal Marriage as "affective tragedy," which differs from pathetic tragedy in that virtue predominates over pathos:

. . . while The Fatal Marriage remains primarily a pathetic play, reveling in the emotionally charged misunderstandings, self-accusations, and farewells attendant on the ill-fated Isabella's reunion with her beloved Biron, Southerne is inclined, at least in the initial acts, to emphasize virtue over suffering. (Dramatic 98)

Brown is on the right track when she asserts that the play is more than simply pathetic, but she fails to pursue this at length; instead, she constructs a new "pigeonhole."

A few critics allow Isabella more than a passive role in the play, but their remarks are curiously ambivalent. For example, Dodds claims that "the scenes in the last act in which Isabella goes mad have a violent power beyond that of mere pity" (116), but earlier in the same chapter Dodds claims that the tragedy hinges on pity (106). In her book-length study of Restoration drama, Staves writes that Isabella displays "recognizable honor in spite of [her] passivity and helplessness" (187); but later in the same study, Staves asserts that "Southerne seems simply to ask for our sympathy for his heroine" (247). Even Root, from whom I frequently draw in the preceding pages because he allows Isabella a degree of complexity, remarks that the play is noteworthy for its "focus on the pathetic" (86).

The only critic who declares Isabella to be an active character--in fact, the only one who has produced a published article devoted to Isabella--is Julia A. Rich. While I agree with this critic that "Clearly The Fatal Marriage is far more than a pathetic drama with a sex-comedy subplot tacked on" (96)<sup>4</sup> and that "it is possible to see Isabella's destruction resulting . . . from her own character and actions" (90), I sharply disagree with her thesis that Isabella must shoulder the burden of the tragedy because she is guilty of moral crimes. Rich's reading of Isabella's character is identical to that proposed by critics who condemn Anne Frankford for being the instrument

of her own destruction in A Woman Killed with Kindness (see 73n16). Briefly, Rich believes that Isabella's breaking of religious vows parallels the breaking of her marriage vows with Biron: "Her flaw is that she not once but twice breaks vows freely taken which if preserved would keep her from sin and tragedy" (91). Rich feels that Isabella belongs in a convent: "Isabella is by nature a passive and unforceful woman who finds the religious life compatible with her character of virtuous fragility." When Isabella leaves the convent, she betrays her vows as "bride of the church" and is doomed, an act that places her "sin in the vast context of the fall from Eden":

. . . virtue surely lies in resisting temptation rather than in never experiencing it. If one is susceptible to temptation, as Isabella is, one is indeed sensible to withdraw from the world, as she did in becoming a nun; obviously she did not withdraw far enough. (90)

Yes, Isabella's destruction results from her own character and actions, but it is her admirable attempt to correct the corruption of her domestic environment that leads to her tragedy. For Rich, the only true value system in the play is the ability to remain true to oaths. On the other hand, for Rogers the only true value system in the play is romantic love, thus the play is a "she-tragedy" because Isabella is destroyed by "simple villainy rather than by opposing values" (cited above). However, these two critics, approaching the text from different directions,

both fail to see that the play does present two conflicting value systems: love of family and obedience to authority.

These critics are not alone; in fact, no critic that I know of, other than Rich, has presented an intrinsic discussion of this play devoted to Isabella. And it is easy to notice that the drama of Thomas Southerne has long been critically neglected. In a mere thirty-four pages, J. M. Armistead lists and annotates "every significant comment on Southerne as dramatist" ("Thomas" 217) made during the preceding three centuries. Hume asserts that, "counting generously, one might now find half a dozen critical articles on Southerne worth reading" ("Importance" 275). But in the world of Restoration dramatic scholarship, such neglect is not limited to Southerne. Hume points out that "Among some five hundred new plays [of the late seventeenth century], roughly ten enjoyed substantial critical attention before 1975," a phenomenon which stems from the belief that "A historian is allowed to look at a larger number of plays, but critics feel the pressure of inherited value judgments" ("Importance" 287). Such inherited value judgments are hard to shake. In his review of the recently published, two-volume Oxford edition of Southerne's ten plays (1988), David Womersley argues that any new critical attention concerning Southerne should be directed "towards his historical and cultural importance" (512). Indeed, most recent attention to Southerne's

tragedies has followed this direction. For example, Brown sees Isabella in The Fatal Marriage and Imoinda in Oroonoko as heroines characteristic of late seventeenth-century transitional drama, standing between the aristocratic drama of the early Restoration and the bourgeois drama of the eighteenth century; for Brown, this "defenseless woman" is "a figure of both critical and historical significance":

The sources of her passivity, the consequences of her prominence, the nature of her role in dramatic history--each of these issues implicates the others, and all of them can be illuminated by an examination of their ties to the social and economic contexts of the age. ("Defenseless" 430)

Examining Southerne's cultural context is important; of course, addressing extrinsic factors is important in any investigation of literary history. Nevertheless, "kinds" of literary characters, I continue to argue, are not always historically monolithic, and much can be learned by addressing the plays intrinsically, instead of simply regarding them as signs in various systems of cultural semiotics. In his call for more critical attention for Southerne, Hume proposes a more balanced approach than that proposed by Womersley:

[F]alse historical constructs have tended to blind us both to his quality and his historical significance, and that fresh attention to these plays can help us rethink the much-disputed generic issues of the 1680s and 1690s. ("Importance" 275)

Hume concludes that "Southerne has long been ignored or condemned because his plays are disconcertingly unusual." And, in order to overcome this censure, "Barriers of unfamiliarity must be overcome on two levels: simple acquaintance with the texts and discomfort with unfamiliar generic features" ("Importance" 290). Apparently, Hume has already begun to rethink his former position on Southerne. Earlier, this critic had been skeptical of the intrinsic quality of The Fatal Marriage:

The Fatal Marriage has everything a play needs to be great--except internal raison d'être for the tragedy. The pain we feel is that elicited by a gruesomely enacted accident--and so we may be left tearful, but we are never deeply moved. (Development 403)

However, I believe that we can overcome Hume's initial skepticism by recognizing that The Fatal Marriage does possess an "internal raison d'être for the tragedy." In our walk through the play with Isabella--in our attempt to overcome "barriers of unfamiliarity" with the text and with unfamiliar generic features--we have learned that she exhibits the virtues of love of home and family and a belief in the sacredness of vows of love. Coupled with these virtues is her inherited belief in obedience to patriarchal authority. When this authority figure, her father-in-law, threatens to take her child, Isabella must choose whether to remain obedient or to act against authority for the preservation of the higher good--for her home and family.

Because she willingly chooses the latter course, Isabella inspires admiration, and, tragically, her defiance brings disaster. Although her death corrects the corruption in the authority system that caused this conflict, this correction comes too late: she dies and loses the things she has fought to preserve. Thus, in her death we are deeply moved. Herein, lies the "internal raison d'être for the tragedy."

Where, then, do we rank Southerne as a dramatist? Do we agree with Dodds that "Thomas Southerne is of course a dramatist of the second order of excellence" (1)? Do we agree with Womersley that his "real but limited strengths" disallow him a place "in the first rank of dramatists" (512)?<sup>5</sup> Even Southerne's most recent editors, Jordan and Love, hesitate to applaud Southerne's talents, especially in tragedy:

For Oroonoko and The Fatal Marriage it is enough that they were among the most popular half-dozen plays of the eighteenth century and that anyone ignorant of them has that much less understanding of that century. (I:xliv).

But is it really enough? Is Southerne to remain a historical curiosity? Is The Fatal Marriage a "work" of literature, or is it a cultural "text" which rejects (or promotes?) primogeniture? Again, cultural issues are important, but should they be addressed at the expense of intrinsic concerns? Hume remarks: "Making such evaluative judgments is an uncomfortably subjective business, but to

alter received canons we must be prepared to confront issues of quality" ("Importance" 275).

Therefore, in an attempt to overcome inherited value judgments, we must be willing to accept the challenge of engaging in the "uncomfortably subjective business" of "making evaluative judgments": In The Fatal Marriage, Southerne presents a heroine whose attempt to reconcile opposing value systems is admirable and tragic. We should not hesitate to commend a play which contains unfamiliar generic features; instead, we can reprise Adrian Poole's remark that "Greek tragedy is exemplary in the sense that it provides memorable and gravid examples of the unprecedented--of new experiences for which the available explanations, models and patterns prove inadequate" (12). Where Brown looks to the "social and economic contexts of the age" to explain Isabella, I look back to the Deianeiran heroines portrayed in the drama of Sophocles, Heywood, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, and Otway. And I look ahead to the portrayal of Calista in Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent.



NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1 Recalling that Sophocles transformed the mythical Deianeira from a "man-killer" into a figure who embodies "humanity's fundamental desire to achieve that stability which serves as the basis of civilized life" (see 38), we should notice that Southerne chose a similar tactic. In his dedication to "Ant. Hammond Esq," Southerne writes that "I took the Hint of the tragical part of this play from a Novel of Mrs. Behn's, called The Fair Vow-Breaker" (10). In the novel, Isabella murders two husbands and dies on the gallows. Robert L. Root, Jr., points out that "while Southerne's plot may be nominally drawn from Behn's novel, its spirit is rather remote from it" (77). Rose A. Zimbardo asserts that the relationship between Southerne's play and Behn's novel deserves more exploration (8). For discussions of this issue see Paul Hamelius, Montague Summers, Jacqueline Pearson (150), Susan Staves (247-249), John Wendell Dodds (101-111), and Robert Gayle Noyes (78-80). Southerne's Oroonoko is also adapted from Behn's novel of the same title.

2 In their explanatory notes to the Oxford edition, Robert Jordan and Harold Love explain the legal issue: "In English law, under an Act of 10 Jac. I and the Statute of Limitations of 1666, bigamy was not a felony when the first spouse had been presumed dead for seven years. The bigamous marriage was, however, invalid" (457).

3 Rogers does not have the same admiration for Southerne's Isabella as she does for Otway's Belvidera (see 139).

4 The subplot of The Fatal Marriage, also used by John Fletcher in The Night Walker, or, The Little Thief, is found in the Decameron, third day, eighth tale (Root 82). Rich engages in some remarkable critical dexterity to prove that the subplot "comments critically on the heroine Isabella" (88) and "provides Isabella's actions with the commentary which is missing from her own plot line and which is necessary for tragic effect" (93). In a provocative assessment of the subplot, Pearson argues that Victoria, who "puts on men's clothes both to flee from her tyrannical father and to test the sincerity of her lover . . . is

a thematic parallel to Isabella, since both are in sexually anomalous situations, Victoria as a transvestite, Isabella as an innocent adulteress" (113). In an unusually simplistic reading for him, Eugene M. Waith sees the main plot as an "admonition to parents not to push younger brothers towards crime by discriminating against them" and the subplot as "a homily against jealousy" (Ideas 269). I think that we are better off taking Southerne, who dispenses with the subplot after three and one-half acts, at his word: I have given you a little taste of Comedy with it, not from my own Opinion, but the present Humour of the Town (Epistle Dedicatory 10).

Hume distinguishes three types of double-plot constructions in late seventeenth-century English drama: "split-plot," in which the subplot is "radically dissociated from the main action"; "mixed-plot," in which the subplot is "a comic addition to lighten the other"; and "hip-hop," in which the "connection vanishes and comedy enters . . . a stitching together of apparently disparate story lines" (Development 210,182). Hume classifies The Fatal Marriage as "hip-hop" (Development 402).

<sup>5</sup> Hume points out that in volume two of the New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature (1971) Southerne is discussed under the heading "Minor Restoration Dramatists"; nine others are listed as major: Dryden, Etherege, Wycherley, Shadwell, Lee, Otway, Vanbrugh, Congreve, and Farquhar. Hume argues that Southerne's critical reputation has suffered because he experimented with many dramatic forms, while twentieth-century critics prefer playwrights who stick with one genre. For example, "Dryden has been cast as the champion of heroic drama," while "attention to his comedies and tragicomedies is almost always incidental and usually dismissive" ("Importance" 289).

## CHAPTER VIII

THE FAIR PENITENT

In The Fair Penitent, Altamont, a young lord of Genoa, is betrothed to Calista, daughter of the nobleman Sciolto, who reared him. Calista is unhappy with this arrangement because she is in love with Lothario, who has seduced her. When Altamont's friend Horatio, married to Altamont's sister Lavinia, learns of this affair, he warns Calista not to see Lothario again. This brief summary illustrates that all is not well on the domestic front in Genoa, and we see another heroine who finds her moral context threatened by a corrupt patriarchy.

The play opens on the day of the wedding,<sup>1</sup> and we quickly learn that Sciolto had rescued Altamont from destitution after his father had been driven to political and financial ruin--and eventually death--"Urged and assisted by Lothario's father" (I.47). Sciolto has now chosen to completely restore Altamont's "high rank and luster" (I.12) by awarding his daughter in marriage to Altamont. However, Altamont is troubled because when Calista agreed to the marriage, only the night before, he "found her cold, / As a dead lover's statue on his tomb" (I.104-105). Sciolto, who is more concerned with his family name than with his daughter's happiness, claims that her

coldness is simply "the cozenage of their sex, / One of the common arts they practice on us" (I.114-115). He instructs Altamont that he is naive:

Thou hast in camps and fighting fields been bred,  
Unknowing in the subtleties of women;  
The virgin bride who swoons with deadly fear  
To see the end of all her wishes near,  
When, blushing, from the light and public eyes  
To the kind covert of the night she flies,  
With equal fires to meet the bridegroom moves,  
Melts in his arms, and with a loose she  
loves. (I.118-125)

Sciolto's speech reveals that Altamont is not the only one who is naive.

We soon learn that Calista has already loved. Lothario tells Rossano how Calista reacted after the seduction:

With uneasy fondness  
She hung upon me, wept, and sighed, and swore  
She was undone, talked of a priest and marriage,  
Of flying with me from her father's pow'r,  
Called ev'ry saint and blessed angel down  
To witness for her that she was my wife. (I.172-177)

In his conversation with Rossano, Lothario is engaging in masculine braggadocio, speaking of his "triumph o'er Calista" (I.129); but Lothario agrees with Rossano, who claims that "She, gentle soul, was kinder than her father" (I.135): "She was, and oft in private gave me hearing, / Till, by long list'ning to the soothing tale, / At length her easy heart was wholly mine" (I.136-139). Lothario also admits that "I liked her, would have married her, / But that

it pleased her father to refuse me, / To make this honorable fool her husband" (I.130-132). Sciolto's motive for refusing Lothario is strictly political; he and Altamont's father were allies against the faction led by Lothario's father. Lothario's motive for seducing Calista, then, is also political, and his triumph is sweetened by the fact that Sciolto has awarded her to his familial enemy Altamont, now a cuckold before marriage.

In traditional readings (discussed below), Calista needs to repent because she allows herself to be seduced by Lothario while she knows that her father desires her to marry Altamont; thus, Lothario is the intruder in the planned domestic arrangement. However, Calista did not consent to the marriage in obedience to her father until after Lothario's seduction, and Lothario only seduced Calista in order to gain revenge on Sciolto for refusing his suit. In my reading, I choose to focus on the indisputable fact that Calista loves Lothario, no matter how despicable the audience or the other characters find him.<sup>2</sup> After the seduction, she considers herself, morally at least, as Lothario's wife--as Aspatia and Penthea considered themselves morally married to Amintor and Orgilus--and begs him to marry her. I have discussed several forced marriages in this study, so we should be able to see that the intruder, the character who upsets domestic stability, is not Lothario, but Altamont.

Lothario is undoubtedly a rake; nevertheless, he is an intelligent rake, and we can trust him above anyone else in the play when it comes to revealing Calista's true nature. He tells Rossano that their last meeting occurred two days earlier, when she came "Straight with tears and sighs, / With swelling breasts, with swooning, with distraction" (I.182-183). He sees that she is being torn apart by conflict between her love for him and her obedience to her father. Knowing that if he rejects her she will succumb to her father's wishes, a course that will result in an unhealthy marriage for his enemy, he refuses her pleas of marriage.

Lucilla, Calista's confidante, then arrives with a letter for Lothario. Critics neglect the contents of the letter--first read by Lothario, then lost by him, and finally found by Horatio. Instead they discuss its loss and recovery as some sort of stage machinery (e.g., Canfield 121). However, this is the first we hear from Calista herself--up to this point she has simply been a topic of conversation--and it is intriguing that the letter is read aloud twice, first by Lothario and then by Horatio, barely twenty lines later. The two versions need to be read in tandem. First Lothario's, which is a sort of Shandean puzzle complete with textual "gaps":

LOTHARIO (reads).

"Your cruelty--obedience to my father--give my  
hand to  
Altamont."

(Aside.) By heav'n, 'tis well; such ever be the  
gifts

With which I greet the man whom my soul hates.

But to go on!

"--Wish--heart--honor--too faithless--weakness--  
tomorrow--last trouble--lost Calista." (I.250-256)

Confirming Lothario's insight into Calista's character, the first section lists the two reasons why she has agreed to marry Altamont; both stem from Sciolto's refusal to allow Lothario's suit, a refusal based on political considerations. The second part of the letter reads like a catalog describing the reasons for her mental anguish and how she is attempting to cope with this torment. We see that Calista has requested a final meeting with Lothario to take place the day after the wedding. We can also assume that she is being torn apart by the familiar heart/honor dichotomy. The most puzzling words are "too faithless": Who is too faithless? Calista or Lothario? In their earlier meeting after the seduction, Calista had called Lothario a "Base betrayer!" (I.204), but from the other words in the letter, we can also see that Calista believes that she is also betraying herself--specifically by marrying Altamont. Rowe then allows the audience to fill in the textual gaps by having Horatio read the letter aloud. Lothario's reading is indicated by emphasis:

[HORATIO] Reads.

"Your cruelty has at length determined me, and I have resolved this morning to yield a perfect obedience to my father and to give my hand to Altamont, in spite of my weakness for the false Lothario. I could almost wish I had that heart and that honor to bestow with it which you have robbed me of--" Damnation! To the test--

Reads again

"But, O, I fear, could I retrieve 'em I should again be undone by the too faithless, yet too lovely Lothario; this is the last weakness of my pen, and tomorrow shall be the last in which I will indulge my eyes. Lucilla shall conduct you, if you are kind enough to let me see you: it shall be the last trouble you shall meet with from

The lost Calista." (I.283-295)

Reading the closing, Horatio exclaims: "The lost indeed!

For thou art gone as far / As there can be perdition. Fire and sulphur, / Hell is the sole avenger of such crimes"

(I.296-299). In reality, Calista feels lost, not because she has "lost" her maidenhead, but because she is being cast into a relationship against her better judgment. In her letter she even admits that if her maidenhead were restored, she would again yield it to Lothario.

She repeats the word "lost" in the opening lines of Act II, revealing that her primary concern is her rejection of her moral code: "For, O, I've gone around through all my thoughts, / But all are indignation, love, or shame, / And my dear peace of mind is lost forever" (II.i.6-9).

Indignation, love, and shame are certainly three irreconcilables which demonstrate her mental torment: indignation at the thought of marrying Altamont, love for Lothario, and shame for being too weak to disobey her



father. Her shame does not result from her sexual encounter with Lothario. Lucilla counsels Calista to accept a role of passive obedience by devoting herself to Altamont, but Calista says, "Away--I think not of him" (II.i.18); she has been "by love undone" (II.i.28). Lucilla then urges her not to see Lothario, but Calista cannot live with this dilemma any longer. Accepting the role of passive obedience to her father will not work for Calista: "Perhaps it is the crisis of my fate, / And this one interview shall end my cares" (II.i.49-50). For Calista, the crisis will mean either that she will die--"My lab'ring heart, that swells with indignation / . . . shall rest with its cell, / And never beat again" (II.i.51-54)--or that she will be reunited with Lothario:

I swear I could not see the dear betrayer  
Kneel at my feet and sigh to be forgiven,  
But my relenting heart would pardon all,  
And quite forget, 'twas he that had undone  
me. (II.i.65-68).

Unlike the critics whom I will discuss below, Calista believes that Lothario is the character who needs to be pardoned, not she; Lothario's sin is not that he seduced Calista, but that he refuses to elope with her.

The sins of Calista's father and her lover then evoke two familiar refrains which accompany the tragedy of the Deianeiran heroine. Lucilla, in words reminiscent of Aspatia's to her maids (see 78), delivers the by-now

familiar Deianeiran speech directed against men, a speech normally reserved for the heroine:

Ye sacred powers, whose gracious providence  
Is watchful for our good, guard me from men,  
From their deceitful tongues, their vows and  
flatteries;  
Still let me pass neglected by their eyes,  
Let my bloom wither and my form decay,  
That none may think it worth his while to ruin me,  
And fatal love may never be my bane. (II.i.69-75)

And Calista, now engaging in the by-now familiar Deianeiran period of emotionally charged self-scrutiny, apostrophizes herself:

Calista, now be wary,  
And guard thy soul's accesses with dissembling;  
Nor let this hostile husband's eyes explore  
The warring passions and tumultuous thoughts  
That rage within thee and deform thy  
reason. (II.i.76-80)

Such dissembling will be impossible for Calista. Altamont enters, attempting to assuage her doubts, but with deep insight that recalls Isabella's warning to Villeroy (see 149), she says:

I tell thee, Altamont,  
Such hearts as ours were never paired above;  
Ill suited to each other; joined, not matched;  
Some sullen influence, a foe to both,  
Has wrought this fatal marriage to undo  
us. (II.i.98-102)

Calista fulfills her oath of marriage but is unable to mask her "soul's accesses." When Sciolto chastises his

daughter for her melancholy, she asks if she has not  
"Yielded the native freedom of her will / To an imperious  
husband's lordly rule / To gratify a father's stern  
command?" (III.i.13-15) He, however, refuses to be moved by  
her nature and simply states: "Today I have made a noble  
youth thy husband; / Consider well his worth, reward his  
love, / Be willing to be happy, and thou art so"  
(III.i.36-38). After her father exits, Calista delivers her  
pivotal soliloquy, acknowledging the sins that continue to  
be committed against her and revealing that she is ready to  
reject her passive role:

How hard is the condition of our sex,  
Through ev'ry state of life the slaves of man!  
In all the dear, delightful days of youth  
A rigid father dictates to our wills,  
And deals out pleasure with a scanty hand;  
To his, the tyrant husband's reign succeeds;  
Proud with opinion of superior reason,  
He holds domestic business and devotion  
All we are capable to know, and shuts us,  
Like cloistered idiots, from the world's acquaintance  
And all the joys of freedom; wherefore are we  
Born with high souls but to assert ourselves,  
Shake off this vile obedience they exact,  
And claim an equal empire o'er the world? (III.39-52)

When Horatio comes to Calista, directly after the above  
speech, she assumes the role of an active heroine attempting  
to gain control over her environment. Horatio addresses her  
by referring to himself as "Calista's friend" (III.66), but  
she replies: "You are my husband's friend, the friend of  
Altamont" (III.67). Horatio, surely an enemy to all

feminists,<sup>3</sup> argues that since she and Altamont are married, Calista is logically his friend also--i.e., she is defined now as a wife. But Calista metaphorically counters:

"Force, and the wills of our imperious rulers / May bind two bodies in one wretched chain; / But minds will still look back to their own choice" (III.75-77). After an intense exchange between the two, which ends with her tearing of the letter, we see that Calista has now assumed control of her own life:

Henceforth, thou officious fool,  
Meddle no more, nor dare ev'n on thy life  
To breathe an accent that may touch my virtue;  
I am myself the guardian of my honor,  
And wo' not bear so insolent a monitor. (III.176-180)

Her mettle is tested when Altamont enters and places his friendship with Horatio above the marriage bond; she then assumes control of her own body: "No force shall drag me to thy hated bed; / Nor can my cruel father's pow'r do more / Than shut me in a cloister" (III.213-215). Her affective power has also increased to the point that she assumes control over the life of her husband as well, as the scene closes with the severing of the bonds of friendship when Horatio and Altamont fight after Horatio accuses Calista of sleeping with Lothario.

Thus, Calista has become Altamont's lawful wife; however, by still maintaining her emotional marriage to Lothario, she garners the strength to assume physical

control over her lawful marriage, which she refuses to consummate. Altamont's dilemma is similar to that of Villeroy in The Fatal Marriage, a male protagonist who found himself married to a melancholy woman in black.

Altamont exclaims:

O, last night!  
What has ungrateful beauty paid me back  
For all that mass of friendship which I squandered?  
Coldness, aversion, tears and sullen sorrow  
Dashed all my bliss, and damped my bridal  
bed. (IV.8-12)

Thus, Calista remains true to her "marriage" to Lothario, as we see another heroine who has her soul divorced from her body by outside forces.

She meets with Lothario the morning after the wedding but refuses to be moved by his offer to "melt the present hour in bliss" (IV.26), because she now believes herself to be guilty of moral bigamy. Before the marriage she had written in her letter that she would most likely allow herself to be "undone" by Lothario if the opportunity arose, and she had remarked to Lucilla that "her relenting heart would pardon all" if she met with him again. But like Penthea, who engaged in a similar meeting with Orgilus after her marriage to Bassanes (see 102-104), Calista is no longer a figure of passivity; she now possesses the strength to maintain control over her body. Recognizing her new power,

the unrelenting Lothario resorts to attacking her moral virtue. After she accuses him of being false, he counters:

Hear this, ye pow'rs, mark how the fair deceiver  
Sadly complains of violated truth;  
She calls me false, ev'n she, the faithless she,  
Whom day and night, whom heav'n and earth have heard  
Sighing to vow, and tenderly protest  
Ten thousand times, she would be only mine;  
And yet, behold, she has giv'n herself away,  
Fled from my arms, and wedded to another,  
Ev'n to the man whom most I hate on earth-- (IV.51-59)

She turns on him by defending her moral values and her innate goodness: "Hadst thou been just, not all Sciolto's pow'r, / Not all the vows and pray'rs of sighing Altamont / Could have prevailed, or won me to forsake thee" (IV.68-70). Again, Calista states that Lothario's injustice is his refusal to marry her, not his robbing of her virginity.

Overhearing their conversation, Altamont enters and kills Lothario. And when she attempts to run herself on his sword, Altamont prevents her from committing suicide. Her words to him at this point reveal her rage, not her guilt or shame for having been discovered. She must die because if she lives she knows that she will be forced to repent for a sin that her moral values declare she has not committed:

"Think'st thou I mean to live, to be forgiven?" (IV.124)

Sciolto, enraged by what he believes is a crime against his patriarchal authority, enters and tries to kill his daughter in an attempt to "wipe dishonor from my name" (IV.151).

Altamont stops him, but Calista begs her father to act. Her

following words to her father, which should be delivered with stirring sarcasm, reveal her rage, not her shame:

No, Altamont! My heart, that scorned thy love,  
Shall never be indebted to thy pity;  
Thus torn, defaced, and wretched as I seem,  
Still I have something of Sciolto's virtue.  
Yes, yes, my father, I applaud thy justice;  
Strike home, and I will bless thee for the blow;  
Be merciful, and free me from my pain;  
'Tis sharp, 'tis terrible, and I could curse  
The cheerful day, men, earth, and heav'n, and thee,  
Ev'n thee, thou venerable good old man,  
For being author of a wretch like me. (IV.158-168)

Calista is outraged because of the treatment she has received at the hands of her father, Altamont, Horatio, and Lothario. Reading the above speech as pure melodrama, especially lines 165-168, would certainly make this speech little more than laughable, but reading these final lines with sarcasm assigns Calista power and complexity.

Sciolto relents in his desire for immediate vengeance, but his new course further abuses patriarchal authority: he decides that her punishment will be to live and suffer. She realizes that this new sentence will be worse than instant death: "Then am I doomed to live and bear your triumph?" (IV.189); she also asks, "Is this, is this the mercy of a father? / I only beg to die, and he denies me" (IV.195-196). Then, like John Frankford, Sciolto increases the severity of the sentence: "Hence from my sight; thy father cannot bear thee; / Fly with thy infamy to some dark cell" (IV.197-198); he continues, "There howl out the remainder of thy life, /

And wish thy name may be no more remembered" (IV.203-204).

And, like Anne Frankford, she imposes her own conditions on the sentence:

Yes, I will fly to some such dismal place,  
And be more cursed than you can wish I were;  
This fatal form that drew on my undoing,  
Fasting and tears and hardships shall destroy;  
Nor light nor food nor comfort will I know,  
Nor aught that may continue hated life.  
Then when you see me meager, wan, and changed,  
Stretched at my length, and dying in my cave,  
On that cold earth I mean shall be my grave,  
Perhaps you may relent and, sighing, say,  
At length her tears have washed her stains away,  
At length 'tis time her punishment should cease;  
Die, thou poor suff'ring wretch, and be at  
peace. (IV.205-217)

Altamont, who before now has been only concerned with his own reputation and life, is moved by a new admiration for Calista. He accuses Sciolto of being too harsh on his daughter: "I tremble at the vengeance which you meditate / On the poor, faithless, lovely, dear Calista" (IV.226-227). Sciolto, however, is still only concerned with the honor of his family name: "Yet by the ruin she has brought upon us, / The common infamy that brands us both, / She sha' not 'scape" (IV.234-236).

The psychic torment that Sciolto has heaped on his daughter is fully realized in the opening of the final act, where we see Calista engaging in an act of "formal meditation" (Wyman). Dressed in black, disheveled in appearance, surrounded by the bones of the dead, and seated



in close proximity to Lothario's body, Calista prepares for the final movement of her tragedy. Samuel Johnson remarked that "The fifth act is not equal to the former: the events of the drama are exhausted, and little remains but to talk of what is past" (II.68). However, the importance of the final act is well-stated by Rose A. Zimbardo:

For the first four acts of the play our feelings for Calista have been mixed. She has been the central focus of our attention but in very oblique ways; that is, our attention has been upon Calista, but our view of her has consistently been filtered through the emotions we share with other characters. In act 5 we feel only with Calista. . . . We can feel Calista's pain purely because it is exclusively pain; we want her death, as she does, as a release. (220-221)

She must be released from this life because even her attempts to control it have met with disaster. The Genoan political scene has deteriorated into anarchy; and as Sciolto enters he blames the current problems on Calista, who, to Sciolto, looks "Like Helen in the night when Troy was sacked, / Spectatress of the mischief which she made" (V.53-54). Sciolto fails to realize that he could have prevented the "noise and anarchy" in the streets, which "drown the voice of law" (V.51). The opposing factions are the same as those who fought in the days of Horatio's and Lothario's fathers. Sciolto had the opportunity to unite the factions by allowing Lothario to marry his daughter, but he refused. When they begin speaking, their conversation echoes that of Priuli and Belvidera (see

131-132), an exchange which reunited the broken family. First, Sciolto says, "Thou wert once / My daughter" (I.59-60); but he is finally moved to acknowledge, "Thou art my daughter still" (V.124). Thus, Calista is successful in correcting the domestic sphere encompassing her and Sciolto, but because her actions have caused the death of Lothario, she must die: "That I must die, it is my only comfort" (V.132). She requires comfort because her act in marrying Altamont after having been with Lothario is too great a burden for the Deianeiran heroine: "Nothing but blood can make the expiation, / And cleanse the soul from inbred, deep pollution" (V.157-158).

After Sciolto leaves, Altamont then enters, forgiving her and claiming that "happiness is still within our reach" (V.193), but Calista knows that there is no chance for domestic peace. She advises him, in nearly the exact words that Penthea advised Orgilus (see 104), that he should begin a new domestic life:

Live for some maid that shall deserve thy goodness,  
Some kind, unpracticed heart that never yet  
Has listened to the false ones of thy sex,  
Nor known the arts of ours; she shall reward thee,  
Meet thee with virtues equal to thy own,  
Charm thee with sweetness, beauty, and with truth,  
Be blest in thee alone, and thou in her. (V.208-214)

Calista's decision to die also affects her father, who "privately went forth, / Attended but by few, and those unbidden" (V.220-221), and was mortally wounded. Horatio

relates that his actions, however, were suicidal: "his frantic valor had provoked / The death he seemed to wish for from their swords" (V.226-227). Any remorse that Calista feels before her death is directed toward her father. Like the other heroines in this study, she will seek no vengeance on an immediate member of her family, even if this member is responsible for her ruin. Because her actions, though precipitated by her father, have caused his death, she believes that her real crime is "This parricide" (V.128); and, before she stabs herself, she repeats her crime: "This parricide shall be thy plague no more; / Thus, thus I set thee free" (V.234-235).

With a few exceptions, critics have rarely portrayed Calista in such an admirable light. One reason is that the drama of Nicholas Rowe has suffered a fate similar to that of Thomas Southerne and other Restoration tragedians. Instead of addressing the intrinsic merit of his seven tragedies, many critics, asserting that Rowe's drama simply catered to public taste, attend to his role in literary history. For example, Malcolm Goldstein writes: "But Rowe, despite his lack of high seriousness of purpose, has a claim to our attention still, if only by virtue of his great past fame" ("Pathos" 185). Others discuss Rowe's generic innovations in a time when the drama was "in transition." Kearful argues that Rowe's two most successful plays, The Fair Penitent and Jane Shore,

are the first attempts to fuse the naturalism of domestic tragedy and the patheticism of 'sentimental' tragedy with a new didacticism which is part of the Augustan temper. (360).

In a similar comment, Malcolm Elwin concludes that in The Fair Penitent "Rowe renounced the heroic model and resorted to an entirely domestic and sentimental setting" (153). In her study of generic form, Laura Brown likewise argues that Rowe's work fills "the evaluative vacuum left by Otway's rejection of aristocratic standards" and the rise of "bourgeois moral drama" (Dramatic 150). And Robert Gayle Noyes writes that "Rowe is the link between Otway and George Lillo" (92). On the other hand, Bonamy Dobrée does not see Rowe as an immediate link between Otway and Lillo. Dobrée--arguing that, unlike Rowe, Otway displays strong affinities with Ford--sees a kinship between Rowe's tragedies and the anonymous domestic tragedies, The Yorkshire Tragedy and Arden of Faversham: "but those strange plays should, for safety's sake be left out of any genealogy, whereas a claim might be made for Heywood's A Woman Killed with Kindness" (163).

Thus, even those who attempt to assign Rowe his rightful place in the grand genealogy of tragedians are in disagreement. In any case, these critics all imply that whatever place Rowe occupies in this history, the aesthetic progress of dramatic tragedy during the late seventeenth century is not a phenomenon to be admired. In his article

comparing The Fair Penitent with Rowe's source, Massinger and Field's The Fatal Dowry, Donald B. Clark argues: "For the twentieth-century critic the interest of The Fair Penitent lies in Rowe's shrewd discernment of the taste of the early eighteenth-century audience" (239). Clark concludes that, to say the least, Rowe's adaptation is unsuccessful, and that the early eighteenth-century audience must have indeed possessed poor taste, for "the veneer of impeccable moral sentiment is evidence of the rise of a bourgeois morality which will shackle tragedy for more than a century to follow" (252).

In addition to possessing a twentieth-century distaste for "moral sentiment," critics are hesitant to applaud the intrinsic merits of The Fair Penitent because they believe that the title is a misnomer. They simply assume that, because of the title, the tragedy is caused by Calista. Thus, these critics ask: Is Calista a "fair penitent"? J. M. Armistead explains that "The prevailing view, in the eighteenth century and now, was concisely stated by Samuel Johnson in his 'Life of Rowe'" ("Calista" 173). Dr. Johnson's statement reads:

It has been observed that the title of the play does not sufficiently correspond with the behaviour of Calista, who at last shews no evident signs of repentance, but may be reasonably suspected of feeling pain from detection rather than from guilt, and expresses more shame than sorrow, and more rage than shame. (II.68)

Johnson, in his comment, accepts the premise that Calista has committed a sin--she has allowed herself to be seduced by Lothario--a moral outrage that necessitates repentance. Critics since Johnson who agree that Calista "shows no evident signs of repentance" include Donald B. Clark:

The title of the play, The Fair Penitent, is a misnomer. Calista evidences sorrow, but at no time does that sorrow reach a penitence which, in turn, should effect a spiritual regeneration or purification. To the end she remains a determined, hardened woman who has played a dangerous game with love and lost. (248)

Kearful concludes that "Calista never makes of herself an example to the audience . . . nor does she ever explicitly confess her guilt" (360). Jean H. Hagstrum acknowledges that "the overt values of the play center in Christian repentance and mercy," but "Samuel Johnson was right in sensing its moral ambiguity" (117n41).<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, a few critics argue that Calista does repent. J. Douglas Canfield uncovers typological imagery in the play to suggest that "the story of the Fall . . . is constantly echoed to provide a framework for the actions of the play" (113): for example, the Garden/Sciolto's garden, Creator/Sciolto, Adam/Altamont, Eve/Calista, Satan/Lothario, Gabriel/Horatio. Lindley A. Wyman points out the Gothic atmosphere of Calista's "formal meditation" at the beginning of Act V and asserts that her soul-searching "is apparently a development of the

codification of the methods of the Catholic mystics"

(413):

By calling up the ancient tradition of the formal death-meditation for the climactic scene in his play, Rowe attempts to show the depth of contrition which his heroine feels. (416)

And, in more secular terms, Brown claims that "[Calista's] repentant death provides the didactic lesson of the tragedy" (Dramatic 150), as stated in Horatio's final speech: "The sorrows that attend unlawful love" (V.289).

The unspoken subtext in the comments of those who deny Calista's repentance, then, is that Calista's lack of remorse indicates that she does not deserve admiration. In other words, Rowe unsuccessfully presents a "fair penitent." Even those who accept that Rowe successfully presents a "fair penitent" still deny Calista admiration. For this second group of critics, Calista functions as a negative example, a warning delivered by Horatio in his final couplet and directed to the ladies in the audience: "If you would have the nuptial union last, / Let virtue be the bond that tied it fast" (V.292-293). Thus, both schools of thought agree that Calista sins. I argue, however, that although she errs in judgment, which is typical of tragic protagonists, Calista is not a sinner, but the one sinned against. Dr. Johnson is correct that Calista exhibits a combination of guilt, shame, sorrow, and rage in the final

act of the tragedy. But whereas Johnson believes that she feels "pain from detection rather than from guilt," I argue that these feelings are much more complex. On the one hand, Calista's shame, sorrow, and guilt spring from two sources: first, she mistakenly believes that she can restore domestic stability to her environment by marrying Altamont, a course which violates her moral values; second, she believes that her actions cause the death of her father. On the other hand, Calista is outraged because the tragic sequence of events has been perpetrated by outside forces; she is outraged because of the treatment she has suffered at the hands of an abusive patriarchal system, a system represented by Sciolto, Altamont, Horatio, and Lothario. She is not ridden by guilt for her "pre-marital adultery," nor is she simply a "hardened woman who has played a dangerous game with love and lost."

Richard H. Dammers argues that "For [Rowe], female morality is not a matter of physical chastity"; Rowe is aware "of a more complex ethical ideal for women encompassing the whole range of human experience" ("Characterization" 35). Calista's "female morality," I believe, can be explained by viewing her in the Deianeiran tradition, a model that explains her behavior and releases the audience from any condemnation it should feel in suspecting that Calista "shows no evident signs of repentance" or any lack of admiration it should feel for



seeing Calista as a fallen woman. The play's title is not a "misnomer": by the end she is sad, humble, and regretful for her misdeeds; but she is also admirable for trying to correct the abusive patriarchal system, a course that in tragedy results in death for the heroine. Armistead agrees with the above conclusion:

[T]o some extent Dr. Johnson saw true: while penitence and forgiveness may calm, they cannot cure Calista's "rage," for it springs only secondarily from a sense of the specific sins of individuals, including herself. Its primary source is her tragic recognition, persistent to the play's end, that the dominant institutions and social rituals, albeit supervised by pious men and designed to secure society from mankind's imperfections, cannot fulfill her own most profound and 'soulful' needs. . . . [H]er penitence, though real, does not involve a capitulation to the moral values embodied in her father. ("Calista" 174)

Jacqueline Pearson arrives at a similar conclusion:

In The Fair Penitent Calista insists that she is an individual with her own moral code: "I am myself guardian of my honor" [III.79]. She is finally, however, allowed to demonstrate this proud boast only by suicide. . . . Everybody, herself included, blames Calista rather than the social order for its tragic conclusion. . . . [A]ccording to the play, female assertiveness is inevitably destructive and doomed. Calista can only gain "Forgiveness" from God and her father by self-denial and suicide. (60-61)

No more will Calista be plagued by her self-accusations, and no more will she be plagued by an abusive patriarchal system.

Does she, then, deserve the admiration worthy of a Deianeiran heroine? If we accept Hume's value judgment that

The Fair Penitent "is a good pathetic melodrama"--in which "Rowe pushes pathos hard, but strictly within the limits of poetic justice for Calista, who is guilty and therefore must die" (Development 219)--then Calista does not deserve this admiration. But Dammers points out that "One much neglected aspect of Rowe's domestic tragedies is the expression of the unfair and unequal treatment women suffer in a repressive society" ("Experience" 28). Aikens argues that "Her repentance alone would not provide a satisfactory conclusion to the play since she is a victim of more than her own shortcomings" (270):

The cause of Calista's difficulty is society's unnatural insistence on woman's subordination to men, rather than her own moral failure. Her struggle to control her powerful passions and "high soul" while suffering under such "vile obedience" demonstrates her very nobility to the audience. (268)

The intrinsic merit of The Fair Penitent can only be discovered by viewing Calista as an admirable heroine. Katherine M. Rogers understands why critics such as Dr. Johnson were reluctant to grant Calista heroic status: "Calista's feminist argument is undercut by the unchastity that disgraced her in eighteenth-century eyes, but she remains a figure to command respect as well as sympathy" (Feminism 122). As critics, we should rethink inherited value judgments and at least begin to recognize the many female protagonists throughout the history of drama who

command our respect: Deianeira, Anne Frankford, Aspatia,  
Pentheia, Belvidera, Isabella, and Calista.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

1 Janet E. Aikins points out that because the play begins with the prospect of a happy marriage our expectations are reversed: "Tension between the anticipated joy and the woe that replaces it gives the play its power so that the emotional experience is itself the action that causes the audience to progress through the work" (264). A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding A Woman Killed with Kindness and The Maid's Tragedy, two other plays in this study which begin with anticipated happy marriages.

2 Rowe's characterization of Lothario is often seen as an artistic flaw. Samuel Johnson believed that "Lothario, with gaiety which cannot be hated, and bravery which cannot be despised, retains too much of the spectator's kindness" (II.67). Donald B. Clark agrees that "His brilliancy, his fine appearance, his high spirit . . . are too much emphasized . . . an impression antagonistic to the moral which Rowe intended his play to illustrate" (242). Robert D. Hume is mystified: "why the fair Calista ever yielded to the gay Lothario one cannot see" (Development 219). However, these problems dissolve if we heed Frank J. Kearful's comment: "Clearly, Rowe is endeavoring to create something more than a melodrama of unsuspecting virtue assailed by diabolical vice" (355). In order to accept Calista as a complex tragic heroine, we must also accept her seducer as complex. Clark asserts that Lothario "had no reason for ruining Altamont" and "never loved the girl whom he has seduced" (244), but neither of these assertions is validated by the text. Whatever conclusion we draw concerning his character, Lothario still remains one of the forces of a corrupt patriarchal system.

3 Some critics are quick to applaud Horatio's moralizing throughout the play and claim that Horatio and Lavinia "function as examples of and spokesmen for marital virtue" (Kearful 357-358). Thus, they counterpoint the relationship between Calista and Lothario. However, this comparison does not hold up to scrutiny. On Calista and Lavinia, Aikins writes: "[Calista] does not suffer from a love of variety, as Horatio suggests and the critics have insisted; she is tormented by the futility of her single, driving passion for Lothario . . . yet in her steadfast love she could not more closely resemble Lavinia than she already

does" (269). On Lothario and Horatio, Annibel Jenkins writes: "Lothario may be a villain, but Horatio is a self-righteous coxcomb . . . . [Lothario's] bold sophistication, his independent arrogance, and his satanic charm make him as attractive as Horatio is unattractive. Horatio's strictly moral preachments make him pompous" (59). Horatio, like Lothario, is part of the corrupt patriarchal system that abuses Calista. For examples of Horatio's moralizing see I.376-391, 402-407; II.ii.169-177; V.288-293.

<sup>4</sup> In his psychological reading, Hagstrum suggests that Calista, as a "spiritual adulteress," sees herself as a "woman abandoned, even though married and in the midst of society"; "the morbid attraction of death" forms the "compelling, substructural movement of the play" (117-121). Hagstrum admits that his conclusions are speculative--"It is difficult to say whether the playwright was aware of what I have called the deep structure and the unconscious values of the play"; however, his suggestion is not without merit. I agree that Calista is determined to die because she follows a unique moral code, outside of the patriarchal mainstream, but I fail to see Calista as a Dido-figure, as does Hagstrum. Similar psychological claims are made regarding Aspatia's "morbid death-wish" in The Maid's Tragedy. For an interesting reading of Richardson's Clarissa, in this regard, see R. D. Stock (esp. 278-282).

## CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters I have used Eugene M. Waith's classic study, The Herculean Hero, as my model in attempting to establish a new literary/dramatic type: the Deianeiran heroine. As I have demonstrated, the chief characteristic of this heroine is a fierce devotion to love, family, and duty. This devotion is so fierce, in fact, that when faced with a conflict between love and duty she experiences an initial state of mental confusion; but after a period of intense self-scrutiny she chooses the higher good--love and family--over duty to a corrupt authority, even though her choice will ultimately bring her death. Her devotion to her ideals and her spiritual growth, as she recognizes the consequences of her determination to be true to those ideals, inspires our admiration and qualifies her for heroic status.

I have also shown that the structure of each play is remarkably similar, although the moral conflict experienced by the heroine appears in multiple configurations. She may be in love with a husband, a betrothed, or a seducer. The intruder in her relationship may be a woman--a concubine or wife of her betrothed--or it may be a man--a seducer or a husband. The character responsible for introducing this intruder, however, is always a man, but he may take many

forms: a husband, a king, a brother, a brother-in-law, or a father. Thus, the initial act that causes the tragedy in each play results from some form of patriarchal abuse: a concubine is brought into the home (Trachiniae); a potential seducer is brought into the home (A Woman Killed with Kindness); nuptials are revoked, resulting in a forced marriage for either the heroine (The Broken Heart, The Fair Penitent) or her betrothed (The Maid's Tragedy); a father or father-in-law refuses to recognize a marriage (Venice Preserved, The Fatal Marriage). Additionally, this patriarchal abuse is compounded when a male figure becomes consumed with a false sense of divinity (Heracles, John Frankford, Count Baldwin) or egoism (Amintor) or a desire for revenge (Orgilus, Jaffeir, Altamont) and fails to recognize his violation of the heroine's value system. The heroine's initial attempt to restore stability to her domestic environment is unsuccessful: she may resort to magic (Deianeira), seek forgiveness (Anne Frankford), sanction her betrothed's marriage to another woman (Aspatia), marry another man (Pentheia, Isabella, Calista), or attempt to educate her beloved (Belvidera). Finally, her death leads to a restoration of order when her son (Hyllus), husband (John Frankford, Jaffeir, Altamont), betrothed (Orgilus, Amintor), brother (Ithocles), father (Priuli, Sciolto), or father-in-law (Count Baldwin) recognizes his

error; tragically, however, this recognition is too late to save the heroine.

I have further attempted to show that critical recognition of the Deianeiran heroine in each of these dramas allows the plays to be read as classic tragedies in which admiration for this heroine purges the emotions, in the manner prescribed by Corneille and Sidney. Such a reading removes many of the "problems" previous critics have found in the plays and shows them to be both powerful and effective dramas. Because none of these plays contains a name in the title, unlike most plays generally recognized as tragedies, critics universally wrestle with the question of who deserves tragic focus. The Deianeiran model reveals the central tragic figure in each: Deianeira, not Heracles; Anne Frankford, not John Frankford; Aspatia, not Amintor or Evadne; Penthea, not Calantha or Orgilus or Ithocles; Belvidera, not Jaffeir; Isabella, not Biron or Bassanes or Count Baldwin; Calista, not Altamont. The Deianeiran model is also useful in explaining the actions of the female protagonists that critics find troublesome: Deianeira's use of the philtre, Anne Frankford's yielding, Aspatia's disguise, Penthea's forgiveness of Ithocles, Belvidera's motives, Isabella's marriage to Bassanes, Calista's penitence. And, above all, the Deianeiran model allows us to view the heroines as dynamic figures, not simply as passive victims.



Again using Waith as a model, I have studied seven plays from different eras to provide a synchronic view of the Deianeiran heroine. I have used this approach because it is appropriate in a search for literary/dramatic types and because it illuminates the pitfalls of approaches which rely on "false generics" and narrow historical interpretations. Thus, the plays are not failed tragedies, Christian homilies, or dramatized conduct books. Neither are they simply sentimental, pathetic, affective, domestic, communal, or didactic tragedies; nor are they simply transitional works or hybrids, unless we accept that all literary texts are in some ways transitional.

In a wider sense I have also incorporated contemporary critical theory in this study to "re-view" three Renaissance and three Restoration plays. First, because I find much of the traditional criticism of these plays to be biased and demeaning, I have drawn on feminist approaches to literature in an attempt to uncover meaning that has been repressed by phallogentrism. Second, in a further attempt to uncover meaning, I have drawn on the new historical approach, which views literary history as discontinuous, in order to demonstrate that literary types are not confined to a single historical era. Third, I have engaged in the "canon-wars" by pointing out the need to question inherited value judgments, most particularly the view that relegates some of these plays to the status of historical curiosities.

Fourth, despite my use of current critical approaches I have maintained that there is no greater error in critical studies than in failing to address a literary text intrinsically; intertextuality aside, "close reading" or recognizing that literary works are fundamentally self-contained linguistic systems is necessary in the critical dialogue concerning tragedy.

Finally, I intend that my reexamination of this small group of tragedies will not only encourage new critical discussion of these plays but also encourage reexamination of the large body of drama from these periods which are all but lost to modern readers, a phenomenon ascribable to the disdain of past critics and anthologists. And I offer this study of the Deianeiran heroine as one model for this process.

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