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HOPKINS, Lisa

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Knowing their loves: knowledge, ignorance, and blindness in

'Tis Pity She's a Whore

Ever since Brian Morris remarked in his introduction to the New Mermaids edition of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* that 'the word "blood"...occurs more than thirty times in the course of the play',¹ critical attention has been paid to Ford's complex uses of the term.² In terms of sheer frequency, however, there is another word which figures far more prominently than 'blood' in the play, yet which has received much less sustained examination, and that is the verb 'know' and its related forms.³ 'Know' itself occurs seventy-six times, 'knowledge' three, 'know't' six, 'known' four, 'knows' three, 'knew' five, and 'know'st' four, giving a total of a hundred and two instances. Such frequency of use should certainly alert us to the fact that knowledge, and indeed epistemology itself, as well as their literal and metaphorical corollaries blindness and ignorance, form an important part of the play's thematic structure. Moreover, 'knowing' words are, as one might expect, not distributed uniformly through the text; they cluster around particular issues, and, very strikingly, demarcate the speech- and thought-patterns of particular characters, most especially Vasques and the Friar. To use John S. Wilks's term for *Doctor Faustus* and *The Atheist's Tragedy*, plays with which *'Tis Pity* shares interests in incest and in atheism, this is 'a tragedy of knowledge',⁴ whose incestuous love-story proves a site for the exploration of some of the key discourses of Renaissance knowledges and their demarcations. As Bruce Boehrer argues, 'Ford drew the intellectual conflict of *'Tis Pity* from the very issues

that were beginning to distinguish modern European society from its medieval origins'.⁵

i) Knowing love

One repeated feature of Ford's use of 'knowing' words is, as so often in Renaissance drama, a sustained pun on the idea of 'carnal knowledge'. The play very obviously derives much of its source material from a reworking of *Romeo and Juliet*,⁶ but there is a striking difference in the presentation of the two main characters and those who surround them: instead of a nurse, a figure who serves overtly to link Juliet with the childhood comforts she leaves behind during the course of her story, Annabella is attended by a 'tut'ress'. The female servant whose role is explicitly referred to as an educational one is surely a rare phenomenon in Renaissance drama - I can think of no other example - and serves further to underline the idea of the importance and imparting of knowledge. Ironically, however, this particular 'tut'ress', ominously named Putana, proves disconcertingly like Juliet's nurse in her farmyard morality: what she teaches Annabella is nothing more than a radically debased view of human sexuality. Her eventual punishment for this is a fitting one: like Oedipus and like Gloucester, she pays the price for her sexual sin by forfeiting her eyes. 'Knowing' what one should not is rewarded by a blindness which, in Putana's case, proves to be a literal, not a redemptive one - no 'cloud of unknowing' but a state of terrifying vulnerability and disempowerment in which she can be led unresisting to her death.

The specifically sexual nature of her knowledge is amply illustrated. In her summing up of Annabella's suitors, she describes Soranzo as 'liberal, that I know; loving, that you know' (I.ii.91-2), which directly links knowledge both with felt experience and, explicitly, with love. Moreover, unlike Juliet's nurse, Putana is never said to have had a husband and child of her own, yet she can demand indignantly of Giovanni, 'How do I know't? Am I at these years ignorant what the meanings of qualms and water-pangs be?' (III.iii.10-11).⁷ And she is finally indicted by her own half-boast to Vasques, 'I know a little, Vasques' (IV.iii.195), in a context charged with knowing sexuality not only by the explicit fact that it is the father of Annabella's child who is under discussion but by the possibility of an all / awl pun in Vasques', 'Well, I could wish she would in plain terms tell all' (IV.iii.188-9).

Other characters also make the link between loving and knowing. Giovanni does so repeatedly. Of his eight uses of 'know', one of 'knew', four of 'know't' and two of 'know'st' (giving an overall total of fifteen), several hover around the love / knowledge pun. 'Tis not, I know, / My lust, but 'tis my fate that leads me on', he says at I.ii.153-4. The statement is in various ways a highly dubious one. Giovanni is always anxious to allocate responsibility for his own actions to fate; here his rationale seems especially suspect, since our awareness of the habitual secondary meaning of the word 'know' serves merely to reinforce the suggestion of lust. Later, when Annabella, showing him the jewel given her by Donado and playfully terming its donor 'a lusty youth' (II.vi.127), asks him if he is jealous, he replies:

That you shall know anon, at better leisure.

Welcome, sweet night! The evening crowns the day.

(II.vi.131-2)

The evening crowns the day, presumably, because it brings with it the promise of sexual activity, which is what will make the night sweet; what Annabella will know, then, is carnal knowledge.

The same idea recurs when Giovanni is reproaching her for her altered attitude in V,

v:

What, changed so soon? Hath your new sprightly lord

Found out a trick in night-games more than we

Could know in our simplicity?

(V.v.1-3)

It even colours his passionate defence of their actions:

If ever after-times should hear

Of our fast-knit affections, though perhaps

The laws of conscience and of civil use

May justly blame us, yet when they but know

Our loves, that love will wipe away that rigour

Which would in other incests be abhorred.

(V.v.68-73)

But others can of course precisely not 'know' the love of Giovanni and Annabella in the sense in which he customarily employs the word; such knowledge can only be directly experiential, not vicarious. The terms on which Giovanni has previously predicated the acquisition of knowledge must make it for ever incommunicable.

A literal inability to communicate marks his penultimate use of the word
'know':

Yes, father; and that times to come may know
How as my fate I honoured my revenge,
List, father, to your ears I will yield up
How much I have deserved to be your son.

(V.vi.36-9)

What does this mean? The abstract nouns 'fate' and 'revenge' serve, as so often in Ford,⁸ to dissipate the sense of direct and unambiguous meaning, nor is the tone clear: what effect does Giovanni intend to produce upon his father by ascribing his horrific actions to 'how much I have deserved to be your son'? It is at least arguable that Giovanni is in fact mad here - functioning under the clearly mistaken belief that it is possible to identify a person by their heart, and using words and phrases in a similarly idiosyncratic and ideolectal manner.⁹ His final use of the word 'know' certainly reveals an odd kind of logic:

For nine months' space in secret I enjoyed
Sweet Annabella's sheets; nine months I lived
A happy monarch of her heart and her.
Soranzo, thou know'st this; thy paler cheek
Bears the confounding print of thy disgrace,
For her too fruitful womb too soon bewrayed
The happy passage of our stol'n delights,
And made her mother to a child unborn.

(V.vi.44-51)

Soranzo's knowledge here is, once again, envisaged as having an essentially physical basis. Manifesting itself in the bodily sign of the pale cheek, what he 'knows' seems to be profoundly connected with what is 'betrayed' by Annabella's womb, which Giovanni has himself so recently 'ploughed up' (V.vi.32). His own need to uncover its secrets by direct contact with it raises the whole issue of what Luke Wilson has called 'the problem of knowledge about the inside of the body',¹⁰ and a more rarely dissected female body at that: Jonathan Sawday has observed that '[t]he womb or uterus was an object sought after with an almost ferocious intensity in Renaissance anatomy theatres.'¹¹ This may well be seen as lending a similarly experiential colouring to his use of 'know' here, as it perhaps did to his earlier demand to Putana, 'With child? How dost thou know't?' (III.iii.9); Giovanni in his quest for knowledge will violate not only the traditionally female, private space of the birth chamber,¹² but the secrets of the womb itself, making of himself 'a tragicall midwife'.¹³ His act echoes and ironically inverts our first glimpse of Hippolita, who enters, as Nathaniel Strout points out, 'having forced her way into her lover Soranzo's private room';¹⁴ both stand as desperate efforts to know what is hidden inside, and indeed William Dyer refers to Giovanni's treatment of his sister as 'his nine-month pursuit of interiority.'¹⁵ Both violations of space may, moreover, remind us that Ford had both family and literary links to the history of St Carlo Borromeo,¹⁶ whose invention of the confession box, apparently intended originally only for women, can be argued to have performed an analogous function of serving to demarcate sexual knowledge as an area of investigation.¹⁷

ii) Knowing God

Giovanni presents himself as absolutely confident of his own knowledge, rooted as it is in his physical experiences. An impression of far less certainty is conveyed by the Friar's very different pattern of usage of words denoting knowledge, which indeed brings him very much into line with what John Wilks has called the 'epistemological uncertainty' of Ford's own non-dramatic writing.¹⁸ The Friar is responsible for two of the three uses of the word 'knowledge' in the play (and also, at I.i.75, for an occurrence of its near homonym 'acknowledge'). To him - appropriately given his recent position at Bologna - knowledge appears to be an absolute, unquestionable good; and yet his actual use of the words 'know' and 'knowledge' often works to undercut the very certainties he apparently articulates. His first use of 'knowledge' has him crying:

O Giovanni, hast thou left the schools
Of knowledge to converse with lust and death?

(I.i.57-8)

Here the proximity of 'knowledge' to 'lust' threatens to pull the word in precisely the direction so markedly favoured by Giovanni, tending to merge the two rather than sustaining the opposition ostensibly created between them. His second use of the word destabilises it even further, as he stigmatises Giovanni's reasoning as 'O ignorance in knowledge' (II.v.27). Here knowledge is not an absolute at all, but something that can, with alarming rapidity, be seen to contain its own opposite.¹⁹

Even more striking is the fact that during the entire scene in which the Friar convinces Annabella to marry Soranzo he uses the word 'know' only once, and then in relation not to the heavenly things of which he is presumed to have special knowledge, but, with apparent perversity, in relation to the secular:

Sigh not; I know the baits of sin
Are hard to leave. O, 'tis a death to do't.

(III.vi.39-40)

When it comes to hell and heaven, he claims no knowledge; when it comes to 'the baits of sin' from which he seeks to dissuade her, he does. The Friar is in fact remarkably reluctant to claim knowledge in his own sphere, and Ford, whatever the precise nature of his involvement with the law may have been,²⁰ will certainly have been well aware of the important legal distinction between what is within one's own personal knowledge and what is merely hearsay.²¹ The Friar uses 'know' only three times in the play, 'knowledge' twice, and 'known' once. Moreover, two of these uses are actually within the specific context of denying or refusing knowledge:

I must not stay
To know thy fall; back to Bononia I
With speed will haste, and shun this coming blow.
Parma, farewell; would I had never known thee,
Or aught of thine.

(V.iii.65-9)

This reluctance to know is prefigured in his opening speech:

Dispute no more in this, for know, young man,
These are no school-points; nice philosophy
May tolerate unlikely arguments,

But Heaven admits no jest: wits that presumed
On wit too much, by striving how to prove
There was no God, with foolish grounds of art,
Discovered first the nearest way to hell,
And filled the world with devilish atheism.
Such questions, youth, are fond; for better 'tis
To bless the sun than reason why it shines;
Yet He thou talk'st of is above the sun.
No more; I may not hear it.

(I.i.1-12)

For all the Friar's status as educator, the entire speech is imbued with an aesthetic and indeed an ethic of ignorance; all that can be known is that it is better not to know, and beyond this it is better not to hear, and the whole is reinforced by the condescension of the 'young man' which disables Giovanni's entire perspective by suggesting accumulated (although presumably strictly circumscribed) experience rather than ratiocination as the appropriate basis for knowledge. It is of course ironic that the speech's obvious allusion to Marlowe, most famous of the 'wits who presumed',²² issues the audience with an appeal to their own knowledge, to be used in spotting and applying the reference. To have the Friar by definition deaf to this metatheatrical level on which his words operate underlines his willed blindness; at the same time, however, the choice of the verb 'discovered', with its suggestion of inappropriate revelation, may prompt us towards an application of the Marlowe story which would at least in part endorse the Friar's perspective on it.

A similar desire not to know powers the Friar's admonition to Giovanni in II,v:

Peace. Thou hast told a tale, whose every word
Threatens eternal slaughter to the soul.
I'm sorry I have heard it; would mine ears
Had been one minute deaf, before the hour
That thou cam'st to me.

(II.v.1-5)

Here it is not only Giovanni's actual deeds but his very words which are seen as having the power to defile, and the Friar ends his gesture of recoil by a wish for deafness which provides a clear counterpart to the literal blindness eventually inflicted on his educative counterpart, Putana. It is gloriously ironic that one of the very few occasions on which the Friar does assume knowledge and pronounce with certainty should be such a ludicrous one: he pontificates that 'that marriage seldom's good, / Where the bride-banquet so begins in blood' (IV.i.109-110), asserting a wide experience of bloody bride-banquets which neither he nor very many other people can seriously be expected to possess.

Ironically, Friar Bonaventura's name echoes that of the famous Franciscan author of the *Lignum Vitae*, and thus works to associate him with the pronounced Franciscan interest in epistemology: 'at its origins, the Franciscan movement had what we might now consider a revolutionary character, and revolutions produce changes in knowledge and in thought, notably about the nature of human relations and about the determining conditions of human life'.²³ The possibility of a deliberate allusion here is enhanced by the fact that in Whetstone's *An Heptameron of Civill Discourses* a Monsieur Bergetto reports a tale set '[i]n a little village among the Apennine

mountaines, not far from the place where S. Fraunces lieth intombed' (Whetstone also features a character called Soranso).²⁴ Faustus, transgressing in ways notably similar to the modes of Giovanni's rebellion, had specifically requested that Mephostophilis should appear in the robes of a Franciscan friar; perhaps, if the stage image of Giovanni with Bonaventure may recall that of Faustus and Mephostophilis, the cagey nature of Bonaventure's proselytising may similarly echo Mephostophilis' question-begging, niggardly imparting of information on things celestial. Both, however, stand in sharp contrast to the questioning spirit of Franciscan thought, and both, too, insert into their respective plays a reminder of the anti-materialist commitment of the Franciscans which sharply critiques the worldly values which so many of the characters espouse. Moreover, an allusion to Bonaventure becomes a particularly pointed one in a play about incest, since his model of a harmonious relationship between God and the soul was one which a recent critic has termed 'spiritually incestuous'.²⁵

There is also a striking contrast between the Friar's own reticence about his authority and the evidence for popular belief which we see in the play. When he expounds his vision of hell to Annabella, he prefaces it with the injunction, 'weep faster yet, / Whiles I do read a lecture' (III.vi.5-6). To call it a 'lecture' which he reads deliberately situates it within the realm of human knowledge, something which is underlined by the existence of copious literary antecedents for the picture he paints. Giovanni adopts exactly the same position when he speculates on the after-life: 'The schoolmen teach that all this globe of earth / Shall be consumed to ashes in a minute' (V.v.30-1). Annabella, however, has no such qualms about authority: she replies to

her brother's questions with 'That's most certain' (V.v.35), and 'For certain' (V.v.38). The lack of experiential basis for her claim to knowledge seems sharply underlined when she eventually acknowledges that she has reached its limits:²⁶

GIOVANNI But d'ee think
 That I shall see you there? - You look on me?
 May we kiss one another, prate or laugh,
 Or do as we do here?

ANNABELLA I know not that.
 (V.v.38-41)

Here 'know' seems once again to flirt with its habitual sexual meaning; Annabella disclaims knowledge of kissing or laughing not only in the abstract but, presumably, in the present, because the entire scene seems to be unfolding in the aftermath of her implied refusal to resume sexual relations with her brother. For all that they enter 'lying on a bed' (V.v.s.d.), Giovanni's opening accusation 'What, changed so soon?' (V.v.1) appears to leave little doubt that relations between them have dramatically altered. The resulting emotional dynamic charges the whole scene with a particularly forceful sense of the connections between 'knowing' and carnally knowing.

As in this scene, Annabella is generally characterised by a remarkable confidence in her own knowledge, and her uses of the word tend to be tellingly nuanced by ideas of faith and belief. There is a suggestive exchange with Soranzo which plays with precisely such ideas:

SORANZO Do you not know
 What I should tell you?

pregnancy of Mary and the unworthy nature of Joseph's suspicions;²⁷ and the idea is reinforced when Annabella sings '*Morendo in gratia Dei, morirei senza dolore*' (IV.iii.63).

In such a context Annabella's juggling of the twin poles of knowledge and belief becomes doubly charged. What she actually says is ambivalent in its meaning. Soranzo's 'What?' interrupts the syntax of her sentence and makes it ultimately unclear whether the verb 'believe' is to be taken as transitive or intransitive. Soranzo's 'What?' could be a completely literal one, requesting clarification of the object of 'believe', and this could be precisely what he is offered in the second half of the sentence: Annabella wants him to believe that he will never know, i.e. to accept that his hounding of her is futile since she will never tell him the name of her child's father. Equally, though, the sentence seems to set up a powerful opposition between knowing and believing which makes one more than merely the object of the other, and this takes on a particular force if it is read within the template of Annabella as an analogue of Mary, possessed of special, divinely imparted knowledge, and Soranzo as the ignorant Joseph from whom an act of faith is required. With her customary certainty, Annabella denies absolutely the possibility of Soranzo ever possessing her own knowledge, but she does offer him the alternative position of belief - the same sort of belief that will later characterise her own attitude in her exchange with Giovanni about the afterlife. What would remain unclear in this second reading is *what* Soranzo is invited to believe, unless he is being recommended to the blindest of faiths. Earlier, Annabella has told him, with a strange mixture of insult and seeming ingenuousness, 'Would you be patient yet, and hide your shame, / I'd see whether I

could love you' (IV.iii.24-5); she could be seen as extending a similar sort of invitation here, offering fidelity in exchange for faith. Alternatively, the religious connotations of the preceding section of the dialogue might spill over to invite a Christian approach of forgiveness from Soranzo, though either of these interpretations might well seem subject to the charge of strain. Ultimately, the only person who can ever be fully confident of Annabella's meaning is herself, since she seems to be guided throughout by an absolute confidence in her own ability to control the hermeneutics of her pregnancy.²⁸ To this extent, at least, the Friar's distrust of knowledge seems justified, since Annabella, who has had so much less formal education than her brother, has so markedly greater a spiritual certainty than he.

iii) Knowing the World

Another character who displays a high level of confidence in his own knowledge is Vasques. Indeed, in terms of the depiction of knowledge and ignorance, Vasques and the Friar emerge as the structural poles of the play, situated at precisely opposite extremes. Whereas the Friar, an ostensible authority-figure, utters only six of the play's one hundred and two uses of 'know' and its derivatives, Vasques is responsible for twenty-three. Admittedly, he has a larger part: of the play's total of 2,281 lines, Vasques speaks 296 and the Friar 181 (figures which are complicated by the fact that all Vasques' lines are in prose, and may therefore be either significantly longer or significantly shorter than an iambic pentameter, and all the Friar's in verse). Nevertheless, the discrepancy seems to me striking, and it may well be taken as telling that the society of Parma is one in which a Spanish servant feels more

epistemologically secure than an honoured representative of the state-sponsored religious system.

Unburdened by worries about the status of knowledge, Vasques is far more concerned with its functions. When he is speaking to Putana, he represents knowledge not as an absolute, but as a transitory object of gratification:

I durst be sworn, all his madness is for that she will not confess whose 'tis,
which he will know, and when he doth know it, I am so well acquainted with
his humour, that he will forget all straight. Well, I could wish she would in
plain
terms tell all, for that's the way indeed.

(IV.iii.185-9)

For the Friar, to know is to be irrevocably tainted; for Vasques, though, knowledge is not a permanent enlightenment but a temporary acquisition, a process that is valued for its own sake rather than for what it represents. It is interesting to plot Vasques' trajectory through the play in these terms. Seeing through Hippolyta, suspecting Annabella, anticipating Giovanni, Vasques is 'knowing' indeed, and his confidence in his own knowledge may well seem justified when he departs the play alive, unpunished, and with an exit line which expresses nothing but self-satisfaction: "'Tis well; this conquest is mine, and I rejoice that a Spaniard outwent an Italian in revenge' (V.vi.146-7). The Friar leaves in order that he may *not* know; Vasques stays until he is in full possession of all the facts, so that he shares with the audience the possession of narrative satisfaction at least, even if events have not unfolded entirely in accordance with his wishes.

A similarly functional attitude to knowledge is shared with Vasques by the man who pardons him, the Cardinal. Unlike the Friar, the Cardinal is not at all hesitant to lay claim to authority on the basis of knowledge, though like the Friar, he does so largely in secular matters. When Grimaldi is pursued to his door, there is an enactment of the pursuit of knowledge, too, to its borders. Ignorance of a variety of things is the keystone of the Cardinal's counter-charges against Grimaldi's accusers:

Why, how now, friends! What saucy mates are you
That know nor duty nor civility?
Are we a person fit to be your host,
Or is our house become your common inn,
To beat our doors at pleasure? What such haste
Is yours as that it cannot wait fit times?
Are you the masters of this commonwealth,
And know no more discretion?

(III.ix.28-35)

Passing on after this disabling preamble to the substance of their complaint, he is able to dismiss it slickly on the grounds of his own superior knowledge:

you have lost a nephew,
Donado, last night by Grimaldi slain:
Is that your business? Well, sir, we have knowledge on't.
Let that suffice.

(III.ix.36-9)

And he continues to harp on the theme when he warns them:

know, as nuncio from the Pope,

For this offence I here receive Grimaldi
Into his holiness' protection.

(III.ix.52-4)

The ambiguity of the syntax here serves only too clearly to point up that it is the sub-text rather than the text which is important: the abrupt imperative 'know' is empowered by its immediate proximity to the declaration of the Cardinal's status as 'nuncio from the Pope', while the initial placing of 'For this offence' provocatively invites a reading in which Grimaldi is afforded protection *because* he has committed the offence, with the murder acting as positive stimulus for papal interest rather than merely rendering it necessary. It is hardly surprising that the Cardinal should conclude his dismissal with the injunction 'learn more wit, for shame' (III.ix.59): when 'wit' - a part of the process of cognition itself - is seen as the object of 'learning', rather than any specific piece of information, it becomes quite clear that, as in Vasques' epistemological model, what is important is not the subject of knowledge but the politics of its processes.

A similar awareness imbues the comical exchange between Donado, Bergetto and Florio:

FLORIO: Sure 'twas the doctor's niece, that was last day with us here.

BERGETTO: 'Twas she, 'twas she.

DONADO How do you know that, simplicity?

BERGETTO Why, does not he say so? If I
should have said no, I should have given him the lie, uncle, and so have
deserved a dry beating again; I'll none of that.

(II.vi.96-101)

Bergetto may be simple, but he is wise enough to realise that what he needs to know is the social and political origin of any claim to knowledge rather than the veracity of its content. Donado's oxymoronic coupling of knowledge and simplicity serves to reinforce our sense of the lack of wisdom that may be entailed in society's privileging of the status of the knower over the status of what is known, while Bergetto's blunt reference to a 'dry beating' merely offers a simple statement of the power relations governing knowledge which are expressed so much more knowingly by the Cardinal. Moreover, the phrase 'dry beating', not suggested by anything in the preceding dialogue, may well recall the phrase 'dry basting', used by Dromio of Syracuse to his master during a long discussion of the whys, wherefores, rhymes and reasons of a beating which, as the audience know, was actually administered on the basis of a mistaken identity and as an apparently natural effect of the power-relation between the two.²⁹

The inescapability of politics is something which Ford himself underlines when he gives the Cardinal the closing speech of the play and allows that final summing-up to stand as his own title. Although the greater part of the play has been concerned with the domestic affairs of Parma, the dramatist shows himself acutely aware that however peripheral the Cardinal may be to the events of the plot, his social position is enough to ensure that though his experiences may correlate only indirectly with those of the rest of the characters, the language in which he chooses to describe events will always be what passes for the normative and formative. The Cardinal is also allowed to dispense justice on Putana,³⁰ and chooses a punishment which seems to label her

crime as witchcraft when he decrees that she shall be burned to ashes.³¹ His epistemological counterpart Vasques, has, however, perhaps acted more judiciously when, on his own initiative, he inflicted on Putana the traditional mythological punishment for inappropriate and particularly sexual knowledge, the blinding which was the fate of Gloucester and the choice of Oedipus.³² Oedipus is a figure with whom Orgilus in *The Broken Heart* explicitly compares himself - 'Dark sentences are for Apollo's priests; / I am not Oedipus'³³ (an allusion picked up in the 1994-5 Stratford-upon-Avon production by making Tecnicus blind) - and the connection here is made particularly potent in the terms of Vasques' instruction, 'You shall know presently. Come sirs, take me this old damnable hag, gag her instantly, and put out her eyes' (IV.iii.224-5). With its obvious literal and symbolic links to the processes and politics of knowing, this literal disablement also bodies forth the symbolic disabling strategies which have punctuated the attempts of the Friar and the Cardinal to maintain control over knowledge, and thus serves to align the Cardinal with his religious *confrere* as well as with Vasques. Such a doubling of doublings serves as a powerful emblem for the radical instability with which Ford has imbued his complex depictions of knowledge, its cognitive mechanisms, and its social meanings. If we agree with Giovanni, we are forced to recognise that our own responses to the play must always be devalued because of our merely vicarious experience of it; if we agree with the Friar, we may well conclude that the very act of viewing the story has been an essentially corrupting one, and that vicarious experience, far from being insufficient, is therefore in itself too much. Paradoxically, the perspective we are most likely to adopt is in fact that shared by the two characters whom we may well like the least, the Cardinal and Vasques, whose awareness of the uses of knowledge we are surely likely to share. As our 'discovery' of that initial allusion to Marlowe suggests, a play which

concentrates so much on dramatisation of the dangers of knowledge never ceases to remind us that we are always already implicated in it.³⁴

Lisa Hopkins

Sheffield Hallam University

Notes

¹ John Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, edited by Brian Morris (London: Ernest Benn, 1968), introduction, pp.xxiv. All further quotations will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

² See for instance Carol C. Rosen, 'The language of cruelty in Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*', *Comparative Drama* 8, 1974, pp.356-68; Terri Clerico, 'The Politics of Blood: John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*', *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992), pp.405-324; and my own *John Ford's Political Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

³ Cyrus Hoy's "'Ignorance in knowledge": Marlowe's Faustus and Ford's Giovanni', *Modern Philology*, LVII, February 1960, pp.145-154, is of course a major exception. Dorothy M. Farr, in her chapter on the play in *John Ford and the Caroline Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.36, lists what she sees Giovanni and Annabella as knowing, but does not interrogate the concept of knowledge.

⁴ John S. Wilks, *The Idea of Conscience in Renaissance Tragedy* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.170. Stanley Cavell uses similar terms of *Othello*, a play which may be thought to have influenced the depiction of the Soranzo / Annabella relationship

(*Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], pp.8-9).

⁵ Bruce Boehrer, ““Nice Philosophy”: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and The Two Books of God”, *Studies in English Literature* 24 (1984), pp.355-71, p.362.

⁶ See for instance H.J. Oliver, *The Problem of John Ford* (Melbourne, 1955), p.86, and Clifford Leech, *John Ford and the Drama of his Time* (London, 1957), p.56.

⁷ For the very different epistemological assumptions of Giovanni here, see Claudine Defaye, ‘Annabella’s Unborn Baby: The Heart in the Womb in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*’, *Cahiers Elisabéthains* 15 (1979), pp.35-42, p.36.

⁸ See Coburn Freer on Ford in *The Poetics of Jacobean Drama* (Baltimore, 1981).

⁹ For the argument that Giovanni is mad, see for instance Ronald J. Boling, ‘Prayer, Mirrors, and Self-Deification in John Ford’s *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*’, *Publications of the Arkansas Philological Association* 17:1 (1991), pp.1-12, pp.1 and 5; Mark Stavig, ‘Shakespearean and Jacobean Patterns in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*’, in *Concord in Discord: The Plays of John Ford, 1586-1986*, ed. Donald K. Anderson, jr. (New York: AMS Press, 1986), pp.221-240, p.236; Richard Madelaine, ““Sensationalism” and “Melodrama” in Ford’s Plays’, in *John Ford: Critical Re-Visions*, ed. Michael Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.29-54, pp. 33 and 41; Verna Foster, ‘*'Tis Pity She's a Whore* as City Tragedy’, in *John Ford: Critical Re-Visions*,

pp.181-200, p.195; and my own 'John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and early diagnoses of *folie a deux*', *Notes and Queries*, 239 (March, 1994), pp.71-4. Michael Neill, in "'What Strange Riddle's This?': Deciphering *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*", in *John Ford: Critical Re-Visions*, pp.153-80, also points out Ford's debt to Fletcher's *The Mad Lover* (pp.158-60); recognition of the allusion would seem to increase the audience's chances of perceiving Giovanni as mad. The act of exploring Annabella's womb might possibly have been read in the light of the early printed accounts of the doings of Vlad Dracul, who would be an equally negative avatar for Giovanni.

¹⁰Luke Wilson, 'William Harvey's *Prelectiones*: The Performance of the Body in the Renaissance Theater of Anatomy', *Representations* 17 (1987), pp.62-95, p.62.

¹¹ See Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.222 and 220. Sawday also remarks on the extent to which the anatomised female body was seen in terms of Eve (p.224).

¹² On the ritualised exclusion of men from the birth chamber, see Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.101-3.

¹³ The phrase is quoted from Garthine Walker's account of a woman burglar who assaulted a householder's pregnant wife: 'she ript her up the belly, making herself a tragical midwife' (Garthine Walker, "'Demons in female form": representations of women and gender in murder pamphlets of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', in *Writing and the English Renaissance*, ed. William Zunder and Suzanne Trill [Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1996], pp.129-39, p.126). I quote it because the

association with burglary here seems to me an apt correlative for the ways in which Giovanni's action is inflected by imagery of the invasion of forbidden space, as has already been dramatised in the play by the clash at the Cardinal's gate.

¹⁴ Nathaniel Strout, 'The Tragedy of Annabella in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*', in David G. Allen, ed., *Traditions and Innovations* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), p.169. I am grateful to Derek Roper for drawing this essay to my attention.

¹⁵ William D. Dyer, 'Holding / Withholding Environments: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Ford's *The Broken Heart*', *English Literary Renaissance* 21 (1991), pp.401-24, p.422.

¹⁶ See my notes, 'A Source for John Ford's *Love's Sacrifice*: The Life of Carlo Gesualdo' (published under my maiden name of Lisa Cronin), *Notes and Queries* 233 (March, 1988), pp.66-7, and "'Elegy by W.S.': A Possible Candidate for Authorship?', forthcoming in *Philological Quarterly*, summer, 1997.

¹⁷ Jeremy Tambling, *Confession: Sexuality, Sin, The Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp.68-9. I am very grateful to Richard Wilson for alerting me to this passage.

¹⁸ Wilks, *Idea of Conscience*, p.254.

¹⁹ Though for a rather different interpretation of these celebrated lines, see Rick Bowers, 'John Ford and the Sleep of Death', *Texas Studies in Language and*

Literature 28 (1986), pp.358-87, p.357. I am grateful to Derek Roper for drawing this essay to my attention.

²⁰ This is best explored in M. Joan Sargeant, *John Ford* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1935), pp.14-16.

²¹ See for instance Verna Ann Foster and Stephen Foster, 'Structure and History in *The Broken Heart*: Sparta, England, and the "Truth"', *English Literary Renaissance*, 1988, pp.305-328, p.309, on Ford's technical use of the term 'presentment', 'a statement on oath by a jury of a fact within their own knowledge', in the prologue to *The Broken Heart*.

²² Some versions of the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh have Lord Chief Justice Popham, who was Ford's great-uncle, warning the defendant against letting Marlowe show him the way to hell. Accounts vary, however, and the reference may in fact have been to Thomas Harriot, or to a third, unidentified person: see George T. Buckley, *Atheism in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), p.144, and Ernest A. Strathmann, *Sir Walter Raleigh: A Study in Elizabethan Skepticism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973), p.58. Strathmann argues that Raleigh was not an atheist but was rather displaying a Pyrrhonist scepticism about human knowledge (p.222). As well as his involuntary connection with Popham on this occasion, Raleigh was also related to the Gamages and Stradlings, connections of Ford on the mother's side. Sir John Stradling's apology for Justus Lipsius is noted by Wilks (*Idea of Conscience*, p.230) as part of the general Renaissance debate over 'right reason'.

²³ Charles Harrison, 'Giotto and the "rise of painting"', in *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. Diana Norman (2 vols), (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), I, pp.73-96, p.88.

²⁴ Pamela Benson, ed., *Italian Tales From the Age of Shakespeare* (London: J.M. Dent, 1996), pp.255 and 269.

²⁵ Marc Shell, *Elizabeth's Glass* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), p.36.

²⁶ Ronald J. Boling argues that their 'disparity in moral knowledge is what produces the moral closure of the play whereby Annabella repents and then is saved, while her brother remains defiantly in his sin and is damned' ('Prayer, Mirrors, and Self-Deification', p.5).

²⁷ See my 'John Ford's Annabella and the Virgin Mary', *Notes and Queries*, 240: 3 (September, 1995), p.380.

²⁸ On the epistemological issues surrounding the concealment and detection of Annabella's pregnancy, see Susan J. Wiseman, "'Tis Pity She's a Whore: Representing the Incestuous Body', in *Renaissance Bodies*, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), pp.180-197.

²⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, edited by Stanley Wells (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), II.2.68.

³⁰ For the ambiguity in the referent here, see *'Tis Pity*, ed. Morris, note on V.vi.133.

³¹ This is comparable with the similar displacement of guilt onto an alleged witch which is dramatised in Ford, Dekker and Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton*.

³² On the Oedipal resonances of this, see for instance Denis Gauer, 'Nature and Culture in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*', *Cahiers Elisabethains* (1987), pp.45-57, p.49.

³³ John Ford, *The Broken Heart*, ed. Brian Morris (London: Ernest Benn, 1965), IV.i.140-1.

³⁴ On the implications of our knowledge of other plays for our reading of *'Tis Pity*, see Neill, "'What Strange Riddle's This?'"', Richard S. Ide, 'Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and the Benefits of Belatedness', in *'Concord in Discord*', pp.61-86, and Martin Coyle, 'Hamlet, Gertrude and the Ghost: The Punishment of Women in Renaissance Drama', *Q/W/E/R/T/Y* 6 (October, 1996), pp.29-38, p.33. On the question of knowledge in *'Tis Pity*, see also Rowland Wymer, *Webster and Ford* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p.126.