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Moral tone of John Ford's tragedies

James J. Antonich

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THE MORAL TONE OF JOHN FORD'S TRAGEDIES

by

James J. Antonich

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Approved by:

[Signatures]

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Dean, Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

JOHN FORD AND HIS CRITICS

One of the first pieces of adverse criticism directed towards John Ford came in the seventeenth century from the pen of Richard Crashaw who drolly observed:

    Thou cheat'st us Ford, mak'st one seem two by Art,
    What is Loves Sacrifice, but the broken Heart?¹

But Crashaw's complaint, whether a serious indictment or not, is generally out of the mainstream of Ford criticism. Although Ford has received more critical attention than perhaps any of the early successors to Shakespeare, few of his critics are concerned with what might be called excessive repetitiveness of theme in his major plays. On the contrary, critics since Crashaw more often comment on Ford's originality in plot and theme than on any other single attribute (or defect) he possesses. This is particularly so of critics in the twentieth century.

The fact that critics find numerous parallels between Ford's plays is not in itself a harsh evaluation. Rather, the fact that the parallels most often cited represent what many critics consider a moral confusion at the heart of his tragedies, appears to account

for most of their consternation. The charge that Ford was a confused moralist is a frequent one; yet it is also held, sometimes by the same critics, that he was an outspoken rebel against the moral orthodoxies of Jacobean and Caroline England, that he continually lashed out against Christian ethics.

Nevertheless, for all the concern shown him, John Ford survives as a complex and, I think, frequently misunderstood dramatist. Placed apart from his contemporaries and subjected to criticism primarily reserved for modern fiction, he is often examined as though he were somehow distinct from the drama that preceds him, yet only distantly related to writers like Flaubert and Stendahl. Perhaps more than anything it seems necessary to achieve a perspective which sees Ford very much akin to playwrights like John Webster, Thomas Middleton, and the Shakespeare of Hamlet and Antony and Cleopatra. But before any new evaluation of Ford's tragedies can be made, it is important to examine the nature of the various charges levelled at them in order to avoid the pitfalls into which some critics have fallen.

In the first place, criticism of Ford is marked by a number of adverse judgments based solely on ethical criteria. With an intense dislike for what they consider prurient longings in him, many critics banish Ford from their roster of serious seventeenth century playwrights--playwrights who, in their estimation at least, abide by orthodox Christian standards. On the other hand, Ford has acquired a coterie of friendly critics who sometimes respond to his plays
almost with adulation. Of the critics favorable to him, there are
broadly speaking, two kinds: those who admire his plays without
any distaste for, and sometimes with no apparent awareness of, the
nature of the moral issues he develops; and those who consider Ford
an artist who undertook close psychological analysis of his char-
acters. Finally, there are several recent critics who are neither
overly fond, nor hypercritical, of his moral vision. This group
tend to view Ford as morally neutral and suggest that he is neither
an ethical anarchist nor a conventional moralist.

Of the first kind of critic (i.e., those who condemn Ford
on ethical grounds), little need be said, for most of them usually
attack the same plays for the same reasons. In line with nineteenth
century criticism, for instance, A. W. Ward offers an argument which
has, however variously stated, been a critical focal point for many
years. To Ward, Ford had "conceptions unutterably shocking to our
consciousness of the immutable authority of moral laws . . . "2
And, by extension, Ford was one of the few major English dramatists
who "insidiously contributed to unsettle the true conception of the
basis of true tragic effect."3 Similarly, Felix E. Schelling con-
tends that Ford, in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, dwells upon "a subject
which should hardly be mentioned."4

3 Ibid., p. 88.
4 Felix E. Schelling, Elizabethan Drama: 1558-1642 (New York,
1910), II, 334.
The dramatic treatment of incest was, of course, not original with Ford; Shakespeare’s Hamlet, The Revenger’s Tragedy of Cyril Tourneur, and Women Beware Women of Thomas Middleton, to mention only a few, are all plays that at least partly deal with incestuous love. But if Shakespeare escapes blame, Tourneur and Middleton have not been so fortunate; they too have frequently been attacked for tastelessness in their choice of subject matter. In Ford’s case, however, the situation is somewhat different from that of either Tourneur or Middleton: not only is his treatment of incestuous love in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore denounced as morally loathsome, but his alleged sympathetic treatment of Giovanni and Annabella has met with cries of outrage. And for those critics who voice no disapproval of 'Tis Pity, there remains Ford’s handling of adultery in Love’s Sacrifice with which they must also contend.

Certainly one of the most outspoken opponents of Ford’s alleged moral distortion is Stuart P. Sherman. In the introduction to his edition of 'Tis Pity She’s a Whore and The Broken Heart, Sherman asserts that 'Tis Pity ”represents the height of Ford’s achievement as a dramatist and the depth of his corruption as an apostle of passion.” In Ford himself, Sherman sees “a decadent romanticist bent on showing the enthralling power of physical beauty and the transfiguring power of passion.” And Sherman is not alone. Writing

5 'Tis Pity She’s a Whore and The Broken Heart, ed. with an intro. by Stuart P. Sherman, The Belles-Lettres Series (Boston, 1915), p. xxxiv.

6 Ibid., p. xxxvii.
in *The Cambridge History of English Drama*, W. A. Neilson maintains that *'Tis Pity* combined Ford's strengths and defects in leading "an assault at once so insidious and so daring upon the foundations of accepted morality." In a similarly blunt manner, A. H. Thorndike charges that Ford's tragedies "are immoral because their passion is so often morbid and their sentiment mawkish."³

Many critics who dislike the tragedies believe that Ford was a champion of the moral and emotional instability of his heroes and was rebelling against the moral standards of the ages. For Ford, they insist, conventional moral codes were at best a constricting force which hampers the behavior of people who are corrupt when judged by accepted norms, but look attractive and defensible through his use of certain seventeenth century views on human psychology. The only alternative that these critics are willing to accept is that Ford, if not a reactionary, was morally confused.

In his discussion of Ford, for example, Sir Herbert Grierson limits his comments on *'Tis Pity* to a mere three sentences and concludes that "more subtly repulsive than physical horror is the sympathy that Ford implicitly demands for the victims of passion, as if passion excused everything."⁹ And in a related manner, but

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without directly implicating Ford himself, T. S. Eliot writes that "Giovanni is merely selfish and self-willed, of a temperament to want a thing the more because it is forbidden; Annabella is pliant, vacillating and negative: the one almost a monster of egotism, the other virtually a moral defective." Eliot nevertheless contends that Perkin Warbeck "is unquestionably Ford's highest achievement, and is one of the very best historical plays . . . in the whole of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama." This assertion appears to have led several later critics to the same conclusion and has helped to steer criticism away from 'Tis Pity and The Broken Heart.

Thus, Professor M. C. Bradbrook in her study of Elizabethan tragedy strongly endorses Perkin Warbeck as Ford's best play. Although she appears undisturbed by his treatment of love in the tragedies, Miss Bradbrook thinks that Ford marks the end of Elizabethan drama and is best categorized under the heading "decadent." Says Miss Bradbrook, Ford's "decadence may be summed up as an attrition rather than as a coarsening . . . . Moreover, the attrition represented by 'Tis Pity She's a Whore is serious. The Elizabethan drama had worked itself out in Ford."

But in their attempts to shift critical consideration away from

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11Ibid., p. 177.

Ford's more popular plays, Eliot and Miss Bradbrook have not been completely successful. With a kind of magnetic attraction, the moral issues raised in 'Tis Pity, The Broken Heart, and Love's Sacrifice continue to demand and receive the critical attention of most modern students of Ford. Like their various predecessors, however, several of them launch an immediate and direct assault on the author of such "moral atrocities." Fredrick S. Boas, like many before him, believes that Ford, if not a moral rebel, was at least involved in ethical paradox. When we finish reading 'Tis Pity, says Boas, "we feel that [Giovanni's] love for [Annabella], though outside 'the laws of conscience and of civil use', is a worthier thing in the dramatist's eyes than that of the profligate Soranzo." Notwithstanding the accuracy of Boas' words, the implication is that Ford tends to distort orthodox moral views.

Even Lord David Cecil, writing less than a decade ago and aware that recent critics have advanced plausible arguments in Ford's defense, has difficulty coping with the dramatist in a positive manner. Since Lord David assumes that Ford sanctions incest, he believes that a "fundamental indifference to moral implications of this kind makes [Ford] unable to make us feel it as sinful. On the contrary, the

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14Boas' assertion, it seems to me, is essentially valid: i.e., Ford has made Giovanni "a worthier thing" than Soranzo. However, I would argue that Ford has not done so in order to flout conventional morality as Boas implies.
passion of the lovers is presented, deliberately or not, as something glorious; and all the more so because it is unlawful."15 Arguing in the same vein, M. E. Cochnower declares that there is a "dizzy uncertainty" surrounding moral truth in Ford's plays, and that with the exception of The Lover's Melancholy and The Lady's Trial, Ford "habitually confused good and evil."16 Miss Cochnower even carries her argument a step further when she deals with 'Tis Pity. She suggests that the moral concerns here are of less importance to Ford than erotic stimulation of his audience: "Ford did not make Giovanni his hero for the sake of the moral problem he might represent. Rather he chose Giovanni for the dramatic possibilities of his story."17

Yet the hostile criticism heaped upon Ford for decadence and moral perniciousness certainly does not cover the total critical concern for him. The negative criticism of his tragedies is almost balanced by favorable evaluations, and, in the case of certain critics, the extreme praise lavished on Ford would appear to tip the critical scales toward justification of his handling of moral conflicts in his plays. However, in the earlier of these admirers, there is the dangerous tendency to overstate the case for Ford, so that their sometimes unrestrained enthusiasm seems as groundless as the distaste


17 Ibid., p. 201.
shown by other critics.

Writing in 1808, Charles Lamb lauded what he thought was an extraordinary artistic achievement in *The Broken Heart* and excerpted a substantial portion from the fifth act as illustration of it. After a discussion of the final scene, Lamb concludes that "Ford was of the first order of poets. He sought for sublimity, not by parcels in metaphors or visible images, but directly where she has her full residence in the heart of man; in the actions and sufferings of the greatest minds." With a genuine ardor for the subdued but highly dramatic conclusion to *The Broken Heart*, Lamb likens Calantha's death to the final moments on Calvary, and for her last speech maintains, "I do not know where to find in any play a catastrophe so grand, so solemn, and so surprising as this. This is indeed, according to Milton, to 'describe high passions and high actions.'

Like Lamb, A. C. Swinburne is generally favorable to Ford. Excluding *Love's Sacrifice*, he considers that the tragedies are of a high degree of excellence. Yet it is for *The Broken Heart* and *'Tis Pity* that Swinburne reserves his highest accolades: "... among the mighty throng of poets then at work a leading place could

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19 Ibid., p. 228. William Archer takes Lamb to task for these critical excesses. "Is it not time," he asks, "that commonsense should reassert itself in protest against such monstrous over-valuations? They have held the field for a century--surely that is long enough." (The Old Drama and the New: An Essay in Re-valuation [Boston, 1923], p. 65.)
The broken heart, it cannot be resumed. The Play of the Play is a marvel, and perchance melancholy. The author of The Play, she, a more, and hardly have been graced to the author only of the lover's melancholy.
which arise from internal, psychological struggles and produce a tragic vision free from external forms of determinism. "In 'Tis Pity," observes Babb, "Ford presents what is perhaps the most detailed study of the love-reason conflict in the drama." But the leap from a "love-reason conflict" to a narrowly deterministic viewpoint is not a great one. Hence, critics who think Ford a playwright who plundered Burton's massive work for psychological motivation tend to remove his characters from the pale of conventional morality and place them within the borderless region of amoral, psychologically-determined conduct.

The critical issues thus become somewhat complex, for it is true that Ford was influenced by The Anatomy of Melancholy. Once this is acknowledged, there remains only the question as to what degree Burton exercised an influence over him. S. Blaine Ewing contends that Burton's influence on Ford is extreme, that "the range of Ford's interest in melancholy is the whole of Burton's treatise and more. As we advance through his plays, we view a gallery of melancholy types representing almost every major type in The Anatomy." Moreover, Ewing argues that melancholy as the psychological force in Ford's drama "determines the selection of scenes, motivates the

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24In The Lover's Melancholy, for instance, Ford cites his own indebtedness to Burton.

character's acts, and specifies the denouement." He sees melancholy as the "principle of confusion" in Ford, and finds him guilty of "what blame attaches to him for being too much interested in oblique subjects and for dissolving their sin in a cup of sweetness by treating them with sympathy and clothing them in great poetry." Thus, even by his more sympathetic critics Ford stands partially charged with a decadence said to develop from his attempt to dramatize sensational themes.

In line with Ewing's criticism, but with greatly developed implications--implications that would seem to inevitably stem from analyses like Ewing's--is a full-length study of Ford by George F. Sensabaugh. Aware that Ford has a peculiar appeal for twentieth century readers, Sensabaugh has built a case for him as a proponent of scientific determinism, who sanctioned the individualistic urges of characters like Giovanni in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and Orgilus in The Broken Heart. Here, as in a number of the critics already mentioned, is the recurring insistence that Ford be identified with the position of his rebellious heroes. Like Ewing, however, Sensabaugh is not distressed by Ford's supposed moral confusion; he is neither hostile to nor repelled by the moral issues in 'Tis Pity and The Broken Heart. In fact, he is kind to Ford and likens him to the deterministic writers of our own age: his "deterministic approach to man's course in the world and the amoral philosophy attendant upon

26 Ibid., p. 104.
27 Ibid., p. 112.
it foreshadowed in Ford's time the shape of modern thought. The beliefs which pervaded Ford's drama appear not only in scientific and philosophical works of today but also in the novels and plays of many modern writers.  

Like the critics who oppose Ford primarily on ethical grounds, Sensabaugh maintains that 'Tis Pity "strikes the most decisive blow against the world's moral order . . . makes an open problem of incest and thus queries the Christian idea of retributive justice."  

Thus, Sensabaugh occupies a rather new position in the history of Ford criticism. At the same time that he labels Ford a determinist, he sanctions his "decisive blow" against accepted moral order. "The actions of these tragedies," he goes on to say,  

is so solidly based upon scientific necessity and their characters are so consistently sympathetic to unbridled individualism, that it is hard to escape the conclusion that Ford is here presenting by the objective method of the stage his most profound observations upon life. At any rate, because of the scientific necessity and the claims of extreme individualism, these plays present unresolvable dilemmas, even as for the same reasons modern tragedies are replete with conflicts which seem to admit no solution.  

Because of this rather unusual viewpoint, Sensabaugh is perhaps the most unique of Ford's critics. Unbothered by the danger of seeing him as a mere sensationalist with a diseased moral outlook, Sensabaugh  

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asserts that Ford "absolved his lovers from sin simply because they were beautiful and loved in their souls. He shows true love to be more important than marriage, sets up this love as the sole guide to virtue, and allows his lovers every freedom of action or thought." In Sensabaugh's study Ford is more closely related to late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers than he is to Shakespeare, and is a forerunner of writers like Thomas Hardy and Eugene O'Neill: "... what Freud seems to have done for Eugene O'Neill, Burton accomplished for John Ford ... "

But in his discussion of the plays, H. J. Oliver attacks positions like Sensabaugh's and asserts that "the more one examines Ford's allegedly daring assaults on conventional morality, the more absurd the charge becomes." Oliver would have us believe that Ford, rather than suffering from some kind of moral radicalism, was "a constant experimenter with dramatic form, who, because he never quite cast off the shackles of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, did not find the new form he was seeking." Oliver contends that it was dramatically necessary for Ford to use "the daring, the immoral, [and] the unnatural" for subject matter—dramatically necessary, that is, in order to arouse a nearly apathetic audience.

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31Ibid., p. 165. 32Ibid., p. 70.

33Harold James Oliver, The Problem of John Ford (Victoria, Australia, 1955), p. 66.

34Ibid., p. 127.
In his analysis of Ford, Clifford Leech ranks *Tis Pity beneath the dramatic achievements of Love's Sacrifice, The Broken Heart, and Perkin Warbeck. Still, his feelings about *Tis Pity are not founded upon an offended sense of propriety. On the contrary, Leech arrives at a position which sees all of Ford's plays as resting on a reasonably sound moral base: "... the dominant figures in Ford's plays have about them something of God's chosen and something of the rejected ... And it requires only a slight shifting of this viewpoint to find one's aristocracy among the damned—a shifting exemplified by Ford in *Tis Pity She's a Whore, as by Webster in The White Devil." 35 Yet Leech is never totally conclusive in his statements about *Tis Pity; when Giovanni meets his death, and order appears to be restored, Leech says that "there is a pattern in things," though "we have only glimpses of what that pattern signifies." 36

A yet more recent critic, Robert Ornstein, presents the thesis that the Jacobean, far more than the Elizabethans, began to rely on reason as a means of understanding man's tragic position in the universe. He sees men like Montaigne, Machiavelli, Donne, and Marston as largely responsible for this emphasis on reason, a force that undermined man's faith by confounding one kind of knowledge (i.e., revelation) with another kind of knowledge (i.e., empirical evidence). Ornstein finds in Ford's plays a reflection of the dominant feelings

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36 Ibid., p. 61.
flourishing at the end of the period: "though good usually triumphs and evil is destroyed at the close of Jacobean tragedy, we are made to feel how vulnerable are the walls—the political, religious, legal, and familial institutions—which seek to check or contain the uncivilized man." Unlike many of his predecessors, Ornstein does not identify Ford with the incestuous hero of 'Tis Pity: "It requires a peculiar insensitivity to the nuances of characterization and verse in 'Tis Pity to treat Giovanni as Ford's spokesman." But, he adds, "it is no less an error to turn Ford into a champion of orthodoxy by identifying him with the Friar, who is, despite his choric role, a somewhat muddled moralist." Directly contrary to many of Sensabaugh's claims, Ornstein refuses to call Ford an unbridled individualist in matters of love versus the "laws of civil use." Says Ornstein: "Far from exalting the claim of individual desire over the bond of matrimony, The Broken Heart, like Ford's other tragedies, depicts the warping of love that cannot grow and mature. . . . the highest expression of love in Ford's drama is not the reckless ardor of Giovanni and Orgilus but the generous devotion of Annabella and Penthea." Eventually, Ornstein characterizes Ford as a man who, like Donne, "insists upon an ethical judgment that is individual, flexible, and humane, not rigid, dogmatic, and absolute."
Irving Ribner pushes Ornstein's thesis further. 'Tis Pity Ribner says, "is a product of Caroline scepticism. It opposes to accepted standards of religion and morality the crime of incest, not because Ford approves of this, but because it is probably the most shocking challenge to traditional values of which he can conceive. It is a dramatic symbol of the moral uncertainty which is the theme of the play." Ribner chooses 'Tis Pity as the "culmination" of Ford's dramatic development, for in it he finds the final statements that Ford had to make about the tragic nature of man: "Ford sees mankind poised, like a morality play hero, between divine law and a nature which seems in opposition to it; but unlike the morality hero he is incapable of choice."  

It can be seen that the climate of opinion surrounding Ford's plays covers a fairly wide range. From the extreme hostility of S. P. Sherman on the one side, to the high-flown praise of Charles Lamb on the other, the criticism is nearly as diverse as it can be and yet deal with the dramatic works of only one man. It is clear, too, that Ford's critics, no matter how pejorative or adulatory, often reveal a peculiar tension within themselves when dealing with his plays. Many critics who are disgusted by Ford's treatment of love cannot help being honestly amazed by his poetic ability. Lord David Cecil, for instance, voices a typical response when he asserts

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43 Ibid., p. 173.
that "there is nothing in the whole range of England's magnificent literature more 'beautiful' than Ford's blank verse, and nothing in the least like it." Critics who admire Ford's poetry but resent his handling of moral issues evidently come away from plays like 'Tis Pity, Love's Sacrifice, and The Broken Heart with a sorry shaking of their heads that the poet could have wasted such fine talents on such dubious materials. The same kind of inner tension also exists in many recent critics who applaud Ford's dramatic presentation of melancholy-ridden or skeptically-minded people, yet are invariably repelled by the comic subplots in his tragedies.

Such divergence in critical judgment might lead us to conclude that "there is something for everyone" in Ford, but instead it should, if anything, tell us that Ford is a complex dramatist who presents moral problems in such a way that no "formula" for dealing with them is quite adequate. He does not, as Sensabaugh tries to persuade us, herald the beginnings of modern, "scientific" drama, nor does he quite represent the typical Elizabethan temperament. On the basis of the moral conflicts presented in Love's Sacrifice, 'Tis Pity, and The Broken Heart, it remains for us to discover as nearly as possible what Ford's contribution to the drama is. Since the dates of composition of the tragedies are unknown, the order in which I have chosen to discuss the plays is purely arbitrary.

44Cecil, op. cit., p. 122.

45The problem of dating the composition of Ford's tragedies is treated in the Appendix.
CHAPTER II

'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE

The world of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore is socially chaotic and morally diseased. It is a world in which proud, selfish people flourish, a world in which conventional morality has little place. While some characters represent what is decent and moral, the lives of the majority are ridden with viciousness, incest, revenge, deceit, or adultery. It is a world mainly of the senses, a world where carnal pleasures are eagerly sought and feverishly desired. It is, in short, a world in which reason is continually pandering to passion.

Ford's choice of Renaissance Italy as his setting is thus fairly obvious. The blatantly sordid lives of so many of the characters would seem to dictate such a setting; a treatment of incest at any closer range might perhaps have met with squeamish objections even from a Caroline audience. But by removing, and so distancing, 'Tis Pity, Ford has by no means made his action seem remote or artificial.

On the contrary, the high-pitched, argumentative tone of the opening scene is almost intimate in its intensity. Caught in the surge of an incestuous passion for his sister, Annabella, Giovanni has come to his priest and teacher, the Friar, to plead that he be allowed to consummate his burning desire—to plead, in other words, that incest is a legitimate form of love. Since the first scene begins in the middle of their debate, and since the Friar speaks first
sharply rebuking Giovanni, we must assume that the latter has been in some way challenging the validity of Christian faith, and has, thereby, provoked the Friar's sudden reply:

Dispute no more in this; for know, young man, These are no schoole-points; nice philosophy May tolerate unlikely arguments, But heaven admits no jest; wits that presum'd On wit too much—by striving how to prove There was no God,—with foolish grounds of art Discover'd first the nearest way to hell, And fill'd the world with devesh atheisme . . . 1

The Friar's argument is simple. Matters of faith, he says, are not a debating ground for philosophers. While implausible arguments concerning God's existence may be tolerated by philosophy, they are presumptuous before God, and their proponents may be assured of eternal damnation. The Friar's recommendation that "better 'tis/ To blesse the sumne then reason why it shines" (L.1.9-10) sums up his stand as bluntly as possible. He is not, as might appear, discounting the use of reason; he is arguing that man's capacity to solve life's riddles is acutely limited and that reason alone is insufficient as a means to a solution.2 "To blesse" the sun rather than logically analyze it is the Friar's way of telling Giovanni to rely on faith when reason fails to satisfy his desire for knowledge.

But Giovanni does not agree. Impassioned by sensual thoughts

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1All references to 'Tis Pity, refer to S. P. Sherman's edition, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and The Broken Heart, The Belle-Lettres Series (Boston, 1915).

2Irving Ribner, op. cit., p. 164, maintains that the Friar "urges a blind acceptance in spite of reason." In my opinion, Ribner's view of the Friar is highly arguable.
of Amnabella, he simply asks: "Must I not do what all men else
may,—love?" (I.i.19). The Friar, appearing not to know where Giovanni's
logic will take him, assents. Then, the ardent youth becomes ecsta-
tic and proceeds to ask:

Must I not praise
That beauty which, if fram'd a new, the gods
Would make a god of, if they had it there,
And kneele to it, as I doe kneele to them?
(I.i.20-23)

Of course, this is heresy. To elevate a creature above The Creator
is an obvious blow against the First Commandment. But Giovanni, a
"foolish madman" (I.i.24), according to the Friar, is enthralled with
passion and is arguing from the position of Renaissance Naturalism.
It is easy for him, therefore, to exalt one of nature's creatures
above God once he has acknowledged that nature is his deity. But
Giovanni's view is also rather complex, if not ambiguous and ironic.
In the first place, his philosophic position requires that he argue
rationally with the Friar. And at first glance, it might appear that
he does so:

Shall a peevish sound,
A customary forme, from man to man,
Of brother and of sister, be a barre
Twixt my perpetuall happinesse and mee?
Say that we had one father, say one wombe--
Curse to my joyes--gave both us life and birth;
Are wee not therefore each to other bound
So much the more by nature, by the links
Of blood, of reason,--nay, if you will hav't,--
Even of religion, to be ever one,
One soule, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all?
(I.i.24-34)
Giovanni obviously has little respect for the Friar. Expressions like "peevious sound" and "customary forme" are uttered with a tone of contempt and though he connects his questions with "therefore," his argument lacks some important middle premises. Similarly, the rhetorical devices (e.g., the questions, and the hypothetical proposition) are merely a support to sophistry. Thus, it is soon clear that he must resort to other than logical means to make his case for incest. A poor logician, Giovanni advances an argument that ironically undercuts his pseudo-rational point of view. Though he seems not to know it, Giovanni's argument is no more in accord with a naturalistic code of ethics than it is with the Christian code. His love for his sister is overwhelmingly unnatural, and is opposed to the mores of almost every culture. The more he argues, the more his argument turns back upon itself. In fact, his words become loose and rambling, and begin to tumble unchecked from his tongue. After revealing his "develishe atheisme," his idol-worship, and his thirst for incest, Giovanni makes known what he really hopes for: "joyes" and "perpetuall happinesse." Unlike the strict rationalist he imagines himself, Giovanni is essentially a hedonist with no intention of ever transcending earth-centered pleasures. Of course, the Friar is stunned by this defense of sensuality; his stern judgment is both apt for the present and ominous for the future: "Have done, unhappy youth, for thou art lost" (1.1.35).

Throughout this first scene, then, we see more than just a moral conflict, for Giovanni and the Friar oppose one another in various ways.
Giovanni is young, rash, wilful, individualistic, and personally and immediately involved in his dilemma. The Friar, however, is older, wiser, more restrained and conservative in temperament, and not directly involved in Giovanni's problem. Consequently, there is a tendency in Giovanni to simply show off before his teacher. Told to repent first, and then if necessary find another mistress, Giovanni defiantly declares:

It were more ease to stop the ocean  
From floates and ebbs then to dissuade my vowes,  
(I.i.64-65)

And though he half-heartedly accepts the Friar's advice to repent, Giovanni ends the scene by hinting that he has given in to his passions, as if he is bent on self-destruction:

All this I'le doe, to free mee from the rod  
Of vengeance; else I'le sweare my fate's my god.  
(I.i.82-84)

This speech is ambiguous, for earlier Giovanni seems to accept, and is accused of, atheism. Yet, just as we saw him deifying Annabella and nature, we now see him doing the same with fate. Paradoxically (indeed, an instance of Ford's irony), Giovanni is unable to maintain a stand of absolute atheism. His fear of the "rod of vengeance," tells us, I think, that for all his religious doubts and outright scepticism, Giovanni has a decidedly religious bent.

Although we may not yet know what Ford thinks of Giovanni, we can be sure what our own judgment is. Giovanni is an egotistical fool, profoundly confused in his moral outlook. Fresh from the University of Bologna, this "miracle of wit" has chosen to challenge
a value system almost as old as Western culture itself. Armed with a peculiar blend of Renaissance Naturalistic philosophy, perverted Neo-Platonic doctrines, and pure romantic excess, Giovanni has set himself up as the master of his own destiny—an assumption we instinctively know is rash and dangerous.

The Friar, on the other hand, is initially presented as a conventional moralist. He admonishes Giovanni in the same way that any devout clergyman might, cautioning him to beware the dangers in his "schoole-points." But the Friar's viewpoint, governed largely by faith, is not one that sees moral issues in stark blacks and whites. By recommending that Giovanni search for a new mistress after his repentance, the Friar even sounds what appears to be a note of "worldly-wise" discretion. "Leave [Annabella], and take thy choyce, 'tis much less sinne" (I.i.62) is the kind of advice that, coming from a priest, might seem strange if not strikingly discordant. But the Friar can scarcely be charged with being morally unsound. For one thing, Giovanni is exasperatingly determined to sin. Equally intent on diverting him, the Friar resorts to a solution that even Giovanni, he hopes, might find feasible. The Friar's plan, then, is the lesser of two evils, and is, at least, free from the sickening unnaturalness of incest.

Thus, when the Friar outlines a possible road to repentance, he proposes the traditional means to that end—means which, though they may sound to us severe, are nevertheless solidly within the

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3Premises used in debates by Scholastics.
framework of orthodox Christian practice. "Hye to thy fathers house," he tells Giovanni,

there locke thee fast
Alone within thy chamber, then fall downe
On both thy knees, and grovell on the ground:
Cry to thy heart, wash every word thou utter'st
In teares,--and if't bee possible,--of blood:
Begge heaven to cleanse the leprosie of lust
That rots thy soule, acknowledge what thou art,
A wretch, a worme, a nothing: weepe, sigh, pray
Three times a day and three times every night:
For seven dayes space doe this . . .
(I.i.69-78)

Even the Friar's choice of language is in line with the rhetoric usual to Renaissance discourse on this subject. The suggested procedure is a typical means of mortifying the flesh; the Friar's words could as well have come from a sermon by John Donne.

In addition to his role as confessor, the Friar is obviously fond of Giovanni. As a matter of fact, part of the Friar's horror stems from the knowledge that he has forsaken his own studies at Bologna in order to remain with his "tutelage." His affection for the youth also partly explains the Friar's unwillingness to totally denounce Giovanni. While he says that his young friend is "lost," is a "foolish madman," and is heading for "ruin," the Friar is careful not to close off all chances for Giovanni's moral recovery. And although we see a thoroughly corrupt and blasphemous upstart before us, the Friar sees a young and once brilliant companion. The Friar's affection accounts, too, for his "worldly-wise" discretion. Besides, he is cast into something of an ironic position
by Giovanni. As his teacher at the University, the Friar feels at least tangentially responsible for his wayward student. Because he has helped equip Giovanni with the tools of the philosopher, the Friar assumes a portion of the guilt for Giovanni's perversion of values.

Yet there can be no question in this first scene that Giovanni has misused his reason. His logic is specious, resting principally upon emotional drives that are purely egoistic. At one point in his argument Giovanni even resorts to begging the question. Beginning "Gentle father, / To you I have unclasp'd my burthened soule" (I.i.12-13), he openly tries to prompt the Friar's sense of compassion and thus gain sanction for his wishes. But he does not succeed. The Friar's gentle reply is soon turned into an absolute command that Giovanni abandon the evil desires that plague him. As a rhetorician Giovanni fails miserably, for he is unable to resist falling back upon emotional bias. As a debater he is doubly defeated, for he is met with an inflexible "Thou shalt not" from the Friar.

What we begin to see here is Ford the psychologist as well as Ford the dramatist. He has brilliantly pitched us into the middle of a moral conflict that threatens to enlarge and fester. In less than one hundred lines he has seized upon the essential moral issues that will occupy the center of 'Tis Pity and has done so with all the dramatic skill at his command. We also see that Ford has subtly delineated his characters so that they come alive and move and speak in ways sharply defined. More than mere "types," Giovanni
and the Friar are tautly developed. Friends on one level, enemies on another, they are individualized to the point that their clash becomes highly credible and engrossing.

Ford has given us two viewpoints to consider: Giovanni's and the Friar's. In Giovanni we have an undisciplined, selfish, and wildly rebellious approach to the perennial conflict between moral fiat and emotional drives. Giovanni, we feel convinced, will listen to no one who opposes the consummation of his incestuous love, and so, seems destined for a fall. On the other hand, the Friar's position, if also somewhat unrestrained, is nonetheless traditional and absolute. To be sure, it is hard to imagine the Friar remaining calm under the circumstances. As a man, he is revolted at the thought of incest and has no desire to be a party to Giovanni's proposals. As a priest, what other position can he take?

Another way to approach the problem of incest, however, is provided by Annabella. Her moral position rests somewhere between that of Giovanni and the Friar, for when she meets her brother (I.iii), she momentarily hesitates before succumbing to his wishes. Though she, too, is inflamed by passion, Annabella implicitly acknowledges the sinful nature of Giovanni's proposals before she recklessly joins him in a love-pact:

Forbid it, my just fears!
If this be true, 'twere fitter I were dead.
(I.iii.73-74)

Nonetheless, join him she does and in an absurd travesty of the conventions they are flouting, Annabella and Giovanni kneel down before
one another, exchange vows, swear they will remain constant, and
seal their bond with a kiss. Like her brother, Annabella initially
lacks a genuine sense of guilt. Since she seems not to know right
from wrong, Eliot's verdict (i.e., that Annabella is "virtually a
moral defective") appears valid here.\footnote{Eliot, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 174.}

Yet Annabella's slight hesitation is, I think, important.
Giovanni comes to her with a "tortur'd soule," works upon her sense
of pity, and says that in trying to repent he has

\begin{quote}
Done all that smooth'd-cheeke vertue could advise;
But found all bootelesse: 'tis my destiny
That you must eyther love, or I must dye.
(I.iii.81-83)
\end{quote}

No thinker, Annabella is overcome by Giovanni's bombast; like the
pitchman he is, he pressures his sister into "buying" his love. To
prove that his intentions are holy, Giovanni applies the same
specious logic that failed to impress the Friar. With the naive
Annabella he has more success.

\begin{quote}
Neerenesse in birth or blood doth but perswade
A neerer neerenesse in affection.
I have askt counsell of the holy church,
Who tells me I may love you; and 'tis just
That, since I may, I should; and will, yes, will!
(I.iii.93-97)
\end{quote}

Giovanni lies to his sister here, for no churchman has given his
sanction to the affair. Meanwhile, Annabella is not so daring in
her yearning. She blushes, for instance, when she reveals the long
standing sexual attraction she has had for Giovanni. And while a
blush may at this moment indicate little moral health, her embarrassment is a good deal more than Giovanni displays. But even at this, Annabella's actions are far from blameless. Regardless of what is responsible for her eventual submission, she is willing to admit that she has long possessed an unnatural affection for her brother.

In this scene Giovanni's moral state appears to have worsened. He begins by soliloquizing that he is "lost" and that "the more I strive, I love" (I.iii.2). He claims the Friar's advice has netted him nothing and has therefore forsaken it; now, however, he shows an awareness of sin:

O that it were not in religion sinne
To make our love a god, and worship it!
(I.iii.6-7)

No longer trying to suppress his passion, Giovanni gives up and attributes it to an outside agency:

... 'tis not, I know,
My lust, but 'tis my fate that leads me on.
(I.iii.15-16)

The result is ironic. In effect, Giovanni equates lust and fate; his assertions to the contrary are simply wilfull self-deception. To justify his evil, he has replaced a providential view of life with the machine-like force of fate, so as to evade responsibility for his actions. And by denying responsibility for what he does, Giovanni ironically undercuts his dreams of individuality and self-mastery. He is unwittingly reducing his humanity while thinking he is exalting it. At one and the same time, he exerts
his will in one direction and rejects it in another. Thus, it is difficult to picture him as a dashing libertine; he has by now become a rather pathetic figure beset with weaknesses he does not recognize.

From this point on Giovanni and Annabella degenerate rapidly. Once they have consummated their love, they become disgustingly coy in their erotic banter with one another. Teased about her loss of chastity, Annabella, delighted, replies:

Oh, y'are wanton!
Tell on't, y'are best; doe.
(II.i.14-15)

Her brother rewards her with:

Kisse me--so! Thus hung Jove on Laeda's necke,
And suck't divine ambrosia from her lips.
(II.i.16-17)

The analogy, however accurate, goes unnoticed by them both. Unaware that he has rejected reason, Giovanni ironically keeps up his "logical" front before the Friar and still argues in behalf of his actions:

What I have done I'le prove both fit and good.
It is a principall, which you have taught
When I was yet your scholler, that the frame
And composition of the minde doth follow
The frame and composition of body:
So, where the bodies furniture is beauty,
The mindes must needs be vertue; which allowed,
Vertue it selfe is reason but refin'd,
And love the quintessence of that: this proves
My sisters beauty being rarely faire
Is rarely vertuous; chiefly in her love,
And chiefly in that love, her love to me.
If hers to me, then so is mine to her;
Since in like causes are effects alike.
(II.v.13-26)
This argument is perversely Neo-Platonic. Giovanni distorts truth when he contends that virtue "it seife is reason but refin'd", and that love is "the quintessence" of reason. In the Symposium, Socrates values love only when sensual love has been supplanted by a higher, purely rational love divorced from the senses; so too does Marsilio Ficino in his Commentary on Plato's Symposium (1482), one of the key analyses of love in the Renaissance Neo-Platonic tradition of love. But Giovanni is trying, more lamely than he suspects, to justify physical union on non-physical premises. Even if we were to concede some truth to his reasoning, it is foolish to assume that he is virtuous merely because Annabella is, especially since it is obvious that Annabella is no longer virtuous, if she ever was. Giovanni's reasoning is still specious, and still the Friar refutes it:

O ignorance in knowledge! Long agoe,
How often have I warn'd thee this before!
Indeed, if we were sure there were no deity,
Nor heaven nor hell, then to be lead alone
By natures light—as were philosophers
Of elder times—might instance some defence.
But 'tis not so: then, madman, thou wilt finde
That nature is in heavens positions blind.

(Il.v.27-34)

As before, the Friar contends that Giovanni is badly mistaken in assuming that pre-Christian philosophy takes precedence over the doctrines of Christian morality. Trying to be reasonable, the Friar supposes for a moment that were God not to exist, Giovanni would yet have only "some" defense for incest.5 But God does exist for the

5Robert Ornstein, op. cit., p. 206, maintains that the Friar "implies that philosophy and 'natural law' support rather than refute Giovanni's arguments" when he admits that "incestuous desire is natural, though forbidden by divine law." I find this hard to accept. After all, the Friar says only that Giovanni "might" have an argument if natural law prevailed. He uses merely a rhetorical hypothesis which, in fact, is "not so."
Friar, who knows that "natures light" (i.e., reason) is finally an insufficient means of moral illumination for any man. Again, the Friar could conscientiously take no other view. If he is categorical, what else, in the last resort, can he be as a Catholic clergyman?

In a childish effort to embarrass the Friar, Giovanni then describes Annabella's physical charms. Beginning with her lips, breath, eyes, hair, etc., he deliberately proceeds until "what is else for pleasure fram'd/ Least I offend your eares, shall goe unnamed" (II.v.57-58). This catalogue of feminine features is a parody of the ancient conception of the great chain of being and suggests how Giovanni is actually descending the chain from levels of spirituality to levels of animality.

Owing both to a sense of guilt and to the fact that she has become pregnant, Annabella, on the other hand, becomes contrite, does penance before the Friar, and begs for mercy. Curiously, he tells her she must accept

First, for your honours safety that you marry
The Lord Soranzo; next, to save your soule,
Leave off this life, and henceforth live to him.

(III.vi.36-38)

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6The idea that reliance upon "natures light" might be morally destructive is fairly commonplace. The Christian-humanists through their pronounced familiarity with classical literature were aware of such a danger. In Paradise Regained, for example, Satan tempts Christ to "be led by Nature's light" and abandon "Moses' law." But Christ replies that "he who receives/ Light from above, from the fountain of light,/ No other doctrine needs. . ."
The Friar appears to resort to expediency here, and again with mixed motives. In the first place, since he, Giovanni, and Putana alone know that Annabella has been sharing Giovanni's bed, the Friar feels he must provide the girl with more than religious solace. Consequently, he offers Annabella spiritual guidance and practical advice.

Nevertheless, while trying to be helpful, the Friar is prompting Annabella to cheat Soranzo, even though he knows nothing of her pregnancy. Once more faced with a choice between the lesser of two evils, the Friar chooses to risk a slight to Soranzo's pride and already dubious reputation. Critics who think the Friar muddled here appear to have overlooked his sincere kindness. He obviously feels the same way about Annabella as he does about Giovanni: both are misguided delinquents in his eyes. If he compromises with values, as he does, it is because of the charity he shows them both. But rather than to see her continue sinning, he tells Annabella that she is "almost condemn'd alive" (III.vi.8), leaves her an opportunity to repent, and, perhaps, redeem herself.

True repentance, however, is still some distance from Annabella. After Soranzo marries her and finds that she is pregnant, Annabella taunts him with his ignorance:

Beastly man, why 'tis thy fate,
I sued not to thee; for, but that I thought
Your over-loving lordship would have runne
Mad on denyall, had ye e lent me time,
I would have told 'ee in what case I was . . .

(IV.iii.15-19)

When Soranzo tortures her in order to learn the identity of her lover,
Anabella stubbornly refuses to divulge it. Instead, she mockingly sings,

Che morte piu dolce che morire per amore?7

It is not until the beginning of the fifth act that Anabella sincerely repents for her sins: "My conscience now stands up against my lust/ With dispositions charactred in guilt" (V.i.9-10). When the Friar coincidentally happens by her open window, Anabella calls him to deliver

This paper double lin'd with tears and blood:
Which being granted, here I sadly vow
Repentance, and a leaving of that life
I long have dyed in.

(V.i.34-37)

She bids the Friar to have Giovanni "read it, and repent" (V.i.47), and when he consents, Anabella feels that she can "welcome death" (V.i.59).

In contrast, Giovanni never repents. Bursting with pride and disdain, he continues his onslaught against what he thinks is conventional morality:

Busie opinion is an idle foole
That, as a schoole-rod, keepes a child in awe,
Frights the unexperienc't temper of the mind:
So did it mee, who, ere my precious sister
Was married, thought all tast of love would dye
In such a contract; but I finde no change
Of pleasure in this formall law of sports.
Shee is still one to mee, and every kisse
As sweet and as delicious as the first
I reap't, when yet the priviledge of youth
Intitled her a virgine.

(V.iii.1-11)

7Sherman translates, "What death more sweet than to die for love?"
The fact that he is now an adulterer compounds Giovanni's sins. Furthermore, words like "tast," "sports," "sweet," and "delicious" assure us that, whether he knows it or not, he is deeply immersed in the senses. The "superstitious feare" the Friar offers him, Giovanni hurls aside; in defiance, he scorns the Friar's "peevish chattering." But irony undercuts all that Giovanni now says or does. He implies here that he is not "unexperienced," but when first told that Annabella is pregnant, he stumbles about in confusion. "Oh, mee!" he wails, "I have a world of businesse in my head" (III.iii.29-30), and, "How does this newes perplex mee!" (III.iii.32). Shown Annabella's letter of repentance, Giovanni is asked by the Friar, "Why d'ee change colour, sonne?" (V.iii.27). As an intellectual Giovanni has presumed to argue with the moral wisdom of the ages, but in fact is too foolish to cope with an elementary biological phenomenon: procreation.

Motivated by fear and uncertainty, Giovanni becomes even more rash. He disobeys the Friar and, determined to "glut himselfe in his own destruction" (V.iv.55), rushes to a final rendezvous with his sister. Oblivious to the trap waiting for him, he allows his pride unthinkable liberty:

... why I hold fate
Clasp't in my fist, and could command the course
Of times eternall motion ...  
(V.v.11-13)

Neither Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine nor his Mortimer of Edward II exhibits a greater lack of insight into their respective destinies. Like Cyril Tourneur's D'Amville of The Atheist's Tragedy,
Giovanni insists that he cannot believe in God's law unless he is given a "sign." He mocks the Last Judgment, convinced that

'twere somewhat strange
To see the waters burne: could I believe
This might be true, I could believe as well
There might be hell or heaven.

(V.v.32-35)

His face, says Annabella, contains "distraction and a troubled countenance" (V.v.46), but Giovanni's conscience is barren. Entirely self-infatuated, he orders his sister to pray before he kills her for revenge. What revenge we ask? Upon what does he base what he appears to think is a just act? There seems to be only one answer: in his solipsistic universe, Giovanni fancies that he is entitled to some compensation for Annabella's marriage. The revenge he wants derives from nothing other than a frantic jealousy. Tormented by the thought that he has been spurned by Annabella, he disregards her futile efforts to convert him to repentance. Closer than ever to the fury of Soranzo, he protests,

If ever after times should heare
Of our fast-knit affections, though perhaps
The laves of conscience and of civill use
May justify blame us, yet when they but know
Our loves, that love will wipe away that rigour,
Which would in other incests bee abhorre'd.

(V.v.68-73)

In a sense, Giovanni is more honest in this speech than he has ever been. Gone are his attempts to justify incest rationally; in their place is the endeavor to justify passion by means of itself. Hence, Giovanni's "fast-knit affections" are now admittedly responsible for his quarrel with religious and social conventions. He now frankly
elevates his emotions above reason and the "lawes of conscience" and "civill use." He presumes, moreover, that he and Annabella will reap the mercy of society once their incestuous love is recognized for its form. But if he has doubts about the legitimacy of incest ("lawes . . . may justly blame us"), he dispells them by savagely killing his sister "to save [her] fame" (V.v.84). Her dying condemnation ("Brother unkind, unkind" [V.v.93], contains words of horror at Giovanni's unnaturalness. Still, he ignores her, and ruthlessly carves her heart from her breast.

Then, with seemingly methodical and premeditated movements, Giovanni impales Annabella's heart on his sword and descends to the banquet hall to boldly "act [his] last and greater part!" (V.v.106). The heart, a conventional symbol for passion, has a distressingly overt, sexual overtone when fixed to the sword. In fact, the orgiastic joy that Giovanni experiences in mutilating Annabella's body fittingly caps the moral mutilation of which he has been long guilty. No more the troublesome student, Giovanni is now a fiend.

The denouement is swift. Proud that he is "a most glorious executioner" (V.vi.35), Giovanni stabs Soranzo and is, in turn, stabbed by Vasques, Soranzo's servant. Told by the Cardinal to "call for mercy," Giovanni sneers, "Mercy? why I have found it in this justice" (V.vi.108). Unrepentant and depraved to the end, he makes one dying wish:

Where e're I goe, let mee enjoy this grace,
Freely to view my Annabella's face.

(V.vi.112-113)
Ironically, perhaps Giovanni hopes that Annabella will, like him, be damned. At any rate, he dies, surely one of the most dissolute and debauched heroes of Jacobean drama.

II

The main plot of 'Tis Pity, as I have interpreted it, has often received lengthy critical discussion which amounts, for the most part, either to condemnation of the play or unusual evaluations that free Ford from any moral commitments. Some critics believe Ford is so fond of his incestuous lovers that he employs them as a challenge to conventional morality. Love, they maintain, is Ford's one, supreme value, even when in conflict with accepted moral principles. Assuming that one works primarily with the main plot, this argument can be made fairly persuasive. After all, it is true that Annabella and Giovanni, for all their sins, are glorified in comparison with some of the other characters. Both are young and handsome and exude a kind of vitality that has its attraction. They oppose religious doctrines that no one, save for two or three lesser characters in their world, believes in any way. We might say that Giovanni and Annabella are romantic figures fighting against a moral absolutism which would rob them of their individuality and freedom to love, were they to agree to it. But is it possible to say these things with conviction? To do so, is to ignore the relationship of the subplots to the main plot. If the subplots are significant they must in some way qualify the themes of the main plot and so provide
us with a knowledge of what Ford was ultimately suggesting.

Because of what she calls an Elizabethan "feeling for allegory," Professor Bradbrook believes that a contrast on the level of action is achieved "between different moods (almost different genus) of drama in the plot and subplot." If this is correct, then it seems to me that the subplots in "Tis Pity are surely worth examining. They have, of course, already received some attention, but it has been mostly negative. Miss Bradbrook herself says that "there is no interconnection between the comic characters and the serious ones" in "Tis Pity." And Robert Ornstein argues that the minor characters exist mainly to "create lewd antimasques to romantic tragedy."

I suggest, however, that the minor characters in "Tis Pity have a definite purpose: as foils to the major characters, they reflect deeper and more subtle levels of characterization in the protagonists. But as foils the minor characters need not make explicit, direct statements about their counterparts in the main plot. They may, as they seem to do here, merely afford us a means of comparison by which we can gauge and better evaluate the actions of Giovanni, Annabella, and the Friar. For each of these three figures is deliberately contrasted with other characters whose primary

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8 Bradbrook, op. cit., p. 44.
9 Ibid., p. 256.
10 Ornstein, op. cit., p. 203.
function is to show us how evil—or how "romantically" good—
Giovanni and Annabella really are. Giovanni, obviously, can be
compared and contrasted with his three rivals for Annabella's love:
Bergetto, Grimaldi, and Soranzo. Annabella has parallels in Putana,
Hippolita, and Philotis. And the Friar, finally, can be likened to
Florio, Donado, the Cardinal, and Richardetto. If we dismiss
Bergetto's servant, Poggio, we have only to contend with Vasques,
who is more ambiguous than any other character and must be dealt
with separately.

The principal subplot of 'Tis Pity involves Hippolita, wife
to Richardetto; Soranzo, one of Annabella's suitors; and Vasques,
Soranzo's loyal servant. Hippolita and Soranzo have long had an
adulterous relationship, and it is only of late that he has shifted
his affections to Annabella. Hippolita and Soranzo are foils to
Annabella and Giovanni, for by their adultery they also have violated
Christian ethics. Though their sin may not be so revolting as in-
est, nevertheless it leads them to deceit, treachery, and murder.

Like Annabella and her nurse, Putana, Hippolita is lustful;
unlike them she is extremely wilful and proud. Furious when Soranzo
ends their affair, she sets out to be revenged for his "infidelity,"
and confronts him in a scene similar to the initial debate between
Giovanni and the Friar. Spurred on by wounded self-esteem, Hippolita
rages at Soranzo until at last he threatens to leave her presence.
In a burlesque of the Friar's advice to Giovanni, Soranzo sophis-
tically replies:
The vowes I made, if you remember well,
Were wicked and unlawful; 'twere more sinne
To keepe them then to breake them . . .
(II.ii.87-89)

When Hippolita continues to rave, Soranzo tells her she is "past all rules of sence" (II.ii.60), and later,

Woeman, come here no more;
Learn to repent and dye; for, by my honour,
I hate thee and thy lust: you have beene too foule.
(II.ii.100-102)

Soranzo's advice is, then, a parody of the Friar's to Giovanni and Annabella. Soranzo, no less than Giovanni, is oblivious to spiritual health; his "honour" is an absurd pretence. Hippolita, refusing to listen, turns to Vasques for aid. By offering him her wealth and her body, she believes she can obtain his help in getting revenge on Soranzo. She is badly mistaken. At the wedding feast for Soranzo and Annabella, she is tricked by Vasques, drinks from the poisoned goblet intended for Soranzo, and dies cursing him:

Maist thou live
To father bastards; may [Annabella's] wombe bring forth Monsters; and dye together in yor sinnes,
Hated, scorn'd and unpittied . . .
(IV.i.103-105)

Notwithstanding her prophecy, Hippolita's death certainly foreshadows Giovanni's. Like him she is determined to do as she pleases and like him she pays the price for doing so. She, too, loses all sense of reason and is driven blindly to her destruction.

Soranzo is equally selfish. Before Hippolita he is restrained in his arguments but when she refuses to listen to him he becomes angry. Like Giovanni, Soranzo imagines himself a complete individualist.
who can choose his own moral (or immoral) conduct, and like Giovanni we see him primarily in an ironic light. On the one hand, he smoothly glosses over Hippolita's complaints by counseling her to restrain herself. On the other hand, he also lacks self-control when his own profane love is injured. Enraged that Annabella is carrying another man's child, he loses his composure, seizes Annabella by the hair, and drags her up and down his chamber. "Come strumpet, famous whore!" (IV.iii.1), he bellows, struggling to learn the name of her secret lover.

While being cuckolded would scarcely be wished on anyone, in the case of Soranzo we are almost glad that he is. His dealings with Hippolita have been mean-spirited, and, regardless of the harm done his alleged honor, his treatment of Annabella is utterly sadistic. Some of the critics I have earlier noted contend that Soranzo is somewhat responsible for making it appear as though Ford partly approves the love of Annabella and Giovanni. By creating Soranzo as despicable, they maintain, Ford makes Giovanni seem preferable to us and hints that incestuous love is viable under the circumstances.

To be sure, Soranzo is worthless. Deceitful, arrogant, and lecherous he arouses intense dislike. But do his melodramatic actions make Giovanni's seem less evil than they are? I doubt it. What we see is that Giovanni is equally pernicious and selfish. In fact, as foils, these two lechers are reflections of each other. In the fifth act, for instance, when we witness Giovanni's bizarre and ruthless murder of Annabella, we can immediately sense that what
Ford has done with Soranzo he has done deliberately—to supply us a means by which to measure Giovanni's outrageous actions. Their respective treatments of Annabella are so similar that it is difficult to see why critics draw such sharp distinctions between them. Soranzo has flouted traditional values as thoroughly as Giovanni. Both have lived primarily for their senses. When Soranzo sees the chance to better satisfy his sensual appetite, he marries Annabella and discards Hippolita in one, neat movement.

Bergetto is another of Giovanni's foils. Nephew to Donado and suitor to Annabella, Bergetto is literally a simpleton who confounds his chances for marriage through utter lunacy. The two of them, Giovanni and Bergetto, both ignore the advice and counsel of older, wiser men; both intend to follow their own egocentric plans. Before he is rebuffed by Annabella, Bergetto says that he can "buy a head-full of wit at any time," and until then "shall have the wench, myne unkle sayes" (I.ii.129-131). But when resisted by her, Bergetto soon forgets Annabella, is attracted to Philotis, Richardetto's niece, and tries to woo her. Donado becomes impatient with him: "Wilt thou be a foole stil?" (I.iv.47), he asks Bergetto. When his nephew continues his senseless behavior, Donado grows even more impatient: "Get you home, sir, and looke you keep within doores till I returne" (II.iv.49-50). Like the Friar, Donado rebukes his ward; his command is an ultimatum. And like Giovanni, Bergetto obeys, but scornfully: "Now! that were a jest indeede; I scorne it, yfaith" (II.iv.51-52).

He has made up his mind to have Philotis in spite of Donado:
'Sfoot, I will have the wench, if he were
tenne uncles, in despight of his nose, Poggio.
(III.1.6-7)

When cautioned by Poggio to remember his uncle's command, Bergetto
flatly asserts:

Hang him, old doating rascal! no, I say
I will have her.
(III.1.24-25)

Bergetto is obviously a fool. So finally is Giovanni. Neither ever
fully knows what he is doing, and while Giovanni may display more
awareness of his own plight, like Bergetto he badly needs guidance.

Donado, in contrast, is a foil to the Friar. With Florio,
father to Annabella and Giovanni, he represents a secular, but
basically moral part of the society of Parma. All three men are
advisers to younger members of the play. Donado, for example, goes
out of his way to promote Bergetto's suit to Annabella. When
Bergetto is mistakenly killed by Grimaldi, Donado is grief-stricken:
"Alas, poore creature! he ment no man harme;/ That I am sure of"
(III.ix.8-9). Likewise, since he loves his daughter, Florio "would
not have her marry wealth but love" (I.iv.11). When she seems ailing,
he immediately calls for a physician and shows a normal parental
concern for her. Similarly, when she becomes sick in the early stages
of pregnancy, Florio does his unknowing best to see that Annabella is
well cared for. He joins Donado in sorrow over the death of Bergetto,
and he quite rightly protests against the Cardinal's justice in pro-
tecting Grimaldi from punishment. Throughout the play Florio is opposed
to tyranny and sin only to be overwhelmed by discovering that his son
is the most heinous sinner in a world besotted with filth. Yet, since both Florio and Donado attempt to wed Annabella to a fool (Bergetto), they too are tainted with the moral blight that pervades Parma.

We should realize by now that Hippolita is not the only person who thirsts for revenge. Since Grimaldi, Soranzo, Richardetto, and Giovanni all strive to retaliate for the "insults" they have received, the revenge motif provides yet another means by which Ford can compare and contrast characters and complicate his themes. Grimaldi is no better than the others. After he fails to obtain a love potion to seduce Annabella, he quickly decides to murder Soranzo, his rival. By making Giovanni a revenger, then, Ford adds one more telling mark to the depraved nature of his incestuous hero. It is at this point that the critics who argue that Ford condones Giovanni's actions seem to have missed a significant parallel. Again, it is a minor character who supplies us with a new way of looking at Giovanni.

As I have said earlier, Annabella shows more moral health than her brother. Compared to Putana, her nurse, Annabella appears even better.11 Putana is an outright bawd and makes no effort to be anything else. Informed by Annabella that Giovanni is her lover, Putana allays any pangs of conscience her mistress might feel by arguing, ". . . if a young wench feele the fitt upon her, let her take any body--father or brother, all is one" (II.1.45-47). Devoid of any

11The Italian noun puttana means "whore."
ethical sense and crassly materialistic, Putana tells Annabella that except for the "speech of the people [incest] were nothing" (II.i. 49). Perhaps the most depraved person in the play, Putana several times shows her prurience by implying that she, too, would satisfy Giovanni's lust if given the chance. Lacking the opportunity, she feeds vicariously on Annabella, expressing sheer delight when told in detail of her mistress's affair. To choose a spouse Putana advises that Annabella

Commend a man for his qualities, but take a husband as he is a plaine-sufficient, naked man; such a one is for your bed . . .

(I.ii.108-111)

But like nearly everyone in the play, Putana is aware of sin, and sooner or later reveals it. After Annabella is discovered pregnant Putana registers first a fear of social degradation ("sham'd for-ever!" [III.iii.2]), and then a horror of divine retribution ("heaven forgive'ee! 'Tis too late to repent, now heaven helpe us!" [III.iii. 11]). Later, Putana is easily duped by Vasques, Soranzo's servant, and tells him that Annabella's child will also be Giovanni's. Once he knows this, Vasques and his cohorts blind Putana—punishment that symbolizes her gross immorality.

As a foil to Putana, Annabella appears less evil than she is. When compared to Philotis, Richardetto's niece, Annabella fares less well. Since Richardetto has been cuckolded by Soranzo and since he seeks revenge, he uses Philotis to gain access to Soranzo through Annabella. Then, after she has unknowingly helped her uncle, Philotis is conveniently dispatched to a convent. By this time Richardetto
has come to understand the evil implicit in revenge (i.e., his hatred for Soranzo has been responsible for the death of Bergetto), and he leaves his niece with the wisdom that "who dyes a virgine, lives a saint on earth" (IV. ii. 28). Philitis is strikingly different from the early Annabella. Pure of heart and soul, she departs for the convent with a display of piety extraordinary for the world of *'Tis Pity:

Then farewell, world, and worldly thoughts, adieu! 
Welcome, chast vows, myself I yeeld to you.

(IV. ii.29-30)

We are meant to see a similarity between Philitis and Annabella when, in the fifth act, Annabella exhibits the same contrition, the same piety:

Pleasures, farewell, and all yee thriftlesse minutes
Wherein false joyes have spum a weary life!
To these my fortunes now I take my leave.

(V.i.1-5)

Vasques alone remains for comment. Our first glimpse of him (I.ii) tells us little except that he respects his master, Soranzo, to the extent that he will fight for him. Like Putana and Poggio, Vasques is a servant, totally faithful to his master's wishes. In his short-lived combat with Grimaldi, for example, Vasques obeys Soranzo, wounds Grimaldi, and then defends Soranzo's honor before Florio:

Yet the villaine of words, Signior Florio,
may be as such as would make any unspleen'd dove chollerick; blame not my lord in this.

(I.ii.61-63)
Vasques's counter-plot against Hippolita is also undertaken to protect Soranzo, and in an aside he reveals his true intentions:

"Worke you that way, old moule? then I have wind of you" (II.ii.151)

After he has seen his master die and has killed Giovanni, Vasques explains to the Cardinal that he has lived according to the selfless servant's code:

... for know, my lord, I am by birth a Spaniard, brought forth my countrey in my youth by Lord Soranzo's father, whom whilst he lived I serv'd faithfully; since whose death I have beene to this man as I was to him. What I have done was duty, and I repent nothing, but that the losse of my life had not ransom'd his.

(V.vi.122-128)

And Vasques is pardoned by the Cardinal for the same reason that he committed his crimes:

Fellow, for thee, since what thou did'st was done
Not for thy selfe, being no Italian,
Wee banish thee for ever....

(V.vi.149-151)

I think we must question this verdict. How is it that Vasques and Grimaldi should both be banished by the Cardinal when they have openly contributed to, and sometimes master-minded, plots of violence and revenge?\(^\text{12}\)

One way of explaining the Cardinal's decision is to contrast him with the Friar. Like Putana, the Cardinal is materialistic, and when he ends the play he shows it:

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\(^{12}\)Although Grimaldi mistakenly murdered Bergetto, his intentions were still murderous, and when the Cardinal absolved him of his crime, justice was obviously not enforced.
Take up these slaughtered bodies, see them buried;  
And all the gold and jewells, or whatsoever,  
Confiscate by the canons of the church,  
We ceaze upon to the popes proper use.  
(V.vi.156-160)

This implied indictment of the Cardinal need not be interpreted as an indictment of Christian morality. Ford's hostility seems directed against the Cardinal as a man and a cleric, not as a representative Christian. And Grimaldi, a close friend of the Cardinal, escapes justice because of the latter's influence and power. Besides, the one sustaining moral force of the play—the Friar—has reluctantly fled Parma and its vile moral disorder. His absence seems to indicate that corruption now extends to almost every level of society.

With Vasques, the problem of characterization is more complex. On the plane of "simple characterization" (i.e., what a character says and does in relation to what other characters say and do), he is ambiguous. On the level of language (i.e., what a character says in relation to a general pattern established by the language), he can more clearly be seen as a semi-choric commentator, as one who stands somewhat above the other figures in the play and speaks mainly to the audience. It is significant that for all his evil, Vasques never involves himself in sins of the flesh. He is not, as so many other characters are, driven by lust. Rather, his outstanding attribute is cold reserve. Although detached because of his social position, Vasques is the supreme rationalist of the play, and is thereby aloof from much of the emotional riot that fills 'Tis Pity.
His power of reasoning is no better illustrated than in the scene where Soranzo viciously abuses Annabella. With a seemingly authentic note of incredulity, Vasques stammers: "Sir, you must be ruled by your reason, and not by your fury: that were unhumane and beastly: (IV.iii.85-87). He tells Soranzo to "smother" his revenge and trust that he, Vasques, will uncover the girl's secret. When he successfully tricks Putana, we see that he is, besides relentlessly rational, a master of pretence. In the course of the play, he effortlessly dupes Putana, Hippolita, Giovanni, and Annabella.

Intelligence is required to be a good actor, and intelligence is a large part of Vasques' character. Although he seems to lose control of himself when he kills Hippolita, he remains collected. He condemns Hippolita, calmly explains his reasons for killing her, and watches her die:

Dye in charity, for shame. This thing of malice, this woman, had privately corrupted me with promise of marriage, under this politique reconciliatio to poysn my lord, whiles shee might laugh at his confusion on his marriage day. I promis'd her faire, but I knew what my reward should have been . . . . . . and now have fitted her a just payment in her owne coyne. . .
(IV.i.80-89)

But it would be unfair to say that Vasques does not enjoy his cunning successes. After learning from Putana that Giovanni is Annabella's lover, Vasques revels in perverse pleasure:

Why this is excellent and above expectation! Her owne brother? O, horrible! to what a height of liberty in damnation hath the devill trayn'd our age!
(IV.iii.268-271)
Then he instantly sets about to trap Giovanni.

Ford has been careful to provide Vasques with attributes which no other character possesses to the same degree. Emotionally frigid, intelligent, detached, loyal, trustworthy, and selfless—he is all these things when he wants to be, even though his inability to feel compassionately makes him unattractive. Dedicated to his master, he also occasionally shapes Soranzo. And in his own way, Vasques is as resolved in what he does as the Friar is.

It should be noted that the words "resolve" and "resolution" occur over and over again throughout the play. These words seem to take on a special meaning in 'Tis Pity, particularly in conjunction with Vasques. He prods Soranzo to revenge until at last Soranzo agrees:

I am resolv'd; urge not another word;  
My thoughts are great, and all as resolute  
As thunder.  

(V.ii.10-12)

Aware that an emotionally unstable person is apt to forget or alter his resolutions, Vasques fans Soranzo's discontent into hatred:

Good sir, trouble not your selfe about  
other business then your owne resolution;  
remember that time lost cannot be recal'd.  

(V.ii.17-19)

And when the guests have assembled for Soranzo's birthday celebration, Vasques hastens to "a little edge [Soranzo's] resolution: (V.iv.25), and later advises him to be "wise and resolute" (V.vi.2).

The people most self-assured are those who most frequently
acknowledge that they are resolute or resolved. Hippolita warns Vasques to "resolve thy selfe" (II.ii.137), for she is sure that Soranzo will betray him. Later, she says that she is "arr’d in [her] resolves" (III.vi.13) for revenge. More than once Giovanni declares that he is "resolved" in his love for Annabella, and when Annabella agrees to marry Soranzo, the Friar sighs: "Timely resolv’d" (III.vi.53). After Annabella openly repents before Giovanni, he questions her: "And what? you’le now be honest—that's resolv'd?" (V.v.15). Annabella counters by warning her brother to "resolve" himself that the banquet is a trap. Finally, Grimaldi is "resolved" that he will kill Soranzo; and before she leaves for the convent, Philotis asks, "Uncle, shall I resolve to be a nun?" (IV.ii.22). This verbal pattern suggests that Ford wants us to ponder the nature of resolution.

If Vasques and the Friar are two truly resolute persons in the play, it is because they have behind them an equally resolute code of ethics. By basing his decisions upon faith in God, the Friar enjoys a firm ethical footing. Likewise, by basing his decisions upon a manmade, but equally solid, set of standards, Vasques has the sanction of centuries-old customs grounded in the master/servant relationship. By staying within the confines of his "code" (i.e., by remaining faithful to his master, above all), Vasques has much in common with the Friar. Neither he nor the Friar questions the validity of their moral codes; they willingly accept them and live
by them. Too, since Vasques has successively served Soranzo and his father, he knows the value of being ruled. Thus, when he tells Soranzo to "be ruled" by reason and not passion, Vasques is not restricting his advice to merely the present moment. Be it self-discipline or the avowal of an external "faith," Vasques recognizes the need for restraint. So does the Friar. When Giovanni insists on making his final visit to Annabella, the Friar commands him not to: "Be rul'd, you sh' not goe." (V.iii.61). Earlier, Richardetto orders Bergetto to leave off his silly lovemaking:

Be rul'd: when wee have done what's fitt to doe,  
Then you may kisse your fill, and bed her too.  
(III.v.50-51)

And when Soranzo fails to abide by reason, Vasques interjects, "bee rul'd, as you respect your honour, or you marr all" (IV.iii.105).

Again we find Ford consciously working with language, for it is with the aid of these recurring words and phrases that he pieces his play together. Through their frequency, words like "blood," "reason," "duty," "justice," and "fate" become imagistic and assist in recalling many preceding scenes. The word "blood," for instance, occurs over thirty times. Often it is a synonym for blood-relationship, as when Giovanni argues that Annabella is bound to him "by the links/ Of blood, of reason: (I.i.31-32). At other times "blood" is connected with violence, as when Hippolita calls Soranzo's lust a "sensual rage of blood" (II.ii.28). And by occasionally overlapping the meanings of the word, Ford achieves irony and also unifies his play. So it is when Richardetto surmises that Annabella's "sicknesse is a fulnesse
of her blood" (III.iv.8). That is, owing to her passion (blood), Annabella has become pregnant by her brother (her blood).

D. K. Anderson, in one of the few studies of Ford's imagery, has pointed out that a sustained verbal pattern also exists in the use of the words "heart" and "banquet." Throughout the play, says Anderson, "Ford depicts love in terms of feast and food; hence the love-death scene between Giovanni and Annabella is symbolized not only by the torn-out heart but by the banquet of pleasure." Since this seems to be so, "Tis Pity gains as much through its language, as through its subplots.

Thus, the moral conflict in "Tis Pity She's a Whore has far reaching implications. In the first place, Ford does not sanction incest. Annabella and Giovanni are not his example of virtuous lovers, nor are they elevated to a position superior to Christian morality. The Hippolita/Soranzo subplot is a reflection of the disease which has infected their minds--indeed, the minds of nearly everyone in the play--the disease of self-will and self-love which finds its expression in rank carnality. Giovanni is placed on a level with, if not beneath, adulterers, fools, sensualists, and murderers. By her repentance, Annabella shows all the more that Giovanni is "lost" in madness and will be damned for his sins. Simultaneously, Ford implies that one


14 Ibid., p. 211.
will not be "lost," if one exerts one's will properly.

Vasques is pardoned and banished for at least two reasons. The Cardinal, mercenary though he is, is in a position of authority and has the power to rule over the wills of others. Also, inasmuch as Vasques has not perverted his reason, and because he subscribes and remains loyal to a "faith," however un-Christian, it appears that Ford considers a selfless commitment to external values a measure of some worth. When reason panders to passion, the press of emotion seen in characters like Giovanni, Annabella, Soranzo, Hippolita, Putana, and Bergetto erupts and destroys the equilibrium between reason and passion that must be maintained in man if he is to thrive in amity with others. Misused, reason becomes annihilated by selfish, egotistical surges of insane individualism—an individualism which seems to generate death. In the last analysis, Ford's final view at the end of the play appears remarkably close to the Friar's starting point:

... better 'tis
To blesse the sunne then reason why it shines...
CHAPTER III

THE BROKEN HEART

In some respects, the world of The Broken Heart is related to the world of 'Tis Pity. Ford has again focused upon characters whose lives are governed far more by passion than by reason, and again he indicates that loss of internal stability ends in self-destruction. Throughout, however, a quiet and subdued tone pervades The Broken Heart which modifies and softens the actions of the most crucial characters--Ithocles, Orgilus, Penthea, and Calantha. Violence, when it occurs, is restrained; physical pain and mental anguish slowly consume their victims; personal responsibility and public duty relentlessly grind them into an intense suffering and unbearable duality. When they die, they die either languishing under the burden of their sorrows or silently and deliberately commit suicide. Love and death are inextricably bound together, and over the entire play an indefinable fate hangs suspended like a dark cloud.

The setting for The Broken Heart is Sparta, and the characters, mostly aristocrats, are members of the royal family, counsellors of state, or wealthy noblemen. Since this play, like 'Tis Pity, involves a rather unusual treatment of moral issues, we might guess that Ford selected Sparta for his setting for the same reasons that he chose Renaissance Italy as the setting for 'Tis Pity. But Sparta has a

1Sherman, op. cit., xxvii, notes that in The Broken Heart "Ford throws down the gauntlet to orthodox morality by placing a thoroughly pure woman [Penthea] in a genuine moral dilemma."
definite dramatic advantage over Italy. Because it is as far from
England in time as it is in space, Sparta offers Ford a temporal
perspective as well as a geographic one. The result is a uniquely
artificial, nearly dream-like quality that effectively contributes
to the play's overall tone. With more than a hint of allegory, the
characters are given names suggestive of the dominant trait each
possesses and the figurative role each will play, almost as if they
are personified "humours" as in Ben Jonson's comedies. There is
reason to suspect, too, that this world owes much to the pastoral
settings of Beaumont and Fletcher. Sparta, because of its legendary,
royal splendor, is ideally fitted to the symbolic, ritualistic ac-
tions and themes of the play. For in The Broken Heart we are pre-
sented with a privileged class who live restrained lives within the
confines of a highly civilized and refined culture, a class who
continually struggle to control and, if necessary, quell the torrent
of their emotions.

A major problem in treating The Broken Heart will be overcome
as soon as we realize that the plot, as artificial as the setting,
is highly unrealistic. Situations and events are so contrived that
they are preposterous in relation to simple cause and effect. As a
consequence, some critics are perplexed by various scenes, and in
view of their criteria (a rather vague insistence upon realism in

2Characters are identified by such attributes as "angry," "vexation," "noise," "joy," etc., and, for the most part, exemplify
these attributes in their behavior.
plot and characterization), they are not completely mistaken in their objections. No one will deny that the plot of *The Broken Heart* is confusing; indeed, I should be the first to admit it.

Initially, we must realize that an error in judgment committed long before the play begins is responsible for most of the problems which now affect the main characters. At the outset, Orgilus, son to Crotolon, is desperately in love with Penthea. The two, we are told, had been formally betrothed until Penthea's brother, Ithocles, broke the betrothal contract and forced Penthea to marry Bassanes, a rich, middle-aged nobleman. Sometime afterwards, when Ithocles returns to Sparta from the war at Messene, he himself falls in love—with Calantha, daughter to King Amyclas. By this time, Orgilus is secretly pursuing retaliation for the wrongs he has suffered. His revenge seems complete when he kills Ithocles and so prevents him from consummating his love for the Princess. Meanwhile, Penthea slowly succumbs from grief. Separated from her true love (Orgilus), she loses her mind and starves herself to death.

Implicit in the play are themes of honor, duty, justice, and revenge—all of them deriving from a basic love/reason conflict. In order to cope with them, it is best to define the nature of this conflict more fully. In the first place, each of the four chief characters is endowed with a ruling passion which appears to be inimical to his or her happiness or frustration. This ruling passion or "trait" leads each character to make choices or vows in which each runs the risk of clashing with the will of others or with the authority
of institutions and social codes which have behind them an absolute system of ethics, however limited. That is, institutions like marriage and duty to the state tend to impose a code of ethical behavior upon people who may accept or reject the code, depending upon its power and the strength of individual drives. Yet, even when characters like Ithocles, Calantha, and Penthea accept the moral codes of institutions, they are unable to live by them for they find themselves still incited by inner desires which oppose institutional morality. The outcome of this conflict is a kind of moral schizophrenia in which some characters try to obey two contrary demands. Inwardly divided, they become enmeshed in seemingly insoluble dilemmas which they cannot resolve by themselves. Death seems to them to be their only release from the anguish of internal torment and they eagerly seek it.

We are, then, faced in this play with moral problems of enormous complexity. But while it is one thing to recognize the moral problems in *The Broken Heart*, it is another to understand what Ford may offer as solutions to them. As in 'Tis Pity, the minor characters provide some means for determining the "answers" we seek, but not enough. Although at least two of the minor characters (Prophilus and Euphranea) are quite obviously foils to the four major characters, they appear so seldom in the play as to be inadequate for our purposes. Consequently, in order to understand Ford's moral vision, we must ultimately come to grips with what appears to be the play's central concept. Since almost every person in *The Broken Heart* is determined to attain or preserve
his or her honor, there is no better place to begin a thematic dis-
cussion of the play than with what Ford seems to suggest is the nature
of honor.

In the third act of The Broken Heart, Tecnicus, a wise philos-
opher and teacher of Orgilus, explains what true honor is:

Honour consists not in a bare opinion
By doing any act that feeds content;
Brave in appearance, 'cause we thinke it brave:
Such honour comes by accident, not nature,
Proceeding from the vices of our passion,
Which makes our reason drunken. But reall honour
Is the reward of vertue, and acquir'd
By justice or by valour which for bases
Hath justice to uphold it. He then failes
In honour, who for lucre or revenge
Commits thefts, murthers, treasons, and adulteries,
With such like, by intrenching on just lawes,
Whose sov'raignty is best preserv'd by justice.
Thus, as you see how honour must be grounded
On knowledge, not opinion,—for opinion
Relyes on probability and accident
But knowledge on necessity and truth.  
(III.i,32-48)\(^3\)

According to Tecnicus, true honor is earned by virtuous, just, and
valourous actions in behalf of a justice grounded in knowledge. Knowl-
dge, in turn, rests upon necessity and truth—i.e., upon the very
nature of things, upon a set of principles which are absolutely
certain. "False" honor, the converse of true honor, can be gained
only by accident, for it proceeds from the "vices" of passion which
subvert reason. This is not to say that all passion is bad, but

\(^3\) All references to The Broken Heart refer to S. P. Sherman's
edition, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and The Broken Heart, Belles Lettres
Series (Boston, 1915).
rather that the "vices" or excesses of passion are disastrous. Thieves, murderers, traitors, adulterers are not honorable because their passionate "vices" make their "reason drunk" so that they invariably fall into the snare of false honor. Tecnicus specifically condemns opinion, which he considers the antithesis of knowledge, because opinion can, like passion, be totally egocentric and therefore undisciplined. He holds knowledge superior to opinion because it is based upon an objective, absolute standard of truth which supports, rather than entrenches upon, "just lawes."

He equates, or at least links, real or true honor with virtue, justice, reason, knowledge, and necessity. At the same time, he directly associates false honor with lawlessness, passion, opinion, and accident—the opposite of necessity. Significantly, he does not entirely deny the value of opinion or subjective judgments, for he knows that man must sometimes rely upon subjective judgment in order to make moral choices and decisions. Tecnicus negates only the excesses of opinion which lead man to reckless and selfish actions. He pleads for a kind of via media, and thus is largely Aristotelian in his distinction between real and false honor. In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle reasons that

Virtue... is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the mean of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions,
while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence, in respect of its substance and the definition which states its essence, virtue is a mean . . .

But not every action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e.g., spite, shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions adultery, theft, murder . . .

Tecnicus, by associating honor with justice, suggests that he also has in mind the other three classical virtues to which man should ascribe: wisdom, temperance, and courage. The deliberate misuse of reason, however, is neither wise, temperate, nor courageous, but foolhardy, intemperate, and cowardly, and rewards man with only a distorted sense of self-esteem. As such, excessive opinion leads to a solipsistic morality incompatible with the absolute nature of knowledge.

For all intents and purposes, Tecnicus' speech is the thematic core of The Broken Heart. Not only is justice shown to be more valid than impulsive, individualistic aims, but opinion and knowledge—the foundation for man's thoughts and actions—are held to be diametrically opposed. In view of these distinctions, it is relatively easy to evaluate the actions and reactions of characters. Through Tecnicus' definition of honor, we are provided with the means we need for determining whether a character is acting honorably or not, whether he is pledged to knowledge or opinion, whether his life is built upon necessity or accident.

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As in the opening scene to 'Tis Pity, The Broken Heart begins with two figures pitted against one another. Crotolom, a minister of state, is quarreling with his son, Orgilus, over whether the latter should be permitted to journey to Athens. Orgilus reminds his father that his betrothal to Penthea has been broken by Ithocles, and that she has been forced to marry Bassanes. Otherwise, says Orgilus,

we had enjoy'd
The Sweets our vows expected, had not cruelty
Prevented all those triumphs we prepar'd for...
(I.i.32-34)

Orgilus pleads that he be allowed to leave Sparta to escape the sorrow he feels when near Penthea and to free Bassanes from cause for jealousy:

For knowing how the maid was heretofore
Courted by me, his jealousies grow wild
That I should steal again into her favours,
And undermine her virtues; which the gods
Know I nor dare nor dream of.
(I.i.72-76)

The argument ends peacefully for, while disappointed in love, Orgilus seems determined to leave Sparta and seek therapy for his bitter but useless grief. Since Penthea is married, Orgilus can do nothing. His proposed journey he calls a "voluntary exile," and we have no apparent reason to doubt him.

Nevertheless, Orgilus is shot through with rancor and malice. He feels, as we discover later, that he is still not only betrothed,
but actually married, to Penthea. His debate with Crotolon belies an obvious hatred for Ithocles, Bassanes, and the marriage, which has produced in Bassanes what Orgilus calls

\begin{quote}
\textit{a kinde of monster-love, which love}
\textit{Is nurse unto a fear so strong and servile}
\textit{As brands all dotage with a jealousie.}
\end{quote}

(I.1.61-63)

Orgilus' love for Penthea, strong as it may be, is highly overstated in this first scene. Regardless of his unhappiness, he is arrogant when he declares that Bassanes "never can usurpe her heart, / Before contracted mine" (I.i.52-53). He insists that "no time/ Can eat into the pledge" (I.i.31-32) he has made, and that Penthea, his "shrine of beauty" (I.i.64), will remain forever tied to him. An outraged idealist, Orgilus demands an "ought-to-be" world for the one in which he finds himself. Faced with a bleak future, he exaggerates his claims, allowing himself self-pity and the chance for revenge. When he moans that "Soules sunke in sorrow beare their griefes about 'em" (I.i.117), he is tortured by an inner turmoil which can only be dangerous. For, like Giovanni, Orgilus fully intends to follow the course of action he feels he must.

Since he lies about leaving Sparta, assumes a disguise, and becomes a student of Tecnicus, it is apparent that he has begun to live by opinion and the "vices" of passion. Tecnicus sees a "consequence

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\textsuperscript{5}By Elizabethan standards Orgilus is correct. The seventeenth-century betrothal was far more binding than a simple vow of true love. Glenn H. Blayney says that Penthea's "subsequent enforced marriage to Bassanes would have been thought adulterous" at the time. ("Convention, Plot, and Structure in The Broken Heart," Modern Philology, LVI [August, 1958], 2). But even so, Ford seems to consciously make Orgilus' sense of outrage excessive.
of danger" (I.iii.7) in the "aspect" of his pupil and cautions him, "Tempt not the stars," for

this change
Of habit and disguise in outward view,
Hides not the secrets of thy soule within thee,
From their quicke-piercing eyes, which dive at all times
Down to thy thoughts. . .

(I.iii.2-6)

Orgilus' motives are soon apparent; he has decided to woo Penthea and to prevent Euphranea, his sister, from becoming engaged to Prophilus, Ithocles' closest friend. Thus, when he discovers himself to Penthea (II.iii), he blatantly disobeys Tecnicus' warning.

In this scene Ford develops keen psychological insight into Penthea. We expect her to be pleased with Orgilus, for she is said to love him as much as he loves her. But she is not pleased. She attacks him for his impetuous and flagrant affront to her honor:

Rash man, thou layest
A blemish on mine honour, with the hazard
Of thy too desperate life. . .

(II.iii.52-54)

In other words, Penthea accuses Orgilus of permitting the "vices" of his passion to overwhelm his judgment. Still, her quixotic refusal of Orgilus is hard to comprehend. On the one hand, she contends that their former joy is "buried in an everlasting silence,/ And shall be, shall be ever" (II.iii.70-71). On the other, she confesses that she cannot "thinke that Orgilus deserv'd/ No better favours then a second bed" (II.iii.102-103), and declares that the "Heavens doe witness" (II.iii.79) yet to the validity of the betrothal. Ithocles'

injustice, she says, is a "rape done on [her] truth" (II.iii.80), but despite her love for Orgilus and the known legitimacy of their betrothal, she insists on preserving her honor and remaining faithful to Bassanes. She will adhere, that is, to the virtue demanded by marriage although she does not wholly accept it. Thus, Penthea is pulled simultaneously in two opposite directions: by her personal desires (i.e., she is "wife" to Orgilus), and by the objective absolutes of the institution of marriage (i.e., she is married to Bassanes). What makes her case complex and pitiful is that her allegiance to both men and to the "justice" of marriage and betrothal is insufficient. We might agree that she now lives in adultery with Bassanes, but this seems merely a technical stipulation. To Penthea both of her "marriages" are sacramental. Her inability to honor both of them (and thereby satisfy the demands of two conflicting absolutes) is clear: lacking consummation, her love for Orgilus leads to emotional frustration. The honor she so devoutly treasures is blighted by the fact that she cannot be truly honorable, in spite of her efforts.

Penthea would have Orgilus believe that she is somehow bridging the gap between honor and love, but he fails to understand her peculiar ambivalence. He argues that she is "wanton" in granting him her love but not her bed, and provokes another savage outburst from her:

Uncivill sir, forbeare,
Or I can turne affection into vengeance;
Your reputation, if you value any,
Lyes bleeding at my feet. Unworthy man,
If ever henceforth thou appeare in language,
Message, or letter to betray my frailty,
I'lle call thy former protestations lust,
And curse my starres for forfeit of my judgement.
(II.i.ii.110-117)

The irony is that Penthea has already forfeited much of her judgment. By trying to reconcile her internal and external conflicts, she has partly victimized herself. Orgilus is right when he tells her she is "wanton," for more than a trace of selfishness lies beneath her headstrong denial of his pleas. One cannot help thinking that Penthea, miserable though she is, rather enjoys her pain. She is presumptuous in assuming that she must span two antipodal poles of honor. In a sense, she deliberately amplifies her misery for the sheer torment of doing so.

Nevertheless, what is Penthea to do? She has, after all, been trapped by circumstances beyond her control. Forced by Ithocles to marry Bassanes, she, like Orgilus, has been cast into a situation which she would alter, one supposes, if she could. Unable to, she fights to salvage the vestiges of her honor and keep her only grip on self-respect. In relation to Tecnicus' speech, her problem appears insoluble for her motives seem grounded in knowledge and not opinion. Since "real honour/ Is the reward of vertue," and since Penthea is trying to maintain real virtue, it looks as though she is a truly honorable woman. Her passion has not made her "reason drunke," for if it had, she would submit to Orgilus and be unfaithful to Bassanes. By refusing Orgilus, she implies that, unlike him, she has no penchant for clashing with institutions sanctioned by God or disobeying the will of her husband. The only thing that Penthea can
really be accused of is a perverse and unconscious desire for self-destruction. Knowing herself in an impossible situation, she begins to yearn for death from the moment she rebuffs Orgilus:

In vaine we labour in this course of life
To piece our journey out at length, or crave
Respight of breath, our home is in the grave.

(II.iii.147-149)

In contrast to Penthea, Orgilus is not troubled by a divided mind. Defiantly he protests that she owes no debt to Bassanes:

I would possesse my wife; the equity
Of very reason bids me.

(II.iii.72-73)

But reason is not Orgilus' guide. On the contrary, the "vices" of passion have succeeded in making his "reason drunk," and anger (which is his personified "trait") overwhelms any justice to which he might be entitled. Although his argument is legally defensible (i.e., he has the betrothal contract behind him), he is still guilty of "in-trenching on just lawes" by refusing to recognize that Penthea's marriage to Bassanes is valid. Orgilus' disguise is an obvious instance of how he has dishonorably tried to further his own ends. Besides, he does not actually wish to virtuously gain or preserve honor, but merely to satisfy his passion by loving Penthea.

That Orgilus is guided by opinion and not knowledge becomes increasingly evident as we follow him through the play. Nursing his frustrations, he waits for the opportunity to get revenge on Ithocles. Crotolon, aware of Orgilus' distemper, warns him to contain his wrath:
Sonne, sonne, I find in thee a harsh condition;
No curtesie can winne it; 'tis too ranckorous.
(III.iv.19-20)

Orgilus disagrees. His sense of honor has been badly injured by
Ithocles, and while he pretends to comply with his father's wishes,
he becomes steadily more hostile to Ithocles who, he says,

hath descended from that height
Of arrogance and spleene which wrought the rape
On grieved Penthea's purity; his scorne
Of my untoward fortunes is reclaim'd
Unto a courtship, almost to a fawning... .
(III.iv.24-29)

Again Orgilus is mistaken. Ithocles is not "fawning" but is attempt-
ting to repair, insofar as he can, the damage he has done in the past.
So it is that Crotolon accuses Orgilus of an "infection of [the] mind"
that "threatens the desolation of [his] family" (III.iv.44-45).

Compared to Orgilus, Penthea is pathetic. When she becomes
reconciled to Ithocles she sincerely tries to forward his suit to the
Princess by visiting Calantha and begging her to consider Ithocles a
prospective husband. Yet, for all her good intentions, Penthea is
gradually losing her wits. More than ever she expresses the desire
to die:

My glasse of life, sweet princesse, hath a few minutes
Remaining to runne downe; the sands are spent;
For by an inward messenger I feele
The summons of departure short and certaine.
(III.v.9-12)

Her internal struggle with two opposing loyalties has been too severe,
and she insists that her only remedy will be a "winding sheet" and
a "fold of lead." Convinced that she "must not live" (III.v.41), she
ignores Calantha's reasonable arguments and surrenders, so to speak, to opinion. The moral cleavage which has long divided her sensibilities is simply too much for Penthea to withstand. Her last encounter with Orgilus, Ithocles, and Bassanes (IV.ii) is tragic. Raving deliriously, Penthea turns to them, sobbs once more over her "wrack'd honour," and resorts, at last, to suicide. She starves herself to death, certain there is "nor cure nor comforts for a leprous soule" (IV.ii.169).

From one point of view Penthea has done her utmost to live in terms of knowledge. Now, when she takes her own life, it is difficult to maintain that viewpoint. Tecnicus (with Aristotle as his authority) explicitly points out that "murthers" run counter to the universal laws which constitute knowledge. By committing suicide, Penthea reveals that she has been conquered by the excesses of her emotions. Her death, therefore, is not virtuous, but the result of a thorough misuse of reason.

Orgilus represents an even worse misuse. Distressed by the sight of his beloved, he foolishly misinterprets her mad raving and assumes that Penthea has suggested he kill Ithocles:

She has tutor'd me;
Some powerfull inspiration checks my lasinesse.
(IV.ii.124-125)

Whether or not Penthea has actually done so is debatable. If she wants Orgilus to murder Ithocles, then her reconciliation with her brother was treacherously motivated. On the other hand, she appears to be honestly reconciled to him when she attempts to match him with
the Princess. Consequently, Ford may wish us to see that Penthea
unconsciously desires revenge upon Ithocles. At any rate, it is clear
at this point in the play that Orgilus is being driven by excesses of
passion. Warned once more by Tecticus to beware the outcome of re-
venge, he scoffs that he will not trouble himself with the riddles
of oracles: "... 'tis dotage of a withered braine" (IV.i.154).
Once he realizes that Penthea is dead, Orgilus becomes, like Giovanni
in 'Tis Pity, intent solely on carrying out his murderous plans.

He traps Ithocles in a chair equipped with an "engine," stabs
him, and confesses his crime to Calantha. When granted his choice
of execution, Orgilus chooses to bleed to death by his own hand—a
fitting symbol for the riot of passion. He brazenly slashes his
veins and insists that the onlookers

looke upon my steadiness, and scorne not
The sickness of my fortune... .
(V.ii.119-120)

Feeling no repentance for his murder, Orgilus welcomes death, like
Penthea, as a means to escape the pain of life:

Welcome thou yet that sit'st about my heart,
No heat can ever thaw thee.
(V.ii.155-156)

II

Ithocles and Calantha, like Orgilus and Penthea, are also beset
with frustrations which arise from the conflict of opinion and knowledge,
and they too feel no relief from their miseries. When Ithocles first returns to Sparta from his victories abroad, he receives praise from almost everyone except Orgilus. Prophilus, his friend and fellow-soldier, tells Calantha that Ithocles has acquired unrivalled valor in battle at Messene:

He in this firmament of honour, stands
Like a starre fixt, not mov'd with any thunder
Of popular applause or sudden lightning
Of selfe-opinion. He hath serv'd his country,
And thinks 'twas but his duty.
(I.ii.43-47)

In terms of Tecnicus' speech, Ithocles' military accomplishments reflect real honor for they were executed free from personal profit and were, instead, the fulfillment of his responsibility to Sparta. By going to war for his country, Ithocles obeyed the will of his king and thereby acted virtuously through knowledge. In fact, he modestly calls his obligations to Sparta mere "nothings" compared with the "honours/ Heap'd on the issue of a willing mind" (I.ii.71-72). He is astonished that he should be lauded for what he thinks is man's second nature:

For who is he so sluggish from his birth,
So little worthy of a name or country,
That owes not out of gratitude for life,
A debt of service, in what kinde soever
Safety or counsale of the common-wealth
Requires for payment?
(I.ii.74-79)

We know, however, that Ithocles has not always been truly honorable. By ignoring the betrothal of Orgilus and Penthea, he wilfully acted on opinion to satisfy his craving for revenge, "lucre," and prestige.
Now, Ithocles sincerely desires to redeem himself and prove that neither passion nor opinion will deter him from just actions. Not only is he modest before the court's adulation, but he admits that he deserves criticism for what he did in the past. In a conversation with Crotolon, Ithocles asks only that Crotolon consider what the heat

Of an unsteady youth, a giddy brain, 
Greene indiscretion, flattery of greatness, 
Rawnesse of judgement, wilfulness in folly 
Thoughts vagrant as the wind, and as uncertain, 
Might lead a boy in yeeres too...

(II.i.44-49)

His confession is basically in accord with Tecnicus' speech. His past misdeed, he explains, stemmed from youthful unsteadiness, indiscreet and rash judgment, wilfull and uncertain knowledge. He admits that his error was founded upon "accident" rather than "necessity," that his sin was a result of the "vices" of passion and was neither virtuous nor just. More mature for his mistakes, Ithocles contends that he will "redeeme those wrongs with any service" (II. ii.54) that Crotolon requires. He will, in short, rectify his past injustice by henceforth aspiring to virtue through justice and valor.

Ithocles' transformation is not so honorable as it seems, however. Since he has also fallen in love, he is stricken with the same grief that has befallen the other lovers. A mere subject, he is afraid to violate protocol by proposing to Calantha. Therefore, he searches for the "best receipts and meanes" (II.ii.15) to end his suffering and yet remain loyal to King Amyclas. Like Penthea, he suffers a
divided mind. When he turns to his sister for forgiveness he appears
to do so for at least two reasons: an earnest desire to be reconciled
and to share his sorrow with her. He "sweat[s] in blood" over his
predicament and Pentheus's reproaches are merciless. Finally, he too
begins to yearn for death:

Death waits to waft me to the Stygian banke,
And free me from this chaos of my bondage;
And till thou wilt forgive, I must indure.
(III.i.90-92)

In the meantime, Calantha is not initially troubled by internal
moral division. Heir to Sparta's throne, she is totally dedicated to
serving her country. Characterized by "beauty, vertue, / Sweetnesse,
and singular perfections" (III.iii.16-17), she represents the
aristocratic ideal, replete with stoical reserve and decorum. Although
her father would prefer that she marry Nearchus, Prince of Argos, he
does not "inforce affection" where Calantha does not feel it. Yet
she chooses to abide by the will of her father and her sense of duty.
Opinion and the "vices" of passion are not part of Calantha; her
commitments to Sparta are foremost in her mind.

Only after she is attracted to Ithocles does a conflict in
loyalties threaten her. Prompted by Pentheus, Calantha returns Ithocles'
love and openly antagonizes Nearchus. Then, aware that she must
"egalize" her affections, she asks her father that she be allowed to
marry Ithocles. The fact that she seeks permission is important, for
it indicates that Calantha is determined to uphold duty and honor.
Amyclas is correspondingly just. He instantly betrothes the lovers
and, for the moment, supplies them with a glimpse of joy.

Happiness in love for Orgilus and Penthea seemed nearly impossible to attain. In the second scene of Act V we realize the same is true for Calantha and Ithocles. The latter is spitefully killed by Orgilus; the former is brusquely told of her lover's death during a public entertainment in the court. Dancing at the wedding feast for Prophilus and Euphranea, Calantha is informed of three painfully significant deaths. Arnostes, a counsellor, tells her that her father has just died; shortly afterwards, Bassanes reveals that Penthea has starved herself to death; and soon thereafter, Orgilus proclaims that he has killed Ithocles. But, as if completely unaffected, Calantha continues to dance, pausing only to catch her breath during the sprightly measure. At first it seems incredible she should remain so placid in the face of three such catastrophes. But when we refer back to Tecnicus, her actions can be understood in terms of the thematic implications of the play.

I have said that Calantha has committed herself to a life of duty, and that she thereby lives in terms of knowledge and not opinion. She cannot, therefore, allow private woe to overrule "necessity" and "truth." Because Amyclas has ordered the wedding celebration, Calantha refuses to let her subjective feelings interfere with her father's command; the celebration must continue in order that the royal will be obeyed. Paradoxically, the stoical calm that she exhibits in no way implies that Calantha is insensitive. Instead, she evinces the sort of sensitivity to duty absolutely necessary in a royal personage.
Inwardly, Calantha is deeply stirred by the fatal news. Her cheeks become flushed, and she replies to Nearchus,

. . . 'tis, me thinks, a rare presumption
In any who prefers our lawfull pleasures
Before their own sowre censure, to interrupt
The custome of this ceremony bluntly.

(V.ii.25-28)

Unable to give way to her inner sorrow, Calantha must also "suddenly prepare [her] coronation" (V.ii.94). Bassanes is amazed at her fortitude, at her "masculine spirit" (V.ii.96); he marvels that she can quell the rage of personal feelings. Actually, she is immersed in a conflict that resembles Penthea's and Ithocles', for she must also undergo the strain of divided loyalties. Unlike them, however, Calantha's behavior is much more disciplined, even in death.

Her love for Ithocles, though now physically impossible, has been too strong to erase. Though obliged to maintain order in the realm by assuming her father's duties, Calantha must at last acknowledge the internal strife she feels:

Now tell me, you whose loyalties payes tribute
To us your lawfull soveraigne, how unskilfull
Your duties or obedience is to render
Subjection to the scepter of a virgin,
Who have beene ever fortunate in princes
Of masculine and stirring composition.
A woman has enough to govern wisely
Her owne demeanours, passions, and divisions.

(V.ii.2-9)

A testimonial to Tecnicus' definition of honor, this speech also reveals the tragic nature of man. The split between public duty and private responsibility causes an irreparable schism in Calantha as in Penthea. Since neither can reconcile incompatible codes, death
is the only alternative. Like Pentheus and Ithocles, Calanthe dies of a "broken heart," but her suffering seems even more intense. In a final tragic gesture, she marries the corpse of Ithocles and succumbs to her "silent griefs which cut the heartstrings" (V.iii.75).

Thus, three of the four main characters in The Broken Heart are destroyed by their inability to reconcile conflicting feelings and incompatible ethical codes which derive from a clash between opinion and knowledge. Ithocles, Pentheus, and Calanthe are rendered helpless by allying themselves to loyalties they cannot easily abide by. And Orgilus, though not torn by opposing loyalties, dies because he rashly commits himself to the excesses of passion and refuses to recognize the via media that Tecnicus has recommended. Ford has placed his four major characters in dilemmas which ensue from faith in an absolute ethical system running counter to their nature. Conflicts compound themselves until they induce suffering and pain and offer no other relief from the ethical tangle but death.

Yet, it would be unfair to end discussion of The Broken Heart on such a note. To do so, Tecnicus' moral position would be accounted of small value, and we would still have to deal with a number of minor characters in the play whose lives suggest that existence need not necessarily be permeated with the anxiety that besets the major characters. Indeed, Ithocles, Pentheus, Calanthe, and Orgilus are not alone in their moral schizophrenia. Bassanes, Pentheus's husband, must cope with many of the same problems. He knows that his marriage is
disputed by Orgilus and that his honor as a husband is in jeopardy. Fearful of being cuckolded, Bassanes grows insanely jealous of Penthea and relentlessly hovers over her. So excessive is his fear, that he is obviously mentally disturbed. Like Penthea, Orgilus, and Ithocles, Bassanes is the victim of passionate "vices" and his mental state progressively deteriorates.

More than any other character, he has become so servile to his impulses that he is, at first, helpless. To express his agony, he constantly mutters inane ejaculations and is certain that "there's a lust/ Committed by the eye" which waits until "the deformed bear-whelpe/ Adultery be lick'd into the act" (II.i.4-6). So intense is his inner turmoil that he "struts, puffs, and sweats" before everyone except Penthea. With her he is strangely soothed; away from her, he again waxes feverish. Moreover, while Bassanes knows that his jealousy is the product of his emotions, he still cannot easily master it. For instance, when Ithocles takes Penthea aside to apologize to her, Bassanes instantly suspects his brother-in-law of incest.

Eavesdropping at the door to Ithocles' apartment, he "can forbeare no longer" (III.ii.119) and bursts in upon them with his sword. Bassanes' mistrust, says Ithocles, "has rob'd him of his wits" (III. ii.147), but when scolded by Penthea he becomes penitent and hints that his psychopathic behavior may be traced to sexual sterility:

O that I could preserve thee in fruition
As in devotion.

(II.ii.165-166)
No other character is directly troubled by a mental disease, and so Bassanes must surmount an obstacle as great as, if not greater than, those which face the others, if he wishes to overcome his inner frustrations and their contempt. He must, in other words, follow Ithocles' advice and

\[
\text{shew good proffe than manly wisdome,} \\
\text{Not over-sway'd by passion or opinion,} \\
\text{Knowes how to lead your judgement...}
\]

(III.i.182-184)

Since Bassanes has decidedly lived beyond his emotional means, Ithocles' advice is intended as an antidote. Bassanes agrees that "diseases desperate must find cures alike" (III.i.200), and so will "henceforth... study reformation" (IV.ii.12). He wishes to "appease the gods," for he knows that

\[
\text{men endow'd with reason and the use} \\
of reason, to distinguish from the chaffe \\
Of abject scarcity the quintessence, \\
Soule, and elixar of the earths abundance, \\
The treasures of the sea, the ayre, nay, heaven, \\
Replining at these glories of creation, \\
Are verier beasts than beasts; and of those beasts \\
The worst am I...}
\]

(IV.ii.22-29)

The cure is not easy. Confronted by Penthea's lunacy, Bassanes must struggle to control himself. The patience (i.e., endurance and self-knowledge) he badly needs, he seeks. Hitherto, patience has been a virtue (like wisdom and courage) to which Calantha alone has aspired. Now, Bassanes realizes that he also must acquire it, and by the end of the play, he suggests that he has, for he is content to survive in "some corner of the world to weare out/ The remnant of
[his] minutes . . ." (V. ii. 25-26). Impressed by his transformation, Calanthe appoints him Sparta's marshall, for "The multitudes of high employments could not/ But set a peace to private griefes" (V.iii. 47-48). A foil to Orgilus, Penthea, and Ithocles, then, Bassanes overcomes grief by learning that patience must be sought despite inner anguish. His victory over the "vices" of passion is realistically implausible, perhaps, but it thematically illustrates that real honor can and must be earned.

The remaining characters in The Broken Heart warrant little further discussion. Owing to their age, most of them are hampered neither by the "vices" of passion nor the excesses of opinion. Arnostes, Crotolon, and Tenicus perform dramatically as advisors and counsellors to the younger characters; time and again they recommend that knowledge and virtue be the guide to action. Arnostes reminds his nephew, Ithocles, to learn that "merre opinion/ Proves but in birth a prodigie" (IV.i.72-73), and orders him to

These vaine unrly passions, which will render ye
Into a madnesse.

(IV.i.114-116)

And appalled by Penthea's conduct, he commands her, "Be not so wilfull,/ . . . to worke your owne destruction" (IV.ii.153-154).

Although all three men are unwavering in their duty to the state, they are sympathetic to the anxiety around them while justly aware that a life enslaved to opinion is hazardous to both the state and the individual. Recognizing the interdependency of kingdom and subject, they fear the consequences of highly subjective decisions.
Thus, after he has reprimanded Orgilus several times, Crotolon explains to his son that his obligations to his king have "made [him] so earnest" (III.iv.54). And Tecnicus, as a philosopher, tries to avert the "resolution/ Of giddy rashnesse" from choking "the breath of reason" (III.i.i-2). All are compassionate and affectionate to the young people, but cannot condone disobedience to institutional codes.

But this is not to say that years are necessary to resist the impulses of opinion. Nearchus, Prophilus, and Euphranea are youthful and yet unscathed by the misery that harasses their contemporaries. The latter two are happily wedded during the play, and will presumably share a harmonious marriage. At first, when Prophilus proposes, Euphranea replies that she must receive the consent of her father and brother before she enters into a betrothal. Notwithstanding her love for Prophilus, she asks that he expects of her nothing less than "language suited/ To a divided minde" (I.iii.66-67). And though Prophilus insists that his "love is honourable" (I.iii.59), Euphranea will not forsake her promise to Crotolon and Orgilus:

Death shall sooner
Divorce life and the joyes I have in living
Then my chast vows from truth.
(I.iii.87-89)

Her situation, similar to Pentheas's, could conceivably end in disaster, for Euphranea also harbors a latent death-wish. Trying to be honorable as daughter and sister and yet love Prophilus, she too is exposed to the conflict of opposing loyalties. But Euphranea's "divided
minde" does not remain divided. By submitting to institutional codes in all sincere integrity, she and Prophilus are somehow blessed with the approval of society and institutions.

Nearchus also enjoys a peaceful life. Though a rival of Ithocles, he admits it would be better to lose Calantha than win her against her will. Disciplining himself with respect to virtue and honor, he is bewildered at seeing "hereticke[s] in Loyalty" (IV,i.97). Of all the young people in the play, he and Calantha most evidence the kind of wisdom that Tecnicus has outlined as the means for acquiring real honor. Thus, when Amelus, his companion from Argos, inquires of Nearchus if he can "brooke to be so rival'd" for Calantha's hand, he temperately replies

I can, Amelus; for affections injur'd
By tyrannie or rigour of compulsion,
Like tempest-threatend trees unfirmely rooted,
Ne're spring to timely growth . . .
(IV.ii.205-208)

Hence, it is fitting that at the end of the play Calantha should leave her realm to Nearchus before she dies. And it is fitting he should pledge that "her last will/ Shall never be digrest from" (V.ii.102-103).

III

Superficially, Ford's ethic in The Broken Heart seems scarcely a radical departure from conventional morality. He strongly suggests, as he has done in 'Tis Pity, that individual emotional
drives be regulated by something more reliable than themselves.
One's life must be honorable, and not merely "Brave in appearance, 'cause we think it brave . . ." Necessity rather than accident must be the basis for knowledge, inspiring justice and valor. The "grace of real honour" must be earned through restraint and resignation to the eternal and exacting moral requirements dictated by institutions.

Nevertheless, real honor is an absolute value immensely difficult to preserve and uphold. Calantha in particular has steadfastly dedicated herself to real honor, yet she also dies of a "broken heart." One wonders what principle of causality reigns in the world of this play, or if a principle of causality available to human understanding exists at all. Calantha, Orgilus, and Penthea all seem in some way to be manipulated inexplicably by powers beyond their rational control—which, for convenience of discussion, we shall call fate. Try as they may to stave off internal pressures, they seem unable to effectively rule their own lives and are virtually beaten to their deaths. If it is true that they are fated to be rent between knowledge and opinion, the tragic potential of their lives is thematically shifted from an emphasis upon character to a stress upon fate. And if this be true, we can assume that, in effect they are totally helpless. Furthermore, we can assume that Ford holds a rather bleak view of man: that man's nature is somehow inadequate for what is required of him and that more than human frailty is responsible for his downfall. Finally, if Ford is denying the
existence of free will, the gloom that pervades this tragedy could be interpreted as a kind of nihilism suggesting that moral principles are meaningless. Let me say now that the issue of free will and determinism is exceedingly complicated in *The Broken Heart*, but because the word "fate" recurs more often in this play than in *Tis Pity*, it is evidently one of Ford's major concerns.

We have already seen how certain characters control the fates of others. Penthea is "fated" by her brother to marry Bassanes. Since she is given no alternative, her marriage is determined by Ithocles. Likewise, Ithocles has no apparent way to prevent Orgilus from killing him. Consequently, his death is determined by Orgilus. In both of these instances, however, only the freedom to react against circumstance is curtailed by external force. That is, Penthea and Ithocles are free to choose to act as they wish, though they may never obtain what they choose. In other words, Ithocles may want to live happily wedded to Calantha and still be impeded from marrying her. Penthea, in the same fashion, may want to marry Orgilus and yet be prevented from doing so. In fact, insofar as we know, both Penthea and Ithocles make innumerable choices which are mercilessly thwarted by the actions of others.

While this distinction may at first seem like "logic-chopping," it is not. The conflicts arising between characters in this play limit their actions (even produce outcomes they least desire), but do not nullify their basic freedom of choice. Because we must treat a more complex and indefinable determining factor in *The Broken Heart*--
one which might have a thoroughly deterministic sway over man's choices—we should note that the influence of persons or institutions over other persons is no different here from almost any external force which might be exercised over any man throughout his life.

To be sure, purely external forces, regardless of kind, seem unable to determine man's choices and still remain external. Suppose, for example, that a disease comparable to Bassanes' were to infect a man in real life. If the disease were psychosomatic, we could rightly assume that it is responsible for conditioning or influencing the choices of the diseased person. But we should also have to realize that the "infection," once contracted, would have become internal and could only then unleash its power over the will of its victim.

A mysterious and potent force does appear to be at work in The Broken Heart—a force which may exist within certain characters and dictate their choices. Orgilus is a prime example. Tecnicus has warned him to avoid tempting the "severity of fate" (I.iii.2), and later observes:

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Much mystery of fate
Lyes hid in that mans fortunes; curiosity
May lead his actions into rare attempts;
But let the gods be moderators still;
No humane power can prevent their will.
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(III.i.54-58)

That no "humane power" can halt the will of the gods may indicate that man is predestined in his choices and actions by a supernatural power. The gods may, as it were, totally control man. On the other hand, man's nature also seems responsible for leading "his actions
into rare attempts" by choosing to satisfy his own "curiosity." What we see here, I think, is a double view of fate, or perhaps the underlying irony which is part of the human predicament. At one and the same time, fate seems to dictate man's choices, and yet through choice, man seems to decide his fate. The problem, in short, is whether Orgilus' "curiosity" (which causes his actions) is entirely self-motivated or determined by the gods.

Ford is highly, and perhaps deliberately, ambiguous on this point, but seems to incline towards equating fate with character. Before Tecnicus abandons Sparta for Delphos, he delivers an oracle which foresees that "Revenge proves its own executioner" (IV.i.139). Then, when Orgilus takes his own life, it appears as if his suicide had been foreordained by the gods. But to be sure that Orgilus' action is the product of a pre-determined choice, we must ascertain that he chooses to seek revenge from a self-motivated "curiosity."

6 The OED lists the probable meaning of "curiosity" here: "Care or attention carried to excess or unduly bestowed upon matters of inferior moment."

7 Mary E. Cochnower, op. cit., p. 198, concludes "that the actuality of the fatalism of Ford as a man, as distinguished from that of Ford as a dramatist, must remain a matter of opinion. The difficulty of determining his stand on this matter arises from the fact that a discrepancy often exists between Ford's intuitive wisdom and the ideas which seem to have the sanction of his intellect. Yet, since Heaven and Providence seem to be Ford's names for a gentler fate that makes things 'come right,' I should attribute to Ford a kind of fatalism which . . . was not incompatible with a profession of Christian faith." Miss Cochnower and I are basically in agreement, though I am not sure I understand her distinction between Ford as man and dramatist.
And we cannot be sure.

Indeed, the "curiosity" that propels Orgilus often seems to be part of a large and strange compulsion that drives him, Penthea, Ithocles, and even Calantha into headlong confrontations with misery and pain. Earlier, when I remarked that Penthea evinces a "wanton" desire for self-torture, I had in mind a similarly unyielding and perhaps unconscious desire which seems at times to motivate Ithocles, Orgilus, and Calantha. While I confess that I do not know to what this drive should be attributed, I suspect that Ford is grappling not merely with the nature of extreme frustration, but is approaching a profound level of human paradox: man can himself be responsible for his fate by creating and upholding the very institutions which will later destroy him. In this sense, the characters of The Broken Heart seem at odds with their own humanity. For, as every Christian is well aware, what a man chooses to do (or thinks he chooses) and what he actually does can sometimes be antithetical. That is, one may reverently choose to stop sinning but almost invariably sin again. And to ask why is, at bottom, to inquire into the mystery of the human condition. Moreover, the fact that one may continually choose goodness while effecting evil does not necessarily imply that one's sins are determined by outside forces, but that one often chooses to sin under strong, external influence.

Thus, when Calantha reluctantly succumbs to her grief, she willingly does so because she has been powerfully influenced, but not determined, by Ithocles' death. Unlike either Penthea or Orgilus,
Calantha is tragic in her submission for she appears to sense that she is somehow responsible for a fate which is largely the outcome of her previous choices. She realizes that by loving Ithocles she has unwittingly generated a kind of tragic inevitability or moral gravity to which she must now pay her debt. Indeed, the moral gravity that pervades The Broken Heart can be traced from Calantha, through Penthea and Orgilus, back to Ithocles, whose foolish mistake in the past is finally responsible for rendering present choices excruciatingly difficult. As a consequence, the world of The Broken Heart is neither rigidly deterministic nor totally free. Instead, it illustrates that man's choices are ultimately meaningful, even if not fully comprehensible, and that the nearly impossible task of atoning for one's sins is morally requisite.
CHAPTER IV

LOVE'S SACRIFICE

Love's Sacrifice is fashioned around an Italianate setting resembling that of 'Tis Pity. More realistic than the Spartan background of The Broken Heart, the court of Pavia is a typical Italian dukedom as seen by the Renaissance playwright. Replete with intrigues and brooding malcontents, Pavia is populated by courtiers, parasites, and fools given to ambition, perfidy, and licentiousness. Heightening their activities, the play dwells on the vicious, carnal lives of people who have no moral perspective. Love and friendship are ruptured; faithlessness is met with revenge; in time, revenge is superceded by justice.

But except for superficial likenesses, Love's Sacrifice is much less satisfying as tragedy than 'Tis Pity and The Broken Heart. Lacking inner consistency, the play is diffuse and prolix. The subplots are barely significant, for they diverge from the main plot and become tedious and sensationalistic. Of the three plays, Love's Sacrifice lacks the unity of theme and subtle nuances of characterization which make Giovanni alive and vital and Penthea absorbing and affecting. All the ingredients for tragedy may be here, but they are not combined in any way that leads to tragic insight. Nearer to Restoration heroic drama than Elizabethan tragedy, Love's Sacrifice discloses that Ford is predominantly a minor dramatist who but twice approached the tragic level of his great predecessors. Yet, the
play is not just a weak forerunner to Restoration libertinage; although its moral vision may not be readily discerned, Love's Sacrifice neither advocates nor commends the adultery and revenge which make up the lives of its main characters.

The main plot is relatively simple: Caraffa, Duke of Pavia, and newly married husband to Bianca, has been recently reunited with his dear friend, Fernando, a court favorite. Shortly thereafter, the Duke's widowed sister, Fiormanda, falls in love with Fernando and tries to coerce him to marry her. With the skill of a clever courtier, he smoothly but graciously eludes her, for he has been overwhelmed by the beauty of Bianca and hopes to make her his mistress. Later, when Fiormanda learns this, she jealously informs her brother and prods him to vengeance. Caraffa slays Bianca but spares Fernando when the latter declares that he and Bianca lived in chaste communion, that their love was the pure affection of friends. Now, grieved by Caraffa's irreparable action, Fernando commits suicide. Too late, Caraffa realizes that the lovers have lived virtuously. In a paroxysm of self-contempt, he kills himself for his senseless mistake.

With an evident debt to Othello, Love's Sacrifice presents a conventional love/friendship triangle ending in disaster. In fact, by the time Ford wrote the play, this theme had been so frequently dramatized that it was hackneyed in the extreme, and attempts to revivify it were often no more than thunderous, melodramatic efforts to please audiences searching for new emotional and sexual stimuli. This is surely the case here. The main issue, adultery, is never
really explored by Ford, while the theme of love versus friendship seems important solely as a means of compensating for innumerable failures in characterization and plot. In effect, the love/friendship theme owes its existence to Ford's need to create a dramatic conflict. In order to promote discussion of adultery, he must convince us that the Duke and Fernando have enjoyed a profound friendship for one another, one that collapses when Fernando begins to lust after Bianca.

No doubt, Ford makes a flimsy attempt to do this, but because we never witness any real suffering on the part of either Fernando or the Duke, we are totally unconvinced. In the long run, the affection between them is merely a dramatic cliché used for the sake of its soap-opera appeal. Simultaneously, the subject of adultery, milked for all the sensationalism it can provide, is bereft of serious moral exploration. So intent is Ford on cleverly creating the affair that he seems to intentionally cloak adultery with mystery. To the end of the play we never know if Fernando and Bianca are actually adulterous—surely a titillating riddle for the ordinary Caroline theatergoer. However, this element of suspense (if it can honestly be called that) is indicative of thematic cancers which make the play unworthy of serious consideration.

Of course, it is finally unnecessary to know whether the protagonists do commit adultery, for even if their love is physically unconsummated, they receive Ford's reprobation. Professor Sherman's
criticism, therefore, is rather too severe:

In the beginning of [Love's Sacrifice] every one
knows what is decent; in the middle Fernando and
Bianca grow skeptical as to what is decent; in
the end no one knows what is decent—not even the
author.\footnote{Sherman, op. cit., p. xxxiii.}

Although Ford was not gravely at work here, it appears that he knew
what was decent. In the first place, Caraffa is an irresponsible
ruler. When he selected Bianca for his bride, he chose a wife who
pleased his "eye" and scoffed at the wisdom of counsellors who

Would tie the limits of our free affect,--
Like superstitious Jews,—to match with none
But in a tribe of princes like ourselves . . .

But why should princes do so, that command
The storehouse of the earth's hid minerals?—
(I.i.15)\footnote{All quotations from Love's Sacrifice are from The Works of
John Ford, ed. William Gifford and rev. Alexander Dyce, II (London,
1869). Numerals enclosed in parentheses refer to act, scene, and
page number, since this edition is not lineated.}

Not unlike Shakespeare's Richard II, the Duke's disregard for tradi-
tion and practical judgment tells us that he is fatuously inclined
to rule by impulse. Petruchio, a minister of state, relates that
the Duke was stubbornly predisposed to marry Bianca: "He saw her,
lov'd her, woo'd her, won her, match'd her;/ No counsel could divert
him" (I.i.12). A sensualist who seeks a "life of mirth" (III.ii.
62), the Duke prefers the pleasures of hunting to matters of state.
He envies Mauruccio, an old dotard, because the latter revels in
"mirth and ease":

1
How happy is that idiot whose ambition
Is but to eat and sleep, and shun the rod!
(III.i.64)

Unburdened by the anguish of a Henry IV, he childishly dotes on
Mauruccio's nonsensical antics and lewd postures. In short, the
only favorable quality the Duke manifests is his dubious friendship
and love for Fernando and Bianca:

Look, Bianca,
On this good man; in all respects to him
Be as to me: only the name of husband,
And reverent observance of our bed,
Shall differ us in persons, else in soul
We are in one.
(I.i.13-14)

The Renaissance slogan, "one soul in bodies twain," as an epitome of
the nature of friendship was so commonplace by Ford's time that the
Duke's mention of it would immediately have told an audience what to
expect.

Fernando, meanwhile, brags of "loyal duty" and "devoted zeal"
and agrees with his sovereign on marriage. Placing little worth in
political alliances, Fernando himself would not marry unless "Beauty
and truth were the fee propos'd" (I.i.13)--a common expression of
the courtly lover. Having travelled extensively in Spain, France,
and England, he fancies that he is a well informed courtier with a
broad education, sophisticated manners, and a fluent tongue. Still
Fernando knows that adulterous behavior with Bianca is intolerable
if only because the Duke is his friend. So it is that he soliloquizes
on the conflict between his sexual cravings for the Duchess and his
avowed affection for her husband:
Fernando swiftly resolves his quandary by deciding to woo the Duchess and forget his bond to the Duke. The power of friendship melts before the hot surge of lust, and like Giovanni and Orgilus, he rushes to his beloved and candidly declaims that he "must speak or burst" (II.ii.34).

If we pause briefly to reflect on the friendship theme, we can sense that Ford may be using classical authority to show the folly of characters like Fernando and the Duke. Since the dialogues of Cicero were highly revered in seventeenth century England, Ford was most likely familiar with De Amicitia, the great summary of ancient thought on the subject of friendship. Certainly this play, with its persistent concern for friendship, suggests an indebtedness to antiquity which we would do well to consider. According to Cicero,

... friendship is nothing else than an accord in all things, human and divine, conjoined with mutual goodwill and affection, and I am inclined to think that, with the exception of wisdom, no better thing has been given to man by the immortal gods. Some prefer riches, some good health, some power, some public honours, and many even prefer sensual pleasures. This last is the highest aim of brutes; the others are fleeting and unstable things and dependent less upon human foresight than upon the fickleness of fortune. Again, there are those who place the 'chief good' in virtue and that is really a noble view; but this very virtue is the parent and preserver of friendship and without virtue friendship cannot exist at all.³

The fact that Fernando prefers to satisfy his sensual appetites rather than be a true friend reveals that he is nothing less than a self-seeking individualist employing his wiles with the Duke to further his chances with Bianca. Cicero provides a commentary on such friendships:

For it is love (amor), from which the word 'friendship' (amicitia) is derived, that leads to the establishing of goodwill. . . . in friendship there is nothing false, nothing pretended; whatever there is is genuine and comes of its own accord.4

In terms of De Amicitia, the Duke is also guilty of using friendship as a means rather than an end. When D'Avolos, Secretary of State and Ficimanda's henchman, comes to him with the news that Bianca has cuckolded him, the Duke is eager to lavish his "special thanks and love untamed" (III.iii.67) upon his informer. Then, as soon as Fernando enters the room, the Duke quickly hides his hatred. "Come," he says, "mine own best Fernando, my dear friend" (III.iii.69).

In the meantime, Bianca has twice refused Fernando's advances, both times out of respect for the sacrament of marriage. So thorough and spontaneous are her refusals that she convinces him never to tempt her to adultery again. Thus, it is no small surprise both for us and for Fernando to shortly discover Bianca, clad solely in a dressing gown, in his sleeping-quarters. "Why do you think I come?" she asks. "Why! to crown joys, / And make me master of my best desires" (II.iv.51), replies the happy Fernando. But he is not wholly right; for impetuosity is her stimulus. Bianca explains that she has been in

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4Ibid., p. 139.
love with Fernando since she first saw him and is now unable to resist him. She has decided to submit to her erotic hunger, with one stipulation: if he seduces her, she will kill herself.

As we know, scenes like this are fairly common to Ford. Often as not, they allow for some of his best psychological analysis. But this one, bloated with melodrama, ends with a bizarre conclusion empty of common sense. Fernando says he cannot bring himself to seduce the purveyor of such virtue. Astounded and converted by Bianca, he finds recompense in being named her lifelong servant in pure love. Given three "chaste kisses," he is content to "master passion, and triumph in being conquered" (II.iv.53-54).

Since Ford has failed from the outset to make this "love" credible, Fernando's claim that he must "master passion" is grossly far-fetched, and except for his hollow exclamations to the contrary, shows no evidence of actual struggle. Like Bianca, he is a limp character whose function is to startle, not to convince. Hence, their obvious sinfulness occurs to neither. In 'Tis Pity, Giovanni's petulant self-deception is made probable through his heated arguments with Annabella and the Friar. But because Bianca and Fernando are barren of Giovanni's emotionality, it is neither likely nor plausible that they should overlook that adultery need not culminate in intercourse to be adultery. Each has mentally lusted after the other, and each has stopped short of physical lust for the most fantastic of reasons.

The two lovers perpetuate their "chaste love," then, and become increasingly disdainful of the Duke. For all intents and purposes,
the love/friendship conflict is now shelved until needed for a final
dramatic thrust in Act V. Once rid of it, Ford can concentrate mainly
on adultery, which he does. In a conversation with the Duke, Fiormanda,
Petruchio, D'Avalos, and Fernando, Bianca turns to her beloved and in
an aside asks if she should "steal a kiss" (III.i.62). More crafty
than she, Fernando is flabbergasted. He has, after all, his reputa-
tion at stake and does not want to tumble from the Duke's esteem.
Still, when told by Roseilli, his friend, to heed the cunning D'Avalos,
Fernando is flippant:

Pish! should he or hell
Affront me in the passage of my fate,
I'd crush them into atomies.
(III.i.66)

From pride alone Fernando is morally diseased, but his faults do not
end with pride. Later, proclaiming that Bianca "is as loyal in her
plighted faith/ As is the sun in heaven" (IV.i.98), he theorizes:

... but put case
She were not, and the duke did know she were not;
This sword lift up, and guided by this arm,
Shall guard her from an armed troop of fiends
And all the earth beside.
(IV.i.87)

However unknowingly, Fernando admits he would defend adultery if need
be, and mocks any moral code that might challenge him.

Bianca is equally guilty. Using a sophistry reminiscent of
Giovanni, she swears that "iron laws of ceremony" are non-existent
for true lovers, that her conscience is all that bars sensual grati-
fication with her sweetheart. Otherwise, says Bianca,
... I had rather change my life
With any waiting woman in the land
To purchase one night's rest with thee, Fernando,
Than be Caraffa's spouse a thousand years.

(V.i.89)5

She, Fernando, and the Duke apportion roughly the same significance
to ceremony and tradition. Without compunction, they vaunt the
priority of individual will over convention.

By the fifth act, Love's Sacrifice begins to sag worse than
ever. Most of the speeches are wordy; the actions of the Duke,
Fernando, and Bianca grow appreciably more wearisome. Caraffa,
reluctant to murder his wife, lapses into absurdly long and ineffectual
discourses on his disappointment in marriage. In response,
the Duchess denounces him for his "crooked leg," "scrambling foot,"
and "untrimmed beard." With the aplomb of a strumpet, she avers
that "the selfsame appetite[s]" which captivate the Duke also
account for her sexual élan for Fernando:

... be assur'd, my lord, if ever language
Of cunning servile flatteries, entreaties,
Or what in me is, could procure his love,
I would not blush to speak it.

(V.i.94)

At last, whipped into fury, the Duke stabs her, and Bianca dies unrepentant: 
"Commend my love/ To thy true friend, my love to him that
owes it . . ." (V.i.96). Her death scene is as inflated as anything
staged by Beaumont and Fletcher.

5At this point, one might legitimately ask why on earth she
married the Duke. I imagine we are given no answer because by this
time we are supposed to be enthralled by Bianca's "dilemma."
Likewise, when the Duke turns his wrath on Fernando, the ensuing speeches are loaded with bombast and artifice. Fernando repeatedly insists that his "friend" has misjudged the Duchess. "Glorious Bianca," says he, has perished in "martyrdom" for her sacrifice to love (V.ii.99). After a ridiculously long time—during which Fernando bares his chest to, and even kisses, his opponent's sword—the Duke claims to recognize his error, becomes rueful, and orders a solemn burial for his wife. Repentant before her tomb, he is met by Fernando foolishly clothed in a winding sheet. Through a violent exchange, they again ridicule convention (the burial ceremony), and both commit suicide. Although the Duke seems to undergo a moment of tragic recognition, he dies mentally confused. Over Fernando's corpse, he affectedly intones the final words of a man unaware that the nature of true friendship, "derived from nature rather than from weakness, will be more consonant with truth."6

Obviously the main characters in Love's Sacrifice are dishonest. But in addition, they are so poorly delineated that one has trouble determining who displays the greater weakness: the playwright or his characters.

Ford's dramatic presentation of the love/friendship theme is so trite that he has entirely overlooked the need for a moral commentator to provide even commonplace ethical standards. As a result, Ford haphazardly assigns the task to Roseilli, the closest approximation to an honest man in the play. For reasons not altogether clear, Roseilli

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6Cicero, op. cit., p. 145.
has been appointed the Duke's successor by Fiormanda, and begins to remedy the evil which has flourished. Instantly he condemns the "graceless villain," D'Avolos, to prison. And then, with a sudden quirk, he banishes his benefactress, Fiormanda, so that she will "be-think in time to make [her] peace with heaven" (V.iii.107). Even more astounding is her willingness to do so.

Innumerable implausibilities like these assist in reducing Love's Sacrifice to a sham. The subplots, as I have hinted, are unworthy of Ford. Trivial and often meaningless, they drift aimlessly by themselves, content to furnish spectacular bursts of pseudo-erotic action. If not totally irrelevant, they supply only banal moral commentary on the lives and actions of the main characters. In one scene, for instance, three lustful wenches, Julia, Colona, and Morona, join to curse Ferrentes for his perverse activities. A debauched rogue, Ferrentes wittily explains that since they are all pregnant by him he shall marry none of them. Later, after they have vowed revenge, Julia, Colona, and Morona don disguises and murder Ferrentes. One imagines that the evils of illicit sexuality and revenge in Ferrentes and his three mistresses would directly bear upon the lust and wrath of Fernando, Bianca, and the Duke. And in part, this is so. But when Ferrentes' women parade their three bastard children across the stage, sensational fireworks overwhelm moral commentary. Afterwards, when the Duke pardons the revengers, one can only guess at his motives.

Ultimately the charge of decadence is earned by Love's Sacrifice
but it should be carefully aimed at the play's aesthetic lapses rather than its moral tone. While Ford's effort to revitalize worn-out dramatic material may be thoroughly disappointing, the play is not the work of a twisted mind or a warped moral sensibility. We can argue that the play dwells on prurience not to glorify it, but to accommodate an audience with sensual excitation. On the other hand, if we conclude that the play is dramatically incompetent, we must also conclude that it is morally ineffectual. Although Ford tries to blend the Christian principle of fidelity in marriage with the Ciceronian concept of loyalty in friendship, he does not finally succeed. And since it is obvious that he has made no genuine commitment to any of the issues in Love's Sacrifice, it is difficult to take seriously his stand on either adultery or orthodox morality.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

One of the more important critical issues I have skirted in my treatment of *Tis Pity, The Broken Heart, and Love's Sacrifice* is the extent to which Ford was influenced by Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). As I have mentioned before, scholars have proved beyond any doubt that in *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628) Ford owes a direct though indeterminate debt to *The Anatomy*. Some scholars, however, hail Ford as a near-offspring of Burton, and thereby tend to disregard other possible influences on him.¹ Burton's influence is sometimes said to have almost entirely shaped Ford's moral acuity and tragic vision into a psychologically deterministic approach to life.

In this conclusion I have neither the time nor space to indulge in a thorough discussion of *The Anatomy*, nor can I estimate the degree to which Ford may have found the work dramatically useful. Suffice it to say that he was acquainted with Burton's definition of melancholy and seems to have leaned upon it from time to time in his tragedies. To Burton, melancholy is "a kind of dotage without a fever, having for his ordinary companions, fear and sadness, without apparent occasion. We properly call that dotage . . . when some one principal faculty of the mind, as imagination, or reason, is corrupted

¹See particularly George F. Sensabaugh and S. Blaine Ewing, *op. cit.*
As we have seen, numerous characters in Ford's tragedies exhibit qualities roughly comparable to what Burton calls a melancholic "dotage." Their reason is corrupted; they grow fearful and sad. Yet I seriously doubt that Ford was particularly keen for the burgeoning science of his day simply because most of his tragic characters ignore reason and confuse moral values. Instead, I would argue that The Anatomy furnished Ford with an immediate and concise means for preparing his audience (almost beforehand, as it were) for the tenacious behavior of many of his characters and their predilection for evil. One can imagine that when the religiously-melancholic Giovanni (for such he is if one limits his characterization only to its Burtonian aspects) stalked into view, Burton's devotees knew at once they were about to behold a person saturated with a superfluity of humour melancholy and inwardly intent on challenging the existence of a supreme being.3

Obviously this is no startling innovation on Ford's part.4


3 The Anatomy contains reference to some melancholic types which could easily have been adopted in The Broken Heart. For Penthea, Ford may have been stirred by Burton's account of a young woman who was married "to an ancient man against her will, whom she could not affect; she was continually melancholy, and pined away for grief." Ibid., p. 241.

4 Ferdinand in Webster's The Duchess of Malfi, for instance, becomes so distracted after he has killed his wife that he struggles with his own shadow. Later we are told that Ferdinand is possessed by lycanthropia, a melancholic ailment in which he thinks himself a wolf.
Jonson's "humourous" characters were created by means of essentially the same method, and few critics would concede that his great characters are mere types. On the contrary, they become singularly distinct in our minds once we see them, and so remain. They are personalities with a striking individuality that owes much to the fact that they are embroiled in value conflicts. Volpone, for one, creates a lasting impression not just because he is exhaustibly enthusiastic, but because he and his parasite, Mosca, represent the basaness of human nature. At the same time, both fit into a certain dramatic class of men: the mountebank. One need only sample the reams of criticism on Hamlet to learn that critical arguments over the dramatic "type" and the "individual" are never-ending. Ironically, hassles of this kind inadvertently pay tribute to a writer's genius. Similarly, while motivated by religious melancholy, Giovanni transcends his species and becomes one of many characters suffering from this disease—one who must make moral decisions for himself in a rational world. So also must Penthea, Orgilus, Bassanes, Fernando, and the Duke. All are types; all are individuals.

Consequently, I think we are justified in questioning the worth of critical studies which insist too dogmatically on Ford's debt to The Anatomy. Too frequently such studies narrow Ford's dramatic range beyond its already narrow scope, underrate much of what he has to offer as a moralist, and conclude that he was merely a psychological determinist convinced that man is helplessly suspended in an irrational cosmos. Such is the stand of Professor George F. Sensabaugh: "Ford
composed the bulk of his drama with his eyes steadfastly focused upon the seventeenth century doctrine of passions. He copied whole sections almost verbatim from the four-humours theory and so absorbed the idea of determinism that his plays are exemplifications of the formula of cause and effect.\(^5\) According to S. Blaine Ewing, melancholy is the "principle of confusion" in Ford's plays: "It picks its victim with no logic perceptible to him and pursues him like a Fate which he is equally powerless to avoid, to counter, or to control. It destroys his self-mastery in thought and action, and leads him to violate the conventions of moral behavior."\(^6\)

Although Sensabaugh and Ewing are well informed about both Burton and Ford, nevertheless there are times when they seem to oversimplify. To me it is hazardous to contend that Ford's tragedies are the work of a man consciously rebelling against the Western moral tradition, a man whose basic creed was to show how moral absolutes unfairly and indefatigably grind human beings into dust. I cannot finally believe that Ford secretly waged a private war against prevailing Christian dogma. His determinism, if such it be, is not a subject one can easily demote to fatalism or a Burtonian "formula of cause and effect."

Burton himself seems less deterministic than Sensabaugh makes him out to be. The Anatomy explicitly states that "Inveterate Melancholy, howsoever it may seem to be a continue, inexorable

\(^5\)Sensabaugh, op. cit., p. 35.

\(^6\)Ewing, op. cit., p. 111.
disease, hard to be cured . . . may be helped, even that which is most violent." In the light of this statement, Bassanes appears to be the kind of melancholic "victim" who partly, at least, masters his influx of jealous melancholy by listening to sound advice and acquiring patience. And surely if Bassanes could find a cure for melancholy, so, one may suppose, could Giovanni, Orgilus, Penthea, Fernando, and the Duke. Yet, since they do not, we might well ask ourselves why—which is another way of asking whether Ford was really a so-called Burtonian determinist, or a playwright concerned to depict characters engrossed in moral conflicts?

Regardless of all this, the studies by Ewing and Sensabaugh provoke at least one other question. Assuming that Ford was a pronounced disciple of Burton, what do his tragedies gain by it? Are they more aesthetically pleasing, or even more artistically truthful? Professors René Wellek and Austin Warren in their theoretical discussion of literature and psychology would refute such contentions:

... if we assume that an author succeeds in making his figures behave with "psychological truth," we may as well raise the question whether such "truth" is an artistic value. Much great art continuously violates standards of psychology, either contemporary with it or subsequent. It works with improbable situations, with fantastic motifs.... In the sense of a conscious and systematic theory of the mind and its workings, psychology is unnecessary to art and not in itself of artistic value.  

Although Wellek and Warren object to the sort of literary criticism

7Burton, op. cit., p. 293.

that insists on blurring art and reality, they would not deny that Ford's tragedies contain various levels of psychological insight. As a matter of fact, since characters like Penthea, Calantha, Giovanni, and Annabella are thematically developed, they seem to become psychologically real once we are willing to understand and accept the themes of *Tis Pity and The Broken Heart. Both Ewing and Sensabaugh, however, suggest that what they see (or want to see) in Ford is a kind of case history drama in which the dramatist psychologically probes his characters with tools he has borrowed from Robert Burton. By examining the characters and their actions out of context, these critics fail to see the thematic significance of melancholy in Ford's tragedies and almost completely overlook moral issues of any kind. As a result, they tend to forget that Ford was acutely aware of Christian morality as understood in seventeenth century England, exaggerate the influence of Burton, and end by asserting that Ford glamorizes illicit love, be it adultery or incest.

Conclusions like these seem to me indicative of a drastic misunderstanding of Ford's tragic perspective. In *Tis Pity, the point is reasonably plain: that the undisciplined lover needs to control his sexual impulses by living according to Christian ethical codes. On the other hand, The Broken Heart reveals that allegiance to such ethical codes is enormously difficult but necessary, and exacts hardship and pain even from those who try to be virtuous. In the long run, Ford's perceptions about the ambiguities in human life are too complex to be based solely on The Anatomy. And, with the exception
of *Love's Sacrifice*, Ford appears to have realized that his tragic province lay far more in the area of the moral dilemma than in the realm of psychological maladjustment.
APPENDIX

Any study of Ford's plays must face the difficulties arising from our nearly total lack of knowledge about the dates of composition of the tragedies, their order of composition, and the sources from which they were derived, if any. Since almost nothing is known of Ford as a writer (it is assumed that he died in 1639-40), we are dealing with a set of plays about which external evidence is almost nonexistent.

Interest in possible sources remains strong in some quarters, however, and in the case of The Broken Heart is rather understandable. Two lines in The Prologue strongly imply that Ford either modelled his play upon a factual incident or upon a factually-based literary work:

What may be here thought a fiction, when times youth
Wanted some riper yeares, was knowne a truth . . .

In the continuing quest for this "truth," one recent scholar has suggested that Ford is referring to a novella by Matteo Bandello, which in turn was based upon an actual occurrence, and that Ford uses the word "truth" to convince us that the events which follow are real.¹ An older argument, and one that seems now to have been largely discounted, was advanced by Stuart P. Sherman, who believed

¹G. M. Carsaniga, "The 'truth' in John Ford's The Broken Heart," Comparative Literature, X (Fall, 1958), 344-348.
that the "truth" mentioned in The Prologue to The Broken Heart was a reference to the unfortunate courtship and eventual marriage of Penelope Devereux and Lord Rich. Sherman's contention is noteworthy because he argues that Ford's early elegiac poem, Fame's Memorial (1606), was written on the same subject and was a youthful effort "to plead the rights of love against public opinion." Yet, from all the evidence we now possess, studies of the sources of Ford's tragedies are mainly conjectural.

Nor has any date of composition ever been discovered for 'Tis Pity, The Broken Heart, and Love's Sacrifice. The three tragedies were entered in the Stationer's Register in 1633, but have been assigned various dates, which remain, like the sources, highly contestable. Most critics date the composition of the tragedies some time after 1628, the date of The Lover's Melancholy, and some time before 1634, the often ascribed date for Perkin Warbeck. All attempts to be more precise have encountered numerous objections and are really little more than guesswork. Basing much of what she has to say on the studies of P. G. Fleay, Miss Joan Sargeant argues for an earlier date than 1628 for 'Tis Pity: "... it must have been written well before the autumn of 1628 and probably after the beginning of 1625, at about which time Ford seems to have ended his period of dramatic collaboration." H. W. Wells believes that 'Tis Pity was composed in 1628, but Miss Ellis-Fermor places its composition some time between

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2 Sherman, op. cit., p. x.
1628-32. For The Broken Heart Miss Sargeaunt argues for a date around 1630-32, or about the same time that Hemminge's "Elegy on Randolph's Finger" was written.\(^4\) Wells assigns 1629 for The Broken Heart; Miss Ellis-Permor again suggests 1628-32. Gerald Bentley contends that The Broken Heart "must have been close in date to Beauty in a Trance and The Lover's Melancholy, or about 1627-31."\(^5\)

He believes that Love's Sacrifice was composed in "the late summer or early autumn of 1632."\(^6\) And, again somewhat indefinite he places 'Tis Pity around 1629-33.\(^7\)

\(^4\)Ibid., pp. 26-27. The "Elegy," published in Choyce Drollery (1656), reads, "Deep in a dump Iohn Forde alone was got, / With folded arms and melancholy hat." As Miss Sargeaunt points out, some of Ford's critics have used this as evidence for seeing Ford as a forlorn, melancholy figure.


\(^6\)Ibid., p. 453.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 462.
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