

Marriage and Sexual Regulation in Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*

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Abstract

This paper interprets John Ford's play, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, in the context of the sexual regulation of the day, which was predicated on holy matrimony. Anyone engaging in a sexual relationship outside of marriage was threatened with divine punishment. This interdiction was internalized by people through the panoptic mechanism sustained by the discrepancy in knowledge and visibility between God and man. This panoptic control of the mind was complemented by the actual penalty—public penance—which was aimed at the sexual offenders' eventual submission to the regulation. Given this context, Ford's allegiance to the orthodox sexual mores of his day can be seen in his accentuation of the all-encompassing regulative power in this play. In spite of his incestuous and atheistic posturing, Giovanni remains subject to panoptic control in his initial attempt to constrain his incestuous desire, his application of God's principle in censoring himself, and, at the end of the play, his dual roles as the agent and object of God's vengeance on sexual offenders. The incestuous couple's subjection to sexual regulation is revealed in their attempt to legitimize their relationship by establishing a matrimonial bond and also in their acquiescence to Annabella's marriage to Soranzo. In contrast to Giovanni, Annabella has a strong tendency to submit to sexual regulation; she eventually reconciles with God by undergoing public penance and an orthodox preparation for death. While experiencing the play, Ford's audience was also penetrated by the same panoptic mechanism, and made conscious of God's invisible but omniscient surveillance.

Keywords: sexual regulation, holy matrimony, panoptic mechanism, public penance, incest, adultery

Is a play based on incest, the cause of which is justified by the casuistic hero, necessarily unethical? Does the moral of a play simply reside in its poetic justice when all the sinners are punished at the end of it? Can we truly appreciate a play without delving into the culture in which it was composed? Critics' reactions to the theme of incest in John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* are mixed, and vary widely. 19th century criticisms are divided, but later largely emphasize the moral ambiguity of the play.¹ However, when we read this play in the context of sexual regulation in Renaissance England, its ethical importance may come to light.

Sexual regulation in Renaissance England was based on holy matrimony, which was used to normalize sexual behavior and procreation, and to castigate deviations from the norm. Sexual offenders, who copulated with people other than their wedded spouses, were threatened with divine punishment. Accordingly, the mechanism of sexual regulation relied on a system of panoptic control, which restrained people's sexual endeavors through their internalization of the divine principle. Even the penalty for sexual transgression was regulative in nature. The public penance, required by ecclesiastical courts as punishment for sexual offenses, was a device used to regulate offenders after procuring their confessions, repentance, and resolution for reformation. Understanding this cultural background helps us to comprehend certain enigmas in the play that tend to escape critical attention. It particularly suggests a rationale for Annabella and Giovanni's justification of their relationship, their easy acquiescence of her marriage to Soranzo, her sudden reconciliation with God, and the justice Giovanni claims at the end of the play. By reading this play against the social, religious, and political context of sexual regulation in Renaissance England, where this play was composed and performed, this paper aims to show that Ford's allegiance to the orthodox sexual mores can be seen in his accentuation of the all-encompassing regulative power in *'Tis Pity*.

Marriage and Sexual Regulation in Renaissance England

When consecrating their marriage in church, a priest would tell a Renaissance English couple that holy matrimony was ordained by God in the beginning of the world for three reasons—the procreation and education of godly children, avoidance of fornication, and the mutual company and comfort of the spouses (“The Forme”).

¹ The conflicting criticisms of *'Tis Pity* begin with the negative and positive views of William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb, respectively, in the nineteenth century. Hazlitt thinks the story of incest is “repulsive” (179) because of “the sting of illicit passion” (180). Placing Ford among “the first order of poets,” Lamb applauds the traces of sublimity and “hints of an improvable greatness” in human nature expressed in this play (238). Ian Robson reconciles the conflicting views by contrasting the merits of the incestuous lovers with the corruption of the other members in the Parmesan society (91-108). As for critical comments stressing the moral ambiguity in this play through various perspectives, see Lauren 57-58; Ornstein 203-213; Champion 78-87; and McCabe's *Incest, Drama, and Nature's Law* 228-235.

The first two purposes² explicitly reveal the function of holy matrimony in regulating the flesh. During this age, in which contraceptive methods were underdeveloped,³ it was imperative for authorities to control people's sexual conduct because, unfettered, it would inevitably result in conception. After the Reformation, when marriage replaced celibacy as "the ethical norm for the virtuous Christian" (Stone 100-101), sexuality in Renaissance England was regulated by granting people legitimate sex through marriage, castigating illicit copulation through threat of divine punishment, creating panoptic control in the minds of people, and allowing offenders back into the Christian community through public penance.

For people who were not born with the gift of continence, the only course of action was to get married in order to copulate legitimately. This enjoyment of the flesh was conditioned by the concomitant task of breeding and educating God-loving and God-fearing children, which was the first and specified official goal of marriage. Holy matrimony was "an honorable state," not only because it was instituted by God, but also because it was ordained to perpetuate the church ("The Forme"). The pleasure of wedlock was purchased at the price of transmitting Christian beliefs to the next generation. Enjoyment of the flesh was justified in the name of preserving and enlarging the church, and the innate contamination of the flesh was purified by divine sanction. In this divine institution, the doctrinal contradiction of the flesh and the spirit was reconciled because the "corrupt inclinations of the fleshe" were contained "within the limittes of honestie" decreed by God ("An Homily" 256). Succumbing to the spiritual power exercised through the ordinance of matrimony, couples became at once the agents on whom the power was exercised and by whom the power was extended. The power of the church and the kingdom of God were maintained and increased through this institution, which ensured the dissemination of Christian morals among its present and future flocks.

In addition to perpetuating the Christian church, marriage was also a device for restraining man's free use of his flesh as "it was ordained for a remedy against sin and to avoid fornication" ("The Forme"). The inclusion of divine interdiction against sexual transgression, in the official representation of the purpose of marriage, actually reinforced the effect of sexual regulation through marriage. Its effectiveness was achieved through churchmen's dissemination of the "truth": the flesh was hereditarily

² T. E. in his *The Laws Resolutions of Womens Rights* recognized only "increase of Children" and "the euicting of fornication and uncleanness" as the principle reasons for marriage (63), while he defined marriage, according to the civil and common law, as "a Coniunction of Man and Woman, containing an inseparable connection and union of life" (51-52). Although his legal account of marriage was different from the official or ecclesiastical one, the scripture remained one of the authorities from which he drew support for his explications.

³ *Coitus interruptus* was the major contraceptive method in this era, while the possible use of spermicides and abortifacients are also suggested by historians. See Ingram 158-9; Houlbrooke 128-9; and Laslett 117-8.

sinful and therefore required a divine cure so that more members could be recruited into the institution. Attributing this hereditary sin of the flesh to the fall of Adam, John Featley designated sexual desire as wickedness, which “(without repentance) . . . must be punished in Hell” (13). Along similar lines, Matthew Griffith, elaborating on I Peter 2: 11, defined flesh as impurity, uncleanness, and “Corruption” (165). Under this premise, William Govge praised “the honour of marriage” because it “is as an haven to such as are in jeopardy of their saluation through the gusts of temptations to lust” (210). Accordingly, those who sought to gratify their sexual desire legitimately had no choice but to marry.

Once the norm of conjugal sex was established through the Law of God, all other sexual acts were measured as deviations from this and therefore prohibited. As Richard Cooke pointed out,

Where wee reade that God blessed marriage it is easie to gather on the contrary that all other companying of man and woman not in marriage is accursed . . . the sanctitie and chastitie of marriage is commanded in the Law, and the contrary is forbidden, and all other acts of vncleanesse whatsoever which are a violation of marriage (27-28).

In this light, those who refused to be contained by the institution of marriage were denounced as “wicked,” “filthy,” “bestly,” “stinking,” and “unlawful.” Marked and demonized, these sexual culprits were differentiated and excluded from faithful Christians. They were described as “bond-slaves to the devill” (“A Sermon” 83) as they had succumbed to the seduction of the devil without any pang of conscience (“An Homily” 256). Because they disobeyed God’s interdiction, they would suffer a spiritual death after their corporal one and be excluded forever from the kingdom of God.

While sexual regulation in Renaissance England was sustained through religious tenor, the social, political, and economic significance of the regulation was also visible in the clergy’s attacks on sexual transgressions and in related legal changes. Regarding chastity as one of the principal duties of married people, William Whately castigated adulterers for endangering the stability of the commonwealth, the perpetuation of the patriarchal family, and their own bodies and souls (3-4). Whately’s insistence that chastity was one element that was indispensable for maintaining the marital bond⁴ revealed not only his puritan-minded demand for stricter sexual

⁴ Unlike other Protestant countries in Europe, the canon law of marriage remained the law governing matrimonial matters in Renaissance England. According to canon law, marriage was a sacrament representing the everlasting union of Christ with his Church, so it remained indissoluble. Accordingly, divorce *a vinculo*, meaning literally “divorce from bond,” was prohibited in Renaissance England.

discipline, but also a typical endorsement of the patrilineal and patriarchal social system. Griffith also noted the political aftermath of the adulteress' sin, saying bastard children would endanger the family line and infringe on her siblings' right to inheritance (299-300)⁵ while Govege emphasized the disturbance of the commonwealth and the family "with an unlawfull and bastardy brood" (301). Whereas adulterers' and adulteresses' sin endangered the institution of marriage and the lineage of patriarchal family, bastards of poor fornicators would increase the economic burden on the parish. Given this situation, it is not surprising that the acts passed in 1576 and 1610 ordered the "maintenance of poor bastard children and punishment of the guilty parents," while the supplementary Jacobean Act decreed that "mothers of poor bastards should be sent to the house of correction for one year" (Ingram 152). The fact that this change in secular law was made to solve an economic problem rather than punish the heinous sin of the flesh indicates that the secular law was more concerned with immediate economic problems than the spiritual salvation of the people, which was the task of clergymen.

In fact, sexual discipline in Renaissance England, which was to a large extent the task of the Church (Ingram 151), relied more on control of the mind than coercion of the body. Sexual transgressions were prevented through panoptic control that was established and activated by the clergy through discursive elaboration on, and reiteration of, this scriptural interdiction: "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13.4). Sexual offenders would be punished and condemned by God ("A Sermon" 84) because they profaned God's possession, defiled the honorable bed of marriage, and violated the sexual regulation predicated on holy matrimony. Cooke offered his explanation of why, according to the Apostle, God himself would be the judge of sexual offenders: "the chiefe and principall cause . . . was . . . for the greater terrifying of such offenders, that al such filthy wretches and beastly livers might be assured that they could neither sinne so secretly but they should be discovered, nor after sinne committed scape vnpunished" (12). This description illustrates how people were caught up in the panoptic mechanism: they were watched, censored, and would be punished by an omniscient God, whose presence remained unseen but whose

What one could have at best was divorce *a mensa et toro* or separation "from bed and board" when the divorcees were not allowed to remarry so long as their former spouses remained alive. In addition, the spiritual significance of marriage not only led to the marital indissolubility but also gave the jurisdiction over matrimonial causes exclusively to the ecclesiastical courts (Gibson 10-11). Since Whately's argument that "the sinne of Adulterie dissolueth the bond of Matrimonie" contradicted canon law, he added an advertisement to his readers in the second edition of this book to refute this point.

⁵ Although a double standard for sexual transgression permeated in Renaissance England, spiritual leaders always stressed the parity between adulterers and adulteresses. Griffith believed that an adulteress was more sinful than an adulterer with regard to the sin itself, and the adulterer was more sinful than the adulteress with regard to the sinner (299-300). In a similar vein, Govege stressed that an adulterer was as sinful as an adulteress "in regard of the breach of wedlocke, and transgression against God" and would accordingly suffer the same punishment from God (219).

deputy was witnessed by all in the edifice of churches, which resembled the central tower in a panopticon.⁶ This panoptic mechanism sustained sexual discipline, as “He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power. . . . he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (Foucault, *Discipline* 202-3). In other words, when an individual is caught in a panoptic situation, he becomes his own subjugator and constrains himself mentally. He plays two roles simultaneously: he is the subject of observation and censorship, and he is also the observer and censor. Featley’s metaphor, “The hearts of men are the Booke of God, wherein his Majesty is written” (25), explained this automatic effect of divine power, which reached and worked on the minds of people because of their “conscious and permanent visibility” (Foucault, *Discipline* 201). Similarly, this internalized disciplinary mechanism was also expressed in Thomas Wilson’s definition of conscience: “It is a faculty of mans soule, taking knowledge, and bearing witness of a mans thoghts, words and workes, excusing them when they bee good, and accusing them when they bee euill” (85). Wilson’s explication of conscience demonstrated the double roles assumed by the individual under the panoptic control as his soul, now the agent of the divine principle, censored his deeds according to God’s law. His conscience became the eye of God, judging and constraining his behavior. According to Wilson, conscience was bound by God, “the onely law-giuer, who obligeth Conscience absolutely vpon paine of eternall wrath” (86). It was this threat of divine vengeance against sexual sinners that gnawed at the consciences of believers or intervened in their possible transgressions.

However, since divine punishment was not immediate, it did not always prevent people from committing sins of the flesh. In fact, its effectiveness was also impaired by the rather lenient disciplinary measures employed by the Church. The most severe punishment given out by the ecclesiastical courts for sexual offenders in Renaissance England was public penance, a measure aimed at regulation rather than punishment. Ronald A. Marchant observes that, since the shame punishment did not harm the offender, hamper his liberty, nor diminish his fortune, “the essential feature of canonical discipline was that it was intended not so much to punish as to reform the offender” (4). When convicted and made to perform public penance, the sinner was singled out from the public in the market place or the congregation in the church. Wearing a white sheet, which wrapped his “blacke soule” (Cooke 1) in a purifying cover, he was to make “a public confession of guilt, an expression of contrition, a profession of reformation and, incidentally, to serve as a warning to others” (Marchant 4). By having the sinner marked and distanced from people, this symbolic punishment

⁶ For a detailed description of Bentham’s Panopticon and its automatic effect, see Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* 200-203.

excluded him from the community only to have him eventually included and reconciled with the parishioners once again as long as he complied with the sexual regulation demanded by the Church in the name of God's Law. In order to attain absolution, the offender needed to have "heartily repented and humbled themselves to God and through Christ have made their peace with God" by means of "heartily humiliation and sincere and sound repentance for former sinnes and vnfeined resolution for future holines" (Cooke 15, 36). In other words, to avoid damnation, they had to submit to sexual regulation and resolve to abide by the sexual rules of the Christian community. This "shame punishment" was also intended to affect not only the sinner, but also other would-be sinners in the parish. As Cooke put it plainly, addressing the sinner in his sermon, "This hath beene your sinne, and this sinne hath brought you to this dayes shame; *ut pœna ad paucos, timor ad omnes*,⁷ God grant it may doe you good, and that others by your punishment may learne to be wise" (32).

Affirmation of Sexual Regulation in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*

Although the sensational plot of *'Tis Pity* seems to be in opposition to the sexual regulation of the time, an in-depth analysis of the play shows otherwise. Returning to Parma from a Bononian university, Giovanni finds himself madly in love with his sister Annabella. He confesses his incestuous love to his teacher Friar Bonaventura, who is accompanying Giovanni to Parma because he cannot bear to part with his favorite student. After trying futilely to repress his love using the methods recommended by the Friar, Giovanni gives in to his "fate." He confesses his feelings to Annabella, she reciprocates, and they consummate their love. This incestuous relationship lasts for nine months before Annabella must marry Soranzo because she is impregnated by Giovanni. However, even after Annabella is married, her sexual relationship with her brother continues. When her husband discovers her pregnancy, he tries to force her to tell him the name of her lover. Annabella is determined not to reveal it and is willing to sacrifice her life for Giovanni's safety. Nevertheless, Soranzo's servant Vasques tricks Putana, Annabella's governess, into revealing the identity of her lover, and he then goads his master to take revenge on Giovanni. Though Annabella writes her brother a letter written in blood to warn him of the impending danger, Giovanni accepts Soranzo's invitation to his birthday feast, determined to meet his doom by taking all others down with him. Before Soranzo begins his revenge, Giovanni bids his sister to pray and then kills her as they kiss. He then reveals himself to the Parmesan dignitaries, with her heart impaled on his dagger, confesses their incestuous relationship to all, kills Soranzo, and then is killed by

⁷ This means "inasmuch as few are punished and all afeared" (Davis 54).

Vasques and the banditti.

A summary like this inevitably overlooks the depth of this play, which will be explored in the following interpretation. Underneath the sensational plot in which “Incest and murder have so strangely met” (5.6.158), what begs for attention is how Giovanni and Annabella’s incestuous love leads to their deaths, through which Giovanni curiously finds justice. Is Giovanni no more than a madman suffering from “religious melancholy in defect” and “heroical love?”⁸ Is he simply “one of Calvin’s voluntary slaves, willfully electing himself to a destiny that is also a predestined doom” (Wilks 256)? In fact, Giovanni, like Annabella, has been inscribed with the sexual regulation, which is enforced through the panoptic mechanism and the normalization of sexual behavior and procreation through matrimony. As a whole, this play accentuates the overwhelming power of sexual regulation when the incestuous couple relies on marriage for consummation of their love and as a solution to their plight. Despite their incest and adultery, both eventually succumb to the system of regulation. Annabella asks for God’s mercy by means of her sincere penance, and Giovanni partakes in God’s justice by executing His vengeance on sexual offenders.

Although at the very beginning of the play Friar Bonaventura gives us the false impression that Giovanni is an atheist, who has been “striving how to prove / There was no god, with foolish grounds of art” (1.1.5-6), as Robert Ornstein observes, “his [Giovanni’s] atheism is lacking in conviction” (207). Taking into account Giovanni’s subdued apprehension about his spiritual ruin throughout the play, we may disqualify him as a true atheist, “who acknowledge[s] nor God, nor Christ, nor Law, nor Gospell, nor Prophet, nor Apostle, nor holy Writ, nor heavenly Meditation” (Griffith 311). In fact, his respect for divine prohibition of incest counterbalances his atheist arguments in the opening scene. Though Giovanni does argue against the existence of God (1.1.5-6), commit idolatry by deifying Annabella (1.1.20-23), defy the divine law against incest by reducing it to mere secular convention (1.1.24-27), and justify his incestuous love through natural law (1.1.28-34), his first request to his spiritual advisor is for a “cure [that] shall give me ease in these extremes” (1.1.42). While he verbally poses as an atheist, the first action he takes to cope with his incestuous desire is to follow the Friar’s advice so as to avoid divine punishment.⁹ After receiving the Friar’s typical Renaissance clerical advice for bridling sexual desire by undertaking religious practices, fasting, and avoiding temptation (Whatley 8-12), Giovanni replies, “All this I’ll do, to free me from the rod / Of vengeance” (1.1.83-84).¹⁰ This

⁸ For the Burtonian diagnoses of Giovanni’s melancholy, see Ewing 71-76 and Sensabaugh 68-70.

⁹ This interpretation takes Tucker Orbison’s one step further. What drives Giovanni to ask for the Friar’s advice is more than his “suffering from a knowledge of guilt” as Orbison suggests (62). It is Giovanni’s fear of the promised punishment for sexual sinners that intimidates him, as his later reference to God’s vengeance clearly indicates.

¹⁰ In *A Christian Dictionary*, Wilson defined vengeance as “Law, and diuine right” or “Punnishment,

declaration, along with his decision to repress his desire for his sister, indicates that Giovanni has been subject to Christian panoptic control from the very beginning of the play. Although Giovanni seems to give more credence to classical philosophy than to Christian interdiction, both of which he must have learned about in university, the power of the latter nevertheless constrains his actions at this point. In fact, the Friar's incessant warning that Giovanni would be ruined should he persist in his incestuous love makes the holy man an earthly deputy of omniscient and invisible God, whose law demands Giovanni's subjugation to His prohibition of incest.

As Foucault remarks, "there are no relations of power without resistances" (*Power/Knowledge* 142). Giovanni's decision to violate the scriptural prohibition against incest by replacing the Christian God with fate as his guiding principle is an obvious act of resistance against the exercise of power that establishes the disproportionate relationship between God and Man and constrains the latter's free use of the body. In this asymmetrical relationship of domination, human freedom is extremely limited (Foucault, *Ethics* 292). Accordingly, whether the "fate" Giovanni subjects himself to is lust or not,¹¹ it allows him to consummate his incestuous love, but not to completely escape the panoptic mechanism. While Giovanni's transgression suggests the ineffectiveness of the actual disciplinary measures in Renaissance England, his resubmission to sexual regulation after he decides to give in to his fate accentuates the all-encompassing power exercised in the name of God. Unable to fight his incestuous desire, Giovanni assumes the principle of God and sentences himself to a spiritual death according to Scripture, reiterating the Friar's verdict (1.1.35):

Lost, I am lost: my fates have doom'd my death.
The more I strive, I love, the more I love,
The less I hope: I see my ruin certain. (1.2.139-140)

His transgression arouses this sense of doom because he applies God's principle when judging his behavior. In fact, no matter how hard he tries to deny the restraining power, both verbally and physically, he is unable to escape from its control over his mind. Before confessing his love to Annabella, he has to gather his courage to overcome his inner censor, uttering: "Keep fear and low faint-hearted shame with salves" (1.2.155). However, debasing the judgment of this inner censor does not free

inflicted & taken vpō the wicked for their wickednesse" (623).

¹¹ Whether Giovanni is responsible for the consummation of his incestuous love remains debatable. For critics who identify his fate with his lust, Giovanni's insistence that it is his fate, not his lust, that leads him on (1.2.153-54) is either an excuse (Hoy 148) or a self-deception (Orbison 64). However, Dorothy M. Farr, more sympathetic toward the incestuous lover, justifies Giovanni's realization of the forbidden love by regarding it as "a question for survival," which drives Giovanni to realize his love for the sake of self-fulfillment dictated by his nature (40).

him from the grip of the constraining power he has internalized. He remains subject to God's ordinance when he is conscious of the price he has to pay for consummating his incestuous love and of the shame of his failure to adhere to the sexual norm required by God. After consummating his love, he confesses to Annabella that he has paid for it with his spiritual life: "That yielding thou hast conquer'd, and inflam'd / A heart whose tribute is thy brother's life" (2.1.4-5). Although Annabella takes this confession at face value and dedicates herself to Giovanni in return, Giovanni's realization of his spiritual damnation never leaves him.

Caught between divine interdiction and love, the incestuous couple sacrifices the former for the latter. The act of incest easily induces moral castigations. Mark Stavig comments, "In their worship of each other and of their love both have forgotten the basis of moral order" (103). However, what Stavig fails to recognize is that the lovers did attempt to adhere to the sexual regulation of the time, even if the consummation of their love actually violated it. Before Giovanni and Annabella go to their incestuous bed, they legitimized their relationship by establishing a matrimonial bond so as to "insulate themselves in an alternative form of marriage sanctified by its own ceremonies and vows" (McCabe, "'Tis Pity" 315). It is their subjugation to the Renaissance norms of sexual behavior that enables the incestuous couple to bypass (to a certain extent) their inner censors, which would prevent them from committing incest. After confessing their love to each other, Annabella initiates an exchange of vows as if in a betrothal, through which they are made man and wife:

ANNABELLA.	On my knees,	<i>She kneels.</i>
	Brother, even by our mother's dust, I charge you,	
	Do not betray me to your mirth or hate,	
	Love me or kill me, brother.	
GIOVANNI.	On my knees.	<i>He kneels.</i>
	Sister, even by my mother's dust, I charge you,	
	Do not betray me to your mirth or hate,	
	Love me or kill me, sister.	
. . . .		
ANNABELLA.	I'll swear't, I.	
GIOVANNI.	And I, and by this kiss. . . .	<i>Kisses her.</i>
		(1.2.249-58)

As Bruce Boehrer observes, "this is a real marriage" because it follows "the *ponsalia perverba de praesenti* . . . a particularly binding form of the marriage contract," which sustains even without clerical sanctification according to canon law (367-68).

Moreover, not until their identities as husband and wife are confirmed by the vow (Kaufmann 533) do Giovanni and Annabella consummate their love. Because of his newly-acquired identity as Annabella's husband, Giovanni identifies himself as "king" (2.1.19) and "monarch" (5.6.46) of his sister, wears the ring bequeathed by their mother to her husband (2.6.36-42), and objects strongly against the Friar's advice to have Annabella marry someone else: "Marriage? Why, that's to damn her! That's to prove / Her greedy of variety of lust" (2.5.41-42). Giovanni's objection manifests not only his perception of himself as Annabella's husband, but also his application of God's principle in "damning" the adulteress that Annabella will become if she marries another man. This spontaneous judgment underscores Giovanni's subjugation to Christian sexual mores, even after he chooses to violate the incest taboo.

Although Giovanni and Annabella attempt to justify their relationship through matrimony, their marriage is, in fact, invalid in the eyes of both Man and God. Their consanguinity is without doubt an impediment that prevents them from being "lawfully joyned together in matrimonie" ("The Forme") according to the Levitical law against incest. Giovanni is sophisticated enough to acknowledge that his marriage with Annabella is not sanctioned by magistrates nor by God. Accordingly, he can rely on no one but his sister to ensure that their marriage will remain intact. Driven by practical sense, he dares her to make another vow:

GIOVANNI. But tell me, sweet, canst thou be dar'd to swear
That thou wilt live to me, and to no other?
ANNABELLA. By both our loves I dare. . . . (2.1.26-27)

This second vow, which Annabella makes after their consummation, actually completes the first one, because it is identical with the vow that couples made to live together as husband and wife in the Renaissance marriage ceremony. Nevertheless, no matter how conscientiously Annabella and Giovanni follow the ritual, they can never be a lawfully joined couple. Neither their marriage nor their offspring is sanctified by God.

In fact, it is Annabella's pregnancy that compels the incestuous couple to subject themselves completely to sexual regulation. Although Annabella and Giovanni may be able to justify their sexual relationship by means of their self-defined marriage, their bastard child, by its mere existence, exposes its parents' incest, which would subject them immediately to secular discipline. The "social necessity" that forces Annabella to marry Soranzo and intrudes into the "idealism of the two lovers who have tried to live outside traditional values and concepts" (Defaye 36), is actually related to the penal and political consequences of their sin, were the sin to be exposed.

The honor that Annabella seeks to maintain by marrying Soranzo lies not only in her own reputation (Robson 97), but also in Giovanni's and the bastard child's. This can be seen by examining the issues of incest and bastardy from the perspective of sexual regulation in Renaissance England. The ordeal that Giovanni and Annabella would go through if they were convicted of incest would include public penance, during which they would have to confess their shame, and possibly "additional humiliations such as appearing bare-legged or wearing a placard marked 'for incest' (Ingram 249). The child would be excluded from the patriarchal and primogenitural social system, deprived of any inheritance and title (Stone 30); these are apparently Annabella's concerns when she chooses to marry Soranzo. The "glory" she says she will give to Soranzo by providing him with a son (4.3.32-33) actually belongs to Giovanni and his child, who stands to inherit her husband's property and title because he will be thought of as his legitimate first-born son. In this situation, the Friar's advice that Annabella enter into a marriage of convenience, in effect, offers the incestuous couple a way not only to escape from the dire consequences of their sin, but also to gain both social and financial benefits for their child.

However, while this strategy seems to reduce the dangerousness of Giovanni and Annabella's immediate situation, it also marks a turning point in the play when the lovers have succumbed to the socio-religious power without any apparent resistance. This reversal is dramaturgically revealed in Giovanni's recession as the casuistic and active defender of the incestuous relationship. While Giovanni dominates Acts I and II with the justification and consummation of his incestuous love, he is curiously thrown into the background during Acts III and IV. He is physically distanced when spying on Soranzo's courtship of Annabella, and dramatically silenced when he overhears Annabella's vague promise to marry Soranzo (3.2.61-62) and when he sees her promise in public to marry him (3.6.53-54). Informed of his sister's pregnancy, Giovanni behaves like a panicked child, immediately leaving the scene to ask for help of the Friar, who he already knows suggested that Annabella marry someone else. Giovanni's fear of the Friar's "falsehood" does not prevent him from inviting Soranzo to be betrothed to Annabella. His whining during an aside at Annabella's wedding feast exposes the pain caused by his submission to sexual regulation when he acquiesces to the solution offered by the Friar. In short, Giovanni's anomalous reticence and enigmatic reservation at this crucial event makes one wonder if he is trying to help the Friar and his father marry Annabella off to Soranzo. One thing is beyond doubt: Giovanni is no longer the man who was determined to sacrifice his spiritual life to be the sole monarch of his sister. When it comes to the exposure of their incest and consequent humiliation, he, betraying his love, submits to the sexual regulation of his time that he previously dismissed as "customary form" (1.1.26) and

later refers to as “a school-rod” (5.2.2) that prevents him, for a while, from having sexual relations with Annabella after she gets married.

With the diminution of Giovanni’s exertion and voice, the Friar replaces his pupil as the catalyst for change and key speaker in the play. This replacement is dramatically effective in that the power of sexual regulation is felt to be so overwhelming that it cannot be resisted. This impression is created simultaneously by Giovanni’s abatement and by the Friar’s dominance over the submissive Annabella. While the Friar was unable to dissuade Giovanni from committing incest, the confession scene in Act III underscores his success in burdening Annabella with the weight and consequences of her sin and compelling her to submit to sexual regulation by entering holy matrimony.¹² Although the Friar’s integrity may not stand up scrutiny because he gives priority to a secular remedy rather than the spiritual one (3.6.36-38),¹³ his eschatological lecture is important both structurally and ideologically. From a structural point of view, his prophetic statement about Annabella’s punishment through Giovanni’s betrayal (3.6.27-30) foreshadows her death at the hands of her brother.¹⁴ It is his emphasis on divine punishment (with a secular one implied when Annabella’s honor can be maintained by avoiding public penance) that appears to persuade Annabella to marry Soranzo and thus causes her death. Ideologically speaking, the Friar reiterates the clerical discourse on sexual regulation by underlining both God’s punishment of sexual offenders and the possibility of avoiding sin by getting married. It is true that the Friar’s “literalistic mind views morality wholly in terms of crime and punishment” (Ornstein 209), but, as a product of his time, he can do no better than the Renaissance clergy and authors of conduct books in reinforcing sexual morality by eliciting fear of divine punishment. Thus Larry S. Champion comments that the Friar’s chief function in this play is “to give voice to what the spectator would certainly perceive as a reflection and reinforcement of traditional social and religious values” (81). These are the values Annabella embraces once again near the end of the play. She may actually, as Giovanni wishes, be accepted into heaven because she has repented and reformed before her brother murders her.

Forking Compliance with Regulation

Annabella’s inclination to submit to sexual regulation is more evident than

¹² Critics have disagreed about the Friar’s role in this play. For example, Farr believes that he is “the strongest character in the play,” an influential spiritual guide to whom the main characters turn for help and advice (45), but H. J. Oliver thinks he is “a weak person,” who runs from the dreadful end and whose ineptitude contributes to the tragedy of Giovanni (89).

¹³ For critical comments on the Friar’s dubious moral position, see Robson 88 and Orbison 54-55.

¹⁴ See Farr 45 and Orbison 82.

Giovanni's.¹⁵ As Farr points out, the education she received as a daughter of a wealthy family has made her a "traditionalist" and "realist" at heart (47). Although she does reciprocate her brother's love, her adherence to sexual mores has otherwise been persistent. She expresses fear when she suspects, and later learns of, her brother's love for her (1.2.138, 1.2.215). Her fear apparently results from her internalization of sexual regulation, which, as the Friar later reminds her, underscores divine punishment for sexual offenders. Forced by Giovanni to choose between accepting his love or having him die, she utters her scruples about incest: "You are my brother Giovanni" (1.2.228). She does not reveal her feelings for him until her inner censor is persuaded by Giovanni's deceitful account of ecclesiastical approval of their love (1.2.237-38). Her belief in religious teachings is so deep-rooted that she is intimidated into repressing her love for Giovanni, as she confesses to him:

For every sigh that thou hast spent for me
I have sigh'd ten; for every tear shed twenty:
And not so much for that I lov'd, as that
I durst not say I lov'd, nor scarcely think it. (1.2.244-47, italics added)

Although her love triumphs over fear of punishment, Annabella cannot realize her love without mitigating the conflict between the consummation of that love and the regulations about the sexual and reproductive uses of her body. After she reciprocates Giovanni's love, the first thing she does is to legitimize their relationship by initiating the marriage vows. This spontaneous action indicates her readiness to follow the norms of sexual relations, which she must have acquired from her breeding, even though this marriage is not sanctified by God. Just as she cannot involve herself in a relationship without establishing a conjugal bond first, she cannot be the mother of a child who is not sanctified by matrimony. If abortion is not an option, she must marry someone other than Giovanni in order to procure a legitimate identity for her bastard child. Although her acquiescence in marrying Soranzo seems to be due to the Friar's admonishing advice, it is more likely that she had already made the decision when she promised Soranzo: "If I hereafter find that I must marry, / It shall be you or none" (3.2.61-62). This promise indicates not only that Annabella could be aware of the cause of her symptoms before Putana explains it to Giovanni, but also that she thinks it compulsory for a pregnant girl like her to be married. It is true that she profanes the sacredness of wedlock in her marriage of convenience, but, by marrying Soranzo, she also complies with the regulation pertaining to procreation because her

¹⁵ This interpretation conflicts with Orbison's (67). Although Annabella's love for Giovanni is strong, saying that she is a complete captive of passion ignores her moral integrity and endows her with a flatness that she actually rises above.

swollen belly will make her a target for discipline and humiliation if she resists it.

Paradoxically, although Annabella appears to sacrifice her love for Giovanni, by marrying Soranzo for the sake of her baby, and subjects herself to the sexual constraint her new identity demands, her love is more manifestly demonstrated in the drastic situation that her marriage creates. Given the fact that Annabella's decision to marry Soranzo has more to do with her compliance with sexual regulation than her sincere penance, we should not be surprised when we later learn of her adulterous relationship with Giovanni (5.3.8). In this marriage of convenience, Soranzo means nothing to her (4.3.46-49). Her adoration for her brother remains the same. Giovanni is to her a "blessed" and "celestial creature" (1.2.26-27) before their incestuous relationship begins, and remains "so angel-like, so glorious" (4.3.37) to her when she is confronted by her husband about her pregnancy. Her love for Giovanni is so deep that she is willing to sacrifice herself for him by refusing to reveal his identity to the furious and vengeful Soranzo (4.3.75) and by taking the blame and divine punishment all on herself (5.1.19-23). Annabella's extremely selfless devotion to love may strike the spectator as heroic; however, it is counterbalanced by the fact that hers is a forbidden love, tainted first by incest and then aggravated by adultery, the consequences of which concern not only the sinners, but also the institution of the patriarchal family and the whole social system. When Annabella decides to find a shelter for herself and her baby by getting married, she unwisely subjects herself to the rigid sanction and discipline of the institution. After marrying Soranzo, she becomes his subject and possession. Helping Giovanni to "steal" Soranzo's property¹⁶ by indulging in adultery with him, Annabella commits a greater sin, the discovery and punishment of which prove to be more fatal and immediate, as Soranzo's threats of murder indicate.

The restrictions that Annabella accepts in her marriage curiously trigger her submission to orthodox regulations and eventual reconciliation with God. In fact, before Annabella has time to ponder the unlawful nature of her relationship with Giovanni, and the resulting physical and spiritual punishments, while she is confined in her room by her husband, her conversion to traditional social and religious values has already been hinted at the end of the confrontation scene. After Soranzo hypocritically evokes his husbandly divinity and duty of forgiveness (4.3.136-40), Annabella in turn assumes the role of an obedient wife, kneeling in front of her husband and silently obeying his order. The next time we see her on stage, she clings to her role as Soranzo's wife when she speaks of herself with reference her husband, "whose wife I now am" (5.1.26). This signifies Annabella's acceptance of an identity

¹⁶ According to Griffith, an adulterer was a thief because he purloined the cuckolded husband's use and rights over his wife's body (298).

that is defined by subordination and faithfulness to her husband. This altered sense of self compels her to recognize the sinfulness of her relationship with Giovanni. Unable to justify her love for Giovanni as Soranzo's wife, she now sees her love as "lust" and "false joys [that] have spun a weary life" (5.1.2). She decides to renounce this life (5.1.3) because her conscience demands it (5.1. 9-10). Annabella's reference to herself as a "lost" woman (5.1.11) curiously echoes Giovanni's earlier statement about himself when he decides to give in to his incestuous desire (1.2.139). However, whereas Giovanni was determined to resist the voice of his conscience, Annabella succumbs to hers and submits humbly to God's will through confession, repentance, and reformation in the last act.

In addition to Annabella's public penance, Ford makes her reconciliation with God even more convincing by showing her orthodox preparation for death. Before Annabella dies, she completes almost all of the rituals that a Catholic engages in before death: the calling of a priest, confession, the last blessing, and the deathbed prayer (Delany). While the Friar's delivery of Annabella's letter emphasizes Giovanni's resolution to confront his enemy, the accidental presence of this holy man also substantiates the ritualistic formality. Although Annabella's repentance and reformation are conditioned by the completion of her last effort to save Giovanni, the Friar's timely presence to hear her contrition, confession, and promise for reformation nevertheless accentuates her making peace with God. In exchange for her penance, the Friar gives her his blessing—"live, to die more blessed" (5.2.57). With this, Annabella states "now I can welcome death" (5.2.59). Obeying Giovanni's command, Annabella makes a typical deathbed prayer: "Ye blessed angels, guard me!" (5.5.67).¹⁷ Giovanni's blessing underlines the significance of this action:

Pray, Annabella, pray; since we must part,
Go thou, white in thy soul, to fill a throne
Of innocence and sanctity in Heaven.
Pray, pray, my sister! (5.5.63-66)

In addition to the fulfillment of the ritualistic formality, Ford further convinces us that Annabella departs with a "white soul" from her interaction with Giovanni in the murder scene. Her refusal to copulate with Giovanni demonstrates her resolution to

¹⁷ Annabella's prayer is more like a shortened variant of the example Delany gives of the words whispered into the dying person's ear: "Mary Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, do thou protect me from the enemy and receive me at the hour of my death" than "an act of devotion" Ronald Huebert suggests (55). Annabella's invocation of heavenly protection here is thus a conscious action to prepare her soul for death, which Michael Cameron Andrews neglects in his interpretation of this prayer (114), since Annabella regards the banquet Soranzo gives as "an harbinger for death" (5.5.27) for her and Giovanni.

leave “the baits of sin” (3.6.39). In contrast to Giovanni’s literal doubt about the Apocalypse, Annabella’s faith is manifested in her certainty about the scriptural Revelation (5.5.33-38). Her final gesture of selfless love, in the manner of Christ, is once again revealed in her begging God to forgive her murderous lover (5.5.92), and her last cry for mercy indicates her readiness to submit herself to the will of God, as well as her sincere contrition. Reformation, faith, love, and contrition define Annabella on her death bed, making her “a type of Everyman discovering the steep and thorny—but traditional—road to salvation” as Jeanne A. Roberts remarks (330).

While Annabella turns to God for mercy, Giovanni is much more dominated by God’s justice when he returns to the foreground in the last act. Once again he utilizes God’s principle of vengeance on sexual sinners to censor his own misdeeds. After acquiescing to Annabella’s marriage to Soranzo, and the illegitimacy of his love for her is aggravated by adultery, Giovanni can find no alternative philosophy to justify his incestuous love. Before he gives in to illicit pleasure, he is intimidated by the divine prohibition of adultery just as he was before he committed incest:

Busy opinion is an idle fool,
That as a school-rod keeps a child in awe,
Frights the unexperienc’d temper of the mind:
So did it me; who, ere my precious sister
Was married, thought all taste of love would die
In such a contract; but I find no change
Of pleasure in this formal law of sports. (5.3.1-7)

Even though he denies the sanctity of Annabella and Soranzo’s marriage by referring to it as a “contract,” he is aware of the legal sanction against his affair with his sister because their adultery disturbs the stability of the patriarchal social system. Eventually he admits his guilt in violating both divine and social laws, both of which would charge him and Annabella for their incest and adultery: “The laws of conscience and of civil use / May justly blame us” (5.5.70-71). While he has been quick to ward off blame in the name of love, he remains apprehensive about the divine punishment that he is to suffer after death because he has internalized the divine principle against sexual transgression. In fact, his ardent exaltation of love exposes the intensity of his fear and anxiety. After he hails the “glory” of his and Annabella’s “united hearts” (5.2.11-12), his mind is occupied immediately by the promised damnation of their souls. His typical Renaissance proclamation that places worldliness above spiritual salvation (5.3.14-16) is weakened by his reference to “Elysium,” a pagan variant for the Christian heaven accommodating the souls of the

dead. Giovanni's metaphorical designation of his "life of pleasure," instead of illustrating the thrill of incest intensified by adultery, as Clifford Leech suggests (17), reveals his preoccupation with spiritual life after death. Because he believes his soul will suffer as a result of his sins, he is compelled to refute the existence of hell to the Friar, who interrupts his brooding over the fate of his soul after death (5.3.18-20). In the same light, when Annabella reminds him of their impending death, it is spiritual rather than physical death that occupies him when he alludes to the Day of Judgment (5.5.30-31). Although he refuses to accept the divine sanction of his sin on the ground of natural law (5.5.32-35), his later demand that Annabella pray before she dies shows the insincerity of his verbal rejection of the divine sanction.

Giovanni's conscious submission to official sexual regulation eventually comes to light in his vengeful "butcheries." Taking vengeance on his faithless "wife" and her accomplices, he becomes curiously both the agent who carries out God's justice and the object at whom God's vengeance is aimed. His internal subjection to the panoptic mechanism is thus displayed by the double roles he plays in the denouement. Killing Annabella, their bastard child, and Soranzo in exchange for his own death, Giovanni assumes and carries out God's principle of vengeance on sexual sinners. Although he is the last in the play who receives the death penalty for sexual transgression, he is the first on his own death list. Before going to Soranzo's feast, he has resolved to die and bring down with him his "under-shrubs," Annabella and their bastard child. Having relinquished his right to have Annabella as his wife by acquiescing to her marriage to Soranzo, he reclaims it when she refuses to have sex with him. To Giovanni, her determination to reform is a dangerous "revolt" against his husbandly authority. Her resolution to be honest stirs his "repining wrath" because, by rejecting his physical possession of her, she proves to be "treacherous" to her "past vows and oaths" (5.6.4-5), through which she became his wife. To punish his "faithless" wife, who reserves herself now solely for Soranzo, Giovanni kills her as they kiss, proclaiming "honor doth love command" (5.5.86). Through her death, Annabella atones for her betrayal. As Giovanni explains, "How over-glorious art thou [Annabella] in thy wounds, / Triumphant over infamy and hate!" (5.5.103-4). The other reason that he kills Annabella is to annihilate the "hapless fruit," their dishonorable bastard, whose existence violates the official rule of procreation. Giovanni's love for the child compels him to save it from the humiliation of its true identity. Punishing his adulterous wife by murdering her and ending the life of the bastard, Giovanni regards himself as the "most glorious executioner" (5.6.34) of God's justice, which to him is more important than mercy (5.6.104). After punishing his unfaithful wife, Giovanni seeks his revenge against the adulterer, Soranzo, who stole Annabella away from him. He stabs Soranzo, proclaiming, "Now brave revenge is mine" (5.6.75). Giovanni

himself is the next one to die for sexual offenses, for he admits that he would commit suicide if he had not received a fatal wound from Vasques. Throughout the play, Giovanni has been verbally denying God's law with regard to his incestuous love, but in the end he kills all the sexual offenders as well as the fruit of his incest, upholding and executing God's vengeance on sexual culprits.

However, while Giovanni appeals to God's law to justify his self-righteous murders, he is paradoxically marked as a target for God's vengeance because his actions are also motivated by his relentless obsession with Annabella. His obsessive love is revealed in his obstinate endeavors to possess her even at the cost of her life. Ready to die a glorious death in his combat with Soranzo, he has to ensure that Annabella will not fall into his rival's hands if he does not survive the fight. To keep his sister solely for himself, he has to kill her before the battle begins. In addition, Annabella's refusal to sleep with him also arouses his desire to possess her body in order to be sure that he still has her love. If he cannot have her through willing compliance, he will pierce her womb with his dagger to claim her heart (5.6.31-33). The way Giovanni dissects Annabella's body symbolically consummates the sexual intercourse that he was previously denied. Annabella's impaled heart on his dagger is "the spoil / Of love and vengeance" (5.6.10-11) and the visual symbol of his "*rape of life and beauty*" (5.6.20, italics added). Displaying Annabella's impaled heart, Giovanni is eager to convince the Parmesan magnates of his utter possession of it and, by implication, of her love. His dying wish epitomizes his obsession with his sister: "Where'er I go, let me enjoy this grace, / Freely to view my Annabella's face" (5.6.107-8). Giovanni's "uncertain agnosticism" expressed in this couplet (Wilks 264) magnifies the irony of his desperate attempt to seek union with Annabella through death. Although he forswears his atheist pose by imploring God's grace, the "happy and blessed condition" allowed by "good will and free fauour of God" (Wilson 242-43), his recalcitrant devotion to his incestuous love not only reveals his falling out of grace,¹⁸ but also excludes his soul from heaven, where Annabella's white soul goes with his own blessing. When he decides to possess Annabella against all odds, he has already made himself the object of God's vengeance, as the watchword of the banditti reminds us, damned to lose his love and burn in hell for eternity.

Though Giovanni's last wish for spiritual reunion with Annabella outweighs his focus on divine justice because of its posteriority, his questionable revenge only serves to underline the religious interdiction against sexual transgressions. Giovanni's justification for vengeance is but an appropriation of contemporary sexual mores, and the official view of conjugal chastity is strengthened when he draws from it his justification for murder. His application of orthodox values ironically provides a way

¹⁸ In the sense of God's grace that makes people "Gracious and acceptable vnto God" (Wilson 242).

for the audience to see through his inversion when his clouded vision blurs the fact that Soranzo, not himself, is in fact Annabella's lawfully wedded husband. In the end, the triumph of Giovanni's vengeance belongs not to him but to the "One / Above" (4.2.8-9), the omniscient and omnipotent God, whose justice is gained by punishing all the sexual culprits, as Richardetto indicates when the reckoning in this play begins with Hippolita's unexpected death. Giovanni's endorsement and appropriation of the sexual regulation in the final act explicitly manifest the all-encompassing power of God's law, which enacts justice on even the most impenitent sexual transgressor in the play.

In fact, this dramatic confirmation of sexual regulation, through its verification of the inevitability of divine justice, also activates the panoptic mechanism in the minds of its spectators. The invisibility Ford's audience enjoyed as spectators in a private theater could no longer protect them when the dramatic invocation of God also engaged them in His invisible and omniscient gaze. Having employed the divine principle they had already internalized to understand the play, the audience not only scrutinized the characters according to it, but also subjected themselves to it, when they became conscious of their exposure to God's all-knowing eye. Accordingly, their vicarious experience was sustained at two conscious levels: they gazed at the players and were gazed at by God. In this light, they resembled the inmates in a panopticon in two senses—the double role that they played was maintained by their relationships with both the actors and God, and by an internal censor triggered by the dramatic invocation of the invisible watching eye. In this situation, the verisimilitude of the panoptic control was substantiated by the dramatic reality, penetrating the audience and compelling them to censor and constrain their own behavior while watching its effects displayed on stage. Whereas the spectacle of the reformed sinner Annabella might have achieved a preventive effect similar to that achieved by those who witnessed a real public penance, the execution of the sexual offenders, repentant or not, had an even stronger effect of preventing audience members' possible sexual transgressions.

As Roberts observes, "It is probably true that Ford accepted the rightness and necessity of society's rules and traditions and that he was not himself at all revolutionary" (322). However, as a playwright serving the Muses rather than the Church, he tests in *'Tis Pity* the limit of sexual regulation, and shows how potent and penetrative it is. While the ethical import of this play may be obscured by the intensity of the siblings' incestuous love, it comes to light when their tragedy is approached while considering the historical context of sexual regulation in Renaissance England. Although the incestuous lovers violate the divine interdiction against sexual transgressions, they never break free from its control. Their submission to the

regulation defines their attempt to legitimize their love, their management of the dire consequences of their copulation, and their respective responses toward the reckoning of their sins. Embracing in the denouement the opposing Christian principles—love and justice, mercy and vengeance—Annabella and Giovanni demonstrate the core spirit of the Christian religion. Observing the dramatic public penance and experiencing the disciplinary mechanism, Ford's audience was in turn affected by the regulation through their vicarious experience, as was the playwright while composing the play.

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