

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

Down Darkened Corridors: A Comparative Study of Jacobean Theatre and Film Noir

Submitted by Mike Nolan BA (Hons)

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Faculty of Communication, Arts and Critical Enquiry

La Trobe University
Bundoora, Victoria 3086
Australia

August 2010

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction:	4
Chapter 1 Dark with something more than night	15
Chapter 2 Madness, Dissonance and the Search for Harmony	29
Chapter 3 The Gender Game	67
Chapter 4 Black Like Me	94
Chapter 5 Public Words	123
Chapter 6 Sex, Power and Politics	134
Conclusion	185
Bibliography	189

Summary

The worlds of Jacobean Drama and film noir are separated by three and a half centuries, however, both forms are similarly imbued with images of darkness and heightened tensions to such an extent that a comparative criticism has the potential to enhance our understanding and appreciation of each form. Senses of dislocation, alienation and disorientations are common to plays and films of the respective periods. Language fails as an adequate means of articulating a pervading brooding malevolence and there is a common lack of resolution in plays and films of the darkness that emerges from the texts. The shared shadowed world of the Night with a darkness 'something more than night' pertains to each of the environments. In this thesis it is my intention to explore the points of connection (and of difference) between selected Jacobean plays and films of the noir period. My main focus will be on how each form deals with questions of madness/sanity, how individuals are named with regards to gender, race and reputation, and concluding with an examination of how corruption in City and Court intersects with and is characterized by sexual deviancy.

Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

I will be using the Turabian system of referencing throughout the thesis.

Introduction

I cannot sleep; my eyes' ill neighbouring lids Will hold no fellowship

Bussy D'Ambois's explosive entrance at the beginning of Chapman's play of the same name: "Fortune, not Reason, rules the state of things,/Reward goes backwards, Honour on his head" (1.1.1-2),¹ articulates a high level of anxiety and disenchantment with a world that is perceived to be disordered, fragmented and treacherous. While *Bussy D'Ambois* may not be the most typical of Jacobean tragedies, the young hero's sense of righteous indignation at the viciousness of courtly powerbrokers expressed here so vehemently is echoed in many other plays of the period, including, notably, Vindice's caustic denunciation of the Duke's Court in *The Revenger's Tragedy*² ("Oh that marrowless age/would stuff the hollow bones with damned desires" 1.1.5-6) and Lodovico's cynical reasoning in the opening scene of *The White Devil*³ that "Great men sell sheep, thus to be cut into pieces,/When first they have shorn them bare and sold their fleeces" (1.1.62-3). There is a shadowed world where characters become disoriented and disengaged from their environment; where the tremor of expectation is seldom satisfied; where desire is necessarily secretive and often repressed, where previously fixed notions of morality become dissipated in a confused blurring of right and wrong. As revealed in many of the plays performed in the early years of the reign of James I, there is a general loss of confidence in the very structures, state and societal, that are said to underpin human endeavour, resulting in the alienation of the individual as he or she struggles to cope with forces that seem to be beyond their control or comprehension.

In the opening of the 1947 film noir, *Crossfire*, we are confronted with a deadly struggle between two men; their shadows only are visible to us as they thrash about, knocking over furniture and lamps until finally, a prostrate, dead body is revealed on the floor. The savage, brutal and senseless murder offers an introduction to a world which, as becomes increasingly apparent during the film, is dysfunctional, destabilised and perverse. It is, as the character

¹ George Chapman, *Bussy D'Ambois*, ed. Nicholas Brooke (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). All subsequent references to the play will be from this edition. Details in parenthesis. Likewise, for all plays mentioned in this thesis, unless otherwise stated, the first reference to a text will establish that edition as the source for all other references to the text.

² Bryan Loughrey and Neil Taylor, eds., *Thomas Middleton: Five Plays* (London: Penguin Books, 1988).

³ John Webster, *The White Devil*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Methuen and Co., 1967).

Muller remarks in *Hollow Triumph* (aka *The Scar*, 1948), “a bitter little world.”⁴ This is also the premise of another film noir, *D.O.A* (1950), which contains a most striking and darkly evocative opening. A character walks into a police building, down long, poorly-lit corridors to the Homicide Department where he announces to the lieutenant in charge that he has come to report a murder. When the police officer asks him who was murdered he answers: “I was.” While visiting a jazz club and unaware initially of the circumstances surrounding the criminal act, he had been intentionally poisoned with a luminous toxin for which there is no antidote and with only hours to live, he is determined to track down and identify his killer. Film noir engages with a world that is thus necessarily compromised and violent, where men and women are unsettled and emotionally displaced; where life is tainted and characters’ attempts to bring about significant change are most often ineffectual. As Geoff Mayer notes: “...film noir went beyond presenting the drama as a simple or unequivocal conflict between good and evil. Instead, they shifted the dramatic focus to the “psychological” conflict that emanated from an ambivalent presentation of moral norms.”⁵

There are three hundred and fifty years separating the Jacobean period from the noir films of the middle decades of the twentieth century, but it is the contention of this thesis that the thematic and artistic preoccupations of the Jacobean theatre are replicated in the films made between 1941 and 1958⁶ that are designated film noir and those neo noir films, heavily influenced by the classic noir films and sharing similar dispositions, made since that time. The intention is, in recognising similarities of the forms, to analyse the ways “in which the past and the present might be put into meaningful dialogue with one another.”⁷ This dialogue is not assumed to be based on a causal link between the plays of the early seventeenth century and films noir – except in rare cases⁸ film directors were not consciously influenced by nor did they seek to emulate Jacobean drama – nor is it suggested that a comparative study of play and film is unavoidably universalist. Stevie Simkin, author of the above quote, uses the term “transhistoricist” to describe his approach to texts from different periods which allows

⁴ John Muller is a criminal who, realising he bears an uncanny resemblance to a prominent psychiatrist, murders the doctor and takes on his identity. His comment is thus replete with self-conscious irony.

⁵ Geoff Mayer and Brian McDonnell, *Encyclopedia Of Film Noir* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007) , 6.

⁶These are the years upon which there is most agreement that they form the limits of what could be deemed Film Noir.

⁷ Stevie Simkin, *Early Modern Tragedy and the Cinema of Violence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 3.

⁸ Such as the film versions of *Othello* and *Macbeth* directed by Orson Welles, which had noir qualities and *A Double Life* (1947), a celebrated film noir which featured a character who murdered his lover while rehearsing and acting the part of Othello.

for the recognition of essential and particular features that distinguish the literature of each age but at the same time understands that comparative studies can enrich the appreciation of the texts themselves.⁹ It will be my argument then that there is a close relationship between the darkness of Jacobean theatre and the brooding malevolence that is associated with film noir. I will be suggesting that the similarities go beyond stylistic mimicry or superficial points of contact, to form an observable, unified sensitivity or artistic interpretation of the world and that considering Jacobean drama and film noir as potentially complementary forms allows for the enhanced appreciation of the plays of one era by comparing them to the films of another much later period and vice versa.

As I have stated, I am not trying to establish (nor do I believe there exists) a causal link between Jacobean drama and film noir, rather the focus will be primarily on the areas, artistic and textual, common to both forms, featuring close analysis of individual texts – the transhistoricist approach suggested by Simkin. However, there are a number of historical circumstances or historical points of contact from both periods - political, social and economic - which indicate some common features.¹⁰ Certain aspects of these historical circumstances are not dissimilar¹¹ and before proceeding with this introduction I will briefly consider them as they provide some context for the arguments advanced in the next chapter which seek to establish the foundations for a comparison of the two forms.

In Jacobean England and the USA during and post World War 2 (coinciding with the film noir years), there was a pervasive sense of disillusionment relating to dissatisfaction with the new monarch when compared to the ‘splendour’ of the Age of Elizabeth 1 and the loss of the pre World 2 American aspirational confidence and optimism, perhaps best epitomised in the term the American Dream used first by James Truslow Adams in 1931,¹² manifested in part by the architectural marvels of buildings such as the Chrysler and the Empire State buildings and the escapist film industry of the 1930s, due to the horrors and destruction associated with The Great War. These grand narratives of Queen and Dream were challenged by artists who were cynical of the disparity between rhetoric and reality and critical of the legitimacy of the

⁹ Simkin, 3.

¹⁰ Throughout the thesis there is some reference to the similarities of the periods themselves, especially in Chapter 6.

¹¹ How these interacted with the texts of both eras is worthy of investigation but such a study is beyond the parameters of this thesis.

¹² Joseph L. DeVitis and John Martin Rich, *The Success Ethic and The American Dream* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 4.

respective attempts at national mythmaking. The Jacobean playwrights' responses were more problematical in that some seemed to encourage negative reactions to James by offering unflattering comparisons of his reign to that of Elizabeth¹³ but then others were more ambivalent towards the promotion of the Virgin Queen.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the writings of both periods were deeply affected by a waning trust in things political and economic.

The court of King James 1, often associated with corruption, favouritism and nepotism, can be compared to the corrupt influence of crime syndicates within State legislatures and government authorities in 40s and 50s USA. Both periods were also characterised by the escalating intrusion into personal lives and a certain paranoia about state security, resulting in the increased use of censorship of works being prepared for stage and screen. Fear of communist infiltration during the Cold War in the USA and a corresponding crackdown on Catholics (and other dissenters) after the disclosure of the Gunpowder Plot forced writers to disguise their criticism of social and political matters, to employ oblique language and analogy in order to express opposition. And so, for example, the use of an insane asylum as a metaphor for political corruption is an artistic device common to Jacobean drama and film noir; this particular 'common ground' will be explored in detail in chapter 3.

These are some of the non-textual background elements that provide some linking between the periods and indicate where an examination of the Jacobean texts and films noir in the light of their analogous political, social and economic factors might be profitable. Again, I stress that it is not the intention of this thesis to present such a study. Analyses of any plays by Shakespeare¹⁵ will also not be attempted, even though there have been film noir versions of his tragedies.¹⁶ In the presentation of Shakespearean tragic heroes, the spotlight is on the individual who shows himself to be mostly aware of the nature of his tragic environment, which may or may not be created or exacerbated by his own actions. He also has a degree of control, however imperfect or tenuous, of his actions and has some heightened insight into his situation. Jacobean and noir heroes are less isolated from their environments so that they are

¹³ References in *The Revenger's Tragedy* to Vindice's lost love, Gloriana, as a counter-point to the corruption of the Duke's court are sometimes interpreted as examples of this unflattering comparison.

¹⁴ For example, Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* seems to offer a critical view of Elizabeth.

¹⁵ There is quite a detailed discussion of *Pericles* in Chapter 4 but this is limited to the first part of the play which is often attributed to George Wilkins who is said to have collaborated with Shakespeare. Roger Warren and Suzanne Gossett, editors respectively of the Oxford (2003) and Arden (2004) editions of *Pericles* argue that Wilkins is the author of the first 9 scenes of the play.

¹⁶ See note 8.

distinguished less from other characters and are more implicated in ills of their particular societies. Their actions are often poorly co-ordinated, spontaneous, reactionary (in a non-political sense) and tainted. While *Hamlet*, for example, has noir aspects, the character of Hamlet, as a tragic hero, has little in common with the heroes of the Jacobean plays and the films noir which I will be examining. An argument could be made that plays such as *Measure For Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *All's Well That Ends Well* are pertinent to a discussion of Jacobean disorientation, however, I have given preference instead to some less well-known works such as *The Turk* by John Mason, *Mahomet and His Heaven* by William Percy and *The Knight of Malta* by Philip Massinger which have received comparatively little critical attention but which offer powerful insights into the conflicted and compromised nature of human endeavours.

The stimulus for investigating connections between Jacobean drama and film noir came from Gamini Salgado's introduction to the 1965 Penguin Edition entitled *Three Jacobean Tragedies*¹⁷ which comprised *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The White Devil* and *The Changeling*. In referring to the thrillers written by Mickey Spillane, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Graham Greene – whose novels were the basis for many of the important noirs made in the 1940's and 50's – Salgado noted that there were “several points of resemblance between the modern thriller and the seventeenth-century revenge play...’Casual slaughter’ aptly summarizes the attitude to murder and mayhem which many thrillers share with the revenge play.”¹⁸ Salgado continues with his comparison at some length, referring to the shared focus on crime and violence, the mechanics of mayhem and disordered worlds. He further states that in the drama, violent action “is emblematic of the moral corruption of the society in which it occurs”¹⁹ and suggests that this feature of Jacobean Tragedy finds its equivalent in the novels of Hammett and Chandler. Indeed, the connection in the plays between the amoral criminal actions of characters and political and social corruption is a major concern of films noir and this will be examined in some depth in Chapter 6. Salgado recognised that similar tensions and an almost sensationalist approach to the expressions of human desire were crucial to both forms and that appealing to a contemporary understanding of popular culture was an effective means of contextualizing the deviant practices in so many

¹⁷Gamini Salgado, ed., *Three Jacobean Tragedies* (London: Penguin Books, 1965).

¹⁸ Salgado, 12-13.

¹⁹ Salgado, 14.

of the plays which had polarised some critics who had recoiled from what was seen as the glorification of the moral excesses contained in the revenge plays.

Before Salgado there was another critic who made explicit a connexion between Jacobean drama and film noir. In 1959, B. J. Layman wrote an interpretation of *The White Devil* wherein he defined Vittoria's creative ingenuity in noir terms by claiming that she was "an outrageous *femme fatale*."²⁰ Writing at roughly the same time that noirs such as *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), *The Killing* (1956) and *Vertigo* (1958) were being screened, Layman seemed conscious of the similitude between the reactions of a seventeenth century female character and the *femme fatales* on the screen and employed the noir term as an excellent means of conveying an essential facet of Vittoria's character.

Apart from these references, and while there has been casual mention,²¹ mostly in film noir criticism, of links between the forms, no critic has made a sustained comparison since Salgado, and he did not mention the films which arose from the crime fiction and thrillers, but only discussed the *romans policiers* as a way of interpreting the more bloody aspects of Early Modern revenge drama. In the first years of the twenty-first century, there have been some examples of artistic interest in re-shaping Jacobean dramas within a modern neo noir context. In 2002, Russell James, called 'the Godfather of British Noir',²² reconfigured Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* to create a modern thriller named *The Annex*. This novel was followed soon after by Alex Cox's 2002 neo noir film adaptation of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, which was set in a grim and decadent contemporary depressed, urban environment. Both texts slip easily between the conventions of Jacobean and noir darkness and point to some understanding of the precedence of Early Modern tragedy as a model for the recording of modern trauma. Likewise, Howard Baker's adaptation of *Women Beware Women* in 1986, whereby he presented two thirds of Middleton's play untouched but then

²⁰ B. J. Layman, "The Equilibrium of Opposites in *The White Devil*: A Reinterpretation," PLMA 74, no. 4 (Sept. 1959): 341.

²¹ Examples of such passing references can be found in Nicholas Christopher, *Somewhere In The Night: Film Noir and the American City* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), 13, Raymond Durnat, "Paint it Black: the Family Tree of Film Noir", in *Film Noir Reader*, eds. Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 2003), 37, Raymond Durnat, Scott Simmon, *King Vidor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 278, Steve Chiball, *Get Carter: A British Film Guide* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 16, James Narremore, *More Than Night: film noir in its contexts* (London: University of California Press, 1998), 69-70, Dennis Kennedy, *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 294, Chris Johnson, *Essays on George F. Walker: Playing with Anxiety* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1999), 105 and David L. Smith and Richard Strier and David Bevington, *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576-1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 145.

²² Publisher's Weekly. 2002. <http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/home/index.html> (accessed 4/5/2006).

rewrote the concluding scenes, is another example of the ability of these plays to command our attention and stimulate creative interest.

In 2006, Stevie Simkin, in his critical response, *Early Modern Tragedy and the Cinema of Violence*, argued, in a similar fashion to my previous comments about the connections between Jacobean drama and film noir, that parallel critical analysis of Revenge tragedy and contemporary revenge cinema would not only be valid and worthwhile but would also reveal a consistency between the forms, separated by four hundred years. He acknowledged that there had been passing critical references to “the frequently explicit and inventive violence of early modern tragedy (especially revenge tragedies) and the graphic violence that finds its way into a number of different genres of popular film”²³ but that “the connections seemed to be made in order to draw students and inexperienced readers of Renaissance texts into the works of Webster, Middleton or Shakespeare, suggesting to them that these texts may not be so very far removed from the entertainment of their own time, after all.”²⁴ This certainly was not the case with regard to Salgado’s introduction; he was perhaps trying to mitigate any distaste that readers might feel when faced with the Renaissance’s seemingly ready acceptance of bloody and carnal excesses by suggesting that twentieth century thrillers offered a similar fare. As mentioned previously, Simkin is seeking to establish a critical dialogue between the texts of different eras, based on the assumption that there are shared (or illuminatingly contrasting) concerns which reward any study with critical insights into both sets of texts. And so, throughout his study, he discusses a range of issues and characters from these texts in a free and non-discriminatory way. That is, the discussion moves easily between the forms of revenge tragedy and violent modern films; the overall aim being to provide parallel analysis but with an integrated discussion of texts. I will be using a similar approach.

Stevie Simkin confines his treatment of the texts to selected revenge tragedies but is freer in his analysis of films, not restricting himself to any one genre, although clearly his focus is primarily on films that contain graphic violence. I will be looking only at films noir from the 40’s and 50’s, as well as selected neo noir films; the examination of Jacobean plays will not be restricted to tragedies but will include a number of non-tragedies such as *Ram Alley*, *The*

²³ Simkin, 4.

²⁴ Simkin, 4.

Knight of Malta and *The Roaring Girl*. The subject matter, the critical areas that will be covered and the interpretation of course differ considerably from Simkin's study.

In the first chapter, the connections between the darkness of Jacobean drama and the corresponding eponymous darkness of film noir are outlined. The primary characteristics which I am arguing pertain to both forms are examined and clarified. Fundamental to both forms is the physical nature of the shadowed world; the blackness is not simply the absence of light but that within the darkness there is an active presence of forces and behaviours that seem to defy clear definition. This is mirrored in the plots which are non-linear or with interrupted plot lines and so we enter a world where misalignment of characters and situation occurs, as Joan Copjec notes; "...in *film noir* it [the world] breaks up into inconsistent and always alien fragments."²⁵ Disguises, masks, overheard conversations, mirrors, obscured staircases and other stage/film craft materials reinforce the sense of a reality being perceived dimly. The noir detective "cannot and does not solve the crime by drawing from his observations a continuous sequence of arguments, each supported by the one before and supporting the one that follows. Instead, the investigation moves forward in fits and starts, through reversals and false solutions."²⁶ This disjointedness is also a feature of Jacobean drama as characters seek to resolve their dilemmas with actions that are similarly disrupted. The logic of action is always being compromised by the awakening of desires that undermine reason. Characters therefore often experience a stripping away of agency as the all-pervading darkness inhibits their ability to construct effective order in a world disposed to chaos.

The depiction of such an unsettled world would seem to lead logically to the next chapter which deals with madness and sanity, and the blurring of the lines between them. A considerable number of plays and films²⁷ critique their contemporary worlds by using madness metaphorically and ironically to recognise that there is sanity in madness and predispositions to madness in the supposedly sane authority figures of the texts. Chapter 2 looks firstly at the importance of asylums and sanatoriums as indicators of social and political malaise, places where our sympathies are with the men and women whose struggle with the confusion in their minds is contrasted with the criminal opportunism of those in power who

²⁵ Joan Copjec, *Shades of Noir* (London: Verso, 1993), ix.

²⁶ Copjec, viii.

²⁷ Apart from the texts mentioned in this section, other texts that deal with madness are: *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *Northward Ho*, *The Nice Valour*, *The Mad lover*, *The High Wall* (1947), *Shock* (1946), *The Blue Dahlia* (1946), *The Dark Mirror* (1946) and *Spellbound* (1945). This list is by no means exhaustive but is an indication of how madness featured so prominently in both Jacobean plays and films noir.

are deemed sane but act irrationally. *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) and *The Honest Whore Part 1* are the main texts examined. While the mental institutions, in these texts, are an important background element, the focus moves in *The Changeling*, *Behind Locked Doors* (1948) and *Shock Corridor* (1963) to within the actual asylums where there is a more in-depth and detailed analysis of the fractured and fragmented nature of the social settings inside and outside the walls. A common feature of each of these texts is the presence of men in the asylums who are pretending to be mad. This disrupts attempts by authority figures to apply facile definitions of sanity to restrict legitimate expressions of difference as it becomes more difficult to trace clear lines of demarcation.

The last section of the chapter examines what takes place outside the walls of the asylum and focuses on examples of psychotic behaviour within the general community. Madness in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *Dial 1119* (1950) is not primarily reflective of a more general darkness in society (although there is certainly an element of this in both texts), rather it is a highlighting of specific ills that are ignored or underplayed. The mentally unstable individuals are shown to be dangerous but the desperation of their situations relates more to how they have been treated, how they typify strains of darkness within the wider populace and how their illness is exacerbated by feelings of powerlessness and dispossession.

In Chapter 3, questions of power are also a principal focus. The discussion moves into the fraught area of gender relations, showing how the naming of those women as aberrant, who did not conform to the strict social template devised by men, became a means of limiting opportunities for the feminine voice to be heard. Texts associated with *la querrelle des femmes*, such as *Haec Vir* and *Hic Mulier* are discussed, and the controversy surrounding Joseph Swetnam, which will then lead to an examination of *Ram Alley*, *The Roaring Girl*, *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Blonde Ice* (1948) and *Too Late For Tears* (1949). Naming becomes a means of control, as depicted in noir and in the plays of the early seventeenth century, to tie women to the domestic spheres of influence and to isolate those who refused to submit. Women in these texts are placed at the centre of the action; their presence is subversive of the dominant societal structures as they seek to find space for their own desires within the masculine powerbrokers who are simultaneously attracted to and fearful of the feminine.

Also considered as part of the naming process are the ways in which issues of race are similarly defined; gender and colour naming situated women and people of a different race outside the accepted community parameters and as outsiders they could easily be demonised through language. However, the plays and films themselves resist attempts to narrow diversity through language, and plays such as *The Roaring Girl* and *The Knight of Malta* are critical of blind prejudice and project positive images of women (the former) and of blackness (the latter). In chapter 4 there are a number of texts discussed which explore the darkness that disenfranchises through intolerance and bigotry. A close examination of the texts *Mahomet and His Heaven*, *The Lascivious Queen*,²⁸ *The Knight of Malta* and *The Turk* suggests that these plays are offering a more nuanced treatment of race than is sometimes supposed. Racial stereotyping in particular is challenged in subtle but very effective ways so that comparisons with the noir films *Crossfire* (1947) and *No Way Out* (1950) elucidate the common factors which facilitate the emergence of racist naming in communities. And indeed, what becomes apparent in the consideration of the texts is the extent by which racial naming prompts a discourse about the volatile and fragmentary nature of communities based on racial exclusion or discrimination. The theme of naming is continued in chapter 5 where public naming through the news processes is examined and Ben Jonson's *Staple of the News* and his masque *News From the New World Discovered in the Moon*, works that anticipate many of the features of our contemporary news media, the playwright are the starting points for this discussion. The films *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957) and *Slander* (1957) are more directly involved with the impact of public naming on individuals and exposing the power that is amassed by those in the media who are able to control and manipulate public opinion.

The noir *City* and the Jacobean *Court* are the principal sites of corruption and darkness in the works of their respective periods. Here those who exercise great power and those who are intent on accessing that power in order to corrupt the processes of government for their own benefit are concentrated. The combination of considerable amounts of money, creative but decadent young men and women and compromised public officials creates an environment where excess seems to guarantee success. Chapter 6 follows the fascination both forms have with the infiltration of the personal into the public sphere in this environment where overindulgence is privileged and restraint is ridiculed. In the world of the *City* and the *Court*, the suspension of any active and effective moral authority results in a savage hedonism which

²⁸ See note 175 for clarification of the title of this play.

threatens to overwhelm the State. This threat is represented in the texts by acts and states of sexual perversion and deviancy which act as metaphors for the corruption that is rife at the highest level; incest, necrophilia and rape are associated with the most powerful men and women.

Raymond Chandler wrote in his introduction to *Trouble is My Business* that the success of the noir crime novels of the 1930's was perhaps due to the "smell of fear which these stories managed to generate."²⁹ This is a most apt comment in terms of a comparative study of Jacobean drama and film noir as a fearful and de-stabilised environment is essential to both forms. Characters enter into darkened and contaminated places where the shadows can, quite paradoxically, offer protection and at the same time threaten. In chapter 1, I will examine these and other elements which I believe demonstrate that Jacobean drama and film noir are comparable forms.

²⁹ Raymond Chandler, introduction to *Trouble is My Business* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), iii.

Chapter 1

Dark with something more than night

Before embarking on a detailed analysis in the following chapters of shared themes in plays and films, and how a comparison of form, mood and content can provide new insights into our appreciation of each set of texts, there needs to be some exploration of the foundational elements that link the drama of the seventeenth century to the noir concerns expressed in a different medium in the twentieth century. These fundamentals are the means by which a noir/Jacobean sensibility is able to be expressed and through which the similarities can be recognised. The main texts for consideration will be *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *Chinatown* (1974), *The White Devil*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *D.O.A* and *Detour* (1946).

Both film noir and Jacobean drama are powerfully atmospheric. They present a world of shadows, where the darkness of night is a metaphor for the darkness of the soul. Deep in this world is the shadowed other, the *femme fatale* – mysterious, potent, fiercely independent yet ultimately self-destructive – the outsider, the lone detective, the victim, the haunted, the hunted, the obsessed, the paranoid, the psychotic, the doomed (often so, paradoxically, because of their innocence), the corrupted and the corrupt. The darkness, whether real or metaphorical, is all embracing and every character is immersed in this world that has no easily articulated or self-evidently recognizable moral centre. Shadows exist not as a point of contrast but as an existential marker of uncertainty.

The matter in a Jacobean play or a film noir is inextricably linked to the manner in which it is presented. The work *is* the mood. Throughout both forms, there is a discrepancy between what the main characters desire and the means they employ to try and satisfy those desires. Thus, there exists a recognition and an acknowledgement of the necessary presence of evil, together with a realisation that in the struggles between good and evil, the dice may well be loaded against the former. The moral values are skewed, with often the most interesting, attractive, the most dynamic and effective characters being the most corrupt. The moral mist Una Ellis-Fermor³⁰ refers to as being the central metaphor in John Webster's plays pervades this world, greying the boundaries between what is and what is not morally acceptable. A key

³⁰ Una Ellis-Fermor referred to in Anders Dallby, *The Anatomy of Evil: A Study of John Webster's "The White Devil,"* (Malmo: CWK Gleerup Lund, 1974), 17.

aspect of the darkness of the Jacobean and noir dramas is that it encompasses the society as well as the individual, indicting structures as well as people. The dominant moods are thus: disillusionment, alienation – from self and others – disenchantment, paranoia, suspicion, betrayal, obsession, lust and a pervasive moral ambiguity. These feed into one fundamental image of the ‘Night,’ which is common to the majority of plays and films.

In Thomas Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy*³¹, the night is the veil drawn to allow men and women to give free rein to their repressed and hidden desires. Vindice, disguised as Piato, lures Lussurioso with images of a sexual smorgasbord of forbidden sexual couplings:

Some uncles are adulterous with their nieces

Brothers with brothers’ wives. O Hour of incest!

(1. 3. 62-63)

The night is the means by which the appetite is sated.

...Well, if any thing be damned

It will be twelve o’clock at night; that twelve

Will never ‘scape.

It is the Judas of the hours, wherein

Honest salvation is betrayed by sin.

Night here, as in noir, is an active, dynamic force, not simply the absence or the dimming of light. The characters belong to the darkness; it is a world they understand, even if their response to it is ambiguous. Night endorses what would be condemned during daytime and there is the sense here that conventional (i.e. daytime) morality is a denial of the ‘true’ natures of women and men.

...and in the morning,

When they are up and dressed, and their mask on,

Who can perceive this?

(1. 3. 65-67)

³¹ Loughrey and Taylor, eds.

Vindice's use of imagery is ironic in that he is repelled by the very sexual excesses he catalogues, but at the same time he realises the account he gives of life in the Duke's Court is accurate: the moral chaos and the perverse inversion of values are the norm.

There is a similar treatment of 'Night' imagery in Roman Polanski's neo-noir *Chinatown*, even if the opening scenes are flooded with the intense Californian sunlight. As in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the daylight masks the passions and duplicities of the characters, which are then revealed after dark. Jake Gittes's shadowing of Hollis Mulwray is uneventful during the day but after nightfall Mulwray is murdered and the evils associated with the autocratic behaviour of Noah Cross are let loose.

Night in the film has also a strong metaphorical sense, centred not only in the moral blackness of Noah Cross, who casually murders, has an incestuous relationship with his daughter and is politically corrupt, but is strongly represented in the maze of different levels of meaning and in the difficulty Jake experiences in unravelling those secrets that fester beneath the surface of conventional society. The moral mist of the Jacobean is replicated in the tangled lives of the characters in *Chinatown*. The truth of identity is hidden behind "what seems." Ida Sessions *seems* to be Evelyn Mulwray; Hollis Mulwray *seems* to be having an affair with Katherine who *seems* to be his mistress. Mulwray *seems* to have drowned; Mar Vista *seems* to be a respectable home for the aged. It is Evelyn Mulwray herself who provides the most telling example of the kernel of truth hidden by layers of subterfuge when she tries to explain to Jake the 'true' nature of her relationship with Katherine. He accuses her of lying and delivers a slap as she alternately states that Katherine is "my sister," "my daughter," "my sister," "my daughter," until he realises that both statements are true. Here each layer of seeming is peeled away until the shocking truth of Cross's incest with Evelyn is revealed. The grotesque sexual partnering described by Vindice, referred to previously, becomes noir reality in this scene. As in the Duke's court, a link is made between the moral corruption of those in power and the political corruption that is endemic in both societies.

This intricate mingling of plot and theme in the context of a tangible, constructed atmosphere, whereby a narrative becomes complex because it is carrying metaphorical as well as storyline significance, is thus indicative of Jacobean drama and film noir. Plots are seldom linear, containing myriad apparent diversions and distractions as the alienation experienced by the characters is reflected in the lack of classic resolution in the dramatic schema of the texts. In a traumatised world, events are seldom organised in an orderly fashion nor are they

conveniently and satisfactorily resolved. And so, for example, the storyline of *The Big Sleep* (1946) almost defies description due to its complexity, as the interest in the action does not rely principally on what is resolved but on what is explored, as Kevin Hagopian notes: “*The Big Sleep* is as intricate a social text as it is a narrative one, its contorted plot an index of a garbled and anxious wartime society, its lyrical impossibilities alluding to social possibilities the conservative ethos of the classical Hollywood cinema could barely contain.”³² The stark, and dark explicit contemporaneousness of most of the plays and films, their readiness to reflect and critique the societies in which they are embedded, results in structures that mirror the moral, social and political complexities of those societies.

Returning to *Chinatown*, we see that this structural, purposeful irresolution common to both forms is capable of creating drama of surprising power. Throughout his initial investigations, and in spite of his skill and experience, Jake struggles to make sense of the investigation of Mulwray’s supposed infidelity and his subsequent murder. Noah Cross tells him: “you may think you know what you’re dealing with, but you don’t” and we readily concur. Jake’s investigation begins as strictly domestic (and after all, his detective work is almost solely to do with affairs matrimonial), but it quickly escalates into murder, political swindling, incest and concludes with attempted murder, abduction and a fatal police shooting. His attempts to ‘deal’ with the Mulwray case are shown to be worthy but futile. He only fully realises the scope of the evil Cross perpetrates when it is too late. At the end of the film, Jake has exposed the political and personal contagion that is Noah Cross, but to what avail? Evelyn is dead, her daughter/sister is led away to be abused by her grandfather/father, the police are ineffectual and indirectly implicated. No one is interested and as the on-lookers impassively stare, Jake’s off-sider Walsh remarks: “Forget it Jake. It’s Chinatown.” The recipe for survival in Chinatown is to “do as little as possible.” In film noir justice is seldom measured out equitably and impartially. The casual lawlessness of Chinatown acts appropriately as the background for the endgame. The innocent suffer and the guilty are protected.

Similarly, in the final scene of *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, Vindice and Hippolito challenge the tyrannical lawlessness of the Duke’s Palace and purge the court of the Duke and his hideous offspring. The revenging brothers dedicate their actions to Antonio, who will become the new Duke.

³² Kevin Hagopian, ““How Are You Fixed For Red Points?”: Anecdote and the World War II Home Front in *The Big Sleep* (1946),” in *Film Noir Reader 4*, eds. Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 2004), 34.

Hippolito: Now the hope
 Of Italy lies in your reverend years.

Vindice: Your hair will make the silver age again
 When there was fewer but more honest men.

(5. 3. 93-95)

Antonio promises to “rule that heaven may keep the crown” (98), but when he learns that the brothers were responsible for the Duke’s death, he bypasses heaven and pronounces an immediate judgement: “bear ‘em to speedy execution” (110). His reason? “You that would murder him would murder me” (112). The self-interest Antonio exhibits is contrary to the cause of justice he was just espousing. While neither Vindice nor Hippolito are innocent victims, their actions nonetheless enabled Antonio to assume power with the promise of being “the hope of Italy.” His ruthless and expedient response to Vindice’s confession in the hope “their blood may wash away all treason” (137) shatters the notion of a just resolution to the drama. As in *Chinatown* the dispensing of justice is arbitrary and serves those who have access to power. There is a moral ambivalence about the actions of characters who are pitted against the power elites as all characters endeavour to chart their way out of a morass of competing hopes, desires, fears, obsessions and grievances.

Film noir and Jacobean drama thus share a most important trait; the evil that escapes, is let loose or is revealed during the course of the action may be diminished but still uncontained regardless of what may appear to be resolved in the final scene. Pandora’s Box-like, the lid cannot be replaced; the survivors are tainted with the human frailty they have confronted and so any expectations that order can be easily re-established or that evil has been totally purged are shown to be futile. When Giovanni, in the conclusion to *The White Devil*, addresses the conspirators Lodovivo and Gasparo:

You bloody villains
 By what authority have you committed
 This massacre?

(5.6.285-287)

he is told by Lodovico “By thine” (288). While Giovanni is certainly not responsible for the carnage in this scene, he is part of the power structure that includes one of the real culprits – his uncle Francisco de Medici. Giovanni’s trite and feeble moralizing final couplet

Let guilty men remember, their black deeds
Do lean on crutches made of slender reeds.
(305-306)

is spoken without conviction as he realises that not only will the murder of his father Bracciano be unavenged, but that the defiant boast of Lodovico “I limed this nightpiece and it was my best” (302) resonates beyond his moralising. The scapegoats will suffer and those in power will prosper. The informed cynicism that emerges from Jacobean drama and film noir owes its presence, in part, to this dislocation between the sufferings of the characters and the workings of justice. The dark and potent energy of the various social and personal evils present in the films and plays cannot be adequately corralled by those who are representing the positive forces for good in society. Evil exists in the hearts of men and women; it is tangible and is directly related to power. When the guilty die, their destruction does not automatically herald a comprehensive and lasting victory over evil.

There are many moments in literature and film where the evils that have been referred to emerge from darkness and night. What distinguishes and unites Jacobean drama and film noir as complementary forms however, is typified in the words of Raymond Chandler, who not only wrote stories that were made into noir films but also contributed as scriptwriter to two 1940s noirs that will be discussed in later chapters – *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Blue Dahlia* (1946). Endeavouring to characterise the visceral nature of the darkness encountered in his novels, Chandler described “Streets that were dark with something more than night.”³³ The menace is not confined to the evil within individuals but extends to the immediate environment, and it is this extension of the darkness that establishes the Jacobean/noir sensibility as unique. It is the indeterminate nature of the threat suggested by “something” – it is real but unqualified and unquantified – and the “more” continues the sense of the indefinable character of the danger but alerts us to it extending beyond set parameters. The shadowed night is alive with threat but there is also a relentless and unsettling energy which may be as terrible in its creativity as it is in its destructiveness. The frenzied, malicious genius

³³ Chandler, vii.

of Lodovico, demonstrated in the first scene in *The White Devil*, propels us headlong into the maelstrom of the competing courts of Brachiano and Francisco. Chandler's "more" is readily understood in the context of the play where villainy, subterfuge, betrayal and deceit are reflected to varying degrees in the main characters, of whom perhaps only Isabella and Giovanni remained untainted. Lodovico's dark passions are an extension beyond the acts of violence that have been normalised in the court as politically necessary and expedient or to satisfy personal desires and his leap into the darkness is a full and psychotic embracing of the evil that other characters resort to as a means to an end. In his venomous tirades – "I'll make Italian cut-works in their guts" (1.1.54) – Lodovico is matched by the equally psychotic Tommy Udo in *Kiss of Death* (1947), who, before he pushes an old woman in a wheelchair downstairs to her death, states: "You know what I do to squealers? I let 'em have it in the belly, so they can roll around for a long time thinkin' it over." The associations of the vulnerability of the stomach, inflicting great pain and an obscene intimacy involved with the act of killing, whereby the intimacy of sex is mimicked, are the outward displays of an evil interior.

The darkness of Udo and Lodovico lies in their unpredictable manic disposition; they are indubitably evil men who are highly imaginative and energized but wholly corrupted. The interest for Jacobean playwrights and noir directors often lies in the darkness that emerges from the collision of sensitivities and from those points of conflict within an individual when characters are forced by circumstances to act contrary to their established nature. In these situations, men and women, who are otherwise moral beings, have become compromised and are then drawn into the shadowed world, from which it is difficult to return. Noir particularly is drawn to those moments when the contradictions are realised, when the opposing tensions within a character touch and make contact. In *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Vindice is such a conflicted character; he plots vengeance against the Duke and his sons but Elodie Likhart argues that he is a puritan because of his desire to purify the society of the lechery practised by the Duke, the Duchess and their diabolical family. So she poses the question:

Comment un personnage puritain peut-il souhaiter purifier la société en tuant ses membres corrompus, sachant qu'en se vengeant, il usurpe le rôle de Dieu et agit en lieu et à la place de la rétribution divine? Comment enfin l'immoralité de la

vengeance peut-elle être réconciliée avec le désir moral de purification prôné par le héros de cette tragédie?”³⁴

Vindice resolves this by seeing himself as the one who will avenge not only his beloved Gloriana’s death, but also the one who will act for heaven in purging the world of vice. This accounts for the tests he applies to his sister and mother to judge their worthiness and moral propriety; Castiza passes with flying colours but Gratiana’s venality strengthens his resolve to eliminate lechery and corruption. Even disguised as Piato he provides the opportunities for Lussurioso and the Duke to condemn themselves, offering a testing of a different kind, but it seems that before enacting retribution he wants to satisfy himself of their sinfulness; he imagines himself to be the agent of “that eternal eye/That sees through flesh and all” (1. 3. 68-69). Ultimately, however, Vindice cannot reconcile the contradictions of the roles he has assumed; especially so with the assassination of the Duke, in which his delight in the process of righteous revenge mimics the very sexual excesses that compelled him to act in the first place.

It is evident that many characters recognise their situation, recognise that what confronts them is beyond their immediate capacity to effect change. Vindice is effective in eradicating the Duke and his family but they are primed for self-destruction (through their suspicious loathing of each other) and his role is more that of opportunistic facilitator. However, for many of the characters they must come to terms with a lack of agency; they are able to act, but usually such action will often result in the deterioration of their situation or will have a disastrous impact on another character, usually someone close to them, or someone they love. Curiously, this lack of agency, while often exacerbated by a character’s lack of social status with concomitant reduced access to power, can also be found in high-ranking, seemingly independent men and women. The anonymous King in John Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy*³⁵ recognises no limits to his power, which even extends into the marriage arrangements of his subjects. He has Amintor marry Evadne, his secret mistress, who then proceeds to inform her new husband that the marriage is a sham, designed so that the King and she can have uninterrupted access to each other while Amintor will be denied Evadne’s body. Later in the

³⁴ Elodie Likhart. "La Tragédie du vengeur de Thomas Middleton ou la thérapie paradoxale du théâtre," *Études Épistémè* no. 16 (2009): 44. How is a puritan able to purge a corrupt society through killing, knowing that in taking revenge he usurps the role of God and pre-empts divine retribution? How can the immorality of vengeance be reconciled with the moral desire to purify as advocated by the hero of this tragedy? (My translation).

³⁵ John Fletcher, *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed. T. W. Craik (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

play, having experienced a change of heart, Evadne ties up her lover, letting the King believe it's part of their love-play, and then kills him. Beyond the dramatic reversal of sex roles, with Evadne's use of the phallic knife being a grim parody of love-making, there is performed for us the emasculation of the King as he is deprived of agency as a man and as a man of state. Importantly, he is not presented as a tyrant, though we certainly don't condone his treatment of Amintor, but he loves Evadne and there's no sense of his forcing himself on her; their relationship is consensual. The binding of the King has a metaphorical resonance in the play as he has been bound by his own manipulative lusts. Amintor, however, is hidebound by expectations of how a virile young man should behave with a bride. While his soldier and courtier friends tease him with sexual banter that is meant to reinforce gender stereotypes in marriage, he is obliged to adopt an enforced impotence. Ironically, when Amintor does act, he kills his rejected first love, Aspatia, who having disguised herself as a man, provokes him to fight her in a duel with the express purpose of being killed by him.

Fletcher subverts fixed ideas of masculinity, using the sword as deviant phallus, wielded firstly by Evadne in her 'raping' of the King, and then by the 'impotent' Amintor who pierces Aspatia as a horribly confused symbolic taking of her virginity. The actions of all the major characters are ineffectual and self-destructive. There are also multiple examples of murder by proxy – the most obvious being Melantius who forces his sister Evadne to avenge the slight done to his friend Amintor instead of acting himself – which serves to strengthen our sense of the incapacity of the characters to act in meaningful and purposeful ways. Importantly, the loss of agency or the chronic obliqueness of lines of action, which I am arguing is indicative of Jacobean and noir texts, is not a plot device to heighten tension but is intrinsic; the nature of the Jacobean/noir universe inhibits agency.

A most powerful example of this loss of agency occurs in the opening scene of the 1950 film noir *DOA*. Frank Bigelow rushes into a police station to report a murder. The desk sergeant asks him who has been killed and he answers – “me.” A fatal dose of poison has been administered to Bigelow in a crowded waterfront nightclub without his knowing the identity of the culprit. With only days to live, Frank, an accountant, plays detective as he tries to uncover the reason for the poisoning and to track down his murderer. He acts out of an existential necessity to understand what has happened to him, who has been responsible for this ostensibly senseless killing and why he has been chosen to die. Bigelow is, in effect, his own avenger but one who must first determine the nature and substance of the crime before

he can take action. He “typifies the hopeless plight of people manipulated by forces they are unable to control or comprehend.”³⁶ The film presents us with an undeniably bleak prospect for we know at the beginning that the hero is doomed, that there cannot be a miracle cure or a circumstance that will enable him to survive. Any actions that he takes will, in an existential sense, be futile and perhaps meaningless. And yet Bigelow is given options; he can succumb meekly to his determined fate or, Meursault-like, resist and fight against the absurdity of his situation. In fact he does refuse to accept that he is powerless and he rebels against the death sentence he has received. Against all odds he is successful in unscrambling the mysteries of his situation; he is successful in confronting and destroying his poisoner. In achieving this he transcends the mediocrity of his previous lifestyle and in his resistance he is able to impose some kind of meaning on his deadly predicament. His loss of agency is real, but so too is the journey he makes to reinstate some sense of his particular personal significance within the broader context of a chaotic world that inhibits or denies the individual’s access to agency.

In stark contrast to Bigelow’s stance against the void before him, Al Roberts in Edward G. Ulmer’s *Detour* (1945) fatalistically acquiesces in the circumstances that threaten to ruin him. Picked up while hitch-hiking, Roberts takes over the driving while the owner of the car, Haskell sleeps. Unable to wake the man, he soon realises that Haskell is dead. He panics, disposes of the body, and later picks up a woman who had been picked up by Haskell previously and so knows that the car is his. She questions Roberts until he explains what happened. She disbelieves his story but agrees not to make trouble if he does what she tells him. Later, during an argument in a hotel, she is killed accidentally – the cord of a telephone becomes wrapped around her neck and when Roberts, in another room, tugs on the cord, she is strangled – and Roberts, realising that he now has to explain two deaths, runs away to Reno. Roberts surrenders any claim to independent action and uses the fantastic nature of his happenstance to justify his incapacity to act. “His struggle against fate is self-defeating, for in spite of his protestations to the contrary, the ‘detour’ is really the road he wants to travel.”³⁷ Dreams and dream-like qualities feature in film noir but there is a particular oneiric quality that relates specifically to the question of agency and the noir protagonist; the dream sensation of being threatened and desperately wanting to flee but being unable to move. Al Roberts is one such protagonist.

³⁶ Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward, eds., *Film Noir* (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 1992), 78.

³⁷ Silver and Ward, 90.

A major difference between Jacobean drama and film noir lies in the manner by which loss of agency is portrayed. In noir there are powerful forces outside the control of the characters which are activated when a character decides on a course of action or is reactive to a situation in which they find themselves. They are, for the most part, ordinary people placed in extraordinary situations, who have a limited or no understanding of what is going on around them. The oneiric nature of their responses relates more to their lack of knowledge than to a specific deficiency in character. Norah Larkin in *The Blue Gardenia* (1953) finds herself in a nightmare world when she forcefully resists a man who has plied her with alcohol and tried to seduce her in his flat. She passes out and the next day cannot remember the events of the previous night. Reading of the man's murder in a newspaper, however, she becomes convinced that she is the murderer. Until near the end of the film, when the true culprit is discovered, Norah believes that she has killed. An even more nightmarish plot involves an alcoholic, Marty Blair, in the 1946 noir *Black Angel*, who tries to find who killed his wife, only to realise in the end, as he untangles the fragmented strands of his drunken, dream-like memories, that in fact he is the murderer. The miasma caused by the traumatic fallibility of memories, scrambled motivations and characters not being able to completely trust themselves, let alone others, is indicative of the noir consciousness that impinges upon action. There is a more multifaceted moral terrain covered in Jacobean plays, as the characters are more precocious in their understanding of the dangerous interplay of complex, wilful, incompatible and self-serving desires. Where many noir heroes and heroines find themselves mired in the darkness, their Jacobean equivalents are more likely to engage aggressively with deviant forces, locked into the pursuit of the satisfaction of their desires with a fuller understanding of the possible consequences of their actions. This is perhaps due to the clearly articulated statement of political and social corruption that is heralded at the beginnings of many plays, from Bussy D'Ambois and Lodovico's opening tirades to Vindice's bitter commentary on the entrance of the grotesque Duke and his family. Regardless of how problematic the course of action in these plays, in terms of the efficacy of what can be achieved, the main characters are at least informed as to the true state of affairs - or the extent of the misrule - at the commencement of each play; there is usually a stated level of disconnection with which the characters are familiar.

It is perhaps overly simplistic to argue that in the plays protagonists exercise more choice and thus should take greater responsibility for their failures while in noir circumstances often seem to dominate the characters thereby limiting their choices. In the plays and in the films

humans are constrained, whether through their own actions or in response to events, and the inability to make an impact on the chaos that surrounds them or to re-establish some kind of order is implicit in both forms. Their world is neither benevolent nor even neutral - maliciously indifferent perhaps. The power of the individual to effect change is severely limited by the very creative qualities that bring him or her to prominence. The power of the individual is short-circuited by the actions of others and by the undertow of repressed and unarticulated desires that compromise effective action. These are not works that champion the supremacy of individual consciousness, or perhaps more correctly, the plays and films do not subscribe to the idea that heroic behaviour, or the purity of an individual vision will necessarily triumph over human duplicity, fallibility and fraudulence. The loss of agency as depicted in Jacobean drama is indicative of a view of the Fall, whereby from that time onward humankind is blighted by indelible flaws and in film noir it reflects the bleakness of the war years from 1941 to 1945, especially revelations about the Holocaust and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The post World War consciousness was shaped by a revulsion at the ways by which particular powerful individuals nearly destroyed the world.

It is emblematic of the sophistication of these forms that questions of agency are often decided by the woman - especially the *femme fatale*. Inferior in status within the societies of the times, the *femme fatale* is able to establish agency through erotic deviancy; she gains power and resists patriarchy by knowingly subverting the projection of herself as sexualised object. In an interview with Robert Porfirio, the noir actress, Lizabeth Scott, said that the *femme fatale* "was the person...who had the greatest understanding,"³⁸ and it is this knowledge that enables the woman to act decisively, if not always non-destructively. She is intelligent and perceptive which strengthens her dramatic presence and I will be arguing in later chapters that Jacobean playwrights often tended to sanction the resistance of deviant women while "film noir movies rebel against normative representations of women," presenting them "as sympathetic and traumatized rather than opaque figures of destruction."³⁹ Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognise the Jacobean and noir *femme fatale* as an erotic entity whose authority may extend beyond her sexuality, but sex is always central to her influence.

³⁸ Robert Porfirio, Alain Silver and James Ursini, eds., *Film Noir Reader 3: Interviews with Filmmakers of the Classic Noir Period* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2002), 195.

³⁹ Julie Grossman, *Rethinking the Femme Fatale in Film Noir: Ready for Her Close-Up* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 70.

The erotic deviancy of the *femme fatale* is to do with resistance to particular gender stereotyping - the submissive woman - however its expression is most often connected to violence and the eroticisation of violence is an integral aspect of the Jacobean/noir darkness. As has already been noted, Evadne in *The Maid's Tragedy* kills her lover, the King, with a knife, on the bed used previously for their love-making. Jane in *Too Late For Tears* (1949) shoots her husband when they are taking a romantic boat ride; Abdella in *The Knight of Malta* fires a pistol to emasculate an opponent and Annie Laurie, the *femme fatale* in the aptly named noir *Gun Crazy* (1950), goes on a killing spree, her obsession with her revolver sexualised in the film. The women commit acts of violence as a means of establishing power over men but the acts themselves are performed as erotic and sexual. Perversely, in enacting a "rage born of life under men"⁴⁰ the women employ weapons as phalluses in erotic displays which mimic masculinity whereby acts of resistance could have the undesired effect of increasing the women's cachet as objects of male arousal. Certainly the deviancy of the women in the texts mentioned has this effect: the King is sexually excited by the prelude to his execution, Danny is likewise affected by Jane's ruthlessness; Abdella becomes a potent object of desire in *The Knight of Malta*⁴¹ and Annie's mastery of her weapons has Bart enthralled. And yet, the *femmes fatales* are much more than merely the sum of their deviant actions and the 'understanding' referred to by Lizabeth Scott, reflected in their ability to act on their environment, militates against the diminishing of their significance as agents.

The eroticisation of violence is not exclusive to the portrayal of the *femme fatale*; I have already referred to the almost orgasmic delight that Lodovico (*The White Devil*) and Tommy Udo (*Kiss of Death*) take in murdering or talking about murdering, their phallus substitutes - dagger and hand-gun - become the perverted means, in imitating the sex act, of administering intense pain instead of pleasure. Their pleasure in inflicting suffering is nakedly sexual. In *Railroaded* (1947) the gunman/killer, Duke Martin, perfumes his bullets before he kills his victim: "There is an erotic quality to his ritualising anointment of the bullets and the self-satisfying response to the massaging of his gun barrel."⁴² This association of sex with violence intensifies the darkness created through mood and the physical realisation of atmosphere by plunging into the depths of repressed and disturbed psychological states. The often macabre evil perpetrated by characters is not presented as merely actions but essences;

⁴⁰ Jim Kitses in Grossman, 70.

⁴¹ Abdella's blackness is also a factor in her erotic presence in the play.

⁴² Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward, eds., *Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style* (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 1992), 238.

the violence emanates from what is essential to these characters and it is not incidental to them.

In this chapter, by focusing on the questions of darkness and agency, I have endeavoured to establish that common ground exists between Jacobean drama and film noir, and to draw attention to some of the foundational aspects of the two forms. This will prepare the way for the more detailed comparative approach to the texts that is employed in the following chapters. The first area that will be considered is the disintegration of certainty that occurs when the lines between sanity and insanity become blurred. The emphasis on darkness and agency in this chapter leads logically to a discussion of the shadow lands of the disturbed mind and the extension of the investigation into asylums allows for a consideration of how Jacobean drama and film noir deal with the societal ramifications of institutionalised madness.

Chapter 2

Madness, Dissonance and the Search for Harmony

A dark highway; an obviously terrified woman, naked under a trench coat, is running, stopping when a car approaches in an attempt (unsuccessful) to flag down first one car then another. In one last desperate effort to escape her unseen pursuers she stands, her figure silhouetted in the headlights, in front of a third on-coming car, causing it to swerve onto the verge and stall. The driver abuses her: “you almost wrecked my car,” but then reluctantly gives her a lift. From her lack of clothes and her manner the man makes two assumptions about his passenger; first that she has been engaging in some sort of sexual activity: “you were out with some guy who thought ‘no’ was a three letter word” and moments later, at a police road block, that she’s “a fugitive from the laughing house” (i.e. a nearby mental asylum). Shortly after being rescued however, the woman is re-captured, tortured and brutally murdered; the man survives.

The opening minutes of *Kiss Me Deadly*, as outlined here, immediately establish the noir credentials of this 1955 film – the brooding darkness, broken intermittently by shafts of intense light that blind rather than illuminate, the sexual ambiguity associated with Christina (the woman), stemming from her appearance and her situation⁴³ which leads both Mike Hammer (the man) and the attendant at the petrol station at which they briefly stop, to interpret her distress as sexual; the alienated anti-hero who acts out of self interest in a world where relationships are riven with misunderstanding, distrust and suspicion and the question of how do you define sanity in a world that has gone crazy.⁴⁴ The relationship between the essential darkness of the Noir/Jacobean sensibility and mental disorder and how the disorder of the mind mirrors the more general disorder in society will form the basis of this chapter.

⁴³ Christina’s naked vulnerability is immediately qualified by her behaviour once she is in Hammer’s car. Her heavy breathing which is very pronounced while the titles are rolling, is disturbingly ambiguous, as suggestive of sex as it is of fear and exhaustion. The opening purposely mixes the signals – distress is marked as indistinguishable from orgasm and this perhaps explains both Hammer and the petrol station attendant misreading her situation. Christina herself helps to blur the issue when she, pretending to be his wife, cuddles into him to escape the police road block.

⁴⁴ The film makes it clear that Christina, like the eponymous heroine in *The Duchess of Malfi*, is not insane but that the world that surrounds her is. The conflict between the interior world which is deemed mad and the exterior that condemns and destroys Christina for her knowledge and the Duchess for her passion, sets up the binary of reason and madness.

My focus will first be on madness as depicted in asylums and then on the disordered individual.

As stated in the previous chapter, the inherent darkness we encounter in Jacobean drama and film noir is related to the ambiguous and disengaged motivation and action of the protagonists. Characters appear disoriented, disaffected and often paranoid. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in those works which deal with madness; the darkness here is centred in the disputed territory of the mind. Michel Foucault has typified madness as the “confrontation beneath the language of reason”⁴⁵ but in the plays and films I will be discussing, the language of reason itself becomes suspect as the lines distinguishing sanity from madness become blurred. This is especially true of those plays/films that feature asylums, where the most problematic characters are often those who exercise power and are authority figures. Reason is not privileged in a world where the default position in human relationships, political environments and gender battlegrounds is one of ambiguity; reason is just one of a number of contesting propositions. And so we find reason in madness and madness in reason. As Oliver and Trigo note, referring to film noir, “the use of reason does not lead to truth.”⁴⁶ There are also a number of characters who feign madness, mixing with the inmates of asylums so that the presence together of real and constructed madness further disrupts any attempt to proclaim a simple binary of an ordered sane society and an insane, disordered margin. Within Jacobean drama and film noir such simplifications are constantly subverted. In both, the distinctions between madness and sanity are contested so that questions of the specificity of truth are challenged. Madness defined as an individual’s ability to speak and act reasonably is shown to be inadequate when the named ‘sane’ characters in the plays and films regularly behave unreasonably and irrationally. Not only is the ‘safe’ assumption that sanity may be assumed because of status or social influence dispensed with, but a number of works draw the focus away from the ‘sane’ centre to concentrate on the disturbed margins.

It is indicative of the importance of madness to the articulation of darkness in Jacobean drama and film noir that so many plays and films focus on the disordered or unstable mind.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, *Civilisation and Madness* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), xi.

⁴⁶ Kelly Oliver and Benigo Trigo, *Noir Anxiety* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 99.

⁴⁷ Apart from the plays and films discussed specifically in this chapter, the following works are among many which deal with questions of sanity: *The High Wall*, *Possessed*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Spellbound*, *Strange Illusion*, *The Duke of Milan*, *Philaster*, *The Maid’s Tragedy*, *Shock* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

It is a logical extension of the prevailing sense of noir dislocation to move to the dislocation of the psyche. The shadow world of the court and the city is thus reflected in the shadowed territory of the mind;⁴⁸ and the shadowed world of the insane acts as a reflective metaphor for the madness in the worlds of court and city. The portrayal of madness has political connotations therefore, as madness contests with those forces in society that seek to rationalise the world according to their own interests to preserve their hold on power. Madness becomes the means by which many of the tensions and contradictions in society are highlighted in texts that challenge the subjective use of reason as an arbiter of who shall have access to power. The disordered mind acts as a metaphor for the disordered society. The sympathies of the majority of texts I will be discussing in this chapter are firmly with the inmates in the asylums and to a slightly lesser extent with individuals who are mentally unstable. However, it must be recognised that such sympathy, in worlds where there are obvious disparities in access to and in the exercise of power, has limited impact; mental health in the past (as also in the twenty-first century), has been considered to be of secondary importance. As Hopps, a psychiatric orderly in *Behind Locked Doors* says: “the people on the outside aren’t much interested in us on the inside – inmates or attendants.”⁴⁹ This may be true but portrayals of madness succeed in spotlighting the sometimes manic behaviour of those in power; the madness in Dr Alibius’ asylum in *The Changeling*, for example, lays bare and critiques the contested versions of the truth, of sanity and of honour in the privileged court of the Governor, Vermandero.

Not only is there an attempt to portray madness sympathetically in the works under consideration, it is also the case that the mad are given a voice and a dignity that goes beyond crude stereotype.⁵⁰ Irony is used extensively to infuse the antics of those deemed mad with layers of meaning which undercut any sense of a non-reasoning other, and to provide melancholic undertones which make real their suffering. We are also offered commentaries on this suffering – by Isabella in *The Changeling*, Friar Anselmo in *The Honest Whore*⁵¹, Hopps in *Behind Locked Doors* and the Doctor in *Shock Corridor* – which serve to humanise

⁴⁸ In film noir mirrors are often used to suggest mental instability, indicating the difference between the real and the image, the fragile grasp on reality and to show an audience what the mirror shows of a character's interior turmoil.

⁴⁹ In support of Hopps’ statement, it is clearly established that it is only because Judge Drake has chosen to hide in the sanitarium that there is any interest in the care of mental patients and that it is in order to capture him that the police arrive.

⁵⁰ Certainly the way madness is portrayed differs significantly from, for example, Jonson’s additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* or madness as horror in *Jane Eyre* (1944).

⁵¹ All references to *The Honest Whore* will be only to Part One of the play.

the subject, remove prejudice and provide bases for understanding. It is only when madness is combined with power – as in the cases of Duke Ferdinand (*The Duchess of Malfi*) and Dr Sorebin (*Kiss Me Deadly*) – that violence erupts and madness poses a threat.

Sanatoriums are very crowded nowadays

The Asylum

The asylum as space imbued with meaning is the focus of a number of Early Modern plays and films noir: *Kiss Me Deadly*, *The Honest Whore*, *Behind Locked Doors*, *The Changeling*, *Shock Corridor* and *The Duchess of Malfi* are the main texts on which I will be focusing. Each of these texts operates allegorically; in very simplistic terms, activity in the asylum mirrors behaviour outside so that the antics of the mad and the antics of those in authority, both within and without the asylum are not only similar (though different in form and obviousness) but also complementary. As Duncan Salkeld notes, “throughout the Stuart and Carolingian monarchies madness became increasingly used as a metaphor for sedition and the subversion of authority and reason.”⁵² The irrationality of the sane world is made apparent when placed alongside the supposed insanity of the inmates whose madness stems from responses to personal suffering or encountering the contradictions inherent in the prevailing socio-political schema whereas the ‘madness’ of the sane world arises from selfishness and political or personal expediency. The works have a distinctly political dimension as they insinuate that the world of the asylum is not that far removed from the workings of the court or of the political institutions. There is an interplay of sanity and insanity, of reason and lack of reason, that gives meaning to the expression “method in his/her madness” and the plays/films explore the ramifications of this blurring of the lines, illustrating that there is insanity outside the places set aside by society for the treatment of the insane and that the mad sometimes have special insights into human behaviour and can speak the truth.⁵³ While

⁵² Duncan Salkeld, *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 2.

⁵³ Salkeld disagrees: “Mad men and mad women are innocent liars...Madness is, in all its variety, contrary to truth” p. 20. However, of the mad Trouble-All in *Bartholomew Fair* it is said: “the world is made in error but he in truth” (4.6 154). And “Lear, the frantic King tears off the mask and speaks the sane madness of vital truth” - David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds., *The American Intellectual Tradition: A Source Book, 1630-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 432.

not set in an asylum, *Kiss Me Deadly*, as we have seen already, takes the chance intersection of Hammer from the ‘real’ world and Christina, the escapee from the ‘unreal’ world of the asylum as the pivotal moment of the story. An element of instability is thus introduced which culminates in the explosion at the finale.

In *Kiss Me Deadly*, director Robert Aldrich disengages his narrative from the more established, conventional means of conveying his story which results in the film running counter to stereotype in both character and plot. The escapee from the Mental Asylum is female and non-threatening; her nakedness is non-sexual and yet her heavy breathing when she is safely in Hammer’s car and recovering from her trauma is presented as being almost orgasmic. That our narrative expectations are being challenged is reinforced when the titles roll from the top and not the bottom of the screen – this is a world where perception runs counter to fact, where characters’ assumptions are immediately shown to be unfounded. This confounding of expectation happens not only in the first scenes but continues throughout the film;⁵⁴ there is a confusion of signals as the characters try to negotiate the complex interplay of desires, fears and expectations. The noir darkness militates against certainty. ‘The laughing house’ that Mike refers to so dismissively, with its implied uncontained madness, intrudes into Hammer’s carefully regulated world. He is a detective specialising in marriage problems who uses his secretary, Velda, as a lure to set up and sexually compromise husbands so their wives can divorce them. As a detective, he is always on sure ground, in control, manipulating people and events. His encounter with Christina and her “madness” ruptures his carefully manipulated world and opens him up to the uncertainty of randomness.⁵⁵ The ‘truth’ that is the outcome of his divorce work, the truth of the rational world, is the same ‘truth’ that manifests itself in the confusion of signals that establishes Christina as ‘mad’ and ‘lascivious,’ with Hammer, according to the petrol station attendant, as her seducer. The ‘rational’ truths are based on a misreading of signals and are directly related to the community lowest common denominator. The ‘mad narrative’ as told by Christina, that “I’m from the laughing house and they’re out to kill me,” is shown to be true – this is what

⁵⁴ Indeed, the controversy of the conclusion of *Kiss Me Deadly* rather unwittingly supports this view of the film. For many years, the film was shown with the final frame being the explosion of the bomb occurring while Mike and Velda are just escaping from the house. The restored (and the original) ending shows them at some distance from the house, moving through the surf. For further analysis of the different endings see Alain Silver and James Ursini, eds., *Film Noir Reader* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2003), p.228-34.

⁵⁵ There is also some irony in that Christina places him in the same compromising situation that he puts his husbands: the garage attendant locates Hammer as a seducer, in the role of ‘the man who thought ‘no’ was a three letter word.’

happens! The worldly, rational viewpoint, as demonstrated by Hammer, which makes assumptions based on a cynical perception of human nature, is thus shown to be unreliable. Through the 'mad' Christina, who is linked to the poet Christina Rossetti after whom she is named, Aldrich is exploring the fractures in the tough, macho, selfish, self-possessed edifice that Hammer represents. Both characters make assumptions about the other but it is Christina's analysis of Mike's character that is closest to the truth:

You're one of those self-indulgent males who thinks about nothing but his clothes, his car, himself...the kind of person who never gives in a relationship – only takes. Ah woman, the incomplete sex. And what does she need to complete her? Why, man, of course. A wonderful man!

Mike loses his self-assurance: "All right, all right, let it go." The tables have been turned – the vulnerability of Christina when we first see her - naked, pursued, terrified - can later intimidate the materialistic, assured Hammer, secure in his fancy sports car. She is vulnerable with only a trench coat covering her, but he is even more vulnerable because she sees through his pretence. The film deals very much with perception – the 'loonie' from the 'laughing house' is one of the few who can see. That the mad "could have access to the truth"⁵⁶ is a consistent theme in the plays and films that I am examining in this chapter.

When Christina says with theatrical sarcasm, "all loonies are dangerous," it is apparent that the sentence contains levels of truth and falsehood and that the film examines the conversation between different representations of fictionality. There is the obvious point that her status as insane person derives from her incarceration in an asylum and her danger to the public lies in the description of her as an escapee which enables the villains to co-opt the police to assist in her re-capture. This is a fiction that masks the fact that the respectable Dr Soberin is in reality both mad and very dangerous. The danger Christina poses is due to the knowledge she possesses and for the threat to be neutralised a narrative, which appeals to community anxieties associated with insanity and with escapees from mental institutions, must be articulated. It is assumed that there is an inherent truth in the claim that 'all loonies are dangerous' and to be feared. However, the tendentious nature of this statement comes out most strongly when we witness the sadistic murder of Christina at the hands of Dr. Soberin and his henchmen who are 'sane' but dangerous; the irony of the 'dangerous loonie' being brutally disposed of by those considered perfectly sane is established by Aldrich. What

⁵⁶ Dominique Froidefond. "The Confined Spectacle of Madness in Bey's 'The Illustrious Madmen'" in *Themes in Drama 15. Madness in Drama*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 47.

emerges in the film is the notion that perceptions of madness are relative – an escapee from an asylum is reckoned to be unable to distinguish between reality and paranoid fantasy but society is blind to the state-sanctioned madness of the atomic bomb. Madness when associated with powerful men is no longer deviance but can be interpreted as sanity. Dr Sorebin cloaks his madness in a cultured, sophisticated manner; he is powerful and appears sane, therefore he is respected and considered to be rational.

The irony for Christina is that the world into which she is escaping is just as, if not more, dangerous and insane than the asylum she leaves behind. It is not so much that she is a ‘loony’ from ‘the laughing house’ but that ‘the laughing house’ is all around her. In the lyrics of the song that is playing on the radio⁵⁷ when Hammer picks up Christina there are most of the key elements of film noir – “The night is mighty chilly...I feel so mean and wrought...the room is dark and gloomy...all night I walk the city...the street looks very frightening...the rain begins...” In this disorienting, predatory environment, the individual’s experience borders on the paranoid. The theme song also connects with the Christina Rossetti poem “*Remember*” recited by Lily Carver towards the end of the film which contains the clue Hammer needs to find the box of fissionable material sought after by Sorebin:

Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of a future which you plan
Only remember me, you’ll understand
But if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts than once we had.⁵⁸

Christina is placed in “the darkness and corruption” just as she was in the lyrics of “*I’d Rather Have The Blues*” in the opening scene and yet there is some hope in the sense that her request to Hammer that he remember her has been fulfilled – he does remember her. In spite of his unashamed mercenary nature, summed up by his response “What’s in it for me?” when Murphy asks him to cooperate with the authorities, Hammer is strangely loyal to the woman he picked up, perhaps because in the transitory world in which he works, nothing is worth remembering.

*The Honest Whore Part One*⁵⁹ distinguishes in the opening scene between the potential madness of Hippolito⁶⁰ and the real madness of Gasparo, Duke of Milan, who is prepared to

⁵⁷ *I’d Rather Have The Blues* is also reprised by Madi Comfort in a bar later in the film.

⁵⁸ The five verses have been edited in the film to facilitate the action.

endanger his daughter Infelice's life by administering to her, without her knowledge, a drug that induces a death-like trance in order to frustrate the love between Hippolito and Infelice. If *Kiss Me Deadly* begins with a 'mad' fugitive, escaping from the authorities, *The Honest Whore* presents an inversion whereby we are first shown the unstable, mad mind of the key authority figure, Gasparo, who stages a formal funeral, which becomes an elaborate enactment of his mad desires,⁶¹ a performance ostensibly to thwart the marital ambitions of Hippolito but more akin to the antic performances of the Bethlem inmates we meet later in the play. In both works, men in authority are depicted as paranoid, totalitarian and destructive. Against the background of the funeral procession that he has so carefully stage-managed, the Duke subverts the staged solemnity of the occasion by urging his followers to "let your swords/seek out his (i.e. Hippolito's) bowels" (1.1.15-16.); the words he uses to blunt the impact of Hippolito's accusations – "thou dost abuse my child and mock'st the tears/that here are shed for her" (21-21) - are ironic because it is he who has most abused his 'child' and the tears he is shedding mock the reality that the funeral is fake. The Duke becomes lost in the unreality of Infelice's "death," creating a rhetoric that becomes disturbed as he oscillates between "real" and "imagined" feeling, so that his last plea to Hippolito to forget his daughter reflects not the acting self that knows that the funeral is a sham but the shadowed self that expresses a morbid view of death that is close to his own fears:

What's beauty but a corse?
 What but fair sand-dust are earth's purest forms?
 Queen's bodies are but trunks to put in worms.
 (54-7)

Matheo, whose role in this scene has been to try to pacify Hippolito as he fears that his friend is in danger of becoming mad through love, recognises the Duke's instability as he advises him to "speak no more sentences, my good lord...your grace is here somewhat too long already." (58...60) Gasparo is present when Infelice awakes.⁶² His rambling speech as she regains consciousness reveals the clash of contradictory emotions, love for her purity both in body and mind – "the crystal banks of her white body" (I.iii. 8), obsessive possessiveness – "I'll starve her on the Appenine/ere he shall marry her" (25), admiration for Hippolito's

⁵⁹ Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, *The Honest Whore Part 1*, ed., Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

⁶⁰ Matheo's "come, y'are mad!" (1.1. 9) is consistent with the Jacobean acceptance of a link between disappointment in love and madness.

⁶¹ The Duke receives his cure in the asylum which is a place of recovery; he becomes reconciled with both Hippolito and Infelice. His madness runs throughout the play unchecked until he encounters the asylum.

⁶² Parallels with *Romeo and Juliet* are obvious but with the important difference that unlike Shakespeare's play where the plan is to unite the lovers, with the hope that young love can survive the adult world of hate and expediency, here Gasparo acts to suppress young love and reinforce his will.

accomplishments – (a man) “whom I would court to be my son-in-law” (29) and political cunning, deciding that Hipolito is unsuitable as a match for his daughter:

But princes whose high spleens for empery swell
Are not with easy art made parallel.
(30-1.)

The play quickly establishes the Duke as a fractured individual, his competing passions revealing a disordered mind which in turn helps to create, in his image, a fractured society. There is a psychotic darkness combined with a ruthless realpolitik which dominate his political decision-making – from the elaborate faux-state funeral, the disturbingly manic manipulation of his heir Infelice,⁶³ to the political assassination of Hippolito that he orders. Gasparo is at his most dangerous here in scene 3 because he believes he has power over life and death, that he can have Infelice reborn (with the added sense that he can re-create reality for her by installing memories as he tries to do when he fabricates the story of her fainting at the news of Hippolito’s ‘death’ to cover her drugging) and Hippolito eliminated – “I wish his death” (1.3. 93). Power is supported by the state apparatus, in this case Doctor Benedick, which enacts the desires of the Duke: “And you may have your wish. Say but the word” (94). Madness becomes policy. Power creates its own logic, as the Duke concludes: “Greatness hides sin” (100).

Unlike *Kiss Me Deadly* which begins with an asylum and ends with an insanely orchestrated cataclysmic nuclear explosion, *The Honest Whore*, after exploring the dark and sinuous contours of attempted murder, political corruption, incest, lust, prostitution, madness, drug abuse and paranoia resolves the action in an asylum, ‘Bethlem Monastery’. Harmony is re-established within the Duke himself and then, as a consequence, within the general society. Lines of responsibility are re-introduced – Gasparo, his disordered mind now ordered, can rebuild his personal lines of communication (with his daughter and son-in-law), restore the integrity of his political relationships and mete out justice - his judgements on Matheo and Candido.⁶⁴ Place is very important here: the gathering together and resolution of all the various plotlines occur not in a formal court or forest setting but in a madhouse. The

⁶³ There is an erotic quality to the language used by Gasparo to describe his daughter’s re-awakening which perhaps she subconsciously recognises when she calls him ‘unnatural father.’ She is his possession and like Malefort in *The Unnatural Combat* and JB Hunsucker in *Sweet Smell of Success*, Gasparo is fired with jealousy at the prospect of a rival for his daughter’s (for Hunsucker, his sister’s) love.

⁶⁴ The justness and durability of the Duke’s pronouncements can be challenged but there is certainly the sense that Gasparo is trying to seek justice beyond his own interests and desires. This modelling of social reconciliation occurs under the aegis of a benevolent autocratic ruler but the action early in the play casts doubt on the desirability of such a ruler by showing how easily the Duke can pervert justice, manipulate a sycophantic court and endanger the lives of citizens.

metaphorical linking of court, city and asylum, the ironies of ‘sane’ madmen and ‘insane’ court, that have characterised the dramatic energies of the play, are brought into clear focus in the final scenes. The mad scenes (both literal and pretended) in Bethlem are not, as Carol Neely suggests, “isolated from the main action”⁶⁵ of the play but are crucial to our understanding of the drama; this is where the ‘real’ world comes in direct contact with the ‘mad other’ and recognises its own debilitating and destructive obsessions in the confrontation. And so, when Friar Anselmo pleads for reconciliation between the Duke and the lovers, his reference to “your vex’d souls in peaceful union meet” (5.2.381.) accords with Gasparo’s recent experience with the ‘vex’d souls’ of Bethlem; “You beseech fair. You have me in place fit/to bridle me” (386-7). He acknowledges the importance of place and his words resonate with an awareness of the need to confine his unbridled passions. There is a direct relationship between what the Duke has just experienced and his recovery – Bethlem is the place where cures are possible.

This point is very clearly established in *The Honest Whore*; madness can be successfully treated as the conversation between the Duke’s entourage and the Sweeper indicates.⁶⁶ Wits can be lost and regained: the Duke tells Anselmo “you can make madmen tame, and tame men mad” (5. 2. 388). Ken Jackson, in his article “Bethlem and Bridewell in *The Honest Whore Plays*,”⁶⁷ rejects the critical view that Jacobean plays dealing with madness were exploitative and unsympathetic to their subjects, preferring to see instead evidence of compassion and charity within the texts, particularly in Dekker and Middleton’s treatment of the hospital inmates. Remarking on the responses of the Duke and his courtiers to the displays of madness Jackson says “rather than laughter, we see pity and appreciation for the hospital’s work.”⁶⁸ Bethlem is a place that contains and diffuses violent tendencies and so importantly the Duke and his men are made to disarm when he enters the hospital. The tendency towards unrestrained, chaotic threatened swordplay that characterised the opening of the play – “take from your manly sides your weapons” and “let wrath/join in confederacy with your weapons’ points...let your swords/seek out his bowels” (1.2.6-7, 13-16) – is neutralised in Bethlem so that Gasparo’s command “draw all your weapons” (5.2.355) when Bellafront reveals Hippolyto and Infelice is demonstrably ridiculous. The Duke’s ‘mad’

⁶⁵ Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), 186.

⁶⁶ The Sweeper is a former inmate and he discusses the rates of cure with the courtiers.

⁶⁷ Ken Jackson, “Bethlem and Bridewell in *The Honest Whore Plays*,” *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 43.2 (2003).

⁶⁸ Jackson, 403.

ranting, which is an unconscious, self-emasculating parody of the antics of the madmen, is rendered ineffectual precisely because the context will not sustain the dramatic hyperbole that is irrationally accepted at Court. In a madhouse, the madness of the Duke is revealed for what it truly is.

It is clear that Bethlem was used as a metaphor in the play for the ills in the contemporary political and social spheres but what is less clear is the logical consequence of such paralleling. If Bethlem is a location that allows for mutability – which the final scene emphatically demonstrates – then its metaphorical counterpoints, the court and city, are being critiqued for being locked into inflexibility. Viola refuses to compromise in her view of how she can construct Candido so that he can suit her, just as the Duke is prepared to destroy his daughter rather than allow her to exercise her own judgement. “The social conflict and anger...that generated so much of the plot are alleviated in Bethlem.”⁶⁹ Both Viola and Gasparo engineer complicated and controlling stratagems that are designed to shape their environments to their intractable will and they are ultimately unsuccessful because of their rigidity. Reconciliation is provided by those characters most marginalised – Bellafront, the honest whore, Candido, the honest man and Friar Anselmo, as the person in charge of an asylum – in a place that is also on the margins.

Some critics have determined that the portrayal of madness in the play functions merely “as a diversion, a pause in the action”⁷⁰ but questions of what is sanity and who is truly sane are examined continually throughout *The Honest Whore*. I have already referred to Gasparo’s disturbed behaviour in the opening scenes and until he arrives in Bethlem his madness is unconfined because of his position as Duke. His criminal irrationality, which is endorsed by the Court, is contrasted with Candido’s supposed madness. The citizen displays a patience the Duke so obviously lacks and because of this he is declared mad and sent to Bethlem. The irony of the mad Duke protected by court privilege while the sane shop-keeper is certified is articulated by George when he declares to Gasparo: “there’s a thousand about your court, city and country madder than he” (5.2.74) and when he says a few lines later, “Come Mistress, the Duke’s mad too” (85), he refines his general observation to refer specifically to Gasparo. Madness is thus not confined to Bethlem as the Sweeper, in an exchange with Pioratto reveals:

⁶⁹ Jackson, 397.

⁷⁰ Salkeld, 124. I have already referred to Carol Neely’s similar view.

Pioratto: Are all the mad folks in Milan brought hither?

Sweeper: How all? There's a wise question indeed: why if all the mad folks in Milan should come hither, there would not be left ten men in the city." (120-3)

Overlays of privilege, procedure and decorum protect the powerful from clinical interference; their 'madness' is read as policy or statesmanship in terms of the Duke and wifely duty insofar as Viola's persecution of Candido is endorsed as making him conform to expected male/husband role patterns. Bellafront and Candido offer converse images of Viola and Gasparo; Bellafront's pretended madness and Candido's gentle, patient goodness, misread as madness, highlight the actual madness (almost psychotic on the part of the former) of the Duke and the citizen wife.

What is crucial for the Duke's return to health is his confrontation with the madmen in the asylum, for not only does he encounter, as in a mirror, distorted projections of his own obsessive conduct so that he can see himself in the frayed passions of the three inmates, but he is also drawn into their suffering through a process of empathetic engagement. The visitors are at first amused and entertained by the antics and distempered dialogue of the madmen but the mood changes when the first madman takes the Duke's hand and thus draws him into his disengaged narrative. Gasparo, no longer an onlooker, is now a participant; the madman then mistakes him for his son, "kneel down thou/varlet, and ask thy father's blessing" (5.2.215-6).⁷¹ This involvement in the action, which is also borne out in his crying out to the third madman, "How will you do now, sirrah? You ha' killed him." (292), provides the Duke with an opportunity to reflect on his own disengaged behaviour. In describing the madness of the third madman, Joost Daalder states that "His obsession is so strong that he cannot make contact with any reality beyond his obsession."⁷² The Duke himself, in the development of his madness, is very close to becoming as permanently disoriented.

The presence of the asylum in both *Kiss Me Deadly* and *The Honest Whore* is a symbol of the destabilising of meaning and identity within the wider community; personal narratives struggle for articulation amid competing and self-serving political and ideological forces. Language becomes tangled in ambiguity, and words, because of the deadly opposition of

⁷¹ The irony here is that Gasparo should be kneeling to Infelice to ask her forgiveness for his deceits. As if to emphasise the pairing of Gasparo and Viola, Dekker and Middleton have Viola, in a parallel gesture, kneel to her husband at the end of the play.

⁷²Joost Daalder, "Madness in Parts 1 and 2 of *The Honest Whore*: A Case for Close Reading," *AUMLA* no.86 (November 1996): 77.

interests, take on or are forced to take on oblique or hidden meanings. This encrypting of language is mimicked in the Bethlem dialogue of the madmen and finds its apotheosis in Christina's coding of Rossetti's poem; clear distinctions between rational and irrational discourse evaporate as meaning becomes layered and diffused. The rational funeral narrative that Gasparo constructs, conceals the irrational maelstrom of desires, fears and obsessions that characterise the Duke's true state of mind. Once again, the ducal spin, which alternates between cold calculation and extemporising, and which fails to engage emotionally with either Hippolito or the audience, finds its ironic narrative equivalent in the closed-loop storytelling of the compulsively preoccupied inmates of Bethlem whose seemingly incoherent ravings elicit genuine sympathy from the stage audience (and from us), "alas poor soul" (177) and "a very piteous sight" (240).

From the very beginning of *Kiss Me Deadly*, in terms of how identity is articulated, the asylum (that we do not see) shadows the action, disrupting any effort to establish any stable understanding of character. The woman escaping is identified first as a sexual tease, then as the "looney from the laughing house" and even when she is named as Christina, her identity is amorphous as her name becomes subsumed in the identity and poetic resonances of the person after whom she is named - Christina Rossetti. For Hammer, Christina has reality only as a desperate voice that asked to be remembered, and later in the film as a name to be interpreted as part of a code. For Hammer, as for McPherson in *Laura*, the reality of the woman lies in how she is constructed and understood by the man. However, this fixed view of Christina,⁷³ is challenged once we meet Lily Carver, who is like a perverse mirror image of Christina; they are both naked when we first meet them – Christina with a coat on, Lily with a dressing gown; they have short, blonde hair, similar build, exude an air of mystery and they are portrayed as sexually ambivalent. Carver's identity is ungrounded because the woman we identify as Lily is an impostor, someone who has assumed her character after the original has been eliminated. She is at once victim and predator, confidante and betrayer. Such indistinction is recognised by Sorebin when, in the final moments of the film, he struggles to locate her, attempting through classical and biblical references – Pandora and Lot's Wife – to describe her. In a similar way, after his initial escape from death Hammer seeks to define Velda with his complaint "you're never around when I need you," that is that her worth is

⁷³ Hammer's views on women are mostly misogynist and there is some irony in his sense of duty towards the one who was prepared to challenge his stereotypical approach as he creates another stereotype for her – the pure woman on the pedestal.

dependent on his need. Her response, “you never need me when I’m around” underlines the point where desire and expectation mitigate against characters understanding and accepting each other.

It is indicative of the irony employed in *The Honest Whore* that the one stable, consistent character, Candido, is the one who is dispatched to the asylum. In a world gone mad, sanity can only be seen as a threat. In a sense Bellafront destabilises herself and in doing so, critiques nominated understandings of gender roles and identities. At first she is the victim (as we learn later), defining herself through her body as whore because of the seduction of her by Matheo. In the madhouse, when she is free as mad (feigned) – i.e. she has a privileged position as the centre of attention and can challenge the Duke and her former lover without constraint – the madness frees her from her normal social obligations and position as whore and reformed whore. She now drives the action and is a means of reconciliation. She unsettles, through her ungrounded ‘madness’, the established class, gender and familial relationships and sets the parameters for renewal. With the constant Candido she redirects and refocuses the action, taking it beyond artifice, expediency and submission to desire. When she asks the Duke and his courtiers “Do not you know me? Nor you? Nor you? Nor you?” (5.2.308), she sees the knowing as being beyond the superficial, artificially created social identities. This is a crucial scene for an understanding of identity. There are two groups, with Bellafront in the centre in control, through her knowing. The teasing “do you know me?” is followed by her saying that she knows them, just as she says she knows the disguised Hippolyto, Matheo and Infelice. Concealment (including her own supposed madness), subterfuge and the threat of violence are all resolved through Bellafront.

I’m not getting myself locked up in any nut house on a hunch

While the asylum acts as a framing device for *Kiss Me Deadly* and a locus for revelation leading to reconciliation in *The Honest Whore*, the ‘madhouse’ features much more prominently in *Behind Locked Doors* (1948), *The Changeling* (1622) and *Shock Corridor* (1963). Indeed the action of both films noir is centred in the asylum while in *The Changeling* the main sub plot is situated in Doctor Alibius’s hospital for the insane. Entry into the asylum

metaphorically marks admission into the disordered mind as the building becomes the representation of disputed territory in the struggle between sanity and insanity, or more correctly between what passes for sanity and what is designated as insane.⁷⁴ Characters who are feigning madness engage with people who are mad creating a stronger sense of the dark chaos associated with madness. In the two films and the play there is a test given which is meant to determine whether a person is insane or not. In each case the integrity of the test is breached and an impostor is allowed in. The treatment of the asylum is here much darker. While in *The Honest Whore* Friar Anselmo demanded pity and respect for his charges and the expectation of treatment was cure, now those in charge are either suspect, incompetent or malicious and expectations of improvement are cynically dismissed: “you came here to be cured? You’re more likely to be killed.”⁷⁵ Importantly the threat does not come from the inmates whose madness is portrayed sympathetically but from those in control or in positions of responsibility. Indeed, each work establishes the binary between the patients in the asylums whose madness reveals fissures in the moral and mental certainties of the sane world and the flawed, corrupt representatives of that real world. Our sympathies are directed towards the mad through the agency of characters who, in feigning madness, come to a heightened awareness of community prejudice against the insane and excoriate those who abuse the mentally ill. Later in this chapter I will focus on these counterfeit mad characters, Ross, Johnny and Isabella.

The central plot premise in *Behind Locked Doors* – that a corrupt judge, hiding in a sanatorium to escape prosecution, protected by a corrupt chief administrator, is being pursued by a private detective pretending to be a disturbed patient - connects us to a dark underworld which provides an insight into the political and social tensions in post World War 2 American society. Figures of authority in the film are compromised either through criminal self-interest, fear or vain ignorance: the State psychiatrist is too easily duped by Ross Stewart into believing that he suffers from mental illness and later shows his indifference to pleas by Kathy for assistance – “it’s after six and I have a dinner engagement;” Dr Porter, the chief administrator of the asylum, perverts the course of justice and is involved in attempted murder as well as the actual murder of the Champ, and Larsen, the attendant-in-charge in the asylum, is a sadistic, mentally unbalanced thug. But it is the disgraced judge, Finley Drake, who casts the longest shadow over the action in the film. He is totally crooked, using his

⁷⁴ All three works clearly subvert the notion of clear lines of distinction between sanity and insanity.

⁷⁵ Purvis to Ross Stewart in *Behind Locked Doors*.

position to buy and sell favours to protect his interests. He reminds Porter that “you’d still be a small-time quack if I hadn’t given you a break” and scoffs at his suggestions that he may be betrayed by his accomplices as “the men working for me can’t afford to talk.” This implies a corrupt network of influence among the important decision makers in the city which at the same time ghosts and subverts the official instrumentalities of law and order. There is an added irony in the choice of the asylum as a hiding place since, as the film shows, people are placed there to be forgotten and abused. It also serves as a simple metaphor for the madness that exists in the outside world which is made all the more disturbing as the comparison of revealed (inmates) and un-revealed (‘normal’ people) madness highlights the disparity between the discernibly innocuous behaviour of the mental patients and the real danger and threat posed by the crazed criminals in charge.

It soon becomes apparent in the film that official names and titles⁷⁶ cannot be trusted, none more so than the name of the asylum, “La Siesta,” an exotic moniker suggesting sanctuary for the mentally ill from the pressures of everyday life but this naming is belied by the brutal treatment meted out to the patients and by the reality that outside the walls a comfortable, uncaring, complacent community prefers to remain indifferent to the suffering of the inmates.⁷⁷ The sinister nature of this passivity is summed up by the attendant Hopps when he warns Stewart: “Just mind your own business and you won’t get into trouble.” Similar warnings are delivered by Hopps on another occasion and by Parker to Purvis; survival is linked to ignoring the criminality that is part of the everyday life in the sanatorium and consequently ensuring that the vicious predatory regime survives.

One locus of resistance is the enigmatic Mr Quist who shares the room with Stewart and Purvis. He is prone to waking from a nightmare and screaming until he is pacified, that is, either bashed into submission by Larsen or soothed by Stewart. The conformity/acquiescence imposed by the authorities is shattered by a man whose anguish cannot be properly articulated but is understood and interpreted by Stewart. A turning point in the film is when Stewart realises that he is searching for the Judge, not to claim his monetary reward but to put an end to the corrupt practices in the organisation of the sanatorium and the abuse to which the patients are systematically exposed. When the Judge and his cronies are finally defeated,

⁷⁶ Much emphasis is placed early in the film on official signing; that respectability and authenticity are guaranteed through naming. The only sign that is not compromised is the one on Stewart’s door to which the sign writer puts the finishing touches. The most unrespectable sign is the most trustworthy.

⁷⁷ As Hopps notes: “the people on the outside aren’t much interested in us on the inside – inmates or attendants.” (Refer to footnote 25)

it is as a result of the concerted action of individual characters who refuse to ‘mind their own business’ - Topper, Purvis, Hopps, Stewart and Kathy.

Even though what drives the action in *Behind Locked Doors* is its location in a sanatorium this is very much a film centred in the political. Part of this is due to the sympathetic social commentary it offers on those people who are marginalised in society, drawing attention to specific questions of maltreatment and injustice. For those ‘behind the locked doors’ there is no effective therapy and they can expect no quick release. When his room-mate Purvis complains to Stewart about the abuse of patients, he identifies not only the situation of the institutionalised inmates of *La Siesta* but also seeks to include other disadvantaged groups that exist beyond the walls:⁷⁸

Too much trouble to try and cure them with any kind of treatment. Have you heard of the isolation room they’ve got here too? Bare room, padded walls – they throw you a blanket, you sleep on the floor. Oh yes – this is a very high class sanatorium – fine care and treatment you get here. You pay extra well to be treated like a dog! Try and complain about it – try and protest about anything and what do you get? I’ll tell you what you get – that extra special treatment . They throw you in a locked.....⁷⁹

Purvis is not so much mad as displaced, disoriented and frustrated with the obvious inconsistencies necessary for the organisation of the asylum, inconsistencies, he notes, that are also apparent to thinking people outside the walls. His questioning nature (established early when we are introduced to him reading *Newsweek*) is misread as rebellion, his opposition is seen as evidence of his need for more treatment. That the society is fracturing is set up very early in the film: when Stewart presents himself to be examined as a manic depressive, the State Psychiatrist regards this as unremarkable: “private sanatoriums are very crowded today.” Hopps, when he admits Stewart, quickly and cynically dismisses any chance of effective treatment: “so you think you’ve got a beef with the world!” A strange parity, in terms of mental distress, exists between the world outside the walls and the one inside.

The more important part of the political element of the film involves the positioning of Judge Drake as a central figure. His fugitive status is downplayed; he is holding court in an asylum, with full access to his mistress Madge Bennett and to those certain luxuries – expensive

⁷⁸ Purvis is very much the social conscience in the film, alerting Stewart to the corrupt work arrangements and malpractice in the asylum. His concerns are shown to include conditions outside the walls as his reading of “Newsweek” indicates.

⁷⁹ Purvis doesn’t get to finish the sentence: Larsen rushes in and drags him off to be punished.

cigars and fine whiskey - he enjoyed as judge. What is emphasized, with great irony, is the lack of adjustment the judge has to make to accommodate himself to his new environment. The madhouse and the courthouse are not so far removed from each other. In microcosm, Judge Drake presides over a world that mirrors the very one he has been forced to abandon. Larsen fulfils the role of a police force and the Champ, a brain-damaged ex-boxer in the Locked Ward who, when he hears a bell, will fight and injure anyone with whom he comes into contact, becomes the means through which punishment is meted out and opposition crushed and this is what happens to Purvis when he criticises the practices at *La Siesta*. What then is truly shocking is that we learn that this dark travesty of the judicial system is quite an accurate reflection of the corrupt world of the Judge before he was forced to hide.

What is particularly insidious about this mirroring - the extended metaphor of asylum as real world - is the use of the Champ as part of the process for maintaining order in a disordered environment.⁸⁰ He is stripped of his identity, his body redefined as pure function as he becomes part of the Judge's political machine in the asylum just as previously Drake had employed functionaries to protect his interests through physical intimidation and bribery. The crucial irony in the film is that among the mentally disturbed but non-threatening patients in *La Siesta*, at the very heart of the establishment, the extreme madness of the supposedly sane Judge is located among the dangerous inmates in the isolation ward. Continuing with the sense of ironic contrast, it can be seen that the Judge and the Champ are dramatic opposites: the former is protected by the Locked Ward, the latter incarcerated there; the danger posed by Drake is uncontained whereas the ex-boxer is constrained and controlled; both deal ultimately in death, however, with the Judge's criminal madness expressing itself through his intelligence while the Champ responds exclusively with his body. The blind, stumbling, manic brutality of the Champ is an appropriate representation of how much Drake has been able to pervert the symbols of Justice.

Throughout *Behind Locked Doors*, it is clear that those who are ostensibly sane behave the most irrationally (and barbarously) while those deemed insane possess a dignity that transcends their parlous mental state. The mad characters are also most eloquent in their opposition to the injustices and illogicalities practised upon them, contesting the various

⁸⁰ Which use of course de-legitimizes the process as the Champ himself is disordered, thus highlighting the key self-contradiction in the film.

attempts of Parker, Larsen and Hopps⁸¹ to articulate and interpret reality for them. Thus reason, when used by Parker to justify coercion and bullying, becomes disordered and unsound while the oppositional articulations of Quist with his primeval scream, Jim (Hopps's son), who communicates by tearing up pieces of paper, Purvis with his passion for words that characterizes his yearning for justice and Topper whose fascination with fire is used to reveal the presence of the Judge, suggest truthfulness and integrity. This apparently ungrounded and unstable language proves to be more trustworthy than that employed by the three professional characters with the highest status in the film – Dr Porter, Dr Ball and Judge Drake - for whom words are more often the means of obfuscation rather than enlightenment.

A key element common to many of the plays and films that deal with madness and asylums is the question of counterfeit or feigned madness and here I am going to focus mainly on *The Changeling*⁸² and *Shock Corridor*,⁸³ with some reference to *Behind Locked Doors*.⁸⁴ Each of these works initially identifies madness with a physical environment – the asylum, and what is at first stated clearly is that outside the asylum sanity is the default position. The building is at the same time a signifier of madness and an indicator of where sanity resides – i.e. in mainstream society, the inference being those who are not in the asylum are sane. That a clear line of demarcation exists between sanity and madness is reinforced by the presence of seemingly omniscient health professionals – Dr Alibi and Lollo in *The Changeling*, Doctors Ball and Parker in *Behind Locked Doors* and Doctors Cristo and Menkin in *Shock Corridor*. In the films and the play, tests are administered to determine an individual's level of sanity. However, when such tests are compromised because Ross Stewart, Johnny Barrett and Antonio⁸⁵ feign madness and are committed, the asylum is no longer a means of adequately establishing the binary of sanity/madness. The asylum becomes a place of destabilisation as the previously clear definitions of mental illness falter and the real madness exhibited by those outside the confines of the asylum further blurs the lines of rationality. In entering the space where madness is confined, the characters performing madness bring into

⁸¹ The participation of Hopps here was mostly unwilling.

⁸² Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*, ed. N. W. Bawcutt (London: Methuen, 1961).

⁸³ Many films and plays are also ambivalent about degrees of madness and how much is feigned. Films such as *Shock*, *Witness to Murder*, *Strange Illusion*, *Spellbound* and *The High Wall* negotiate the fine line between sanity and insanity, where the characters are uncertain about their sanity.

⁸⁴ Stewart's feigned madness is essentially a device to allow him entry to the sanatorium. Once inside, he virtually discards his disguise as he searches for the Judge.

⁸⁵ A distinction is made in *The Changeling* between fools and madmen and Antonio is pretending to be a fool. However, as I am examining the process of entry into the asylums and as it is clear that tests for madness are also part of the entry process I am not going to worry over this slight inconsistency.

sharp focus the unconfined madness that exists among those who move unrestrained in the spaces deemed sane. As master of the confined space, Alibius admits to the locational mutability of madness when he replies to Isabella's taunt "Y'have a fine trade on't/Madmen and fools are a staple commodity" (3.3.275-6) with "Just at the lawyer's haven we arrive/By madmen and by fools we both do thrive." (278-9)

Those who feign madness do so initially out of self interest; Antonio to woo Isabella, Ross Stewart to share in the reward money and Johnny to win a Pulitzer Prize. Thus Stewart is at pains to express his lack of altruism when he warns Kathy "I'm not getting myself locked up in any nuthouse on a hunch!" However, in each case, the encounter with madness brings change and a deeper appreciation for and understanding of mental illness.

Although Antonio and Franciscus are the first 'mad pretenders' we see in *The Changeling*, it is Isabella whose feigned madness has the most profound effect. Antonio and Franciscus, in their antic pursuit of Isabella, "approximate Alonzo, Alsemero and De Flores in being transformed by their lusts into fool and madman"⁸⁶ and so reflect the obsessional madness of the more mainstream relationships in Alicant. But it is Isabella whose portrayal of a madwoman destroys the romantic artifice projected by Antonio (and this has ramifications for all the romantic pretensions in the play), posits an ironically sane counterpoint to the destructive, disturbed energies of Beatrice-Joanna and provides for some resolution to the tensions in the play caused by the confusion of sanity with madness. In much the same way that Bellafront's feigned madness in *The Honest Whore* underscores the insanity of the outside world and restores some sense of balance, so too does Isabella's mad portrayal point to a sane mean beyond which most of the characters in the play have passed. The main image in her madwoman speech, of Icarus and his fall, provides a corrective to and a commentary on the love-sick madness of Antonio and the wild, criminal fantasies of Beatrice and De Flores. "Hey, how he treads the air...he burns his wings else...he's down, he's down, what a terrible fall he had!" (4.3.102-5). On a literal level, this speech anticipates the fire that De Flores will use to create a diversion and destroy Diaphanta while at the same time characterizing the all consuming fiery passion of the lovers and their overreaching. Isabella continues the train of thought with a passing reference to Daedalus as the creator of the labyrinth and herself as the means of escape: "I'll bring thee to the clue." (108). Isabella's

⁸⁶ A.L. and M.K. Kistner. "The Five Structures of *The Changeling*," *Modern Language Studies* 11, no 2 (1981): 50.

mad ranting echoes and ridicules the romantic posturing of Franciscus's love letter and provokes Antonio: "Thou wild unshapen antic; I am no fool/You bedlam!" (124-5). The pretend fool is duped by the pretending madwoman. Isabella strips away preconceived notions of love/attraction/madness and sanity. Social attitudes and postures are revealed as constructed: "No, I have no beauty now,/Nor ever had, but what was in my garments." (130-1). Her damning exit line, "I came a feigner to return stark mad" (135), subverts any clear lines of division that seek to establish who is mad and who is sane and has the dramatic impact of ensuring that the unmasking of Franciscus as a faux-madman a few moments later is anti-climactic. A distinction is thus made between the self-indulgent falseness of Antonio and Franciscus and the positive, assertive feigned madness of Isabella which critiques and emasculates the devices used by the men.⁸⁷

Isabella's assumption of control in her final scenes also has the effect of re-situating women as stable when for much of the play they have been deemed unstable. The male characters are all united in their fear of women's inconstancy, from Alsemero's virginity test-kit and De Flores assertion that "if a woman/Fly from one point, from him that makes a husband,/She spreads and mounts them like arithmetic" (2.2.61-3) to Alibius's obsessive jealousy that makes Isabella a prisoner in the Doctor's asylum. Fears of their women's susceptibility to penetration run parallel to concerns about enemy penetration of the citadel. Vermandero is reluctant to allow Alsemero to inspect the Castle fortifications until he is assured of his background and family connections, behaving just as if he were interviewing a prospective suitor for his daughter – which, in effect, is how Beatrice interprets the conversation. The Body as metaphor for the Citadel/State and site of instability is well established in the play:

⁸⁷ Carol Neely condemns both Isabella and *The Changeling*: "Isabella and the play exploit the mad, and her own counterfeit madness produces not compassion and reform but disillusion and retaliation." (p.195) and "(Isabella)...plays mad herself and derides the inhabitants of the house" (p.196). Carol Neely, *Distracted Subjects* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

This criticism I feel is unwarranted as Isabella's 'playing mad' is both reactive – designed to fool and punish the fools – and active, in the sense that she presents madness as a means of arriving at truth. And her last line to Antonio, "I came a feigner to return stark mad" suggests that she would prefer madness to Antonio's sanity. Her response to Franciscus when she first meets him – "Alack, alack, 'tis too full of pity/To be laughed at; how fell he mad?" (III.iii. 47-8) – indicates some sensitivity to the plight of the mad as does her explanation of the behaviour of the madmen to Antonio:

"(They)...act their fantasies in any shapes
 Suiting their present thoughts; if sad, they cry;
 If mirth be their conceit, they laugh again.
 Sometimes they imitate the beasts and the birds,
 Singing, or howling, braying, barking all
 As their wild fancies prompt 'em." (3.3.199-204)

Isabella here marvels at the freedom of the madmen to respond naturally and without artifice to their own feelings compared to her own state where she is watched over by a jealous husband and his lascivious servant.

Jasperino: Tush, I know what physic is best for the state of mine
own body.

Diaphanta: 'Tis scarce a well govern'd state, I believe.

(1. 1. 140-1)

What makes women dangerous is that love for a man is read in the play as madness while for a woman love is interpreted as a reasonable response to a man's offer. Love of a woman causes men to behave unreasonably, madly, therefore women themselves are unstable. Jasperino declares to Diaphanta that he is "a mad wag" (1. 1 136) to which she retorts that there's a doctor in Alicant (Alibius) who can cure madness. Antonio's and Franciscus's disguises merely reflect the 'madness' that is associated with their lust for Isabella and yet they expect reason from her as a response.⁸⁸ Women are also seen as unfathomable because they are, by their natures, unreasonable. By rejecting the madness of her suitors, by taking control of the asylum and lastly her husband – "you are a jealous coxcomb" (5. 3. 211) - Isabella argues for reason in a world that has gone mad.

Both Isabella's and Ross Stewart's feigned madness have therapeutic connotations; their impersonations are accepted by an audience because they bring about some resolution of tension and are beneficial in terms of dealing with social conflict. In *Shock Corridor*, however, Johnny Barrett's feigned madness is far more problematical. As Thomas Elsaesser notes, "*Shock Corridor*...unambiguously establishes the fascination with the 'other' as a fascination with self."⁸⁹ Johnny's objective, to find out who killed Sloan, is a means to his end – to win the Pulitzer Prize, which is in turn a means of establishing his identity. The search for the murderer is a search for self. Because Johnny enters the asylum as a troubled individual, through his feigned madness he is not able to effect the sympathetic detachment that Ross and Isabella achieve and so becomes totally immersed in the disturbed world of the inmates of the asylum. In the end, the madness that Johnny assumes rebounds upon him.

In the opening scene, Johnny is describing his erotic feelings for his sister to a psychiatrist, then the tension is broken when we realise that it is just a staged performance, though the psychiatrist is real. Sam Fuller disorients us with his first shots – a play-acting scene which features a man who will later perform madness. As the film progresses however, the line

⁸⁸ This explains why Antonio is so disturbed by Isabella's portrayal as a madwoman.

⁸⁹ Thomas Elsaesser, "Shock Corridor by Sam Fuller," in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 29.

between performance and reality is frequently crossed⁹⁰ until eventually Johnny cannot maintain his sanity. Performing madness and being mad, playacting and reality merge. What is established in this opening scene is that contradictory and competing desires are battling for dominance. Johnny's plan has the full support of Swanee, his newspaper Editor, whose interest is purely commercial but is opposed vehemently by Cathy, Johnny's girlfriend, on moral grounds and also that it could pose a threat to his sanity. She has a heightened sense of the moral consequences of "a doctor and a newspaper Editor – both socially sanctioned guardians of sanity and truth – colluding in a scheme of deceit and madness."⁹¹ The confrontation in Dr Fong's consulting room, where pretended madness is being rehearsed, prepares us for the main energy of the film as it examines contradictions in American society that will result in the real madness of Johnny.

Whereas Isabella and Ross approached their impersonation of madness as being outside the construction of their identities, Johnny produces a mad persona formed out of his own fears and desires. Ross chose his mental aberration at random from a textbook on psychosis but for Johnny the choice of sexual feelings for his 'sister' as the basis of his supposed illness is actually very close to the mark; his ambivalence towards his sexual relationship with Cathy is ultimately and disturbingly resolved when he begins to see her as his sister and is repelled by the thought of being intimate with her. Johnny is a man who is unstable at the beginning of the film and he enters an asylum which, in acting as a metaphor for a turbulent and troubled U.S.A., is a frightening and dangerous place. "The flat, harshly lit world of the madhouse...is the alembic in which the fevers of American psychosis are brought to the boil."⁹² Where Ross has both Hopps and Purvis to act as guides and provide information for him at *La Siesta*, the same luxury is not afforded Johnny; his only avenues to the truth are provided by men who offer only partially rational discourse. What he encounters is as much a threat to his mental health as it is to his physical health.

There is one dominant image in *Shock Corridor* – the main corridor of the asylum where everyone congregates that is referred to as 'The Street' by the inmates and staff. 'The Street' works as a metaphor for life outside the asylum, with the wide variety of mental illness among the patients reflective of the urban mix of any city street, but it is also, importantly, a

⁹⁰ Cathy also straddles the line between performance and reality as in her occupation as a stripper she acts out desire .

⁹¹ Elsaesser, .29.

⁹² Iain Sinclair. "War Zone." *Sight and Sound* 7, no. 3 (1997): 22.

means of bringing the outside world in. Concerns from the outside at the time the film was produced (1963) such as racism, the role of science and the threat of thermonuclear war, the paranoia associated with the Cold War, education, patriotism, are part of the conversation in “The Street.” The bleakness of the corridor and the isolation of the inmates in their own traumatised worlds fit easily into our understanding of the modern city thoroughfare with its own fragmented and dislocated people-scape. “‘The Street’ is the centre of the asylum, and Fuller blatantly elevates it to represent Main Street USA.”⁹³ This is also the environment described by Raymond Chandler: “...a world gone wrong, a world... in which the streets were dark with something more than night.”⁹⁴ It is ironic that ‘The Street’ is so well lit that there are no shadows and yet it is the darkness of the mind, so apparent in the film, which recalls Chandler’s famous line. The more Johnny walks down the corridor the more evident it is that the darkness he is seeking to illuminate lies within himself.

The portrayal of madness in *Shock Corridor* is far more graphic, violent and intense than what we see in *The Changeling* and *Behind Locked Doors*. Much of the chaos in the asylum results from patients being less able to articulate and interpret the turmoil in their minds and Johnny, although he is finally able to identify the murderer, offers little assistance, becoming instead overwhelmed by their stories as he battles to maintain his sanity. What further complicates matters is that the characters are alienated from the means of achieving what they desire. In the case of the inmates, this alienation is part of their condition and so the resulting frustration is often incoherently expressed and unfocused. For the ‘sane’ characters, narrowing the gap between their desires and the means of fulfilment requires bargaining and exchange. Johnny wants the Pulitzer Prize and is prepared to bargain his fiancée and his sanity in order to achieve it. In order to set up a scoop, in exchange Swanee is prepared to tolerate the loss of Johnny’s sanity. Dr Fong has no compunction about providing the necessary coaching expertise, which surely compromises his professional integrity, in order to be part of the deal. Fuller has made great use of irony throughout the film, none more telling than highlighting the unscrupulous means the three men employ to win the Pulitzer which honours integrity and honesty in journalism. An added irony is that the three respected and respectable professional men act without regard to any moral scruples while Cathy, a stripper with few pretensions to respectability, sees their plans as dangerous, exploitative and

⁹³ Rick McGrath *Shock Corridor*. www.culturecourt.com/Ajo/film/ShockC.htm (accessed 12 January 2006).

⁹⁴ Brian McFarlane, Geoff Mayer, *New Australian Cinema: Sources and Parallels in British and American Films* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 68.

morally reprehensible. On a more global scale, Johnny's dialogues in 'The Street' with Stuart, Trent and Boden suggest a far more Faustian bargain – that the promotion of the grand social, political and international enterprises of the US rebounds on some of the participants, destroying their integrity. As Elsaesser notes "Fuller intimates that some of the most conscious and rational impulses of American society powerfully demonstrate the profoundly irrational nature of that society."⁹⁵

Unusually for film noir, *Shock Corridor* explores in some detail the impact of the pursuit of the American Dream on the protagonists with Johnny's pursuit of the Pulitzer Prize encapsulating the main features of the Dream: individual hard work, ingenuity, creativity, the prospect of material, financial and personal success. Johnny is imbued with an evangelical zeal that is so dynamic it overrides the valid objections put forward by Cathy. Johnny has total self belief which enables him to sell his idea as well as himself. This is what Swanee realizes – that Johnny is a viable, potentially valuable commercial commodity. However, in the asylum "what confronts Johnny...is nothing short of the shock of encountering the extreme gestures of paranoia and psychosis that are nurtured in the torments of racism, abuse, and the dislocated creative impulses."⁹⁶ As his contact with the patients he wishes to interview about the murder intensifies, his hold on the dream of winning a Pulitzer weakens. Johnny sees in the stories of Stuart, Trent and Boden, that embody aspects of the American Dream, traces of his own narrative. What shocks him is the extent to which their dreams have been fractured, causing him to reflect on the fragility of his own situation. Once his confidence has been shaken and his contact with Cathy becomes destabilized, Johnny begins his inevitable decline into insanity. He is made aware, through his conversations with the three men, of the contradictions in mainstream society, each man representing one aspect of the failure of the Dream.

Stuart's manic playacting of episodes of the American Civil War centres our attention on the extremes of social fragmentation, the American context bringing into clear relief his involvement in another civil war, the Korean War. War virtues endorsed by society – bravery, honour, self-sacrifice, patriotism – are stripped back to reveal their counterpoints – betrayal, cowardice, fear, isolation. Stuart's treachery can be traced back to his parents'

⁹⁵ Elsaesser, 295.

⁹⁶ Andrew Dickos, *Street with No Name: A History of the Classic American Film Noir* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 127.

ignorance and his lack of education. His retreat into the glorious splendour of the Civil War offers him a chance to re-badge his narrative as part of a heroic national epic.

An integral part of the American Dream is the role played by education in allowing the individual to fulfil their potential. For Trent, a Negro, the trauma associated with his attempts to gain equal access to educational resources causes his mental breakdown. He articulates his struggle most powerfully by adopting the persona of a rabid white supremacist; his racist diatribes against blacks emphasizing the point that most people with access to the Dream are white.

If Trent most effectively subverts racism by adopting the rhetoric and tone of white racists, Boden, one of the country's pre-eminent nuclear scientists, deconstructs the post World War 2 reverence for the behemoth of Science by reverting to childhood as a result of his breakdown, establishing the stark binary of innocence versus unimaginable and morally unstable nuclear power. That the scientist reverts to childish innocence when mad not only critiques and inverts the usual scenario of 'mad scientist equals megalomaniac', but it also challenges the primacy of science through someone so close to the important ethical challenges posed by the development of nuclear means of mass destruction having such deep moral misgivings. The greatest irony in a film which is heavily ironic is that at the moment when Johnny confronts the killer and attains his Pulitzer reward to fulfil his Dream he loses all contact with reality.

Fuller somewhat crudely connects his Pulitzer Prize/murder mystery action – “who killed Sloan in the kitchen” – to his broader concerns with the contradictions in society that produce insanity through the testimony of the three witnesses. Their witnessing of the murder is overlaid with their witness to the wider global issues. Johnny at first tries to confine the flow of information from the witnesses only to the details of the crime; his clearly stated mission is to identify the murderer. However, their lives have been a witness to great tyrannies, injustices and inequalities which Johnny begins to realize are reflected in the quest upon which he has embarked. The fracturing of their dreams, associated with epic social, military and scientific movements and aspirations in the USA, reveals to Johnny the fault-lines of his own pursuit of the American Dream. The desperate struggle he later has with the murderer, Wilkes, is essentially a struggle with himself. Adrian Martin notes that “Fuller's films are all

about drives, impulses, emotional states that are imprinted on the social being.”⁹⁷ In the asylum Johnny is made to realize the full implications of this imprinting. Insanity results from the confusion caused by the conflict between the socially constructed self and the observing self which is aware of the discrepancy between what is being observed – the intolerance, ignorance and prejudice - and the expectations of each of the characters based on the American National Story. For Stuart, Trent and Boden this conflict is articulated through the role playing they enact which attempts to reconcile the contradictions. And so Johnny encounters Stuart’s created Civil War heroics, Trent’s adoption of White American racism and Boden’s reversion to childhood. The impact is far more traumatic for Johnny, the reporter whose life is centred in words, as he slowly recedes into a catatonic state. There is great irony at the conclusion of the film when we learn that he has won the Pulitzer Prize but is now completely speechless and insane. One line spoken by Johnny’s roommate in the asylum, Pagliacci, early in the film, “it’s good to sleep, that’s when they can’t tell a sane man from an insane man,” casts a deep shadow over the conclusion. Madness can’t be easily corralled; appearances do not reflect realities, scientists, Pulitzer Prize winners and heroes can be mad.

The Duchess of Malfi – asylum breakout

Unlike the works discussed earlier in the chapter, *Shock Corridor* and *The Duchess of Malfi* do not provide sane guides for the journey into the fractured world of the asylum. Johnny, even when sane, is not in control of his situation – his terrifying encounter with the nymphomaniacs alone shows this. His voice is subdued by the many competing, disorientated, frightening, discourses that envelop him. A similar unsettling darkness pervades *The Duchess of Malfi*⁹⁸ as the Duchess struggles to establish her sanity in an environment completely dominated by her mad brother, Duke Ferdinand. In a world literally gone mad, the Duchess, like Isabella, is the sane constant, anchoring reality while all around her is madness. This dislocation is not only evident in the situation whereby the ruler, the Duke, is mad, but also in the way in which madness is loosed upon the court; characters do not go to the asylum, the asylum moves to the Court; madness is released and recognises itself in the actions of the Court. In order to further torment his sister, Ferdinand discharges

⁹⁷ Adrian Martin, *Senses of Cinema*. www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/02/fuller.html (accessed 12/03/2007).

⁹⁸ John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Brian Gibbons (London: New Mermaids, 2001).

the ‘mad-folk’ from the nearby hospital and orders Bosola to “place them near her lodging.” (IV.i.124) This releasing of madness into the community, in the manner of a Bruegel painting, establishes mental disharmony as the default position. In a recognition of the growing psychosis evident in Ferdinand’s behaviour, of which the liberation of the madmen is but the most recent example, the Duchess notes:

Nothing but noise and folly
Can keep me in my right wits, whereas reason
And silence make me stark mad.
(4.2.5-7)

This inversion points to the Duchess’s stoic defence against the chaotic world that the Duke is constructing to replicate the turmoil within his mind. The chief danger to her sanity is not the madmen sent to scatter her wits through aligning their reality with hers but the devastating logic of Bosola.

‘The noise and folly’ of the madmen when they enter anticipates the ‘reason and silence’ of the state sponsored madness of Bosola immediately following their departure. The song the madmen sing, by way of a funeral dirge, prefigures in a similar way the death of the Duchess. Through an inversion (one among many in the play), the funeral precedes the death. The chaotic violence of the lyrics, “the threat’ning throat/of beasts and fatal fowl./As ravens, screech-owls, bulls and bears/we’ll bill and bawl our parts” (4.2.63-6), offers an antic parody of the more ordered, melodic Court music. However, although the form Webster uses – madmen making a public display of their mental confusion – conforms to the tradition of the stage bedlam performance, the subtext – situating the Duchess as approaching death - and the context – preparing the audience for the execution of the Duchess - are powerfully sane. This is her swan song. The legend of the dying swan, mute during life but able to sing a beautiful song when dying, is particularly appropriate for the Duchess as her brothers have been obsessed with maintaining her silence, negating the power of the female voice, but the scenes leading to her death are enacted with great eloquence. As with Isabella, the Duchess is portrayed as representing the primacy of reason in the face of madness.

When the madmen speak, their incoherence only is apparent. They represent a series of allegorical versions of the troubled soul of Ferdinand. Madman 1, in stating that “I cannot sleep, my pillow is stuffed with a litter of porcupines” (75-6), gives voice to a ducal and

personal paranoia that cannot be assuaged.⁹⁹ The image of a magnifying glass “that shall set all the world on fire” (74) continues the line of thought expressed by Ferdinand at the end of the previous scene “to feed a fire as great as my revenge” (4.1.136). Fire is given a sexual connotation by the Duke when he adds “which ne’er will slack till it have spent his fuel.” (137), “slack” and “spent,” while here referring literally to his revenge against Antonio, on another level register his suppressed sexual feelings for his sister. Fire as sexual passion is then picked up by Madman 2: “Hell is a mere glass house, where devils are continually/ blowing up women’s souls.” (4.2.7-8). The dance the madmen perform completes the circle of inversion begun by the funeral dirge as it is a “...parodic inversion of the form and values of the climactic dance in a marriage masque, which symbolically expressed harmony, unity and order.”¹⁰⁰ When Bosola enters disguised as an old man, the extent to which madness has entered the mainstream is immediately clear when the Duchess asks: “Is he mad too?” (109). Later, in answer to Cariola’s determination to call for help, the Duchess acknowledges the fact even more clearly: “To whom? To our next neighbours? They are mad folks.” (188). She is encased in madness which then makes the procession of executioners with a coffin even more symbolic. The play moves from the manic exhortations of Ferdinand and those who afford him a metaphorical presence in this scene, the madmen, to the more reasoned though equally insane, strangely protracted state killing carried out by Bosola. The three questions the Duchess asks of Bosola – “Dost thou know me?” (115), “Who am I?” (117) and “Am I not your duchess?” (127), provoke answers from him which echo the heightened linguistic mayhem of the madmen. Her humanity is stripped bare: “thou art a box of worm-seed.” (118). In response to the last question, Bosola embarks on a scarifying verbal assault on the trials of greatness, emphasizing the mental agony associated with those who wield power. As with the madmen, this tirade seems to refer more to the obsessional behaviour of the Duke than to the comparative calm exhibited by the Duchess. Her defiant statement, “I am Duchess of Malfi still” (135), is as much an assertion of a sane identity amidst constructed and unconstructed madness as it is a statement of political reality.

Throughout the play there is consistent modelling of the enlightened prince who defers to reason against whom the self-indulgent, paranoid and psychotic machinations of Ferdinand

⁹⁹ Reminiscent of Macbeth: “full of scorpions is my mind.”

¹⁰⁰ John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Brian Gibbons (London: New Mermaids, 2001). Note 108, p.96.

and the Cardinal appear in stark contrast. The play opens with Antonio's positioning of the French King as the paradigm for the Italian Court:

In seeking to reduce both state and people
To a fix'd order, their judicious king
Begins at home; quits first his royal palace
Of flattering sycophants, of dissolute
And infamous persons...

(1.1.5-9)

In the absence of such a 'judicious king', policy is formed out of expediency and self interest. Antonio, having begun the discourse of princely virtues, seems to be referring to the Duchess's brothers when he examines princely vices:

Ambition, madam, is a great man's madness,
That is not kept in chains and close-pent rooms
But in fair lightsome lodgings, and is girt
With the wild noise of prattling visitants
Which makes it lunatic beyond all cure.

(412-16)

This image of the Court is expressed according to the convention of the times; madness is mutable, not easily defined and located; it will be found in the Court as well as in the asylum. Antonio and the Duchess express their passion in a rational way and one that declares that love is beyond class, status and position. Although he is to benefit from his marriage to the Duchess, Antonio renounces ambition. By way of contrast, Ferdinand's madness stems from his political ambition, as observed by Antonio, and his own dark, unresolved feelings for his sister, the Duchess.

The stream of madness in *The Duchess of Malfi* finds its natural apotheosis in Ferdinand, a madman who, unlike most of the mad people in the plays and films discussed up to this point, poses a real and direct threat to those around him. His attempts to torment his sister are self-reflexive, replicating the intense anguish he himself is experiencing while simultaneously augmenting that same suffering. His relationship with the Duchess is so exclusively grounded in their twin-ness he seems unable to fully experience sensation except through her. Thus the discovery of the strangled children, which has so affected Bosola, leaves him completely unremorseful; "The death/of young wolves is never to be pitied" (4. 2. 247-9). Ferdinand's emotions then swing from this icy indifference to the suffering he has caused to overwhelming grief when he sees the strangled Duchess. He is unable to resolve his explosively contradictory impulses towards his sister, alternately blaming Bosola for not second-guessing his wishes and then belatedly dismissing as insignificant the once important

reasons he had for opposing the lovers' marriage. His confrontation with the twin-ness of his sister is what causes a complete disengagement with reality and from this scene onwards Ferdinand is clinically mad:

She and I were twins;
And should I die this instant, I had liv'd
Her time to a minute.
(269-70)

Ferdinand cannot establish an identity separate from his sister, consequently when she dies he loses all sense of self. This is shown most graphically in Act 5 when he makes a great public show of trying to separate himself from his shadow;¹⁰¹ his character disintegrates as he descends into lycanthropia. In *The Duchess of Malfi* the focus on madness is on the individual and how that individual's madness expresses itself through the most graphic violence.

We have moved from the dark corridors of the asylums, where battles for sanity have raged and where the paradoxes of the 'sane' madmen and the 'insane' people outside the wall, the disordered, destructive Court/State Authority and the restorative, life-affirming asylum have been clearly articulated, to the dark inner corridors of the individual disturbed mind. Ferdinand is perhaps the meeting point of concerns about public and private madness, with the dispersing of the madmen from the asylum a powerful symbol of the untrammelled madness of the Duke.

There's a madman loose

The representation of the mad individual in society is by its very presence a means of destabilisation. Especially so since the performance of this madness, in the examples I am going to examine, Vindice in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and Gunther Wyckoff in *Dial 1119*, is unrecognized, un-signified and uncontained within mainstream society - in the City and in the Court. Madness is identifiable in an asylum; in the world outside the walls it is not so clearly defined. There is also more threat associated with the mad individuals here mentioned as

¹⁰¹ The shadow could be taken as the metaphorical presence of his twin, the Duchess. This would then connect with Act 5 Scene 3 where the Duchess's voice echoes the conversation between Antonio and Delio. There are many examples of paralleling between Antonio and Ferdinand.

issues of injustice, betrayal, grievance, revenge, fear, isolation and marginalisation characterize the expression of their madness.

Vindice and Gunther are outsiders, approaching the Court/City under cover of darkness. They are displaced, unlocated, psychotic and driven by an obsessive desire for revenge and righting injustice. Therefore they interpret what has happened to them as representative of the wider corruption that exists as the norm in society. There is also something of the puritan in both men, in their attitudes to sexuality and to their missions which they see as self-evidently purgatorial. Any violence they commit is justified by the sanctity of their motivation.

It is not unintentional that *The Revenger's Tragedy* begins at night, with the ducal procession passing over the stage in torchlight, observed by Vindice. Night and darkness provide the necessary environment for evil to flourish as Vindice proclaims to Lussurioso:

Some father dreads not, gone to bed in wine,
To slide from the mother and cling the daughter-in-law;
Some uncles are adulterous with their nieces,
Brothers with brothers' wives – Oh hour of incest!
Any kin now next to the rim o' the sister
Is man's meat in these days, and in the morning,
When they are up and dressed and their mask on,
Who can perceive this, save that eternal eye
That sees through flesh and all? Well – if anything be damned
It will be twelve o'clock at night: that twelve will never 'scape;
It is the Judas of the hours, wherein
Honest salvation is betrayed to sin.

(1.3.61-72)

This picture of moral anarchy that Vindice depicts is precariously contained by daylight hypocrisy – what the day denounces, the night delights in. Vindice's responses themselves are problematical as they indicate the contradictions he feels as he is both disgusted by and yet attracted to the very things he condemns. This is most tellingly observed in the various personas he adopts: the avenging lover, the political intriguer, Lussurioso's bawd, trenchant social critic, murderer, necrophiliac – the first guise (avenging lover) is meant to justify all the others but it is apparent that Vindice is absorbed totally in each role he creates, that he vicariously experiences virtue and vice in his performing. Charles and Elaine Hallett take this further, noting that Vindice "...creates an alter-ego and loses all grip on himself. Eventually

there is no real Vindice; he has entered so far into deceit that he is the man he pretends to be.”¹⁰²

While I do not believe he loses all sense of the parameters of his identity, it is true that the lines become blurred and that his descriptions to Lussurioso of the delights of vice, incestuous deeds done under the cover of night, go way beyond the demands of his plotting; in arousing the Duke’s son, he succeeds in arousing himself. At the same time, however, the social, legal and moral contradictions he observes in the Court, reflective of human nature, torment him and create warring divisions in his own psyche. His hyper-puritanical view of women is situated in the body; the flesh of a woman, whether natural or constructed (“the artificial shine/of any woman’s bought complexion” 1.1.21-2), lures men to their destruction. In his opening speech, “far from establishing Gloriana’s chastity, Vindice’s language instead produces an illicit sexuality – her ability to excite an eighth erection in ‘the uprightest man.’”¹⁰³ Women are only stable when dead (Gloriana and Antonio’s wife) and their virtue can be intoned as their constancy is now immutable; they are beyond temptation. Vindice’s entrance with Gloriana’s skull is not a macabre stage trick, rather it shows he is intent on establishing purity in the skeleton, stripped of its seductive flesh. Alex Cox in his 2003 film of *The Revenger’s Tragedy* illustrates this by having Vindice in the act of close-shaving his head when we are first introduced to him, a consciously mimetic act, replicating as far as is possible Gloriana’s bare skull. It is therefore appropriate that her skull is used to poison the Duke; the bone acting as an antidote to the lecherous flesh.

Disguised as Piato, Vindice, in seeking to seduce his sister Castiza on behalf of Lussurioso, reveals a more nuanced attitude to sexuality. His advances to Castiza are quickly and emphatically rebuffed. The irony is he succeeds with his Mother, enlisting her support to try and win Castiza over. What is disturbing here is the undercurrent of desire that informs Gratiana’s responses combined with Vindice’s clear articulation of the realities of Courtly sexual currency. While it is apparent that Gratiana is sexually aroused during this scene¹⁰⁴ – “O heavens! This overcomes me!” (2.1.105), and “Oh if I were young, I should be ravished” (192) - what is not clear is whether she is responding to Piato himself or to non-specific memories of her own past sexual experiences. Vindice cries that “she’s unmothered” (112) and he is right, both in terms of Gratiana losing her authority as the matriarchal arbiter of

¹⁰² Charles and Elaine Hallett, *The Revenger’s Madness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 239.

¹⁰³ Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 109.

¹⁰⁴ Gratiana is also excited at the prospect of having access to riches if Lussurioso has access to Castiza.

morality and of her expression of a separate, viable sexual identity that violates his image of her as mother.¹⁰⁵ He has lost those moral reference points that enabled him to initiate his revenge, for now he is as much disturbed by his mother's arousal as he is by her willingness to prostitute her daughter. Vindice is distressed to find himself acting out a situation with incestuous overtones similar to the scenarios he described so licentiously to Lussurioso.¹⁰⁶ Already he is dangerously disturbed so that this "merging of mother and son, which is described in specifically sexual terms, threatens to 'undo' Vindice's world... Overwhelmed by his successful, yet taboo, penetration of Gratiana, Vindice expresses the depth of his psychological devastation."¹⁰⁷ He stumbles through to the end of the scene, ignoring Castiza's repeated positive espousing of the primacy of womanly chastity to proclaim darkly: "Were't not for gold and women, there would be no damnation" (2.2.297). If his mother is prepared to be a bawd, regardless of how chaste Castiza shows herself to be, all women are now unstable. In a very real sense, Vindice striking out at the lecherous Duke and his diabolical family is the outward manifestation of his inner fearful loathing of the body and his uncomprehending disgust at the disordered accessibility of women. Even from the beginning of the play, Vindice's clear rationale for revenge – the poisoning of Gloriana by the Duke – is entangled with the giddy sexual disorientation he experiences and articulates in his manic opening monologue. He is unable to reconcile fully the various meanings he wants to ascribe to Gloriana's skull; she is both saint and whore, a talisman signifying purity, an object of desire and later, a vehicle for revenge. In life the woman is denoted constant but in death she becomes alterable as men feel at liberty to inscribe meaning on the female.¹⁰⁸ This process is problematic, given the instability of Vindice, so that, (in spite of his declarations of her virtue), as Karin S. Coddon observes, the skull of his lover and his manner of engaging with it are replete with sexual connotation. "While the skull of Gloriana...literally lacks a body, it does not...lack a sexuality."¹⁰⁹ Coddon then comments on the sexual connotations of Hippolito's use of 'sighing' in his

¹⁰⁵ Like her brother, Castiza cites a dichotomy between the woman and the mother: "Mother, come from that poisonous woman there." (2.1.239).

¹⁰⁶ "Oh hour of incest!" (1.3.64).

¹⁰⁷ Kathryn R. Finin, "Re-membering Gloriana: 'Wild Justice' and the Female Body in *The Revenger's Tragedy*," *Renaissance Forum* 6, no.2 (2003): 7-8. Finin reads linguistic penetration as sexual penetration of the mother's body.

¹⁰⁸ This also happens to Antonio's wife whose suicide, as a consequence of her rape by Junior, is described by her husband as a "precedent for wives" (1.4. 6).

¹⁰⁹ Karin S. Coddon, "'For Show or Useless Property': Necrophilia and *The Revenger's Tragedy*," *ELH* 61, no.1 (1994): 65.

opening address to Vindice, “Still sighing o’er Death’s visard?” (1.1.49),¹¹⁰ introducing the topic of necrophilia which shadows all discussion of the dead female body in the play, the apogee being the use of Gloriana as a lure for and instrument of the Duke’s destruction. There is a fitting irony in his seeking to satisfy (and simultaneously destroy) the Duke’s lust by using Gloriana’s ‘body’ which was the original object of the old man’s fatal lechery. And yet Vindice is no longer “sighing over death’s vizard”; the brilliant means are now taking precedence over the end, “And now methinks I could e’en chide myself/For doting on her beauty.” (3.5.68-9). In the ecstasy of his plotting, Gloriana is deemed object and mechanism for revenge and that revenge becomes sexualised as he torments the Duke, the prolonging of the latter’s agony like a darkly perverse inverted parody of love-making with emphasis on tongues, kissing and eyes that will be forced to view the lust of Spurio and the Duchess: “Here in this lodge they meet for damned clips;/Those eyes shall see the incest of their lips.” (180-1). Just as he had for Lussurioso and his mother, Vindice creates vivid images of transgressive sexual coupling for the dying Duke and once more, his arousal is evident in the very articulation of that which he professes to despise. Referring to her adultery, the Duchess says, “Why there’s no pleasure sweet, but it is sinful.” (203). This comment applies equally to Vindice whose ‘sin’ of murder is imbued with sexual pleasure.

Dial 1119 presents a world similarly bleak though in more muted tones. A contrast is quickly established in the opening scene between the reassuring station identification announcements and low-key dance music that we hear from the local radio station and the deep, dark cynicism of Harry, the burnt-out (morally and physically) news-reporter. This is Terminal City, a soul-less dead-end destination where human contact is characterized by suspicion and superficiality. If the naming of Terminal City is brutally accurate, there is a grim irony in the name of the Oasis Bar where most of the action takes place, for it offers no refuge for the faceless people who pass each other in the streets. It is the meeting place for the disconnected, the desperately lonely, and when Gunther enters, the psychotic. The world-weary, morose barman is appropriately nick-named ‘Chuckles’. Into this problematical world Gunther Wyckoff enters in search of Dr Faron, a psychiatrist whom he blames for his incarceration in the State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. His appearance belies the disturbed state of his mind; he is a young (twenty-seven years), clean-cut, handsome man, seemingly an all-American paragon. His natural counterpart should be the young, attractive

¹¹⁰ Coddon, 79.

Helen but she is being seduced by Earl who is bland, middle-aged, and unimaginatively conventional. The characters' isolation is emphasized in the dialogue:

“Chuckles I love you.”
 “You don't love anybody – You love the drink”
 “Are you happy?”
 “Yeah, I guess so.”
 “You don't look it.”

A TV at the bar shows two wrestlers competing in a bout which causes Harry to observe:

“They merely illustrate the society in which we live. We're all wrestlers.
 Everybody beats each others' brain out.”

And indeed the alienation of the individual, which is a constant throughout the film, is combined later paradoxically with the vicious voyeurism exhibited by the crowds that gather to view the standoff between the police and Gunther. Predatory TV news-crews sensationalize the human drama and suffering is marketed as entertainment. No one wants to be involved (a key witness to Wyckoff's first murder doesn't want to identify him because she doesn't want to be caught up in the affair) but everyone wants to observe. Into this bleak environment, Gunther returns, journeying to Terminal City to seek retribution from John Faron, the psychiatrist he blames for sending him to the asylum, but he can also be seen, and he certainly sees himself in this way, as avenging injustices he believes were perpetrated against him by society. *Dial 1119* eschews simplistic oppositional formulae that would pit a crazed killer against a sane, frightened, innocent populace. Everyone in the film is implicated in some way – Faron admits in his argument with the police officer in charge, Captain Keiver: “Wyckoff has always been unbalanced – most of us are in one way or another.” His madness has fatal consequences for three people but the extent of his culpability is mitigated by the scurrilous activities of the Press and the Media which serve to direct our sympathies towards Wyckoff, the pseudo-vigilante position adopted by Keiver and by the heroic attempts made by Faron to defuse the situation by engaging with him. As the psychiatrist tellingly remarks to Keiver: “We no longer execute the sick.”

One key aspect of the presentation of Gunther's madness is the extent to which it is centred in delusion. Part of his grievance is that as a war veteran he has not been assimilated back into society but we learn that this claim is false when Faron confronts him with the fact that he was denied service because he was considered unsuitable. The intensity of his self delusion – his apartment is full of army material and war paraphernalia – is evident in the self-dramatising tirade directed at his hostages: “Blood sweat, tears – that's what the man said,

and what good did it do? We were going to have a better world. That's what they said for the first one." But interspersed with his constructed memories of battle are keenly observed insights into the all pervading loneliness he witnesses in Terminal City: "Look at the people's faces in the street. What do you see? Sadness, sadness, everywhere." Wyckoff's psychosis is self-reflexive and at the same time reflective of his immediate environment. There is a close symmetry between Gunther's observations and the behaviour of the people in and outside the bar – his claim that none of them has anything to live for is an echo of Chuckles's comment to Harry: "you're not going to die in my joint," to which Freddy replies: "why not – what's he got to live for?" – but his analysis is cold, obsessively puritanical¹¹¹ and judgemental. His madness is characterised by his fatal inability to empathize and as the media circus shows, he is not alone in this failing.

Wyckoff's capacity to self-delude is shared by the designated 'sane' people in the Oasis Bar: the hack reporter, the bar fly desperately trying to hold on to her fading beauty, the young girl seeking companionship with a middle-aged man who is out for sexual adventure. All fail to recognise the reality of their individual situations. Their self-delusion isolates them, preventing any meaningful contact with others in the bar. After the conflict has been resolved with Gunther killed, Earl approaches Freddy as a substitute for Helen, who is no longer in the mood for an affair with him, but she laughs in his face. Loneliness is not assuaged, the issues relating to Gunther's mental illness are unresolved: he dies in a hail of bullets¹¹² and the one person who made an effort to understand and treat him lies dead on the floor of the bar. The passionate debate between Faron and Keiver during the siege over whether justice is best described as retribution/execution or rehabilitation/treatment is trivialised when Harry telephones through his scoop describing Wyckoff as a "Mad Killer." The gaggle of news reporters and television crews is out in force to chronicle the elimination of what they see as a crazed man who is a threat to the commonwealth. The irony is that their behaviour appears to be similarly crazed.

Dial 1119, in common with the Jacobean plays and other noir films discussed in this chapter, undermines attempts to quarantine the mentally ill - figuratively or literally - as aberration.

¹¹¹ When Freddy tries to save herself by seducing him, Gunther slaps her face. He also delights in Helen's rejection of Earl: "I was going away with him – that's a sin. It's God's way of stopping us, of punishing me."

¹¹² The manner of his death is problematic as no attempt is made to identify Gunther before he is gunned down the instant he appears at the door of the bar. His death is a payback by Keiver for the failure of the judicial system, as he sees it, to execute Wyckoff when he was previously tried and convicted.

The threat posed by Wyckoff is real, but so is his frustration and his ill-treatment. Madness in these texts serves to highlight what is irrational and unsettled in the wider community; the darkness of the obsessive marginalised character mirrors a more malevolent darkness that is situated in those who appear most sane. That the naming of people as deviant, according to how they measure against perceived levels of 'rationality' and as a result of this of demonizing those who 'fail the test' is a fraught and dangerous exercise, becomes most apparent when examining these texts. The subject of naming in terms of gender is an area of concern for the Early Modern period as it was during the film noir period of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and many of the assumptions related to the discussion of naming and madness are pertinent to questions of gender-naming.

Chapter 3

The Gender Game

The Truth is, the world is very much out of order

Hic Mulier: The tythe of your friendship (good Lady) is above my merit.

Haec Vir: You make mee rich beyond expression. But faire Knight, the truth is I
am a Man, and desire but the obligation of your friendship.

Hic Mulier: It is ready to be sealed and delivered to your use. Yet I would have
you understand that I am a Woman.

Haec Vir: Are you a Woman?

Hic Mulier: Are you a Man?¹¹³

This conversation between *Haec Vir* (the Womanish Man) and *Hic Mulier* (the Manish Woman) which occurs near the beginning of *Haec Vir*, a pamphlet written in 1620 as a reply to *Hic Mulier*, a misogynist text which, among other things, attacked women for blurring the gender lines by dressing as men, satirizes the notion of clothes literally making the man (or woman). *Hic* and *Haec*'s struggle with the visual signifiers that should identify and clearly establish the other's gender points to wider community concerns and confusion about problematized relationships between males and females that had been characterised by an on-going pamphlet war¹¹⁴ since the mid Sixteenth Century. The *Hic*/*Haec* questions; "Are you a Woman?" "Are you a Man?" indicate the furthestmost points of a gender discussion, conducted in a steady stream of pamphlets and on the stages of London, that reflected more general social anxieties about the public and private roles of women, questions of gender power relationships - including marriage, and ambivalence about the sexual mutability of women suggested by the fashion of some women adopting men's apparel. Indeed, as Jean E. Howard notes, "Crossdressing...threatened the

¹¹³ *Hic Mulier: Or, The Man-Woman And Haec Vir: Or, The Womanish-Man* (Rota: University of Exeter, 1973).

¹¹⁴ There has been some discussion about the nature of the gender debate. Linda Woodbridge in *Women and the English Renaissance: literature and the nature of womankind 1540-1620* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1984) has argued convincingly that, while some of the contributors were passionate about their sides, others were writing as part of a literary genre. Also, it has been suspected that in some cases one author might write both an attack and a defence of women. There is also no certainty that some of the 'female' defences of women were in fact penned by a woman. It would seem, however, that the passion surrounding the debate in the early seventeenth century was real and not constructed.

normative social order based on strict principles of hierarchy and subordination of which women's subordination to man was the chief instance."¹¹⁵

Two major impulses are evident in this discussion: one that seeks to maintain a view of women confined within specific and mutually exclusive categories, opposed by its nemesis, one that questions and challenges specificity. *Hic Mulier* seeks to close down while *Haec Vir* endeavours to open up the discussion of women's position in society. In this struggle, the naming process, especially with reference to the first impulse, becomes extremely important as a vehicle for controlling meaning, which then becomes a critical way of conserving structure in society and limiting the effectiveness of dissident voices. Thus "A woman who did speak out, who cursed or yelled or argued with men, was said to be a scold or a shrew and regarded as little better than a whore. So a woman's 'value', which in fact meant her social place and eventually, her sense of herself, derived from what the 'world' said about her."¹¹⁶ Naming was intended to contain and restrain women's voices, to pressure them into accepting fixed, determined roles within the community by articulating publicly what constituted acceptable and unacceptable womanly identities. In this chapter, I will focus on the importance of signifiers in particular texts – pamphlets, plays and films - in relation to gender. The main texts discussed will be the pamphlets *Haec Vir, Hic Mulier*, Swetnam's *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women, A Mouzell for Melastomas*; the plays *Swetnam the Woman Hater* and *The Roaring Girl*, and the films *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Blonde Ice* (1948) and *Too Late For Tears* (1949).

What is deemed to be self-evident in gender discussions of the Renaissance is that, in determining 'correct' social behaviour, the Man is the mean against which the Female is to be judged. Manly values and qualities form the default position – womanly virtues are thus conscribed by, and their value was measured in comparison with, the masculine. This view of the dominant status of the man was reinforced in the popular moral commentaries¹¹⁷ of the day: "The woman, therefore, is the image of the man...the woman was made from the man, and after him, and is inferior to him and created like him merely...woman is a notable ornament of man...a material over which he may exercise his jurisdiction and dominion."¹¹⁸ Part of the 'jurisdiction,' referred to by Ladipus, was the constructing of the female by the male, whereby she was to

¹¹⁵ Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, The Theatre and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1988): 418.

¹¹⁶ Simon Shepherd, ed., *The Women's Sharp Revenge* (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 11.

¹¹⁷ Religion was used as the basis for these manuals on appropriate womanly behaviour.

¹¹⁸ Cornelius Lapidus in *The English Renaissance: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, ed. Kate Aughterson (London: Routledge, 1998), 462.

adhere to a code of appropriate (as determined by the male) ‘womanly’ behaviour. So a wife was enjoined to: “reverence her husband...submit herself and be obedient *unto him...that she do not wear gorgeous apparel beyond her degree and place, but that she be comely and sober.*”¹¹⁹ It is significant that womanly passivity is here linked with appearance as dress becomes of increasing importance in the continuation of *la querelle des femmes* in the opening decades of the seventeenth century. No less a personage than James I echoed the sentiments of Elizabethan moralists like Stephen Gosson and Phillip Stubbes when he highlighted what he saw as the damning nexus between manners and clothing, praising “the garment of a chaste woman, who is onely set forth by her natural beautie, which is properly her owne” but asserting that “other deckings are but the ensigns of a harlot that flies with borrowed feathers.”¹²⁰ If a chaste woman is a passive woman who dresses demurely then a woman whose clothing is outside the parameters of what is considered fitting, is deemed - by very nature of her transgression - to be a whore. It is clear from the conduct books of the Early Modern period that the discussion of womanly vices and virtues is embedded in the language of and examples from the Bible and generally, in terms of the majority of the tracts, in Biblical authority with both sides of *La Querelle* peppering the debate with scriptural quotes and counter-quotes; religion is a most important reference point for the majority of the pamphlets. Those who wished to close down the question of women in society traced paternal authority through biblical father figures, especially from the Old Testament, to the King as God’s representative on earth and the English father as husband and head of the family. This patriarchal template is challenged and ridiculed on stage, however, in plays such as Dekker and Middleton’s *The Honest Whore Part One* which in the opening scenes of the play clearly presents the Duke, Gasparo, in his combined roles as ruler and parent as a most decadent and tyrannical figure (as I have discussed in the previous chapter) and *The Turk* by John Mason where Borgias, Governor of Florence and a Machiavellian self-professed atheist, cynically and for his own self-interest exploits the reciprocal link between parental and scriptural authority when he tells his daughter: “Religion bindes your obedience minion to my will” (2. 2. 99-100).¹²¹ Presently I will explore the various ways Jacobean drama engaged with issues of control associated with gender naming but first I will return for a closer look at the controversies associated with *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* as well as the earlier furore created by Joseph Swetnam’s *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women* (1615).

¹¹⁹ Dod and Cleaver in Aughterson, 448.

¹²⁰ Neil Rhodes, Jennifer Richards and Joseph Marshall, eds., *King James VI and I: Selected Writings* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 308.

¹²¹ John Mason, *The Turk*, ed. Fernand Lagarde (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1978).

While the majority of appeals to authority in *Hic Mulier* are from the Bible (and it is noteworthy that the patriarchal Old Testament is what was mostly used to justify the privileged position of men over women), it is curious that the paratext of the title page and opening paragraphs of the pamphlet frame the gender question primarily according to Classical models. Following the intended contradiction of *The Man-Woman* title, which is mirrored in the transgendered/anthropomorphic slur of “Coltish Disease of the Staggers,” a naming with its associations of untamed, unnatural and disordered female behaviour, is a quotation from Virgil’s eighth Eclogue: “Non omnes possumus omnes” (we cannot all do everything).¹²² Women moving beyond the limits imposed by the patriarchal society are thus depicted as unreasonable, unrealistic (that is unconnected to the ‘real’) and unnatural; a woman cross-dressing is not only a diseased affront to Nature but also indicates a peevish unwillingness to see that there are limits to her role in the community. Furthermore, the poem offers us images of chaotic disharmony, of alarming abnormality – griffins mating with horses, oak trees bearing golden apples - and lycanthropy as Moeris changes form from man to wolf, suggesting that women too are changing form when they don men’s clothes and are likewise transformed into hideous beings. The second use of classical naming is associated with the intended grammatical irregularity of ‘Hic’ ‘Mulier’ (a feminine noun with a masculine pronoun), which, in distorting a revered, ‘dead’ (and therefore not subject to whim nor fashion) language, reveals how truly shocking women’s conduct is; it cannot be described except in the perversion of a language which was used as the lingua franca in law, science, religion and medicine. The author believes that the most effective way he can illustrate aberrant actions is by deliberately making the most respected of languages deviant, to reflect chaos by adopting the chaotic - to “breake Priscians¹²³ head.”

What becomes disturbing about the rather forced rhetoric he employs is that amid the classical allusions to ‘turning,’ ‘transforming’ and ‘mating’ and his strained grammatical analogising lies a fear of uncontrolled and disordered female sexuality. Terms such as ‘gender’ and ‘case’ acquire distinctly sexual connotations, as he states that women are now ‘masculine in their genders’ (their acts of procreation) and ‘masculine in Case’ (their vaginas, or ‘case’ can also refer to the penis), ‘even from head to foot’ (‘head’ signifying prepuce as well as maidenhead and ‘foot’ vulva, copulation or suggestive of a ‘yard’ – a penis). He concludes with “Are all women then turn’d Masculine?”(engaging in sex with men), echoing Nerissa’s “Why, shall we turn to men?”

¹²² Translation of Virgil from Guy Lee, ed., *The Eclogues* (London: Penguin Books, 1984). The line from the poem is in fact “non omnia possumus omnes.”

¹²³ A celebrated 6th Century Latin grammarian.

which prompted Portia's rebuke: "Fie, what a question's that/If thou wert near a lewd interpreter!"¹²⁴ (3.4. 80-81). Shakespeare in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and John Marston in *What You Will* had explored earlier the sexualizing of the grammatical characteristics of language with Marston making explicit what was perceived to be the erotic relationship between language and women: "...lingua is declined with *haec* the feminine because it is a household stuff particularly belonging and most commonly resident under the roof of women's mouths."¹²⁵ In *Hic Mulier* the sexually active words – "case", 'gender' and turn'd' – are less to do with female sexuality than codifying instead what is deemed to be perversion. In this disquieting mélange of sexual imagery there is, barely submerged, a literalizing of cross-dressing, the fear expressed that the woman dressed as a man will not only adopt the manner of a man but also the matter.¹²⁶

In his confused naming of women, the author of *Hic Mulier* renders them grotesquely inorganic – "I write with a rough quill, and blacke Inke, on iron sheetes, the iron deeds of an iron generation" – then later he continues the metallic imagery to accentuate their feminine, though still inanimate, superficial yet lethal beauty; "you that are the gilt durt, which imbroders Play-houses, the painted statues which adorn Caroches, and the perfumed Carrion that bad men feed on in Brothels." Cross-dressing women are unstable and unlike virtuous women who are 'Castles impregnable', 'Seas immoveable' and 'Centinels most carefull', they allow and encourage ingress to their access points: their clothing is 'extreme short wasted to give a most easie way to every luxurious action.'" (A4) Women's bodies were named and defined as object, and subject to the actions of the male whereby the female receives meaning through her interaction with the male; her functionality is conceptually paradoxical, simultaneously and inextricably the passive focus of male desire (both as profane and sacred object) and subversively the active but unfathomable locus of sexual potency. Thus actions that challenged the social and political structures were glossed as sexual in nature and the reverse could also apply, as Jean E. Howard notes, "When women took men's clothes, they symbolically left their subordinate position...and this threatened overthrow of hierarchy was discursively read as the eruption of uncontrolled

¹²⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Penny Gay (Marrickville: Science Press, 1995).

¹²⁵ John Marston, *What You Will*, ed. M.R. Woodhead (Nottingham : Nottingham University Press. 1980), 2.2.739-741. Both 'stuff' (semen or whore) and 'mouths' act to sexualize the discussion.

¹²⁶ Jane Sharp in *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook*, ed. Kate Aughterson (London: Routledge, 1995) describes the clitoris in some women as being comparable to a penis: "sometimes it grows so long that it hangs forth at the slit like a yard, and will swell and stand stiff if provoked, and some lewd women have endeavoured to use it as men do theirs" (129).

sexuality.”¹²⁷ Such transgressive blurring of social, sexual and gender roles is highlighted in *The Fleer*¹²⁸ by Edward Sharpham:

The city is like a comedy,
both in parts and apparel, and your gallants
are the actors. For he that yesterday played the
gentleman now plays the beggar, she that played
the waiting-woman now plays the quean, he
that played the married man now plays the
cuckold, and she that played the lady now plays
painter. Then for their apparel they have
change too. For she that wore the petticoat now
wears the breech, he that wore the coxcomb
now wears the feather, the gentleman that wore
the long sword now wears the short hanger.
(2.1.149-160)

In the action of the woman substituting the petticoat for the breech, increasing her status within a context where there is a disordered jumbling of rank, her sexuality becomes indistinct and subsequently volatile.

If *Hic Mulier* is intent on naming cross-dressing women as aberrant, the author of *Haec Vir* subverts this ploy by adopting the grammatical contradiction of the named ‘monstrosity’ ‘hic mulier’ as a means of exploring how brittle are the stereotypes of women upon which the power relationship structure of society was based. Against the static, reactive misogyny of ‘castles impregnable,’ *Haec Vir* privileges the action inherent in the expression of common human dignity: “I walk with a face erected, with a body cloathed, with a mind busied” and “I stand not with my hands on my belly like a baby at Bartholomew Fayre...that am not dumbe when wantons court mee, as if Asse-like I were ready for all burdens.” (B3) Here the woman constructs herself as an independent, visible and audible presence, irrespective of male categorisation. The female body is not here defined according to the eyes of male desire; the focus is not on the problematical orifices but on the non-sexualised extremities: “I have hands that shall bee liberall to reward desert, feete that shall move swiftly to do good offices.” (B3).¹²⁹ There is a clear rejection here of passivity – the statements establishing personhood are clear and unequivocal, as is the assertion of sexual independence in her refusing to be merely the object and target of

¹²⁷ Howard, 424.

¹²⁸ Edward Sharpham, *The Fleer* (London: Globe Quartos, 2006).

¹²⁹ Jacobean fetishisation of hands and feet is evident in Swetnam’s *Arraignement of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women* when he accounts for men being in thrall to women: they “stand highly upon their foote and hand.” The author of *Haec Vir* is reclaiming female sovereignty over the body and repudiating the assertion that the female body can only be defined and gain meaning in terms of male desire and the male gaze.

desire. Dumb acceptance of sexual servitude to the male, to be ‘ready for all burdens’, is emphatically dismissed.

Joseph Swetnam’s *An Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women*,¹³⁰ differs from other anti-feminine tracts in that it seems very much rooted in a misogynistic cynicism borne of the fencing master’s selective reading of his personal experience from which he seeks to draw a picture of all women as being, per se, inimical to men.¹³¹ Therefore, he argues, women’s access to power – whether on a domestic, social or political level - must be curtailed. Implicit in much of Swetnam’s diatribe is the positioning of women as traitors to the harmony of the commonwealth, an insidious presence whose seeming physical weakness compared to Man belies a temperament that will result in his destruction unless he remains alert to his danger. The naming of women as treacherous is due to their perceived natural disposition which places them in opposition to manly and therefore mainstream virtues. Women defined as ‘the opposite’, with the concomitant negative associations of their being at variance with the established behavioural masculine mean, were then described in antagonistic binary terms to the male. Virtuous women were those who were able to resolve their natural opposition by acquiescing in the male world view while women who challenged this view – the lewd, froward women against whom *The Arraignment* was directed – were locked into behavioural modes that threatened the viability and stability of gender structures. Feminine resistance counterpointed masculine strength and one of the major contact points that Swetnam focuses on is women’s speech:

...but a womans chiefe strength is in her tongue, and as the Serpent neuer leaveth hissing and stinging and seeking to doe mischief: euen so some women are neuer well except they be casting out venome with their tongues. (G)

The ‘Serpent’, recalling Eve’s undoing of Adam through her persuasive tongue, serves as a metaphor for the unruly woman whose physical weakness compared to man’s strength is compensated for through her superior competence with language, a competence which is depicted as dangerous and subversive (“casting out venome”). There were many contemporary references to the threat posed by women’s speech: “Le done no ga altra arm che la lingua” (The tongue is women’s only weapon)¹³², “A nest of wasps and hornets are not comparable to her

¹³⁰ In this chapter I will be referring to Swetnam’s text as found in Charles Butler, ed., *Female Replies to Swetnam The Woman-Hater* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995).

¹³¹ Swetnam makes a pretence of valuing ‘vertuous and honest’ women in the title page but the assumptions underlying his arguments are all misogynist.

¹³² Elizabeth Horodowich, “The gossiping tongue: oral networks, public life and political culture in early modern Venice,” *Renaissance Studies* 19, no. 1 (2005):.27.

spite, nor may equal her in spleen...she hath sting in her tongue, they in their tail"¹³³ and a telling example from Lording Barry's *Ram Alley* in which William Small-Shankes with sword drawn threatens the widow Taffata "Keepe close your womanish weapon, hold your tongue" (5.1.1102).¹³⁴ Barry dramatically places the male 'weapon' in direct opposition to the female 'weapon', once more demonstrating that "the period was fraught with anxiety about rebellious women and particularly their rebellion through language."¹³⁵ This fear of women's unruly tongues went further than just alarm at what women said: "The idea that the tongue is the female penis...can often be seen underlying Renaissance prohibitions against female speech."¹³⁶ Paradoxically, concern was moreover expressed at the problematical nature of women's mouths, "the open mouth hath much uncleanness"¹³⁷ and "The talkative woman is frequently imagined as synonymous with the sexually available woman, her open mouth the signifier for invited entrance elsewhere."¹³⁸ This anatomisation of women into negotiable units whereby the mouth, considered as resembling the pudendum, is designated female and named as passive while the tongue, the sharp and 'dangerous' women's weapon, is active, and resembling the penis is assigned a masculine value. (Thus the confrontation between William's sword and Taffata's tongue has the appearance initially of a duel). Fear of 'unruly' women, which underscores the naming in the misogynist pamphlets, stemmed irrationally from the speaking female being perceived as metaphorically hermaphroditical. Furthermore, such gender volatility, springing from women's "unruly member," situates female speech as a symbolic relocation of the male organ, an unlawful appropriation of phallic authority."¹³⁹

In keeping with the tone and tenor of many of the Early Modern conduct books,¹⁴⁰ Swetnam endorses silence as the appropriate feminine response,¹⁴¹ conscious perhaps of the commonly accepted maxim that silence signals consent. Containment of women's voices is a constant theme of *The Arraignment*, considered necessary because these voices were deemed to be irrational,

¹³³ Kate Aughterson, *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1995), 245.

¹³⁴ Lording Barry, *Ram Alley*, eds., Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Nottingham: Nottingham Drama Texts, 1981).

¹³⁵ Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 40.

¹³⁶ Judith Fleming, "The French Garden: An Introduction to Women's French," *ELH* 56, no.1 (1989): 50 n. 23.

¹³⁷ Newman, .11.

¹³⁸ Lynda E. Boose, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1991): 196.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 204.

¹⁴⁰ Such as Juan De Vries, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, Richard Braithwait, *The English Gentlewoman* and Robert Dod and John Cleaver, *A godly form of household government*.

¹⁴¹ Lynda Boose gives details of more aggressive forms of silencing the female such as the cucking stool, the scold's bridle and the skimmington ride.

dissident, channels for gossip, rumour and innuendo, and a challenge to the dominant order which privileged the masculine. It is instructive therefore that the women's¹⁴² responses written as answers to Swetnam's pamphlet (*A Mouzell for Melastomus, Ester hath hang'd Haman and The Worming of a Mad Dogge*) are superior in terms of scholarship, quality of writing and argument. The distinction between woman as named by Swetnam (and in many of the conduct books) and the actual recorded female voice could not be more pronounced. The pro-women tracts are written consciously to communicate the voices of women¹⁴³ - Rachel Speight dedicates *A Mouzell for Melastomas* to "all virtuous ladies...and to all other of Heuah's sex"¹⁴⁴ (A3) – providing a comprehensive and sustained defence of the women as well as asserting the rights of women to break free of misogynist stereotyping and create cultural and linguistic space in which *they* could define themselves. The responses, through the ordered, learned and witty presentation of counter-arguments to Swetnam's jumbled mix of mostly anecdotal distortions, clearly demonstrates the fatuity of his anti-feminine naming. Women were also given public space with the performance (c. 1619) of an anonymous play, *Swetnam the Woman-hater*, the prologue of which clearly spoke to the concerns of women about how they had been named as 'lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant:'

The Women are all welcome; for the men,
They will be welcome: our care's not for them.
'Tis we poore women, that must stand the brunt
Of this day's tryall: we are all accused.
...We will not be ore-come with Infamie,
And slanders that we never merited.¹⁴⁵

The attempt to control women by denying the legitimacy of their voices was thus sharply resisted and indeed the pamphlets not only defend but also go on the attack, suggesting that the muzzle intended for women should be applied to Swetnam himself, that he is a mad dog that needs to be wormed and that just as the biblical villain Haman was executed for his defaming of Esther, the fencing master has been metaphorically 'hanged'. In *Swetnam the Woman-hater*, Swetnam (taking Misogynos as his alias in the play) is arraigned before a court of women and for punishment is brought on stage for the epilogue "muzzled, hal'd in by women." That there were two distinct court scenes to arbitrate the validity of Misogynos's charges, the first presided over by male judges and officials whose impartiality and competency to deliver a just verdict were

¹⁴² I acknowledge that, apart from Rachel Speight, the genders of the main contributors to Swetnam responses have been disputed. The use of pseudonyms – Constantia Munda and Ester Sowernam – has also complicated the affair. For purposes of argument I am going to assume that the writers are female.

¹⁴³ That the gender of the authors of two of the tracts is uncertain does not detract from the stated aim of these works – to answer criticisms of women and to give voice to women's concerns about how they were portrayed.

¹⁴⁴ *Female Replies to Swetnam The Woman-Hater*.

¹⁴⁵ Anon. *Swetnam, the Woman-Hater* in *Female Replies to Swetnam The Woman-Hater*

questioned when they ruled in favour of Misogynos, “you are all men, and in this weightie business,/ grave women should have sate as judges with you” (F3) and the second “a womans counsel” with all the roles filled by women, ultimately pronouncing sentence after finding him guilty, highlights the playwright’s concern that women were at an institutional as well as a social disadvantage. In fact, the epilogue ushers in a third trial as Swetnam, his true identity having been exposed, is told by Loretta that his “was a generall wrong; therefore (he) must have/ a generall tryall and a Judgement too.”(sig. L1v) Fully remorseful, he now turns to the audience “And thus to you (kind Judges) I appeale,” vowing to use his skills to defend the honour of women.

It is ironic that Joseph Swetnam in the eponymous play is brought to heel by the actions of a man (Lorenzo) disguised as a woman (Atlanta) while in a play staged just a few years earlier, Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl*, the anti-female characters, Wengrave, Laxton and Trapdoor, are tamed by Mary Frith (or Moll Cutpurse as she is more commonly referred to), a woman openly dressed as and adopting the mannerisms of a man. Playhouse performances of gender trompe l’œils were more than just popular theatrical devices. Those in *la querelle des femmes* who wanted to locate women within strict male-ordained parameters, who wished to enforce codes of dress and speech because of a perceived link between feminine unruliness and defiance of such codes, met some opposition on the stage as a number of playwrights, including, as we have seen, the anonymous author of *Swetnam, the Woman-hater* and Middleton and Dekker, sought to resist the naming of women as dangerously unstable, questioning instead the integrity of patriarchal structures that ignored “social and sexual anxieties...Indeed Middleton and Dekker create Moll as the fulcrum of *The Roaring Girl* and the other characters’ reactions to her tend to define them as social and moral beings.”¹⁴⁶ Though it is moot whether the authors of the pro-women tracts already discussed would have seen Moll necessarily as their ally, it will become clear in the following analysis of the play that she embodies not only that spirit of passionate opposition by adopting male dress that characterizes *Haec Vir*, but also that she asserts the need, consistent with the later writings of Rachel Speight, Ester Sowerman and Constantia Mundis, for an unmuzzled female voice that will articulate an independent, self-reflective image of women.

¹⁴⁶ Mary Beth Rose, “Women in Men’s Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in *The Roaring Girl*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 14, no.3 (1984): 367.

***It is a thing,
One knows not how to name***

In a play contemporaneous with *The Roaring Girl*, Nathan Field's *Amends to Ladies*, Mary Frith, referred to as Mall Cutpurse, makes a fleeting but significant appearance. This contribution to the on-going discussion of womanly roles in society offers a more conventional reading of gender relations. Mall is bested in a fierce encounter with Grace Seldome, a shopkeeper who is outraged at Mall's attempt to involve her in a tryst with Sir John Love-all. With invective reminiscent of Wengrave's outbursts regarding Moll in *The Roaring Girl*, Grace rails at Mall:

Hence lewd impudent,
I know not what to tearme thee man or woman,
For nature shaming to acknowledge thee
For either; hath produc'd thee to the World
Without a sexe.¹⁴⁷

(2.1.32-36)

However, while in Middleton and Dekker's play Moll's attitude and behaviour are fully endorsed, here Mall retreats, defeated by a citizen wife whose apparent virtue¹⁴⁸ is contrasted with Mall's licentiousness. This scene places us in the middle of the cross-dressing controversy (and provides part of the nomenclature of a future pamphlet war) as Grace's husband, Seldome, makes clear with his first words to Mall, addressing her as "Mistris Hic and Haec" (2.1. 18), positioning her in an androgynous netherworld that his wife will shortly refer to and reiterate with such added vindictive force. This scene at the start of Act Two, follows on from the opening of the play where three women, a wife, a widow and a maid argue the respective merits of their positions; this articulation of the conventional options for women leaves no space for Mall and she is dismissed as an ungendered monstrosity or it is inferred that she slides into the subversive space occupied by those who can't be described as wife, widow or maid – she is "a punke," as Lucio determines in *Measure for Measure*.¹⁴⁹

Initially *The Roaring Girl* seems to collude with those who view Moll as a grotesque parody of womanhood; Sebastian, the son of Sir Alexander Wengrave, feigns affection for Moll to force his father "to consent/that here I anchor rather than be rent/upon a rock so dangerous." (1.1.105-

¹⁴⁷ William Peery, *The Plays of Nathan Field* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1950).

¹⁴⁸ 'Apparent' because she is vehement in her protests towards Mall but reacts mildly, perhaps even coquettishly when immediately after Mall's exit, Lord Proudlie enters and tries to seduce her. She may decline his advances but her outrage is selective.

¹⁴⁹ "My Lord she may be a punk; for many of them are/Neither maid, widow, nor wife." (5.1.179-80)

107). He believes that Wengrave will be so horrified by his proposing to marry Moll, who is named by Sebastian as ‘mad Moll, or merry Moll, a creature/ so strange in quality,’ that his father will readily accept his true love, Mary Fitzallard, whom Wengrave had rejected as a match for his son previous to the action of the play. In the opening scene Moll is projected as the unthinkable proposition, the ‘roaring girl’ who is the totally unviable contrast to Mary who had so demurely acceded to Sebastian’s plan: “My prayers with heaven guide thee!” (1.1.110). By Act 4, however, the gulf that had separated Moll from her namesake Mary has been bridged. Mary enters crossdressed as a young man; mentored by Moll she now mimics the roaring girl’s transgressive behaviour, projecting a muted version of Moll’s unruly sexuality that has an effect on Sebastian similar to the one Moll has on Laxton¹⁵⁰ so that after he kisses her he muses:

Methinks a woman’s lip tastes well in a doublet (47)

and,

...every kiss she gives me now
In this strange form, is worth a pair of two. (55-6)

The ‘sweet maid’ of Act 1 that Sebastian addressed and ‘your chastity’ at whom Neatfoot directed his bawdy nonsense, now reveals an erotic sensibility and a maturity that helps to establish her as a more independent entity. Certainly Sebastian credits Moll with the change in their circumstances: “Thou hast done me a kind office,” (39) and “to thy wit and help we’re chief in debt” (71) Mary has coalesced into Moll, although there still remain important distinctions, and their mutual mutability is highlighted by Middleton and Dekker when in the last scene we slip from Moll masked as Mary, then Moll exposed and finally to Mary appearing as herself. This melding of Moll/Mary precipitates complementary responses from Wengrave who waxes and wanes according to the image of woman that is presented to him. So Moll disguised as Mary elicits this favourable response:

...a goodly personable creature,

Just of her pitch was my first wife his mother (5.2.131-2).

But some moments later when she unmask he protests:

O monstrous impudence (153)

and follows this with:

A devil rampant (162).

His spirits are at last restored when Mary Fitzallard enters and Wengrave realises the futility of trying to affix categories onto women. Firstly he apologizes to Mary – “’twas my blindness/when

¹⁵⁰ Laxton’s comments on Moll’s first appearance in the play: “Heart, I would give but too much money to be nibbling with that wench.” (2.1.172.) point to the sexual impact of her cross dressing.

I rejected thee; I saw thee not,” (191-2) and then later to Moll: “Forgive me, now I cast the world’s eyes from me.” (244)¹⁵¹ The masks that prevent him from appreciating Mary’s value and caused him to name Moll as whore he now sees as gender constructs. Wengrave, the self-appointed arbiter of the positioning of women in society, admits that women possess an essence which was not seen by him and that his view, corresponding to the ‘world’s eyes’ was false. He thus associates maleness with blindness and in an intriguing inversion re-genders the dominant ‘common voice,’ which is understood to be masculine, as feminine – ‘the whore that deceives man’s opinion.’¹⁵²

The convenient labelling of women as Maid, Widow, Wife or unruly other that informs the opening scenes of *Amends for Ladies* is challenged in *The Roaring Girl*. Moll repudiates attempts to categorize her, presenting herself as a multifaceted individual in keeping with the sentiments expressed in the words accompanying the title of the pamphlet *Ester Hath Hanged Haman* where the author describes herself defiantly as ‘neither maid, nor widow, nor wife and yet all three.’¹⁵³ Moll, like Ester Sovernam, argues for the right to determine and articulate her own gender parameters. She retrieves her name from the control of ‘the common voice’ and publicly asserts her unformalised status in responding to Lord Noland’s query about when she will marry, stating:

Who I, my Lord? I’ll tell you when I’ faith:
 When you shall hear
 Gallants void from sergeants’ fear,
 Honesty and truth unslandered,
 Woman manned but never pandered
 Cheats booted but not coached,
 Vessels older ere they’re broached.
 If my mind be then not varied,
 Next day following I’ll be married. (5.2.216-24)

Not only is this a statement of independence but it is also an indictment of men like Laxton, Goshawk and Wengrave who see women as commodities for pleasure and profit. So in a similar fashion to Bellafront repudiating the categorisation involved with the naming of her as ‘whore’ and determining for herself how she will be recognised, Mary Frith refuses to be catalogued.

¹⁵¹ The sincerity of Wengrave’s apology is perhaps problematical as it occurs straight after Trapdoor publicly discloses his plotting against Moll. How reformed his views are is certainly debatable.

¹⁵² This is also problematical as describing male vice as feminine absolves men of the responsibility.

¹⁵³ *Female Replies to Swetnam* A1.

In her condemnation of the young gallants' opportunist but misogynist views, Moll places great importance on the naming of women by males, which is part of a process that accentuates and normalises the power imbalance between the sexes.

How many of our sex, by such as thou
 Have their good thoughts paid with a blasted name
 That never deserved loosely or did trip
 In path of whoredom beyond cup and lip?

(3.2.80-83.)

Those who have the power in Jacobean society have the naming rights. Sir Alexander Wengrave is more than ready to “blast” Mary Frith with the name of whore. He first distinguishes between the two Mary’s – FitzAllard whom he deems “that virtuous maiden”¹⁵⁴ – and Frith who through her soubriquet Moll is thus naturalised as whore, his logic being that most whores are called by that name.¹⁵⁵ Not content with naming Moll as the other, as someone who disqualifies herself from the marriage market because of class and name, Sir Alexander tries to destroy her by questioning her right to exist as an entity:

...It is a thing
 One knows not how to name (1.2.128-130).

Wengrave adopts a scatter-gun approach, locating Moll, by virtue of her name, as the prostitute other and through her unwillingness to conform to the society’s understanding of how a woman should dress, dispatching her to some sinister androgynous netherworld. In his desperation to neutralise Moll’s influence, Sir Alexander concocts a barrage of mixed images, branding her a sexual deviant who “strays so from her kind/Nature repents she made her” (214-15) and then deeming her “a mermaid” who “has tolled my son to shipwreck.” (215-16) Both references seek to dehumanise Moll but convey mixed messages. She is a sexual freak one moment and a sexual predator another.¹⁵⁶ In his haste to cage Moll within an avalanche of naming devices, Wengrave seems unaware of the implications of what he is saying. If Moll truly does “stray so from her kind” what does it say about Sebastian that he seems to be attracted to someone of indeterminate sex?

Through the various naming processes employed by those characters representing the power structures, veneers of otherness are applied to Moll in an attempt to disempower her, to create

¹⁵⁴ This naming however is a fraud as Sebastian points out, Wengrave had previously cursed that same “virtuous maiden” because she didn’t fit in with his plans for his son’s marriage.

¹⁵⁵ The distinction made by many of the male characters, to distinguish between the endorsed Mary and the whore Moll, has echoes of the New Testament coding of the Virgin Mary and the supposed prostitute Mary Magdalen.

¹⁵⁶ Mermaids were often identified with Sirens in the 17th Century, luring men to their destruction.

the monster that Sir Davy refers to: "A monster, 'tis some monster" (134) in response to the disfigured image created by Sir Alex:

A creature...nature hath brought forth
To mock the sex of woman...her birth began
Ere she was all made; 'tis woman more than man,
Man more than woman.

(1.2.127-131)

Sir Alexander's naming – "creature" and "thing" – are designed to negate Moll's determination to create her own independent identity outside the essential and intentionally constricting notions of class and gender. It is this independence that threatens the status quo and it is Moll's quest to establish her identity outside the straightjackets of women's roles that is endorsed by Middleton and Dekker. Moll transgresses in terms of class – the argot scenes (and Moll's role as interpreter/participant) privilege the so-called criminal classes, and their illegal activities are shown to be no worse than the devious "legal" actions of Laxton and Wengrave.¹⁵⁷ One of the major focal points of the play is the battle over who has the naming rights and how the "feminine" is constructed. Whoever controls the naming controls the action. Wengrave is not alone in having difficulty defining Moll, as Line Cottagnies notes:

La pièce s'organise autour de la figure paradoxale et énigmatique de Moll, la 'roaring girl,' qui a la particularité d'y incarner la vertu en dépit de ses accointances avec la pègre; mais cela ne l'empêche pas d'y occuper, en raison de son statut de personnage quasi-referentiel, une position marginale à l'égard de la fiction, sur laquelle elle porte un regard d'une ironique lucidité."¹⁵⁸

Moll is an enigmatic and paradoxical figure but it is because she defies easy simplistic categorisation that she is such a potent force - "quasi-referentiel" - in a society that is suffocating beneath the strictures of class, gender stereotyping, courtship/marriage rituals and commerce.

The very title of the play, "The Roaring Girl," illustrates powerfully the different, antagonistic responses to how women and men are perceived through their naming. Laxton¹⁵⁹ and Goshawk,

¹⁵⁷ Indeed, Wengrave is a most unsavoury character, not above arranging for Moll's murder if necessary to protect his interests.

¹⁵⁸ Line Cottagnies. "Lecture de *The Roaring Girl* (1611) de Thomas Dekker et Thomas Middleton: Moll Cutpurse ou le principe du théâtre," *Études Epistémè*, numéro 2 (2002).

The play is organised around the paradoxical and enigmatic character of Moll, the 'roaring girl,' who epitomizes virtue despite her involvement with the underworld; but that doesn't stop her from holding, because of her quasi-referential status, a marginalised position in the story, in which she presents an ironic lucidity (My translation).

¹⁵⁹ Laxton's position as a 'roaring boy' is ridiculed in his name, i.e Lack stones (testicles).

the roaring boys, are expected to be wild, to have affairs, to seduce pretty wives, yet when Moll parodies their behaviour and becomes a 'roaring girl' she is condemned. Dekker and Middleton carefully place Moll in the centre of, but also at the same time, outside, the action and it is the re-positioning of her naming that is ultimately privileged in the play. This fact is recognised eventually by Wengrave in his speeches towards the end of the play. His main target-word, "whore" is recalibrated:

I'll never more
 Condemn by common voice, for that's the whore
 That deceives man's opinion, mocks his trust,
 Cozens his love, and makes his heart unjust.
 (5.2.248-51)

She is initially made an outsider by being named as a whore and that naming is then reconstructed because she refuses to accept or acknowledge the sexual role that has been allotted to her. Sir Alexander absolves himself from any blame for defaming Moll as he claims he was following the "common voice." This is a somewhat disingenuous response since the violence he demonstrated towards Moll stemmed from the fear that his commercial interests were being threatened and he rearticulated and then accentuated a public prejudice against Moll to control what he perceived to be his son's perilous 'choice' of marriage partner.

That's a honey of an anklet you're wearing Mrs Dietrichson

Despite (or perhaps because of) the problematical depictions of the status of women in *The Roaring Girl*, Sir Alexander Wengrave fully endorses marriage as the chief repository of womanly virtues in the final speech of the play:

And you gentlewomen,¹⁶⁰ whose sparkling presence
 Are glories set in marriage, beams of society
 (5.2.260-1)

And so, while Moll's eschewing of the married state is accepted, it is still seen, ultimately, as a divergence from the norm.¹⁶¹ It may be that "Representations of single women in plays from

¹⁶⁰ There is of course the irony that the gentlewomen referred to here are the citizen wives whose marriages are not without their problems.

¹⁶¹ Jane Baston offers a more critical view of the positioning of Moll: "The play fashions Moll into an eccentric pantomime character – a spirited principle boy – rather than a spokeswoman for a new world order,

this period...confound the advancement of patriarchal ideologies that depend on misogyny and the fixed and internalised understanding of femininity as subordinate and inferior to masculinity”¹⁶² but key words in the final scene – Mary’s “duty and love” (196) and Wengrave’s “the best joys/...to man betide/Are fertile lands and a fair fruitful bride” (202-4) – seem to endorse marriage as the established and approved option. In the three films that I will consider in this section, *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Blonde Ice* (1948) and *Too Late For Tears* (1949), each of the female protagonists is married so that what is explored is not the negotiated space between being named single and being named married but the dissatisfaction and sense of entrapment experienced by women for whom marriage closes down rather than opens up possibilities. At first their naming as wives accords them a privileged, unambiguous position (that is denied to Moll and Mary for most of *The Roaring Girl*) within the patriarchy but as each film shows, their status is dependent on them accepting a subservient role within the marriage relationship and controlling/disguising their sexuality.

What distinguishes the naming in *Double Indemnity* is the literalness of the ways in which the principal characters are identified by their names, that is to say the derived meaning of the names explicates how we are to see them and how we are to understand the dramatic tensions surrounding Phyllis, her husband and Walter Neff. Phyllis is named at the onset as Mrs Dietrichson – the wife of the son of Dietrich. Her role is first circumscribed by her title which defines her as a mere appendage of her husband and then is further burdened with the suggestive masculine dominance of the root form “Dietrich,” which means ruler of the tribe or people.¹⁶³ Fittingly, within the context of the film Mr Dietrichson is portrayed as an autocrat, enjoying an unencumbered professional life, travelling widely, working irregular hours and seeking to control all aspects of his wife’s life when he is home, while she is housebound, an attractive ornament for a coarse, unfeeling husband who gets drunk and beats her. Her first name, Phyllis, meaning beloved and associated with Greek legends of a woman who died for love, as well as a name featuring in Elizabethan love pastorals, acts in opposition to her more prosaic, testosterone–influenced surname. Her naming acts as shorthand for her situation; that she, a sensitive and sensuous woman, sees herself as trapped in a loveless and violent relationship. Likewise there is an inherent opposition within her lover’s names – Walter

transforming her into a matchmaker, mediator, and conciliator, all in the service of vengery, not radical feminism.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 37, no. 2, (1997): 323.

¹⁶² Adrienne Eastwood, “Controversy and the Single Woman in *The Maid’s Tragedy* and *The Roaring Girl*,” *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 58, no. 2 (2004): 21.

¹⁶³ The surnames of the protagonists in *Double Indemnity* differ significantly from James Cain’s novel of the same name upon which Wilder’s film is based. Nirdlinger and Huff become Dietrichson and Neff.

(powerful warrior) and Neff (artless, candid), though it could be argued that despite his worldly airs, Neff displays some naivety in his relationship with Phyllis.

The emphasis on names in the first scene at the Dietrichson's house – names are mentioned ten times in the opening twelve exchanges – anticipates and acts as an ironic commentary on the action. The two males, with their grand Teutonic nomenclature, are pitted against each other, metaphorically, in a mock heroic battle for the love of Phyllis; the primal attraction Neff feels towards Phyllis (“I was thinking about that dame upstairs and the way she had looked at me”) and his desire to pursue her in spite of the husband are clearly apparent early in the film. That Neff is an insurance salesman and the initial encounter between the rivals takes place quite civilly in Dietrichson's living room only serve to heighten the irony. However, regardless of the discrepancy between the heroic connotations of the names and the venal pettiness of the lovers' motivations, by the film's end three people have been brutally murdered. The mock heroic posturing suggested by the naming is a framing device that is intentionally designed to be inadequate as a means of supporting the passions aroused by the situation. The naming suggests a stereotypical love triangle but this is a chimera as the noir darkness of the circumstances evolves. The perfect crime becomes the perfect nightmare as the lovers' carefully thought-out plan unravels and as their relationship, born of lust, self-interest, manipulation and expediency, becomes more complex as love, especially on Phyllis's part, emerges as part of the mix.

The projection of named combative opponents, seemingly within an assertively masculine context whereby Phyllis is the passive prize, is also unsustainable. She assumes agency that belies attempts to limit her naming to wife (and property) – Mrs Dietrichson, potential lover – Phyllis and *femme fatale*, a site for the male gaze. As narrator, Neff constructs for us his version of Phyllis, one that coincides with his ego and his desires; one that has little relation to the reality. For him she is a perfume, a secreted body – hidden from view by the towel in her first appearance on the landing but obviously available to his imagination – an anklet; he oscillates between the three areas that he has established for her – wife, fragrance and desired object. What we as an audience see is quite different. There is nothing overtly sexual in her manner; Phyllis's appearance in a towel is neutral in tone and her anklet is not provocatively displayed. What Neff fails to see is Phyllis's calm and calculated assessment of an opportunity presenting itself; her questions indicate her line of thought – “You're a smart insurance man, aren't you Mr Neff?,” “You handle just automobile insurance, or all kinds?,” “Accident

insurance?’. Proverbial gender assumptions are disrupted – the man here acts irrationally while the woman is practical, reasonable and logical. He is seduced by the image of a desirable woman, she by an idea. Blinded at first by his readiness to name her as sexually accessible and assuming agency for the situation, Neff retrospectively acknowledges that Phyllis rather than he has control: “...what I didn’t know then was that I wasn’t playing her. She was playing me.”

In the film, Phyllis is quite explicit during their second meeting in the proposal she presents to Neff, to insure her husband without his knowledge and then kill him; his reaction is to storm out of her house. This is in marked contrast to the novel where Huff, realising what Phyllis is suggesting, doesn’t retreat: “What I did do was, put my arm around her, pull her face up against mine, and kiss her on the mouth, hard.”¹⁶⁴ Huff asserts his dominance in a raw display of machismo, his motivation stemming in part from a fascination with experiencing the thrill of pivoting between normality and murder.¹⁶⁵ In the film, Barbara Stanwyck’s portrayal of Phyllis is more nuanced, more forceful and self-possessed; her body is the expression of her self-confidence and is not displayed for the male gaze. Neff, while certainly drawn to the body-on-display, as he interprets it, nevertheless doesn’t try to inscribe his desire on the body, as Huff does; he responds more intuitively, characterising the attraction as an aroma – the smell of honeysuckle.

There is thus gender disorientation in the first scene between Phyllis and Walter, whereby the literal naming is challenged and stereotypical gender positions, while seeming to be reinforced – Phyllis’s naked body on display, Walter the appreciative on-looker - are in fact subverted. The language provides a counterpoint to the visual. The masculine cockiness of Neff’s words to the maid Nettie “I always carry my own keys” cannot be sustained, and he finds himself responding to the air of calm assurance that Phyllis exudes, rather than trying to dominate her. The dialogue privileges possibility over certainty as both characters negotiate the area of contesting emotions and desires – it becomes perhaps more feminine as the ‘suppose’ exchange demonstrates.

Phyllis: There’s a speed limit in this State, Mr Neff. Forty-five miles an hour

Neff: How fast was I going, officer?

Phyllis: I’d say about ninety.

Neff: Suppose you get down off your motorcycle and give me a ticket.

Phyllis: Suppose I let you off with a warning this time.

¹⁶⁴ James M. Cain, *Three of a Kind* (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1944). Huff is changed to Neff in the film.

¹⁶⁵ This aspect of Cain’s novel is explored in John T. Irwin, “Beating the Boss: Cain’s Double Indemnity,” *American Literary History* 14, no. 2 (2002).

Neff: Suppose it doesn't take.
 Phyllis: Suppose I have to whack you over the knuckles.
 Neff: Suppose I bust out crying and put my head on your shoulder.
 Phyllis: Suppose you try putting it on my husband's shoulder.

Neff enters the scene barging past Nettie to pressure Dietrichson to renew his insurance. In the course of his encounter with Phyllis his initial show of ultra-masculine assertiveness retreats before her feminine potency which he discerns obliquely. His stated purpose, to talk to her husband about his policies, is no longer of prime importance; "I'm getting over it a little. If you know what I mean." He is fascinated with the feminine as distinct from being sexually aroused and so her very name becomes an object to savour and to interpret:

Neff: Phyllis. I think I like that.
 Phyllis: But you're not sure?
 Neff: I'd have to drive it around the block a couple of times.

The uni-dimensional language that is part of his corporate identity and is employed by Neff as the scene opens becomes mutable; meaning is taken beyond the confines of verbal communication, meaning is layered and ambiguous. The final exchange between Neff and Phyllis reflects this shift:

Phyllis: I wonder if I know what you mean.
 Neff: I wonder if you wonder.

In the noir netherworld certainty is blunted when desire is darkened by circumstances and meaning enveloped in shadows.

Don't you think you're being a little affectionate for a newly married woman?

Claire Cummings is described in the tag line for the 1948 film noir, *Blonde Ice*, as having "ICE in her veins – ICICLES in her heart." Like Moll Frith she is named as aberration, a damning self-contradiction – a woman without feeling. She poses a threat to men because the 'ice' is hidden beneath the sexually charged dangerous appearance of 'the blonde.' Her instability is also apparent in her climbing of the social ladder – from social columnist to wife of the rich establishment figure Carl Hanneman. The film opens with her wedding and it is apparent from the reaction of some of the guests that she is perceived as a mercenary interloper. As if to reinforce the stereotype of 'blonde danger' director Jack Bernhard reprises Phyllis

Dietrichson's famous entrance when he has Leslie Brooks's Claire similarly walk down a set of stairs, close-up on her feet, providing a sensuous contrast to the demure whiteness of her dress. In fact the highlighted erotic display of feet signifies her utter contempt for the ceremony itself as indicated in her passionate embrace with her former lover, Les Burns, on the balcony immediately after she has exchanged vows with Hanneman. When Burns asks her "Don't you know what those words meant in there?" she replies contemptuously "let no man put asunder? No one can put us asunder Les," demonstrating a total lack of interest in and respect for the ethical standards of the society; she refuses to place a value on marriage beyond what is expedient and useful for her. She offers an exchange: her body, to stimulate and satisfy Hanneman's gaze,¹⁶⁶ for power, privilege and wealth. That she can make arrangements for her body, separate from her affections is shown when she tells Les "I'll think about you on my honeymoon," these thoughts establishing an erotic link with her lover that displaces and distances herself from the wifely duty she will perform for her husband. This expression of control echoes Moll's statement to Laxton that "I scorn to prostitute myself to a man,/ I that can prostitute a man to me" (III. i. 110-1). The bargain struck with Carl Hanneman places him as that prostituted male in that he purchases only the body of the woman he desires.

Claire Cummings is a frustrated, dangerous, unstable, dislocated and self-centred woman. She is a murderess, killing three men with her own hands. However, it is also clear that she is ambitious, intelligent, resourceful, ingenious and courageous. This mix of complementary and contradictory qualities consolidates her position as by far the most interesting character in the film. If there is a pathological side to her being – and her actions would tend to support this view – it is also apparent that this develops, to some extent, as a reaction to the naming and containing that pervades the society depicted in *Blonde Ice*, that because she struggles against being contained she must be depicted as deviant.

The opening wedding scene, which significantly takes place in Hanneman's mansion, sets up the boundaries that will impinge on Claire's capacity for self-determination. She is first defined by the snobbish socialite guests on whose activities she used to base her column as one of *those* people. The quality of her work as a journalist is derided by Les who determines that she had no ability but only personality. Al sarcastically measures her development from a "\$18 steno from Hicksville" to Hanneman's bride. June Taylor stands in silent (and often not so silent)

¹⁶⁶ The film clearly establishes that there is little love in this marriage. Hanneman ends his marriage coldly and in a business-like manner. There is no sense that he has been deeply involved in the relationship.

opposition to Claire. She is the compliant female, the “impregnable castle” of *Hic Mulier*, the girl who works quietly for men and who knows her place. Her “I don’t have a boyfriend” comment to her boss, Hank Doyle, serves to draw attention to Claire’s transgressive sexuality. However, concurrent with the negative and deprecatory framing of Claire is her challenging the very restriction placed on her by others. The first line of dialogue refers to her lateness – she will determine when the ceremony will begin and her entry down the stairs, as I have noted, indicates a barely contained sensuousness that shadows and undercuts the solemnity of the occasion. The exclusiveness of the male domain is also challenged when we realise (as do Al and Les at the same time) that Claire has variously given her lovers a cigarette case to mark her special love for them. (We can also presume that Claire has presented one to her husband). Claire thus eludes attempts to lock her into relationships which will deny her some form of autonomy. And in fact the restrictive nature of her relationship with Hanneman is emphasised in the scene at the racetrack when the couple are enjoying their honeymoon. Carl is horrified and then outraged when Claire reveals that she won \$500 after placing a \$100 bet. He vehemently condemns what he regards as her frivolous attitude to money and cannot tolerate her moving beyond the bounds he has set for her; in this case he had approved only bets of \$2. Hanneman’s masculinity is threatened when Claire indulges in risk-taking that he associates with male behaviour. It is only when Claire repositions herself as ostensibly ‘feminine’, as he understands it, by apologising for her deviancy that he is mollified.

Initially then, in spite of her resistance, Claire is placed within clearly defined boundaries which mark her as both woman and wife. Meaning is further inscribed onto her body by the male protagonists to constrict her even more and much of her violence in the film stems from her refusal to accept the forced narrowing of her options. To her husband she is a beautiful ornament, an object to possess and control; she has no interiority, as far as he is concerned, existing only as the physical manifestation of his desire. Les Burns is more aware of the complex character beneath the façade but even he limits her by ascribing her journalistic success to ‘personality.’¹⁶⁷ She is defined by him as self-obsessed; “You make everything add up to spell Claire,” and the ambitions she displays and the frustrations she feels are quickly attributed to her ‘feminine’ mutability. For Mason, the man she aims to marry after she has

¹⁶⁷ Burns’s dismissal of Claire’s journalistic talent in the film is in marked contrast to how she is portrayed in the novel on which it is based, *Once Too Often* by Whitman Chambers (New York: The American Mercury, 1943), where it is revealed she is a college graduate, her column is syndicated in over 30 newspapers, she is respected by her peers and is praised by Burns as ‘such a good newspaper woman.’ (p.7). Director Jack Bernhard makes Claire more vulnerable and more susceptible to labelling.

murdered Hanneman, Claire is essentially a sexual entity. He is a successful lawyer and aspiring politician who seeks physical relationships with beautiful women. Her body becomes the disputed territory for the men in the film, each male endeavouring to place her to his own best advantage, to neutralise and control her.

Blonde Ice shows us how the female body can retaliate to defy inscription. Claire acts immorally in murdering the men who oppose her, however the film establishes some sympathy for her plight as well as indicting their arrogance in believing that her status was necessarily reliant on, described by and subordinate to theirs. In her reactions to their closing down her options, she shows that she has incorporated the dominant patriarchal power patterns of behaviour. And so when Blackie, knowing that she murdered Hanneman and in the process of blackmailing her, invokes a capitalist imperative: "I wouldn't double-cross anyone.....unless I had to" Claire concurs: "I wouldn't double-cross anyone either Blackie.....unless I had to." Then she shoots him. Claire rejects all attempts to place her in any situation that denies her agency, only killing when her independence and capacity to nominate her own space are threatened. Furthermore, there is a pompous self-righteousness, from which Les Burns is notably exempt, emanating from most of the males in the film that militates against an unequivocal condemnation of Claire. The apotheosis of the seemingly all-knowing male eye is the psychiatrist friend of Stanley Mason, Dr Geoffrey Kippinger, who is the first to name Claire as mentally and morally aberrant. Given that throughout the film Hanneman, Blackie, Al and Mason betray a wide range of varying degrees of psychosis, the isolation and naming of Claire as the transgressing female is quite fatuous. While the male characters are not juxtaposed, Claire's position as 'icy blonde' is placed in binary opposition to June Taylor's portrayal of socially endorsed, compliant femininity. Importantly, the veracity of Dr Kippinger's analysis of Claire is diminished by Burn's comment over her dead body, where she lies, surrounded by men: "You didn't know her well. None of us knew her well." There is ambiguity even in the manner of her death – does she die by accident as Hank and Al struggle to disarm her or does she purposefully commit suicide?

Blonde Ice, notwithstanding its sometimes forced staginess, bears powerful witness to a woman's struggle to reclaim a sense of self that has been concealed over time by layers of masculine naming. Burns in his epitaph to her recognises that the dominant male gaze has scrutinised Claire during the course of the action but concludes that, in spite of Kippinger's plausible yet ultimately facile explanations, she resists knowing. Even when, as Phyllis

Dietrichson does in her final scene,¹⁶⁸ she names herself as aberrant – “I never loved anyone...” and declares her inability to love, there are too many unresolved behavioural contradictions to allow for convenient moralising. The women protagonists’ self-professed lack of capacity to love seems to confirm their status as evil gender-betraying opposites¹⁶⁹ to those women proficient in showing affection – Lola (*Double Indemnity*), June (*Blonde Ice*) and Kathy (*Too Late For Tears*). They are condemned by the worlds of the films less for the crimes that they perpetrate than for their disdain of and transgression against what were normalised as ‘womanly virtues.’ What emerges from a study of the films themselves, however, is more nuanced as the women in question possess a vital energy that resists constriction and containment, their transgressive behaviour being a reaction to the inflexibility and punitive chauvinism of their male counterparts. We cannot condemn the women without acknowledging the prominent role of patriarchal naming in these domestic tragedies.

The final film to be considered is *Too Late For Tears* (1949) – another blonde, another murderess. Jane Palmer, the central character, differs markedly from Phyllis Dietrichson and Claire Cummings in that she appears initially to fit the conventional stereotype of a 1940s married woman, secure in her relationship with a loving husband. She is not glamorous, nor does she exude the confident self-assurance of the two other women. A misunderstanding whereby a bag with \$60,000, part of a blackmail pay-off, is thrown into the back seat of the car in which she is travelling with Alan, her husband, offers her the possibility of changing her life. Through her desire to keep the money, which entails acting in opposition to her husband’s determination to hand the money in to the police, she is drawn into a vortex of violence, murder, betrayal and destruction. Jane’s murderous nature does not develop because she is trying to acquire wealth, as is the case with Phyllis and Claire; her dark energies are engaged to retain it. Her desperation stems from her understanding that “chances like this are never offered twice.” At the onset of the drama, she justifies her actions as sins of omission – not informing the authorities – rather than commission.

Throughout the film, Jane’s role as a housewife located within a domestic environment is emphasised. This is how she presents herself to Danny Fuller and Don Blake when they enter her home – Fuller to ascertain what she has done with his money, Blake to investigate the

¹⁶⁸Phyllis asserts that she is “rotten to the heart” and that “I never loved you Walter.”

¹⁶⁹In a curious inversion of white equalling good and black bad, the three villainesses – Phyllis, Claire and Jane – are all blonde, while their moral opposites – Lola, June and Kathy are all dark-haired.

woman he believes is responsible for his brother's death; she even adopts a domestic stereotype to deflect Danny's suspicions – "Housewives can get awfully bored sometimes." On numerous occasions she names herself thus as housewife to lull those who seek to control her. Jane's aspirations are bourgeois: "We were white collar poor – middle class poor – the kind of people who can't quite keep up with the Joneses, and die a little every day because they can't." The last part of the sentence exposes the fragility of the veneer of law-abiding, homemaking respectability that papers over deep dissatisfaction, frustration, anger and a ruthlessness which emerges once she has received her windfall. She simmers under the economic confines of domesticity, complaining to Alan that the sum of what he has provided for her is "you've given me a dozen down-payments and instalments for the rest of our lives" and rebels against what she sees as the patronising attitude towards her, adopted by his wealthy friends. Consequently, the domestic space becomes the major site for the battle between conflicting interests, aspirations and gender stereotypes as Jane resists her entrapment. Gradually the male characters are made to realise the extent to which there is a divergence between how they perceive Jane as embodying domestic ideals and the reality and extent of her deviancy.

Jane's naming as housewife and positioning as household body is immediately apparent when Danny first bluffs his way into her apartment and refers to her continually as 'honey.' Perceiving a vacated masculine presence (Alan is at work) he takes on the role of proprietorial male,¹⁷⁰ strutting around the rooms, inspecting cupboards, drawers until he finds the newly purchased luxury goods that implicate Jane in the taking of his money. To establish the whereabouts of the 'loot' he proceeds to beat her in a fashion consistent with male initiated domestic violence, all the while assuming that she is as he has named her, *femme familial*. We, however, from early in the film, are privy to the dislocation between her housewifely appearance and the oppositional forces deep within her being, forces that even she finds sometimes difficult to identify. Thus in the opening scene when Alan is taking her to socialise with friends she dislikes, she resists the role of accompanying wife expected of her, suiting her actions to her words by physically trying to take control of the car. Alan relents, telling her that they will return to their apartment. At this moment the bag of money is thrown onto their back seat and, in the car chase that directly follows, it is Jane who has the presence of mind to take charge of the situation and drive so skilfully that they elude their pursuer. When the danger is

¹⁷⁰ Blake behaves similarly when he first enters Jane's apartment. The husband's absence is taken by Blake and Fuller to signify that they can continue the patriarchal line, invading the domestic space and adopting the role of de facto husband – passing the baton.

over, Alan insists that she relinquish control, his male pride demanding that she revert to her function as a passive female. Jane consistently challenges her designation as domestic entity by displaying a ruthless, quick-witted resourcefulness that results in the accidental killing of her husband and the murder of her lover/accomplice Fuller. It is Fuller, however, who is forced to reassess his initial impression of Jane, whereby she was named as 'honey' and her intelligence limited by her appearance – "what's on that lovely blonde mind?" Through the use of her tongue, her capacity to use speech to dissemble, dissect, coerce, convince, protect and outwit, she is able to enter the exclusive area of male discourse to shape her own destiny (This is the same 'woman's weapon' that disturbed so many Jacobean polemicists). As Jane explores and engages with the dark world outside her household, Danny Fuller ceases to address her as 'honey,' instead referring to her, more aptly, as 'tiger.' Through her facility with speech he is forced to move from being active to reactive, from intimidating to following her lead. He is now grimly aware of the dynamic range of her character beyond the domestic: "You know Tiger, I didn't know they made them as beautiful as you are, and as smart, or as hard." Later he understands that positions have been reversed; he is the one who is trapped: "You *are* a tiger; you've got me in so deep I can't get out."

The three murderesses, Phyllis, Claire and Jane, criminally rebel against what they perceive to be the oppressively stifling constriction of their naming which is based on gender assumptions that seek to constrain their desires and discount their intelligence. While the male gaze is centred on their bodies, important aspects of their roles within the action are interpreted in less substantial ways. For Neff, Phyllis is a fragrance, the smell of honeysuckle which he associates with murder. Claire is the named contradiction – *blonde ice* – a naming that is consistently applied throughout the film, concluding with the patriarchal condemnation of her apparent inscrutability; she eludes the masculine attempts to locate her deviancy through the use of binary opposites. In characterising Jane as a tiger, Danny abandons his initial reading of her body as passive - 'honey' - focusing instead on the 'sinews' of her will.

Sexual tension is intrinsic to the interaction of man and woman, and gendered naming arises as an unreasoning, often fearful response to what is perceived by men as threat. And it seems, paradoxically, that the more limited is women's access to power, the greater the masculine suspicion and paranoia. The texts that have been presented here recognise the contested nature of gender relations, the power imbalance between the sexes and the viciousness of the naming directed against women. In much the same way, racial naming in the periods under review

springs from fear and anxiety; the naming being intended to defend the dominant white power groups from the 'strangeness' of the coloured opposite. Within the texts that deal with race there are also some sense of the complexities of race relations, and a number of plays and films challenge naming associated with colour.

Chapter Four

Black Like Me

Rest at pale evening...

A tall, slim tree...

Night coming tenderly

Black like me (Langston Hughes *Dream Variations*.)

In 1915 Louis Wann drew up a list of some 41 plays dealing with Turks and Moors¹⁷¹ produced between 1579 and 1625 on Elizabethan and Jacobean stages, concluding that "...from the mere list of plays and the variety of subjects treated [it can be seen] that interest in the Orient was considerable."¹⁷² That considerable interest has been replicated somewhat in recent years due to the increased attention given in critical analysis to questions of race, religion and blackness that inhabit the Renaissance texts. While the plays themselves are not univocal in their presentation of Turkish/Moorish blackness, displaying rather a complexity of male and female characters who possess varying shades of colour and capacities for goodness or evil, the majority of critics, even as they recognise ambiguous and conflicting racial designations within particular works, have tended to see European anxieties to do with race underscoring the representations of blackness on the Jacobean stage. Virginia Mason Vaughan traces the connection between medieval notions of coloured binary opposites – black/evil and white/good – and the depiction of blackness on the Early Modern stage: "Like their devilish forebears on medieval pageant wagons, these blackened figures can then serve as a one dimensional symbol against which white society can coalesce."¹⁷³ Other critics such as Nabil Matar, Emily Bartels and Daniel Vitkus have highlighted the problematic coding of the moor/turk/black characters as a

¹⁷¹ In this chapter I am not seeking to differentiate between the terms used in mostly unspecialised ways in Renaissance English Plays – "Moor" and "Turk" (nor the more general "Black"), as Daniel Vitkus notes: "The words 'Moor' and 'Turk'...were sometimes used to refer specifically to the people of Morocco or Turkey, but more often they signified a generalized Islamic identity." Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), p.91. I will be using 'black' and 'blackness' to describe the portrayal of Turks, Moors and Sub-Saharan Africans.

¹⁷² Louis Wann, "The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama," *Modern Philology* 12, no. 7. (1915): 186. There are a number of plays not included by Wann, such as *The Thracian Wonder*, *Orlando Furioso*, *The Spanish Curate*, *A Challenge For Beauty*, *Albumazar*, *Old Fortunatus*, *John of Bordeaux* and *All's Lost By Lust*, that can be added to his list.

¹⁷³ Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 56.

necessary amalgam of dangerous and undesirable qualities: they were identified by nature as lustful, sadistically cruel, overweeningly ambitious, devilish and physically repulsive. Ian Smith notes that “The Moors’ sexual excess, their rabid lust and unbridled sensuality, is a commonplace of Elizabethan Literature,”¹⁷⁴ and Anthony Barthelemy, referring to the main Moorish characters in *All Lost By Lust*, *Titus Andronicus* and *The Lascivious Queen*,¹⁷⁵ opines that “Wickedness is constituent to Mulymumen, Aaron and Eleazar and the belief that blackness signifies evil, a long-held popular notion, predetermines their type.”¹⁷⁶ The impact of the presence on stage of a coloured individual was complemented by contiguous elements of alterity - race/culture (Moor/Turk) and religion (Muslim). As Dympna Callaghan notes: “The capacity of blackness simultaneously to intensify, subsume and absorb all aspects of otherness is a specifically Renaissance configuration of othering.”¹⁷⁷ It appears that to be named black, is to be signified consequently as dangerous, sexually rapacious and deviant. And yet, there are indications that the question of blackness in Early Modern literature is more nuanced and requires further investigation. Nabil Matar’s contention that in England “the stereotype developed in literature...played the greatest role in shaping anti-Muslim national consciousness”¹⁷⁸ is challenged by Linda McJannet, who, in analysing nearly forty plays dealing with Ottoman Turks, was unconvinced that there *was* such a link and that such stereotyping was the norm.¹⁷⁹

Linda Woodbridge,¹⁸⁰ when examining the use of colour in 16th and 17th Century English Sonnets, made use of research carried out among a number of African tribal cultures. She noted the dominance of a tricolour code used in ceremonial rituals – red and white symbolising life fluids and black standing for death. In female puberty rites, girls are whitewashed, representing

¹⁷⁴ Ian Smith, "Barbarian Errors: Performing Race in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1998): 179.

¹⁷⁵ In referring to *The Lascivious Queen* instead of *Lust's Dominion*, as the play is more commonly known, I am following the suggestion of Charles Cathcart that the former “may have been an authorial (Marstonian) title and may also have been the name by which the play was known at the time of its performances.” Charles Cathcart, "Lust's Dominion; Or, The Lascivious Queen: Authorship, Date, and Revision." *The Review of English Studies, New Series* 52, no. 207 (2001).

¹⁷⁶ Anthony Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 120.

¹⁷⁷ Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare Without Women – Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.78.

¹⁷⁸ Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age Of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 102.

¹⁷⁹ One example she notes is that in ten instances of a sultan being depicted on stage only four could be considered negative. Linda McJannet, *The Sultan Speaks* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006).

¹⁸⁰ Linda Woodbridge, "Black and White and Red All Over: The Sonnet Mistress Among the Ndemdu," *Renaissance Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1987).

being and the positive bodily fluids, milk and semen, before they have black mud applied, signifying the fluids of death (putrefaction). In this context the colour black is also associated, among Sub-Saharan tribes, with sterility and witchcraft. The medieval binary of black and white (and subsequent applications to Early Modern Theatre) would thus seem to be culturally unspecific as it also describes non-European applications of blackness. This is not to preclude the reality of the presentation of racialised stereotypes on the Jacobean stage but it does suggest that defining blackness as an exclusively European construction which denotes moral deficiency provides an incomplete perspective for blackness as portrayed in Jacobean drama.

Other challenges to the critical paradigm that dark skin colour in the theatre essentially acts metaphorically to project negative racial stereotyping are made by Mary Floyd-Wilson. Arguing from a geohumoral point of view, she critiques assumptions that Moors are depicted as intrinsically lustful, citing the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice* and Aaron from *Titus Andronicus* as examples of characters who eschew lust and whose blackness is, on the contrary, indicative of a “cold, dry temperament.”¹⁸¹ She also points to the reluctance of Eleazar in *The Lascivious Queen* to respond lustfully to his lover, the Queen of Spain¹⁸² - indeed his indifference to Eugenia’s sexual advances is featured in the opening scene. Furthermore, Floyd-Wilson disputes the uniqueness of the black pejorative when it occurs by insisting: “We should acknowledge that the rhetoric applied to both Africans and Irish during this period is virtually indistinguishable.”¹⁸³ Linda McJannet also notes that “Ethnic epithets are not the exclusive province of European writers” and that Ahmed Arabshah, an Arab historian, referred to the invading Timur as ““that viper” whose “black deeds[s]” well become a member of a “black horde.””¹⁸⁴

This widening of the context for the enacting of race on the Early Modern stage is not meant to devalue the negative naming of blackness in those instances where racialized colour binaries operate within certain texts; however, it is unhelpful to limit the focus on race to those texts that offer discriminatory stereotypes. It is also important to consider that a number of poets were engaged in dialogues that projected more affirming views of black otherness (while not necessarily referring exclusively to racial blackness). Edward, Lord Herbert, in *Sonnet of Black*

¹⁸¹ Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 43.

¹⁸² Mulleasses from Mason’s *The Turk* is another example of a black character whose amorous endeavours stem from ambition and not lust.

¹⁸³ Floyd-Wilson, 46.

¹⁸⁴ McJannet, 16-17.

Beauty and Another Sonnet to Black Itself invoked the sublime mystery of the mistress's blackness, which is "a spark/Of light inaccessible." Blackness is postulated as an inclusive, natural and necessary element of existence and the opening lines of *Another Sonnet*, wherein black is personified as a multivalenced and dignified constituent,

Thou Black, wherein all colours are compos'd,
And unto which they all at last return
Thou colour of the Sun where it doth burn,
And shadow, where it cools, in thee is clos'd
Whatever nature can, or hath dispos'd
In any other Hue¹⁸⁵

suggest a synergy with the lines from Langston Hughes with which this section began. "Herbert praises the heterogeneity of darkness...while simultaneously acknowledging – and even celebrating – the inability of poets to "write out" (or white out) its mystery."¹⁸⁶ Darkness as wonderfully ineffable is fore-grounded. In Sonnet 127, Shakespeare puns on 'fair' and 'black' to disrupt conventional colour binaries while at the same time leaching the power of 'fairness' to promote itself as the referent of beauty by asserting that fair beauty is a product of cosmetic artifice so that black is now "beauty's successive heir." This idea of constructed white beauty, 'fairing the foul,' opposed to natural black, is replicated and developed further in *The Knight of Malta*, which I will examine in greater detail later in this chapter.

Another example of the privileging of alterity occurs in William Percy's *Mahomet and His Heaven*.¹⁸⁷ In this play, where the dramatic reference points are entirely Muslim, there is no Christian world against which blackness can be measured.¹⁸⁸ The scene opens in Heaven, with Mahomet, determined to destroy the population of Arabia because of the iniquity of the inhabitants, resisting the attempts of his angels to dissuade him from his course of action. Ultimately however, he relents and sends two angels, Haroth and Maroth, to Earth in order to determine if the Arab population is worth saving. Importantly, Mahomet designates them "Angel of mercy th'one, of Justice th'other" (1.1.66) – conferring on them qualities that contest what are seen as the prevailing negative constructions of Muslim apartness. Percy attempts, in

¹⁸⁵ John Churton Collins ed., *The Poems of Lord Herbert of Cherbury* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1881), 58-9.

¹⁸⁶ Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 120.

¹⁸⁷ William Percy, *Mahomet and His Heaven* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006).

¹⁸⁸ Through detail acquired as a result of research, Percy endeavours to provide an 'authentic' Oriental cultural base for his action, in direct contrast to what occurs in some plays, such as *Revenge For Honour*, where the setting is Eastern but the characters' behaviour, manners and underlying belief systems are English.

his staging not only of the Prophet but also of his understanding of the tenets of Islam, to reproduce an accurate (in terms of the material available to him) representation of the Islamic text, the Qur'an, within an exclusively Oriental context, providing the play with a dominant dramatic rhetorical and philosophical framework that reflected more informed contemporary studies of Islam.¹⁸⁹ The play concludes with the affirmation of Mahomet as the provider of justice, his rulings endorsed by all on stage: "Just is the judgement of just Mahomet." (5.13.141).

And so, from the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, there is a challenge to and disruption of presumed metaphorical links between racial blackness and evil. In analysing three plays from the period, *The Lascivious Queen*, *The Turk* and *The Knight of Malta*, I will examine the brittleness of such projected binary opposites while also contending that black alterity merges with the 'noir' darkness that is a feature of Jacobean drama, contesting dominant views through becoming one of the means of exploring the inconsistencies, ambiguities, the dissolving of certainties, the hypocrisies and the political and social fissures within the state. Just as Raymond Chandler's streets that "were dark with something more than night" referred to darkness beyond the literal, so too does blackness in the beginning of the Seventeenth Century point to that which is more than mere racial identification and objectification. These plays show that evil cannot be circumscribed according to colour; any simple metaphorical aligning of the stage Turk, Moor or Sub-Saharan African with evil was no longer sustainable. Mason, Massinger, Fletcher and the authors of *The Lascivious Queen*¹⁹⁰ purposely disturb racial stereotyping to ensure that the audience focus is directed towards the blackness of the collective human soul rather than on the superficial manifestations of race. Racial naming is very much in evidence in the plays and in the films (*Crossfire* 1947 and *No Way Out* 1950) that will be discussed but it is important to consider who is responsible for the naming, what the context is in which the naming occurs and the discreteness of the values associated with concepts of blackness.

¹⁸⁹ There were, of course, limitations on the accuracy of the transfer of cultural information from East to West and vice versa, as indicated by the frontispiece to the *Letter from The Great Turk*, which informs us that this is a translation "out of the Hebrue tongue/into Italian, and out of the Italian/into French and now into English/out of the French coppie."

¹⁹⁰ Authorship of this play is unclear. See note 151. The edition text I will be using, however, is Thomas Dekker, *Lust's Dominion* in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

In *The Lascivious Queen* and *The Turk*, the main protagonists, Eleazar (a Moor) and Mulleasses (a Turk) are ruthless, ambitious outsiders who endeavour to plot their way to political power in their respective Christian environments – the court of Spain (Eleazar) and the republic of Florence (Mulleasses). However, in spite of rhetoric that depicts the two men as the feared alien threat, both courts are riven with political intrigues as corrupt Machiavellians struggle for power, forming alliances and naming enemies based more on realpolitik rather than race – Mendoza, the Cardinal, makes an alliance with Eleazar, as does Borgias, the Governor of Florence, unite with Mulleasses. In what is depicted as an already fractured, decadent society ‘otherness’ is reflected in the alienation of the individuals within the general community and ceases to mark the outsider alone as a menace to wholeness. What also militates against unqualified delineations of the other is the plays’ eroding of racial stereotypes.

As the earlier reference to Mary Floyd-Wilson’s reappraisal of racial typecasting indicates, the image of the ‘lustful Turk’ is belied in the presentation of Eleazar’s relationship with his wife Maria and his lover, the Queen (Mother), Eugenia.¹⁹¹ In the opening scene, a seraglio is suggested – music playing, two Moorish servants taking tobacco, Eugenia entering seductively and Eleazar seated behind a curtain - but no sooner is the setting established than it is destroyed. Eleazar shatters the atmosphere of sensuous languor suggested by the music: “Is it you that deafen me with this noise” (1.1.7.) – then he proceeds deliberately to repudiate the sexual advances of Eugenia: “I am now sick, heavy and dull as lead.” (20). He ignores the Queen’s obscene rejoinder; “I’ll make thee lighter by taking something from thee” (21); his love ennui is palpable as is the exposing of what the playwrights see as vacuous cultural clichés. The exotic is clearly established as a veneer; in one of the many inversions in the play Eleazar is presented as a dynamic, highly imaginative, ruthless and intelligent schemer who manipulates the Court with a calculating efficiency that could be described as ‘European,’ while it is the Spaniards of high status, King Fernando, Cardinal Menoza and Eugenia who are in thrall to lust, parodying the stereotype of deviant sexuality purportedly synonymous with the Orient. Towards the end of the play, another cultural cliché that would depict the Turk as sexually insatiable is dismantled when Eleazar, seemingly on the verge of raping Isabella (and with his enemies imprisoned he had no fear of interruption), suddenly stops himself with “I jest with you” (5.1.289), “’twas but a trick” (290) and “Why, do you think that I’d nurse a

¹⁹¹ Eugenia begins the play as King Phillip’s wife but after his death is known as the Queen Mother.

thought/To hurt your honour?" (295-6).¹⁹² Consistently throughout the play there is resistance to any attempts to equate race with prescribed patterns of behaviour.

Mulleasses in John Mason's *The Turk* is similarly unspectacular as an exemplar of the 'lustful Turk.' His lack of sexual proficiency is emphasized in Act 2 Scene 2 when both he and Borgias try to court Julia and Amada, their wooing in tandem a further indication of their anxiety in matters sexual. When they meet resistance, Mulleasses readily admits "We are no Venus darlings." (2.2.94.) His relationship with Timoclea, wife of Borgias the Governor of Florence, mirrors Eleazar's with Eugenia in that he is a jaded lover. Presenting herself as an erotic commodity, Timoclea promises that "like Salmecis, thy love/Shall cling about thy neck" (3. 4. 51-2) and Mulleasses responds with "I am not sportful." (53) She continues: "I'll dance before thee like a faiery Nymph/And with my pleasing motions make thee sport:/I'll court thee nak'd" (54-56), to which he answers coldly "You are not pleasing." (59) Neither play is likely to endorse Henry Kissinger's dictum that power is the ultimate aphrodisiac. On the contrary, in these plays, sex is merely part of the stratagem for the acquisition of power. Both Eleazar and Mulleasses dispassionately use women to extend their power bases. Their 'lust' is motivated by political rather than sexual urgings. The plays quickly disabuse themselves of notions that skin colour determines behaviour as we are thrust into worlds where the main behavioural determinant is proximity to power; the complex, feverish and bloody political machinations are depicted as arising from a shared blackness of the human soul. In dispensing with the supposed racial truisms, *The Lascivious Queen* and *The Turk* emphatically contest the correlation of sexual threat and the Orient.

Khalid Bekkaoui states that "Eleazar is a complex character rather than merely a conglomeration of contemptuous stereotypes...[he] is endowed with majesty and power."¹⁹³ This can be seen in the opening scene where the Prince of Fez resists attempts to confine his identity, resolving instead to determine his own naming and to establish agency for himself. He declares that "in my veines,/Runs blood as red, and royal as the best/And proud'st in Spain." (1.1.154-6), demanding equivalency with the members of the Spanish Court.

¹⁹² This is in marked contrast to the encounter in *Knight Of Malta* where the Turkish Lucinda is sexually threatened by the supposedly virtuous Christian Miranda.

¹⁹³ Khalid Bekkaoui. "The Moorish Figure and Figures of Resistance." *Sheffield Hallam Working Papers: Representing Morocco*, <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/wpw/morocco/Bekkaoui/Bekkaoui.htm> (accessed 21 July 2009).

Importantly, the playwrights position Eleazar as a malcontent, a man who has suffered injustice – his father died at the hands of the invading Spanish forces and “left me Captive to a Spanish Tyrant” (158) – and is contemplating revenge:

Sweet opportunity I’le bind my self
 To thee in base apprentice-hood...
 ,,and all hands shal lay hold on thee:
 If thou wilt lend me but thy rusty sithe,
 To cut down all that stand within my wrongs,
 And my revenge.

(186-92)

The justice of his complaint is recognised by Alvero, his father-in-law who, nevertheless, advises him to “Watch fitter hours to think on wrongs then now” (166). Alvero avers that currently the State is “ruinate” which aligns Eleazar with other avengers – Vindice, Pietro,¹⁹⁴ Hamlet – whose sense of violated justice is accentuated and frustrated by the political corruption associated with their respective heads of state. Eleazar’s actions are now seen, through his soliloquy in Act One, as being determined by his status as revenger rather than relating to a racial stereotype that is itself continually being subverted throughout the play. Like Vindice he is brilliantly creative in his language and in the outrageous daring of his plotting; he is obsessive, ruthless and ultimately he overreaches in trying to achieve his revenge. We are made privy to his innermost thoughts and in the absence of a purposeful model of integrity in the play or a character who is not maliciously self-serving, his villainy is relative, not absolute. The Spanish Court is fractured and fractious; Eleazar is merely one of many scheming Machiavels who conspire to achieve political dominance. However, he shows himself to be far more astute than his rivals, which is clearly demonstrated towards the end of the play when he enters displaying Hortenzo, Eugenia, Philip and Mendoza, all in chains. His command of realpolitik is apparent when he outlines to Eugenia how they can thwart Philip’s succession as rightful heir by proclaiming him a bastard:

By this means shall you thrust him from all hopes
 Of wearing Castiles diadem, and that spur
 Galling his sides, he will flye out, and fling,
 And grind the Cardinals heart to a new edg
 Of discontent, from discontent grows treason,
 And on the stalk of treason death: he’s dead
 By this blow, and by you; yet no blood shed.
 Doo’t then; by this trick he gon!

¹⁹⁴ Pietro (*The Malcontent*) and Eleazar use discordant music in the openings of their respective plays as a signifier of their discontent which perhaps suggests that there is some merit in attributing the play to John Marston.

We stand more sure in climbing high;
 Care not who fall, 'tis reall policie.
 (2.2.52-62)

Eleazar's genius lies in his appreciation of how he can use psychology to manipulate his opponents; he is fully aware of the basic human drives that determine behaviour. His sophisticated and scientific approach is contrasted with the primitive responses of his adversaries whose first resort is to brute force and bravado, accompanied by racial epithets that are rendered innocuous through their unimaginative and tedious repetition. Relying on an outdated association of blackness and hellish evil, Eleazar's enemies name him as "divell," "that fiend/That damned Moor, that Devil, that Lucifer," "damned hellhound," "this black fiend." Associations of blackness with Hell are extended to include witchcraft as part of his diabolical armoury in an attempt to explain his success on the battlefield as illustrated by the King of Portugal's desperate naming of Eleazar as:

...a Divell, never did horrid feind
 Compel'd by som Magicians mighty charm,
 Break through the prisons of the solid earth,
 With more strange horror, then this Prince of hell,
 This damned Negro Lyon-like doth rush,
 Through all, and spite of all knit opposition.
 (4.2.29-35)

Eleazar's outstanding capabilities as a resourceful and courageous military tactician are here attributed to demonic origins as the Spanish rebels, who are facing defeat, struggle to come to terms with their failure. The King's inability to think beyond racial invective renders him incoherent as he indulges in a confused, disturbed ranting that reflects his cultural incapacity to process difference; words that project positive images of power "magicians mighty charm," "prince," "Lyon-like,"— clash against the pejoratives "horrid feind," "hell" and "damned." Language fails to articulate reality. Portugal's racist worldview is fracturing and his words, as well as his armies, fail him. His ascribing Eleazar's success to "som Magicians mighty charm" is superstitious nonsense, a feeble attempt to interpose the fanciful between cause and effect. Eleazar, in quelling the riotous crowd in Act Three, explains that he uses "the magick of true eloquence" (3. 4. 20), asserting that the potential for personal agency lies within, not without.

Racial naming, as practised by Mendoza, Philip and the Portuguese King, is shown to be totally ineffectual as a means of dealing with the political threat posed by Eleazar. Conversely, his false naming of Philip as bastard is a brilliantly successful ploy which is directly responsible

for firstly the Court and then the populace pronouncing him King.¹⁹⁵ Naming Philip bastard has the ironical effect of legitimizing blackness as Eugenia calls on the Court to “crown that proud Blackamore” (3.2.233) while Friar Cole, with the endorsement of the crowd, can publicly proclaim him “Your noble King the *Moor*” (3.3.68) and “a fair black Gentleman” (72). The crowd asserts that between the white Philip’s bastardy and the Moor Eleazar’s claim to royalty “S’blood, there’s no comparison” (80). Negative racial naming is further countered by the fact that, as Bekkaoui notes, “Eleazar is proud of his blackness. He even swears by his complexion...[and] asserts his Moorish dignity and honour.”¹⁹⁶ This assertion of the integrity of blackness is supported by Eugenia:

Fair eldest child of love, thou spotlesse night,
 Emprise of silence, and the Queen of sleep;
 Who with thy black cheeks pure complexion,
 Mak’st lovers eyes enamour’d of thy beauty:
 Thou art like my Moor, therefore will I adore thee,
 For lending me this opportunity,
 Oh with the soft skin’d Negro!
 (3.1.1-7)

Key signifiers – “spotlesse,” “Emprise of silence,” “Queen of sleep,” “pure,” “beauty” – reclaim the sensuous, creative, affirming energy of night, melding night and blackness into a mystical wholeness, in much the same way as Langston Hughes, some centuries later, authenticated blackness and night as co-actively self-validating: “Night coming tenderly/Black like me.” Socially constructed negative associations of blackness and night with malevolence are dissolved. The Queen Mother recognises in the Moor qualities that transcend the mindless ranting, the inept and superficial racial stereotyping practised by some members of the Court. Moreover, the impact of this vilification of Eleazar is greatly lessened when we consider that the main perpetrators – Philip, Mendoza and the King of Portugal – are portrayed as seriously flawed, opportunistic, emotionally and politically unstable characters whose racial abuse is merely one facet of their often disordered and inchoate use of language and their problematic behaviour; as representatives of the dominant moral establishment they lack credibility. One among many examples of this is when Zarack, Eleazar’s Moorish assistant, resolves to free the Spanish captives – Philip and Hortenzo - in response to Isabella’s pledge that for his assistance “By my birth;/No Spaniards honour’d place shall equall thine” (5. 2. 137-8). She orders him also to kill his fellow Moor and accomplice Baltazar. Zarack frees the prisoners, kills Baltazar and then is treacherously murdered in turn by Philip. We feel little sympathy for Zarack, given

¹⁹⁵ Once more Eleazar shows his superb grasp of politics as no sooner is he pronounced King than he divides his newly won kingdom among those who were most reluctant to support him, thus stymieing his opposition.

¹⁹⁶ Bekkaoui, 1.

his villainy throughout the play, but nor are we encouraged to endorse the somewhat callous and unnecessary actions of Philip or the cold, calculating of his sister, who can swear oaths one minute and break them the next.

The Court displays little that is honourable in the conclusion of *The Lascivious Queen* as the Moor stands defeated before his enemies. In characteristic fashion, Eleazar alone understands the political realities underlying the posturing of the victors:

Then am I betrayed
And cozened in my own designs?
I did contrive their ruin,
But their subtle policy hath blasted my ambitious thoughts.
(5.2.136-139)

In the maelstrom of political double-cross, intrigue and murder involving all the main players, Philip and Eugenia select one culprit: “This is the Moor, the actor of these evils,” and “Spaniards, this was the villain;” villainy is aligned with race and in isolating and particularising villainy, the new King and the Queen Mother establish a clear demarcation between being Spanish and being evil. Because deviance is exclusive to the outsider, there are hypocritical public displays of solidarity between former adversaries - Mother and Son embrace; the Cardinal and Eugenia are reconciled with Philip. The final scene is thus heavily ironic as the play has consistently endorsed the notion that ambition, lust (political and sexual) and villainy are racially non-specific. We are also invited to be uneasy at the actions of Philip, who invests himself as King – “I challenge my hereditary right/To the royal Spanish thrown.../...I thus do plant myself” (169-171) - moments after he has killed Eleazar, not on the battlefield, but in full view of the Court and while the Moor was manacled as his prisoner. This is no restoration of ‘order’ over ‘chaos,’ but the execution of one tyrant by his autocratic successor. Hence, Philip’s final dismissal of Eleazar as being barbarous¹⁹⁷ is perhaps a fitter description of his own behaviour and demeanour.

In 1953, Frank Wadsworth¹⁹⁸ argued that, due to the number of similarities between the plot and character structures of the two plays, *The Lascivious Queen* provided the model for John

¹⁹⁷ There is also some irony in Philip’s denunciation of Eleazar as “this Barbarous Moor” Ian Smith argues that in the Early Modern period “linguistic and cultural barbarism” were seen to be “coterminous” and that rhetorical eloquence and barbarism were binary opposites. Yet, throughout the play it is the “barbarian” Moor who displays great poetic and linguistic eloquence while the “civilised” Philip is on many occasions reduced to incoherency.

¹⁹⁸ Frank Wadsworth, "The Relationship of Lust’s Dominion and John Mason’s *The Turk*." *ELH* 20, no. 3 (Sept., 1953).

Mason's *The Turk*. However, while Eleazar is clearly the central and most dynamic character in the former play, the main focus in *The Turk* is split between the Florentine Borgias and the eponymous Turk, Mulleasses. Both men are villains, but importantly, the European, white Borgias is demonstrably more evil than Mulleasses. Although racial and cultural differences are featured - blackness is without doubt a significant element in the play, even more so is the portrayal of Islam - there is little of the pejorative racial taunting, nor the assigning of aberrant behaviour to a coloured stereotype, that occurs in *The Lascivious Queen*. This pairing of villains, which is an unmistakable feature of the play's structure, militates against fixed and necessary racial-deviancy binaries. If the effectiveness of racial naming is blunted in *The Lascivious Queen* by the chronic instability of the perpetrators of such naming and through the main target, Eleazar, being presented as simply the most astute Machiavel among a court of Machiavellians, then in *The Turk* the notion that blackness determines deviant actions is unsustainable from the very outset. There are established many points of parity between Borgias and Mulleasses so that the different racial and cultural signifiers are neutralised as the men become at the same time partners and opponents in villainy, their common quest for power transcending questions of race. Accordingly, in the Argument for the play, reference is made to "all their blacke and Trecherous plots,"¹⁹⁹ "blacke" acting as a non-rationally specific term, collapsing any perceived sense of Borgias's and Mulleasses's socially constructed whiteness and blackness into a universal darkness of the human psyche which is beyond racial determination.

It is perhaps due to the focus being on the darkness at the heart of political individuals that, to a certain extent, *The Turk* is less concerned with issues of racial and cultural difference. Florence is presented as a more cosmopolitan location than the mostly mono-cultural Spain of *The Lascivious Queen*. Bordello is a visitor from England, Eunuchus is a Cypriot, Mulleasses, a Turk, is in Italy as part of a cultural exchange to learn the language and customs, and Julia's suitors are from Venice and Ferrara. In this environment, Borgias sees no obstacle to his daughter Amada marrying the 'black' Mulleasses; on the contrary he is enthusiastic for the match, as he is also for a partnership with the Turk in his plotting to take control of Florence. Critical opinion that sees Mulleasses as the alien threat to Christendom fails to take into account the pivotal role played by Borgias. The menace is from the familiar, not from the outsider. To achieve his political ends, Borgias is prepared to abjure his religion, his family and Christendom itself, proposing to kill his wife so that he can marry his niece, then through a

¹⁹⁹ *The Turk*, Argument, line 39. 74.

treaty with “the Turk,”²⁰⁰ who has offered him 40,000 Janissaries, he would be made “king of Italy” (1. 3.72). He declares that:

Should there depend all Europe and the states
Christened thereon: Ide sinke them all,
To gaine those ends I have proposed my aimes.
(77-9)

In a manifesto that seems to be a perversion of the Renaissance re-centring of Man, he seeks to re-create himself, free from received religious dogma, answerable only to Reason and Nature:

Religion (thou that ridst the backes of Slaves
Into weake mindes insinuating feare
And superstitious cowardnesse) thou robst
Man of his chiefe blisse by bewitching reason.
(80-3)

He admits no impediment to the primacy of his own self-determination

Be they my childrens lives, my deerest friends. (90)

In an obvious challenge to James 1 and the notion of the divine authority given to kings, Borgias concludes:

...al's vacuum above a crowne,
For they that have the sovereignty of things,
Do know no God at all, are none but Kings.
(92-4)

Ostensibly, as Governor of Florence, as husband, as father and as uncle-protector to his niece, Borgias represents the interplay of those socially cohering elements, public, personal and metaphorical, that form the model of the responsible Christian leader. That the paradigm holds views that are atheistic and antithetical to the core values of the society is part of the outrageous irony that underlies much of the action.

Immediately following Borgias's articulation of the philosophical basis for his ruthless and amoral politicking, Mulleasses counters with his own political testimony, one that is the diametrical opposite. Whereas Borgias recognised no authority to whom he was answerable and no ethical limits to the efficacy of his actions, Mulleasses acknowledges a hierarchical structure, wherein both the personal and political are inextricably combined, with authority originating in Allah – “that mov'd/and gave the Chaos forme” (2.1.1-2) – passing to Mahomet and then to himself. The unfamiliar Turk is presented in a familiar form, the believer who is praying to God for intercession. Although the reference points are to Allah and Mahomet, the granting of divinity to Mahomet (“Thou God of Mecha” (6)), while indicative of some Early

²⁰⁰ Seemingly a reference to Suileyman the Great.

Modern misrepresentations of Islam,²⁰¹ makes the foreign recognizable as the audience sees Christian patterns of worship replicated; Mulleasses prays to Jesus (Mahomet) while acknowledging God the Father (Allah). Borgias is thus emphatically named as the atheist villain who poses the greatest threat to the stability of Florence. Any suggestion that the black man is predisposed to or is inherently evil becomes unsustainable; Mulleasses calls on Mahomet to forestall his predisposition towards goodness: "...mew not up my soule/In the pent roome of conscience:/Make me not morall Mahomet." (10-12). His evil has to be manufactured, and to a certain extent, in being sent to Florence to "learne the language and fashions of the Countrey" (Argument 28-9) he has come under the evil influence of Borgias who we learn tutors him instead in the corrupt ways of policy. The tendency towards overweening pride that stems from Borgias's firm belief in his own ability to self-determine, is not, however, passed on to Mulleasses. When once he begins to imitate Borgias's rhetoric: "Thus I ascend, and from proud Fortune's wheele,/Pull my owne Fate" (2. 1. 201-2), he instantly repents and asks "forgiveness Mahomet/My hopes make me prophane; and my proud thoughts/Usurpe above thy greatnesse" (202-4). Borgias is depicted as the ungodly blasphemer while the Turk's recognition of human limitation is, ironically, more consistent with prevailing Christian attitudes.

Mason shows little interest in depicting Mulleasses as the menacing outsider, instead he offers us a man caught between cultures, a young man who mimics the villainy of his older mentor²⁰² rather than responding to the call of his own evil nature. The degree of confusion he experiences is indicated in his soliloquy at the start of Act Two where his prayers to Mahomet, to which I have referred, are concluded with a paraphrased quote from Seneca's *Herculer Furens*: "A Scelus felix styles us vertuous" (21).²⁰³ His desperate praying to be made corrupt indicates a certain naivety when set against the lessons in duplicity, deception and expediency provided by the Western cultural models. The environment provided by Borgias would surely be sufficient. Even when he is enmeshed in the violent actions and intrigues at the heart of the Court of Florence, Mulleasses, unlike Eleazar, displays vulnerability as he seeks to reconcile his education in the ways of Christian 'policy' with the moral guidelines of his homeland. And

²⁰¹ During the period, it was commonly postulated that Mahomet was treated as a god.

²⁰² The play makes clear that there has been a cultural exchange involving Julio, Borgias's son, and Mulleasses. Borgias thus perverts his role as *in loco parentis*.

²⁰³ The line from Seneca's play is "Prosperum ac felix scelus virtus vocatur." (Crime that prospers and flourishes is given the name of valour). John G. Fitch, ed/trans., *Seneca*. (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2002), 66. Mulleasses's struggles to reconcile the sacred with the profane make him a most intriguing character.

so, even as he tries to woo Amada (unsuccessfully) in courtly fashion, he can still distance himself culturally from Borgias's ill-treatment of his daughter when she refuses to agree to her father's choice of husband: "Be these the precepts Christians give their children?" (2. 2. 111). It is in his treatment of women, however, that Mulleasses distinguishes himself from the aggressive, ego-centric, testosterone-fuelled rivals for Julia, Ferrara and Venice and where he departs most markedly from the stereotype of the 'lustful black other.' The Turk is unusual in that he predicates sexuality and desire on female agency, telling his lover Timoclea to "Give freedom to those faculties of nature,/That made your sexe first dare to reach at pleasure." (2. 1. 213-4). Later when he is trying to seduce Julia he states that "Elysium is in thee" (5. 3. 9), that her capacity for pleasure stems from within the female body and is not reliant on male-initiated interpretations and delineations of sexuality. Mulleasses is so effective in articulating female desire,

If thy warme blood (that dallies in thy vaines,
And through thy flesh like wanton rivilets plaies)
Desires with Nyle to rise above her bankes,
And vent in pleasure on the neighbouring plaines;
(19-22)

that the chaste Julia is affected, in spite of herself: "Enough, too much" (34). Julia eventually regains her poise and is instrumental in bringing about Mulleasses's demise. However, he is a complex, ambiguous and conflicted character, the familiar alien against whom there is little of the racial naming that was directed towards Eleazar. The threat to Florence is from the powerful and ambitious Christians – Borgias, Ferrara and Venice – rather than from the enigmatic Turk.

The final play I wish to consider for its significant contribution to the discussion of the contesting of established positions to gendered racial naming in the early years of the Seventeenth Century is *The Knight of Malta* by John Fletcher, Phillip Massinger and Nathan Field. My focus will be on Abdella, the Moorish servant to Oriana who is the virgin heroine of the tragi-comedy. Unlike black servants who appear in other plays of the period – Zanche (*The White Devil*), Fidella (*All's Lost By Lust*), Zanthia (*The Tragedy of Sophonisba*) - Abdella²⁰⁴ has a dramatic presence that rivals her mistress, indeed, an authority and strength of purpose that is in fact superior. It is difficult to reconcile Anthony Barthelemy's statement that "The

²⁰⁴ In the *Dramatis Personae* the character is listed as Abdella *alias* Zanthia. The reason for her concealment is not explained in the play and she is addressed when she first enters as Zanthia. Curiously, just prior to her entry, Mountferrat has a soliloquy on disguise. A plot idea that was perhaps discarded.

black Moorish woman stands as a symbol of everything evil and low”²⁰⁵ when considering the presentation of Abdella in *The Knight of Malta*. It is true that she is keenly involved with Mountferrat’s malevolent plotting but her transgressive behaviour is not the nadir of infamy in the play, nor are her actions in any way necessarily related to her colour. At the same time that she is named, correctly, as villain, she is also portrayed as a perceptive, astute judge of character and human nature, a woman confident and unintimidated in the expression of her sexuality, eschewing attempts at gender objectification (in stark contrast to Zanche) and a resourceful, plain-speaking individual who has some status in the Court, as is shown when she forcefully interrupts two gossiping gentlewomen: “Hist, wenches: my Lady calcs, she’s entring the Tarrasse” (1. 2. 60) to remind them of their duties. What is truly remarkable about Abdella, however, is that she disputes the two major naming rhetorical devices that were directed against black men and women – the supposed inability to blush and the axiom that it was impossible to wash the Ethiop white.

Prior to Abdella’s first entrance in the play, her lover, Mountferrat, as he burns with illicit lust for Oriana, soliloquises on duplicity, and concedes that the whiteness of his knight’s uniform conceals “the dim thoughts of this troubled breast” (1. 1. 157) and “these graceless projects of my heart” (158). He affirms his privileged social position through the double whiteness of his skin colour and his tunic while acknowledging privately the hypocrisy of his corrupt self hiding behind the signifiers of righteousness. This hypocrisy is compounded when he is totally insincere in lavishing lover’s vows on Abdella as she enters; she, however, is fully aware of the true nature of his affections. Whiteness is thus made synonymous with falsehood, deceitfulness and fraudulence, a point recognized by Abdella who offers blackness, in a wonderfully barbed inversion, as the untainted, pure binary opposite of that which is counterfeit – whiteness. A Moor’s inability to blush was deemed to be evidence of both the incapacity to feel and exhibit shame and of instability; that the black face was unreadable and as such could not be trusted. Abdella overturns and inverts this racist aphorism by stating that “my black Cheeke [cannot] put on a feigned blush,/To make me seeme more modest then I am” (173-4). The white face, if it is postulated that it can more readily reflect the mind, intentions and inner thoughts of the white subject, by virtue of its ability to blush, can therefore just as easily be manipulated to register falsehood and deception. “Black, in contrast, can neither be written on, nor can it be

²⁰⁵ Barthelemy, 123.

returned to white.”²⁰⁶ Abdella depicts the black face as that which is essentially natural and unaffected, thus converting a supposed negative – the indecipherable countenance - into a positive. She continues, inferring that the white face is a canvas onto which, through the use of cosmetics, can be inscribed all that is able to mislead, since a black face is incapable of dissembling:

This ground-worke will not beare adulterate red,
Nor artificiall white, to cozen love.
(175-6)

Blackness is substantial, grounded in essential being, whereas ‘artificiall white’ is erratically mutable, easing into ‘adulterate red’ and transmuting through “their tyres,/their wyres, their partlets, pins and perriwigs” (183-4) in order to ‘cozen love.’ Female whiteness, read as beauty, is constructed and stripped of their devices “they appeare like bald cootes” (184). What Abdella offers is tangible: “I am...full of pleasure to the touch...juicy and firme” (181, 183).

Having illustrated the folly of trying to manufacture racially determined physiognomical markers of good and evil, Abdella at the same time subverts the proverbial expression that deems it futile to attempt to wash the ethiop white, by refuting the inference that blackness is necessarily inferior to whiteness, an incomplete state that could only be made whole by (impossibly) becoming white. Her statement, “No bath, no blanching water...Doth mend me up” (179-80), acts contextually to assert that her body needs no cosmetic tampering to assist her natural condition but then, most importantly, to situate blackness as an essence complete in itself; one that does not require ‘blanching water’ in order to be fulfilled. The primacy Abdella institutes for her black agency draws a passionate and overwhelming endorsement from Mountferrat:

Oh my black swan, silk’ner then Signets plush,
Sweeter then is the sweet of Pomander,
Breath’d like curl’s Zephyrus, cooling Lymon-trees,
Straight as young pines, or Cedars in the grove.
(190-3)

Just before she leaves him, Mountferrat kisses her, a wonderfully subversive gesture, especially so considering the environment of rabid racism generated by Norandine in the play, upon which I will shortly focus. Mountferrat crosses race and class barriers in his relationship with Abdella, who demands, and to a certain extent receives, a degree of equality. After she exits, echoing Portia when she coyly declares to Bassanio that she is prompted by something, but not

²⁰⁶ Callaghan, 80.

love, Mountferrat immediately self-excuses: “It is not love, but strong Libidinous will/that triumphs o’re me” (219-20) and declares that to satisfy his lust “What difference twixt this Moore, and her faire Dame?” (221). Although desire drives his reasoning, Mountferrat’s elision of racial and class difference – “lust being blind/Never in women did distinction find” (224-5) – is very much to the fore of the dramatists’ concerns. He also asks: “Whose hand so subtle, he can colours name,/If he do winck, and touch ‘em?” (223-4), illustrating that each of the knight’s questions mimics the claims recently made by Abdella, that she is the equal in beauty and in love of any white woman. In collapsing gender, race and class signifiers in response to the cues provided by Abdella, Mountferrat shows that he is moved by more than just the lust he uses to justify his attraction to a black woman.

Fletcher, Field and Massinger maintain their interest in Abdella’s defiant subversion, presenting, towards the end of the play, one of the most provocative actions perpetrated by a female on the Jacobean stage, and certainly by a Moorish woman. Her lover and his servant, Rocca, having been wounded, subdued and at the mercy of Gomera, are rescued when Abdella shoots Oriana’s husband with a pistol. She interrupts the sword fight between the men, saves the life of Mountferrat and publicly emasculates (figuratively) the three male combatants. Gomera reacts in startled amazement – “Tracherous bloody woman/What hast thou done?” (4. 4. 19); he registers outrage that a woman should so easily slice through the rigid, inflexible layers of knightly honour that were understood to characterize male armed conflict. Her sardonic riposte, “Done a poor woman’s part” is followed immediately with a dismissive assessment of the men’s posturing; “And in an instant, what these men so long/Stood fooling for” (20-22). Abdella’s authoritative voice transcends essentialized gender and racial constructs as the men are forced to be passive spectators, their access to action and effective articulation for the moment withdrawn. Although her victory is short-lived, as she is almost immediately captured, along with Mountferrat, she evades all attempts at definitive representation; undermining, through her defiance, attempts by Norandine especially to contain her opposition.

Norandine, a highly opinionated, swashbuckling Dane and Commander in Chief of the Navy in Malta, gives voice to a constant stream of misogynist vitriol throughout the play, but he is particularly venomous towards Abdella. His outburst against her near the end of the play seems to support claims of overt racism in Early Modern playtexts:

...o’ your bacon face,
you must be giving drinks with a vengeance; ah thou branded

bitch: do'ye stare, googles? I hope to make winter bootes o' thy
hide yet; she feares not damning: hell fire cannot parch her
blacker than she is.

(5.2.150-154)

However, in Act Two Norandine is similarly poisonous towards Lucinda who subsequently is celebrated on three separate occasions as a paragon of virtue:

With all your paintings, and your pouncings Lady...
...plague take ye,
Ye are too deep ye rogue: - this is thy worke woman,
Thou lousy woman...
...the devil's holiness
And you must have a daunce: away with her,
She stinks to me now.

He is then prepared to hand her over to be gang raped by his men but is prevented from using her body as means of satisfying male desire when she demonstrates, through her refined speech, that she is well born. Norandine's is a voice tainted and erratic; he is a disturbed individual whose rantings serve to highlight community anxieties about the reliability and readability of women²⁰⁷ as much as they indicate concerns over race. The diatribe against Abdella, joining as it does a virulent racism with a dangerously unsettled misogyny that demonizes women, emanates from the most unreliable character in the play, and the one whose views are presented only to be demolished. Norandine's tirade is immediately made ineffectual when Abdella's response is to grin - "do'ye grin...?" (154). This is the most charged reply to his bombast, as the simple yet defiant gesture disables the racist rhetoric through ridicule and provides a parody of the propositions that women are culpably enigmatic and that blackness camouflages intent. Abdella has already immobilised Gomera with a pistol and here she does the same to Norandine with a grin. The final irony, in a play that makes full use of that device, is that Mountferrat's punishment - that he must marry Abdella and with her be banished from Malta - is exactly what he promised her in Act One: "Malta I'le leave.../And in some other Country, Zanthia²⁰⁸ make/My wife, and my best fortune" (1.1.198-200); this seems more reward than penalty. Abdella may very well have had the last laugh.

The three plays that I have examined disturb attempts to create simple metaphorical binary associations between whiteness and goodness, blackness and evil, by introducing dynamic, nuanced and articulate persons of colour who exhibit a wide range of emotions that are

²⁰⁷ Women are under constant scrutiny and are subjected to tests of their fidelity. Oriana/Lucinda is subjected to a test by Miranda, and also by her disguised husband Collonna.

²⁰⁸ The plot device of Abdella using the alias of Zanthia is not developed nor explained.

unconnected to the stereotyping of race. Blackness, as it acts as a racial marker of contest connoting both positive and negative values, is unfixed and elusive. Efforts to stabilize and questions of race through naming and authorizing particular racial models are shown to be unsatisfactory and are resisted within the texts; the verse, through the use of irony and paradox, is riven with corridors of ambiguity, uncertainty and contradiction.

The snakes are loose; anyone can get them

Even though Eleazar, Mulleasses and Abdella are seen as the alien ‘menace’ acting *within* the white Christian society, they are nevertheless more representative of a perceived threat from *without* that world. The plays however collapse notions of the uniqueness of black alterity through the revealing of corresponding levels of ‘white’ lust, treachery and perversion in order to suggest some equivalency among those from different racial groups. In the USA of the 1940’s and 50’s, when the recognised profile of the American identity was overwhelmingly White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, anxieties over questions of race were centred not so much on the threat of the danger *without* but on the unstable alien other *within* the society – the inside outsider; the degree of difference, when variance from the norm is based solely on race, was clearly demonstrable.²⁰⁹ The films of this time were unequivocal in their support of the racial minorities when these minorities became the victims of racially motivated discrimination and prejudice. Therefore racial naming was shown to be vicious and insidious in films noir and was accompanied usually by extreme violence. It is also self-reflexive, exposing the fears, insecurities and paranoia of the perpetrators that trigger racist naming and hostility. In Edward Dmytryk’s *Crossfire* (1947), the virulent racist strain displayed by the demobbed soldier, Montgomery, stems from a malignant disaffection and a sense of alienation exacerbated by his war experience. This is similar to Phillip’s targeting of Eleazar for xenophobic abuse as a direct response to the actions of his mother in disinheriting him and choosing the Moor as her sexual partner, as well as Norandine’s targeting of Abdella for racial invective as the convenient means

²⁰⁹ And so, in *Crossfire*, Montgomery immediately identifies Sammy as the racial alien other once he hears his name.

of articulating his psychotic hatred of women.²¹⁰ There is no doubting the existence of a malevolent racism in these texts but outbursts of intolerance can also mask personal and societal factors that are by no means incidental to the expression and enacting of race-based bigotry.

Crossfire, in recounting the search for the killer responsible for a racially motivated murder expresses a “pervasive sense of a restless, dislocated society.”²¹¹ Significantly, the film is set in the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C., so that the malaise that shadows the protagonists is read as being symptomatic of racial anxieties which are in opposition to the social harmony of the whole country. The action takes place at night, in small rooms, enclosed spaces, bars, a darkened movie house, dingy flats and inhospitable streets. Soldiers awaiting discharge aimlessly gather; a society that has been caught up in the patriotic fervour of a war, fought with such great single-mindedness of purpose, is now facing the anti-climactic emptiness of victory. As Joseph Samuels whose murder is the focus of the police investigation notes in flash-back; “We’re too used to fightin’. But we just don’t know what to fight. You can feel the tension in the air. A whole lot of fight and hate that doesn’t know where to go.” In a separate scene, Sergeant Keely reinforces this lack of direction when he’s asked to explain what ‘crawling’ means. “Soldiers don’t have anywhere to go, unless you tell them where to go. When they’re off duty, they go crawling. Or they go crazy.” One soldier, a sergeant called Montgomery, manages to do both, and subsequently kills Samuels, a civilian and a Jew. The main suspect, however, is a sensitive young soldier Mitch, who had been befriended by Samuels. Mitch evades the police and is protected by his mentor Sergeant Keely while being pursued by Captain Finlay, a police detective who operates as the liberal, moral voice in the film. The main focus of the film is not on the police murder hunt but on the exposition of deadly levels of hate, frustration, disorientation, fear as well as loneliness in the community and most importantly, on how these various elements coalesce to facilitate and initiate race hatred.

Joseph Samuels appears as a corpse in the opening scene of *Crossfire* in real time and then is re-constructed by Monty, Mitch and Leroy in flashbacks. For the first of these three men, Samuels’s personality is quickly subsumed by his racial identity until it becomes for Monty the main identifying feature; he is murdered not for who he is but for what he is, and the

²¹⁰ Abdella provides the perfect opportunity for Norandine to give vent to his misogynist anxieties as her racial and religious otherness act as distractions for the real issue – her gender.

²¹¹ Andrew Spicer, *Film Noir* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), 86.

randomness of his selection as victim is what is truly frightening. Samuels's Jewishness is anathema to Monty who concocts a deadly brew of an extreme and racially exclusive patriotism, the privileging of the soldiering role in society and a corrosive envy that characterises the other as the unworthy inheritor of the benefits secured by the sacrifices made by true patriots like himself. In an interview with Finlay, referring to Samuels, he articulates his fears and his bigotry:

I've seen a lotta guys like him; guys that played it safe during the war, scrounged around keeping themselves in civvies. Got swell apartments, swell dames...you know the kind...some of them are named Samuels – some of 'em got funnier names.

There is a double irony here; Monty is displaying the very racism that he was meant to be fighting against during the war with the Axis forces and in adopting his aggressive discriminatory attitude to "inside-outsiders" he is defending WASP power structures that have, through their dominant position in US society, institutionalised prejudice based on race, but these same power structures deny him entry because of his low status; they despise and exploit him. He is, in the words of Thomas Merton referring to men who mindlessly served the fascist state in Germany, a "functionary who, unable to have wealth and power himself, participates in a power structure which employs him as a utensil." Monty is furthermore a man who, "...centred on his own empty and alienated self...becomes destructive, negative, violent."²¹² His instability - moral, emotional and social – increases as he tries to perpetuate fixed ideas of race and culture while all around him the world is relentlessly changing.

Monty's confusion is indicated early in the film when he assumes a strangely contradictory approach to his naming of Samuels. At first he adopts the inclusive labelling of Samuels as "Sammy," mimicking the intimate form of address he overhears Samuels's woman friend, Miss Lewis, employ, inducting the man (he is soon to murder) into the privileged circle of men with abbreviated surnames acting as nick-names such as his friend Mitch.²¹³ Within a short time, however, 'Sammy' becomes 'Jew-boy'; the matey ritualised naming is shown to be fraudulent, giving the appearance of closeness when in reality the naming is associated with Monty's need to maintain the gap between the familiar and the unfamiliar. However there is a blurring of the lines – "Sammy" serves simultaneously and paradoxically as both a familiarising and anti-familiarising/distancing term. The naming is meant to allow the other to gain access to a limited area of involvement – "Sammy" is used in the familiar, male-bonding environment of

²¹² Thomas Merton in an introduction to *Alfred Delp, S.J. Prison Writings* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), xxviii.

²¹³ And of course, Montgomery is identified throughout the film by others and by himself as Monty.

the bar as a means of introducing Samuels into one sphere of participation only; its main purpose is to allow Monty to sermonise about the shortfalls of society to a stranger and as it turns out, a hated stranger. In much the same way as Leroy is named “hillbilly,”²¹⁴ with the connotation of backwoods slow-wittedness, the naming of Samuels as “Jew” locates him as the outsider who made money at home during the war while “true” Americans fought for liberty.²¹⁵ Monty’s frustration is exacerbated by his understanding of the discrepancy between what he believes is his due as a war veteran from the right racial background and what he perceives to be the privileged position granted to an alien who has benefited from his sacrifice and exposure to danger in the war. In spite of Monty being a “true” American, as a poorly skilled, poorly educated ex-soldier he has limited prospects.

The seemingly contradictory approaches to naming employed by Montgomery, whereby the inclusiveness of “Sammy” is negated by the alien connotations of the name from which it is derived, Samuels,²¹⁶ are mirrored in the two separate settings where Samuels and Monty encounter each other. The bar where they first become acquainted is positively depicted as communal space, a place of healing (Samuels assists Mitch in his understanding of what is ailing him) and an environment that is non-threatening – when Leroy accidentally spills his drink over Miss Lewis, Samuels is conciliatory not aggressive. However, there is present an undercurrent of raw hostile aggression that runs in dark opposition to the apparent conviviality, and which surfaces here, as frustration with reality rubs against expectations of better times now that the war is over. Floyd Bowers, recently discharged from the Army and best friend of Monty provides a striking example as he daydreams about what he’d do if he had money: “I’d

²¹⁴ Findlay uses this to distance Leroy from the influence of Montgomery, to allow him to inform.

²¹⁵ This of course is a mistaken assumption made by Montgomery. Samuels had a distinguished military record and was wounded in battle.

²¹⁶ In *The Roaring Girl*, Wengrave acts similarly to modify meaning through oppositional interpretations of the same name when he alternates between approval and disapproval of Moll depending on whether his interests are challenged or not.

*The most comfortablest answer for a roaring girl
That ever mine eyes drunk in. (2. 2. 46-7)*

*A pox on you for that word. I like you not now,
Y’are a cunning roarer. (53-4)*

How I do wrong this girl. (65)

She is but cunning. (71)

For Wengrave, the name says it all; he does not have to deal with the person of Moll, merely alter the value of her naming to suit his aims. So the privileging of “roaring” can be stripped away with “cunning.” The admission that he has wronged her can be dismissed a few lines later with the accusation that she is “but cunning.”

live on the beach, and I'd fish, I'd eat and just live on the beach, and I'd steal me a air-cooled machine gun – I shoot anyone try to take me back.” Bowers, like Monty, is fearful of dispossession and instinctively sees violence as the principal means of protecting and consolidating his identity; in their warped, alienated view of the world, both men see Samuels as typifying those who would come between them and their desires and so in killing Samuels they believe they are protecting the integrity of their dreams and their racial superiority.

Just as Monty appropriates Samuels as the named friend by using the familiar ‘Sammy,’ he also then proceeds, with the active support of Bowers, to appropriate, as an extension of the public space of the bar where they had been drinking, his apartment; by naming Samuels as friend, Monty accords himself the privilege of unquestioned access to his friend’s property. The contradictory duality of inclusive/exclusive naming – ‘Sammy/Jew boy’ - that he instigates, enables him to share the intimacy of Samuels’s personal place while incongruously at the same time regarding him as in outsider. Once Samuels is named as unfamiliar, even the place that is signified as his home offers no protection and he is murdered in his own living room. Later, Bowers is also murdered (by Montgomery) in a familiar space – his apartment. Significantly, in a film where the major characters are all placed in familiar environments – Virginia, Bowers, Samuels have apartments, Finlay his office, Keely and his fellow soldiers have their barracks, even the mysterious nameless man has some claim to occupancy of Ginny’s rooms - Monty is the exception, a man unfixed who appropriates the lived space of others. At the conclusion of the film, this statelessness is emphasised when he is shot and dies in unlocated space, trying to escape along a public thoroughfare.

In *Crossfire* violent actions against people because of their race are the results of ignorance; the perpetrators lack the ability to articulate coherently their sense of grievance and dislocation, nor are they able to reflect upon their situation beyond the stereotypes, racial clichés and bigotries they have absorbed. However, the film moves beyond Montgomery and Bowers as scriptwriter John Paxton was intent on showing that their crime is symptomatic of strains of racist naming and violence that have characterised much of the social history of the USA and indeed Finlay, in a key speech, is at pains to place the murder of Samuels within this wider context:

Thomas Finlay was killed in 1850, because he was an Irish Catholic.
A few weeks ago, a Negro was lynched, because he was a Negro. This evening,
Samuels was killed, because he was a Jew.

Mitchell's sickness thus acts metaphorically to sharpen the contrast between the blind prejudice exhibited by Monty and the perceptive and compassionate social analysis provided by Samuels.

No Way Out, released ten years after *Crossfire*, confronts the issue of racism much more aggressively, focussing entirely on the violent repercussions of anti-black naming. Prejudice is rife in a community that has two distinct, antithetical ghettos – one white, encompassing an area called Beaver Canal and the other black, referred to derisively as Niggertown. Colour signifies difference more immediately (and more emphatically) than Samuels's name establishes him as the Jewish other. Montgomery is limited in the degree to which he can show publicly his prejudice as the whiteness of Samuels²¹⁷ ensures that he has access to and membership of, however qualified, the dominant racial group. In both films, racial naming comes from those on the lowest rung of the white majority power structures who feel threatened by people they position as racially inferior but who have much higher status – Samuels belongs to the professional class and Luther Brooks is a doctor. While *Crossfire* focuses on individual examples of racist naming, presenting them as the actions of the ill-informed and ignorant, *No Way Out* examines communities bitterly divided by questions of race.

The plot of *No Way Out* revolves around Dr Luther Brooks's treatment of Johnny Biddle when he, along with his brother Ray, is taken to the hospital after a shoot-out with police. Johnny's wounds are apparently non life-threatening but he dies after Luther, suspecting that his patient is suffering in fact from something far more serious, administers a spinal tap. Ray accuses Brooks of racial murder and with the assistance of another brother George, a deaf/mute, he stirs up racial unrest within Beaver Canal that culminates in a riot. A post mortem reveals that Luther acted correctly and he is exonerated. Blinded by his hatred, Ray refuses to accept the verdict, escapes from hospital and tries to kill Brooks. With the assistance of Edie, Johnny's ex-wife, Brooks overpowers Ray and the threat for the moment is averted. The tenuousness of the resolution is accentuated in the last words of the film when Brooks offers a bitter retort to Ray's previous taunting of him as "Sambo" and "Nigger" as he roughly twists the tourniquet on Biddle's infected leg: "Don't cry white boy – you're going to live." This final image of an

²¹⁷ To Monty, and the people he represents, Samuels may be white in colour but be seen as racially different because of his ethnicity and as a result, classed as inferior. That his colour masks his racial identity – in a similar way to people of colour who could pass as white – meant that his name was important as the means of determining his status. To many Americans of this period, Samuels would not have been considered 'white.'

angry, frustrated and almost vindictive Brooks is more nuanced than Andrew Spicer's description of him as "an ebony saint."²¹⁸

While extreme racial tension is central to the film, in the opening scenes we are presented with an interracial success story as Luther Brooks, a black American, who has passed his final examinations and is fully qualified, moves among his white peers and patients, a respected and accepted man. The hospital itself is familiar territory for Luther; in a place of healing, he is a gifted, conscientious and confident medical practitioner. Racial prejudice emerges initially, and perhaps unexpectedly, from an embittered black orderly, Lefty, who believes that the hospital administration actively discriminates against blacks by making only coloured doctors appear before the board before they can qualify. When Brooks denies this, Lefty continues in his attack, asserting that the board was discriminatory in its practice: "I bet they laid it on you." When Brooks carefully explains, "No more than anyone else. They don't even ask your name – they just give you a number," Lefty counters with: "They look at your number. They know. They got ways." Given the systemic discrimination that existed throughout the USA, there is some truth to his comments, when applied generally, but as the hospital environment that is shown in the film is totally supportive of integration, Lefty's pejorative "they" is strangely reminiscent of Montgomery's "you know the kind" when referring to what he believed was covert Jewish influence and power. What helps to mitigate the prejudice Lefty displays, however, is the long scar, the result of a racist attack, that runs down the side of his face which is a vivid witness to the extent and viciousness of white intimidation of the black community. In the battle between the racially distinct neighbourhoods, even though there is prejudice on both sides, the film shows that black violence is in reaction to white aggression. The Hospital, like the asylum in *The Honest Whore*, is clearly seen as a place of refuge, where reconciliation is possible.

In spite of his being wounded and apprehended by the police as a criminal, Ray Biddle enters the prison ward of the hospital belligerently self-assured and contemptuous of those around him. He refuses to accept that his circumstances place him at a disadvantage as he quickly asserts what he believes is his racial and therefore consequently social and cultural superiority over Brooks and Lefty. He mistakes Brooks for an orderly, assuming that a black man must always occupy a subservient role – and upon learning of his mistake, derisively names him as

²¹⁸ Spicer, 168.

an inhabitant of “Niggertown.” This verbal marking of Brooks invites us to recall the scarring of Lefty which acted as the visual marker of racist behaviour; both markings are attempts to inscribe white segregationist meaning onto the bodies of the black men, in order to impair their ability to construct an independent view of self and to confine and control coloured citizens through intimidation and coercion. Biddle spits on the floor and orders Brooks to clean it up, challenging the position of the hospital as neutral ground free of racial contest and reaffirming his belief in the primacy of his status as white, even as a prisoner, compared to a black man. In spite of Biddle’s attempts all through the film to establish a racial pecking order, the two diametrically opposed poor racial ghettos – Niggertown and Beaver Canal – suffer equally as economically depressed areas, each affected by the same social and economic conditions which determine their disadvantage. For both groups the starkness of the film’s title, *No Way Out*, is particularly poignant, pointing to the entrapment of white and black within adjacent neighbourhoods that are impoverished, under-resourced and socially dysfunctional. Even moving away from the immediate vicinity of Beaver Canal doesn’t guarantee improvement as Edie cynically observes: “I used to live in a sewer. Now I live in a swamp.” Anxieties about race are exacerbated by poverty, limited educational and employment opportunities. These social and racial tensions are lethally expressed in the pitched battle between Beaver Canal and Niggertown which takes place, significantly, in an industrial no man’s land, an urban wasteland of twisted and cast off rusted metal. Director Joseph Mankiewicz doesn’t hesitate to demonstrate the inchoate irrationality and vicious ugliness of white racist attitudes but these are shown within the context of chronic deprivation and social neglect.

Ray Biddle’s initial vilifying of African Americans refers to place – Niggertown²¹⁹ before he individualises by naming Brooks as the “nigger doctor.” This is foremost a battle for territory and naming rights rather than just a clash of individual racial identities. The urban battlefield becomes racialised space as competing whites and blacks, anonymous among the confused jumble of limbs and bodies, identified only by their colour, struggle for supremacy, a struggle the film is at pains to show is as futile as it is self-destructive. Ultimately Brooks and Edie repudiate debased notions of the primacy of place as the means of self-definition, deciding instead that there *are* ways out, that the individual is not tied, as Lefty and the Biddles are, to imposed, pre-ordained, constrained views of self. In an attempt to restrict other characters’

²¹⁹ There is conscious parody here of the mainstream naming of cities – Charleston, Greensboro, Louisville – settlements that are important nationally. Biddle combines the sarcastic exaggeration “town” with the pejorative descriptor “nigger” to mock the aspirations and circumstances of the disadvantaged black community.

options – and in the process stifling his own - Ray uses language. He endeavours to negate the positive naming associated with Luther's position as doctor by naming him as 'nigger' which consigns him then to a location - 'Niggertown.' This linking is even more powerfully illustrated when Ray succeeds in inducing Edie to name Brooks as the 'nigger doctor,' the racial pejorative cancelling out the high status descriptor and his beaming self-satisfied grin acknowledges her reversion to and acceptance of Beaver Canal naming. His satisfaction is short-lived however, as Edie's actions in saving Brooks at the end of the film definitively mark her rejection of territory and territorial naming as signifiers of fixed identity.

For Ray, it is inconceivable that 'black' be associated with 'doctor' and to emphasize the point when confronted with the prospect of being examined by Luther he demands "I don't want him. I want a white doctor." The guard's light-hearted response: "We'll turn the lights out and you won't know the difference" could be interpreted perhaps as being racially tactless but in fact it expresses the elemental truth contained within the storyline: perception dominates over what is verifiably real. When told by the coroner that his brother was not killed by Brooks but died as a result of a brain tumour Biddle stubbornly refuses to accept that his accusations against the doctor are groundless. The three brothers' afflictions that are clearly represented in the film therefore act symbolically to reflect their incapacity to accept any reality beyond their prejudice; George's physical handicaps as a deaf/mute draw our attention to Ray's moral blindness – his crippled leg is also a metaphor for the mindless hatred that festers inside - and Johnny's tumour enacts the malignancy that is Beaver Canal; their physical incompleteness an assertion of their moral deformity.

The guard's words are reprised but with an intriguing inversion later in the film as Ray and George, having escaped from the hospital, surprise Edie in her darkened flat. "We kept it dark in here," Ray tells her, "because we thought you'd like it better if you couldn't tell we were white. Now I'll turn the lights on." Turning the lights off, the guard suggested, would eliminate difference, privileging for once the black man as the dominance of whiteness is neutralised. Ray inverts this by suggesting, with unconscious irony, that in fact whiteness is in need of protection, although the underlying sexual jibe directed at Edie, that she now prefers black men, is what clearly motivates him as his growing paranoia, caused by the erosion of the certainties of his upbringing, leaves him disturbed and confused. These references to darkness, to lights being turned off and on, and the unsettling ambiguity of what happens in the shadows reveal Ray's anxieties about physical intimacy. He is as repelled by the idea of a black doctor

being intimate with his or his brother's bodies as he is with the notion that darkness could erase difference, allowing slippage between the colours. At the same time, with Edie he is both aroused and disgusted by the erotic dream that in the darkened room his own racial and sexual identities become unfixed, that repulsed by him with the lights on, she may be sexually stimulated by the possibility that with the lights extinguished he could be black. In exploring the concept that darkness dissolves difference, *No Way Out* echoes similar concerns expressed in *The Knight of Malta* by Mountferrat in a soliloquy wherein he reflects on the collapsing of racial identity in the night so that his white love and his black mistress are indistinguishable in their erotic potential:

What difference twixt this Moore, and her faire Dame?
Night makes their hews alike.
(1.1.122-3).

In projecting himself as black erotic object, ostensibly as part of a display of his sexual desire for Edie, Ray not only fetishizes blackness but also positions Edie as a latter-day Mountferrat, evaluating the merits of her black and white suitors. He turns on the lights, as if to re-impose white certainty but his world is so riven with racial, sexual and psychological contradictions that it can only fracture and disintegrate. In 'turning on the lights' these inconsistencies were exposed so emphatically that even he could no longer ignore them, so that by the end of the film his racial naming is no longer sustainable and consequently degenerates into incoherence. Fittingly Edie is the agent of destruction when, just as Biddle is about to execute Brooks, she switches off the lights, giving the doctor the opportunity to overpower his would-be murderer; Ray is now completely emasculated, a whimpering, crippled man.

As in the other texts dealing with racial naming that I have examined, *No Way Out* articulates the counter-cultural ambivalence of blackness and the ways in which blackness reveals fractures in societies where the dominant colour is white.

Chapter Five

Public Words

What news would she hear?

Any kind,

So it be news, the newest thou have

Gendered and racial naming in the Early Modern plays and films noir reflects established, deep-seated prejudice against particular groups of people within particular general communities; individuals are named primarily because they are perceived to embody the negative behavioural traits of the constructed stereotype. Membership of the named group is thus a prerequisite for prejudice against an individual who is seen to represent that group. In this section, my focus will be on how the individual, unconnected to and unrepresentative of any group, is named in the news media of the Jacobean and Post World War 2 periods and on the news processes involved with public naming, for it is the exposure of the individual to the general gaze of the society that constitutes the naming; the naming is engendered within the act of exposure. News broadcasting is therefore a volatile business, for not only is the announcing of the news – in whatever format – highly charged as the community’s attention locks on to an individual, but the news gathering procedures, which of necessity rely on a raw and contradictory melange of factual reporting, hearsay, rumour, innuendo, gossip, slander, conjecture, skilful interpretation, militate against the maintenance of high levels of truthfulness and integrity.²²⁰ The vaunted claim by news services to “give light to posterity in the truth of things”²²¹ is essentially compromised by the often dubious (and devious) means employed by the news gatherers. This dislocation between exalted aim and praxis is one of the major concerns of Ben Jonson who, in his masque *News from the New World* (1620) and the play that develops more fully the concerns first raised in the earlier work, *The Staple of News* (1626), provides a complex analysis of the many and varied processes of news gathering and dissemination, one that Mark Muggli²²² considers contains much that informs contemporary

²²⁰ This judgment refers only to the depictions of the News in the texts covered in this section.

²²¹ Ben Jonson. *News From the New World Discovered in the Moon* in Francis Cunningham (ed) *The Works of Ben Jonson* (London: John Camden, 1816), p.135.

²²² Mark Z. Muggli, "Ben Jonson and the Business of News." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 32, no. 2 (1992). Anthony Parr notes similarly that “Many of these journalistic efforts are the true ancestors of today’s

discussions of the place of the Media in modern society. In fact, such is the quality of the insights shown by Jonson into issues surrounding the foundational news media of his time that the two films that will be examined whose main focus is the circulation of news, *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957) and *Slander* (1956), investigate and expand upon many of the same concerns. It is important to note that the satire in each text is directed against what could be broadly described as tabloid journalism, the manipulation of news material for sensation.

What is immediately gleaned from contact with the texts is their recognition of the overwhelmingly popular nature of the news media and the subsequent need to satisfy an audience's voracious appetite for novelty in order to maintain popularity. Muggli notes that Jonson "...dramatizes the frightening transformation of individual consumers into a mass audience seeking the same trivial, emotionally engaging news, a transformation that has interested modern media analysts and owners."²²³ While they are uniformly critical of the lack of integrity of the news processes and practices, the four texts mentioned above acknowledge that the immediacy associated with the dissemination of information (or misinformation as Jonson would say) produces a seductive energy. In *The Staple of News*, Pennyboy Junior's demand for news, "the newest that thou hast"(3. 1. 19), reflects this craving for fresh news and the quest for the immediate has been the challenge and the inspiration for news providers since the Seventeenth Century, with the concomitant Sisyphean realisation that "...the central anxiety of the news business in all ages...is that once news has become known, it is no longer news"²²⁴ and the search for what is new continues unabated. The urgency and the transitory nature of news gathering create an environment, as will be examined in greater detail later, wherein truth in the reporting of news is neither absolute nor necessary; rather it becomes relative, dependant on the fickle interests of the consumer in the market place and the overriding concerns of those who control the flow of information. As the Printer in *News from the New World* states: "I'll give anything for a good copy now, be it true or false, so't be news."²²⁵ In an attempt to sate the appetites of an insatiably curious public therefore, the naming of individuals is driven by economic, social and political imperatives rather than the desire to provide news coverage that is both accurate and truthful. The very popularity and ephemerality of the News industry encourage work practices that subvert the official rhetoric

tabloid press" in Ben Jonson. *Staple of the News*, ed. Anthony Parr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 26.

²²³ Muggli, 332.

²²⁴ Muggli, 333.

²²⁵ Jonson (Cunningham), p. 134

which endorses the primacy of truthfulness and impartiality. The plaque in Manley's office (*Slander*) with the words "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth will set you free" serves as an ironic reminder of the discrepancy between such rhetoric and commercial imperatives.

In *News From the New World* an association is immediately made between the emergence of news and darkness as the First Herald proclaims news "New as the night they are born in" (3) with the rider provided by the Second Herald "Or the phant'sie that begot 'em"(4). News is unstable; a product of an imagination that thrives on the ambiguities of the world of shadows. This locating of the news in the night is featured in the opening scene of *Sweet Smell of Success* when darkened city streets are crisscrossed by delivery trucks depositing their newspapers on the pavements for vendors to sell: "Get these papers while they're hot!" The news brought by the Heralds turns out to be the work of the poet's creativity and in sharp contrast to the more prosaic imaginings of the news 'professionals', the Printer, the Chronicler and the Factor; their intellectual dishonesty – "though they (news) be false, they remain news still" – lies in their perverting of the creative process; they are unafraid of presenting as true what is demonstrably false. The public, however, uncritical of the process, eagerly demands the product.²²⁶

Jonson's contempt for the general public's bottomless appetite for news moves from the satirical exposing in *News From the New World* of the vacuousness of the agents of the news industry – the aforementioned Printer, Chronicler and the Factor – to the grotesque characterising of the processing of news in *The Staple of News* as literally visceral as Bruce Thomas Boether, in his study of Jonson's metaphorical use of the alimentary canal,²²⁷ demonstrates. In the character of Lickfinger, Pennyboy's cook, Jonson establishes a culinary discourse, featuring ingestion, digestion and evacuation, which runs parallel to the discussion of news and the News Office. The populace's ravenous appetite for news – "A groatsworth of any news – I care not what" (1.2.11) – finds its symbolic counterpart in the play's emphasis on the appetite for food. Lickfinger himself draws the two streams together when he calls at the Staple and demands "News, news my boys!/ I am to furnish a great feast today,/ And I would have what news the Office affords" (3.2.160-2). This is enhanced further as, in answer to

²²⁶ Jonson's satire of the obsession with fresh news is most apparent in the Staple Office scene where Pennyboy Junior demands news "fresh from the forge" and is shown an item dealing with the details of his father's 'death'. The fresh news is of course what Pennyboy already knows, but he is so excited to be 'in the news' that he is unaware of the sharp irony.

²²⁷ Bruce Thomas Boether, *The Fury of Men's Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

Pennyboy's jibe²²⁸ about the feast being for cannibals, he speaks with parodic religious fervour of creating

...such sauces for the savages
 And cook their meats with those enticing steams
 As it would make our cannibal-Christians
 Forbear the mutual eating one another.
 (3.2.174-77)

Immediately prior to Lickfinger's entrance, Pennyboy has been introducing Pecunia to the Office, with all characters joining in a feast of news, outrageous and slanderous, as Fitton, Thomas, Register, Nathaniel and Cymbal provide their guests and customers with the latest information from the Continent. The leaders of the various Christian States mentioned are figuratively 'eating one another.' Register makes the feasting connection more emphatic by describing his clients' demands "to taste the cornucopiae of her (the Office's) rumours" (119). Jonson crowds this scene with diverse characters – the numerous Office staff, the Pennyboys, Pecunia and her entourage, Lickfinger as well as customers queuing for news. Within this seeming farrago of bodies, movement and noise, the playwright indicates some of the key threads of his representation of news making. The scene is replete with named individuals whose position is no protection for what are, in most cases, salacious, though highly amusing attacks. They are offered as "Baits, sir, for the people!// And they (the vulgar) will bite like fishes" (121-22). Appetites must be sated, demand must be satisfied. Pecunia and her sought after fortune underscore the commercial reality of the news business; this is a commercial enterprise with people and the news itself as goods as F. J. Levy notes "Jonson's main point appears to be that news has become commodified, an object...to be bought and sold."²²⁹ This commoditization of the news is prefigured in the descriptions of food and food processing that run throughout the play.

Lickfinger is an enigmatic interpreter of and commentator on both worlds, providing the access point for the audience to enter. He is also one of the means by which Jonson indicts the news industry by comparing its processes to the workings of the alimentary canal, most tellingly indicated in the dialogue between Lickfinger and Thomas where the former, after seeking news of the Stage asks:

²²⁸ Pennyboy's comment follows a reference Nathaniel makes to a news item which describes a colony of cooks set out to convert the cannibals of America.

²²⁹ F. J. Levey in *Print, Manuscript, Performance. The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*, eds. Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 270.

What news of Gondomar?²³⁰
Thomas: A second fistula,
 Or an exorciation, at the least,
 For putting the poor English play was writ of him
 To such a sordid use, as is said he did,
 Of cleansing his posteriors.
Lickfinger: Justice! Justice!
Thomas: Since when, he lives condemned to his chair at Brussels.
 (3.2.198-212)

Referring to this conversation, Boehrer notes that “The news itself demonstrates a grotesque metamorphic quality that leads inevitably to the watercloset.”²³¹ Lickfinger’s “Justice! Justice!” in response to the description of Gondomar’s treatment of the play acts ambiguously as a comment on an unpopular figure or as an endorsement of a named public figure exacting appropriate revenge. Jonson’s alimentary discourse is reinforced with the numerous references to news being ‘vented’ – “Where the best news are made – Or vented forth.”²³²

In *Sweet Smell of Success*, the correlation between consumption of food and news is established early in the film; Sidney Falco’s desperate reading of J.J. Hunsucker’s newspaper column takes place in a crowded diner, the newspaper simply one part of the daily consumption of the city inhabitants, mixed in with the coffee and doughnuts. Much of the action is centred in eating and drinking venues – bars, nightclubs, cafes, diners – and specific items of food – ice-cream, pretzels, waffles with syrup, cookies, a bowl of fruit, pepper, hens and eggs - are used to convey some sense of the methods used by those involved in news, opinion and publicity to sate the general consumer’s appetite. The film is less concerned, however, with using the digestive tract metaphorically as a means of exploring questions of appetite for and consumption of news, the primary symbolic impulse is centred in the eyes: on what can be seen.

J.J. Hunsucker is ‘the eyes of Broadway.’ A celebrated newspaper columnist who boasts a readership of 60 million, he is refusing to feature promotional material for publicity agent Sidney Falco because Falco had promised to break up a relationship he considers unsuitable

²³⁰ The discussion centres on the performance of *A Game of Chess* by Thomas Middleton in which Gondomar, a Spanish diplomat, is ridiculed.

²³¹ Boehrer. 140.

²³² Eric Partridge in *Shakespeare’s Bawdy* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 276 notes that a meaning for ‘vent’ is “to emit from the anus.”

between Hunsucker's sister Susie and a musician Steve Dallas but has failed to deliver. We enter a frenzied, frenetically paced world where betrayal, emotional and career blackmail, violence, corruption, entrenched cynicism, where the power to name has its corollary, the power to defame, struggle to be hidden by a glamorous, flashing neon-lit cityscape veneer. Hunsucker, observing a drunk being ejected from a prestigious club and then kicked, enthuses "I love this dirty town." The first frames of *Sweet Smell of Success* alert us to what will be the dominant symbol – the eyes of Hunsucker, framed by thick, horn-rimmed spectacles. The naming that occurs in the film comes from what the eyes see. Without the glasses, there would be something sinister about disembodied eyes, but the glasses provide reassuring overlays of authority (patriarchal²³³ as well as social), trustworthiness, sincerity and journalistic integrity. However, due to the subject matter of his column – entertainment industry news and gossip – the reality differs from the image; Hunsucker's gaze is essentially voyeuristic. The human stories that flit throughout the city remain anonymous until Hunsucker's gaze lights on them, "to see their names in my column all over the world".

In the film we see that his focus is highly selective which, when combined with the trust placed in his gaze by his readers, creates the circumstances for him to be corrupt and to use his power for his own gain. The public in *The Staple of News* believed what they read; in *Sweet Smell of Success* they believe what the trusted 'eyes of Broadway' see. And in one sense this is understandable; the main signifier for the columnist is the pair of glasses as his name, J. J. Hunsucker has no substance by itself, the surname ugly and the initials inconsequential. He is known by what he sees and he knows because he has such acute vision. His hymn of praise, "I love this dirty city," is heartfelt because he 'knows' the drunk being manhandled; he appreciates that the shadow world of vice and corruption is intricately bound to the surface life of respectability, and he is able to communicate to a broader audience his sense of understanding. A scene that indicates the level of his intuition and the extent of his influence occurs when we are first introduced to Hunsucker at the Twenty-One Club, where he holds court at a table with a Senator, the senator's proposed mistress and her 'agent.' Hunsucker advises the politician:

But why furnish your enemies with ammunition? You're a family man, Harvey and some day, God willing, you may want to be President. And here you are, out in the open, where any hep person knows that *this* one (*indicating the agent, Manny*) is toting *that* one (*indicating the blonde mistress*) around for you!

²³³ This is particularly significant as Hunsucker adopts an overbearing, aggressive paternal attitude to his sister Susan.

Are we kids or what?

The Senator thanks Hunsucker and chastened leaves. On this occasion J. J. saves the career of one man by withholding naming, but there are other times when he is not so circumspect.

For all his intimate knowledge of the commercial, social, sexual and psychological trip wires in the city, Hunsucker is unable to fathom the love his sister shows for the gifted, unassuming musician Steve. His obsessive hatred of Steve, which stems from his over-possessive relationship with Susie – with muted undertones of incest – culminates in the destruction of his rival for her obedience and affections. Steve is publicly named, not by Hunsucker himself, but through a series of seedy and devious deals and favours, paybacks, involving professional jealousies and even some prostitution. Falco finally delivers; an article appears, written by a rival smear journalist that accuses Steve of being a marijuana smoking Communist. This first naming results in his losing his employment, and is followed by Dallas's arrest after we see Falco plant cannabis on him, then give the signal to a corrupt detective, Harry Kello, who is on Hunsucker's payroll. The guitarist is savagely beaten before being taken into custody; the scene is set for a career destroying public humiliation but Falco and Hunsucker fall out and this never eventuates.

By the end of the film it is apparent that the famed, all-seeing 'eyes of Broadway' are incapable of true self-reflection; Hunsucker's intimate knowledge of his environment does not extend to self-knowledge and he stumbles around blindly in his final scene, uncomprehending and criminally ignorant of the destruction he has wrought on those around him. He cannot see that Falco has just saved his sister from committing suicide and accusing him of attempted rape, Hunsucker savagely beats him. The frenzy of his punches symbolically attests to the deep-seated psychological viciousness that has characterised his newspaper column and is at the heart of his use of the news media.

Sweet Smell of Success reveals the complex, completing and often contradictory commercial and ethical interests that are involved in the gathering and distribution of news. Named individuals, the subjects of the news items, are the commodities in the process, as Jonson has demonstrated, their value determined by the rate by which they are able to stimulate the appetite of the general public. Unlike racial and gender naming, there is little personal animosity associated with the naming of people in the news media as they exist primarily as the

raw material in largely impersonal business processes. Consequently, once their newsworthiness becomes diminished, they are quickly dispensed with as the attention span of the news audience is very limited and an individual's role in the news process is necessarily transitory. In the 1956 film *Slander* the former point is most powerfully illustrated.

The managing director of a scandal magazine called *Real Truth*, H. R. Manley is a former press agent who has built up his readership on the contacts, stories and gossip he has accumulated in his previous career. He also employs journalists with a grudge against the world, eager to 'dig up dirt' on celebrities as a means of revenge. To address a slide in *Real Truth*'s circulation, he decides to investigate a major show business star because of her rumoured juvenile transgressions. In the absence of hard facts he tries to blackmail a newly successful TV children's show host, who grew up with the star, by threatening to expose his prison record unless he reveals the details of her past. Scott Martin, the host, refuses and is publicly named and subsequently loses his job. The publication of the details of his crime, committed when he was a teenager, has drastic consequences for his family when his son is cruelly taunted at school and then killed by a car as he attempts to evade his tormentors. Scott's naming is a result of purely commercial considerations and Manley's interest in him is strictly strategic. Likewise, the decision made by the sponsors of the children's show to sack Scott was influenced principally by fears that their business would be adversely affected. While the film endeavours to offer a sympathetic portrayal of the actions of the Sunny Boy Crisp Breakfast Company we see that they are as much in thrall to the hard-nosed principles of market based commercial reality as the management of *Real Truth*. Both entities reject any notion of ethical behaviour that runs counter to the basic tenets of market-driven enterprise; profit margins are non-negotiable. Sterling, owner of the company that makes Corn Krinkles, defends his dismissal of Scott; "The public always calls the tune – I'm sorry Scott," and similarly Manley acknowledges a duty to his customers "I'm giving the people of this country something they not only want but something they need."

Slander differs markedly from *The Staple of News* and *Sweet Smell of Success* in that all the naming in *Real Truth* is indeed the truth. The magazine's boast, inscribed in large letters in the reception area, "*Real Truth*: the only magazine that dares to publish all of it" is factual.²³⁴

²³⁴ That the magazine publishes facts that are verifiable is correct. However, the "all" doesn't refer to a comprehensive coverage of the facts of a situation; "all" in this context means the totality of scandalous information that can be used against the reputation of celebrities.

Jonson's satirical attack on the lack of veracity in the news reflects a more general scepticism as indicated in other plays such as *The Noble Spanish Soldier* when Cornego, responding to being asked whether he would trust the truthfulness of an almanac, replies "Nor a coranto neither, though it were sealed with butter, and yet I know where they both lie passing well" (4. 2. 62-3);²³⁵ and the truth in Hunsucker's column is clearly relative as indicated by jazz club owner Joe Robard's comment to Falco: "Oh it's a publicity man's nature to be a liar. I wouldn't hire you if you wasn't a liar." Remarkably, truth for Manley is non-negotiable: "Our job is to tell the truth." However, rather than promoting a truth which "shall make you free" – the line from John's Gospel is emblazoned on one of the walls of his office - his truth is the search for the evidence of private vices, hidden indiscretions and misdemeanours of celebrities which are in direct opposition to their public image or, in Scott's case, to his role as a TV host of a children's show. Manley is keenly aware of the paradox that the public expects their celebrities to be free from the very human frailties that are common to everyone. He also realises that with this expectation there is the concomitant craving to revel in any scandal associated with public figures. Perversely, Manley is one of the most perceptive characters in the film, as he understands the public's insatiable appetite for celebrity dirt and provides the necessary environment for the hunger to be alleviated, but he knows there will always be the desire for celebrity exposures.

In the film Scott makes an impassioned on-air plea to his audience to reject the vicious muck-raking of Manley and his ilk which appears to be effective; his manager catches up with him to say the switchboards are full of calls of support for him and condemnation of Manley. The publisher is neutralised when his mother, no longer able to tolerate her son's calculated destruction of people's lives – she is particularly affected by the loss of Joey, Scott's son - shoots and kills him. Any sense of the triumph of righteousness is clouded, however, by what is left unresolved at the conclusion. Manley has been silenced but he was not ultimately responsible for the sponsors of Scott's programme failing to support him, nor did he incite the schoolboys to bully Joey so brutally. The public, who we are told "calls all the tunes," is shown to be finally accountable for what happens to the Martin family. *Real Truth* can only survive because its readership endorses fully the celebrity cult and views the personal lives of those who appear on TV and in the movies as part of their entertainment package. Scott recognises

²³⁵ Thomas Dekker. *The Noble Spanish Soldier* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2006). The pun on "butter," refers to Nathaniel Butter, an industrious pioneer of news journals and pamphlets in Jacobean England.

the public appetite for scandal when he makes his on-air statement: “Every person in this country...who went to a news stand and put down 25 cents for a copy of *Real Truth* helped spread the poison that killed my boy,” but places the blame on the magazine, seeing the public as being unwitting victims of a poisonous and manipulative process. Manley’s view of course is that the public delights in gossip, that human nature is naturally voyeuristic and that he is simply responding to what the market desires.

Scott’s appeal is itself part of the wider drama initiated when Manley ruined his reputation with his disclosures about his juvenile crimes. The general audience’s endorsement of Scott’s emotional appeal is not necessarily a damning judgement on the immorality of Manley’s publishing activities; it is, rather, part of the dramatic conclusion of what they see as reality entertainment. The hero has endured setback and trauma only to emerge triumphant at the end and the audience feels obliged to reward this by showing their approval. However, the desire for scandal and sensation remains undiminished and the audience’s attention span being limited, it is unlikely that Scott’s victory over Manley will be conclusive. Indeed, the immediate trigger for Mrs Manley’s reaching for a gun is her son’s reaction to Scott’s appearance on TV; “It’s the biggest publicity break we’ve ever had.” He now has nationwide coverage and plans to work all night to capitalise on what he sees as a circulation-boosting opportunity. His murder, ironically, will provide the other sensationalist scandal publications mentioned by Manley as threats to *Real Truth* with powerful headlines; his killing, which was meant to prevent him from profiting from Joey’s death, will encourage the survival of his competitors. The one big story that Manley was trying to use Scott Martin to acquire has been broken. And so, it becomes clear, in spite of Seth, Scott’s manager, stating that public opinion was with them, that the unfolding drama which finally enmeshes Manley himself will pander to the public’s voracious appetite for the sensational and the scandalous. As Manley proclaimed: “Our readers want dirt.” The murder of a son by his mother will stimulate their interest.

Of the three distinct facets of naming that have been observed - gender, race and public naming - only in the last mentioned, in the texts themselves, is there presented an unequivocal view of the naming; the personalities, the processes and the pretensions of news commentary are castigated relentlessly. The sympathy of the audience is assumed to be with the victims of the powerful men who control the news parcelled out to the public and the ambiguities in the presentation of race and gender naming are not as evident. It is also notable that the centuries separating the Jacobean from the Twentieth Century appear negligible so that Joad Raymond's

description of *The Staple of News* applies equally to *Sweet Smell of Success* and *Slander*: "Jonson examines the cultural logic of print, satirising not just corantes, but the process by which news is exchanged, commercialised, commodified and obsessively consumed."²³⁶ The 'logic of print' appears remorseless in these texts.

²³⁶ Joad Raymond. *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 140-141.

Chapter Six

Sex, Power and Politics

While one of the most evocative of the prevailing images of the noir sensibility in film and, in terms of this thesis, on stage, is Raymond Chandler's streets darkened with something more than night - a disturbing image of intangible, undefined and dangerously unfixed threat - the primary, overarching location for the anxieties inherent in Jacobean drama and film noir is the Court for Jacobean drama and the City for film noir - the site where the various shadowed and disparate disharmonies converge and contest. The dark alleyways, both material and metaphorical, refer back inescapably to the perceived decadence of the Jacobean Court and the brooding malevolence of the noir City.²³⁷ They represent the actualisation of the atmosphere described by Chandler; in them the inferred menace of the streets becomes manifestly visceral. And in this unforgiving environment, "the individual is alternately lost and at home, a refugee from others; a lone human spirit...one among none."²³⁸ Thomas Churchyard in 1596 could be referring to the noir City when he says that the "Court is a maze of turnings strange/ a laborinth, of working wits;"²³⁹ the individual, alienated from others, from the environment and from the self, is often fatally compromised. To further complicate matters, both the Court and the City are highly seductive in their appeal as they appear to offer unfettered access to wealth, power and sexual gratification but once lured, the noir hero finds the desire lines become hopelessly entangled as longing exceeds the means of satisfaction. The magnificence of the Court/City is all artifice where

Authority, wealth, and all the spawn of Fortune,
Think they bear all the kingdom's worth before them;
Yet differ not from those colossic statues,
Which, with heroic forms without o'er-spread,
Within are nought but mortar, flint and lead.

(1. 1. 13-17)

These words find their latter-day equivalent in the soaring towers that dominate the noir landscape, where humans, dwarfed by the buildings, inhabit the concrete and asphalt canyons below. Joan Crawford's total disorientation in the opening scene of *Possessed* (1947) as distractedly she wanders the streets of Los Angeles, disengaged from the routines of the City, is one of many examples of

²³⁷ There are, of course, important noirs like *Out of the Past* and *The Postman Always Knocks Twice*, which do not feature the city as the centre, or even an important part of the action, just as there are plays that are not set in the Court, however, for the majority of the plays and films, the urban and courtly environments are crucial to their appreciation.

²³⁸ Andrew Dickos, *Street with No Name* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 63.

²³⁹ Thomas Churchyard, in Franco Moretti. *Signs Taken For Wonders* (London: Verso Editions, 1983), 72.

urban dislocation. Or, conversely, in *White Heat* (1949), there is the view as from a skyscraper when Cody, like a latter-day Chapman colossus, stands in a faux heroic triumphant pose on top of a huge tank in a petroleum refinery shouting: “I told you Ma I’d be on top of the world” before he is obliterated in an explosion. The primal and implacable energy of the City/Court is inexorable, the substantial product of competing individual lusts, dreams and obsessions which are overtly and covertly expressed; the fiery demise of Cody reflects the fate of any one person who defies its accumulated power. In spite of (or perhaps, given the often fatalistic attitude adopted by the protagonists, because of) this, the allure of this concentration of power is almost irresistible.

In films noir and Jacobean plays, the interaction between people and power is most often expressed sexually, and in many cases expressed in terms of deviant sex. An insatiable appetite for power is rarely presented without a concomitant sexually charged reference point. Here, amid disenchantment, criminal self-interest, the lust for control, elevated and blighted expectations, the personal and the political are inextricably linked; the desiring “body natural” seeks definition in the “body politic”. What is intriguing in *Bussy D’Ambois* is how quickly the reforming, satirical, political rhetoric of Bussy becomes conflated with expressions of his desire for Tamara, or, in *The Lady’s Tragedy*²⁴⁰ how affairs of state are swiftly fused with the Tyrant’s lust for the Lady. Sexuality and sexual deviancy act metaphorically to expose what is seen as a necessary relationship between people and power. The City/Court, as both lure and threat, provides the ambivalent space. In the first part of this chapter, the focus will be on the City/Court as corrupt place and then in the second, the relationship between Power, People and Sex will be examined in terms of sexualised, deviant space where corrupt/corrupted bodies define the environment. I will refer to two films in some detail: *The Racket* and *The Big Heat* and three plays: *Bussy D’Ambois*, *The White Devil* and *The Malcontent* for the first part of the discussion and then the films *Chinatown* and *Vertigo*, and the plays *The Unnatural Combat*, *Pericles* and *The Lady’s Tragedy* for the second.

As we have seen in the final moments of *White Heat*, the gangster Cody is incinerated just as he proclaims, with unconscious irony, his invincibility. He is the rogue threat to society who is spectacularly eliminated. *White Heat* establishes Cody as a marginalised, malevolent, dark force that acts on society from the rural and suburban perimeters. In the City, however, the battle-lines are

²⁴⁰ Also known as *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy*. In referring to this play as *The Lady’s Tragedy* I am following the practice of Lisa Hopkins in her book *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

indefinite and ambiguous; the threat from the inside is not so easily identified. In *Shoot to Kill* (1947) the integrity of City governance is compromised when the District Attorney is found dead in a car wreck with a gangster. The opening scene of *The Big Heat* (1953) features the graphic suicide of a policeman because he is troubled by his involvement with organised corruption. A layer of deception is added when his wife removes the suicide note for use as a means of blackmail (in a corrupt urban landscape worth is determined by utility and so a dead husband can be transformed into a valuable commodity). Both films begin with compromised, corrupt public officials, but it's the pervasiveness of corruption that is also alarming; the wife's callous opportunistic exploitation of her husband's death is perhaps more egregious than her husband's venality. It is the nature of city corruption that many people are implicated as crime involves networks of self-interest. The lone hand of Cody²⁴¹ is replaced by institutionalised crime figures who operate with the implicit and complicit support of members of the community.

Paroles come kind of high in election years they tell me

Intrinsic to the notion of the 'corrupt place' are the physical characteristics of the City. Soaring glass and concrete towers, dark canyon-ways, shadows, bright lights, glitz, glamour, glare, decay, opulence – all cities create avenues of display and dimmed-light hideaways. In noir, the City is an uncredited character, playing a rôle that is typified by indifferent menace; it is "malevolent space, in this desert of rock that supports no vegetation."²⁴² The stark contrasts in height, light and density disrupt continuity and provide for disharmony. Urban dwellers reflect their surroundings, being opportunistic, ambitious, venal, selfish, flamboyant, desperate and compromised. Crime and civic corruption flourish in this environment, responding to the tensions and opportunities which arise naturally from the fundamental contradictions and paradoxes that pertain to urban existence. Cities are "utterly in thrall to corrupt, parasitical political machines which are limp appendages to organised crime."²⁴³

²⁴¹ Cody works with a gang but they merely reflect his interests and obsessions.

²⁴² Jean Paul Sartre as quoted in David Reid and Jayne L. Walker, "Strange Pursuit: Cornell Woolrich and The Abandoned City of The Forties", p.71, in Joan Copjec, *Shades of Noir* (London: Verso, 1993). Sartre is referring to New York in the early 1940s.

²⁴³ Christopher, 161.

The nocturnal cityscape images that are the background to the opening credits of *The Racket* (1951) differ little from many opening sequences in noirs of the period. There is a difference in intent, however, as a connexion is immediately established between the City and corruption when one commuter comments positively on the newspaper headline ‘Crime Commission Meets with Governor’ only to have his companion cynically reply “Sure, sure.” In fact we soon learn there are two distinct and competing streams of corruption and organised crime in the city. Nick Scanlon is an old school crime boss who specializes in control through violence and physical intimidation. His rival, whom we never see on screen, is referred to only as the ‘Old Man’, and his methods are more restrained, in keeping with the ‘crime as business’ model.²⁴⁴ The opening and closing shots, over the credits, do more than present the urban backdrop for the action; they provide the metaphorical template for the film’s examination of the City as corrupted and corrupting space. The first image we see is of a car travelling down a darkened street, crossing an intersection with the traffic lights. Swinging in immediately behind the car is a street sweeper. Scenes of a city beginning its morning rituals – workers hosing and sweeping the streets, newspapers being loaded and then delivered – follow. The first words spoken - “Crime Commission gonna clean things up, “Sure sure” – act as a sceptical and realistic counterpoint to the initial images of a free press informing the public and of criminal dirt and filth being swept away. The Crime Commission’s determination to clean up the city is literalised as are the obstacles to their efforts – there are a number of examples of a character’s progress being impeded by traffic lights, pedestrian and railway crossings. We are invited to read the dramatic action through the visual tracking.

The final shot of the film, replicates and explicates the opening image of the car going down the street. It is now clear that the occupants of the car are Captain Tom McQuigg and his wife Mary and they are leaving the 7th Precinct police station having eliminated Scanlon and possibly interrupted the Old Man’s criminal activities. Although it is night-time, there is more light than in the opening shot and a shop sign “Civic Cleaners” is now clearly visible, reinforcing the visual impact of the street sweeper which once more swings in behind the policeman’s car.²⁴⁵ The city has been cleaned of corruption. However, the street sweeper doesn’t cross the street behind McQuigg but instead turns left, underpinning the realities of McQuigg’s final words: “Constant fight, constant struggle...tomorrow it starts again.” There are no easy answers and no finalities.

²⁴⁴ Scanlon and the Old Man are not rivals in the strict sense; Nick’s operations are overseen by the Old Man, who is a national crime figure. Their opposition stems from the methods employed; Nick’s way - the fist and gun versus achieving control through the appointment of bribed public officials and the use of corporate covers such as the Acme Real Estate Company, the approach taken by the Old Man..

²⁴⁵ The two film sequences are not identical and it would seem there are two takes of the one scene, thus I am referring to them separately.

Even though ostensibly the competing forces are the Governor and the Crime Commission, chaired by Harry Craig, opposed by the Syndicate controlled by the Old Man, the battle between the campaigners of the old school, Nick Scanlon and Captain Tom McQuigg, is central to the plot. There is also a struggle over territory, which accounts for the extreme level of violence associated with each protagonist. Nick proclaims that this is “his City” and no one really disputes this, though McQuigg responds by stating that the 7th is “his precinct.” And even though McQuigg is seen by the Crime Commission as their champion in their quest to fight corruption, he consciously limits his actions to fighting Scanlon only when the crime boss encroaches on his area. There is a binary split in the overall wrestling for power; the Crime Commission and the Old Man in their conflict are not confined to place as they represent the exercising of power across and uninhibited by territory. Their weapons are bureaucratic – subpoenas, writs and counter writs – and control depends on using and/or abusing the legal, political and commercial infrastructure of the City. Both parties eschew violence, preferring to exercise their influence through legitimate or quasi-legitimate means. McQuigg and Scanlon, conversely, engage in a brutal and bloody war of attrition wherein each antagonist is willing openly to flout the law. McQuigg tears up a writ of *habeas corpus* that would set Scanlon free, and illegally and contemptuously arrests Davis, the corrupt functionary, who brings the document to the police station where Nick is being held for murder. When Scanlon is endeavouring to implicate Irene in a crime, he tells Welsh, the Assistant State’s Attorney (and in the pay of the Old Man), “Let me know how many witnesses you want.” Even a police constable, a protégé of Tom’s, Bob Johnson, who is depicted as being otherwise ethically sound, is prepared to arrest Nick’s brother on a trumped-up charge. Scanlon and McQuigg are engaged in a bloody war – the numerous references to Johnson’s recent war experiences act allegorically to provide context for the struggle between battles for territory – while the war waged by the Crime Commission on corruption is largely metaphorical. Individual freedoms may be violated in war but the discrepancies in methodology cannot be maintained beyond the battlefield; McQuigg’s methods are inimical to the processes of law and, ultimately his ways are just as outmoded as Scanlon’s. The war on Scanlon has succeeded because it was over specific territory but the criminal interests of the Old Man, in that they mimic the legal, commercial and hierarchical structures of the City and are not bound by place, may be disrupted but are not permanently disturbed.

Nick’s claim that it is ‘his City’ and McQuigg’s rejoinder about ‘his Precinct’ determine the nature of the combat; it is located in specific, clearly identified spaces, both public and private. As befits his boast, Scanlon lives in a penthouse in the middle of the city, surrounded by his henchmen. There is a merging of personal and public place as this domestic site doubles as his office, whereas Johnson

and McQuigg retreat to the suburbs for their domestic space. Scanlon's social aspirations are clearly indicated by the incongruous presence, given the gangster environment, of a butler. Both men encroach on each other's space; McQuigg's house is bombed, he retaliates by invading Scanlon's apartment and assaulting his butler. In his domestic space, the lounge room, Johnson ambushes and kills two hoodlums sent by Nick to eliminate him. Finally Nick bursts into the police station and shoots Johnson. The invasion of domestic space, and the calculated use of this space as battlefield, as the site of manly disposition, is concomitant, consequently, with the displacement and enfeeblement of the female presence in the film. Both Mary, wife of McQuigg and Lucy, Johnson's wife, become passive bystanders as their homes are threatened. The policemen are conscious of the impact of their actions – Johnson allows his home address to be published in a news-story with the specific intent of luring Scanlon's hit-men – but see this as unavoidable. Choice and agency are denied to the women; they occupy domestic space without any sense of ownership. When challenged by Irene who demands to know of McQuigg: "What game are you playing?" he replies: "Just one. I want Nick Scanlon." Ironically it is Irene, displaced and the most marginalised of the women in the film, who offers the most resistance to the masculinisation of space, and it is significant that she and Dave Ames, a newspaper reporter²⁴⁶ present a more nuanced approach to gender and spatial relationships.

The violence in *The Racket* is inchoate and seen as primitive by those intimately connected with the opposing, more influential power brokers. The police are finally victorious but the manner by which victory was achieved is at best problematic. Nick Scanlon's death is the result of collusion between the Old Man and McQuigg²⁴⁷ so that what we witness at the end of the film is not the shooting of a ruthless crime boss as he tries to escape but his assassination. Nick, in police custody for the murder of Johnson, alive and able to inform on the Syndicate, poses an unacceptable risk to the Old Man; the police want revenge and the removal of Nick as an impediment to the work of the Crime Commission. Both parties want him dead. An opportunity is given to Nick to allow him to attempt an escape but he's shot by Turk, a corrupt detective in the pay of the Old Man as he tries to flee. A gun placed within Scanlon's reach and which he grabs to effect his getaway had been purposely unloaded. An assassination has been cynically arranged so that the crisis initiated by Nick's actions is managed. Turk, a policeman, though corrupt, is acting simultaneously in an official and counter-official capacity. Shortly after the shooting, showing exemplary timing, Craig from the Crime

²⁴⁶ Ames makes the least demands on Irene and tries to allow her to situate herself outside the strict gender stereotypes enforced by both Scanlon and McQuigg. The implied success of their relationship acts as a critique on the behavior of the protagonists.

²⁴⁷ McQuigg does not actively engage with the Old Man in this matter, but is aware of how he will act to protect his interests and doesn't stop Turk from killing Scanlon.

Commission arrives to serve subpoenas on Turk and Welsh. This attempt to establish process after the extremely problematic nature of the preceding events invites a response similar to the comments of the man in the opening scene – “Sure, sure.” The face of the City has not been essentially changed; the brutal battle between Scanlon’s “City” and McQuigg’s “Precinct 7” has been won and lost but at the start of the film both men were seen to be relics of a bygone era. This point is reinforced at the very end of the film when the car carrying McQuigg and his wife crosses the street but the street sweeper makes a turn; with Scanlon’s demise, McQuigg’s methods of combating corruption are no longer appropriate and so there is a parting of the ways. The City is constant; it remains as a contested site, even if the nature of the contest has changed. Whatever confidence we may have in the Crime Commission to effect change is lessened when we consider the possible identity of the ‘Old Man:’ “...it is hinted strongly that the city’s paramount crime lord...(he’s always referred to as “the Old Man”) and who is only glimpsed once, early on, portentously initiating a bogus “investigation” into political corruption, is the state’s governor.”²⁴⁸

The Racket is at pains to show that the main protagonists are products of the City who have known each other since childhood, who understand instinctively the nebulous and somewhat contradictory urban rhythms and seek to impose their particular authoritative meaning onto urban space. This in part accounts for the masculinisation of the environment and the violent intrusion into domestic space. The fight over territory is purely visceral. Their struggle is also necessarily connected to, but curiously distinct from, the overarching battle against corruption. McQuigg seems indifferent to the corruption associated with Welsh and Turk; he is vaguely contemptuous but also oddly tolerant of their quite blatant connections to organised crime. As already mentioned, his one aim is clear: “I want Scanlon.” Against a background of endemic, institutionalised and “respectable” corruption, Scanlon and McQuigg stand aloof, almost defiantly, recognising in each other that what links them in their binary opposition, distinguishes them from the more prosaic actions and procedures of the Crime Commission and the Old Man. So the ultimate outcome of their encounter does not determine the victory of Law and Order over urban corruption which is the concern of the Crime Commission as stated in the opening scenes. Nick was a brutal and vicious gangster but his downfall has about it an almost tragic hero dimension. Turk offers an epitaph for the slain man; “they always go too far” but it is this compulsion to make real his claim that the City was his and his vain efforts to forestall the challenges from the Old Man and the Crime Commission that may mitigate our total condemnation of his actions.

²⁴⁸ Christopher, 165. The logic of the film is clearly suggesting that the Old Man and the Governor are the same man.

In the Court as depicted in Jacobean drama there is no network of corruption with a clear line of authority which acts as a directly negative, competitive force in opposition to legitimate forms of government. Power in the Court is also unmistakably centred in one person – the monarch and “government is the product of the monarch’s character; it is the personalised conception of state.”²⁴⁹ Open defiance of the authority of that one person was dealt with swiftly, and ruthlessly. Avenues of power and influence beneath the absolute level, within the Court and Parliament, were labyrinthine and in this sense bore some resemblance to the fragmented and intersecting power lines within the noir City; nevertheless, the dominant position of the monarch within the Court is not replicated in film noir where there is a general reluctance to focus on individual political leaders.

The Court acting as the seat of corruption is a major premise of Seventeenth Century playwrights. The Court is the corruptive place where “men of honour (are) topsie turvie brought”²⁵⁰ and “...no man who remained completely honest, sincere, and upright was likely to prosper. To survive one needed to deceive and manipulate...Hypocrisy, double dealing, and guile were widely regarded as inherent vices of the courtier’s trade.”²⁵¹ Corruption has become elemental to the processes of the Court in much the same way as *The Racket* exemplifies the intrusive yet symbiotic relationship of vice within the legal and police procedural frameworks in the Metropolis. But what must be considered also is the lure provided by the Court/City; many people, despite their awareness of the ability of the Court/City to corrupt, seem powerless to resist the promise of power and glory, as is most powerfully illustrated in the following conversation between Monsieur and Bussy in *Bussy D’Ambois* where the King’s brother challenges D’Ambois to “...live as thrivers do at the well-head.” (1.1.83). The latter responds with a savage indictment of the Court:

At the well-head? Alas what should I do
 With that enchanted glass? See devils there?
 Or (like a strumpet) learn to set my looks
 In an eternal brake, or practise juggling,
 To keep my face still fast, my heart still loose;
 Or bear (like dames schoolmistresses their riddles)
 Two tongues, and be good only for a shift;
 Flatter great Lords, to put them still in mind
 Why they were made Lords: or please portly Ladies
 With a good carriage, tell them idle tales,
 To make their physic work; spend a man’s life

²⁴⁹ Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England 1603-1642* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 19.

²⁵⁰ ‘Fortunes Wheele. Or Rota fortunae in gyro,’ an anonymous satirical poem in Andrew Mcrae, “Political Satire in Early Stuart England: New Voices, New Narratives.” *Literature Compass* 1, Issue 1 (2003): 17.

²⁵¹ R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1987), 77-78.

In sights and visitations, that will make
 His eyes as hollow as his mistress' heart;
 To do none good, but those that have no need;
 To gain being forward, though you break for haste
 All the Commandments ere you break your fast:
 But believe backwards, make your period
 And Creed's last article, *I believe in God*;
 And (hearing villainies preach'd) t'unfold their art
 Learn to commit them - 'Tis a great man's part.
 Shall I learn this there?

(1.1.84-104)

D'Ambois returns to the heroic rhetoric of his opening soliloquy as he strips bare the fraudulent workings of the Court but Monsieur stifles his outburst with: "Thou hast the theory, now go there and practise" (105), at which Bussy quickly relinquishes his reforming stance and accepts Monsieur's offer of service and a position at Court, his desire for greatness now acknowledged as his prime motivation. Engagement with the Court/City inevitably involves compromise as the benefits of power, influence and privilege accrue to those who will sacrifice their principles for gain. The pursuit of greatness, in Bussy's case, involves the blurring of roles and identities as the public impinges on the personal. Thus Bussy can declaim against courtly abuse one moment, acquiesce in the power machinations of Monsieur and then, in a soliloquy following his departure, try to rationalise his behaviour by proposing that he will be able to reconcile contradictory impulses: "I may bring up a new fashion/And rise in Court with virtue." (125-26). The desire to be both principled malcontent outsider and powerful courtly insider becomes the dilemma for Bussy throughout the play though he resolves it temporarily in this scene privileging greatness above all else, concluding that "men that fall low must die/As well as men cast headlong from the sky" (138-39) – there is no gain in under-achieving, inverting the saw that death comes to all regardless of degree or wealth by claiming that the level of achievement is what distinguishes one's death. That Bussy is a problematic character is seen by A. R. Braunmuller as a means by which "Chapman can employ the hero as a scalpel drawn across the court's corrupt body."²⁵² And more specifically the playwright uses the French setting "as a mask, a mirror, or a medium for deeper reflection on contemporary politics."²⁵³

²⁵² A.R. Braunmuller, *Natural Fictions. George Chapman's Major Tragedies* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1992), 35.

²⁵³ Gilles Bertheau, *George Chapman's French Tragedies, or Machiavelli Beyond the Mirror in Representing France and the French in Early Modern English Tragedy*, ed. Jean-Christophe Mayer (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 114.

The inner turmoil experienced by aspiring courtiers such as D'Ambois was exacerbated by competition for places at Court as "the number of men seeking posts began to outstrip significantly the supply of patronage."²⁵⁴ Plays of this period are replete with talented, articulate, ambitious and disaffected young men who desire to ape, but are simultaneously repelled by, the ways of the Court: Bosola (*The Duchess of Malfi*), Vindice (*The Revenger's Tragedy*), Flamineo (*The White Devil*), Francisco (*The Duke of Milan*) as well as Bussy himself. These men become volatile as they attempt to reconcile interior contradictions and their instability makes the Court an even more dangerous space as the courtly appearance is shadowed by these unresolved tensions, which are then co-joined with the ever present courtly "world of sycophants, flatterers, spies and conspirators."²⁵⁵ In the corrupted place, individuals have difficulty in locating themselves within their environment and means of recognition become themselves unreliable, thus in the first scene of *Bussy D'Ambois* Maffé, Monsieur's steward, ordered to equip the new protégé appropriately for his new position, initially fails to interpret his master's orders because of Bussy's appearance, taking him for a poet, then an impoverished soldier and then a jester: this is an early indication of the pervading sense of identity confusion throughout the play. In this environment trust is absent as is certainty; darkened interiority infiltrates, disturbs and disrupts the exterior world.²⁵⁶ The Court is indefinite territory where identification is often confused and, as the Conjuror in *The White Devil* notes, where "Both flowers and weedes spring when the Sunne is warm" (2. 2. 56), the warmth of the Court patronage provides the necessary environment for the antagonistic opposites good and evil to flourish. Webster does not complete the biblical reference – that at harvest time the wheat and the weeds will be separated and the weeds destroyed – as in the Court there will be no reckoning for there is no discernable moral authority nor disinterested judicial process able to arbitrate against corruption.

John Marston in *The Malcontent* begins the play with a savage indictment of the Court that emphasizes its perverse mutability. The scene is set with "the vilest out-of-tune music being heard" which is followed by the entrance of Bilioso and Prepasso who address each other with a series of questions that serve as metaphorical markers of Courtly corruption: "Are ye mad or drunk or both?" "Are ye building Babylon here?" "Here's a noise in Court, you think you are in a tavern do you not?" "You think you are in a brothel-house, do you not?" (1.1. 1-5) Locations of despised otherness – madness, drunkenness, lechery, exotic deviancy (Babylon) are randomly selected as Marston makes literal what in other contexts would be the metaphorical representation of the Court. Here the

²⁵⁴ Smuts, 78.

²⁵⁵ Smuts, 78.

²⁵⁶ Identity confusion is well illustrated in the 1946 film noir *Shoot To Kill* where all the major characters except for Mitch, the crusading journalist, are not what they seem.

actual discordant music and the stench (“This room is ill-scented...So, perfume, perfume: some on me I pray.”(6-7) indicate the actual dissonance and disruption in the Court of Genoa. The three attempts to locate the Court – the madhouse, the alehouse and the brothel – situate us clearly in a highly compromised, corrupt and corrupting environment. These are also places where language becomes fragmented and ineffectual, where there is a disconnection between intent and execution and where disarticulation designates fraudulent inversion, a point made by Malvole when in answer to the question “Who dost thou think to be the best linguist of our age?” replies “The devil,” the prince of deception.

Marston’s depiction of the Court as corrupt space is far more visceral than Chapman’s, which stems from the deposed duke Altofront’s position, in the guise of Malvole, whose knowledge of the Court is intimate and from the fact that his desire for revenge colours his view of the courtiers whose loyalty to him was based solely on expediency. Thus Malvole describes Bilioso as “my old muckhill overspread with fresh snow? Thou half a man, half a goat, all a beast.” (33-35). His is the voice of the informed, involved insider, whereas Bussy knows by observation; he is the envious outsider. However, although there is some irony in Malvole’s invective against the court and courtiers, given that prior to the action in the play he was Duke of this same corrupted Court, it is apparent in the first act that Malvole, speaking as Altofront in soliloquy, is aware of the truth and appositeness of the words that Malvole uses. He revels in a new found freedom:

Well, this disguise doth yet afford me that
Which kings do seldom hear, or great men use –
Free speech. And though my state’s usurped,
Yet this affected strain gives me a tongue
As fetterless as is an emperor’s.

(1.3.154-8)

Processes of language that were decayed in the first scene and were seen as indicative of courtly communication have now been liberated through the artifice of the knowledgeable alter ego. But a distinction is made between the courtiers bound in courtly language and the unrestrained liberating language of Malvole, which speaks to the Court, to the usurper Pietro and to Altofront, the deposed Duke. It is significant that Pietro shares Altofront’s view of his adopted character:

..I like him,
faith, he gives good intelligence to my spirit, makes me
understand those weaknesses which others’ flattery palliates...
...he is as free as air.

(1.2.27-29, 1.3.2)

Marston eschews the possibility that corruption at Court may not implicate or be attributable to a duke, for Pietro is compromised and Altofront’s satirical lambasting, as Malvole, of courtly vices

shows that he was aware of these but did not attempt to eradicate them. However, in his binary roles as malcontent and duke, Altofront has the unique potential to act positively to address corruption in the commonwealth. Whether at the end of the play this potential is realised is a moot point – there is a strain of sententious moralizing in his final speeches that may suggest that this will not be the case.

Lead with your chin and don't compromise

Fritz Lang's 1953 film noir *The Big Heat* is similar in plot detail and mood to *The Racket*: detective hero fighting crime bosses who organise their activities to mimic legitimate business practice, isolation of the honest detective by corrupt city officials, bomb attacks on the detective's home environment, detective going outside the law to combat crime. There is also in both films the sense that the crime bosses are holding court in their homes as a display of their power and position. Nick Scanlon's apartment, with the attendant butler and courtier criminals, is both a symbol of his rise from poverty to riches and an exercise in intimidation. However, it is dwarfed by the police-guarded magnificent edifice that is Mike Lagana's residence in *The Big Heat*. His is truly a palace from where he directs his operations, entertains city officials and holds court for his minions. Dave Bannion is an honest, uncorrupted cop in a police force where the Commissioner is on Lagana's payroll and Bannion's direct superior is weak and meekly accepting of Lagana's brutal hold on the community. As a uniformed policeman says to Bannion; "Mr Lagana kinda runs things. I guess that's no secret." Lagana's dominant position in the City is exemplified by two imposing structures – his mansion and the apartment of his right-hand man, Vince Stone, which is also richly appointed. Both locations are able to transcend their domestic purpose and function as signifiers of power, coercion, nepotism and violence. Stone's habitat is, like Nick Scanlon's, aggressively masculine with only a veneer of the domestic. It is a place for meeting, planning, organising – the perverted mirror image of the rooms of government, a place where bribed public officials are given their instructions and their pay-offs. Lagana's is a pseudo- state governor's residence where the domestic is also a veneer, but ostentatiously so; his office is leather-bound book-lined with a portrait of his mother over an elaborate fire-place, a photo of his wife, plush furniture and grand surroundings. What is presented nonetheless is a carefully constructed *trompe l'oeil* for the real seat of power, as it is for Scanlon, is in the very heart of the city, in Stone's apartment. Here, in a richly evocative night-scene Lagana stands on the balcony surrounded by the glittering towers of the City skyscrapers plotting his next course of action with Stone. Again, as with Scanlon, Lagana projects himself as the

authentic power broker in the City. Lang destabilizes Lagana's pretensions, suggesting they are unfounded, by immediately cutting to the next scene where Bannion is standing outside a car wrecker's yard - once-luxury cars piled on top of each other, the mangled detritus of the urban environment and a predictive metaphor of his downfall.

The escalation of violence in *The Big Heat* occurs outside what might be deemed 'necessary violence' – that is, violence that is necessarily linked to the protection of Lagana's crime interests, violence that is business related²⁵⁷ - and is directly related to how Bannion and Lagana react to perceived threats to their respective domestic environments, their 'homes.'²⁵⁸ In response to a coarsely suggestive phone call made by one of Lagana's minions to Katie, Bannion's wife, he gatecrashes a party given by Lagana for his daughter. When Bannion says he has come to investigate a murder (which was ordered by Lagana), the gangster differentiates between his domestic and business personae: "I've got an office for that sort of thing...this is my home and I don't like dirt tracked into it." Establishing distance is essential for both men, although each is concerned only with his own coping strategy and is contemptuous of the other's attempts. Thus Bannion ridicules Lagana's use of henchmen to carry out his bloody work thereby distancing himself from the unpleasant, sordid reality. He also mocks the domestic artifice of the mansion: "We don't talk about those things in this house, isn't that right? It's too elegant, too respectable – nice kids, party, painting of Mom there on the wall." Bannion is determined to shatter Lagana's elaborate partitioning of his identities but he does not realise that he has acted similarly to protect his wife and family, and that he himself is as vulnerable, if not more so, to attack. Sarcastically he remarks to Lagana: "I've violated your immaculate home, is that it?" Lagana's reply – "That's exactly it" – indicates that he is already plotting retribution for Bannion's invasion. The next day Katie is killed in a car bomb that was intended for the detective. She is the first of a number of characters whose deaths can be linked to what has become a personal vendetta between two men trying to protect their home space.

The blurring of place, personal and public, as mentioned previously in this chapter, was an important element in *The Racket*, but whereas in the earlier film this was examined within the wider context of institutionalised corruption, Fritz Lang moves beyond questions of corruption to explore the human

²⁵⁷ This is not to suggest that the violence is not disturbing; the psychotic behaviour of the killers, Larry Gordon and Stone, ensures that the murders are particularly graphic.

²⁵⁸ For each man, 'home' represents more than house and family. To Bannion it offers suburban refuge from the realities of city class based crime (working class, barflies, low-lives, upper class hoodlums – a curious mix of childhood poverty graduating through crime to nouveau riche respectability), an environment where wife and child are protected. Lagana has created a grand mausoleum in honour of his mother and to remind him of his journey from poverty to riches; it is a refuge also, from the reality of criminal operations – his own.

cost of this blurring. The territorial fight between McQuigg and Scanlon was an extension of common childhood experiences and confirmed by their divergent and oppositional paths after adolescence; the struggle for dominance determines the invasion of domestic space. In *The Big Heat*, however, the protagonists are dangerously unstable individuals, bent on revenge – Bannion for the murder of Katie and Laguna for the violence perpetrated by Bannion in his home;²⁵⁹ the pursuit of Laguna as crime boss is now of secondary consideration. The narrowing of the focus and “the ferocity of the violence”²⁶⁰ are essential noir ingredients and highlight the conflicted nature of Bannion’s presence. In much the same way as Bussy is depicted by Chapman as a mass of contradictions, a highly gifted but complex man of action who is morally ambivalent, acting in contradiction to his rhetoric, the detective’s stated opposition to all Laguna stands for is compromised not so much by his actions but by his selective withdrawal from action and his manipulation of circumstances which nevertheless mimic the viciousness of his nemesis. There are seven people killed in the film but Bannion is directly responsible for only one death, Vince Stone, whom he kills in a shoot-out. Of the six remaining deaths, one, that of Duncan, occurs at the very opening of the film before Bannion appears and the other five are all, to varying degrees, attributable to him. I will discuss the collateral damage resulting from his actions directly but firstly I would like to focus on the curious examples of murder by proxy that occur in the film.

Bannion in his role of revenger employs some of the tactics adopted by Vindice in *The Revenger’s Tragedy* when the latter used the rivalries between the children of the Duke and Duchess as a device for fratricide and thus accomplished his ends without being directly involved. When Bannion finally corners the man who planted the bomb in his car which killed his wife, he does not avenge the murder immediately but says that “I’m going to spread the word that you talked. You’re out of business.” We learn later from Stone that the word was indeed spread and Larry Gordon was shot at the airport trying to escape. In this way Bannion adopts Laguna’s practice of distancing himself from the killing, a phone call, the word spreads and someone dies. Moral distinction between the two men’s actions becomes shadowed. The second murder by proxy is when Debby, Stone’s estranged girlfriend who then teams up with Bannion, shoots Bertha Duncan who has incriminating evidence that will destroy Laguna and has been blackmailing the gangster. Towards the end of the film, Bannion realises that Laguna will face immediate prosecution if Bertha dies and the documents she has in her possession are revealed. He had threatened Bertha that he would kill her but as he

²⁵⁹ Laguna orders his bodyguard George to evict Bannion. He reacts by beating up George and humiliating Laguna with George on the floor: “You want to pinch hit for your boy, Laguna?”

²⁶⁰ Tom Flinn, “*The Big Heat* and *The Big Combo*: Rogue Cops and Mink Coated Girls,” *Velvet Light trap* 11 (1974): 25.

confesses to Debby, he could not go through with it. He leaves a hand gun with Debby, ostensibly for her protection but she uses it to murder Bertha and thus bring down Lagana's empire. Colin McArthur²⁶¹ suggests that Bannion is the occasion of Bertha's murder; that Debby acts on his inferred suggestion and does what he is unable to do. It is unclear whether he refuses to kill because of moral or gender considerations – that he balks at killing a woman. That he allows (consciously or subconsciously) Debby to perform his rôle – a woman killing a woman appeasing his sense of appropriateness – further enhances our sense of uncertainty over his behaviour. Another point of similarity between *The Big Heat* and *The Racket* is that, as has been stated earlier, McQuigg employs likewise a distancing ploy to eliminate Nick Scanlon; Turk shoots a man who has been encouraged to attempt an escape.

What distinguishes Bannion's quest for revenge is that, unlike McQuigg in his determination to eliminate Scanlon, he is responsible for considerable collateral damage. As Grant Tracey notes: in the film "Bannion is responsible for every woman's death."²⁶² He is the honest cop fighting corruption but his failure to anticipate the consequences of his actions is strangely at odds with his awareness of the dramatic implications of his setting up of Gordon and Bertha. Bannion performs his prejudices when he interviews Lucy Chapman who casts doubt on the circumstances surrounding the opening suicide of Duncan; she is a barfly and is challenging the testimony given by Bertha, whose status as a grieving widow of a policeman is duly privileged by Bannion. His failure to protect Chapman serves to underscore the limits of his professional intuition and his macho display when he invades Lagana's home proves counterproductive as he fails to allow for the possibility of a counterattack on his own home, and his wife is killed in his place. His encounter with Debby Marsh is doubly tainted when their being seen together results in Vince Stone throwing the contents of a boiling coffee pot on her face, disfiguring her, and her death at the hands of Stone is directly related to her ongoing relationship with Bannion. It seems unfair to blame him for what happens to Debby, however, as Stone is a sadistic, bullying murderer and Debby pursued Bannion fully aware of the dangers if she were observed. There is an irony in the impact of Bannion as an 'homme fatale' as his is the most sensitive reading of women in *The Big Heat*, a film that "consistently reveals a sensitive awareness of the social position of women, and offers a moving, unobtrusive tribute to their

²⁶¹ Colin McArthur, *The Big Heat* (London: BFI, 1992), 74-75.

²⁶² Grant Tracey, "Covert Narratives to Contain and Punish Women in *The Big Heat* and *The Big Combo*," in *Film Noir Reader 4. The Crucial Films and Themes*, eds. Alain Silver and James Ursini (New Jersey: Limelight Editions, 2004), 125.

resilience, courage and tenacity.”²⁶³ These are qualities Bannion recognises as applying to all the women (with the exception of Bertha) with whom he comes into contact; he learns to look beyond his wife Katie as a template for womanly worth as he appreciates the moral strength of both Lucy and Debby. He also values the bravery of a minor character, Selma Parker, a crippled woman working at the car wreckers. Robin Wood considers her influence on Bannion as important since Selma is one of the few characters “whose motives are absolutely pure.”²⁶⁴ She gives Bannion key information after the male owner of the yard had refused to jeopardise his position by cooperating, and later in the film she places herself in danger by positively identifying Gordon. Selma’s handicapped status belies the significance of her actions and works metaphorically as an indictment on those who are able-bodied but crippled morally, from Bertha to Gordon, Stone, Higgins (the corrupt Police Commissioner) through to Lagana himself.

Attaching blame to Bannion for what is in essence the murderous behaviour of establishment hoodlums has the dual effect of distracting us from their gross culpability and also of tempting us to discount the dynamism of Debby in her rôle as revenger. It is this last element I now wish to discuss. Bannion, once he resigns from the police force and makes a point of not handing over his gun, acts as an investigative revenger, but it is Debby who carries out the revenge by shooting Bertha and throwing boiling coffee in Vince’s face. Her desire for personal revenge is ameliorated by her realisation that Bannion must, but can’t kill Bertha; she is prepared to act beyond her personal interest, in much the same way as Bannion is *not* prepared to act to achieve his own vengeance. Bannion sees bloody revenge as a diminishing of self whereas for Debby, revenge elevates her dramatic status and establishes her as heroic.²⁶⁵

Debby is the only character who undergoes significant change throughout the action. It soon appears that her initial vapid, alcohol induced languorous demeanour has been adopted to enable her to suffer Vince’s boorishness and Lagana’s cloying imperial dominance. Through her scarring, but more importantly, her appreciation of Bannion’s inherent decency – which prevents him from murdering Bertha – she matures into the more powerful presence in the second half of the film. In this way she immobilizes the tendency to infantilize feminine names – ‘Katie,’ ‘Debby’ – and thus diminish the female in the drama; she now displays great moral and physical strength. Her replaying of the action

²⁶³ Robin Wood, "Creativity and Evaluation: Two Film Noirs of the Fifties" in *Film Noir Reader 2*, eds. Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 1999), 102.

²⁶⁴ Wood, 104.

²⁶⁵ It is perhaps a weakness in the film that violence is perceived as the only means of destroying Lagana and that Bannion benefits from Debby’s convenient, deliberate destructive actions.

by scarring Stone, in the same way that he scarred her, not only immediately disables him and reduces his status, but also reveals the weakness of his reliance on violence as a means of establishing dominance. She has, furthermore, moved from a dependence on language to manipulate her environment to action; the attack on Vince emasculates him, then she uses language to enhance her power by describing for him how his experience will now mirror hers – and we perceive that their shared situation has no gender marking. Even though Bannion later kills Stone in a shoot-out, it is Debby who has confronted him. There is much truth in Christine Gledhill's comment on noir and neo-noir tendencies to "entertain the female voice and then to undermine it,"²⁶⁶ but in *The Big Heat* it can be argued that the attractive, barbed wittiness of Debby's voice early in the film, which is shown to be ineffectual, matures into purposeful and effective action by the film's end.

The significance of Debby's rebellion is heightened when we examine the prevalence of the inscription of the female body in the film. All the females in the film are marked: Lucy is found with burn marks on her body, Katie's body is burned, Debby's face is scarred, Selma is crippled, Vince stubs a cigarette on the wrist of a girl in the bar and both Debby and Bertha are shot. My focus is not on the shootings but on the disfigurement of women's bodies. In each case except Selma's, Vince or Larry has been responsible for the marking, whereby meaning is inscribed directly onto the body. Male ownership of the female body is assumed, so that the inscribing marks the female as property primarily, then the action also signifies direction – that the woman will enact male desire and be obedient. In Lucy's case inscription acts as punishment for giving information to Bannion and to ensure that her feminine leakage is stopped. Katie's body serves as a means to deliver a message to Bannion so that he is rendered ineffective.²⁶⁷ The inscribing of the bar girl – "a silencing act of cruelty"²⁶⁸ - relates to the punishment of those women deemed recalcitrant and the scarring of Debby derives from Vince's sexual jealousy, underpinned by his fear that his exclusive ownership of her is threatened, and his concern that she will betray Lagana as Lucy attempted to do. Vince inscribes Debby's body as damaged goods; his selection of her face as the point of inscription is directed at other males to mark her as deformed and hence undesirable. Debby and Lucy attain access to masculine power through exchange; their desirable bodies for security, money, clothes and a privileged lifestyle. Larry identifies this commercial arrangement when he offers to take up an option on Debby's services when Vince says, in deference to Lagana that he can get rid of her. "I'm

²⁶⁶ Christine Gledhill, "Feminism and Klute," in *Women in Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute, 2005), 109.

²⁶⁷ The car bomb was intended for Bannion himself but the sloppiness of the planning doesn't preclude action against Katie. If Bannion is killed, Lagana is delivered of an enemy and if Katie is the victim it will serve to hamper his investigation.

²⁶⁸ Dickos, 32.

a rebound man.” Vince destroys Debby’s currency as an object of exchange. Thus when Debby inscribes Vince’s body, it is not only in retaliation for diminishing her value but the scarring acts to mark him as her property, if only for the moment, and to determine his immediate future. His scarring does not diminish his value in terms of physical attractiveness, though this would have been a consequence; it diminishes his status as power-broker.

As has been noted, Selma is an influential minor character whose body is inscribed with disability, although, unlike the other female characters the inscription occurred in the pre-story of the film. She is the most physically vulnerable character in the film, and her signification seems to be described by her work environment – a wreck among wrecks. In the context of the world of the film, as articulated by the masculine power voices – Lagana, Higgins, Stone - her crippled, feminine status marks her as valueless. Yet, she identifies Gordon as the one who planted the car bomb which is crucial to the case against Lagana.

There is a curious inversion of gender stereotyping in *The Big Heat*; women’s voices in noir are often cast as untrustworthy and problematically leaky whereas men are deemed to be more taciturn and guarded with their speech, thus they are considered more reliable. Superficially the action in *The Big Heat* appears to endorse this gender cliché; the women talk and the men remain silent. However, the women who speak are courageous, principled and their speaking shatters a corrupt male world that tries to stymie opposition and revelation through intimidation, torture and murder. The males who reserve their counsel do so because they are bribed, compromised, fearful or apathetic. The barman at the nightclub is criminally negligent in his refusal to cooperate with Bannion during the initial stages of the investigation and notions of the specificity of male taciturnity are challenged when he immediately ‘leaks’ to inform Lagana of Bannion’s investigation into Lucy’s murder. Loose male voices are later responsible for Larry Gordon’s murder. The car wrecker refuses to divulge important information not out of misguided loyalty but because of a cowed sense of self-preservation. The Police Commissioner and senior policemen connive in the silence which kills; the women speak out to challenge the tyranny of Lagana’s rule and they are the privileged voices in the film.²⁶⁹ There is a deadly stifling of voices to ensure that the lines of corruption necessary for the survival of the hoodlum empire are unimpeded and women’s voices are critical in the dissemination of information which destabilizes this empire.

²⁶⁹ It is worth noting that there is one exception to the film’s positive portrayal of the female voice. Bertha Duncan prevents the police from reading Duncan’s exposé of Lagan’s criminal empire and works throughout the film to stifle the truth.

The Racket and *The Big Heat* are embedded in cityscapes wherein complex and antagonistic forces battle for survival and supremacy. Clear distinctions between authority, law enforcement and their nemeses, corruption and organized crime, become distorted; the organic nature of the City requires accommodation and where self-interest prompts self-preservation, there are always those ready to accommodate and be accommodated. Debby's simple maxim "I've been rich and I've been poor. Believe me, rich is better" is the determining factor in her arrangement with Vince Stone and it is only when Bannion dismisses her with "I wouldn't touch anything of Vince Stone's with a ten-foot pole" that she realises the consequences of her compromised position. Likewise Welsh in *The Racket* is the quintessential accommodator, beholden to the Old Man for his position but trying to maintain a working relationship with McQuigg. Opposition to corruption in *The Racket* emerges from those who have refused to accommodate criminal activity and their stance is collective. The Press and the majority of the 7th Precinct are unequivocal in their resistance to Scanlon and the Old Man²⁷⁰ and they are united in their quest. While there are those who offer some support for Bannion towards the end of the film – the ex-soldiers who rally to protect his daughter and the non-interventionist Lieutenant Wilks²⁷¹ – his struggle is as an individual with the assistance of individual, marginalised women. There is no collective rebellion against Lagana's strangle-hold over the City; his empire collapses not through the triumph of the law but because of the actions of a lone woman, Debby, who murders a 'sister under the mink,' Bertha Duncan. Hence, much of the darkness of both films stems from the denouements which feature convenient murders by proxy – Scanlon by Turk and Bertha by Debby. The detectives McQuigg and Bannion benefit from the killings but are not directly involved with their execution.

²⁷⁰ It is clear, however, that McQuigg's chief aim is to destroy Scanlon. The collapse of the crime syndicate is a secondary objective, one that will be a natural consequence of his toppling Nick. This assumption is shown to be naive.

²⁷¹ McArthur notes that Wilks's washing of his hands in a scene with Bannion as the lieutenant tries to soften his sergeant's approach to Lagana presents him as a Pontius Pilate figure. He is not corrupt himself but he absolves himself of the responsibility of knowing about Lagana's enterprises and of not doing anything to oppose his methods.

***O happy they that never saw the court,
Nor ever knew great men but by report***

The public areas of the Court and the City examined so far in this discussion have been predominantly and overtly masculinised space. However problematical the power relationships between the protagonists, however ambiguous and confused the interplay of the binaries legal - illegal, legitimate - illegitimate authority, good - evil, order - corruption, all action has taken place in substantially testosterone saturated environments. There is some modulation of the paradigm, as we have seen, in *The Big Heat* where Bertha, Lucy, Katie, Debby and Selma challenge the dominance of male exclusivity and privilege, though as we have also seen the cost is catastrophic with Selma being the only survivor. Still, their collective efforts have an impact on the male space and there is some mitigation in the film of the pervading atmosphere of machismo. In some works insistent strains of the feminine are more evident, more dynamic and more volatile. *The White Devil* by John Webster is one such work that presents a Court that is no less beset with jealousy, intrigue, naked ambition, murderous intent and competing desires than other tragedies of the period but the Duke of Bracciano's Court in Rome is a site that also encompasses the feminine, assuredly nonetheless, a feminine that is contentious, ambivalent and sexualised beyond what we see in *The Big Heat*. This leads to the sexualisation of the political as physical desire becomes enmeshed in lethal power plays and one consequence of this sexualisation is the dangerous elision of the private into the public and political.

The most outrageous example of sexualised feminine/political space is the opening line of Barkstead, Machin and Martson's *The Insatiate Countess*:²⁷² "What should we do in this Countess's dark hole?" The courtier Guido, in uttering these words, conflates sexuality, location – in the body and in the Court – with the political, at the same time demonstrating an emasculating sense of uncertainty. The "we do," however hesitant, carries with it the inference of group sex/rape suggesting a masculine fear of the unsettling nature of the presence of the Countess as sexual object and the darker connotation of fear of uncontrolled female sexuality. His words are very specific, collapsing the Court to the reality of (and proximity to) the Countess's sexual organs. Of course Guido is a coarse and free-speaking character who performs a clown-like role in the play, but the fact that his lines open the play, when considered alongside the pivotal role of the Countess and the

²⁷² Here I am following the editorial decision made by Martin Wiggins, ed. *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, that the play was written by William Barkstead and Lewis Machin from a draft by John Marston.

commoditisation of her body in the play, points to the significance of his initial observation – that the machinations at Court can be represented through sexually transgressive female behaviour. Furthermore, the instability occasioned by such behaviour poses a threat to privileged order within society. As Martin Wiggins observes, commenting on what he sees as the pretext for the execution of the Countess – her involvement in the murder of Rogero – “her greater offence lies in her sexual appetite and the active role she takes in satisfying it.”²⁷³ The Countess is hazardous territory as she has power because of her position and her body is the specific focal point for competing male desires. Guido’s question is the male proposition, but in the world of the play, it is the Countess who decides who is to be favoured and chooses accordingly; it is she who determines, with admittedly drastic consequences, what “we do.”

The opening lines of *The White Devil* in a similar fashion, feminise the Court, depicting Courtly processes as Fortune acting like a whore who “If she give aught, she deals it in small parcels/That she may take all away at one swoop” (1.1.5-6). Where the phallic statuary of Bussy’s first lines projected a purely masculine Court, Webster establishes a world where women, however problematic their presentation, are significant. Amid his raging against his banishment, Lodovico understands intuitively the access to power some women gain through manipulating masculine desire and so he claims that Vittoria as the woman Bracciano, the Duke of Rome, lusts after, “might have got my pardon/For one kiss to the duke” (43-44). The switch from Woman (Fortune) as capricious dispenser of favours to Woman as intermediary reflects the erratic and disturbed nature of Lodovico and shows that he regards his situation as being determined by Vittoria’s unwillingness to act and not as a consequence of the “certain murders here in Rome/Bloody and full of horror” (31-2) for which he was responsible. The female is still constructed according to male needs and prejudices. Lodovico is prepared to countenance corruption – Vittoria using her sexuality to intercede for him – as it serves his self-interest but condemns Bracciano’s for seeking to seduce her.

In his highly agitated state, Lodovico releases streams of conflicting and provocative images which help to determine our understanding of the activities of the Courts in the play. Intrigue, excess, extreme violence – “I’ll make Italian cut-works in their guts” (51) – deviant sexuality, betrayal and sexual licence are pronounced as normative. From this riot of extremes we are then ushered into Vittoria’s Court where she means to entertain Bracciano. It is significant that the first seat of power presented is a woman’s and it is the man who feels intimidated. The play then toys with notions of

²⁷³ Wiggins, xiii.

authenticity – Vittoria is later, during the trial scene, said to “counterfeit a prince’s court” (3.3.75) and we are told “her gates were chok’d with coaches, and her rooms/Outbrav’d the stars with several kind of lights” (73-4). Monticelso ends with the claim that “This whore...was holy” (77); that she set up an elaborate artifice to disguise her deviant sexual status. And yet, after Lodovico’s manic ranting we are more than prepared to engage with the articulate and composed Vittoria; Bracciano’s deference adds to our sense of her legitimacy. In fact, Webster invites us as audience to see Vittoria through Bracciano’s eyes, to feel excited and intimidated by her presence as he does, to be fascinated with her, which fascination can be partly explained by the thrill of trying to ascertain where artifice ends and reality begins. Our response to her is further complicated because of her involvement with Camillo’s death for “the allure of the woman...is paradoxically made more brilliant for the corruption implicit.”²⁷⁴ Her defence in the trial scene is a dramatic *tour de force* which earns her our sympathy even though we know she is guilty. The tensions involved with contradictory aspects of her presentation as hero/accomplice subvert any sense of a sustained authoritative moral voice in the play against which she may be judged. The shadow world of intrigue and subterfuge taints the major power players – Francisco, Monticelso and Bracciano - which in turn infects their amoral followers Flamineo and Lodovico. Even Cornelia who tries to enforce principled behaviour is brutally bested in argument by her son Flamineo. Monticelso’s claim that Vittoria’s court is counterfeit rebounds on him ultimately for there is no alternative, authentic, uncontaminated courtly presence to belie her pretensions.

Irrespective of the strict legitimacy or otherwise of Vittoria’s court, Webster places emphasis on how courtly public space becomes transformed into an eroticised, intimate and, importantly, exotic environment. The stage directions have Zanche, Vittoria’s Moor servant, lay out a carpet then place upon it two fair cushions for her mistress’s meeting with Bracciano. For an Early Modern English audience who had already encountered the exotic in the setting of the play in Italy, which “mainly signified in Renaissance England...another country, a country of others, constructed through a lens of voyeuristic curiosity through which writers and their audiences explored what was forbidden in their own culture,”²⁷⁵ there was an exponential increase of exotic otherness as exotic space becomes eroticised and made explicitly sexual. The sense of the audience as voyeurs, referred to by Jones, is further heightened by the presence of two groups of voyeurs onstage, Zanche and Flamineo, watching and approving, and the hidden Cornelia, shocked with what she is witnessing. The level of

²⁷⁴ Ann Rosalind Jones, “Italians and Others,” in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, eds. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 255.

²⁷⁵ Jones, 251.

sexual excitement increases as Zanche and Flamineo provide a running commentary – “See how they close,” “most happy union,” “Excellent./His jewel for her jewel” (a response to Bracciano’s obscene offer to “change/My jewel for your jewel”) – on the love-making. This device also enables Webster to indict Vittoria for the subsequent murders of Isabella and Camillo when she tells Bracciano of her dream which is in turn interpreted for us by Flamineo: “Excellent devil./ She hath taught him in a dream/To make away his duchess and her husband” (1. 2. 256-9). In effect, Vittoria seems to be validating Lodovico’s assertion that the order of his banishment would have been revoked if she used her sexuality to intervene on his behalf with Bracciano. The eroticism of this scene is now darkened with the implied violence of Bracciano’s reaction to the dream:

You are lodged within his arms who shall protect you,
From all the fevers of a jealous husband,
From the poor envy of our phlegmatic duchess
(1.2.260-2)

‘Arms’ and ‘protection’ continue the euphemism of Vittoria’s ‘foolish, idle dream;’ underscoring the proffered shielding sexual embrace is the promise of ‘arms’, weapons, that eradicate the threat posed by Camillo and Isabella. The protection is political as well as personal as the Duke promises to seat her “above law and above scandal.” Bracciano, an astute politician, cancels the legitimate claims of ‘husband’ and ‘duchess’ by positioning them through the inapt (and unjust) signifiers ‘jealous’ and ‘phlegmatic’ as threats to Vittoria. His protection then becomes aggressive action as he arranges for their deaths. The expository device of the dumb show is employed by Webster to show the deaths as in a conjured vision with Bracciano as the audience, a further exercise in stage voyeurism where the implied sexual violence of the previous scene is realised. Each violent death has a sexual overtone; Isabella’s inhaling of poisonous fumes as she tries to kiss Bracciano’s portrait comes from her desire to “feed her eyes and her lips” on his image, and Camillo’s demise as he is stripped to mount a vaulting horse is replete with sexual innuendo and is also suggestive of Bracciano being ready now to take his place to ‘vault’ Vittoria.

Slippages of the personal into the political and vice versa abound in the play and the distinction the conjuror draws between the ‘passionate’ death of Isabella and the ‘politic’ assassination of Camillo is lost on Bracciano as he signalled both deaths necessary for him to have unimpeded access to Vittoria. His obsession with Vittoria has the effect of destabilising his political position as Francisco recognises:

We send unto the duke for conference
‘Bout the levies against the pirates, my lord duke
Is not at home, - we come ourselves in person,
Still my lord duke is busied.

(1.1. 84-7)

The rebuke is for his neglect of state duties. Bracciano himself declares to Vittoria, as we have seen, that he will place her above the law and

...nor shall government
Divide me from you longer than a care
To keep you great: you shall to me at once
Be dukedom, health, wife, children, friends and all.

(1.2. 265-8)

Regardless of this protestation, because of his position, Bracciano cannot help but turn “his private desires into political acts.”²⁷⁶

In *The Racket* and *The Big Heat*, there was constant blurring of the lines between the personal and the political as police and mobster/officials involve the personal in their struggle for domination. Francisco and Monticelso’s public actions are also governed by their personal antipathy to Bracciano and Vittoria and desire for the revenge of the murders of Isabella and Camillo. Bracciano does not so much allow his decision making to be affected by his lust for Vittoria, rather he considers political and familial considerations relevant only when they interfere with his love. Herein lies the nub of the vehement opposition to the Duke of Rome and his mistress. Bracciano, in effect, substitutes Vittoria and her brother/pimp Flamineo for the legitimate wife Isabella and their lawful son Giovanni, creating what Monticelso refers to in the trial scene as Vittoria’s ‘counterfeit court.’ This is perceived as a direct challenge to courtly order and legitimacy, primogeniture, and established social patterns of behaviour and common decency. “Brachiano and Corombona represent a new form and style of power, in Brachiano’s flaunting of his wealth, and Corombona’s eloquent defiance in court of the sententious and mystifying hypocrisies of the old order, and her unapologetic commitment to her own self-interest.”²⁷⁷ Consistent with the blurring of the political and the personal, the motivation for such a challenge is not based in political theory or occasioned by the emergence of an unfranchised power bloc seeking recognition but is centred in desire, antipathy and in the case of Flamineo, naked ambition. The reactive representatives of authority in the play, Francisco and Monticelso, similarly compromise their political standing by privileging the personal over the politic. It is significant that the authenticity of both men’s power is undermined by their involvement in their own counterfeit activities. The Arraignment of Vittoria, as it is named at the start of Act Three, Scene Two, could also be considered, in a wonderfully punning sense, a counterfeit court.

²⁷⁶ Sandra Clark, *Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 126.

²⁷⁷ Margaret Rustin and Michael Rustin, "Sibling Catastrophes: an Essay on two Jacobean Tragedies." *Costruzioni Psicoanalitiche* 13: 31-52, (2007), 8.

Lacking any substantial evidence, as Monticelso admits – “We have nought but circumstances/To charge her with, about her husband’s death” (3. 1. 4-5) – they resolve instead to destroy her reputation, employing the trappings of the court process to grant gravitas to the stage-managed proceedings. As will be shown presently, however, the trial is more burlesque than solemn occasion. To reinforce the confusion of the ‘real’ with the ‘fake’ later in the play, as a necessary part of the bloody conclusion, Francisco plays a counterfeit Moor to enact his ‘rough justice.’

Intriguingly, the trial scene is the closest approximation in the play to what might be expected of a formal ‘Court.’ There are foreign ambassadors and dignitaries present, and the formal proceedings involving the important power brokers provide us with an overwhelming sense of stately occasion. Webster then immediately makes farce out of the formal solemnity of the setting: there is no seat for Bracciano, forcing a comical search for one. The lawyer accusing Vittoria opens his address in Latin which is successfully challenged by Vittoria and so he is made to change into the vernacular but insists on using ludicrously incomprehensible jargon: “...this...diversivolent woman/ Who such a black concatenation/Of mischief hath effected, that to extirp/The memory of’t, must be the consummation/Of her and her projections” (3.2.28-32), so ridiculous is his performance that eventually he is dismissed from the court. Monticelso then assumes the roles of both judge and prosecuting lawyer, a situation to which Vittoria quite rightly objects. Resonances abound in this scene as slippages occur between ‘Court political’ and ‘Court judicial’, between the roles of Monticelso as cardinal (with temporal/spiritual responsibilities and powers) and as judge/prosecutor, Bracciano as part of the gathering of dignitaries to witness the trial of Vittoria for the murder of Isabella and Camillo and as their murderer, and Francisco as brother of Isabella and judge of Vittoria. This disturbing indeterminate and antagonistic distribution of roles is ridiculed by the playwright when Flamineo’s immediate response to the mention of Vittoria’s bawd – “Who I?” indicates his true role as procurer but is relieved when it is clear Monticelso is referring to Zanche. Using comedy Webster highlights a series of deadly dislocations as the intrigues of the various ‘courts’ collide and rebound with ever increasing velocity. It is therefore unremarkable that amid all this perplexity the reality remains - Vittoria is guilty; distractions aside, there is no doubting that she is heavily implicated in the deaths of Isabella and Camillo. Her culpability is less evident due to her superiority in the rhetorical battle with her accusers in the court and to the inability of her opponents to provide an effective and untainted moral counterpoint to her obvious duplicity. Within the trial, where justice is shown to be a sham, the endorsement of Vittoria given by the English Ambassador – “She hath a brave spirit” (140) – is at the same time wonderfully ironic and a fair assessment of Vittoria’s ambiguous place in a terminally compromised court environment. In her parting words,

Vittoria further destabilises the notion of ‘court’ by asserting she can through the power of her imagination transform the house of convertites to “make it honest to me/Than the Pope’s palace” (291-2). Because of her integrity, she argues, a truer sense of court can be said to reside within her body and the accusation levelled at her by Monticelso of previously establishing a ‘counterfeit court’ rebounds on him, for his court, lacking honesty compared to hers, is therefore less genuine.

There has been general critical agreement that the corrupt foreign courts depicted in so many Jacobean plays are satirical representations of the Court of King James 1, that the flattery, bribery, criminal manipulation of justice, the tainting of individuals and the blighting of careers performed on stage reflected the experience of the Early Modern English Court culture under James. “Dramatists had remarkable latitude in presenting the most damning portrayals of modern court life that English theatre ever produced – an admonitory mirror for the age.”²⁷⁸ The specificity of the attack on the English Court by dramatists such as Marston, Middleton, Chapman, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher through the portrayal of the stylised Continental European ‘corrupt places’ differs therefore from the generic characterisation in noir of City corruption as endemic and unlocalised. (The impact of the Kefauver Senate Committee hearings, “which exposed the extent of US organised crime and featured crime syndicates organised along the lines of legitimate business,”²⁷⁹ was evident in such films as *The Big Heat* and *Underworld USA* (1960) where the national nature of corruption was emphasised). Playwrights and filmmakers showed themselves to be deeply disturbed by the corruption that seemed to be intrinsic to the Court/City environment and sought to convey their anxieties through depicting acts of extreme violence. The focus now will be on how sex and sexual deviancy become means of heightening our understanding of the destructive nature of political corruption.

My incestuous fires Towards her are quite burnt out

While the representation onstage of acts of sexual deviancy was no doubt part of the box office appeal of many plays of the Jacobean period (pleasing to theatre managers intent on profit), the corruption of the body, especially the female body, was part of a complex

²⁷⁸ Tricomi, xiii.

²⁷⁹ Jim Hillier and Alastair Phillips, *100 Film Noirs* (London: Palgrave, 2009), 25.

metaphorical indictment of the morbidity of the processes of the Court. Linda Levy Peck notes the connexions made between decadence of the Court and the deviant body: “The earliest definitions of corruption included the corporeal and referred to the decay of the body: when applied to the body politic...the concept signified both corrupt practices and the corruption of the political system.”²⁸⁰ Significantly, notions of corporeal corruption are grounded in the abuse of the female body by male protagonists so that “...court corruption is symbolically centred in the idea of transgressive eroticism, depicting a locale of illicit sexual relations where rape, adultery and incest make up a world of ‘strange lust.’”²⁸¹ The abused female body becomes a metaphor for the abuse of power by those who act as tyrants; the sexploitation of women’s bodies draws our immediate attention to the perversions of the political process.²⁸² Even though the body is forcibly acted upon, there is in the texts examined here, with the exception of the daughter of Antiochus in *Pericles*, resistance. Bodies are corrupted through violation; the desires of the powerful males forcing physical compliance of the female, and “so the tyrant turns his private desires into political acts”²⁸³ which are then construed as symptomatic of more widespread Courtly corruption. My focus will be on the metaphorical use of corrupt bodies to impugn the integrity of the State and so I will not be investigating the implications of reading the female body as the seat of corruption, nor of the vastly problematic nature of gender relations arising from such a reading. However, the first line of *The Insatiate Countess*, discussed earlier in this chapter, which cites Isabella’s ‘dark hole’ as the body penetrable, but then postulates that the woman-as-woman is unreadable or impenetrable, highlights the anxieties that emerge from inherently contradictory attitudes to women that are the consequence of male fear, ignorance and thwarted, confused sexual desire. The extreme violation of the female body through incest and necrophilia is an attempt to rob women of agency through their being defined primarily as adjuncts to obsessive and destructive male desire and as the exclusive possessions of self-selected males.

²⁸⁰ Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 162.

²⁸¹ Michele Marrapodi and A.J. Hoenselaars, *The Italian World of English Renaissance Drama: Cultural Exchange and Intertextuality* (London: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 199.

²⁸² There are examples of women who rebel against the view of women as acted upon, adopting a more dominant role though the use of deadly substitute phalluses; Evadne in *The Maid’s Tragedy* who uses a knife to assassinate the King and Meg in *Gun Crazy* whose prowess with a gun unsettles the otherwise dominant males in this film noir. Their rebellions however are short-lived and their actions are re-interpreted as pointlessly aberrant after their deaths by the males.

²⁸³ Clark, 126.

The Unnatural Combat, *Pericles* and *Chinatown* feature fathers as abusers of those closest to them – their daughters. Mothers are absent and there is the suggestion that the daughters are wife substitutes for men who occupy important power positions in their communities. There is a blurring of their perverse roles as parent/daughter-seducer and their tyrannical wielding of political power so that the abusive incestuous father cannot be separated from the political elder²⁸⁴ who wants to impose his will on others. In the texts, the daughters can be seen to represent the commonwealth of citizens who suffer from the resulting chaos and disorder; the acts of the fathers have dire political and social repercussions. The fouled State is immediately apparent in the depiction of the court of Antiochus in *Pericles* by George Wilkins and William Shakespeare as a charnel house where the severed heads of the failed suitors adorn the stage in the opening scene, indicative both of the odium of the King's regime and the horrific waste of this generation of young men. The fraud of a father offering his daughter for a marriage that he has no intention of honouring strikes at the heart of the validity of the Court. Antiochus presents his daughter as a body to arouse the sexual desire of the young suitors whereby he achieves sexual pleasure in their arousal and satisfaction in denying them access to the body that he alone is to enjoy. The ironic futility of such an attitude is shown by Jeanie Moore: "The physical violation of a daughter is patriarchal power in a most abusive form, but the abuse is the very act which destroys the patriarchy...When Antiochus keeps his daughter to himself, killing all her suitors, he eliminates the possibility of his own legitimate posterity."²⁸⁵ A primary justification of patriarchy, that the father will act as protector, providing the necessary moral and physical strength to ensure the security and well-being of the society, as well as legitimising appropriate sexual unions for progeny, is thus undermined. Antiochus and Malefort in *The Unnatural Combat* seek to circumvent established patriarchal avenues of generation by ascribing to themselves the exclusive access to their daughters' sexuality – they are to be fathers and husbands, their daughters to be daughters and wives. This stifling of the regenerative process through the commandeering of all aspects of patriarchal agency creates a barren void, a tainted infertile environment that is most powerfully demonstrated in the grisly display of severed heads that adorns the court of Antioch. This is a place where the energy and vitality of youth is laid waste, as Antiochus himself admits pointing to the remains of the suitors:

Yon sometimes famous princes, like thyself

²⁸⁴ Antiochus, Malefort and Noah Cross are all mature powerful elders of their communities but they have not gained wisdom with their ageing.

²⁸⁵ Jeanie Grant Moore, "Riddled Romance: Kingship and Kinship in "Pericles,"" *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 57, no. 1 (2003): 37.

Drawn by report, adventurous by desire,
 Tell thee with speechless tongues and semblance pale
 That without covering save yon field of stars
 Here they stand martyrs slain in Cupid's wars
 And with dead cheeks advise you to desist.

(1.1.77-82)

As in *The Unnatural Combat* where the destructiveness of Malefort's incest is compounded by his killing of his son, so too is the perfidy of Antiochus's incest made more evil by the wilful and deceitful²⁸⁶ destruction of the young suitors. Our sense of the corruption of the court is intensified through our understanding of the self-serving viciousness of the men in powerful positions.

While Antiochus is presented as a vile tyrant, his lusts indistinguishable from his tyranny, the character of Malefort is much more complex. Both men are condemned in the plays for their defiance of patriarchal continuity, for by their actions they interfere with and disrupt the cycle of fertility and generation, the passing of power from father to son. However, Malefort presents a far more dangerous challenge to the community as, unlike Antiochus who is conscious of feeling some guilt for his transgressions, the Admiral rationalises that had he "Injoyd what I desir'd, what had it beene/But incest?" (5.2.15-16); that he stood "accomptable for greater sinnes" (17). He finds justification for his incestuous desires in the sexual practices of the ancient gods and in teeming Nature:

...The gallant horse
 Covers the Mare to which he was the sire,
 The bird with fertile seed gives new increase
 To her that hatch'd him. Why should envious man then
 Brand that close act which adds proximity
 To what's most neere him, with the abhorred title
 Of incest?²⁸⁷

(29-35)

David Hopkins notes that Montaigne and philosopher Pierre Charron would not necessarily have disagreed with arguments from Nature but "Man should avoid incestuous unions,

²⁸⁶ Antiochus's daughter can only be won if the suitor is able to decipher the riddle. If he cannot, he dies but if he does comprehend he will also die as he will realize that what is described is the incestuous relationship of king and daughter. The suitor who reveals the secret will be killed. The challenge is therefore patently dishonest. Pericles is spared because he intimates to Antiochus that he knows the answer to the riddle but does not disclose this to the court. He wins a temporary reprieve.

²⁸⁷ These lines and the justification of incest through comparisons with nature are taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book 10. James Gresham also published a version of this story entitled *The Picture of Incest. Lively Portraicted in the Historie of Cinyas and Myrrha* in 1626. In Ovid, curiously, it is the daughter Myrrha who lusts after her father the King Cinyras. This inversion further emphasises Theocrine's innocence and the culpability of Malefort in his daughter's rape and death.

Charron goes on to suggest, not because they violate Natural Law, but because he must, for the sake of social order, respect those customs and laws which obtain in the community in which he lives.”²⁸⁸ And, in the light of his killing of Malefort Junior, together with his domination of Theocrine, we see the attempts to rationalize his position as specious. The assertive ‘maleness’ of his examples is instructive as he envisages a patriarchy where the expression of power is indistinguishable from the expression of one’s sexuality which is in turn unrestricted. In all of his self-justification therefore Malefort fails to personalise his daughter Theocrine. She is objectified as the body that arouses him, causing his “fires” to “breake out with greater fury” (21-22). His desire to possess her as his wife/lover cancels out his ability to see her as ‘daughter,’ and his aberrant behaviour is consistent with past actions: we learn that he has murdered his first wife to steal the mistress (Theocrine’s mother) of his friend Montreville. He kills his son in single combat to prevent him from revealing the truth of his mother’s death and he hands Theocrine over to Montreville, a man who will rape her with such violence that she dies. Theocrine initially exercises choice when she is engaged to Beaufort Junior, the son of the Governor of Marseilles, but that choice is taken away from her when Montreville, at the urging of her father, forcibly abducts her. Theocrine’s agency through choice being denied, male desire is then embodied in her as the two middle-aged men dispute their rights to access her and as in *Pericles* there is also the generational struggle between the older father/father figure and the younger more appropriate suitor. After the brutal rape, Theocrine declares to her father that he should not approach as she is “infectious.” Massinger, in a telling example of Early Modern intertextuality, employs Beatrice-Joanna’s line from *The Changeling* “Oh come not near me, sir, I shall defile you,” but with the key substitution of “I am infectious” (198), establishing a clear distinction between the shame felt by Beatrice-Joanna, the suicidal sense of dishonour exhibited by other raped women in Jacobean tragedy, and the just anger shown by Theocrine. By “infectious” she does not mean that the fault can be located within her body, nor that she is in any way responsible for her body being as a vessel for Montreville’s lust and his desire to revenge himself on her father – she curses him for his abuse of her and asks her father “What offence/...did I commit?” (207-8); she declares her innocence and assigns blame emphatically to those who deserve it. So her being ‘infectious’ does not detract from her integrity, nor does it imply that she will contaminate others as she states:

To looke on me from a distance is as dangerous

²⁸⁸ David Hopkins, "Nature's Laws And Man's: The Story Of Cinyras And Myrrha In Ovid And Dryden,," *The Modern Language Review* 80, no. 4 (1985): 795.

As from a pinnacles cloud-kissing spire,
 With giddy eyes to view the steepe descent,
 But to acknowledge me a certain ruine.
 (199-201)

What happened to her was corrupt, but her body has not been corrupted in the action and in these lines she changes the focus from her violated body to the observer's horror at seeing her defiled. The infection lies in those who conspired in violating her. These lines express a revulsion at the separation that now exists between what she has been reduced to here and what she was before. Her body has been a means of exchange between powerful men and in conforming to the society's expectations of her gender she is now 'a certain ruine,' a discarded piece of property. She recognises the inequity of her situation as she confronts her father: "...with my last breath/Give me leave to accuse you" (206-7). Her death is not a suicide caused by shame; she implicates her father and curses Montreville, her death being a direct consequence of the violence of his actions in raping her. This repudiates any suggestion of the perfidious female body, whereas in *Pericles* there is some sense of collusion between Antiochus, his daughter and Pericles if only in the sexual arousal experienced by Pericles so that "he has been tainted by an unhealthy desire, and...even his proximity to the incestuous evil has infected him."²⁸⁹ That the 'infection' is outside Theocrine is illustrated by the assertion made by Montreville that he was merely enacting the desires of her father. Through Theocrine, Massinger is examining the devastating impact on the populace when tyranny is unchecked, the incest and rape in the play signifying the corruption that can attach itself to any court.

In *The Unnatural Combat* and *Pericles* there are examples of righteous fathers to offset the perverted villainy of Antiochus and Malefort. Pericles, through his traumas physical and psychological, shows himself to be an honourable man and is eventually reunited with his daughter and his wife, their re-ordering of the world of the play offering a dramatic counterpoint to the moral and political chaos resulting from Antiochus's incestuous relationship which is exposed in the opening scene. Malefort and his disastrous and fatal family dealings are contrasted with Beaufort Senior and Beaufort Junior who combine reason and affection with integrity; the governor is a kind and loving father and the son dutiful and respectful.

²⁸⁹ W. B Thorne, "Pericles and the "Incest-Fertility Opposition," *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 22, no. 1 (1971): 49.

There are no correspondingly redeeming parental figures in *Chinatown* to obviate the tyranny of the authorised sexual deviancy; Noah Cross is a murderous, highly influential power broker, an incestuous father whose violation of his daughter and potentially, his grand-daughter²⁹⁰, while shocking, is explained away by Walsh at the end of the film: “Forget it, Jake – it’s Chinatown.” This is a confused, compromised world, indifferent to concerns of justice. Jake Gittes, the private detective, only begins to comprehend the scale of Cross’s evil when it is almost too late to act and the measures he takes to try and protect Evelyn, Cross’s daughter, are totally ineffectual and he inadvertently contributes to her demise; she is shot and killed in Chinatown, significantly, by a policeman who misreads the situation. Chinatown acts as a metaphor for the moral, social and political mayhem of Los Angeles; it is a place where, as Gittes notes, “you can’t always tell what is going on there...I thought I was keeping someone from being hurt and actually I ended up making sure they were hurt.”

Not only is Cross left unpunished at the conclusion, his exit from the scene is almost triumphant as he escorts his grand-daughter/daughter Katherine away from the chaos of his own creation, his ‘respectability’ untarnished, his access to power and his progeny unfettered. Malefort’s incestuous desires and Antiochus’s acts of incest do not survive the action of the play; their destructions mark the limits of political tyrannies that are expressed, in both metaphorical and real senses, in incestuous relationships. Jacobean theatrical sensibility, sensitive to questions of censorship, excoriates political corruption through depicting deviant sexual practices of powerful men, whereby the focus is on such aberrant behaviour – the metaphor is as important, in the dramaturgy, as the reality it evokes. We recoil from the shock of the incest and through our involvement with the personal the nature of political tyranny and corruption is revealed. As director of *Chinatown*, Roman Polanski similarly establishes a structural correlation between incest and abuses of power but as Vernon Shetley argues “we might also see Cross’s treatment of his daughters as the introjection into the family of the values that prevail in his business dealings.”²⁹¹ Thus it is “the most frenzied and amoral pursuit of wealth in the public sphere”²⁹² that finds its ‘natural’ expression in incest. The linking is not, therefore, so much metaphorical as causal, but for an audience the impact is the same, we equate gross abuse of power with gross abuse of body and vice versa.

²⁹⁰ Through incest with his daughter, Evelyn, Noah Cross fathers another daughter, Katherine, who is therefore Evelyn’s sister, her daughter, and grand-daughter/daughter to Cross.

²⁹¹ Vernon Shetley. "Incest and Capital in 'Chinatown,'" *MLN* 114, no. 5 (1999): 1106.

²⁹² Shetley 1106.

For Shetley the dialectics of *Chinatown* are centred in power struggles: “*Chinatown* proposes that capitalist accumulation, far from being the basis of social organisation, is in fact its destroyer...the appropriation of public property for private ends becomes, like incest, a crime that violates the entire social contract.”²⁹³ We are therefore not asked to read the public crimes through the private, as in *Pericles* and *The Unnatural Combat*, but to see the incest as the corroboration of what we already know. However, Michael Eaton avers that “The rape of the land is not merely mirrored by, it is overtaken by the rape of the daughter,”²⁹⁴ which is perhaps more a reflection of the positioning of the revelation of Cross’s incest with Evelyn towards the end of the film, which is highly dramatic and affecting, than a comment on the overarching structural logic of the film. The ability of the disclosure of Cross’s incest to shock is integral to the impact of the film but in the finale the survival of Cross is more about political corruption and the incapacity of the officers charged with the enforcement of the Law than it is about the rape of Evelyn. Even though the situation is charged with sexual imagery – the impotence of the police (and also of Jake) is in direct contrast to the perverted, fertile virility of Noah Cross – this only serves to highlight the obscenity of power bought through riches, which is made clear when Jake urges Evelyn to “let the police handle this” and she retorts with “he owns the police.” This is the most effective way for Cross to protect his capital investments and his shepherding of Katherine away from the disorder for which he was responsible is his way of reclaiming property, of securing the future. As Shetley notes: “Noah Cross’s incestuous acts and his land swindles turn on his desire to monopolize for himself the possibilities of life and fertility.”²⁹⁵ In the bleak landscape of *Chinatown* there is no Marina to suggest a more hopeful future; her equivalent, Katherine, is corralled and led away to serve the interests of her father/grandfather.

There is a common thread of heroic impotence in *Pericles*, *The Unnatural Combat* and *Chinatown*. Each of the young men engages in a futile battle against forces about which he has an inadequate understanding. Pericles and Jake stumble to recover from being forced to deal with matters beyond their expertise; Pericles is suited for noble, heroic quests but flees rather than confronts the reality of Antiochus’s true relationship with his daughter. Jake is a highly skilled private investigator but fails completely to comprehend Evelyn’s position until she informs him herself. He “remains permanently displaced and disoriented by the

²⁹³ Shetley, 1100.

²⁹⁴ Michael Eaton, *Chinatown* (London: BFI Publishing, 2008), 64.

²⁹⁵ Shetley, 1098.

treacherous space that subtly envelops him.”²⁹⁶ Pericles interprets the riddle but is then incapable of acting – apart from taking flight. Jake understands too late, acts in haste and subsequently Evelyn dies. Beaufort Junior is able to chart but not check Malefort’s growing fatal fondness for Theocrine. With his father, who tries to find a comforting moral: “...may we make use of/This great example, and learn from it” (5. 2. 340-1), at the conclusion of the play he can merely inspect the devastation he has been unable to prevent. His is a double failure as Theocrine suffers from the hands of both her father and Montreville without his being able to intervene. The incompetence of the heroic response is not so much an indictment of the ineffectual – the three heroes all possess and demonstrate admirable qualities and in other situations are clearly capable of effective action – it is instead an appreciation of the all-pervasive nature of the corruption which can be seen as intrinsic to the political, social and economic structure of the society. And so the bodies of Theocrine and Evelyn remain ‘onstage’ at the conclusion of the play and film, being the collateral damage of the inexorable processes of power, as their male destroyers are unaffected (Noah Cross), uncommunicative (the Iago-like Montreville: “Rackes cannot force more from me then I have/Already told you” (325-6)) or unrepentant (Malefort curses Fate and the Stars but ultimately refuses to acknowledge responsibility for what he has done). The young men’s inability to act is partly due to the amorphousness of their opponents; they are opposed not to individuals per se, but to the sources of power these men represent. Individuals act, but their actions are intertwined with their roles as public figures and to the necessary machinations of governance. There is nothing to be learnt from torturing Montreville as his deviancy is only nominal, in the sense that it is replicated and reflected in the very political, social and economic configurations in Marseilles.

There is a disturbing inversion in these works of the usual relationship between the generations: the inheritance of the young is blighted by the unwillingness of the old to relinquish power. As has been noted previously, incest should be inimical to the requirements of patriarchy as it interrupts the flow of power from father to son, from the old to the young, interfering with the processes of regeneration and continuance of power and property. Certainly the behaviour of Antiochus and Malefort is necessarily self-destructive, both for themselves and their communities, in the sense that “By committing incest with his daughter,

²⁹⁶ Hillier and Phillips, 48.

Antiochus offends the very foundation of nature,”²⁹⁷ which disrupts natural regeneration and through purposefully shutting off the access to their daughters they deny the suitors the opportunity to contract an exchange, to engage in the commercial practices essential for the transfer of property. Antiochus stymies attempts to marry his daughter by challenging a suitor to risk his life by explaining correctly a riddle which, if he interprets rightly, as Pericles does, will result in his death and if he fails he also dies. Malefort locks Theocrina away in Montreville’s castle to ensure she doesn’t marry Beaufort Junior and to protect himself from his incestuous desires. The woman in either case is commodified as she is at once offered for exchange and then at the same time withdrawn from sale.

In *Chinatown* the acts of incest are not necessarily antithetical to patriarchy; rather they can be seen as corollaries. As stated before, incest as practised by Cross is a product of the ruthless, exploitative capitalist ethic that encompasses and does not discriminate between family, government and business. The non-sexual nature of his incest is recognised by Andrew Spicer: “Noah Cross [is] quite prepared to destroy a city and copulate with his own daughter in order to preserve his power and dynastic aspirations.”²⁹⁸ Consequently there is not the paranoia about fertility and the desire to disrupt regeneration that we see in *Pericles* and *The Unnatural Conduct*. As will be shown, Cross also wants to control fertility, but, product oriented as he undoubtedly is, he produces a daughter from his daughter and will attempt to continue to produce offspring.²⁹⁹ Furthermore, his control is more in the form of regulation and manipulation; with concern for his profit margins always the primary consideration.

Water is central to the plot of *Chinatown*. Los Angeles is a city surrounded on three sides by desert and the corruption associated with water flow and a vicious grab for land becomes the main focus for Jake’s investigations. Cross is the central figure behind the schemes designed to deny farmers adequate water for their crops and then buy up their land at deflated prices. To increase the pressure on the landholders (and also on the city dwellers who were dependent on water for survival), Cross was secretly (and illegally) releasing water from the city dams during a drought. Throughout the film, he is associated with water – we first meet him at the Albacore Club on the ocean; he drowns Hollis Mulwray (Evelyn’s husband) in a

²⁹⁷ Thorne, 45-46.

²⁹⁸ Spicer, 139.

²⁹⁹ This is the most shocking aspect of the ending of the film, in spite of the death of Evelyn and the confusion of the police.

domestic salt-water tide pool and then arranges his body to be found in a reservoir and his name, Noah, has obvious aquatic connotations. He has promoted the building of a new dam, ostensibly to supply Los Angeles, but in reality it will provide water for new subdivisions on land bought cheaply from the ruined orchardists and farmers. Like his biblical predecessor, Noah will prosper from land made fertile, but the toll in human lives and livelihood will be horrendous. By controlling the flow of water, Cross is able to control the future, as he states when Jake asks him, given his untold wealth, “What can you buy that you can’t already afford?” – “The future Mr Gitts – the future.” Katherine and her fertility are part of that controlled future, illustrating the perverted nature of his overweening, intolerably corrupt presence. As the riddles become gradually resolved at the end of the film, we are more aware of the various complex natures Cross exhibits and how his public and private crimes are intrinsically linked. Shetley states that “In the person of Noah Cross, the desire to appropriate and possess the productive potential of natural resources such as land and water, which is the mainspring of the capitalist economy, is wedded to the desire to appropriate and possess the sexual and reproductive potential of one’s own daughters.”³⁰⁰

In comedies and tragi-comedies of the Jacobean period a common romantic schema involved opposition by the older generation – a father, older suitor or an unsuitable man of the parents’ choosing - to young lovers which is subverted and young love invariably triumphs.³⁰¹ As Thorne³⁰² notes, however, the older man now is both objecting parent *and* competitive suitor. Unlike Cross, whose desire for exclusive ownership of Katherine bypasses Evelyn so that he never regards himself as a suitor, Antiochus and Malefort are in direct opposition to the suitors for the sexual favours of their daughters. Each man finds a sexual charge in his daughter’s ability to arouse the young suitor, which charge is then heightened by the knowledge his proprietorship, conferred by the title of father, allows him exclusive access, with the corresponding right to deny that same access to competitors. And so we see that Malefort, after embarrassing Theocrine by kissing her sensuously, justifies his intimacies to the Court:

...who is the owner of a treasure,
Above all valew, but without offence,
May glory in the glad possession of it?
(1.3. 88-90)

He then goes further, challenging anyone to deny that

³⁰⁰ Shetley, 1100.

³⁰¹ Plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Roaring Girl*.

³⁰² Thorne, 46.

...looking on the daughter,
 I feast my selfe in the imagination
 Of those sweet pleasures, and allowed delights,
 I tasted from the mother (who still lives
 In this her perfit model).

(91-96)

The elision of mother into daughter³⁰³ allows him, drawing on his erotic memory, to project images of his virgin daughter as a tasted pleasure and entice Beaufort to visualize Theocrine “in her owne natural purenesse/How farre she will transport you” (106-7). He draws the hoped-for response from Beaufort: “Your words are but as oyle powr’d on a fire./That flames already at the height” (111-2). Malefort then cuts the audience short, dismissing Beaufort and the courtiers which emphasises what he sees as his proprietary rights. Antiochus behaves similarly with Pericles, encouraging him to desire that which can never be his. In both narratives there is an invitation for audiences to consider metaphorically the behaviour of the tyrants to illustrate the ways governments and Courts restrict access to power, act corruptly and infringe the rights of citizens. Indeed, Malefort’s infatuated, possessive attitude to Theocrine could be read as parodying the James I – Buckingham relationship; the breaking of the incest taboo in the play, signifying political corruption, drawing attention to the problematical relationship between the older James and the younger Buckingham which was attacked at the time in verse libels as being corrupt and of a deviant sexual nature.³⁰⁴ Incest intimidates. The confidence traditionally associated with lovers dissipates as they begin to realise the shocking truth that the father is their rival. There is a tyranny of silence as awareness of the situation in which their own desires and expectations as suitors are thwarted and the characters edge around what is regarded as the perverse secret, something too horrific to contemplate. What is then disabled is the assurance that the loved woman is as she appears, which leads to anguished confusion as the men confront their conflicted desires. The women are constant in that they are acted upon, are denied agency and are constructed in a real and savage sense by the perpetrators of the incest and through the ignorance of the suitors; their appearance is manufactured by the malicious fathers to fulfil their desires and are misinterpreted through the suitors’ lack of knowledge. The perverse secret, as in contemporary cases of child abuse, holds sway as it is postulated that it is in no one’s

³⁰³ This elision is echoed in *Chinatown* when Evelyn slips from “daughter” to “wife” to “mother” when trying to explain her relationship to Noah Cross. The daughter is reified by the father so that she becomes that which he desires at a given moment. She is unable to define herself but must slip between daughter/mother/wife/lover, depending entirely on his authority.

³⁰⁴ Paul Salzman, *Literary Culture in Jacobean England. Reading 1621* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 97-101.

interests for it to be revealed. The metaphor of Chinatown where “you can’t tell what’s going on” – which pronounces a pernicious truth when read literally as an instruction – relates to each text’s indictment of the complicity of silence.

The father figure dominates these texts as an embodiment of State authority in whose interests the silence is maintained. In those texts dealing with corruption, previously discussed, that there was corruption was readily admitted by all; it was seen as intrinsic to the Court/City environment. But the secret, tortuous world of incest among the power brokers of *Pericles*, *The Unnatural Combat* and *Chinatown* is perhaps more reflective of the dark and dangerous nature of patriarchal forms of government. The secret of incest focuses the mind on the secret - that is, hidden or fundamental - currents of influence common to patriarchy. Just as King James I made a direct correlation between the King as Father of the nation and the father as head of the household, each one reinforcing and describing the position of the other - “The King towards his people is rightly compared to a father of children”³⁰⁵ - Wilkins/Shakespeare and Massinger connect the corruption and decadence of the State with the actions of the politically powerful man performing incest within the family. The justification for the father as head of the family and for the King as father/head of State is challenged by the representation of the incestuous father as head of state or as power-broker, where his incest is deemed to be a metaphorical marker for his political tyranny.

A braver world comes toward us

Necrophilia in Jacobean tragedy and film noir is depicted as deviant behaviour which reflects societal anxieties associated with corrupt power relationships in the Court of James I and with post-World War 2 North American disillusionment. Although necrophilia, as illustrated in the two texts I will be examining – *The Lady’s Tragedy* by Thomas Middleton and *Vertigo* directed by Alfred Hitchcock – is concerned, obviously, with the body of a dead woman and how that body is used or abused, it is also to do with loss as Scott Dudley avers: “Necrophilia is the displaced, uncanny desire to dig up the past and make it live again – to recover the trace

³⁰⁵ King James VI and I, *Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 76.

of the lost other in order to fill the cultural and institutional gaps...It is the reactionary compulsion of a culture that feels cut off from the sacred past that once gave life to meaning, and from the institutions, traditions and laws that once established order.”³⁰⁶ The body of the woman is acted upon, and in the ways that it is (re)constructed by the men, these acts degrade, oppress and deny agency; nonetheless, the sense of dislocation, of emptiness and the deviant use of the woman’s body in an attempt to allay masculine anxiety is all pervasive. The corrupting of the bodies acts metaphorically to critique Court and City and also acts to register deep levels of unease in both.

The Tyrant in *The Lady’s Tragedy* greets the entrance of the dead but regally dressed Lady with the words: “A brave world comes toward us” (5.2.12). “Brave,” glossed by Anne Lancashire³⁰⁷ as ‘better’ registers the Tyrant’s disenchantment with his Court, ironically seeing in the corpse of the Lady the promise of a better future. This is linked to the idea of necrophilia as nostalgia which is at the heart of Dudley’s article and in the play this is clearly deemed to be self-evidently self-destructive. The only one deluded in the main plot is the Tyrant. And yet he, in making her life-like, is not duped into believing the Lady is alive: “’Tis impossible for living fire/To take a hold there” (99-100). He will however “By art force beauty on yon lady’s face...our pleasure will prevail” (110-12). Here the body as revered spectacle and as a confusing mixture of harbinger of a new world and talisman for nostalgia becomes sexualised with ‘pleasure’ and ‘will’ which are suggestive of rape, and in this confusion of intents the dangerously erratic nature of the despotism of the Tyrant is shown. The veneration of the corpse as the Lady is brought in, which is part of a public display, the soldiers being made to honour her, is now replaced by personal lust as he responds to the ‘painting’ of the Lady that Govianus performs by proclaiming that he “shall labour life into her” and “call thee at the door of life” (118-19). From the stage direction we see that he kisses her lips but reading ‘door’ as vagina, with ‘life’ referring, plausibly in the context, to semen, it could be that a more vicious treatment of the body is being contemplated which is only interrupted by the poison that Govianus has applied to the lady’s face. As the poison eats into the body of the Tyrant, an outward marker of his interior corruption, attention is drawn to the political implications of Govianus’s ostensibly treasonable actions when the courtiers enter and instead of arresting Govianus rejoice in the Tyrant’s dying and pledge allegiance to

³⁰⁶ Scott Dudley, "Conferring with the Dead: Necrophilia and Nostalgia in the Seventeenth Century," *E.L.H.* 66.2 (1999): 291.

³⁰⁷ Anne Lancashire, ed., *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978).

Govianus. “The necrophilia, of which the Tyrant is guilty, marks him with corruption, and both the Court and the audience recognise it. Necrophilia in this play is one more element defining the Tyrant as a political as well as a sexual monster,”³⁰⁸ the sex-crime making manifest the political corruption which is concomitant to the autocratic behaviour of the Tyrant. The overthrowing of the Tyrant is the rejection of autocratic governance; the poison signifying legitimate means of countering a ruler whose unnatural treatment of the Lady denotes untrammelled despotism.

Regardless of whether there is complete agreement on Middleton’s authorship of *The Revenger’s Tragedy* and *The Lady’s Tragedy* – both plays are in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino’s edition of Middleton’s Collected Works - there is great similarity in the ways in which women’s corpses are used in each play to poison men who are both sexual criminals and political tyrants; the Duke and the Tyrant are both disposed of by the lovers of the deceased (and sexually abused) women. The innocence of the women, as the audience sees it, only compounds the malice of the violence enacted upon them and it appeals to a sense of poetic justice that the abusers die in the act of giving full rein to their lusts. The corpses have their revenge. Middleton’s keen ironic instincts are very apparent as the forced compliant bodies are manipulated by Vindice and Govianus to slip beyond their passive role in supplying form to the erotic fantasising of the Duke and the Tyrant so that in enacting vengeance they are also involved in active erotic interplay. The vengeance may be seen as just, but the acts themselves are sexualised. “While the skull of Gloriana...literally lacks a body, it does not...lack a sexuality.”³⁰⁹ And this is somewhat disturbing as there is no doubting that Gloriana and the Lady are victims of tyrannical oppression, nor that they have great integrity, but the exploitation of the dead bodies by the two avengers necessarily has sexual connotations that mimic, in a very much diluted manner it must be admitted, the invasion of self attempted by the tyrants. The sexualised bodies are the necessary implements for a revenge that relies on the ability of the dead bodies to arouse the despots and thereby lure them to a destruction in which they are all complicit. In *The Revenger’s Tragedy* Vindice cannot help himself from delighting in the ingenuity of his scheming and the artifice of his revenge, making sure that the dying

³⁰⁸ Richard W. Grinnell, “‘And I love thee after:’ Necrophilia on the Jacobean stage” in Rose De Angelis, *Between Anthropology: Interdisciplinary Discourse* (London: Routledge, 2002), 135.

³⁰⁹ Coddon 75.

Duke knows the circumstances of his passing. Likewise, Govianus waits until the Tyrant has been poisoned by kissing the Lady's lips before he reveals himself as Heaven's avenger, triumphing in the incapacity of the Tyrant to make good his threats. We do not mourn the deaths of the oppressors, especially the Duke who is more advanced in his villainy than the Tyrant, but there is some unease at the victories over tyranny that are gloating. There is also in *The Lady's Tragedy* the determination by Govianus that the Lady be placed "in this throne" and that she be crowned "our queen" (200). This replicates the Tyrant's public spectacle in honouring the Lady for her beauty, by presenting her as a staged model for chastity. There is a great difference in degree, the Tyrant's behaviour is totally reprehensible, however, Govianus is still intent on utilising the Lady's body. There is also the inconvenient truth that the corpse is still toxic with the poison he applied. In her present state the body of the Lady is indeed a very formidable bastion for chastity.

Govianus's insistence on establishing and formalising the chastity of the Lady as an exemplar could be seen as a means of countering the example of "powerful, if often corrupt, men [who] retrieve dead women from the grave and reinsert them into the social system of desire."³¹⁰ For Govianus, the value of chastity as a living, exemplary virtue is dependent on the willingness of women to be prepared to die rather than submit, and yet, for the Lady, having sacrificed herself in this way, there is the added outrage of being desired beyond refusal and beyond death. The intractability of the Tyrant's obsessive passion for the Lady horrifies Govianus, as he states:

Cannot the body after funeral
Sleep in the grave, for thee? Must it be raised
Only to please the wickedness of thine eye?
Does all things end with death, and not thy lust?
(128-31)

Here there is disgust at the Tyrant's outrageous abuse of power which interferes with the dead as well as oppressing the living and is designed to accommodate what appears to be an insatiable appetite for self-indulgence. Rose De Angelis makes a connexion between staged acts of necrophilia and critiquing the politics of the Jacobean Court, stating that the use of necrophilia reflects "the cultural anxiety about gender roles and power that attends James I's coming to the Throne;" and that "necrophilia would become a method by which dramatists would simultaneously

³¹⁰ De Angelis, 84.

shock and register the culture's dis-ease."³¹¹

In *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Middleton records the community's uneasiness with matters Courtly, where the necrophiliac encounter is merely one of the sexual horrors perpetrated among a wide range of deviancies which provide a panoply of anti-Court cultural references. What is depicted is political and moral chaos: "the enabling distinctions that divide mind from corporeality, licit from illicit desires, subjects from objects, are disintegrated."³¹² Citizen disaffection with the collapse of certainty, with the attendant sense of dislocation and alienation are mirrored in the play. These aspects, which are articulated in the anti-Court rhetorical overlay of the play, with its implicit and explicit entwining of sexual deviancy and political corruption, feature also in *The Lady's Tragedy*. Although the tone of the latter play is in general more restrained, the situating of necrophilia as the metaphorical marker for political tyranny is given more prominence, as is the restoration of order with the re-instatement of Govianus as ruler. The play does, however, caution its audience to resist the facile sermonising by Govianus when the Tyrant is destroyed; "Well, he's gone,/And all the kingdom's evils perish with him" (194-5). We know this claim is false as we have, previous to this scene, witnessed the bloody and totally unnecessary destruction of Anselmus, Votarius, Anselmus's wife, Leonella, her waiting-woman and Bellarius, Leonella's lover as they acted out a domestic tragedy of their own. Evil is not restricted to the Tyrant, nor is it eliminated with his demise. There is something similarly idolatrous in Govianus's behaviour towards the Lady, when he dismissed the political ramifications of the overthrow of the Tyrant in a few words while he then rhapsodizes at length about the moral beauties of the Lady. The situation at the end of the play is no less unsettling than at the beginning as the hero proceeds to construct his version of the Lady just as the Tyrant did his. This is not to say that there is any attempt by Middleton to establish a moral equivalency between the two men's actions, but Govianus is not untainted by necrophilia. Indeed, his assertion in the last few lines of the play alerts us to his growing obsession with the fostering of devotion to the dead Lady, an obsession disturbingly similar to the Tyrant's when he proclaims that: "Our zeal is such/We cannot reverence chastity enough" (208-9).

The dead female body, lacking agency, is easily manipulated to conform to male desire. In a

³¹¹ De Angelis, 84.

³¹² Coddon, 85.

literal sense, the body is constructed and meaning conferred without there being the possibility of resistance – although the Lady, through her ghostly presence is able to enlist the support of Govianus who takes on the role of an active and revenging amanuensis who inscribes her will and her counter-meaning on the body of the Tyrant.³¹³

Alfred Hitchcock in *Vertigo* (1958) also examines the construction of a woman according to the competing desires of two men – in fact the woman has three separate constructed identities. Scottie Ferguson, a policeman, is duped by an old school acquaintance, Gavin Elster, into being an unknowing accessory in the murder of his wife. Elster enlists Scottie's professional assistance in shadowing Madeleine, the wife, who is said to be possessed by a Nineteenth Century woman, Carlotta and is suicidal. It is all part of an elaborate ploy – Elster coerces his mistress, Judy, into impersonating Madeleine so that Scottie believes she is the suicidal wife. Elster pushes his wife to her death in a substitution that has Scottie believing that the woman he is falling in love with – Judy as Madeleine – has killed herself. Elster inherits his wife's money and Scottie thinks that he failed to save Madeleine because of his vertigo - Elster purposely chose a tower from which Madeleine seemed to throw herself because he knew that Scottie would be unable to follow Judy as Madeleine up the stairs. Scottie later meets Judy, is attracted to her because of her resemblance to Madeleine and he tries to recreate the dead Madeleine in Judy by forcing her to dye her hair from brunette to blonde and to dress as Madeleine – to become a resuscitated Madeleine. "Ferguson makes it clear that he will not, indeed cannot, feel desire for her until and unless she becomes the other."³¹⁴ As he is re-creating her, the truth is revealed to Scottie and in attempting to force a confession from Judy by taking her up the tower, he watches as she accidentally falls to her death.

Whereas the Tyrant and Govianus *know* the Lady and the necrophilia occurs as result of and in response to that knowledge, Scottie has limited knowledge and even less understanding of the constructed identities he encounters. With Evelyn Cross we witnessed a woman whose identity was jumbled by the conflicting positions of mother, wife, daughter and lover; with the woman in *Vertigo*, identity becomes even more slippery, for much of the film we only see her as she has been constructed by Elster. She is Carlotta, an exotic and vivacious historical identity whose spirit is said to inhabit the blonde Madeleine, who in turn is a version

³¹³ Lisa Hopkins sees that the Lady has more power than I have allowed here.

³¹⁴ R. Barton Palmer, *Hollywood's Dark Cinema* (London: Prentice Hall, 1994), 136.

of Elster's real wife and finally she is Judy, a brunette shop assistant, formerly Elster's mistress. Ironically Scottie is in love with the two dead women, Carlotta and Madeleine and rejects the only one who is alive and real – Judy. Marilyn Fabe perceptively notes that “Scottie falls in love with an impossible object.”³¹⁵ With his diminished level of comprehension, it is beyond his capability to reconcile the fraught identities within the character he knows as Madeleine and she has been purposefully constructed as ‘impossible object’ by Elster to lure Scottie. As object she lacks a character independent of her purpose; she exists purely as exotic, desired object. The fetishising of Carlotta and Madeleine as exotic presence displaces the reality of Judy, even to the extent that their names possess erotic possibilities that are denied to the more mundane ‘Judy.’

Unlike the other protagonists therefore, who are similarly haunted men - Vindice, the Tyrant and Govianus, who seek to construct women according to their needs and desires - Scottie, while vulnerable to Elster's creation of Carlotta/Madeleine, tries to mould Judy according to his anxieties. Desire is there of course but it is not as dominant or undiluted as in the plays. The vertigo that cripples Scottie in the tower is symbolic of his fraught and traumatised position; his unsettled mind renders him unsteady. It is difficult, however, to see Scottie as the victim for his treatment of Judy appears unconscionable. As Laura Mulvey states: “He reconstructs Judy as Madeleine, forces her to conform in every detail to the actual physical appearance of his fetish.”³¹⁶ However, Clifford Manlove argues that rather than being in control, “he is...a passive victim of another, more powerful gaze”³¹⁷ – Elster's. So while for much of the first part of the film Judy as Madeleine is the object of Scottie's professional voyeuristic gaze and is constructed by him as a desirable object, and while he “possesses an active male look,”³¹⁸ which reads her behaviour accordingly, the fact that he is under the gaze of Elster, as well as under the surreptitious monitoring scrutiny of Madeleine, well aware that she is being observed, is a mitigating factor in determining his behaviour. Judy *is* complicit in his duping and in the murder of the real Madeleine; the controlling gaze in the film belongs to Elster, not to Scottie, who, as in many films

³¹⁵ Marilyn Fabe, *Mourning Vertigo*, *American Imago* 66, no. 3 (2009): 347.

³¹⁶ Laura Mulvey, as quoted in Clifford T. Manlove. "Visual "Drive" and Cinematic Narrative: Reading Gaze Theory in Lacan, Hitchcock, and Mulvey," *Cinema Journal* 46, no. 3 (2007): 91.

³¹⁷ Manlove. 91.

³¹⁸ Manlove. 91.

noir, is unknowing, disoriented and struggling against forces both physical and psychological over which he has limited control. On a stylistic level, there is the clash of narrative impulses which is deliberately utilised to increase our awareness of his inner turmoil: “The last section, in effect, has fused two kinds of narrative. On the one hand, the romantic narrative, the drive to recapture lost love. On the other, the paranoid narrative, the drive to unravel the conspiracy.”³¹⁹ To accomplish one he sets in motion that which will destroy the other.

A physical explanation for the fraught state of Scottie’s nerves lies in the vertigo he develops as a result of his experience as a detective when, after pursuing a criminal over roof-tops, he is left dangling from a tall building, hanging on to guttering until he is rescued. Vertigo results from the immediate threatening future – that he will fall and die. In the film Scottie views the immediate past and the future with some trepidation and so it is understandable then that nostalgia for the more distant past becomes part of his coping strategy and this can account for his obsession with Carlotta and Madeleine; the obsession with a woman who is obsessed with another woman. Madeleine is reconstructed historical artifice and as such she represents a past that is knowable. The cliché ‘object of affection’ is literally true as a description of how Scottie sees Madeleine; that she is a loved, animate memento who, in being associated with established markers of time and place, is capable of offering him sanctuary. When he shadows her, as instructed by Elster, he is led to specific San Francisco landmarks - the Mission Dolores and its cemetery, the Palace of the Legion of Honour (where Carlotta’s portrait hangs), the Golden Gate Bridge, Ernie’s Bar – and a prolonged wordless narrative³²⁰ enacts a story which provides Scottie with enough clues for him to project himself into a self-contained narrative, within which, as it has been carefully constructed by Elster, he can find his assigned place and role. The counterfeit Madeleine is a powerful influence over Scottie not because she is or seems real but because she and her placement in-story triggers a deep longing within him, a nostalgia for another time and place. The places she visits are aspirational, places of grandeur and beauty which are designed to uplift the human spirit and which cause the viewer to look up in awe, the binary opposite to his vertigo, induced by the

³¹⁹ Charles Barr, *Vertigo* (London: Palgrave, 2009), 76.

³²⁰ This narrative structure, whereby a detective follows the spouse of the untrustworthy client to a range of outdoor and indoor locations, is also used of course by Roman Polanski in *Chinatown*.

terrifying rooftop chase in the opening of the film, which makes him afraid to look down. The familiar dark, dangerous and hidden places associated with his former role as policeman are replaced in his mind by the open, exotic, inspirational environment especially synthesised for him by Elster. Scottie's familiar domestic spaces – his own and Midge's – are cramped, cluttered and mundane, whereas the world in which he accompanies Madeleine before her 'death' includes the sites previously mentioned as well as the Palace of Fine Arts and a Redwood forest. The Palace, with its Greco-Roman inspired architecture and the trees in the forest, some dating back to the Ninth Century, reinforce the cloying atmosphere of nostalgia.

Necrophilia in *Vertigo* is characterised by the unsubstantial. Marilyn Fabe describes how "Scottie...falls in love with an impossible object, impossible because even within the story world of the film Madeleine is a fantasy imago, a fiction created by the character Gavin Elster."³²¹ Like the Tyrant he tries to construct the woman as spectacle, as a nostalgic memento to re-kindle desire. And so, after Madeleine's 'death' Scottie repeatedly visits the places of engagement with her – the florist, the Legion of Honour, the outside of her luxury apartment building, Ernie's – and when he stumbles across Judy, the counterfeit Madeleine, he views Judy's body as the means of re-generating the dead Madeleine, just as the Tyrant tried to recreate the Lady as amenable to his lust. Judy exists purely as the erotic pathway to Madeleine; offering access to the past through the present.

There is a fetishisation of the past in *Vertigo* as places, people and objects are made to reflect melancholic longing, a nostalgia for an illusionary past. Aware of the irony, Fabe notes that fans of the film regularly visit the public places that form part of the constructed past given to Madeleine and which then become part of Scottie's pattern of remembrance. "Just as Scottie is unable to accept the loss of Madeleine, and instead obsessively embarks on a quest to find her, to get back what he has irretrievably lost, so viewers try to restore something of the eerie romance and mystery of *Vertigo*...by returning to the physical locations where it was filmed."³²² The fan response is perhaps an unconscious recognition of the significant role played by nostalgia in the film. The Post World War 2 dissatisfaction with a peace that was

³²¹ Fabe. 347.

³²² Fabe. 345.

always being underscored by the tensions created by the realities of the Cold War, together with anxiety associated with the fear of nuclear attack, and the growing disillusionment with the failure of the 1950s to provide uncompromised economic and social benefits, encouraged nostalgia. Post war life was depicted by Sartre in 1947 as being composed of a “labyrinth of hallways, doors, and stairways that lead nowhere, innumerable signposts that dot routes and signify nothing.”³²³ Foster Hirsch characterizes the period as a “decade of anxiety, a contemporary apocalypse” with a “pervasive aura of defeat and despair.” Noir encapsulates “the country’s sour postwar mood.”³²⁴ In *Vertigo* this general period malaise is identified and then made more intense by the efforts of Scottie to erase the troubled present and escape into the past. The vertigo he experiences is a metaphor for the cultural and political anxieties of the time, while the links through Carlotta and the splendid public buildings to a more confident and dynamic past are created and embodied in the counterfeit Madeleine. Sartre’s labyrinths where signs fail to signify, themselves seem illusionary when juxtaposed with the colonial assurance of the Missions and the grand civic vision which resulted in the Palace of Fine Arts and Palace of the Legion of Honour. Buildings become endorsements. Scottie’s love for a ‘dead’ woman becomes part of a poisonous nostalgia for a ‘dead’ time, a recreated/reinvented history which is so easily manipulated by Elster to entrap the former detective. By demonstrating the effective deadliness of carefully controlled myth-making, Hitchcock offers an insight into the creation of national myths often employed to mask crimes of a much larger, national scale. For example the myth of the frontier town that became San Francisco is referred to by Elster in his initial conversation with Scottie to set up a nostalgic paradigm that will dupe his old school friend and the same myth of white entrepreneurial dominance was being used in the 1950s to marginalise women, African-Americans and racial minorities.

Myth-making in *Vertigo* and *The Lady’s Tragedy* is inescapably connected to the dead body of a woman and especially to the power which derives from that dead body. The Tyrant establishes the corpse of the Lady as Queen:

Go bring her forth,
As we have caused her body to be decked
In all the glorious riches of our palace.

³²³ Jean-Paul Sartre in James Narremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (London: University of California Press, 1998), 24.

³²⁴ Foster Hirsch, *The Dark Side of the Screen* (London: Da Capo Press, 2001), 21.

(5. 2. 7-9)

as does Govianus when he orders her to be “solemnly borne/Unto the house of peace from whence she came/As queen of silence” (203-5). There is the transformation from the physical body as emblem - as produced by the Tyrant, power being dependent on presence - to the body as symbol, which is asserted by Govianus, and the power comes from the manipulation of memory to establish significance. Both men project their interpretation of the body to create the appropriate myth in order to reinforce their power base. Value is accorded to the dead body in a similar way to the example given by Scott Dudley concerning the use of the body parts of a Catholic priest, Edmund Geninges, martyred in James I’s reign as powerful relics. Catholic tracts of the period “privilege the corpse not only for its ability to contain the sacred, but also for its capacity to underwrite cultural and institutional certainty.”³²⁵ The martyred Lady is co-opted by Govianus to justify his political actions in overthrowing the Tyrant, to serve as a conduct example for women and to validate his claims to power. She is instituted into the national memory through the explicit removal of her body and her projection into the national consciousness as a symbol; her transformation from body to potent memory cedes enormous power to Govianus, as he will govern with the endorsement of a most powerful symbolic presence, as opposed to the Tyrant’s projection of the body of the Lady as ‘real,’ presence.³²⁶ In the play she becomes a potent cultural representation and a means of establishing confidence.

The woman Scottie falls in love with is myth, in that she represents the sum of men’s desires. Judy is acceptable only as a physical nostalgic reference point; she is the stimulus for his necrophilia but only insofar as her personality is not engaged. In this sense the necrophilia is real and not imagined as Judy is systematically eradicated when Scottie makes up the body, in a similar way to the Tyrant, to perform as Madeleine. During the conversion process he refuses to kiss the transitional body or engage with her physically. When he is satisfied that the transformation is complete, he has sex with her. However, despite the makeover, this is Judy not Madeleine, a distinction Scottie refuses to consider and from this point till the end of the film he forces her to be Madeleine.

³²⁵ Dudley, 279.

³²⁶ The terms I have used here refer to the action within the play but critics have seen the opposing uses of the Lady’s body as illustrative of the ongoing theological battle between Catholics and Protestants over the real or symbolic presence of Christ in the Eucharist. There is also discussion over whether the Lady is to be interpreted as representing the Virgin Mary or the Virgin Queen.

Part of the disturbing genius of the film is that we are encouraged to view Madeleine as Scottie does. That is, Judy becomes the counterfeit and the manufactured, mythical Madeleine the real. Madeleine, sophisticated, beautifully presented, elegant and refined is a perfect fit for the opulent, nostalgic environment in which Elster places her. Clichéd images and appeals to superiority due to class are designed to lure us as well as Scottie into the seductive world of myth. The film positions us to approve of the engagement of the detective with the illusionary and to ignore the grounded worldliness of Judy. Yet Judy is not the aberration – Madeleine is. Scottie’s refusal to see beyond the artifice echoes a nation’s investment in nostalgic myopia which would eventually be vigorously challenged in the 1960’s. Scottie’s obsession with Madeleine is deadening, both to himself and to Judy. His love is as unrealistic as the Tyrant’s for the Lady; their necrophilia is totally unsubstantial.

Opposed to the lethal fantasy world inhabited by Scottie, Madeleine and Elster there are women who try to bring Scottie and the audience back to the present – Judy and Midge. Unlike Madeleine and the classical imitations against which she is foregrounded, they are fully engaged in the hustle and bustle of everyday life in urban San Francisco. Judy has a “brassy manner, the somewhat cheap appearance, the easy familiarity with the ‘real world,’ and the defiant independence of the working girl.”³²⁷ For Scottie, however, as Erich Fromm in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* remarks when discussing necrophilia, “only the past is experienced as quite real, not the present or the future.”³²⁸ What characterises Scottie throughout the film is fear and so the past, even a re-constructed, false past is preferable to an unfamiliar, uncertain present and future in which he feels disoriented and unconnected. Thus when Midge as a joke – and in an attempt to rekindle his love for her – paints an imitation of the portrait of Carlotta hanging in the Palace of Fine Arts replacing Carlotta’s head with her own and shows Scottie, he storms out of her apartment; when faced with the reality of his obsession he must retreat into the world of the past. The Scott Dudley statement which I used to open this discussion on necrophilia is worth repeating, in part, here as it applies directly to the predicament in which Scottie finds himself. For him “necrophilia is the displaced, uncanny desire to dig up the past and make it live again – to recover a trace of the lost other in order to fill the cultural and institutional gaps created by new ideologies.”³²⁹ This notion of escaping into the past is heralded by Elster in his conversation with Scottie early in the film.

³²⁷ Palmer, 136.

³²⁸ Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1973), 39.

³²⁹ Dudley. 291.

Recognising perhaps a susceptibility in his old college friend to historical suggestion he provides the first of many prompts referring to the past that will enable him to use Scottie to carry out his plan to murder his wife: “San Francisco’s changed. The things that spelt San Francisco to me are disappearing. I should have liked to live here then [in the 1840s] – colour, excitement, power, freedom.” His words resonate within Scottie and when he first sees Madeleine in Ernie’s she is placed in a Nineteenth Century decor that recalls the Old San Francisco, the spirit of which had been evoked by Elster. From this moment, as is clearly shown in Hitchcock’s deft direction of her entrance – which is discussed in some detail by Charles Barr³³⁰ - he immerses himself completely in the unfolding narrative and is unable to return.

Inexorably, Judy-Madeleine’s fate is entwined in his so that his inability to escape from the fantasy narrative has devastating consequences for her.³³¹ In the ultimate makeover, Judy is forced to ‘become’ Madeleine figuratively – Scottie in her final moments no longer sees her as Judy – and literally as she falls to her death, just as Elster’s wife did.

Jacobean drama and film noir were alike in their interest in offering scathing critiques of their respective political environments and of those in powerful positions. Court and City were the embodiment in the texts of the corruption that so often accompanies power that is unchecked or tyrannical. The dramatic focus on the Court (Jacobean) and the City (film noir) provided opportunities for audiences to recognise on stage and on screen behaviours that replicated what they observed within their immediate surroundings. In this way the Court/City acts as a metaphorical examination through fictional premises of the contemporary world. Furthermore, this metaphorical linking is enhanced through the use of deviant and exploitative sexual practices, associated in the texts with the power brokers, to highlight the corrupt practices of those in positions of political and social authority. As has been indicated in the discussion of the texts, there is an affinity in mood and in substance between the Seventeenth Century plays and film noir.

³³⁰ Barr, 7-10.

³³¹ In a film replete with irony in image, plot, characterization and dialogue, the film’s conclusion, when Scottie drags a terrified, unwilling Judy up the tower, is an ironic inversion of the earlier ‘suicide’ scene that has Madeleine run up the same tower with an equally terrified and reluctant Scottie following.

Conclusion

I began this thesis with the highly-charged entrance onstage of Bussy D'Ambois and his fierce indictment of the venality of the French Court. His position as enlightened critical commentator is soon compromised, however, and his reforming, creative energy becomes

diffused as he is entangled in the darkness of courtly intrigue and is eventually murdered. His dying words show that his dynamic, passionate imagination has not been totally diminished through his contact with the Court, even though they indicate a keen awareness of his sense of unfulfilled potential:

Oh, frail condition of strength, valour, virtue,
 In me (like warning fire upon the top
 Of some steep beacon, on a steeper hill)
 Made to express it: like a falling star
 Silently glanc'd, that like a thunderbolt
 Look'd to have struck and shook the firmament.
 (5.4.141-46)

His is a restless spirit, trying to find meaning in a volatile environment, and it is this restlessness, which is related to a loss of confidence in, and a suspicion of, authority structures and authority figures, that he shares with other Jacobean heroes and heroines. Tamara, before Bussy's body is borne off, laments "No place, no good, so good, but ill compriseth" (173), expresses the essence of the shadow world that has dominated the play. She does not die but her future encapsulates the isolation of the individual in this world: "...but to the open deserts/(Like to a hunted tigress) I will fly" (200-1). She and her husband, Montsurry, 'exit severally'; reconciliation is impossible and their shared relationship is now disrupted.

The ending of the play, as with so many of this period, is a noir ending. The 'falling star/Silently glanc'd' is evocative of the darkened noir environment where there is a fundamental discrepancy between expectation and realisation, between language and meaning, between the hero/heroine and the world in which he or she lives. As I have suggested in the preceding chapters, the dark corridors, the shadowed staircases, the wet, dangerous streets, the mirrors that reflect the trauma of characters and isolate these same characters from those around them, those elements that are indicative of film noir find their equivalents in the claustrophobic, disturbing blackness of Jacobean drama; the reading of a particular film can be enhanced by comparing it to a Jacobean play as they both inhabit familiar visual, emotional, philosophical and artistic territory. The bleak psychological terrain of Tamara's 'open deserts', for example, can be readily applied to the state of mind exhibited by the distressed Louise Graham whom we meet wandering the 'open deserts' of the desolate

city streets in *Possessed*. Jacobean drama and film noir are perhaps most affecting and poignant when exploring mental anguish and rupture.

The extract from *Bussy D'Ambois* also serves to draw attention to one of the key elements that emerges ultimately from a consideration of all the texts in this thesis – the sheer force of the creative energy bursting from the texts that delights the imagination. Audiences are captivated by the intellectual vigour and emotional power of the forms, where the highly charged verse rhetoric of the characters in the plays is matched by the stunning yet unsettling visual rhetoric of film noir. The works are epic in tone and subject matter but microscopic in attention to emotional and psychological detail; they simultaneously expand the scope of their world view then contract it to focus on the frantic minutiae of human interaction. This continual enlarging then collapsing of exterior and interior states, whereby the global framework within which the protagonists operate is interrupted by the persistent articulation of personal needs and obsessions, creates heightened forms of dramatic tension.³³² Therefore the enduring popularity of Jacobean drama and film noir is unsurprising as the viewing public's recognition of the capacity of these forms to engage with audiences, especially so in a post- modern world when a general questioning of authority, the challenging of the concept of moral absolutes and with the rise of relativism, is increasingly apparent. Stage productions of plays such as *Women Beware Women*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Malcontent* and *The Changeling* are common and there have been successful film adaptations of Jacobean plays including Alec Cox's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (2003) and Marcus Thompson's *Middleton's Changeling* (1998). Film noir continues to be a major influence on filmmakers as indicated by the large number of noir influenced or neo noir films made recently.³³³ These texts have maintained their relevance to changing times and shifting preoccupations.

Throughout the thesis, there has been discussion of the ways in which films and plays have highlighted the fractures and inconsistencies in societies that have been presented (or presented themselves) as ordered and functional, and examined the disorientation,

³³² The same may be said of Greek and Shakespearean tragedy but as I claimed in the Introduction, the focus in Jacobean/noir is not on an individual tragic hero but on individuals involved in potentially tragic situations and on the environment which becomes an active force in the articulation of the drama.

³³³ Films such as *Se7en* (1995), *L A Confidential* (1997), *Payback*, (1999), *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001), *Mulholland Drive* (2001), *Bloodwork* (2002) and *Collateral* (2004).

displacement, the loss and pain of individuals. The darkness that inhabits the landscapes of both forms refers to the physical and the psychological, and so I have explored questions of sanity, gender, race, the media and the City and Court environments. Where do we go from here? Can the discussion be taken further? There are at least two important areas that were outside the scope of this thesis but are worthy of detailed investigation and after having offered some concluding comments on what has been written, I would like now to suggest, briefly, how these areas could enhance a future comparative analysis of Jacobean drama and film noir.

I have explained in Chapter 3 how the naming of women was a major concern in the plays and films and have outlined the different ways in which women and the rôles of women were presented. The concept of *femme fatale* comes from film noir critical traditions but it can apply equally well to women of the Early Modern dramas such as Vittoria (*The White Devil*), Isabella (*The Insatiate Countess*), Eugenia (*The Lascivious Queen*), Livia (*Women Beware Women*), Evadne (*The Maid's Tragedy*) and the Duchess (*The Duchess of Malfi*). The woman as sexual predator, dangerous beauty, initiator or perpetrator of murder or as a knowing or unknowing destructive agent is a significant part of the dynamics of film noir and each of the women I've mentioned - and there are many more from other works who could also be referred to - could, without difficulty, be classified as a *femme fatale*. A comparative reading of Jacobean and film noir *femmes fatales* would be extremely valuable as it would provide a different context in which to explore the engagement of unsettled and unsettling women with similarly situated men.

The other area that could not be fully explored in this thesis as it deserves to be the major focus of a study is the rôle of the male private/police detective or investigator compared with and contrasted to the male protagonists/revengers in the Jacobean plays. With worlds that are fraught with what is undisclosed, secret, knotted and threatening, the efforts of young men to understand and untangle while being at the same time deeply involved and implicated in the darkness themselves, becomes worthy of attention. Dave Bannion (*The Big Heat*), returned war veteran Johnny Morrison (*The Blue Dahlia*) and of course Philip Marlowe (*The Big Sleep*) and Sam Spade (*The Maltese Falcon*) can be identified with their perhaps more compromised Jacobean counterparts Bosola, Vindice and Malvole.

The journey down darkened corridors is an ongoing encounter with the shadowed world and the changes in perception as the lines between darkness and light become blurred. This thesis has attempted to illuminate some areas through a comparative study of two periods that appear to share common artistic and interpretive concerns and means of expression.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY WORKS: PLAYS and NOVELS

- Anon.**, *Hic Mulier: Or, The Man-Woman And Haec Vir: Or The Womanish-Man* (Rota: University of Exeter, 1973).
- Barkstead, William** and **Machin, Lewis**, *The Insatiate Countess*, in *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies*, ed. Martin Wiggins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Barry, Lording**, *Ram Alley or Merrie-Trickes*, eds. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge. Nottingham: Nottingham Drama Texts, 1981.
- Butler, Charles** (ed), *Female Replies to Swetnam The Woman Hater*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995.
- Cain, James M.**, *Three of a Kind*. Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1944.
- Elizabeth Thomson**, ed. *The Chamberlain Letters*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965.
- Chambers, Whitman**, *Once Too Often*. New York: American Mercury, 1943.
- Chapman, George**, *Bussy D'Ambois*, ed. Nicholas Brooke. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.
- Collins, John Churton**, ed. *The Poems of Lord Herbert of Cherbury*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1881.
- Dekker, John**, and **Middleton, Thomas**, *The Honest Whore Part I*, ed. Fredson Bowers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.
- Dekker, John**, *The Noble Spanish Soldier*. London: Nick Hern Books, 2006.
- _____, *The Lascivious Queen in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker Volume* , ed. Fredson Bowers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961.
- Dekker, John** and **Middleton, Thomas**, *The Honest Whore Part One in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker Volume II*, ed. Fredson Bowers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961.
- Delp, Alfred**, *Alfred Delp, SJ: Prison Writings*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004.
- Fitch, John G.**, ed., and trans. *Seneca*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Fletcher, John**, *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed. T. W. Craik. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.
- Fletcher, John**, **Field Nathan** and **Massinger Philip**, *The Knight of Malta in The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon Volume VIII*, ed. Fredson Bowers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Gibson, Colin**, ed. *The Selected Plays of Philip Massinger*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

- Grose, Francis**, *The Vulgar Tongue: Buckish Slang and Pickpocket Eloquence*, ed. Alastair Williams. New York: Bantam, 2004.
- Hazlitt, W. Carew**, *Old English Plays Volume 10*. London: Reeves and Turner, 1875.
- Holaday, Allan**, ed. *The Plays of George Chapman: The Tragedies*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987.
- Hudston, Jonathan**, ed. *George Chapman: Plays and Poems*. London: Penguin, 1998.
- James I, King**, *King James VI and I: Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- James, Russell**, *The Annex*. Waterville: Five Star, 2002.
- Jonson, Ben**, *The Staple of News*, ed. Anthony Parr. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.
- _____, *The Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. Francis Cunningham. London: John Camden, 1816.
- Bryan Loughrey and Neil Taylor**, eds. *Thomas Middleton: Five Plays*. London: Penguin Books, 1988.
- McDermott, Kristen**, ed. *Masques of Difference: Four Court Masques by Ben Jonson*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.
- Marston, John**, *The Malcontent*, ed. Bernard Harris. London: Ernest Benn, 1967.
- _____, *The Malcontent and Other Plays*, ed. Keith Sturges. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- _____, *What You Will*, ed. M. R. Woodhead. Nottingham: Nottingham University Press, 1980.
- Mason, John**, *The Turk*, ed. Fernand Lagarde. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1978.
- Massinger, Philip**, *The Unnatural Combat in The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger Volume II*, eds., Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Middleton, Thomas and William Rowley**, *The Changeling*, ed. N.W. Bawcutt. London: Methuen, 1961.
- _____, *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, ed. Anne Lancashire. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978.
- Middleton, Thomas, and Dekker, Thomas**, *The Roaring Girl*, ed. Elizabeth Cook. London: New Mermaids, 2000.
- William Peery**, ed. *The Plays of Nathan Field*. Austin: University Press of Texas, 1950.
- Percy, William**, *Mahomet and His Heaven*, ed. Matthew Dimmock. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006.
- Salgrado, Gamini** (ed), *Three Jacobean Tragedies*. London: Penguin Books, 1965.

- Sharpham, Edward**, *The Fleer*. London: Globe Quartos, 2006.
- Shakespeare, William**, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Penny Gay. Marrickville: Science Press, 1995.
- Shakespeare, William** and **Wilkins, George**, *Pericles*, ed. Suzanne Gossett. London: Arden, 2005.
- Virgil**, *The Eclogues*, ed., and trans. Guy Lee. London: Penguin Books, 1984.
- Webster, John**, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Brian Gibbons. London: New Mermaids, 2001.
- _____, *The White Devil*, ed. John Russell Brown. London: Methuen and Co., 1967.

PRIMARY WORKS - FILMS

- Behind Locked Doors* (Bud Boetticher, 1948)
- The Big Heat* (Fritz Lang, 1953)
- Black Angel* (Roy William Neill, 1946)
- Blonde Ice* (Jack Bernhard, 1948)
- The Blue Dahlia* (George Marshall, 1946)
- The Blue Gardenia* (Fritz Lang, 1953)
- Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1973)
- Crossfire* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947)
- D.O.A.* (Rudolph Maté, 1950)
- Detour* (Edward G. Ulmer, 1945)
- Dial 1119* (Gerald Mayer, 1950)
- Double Indemnity* (Biller Wilder, 1944)
- Hollow Triumph* (aka *The Scar*) (Steve Sekely, 1948)
- The Killing* (Stanley Kubrick, 1956)
- Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955)
- Kiss of Death* (Henry Hathaway, 1947)
- No Way Out* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950)
- Possessed* (Curtis Bernhardt, 1947)
- The Racket* (John Cromwell, 1951)
- The Revenger's Tragedy* (Alex Cox, 2002)
- Railroaded* (Anthony Mann, 1947)

Raw Deal (Anthony Mann, 1948)
Shock Corridor (Sam Fuller, 1962)
Slander (Roy Rowland, 1957)
Sweet Smell of Success (Alexander MacKendrick, 1957)
Too Late For Tears (Byron Haskin, 1949)
Underworld USA (Samuel Fuller, 1961)
Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958)
White Heat (Raoul Walsh, 1949)

SECONDARY SOURCES

Aasand, Hardin. "'To Blanch an Ethiop, and Revive a Corse': Queen Anne and The Masque of Blackness." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 32, no. 2 (1992): 271-285.

Aughterson, Kate, ed. *The English Renaissance: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Aughterson, Kate. *Renaissance Woman. Constructions of Femininity in England*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Bamford, Karen. *Sexual Violence on the Jacobean Stage*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Barthelemy, Anthony. *Black Face: Maligned Race*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1987.

Barr, Charles, *Vertigo*. London: Palgrave, 2009.

Baston, Jane. "Rehabilitating Moll's Subversion in *The Roaring Girl*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 37, no. 2 (1997): 317-335.

Bekkaoui, Khalid. "The Moorish Figure and Figures of Resistance," *Sheffield Hallam Working Papers. Representing Morocco*.
<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/wpw/morocco/Bekkaoui/Bekkaoui.htm> (accessed 21 July 2009).

Bellany, Alastair. *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Belsey, Catherine. *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama*. London: Methuen, 1985.

- Benson, Pamela Joseph.** *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992.
- Biesen, Sheri Chinen.** *BlackOut: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 2005.
- Bluestone, Max and Norman Rabkin,**eds. *Shakespeare's Contemporaries: Modern Studies in English Renaissance Drama.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970.
- Bly, Mary.** *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queans on the Early Modern Stage.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Boether, Bruce Thomas,** *The Fury of Men's Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1997.
- Borde, Raymond and Etienne Chaumeton.** *A Panorama of American Film Noir 1941-1953.* San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002.
- Boose, Lynda E.** "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42, No. 2 (1991): 179-213.
- Bovilsky, Lara.** *Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Brant, Clare and Diane Purkiss,** eds. *Women, Texts and Histories 1575-1760.* London: Routledge, 1992.
- Braunmuller, A.R.** *Natural Fictions: George Chapman's Major Tragedies.* Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1992.
- Braunmuller, A.R. and Michael Hathaway.** *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Breitenberg, Mark.** "Anxious Masculinity: Sexual Jealousy in Early Modern England." *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2, Women's Bodies and the State (1993): 377-398.
- Bruster, Douglas.** "The Jailer's Daughter and the Politics of Madwomen's Language." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (Autumn, 1995): 277-300.
- Burks, Deborah G.** "'Till want my will else': *The Changeling* and Women's Complicity With Their Rapists." In *Revenge Tragedy*, edited by Stevie Simkin, pages 163-189. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.
- Bushnell, Rebecca W.** *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought and Theater in the English Renaissance.* Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Cairns, Christopher,** ed. *The Renaissance Theatre Texts, Performance, Design: Volume 1 English and Italian Theatre.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

- Calbi, Maurizio.** *Approximate Bodies: Gender and Power in Early Modern Drama and Anatomy*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Callaghan, Dymrna.** *Shakespeare Without Women – Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- _____, *Women and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy: A Study of "King Lear", "Othello", "The Duchess of Malfi" and "The White Devil."* Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989.
- Carruthers, Jo,** "'Neither Maide, Wife or Widow': Ester Sowerman and the Book of Esther." *Prose Studies* 26, no. 3 (2003): 321-343.
- Cathcart, Charles.** "Lust's Dominion; Or The Lascivious Queen: Authorship, Date and Revision." *The Review of English Studies, New Series* 57, no. 207 (2001): 360-375.
- Chandler, Raymond.** *Trouble is my Business*. New York: Vintage, 1988.
- Chiball, Steve,** *Get Carter: A British Film Guide*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2003.
- Christopher, Nicholas.** *Somewhere in the Night*. New York: Henry Holt, 1997.
- Clare, Janet.** *'Art made tongue-tied by authority': Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990.
- Clark, Sandra.** *Renaissance Drama*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.
- _____, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: Sexual Themes and Dramatic Representation*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.
- Coddon, Karen S.,** "'For Show or Useless Property': Necrophilia and *The Revenger's Tragedy*." *ELH* 61, no. 1 (1994): 71-88.
- _____, "'Such Strange Desygns': Madness, Subjectivity, and Treason in *Hamlet* and Elizabethan Culture." In *Renaissance Drama, New Series XX: Essays on Dramatic Traditions: Challenges and Transmissions*, edited by Mary Beth Rose, pages 51-75. Evanston: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library Center for Renaissance Studies, 1989.
- Comensoli, Viviana and Anne Russell,** eds. *Enacting Gender on the English Stage*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Copjec, Joan,** ed. *Shades of Noir*. London: Verso, 1993.
- Cottagnies, Line.** "Lecture de *Roaring Girl* (1611) de Thomas Dekker et Thomas Middleton: Moll Cutpurse ou le principe du theatre." *Etudes Epistème*, numéro 2 (2002): 2-22.
- Daalder, Joost,** "Madness in Parts 1 and 2 of *The Honest Whore: A Case for Close Reading*." *AUMLA*, no. 86 (1996): 63-79.
- _____, "Folly and Madness in *The Changeling*." *Essays in Criticism* 38, no.1 (1988): 1-21.

- ____, "The Role of Isabella in *The Changeling*." *English Studies* 73, no. 1 (1992): 22-29.
- Dallby, Anders.** *The Anatomy of Evil: A Study of John Webster's "The White Devil."* Malmo: CWK Gleerup Lund, 1974.
- Dawson, Anthony B.** "Women Beware Women and the Economy of Rape." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 27, no. 2 Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring, 1987): 303-320.
- De Angelis, Rose.** *Between Anthropology and Literature: Interdisciplinary Discourse.* London: Routledge, 2002.
- Dickos, Andrew.** *Street with No Name.* Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2002.
- Dollimore, Jonathan and Alan Sinfield.** *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985.
- Dixon, Wheeler Winston.** *Film Noir and The Cinema of Paranoia.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
- Dudley, Scott,** "Conferring With The Dead: Necrophilia and Nostalgia in The Seventeenth Century," *ELH* 66, no.2 (1999): 277-294.
- Durgnat, Raymond and Scott Simmon,** *King Vidor.* Berkley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Eastwood, Adrienne.** "Controversy and the Single Girl in *The Maid's Tragedy* and *The Roaring Girl*." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 58, no. 2 (2004): 7-27.
- Eaton, Michael,** *Chinatown.* London: BFI Publishing, 2008.
- Fabe, Marilyn,** "Mourning Vertigo," *American Imago* 66, no. 3 (2009): 343-361.
- Finin, Kathryn,** "Re-memembering Gloriana: 'Wild Justice' and the Female Body in *The Revenger's Tragedy*." *Renaissance Forum* 6, no. 2 (2003):
- Finkelpearl, Philip J.** *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Finucci, Valorie and Regins Schwartz** eds. *Desire in the Renaissance: Psychoanalysis and Literature.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Fleming, Judith.** "The French Garden: An Introduction to Women's French." *ELH* 56, no.1. (1989): 19-51.
- Flinn, Tom.** "*The Big Heat* and *The Big Combo*: Rogue Cops and Mink-coated Girls." *Velvet Light Trap*, 11 (1974) 23-28.
- Floyd-Wilson, Mary.** *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

- Froidefond, Dominique.** "The Confined Spectacle of Madness in Bey's *The Illustrious Madman*." In *Themes in Drama 15: Madness in Drama*, edited by James Redmond, pages 43-53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Fromm, Erich,** *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1973.
- Gonzalez Campos, Miguel Angel.** "Crime, Revenge and Horror: Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* as a Jacobean Revenge Tragedy." *Sederi VIII* (1997): 237-241.
- Gray, Catherine.** "Feeding on the Seed of the Woman: Dorothy Leigh and the Figure of Maternal Dissent." *ELH* 68 (2001): 563-592.
- Grossman, Julie.** *Rethinking the Femme Fatale in Film Noir: Ready for Her Close-Up*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.
- Gurr, Andrew.** *The Shakespeare Company 1594-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Hall, Kim F.** *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Hallet, Charles and Elaine.** *The Revenger's Madness*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980.
- Harp, Richard and Stanley Stewart,** eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Hattaway, Michael,** ed. *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Henderson, Katherine Usher and Barbara F. McManus,** eds. *Half Humankind. Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England 1540-1640*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985.
- Hillier, Jim and Alastair Phillips.** *100 Film Noirs*. London: Palgrave, 2009.
- Hirsch, Foster.** *The Dark Side of the Screen*. London: Da Capo Press, 2001.
- Hollinger, David A. and Charles Capper,** eds. *The American Intellectual Tradition: A Source Book, 1630-1865*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Hopkins, David.** "Nature's Laws and Man's: The Story of Cinyras and Myrrha in Ovid and Dryden." *The Modern Language Review* 80, no. 4 (1985): 786-801.
- Hopkins, Lisa.** *The Female Hero in English Renaissance Tragedy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002.

- Horodowich, Elizabeth.** "The gossiping tongue: oral networks, public life and political culture in early modern Venice." *Renaissance Studies* 19, no.1 (2005): 22-45.
- Howard, Jean E,** ed. *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- _____, "Crossdressing, The Theatre and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39, no.4. (1988): 418-440.
- _____, "Sex and the Social Conflict: The Erotics of *The Roaring Girl*." In *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, edited by Susan Zimmerman, pages 170-190. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Irwin, John T.** "Beating the Boss: Cain's Double Indemnity." *American Literary History* 14, no. 2 (2002): 253-283.
- Kaplan, Ann E.,** ed. *Women in Noir*. London: British Film Institute, 2005.
- Jackson, Ken,** "Bethlem and Bridewell in *The Honest Whore Plays*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 43 no. 2 (2003): 395-413.
- Johnson, Chris.** *Essays on George F. Walker: Playing with Anxiety*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1999.
- Jowitt, Claire.** "Political Allegory in Late Elizabethan and Early Jacobean "Turk"Plays: *Lust's Dominion* and *The Turke*." *Comparative Drama* 36, no. 3,4 (2002-2003): 411-443.
- Kastan, David Scott and Peter Stallybrass.** *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretation of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Kennedy, Dennis.** *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth- Century Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Kinney, Arthur F,** ed. *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*. Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2004.
- Kirstner A. L. & M. K.** "The Five Structures of *The Changeling*." *Modern Language Studies* 11, no. 2 (1981):
- Layman, B. J.** "The Equilibrium of Opposites in *The White Devil*: A Representation." *PLMA* 74, no. 4 (1959): 336-347.
- Levin, Carole and Karen Robertson.** *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama*. Lewiston N.Y: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991.
- Likhart, Elodie.** "*La Tragedie du Vengeur* de Thomas Middleton ou la Thérapie Paradoxe du Théâtre," *Etudes Epistème*, no. 16 automne (2009): 43-57.
- Limon. Jerzy.** *Dangerous Matter: English Drama and Politics in 1623/24*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

- Little, Arthur L.** "'Transshaped' Women: Virginité and Hysteria in *The Changeling*." In *Themes in Drama 15: Madness in Drama*, edited by James Redmond, pages 19-41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Loftis, John.** *Renaissance Drama in England and Spain: Topical Allusions and History Plays*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Lyons, Arthur.** *Death on the Cheap: The Lost B Movies of Film Noir*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2000.
- McArthur, Colin.** *The Big Heat*. London: British Film Institute, 1992.
- MacDonald, Joyce Green.** *Women and Race in Early Modern Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- McFarlane, Brian and Geoff Mayer.** *New Australian Cinema: Sources and Parallels in British and American Films*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- McGrath, Rick.** *Shock Corridor*. www.culturecourt.com/Ajo/film/ShockC.htm (accessed 12 January 2006).
- McJannet, Linda.** "'History written by the enemy': Eastern Sources about the Ottomans on the Continent and in England." *English Literary Renaissance* 36, no. 3 (2006): 396-429.
- _____, *The Sultan Speaks*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006.
- McLuskie, Kathleen.** "Drama and Sexual Politics: the Case of Webster's Duchess." In *Themes in Drama 7: Drama Sex and Politics*, edited by James Redmond, pages 77-91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- McNeill, Fiona.** "Gynocentric London Spaces: (Re)Locating Masterless Women in Early Stuart Drama." In *Renaissance Drama, New Series XXVIII, The Space of the Stage*, edited by Jeffrey Masten and Wendy Hall, pages 195-244. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999.
- McRae, Andrew.** *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- _____, "Political Satire in Early Stuart England: New Voices, New Narratives." *Literature Compass* 1 (2003): 1-23.
- Manlove, Clifford T.** "Visual 'Drive' and Cinematic Narrative: Reading Gaze Theory in Lacan, Hitchcock and Mulvey." *Cinema Journal* 46, no 3 (2007): 83-108.
- Marrapodi, Michele and A. J. Hoenselaars,** eds. *The Italian World of English Renaissance Drama: Cultural Exchange and Intertextuality*. London: University of Delaware Press, 1998.

- Marotti, Arthur F.** and **Michael D. Bristol**, eds. *Print, Manuscript, Performance. The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*. Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2000.
- Matar, Nabil**. *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Mayer, Jean-Christophe**, ed. *Representing France and the French in Early Modern Drama*. Newark: University of Delaware, 2008.
- Mayer, Geoff** and **Brian McDonnell**. *Encyclopedia of Film Noir*. London: Greenwood Press, 2007.
- Moore, Jeanie**. "Riddled Romance, Kingship and Kinship in *Pericles*." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 57, no. 1 (2003): 33-48.
- Moretti, Franco**. *Signs Taken For Wonders*. London: Verso Editions, 1983.
- Mowry, Melissa**. "Thieves, Bawds and Counterrevolutionary Fantasies: The Life and Death of Mrs. Mary Frith." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (2005): 26-48.
- Muggli, Mark Z.** "Ben Jonson and the Business of News Studies in English Literature 1500-1900." *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* 32, no. 2 (1992): 323-340.
- Narremore, James**. *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts*. London: University of California Press, 1998.
- Neely, Carol Thomas**. *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Early Modern Culture*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Neill, Michael**. "'Mulattos,' 'Blacks,' and 'Indian Moors': Othello and Early Modern Constructions of Human Difference." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49, no.4 (1998): 361-374.
- Newman, Karen**. *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Oliver, Kelly** and **BenigoTrigo**. *Noir Anxiety*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003.
- Orgel, Stephen**. "The Subtexts of *The Roaring Girl*." In *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, edited by Susan Zimmerman, pages 12-26. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Palmer, R. Barton**. *Hollywood's Dark Cinema* London: Prentice-Hall, 1994.
- Panek, Jennifer**. "The Mother as Bawd in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *A Mad World My Masters*." *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 13, no. 2 (2003): 115-137.
- Partridge, Eric**. *Shakespeare's Bawdy*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Peck, Linda Levy**. *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*. London: Routledge, 1990.

- Porfiro, Robert, Alain Silver** and **James Ursini**, eds. *Film Noir Reader 3*. New York: Limelight Editions, 2002.
- Raubiecheck, Walter** and **Andrew Sarris**, eds. *Hitchcock's Released Films: From 'Rope' to 'Vertigo'*. Detroit: Wayne State University, 1991.
- Raymond, Joad**. *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Reiss, Timothy J.** *Tragedy and Truth: Studies in the Development of a Renaissance and Neoclassical Disclosure*. London: Yale University Press, 1980.
- Rose, Mary Beth**. "Women in Men's Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in *The Roaring Girl*." *English Literary Renaissance* 14, no.3 (1984): 367-391.
- _____, *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford**. "Prophets and Humanists: Types of Religious Feminism in Stuart England." *The Journal of Religion* 70, no. 1 (1990): 1-18.
- Rustici, Craig**. "The Smoking Girl: Tobacco and the Representation of Mary Frith." *Studies in Philology* 96, no. 2 (1999): 159-179.
- Salkeld, Duncan**. *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.
- Salzman, Paul**. *Literary Culture in Jacobean England: Reading 1621*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Sharpe, Kevin** and **Peter Lake**, eds. *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Shepherd, Simon**, ed. *The Women's Sharp Revenge*. London: Fourth Estate, 1985.
- Shetley, Vernon**. "Incest and Capitalism in *Chinatown*." *MLN* 114, no. 5, Comparative Literature Issue (1999): 1092-1109.
- Silver, Alain** and **James Ursini**, eds. *Film Noir Reader*. New York: Limelight Editions, 2003.
- _____, *Film Noir Reader 2*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1999.
- _____, eds. *Film noir Reader. Vol. 4. The Crucial Films and Themes*. New Jersey: Limelight Editions, 2004.
- Silver, Alain** and **Elizabeth Ward**, eds. *Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style*. Woodstock: the Overlook Press, 1992.
- Simkin, Stevie**. *Early Modern Tragedy and the Cinema of Violence*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006.

- _____, ed. *Revenge Tragedy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.
- Sinfield, Alan.** *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Slater, Ann Pasternak.** "Hypallage, Barley-Break, and *The Changeling*." *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 34, no. 136 (1983):429-440.
- Smith, David L., Richard Strier and David Bevington,** *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576-1649*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Smith, Ian.** "Barbarian Errors: Performing Race in Early Modern England." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49, no.2 (1998): 168-186.
- Smuts, Malcolm R.** *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987.
- Sofer, Andrew.** *The Stage Life of Props*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.
- Spicer, Andrew.** *Film Noir*. Harlow: Longman, 2000.
- Sukic, Christine.** "'Shortly they will play me with what forms they list upon the stage' : Essex et la construction fictionnelle de l'Histoire." *Études Épistémè* 16 (2009): 78-94.
- Tennenhouse, Leonard.** *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's genres*. New York: Methuen, 1986.
- Thorne, W. B.,** "Pericles and the "Incest-Fertility Opposition." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1971): 43-56.
- Todd, Margo,** ed. *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England*. London: Routledge, 1995
- Traub, Valerie, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callaghan,** eds. *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Tricomi, Albert H.** *Anticourt Drama in England 1603-1642*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.
- Vaughan, Virginia Mason.** *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Vitkus, Daniel.** *Turning Turk*. New York: Palgrave, 2003.
- Wadsworth, Frank.** "The Relationship of Lust's Dominion and John Mason's *The Turk*." *ELH* 20, no. 3 (1953): 194-199.
- Wager, Jans B.** *Dames in the Driver's Seat: Rereading Film Noir*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.
- Wann, Louis.** "The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama." *Modern Philology* 12, no. 7 (1915): 423-447.

Wiesner, Merry E., *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000..

Woodbridge, Linda. "Black and White and Red All Over: The Sonnet Mistress Among the Ndemdu." *Renaissance Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1987): 247-297.

_____, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind 1540-1620*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1984.

Zimmerman, Susan. "Animating Matter: The Corpse as Idol in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*. In *Renaissance Drama, New Series 31: Performing Affect*, edited by Jeffrey Masten and Wendy Hall, pages 215-243. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002.