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"Honor in Oblivion": The Motif of Heroic Isolation in the Works of John Ford

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"HONOR IN OBLIVION":
THE MOTIF OF HEROIC ISOLATION
IN THE WORKS OF JOHN FORD

by
Rudolph W. Stoeckel

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VITA

The author, Rudolph William Stoeckel, is the son of Rudolph and Jean (Chalmers) Stoeckel. He was born March 8, 1938, in Montreal, Canada.

His elementary education was obtained in the parochial schools of Montreal and secondary education at Mount Assumption High School, Plattsburgh, New York, where he was graduated in 1956.

After service in the U.S. Marine Corps, he entered St. Michael's College, Vermont, and in June 1964, received the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with a major in English Literature.

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INTRODUCTION

John Ford's drama has generated an unusually large number of divergent critical responses. One reason for such varied reactions to his plays is Ford's apparently ambiguous attitude toward his heroes' moral and psychological states. The difficulty is compounded by the dramatist's portrayal of the society that his characters inhabit. More often than not, the major social institutions do not provide firm moral standards by which we can judge the validity of the hero's actions.

The reader is justifiably confused when confronted, for example, by Perkin Warbeck's intransigent refusal to admit that his claim to the English throne is spurious. Is Perkin an unscrupulous poseur? Is he utterly mad? Or is Ford suggesting that Perkin's noble, if distorted, view of reality is superior to the legitimate, but narrow, statecraft of Henry VII?

A similar ambivalence exists in 'Tis Pity She's A Whore. Giovanni's behavior may be interpreted as mad, cruel, and immoral. Yet, given the society in which the events take place, may we not view Giovanni's incestuous relationship with his sister with some degree of sympathy? Is his behavior made less offensive by the desperate circumstances of his environment?
Ford often places his hero in conflict with a major social institution. In *Perkin Warbeck* the institution is the government itself, personified in Henry. In *'Tis Pity*, the institution is the church, represented by the Friar and the Cardinal. The placing of his heroes beyond the pale of conventional social restraints is a typical Fordian strategy. This habit is somewhat surprising in the oeuvre of an author whose early work reflects strong admiration for the very conventions he later questions.

In his earlier, non-dramatic work, Ford is highly supportive of traditional attitudes toward social and moral behavior. Both "Fame's Memorial" and "Christ's Bloody Sweat" are poems that are based upon what appears to be a conservative temperament. In the elegy "Fame's Memorial," Ford adopts, with very little modification, the courtesy tradition most clearly exemplified by Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. "Christ's Bloody Sweat" is a meditative poem that celebrates the sacrifice of Christ in redeeming mankind. Paradoxically, these two ostensibly conservative works contain elements that, I believe, may have contributed to Ford's subsequent dramatic portrayals of characters who are morally and psychologically unorthodox.

The three specific elements that I wish to isolate and examine are those of courtesy, meditation, and satire. In the first part of the thesis, Chapters I-IV, I shall
study these strands as they are found in Ford's non-dramatic work. In Chapter I, I shall sketch the importance of the trends of courtesy, meditation, and satire as they relate generally to the earlier decades of the Seventeenth Century. It was in the first twenty years of the century that Ford developed the techniques and attitudes that he would later use in the plays. Chapters II, III, and IV will examine the works "Fame's Memorial," "Christ's Bloody Sweat," "A Line of Life," and "Honor Triumphant." Chapter II will concentrate more fully upon courtesy, Chapter III upon satire, and Chapter IV upon meditation.

Chapter V is a transitional chapter, in which I discuss the general attitudes revealed in Ford's dramas. Chapters VI-IX examine four of Ford's plays: Lover's Melancholy, Love's Sacrifice, 'Tis Pity She's A Whore and Perkin Warbeck. In this second part of the thesis, I shall interpret the plays as refinements of attitudes, themes, and techniques which Ford had been exploring from the beginning of his career.

I hope to show that Ford cultivates an attitude of aloofness to moral conduct. This attitude is maintained and refined through manipulations of an aristocratic code of honor which is consistent with the themes of "Honor Triumphant," "Fame's Memorial," "Christ's Bloody Sweat," and "A Line of Life." Through satire, and through
meditation on "the trash and bondage of human affairs," Ford creates a world in which men and women must fashion for themselves an honorable and solitary existence. In the drama, the subject of love provides Ford with a central metaphor which enables him to synthesize the elements of social criticism and personal privilege in a concentrated, single motif.


The major difference between these studies and mine is that I intend to concentrate more fully than they on the development of Ford's attitudes from their beginnings in the earlier non-dramatic works to their full expression in the dramas. Instead of seeing his drama as a phenomenon separate from his total oeuvre, I shall trace the development of the theme of heroic isolation and will attempt to demonstrate a search by the poet for the genre and style best suited to the exploration of this theme.

What began in "Fame's Memorial" as a strict code of behaviour patterned after the courtesy books became, in the
drama, an obsession with exclusivity. The process of meditation revealed in "Christ's Bloody Sweat" seems to recur in the drama as a proclivity, on the part of Ford's protagonists, for a highly introspective spiritual isolation. A satiric attitude toward common affairs is evident in both "Christ's Bloody Sweat" and "A Line of Life." In the plays, satire serves as a major technique. Ford uses satire as a way of measuring the distance between the artificial manners and lechery of the foils, and the courtesy and authentic love of the protagonists.

The elements of courtesy, meditation, and satire reappear in the drama, then, where they reflect the author's attitude of disapproval toward those characters who are not privileged by participation in a harsh rite of initiation. In the plays, this initiation is characteristically presented by frustrated or doomed love, through which one must pass in order to be elevated to heroic stature.

For the study of the poem "Fame's Memorial" and the essays "A Line of Life" and "Honor Triumphant," I shall depend upon the standard Gifford and Dyce edition of The Works of John Ford (London, 1869). For the plays, I will use Bang's Materialen zur Kunde des alteren Englischen Dramas (Louvain, 1908), and De Vocht's Materials for the Study of the Old English Drama (Louvain, 1927). De Vocht's is a continuation of the Materialen series. Quotations from
"Christ's Bloody Sweat" are from a microfilm of the first edition of 1613.

While the Bang and De Vocht Materialen is the best edition of the collected plays of Ford, I shall also make use of more recent editions of individual plays, especially 'Tis Pity She's A Whore edited by N.W. Bawcutt (Lincoln, 1966), The Broken Heart edited by Donald K. Anderson, Jr. (Lincoln, 1968), and Keith Sturgess' edition of 'Tis Pity She's A Whore, The Broken Heart and Perkin Warbeck (London, 1970).
CHAPTER I

TRENDS

In his recent article on Ford's *Tis Pity She's A Whore*, Larry S. Champion suggests that "Ford's refusal to provide a single convincing teleology for the stage world projects a fundamentally pessimistic view of life in which man's challenge is not the heroic deed or the new horizon but the ambiguity of moral values constantly frustrating his search for a meaningful life."¹ Hugh M. Richmond points out that "even in the drama that was broadly favored by the English Courts there is a recurring emphasis on the revulsion from the value of public service and reputation."² J.W. Lever suggests that the fundamental pessimism of the Jacobean drama is the result of the heroes' finding themselves alienated "in a society and a cosmos drained of meaning."³

The reasons for so pessimistic a view of society and existence have been assigned to phenomena as disparate as the

¹Larry S. Champion, "Ford's *Tis Pity She's A Whore* and the Jacobean Tragic Perspective," PMLA, 90 (January 1975), 86.

²Hugh M. Richmond, "Personal Identity and Literary Personae: A Study in Historical Psychology," PMLA, 90 (March 1975), 211.

new science, tremendous economical confusion, and the emergence of centralist monarchies with their parasitic bureaucracies.  

Whatever the causes of the social crises of the Seventeenth Century, Maurice Evans suggests that "the mounting political and religious pressures of the period . . . demanded a directer form of literary treatment than had been necessary before." Whether one can argue that Donne's Anatomie of the World or Jonson's The Alchemist are more "direct" literary exercises than, say, Spenser's Shepheardes Calender or Lyly's Endymion, one may see reflected in the former works "the extent to which 'new philosophy' might call all in doubt." The appearance of new literary forms and treatments, notably formal satire, suggests a literary analogue to what Basil Willey calls a "disharmony between traditional explanations and current needs."


Nicolson, p. 13.

One aspect of the age seems to be a movement away from a fairly optimistic faith in humanism, exemplified by the tradition of courtesy, to "a vista of anarchy, of chaos, of the void itself."\(^8\) Some authors of the period reacted by attempting to fashion literary forms appropriate to confronting this crisis. Ford's non-dramatic poetry, written between the years 1606 and 1620, suggests that he was undertaking a search for a genre and style best suited to his increasingly skeptical view of social and moral systems.

Ford's development can be traced in his major non-dramatic works. "Fame's Memorial" (1606) is basically a celebration of the courtesy tradition. "Christ's Bloody Sweat" (1613) is a meditative poem which incorporates long passages of satire, many of which criticize the very virtues that he had praised in the earlier poem. In his later prose tract, "A Line of Life" (1620), Ford reiterates his increasingly somber view of life, especially of the active life which he calls "trash and bondage."\(^9\)

Ford's loss of faith in the traditional concept of courtesy reflects a more generally felt mistrust of the ideal in the early decades of the Seventeenth Century. Ford's place

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in this age of transition can be viewed through his concern with what was for him an ever-important theme. This theme, however, was undergoing drastic changes during Ford's early career.

It has been noted, for instance, that between 1528 and 1619 at least sixty editions of Castiglione's famous manual *The Courtier*, were published, but that for a century after 1619, not one appeared. It may be that religious attitudes in England toward the continent promoted a picture of the sophisticated wickedness of Italian society and that these attitudes accounted for a falling from grace of *The Courtier*. It has been suggested, too, that the ideal represented only a "small and antiquated class, which the new age was rapidly outmoding."\(^{10}\) As the small Renaissance court became less important with the growth of large, centralist monarchies, the courtier himself perhaps appeared to be merely ornamental.

*The Courtier* is both a commitment to and a celebration of a way of life, even though the way of life is necessarily limited to a very restricted group. In fact, the exclusiveness of the world described in *The Courtier* is one of the fundamental elements of its character. The courtier is

isolated by birth and blood line, and his sense of separateness is cultivated to the point where it forms one of the central factors of his existence. Adherence to such a code in the face of a general collapse of the world which supported it might very well produce a sense of exile—not at all of a Jaques in Arden, rather of a Hamlet in the general moral squalor of Elsinore. In the alienation of Ford's heroes I believe we may see a noblesse oblige which, in the face of encroaching social realities, seems at first precious and stubborn. Finally, however, the hero's relentless pursuit of an ideal code of honor in a generally depraved world leads to an absolute retreat into the autonomous world of self.

In the Sixteenth Century two major trends emerge so far as the courtesy tradition is concerned. First there is a growth of Italian influence from the court to society. The courtesy books themselves reflect this extension. "There is no more difference between the gentleman and the yeoman than there is between two bricks made of the self-same earth."11 The sense of levelling Castiglione's exclusive world appears not only in Guazzo's Civil Conversation, but is reiterated in The Galateo (London, 1596), which was intended for more general use than was Castiglione's work.

The second trend, which took place simultaneously, was the reaction against this same Italian influence; this reaction was "moral and national . . . " and was further fostered by the growth of Puritanism."12 This reaction against depravity is reflected in such works as Roger Ascham's The Scholemaster (London, 1570) and Philip Stubbes' more strident The Anatomie of Abuses (London, 1583). The tone of the censures, though, tends increasingly to resemble Stubbes'. For instance, Stephen Gosson, in The Schoole of Abuse (1579), laments that the old exercises of shooting, wrestling, and strength of arms have now become banqueting, playing, pipyn, and dauncing, and all such delights as may win us to pleasure, or rocke us a sleepe. Oh what a woondervful chaunge is this? Our wreastling at arms, is turned to wallowing in Ladies laps, our courage to cowardice, our running to ryot. . . . We have robbed Greece of Gluttonie, Italy of wontonnesse, Spaine of pride, Fraunce of deceit, and Dutchland of quaffing.13

One can see in much of this invective a Puritan disdain of luxury. But the tide of resentment goes well beyond the mere insular, anti-continental, anti-Romish tirades of a Gosson or a Stubbes. As H.R. Trevor-Roper points out, the

12 Ibid., p. 81.

great crisis of the Seventeenth Century had its roots in the
dissolution of the small Renaissance courts which replaced
the medieval mercantile cities as centers of power and
influence.

The European economy, already strained to the limits by
the habits of peacetime boom, was suddenly struck by a
great depression, the universal 'decay of trade' of 1620.
Moreover, in those twenty years [the first two decades of
the Seventeenth Century], a new attitude of mind had been
created: created by disgust at that gilded merry-go-round
which cost society so much more than society was willing
to bear. It was an attitude of hatred: hatred of 'the
Court' and its courtiers, hatred of princely follies and
bureaucratic corruption, hatred of the Renaissance itself:
in short, Puritanism... But let us not be deceived by
mere local forms. This reaction against the Renaissance
courts and their whole culture and morality was not con­
 fined to any one country or religion.14

To the contemporary Englishman the real causes of early
Seventeenth Century social upheaval may have been hidden,
but his very uncertainty may have caused him an even greater
"tangle of loyalties, ethical considerations, and practical
motives."15

One would not expect the proponents of courtesy to
capitulate immediately to the forces threatening the
tradition. We see rather the emergence of an attitude which
is critical of the excesses of the courtly parasites and

15Hallett Smith, Elizabethan Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard
which makes more accessible to the other social strata the concept of courtesy.

Two exemplars of the argument against the excesses of the Italianate gentleman are Stubbes and Ascham. Stubbes' tone is harsh and gives little evidence of thought. Rather, he seems to place himself outside society, ticking off abuses in a random fashion:

Golde, silver and precious stones . . . bracelettes, and armelettes of golde, and other costly jewelles . . . rapiers, swordes, and daggers, gilt twice or thrise over the hiltes with good angell golde. But wherefore they be so clogged with golde and silver I know not.\(^{16}\)

Stubbes' heaping together of these excessive luxuries is like a merchant's bill of lading: "Cast your accompts before what will bee the reward in the ende" (Anatomie of Abuses, p. 136) and the effect is a curious combination of invective and envy.

Ascham's tone in The Scholemaster is much more moderate than is Stubbes' but it is interesting to see that he too uses the catalogue as a technique, although his concern is less with baubles and ruffles than with Mediterranean moral torpor:

Our Italians . . . being free in Italy to go whithersoever lust will carry them, they do not like that law and honesty should be such a bar to their liberty at home in England. And yet they be the greatest makers of love, the daily dalliers with such pleasant words, with such smiling and secret countenances, with such signs, tokens, wagers, purposed to be lost before they were purposed to be made, with bargains of wearing colors, flowers and

\(^{16}\)Philip Stubbes, The Anatomie of Abuses, p. 133.
Herbs, to breed occasion of often meeting of him and her, and bolder taking of this and that, &c. . . . These knacks that were brought first into England by them that learned them before in Italy in Circe's Court. 17

Although the tones of Stubbes' and Ascham's works are quite different, both implicitly condemn the frivolous immorality of those who should have been concerned with the practical and orderly running of the country.

As powerful as these criticisms of courtly excesses may be, however, may not the final dismissal of the courtier be more than a moral objection to his elegant pastimes? At the end of the Seventeenth Century, Thomas Baker, in his Reflections Upon Learning speaks of such paradigms as the courtly as being of no use. The courtly figure is ultimately "too great and inimitable an Example, perfectly imaginary, and consequently of no Use in Human Life. . . . He is nowhere to be found but in the Conceptions of our Mind." 18 These ideal beings seem increasingly to be relegated to the world of legend and myth, a world which, like Arcadia, becomes more and more distant as the century progresses. As indicated by its title, Baker's Reflections Upon Learning suggests a shift in attitude toward the perception of reality


as much as in literary genre, and is but one indication of the period's turning "from ideology to psychology." 19

A similar evolution takes place in Ford's oeuvre. From the ideological assumptions of "Fame's Memorial" to the meditative and satiric tone of "Christ's Bloody Sweat" we can see developing a trend which is more fully explored in the complexity and ambiguity of the drama. Central to Ford's work are the counterpoised elements of true honor and false courtesy. Typical of Ford's drama is the juxtaposition of the hero, struggling to fashion a code of behaviour, with the foils: usually extravagantly foppish courtiers, always dealt with satirically.

Satire is one of those forms of literary treatment which, especially during the 1590's, was cultivated as an attempt to articulate the dissatisfaction with existing social institutions and with the language that embodied this disaffection. Just as Thomas Baker distrusted the exaggerated claims of the courtesy books, so some poets felt that "the veils of fiction were beginning to get in the way of those who wished to see the truth clearly." 20 A good deal of the subject matter of the satires of the last decade of

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the Sixteenth Century had been treated in earlier prose works such as The Scholemaster and The Anatomie of Abuses but, as satire became a more formal poetic discipline based upon classical models—as in Hall and Marston—we see emerging the figure of a satirist who seems to be "trying to duplicate realistically the effect of thought as it is forming."21 This formal satire has in common with the earlier satire of Gosson and Stubbes the technique of cataloguing, or heaping of abuses, which tends to build a sense of increasing emotional intensity.

His tongue, call'd complement:
In which he can win widdowes, and pay scores,
Make men speake treason, cosen subtlest whores,
Out-flatter favorites, or outlie either
Jovius, or Surius, or both together.22

Increasingly, authors will attempt to create a more natural or spontaneous mode of expression. They will strive for "more matter, with less art," and ridicule those who refuse to conform to a demand for a more direct, more "honest" speech. Ford often invokes the figure of the windy courtier whose evasive verbiage contrasts with the blunt but honest speech of the hero.

Pelias. May't please your grace,
I thinke you doe containe within your selfe


The Great Elixer, soule and quintissence
Of all divine perfections: are the glory
Of mankind, and the onely strict example
For earthly monarchies to square out their lives by:
Times miracle, Fames pride; in Knowledge, Wit,
Sweetnesse, Discourse, Armes--Arts--Prince. You are a courtier. 23

It is the courtier's language that most dramatically sets him
apart from honest men--most especially from the plainspeak-
ing satirist. The courtier's "tongue, call'd complement"
is portrayed as being a comic rite, an evasion which is
useful only as a means of avoiding the communication of a
thought.

A courtier! wash, go by, stand not upon
Pishery-pashery; those silken fellows
Are but painted images, outsides, outsides,
Rose; their inner linings are torn. 24

Rem tene, verba sequentur; and the language of satire
fixing itself tenaciously to things, concerns itself with
"what seems to be but is not, what is, but does not seem to
be--that is, with the difficulties of knowing, and the

23 John Ford, Lover's Melancholy, II.676-684. All
references to Ford's plays will be from Materialen zur Kunde
des alteren Englischen Dramas, Volumes 12-14 (Louvain, 1905),
Volume 23 (Louvain, 1908) and Materials for the Study of the
Old English Drama, new series, Volume 1 ed. Henry De Vocht
(Louvain, 1927). There are no scene divisions in the original
quartos reprinted in the Materialen. References will be to
act and line numbers.

24 Thomas Dekker, The Shoemaker's Holiday, III.v. 61-
64, in English Drama 1580-1642, ed. C.F. Tucker Brooke and
Nathanial Paradise (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1933),
p. 279.
special immorality of hypocrisy in an age aware of the difficulties, under normal conditions, of knowing.\textsuperscript{25} The equation of bloated language and hypocrisy is best developed, perhaps, in Jonson's \textit{The Alchemist}. Time and again, and often in a manner quite similar to Jonson, Ford introduces characters whose sophisticated speech cloaks sinister and immoral designs.

Clearly, however, there are thoughts which do not offer solidity and which cannot be counted, catalogued and shelved. The hesitant, awkward and dense style of the satirist is often the result of his trying to penetrate the elusive aspects of behavior.

\begin{quote}
Can you paint a thought? or number
Every fancy in a slumber?
Can you count soft minutes roving
From a dyals point by moving?
Can you grasp a sigh?
\end{quote}

(Ford, \textit{The Broken Heart}, III.1122-1126)

The problem becomes one of creating an authentic persona and a clear and striking statement of his perception.

Ironically, the satirist begins by isolating a social aberration, sees around him an ever-widening morass of folly and abuse, and finally sees himself isolated from the very society he intended to correct. Plagued by the vision of a corrupt world, he cuts himself off from it, and creates for

\textsuperscript{25}Powers, p. 27.
himself a lonely vantage point from which he can revile the rest of mankind.

Leave mee, and in this standing woorden chest, Consorted with these few books, let me lye. . . . Shall I leave all this constant company, And follow headlong, wild uncertaine thee?

(John Donne, Satyre I. 11. 2-3, 11-12)

The satirist's position suggests that if his vision is to be a valid one, then he must be free from the distractions and trivialities which occupy the majority of men.

Friends and companions get you gone, 'Tis my desire to be alone; Ne'er well but when my thoughts and I Do domineer in privacy.26

We shall see how in "Christ's Bloody Sweat" and even more so in the drama, Ford emphasizes the loneliness of the hero as he is surrounded by poseurs and plagued by the aberrant behaviour of corrupt courtiers. Ford's typical hero has abandoned any traditional ideology, and is caught between the pressures of what to him is a corrupt society, and "the imperative necessity to act, even at the price of his own moral contamination."27

The physical and moral isolation of a figure observing and registering society's faults is characteristic of the


27 Lever, p. 13.
satirist. When that moral isolation becomes spiritual retreat and when the seer struggles to understand his relationship to the exterior world, we get the great interior drama of meditative poetry. The term "meditative poetry" may be one which attempts to resolve a paradox suggested by what much poetic meditation seems at first to be, that is, mystical poetry. The apparent contradiction is between the mystic's abandonment of the senses in his attempt to illuminate the spirit, and the poet's use of image, his direct appeal to the senses. Helen White notes that, for the mystic, the potency of imagery may be "centrifugal, may actually lead the mind away from the object of the mystic." On the other hand, "St. Ignatius directs that one must also use the image-forming faculty to provide a concrete and vivid setting for a meditation on invisible things."

The fundamental distinction in meditative poetry, and one which must be confronted, is that between the soul and the corrupt body in which it is imprisoned, and then, by extension, between the spiritual world and the corrupt society of man. The element of satire clearly would be

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present as a part of the poet's method in showing the dis­
tinction between the ideal and the real, but the poetry of
meditation would differ from formal satire by the added
element of absorption and self-examination.

This difference, however, is reconcilable. It might
at first seem that a poetry that concentrates as strongly on
the "trash" of existence as satire does would be inappro­
priate as a means of leading us to an exploration of man's
upper, or spiritual, range of potential. "What we
remember from a satire is neither character nor plot, per se,
but a fantastic image or a series of them."\(^30\) However, the
very intensity of the vision of man's depravity may suggest
or invoke an ideal for which the satirist yearns. The com­
bination of the powerful invective of satire with the
visionary quality of the meditative poem produces "a hither­
to unparalleled integration of feeling and thought, of
sensuous detail and theological abstraction."\(^31\)

Ford often returns to the theme of a noble individual
suffering at the hands of a depraved society. In "Christ's
Bloody Sweat" Ford provides us with the ultimate figure of a

\(^{30}\) Ronald Paulson, The Fictions of Satire (Baltimore:

\(^{31}\) Martz, p. 79.
man suffering in the midst of a generally corrupt humanity. "The concept of *Imitatio Christi* took on a new meaning in a period that seemed to its contemporaries to be as full of trial and suffering as Christ's own life."\(^{32}\)

In meditation the concentration on the chosen image (the crucifixion, the suffering in Gethsemane) is not an end in itself, but a preface and an aid to intense self-analysis. Ford appropriates, in his drama, the technique of balancing a central image (often blood, or death) with the exploration of abstract psychological states. We shall see in Chapter IV how the program of meditation may have prepared Ford better to control and integrate the elements of social criticism and spiritual self-examination.

Meditation provides a retreat from the world, even if only a temporary one. It begins with observation but then moves inward attempting to discover resources in the self which will make one's eventual re-engagement with the world more bearable. In Ford's "Christ's Bloody Sweat" the element of isolation merges with the recognition of the inadequacies of social convention. In Ford's drama the notion of spiritual isolation becomes the central motif. The major characters are exiled and, as in "Christ's Bloody Sweat,"

the crisis occurs as the hero contemplates the meaning of his suffering. Ford's concern with self-analysis and discovery is a significant element in his drama. In his meditative poem, Ford states that he has "set forth the witnesse that may testifie what I desire to bee": and what he desires to be is set against what to Ford seems to be a dismaying scene of general corruption. The method by which he intends to make this discovery is "Faire Meditation."

Since the meditative mode was one which "drew upon all the poetical resources available in the culture of the day," "Christ's Bloody Sweat" was an especially appropriate final working out of poetic problems prior to his apprenticeship in dramatic literature.

CHAPTER II

"FAME'S MEMORIAL"

AND

THE MIRROR OF COURTESY

No critic has considered Ford's early work ("Fame's Memorial," "Honour Triumphant," "A Line of Life" and "Christ's Bloody Sweat") to be sufficiently important to merit a thorough stylistic analysis. Most critics limit themselves to the observation that Ford's interest in the themes of love and aristocratic values is manifested early and remains constant throughout his career.¹ It is not my intention to suggest a re-evaluation of Ford's early poetry and prose so far as its quality as literature is concerned. That quality, it is universally agreed, is of a pretty low order.²


²Alexander Dyce claims that Ford's acrostic to Penelope in "Fame's Memorial" "may be fairly set down as the worst that ever passed the press." Works, III, 284.
But this does not mean that these works are of no significance to a study of Ford's later dramatic style. Ford's first dramas appeared in the 1620's: a study of the earlier, non-dramatic works will enable us to note a striking development in Ford's style and ideology from a dependency upon conventional language and attitudes to a unique style and an independence of thought. It may be that the failure to have analyzed thoroughly Ford's non-dramatic work has made more difficult the task of appreciating his dramatic style. In this Chapter, I shall focus on "Fame's Memorial" as a statement of Ford's early attitude toward the courtesy tradition. I shall then compare Ford's treatment of this theme to Samuel Daniel's "A Funeral Poeme," which was written in the same year and on the same occasion as "Fame's Memorial." A comparison of these two works will aid in judging the level of Ford's early performance.

"Fame's Memorial," published in 1606, is an elegy on Charles Blount, Earl of Devonshire, eighth Lord Mountjoy. Blount held a command in the fleet which defeated the Spanish Armada and in 1600 was appointed by Elizabeth to the position of Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. In 1605 he married Lady Penelope Rich with whom he had maintained an adulterous
affair.³ It is to Lady Penelope that the poem is dedicated. "Fame's Memorial" has none of the literary power which was to distinguish Ford later as a poetic dramatist.⁴ In the forty-seventh stanza of that poem Ford invokes his muse:

"... lend me some deep moving style, / Or add unto my bluntness quick conceit." In this work he was rewarded with neither. It cannot be said that the failure of the poem is due entirely to the youth of the poet. The period is replete with works of considerable merit written by youthful authors. But a Donne or a Nashe show even in their early work a sensitivity to style and a willingness to experiment and innovate that is entirely absent from "Fame's Memorial." In the poem Ford shows an admiration for the courtly ideal, as exemplified by the career of Charles Blount, but he reveals no apparent intuition of "the realities that lay hidden behind ... comforting platitudes."⁵

³Ford's admiration of Penelope's and Blount's love is seen by some critics as evidence of his early approval of defiant and unconventional behavior. See, for example, H.J. Oliver, The Problem of John Ford (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1955), pp. 8-11.

⁴A power described by T.S. Eliot as being of "a very high order ... the distinct personal rhythm in blank verse which would be no one's but his alone." "John Ford," in Elizabethan Dramatists (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1962), p. 127.

⁵Ornstein, p. 44.
"Fame's Memorial" follows the general pattern of the courtesy books in both structure and subject-matter. It might be useful to use Sir Thomas Elyot's *Book Named the Governor* (1531) as an illustration of his early dependence upon conventional thought. It is as though Ford took the occasion of Blount's death as an opportunity to suggest the validity of the courtly program of education and conduct by using a work such as *The Governor* as an ideal standard against which to measure the private and public virtues of his subject.

Elyot's program of education, we recall, begins with the study of grammar, which is "but an introduction to the understanding of authors." The student should move thence to logic and rhetoric.

Bye the time that the child should come to seventeen years of age, to the intent his courage be bridled with reason, it were useful to be read unto him some works of philosophy... Lord God, what incomparable sweetness of words and matter will he find in the said works of Plato and Cicero. Ford describes much the same procedure as he outlines the early education of Blount.

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7 Ibid., p. 39.
Having suck'd the rudiments of learning, Grammar's elixir-juice and quintessence, He soon approv'd his judgment by discerning, Applying with industrious diligence To follow studies of more consequence; Then, by a syllogistic kind of war, He ruminates on thoughts which nobler are.

He learns sharp-witted logic to confute With quick distinctions, sleights of sophistry, Enriching his rich knowledge doth it suit, And sounds the depths of quaint philosophy, Himself the mirror of morality.

Exercise plays an important part in forming the character of the gentleman since, very likely, he will be enlisted in the defense of his nation. Among the more practical pastimes most likely to develop good qualities, Elyot lists running, "a good exercise and a laudable solace"; hawking and hunting, "an imitation of battle." "But," says Elyot, "the most honorable exercise, in mine opinion . . . is to ride surely and clean on a great horse and a rough." 9 Ford makes clear the notion that Blount, as an ideal Courtier "could not brook / To have his equal or for sword or book" (Works, III, 290).

Now he delights to see the falcon soar About the top of heaven; then to chase The numble buck, or hunt the bristled boar

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8 Works, III, 289; future references to this work will be indicated in parentheses after each citation.

9 Elyot, p. 64.
From out the sty of terror; now the race;
Barriers and sports of an honorable grace.

(Works, III, 292)

In much the same emphatic manner as Elyot, Ford insists that the gentleman ". . . after toys of courtiership assays /
Which way to manage an untame\d horse" ("Fame's Memorial," p. 293). The horse's being "untame\d" is important because, Elyot suggests, this will "impart a majesty and dread to inferior persons."¹⁰

The second part of "Fame's Memorial," while still biographical, deals with Blount's public reputation, the way to which was "limn'd" by "private exercises." This plan conforms closely to that of The Governor, in which Books II and III deal with the public virtues of the governor. Having dealt with both "the studies, also the exercises" necessary for the education of the nobleman, Elyot says he will now "treat of the preparation of such personages, when they first receive any great dignity, charges, or governance of the weal public."¹¹

Blount's public career included service in the Low Countries and Brittany and, from 1599 to 1603, in Ireland.

¹⁰Elyot, p. 64.
¹¹Ibid., p. 95.
It is his return from Ireland that signals for Ford the movement toward a discussion of the public virtues of the governor.

In robes of place, accoutrements of rest,
He was advanc'd a counsellor and joy'd
The soft fruition of a graver breast.

(Works, III, 303)

At this time, Blount would have been forty years of age. His age would be significant to the thematic development of the poem since a common element of the delineation of the ideal gentleman has to do with a balancing of the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* (the "book" and "sword" of Ford's poem) and the age at which the one is more appropriate than the other. In the most famous courtesy book of the time, Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (Hoby's translation had appeared in 1561), one statement of the ideal notes that "of all the ages, man's state is most temperate, which hath now done with the curst prankes of youth, and not yet growne to ancientness."\(^{12}\) Ford proceeds to catalogue those qualities (derived ultimately from Aristotle) which in both Elyot and Castiglione characterize the mature courtier: discretion, prudence, temperance, courage, liberality,

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courtesy and magnanimity. An abiding concern in treatments of this theme is that one must be discrete in granting rewards. "I say that it would be well to be considered liberal; nevertheless liberality such as the world understands it will injure you, because if used virtuously and in the proper way, it will not be known, and you will incur the disgrace of the contrary vice." Elyot sees liberality and beneficence as the very sources of magnanimity "and he is only liberal, which distributeth according to his substance, and where it is expedient." 

We see a not too distant echo of this attitude in Ford's lines on Blount's largesse:

Ready to help the poor, the great to please;
   In rights of honour neither great nor small
Would he prefer, but merit pais'd [sic] them all:
   Since all these virtues were in him combin'd,
   Truth will avow true virtue grac'd his mind.

Not in the wreck of prodigality,
Nor thriftless riot of respectless mean,
Did he extend his liberality;
But to his honour's credit, where was seen
Apparent worthiness, he still hath been
   A patron to the learnèd, and a prop
To favour study's now-despised crop.

(Works, III, 306-307)

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14 Elyot, p. 130.
I am not interested in making an exhaustive study of the sources of "Fame's Memorial"; the listing of parallel passages can quickly become tiresome. What is more important for this study is to establish Ford's complete acceptance of, and reliance upon, the well-established conventions of courtesy. He seems in "Fame's Memorial" to have used the elegy as an opportunity to celebrate a compilation of abstract virtues and only incidentally to have lamented the death of Blount. Ford dutifully uses the occasion to deal with notions traditionally associated with the elegy: *contemptus mundi, de casibus, memento mori*, a criticism of the present day and the consolation of the defeat of time through eternal fame.

And so, though death his life deprive,  
His life in death will new-revive.

*(Works, III, 319)*

Of course, one can argue that the point of the elegy may be to get at the universal through the particular and that the examination of an ideology is a perfectly appropriate way of doing this. Donne reportedly said of his treatment of Elizabeth Drury in his *Anniversary* that he "described the Idea of a Woman and not as she was." In the same way, Ford defines the Idea of "true virtue" and perhaps we should not cavil at his reluctance to examine the validity of the convention.
His early dependency on the courtesy ideal is important to recognize, however, since as a dramatist Ford is described as one of the writers who "helped dissolve the existing renaissance order."\textsuperscript{15} And although Sensabaugh's opinion of Ford's "unbridled individualism" is, no doubt, an exaggeration, there is a general agreement that Ford was rather more interested finally in the psychology than in the ethics of his characters. In his early work, Ford appears to be quite conservative; he praises the responsible man who defends the values of society through his participation in arms and politics. In his later non-dramatic work, for example in "A Line of Life," we see his attitude beginning to change. He seems much more interested in the individual than in society, and the values that he later espouses are those of the private man who has rejected the participation in active life. Ford's dramas indicate how greatly modified was his mature idea of courtesy. It ceases to be a social virtue, as it clearly is in "Fame's Memorial," but becomes a code fashioned by the individual in an otherwise valueless society.

For the reasons of such a shift in emphasis, we may look to a general feeling in the Seventeenth Century that grandiose descriptions of ideal courtiers and orators are

somewhat irrelevant since, as Baker claims, such a figure is "perfectly imaginary, and of no Use in Human Life. . . . He is nowhere to be found but in the Conceptions of our Mind."16 Just twenty-two years after the publication of "Fame's Memorial," which celebrates the virtues of the active man, Ford had Rhetias (a sympathetic character) say:

I will not court the madness of the times,  
Nor fawne upon the Riots that enbalme  
Our wanton Gentry, to preserve the dust  
Of their affected vanities, in coffins  
Of memorable shame.

(The Lover's Melancholy, I.242-246)

Ruth Wallerstein suggests that the "gross exaggeration" of the elegies of the early Seventeenth Century is due to the fact that "men of the day still believed in the historical force of the great, good man."17 In Ford's later work we can see that this belief is beginning to wane. Suspicions that such paradigms as the perfect governor or courtier are "perfectly imaginary, and consequently of no Use in Human Life" are reflected in many works of the time. Adolph suggests that the "controlling assumption of the

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age . . . was the identification of one ill-defined abstraction, Truth, with another, Utility."18

In any event, there are limits to be imposed by decorum on even justifiable opportunities for exaggeration. Samuel Daniel, in his Epistle "To The Lord Henry Howard" begins by saying that

Praise, if it be not choice, and laide aright,
Can yeeld no lustre where it is bestowde,
Nor any way can grace the givers Arte. (1l. 1-3)19

By a happy coincidence, Daniel as well as Ford wrote an elegy on the death of Blount. It appeared in 1606 and is entitled "A Funeral Poeme. Upon the Death of the Late Noble Earle of Devonshire." By 1606 Daniel had already written his major works and was a mature artist of forty-four years of age. Moreover, he had the advantage of having known Blount, the subject of his poem. Ford, on the other hand, was a young man at the very beginning of his career and chose Blount as the subject of his poem evidently as a convenient vehicle for the expression of his ideology. By comparing the two poems, written in the same genre and on the same occasion, we may see in a clearer perspective the nature and quality of Ford's performance. Certainly it will make it

18 Adolph, p. 191.

easier to see the qualities that Ford would have to acquire before being considered an accomplished poet.

In "A Funeral Poeme" Daniel says of Blount:

He was a man
And built of flesh and blood, and did live here
Within the region of infirmity;
Where all perfections never did appear,
To meet in any one so really,
But that his frailty ever did bewray
Unto the world, that he was set in clay. 20

It is Daniel's grasp of Blount's "flesh and blood" reality as a human being, as well as the limitations implied by his humanity, which is most striking and which more clearly differentiates his poem from the vagueness of Ford's perception of Blount. Daniel's familiarity with Blount affects the tone of his opening statement of theme, where he says unostentatiously that he "sincerely will report" the "contexture" of Blount's heart.

How different is this from the rather clangorous tone with which Ford opens his invocation: "Swift Time, the speedy pursuivant of heaven," and his wish that

some sacred poet now survived,
Some Homer to new-mourn Achilles' loss.

(Works, III, 286)

Ford uses apostrophe and exclamation excessively, and the effect is that of a contrived and exaggerated emotion: "But, ah, be still thyself" (p. 294), "But 0, forsaken soldiers" (p. 295), "But, 0, ere he could apprehend" (p. 302), and so forth. Ford invariably reaches for the most expansive point of reference and seems as much interested in displaying his own education as in celebrating Blount's. In praising his subject's knowledge of philosophy, Ford suggests that the Earl

Proves by instance that Aristotle lies,  
Who young men's aptness to the same denies.  

(Works, III, 289)

This is completely unlike Daniel's treatment of the same theme, where he says that although Blount was widely read,  

Yet did it [Blount's learning] make thee trust thyself  
the lesse,  
And lesse presume.  

("Funeral Poeme," ll. 62-63)

Ford is so conspicuously attentive to "the smoothed lips of eloquence" (p. 323), that we tend to lose sight of Blount behind a barrier of turgid rhetoric. It would be twenty years before Ford's language would be modulated sufficiently to capture a sense of sobriety appropriate to the subject of death:
In vaine we labour in this course of life
To piece our journey out at length, or crave
Respite of breath, our home is in the grave.

(The Broken Heart, II.1025-1027)

This is much closer to catching the sense of loss in Daniel's

This action of our death especially
Shewes all a man, Here only is he found.

("Funeral Poeme," ll. 381-382)

One effect of Daniel's more tentative and restrained attitude is the sense that one's chance of overcoming death through fame is contingent upon the poet's celebration of that fame. It may be true that Blount's reputation will live after him, but, as Daniel observes,

Something unto thy fortune, that thou hast
This monument of thee, perhaps may last. 21

("Funeral Poeme," ll. 441-442)

This sense of ultimate anxiety about death and its meaning to the poet, if not to the reader himself, is lacking in Ford's poem. His exuberant affirmation

Long may he triumph, over-topping clouds
Of our all-desperate mould's vexation

(Works, III, 326)

is not at all convincing. Ford never shows very clearly our "all-desperate mould's vexation" nor gives very convincing evidence that Blount was actually "The quintessence of ripe

21 My italics.
perfection" (p. 381). Daniel's recognition of the quite human aspect of Blount is reflected in his willingness to confront first the absolute fact of death and then to examine its meaning. All the pomp and fame that Ford evokes has, in Daniel's poem, been erased by the "hand of death." Blount's death has rent the veil which is "drawne betwixt thy selfe and thee." What does remain is a chain, the links of which have been forged by love. In a very real sense, then, Daniel's poem is motivated by what one man meant to the other, not merely by a wish to extol a catalogue of disembodied virtues. Ford insists that "We intend / To show the substance, not the shadow'd glose" ("Fame's Memorial," p. 310); but following a vague and conceptual pattern, as he does, and in ambiguous language, Ford shows us all shadow and no substance.

Daniel's knowledge of Blount made his meditatio mortis a practical and effective way of vividly (if selectively) maintaining his memory. The passages dealing with Blount's experiences in Ireland, and especially those describing his death, suggest an intimacy which makes us more willing to accept his appraisal. Ford's poem on the other hand conveys a sense of great moral certainty (close, at times, to being smug); but the certainty is based upon an uncritical accept-
ance of an Aristotelian concept of magnificence. It displays neither the intellectual vigor nor the sensuous texture to make it interesting.

With his use of transposed syntax, irregular accent, repetition, epithet, apostrophe and the like, Ford overdoes what Puttenham calls auricular figures, those "which work alteration in th'eare by sound, accent, time, and slipper volubilitie in utterance." 22

Two major elements, then, are lacking in Ford's poem: first the poet's ability to indicate a sense of close familiarity with his subject; and second, a poetic language capable of sustaining a prolonged, abstract reflection. It was not until ten years later in his poem "Christ's Bloody Sweat" that Ford remedies both these deficiencies in a dramatic way.

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CHAPTER III

"CHRIST'S BLOODY SWEAT"

THE WITNESS OF SATIRE

The poem "Christ's Bloody Sweat" is the most important of the works that Ford wrote between his early "Fame's Memorial" and the later drama. In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" we may see emerging certain attitudes which will be important in our understanding of the plays. I would like, also, to make some use in this chapter of two of Ford's prose works in order to make more clear the development of his thought. These prose works are "Honor Triumphant" (1606) and "A Line of Life" (1620). The significance of these pamphlets lies not in their originality, but in their thematic and stylistic similarity to the poems. By examining these works I hope to demonstrate the consistency of Ford's development as it is reflected in his more important work, "Christ's Bloody Sweat."

Overwhelmingly, comment on "Christ's Bloody Sweat" has been confined to the establishment of Ford as the poem's author. Stavig states that "scholars have been reluctant to
use [the early works] as serious evidence of Ford's views."¹ Most recently Donald K. Anderson grants that "as art, 'Christ's Bloody Sweat' is superior to Ford's other poem 'Fame's Memorial',"² but Anderson devotes only a dozen lines to his discussion of the work's poetic qualities. Robert Davril says that the poem reveals "le désir d'un rachat par une communion intense avec la souffrance du Christ... Pensée peu originale encore mais qui a le mérite de la sincérité."³ It is with "Christ's Bloody Sweat," Oliver claims, "that the author is beginning to be interesting as a poet."⁴

What has not been pointed out by critics, and what seems to me to be most dramatically different in the style of "Christ's Bloody Sweat" is a striking and compact mass of

¹Mark Stavig, John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 21. The continued reluctance is due, presumably, to the poem's essentially religious nature. Evidently it is difficult to reconcile this meditative poem to any theory which sees Ford as a scientific determinist or proto-existentialist, views not uncommon in Ford criticism.


imagery and metaphor. There is a density in this poem which signals an entirely new attitude to the objects of the poet's observation and a new manner of expressing these observations poetically. While in "Fame's Memorial," Ford avoided the evocation of all but the most symbolic objects, "Christ's Bloody Sweat" is saturated with vivid and concrete images from all levels of English life.

In the dedication to the earlier poem, it is difficult to find any clear statement of purpose. The style, labored and diffuse, is almost impenetrable.

I have thus adventured to shelter my lines under the well-guided conduct of your honorable name; grounding my boldness upon this assurance, that true gentility is ever accompanied--especially in your sex, more specifically in yourself--with her inseparable adjunct, singular humanity, principally toward those whom neither mercenary hopes nor servile flattery have induced to speak, but with the privilege of troth.

("Fame's Memorial," Epistle Dedicatory)

In the preface to "Christ's Bloody Sweat" Ford's manner has changed noticeably as he states "I have here set forth the witnesse that may testifie what I desire to bee." One detects here a conscious effort on the part of the author

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5"Christ's Bloodie Sweat, or the Sonne of God in his Agonie," (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, approx. 1960). The pagination of the first edition begins on the first page of the text of the poem. There are neither line nor stanza numbers. Subsequent references to the poem will be identified by the page numbers of the first edition.
to avoid the pointless wordiness of the earlier prose. 6

The tone of "Fame's Memorial" indicates that Ford is willing to accept the world as it is, but in "Christ's Bloody Sweat" Ford is serving notice that, since the world is most definitely not populated by ideal courtiers, he, like Stubbes, is keeping an eye on things. And by concentrating on things, Ford finds a language appropriate to the cataloguing of the vices of man.

The first part of the poem (pages 1-10) deals with the speaker's vision of Christ, and with his meditation on Christ's passion. Then (pages 10-17) Ford levels a blast of graphic and picturesque invective against every element of society. The linking device ("He saw") evokes a repetitive, emphatic tone; it is as if the satirist were wandering through the streets and counting vices with some moral abacus, tallying up the moral grotesques. Stanza after stanza begins "He saw" or "Here saw He" and eventually the effect is almost hypnotic--he might as well have used "Item!"

In every sex, and some of all degrees,
He saw the mispent ryot of their talent.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 10)

Pages 17 to 21 are a continuation in the satiric vein, but deal with specific figures who represent individual sins,

6 It is precisely the elaborate and inflated style of "Fame's Memorial" that Ford satirizes twenty-two years later. See above, p. 12.
rather than with social types. Pages 10 to 17 are vertical, or pyramidal, in development; they give a cross section of society from monarch to scholar. Pages 17 to 21 are horizontal to the extent that they drag us across the chaos of the artist's stage. They present a series of close-ups and here the "deformed faces of stupidity, greed, venality, ignorance . . . stare boldly at us."  

This did the Leacher sleeping in the sheetes  
Which reeke with lust, but thinke on, he would weepe;  
This did the Drunkard reeling in the streetes  
(Then only wise when hee doth onlie sleepe)  
Consider, he might sigh; and not incline  
To vomit out his soule in streames of wine.  

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 17)

What the satirist is urging these lechers, drunks, prostitutes and so forth to "thinke on" is the ever-present image of suffering Christ. The agony of Christ is the backdrop against which we see the danse macabre of humanity. "The basic polarity of an ideal (usually in the past) and a degenerate present provides a useful frame for the argument of a satire."  

It is, of course, possible to argue that in "Christ's Bloody Sweat" man is pictured as debased to an extreme, while

in "Fame's Memorial" he is idealized to the opposite extreme. But the satirist is traditionally one of those men who

\begin{equation}
\text{come down from the shade}
\text{Of fictitious rhetoric to wage real battles.}\end{equation}

The attempt to establish the authenticity of the battle and the sinister presence of the enemy is part of the technique of the satirist. He prefers "fresh, personally-apprehended experiences and interpretations of phenomena to inherited impressions concerning them."\(^{10}\) The major difference between "Fame's Memorial" and "Christ's Bloody Sweat" is that in the latter poem Ford has discarded his uncritical acceptance of the courtesy tradition. The difference is equally dramatic between "A Line of Life" (1620) and his earlier celebration of courtly love, "Honour Triumphant." In the later prose work Ford suggests that it is better for a man to remain private and withdrawn, the better to avoid "what misery, calamity, ruin, greatness and popularity may wind him into."\(^{11}\) We shall see how this attitude, emerging in "Christ's Bloody Sweat," will provide one of the major themes of Ford's drama.

In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" we find a constant reference to the difference between appearance and reality,


\(^{10}\)Powers, p. 26.

between man's devotion to the ephemeral and the satirist's grasp of the significant. Much of the satirist's ferocity and mockery seem to stem from his frustration at seeing man's refusal or inability to recognize the obvious.

Schollers he saw, how foolishly they strove,  
With tearmes of Art and smooth beguiling rimes,  
To paint the groseness of unlawfull love,  
And prove the sinnes that did corrupt the times  
Maintaining up-start sects which all with-stood  
Truthes precious light: for those He sweated blood.  

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 13)

The satirist, then, is a member of an aristocracy just as surely as is the courtier--except that in the case of the satirist his exclusiveness is based on a moral or intellectual superiority. He feels no need to be haughty or reserved; his attitude expresses the opposite of the cool, uncommited sprezzatura of the courtier. "Christ's Bloody Sweat" takes an utterly unidealized look at reality. The narrator adopts a position of moral superiority; he commits himself to a high moral standard. But he gains his perspective through the intensely personal mode of the vision, and this tends to emphasize the solitary, exclusive nature of his attitude.

There is a coarseness about the tone of "Christ's Bloody Sweat"--at least of the three hundred-odd lines that render the world satirically. The great "stillness" that

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12 See especially the discussion in Powers, p. 70.
most critics find in Ford is shattered by oaths, riots, brawls, screams of agony and merchants hawking shoddy goods. The images suggest an assault on the senses: slime, sicke, bloody butcher, oaths, rotten, reeke, vomit, disease, toads, gnawing worm, hellish cries, whip, fiery stake. The poem engages the reader in a way that "Fame's Memorial" fails to do.

It has been suggested that "Christ's Bloody Sweat" reveals certain Calvinistic tendencies insofar as Ford finally aligns himself on the side of Christ against a generally depraved humanity. There is no need, however, to turn Ford into a "revivalist" to explain his general revulsion toward man in this poem. If the satiric element is given the weight I believe it warrants, we may see Ford joining a quite different elect, one which urges him to denigrate many of the same notions he had celebrated ten years earlier. Where he had once elaborately praised Blount's learning and fame he now looks despondently at those "commaunders of State":

How fond in their madness they did wast
Their greatnesse in ambition and debate.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 11)

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What had originally been seen as virtues are now seen as vanities and dealt with in much the same manner as those vilified in Juvenal's tenth satire. Stavig suggests that "classical and moral thought would be out of place in a meditative poem about Christian redemption since the subject is understood through revelation and only secondarily through human reason." Nevertheless, we should not be surprised at the fact that the satiric vision is incorporated in a primarily religious context. The compatibility of the two elements has certainly a legitimate English heritage, as in Piers Plowman; and a glance at the reliefs on most medieval cathedrals would suggest that the dramatic confrontation of extreme sanctity with extreme depravity is not limited to literature.

There is another reason why Ford might have chosen to work in a religious context at this particular time. In an age when satire was looked upon with extreme suspicion, and was in fact subject to extremely harsh punishment, it might very well have occurred to Ford that a poem with an ostensibly religious coloring might provide a freer stage for social criticism. In 1599 the printing of further satire had been prohibited and the works of some satirists had been burned. In 1609, James, with the consent of Parliament, had passed an act forbidding "the issuance of pasquillis,

\[15\] Stavig, p. 22.
rymes, cokalinis, commedies, and syclyk occasionis."\textsuperscript{16} Drama was one direction in which the satirists moved after the exertion of government pressure,\textsuperscript{17} but it would be some years before Ford would begin writing in that genre.

Ford's mature works, qualities of which are present in "Christ's Bloody Sweat," suggest that he is not as confident in the existence of ideal paradigms as he had been in his youth. More and more, Ford will express dissatisfaction with conventional ideals. He begins to satirize them in "Christ's Bloody Sweat," and he reflects on their ephemeral nature in "A Line of Life." In his dramas, Ford characteristically places his hero in conflict with a traditional code and shows that conventional morality is often inadequate as a guide to resolving the conundrums of existence.

As Ford matured, he became increasingly interested in what was to become one of the major tendencies of Seventeenth-Century poetry, "an intensified concentration upon the individual consciousness."\textsuperscript{18} (This interest is especially


\textsuperscript{17} Kernan, p. 140.

clear in Ford's allusions to and use of Robert Burton's psychological treatise). To some extent we may see Ford's modification of style as a cultural phenomenon, but we must also see it as revealing a change in his own attitudes. "If 'personality' is considered too vague a thing to be conveyed by words, we may ask how personality may be expressed otherwise than through language. This is the only meaning of 'le style, c'est l'homme.' The course of a man's style can reflect, sometimes with uncanny fidelity, the progress or deterioration of his thought." 19 Richard Ohmann suggests that the building of metaphors is in fact the making of "new ontological discoveries." 20 In The Lover's Melancholy, (I.296), Rhetias reports that Agelastus laughed when he saw an "Asse eat Thistles." Gifford in his note (Works, I, 19) points to Pliny as the source, and to Jonson's New Inn for a contemporary use of the image. But for a really graphic working out of the metaphor we may look to Chapman:

But as an Asse that in a field of weeds
Affects a thistle and falls fiercely to it
That pricks and galls him, yet he feeds and bleeds--

* * *


So, in this world of weeds you wordlings taste
Your most-lov'd dainties, with such warre buy peace,
Hunger for torment, virtue kicke for vice:

* * *

And, though ye dreame ye feast in Paradis,
Yet Reason's Day--light shewes ye at your meate--
Asses at Thistles, bleeding as ye eate.21

The point here is not primarily which of the sources led to Ford's use of the image. What interests me is the question of the attitude consistently expressed by his choice of imagery. In each case, Ford's imagery conveys a sardonic view of general vulgarity or of obstinate stupidity. Ford's critical attitude toward society is revealed in what Kenneth Burke calls a strategic or stylized linguistic response. "These strategies size up the situation, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude towards them."22 The use or imitation of an established metaphor is quite revealing insofar as it is an author's appropriate response to his observation of reality. We shall see, in examining the imagery of "Christ's Bloody Sweat," that Ford was more interested in the nobility of suffering than in heroic accomplishment as he had been in


his earlier work. This is particularly important because one of Ford's ultimate themes will be precisely the plight of the privileged individual caught in the trash and bondage of circumstances.

In the first stanza of "Christ's Bloody Sweat," Ford states that Christ's mission was to gain by suffering "The Monarchy of hearts usurp't by sinne" ("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 1). Ford's later heroes have in common with the Christ of this poem the fact that their kingdoms, like Christ's, are not worldly. Even Perkin Warbeck, who maintains to the end his insistence that he is the legitimate king of England, finds that his true role is that of "King of Hearts." In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" the "Heavenly Voice" that directs the Narrator's activity tells him that "The true way to happiness should be / Found out in Bloud, and bloud of his [God's] annointed" ("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 5). The image of blood pervades "Christ's Bloody Sweat" and in all of Ford's subsequent works the metaphor of sacrifice and blood plays a dominant role in expressing the ideological framework.

In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" salvation is viewed primarily as the reward for martyrdom: "Deare Ransome where the

23 *Perkin Warbeck*, IV. 2215. Future references to the plays will be in parentheses after each quotation.
payment is in bloud / Dear bloud where every droppe out-values golde" (p. 1). The persecution may take the form of physical torture or banishment. We shall see that in the plays Ford's characters are constantly referred to as castaways or exiles, and his concern with the ritual of punishment is one of the most striking qualities of his work. In "Fame's Memorial," on the other hand, what little imagery there is tends to celebrate a world of martial heroism. Ford's later work, qualities of which are to be found in "Christ's Bloody Sweat," depicts a more sinister and threatening world, where the hero wanders through a labyrinth that is embellished with symbols that anticipate his fate: engines of torture, stocks, gallows and poisoned weapons. The world of Ford's later work resembles a wasteland dominated by the tree of death of which "scaffolds, gallows, whips and birch rods are or could be modulations." 24

There is further evidence that the differences between "Fame's Memorial" and "Christ's Bloody Sweat" represent fully different ideological frameworks on Ford's part. Ford wrote two prose works which closely parallel, both chronologically and stylistically, the non-dramatic poetry. These works are

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the pamphlets "Honor Triumphant" (London, 1606) and "A Line of Life" (London, 1620).^{25}

"Honor Triumphant" is a defense of the courtly code of love. The four positions advanced by Ford are (1) knights in ladies' service have no free-will; (2) beauty is the maintainer of valor; (3) no fair lady was ever false, and (4) only perfect lovers are wise. As one might expect, most of the arguments can be found in the fourth book of The Courtier. Ford argues that "Love is the dignity of man's worth; not a blind Cupid . . . an earnest and reasonable desire of good, as authorities claim. Love is the only line which leadeth man to the font of wisdom" (Works, III, 369).

To beauty, Ford predictably assigns goodness, virtue, and sanctity. "As the outward shape is more singular, so the inward virtues must be more exquisite" (Works, III, 359).

A typical sentence reads:

For this, in the rules of affections, is text: whosoever truly love, and are truly of their ladies beloved, ought in their service to employ their endeavors, more for the honour and deserving the continuance of their ladies' good will, than any way to respect the free-will of their own heedless dispositions; else are they degenerate bastards and apostates, revolting from the principles and principal rules of sincere devotion.

("Honour Triumphant," Works, III, 347)

There is the obvious religious connotation in "text," "service," "free-will," "apostates," and "devotion," linking

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^{25}Ford, Works, III, 335-419.
the concepts of love and ritual. But in the background there is the same socially elite world as the one celebrated in "Fame's Memorial." (The first poem was dedicated to Penelope, Countess of Devonshire; the pamphlet was dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke and the Countess Montgomery.) The speaker betrays a somewhat euphoric light-headedness in his elegant, rhetorical participation in the courtly world and in his possession of arcane lore.

In "A Line of Life" (for which there is no dedication), Ford declares his intent in a manner which corresponds to the tone and manner of "Christ's Bloody Sweat." He suggests that "here in this handful of discourse is deciphered not what any personally is, but what any may personally may be; to the intent that by the view of others' wounds we might provide plasters and cures for our own" ("A Line of Life," Works, III, 383). In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" Ford had declared his intent to "Here set forth the witnesse that may testifie what I desire to bee:" and a major part of the poem is devoted to viewing others' wounds.

The difference in style between "Honour Triumphant" and "A Line of Life" is as dramatic as that between the poetic styles of "Fame's Memorial" and "Christ's Bloody Sweat." In "A Line of Life" the sentences have become short and pointed: "To live, and to live well, are distinct in
themselves so peculiarly as is the actor and the action" (Works, III, 387). The tone is sombre and meditative: "Life, desired for the only benefit of living fears to die; for such men that so live, when they die, both die finally and die all" (Works, III, 387). Even when the sentences grow in length, we notice neither a loss of control nor an evasiveness. Here is the second part of an extended metaphor, the first part of which begins "as he who in a ship directs his course to some port . . ."

so in this ship of our mortality, howsoever we limit our courses, or are suited in any fortune of prosperity or lowness in this great sea of the world, yet by the violence and perpetual motion of time are we compelled to pace onward to the last and long home of our graves. . . .

(Works, III, 388)
The use of the metaphor, the rigid application of the metaphor to the theme, and the careful and logical working out of the terms of the metaphor all distinguish the later prose from the vague diction of the earlier work. "Christ's Bloody Sweat" shares this quality of control which partly explains its superiority to the prolix "Fame's Memorial." "A man's mind is the man himself," says Ford ("A Line of Life," Works, III, 392), and while I would like to avoid labelling this emergent style, it does bear striking similarities to what Croll has described as the baroque, which
disdained complacency, suavity, copiousness, emptiness, ease, and in avoiding these qualities sometimes obtained effects of contortion or obscurity, which it was not
always willing to regard as faults. . . . In a single word, the motions of souls, not their states of rest, had become the themes of art.26

Especially interesting in the case of Ford is the fact that the qualities he disdains in the later work are the very qualities that he had cultivated in his work of the first decade of the century.

The attitude expressed in "A Line of Life" is similar in some respects to that expressed in "Christ's Bloody Sweat." In the prose work Ford states that "virtue and moderation walk alone" (Works, III, 396). The man who enters the active political world has, Ford admonishes, "waded into the labyrinth." Ford says that glory is without, and has nothing to do with true happiness, but "a resolved constancy is within and ever keeps a feast in a man's soundest content" (Works, III, 418). In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" the narrator comments on the magistrates and courtiers, those who have wandered into the labyrinth:

Here saw he such, who under those Frinces were plac't
In seats of greatnesse and commaundes of state:
How fond in their madnesse they did wast
Their greatnesse in ambition and debate:

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 11)

In his first independent play, Ford will reiterate this theme of contempt of the world (as he will in all his plays).

Meleander calls the concern for worldly fame and wealth "moss."

The moss of honour, gay reports, gay clothes, Gay wives, huge empty buildings, whose proud roofes, Shall with their pinacles, even reach the starres.

(The Lover's Melancholy, II.1055-1058)

The major development in Ford's thought, and one which is reflected in his style, is his increasing mistrust of any external or a priori explanations of the mysteries of existence. The reasonable or pragmatic interpretation of emotional or psychological complexities, such as Corax's anatomy of melancholy, or the Friar's arguments to Giovanni, is merely

form of books and school-tradition;
It physics not the sicknesse of a minde
Broken with griefes.

(The Broken Heart, II.741-743)

I am not certain of the adequacies of such terms as baroque, mannerist, and so forth, in defining Ford's style as it appears in the later non-dramatic works. What is certain, though, is that there is a vastly greater concern for the impenetrable complexity of existence and a greater sensitivity to the individual's attempts to express the subtleties of his meditations. There is a sense of absorption, a distinct faculty which makes possible a clarity of perception and an appropriate expression.

I have suggested that in "Christ's Bloody Sweat" the meditative absorption and the satiric rage are not antithet-
ical. The prophetic inspiration of satire and the "asperity, vehemence and vigor" of the satirist's expression are causally linked.\textsuperscript{27} The notion of the dignified, meditative satirist's being above the corrupt world he describes is reflected by the rhetorical strategy of "Christ's Bloody Sweat." The satiric element of the poem is framed by the primarily devotional matter. The poem will reflect

\begin{quote}
Sweete straines of Musicke, sweetly mixt among,
The discord of my paines. . . .
\end{quote}

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 2)

The "Sweete straines" establish the religious or prophetic nature of the poet as he is directed by some superior power "as if God's voyce had spoke" (p. 2). At the conclusion of the poem, after the cacophonous description of mankind, "a whispering voyce did come" (p. 63), and the quiet tone of the opening stanzas is reintroduced. These two parts of the poem are characterized by a smooth, rhythmic and pleasant tone and by the images of light, music, perfume and stillness.

We can see Ford adjusting his style as he engages in the satiric "discord" of the poem, especially in pages 10 to 21. The language is rude and explicit and Ford uses

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}
short, barely controlled phrases to suggest the indignation of the satirist when confronted by the corruption of society. The repetition of key phrases: "This did the gamester," "This did the Leacher," etc., as Ford catalogues man's vices, is much more effective than any of Ford's earlier attempts at reproof. The syntax of the verses becomes strained:

This did the gamesters, spending nightes and dayes,  
In loosing what they gaine (such gaine is losse)  
For-cast, they would repent, and have such playes,  
Reputing mony as it is, but drosse.  

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 17)

We shall see how, even in the plays, Ford uses similar variation of tones as a means of more clearly defining the segments of society he chooses to examine. Ford's sensitivity to style in "Christ's Bloody Sweat" is a major improvement over the rhetorical monotony of "Fame's Memorial."

What Ford has not abandoned is the view of himself as someone essentially apart. Even in "A Line of Life," which does not promote a particularly exclusive world view, he notes that "my aim hath not been so grossly levelled, that I meant to choose every reader for my patron" (Works, III, 384). The tone of the essay is not vain or arrogant, but he has come a long way from his praise of Mountjoy when he now says that "the toil in common affairs is but trash and bondage compared to the sweet repose of the mind" (Works, III, 417).
"Christ's Bloody Sweat" conforms in some significant ways to the harsh and abusive tone of satire. This is especially true of the turbulent flood of images and the extended passages of what Puttenham calls "rough and bitter speaches." In spite of the satiric content of the work, "Christ's Bloody Sweat" is essentially a meditative poem. The satirical material is set in a specifically religious context, and to this extent bears a similarity to Piers Plowman. "The most striking aspect of all such meditations... is the full self-awareness of the vision; the eye of truth that cuts aside all cant, looking with grim, satirical humor upon all the follies of the world."  

We should see the tone of invective and the concern for the accuracy and authenticity of the vision in the poem not solely, nor even essentially, as formal satire, but as responses to the demands of the genre of meditative poetry. The

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2Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, p. 137.
fact that Ford chose to write a poem in the meditative mode is at least as significant as his use in "Christ's Bloody Sweat" of images and concepts that will recur later in his plays. Ford, both here and in "A Line of Life," was attracted to a genre which was, at this time, flourishing as the result of the adaptation of religious meditative exercises to poetry.³

In attempting to define meditative poetry ("changing, resourceful, and elusive") Louis Martz suggests that "perhaps it is enough to say that the central meditative action consists of an interior drama, in which a man projects a self upon a mental stage."⁴ It is an intensely personal mode, one in which the mind of the poet-persona is animated by the intensity of his grasp, through devotion, of the divine and of his own presence. A large part of the devotion is programmatic in nature; that is, the self-projected state of mind can be achieved through a highly disciplined organization of the process of meditation. This process has its analogue in the poetic method of representing such a state of mind. Ford's choice of the meditative genre suggests a search for a form appropriate to the poetic exploration of the self.

As Martz points out, one type of meditative poem is characterized by an "easy colloquial style" and "the practice of dramatizing theological points." I think it likely that the demands of this type of poem, with its emphasis on vivid imagery and dramatic colloquy, have much to do with the impression of sincerity which is so much more apparent in "Christ's Bloody Sweat" than in "Fame's Memorial."

Ernest Dawson in his contemporary The Practical Methode of Meditation (London, 1614) defines the process as "nothing else but a diligent and forcible application of the understanding, to seeke, and know, and as it were to taste some divine matter" (p. 3). The difficulty in the mental operation is in making tangible the mysterious "divine matter." The first step in this direction is to prepare oneself by seeking to "cleare our soules" and then to "conceive the presence of God after the liveliest manner wee can." We must "looke upon our owne unworthiness and say Loquar ad Dominum meum" (pp. 5-10). A similar process can be seen early in Ford's poem:

5Martz, The Poetry of Meditation, p. 29.

6Cf. Davril's comment on "le mérite de la sincérite" of "Christ's Bloody Sweat" in Le Drame de John Ford, p. 85.

7Reprinted in Martz, ed., The Meditative Poem, pp. 1-23. Further references to this work will be indicated in parentheses after each quotation.
Such thoughts as those, whiles in a ravish'd spirit,
Faire meditations Summoned to appeare,
Before the Arke, and mercie-seat of merrit
A sacred flame mixt with an holy feare,
As if Gods voyce had spoke, seem'd to invite,
My heart to prompt, my ready hand to write.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 2)

The first prelude of the meditation is, according to Dawson, "a briefe calling to mind of the mystery we are to meditate" (p. 18). A prelude is one of a regular sequence of steps leading up to the meditation proper. In Saint Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* we may see how closely Ford seems to have been following the model of the meditative process. In the Third Week, Second Contemplation, St. Ignatius chooses as the subject of his first prelude how Christ "placing himself in prayer, poured forth sweat as it were drops of blood." We see Ford's adherence to the program as Christ's voice charges the poet with his theme:

Set then the tenour of thy dolefull song,
To the deepe accentes of my bloody sweate.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 2)

Christ has already chastised the poet as being one of those triflers who

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hast spent thy best of days,
In Thriftlesse rimes (sweete baytes to poyson youth).

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 2)

One need hardly see in this rejection of his earlier work any necessarily Calvinist inclination. It is rather a part of the conventional putting aside of worldly concerns in preparation for an examination of one's spiritual values.

The second prelude is of supreme importance for its influence on the poetic rendering of meditation. Dawson indicates the significance of this second step when he points out that "on the well making of this Preludium depends both the understanding of the mystery and attention in our meditation" (p. 11). The second prelude is described as

an imagination of seeing the places where the things we meditate on were wrought, by imagining ourselves to be really present at those places; which we must endeavor to represent so lively, as though we saw them with our corporall eyes; which to performe well, it will help us much to behould before-hand some image wherein that mystery is well represented. . . .

(Dawson, p. 11)

In Ford's poem the "place" is the Garden of Gethsemane and the image which best represents the "mystery" is Christ's blood "which trickling downe my cheekes upon the grasse, / Well told the agony wherein I stood" (p. 3).

Having achieved a quasi trance-like state, the poet is assured by Christ's voice that
where thy sacred fires
Waxe dimme, My breath shall quicken thy desires.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 4)

It seems curious that, in "Christ's Bloody Sweat," Christ is a more human, or at least more fully realized, figure than was Blount in "Fame's Memorial." It is not surprising that this is so, however, when we consider that Ford's familiarity with accounts of Christ's life were likely to have been more thorough than his knowledge of Blount's life. Through his recollection of the Bible and his use of commentaries, he might easily have had a clearer (certainly a more dramatic) perception of the texture and meaning of Christ's life. Moreover, the "seeing of the places" implies intimacy with the matter and theme of meditation through both familiarity with scripture and with "what good Authors wrote" (i.e., the Biblical commentaries). The second prelude cultivated "a habit of feeling theological issues as a part of a concrete, dramatic scene." 9

This imaginative effort required to recreate the situation under examination encourages Ford to describe the suffering of Christ and to use dialogue in a manner analogous to Daniel's account of Blount's experiences. In the Gospel treatment of the agony in the garden, Christ asks his Father

to "take away this Chalice from before me" (Mark, XIV, 36).

In "Christ's Bloody Sweat," Christ addresses God:

Father! ah that those terrors might suffice!
Ah that this deadly banquet might depart!
In which without thy wrath, I might not sup,
The health of sicke soules, in a Poysoned Cup. 10

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 8)

Ford's poem is essentially an elaboration of the third prelude of the Ignatian exercises. "The third prelude is to ask for which I desire. The special grace to ask for in the Passion is sorrow with Christ in His sorrow, a broken heart with Christ brokenhearted, tears and interior suffering for the great suffering Christ endured for me." 11 It is clear that in his direct use of carefully selected images, especially those of blood and chalice, Ford is creating an emotional environment consistent with both the tone and sequence of the Third Week of the meditative program. 12

10 Jonas Barish feels that Warbeck "luxuriates in persecution." See "Perkin Warbeck as Anti-History," Essays in Criticism, XX (1970), 151-171. Ford, however, consistently suggests that his heroes (like Christ in "Christ's Bloody Sweat") do not want to suffer. They do, though, accept the consequences of their commitment to an extreme moral position.

11 Spiritual Exercises, p. 141.

12 "In this Third Week the battle itself is set before us. For here we behold our King enduring all manners of labours, watchings, and sufferings." Longridge, commentary on the Spiritual Exercises, p. 135.
Dawson suggests that we may conclude our meditation with some "affectionate speach or Colloquium" to God by way of providing a reverent departure from "the great Lord of whome we have had so gracious audience" (Dawson, p. 17). This "colloquium" is consistent with St. Ignatius' instructions in the first meditation of the Third Week: "To finish with a colloquy to Christ our Lord" (Spiritual Exercises, p. 137). Such an exchange concludes "Christ's Bloody Sweat" (pp. 62-64), and reiterates the significance of the third prelude.

The howres and daies which I have spent in vaine,  
In fruitlesse studies, and inventive pleasure,  
Redeeme, O Christ, and call them backe againe,  
Doe not, in Judgement, mine offences measure:  
But, in thy mercies, hide my faults; protect  
My sighes, let thy love cover my defect.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 62)

I have seen only one reference to "Christ's Bloody Sweat" as a meditative poem. Stavig argues that "the subject dictated the method of the analysis. Classical moral thought would be out of place in a meditative poem about Christian redemption." Stavig is concerned here not with analyzing the poem, but with assuring the reader that Ford is an "enlightened, thinking Anglican with solid roots in both Christian and classical thought."  

\[13\] Stavig, p. 22.

\[14\] Ibid., p. 22. This attitude, compared with Sensabaugh's view of Ford as a rebel, fairly well defines the extreme diversity of opinion which exists on the subject.
More pertinent to the purpose of this study is the view of the meditative poem as a form which encourages self-awareness and which represents an "interior drama, in which a man projects a self upon a mental stage."\textsuperscript{15} I have been suggesting that the direction of Ford's poetry has been essentially introspective and that when he describes the society around him he does so not to praise it but to revile it. This by no means makes Ford unique, but does suggest that his work was developing \textit{pari passu} with a major trend. "Evidence does exist, in all manner of writings and in the poems themselves, for an increase in psychological awareness during the Seventeenth Century."\textsuperscript{16}

Helen White has noted that, even while the age yields to "bitter disillusionment," there exists at the same time "something of the memory of the hope for a renewal of life that was so marked a feature of the spiritual orientation of the preceding period."\textsuperscript{17}

In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" we may see a tension that is almost a paradigm of what constitutes the thematic structure

\textsuperscript{15}Martz, ed., \textit{The Meditative Poem}, p. xxxi.  
\textsuperscript{17}White, p. 39.
of the later drama. On the one hand we have the social observer reporting the increasing corruption of society, while on the other we see the meditative poet giving personal testimony "for the purpose of coming to understand oneself and other men."18 The tension, then, at the poetic level, is between the diverse imagery of satire which tends to be widely varied and more often than not grotesque, and the emblems of the cross and Christ's Blood which provide a central metaphor, a fixed symbol of heroic suffering which stands above the gross reality of the satiric view. On the social level in Ford's drama we see the disruptive, squalid figures such as Bergetto, Cuculus and Hemophil. At the center of the dramas are the quiet, self-absorbed characters: Menaphon, Warbeck, Calantha. It is the motif of the suffering of Christ and the participation in that suffering by a privileged attendant that emerges from the texture of "Christ's Bloody Sweat."

Even the images used in a satiric context often echo, in an ironic way, the central symbols. When, for example, Ford speaks of "Satan's guiles" he refers to them as "spiced pleasures in a damned cup" (p. 16); the "damned cup" becomes a reversal of the sacred symbol of the Eucharistic Chalice.

There are more extensive passages which signal a relaxation from the militant satire of the verse for the sake

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18 Powers, p. 27.
of a summing up or commentary upon the invective. Such passages reflect an almost choric quality.

What is man but dust made up in forme? 
Fraile, weak, corrupted: keeping time in motion, 
A ship at sea, ore-turned at every storme; 
Eates, sleeps, and dies, unsettled in devotion: 
  In health, unbridled, in his yeares a span, 
  A fading bloom, and such a thing is man.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 34)

We see a constant oscillation between the condemnation of the abuses of the flesh where Ford uses the frontal attack of vivid sensuous images, and the wistful yearning for a release from the coercion of the passions. The "Bloody-minded butcher" will "stabbe and fight and scorn the weight of life":

Here shall the wantons for a downy bed
Be rackt on pallets of stil-burning steele:
Here shall the glutton, that hath dayly fed,
On choice of daintie diet, hourly feel;
  Worse meat then toads, & beyond time be drencht
  In flames of fire, that never shall be quencht.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 26)

At one remove from the direct appeal to the senses is Ford's use of the extended metaphor which allows the poet to make an explicit comment upon the topic.

Yet as a cunning fire-work lighted glowes
Spits and with hissing wonders dares the skies,
Till being wasted, downe it fal, and showes
No more; his matter spent it weakly dies,
  And vanisheth to aire and smoke, so men
  In health are strong, but dying vanish then.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 34)
The working out of the metaphor provides a distance between the poet's satiric catalogue of man's depravities and his meditation on the \textit{contemptus mundi}. The meditation takes place in an orderly, logical manner, as opposed to the apparently helter-skelter response of a series of disparate and solely sensuous images of the satire. The image of the firework is a judicious one, too, in that it evokes a sense of the motion and a momentary suspension at the apogee of flight before the plunge into darkness. The affinity between the metaphor and the brevity of man's life is what is especially striking here.

No doubt the treatment of experience at two levels—that of concrete reality and that of reflection—is not unique to Ford. This concern with analysis and reflection does, however, suggest one tendency increasingly found in the poets of the early Seventeenth Century.\(^\text{19}\) Ford's choice of the meditative mode was well-suited to develop this tendency toward self-observation. Meditative poets, according to Harold Segel, did not seek merely "the poetization of biblical passages, but the personal, individual, distinctly lyrical

\[^{19}\text{A tendency which produced poetry which was increasingly, Miner suggests, "reflective, self-observing, psychological." The Cavalier Mode from Jonson to Cotton, p. 226.}\]
expression of their reflection upon the theme of man in God's world.\textsuperscript{20}

One of the important themes of meditative, or reflective poetry was the "theme of man's terrestrial existence as something illusory, dreamlike because of its mutability, brevity and ephemerality."\textsuperscript{21} These attitudes are clearly evident in all of Ford's plays, and "Christ's Bloody Sweat" is very important in that in the poem Ford seems to have set forth many of the themes he will more fully develop in the drama. In "Fame's Memorial" Ford had praised the learning, power, and social grace of Blount. In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" Ford recognizes the insignificance of the values he had once so highly praised. He joins, in this poem, the meditative poets who "expose the hollow vanity of attachment of the ephemeral, illusory pleasures of material existence. Yet these pleasures are often presented in concrete, sensuous, naturalistic terms that underscore man's passionate yet futile attachment to them and the pain he experiences in contemplating his separation from them."\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21}Segel, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{22}Ibid, p. 97.
There is an important dimension in the narrative structure of "Christ's Bloody Sweat," one which is more specifically appropriated by the writer of a devotional poem. This element is that of the vision. The poetic problem associated with the visionary experience is how the visionary is to place his experience in a localized linguistic form, since surely the ecstasy implies an abandonment of the senses. "Given the power to contemplate the Authentic, who would run, of choice, after its image?" ²³

A suggestive analogue to the process of meditation is Henri Bergson's discussion of absolute and relative knowledge in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Bergson identifies the absolute with perfection (somewhat like the Plotinian equation of the Good with the Absolute) and claims that analysis, "an endless multiplication of points of view," is not adequate to obtain knowledge of the absolute. "An absolute can only be given in an intuition... We call intuitions here the sympathy by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it." ²⁴

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I would suggest that the cumulative effect of the concrete imagery is much like "an endless multiplication of points of view." The act of meditation is an attempt to get beyond the surface which Ford characterizes as trash. In attempting to describe the visionary experience, Plotinus says that "no longer is there a spectator outside gazing on an outside spectacle ... one must bring the vision within. And this identification amounts to a self-knowing, a self-consciousness."25 We must remember, however, that this condition of ecstasy is achieved through an abandonment of the senses.

On the other hand, the meditative program encourages the application of the senses: the image is sought. "The exercise of this application is to propose the object of some one sense, as of sight, as though we truly saw it."26 It is through this qualified demand for an image that we may most clearly see Ford's strategy of using the emblem of the Chalice or the Cross. "An emblem is a detached object of meditation."27 It is through the application of the senses to a vivid image that the poem seeks to get within the mystery and to express metaphorically what is "inexpressible" in it.

26Dawson, p. 21.
27Wallerstein, p. 331.
The intuition is the ecstasy, literally the "standing outside" when "Our soules, Which to advance their state, / Were gone out." It is a condition, suggests Cowley, in which

An unexhausted Ocean of delight
Swallows my senses quite.

Ford describes the pattern which generally appears in such poetry—loneliness, brilliant light, wind, and a release from the senses (here stated paradoxically as "carnal death"): Heere, in the pensive solace of my soule, Methought, a soft coole winde did gently breath, As if my spirit were transported whole, Unto another life, from carnal death: When straight a shining light perfum'ed the room, Out of which light, a whispering voyce did come. ("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 63)

"In a modified neo-Platonic psychology, the mind has a vision so far as is possible while she is in this life of the divine beauty wherein she had her origin." As the

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30 Wallerstein, p. 332.
vision fades the perspective changes and the narrator returns to mundane reality. The voice, with whom the narrator had been engaged in colloquy (the last step in the meditative process), is silenced.

Up flew the light, and silence shew'd the voyce Retir'd to stilnesse.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 64)

The vision fades, but we must remember that the purpose of the meditation was a temporary retreat, not a total abnegation of one's humanity. The vision provides a spiritual rejuvenation through which the narrator will "attaine the place, / Where quiet soules do end their happie race" (p. 63). The final view of earthly existence is not, then, one of utter "trash" or "slime."

The narrator says: "I seal'd up my comforts in a booke" (p. 64). In a real sense, the poem consists of two antipodal visions: first, of the most grotesque vices of the flesh, and second, of the most elevated possibilities of the soul. Confronted with these equally valid views of man, the narrator is revolted by the first, but realizes the impossibility of sustaining the second. Ultimately, he wishes to be left with his "few books": happiest "When my thoughts and I / Do domineer in privacy." 31

"Vanity most commonly rides coached in the highway, the beaten way, the common way: but virtue and moderation walk alone." 32 I am not trying ingeniously to manipulate quotations in order to create a caricature of Ford as proto-existentialist. 33 I am suggesting, though, that we ought not ignore evidence that Ford, in both his prose and poetry, lends substantial support to the only contemporary allusion to him:

Deep in a dump John Ford alone was got,
With folded arms and melancholy hat. 34

In Ford we find an omnipresent inventory of decay, and the individual's existence is characteristically seen as labyrinthine, lonely, and dreamlike.

Several elements of "Christ's Bloody Sweat" indicate that the poem occupies an important place in the development of Ford's technical prowess and spiritual maturity. In the poem (and in "A Line of Life") Ford adopts a more unsettled attitude toward morality and behaviour than were reflected in "Fame's Memorial" or "Honour Triumphant." In The Broken Heart Armostes says:


33Several modern critics find in Ford certain characteristics of existentialism.

34Ford, Works, I, 1i.
Our eyes can never pierce into the thoughts,  
For they are lodg'd too far inward.  

(IV.1654-1655)

In his choice of the meditative process, Ford experiments with a poetic means of bringing the vision to within. The ecstatic vision is, as Martz suggests, the attempt to project the self upon a mental stage: the intent is the same whether the program is Plotinian, Ignatian or Bergsonian. The advantage of the meditative process, for Ford, is the tremendous emphasis it placed upon the concentration upon a single isolated motif: a visible emblem which would provide an object of contemplation, and at the same time give the poem a more precise ideological focus than it might otherwise have had.

The theme that most interests Ford is that of man's suffering in isolation. The meditative poem on Christ's agony gave Ford the opportunity to examine this theme in great depth. In the later plays the techniques of "Christ's Bloody Sweat" will be enlisted to dramatize the isolated man's attempt to discover his spiritual resources. Ford introduces moments of stillness during which we are presented with profound and disturbing spectacles--the ritual, Bacchic murder of Ferentes; Giovanni flourishing the impaled heart

of Annabella; Fernando rising from the tomb of Bianca. The themes of suffering, death and rejuvenation are themes which lie beyond rational explanation.

Ford settles finally upon love as the theme that best provides an opportunity to anatomize man's circumstances. It is through

lovers' eyes,
Lock'd in endlesse dreames,
Th' extremes of all extremes,

(The Broken Heart, IV.2181-2183)

that we will see more clearly certain themes that Ford has been developing since his earliest poems. Love, like religion, is a profound and potentially disturbing phenomenon. Ford characteristically links the two experiences through imagery. In Ford's plays the garden in which the agony occurs is the hortus conclusus of the hero's mind. The questions posed by Ford's dramas are ones that "reason cannot answer": to the rational observer, Ford's heroes seem to be refugees from "some unquiet dream" (Perkin Warbeck, V.2377).
CHAPTER V

FORD'S DRAMA: "CONSTANCY IN SUFFERING"

Much Ford criticism expresses the attitude that Ford's inferiority to Shakespeare was due to Ford's lack of moral discernment. "Is it not abhorrent to think that Caraffa, Bianca, and Fernando will lie gathered within one tomb? Is this conception of morality not an offense against the audience's notion of morality?"¹ "There is no serious morality in these plays at all; they do not depend upon a code of any kind, but simply on exploiting the feelings and combining the pathetic and the pornographic."² And even in his generally appreciative essay on Ford, Frederick Boas reminds us that Ford's "chosen themes took little heed of conventional standards."³

Much of this criticism (though not Boas') implies that, since Ford's standards were not the same as Shakespeare's,

they were inferior to Shakespeare's. It would never occur to me to deny Shakespeare's superior breadth of vision. Nor would I suggest that Ford can match Shakespeare's variety and virtuosity as a poet. But much of this criticism merely flogs Ford for not being like Shakespeare, and misses the point, which is that Ford became increasingly interested in seeing his heroes not as assimilated to an established moral order, but rather as excluded from such a reconciliation. Moreover, the dissonant attitude of the typical Ford hero is usually one of choice and disposition rather than one forced upon him by circumstances. Ford's heroes seem unregenerately contentious, indifferent to acceptable social behaviour, and very often mentally deranged.

Not surprisingly, some critics find such representative figures distasteful, and see in Ford's ambivalent stance something of an affront to propriety. The anti-democratic bias which pervades much of Ford's work has been viewed as a defect in Renaissance culture generally. "The great achievements of that civilization transcend the court-world in every way, and there is a sense in which they came about not because, but in spite of, the polished society that assembled in Urbino and all other would-be Urbinos of that age."4 A world which consolidates all elements of society, or which

elevates a Simon Ayre from shoemaker to Lord Mayor of London may very well be superior to the aristocratic milieu of the court. The bellows and the awl may be more appropriate symbols of Ford's civilization than are the lute and rapier. But arguments based on such a preference tend to place Ford's work too superficially in the neat category of decadence: Ford is seen as a playwright who, for one reason or another, was not able to accept some wholesome English notion of social harmony. "His principal characters, tortured with burning desires, whisper lecherous pleas and utter arguments for clandestine love which exceed in prurience the most erotic scenes in the plays of John Fletcher." This predominantly moral attitude toward Ford's drama misses the point that, for him, the psychological "torture" induced by passion is the force that first isolates, then tests, the major characters.

Let us grant that Ford was a decadent. But let us give the word "decadence" a broader, and so far as Ford's work is concerned, more relevant meaning. Gautier, in an essay on Baudelaire, defines decadence as "art arrived at that point of extreme maturity yielded by the slanting suns of aged civilizations: an ingenious complicated style, full of

5Sensabaugh, p. 6.
shades and of research, constantly pushing back the boundaries of speech . . . struggling to render what is most inexpressible in thought, what is vague and most elusive in the outlines of form, listening to translate the subtle confidence of neurosis, the dying confessions of passion grown depraved, and the strange hallucinations of the obsession which is turning to madness." 6 Havelock Ellis cautions that "we have to recognize that decadence is an aesthetic and not a moral conception." 7 We can recognize, in each phrase of Gautier's, characteristics which have been assigned to Ford's drama. Usually, however, it is the quality of "passion grown depraved" that most exercises critical responses to Ford; and critics generally find Ford confused in purpose rather than intricate in design. David L. Frost claims that Ford was "muddled," but can be seen as clearly "anti-Shakespearean." 8 Wallace Bacon complains that "what Ford gives us is not simply a statement of ethical impasse but rather a state of moral confusion." 9 The assumpt-

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7 Ibid., p. xix.


9 Bacon, pp. 193-194.
ion here seems to be that moral certainty will result in the creation of superior art.

I have suggested in my first chapter that moral certainty was not a quality to be expected of a dramatist writing in the third and fourth decades of the Seventeenth Century. This may seem to be contradicted by the evidence of Ford's having written a meditative poem. However, "Christ's Bloody Sweat" does not propound any consistent moral code, but depends upon a visionary experience. To this extent it limits the numbers of the "saved" to a privileged and specially blessed few. Moreover, the vision serves rather to show the general depravity of man than to suggest a moral program by which one can be raised to a state of grace.

But moral uncertainty need not mean moral vacuity. As in "Christ's Bloody Sweat," Ford suggests the possibility of a special redemption, so in the social sphere there are acts of secular grace: honor, courtesy and contemplation. Early in his career, Ford had seen, for example, Devonshire as a paradigm of this ideal, and it has been suggested that what especially attracted Ford to his subject was Devonshire's daring, and socially unacceptable, relationship
with Penelope Rich. 10 Devonshire and Lady Rich have this in common with Ford's later protagonists: no matter what we think of the decorum of their action, it singles them out as special people. It is precisely their love affair which, in Ford's view, elevates them:

Maugre the throat of malice, spite of spite,  
He liv'd united to his heart's delight.

("Fame's Memorial," p. 307)

Ford praises Penelope as being "wisely-discreet, / In winking mildly at the tongue of rumour / . . . With meekness bearing sorrow's sad disgrace" (p. 308).

It is interesting, too, how Ford characterizes those who criticize the love of Devonshire and Penelope:

0, that the eyes of sense  
Should pry into the nature of the worst,  
Poor fortune's envy, greatness' eminence!  
Because themselves in worldly cares are nurs'd,

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10 Sensabaugh, p. 151. Stavig, on the other hand, says that Devonshire and Penelope "should be seen less as daring illicit lovers than as two basically moral people trying to live with outmoded divorce laws" (Stavig, p. 5). I think that Stavig places too great an emphasis on Ford's studies at the Inns of Court. In any case, the theme of love beyond the pale of social convention is the significant element, and both critics recognize this theme as being present in the early poem. The dedication of "Fame's Memorial" to Penelope Rich suggests that Ford was "a mere stranger, altogether unknown to" the countess. Ford, at this early date (1606), was a student at the Inns of Court and the poem suggests that he was much more interested in cataloguing the qualities of honor and courtesy than in winning patronage.
Deluding types of honour as accurs'd,
When they themselves are most accurs'd of all,
Who being lowest lower cannot fall.

("Fame's Memorial," p. 308)

Although "tongue-oiled courtiers" receive plenty of heavy-handed criticism in Ford's work, Ford is not criticizing courtiers in this stanza. Those critics of Penelope and Devonshire who "in worldly cares are nurs'd" are not initiates in the refined sensibility of the court. Ford makes it clear that, whatever other faults the courtiers may have had, they were at least susceptible to the superior graces of Penelope: "This heart-stealing goddess charm'd their ears" ("Fame's Memorial," p. 308).

Throughout the drama we will note how consistently Ford returns to the occasion of love as a means of exploring the resources of people under great psychological pressures. The ethical center of such a situation is that love provides the protagonist with the opportunity to make a total commitment—one which transcends social or historical bounds. The settings of the plays, distant and remote, serve to underscore the impression that the characters are manoeuvring in an arena far removed from normal associations. 11

11 Perkin Warbeck would seem to be an exception. However, here the distance is essentially temporal. And although there is the familiar setting, Warbeck is suspended between two courts represented by James and Henry. The real sense of who he is more clearly emerges from his relationship with Catherine. Again, love, not politics, provides the real center of the drama.
To this extent, he differs from a dramatist like Shirley, for example, whose "depiction of society is meticulous and detailed so that the problem can be grasped in all its importance and contemporary relevance." ¹²

To call love the center of Ford's plays may be imprecise unless we see it as the center of a series of concentric circles, each circle representing a dramatic structural component. Ford's themes and settings provide one outer circle which excludes more than it contains. It excludes the whole vast matter of contemporary relevance. Within this circle there is another which contains the group of characters who have the potential to love (e.g., Dalyell, Fiormonda, Roseilli) or who are powerful enough to be antagonists (e.g., Henry, Soranzo, Caraffa). The area between the outer and second circle is inhabited by the satiric and comic foils, e.g., Bergetto and Cuculus. The dramatic focus of the plays is provided by those who commit themselves to love: this is the "Extreme of all extremes" (Broken Heart, IV.2182-2183). The protagonists of Ford's plays engage in a ritual of anguish centering in the decision to love. The impediments to love are often so great that the hero's commitment seems foolhardy or deranged.

John S. White has suggested that the Renaissance Cavalier, a type exemplified by Castiglione's courtier, was essentially apolitical and that the great danger he faces is his excessive remoteness from life. The ideal of personality exemplified by such figures White calls "the aesthetic individualist." Such a figure faces the greatest anxiety when faced with "life's most fundamental problem: whether it does not more conform to our destiny to engage ourselves with our total personality toward a suprapersonal goal . . . than to devote ourselves entirely to self-stylization and to enjoy a personal liberty in vacuo." In his earliest poem, Ford had advised that

Activity abroad, dalliance in chamber,
Becomes a perfect courtier,—
Free spirits, soon are caught when slaves go free:
What uncontrolled soul is so precise
As may, yet will not, taste earth's paradise?

("Fame's Memorial," p. 291)

Ford is already examining the option of forgoing "liberty in vacuo" of becoming "caught" in the emotional tumult of love. Ironically, Ford suggests, only "true spirits" like Penelope and Blount can be so caught. The "slaves go free," but their freedom is limited in that it is egocentric and uncommitted. In order to "taste earth's paradise," the lover must first go through great suffering.

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13 White, p. 10.
14 Ibid., p. 57.
The slave, in Ford's context, never suffers the great emotional stress of love, but for that very reason, never discovers the real depth of his being. Far from avoiding the fundamental problems of life, Ford confronts them head on by engaging his characters in a series of complex emotional confrontations which may destroy the lover, but which may offer him an opportunity of achieving nobility. Ford cannot celebrate cloistered virtue: "Never to have seen evil is no praise to well-doing" ("A Line of Life," Works, III, 396). In his plays, there are many examples of characters who attempt a retreat into the seclusion of disguise, exile or melancholy. Their nature is defined not as they emerge into a world of social commitment, but as they engage someone willing to share the burden of isolation. Ironically, we experience freedom only within the recognition of local necessity. 15

The lovers in Ford's plays transmute everything beyond their sphere to an autonomous moral realm by participating

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15"Whereas before being loved we were uneasy about that unjustified, unjustifiable protruberance which was our existence, whereas we felt ourselves 'de trop', we now feel that our existence is taken up and willed even in its tiniest detail by a freedom which at the same time our existence conditions and which we ourselves will with our freedom." Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 483-484.
in a ritual--"locked in endless dreams"--which involves a separate vocabulary and behavior. They participate in a series of plays within plays; masque-like interludes which suggest that they are cloaked by a magically protective rite which excludes all others. It is "... a theatre of highly formalized physical spaces self-consciously aware of its own theatricality, and engulfing the spectator until he is aware that he stands both before and behind the mirror which the theater holds up to the theatrum mundi."16 The lovers mock one reality by creating their own. Characteristically, in Ford's drama, when the grosser "reality" overwhelms the lover's world, the lovers will choose death, or to be killed by the society they have refused to join.

Not only society, but nature as well is pretty well obliterated in Ford's world. The characters are vivid but the background is muted in darkness. "Men and women alike were for Ford material for wondering contemplation."17 The plays are stripped of imagery, as though too great a concern with objects would be a distraction. More typically, Ford will work variations on a metaphor having to do with blood, 


17Leech, p. 30.
religion or sacrifice. These central metaphors will provide a core of meaning for the play; love is the objective correlative. In 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, Giovanni's declaration of love is made in a quite clearly religious context. The kneeling, the giving of the ring, the chant-like exchange of vows (I.335-445), all foreshadow the resolution of the action. When Giovanni presents Annabella's heart to the feasting celebrants, we see another, more parodic, variation of the love-religion metaphor.

The tone in Ford's plays is one of absorption. Ford does not replace the religion of "Christ's Bloody Sweat" with some neo-Platonic deification of Amor. There is very little of the Bembo-like raptures about lovers burning in most happy flames. In this respect, Ford's development over the language of his earlier poetry is most evident. The language of the plays reveals little of the declamatory tendency which is all too evident in "Fame's Memorial." What seems to have happened is that Ford, through a process of experimentation in the various genres, has achieved a voice which best suits the subjects which had attracted him throughout his career.

The aspects of suffering, the hero's isolation from all but his notion of honor, are most effectively captured

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18 Castiglione, p. 319.
by the formal, ceremonial, hushed moments in the plays. 
"the persons of the drama make the customary gesture 
developed in ritual observance, and, in doing so, they 
project in a whole-hearted way attitudes which are not 
normally articulated at large." 19  We will see how often 
Ford suggests that the most powerful emotions are the most 
difficult to articulate. At moments of psychological crisis, 
Ford very often abandons dialogue and emphasizes some solemn 
action. Through the use of the visible, "the world has been 
moved a little closer to the heart's desire in a strict 
sense of what we understand by ritual." 20 

In the drama the technique is enormously effective. 
"There is a coldness and restraint in much of his work; a 
grave and chilly dignity in which the emotions seem to be 
recollected rather than felt; recollected not merely in 
tranquillity, but in spellbound stillness." 21 The plays 
contain a series of dialoghi d'amore which, like Ebreo's and 
Bembo's, include an exploration of the psychology of love. 
The plays have a visionary quality and the stage often 
becomes a diorama, silent and motionless; the spectator 
becomes visually absorbed in a symbolic ritual the meaning 
of which lies beyond words, as, for example, the Bacchic

19 Cope, p. 171.  
20 Ibid., p. 172.  
21 Bradbrook, p. 73.
dance in *Love's Sacrifice*. Paradoxically, the most external, physically realized literary genre can, at these moments, become a vehicle for expressing an interior drama which corresponds to the dream vision of medieval literature.

Though eyes be overtaken,
Yet the Heart doth ever waken
Thoughts, chain'd up in busie snares
Of continuous woes and cares:
Love and griefes are so exprest,
As they rather sigh then rest.

( *The Lover's Melancholy*, V.2439-2444)

In Ford's dramas these moments suggest the notion of epiphany in a way very similar to the meditative concentration on a visible emblem—a contemplation so intense that everything beyond it is eradicated.

Heere, in the pensive solace of my Soule,
Me thought, a soft coole winde did gently breathe,
As if my spirit were now transported whole,
Unto another life, from carnal death:

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 63)

This constant regard for the exploration of his characters' "pensive solace" is the quality that suggests to critics who see Ford a "modern," that he is "as surely and as interestingly an existentialist as Sartre." Gorley Putt suggests that Ford "seems to be emerging from Jacobean

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eloquence into a more matter of fact existentialist statement of man's self-destructive passions." There is a pleasant circularity in such suggestions, because when one examines the existentialist writers one feels Ford's kinship to them, but one increasingly suspects that they are working refinements on traditions that were already established in Ford's time. In Sartre's *Nausea*, Anny's description of the idea of the "perfect moment" is strikingly like the emblematic perception of the visionary. "You have to know how to concentrate. Do you know what I read? Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. It has been quite useful for me. There's a way of first setting up the background, then making the characters appear. You manage to see." In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" Ford too discovered the value of the meditative process, a process which was applicable to the secular and problematical world of the drama.

I suggested in Chapter Three that the satiric view is antipodal to the meditative. But in a sense they are

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complementary: it is disgust with the world that prompts the spiritual retreat. In order to show the superiority of the ideal it is necessary to show the grossness of reality. An understanding of Ford's method of contrasting the two views may help explain Ford's subplots which have so offended some critics. The most common objection to the subplots is that they tend toward cruddeness and obscenity.

The derisive view of society may come indirectly, as the result of the depiction of the depraved characters like Cuculus in Lover's Melancholy, or more directly from a raisonneur like Rhetias, or from a major character like Meleander. Meleander, for instance, comments on Corax's attempts to cure melancholy:

All the buzz of Drugs, and Myneralls and Simples, Blound-lettings, Vomits, Purges, or what else Is conjur'd up by men of Art, to gull Liege-people, and reare golden piles, are trash To a well-strong-wrought halter.

(Lover's Melancholy, IV.1888-1892)

There is a strong echo here of Surly's attitude toward alchemy in Jonson's satire:

With all your broths, your menstrues, and materials Of piss and eggshells, women's terms, men's blood, Hair o' the head, burnt clouts, chalk, merds and clay. 25

Like Surly, Ford's protagonists are primarily concerned with revealing the "poisoners of virtue, the betrays of goodness, the blood-suckers of innocency" ("A Line of Life," Works, III, 401).

The raisonneur stands beyond the central action and comments sardonically upon it. Rhetias establishes this position when he states:

When commonwealths
Totter and reel from that nobility
And ancient virtue which renowns the great,
Who steer the helm of government, while mushrooms
Grow up, and make new laws to license folly;
Why should not I, a May-game, scorn the weight
Of my sunk fortunes? snarle at the vices
Which rot the land, and without feare or wit
Be mine owne Anticke?

(Lover's Melancholy, I.246-254)

Then there are the fools who are the object of the satire, characters like Hemophil or Cuculus, whose pretension to courtly manners make them especially treacherous—and almost sacrilegious:

Though haughty as the Divell or his Dam,
Thou dost appeare, great Mistris: yet I am
Like to an ugy fire-worke, and can mount
Above the Region of thy sweet Ac---count.
Wert thou the Moone her selfe, yet having seene thee,
Behold the man ordain'd to moove within thee.

(Lover's Melancholy, III.1193-1198)

The obscene manoeuverings of a Cuculus are, in fact, a grotesque parody of the central loves between Manaphon and
Thamasta, and between Amethus and Cleophila. The point is that Cuculus is a courtier, and his suit is especially insidious because, he admits, "I have not a rag of love about me. Tis only a foolish humour I am possest with. . . . I will court any thing; be in love with nothing, nor no——thing" (III.1210-1212).

So the satiric levels of the plays conform closely to the levels of action. The characters are quite clearly divided into those who cannot love, those who will not love, and those who are condemned to love. Because the central value is love, it should not surprise us to find the satire dealing quite often with obscenity. This, however, should not lead us to see Ford's plays as pornographic. The satire shows how pervasive is the threat of deceit in the guise of courtesy; it is not intended to pander to the depraved tastes of the audience.

We see in Ford's plays the bringing together of the themes and techniques he had used in his previous work. In his first poem we observed a fascination with the code of honor and courtesy. In both "Fame's Memorial" and "Honor Triumphant" he explored this theme both as it affects man's active life and as it provides man with a system of values by which he can make moral judgments.
His excursion into meditative poetry provided him with a paradigm for self-knowledge. The visionary nature of the revelation, however, tends severely to limit the number of people capable of achieving that knowledge. It is important to recognize that the two traditions, the courtly and the meditative, are not mutually exclusive, nor even opposed. Nesca Robb has pointed out that one major channel of neo-Platonic thought is mystic and that the knowledge arrived at in this mode cannot be attained, but is revealed. Such an attitude develops the notion of the privileged participation in esoteric or hermetic lore.  

The code of honor et fides incorporates the realms of soul and mind and is symbolized in Ford's drama by aristocratic love. "What haunted Ford, as it was increasingly to haunt Western culture, was the discontinuity of human experience. . . . No universal, divine order was reflected in nature or in civil custom and use." Ford presents this discontinuity through a vigorous satiric turbulence. The escape from this depraved world is not physical removal, but spiritual isolation.

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26 Nesca Robb, *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1935), p. 17. The tone of Bembo's detailed excursus on love (Courtier, IV) suggests the mystical and religious nature of the program leading to "this most holie light, that sheweth us the way which leadeth to heaven" (p. 130).  

27 Sensabaugh, p. 215.
T.S. Eliot has spoken of the "perfection of pattern" that informs all of Shakespeare's work as being one indication of his excellence. "The measure in which dramatists and poets approximate to this unity in a lifetime's work is one of the measures of major poetry and drama."\textsuperscript{28} Judged by this criterion, Ford's work is clearly not of the first order. Of course, one of the problems of such comparisons is that, compared with Shakespeare, most dramatists are going to suffer. I want, as much as possible, to avoid "grading" Ford but the specter of Shakespeare's reputation looms so ominously in the background that it cannot be ignored.

Eliot asserts that without this unity of pattern a poet's work suffers a lack of purpose. David L. Frost suggests that "perhaps events in the lifetimes of the younger dramatists, the flood of controversy in religion and politics, the depravity of James' court, with his liking for worthless favorites and ignominious policies, all made it difficult to accept Shakespeare's insights."\textsuperscript{29}

What I have been suggesting is that, although the level of performance varies, Ford's non-dramatic work displays a consistent attempt to fashion a code of values which drew upon a number of genres and traditions. The dramas do not


\textsuperscript{29}Frost, p. 130.
represent a complete break with his previous work. His collaboration with experienced dramatists introduced him to a genre capable of anatomizing the topics of honor, love and suffering which he had explored throughout his early career. The drama, in this view, will be seen as an extension of the non-dramatic work, and I hope to show that the plays can be more clearly understood when thus examined.
CHAPTER VI

THE LOVER'S MELANCHOLY

Ford's last prose pamphlet "A Line of Life" was published in 1620, and his first independent play The Lover's Melancholy was licensed in 1628.¹ The seven intervening years were spent in apprenticeship with Webster, Dekker, and Rowley. It was from these established playwrights that Ford learned the dramatic craft.² In any event, it is with The Lover's Melancholy that Ford's critical reputation begins.

In commending the author of that play, William Singleton claims

that the Age
May be indebted to Thee for Reprieve
Of purer Language.

(11. 10-12)

Singleton suggests, too, that Ford's first play is only the latest of writings which "Hath forc'd a praise long since, from knowing Men" (1. 8), and that the play "can nor fear, ¹

¹There is some uncertainty about the order of the composition of Ford's plays. I have relied upon H.J. Oliver's persuasive and conservative approach to dating.

²It is impossible clearly to adduce the extent of Ford's contribution to such plays as the Witch of Edmonton, the Spanish Gypsy and The Sun's Darling. Aside from the difficulties of arguing from internal evidence, some of the plays on which he collaborated have been lost. See Works, I, lxx.
nor want / The Rage, or Liking of the Ignorant" (ll. 5-6). Ford himself in his dedication notes (somewhat haughtily) that "As plurality hath reference to a Multitude, so, I care not to please Many" (ll. 14-16). It is worth remembering that in his last previous independent work, "A line of Life," he had claimed, in much the same tone, that "my aim hath not been so grossly levelled, that I meant to choose every reader for my patron" (Works, III, 384). And in the prologue to the play, Ford Laments that

It is Arts scorne, that some of late have made The Noble use of Poetry a Trade.

(ll. 12-13)

Fifteen years before he wrote these lines, Ford had complained:

Poetrie is so every way made the herauld of wantonesse, as . . . hath been the cause, why so generall an imputation is laid upon this ancient and industrious arte.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," prologue)

It may be true that in the late twenties the tone cultivated by the dramatists "had to be quieter, more attuned to the narrower, more courtly, audience." But we have seen that the tendency toward calm introspection was one which Ford had displayed almost a decade before he had even begun

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to collaborate on plays. It is more likely that Ford so stresses what may be seen as a common attitude of the playwright, because it happened to represent an attitude which he had felt all along. Ford had characteristically portrayed himself as being independent, and not especially interested in, nor in need of, patronage. The themes he had dealt with in his earlier writings even before he became involved in the drama had, moreover, stressed the virtues of both moral and intellectual independence.

Ford typically places the superior individual in a degraded or disturbed setting and then explores the means by which such a character can fashion an acceptable existence. Ford's heroes are generally hyperborean, favored but out of place, reflective, terse, and ill at ease in large social groups. To this extent they share features common to the personae of Ford's non-dramatic work. In The Lover's Melancholy the lovers inhabit a world strikingly similar to Frye's description of the last phase of the comic mythos of spring. "In this phase the social units of comedy become small and esoteric, or even confined to a single individual. Secret and sheltered places become more prominent as does the penseroso mood of romance, the love of the occult and

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4 In "A Line of Life" (Works, III, 397), Ford uses Epominondas as an exemplum of the good man because "he chose rather to be moderate alone than mad with the multitude."
the marvellous, the sense of individual detachment from routine existence."^5

In The Lover's Melancholy, Prince Palador has upset the normal order of things by abdicating his responsibility to rule the kingdom. Menaphon has been a castaway, and meets the beautiful Cleophila on a "solitary walk" in a "silent grove." Thamasta's heart is "intermured with ice." Meleander remarks that

If I should speake as much as I should speake, I should talke of a thousand things at once,

(V.2583-2584)

and this seems to reflect the attitude of most of Ford's major characters. Confronted by the disturbing vagaries of experience, they distrust the apparently rational explanations of things. Discourse in Ford's plays tends towards the oblique and the suggestive and indicates characters both brooding and introspective.

The "Purer language" of which Singleton speaks seems to describe the most significant difference between the non-dramatic and the dramatic work. I have suggested that there had been an increasing awareness of the tension between

^5Frye, p. 185. Jackson Cope, in The Theatre and the Dream, argues that Ford "explored the terrible and triumphant power of the imagination as a faculty of total recreation, blowing away fact and reason, principle and plot, as insubstantial bubbles" (p. 134).
"courtly" language and honesty. The typical hero-lover in Ford is reticent, reserved and extremely wary of inflated language and of jargon. Evasive and extravagant language is not, in Ford, a subject of amusement, but rather suggests the presence of a corruptive influence in the privileged court world. Ford's comic characters often are seen as failures in poetic sensibility because they are so crude. I think Ford knew perfectly well what he was doing: these characters are nauseating because they represent a totally sinister duplicity in a setting where alliance and verbal contract are of the highest importance. They are social and moral grotesques, and Ford uses satiric hyperbole which enables us to see more clearly the qualities of restraint and control which he certainly wishes us to admire in his heroic characters.

It is with a contrast of these two qualities, extreme reserve and foolish prolixity, that Ford begins The Lover's Melancholy. Such a contrast, I think, is representative of Ford's typical satiric mode in the plays. Menaphon has just returned from a year's voluntary exile occasioned by the frustration of his love for Thamasta, whose heart "Is intermur'd with Ice" (I.86). In the first scene of the play, Menaphon is being questioned about his travels by Pelias

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See above, p. 17.
(a "foolish Courtier"). After putting up briefly with Pelias' nonsense, Menaphon asks him "Where didst thou learn this language?" Pelias responds that

We that study words and formes
Of complement, must fashion all discourse,
According to the nature of the subject.

(I.32-34)

At this moment Menaphon's father, Sophronos, and Menaphon's close friend, Amethus, enter and the three are reunited. What is especially interesting here is to see how quickly Ford establishes the notion of the speechlessness of real emotion, to be contrasted, of course, to the stupid ramblings of Pelias. There are, in fact, no welcoming speeches.

Sophronos . . . The joys that bid thee welcome do too much
Speak me a child.

Quickly the stage is cleared except for the two friends Menaphon and Amethus.

Amethus. Give me thy hand, I will not say, Th'art welcome,
That is the common roade of common friends,
I am glad I have thee here--0, I want words
To let thee know my heart.

Menaphon. 'Tis peec'd to mine. 7

(I.58-62)

This expression and the subsequent exploration of friendship

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7There will be a very clear echo of this in Act V. The occasion of the emotion then will be Meleander's "return" from his own exile--that of melancholy. The terms of the reunion are almost exactly the same as here in Act I.
if of considerable significance to the theme of the play. "Friendship itself is 'une condition du développement de l'amour,' and 'intermédiaire entre l'amour propre et l'amour intelligible.'" Indeed, in *The Lover's Melancholy*, the theme of friendship seems to be the visible emblem of the mysterious and exalted condition of love. The fact is that the courtiers Pelias and Cuculus are "friends," but we are introduced to Cuculus only at that moment when Pelias is playing a joke on him—a joke based upon deception.

Pelias. Thou hast a Patent to abuse thy friends.

(I.300)

I'm not sure how much significance should be attached to the term "Patent" used in this context, but its legal connotation is certainly in extreme opposition to the explicitly religious attitude toward friendship expressed by Amethus. He suggests that his heart is pieced to Menaphon's as firmely, as that holy thing Call'd Friendship can unite it.

. . . henceforth

We never more will part, till that sad houre,
In which death leaves the one of us behind,
To see the others funerals perform'd.

(I.63-70)

The service d'amitié is set in terms which quite clearly evoke and prefigure a service d'amour. Thamasta, who refuses

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to recognize Menaphon's love, becomes capable of responding to love only after she has established a proper relationship with Eroclea. Eroclea is disguised as a young man and Thamasta's impulsive infatuation with her is a suggestion of her emotional derangement. Thamasta eventually learns the meaning of love through a recognition of the meaning of Amethus' and Menaphon's friendship.

Thamasta. Now I perceive the league of Amitye, Which you have long betweene yee, vow'd and kept, Is sacred and inviolable, secrets Of every nature are in common t'ee: I have trespass'd, and I have been faulty: Let not too rude a Censure doome me guilty, Or judge my errour wilfull without pardon.

(IV.1776-1783)

Prince Palador has cut himself off from the rest of the court, and in effect, from the world and he too becomes deserving of love only after he has reconciled himself to the wrong done to Meleander, Menaphon's father. Palador emerges from his absolute isolation (another self-imposed exile), restores Meleander's previous honor and position and concludes that

Princes should be circled with a guard Of truly noble friends, and watchfull subjects.

(V.2399-2400)

Elsewhere Ford emphasizes the importance of friendship as, for example, the relationship between Dalyell and
Warbeck, and between Fernando and Roseilli. The absence of friendship in 'Tis Pity adds to the terrific sense of isolation in that play.

These examples are enough, I think, to suggest the potent force of friendship as an element in Ford's plays. Devoted and honorable friendship provides a paradigm of value by which we can gauge the worth of a character in Ford's dramatic world. In The Lover's Melancholy Amethus and Menaphon provide the standard against which the other characters must be seen.

Ford does not suggest, however that once one has fashioned a "league of amity" one has won contentment. Friendship is, after all, an intermediate stage and both Menaphon and Amethus are infected by a general melancholic miasma which infects the whole court of Cyprus. Palador is pining for Eroclea who had escaped Cyprus with her servant Rhetias but who has now returned in disguise. As the moral center of the court, Palador symbolizes the state of his subjects, all of whom share, to some degree, his sickness.

Menaphon. Why should such as I am, Groane under the light burthens of small sorrowes, When as a Prince, so potent, cannot shun Motions of passion? To be man (my Lord) Is to be but the exercise of cares In severall shapes; as miseries doe grow, They alter as mens formes; but how, none know.

(I.106-112)
Melancholy becomes Ford's secular analogue to the meditative procedure in "Christ's Bloody Sweat." "Melancholy as Albertus Durer had depicted her, was an angel fixed upon the point of her own contemplation, arrested by the intensity of her understanding."9 The melancholic's meditation implies both suffering and knowledge. "The punishment it inflicts multiplies by nature insofar as, by punishing itself, it unveils the truth."10 The cure of melancholy cannot be arranged by adjusting external circumstances, as Corax tries to do. It is a heroic disease, and the melancholy figure must rely on his own spiritual strength by engaging in a struggle which demands some sort of voluntary exile. Ford commonly uses the words "exile" and "castaway" to describe the status of his heroes. Sometimes there is a literal separation which corresponds to the spiritual exile of the characters, as, for example, in the cases of Menaphon and Eroclea in *The Lover's Melancholy*, Orgilus in *The Broken Heart*, Roseilli in *Love's Sacrifice*, and, most dramatically, Perkin Warbeck. But "actually the voyage is inward, through the fantastic worlds the imagination creates, a world like

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that of Bruegel's 'Mad Meg,' where an entire landscape is made up by the action of one picaresque, errant, wandering mind."  

To a large extent, this melancholy is Palador's patrimony. The corruption of the court was due, in reality, to sins "against laws of truth or honour" committed by Palador's father before his death. All the more reason then, why the confusion is so labyrinthine: there is no fixed object of evil, no specific villain whose death or expulsion will cleanse the state. It is a psychological visitation and has resulted in a series of tangled emotional commitments and uncertain devotions.

Palador's isolation, because of his position, is potentially the most dangerous. Notice the lack he most specifically points to as describing his situation:

I never had a friend, a certaine friend,  
That would informe me throughly of such errors,  
As oftentimes are incident to Princes.

(II.730-732)

This is a good example of how Ford can take a traditional notion or convention of amity,12 and with extreme economy

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11 Colie, p. 405.

12 Elyot writes "of that incomparable treasure called amity," that "it is a blessed and stable connection of sundry wills, making of two persons one in having and suffering" (p. 134).
refine it so that it is both fresh and beautifully appropriate. If he had used the word "advisor" instead of "friend" we would see immediately the relationship between the prince and the courtier which so exercised such writers as Castiglione and Machiavelli. But Ford, at this moment, gets quite poignantly to the real issue. Palador wishes not for a counsellor, a tutor, or a physician: he wants a friend. Rhetias gently reminds him that another part of his princely patrimony is loneliness.

Rhetias. I have seen a man so curious in feeling the edge of a keene knife, that he has cut his fingers. My flesh is not of proofe against the metall I am to Handle; the one is tenderer then the other.

(II.733-736)

But Palador's love urges him to make a desperate commitment;

Palador. /I/ will for her sake
Beg friendship from thee, Rhetias. . . .
I know thou wert put on to sift me:
But be not too secure.

(II.812-817)

The irony is that Palador chooses to embrace the one man who most scorns courtiers and anyone else who would "fawne upon the Riots that embalme / Our wanton Gentry, to preserve the dust / Of their affected vanities in coffins / Of memorable shame" (II.243-246).

The logic of Ford's using Rhetias as the prince's confidant is that Rhetias is the only character who can
provide a link between the satiric and the heroic worlds. Pelias and Cuculus are too utterly opaque to participate in any but a farcical reflection of the world of romantic commitment. Cuculus is a mere object of laughter, and the laughter is of an aggressive, warning nature. His role is that of an "ordinary ape" and the manifestation of his folly is his perversion of court etiquette.

Pelias. He knowes no reason, but he may reduce The Courtiers to have women waite on them, And he begins the fashion.

(I.283-285)

Not only does this serve as a distortion of courtesy, but his "wench" is actually a male in disguise, a device with which Ford reinforces the parallellism of the main and sub-plots: Eroclea, who will ultimately marry Prince Palador, is disguised as a male.

Just as Menaphon and Amethus represent the virtue of verbal restraint, Cuculus sets out on his career of seduction by rehearsing a series of contrived rhetorical strategies. Rhetias suggests to Amethus that when he is declaring his love "few words to purpose soon'st prevail: / Study no long Orations; be plaine and short" (II.1095-1096). Cuculus, on the contrary, prepares cynically to use language as a cloak: "Thus I talk wisely, and to no purpose" (III.1142). This concern for appropriate language probably explains why Ford
has Cuculus' page express himself in the misguided language of malapropism. ("Thanks, most egregiously," "You're too perstreperous, saucebox") The distortion of the language in these cases implies an equivalent distortion of moral purpose. When Grilla asks Cuculus whether he actually loves these women, Cuculus' mask is removed.

Pish, I have not a ragge of love about me. Tis only a foolish humour I am possest with, to be surnam'd the Conquerour.

(III.1210-1212)

Cuculus and Pelias are on the periphery of the court world and are cut off from it by nature of their own frivolous choice of values. In the tragi-comic world of The Lover's Melancholy they never pose much of a threat, but they prefigure characters like Bassanes and Bergetto in the tragedies. Cuculus and Pelias are harmless only in terms of the relative lightness of the play. Between these characters and the lovers are those who are attempting to straighten out the confused psychological and emotional misalliances. These characters are Corax, the physician; Rhetias, the satiric commentator; Sophronos, who is actually administering the government; and Aretus, the tutor. In this middle circle there is less sound and fury, but there is a great deal of discontent. Rhetias asks,
Why should not I, a May-game, scorne the weight
Of my sunke fortunes? snarle at the vices
Which rot the Land, and without feare or wit
Be mine owne Anticke?

(I.251-254)

Sophronos complains:

Our Common-wealth is sick . . .
The Court is now turn'd Anticke, and growes wilde, . . .
Whilst the unsteady multitude presume,
How that you, Aretus, and I, ingrosse
(Out of particular Ambition)
Th' affaires of government, which I for my part,
Groane under, and am weary of.

Aretus. Sophronos,
I am as zealous too of shaking of
My gay State-fetters, . . .

(II.553-571)

Corax, in one of the rare soliloquies in Ford, describes the
disappointment of the meditative man at court:

To waste my time thus Droane-like in the Court,
And lose so many houres, as my studies
Have horded up, is to be like a man
That creepes both on his hands and knees, to climbe
A mountaines top, where when he is ascended,
One carelesse slip downe, tumbles him againe
Into the bottome whence a first began.

(III.1231-1237)

H.J. Oliver has suggested that the only reason for
Rhetias' condemnation of court life is "apparently that such
characters had such soliloquies.\textsuperscript{13} It seems to me, however, that to assign Rhetias' attitude to the category of vestigial Elizabethan malcontent\textsuperscript{14} is to ignore the fact that the attitude of dissatisfaction is embraced by a whole group of characters, and this group of characters is not as insignificant as Cuculus and Pelias. They are much more sophisticated than Cuculus and Pelias but they have in common with the latter the fact that they are not included among the significant group who are engaged in love.

A politician, a tutor, a physician and a raisonneur may all be seen as countering the play's psychological dislocation with an essentially rational point of view. Each can take refuge in a specific role which provides him with a feeling of security when confronted with the problematical nature of things at Palador's court. These characters attempt to rectify the situation by "reasonable" solutions. However, Sophronos and Aretus are gripped by exhaustion and wearily seek to escape the burden of responsibility for

\textsuperscript{13}H.J. Oliver, The Problem of John Ford, p. 51. Oliver identifies Rhetias' speech as occurring in Act III. It is in Act I. Corax's soliloquy is in Act III. This confusion makes it unclear whether Oliver is characterizing Rhetias as a cardboard malcontent and misplaces the speech, or whether Corax is one of "such characters." There are not many characters like Corax, a sort of consulting Burtonian psychiatrist. See Sensabaugh, The Tragic Muse of John Ford, pp. 35-42.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 53.
affairs. When Rhetias and Corax first meet, they come close to fighting, and engage in an exchange of bitter invective.

Rhetias. Mountebanck, Empricks, Quacksalvers, Mineralists, Wizards, Alchimists, cast-Apothecaries, old Wives and Barbers, are all suppositors to the right Worshipfull Doctor, as I take it. . . . Thou art in thy Religion an Atheist, in thy condition a Curre, in thy dyet an Epicure, in thy lust a Goate, in thy sleepe a Hogge; thou tak'st upon thee the habit of a grave Phisition, but art indeed an impostrous Emperike.

Corax. The best worth in thee, is the corruption of thy minde, for that onely intitles thee to the dignity of a lowse: a thing bred out of the filth and superfluity of ill humours. . . . Thou art Fortunes Ideot, Vertues Bankrupt, Times Dunghil, Manhoods Scandall, and thine owne scourge.

(I.367-400)

Corax will attempt cures of Palador and Meleander's melancholy with masques and potions. Their programs are strategies which each has created for the court. The rhetoric of argument increases the rigidity of the stance. But it is Rhetias who carries with him the real elixir: the knowledge of Eroclea's identity. In Act II, Rhetias provides Palador with a sense of hope for the ultimate return of Eroclea by hinting that Parthenophil may still be alive. Palador tells Rhetias

I must ever thanke thee; th'ast unlockt
A tongue was vow'd to silence.

(II.797-798)

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Palador tells Rhetias to "continue still thy discontented fashion" (II.819), and thus establish a reason for Rhetias' extremely sardonic comments in the latter acts. Rhetias has already contributed to Palador's "revival," through his revelation to Palador, though the intimation is veiled in obscurity. On the other hand, Corax tries to use 'science' to cure melancholy, but as Orgilus says in The Broken Heart

Love! thou art full of mystery: the Deities
Themselves are not secure in searching out
The secrets of those flames.
Physic yet hath never found
A remedy to cure a lover's wound.

(I.410-415)

It is important to remember that the cause of the disorder and misalliances at court stem from sins against truth and honor. Corax in explaining the probable cause of Palador's disturbance confidently explains that melancholy is briefly this,

A meere commotion of the minde, o're-charg'd
With feare and sorrow; first begot i' th'braine,
The Seate of Reason, and from thence deriv'd
As suddenly into the Heart, the Seate
Of our Affection.

(III.1255-1260)

It is on such evidence as this that Ford has been called a

16 Some added significance may be seen in Ford's use of this notion since he often anagrammatized his name Fides Honor.
Comparing the accomplishments of Rhetias with those of Corax I would think it would be easier to see Ford as a reactionary. It is clear that the range of mistrust and despair originated in the hearts of those characters who are afflicted, and it is through love that they must be restored.

Diamonds cut Diamonds: they who will prove
To thrive in cunning, must cure love with love.

(I.547-548)

During his "treatment" of Meleander, Corax is given some counselling by his patient.

Meleander. 'las poore man; canst thou imagine
To prosper in the taske thou tak'st in hand,
By practising a cure upon my weakenesse,
And yet be no Physician for thy selfe?
Goe, goe, turne over all thy bookes once more,
And learne to thrive in modesty; . . .
Thou art a foole,
A kind of learned foole.

(IV.1927-1934)

Corax. . . . There is so much sence in this wilde
distraction,
That I am almost out of my wits too,
To see and heare him.

(IV.1949-1951)

Sensabaugh claims that "Ford doubtless considered the Anatomy of Melancholy a repository of scientific truth and turned to its pages for enlightenment about the condition of man" (The Tragic Muse of John Ford, p. 18). Ford more often turns to Shakespeare and the courtesy writers than to any notion of scientific determinism. Moreover, it seems to me to be less than obvious that Burton was a scientific determinist.
It has taken a while, but Corax is learning what Rhetias already knows. Confronted with the grinning mask of unreason, he senses that vertiginous loss of balance and perspective which makes him question the validity of his own position. What makes Cuculus and Pelias comic and Corax only less so, is the inflexibility of the roles they adopt. They can never feel a sense of isolation because they have no center from which to be cut off. They truly exist in vacuo.

The major characters, on the other hand, assume more complex roles, rather like stylized masks (a parody of which we see in Grilla, Cuculus' "page"). Thamasta maintains an icily proud distance from her suitor. Menaphon and Eroclea adopt the literal separation of exile, and Eroclea further retreats behind the more dramatic facade of disguise. Palador and Meleander have sought refuge in the psychological labyrinth of melancholy. Even Rhetias, as we have seen, as a participant at this level of the plot, assumes the persona of railer.

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18 Oliver remarks that "when Eroclea and Thamasta meet, the difference between Ford's use of the conventional story of the woman in disguise and Shakespeare's becomes apparent. ... Ford explores the situation for its psychological interest and is not afraid to investigate psychological abnormality if necessary. ... Ford does bring out what such a mistaken affection can mean to the person deceived; it is Shakespeare, in comparison, who is merely 'pretty'." Oliver, pp. 54-55.
These characters' sense of separateness runs through the play like a refrain. Meleander has undertaken "a voluntary exile." Palador realizes that without at least the memory of Eroclea to sustain him "I am lost too." Eroclea "in much solitariness lived. . . she was long an exile." Meleander tells Cleophila "I do often sigh / For thee Cleophila; we are secluded / From all good people." Sophronos is afraid that his prince "is lost for ever as well unto himself as to his subjects." Thamasta is willing to give up everything for Eroclea: "Go where thou wilt, I'll be an exile with thee."

When the characters express their love, it is in similar terms.

Eroclea. Deare Sir, in Athens have I been buried.

Palador. Buried! Right, as I In Cyprus.

(IV.2186-2188)

And when Cleophila sees her father enlivened by his recognition of the portrait of his daughter ("this rich relic") she urges him to

now set at liberty
Your long imprison'd heart, and welcome home
The solace of your soule, too long kept from you.

(V.2560-2562)

Exile, imprisonment, burial--these are the states in which the lovers have both suffered and grown strong. It is true
that the resolution is a comic one with feasts and solemn rites, but the tone of solemnity far outweighs that of celebration. Palador proclaims "The day and place is privileged" (V.2408), and no doubt the condition of privilege is one attained through the enduring of great distress. The most memorable lines in the play advance the notion of how inseparable are endurance and fulfillment.

Eroclea. Minutes are numbred by the fall of Sands;  
As by an hour-glass, the span of time  
Doth waste us to our graves, and we looke on it.  
An age of pleasures revel'd out, comes home  
At last, and ends in sorrow, but the life  
Weary of ryot, numbers every Sand,  
Wayling in sighes, untill the last drop downe,  
So to conclude calamity in rest.

(IV.2107-2114)

And Meleander addressing Corax:

Sigh out a lamentable tale of things  
Done long agoe, and ill done; and when sighes  
Are wearied, piece up what remains behind,  
With weeping eyes, and hearts that bleed to death:  
Thou shalt be a companion fit for me,  
And we will sit together like true friends,  
And never be devided. With what greedinesse  
Do I hug my afflictions?

(IV.1938-1945)

It is precisely in what Ford had called "The pensive solace of the soule" ("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 63) that the real center of The Lover's Melancholy is located. I think that
some critics' dissatisfaction with Ford's structure may be explained by the fact that Ford was less interested in conventional dramatic resolution (quite anti-climactic in this play) than in the penetrating examination of his characters under stress. As in "Christ's Bloody Sweat," the really significant element is the hushed exploration of the mental attitudes of his characters, and their discovery, through rigorous self-examination, of the spiritual resources they command. In the play, as in the poem, the level of interest is most intense as we transcend the peripheral concerns of the court and society.

Ford has been accused of being "totally devoid of the comic sense," and to an extent this is true. His comic characters are not funny so much as they are absurd. But they are satiric counterparts to his heroes and as such represent a sinister, encroaching degeneracy. In the light

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20 Oliver suggests that Ford's penchant for psychological analysis might have been better served by another genre—the novel. Oliver compares Penthea in The Broken Heart to Mrs. Ramsay in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse. The Problem of John Ford, p. 127.

of Ford's earlier non-dramatic work, such an attitude should not be surprising. It has been characteristic of Ford to see those characters outside the privileged circle not as amusing nonentities, but as threatening to overwhelm the rather perilously limited world of honor. In *Love's Sacrifice* the objects of satire become far more ominous, and the line between tragi-comedy and tragedy is obliterated.
CHAPTER VII

LOVE'S SACRIFICE

Una Ellis Fermor reluctantly concludes of Love's Sacrifice that "however we may guess at the intentions . . . we tend to borrow our verdict from Thersites: 'All the argument is a whore and a cuckold'."\(^1\) And Wallace Bacon, mightily offended by Ford's obliquity, asks "who can blame the Puritan if, while he looked at Bianca and Fernando, they seemed to him more wallowers in the sty than chaste souls intent upon heavenly beauty?"\(^2\)

Such criticisms of Ford which blame him for not resolving his conflicts with sufficient clarity are common.\(^3\) Kenneth Burke, however, speaks of two kinds of art, "cathartic" and "mimetic." He explains these different modes by means of an analogy with the musical forms known as

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\(^3\) David Frost calls Ford "muddled" and suggests that "he has no consistent moral view."--The School of Shakespeare, pp. 122ff. Ornstein, more pertinently, says that Ford "believes that moral values are shaped by the process of life even as they in turn shape the nature of human relationships."--The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy, p. 221.
the symphony and the tone poem. "The symphonic form contained a "way in," "way through," and "way out." It sought to place a spell of danger upon us, and in the assertions of its finale to release us from this spell. But the tone poem sought to lead us in and leave us there, to have us sink beneath the ground with Alpheus and never to reemerge with Arethusa."\(^4\) Compared to Shakespeare's and Jonson's plays, which may be seen as symphonic, Ford's would seem to represent the problematic tone poem which poses thematic conflicts, but is not as concerned with providing harmonious resolutions. In Love's Sacrifice, Fernando is torn between the impulse of his passion for Bianca and the realization that honor demands a different code of behaviour than the one urged by his passion.

Davril remarks that in reading Elizabethan and Jacobean literature "on ne peut, en effet prononcer le mot 'love' sans que surgisse à ses côtés l'ombre maléfique de 'lust,' la passion pur et fertile en face du désir sensuel de l'être physique."\(^5\) The conclusion of Love's Sacrifice eliminates the great tension between love and lust, but

\(^4\)Burke, p. 102.

substitutes a prudent and rather bloodless world ruled over by Roseilli and the chastened Fiormonda, both of whom

dismiss
The mutuall comforts of our marriage-bed.

(V.2874-2875)

In loving, Fernando and Bianca confront enormous obstacles, both moral and psychological, but they are given the opportunity to prove their superiority to the other characters in the play. The sort of order restored at the conclusion of the play suggests that Ford feels that the "ordinary" world cannot sustain such people. Fernando's question, in Act I, "Whither shall I run?" can be seen as a query which expresses his separateness from the characters who can either, like Roseilli, control or, like Ferentes, falsify their emotions.

Just as Corax in The Lover's Melancholy futilely invokes treatises and complicated cures for melancholy, so Mauruccio in Love's Sacrifice thinks he can arrange Fiormonda's love by enlisting the lore of Petrarch, Dante, Sanazzaro and Ariosto in his assault on the Duke's sister. Ford again reveals his mistrust of rigid, systematic approaches to experience.

The plot of the play is not especially complex. Duke Caraffa of Pavia is married to the beautiful Bianca.
Caraffa, swearing friendship to his favorite, Fernando, urges his wife

in all respects to him
Be as to me: onely the name of husband,
And reverent observance of our bed
Shall differ us in persons, else in soule
We are all one.

(I.230-234)

She gives her word, and she and Fernando eventually declare a love for one another which, although never consummated, is sufficiently obvious to arouse Caraffa's vengeance. Caraffa's revenge ultimately causes the deaths of Bianca, Caraffa and Fernando. Caraffa's sister, Fiormonda, spurned by Fernando throughout the play, has plotted with the sinister D'Avalos to bring about Fernando's death. Finally (and somewhat reminiscent of Thamasta in The Lover's Melancholy), she checks her misplaced passion and is wedded to Roseilli, Fernando's friend who has been exiled by the duke, and who spends most of the play in the disguise of a fool.

There is a typically Fordian third sub-plot which involves a parodic treatment of love. The characters at this level are Ferentes, a seducer (a sinister Cuculus) and the aged, therefore foolish, lover Mauruccio. Ferentes and D'Avalos are killed, and Mauruccio is ostracized from the court.
The relative simplicity of the plot allows Ford much greater conceptual control over Love's Sacrifice than he exerted over The Lover's Melancholy. The play is a taut examination of the varied responses to physical beauty, and includes Mauruccio's senile maulderings, Ferente's seduction of Julia, Morona, and Colona, and Fernando's love for Bianca. It seems to me that the "sacrifice" of the title is Fernando's ability finally to "master passion" at the very moment that he could consummate his love. That moment (II.iv) is the fulcrum of the play and Ford signals its importance by incorporating in it a good deal of religious imagery ("Heaven," "new-christen day," "faith," "sacred temple," etc.) and by structuring the scene on a framework of ritual which has the lovers exchanging vows while kneeling before the candle that Bianca has brought into the chamber. At this moment Fernando is cleansed, renewed.

Heaven forbid that I  
Should by a wanton appetite prophane  
This sacred Temple.

(II.1365-1367)

Roseilli is spared the terrible struggle between moral restraint and lust. By removing him from the better part of the action, Ford protects Roseilli from the infection of Ferentes and Mauruccio (and from the temporarily deranged passion of Fiormonda) but Roseilli does not participate in
any test equivalent to Fernando's. He is never in any danger, but he can, therefore, never prove his strength. His freedom is a qualified one since he exists in vacuo. We recall Ford's attitude that "never to have seen evil is no praise to well-doing." 6

Roseilli speaks the first words of the play, "Depart the court?" and he emphasizes his wonder at the turn of events in a somewhat confused series of questions: "And whither must I go?" . . . "Why then 'tis like I'm banished?" From this point on, Roseilli is hidden by the disguise of a fool, or of an innocent; he is inarticulate but observant. When he presents himself finally to Fiormonda, it is his "Truth, / like a transparent mirror" (V.2706-2707) which reveals her previous unreason. The other characters in Love's Sacrifice involve themselves in a series of emotional complexities and their reflections are changed and, at times, distorted.

On the satiric level, Mauruccio's mirror device is the counterpart to Roseilli's sincerity. Mauruccio is having a portrait painted for Fiormonda and

on my left side, . . . I will have a cleare and most transparent Chrystall in the forme of a heart. . . . this being to her instead of a Looking-glasse. . . .

she shall as often gaze on my picture, remember me, and behold the excellence of her excellencies beauty, in the prospective and mirror, as it were, in my heart.

(II.744-758)

As absurd as Mauruccio is, he does provide a "glass" for the other lovers in the play. Mauruccio claims to be "rapt with fury" and on a level more serious than Mauruccio and Giacoppo the play is an examination of deranged love. Mauruccio's mention of Petrarch, Dante, Sanazzaro and Ariosto is as central to this play as was Corax's use of Burton in The Lover's Melancholy. It suggests a framework which includes a series of love treatises and explores the doubts about love which are an important part of that tradition. Some of these doubts provide the fundamental tensions of Love's Sacrifice. "Which is more difficult, to feign love or, loving, to conceal it. Who is naturally more constant, man or woman. Whether love can be without jealousy. Which is the most powerful passion, love or hate."7 Love's Sacrifice deals with the dark side of love where doubt provides the dominant tone. It is a play of jealousy, concealment, inconstancy and hate. The dialogue is indirect, hinting, taunting, and the duke's words to D'Avalos apply equally to most of the figures in the play:

Such broken language argues
More matter than your subtlety shall hide.

(III.1729-1730)

Fiormonda is "bitter and shrewd" and there is a note of
cynicism throughout the play. As Bianca talks of honor,
Fiormonda retorts,

Honour! puh!
Honour is talk'd of more than knowne by some.

(I.576-577)

There is no emphasis upon friendship in this play as there
was in The Lover's Melancholy. If friendship is "an imper-
fec"t love, and looks toward the absolute good, an aspiration
toward the good,"8 then this link of amity is extremely
fragile. Caraffa ironically sees himself as

a Monarch of felicitie,
Proud in a paire of Jewels, rich and beautifull;
A perfect Friend, a Wife above compare.

(I.217-219)

Had he realized the absolute commitment required by love, he
might have adopted Bembo's blunt appraisal of friendship:

I have thought . . . never to put a man's trust in any
person in the worlde, nor to give himselfe so far a
pray to friende how dear and loving soever he were, that
without stoppe a man should make him partaker of all his

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8Laurens J. Mills, One Soul In Bodies Twain
thoughts, as he would his own selfe: because there are in our minds so many dennes and corners, that it is unpos­sible for the wit of man to know the dissimulations that lye lurking in them."

It is not a pleasant observation, but, like Fiormonda's, it is bitter and shrewd. The friendship between Fernando and Caraffa is a second sacrifice that must be made. Ford typically pushes the examination of the "dennes and corners" of the human mind (and heart) to the extremes and shows that love can be a destructive element which dissolves some relationships as it creates stronger ones.

D'Avalos' view of things is also cynical, and he also makes use of the mirror image.

Oh, these women, my Lord
Are as brittle mettle as your glasses, as smooth, as slippery:
Their very first substance was quicke-sands.

(I.324-326)

The irony is that D'Avalos, although skeptical of the trustworthiness of women, is linked with Fiormonda in an intrigue against Fernando and Bianca. She tells him that by entering with her into this scheme she "will raise D'Avalos high in grace" (I.291). D'Avalos replies that he "will omit no art," and it is through art, using the portraits of Fiormonda and Bianca, as well as through artifice that D'Avalos discovers the fact of Fernando's love for Bianca. Self-serving

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9Castiglione, p. 119.
duplicity is the extent of D'Avalos' service d'amour, just as in Act I he reveals the nature of his position in the court by telling Roseilli that "I shall / Informe the Duke of your discontent" (I.88-89). Roseilli answers "Doe, Politician, doe: / I scent the plot of this disgrace" (90-91).

Roseilli, as the play later bears out, is able to scent plots, and he removes himself sufficiently to avoid contamination. But Fernando, utterly consumed by his love for Bianca, is unable clearly to detect D'Avalos' guile.

Fernando. You told me, master Secretary, once, You ow'd me love.

D'Avalos. Service, my honour'd Lord, howsoever you please to terme it.

(II.904-907)

D'Avalos shows Fernando two portraits; one of Fiormonda and one of Bianca and observes Fernando to see which portrait provokes the stronger reaction. This scene, I think, echoes strongly Mauruccio's use, on the comic level, of the mirror portrait to win Fiormonda. Of Bianca's portrait D'Avalos says

She cannot more formally, Or (if it may be lawfull to use the word) more really, behold her owne Symetry in her glasse, then in taking a sensible view of this counterfeit.

(II.929-932)
Fernando, unable to counterfeit his emotions, tells D'Avalos that Bianca's portrait is "such a picture as might well become / The shrine of some famed Venus" (II.951-952). Then, in an aside, he exclaims "I'm lost beyond my senses" (II.956).

I think that the opposition of ideal love (Venus' shrine) to inevitable jealousy and lust provides the major tension of the play. At the satiric level, Ferentes most clearly represents the figure of the persuasive seducer who makes no pretense of valuing the objects of his attentions. His language of seduction makes use of the conventional love arguments:

time, like a turne-coat, may order and disorder the outward fashions of our bodies, but shall never inforce a change on the constancy of my minde, sweet Colona, faire Colona, young and sprightfull Lady, doe not let me in the best of my youth, languish in my earnest affections.

(I.360-365)

Ferentes occupies a position between the comic Mauruccio and the heroic Fernando. He is certainly no comic character; his fate is to be slaughtered in a bloodbath at the hands of the three women he has seduced and made pregnant. The resolution of the Ferentes sub-plot is of great significance as a harbinger of things to come. The Abbot, acting as a choric commentator on the action, ends Act III with the epigram:
Here's fatal and sad presages, but 'tis just,
He dyes by murder, that hath liv'd in lust.

(III.1903-1904)

Ferentes represents the corrupt and infectious center of the court. Julia, one of Ferentes' mistresses, is called by her father "leprosy of my blood," and the image is used by Ford on a number of occasions to suggest that the infection has not been limited to Ferentes' victims. When Fernando is pleading his case before Bianca she warns him not to "henceforth ope / Thy leprous mouth" (II.1214-1215). Even before this confrontation, Fernando had already recognized in himself the presence of a spiritual disease:

I must urge no more:
For were I not beleapred in my soule,
Here were enough to quench the flames of hell. 10

(II.869-811)

Ford provides a coarse counterpart to the love dialogues of Fernando and Ferentes.

Mauruccio. Nay, I know I can tickle 'em at my pleasure:
I am stiffe and strong, Ferentes.

Giacopo. A Rhedish root is a speare of steele in comparison of I know what.

(II.975-978)

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Nebrissa. If my jolly gallants long Clapper have strucke on both sides, all is well; ... One Cocke hath trod both our Hens.

(III.1431-1440)

Ferentes. I was ill advis'd to digge for gold in a Cole-pit.

(III.1510)

D'Avalos. Your gray jennet with the white face is curried, forsooth;--please your Lordship leape up into the saddle.

(II.1220-1222)

This lowering of the level of discourse is offensive; or at least its presence gives the reader a jolt, as it inevitably occurs immediately after a scene in which Fernando speaks of his love in elevated language. Compare for example:

Fernando. Thus bodies walke unsold; mine eyes but followes
My heart intomb'd in yonder goodly shrine:
Life without her, is but death's subtill snares,
and I am but a Coffin to my cares.

(I.671-614)

and a few lines later;

Mauruccio. Canst thou perceive, as it were, a hansomensesse of shape in my very breath, as it is formed into syllable, Giacopo?

Giacopo. Yes indeed, Sir, I doe feele a savour as pleasant as--a Glister-pipe.

(II.688-692)
So much for the exhalation of Mauruccio's soul! We shouldn't see this use of the bawdy as a lack of sensibility on Ford's part, or as an inability to handle a sub-plot (two charges often levelled at Ford), but rather as a satiric counterpoise to the straining of Fernando to escape "the tyranny of the senses." The technique is one which, we recall, Ford had used effectively in "Christ's Bloody Sweat" where the appearance of religious and meditative elements was heightened by their contrast with the realm of sensual and worldly pleasures.

The use of the imagery of disease, more evident in this than in any other of Ford's other plays, is perfectly consistent with the prevailing attitudes toward love. Ford had already established his familiarity with the neo-platonic love theories in the four positions advanced in " Honour Triumphant." Erwin Panovsky, speaking of the Neoplatonic writings of Ficino, remarks that "he who is insusceptible even to visible beauty, or stoops to debauchery, or, even worse, abandons for sensual pleasures a contemplative state already attained, falls prey to a 'bestial love' (amor ferinus) which, according to Ficino, is a disease rather than a vice." 12

11 Bacon and Fermor object to the crudeness of the comic sub-plots in Ford.

Fernando's talk of unsouled bodies, goodly shrines, and eyes as choosers of the heart, places him squarely in the tradition of lovers whose spirits "issue out at the eyes, because they are engendered nigh the heart." It is interesting that in Castiglione the spiritual nature of the lover's look is discussed in terms similar to those found in Ford. Castiglione (through Lord Julian) says that the spirits "infect the bloude about the heart" and that one lover's spirit takes on the characteristics of the other's "as it is seen in a sore eye, that beholding steadfastly a sound one, giveth him his disease."

In Act II D'Avalos confronts Fernando with the two recently completed portraits of Fiormonda and Bianca. This scene raises the technique of paralleling kinds of love to a higher and much more complex level than the satiric/heroic contrasts in Ford's earlier work. In the context of the play's contrasting views of unruly passion vs. chastity, Fiormonda is not of Bianca's stature, but it is she, with Roseilli, who will take over the rule of the court after Caraffa's death. Socially she is Bianca's superior; Ford makes it clear that a large part of Fiormonda's antipathy to Bianca and her revulsion at Fernando's love for Bianca, is

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13 Castiglione, p. 247.
14 Ibid., p. 247.
her disdain for Bianca's non-aristocratic background.

Fiormonda. What is she, but the sallow-coloured brat
Of some unlanded bankrupt? taught to catch
The easie fancies of young prodigall bloods,
In springes of her stewe-instructed Art?

(IV.1923-1926)

Just as Ferentes is a more sinister version of Cuculus
in The Lover's Melancholy, so Fiormonda is an infinitely
more proud and passionate version of Thamasta of that play.
Both eventually become fit rulers after they have purged
themselves of unruly passions. This dark side of Fiormonda
is reflected by D'Avalos, the Machiavellian plotter, and his
execution (appropriately by starvation) is a symbolic
cleansing through strict and enforced renunciation. Roseilli
himself imposes the condition of strict chastity on his own
marriage with Fiormonda, and again, the Abbot makes the
sententious observation,

'Tis fit:
Purge frailty with repentence.

(V.2882-2883)

The portrait of Bianca is certainly, for Fernando, an
object of religious contemplation.

'Tis such a picture as might well become
The shrine of some fain'd Venus; I am dazeld
With looking on't.

(II.951-953)
D'Avalos observes of Fernando that "his eye is fixed as if it were incorporated there" (II.937), and in a soliloquy Fernando realizes that he had revealed his feelings:

I feare I spoke or did I know not what,  
All sense of providence was in mine eye.

(II.963-964)

Erwin Panovsky has discussed the popular "twin portrait" genre of Renaissance painting which depicts two Venuses, the Heavenly Venus and the Earthly Venus. The first Venus is the object of divine love; it is contemplative and rises from the visible to the universal. It is fairly clear that this is the kind of love that Bianca, in person and in the icon of the painting, arouses in Fernando. Initially, Fernando wished to consummate the love, but Bianca's influence is such that he renounces the sensual attraction.

I'le master passion, and triumph  
In being conquer'd.

(II.1372-1373)

Bianca and Fernando seal their vow with a "chaste kiss."

A kisse may be saide to be rather a coupling together of the soule, than of the body, because it hath such force in her, that it draweth her unto it, and (as it were) separateth her from the bodie.

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15 Panovsky, pp. 129-169.
16 Castiglione, p. 315.
Bembo and Castiglione recognized perfectly well the impossibility of sustaining this sort of other-worldly rapture. The experience Fernando and Bianca are striving for "required what Leon Ebreo called 'the ecstasy, or else alienation by amorous meditation. . . .' We are presented, in fact, with an analogy often explicitly confessed, and as exact as it could be made, between this secular state and the ecstasy of Divine Contemplation."¹⁷ It is this absolute alienation, which for the lovers becomes an actual death, that distinguishes Bianca from Fiormonda. Panovsky points out that both Venuses and both loves are valid and praiseworthy, but that the value of the divine love is of a higher order. Another element about this gradation of love seems to reflect accurately Ford's characteristic tone. "The praise of a sublime love divorced from 'base impulses', yet allowing an intense delight in visible and tangible beauty, was bound to appeal to the taste of a refined, or would-be refined, society."¹⁸

Fernando sees himself as "a Cast-away in love" (II.807).¹⁹ Like Menaphon in The Lover's Melancholy, he is

¹⁸Ibid., p. 368.
¹⁹Cleophila also calls herself "a castaway." Ford in these plays stresses the essential loneliness of the lovers.
an exile. But Fiormonda and D'Avalos constantly intrude, and because they are not participants in the code which determines Fernando's and Bianca's behaviour, they misinterpret everything they see. At the very moment that Bianca has "schooled" Fernando and made him see the superiority of a spiritual love, D'Avalos, watching from a distance, comments, "Now, now, the game's afoot ... Poor duke, how does thy head ache now!" (II.1220-1224).

Mauruccio too is being schooled in love. "Thus I reverse my pace, and stalking in courtly gait, I advance one, two, and three" (II.702-703). As Fiormonda wryly observes, Mauruccio's attempts at being a courtly lover make him "a subject fit / To be the stale of laughter" (II.699-700). His grotesque affectations,

Let not old age, or haires that are silver
Dis-parage my desire; for it may-be
I am then other greene youth nimb-ler.

(II.709-711)

are a comic counterpart to Fernando's lonely attempt to modify his behaviour, just as Mauruccio's ridiculous notion of a portrait within a portrait is a comic counterpart to the twin portraits of Fiormonda and Bianca. Mauruccio's attitude seems to be that a study of the handbooks on love, and the assumption of conventional rhetorical formulae, will transform him from an aging fop to a graceful courtier. The
assumption of a mask gives him a certain confidence, but it also prevents him from examining the self behind the mask. Fernando, on the other hand, discovers that there is no ready-made code or role that will satisfy the terms of his dilemma. "I am," he says, "lost beyond my senses" (II.956).

In Fernando we see what Frye describes as "melancholy in its extreme form of accidia or ennui, where the individual is so isolated as to feel his existence a living death."20 A visible paradigm of this life in death in Love's Sacrifice is Fernando's decision to enclose himself alive in Bianca's tomb "cloath'd in robes that fit the grave" (V.2792). Between Mauruccio's devotion to sensual pleasure and Fernando's impossible predicament, we may see the "collision between a selection of standards from experience and the feeling that experience is bigger than any set of beliefs about it."21 Fernando's distress is caused primarily by conflict with standards ("iron laws of ceremony" V.2354) which forbid fulfillment of his love for Bianca.

20 Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 297. Burton notes that the melancholy lover is "a cast-away, a dead man." Anatomy of Melancholy, p. 730. R.D. Laing describes the individual who suffers from "ontological insecurity" as one who "may, in a literal sense, feel more dead than alive; precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity and autonomy are always in question. . . ." The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), p. 42.

21 Frye, p. 229.
In the last scene, Fernando rises from Bianca's tomb in a last, defiant gesture against the "iron laws of ceremony." As he dies from his vial of poison, he exclaims

Thus I--hot flames
Conclude my Love--and seale it in my bosome.

(V.2809-2810)

The hot flames, literally, are the burning pains of the poison, but Panovsky points out that part of the iconography of the "debating" pictures of the two Venuses is a flame in the right hand to symbolize "Felicita Eterna," and Bembo, in his peroration in Book IV of The Courtier speaks of the final step in the ladder of love as a "most holy fire in soules [which] destroyeth and consumeth whatsoever there is mortall in them." Ford does not resolve the ambiguity of the image: agony, purification, eternal joy, eternal torture. Ford, typically, leads us in and leaves us there. At the moment that Fernando most clearly achieves his identity, he obliterates it.25

22 Panovsky, p. 151.
23 Castiglione, p. 320.
24 See above, p. 128.
25 Laing observes that persons who feel a severe threat to their identity commonly express this anxiety through images of burial and fire: "The image of fire recurs repeatedly. Fire may be the uncertain flickering of the individual's own inner aliveness. It may be a destructive alien power which will devastate him." The Divided Self, p. 45. In Ford, the notion of aliveness and devastation are often inseparable.
I suggested earlier that Roseilli avoided infection by remaining well away from the perplexing events of the play's main action. His separateness was emphasized by his choice of disguise—an incoherent fool. He will marry Fiormonda but it will be a marriage safely chaste. Fiormonda humbly accepts his conditions:

Fiormonda. I embrace it:  
Happy too late, since lust hath made me foule,  
Henceforth I'le dresse my bride-bed in my soule.

(V.2884-2886)

The world of Fernando's heroic love has been replaced by Roseilli's prudent reign. D'Avalos will be starved to death, Mauruccio will be banished from the court. Things will be restrained and well-ordered. The court will "Learne new live; my vowes unmov'd shall stand" (V.2876).

In Love's Sacrifice Ford displays techniques and themes which we recall from previous works. There is the sprawling, obscene, satiric sub-stratum, the aristocratic world of rite and ceremony—and above this, the further isolated figures of the lovers, displaying characteristics reminiscent of the meditative ecstasy of "Christ's Bloody Sweat." In the dramas, Ford uses these separate worlds as a means of creating great tensions between sets of characters. In Love's Sacrifice, however, he has refined the distinctions and examined more closely than before the
great emotional distress of the lover whose passage is obscured with doubts and obstacles, both moral and psychological. In 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, Ford will further limit the world of the privileged and by doing so create an emotional intensity unmatched in his work.
CHAPTER VIII

'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE

In 'Tis Pity She's a Whore we see, more clearly than in his previous plays, Ford's technique of creating great emotional strain by placing in conflict the realms of human desire and the "iron laws of ceremony." Giovanni's love is incestuous, and the order against which he revolts is Christian morality, here represented by the Friar, Bonaventura. In this play there is no rational, "scientific" attempt to confound melancholy, as there had been in The Lover's Melancholy, nor is there an effort, through the convention of courtly love, to resolve the emotional confusion of the hero. In 'Tis Pity, religion is the system which is used to constrain Giovanni's "leprosie of Lust" (I.133).

The world inhabited by Giovanni "differs from a pure inferno mainly in the fact that in human experience suffering has an end in death. . . . We often find, on this boundary of the visio malefica, the use of parodying religious symbols suggesting some form of Satan or Antichrist worship."\(^1\) Giovanni rejects religion, and is seen by the

\(^1\)Frye, p. 238.
other characters in the play as "a frantick madman" (V. 2471), a "Black Devill" (V. 2530), and a "cursed man" (V. 2495).

The terms of Giovanni's choice to declare his love for Anabella are similar to those of Fernando's in *Love's Sacrifice*, but because the principles Giovanni must abandon are so fundamental, his isolation is absolute. He is left without even the solace of Annabella's love, since she is convinced ultimately by the Friar to renounce her love for Giovanni. Ironically, once she has made this decision, Giovanni describes her as "faithless." His choice to love her is unconditional; and as with other heroes in Ford's plays, we sympathize with Giovanni to the extent that he is willing to suffer the consequences of his intensity of feeling.

Several critics have noticed the similarities between *'Tis Pity* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The strong similarity has caused some critics to see Giovanni and Anabella as a somewhat depraved Romeo and Juliet, a pair of star-crossed lovers, similarly doomed to their love, and so vastly superior to any one else in the play that their guilt is thereby obviated. Sensabaugh claims that in *'Tis Pity*,

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2 H.J. Oliver, pp. 96 ff., Clifford Leech, p. 56; David L. Frost points out that far from trying to disguise the Shakespearean elements, Ford "seems rather to multiply the parallels, as if intending that they be seen," p. 158.
"incestuous love has been irradiated with heavenly light. . . . Theirs was a joining of heart and soul, and hence even incest for them appeared pure."³ Although Clifford Leech sees Giovanni as culpable for his arrogance, he nonetheless interprets the incestuous love of Giovanni and Annabella as "an impulse that drives them to doom. There is a sense that he had no choice; there is a sense that his fellows are not worthy to judge him. Above all, there is a strong sense of sympathy with the man who is apart from his fellows, making his challenge, facing his end."⁴ The attempts to show Annabella and Giovanni as being essentially the same, and to exonerate Giovanni on the basis of his cool, intellectual superiority to all the other characters, are, I believe, obstacles to a clear understanding of the play. Giovanni must bear sole responsibility for his fate.

To see Giovanni's arguments as especially brilliant or persuasive is to ignore the Friar's presence in the play. In Act I we see not really a debate between the Friar and Giovanni, but the Friar's response to a position already intractably held and sophistically defended by Giovanni. The Friar points out to Giovanni that his love is against both social convention and the natural law, but to Giovanni

³George F. Sensabaugh, "John Ford Revisited," Studies in English Literature, IV (1964), 210-211.
⁴Leech, p. 61.
these are merely "peevish sound" and "customary form."
The Friar, in the first scene, stands as the last barrier between Giovanni and the refusal of any constraint whatever. But Giovanni has already decided to make the leap, just as Faustus, in Marlowe's play, has determined to abandon the traditional disciplines for the forbidden territory of magic. Giovanni too had been a great scholar and disputant:

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Art thou (my sonne) that miracle of Wit,
Who once within these three Moneths wert esteem'd
A wonder of thine age, throughout Bononia?
How did the University applaud
Thy Government, Behaviour, Learning, Speech,
Sweetnesse, and all that could make up a man?
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(I.105-110)

But Giovanni's present state is one in which he sees himself as more than man. In opposition to the Friar's pleas to moderate his passion, Giovanni responds

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It were more ease to stop the Ocean
From floates and ebbs, then to disswade my vowes.
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(I.122-123)

Like Faustus, Giovanni is constantly reminded that there is time left to repent. His answers indicate not despair, but titanic assurance:

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Friar. The Throne of Mercy is above your trespass,
Yet time is left you both--

Giovanni. To embrace each other,
Else let all time be strucke quite out of number.
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And in an early exchange with Annabella, Giovanni tells his
sister that he would "not change this minute for Elyzium" (I.431). The titanic references of Giovanni's refusal to be governed by conventional advice suggest that, far from being "fated" to love, he makes a conscious choice in rejecting the limiting morality of the Friar. "Instead of an emotional principle governing men's lives in the arbitrary form of a divinity, such as the Aphrodite of Euripides, love comes to be an elaborate pattern of social situations demanding the same care and subtlety that the ancients devoted usually to politics and rhetoric rather than to religion and manners."5

In Love's Sacrifice, Fernando becomes an admirable character as he is able to modify his attitudes to fashion a system of behaviour toward Bianca that is acceptable on both a social and personal level. There are elements in 'Tis Pity which suggest that the same general attitudes to love operate in the background. However, Giovanni differs from Fernando in that, first, his love for Annabella is further beyond the pale than Fernando's was and, second, he absolutely refuses to consider the horrendous situation in which he involves Annabella.

The "sacred troth" of which Sensabaugh speaks is, after all, incest, and involves the joining of more than the

heart and soul. For Giovanni the love is less an attempt at spiritual unity than it is an imposition of his will on a deceived Annabella. We admire Giovanni, if we do, for his Faustian challenge of both social restraint and religious belief. In order to execute this challenge, Giovanni must cut himself loose entirely from the sympathy of any element of society. His is a journey to a "heart of darkness," and part of the critic's dilemma is akin to Marlowe's when confronted with the mystery of Kurtz: there is something horrible in the crime, but a certain grandeur in the challenge. "This search for method and control in the face of the complexities of experience marks Stuart literature at every level, not just the lyric one. In it the power and authority of the individual consciousness in the face of the most bizarre and challenging circumstances are consistently vindicated." 6

An interesting element in 'Tis Pity is the absence of the usual courtly and aristocratic setting. Giovanni and Annabella are the children of Florio, a citizen, and the only nobles in the play are the Roman Grimaldi and Soranzo, Annabella's eventual husband. Both Grimaldi and Soranzo are murderers, and the lack of any other figure of authority is an indication of the general vacuity and derangement reflected in a specific way by the main action of the play. The

6 Richmond, p. 223.
Friar leaves Parma to avoid "the bad fearful end," and Richardetto sends Philotis away to Cremona so she won't be a part of "the end of these extremes." The final words of the play are left not for a figure who will establish some sense of order, but for the Cardinal, a nuncio from Rome. We have not even the prudent reign of a Roseilli to fill the vacuum left by Giovanni's destructive plunge.  

Writing of the four-part structure of the first act of 'Tis Pity, R.J. Kaufmann has noted that it introduces the isolation of Giovanni and Annabella with "a neat economy of attack, an unusual quality in Ford's drama." I believe it does something more than this; the four episodes of Act I establish the absence of any order in Parma by showing intellectual, social, and moral derangement, and by introducing the satiric figure of Bergetto. The comic sub-plot is far less evident in 'Tis Pity than in Ford's other plays, and I think this can be explained by the fact that the satire permeates all levels of the play, even that inner circle, usually the preserve of the pure, heroic lovers.

I have already suggested what I feel to be the unbalanced nature of Giovanni's arguments to the Friar. He

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7 The Cardinal seems more interested in disposing of the victims' gold and jewels than in providing any ethical judgment of the issues.

resembles one of those Senecan characters whom Charles O. McDonald suggests has "a single dominating emotion, an idée fixe or pathos, which drives them to hysterical heights (or depths) of violent action..."9 In no other of Ford's plays does the hero use such extravagant rhetoric. The Friar calls Giovanni's bombast "unranged almost blasphemy" (I.103) and Ford once again employs the image, applied here to Giovanni, of "the leprosie of Lust / That rots thy Soule" (I.133-134). Giovanni, from the beginning, seems to realize the loss he has suffered and to which the Friar alludes. Giovanni's distorted arguments and eristic tone suggest a lack of conviction. It is worth remembering that Ford's heroes, for example Menaphon, Fernando and Orgilus, are marked by reticence; Ford is careful about establishing this quality early in his plays. This is in direct contrast to Giovanni's appearance in the first scene of 'Tis Pity.

Following Giovanni's dispute with the Friar, Ford introduces disorder on still another level. On a street before Florio's (Annabella's) house, appear Grimaldi, a gentleman, and Vasques, a servant. A fight between them follows and the first view we have of Annabella is when she appears above on a balcony looking at the "threatning, challenging, quarrelling, and fighting, on every side" (I.211-212).

The nature of the fight itself suggests that Ford was emphasizing the disruption of the normal order of things. Vasques is old and Grimaldi young, "These gray haires, They'le not flinch for a bloody nose" (I.151-152). The notion of age as the normal possessor of wisdom is here subverted. Moreover, the idea of a gentleman brawling with a servant is not only indecorous, but, for the gentleman, foolish. As Castiglione points out, "If hee overcome his gaine is small, and his losse in being overcome is very great." In this incident Grimaldi is defeated at the hands of the aged servant. Soranzo, whose servant Vasques is, delivers the ultimate insult when he says of Grimaldi

I will'd my Servant to correct this tongue,
Holding a man, so base, no match for me.

(I.189-190)

Above this turbulent scene of fighting and hurling insults Annabella stands with her tutoress and companion Putana. Putana's name suggests the kind of counsel she is likely to give Annabella. She suggests dismissing Grimaldi as a suitor because soldiers are likely to have "some pryvie mayme, or other, that marres their standing upright" (I.228). One is tempted to dismiss Putana as a comic counterpart of

10 Later Giovanni argues that if the Friar were young he would agree with Giovanni's wisdom.

11 Castiglione, p. 98.
Juliet's bawdy nurse, but later she comments on the decorum of Annabella's affair with Giovanni:

> What though hee be your Brother; your Brother's a man I hope, and I say still, if a young Wench feele the fitt upon her, let her take any body, Father or Brother, all is one.

(II.572-574)

Her fate in the play suggests that Putana is less a harmless comic character than another indicator of the universal absence of moral direction.

The third scene consists of the first interview between Giovanni and Annabella, where their love is ratified by a series of vows and the exchange of a kiss. The scene is important thematically because it introduces one of the major conflicts in the play—that is, between Giovanni's claim that fate is responsible for his love (a claim that some critics have taken as accurate) and that his love is the result of a conscious exertion of his will. The two words, "fate" and "will," play important parts in the development of the scene.

The first words Giovanni speaks after his confrontation with the Friar are "Lost, I am lost: my fates have doom'd my death" (I.294). He continues this soliloquy to examine the nature of his loss, making it clear that he recognizes that it is "in Religion sinne / To make our love a God, and worship it!" (I.300-301) He claims that he has
tried to counter this obsessive love, but that everything he has been told seems to him

but dreames, and old mens tales
To fright unsteedy youth; I'me still the same,
. . . tis not I know,
My lust; but tis my fate that leads me on.

(I.306-309)

After sixteen lines of soliloquizing, the notion of lust finally emerges as the element to be seen countering that of fate. His resolution to "Keepe feare and low faint hearted shame with slaves!" (I.310), is consistent with his attitude in the first scene. The soliloquy is less a contemplation attempting to examine two points of view, than a dismissal, out of hand, of one of them.

He is only slightly less sure of himself when he meets Annabella: it is Annabella who is uncertain and awkward. Her first reaction is to blush, suggesting an initial emotional confusion. This is echoed by her dislocated and questioning speech, reminiscent of Roseilli's confused interrogations in The Lover's Melancholy.

Giovanni. I hope you neede not blush to walke with mee,
Annabella. How's this?
Giovanni. Faith I meane no harme.
Annabella. Harme?
Giovanni. No good faith; how ist with'dee?

Annabella. I trust hee be not frantick.

(I.331-337)

Giovanni takes refuge in a series of love compliments in language which suggests a playful attitude, but the compliments become more and more extravagant,

Such lippes would tempt a Saint; such hands as those Would make an Anchoret Lascivious.

(I.357-358)

Annabella can no longer dismiss them as frivolous. Her attitude is still hesitant "D'ee mock mee, or flatter mee?" (I.359) "Are you earnest?" (I.369) but Giovanni reveals the earnestness of his love by appealing to fate: "'tis my destiny" (I.385).

When Annabella asks again if Giovanni is being honest (her unwillingness to commit herself until absolutely sure of Giovanni is one of the most convincing moments of the play), he makes a comment that provides a hinge for the scene:

Let some mischiefe
Befall me soone, if I dissemble ought.

(I.391-392)

The importance of this line becomes clear when Ford has Giovanni in his very next words say,
I have askt Counsell of the holy Church,  
Who tells mee I may love you, and 'tis just  
That since I may, I should; and will, yes will.  

(I.403-405)

The emphatic use and repetition of the word "will" in the context of his lie to Annabella must cast some doubt on the validity of his vows. Annabella asks one last time if Giovanni makes his commitment in "good sooth" and Giovanni answers "In good troth, I doe" (I.426). The last exchange of the scene has a note of finality about it and, I believe, eliminates from serious consideration Leech's contention that "there is a sense that he has no choice."12 Giovanni says, in a suggestive combination of resolution and uncertainty,  

I would not change this minute for Elyzium,  
What must we now doe?  

(I.431-432)

Annabella answers: "What you will" (I.433).

The last of the four scenes of Act I introduces us to the tactics of the suitor at the comic level, Bergetto. He assures Donato that his "wise talk" to Annabella was gallantly executed: "I tickled her with a rare speech, that I made her almost burst her belly with laughing" (I.490-491). No wonder when Annabella first sees Bergetto from her

12Leech, p. 61.
balcony she remarks wearily, "this Ideot haunts me too" (I.268). Scene four functions by way of deepening the tone of disarray that characterizes the entire first act. Ford does not suspend the satirical element at any point in Act I. The incestuous love cannot be mitigated by its being the only element of selflessness or purity in an otherwise corrupt world. If that were Ford's argument, it seems to me that he could have had Annabella work the sort of change on Giovanni that Bianca exerted on Fernando. However, she goes completely along with her brother's intention "to court in smiles, to kisse, and sleepe" (I.435).

As Giovanni's commitment to lust grows, his language increasingly resembles that of the seducer found in Donne's "The Flea." Here he lightheartedly tells Annabella

I marvaile why the chaster of your sex
Should thinke this pretty toye call'd Maiden-head,
So strange a losse, when being lost, 'tis nothing,
And you are still the same.

(II.533-536)

This is nonsense, of course; she later says: "Oh I begin to sicken" (III.1233); and her sickness consists of the first signs of pregnancy, as dramatic a sign of her loss of innocence as we can have. Moreover, she knows that the "sickness" is more than a physical one, as later she regrets all the "thriftlesse minutes / Wherein False joyes have spun a weary life." (V.2054-2055).
It is at the point of Annabella's repentance that Giovanni's isolation becomes absolute and his tone intran-sigent. In the soliloquy in Act V he claims

Busie opinion is an idle Foole,
That as a Schoole-rod keepes a child in awe,
Frights the unexperienc't temper of the mind.

(V.2145-2147)

It was through a vivid description of hell (taken mostly from "Christ's Bloody Sweat") that the Friar had convinced Annabella to repent. To Giovanni, however, the Friar's talk of hell and suffering is "religion-masked sorceries" (V.2175). Giovanni's final statement of resolution is like a parody of the hero's commitment to some moral or social value. In the frenzy of his "resolve / To strike as deepe in slaughter as they all" (IV.2212-2213). Giovanni causes the Friar to abandon Parma. Giovanni has shown himself to be closed to any reasoned argument, and now, oblivious to even the possibility of religion as a restraint.

Let not the Curse
Of old prescription rent from mee the gall
Of Courage, which inrolls a glorious death.
If I must totter like a well-growne Oake,
Some under shrubs shall in my weighty fall
Be crusht to splitts: with me they all shall perish.

(V.2226-2231)

The last person who tries to alter the course of Giovanni's plunge is Annabella, and he tears out her heart.
As we watch the development from *The Lover's Melancholy* and *Love's Sacrifice* to 'Tis Pity we can see Ford's main characters moving from a state of innocence to experience. In the previous plays, characters like Menaphon, Meleander and Fernando were tempted, but achieved a salvation by aligning themselves with a figure of innocence such as Cleophila, Eroclea or Bianca. In those plays, love could serve as a metaphor for the religious experience because it provided an occasion for constraint. In both *The Lover's Melancholy* and *Love's Sacrifice* there are strong images of revivification. Both Palador and Meleander are reborn through love, and in *Love's Sacrifice* Fernando triumphs over death at the very moment he chooses to take his own life. His appearance at Bianca's tomb, his dramatic emergence from it in "robes that fit the grave" (V.2792) carry strong echoes of the *visitatio sepulchri* and resurrection from earlier religious drama.

In the *Anatomy of Criticism* Northrop Frye discusses a phase of tragedy which portrays "a world of shock and horror in which the central images are images of sparagmos, that is, cannibalism, mutilation and torture. In such tragedies the hero is in too great agony or humiliation to gain the privilege of a heroic pose, hence it is usually easier to make him a villainous hero, like Marlowe's Barabas, although Faustus belongs to the same phase."¹³ This is the world

¹³Frye, p. 222.
mirrored by 'Tis Pity. The final shock of Giovanni's mutilation of Annabella is foreshadowed by the moral shock of their violation of the taboo of incest. Giovanni sees the love as holy, but Ford gives us ample evidence that Giovanni's position is blasphemous. In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" Ford had written

Others there are, who smooth the front of sin. . . .
And they their foolish wits with pride to prove,
Will strive forsooth to make a God of love.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 37)

Giovanni tells the Friar that

had you youth like mine,
You'd make her love your heaven, and her divine.

(II.940-941)

In 'Tis Pity it is clear that Giovanni's sin is pride and that he tries to "prove" his position with "foolish wit."14

In Love's Sacrifice the murder of Ferentes by Colona, Julia and Morona is clothed in ritual which suggests the rite of sparagmos.15 The stage directions describe the action (which is in the form of a masque, tending to increase

14 This is especially true of all of Giovanni's arguments with the Friar. Muriel Bradbrook notes that Ford's finest passages express a unique feeling, "... a personal and human love, described in simple and unimpassioned language. The contrast between the strength of the feeling and the quietness of the statement is something new in Elizabethan drama." Muriel Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1952), p. 251.

the ceremonial mood):

Suddenly to them enter Colona, Julia, Morona in odd shapes, and dance; the men gaze at them, are at a stand, and are invited by the women to dance. . . . The women hold hands and dance about Ferentes in divers complementall offers of Courtship; at length they suddenly fall upon him, and stab him, he falls downe, and they run out at severall doores. Cease Musicke.

(Love's Sacrifice, III.1846-1856)

In Love's Sacrifice the ritual murder is a cleansing; in 'Tis Pity the murder, or sacrifice, of Annabella is more ironic.

The climax of the play centers in the celebration of Soranzo's birthday. Annabella is clothed in her bridal robes and the time of the play itself is bounded by the nine month period of gestation. Giovanni literally has determined the limit of time possible for the action and says

I hold Fate
Clasp't in my fist, and could Command the Course
Of times eternall motion. . .

(V.2311-2313)

He sees himself as master of time, fate and life, and as he stabs Annabella he claims finally that "revenge is mine" (V.2402)—a conscious reversal of the Biblical injunction that "revenge is mine saith the Lord." Twice Giovanni invokes images which suggest his control over natural forces.

Be darke bright Sunne,
And make this mid-day night,

(V.2394-2395)
and he tells his father that

The Glory of my Deed
Darkned the mid-day Sunne, made Noone as Night.

(V.2450-2451)

Like Fernando, but in a far more terrifying way, Giovanni is "a man of darkness" whose revolt temporarily obliterates the sun.

Giovanni was prophetic when he said that "Some under-shrubs shall in my weighty fall / Be Crusht to splitts" (V.2230-2231): his vengeance embraces Putana, Soranzo, Florio, Annabella, and Giovanni himself. The child that he had conceived "Hath had from me a Cradle and a Grave" (V.2413).

The evocation of the symbols of conception, gestation, birth and death give the play a deep conceptual structure. Ultimately the play resolves itself in a confrontation between death and fertility. In the society that Ford creates in this play, so malignant and sterile, the hero's final gesture is one of annihilation. Giovanni's entrance to the banquet with a bloody heart impaled on his dagger is a paradigm of "the terror inspired by the unfathomable, that is, the grotesque." 16

It is a hideous parody of communion--"You came to feast, My Lords" (V.2452)--and in a turning upside down of

the world Giovanni becomes, as Soranzo calls him, "that Blacke Devill" (V.2530). In Act V we see an evident reversal of the theme of renovation of society through sacrifice. "Sparagmos, or the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or doomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world, is the archetypal theme of irony and satire."17 Kott writes that in "this darkest of rituals" we see the "negation of time . . . and the negation of succession. Cosmos has become chaos again so that everything can begin anew."18

The paradox at the heart of 'Tis Pity is that while we know, and Giovanni himself admits, that his love is unconscionable, we still find something sympathetic in Giovanni. As in Ford's other plays, the hero is forced to make a choice which enables him then to define his condition more clearly than the other characters. The other characters tend to rely upon a ready-made system of values, or to display a Laodicean attitude: we recall how many characters withdraw from the action to avoid having to contend with the complexities of choice.

In Act V of 'Tis Pity Giovanni makes it clear that he sees the exact nature of the dilemma that confronts him; on

17Frye, p. 192.

18Kott, p. 200.
one side are "The Lawes of Conscience and Civill use" (V.2382) similar to the "iron Laws of ceremony" in Love's Sacrifice. On the other side is love. As if to emphasize human fragility when opposed by the inflexibility of civil use, Ford has Giovanni abandon the abstract justifications of his love, and take Annabella's hand in his own:

how sweetely Life doth runne
In these well coloured veines!

(V.2385-2386)

This is a very poignant moment in the play. For the first time Giovanni seems to recognize the consequences of his actions for someone other than himself. This knowledge, and his plea for forgiveness, save him from being nothing more than a heroic poseur. Giovanni's final destructive acts can be seen as his absolute refusal to capitulate to a venal and corrupt world.

Richardetto emerges, like Roseilli in Love's Sacrifice, from his disguise to supply some idea of continuity. But so apocalyptic is the conclusion that one detects a deepening sense of the fragility of what is good or noble in a corrupt world.
CHAPTER IX

PERKIN WARBECK

In "A Line of Life" Ford says that "any man who has waded into the labyrinth of greatness and employment... will find that the toil in common affairs is but trash and bondage, compared to the sweet repose of the mind, and the godly contemplation of man's peace with himself."¹ Perkin Warbeck is the story of such a man. When Warbeck's dreams of kingship have finally been demolished, he is left with the two relationships which confer nobility on him: the friendship and respect of Dalyell, and the love and constancy of Katherine. All hopes of a crown lost, Warbeck is left with "My heart, the rich remaines, of all my fortunes" (V.2699).

Perkin Warbeck concludes with a tranquillity totally unlike the emotional outbursts which mark the final scenes of Love's Sacrifice and 'Tis Pity. Warbeck's final meditation on death (in the fifth act) after his chaotic quest for power, is like the poet's arrival at

¹Works, III, 418.
The pensive solace of my soule . . .
As if my spirit were transported whole
Unto another life from carnal death.

("Christ's Bloody Sweat," p. 63)

The sustaining quality here, as in Ford's other plays, is
the hero's "contempt of death" because, in spite of all else,
"Wee raigne in our affections" (V.2678).

Donald K. Anderson has written that "Perkin Warbeck
might be called a lesson in kingship,"\(^2\) and he describes
the play as Ford's attempt at outlining a treatise de
regimine principum deriving from Machiavelli's The Prince
and, of course, Ford's likely source for the play, Francis
Bacon's Henry VII. Anderson's conclusion is that "Ford
portrays his ideal king in the person of the wise and
eminently practical Henry VII."\(^3\) At the other extreme is
Winston Weathers who counters that the play "is no more
about kingship and government than is the Oedipus Tyrannus."\(^4\)

Having noted the predominantly psychological theme of
the play, however, Weathers goes on to argue that, as the
figure of reason and order, Henry dominates the play. Both

\(^2\) Donald K. Anderson, "Kingship in Ford's Perkin Warbeck,"
ELH, XXXVII (1960), 177.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 177.

\(^4\) Winston Weathers, "Perkin Warbeck: A Seventeenth-
Century Psychological Play," Studies in English Literature
1500-1900, IV (1964), 217.
Anderson and Weathers stress heavily Henry's qualities of pragmatism, foresight, rationality and "mental health," as evidence that Ford means for us to admire the English King. Anderson says that "Ford presents Warbeck as an attractive lover but ineffectual leader,"5 and Weathers remarks that those few characters who commit themselves to Perkin "remain 'outsiders' when the Warbeck problem has been solved."6

These comments by Anderson and Weathers seem good examples of what Jonas Barish, writing about another Ford critic, calls the writer's discarding his own best observations.7 The very fact that Perkin is an attractive lover (as opposed to the wholly pragmatic and entirely womanless English part of the play) and that he and his circle are 'outsiders,' should suggest the very elements that had fascinated Ford from the beginning of his career. We recall that the subject of his first poem, "Fame's Memorial," had

5Anderson, p. 183.

6Weathers, p. 225. Lawrence Babb in an early article had pointed out that Ford's primary interest was in Warbeck's psychological progress in the play. Babb emphasized that Warbeck "is no rogue and no hypocrite in Ford's play." "Abnormal Psychology in Ford's Perkin Warbeck," MLN, LI (1936), 237.

been involved in an affair quite dramatically outside the realm of respectability, and that some critics have suggested that Ford's interest in Devonshire and Penelope was generated by that very fact.  

After reading The Lover's Melancholy, Love's Sacrifice and 'Tis Pity, it is hard to imagine Ford choosing as the hero of his play the dull, safe and politic figure he has created in Henry VII. That would be a little like seeing Roseilli as the hero of Love's Sacrifice because he opens and closes the play, restores order at the conclusion, and prudently adopts a bloodless sort of arrangement with Fiormonda. He too is pragmatic, sane and adept: but he is not (and especially not in Ford) the stuff of which heroes are made.

Barish has pointed out Henry's use of animal and hunting imagery when talking of other characters and suggests that "the king who thinks of other men as animals of prey to be trapped or hooked does not endear himself to us as a human being." He admits that, especially in Perkin's first speech to James in Act II, Warbeck displays a tendency "to

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8 See above, p. 27, fn. 3.

9 Barish calls Henry "a smaller, drier, more prosaic personality than Perkin, p. 165.

10 Ibid., p. 163.
luxuriate in persecution." We must remember, however, that Ford's heroes distinguish themselves by their capacity to suffer. It is not so much that they luxuriate in persecution, as that they purify themselves through suffering. In a way, Perkin resembles Giovanni or Fernando in having adopted the most extreme stance possible under the circumstances, and then uncompromisingly accepting the consequences.

Ford's emphasis on the pitiable nature of Warbeck must be contrasted with the haughty assurance of Henry. Stavig calls Warbeck "mad, immoderate and effeminate" and there is some truth in that judgment. But the important question is whether Ford considers masculinity and moderation superior qualities. When Warbeck first appears in Act II, the women (Countess of Crawford, Lady Katherine et al) are "above" observing the grand entrance. Their attitude toward "this English prince" is clearly skeptical. Throughout this scene Ford emphasizes the sense that the Scottish court is not prepared to take Warbeck seriously. However, once Warbeck has had a chance to give an initial justification of his position, we see that the Countess is impressed

11 Barish, p. 160.

12 Stavig, John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order, p. 183.

13 The scene is similar to Annabella's and Putana's observing the bizarre parade of characters in 'Tis Pity.
by Warbeck, and as she turns to Katherine she notices the young girl's confusion: "Madam, you're passionate" (II.787). Katherine admits that "His words have touched me home" (II.788), and makes a remark that raises one of the most important themes of the play; her disappointment will come, she says, "if he should prove another than he seems" (II.790).

Katherine is willing to accept what "seems," to trust her perception or intuition of what Warbeck is. Interestingly, James initially accepts Warbeck on similar grounds: "He must be more than subject who can utter / The language of a king" (II.772-773). However, James grows more practical as the play progresses. He adopts, "thanks to Henry's impressive examples, a more responsible and realistic philosophy." Pity becomes pragmatism and policy, and the best example of this growth is in James' eventual decision to dismiss Perkin. The tone of James' soliloquy does not convince the reader that Ford sees James' change as entirely for the better.

James. A league with Ferdinand? a marriage
With English Margaret? a free release
From restitution for the late affronts?
Cessation from hostilitie! and all
For Warbeck not delivered, but dismiss?
Wee could not wish it better.

(IV.1947-1952)

Weathers, p. 223.
This is an appropriate attitude for a statesman whose mentor's philosophy seems to be based on the notion that "Money gives soul to action" (III.1199). Henry's central instinct is to conserve. "The use of time / Is thriving safetie, and a wise prevention / Of ills expected" (IV.2178-2180), and he boasts that "we never scatter'd / On cobweb parasites . . . / No undeserving favorite doth boast / His issues from our treasury" (IV.2128-2132). His attitude is rather ironic since he had recently recovered from the devastating shock of discovering that he had been betrayed by Stanley,

My Counsellor, the love,
The pleasure of my Court, my bosome friend,
The Charge, and the Controulement of my person;
The keyes and secrets of my treasurie;
The all of all I am.

(I.620-624)

For a cool, rational Machiavellian, Henry has made some noticeably bad choices.

Katherine, on the other hand, makes a good choice, although it is more an act of faith than a consciously thought out decision. Katherine's marriage to Warbeck is decreed by James and one might therefore object that she had nothing to do with it. However, Ford plays down the arranged nature of the marriage, and prepares us for the match by showing us Katherine's initial response to Warbeck. Any arrangement James might make subsequent to her response is
obviously beside the point; she loved Warbeck from the moment she saw him and heard him speak. As James becomes more pragmatic, more masculine, he will regret the arrangement. Ironically, James regrets his most creative act: the ratification of Katherine's and Warbeck's love. He learns the way of the world but "increased worldly wisdom may not be a fact to be indiscriminately rejoiced in."¹⁵ As James falls under Henry's influence, the court becomes a more and more hostile environment and Perkin and Katherine become spiritual refugees.

Henry loses his one great friend, Stanley, and Perkin gains the friendship of Dalyell, the one character about whom no one says anything detrimental.

'Tis a name, hath wonne
Both thankes, and wonder, from report; (my Lord)
The Court of England emulates your meritt,
And covetts to embrace'ee.

(V.2362-2365)

Modern critics who call Warbeck effeminate, hypocritical and demented must explain why Dalyell displays so strong and sincere an affection for him. The answer cannot be solely that he loved Katherine and would follow her anywhere. When he says goodbye to Warbeck, his speechlessness--("I want utterance; / My silence is farewell" V.2738-2739)--is perfectly typical of other scenes in which Ford suggests that

¹⁵Barish, p. 160.
the most strongly felt emotions are often the least able to be articulated. "Oh, I want words / To let thee know my heart!", "I have not words that can expresse my joyes" (The Lover's Melancholy, I.60-61, V.2589). It is because of Katherine that Dalyell is drawn into the circle, but the quality that defines them is their capacity to love.

It seems that the two worlds of Perkin Warbeck are those of love and politics. Critics are correct when they assert Perkin's ineptitude as a practical leader. He is, as he says to Katherine "Sovereign of this Kingdome, / Your heart" (II.1058-1060), and in Act III Perkin tells his wife that "love and Majestie are reconcil'd" (III.1473). Perhaps Skelton was not far wrong when he cheers Warbeck by shouting "Save thee, King of hearts" (IV.2215). Warbeck's first speech in the play suggests qualities of pity and compassion which we might not expect in a figure struggling for power. They are qualities completely absent from Henry's personality.

The world of Perkin Warbeck seems utterly to lack the qualities exemplified by the charmed circle of "outsiders," Katherine, Dalyell and Warbeck. Their "king of hearts" must appear absurd, clownish; an almost surreal apparition. These are the images applied to Perkin by almost everyone in the play. The important exception is the early admiration shown by James, and I suggest that Ford was showing the powerful appeal that Warbeck could exert on a young and
idealistic ruler. James, significantly, symbolizes this faith in Warbeck by joining Perkin's and Katherine's hands. His later disenchantment is much more a comment on James' fall from grace than on Perkin's failure to achieve a position of rule.

Ford makes Perkin the most dramatically de trop character in all of his plays. He is called "vagabond," "straggler," "obscure," "a running weed," "a mere trifle." And once Katherine marries Warbeck her separation from the world she knew is complete. Her father knows that she is "lost" and is "but now a castaway" (III.1364). In the Cornwall scene Katherine poignantly characterizes herself as "in a strangers and an enemies Land Forsaken," and tells Jane that James has "Renderd us spectacles to time and pittie" (V.2255,2279). Of course, she has now been introduced to the qualities which had always defined Warbeck's existence. The first time that she, sitting above the action, hears Warbeck speak, he says that his life had been "a tale of persecution and malice" (II.715-716). She says at that time: "His words have touchd mee home," (and then prophetically) "as if his cause concerned mee" (II.788-789).

But there is another level to the imagery that Ford employs to suggest the mystery of Warbeck. He is referred to as an "ayrie apparition" (I.550). Henry is "haunted"
by him (I.1). Warbeck is "hid in darkness" (I.556), "a shadow" who may at times burst forth like a "wilde Comet" (I.554). Henry sees him as emerging from some "unquiet dream" (V.2377), and at various times in the play Warbeck is accused of enlisting magic to bewitch his followers. This imagery suggests another dimension to Warbeck's appearance; he seems to be a "pretender" not merely in the political sense, but a mysterious, inexplicable force. This is especially disturbing to those characters who have wrapped themselves in a cloak of sterile rationality.

Crawford. Tis more than strange, my reason cannot answere Such argument of fine Imposture, coucht In witch-craft of perswasion, that it fashions Impossibilities, as if appearance Could cozen truth itselife.

(II.971-975)

At this point in the play James still reflects an ability to transcend reasonable explanations; "Instinct of soveraigntie / Designes the honor" (II.1015-1016). Warbeck is an apparition whose appearance "reason cannot answer."

Immediately following the scene in which Henry comments that "money gives soule to action" (III.1199) and where we see him dismissing the Cornish leaders--("on them our Justice / Must frowne in terror, I will not vouchsafe / an eye of pitie on them" IV.1265-1267)--Ford quickly changes the tone to one of celebration. Perkin and Katherine have
been married and Katherine's father is shocked
to see the gambolds,
To heare the Jiggs, observe the friskes, b'enchanted
With the rare discord of bells, pipes and tabors,
Hotchpotch of Scotch and Irish twingle twangles,
Like to so many Queresters of Bedlam . . .
Ane all this for King Oberon, and Queene Mab.

(III.1298-1307)

From one standpoint, Perkin is "a rage of Hell / Loosd from
his chaynes" (III.1600-1601), from another he is Oberon, a
fairy prince "devoted to virtue and disillusioned by the
pomp and vanity of mankind . . . (and) . . . whose appear-
ance signals a moment of purification." Ford often used
in his work the notion of the feast, the sacrifice, and the
special moment of purification. Just as Ford emphasizes the
role of Warbeck as the king of hearts, we recall that in
"Christ's Bloody Sweat," the poet states that Christ's
mission is to "winne the monarchy of hearts usurp't by
sinne" (p. 1). Ford always suggests, however, that such a
victory is won by attending to the mysterious element of the
emotions, and not through a rigorous application of the
reason.

Winston Weathers sees Henry as the figure of order in
the play, a force that represents "the whole psychological

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16 Robert Rentoul Reed, Jr., *The Occult on the Tudor and
Stuart Stage* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1965),
p. 199.
complex of the human mind as it struggles to maintain its
sanity and reason in the face of aberrant and disordering
forces."\textsuperscript{17} It seems to me, however, that Ford is suggest-
ing that Henry may not be the model we are most to admire.
Ford's \textit{de regimine principum} is not of the Machiavellian
type, and never in Ford's writings is there any suggestion
that he was interested in politics, except in the most
incidental of ways in "A Line of Life." In \textit{Perkin Warbeck}
the orderly, practical world of Henry, Stanley, Oxford, and
ultimately of James, is "a society held together by a kind
of molecular tension of egos, a loyalty to the group or
leader which diminishes the individual. . . . Such a society
is an endless source of tragic dilemmas like those of Hamlet
or Antigone."\textsuperscript{18} When Stanley's allegiance shifts away from
Henry, he is exterminated. James submerges his notion of
honor and compassion and joins with Henry.

On the other side is Warbeck. "The other pole is
represented by the \textit{Pharmakos} or sacrificial victim, who has
to be killed to strengthen the others."\textsuperscript{19} Perkin is mad by
all the standards of Henry's world. But his madness is some-
what like the madness of a Mishkin. He is essentially good,
and his absurdity is his refusal to see, or to conform to, the way things are. "Madness fascinates, first, because all these absurd figures are in reality elements of a different, hermetic, esoteric learning."20 James learns that one must commit oneself wholeheartedly to one or the other of these two worlds. Ford seems to suggest that the worlds are tragically irreconcilable, and the conclusion of Love's Sacrifice, with Roseilli's decision to "dismiss the mutual comforts of our marriage-bed," indicates a consistency of attitude on Ford's part. The inheritors of power are not reconciled to love; they avoid the otherwise inevitable anxieties of emotional entanglements by excluding love as well as lust. James doesn't dismiss Perkin's claims to nobility, (and this is important) but chooses the obviously more practical strategy of a league with Henry. He came, says James, for refuge, and now, "I will dismisse him .... In safetie, but not ever, to returne" (IV.1935-1937).

Warbeck's last trial is one which carries him across water

After so many stormes as winde and seas, Have threatned our weather-beaten Shippes, and carries him finally to "our deare mother earth" (IV.2183-2186). In Cornwall he is "hedged" by Henry and led before

the king in chains. In a wonderfully pointed comment, Perkin observes to Henry

\[
\text{No lesse, then what severitie calls Justice,}
\]
\[
\text{And Polititians, safetie.}
\]

(V.2461-2463)

Warbeck is taken to England, led about "followed by the rabble," put in stocks, and taunted by the obsequious Simnel. From the stocks Warbeck says

\[
\text{Bayted to my death?}
\]
\[
\text{Intollerable crueltie! I laugh at}
\]
\[
\text{The Duke of Richmonds practise on my fortunes.}
\]
\[
\text{Possession of a Crowne, ne're wanted Heraulds.}
\]

(V.2579-2582)

Simnel, reflecting the official point of view, remarks that "Hees past / Recovery, a Bedlum cannot cure him" (V.2628-2629). Oxford tells Warbeck that "a Devill rauges in your tongue," that he is possessed and deluded (V.2659-2660). These are the spokesmen for the mob that has hounded Warbeck to the scaffold.\(^1\) Foucault observes that in the early Renaissance we see the spectre of madness emerging as a dramatic paradigm of the ultimate quid pro quo in that "it needs no external element to reach a true resolution. It has

\(^{21}\text{Frye (p. 149) points out that in dramas of the type that Warbeck resembles strongly, "scaffolds, gallows, stocks, pillories . . . are or could be modulations" of the central image of the tree of death which often dominates such works.}\)
merely to carry its illusions to the point of truth." \(^{22}\) Madness "will henceforth be that mirror which, without reflecting anything real, will secretly offer the man who observes himself in it the dream of his own presumption. Madness deals not so much with truth and the world, as with man and whatever truth about himself he is able to perceive." \(^{23}\)

Warbeck's truth about himself, his fate made visible, is to be put in stocks and yet to see before him Katherine and Dalyell, more faithful than ever. Even Huntley, who had been saddened by the spectacle of his daughter's becoming a "castaway," recognizes something extraordinary about Perkin.

\[\text{I glorie in thy constancie;}
\text{And must not say, I wish, that I had mist}
\text{Some partage in these tryalls of a patience.}\]

\[(V.2720-2722)\]

Katherine most clearly sees what is enduring. Evoking the image that had been used against Warbeck, she says that when they were married "The Ceremonie / Was not in apparition, \(\text{sic}\) but in act" \((V.2669-2670)\). Warbeck, in language which suggests anything but dementia, fixes on this one reality, love, in the midst of the disintegration of his dream of an active public life.

\(^{22}\) Foucault, p. 38.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 33.
Of course, Henry misses the point. He and his lords will follow to the scaffold
To see the execution; and from hence
Wee gather this fit use

(V.2781-2782)

and as Gifford points out, Ford "seems to apply this word use in the puritanical sense . . . of doctrinal or practical deduction." The contrast between Henry's world of rule, and Perkin's "reign of affection," with music, dance, drink, and love, is maintained to the very end of the play. The tension of the play conforms to a pattern which finds "a Dionysiac aggressive will, intoxicated by dreams of its own omnipotence, impinging upon an Apollonian sense of external and immovable order." The order is necessary, no doubt, but there is a sense of loss when "the inscrutable tragic hero . . . becomes articulate at the point of death. A greater world becomes for an instant visible, but there is also a sense of the mystery and remoteness of that world."26

As in "Christ's Bloody Sweat," so in Ford's tragedies there is a powerful sense of a realm of stillness behind the tumult of human affairs. It is a realm which certain

24 Works, II. 217, n. 17.
25 Frye, pp. 214-215
26 Ibid., p. 215.
privileged people can attain through a rite of suffering and meditation. In the plays, most dramatically in 'Tis Pity and Perkin Warbeck, that moment of meditation is expressed when the hero is driven past the point when he may depend upon any "normal" response and must express, regardless of the consequences, what he sees to be the irreducible truth about himself. Naturally, a Dawbenny or Simnel responds by relying on the safest possible view--Perkin was an imposter; and Henry will reduce the whole fantastic spectacle to the level of a neat sententia. To take Simnel's, Dawbenny's or Henry's words as Ford's ultimate judgment of Perkin is to misunderstand one of the basic motifs of Ford's work.

Throughout Ford's oeuvre we detect an increasing sense of conflict between the conventional world and a hortus conclusus, an interior and autonomous realm. In Ford, the hortus conclusus is the hero's mind, a kind of secular Gethsemane, though similar to the Gethsemane of "Christ's Bloody Sweat." The hero's nobility is conferred by his recognition of the great suffering that he will endure as a result of his moral commitment. In his earliest poem, "Fames Memorial," we detect Ford's admiration for the unconventional but committed individual. In "Honour Triumphant" Ford's attention is directed to the notion of privilege, especially as it attends upon the beautiful and the aristo-
ocratic. "Christ's Bloody Sweat" is Ford's final non-dramatic poetic statement and it clearly delineates the conflict between a corrupt world and a special, privileged group. In the poem the themes of suffering and exclusivity are especially apparent and "Christ's Bloody Sweat" provides a strong thematic link between the earlier work and the drama.

In the drama, as in "Christ's Bloody Sweat," we find Ford's typical procedure: depravity contaminates every element of society. The central characters (Fernando, Giovanni, Meleander, Warbeck) annihilate temporarily this corrupt world by seeking a spiritual retreat, represented by a commitment to love. The depraved world reasserts itself, however, and in a usually apocalyptic conclusion engulfs the refuge fashioned by the lovers. The world of law and convention is represented by intellectuals (e.g. Corax) and practical rulers (e.g. Henry) but the lovers tend to exist in a realm of mystery. As Ford matured, he came more and more to see the inadequacy of rational systems of discipline and knowledge, and his work represents one trend of the period in its "devotional anti-intellectualism." ²⁷

The emphasis in Ford is always on the fundamental isolation of the individual. The isolation is not forced by

society, but is chosen by the hero. Ford is thus able to create a series of acute psychological portraits of characters who reject the "trash and bondage" of the material world in order to discover the depth of their spiritual resources.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Stanley Kunitz's poem "The Class Will Come to Order" contains what may be seen as a startling analogue to Ford's drama, and, at the same time, suggests the timelessness of Ford's so-called "rather narrow plot of ground." 1

Perhaps there's too much order in this world;
The poets love to haul disorder in,
Braiding their wrists with her long mistress hair,
And when the house is tossed about our ears,
The governors must set it right again... . .

There is a single theme, the heart declares,
That circumnavigates curriculum.2

In Ford's work "curriculum" can be equated with "The iron lawes of ceremony": the orderly, rational and conventional codes of behaviour and thought with which Ford's major characters inevitably collide. Often, Ford's heroes, because of their intractable refusal to conform to society's "curriculum," appear to be egocentric or even deranged. Giovanni and Warbeck may be seen as examples of this sort of extreme non-conformity.

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It is important to remember, however, that Ford had explored throughout his career this theme of the individual's attempt to fashion a code of behaviour in a corrupt world. In his first work, "Fame's Memorial," Ford had looked to an already established code, one primarily aristocratic, for a model. For social and historical reasons, however, the courtesy tradition was outmoded even as Ford was using it in his early poem and in his pamphlet "Honour Triumphant." The sophisticated and elegant world of the courtier seems to have been hopelessly inappropriate as a way of coping with the complexities of the Seventeenth Century, "an increasingly analytical age which no longer accepted without question either a universe informed by transcendent and inscrutable reason or human conduct predicated fundamentally on traditional religio-social values."  

It was not long before Ford abandoned the courtesy tradition. In "Christ's Bloody Sweat" Ford's tone of disapproval toward society is stronger than it had been in the earlier work. Through the use of satire and meditation on what Ford calls "the trash and bondage of existence" we may see emerging a world in which men and women must fashion for themselves an honorable and solitary existence. Ford's

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3Larry S. Champion, "Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and the Jacobean Tragic Perspective," PMLA, 90 (January, 1975), 86.
transitional poem seems to suggest that only certain individuals may be privileged by participation in a rite which involves initiation through suffering.

In the plays this initiation is characteristically represented by frustrated or doomed love, through which the major characters must pass in order to be elevated to heroic stature. The plays themselves are refinements of attitudes, themes and techniques which Ford had been developing from the beginning of his career. We remember that one of the reasons that Blount seems to have attracted Ford's admiration was Blount's affair with Penelope Rich. In "Fame's Memorial" Ford suggests that, even though society may question the propriety of Blount's involvement with Penelope, his subsequent behavior makes him worthy of our admiration.

The typical hero of Ford's plays chooses to love in spite of social or moral reasons against that love. Representatives of church, science, government and philosophy stand in opposition to the hero's choice, but the hero obstinately refuses to "listen to reason."

That Ford's heroes are so much the outsiders explains, I believe, their fascination for modern critics who seek in Renaissance playwrights the insights of modern existentialism. What I have attempted to demonstrate is that, while there is something undoubtedly modern in the themes and tone
of Ford's work, these elements can be seen as reflections of late Renaissance ideological tendencies.

Ford's career coincides with events which give evidence of increasing disillusionment and cynicism. The fall of Bacon, the execution of Ralegh, the murder of Overbury, the excessive favoritism of James' court, must all have contributed to what J.W. Lever sees as a general attitude among Jacobean tragedians: "Power is seen as a completely amoral entity, divorced from all virtue, at once the offspring and the seed of corruption." The value, then, of examining Ford's early work seems to me to be twofold. First, it provides us with a way of better understanding the development of an important Jacobean playwright. Secondly, Ford's work as a whole enables us better to comprehend the moral and psychological confusion that characterized much early seventeenth-century thought.

Kunitz suggests that it is the poets who "love to haul disorder in," but I have attempted to show that the moral and emotional dislocation of Ford's plays may be seen as reflections of pervasive seventeenth-century philosophical confusions. Ford's work, then, may be seen as an attempt on the part of the poet to create an ideal world of love, his

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"single theme," even though that fragile world must necessarily be defeated by a corrupt society.

Charles McDonald has observed that "although John Ford has come to be recognized as one of the more important later Stuart dramatists, his achievement is still beclouded by misapprehensions. . . ."\(^5\) I hope that by having stressed the continuity of Ford's work, I may have contributed, in a small way, to a clearer and more consistent interpretation of his work.

\(^5\)McDonald, p. 314.
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