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Gender, Power and Sexuality in John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*

Rahime Cokay Nebioglu

Research Assistant, Department of English Language and Literature, Gazi University, Turkey
Ph.D. Candidate, Middle East Technical University, Turkey

Abstract:

John Ford (1586–1639), who is one of the most recondite of Renaissance playwrights, has been subjected to different criticisms due to astounding ways he embodied in his plays to unravel and even subvert both dramatic traditions and social codes. The diversity of critical opinions on Ford's plays range from praises to condemnations as immoderate and inauthentic as well as denoting moral degeneration. Despising drama that is sheer imitation of life and voice of morality, Ford creates spectacular plays intending to break down all conventional ideas, beliefs, social codes and representations, which, in a sense, justifies the polarization of opinions on his works. 'Tis Pity She's a Whore (1633) is one of such plays that uses and abuses not only social, political and aesthetic elements in Caroline drama but also all existing codes of social and linguistic representation in Renaissance society. 'Tis Pity, 'a wretched woeful woman's tragedy', presents us with a grotesque and even scandalous version of romantic love story, an artificial version of Platonic love, disturbing interpretations of religious doctrines, subverted sexual interest, namely incest, and unconventional female figures exposed to conventional patriarchal oppression. Although the play offers a wide range of significant subjects to examine within the frame of both Renaissance drama and contemporary literary theory, this paper will focus on only the relationship among gender, power and sexuality in Renaissance society from the perspective of 21st century woman reader familiar with feminist theory, taking historical dimension into consideration. In this respect, the study will begin with an analysis of standpoints from which men view women and women view themselves particularly during Renaissance referring to feminist scholars, and continue with a close reading of the play within this context.

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Dealing with theories of feminist literary criticism, femaleness and femininity, Toril Moi remarks that 'femaleness refers to a matter of biology and femininity is a set of culturally defined characteristics, and feminine and masculine represent social constraints patterns of sexuality and behaviors imposed by cultural and social norms' (1985: 122). This implies the constructedness of gender roles within society, which recalls one of the earliest feminists Simone de Beauvoir's famous assertion in her work entitled *The Second Sex*: 'One is not born but rather becomes a woman' (1989: 273). According to Beauvoir's notion, being a woman is not about biological, psychological or economic factors, but about performance of culturally and socially constructed gender identity which pushes woman to the margins and establishes her as *the Other*. For Beauvoir,

[W]oman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality. And even today woman is heavily handicapped, though her situation is beginning to change. Almost nowhere is her legal status the same as man's, and frequently it is much to her disadvantage. Even when her rights are legally recognized in the abstract, long-standing custom prevents their full expression in the mores. (ibid. 19)

Not only female identity but also female body and sexuality are confined to patriarchal limits. Female sexuality is perceived as 'one thing, the lacking Other of male sexuality' (Robbins, 2000: 153), an Other that provides male counterpart to assign himself with power and authority. As Valeri Wayne puts it, '[female] bodies [are] sites for the inscriptions of ideology and power, since [women] cannot "know" them in any unmediated form and they, as [women], are products of the cultural meanings ascribed to them' (2000: 168). Patriarchal society forces woman to perform her sexual acts within the borders they have determined by homogenizing and reducing their multiplicity. Despite sexual confinements of patriarchy, however, the nature of female sexuality is not "uniform, homogenous, classifiable into codes –more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Wom[a]n's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible' (Cixous, 1976/2011:312). This plurality of female sexuality innately crosses the boundaries of patriarchy, and female desire becomes 'the source of the energy and creativity which are in excess of patriarchal language' (Mousley, 2000: 173) as well as the source of silent revolt against sexual oppression projected by male-dominated society.

Looking at even the earliest scriptures proves such feminist scholars' opinions right, demonstrating the secondary position of woman dating back to the beginning of time. In Bible, for instance, one can find several implications that woman is inferior to man and, even worse, responsible for the fall of man –that is, the original sin-. Because of her sin, God punishes Eve with childbirth: 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee' (*Genesis* 3.16). Furthermore, God orders women to 'be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord; for the husband is the head of the woman, as Christ is the head of Church' (*Ephesians* 22). Likewise, in the Middle Ages, woman as the descendant of Eve was subjected to the same debasing attitude since Medieval society was eminently unwilling to allow woman to exercise female power. Medieval society regarded woman as 'intellectually and emotionally inferior to m[a]n and thus incapable of wielding authority effectively'; she was not permitted to 'vote or run for public office', 'participate fully in other power structures such as the Church, the military or guilds', access to 'institutions of higher learning' (Erler and Kowaleski, 1988: 1). Moreover, woman in the Middle Ages was classified with her 'virginity, chastity and biological motherhood' (Caviness, 2001: 2), and categorized either as 'good girl' or 'bad girl': the former referring to the one who adopted such gender roles determined by society as wives, nuns or widows, the latter denoting the one who rejected patriarchal boundaries and hence was ostracized.

Although the rigid limits started to loose during the Renaissance which is regarded as the beginning of the modern age in which people began to think themselves as individuals, and women started to participate in social, religious and educational institutions, one cannot claim that such changes were valid for all women from different classes and enough to remove gender differences and inequality defined by society. Much as the period produced several significant female figures such as Elizabeth I of England, Christina of Sweden and Isabella of Castile, lower-class woman's identity continued to depend on "their relationships to men as daughters, wives, mothers, or widows" (Grendler, 2004: 175). While an unmarried woman's most important duty was to protect her virginity which was the symbol of family honor, the responsibility of a wife was to raise her children, remain faithful and submit to her husband. Therefore, woman pursued to lack a subject position to speak and represent her female identity within Renaissance society.

Moreover, Renaissance society conceived female desire as means of constructing female identity, hence as a destructive force and even as a threat against patriarchy. They attempted to "polarize representations of women as images of chaste purity or depraved sexual excess, observing that women must suppress or limit their sexuality in order to be perceived positively" (Warnock, 2000: 6). Renaissance man tended to associate female freedom, autonomy and desire with promiscuity and confirm his own sense of identity, authority and power with the sexual possession of woman mostly through forcing her to marriage. Hence, woman in the Renaissance had the status of victim whether it be a good girl or be a bad girl: If she defied the patriarchal restrictions, acts independently and subvert male-domination, she was marginalized and punished by society, and so became a victim; if she behaved virtuously and submissively within the patriarchal boundaries, then she was already a victim whose life was controlled, dominated and even exploited by man.

Bearing all these in mind, Ford's *'Tis Pity* Much offers a good deal of materials for feminist reading, yet it is oddly overlooked by feminist critics and mostly discussed in terms of subversion of moral codes regarding incest. The play comprises the perfect illustrative portrait of woman in Renaissance, her subordinate position within society, her attempt to climb over her inferior status and possible results of such a challenging act. *'Tis Pity* tells the story of a tragic and problematic love story between two siblings, Giovanni and Annabella. Despite being aware of the impossibility of such a relationship, Giovanni desperately falls in love with his sister who is courted by three suitors -Soranzo, Grimaldi and Bergetto- and refutes these proposals. Confessing his secret love to the Friar and advised to give up such a sinful act but unable to terminate his passionate feelings, Giovanni professes his source of pain to his sister and is unexpectedly well received by Annabella who also bears such an unusual feeling. As an outcome of this mutual love, Annabella gets pregnant and is forced to marry one of his suitors, Soranzo who is assumed as a nobleman but indeed a debase person having a adulterous relationship with a married woman. Right after their marriage, however, Soranzo discovers Annabella's illegitimate pregnancy and schemes to kill her in order to save his honor but fails in doing so since Giovanni acts quickly to murder Annabella who, he thinks, has betrayed him by marrying to another man.

Renaissance society regards marriage not as something to do with love but as something about a union of families and hence fortunes, and condemns any kind of sexual intimacy before marriage. At the very beginning of the play, such patriarchal social norms come to the fore when several suitors make advances to Annabella whom they think fit for performing the roles of a wife as a daughter of a nobleman that categorizes her as a 'good girl'. Suitors put themselves in for a marriage with Annabella not because of her individuality and personal characteristics but of her relationship to man, namely her father; thus, they do not address her with her own name, rather with her affiliation "Signior Florio's daughter" (1.2 172). Moreover, having the sexual possession of a woman desired by several other suitors is considered as a means of performing one's power and superiority over other men, which results in a rivalry among Annabella's courtiers. These men scheme villainous plots to pull each other's leg so as to prove their authority rather than their love towards the young girl. Soranzo, for instance, orders his servant Vasques to insult Grimaldi, his rival, and to provoke a quarrel in order to put him out of action by tarnishing his reputation. Upon putting through his insidious scheme, he celebrates his victory with the following words:

This gentleman, whom fame reports a soldier,
 (For else I know not) rivals me in love
 To Signior Florio's daughter; to whose ears
 He still prefers his suit, to my disgrace;
 Thinking the way to recommend himself
 Is to disparage me in his report.
 But know, Grimaldi, though, maybe, thou art
 My equal in thy blood, yet this betrays
 A lowness in thy mind; which, wert thou noble,
 Thou would'st as much disdain, as I do thee
 For this unworthiness; and on this ground
 I will'd my servant to correct his tongue,
 Holding a man so base no match for me. (172)

While fathers and husbands hold a grand authority over their daughters and wives in Renaissance society, brothers have secondary roles within this patriarchal hierarchy, having a diminished male authority because of the absence of legitimate rights to dominate and control their sisters. As Jeanie Warnock puts it, “[w]ithout a socially sanctioned position from which to govern their sisters or a clear place within their society’s hierarchy, brothers are reduced to copying the two principal social roles which give men identity as well as authority over women—father and husband” (11). This lack of recognition as a male authority can be claimed to have led Giovanni to adopt a paradoxical mimicry of the role of a husband and hence to bear an incestuous feeling toward his sister, which foregrounds the extent to which “both the normal and the abnormal [incest] are produced by similar, even the same, ‘acceptable’ discourses [about gender, power and sexuality]” (Bell, 1993: 83). In both cases, therefore, Annabella, as a Renaissance woman, is reduced to the status of an object through which men, diverging in their roles either as husband/father or brother, assert their male power. This, in a sense, reveals how female body becomes involved in power relations and how “power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (Foucault, 2004: 550).

Albeit the fact that Giovanni uses and abuses his sister as an object of both his sexual desire and male power, he strives to justify his love by likening it to Platonic love. In the scene in which he confesses his sinful deed to the Friar, he regards his perverted love as nothing different than “what all men else may” (169) and argues:

Shall a peevish sound,
 A customary form, from man to man,
 Of brother and of sister, be a bar
 “Twixt my perpetual happiness and me?
 Say that we had one father, say one womb
 (Curse to my joys) gave both us life and birth;
 Are we not therefore each to other bound
 So much the more by nature; by the links
 Of blood, of reason? Nay, if you will have’t,
 Even of religion, to be ever one:
 One soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all? (169-170)

For Giovanni, their familial tie provides them with an acceptable reason to unite on both spiritual and physical terms, disregarding the social and religious norms that urge the opposite. He despairingly longs for becoming “one soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all” with his sister and the lack of such a unity deeply wounds him:

The more I strive, I love; the more I love,
 The less I hope; I see my ruin, certain.
 What judgments or endeavors could apply
 To my incurable and restless wounds
 I thoroughly have examined, but in vain. (175)

Reminiscent of Neoplatonic sentiments, Giovanni’s love roots in the loss of such a unity that he desires, which causes in him a great agony and hence leads him to cure his wounds, namely to return to the wholeness that he has lost, through his love towards Annabella. For Giovanni, “[w]ise nature first in [his sister’s] creation meant/ [t]o make [her] [his]: else’t had been sin and foul/ [t]o share one beauty to a double soul./ Nearness in birth or blood doth persuade/ [a] nearer nearness in affection” (177). Giovanni’s illustration of Annabella as his mirror image with his reference to “one beauty” and “one all” recalls Marsilio Ficino’s statement that “[t]he soul of the lover becomes a mirror in which the image of the beloved is reflected...when the beloved recognizes himself in the lover, he is forced to love him” (qtd in Dawson, 2008: 132). No matter how tenaciously Giovanni defends the holiness of his love, the consequences of his love prove the opposite at the end of the play when he kills Annabella, the goddess, whose forehead he compares to that of Juno’s, whose eyes “give life to senseless stones”, whose lips “would tempt a saint” and whose hands “would make an anchorite lascivious” (176).

Whereas Giovanni compensates his diminished male authority by having the sexual possession of his sister and exercises his power through what he calls pure love, Annabella uses her female desire as a space for female agency and as a means of a revolt against the restrictions of patriarchal society. She may not be an assertive female self that stands out against all kinds of confinements as Irigaray and Cixous defines in their works, yet it is obvious that she is a female libertine that strives to create a gap for herself beyond existing discourses of gender and identity. Rather than reciprocating the advances of her suitors whom her father thinks appropriate for her, Annabella challengingly requites her brother's incestuous love:

Live; thou hast won
The field, and never fought: what thou hast urged,
My captive heart had long ago resolv'd.
I blush to tell thee –but I'll tell thee now-
For every sigh that thou hast spent for me,
I have sigh'd ten; for every tear, shed twenty:
And not so much for that I loved, as that
I durst not say I loved, nor scarcely think it. (178)

Where male figures wish to enclose her within the borders of arranged marriage, Annabella cuts loose and defies both social and religious norms in having an incestuous relationship with her brother. Annabella is named as “virtually a moral defective” (Eliot, 1963:126) and mostly regarded as a passive, weak and submissive, namely a conventional Elizabethan woman, by critics, she is nevertheless a defiant woman who dares to resist patriarchy.

Casting herself in the role of heroic female figure crossing the patriarchal boundaries by having a sexual intercourse with her brother and hence proving female autonomy, Annabella gets pregnant. This rebellious act results in her being labeled as ‘bad girl’ within society, turns her into a helpless victim and pushes her into the margins of female passivity.

Friar: Ay, you are wretched, miserably wretched,
Almost condemn'd alive. There is a place,
List, daughter! in a black and hollow vault,
Where day is never seen; there shines no sun,
But flaming horror of consuming fires,
A lightless sulphur, chok'd with smoky fogs
Of an infected darkness: in this place
Dwell many thousand thousand sundry sorts
Of never-dying deaths: there damned souls
Roar without pity; there are gluttons fed
With toads and adders; there is burning oil
Pour'd down the drunkard's throat; the usurer
Is forced to sup whole draughts of molten gold;
There is the murderer forever stabb'd,
Yet can he never die; there lies the wanton
On racks of burning steel, whilst in his soul
He feels the torment of his raging lust.

Annabella: Mercy! oh, mercy!

Friar: There stand these wretched things,
Who have dream'd out whole years in lawless sheets
And secret incests, cursing one another:
Then you will wish each kiss your brother gave
Had been a dagger's point; then you shall hear
How he will cry,
Oh, would my wicked sister
Had first been damn'd, when she did yield to lust!
But soft, methinks I see repentance work
New motions in your heart; say, how is 't with you?

Annabella Is there no way left to redeem my miseries?

Friar There is, despair not; Heaven is merciful,
And offers grace even now. 'Tis thus agreed:
First, for your honour's safety, that you marry
My Lord Soranzo; next, to save your soul,
Leave off this life, and henceforth live to him. (206-7).

At one hand, she is put under dominion of her father and the Friar who force her to marry Soranzo to cover her pregnancy -which is a plausible reason for Renaissance society to ostracize her- with descriptions of hell; on the other hand, she is controlled by Giovanni who assumes the role of a husband and gains an absolute power over her. Torn between her father and the Friar's urging to marry and Giovanni's pressure to "be not all woman; think on [him]" as well as between her desire as a female agency and her consciousness aware of patriarchal threat, Annabella sees no way out except marriage. Thus, as Peter Womack states, "what we see is Annabella entering on her marriage not because she is convinced, but because she is terrorized. We remember this when the marriage leads directly to the eventual bloodbath" (2006: 253).

Considering the role of woman in marriage during Renaissance times, it is not hard to guess pathetic situation of Annabella in her arranged and even forced marriage to Soranzo. Renaissance society gives husband an absolute authority not only over the body of woman but also her property. The ideal wife is supposed to be silent, obedient, faithful, nurturing and serving; her freedom is surpassingly restrained by her husband; she is reduced to a secondary position where she is deprived of her rights. In the play, much as Annabella accepts to marry Soranzo in order to hide her illegitimate pregnancy, Soranzo discovers her secret.

Had Annabella liv'd when Sannazar
Did, in his brief Encomium, celebrate
Venice, that queen of cities, he had left
That verse which gain'd him such a sum of gold,
And for one only look from Annabel,
Had writ of her, and her diviner cheeks. (185)

These praises that Soranzo addresses to Annabella before their marriage are replaced with the following insults upon his discovery:

Come, strumpet, famous whore! were every drop
Of blood that runs in thy adulterous veins
A life, this sword (dost see't?) should in one blow
Confound them all. Harlot, rare, notable harlot,
That with thy brazen face maintain'st thy sin,
Was there no man in Parma to be bawd
To your loose cunning whoredom else but I?
Must your hot itch and pleurisy of lust,
The heyday of your luxury, be fed
Up to a surfeit, and could none but I
Be pick'd out to be cloak to your close tricks,
Your belly-sports? Now I must be the dad
To all that gallimaufry that is stuff'd
In thy corrupted bastard-bearing womb! Why, must I? (217)

Soranzo stamps with rage since he regards Annabella's pregnancy not merely as something to strain his honor but, most importantly, as a threat against his male authority as a husband. In such cases, religious principals adopted in Renaissance society require husbands to report their wives' adulterous relationships to Church and have faith in ecclesiastical justice since Christ's treatment of adulterous woman prescribes tolerance and forgiveness: "Seeing that Christ said to an adulteresse, I condemne thee not, goe and sinne no more, who cannot conceive that an husband and wife hath forgiven: and that he aught not to account her an adulteresse whose fault he beleeveth to be blotted out, by the mercie of God, upon her repentance" (Ingram, 1987: 253-55). However, Soranzo, like many Renaissance men, regards his wife's adultery as a matter of household and plans to punish her with his own ways:

Revenge is all the ambition I aspire,
To that I'll climb or fall; my blood's on fire. (227)

What is ironic about Soranzo's condemnation of Annabella's infidelity is that he himself is involved in an adulterous relationship with a married woman called Hippolita before his marriage. Soranzo who is described as "wise", "rich", a nobleman" and "handsome" has indeed quite a wicked nature, which is unraveled when Hippolita tells his betrayal. Hippolita declares that he has wooed into the sin by promising her to marry when her husband dies; however, upon learning her husband's death he breaks his word and tries to get rid of her with cruel insults. Thus, Hippolita speaks out her hatred and rage against Soranzo as the following:

Tis I; Do you know me now? Look, perjurd man, on her
Whom thou and thy distracted lust have wrong'd.
Thy sensual rage of blood hath made my youth
A scorn to men and angels; and shall I
Be now a foil to thy unsated change?
Thou know'st, false wanton, when my modest fame
Stood free from stain or scandal, all the charms
Of hell or sorcery could not prevail
Against the honour of my chaster bosom.

Thine eyes did plead in tears, thy tongue in oaths,
 Such, and so many, that a heart of steel
 Would have been wrought to pity, as was mine;
 And shall the conquest of my lawful bed,
 My husband's death, urg'd on by his disgrace,
 My loss of womanhood, be ill-rewarded
 With hatred and contempt? No; know,
 Soranzo, I have a spirit doth as much distaste
 The slavery of fearing thee, as thou
 Dost loathe the memory of what hath passed. (185)

Just like Annabella, Hippolita is also an unconventional female figure that attempts to wreak the havoc and seeks revenge on Soranzo who abuses her with empty vows and oaths. Her vengeful character, as opposed to passivity and submission expected of a Renaissance woman, emphasizes her female agency. Male-dominated society in which she resides does not allow her to carry out her vengeful desire, which is to poison him before his marriage, and, even worse, causes her miserable death. Jonathan Dollimore considers Hippolita's failed revolutionary act as a "humanist transgression" (56), namely a form of "transgressive reinscription [...] a mode of transgression which seeks not an escape from existing structures, but rather a subversive reinscription within them" (57). However, patriarchal system punishes her by denouncing as a debased woman, a "lustful woman in her husband's time", a "she-devil", "foolish woman", a "thing of malice" (215) and by conniving at her pathetic death, even though she is the one who is already oppressed and exploited, whereas it lets Soranzo, the evil-doer, move on his life as a nobleman.

Despite his earlier wicked life in which he woos a married woman with promises, refuses to acknowledge his affair when asked to abide by his word and atrociously watches the death of the woman whom he has abused before his eyes, Soranzo does not hesitate to get furious with Annabella and impeaches her with something she has done before their marriage. Rather, he misdemeanors and threatens her to "rip up [her] heart", "tear the prodigious lecher joint by joint", "hew [her flesh] to hreds", "pull [her] hair" and "drag [her] lust-belepered body through the dust" (219) by branding her with several derogative epithets such as "strumpet", "whore of whores", "damnable monster", "harlot" and "quean" (217-219). According to Larry S. Champion, the "grim irony" of the play lies in "the parallels with his own earlier relationship and his assumptions that he bears no responsibility and no guilt for his previous sexual actions"; thus, "despite the general physical revulsion against an incestuous relationship" one should not overlook the sinful deeds of "this hypocritical and brutal legitimate husband" (79).

Albeit her husband's rage, Annabella is strong enough to withstand him and refuse to give her lover's name. While Giovanni blames fate for what has happened, she displays a much more courageous act by acknowledging the responsibility for things she has done. When her husband charges her with infidelity and dishonesty, for instance, she does not defy his charges much as she defies his urge to unveil the name of the illegitimate child's father, saying that "You shall never know. [...] Never; if you do, let me be cursed" (218). As Champion puts it, "[s]he repudiates the 'false joys' for which 'conscience now stands up against [her] lust / With depositions character'd in guilt' (v, i, 2, 9-10). She would now accept total guilt for the 'black offense' (1. 21), if by doing so Giovanni might escape 'the torment of an un-controlled flame' (1. 23)" (79). Moreover, she repents for her guilt not because of her husband's threats but because of the horrors of hell that she fears to face with. Giovanni is, however, terribly unwilling to exhibit such a courage to take responsibility. For him, it is the hell itself to "endure this sight, to see [his] love Clipped by another [...] stand the horror of ten thousand deaths" (213) and it is the fate that makes him bear incestuous feelings towards his sister and brings misery to his life by separating her from him.

Much as most critics praise Giovanni's heroic stature in the play, he is indeed "the single-tracked man of passion" (Heilman, 1986: 43) whose feelings towards Annabella "negat[e] all other imperatives that belong to human wholeness" (ibid. 41) while it is Annabella herself who "is the essential tragic figure, inclusive enough in her humanity to feel strongly, indeed, both the proscribed passion and the imperative that proscribes it" (ibid. 41). Throughout the play, as opposed to the portrayal of her brother as obsessed with his incestuous love, living with the fear and agony of losing her, isolated from society, egocentric and coward to bear the consequences of his choices, Annabella is a strong female character who is much more aware of the requirements of the society that she rejects and the consequences of her acts and who gets the nerve up to claim the responsibility for what she has done even if she knows that she will be severely punished. No matter how frequently her presence is "overshadowed by the physical and verbal presence of the male characters, particularly her brother", her experience "is ultimately the only lucid, sane and self-aware one of the play, one which expresses itself most strikingly in her final confrontation with her insane brother" (Warnock, 2000: 265). Even though she is not given "the long soliloquies of Giovanni and is physically passive through the play, [it is Annabella], not Giovanni, [who] undergoes a spiritual and psychological transformation and dies with an increased degree of self-knowledge" (ibid 265).

Ensuring his male authority by having the sexual possession of his sister and removing the ambiguity of his position in the patriarchal hierarchy by assuming the role of a husband, Giovanni feels betrayed when Annabella pushes him back to the role of a brother, hence attempting to diminish his authority, through her marriage to Soranzo. This results in him an outrageous jealousy, anger, a massive desire to regain his previous position and an urge to regard Soranzo as his rival. Before Soranzo as a husband performs his duty to punish Annabella, Giovanni takes action to escape from the lack of identity and authority associated with brotherhood. Thus,

Annabella becomes the object of this double male oppression. In the final act of the play, Giovanni stabs her heart out and declares his triumph over Soranzo as the following:

Thus die, and die by me, and by my hand!
 Revenge is mine; honour doth love command.
 [...]

 Soranzo, thou hast miss'd thy aim in this!
 I have prevented now thy reaching plots,
 And kill'd a love, for whose each drop of blood
 I would have pawn'd my heart. Fair Annabella,
 How over-glorious art thou in thy wounds,
 Triumphant over infamy and hate!
 Shrink not, courageous hand, stand up, my heart,
 And boldly act my last, and greater part! (234-235)

Giovanni reclaims his power by killing his sister and gouging out her heart on which female desire is inscribed. Patriarchal injustice manifests itself once more by summing the whole event as “*Tis pity she's a whore*” (239) and closing the case. Exeunt. The tragic end of Annabella as an unconventional and revolutionary female figure is best clarified with Julie Sutherland's following words:

If Annabella is a whore-rather, if society has created a moral structure that labels Annabella's activities 'whorish' –she is not a solitary moral pariah. If she is plagued with conscience because her choices run contrary to society's ideals and its perception of natural law, others have come before her who are similarly plagued. If she questions her expected submission to fate, she can rest assured she is not the first to have cried out in anger at the stars. Annabella is one of a group of women who have been portrayed in literature as outcasts who have not been cast out silently, without question and self-analysis. (2004: 205)

'Tis Pity She's a Whore, to conclude, provides us with a realistic portrait of patriarchal Renaissance society in which we observe not only the inevitability of patriarchal enforcement but also the glimpse of revolutionary female agency, notwithstanding its tragic consequences. All women in the play attempt to trespass patriarchal boundaries: Annabella with her incestuous relationship; Hippolita with her deviant vengeful nature; and Putana, a minor character functioning as Annabella's confidante, with her amorality that goes against chastity prescribed on women by men. However, all these three women' venture eventuates in their dreadful deaths: Annabella is horribly murdered by her brother and her heart is demounted and stuck into his dagger; Hippolita is poisoned with the drink that she plans to kill Soranzo and her death is cold-bloodedly watched by men including Soranzo himself and Vasques who switches the drink; Putana's eyes are gouged out and she is burned to death after Vasques forces her to declare Annabella's lover. Much as the end of the play is tragic and hopeless, it is noteworthy that it portrays the representation of assertive female figure and sexual libertine seeking her own independence, self-autonomy and female identity free of the constraints imposed by patriarchal society, which can be regarded an indicator of the emergence of revolutionary movements to question woman's secondary position within social hierarchy in Renaissance society.

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