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The Ladies Dreadful: Abjection and Female Agency in Early Modern English Drama

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The Ladies Dreadful: Abjection and Female Agency
In Early Modern English Drama

by

Nicole E. Batchelor

A Dissertation

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

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in

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The Ladies Dreadful:

Abjection and Female Agency in Early Modern English Drama

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how the female characters of several important seventeenth-century plays both resist and participate in the patriarchal fantasy of the female Other. I take as my theoretical framework Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, which is the state of rejecting what the subject fears will collapse the boundaries between self and Other. Each dissertation chapter explores a central female character's appropriation of the various constructions of the patriarchal abject Other as a means of resistance: the first examines how Beatrice in Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622) utilizes the construction of the abject Other to uncover the source of her domination, affording her the pleasure of exposing the illusion of a stable and autonomous male subjectivity; the second, discussing John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633), explores how Annabella's incestuous desire unintentionally aids her in curbing Giovanni's objectification and mastery of her body and identity to sustain his subjectivity; and the third demonstrates through Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1613) how authoring a grotesque chivalric romance affords Nell the means to express her repressed maternal ambivalence and also fulfill her desire to become a subject on her own terms.

INTRODUCTION

The use of psychoanalytic theory to analyze Renaissance texts has been controversial. According to early modern scholar Lee Patterson, psychoanalysis is an anachronistic lens patronizingly wielded by literary critics as a foolproof tool to analyze the period and its people, allowing them to explore and understand medieval culture better than it understood itself. He passionately argues that literary critics who use psychoanalytic theory to produce close readings of medieval literary texts are not only condescending, but also arrogant enough to regard the psychoanalysis' approach as "the pipeline to the truth" (464 Patterson). Patterson believes that that using psychoanalysis as a lens through which to read the early modern period results in the misrecognition of the early modern culture and the meanings it produced rather than encountering the real middle ages. For Patterson, literary critics employing psychoanalysis as a lens fail to recover, as new historicists Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt phrase it, a "touch of the real"(31), because they misemploy a "dialogic method of therapy to a one-way analysis of fictional characters who must stand mute before their analyst" (Patterson 644). Psychoanalysis is not a vehicle to the truth of the early modern period for literary critics but, according to Patterson, it is "in fact an ambulance or perhaps even a hearse" (655). Patterson believes that psychoanalysis is a dead literary methodology because scholars who utilize it do not seek a rapprochement with the practices of new historicism.

Unlike Lee Patterson, Stephen Greenblatt believes that psychoanalysis is not “exactly an anachronism,” nevertheless he expresses great ambivalence regarding the effectiveness of it a literary tool to analyze Renaissance texts. In “Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture,” Greenblatt argues that psychoanalytic interpretations of early modern literature are both belated and marginal because of the way in which the Renaissance and its texts conceived of identity as a mask, or social construction, fashioned by various public discourses and complex social phenomena (143). Greenblatt contends that, “in the company of literary criticism and new history, psychoanalysis can redeem its belatedness only when it historicizes its own procedures” (142). Instead of leaving this work to psychoanalytic theorists to historicize their methodologies, Greenblatt historicizes psychoanalysis for them, asserting that it is the “historical outcome of certain characteristics of Renaissance strategies,” and in doing so he renders psychoanalysis redundant (144). According to Greenblatt, Renaissance literary works provided a theory of subjectivity that psychoanalytic theorists fail to acknowledge because they privilege their procedures without considering the historical and cultural milieu in that produced a theory of subjectivity. Ultimately, Greenblatt suggests that new historicism is the best vehicle to understanding the origin and formation of early modern subjectivity because it closely examines the historical conditions that fashioned it, allowing literary critics to recover an available real that is beyond the scope of psychoanalysis.

In her work, *Staging the Gaze*, Barbara Freedman argues that Greenblatt actually demonizes psychoanalysis as a monstrously ineffective method that must be destroyed:

“Reasoning like Brutus on Caesar’s death, Greenblatt envisions psychoanalysis as a serpent’s egg that must be killed in the shell” (36). While I agree with Freedman that Greenblatt’s work betrays some fear of psychoanalysis, I believe that he desires to quash and contain it rather than seek its demise. I think that Greenblatt’s gesture to render psychoanalysis as redundant expresses his ambivalence toward psychoanalysis. On one hand, Greenblatt advocates that scholars “do not abandon attempts at psychologically deep readings of Renaissance texts,” suggesting but not arguing, that the application of psychoanalytic models may offer close reading techniques. Yet, Greenblatt’s construction of psychoanalysis as superfluous and redundant underscores his loathing of it, as Freedman’s quote illustrates, as an abject mode of critical practice that cannot productively help scholars analyze early modern texts. In doing so, Greenblatt constructs new historicism as the privileged critical practice that can “recover a confident conviction of reality” in the stead of psychoanalysis’ (always) belated, ahistorical, and abstract theories which would result “in more than one sense, the end of the Renaissance” (3, 131).

Like early modern scholars Barbara Freedman, Cynthia Marshall and Elizabeth Bellamy, I believe that Patterson and Greenblatt have mischaracterized psychoanalysis as a baroque theory from whose ahistorical taint the Renaissance and literary criticism require protection. Within “Psychoanalyzing the Prepsychoanalytic [sic] Subject,” Cynthia Marshall convincingly argues that Patterson and Greenblatt achieved this by constructing new historicism, “with its appeal of empiricism and the burgeoning availability of texts and discovered data lent historicism an aura of truth,” as a pragmatic

alternative to psychoanalysis (1207). Like Marshall, I believe that psychoanalysis is not essentially indifferent to the claims of history but rather can contribute to a rapprochement with new historicism without modifying historical evidence and literary works to exactly mirror psychoanalytic templates. Like new historicism, a psychoanalytical approach analyzes surviving texts of a past culture, emphasizing how the close reading of their language is the key to understanding the culture's ideologies that produced a nascent subject. I like to believe that my project seeks this rapprochement between psychoanalysis and new historicism creating a productive critical practice which functions as more than just a mirror that reproduces the theories of sex, gender, and identity of the early modern period. I believe that a partnership between psychoanalysis and new historicism enables my project to critique early modern ideologies of sex and gender that construct women as abject Others.

Through an analysis of seventeenth century discourses and their constructions of the abject female Other, my dissertation analyzes how they contributed to identity structures that *The Changeling* (1622), *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore* (1633), and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1613) promoted. Carefully attending to the historical specificity of the texts' language and its meanings, I attempt to forge a dialogue between new historicist methodologies and Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories that enables me to analyze and better understand early modern discourses of sex, gender and subjectivity. Within this dissertation, I cautiously try to avoid applying her psychoanalytic theory as an exact road map, or "a pipeline to the truth," which results in anachronistic explanations of seventeenth-century narratives of subjectivity (464 Patterson). Rather, I attempt to

employ Kristeva's theories as lens that provides close reading techniques that work in conjunction with the historical context of the period, which offers explanations for why and how early modern constructions of the abject female Other is a necessary discursive prop to produce the illusion of stable and autonomous masculinity. Kristeva's terms do not merely repeat or translate what these seventeenth-century plays and their rhetorical structures accomplish, revealing the specious nature of Greenblatt's claim that psychoanalytic theory is redundant since it is merely "the outcome of certain Renaissance strategies" (144). Rather her psychoanalytic theories contribute to helping readers better understand the desires, anxieties, and frustrations that contribute to the constructions and changes in early modern fantasies of sex, gender, and subjectivity.

Within this dissertation, "The Ladies Dreadful: Abjection and Female Agency in Early Modern English Drama," I argue that the female characters in several important seventeenth-century English dramas both resist and embrace the patriarchal narrative of the abject female Other. This activity offers these characters a mode of limited agency to resist the patriarchal gender roles that confine and harm them. I take as my theoretical framework Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, which is the state of rejecting what the subject fears will collapse the boundaries between self and Other. The abject, however, is too much a part of the self for rejection to be entirely possible. Just as we depend upon our blood to live but are horrified when it spills from our bodies, so do the male characters in early modern drama depend upon the abject female Other to construct their identities but are threatened when their dependence is made apparent. Each dissertation chapter explores a central female character's appropriation of the various constructions of

the patriarchal abject Other as a means of resistance: the first examines how Beatrice in Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622) utilizes the construction of the abject Other to uncover the source of her domination, affording her the pleasure of exposing the illusion of a stable and autonomous male subjectivity; the second, discussing John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633), explores how Annabella's incestuous desire unintentionally aids her in curbing Giovanni's objectification and mastery of her body and identity to sustain his subjectivity; and the third demonstrates through Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1613) how authoring a grotesque chivalric romance affords Nell the means to express her repressed maternal ambivalence and also fulfill her desire to become a subject on her own terms.

Within Chapter 1 of my dissertation, I examine how Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling* presents its principal male character, Alsemero, as openly anxious about his dependency upon Beatrice to establish his subjectivity. I argue that the play exposes Alsemero's linguistic efforts to construct Beatrice as a spiritual womb of "man's creation," denying not only her procreative power, but also her discursive power to construct her sense of self. Alsemero desires to construct Beatrice as a non-everything that is useful to his narcissistic need for the production of his subjectivity. In addition, I elucidate Beatrice's resistance to Alsemero's construction of her as an ideal projection of the male Self by displaying how she lays bare men's dependency upon the female Other to determine their subjectivity. Through the lenses of Luce Irigaray's and Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories, I argue that Beatrice fights

to write her own body and subjectivity by rewriting the potentially progressive masochistic masculinity of her servant, DeFlores, into a sadistic masculinity. Initially Beatrice rewrites DeFlores' masculinity to stave off the use of her body as a text and lesson for men, but the play exposes her desire to adopt the sadistic masculinity that she engenders. It is the play's connection between the production of language and the procreativity of the female body that produces male anxiety over "monstrous" female self-fashioning. On the surface, the play appears to quash Beatrice's discursive power since it creates a violent identity that simultaneously imitates and destabilizes the patriarchal status quo; however, the play provides Beatrice with the power to expose the construction of Woman-as-fiction through a mimetic performance of "Woman." The play expresses anxiety over Beatrice's multiplicity, her desire to be both masculine and feminine; nonetheless, I contend that *The Changeling* reveals how early modern patriarchy sets up a self-destructive mode of subject formation that depends on its monstrous construction of the abject female Other. This failed construction plunges the male characters into an unproductive melancholic crisis, leaving them to grieve over their inability to achieve even the illusion of an autonomous male subjectivity.

Interestingly, some of the Renaissance female characters do not combat the patriarchal gender hierarchy by re-writing masculinity and femininity. Rather, these characters appropriate the abject representations to provide themselves with a sense of agency and power denied to them by authoritative male figures. In Chapter 2 of my dissertation, I explore how in John Ford's *Tis' a Pity She's a Whore* the character Annabella allows her brother, Giovanni, to construct her as an abject text—an incestuous

whore—because it allows her to rebel against patriarchy’s hetero-normative sexuality and its rigid institution of marriage that limits and confines her desires. Giovanni constructs Annabella as a maternal substitute as a means to disavow his grief over the loss of his mother and the sense of self that she provided for him. His incestuous relationship with Annabella allows him to rebel against the symbols and representatives of the symbolic world, specifically father figures and their institutions. For Giovanni, identity is hopelessly entwined with the abject material body and identity of the Mother. Hence the patriarchal culture’s substitution for the loss of the Mother, language, does not provide him with the sense of wholeness and unity that a child receives from its bodily connection with the Mother. Giovanni declares patriarchal discourse and its customs “peevish sounds” that do not provide him with a unified self. Thus, Giovanni turns to Annabella to fill the maternal void. The chapter explores how Giovanni re-writes Annabella as an abject maternal substitute that will recover for him the subjectivity that the ineffective patriarchal institution of religion cannot offer him. He constructs Annabella as a sexualized religious idol, an erotic and nurturing maternal force. I argue that Giovanni’s construction of Annabella as an abject site of incestuous maternal desire helps Giovanni stave off the process of mourning the Mother and consequently a disconnectedness from the Self. More importantly, the chapter explores through the lens of psychoanalytic theories of sexuality how the abject feminine unintentionally aids Annabella in achieving a limited agency that allows her not only to resist the early modern patriarchal norms of female sexuality and gender but also curb Giovanni’s objectification and mastery of her body and subjectivity. In doing so, Annabella does not

assuage his anxiety over the loss of a unified self, but heightens it by resisting his control of her body and her desires. Ultimately, Giovanni's murder of Annabella and their unborn child serve as the disturbing actualization of patriarchy's irrational fears of the abject female Other. *Tis' Pity She's A Whore* expresses a sense of horror over patriarchy's appropriation of female generative power to control the reproduction of male identity, causing women and men trauma to their bodies and anguish to their psyches.

Lastly, in Chapter 3 I argue that, within Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Nell's relationship to the chivalric romance speaks to Kristeva's theory regarding literature and abjection because it serves her not only as the means to express her maternal ambivalence, but also it induces a catharsis. Nell authors a grotesque chivalric romance as a means to jettison the abject Other that harms her; she desires to purge her abject status as (m)Other assigned by patriarchy that constructs her as a non-subject. With her literary creation, Nell expresses and fulfills her desire to be a subject (i.e. an author) who is more than just an object working for patriarchy in service of domesticity, motherhood, and childrearing. Nell expresses her maternal ambivalence through the grotesque chivalric romance, which, as Kristeva notes, affords Nell the means to work through her conflicts as a mother so that she is not doomed to act them out further with her real children.

The work of this dissertation seeks to give voice to female characters who defy the values and norms of dominant Western culture. I believe that the work of this dissertation is important in the way it exposes how male characters and, by extension, male playwrights determine for readers what to think about women through their

construction of “Woman.” Through my work I hope to chronicle and interrogate this cultural history as it is presented in the literature of the early modern era because of its part in a long standing tradition of the silencing and exploitation of women. Just as important, I hope that this dissertation contributes to the fields of early modern criticism and feminism by advocating for a more mutual and reciprocal means of identity formation that does not rely on the dehumanizing subject-object structure that oppresses and harms both men and women.

Chapter One

Monstrous Female Self-Fashioning in

The Changeling

And I finally decided that God formed a vile creature when He made woman, and I wondered how such a worthy artisan could have designed to make such an abominable work which, from what they say, is the vessel as well as the refuge and abode of every evil and vice. As I was thinking this, a great unhappiness and sadness welled up in my heart, for I detested myself and the entire feminine sex, as though we were monstrosities in nature and in my lament I spoke these words: Alas, God, why did You not let me be born in the world as a man...

Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405)

The 1615 murder trial of Frances Howard is often referenced in recent criticism of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling* as one of the sources of inspiration for its eponymous tragic heroine, Beatrice. Often contemporary scholars discuss the way in which Frances Howard's murder of Thomas Overbury because of his vocal opposition to her marriage to his friend, Robert Carr, incited cultural anxiety over female desire and agency. For Frances Howard's gruesome poisoning of Thomas Overbury, Cristina Malcolmson notes within "Politics and Gender in *The Changeling*," that Frances was depicted as the masculine woman within the pamphlet *Hic Mulier or the Man-Woman* since such an act of aggression resembled the "man in action by pursuing revenge" (146). According to Malcolmson, *Hic Mulier* interpreted Frances Howard's act of gender defiance as possessing the power to transform her sex; her masculine behavior constituted her as a threatening shape-shifter that defied sex and gender boundaries of

17th century England. Whether directly informed or excited by the scandal of Frances Howard, the title of Middleton and Rowley's play functions to construct women's bodies and desires as a shifting and unstable thing that poses a danger to men. Nevertheless, an ideological aim of the construction of Frances Howard's transgressions in *Hic Mulier* and Beatrice's repulsive self-fashioning in *The Changeling* is for both women and men to internalize the idea that the female body is unstable and its unchecked desires are monstrous. My analysis of Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* critically examines this discourse and its construction of woman as an abject Other, examining how this construction affects the way of thinking and behavior of the male characters and Beatrice. I will argue that *The Changeling* lays bare through Beatrice the ways in which the patriarchal culture's construction of the abject female Other is a necessary, but threatening, discursive prop to producing and maintaining male subjectivity and its power. Although this patriarchal linguistic prison ultimately destroys Beatrice, she utilizes the construction of the abject female Other to uncover the source of her domination, which affords her the pleasure of exposing the illusion of a stable and autonomous male subjectivity.

The very title of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's play, *The Changeling*, expresses immense anxiety over the gender transgressions of its tragic heroine, Beatrice, who not only wishes "creation had formed her a man" but actually attempts to *change* her gender identity (II, ii. 110). Two centuries before Middleton and Rowley's Beatrice acted on her wish to change her gender identity, Christine de Pisan illustrated, within *The Book of the City of Ladies*, the lasting and powerful affects of patriarchal discourses and their

various constructions of the female sex as monstrous. Like Christine de Pisan, Beatrice internalizes the female sex as “an abominable work,” “a vile creature” and “the vessel, as well as the refuge, and abode of every evil and vice” inducing a self-loathing that shapes her desire to possess both the “perfect[ion]” and agency of man (Pisan 6-7). Throughout the play Beatrice attempts to embody the male gender identity which she perceives as “the very soul of freedom” providing her the “power to oppose [her] loathings, remove them forever from [her] sight” (II, ii. 109-113). Beatrice desires the power and agency to oppose her father, Vermandero, who treats her as a commodity to elevate his socioeconomic position. Although Beatrice never publicly voices her disapproval of the arranged marriage to Alonzo de Piracquo, her silence suggests her inability to voice any objection against her father’s “will” (I.i. 219). Within the play, Beatrice doesn’t directly express her desires to Vermandero, but rather she must convey her feelings in asides suggesting that strength and force of her father’s will.¹ Beatrice vehemently opposes the arranged marriage Vermandero brokers between her and Alonzo de Piracquo to secure for himself a profitable dynastic alliance. Vermandero does not recognize Beatrice as possessing an independent subjectivity, but rather regards her as an object with the means “to bind [Alonzo de Piracquo] to him “as fast as this tie can hold him” (I, i. 218).

Vermandero’s inflexible desire to “have [his] will else” inflames Beatrice’s feelings of

¹ Within the play, Beatrice acknowledges that, at one time, she posed no objection to the arranged marriage between herself and Alonzo Piracquo. Within an aside, Beatrice declares that her senses failed to recognize her desired mate, Alsemero: “Sure, mine eyes were mistaken: This was the man was meant me” (I.i.83-84). The quote indicates that at the very least she yielded to this arranged marriage, and she even believed Alonzo to be an attractive potential husband. Yet, Beatrice’s longing to choose her own partner, Alsemero, underscores the ways in which her eyes were in part conditioned by her father’s “will” to see Alonzo de Piracquo as a desirable husband (I.i.219).

rage over her impotence in the face of paternal authority (I, i. 218-19. In her aside, Beatrice verbally resists her father's patriarchal control vowing to "want mine," meaning her "will," if Vermandero should execute his matrimonial plans. Not only does the aside convey Beatrice's lack of voice, but the word choice expresses her powerlessness in the face of patriarchal power. Her very use of the word *want* communicates that *will* is a privilege of the patriarchal culture denied to women. Beatrice identifies *will* as the patriarchal privilege of power and authority to self-govern one's identity, body and sexual desires. She recognizes the body and its desires as the property of the Self. Thus, Beatrice's reiteration of *want* marks her need for recognition from her father as a sexual subject with her own plans and desires.

Vermandero's statement of will serves as a form of verbal violence affecting Beatrice's self-conception. Consequently, she internalizes the concept of "*will*" as a patriarchal privilege of the male sex. She tries to protect her psyche and identity from the violent verbal acts committed against her. Through the incorporation of the male gender identity, Beatrice tries to evade objectification and subsequent victimization at the hands of her father. Refusing to play the traditional role of the passive and submissive female, Beatrice actively and aggressively attempts to fashion her own subjectivity as masculine.² As a result, she incorporates the notion of "will," literally trying to embody the male gender identity so she can achieve control of her identity, body and pleasures. Imitating her father's resolve to will, Beatrice attempts to replicate the patriarchal violence

²I borrow the term "self-fashioning" from Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and Karen Newman's *Fashioning Femininity*. I allude to and am indebted to their respective new historicist works that inform my examination of the ways in which male and female subjectivity are constructed within Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* through the means of various discourses.

committed against her subjectivity and body; she strategizes a way to dominate and control the male body and subjectivity through the murder of her husband-to-be. Working within the social conditions that oppress her, Beatrice utilizes her class position and beauty to financially persuade and sexually manipulate her lovestruck servant, DeFlores, so that she can marry the man of her choice, Alsemero. DeFlores' murder of Alonzo allows her, although by proxy, the ability to dominate a male body by robbing it of subjectivity and power. Although Beatrice does not kill Alonzo herself, nevertheless she is the agent of his death. Beatrice's aggression and hostility toward the fiancée that Vermandero chose for her underscores her desire to be something more than a passive and powerless female. Beatrice's masculine behavior is an act of gender defiance that compels her to replicate the toxic masculinity that "wants [its] will or *else*" (I.i.218-219). Treating Alonzo like a disposable object, she replicates her dehumanization at the hands of patriarchy. Beatrice's gender transgression provides her with the means to escape submission to her father, allowing her to marry Alsemero.

Beatrice internalizes the patriarchal model of masculinity that surrounds her, but as a result she is still viewed by the male characters around her as a duplicitous, sexually active and rebellious female. Alsemero states:

What an opacous body had that moon
That last changed on us! Here is beauty changed
To ugly whoredom; here, servant-obediance
To a master-sin, imperious murder;
I, a supposed husband, changed embraces
With wantonness, but that was paid before...
(V.iii. 196-201)

He scripts her body as an ominous and ambiguous force that naturally alters its body into something gross and licentious. The classically ideal body is closed, static, stable, sleek, and most emphatically male. Alsemero writes Beatrice as a threatening body that is not closed, static, stable and sleek but rather she is defined by a loss of boundaries. Her body is open, excessive and grotesque; Alsemero depicts her as a body of process, constant becoming and transformation³. Alsemero's purposely subsumes Beatrice to an irregular and lascivious body in the attempt to write female identity and sexuality as a threatening force that is "servant-[obedient]" to its bodily appetites. He references the locus of Beatrice's desire is her "ticklish heel" which suggests that she is not only easily swayed by bodily sensations but communicates the unsteadiness that her desire creates (V.iii. 46). Yet, Alsemero poses her sexuality as more dangerous than the mere threat of unsteadiness; he conflates her libidinal desires with death. Upon learning Beatrice's violent desire to sexually possess him led to the death of Alonzo, Alsemero plots her "bed as a charnel" with "sheets [that serve] as shrouds for murdered carcasses" (V. iii. 83-84). Her sexuality provides her with an agency that is not only hazardous but a source of horror; her body has the power to devour men. In an attempt to assuage his anxiety, Alsemero tries to contain Beatrice's act of self definition by divorcing her behaviors and desires from the masculine and by re-aligning her body and behaviors with the feminine. Her behaviors and actions performed in the attempt to masculinize her self are

³ The definitions of the classical and grotesque bodies are informed by and indebted to Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* and Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* which examine the ways in which the body is inscribed with specific meanings and, ultimately, serves as a cultural symbol that reinforces and/or subverts dominant culture.

constructed by Alsemero as not only feminine but abject and even monstrous. Beatrice is a monster whose “ugly whoredom,” or sexual abjection, results in the loss of homosocial bonds and, more importantly, the loss of Alsemero’s identity. Beatrice merely provides Alsemero with the illusory status of “a supposed husband”; her sexual activity with her servant DeFlores robs Alsemero of sole sexual ownership of Beatrice which is integral to his sense of gender identity as a husband. Alsemero produces an imaginary monster with his “opacous body” script in an attempt to contain not merely Beatrice’s self-production but to minimize and erase the mobility of her self-fashioning.

The play’s emphasis on Beatrice’s “giddy turning”, or gender fluidity, from the obliging and dutiful daughter to the aggressive and independent masculine-identified figure, constructs her as the “changeling” (I.i.154)⁴. Yet the play does not directly use this nomenclature in regards to Beatrice. The play’s dramatis personae indicates the character, Antonio, as the changeling, but his character does not reflect the play’s usage of the term. The play’s preoccupation with change, transformation and instability

⁴ Within Early Modern scholarship regarding Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s *The Changeling*, numerous critics make a point of arguing for various reasons that Beatrice functions as the titular character. Within her article, *Women’s Division of Experience*, Ania Loomba argues that Beatrice serves as the play’s “changeling,” and this appellation emblemizes her “giddy turning” (IV.ii.46), or gender fluidity, kindled by her internalization of the contradictory roles of patriarchal femininity (50). In a similar vein, Sara Eaton’s “Beatrice-Joanna and the Rhetoric of Love” argues that “Beatrice’s internalizes and reflects the inherent contradictions in male perceptions of women [that] [are] couched in the rhetoric of Courtly Love” which designate her as the changeling (276). The changeling that Marjorie Garber identifies within her “Insincerity of Women,” is female pleasure, specifically Beatrice’s pleasure, which eludes male appropriation and control (35). Reinforcing Garber’s argument in her article, “A Woman Dipped in Blood,” Naomi Liebler recounts Garber’s central claim that “despite the dramatis personae’s assignment of [the changeling] to Antonio, it is Beatrice-Joanna “[who] [is] the real changeling [that] threatens patriarchy with her power to withhold” (376). In “Women’s Complicity With Their Rapists,” Deborah Burks offers her reading that Beatrice-Joanna operates as the play’s changeling owing to her “successful evasion of Alsemero’s investigations [which] testifies to the “elusive and undecipherable [quality] [of] women’s bodies” (179). Christina Malcolmson asserts in her article entitled, “Politics and Gender in *The Changeling*,” that Middleton and Rowley’s title refers not just to Beatrice’s metamorphosis into a monster but it also indicates “Isabella’s [ability] to fully protect her integrity” (145).

constructs for the reader a working definition, similar to that of the Oxford English Dictionary, of a changeling as an individual who is changeable and inconstant. Interestingly, the OED's definition speaks to the play's anxious construction of a changeling. The OED delineates changeling as not merely "one given to change or an inconstant person", but complicates the definition classifying a changeling as "a waverer, turncoat and renegade". The play's construction of Beatrice's inconstancy is marked by this discourse of betrayal and rebellion that the OED delineates. A marginal character of the subplot, Antonio does not embody the play's definition of a changeling. Although Antonio feigns madness in order to seduce Isabella, Albius' wife, he does not alter his identity in his performance of a madman. Although Antonio learns a lesson from his failed seduction, it does not transform his subjectivity: "I was changed too, from a little ass as I was to a great fool as I am; and had like to ha' been changed to the gallows but that you know my innocence always excuses" (V.iii. 204-206). Antonio does not undergo a transformation or a change but merely achieves a form of self-awareness about his stupidity which is represented in the previous line as a thing of constancy. Even by the end of the play, his stealthy seduction of a married woman is not represented as a transgression, but an error incurred by his "innocence" (i.e. foolish idiocy) which "excuses [him]" (V.iii. 206). Antonio's usurpation of patriarchal authority is merely chastised, yet Beatrice's self-fashioning and sexual independence is demonized as an "ugly whoredom" because she rebels against the patriarchally defined female gender role (V.iii.198).

In fact, it is the script of Beatrice drafted by Alsemero that prompts Antonio's revelation. As Alsemero completes this opacous body script of Beatrice, he turns to Tomazo, Alonzo's brother, declaring: "Your change is come too, from an ignorant wrath to knowing friendship. Are there any more on's?" (V.iii.202-203) Alsemero encourages the men around him to treat Beatrice as a text from which one can learn a lesson. His textualization of Beatrice cements her as the changeling; she becomes the textual yardstick by which men measure the immorality of their social and sexual transgressions. Beatrice is relegated to the function of a mirror for the male characters of the play. Beatrice is the "deformed" and "ugly" changeling that the men must avoid becoming. Alsemero's process of "othering Beatrice" as a threatening, unstable and abject changeling serves the production of all subjectivity as male.

Beatrice's textual body serves not merely as a mirror, it also possesses totemistic value for the male characters; she becomes the text through which men forge familial bonds. Despite Beatrice's death severing the familial connection between Alsemero and Vermandero, Alsemero offers "yet a son's duty living" if he would "accept it" (V.iii. 216-217). Even in the epilogue, Alsemero anxiously reiterates the need for the men to stave off grieving their losses by cementing male-male bonds with each other. He suggests Tomazo accept Vermandero as a substitute brother and for Vermandero to accept him as a substitute for the loss of his daughter, Beatrice. Alsemero further urges the audience to be complicit in the textual containment of Beatrice so a fraternal order can be re-born. Alsemero asks the audience to use their smiles which have the power to allow Tomazo, Vermandero and him to "reconcile their griefs" (V. iii. 224-22). Alsemero

requests the audience to aim the power of their smiles in manufacturing not only Beatrice's alterity but her invisibility. Within the epilogue, Alsemero stages his hysteria over Beatrice's self-fashioning directly to the audience. Alsemero's appeal for symbolic familial substitutions in the stead of lost family members is a dramatic response to threatened loss and instability. Beatrice's monstrous self-fashioning leads to the deaths of men, the end of a patriarchal legacy and the destruction of male-male bonds. Yet, it is Beatrice who unites Alsemero to these other men through her attempts to act like the male sex; her monstrous acts were the catalyst to his new fraternal order. Alsemero is so horrified by his dependence upon Beatrice to produce and maintain his and other male characters' sense of subjectivity, that he tries to hide and erase this dependence upon an Other, a changeling. The absence of a female figure, even the patriarchally proper Isabella, within Alsemero's revised kinship structure discloses his hysteria over the presence of the feminine as a potentially destructive and harmful force to male identity and power. Alsemero desperately attempts to deny the patriarchal dependence upon the female body to produce male subjectivity, strengthen male homosocial bonds and generate kinship structures because Beatrice exposes the fragility of male subjectivity. He constructs Beatrice as an abject changeling to contain and diminish her threatening power of exposing the illusion of male subjectivity as stable and autonomous. The anxious mapping of the grotesque upon Beatrice and his attempt to render invisible the dependence of male subjectivity upon a female Other exposes the patriarchal hysteria over the loss of subjectivity. For Alsemero depicting Beatrice as self contained would result not only in a loss of identity, but the willing divesture of mastery and authority.

Not only does the play depict male hysteria over female self-fashioning, but also contemporary criticism of Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* replicates this hysteria. In his "Folly and Madness in *The Changeling*," Joost Daalder's criticism replicates the male character's anxious response to Beatrice's agency, drawing on the iconography of the female grotesque cultivated by Alsemero. Reflecting the gender politics of the play, Daalder is complicit in the work of the male characters by further constructing Beatrice as an abject Other driven mad by her unconscious sexual desires to obscure the ways in which the male characters and patriarchal institutions are responsible for creating this "sick mind" (Daalder 15). Daalder's reading of Beatrice derives from his close reading of her death scene, his reliance upon the OED's 17th century definition of "changeling" and, most importantly, his belief that the play's madhouse scenes function as the key to actively interpreting Beatrice as "an ugly, insane changeling" (18). Daalder argues that Beatrice interprets her death literally as a necessary exsanguination that purges her polluted blood "for [the] better health" of the patriarchal body of society. For Daalder, Beatrice's speech unveils Antonio's function as the dramatic device that highlights not only how the subplot and the main plot are ironically related, but also reveals that "she is the changeling, not Antonio, to whom that role is assigned in the *dramatis personae*" (17,19). Even Daalder's use of the OED as a form of support to validate the connective tissues that he creates between Beatrice's death speech and the subplot's madhouse scenes is used to rescue the male characters from the recognition of their patriarchal bodies as the source of the "bad blood." Focusing on the 17th century definition of "changeling," Daalder skews its definition, imposing upon the play a

misreading that the play does not support. In what Daalder calls an “ironic twist by the dramatists,” instead of the fairies leaving an ugly or mentally deficient child in the place of a normal child, “what the fairies had taken away from Beatrice’s father when she was born was bad blood” (18). According to Daalder, the fairies magnanimously conducted a magical, medicinal procedure drawing from Vermandero polluted blood but leaving it within Beatrice allowing him to remain sane and normal. Although the play references the fantastic world of the fairies (III.iii.49), it does not depict the fairies as characters who motivate the plot or influence the actions of characters, underscoring Daalder’s reading as an unsupportable stretch of the imagination.⁵ Daalder ignores that it is Vermandero who “gives birth” to this bad blood, which is, after all, not a natural byproduct of her birth but rather it is socially generated by the paternal behavior and patriarchal constraints that Vermandero imposes upon Beatrice’s self-fashioning and sexuality. Daalder’s narrow employment of the 17th century definition and his revisionist efforts to redefine the term, changeling, do not validate his claim. Daalder imposes this definition of changeling upon Beatrice to conflate the female body with the abject and madness, thereby constituting the male body as normative, clean and sane. Vermandero survives the mad, contagious “bad blood” of Beatrice thanks, not to the fairies, but to the scholarly efforts of Daalder, who divorces Vermandero from such abjection by cloaking the origins of the grotesque.

⁵ In 3.3, Franciscus greets Isabella exclaiming “hail, bright Titania.” Although this is a direct reference to William Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Franciscus does not persist with this allusion to the Queen of the Fairies to construct a parallel between Isabella and Titania. Daalder’s argument builds itself upon this flimsy reference to Shakespeare’s play which features the 17th century’s definition of a changeling as a [mentally deficient] child in the place of a normal child. However, unlike Franciscus’s persistent reference to and appropriation of the mythology of Tiresias, the self-proclaimed seer references Titania in name only.

Daalder's scholarship on female sexuality in *The Changeling* teeters on the line between cultural conservatism and ideological hysteria. Consequently, I believe a re-examination of the gender politics within the madhouse scenes is worthwhile. Although I find Daalder's analysis of the subplot unconvincing, his claim contending that the subplot serves as the key to reading the main plot is viable. For me, the representations of madness within the subplot are vital in gaining an understanding of the gender and sexuality ideologies of the play. So, too, does Cristina Malcolmson who asserts within her article "The Politics of Gender in *The Changeling*" also suggests that the importance of the madhouse subplot is that it exposes and reinforces the sex and gender politics of the main plot both of which require "the women [to] obey male authorities as madmen obey menacing guards" (149). Malcolmson's analysis of the play's sexual politics defined in the terms of an attack that requires the subjugation of women to constitute male identity is compelling, but what I find most interesting is her underdeveloped observation that the madmen must submit to the phallic, "commanding pizzlies" (i.e. male genitals) of male authorities which fashions them "as tame as ladies (149)." My point here is not to dismiss Malcolmson's statement but to show how it exposes the messy relationship between the abject feminine and queerness since this violence performed by male authority figures results in an eroticized subjugation that leads to the grotesque emasculation of the mad men. Within the madhouse, the male power structure organizes a range of desires and erotic practices that does not merely reinforce heteronormative gender politics, as Malcolmson asserts, but also reflects the indeterminacy and instability of gender and sexuality. I contend that this textual moment, among others in the subplot

and mainplot of *The Changeling* creates a queer landscape through which a range of erotic and non-erotic (i.e. identifications between the sexes) pleasures emerge within the very spaces of repressive patriarchal regimes, like the madhouse, erected to police and closet such pleasures. Within the subplot scenes of *The Changeling*, the madhouse appears to be the site of the abject feminine, which liberates an array of polymorphous pleasures that cause considerable gender trouble. I read these scenes as depicting the abject feminine as a site of queer pleasures which afford individual characters such as Franciscus and Beatrice with the means of resisting a monstrous patriarchy.

Queer Change(ling)s

As a counterfeit madman, Franciscus's gender bending narrative and its relationship to the abject feminine causes anxiety within male and female characters of the subplot. Unaware of Franciscus's performance of madness, Lollio and Isabella act as keepers of the madhouse attempting to contain him by authoring respective texts constructing Franciscus's identity, his pleasures, and his relationship to the abject feminine to serve the heterogeneous needs of patriarchy. In Act 3 of *The Changeling*, Lollio explains to Isabella how the poet, Franciscus, arrived at the Fool's College section of the madhouse:

Isabella: ...How fell he mad? Canst thou tell?

Lollio: For love, mistress; he was a pretty poet too, and that set him forwards first; the muses then forsook him, he ran mad for a chamber maid, yet she was but a

dwarf neither (III. iii. 49-52.)

Lollo's answer to Isabella's question is a loaded reply expressing connections among love, madness, the feminine and the abject. The love-sick poet's desires are depicted as abject; what is dirty, gross, physically bizarre and socially abnormal fascinates Franciscus sexually. Franciscus's abject love-object is marked as grotesque by Lollo because she is a physically non-normative female. Lollo feigns surprise when he finishes his story with... "yet she was but a dwarf neither." Lollo's language expresses a sense of astonishment that a man could love a dwarf, a physically irregular and incomplete woman. So Franciscus's lust for the dwarf chambermaid is mad because it is irrational and disgusting to desire such an abnormal woman. Even her profession as a chambermaid excites further disgust since it requires her to physically labor with the bodily filth of others. The dwarf chambermaid is doubly Othered within this scene to build a sense of fear and loathing within the audience. The abject and the feminine are conflated in this passage, constructing the female body as a physically monstrous and threatening figure with the potential to contaminate and defile man and his sense of reason.

Interestingly, Lollo appears to manufacture this story of mad-love since the play does not indicate the source of this uncanny narrative. He creates a story highlighting a relationship between madness and the abject feminine. Lollo creates a tale to construct an identity for the young poet that deliberately aligns him with the uncleanly feminine. Lollo's fantastic fiction, the dwarf chambermaid, could possibly excite pleasure rather than anxiety since the irregular shape of dwarves were often employed and regarded as

comic figures by dominant culture. However, within *Rabelias and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that laughter can express not just derisive pleasure, but also profound anxiety. Bakhtin asserts that “laughter is ambivalent” since it does not only “deny” and “bury,” but it can “assert” and “revive” various repressed feelings (e.g. fear, disgust, desire, anger, etc.) that a person experiences in the face of grotesque realism (i.e. the material body) (11-12, 18). The concept of grotesque realism, the material body and its abject processes, excites this ambivalent laughter which, according to Bakhtin, renders visible the ways of thinking and feeling that were not just discursively impoverished, but also obscured by the dominant culture (12). Lollo's dwarf chambermaid is a “funny [monstrous]” figure that elicits mirth with her aberrant form, but she also renders visible a sense of dread and disgust over the grotesqueries of the female body (e.g. the genitals, libidinal desires, physical deformity, bodily filth, bodily fluids, aging, etc.) and the foulness of its alterity (49)⁶. Ultimately, this ludicrously frightful dwarf unveils, as Bakhtin claims, Lollo's sense of distress relating to the abject feminine but it also

⁶ Within *Rabelias and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin asserts that [ambivalent] laughter is an indisputable element of grotesque realism (24). Bakhtin argues that this [ambivalent] laughter is not merely produced by the material body and its processes, but that the essential principle of laughter is degradation (21). Degradation is a matter of taking what is “high, spiritual, ideal and abstract” and lowering it to the level of the material body in order to make the subject flesh (19-20). According to Bakhtin degradation is both a destructive and regenerative process that critiques and debunks specific cultural ideologies or values to create new, and necessary, forms of speech and meanings. Bakhtin attributes feminine imagery to grotesque realism and its process of degradation referring to it as a womb that “swallows up” and “devours” but is “always conceiving” (21). Although Bakhtin contends that everyone is implicated within grotesque realism, making its instruments of laughter and degradation democratic tools that empower everyone not just the elite of a society. Rather than utilize this specific principle of Bakhtin's theory, I am more interested in applying his claims regarding the material body and its ability to generate an ambivalent laughter as a lens to examine the specific fears and anxieties that the play's patriarchal figures harbor concerning the feminine and the female Other. Bakhtin's grotesque realism further permits this analysis since the imagery that he cultivates around it aligns the grotesque with the realm of the feminine and the reproductive power of the female body. Bakhtin genders his theory, rooting it in the matrix of maternal function—woman, womb, birth, life and death—which makes it an useful lens to unveil what anxieties and desires inhabit the play's patriarchal construction of the feminine and the female Other.

reinforces Julia Kristeva's theory from her work, *Powers of Horror*, that "laughter is a way of placing or displacing abjection" (8). Lollo's strange narrative invites the audience to feel not only a sense of revulsion over Franciscus's abject appetites that override his masculine reason but also the narrative seems to create a need for him to exclude this feminine Other.

But why does Lollo, with his representation of the chambermaid, desire to incite anxiety within Isabella and the audience over madness and this hideous female body? His text reflects the patriarchal anxiety over the power of the abject feminine to blur and deconstruct gender identity boundaries. Lollo's narrative proposes that madness obscures boundaries between self and Other (i.e. the dwarf chambermaid), thereby debasing and dehumanizing the male poet. Ultimately, the play genders madness as the abject feminine which attempts to collapse sex and gender boundaries. Middleton and Rowley's work echoes Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. Kristeva argues that historically it is the feminine and the female body that is constructed an abject Other by patriarchal cultures to ensure the stability and authority of all subjectivity as male (54-55, 58-59). Women are subsumed to the body and its materials of abjection—defecation, vomit, blood, pus, urine—that are despised and must be rejected by men in order for patriarchy to fashion male subjectivity as clean, stable, proper, whole and intact (Kristeva 53-54). Specifically, it is women's reproductive ability, Kristeva notes, that evokes a fear and horror over the materiality of the female body; this maternal factor constitutes woman as the source of life and subjectivity and the site of death (161). Socially constructed as an archaic (m)other, woman is a malevolent womb and devouring vagina

that threatens to once again (re-)absorb the life and the male identity that it created (Kristeva 77, 64)⁷. Nevertheless just as men depend on blood to live, but are horrified when it spills from their bodies so do men depend upon the abject feminine to construct male subjectivity but are threatened when this dependence is made apparent. Kristeva explains that the abject feminine destabilizes male identity, but nevertheless it is integral to the formation of male subjectivity:

We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger. But also because abjection itself is a composite of judgment and affect, of condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives. Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship... Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate, but an Other who precedes and possesses me and through such possession cause me to be (9-10)

Within the play, madness produces an anxiety over the instability of gender identity that the abject feminine of the dwarf chambermaid highlights. Franciscus's pleasure in the abject feminine emasculates him. Lollo discursively depicts Franciscus as a man infected by a disease that defiles, corrupts and effeminizes him by disintegrating his mental capacity. By Lollo's account "the muses forsook him," making it impossible for Franciscus to actively create and produce the work that defines him as a man (III.iii.50-51). For a writer, the pen functions as a phallus with which men discursively create and

⁷ In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva explains that this fear of (re-)absorption by the abject female Other recalls the "earliest attempts to release the hold of the maternal entity before existing outside of her [body], thanks to the autonomy of language" (13). Ultimately, the mother is the source of subjectivity, but the male child desires to define itself independently. The abject material processes of the body are too much a part of the self to be fully rejected by men. Culturally, women are required by patriarchy to literally and metaphorically embody the abject so that men can achieve this disavowal of such gross materiality.

order the world with their art. This scene wants to produce an anxiety within the audience over man's dependence on an Other to be masculine. Like Beatrice, Franciscus serves as a cautionary tale for the patriarchy; he functions as the handbook on how to fashion a masculine gender identity free of the feminine that threatens to dissolve male subjectivity. Lollo's story justifies patriarchy's textual construction and containment of the abject feminine to constitute male subjectivity, power and authority. Ultimately, his text of Franciscus underscores the patriarchy's need of an Other to establish male subjectivity.

Unwilling to connect Franciscus's lunacy with the abject figure of the dwarf chambermaid, Isabella projects an imaginative cause of her own onto Franciscus:

His conscience is unquiet, sure that was/The cause of this.
A proper gentleman.
(III.iii.60-61)

Isabella refuses to buy Lollo's narrative of mad love because of Franciscus's social status as a poet; she desires to read him as "a proper gentleman," dispossessing him of such dirty and frightful passions unbecoming a man of his social position. More importantly, with her words "a proper gentleman" she discursively reproduces his gender identity shielding Franciscus from the horror of the abject feminine of Lollo's narrative which threatens to reduce him to a non-being—a woman. Instead Isabella believes his creative and imaginative profession as a poet resulted in his "unquiet conscience," that is, his inability to perceive reality from fantasy. Franciscus's persistent poetic allusions to mythical Greek figures construct Isabella's view of him as a "proper gentleman" entrenched in fantastic fictions making the real world for him imperceptible from the

artistic works created by himself or other poets. She constructs madness as the derangement of the imagination rather than madness produced by excessive bodily passion for an abject Other. Isabella discursively defends Franciscus from the taint of Lollo's representation of madness, the dreaded site of sexual difference. Yet like Lollo, Isabella treats Franciscus as a text; she wants to authorize a *cause* to provide a narrative of experience, and hence an identity, for the poor mad man.

Isabella's reaction to her madhouse imprisonment speaks to Michel Foucault's analysis of the institution in *Madness and Civilization*. According to Foucault, the impossible task of the madhouse was swift repression of *unreason*, hiding the shameful desires and deviant behavior of individuals that defied the norms of the culture (Foucault 67-68). Not only were the bodies of the mad organized by the great confinement, but Foucault asserts that by the seventeenth century the discourse of the madman was marginalized and constructed as harmful to reduce the contagion of abject unreason among the populace (Foucault 66). This rite of exclusion identified this troubling discourse not only to punish and purge it, but also to induce a sense of shame to prevent further abject desires and actions of unreason. The madman's discourse of unreason contested the norms of the culture, testing the limits of the normative with speeches promoting the taboo pleasures of unreason thus potentially laying bare the socially constructed apparatus of morality and shame created to socially control individuals. Thus, confinement was necessary to silence the madman's discourse of unreason to maintain the stability of repressive, normative ideologies.

Isabella uses normative gender ideologies to contain the abject unreason even within the space of the madhouse. Lollo's reproduction of the grotesque through his sexually aberrant tale signifies his inability to serve as the authority figure that should police gender boundaries staving off the ambiguity the abject feminine creates. For the ideologies of the play, the madhouse and its keeper, Lollo, are not successful agents of repression. Lollo appears to be tainted by the madness that he is authorized to suppress; his speech serves as tool in the service of mad unreason and its abject feminine pleasures. Lollo does not make an attempt to silence and hide away irregular bodies and images of madness; he believes Franciscus to be an "understanding madman" who poses no great discursive threat to the construction of male subjectivity. Isabella's discourse of reason, however, attempts to divorce both Lollo and Franciscus from Lollo's shameful text of vile and abject passions. Isabella rewrites Lollo's narrative to sever Franciscus' connection to madness, yet she identifies Franciscus as the textual embodiment of the discourse of madness that must be contained through a purification of the abject. She limits the scope of his body and gender with her narrative; hence, in fashioning Franciscus, she controls the discourse of madness and its representations. Isabella's narrative designs function as a tool of repression that works to prevent the grotesque from threatening this "proper gentleman's" subjectivity (III.iii. 61). Her tale serves the patriarchal ends of the madhouse—confinement and submission of the abject feminine. Unlike Lollo, she writes the textual body of Franciscus to reproduce and maintain the patriarchal illusion of an autonomous male gender identity. Even Isabella's lack of dialogue with the madman, Franciscus, to pinpoint the cause of his frenzied mental state

creates a hint of suspicion for the readers. Within this particular scene, the obvious lack of conversation with Franciscus betrays her desire to suppress the potentially loathsome discourse of the abject feminine; she prefers Franciscus to function merely as a spectacle of madness that remains silently incapable of diverting the discourse of reason and its limiting and normalizing definitions of gender.

Yet, Franciscus participates in Lollo's narrative that acknowledges his need for an abject Other, resisting the repressive narrative of Isabella. Franciscus even resists Lollo's fashioning to some extent by writing his own subjectivity. Franciscus attempts to possess some discursive agency by revising Lollo's narrative of him as the mad poet. But Franciscus's desire to fashion his subjectivity proves to be far more monstrous than the desire for the dwarf chambermaid that Lollo constructed for him:

Franciscus: Didst thou never hear of one Tiresias/A famous
poet?

Lollo: Yes, that kept tame wild-geese.

Franciscus: That's he; I am the man.

Lollo: No!

Franciscus: Yes; but make no words on't, I was a man.
Seven years ago.

Lollo: A stripling, I think, you might.

Franciscus: Now I'm a woman, all feminine.

Lollo: I would I might see that.

Franciscus: Juno struck me blind.

Lollo: I'll never believe that; for a woman, they say, has

an eye more than a man.

Franciscus: I say she struck me blind.

(III. iii. 64-77)

The passage above appears to indicate that Franciscus's nutty ranting is a sane expression of his desire to experience the feminine. Franciscus refers to Tiresias as the "famous poet" rather than the famous prophet. Such a glaring mistake about Tiresias's profession displays Franciscus's conscious desire to create a parallel between himself and the blind prophet. Although he merely feigns madness here to seduce Isabella, Franciscus deliberately chooses to utilize the ambiguous figure of Tiresias to map out his desire to identify with the abject feminine. Franciscus consciously and playfully draws on the discourse of the mad to convey his desires, yet his crazy speech and its subject, the queer seer, incidentally relay a truth concerning the instability of categories such as sex, gender and sexuality. Tiresias's body situates Franciscus outside the heteronormative because of its ability to muddle such categories as female/male, feminine/masculine, and straight/gay/bi-sexual. He possesses a shape-shifting body that produces cultural anxiety over his queer gender and sexuality which allows him limitless expression and experience of non-normative pleasures. In his performance of a raving lunatic, Franciscus's appropriation of the asylum's mad discourse reflects, in the words of Foucault, that the language of madness (i.e. delirium) is that of reason (95). Franciscus's feigned delirium functions to free his appetites and desires from the limits of the patriarchal culture that surrounds him. For the counterfeit lunatic, Greek and Roman mythology's representation of Tiresias is useful in that it helps Franciscus authenticate his madness by invoking the

image of Tiresias's indefinable and vague body that resists easy cultural definition.

Franciscus's use of this queer "changeling" dispels the patriarchal illusion of sex, gender and sexuality as fixed and unchanging categories.

In order to explain how Franciscus's masquerade as the queer Tiresias allows him to do this work, it would be useful to examine why the bogus madman chooses the mythology of the ambiguous seer to examine the relevance of the narrative's rich layers and their impact on the play's gender ideologies. According to varied Greek accounts of the Tiresias myth, while walking on Mount Cyllene, Tiresias encounters two snakes mating, and he decides to separate them. In separating the snakes, Tiresias is transformed into a woman for seven years. However, depending upon the Greek myth, it is the female snake's death that functions as the cause of Tiresias's sex change.⁸ Within the Roman account, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Tiresias's mere act of "striking [the snakes] from each other" (i.e. separating) results in his metamorphosis into a woman (III.28). Ovid's version of the narrative reduces the abject threat of the female snake and her death that a range of accounts within the Greek tradition depict as responsible for the prophet's sexual transformation. The Roman myth of Tiresias attempts to repress the abject feminine

⁸ Within her book, "The Tiresias Experience: The Feminine and the Greek Man," Nicole Loraux explains that within Greek mythology there are various Tiresias narratives that depict him as "having struck, wounded, or killed (or at least separated) a pair of copulating snakes" (11). Loraux acknowledges that there is a variation of the Greek myth that mirrors Ovid's favored account of Tiresias as composed and non-violent, but nevertheless she indicates that a number of the Greek versions depict the seer as hysterically violent in his reaction toward the snakes. Roman mythology persists in constructing a static image of Tiresias as a restrained and active, but disciplined, man. Interestingly, Loraux doesn't critically examine an account of the female snake's bite and/or death serving as the vehicle to Tiresias's metamorphosis. Within her text, Loraux is more concerned with Callimachus's myth of Tiresias that does not focus on his metamorphosis into a woman, but instead focuses on attributing the seer's blindness as punishment for seeing Athena's naked body. Her work takes "Tiresias as an eponym" to explore the ways in which various male figures within various Greek myths appropriate and incorporate the powers and pleasures linked to the feminine in order to strengthen male qualities such as virility (11,13).

threat within the collective unconscious of Western culture through a meaningful gap or absence that renders the female snake's subjectivity and power non-existent. Although the myths of Tiresias vary in their accounts, the legends recount how the sight of the snakes coupling moves Tiresias to stop the sexual activity. Yet none of the myths explain *why* Tiresias desires to halt the sexual activity of these two beasts, nor does Greek myth explain *why* the death of the female snake transforms him into a woman. Just as important, the various Greek myths and the Ovidian narrative fail to provide readers with characteristics that clearly distinguish the differences between the sexes of the copulating snakes. The range of Greek and Roman myths' omission to present distinctive sex characteristics further underscores a need to construct the feminine and female body as an abject site. I believe that the Greek myths and Ovid's account of Tiresias create a link between sexual pleasure and the feminine, characterizing bodily pleasure as repulsive and monstrous. The very sight of the snakes' intercourse attracts and repulses Tiresias who, rather than ignoring the fornicating, utilizes force to deny the reptiles their amorous pleasure. Yet, it is the body of the female snake that becomes conflated with a site of sexual pleasure that must be aggressively repressed and denied.

Behind Tiresias's hostile measures lurks the perception of female sexuality as indecent, sinful and disgusting. Like Lollio's horrific figure of the dwarf chambermaid, the representation of the female snake's death functions as a symbol that depicts female sex and feminine sexuality as an erotic object that inspires both fear and fascination. This primal scene fascinates Tiresias with its shameless exhibition of pleasure, yet his attraction to the sensual display provokes within him a sense of horror about sexual

difference. The image of the female snake conveys what is monstrous and abject about the feminine. The female snake is the site of horror because of the feminine power to corrupt and castrate the male body. After all, within various Greek versions, the female snake's death alters the sex of Tiresias, stripping him of the power and social privilege the penis bears culturally. The female body is literally inscribed as a treacherous site since its aggressive sexuality and the abject feminine contaminate the male body. The Tiresias myth constitutes the snake's sexual difference and female sexuality as an object of dread since her body represents lack, nothingness, and death. As such, female sexuality is constructed as a form of violence that inflicts upon men a terrifying wound—the vagina. The numerous Greek myths portray unchecked female desire as destructive to the patriarchal illusion of sex and gender identity as stable and unchanging. Thus, Tiresias's act of violence against the female snake was an attempt to subvert the female subject's power by keeping the female body and its abject desires in check. Tiresias's violence insists that female pleasure is a dangerous form of agency that must be denied and controlled.

Franciscus employs the Tiresias myth apparently to instruct the male sex not merely how to desire, but how to be a man. The myth instructs males by constructing woman as an abject Other, e.g. a snake, that they must avoid identifying with and ultimately becoming. The myth attempts to construct male identification with the feminine as a consumptive act. Rather than the male subject incorporating the feminine into his subjectivity to shape his identity, the mythology characterizes the feminine as a ubiquitous and devouring specter ultimately ingesting masculinity. Thus, the myth

depicts the mental process of identification, the act of assimilating a quality or attribute of an individual, as a real physical threat rather than a mental process to heighten a sense of terror over sexual difference. Thus, the myth appears not to assuage male fear but to heighten it. The tale of Tiresias appears to function as a lesson to stave off the pleasures of the monstrous feminine that can grotesquely alter a man and thus harm male identity and power. Despite the myth's ability to serve patriarchal ends, I believe that the myth also underscores Franciscus's sense of satisfaction in the abject feminine's ability to destabilize patriarchal gender roles that divorce men from pleasures of the body. Even though Franciscus performs as a madman to seduce Isabella, he deliberately chooses to embody this particular narrative about a seer who troubles the boundaries of sex and gender to experience bodily pleasure that is culturally aligned with the abject feminine.

The tale of Tiresias's transformation exposes not merely the seer's repulsion toward the abject feminine but also his attraction to it. Tiresias's sex change conveys the return of a repressed desire; his transformation literally represents a longing to experience the satisfaction of a primal, feminine-centered instinct.

Within Sigmund Freud's 1915 essay, *Repression*, he suggests that the phenomenon of repression occurs when an individual tries to disavow a conscious desire that civilization deems inappropriate. Freud's psychoanalytic theory asserts that repression is not successful in terminating the affect because the act of burying the desire in the unconscious is complicated by the libidinal energy which threatens to let the desire re-emerge. The individual's conscious mind holds traces of the affect despite its efforts to hide its original object of attachment, by displacing the libidinal energy onto ideational

representatives, images or signs. The ideas, images or symbols constitute the return of the repressed desire, which does not withdraw the libidinal energy but intensifies it. The reservoir of the unconscious converts the libidinal desire into an anxiety that is displaced onto a phobic object, a symbolic substitute that attempts to prevent the desire from being liberated. Ultimately, the repressed desire re-emerges within dreams or behaviors as an anxiety that underscores the original object of pleasure. Although a Freudian revisionist, Julia Kristeva supports Freud's concept of repression within her *Powers of Horror*, but she complicates his definition with her claim that it is "the abject [that] is the "object" of primal repression" (Kristeva 12). Tiresias's violence, according to Kristeva's theory, does not retreat from, but embraces the abject which is a primitive animalism, often aligned with sexual desire and aggression, that is inseparable from the primary drives that govern his body (Kristeva 13).⁹

Although the character Tiresias does not betray this psychic manifestation in a first-person narrative, it is the narrative structure of the myth that exhibits the stages of repression. The story attempts to identify specific desires as abject in order to name and punish those desires. But the narrative structure of the myth reveals Tiresias's repressed desire for the abject feminine through a parapraxis, a seemingly failed series of actions that actually fulfill unconscious wishes and desires that were repressed. The various Greek myths' depiction of Tiresias' bungled attempt to separate the mating snakes

⁹ Kristeva argues that, as a part of the primary drive, the abject is related to the innate physiological urges or needs (i.e. sex, hunger, self preservation, etc.) that an individual must learn to sublimate according to a patriarchal culture because they are considered inappropriate or shameful. According to Kristeva, the abject is the natural physiological processes of the body such as shit, piss, blood, menstruation, breast milk, vomit, genital secretions, tears, etc that are culturally constructed as gross and uncontrollable bodily fluids that must be regulated, repressed and hidden from view of society.

reveals his embrace, not rejection, of the desire to experience the pleasures and agency of sexual fulfillment that is aligned with the feminine. Rather than the myth constructing a successful repression of his sexual desires, Tiresias's sex change marks the liberation of his feelings and desires that could not be anchored and subsumed into the symbolic substitute of the female snake.

Just as the Roman narrative of Tiresias attempts to repress the identificatory pleasure and power in the abject feminine within the collective unconscious of Western culture through its favored depiction of the Greek myth, the play reveals its repressive tracks through its gaps and blanks in the narrative of Franciscus. Unlike the character, Antonio, the play is silent concerning Franciscus's familial and class background. The narrative provides the audience with Antonio's class background through the verbal indicator—gentleman—to convey his social position to Isabella, and the play provides a homosocial connection for Antonio via the character, Pedro, who helps him accomplish his entrance into the madhouse and indicates to Lollo that he comes “from a great family to which he should be heir” (Act I, Scene II, lines 111-112). Within the play, Franciscus appears to be without family and a homosocial connection; the narrative constructs him as an ambiguous figure from the margins of society. Franciscus is even denied physical and sexual contact with Isabella, while the narrative grants Antonio the space to touch and kiss her. In a face-to-face encounter, Antonio reveals his identity as a gentleman and his love for Isabella through an aggressive kiss fulfilling his heterosexual fantasy. Although Franciscus exposes his counterfeit lunacy, he confesses this shameless ruse through a letter which denies him opportunity for sexual contact. In addition, Franciscus

escapes punishment unlike his bogus peer, Antonio, at the hands of Isabella. Disguised as a madwoman, Isabella sexually threatens Antonio, who is repulsed by the “wild *unshapen* antic’s” crazy discourse to seduce him (IV.iii.126). Isabella chastises Antonio for being a “quick-sighted lover” teaching him a valuable lesson about the unreliability of the gaze (IV. iii. 134).

Yet the play abstains from providing Isabella with the space to deploy a similar face-to-face castigation of Franciscus which intensifies a sense of affective detachment between the romantic lunatic and his supposed object of desire, Isabella. Instead, the play focuses on the contents of Franciscus’s letter to Isabella in which he tutors her to forgive his imperfections in the face of her perfection since “tis the same sun that causeth to grow and enforceth to wither, shapes and transshapes, destroys and builds again” (IV. iii. 17-21). Within the letter, his preoccupation with shapes and transshapes suggests that in nature there is both fixity and transience, but like Antonio’s anxiety over the sexual advances of the “unshapen antic”, the disguised Isabella, the play emphasizes the potential ambiguity, fluidity and perhaps in-betweenism of bodies. Even Isabella’s speech to Antonio concerning the fantasies of lunatics speaks to this anxiety over the ambiguous shape-shifting:

Isabella: Of fear enough to part us,/Yet are they but our
 Schools of lunatics,/That act their fantasies in
 any shapes/Suiting their present thoughts: if sad,
 they cry;/ If mirth be their conceit they laugh
 again;/ Sometimes they imitate the beasts and
 the birds,/ Singing or howling, braying, barking—
 all/ As their wild fancies prompt’em.
 (III. iii.193-199.)

The play's construction of the mad as simultaneously mutable and "unshapen" and Franciscus's fixation with *shapes* create an open-ended set of meanings concerning the bogus madman's gender and sexuality. Isabella's reflection on madness as a liberation of an individual's fantasies suggests that the *shape* of Franciscus's fantasy is that of the queer "[transshape]" of Tiresias (IV.iii.21). Even though Franciscus declares her to be the cure for his madness, his letter muddles his sexual orientation and sex when he says: "I come in winter to you dismantled of my proper ornaments" (IV.iii.21-22).

Franciscus's reference to a lack of proper ornaments underscores his discursive dress-up as the "[transshape]" Tiresias figure that is, at times, without a proper penis or without the proper masculine attire that gives the male sex its *shape*. Within the narrative of the play, there are limited moments that allow Isabella and Franciscus to appear as potentially a romantic, heterosexual couple. His letter to Isabella can simultaneously serve as a form of heterosexual credentials that assuage the anxieties of the audience over Franciscus's queer impersonation of Tiresias as well as link him to homosexuality. Franciscus's impersonation of a madman as a means of heterosexual seduction functions as a pretense to relish in the queer narrative of Tiresias.

Within recent scholarship examining Middleton's and Rowley's *The Changeling*, little to no attention has been paid to Franciscus's preoccupation with the queer figure of Tiresias. As a part of the subplot and its comic relief, Franciscus and the Tiresias myth receive a cursory glance from such Early Modern critics as Joost Daalder and Marjorie Garber. Within her article, "The Insincerity of Women," Garber merely references that Franciscus feigns madness to seduce Isabella by impersonating Tiresias, but she does not

critically examine why Franciscus selects such a sexually ambiguous figure to masquerade as in his pursuit of Isabella. Instead, Garber turns her critical eye toward Juno's role within the Tiresias myth. The subplot's employment of the Tiresias myth reflects, according to Garber, the conflicts in the main plot between Beatrice and Alsemero regarding female pleasure and the control of it. Garber suggests that perhaps Juno blinds Tiresias for disclosing the secret of female power—her pleasure—thereby making it difficult for women to secure the power of female pleasure beyond men's control (35). Reflecting Juno's desire to maintain ownership of her sexual desires, Beatrice's mimesis of the female orgasm during Alsemero's test of her virginity serves as a sign of female agency because she feigns sexual pleasure, denying him the pleasure of her pleasure (34). For Garber, "female pleasure is the changeling," because "faking it," an orgasm, is then the means by which Beatrice (and perhaps Juno) can maintain "the privacy and control of [their] pleasure" (35).

I believe that Garber's reading and application of Juno as a lens produces an insightful reading that explains Beatrice's mimicry as an act of resistance that displays gender not just as a matter of imitative performance, but as a means of closing off male appropriation and negation of female pleasure. While I value and identify the mimetic creativity of "faking it" as a powerful and productive resistance that shields pleasure from the control of patriarchal figures, a close reading of Franciscus reveals the ways in which "pleasure is [more than] a changeling" that defends itself through the (re)production of theatrics. Garber dislocates Franciscus from her critical reading of the play's employment of the Tiresias myth by focusing solely on the queer prophet, diminishing

the significance of Franciscus's invocation of and identification with "[this] changeling" (28). Although Franciscus's impersonation of Tiresias supports, to some extent, Garber's reading of male appropriation of female pleasure, I contend that the play suggests that Franciscus's masquerade does not attempt to objectify and negate such pleasure; rather, it acknowledges its generative power that provides for him the ability to conceive a *shape* of his own. Like Garber, I read this play as constructing female pleasure as a site of limited agency, but I contend that an examination of Franciscus's preoccupation with the feminine and its pleasures extends and complicates her work by laying bare how such pleasure is productive in generating a subjectivity that resists traditional patriarchal identity politics.

Within the play madness and queerness appear to be constructed as "frightful pleasures," not unlike the abject feminine, that trouble the boundaries of sex, gender, and sexuality by "unshaping" Franciscus making him indeterminate and sexually open (III.iv.262). Franciscus's use of the Tiresias image conveys cultural beliefs about madness and queerness and their connection to the feminine grotesque. In his impersonation of the queer prophet, Franciscus points to Luna, at the instigation of Lollo, as the origin of his lunacy:

Lollo: And Luna made you mad: you have two trades to beg with.

Franciscus: Luna is now big-bellied, and there's room
 For both of us to ride with Hecate;
 I'll drag thee up into her silver sphere,
 And there we'll kick the dog—and beat the bush—
 That barks against the witches of the night;
 The swift lycanthropi that walks the round,

We'll tear their wolvisk skins, and save the sheep.
(III.iii.78-86.)

The passage above exhibits early modern drama's iconography of the moon as a symbol of instability and change, and conflates it with the female body. Franciscus's speech directly suggests that Luna gives birth to lunatics; she possesses a terrifying body that reproduces an abject progeny--instability. Luna's *big bellied* state sparks anxiety over the monstrous fecundity of woman that can alter and disrupt man's mind and body.

Franciscus's speech further compounds the monstrification of Luna with his reference to the ancient Greek goddess of the moon and witchcraft, Hecate. Hecate acts as the figurative umbilical cord to the abject womb of fertile Luna. Franciscus declares that Hecate will transport him to the *silver sphere* (i.e. the belly) of the moon, Luna, of which she is a part. The moon goddess's connection to Luna emphasizes a kind of feminine vastness and plenitude, but even more significantly, Franciscus's performance of a madman hints at his need to re-establish a connection to an abject mother. Franciscus envisions this connection with the feminine as a space of non-policed and shame-free pleasures.

Through the cultural artifacts of Luna and Hecate, Franciscus metaphorically roots sexual pleasure and excess of maternal power in the figure of Isabella. Isabella represents Hecate in particular as the gateway to the immeasurable and fruitful satisfaction of Luna's womb, the mother of pleasure and power. With his constructions of Hecate and Luna, Franciscus attempts to persuade Lollio to become a willing partner in the coercive seduction of Isabella rather than continue to serve as the man in the moon's

(i.e. Alibius) “dog,” or sentinel, who “barks” against these goddesses threatening and policing the excessive pleasures they offer. In his remark to Lollo, declaring that they can “beat the bush” so both can “ride with Hecate [i.e. Isabella],” Franciscus conveys that they both can *waste time* gratifying their sexual needs. Franciscus’s choice of words—*beat the bush*—suggests that the patriarchal society beyond the sphere of the feminine deems such sexual recreation as excessive and worthless. Yet for Franciscus such feminine pleasures serve as a form of agency resisting the limitations of paternal authority that constructs libidinal pursuits as unproductive and irresponsible. The space of the feminine is not merely license to indulge in delirious sexual gratification: for Franciscus it is conflated with the generative power of the womb. Luna’s procreative power is alluring to Franciscus who longs to act as his own originating womb; he wants to be the creator of his self. For him this feminine power is real and not merely the symbolic and hence illusory power of paternal authority. His desire to be the bearer of his self displays the abject feminine as the Subject rather than the object of patriarchal culture. Franciscus’s connection to the fecund abject mother allows him to discursively reproduce his self as the queer figure of Tiresias who is in-between man and woman. At this particular textual moment, Franciscus chooses to verbally produce himself as a *woman, all feminine*. This discursive rebirth also provides him with the space to gratify a range of non-straight sexual pleasures. Upon his insistence that he is a *woman, all feminine*, Franciscus offers Lollo the opportunity to engage in a queer ménage a trois. Through his offer that “there is room for both of [them] ride with” Isabella, Franciscus commits his body to straight and non-straight forms of sexual expression with Lollo

(III.iii.81). Not only does Franciscus offer Lollo to *ride with*, or share Isabella sexually, but he is also a *woman, all feminine* that Lollo can *ride with* to gratify his sexual desires. The sexual pleasure and (pro)creative power aligned with abject maternal provides Franciscus with the agency to be productive and active in constructing his subjectivity and desires resisting patriarchal authority.

Interestingly, the play depicts Franciscus's subversive self-authorization as a queer figure within the space of the madhouse which was culturally employed to eradicate difference. *The Changeling* reflects Foucault's claims regarding the early modern period's classical idea of madness which culturally sanctioned confinement in the madhouse to rob individuals of their subjectivity if it potentially threatened the values of normative society. The play's madhouse subplot seems to indicate that Franciscus's desire to identify with the abject feminine and his willingness to draft his identity as queer exhibits a dangerous madness that warrants his marginalization and subsequent unintelligibility since his construction of a queer, feminine-identified subjectivity serves as a form of agency that threatens the early modern notion of masculinity as a stable, autonomous and powerful identity. The space of the madhouse attempts to lessen the discursive threat of Franciscus with its repressive tool of confinement to constitute him as a nothing. Foucault claims that confinement was a mechanism of social control that ultimately determined an individual's visibility and existence:

Confinement merely manifested what madness, in its essence, was: a manifestation of non-being: and by providing this manifestation, confinement thereby suppressed it, since it restored it to its truth as nothingness. Confinement is the practice which corresponds most exactly to madness experienced as

unreason, that is, as the empty negativity of reason: by confinement, madness is acknowledged to be *nothing* (115-116).

Foucault suggests that the Self is threatened by its dependency upon a mad Other for self-recognition so it attempts to suppress and annihilate it through the act of imprisonment and absorption. Thus the hysterical containment of Franciscus within the asylum, according to Foucault, underscores the power that this mad queer Other has to dispel the illusion of the Self as autonomous. He stresses how the Other is utilized to give shape and meaning to the subject formation of the Self, but Foucault balks at emphasizing the potential rebellious agency of the abject Other to exceed the symbolic structure that constructs it. Although his work notes the destabilizing power of the non-being, Foucault halts at underscoring the potentially subversive agency of the living-dead to resist the patriarchal imprisonment and servitude as the essential Other to constitute the heteronormative. Throughout the play, neither the repressive power of confinement nor Lollo's policing presence squelches Franciscus's rebellious self-fashioning that he exercises to resist the social death the madhouse manifests in order to live and experience his unlivable desire to be queer, shape-shifting Tiresias. Franciscus plots his subversion within the existing discourse of the patriarchy, wielding its power, to lay bare the limits of its discursive hegemonic structure.

Although the dialogue between Franciscus and Lollo suggests that Tiresias's female metamorphosis contaminates him by robbing him of the male gaze, Franciscus uses this non-being status for a purpose other than the articulation of his subordination as mad and female. Within the madhouse scene, Franciscus openly draws connections

between madness and blindness that constitutes the loss of male social power. Through his denial of possessing “an eye more than man,” Franciscus relies on the blindness of Tiresias to evoke a parallel between a lack of vision and the lack of social power that the female genitals represent (III.iii. 75-76). Franciscus expresses how culturally blindness is equated with being like a woman. Within both Greek and Roman mythology, Tiresias loses his gaze that constitutes male subjectivity and provides him with a sense of wholeness, control and power; his loss of the male gaze makes him socially inferior and incomplete like a woman according to patriarchy’s symbolic structure. In spite of the apparent threat to his masculinity, this particular narrative and its representation of the sex-shifting Tiresias speaks to Franciscus who uses his non-being status as a form of agency. Franciscus’s insistent reply—“Juno struck me blind”—to Lollio recalls Tiresias’s punishment for his admission to Juno that women experience more pleasure in sex than men; but, for Franciscus, however it highlights instead Tiresias’s ability to embody both the masculine Self and the feminine Other (III.iii.74).

Unlike Vermandero, Franciscus does not construct the abject feminine as an object used to constitute male subjectivity. Rather, Franciscus’s employment of Tiresias’s confession relays how the experience of the abject feminine provided the prophet with a space of mutual recognition despite the loss of his masculine gaze. Tiresias’s confession marks the pleasure that the queer seer takes in the feminine Other and also in receiving pleasure as the feminine Other. Franciscus’s deliberate mimicry of the queer prophet expresses his own identificatory pleasure in the abject feminine. Both Tiresias’s and Franciscus’s identification with and pleasure in the abject feminine ratify the power of

the female body. Tiresias's confession and Franciscus's mimicry acknowledge that desire and pleasure are the property of the feminine; ultimately, the queer prophet and abject bogus lunatic recognize the feminine or female body as a subject. Franciscus desires to experience his gender identity like Tiresias who is both like a man and like a woman. He desires a gender identity that is not fragmented or incomplete but able to sustain separate selves much like that of Tiresias.

Franciscus internalizes the abject feminine as a subject that is representative of desire and agency. Like the blind prophet, Franciscus wishes to sustain the recognition of the feminine as an active, desiring subject through defensive verbal tactics that prevent Lollo from denying him the assertion of his identity as a woman. With his aggressive reply—"make no words on it"—Franciscus tries to amputate Lollo's discursive power to rigidly define his sex and gender identity (III.iii.69). He insists that he is female despite Lollo's wish to "see that" sex change (III.iii.73). Refusing to provide physical evidence, he asserts "Juno struck him blind"; Franciscus longs to maintain the illusion of his femaleness so he indirectly and ambiguously verbalizes a lack with this repetition (III.iii.74). Franciscus's refusal to provide Lollo with visual proof suggests his desire to sustain the fantasy that he is "a woman, all feminine" (III.iii.72). His deliberate objection to provide physical evidence of his sex serves as a means, whether intentional or unintentional, that propels Lollo to insist upon seeing the mark of difference—" [woman's] eye more than man" (III.iii.75-76). Although Franciscus cannot physically produce this sexual difference for Lollo, he successfully positions himself to be within Lollo's erotic gaze to compel his recognition of Franciscus as female. At first, Lollo

resists providing Franciscus with the subject recognition that he desires. As the keeper of the madhouse, Lollo believes Franciscus to be a mentally deficient man with flights of fancy about being a woman, but he nevertheless wishes to ogle his body and genitalia. Lollo's reference to his whip as a "pizzle" (i.e. penis) queers his position to and relationship with his "patients" as a sexual sadist and non-straight voyeur. By subjecting himself to the gaze of Lollo, Franciscus relies upon the performative power of language to create the reality it designates and even the power of suggestion to constitute him as a woman. He attempts to manipulate Lollo's gaze in order to change structures of domination that contain his desire in order to determine his own identity and pleasures.

Franciscus instructs Lollo how to see his body and acknowledge his subjectivity. Through his performative utterance—"Now I'm a woman, all feminine"—Franciscus stages an attempt at subject-constitution that is within patriarchal structures (III.iii.72). He does not merely articulate his desire to be a woman, but he uses the power of speech to produce his Self as a woman. His insurrectionary desire demands the recognition of the abject feminine as a subject. Franciscus's verbal deployments prove successful in the sense that Lollo not only consents to his narrative, but also carries on contributing to and producing the extra-textual body of Franciscus as Tiresias-woman-man. Lollo's discursive play helps to produce the materiality of Franciscus as a woman. His voyeuristic appetite to see Franciscus's excessive body—"the extra eye that man doesn't have"—denotes a power, not unlike that of the phallic gaze, in the abundant multiplicity of the feminine (III.iii.75-76). Lollo uses eye as a synonym for vagina, and interestingly this expression does not construct a vagina as an ever-open orifice that is passive and

penetrable, but rather he fashions female genitalia as possessing an active power that men lack. Lolloio suggests that with this “extra eye” women possess the power of multiple gazes, underscoring the “nature” of the female body as the site of excessive difference. Franciscus wields this discursive power with the institutional authority of Lolloio that produces an unexpected result—a social identity that exceeds the symbolic structure of the heteronormative. The social identity of woman is a subject that evades singular reproduction as Other; woman is an unstable identity that is not just non-being but multiple and excessive staving off the linguistic containment of patriarchy.

Ultimately, Franciscus’s desired union with the abject feminine serves as an escape from the constraints of patriarchy’s male gender role. His masquerade as the ambiguous prophet expresses his longing to construct a subjectivity that incorporates both genders, but that is not predicated on a structure of dependence on and domination of the feminine. Throughout the madhouse scenes, Franciscus’s employment of the Tiresias myth and even his own discursive metamorphosis do not reflect, within their identity politics, the patriarchal dialectic of control; the Self (i.e. male subjectivity) does not control and render invisible the existence of the Other (i.e. female subjectivity). With his seemingly oppositional statements—“I am that man [Tiresias]” and “Now I’m a woman, all feminine”—Franciscus discursively routes his subjectivity through sex and gender categories suggesting that such “shapes,” or ways of being, are transitive. The very discursive “shape” of Franciscus’s body provides him with a fluidity that offers him multiple gender identities and a range of sexual expressions.

Despite Franciscus's declaration at the close of the play that, like Beatrice, his desires made him "stark mad," his reply "almost for the same purpose" leaves in its wake a queer inquiry resisting the play's containing structure. How was Franciscus's desire "almost [to] the same purpose" as Beatrice's desire? Within an oppressive patriarchal culture, Beatrice attempted to act on her unlivable desire to be a man so she could marry the man that she loved. Similarly, the aim of Franciscus's madhouse metamorphosis was a ploy that feigned a desire to penetrate the chaste Isabella in order to indulge in the pleasure and subjectivity of the abject feminine. Both changelings attempt a socially disruptive self-fashioning that destabilizes notions of gender hierarchy and its structure of social power. Yet, Beatrice's self-fashioning, as we have seen, is punished and constructed by the men around her as mad and monstrous since it threatens not just the lives of men, but the very stability of male subjectivity as well. After her death, Beatrice's body is utilized as an abject text to reassert male subjectivity as stable and autonomous and ultimately to negate female subjectivity. The anxious employment of Beatrice as a textual body reveals Alsemero's need to deny the cipher-like female body the ability to exceed the symbolic function. Beatrice's death allows Alsemero the opportunity to construct her as a clear-cut text that is free of abject change and its threatening instability. From Alsemero's perspective, death becomes Beatrice. Her convenient murder denies her a space of agency to resist the proscriptive force of Alsemero's narrative and its patriarchal intent. Alsemero confines her to a textual body that is invested in the singular reproduction of male subjectivity. Unlike Beatrice, Franciscus is not directly punished for his ambiguous and non-normative desires, his

textual body escapes heteronormative gender resolution. Like the socially undead of the madhouse, the queer changeling, Franciscus, remains a haunting presence within the boundaries of normative culture threatening its discursive stability.

Abjection as Masquerade: A “Giddy-Turning” is a “Frightful Pleasure”

And I, too, said nothing, showed nothing; I didn't open my mouth, I didn't repaint my half of the world. I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and my fear. I said to myself: You are mad! ...Where is the ebullient, infinite woman who, immersed as she was in her naivete, kept in the dark about herself, led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental-conjugal phallogentrism, hasn't been ashamed of her strength? Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives... hasn't accused herself of being a monster? Who, feeling a funny desire stirring strong inside her, hasn't thought she was sick? Well, her shameful sickness is that she resists death, that she makes trouble.
--Helene Cixous *The Laugh of the Medusa*

In *The Changeling*, Franciscus's grotesque masquerade progresses without social or corporal punishment because, unlike Beatrice's medusian zeal to acquire the privileges and powers proscribed to the male sex, he relinquishes his culturally constructed rights through his willing and abject plunge into queerness. Franciscus's "frightful pleasure" seemingly supports the patriarchal status quo since it appears as if he steps down the heteronormative sex and gender ladder into a happy submission as a queer transhape that appears as something less than a man—an abject Other, a woman (III. iv. 262). Not only does Franciscus surrender his privileges for his irregular and misshapen subjectivity, but at the instigation of Alsemero, he actively plays a part in the displaced abjection of

Beatrice through his participation in her textualization as a cautionary tale for patriarchal use. The play attempts to minimize the threat of this queer figure by depicting Alsemero narratively binding Franciscus in his discursive assault to cast Beatrice as the changeling. By showing Franciscus's complicity in the construction of Beatrice as a monstrous changeling, the play deflects attention from the heteronormative male characters' changeability, but more importantly it requires Franciscus to participate in Alsemero's heteronormative fiction to foreclose his queer influence upon gentlemen of definitive social status. As a man of ambiguous status with no class or homosocial bonds to trace his social position, Franciscus's mad desire to embody the grotesque serves as a potentially troubling force against the putative stability of heteronormative male subjectivity. Franciscus threatens patriarchal male identity with his acceptance and desire for queer transshapes potentially contaminating the normative minds and bodies of the gentlemen around him to abdicate their superior social positions so they can indulge in the discontinuous topography of pleasures that the abject feminine provides. For that reason, the play attempts to contain the abject feminine through Alsemero's normalizing and sadistic narrative that exclusively fashions Beatrice as the changeling whose death is required for the continual discursive production and reproduction of male identity. Male subjectivity, as understood by patriarchy, requires the image of the excessive and abject body as a discursive prop for its constitution, thus Beatrice serves as the generative linguistic womb for these male characters despite their fear and loathing of the rhetoric of the abject that is embedded within their narrative (pro)creation.

At the textual insistence of Alsemero, Beatrice's discursive metamorphosis (i.e. the changeling) underscores the patriarchal society's anxiety over her desire to rise within the sex and gender hierarchy to appropriate the freedoms of the male sex. Beatrice's fantastic drive to fight the narrow sex and gender politics, which constitute all subjectivity as male, troubles the male-dominated culture around her since she resists participating in the compulsory practice of patriarchal femininity. With her attempt to embody the male gender identity, Beatrice threatens to unveil the illusory fabric of male subjectivity that patriarchy manufactures through discursive means. As a narrative fortification to stave off the abjection of male characters, the play employs various punitive discursive measures against Beatrice to quash her threatening mobility that blurs the sex and gender boundaries that constitute male subjectivity as unintelligible from patriarchal construction of female subjectivity—the abject Other. Within the play, the patriarchal culture achieves its construction of Beatrice as the sole changeling by employing a discursive weapon within its arsenal, the language of internalization, to naturalize her subsequent subordination and gender identity as Other. Beatrice internalizes her “giddy-turning” (I. i. 154) as a “frightful pleasure,” (III. iv. 262) ultimately, defining her as a disturbed fiend controlled by abhorrent drives. Schooled by the male society around her in the dichotomous roles of patriarchal female sexuality, a conflicted Beatrice learns to identify her subjectivity and its pleasures as a grotesque and excessive construction—murderous whore and erotic virgin—that serves as both a tool for and a threat to male subjectivity and power. Rather than see herself as a subversive threat against the oppressive male society around her, Beatrice shamefully perceives

herself as hideous progeny that naturally embodies and reproduces the “curs[e]” of deadly “sins” (III. iv. 164-165). Beatrice’s disgust over her sexual and social desires reflects the patriarchal conditioning that contemporary feminist Helene Cixous in *The Laugh of the Medusa* identifies as the stealthy and powerful psychological tool of a male-dominated society to subordinate and control female identity and pleasure (Cixous 348-351). Beatrice’s self-loathing dramatizes what Cixous recognized as the oppressed female subject’s internalization of patriarchy’s dominant ideologies concerning female sexuality and subjectivity. Beatrice resists what Cixous refers to as “the great arm of parental-conjugal phallocentrism” that Vermandero employs to induce a sense of shame in order to coerce her into the act of self-subordination (348).

To better understand how Beatrice makes sense of the multiple and competing patriarchal discourses used to draft her discontinuous identity, feminist psychoanalytic and new historicist lenses function as useful analytical tools. Feminist psychoanalytic work is important to my analysis of this play because as a lens it provides a language to articulate the unconscious desires and anxieties of Beatrice (and other male characters), but such a lens is even more significant since traditional psychoanalysis is phallogentric lacking a complete understanding of the unconscious desires and anxieties of women (and men) under patriarchy. Just as imperative to my close reading of this play is a feminist new historicist lens that provides a glimpse into the cultural context that shaped and informed early modern femininity and masculinity ensuring that I do not rescue Beatrice (or the period) from its troubling ideologies or rewrite it to reflect my contemporary values and ways of thinking. Utilizing the works of scholars and theorists

such as Ania Loomba, Sara Eaton, Margery Garber, Debra Burke, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva as lenses, I turn my attention to an examination of *The Changeling* with the aim of not merely reflecting back the premise of their arguments but also contributing new layers of analysis that elucidate the behaviors and desires of Beatrice, DeFlores and Alsemero.

Within her essay, “Women’s Division of Experience,” Ania Loomba analyzes the ideological affects of early modern patriarchal discourses as represented in Jacobean drama that create a split female subjectivity. In Renaissance drama as in its culture, Loomba argues, “the functioning and power of contradictory patriarchal ideologies of femininity (e.g. whore and virgin) hinges on their internalization by the oppressed subject” (41). Loomba contends that the heterogeneous and contradictory discourses of femininity serve as patriarchy’s means to acquire power since such ideologies are constructed to make it impossible for women to inhabit or live such conflicting roles, thereby inciting within women a self-loathing over their sex and gender. Sara Eaton’s analysis of *The Changeling* speaks to, but complicates and historicizes, Loomba’s argument by examining the particular early modern technique, the rhetoric of courtly love, that is used to subordinate Beatrice. Within “Beatrice-Joanna and the Rhetoric of Love,” Eaton argues that Beatrice is a product of courtly love discourse because she internalizes the contradictory rhetoric that leads to her linguistic possession at the words of DeFlores who fashions her as both idealized and degraded femininity (276). DeFlores discursively composes Beatrice as “a fair murderess”, a whore and an “odd feeder” provoked by her body’s queer “hunger and pleasure,” yet he is resolved that [her]

virginity [is] perfect in [her] (III.iv. 117). Through his employment of courtly love rhetoric, DeFlores discursively imprisons and silences Beatrice by constructing her as the representation of his conflicted desires thwarting her from drafting her own subjectivity and desires. Building off this work of Ania Loomba and Sara Eaton, I will further examine how these contradictory discourses fragment Beatrice's subjectivity, but more importantly I will examine the ways in which she internalizes DeFlores's and Alsemero's construction and projection of the abject feminine so that it does not just reinforce their patriarchal ideologies of femininity but also serves as a means of limited agency and pleasure for her. Ultimately, the play enacts both patriarchy's success and failure in constructing female subjectivity as an abject Other in order to establish male subjectivity. The play demonstrates the ways in which the abject female Other is used to constitute male identity as whole, powerful and autonomous; however, feminist psychoanalytic criticism reveals patriarchy's dependence on the abject feminine dispelling the illusion of male subjectivity as an autonomous product of its generative power.

In Act III, Scene IV, DeFlores convinces Beatrice that not only does her "giddy-turning" yield a monstrosity, but that she herself is the monstrosity. Confronting her with Piracquo's severed hand bearing his engagement band, DeFlores denies Beatrice the moral high ground of her class position, declaring that she is "a woman dipped in blood" even as he demands sexual compensation for a job well executed (III.iv.126). Through such gory imagery, DeFlores attributes to Beatrice a gruesome pleasure that constructs her as vampiric fiend excessively immersed in the blood of her victim. DeFlores' imagery implies that Beatrice is not merely accountable for her hand in the murder of her

fiancée, Piracquo, but overwhelmingly it places sole responsibility for the homicide upon her. The abject blood imagery defines Beatrice as the natural source of grotesque and bloodthirsty violence rather than a co-conspirator or conniving master mind. DeFlores aggressively disavows his responsibility constructing Beatrice as the catalyst to his wrongdoing. Beatrice stomachs DeFlores's claim that she carries the sole blame for the murder of Piracquo, because she is "the deed's creature" (III.iv. 137). DeFlores's poetic slur betrays not merely the suggestion of an intimate relationship between Beatrice and violent, sinful acts, but he casts the impression of Beatrice as the possession and progeny of such abject horror.

In a further attempt to deflect his culpability and indulge in his sexual longing, DeFlores instructs his mistress that his part in these acts of immorality derives from her inability to control her base appetites:

Yes, my fair murderess. Do you urge me, though
thou writ'st 'maid', thou whore in thy affection?
T'was changed from thy first love, and that's a
kind of whoredom in thy heart...
(III.iv. 141-144)

Aggravated by his desire to possess her, DeFlores penetrates Beatrice's psyche claiming that she is comprised of "changeable stuff" in the hopes that such a wound would result in her sexual surrender. DeFlores strips Beatrice of her discursive chastity belt, "maid," by revising her as a whore for re-directing her love from Piracquo to Alsemero. Casting her as a whore, DeFlores discursively colonizes Beatrice's body by severing her from the process of writing her self as a maid. Subordinated by such a negative representation and

a lethal dose of blackmail, Beatrice is forced to relinquish her identity and desires to the control and construction of DeFlores who redeploys Beatrice as the projection of his identity and his desires. In what appears to be a contradictory discursive move, DeFlores drafts Beatrice's emotional response as akin to "a panting turtle [dove]" that is innocent, scared and at the same time excited to engage in sexual intercourse with him (III.iv.169). DeFlores needs Beatrices to be both virgin and whore to satisfy his multiple and complicated desires. He needs her to internalize his definition of her as a whore so that he can, as his name suggests, deflower her; if she incorporates the degraded image of whore that he constructs then she will, like a mirror, reflect and fulfill his desire. Simultaneously, DeFlores needs her to be a virgin to satisfy his sexual fantasy of penetration and possession, whereby he wantonly consumes "her honour's prize [drinking] it all up, [leaving] none behind for any man to pledge" (V. iii. 168-170). The contradictory representations that DeFlores discursively forces Beatrice to internalize, ultimately shape and affect her view of herself as both abject and pure. Through these heterogeneous patriarchal discourses, Beatrice experiences her identity as discontinuous, unstable, and fragmented.

Experiencing the pressure of patriarchal structures from without as well as from within herself, Beatrice embraces the dichotomous existence that DeFlores fashions for her which ultimately results in her physical and mental subordination. Believing herself to be simultaneously a pure and degraded Other, Beatrice takes up the patriarchal work of DeFlores to negate her self. Beatrice yields to DeFlores the sexual rights to her body, and in doing so she affirms not only the instability and fluidity of her desires, but also the

monstrous and destructive effects of her body and its appetites. Consequently, Beatrice conceives of DeFlores as the offspring of her womb and its voracious maw:

Was my creation in the womb so curst
It must engender with a viper first?
(III.iv.164-165)

Beatrice's loaded question suggests her fear that she is the loathsome product of a monstrous womb that is doomed to have sex with a serpent (i.e. DeFlores). However, her question also conveys her fear and loathing that "[her] creation," a sadistically masculine DeFlores, "within [her] womb engenders", or reproduces, such unnatural offspring. Betraying signs of horror and shame, Beatrice suffers a kind of reverse umbilical whiplash bearing a psychic flogging from her supposed creation. Beatrice is persuaded by DeFlores that she produces gross enormities which are defiling and deadly agents of her will. Her abject womb generates a viper, a violent and sadistic DeFlores, who executes her fantasy to be man enough "to oppose [her] loathings, [removing] them forever from [her] sight (II.ii.14-16). DeFlores's demonization of Beatrice's desire to remove the male figures that thwart her sexual pleasure and autonomy mirrors that of the abject female snake from the Tiresias myth who symbolically castrated the male prophet that sought to end her sexual liberty and gratification.

Although Beatrice participates in her own oppression, nevertheless it provides her with a means of limited agency. Like the transformative bite of the female snake, Beatrice produces a gender change through the malleable figure of DeFlores who pleads with his mistress "without change to your sex... claim so much man in me" (II.ii.113-114). Unable to alter her sex, Beatrice stealthily manipulates DeFlores into her service

as a symbolic substitute that is representative of her desire to be a sadistic masculine agent who can *will* things to happen. DeFlores's willingness to act as Beatrice's man stems from his masochistic vein:

Yonder's she. Whatever ails me, now a-late especially
I can as well be hanged as refrain seeing her. Some
twenty times a day, nay not so little, do I force errands,
frame ways and excuses to come into her sight—and I
have small reason for't, and less encouragement: for she
bait me still every time worse than other, does profess
herself the cruellest enemy to my face in town, at no
hand can abide the sight of me as if danger or ill luck hung
in my looks. I must confess my face is bad enough...
(II.i.26-36).

As a spectacle of abjection, DeFlores's gruesomely ominous features and his willingness to experience pain and derision from his disdainful mistress make him a fitting object to fulfill Beatrice's sex change fantasy. It is DeFlores' identification with abjection (i.e. masochism) that functions as an ironic site of rebellion. Within the passage above, DeFlores parades his non-normative pleasure in the traditionally feminine role of a masochistic, needy bottom in service of a sadistic and domineering top, Beatrice, since it provides him with the satisfaction of possessing a role and an identity. DeFlores celebrates his queer hunger for humiliation, public ridicule and social marginalization by willingly and purposefully binding himself to a sado-masochistic contract that schools him in the pleasure of being an impotent bottom as well as the entrancing pleasure and power of being the top. Through Beatrice's vicious lessons in abjection, DeFlores learns by example how to be an aggressive sadist possessing power and subjectivity. Beatrice's murderous scheme serves as an outlet for his primary masochism which allows him to

externalize his aggression on other men, like Piracquo, leaving behind the traditionally feminine masochistic drives. His servile masochistic impulses provide him with the space to comprise his subjectivity. Exploiting his need for mutual recognition, Beatrice influences DeFlores's gender metamorphosis, transforming him from a passive, self-punishing masochistic male to an active, violent sadistic male.

DeFlores longs to sustain the feelings of visibility that Beatrice provides him because her class position affords her the power to render him visible. For DeFlores, visibility is a means to recoup his class position which is indelibly conflated with his sense of masculinity:

Though my hard fate has thrust me out to servitude,
I tumbled into th'world a gentleman.—Now she turns
her blessed eye upon me now, and I'll endure all storms
before I part with't (II.i.48-51).

Willing to “endure *all* storm” of class backlash from his male superiors, DeFlores posits Beatrice's gaze as the means to recover the loss of his gender identity and social worth as a man. But Beatrice's “love-shooting” gaze possesses the horrifying power to “burn [DeFlores's] heart to cinders (III.iv. 151-152).” The penetrative “blessed eye” of Beatrice provides him with a feeling of subjectivity, but simultaneously her “shooting” gaze symbolically castrates him, rendering DeFlores as impotent and invisible. Desperately wanting to sustain a sense of visibility and wholeness, DeFlores amputates Beatrice's “shooting eye” by emptying her gaze of its phallic power, thus reducing Beatrice to a symbolic trophy that he can assume as his property. DeFlores resists “parting with [Beatrice's] [eye]” by appropriating it through his construction of her as a negative

representation (i.e. an object/the ring) that has no identity or value of its own (II.i. 51). Conflating Beatrice with the diamond engagement ring, he severs the ring finger from the dead hand of Piracquo in an act of symbolic castration. Although he claims that cutting off the ring finger of Piracquo will supply proof of his service, Beatrice never requests the retrieval of this love token (i.e. the ring) that her father ordered her to give her fiancée. For DeFlores, Beatrice is a metonym for the ring:

And I [have] made him send it back again
For his last token. *I was loath to leave it,*
And, I'm sure dead men have no use of jewels.
He was loath to part with't, for it stuck
As if the flesh and it were both *one* substance
(III.iv. 34-38).

DeFlores obsession with its retrieval betrays his understanding of the jewel (i.e. the diamond ring) as a sign of Piracquo's sexual ownership of Beatrice. Joking in macabre fashion, DeFlores grossly suggests that as a dead man, Piracquo, cannot penetrate and consume the fruits of Beatrice's maidenhead. He is loath to leave behind such a jewel because of its symbolic value. Just as the diamond ring reflects male authority, the thrust of his finger into the diamond engagement ring, is akin to sexually possessing Beatrice. Through his control of Beatrice's body and its sexual desires, DeFlores disrupts the patriarchal system that robbed him of his class position. DeFlores reclaims his status as a "gentleman" by performing the deed that his name designates—deflowering Beatrice—thus stealing from Vermandero and Alsemero the precious commodity of virginity that forges a profitable and socially powerful dynastic alliance between these two men.

Through the sexual colonization of Beatrice, DeFlores restores his masculinity by socially emasculating the wealthy men who participate in and maintain a feminizing class hierarchy that depends upon his construction as a servile object to constitute their masculinity and power. DeFlores's temporary identification with Beatrice's gender position and his subsequent acceptance of his role to play the "man" appears to be a means to access the phallus. Beatrice becomes the phallus for DeFlores; she is the means through which DeFlores acquires the social authority and power prescribed to patriarchy.

However, it is DeFlores's particular emphasis on the ring fusing to the finger of Picquaro that indicates that his desire for Beatrice is more complicated than a longing to have access to the phallus. His total absorption with how the ring creates "*one substance*" reveals his yearning to fuse with Beatrice. Upon closer examination of DeFlores's desire for fusion, I find that the text indicates that his eagerness for this oneness displays his masturbatory desire to reproduce autonomously his own identity. Luce Irigaray's theory of the "Law of the Self Same" provides a useful lens that opens up and even works in accordance with the play offering a textual analysis for why DeFlores wishes for this power of independent Self regeneration (Irigaray 32-33). Irigaray's "Speculum of the Other Woman" argues that a man's desire to deflower a woman underscores his longing to return to the origin of his creation (Irigaray 33). Although Middleton's usage of the name, DeFlores, may be incidental, nevertheless the meaning of such a name (i.e. to deflower) coupled with the character's obsessive verbalization for *oneness* produces the narrative space to interpret DeFlores's desire to construct him self as the source of subjectivity.

Through the colonizing discourse of oneness and the defloration of Beatrice, DeFlores co-opts her natural procreative power that serves as the “origin” of life, power, pleasure, and identity. With the sexual consumption of her virginity, DeFlores robs Beatrice of her identity and agency by enslaving her body in the biological and social regeneration of his potential offspring and his name. Dispossessed of her virginity and its reproductive power by DeFlores, Beatrice is a no-place whose relationship to origin is dictated by him (Irigiray 166, 227). With his appropriative discourse of oneness, DeFlores’s reveals his longing to utilize Beatrice as a womb-like vehicle back to the very beginning, to *one* origin—his Self. In keeping with Irigiray’s theory of the Law of the Same, Beatrice is reduced to the simplicity of a mirror that is charged by DeFlores to reflect only his projected desires that comprise his Self:

Woman will be the foundation of this specular duplication, giving man back “his” image and repeating is as the “same.” If an “other” image, an “other” mirror were to intervene, this inevitably would entail the risk of mortal crisis. Woman will therefore be this sameness—or at least its mirror image—and in her role of mother, she will facilitate the repetition of the same, in contempt for her difference (Irigiray 55).

Hidden from view and regulated in the service of constituting DeFlores’s subjectivity, Beatrice’s identity is subsumed to the act of producing and reproducing all subjectivity as male and, more importantly, to generate the illusion that male identity serves as its own referent free from the abject multiplicity and difference of the female Other (Irigiray 18, 23, 135-137). DeFlores’s constructs Beatrice as a speculum that projects the male sex as the singular and ideal Subject.

Unwittingly, Beatrice conjures within DeFlores a gender metamorphosis that *engenders* her own oppression. Despite her revisionary efforts to modify and manipulate masculinity to suit her desires, Beatrice replicates the toxic masculinity of the patriarchal figures who wish to utilize and maintain her as a pliant, sexual object and a nurturing womb to create and reproduce male subjectivity. DeFlores's ghoulish metamorphosis not only leads to the loss of Beatrice's most treasured possession, her virginity: but also her identity and agency are fused and subject to his subjectivity and its whims. Following in the same psychic footsteps of Alsemero, DeFlores perceives Beatrice as a primal domicile that mirrors back to him his gender identity and its power and privilege:

Push, fly not to your birth, but settle you
In what the act has made you; y'are no more now.
You must forget your parentage to me:
Y'are the deed's creature; by that name you lost
Your first condition; and I challenge you
As peace and innocency has turned you out
And made you one with me
(III.iv. 137-140)

With his yearning for the singular reproduction of his subjectivity, DeFlores's desire resonates with Irigaray's theory that argues that the masculine discourse of "the Law of the Same" constitutes that *one* is always male (Irigaray 55, 133). Within the passage above, Beatrice's identity is negated by DeFlores who discursively transforms her into "a no-place" with his utterance that she is "no more now" (Irigaray 166, 230). With great rhetorical mastery, DeFlores subordinates Beatrice by linguistically conceiving his right to challenge, or lay claim to her body and identity, because her abject wish to be a man makes her the "deed's creature." Grafted as the "deed's creature," Beatrice is the

monstrous progenitor of the subsequent murderous actions that DeFlores executes on her behalf. According to DeFlores, Beatrice engenders his birth as a murderer. Beatrice's abject delivery divorces her from her original "parentage" and, ultimately, establishes a maternal-like link to DeFlores wherein she operates as his topos (Irigiray 41). DeFlores scripts Beatrice as a creature, a non-human (m)other, to serve as the source of his gender identity (Irigiray 41-42).

Resembling Franciscus's obsession with the procreative power of "big bellied Luna," DeFlores constructs Beatrice as his discursive origin. DeFlores replicates the desires of queer Franciscus with his wish to be his own originating womb, but DeFlores replicates this desire with a difference. Fearful of constituting the female Other as a subject, DeFlores evades duplicating Franciscus's identification with Woman by reducing Beatrice to an object so he can possess and master her feminine alterity to achieve the fullness of being and authority. Although DeFlores textually constructs her as the source of his gender identity as an aggressive man, he shields his dependence upon this grotesque Other by discursively fusing her identity to his. With his claim that Beatrice is "made *one* with [him]", DeFlores hides from view her dreadful difference upon which his discursive power and self is built. DeFlores utilizes discursive means to subordinate Beatrice through his language of oneness making her an inseparable and necessary element of his subjectivity. Beatrice functions as a speculum that textually reproduces and reflects DeFlores's violent deeds and, more importantly, his subjectivity as the product of his (pro)creative ability. Beatrice is more than just the linguistic occasion to conceive DeFlores's gender identity; she is the means by which he projects the illusion

that he is the creator of his self. Resisting queer Franciscus's acknowledgment of the female Other as topos, DeFlores discursively constructs a speculum, Beatrice, that cannot reflect her own Self allowing him to elude the risk of mortal crisis-- his nothingness. Despite his efforts to stave off the dread of nothingness, DeFlores's appropriation of her reproductive ability proves just as emasculating as his dependence upon her alterity for his subject formation since his identity resembles the female Other.

Unconscious of the fact that he mimics his rival's need for fusion, DeFlores mirrors Alsemero's hunger for self-production. Alsemero couches within Beatrice a longing for a fusional love:

T'was in the temple where I first beheld her,
And now again the same. What omen yet
Follows of that? None but imaginary:
Why should my hopes of fate be timorous?
The place is holy, so is my intent:
I love her beauties to the holy purpose,
And that, methinks, admits comparison
With man's first creation, the place blest,
And is his right home back, if he achieves it.
The church hath first begun our interview,
And that's the place must join us into *one*;
So there's beginning, perfection too.
(I.i., 6-12)

The symbolic space of the church inspires Alsemero's conviction that Beatrice is the metaphorical vehicle that returns him to Eden and restores his relationship to a paternal figure—God (or a father-in-law)—through the holy rite of matrimony that unites them as one. Although, Beatrice's grotesque desires unite Alsemero with a father figure, Vermandero, at the end of *The Changeling*, it is this very opening scene of the play that

stresses Alsemero's desire to be the Father of his self production rather than be subjugated to a Father. Through his word choice, "man's creation," Alsemero underscores his authority and power rather than highlight the (pro)creative power of God.

Sara Eaton contends that Alsemero's desire to return to "man's first creation" underscores his desperate hunger for homosocial bonds within his material world.

Alsemero deliberately fashions Beatrice, Eaton argues, "as a vaginal pathway" that will deliver him into a relationship with a father figure, Vermandero (278-279). While I agree with Eaton's argument that Alsemero yearns for a connection to a paternal authority, the play indicates that Alsemero's construction of Beatrice as a womb also highlights his yearning for reproductive power of the Self.

For Alsemero, a marriage to Beatrice would be a return to "man's first creation" once produced and defined by a patrilineal system—God and Adam. Alsemero's juxtaposition of Eden with Beatrice implies that she is "the first creation of man". As a replica of "man's first creation," Beatrice is equated with God's consent that Adam name and classify the flora and fauna and, therefore the discursive birth, of the Garden of Eden and, perhaps, even the use of his material body by God to reproduce Eve. Just as Adam's rib created Eve, Alsemero desires to construct a female Other who is essentially the Same (Irigaray 54). His "right home back" to Eden can be "[achieved]" through the discursive *wedding* of Beatrice's identity to his own. Reflecting the "marriage" of Adam and Eve, Alsemero metaphorically constructs her as the enclosed garden—untouched, faithful, and fertile-- regulated to bearing his fruit and, hence, his name. Alsemero wants Beatrice to be his Paradise, yet his edenic imagery does not highlight the procreative power that is

aligned with (m)other nature and the female Other. Rather, his reference to the Garden of Eden as “man’s first creation” functions as the discursive means of appropriating the reproductive ability of the female Other. Although Beatrice is important because she is the way back to Paradise, simultaneously, she is nothing since Eden is “man’s creation.” Through his textual co-option, Alsemero reinforces male authority over the production and reproduction of bodies and identities. Beatrice operates as his spiritual womb that provides Alsemero with a “beginning,” or origin, but more importantly she cultivates his desire for “perfection too” by reflecting his subjectivity as a product of his reproductive power.

Luce Irigaray’s contemporary analysis of male discursive subordination of the female Other sheds light on the early modern patriarchy’s concern with the textual construction and control of woman as the necessary Other to constitute male identity. Sara Eaton offers a similar reading to my analysis informed by Luce Irigaray’s theory from *Speculum*. Eaton argues that Middleton and Rowley use courtly love rhetoric to expose how the aim of such a contradictory discourse is the possession of women (276 Eaton). Closely examining the public and private languages of the Renaissance within Middleton and Rowley’s play, Eaton argues that DeFlores’s and Alsemero’s use of courtly love rhetoric’s harmonious theme of *oneness* underscores both men’s aim to produce his identity by discursively drafting Beatrice as an Other whose textual body is indispensable to manufacturing his sense of completeness (i.e. “I”) (Eaton 280). Eaton articulates that the central desire for DeFlores and Alsemero is not merely for Beatrice to generate both men’s subjectivity, but that her discursive body must also reflect, like a

screen, their conflicting heterogeneous desires (i.e. both idealized and abject representations of femininity.) (283 Eaton). DeFlores and Alsemero require Beatrice to adhere to this discourse of *oneness* so that they can sustain not only the phantasy that they are the authors of their selves, but through the discourse of fusion both each man then possesses a mirror that produces and reproduces their identity and desires at their pleasure. As a projection of male desires, Beatrice cannot her reflect her own desires and identity leaving her silenced and confined to the textual limits of the masculine discourse of courtly love (277, 285 Eaton). Although Beatrice exposes the gaps in the very rhetoric that constitutes her, Eaton contends that nevertheless she is without any agency to combat the linguistic fraternity that oppresses her.

Despite the confining androcentric rhetoric of courtly love, I read the play as offering Beatrice a space for resistance against the discursive enclosure that Eaton believes the male characters use to dispossess her of a voice. Sara Eaton argues that “Beatrice-Joanna assumes that her ability to mime, to speak the play’s language of love, includes choosing how she will be perceived and possessed (284).” While I agree with Eaton’s claim that Beatrice is stripped of a voice, the play displays how she unveils through mimicry this patriarchal society’s dependence upon the linguistic construction of an abject female Other to constitute male subjectivity and power. The play locates Beatrice’s agency as the effect of her subordination, but although Beatrice is an effect of this power, she exceeds the discursive patriarchal structure that Eaton believes:

defines her body as [a] fortress and her language exposes the “gap,” the locus of societal “hell,” that a cultural psychology has built upon the “secrets” of the female body, and then [used] as a referent for its language of love (286-287).

Through her theatrical parody of a virgin, Beatrice copes defensively with this linguistic gap—the construction of the female Other—by exposing its abject excess and discontinuity in producing the patriarchal culture’s fantasy of woman as the Same. The discursive cracks that Beatrice exposes within the patriarchal linguistic system suggest that the female Other is a set of linguistic terms and imitative practices that can destabilize the naturalized categories of identities and desires of patriarchy. I believe that Luce Irigaray’s theory of mimicry will facilitate and articulate the play’s depiction of femininity as a patriarchal construction that Beatrice appropriates to stage and expose the distance between the doer and patriarchy’s discursive creation.

Within *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Luce Irigaray defines mimicry as a script of body language, generated by a patriarchal linguistic system, which is drafted to render women mute consigning them as female Others—hysterics--regulated to a constant state of mimesis reproducing the discourse of sameness (Irigaray 60, 125). Although Irigaray contends that hysteria is historiography of bodily symptoms and mute gestures that patriarchy culturally induces in the female Other, nevertheless she argues that this gestural system left to the Other does not render it silent and powerless. Hysteria and its symptoms—mutism and mimicry—may be what a patriarchal culture leaves to the female Other, according to Irigaray, but it also presents her with a non-verbal mode of speaking:

Woman’s special form of neurosis would be to “mimic” a work of art, to be a bad (copy of a) work of art. Her neurosis would be recognized as a counterfeit or a parody of an artistic process. It is transformed into an aesthetic object, but one without value, which has to be condemned as a forgery. It is neither “nature” nor an appropriate technique for re-producing nature. Artifice, lie, deception, snare—

these are the kinds of judgments society confers upon the tableaux, the scenes, the dramas, the pantomimes produced by the hysteric. And if woman's instincts try to command public recognition in this way, their demand and de-monstration will be met with derision, anathema, and punishment. Or at least by belittling interpretations, appeals to common sense or reason. A society has the duty to ban forgeries. And the hysterical woman who flaunts an appearance exceeding and defying the natural, the legally sanctioned mean, must be chastised (Irigaray 125).

Instead, Irigaray identifies a disruptive power that the symptoms of hysteria—mutism and mimicry—speak in a gestural way that grossly caricaturizes and warps the patriarchal system of representation and its interpretation of the feminine. Woman's masquerade of femininity fails to correspond to patriarchy's construction of the body object—the female Other—and its abject processes and behaviors. Similarly within Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*, Beatrice's mimicry is a deliberate parodic masquerade that functions as a strategy of resistance which exposes, through playful repetition, the patriarchal terrain of femininity as make-believe. Without reproducing the authority and fantasies of the Law of the Same as real, Beatrice's mimicry works to lay bare the source of patriarchal domination by uncovering how the female gender identity is a textual territory that does not arrest the feminine within its illusory representations and constructs. Beatrice's parody provides the disruptive space for her to recover the source of her subjugation by discourse instead of being reduced to it.

Afraid of suspicion about the status of her virginity from her soon-to-be husband, Beatrice fortuitously acquires assistance in hiding from Alsemero the loss of her maidenhead when she finds his copy of Antonius Mizaldus's, *Secrets in Nature*, in his closet:

Ha! That which is next is ten times worse:

‘How to know whether a woman be a maid or not.’
If that should be applied, what would become of me?
Belike he has a strong faith of my purity,
That never yet made proof; but this he calls
‘A merry sleight, but true experiment, the author
Antonius Mizaldus. Give the party you suspect the quantity
of a spoonful of the water in the glass M, which upon
her that is a maid makes three several effects: twill make
her incontinently gape, then fall into a sudden sneezing,
last into violent laughing; else dull, heavy, and lumpish.’
Where had I been?
I fear it, yet ‘tis seven hours to bedtime.
(IV.i. 39-51)

Although Beatrice mines this book to mimic the bodily symptoms of its virgin test, what is important to first note is that Antonius Mizaldus’s collection of experiments is aimed at penetrating specific “secrets in nature”—the female body. Mizaldus’s text seems to be preoccupied with the intelligibility of the female body rather than with the knowledge of (M)other nature’s womb. Not only does Alsemero’s book outline how to test if a woman is a virgin, but Beatrice discovers a concoction to determine whether a woman is pregnant. For Mizaldus, nature is not only synonymous with the female Other, but even the term “secrets” is conflated with the female body as well. The very first word in the title of the book—*Secrets*—suggests that the female Other is mysterious, excessive and contains a vast amount of undisclosed knowledge that is incomprehensible to man. Beatrice’s careful attention to Alsemero’s marginal notes within the text regarding Antonius Mizaldus’ mystery tonic-- “as a merry trick, but true experiment”--convey his anxiety over the surreptitious functions and appetites of the female body. Alsemero’s possession of Mizaldus’s text communicates his fear and distrust of the female body and sexuality, but even more important this book of secrets and experiments provides him

with the means to assuage these feelings through the control of the unruly and obscure female Other. The book supplies Alsemero with a series of keys to unlock the secrets of the female body so that he can possess reliable signs to successfully read the female Other and its incomprehensible states of being. Mizaldus' experiment prescribes a series of feminine characteristics and behaviors that serve as the topography of the "natural" female body and its specific processes.

The book of experiments is not merely a guide to understanding the female Other; it also constitutes the female Other. Not only do the disproportionate physical effects of Mizaldus's "strange trick" draft woman as Other, but also the location in which Alsemero stows the text underscores the monstrous nature of the female body—the closet. Mizaldus's text, like the textual construction of the female Other, must be hidden from view and cast into abject blackness in an attempt to contain and control the threat of its alterity. At the close of the play, Alsemero literalizes this anxiety to contain the abject feminine with his imprisonment of Beatrice within the same closet declaring that "[he] will be her keeper yet" (V.iii. 87). Alsemero permits Beatrice's abject desires ordering her as her "[panderer]" to "rehearse her scenes of lust" with DeFlores, yet his staging of her sexual desire is concealed from sight (V.iii.114-115). By closeting Beatrice's desire, Alsemero shapes female pleasure as a filthy and shameful practice that mirrors the masculine imagination of Mizaldus's female Other. Beatrice's murder by the *penknife* of her partner in crime, DeFlores, inscribes upon her body her punishment for caricaturing the patriarchal text of virgin (V.iii.172). She must suffer death as chastisement for her lack of chastity and her convincing impersonation as an innocent maid.

Within the play, her masquerade as a virgin is interpreted by male characters as “flaunting an appearance that [exceeds and defies] the *natural*, the legally sanctioned mean” of patriarchal femininity (Irigaray 125). Beatrice is not reduced to her parodic mimicry of virginity; she doesn’t enact the reality—Beatrice as virgin—that the masculine discourse designates. The physical responses Beatrice pantomimes are excessive and grotesque bodily symptoms that permit her mute gestures with which to stage and expose the bad theater of patriarchal femininity. She emulates a series of bodily responses which mirror symptoms of traditional, patriarchal hysteria (i.e. the mad woman, the lunatic) that is culturally conflated with the female bodies—incontinent gaping, uncontrollable sneezing, violent laughter, and melancholy. Beatrice mimics this feminine lack of physical self-control and thus appears to reproduce for Alsemero a female body as “chaste as the breath of heaven or morning’s womb” (IV.iii. 150-151). Alsemero’s rhetoric--the “breath of heaven or morning’s womb”—aims to confer Beatrice (and the feminine) to the realm of silence and reproduction. Mizaldus’s experiment and, by extension, Alsemero gender the female body as unmanageable, messy, irrational and emotional; these symptoms of the female body comprise what is feminine for this male society. As the directions of the man-made experiment indicate, a “natural” virgin experiences these bodily effects rapidly without the pause of reflection indicating that the female body is a disorderly object that defies its material boundaries. To be a virgin then, according to Alsemero, is to be assigned not merely to an abject corporeality, but also to be consigned to a set of gendered behaviors determined and drafted by its bodily functions.

Despite the lack of her hymen, Beatrice easily replicates for Alsemero these feminine “symptoms,” reproducing a virgin who appears not to possess a command over her body. Beatrice’s parody reveals that virginity is recognized by a patriarchal culture through a set of gendered behaviors since it is not a visible, traceable object that is subject to ocular control. Like Garber, I examine the ways in which the masculine imagination and its virginity test attempt to construct and control the female body by limiting it to a script of intelligible and visible bodily signs. Building off of Garber’s claims that Beatrice’s mimesis serves to shield female pleasure from male control, I examine the ways in which Beatrice’s mimicry of femininity registers as a threat to Alsemero because he perceives it as a form of agency that opposes masculine discourse rather than constitutes it (Garber 35). The potion’s ability to render Beatrice speechless indicates that this male culture regards a woman’s voice as deceitful and, possibly, indecipherable so a reliable sign constituting virginity and femininity must be rooted in symptomatological explanations defined by men. The play seems to reflect Irigaray’s critique that a patriarchal culture produces hysterics, *attempting* to imprison woman within its discursive theater sentenced to the terms of miming and reproducing the illusion of the female Other. Without a voice, Beatrice unveils the symptomalogical explanations of the female Other as the source of male authority and power. Through her virginal masquerade, the play exposes how Alsemero employs Mizaldus’s text of woman-as-symptom to map onto Beatrice’s body signs and meanings that he can control, ultimately, providing the means for him to experience a sense of agency. Beatrice seduces Alsemero with Mizaldus’s feminine text of virgin—sexual innocence and

physical vulnerability —that reinforces the image of male power. Pretending to be the “timorous virgin,” Beatrice appeals to Alsemero’s sense of masculinity with her request that she “come obscurely to [his] bosom” on their wedding night (IV.ii.118-121). Beatrice’s wish to arrive veiled by darkness conveys for Alsemero a feminine meekness and terror regarding his physical subjugation and sexual consumption of her body. Despite her reproduction of his desires, it is Beatrice who commands the patriarchal text of femininity. Through her parodic demonstration, Beatrice reveals femininity to be merely a series of imitative practices that she can appropriate to maneuver through the patriarchal constraints that seek to silence and enslave her within the reproduction of the Law of the Same (Irigaray 135-137). Beatrice links agency to her body and its desires rather than remain constrained to Alsemero’s body and desires. Her desire to simultaneously appear virginal and be sexual is perceived as dangerous by Alsemero since it limits his agency; he cannot subjugate her body and pleasures in the service of creating his masculinity. The multiplicity and, at times, the opacity of Beatrice’s body and desires to Alsemero’s forensic gaze and penetrative potion yields his anger because she defies and exceeds the “naturalized mean” of patriarchal femininity.

Posing as a counterfeit speculum, Beatrice’s death is required by the men around her to stave off the horrific experience of a fragmented subjectivity. Repulsed by the “cunning face [behind the virginal] visor,” Alsemero hints that Beatrice’s multiplicity abjures projecting an idealized image of his subjectivity (V.iii. 46-47). Knowledge of Beatrice’s mimicry and multiplicity proves a disruptive resistance that alters the process of Alsemero’s subject formation by denying him the feeling of being unified, singular

and whole. Like a funhouse mirror, Beatrice reflects a misshapen and gory image eliciting dread within Alsemero—"Thou art all deformed" (V.iii. 77). As the image necessary to his subject formation, Beatrice projects an irregular body marring the reproduction of his self as cohesive and complete. Not merely mirroring deformity, Alsemero reads the reflective surface of Beatrice as containing images of fragmented male bodies and even reproducing death. Upon hearing Beatrice's confession as the "cruel murderess" of Piracquo, Alsemero comprehends her self-interested desires as transforming "[their] bed [itself] [into] a charnel [and] the sheets [into] shrouds for murdered carcasses (V.iii.83-84)." These lines suggest that Alsemero interprets Beatrice's murder of "innocent Piracquo," via the help of DeFlores, as the absolute dissolution of male identity (V.iii.70).

Beatrice threatens Alsemero with the loss of self ownership evoking an aggressive drive to restore a unified subjectivity. Only after her death, can Alsemero regain Beatrice as his speculum by constructing her as a text—the monstrous changeling—allowing him to prevent the abject misrecognition and dissolution of his subjectivity that Beatrice's multiplicity generated. With interpretative control over the uses of her textual body, Alsemero endeavors to manufacture his identity, and the other male characters' identities, as united and whole. But more importantly, Alsemero attempts within the epilogue to restore this fantasy of a stable and whole male identity through an insular structure that omits and denies the necessity of woman:

All we can do, to comfort one another,
To stay a brother's sorrow for a brother,
To dry a child from the kind father's eyes,
Is to no purpose; it rather multiplies.

Your only smiles have power to cause re-live
The dead again, or in their rooms to give
Brother a new brother, father a child:
If these appear, all griefs are reconciled.
(V.iii. 220-227)

Disavowing the abject threat of the female Other, Alsemero advocates the suspension of mourning since such emotional display would excessively increase sorrow. Alsemero shrinks from the multiplication of pain, devaluing the work of mourning because he reads it as an uncontrollable and fruitless process that incapacitates the griever.

Even more important, Alsemero's epilogue indicates that he imagines these grieverers to be male audience members. His speech does not address mothers or daughters, but rather it focuses on fathers and brothers who need to abstain from the inertia of tears. Alsemero's prescription of a smiling denial of emotions and the absence of female figures highlights his juxtaposition of excessive corporeal and affective expression with the female body. Instructing the male audience to smile, Alsemero ventures to buttress male subjectivity like a fortress sealing it off from inordinate and disorderly feminine emotions that threaten to transform the men into "leaky vessels," consequently fragmenting and endangering the fiction of a unified and whole male subjectivity (Kern 25). Alsemero's regards this irrepressible grief as a feminizing force that impedes his fantasy objective—the productive discursive reconstruction of all subjectivity as male and the crucial restoration of homosocial bonds between men—that requires the collusion of male audience members to establish this discursive resurrection of male subjectivity as singular and autonomous. Desperate to produce this all-male utopia free from a dependence upon the female Other, Alsemero beguiles his male

audience suggesting that designating this “no place” as a reality lies in within their power by acting as a brother or son to a male figure in order to “[reconcile] the griefs” caused by the abject female Other. Empowering his fellow man, Alsemero links agency and regenerative power to the male body by discursively attempting to terminate the abject female Other to make room for the textually unpolluted (re)birth of a male subjectivity as autonomous and universal. In his pursuit to stave off the fragmentation of male subjectivity, he fails at discursively containing the effects of the abject Other with the inadequate and flimsy closure of his epilogue.

Alsemero’s desire to deny the discursive bounds of the abject female Other that define him leads to his appropriation of its (pro)creative power, and hence alterity, in an attempt to replace the text of the Other with the most desired body of text—male subjectivity. As one of the new children of men, Alsemero experiences firsthand the labor pains that come with the narrative (re)birth of an insular male community. His emphasis on healing the male society around him through the invention of an all-male culture underscores the impossibility of purging the abject that is conflated with the feminine. Alsemero’s fraternal project seems to resonate with Jacques Derrida’s pithy phrase from *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Style*: “...the dream of death begins. It is Woman” (Derrida 367). Alsemero’s effort to preserve his fellow man from extinction by the monstrous feminine removes the female Other from the reproductive service of socially (and biologically) constituting male subjectivity, ultimately leaving men to assume the contradictory roles of the abject feminine—difference, the phallus, reproduction, and death. Alsemero’s reconstructed community discursively furnishes the male body and

subjectivity with the base textual materiality attributed to the female Other that is violently inscribed by patriarchy as a horrific void not merely linked to death but also underscoring death's most abject consequence--castration. Alsemero endeavors to deny his loss of the phallus by discursively shaping his dream as a symbolic gain through his hopeful depiction of a fraternity that mutually and reciprocally replenishes the feeling of wholeness and power that possession of the phallus provides. With this unsustainable fantasy of male unity and a shared hegemony, Alsemero creates a social structure that reproduces decay and death of the male body and identity. With no natural cycle of regeneration, Alsemero unintentionally drafts this all male community as an abject Other with its untenable method of social transformation through merely symbolic substitutions to generate new brothers, sons and fathers for all men. Rather than create an all-male society with his inseminating words, Alsemero conceives a terrifying textual tomb that compels self-destruction.

Unable to exclude all Otherness, Alsemero's epilogue actually appears to mourn the loss of the dreaded object that he feared most— Beatrice—that functioned to preserve the (re)production of his subjectivity sparing him from em-bodying the discursive taint of the abject feminine. Like the patriarchal construction of the abject feminine, Alsemero reproduces injurious losses for both women and men with his self-enclosed social structure that replicates the disciplinary practices of patriarchy (i.e. sex/gender ideologies) without the stealthy veiling of its lethal discursive power. Alsemero's fraternal order sadistically eliminates the necessity of women, inflicting upon potential female audience members or readers the immense loss that a double negation produces—

absolute social exile and the loss of any identity even as an abject Other. Reduced to empty constructions and expelled from society like waste, Alsemero's aggressive denial of the discursive or real necessity of women underscores that they are objects deserving of such destructive anger because of their inability to serve as reliable phalluses. He creates a social narrative—the female Other as socially and materially destructive to Man—to explain and support their complete and utter substitution by male figures. Without the female Other, Alsemero's brotherhood needs to displace lack onto a body that will help constitute male subjectivity as complete and whole. As the play demonstrates through the subordination and subservience of a “former gentleman,” DeFlores, a patriarchal culture does not produce benevolent Fathers willing to share in the labor of producing and procuring the phallus for all men (II.i.49). Patriarchy is unimaginative; it cannot constitute male subjectivity without the construction of an abject alterity. To carry on as an all-male society, Alsemero and his fellow men must subject each other to the alienating hierarchy of patriarchal identity politics.

Alsemero's fraternal invention attempts to phallicize his grief into a symbolic gain by replacing the original lost object and its fetishistic substitute (i.e. Beatrice) with male bodies. He mourns the idea of the phallus. Within his opening speech of the play, Alsemero indicates that the phallus he mourns is the lost relationship between himself and God and the inherited occupation and mastery of Eden and, ultimately, the generative power to create and control life. Alsemero's grief reflects the cause—the Fall of Man—that Robert Burton identifies as the source of melancholy within *The Essential Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621):

...no man living is free, no stoic, none so wise, none so happy, none so patient, so generous, so godly, so divine, that can vindicate himself: so well composed, but more or less, some time or other he feels the smart of it. Melancholy in this sense is the character of mortality. "Man that is born of woman, is of short continuance, and full of trouble." (144)

Burton's statement and employment of scripture from the Book of Job directly conveys that with Eve's sin came death, and hence the diabolic inevitability of melancholy from which all *men* suffer. Though Burton offers cures to mediate the effects of "Mistress Melancholy," he claims that melancholy is a "habit [that] will hardly be removed" (Burton 20, 146). Melancholy is characterized by Burton as a threatening feminine force—"Mistress Melancholy"-- that lasts indefinitely and aggressively. For Burton, melancholy is the key figure of abjection for men; it is a monstrous "continue disease" that regulates man to the site of the body and its grotesque functions, blurring the boundaries between the material body and the self (Burton 146). Kristeva's recent theory of the abject, from *Powers of Horror*, mirrors that of Burton's depiction of Mistress Melancholy, arguing that Western patriarchy constructs the feminine body or the maternal body possessing as a polluting power with the demonic potential of absorbing male identity irretrievably into its murky materiality (Kristeva 64-65). "Mistress Melancholy," like the abject changeling, proves impossible for Alsemero to master and purge from existence no matter how much he shores up his fraternity as the object of desire—the phallus—to defend against the loss of subjectivity and its power. Alsemero's abject melancholia is revealed through his invocation of the Edenic couple and his marriage to Beatrice as his "right back home" as the means to recover the status and power of man's ancestor, Adam (I.i.9).

Ultimately, Alsemero reenacts the traumatic loss of Adam and the failure of his male descendants, since he cannot recover Adam's status as a man born not of woman. Alsemero cannot recapture the reproductive power of Paradise that was happily autonomous of the female Other. Quoting Ecclesiastes within his *Anatomy*, Burton identifies that the source of this social melancholia that afflicts men, like Alsemero, lies in understanding that male identity is bound up with the dismal materiality of the female body:

“Great travail is created for all men, and an heavy yoke on the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb, unto that day they return to the mother of all things.” (Burton 131)

Burton employs this biblical passage that characterizes the “travails of all men,” in this case for Burton melancholia specifically, as a kind of subjugation or oppression that is the product of the womb. More importantly, Burton specifically utilizes this passage which aligns regenerative power as a male right with his reference to God as “the mother of all things” that ultimately further illuminates the anxiety concerning the female body (Burton 131). Only death will return men to a non-corporeal “mother” figure, God, who figures as an abstract parent freeing its progeny from any trace of its bodily imprint and connection to the abject female Other. Burton's text mirrors Alsemero's fantasy of social (and material) reproduction independent of the female Other as a possibility that can only be achieved through the abject state of death. Struggling with the loss of this Edenic ideal, Alsemero reveals that the dream of self-production is irrecoverable and unrealizable via his melancholic substitution—an all-male society—that will not provide him with the means to redeem his ancestor, Adam, and his descendants.

So why does Alsemero fantasize about an all-male culture that, like the abject feminine, threatens to destroy what he seemingly wishes to preserve? Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory of abjection offers us a language that contributes to and complicates Burton's melancholy providing the means to read Alsemero's melancholia as a kind of affirmation that exposes his aggression against the patriarchal structure, religion, which binds his identity to its destructive social forces. Kristeva argues that:

The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being. . . . The abject is the violence of mourning for an 'object' that has always already been lost. The abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgments. It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away. (Kristeva 5, 15)

Kristeva contends that a loss serves as a productive kind of abjection that provides for the subject the means to understand how a specific loss shapes an individual's various non-material wants and desires. Alsemero does not consciously articulate that he understands how the Edenic loss has shaped his fantasy fraternity, but the play depicts him grieving the loss of an ideal (i.e. Eden and Eve as the phallus), rather than a real loss (i.e. the death of Beatrice), that he does not experience firsthand but inherits from his biblical predecessor, Adam. Alsemero's fraternal fantasy not only displays aggression toward the female Other but also betrays his anger toward his patriarchal inheritance—social and religious melancholia—which orchestrates his continued failure by providing him with unreliable objects (i.e. women) incapable of supplying him with a sense of subjectivity, power and wholeness. The play exposes that the very foundation of loss is a kind of abjection that serves to constitute Alsemero's self.

Unable to recapture this imaginary Eden, Alsemero directs his aggression toward the patriarchal culture. In melancholic fashion, Alsemero unconsciously internalizes the lost object—the female Other as phallus—into his self, incorporating the abject changeling’s aggression and violence toward the repressive patriarchal culture that provided him with the wounding, melancholic narrative to construct his subjectivity. Within the opening speech of the play, the very space of the temple induces Alsemero’s longing to possess “man’s first creation,” Beatrice, who will serve as his phallus, but the place of worship tinges his desire with a “timorous” feeling, indicating that such a desire was created as an “omen” with the express intent to harm him (I.i.2,4). Although Alsemero attempts to shake off this “timorous” feeling, he establishes that the physical space of the temple and his religious belief serve as catalysts that propel him into experiencing, in a re-imagined and truncated form, this edenic desire and its fictive loss through his marriage to Beatrice. Alsemero presents this religious melancholia as an abjection that he did not create but he must repeat and suffer passively. Despite Alsemero’s inability to imagine an effective means of social resistance like constructing alternative modes of heterosexual love and gender roles that are not predicated on asymmetrical power relations, it is the construction of the abject female Other that reveals the patriarchal orchestration of a melancholic structure compelling him to substitute one loss for another. Alsemero’s inherited and unresolved grief displays that his subjectivity possesses a bit of what patriarchy wishes to deny—the abject Other. Middleton and Rowley’s *The Changeling* delineates how the patriarchal institution of religion sets up a self-destructive mode of grieving that depends on and cannot efface the abject female

Other. This early modern patriarchy is the cause of its own failure since it must depend on its monstrous construction of the abject female Other that plunges the play's male characters into an unproductive crisis, leaving the men incapable of achieving the illusion of an autonomous male subjectivity.

Chapter Two

Abjection and Agency in John Ford's

'Tis Pity She's a Whore

Recent scholarship regarding John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's A Whore* employs anthropological approaches with great frequency to explain how its protagonist, Giovanni, violates the incest taboo functions to disrupt patriarchal kinship structures. Pompa Banerjee argues, for instance, that when Giovanni flouts the prohibition against incest to engage in his lust for his twin sister, Annabella, he ultimately threatens the stability of homosocial bonds between his father, Florio, and her husband, Soranzo, by dispossessing these men of their control over the body and desires of Annabella. With the help of anthropologist Marcel Mauss's gift theory, Banerjee claims that "Giovanni perverts the [kinship structure]" by removing himself from the patriarchal market of the reciprocal gift exchange of daughters and sisters through his sexual consumption of Annabella, which threatens Soranzo's future patrimony and his sociopolitical legitimacy within patriarchal society (139-140). Following in Banerjee's anthropological footsteps, Richard McCabe examines the seventeenth-century discourses of religious authority figures, which further developed and refined the incest prohibition to create and sustain patriarchal kinship structures of the early modern period. McCabe argues that Giovanni challenges the very concept of kinship by refusing to adhere to the traditional Augustinian stance that incest frustrates the social goal of matrimony—exogamy—which

serves “to strengthen the fabric of society by creating new bonds of love and charity between ever greater numbers of people” (312, 313). Both Banjeree and McCabe view the play as far more concerned with “the social, moral and political issues associated with [Giovanni’s incestuous desire]” than with incest itself (McCabe 309). For these scholars, incest serves as a thematic device to explore early modern ways of thinking about religious authority, kinship structures, marriage, and a host of other cultural issues.

With incest as its subject matter, John Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s A Whore* begs an analysis of the specific ways in which this brother-sister incestuous relationship disturbs the early modern period’s patriarchal kinship structures; however, what I find most striking is the significant lack of attention paid to the very manner—incest—in which Giovanni chooses to frustrate this male system of exchange. Like Banjeree and McCabe, I too argue that the play employs incest to explore and even critique the social and political ideologies regarding the kinship structures of early modern patriarchy, but what this specific examination ducks, that I would like to explore, are the psychological and ideological underpinnings of Giovanni’s abject choice. In this chapter, my goal is to understand the ideological messages behind the representation of Giovanni’s incestuous desire. At the heart of *’Tis Pity She’s A Whore*, the ideological concern is not just Giovanni’s deviant desires; rather, the play communicates the horrors that patriarchy’s destructive gender identity politics inflict on men and women.

With the help of Julia Kristeva’s feminist psychoanalytical works, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* and *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, I will examine the ways in which Giovanni’s incestuous desire for his sister intimates his

longing to restore a connection with an abject maternal figure. According to Kristeva, the maternal body represents to the child a long lost sense of plenitude without differentiation that the child experienced during its material connection with the mother. Kristeva defines the mother as the chora, or a nourishing matrix-like space, that governs a pre-linguistic, semiotic realm in which the mother is not an object for the child, but a subject that fulfills its need for an identity (13-15). The symbolic world of patriarchy demands, according to Kristeva, the child to forfeit its union with the mother by constructing boundaries between itself and her through its use of language to acquire an identity separate from the mother. Within the symbolic world, language becomes the substitute for the mother. Utilizing patriarchy's symbolic maternal substitute, the child attempts to jettison the maternal body by participating in its dehumanizing subject-object distinction that defines the mother as the abject object that threatens to engulf its subjectivity. The symbolic's objectification of the mother requires the child to renounce part of itself (i.e. the mother), prohibiting the child's narcissistic identification with the maternal body that served as its first love and provided it with an identity. Not only does the symbolic demand the submission of the child to an imaginary father and his signifying practices that establish at best a fictive identity, but the child's separation from its origins, the maternal body's affects and desires, could possibly render the child a melancholic orphan who unsuccessfully seeks the unity and wholeness of the undifferentiated union that the abject mother supplied within a distant and withholding symbolic realm.

Within *'Tis Pity*, Giovanni rebels against the symbolic world's substitutes for the abject (m)other—the patriarchal discourses of religion and family—since the

paternal function of such discourses is to obscure how its conception of a fixed identity is a fiction. Giovanni experiences his gender identity as an unstable text that is revised and even negated at the whim of his father figures, Friar Bonaventura and Florio, who serve as the determining forces of his “subjectivity.” Horrified by Giovanni’s incestuous desires for Annabella, Friar Bonaventura denies him a spiritual connection or oneness with a boundless and loving God, thus withholding from his surrogate child the sense of completeness that religious ideology of sharing “one soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all” with the infinite supplies (I.i.34). Doubting Giovanni’s ability to reproduce the family name and lineage, Florio refuses to nurture a subjectivity for his son who may conceive no heirs that strengthen his familial dynasty, focusing instead on his daughter, Annabella, as the vehicle to achieve social and financial power. Friar Bonaventura and Florio wield male subjectivity as unreachable entity that is always elsewhere, deepening Giovanni’s awareness that patriarchal discourses of religion and family yield grim promises of nothingness. These father figures induce within Giovanni a sense of incompleteness resulting in his mourning the loss of the chora that originally provided him with a sense of wholeness. Discursively disowned by patriarchy, Giovanni becomes a melancholic orphan seeking the shelter of an abject mother to recoup the loss of subjectivity. Giovanni resists allowing these patriarchs to produce his subjectivity as a malleable “nothing” that generates and provides them with meaning and power, and instead seeks to recapture the undifferentiated union with the abject mother where he is free from the threat of patriarchal discourses that control and even negate his existence (I.i.76). Viewing his identity as hopelessly entwined with the body and identity of the

abject (m)other, Giovanni turns to Annabella to fill the maternal void in order to recapture a sense of unity and wholeness that patriarchy's symbolic world cannot provide. Within his incestuous relationship with his sister, Giovanni constructs Annabella as an abject maternal substitute to repress his grief over the loss of, what Kristeva refers to as the original "object" of desire, his mother, that guaranteed him a subjectivity.

However, Giovanni's identification with and pleasure in the abject feminine does not keep him from appropriating the abject feminine as a weapon against a patriarchy that attempts to repress both his incestuous desire and his desire for subjectivity and power. Giovanni replicates the very patriarchal power that he rebels against out of his fear that his abject maternal substitute, Annabella, will not sustain the subjectivity and pleasures that he desires. Here Kristeva's theory of abjection offers a language that provides us with an understanding of why Giovanni mimics patriarchy with his anxious appropriation of the abject feminine. According to Kristeva, the abject female Other simultaneously creates and threatens the child's identity ultimately eliciting the fear that its "subjectivity [is] sinking irretrievably into the (m)other" (64). Although Giovanni fears the engulfing embrace of the abject (m)other, nevertheless he discovers that he cannot be free of the abject female other entirely since it paradoxically threatens and maintains his selfhood (Kristeva 2). Giovanni's murder of his sister-lover and unborn son reveals his attempt to keep his identity from being engulfed by the simultaneous "fruitful womb" and "tomb" of Annabella's body (V.vi. 28, 33). With the brutal murder of Annabella, Giovanni eliminates the means to reproduce his identity. To

stave off the loss of subjectivity, Giovanni appropriates the generative power of Annabella's body constructing himself as the cradle of subjectivity in an attempt to conceal his dependence and need for the abject female other.

Although Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling's* Alsemero desires to forge a fraternal order of fathers, sons and brothers free from the taint of the female Other, Giovanni, the protagonist from *'Tis Pity*, seeks the abject female Other as a refuge from an oppressive patriarchy that seeks to limit and control his sexual desires. In the very opening scene of *'Tis Pity*, Giovanni confesses his incestuous desire for his twin sister, Annabella, but is dutifully chastised by his childhood educator and proxy father figure, Friar Bonaventura, for attempting to rationalize his grotesque libidinal desires. In an attempt to diminish Giovanni's claims, Friar Bonaventura rigidly declares that "nice philosophy may tolerate unlikely arguments," but religion will not stomach such "jests" (I.i. 2, 3). Infantilizing Giovanni's rhetoric as mere "school points," Friar Bonaventura endeavors to close off his desire for Annabella by rigidly denying incest as a legitimate custom of a religious society. Friar Bonaventura likens Giovanni's argument in support of incest to the "wits that presumed...to prove there was no God," asserting that Giovanni should not question Catholicism and its taboos but merely submit to its moral laws and practices (I.i.4, 6). Giovanni reacts aggressively to the Friar's rhetorical strategies to subordinate not only his intellectual curiosity and ability, but also his abject desire. Dismissing the term, "incest", as merely "a peevish sound" and "customary form," Giovanni vigorously contests the symbolic order of patriarchy by constructing the prohibition against incest as nothing more than sounds uttered by the

throat and tongue and a conventional formality to deplete its laws and rules of meaning and power (I.i.25-26). Giovanni's attempt to lay bare how the cultural prohibition against incest is a construction that can be easily rendered meaningless can be understood through the lens of Kristeva's theory of abjection:

What causes abjection is what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous the composite. Any crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law is abject... We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because abjection acknowledges the subject to be in perpetual danger. But also because abjection itself is a composite of judgment and feeling, or condemnation and yearning (4, 10)

Giovanni exposes the fragility of the border between nature and culture with his perverse, but logical, argument supporting his abject desire for Annabella. Furnishing "links of blood, of reason" and "even religion" as resources to justify his incestuous desire, Giovanni manipulates these materials by underscoring the common ideology of oneness—"one soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all"—sanctioned and supported by discourses such as biology and religion (I.i.34). Giovanni's abjection, or destabilization of the cultural prohibition against incest, is a conscious act that highlights his awareness of his incestuous desire as forbidden, but perceiving it as forbidden, he wants it nonetheless. Giovanni's abject incestuous lust threatens patriarchal subjectivity, blurring the boundaries between self and an abject Other. Susan J. Wiseman's argument in her article, "Representing the Incestuous Body," regarding the potent effects of incest in *'Tis Pity* mirrors Kristeva's theory of abjection: "the play suggests the power of incest confounds the boundaries of nature and culture eliding any clear distinctions between self and other" (221). Friar Bonaventura ineffectually tries to prevent, what Kristeva theorizes

and Wiseman acutely observes to be the collapse of meaning, subjectivity and the Other by negotiating the impact with tools of the symbolic. Friar Bonaventura tries to resurrect definite boundaries between normative and non-normative desire through the exclusion of the abject via acts of contrition that require his son's "repentance and sorrow for this sin" (I.i.43). Troubled by his surrogate son's misuse of his education to legitimize his abject desires, Friar Bonaventura tries to induce feelings of guilt and shame within Giovanni by reminding him that "[he] was proud of [his] tutelage [choosing his] books rather than part with [him] (I.i. 54-55). Friar Bonaventura realizes the futility of his teachings declaring that the "fruit of all [his] hopes are lost in [Giovanni]," but even more significant such a statement underscores this holy man's separation anxiety from his university protege (I.i. 50-52). The cleric expresses the fear that he no longer fashions and controls Giovanni's sense of self who is instead "lost [within himself]," divorcing his subjectivity from the Friar and his tutelage (I.i. 56). Even the loving way in which the Friar expresses his affection for his pupil, as "the miracle of wit," linguistically smacks of patriarchy's symbolic order and communicates the ways in which Giovanni's subjectivity is a product of it:

"Art thou, my son, that miracle of wit/Who once within these three months, wert esteemed/A wonder of thine age, throughout Bononia? How did the University applaud/Thy government, behaviour, learning speech, /Sweetness, and all that could make up a man! (I.i.47-52)

According to Friar Bonaventura, Giovanni was fathered by the various discourses and belief systems that the University and he employed to reproduce a gentleman. Friar Bonaventura clearly expresses that his "son" is obligated to the symbolic realm of patriarchy for the subjectivity that it fashions for him. Constructing Giovanni's

incestuous desires as the “leprosy of lust” that flirts with an “unranged (almost) blasphemy,” Friar Bonaventura deems his “fair son” afflicted with a sick sexual appetite and profane madness that will corrupt his body if he does not adhere to his fatherly guidance (I.i. 45, 74, 19). Hesitant to diagnose Giovanni’s desire as blasphemous, Friar Bonaventura fashions a spiritual treatment that compels Giovanni to denounce himself as “a wretch, a worm [and] a nothing” (I.i.76). Friar Bonaventura’s rehabilitation demands Giovanni’s submission to multiple fathers—his biological father and benefactor (Florio), his spiritual guide and educator (Bonaventura) and his religious father (God)—to instruct him that, although he exists, it is as “a nothing” within a highly stratified patriarchy (I.i.76). Although Giovanni agrees to “do [all that Friar Bonaventura requests], he does so to “free himself from the rod of vengeance” conveying that he is fully aware of paternal recrimination and punishment at the hands of his familial, spiritual and holy fathers for failing to submit to the confining system of belief that produces and sustains a fictive identity for him (I.i.83-84). As “a nothing,” Giovanni experiences his identity as a fiction that can be rewritten by powerful patriarchs who deny him the subject-object distinction necessary to become a discrete subject. Giovanni resists embracing patriarchy’s fictive identity because doing so is a matter of participating in his own oppression and eventual self-destruction.

Yet Giovanni has no faith in the religious discourse of the symbolic world that compels him to identify with unloving fathers who offer no consolation against “nothingness” and emptiness (I.i.76). Giovanni rails against and rejects Friar

Bonaventura who serves as the representative of the symbolic world and its laws of God,
the Father:

Gentle father, to you I have unclasped my burdened soul, emptied the
storehouse of my thoughts and heart, made myself poor of secrets;
have not left another word untold, which hath not spoke all what I ever
durst, or think, or know; and yet is here the comfort I shall have, must I
not do what all men else may, love? (I.i.12-19)

Giovanni grieves that the repressive, paternal realm of religion does not merely limit his
“thoughts and heart,” but it forecloses possible exchanges of incestuous love between
himself and Annabella, ultimately bankrupting him of his non-normative sexual desires.
Opposing the suffering of an impoverished libido at the ideological insistence of a
patriarchal religion, Giovanni’s discourse of religion and its conception of love mirrors
the economic discourse that composes the patriarchal kinship structures that he
rhetorically rebels against. Giovanni embraces and participates in, what Banerjee refers
to as the “vocabulary of the marketplace,” constructing Annabella as “a commodity in the
marriage market” like her comical suitor, Bergetto, who conflates marriage to her as
“another purchase” (142). Refusing Friar Bonaventura’s request to persuade Annabella
to marry a suitor, Giovanni fetishizes Annabella as a rare property with “eyes likes
jewels,” “hair that is made of threads of gold,” “breath composed of sweet perfumes” and
“cheeks resembling delicious flowers” that must be kept out of circulation that exogamy
requires (II.v.51-54). Aware of his sister as a commodity, Giovanni desires to poach
Annabella from his father, Florio, to prevent, as Putana suggests, that “[she’ll] be stolen
away [while] sleeping” by a potential suitor (I.ii.65-66). Giovanni situates himself in

discursive combat with patriarchy over the linguistic ownership of religion and its conception of love, appropriating its pecuniary terms to purchase his incestuous desires.

Through his repossession of these patriarchal discourses of religion and love, Giovanni's rhetorical manipulations prove profitable, securing him the discursive power to fashion an idealized construction to stave off the "nothingness" that the fathers of the symbolic world cannot (I.i.34). Giovanni narcissistically drafts Annabella into a non-threatening religious figure so that through its love he can produce a self that is reassuring rather than fictive. According to Giovanni, Annabella is a beauty that even "the gods would make a god of," and "kneel to it as [he] kneels to them" (I.i.22-23). Although Annabella is transformed into a "god" via Giovanni's religious imagination, he refers to her as "it," reducing her to a thing to be worshipped (I.i.21-22,64). In his anger over Giovanni's blasphemy, Friar Bonaventura refers to Annabella as an "idol" reinforcing his son's idea that she is an object that cannot speak or think (I.i.61). Giovanni's concept of worship conceives of Annabella as a sacrament that once sexually consumed miraculously ends his suffering for subjectivity. After consum(mat)ing their mutual love, Giovanni declares his happiness to Annabella over the birth of his subjectivity: "I envy not the mightiest man alive, but hold myself in being king of thee more great than were I king of all the world (II.i. 18-20)." Giovanni's religious "idol" fosters his narcissistic need for a subjectivity that designates him as all powerful (I.i.61).

Giovanni replaces God, the Father, with a religious object that he defines, allowing him to control his "god," Annabella, and indulge in his incestuous desires. Cunningly, Giovanni employs such religious discourse purposefully underscoring its

idealized tenet of oneness with God to persuade Friar Bonaventura that his desire is both culturally and naturally sanctioned:

Say we had one father, say one womb (curse to my joys) gave us life and birth; are we not therefore each 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? (I.i.28-34)

Giovanni exploits this religious ideology that highlights the pleasure in the dissolution of boundaries between an idealized love object (e.g. God) and an individual's subjectivity producing the feeling of a shared self with the creator of everything. However, Giovanni doesn't experience this connection with God or its subsequent sense of wholeness that a union with this absent Father figure seemingly conceives. Although Giovanni takes up the religious ideology of oneness as a defense to support his incestuous desire, it is secondary to his argument regarding "nature". Mirroring Freud's theory from *Civilization and Discontents*, Giovanni supports the psychoanalysts' claim that religion promises to be an echo of an infantile state of oneness, but it ultimately fails to substitute the lost feeling of oneness that the "links of blood" supply for Giovanni (Freud 20-21). For Ford's orphaned believer, religion fails to reproduce, what Freud refers to, as an "oceanic feeling," or a sense of unity with a being without borders. Giovanni's experience of religion reflects, to some extent, Freud's claim that it doesn't father "a feeling of something as limitless, unbounded" or "a feeling of an indissoluble bond of being one with the eternal world as a whole" (Freud 11-12). Annabella generates this "oceanic feeling" for Giovanni, rather than religion which fails to produce and nourish Giovanni's

subjectivity. Evading a state of non-existence and the denial of his abject love at the request of these religious father figures, Giovanni professes that “it were more ease to stop the ocean from floats and ebbs than to dissuade his vows” to his grotesque idol, Annabella, whose female body supplies the infantile state of oneness that patriarchal religion did not successfully replicate (I.i.64-65).

Although Giovanni compares his incestuous desire to the ocean to convey that his sexual appetite for his sister is a natural and uncontrollable force, nevertheless his imaginative choice of metaphor finds a parallel in Julia Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory regarding the semiotic chora, or the maternal realm. Giovanni’s ocean metaphor also expresses his instinct that Annabella is the vehicle to return to a nourishing womblike space. As a natural force without boundaries, the ocean’s “floats and ebbs” recall to Giovanni a vastness, plenitude and oneness with the maternal body that, according to Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror*, is reminiscent of the child’s Imaginary union (i.e. pre-symbolic or pre-verbal) within its mother’s womb wherein the child experiences a sense of subjectivity without any borders (19-20). The play intimates that Giovanni’s incestuous desire for Annabella belies his actual desire for his mother and the subjectivity that she generated for him. Giovanni seeks to recoup this connection to the maternal body in order to feel whole and complete but he can only do so through the objectification and sexual domination of his sister since, as the play clearly indicates, Giovanni and Annabella’s mother is dead. *’Tis Pity* doesn’t clearly indicate if their mother died in child birth or later in the children’s infancy, but it is clear that Giovanni’s resistance against the symbolic realm, or patriarchal religion, indicates that her absence is a source of

melancholic trauma for Giovanni who seeks to alleviate this oceanic void through an incestuous relationship with his sister. Despite his ardent rebellion against a repressive patriarchy, Giovanni's means to retrieve a connection to the (m)Other, and ultimately his subjectivity, betray his indoctrination at the hands of the very authority that he resists. Kristeva's theory of abjection provides further understanding for why Giovanni attempts to discursively appropriate and objectify his maternal substitute, Annabella, who produces and nourishes his subjectivity:

“...the archaic relation to the mother, narcissistic though it may be, is from my point of view of no solace to the protagonists and even less so to Narcissus. For the subject will always be marked by the uncertainty of his borders and of his affective valency as well; these are all the more determining as the paternal function was weak or even nonexistent, opening the door to perversion or psychosis. The edenic image of primary narcissism is perhaps a defensive negation elaborated by the neurotic subject when he sets himself under the aegis of the father (Kristeva 63).

Giovanni discursively controls the (m)Other to cope defensively with his negation under the symbolic realm's ineffectual shelter, discourse, that falls short of providing him with a stable identity. However, Giovanni's objectification of his maternal substitute, Annabella, highlights his fear of the abject (m)Other's engulfing embrace that simultaneously creates and threatens Giovanni's self. Like patriarchy's symbolic realm, the abject (m)Other doesn't shield Giovanni from “nothingness” but it nevertheless provides him with the means to secure a subjectivity through a narcissistic union with a maternal object that he can control (I.i.76). Giovanni attempts to stave off the threat of his identity “sinking irretrievably into the (m)Other” by subjugating and drafting a maternal realm that suits his needs (Kristeva 64). Giovanni discursively fashions a permissive maternal ideal that sanctions incest as a natural act and desire that patriarchal

culture cannot prohibit with its laws. “Links of blood” or the shared experience of the abject materiality of the female body serves as the heart of Giovanni’s argument to justify an incestuous relationship with Annabella (I.i.31-32). Further rationalizing his incestuous desire for his sister, Annabella, Giovanni argues with Friar Bonaventura that sharing “one father” serves as a viable reason to love since it “[binds them] by nature,” but it is his oblique reference to his mother as the “one womb [that] curst to [his] joys [gave him and Annabella] both life and birth” that discloses the undifferentiated union with the maternal figure that he seeks to reduplicate (I.i. 28-32). Even Giovanni’s claim to Annabella that their physical likeness further naturalizes their incestuous relationship underscores his desire to return to the maternal realm: “Wise nature first in your creation meant to make you mine; else had been sin and foul to share one beauty to a double soul” (I.ii.232-234). Giovanni suggests that he and Annabella are twins, or at the very least they are mirror images of each other. Annabella allows Giovanni to recreate what was once continuous with the self—the (m)other. Annabella serves as this “edenic image” that Giovanni can immerse his self in; for Giovanni looking at Annabella is akin to experiencing the oneness and plenitude of the mother (Kristeva 63). Giovanni’s desire to replicate this fusion with a maternal figure unveils his desire to indulge in the abject pleasures of primary narcissism. His need to reproduce a shared subjectivity betrays the self-love couched within his incestuous relationship with Annabella that blurs the boundaries between self and Other. Giovanni constructs his sister-lover as an idealized speculum that reflects his subjectivity reproducing a comforting, onanistic belief that: I am everything and everything is me.

According to Kristeva, the threat of incest is directly related to the issue of primary narcissism since the child's origin, or its intimate bodily connection to the mother, evokes fears of non-normative maternal desire because the child's primary identification begins with its first love, the mother. Primary narcissism, as Kristeva notes, produces within the symbolic realm the "dread of incest"¹⁰ since the child's libidinal energy is directed toward the abject (m)Other preventing its separation and individuation from her (56-59). However, Kristeva redirects the focus from the fear of incest to the presymbolic subject formation that the intimate material relationship between mother and child produces. Kristeva argues primary narcissism is the pre-verbal and pre-objectal relationship between child and mother wherein the child experiences the "archaic economy," the plenitude that the undifferentiated union of the chora, or maternal space, supplies (10,15). Within the chora, Kristeva claims that the child views the mother as a subject rather than an object, and ultimately identifies with and incorporates the (m)Other into itself. During this narcissistic union with the mother, the child becomes "a not-yet independent subject" by reduplicating the non-objectal patterns (e.g. affect-driven language and amatory feelings) of the mother that will help usher it into the symbolic. For Kristeva, primary narcissism is a structure in which the child over its life learns not only how to become a "subject" but also how to identify with other "objects" within the symbolic through the abjection of the mother. "Abjection is a precondition of narcissism" producing for the child the paradoxical experience of separateness and connectedness that informs its future "object" identifications and

¹⁰ I am borrowing Freud's phrase that he coined in his work *Totem and Taboo*, in which he argues that the woman-mother figure is the reason for the culture's production of the taboos against murder and incest.

“object” relations (13). Despite the material separation between the mother and child, Kristeva argues that the child cannot escape from “the abject through whom [it] exists,” yet at the same time the child’s entrance into the symbolic is paved by the abject (m)Other who allows the child to renounce its identification with her and seek out new “objects” free from the threat of losing its connection to her (6). Although the child staves off the loss of the abject, nevertheless it suffers the loss of the satisfying experience of plenitude that the abject (m)Other supplied that cannot be recovered within the symbolic but replicated to simulate the pleasures of primary narcissism.

Giovanni departs from Kristeva’s theory through their objectification of their familial substitutes reducing them from “object” choices, or subjects, to mere sexual possessions. Nevertheless this incestuous bunch mirrors, to some extent, Kristeva’s account of plenitude which they pursue through familial substitutes who serve as a form of narcissistic protection from a dissolution of boundaries and hence a loss of self. Simultaneously, these literary and film characters are aware of the loss of plenitude but their need for a familial proxy to reduplicate an experience akin to that of primary narcissism conveys their inability to tolerate this primal loss of wholeness. Giovanni’s melancholy underscores his acute understanding of the loss of a satisfying oneness with a maternal “object” that he tries to reproduce through his incestuous relationship of Annabella which allows him to deny such a painful loss. Although Annabella does not share in Giovanni’s melancholy over the loss of their mother, the play depicts her possessing repressed incestuous desires that aid and consent to her brother utilizing her as a vehicle to recoup the fusion state that he longs for. Upon hearing Giovanni’s

declaration of his abject love, Annabella's confession indicates that she naturally mirrors his incestuous desires:

Thou hast won the field and never fought. What thou hast urged
my captive heart had long ago resolved. I blush to tell thee now—
for every sigh that thou hast spent for me I have sighed 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 (I.ii.240-247)

Not only does Annabella admit her incestuous desire for Giovanni, but the play suggests that she loved *first*. Although the play opens with Giovanni's startling confession, its depiction of Annabella's repressed incestuous desires as existing within "[her] captive heart [that] long ago resolved" to love before her brother's "urging" indicates a duration of time unlike Giovanni who doesn't verbalize *when* but merely declares that he loves her (I.ii.241-242). Her choice of the word, "captive," supports Giovanni's belief that "nearness in birth or blood," the material body of the mother, inspired their incestuous desires (I.ii.242,235). Annabella's "captive heart" conveys her lack of choice in loving Giovanni, underscoring a physical force compelling her heart to yearn for flesh and blood similar to her own. Despite Annabella's incestuous desire to be one with Giovanni, her need for fusion doesn't bear traces of the narcissistic (re)union that Giovanni longs for with their lost mother. Although Annabella evokes the memory of their dead mother as the contractual measure to legitimize the incestuous desire that her materiality produced, she doesn't stake a claim on the maternal body and womb that housed them: "By *our* mother's dust, I charge you do not betray me to your mirth or hate. Love me or kill me brother" (I.ii.250-252). Replicating this promise with a difference, Giovanni declares "by *my* mother's dust" that he will not betray Annabella (I.ii.254). In his analysis of the play,

McCabe notes Giovanni's usage of the possessive pronoun which he thinks bears a relationship to the deceased mother. Employing a Freudian lens, McCabe suggests that "incest with a sibling can sometimes be interpreted as a sublimated form of incest with a parent" (316). Yet McCabe hesitates from fully developing this psychoanalytic reading, instead leaning toward the interpretation that: "at the very least, it seems that the absent mother is a very powerful presence in Giovanni's psyche and that his feelings for his sister are deeply implicated in his memory of her" (316). Building upon McCabe's psychoanalytic reading, I believe that the play suggests that Giovanni's obsession with his mother's ring only highlights his incestuous desire for his mother, but also reveals what she metonymically represents for him.

Giovanni's choice of pronoun is significant because it stresses his possession of the mother, but asserting his ownership of their mother's (decomposed) body is not enough. Giovanni orders Annabella to give him the ring that their mother bequeathed her to give to her future husband (II.vi. 37-40). Deliberately, Giovanni lays claim to a symbolic possession that once belonged to his mother and continues to sustain, via the ritual of marriage, the power and privilege of patriarchy that denies him a self. The engagement ring is a symbol of Annabella as a form of property for her husband, and as his property she maintains and supports his authority and identity.

Although Giovanni's desire to wear the ring indicates his status as Annabella's husband, it is significant that he lays claim to a personal possession, the ring, which bears traces of a bodily connection to their mother. Interestingly, throughout the play Giovanni evades independently naming and referring to his mother unless prompted by Annabella

who incorporates their mother into their mock wedding vows. Giovanni and Annabella's mother literally has no name; she is merely identified by her familial and biological relationship to her children—mother. Their mother is present via the insufficient, yet necessary, sign of ring but she is also an indeterminate something that resists articulation (Kristeva 11-15). The play doesn't depict Giovanni asking for the ring, but relays this information through Annabella who must account for its absence to her father, Florio (II.vi.37-44). Although Giovanni can ask for his mother's ring from Annabella, nevertheless the play avoids staging this scene contributing further to the construction of his mother as ineffable presence. The ring serves as the symbolic consolation and compensation for the loss of Giovanni's mother, yet the ring proves to be an impossible stand in for her. This deliberate narrative gap within *'Tis Pity* suggests that the symbolic world and its discourses fail to provide melancholic Giovanni with the means to verbalize the primal loss of his mother. Kristeva's *Black Sun* provides a possible explanation for the ways in which this narrative gap is meaningful and also contributes to a nuanced understanding of why Giovanni desires jewelry that once belonged to his mother:

With those affected by melancholia, primary identification proves to be fragile, insufficient to secure other identifications, which are symbolic this time, on the basis of which the *erotic Thing* might become a captivating *Object of desire* insuring continuity in a metonymy of pleasure. The melancholy Thing interrupts desiring metonymy, just as it prevents working out the loss within the psyche. ...Never is the ambivalence of drive more fearsome than in this beginning of otherness where, lacking the filter of language, I cannot inscribe my violence in "no," nor in any other sign (14,15).

Reflecting Kristeva's theory, although Giovanni can ask for his mother's ring, nevertheless he cannot name what he has lost. He longs not for an actual Object but

rather for a Thing that resists articulation. Giovanni's Object of desire, his mother's ring, conveys his incommunicable grief for the unrepresentable Thing behind it—the lost fusion state with the abject (m)other. His counterfeit marriage to Annabella is symbolically consecrated by the ring that allows Giovanni to (re)experience the pleasures—a state of oneness and a subjectivity—that he forfeited with the loss of his mother. The engagement ring represents wholeness and perfection since as a circular object, it has no beginning and no end. The ring's endlessness makes it a symbol of oneness and plenitude akin to that of the bodily connection to the abject (m)other. Their dead mother's heirloom is for Giovanni an expression of the experience of the semiotic that is present within, but subject to the will of the symbolic world of patriarchy and as such must be appropriated to replicate for him the pleasures of primary narcissism. Giovanni's possession of Annabella and the ring amounts to the recovery of his subjectivity, but also it fulfills his narcissistic longing for a simulated re-union with his first love—the mother. Giovanni's custody of the ring and his possession of the fruit of Annabella's womb, reproduces for him the metonymy of “oneness” with the mother that was lost. Ultimately, Giovanni's abject incestuous desires for Annabella function as a form of protection against the unbearable anguish of losing his sense of self.

This re-union, however, is not solely about the undifferentiated pleasure of being one with the abject (m)Other; rather it intimates his longing for sexual ownership over the procreative power of the female body. Giovanni metaphorically and literally experiences this sexual ownership through his incestuous relationship with Annabella, which also allows him not only to frustrate and usurp his father's patriarchal authority to exchange

Annabella's body for profit, but also to rob her husband, Soranzo, of a sexual control that would ensure the necessary production of legitimate heirs. The play intimates that there is a tension between Giovanni and his father, Florio, who publicly declares that Giovanni, "so devoted to his book," will not contribute to his dynasty, believing his son's doubtful health will "miscarry" all his hopes (I.iii.5,7). His public declaration of his fears to Signor Donado regarding Giovanni's health could only prove risky and harmful for Florio who must broker a future marriage within Parman society for his son. Such a confession to a fellow nobleman suggests that Florio resists all efforts to procure a suitable bride for Giovanni that would provide him with social status and subjectivity that he so desires. Even Florio's word choice, "miscarry," grounds Giovanni's (potential) failure to reproduce the family legacy in the discourse also used to convey the loss of a pregnancy. Giovanni's father believes that he may conceive "nothing." Florio doubts his son's ability to reproduce the family name and lineage, believing that "all [his] hopes rely upon [his girl]" to forge further homosocial bonds to bolster his dynasty (I.iii.7-8). Florio intimates that heirs are a form of currency without which Giovanni cannot purchase a male identity with all the powers and privileges that patriarchal society assigns to it. Florio's doubt enacts Giovanni's negation causing him great psychological injury that amplifies his incestuous desire for Annabella.

By privileging Annabella as prized object that reproduces social and financial power for both her father and future husband, Florio unwittingly contributes to reinforcing Giovanni's belief that his sister's body is a means through which he (re)acquires the subjectivity that he lost and which patriarchy continues to deny him. In a

perverse fashion, Giovanni publicly proves at a dinner banquet “how much he deserved to be his son” by boldly informing Florio and guests that not only did he enjoy “sweet Annabella’s sheets” for nine months but he is also the father of her “unborn child” (V.vi.39, 45,51). Giovanni fathers a child within his own blood line proving to Florio that he can indeed conceive an heir that will provide him with the social status and subjectivity that his father denied him. Ultimately Giovanni’s incest and control of Annabella’s reproductive power serve to express his anger toward an indifferent father who doesn’t foster his identity. His “unborn child” successfully allows him to frustrate the homosocial bonds between Florio and his new son, Soranzo. Giovanni’s abject progeny prevents any further distribution of material and social wealth between Florio and Soranzo that cements the bonds between a father and his son (in law). Unable to redirect Florio’s love and influence to cultivate his male identity, Giovanni’s incest allows him to prevent his father from further developing and nurturing Soranzo’s social status and subjectivity. Like her brother, Annabella’s incest provides her with the means to exhibit and articulate her repressed anger toward both Florio and Soranzo who attempt to deny her both control of her body and her voice. Annabella’s incestuous rebellion aids Giovanni’s designs against the patriarchal foes that frustrate his desire for subjectivity and power, but ultimately her new found sense of empowerment disappoints and obstructs his desire for both.

Annabella’s Incest as a Mode of Limited Agency

Giovanni constructs Annabella as an abject site of incestuous maternal desire, thereby preventing the loss of his identity at the hands of patriarchy. She does not assuage this anxiety, however, but heightens it by resisting his control of her body and desire to constitute his subjectivity. Giovanni's appropriation of the abject feminine unintentionally aids Annabella in achieving a limited agency that allows her not only to resist the early modern patriarchal norms of female sexuality and gender but also to curb Giovanni's and Soranzo's objectification and mastery of her body and subjectivity. Annabella doesn't resist Giovanni's construction of her as an abject text, an incestuous whore, because it allows her to rebel against patriarchy's hetero-normative sexuality and its rigid institution of marriage that limits and confines her desires. In accepting the abject role of incestuous whore, Annabella explores not only her sexual and social desire, but she also expresses her resentment toward Florio and dissatisfaction with Giovanni.

Unlike Giovanni, Annabella does not give voice to her anger regarding Florio's negotiations to barter her in exchange for a wealthy son in law from the nobility. Rather Annabella incestuous relationship with Giovanni underscores the underlying aggression that she feels toward her father who led her to believe that she possessed the agency to fulfill her desires. Annabella directs her anger toward the object of Florio's affection, Soranzo, rather than voice or exhibit any hostility that she feels toward her father who controls both her purse strings and social status necessary to navigate and survive within the patriarchal society of Parma. As her whipping boy, Soranzo allows Annabella to express her anger toward a calculating and greedy father, Florio, who publicly constructs and wields the falsehood that his daughter possesses the agency to choose her husband.

Florio employs this fiction to decline undesirable offers made by wealthy citizens such as Signor Donado, on the behalf of his foolish nephew, Bergetto, who are not members of the gentry that he seeks to align himself with:

Signor Donado, you have said enough, I understand you; but would have you know I will not force my daughter 'gainst her will...My care is how to match her to her liking. I would not have her marry wealth, but love. And if she like your nephew, let him have her. Here's all that I can say. (I.iii.1-3, 10-12).

Florio fashions himself as an affectionate and permissive father who views Annabella as a subject in possession of her own body and desires, rather than the shrewd negotiator who promises her to the nobleman, Soranzo. Within Act I, scene ii, Florio declares openly to Soranzo, with Signor Donado as an audience, that he need not have his servant, Vasques, fight on his behalf with Grimaldi a Roman soldier, for Annabella since Soranzo has Florio's "word engaged" that Annabella will be his wife (I.ii.53-54). Privy to this conversation from her balcony, Annabella overhears Florio quelling Soranzo's fears informing him that as "own[er] of her heart" he need not "doubt her ear" will be persuaded or seduced by another suitor (I.ii. 53-54). Annabella witnesses her father's machinations to secure Soranzo as his son in law through the sweet falsehood that he is the proprietor of her heart and its desires. Putana articulates the fears that Annabella does not regarding her position as a woman and Florio's daughter: "You need to look to yourself, charge, you'll be stolen away sleeping else shortly (I.ii.65-66) Putana underscores that the men of Parman society, including her father, view Annabella as an object without a choice. Yet Florio persists with the fiction that Annabella has an option to choose her future husband by declaring that "Soranzo is the man [he] only likes"

compelling Annabella to “look on him” favorably as a possible husband (II.vi. 123-124). The play encourages us to feel sympathy for Annabella who is acutely conscious of her duplicitous father’s commodification of her body and heart dispossessing her of the agency to choose whom she desires to give her heart.

Withstanding her father’s influence and manipulation, Annabella brutally rejects Sorazano’s “love sick” query if she “[has] not the will to love him” replying “not you” (III.ii.20-21). Appealing to Soranzo’s “common sense,” Annabella persuasively argues “that if [she] loved him, or desired [his] love, then some way [she would] have given him better taste” of her affection and body (III.ii. 43-45). In response to Soranzo’s anger over her “scornful taunts” to his proposal, Annabella rebukes him proclaiming that he is “no looking glass” otherwise she would “dress her language by [him]” (III.ii.40-41). With these few lines, Annabella appears to inform Soranzo that he must forgo telling her how to respond to his proposal since he is not a role model for whom she must police both her manner and tone of speech and even modify her behavior to reproduce the composition of his character and its values. More importantly, Annabella articulates that she has no wish to become a replica of Soranzo and his desires, preferring “to dress her language” by a “looking glass” that reflects her heart’s values and pleasures. After all the purpose of a “looking glass” is to reflect a replica of the individual so Annabella’s quip to Soranzo that “[he] is no looking glass” locates her desire to be immersed in an image that reduplicates her desires. Interestingly her allusion to a “looking glass” recalls Giovanni’s persuasive argument to Annabella that their “one beauty to a double soul,” or their uncanny physical likeness, naturalizes their incestuous desire since they are twin images

of each other (I.ii.234). Annabella does not only criticize Soranzo's character but she also rejects him as lover and husband since he is not the attractive speculum that reflects her desires. Although it is Annabella's "captive heart" that persuades her to embrace Giovanni's incestuous desires that naturally mirror her own, nevertheless her abject love is a means of resistance against her father's control and his exchange of her heart to Soranzo. *'Tis Pity* appears to take some subversive pleasure in Annabella's incestuous relationship with her brother that allows her to resist her dehumanization at the bequest of her father's desire to move up the social ladder of Parma. The play displays that Florio's hegemony over Annabella's heart is just an illusion. Annabella's incest allows her to resist the structure of her desire to be employed in the service of sustaining the power and privilege that strong homosocial bonds forge for patriarchal Parma.

Although Annabella's incestuous relationship compels her to marry Soranzo in order to hide her illicit pregnancy by Giovanni, this marriage is a form of accommodation that provides her with the means to resist both Florio's and Soranzo's control of her heart. Her acceptance of Soranzo's proposal of marriage can be textually attributed to Friar Bonaventura who paints a horrific portrait of hell that seemingly scares a pregnant Annabella into wedlock with a man that she does not love. Yet Annabella avoids strictly following Friar Bonaventura's order to "save [her] soul" by forgoing her incestuous relationship with Giovanni to "henceforth live with [Soranzo]" as his dutiful wife (III.vi.36-38). Despite the impending peril to her soul, the play intimates through Richardetto that Annabella continues her incestuous relationship with Giovanni. Richardetto relays to us the chatter amongst Parman society that heated "debates run

twixt” the married couple but more importantly he relays that Annabella “slightens [Soranzo’s] love” (IV.ii.10-12). According to the talk of Parma, Annabella and Soranzo share a brief, if non-existent, honeymoon phase giving way to intense quarrels due to her contempt for his affection and sexual advances. Confirming Richardetto’s hearsay as credible, Giovanni boasts that despite the “contract” between Annabella and Soranzo (i.e. marriage) he finds that their love actually thrives with “no change of pleasure in this formal law of sports” (V.iii.6-7). Throughout her marriage, Annabella’s desires are single-hearted continuing with Giovanni as her preferred libidinal object. For Annabella the marriage is a convenient screen that allows her to continue her sexual relationship with her brother, Giovanni, and also provides the haven of legitimacy for her unborn bastard child. Annabella defends herself against her husband, Soranzo, who threatens to “rip up [her] heart” to reveal the legitimate father of her unborn child. Annabella calmly informs Soranzo that she never “sued for [him] but only married him for “honour’s sake.” She even attempts to negotiate with Soranzo telling him that if he “hides his shame” that she would then “see whether she could love him.” In a rather strategic move, Annabella suggests that Soranzo adopt “her sprightly [unborn] boy” as his own and in doing so he could possibly gain her love and affection. Yet, her love is a tenuous facet of the bargain since she argues quite persuasively that Soranzo assumes her unborn son as his heir. Annabella uses paternity as a bargaining chip with Soranzo since the very sex of the child will afford him, as she declares—“glory.” Although manipulative, Annabella tries to find a way to cope defensively in a traditional patriarchal marriage that deems her body and its reproductive ability as the property of her husband, Soranzo.

Her incestuous relationship and subsequent pregnancy provides her with a modicum of agency since she denies Soranzo sexual control over her body and denies him a legitimate heir. Ultimately, Soranzo is forced to legally recognize a child that is not his. Feeling impotent in the face of Annabella's arguments, Soranzo acknowledges without her confession regarding the paternity of the child that he must be "dad to all that gallimaufry that's stuffed in [her] corrupted bastard-bearing womb" (IV.iii.13-15). Annabella's hodge-podge, ambiguous bastard child emasculates Soranzo by designating him a cuckold. As a cuckold, Soranzo is a man with borrowed "horns" who cannot appease or control his wife's sexual appetites, but more importantly he must rear and financially support the progeny of another man. Annabella may be immobile to act against Soranzo but she possesses a rhetorical agency that troubles and threatens his masculine identity. *Tis Pity* encourages the audience to take pleasure in Annabella's speech which is linked to the expression of her transgressive sexuality allowing her to resist submitting to Soranzo.

Annabella even resists the machinations of her brother and lover, Giovanni, by ending their incestuous relationship denying him the use of her body to fulfill his desire for subjectivity and power. Although Friar Bonaventura convinces Annabella to repent for her sin of incestuous desire by marrying Soranzo, it is Annabella who ultimately decides to end her sexual relationship with Giovanni due to the pangs of her "conscience that stand up against her lust" (V.i.9). Upon Annabella's request, the Friar delivers a letter written in her blood atoning for her "false joys" and informing Giovanni to "repent" (V.i.2). Before Giovanni reads Annabella's letter, he reveals within a soliloquy that

despite his sister's marriage of convenience he finds no change in his desire for his sister and she for him. He thinks that Annabella "is still one to [him];" Giovanni believes her desires to be fused with his (V.iii.8). Upon learning the contents of Annabella's bloody letter, Giovanni blames the Friar's "religious-masked sorceries," or his horrific narratives regarding hell's topography and punishments, that influenced Annabella's decision (V.iii.28). Unwilling to believe Annabella would end their incestuous relationship, Giovanni claims the letter is a forgery, despite his recognition of her handwriting, created by Friar Bonaventura since it too closely resembles the holy man's "peevish chattering" (V.iii.40). Friar Bonaventura is merely the messenger who delivers both Annabella's letter and verbal warning to Giovanni; he does not help her write the letter or advise her on how to end her relationship with Giovanni. Giovanni cannot imagine that Annabella would express beliefs or thoughts about their relationship that did not reflect his own; essentially, he simultaneously views her as a sex object and a metaphorical womb that will help him achieve a unified self. Denying Annabella's pangs of conscience, Giovanni accuses her of choosing Soranzo because of his seductive "night-games" that supersede his sexual experience and prowess (V.v.2). Once again, Giovanni drafts Annabella as a shameless, desirous body "no more steady than an ebbing sea" to explain what he believes to be a shift in her loyalty but also naturalizing female sexuality as changeable and unstable. Annabella reaffirms quite convincingly that her conscience compelled her decision, as did her desire to secure her brother's safety against the recriminations of Parman society and the vengeance of Soranzo. Annabella is aware of the real material conditions that their incestuous relationship troubles, while Giovanni fails to see the big

picture, fantasizing instead of a disapproving father figure and a promiscuous lover who cruelly and selfishly deny his desires. The play invites readers to take pleasure in Annabella's refusal to sacrifice her body at the altar of Giovanni's self fashioning.

Giovanni's Labor Pains: (Re)Producing the Self

Enraged by Annabella's contrite letter and Friar Bonavetura's warnings of hellfire, Giovanni chooses to eclipse Soranzo's designs for revenge with a "baneful plot" of his own, denying his rival the pleasure of spilling his blood and outing his incestuous pleasures to Parman society (V.iii.73). Giovanni fashions his soul to "be all man" commanding it to repress the effeminizing fear of the "old prescription" (i.e. the curse upon a man who lay with his sister) so that he possesses the courage to ensure that "with [him] all shall perish" (V.iv.74-75, 79). Despite Annabella's rational claims to protect Giovanni and ease her conscience, he kills his sister for "proving treacherous" to her "past vows and oaths" made on the dust of his mother's bones (V.v.4-5). Unleashing his vengeance first upon Annabella, Giovanni constructs her murder as a rescue: "To save thy fame, and kill thee in a kiss. Thus die, and dies by me, and by my hand. Revenge is mine; honour doth love command" (V.v.84-86). Giovanni's love is a lethal force requiring her death to save her reputation from Soranzo's "reaching plots" (V.v.100). Interestingly Giovanni's further frames her death as a revenge that "love commands" to restore his honor. His revenge requires not only Annabella's death but also the excision of her heart from her chest which he places upon his dagger like a trophy. Before all of the esteemed men within the banquet hall, Giovanni presents the spectacle of Annabella's

bloody dead heart upon his dagger compelling them to “[behold] the rape of life and beauty” of his sister that he executed. Giovanni’s use of the term, rape, is significant given the violence of dagger, a phallic object, penetrating Annabella’s heart is sexually charged. The dagger functions as an extension of Giovanni’s penis. The image of the phallic knife through Annabella’s heart is emblematic of the sexual act which unites two bodies into one. Annabella’s dead bloody heart upon Giovanni’s dagger communicates his monstrous desire to achieve and maintain a sense of fusion and wholeness. The Cardinal, Donado, Florio and Soranzo bear witness to the symbol of Giovanni’s phallus, his sexual control of Annabella’s body and her heart. For Giovanni, the “rape” constructs a sense of respect and worth as a man by reclaiming his property, Annabella’s heart, in front of the very men, Florio and Soranzo, who sought to control and manipulate his prized possession.

With Annabella’s murder at his hands, it would seem that Giovanni no longer desires or needs her to re-produce the experience of a unified subjectivity akin what the maternal body supplied. Yet Annabella’s death facilitates Giovanni’s self authorization before the patriarchal figures of Parma who denied him a subjectivity. Ownership of Annabella’s heart helps Giovanni become a man by supplying the feeling of wholeness that he desperately longs for: “A heart, my lords, in which is mine entombed” (V.vi.28). Giovanni asserts the union of his heart with Annabella’s heart underscoring a state of oneness. The very tangible evidence of her excavated, pulpy heart reassures Giovanni that he is whole and complete. For Giovanni, Annabella’s heart is the cradle of his subjectivity. Susan Wiseman offers a similar reading of Giovanni’s obsession with

Annabella's heart. In her work, "*'Tis Pity She's a Whore: Representing the Incestuous Body*," Wiseman argues that Annabella's "body is a rich vagina-womb-mine, but also a burial ground (ploughed up) from which Giovanni must disinter his buried heart" (222). Like Wiseman, I read Giovanni's grotesque excavation of Annabella's heart as the metaphorical birth and liberation of his subjectivity rather than the death of it. Yet Wiseman's explanation for Giovanni's anatomist-like method of removing Annabella's heart excites for me further critical examination. Although her work offers a way to understand that Annabella's heart signifies Giovanni's identity, Wiseman does not consider how physically separating his unborn child from the womb figures within his violently horrific need to reproduce his identity. She observes that "the child is cut off and the womb invaded not by a doctor but a brother lover" in search of his identity, but her work does not consider why Giovanni cut open her womb to remove her heart (222). Giovanni need not cut Annabella's womb to extract her heart and hence his identity, so why does he perform such a monstrous incision that kills his love child?

By slicing his sister open from groin to throat, Giovanni literally executes the separation of his unborn son from its origins, the body of the mother, denying the child the future pleasures of primary narcissistic identification with the mother. With the murder of his son, Giovanni denies his unborn child all possibility of achieving that which Giovanni desired most—subjectivity. In a sense it would appear that Giovanni re-enacts the trauma of his own separation from the abject materiality of the mother through the murder of his maternal substitute, Annabella, and his unborn son. However, the manner in which Giovanni murders his sister betrays his attempts to ward off the fear of

his subjectivity sinking irretrievably into the body of the abject mother. Before extracting Annabella's heart from her chest, Giovanni exclaims that not only did the unborn child in Annabella's womb "receive its life from him" but he also provides his son with "a cradle and grave"(V.v.95-96). Giovanni's son will not experience the loss of his first love, the mother. Giovanni prevents his son's identity from being consumed by the mother through his perverse cesarean, but it is the metaphorical delivery of his own identity from the body of the abject female (m)Other Giovanni accomplishes. After all it is Giovanni's life within the womb of Annabella; he is both the metaphorical womb and tomb of the frontier of his subjectivity. His appropriation of the generative power of the female body conveys his anxiety over the mother as the origin of existence and subjectivity. Giovanni constructs himself as the font of life and subjectivity. Giovanni's murders of Annabella and his unborn son are the disturbing actualization of patriarchy's irrational fears of the abject female (m)Other. Ultimately, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* expresses a sense of horror over patriarchy's appropriation of female generative power to control the reproduction of male identity causing women and men trauma to their bodies and anguish to their psyches.

Annabella's death proves productive not just for Giovanni but for the male dominated community of Parma. The Cardinal builds a political project upon Annabella's dead body that serves to reinforce traditional gender roles for women that specifically restores patriarchal power of Parma and the Church. Cunningly the Cardinal shifts the blame from Giovanni to Annabella for destabilizing these patriarchal societies:

We shall have time to talk at large of all; but never yet incest and murder have so strangely met. Of one so young, so rich in nature's

store, who could not say, 'tis pity she's a whore? (V.vi. 156-160)

Addressing Donado and Richardetto, the Cardinal's rhetoric invites these men to discuss the tragic events that have passed, and even intimates that these three men will "talk at large" to decide *how* such event is talked about amongst Parman society. But it is the Cardinal who sets the pace deciding what discourse and terms are applied to the tragedy and who shoulders the blame. The Cardinal utilizes the word, "whore," with the aim of achieving closure that depicts the tragic deaths of Soranzo, Florio and even Giovanni are the consequence of Annabella's inability to control her sexual desires. He laments Annabella's refusal to adhere to the traditional gender role of the good wife whose sexual desires are neither multiple or diffused amongst various men. The Cardinal's lamentation extends beyond the society of Parma, instructing the audience on the proper female gender roles—the virgin or the faithful wife—that women must observe and practice. Within his "Heart and Blood: Nature and Culture in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*," Denis Gauer suggests that perhaps the Cardinal's use of the present tense verb may not refer to the dead Annabella but to women in general (56). I find Gauer's reading most convincing especially since the play's gaps offer further support that the Cardinal's speech underscores that it is the responsibility of women to stabilize patriarchal society. Giovanni's trespasses are not by any means rendered invisible by the Cardinal's final speech that chiefly characterizes Annabella's abjection. However, it is significant to note that the Cardinal does not prescribe any gendered term to Giovanni's transgressive behavior that underscores how men must act or be. Although Giovanni's incestuous desire frustrated and undermined the smooth continuity of homosocial bonds of Parma, it

is Annabella's mutilated body that is utilized as a warning to women and men. For the Cardinal, Annabella's dead body serves as the lesson from which men learn to monitor and control their wives and daughters' sexuality, and for women to understand that their inability to control their (non)-normative sexual appetites will end in their death and destruction. Although both brother and sister die at the end of the play, the Cardinal leaves Giovanni's body untouched, choosing to dispose of Annabella's body in a most hysterical fashion¹¹:

Peace!—First this woman, chief in these effects: My sentence is,
that forthwith she be ta'en out of the city, for example's sake,
there to be burnt to ashes (V.vi.133-136)

The Cardinal exiles the corpse of Annabella to suffer further degradation by denying her the rites of a Christian burial. Yet the banishment of Annabella's dead corpse is not enough to protect the borders of Parman society and its citizens from this abject female threat. The demand for Annabella's body to be cremated outside the city walls underscores the Cardinal's anxiety to prevent her ashes from contaminating and threatening patriarchal authority further. Annabella's ashes actually restore homosocial bonds by uniting the Cardinal, Donado and Richardetto. Not only does Donado accept the Cardinal's request to dispose of Annabella's body, but he affirms the corrupt holy

¹¹ Within some recent scholarship, the Cardinal's line, "this woman," is read as referring to Putana to explain how the play resolves her troubling presence within Parman society (V.vi.133). However, the New Mermaids edition of *'Tis Pity* edited by Brian Morris notes that this reference is ambiguous referring to "either Putana or the dead body of Annabella" (96). Although the Cardinal orders these "slaughtered bodies" to be buried, the play never indicates if Annabella's body is amongst the pile of corpses. Within Act V, scene vi, the play indicates that Vasques actually exits the stage briefly to report if Giovanni's confession regarding the murder of Annabella is truth or fiction. Vasque's exit suggests that Annabella's body is not one of visible bodies on stage that the Cardinal commands to be buried in his final speech. Furthermore, the ambiguity created by the Cardinal's indeterminate referent, "this woman," generates a lot of slippage between Putana and Annabella, conflating Annabella with a female character whose name literally means whore.

man's authority declaring her cremation as "most just" (V.vi.137). Richardetto further reinforces the Cardinal's authority to confiscate "all the gold and jewels" for the Pope's benefit and use with his declaration that: "...[he] long lived disguised to see the effect of pride and lust at once brought to shameful ends" (V.v.152-154). Although Richardetto's sought only to revenge himself against Soranzo, his commentary reflects the scandalous demise of Giovanni and Annabella. Neither Donado nor Richardetto voice any objections to the Cardinal's decision to assume the wealth of those dead. In the midst of constructing Annabella as textual lesson, the Cardinal seizes the opportunity to further exploit the tragedy by accumulating material wealth as well as increasing the Church's social control through underscoring traditional female gender roles. The Cardinal's predatory decision discloses how patriarchy is itself a destabilizing force because of its acquisitiveness.

Within *'Tis Pity*, the Cardinal re-establishes traditional female gender roles that, like religion, fail to provide a sense of wholeness via a stable male identity for Giovanni and men in general. The play affirms Giovanni's aggression toward and criticism of religion with the Cardinal's ineffective use of the word, "whore," as a bid to re-stabilize the authority of patriarchy and the Church. According to Giovanni, religion falls short of producing the experience to "be ever one," denying him the chance to be and feel whole (I.i.33). Friar Bonaventura requires Giovanni to: "acknowledge what thou art, a wretch, a worm, a nothing." He denies Giovanni the subjectivity that the discourse of religion promises. The Church's representatives and its religious discourse are empty of meaning and values that they need to produce and sustain male subjectivity. But even more

important, the Friar's words cut off Giovanni from affective bonds and connections with others. Within *'Tis Pity* religious discourse is cut off from the affect and drives—"one soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all"—that it purports to be connected to. As "a nothing," Giovanni is dispossessed of the access to love and selfhood due to the limits of patriarchal religion. Incest provides the means for Giovanni to represent not just the absence but the loss of subjectivity that religious discourse fails to resurrect. Yet, within his incestuous relationship with Annabella, Giovanni's participates in the lethal gender hierarchy that Cardinal fashions with his closing speech. Giovanni murders his sister believing her to be a "faithless" lover easily seduced by the "night games" of her husband. Even though Giovanni does not literally call his sister a whore, nevertheless he implies that she is a sexually promiscuous woman who must be killed by his hand so that he may once again prove to "be all man." The Cardinal's call for traditional female gender roles creates a gender hierarchy that is doomed to repeat the destructiveness that Giovanni unleashed upon Annabella's body in the hopes of providing himself with a stable male identity. Ultimately, the play supports Giovanni's criticism of the Church and its authority figures but nevertheless by the end of *'Tis Pity* this diseased institution is still intact and working through the working words of the Cardinal, Donado and Richardetto. The society depicted within *'Tis Pity* is so entrenched in a toxic gender hierarchy that it cannot conceive of a way out. *'Tis Pity* compels us to be disgusted with this asymmetrical gender hierarchy encouraging the audience to construct more mutual and reciprocal gender roles for men and women.

Chapter Three

Abjection and Maternal Ambivalence in Francis Beaumont's

The Knight of the Burning Pestle

Michael Hattaway's argument in his introduction of the New Mermaids edition of Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* regarding Beaumont's use of satire is representative of the critical consensus. Hattaway convincingly argues that Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* satirizes the merchant class's "theatrical naivete" and aesthetic taste for "old fashioned chivalric romance" (11-19). Throughout the play, Beaumont depicts a middle class couple, the grocer (George) and his wife (Nell), as uneducated play goers who pay to see a production of *The London Merchant* but cannot correctly identify the play's allusions to biblical and classical works and often fail to understand standard dramatic conventions and practices. Though George and Nell's theatrical naiveté constructs them as objects of derision, according to Hattaway "the citizen's taste for romance is the main object of the play's satire" (15). Like Hattaway, I believe that Nell and George's taste is "not discriminating since they [openly] reject the stock fare offered them and chooses instead spectacle and adventure" (Hattaway 14). Hattaway asserts that Beaumont, "like [many other] Elizabethan scholars such as Sidney, Puttenham, and later Jonson, had mocked the *common* people's love of this literature that

rested so firmly on the chivalric virtues of honor and constancy” (17).¹² Yet Hattaway doesn’t clearly indicate within his introduction *why* Beaumont’s play subjects the genre of chivalric romance and its virtues to such mockery. I believe that *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*’s depiction of the common people’s love of what Hattaway calls “extravagant heroical adventures” constructs a grotesque representation of knighthood and its chivalric virtues that communicates the play’s elitist attitude toward Nell and George’s employment of the romance genre to achieve a form of social mobility.

The citizens pay for the privilege to stage a traditional chivalric romance full of abject spectacle and bombastic huffing parts that does not merely celebrate, but glorifies, George’s profession by constructing Rafe as something more than just a grocer. Nell and George construct Rafe as an errant knight, which underscores their preoccupation with elevating their social status. Linda Anderson argues that the citizen’s economic power highlights “their attitude that if they are willing to pay, then the actors must do as they wish (2).” Both Nell and George make considerable efforts to see that their demands are met by the actor troupe who despite their protests “accede to most of the [their] demands” to stage an abject chivalric romance that not only underscores their pride in George’s profession (i.e. grocer) but also intimates their desire for social mobility (Induction 98-109, III.172-80; Interlude III.9-11, 17-18; IV.27-53, 107-109; Interlude IV.6-21)”

¹²Michael Hattaway argues that “Beaumont was not the first to parody plays” that employed traditional romance (xviii). Hattaway references Sidney as one of many authors who wrote romances, but would often parody conventions of traditional romances. For instance, Hattaway alludes that Sidney, like Beaumont, would parody traditional romantic conventions such as Jasper threatening Luce at knifepoint to test her love, so that “the world and memory [could] sing [about] her constancy (III.61-72). Hattaway’s reference to this example from Beaumont’s play implies that Sidney parodied such traditional romantic conventions to illustrate how his romantic narratives were intellectually and morally superior to what he believed to be inferior forms of traditional romance.

(Anderson 2). It is evident from the very title of the play that Beaumont considered traditional chivalric romance to be the pabulum that passed as popular fiction in the seventeenth century, but more importantly the play's employment of traditional chivalric romance communicates its contempt for Nell and George's longing for social mobility. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is a loaded title that does more than just pay homage to George's profession as a grocer with its reference to the tool of his trade, a pestle. The title also serves as a dirty joke that constructs George and Nell's champion, their apprentice, Rafe, as a victim of a sexually transmitted disease that burns his genitals and cannot be extinguished. Even within the chivalric romance narrative co-authored by George, Nell, Rafe, and, at times, various actors, Rafe functions as the only honorable and constant knight who rescues his brothers in arms from a giant, Barbosa, who despite treating the knights for various venereal diseases decides to keep them as captive trophies in his monstrous cave. Beaumont deliberately breaks from motifs of traditional chivalric romance by characterizing knights as debauched gallants who forfeit battles, neglecting their honor and caring nothing about preserving their chastity and that of the damsels who cross their paths.

Beaumont deliberately bastardizes the traditional chivalric romance, rendering it a grotesque and contemptible genre that attracts an audience, specifically the lower classes, which is as unsophisticated and excessive as the texts they consume. The very ending of Beaumont's play underscores the necessity to jettison both the chivalric romance narrative and its writers and audience, George and Nell, from the theater and *The London Merchant* to preserve the integrity of the play's narrative. The boy actors who perform

The London Merchant refuse to provide narrative closure for George and Nell's romance, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, claiming that "[they] have nothing to do with [Rafe's] part," desiring to distance the ideological work of their play from that of the merchant couple's chivalric romance. The acting troupe's refusal to participate any further in constructing a narrative for Rafe is also compounded by the boy actors' protest against the death scene that Nell authors for her apprentice who plays a grocer who is also an errant knight. A boy actor objects to Nell's conclusion, claiming that death of Rafe with "no occasion" is dramatically "unfit" within a "comedy" (V. 274-275). George, and, more specifically, Nell are chastised for their reasonless and discordant narrative choices that violate the expectations for a comedy. Even more important is the insulting label of comedy applied to their play which belies the troupe's attitude regarding the ideological work of the couple's chivalric romance. By labeling George and Nell's romance a comedy, the boy actor underscores the entire troupe's participation in their fiction at the expense of the couple's dreams of unchecked social mobility. The acting company's contribution to their narrative serves to parody George and Nell's desire to be something that they are not—a part of the upper class. Nell and George are depicted as too ignorant to understand that *The London Merchant's* narrative supports the social mobility of apprentices to the middle class with the marriage of Jasper to Luce, a woman of the merchant class, who is above his socio-economic position. Instead of throwing their support behind *The London Merchant's* ideological message of limited social mobility, George and Nell insist on a chivalric romance about a knight who possesses such social mobility that he stands a chance of marrying a Saracen princess. Essentially, the acting

troupe communicates that George and Nell's desire for social mobility is not only laughable, but also grossly inordinate with what their culture considers allowable and natural.

Rafe's death scene is staged by the acting troupe, but only so that Jasper's father, Merrythought, may close *The London Merchant* with a song that reinforces the play's message that only limited social climbing between those who labor and those who trade is a permissible and normative advancement that should not be resisted to keep the brows of middle and lower class men "smooth and plain" (V. 340-341). Merrythought's song attempts to cleanse the play of George and Nell's ugly ambition to rise above the merchant class. Unwittingly, with the spontaneous scripting of Rafe's death, Nell appears to help bring about the symbolic death of her and George's crude status seeking that the culture deems inappropriate. Obeying Nell's order to die, Rafe improvises a death scene that serves to right the natural social order and clearly define the boundaries of acceptable social climbing for the lower classes. Rafe meets Death not on an adventure in some strange place, but while working in his grocer's stall trying to prevent Death from cheapening aqua vitae (V. 309-310). He narrates a meeting with Death in his place of work as a grocer, rather than as an errant knight, while wearing his blue apron, a symbol of his class position that further underscores his social containment. Like the figure of Death, the very work of a grocer is a form of social containment that immobilizes him by keeping him anchored to a community that he must serve. Rafe's choice to depict his death as a grocer fixes his position within the merchant class. Even more important,

Rafe's death as a grocer appears to quash George and Nell's abject fantasy of unfettered mobility and agency that they scripted for him as an errant knight.

So why would Nell frustrate her struggle to ascend to the upper class with authorization of Rafe's death? At the close of the play, Nell's request that Rafe die is not an attempt to repress or eliminate her desire to advance socio-economically, but rather it reveals her frustration with and her desire to be something more than just a wife and mother within this patriarchal society. Originally groundling audience members, George and Nell try to elevate their social position by paying for the privilege to sit on stage with the "gentle class" to watch *The London Merchant* in an attempt to distance themselves from the citizen class. Hence, Nell endeavors to purchase more than a seat on stage and the opportunity to help create a chivalric romance to honor her husband's profession. Within the epilogue, Nell asks the "gentleman" audience members on stage to join her at her home for a "pottle of wine" and "a pipe of tobacco" to discuss what they thought of Rafe's performance, despite her earlier criticism of the same men's habit of smoking "stinking tobacco" that made "chimneys of [their] faces" (I. 208-210). Although Nell claims that the "tobacco stink kills her," wishing "there were none in England," she suspends this judgment to socialize with these men for personal gain. She yearns to know "the truth" regarding the action that she authored for Rafe, yet she dares to manipulate this "truth" by urging their approval of her narrative with a suggestive "wink" and "a pottle of wine" and tobacco to smoke (I. 207-208). Most interestingly, Nell informs the gentlemen that Rafe is a "poor fatherless child" before resorting to her bribes of tobacco and wine, presenting them with an illusory control over deciding the

success of Rafe's performance and her body of work (Epilogue). Nell attempts to bolster support for her play by invoking sympathy among the gentlemen hoping to produce a fatherly concern to applaud and protect her boy performer and her narrative child.

Wielding the traditional gender role of father against these gentlemen, Nell aims to garner patriarchal support for the adventures that she produced and mothered. At the same time, Nell functions as a director who not only aids Rafe's performance, but also instructs the male audience members how to think and feel about her text. At the close of the play, Nell exhibits authorial control not only through her voice which closes the play but also through her manipulation of the male audience members.

All of this brings to bear the question, why does Nell decide to kill Rafe at the end of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*? Nell doesn't have to kill Rafe at the end of play to assuage anxieties regarding the social mobility of the citizen class. She could have easily requested that the play close by emphasizing his valiant adventures and good works as a grocer rather than a knight. She would still have the opportunity to socialize with the upper class. Various textual moments within *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* reveal a maternal relationship between Nell and Rafe that is tender but at times fraught with tell-tale signs of aggression that she aims at her surrogate child. Throughout the course of the play, Nell contributes scenes of violence in which Rafe is not just the perpetrator but also the victim. Nell's desire for violence committed by and against Rafe, coupled with her plea for paternal acknowledgment and support of the creative work she conceived within the theater, is an expression of her own ambivalence as a mother and wife. Her aggression directed toward or performed by Rafe is not entirely destructive; she doesn't

want Rafe or anyone else to actually die. Rather Nell's aggression is defensive; it is directed toward preserving of the voice, agency, and power that authoring the chivalric romance affords her but which is denied her in her traditional patriarchal role as mother and wife.

Interestingly, Nell's ambivalence is channeled through the vehicle of the chivalric romance that she co-authors with George, Rafe, and the boy actors of *The London Merchant*. Although multiple characters assist in creating this play, Nell contributes a majority of the stage directions for Rafe as well as conceives the majority of the plot action that sustains the chivalric romance embedded within *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Nell embraces the traditional chivalric romance, a genre that is subjected to satirical commentary because of its excessive form and abject content, as a dramatic form which provides her with the means to make her maternal ambivalence visible. The abject chivalric romance makes Nell's co-existing feelings of love and hate toward her biological children, surrogate children—Rafe specifically—and her husband, George, palpable but it also provides her with a sense of relief and pleasure, as she refuses to submit to a form of (self-) punishment from a too demanding patriarchal society. The chivalric romance proves to be the genre best suited to relaying Nell's monstrous feelings of love and hostility toward her children (and husband) since it has long been regarded as degenerate form of fiction that ultimately subverts social and moral orders. Within *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, Nicola McDonald thoroughly delineates the early modern period's patronizing attitudes and fears regarding the influence of the chivalric romance genre on men and women:

Reviled by the medieval church as ‘vayn carpynge,’ foolish and corrupting lies, and dismissed by men with literary pretensions (like Harry Bailey) as ‘nat woorth a toord,’ romance becomes in the centuries following its invention, the subject of energetic condemnation, a byword for moral degeneracy, religious heresy, political tyranny and everything that’s bad about fiction... Juan Luis Vives, the Spanish humanist and friend of Sir Thomas More, in a sweeping prohibition of romance, outlines its dangers more precisely: “they make them [men and women] wylde and craftye, they kindle and styr up couetousnes, inflame angre, and all beastly and filthy desire.’ England’s Roger Ascham likewise warns of social mayhem: ‘a man by redinge [romance] shoulde be led to none other ends, but only manslaughter and baudrye.’ James Beatties concurs: “Romances are a dangerous recreation’, they ‘corrupt the heart’, ‘stimulate the passions’ and fill the mind with ‘criminal propensities’. These critics (medieval ecclesiast, early humanist, eighteenth century antiquarian and beyond), whether moralists, educators or simply middle-class men determined on social advancement, are keen to protect readers from the kind of depravity that texts like *Guy of Warwick*, *Libeaus Desconus* or *Ipomadon* necessarily engender (3).

The chivalric romance possesses a disruptive potential, making it the ideal vehicle for Nell to express her anguish and lack of fulfillment with her role as mother and wife through her representations of excessive violence, deviant social desires, and boundary-defying love that threatens to destabilize the patriarchal society around her. Even the spontaneity with which Nell produces her vulgar romance reflects, as McDonald notes, her low class position and also underscores the inferior quality of her fiction:

Aberrantly ‘crude’ products [of this later period] are attributed to ‘the lowest classes of society’ because, according to the scheme of things, they can belong nowhere else. The composer-poets are similarly stigmatized: while low-class romances ‘knocked together’ (*the association with manual labor is inescapable*), superior ones are said to issue from those with intimate knowledge of upper class life. (9)

Within the play, Nell’s creative process is akin to a form of labor that reproduces, as “knocked together” connotes, a haphazard and misshapen issue (i.e. her traditional chivalric romance). Not only does Nell create this traditional chivalric romance, but also

she positions her self as a maternal figure to the Rafe and the boy actors who perform her narrative. Throughout the play, Nell's maternal labors are dramatized on stage; she showers, though at times inconsistently, Rafe and the child actors with comforting words, sympathetic advice, nurturing forms of praise, and generous gifts of candy, which highlights her capacity to perform and fulfill the required work of a mother, especially for children that are not her own. Linda Anderson notes that Nell "forces the production into the sphere of her control, that of motherhood," and in doing so Nell illustrates that her power is achieved not only by generating abject chivalric romance but also through "the manipulation of her role as a mother" (504-505). Interestingly, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* further supports McDonald's statement regarding the lack of attention and care that Nell contributes to what she bodily (re)produces. In both subtle and direct ways, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* underscores how Nell's (pro)creative ability is linked to her role as mother through its depiction of her inconsistent nurturing and even more important her hostility toward personally fulfilling her biological children's bodily and emotional needs. Although Nell "knocks together," or haphazardly mothers this chivalric romance, she regards her textual progeny at times with the same ambivalence that she expresses toward her actual children. At her whim, Nell nurtures her narrative yet at times she abandons it to be nursed and reared by others despite the fact that the chivalric romance genre serves as the source of her voice, agency, and power.

Julia Kristeva's theory of narrative abjection serves as a useful lens to help us understand why Nell might be aggressive toward the very means of her agency and power. Within her *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva argues that literature "may also involve

not an ultimate resistance to but an unveiling of the abject: an elaboration, a discharge, and a hollowing out of abjection through the Crisis of the Word” (208). Literature is the abject’s privileged signifier, meaning that it serves as the vehicle not only to make the abject palpable but also to communicate how it works. Abjection is a process that involves expelling what is regarded as “Other” to the self; it provides the borders that define subjectivity. Yet abjection continually troubles subjectivity, threatening to dismantle what has been constructed. According to Kristeva, subjectivity is not stable, so a subject must be vigilant against that which may threaten to dissolve its borders. Nicola McDonald’s quotation (presented above earlier) outlining the fears regarding the influence of romance, likens the genre to the abject because it is a literary form that “perverts the mind, incites illicit thoughts, promotes obscene behavior and encourages a propensity for violence” (3). (Chivalric) Romance threatens the tenuous borders of subjectivity by exciting abject bodily responses that are a part of the self but constructed as Other so that, according to various scholars and humanists, the self must be vigilant in rejecting and protecting itself against the abject to remain stable and whole. Literary creation, as Kristeva claims, is a means of sustaining this vigilance, but the creative process also nurtures a catharsis allowing the author to purge what is Other or abject:

By suggesting that literature is abjection’s privileged signifier, I wish to point out that far from being a minor, marginal activity in our culture, as a general consensus seems to have it, this kind of literature, or even literature as such, represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and most serious apocalypses. Hence its nocturnal power... (208)

For Kristeva, literature becomes the means to work through and grapple with the “maladies of the soul” (i.e. abjection, depression, melancholia, ambivalence, etc.) that

afflict an individual by working through a series of conflicts that trouble the subject so s/he is not condemned to act them out. Like abjection, literature both reveals the afflictions (e.g. Nell's role as (m)Other and her abject maternal ambivalence, etc.) that harm the subject and also offers catharsis to the subject.

Within *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Nell's relationship to the chivalric romance speaks to Kristeva's theory regarding literature and abjection because it serves her not only with the means to express her maternal ambivalence, but it also induces a catharsis. Nell authors a grotesque chivalric romance as a means to jettison the abject Other that harms her; she desires to purge her abject status as (m)Other and wife assigned by patriarchy that constructs her as a non-subject. Desperately Nell works to avoid the pain and suffering the wives and (m)Others, specifically Luce Venturewell and Mistress Merrythought, are subjected to within the production of *The London Merchant*. Within patriarchy these women are regarded as commodities to be traded between men or disposable objects to be easily discarded. With her literary creation, Nell expresses and fulfills her desire to be a subject (i.e. an author) who is more than just an object working for patriarchy in service of domesticity, motherhood and childrearing. Ironically Nell utilizes what is regarded as abject (i.e. the chivalric romance) to purge her self of her Otherness (e.g. wife and mother in service of patriarchy). In the aim of purging this Other, Nell does not merely author the abject but the abject authors her. Nell expresses her maternal ambivalence through the grotesque chivalric romance, which, as Kristeva notes, affords Nell the means to work through her conflicts as a mother so that she is not doomed to act them out further with her real children. The play suggests that Nell's

aggression toward her children stems from that lack of gratification that she receives from her anonymous offspring who are depicted as physically demanding and “unruly” little monsters who defy her authority as mother, requiring her to depend upon Rafe to “fear [her] children” into behaving “as quiet as lambs” (Induction 71-72). Throughout the play, Nell only mentions her children *twice*, and only in one of those moments she expresses some semblance of parental concern for one of her children, but interestingly she voices a deeper affection and love for Rafe than for her actual offspring. Nell acquires the pleasure of a voice and agency with the help of Rafe who commits not only to performing but also to embodying her spontaneous scripting and stage directions that engender her selfhood. Yet Nell does not exploit Rafe to build her subjectivity; rather, Nell’s abject romance cultivates mutuality between her and the young male apprentice. Both Nell and Rafe benefit from his performance as a grocer and errant knight. Thanks to Nell’s abject narrative, Rafe gets the pleasure of acting on stage which is a kind of agency that his apprenticeship itself cannot offer. As an actor, Rafe participates in the subversive space of the theater that reproduces and sustains the means to self-fashion, a threatening power with the potential to unmoor the early modern notion of a fixed identity and social station, as an a heroic, errant knight who achieves a “famous history” rather than sits contentedly in “his [grocer’s] shop with a blue apron before him” (I.248-251) Even more important, her abject narrative allows her a way to cope with her maternal ambivalence productively by building a relationship with her surrogate child, Rafe, based on a kind of mutual gratification that is not predicated on maternal sacrifice. For Nell, authoring a play does not require motherhood’s masochistic self-denial nor

compel her isolation from the world of the symbolic where the author, as Kristeva argues, wields the Word to conceive a subjectivity (Kristeva 208). At the close of the play, Nell sustains both her authorial voice and her visibility as a subject among the male-dominated audience of the theater.

As soon as Nell is lifted on the stage, she declares her status as a “troublesome” Other in this male-dominated space of the theater whose very presence threatens to frustrate the pleasures of her husband, George, and the gentlemen audience. Nell confesses her abject pleasures for romance but also her lack of familiarity with and knowledge of the practices of the theater:

By your leave, gentlemen all, I'm something troublesome; I'm a stranger here; I was ne'er at one of these plays, as they say, before; but I should have seen Jane Shore once, and my husband hath promised me any time this twelvemonth to carry me to *The Bold Beauchamps*; but in truth he did not. I pray you bear with me (Induction).

In front of the entire audience, Nell clearly communicates her dependence upon George to attend a playhouse, but also she blames George's failure to take her to any popular production for deliberately fashioning her as a stranger, an Other, to the world of theater. George contributes to Nell's ignorance, in order to deny her the visibility and subjectivity that he shores up for himself. George's resistance stems from his anxiety about Nell's presence disrupting and appropriating his authorial voice. George disrupts *The London Merchant* demanding a play honoring his profession as a grocer, underscoring his desire for a production that functions as mirror reflecting his subjectivity. However, he betrays very little imagination and skill as a potential playwright with his direction that the grocer

will “do admirable things” (Induction 33-34). Before George can satisfy the Prologue’s request to supply what specific action the grocer-knight will do, his speech is amputated by Nell who decides: “Let him kill a lion with a pestle, husband; let him kill a lion with a pestle” (Induction 42-43). George cannot fulfill his position as an active creative agent who produces literary subjects and themes; he needs Nell in order to join the ranks of the male playwright, actors, and audience members on stage. George appropriates Nell’s narrative, claiming ownership of her idea as his own: “So he shall. –I’ll have him kill a lion with a pestle” (Induction 42-43). Yet his acknowledgment of his need for Nell causes George an anxiety that is highly visible: “Pray, gentlemen, make her a little room” (Induction, 47). As Nell is literally elevated to the status of male audience members on stage, George authorizes the most marginal of spaces for Nell, subtly instructing her to practice limiting her space and her voice. George’s anxiety is realized with Nell’s reference to *Jane Shore* as a play that she was most desirous to see performed. Mistakenly, Nell refers to Thomas Heywood’s play, *Edward IV, parts 1 and 2*, as *Jane Shore*, supplanting the eponymous hero of the play with a marginal, female character. Nell fails to internalize George’s instruction to take up “little room” by marginalizing King Edward IV and regarding Jane Shore as the noteworthy subject whose representation compels recognition. Nell’s choice demonstrates her lack of concern for creating and caring for male subjectivity.

More importantly, Nell’s choice to privilege Jane Shore serves as a means of resisting her own non-existence with a patriarchal society. While the play attributes the title of “citizen” to George, underscoring his socio-economic position and visibility as a

subject, Nell is merely identified as “wife.” Nell is reduced to her marital status, suggesting that she only has subjectivity through a male figure. Without her marriage to George to define her, Nell’s existence is negligible. Throughout the play, George avoids calling his wife by her name, choosing instead a series of pet nicknames—mouse, cony, lamb, honeysuckle, bird and duck—reducing her to some animalistic Other without a voice or identity. George calls Nell by her name only twice during the play in an attempt to keep her an Other in service of building his identity. Nell desires subjectivity because she is denied it; she seeks to produce an identity for herself through the construction of an abject chivalric romance. Nell conceives an excessively violent narrative with the help of her surrogate child, Rafe, who embodies her tale, helping to deliver Nell’s subjectivity. Although Rafe serves as George’s apprentice, it is Nell, rather than his master, who offers his services as an actor in response to the Prologue’s protests that “everyone hath a part already’ (Induction, 57-58). George swears the acting troupe will not be sorry using Rafe, yet it is Nell who attests to his ability as an actor:

I pray you, youth, let him have a suit of reparel.—I’ll be sworn, gentleman, my husband tells you true: he will act you sometimes at our house, that all the neighbours cry out on him. He will fetch you up a couraging part so in the garret, that we are all as feared. I warrant you, that we quake again (Induction, 65-70).

According to Nell, Rafe not only possesses experience as an actor, but also he is such a convincing actor the neighbors complain about the “huffing parts” that he plays within the guildhall theaters and the theater that is her home (Induction, 73). Interestingly, Nell suggests that Rafe is a malleable figure who not only embraces multiple identities but also convincingly embodies those subjectivities making him a convenient and smart

medium to help fashion her identity. Offering further evidence of Rafe's acting ability, Nell informs the gentlemen how she employs his theatrical skills to scare her children into behaving:

We do fear our children with him: if they be never so unruly, do but cry, 'Rafe comes, Rafe comes', to them and they'll be as quiet as lambs (Induction 70-71).

Nell constructs her children as disobedient and uncontrollable children that resist obeying their mother's orders. The passage indicates that Nell supports and encourages Rafe's acting since it aids in her domestic work as a mother, allowing her to exercise control over her children. Although Nell's word choice, "we," suggests that George may be an equal partner in the childrearing, nevertheless the usage of this pronoun also conveys Nell's understanding of her role as a mother and wife within a patriarchal society within which, as Catherine Belsey argues, she is "effectively denied a subject position from which to speak" (160). Although, Nell speaks about her experience of motherhood, nevertheless she knows that to speak from a position of authority even as a mother transgresses the system of [sex and gender] difference defined by patriarchy (Belsey 182-183). Cautiously, Nell "wives" George with her use of "we," which provides her with the means to reduce her husband's anxiety regarding her authorial voice. Nell fulfills her wifely responsibilities by providing George with what *appears* "to be a visible model of submission" (Belsey 159). Subsequently, George doesn't attempt to shut down Nell's authoring of her traditional chivalric romance; after all, he desires to fulfill his narcissistic fantasy to stage "a grocer" who "shall do admirable things" that valorizes his profession and by extension his identity, which Nell's narrative helps him achieve (Induction 33-

34). George appears as if he defers to Nell's authorial whims, but as Osborne persuasively argues, he vies for control over the production of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* frequently using his economic power to do so (505).¹³ George offers to pay for their seats on the stage, the musicians, and costumes as if he were both a producer and stage manager, ensuring that the production pays tribute to his honor by staging a grocer with all the necessary theatrical accoutrements that a protagonist deserves (Induction 33-34).

Nevertheless, Nell's use of the plural pronoun effectively conveys that she is subject to her husband; she carefully manipulates her role as George's "wife" to garner the authority that allows her to continue to speak publicly and to convince the gentlemen of Rafe's acting abilities. Yet Nell offers evidence that would be unlikely to convince the production company or the gentlemen audience of Rafe's acting ability since scaring a group of children, a naïve and inexperienced audience, would not tax the repertoire of an experienced actor. So why does Nell offer this example as proof of Rafe's credentials as an amateur thespian? It would seem that this evidence is not so much about Rafe as about Nell. Nell's testimony expresses more about her ambivalence as a mother than it vouches for Rafe's skills as a performer. Within her "Female Audiences and Female Authority in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," Laurie E. Osborne argues that "Nell forces the production (i.e. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*) into the sphere of her

¹³Osborne argues that George competes with Nell for control of the production of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (506). George's narrative suggestions are frequently overruled by Nell (and even the child actors), which, according to Osborne, results in a competition between the married couple for narrative control over the play. Osborne asserts that "George imagines a tribute to grocers' honor by one May king," which results in Nell annulling his suggestion and taking control of the play by ordering directions to Rafe and the other child actors herself rather than asking her husband to relay her directions (506-507).

control, that of motherhood” (505). While in agreement with Osborne, I would argue that not only are plays enveloped by the matrix of Nell’s motherhood but also Rafe’s performances are bound up with her feelings of love, frustration, and anger toward motherhood and her own children. Unabashedly, Nell confesses to using fear to keep her children silent which is effective, but her willingness to elicit fear in her children conveys her exasperation with them. As the medium to channel her dissatisfaction and anger, Rafe’s “huffing parts” are the behavioral manifestation of Nell’s feelings of frustration and disaffection toward her children that is produced by her lack of fulfillment as a mother (Induction 73). Nell’s scare tactics are comparable to the early modern period’s child-rearing technique of “salutary anxiety” which, according to Greenblatt, is a form of “disciplinary kindness designed to show the child(ren) that [their] misery is entirely self-inflicted and can be relieved by voluntary and inward surrender” (91). In “The Cultivation of Anxiety: King Lear and His Heirs,” Greenblatt emphasizes that this isn’t merely “tyranny masquerading as [maternal] kindness” but rather these techniques were considered to be borne out of love for the child(ren) (82). Even though Nell and Rafe’s collaborative coercion of the children resembles the ideological aim of early modern period’s child-rearing practices, it can still be borne out of maternal frustration and anger toward her disobedient children. She deliberately heightens her children’s sense of fear not only to teach them that there are consequences to their actions, but also to gain control of them. Of course, Nell’s behavior may be interpreted as a matter of “disciplinary kindness” since she is essentially teaching them to respect her maternal authority. But Nell’s employment of such scare tactics hints at her anxiety to maintain her

maternal authority by preventing the children from ruling over her. Furthermore, Nell's account of this scenario doesn't draw clear lines between her feelings of love, frustration, and anger, which makes this more than just a matter of a mother inducing "salutary anxiety" within her children out of love exclusively (91). After all, the mode Nell chooses to handle her domestic crisis hints at some twinges of anger as well as love toward her unruly brood, especially since she wants them to experience such emotional turmoil. Moreover, Rafe's willingness to engage in such scare tactics on his mistress's behalf provides him an outlet to act, but it also might express a shared disdain between Nell and Rafe as non-subjects, a mother and an apprentice, who within a patriarchal society must practice and endure various forms of self-sacrifice and subordination.

Although Nell happily employs Rafe to help her cope with the pressures of motherhood, she does not regard him merely as a tool to serve her ends. Throughout the course of the play, Nell demonstrates sincere concern, affection and love towards Rafe that resembles a mother-child relationship. Nell displays genuine maternal affection for Rafe when she orders a boy actor to take him a piece of liquorice to "open his pipes the better" (I. 71-73). Not only does she display concern that he perform her romance, but her gifts of candy serve to infantilize Rafe. Nell assumes the role of Rafe's (step)mother. David Samuelson's "The Order of Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*" observes that Nell's preoccupation with her fatherless apprentice reveals how she regards him as an adopted son (313). Within "'Plot Me No Plots': The Life of Drama and the Drama of Life," Lee Bliss notes that Nell treats Rafe like a foster son, but neither Bliss nor Samuelson critically examine why Nell adopts this fatherless apprentice as her

surrogate child or what such a mother-child relationship offers both Nell and Rafe. Osborne gestures toward such an examination claiming Nell puts “Rafe forward as the child of her choice” because of the sexual desire that tinges their mother-child relationship (504). Osborne reads Rafe’s response to the near loss of Nell’s child as an expression of desire for his surrogate mother figure:

Nell: I shall ne’er forget him, when we had lost our child (you know it was strayed almost, alone, to Puddle Wharf, and the criers were abroad for it, and there it had drowned itself but for a sculler), Rafe was most comfortablest to me. “Peace, Mistress,” says he, “Let it go; I’ll get thee another as good (II. 347-348).

Osborne reads this passage as Rafe offering his services to impregnate Nell to compensate for the loss of her child (504). While Osborne offers a viable and persuasive reading, I believe that the text suggests that from Nell’s perspective Rafe offers himself as a replacement for the loss of her child. Nell’s memory of the near loss of her child is triggered by Rafe’s vow to a distressed damsel, Mistress Merrythought, and her son, Michael, who in search of a better life, have fled from the ineffectual and irresponsible patriarch, Master Merrythought, who refuses to work and financially support his wife and child. Rafe declares to Mistress Merrythought that “by my order ne-er to leave you,” which evokes for Nell the memory of Rafe comforting her during the near-death experience of her child (II. 340). Immediately after Rafe swears this vow to Mistress Merrythought, Nell publicly recalls the near-tragic incident in which he kindly offered her not only some consolation, but also a promise to replace her lost child. The play suggests that Nell interprets Rafe’s promise to Mistress Merrythought as a pledge levied

toward her. Nell identifies with Mistress Merrythought's position as a woman left to her own devices to nurture and care for a child without the help of a father figure, namely George. Given the description Nell offers of her children as demanding and unruly who disregard the authority of their mother, the text suggests that, given the number of children and their bad behavior, it is just too much work for just Nell to cope with. Nell is denied maternal authority by her children whose insubordinate behavior render her powerless, and George's lack of contributions as a partner to Nell actually regulates and contains her to the role of (m)Other, denying her a self. Nell's loved ones view her as nothing more than a powerless object used to meet and sustain their needs. Just as his acting helps her exercise control over her children, Rafe is more "comfortablest (i.e. helpful) to [her]" than her husband during her time of distress and suffering. Although Nell's statement that "we had lost our child" includes George as an equal partner in this devastating, but temporary, loss of their biological offspring, nevertheless Nell's memory does not offer a compassionate picture of her spouse (II.344). Neither does Nell's story produce any emotional response for George who, at least in this scene, appears unaffected by this traumatic experience which clearly haunts Nell. Nell's declaration that "Rafe was the most comfortablest to [her]" suggests that George was not a consoling presence or partner during this crisis. Nell's question is a thinly veiled public criticism of George's paternal failures that are a form of subtle rebellion made possible by her position within the theater. Summarizing the work of Catherine Belsey, Osborne contends that "women's roles in marriage and family effectively denied them a subject position from which to speak" (499). Osborne further argues that "though co-equal with

the father in authority over the children, the mother in patriarchy is always subject to her husband” so “to speak from a position of authority, even as a mother, was to transgress patriarchal strictures” (499). Nell’s position as co-author of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* affords her the agency to voice her anger and frustration with her dissatisfaction with the traditional patriarch who is withdrawn and disinterested in his wife and children. Indeed, Nell’s comment seems like a public reproach against her husband, but George affirms Nell’s belief that Rafe was more helpful and assuring than he with his reply: “Yes, duck” (II. 343). George admits that he is an absent and denying husband to Nell, and his fathering is intermittent and tenuous. Furthermore, he suggests with his absence and stoicism in the face of reliving her grief that her fears regarding her lost child are so insignificant to him that his apprentice is an adequate substitute to perform his duty as a husband and father to console his wife and affirm that she is a good mother by pledging “to get her another (i.e. child) as good” (II. 348). Although George offers no reproach of Nell’s mothering, highlighting her inattentiveness or lack of observation regarding the safety of her children, his apathy toward her role and duties as a mother indicates that such work is of no concern or value to him. Through his indifferent behavior, George negates her existence by diminishing the importance of motherhood, forcing Nell to grapple with the tenuous selfhood that the patriarchal role of mother affords her. Consequently, it is not a surprise that Nell is comforted by her surrogate child’s promise that, unlike her wayward child, he will not leave her and unlike George he will help her with her motherly duties (II. 43). Rafe provides Nell with some semblance of an identity

as a mother by remaining a constant presence that she can mother, but he also validates her labors by participating, though aggressively and creatively, in them.

Interestingly, Nell's public reproach against George also functions to subject her to the audience's judgment, providing them with the chance to shame her for being a bad mother. Yet the play offers not a whiff of judgment passed by any of the characters within the play. It would seem that rather than provide a space to shame Nell, the play instead provides her with the platform to publicly own her mixed feelings of love and hostility for her children. Also Rafe provides Nell with the opportunity to avoid the shame of being an unobservant and inattentive mother by "ne'er leaving" her side (II.340). More importantly, Rafe's performance within the chivalric romance's "damsel in distress" scene provides Nell with the means to work through, as Kristeva believes, the "maladies that afflict [her] soul" (Kristeva 208). This abject literary work provides a cathartic moment for Nell who, within the public space of the theater, purges pent up emotions "unveiling [her] most intimate and serious apocalypse"—her anger and frustration toward children and George who do not acknowledge her as a subject with authority and power (Kristeva 208). *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* offers Nell the means not only to jettison the hateful feelings toward her loved ones that plague her, but also to provide her with a means to manage her maternal ambivalence.

The play intimates that Nell's account of her missing child communicates both feelings of fear and grief regarding the near death of her child and her indifference and hostility toward the uncontrollable child whose misbehavior fashions her as a bad mother. Nell expresses her grief at nearly losing her child, which hints at her love for her

wayward child; she also clearly indicates that Rafe comforted her, conveying that she felt some level of distress for the safety of her own child. Yet, Nell focuses more on the emotional support that Rafe offered her than on the emotional distress produced by the disappearance of her child, suggesting that her feelings of concern co-exist with feelings of hostility. Nell's account does not indicate how the child happened to wander off to Puddle Wharf and nearly drown, but her story intimates that she was not observant and attentive to the absence of her child. This memory also highlights the circulation of hostile and destructive feelings that Nell experiences in regards to her children. Although Nell doesn't actually suffer from a real loss (i.e. the death of her child), nevertheless her child's innocent waywardness forces her to undergo a loss experience that amplifies her feelings of aggression. The passage indicates Nell's anger and frustration toward her nearly "lost" child through her frequent reference to one of her offspring as "it" (II.345, 346). Nell's use of "it" reveals that she does not feel a sense of oneness with her child; she does not experience a sense of satisfaction and completion from the proximity or closeness with her child. Nell dehumanizes her child with her use of "it" because the child threatens her with a loss that she cannot bear.¹⁴ More importantly, her anger and

¹⁴ Although, children under the age of seven and/or before puberty were often referred to as "it," Mary Ellen Lamb argues that this appellation was applied to the sexually ambiguous bodies of boy and girls because they were "perceived as creatures more of their bodies than their minds" (529). During the early modern period, children were not considered fully rational beings, but rather things or animals that followed the impulses of their bodies. This is not to say that all parents who used this moniker did not love their children, but the fact that this was standard practice to refer to children as "it" (i.e. creatures) intimates an attitude that children, between infancy but just before puberty, were regarded as inhuman. In *The English Family 1450-1700*, Ralph Houlebrooke provides another explanation for why children were designated as "it" during the early modern period: "It has been argued that children's deaths were so common that parents could only ensure their own emotional stability by avoiding the investment of much affection in their offspring, or that the high child mortality rates themselves were in large part due to *parental neglect*" (136). While Houlebrooke acknowledges the impact of the high mortality rate upon parent's emotional distance from their children, nevertheless he argues that the "love of some parents for their children could have

the hostility that the threat of such a loss evoked within her works to obscure the actual feelings of love and affection that the passage indicates she so obviously feels. The source of Nell's hostility toward her child is produced by her child's near death since it underscores Nell's fear of her inability to protect her child. As a mother, Nell's ability to protect her children is tied to her maternal authority; her child's wandering off from Nell conveys its disregard for her control, thus implying that she bears no actual power. With Rafe's promise to "ne'er leave" her, Nell is able to stave off the sense of powerlessness and failure as a mother that her child's near death produced. Unlike her biological child, Rafe willingly submits to her maternal control with his childish but tender pledge. Ultimately, Rafe provides Nell with the means of achieving some distance from her mixed feelings of love and anger toward her children. Rafe helps Nell channel the feelings of anger and hostility toward the *The London Merchant's* characters, even the eponymous hero of her romance, preventing her from becoming a monstrous mother figure.

Not only does Nell express maternal ambivalence toward her children, but this seesaw of love and hate extends to Rafe as well. Appalled by Jasper's violence against Humphrey, Nell intimates that her knight must exact retributive justice on Humphrey's behalf by threatening to hang Rafe if he spares Jasper (II. 281). Nell threatens Rafe with violence if he will not perform her request as commanded, underscoring her inability to master her aggression. Yet Nell doesn't intimidate Rafe with just physical harm, but she

coexisted with widespread indifference and neglect" (138). Although, Houlebrooke asserts that there is "no evidence that such behavior (i.e. parental neglect) was *typical*," nevertheless he suggests that parental neglect was a possible cause of child deaths. In Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, I interpret Nell's disaffection with her wayward child as both a matter of parental neglect and also her frustration with her lack of maternal authority, rather than a response to the high child mortality rate.

threatens him with death if he will not act as an extension of her self. Rafe's obedience is required to shore up Nell's maternal authority; Rafe willingly obliges but he is subject to a brutal beating in the attempt to fulfill his foster mother's wishes. Nell hesitates to protect Rafe from Jasper, advising him to run instead of guarding or defending him from physical violence. Although, as a woman, it is not Nell's place to stop such violence, nevertheless her reluctance as his surrogate mother to prevent it also suggests Nell's desire to see Rafe suffer, providing her with a brief and gratifying revenge against the children who swamp her needs. As her knight of the burning pestle, Rafe is subjected to actual, not just pretend, violence that allows Nell to experience vicariously her aggression toward her children without feelings of self-loathing and guilt. Despite these destructive impulses, Nell displays affection toward Rafe by giving him sweets, attempting to soothe the poor apprentice after Jasper brutally beats him on stage for interrupting the action of *The London Merchant*:

--Stay, Rafe, let me speak with thee. How dost thou, Rafe? Art thou shroadly hurt? The foul great lungies laid unmercifully on thee; there's some sugar-candy for thee. Proceed, thou shalt have another bout with him (II. 326-330)

Although Nell does not offer physical comfort to Rafe in the form of a hug, caress or kiss, nevertheless the sugar candy is a sign of her love for him since it is an attempt to provide for and nurture her abused grocer-errant knight. Nell is compelled to nurture Rafe to ease her maternal frustration, hoping that such maternal behavior will mirror back to herself that she can be an adequate mother. Within this violent scene of the romance scripted by Nell, she does not see Rafe as separate from her subjectivity; Rafe's

participation in the retributive violence displays his active participation in Nell's belief system. Nell's reward of sugar candy indicates that she is pleased that Rafe mirrored back her belief that Jasper deserved such violence for beating a helpless Humphrey and stealing his fiancée, Luce Venturewell. Despite Rafe's failed performance to bring her revenge to fruition, Nell's expression of maternal love derives from her narcissistic gratification that Rafe did not depart from a mother's belief system or deviate from a playwright's scene direction. Yet in regard to her queries, Rafe remains silent rather than give an account of his wounds. Rafe's silence may be read as a matter of self-preservation, wishing to keep his dignity intact, but at the same time his silence suggests that he wants to endure Nell's maternal administrations. Nell's questions display concern about his injuries; however, at the same time, rather than protecting her foster son, she desires Rafe to once more put himself in the way of real harm. Through her abject chivalric romance, Nell can show a full range of emotions to Rafe—anger, love, hate, frustration—helping her manage her maternal ambivalence toward her children by creating, at times, an abeyance and an imaginative outlet in which to channel her aggressive impulses.

Nell's feelings of anger do not destroy her ability to feel and express love and tenderness for Rafe. Nell does not suffer alone with her maternal ambivalence because Rafe helps her sustain her capacity to mother. The chivalric romance that Nell coauthors allows her to express feelings of tenderness that border on love for Rafe. Nell expresses concern that the acting troupe will successfully manipulate Rafe because he is a "fatherless child" (II. 93). She underscores how Rafe's lack of a father leaves him open

to the influence of male actors in charge of dressing him, who might impede his transition from a boy to a man:

...for I tell you truly, I'm afraid o' my boy. Come, come, George, let's be merry and wise. The child's a fatherless child; and say they should put him into a strait pair of gaskins, 'twere worse than knot-grass: he would never grow after it (II. 92-95).

Nell lectures George that, as paying audience members and co-authors of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, they can have fun watching Rafe bring to life Nell's abject chivalrous romance, but as his master and mistress they must be "wise" to make sure that the very tight breeches do not stunt the development of his body and perhaps even his genitalia. The play does not indicate Rafe's age; however Nell and George frequently refer to him as a "boy" indicating that he was at least old enough to have gone through a breeching ceremony, but Nell's fear for Rafe does not make it clear if he has taken part in the breeching custom. Nell's concern regarding the "strait gaskins" reflects the early modern "breeching" ceremony which, according to Mary Ellen Lamb, differentiated boys from girls, serving as a sign of their masculinity (3).¹⁵ However, Nell is worried that the breeches the theater group provides Rafe will actually prevent him from becoming a proper and complete man. The absence of a father figure in Rafe's life provokes Nell's

¹⁵ Within her article, "Engendering the Narrative: Old Wive's Tales in *The Winter's Tale*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*," Mary Ellen Lamb recounts the early modern period's breeching ceremony as a significant rite of passage that marked a child's transition from boy to man. Before the boy child's transition to manhood, the boy wore androgynous petticoats making the sex and the gender of a boy child indistinguishable from a girl. Boys were initiated into manhood between the ages of five and seven, but their masculinity was not produced by trousers alone. Russell West-Pavlov's *Bodies and Spaces: System, Crisis and Transformation in Early Modern Theater* claims that "the passage from child to incipient manhood involved a change of social space from the care of women to the care of men" (114). Within the early modern period, gendered clothing and social space constructed masculinity for male children.

maternal desire to protect him from an ambiguous sex and gender. As Russell West-Pavlov claims within his *Bodies and Spaces: System, Crisis and Transformation in Early Modern Theater* that “masculinity in its early modern configuration was not a given” (114). With no father to usher Rafe into manhood, Nell desires to prevent the theater’s costume from engendering a transformation that would fashion Rafe as a helpless child aligned with the feminine instead of suiting him in garb that constructs him as an autonomous and masculine knight.

Nell wants to ward off the potential threat of Rafe’s body blurring the boundaries of sex and gender; she expresses her affection for Rafe by desiring to shield him from the very thing that she finds immense pleasure in—the abject. Not only does Nell enjoy the abject genre of chivalric romance, but she confesses to George and audience members her love of grotesque freak shows:

“...but all the sights that ever were in London since I was married, methinks the little child that was so fair grown about the members was the prettiest, that and the hermaphrodite (III. 273-276).

Nell expresses her visual delight in gazing at a fascinating Other with an abject body.¹⁶

This fascinating Other happens to be a hermaphrodite who is the “prettiest” spectacle with aberrant genitalia that make it difficult to distinguish if it is male or female, leaving Nell to use the word, “child,” to convey the complex ambiguity of its doubtful sex. The hermaphrodite is a partially formed and abject figure who, as Kristeva argues, does not

¹⁶ Though the passage reads as if Nell is addressing two very different abject figures, this moment is another of Nell’s solecisms. Her reference to “the child so fair grown about the members,” according to Hattaway, is an allusion to freaks, specifically the hermaphrodite. Hattaway notes that Beaumont borrows Jonson’s euphemism for hermaphrodite in Act V, scene i within *The Alchemist*. According to Michael Hattaway’s note within the Mermaids edition, Nell’s mistake is a matter of “Beaumont satirizing the citizen’s taste for freak shows” (69).

“respect borders, positions and rules” but possesses the threatening potential “to disturb identity, system and order” (4). An incomplete and subhuman body of the hermaphrodite threatens, as Kristeva notes, “to collapse [the] meaning” and order of early modern patriarchy’s sex and gender hierarchy that creates and sustains male subjectivity as whole and powerful (9). Yet the grotesquerie Nell loves to gaze upon is what she desires to “radically exclude” from the body of her surrogate child (Kristeva 2). Nell wants to prevent Rafe from transforming into a monstrous boy-girl, so that he may become an active subject. Her desire to jettison the abject, in-between state of being a “child” from Rafe departs from and complicates Kristeva’s formulation of abjection. According to Kristeva, the mother is the first thing to be abjected from the child so that it can avoid being engulfed by the abject (m)Other so that it may try to acquire a separate self that is not dependent upon her body (60). Nell does not attempt to absorb Rafe in order to create and sustain her authority and power as a mother, but rather she expresses her maternal concern and love by attempting to eliminate obstacles that pose a hazard to her foster son’s autonomy that is necessary to achieve an unhampered and stable subjectivity. Nell may be fascinated by and attracted to an abject Other but her fear of it tainting and deforming Rafe’s body and gender betrays that she is also repulsed enough by it to guard a loved one from it. Ultimately, Nell recognizes Rafe as a subject that is connected but separate from her sense of self as a (m)Other.

Yet Nell’s nurturing and concern for Rafe appears to be in support of the patriarchal hierarchy of sex and gender which oppresses her and also contributes to her maternal ambivalence. In an early modern patriarchal society, Nell is aware that a good

mother sacrifices her connection to her child for his/her benefit. Denied a subjectivity of her own by patriarchy, Nell's consolation is a "good mother" sacrifices her desire for a self outside of motherhood to produce an identity for Rafe through her chivalric romance. However, Nell's frequent reminder that Rafe is "fatherless" hints that her pleasure derives not from sacrificing her desire for subjectivity but rather from Rafe's ability to help her become something more than a mother—an author. In concurrence with the breeching custom, Ralph must not only wear trousers but also break his primary identification with a mother figure, Nell, in order to become male identified. As the only male presence in Rafe's life, Ralph Houlbrooke's work, *The English Family: 1450-1700*, claims that "ideally the master stood in the parent's place and assumed some of the parental responsibilities" (175).¹⁷ Unlike Nell, George offers no input of value to nurture Rafe; it is Nell who performs most of the parenting of Rafe. Although George's generous sums to various boy actors appears to express his concern to protect Rafe, George pays really the theater troupe handsomely to protect his investment. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is George's legacy since it serves as a mirror that will reflect his self-worth, honor and identity as a citizen grocer (Induction 30, 34). Not only does George fail to father his apprentice, but he also assigns exclusive possession of him to Nell, referring to Rafe

¹⁷Houlbrooke argues that "the short duration of service clearly mitigated against the establishment of a very close bond between masters and servants;" yet, nevertheless "the master was legally bound to provide for his servants physical needs" (175). Houlbrooke contends "relationships built up between the most conscientious masters and their longest employed or most deeply trusted servants *sometimes resembled* those between parents and children, especially when masters had no children of their own" (176). He records instances of 16th century masters such as John Bruen who helped his servants get married, or Anthony Cave who enhanced his apprentice's, John Johnson, legacy by lending him money and giving him wise advice regarding his investments (176). Overall, Houlbrooke argues that there are documented cases of apprentices and some domestic servants who were treasured by their masters with "a quasi-parental affection" (176). Although, Houlbrooke regards the above cases as "exceptional," nevertheless there were master-servant relationships that mirrored in practice parent-child relationships (176).

as “[her] man” (II. 197). Without a father figure to identify with, Rafe’s subject position is not predicated upon rejecting a connection with a mother figure. Nell is not a disempowered mother within this male dominated space of the theater but a visible and powerful subject thanks to Rafe who helps her stave off being nobody by performing, embodying and co-authoring her abject chivalric romance.

Although Rafe does not in fact “kill a lion with a pestle” as Nell suggests, nevertheless he relocates her narrative within a traditional chivalric romance plot that fashions *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* as a cavalier who pledges to rescue damsels in distress from uncourteous knights. Rafe’s revision reveals his preoccupation with and love of the traditional chivalric romance that represents a time of civility and honorable and steadfast men who displayed concern and respect for the weaker sex, women. His picture of his contemporary society as uncivil and hostile reflects a sincere mourning for the age of chivalry:

There are no such courteous and fair well-spoken knights in this age; they will call one ‘the son of a whore’, that Palmerin of England would have called ‘fair sir’; and one that Rosicleer would have called ‘right beauteous damsel’, they will call ‘damned bitch’ (I. 241-245)

The traditional chivalric romance appeals to Rafe allowing him to fashion himself an active agent who rescues women, thus constructing himself as the apotheosis of masculinity that the profession of grocer cannot supply. Rafe criticizes the passive life of a grocer arguing that “no brave spirit” could be “content to sit in his shop with a flappet of wood and a blue apron before him, selling mithridatum and dragon’s water to visited houses” (I. 248-249). The apprentice expresses his desire to do more than sell antidotes

to mend physical ailments and ease the plague since he is little more than a marginal figure peddling goods on the fringes of danger rather than in the fray. The romance genre fulfills Rafe's phantasy to become a knight whose "heroic prowess" procures him "a famous history" (I. 251-253). Interestingly, Rafe conflates the traditional chivalric romance with history to emphasize the power of history to memorialize and legitimize his fantasy of a masculine identity as a knight. Rafe historicizes the power of romance not only to redefine masculinity for his contemporary culture, but also to underscore how the genre serves as a conduit that voices the desires of the Other. Romance serves as the vehicle for Rafe to fashion a world in which he is a visible and powerful subject of the dominant culture rather than a part of an invisible, voiceless and powerless minority.

For Rafe, a commendable knight must "neglect his possessions" "to relieve poor ladies," thus privileging women over the acquisition of material goods (I.235-237). Rafe prizes women over material goods, which suggests that he does not view women as objects to be exploited for a knight's gain. Nevertheless sections of the romance that Rafe improvises construct women as helpless and weak figures requiring rescue by a big strong knight. In Rafe's romantic vision, the "wandering damsels" may go in "quest of their knights" but their inability to protect and fight for themselves serves as a necessary plot point to constitute a knight's masculinity (I. 236-237). Within Rafe's chivalric romance, knights depend upon women to construct and sustain their gender identity. Outside the diegetic reality of the romance, Rafe's fantasy of becoming as an active subject is dependent upon and produced by Nell. Rafe's obsession with rescuing women evolved from his concern to assist and rescue his mistress from her unrewarding and

unsatisfying role as a mother. Rafe's assistance with Nell's children is a small act of gallantry that makes her maternal ambivalence manageable by diminishing and even re-directing its destructive impulses. Preserving Nell from her "unruly children" affords Rafe the opportunity to perform "couraging" and "huffing parts" that allow him to practice embodying an intimidating and exaggerated hyper-masculinity. Nell embraces Rafe's vision of hyper-masculine knighthood and its mission not only to protect women, but also to restore them to an idealized pedestal that centers women at the heart of the narrative. Nell offers no objection to Rafe's alterations to her romance (i.e. killing a lion with a pestle) since they speak to experiences of abuse levied against her by the gentleman of her contemporary society:

I'll be sworn will they, Rafe; they have called me so an hundred times about a scurvy pipe of tobacco (I. 27).

Her experience supports in part Rafe's charges against their contemporary society, but more importantly her response conveys her dissatisfaction with her status as woman which requires her to forfeit the rights and visibility of a subject. Nell resists internalizing the verbal abuse of the gentlemen, refusing to believe that she is a "damned bitch," or a hated and lost figure undeserving of recognition. Although Nell confesses that she is "a stranger," or outsider, to the male-dominated space of the theater, she does so not merely to shame George publically for breaking promises he made to take her to the theater, but also to cultivate and hone an authorial voice of her own. Like Rafe, Nell realizes how the traditional chivalric romance gives voice to her desires as a marginal Other for subjectivity. Throughout the process of spontaneously scripting the chivalric romance, Nell understands that it is an authorial voice that constitutes her as a subject. Despite his

revision to her romantic theme of choice, Nell embraces Rafe's narrative contributions because they seek to safeguard women against becoming a marginal Other via such constructions as a "damned bitch" (I. 244) and "a stranger" (Induction 50). Nell exhibits not a trace of possessiveness or even resistance to Rafe's influence upon her creative work suggesting that she does not perceive his narrative contributions as an obstacle to her desire to acquire subjectivity. The absence of a power struggle over absolute ownership of the romance between Nell and Rafe reveals that Nell derives some pleasure in creating and nurturing *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* with her surrogate son. Mothering both her foster child and their play is a pleasurable experience because she can share the stage with Rafe rather than, as patriarchal motherhood requires, retire to the background. Allowing Rafe's revisions and additions to give shape to the romance, the play suggests that Nell views Rafe as a whole subject rather an object. For Nell, Rafe is an Other, inspiring both love and disdain, not just an extension of her self. Permitting Rafe to author some of this romance suggests that Nell sees him as a whole object that she hates enough to subject to violence and loves enough to allow him to construct sections of the play independent of her authorial voice. Rafe's unsolicited contributions and Nell's acceptance of them produces a mutuality between foster mother and surrogate child that allows Nell to manage her maternal ambivalence through a creative aggression that simulates rather than causes real harm.

Between Nell and Rafe mutuality is not achieved without a creative struggle over their chivalric romance that results in the recognition of their separate identities. Their chivalric romance functions as a therapeutic narrative wherein Nell recognizes and

embraces her aggression which she transforms into more creative modes of mothering that meet both Rafe's and Nell's need for subjectivity. Within act three of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Nell commands Rafe to perform excessive acts of violence which betray the depth of her anger and aggression that the role of mother assigned by patriarchy produced within her. Nell taps into the reservoir of her maternal ambivalence exploring the intensity of her anger and hostility that Rafe accommodates to a degree but ultimately shrinks from. Although Rafe enjoys playing the part of a doughty knight, nevertheless he distances himself from Nell's creative acts of brutality, communicating his loathing and disgust. As Rafe battles the grotesque giant, Barbarossa, to liberate the debauched knights suffering from various venereal diseases, Nell's scene directions to her errant knight of the burning pestle reveal her abject appetite to inject their romance with a destructive aggression that craves annihilation: "There, boy; kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, Rafe" (III. 348). Rafe denies his co-author the violent death that she fervently desires; instead he spares the giant's life and foolishly contributes to the spread of the abject (e.g. syphilis, crabs, etc.) by freeing knights such as Sir Pockhole from the monstrous Barbarossa's attempts to cure him. Rafe asserts his independence from Nell's authorial voice choosing to construct the knight of the burning pestle as a cavalier unburdened by such feelings of destructive aggression. Rafe refuses to be treated as if he were an extension of Nell. He does not submit himself entirely to her whims. Nonetheless, his performance of her scene suggests that he feels for his mistress; he wants to respect her vision even if he would rather not mirror her desire for aggression.

Unfazed by Rafe's dramatic choice to display mercy, Nell again attempts to induce Rafe to mirror her appetite for destruction:

Rafe, I would have thee call all the youths together in battle-ray, with drums, and with guns and flags, and march to Mile End in pompous fashion, and there exhort your soldiers to be merry and wise, and to keep their beards burning, Rafe; and then skirmish, and let your flags fly, and cry, 'Kill, kill, kill.' ...Do it bravely, Rafe, and think before whom you perform, and what person you represent (V.57-62).

Although Rafe does not actually perform acts of violence, nevertheless he adopts a threatening and intimidating figure who *could* bravely "kill, kill, kill," fulfilling Nell's hunger for potential (and actual) violence (V.57-62). Rafe agrees to perform Nell's narrative but declares that "if he does it not for the honour of the city and the credit of his master, then let him never hope for freedom" (V.66-68). Although Nell believed in Rafe's acting abilities enough to unreservedly recommend him to serve as the lead character within *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, nevertheless he interprets her reminder that he must remember the "person [he] represents" as George rather than his mistress (V.62). Rafe neglects to remember that it was Nell who secured him the lead role in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Within the induction, the play reveals that George forgot about Rafe's acting abilities until Nell reminded him providing extensive and persuasive testimony regarding their apprentice's theatrical skills as an amateur actor (Induction. 61). Not only does Rafe fail to credit Nell as the "person he represents," but he executes her scene directions reflecting the spirit of the idea rather than following them to the letter "crying kill, kill, kill" (III.348). Rafe rallies his fellow soldier-citizens giving a rousing speech inspiring the men to help him vanquish their enemies in order "to show the world that poulterers and pewterers can brandish a weapon as well as shake an apron"

(V. 152-153). Yet Rafe forgoes performing the primal rage and aggression that Nell explicitly requests, shouting instead “Saint George,” reflecting patriotism rather than primitivism (156-157). Nevertheless, Nell rewards Rafe’s performance with “a cold capon” and “March beer” because he has displayed both his connection to and separateness from her textual body (156-157). Nell rewards his creativity in staging her scene, since despite his slight revision Rafe brings her work to life, helping rather than hindering her desire to achieve an identity outside of motherhood. Rafe’s performance helps Nell achieve subjectivity as a playwright and director, but also his hesitation to execute her scene to the letter provides her with the opportunity to mother creatively, allowing her to manage her ambivalence. Rather than react aggressively to Rafe’s modified vision of her textual progeny, Nell’s maternal love for her foster son outweighs her aggression. Once again, Nell mothers Rafe with food gifts in an attempt to nourish his body; however unlike the liquorices and sugar candy these victuals do not infantilize him, highlighting Nell’s perception of him as an adolescent with a subjectivity separate from her sense of self. She no longer sees Rafe as child that depends absolutely upon her maternal guidance and affection; he allows her to be a good mother, but at the same time to receive recognition of a subjectivity separate from her foster child. Through the creative process of co-authoring a traditional chivalric romance, Nell manages her maternal ambivalence productively by building a relationship with Rafe that is based on mutual recognition rather maternal sacrifice.

The play’s representation of Nell does not cast judgment as to whether she is ultimately either a good or a bad mother, but rather it suggests that maternal ambivalence

is inevitable. Despite Rafe's dramatic evasions and revisions, her desire for the annihilation of an object is not entirely quashed. In fact, Nell directs her aggression toward the destruction of her surrogate son and her errant knight. Although co-authoring a chivalric romance leads to moments of mutual recognition between Nell and Rafe, nevertheless Nell's maternal ambivalence still exists, with Nell instructing George that her knight of the burning pestle must "come out and die" (V. 272). Despite the theater company's protest that killing her knight is dramatically "unfit [that he] die upon no occasion," Nell and even George remain unmoved by this protest (V. 274-275). Once again, Nell's maternal ambivalence allows her to express a range of emotions toward Rafe, underscoring her ability to see him as a whole subject. For Nell, Rafe is an Other inspiring both love and disdain; she sees him as a whole object that she loves enough to allow him to revise sections of her chivalric romance and dislikes enough to subject his character to death for it. No matter how much love and affection Nell feels for Rafe, these emotions will coexist inexorably with her feelings of anger and disaffection for him. This ambivalence is a result of the existing conflict between the desire to satisfy her needs and the impulse to attend to those of her children.

So why does Nell order the death of her creation, her errant knight, who helps her manage her maternal ambivalence but more importantly provides her with the opportunity to be something more than just a mother? Nell continues to use, as Kristeva argues, her "literary creation as a means to work through the maladies of her soul, [i.e. her maternal ambivalence], by working through a series of conflicts that trouble her so she is not condemned to act them out" (208). Kristeva argues that literature, as

abjection's privileged signifier, not only reveal an individual's affliction (i.e. Nell's maternal ambivalence) that harms the subject but also offers him/her catharsis (209). Nell's choice to annihilate Rafe is twofold. Rafe's counterfeit death speaks to her desire to get rid of the child(ren) that threatens to make her helpless and powerless by robbing her of a constructive and protective maternal authority, but more importantly it is a matter of forcing and affirming for her an independent identity. Her decision to kill Rafe is a metaphorical way to kill her children purging her maternal ambivalence in a creative and productive way that does not condemn her to cause real harm to her real children and supplying her with a subjectivity that is not based solely upon mothering and childrearing (Kristeva 208). Without revising or attempting to evade his character's narrative demise, Rafe helps Nell not only reduce her feelings of rage toward her children and her foster son, but also alleviate her feelings of guilt and shame for harboring the abject desire to kill her children. Rafe's willing participation in Nell's death scene benefits him as well as his foster mother. The death scene offers Rafe a dramatic opportunity to recount all of his adventures as a knight before permitting his soul to fly to Grocer's Hall (V.328). During his long-winded death speech, Rafe fails to exalt the life of a mere grocer though his soul will reside in heaven full of dead grocers rather than in a heaven full of chivalric knights. The death scene allows Rafe to memorialize and legitimize an identity as a knight. Through his hyperbolic death scene, he creates "a famous history" cataloguing his "heroic prowess" securing a bit of immortality (I.26-28). This chivalric romance, although fictive, historicizes and preserves for him a masculine subjectivity that he most desires to embody in reality.

With her final speech, Nell seems to purposefully wield the patriarchal role of father figure against the gentlemen in the theater to shore up patriarchal support for the romantic narrative that she produced and mothered. Nell blatantly bribes the men to return to her home for some wine and tobacco in exchange for telling her the truth regarding Rafe's performance. As the writer and director, Nell's final words and her thinly veiled "wink" instruct the male audience members how to think about her literary creation and her apprentice who brought it to life. Despite her obvious attempts to manipulate the male audience to validate her authorial voice and control, the epilogue suggests that Nell desires to reinforce homosocial bonds by urging the men to support and protect a "fatherless Rafe." Nell deliberately brings up Rafe's lack of a father figure to induce some paternal feelings within the men present in the hopes that one if not all of them will father him. Yet, the play offers little to no support that these gentlemen will care for and support this orphaned boy. Although George serves as Rafe's master teaching him a profession, the play clearly indicates that it is only Nell who provides this orphaned boy with the attention and care that a child requires. Unlike Nell, George views Rafe merely as a tool to generate his subjectivity. For George, Rafe's performance serves as the projection of his master's identity as "a grocer [who] does admirable things," rather than a means for Rafe to be something more than his apprentice (Induction 33-34). Rather, George regards Rafe as a form of property rather than as an independent subject. George constructs Rafe as a commodity to be easily traded, declaring that the "players would give all the shoes in their shop for him" (I.279-280). His construction of his apprentice as a tradable commodity underscores his pleasure in controlling Rafe's life.

Unlike George, Nell sees him as a whole subject whom she can love and hate, but who is also more than just an extension of herself.¹⁸ Thus, Nell's heavy emphasis on Rafe's fatherlessness also serves as a gesture asserting that embracing a mother's ambivalence is much better than accepting the indifference of would-be father figures. Despite the seesaw of love and hate that Rafe endures with Nell as his primary caretaker, at least he is not subjected to the indifference of an absent father. The shared creative process of writing *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* provided Nell with the means to creatively manage her maternal ambivalence by mitigating her aggression and hostility with love to ensure mutuality between herself and Rafe. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* suggests that Nell's maternal ambivalence is by far more productive and life-giving since it provides for Rafe the opportunity for subjectivity which Nell's sought-after surrogate fathers (i.e. the gentlemen attending the theater) fail to produce.

¹⁸ As I argued earlier in this dissertation, George disrupts *The London Merchant* to purchase a play that honors his profession. George's s declares that he will have a "citizen of [his] own trade" serve as the play's protagonist (Induction 29-30). George's vision is a narcissistic enterprise that aims at constructing and projecting his identity. Even, George's nicknames for Nell are used to reduce her to some animalistic Other without a voice or identity. Although, George doesn't use pet names to reduce and Other Rafe, nevertheless he regards Rafe as a form of property or object that he can control. Even George's behavior toward the boy players underscores his attitude toward the children as objects. In "If both my sons were on the gallows, I would sing": Oppression of Children in Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," Linda Anderson argues that "the children are the object of most of the threats of violence in the play" (77) Anderson contends that George threatens the male children in the play with legal and physical violence, when "they have failed to give him his money's worth," but more importantly, it conveys his anger over his inability to control the boy actors (79-80). In "The Order in Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*," David Samuelson argues that George's (and to some extent Nell's) "ideal children are nonentities, passive and agreeable like one's baggage or goods" (307).

Conclusion

Both *The Changeling* and *Tis' Pity She's a Whore* depict how patriarchy's mode of subject formation for men is harmful for both women and men. Yet what I find most fascinating about these two plays is how the female characters, Beatrice and Annabella, utilize patriarchy's abject constructions of the female Other that serve as the very means and source of their oppression. So it would seem that these women are willing participants in their own oppression. Yet with Beatrice and Annabella's appropriation of these monstrous and loathsome constructions of the abject female Other, they nevertheless find a way to recover some kind of agency and power, though limited, to resist gender roles that are confining and harmful, causing them great psychological pain and anguish. Most poignant is how *The Changeling* and *Tis' Pity* depict these female characters finding something life-giving and empowering within the most dire and painful circumstances. The forms of agency and power that Beatrice and Annabella recoup are by no means radical; they don't undo the patriarchal system in which they live. After all, in both plays, *The Changeling* and *Tis' Pity*, the female characters are killed by loved ones for assuming the rights and privileges denied to them. Nevertheless, their actions are still emancipatory and to some degree subversive because they lay bare the very discursive trappings that serve as the means of their oppression. I find hope in these Jacobean plays that reveal how an oppressive patriarchal system works because this system does not close down the possibility of change. These seventeenth-century plays call for a new mode of generating subjectivity for men and women that

diverges from patriarchy's dehumanizing construction of woman as an abject Other that produces and maintains male subjectivity and its power.

Although the *Changeling* and *Tis' Pity* call for a new means of constructing gender identity for men and women, the societies in these plays are so entrenched in a toxic gender hierarchy that they cannot conceive of a way out. These Jacobean plays compel us to be disgusted with the asymmetrical gender hierarchy, encouraging the audience to construct more mutual and reciprocal gender roles for men and women. I read the endings of both *The Changeling* and *Tis' Pity* as a call to arms to transform a toxic sex-gender hierarchy that is lethal to both women and men. Despite the horrific and violent endings of these plays, we as readers are invited to share in the responsibility of formulating gender roles that are mutual and reciprocal. Although these Jacobean plays cannot conceive how these new gender roles would work, nevertheless they still call on the readers to take part in producing ethical subjectivities. However, unlike *The Changeling* and *Tis' Pity*, Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* imagines a way out of patriarchy's destructive sex and gender hierarchy for men and women. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* suggests the means to deconstruct patriarchy's destructive gender identity politics can be achieved through collaborative storytelling between women and men that allows the women to creatively express and manage their ambivalence toward patriarchal figures and loved ones. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* suggests that feelings of aggression and hostility mitigated by love with the shared creative process of writing cultivates mutuality between women and men who are compelled to see each other as whole subjects rather than as objects. Francis Beaumont's

The Knight of the Burning Pestle offers a view on a seventeenth-century attempt to construct, albeit messily and imperfectly, ethical subjectivities that are not predicated on domination and oppression of women or men. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* offers our modern society a valuable strategy that possesses the potential to strengthen and create healthy, mutual and reciprocal heterosexual relationships.

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