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Subjective allegories : the fictional here-and-now, or, What may be digested in a play?

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Chapter 7

Subjective Allegories

The Fictional Here-and-Now, or What may be digested in a Play?

what may be digested in a Play

(*Troilus and Cressida*, Prologue 29)

[*Alberto.*] eyes to see
The inward man

(*The Fair Maid of the Inn* 1.1.188–89)

Much criticism sees Fletcherian drama as mannerist (in the negative sense) and entrapped by unrealistic conventions. H. J. Makkink, in his comparison of Massinger and Fletcher (1927), asserts that the

> Lack of coherence and the frequent occurrence of irrelevant scenes are not the only faults in Fletcher's plays. They suffer also from improbability […]. The improbability makes a good many situations ridiculous, if not absurd. (Makkink 1927: 72)

For Makkink—as well as for many other critics before and after him—the failure to obey the dogma of probability implicates faultiness in Fletcher's dramatic work. This chapter aims to study the seeming inconsistencies and deviations from realism and suggest a more plausible reading of the situation or the entire play, that is, interpretations that would give the Fletcherian plays the *objective correlative* that T. S. Eliot was unable to find for them.

Fletcherian drama is marked by a substantial breach with the realistic mode. The onstage actions are often carried out in direct contrast to the fictions represented. In the previous chapter, I gave instances of Fletcherian dramatic techniques which developed a certain feature in characters or a dramatic situation in order to expose a hidden, often subjective aspect of the fiction. The character of the Lieutenant functions as an allegorical personification of the conflicts in the play; by containing or reflecting them, he becomes their central playing space. Similarly, there are many other instances of seemingly redundant and disconnected scenes and moments in Fletcherian plays which are 'faulty' from the realistic perspective. However—as my study argues—once it is not the onstage reality that is judged but the fictional reference, the crucial moments acquire coherence and a logic of their own. In other words, I argue that mature Fletcherian drama is not constructed primarily for the onstage presentation—although the plays themselves are exquisitely theatrical—but rather for fiction, its figurative expression

and for the response they raise in the audience. The themes that this new development of drama makes possible to exploit go far beyond the ingenuous tradition of romances, chivalric epic and fairy tales. Mature Fletcherian drama, continuing in, and directly coming from, the tradition of Shakespearean romances, revives the figurative—often symbolic or allegorical—dimensions of the fairy tale or the romance. The fundamental achievement of Fletcherian drama and theatre is the dramatic translation of the subjective space into the physical and rather limiting Jacobean stage conditions. This chapter sets out to analyze some of these techniques, proceeding from allegorical characters and elemental situations into complex allegories of individual action, space and overall designs of the plays.

Some of the interpretations suggested are archetypal; the appeal of a dramatic situation may simply rest on the purity and beauty with which it is treated in the play. Most of the explanations are taken from the subjective sphere, from the inner life. Fletcherian mature tragicomedy deals with the inner, subjective worlds; the plays give bodies to abstract realities, such as qualities (Patience in *Henry VIII*), faults, desires or vices. The development that drama underwent in the later years of the Jacobean era was one towards emblematic expression, figurativeness, and allegory. From the perspective of modern, realistic theatre, this may seem a *cul-de-sac*, a retrograde development. In my approach, I tend to disregard this normative diachronic assumption and to analyze the new paths as achievements that turned out as productive and positive.

The interpretive complexity of Fletcherian drama is illustrated on seven plays. The first section analyzes two consecutive scenes from *Henry VIII*, an acknowledged Shakespeare-Fletcher collaboration of 1613, and observes (1) the ways in which the drama directs the audience's attention, focusing on the central themes and patterns of the play; and, (2) transforms the physical space of the stage into the mental—or subjective, Baroque—space of the mind.

The latter technique (dramatizing the subjective space) is exemplified in the second section on the function of the semi-allegorical figure of the tempter Latorch of *The Tragedy of Rollo, Duke of Normandy, or The Bloody Brother* (c1617, rev. 1627–30), a consecutive collaboration of Fletcher, Massinger, Jonson and Chapman. Latorch is explicitly referred as the 'firebrand' (*Rollo* 2.3.88) and thus is identified as a personified temptation.

The third section, on 'Subjective Journeys', provides a more complex allegorical reading of *The Pilgrim* and *Women Pleased*. The characters themselves are not seen as allegorical, but the actions they undertake are viewed in their figurative overtones. This reading gives the plays their unity, a quality which realistic, literal approaches have denied them.

The section on Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (1624) analyzes the play's unifying element, its inner rules of poetic justice. In a series of complex counterfeiting and deceptions the play presents a notion of normalcy, integrity or balance of character. The pattern the play is constructed on is the use of the 'aggressive' or unbalanced energy against itself; the cunning characters of the play, Leon and

Estifania, use the desires and ambitions of their partners against themselves. That is to say, the equilibrium in the play is achieved when 'passions (like a Whale on ground) | Confound themselues with working' (*2 Henry IV* 4.3.40–41).

In *The Sea Voyage* (1622), a Fletcher-Massinger *riposte* to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, characters—arguably allegorical representatives of the society—are trapped on the island on account of their attachment to money and property. The barren island of the play becomes, in a sense, a subjective purgatory, separating people from one another by their avarice. The voyage of the title is explicitly referred to as one that 'makes of deadly enemies faythfull friends' (*The Sea Voyage* 5.4.116).

The final section analyzes the distinctively Baroque notion of worldly prerogative in another *riposte* to *The Tempest*, Fletcher and Massinger's *The Prophetess* (1622). The play minutely treats the theme of conflict of the individual will and the outer world, suggesting a model for an ideal ruler in the body of an erring human individual.

Henry VIII (All is True)

> *Theodor.* *Honor* thy name is, and I hope thy nature.
>
> (*The Loyal Subject* 3.4.55)

In one sense, *Henry VIII* is a play of sorrow and joy; the cycle of alternate moments of joy and sorrow, sometimes referred to as the Wheel of Fortune, may arguably be seen as one of the central themes in the play. This is at least what the play dramatically focuses on. In Scene 4.1, the choric figures of the two anonymous gentlemen carefully juxtapose the two sides:

> *1.* Y'are well met once againe.
> *2.* So are you.
> *1.* You come to take your stand heere, and behold
> The Lady *Anne*, passe from her Corronation?
> *2.* 'Tis all my businesse. At our last encounter,
> The Duke of Buckingham came from his Triall.
> *1.* 'Tis very true. But that time offer'd sorrow,
> This generall ioy.
>
> (*Henry VIII* 4.1.1–7)

The Gentlemen stress the juxtaposition of the two situations. From a realistic point of view, one might see this exchange simply as character individuation. However, dramatically, what their encounter and their exchange suggest is that they become, symbolically, the witnesses of the events, and that what they—as certain personifications of 'the world'—are interested in are sensations. At the same time, the present day's celebration is inadvertently linked with another 'time [to offer] sorrow', the fall and dishonour of Queen Katherine.

This day—as the Gentlemen say—is a time for 'those that claime their Offices […], | By custome of the Coronation' (4.1.15–16). Once they have commented on the celebration, the Second Gentleman pronounces their latent, sorrowful side:

[*1.*] But I beseech you, what's become of *Katherine*
The Princesse Dowager? How goes her businesse?

(*Henry VIII* 4.1.22–23)

Is this indeed a time for general joy? Does not the closeness of sorrow, so carefully orchestrated by the play, render true joy impossible? From this perspective, the play becomes a story of bereavement and transitoriness, bringing 'a feeling of uneasiness in the modern mind' (Foakes 1957: lxii).[1] Arguably, the feeling of uneasiness was there even in the early modern one:

[*2., commenting on the procession.*]
I take it, she that carries up the Traine,
Is that old Noble Lady, Dutchesse of *Norfolke.*
1. It is, and all the rest are Countesses.
2. Their Coronets say so. These are Starres indeed——
1. And sometimes falling ones.
2. No more of that.

(*Henry VIII* 4.1.51–55)

The First Gentleman's quibble on 'falling' may be the dramatists' design; yet, what his partner reacts to by 'No more of that' is the remembrance of Buckingham's, Katherine's and Wolsey's falls.

The dramatists use ingenious techniques of focusing on 'subjective readings'. They intentionally change the place of coronation of Queen Anne from the authentic Westminster Hall to York-place in order 'to refer to Wolsey' (Foakes 1957: 132n.) and, even more importantly, to his fall and the confiscation of his property. Bishop of Winchester is mentioned as 'no great good louer' of Cranmer, Wolsey's successor (4.1.103–05), thus obliquely giving the exposition to a new 'breach' and (potentially) to his later fall. When the Third Gentleman enters to report on the coronation and the Queen's procession, he indulges in lurid details of the crowds:

[*3.*] No man living
Could say 'This is my wife' there, all were woven
So strangely in one peece.

(*Henry VIII* 4.1.79–81)

Why is the joke constructed as it is when it deals with the coronation of a new Queen, and—implicitly—the deposition of the old? Obliquely, the dramatists seem to direct the spectator to consider whether the King himself could say 'This is my wife' in view of the previous one and the following four.

1 As for the tone of the play, Foakes describes it generally as one of 'joy and reconciliation, and a prospect of lasting piece and well-being' (Foakes 1957: lviii). However, the initial sequence of the two Gentlemen's dialogue in 4.1 culminates with the sorrow over Katherine's lot: 'Alas good lady' (4.1.35), followed abruptly by the sound of hautboys: 'The trumpets sound: stand close, the queen is coming' (4.1.36). It is doubtful whether the celebration really overrides the recurrent nostalgia of the play.

In scene 4.1—very likely a close and careful collaboration of Shakespeare and Fletcher[2]—the focalizing moves a step ahead, retreating into the intimate world of Katherine and her companions, which culminates in the heavenly vision before her death. Who are Griffith and Patience? What functions do they fulfil in the scene?

> The faithful ministrations of Griffith and Patience to Katherine in this scene seem to be the dramatist's invention, enlarged from mere hints in the chronicles. Griffith's name is not mentioned in connection with her death in Holinshed, but he is named in relation to her trial […]; Katherine's maid Patience is wholly an invention. (Foakes 1957: 134n.)

Patience's role is to materialize Katherine's thoughts.[3] After Griffith corrects Katherine's one-sided view of Wolsey, she says: '*Patience*, be neere me still, and set me lower' (4.2.76), carefully securing the *double entendre* of the address; Katherine addresses both her maid, asking her to 'set me lower', as well as her own patience, invoking humility. Katherine falls asleep, having sent her companions away, and in her vision she is given a symbolic halo, the heavenly crown, mirroring Anne's recent worldly coronation and her own earlier one (Foakes 1957: li-lii). When Katherine awakes, she calls out for the heavenly spirits, and is answered—in a dramatic irony, perhaps—by her other companions, Patience (patience) and Griffith (grief?):

> *Katherine.* Spirits of peace, where are ye? Are ye all gone?
> And leave me heere in wretchednesse, behinde ye?
> *Griffith.* Madam, we are heere.

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2 In the attribution of 4.1 and 4.2, both the crucial—and, one might say with Makkink, irrelevant—scenes, the most important recent analyses of the authorship question have disagreed; Hoy (1962) assigns both of them to Shakespeare, only 'touched up' by Fletcher, while Hope (1994) gives them to Fletcher entirely (summed up in McMullan 2000: 187n.). Leech remarks on the dramatic connection between this play and *A Wife for a Month*:

> the atmosphere [in *WM*] is indeed oppressive when the court busies itself over festivities to celebrate the doomed marriage of Valerio and Evanthe. Strangely, there appears to be some echoing of *Henry VIII*, in the writing of which it is often, and perhaps rightly, believed that Fletcher had a share. […] And in the scenes showing the common people pressing to court for the wedding-masque, they are treated with the same robust and good-humoured contempt that characterised their handling at the christening of the infant Elizabeth. (Leech 1962: 101–02)

3 McMullan interestingly comments on the characters of Griffith and Patience:

> **Griffith**] No-one of this name is mentioned in Holinshed's description of Katherine's death, but a Griffith is named in the account of the court proceedings at Blackfriars […]. Holinshed draws on Cavendish's fuller description of the moment which notes that, leaving the courtroom, Katherine was 'leanyng (as she was wont allwayes to do |) vppon the arme of his Generall receyvour called m^r^ Griffithe' (Cavendish, EETS, 82).
> **Patience**] Of Katherine's four principal ladies-in-waiting, three were Spanish an one English. There is no historical record of anyone in her household with the name Patience, but it *has obvious allegorical significance and is arguably an epithet transferred from Katherine herself* (see, for instance, 2.4.71, 127, 3.1.137). Cavendysh saw Katherine as 'a perfect Grysheld' […]; William Forrest's poem *The History of Guisild the Second* (1558) is a thinly veiled account of Katherine's sufferings […]. (McMullan 2000: 26)

Katherine. It is not you I call for.

(*Henry VIII* 4.2.83–85)

Apart from personifying her name, Patience is another 'type of means' of externalizing Katherine's inner life; she describes her mental development, drawing the audience's attention to it:

Patience [*to Griffith*]. Do you note 95
How much her Grace is alter'd on the sodaine?
How long her face is drawne? How pale she lookes,
And of an earthy cold? Marke her eyes?
Griffith. She is going Wench. Pray, pray.
Patience. Heaven comfort her.

(*Henry VIII* 4.2.95–99)

In Katherine's death-scene, Griffith makes her come to peace with the world, reconciling her to her enemies. As opposed to the static and passive Patience—who has not even sent 'that Letter | I caus'd you write' (4.2.127–28)—Griffith is the active and dynamic agent.

The references that the characters and situations raise transform the perspective of the play from the physical space into a subjective space. The constructional principle behind much of the play is figurative; the play—or at least its several scenes—becomes an allegorical account of subjective commotions. The figurative space created by the play does not move along the lines of onstage action—*Henry VIII* is hardly what one would call a 'dramatic' play—but along the lines of the more intimate processes, measured by the subjective coordinates of uneasiness, the tension between enmity and reconciliation, or the inevitable cycle of sorrow and joy. It is in such terms that the play could be approached to secure its unity and coherence.

The *dénouement* of Act 5 brings in—as is typical of Jacobean drama—a double climax. The major one is the baptism of Elizabeth and the prophecy. The other one is the King's resolution in the case of Cranmer. The play has established a pattern of rise—fault or denigration (the 'dye', as Buckingham calls it at 1.1.208)—and fall. This merciless pattern is completed three times in the course of the play—in the falls of Buckingham, Katherine, and Wolsey—and is started twice more, with the hopeful rise of Cranmer and that of Anne, who is particularly unwilling to enter it, as if anticipating the inevitable fall (in 2.3). When Cranmer's fate culminates threatening to come full circle, it is broken up by the King, who shows charity towards the erring Cranmer and his enemies (in 5.2), and frees them from the merciless pattern of the play's world. This is the consummation of the allegorical plot—or perhaps 'overplots' (Levin 1976), covert plots of this 'janiform' play (Watts 1984).

Allegory of Temptation in *Rollo, Duke of Normandy*

The central conflict of *Rollo, Duke of Normandy, or The Bloody Brother* is the fraternal emulation between Rollo and Otto for the dukedom. The conflict is exposed as fundamentally irrational, unfounded. Rollo hates Otto causelessly, just like other

Fletcherian 'hard-hearted' characters; their conflict is presented as an axiom, the critical starting point of the play.[4] Structurally, this initial situation is somewhat analogous to the improbable hypothesis; however, in this case the play captures a situational archetype. Although the treatment of the conflict may come across as affected, the starting point proper is essentially realistic. What the play dramatizes then are—in a sense—the consequences of intransigence.

The causelessness and irrationality of the fraternal conflict is exacerbated in the play, for instance by Sophia, their mother, who appeals to them:

> [*Sophia.*] Know yet my sonnes when of necessity
> You must deceive or be deceiv'd, 'tis better
> To suffer treason then to act the traytor;
> And in a war like this, in which the glory
> Is his that's overcome; consider then
> What 'tis for which you strive: is it the Dukedome,
> Or the command of these so ready subjects?
> Desire of wealth, or whatsoever else
> Fires your ambition? 'tis still desperate madnesse,
> To kill the people which you would be Lords of,
> With fire and sword to lay that countrey wast,
> Whose rule you seek for, to consume the treasures
> Which are the sinewes of your government,
> In cherishing the factions that destroy it.
> Far, far be this from you, make it not question'd,
> Whither you can have interest in that Dukedome
> Whose ruine both contend for.
> *Otto.* I desire
> But to enjoy my owne which I will keep.
> *Rollo.* And rather then posteritie shall have cause
> To say I ruin'd all, divide the Dukedome,
> I will accept the moietie.
> *Otto.* I embrace it.
> *Sophia.* Divide me first […]
>
> (*Rollo, Duke of Normandy* 1.1.311–32)

By means of this—highly suggestive and provocative—exacerbation of the conflict the play points to its 'pure' significance: the inhumanity of the brothers' intolerance.

Scene 2.1 presents another archetypal situation. This dialogue between Rollo and Latorch—his 'Earwig' (as the 1679 Folio list of characters calls him), who rekindles the lethal hatred in him—dramatizes the archetype of temptation. As far as its fictional reference goes, this situation is marked by its intimate dimensions; the characters enter and debate, without any references to the fictional time or place whatsoever. Thus, in a sense, it may be said to be taking place 'never

4 Compare with the intransigence of Roderigo in *The Pilgrim*:
> *Lopez.* What's his fault, Captaine?
> *Roderigo.* Tis my will he perish,
> And thats his fault.
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 2.2.154–55)

and nowhere'. What it refers to is simply the rise—the reappearance—of Rollo's former hostility and fierceness.

In Scene 2.1 Latorch is an allegorical figure, functioning in the play as Rollo's alter-ego, his confidant, or even familiar. To other characters—the peacemakers, such the wise uncle Aubrey—his disruptive and subversive acting gains him the epithet of a 'firebrand' (2.3.88). Within the play, he is the personification of the evil latent in Rollo. The play differentiates between their roles: Latorch is the evil-doer proper, while Rollo only lends himself to his temptations. Rollo is passive; Latorch is the agent.

[Scene 2.1]

Enter Latorch *and* Rollo.

Latorch. Why should this trouble you?
Rollo. It does and must doe
Till I finde ease.
Latorch. Consider then and quickly,
[…] what dull cold weaknesse
Has crept into your bosome […]
What, ist your mothers teares?
Rollo. Prethee be patient.
Latorch. Her hands held up, her prayers, or her curses?
O Power of prayer: dropt through by a woman.
[…] where is your understanding,
The noble vessell that your full soule sail'd in,
Rib'd round with honours, where is that? tis ruin'd,
The tempest of a womans sighes hath sunk it.
Friendship, take heed Sir, is a smiling harlot
That when she kisses, killes a soder'd friendship
Peec'd out with promises; o painted ruine!
Rollo. Latorch, he is my Brother.
Latorch. The more doubted;
For hatred hatch'd at home is a tame Tiger
May fawne and sport, but never leave his nature.
[…] Ist not your own you reach at? law and nature
Ushring the way before you, is not he
Born and bequeath'd your subject?
Rollo. Ha?
Latorch. What fool
Would give a storme leave to disturb his peace
When he may shut the casement?
[…] can this couch'd Lyon
(Though now he licks and locks up his fell pawes,
Craftily humming like a Cat to cozen you)
But when ambition whets him and time fits him,
Leap to his prey, and seiz'd once, suck your heart out?
Do you make it conscience?
Rollo. Conscience, *Latorch*? what's that?
Latorch. A feare they tye up fooles in: natures coward,
Pauling the blood and chilling the full spirits
With apprehension of meere clouds and shadowes.
Rollo. I know no conscience, nor I feare no shadowes.

[…] I am satisfied,
And once more am my selfe againe.
My mothers teares and womanish cold prayers
Farewell, I have forgot yee. If there be conscience,
Let it not come betwixt a Crowne and me,
Which is my hope of blisse, and I believe it:
A crowne, a crowne, o sacred rule now fire me:
Otto, our friendship thus I blowe to ayre
A bubble for a boy to play withall,
And all the vows my weaknesse made like this,
Like this poore heartlesse rush, I rend a peeces.
[…] thou art a woolfe here
Fed with my feares, and I must cut thee from me,
No safety else.

(*Rollo, Duke of Normandy* 2.1.1–99)

In this exchange, Latorch fulfils his nominal function, incensing Rollo to be himself, the bloody brother of the title. Analogically to what Patience and Griffith are to Katherine, Latorch is there to materialize one of the conflicting sides of Rollo's character, and the entire scene—which Middleton, say, would perhaps have dramatized as Rollo's soliloquy—gives physical expression to Rollo's inner conflict; it dramatizes his subjective space.

It comes as natural that the *dénouement* devotes as much attention to the justice executed on Rollo as on Latorch, Rollo's alter-ego. The revenger in the play is Aubrey, who—like the Christian revenger of Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy*—defeats by patience. It is in this, essentially Christian, notion of justice that Latorch, the embodiment of evil, is punished in the play:

Latorch. Ha dead? my maister dead? *Aubrey* a live too?
Guard. Latorch Sir.
Aubrey. Ceize his body. [*Guards seize him.*]
Latorch. O my fortune,
My maister dead?
Aubrey. And you within this halfe houre;
Prepare your selfe good Divell, you must to it,
Millions of gold shall not redeeme thy mischiefes,
Behold the justice of thy practise villaine,
The masse of murders thou hast drawne upon us,
Behold thy Doctrine; you look now for reward sir,
To be advanc'd Ime sure for all your labours,
And you shall have it: make his Gallowes higher
By twenty foot at the least, and then advance him
Latorch. Mercy, mercy.
Aubrey. 'Tis too late foole.
Such as you meant for mee, away with him.
Exit Latorch [*with Guard.*]

(*Rollo, Duke of Normandy* 5.2.198–210)

The covert, subjective dimension of the play may become a—somewhat Manichean—tension between good and evil, or rather between the (more Christian)

notion of the soul and the temptation (personified in Latorch, the Earwig). Arguably then, the play is constructed on this subjective principle; so the seemingly irrelevant clownery of Rollo's household servants—Butler, Cook, Pantler, and Yeoman of Cellar in 2.2 and later—becomes an integral part of the design of the play in that it presents their wavering and fear, which Rollo lacks. When '*Latorch gives each a paper*' (2.2.117 SD) instructing them to poison Otto's food and drink, they agree. Yet, after Latorch leaves, they act out their hesitation and perhaps remorse (note the germ of a *possible outcome* in lines 2.2.140ff. and 146ff.):

> *Butler.* What did we promise him?
> *Yeoman.* Doe you aske that now?
> *Butler.* I would be glad to know what 'tis.
> *Pantler.* Ile tell yee,
> It is to be all villaines knaves and traitors.
> *Cook.* Fine wholsome titles.
> *Pantler.* But if you dare goe forward?
> *Cook.* We may be hang'd drawd and quartred.
> *Pantler.* Very true Sir.
> *Cook.* What a goodly swing I shall give the gallowes?
> Yet I thinke too,
> This may be done, and yet we may be rewarded,
> Not with a rope, but with a Royall master,
> And yet we may be hang'd too.
> *Yeoman.* Say 'twere done,
> Who is it done for? is it not for *Rollo*
> And for his right?
> *Cook.* And yet we may be hang'd too.
> […] 'Tis easly done,
> As easy as a man would rost an egge,
> If that be all;
> […]
> *Pantler.* But 'tis a damned sinne.
> *Cook.* I never feare that,
> The fire's my playfellow, and now I am resolv'd boyes.
> *Butler.* Why then have with yee.
> *Yeoman.* The same for mee.
> *Pantler.* For me too.
> *Cook.* And now no more our worships, but our Lordships. [*Exeunt.*]
> *Pantler.* Not this yeare o' my knowledge, ile un-lord ye. *Exit.*
>
> (*Rollo, Duke of Normandy* 2.2.137–73)

The clowns' dilemma functions within the play as a foil to the previous scene, the temptation scene between Rollo and Latorch. In this way the dramatists secure balance by having the clowns pronounce all the consequences implicit in Rollo's and Latorch's plan.

The figurative relation between individual scenes is not only synecdochal (as in realistic drama), but also metonymical, metaphorical or symbolic. The relevance is established not by a coherent world of the stage but by the reference it raises. In the case of the two scenes from *Rollo, Duke of Normandy*, their relation is metonymical;

both the scenes deal with people succumbing to Latorch's temptation, and it is in this subjective, allegorical sphere that the play can be given a thematic unity.

Subjective Journeys in *The Pilgrim and Women Pleased*

> *Alinda.* Alas *Juletta*,
> What is there to be merry at? what joy now,
> Unlesse we foole our own afflictions,
> And make them shew ridiculous?
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 1.1.103–06)

> *Old Tullius.* A blessed metamorphosis!
>
> (*The Faithful Friends* 5.2.223)

In his complaint about the improbability of the disguises in Fletcherian plays, Makkink points out that in

> most of these [plays] one or more characters appear in some disguise before people who know them well. Strange to say, however, young fellows do not recognize the girls they love, and the reverse; parents fail to recognize their own children; brothers and sisters have not the faintest idea that before them stands a sister or a brother. Truly, without exaggeration we may say that such situations are impossible to a degree. In *Women Pleased* Silvio does not recognize Belvidere, disguised as a hag, though the creature's voice, he declares, 'is like the harmony of angels' (IV, 3). Alinda never sees that the pilgrim who looks at her intently is her lover Pedro; the truth does not even dawn upon her when he utters the words inscribed on a jewel he had given her as a present (*Pilgrim* I, 2). When she is disguised as a boy, neither Roderigo nor Pedro recognize her in the camp of the outlaws (II, 2); and what makes the whole affair more improbable still, the two men do recognize her when she has put on the clothes of a shepherd (V, 6). […]
>
> It is also worth observing that when improbable scenes or passages occur in Fletcher, 'they come not single spies, but in battalions'. In *The loyal Subject* I have found four cases; in *Women pleased* not less than six; in *The Pilgrim* as many as seven, etc. (Makkink 1927: 72, 74)

Let me take this long outcry of a realist as a preamble to the present section. It is interesting that Makkink accumulates the seeming absurdities of the plays, yet never thinks of crossing the line, looking for what the design of the play might be. Why do the plays he names multiply disguises and failures to recognize others? And even more; why do they create the extreme situation, like that from *Women Pleased*, in which characters recognize the voice but do not recognize the person? And finally, why, in *The Pilgrim*, do Pedro and Roderigo 'recognize [Alinda] when she has put on the clothes of a shepherd'? How does the shepherd's habit differ from Alinda's previous disguises?

Both of the plays, *Women Pleased* (1618) and *The Pilgrim* (1621), are journey plays.[5] In both of them, the wanderings become symbolic of a certain search. It is doubtful

5 The Beaumont and Fletcher canon contains several other plays with the motif of the jour-

if the *telos* of the search can actually be expressed or named; often the significance is an allegorical progress of the mind—in keeping with the Baroque aesthetics. In the following treatment of *The Pilgrim* and *Women Pleased*, figurative readings of Makkink's improbabilities are suggested.

The Pilgrim

In *The Pilgrim*, Pedro is explicitly the eponymous hero. However, as in the case of other plays, the title's reference is ambiguous—I mentioned *The False One* in the previous chapter as one example. In the course of the play, many other pilgrims and pseudo-pilgrims (foils) appear. Being on a journey acquires multiple, symbolic meanings, from the most sublime and romantic ones to the lowest, comic ones.

The reformed malefactor Roderigo takes on the pilgrim's life as well; but that happens only when he has expressly started to follow Pedro's steps. At the first meeting of Alinda and Pedro, the nature of the pilgrimage is hinted at:

> [*Alinda.*] What do ye want?
> *Pedro.* All that can make me happy:
> I want my selfe.
> *Alinda.* Your self? who rob'd ye Pilgrim?
> [*Aside*] Why does he look so constantly upon me?——
> *I want my selfe*: indeed, you holy wanderers
> Are said to seek much: but to seek your selves——
> *Pedro.* I seek my self; and am but my selfs-shadow:
> Have lost my self; and now am not so noble.
> *Alinda. I seek my self*: [*Aside*] something I yet remember
> That bears that Motto; 'tis not he: he is yonger,
> And far more tender:—— for that self-sake (Pilgrim)
> Be who it will, take this. [*Offers him money.*]
> *Pedro.* Your hand I dare take,
> That be far from me, Lady; thus I kisse it,
> And thus I blesse it too; be constant fair still:
> Be good, and live to be a great example. *Exit.*
> *Alinda.* One word more (Pilgrim)—— has amazd me strangly,
> *Be constant faire still*: tis the posie here: [*Looks at a ring.*]
> And here without, *Be good*: he wept to see me.——
> […] It must be he, or nothing,
> He spak the words that just as they stand engraved here:
> *I seek my self, and am but my selfes-shadow*
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 1.2.159–85)

This exchange sets the romantic, amatory dimension of Pedro's journey, and of course of Alinda's later elopement from her tyrannous father. Alinda decides to follow her lover and to leave her father's house. Her faithful confidante, Juletta, is not privy to her plan, yet knows her reasons well, as she makes clear in her prayer for Alinda's well-being:

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ney, mainly *The Coxcomb* (1611), *Love's Pilgrimage* (1616) and—to a lesser extent, too—the outstanding mature plays *The Lovers' Progress* (1623), *The Custom of the Country* (1616) and *The Chances* (1617).

[*Juletta.*] [*Aside*] Well Love, if thou bee'st with her,
Or what power else that armes her resolution,
Conduct her faire, and keepe her from this mad man [her father Alphonso],
Direct her to her wishes: dwell about her
That no dishonourable end ore-take her,
Danger, or want

(*The Pilgrim* 2.1.134–39)

This notion is supported by the gentlemen who attend on Alphonso. When the furious father starts to organize the hunt for the eloped Alinda, Curio only remarks in an aside, 'Keep her from thy hands, I beseech' (2.1.155). The search for Alinda is marked by a certain paradox; those who carry out the search do not want to comply with the terms that Alphonso, the principal 'inquisitor', enforces. This sets another dimension of the journey; the journey becomes symbolic of the passage of time, and thus of a chance for reformation. With the experience that Alphonso gets from the journey in his search of Alinda, he can no more act as he did before.

The pilgrimage is a complex one, but what it shares with all characters concerned—and what makes the wanderings a pilgrimage—is a spiritual reformation or an inner metamorphosis. In the course of their pilgrimage, the characters go through three experiences, or worlds: the world of the outlaws and the highwayman Roderigo (2.2, 3.1 to 3.4), the madhouse, in which Juletta cunningly harbours Alphonso for a time (3.5, 3.6, 4.1, 4.3, and 5.5), and the 'reformed' world of Roderigo's friendship with Pedro, which coincides with the preparation for the royal court celebration.

Alinda, disguised as a boy, coincidentally serving the wicked Roderigo, is tricked into fulfilling his wish to kill Pedro. She uses the occasion for eschatological purposes, acting out the hypothetical 'possible outcome' of being in earnest:

Alinda [*unrecognized*]. And is your reckoning straight sir?
Pedro. As straight as truth, boy:
I cannot go more joyfully to a wedding.

(*The Pilgrim* 2.2.303–04)

The way the scene develops further points to the modality in which the world of the play operates. Alinda takes Roderigo aside, and tells him (in an argument that mirrors Hamlet's meditation over the repentant, praying King) that to kill the man who is 'Prepar'd thus' (2.2.324) is a blessing not revenge:

[*Alinda.*] This man ye rocke asleep, and all your rages
Are Requiems to his parting soule, meere Anthems.
[…]
When he appears a subject fit for Anger,
And fit for you, his pious Armour off,
His hopes no higher then your sword may reach at,
Then strike, and then ye know revenge; then take it.
[*Aside.*] I hope I have turn'd his mind.

(*The Pilgrim* 2.2.332–33, 355–59)

One of the outlaws, who side with Pedro, expresses his admiration for the boy-Alinda's impact on Roderigo, and at the same time formulates one of the functions played by Alinda the pilgrim in disguise:

> *Lopez.* A cuning villaine,
> But a good Rogue; This Boy will make's all honest.
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 2.2.370–71)

In her following disguises she always meets Pedro and Roderigo and directs them in their pilgrimages. Juletta, her foil and assistant in the progress, assumes disguises too; by their means she directs the other major characters in their journeys. When she is reunited with all the rest in the last scene, she reveals her identity and jokingly sums up her own bygone 'metamorphoses' and the tricks she has used to reform Alphonso:

> [*Alphonso.*] Ye had a waiting woman, one *Juletta*,
> A pretty desperate thing, just such another
> As this sweet Lady; we call'd her nimble chaps.
> I pray is this the party?
> *Juletta.* No indeed Sir,
> She is at home; I am a little Foot-Boy,
> That walke a nights, and fright old Gentlemen;
> Make 'em loose Hats and Cloakes.
> *Alphonso.* And Horses too.
> […]
> *Juletta.* I am a Drum Sir,
> A Drum at mid-night, ran tan tan tan tan Sir,
> Do you take me for *Juletta*? I am a Page Sir,
> That brought a letter from the Duke of *Medina*
> To have one senior *Alphonso*, just such another
> As your old worship worm'd for running mad Sir.
> Alas, you are mistaken.
> […] I am any thing,
> An old woman, that tels fortunes——
> *Rodorigo.* Ha!
> *Juletta.* And frights good people,
> And sends them to *Segonia* for their fortunes:
> I am strange ayers, and excellent sweet voyces.
> *I am any thing, to doe her good beleeve me;*
> *She now recovered, and her wishes crown'd*
> *I am* Juletta *againe*, pray sir forgive me.
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 5.6.93–116; my emphasis)

Although Alinda does not recapitulate the metamorphoses and adventures of her main plot, Juletta's purposeful explanation of what has happened in the foil plot obliquely elucidates the 'business' of the Alinda-Pedro-Roderigo plot.[6] The

6 Some critics have seen the lack of explanation or conclusion as evidence of collaborative incompetence and deficiencies in the dramatic work. However, the interaction and mutual influence of the plots is arguably much stronger than realistic theatre would acknowledge. It is even more so once the coherence and unity of a play is not sought in the onstage ac-

journeys operate in the sphere of 'making all honest'. The central quest of the play becomes explicitly a symbolic journey towards the *telos*, 'the right marke all should aime at' (2.2.141). In their final disguise, Alinda and Juletta meet Pedro and the reformed Roderigo. Their dialogue is left open to multiple, symbolic readings:

> *Alinda* [*disguised*]. Good ev'en.
> What doe ye seeke?
> *Pedro.* We would seek happier fortunes.
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 5.4.55–56)

Of some interest is the role played by the King, that is, his presence in the play; in fact, the King never enters, and the Queen and he are only spoken about. He is an emblematic character whose role lies in the function he fulfils. To the outlaws and their leader Roderigo, he is an incumbent threat ('You heare no preparation | The King intends against us yet?' 2.2.16–17); the play presents his Governor, who has 'Commission from the King to ease' the oppression the outlaws cause the people (5.3.17). For Pedro, the virtuous pilgrim, who is believed to have died, the King symbolizes a different thing:

> **[Governor.]** The Court bewailes much his [Pedro's] untimely losse:
> The King himselfe laments him.
> […] if he be alive, Captaine,
> (As hope still speaks the best) I know the Kings mind
> So inwardly and full, he will be happy.
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 5.3.62–68)

To the reformed Roderigo, the King symbolizes yet another thing; he is no more the angry punisher but a merciful pardoner:

> [*Roderigo.*] All I can stagger at is the Kings Anger,
> Which if it come, I am prepar'd to meet it.
> *Pedro.* The King has mercy, friend, as well as Justice:
> And when you fall: no more.
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 5.4.119–22)

When Seberto and Curio try to liberate their master Alphonso from the madhouse, they use the King's authority to achieve their aim:

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tion but in the sphere of reference—and the practical application of what has been written in theoretical works (Levin 1971) supports it.

A somewhat related issue is that of modality of the play. In Chapter 6, the issue was commented upon on several occasions. One other instance which might support interaction between plots is the parentage question in *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (1626). This romantic play—a collaboration of Fletcher, Massinger, Ford and Webster—has been seriously neglected in critical writing: Wallis (1947), Appleton (1956), Leech (1962), and Maxwell (1966) mention it deprecatingly or not at all. Prospero's sudden revelation that Bianca (believed to be the fair maid of the inn) is Baptista's and Juliana's daughter (*The Fair Maid of the Inn* 5.3.177–229) is prepared for by the subplot, in which Mariana proclaims that Caesario is not Alberto's and her son but a Falconer's (in 3.2). To see this merely as an instance of balancing plots is not enough; the second revelation would have been unthinkable without Mariana's plot, which opens up the potential development of the action. The Plat of this play must have been worked out rather minutely.

> [*Seberto.*] he [Alphonso] is a Gentleman, 10
> And so must be restor'd and cleer'd in all points;
> The King shall be a Judge else.
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 5.5.10–12)

In general, it may be said that the King—or rather the function he plays in the play—represents certain divine attributes: he becomes the securer of justice as well as the donor of mercy and pardon. This notion of regal power is used in *The Prophetess* too (see below).

The final scene of the play is a sacrifice at an altar, which almost explicitly confirms the role of the King as Divinity (to whom sacrifice is offered). At the same time, it formulates the driving forces of the play:

> *Verdugo.* These Oblations first we bring
> To purge our selves: These to the King. 5
> To love, and beauty these: now sing.
>
> (*The Pilgrim* 5.6.4–6)

The closing rite becomes also an expression of the allegorical dimension of the play. It implies the Baroque purgation of deep-seated faults, the acknowledgement of sovereignty, and of course 'love, and beauty'—all symptomatically accompanied by the spectacular music and show.

Women Pleased

One part of the previous chapter—'The Fidelity Test in *Women Pleased*'—touches upon the function of disguises in the play, hinting at the symbolism of the journey. Silvio is given a year's time to find the answer to the Duchess's riddle, which sets out the pattern of both his journey and of the entire plot.

In the course of his journey, Silvio is assisted by Belvidere disguised as an old woman, and eventually it is in this disguise that he is forced to marry her—to the great derision of the Duchess and the Duke of Syenna. To the very end, the play leaves the issue of disguises unsatisfactorily explained:

> *Silvio.* But why that Hag?
> *Belvidere.* In that shape most secure still,
> I followed all your fortunes, serv'd, and counsell'd ye
>
> (*Women Pleased* 5.3.81–82)

A possible clue may be concealed in Belvidere's name: she, Belvidere—loosely to be translated as 'beautiful sight' or 'beautiful to see'—takes on a 'shape' to be able to securely counsel Silvio. Disguise is, of course, a means to an end; the question arises what end it is used for.

As early as 1.3, Soto the clown, the servant of Claudio (who is hopelessly in love with Belvidere) enters in Claudio's clothes and states his purpose:

> [*Soto.*] I have got his cloths, and if I can get to her
> By hooke or crooke here, such a song ile sing her
> […] I have consider'd what to say too
>
> (*Women Pleased* 1.3.12–13, 16)

The reason is that

> [*Soto.*] My Master lyes most pittifully complaining,
> Wringing and kicking up toth' eares in love yonder,
> And such a lamentable noyse he keepes, it kills me
>
> (*Women Pleased* 1.3.9–11)

The whole affair of 1.3, turning out to be a *cul-de-sac*, continues with Soto being shot at by the jealous Silvio, and ends with Soto unharmed and Claudio giving up his claim to Belvidere. In this comical episode, Soto takes on the identity of Claudio and acts out the possible outcome that would follow if Claudio continued in his courting Belvidere. At the same time, Soto sets out a certain precedent for the mode of the play: disguises and mistaken identities.

In the course of the journey, after several shapes he has undertaken, Silvio takes on the armour of a soldier, to fight in disguise on the Duchess's side against the Duke of Syenna, as the disguised Belividere has ordered him to do. The play presents this situation in a peculiar way: Silvio, in the midst of doubts about the meaningfulness of his acting, hears a song and a voice which 'names me often, steeles my heart with courage' (4.2.20):

> *Enter* Silvio *(arm'd).*
> *Silvio.* What shall I do? live thus unknown, and base still?
> Or thrust my self into the head oth' Battell?
> And there, like that I am, a Gentleman,
> And one that never fear'd the face of danger,
> (So in her angry eyes she carried honour)
> Fight nobly, and (to end my cares) dye nobly?
>
> Song *within.*
> *Silvio go on, and raise thy noble minde*
> *To noble ends; fling course base thoughts behinde:*
> *Silvio, thou Sonne of everliving fame,*
> *Now aime at vertue, and a Noble Name.*
> *Silvio consider, Honour is not wonne,*
> *Nor vertue reach't, till some brave thing be done:*
> *Thy Country calls thee now; she burnes, and bleeds,*
> *Now raise thy self, young man, to noble deeds.*
> *Into the Battell Silvio, there seeke forth*
> *Danger, and blood, by them stands sacred worth.*
>
> What heavenly voice is this that followes me?
> This is the second time 't has waited on me,
> Since I was arm'd, and ready for the Battell;
> It names me often, steeles my heart with courage,
>
> *Enter Belvidere deformed.*
>
> And in a thousand and sweet noates comforts me
>
> (*Women Pleased* 4.2.1–21)

What kind of voice is it that Silvio hears? It might be accounted for simply as the conventional, fairy-tale impersonal voice that guides the hero. Doubtlessly, Fletcher relies on the folk tradition. However, on the stage, this has to be sung by someone. And at the same time, it has to be capable of invoking the fictional reality it refers to. In other words, the physical, disillusive *mise-en-scène* has to succeed (and arguably succeeds) in raising the magical space of Silvio's mind. Silvio hears a voice which he cannot and does not locate physically. It becomes symbolically a voice as much *within* himself, in the subjective world, as it is outside, in the physical space of the stage. The incoherence that Makkink objects to so much is intentionally upheld by the play—as I argue—to support the subjective understanding of the scene.

In the sequence that immediately follows the above quotation, Silvio encounters the disguised Belvidere, who addresses him in a similarly ambiguous way, switching from the customary blank verse to the rhymed trochaic tetrameter couplets of the supernatural:

> What Beldom's this? how old she is, and ugly,
> Why do's she follow me?
> *Belvidere.* Be not dismaid, Son,
> I wait upon thee, for thy good, and honour,
> 'Twas I that now sung to thee, stir'd thy minde up,
> And rais'd thy spirits to the pitch of noblenesse.
> *Silvio.* Though she be old, and of a crooked carkasse,
> Her voice is like the harmony of Angels.
> *Belvidere.* Thou art my darling, all my love dwells on thee
> The Son of vertue, therefore I attend thee;
> Enquire not what I am, I come to serve thee,
> For if thou beest inquisitive, thou hast lost me:
> […] There by mine Art, I found what danger (*Silvio*)
> And deep distresse of heart, thou wert growne into,
> A thousand leagues I have cut through empty aire,
> Far swifter then the sayling tack that gallops
> Upon the wings of angry winds, to seeke thee.
> Sometimes 'ore a swelling tide,
> On a Dolphins back I ride,
> Sometimes passe the earth below,
> And through the unmoved Center go;
> Sometimes in a flame of fire,
> Like a Meteor I aspire,
> Sometimes in mine owne shape, thus,
> When I helpe the vertuous […]
> *Silvio.* Some *Sybell* sure, some soule heaven loves, and favours,
> And lends her their free powers, to worke their wonders?
> How she incites my courage?
> *Belvidere.* *Silvio*,
> I knew thee many daies a go,
> Foresaw thy love to *Belvidere*,
> The Duchesse Daughter, and her Heire;
> […]

Be rul'd by me, for to this houre
I have dwelt about thee with my powre.
Silvio. I will, and in the course of all observe thee,
For thou art sure an Angell good sent to me.
Belvidere. Get thee gone then to the fight,
Longer stay but robs thy right;
When thou grow'st weary ile be neere,
Then think on beauteous *Belvidere*,
For every precious thought of her,
Ile lend thine honour a new spurre;
When all is done, meet here at night;
Go and be happy in the fight. *Exit.*
Silvio. I certainly believe I shall do nobly,
And that Ile bravely reach at too, or die. *Exit.*

(*Women Pleased* 4.2.22–83)

In this scene, as well as in her other scenes in disguise, Belvidere acts as a personification of the purpose of Silvio's romantic search for the answer to the riddle. She personifies—as it were—Silvio's true knowledge of her, the hope: 'When thou grow'st weary ile be neere, | Then think on beauteous *Belvidere*' (4.2.76–77). In the last act, Silvio marries Belvidere in her disguise of a hag. It is only through his belief in her true identity, not her shapes, that he reaches his end. The several disguises of the play culminate in the masque in 5.3:

Enter a Masquerado of severall Shapes and Daunces, after which enter Belvidere *and disperses them; before the Maskers—among which are* Bartello, Lopez, Isabella, Rhodope, Soto, Penurio, Jaquenet—*enter two Presenters.*

First Presenter. Roome, roome for merry spirits, roome,
Hether on command we come,
From the good old Beldam sent,
Cares and sorrowes to prevent.
Second Presenter. Looke up *Silvio*, smile, and sing,
After winter comes a spring.
First Presenter. Feare not faint foole what may follow,
Eyes that now are sunk and hollow,
By her Art may quick returne
To their flames againe, and burne.
Second Presenter. Art commands all youth, and blood,
Strength and beauty it makes good.
First Presenter. Feare not then, dispaire not, sing
Round about as we do spring:
Cares and sorrowes cast away,
This is the old wives holy-day.

Daunce here, then enter Belvidere.

(*Women Pleased* 5.3.32–48)

The order of the masque, the Presenters' dialogue, and Belvidere's entry are a little confusing in the rendering of the 1647 Folio. The actual order is: (1) the two Presenters' dialogue (they are supposed to enter 'before the Maskers'), perhaps in the

Maskers' presence; (2) the Masquerado itself (the lower stage direction announces 'Daunce here' after the Presenters); and, (3) '*then enter* Belvidere'. In other words, the two Presenters announce the entry of 'merry spirits', who are 'From the good old Beldam sent', and to Silvio they promise that 'After winter comes a spring.'[7] After the masque proper, featuring the 'spirits' of the play (the disguised and the beguiled), enters Belvidere.

Surprisingly, the Duchess, Belvidere's mother, does not recognize her when she enters: 'Who is this?' The foolish Duke of Syenna answers superficially, 'The shape of *Belvidere*' (5.3.49), as if still taking her for another shape of the masque. Silvio is subjected to yet another test:

> *Belvidere.* Stand up, and come no nearer, mark me well too,
> For if thou troublest me I vanish instantly:
> Now chuse wisely or chuse never,
> One thou must enjoy for ever.
> Do'st thou love me thus?
> *Silvio.* Most dearely.
> *Belvidere.* Take heed foole, it concernes thee nearely.
> If thou wilt have me young and bright,
> Pleasing to thine eye and sight,
> Courtly, and admir'd of all,
> Take heed least thy fame do fall,
> I shall then be full of scorne,
> Wanton, proud, beware the horne,
> Hating what I lov'd before,
> Flattery apt to fall before,
> All consuming, nothing getting,
> Thus thy faire name comes to setting.
> But if old and free from these
> Thou shalt chuse me, I shall please:
> I shall then maintaine thee still,
> With my vertue and my skill:
> Still encrease and build thy name,
> Chuse now *Silvio*, here I am.
>
> (*Women Pleased* 5.3.51–72)

Silvio's final test is based on whether he is sure he sees what he believes he does. At the same time, this dilemma embraces all the conflicts of the play in both the plots—fidelity, true knowing (as opposed to believing in lies, counterfeits or disguises), and the central riddle of the play (avoiding self-complacency, or routine in relationship).

The whole play of counterfeits is rounded off by Belvidere's words:

> [*Belvidere.*] Take your old Love, Sir, and my will thus reward ye,
> No more Spells now, nor further shapes to alter me,
> I am thy *Belvidere* indeed.
>
> (*Women Pleased* 5.3.75–77)

7 Cf. the Proserpina myth as used in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*.

The play uses traditional motifs (or *loci*), applying them to new uses; in this way it succeeds in creating a congenial union of tradition and—what A. D. Nuttall has called—'the very taste of reality' (Nuttall 1990: 34).[8] To discard the fairy-tale-like central conflict in the play as cliché or superficially sentimental is to relinquish the effort of understanding what the play is about before finding the reference.

The masque in *Women Pleased* has a similar function to the altar rite in *The Pilgrim*. It comes as natural, in the allegorical reading of the play, that the characters from the 'fidelity test' subplot (see Chapter 6) should enter alongside those of the main plot. Through dramatic means—the inclusion in the Masquerado—the subplot becomes explicitly connected to the main plot. In this new perspective, evoked by the subplot characters, Silvio's pilgrimage becomes a fidelity test, enforced on Silvio by the machinating Duchess and her metamorphosed daughter Belvidere. As for the riddle, it represents a pattern present throughout the entire play: achieving the aim stales the prize; the will always has to pursue a goal. The other side of the principle is that of correction: what one has taken for the thing itself (the goal) turns out to be only its reflection or counterfeit (disguise). This pattern is present as a miniature in the very first sequence of the play:

> *Duchesse.* Now, *Rhodope*, How do you finde my daughter?
> *Rhodope.* Madam, I finde her now what you would have her,
> What the State wishes her; I urg'd her fault to her,
> Open'd her eyes, and made her see the mischiefe
> She was running with a headlong will into
> […] She now contemnes his love, hates his remembrance,
> Cannot endure to heare the name of *Silvio*
>
> (*Women Pleased* 1.1.1–9)

The entire play is consistent in this way. Its unity, or constructional logic, is based on the subjective principle of knowing and searching for knowledge. The romantic world of *Women Pleased*, of journeys and disguises, becomes a figurative code for expressing intimate and subjective themes. In both this play and even more so in the more elaborate *The Pilgrim*, what may be seen as a romantic and conventional 'love's pilgrimage' on the surface, attains an integral unity once the symbolic overtones are taken into account.

Rule a Wife and Have a Wife

> [*Theodore.*] Not to my life appli'd, but to my fault
>
> (*The Loyal Subject* 5.6.42)

Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* is another play of deceptions and tricks.[9] In this play—by some claimed to be the best comedy of the canon—Fletcher uses all of his characteristic (extremist) dramatic devices in their mature form. The

8 See also Section I of Chapter 2, in which I mention the capacity of puppets for 'life-likeness'.

9 Its subplot—of Estifania and Perez—is based on Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale*.

dramatis personae consist of unbalanced characters, such as the lustful Michael Perez, the greedy Cacafogo, the lecherous Duke, the licentious Margarita, and Leon, originally pretending to be a stupid coward, ready to become a henpecked husband, only to turn out to be the cunning tamer of Margarita.

Towards the end of 3.5, when Margarita seems to have been tamed, Leon welcomes all her guests, and having established himself as the master of the house, he announces that 'This is my wedding day' (3.5.145). The Duke—who has been invited to Margarita's house for an orgy—reacts to this in a threatening aside: 'I'll cross your joy yet' (3.5.145). This is the beginning of his trick on Leon. In 4.3, Juan enters to Leon 'with a commission' from the King ordering him to command 'a troop of horse' in the wars with the Netherlands. Even if the spectator does not see the Duke's trick behind it, this commission threatens to separate the newly-married couple. However, Leon—in a variant of an *extended possibility*—starts to operate with the hypothesis that he should obey, and orders the whole household, including Margarita, to get ready to go to the wars. Margarita tries to bluff her way out of going while playing the obedient wife; to which Leon gives a pithy, significant answer:

> *Margarita.* Faith let me stay, I shall but shame ye Sir.
> *Leon.* And you were a thousand shames you shall along with me,
> At home I am sure you'le prove a million,
> Every man carries the bundle of his sinnes,
> Upon his own back, you are mine, Ile sweat for ye.
>
> (*Rule a Wife* 4.3.88–92)

When the Duke enters, and sees Margarita in tears in view of what she has to leave, he appeals to Leon's humaneness and compassion, seconded by his attendants. Leon extends his ruse onto the Duke as well:

> [*Alonso.*] Go hurry her[?], it is not humane, Captain.
> *Duke.* I cannot blame her teares, fright her with tempests
> With thunder of the warre? I dare swear if she were able——
> *Leon.* She is most able.
> And pray ye sweare not, she must goe theres no remedy,
> Nor greatnesse, nor the trick you had to part us,
> Which I smell too rank, too open, too evident,
> (And I must tell you Sir, tis most unnoble)
> Shall hinder me: had she but ten houres life,
> Nay lesse, but two houres, I would have her with me,
> I would not leave her fame to so much ruine,
> To such a desolation and discredit
> As her weaknesse and your hot will wood worke her too.
>
> (*Rule a Wife* 4.3.111–23)

At that moment Perez enters, having been duped by his wife Estifania into believing that the house is theirs (this is the Chaucerian material). He sees Leon and the others packing all Margarita's furniture for the campaign, thinks that they are leaving to make place for him and his wife, and claims the property his:

Perez. They [*i.e.* the house and its pleasures] are mine Sir, and you know it,
My wives I meane, and so conferd upon me;
The hangings Sir I must entreat your servants,
That are so busie in their offices,
Againe to minister to their right uses;
I shall take view oth plate anon, and furnitures
That are of under place

(*Rule a Wife* 4.3.151–57)

The series of deceptions and tricks becomes minutely entangled: the Duke has played a trick on Leon to get rid of him; Leon seizes the opportunity the Duke offers him, and thoroughly acts out an *extended possibility*, which is a deception by the same token. When Perez claims the house, he comes pat to Leon's purpose. Margarita tries to countermine Leon:

Leon. Ile talk no more,——come weele away immediatly.
Marg. Why then the house is his, and all thats in it,
[*Aside*] Ile give away my skin but Ile undoe yee,——
I gave it to his wife, you must restore Sir,
And make a new provision.

(*Rule a Wife* 4.3.181–85)

The Duke joins in, announcing that the commission was 'a trick I us'd | To try your jealousie upon entreatie, | And saving of your wife' (4.3.193–95). Leon persists and proves that his tie to Margarita, who is his wife, is even closer than all property, and Margarita expels Perez, and submits herself to Leon, asking him:

Margarita. Let me request you stay but one poor month,
You shall have a Commission and I'le goe too,
Give me but will so far.
Leon. Well I will try ye,——

(*Rule a Wife* 4.3.211–13)

Even at this moment Leon is at an advantage; the inevitable is to happen: Margarita, having married, has to become a wife. Similarly, the Duke is 'assailable', or 'vulnerable' as long as he is mastered by his lust. Fletcher's achievement in this play rests in the fact that he dramatizes the 'monstrosities' of the characters in such a way that the plot chastises them in their own terms.

The play and its characters are haunted by 'spirits'; the recurrent imagery of the play is that of sorcery and magic.[10] These spirits in the play refer to lust and lustful dreams:

[*Leon to Margarita.*] Are ye so hot that no hedge can containe ye?
Ile have thee let blood in all the veines about thee,
Ile have thy thoughts sound too, and have them open'd,
Thy spirits purg'd, for those are they that fire ye

(*Rule a Wife* 5.3.77–80)

10 The word *spirit*—in the sense of ghost or apparition—occurs nine times in the play; the image of the conjurer's circle three times.

When Margarita finally doffs her licentious ambitions, Leon traps both her wooers—the Duke in the chamber, and his foil Cacafogo in the wine cellar. Margarita comes to the Duke, who gets frightened by the sounds Cacafogo ('the goblin in the vault') makes:

> *Cacafogo* (*below*). I come, I come.
> *Duke*. Heaven blesse mee.
> *Margarita*. And blesse us both, for sure this is the Divell,
> I plainly heard it now, he will come to fetch ye,
> A very spirit, for he spoke under ground,
> And spoke to you just as you would have snatcht me,
> *You are a wicked man, and sure this haunts ye*
>
> (*Rule a Wife* 5.5.44–49; my emphasis)

The Duke's fear culminates as Margarita identifies its only cause:

> *Duke*. I am most miserable.
> *Margarita*. You are indeed,
> And like a foolish thing you have made your selfe so,
> Could not your own discretion tell ye sir,
> When I was married I was none of yours?
> Your eyes were then commanded to look off me,
> And I now stand in a circle and secure,
> Your spells nor power can never reach my body
> […]
> *Duke*. Let me be gone, Ile never more attempt ye.
> *Margarita*. You cannot goe, 'tis not in me to save ye,
> Dare ye doe ill, and poorely then shrinke under it?
>
> (*Rule a Wife* 5.5.78–91)

Just like Leon has managed to 'reform' the coquet Margarita by afflicting her with her own actions, here it is Margarita herself who lays before the lecherous Duke the 'abstract' of his wrongdoings. The Duke's lust—just like his foil's, Cacafogo's—has served to allure him into an impasse, a deadlock caused solely by his own fault. This purity of dramatic motivation—often pejoratively denoted as 'black-and-white'—makes the play acquire a symbolic dimension, turning it into an allegory of fault and innocuous retribution, or restoration.

This recurrent dramatic pattern materializes the self-destructiveness of evil, a spiritual (Pauline) doctrine pervading much of Jacobean drama. The genre of tragedy essentially shares this ethical principle; characters who are essentially noble but flawed in one feature suffer death in consequence of their single fault—to paraphrase Aristotle's *Poetics*. However, in case of Fletcherian tragicomedy, it is of prime importance that this pattern is 'Not to my life appli'd, but to my fault' (*The Loyal Subject* 5.6.42). The dramatic genre, essentially Christian,[11] replaces the dualistic (pagan) identification of sin/fault and human being, with the notion of edification through (theatrical) experience.

11 So Shawcross (1987: 23–24) and Dixon (1987: 59).

In *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, the main plot and the subplot are connected both structurally and thematically. Structurally, it is the congenial entangling of the two actions of different sources into one (at the start of the play, Estifania is Margarita's lady-in-waiting, and both Perez and Leon are soldiers in one company); thematically—which is perhaps even more important—the plotlines counterbalance each other in a careful symmetry, yoked by the pattern of a fault beneficially applied. In this play, Fletcher's dramatic extremism reaches its culmination.

Castaways for Greed: Allegory of Purgatory in *The Sea Voyage*[12]

> [*Evanthe.*] farewell,
> And if thou canst be wise, learne to be good too,
> 'Twill give thee nobler lights then both thine eyes do
> (*A Wife for a Month* 4.3.207–09)

The Fletcherian canon contains a number of 'derivative' plays that often re-use Shakespearean material. Some critics have considered them epigonic works, or, at best, parodies. However, there is sufficient grounds to consider them rather as artistic *ripostes*; they offer a different perspective of the issue in question. One such *riposte* is *The Sea Voyage*, a response to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The play starts on board a ship in a storm and ends up on an island inhabited by castaways of different kinds. These are in brief the points of similarity between the two plays; everything else sets them apart.

The world of *The Sea Voyage* is distinctively Fletcherian; that is to say, despite its onstage liveliness and its fragmentary naturalism as well as its satirical dimension, it allows for fertile figurative readings. Such is the element of the storm; its impact on the happenings on board the ship may serve as an example. For the play's lovers—the captain Albert and the kidnapped Aminta—the storm is heaven's punishment on the kidnapper, as Aminta makes explicit:

> [*Aminta.*] O *Mounsier Albert*, How am I bound to curse ye,
> If curses could redeeme me? how to hate ye?
> You forc't me from my quiet, from my friends;
> […] You forc't my friends from their peacefull rest,
> Some your relentles sword gave their last groanes;
> […] Was this a lovers part? but heaven has found ye,
> And in his lowd voyce, his voyce of thunder,
> And in the mutiny of his deep wonders,
> He tels ye now, ye weepe too late
> (*The Sea Voyage* 1.1.86–104)

The satirist Tibalt, and the merchant Lamure give the storm another interpretation:

> *Master.* It [the freight] must all over boord. […]

12 A germ of this essay is being published as 'Studying the Art of Provoking', in *For All Time? Critical Issues in Teaching Shakespeare*, University of South Australia, 2002, forthcoming.

Lamure. Must my goods over too?
Why honest Master? here lies all my money;
The money I ha wrackt by usurie,
To buy new Lands and Lordships in new Countryes,
'Cause I was banisht from mine own.
I ha been this tweenty yeers a raising it.
Tibalt. Out with it:
The devils are got together by the eares,
Who shall have it; and here they quarrell in the clouds.
Lamure. I am undone Sir.
Tibalt. And be undone, 'tis better then we perish.
Lamure. O save one Chest of Plate.
Tibalt. A way with it, lustily Saylors;
It was some pawne, that he has got unjustly;
Down with it low enough, and let Crabs breed in't

(*The Sea Voyage* 1.2.1–22)

For Lamure, this storm is the loss of the object of his covetousness; it is a punishment for the dishonest means by which he got his wealth, as Tibalt explicates. If not later, in this scene Lamure is a variant of the medieval Mercator, the Latin version of Everyman, who loses his worldly goods face to face with his last hour. In a sense, Tibalt—as the fool—plays the role of Death:

Lamure. Sir you may loose too.
Tibalt. Thou liest; I ha nothing but my skinne,
And my Clothes; my sword here, and my self;
Two Crowns in my Pocket; two paire of Cards;
And three false Dice; I can swimme like a Fish;
Rascall, nothing to hinder me.

(*The Sea Voyage* 1.2.34–39)

This is the end of their exchange: no retort, no objection allowed. Fletcher reused the Dance of Death motif in his later play in another miniature. In *A Wife for a Month*, Evanthe has to find a man who will marry under the condition that, at the end of the month, he will be executed:

Frederick. Speake, who dare take her
For one moneth, and then dye?
Physitian. Dye Sir?
Frederick. I, dye Sir,
That's the condition.
Physitian. One moneth is too little
For me to repent in for my former pleasure,
[…]
Make it up a yeare, for by that time I must dye,
My body will hold out no longer.
Frederick. No Sir,
It must be but a moneth.
Lawyer. Then farewell Madam,
[…]
Captain. Blesse your good Ladiship,

There's nothing in the grave but bones and ashes,
In Tavernes there's good wine, and excellent wenches,
And Surgeons while we live.
Cutpurse. Adieu sweet Lady,
[…] no, ile no dying,
Though I steale Linnen, ile not steale my shrowde yet.
All. Send ye a happy ma[t]ch. *Exeunt.*

(*A Wife for a Month* 5.3.135–53)

Here it is Evanthe, who represents Death. In view of the Dance of Death motif, one is almost tempted to retain the misprint in the final line of the above passage, which reads 'a happy ma*r*ch'.[13]

In the second scene, the castaways Sebastian and his nephew Nicusa introduce themselves as those at the very bottom, who have lost all, and whom no tribulation can affect (hermits?):

Nicusa. To still and quiet minds, that knew no misery,
It may seeme wretched, but with us 'tis ordinary;
Heaven has no Storm in store, nor earth no terror,
That can seeme new to us.

(*The Sea Voyage* 1.3.4–7)

They watch the ship 'make to harbour', and foresee the affliction of the seamen to follow:

Nicusa. Most miserable men; I greive their Fortunes.
Sebastian. How happy had they been, had the Sea cover'd 'em?
They leap from one calamity to another;
Had they been drown'd, they had ended all their sorrows.
What showts of joy they make?
Nicusa. Alas poor wretches,
Had they but once experience of this Island,
They'd turn their tunes to waylings;
Sebastian. Nay, to curses

(*The Sea Voyage* 1.3.16–22)

This island is an allegory of purgatory, where for everyone there is 'nothing to restore him, | But heavenly hopes' (1.3.28–29). When the seamen arrive, Sebastian explains to them (1.4.184–94) that they became castaways after a lethal fight for the 'cursed Gold', which is in abundance on the island, and urges the newcomers 'O be you wise and carefull' (1.4.194). In the skirmish for gold that follows, Sebastian and Nicusa steal the ship and escape with it. They are allowed to flee the purgatory once they have lost their covetousness of gold:

13 Cf. 'Our lives are but our martches to our graves' (*The Humorous Lieutenant* 3.5.49). A mock *dance macabre* is present in *The Mad Lover* too; General Memnon, the mad lover of the title, falls in love with Princess Calis, and when she asks him, in a figure, to bring her his heart, he takes it in earnest (cf. Fletcher's dramatic extremism), and goes from one soldier to another asking them to accompany him to '*Elizium*, | The blessed fields' (2.1.84–85); the entire scene (2.1) is constructed on the pattern of the Dance of Death.

Nicusa. Away deer Uncle.
Sebastian. This Gold was our overthrow.
Nicusa. It may now be our happinesse. *Exeunt.*

(*The Sea Voyage* 1.4.203–04)

It is the island itself (and its desertedness) that afflicts those who are on it, not a man-imposed charm as in *The Tempest*. Here, as in the authors' *The Prophetess*, there is an obvious shift from supernatural providence to the secular analogy, self-affliction through vice. Supernatural providence is represented by Prospero's magic, which secures justice and punishment for unnaturalness. In *The Sea Voyage*, the covetous punish themselves—as the authors make clear to the audience.

The Fletcherian island is—at least in the first part of the play—a concrete punishment on the greedy, who make themselves captive on it through their passion for money. It represents a concrete, but still a markedly figurative space, whose allegoric interpretation offers more coherence than its satirical or comedic readings. In the play as a whole, the voyage—that is, the entrapment in the 'island purgatory'—represents movements originating in the characters' minds. At the very end of the play it is given an explicit interpretation:

[*Sebastian.*] All look cheerfully, for none shalbe
Denyd their lawfull wishes; when a while
We have here refresht our selves; wee'l returne
To our severall homes; and well that voyage ends,
That makes of deadly enemies faythfull friends. *Exeunt.*

(*The Sea Voyage* 5.4.112–16)

The ethical overtones of the confinement on the island are comparable to those of extended possible outcomes and fidelity tests. In this case they are even more explicitly allied to the subjective worlds of individual characters in that the play creates an allegorical, multidimensional space which each of the characters perceives in radically different terms, which are often dramatized to contrast with each other. The main plotline of Albert and Aminta is a romantic story, while that of Sebastian and Nicusa (and the Amazons around Rossella) presents a much less idyllic reality; and finally the low characters of the subplot, Tibalt, Lamure and company provide a down-to-earth comic foil to the sublime and serious plots. The fundamental achievement of this stratified—and exotic as well as artificially elaborate—world is that, in its essence, it coincides with the archetypal situations.

The following section on *The Prophetess* completes the early modern vertical hierarchy in that it presents a dramatic allegory of worldly prerogative and its politics.

Worldly Prerogative in *The Prophetess*[14]

> To make an example, to deter
> Others from being false.
>
> (*The Prophetess* 4.2.95–96)

> [*Evanthe.*] Pray Captaine tell the King,
> They that are sad on Earth, in Heaven shall sing.
>
> (*A Wife for a Month* 4.5.117–18)

The source of the central dramatic potential in *The Prophetesse* (1622) is the tension between the individual will and the outer world. The theme of the play is the right to, and boundaries of, an individual's self-determination. Diocles is promised by a prophecy that he shall be a Caesar in Rome when he kills a Boar; he has to promise the Prophetess Delphia that he will marry Drusilla. When he is eventually invested with the office of 'half partner in the Empire' with Charinus (1.1.85) and is offered marriage with Charinus' sister Aurelia, he ambitiously forswears his former promise to Delphia and Drusilla. Delphia obstructs the marriage and secures that Dioclesian (as he is called now), although a Caesar, is bereft and unhappy: Delphia causes his nephew Maximinian to be ambitious and covet the throne, and Aurelia to fall in love with him. Eventually, Charinus, Aurelia and Maximinian are abducted into Persia, while Dioclesian thinks they are past recovery.

> [*Chorus.*] Now be pleas'd,
> That your Imaginations may help you
> To think them safe in *Persia*, and *Dioclesian*
> For this disastre circled round with sorrow,
> Yet mindfull of the wrong.
>
> (*The Prophetess* 4.1.47–51)

When he returns to Drusilla, all turns to good; the Persians are defeated and the captives return to Rome. Dioclesian and Drusilla retire 'to a most private Grange | In *Lumbardie'* (5.1.9–10), while Maximinian marries Aurelia and is invested with Dioclesian's position. Dioclesian retains his nominal power and Maximinian becomes its executor.

The central theme of *The Prophetess* (a correction of wrongs) has another dramatic treatment in Calderón's *La vida es sueño* (c1636). Prince Segismundo, who is prophesied to become a cruel king, has been kept in a secret place all his life. When, having been transported to the palace in his sleep, he is made king, his power is conditioned by an admonition that all will turn out a dream in case he gives reign to his evil self. This pattern—conditioning a ruler's power—appears as a recurrent motif in *The Prophetess*. The first occurrence happens when Dioclesian is corrected by the prophetess Delphia. The second, when the Persian kidnappers are corrected by the joint powers of Delphia and Dioclesian. The third occurs in the last part of the play with Maximinian.

14 An earlier version of this essay was published as '*The Prophetess* and *Life is a Dream*: Two Early Modern Plays on Worldly Prerogative', *Brno Studies in English* 27 (2002).

After the rescue of Dioclesian's friends and his retirement, it is Maximinian who becomes the Segismundo of the English play. Although an emperor, he is discontented with the conditioned, uncertain nature of what he has (uncertain because not self-invested, but lent).

> [*Aurelia.*] What then can shake ye?
> *Maximinian.* The thought I may be shaken: and assurance
> That what we doe possesse is not our own,
> But has depending on anothers favour:
> For nothing's more uncertain (my *Aurelia*)
> Then Power that stands not on his proper Basis,
> But borrowes his foundation.
>
> (*The Prophetess* 5.2.22–28)

In quest of self-reliance, he first attempts unsuccessfully to get rid of his half partner, Charinus, and kill the 'lender' of his power, the retired Dioclesian. Charinus warns him, in what may be a definition of the Baroque conception of worldly power:

> [*Charinus.*] When the receiver of a courtesie
> Cannot sustain the weight it carries with it,
> 'Tis but a Triall, not a present Act.
> Thou hast in a few dayes of thy short Reign,
> In over-weening pride, riot and lusts,
> Sham'd noble *Dioclesian*, and his gift:
> Nor doubt I, when it shall arrive unto
> His certain knowledge, how the Empire grones
> Under thy Tyranny, but hee will forsake
> His private life, and once again resume
> His laid-by Majestie: or at least, make choice
> Of such an *Atlas* as may bear this burthen,
> Too heavie for thy shouldiers. To effect this,
> Lend your assistance (Gentlemen) and then doubt not
> But that this mushroom (sprung up in a night)
> Shall as soon wither.
>
> (*The Prophetess* 5.2.109–24)

When Maximinian is eventually defeated, by means of a divine '*hand with a Bolt* [which] *appears above*' (5.4.112 SD), brought on by the providential Delphia, he and Aurelia utter what is an unsettlingly unambiguous Christian form of repentance:

> [*Maximinian.*] We are sorry for our sins. Take from us, Sir,
> That glorious weight that made us swell, that poison'd us;
> That masse of Majestie I laboured under,
> (Too heavie and too mighty for my manage)
> That my poor innocent days may turn again,
> And my minde, pure, may purge me of these curses;
> By your old love, the blood that runs between us.
>
> *The hand taken in.*
> (*The Prophetess* 5.4.127–33)[15]

15 Compare this confession with that of Frederick in *A Wife for a Month*: 'I do confesse my unbounded sinnes, my errours.' (*A Wife for a Month* 5.3.297)

At this instant Dioclesian takes on the providential, benign role of the merciful pardoner, and gives Maximinian another chance:

> [*Dioclesian.*] Once more I give ye all; learn to deserve it,
> And live to love your Good more then your Greatnesse.
> (*The Prophetess* 5.4.139–40)

Before doing so, Dioclesian renounces his place as an emperor for his own 'little world of Man':

> [*Dioclesian.*] I mine own Content make mine own Empire.
> (*The Prophetess* 5.4.138)

Throughout the play, it is the prophetess Delphia who is the providential corrective figure for the characters' wilful actions. Even perhaps more unambiguously than Prospero, she has divine attributes in interfering with other men's lives. And although her prerogative is subject to trial (see Chapter 6) and she herself is often mistreated and abused, she never loses her authority, and still less her power. Similarly, the following speech might be considered an arrogant brag, yet within the action of the play, it is an undoubted statement of her actual power:

> [*Delphia.*] 'Twas I, that at thy great Inauguration,
> Hung in the air unseen: 'twas I that honoured thee
> With various Musicks, and sweet sounding airs:
> 'Twas I inspired the souldiers heart with wonder,
> And made him throw himself, with love and duty,
> Lowe as thy feet: 'twas I that fix'd him to thee.
> But why did I all this? To keep thy honestie,
> Thy vow and faith, that once forgot and slighted
> *Aurelia* in regard, the Marriage ready,
> The Priest and all the Ceremonies present.
> 'Twas I that thundred loud; 'twas I that threatned;
> 'Twas I that cast a dark face over heaven,
> And smote ye all with terrour.
> (*The Prophetess* 3.1.142–54)

At the point in the play when Dioclesian fulfils his promises and defeats the Persian prince Cosroe, in a pivotal speech on Baroque greatness (4.6.23–74), he acquires a providential, yet not supernatural, position within the play too. The first step he takes in his new role is the liberation of the conquered Persians:

> [*Dioclesian.*] Now by my hopes
> Of peace and quiet here, I never met
> A braver Enemie: and to make it good,
> *Cosroe*, *Cassana*, and the rest, be free,
> And ransomlesse return.
> *Cosroe.* To see this vertue
> Is more to me then Empire; and to be
> Orecome by you, a glorious victorie.
> (*The Prophetess* 4.6.50–56)

His next step is the renunciation of his power as Emperor and his retirement to a 'poor Grange, | The Patrimony which my Father left me' (4.6.86–87). The

latent prerogative that Delphia has had over the characters is now extended to Dioclesian and remains latent until Maximinian tries to absolutize his position to become an unlimited tyrant, and eventually transgresses the rights given to him as a human individual and a prince.

From the dramatic point of view, Delphia acts as the theatrical impresario several times. She triggers and gives vent to several *coups*, and at one instant provokes a conflict: when Dioclesian neglects Drusilla for Aurelia, the prophetess says to the rejected maid:

> [*Delphia.*] Comfort *Drusilla,* for he shall be thine,
> Or wish, in vain, he were not. I will punish
> His perjury to the height…
> Some Rites I am to perform to *Hecate*,
> To perfect my designes

(*The Prophetess* 2.3.142–46)

After a possible interact break, '*Enter* Maximinian (*solus*)' with a discontented monologue proclaiming his ambition and envy of his uncle Dioclesian. Delphia then enters with Drusilla (invisible) and explicitly admits her interference into other people's affairs:

> [*Delphia.*] this discontentment
> I have forc'd into him, for thy cause, *Drusilla.*

(*The Prophetess* 3.1.25–26)

Delphia not only brings on Maximinian's envy and ambition but also casts a spell over Aurelia, who falls in love with him. Thus, by providing the causal explanation of the ongoing action ('this discontentment [is] for thy cause, *Drusilla*' etc.), she becomes not only a theurgist, but also a complete dramaturg. However, I would not wish to exaggerate the extent to which these two of her roles are merged. Disregarding that, it is striking how explicitly present and personified is the providentiality in this play.[16]

Delphia is an emblematic character with a symbolic or allegorical overtone; essentially it is she who produces the initial prophecy that Diocles will become Caesar Dioclesian. In the ensuing action the other characters—as it were—merely react to what she has set, while she sees to it that justice and correctness prevail. In the course of the play, Delphia retreats and part of her power is taken over by Dioclesian, who corrects the Persians. It is only at the *dénouement*, at the defeat of the insubordinate Maximinian, that both their powers join; both the supernatural

16 Edward M. Wilson, in his chapter 'On *La vida es sueño*' (written actually in 1938–9; reprinted in *Spanish and English literature of the 16th and 17th centuries: Studies in discretion, illusion and mutability*, Cambridge UP 1980: 27–47), says that Calderón's play 'has something not to be found in ordinary versions of the folktale of the Sleeper Awakened, such as the story of Abu Hassan in *The Arabian nights* or of Christopher Sly in *The taming of the shrew*. The play expresses a view of life, and so does the title.' For a recent analysis of *La vida* and other tragicomedies by Calderón in the context of the English tragicomedy, see Cohen 1987. The possible (or at least thematic) connection with the Fletcher-Massinger play is not mentioned at all by either work.

and the secular power are employed to vanquish an attempted regicide. At the same time, the final campaign sums up and confirms the prerogative of the apparently 'disappearing' providence. In the spectacular conclusion, the play's authorities coalesce into one ultimate allegorical prerogative which reinstates order in the play's world.

* * *

In *The Prophetess* the figurative dimensions of Fletcherian exotic, romantic, spectacular as well as enjoyable theatre are brought to their peak. The dramatists achieve a synthetic unity without sacrificing the play's theatrical attractiveness.

In the case of this play—as well as with other mature plays like *The False One*, *The Island Princess*, *The Lovers' Progress*, *The Pilgrim* or the two '*Wife*' plays—the critic may 'get stuck' on the outer conventions, such as the character types, or the fact that each play has a romantic, melodramatic plot, then another, serious or sublime dimension, and then the comical subplot which functions as a foil to either of the two. However, these are only the *code*, the figurative dramatic 'language' of the plays. This language has a strong *aesthetic function* of its own (or perhaps one should use Osolsobě's concept of *dramatic function* in this case); the individual sequences and scenes are constructed in order to uphold it. And yet—as has been shown in this and the previous chapters—the *dramatic function* is not an end in itself; it is merely a language, which serves elaborate purposes.

While pursuing the dramatic function, the plays obey the early modern custom of moral (or didactic) art, ever stressing the *telos* of the presented action. A play is thus situated in what might come today as an insuperable discord: on the one hand, a play is created to attract the audience by its epic, dramatic and theatrical quality, while on the other, it serves the purpose of Christian edification (a fact apparently undramatic and untheatrical). This may come as an obstacle in today's relativistic theatrical practice. However, only seemingly so. The Christian absolutes (the spiritual vertical) are often present in the plays in a covert form, and their theatrical realization in production need not exceed a figurative representation of authority. As for the related themes objectively present in the play, they should perhaps be left in their implicitness and put into tension with the theatrical realization. Just as we do not need to understand the structural pattern of, say, the musical rondo, still we sense the unity of the composition; by the same token, we do not need to be explicitly presented with the unifying themes of the play. To overstress the plays' allegorical dimensions would be to distort their unity (cf. Vickers 1993, Chapter 7), as it happens in ideological productions (see Chapter 2 'Theatre and Theory'). At the same time, the production should not geld the play of its potential for figurativeness. That would mean—as has been argued in this chapter—disrupting the essential unifying element in many of the plays. However unsettling it may seem, the 'un-pre-interpreted' state of the play, with all its apparent loose ends and incoherence, may yet succeed as a *good* play for the stage as long as the balance of its components—its dramatic function and its literal and figurative meanings—is observed.

Conclusion

Silvio. Ye are […]
A great Professor, but a poore performer.

(*Women Pleased* 2.1.22–23)

If this thesis should have one more chapter to complete the individual, fragmentary studies presented here—on acting, analytic, and dramatic methods, techniques, references and interpretations—it would be about fun, enjoyment and beauty—or, as Gary Taylor calls it, it would be 'a hedonist criticism' of 'delight'. Although these essentials are of prime interest in good (practical) theatre, in theoretical produce—such as this one—they become somehow side issues. Clearly no 'serious' study should be concerned with them, as they would come across as naive, irrelevant, subjective and 'unscientific'. Let my work then be a means, a fragmentary contribution, which practical theatre will hopefully consummate in the hypothetical chapter-to-come, called 'Fletcherian delight, fun, enjoyment and beauty in performance'. Proving a point—in this case, the enjoyableness of Fletcherian plays—has a double effect: its power of persuasion is always balanced by the distrust it raises. And it is a well-known fact that the best way to spoil a joke is to explain it. Let this work be therefore concluded by Boult's promising exhortation:

Boult. Performance shall follow.

(*Pericles* 16.60)