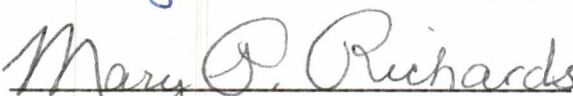


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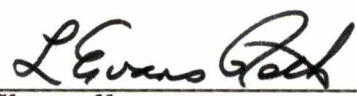
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jean Bettis Graham entitled "'This World's Stage': Reality, Illusion, and the Play-Within-a-Play in the Dramatic Works of John Marston." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.


Norman J. Sanders, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:


Accepted for the Council:


Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

"THIS WORLD'S STAGE": REALITY, ILLUSION,
AND THE PLAY-WITHIN-A-PLAY
IN THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF
JOHN MARSTON

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

John Marston's plays abound in theatrical imagery which compares the world with the stage, and in theatrical situations, or uses of the play-within-a-play, broadly defined as any situation in which the onstage characters become divided into two groups: actor(s) and audience. Play images, references to the "world's stage" or to "playing a part," as well as the use to which Marston puts such dramatic conventions as masque, dumb show, induction, prologue, and epilogue, suggest that every play is a kind of play-within-a-play, because it is set within the larger framing play of life. These images suggest further that life may be highly theatrical. According to Marston, at times the relationship between the world and the stage is so close that the actions of ordinary people are likened to the posturings of actors on a stage. He habitually portrays the satiric types that appear in most of his plays in histrionic terms; those who wish to advance themselves either at court (Flatterers) or in love (Amorists) assume a pretentious role and then become confused about the difference between the role and the person behind the role. Yet another kind of character frequently behaves as a playwright or Dramatist, directing other characters before an onstage audience in a play-within-a-play of his own design, in which he may or may not play a part. In four plays--The Dutch Courtesan, The Fawn, Antonio's Revenge, and The Malcontent--protagonist and antagonist, both Dramatists, try to alter the reality of the play world by involving other characters in elaborate plays-within-plays, and it is the clashing of these inner plays that provides dramatic conflict.

We are all potentially actors, role-players, directors, and playwrights--for good or ill--as part of our human condition. In an ideal world no role-playing should be necessary, but in the world as it is, dramatic activity in some form may offer a way out for people with a variety of problems, as the various protagonists demonstrate. Hercules finds his son a wife (The Fawn), Malevole recovers his dukedom (The Malcontent), and Antonio avenges his father's death (Antonio's Revenge). Massinissa, in forgiving Gisco and Syphax at the end of Sophonisba, echoes Malevole in his treatment of Mendoza and the others who have wronged him. Hercules also excuses Gonzago's pompous behavior at the end of The Fawn, and after the revenge has taken place, Antonio and the other revengers are forgiven.

If Marston has shown theatrical behavior to be a viable alternative in a problematic world, he has not stopped there. He has shown ambivalence by portraying as much abuse as proper use of his craft. He sees acting as a skill which may be used for great good or great harm, and always opposes its use for undeserved self-advancement. He is not as interested in how one views a play--though the audiences of the dramatic productions of Faunus and Malevole were perforce instructed, corrected, given insight--as in how and why we act and direct. He is not as concerned with the differences between the world and the stage as with showing that they are similar enough that one must employ the techniques of the stage in order to survive the stupidity (Gonzago's--The Fawn), the disorders (Malheureux's--The Dutch Courtesan), the brutality (Piero's--Antonio's Revenge), and the displacement (Malevole's and Pietro's--The Malcontent) which the world has

to offer. Paradoxically, it is the masking that leads us ultimately to discovery of the self beneath the mask; it is the theatrical artifice that leads to the reality behind the illusion.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Hist.</u>	<u>Histriomastix</u>	Wood, III, 1934
<u>JDE</u>	<u>Jack Drum's Entertainment</u>	Wood, III, 1934
<u>AM</u>	<u>Antonio and Mellida</u>	Hunter (Regents), 1965
<u>AR</u>	<u>Antonio's Revenge</u>	Gair (Revels), 1978
<u>WYW</u>	<u>What You Will</u>	Wood, II, 1938
<u>Mal.</u>	<u>The Malcontent</u>	Hunter (Regents), 1975
<u>Fawn</u>	<u>The Fawn</u>	Blostein (Revels), 1978
<u>DC</u>	<u>The Dutch Courtesan</u>	Wine (Regents), 1965
<u>Soph.</u>	<u>Sophonisba</u>	Wood, II, 1938

Citations from the works of John Marston will be to the following editions: H. Harvey Wood, ed., 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1934-1939); The Regents Renaissance Drama Series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press); The Revels Plays (London: Methuen, and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).

INTRODUCTION

The play-within-a-play, a device made popular in the theater of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, was used centrally and extensively in the drama of John Marston. Broadly defined as any situation in which the onstage characters become divided into two groups of actor(s) and audience, the play-within-a-play allows the theater audience to see its role as spectator duplicated on the stage, so that situations portrayed there are doubly theatricalized. Marston's use of the device ranges from frequent employment of the Play Image to the appearance of numerous characters who serve as Onstage Dramatists. The Play Image, a Renaissance commonplace implying similarity between the World and the Stage, is seen in the Prologue to The Dutch Courtesan:

Sit, then, with fair expectance, and survey
Nothing but passionate man in his slight play,
Who hath this only ill--to some deem'd worse--
A modest diffidence and self-mistrust.

(Prologue to DC, 15-18)¹

"Passionate man" becomes, not just the actor declaiming in front of the waiting spectators, but by suggestion he becomes Everyman, whose life--brief by cosmic standards--is his "slight play." In this example the metaphor suggests that what is going on on the stage is but a

¹Citations from the plays of Marston will be to the following editions: Histriomastix, Jack Drum's Entertainment, What You Will, The Tragedy of Sophonisba: H. Harvey Wood, ed., 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Tweeddale, 1934-1939); citations from this edition will indicate act, page, and volume; Antonio and Mellida, The Dutch Courtesan: The Regents Renaissance Drama Series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965); Antonio's Revenge, The Malcontent, The Fawn: The Revels Plays (London: Methuen, 1975-1978).

reflection of the larger reality of life in the world, that the walls of the theater may expand to the boundaries of the earth, and that playing is essentially like life. At other times Marston turns the reflecting mirror around, especially through the various uses of the play-within-a-play, to suggest that life is essentially like playing. Then, when onstage characters begin to function as Dramatists, they create roles for other characters to play, designing and producing their own little secondary plays.

Although the play-within-a-play has been an effective dramatic device with which a playwright may examine the relationship between stage actors and audience, and ultimately between illusion and reality, historically it has been a difficult one to treat thoroughly. Dieter Mehl suggests a reason for this:

[T]he device of the play within a play [is] much more complex and less easily defined than many other dramatic conventions, such as the dumb show or the prologue, and this is perhaps the reason why there has been much incidental comment on plays within plays but hardly any attempt to treat the subject comprehensively. I am not even sure whether it would be possible at all, because such a bewildering variety of forms would have to be included, making fruitful comparison very difficult indeed.²

A look at studies of the subject which have been attempted indicates that in grouping the plays of more than one literary period,³ most studies,

²Dieter Mehl, "Forms and Functions of the Play Within a Play," Renaissance Drama, 8 (1956), 42.

³Jean Jacquot, "'Théâtre du Monde' de Shakespeare à Calderón," Revue de Littérature Comparée, 31 (1957), 341-372, traces the development of the Play Image comparing the world to a stage and man to an actor; Robert J. Nelson, Play Within a Play; The Dramatist's Conception of His Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), is philosophical in the Aristotelian sense, so that the play-within-a-play is an imitation-within-an-imitation; Lionel Abel, Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963) submits that Shakespeare and Calderón created a new dramatic

like Mehl's, have focused more narrowly on the flowering of the play-within-a-play in the Renaissance,⁴ and in particular on Shakespeare⁵

form, the metaplay, featuring self-conscious or "self-referring" protagonists, and that "the metaplay is to ordinary fantasy as tragedy is to melodrama. As in tragedy the misfortunes of the hero must be necessary and not accidental, so in the metaplay life must be a dream and the world must be a stage" (p. 79).

⁴F. S. Boas, "The Play Within the Play," A Series of Papers on Shakespeare and the Theatre (London: The Shakespeare Association, 1927), discusses several plays dating from the end of the fifteenth century till the early seventeenth; Arthur Brown, "The Play Within a Play: An Elizabethan Dramatic Device," Essays and Studies, NS 13 (1960), 36-48, restricts his definition of the play-within-a-play to "secondary plays which are immediately recognizable as plays" (pp. 36-37), and limits the functions of the device to four: discovering guilt, accomplishing revenge, cheating or gulling, and bitter satire (p. 48); Dieter Mehl, in his quite useful article, divides the secondary plays into four categories: (1) situations in which companies of actors (or conjured spirits) arrive onstage and perform for an audience of characters from the main play, as in Hamlet and The Tempest, (2) situations in which the secondary play is performed by characters from the main play, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Spanish Tragedy, (3) framing a play, so that the inner play becomes the "main" play (Taming of the Shrew), and (4) situations in which some of the characters observe and comment on part of the play as though it were a performance (Pandarus in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida). Two recent studies are Jackson I. Cope's exhaustive The Theater and the Dream: From Metaphor to Form in Renaissance Drama (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), which is "a critical history of dramatic form in the Renaissance" (p. 13); and Leonard R. Mendelsohn's "The Player as Director: An Approach to Character," Comparative Drama, 6 (1972), 115-124, which distinguishes between character and role. The imaginative character, like a director, creates visions requiring himself and others to assume roles.

⁵Leslie A. Fiedler, "The Defense of the Illusion and the Creation of Myth," English Institute Essays, 1948 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 74-94, discusses A Midsummer Night's Dream and Hamlet; Herbert Randolph Coursen, Jr., "A Spacious Mirror: Shakespeare and the Play Within," Dissertation Abstracts 26 (1966), 6693, limits the play-within-a-play to "situations in which one character manipulates others on the basis of superior knowledge and in which the spectator tends to identify with the manipulator"; Carol Replogle, "Not Parody, Not Burlesque: The Play Within the Play in Hamlet," Modern Philology, 67 (1969), 150-159; Anne Richter, Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), traces this subject

and Jonson.⁶ The plays of Marston are concerned with the nature of theater and certainly would respond to this type of criticism. However, thus far critical consideration of Marston's plays has been scant. In addition to scattered essays dealing with the individual plays, only four book-length studies have appeared in recent decades, those by Anthony Caputi, Philip J. Finkelpearl, Reginald W. Ingram, and Michael Scott.⁷ The need for further study of Marston had been recognized by T. S. Eliot, who suggested over forty years ago:

Marston has enjoyed less attention, from either scholars or critics, than any of his contemporaries of equal or greater rank; and for both scholars and critics he remains a territory of unexplored riches and risks. The position of most of his contemporaries is pretty well settled; one cannot go very far wrong in one's estimate of the dramatists with whom Marston worked; but about Marston a wide divergence of opinion is still possible. His greater defects are such as anyone can see; his merits are still a matter for controversy.⁸

One way of arriving at Marston's Idea of the Play--that is,

briefly in pre-Shakespearean plays and in depth in the works of Shakespeare, concentrating on the Play Image and concluding that Shakespeare was finally disillusioned by the play as imitative and therefore unreal.

⁶Hariett Hawkins, "The Idea of a Theatre in Jonson's The New Inn," Renaissance Drama, 9 (1966), 205-226; Gail Garloch, "Role-Playing and the Idea of the Play in Ben Jonson's Comedies," Diss. University of Tennessee 1975, presents Jonson as "certain of exactly what theatrical fiction is and does," as seeking "to enlighten an audience that preferred ignorance and inherited tastes," and as maintaining that the differences between the world and the stage are more important than the similarities: "Jonson insists that what happens on the stage is art and not to be confused with real life" (pp. 4, 7).

⁷Anthony Caputi, John Marston, Satirist (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961); Philip J. Finkelpearl, John Marston of the Middle Temple (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969); Reginald W. Ingram, John Marston (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978); and Michael Scott, John Marston's Plays: Theme, Structure and Performance (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978).

⁸T. S. Eliot, Selected Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1932, p. 221).

the ideas and assumptions about the nature of dramatic illusion upon which he based his plays--is through a study of the theatrical imagery and explicitly theatrical situations, involving role-playing, which occur frequently in his plays. The plays are filled with images of the theater; they are, in fact, theater about theater. Through a variety of intentional uses of the Theater of the World image in both direct statements and plays-within-plays, Marston explores themes of dissimulation, deceit, and self-deception--themes augmented by elements of duality, indecision, contradiction, error, and coincidence.

The first of these uses constitutes the most basic sense in which a play may be set within a larger play; it is as ancient as the day when people first donned masks and assumed dramatic roles. This is the suggestion that any play is set within the greater cosmic play of life. Included in this concept is the ultimate contrast between illusion and reality, between a person's role and his actual character. Thus all action takes place within a larger frame, and people are a part of history's continuing drama. As Robert Nelson explains it,

In a world in which all values are examined, it is inevitable that the instrument of evaluation be itself examined. . . . Not only the meaning of action but the meaning of meaning is examined. The theater mirrors this introversion in . . . the play within a play. The relationship of the inner play to the outer play prefigures the relationship between the outer play and the reality within which it occurs: life. The play within a play is the theater reflecting on itself, on its own paradoxical seeming.

⁹Nelson, p. 10. Arthur Brown notes that Bottom's play in A Midsummer Night's Dream is presented at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta, "so that its *raison d'être* is accepted without question. And if, as seems very probable, A Midsummer Night's Dream was itself written for such an occasion in a noble family of the time, the circle is complete" (p. 47). Similarly, Leslie Fiedler points out that when The Murder of Gonzago is interrupted in Hamlet, "we have just reached the point at which, had Claudius not interrupted with his terror, his ironic

This relationship between the outer play and life forms a tension that may characterize any play and any play-within-a-play. The audience either may or may not be aware of the play metaphor. Marston frequently makes his audience aware that they are viewing a play through such extra-dramatic devices as asides, characters who primarily address the audience, so that the main stage action is a play removed from them, or through watching actors don costumes and assume roles at the beginning of the play and remove them at the end, as in the Induction to Antonio and Mellida. He further establishes a relationship between the World and the Stage through myriad references to the theater in his plays, references which reflect the complexity of Marston's view of the stage.

Marston also deals with another form of role-playing, which illuminates what M. L. Wine has referred to as the "gulf between what men profess to be and what they are."¹⁰ Each of the comedies features a parade of characters, often types, always objects of satire, many of whom are pretending to be what they are not. These role-players are usually seeking their own personal advancement, either at court or in love, and they employ flattery and other forms of deceit in order to

cry of 'Give me some light!' a Hamlet-character, some melancholy sniffer out of evil, would inevitably have had to come upon the scene to contrive another play to catch the conscience of Gonzago, and in that play another Hamlet, and so on" (p. 88). It resembles, says Fiedler, the fake breakfast-table infinity of "the girl on the cereal box, holding a cereal box on which another girl . . . holds a cereal box on which another girl holds a cereal box on which--and so on until the label blurs" (p. 75).

¹⁰M. L. Wine, "Introduction" to John Marston, The Malcontent (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. xx.

gain their own ends. When one of the characters, played by a skillful actor, deepens the levels of action by further pretense, then "the fictional situation will mirror and indirectly comment on the actual theatrical frame," according to Gail Garloch, "not only in the plays-within-plays but also less blatantly whenever hypocrisy, mimicry, disguising and calculated deceit appear."¹¹

A third group of role-players, however, are not necessarily the objects of satire, but are treated in a variety of ways. These characters may be satirists themselves, or comics, villains, or heroes, but they all have in common the fact that they create roles for themselves and others. These Onstage Dramatists engage in theatricalized plotting, in which they write and direct plays-within-plays so that other characters unknowingly become actors and audience for their plays. The disguise-plot plays--particularly the three best (The Dutch Courtesan, The Fawn, The Malcontent)--present children in plays directed by their parents and courtiers in plays staged by disguised dukes. In each of these plays a main character puts on a disguise and becomes playwright, at times performing the functions of directing, stage-managing, and costuming, as well as acting in his self-constructed play.

The plays often contain two, or even three, kinds of deception or deceit. If both protagonist and antagonist are Onstage Dramatists, as are Franceschina and Freevill in The Dutch Courtesan or Mendoza and Malevole in The Malcontent, the balance is tipped in the end in favor of the character with virtuous intentions--but not without irony

¹¹Garloch, p. 10.

and paradox. Marston's ambivalence has often been noted, and he comes close to the moderns in this. His is never a black and white world of clear-cut issues and easy solutions. His satirists are always tainted by the evils they mock, his heroes flawed, his villains human, and his comics simultaneously outrageous and likable. True, when honestly-motivated characters use theatrical illusion to achieve a justifiable end, then Marston, ever the moralist, smiles upon role-playing. However, the suggestion is ever-present that in an ideal world no role-playing is necessary.

The following study begins with a discussion of Marston's use of the play metaphor--the comparison of the World and the Stage--by looking at references to the theater within the plays, at the use of masque and dumb show, at selected Inductions, Prologues, and Epilogues, and at the play-within-a-play in Histriomastix. Chapter II will look at the cast of actors and role-players, objects of Marston's satire, who fall within two groups: Flatterers, who play roles for purposes of social advancement, and Amorists, who role-play for self-promotion in love. Chapter III will introduce the cast of Onstage Dramatists and will deal first with the Comic Dramatists and then with Dramatists in The Dutch Courtesan, The Fawn, Antonio's Revenge, and The Malcontent. This chapter will consider two types of secondary plays--those in which parents create roles for their children, and those in which disguised dukes direct wrongdoers in an effort to restore order.

In all of this it will be seen that Marston views role-playing as part of the human condition, that irony and ambivalence are continually in attendance, but that it may ultimately lead to grace and

redemption, both in the World and on the Stage, if like Malevole, one uses disguise in order to become oneself.

CHAPTER I

THE PLAY IMAGE: "THIS WORLD'S STAGE"

Not play two parts in one? away, away; 'tis
common fashion. Nay, if you cannot bear two
subtle fronts under one hood, idiot, go by, go
by, off this world's stage.

(Induction to AM, 73-76)

The suggestion is prevalent throughout the plays of Marston, and it is furthered by a number of dramatic techniques which he uses repeatedly, that every play is a kind of play-within-a-play, because it is set within the larger framing play of life. It is this view of dramatic illusion as mirroring the outer reality of life that we see metaphorically whenever a stage play contains a secondary play within it. According to this play image, or metaphor, the stage play then represents the events of daily life, the play-within-a-play is parallel to any dramatic production, and the audience sees an image of itself reflected onstage in the persons of the spectators viewing the play-within-a-play.

This last point is crucial. These play images provide a specific kind of contact with the audience, an acknowledgment of the relationship between the real world and the play. The relationship between the world and the stage creates a tension that may exist in any play and any play-within-a-play. Whether or not the members of the audience are aware of the tension, they inevitably respond to it. Anne Righter suggests that there are three effects of play images on viewers in the audience. First, they indicate the play world's depth. Then, they define the play world's relationship with the reality familiar to the audience. And finally, they "serve to remind the audience that elements

of illusion are present in ordinary life, and that between the world and the stage there exists a complicated interplay of resemblance."¹

In a recent article Alvin P. Kernan discusses the relationship between the audience and the physical theater in the English Renaissance. He states that Shakespeare and others were interested in keeping the audience detached

from any illusion about the reality of the scenes and characters before them and calling attention to the fact that the full scene includes the theater and the audience sitting inside it watching a play. The most obvious device used for this purpose was, of course, the placement on stage of an audience watching a play-within-a-play, as in the production of "Pyramus and Thisbe" in A Midsummer Night's Dream. This stock device forces the actual audience to remember that they are in turn simply another group of players in a larger play, and that the physical theater in which they sit is not final reality but simply another stage₂ on which a longer play is being enacted before an unseen audience.

¹Richter, p. 78. One of the strengths of Richter's study is her discussion of the actor/audience relationship in the early drama, and especially the mystery cycles, in contrast with the relationship between the two in the Renaissance. In the mysteries there was much direct addressing of the members of the audience, which included them within the dramatic boundaries of the play, so that they also became part of the group being addressed by such speakers as God himself, Lucifer, Moses and Jesus. Medieval audiences had no difficulty, when watching a mystery play, in identifying Christ on the cross as a local craftsman and still believing that they were witnesses at the actual crucifixion of the Son of God. Ms. Richter points out that this unique function of the audience in the mystery plays signifies a reversal of the usual dramatic relation of illusion to reality. While daily life is normally considered real and drama as a mirrored reflection or illusion, in the mysteries the religious plays are reality and lives are illusive, shadowy reflections of the real and the ideal. Thus she explains, "The play metaphor had, for obvious reasons, no place in the ritual theatre of the Middle Ages. . . . A drama which deliberately blurred the distinction between audience and actors and associated Reality with the events of the Stage, illusion with the secular world, could scarcely find the comparison useful" (p. 61).

²Alvin P. Kernan, "This Goodly Frame, the Stage: The Interior Theater of Imagination in English Renaissance Drama," Shakespeare Quarterly, 25 (1974), 1.

Kernan goes on to describe the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists as "the most self-conscious writers who ever worked in the theater." They were in the transitional stage of becoming less dependent on patrons and more dependent on learning to please the public taste, and they were constantly encountering fundamental questions about the nature of that exciting new art form, the drama. Kernan adds:

Each of the many plays-within-a-play is thus, in part at least, an attempt by an author to try to look into his own mirror and see himself as playwright and analyze his theater as medium. Attempts at dramatizing dramatic questions went, however, far beyond the numerous plays-within-a-play to pervade the entire atmosphere of the drama. It is remarkable, for example, how often the most interesting and important characters of these plays think of themselves as actors on the stage of the world and find in their conception³ of life as acting enormous power for both good and evil.

This idea that the viewers in the audience are also performers in a larger play is present throughout the dramatic works of John Marston. In the first place, he implies this whenever he constructs any sort of play-within-a-play, as in Histrionastix, and also in the versions of the device to be discussed in later chapters of this study. He calls to mind the Play Image more directly in some of his Inductions and Epilogues, when he shows actors talking about the parts they are to play as they put on costumes before the performance, and stepping out of their roles at the end. His dramatic portrayals of masque and dumb show further develop the Play Image. And finally, Marston establishes a relationship between the world and the stage through a peppering of play language, placed in the mouths of otherwise dissimilar characters, who remind each other that they are "acting" like "players" and that their activities may be compared to "scenes" in a play.

³Ibid., p. 3.

I. PLAY LANGUAGE

Play language is the most frequently used form of the Play Image in Renaissance drama. This language draws on play metaphors which are embedded in the English language so deeply that they do not necessarily refer to the theater when used. However, in the plays of Marston they often convey meaning on a deeper level filled with theatrical import. The list of words and phrases is long, and most of them are found repeatedly in the ten plays of Marston. First are words easily identified as theatrical: "tragedy" and "tragedian," "comedy," "scene," "part," "player," "spectator," "role," "stage" and "world's stage." Some of the words in this category are used both as nouns and verbs: "act," "play," "disguise," and the ever-popular "plot." Another group of words, following up on the idea of disguise, is used to suggest pretence or falseness, yet with dramatic overtones: "feign," "counterfeit," "dissemble," "deceive," "ape" (to imitate or one who imitates), "mimic," "seem" or "seeming." And then there are phrases, some of which are combinations of the above terms: "artificial absence," "make show," "turn player," "play a part."

Such theatrical language appears in all of Marston's plays, and it is used in a wide number of ways with a variety of results. Some examples from the plays will serve as illustrations. Most often seen is "plot," a word of general literary use which may or may not refer to the plot of a drama. However, its dramatic meaning is assured because Marston uses it in conjunction with other theatrical terms. For instance, the witty Feliche in Antonio and Mellida, watching an entrance of a parade of flatterers and fools needing to be satirized, exclaims:

More fools, more rare fools! O, for time and place long enough and large enough to act these fools! Here might be made a rare scene of folly, if the plot could bear it.

(III.ii.117-119)

A similar use of "plot" in concurrence with "act" and "scene" occurs in Antonio's Revenge when the Ghost of Andrugio comments on the unfolding of events in Act V:

Now looks down providence
T'attend the last act of my son's revenge.
Be gracious, Observation, to our scene;
For now the plot unites his scattered limbs
Close in contracted bands.

(V.i.10-14)

Malevole, preparing to hide the injured Ferneze at the close of Act II of The Malcontent, preserves a double meaning in his use of the word "plot," since it simultaneously suggests the planned structure of a literary work and the secret conspiracies of those with questionable motives:

Now 'gins close plots to work; the scene grows full,
And craves his eyes who hath a solid skull.

(II.v.160-161)

This same double meaning exists in the following exchange from The Fawn:

Herod. . . . Know you not Don Zuccone, the only desperately railing lord at's lady that every was confidently melancholy; that egregious idiot, that husband of the most witty, fair, and (be it spoken with many men's true grief) most chaste Lady Zoya? But we have entered into a confederacy of afflicting him.

Herc. Plots ha' you laid, inductions dangerous?

(II.205-211)

Here the word "inductions" unexpectedly adds theatrical emphasis to the first question.

Marston's play language does not provide a single, harmonious view of the theater. To generalize briefly, he includes a burlesque

of the plays of the public companies in his first five plays (Histriomastix, Jack Drum's Entertainment, Antonio and Mellida, Antonio's Revenge, and What You Will), as will be seen. And in the last play, The Tragedy of Sophonisba, a more somber attitude toward playing prevails, since theatrical language clusters around the unpleasant characters (Sophonisba being idealized to such an extent that she does not resort to role-playing). However, the important middle comedies show role-playing to be a part of the human condition. Anyone may assume a role; everyone may use play language. The result is a balance, an ambivalence, that is pervasive in Marston's Idea of the Play and in his view of the world. For example, to return for a moment to the word "plot," it is used in Antonio's Revenge to refer to the intrigues of both Antonio and Piero. Maria says to Antonio:

You are transported with too slight a thought,
If you but meditate of what is past
And what you plot to pass.
(IV.i.34-36)

Two scenes later, in an aside spoken to the audience, Piero congratulates himself: "Now my plot begins to work" (IV.iii.68), showing that both the protagonist and antagonist are actors on the world's stage. Unfavorable uses of the word are numerous in Sophonisba, a play of practically unalleviated misery. In this play plotting carries with it connotations of an evil conspiracy as it is used to refer to the schemes of the Carthaginians. One example will suffice, as Gelosso denounces one of their schemes:

The Gods assist just hearts, & states that trust
Plots before Providence are tost like dust.
(II, p. 21, Vol. II)

Instances of play language reflecting a mood of melancholy or even disillusionment about the stage are found more often in the two

tragedies, of course, than in the comedies, and Antonio's Revenge contains more theatrical expressions than any other play by Marston. One character in particular, Pandulpho Feliche, the father of young Feliche, expresses his views of the world primarily in play images following the death of his son, who is slain through the machinations of the wicked Piero. Pandulpho's initial response to the murder is a bitter laughter, and when he is reproved by Alberto, his nephew, who reminds him that his son is dead, he responds:

True, man, true; why, wherefore should I weep?
Come sit, kind nephew; come on; thou and I
Will talk as chorus to this tragedy.
(I.v.61-63)

The double meaning in the last line is apparent, as is the truth of his statement. Pandulpho provides a choral commentary on the action of the rest of the play, much of it in theatrical terms. When Alberto continues to chide him for his seemingly inappropriate laughter, he rejoins:

Wouldst have me cry, run raving up and down
For my son's loss? Wouldst have me turn rank mad,
Or wring my face with mimic action,
Stamp, curse, weep, rage, and then my bosom strike?
Away, 'tis apish action, player-like.
(I.v.76-80)

With this condemnation of histrionic action still ringing around him, Pandulpho elaborates on his objections to dramatic displays of grief:

Listen, young blood, 'tis not true valor's pride
To swagger, quarrel, swear, stamp, rave and chide,
To stab in fume of blood, to keep loud coil,
To bandy factions in domestic broils,
To dare the act of sins whose filth excels
The blackest customs of blind infidels.
(I.v.87-92)

He objects to outward show of feeling, not for twentieth-century fears of being unmanly, but because he finds such behavior less than honest,

perhaps exaggerated, and certainly imitative, as is the behavior of the actor on the stage. Some quieter action is the more accurate expression of "true valor" and noble emotion.

However, three acts later, in another exchange with Alberto, Pandulpho is much less theoretical. Ironically, he admits that he has not been able to live up to his words, and that in trying to do so he has been doing that which he deplores. In failing to express his grief, he has assumed a role. Antonio, Alberto, and Pandulpho are about to bury the dead Feliche, when Pandulpho begins to weep. Alberto asks his uncle the cause of his tears, and in response he reveals the breast of his son, saying:

Man will break out, despite philosophy.
 Why, all this while I ha' but play'd a part,
 Like to some boy that acts a tragedy,
 Speaks burly words and raves out passion;
 But when he thinks upon his infant weakness,
 He droops his eye. I spake more than a god,
 Yet am less than a man.
 I am the miserablest soul that breathes.
 (IV.v.46-53)

These lines were originally spoken by "some boy that acts a tragedy," since the play was written for the Children of Paul's, and this fact created a double illusion for people in the audience. The theatrical role turned a boy actor into the grieving father Pandulpho, and the Play Image turned Pandulpho back into "some boy that acts a tragedy."

There is present in these statements of Pandulpho one objection to playing that occurs elsewhere in Marston's works. That is the suggestion that stagelike behavior is false and hypocritical, rather than a demonstration of the player's genuine feeling. Thus Antonio says to Mellida as they lament her death sentence:

Madam,
 I will not swell like a tragedian
 In forced passion of affected strains.
 (AR II.iii.103-105)

Gelosso tells the Carthaginians what he thinks of their treachery, his remarks prefaced by the following:

Although a stagelike passion & weake heate
 Full of an empty wording might sute age,
 Know Ile speake strongly truth.
 (Soph. II, p. 21, Vol. II)

Malevole likewise finds such effusive deportment distasteful, as he indicates in one exchange with Pietro:

Pietro. O let the last day fall, drop on our cursed heads!
 Let heaven unclasp itself, vomit forth flames!
Mal. O do not rand, do not turn player; there's more of them than
 can live one by another already.
 (Mal. IV.iv.2-5)

And Sophonisba, observing the worsening of her predicament as she struggles to escape from the pursuing Syphax, and of course eschewing a spontaneous outpouring of her powerful feelings, nevertheless admits that such a demonstration is due her. And the metaphor she uses is taken from the theater:

Chaunce hath so often struck
 I scarce can feele: I should now curse the Gods
 Call on the furies: stampe the patient earth
 Cleave my streachd cheeks with sound: speake from all sense
 But loud and full of players eloquence.
 (Soph. IV, pp. 43-44, Vol. II)

These rejections of "players eloquence" and "stagelike passion" are seemingly clear enough, and yet in fact a closer look is required to clarify exactly what is being rejected. The several speakers declare that in certain life-situations histrionic speech and demeanor are inappropriate if insincere, and also undesirable if they may be taken by others to be insincere. The warning within these speeches is to avoid

turning the world into a theater for the wrong reasons, to aim in life for the honest behavior that is the result of self-knowledge, and to remember the essential distinction between world and stage. And yet this warning is made by a group of actors who have turned the world into a theater in order to assume roles in which to deliver the warning.

Hence it is too simple to interpret Marston as clearly rejecting theatrical activity, even in these brief passages. Rather, he simultaneously rejects and approves, paradoxically juxtaposing the spoken metaphor on one level against the dramatized metaphor on another. This view is further borne out by other uses of the Play Image by Marston, uses which soften the condemnatory tone and imply that the world and stage are at times so close as to be inseparable.

One example of this occurs at the climax of the last act of Antonio and Mellida, assisting that play toward its comic resolution. Antonio, who has been pretending to be dead and is lying center stage in his coffin, sits up suddenly in a dramatic change of role, confident of gaining what he wants--Piero's approval and Mellida's hand--proclaiming:

I rise from death that never liv'd till now.
 Piero, keep thy vow, and I enjoy
 More unexpressed height of happiness
 Than power of thought can reach; if not, lo, here
 There stands my tomb and here a pleasing stage,
 Most wish'd spectators of my tragedy;
 To this end have I feign'd, that her fair eye
 For whom I liv'd, might bless me ere I die.
 (V.ii.210-217)

Antonio is saying that if he is not admitted to Piero's favor, then he will die post-haste, in which case circumstances will have combined to enable those present to become "spectators of my tragedy" (perhaps spoken with a gesture that indicates, not only the people assembled on

the stage, but also the crowd in the theater audience). He is offering the theater audience the possibility of viewing a play-within-a-play, for a brief instant, thus doubling the meanings of "a pleasing stage," "spectators," and "tragedy." His words suggest that his imagined death, taking place before the gathered onlookers, would have certain striking similarities to a staged tragedy, for which the onlookers would become the audience.

Massinissa in The Tragedy of Sophonisba uses an image which both dramatizes an action that he is about to take and at the same time gives his words universal weight. Having just begun to learn the treachery against him, he charges himself to fight his enemies in these words:

Up unmaim'd hart, spend all thy greefe and rage
Upon thy foe: the fields a soldiers stage
On which his action shows.

(Soph. II, p. 27, Vol. II)

A part of the world may serve as stage for those who assume specific roles thereon--in this case the role of soldier.

Finally, in the Induction to Antonio and Mellida, the character about to play Antonio objects strongly to having to play two roles, the second being that of Antonio disguised as an Amazon called Florizel. But he is ridiculed by the boy playing Alberto:

Not play two parts in one? away, away; 'tis common fashion. Nay,
if you cannot bear two subtle fronts under one hood, idiot go by,
go by, off this world's stage.

(Induction to AM, 73-76)

These characters clearly see themselves as actors in the ongoing drama of life, which provides a frame around all other theatrical performances. They assume their roles arrogantly and with confidence, aware that the roles empower them to do great good or grave harm.

Through his use of theatrical imagery Marston offers both a warning and a blessing to those actors in the Theater of the World, from Malevole's "O do not rand, do not turn player; there's more of them than can well live one by another already," to Alberto's "Not play two parts in one?. . .Nay, if you cannot bear two subtle fronts under one hood, idiot go by, go by, off this world's stage."

II. MASQUE

When Freevill interrupts the dancing of the masquers in The Dutch Courtesan, he is intentionally adapting a convention fraught with dramatic overtones to his own theatrical purposes. During the masque, one group of characters from the play serves as onstage spectators, while another group performs in costume. The episode staged by Freevill and Malheureux changes the course of events in the masque from the usual plan of action to a new script known only to the two friends. Utilizing the setting of the masque furthers their plans swiftly, since what they need is a ready-made audience to witness the quarrel and challenge to a duel in order to gain credibility for their later story of Freevill's death.

However, the masque is not to be equated with drama primarily, but it is a form of entertainment older than the drama which E. K. Chambers in The Elizabethan Stage has defined as "an episode in an indoor revel of dancing."⁴ Persons wearing masks and costumes, often bearing gifts, enter the hall--according to tradition, without being expected--to pay tribute to the honored guests or hosts. They always

⁴E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, I (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 149.

begin by dancing for all the guests and end by inviting them to join in the dancing. They are accompanied by torchbearers (remember Sir Hubert calling for more light at the beginning of Freevill's masque), musicians, and presenters who explain what each figure represents, as well as any other pomp and pageantry that can be commanded. Chambers' comments are helpful as he discusses the mimetic setting of the masque:

It is necessary to lay stress on the fact that the guests mingle with the maskers in the dance. This intimacy between performers and spectators differentiates the mask from the drama to the end; its goal is the masked ball, not the opera.⁵

The masque, then, is a hybrid form which begins with an audience viewing a performance and ends as a non-dramatic revel in which everyone is dancing. The masque marks a moment in the development of drama in Elizabethan England when the relationship of performer and spectator hangs in the balance. It calls to mind both the birth of the Greek drama out of ritual⁶ and the medieval English idea of audience as actor, with its blurred boundary between the two.⁷ The moment when the masquers invite the assembled company to join in the dancing confuses the distinction between illusion and reality. Finally, when the two groups actually begin to dance with each other, the barrier between the stage and the seats of the spectators seems to disappear, leaving

⁵Ibid.

⁶Jane Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1913), observes that Greek drama became separated from dance and ritual only in the instant that the idea of an audience took form. As people drew back from active involvement in the communal rites to become spectators, art emerged out of ritual (pp. 119-152).

⁷See footnote 1, this chapter.

the audience surrounded by the illusion, included and honored by the masquers.

Combining the masque with the new dramatic form, the play, was a logical step for the Renaissance playwright. Members of the audience with a taste for the spectacular must have felt that they were getting two kinds of entertainment for the price of one--the resplendent masque with its mute, formal movement and the play with its interwoven plots, rapid dialogue, and more spontaneous activity. Of course, when the masque is inserted in a play, there is yet another audience observing the whole performance. To this outer audience, viewing the masque provides a special kind of play-within-a-play; these people naturally identify with the onstage spectators both before and after they dance with the masquers. As the onstage barriers disappear, it would be but one more step for the masquers to leave the stage and in a similar manner invite members of the theater audience to dance, which knowledge reminds them that they too are actors on the world's stage, that they will not be allowed to sit passively as spectators for very long. The masque includes everyone in its illusion.

John Marston, with a sure sense of what works well on the stage, places masques in more than half of his nine complete plays. In the two earliest of these (Histriomastix and Antonio and Mellida) the masque plays only a small part in the development of the plot, but in the other three it is woven into the plot skillfully and naturally. The masque in The Dutch Courtesan occurs during the middle acts, but those in Antonio's Revenge and The Malcontent take place in the final scene as an integral part of the resolution of each play. The masque is particularly useful in resolving a disguise-plot play, as concealing masks

are stripped away to disclose unexpected personages to the assembly.

Another reason that masques fit smoothly into the plot lines of many Renaissance plays is that the plays often included the kind of celebrations that in real life called for a masque--that is, betrothals, weddings, coronations, or even visits from honored guests. Three of Marston's masques occur in honor of betrothals or weddings: the betrothal of Freevill and Beatrice (DC), the nuptial's eve of Mellida and Galeatzo (AM), and Piero's imminent marriage to Maria, in spite of all the deaths that have taken place (AR). In addition, the installation of Mendoza as duke is observed with music and masquery in The Malcontent, while in the morality Histriomastix a masque, play, and banquet all are planned by Mavortius, Philarchus and others in the act dealing with Pride.

Several further generalizations may be made about the masques in Marston's plays. In all but one of the plays (Histriomastix) the ladies are included in the dancing before the masque is over. In all but two (Antonio and Mellida and The Malcontent) mention is made of a banquet which follows immediately; in Antonio's Revenge the banquet provides a uniquely gruesome twist, as the revengers--having cleared the room of all but Piero--pluck out his tongue and then offer him a dish containing the limbs of his small son Julio, responding to his earlier request for "candied delicates" and "sweetmeats" (V.iii.50-51) with the words:

Here lies a dish to feast thy father's gorge.
Here's flesh and blood which I am sure thou lovest.
(V.v.48-49)

The masquers themselves are characters in the play in four of the five (only Histriomastix fails to indicate this), and only the masques in

Histriomastix and The Dutch Courtesan are too brief to include some dialogue, such as ladies reading the devices in Antonio and Mellida, occasioning puns and double-entendres; the blessing of Galeatzo in Antonio's Revenge plus dialogue between the revengers during the dance; and Mercury as presenter in The Malcontent, as well as dialogue between the dancers.

Masques included in plays are usually more Elizabethan than Jacobean, simpler rather than having the full descriptions of the later Jacobean masques, and in Marston's plays they either are suddenly interrupted or are immediately followed by some unusual happening. The masque in Histriomastix is too abbreviated for analysis, since it involves only three lines of the play and one short stage direction, but in all of the other plays the masque fits smoothly into the plot and comes to some abrupt or unexpected end. For instance the masque of Freevill in Act IV of The Dutch Courtesan has already been mentioned as deeply related to the plot of the main play, and especially to the secondary levels of illusion. With the pre-planned quarrel between Freevil and Malheureux that abruptly terminates the masque, the first scene of Freevill's play-within-a-play takes place, a secondary play that ends only with the imprisonment of Franceschina in Act V. One level of theatrical illusion grows out of another in this play, weaving a complex tapestry, and it all begins in the betrothal masque. Also, in Antonio and Mellida after three couples have engaged in light repartee while dancing, Feliche comes charging into the hall with a message for Piero and complains about the crowd of dancers that he finds in his path:

Stand away. Here's such a company of flyboats hulling about this galleas of greatness that there's no boarding him.
(V.ii.127-128)

In this play the masque, ordered by Piero to solemnize the marriage with Galeatzo that is being forced upon the unwilling Mellida, leads directly into the (however improbable) resolution of the final scene. The union of Mellida with her love Antonio, obstructed from the beginning of the play by the feuding of their two fathers, is finally brought about through the efforts of both lovers and Andrugio, Antonio's father --all of whom have assumed disguises in order to play roles in a rather disorganized secondary play (disorganized because each has written his own part). The resolution is assisted by the satirist Feliche, who interrupts the masque to usher in the disguised (helmeted) Andrugio, followed by the live Antonio brought in in a coffin, precipitating a total change of heart by Piero, the reconciliation of all, and the reunion of the lovers. Thus the masque in this play leads to the removal of all mask-disguises and the restoration of the original roles for all the characters.

Finally, in Antonio's Revenge and The Malcontent, the precedent established by Antonio and Mellida is followed, and the masque is used to facilitate the unmasking of those who have been disguised, as well as the dénouement of each play. In Antonio's Revenge Piero orders the entertainment as he plans to marry Maria, in spite of the fact that the numbered dead already include Mellida (his daughter), Andrugio (Maria's husband), Antonio (Maria's son, rumored dead), Feliche, Strotzo, and unbeknownst to Piero, his own son Julio. Once the revels have been commanded, the revengers lay their plot, assured of support from the Venetian statesmen, and don masquing attire in

preparation for the "masque of the passion,"⁸ sealing their pact with cries of Vindicta! The masque, then, becomes the setting for the revenge in what is generally recognized to be one of the most grisly scenes of vengeance ever to be acted out on a stage, as Piero is tortured and then killed. In this play Marston's paradoxes are horrifying: violence purges violence; one illusion is used to end another. Antonio has been cloaked in illusion--first disguised as a fool, then rumored dead, then dressed as a masquer. And he uses the unreal vision of the masque itself to restore his own identity and bring those present back to a bitter reality. However, as the illusion of masquery moves into the reality of murder, the revenge scene continues to use the techniques of the masque and its banquet. It is not until the ghost disappears and the senators enter that the ordinary world of the outer play is restored.

The masque in The Malcontent, one of the major disguise plays, is strikingly similar to the one in Antonio's Revenge, and yet at the same time is different--and the differences give The Malcontent the superior treatment of the convention. The first similarity is that both masques appear in the final scenes of the respective plays, assisting in the restoration of order to the disjointed play world. The Malcontent is not a traditional revenge play, but like Antonio, Altofronto has been wronged, and seeks to take appropriate action in righting the wrong. In both plays the masque is originally ordered by the villainous character (Piero in Antonio's Revenge and Mendoza in The Malcontent) for his own purposes--to celebrate a wedding or a coronation--and then taken over by the main character in order to accomplish his aims. In The

⁸Finkelpearl, p. 160.

Malcontent Mendoza not only calls for a masque, but he orders a Masque of Dukes:

What shape? Why, any quick-done fiction;
As some brave spirits of the Genoan Dukes,
To come out of Elysium, forsooth,
Led in by Mercury, to gratulate
Our happy fortune.

(V.iv.65-69)

This plays directly into the hands of Altofronto/Malevole, who happens to have available several people to play the parts of the dukes, including himself and Pietro (both deposed dukes) and Ferneze and Celso. In both plays, furthermore, the avenging masquers are secretly armed, and interrupt the usual procedure of the dance by seizing the villain (although only in The Malcontent do the stage directions instruct the masquers to unmask). Both masks are deeply involved with the themes of the play, but then it must be admitted that The Malcontent is the more intricate play thematically, with more levels of action and more relationships among characters to be resolved. During the masque Pietro and Aurelia are reunited, as are Altofronto/Malevole and Maria. But each of the four masquers, with the exception of Celso, steps out of more than the assumed role of masquer as he reveals his face, and multiple levels of illusion begin to recede. First of all, Ferneze, Pietro, and Malevole cast off the simulated role of death. Mendoza believes that all three--plus the hermit (Pietro in disguise)--are dead at his orders, when in fact no one in the play has died. In contrast, during the masque in Antonio's Revenge, four of the five people whom Piero believes to be dead are indeed dead, plus young Julio, and only Antonio has feigned death.

Further, both Malevole and Pietro shift roles from masked dukes to actual dukes, Pietro in one step, Malevole in two, as follows:

Men. Malevole!

They environ Mendoza, bending their pistols on him.

Mal. No.

Men. Altofront! Duke Pietro! Ferneze! Ha!

All. Duke Altofront! Duke Altofront! Cornets, a flourish.
(V.vi.113-116)

The role changes are swift. Malevole moves from masquer to Malevole to his original role as Altofronto, the rightful duke. Pietro moves simultaneously from masquer to usurping duke to his original role as Pietro Giacomo. The masque has led its actors to a recovering of their true identities, a process carried one step farther by Malevole in the last lines of the play:

The rest of idle actors idly part.
And as for me, I here assume my right,
To which I hope all's pleased. To all, good night.
(V.vi.165-167)

The audience then watches the players remove the last of their stage roles and become, once more, ordinary people. However, this process, instead of snuffing out theatrical illusion for the time being, serves to maintain it, by suggesting to the spectators that the role-playing goes on, occurring on level after level, both within and without the theater walls.

In summary, we find the masques in Marston's plays relatively brief and simple, in contrast with the later Jacobean masques. Without exception Marston's masques fit smoothly into the plots of the plays, often employing characters from those plays who are celebrating festive occasions, and because of this they are subject to sudden interruption. More important, there exists a direct relationship between the masques and the plays-within-plays employed by Marston. Leaving out only the minor masque in Histriomastix, each of the others appears in conjunction with either the starting point or the resolution of the

secondary illusion in the main play. In The Dutch Courtesan Freevill's dramaturgy begins with the feigned quarrel staged during the betrothal masque. Similarly, the masques in Antonio and Mellida, Antonio's Revenge and The Malcontent are woven into the final scenes, leading to a symbolic as well as literal unmasking. Thus the masque within the play has reminded spectators of the masque outside the play, and of their own close identification with the characters who both watch and participate in it.

III. DUMB SHOW

In addition to the masque, Marston makes use of another dramatic device with unusual frequency. Seven of the nine plays include one or more examples of the dumb show, with Antonio's Revenge actually containing three. Dieter Mehl, who has also written about the play-within-a-play,⁹ in his survey titled The Elizabethan Dumb Show offers first a definition and then a discussion of the beginnings, forms, and functions of the dumb show. Finding the definition of B. R. Pearn inadequate,¹⁰ Mehl suggests:

Any piece of silent action where one would normally expect dialogue may be called a dumb show, as for example the pantomime in Shakespeare's Hamlet. However, one can usually apply the term dumb show to all cases where one or more characters advance and retire without having spoken.¹¹

⁹See footnotes 2 and 4, Introduction.

¹⁰"Dumb-show in Elizabethan Drama," Review of English Studies, 11 (1935), 385-405. Pearn defines the dumb show as "part of a play which presents by means of action without speech an element of plot which would more naturally be accompanied by speech" (p. 385).

¹¹Dieter Mehl, The Elizabethan Dumb Show: The History of a Dramatic Convention (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. xii.

According to Mehl, the dumb show may employ diverse elements of style, including (1) the simplest form, the silent formal procession, such as that which precedes the Prologue in Sophonisba; (2) portrayal of a short gesture or brief meeting, necessary in the development of the plot, as in The Malcontent, before Act II; and (3) the most frequent, a pantomime of an entire scene without dialogue, as in Antonio's Revenge, before Act III, when Piero woos Maria with seeming success. Some of the more popular situations utilizing dumb shows depict murders, state occasions, kings and courtiers receiving an ambassador or passing judgment, magic or supernatural apparitions, and dreams.¹²

There are several strains characteristic of the Elizabethan period converging simultaneously in the plays of Marston and others who use the dumb show. First, the convention is rooted in the pageantry, masques, allegorical processions, and other forms of semi-dramatic entertainment popular in England after the Middle Ages. Also, it reflects a tendency of the Elizabethans to make each important point, develop each theme, as many times as possible, using all the artistic means available--in the dumb show by making a strong visual impression only. The best dumb shows are, of course, directly related to the plot and provide for the dramatist a chance to create a variety of theatrical effects--for instance, by condensing a significant amount of action into the pantomimed scene or by allowing the dialogue to begin at a moment of high dramatic interest.

The dumb show is also related to the play-within-a-play. Mehl comments on these two contiguous theatrical conventions:

¹²Ibid., pp. 21-25.

The absence of dialogue distinguishes the dumb show from the device of the play within a play so popular in Elizabethan drama. Here also we find something like a second stage set upon the real stage, where scenes are enacted which are often quite different in character and style from the rest of the play. In the case of the dumb show, however, we rarely come across that interplay between the two planes of dramatic action which constitutes the particular appeal of the play within a play. This intentional confusion of the two levels of the real and the make-believe the majority of dumb shows lack, but we shall see that dumb shows are most effective where their use resembles most nearly the technique of the play within a play.¹³

Let it be said that John Marston does quite successfully achieve a fusion of the dumb show and the play-within-a-play in several instances. Remembering that the first requirement of a play-within-a-play is the division of onstage characters into two groups, actor(s) and audience, we will only look at those dumb shows which fulfill this requirement, either by being observed entirely by an onstage audience, or by themselves being divided into the two necessary groups of actors and audience.

Six of Marston's plays contain dumb shows, but here it will only be necessary to discuss representative examples. The six plays are: Antonio and Mellida (one, within Act I, scene i); Antonio's Revenge (three, at the beginnings of Acts II, III, and V); What You Will (one, near the end of Act I); The Malcontent (one, before Act II); The Fawn (one, before Act V); and Sophonisba (two, before the Prologue and before Act II). Within the limitations of these nine dumb shows, Marston achieves a surprising diversity in their use, thus verifying his reputation for possessing a skillful sense of theatrical effect. Some of the functions fulfilled by these dumb shows include conveying information to

¹³Ibid., p. 13.

the audience, reminding them of earlier events, telescoping the action to provide dramatic acceleration, heightening the play's visual impact, and emphasizing certain characters over others.

They also serve to increase the theatrical illusion of the main play when they give the theater audience an onstage double of itself, even in as simple a dumb show as the one before Act II in The Malcontent. At this point in the play, Mendoza, accused of having made love to Aurelia, the wife of Duke Pietro, is manipulating events in order to transfer the suspicion from himself to the young courtier Ferneze, who also desires the favors of the Duchess. Mendoza sets it up so that Pietro and others can catch Ferneze in the act of visiting her in the night. The dumb show depicts Ferneze being shown to the quarters of the Duchess by the bawd Maquerelle:

Enter MENDOZA with a sconce to observe FERNEZE's entrance who, whilst the act is playing, enter unbraced, two pages before him with lights, is met by MAQUERELLE and conveyed in. The pages are sent away.

Mendoza serves as onstage audience for this brief pantomime, the first scene of a full-blown plan which he has conceived in I.vii to conceal his own guilt and at the same time usurp the dukedom of Pietro. This dumb show accomplishes an action which has already been verbalized to the audience; thus, the absence of dialogue lets spectators know that the plot is being carried out and allows Marston to begin the spoken scene with immediacy, at a place of his choosing. The dumb show also puts the spotlight on Mendoza and his histrionic activity, as he sets in motion a secondary illusion which he authors and directs, deceiving everyone in the play world except Malevole--and, of course, the theater audience.

Antonio's Revenge, with its masque of revenge leading to the ritualized murder, continues such stylized, formal action with no fewer than three dumb shows, which introduce three of the five acts. Only in this play does Marston introduce his pantomimes with the title of "dumb show" (before Acts III and V). The one that precedes the last act is of particular interest because nearly all the characters in the play are depicted in their various relationships, overseen by the Ghost of Andrugio, dramatist and presenter of the action about to take place:

The cornets sound for the Act.

The dumb show.

Enter at one door CASTILIO and FOROBOSCO with halberts, four Pages with torches, LUCIO bare, PIERO, MARIA and ALBERTO talking. ALBERTO draws out his dagger, MARIA her knife, aiming to menace the Duke. Then GALEATZO betwixt two Senators, reading a paper to them; at which they all make semblance of loathing PIERO and knit their fists at him; two ladies and NUTRICHE. All these go softly over the stage, whilst at the other door enters the ghost of ANDRUGIO, who passeth by them tossing his torch about his head in triumph. All forsake the stage, saving ANDRUGIO, who, speaking, begins the Act.

Antonio does not appear, because it has been announced to Piero that Antonio has drowned. However, his position is fully known to the audience since he was the last person to speak in Act IV, and his words were, "Let's think a plot; then pell-mell vengeance!" (IV.v.95). The dumb show serves to let the audience know the positions of everyone else, reminding them of what has already happened, and letting them know of new developments in the conspiracy against Piero.

At this point the Ghost of Andrugio is playing a double role. He is first of all the traditional ghost of the revenge tragedy, who has bidden his son Antonio to avenge his father's murder. As such, he actually authors this play of revenge, having appeared to both Antonio and Maria with instructions and suggestions for accomplishing the

revenge. He also is the audience for whom the revenge is carried out, and this function is evident in the dumb show when Andrugio all but applauds the signs that Maria and Alberto, Galeatzo and the Senators now stand in opposition to Piero.

The second role played by the Ghost of Andrugio is that of presenter. The first scene of Act V consists of the dumb show and a speech in which he summarizes for the audience the extent of popular hatred of Piero, affirming the justice of heaven and providence in supporting his revenge. This role too has theatrical overtones, as he presents the pantomime to the viewers, explains its meaning, and in so doing reminds them that they are just one more group of actors and performing before the unseen heavenly audience.

The comedy Antonio and Mellida contains Marston's most original use of the convention of the dumb show within the first scene of the first act. Here Marston successfully combines the dumb show with the play-within-a-play, employing a novel and effective use of the presenter as onstage audience. At this point one group of characters appears on the main stage and performs the pantomime, while another group observes and comments from above. It is common in plays of the period for characters to interact from the two locations during one scene, but the unusual feature here is that there is no dialogue between the two groups. One group eavesdrops while the other executes the silent action.

During the scene so far Piero has been gloating over his triumph in battle against Andrugio, Duke of Genoa, and he has made clear his demand that if Andrugio returns home, the Genoans are to deliver his head and that of Antonio to Piero. He then prepares to

welcome the sons of the Duke of Florence and the Duke of Milan who have come to court his young daughter Mellida. She and her ladies watch this meeting from the upper stage:

The cornets sound a sennet. Enter above, Mellida, Rossaline and Flavia. Enter below Galeatzo with attendants; Piero [enters,] meeteth him, embraceth; at which the cornets sound a flourish. Piero and Galeatzo exeunt. The rest stand still.

MELLIDA.

What prince was that passed through my father's guard?

FLAVIA.

'Twas Galeatzo, the young Florentine.

(I.i.99-100)

After a few more lines of lively dialogue among the women, a similar action is repeated when Matzagente of Milan arrives:

Enter Matzagente; Piero [enters,] meets him, embraceth; at which the cornets sound a flourish. They two stand, using seeming compliments, whilst the scene passeth above.

MELLIDA.

Saint Mark, Saint Mark! What kind of thing appears?

ROSSALINE.

For fancy's passion, spit upon him. Fie!

(I.i.116-117)

The pantomime simply shows the formal welcoming of two honored guests, but much more information than this is provided for the audience in the theater as they watch Mellida and her women watching what is going on below. The commenting women, overheard by the audience but not, of course, by Piero and the courtiers, function in the role of presenter. The point of view of Mellida is made known as she responds to the explanations of Rossaline and Flavia: she is not interested in their suit, she is still in love with poor Antonio, and thus she finds the appearance of these would-be lovers worthy only of ridicule.

This version of the play-within-a-play, which does not occur again in the Marston canon, telescopes some of the action, introduces

and characterizes two groups of people, and enlists the sympathies of the audience with Mellida in her scorn for her father's plans. It also provides a contrast with the scene to follow between the disguised Antonio and women. And more important, it offers the spectators an onstage model of their role as audience that suggests some of the benefits that may result from the alert and intelligent viewing of a play. For Mellida, Rossaline, and Flavia are not deceived by the observation of Piero's roles, of the deceptive harmony which covers up false appearances in the court. Unlike some of Marston's onstage spectators, who are also authors and directors of the secondary action (such as the Ghost of Andrugio in Antonio's Revenge), these women are innocent bystanders, viewing events with which they as yet have nothing to do, but which in the long run may influence their lives in a powerful way. Being thus unaware, it is clearly to their advantage to look carefully at the role-playing going on around them, in order to choose an appropriate response to it in the future.

A fourth play including a dumb show in its first act is What You Will. In a humorous pantomime Celia's two brothers hand a supplication to the Duke of Venice, which asks him to forbid her planned marriage to the French knight Sir Laverdure. The Duke comes by on his way to bed, and the comment is made that he turns day into night, night into day, making light of serious matters. Then the dumb show:

The Cornets sound.

Enter the Duke coppled with a Lady, two cooples more with them, the men having tobacco pipes in their hands, the woemen sitt, they daunce a round. The Petition is delivered up by Randolpho, the Duke lightes his tobacco pipe with it and goes out dauncing.

Ran. Saint Marke! Saint Marke!

Iaco. Did not I tell you? loose no more rich time;

What can one get but mier from a swine?

(I, p. 244, Vol. II)

The use of this pantomime for purposes of comedy and satire is noteworthy, and of even greater interest is the smoothness with which it is completely incorporated within the main play. Unlike the dumb shows in which imagined dialogue is assumed to be taking place, such as those in Antonio's Revenge and in Antonio and Mellida, this dumb show consists entirely of action and music. No one has to act out either the making of the request or a verbal reply. The note containing the petition is handed to the Duke and he uses it to light his pipe; pure action has been substituted effectively for words.

Of course, Randolpho, Andrea, and Iacomo serve as onstage audience for this complete little performance. The importance of the Duke's action in the silent scene is that his rejection of their request spurs these three to concoct the major plot of the play and come into their own as dramatist/directors. They have tried writing one script, and when the Duke refuses to follow it, they conceive another immediately, casting Francisco Soranza, disguised as Albano, in the leading role and thus providing a secondary play that requires four more acts in which to run its course.

From the four examples, Marston's dumb shows are seen to be deeply involved with all stages of theatrical illusion. In contrast with the masques, the dumb shows have certain regular functions to perform--both of recapitulation and prediction--and thus they are more likely to appear at the beginnings of acts. But like the masques, they are often related to various levels of secondary role-playing created within each main play. They occur throughout Antonio's Revenge, particularly before the last act when the Ghost of Andrugio as dramatist /director is preparing to oversee the completion of the revenge. It is

in dumb show that dramatist/director Mendoza sets his secondary play into motion before the second act of The Malcontent. In Antonio and Mellida, similarly, even as the three women watch the role-playing of Piero in dumb show in the first act, Antonio has preceded everyone onto the stage in his disguise as an Amazon, a deception adopted as the best recourse in opposing the manipulations of Piero. In that role he serves as audience to both the women on the balcony and Piero's group in pantomime, before taking an active part in designing a secondary play of his own. Likewise the dumb show in Act I of What You Will is closely tied to the beginning of the play's secondary illusion, as the script submitted by Randolfo and Andrea is tried and found wanting, only to be replaced by that of Iacomo.

Not only are Marston's dumb shows closely related to all levels of theatrical illusion in the plays, but they are also deeply involved with two kinds of relationships between audience and actor. First, Marston shows us, through the conversation of Mellida, Rossaline, and Flavia, an audience that is aware when role-playing is going on and views it critically. Second, he presents Mendoza and Andrugio's Ghost --both dramatist/directors--who also serve as audience for their own productions. Although the young women have had nothing to do with the role-playing that they see going on around them, they do have one thing in common with the two dramatist/directors. They view secondary role-playing with alert, questioning minds, in order to act wisely in response to it. This is also true of the three young men in What You Will. When the Duke fails to assume the role that they have designed for him, they move immediately from watching the dumb show to designing and directing a new scheme. There is much more to be said

about Marston's themes in these plays, and about his view of these characters as dramatist/directors. But this much may be safely said about the dumb show as it is presented in Marston's plays: it is firmly joined to other elements of theatrical illusion, and it provides a model for members of the theater audience that recommends intelligent observation which may even lead to a lively participation.

IV. INDUCTIONS, PROLOGUES, AND EPILOGUES

One strong indication that Marston never forgot and never wanted his audience to forget that they were in the theater comes in a particular use to which he puts the Inductions of the comedies. He likes to bring the actors onstage as themselves, have them interact with the people waiting for the play to begin--perhaps ridiculing certain habits of the spectators--struggle into their costumes, and discuss the roles they are about to assume. The strong visual impact of watching the players put on their roles with their costumes is not lost on the theater audience. When the play is presented to them quite self-consciously as a play, they are reminded once again that the world is a stage and every play is set within the larger play of life.

This use of the Induction is quite in keeping with Marston's method of using devices which work in the theater better than on the printed page. His instinct for good stage technique is strong, and his texts noticeably contain fuller stage directions and musical instructions than those of most playwrights of the period. He informs the readers of The Malcontent and The Fawn that he is worried at the thought of having to print his plays, that he is bothered "to think that scenes invented merely to be spoken should be enforcively published to be

read," that everyone knows plays give more pleasure when "presented with the soul of lively action."¹⁴ But once he does print them, he maintains his concern for the integrity of the dramatic form, addressing his reader more often than is usual with Elizabethan playwrights, explaining his intentions and justifying what he has done.

These two tendencies--respect for his medium and interest in conveying this to his reader/spectator--are apparent in the Inductions to What You Will and Antonio and Mellida. Each of these Inductions turns its play into a framed play, removing it one step farther from the people in the audience, and transforming it into a play-within-a-play. It is clear to the spectators that what they will be watching is "only" a play. The sight of the actors, without costume, discussing the play, establishes an awareness of the artificiality of a theatrical performance in the viewers, causing them to feel remote from the characters in the play, but close to the players themselves.

The Induction to What You Will begins with a short dumb show, which blends smoothly into the opening dialogue, enacted by three gallants named Atticus, Doricus, and Phylomuse. These three are not players about to assume roles in the play, although Phylomuse has engaged himself with the author to give the Prologue. But they are about to sit down and view the play as spectators, and as such the theater audience finds it easy to identify with them. In this dumb show Marston has found a new way of beginning a play:

Before the Musicke sounds for the Acte: Enter Atticus, Doricus, & Phylomuse, they sit a good while on the Stage before the Candles are lighted, talking together, & on suddaine Doricus speakes.
Enter Tier-man with lights.

¹⁴"To the Reader," The Malcontent, pp. 5-6.

Dor. O Fie some lights, sirs fie, let there be no deeds of darknesse done among us.

Rather than opening the scene with a group of actors trooping onto the stage, Marston is able to signal the audience to listen by the lighting of candles, at the same time giving an impression of starting the play in media res.

The conversation is about people in the theater audience and the relative importance of their reaction to a play. Marston defends his own theories of drama through the words of Doricus--particularly his view that pleasing the audience comes first, before following rules of art. The three begin by scorning certain types of audience behavior that may ruin the coming performance, such as that of Sineor Snuffe, Mounsieur Mew, and Cavaliero Blirt. Phylomuse then, in a long speech, states that the author should not mind what they say, since their bad opinions are held in ignorance. But Doricus' reply rebukes Phylomuse, suggesting that it is folly to hold in contempt the collective response of the audience, however inferior it may be. He is certainly referring to Ben Jonson in Every Man Out when he says:

Musike and Poetry were first approv'd
By common sence; and that which pleased most,
Held most allowed passe: not rules of Art
Were shapt to pleasure, not pleasure to your rules.
(Induction to WYW, p. 232, Vol. II)

Over and over Marston repeats these sentiments in the Prologues and Epilogues of his plays:

And if our pen in this seem over-slight,
We strive not to instruct, but to delight.
(Prologue to DC, 7-8)

Art above Nature, Judgment above Art.
(Epilogus to Mal., 15-16)

Your modest pleasure is our author's scope.
(Prologus to Fawn, 10)

He deigns, in self-accusing phrase, to crave
 For praise but pardon, which he hopes to have;
 Since he protests he ever hath aspired
 To be beloved, rather than admired.

(Epilogus to Fawn, 497-500)

His first goal is to please, to put on a good show, to make it work in the theater. After that, artistic theory has its place. But the most important hope is that "we once may please" (Epilogue to WYW, p. 235, Vol. II). The spectators watching What You Will knew this, and after the Induction they knew beyond a doubt that they were watching a play, an artificial illusion, an imitation of their lives' reality.

The Induction ends by returning from theoretical discussion to the up-coming performance:

Atti. Come. . . . lets see what stuffe must cloath our eares:
 what's the plaies name?

Phy. What You Will.

Dor. Ist Commedy, Tragedy, Pastorall, Morall, Nocturnal or Historie?

Phy. Faith perfectly neither, but even What You Will, a slight toye, lightly composed, to swiftly finisht, ill plotted, worse written, I feare me worst acted, and indeed What You Will.

(Induction, p. 233, Vol. II)

With these apologies and other numerous references to the size of the stage, the author, the auditors, and the play itself, Phylomuse delivers his Prologue and the act begins.

Antonio and Mellida is preceded by an Induction which introduces the actors about to play the parts of Galeatzo, Piero, Alberto, Antonio, Forobosco, Balurdo, Matzagente and Feliche. All of the actors playing male roles come onto the stage wearing cloaks over their costumes, carrying their written parts in their hands, and discussing how to act in their respective roles. The result of this discussion is to make the audience aware of the distance between the players and the parts they play.

Galeatzo opens the conversation by asking whether or not they are ready for the play to begin. Piero replies that they know their lines but still have questions about how to behave and move their bodies in the various roles. Thereupon they give each other advice, advice which manages to sketch ahead of time for the audience the satiric types that they will impersonate. Thus one of the concerns expressed by Feliche in the Induction--"I fear it is not possible to limn so many persons in so small a tablet as the compass of our plays afford" (ll. 132-133)--is partially alleviated by the nature of the Induction itself, which acquaints the audience with the main characters ahead of time.

Piero, the Duke of Venice, is told to assume the "haughty form of elate majesty" (l. 8), to strut as if "swoll'n with glory of successful arms" (l. 12). One character prepares to play "the part of all the world" (l. 29)--that of the fool (named Balurdo)--while another will portray Forobosco, the flattering parasite. Opposite both of them is the critic-spectator-satirist Feliche, whose character is described as being completely without envy, a state of mind the person playing the part finds hard to understand, he says, and thus difficult to enact.

Two of the actors are faced with having to play two parts: one must be both Andrugio, Duke of Genoa, and Alberto, unfortunate suitor to Rossaline; the other laments the fact that, while he does not mind the role of Antonio, he does not want to assume the female costume that will turn him into an hermaphrodite, as he fears, when he must come to court disguised as an Amazon called Florizel. The others scoff at him for his fear of playing two parts in one--something that everyone, they say, should be able to do--and Antonio tells Feliche that

some of the parts, such as his, which are undeveloped in this play, will have a second chance when the author writes Part II. Then they clear the stage for the Prologue.

G. K. Hunter, in his introductory essay to this play, underscores the views of both Anthony Caputi and R. A. Foakes that not only the Induction, but the entire play--especially in its presentation of child actors as passionate lovers in distress, roles frequently acted by adults--provides intentional satire and burlesque of the adult companies. Even more important, he indicates that both Induction and play intentionally further the artificial separation of actor and role:

we should see that the disparity between the child-actor and the adult role is a powerful means of presenting the meaningful artificiality of the play-world, and insisting on a dramatic vision of life with its own (non-Shakespearean) force and validity. The Inductions of Jonson and Marston obviously ask for a Pirandello-like awareness of the play-world deliberately made unreal. In Antonio and Mellida we begin with the players, discussing among themselves the roles they must shortly assume. We learn not only that the boys are distinct from their roles, but that the roles themselves belong to theatrical stock. . . . As in Pirandello, the characters' lack of self-knowledge is ironically pointed to by a structure which presents this as symptomatic of the whole human condition.¹⁵

Brian Gibbons makes a similar statement about the function of the Induction, adding a suggestion also made by Caputi that the Induction serves as preparation for off-key activities later in the play:

The effect of the induction is to alert us to the separation between the actors and their roles and to suggest the fragmentation of the personalities in the play, so that our response to the wild behaviour of Antonio in Act IV may easily be ambivalent--now moved by the quality of his grief, now alerted to the far farcical posturing, the swooning, and the stylisation of the action.¹⁶

¹⁵G. K. Hunter, "Introduction" to John Marston, Antonio and Mellida, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. xvi.

¹⁶Brian Gibbons, Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 88.

The significance, then, of the Induction to Antonio and Mellida is many-fold. Typically of Marston, there are contrasts: child and adult, burlesque and serious, satiric and approving, real and unreal, Elizabethan and modern. The tendency of an Induction to exaggerate the gap between players and play is strong here, since every possible technique has been used to let it be known, not only that these boys are playing roles, but that they have a lot of mixed feelings about doing so. This Induction can only serve to heighten audience identification with the actors as the people share in their feelings of insecurity or dismay about their parts. And as members of the audience identify with the role-players, it is only one more step to think of their own lives as similar to theatrical experience.

Remembering that the elaborate Induction to The Malcontent was written by John Webster when the play was appropriated by the King's Men, and not by Marston, the only other play with an Induction to be considered is Jack Drum's Entertainment. This Induction is brief and is labeled "Introduction." First the Tireman runs onto the stage complaining that the author has snatched away the script book at the last minute, preventing the boys from making their entrance. He is then superseded by one of the child actors who explains that the Tireman has misunderstood the author's intention, that he wishes to delight this audience, but that having no Prologue he was reluctant to begin the play without admitting its flaws and making apologies first. Hence he has delayed the play until this informal message could be delivered.

The relevance of this short episode is similar to what has been said concerning the two lengthier Inductions. Focusing the attention of the spectators on the author, the Tireman, and arguments

taking place in the Tiring Room lessens their identification with the characters in the play and increases their awareness of the play as artificial and illusive.

Much of what has been said about the relation of the Inductions to the response of the audience will apply also to Marston's Epilogues and Prologues. Epilogues, like most forms of extra-dramatic address, succeed in calling attention to the play as a play and to the actor as an actor. Most of Marston's Epilogues repeat his apologies for the play's imperfections, express hopes that the audience has been pleased, and bespeak favorable reactions by critics.

One Epilogue, however, merits special mention here. The Epilogue spoken by Antonio at the end of Antonio's Revenge must be quoted in full:

Sound doleful tunes, a solemn hymn advance,
To close the last act of my vengeance;
And when the subject of your passion's spent,
Sing 'Mellida is dead', all hearts will relent
In sad concolement at that heavy sound;
Never more woe in lesser plot was found.
And, O, if ever time create a muse
That to th'immortal fame of virgin faith
Dares once engage his pen to write her death,
Presenting it in some black tragedy,
May it prove gracious, may his style be decked
With freshest blooms of purest elegance;
May it have gentle presence, and the scenes sucked up
By calm attention of choice audience;
And when the closing Epilogue appears,
Instead of claps, may it obtain but tears.
(V.vi.54-69)

Immediately noticeable is the use of play language: "the last act of my vengeance," "lesser plot." But then he begins to speak hypothetically of some future tragedy which may relate the story of Mellida's death. He wishes such a writer easeful eloquence, an attentive audience, and tears rather than applause at the end.

But look again at the irony of these words. First the actual author, Marston, is blessing the efforts of an unknown writer of this imaginary play, while he himself has just written such a play. The speaker, Antonio, relays these words, but he is talking about the play he is in. And when the last two lines express the desire that the Epilogue of that play will move the auditors to tears, he is, of course, delivering such an Epilogue. The difference between this and the Prologue is that this goes one step farther, doubling the illusion for those in the audience. The Prologue invites any who are heavy-hearted or grief-stricken to attend to the coming play; the Epilogue denies that what has just taken place is a play, but assumes its literal reality, by speaking about future plays to be written about these sad events. The Prologue--like the other Prologues, the Inductions, the Epilogues, and indeed most forms of extra-dramatic address, such as asides--posits the current performance as a play within the larger play of life's ongoing drama. The Epilogue removes the illusion to another level, equating the current performance with life's reality, then theatricalizing it with play imagery--referring to events with words like "act" and "plot." Thus the audience is brought full circle with a multiple vision of the theatrical nature of life: reality is like illusion is like reality is like illusion. It is not always clear where the play begins, or where it ends.

V. THE PLAY-WITHIN-A-PLAY IN HISTRIOMASTIX

An essay on Marston's methods of imaging the world as a stage through the special use of dramatic devices must include his first play, Histriomastix or, The Player Whipt. Since its intention is to satirize the public acting companies, this play is about plays in a way

that the others are not. Although Marston does satirize the style and customs of the public acting companies throughout his first four plays, Histriomastix is his broadest burlesque of the acting profession.

The play is distinct from the rest of the Marston canon in several ways. It is generally conceded that Histriomastix is inferior to the other plays because of a rather awkward blending of an allegorical main plot with a subplot full of horseplay and farce. Whether Marston revised an older Interlude-Morality, adding the satiric subplot on the adult actors, or whether he wrote the entire play himself, the fact remains that it occasionally gives a patchwork effect, and there are errors in Act IV when the author apparently forgets who is married to whom. Whether one feels that it is a clumsy first attempt to write a play by a satirist forbidden to write verse satire, or that it is Marston's transition piece between the verse satires and the satirical comedies, its character is defined by the juxtaposition of these two highly divergent plots.

The allegorical plot dramatizes a cyclical version of history, in which society is continually passing through the cycle of six phases of Peace, Plenty, Pride, Envy, War, and Poverty, until Peace returns again. The six acts of the play correspond to the six phases, each phase dominated by the proper allegorical figure. Also within each act members of various groups in society respond in their individual ways to circumstances created by the dominant force in that phase. These groups include scholars (represented by Chrisoganus), lords, lawyers and merchants, and artisans who have forsaken their trades to become players.

It is the antics of the artisan/players that provide much of the play's vitality. In Act II (the time of Plenty) they stage a brief play-within-a-play at the request of the Lord Mavortius, but equally important are the events leading to their forming an acting company, the aftermath of the play as they finally are shipped out of the country for idleness, and the many comments about players cast in their direction throughout the play.

In the first act (Peace), this group of mechanicals, which rivals Bottom's crew in its lack of acting ability, led by their hack poet Posthast, form themselves into a touring company and--without asking Sir Oliver--take the name of Sir Oliver Owlet's Men. The group consists of Gulch, Clowt, Belch the Beard-maker, Gut the Fiddle-string-maker, and Incle the Pedler. Their reasons are, of course, the wrong reasons:

Inc. This Peace breeds such Plenty, trades serve no turnes.
Bel. The more fooles wee to follow them.
Post. Lett's make up a company of Players,
 For we can all sing and say,
 And so (with practise) soone may learne to play.
 (I, p. 250, Vol. III)

Thus begins the satire of the public acting companies, with the suggestion that random groups of decidedly non-artistic tradesmen are pursuing acting as an alternative to working. It continues through the character Posthast and his pretense to scholarship. He is quick to provide answers and instructions, however unnecessary, for his fellow-players, as in the following interchange with a Scrivener, when the company is being formed:

Scri. Your appellations?
Post. Your names he meanes; the man's learn'd.
 (I, p. 251, Vol. III)

As he gives the players a preview of the play he is working on, the story of the prodigal child (having called for wine with which to fortify himself), he punctuates his reading with asides which show that his own emotional response to his work exceeds that of anyone else:

Post. Enter to him Dame Vertue:
My Sonne thou art a lost childe,
 (This is a passion, note you the passion?)
And hath many poore men of their goods beguil'd:
O prodigal childe, and childe prodigall.
 Read the rest sirs, I cannot read for teares,
 Fill mee the pot I prethe fellow Gulch.
 (II, p. 259, Vol. III)

In the same rehearsal, when Clout asks what they will do for a Prologue, Posthast replies, "I'll doo't extempore." When they ask to hear a sample of the Epilogue, Posthast supplies it:

Post. Why man?
The glassei is run, our play is done,
Hence Time doth call, wee thanke you all.
 Gulch. I but how if they doe not clap their hands.
 Post. No matter so they thump us not.
 (II, p. 260, Vol. III)

They advertise two plays, The Lascivious Knight and Lady Nature, but their repertoire also includes, according to Posthast:

Mother Gurtions neadle: (a Tragedy.)
The Divell and Dives; (a Comedie.)
A russet coate, and a Knaves cap; (an Infernall.)
A prowd heart and a beggars purse; (a pastorall.)
The Widdowes apron-strings; (a nocturnall.)
 (II, p. 263, Vol. III)

The poor quality of Posthast's work, his greater interest in wine, his casual attitude about extemporaneous ad-libbing, and the concern of the players over whether or not the audience will applaud--all of this does little to commend the motives and abilities of the group, and bespeaks the players' vast lack of professionalism. While these burlesque scenes provide the strongest satire of the public companies in

the play, also to be considered are the reactions of the three upper classes to this group of players.

Two lawyers and two merchants--Fourcher, Voucher, Velure, and Lyon-rash--have the following discussion, unflattering to the players, about their afternoon's entertainment:

Lion. Gentlemen, how shall wee spend this after-noone?

Four. Fayth lets goe see a Play.

Vel. See a Play, a proper pastime indeed: to heere a deale of prating to so little purpose.

Vour. Why this going to a play is now all in the fashion.

(I, p. 252, Vol. III)

They finally decide instead to spend the afternoon listening to Chrisoganus read mathematics at the academy.

The reaction of the nobility, who engage these players to perform for them, is even more severe. As Anthony Caputi points out, these "homespuns with artistic pretensions . . . embody what the intelligentsia apparently deplored most about the public companies. It is all too plain that they are ignorant."¹⁷ The scene including the play-within-a-play involves broad burlesque both of the players and those who watch them. The onstage audience consists of, among others, Lord Mavortius, who is the host; Philarchus; a lady; and Landulpho, an Italian lord. The play that they watch is an unbelievable hodgepodge, beginning as the romance of Troylus and Cressida and ending as a rough semblance of a morality. The first speech belongs to Troylus:

Troy. Come Cressida my Cresset light,
Thy face doth shine both day and night,
Behold, behold, thy garter blue,
Thy knight his valiant elboe weares,

¹⁷Caputi, p. 91.

That When he shakes his furious Speare,
 The foe in shivering fearefull sort,
 May lay him downe in death to snort.
 (II, p. 265, Vol. III)

This speech is noteworthy as an example of Posthast's typical doggerel; it is also known for its possible pun on Shakespeare's name in the fifth line.

The romance has hardly gotten under way when it is interrupted by what Alvin P. Kernan has called "one of the most hilarious parody stage directions to be found in Elizabethan drama"¹⁸: "Enter a roaring Divell with the Vice on his back, Iniquity in one hand; and Juventus in the other" (II, p. 265, Vol. III).

Understandably, the onstage audience finds this performance an abomination. But they, too, are the objects of Marston's satire. This act presents the allegorical phase of *Plenty*, in which people are tempted by Pride, and the English nobility, in seeking entertainment, do not appear to great advantage. If the mechanicals are guilty of copying the London theater whether or not they understand it, the lords and ladies are guilty of copying the Italians (here represented by

¹⁸"John Marston's Play Histriomastix," Modern Language Quarterly, 19 (1958), 135. In this excellent discussion of the play, Kernan argues for the unity of Histriomastix and against the idea that it is Marston's revision of an earlier play. His first argument is that the mixture of romance and morality in the sub-play is an intentional part of Marston's "sneer" at the players. His second argument is that the change of the character Chrisoganus from scholar to satirist is also an intentional part of a dramatic whole; that his deterioration parallels that of the other groups as the play progresses through the six phases from Peace to Poverty. "The play is then a study in social breakdown, and the ranting satirist is pictured as one form of abnormality, little better than the other debased characters among whom he lives and on whom he feeds. All the characters have perverted the boon which nature granted them, namely, reason" (p. 140).

Lord Landulpho) in their opinions of theatrical affairs. The lady admits as much:

Lady. These admirable wits of Italy,
That court with lookes, and speake in sillables,
Are curious sepervisours over strangers,
And when wee covet so to frame our selves,
(Like over-nice portraying picturers,)
We spoyle the counterfeit in colouring;
England is playne and loves her mothers guyse,
Enricht with cunning, as her parents rise.

(II, pp. 263-64, Vol. III)

She and the others are quick to ask Landulpho his opinion of the production at hand, and they immediately reflect his opinions, at the same time expressing hope that the play will improve. His comments are, predictably, scathing:

Land. Most ugly lines and base-browne-paper-stuffe
Thus to abuse our heavenly poesie,
That sacred off-spring from the braine of Jove,
Thus to be mangled with prophane absurds,
Strangled and chok't with lawlesse bastards words.

(II, p. 264, Vol. III)

And he cannot resist the temptation to make the inevitable comparisons with Italy:

Lan. I blush in your behalves at this base trash;
In honour of our Italy we sport,
As if a Synod of the holly Gods,
Came to tryumph within our Theaters,
(Alwaies commending English curtesie.)

(II, p. 266, Vol. III)

The fate of Sir Oliver Owlet's men inevitably runs the course of the rest of the cycle. In Act III (Pride) Mavortius is firing some of his servingmen in order to allow money for more plays: "A thousand pound a yeare, will so be sav'd / For revelling, and banquetting and playes" (III, p. 271, Vol. III). This action provokes the following denunciation of players from one of the servingmen:

2. For service, this is savage recompence.
 Your Fathers bought lands and maintained men?
 You sell your lands, and scarce keepe rascall boyes,
 Who Ape-like jet, in garded coates; are whipt
 For mocking men? though with a shamlesse face,
 yet gracelesse boyes can never men disgrace.
 (III, p. 271, Vol. III)

Criticism of the players reaches its peak in this act when the players, seeking to purchase additional plays, refuse to pay the scholar Chrisoganus ten pounds for a play that he has written. He curses their pride, prophesying that they will have difficulty finding good plays to perform, but they reply in their typical jaunty fashion, "Not while goosequillian Posthast holds his pen" (III, p. 273, Vol. III). At this point Chrisoganus denounces the players in a major speech that, according to Caputi, "neatly summarizes the intelligentsia's view of the public companies" because they are "committed to what was for the new generation of writers the reprehensible practice of catering to the multitude."¹⁹ Chrisoganus makes the following assault on the public companies:

Chri. VVrite on, crie on, yawle to the common sort
 Of thickskin'd auditours: such rotten stuffs,
 More fit to fill the paunch of Esquiline,
 Then feed the hearings of judicial eares,
 Yee shades tryumphe, while foggy Ignorance
 Clouds bright Apollos beauty: Time will cleere,
 The misty dullnesse of Spectators Eeys,
 Then wofull hisses to your fopperies,
 O age when every Scriveners boy shall dippe
 Prophaning quills into Thessaliaes Spring,
 When every artist prentice that hath read
 The pleasant pantry of concepts, shall dare,
 To write as confident as Hercules.
 When every Ballad-monger boldly writes:
 And windy froth of bottle-ale doth fill
 Their purest organ of invention:
 Yet all applauded and puft up with pryde,
 Swell in conceit, and load the stage with stuffe,

¹⁹Caputi, p. 92.

Rakt from the rotten imbers of stall jests:
 Which basest lines best please the vulgar sence
 Make truest rapture lost preheminance.
 (III, pp. 273-74, Vol. III)

Here Chrisoganus summarizes the judgments against the public acting companies that have been present, throughout the play, in the burlesque scenes involving Posthast and his group. The would-be actors are ignorant, uneducated, over-confident, and totally lacking in talent. Like characters in the mysteries, they address the audience directly, often identifying themselves and the parts they are playing. They are unaware of how bad they are--especially their verse--and they seem to think that anyone can act. They fail in their imitation of the Italians; in fact, they appear not to understand what they are saying (hence they mix the plots of different plays in inappropriate ways).

In much of this they resemble Bottom and his associates in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Those mechanicals have been described as having

three traits in common with those medieval dramatists who designed the Mystery cycles and Morality plays: they have extraordinarily literal minds; they are profoundly in earnest; and they cannot tear their attention away from the audience. . . . The interlude becomes, in effect, an essay on the art of destroying a play.²⁰

But Posthast's players, unlike Bottom and his friends, are less in earnest and even less able--or willing--to understand the play they are performing. Their motives are base: they would rather do this than work. Their play-within-a-play becomes an essay on how to destroy dramatic illusion, with the added suggestion that this is precisely what many of those practicing the dramatic arts actually do.

²⁰Righter, p. 97.

The last three acts of the cycle--those dealing with Envy, War, and Poverty--pass in similar fashion. In Act IV Envy is plaguing the players as they try to rehearse, and they are impressed into the army in Act V in spite of Gut's attempt to talk the officer into sparing them:

Gut. Alasse sir, we Players are priviledg'd,
Tis our Audience must fight in the field for us,
And we upon the stage for them.

(V. p. 286, Vol. III)

The final act shows the dominance of Poverty as the players are unable to pay their hostess. They begin to pawn their costumes in order to raise funds, but the constable offers them a choice: either to be shipped away for idleness or to keep themselves honestly, paying taxes to relieve the poor. They are shipped, complaining that they will have to take up their various trades again.

Thus the burlesque of the English Renaissance stage is consistent throughout Histriomastix in showing the players in a negative vein. They are ill-suited for playing, they have taken up acting for poor reasons, their plays are bad--a fact which everyone tries to overlook--and they are susceptible to numerous other faults such as idleness, laziness, envy, and greed. This view of the public actors adds to the play's unity as it makes this primary statement about the inferior quality of contemporary acting in England.

There are several things to be said about the contribution made by this play to the Marston canon. First, it is admittedly a poor play, but perhaps not as poor as has been generally thought. The portion which is a morality is complete and unflawed. There is some complexity of structure, with six acts representing six allegorical stages

of life, four classes of society, many characters, and many dramatic techniques (to be satirized) woven together.

The subplot involving Posthast is of great interest in this essay. Histriomastix is a play whose theme is denunciation of plays and whose chief presentation of this theme is done through Posthast's play-within-a-play. Here the medium is indeed the message, but the message is a double one. For while the obvious theme is to caricature groups who, like Posthast and his friends, are ill-suited for acting, the situation paradoxically contains a larger affirmation of playing as an art form. This is because Marston uses the medium of the play to comment on the theater, and in this sense he makes a positive statement about the effectiveness of a play. The play-within-a-play, in its attack on plays, satirizes both itself and the outer play, and the theater audience is viewing both a burlesque and a serious version of the medium being satirized. Histriomastix is doubly theater about theater.

The suggestion is that life is also a play. For the use of a play-within-a-play inevitably implies that there is an outer play--that of life itself--framing every specific action that takes place, just as the outer play frames the play-within-a-play onstage. In this sense the stage becomes an emblem of the world at large, holding a mirror up to nature. There are at least two levels of illusion operating, as the audience views first the main play and then the secondary illusion of the inner play seen by Lord Mavortius and the others. The world in which the normal lives of the spectators are lived frames the performance, providing a third level of action, and the entire effect reminds these viewers that their daily lives contain elements of illusion similar to those seen on the stage. As individuals in the audience identify with

Mavortius or any other character, the next step is to think of themselves as also actors on the stage of the world.

Marston's use of a play-within-a-play to satirize a type of playing is not his only use of paradox in Histriomastix. It will be seen in later chapters that Marston is frequently ambivalent, that his treatments often show both positive and negative aspects of a single situation. This tendency is already present in this his first play. Not only does he satirize the performances of the public acting companies in the play-within-a-play, which is set within a complete and somewhat elaborate outer play, simultaneously presenting desirable and undesirable features of playing; but he also portrays life as filled with elements at once good and bad. The theme, which is developed much more fully in the later plays, notably The Malcontent, here appears in an undeveloped form. The cyclical structure shows the deterioration of life from the condition of Peace followed by Plenty through various stages leading to War and Poverty; however, inevitably War and Poverty once again lead to Peace. Thus a state of sin follows the fall from grace, but eventually it also is followed by a return to grace, and the circle has been completed.

Anthony Caputi has described Histriomastix as "a rather crude prototype of the first kind of satirical comedy that Marston was to write, that kind which balances and contains exhibitions of absurdity, grotesqueness, and depravity by concurrently communicating a distinct sense that ideal alternatives exist."²¹ The fact that the play ends with the restoration of Peace is significant in ultimately yielding a comic

²¹Caputi, p. 87.

world view. The scales are almost perfectly balanced between positive and negative throughout the play, but at least it may be said that the last scene brings resolution on a hopeful note.

Thus, Marston's first main use of the Play Image--his belief in a correspondence between the World and the Stage--which has included theatrical language, masque, dumb show, induction and epilogue, and the play-within-a-play, has suggested to the audience that life may be highly theatrical. A second use of the Play Image functions in a different way, bringing onstage a group of role-players who pretend to be what they are not for reasons of personal gain. Each of these, in his own way, turns his immediate world into a stage on which his hypocrisy and deceit are acted out.

CHAPTER II

ROLE-PLAYERS: FLATTERERS AND AMORISTS

O, I have seen strange accidents of state:
The flatterer, like the ivy, clip the oak,
And waste it to the heart; lust so confirmed,
That the black act of sin itself not shamed
To be termed courtship.

(Mal. V.vi.137-141)

According to Marston, at times the relationship between the world and the stage is so close that the actions of ordinary people are likened to the posturings of actors on a stage. One group that he habitually portrays in theatrical terms is the parade of satiric types that inhabit all but one of the comedies (The Dutch Courtesan, his last comedy). These characters try to seem what they want to be; they act as though appearance equals reality. They assume a role, and then become confused about the difference between the role and the person behind the role. Their role-playing is categorically scorned by Marston because it is done for foolish and selfish reasons, either to gain some form of personal advancement or to appear before the world to have attained a higher status than is actually the case. This form of role-playing--which includes hypocrisy, deceit, aping, mimicking, pretending to be what one is not, and saying what one does not believe--falls into two primary categories: (1) flattery aimed at promoting advancement, usually at court; and (2) counterfeiting in the game of love.

The appearance of such satiric types is not surprising in plays by John Marston, since his career as a dramatist was immediately preceded by a brief one as a writer of satiric poetry. In 1598 both

The Scourge of Villanie, composed of three books of satire, and the licentious Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image, and Satyres were published; The Scourge of Villanie was reissued in 1599, containing additional satire. Both of these works were included in the edict of June, 1599, in which the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London ordered the burning of such immoral works as satires and epigrams and prohibited their further printing.

Needing to find a legal medium through which he could continue his new-found interest in writing satire, he began grafting the techniques of verse satire onto those of drama later that same year, following the lead of Ben Jonson in Every Man Out of His Humour (also 1599), and ultimately producing several highly effective satirical comedies. He began writing for the theater by revising Histriomastix for the Children of Paul's. The next five years saw the appearance of five comedies--Antonio and Mellida, Jack Drum's Entertainment, What You Will, The Malcontent, and The Fawn--exhibiting an increasingly smooth blending of the two genres.

Alvin P. Kernan has suggested a theory of satire in the first chapter of The Cankered Muse which is helpful in a consideration of Marston's transition from verse satire to drama. He defines satire using the dramatic terms of scene, character, and plot. The scene is the corrupt, disordered society, filled with "idiocy, foolishness, depravity, and dirt." Cities are densely crowded with one-dimensional people who display such qualities as lust, greed, vanity, and stupidity, and who appear "stroking full stomachs, looking vacantly into space, nervously smiling at the great, proudly displaying jewels and figures,

clinking money-bags, slyly fingering new-bought fashions." The one character hovering in or near this scene, pointing out error in the cast of fools and villains with a voice of indignation or even harshness, is the satiric "hero" or satirist. He has both a public and private personality, the public characterized by a blunt adherence to a traditional moral code, which sees the world quite simply as an arena in which a debilitated good is opposed to a powerful evil. His private personality, however, has been tainted by that which he condemns, so that "he seems always to be seeking out and thoroughly enjoying the kind of filth which he claims to be attacking."¹ Taking plot's usual meaning to be "a series of events which constitute a change," Kernan sees satire's most noteworthy quality as the absence of plot or movement. That is, both the satirist and the parade of fools, locked into opposing attitudes, are incapable of changing, which prohibits even a simple victory of good over evil.

This necessary stasis in the plot of satire leads Kernan to point out some fundamental differences between satire on the one hand and comedy and tragedy on the other. Both comedy and satire portray foolishness as widespread and unrestrained, but while comedy assumes that order will ultimately be restored, satire has lost this belief; the world at the end of a satire is essentially the same as it was at the beginning. And while tragedy and satire hold in common a darkling vision of the world, the tragic hero incorporates complexity, flexibility, and powers of reflection that are beyond the scope of the satirist.²

¹The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 1-36.

²Ibid.

All three of these satiric elements--scene, character, and plot--have been included in the five comedies of Marston listed above, as well as the morality in Histriomastix. First of all, the scene in Histriomastix is extremely crowded with members of society's several groups--scholars, lords, lawyers, merchants, and tradesmen-turned-players--whose behavior deteriorates in accordance with the progression of the six phases of the allegorical cycle. As the groups are affected by Pride, Envy, and so on, their behavior matches that described by Kernan in traditional verse satire, and the scholar Chrisoganus responds by assuming the corresponding posture of satirist. The five comedies revolve around the scene at court, where false hints of sexual exploits rule the procession of Amorists in Antonio and Mellida, Jack Drum, and The Fawn, and where excessive interest in adornment, money, and position occupy the parade of Flatterers led by Bilioso (Mal.), Forobosco (AM), and Lampatho (WYW); the scene also includes the antics of fools: Simplicius Faber (WYW), Balurdo (AM), Passarello (Mal.), and Dondolo (Fawn).

Furthermore, the satiric "hero" or satirist, satire's only real character, assumes increasing importance in each succeeding play, from the scholar Chrisoganus (HM), who begins to rail as Pride leads to Envy, War, and Poverty; through Feliche (AM), Planet (JDE), and Quadratus (WYW), who observe and rail at the depravity around them; to the dominant figures of Malevole (Mal.) and Faunus (Fawn) who, in disguise, control the action of their respective plays. Malevole and Faunus embody one of Marston's two main innovations in his combining of satire and comedy. They at once act as satirists--railing throughout their respective plays at flattery and corruption at court, and exposing

it in each play's final scene--and as protagonists, or "heroes," of comedy. As such, both are disguised dukes who also reveal their own identities and achieve their respective goals at play's end. Marston has harmoniously blended satire and comedy with his invention of this kind of disguised hero.

Kernan's third category, that of plot, is the one in which Marston's greatest innovating necessarily takes place as he moves from verse satire to drama. In Histriomastix there is little dramatic movement, and what movement does occur is controlled by the play's six allegorical phases; this play is most like verse satire in its presentation of satirist and fools, who perform their traditional functions but are otherwise separate from the rest of the play's action. At the end they are exactly where they were in the beginning, a fact which corresponds to the expectation of stasis in a satiric plot. Indeed, the play exhibits more skill in satire than in drama on the part of its author. In Antonio and Mellida, Jack Drum's Entertainment, and What You Will, the traditional roles of satirist, knaves, and villains are clearly recognizable, but their interplay is of slight interest to the main plot; in these plays satire and comedy exist side by side but are only roughly woven together.

In The Malcontent, however, deposed duke Altofronto's disguise in the main plot is that of a snarling satirist, and the play's resolution involves the looked-for moment when both fools and wrongdoers from each level of action are taken to task by the restored ruler. Satire and comedy are here combined smoothly and skillfully. Finally, in The Fawn, in a further variation on this idea, Marston allows his duke/protagonist Hercules to substitute the disguise of Flatterer, or

Fawn, for that of satirist; his plan to expose the court Flatterers with his own use of flattery achieves dramatic interest equal to that of the traditional love-interest between Tiberio and Dulcimet. In both The Malcontent and The Fawn, by making the exposure of folly a significant part of the comic resolution, Marston successfully combines the restoration of order and happy ending requisite to comedy (regaining a throne in The Malcontent, the marriage of Tiberio and Dulcimet in The Fawn) with the stasis required by satire, in which the satiric types, though exposed, never change or see the error of their ways. In these two plays Marston happily fuses verse satire and comedy into a unified genre which Jonson termed "comicall satyre."

When Marston began bringing his cast of satiric types to the stage, he gave them yet a second theatrical dimension by showing each instance of folly or villainy to be inseparable from private role-playing of an individual nature. Although it will be seen that Marston approves certain kinds of roles undertaken for commendable reasons--roles which anyone may at times assume and which are shed when the desired goal is reached--he also clearly scorns and satirizes those dissemblers whose roles are of a permanent nature and are affected for entirely selfish reasons.

Brian Gibbons has called this secondary form of role-playing original in the satiric comedies of Marston, which in other respects are imitative of Jonson's comedies:

In Marston's Comical Satyres the self-sufficient episodes absorb the major creative energies; but though there is a close general imitation of Jonson, with many episodes (exempla) displaying and ridiculing absurd and fantastic behaviour, there is a distinctive fresh contribution. In Antonio and Mellida, What You Will, The Fawn, and The Malcontent. . . Marston, unlike Jonson, excludes none of his characters from satiric analysis, and with an almost obsessive alertness

displays their capacity for evasion, hypocrisy and self-deception. In fact it is not only the dramatist who uses parody to display such evasions; the characters themselves use it consciously and continuously in social contact and as a ready device in schemes.³

Two groups in particular--Flatterers and Amorists--employ such "evasion, hypocrisy, and self-deception" in Marston's comedies. The Flatterers hope to ingratiate themselves at court--with whichever personage happens to hold power--by appearing to be fashionable, wealthy, wise, or sophisticated. Their charade is designed to make a favorable impression on someone else, and the dissembling is often accompanied by insincere praise and servile fawning.

I. FLATTERERS

Marston's plays, according to Philip J. Finkelpearl, "are filled with creatures whom philosophical codes, or passions, or fashions in clothing, manners, or language have blocked from acting naturally and freely."⁴ As anyone acting in a play must choose a costume, study a script, and assume appropriate actions, so Marston's Flatterers and Amorists alter their clothing, language, and behavior in accordance with the roles they have chosen to play. The Amorists put on clothing which they think will attract a woman, adopt the exaggerated, poetic language of lovers, and follow a rigidly defined, artificial code of behavior that includes writing notes, sending tokens, singing songs,

³Gibbons, p. 87.

⁴Finkelpearl, p. 258. Gail Garloch discusses certain of Jonson's characters, whom she terms Pretenders ("not aware of the theatrical nature of their actions") and Actors (with enough self-awareness to distinguish between their roles and their real selves), and who also alter their external appearance in the three areas of dress, behavior, and language (pp. 24-50).

and arranging trysts. The Flatterers prefer clothing whose luxurious fabric and detailed ornamentation will attract attention, an elaborate speaking style which they hope will indicate a background of breeding, and behavior that includes following and flattering people whom they hope to impress. Many of Marston's characters alter one or more of these external features, and are seen in the plays both with and without the feigned style of dress, speech, or acting. The role is regularly adopted whenever such a character is in the presence of someone by whom he hopes to be noticed. In fact, he shifts into the role automatically, evidently believing that by doing so he will become that which he imitates (a successful lover or a favorite at court). However, he only succeeds in becoming a persistent hypocrite or dissembler. Although the secondary role becomes a permanent, ongoing thing, and the character may be gullible enough to believe that he is what he seems, yet a barrier always remains between the character and his assumed role. He is doomed never to become what he would like to be because of his innate falseness. His role inhibits rather than permits the discovery of truth.

The categories established in this chapter are not exclusive groupings, for there is inevitable overlapping; all represent broad tendencies. Some Amorists use flattery when pursuing love, but these will be distinguished from other Flatterers and treated with the Amorists. A lover's writing a poem or singing a song may be considered a specialized form either of language or of behavior, but in the following discussion these acts will be viewed as behavior. Shifts in language, to be considered, must occur in ordinary speech.

The Flatterers are the first group of satiric types that enliven Marston's comedies, and their preoccupation with costume is evident in Bilioso (Mal.), an old courtier who will stop at nothing to advance his own position. He is immensely flattered to be asked by Duke Pietro to go as ambassador to Florence, bearing news to the court there of Aurelia's adultery, and he begins to imagine himself as emissary as he chats with his wife Biancha: "I'll have fifty gentlemen shall attend upon me. . . . and they shall go apparelled thus, in sea-water green suits, ash-colour cloaks, watchet stockings, and popinjay-green feathers" (III.i.51-52, 54-56). Bilioso's concerns never extend deeper than the surface appearance as he prattles on:

Bil. . . . Passarello, my fool, shall go along with me; marry, he shall be in velvet.

Bian. A fool in velvet!

Bil. Ay, 'tis common for your fool to wear satin; I'll have mine in velvet.

Bian. What will you wear, then, my Lord?

Bil. Velvet too; marry, it shall be embroidered, because I'll differ from the fool somewhat.

(Mal. III.i.61-68)

The embroidery, of course, is the chief way in which Bilioso can claim to differ from his fool. Without the difference in clothing, people would be hard pressed to distinguish between the two on the basis of speech or actions. Another foolish character known for his attention to the external person is Balurdo (AM), who believes that by his clothes he will be known. Feliche, an unwilling listener, learns more than he cares to know about the ostentatious costume that Balurdo will wear to the court:

BALURDO.

If you see one in a yellow taffeta doublet cut upon carnation velour, a green hat, a blue pair of velvet hose, a gilt rapier and an orange-tawny pair of worsted silk stockings, that's I, that's I.

FELICHE.

Very good; farewell.

BALURDO.

Ho, you shall know me as easily; I ha' bought me a new green feather with a red sprig; you shall see my wrought shirt hang out at my breeches; you shall know me.

FELICHE.

Very good, very good; farewell.

BALURDO.

Marry, in the masque 'twill be somewhat hard. But if you hear anybody speak so wittily that he makes all the room laugh, that's I, that's I. Farewell, good signior.

(AM, V.i.77-88)

The Flatterers' concern for wearing the correct costume is strikingly evident in What You Will, a play about the effect of disguise, costume, and external appearance on one's self-concept. A group that Finkelpearl calls "an assortment of clothes-crazy, mindless ninnies"⁵ is featured in a scene in which the satirist Quadratus, the fool Simplicius Faber, and the socially ambitious Lampatho Doria call upon the French knight Laverdure. They catch Laverdure in the act of dressing, appropriately enough, and it is soon apparent that he is obsessed with the impact that he thinks clothing can make. He sends Bydett, his lackey, to see who knocks and what they are wearing, then instructs him in the following dialogue:

Lav. Udes so: my gold-wrought West-coate and Night-cap, open my Trunck, lay my richest sute on the top, my Velvet slippers, cloth of gold gamashes, where are my cloth of silver hose lay them--

Bydet. At pawne sir.

Lav. No sir, I do not bid you lay them at pawne Sir.

Byd. No sir, you need not for they are there already.

Lav. Mor du garzone: set my richest Gloves, Garters, Hatts, just in the way of their eyes, so let them in, observe mee with all dutious respect, let them in.

(WYW II, p. 245, Vol. II)

Laverdure wants his best articles of clothing displayed where the others

⁵Ibid., p. 164.

will be obliged to notice them. Although Lampatho, whom Quadratus is introducing to the Epicurean life, is seeking Laverdure's acquaintance solely because he is a knight, and knows exactly what to say to please this particular knight, it is clear that Laverdure deserves this sort of relationship and allows it in order to feed his own self-esteem. When Quadratus rails, warning Laverdure of Lampatho's insincerity, this exchange follows:

Lav. Horne on my Tailor, could he not bring home,
My Sattin, Taffeta, or Tissue sute:
But I must needs bee cloath'd in Wollen thus?
Bydett, what sayes he for my Silver hose?
And Prim-rose Sattin Doublet? Gods my life,
Gives he no more observance to my body?
Lam. O in that last sute gentle Laverdure,
Visite my lodging: by Appollos front
Do but inquire my name; O straight theile say
Lampatho sutes him-selfe in such a hose.
Sim. Marke that, Quadratus.
Lam. Consorts him-selfe with such a doublet.
Sim. Good, good, good, O Jesu admirable!
Lav. La la ly ro Sir.
(WYW II, p. 247, Vol. II)

Simplicius, as well as Lampatho, hopes to be seen as a gallant, primarily through the clothing that he wears. He becomes the target of a trick played by his page, Holyfernes Pippo, and the rogue Bydett, who have persuaded Simplicius "that ther's no way to redeeme his peach collour satten sute from pawne but by the love of a Cytizens wife" (WYW, p. 272, Vol. II). In his efforts to recover his favorite suit, he manages to be gulled out of the rest of his valuable clothing, chiefly because of his greed for more garments with which to adorn himself, and because of his extreme credulity. He allows himself to fantasize about the splendor that will be his once a merchant's wife is providing his support:

Ile thwack a Jerkin till he groane againe with Gold lace: let mee see,
what should I desire of God, mary a Cloake linde with rich Taffeta,

white Sattin sute, and my gilt Rapier from pawne, nay shee shall
give me a Chaîne of Pearle that shall pay for all.

(WYW V, p. 285, Vol. II)

Quadratus questions him, warns him, and rails, but Simplicius cannot
tear his mind from its fixation on black satin, unshorne velvet, and
other details of appointment:

And a fresh Pearle-colour silke stocking o I I I I, Ile goe to the
halfe crowne ordinary every meale, Ile have my Ivory boxe of To-
bacco, Ile converse with none but Counts and Courtiers--now good
boy, good Sinior, a paire of massie silver Spurs, to a hatch short
sword, and then your imbroderd hanger, and good Sinior--

(WYW V, p. 286, Vol. II)

These are the props and costume with which Simplicius hopes to play
his role of would-be gallant. He raves on: "Ile keep two men and
they shall be Taylors, they shall make sutes continually, and those
shall be cloath of silver" (WYW V, p. 287, Vol. II)

The plan is simple. Simplicius is told that the merchant's
wife has a pander, to whom Simplicius must give anything that he asks,
so as not to seem to be pursuing her love for base gain. Later that
night, alone with her, he will regain his property plus much more.
Simplicius' page Pippo appears in the costume of a merchant's wife,
Bydett in that of a pander, and the play-within-a-play is neatly enacted.
Simplicius is the unwitting actor who provides the necessary props,
when the pander requests his sword and dagger, then his hat and
feather, and finally his purse. The rogues, who keep this booty,
succeed in making Simplicius, in Bydett's words, "a perpetuall and
eternall gull" (WYW V, p. 287, Vol. II). Quadratus' denunciation of
Simplicius rings in the ears of the entire clothes-conscious crowd, with
noticeable use of play language:

The triple Ideotts coxcombe crowne thee,
Bitter epigrames confound thee.

Cucold be when ere thou bride thee,
 Through every comick sceane be drawne,
 Never come thy cloathes from pawne.
 (WYW V, p. 290, Vol. II)

Among other humiliations, he hopes that Simplicius' foolishness will be presented on stage in "every comick sceane."

The adoption of artificial language on the part of the Flatterers is illustrated by Puffe's use of fustian (JDE), Forobosco's pompous flattery (AM), and Gonzago's pretentious language fortified by the silence of Granuffo (Fawn). Brabant Junior describes Puffe's speech to Planet before introducing the two. Puffe's affectation is so conspicuous as to be the object of ridicule, and Brabant Junior thinks that Planet will be amused by

profound toungd Maister Puffe, he that hath a perpetuitie of complement, he whose phrases are as neatly deckt as my Lord Maiors Hensmen. . . . And when his period comes not roundly off, takes tole of the tenth haire of his Bourbon locke: as thus. Sweete Sir, repute me as a (Puffe) selected spirit borne to be the admirer, of your never inough admired (Puffe).
 (JDE I, p. 191, Vol. III)

As predicted, Puffe makes the acquaintance of Planet with elaborate verbiage, and he becomes unknowingly an actor in a brief play-within-a-play with Brabant Signior before the onstage audience of Brabant Junior and Planet. Brabant Signior's purpose is to draw him out so the others may hear the puffed-up language with which he flatters everyone he meets:

Bra. Sig. M. Puffe, I long to do faire service to your love.
Puffe. Most accomplit wit, exquisitly accoutred, (Puffe), Judgement, I could wish my abilitie worthie your service, and my service worthie your abilitie.
 (JDE III, p. 209, Vol. III)

Brabant Signior responds in like language, to encourage him further:

Bra. Sig. I protest your abilities are infinite, your perfections matchless, your matchlesse perfection infinite in abilitie, and your

infinite abilitie, matchlesse in perfection.

(JDE III, p. 209, Vol. III)

Puffe does not disappoint his audience, getting almost hopelessly tangled up in a morass of tedious complementary phrases linked with parallel structure:

Puff. The pressure of my haire, or the puncture of my heart, standes at the service of your sollide perfections: my life is bound to your love, your love being my life, tho my life bee not worthie your love, your perfection is the center to which all the paralels of my affection are drawne: your love my life, your perfection, my affection, being--

Pla. You Asse my Foole.

Puff. Being chaine by the mightie coplet of inevitable destenie, who seeth the sunne, but hee must adore it: who seeth beautie, but he must honour it: who vieweth gold, but he must covet it: then, (ô then) who can behold your sun-like beauteous bolden beauties, but he must more then adore, much more then honour, and most infinitely love to be out, out, out.

Bra. Ju. Out he is indeed.

(JDE III, p. 210, Vol. III)

He remains unaware that his speech is the object of the laughter of others, even his page, as when Katherine refuses to converse with him:

Puf. You take my, my, my meaning (puffe).

Page. Nay if he be puffing once, the fire of his wit is out.

Puf. Why she is gone. Hart did I rise for this?

Pa. She cannot endure puffing. O you puffed her away.

(JDE II, p. 196, Vol. III)

Forobosco in Antonio and Mellida is equally tedious, though his use of flattery is more heavy-handed. In the Induction, the actor preparing to play the part of Forobosco mentions the exaggerated speech that Forobosco the parasite will use: "Ho, I will so tickle the sense of bella graziosa madonna with the titillation of hyperbolical praise that I'll strike it in the nick, in the very nick, chuck" (Induction to AM, 59-61). The actor playing Alberto reminds him to preserve the distinction between the character's inner and outer selves. In other words, the actor will play the part of Forobosco, who will then play the part of

"a supple-chapp'd flatterer." And he does so with ease. When Piero sends out proclamations asking for the heads of Andrugio and Antonio, Forobosco's fawning response is immediately noted by the satirist Feliche:

FOROBOSCO.

They are sent every way; sound policy,
Sweet lord.

FELICHE (aside).

Confusion to these limber sycophants!
No sooner mischief's born in regenty
But flattery christens it with "policy."
(AM I.i.72-76)

Forobosco even flatters the fool Balurdo, who loves to receive flattery as much as to give it, into giving away his silver spurs, again with the choric commentary of Feliche. Hyperbole is the distinguishing feature of his assumed form of speech:

FOROBOSCO.

So help me your sweet bounty, you have the most graceful
presence, applausive elocuty, amazing volubility, polish'd adorn-
ation, delicious affability--

FELICHE.

Whop! Fut, how he tickles yon trout under the gills! You
shall see him take him by and by with groping flattery.

FOROBOSCO.

--that ever ravish'd the ear of wonder. By your sweet self,
than whom I know not a more exquisite, illustrate, accomplished,
pure, respected, ador'd, observed, precious, real, magnanimous,
bounteous--if you have an idle rich cast jerkin or so, it shall
not be cast away, if--Ha! here's a forehead, an eye, a head,
a hair that would make a--or if you have any spare pair of
silver spurs, I'll do you as much right in all kind offices--

FELICHE.

--of a kind parasite.

FOROBOSCO.

--as any of my mean fortunes shall be able to.

BALURDO.

As I am true Christian now, thou hast won the spurs.

FELICHE.

--for flattery.

O how I hate that same Egyptian louse,
A rotten maggot that lives by stinking filth
Of tainted spirits. Vengeance to such dogs
That sprout by gnawing senseless carrion!

(AM II.i.104-124)

Such are the looked-for fruits of flattery. Forobosco has little further to do in the play, but his manipulation of Balurdo shows him to be entirely aware of his hypocritical role, in contrast with the unaware, gullible Puffe.

In Antonio's Revenge Balurdo repeatedly admires others for using words unfamiliar to him. It is his habit to use such impressive words, but alas, since he always uses them incorrectly, the impression which he makes is not the one he hopes to make. A few examples will suffice. Early in the play he picks up the words "retort" and "obtuse" from Matzagente, who is impatient with Balurdo's fooling:

Mat. I scorn to retort the obtuse jest of a fool.

Bal. 'Retort' and 'obtuse': good words, very good words.

Gal. Young prince, look sprightly; fie, a bridegroom sad!

Bal. In truth, if he were retort and obtuse, no question he would be merry; but, and please my Genius, I will be most retort and obtuse ere night.

(AR I.iii.21-26)

"Retort and obtuse" are unfailingly paired as adjectives by Balurdo throughout the rest of the play. Other similar errors also occur, as when Piero commands him to lock Mellida in the castle vault:

Pie. Bid Forobosco and Castilio guard;
Endear thyself Piero's intimate.

Bal. 'Endear' and 'intimate'--good, I assure you. I will endear and intimate Mellida into the dungeon presently.

Pie. Will Pandulpho Feliche wait on me?

Bal. I will make him come, most retort and obtuse, to you presently. I think Sir Geoffrey talks like a councillor.

(AR II.i.47-53)

Sent by Piero to play music to help Maria to sleep, he adopts the words with which she describes his efforts:

Mar. Truly, very pathological and unvulgar.

Bal. 'Pathetical' and 'unvulgar': words of worth, excellent words. In sooth, madam, I have taken a murr, which makes my nose run most pathetically and unvulgarly. Have you any tobacco?

Mar. Good signior, your song.

Bal. Instantly, most unvulgarly, at your service. Truly, here's the most pathological rosin. Umh.

(AR III.iv.40-47)

Balurdo is never made aware of his errors in diction; he is a fool and expected to speak in riddles, after all. But he continually gives the appearance of trying to improve himself by increasing his vocabulary, and at the same time, he manages to draw attention to the elaborate language of others as he repeats and misappropriates it.

A special case in the use of pompous language is that of Gonzago, Duke of Urbin (Fawn), described in the list of "Interlocutores" as "a weak lord of a self-admiring wisdom," and his side-kick Granuffo, "a silent lord." Gonzago cannot be hoping to advance himself at court, since he is already duke. His flattery is only of himself, and he seems determined that everyone else will be as impressed by his knowledge, which he thinks vast, as he himself is. But a little learning proves a dangerous thing in the hands of Gonzago. He boasts of knowledge in the areas of poetry, elocution, and oratory, and delivers interminably long speeches punctuated with asides to Granuffo, who never says a word. Silence means consent to Duke Gonzago, who needs a Granuffo to endure his long-winded talk and to support his ego when asked for confirmation of his past eloquence, wit, wisdom, brain, and discourse. Gonzago uses Greek and Latin phrases, refers to Lucullus (a Roman statesman known for his library), has read Cicero de Oratore, and quotes Ovid, Epictetus, and Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria. Further, he will use a figure of speech and point it out to Granuffo. The irony of all this is that Gonzago's truly witty daughter Dulcimet proceeds, throughout the play, to show him to be as foolish as he has thought himself wise.

A few selected examples of Gonzago's self-conscious grandiloquence will suffice. He admonishes Dulcimer not to become interested in Tiberio when he woos her on behalf of his father. Gonzago cannot speak two consecutive sentences without calling Granuffo's attention to the perfection of his over-ornate style:

When young Tiberio negotiates his father's love, hold heed guard over thy passions, and still keep this full thought firm in thy reason: 'tis his old father's love the young man moves--[to GRANUFFO] is't not well thought, my lord; We must bear brain--and when thou shalt behold Tiberio's life-full eyes and well-filled veins, complexion firm, and hairs that curl with strength of lusty moisture --[to GRANUFFO] I think we yet can speak, we ha' been eloquent--thou must shape thy thoughts to apprehend his father well in years.

(Fawn I.ii.84-94)

He also likes to praise his daughter's wit by noting her likeness to him, adding that his wit has since his youth matured into wisdom, as when he comments to Granuffo, "Hear, that's my wit. When I was eighteen old such a pretty toying wit had I, but age hath made us wise--has't not, my lord?" (I.ii.113-115) or "Her very phrase displays whose child she is" (IV.601).

When Gonzago becomes more and more involved, with Dulcimer's help, in warning the bewildered Tiberio to stay away from his daughter, he becomes correspondingly anxious about how well he is expressing himself. Thus he interrupts his own turgid speech with even more frequent asides, as in the following examples:

I will not lose the glory of reproof.
Is this th' office of ambassadors, my lord Tiberio,
Nay, duty of a son, nay, piety of a man
(A figure called in art gradatio--
With some learned, climax), to court a royal lady
For's master, father, or perchance his friend,
And yet intend the purchase of such beauty
To his own use?

(Fawn III.397-404)

and

Meantime, as you respect your best relation
 Of your fair bearing (Granuffo, is't not good?)--
 Of your fair bearing, rest more anxious
 (No, anxious is not a good word)--rest more vigilant
 Over your passion; both forbear and bear,
Anechou e apechou (that's Greek to you now),
Else your youth shall find
 Our nose not stuffed, but we can take the wind
 And smell you out--I say no more but thus--

 Look to't, quos ego--(a figure called aposiopesis or
increpatio).

(Fawn III.442-450, 453)

His utter delight in hearing himself talk continues even into the Parliament of Cupid at the play's end--"('fore Jove, we could make a good poet)" (V.137)--until Faunus exposes both Gonzago and Granuffo, along with the cast of Amorists, for their "presumptuous wisdom" (V.392) and "seeming wise only by silence" (V.373). Faunus deflates their pompous roles as easily as he would stick a pin in a balloon. Both have tried to create an illusion of wit and wisdom--Gonzago through pretentious language, Granuffo through the absence of language. In each case the reality of the person behind the role is seen to be the opposite of the illusion. Granuffo, when made to speak, speaks drivel; Gonzago, when brought face to face with the true wit of Dulcimer, who has accomplished all her aims with his unwitting assistance, speaks with honest simplicity for the first time in the play: "By the Lord, I am ashamed of myself, that's the plain troth" (V.473-474). The man whom Herod once called "very happily mad" (I.ii.259) is finally brought to his senses: "What a slumber have I been in!" (V.475).

In addition to clothing and language, the Flatterers assume specific behavior that is suited to their roles. This behavior is observed and pointed out by several characters in Marston's comedies.

For example, in the Induction to Antonio and Mellida, the actions expected of the fool Balurdo are described; Balurdo is

one whose foppish nature might seem to create only for wise men's recreation, and like a juiceless bark, to preserve the sap of more strenuous spirits. A servile hound that loves the scent of fore-running fashion; like an empty hollow vault still giving an echo to wit, greedily champing what any other well-valued judgment had before hand chew'd.

(Induction to AM, 33-39).

He is another pretender to wit, an imitator, whose role is called "[t]he part of all the world" (Induction, 30), suggesting that many people assume similar roles and by so doing, become fools. Meletza in What You Will augments this negative impression of the behavior of a courtier when asked about Quadratus, "the absolute Courtier":

He is a fine Courtier, flatters admirable, kisses
Faire, Madam, smells surpassing sweete, weares
And holds up the arras, supportes the tapistry
When I passe into the presence very gracefully.

(WYW IV, p. 275, Vol. II)

According to these two comments, courtiers are often fops to whom fawning is second nature. Both are concerned with the details of external appearance (and scent), and Quadratus pays attention to the niceties of etiquette.

The page Noose, also in What You Will, recounts the particulars of the false behavior of his master, an "ordinary gallant":

He eates well and right slovenly, and when the dice favor him goes in good cloathes, and scowers his pinke collour silk stockings: when he hath any mony he beares his crownes, when he hath none I carry his purse, he cheates well, sweares better, but swaggers in a wantons Chamber admirably, hee loves his boy and the rump of a cram'd Capon, and this summer hath a passing thrifty humor to bottle ale. . . . I curle his perriwig, painte his cheekes, perfume his breath, I am his froterer or rubber in a Hot-house, the prop of his lies, the bearer of his fals dice.

(WYW III, p. 271, Vol. II)

Such courtiers have a practical if unadmirable motive in their use of

flattery--their financial support. Like Simplicius (WYW) who hopes to retrieve a suit from pawn once he is subsidized by a merchant's wife, or Forobosco (AM) who flatters Balurdo into giving him the silver spurs, Noose's master is often in need of money with which to maintain himself in the style to which he aspires, and which he gets as best he can--by "cheat[ing] well" at dice and elsewhere. The courtier lies, swaggers, and enjoys the pursuit of drink, food, and women (for whom he affects a perriwig, painted cheeks, and perfumed breath). Here again deceit, flattery, and concern for appearance are a part of the artificial role.

Examples of the behavior assumed by these creatures are particularly outstanding in The Fawn and The Malcontent. In The Fawn, Duke Hercules/Faunus is the primary Flatterer because he chooses the disguise of Fawn--or Parasitaster (imitation parasite), as the subtitle indicates--in order to put to shame the parade of satiric types for their assumed falseness and flattery of others. He has considered and rejected railing as a means of exposing folly, choosing instead to imitate flattery and finally reveal it, thus:

[S]ince vice is now termed fashion,
And most are grown to ill even with defense:
I vow to waste this most prodigious heat,
That falls into my age like scorching flames
In depth of numbed December, in flattering all
In all of their extremest viciousness,
Till in their own loved race they fall most lame,
And meet full butt the close of vice's shame.
(Fawn I.ii.343-350)

Flattery is by definition false praise, but two distinct types of false praise may be seen in The Fawn. The fawners adopt their roles as a way of life, to improve themselves socially and materially (and they will be discussed with the Amorists, since their pretense is

primarily in the area of sexual pursuit), whereas Faunus plays his part only for a temporary period and to carry out a clearly defined purpose.⁶ Both types of flattery are insincere, but that of Faunus is calculated ultimately to bring an end to falseness and insincerity, to arrive at truth, to strip away all roles--both his own and those of the others--in order to reveal the character underneath. Although Faunus is not a satirist, satire is implicit in all his fawning, since he finds something to praise in the most corrupt people and situations. As Finkelpearl has commented, this use of flattery is "disguised satire." Faunus is actually "a satyr-satirist in another guise."⁷

Inevitably, there are also similarities between Faunus and the Amorists whom he flatters. Harkening back to Kernan's definition of the satirist's public and private personalities (which are reversed in the case of Faunus)⁸ it is difficult for a satirist to remain near those who surround him without becoming tainted. In setting out to practice that which he privately condemns, Faunus is particularly susceptible to taking pleasure in his use of flattery. Gerald A. Smith has remarked about this point of vulnerability:

He plays his disguised part with a vengeance. He eggs on the flatterers to more flattery, the braggarts to bigger brags, the

⁶His purpose is threefold. In addition to (1) exposing the falseness of the Amorists, he is (2) promoting the marriage of Tiberio and Dulcimel, and also (3) "indulging his inclination for a lark" (Caputi, p. 212).

⁷Finkelpearl, p. 231.

⁸The public personality of the satirist is normally one of blunt railing at infractions of the moral code, while his private personality is attracted to the vices that he attacks. Faunus, however, publicly associates with the courtiers and practices flattery, while privately denouncing their falseness.

lovers to grander boasts, the pseudo-learned to more impressive appraisals of their wisdom. He also enjoys playing his part: no longer is he Hercules, the upright duke, making his way by strength, honesty, and fair dealing; he is Faunus, the slippery sycophant, who climb by lying, flattery, and fraud.

Throughout the play, therefore, Faunus flatters one character after another, relishing the opportunity to retaliate, since he as duke has often experienced flattery:

But since our rank
Hath ever been afflicted with these flies
(That blow corruption on the sweetest virtues),
I will revenge us upon you all
With the same stratagem we still are caught,
Flattery itself. . . .

(Fawn I.ii.336-341)

His behavior, as imitation courtier, is flawless, and his true identity remains undetected. When Herod says he is married, Faunus says, "Why, I like you well for it." Whereupon Herod admits he is not married, to which the Fawn unhesitatingly replies, "Why, I like you better for it" (II.51, 53). Does Sir Amoroso have children? "O, 'tis a blessed assurance of heaven's favour, and long-lasting name, to have many children" (II.131-133. But he has no children!

O, that's most excellent, a right special happiness. He shall not be a drudge to his cradle, a slave to his child; he shall be sure not to cherish another's blood, nor toil to advance peradventure some rascal's lust; without children a man is unclogged, his wife almost a maid.

(Fawn II.135-139)

Faunus is determined to praise everyone, no matter how difficult this may be in the face of blatant hypocrisy. When he catches Herod forging a love letter, he immediately gives approval:

⁹Gerald A. Smith, "Introduction" to The Fawn (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 1965, p. xiv.

As for thy lying, as long as there's policy in't, it is very passable. Wherefore has heaven given man tongue but to speak to a man's own glory? He that cannot swell bigger than his natural skin, nor seem to be in more grace than he is, has not learned the very rudiments or A B C of courtship.

(Fawn IV.173-179)

He commends Donna Garbetza for cuckolding her husband, Sir Amoroso, by sleeping with Amoroso's brother Herod. He even finds words with which to address two ripe candidates for flattering, Granuffo and Gonzago:

Silence is an excellent modest grace, but especially before so instructing a wisdom as that of your excellency's. As for his advancement, you gave it most royally, because he deserves it least duly; since to give to virtuous desert is rather a due requital than a princely magnificence, when to undeservingness it is merely all bounty and free grace.

(Fawn III.301-307)

The hoped-for result is Faunus' reward for all his effort. He is popular with lords and ladies, prince and princess, and especially with the duke. He has achieved the first goal of all flatterers; his advancement at the Court of Urbino is secure, and he is free to carry out arrangements for his Parliament of Cupids, in which all will be made public.

Deceit and dissembling abound in Marston's most important study in role-playing, The Malcontent. Examples of flattering behavior range from brief glimpses of it in the minor characters to its ultimate refinement in Bilioso and Biancha. The satirist Malevole, in his first appearance in the play, turns from one courtier to another, railing at each for his "flattery and cozenage" (I.iii.20). To Ferrardo: "Ah, ye lecherous animal! my little ferret, he goes sucking up and down the palace into every hen's nest, like a weasel" (I.iii.22-24); he spends his time following "those antique painted drabs that are still affected of

young courtiers, Flattery, Pride, and Venery" (I.iii.25-27). To Bilioso: "[T]hou hugely-horned old Duke's ox, good Master Make-please" (I.iii.40-41). To Guerrino: "Now, Signior Guerrino, that thou from a most pitied prisoner shouldst grow a most loathed flatterer!" (I.iii.64-66). And to Equato: "'[T]is pity that thou, being so excellent a scholar by art, shouldst be so ridiculous a fool by nature" (I.iii.69-71).

Even Passarello, fool to Bilioso, though he often speaks truth, is guilty of wearing a mask and using flattery for personal profit. He tells the theater audience: "Well, I'll 'dog' my lord; and the word is proper; for when I fawn upon him, he feeds me" (III.i.145-146). Passarello uses blunt accuracy in describing his master Bilioso to Malevole. Bilioso retains, in addition to Passarello, fifteen jesters to teach him "the art of fooling," which he then practices on the duke and duchess. Not only does he lie, but "he'll be of any side for most money" (I.vii.46,48).

This last point provides the definitive description of Bilioso, a choleric old marshal, who, instructed by his young wife Biancha ever "to flatter greatness" (III.i.45-46), is absolutely fickle in bestowing his affections. He limits his friendship to those who are currently in favor with the duke, if he can find out who they are (and who the duke is finally going to be--not an easy task in the Court of Genoa, where there are so many contenders). When Bilioso hears Duke Pietro speak well of Malevole, he overlooks Malevole's taunts, courts his acquaintance, offers his daughter-in-law to be Malevole's mistress, and then offers his wife: "What! I keep her not at court for nothing." (I.iv.72-73). Later, hearing Pietro express displeasure with Malevole, Bilioso the

chameleon echoes the duke, and Malevole responds by quoting Bilioso's earlier fawning words to him:

Bil. Why, when? out, ye rogue! Begone, ye rascal!
Mal. "I shall now leave ye with all my best wishes."
Bil. Out, ye cur!
Mal. "Only let's hold together a firm correspondence."
Bil. Out!
Mal. "A mutual-friendly-reciprocal-perpetual kind of steady-unanimous heartily-leagued--"
Bil. Hence, ye gross-jawed peasantry! Out, go!
 (Mal. II.iii.23-30; quotation marks mine)

Duke Pietro sends Bilioso as ambassador to Florence, carrying news of Aurelia's treachery to her father. When he returns Pietro is thought to be dead, Mendoza is duke, and Malevole is once again in favor. The scene in which he returns, bearing word that Florence supports the restoration of Duke Altofronto, displays the turncoat at his worst:

Mal. [W]hat will you do?
Bil. Is Mendoza strongest?
Mal. Yet he is.
Bil. Then yet I'll hold with him.
Mal. But if that Altofront should turn straight again?
Bil. Why, then, I would turn straight again. 'Tis good run still with him that has most might: I had rather stand with wrong, than fall with right.
Mal. What religion will you be of now?
Bil. Of the Duke's religion, when I know what it is.
 (Mal. IV.v.85-94)

Bilioso is truly false. His lack of personal integrity is total, his private will indistinguishable from the flattering roles he plays so slavishly. As he ushers Mendoza from the enthronement, he runs into Malevole, now one of Mendoza's inner circle. The dialogue reverses an earlier scene, Malevole now repeating Bilioso's recent harsh words to him:

Mal. Out, rogue!
Bil. Malevole--
Mal. 'Hence, ye gross-jawed peasantry--out, go!'
Bil. Nay, sweet Malevole, since my return I hear you are become the thing I always prophesied would be, an advanced virtue.

. . . if as often as courtiers play the knaves, honest men
should be angry--Why, look ye, we must colloque sometimes,
forswear sometimes.

(Mal. V.iii.69-74, 76-78)

Our last glimpse of him is at yet another coronation--Altofronto's--where he pretends that he has known Malevole's identity all along, that he has always said he would stand for Altofronto if the duke returned (and thus has been willing to put up with Malevole's insulting him).

Bilioso is predictable to the end. And yet he is aware of his roles, as his discussion with Biancha verifies. He assumes them deliberately, and allows them to obliterate his own personal feelings. This form of role-playing is thoroughly destructive; reality is consumed by illusion. Bilioso repeatedly sells his soul to the one in power, ironically thinking it the only way to survive. Such a rank Flatterer is satirically dubbed by Malevole "my true court-friend. . . my dear Castilio" (I.iv.89). Although he is called to task by the restored Altofronto in the final scene, he is unashamed and unreformed, a satiric type to the end.

Malevole's role in relation to the Flatterers is twofold. He plays satirist, but this is for him an assumed part, for he is actually Altofronto, duke and judge. Because the theater audience knows of his disguise, anticipation of the play's outcome adds another dimension to his railing--a hope that folly and evil will be brought to light in the end. Malevole's role is perfectly suitable for him as deposed duke, because while it serves his purpose of allowing him to move among his people, involved but unrecognized, it also allows him to express opinions that certainly must be those of Altofronto. He can, in safety, denounce the behavior of everyone from fool to duke, verbalizing the

melancholy and near despair that are a part of his daily burden as exiled ruler. Much of Malevole's role must be quite easy for him to play. On one level, he is what he seems--bitterly disillusioned. The illusion and the reality of Malevole draw so close together that they almost merge.

In The Malcontent Marston's fusion of satire with drama is eminently successful. The "scene" includes both the parade of Flatterers and a range of much more malicious intriguers; the "plot" maintains the integrity of both forms: comedy, as Altofronto mounts a successful campaign to recover his throne, and satire, as Flatterers are denounced and contained, but not converted; the "satirist" is the highly satisfying Malevole, who brings to his condemnation of the Flatterers a complex set of motives.

Critics are unanimous in praising this play as satirical comedy and Malevole/Altofronto as crucial to its success. M.L. Wine points out that the traditional satirist is a passive spectator, but that by making Malevole an active participant, Marston "gives greater urgency to his railings and. . .creates a figure who, straddling the two worlds of the play, gives us the assurance of the broad perspective."¹⁰ Anthony Caputi likens Malevole to earlier satirists, because

he pounces on the other characters one by one, summing them up, just as the satirist had, as toadies, lechers, or panderesses. . . . He is the jaundiced yet amused observer of a world in the coils of Opinion, a world in which no one is what he seems, in which characters shift from one role to another with shocking facility, in which some characters do not even know themselves.

However, as Altofronto, protagonist and judge, he is "the sympathetic,

¹⁰Wine, p. xx.

but not too sympathetic, leader of the party of reform in the world of Genoa."¹¹ G.K. Hunter also comments on Malevole's effectiveness in relation to that of the earlier satirists. Malevole, he says, is more than "the ambitious figure of the satirist deeply committed to what he condemns." Beyond this, Malevole and Altofronto, "the libertine and the moralist, are . . . simultaneous aspects of a unified view of the world." Malevole's world is the satirist's world, one in which the just and the meek

are the natural victims of the sophisticated and the predatory. . . . His constant claim is that he must be allowed the ancient freedom of poetry (satiric poetry) to overleap the normal bounds of decency and describe what he actually sees. This can be described as mere prurience or self-indulgence; but it can also be seen as the last effective morality in a world of hypocrites, the last chance to say what man is and what man must be, and so to pierce through the court-mask of self-congratulating superficiality.

Altofronto's world, according to Hunter, is the world of comic resolution, extending beyond the satirist's despair and into "a providential dimension"; this world "will in the end be brought into order."¹²

Malevole and the other satirists--Faunus (Fawn), Planet (JDE), Feliche (AM), and Quadratus (WYW)--serve as chorus to the individual play-within-a-play enacted by each Flatterer, as he shifts into the costume, speech, and behavior required by his chosen role. The choral commentary denounces each role-player for the dishonesty and selfishness which attend him, admonishing him to abandon his role in order to become himself, a person capable of living without a role to define him. Marston sees the histrionic behavior of the Flatterers--

¹¹Caputi, pp. 188-189.

¹²George K. Hunter, "Introduction" to John Marston, The Malcontent (London: Methuen, 1975), pp. lxviii-lxix.

Simplicius' use of costume, Gonzago's use of language, Bilioso's feigned behavior--as undesirable precisely because these actors who employ it are unable to give it up. Their role-playing is perpetual, as they sacrifice self for imagined gain.

II. AMORISTS

A group of dissemblers akin to the Flatterers are the Amorists. Their roles are also self-serving and ongoing, and may even include flattery. However, while the Flatterers employ deceit for social and economic favors, the Amorists use theatrics for a specifically sexual purpose--a favorite form of falseness in Marston's plays. The Amorist's role in pursuing love is prescribed, even more narrowly than the Flatterer's. Not only is hypocrisy present when people commit adultery and when gallants boast of exploits which have not been theirs, as in The Fawn, but it also exists when people who do indeed love each other are forced into rigid "chivalrous" modes of conducting themselves, behavior which is caricatured in Jack Drum's Entertainment and Antonio and Mellida. Amorous conduct is so artificial and unspontaneous that the would-be lover is as easy to recognize as a soldier in uniform. The Amorist's role, like the Flatterer's, is characterized by the dramatic devices of costume, script, and action, and its attractive clothing, hyperbolic speech, and cavalier behavior are put on and taken off at will by the person playing the lover's part.

The clothing worn by the Amorist resembles that of the Flatterer in its elegance tending to showiness, but in addition to his preference for fashions in the latest vogue, the Amorist likes to adorn himself with items designed to attract members of the opposite sex.

Further, he is likely to spend a great deal of time in front of a mirror, assisted by a page who fully understands the role, powdering his wig, applying cosmetics, and evaluating his general appearance--beginning with details of his anatomy. For example, Bilioso (Mal.) when preparing for the evening's revels asks Passarello to admire his calf:

Bil. Fool, how dost thou like my calf in a long stocking?

Pass. An excellent calf, my Lord.

Bil. This calf hath been a reveller this twenty year. When Monsieur Gundi lay here ambassador, I could have carried a lady up and down at arm's end in a platter. . . . I have measured calves with most of the palace, and they come nothing near me; besides, I think there be not many armours in the arsenal will fit me, especially for the headpiece.
(Mal. V.i.1-5, 8-11)

Laverdure, in What You Will, also comments on the beauty of his leg and other physical features which he hopes the ladies will admire:

Why I can raise high, a straight legge, a plumpe thigh, a full vaine, a round cheeke, and when it pleaseth the firtility of my chinne to be delivered of a beard, 'twill not wrong my kissing, for my lippes are rebels, and stand out.

(WYW III, p. 265, Vol. II)

Evidently Laverdure is correct in his catalogue of attributes that women appreciate in a paramour, if Camelia and Winifride (JDE) are any indication. They discuss these very aspects of Brabant Junior--leg, complexion, beard, and so on--but then go further in enumerating the desirable features that they are looking for. Winifride is advising Camelia:

Wini. Indeed young Brabant is a proper man,
And yet his legges are somewhat of the least:
And faith a chitty well complexioned face,
And yet it wants a beard: A good sweet youth,
And yet some say he hath a valiant breath,
Of a good haire, but o, his eies, his eies.

Came. Last day thy praise extold him to the skies

Wi. Indeed, he wares good cloaths, & throws his cloak
With good discretion under his left arme,
He curles his boote with judgement, and takes a whiffe

With gracefull fashion, sweares a valorous oath,
 But o the divel, hath a hatefull fault, he is a yonger brother.
 (JDE I, p. 188, Vol. III)

In addition to his physical beauty, ladies are apt to evaluate a courtier's clothing--both the quality of the cloth and the manner in which he wears it, carrying himself with a swagger. Finally, appearances aside, practicality takes over and these gentle creatures discuss his income; the swagger of a younger brother must be very good indeed, if it is to overcome his financial predicament.

The Dutch Courtesan is not one of the five comedies in which at least a portion of the action is dominated by a parade of satiric types. This was Marston's last comedy, following The Malcontent and The Fawn, both of which had utilized these characters very successfully, and Marston went on in The Dutch Courtesan to explore a form of role-playing which had even greater dramatic possibilities. However, this play does contain one character, Caquetteur, "a prattling gull," who is a carry-over from the plays in which Bilioso and the others strutted across the stage. Caquetteur borrows a diamond ring from Tysefew, after making sure it is real, to grace his finger when he visits his mistress, Crispinella. Tysefew reveals this fact to the witty Crispinella, Beatrice, and Freevill, so that when Caquetteur tries to impress his lady, her friends are lurking nearby, eavesdropping. The result is a brief play-within-a-play which Crispinella spontaneously produces, with Caquetteur as unwitting actor, the ring as a prop, Beatrice and Freevill as audience, Crispinella and Tysefew ad-libbing, as Caquetteur becomes more and more deeply mired in his deception with the ring. Crispinella wastes no time:

CRISPINELLA.

Morrow, sweet servant; you glister. Prithee, let's see that stone.

CAQUETEUR.

A toy, lady, I bought to please my finger.

(DC III.i.145-147)

The first lie leads to another. Crispinella asks for the ring, since he surely would rather please her than please his finger. When he protests, she asks if it be Tysefew's, which he first denies, then says that Tysefew pawned it to him. In an aside, Tysefew calls his bluff, leading Caqueteur to whisper to Crispinella that the ring was given in apology for some impolite behavior the previous evening. But he cannot win. Crispinella repeats loudly what he has just said, and he is forced to deny it, whereupon Crispinella refuses his services any longer. In this instance, Caqueteur's initial base pretense leads him into a web of deceit from which he is unable to free himself. He never even has a chance to play the role he wants to play--that of a gallant dazzling the eyes of his lady with a diamond--because of his greater deception in flashing a stone that is not his, and because Crispinella and the others know of the deception from the outset. Thus Caqueteur's role as an Amorist never succeeds (but there is some indication that Crispinella is impressed with Tysefew, the real owner of the ring, in that role, since she marries him in the end).

Diamonds are not the only objects carried or worn by Amorists who wish to attract notice. Another glance at Bilioso shows him affecting a pomander, whose perfume needs to be replenished for it to be effective: "A good pomander, a little decayed in the scent," he says to Passarello, "but six grains of musk, ground with rose-water, and tempered with a little civet, shall fetch her again presently" (Mal. V.i.16-19).

Castilio also appears "with a casting bottle of sweet water in his hand, sprinkling himself" (AM III.ii.24.1-2). He makes the familiar request of his page for admiration, but Catzo has trouble taking him seriously:

CASTILIO.

Am not I a most sweet youth now?

CATZO.

Yes, when your throat's perfum'd your very words
Do smell of ambergris. O stay sir, stay!
Sprinkle some sweet water to your shoes' heels,
That your mistress may swear you have a sweet foot.
(AM III.ii.25-29)

A scene in Antonio and Mellida shows Balurdo and Rossaline being costumed as Amorists, attended by Dildo and Flavia and castigated all the while by satirist Feliche. The two make rather an elaborate entrance while preening before mirrors held by the two servants, a manoeuver explained in one of Marston's detailed stage directions:

Enter Balurdo, backward, Dildo following him with a looking glass in one hand and a candle in the other hand, Flavia following him backward with a looking glass in one hand and a candle in the other, Rossaline following her. Balurdo and Rossaline stand setting of faces; and so the scene begins.
(AM III.ii.116.1-4)

A comprehensive picture of the range of the Amorist's interests is portrayed in this ludicrous scene. Of greatest concern is a fashionable appearance, as first the face, then clothing, and finally behavior are discussed. Balurdo and Rossaline both look to their attendants for confirmation of their high self-esteem, as when Balurdo asks his page: "[W]hat's the richest thing about me?"

DILDO.

Your teeth.

BALURDO.

By my golden teeth, hold up, that I may put in; hold up, I say, that I may see to put on my gloves.

DILDO.

O delicious sweetcheek'd master, if you discharge but one glance from the level of that set face, O, you will strike a wench; you'll make any wench love you.

BALURDO.

By Jesu, I think I am as elegant a courtier as --How lik'st thou my suit?

DILDO.

All, beyond all, no peregal; you are wonder'd at [aside] for an ass.

(AM III.ii.124-135)

Balurdo's role-playing is so blatant that Dildo knows exactly how to play his complementary role of admiring servant. He also knows how to tease his easily-gulled master, who takes everything seriously and can hardly keep from believing whatever is said to him. Dildo tells Balurdo that he has one small fault--sleeping with his mouth open. Balurdo, sensing that it is a joke, falls for it anyway: "Pew, thou jest'st. In good sadness, I'll have a looking glass nail'd to the testern of the bed, that I may see when I sleep whether 'tis so or not" (AM III.ii.141-143). Balurdo's efforts to look the part of the perfect courtier serve as a blinder of sorts; he cannot see anyone's role but his own. In fact, he would like to nail a mirror to his bed so that he will never have to step out of his role, but can continue in it even when asleep. Here once again Marston has presented a perpetual, self-serving role in an unfavorable light.

Even Rossaline is seen to be frivolous. She is reddening her lips in order to look like the princess, and she is as desirous of being flattered as Balurdo. She goes so far as to give Flavia money for her sugared words:

FLAVIA.

O, ay, that face, that eye, that smile, that writhing of your body, that wanton dandling of your fan, becomes prethily, so sweetly; [Rossaline gives her money] 'tis even the goodest lady that breathes, the most amiable--faith, the fringe of your satin petticoat is ripp'd. Good faith, madam, they say you are the most bounteous lady to your women that ever--[Gives more money.] O most delicious beauty! Good madam, let me kith it.

(AM III.ii.149-156)

Feliche witnesses their interchange with the comment, "A female fool and a female flatterer" (AM III.ii.157). Feliche rightly views the entire proceeding in its theatrical dimension, referring to it in play language: "More fools, more rare fools! Here might be made a rare scene of folly, if the plot could bear it" (III.ii.117-119).

The language spoken by Amorists is as distinctive as their clothing and general appearance. It is totally artificial, bearing no resemblance to their ordinary speech. It is primarily characterized by use of hyperbole, enumerating and praising every detail of woman's beauty, temperament, and other qualities, possibly likening her to the gods. It may include a pledge to defend her or a declaration of unending faith and constancy. Her chastity may be mentioned, as well as her face, smiles, glances, soul, body, and discourse. There is, naturally, a great deal of flattery in amorous speech, and this type of language is immediately recognized and commented on by others. To any but the lover and the beloved, such speech has little usefulness, seems exaggerated, and may inspire rude imitation.

Through use of elaborate simile, metaphor, and strings of adjectives, occasionally in rhymed couplets, the Amorist creates his hyperbolic effect. Iacomo (WYW) employs a metaphor to describe his feelings since Celia will not return his love:

The wanton spring lyes dallying with the earth,
 And powers fresh bloud in her decayed vaines,
 Looke how the new sapt branches are in childe
 With tender infants, how the Sunne drawes out,
 And shapes their moysture into thousand formes
 Of sprouting buddes, all things that show or breath,
 Are now instaur'd, saving my wretched brest,
 That is eternally congeald with Ice
 Of froz'd dispaire. O Celia, coy, to nice!
 (WYW I, p. 238, Vol. II)

And the railer Quadratus aptly points out that what is going on is theatrical: "He speakes like a player, hah! poetically." A player takes the part of Iacomo, but since Iacomo is an Amorist (enamoured of Celia), the lines must be spoken "like a player." An actor playing an Amorist plays a double role--that of the individual (in this case, Iacomo), and also that of the lover, whose lines are universally known. Ferneze (Mal.), courting the Duchess Aurelia, employs both the Amorist's typical simile referring to his mistress' eyes, thus:

But as for poor Ferneze's fixed heart,
Was never shadeless meadow drier parched
Under the scorching heat of heaven's dog,
Than is my heart with your enforcing eyes.
(Mal. I.vi.38-41)

and couplets featuring antithesis, such as the following:

Your smiles have been my heaven, your frowns my hell:
O, pity, then! Grace should with beauty dwell.
(Mal. I.vi.43-44)

In most cases, extreme praise of her beauty and claims of devotion make up the content of the lover's lines. No one in the Marston canon has surpassed Mendoza in the first act of The Malcontent for use of hyperbole in praising women. Mendoza is ecstatic because he is in favor with Duke Pietro while cuckolding him in secret, a fact that he extols in an extremely long prose speech which becomes a tribute to women, particularly Aurelia. He elevates them to the level of angels, calling on paradise to witness his happiness. Then he begins a listing of their admirable qualities, exhausting his store of adjectives in so doing:

O, how full of ravishing attraction is your pretty, petulant, languishing, lasciviously-composed countenance! these amorous smiles, those soul-warming sparkling glances, ardent as those flames that singed the world by heedless Phaeton! in body how delicate, in soul how witty, in discourse how pregnant, in life how wary, in

favours how judicious, in day how sociable, and in night how--O
pleasure unutterable!

(Mal. I.v.41-48)

In a similar vein, Matzagente in the Induction to Antonio and Mellida, preparing to assume his role in the play as suitor to Mellida, rehearses a bit of the proper language, swearing to defend the honor of woman:

By the bright honor of a Milanoise,
And the resplendent fulgor of this steel,
I will defend the feminine to death,
And ding his spirit to the verge of hell
That dares divulge a lady's prejudice.
(Induction to AM, 81-85)

Wooring a lady is learned, not innate, behavior, and some Amorists need to be coached as they learn to speak their parts. For example, Quadratus (WYW) inspires love of Meletza in the heart of Lampatho by cataloguing her beauties for him, at the same time teaching his pupil to follow suit. He reveals his own playful attitude by beginning with a pun on Lampatho's name, "Come then Lampe, ile powre fresh Oyle into thee," and then continues, including familiar references to the lady's eyes:

Ile turne thee gallant, first thou shalt have a Mistresse,
Howe is thy spirit rais'd to yonder beauty?
She with the sanguine cheeke, the dimpled chinne,
The pretty amorous smile that clips her lips,
And dallyes 'bout her cheeke--
Shee with the speaking eye,
That castes out beames as ardent as those flakes,
Which sing'd the world by rash braind Phaeton,
She with the lip, O lips! she for whose sake,
A man could finde in his heart to in-hell himselfe.
(WYW IV, p. 279, Vol. II)

Lampatho learns quickly after this demonstration, and soon begins speaking his own lines as he assumes the role:

Now by the front of Jove me thinks her eye
Shootes more spirit in me, O beautie feminine!
How powerfull art thou, what deepe magick lyes
Within the circle of thy speaking eyes.
(WYW IV, p. 279, Vol. II)

However, Quadratus warns him not to overwhelm the lady but rather to play the part as though only half interested: "Doe but scorne her shee is thine owne, accost her carelesly" (WYW IV, p. 279 Vol. II). But poor Lampatho is so badly smitten that he fails to play the role properly, rushing in too quickly--and too honestly. He confesses his love without going through the customary rituals of courtship, and she rebuffs him swiftly. Quadratus scolds his over-eager pupil:

Wilt not thou clappe into our fashion'd gallantry,
 Couldst not be proud and skornfull, lofe and vaine?
 Gods my hearts object, what a plague is this!
 My soul's intraunc'd, fut couldst not clip and kisse?
 (WYW IV, p. 281, Vol. II)

Lampatho's mistake is allowing his genuine emotion to alter the traditional script followed by Amorists.

Nymphadoro, one of the foolish Amorists in The Fawn, knows that he is playing a role when he pursues a woman's favor and has memorized his lines in preparation for each performance. In one scene he courts three different women--Donnetta, Garbetza, and Dulcimet--before the applauding audience of Faunus. Nymphadoro never ad-libs, but always speaks exactly the same words, thus producing plays-within-the-play that are amazingly alike (since the women give him similar responses):

NYMPHADORO.

By the vow of my heart, you are my most only elected; and I speak by way of protestation, I shall no longer wish to be, than that your only affection shall rest in me, and mine only in you.

DONETTA.

But if you shall love any other?

NYMPHADORO.

Any other? Can any man love any other that knows you, the only perfection of your sex, and astonishment of mankind?

DONETTA.

Fie, ye flatter me. Go wear and understand my favor, this snail: slow, but sure.

(Fawn III.i.81-90)

His aim is to keep more than one mistress at a time, planning privately to marry the first one who comes into money. Thus the scene is familiar when Donna Garbetza makes her appearance:

NYMPHADORO.

By the vow of my heart, you are my most only elected; and I speak by way of protestation, I shall no longer wish to be, than that your only affections shall rest in me, and mine only in you.

HERCULES

Excellent. This piece of stuff is good on both sides. He is so constant, he will not change his phrase.

GARBETZA.

But shall I give faith? May you not love another?

NYMPHADORO.

Another? Can any man love any other that knows you, the only perfection of your sex, and astonishment of mankind?
(Fawn III.i.106-114)

She, too, gives him a favor that she has made for him. Nymphadoro plays his part dishonestly, since he wears the favors of more than one lady at a time, and with little imagination, since the same scene is enacted repeatedly.

This kind of stylized language lends itself to parody, and Marston did not miss the opportunity to parody all the distinguishing marks of an Amorist's speech in two of his plays, Antonio and Mellida and Jack Drum's Entertainment. In so doing, he exaggerates an already established stage tradition, posture, and especially vocabulary. Antonio and Mellida struggle throughout their play to overcome the obstacle of warring fathers, so that they may be together, and hence must sustain the inconvenience of enforced separation and temporary disguise. However, when they do come together, if they manage to recognize one another through their disguises, they immediately lapse into the language of Amorists, made even more noticeable because of its sharp contrast with and disregard for the surrounding scene. When Antonio

is disturbed at the loss of the morning's battle and his father's probable death, frustrated at having to go about disguised as an Amazon, and furious at the unavoidable separation from Mellida, she and Rossaline notice him in his disguise and decide to go down to bid the strange creature welcome. At this point, realizing that he is about to talk with her, Antonio forgets everything else and shifts automatically into lover's language, but has difficulty finding the best simile:

Come down; she comes like--O, no simile
Is precious, choice or elegant enough
To illustrate her descent. Leap heart, she comes,
She comes. Smile heaven, and softest southern wind
Kiss her cheek gently with perfumed breath;
She comes. Creation's purity, admir'd,
Ador'd, amazing rarity, she comes.
(AM I.i.151-157)

Later in the play, both he and Mellida having fled into the countryside, they once more encounter one another, Mellida this time wearing a disguise--that of a page. She recognizes Antonio, though he does not know her, and under these circumstances she leads him into a discussion of his lost love, Mellida. Upon hearing Mellida's name, he responds with the Amorist's habitual use of hyperbole:

Then hast thou seen the glory of her sex,
The music of nature, the unequal'd luster
Of unmatched excellence, the united sweet
Of heaven's graces, the most adored beauty
That ever struck amazement in the world.
(AM IV.i.172-176)

His rhapsodic overstatement is matched by her own use of understatement, as she replies, "You seem to love her" (IV.i.177). In another moment he recognizes her, whereupon the two shift their speech into that of Amorists, but this time the amorous language is not even in English, but in Italian verse. The next eighteen lines of dialogue are indeed a paean of praise, in which each catalogues the other's virtues

and beauties, in a manner typical of lovers. The passage would be artificial enough in English, coming as it does between Antonio's reunion with his father and the capture of Mellida, when there are practical matters to be discussed. But in Italian the dialogue sets the lovers apart completely from the surrounding world.¹³ The fact is here caricatured that Amorists speak a language of their own and are often oblivious to external matters. The page's comment reinforces the comic purpose of Marston in giving these lovers Italian lines:

I think confusion of Babel is fall'n upon these lovers, that they change their language; but I fear me my master, having but feigned the person of a woman, hath got their unfeigned imperfection and is grown double tongu'd. As for Mellida, she were no woman if she could not yield strange language.

(AM IV.i.219-224)

A play which must be considered with Antonio and Mellida for its parody of the artificial role played by young lovers is Jack Drum's Entertainment. Anthony Caputi has shown that Jack Drum is a burlesque of the lovers-in-distress play, "on amorists both in and outside the drama."¹⁴ Thus, when he presents these Amorists in the full splendor of their roles, Marston is burlesquing both the world and the stage. The characters, including both the young lovers Pasquill and Katherine and the rest of the would-be Amorists, are absolutely flat and employ greatly exaggerated speech and behavior which illuminates

¹³G.K. Hunter, "Introduction" to John Marston, Antonio and Mellida (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), points out that Marston uses Italian to separate the lovers from the world, but fails to note his equally important purpose of parody. Says Hunter, the "stilted Petrarchisms of the opera-like dialogue are clearly meant to counterpoint the base vernacular confusions of the surrounding search and the crass common sense of the page" (pp. xx-xxi).

¹⁴Caputi, p. 123.

and ridicules the roles they have assumed in becoming lovers. Mercifully, we are spared many scenes between Pasquill and Katherine, since they spend most of their time wandering about separated from each other and forlorn. However, on three grand occasions they come together: first, in a traditional balcony scene, at which time they plight their troth, and in two joyous reunions after affliction--one, after Katherine has mistakenly thought Pasquill to be dead, he discovering her just in time to prevent her suicide; and the other after Katherine, having been disfigured due to Mamon's villainy, is miraculously recovered, her return restoring Pasquill from madness to sanity.

Of greater interest than the circumstances is the language used by the lovers when they come together. In the balcony scene, Pasquill addresses her with an Amorist's simile, comparing her favorably with the gods:

Unequall Katherine
I bring no Musick to prepare thy thoughts
To entertaine an amorous discourse:
More Musick's in thy name, and sweet dispose,
Then in Apollos Lyre, or Orpheus close.
(JDE II, p. 198, Vol. III)

When she offers him a "modest kiss," he rejoins in metaphor, "This is no kisse, but an Ambrosian bowle, / The Nectar deaw of thy delicious sowle" (II, p. 199, Vol. III). The most distinctive characteristic of their dialogue is their habit of falling into a hyperbolic exchange, Pasquill speaking the first line, pledging his faithfulness, and Katherine the second, trying to surpass his pledge while completing the rhyme. At times they continue back and forth for a dozen or more exchanges, and herein lies the humorous exaggeration:

Pas. The heavens shall melt, the sun shall cease to shine,
Before I leave the love of Katherine.

Kathe. Nay when heavens melted, & the sun strooke dead,
Even then my love shall not be vanquished.

Pas. When I turne fickle, vertue shall be vice.

Ka. When I prove false, Hell shall be Paradise.

.

Pas. Heavens graunt, being dead my soule may live nie
thee.

Ka. One kisse shal give thee mine eternally.

Pas. In faire exchange vouchsafe my hart to take.

Ka. With all my mind, weare this Ned for my sake,
But now no more, bright day malings our love,
Farewell. . . .

(JDE II, pp. 199-200, Vol. III)

This ability to terminate an exchange abruptly and get back to the world of the play underlines their roles as Amorists; they remind us of actors finishing a play. The same effect is created on both occasions of their being reunited. A brief sample will suffice; first Pasquill assures her that he lives, and when she is sure that it is he and not his ghost, they are off once more in their rhymed exchange of ecstasy, until Katherine finally shifts the subject:

Pas. Amazement of thy Sex, Pasquill doth live,
And lives to love thee in eternitie.
Be not agast, recover spirit, (Sweete)
Tis Pasquill speakes, tis Pasquill clips thy waste. . . .

.

Ka. Heaven of Content, Paphos of my delight.

Pas. Mirrour of Constance, life-bloud of love.

Ka. Centre to whom all my affections move.

Pas. Renown of Virgins, whose fame shal ne're fleet.

Ka. Oh I am maz'd with joy, I pree thee sweet,
Unfold to me, what sad mischaunce it was,
Forc'd thy deaths rumour, and such woes disperc'd?

(JDE III, pp. 215-216, Vol. III)

One last point remains concerning the Amorists' use of language. Sometimes the love that is vowed is not eternal, and a lover may decide that his lady is in fact not the Amazement of her Sex or the Wonder of Nature. When that happens, for whatever reasons, the language is simply reversed, though still the effect of hyperbole is created by use of the same devices of simile, metaphor, and adjectives

listing, this time, undesirable features of the former mistress. At such a time, faith is renounced, the lack of beauty of the lady may be described, and women in general derided. This happens to Mendoza in The Malcontent when Ferneze and Maquerelle team up to persuade the Duchess Aurelia to love Ferneze rather than Mendoza. They first pretend to Aurelia that Mendoza decries his love to her, that he now calls her "witch" and "dried biscuit" (Mal. I.vi.18). This is untrue, but once she has spurned him for his imagined loss of faith, he does indeed denounce women with as much fervor as he formerly used in praising them. His lengthy speech curses women for all the ills of humanity: no longer are they nature's wonders, heaven's angels, mankind's preservers, but rather "monsters in nature, models of hell, curse of the earth." The speech crescendos into a catalogue of women's falseness that accuses them of the basest form of role-playing, assuming that no act of theirs may be sincere, no word true. To Mendoza, women have become

mistresses in dissembling, only constant in unconstancy, only perfect in counterfeiting; their words are feigned, their eyes forged, their sighs dissembled, their looks counterfeit, their hair false, their given hopes deceitful, their very breath artificial [underlining mine]. Their blood is their only god; bad clothes and old age are only the devils they tremble at.
(Mal. I.vii. 85, 90-96)

Mendoza has compiled quite a list of words to signify dissembling; the anger that he feels toward Aurelia he expresses against the Amorist's role, and against all women (whom he assumes in his bitterness are playing it).

Finally, in addition to clothing and language, Amorists employ a readily identifiable style of behavior. This includes going mad (or almost going mad) if separated from the beloved for too long; writing

sonnets in praise of her beauty; singing songs--or having a page do so--under her window, perhaps accompanied by a lute; sending notes that declare passion and arrange details for a private meeting; receiving a favor or token from a lady; boasting; and engaging in other forms of pretense to sexual behavior.

Feliche (AM) describes the role for Alberto, who hopes to win the love of Rossaline in spite of having only a small fortune. First Alberto should try flattery, then he should write poems to her, and then offer her lavish gifts. If he cannot afford to buy her gifts, then all is probably hopeless (and we see no more of Alberto in the play). Tiberio likewise defines the Amorist's behavior once he decides to love Dulcimet: "I will now begin to sigh, read poets, look pale, go neatly, and be most apparently in love" (Fawn IV.i.657-659).

Going mad for love is not an uncommon reaction when lovers encounter tribulation, and Pasquill and Iacomo are two cases in point. Pasquill goes mad when Katherine, disfigured by Mamon's poison, leaves and bids him not to follow her. For the duration of the play he stalks around raving incoherently until the last scene when Katherine returns, unexpectedly cured by an old woman's herbs. The sight of her miraculously restores all of Pasquill's faculties, enabling him to resume his amorous dialogue with her. It also may happen that even when a lover is not mad, his behavior may be interpreted as madness by others. Iacomo's problem is unrequited love for Celia, and he goes about in a half-distracted state, unbraced and dressed carelessly, leading Phylus to exclaim to Quadratus in the opening lines of the play: "O O I beseech you Sir reclaime his wits, / My masters mad, starke mad, alas for love" (WYW I, p. 237, Vol. II). He is not mad, however, and so

is free to spend his time devising ways to thwart Laverdure's more successful courtship of Celia.

A second form of behavior frequently used by Amorists is the writing of sonnets. Mendoza ends his long speech exalting women with the decision to write a sonnet immediately in honor of Aurelia; but when he returns a few moments later reading the sonnet aloud, Ferneze and Maquerelle convince Aurelia that it is not she, but Emilia, who is praised in the sonnet. Ironically, the traditional role that he is playing in writing the sonnet is sabotaged by the two conspirators, so that while Aurelia recognizes the role, she mistakes its intended audience. The loss of the duchess' love at this time inspires Mendoza to set off the main conflict of the play. Lampatho also writes a sonnet (WYW), still under the tutelage of Quadratus, who interrupts, commenting on the metaphor.

Another popular activity is for a lover to call beneath his lady's window to advance his suit through song and discourse, resulting either in the lady's staying to listen and give him a favor, or going inside to terminate the interview. Iacomo (WYW) tries to initiate such a scene with Celia, hiring a page to play his lute in hopes of getting her to look out. Frustrated when this brings no results, he dismisses the page:

Fie peace, peace, peace, it hath no passion int.

 That I were but a Poet now t'expresse my thoughts,
 Or a Musitian but to sing my thoughts,
 Or any thing but what I am, sing't ore one more.
 (WYW I, p. 240, Vol. II)

He tries singing himself, but ceases when a willow garland is tossed out the window instead of a favor, with no interview forthcoming.

The balcony scene is parodied in Jack Drum's Entertainment as part of the artificial behavior attending the Amorist's role. Katherine and Camelia are wooed by a procession of suitors in no less than five balcony scenes in quick succession, beginning when M. Puffe arrives at three a.m. beneath Katherine's window. He brings with him a page who sings to her, and is rewarded when she appears in the window. Puffe exclaims, "All happinesse and unconceiv'd delight, / Waite on the love of sweet fac'de Katherine" (JDE II, p. 196, Vol. III). His happiness is short-lived, however, for the wily Katherine refuses to acknowledge his intentions, instead accepting his comments as references to the love she prefers, namely Pasquill:

[K]ind youth, you did wish
All happinesse to wayt upon my love:
Well he shall know it when we next to meete,
And thanke you kindly. . . .
(JDE II, p. 196, Vol. III)

Thus gently rebuffed, Puffe leads his page away, suggesting, "Lets slink along unseen, tis yet scarce day."

No sooner have those two departed than Mamon enters with his page, Flawn, and bids Katherine good day. Although he tells her that he can embrace her with as warm an arm as a younger man, and that Flawn can sing for him, she insists that at his age he should be at home in bed, not out in the dew where he may take cold. Mamon does not go home, however, but lurks nearby to discover the identity of Katherine's true love. Her third caller on this busy morning is indeed Pasquill, and Mamon's eavesdropping gives an additional theatrical dimension to yet another balcony visit as he becomes onstage audience to their interview. This time the lady welcomes her suitor and descends to embrace and kiss him: "My Ned, my Pasquill, sweet I come, I come"

(JDE II, p. 198, Vol. III). Pasquill is rapt: "Oh these kind words imparadize my thoughts." Even as the exaggerated language of these lovers, which has already been discussed, draws attention to the roles that they assume, so does their behavior as they rush into each other's arms whenever they see one another.

Camelia, who makes no decision on her own, but allows the clever Winifride to dictate how she will respond to her suitors, also receives two callers on that same morning--Brabant Junior, whom she has formerly received kindly, and John Ellis, whom Winifride has advised Camelia to accept because, though a fool, he has money. Brabant Junior appears first, fully expecting his usual warm reception, and having brought with him Planet, whom he hopes to impress with Camelia's admirable qualities. Too late, he realizes that he "forgot to bring [a] Page, / To breathe some Dittie in my Mistris eare" (JDE II, p. 202, Vol. III), so he simply calls to her. Camelia does not even come to the window, but Winifride speaks for her, scolding him for being "a youth, / a yonger brother, and a stipendary." Immediately John Ellis comes in, having been persuaded by Winifride to adopt the role of suitor to Camelia. He speaks his lines crudely, using inappropriate similes: "As the Countrey mayd crieth to her Cowe to milke her, or as the Travailer knocketh with his Hostes for a reckning, even so do I call to the ô Mistris" (JDE II, p. 204, Vol. III). However, to Planet's delight and Brabant Junior's fury, Camelia appears, calls him her love, and tosses down a favor for him to wear.

Indeed, these balcony scenes resemble a sequence of little plays within the outer play, further heightening the impression that the actions of Amorists are directed by an external script and are not

spontaneous at all. Once a gallant decides to woo a lady, the procedure that he must follow is clear and he may not deviate from it: call to her from below her window, bring along a page to play his lute and sing of love, hope for a favorable response. Once a lady decides (whether of her own volition or under someone else's direction) whose attentions she will accept, her behavior is likewise prescribed: reject all others, and give a scarf, handkerchief, or some other token of love to the chosen one. He may also be rewarded with kisses, embraces, and pledges of faithfulness.

Two characters in this play whose behavior must be mentioned here contrast sharply with the Amorists courting Katherine and Camelia so very correctly. One is M. John fo de King, a Frenchman who refuses to play the Amorist's role, but quite honestly lusts after every woman he sees and does not hesitate to invite her to bed. The other is Brabant Signior, who entertains himself by making sport of all the fools, apes and gulls, certain that they will behave as he predicts, and ends up gulling himself. Planet warns him of this in one discussion: "Brabant thou art like a paire of Ballance, / Thou wayest all saving thy selfe." But his position does not change: "Good faith, troth is, they are all Apes & gulls, / Vile imitating spirits, dry heathy Turffes" (JDE IV, p. 221, Vol. III); as he has explained earlier, "Why tis the recreation of my Intellect, I thinke I speake as significant, ha, ha, these are my zanyes, I fill their paunches, they feed my pleasures, I use them as my fooles faith, ha, ha" (JDE I, p. 193, Vol. III). Thus when John fo de King keeps searching anxiously for a wench--"my vench is gone, & me brule, and me brule. . .me burst vor a vench" (JDE I, p. 193, Vol. III), Brabant Signior decides to send Mounsieur to his own wife, as

though to a "loose lascivious Curtezan," planning to enjoy the joke when she refuses to entertain him. However, the Frenchman has his way, Mistress Brabant receives him in her chamber, and he returns to thank Brabant Signior for his assistance; the elder Brabant's joke has backfired.

Planet, in denouncing Brabant Signior for his feeling of superiority, shows Marston more tolerant of the Amorists here than in any of the other comedies in which they appear:

Why should'st thou take felicitie to gull
Good honest soules, and in thy arrogance
And glorious ostentation of thy wit,
Thinke God infused all perfection
Into thy soule alone, and made the rest
For thee to laugh at?

(JDE V, p. 240)

In the other plays their role-playing is condemned for its dishonesty when they feign success and for the greed associated with it, but in Jack Drum's Entertainment the Amorists are merely imitating the only form of courtship that they have seen. They emerge from the arena of love either victorious or defeated, in contrast with such Amorists as are found in The Fawn who maintain their roles indefinitely. Though they are fools, they are portrayed as well-meaning, harmless, and undeserving of Brabant Signior's ridicule. He merits more blame than even John fo de King for assuming that he is free from fault and apart from role-playing himself. His self-appointed role as host of the feast of fools is different from that of Malevole in the masque of dukes or of Faunus in the Parliament of Cupid, for they strip away their own masks with everyone else's--but Brabant Signior fails to acknowledge or repent his own foolishness. Thus in the end he plays the part of cuckold, having gulled himself.

Jack Drum's Entertainment is clearly an early attempt at writing a play for Marston. It is poorly constructed and written, giving the effect of being too short and condensed, with undeveloped speeches. There is an elaborate plot structure, but the play is hardly more than an outline of the plot. Each act is short but busy, with action which occurs so quickly, with so little preparation or reaction, as to be unbelievable. The love scenes are effective only as parody, the scenes involving John fo de King crude even as parody, the characters completely flat. The most important feature of the play is its experimentation with role-playing, mistaken identity, and illusion, which served Marston well in later dramatic works. Many things are not as they seem: Pasquill is thought to be mad; Pasquill is thought to be dead; Planet is thought to be dead; Brabant Junior disguises himself as Planet, briefly, having mistaken Planet's intentions with Camelia; Katherine is thought to be poisoned beyond all hope; Brabant Signior gulls himself; Winifride sets up a situation in which John fo de King is carrying a bag containing Jack Drum, and each thinks that the other is Winifride. Even more important, in addition to the role-playing of the Amorists, Planet, Winifride, Mamon and Brabant Signior, as they set into motion plans involving other characters, are forerunners of Marston's Dramatist/Directors, who will be discussed in Chapter III.

While the Amorists discussed so far have been cited for shifting into the language, clothing, and behavior required by their roles, others--in addition to assuming these features--also participate in more subtle kinds of feigned behavior. With these Amorists reality is not what it appears to be. Some boast of sexual conquests which have

not been theirs; others, like Nymphadoro (Fawn), court many ladies at the same time; still others, like Castilio (AM) and Herod (Fawn) support their boasting with forged love letters from ladies whom they have not courted at all.

The exchanging of notes and letters with one's love is a common feature of courtship. Antonio slips a note to Mellida giving her the details of a plan for their escape from Piero's house. (Unfortunately, losing the note only to have it found by an unfriendly person is a misfortune which also frequently happens to one distracted by love; Mellida's note is found by Piero, who immediately mounts a search for the lovers.) And Dulcimet embroiders into her scarf words of love to Tiberio, which she tricks her father, who opposes their love, into delivering to the prince. But Castilio and Herod use notes and letters to make it appear that they are being sought after by many ladies, when in reality they are not.

Castilio Balthazar (whose name certainly calls to mind Balthazar Castiglione, author of The Courtier) boasts to Feliche of the happiness of being a favorite with the ladies:

I cannot sleep for kisses; I cannot rest
For ladies' letters that importune me
With such unused vehemence of love
Straight to solicit them, that . . .
(AM III.ii.64-67)

Feliche recognizes him for a liar and proceeds to expose him. His argument is that he is as physically attractive as Castilio and yet is not courted or rewarded with offers of love. Castilio replies that Feliche has not played the role correctly:

Pew, waw; you ne'er accourted them in pomp,
Put your good parts in presence graciously.

Ha, and you had, why they would ha' come off, sprung
To your arms. . .

(AM II.ii.75-78)

To prove his point, Castilio displays a letter addressed to him in loving language by Rossaline. Feliche snatches the letter from the gallant's hand by force, opens it, and finds inside a bill from Castilio's tailor. Excuses do not save the disgraced Castilio--"In sooth, it is the outside of her letter, on which I took the copy of a tailor's bill"--but Feliche pushes him away, hitting him over the head with the letter: "Honest musk-cod, 'twill not be so stitched together; take that, and that . . . and belie no lady's love; swear no more by Jesu, this madam, that lady; hence, go" (AM III.ii.108-110).

Herod Frappatore is similarly exposed by Faunus for unwarranted boasting. Herod does indeed engage in sexual adventures, being secretly the lover of his brother's wife and father of her unborn child, at the same time betraying her by wooing Puttota. However, he falsely tells Nymphadoro, "[U]pon four great madonnas have I this afternoon grafted the forked tree," and assures Faunus that "some score or two ladies or so ravish me among them" (Fawn IV.100-101, 138-139). He displays letters with which to support this tale, letters supposedly sent to him by his mistresses, and casually contrasts the various handwritings, whereupon Faunus begins to read aloud from one written by Herod to Puttota, begging her to accept his love. Herod beseeches Faunus to cease, not to shame him, but Faunus reads on relentlessly, then ends with a word of flattery for Herod's lying, so long as there is a purpose behind it.

Boasting, feigning, and hypocrisy direct the behavior of the would-be Amorists in The Fawn, resulting in several kinds of illusion

and mistaken identity. Herod, Nymphadoro, Sir Amoroso and Donna Garbetza, Don Zuconne and Donna Zoya, all engage in some form of sexual pretense which distorts the usual role of the Amorist. Faunus, of course, stands by and allows them all to play out their roles to the fullest, waiting until the Parliament of Cupids to expose their folly and send the worst offenders to the ship of fools.

Herod and Nymphadoro, whose forged notes and insincere speech have already been discussed, play two complementary parts. Faunus aptly introduces them: "Why, here are two perfect creatures: the one, Nymphadoro, loves all, and my Herod here enjoys all" (Fawn IV.136-137). Nymphadoro courts many simultaneously for possible marriage, and thus must be false with all. He tells Herod, "I do now love threescore and nine ladies, all of them most extremely well" (I.ii. 59-60), and later says to Faunus, "I am most enforcedly in love with all women, almost affecting them all with an equal flame, . . . neither am I inconstant to any one in particular" (Fawn III.2-4, 7-8). His motive is perfectly clear to him, and he explains it to the astonished Faunus, who has just watched him court both Donetta and Donna Garbetza with identical words:

I do love at this instant some nineteen ladies, all in the trade of marriage. Now sir, whose father dies first, or whose portion appeareth most, or whose fortune betters soonest, her with quiet liberty at my leisure will I elect. . . .

(Fawn III.129-132)

This motive belies his claim that he loves all women, for there is fakery behind his behavior toward them as he wears the favors of all while intending only to marry the wealthiest. Although this form of courtship is insincere, it may be more understandable than the behavior of the

sly, ambitious Herod who, in addition to forging love letters, is denounced in the Parliament of Cupid for falsely bragging about ladies' attentions and displaying counterfeit tokens. Herod has thus presented a false face to the world as a more successful lover than he actually is; to his brother Sir Amoroso, by cuckolding him in secret, letting Donna Garbetza support him, while hoping to inherit the land of the heirless Amoroso; and to Donna Garbetza, who has believed his vow of faithfulness to be "most immutable, unfeigning, peculiar, and indeed deserved" (Fawn IV.22-23). She is undeceived when she and Faunus eavesdrop and hear a page courting Puttota on Herod's behalf. Garbetza has yielded to him only because he told her that he was pursued by many beauties (which also makes her vows of love to him less than honest). But for his greater falseness to her, she will be avenged: she is expecting his child; and by getting his elder brother's wife with child, he has lost his inheritance. The family circle will be founded completely on untruth, as Herod's child forever plays the role of Amoroso's heir.

Sir Amoroso Debile-Dosso is himself a counterfeit Amorist whose name is not without irony. Faunus makes a natural mistake when he first meets Sir Amoroso--"I perceive, knight, you have children" (Fawn II.131)--but he soon learns that the Amorous knight, apparently suffering from a venereal infection--"an odd unwholesome murr" (II. 128-129)--is unable to be what he would like to be, a successful lover and sire of a child. His role involves surrounding himself with aphrodisiacs and all the trappings of love-making, as Nymphadoro explains:

And yet I hear, Sir Amorous, you cherish your loins with high art,
the only engrosser of eringoes, prepared cantharides, cullisses
made of dissolved pearl and bruised amber. . . . Beds made of the

down under a pigeons' wings and goose necks, fomentations, baths, electuaries, frictions, and all the nurses of most forcible excited concupiscence, he useth with most nice and tender industry.

(Fawn II.148-151, 152-156)

He is willing to try anything in order to play his chosen role, but he ends up called to task in the Parliament of Cupids for pretending to entertain women when he is "insufficient, bankrout, exhausted, and wasted" (V.274-275).

Don Zuccone and Donna Zoya have a different situation: he is so extremely jealous of sexual misconduct in his wife, who is widely known to be "more clearly chaste than ice or frozen rain" (IV.412), that he has refused to be intimate with her for some four years. Since he plays the role of cuckold when he is not, she pretends to have become pregnant when she is not. The entire court has joined with Donna Zoya in a "confederacy of afflicting him" (II.210). Dondolo rushes in with the "news" of her pregnancy, which is whispered from him to Nymphadoro to Herod to Faunus, who finally tells Don Zuccone, first tantalizing him with the skill of a consummate actor:

Zuc. Fawn, what's the whisper? What's the fool's secret news?

Herc. Truth, my lord, a thing--that beauty--that--well, i' faith, it is not fit you know it. Now, now, now.

Zuc. Not fit I know it? As thou art baptised, tell me, tell me.

Herc. Will you plight your patience to it?

Zuc. Speak, I am a very block. I will not be moved, I am a very block.

.

Herc. Nay, faith, 'tis no great matter. Hark ye, you'll tell nobody?

Zuc. Not.

Herc. As you are noble?

Zuc. As I am honest.

Herc. Your lady wife is apparently with child.

Zuc. With child?

Herc. With child.

Zuc. Fool!

Herc. My Don.

Zuc. With child! By the pleasure of generation, I proclaim I lay not with her this--give us patience, give us patience.

(Fawn II.258-264, 269-280)

Thus initiated, the plot is carried out neatly, and the plotters have their fun. While Zuccone eavesdrops, Zoya promises to be mistress to all of the men. They joke about which one the coming child will look like, relishing the jealousy they are provoking in their listener, their repartee punctuated with Donna Zoya's asides: "(Does he not gnash his very teeth in anguish?)" (II.403-404). Faunus later eggs on Zuccone in his decision to enforce a separation from her, and once they are no longer married, enjoys explaining the entire plot to the foolish Don: "Why, weakness of reason, couldst not perceive all was feigned to be rid of thee?" (IV.436-437). Herod adds to Zuccone's moment of realization: "Miserable man . . . thou art the ridiculous author of thine own laughed-at mischief" (IV.426-428). Zuccone has unknowingly written the play-within-a-play that has undone him, and like Brabant Signior, he has gulled himself. In the Parliament of Cupids he is another ripe candidate for passage aboard the ship of fools, but he is pardoned because his lady pardons him. She will accept him again as husband, once he has promised to abandon forever the role of jealous spouse: "I have for a short time only thus feignedly hated you that you might ever after truly love me." (V.319-321)

The Parliament of Cupid is itself a pageant-within-a-play in which all role-playing of an individual nature is uncovered. It follows the tradition of semi-dramatic entertainment at court involving allegorical processions, and yet is announced as "no comedy, masque, or barriers," but instead

a session, a general council of love summoned in the name of Don Cupid, to which upon pain of their mistress' displeasure shall appear all favor-wearers, sonnet-mongers, health-drinkers, and neat enrichers of barbers and perfumers.

(Fawn IV.255-259)

This piece of dramatic entertainment enacts a mock trial in which all those convicted of transgressing against the statutes of Cupid are sent aboard the ship of fools. It might well be called the Parliament of Hercules, for the disguised duke authors and directs it as the occasion when all of his goals are fulfilled, so that he, too, may step out of his role as Fawn. Even more appropriately, it is the Parliament of Amorists, in which Faunus as advocate defends the laws of love before Cupid, enthroned as Judge, "emperor of sighs and protestations, great king of kisses, archduke of dalliance" (Fawn V.205-206).

The purpose of the Parliament, as announced by Cupid, is to survey our old laws, and punish their transgressions, for that continually the complaints of lovers ascend up to our deity that love is abused, and basely bought and sold, beauty corrupted, affection feigned, and pleasure herself sophisticated; that young gallants are proud in appetite and weak in performance; that young ladies are phantastically inconstant, old ladies impudently unsatiate. Wives complain of unmarried women, that they steal the dues belonging to their sheets; and maids make exclaim upon wives, that they unjustly engross all into their own hands, as not content with their own husbands, but also purloining that which should be their comfort. Let us therefore be severe in our justice. . . .

(Fawn V.186-199)

With Cupid thus offended, on behalf of the deity Venus, by such abuses as feigned affection, inconstancy, and adulterated pleasure, numerous transgressors are to be found among the courtiers. One after another, judgments are handed down against Nymphadoro, Amoroso, Herod, Zuccone, Granuffo, and Gonzago, for playing false roles which pervert the course of true love. Nymphadoro is censured for failing to observe the "act against the plurality of mistresses" (Fawn V.212). The falseness attending his several courtships is brought to light, as Hercules reads out

that what person or persons soever shall, in the trade of honor, presume to wear at one time two ladies' favours, or at one time

shall earnestly court two women in the way of marriage . . . shall ipso facto be arrested by folly's mace, and instantly committed to the ship of fools. . . .

(Fawn V. 232-235, 239-240)

Garbetza, Donetta, and Poveia all admit that Nymphadoro has been courting them, calling each his "only elected mistress." His dissembling catches up with him as his abuse of the Amorist's role is made public.

Sir Amoroso has disobeyed the "act against counterfeiting of Cupid's royal coin, and abusing his subjects with false money" (Fawn V.261-262). Hercules reads on relentlessly, citing the impotent knight's pretense to sexual prowess:

May it therefore with your pitiful assent be enacted, that what lord, knight, or gentleman soever, knowing himself insufficient, bankrout, exhausted, and wasted, shall traitorously dare to entertain any lady as wife or mistress, ipso facto to be severed from all commercement with women, his wife or mistress in that state offending to be forgiven with a pardon of course, and himself instantly to be pressed to sail in the ship of fools. . . .

(Fawn V. 272-280)

Sir Amoroso is exposed and his pregnant wife pardoned, because he too has dishonestly played the part of a lover.

Herod is condemned by the "act against forgers of love letters, false braggarts of ladies' favours, and vain boasters of counterfeit tokens" (Fawn V.297-299). Again the offenses are forgery, falseness, counterfeiting--all perversions of the Amorist's proper role. The act "against slanderers of Cupid's liege ladies' names, and lewd defamers of their honours" (Fawn V.308-309) catches Don Zuccone, who has made the error of believing falsehoods questioning his wife's fidelity, and who is finally pardoned only because Donna Zoya both forgives and takes him back. Unfounded jealousy is here as bad as blatant deception when playing the game of love. Even Granuffo is caught, he by the "act against mummers, false seemers, that abuse ladies with counterfeit

faces, courting only by signs, and seeming wise only by silence" (Fawn V.371-373). Far from being honest, his silence has furthered a false appearance of sagacity. Hercules exposes role-players of all kinds, even those whose parts require passive, rather than active, behavior.

The last person sent to the ship of fools is Gonzago.¹⁵ As Duke of Urbin, he has been presiding over a court filled with hypocrites, and he has been the greatest fool among them. His offense has been trying "to outstrip Love, to cross his words, and make frustrate his sweet pleasures" (Fawn V.390-392). For such a "presumptuous wisdom" Gonzago is made to "forfeit all his wit" (Fawn V.392, 395). He is finally silenced for the same reason that Granuffo has been made to speak, for pretending to wisdom (particularly in matters of love).

The offenses which have echoed most frequently throughout the Parliament of Cupid are "feigning," "counterfeiting," "dissembling," "forgery," and the like. Clearly, amorous behavior is expected to follow its prescribed course with honesty. An Amorist may alter his dress, language, and actions to indicate that he is in love, and that love has made him act very differently than he used to, but this altered behavior must mean what it seems to mean. Further falseness perverts Cupid's--and Marston's--intent and is neither desirable in the Court of Urbin nor on the world's stage.

Fittingly, the Parliament is brought to a close after the young lovers Tiberio and Dulcimet appear triumphant as the hero and heroine of Cupid's play, having overcome all obstacles in order to consummate

¹⁵ Additional treatment of this portion of the Parliament of Cupid may be found in Chapter III, pp. 176-179.

their love in compliance with the ordained laws of Cupid. They have fulfilled the desire of Hercules by so doing, and they are rewarded for having played their roles as Amorists honestly.

III. FRANCISCO AND ALBANO

A discussion of Marston's Amorists must include the main plot of What You Will, a play about the effects of role-playing on one's identity. Francisco Soranza, a perfumer, is disguised as Celia's husband Albano, rumored dead, a fact which causes both Francisco and Albano to question who they are. The assumption of the proper costume, speech, and behavior by Francisco receives great emphasis, as these external features of the actor's trade are seen to be crucial to the concept of identity.

The main plot itself is very intricate, but is less important than the responses of people to what happens. Since Celia's husband Albano is thought to have died in a shipwreck some three months ago, Celia is planning to marry the French knight Laverdure. This match is opposed, however, by the frustrated Amorist Iacomo, mad with love for her himself, and by her two brothers Randolfo and Andrea. These three together construct a fantastical scheme designed to thwart the marriage:

Ran. By blessednesse wee le stop this fatall lot.

Iaco. But how: but how?

Ran. Why stay lets thinke a plot.

(WYW I. p. 243, Vol. II)

Their plot becomes an elaborate play-within-a-play, with the three plotters as authors, directors and costumiers, Francisco as the principal actor, and the other characters in the play as audience. Most of these

spectators are aware of Francisco's assumed role and are not deceived by it, with two noteworthy exceptions--Albano Beletzo, the person whose identity Francisco has assumed, and Francisco himself. Iacomo states that the motive behind the plot is to stall for time, delaying the marriage until something can be done to halt it permanently. His description of Francisco's role shows it to belong to a kind of revenge play:

Observe me then, him would I have disguis'd,
Most perfect like Albano: giving out
Albano sav'd by swimming (as in faith
'Tis knowne he swome most strangely) rumor him
This morning arriv'd in Venice, heere to lurke
As having heard the for-ward Nuptials,
T' observe his wifes most infamous lewd hast
And to revenge--

(WYW I. p. 244, Vol. II)

The three plotters prepare Francisco to assume his role with great care, first costuming him like Albano, then instructing him in Albano's demeanor, and finally rehearsing his speech until he sounds exactly like the real Albano. The costuming is explained in a stage direction at the beginning of Act III:

Enter Francisco halfe drest, in his black doublet and round cap, the rest riche, Iacomo bearing his hatte and feather, Andrea his doublet and band, Randolfo his cloake and staffe, they cloath Francisco, whilst Bydet creepes in and observes them.

(WYW III, p. 260, Vol. II)

Bydet's unseen observation of this procedure undercuts the effect of Francisco's disguise from the start, since Bydet immediately informs Laverdure of what he has seen. The plotters continue, however, having thus clothed their actor, instructing him to mimic Albano's bearing:

Thou shouldst grow proud, and like fore-horse, view
None but before-hand gallants, as for sides
And those that rank in equall file with thee,

Studdy a faint salute, give a strange eye,
 But as to those in rere-ward O be blind,
 The world wants eyes, it cannot see behind.
 (III, p. 261, Vol. II)

At this point Francisco becomes fearful of the difference between reality and illusion, between his real self and the self he is to portray. His new costume is affecting his self-concept, and it is with a feeling of trepidation that he expresses his thought that he must become that which he plays. He is not sure that he can play Albano or that he wants to do it, if it means losing himself in his role:

Fran. For God-sake remember to take speciall markes of me, or you will nere be able to know me.

And. Why man?

Fra. Why good faith I scarce know my selfe already me thinks I should remember to forget my selfe, now I am so shining brave. Indeed Francisco was alwayes a sweete youth, for I am a Perfumer, but thus brave? I am an alien to it, would you make mee like the drownd Albano, must I bear't mainly up, must I bee hee.

(WYW III, p. 260, Vol. II)

The plotters laugh away his fears, responding to the query "must I bee hee" with "[w]hat els man? O what else?" They assure him that he can indeed "be" Albano if his costume is good enough, then turn to directing him in his speaking part. They respond to his first fear, saying that he will be able to play the role, without addressing the second concern of how playing the role will affect him. If he is to be a convincing Albano, they say, he must adopt Albano's stutter along with his bombastic style of speech. Shortly he is swaggering and stuttering like the seaman, and his hearers are delighted:

Iaco. Now you must grow in heate and stut.

Fran. An odde phantasma! a beggar! a Sir! a who who who what you will! a stragglings go go go gunds, f f f fut--

Andrea. Passing like him, passing like him, O 'twill strike all dead.

(WYW III, p. 261, Vol. III)

Thus equipped, the erstwhile perfumier is ready to go out into the world as Albano. However, the situation is complicated by the appearance of the real Albano, whom everyone--both the plotters and Laverdure's circle, having been informed by Bydet--thinks is the disguised Francisco. Albano cannot understand why no one recognizes him, and the strange experience of being mistaken for the perfumier precipitates a crisis of identity in him. First Laverdure and Quadratus rebuff him: "Harke you perfumer, tell Iacomo, Randolfo, and Andrea, 'twill not do, looke you say no more, but 'twill not doe" (WYW III, p. 266, Vol. II). His hopes revive for an instant when Simplicius seems to know him:

Sim. O God Sir, you lye as open to my understanding as a Curtizan, I know you as well--

Alba. Some body knowes me yet, praise heaven somebody knowes me yet.

(WYW III, p. 267, Vol. II)

But no: "I know you are Francisco Soranza the Perfumer."

This is only the beginning for poor Albano. Iacomo comes along, pretends for a moment not to know him, then praises him for being a "rare dissembler." In like manner Albano's own brothers greet him joyfully, to his great relief--"Had you not come . . . I thinke not one would know me"--then cast him down again with the now-familiar refrain: "Had I not knowne the guile I would ha sworne / Thou hadst bin Albano, my nimble couzning knave" (WYW III, p. 268, Vol. II). Now that Laverdure, Quadratus, Simplicius, Iacomo, Andrea, and Randolfo have all failed to recognize him, Albano begins to wonder who he is. In a conversation with Slip, his page, he suggests that he may indeed have become a perfumier:

Alba. [B]oy who am I?

Slip. My Lord Albano.

Alb. By this breast you lie
The Samian faith is true, true, I was drown'd
And now my soule is skipt into a perfumer, a gutter-master.

.
I am a Perfumer, I, thinkst thou my bloud,
My brothers know not right Albano yet?
Away tis faithlesse, if Albanos name
Were liable to scence, that I could tast or touch
Or see, or feele it, it might tice beleefe,
But since tis voice, and ayre, come to the Muscat boy,
Francisco, that's my name tis right, I, . . .

(WYW III, p. 269, Vol. II)

His doubts are more intense than those of Francisco, who fears that assuming Albano's clothes and behavior will alter his former identity as the perfumier. Albano now wonders why the clothes, speech, and behavior are not enough to establish identity; if others fail to acknowledge him as Albano, then he must no longer be Albano. His words suggest that he becomes whatever he is reputed to be:

Doth not Opinion stamp the currant passe,
Of each mans valed, vertue, quality?

(III, p. 269, Vol. II)

The opinion of others is a powerful force in shaping one's opinion of himself, Albano discovers. Even as the perfumier feels his identity as Francisco diminished by his putting on Albano's clothing, so Albano feels his own identity transferred to the impersonator at the same time. After all, there can be only one Albano. Both of them almost believe, for a while, that Francisco has become the person he imitates. Both have been unable to maintain their former identities.

The tale of mistaken identity is not yet finished. Laverdure proposes a counter-plot which is never carried out, but knowledge of which nevertheless adds even further confusion to plotters of, actors in, and audience to this very involved play-within-a-play. Victor O.

Freeburg, in Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama, sums it up as concisely as possible:

The most subtle doubles situation of all is in Marston's What You Will. A man [Francisco Soranza] is impersonating another who is supposedly dead [Albano]. A rival of this impersonator [Laverdure] proposes to disguise a second impersonator like the absent man, and the knowledge of this counterplot leaks out. But this second disguise is never effected, a fact which does not leak out. The consequence is that when the supposedly dead man appears, the counterplotters think he is the first impersonator and the plotters think he is the second impersonator. Presently when the genuine character and his¹⁶ impersonator appear simultaneously, both are considered bogus.

Albano's anger swells to new heights when he and Francisco appear at once and neither is acknowledged to be Albano: one is thought to be Francisco, the other "a fiddler, a miniken tickler, a pum pum" (WYW IV, p. 282, Vol. II). Albano's confusion is still great, and he finds he must resort to his friend the Duke in order to regain his identity:

I was her husband and was call'd Albano before I was drown'd, but now after my resurrection I am I know not what indeede brothers . . . I am What you will . . . a p, p, p, perfumer, a fiddler, a Diabalo. . . .

(WYW IV, p. 283, Vol. II)

There is double meaning to the words with which Randolph predicts the coming entertainment as the duke enters: "Come grace his entrance; lightes, lightes! now ginnes our play" (V, p. 290, Vol. II). Not only is he referring to the dramatic performance with which the court is normally entertained, and which Quadratus is trying to arrange, but more importantly, he refers to the entertainment that will ensue when both Albano and Francisco appear before the duke. As a matter of fact, to the chagrin of Quadratus, the only play to be seen at court

¹⁶Victor Oscar Freeburg, Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama (New York, 1915), p. 11.

that evening is that performed by the two Albanos. He rants at their interference: "Ile curse you all. O yee ha interrupt a sceane" (V, p. 294, Vol. II). They have interrupted a scene with a scene of their own --one dominated by yet another impassioned speech by Albano: "I am abusd, . . . my cloathes abusd, my shape, my house, my all abusd, I am sworne out of my selfe, beated out of my selfe, baffled" (WYW V, p. 292, Vol. II).

In the world of this play, a world in which a person's costume often conceals as much as it reveals, Albano must finally rely on a birthmark, costume having failed, to prove himself Albano. Laverdure is the first to acknowledge him, knowing that no second imposter has been arranged, and trying to bow out gracefully. His recognition of Albano is followed by that of the fickle Celia, Andrea, Randolfo, and Iacomo. Albano is of a mind to forgive all and welcome everyone to his house as guests: "Shall I be brave, shall I be my selfe now?" (V, p. 293, Vol. II).

According to Anthony Caputi, Marston has treated "the relatively simple plot device of mistaken identity . . . as a problem common to the world of the play,"¹⁷ and by extension, to the world at large. In this world, as Quadratus puts it, "Naughtes knowne but by exterior sence" (WYW II, p. 252, Vol. II). These characters consider a person's costume to be the true indicator of the person wearing it, though in fact their costumes indicate the roles they play rather than reality. There is much concern with costume and apparel in What You Will, from Laverdure, wanting to use his clothes to make a grand impression, only to

¹⁷Caputi, p. 175.

find that his best ones are in pawn; to Lampatho, trying to appear to be a gallant; to Simplicius, gulled out of his clothing; to Francisco, who changes identities with a change in costume; to Albano, who cannot maintain his identity when he sees someone else wearing his garments.

All of these characters are shown to be at fault in this play precisely because they treat their normal clothes as costumes which assist them in playing roles in their everyday lives. Here, as in other plays by Marston, the satiric types are ridiculed for assuming roles which they never shed. The situation of Francisco and Albano, unique in the Marston canon, illustrates the difficulties to which such role-playing may lead--a loss of identity when the exterior trappings of the role are transferred from one to another.

Marston's treatment of the Amorists is also unique in What You Will, because: (1) Celia's availability for remarriage is only illusory, a fact known only by the theater audience until the end of the play; (2) the Amorist Iacomo disguises another person rather than following the traditional pattern of disguising himself in order to be near his love; (3) the passionate love of Iacomo for Celia, which receives heavy emphasis in the first act and precipitates the secondary plot, is unrequited throughout, with dramatic interest shifting to the two Albanos, the love of Iacomo then being quietly neglected in the rest of the play. Other Amorists in the play are Laverdure, Iacomo's successful rival, betrothed to Celia; Francisco, disguised as Celia's husband; and Albano, the husband. Their roles as lovers do not succeed--not the near-madness of Iacomo, the ornate dressing and traditional courting of Laverdure, the disguise of Francisco, nor Albano's relying on his costume, speech, and flamboyant behavior to prove who he is.

Albano regains Celia only when he stops blustering, exhibits the birthmark, and steps forward to claim what is his own.

Although What You Will resembles its forerunners in being choppy, uneven, and crudely executed, both in general and in its discussion of roles, it predicts the themes of Marston's two most important plays, which it immediately precedes, The Malcontent and The Fawn: that healthy role-playing has as its goal the abandonment of roles. It is not role-playing which leads this play to a fortuitous conclusion. Rather, the pretenders and imposters are doomed all along, a fact which the audience knows as early as Act III. The confusion can be resolved when the roles can be shed and when Albano can establish his identity without relying on external appearance. This play, like those which follow it, ends with the casting off of secondary roles before the lights come on and primary roles are also removed.

Like Albano, Marston's other Amorists who actually gain love, from Don Zuccone to Tiberio, do so without the aid of roles. Similarly, lasting success at court is not achieved through flattery, as Bilioso, Lampatho, Forobosco, and the others discover. Marston's attitude toward these Flatterers and Amorists is not difficult to ascertain. Most of them are presented as satiric types, and hence are ultimately unmasked, their falseness laid bare. However, they are exposed for more than foolish or immoral behavior. These characters have one thing in common, though their circumstances may vary: they undertake the playing of roles in order to gain what they want--friends at court (Laverdure, Lampatho), increased income (Simplicius, Bilioso), female attention (Herod, Nymphadoro), admiration (Gonzago). There is a danger associated with this form of histrionic behavior, turning the

world into a perpetual stage, that many of these characters fall into --that of becoming so attached to their roles that they never voluntarily step out of them. Eventually, while others clearly see the difference between the character and his role, he becomes blind to it, actually believing that he is what he pretends to be. But in fact the Laverdures, the Herods, and all the rest are ripe for gulling--or worse, the loss of identity, as What You Will suggests--because they are not alert to the fact that they are only acting a part. Since scenes involving these role-players take up so much space in his comedies--more than half of The Fawn, almost half of Antonio and Mellida and The Malcontent--Marston evidently sees the world as filled with similar feigning and hypocrisy, and is concerned enough to sound a warning against the "venom [t]hat poisons courts and all societies" (Fawn II.i.554-555). It is best to be oneself.

We turn now to yet another kind of theatrical situation experimented with repeatedly by Marston, and refined in The Fawn and The Malcontent. It occurs when a character becomes an onstage playwright or Dramatist, directing other characters before an onstage audience in a play-within-a-play of his own design. Unlike Marston's condemnation of the self-serving, ongoing roles assumed by Amorists and Flatterers, he gives approval to cleverness used to create theatrical illusion for a justifiable end. However, here too, he insists that such roles be temporary, played out and then put off once the goal has been attained.

CHAPTER III

ONSTAGE DRAMATISTS

That a duke should be forced to fool it!
Well, stultorum plena sunt omnia: better
play the fool lord than be the fool lord.
(Mal. V.iii.44-46)

When Albano finds himself supplanted in his wife's affections, one of his options is similar to that taken by the deposed and exiled Malevole: namely, to construct a plot aimed at retrieving that which is properly his. Had he followed this alternative, rather than remaining a passive player directed by Iacomo and the others, he would quite possibly have hastened the restoration of order in the world of What You Will. More to the point, when Iacomo puts into action his plot to disguise Francisco like the absent Albano, in order to interrupt Celia's wedding plans, he is performing the function of Dramatist--which here incorporates the additional duties of director, stage-manager, and costumier--of what Anne Righter has called an "undeclared play within the play."¹ Likewise, Feliche turns Dramatist in Antonio and Mellida when he directs the prostrate Antonio to disguise himself and flee into the countryside. Also, Mamon (JDE), who hires John fo de King to kill Pasquill and then poisons Katherine himself, is drawing others into a dramatic production of his own design in which he, too, takes part. While none of the characters mentioned so far authors a major play-within-a-play, each one does create a dramatic vision which, in order to succeed, requires other characters to assume roles designed for them.

¹Righter, p. 129.

And all three--Iacomo, Feliche, and Mamon--are forerunners of the self-directed Dramatists who dominate Marston's best plays.

Lionel Abel, in Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form, proposes a new dramatic category called "metatheatre" which, he says, succeeds tragedy in the historical development of drama. A "metaplay" is dominated by what Abel calls a "self-referring" character who has "the capacity to dramatize others, and thus put them in whatever situation he is intent on being in." Using Hamlet as his primary example of such a character--others including Falstaff, Prospero, Tartuffe, and Don Quixote--Abel suggests further that all of the characters in Hamlet function either as Dramatists or would-be Dramatists (citing the Ghost, Hamlet, Claudius, Polonius, and death), or as Actors (citing Gertrude, Ophelia, and Laertes).² Marston's plays, similarly, are peopled with a large number of Dramatists who create visions, concoct plots, or design and direct secondary plays within the outer play. All of these visionary "plots, projects, correspondences, and stratagems" (Fawn II.i. 105-106) require the cooperation of other characters from the main play (whether compliance is given consciously or sub-consciously) in playing the parts assigned by the Dramatist; he may only direct the action, like Feliche in Antonio and Mellida and Winifride in Jack Drum, or he may play a part, like Iacomo (WYW) and Franceschina (DC), or he may even put on a disguise in order to deceive both the actors in his secondary play and members of the onstage audience, like Antonio (AM and AR) and Altofronto (Mal.). Leonard R. Mendelsohn, in an essay discussing characters in a play as "vision-producing agents," points out that a

²Abel, pp. 40-72.

character who creates a particular dramatic vision is unable to control the outcome of his secondary play, since other characters may be acting out visions of their own:

While the overall situation may be the prevailing vision of one character, each player who struts upon the platform is in a sense a director. He has the power of vision, but . . . he may be dismembered by his own dream. He can dream and summon roles into being. But once these roles are filled by players, the director no longer is the sole determiner of what will happen upon the stage he has set.³

For example, Mamon has envisioned the role of killer for John fo de King, whom he hires to murder Pasquill, but John refuses to accept such a role and instead chooses one of honorable friend, telling Pasquill of Mamon's treachery.

In Marston's last three comedies (The Malcontent, The Fawn, and The Dutch Courtesan) and also in Antonio's Revenge--his only revenge tragedy--the main action of each play arises as secondary plays designed by major characters operate in opposition to each other. In these plays, protagonist and antagonist, both Dramatists, try to alter the reality of the play world by involving other characters in elaborate plays-within-plays, and it is the clashing of these inner plays that provides dramatic conflict. It is my purpose here to examine the clashing of these inner plays and dramatic visions in order to arrive at Marston's Idea of the Play--the attitude toward the value of theatrical activity upon which his plays are founded. It will be seen that in Marston's eyes, we all are potentially actors, role-players, directors, and playwrights--for good or ill--as a part of our human condition.

³Leonard R. Mendelsohn, "The Player as Director: An Approach to Character," Comparative Drama, 6 (1972), 115-124.

Since the authoring and directing of plays is itself a neutral act, Marston is extremely interested in the motives behind histrionic behavior and in the results it may produce. The Dramatists who are chiefly motivated by selflessness and honesty succeed against those motivated by selfishness and hypocrisy; and temporary secondary plays, like the antics of individual Role-Players, are much preferred to those which are ongoing.

In these four plays Marston narrows his focus to the disguise-plot, allowing each protagonist to assume a disguise as he encounters an antagonist who, though every bit as much a Dramatist, never wears a disguise. Furthermore, these disguise-plots explore two repeating motifs in a variety of ways: (1) the disguised parent or child,⁴ and (2) the disguised spy, usually a duke.⁵ Both motifs are present in three of the four plays, The Malcontent lacking any parent-child relationship. They receive their briefest development in The Dutch Courtesan, though both are present there, and are combined most happily in The Fawn, as the assumed role of Faunus disguises the two permanent roles of duke and father.

⁴Abel, p. 47, points out that any child is forced to take direction according to the script of his parents, but may want to change plays as an adult. Hamlet, Laertes, and Ophelia as young adults find themselves still involved in their fathers' scripts, a dilemma also encountered by several of Marston's characters.

⁵Caputi includes a chapter on the "duke in disguise," a category treated more broadly by Freeburg in his discussion of the "spy in disguise" as "a man of authority who spies on petty roguery" (p. 173). Freeburg's essay compares Marston's Malcontent and Fawn with Middleton's Phoenix and Your Five Gallants, Jonson's Bartholomew Fair, and Shakespeare's Measure for Measure. He finds Shakespeare's play imitative of Marston in plot but superior in its treatment of the disguise-plot. According to Freeburg, "The study of the spy motive, as of all disguise, has a tendency to fix our attention on the physical, momentary, theatrical values of certain dramatic situations" (p. 175).

Before the four plays may be considered, however, it is necessary to look briefly at yet another group of Dramatists presented by Marston in both early and late plays: the Comic Dramatists, responsible for spinning out subplots which they author, direct, and often star in, wearing one or more disguises. These masters (or mistresses) of dramatic illusion, of whom Cocledemoy is the supreme example, are cocky and confident in their roguery, drawing into their playing at least one other, involuntary actor: a fool infinitely worthy of being gulled.

I. COCLEDEMOY AND OTHER COMICS

Two such comic characters, predecessors of Cocledemoy, are Winifride (JDE) and Bydett (WYW), who successfully gull two lusty suitors and one clothes-crazy fop.⁶ The clever Winifride is a born Dramatist, a fact that she demonstrates in two separate lines of action in Jack Drum's Entertainment.⁷ In the first, she does all the thinking for the fickle Camelia (until other Dramatists intervene), and in the

⁶Regretfully, since Marston's contributions to Eastward Ho, a collaboration with Jonson and Chapman, and The Insatiate Countess, begun by Marston but completed by William Barksted in 1613, cannot be precisely determined, two outstanding subplots may only be mentioned. The first is a bit of stage business in Eastward Ho in which Security, not recognizing his own wife in disguise, and tricked by Quicksilver, talks her into running away with Sir Petronel Flash, reminiscent of Brabant Signior playing pander for his wife in Jack Drum and Bilioso doing the same thing in The Malcontent. The second is a delightful episode staged by Abigail and Thais in The Insatiate Countess (certainly kinswomen of Dulcimet and Zoya in The Fawn). Since each woman is being seduced by the other's husband, they change houses for the assignations; each man, unknowingly having made love to his own wife, would rather confess to an attempted murder than admit to having been cuckolded, as each believes he has been, by his arch-rival.

⁷See pp. 91-92 and 109 above.

second she slyly outwits both Jack Drum and John fo de King in their relentless pursuit of her. Bydett shows equal skill in bringing about the gulling of Simplicius Faber. Both characters employ their dramatic talents for the sheer joy of using them.

Winifride, then, from her position as serving maid, directs many of the decisions made by Camelia, Marston's parody of the opportunist who marries for reasons other than love. Camelia's dependence on the opinion of Winifride underlines the intended parody and proves her downfall. Winifride advises her to reject the genuine affection of Brabant Junior because he is a younger brother, and love instead the rich fool John Ellis, following a Machiavellian system of logic:

Pish, by my maiden-head, were I to match,
 I would elect a wealthy foole fore all,
 Then may one hurry in her Chariot,
 Shine in rich purpled Tissue, have hundred loves,
 Rule all, pay all, take all, without checke or snib.
 When being married to a wise man (O the Lord)
 You are made a foole, a Ward, curbd and controlld. . . .
 (JDE I, p. 189, Vol. III)

Having followed her maid's advice and exchanged Brabant Junior for Ellis, Camelia is surprised to find Winifride again changing her mind, now urging her to love Planet (saying that since Katherine has disappeared, Camelia is sole heir to her father's fortune and need no longer marry for money). The maid's tactics are irresistible to Camelia:

Wini. . . . I have found out a man
 That merits you, if man can merit you.
Came. Lord what a tide of hate comes creeping on
 Upon my former judgement? Come, the man?
Wini. The man? (oh God) the man is such a man,
 That he is matchlesse. . . .
Ca. Oh thou tormentst me, deare Winifride the Man?
Wi. . . . O God the most accomplish'd man that
 breathes, And Planet is the man.
Came. Out on the divell, theres a man indeed.
 (JDE IV, pp. 223-224, Vol. III)

Winifride's support, it turns out, has been purchased, and Planet has promised her a hundred pounds a year once he has, with her assistance, wed Camelia. Planet has designated both Winifride and Camelia actresses in a play of his own and has offered to pay Winifride for her performance, in order to demonstrate Camelia's fickle nature to Brabant Junior. Winifride here relinquishes her position as Dramatist to Planet, accepting an acting role in his play instead, and from this point the activity surrounding Camelia becomes even more complicated. The action is crossed by the presence of yet another Dramatist, Brabant Junior, who sees Planet conferring with Winifride and correctly surmises that his friend is arranging to meet Camelia, but has no way of knowing that Planet intends to rebuff her. Overcome with jealousy, Brabant hires a page to kill Planet for his supposed treachery. Tragedy is fortunately averted through the prudence of the page, who wisely decides that such enterprise is insane.

Thus, Winifride, Planet, Brabant Junior, and even the page co-author the secondary play featuring the passive Camelia, illustrating Mendelsohn's point that no single Dramatist may control the outcome of his dramatic vision. In this case, no one vision proves dominant: Brabant Junior's scheme nearly ends in disaster due to his incorrect assessment of the situation; Planet's plot nearly backfires, but finally ends as he desires, with the enlightenment of Brabant Junior; Camelia is made to pay in the end for letting herself be so led by the designs of others, as she turns from one former suitor to another, finally seeking a husband in earnest:

Ca. M. Brabant, M. Planet, M. Ellis, faith Ile have any.
Sir Ed. But no bodie will have thee, this is the plague of
 light inconstancie.

(JDE V, p. 237, Vol. III)

Winifride fails to get the promised reward from Planet, since he never intended to marry Camelia at all, but the reward was not her primary motivation and its loss is not treated seriously. More important, her directing of Camelia's attention from Brabant Junior to Ellis to Planet has been its own reward. Our lasting memory of her is light-hearted, and has to do also with the second line of action that she is responsible for: the double gulling of Jack Drum and John fo de King.

Once again, Winifride's dramatic technique operates smoothly and successfully. She is the object of undisguised sexual advances from both Jack Drum--"Kisse me sweet wench, kisse mee"---and M. John fo de King--"Hee my Vinifride, by gor you are come, in te very nick to pleasure mee, pree you kisse mee, clip mee, love mee, or by gor mee ang die certaine" (JDE III, p. 208, Vol. III). The quick-thinking "wench" devises a plan on the spot which will put an end to their annoying her, while providing a harmless joke all around. She tells Jack to come to her chamber in one hour, where he will be given "what you will aske, and I can graunt." Satisfied, Jack departs, whereupon Winifride then turns to Mounsieur:

Wini. Well Mounsieur, I'll give you pleasure.
Moun. But will you presently? quickly, for by gor me am a hot shot.

.
Wini. Well then, two houres hence come to my chamber, and Timothy Twedle shall give you mee in a sacke.

Moun. In a sacke? Ha very well.

Wini. And you shall carrie me to my Maisters house at Holloway, for in the house we cannot be private without suspect. Till then, farewell.

(JDE III, pp. 208-209, Vol. III)

Mounsieur is delighted with his good fortune, practically licking his lips in anticipation: "I carrie de vench on my backe, and de vench carie me on her (hee) fine back. . . . by gor me sing la, liro, liro la, lilo."

When Drum shows up at the appointed time, Winifride proves equal to the occasion, pulling off her well-designed play with masterful timing. She explains to Drum that, afraid of being discovered with him at home, she will keep her promise to him elsewhere: "To night I must lie at the Farme at Holloway, thither shall you be conveyed in this Sacke, & laid in my chamber, from whence you shall have free accesse to the pleasures of my private bed" (JDE IV, p. 220, Vol. III). The agreeable Jack climbs into the sack, like Mounsieur anticipating pleasure to come: "and so taking leave of your lippes, I betake me to the tuition of the Sacke." This tuition will prove more instructive than he realizes. Only one last directive by Winifride remains to be given--to Timothy Twedle: "Stay a little heere, and if John fo de King come, give him that Sack. Oh I could crack my Whalebone, breake my Buske, to think what laughter may arise from this" (JDE IV, p. 220, Vol. III).

Winifride's plot is laid, the actors in place. Jack Drum waits, crouching in the sack, to be conveyed to a room where Winifride will entertain him. Mounsieur enters, expecting to find a sack containing the willing Winifride, waiting to be carried to his chamber for similar entertainment. The onstage audience is also ready, as Planet, Brabant Signior, and Brabant Junior are idly passing the time discussing the relative merits of "our moderne witts," and are ready to be diverted. Mounsieur, having picked up the sack, comes into their field of vision, obviously laboring under such a heavy load, and first Planet, then Brabant Junior, demands to know what is in it, punctuating their requests by poking and prodding at the pack. Too late, Mounsieur realizes that he has erred in coming this way. His tormentors refuse to believe his claim that he is carrying glasses, "brittle vare," and only a

look into the sack will persuade them to stop striking their victim: "We must know whats in the bag Ifaith." Poor Mounsieur is crestfallen, lowering the bag to the ground, seeing his high hopes for the imminent satisfaction of his lust once again crushed: "Sweet Vinifride, by verie art dus vurst, he by gor, my did not dink to vrong yow dus"; then opening the bag: "He Jack Drum. Jesu vat made you dere?" The embarrassed Drum scrambles out of the bag, fabricates an explanation, and hustles away, angry at Winifride:

Gentlemen, my M. desires you to come supp with him, I was sent to invite you, and this itching goat, would needs ease my legges & carry me: I hope you'll come, and so I take my leave. I, I am guld, but if I quit her not, well.

(JDE IV, pp. 221-222, Vol. III)

Her plot has achieved its aim, to rid her of two unwanted admirers, while the selfish Drum and Mounsieur are well-deserving of the gulling received at her hand. It is this episode that inspires Brabant Signior to take M. John fo de King to his own wife, a jest that backfires on the elder Brabant and finally rewards the long-suffering Frenchman.

The rogue Bydett is the second Comic Dramatist to engineer a gulling, that of the fool Simplicius Faber in What You Will.⁸ The purpose of Bydett's plot is chiefly to provide entertainment for himself and the other pages as Holyfernes Pippo, Simplicius' page, seeks to qualify for initiation into their brotherhood. Bydett, the leader, tells him he "must performe a valorous Vertuous, and religious exploit first in desert of [the] order." This exploit is designated by Bydett: "Cousen thy master, hee is a foole, and was created for men of wit such as thyselfe to make use of" (WYW III, p. 272, Vol. II). Bydett performs

⁸ A description of this action may be found above, pp. 71-73.

the functions of playwright, director, costumier, and actor (along with Pippo and Simplicius) in the performance: "Pippo tis our will and pleasure thou sute thy selfe like a Marchants wife, leave the managing of the sequence unto our prudence." He ignores the protestations of Pippo that he is unqualified to play the part: "alas I am to little, speake to small, go to gingerly, by my troth I feare I shall looke to faire" (WYW III, p. 273). Bydett steps from his role as "Honorificacuminos Bidet Emperor of Crackes, Prince of Pages, Marques of Mumchance, and sole regent over a bale of false dice" (III, p. 279), into the part of Crack, his role for the upcoming play, the Gulling of Simplicius:

Our majesty dismounteth, and wee put of our greatnesse, and now my little knaves I am plaine Crack. As I am Bosphoros Carmelidon Honorificacuminos Bydet I am imperious: honor sparckles in mine eyes; but as I am Crack I will convay crosbite and cheat upon Simplicius, I will feet satiat and fill your panches; replenish, stuff or furnish your purses; wee will laugh when others weepe, sing when others sith, feede when others starve, and be drunk when others are sober. . .

(WYW III, p. 273, Vol. II)

Bydett is espousing the philosophy of more rogues than he in this declaration of intended mischief. It is an old story of clever minds pitted against the slow-witted, of sparkling youth against the dullness of adulthood, of sharp employee against foolish employer. Again Marston makes it clear that the fool deserves what he gets, as Bydett and company divest Simplicius of sword, dagger, hat, feather, and purse. Bydett's group are not entirely innocent since they keep the spoils of their labor as players, but they are forgiven in the world of the larger play. Profit is a boon for them but not their primary goal; they do not rob everyone. Loss is unfortunate for Simplicius, but is simply the risk involved in his choosing to gamble out of greed for more and more clothing.

Marston's outstanding Comic Dramatist, who ensured lasting popularity in performance for The Dutch Courtesan, and whose antics have even been staged separately from the main play,⁹ is the "cogging," "cony-catching" Cocledemoy. Knave, rogue, actor, clown, this light-hearted thief is a "thick, elderly, stub-bearded fellow" (DC II.iii.101), a man of "much money, some wit, but less honesty" (I.i.10-11). Cocledemoy provides a frame as well as a sustained line of comic action for The Dutch Courtesan: he is the topic of discussion in the first scene and the last character to speak at the end. As a Dramatist he works alone, setting up a series of five little plays-within-the-play in which his victims the Mulligrubs and occasional bystanders are unknowing actors, but of which he is the star. The effect is to keep the theater audience in anticipation of his next entrance whenever he is off stage.

The mercurial Cocledemoy costumes himself in one disguise after another, appearing in rapid succession as citizen Gudgeon, barber Andrew Shark, a French pedlar, a goldsmith's servant, a bellman, and a sergeant. He outfits himself, in his multi-roles, with not only costume, but props, script, and sometimes even a name. His successive playlets, taken as a dramatic whole, follow Victor Freeburg's description of multi-disguise plays:

The nature of the plots in these plays is nearly always the same. The main character is a rogue skilful in disguising, who keeps the action moving by shifting from one costume into another, the exchange of costume taking place almost instantaneously. The result is normally a shifting from one complication into another. Hence a

⁹Michael Scott, John Marston's Plays: Theme, Structure and Performance (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978), in his last chapter traces the performance history of The Dutch Courtesan.

multi-disguise play is really a chain of incidents. At any rate this type of play departs farther than other types from any rigid scheme of rise and fall, tying and untying of action,¹⁰ such as critics have applied as the test of a well-constructed play.

While it is indeed the main plot of Freevill and Franceschina that provides most of the traditional rising and falling action in The Dutch Courtesan, and while Cocledemoy's multi-disguise play is an episodic subplot, nevertheless the rogue's activities are unified enough to offer a definite build-up of suspense as Cocledemoy grows bolder and bolder with Mulligrub raging ever more violently against him.

The first action undertaken by Cocledemoy against the Mulligrubs, the theft of a nest of goblets from their tavern, occurs before the play begins, and the opening scene shows Freevill recounting the details of the robbery to an audience made up of Malheureux, Tysefew, and Caqueteur. Thus the legend of Cocledemoy is being passed on by word of mouth, so that the theater audience is already looking forward to his first appearance. He has perpetrated the theft with the aid of colleague Mary Faugh, an old bawd--later pointing out that "[c]heaters and bawds go together like washing and wringing" (DC III.iii.124)--the two of them having escaped through a window with the bowls while a blind harper serenading them played on, unseeing. Cocledemoy's motive in relieving Mulligrub of his dearest possessions, which he explains in soliloquy, is to out-cheat a cheater, repaying vintner Mulligrub with a dose of his own medicine for mixing water with the wine he offers for sale:

Conscience does not repine. Were I to bite an honest gentleman, a poor grogaran poet, or a penurious parson that had but ten pigs'

¹⁰Freeburg, pp. 123-124.

tails in a twelvemonth. . . . I were damn'd beyond the works of supererogation! But to wring the withers of my gouty, barm'd, spigot-frigging jumbler of elements, Mulligrub, I hold it as lawful as sheep-shearing, taking eggs from hens. . . .

(DC III.ii.33-40)

Cocledemoy is a self-proclaimed Dramatist, boasting of his stratagem against the wine-merchant to another Dramatist, Freevill, with apt metaphor: "I will draw the vintner to the stoup, and when he runs low, tilt him" (DC I.ii.63-64). Later he refines the metaphor further, showing that he intends to teach Mulligrub a lesson: "I'll gargalize my throat with this vintner; and when I have done with him, spit him out" (III.ii.31-32).

The second little play staged by Cocledemoy is rather elaborate, involving some advance preparation on his part and two disguises. When Cocledemoy encounters a barber-surgeon's apprentice on his way "to trim Master Mulligrub the vintner" (DC II.i.177), he introduces himself as Gudgeon and asks to borrow the boy's basin, razor, and apron. Puns are frequent throughout the episode on the "trimming," "shaving," and "polling" of Mulligrub, as when Cocledemoy explains, "I have an odd jest to trim Master Mulligrub for a wager" (II.i.190-191), and "if I shave not Master Mulligrub, my wit has no edge" (II.i.199-200). Before the theater audience he disguises himself as a barber, deliberately shifting speech and appearance:

Let me see--a barber. My scurvy tongue will discover me; must dissemble, must disguise. For my beard, my false hair; for my tongue--Spanish, Dutch, or Welsh--no, a Northern barber!

(DC II.i.200-203)

Cocledemoy goes to all this trouble for sheer sport, since he has no prior certainty that there will be anything for him to steal this time. However, his ability to devise his play as he goes stands him in

good stead when he finds Mulligrub carrying a bag of money, and he ends up shaving the vintner of fifteen pounds--a week's income. His method is deceptively simple: introducing himself as Andrew Shark, he applies a lot of lather to Mulligrub's face, forcing him to close his eyes--"Shut your eyes close--wink! Sure, this ball [of soap] will make you smart" (II.iii.66-67)--then even puts a fool's coxcomb on Mulligrub's head--"Your head will take cold. I will put on your good worship's nightcap whilst I shave you" (II.iii.69-70). Covered with suds, good Mulligrub chatters on, but his tormentor has vanished with the money. Not until Mistress Mulligrub appears does he discover the truth: "I will not curse, but a pox on Cocledemoy! He has poll'd and shav'd me; he has trimm'd me!" (II.iii.113-114).

The next scheme is equally involved and also requires two disguises and two roles. This time Cocledemoy, disguised as a French pedlar, eavesdrops as Mulligrub purchases a chalice (to replace the stolen ones) from a goldsmith named Burnish--on credit, his money also having been stolen. The vessel, a "standing cup parcel-gilt, of thirty-two ounces, eleven pound, seven shillings" (III.ii.305), is delivered to Mistress Mulligrub by a servant of Burnish's. Then Cocledemoy, disguised as another of the goldsmith's servants, makes his entrance and handily appropriates the cup:

Your husband, and my master, Master Burnish, has sent you a jowl of fresh salmon; and they both will come to dinner to season your new cup with the best wine; which cup your husband entreats you to send back by me that his arms may be grav'd o' the side, which he forgot before it was send.

(DC III.iii.32-36)

The business of the jowl of salmon adds an extraordinary touch to the comic action, serving to alienate Mulligrub further from

our sympathies and endear Cocledemoy to his audiences, both on and off stage. Mulligrub reinforces the low opinion of him that has been conveyed earlier by Cocledemoy, when he learns that a salmon has been sent in unexpectedly:

MISTRESS MULLIGRUB.

Ay, strange. You know no man that sent me word that he and his wife would come to dinner to me, and sent this jowl of fresh salmon beforehand?

MULLIGRUB.

Peace, not I! Peace! The messenger hath mistaken the house; let's eat it up quickly before it be inquir'd for. Sit to it. Some vinegar, quick! Some good luck yet. Faith, I never tasted salmon relish'd better. Oh, when a man feeds at other men's cost!

(DC III.iii.68-75)

But his good luck turns quickly when he learns that the messenger who brought the salmon departed with the new bowl: "Pah! how this salmon stinks" (III.iii.91). Besides showing Mulligrub's true nature, the salmon episode allows the rogue Cocledemoy a chance to show off his skills as Dramatist and actor; having used the salmon in the plot to steal the standing cup, he now plans to retrieve the salmon in the second scene of this play-within-a-play: "I must have the salmon to worship. Cocledemoy, now for the masterpiece!" (DC III.iii.107-108). He returns to Mistress Mulligrub, still in the guise of Burnish's servant, just after her husband has run out blustering. The scene is played exactly according to his design:

COCLEDEMOY.

Peace, good mistress. I'll tell you all. A jest, a very mere jest! Your husband only took sport to fright you. The bowl's at my master's; and there is your husband, who sent me in all haste, lest you should be over-frighted with his feigning, to come to dinner to him--

MISTRESS MULLIGRUB.

Praise heaven it is no worse!

COCLEDEMOY.

And desired me to desire you to send the jowl of salmon before, and yourself to come after to them. . . .

(DC III.iii.111-118)

The credulous vintner's wife has not learned to be wary, and she who prides herself on having more wit than her "silly husband"--"tis I that must bear a brain for all" (III.iii.27-28)--loses the salmon as well as the cup. It only remains for Mulligrub to re-enter and discover the double loss.

Having relieved the vintner of all his portable wealth, Cocledemoy does not desist, but turns his efforts to getting Mulligrub into trouble with the authorities in his fourth and fifth plays. In the fourth he actually has Mulligrub put in the stocks for stealing his cloak, a feat accomplished by baiting the vintner and then running away, leaving his cloak behind. When Mulligrub picks it up and chases after him, he is accosted by two dull constables who, as Ingram puts it, must come "from the same precinct station as Dogberry and Verges."¹¹ Dramatist Cocledemoy has of course assigned parts to the constables and cast Mulligrub in the role of thief, using the cloak as a stage property, and since the constables are incapable of seeing through the dramatic illusion, they put the irate vintner in the stocks. Not yet satisfied, Cocledemoy returns disguised as a bellman, to whom Mulligrub --who never learns, it seems--entrusts his purse. Cocledemoy then directs the willing constabulary to lead him off to jail.

The fifth and final episode of the sub-plot directed by Cocledemoy comes together with the main plot in the last scene of The Dutch Courtesan. Cocledemoy does not stop until he has brought Mulligrub to the shadow of the gallows (where, incidentally, he makes a date with Mistress Mulligrub to follow the hanging). As has frequently been

¹¹Ingram, p. 152.

noted, the disguised Freevill has also allowed Malheureux to come close to death by hanging, and the parallel plots mingle when Cocledemoy picks the purse of Malheureux from his pocket. Once again the theater audience, no doubt wondering how far this conniving character will go in his toying with the vintner, watches as he steps into this his last disguise and role, that of a sergeant, explaining that he has caused the real sergeant, whose role he borrows, to pass out from drink:

So, I ha' lost my sergeant in an ecliptic mist. Drunk, horrible drunk! He is fine! So now will I fit myself; I hope this habit will do me no harm. I am an honest man already. Fit, fit, fit as a punk's tail, that serves everybody. By this time my vintner thinks of nothing but hell and sulphur. . . .

(DC V.iii.1-5)

In this guise Cocledemoy hears Mulligrub confess his sins and forgive his enemies, specifying Cocledemoy by name. Having finally achieved his purpose of bringing Mulligrub to see the error of his ways, the rogue steps out of his role in front of the assembled company, revealing a magnanimous spirit underneath, "for, observe, honest Cocledemoy restores whatsoever he has got, to make you know that whatso'er he has done has been only euphoniae gratia--for wit's sake: I acquit this vintner as he has acquitted me" (DC V.iii.132-136). He then returns Mulligrub's stolen property and prevents the hanging.

Thus the Play of Cocledemoy ends with all forgiven by Mulligrub, all saved by Cocledemoy. Like other multi-disguise plays its movement is indeed episodic, and yet it features an intensifying of dramatic interest marked by Cocledemoy's series of quick successes, which evoke ever more exaggerated threats from Mulligrub. For instance, after the nest of goblets is stolen he states, "I will hang the cony-catching Cocledemoy, and there's an end of 't" (DC I.i.42-43);

after the barbering, he cries, "Cocledemoy, Cocledemoy! Raise all the wise men in the street! I'll hang him with mine own hands!" (II.iii.102-103). When he buys the gilded chalice from Burnish, his curses have become more explicit:

I will hang the knave. No, first he shall half rot in fetters in the dungeon, his conscience made despairful. I'll hire a knave o' purpose shall assure him he is damn'd, and after see him with mine own eyes hanged without singing any psalm. Lord, that he has but one neck!

(DC III.ii.7-11)

And finally, having lost the cup and the salmon, he rants with humorous bombast, his self-control in shreds: "I'll ha' my fine boy, my worshipful Cocledemoy. I'll moy him! He shall be hang'd in lousy linen; I'll hire some sectary to make him an heretic before he die; and when he is dead, I'll piss on his grave" (DC IV.v.10-14). Mulligrub's steadily increasing fury, his innate pettiness, and his helplessness against the efforts of Dramatist Cocledemoy to employ him as the butt of a self-designed farce, combine to make Cocledemoy's successive plays-within-a-play extremely satisfying to watch. The effervescent rogue finds Mulligrub's mounting tirades irresistible, and he matches each with an ever more outrageous action. Cocledemoy is a natural mimic, and much of his motivation seems to be the pleasure of using his talent. We like him because he selects an opponent who is well-deserving of his fate, and even more because, unlike most rogues, he actually returns the stolen goods.

All of the Comic Dramatists get satisfaction from their theatrical activity. For two of them profit is attractive, although less important than the motive of seeing their victims gulled, shorn of their pretension, hypocrisy, or self-serving ambition. Winifride is bribed to promote Planet's suit with Camelia and also gets rid of two unwanted

admirers, while Bydett gains the flashy clothing of Simplicius. But "honest" Cocledemoy, giving back Mulligrub's money and goblets, has entirely pure motives. He acts for the love of acting, win or lose, with or without an audience. The others who are drawn into his plays have nothing to lose but their pomposity and inflated pride; hence his spectators may sit back and watch with relish as the plots unfold.

Marston makes the same points with his Comic Dramatists that he does with his Role-Players: use theatrical powers wisely and generously; never lose sight of the difference between the person and the assumed role, the world and the stage, nature and art; set up situations involving role-playing for unselfish motives, and never for the improper assumption of power or usurpation of another person's rightful role; when the purpose is achieved, end the playing. And with the Comics, he makes one additional point: it is all right, other conditions having been satisfied, for theatrical productions to entertain.

Next to be considered is The Dutch Courtesan, which, in addition to the little comedies staged by Dramatist Cocledemoy, features a central conflict waged between two confident and powerful Onstage Dramatists, the revengeful courtesan Franceschina and her erstwhile lover, Young Freevill. In this play, after the stage at the Blackfriars has been turned into the hall of Sir Lionel Freevill, the histrionic activities of these Dramatists turn the hall back into a theater.

II. A KNIGHT'S SON: THE DUTCH COURTESAN

Plot One is initiated by Franceschina. She and Freevill have been lovers for a undetermined amount of time before the beginning of The Dutch Courtesan. As the play commences, Freevill has just become

betrothed to Beatrice, renouncing his association with the courtesan for a lawful love, and it is Franceschina's fury against men--that of a woman scorned--that sets her to plotting the deaths of both Freevill and his friend Malheureux. As Dramatist, she creates her own revenge play, stating her motive resoundingly (using Marston's version of a Dutch accent): "Ick sall be reveng'd! Do ten tousand hell damn me, ick sall have the rogue troat cut; and his love, and his friend, and all his affinity sall smart, sall die, sall hang!" (DC II.ii.41-43). She will be avenged against Freevill and all that he holds dear for his fickleness and faithlessness. Her acting ability is quickly evident as Freevill and Maheureux enter her chamber only seconds after this vigorous cursing of her one-time love. She conceals her true feelings as she greets Freevill: "O mine seet, dear'st, kindest, mine loving! O mine tousand, ten tousand, delicated, petty seetart!" (DC II.ii.47-48). But beneath this assumed role, the outraged woman is plotting her revenge.

Freevill's pious friend Malheureux occupies a pivotal place in The Dutch Courtesan because he becomes the primary actor in the dramatic productions of both Franceschina and Freevill. He gets involved by accompanying Freevill to visit the courtesan, following a heated debate in which he has defended the "virtuous" shunning of prostitutes against Freevill's defense of "nature"--Freevill stating one of the themes of the play: "Of all the fools that would all man out-thrust, / He that 'gainst Nature would seem wise is worst" (DC I.ii.160-162). Malheureux goes with Freevill only to shame the courtesan and prevent his friend from staying with her, it being Freevill's farewell visit before his marriage, but "virtuous" Malheureux unexpectedly finds her irresistible, and falls in love with her himself. Fully aware that his newly-

discovered sexual desire is contrary to his former emphasis on self-control, he is thus vulnerable to her efforts to use him in her plot against Freevill. He admits to Freevill, "I am no whit myself" (II.ii.97), then says to Franceschina: "Passion, I am thy slave! Sweet, it shall be my grace / That I account thy love my only virtue" (II.ii.111-112).

With such a willing actor at hand, Franceschina begins to write and direct her revenge play. With Malheureux begging her to love him she pretends to be tempted, then asks, "Will you do one ting for me?" (DC II.ii.140). She tells him that she has made a vow:

FRANCESCHINA.

So long as Freevill lives, I must not love.

MALHEUREUX.

Then he--

FRANCESCHINA.

Must--

MALHEUREUX.

Die!

Malheureux is willing to promise practically anything with the satisfaction of his lust so tantalizingly near. When he asks, "Will you be mine when he is not?" he finds the courtesan's reply seductive. She is most persuasive when seeming not to persuade:

FRANCESCHINA.

Will I? Dear, dear breast, by this most zealous kiss--but I will not persuade you: but if you hate him that I loathe most deadly--yet, as you please, I'll persuade noting.

MALHEUREUX.

Will you be only mine?

FRANCESCHINA.

Vill I? How hard 'tis for true love to dissemble! I am only yours.

MALHEUREUX.

'Tis as irrevocable as breath: He dies!

(DC II.ii.171-177)

The drama that the dissembling Franceschina is designing casts Malheureux as a killer and Freevill as a corpse. She introduces a stage property, asking for Beatrice's ring from Freevill's finger as proof of

his death, then gives some additional stage directions to her actor:
 "Oh, done safely; a quarrel sudden pick'd, with an advantage strike;
 then bribe--a little coin, all's safe, dear soul. But I'll not set you on"
 (DC II.ii.185-187). In an aside, she summarizes her purpose, plot,
 and theme of revenge:

Now does my heart swell high, for my revenge
 Has birth and form. First, friend sall kill his friend;
 He dat survives, I'll hang; besides, de chaste
 Beatrice I'll vex. Only de ring--
 Dat got, the world sall know the worst of evils:
 Woman corrupted is the worst of devils.
 (DC II.ii.192-197)

Unfortunately for the outcome of Franceschina's play, her
 leading actor changes scripts without her knowledge. As soon as
 Malheureux is out of her presence, he realizes the absurd lengths to
 which he has let his infatuation lead him. He is incapable of committing
 murder, even for the enjoyment of the courtesan, and he decides to tell
 Freevill what she has asked him to do:

Lord, how was I misgone! How easy 'tis to err
 When passion will not give us leave to think!

 'Tis sin of cold blood, mischief with wak'd eyes,
 That is the damned and the truly vice,
 Not he that's passionless, but he 'bove passion's wise.
 My friend shall know it all.
 (DC II.ii.215-216, 221-224)

His problem, however, is that he is also incapable of giving her up,
 though he knows her soul to be "hideously black." He can rise above
 only a part of his passion, rejecting murder but not lust.

It is this state of affairs that prompts Freevill to set into
 motion Plot Two, an elaborate counter plot to Franceschina's scheme,
 with himself and Malheureux as actors:

I have it, mark! I give a masque tonight
 To my love's kindred. In that thou shalt go;

In that we two make show of falling out,
 Give seeming challenge, instantly depart
 With some suspicion to present fight.
 We will be seen as going to our swords;
 And after meeting, this ring only lent,
 I'll lurk in some obscure place till rumor
 (The common bawd to loose suspicions)
 Have feigned me slain, which (in respect myself
 Will not be found, and our late seeming quarrel)
 Will quickly sound to all as earnest truth.
 Then to thy wench; protest me surely dead,
 Show her this ring, enjoy her, and, blood cold,
 We'll laugh at folly.

(DC III.i.243-257; underlining mine)

Freeville as Dramatist is quick-thinking and thorough, omitting no necessary details. His counter-plot supersedes that of Franceschina, a fact which the theater audience knows from the outset, so that dramatic interest is sustained by watching Freevill out-manuever her. His play-within-a-play is well-conceived and well-executed. The betrothal entertainment provides the stage setting, as more lights are called for to illuminate the entrance of the masquers. Having completed the formal dancing, the masquers move into the audience to choose partners for ordinary dancing, and Freevill chooses Beatrice. Suddenly the celebration is interrupted by the abrupt entrance of Malheureux, who rudely takes Beatrice from Freevill, provoking his friend into drawing his sword. In the next instant, against shocked protests from Beatrice and relatives and friends of the couple, Freeville and Malheureux have exchanged gloves as pledges, signifying their intent to duel. In another moment the guests, still marveling, go in to the banquet, having just unknowingly served as audience for the first scene of the elaborate secondary play which Freevill writes, directs, and stars in himself.

The two discuss their performance later, noting that the audience has found it believable. Freevill appeals to Malheureux's

virtue and reason, hoping to dissuade him from continuing with the plot, in view of his certain knowledge of the extremes of treachery of which Franceschina is capable. But Malheureux remaining insistent that he must enjoy her favors, Freevill lends him the ring coveted by Franceschina and begins his "artificial absence" (DC IV.ii.19), as he says, by going into hiding at "Master Shatewe's the jeweler's," lamenting the folly of those who "with a willing eye do, seeing, fall." Malheureux's telling response, however, precipitates further dramatic activity in Freevill:

'Tis true, but truth seems folly in madness' spectacles.
I am not now myself, no man. Farewell.
(DC IV.ii.27-29)

At this point Freevill shifts to a disguise-plot without telling Malheureux, Beatrice, Shatewe the jeweler, or anyone, for that matter, but the theater audience. In Finkelpearl's words, "The virtuous Machiavel, Freevill, reveals that he too can be a god of policy, and concocts an elaborate plot involving a trick within a trick."¹² He gives only one motive for assuming a disguise--to teach Malheureux a necessary lesson that he otherwise would not have learned, by exposing him, unprotected, to the courtesan's viciousness:

Now repentance, the fool's whip, seize thee!
Nay, if there be no means I'll be thy friend,
But not thy vice's; and with greatest sense
I'll force thee feel thy errors to the worst.
The vildest of dangers thou shalt sink into.
No jeweler shall see me; I will lurk
Where none shall know or think; close I'll withdraw
And leave thee with two friends--a whore and knave.
(DC IV.ii.31-38)

¹²Finkelpearl, p. 217.

Freevill shows no interest in pursuing counter-revenge on Franceschina for plotting against his life, but certainly that is an inevitable benefit of the working out of his counter-plot. If Malheureux is to experience her true nature, then her inherent cruelty and her plot will perforce be exposed to all. Freevill puts on the disguise of a pander, calling himself Don Dubon, and goes to work for Franceschina where he can oversee, unseen, the acting out of his play. Like the disguised Duke Vincentio in Measure for Measure manipulating the action in order to accomplish the education of Angelo concerning the life of the passions, Freevill remains onstage to bring about similar increase of self-knowledge in Malheureux.

Victor Freeburg, in his chapter on "The Spy in Disguise," has commented on the fact that the success of such a disguise plot "depends entirely on the histrionic ability of the spy." Freeburg says further that

the spy is somewhat like the man who sits behind the scenes and pulls the strings of a marionette show. But he differs from the marionette man by actually appearing on the open scene as part of the show. The spy starts the action because of his disguise, he watches the action or participates in it protected by disguise, and he terminates the action by finally revealing his disguise.¹³

Freeburg identifies three categories of disguised spies--categories which frequently overlap in Marston's plays: the spying husband (Mal., AR), spying father (AR, Fawn), and spying duke (AR, Fawn, Mal.). Although variations on all of these three situations are indeed present in Freevill's disguise--spying duke as he doffs his position of influence to become, for the moment, a pander; spying son rather than father, as

¹³Freeburg, p. 139.

his absence brings great concern to his own father and to Beatrice, who together comprise the audience for his secondary play; and spying husband as, though not yet married to Beatrice, he has opportunity to observe a test of her fidelity--Freevill is predominantly an original in his disguise: a spying friend.

The two plots of Franceschina and Freevill, then, follow parallel lines as Freevill, in the service of the courtesan, both observes and assists her play-within-a-play to run its course. He even acts, briefly, in Franceschina's play. Malheureux sends her the borrowed ring as proof of the death of Freevill; she, in haste, begs two hours before giving him satisfaction, then departs to seek out Beatrice, unknowingly squired by the disguised Freevill. She informs the families of both lovers that Malheureux has killed Freevill, and, in one of the ironic twists so dear to Marston, actually achieves much of her desired revenge. This she does by informing Beatrice of her relationship with Freevill, announcing that he has always preferred her to Beatrice, and producing the ring as proof. With Freevill still standing by in the pander's guise, she then invites the company to come to her chamber where, as audience to her carefully-staged play, they will hear Malheureux confess to the killing.

Thus the theater audience views the final scene of her play-within-a-play. The audience sees the image of itself in the onstage audience--Sir Lionel Freevill, Sir Hubert Subboys, Tysefew, and three officers with halberds--whom Franceschina conceals behind a curtain. She almost gloats over the up-coming performance in an aside:

De net is lay; now sall ick be revenge.
If dat me knew a dog dat Freevill love,

Me would puisson him; for know de deepest hell
 As a revenging woman's naught so fell.
 (DC V.i.12-15)

The scene with Malheureux is quickly played. She enjoys displaying her own acting ability before the hidden spectators, countering his eagerness for love with expertly contrived dalliance:

FRANCESCHINA.

. . .And ick pridee tell me, for me loves
 To hear of manhood very mush, i' fait.
 Ick pridee (vat vas me a-saying?)--oh, ick pridee
 Tell-a me, how did you kill-a Mettre Freevill?

MALHEUREUX.

Why, quarrel'd o' set purpose, drew him out,
 Singled him, and having th' advantage
 Of my sword and might, ran him through and through.

FRANCESCHINA.

Vat did you vid him van he was sticken?

MALHEUREUX.

I dragg'd him by the heels to the next wharf
 And spurn'd him in the river.

(DC V.i.35-44)

Malheureux is the double victim of both Dramatists. He knows he is playing a role, for he has not killed his friend, but he thinks that Freevill is safely hidden at the jeweler's (which he is not) and that Franceschina will live up to her bargain with him (which she does not). He is shocked, totally taken unaware, when the concealed viewers, having just heard him incriminate himself, rush out and seize him.

At this point the levels of deception begin to unwind. For Malheureux the playing is over, but Franceschina and Freevill remain in their assumed roles a while longer. Malheureux sends the officers to Shatewe's where, he thinks, Freevill will confirm his story. Franceschina, actually believing that her play's climactic scene has succeeded, continues with the deception by sending Freevill, still Don Dubon, to vex Beatrice with further taunting about Franceschina's love. Freevill goes to Beatrice as bidden, but instead of continuing in either his

self-assigned role or the one given him by Franceschina, he discovers himself both to her and to Crispinella--who with characteristic honesty tells him, "Brother, I must be plain with you; you have wrong'd us" (DC V.ii.58). She feels that he has gone too far in letting them think him dead.

The ambiguous treatment of theme that is present in all Marston's plays surfaces here. Freevill admits that she is right--and indeed, his willingness to allow Beatrice to suffer at Franceschina's hand while Malheureux is brought all the way to the gallows is more than a little disturbing. However, he assures them that when all is revealed both women will forgive him:

But yet, when my discourse hath stay'd your quaking,
You will be smother-lipp'd; and the delight
And satisfaction which we all have got
Under these strange disguisings, when you know,
You will be mild and quiet, forget at last.
It is much joy to think on sorrows past.

(DC v.ii.60-65)

He sounds as though he is speaking an epilogue to his dramatic production, and we would hope that his prediction is accurate. Yet whether Beatrice's delight and satisfaction are, in the end, complete, unmitigated by what she has learned of Freevill's past behavior, is a question which the play does not answer. The Dutch Courtesan remains a provocative treatment of "Marston's real dramatic subject," according to Gibbons, namely, "the dual nature of personality, the dominance of mask and parody in life, the absurdity of narrow formulations of experience symbolised by the convention of the happy ending and the moral conflict of black versus white."¹⁴

¹⁴Gibbons, p. 121

Freevill remains in disguise until immediately after Malheureux' speech of repentance on the gallows, at which time his appearance astonishes both his friend, the courtesan, and the entire company. Both Franceschina's plot and his larger one are made known. Freevill, the "witty malcontent,"¹⁵ defends his actions, reminding Malheureux that no entreaties, arguments or fears of danger had been able to prevent his pursuit of Franceschina:

Therefore, to force you from the truer danger,
I wrought the feigned, suffering this fair devil
In shape of woman to make good her plot;
And, knowing that the hook was deeply fast,
I gave her line at will till, with her own vain strivings,
See here she's tired.

(DC V.iii.43-48)

Malheureux' concurrence gives immediate assurance that Freevill's goal has been reached. Malheureux has at last gained self-knowledge: "I am myself" (V.iii.61), he says. Freevill's undisguising brings an end to all role-playing as he, too, becomes himself, and the curtain is drawn on the mischief of Franceschina.

Another aspect of this play that has caused concern is its adherence to a double standard. If Freevill is to be admired for having come to terms with his human passions--though this process has included whoring--and is the most morally healthy figure that the play has to offer, then the whipping and jailing of the prostitute seem harsh. However, the play raises more issues than the two characters' contrasting approaches to sexuality, and this problem may be seen in perspective if their contrasting styles as Dramatists are taken into account. Franceschina is not jailed for being a prostitute, but for

¹⁵Ibid, p. 122.

having bent her dramatic skills, wrongfully, to a mean purpose. She has plotted murder and revenge against Freevill, although he has broken no contract with her, and against Beatrice and Malheureux, both of whom are innocent. Marston finds such abuse of dramatic power reprehensible, since she is trying to alter the natural course of events and subvert the chosen roles of Freevill and Beatrice as husband and wife.

At the same time the dramatic activities of Freevill and Cocledemoy, the two additional Dramatists in The Dutch Courtesan, between whom a certain kinship is obvious, are blessed by Marston because they have been designed for totally different reasons. Whereas Franceschina hopes to make permanent and destructive changes--killing Freevill and Malheureux, driving Beatrice mad--Freevill hopes only to save his friend while teaching him a lesson, a plot which runs parallel to Cocledemoy's efforts to teach Mulligrub a thing or two. Clearly, to Marston, the rather awesome potential inherent in playing must be channeled into appropriate uses, both on the stage and in life. This play, which supports simple humanity, right reason, and good sense, certainly supports the employment of these virtues whenever playing is undertaken.

It is significant that in this, Marston's last complete comedy, he allows the action to be dominated by three such strong Dramatists as Franceschina, Freevill, and Cocledemoy, surely a suggestion that he sees life as highly theatricalized. Each has frequently been singled out for special admiration, as has the entire play--which is second only to The Fawn and The Malcontent among Marston's comedies. Of course, The Dutch Courtesan is not the only play to feature strong Dramatists

(though it is the only one to feature three). The Fawn, The Malcontent, and Antonio's Revenge also offer further development of two motifs present in The Dutch Courtesan. Malevole, Faunus, and Andrugio are disguised dukes, and each of their disguise plots receives fuller treatment than Freevill's. Also, although in this play Sir Lionel Freevill and Sir Hubert Subboys are frequently present as the first approving, then distressed, parents of the lovers, they serve mainly as audience to the dilemma of Freevill and Beatrice--whereas Faunus and Gonzago in The Fawn do much more directing themselves in their attempts to arrange marriages for their children, and Piero and Andrugio in the Antonio plays are engaged in a struggle to the grave and beyond which finally destroys their children's hope of marriage.

First, in The Fawn, Marston maintains a light touch in a fortuitous blending of the two motifs by bringing to the stage Faunus--the disguised Duke of Ferrara, disguised father of Tiberio, and disguised spy in the Court of Urbin.

III. DISGUISED DUKE: THE FAWN

The action of The Fawn revolves around four characters who are contrasted with each other in different configurations throughout the play. There are two dukes and fathers, Hercules and Gonzago; two children who become lovers, Dulcimet and Tiberio; but two people who let others direct them, Tiberio and Gonzago, and two clever Dramatists, Dulcimet and Faunus (the disguised Hercules). In this unusual play which lacks a villainous antagonist, the secondary play of one Dramatist secretly incorporates that of the other, as in The Dutch Courtesan, but this time the two are moving toward the same goal. There is, therefore,

little chance of their failing, but much pleasure to be had in watching the working out of the action.

Duke Hercules of Ferrara is the primary Dramatist, and the two actors in his play-within-a-play, besides himself, are his son Tiberio and Dulcibel, daughter of Urbin's Duke Gonzago. He sets his play into motion by sending Tiberio off to the Court of Urbin in the role of ambassador, to negotiate a marriage between father Hercules and the Princess Dulcibel. However, this is not his real purpose for Tiberio, but rather a ploy aimed at achieving his underlying goal. He suggests as much to his brother, in whose care he plans to leave his dukedom while he follows Tiberio to Urbin:

I have vowed to visit the court of Urbin, as thus: my son, as you can well witness with me, could I never persuade to marriage, although myself was then an ever-resolved widower, and though I proposed to him this very lady to whom he is gone in my right to negotiate. Now how his cooler blood will behave itself in this business would I have an only testimony.

(Fawn I.i.19-26)

The aging duke hopes that his son will marry and produce an heir, a task which Tiberio has thus far refused to undertake. Though his words here are not explicit, his strong implication is that, having already suggested Dulcibel as a possible bride for his son, only to have Tiberio reject her sight unseen, Hercules is trying a new approach. He hopes that his aloof son will be tempted by the sight of her beauty, now forbidden, and elect of his own volition to change roles--from suitor of Dulcibel on his father's behalf, to suitor of her for himself.¹⁶

¹⁶David A. Blostein, "Introduction" to John Marston, The Fawn (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1973), pp. 15 ff., proposes an unusual interpretation of Faunus' motives in going to Urbin. Blostein suggests that Faunus is dominated by a "humour of blood" and actually hopes to marry Dulcibel himself, accompanying Tiberio to observe the

Hercules gives fuller explanation of this hope in the next scene while bantering with Herod and Nymphadoro, wryly mocking himself as an unfit suitor for Dulcimet:

Methinks the young lord our prince of Ferrara so bounteously adorned with all of grace, feature, and best-shaped proportion, fair use of speech, full opportunity, and that which makes the sympathy of all, equality of heat, of years, of blood; methinks these lode-stones should attract the metal of the young princess rather to the son than to the noisome, cold, and most weak side of his half-rotten father.

(Fawn I.ii.262-270)

To this end the duke puts on a disguise and steps into the play himself on the stage of Urbin. There, finding that his disguise offers him a startling new perspective on the flattery at court which may attend a ruler, he "resolves to be a 'parasitaster,' just a Altofronto is a 'malcontentaster.'" ¹⁷ Unlike Altofronto, however, who as an imitation malcontent rails at everyone, this imitation parasite will flatter everyone unawares into self-exposure. ¹⁸ Thus, by pursuing his two primary goals, he hopes to satisfy his lust for adventure: the foremost

progress of negotiations; that he works out his own correction as well as that of others in the play; and that by the end of the play's second scene, having seen Tiberio with Dulcimet, he has renounced his claim to her hand in favor of a more appropriate match between the young couple. While interesting, this interpretation is improbable, since such a complete turn-around must occur in the first two scenes, and since a more convincing case may be made for Hercules' having maintained his original plan for the marriage to occur between his son and Dulcimet. Unlocking "the appetite of blood" refers not to his proposed courtship of the young woman, which he feigns, but to his traveling abroad disguised, which his first soliloquy explains: "And now, thou ceremonious sovereignty-- / Ye proud, severer, stateful complements, / The secret arts of rule--I put you off; / Nor ever shall those manacles of form / Once more lock up the appetite of blood" (I.i.37-41).

¹⁷Finkelpearl, p. 232.

¹⁸See Chapter II, n. 6, and discussion, pp. 81-84 and 114-122.

goal, which brings him to Urbin, is the securing of a bride for Tiberio and ultimately an heir for Ferrara; the secondary goal, which he formulates after his arrival, is the exposure of flatterers whose hypocrisy has infested even the Duke Gonzago.

Hercules has an easier job than any other of Marston's Dramatists. Once he initiates his plot by sending Tiberio to Urbin, he receives aid from an unexpected source, the Princess Dulcimet, who also has cast Tiberio in the role of her future husband. She employs considerable skill as playwright and director in achieving this end, freeing Hercules to spend more time in his second pursuit of exposing flattery, while at the same time keeping a watchful eye on her progress. In contrast with Dulcimet's great activity as Dramatist, Hercules serves more as Presenter in The Fawn through his numerous soliloquies. His chief function, once Dulcimet has gone into action, is that of spectator and overseer, since he is present in all of her key scenes, and occasionally actor, when he prods Tiberio to follow Dulcimet's design. His potential as Dramatist is always greater than his activity, since he retains the power to step in and become directive at any time, to recast a character or revise the script, and keeps the audience wondering when he will do just that. Interestingly, Hercules and Dulcimet never exchange words with each other though they are both onstage in many scenes, but they work as smoothly together as a well-practised team.

Dulcimet, then, is the second Dramatist, and the actors for whom she casts roles are Tiberio and her father Gonzago. In seeking a marriage with Tiberio she has set for herself a difficult task, his time in Urbin being short, and both he and Gonzago opposed to such a match. In seeking the marriage she sets for herself two goals which

duplicate those of Hercules: Tiberio's marrying and the gulling of her self-enamored father. First she assigns Tiberio the role of husband-to-be in her well-designed play-within-a-play. More difficult to direct than Tiberio is Gonzago, who is obstinately and irrationally committed to the proposed marriage with Hercules, even when it is overwhelmingly clear that Tiberio is a much more appropriate and attractive bridegroom for the fifteen-year-old princess. Yet his resolute daughter gives him the role of messenger, explaining her intention to her companion, Philocalia:

I will speak to the prince, court the prince, that he shall understand me. Nay, I will so stalk on the blind side of my all-knowing father's wit that, do what his wisdom can, he shall be my only mediator, my only messenger, my only honourable spokesman; he shall carry my favours, he shall amplify my affection, nay, he shall direct the prince the means, the very way to my bed; he and only he, when he only can do this, and only would not do this, he only shall do this.

(Fawn III.i.257-266)

Gonzago, who conceals his folly and self-love (though not very effectively) beneath the assumed role of wise and loving father, is arranging the marriage for her with Duke Hercules. Dulcimet's matching role is that of dutiful and obedient (albeit witty) daughter, and as such she pretends to defer to his wishes. Ironically, it is Gonzago who, unknowingly, "arranges" for her to marry Tiberio, not only by delivering her messages to him in the play, but by first giving her the idea of loving him. Before Tiberio first enters with his retinue, Gonzago has alerted his daughter to the fact that she may find Tiberio to her liking:

When young Tiberio negotiates his father's love, hold heed guard over thy passions, and still keep this full thought firm in thy reason: 'tis his old father's love the young man moves . . . and when thou shalt behold Tiberio's life-full eyes and well-filled veins, complexion firm, and hairs that curls with strength of lusty moisture

. . . thou must shape thy thoughts / To apprehend his father well
in years.

(Fawn I.ii.84-87, 89-91, 93-94)

Naturally enough, the power of suggestion being strong, and Dulcimer being only human, she is prepared to shape her thoughts to the handsome young prince when he enters soon thereafter, his disguised father in his train.

Hercules, to his delight, immediately finds in Dulcimer a ready ally, in need of little assistance from him in creating her plot. In fact, she neither knows nor cares that the duke is present, but simply attends to her own affairs. Even at the first meeting with Tiberio, just after her father's admonition, she is quick to suggest that she may not be getting a very good bargain in Hercules. When shown his picture, which Tiberio assures her is a "perfect counterfeit," she rejoins, "I wonder he would send a counterfeit / To move our love." The ensuing exchange is telling:

Gon. Hear, that's my wit. When I was eighteen old such a pretty
toying wit had I, but age hath made us wise--has't not, my
lord?

Tib. Why, fairest princess, if your eye dislike
That deader piece, behold me his true form
And livelier image; such my father hath been.

Dul. My lord, please you to scent this flower.

Tib. 'Tis withered, lady, the flower's scent is gone.

Dul. This hath been such as you are, hath been, sir.

(Fawn I.ii.108, 111-121)

Already, in this early dialogue, Dulcimer is directive, her wit sparkling, Tiberio is obedient to anyone who will tell him what to do, Gonzago is blithely unaware of the import of his daughter's comments, and Hercules is a silent observer.

The presence of Hercules as spectator of the action which he has begun, a Dramatist seeing his creation staged, is crucial throughout

these scenes with Dulcimer. The sight of him watching her direct scene after scene of her play-within-a-play keeps the relationship between the two inner plays ever before the theater audience: the play of Hercules frames that of Dulcimer. He is observing as she begins the delicate task of directing her father to woo Tiberio for her. The sly girl employs the psychological device of the self-fulfilling prophecy, hoping that if she pretends that Tiberio courts her, he will finally begin to do so. The plan, clever in its simplicity, actually succeeds. Gonzago blusters when she tells him that Tiberio has been advancing his own suit above that of his father, and prepares to berate the prince; therefore Dulcimer gives him lines to speak and, through him, actions to Tiberio:

Dul. And you may say (if so your wisdom please,
As you are truly wise) how weak a creature
Soft woman is to bear the seige and strength
Of so prevailing feature and fair language
As that of his is ever. You may add
(If so your wisdom please, as you are wise)--

Gon. As mortal man may be.

Dul. I am of years
Apt for his love, and if he should proceed
In private suit, how easy 'twere
To win my love, for you may say (if so
Your wisdom please) you find in me
A very forward passion to enjoy him;
And therefore you beseech him seriously
Straight to forbear with such close cunning art
To urge his too well graced suit: for you
(If so your lordship please) may say I told you all.
(Fawn II.i.492-507)

The prince entering forthwith, Gonzago proceeds to enact the scene exactly as he has been directed. He warns Tiberio away from his daughter while delivering to him her first words of love:

In direct phrase, thus: my daughter tells me plain,
You go about with most direct entreats
To gain her love, and to abuse your father.
.....

My daughter is but young, and apt to love
 So fit a person as your proper self,
 And so she prayed me tell you. . . .

.
 I charge you check
 Your appetite and passions to our daughter
 Before it head, nor offer conference
 Or seek access but by and before us.
 (Fawn II.i.536-538, 547-549, 552-555)

Gonzago concludes his speech and departs, giving Tiberio no chance to respond. The prince is understandably astonished and turns to the disguised Hercules, who takes advantage of the opportunity to reinforce Gonzago's suggestion with queries of his own:

 Why, ha' not you endeavored
 Courses that only seconded appetite,
 And not your honour, or your trust of place?
 Do you not court the lady for yourself?
 (Fawn II.i.560-563)

Tiberio's response, "Fawn, thou dost love me" (II.i.564), is filled with irony, since he does not know that he addresses a loving parent, but is merely assuming that the Fawn's flattery has been genuine. He denies courting Dulcimel--"if I ha' done so / 'Tis past my knowledge" (II.i.564-565)--but the idea has been suggested to him twice, and he will not forget it.

Dulcimel's next scene is carried out equally well. Again, she manipulates her father, putting words into his mouth, and again he does her bidding just as she has planned. This time, in a scene filled with dramatic irony and double meanings, she gets her father to deliver a scarf to Tiberio, a scarf in which she has embroidered words of love. She finds Gonzago congratulating himself for having succeeded in halting the prince's supposed pursuit of his daughter: "Young men are fools that go about to gull us" (Fawn III.335). This statement is, of

course, inaccurate, as the young woman immediately proves by proceeding with her own plot to gull him:

Dul. But sooth, my wisest father, the young prince is yet forgetful, and resteth resolute in his much unadvised love.

Gon. Is't possible?

Dul. Nay, I protest, whate'er he feign to you (as he can feign most deeply) . . . Though he can feign, yet I presume your sense is quick enough to find him.

(III.336-341, 347-348)

She is the one feigning here, though her father readily believes that Tiberio does so and that he, Gonzago, is in control of the whole situation.

Dulcimet then hands her father a scarf, which she secretly wants him to deliver to Tiberio, telling him that it is a gift for her from the prince. In it she has fashioned a message to her reluctant lover:

Dul. . . . O view this scarf;

This--as he called it--most envied silk,
That should embrace an arm, or waist, or side,
Which he much feared should never--this he left,
Despite my much resistance.

Gon. Did he so? Give't me. I'll give't him, I'll re-give his token with so sharp advantage--

Dul. Nay, my worthy father, read but these cunning letters.

Gon. Letters? Where? [Reads]

'Prove you but justly loving and conceive me,
Till justice leave the gods, I'll never leave thee,
For though the duke seem wise, he'll find this strain:
Where two hearts yield consent, all thwarting's vain.'

(Fawn III.360-372)

Tiberio enters as if on cue, and Gonzago insists that Dulcimet depart before he speaks to the prince. Again he is in error, unable to perceive his daughter's purpose or penetrate the role she plays, as he sends her away: "Go to, go to, you are a simple fool, a very simple animal" (III.381-382). He overrules her attempt to be allowed to stay with questions whose truth is greater than he realizes: "What would

you do? What, are you wiser than your father? Will you direct me?" (III.384-385). Truly, she is wiser than he and does, indeed, direct him.

Turning to the innocent Tiberio, Gonzago does what he has been directed to do by Dulcimet. He reproves the prince for courting the princess ostensibly for his father, but actually for himself. To Tiberio's protest, "Your Grace doth much amaze me," the old duke replies, "Ay, feign, dissemble, 'las, we are now grown old, weak-sighted, alas, anyone fools us" (III.404-406). He is correct in saying that nearly anyone can fool him, but alas, incorrect in thinking it is Tiberio who does so. Neither Tiberio nor Gonzago is author of the role he plays, but both are actors in a dramatic action designed by another. Undaunted by Tiberio's polite denial--"My gracious lord, if I unknowingly have erred" (III.417)--Gonzago forges ahead, following Dulcimet's script and delivering the scarf into the prince's hands:

. . . Why, can you write these lines,
Present this scarf, unknowingly, my lord,
To my dear daughter--um, unknowingly?
Can you urge your suit, prefer your gentlest love
In your own right, to her too easy breast
That, God knows, takes too much compassion on ye
(And so she prayed me say), unknowingly, my lord?
.
But take your scarf, for she vows she'll not wear it.
(Fawn III.419-425, 430)

With a final word of warning to Tiberio against seeking out Dulcimet's company before returning to Ferrara the next day, Gonzago walks away, leaving Tiberio to read and interpret the embroidered messages. He begins, with admiration, to understand what she is doing: "O, quick, deviceful, strong-brained Dulcimet, / Thou art too full of wit to be a wife" (III.460-461), and is filled with wonder at the ways of her

sex, admitting himself incapable of distinguishing illusion from reality where women are concerned:

. . . O woman, thou art made
Most only of, and for, deceit; thy form
Is nothing but delusion of our eyes,
Our ears, our hearts, and sometimes of our hands.
(Fawn III.463-466)

Once again Hercules is present to do some directing of his own when his son's growing affection for Dulcimel comes into conflict with his loyalty to his father. His ability to prod Tiberio at such a crucial time, with his identity as loving father known only to the theater audience, shows him to be the only voluntary actor in Dulcimel's secondary play, while at the same time author of a plot that encompasses hers. He gives Tiberio the rationalization that he needs to follow Dulcimel's enticing lead, reminding him that their young love is far more appropriate than a match between the young princess and the old duke. Tiberio, however, needs more reassurance before he can forget that he is technically not free to court her, but is the spokesman and emissary of Hercules. He is very direct: "Are fathers to be thought on in our loves?" and Hercules is prompt with an answer:

True, right, sir.
Fathers or friends, a crown and love hath none,
But all are allied to themselves alone.
Your father, I may boldly say, he's an ass
To hope that you'll forbear to swallow
What he cannot chew. . . .
(Fawn III.500-506)

Satisfied at last, Tiberio finds his last line of resistance swept away, his former coolness replaced by warmth and exhilaration. He embraces the full implication of his feelings for Dulcimel, then launches into a rhapsodic statement in praise of all women:

O, Fawn, what man of so cold earth
 But must love such a wit in such a body?
 Thou last and only rareness of heaven's works,
 From best of man made model of the gods--
 Divinest Woman: thou perfection
 Of all proportions, Beauty--made when Jove was blithe,
 Well filled with nectar, and full friends with man:
 Thou dear as air, necessary as sleep
 To careful man. . . .

(Fawn III.510-518)

Dulcimer has indeed made the reluctant prince change his mind about women. The turning point of her play, Tiberio's change of heart, has taken place with the princess offstage, Hercules directing for her. All that remains is for Gonzago to carry one more message for her, the one conveying details of where and when to meet, so that the couple may consummate their love.

This is accomplished in the same manner that the princess has been using all along. Dulcimer convinces her father that over her protest, Tiberio has made plans to climb a tree to her chamber window that night, and that she has been asked to provide a priest. When Tiberio enters, Gonzago rushes Dulcimer away once again and summarily orders the prince to leave the court. Repeating to Tiberio the reasons for this command, he delivers his daughter's latest directive before exiting with a flourish:

What, twice admonished, twice again offending?
 And now grown blushless! You promised to get into
 Her chamber, she to get a priest--
 Indeed, she wished me tell you she confessed it--
 And there, despite all father's jealous fears,
 To consummate full joys. Know, sir, our daughter
 Is our daughter, and has wit at will
 To gull a thousand easy things like you.

(Fawn IV.655-662)

His last comment carries a double meaning: the literal truth of his words, that Dulcimer is capable of gulling Tiberio, plus the greater

truth, known only to the theater audience, that he is the one whom she is presently gulling.

Hercules once more is standing by, ready to interpret the message for Tiberio, but this time his assistance is unnecessary. The prince understands the message, but still does not know where the chamber is located nor how to get there. Even as he verbalizes these questions, Gonzago obligingly rushes back in and provides the answers:

Sir, sir, this plane tree was not planted here
 To get into my daughter's chamber--and so she
 prayed me tell you.
 What though the main arms spread into her window,
 And easy labour climbs it? Sir, know
 She has a voice to speak, and bid you welcome,
 With so full breast that both your ears shall hear on't--
 And so she prayed me tell you. Ha' we no brain?
 Youth thinks that age, age knows that youth is vain.
 (Fawn IV.678-685)

Tiberio is almost laughing to have the information delivered by such a messenger: "Why, now I have it, Fawn, the way, the means, and meaning. Good duke, and 'twere not for pity, I could laugh at thee" (IV.686-688). Finally, Tiberio elects to assume a role voluntarily--that of Amorist--for which he will shift behavior, speech, and appearance: "Dulcimer, I am thine most miraculously. I will now begin to sigh, read poets, look pale, go neatly, and be most apparently in love" (IV.688-690).

As Act V opens, the fulfillment of both Dulcimer's and Hercules' hopes comes to pass. At this point the lines of action initiated by both Dramatists converge, and the two secondary plays become one. The last scene of this blended play-within-a-play takes place with the lovers playing leading roles, Hercules serving as Presenter and Spectator. In dumb show, Tiberio is escorted to his wedding by his own

father, still disguised as Faunus, who then speaks his blessing on the marriage in soliloquy even as it is taking place in Dulcimel's chamber. It is a deeply satisfying moment for the duke, whose chief goal is now realized:

. . . O, bless the sheets
Of yonder chamber, that Ferrara's dukedom,
The race of princely issue, be not cursed,
And ended in abhorred barrenness.

(Fawn V.6-9)

He then expresses the hope that he may be forgiven his act of deception and manipulation of others, as well as his use of psychology:

Let it be lawful to make use, ye powers,
Of human weakness, that pursueth still
What is inhibited, and most affects
What is most difficult to be obtained.
So we may learn that nicer love's a shade--
It follows fled, pursued flies as afraid--
And in the end close all the various errors
Of passages most truly comical
In moral learning, with like confidence
Of him that vowed good fortune of the scene
Shall neither make him fat, or bad make lean.

(Fawn V.15-25)

He has made use of this "human weakness" in both Tiberio and Dulcimel, and both have succumbed, each finding the love prohibited--or seemingly prohibited, in Tiberio's case--by a misguided father.

Now all that remains of this line of action is for Gonzago to find out what has come to pass before his very eyes, without his seeing, and for everyone to discover that the Duke of Ferrara has been walking in their midst, learning all their secrets. All of this, as well as exposure of the Amorists,¹⁹ takes place during the evening's entertainment, the Parliament of Cupid, skillfully directed by Hercules in his last

¹⁹ An additional discussion of the Parliament of Cupid may be found in Chapter II, pp. 118-122.

moments as Faunus. Having one by one exposed the follies of all in the court, including Nymphadoro, Sir Amoroso, Herod, Don Zuccone, and Granuffo, Hercules has saved the unfortunate Gonzago for last. He reads out

'An act against privy conspiracies, by which if any with ambitious wisdom shall hope and strive to outstrip Love, to cross his words, and make frustrate his sweet pleasures, if such a presumptuous wisdom fall to nothing, and die in laughter, the wizard so transgressing is ipso facto adjudged to offend in most deep treason, to forfeit all his wit at the will of the lord, and be instantly committed to the ship of fools for ever.'

(Fawn V.389-396)

Gonzago, true to form, assumes the act to be brought against someone other than himself. He lapses into a lengthy speech bragging of his own wit in his youth, when he had a young lady at his pleasure despite the fact that she was strictly guarded, then contrasting his past success with Tiberio's supposed failure to fulfill a similar purpose with Dulcimet:

Of all creatures breathing, I do hate those things that struggle to seem wise, and yet are indeed fools. . . . Alas, alas, I smile to think--I must confess with some glory to mine own wisdom--to think how I found out, and crossed, and curbed, and jerked, and firked, and in the end made desperate Tiberio's hope.

(Fawn V.398-400, 410-414)

But he is no longer to get away with such false boasts. Hercules presses on relentlessly:

But what yet might your well-known wisdom think
If such a one, as being most severe,
A most protested opposite to the match
Of two young lovers, who having barred them speech,
All interviews, all messages, all means
To plot their wished ends, even he himself
Was by their cunning made the go-between,
The only messenger, the token-carrier,
Told them the times when they might fitly meet,
Nay, showed the way to one another's bed?

(Fawn V.417-426)

Gonzago, despite clues so obvious that everyone in the room must have arrived at their solution, does not figure out whom Hercules is describing without being told bluntly:

Gon. May one have the sight of such a fellow for nothing?
 Doth there breathe such an egregious ass?
 Is there such a foolish animal in rerum natura?
 How is it possible such a simplicity can exist? Let us
 not lose our laughing at him, for God's sake! Let
 Folly's sceptre light upon him, and to the ship of fools
 with him instantly.

Don. Of all these follies I arrest your grace.
 (Fawn V.427-434)

Gonzago is dumfounded, for he has been "rankly gulled" (V.453). He listens as Hercules recounts the extent of his error at some length: he has been the first to inform Tiberio of Dulcimel's love, he has carried to Tiberio her favor, a scarf embroidered with words of love, and he has shown Tiberio both the way to her chamber and the best time to go there. Gonzago resists the truth until the moment when the lovers appear hand in hand, now married, to preside over the scene as the embodiment of wholesome, natural love,²⁰ and Hercules appears undisguised, in his proper garb as Duke of Ferrara. Dulcimel addresses her father in her habitual way, only to have Dondolo the fool call her exaggerated praise of him by its rightful name (mimicking Gonzago's habitual use of asides):

Dul. Royally wise, and wisely royal father--

Don. That's sententious now, a figure called in art Ironia.
 (Fawn V.458-459)

Once she has thanked him for giving her so "fit, loving, and desired a husband" (V.462), and Hercules has given his own blessing to the

²⁰ As Finkelpearl points out, "we are to understand that the judgment scene is occurring at the same time the marriage is being consummated. In a very literal sense the spirit of healthy and natural love presides over the scene" (p. 235).

happy couple, Gonzago finally recognizes the error of his ways, at least in part: "By the Lord, I am ashamed of myself, that's the plain troth. But I know now wherefore this parliament was. What a slumber have I been in!" (V.473-475). Hercules responds to the old duke's remorse with kindness, as he draws his play-within-a-play to a close: "Never grieve or wonder: all things sweetly fit" (V.476). Having stepped out of his disguise as Faunus, he now prepares to speak the epilogue-- "[b]ut now we change our face" (V480)--before also stepping out of his role as Hercules and back into his private life as actor: "And thus in bold yet modest phrase we end" (Epilogus, 481).

The Fawn ends, fittingly, with the discarding of the trappings of illusion--as disguises, masks, roles, and deceits are put aside. In this comedy the restoration of order represents the return to a particular kind of normalcy, in which all is as it seems; this, to Marston, is always the desired end. Finkelpearl and Caputi both argue that the play is about "deformity"²¹ or the "obstruction of the natural course of life,"²² but they fail to point out that a large part of what is unnatural is the falseness and artificiality attending the many forms of role-playing (particularly that of the Amorists and Gonzago). The "open, healthy society," in Finkelpearl's words, that Marston wants restored is a society without role-playing, in which everyone may be himself, and the theatrical activity of Hercules and Dulcimet is only permitted in order to bring about that end.

²¹Caputi, p. 213

²²Finkelpearl, p. 236.

At play's end Hercules and Dulcimet have achieved their goals: both a wedding and a gulling have taken place. Dulcimet has, of course, been of immeasurable help to Hercules in the realization of his hopes, serving more as author and director of events than he. But both have been meticulous in their single-minded, Machiavellian pursuit of their common end. As is the case with all of Marston's Dramatists who are protagonists, the end justifies the means--even role-playing--if they finally achieve positive good for themselves and others in the play world. The Fawn provides the only instance in the Marston canon of double secondary plays running a parallel course throughout all five acts of the outer play, with one framing the other (but neither Dramatist actually directing the other). In The Dutch Courtesan, Antonio's Revenge, and The Malcontent, the secondary play of the disguised protagonist frames the destructive histrionic activity of a hostile antagonist, but only in The Fawn do two such appealing characters as Hercules and Dulcimet work in partnership, employing theatrical techniques, in order to direct others in the play world to shed all roles and become themselves.

The differences between Hercules and Gonzago are obvious, but less obvious are their several similarities. They are both dukes and both fathers, picking up Marston's two dominant motifs. As dukes, both are playing roles--Hercules in his disguise as Faunus, assumed to promote, among other things, the dynasty of Ferrara, and Gonzago in his habitual stance as wise, eloquent, and learned duke of Urbino. At the end of the play Hercules will return to his own subjects, resuming his ducal robes; and one would hope that Gonzago also will be more himself with his subjects in the future, less susceptible to their flattery.

As fathers, both are Dramatists attempting to arrange marriages for their children, without the children's concurrence. Both have seemingly scripted Hercules as the husband for Dulcimet--but here the similarity ends. The plot of Hercules, which secretly advances the marriage of his son with Dulcimet, succeeds for precisely the reason that Gonzago's plot fails: his plan, unlike Gonzago's, maintains order and proportion growing out of a healthy self-knowledge. He knows that at threescore and four he is not the best mate for a young woman of fifteen. But it should be added that Gonzago's failure cannot be lamented for long: his final comment in the play suggests that he has gained a new awareness of the self beneath his accustomed role; and though his daughter changes bridegrooms without his consent, she does not lose the alliance that her father wants between Ferrara and Urbin.

The two parent-child relationships in The Fawn are, of course, diametric opposites. One parent directs; the other is directed. One child is active, the other acted upon. Tiberio is almost totally passive, a state heightened by contrast with Dulcimet's effervescent activity. In an unusual twist, Marston does not even give him a love scene with Dulcimet; these take place indirectly, between the princess and her father, and all at her initiative. In the Dulcimet-Gonzago plot, Marston in no way can be accused of promoting the traditional value of obedience to parents, but rather the less customary value of honesty to self. Nor does Marston condemn Tiberio's lack of filial obedience; in fact, the joyous occasion of his wedding to Dulcimet takes place while he believes that she is betrothed to his father. Rather, Tiberio's failing is withdrawal from life's natural course of events and, hence, a denial of the reality of who he is in an assumed posture of aloofness. Once he

returns to the normal life cycle through his marriage to Dulcimet, he is able to accept his own identity in a moment of recognition which, occurring simultaneously with similar epiphanies for Gonzago and the others in the Parliament of Cupid, brings The Fawn to its happy conclusion.

The Fawn is not a great play--not, for instance, as important a discussion of the nature of hypocrisy and role-playing as The Malcontent. However, it is a lesser play only because it attempts less, and it succeeds brilliantly in what it undertakes, particularly in its presentation of double protagonists. It is linked to both The Dutch Courtesan and The Malcontent in its refusal to mete out harsh punishment on those hypocrites, flatterers, and deceivers who abrogate the laws of the play world--laws of order, proportion, and honesty. In fact, in this play Marston is at his most tolerant of those who engage in histrionic activity. The two Dramatists succeed gloriously, while the Amorists, transgressors of the laws of love, are only mocked gently as they are given passage aboard the Ship of Fools.

In sharp contrast is Antonio's Revenge, which presents Marston's most stern, chilling view of unnatural role-playing and directing--and the consequences thereof.

IV. A DUKE'S SON: ANTONIO'S REVENGE

Antonio's Revenge is unique because it is Marston's only revenge tragedy, because it is an exceptionally violent one, and because it is an unusual hybrid in which Marston grafts a continuation of his ongoing meditation about theater onto the popular Senecan revenge play. In so doing, Marston manages at once to maintain both the

familiar conventions of this genre²³ and the motifs with which he works repeatedly in exploring the Idea of the Play. Central to its action, as to that of The Dutch Courtesan and The Fawn, are two Dramatists who author and direct plays-within-the-play to bring about their desired goals. Also central are two young people who wish to marry, but whose happiness is blocked by hostility between their families. However, in this play the two powerful Dramatists are the fathers of the lovers, both dukes, and their mortal conflict ends forever any chance of marriage between their children. In Antonio's Revenge Marston raises such questions as: What is the worst than can happen when a vicious, unprincipled role-player and manipulator of others uses his skills in an outpouring of rage against an enemy? When he does not hesitate to injure or even slay family members or friends? What response is appropriate when nothing can stop him but an equal measure of his own methods? To what lengths can acting and directing be carried?

The two Dramatists are Piero Sforza, Duke of Venice and father of Mellida, and the ghost of Andrugio, late Duke of Genoa and father of Antonio. These two have just been through a preliminary conflict in Antonio and Mellida, first part of the two-part play of which

²³R. A. Foakes, Marston and Tourneur (Harlow, Essex: Published for the British Council by Longman Group, 1978), p. 17, describes "the most successful revenge plays" as those which present "a protagonist whose father, son or mistress has been murdered by a tyrannical ruler who controls or embodies the law. It is therefore not possible to obtain justice by ordinary means, and the protagonist is driven as by a duty to seek redress by revenge, though with a troubled conscience, and is likely to straddle the boundary between hero and villain." Antonio's Revenge, Foakes continues, exaggerates such conventions as ghosts, bombastic speeches, terror, and the like, thus "expos[ing] the limitations of what had gone before, and, together with Shakespeare's Hamlet . . . prepar[ing] the way for a much more sophisticated treatment of revenge as a motif in Jacobean tragedy."

Antonio's Revenge is the conclusion. But while the action of Antonio and Mellida has focused on the efforts of the two lovers to reconcile their feuding fathers and ended with their betrothal, Antonio's Revenge springs from the abiding hatred of Piero for the house of Andrugio--a hatred great enough to impel Piero to murder Andrugio before Act I begins--and from the revenge demanded by the ghost of the murdered Genoan duke.

In fact, Antonio's Revenge is a double revenge play, since each Dramatist constructs a plan of revenge against the other. The first half of the play belongs to Piero, himself a consummate actor and director of others, who controls the action until the ghost appears in Act III. Piero introduces the motif in the opening scene, using the word "vengeance" four times and the word "revenge" five.²⁴ He enters excited and gleeful, a state of mind evidenced by his unbraced doublet, blood-smeared arms, and poniard dripping blood, since he has spent the last two hours in an orgy of blood-letting. He soon reveals why he wants revenge on Andrugio and the actions he has taken to achieve it. He considers the Genoan duke his lifelong rival:

We both were rivals in our May of blood
 Unto Maria, fair Ferrara's heir.
 He won the Lady, to my honour's death,
 And from her sweets cropped this Antonio;
 For which I burned in inward swelt'ring hate,
 And festered rankling malice in my breast,
 Till I might belk revenge upon his eyes.
 (I.i.23-29)

Far from feeling that a marriage between his daughter and Maria's son might be a fitting culmination of his longtime love for her, Piero has

²⁴In the play as a whole, there are no fewer than twenty-six uses of the word "revenge," twenty-one of "vengeance," and four of "vindicta."

nursed his grudge and now proposes to "[p]oison the father, butcher the son, and marry the mother" (I.i.104). To this end he has poisoned Andrugio during the night, and as the play opens he comes from the scene of another bloody crime, having just stabbed Feliche, young son of one of his courtiers. He gives his minion Strotzo a dastardly order, "Ho, Gaspar Strotzo, bind Feliche's trunk / Unto the panting side of Mellida" (I.i.1-2), and later continues, "Feliche hangs / But as a bait upon the line of death / To 'tice on mischief" (I.i.15-17). His plan is to cast Feliche and Mellida falsely in the role of lovers, so that he may accuse her of sexual licentiousness as an excuse to stop her imminent marriage to Antonio. By the time he delivers his opening soliloquy in Act II, his plot has grown to include dreams of extended political control:

Andrugio rots,
Antonio lives; umh; how long? ha, ha, how long?
Antonio packed hence, I'll his mother wed,
Then clear my daughter of supposed lust,
Wed her to Florence' heir. O, excellent!
Venice, Genoa, Florence at my beck,
At Piero's nod--

(II.i.11-17)

As noteworthy as Piero's willingness to design such a role for his own daughter--not to mention those he designs for other innocent people--are two other aspects of his behavior as Dramatist in this scene. First, he appears to enjoy spinning out his diabolical plot that begins to ensnare more and more people in its web. He gloats to Strotzo, "I can scarce coop triumphing Vengeance up / From bursting forth in braggart passion" (I.i.11-12), returning again to boast shamelessly of his vicious deeds: "I am great in blood, / Unequalled in revenge" I.i.17-18), and also, "This all in one night! / Is't to be equalled think'st thou?" (I.i.78-79).

And second, he is absolutely confident of success when contemplating his histrionic skills. Although he is equally good at both role-playing himself and designing roles for others, in this opening scene it is his own acting he praises: "Hell, Night, / Give loud applause to my hypocrisy" (I.i.30-31), boasting to Strotzo:

Pie. Could I avoid to give a seeming grant
Unto fruition of Antonio's love?
Str. No.
Pie. And didst thou ever see a Judas kiss
With a more covert touch of fleering hate?
Str. No
Pie. And having clipped them with pretence of love
Have I not crushed them with a cruel wring?
Str. Yes.
Pie. Say, faith, didst thou e'er hear, or read, or see
Such happy vengeance, unsuspected death?
That I should drop strong poison in the bowl
Which I myself caroused unto his health
And the future fortune of our unity. . . .
(I.i.57-70)

The motif of the disguised duke operates in Piero's behavior throughout Antonio's Revenge, but never through the adoption of an overt disguise. He never changes costume or doffs his identity as the Duke of Venice. Nevertheless, the true Piero is in disguise all the way through the play, a disguise which he has chosen and wears intentionally: the assumed posture of friend to Andrugio, loving father to Mellida, and just ruler to his subjects. All the while, he knows that he is none of these things, and the role he plays masks the true feelings and actions of which he is well aware: enemy and killer of Andrugio, accuser of Mellida, slayer of Feliche, seeker of power, manipulator of everyone who stands in his way.

Having planned and set into motion an extensive revenge play, Piero finds that he must increasingly draw others into his production, while continuing to act in it himself. He has already directed

sending Balurdo to put Mellida in the castle vault, Piero explains that he surrounds himself with fools because they will readily assume roles he has prepared for them:

I'll seem to wind yon fool with kindest arm.
 He that's ambitious-minded, and but man,
 Must have his followers beasts, dubbed slavish sots
 Whose service is obedience and whose wit
 Reacheth no further than to admire their lord,
 And stare in adoration of his worth.
 I love a slave raked out of common mud
 Should seem to sit in counsel with my heart;
 High honoured blood's too squeamish to assent
 And lend a hand to an ignoble act;
 Poison from roses who could e'er abstract?
 (II.ii.55-65)

His plot begins to thicken as he and Strotzo rehearse the actions and lines for the next scene of Piero's play-within-the-play. He tells Strotzo to say that Mellida is innocent, that Antonio bribed him to defame her honor, and that Antonio also paid him to kill Andrugio. The scene is worth quoting at some length:

Pie. . . . Rush me in
 Whilst Mellida prepares herself to die,
 Halter about thy neck, and with such sighs,
 Laments and acclamations lifen it,
 As if impulsive power of remorse--
Str. I'll weep.
Pie. Ay, ay, fall on thy face and cry, 'Why suffer you
 So lewd a slave as Strotzo is to breathe?'
Str. I'll beg a strangling, grow importunate--
Pie. As if thy life were loathsome to thee; then I
 Catch straight the cord's end, and, as much incensed
 With thy damned mischiefs, offer a rude hand
 As ready to gird in thy pipe of breath;
 But on the sudden straight I'll stand amazed,
 And fall in exclamations of thy virtues.
Str. Applaud my agonies and penitence.
Pie. Thy honest stomach that could not digest
 The crudities of murder; but, surcharged,
 Vomited'st them up in Christian piety.
Str. Then clip me in your arms,
Pie. And call thee brother, mount thee straight to state,
 Make thee of council; tut, tut, what not, what not?
 Think on't, be confident, pursue the plot.
 (II.v.14-36)

Strotzo, having no idea of the danger in which he has placed himself by trusting Piero, runs off to do the duke's bidding, followed by one last stage direction which he does not hear:

Pie. I'll wring what may be squeezed from out his use,
And good night, Strotzo. Swell plump, bold heart,
For now thy tide of vengeance rolleth in.
(II.v.42-44)

At this point Piero seems to be getting away with murder. His plot is proceeding on schedule, having already grown to include Andrugio and Feliche, now dead; Antonio, passively responding to the situation with a grief that rejects reason or comfort; Maria, whom he plans to marry; Mellida, now imprisoned, accused of lust and adultery at her father's whim; Galeatzo, son to the Duke of Florence, Piero's choice for Mellida to marry; Balurdo and Strotzo, his minions; and Pandulpho Feliche, father of the slain youth. Pandulpho, incidentally, is the only person thus far to refuse to be drawn further into Piero's deadly play; when the duke asks him to swear that he knew Antonio sought the death of Andrugio--and Pandulpho refuses--he is banished, his property confiscated.

Piero does not go unopposed much longer, however. Before his schemes have time to work themselves out, he is caught in a trap of his own making. A powerful Dramatist with motive and determination equal to Piero's comes from beyond the grave to counter the Venetian duke's play with one of his own. The ghost of the slain Andrugio, a "disguised duke" with the power to control who may penetrate his disguise, choosing Antonio as his star player, swiftly stirs his son to action. The plot is simple enough to be described in one word: "Revenge!" First the ghosts of Andrugio and Feliche visit Antonio in his

sleep, demanding revenge before he has even heard of their deaths. But later, when a weeping Antonio visits his father's tomb, the ghost appears in order to give his son more information and a bit of prodding:

Thy pangs of anguish rip my cerecloth up;
And lo, the ghost of old Andrugio
Forsakes his coffin! Antonio, revenge!
I was poisoned by Piero's hand;
Revenge my blood!--take spirit, gentle boy--
Revenge my blood! Thy Mellida is chaste;
Only to frustrate thy pursuit in love
Is blazed unchaste. Thy mother yields consent
To be his wife and give his blood a son,
That made her husbandless and doth complot
To make her sonless.

(III.i.32-42)

The ghost explains further that he plans also to visit Maria, enlisting her too in his plot of revenge, then exits, directing Antonio to "[i]nvent some stratagem of vengeance / Which, but to think on, may like lightening glide / With horror through thy breast" (III.i.48-50).

Antonio is not the only sleepless one that night. Maria comes into the church searching for him, telling him to go to bed, and she is soon followed by Piero in his nightclothes, his little son Julio, Forobosco, and Castillo. Piero is calling after Maria, and Julio seeks his father, afraid of "bug-bears and spirits." Like Shakespeare's Claudius in another church, Piero is nearly killed by a hidden avenger. But again like Claudius, Piero is spared for the moment, not, as it happens, to be the first to die. The stage direction reads, "ANTONIO offers to come near and stab, PIERO presently withdraws," followed by Antonio's explanation of why he delays:

Ant. [Aside] No, not so,
This shall be sought for; I'll force him feed on life
Till he shall loathe it. This shall be the close
Of vengeance' strain.

(III.ii.88-91)

The first object of Antonio's revenge is not a middle-aged Polonius, however, but the child Julio, Piero's son and Mellida's brother. Although we know that Julio is on Antonio's list of intended victims, along with Piero, Maria, and Strotzo, this scene can only shock with its brutality. The contrasts stand out all too clearly: Julio's tender innocence, Antonio's grim purpose; their past affection for each other, the present enmity. Julio addresses Antonio as "brother," asking for a kiss and stating, "I love you better than my father. . . . 'Truth, since my mother died I loved you best" (III.iii.3-5, 9). Antonio is unwilling to distinguish between child and father at this point, which he admits to himself:

O that I knew which joint, which side, which limb
 Were father all, and had no mother in't,
 That I might rip it vein by vein and carve revenge
 In bleeding rases!

(III.iii.20-23)

But since Piero's blood cannot be eliminated without killing the boy, Antonio takes out his dagger. It is only when Julio begs mercy for the sake of Mellida that Antonio wavers--only to have his father's ghost appear and prompt him to play his part by repeating the word "Revenge!"

The sight of the ghost is enough to call Antonio back to his grisly task. He avenges the death of his father by killing the son of the murderer. His words attempt to temper the viciousness of his act, but this is not easy as the child continues to trust and love him:

Ant. . . . It is not thee I hate, not thee I kill.
 Thy father's blood that flows within thy veins
 Is it I loathe, is that revenge must suck.
 I love thy soul, and were thy heart lapped up
 In any flesh but in Piero's blood
 I would thus kiss it; but being his, thus, thus,
 And thus I'll punch it. [Stabs JULIO.] Abandon fears;

Whilst thy wounds bleed, my brows shall gush out tears.
Jul. So you will love me, do even what you will.
 (III.iii.34-42)

When the boy is dead, Antonio lifts the corpse--as it were, an offering to Andrugio's spirit--now vehemently denying any correspondence between the body in his arms and the child Julio, as a groan sounds from the tombs below. In his mind the body is Piero's, as he continues stabbing:

Here stands Andrugio's son,
 Worthy his father. So; I feel no breath;
 His jaws are fallen, his dislodged soul is fled,
 And now there's nothing but Piero left.
 He is all Piero, father, all; this blood,
 This breast, this heart, Piero all,
 Whom thus I mangle. Sprite of Julio,
 Forget this was thy trunk. I live thy friend.
 Mayst thou be twined with the soft'st embrace
 Of clear eternity; but thy father's blood
 I thus make incense of: [ANTONIO allows JULIO'S blood
to fall upon the hearse.] to Vengeance!
 (III.iii.52-63)

Treating the blood as incense, he burns it, calling on his father's ghost to inhale this "smoke of blood," then sprinkles it on Andrugio's tomb:

Lo, thus I heave my blood-dyed hands to heaven,
 Even like insatiate hell, still crying; 'More!
 My heart hath thirsting dropsies after gore.'
 (III.iii.67-69)

A comment on this scene by R. A. Foakes underlines the fact that even in a play which deliberately creates a series of startling effects, none is more shocking than this,

the killing by Antonio of Julio, Piero's small son, in a church at midnight, when he sprinkles the boy's blood on the tomb of his own father--here a choirboy-actor playing an adult kills another choirboy-actor playing a boy in a church. This must have provided a special kind of frisson for the original audiences at the play, in the contrast between the extreme horror of the act, and the innocence

of the choirboys doing it.²⁵

Thus Antonio accomplishes his first act of revenge, the first act of the play-within-the-play that Andrugio has commanded to counter Piero's dramatic activity. But this is only the beginning of the revenger's blood-letting.

Dramatist Andrugio next appears in the bedchamber of his widow Maria, who still is mourning his death on the eve of her marriage to Piero. Her husband's ghost speedily relates the circumstances of his death to her, scolding and then pardoning her for replacing him so quickly. As Dramatist, he assigns her a role in carrying out the revenge:

I was empoisoned by Piero's hand.
Join with my son to bend up strained revenge;
Maintain a seeming favour to his suit
Till time may form our vengeance absolute.
(III.v.10-13)

When Antonio enters immediately, having come straight from the church to accuse his mother of treachery for her bond with Piero--the blood-smeared arms and poniard as well as his exultant mood reminiscent of Piero in the play's opening scene--Andrugio also gives him further direction for the next act of revenge:

Fly, dear Antonio.
Once more assume disguise, and dog the court
In feigned habit till Piero's blood
May even o'erflow the brim of full revenge.
(III.v.24-27)

Andrugio is at once dreaded supernatural apparition, husband and loving father delivering a benediction to his assembled family, and

²⁵Foakes, p. 17.

director making certain that his actors are prepared for their next performance:

Peace and all blessed fortunes to you both.

[To ANTONIO] Fly thou from court; be peerless in revenge.

Exit ANTONIO.

[To MARIA] Sleep thou in rest; lo, here I close thy couch.

Exit MARIA to her bed, ANDRUGIO drawing the curtains.

And now, ye sooty coursers of the night,

Hurry your chariot into hell's black womb.

Darkness, make flight; graves, eat your dead again;

Let's reposses our shrouds. Why lags delay?

Mount, sparkling brightness, give the world his day.

(III.v.28-35)

With players from both secondary plays now rehearsed and ready for their next scenes, Piero puts Mellida on trial at the beginning of Act IV. He is here at the height of his powers of directing, role-playing, dissembling, and lying; every statement that he makes is false. However, both secondary plays are now operating simultaneously. Unknown to Piero--who keeps on directing--it is his last great theatrical moment, for Antonio knows his secret and is present at the court, biding his time with deadly purpose, disguised as a fool. Many of Piero's comments are ironic, as, pretending that justice is being done, he calls in the innocent Mellida to be denounced as a strumpet, sends for the "loved youth" Antonio, and even begs Maria, "Yet give me leave to be myself . . . most just and upright in our judgement seat" (IV.ii.4-6).

Mellida having been brought in, Piero sends for Strotzo, signalling the start of the scene they have rehearsed. For a time, all goes as Piero and Strotzo have planned. Strotzo enters with a cord around his neck, tearfully begging someone to kill him, appearing to repent to relieve a burdened conscience, confessing that Antonio bribed him to implicate Mellida and Feliche and to poison Andrugio. However,

in mid-scene, at the moment when Piero is supposed to forgive him for having confessed, the Dramatist changes the script:

Pie. Myself will be thy strangler, unmatched slave.

PIERO comes from his chair, snatcheth the cord's end and CASTILIO aideth him; both strangle STROTZO.

Str. Now change your--

Pie. Ay, pluck, Castilio!

I change my humour! Pluck, Castilio!

Die, with thy death's entreats even in thy jaws!

Now, now, now, now. [Aside] Now my plot begins to work.

Why, thus should statesmen do,

That cleave through knots of craggy policies,

Use men like wedges, one strike out another;

Till by degrees the tough and knurly trunk

Be rived in sunder.

(IV.iii.64-73)

Strotzo actually meets his death while serving as a paid performer for Piero, a fact which momentarily blurs the dividing line between illusion and reality for members of the theater audience, leaving them finally with the knowledge that in his play, only Piero knows where role-playing begins and ends. R. W. Ingram has written of the theatricalism of this scene, calling Marston "a playwright's playwright" who has here created "the most powerful kind of satiric drama":

An example of this achievement is the trial scene in which the devices of the disguise, the art of the actor, the tensions of the play-within-a-play, and the role of the fool and satirist in society are all brilliantly and dramatically debated. . . . Piero directs the mockery of a trial: he acts as both judge and prosecuting counsel, and he pursues his own art of dissimulation to its height when he and Strotzo perform their playlet. Strotzo has no need to act the strangled man, for²⁶ Piero slips from pretense to reality and actually does strangle him.

However, after the killing of Strotzo Piero loses control of the action, for his plot is crossed by that of Andrugio and Antonio. He

²⁶Ingram, pp. 82-83.

has sent for Antonio during Strotzo's confession, no doubt to execute or banish him, but Alberto runs in, under Antonio's direction, to declare that Antonio is drowned. This announcement produces a result scripted by neither Piero nor Antonio: Mellida swoons and soon dies, the second person to die during the afternoon's drama, victim of both men's theatrical illusions, which she interprets as reality. Ingram, in a further comment about this scene, has suggested that Piero "mingles acted rage with real contempt for his tool" when he strangles Strotzo:

He can play the part bafflingly well; for, when told of Mellida's death, he confesses he is near to tears but he regains self-control, carries on with his wedding plans, and commands an exit in dignity to "lowdest musick," thereby leaving the audience in ²⁷the theater to decide where pretense begins and ends in the speech.

Yet although the audience never knows with certainty where Piero's real feelings begin and end, particularly with regard to the deaths of Strotzo and Mellida, he makes it absolutely clear that the situation is developing as he wishes, inspiring him to new heights of ambition and villainy. Before word of Mellida's death arrives from offstage, he gloats to himself that Mellida's marriage and his own will create a political base from which he may even threaten Rome and the papacy:

[Aside] Young Galeatzo; ay, a proper man;
 Florence, a goodly city; it shall be so.
 I'll marry her to him instantly.
 Then Genoa mine by my Maria's match,
 Which I'll solemnize ere next setting sun;
 Thus Venice, Florence, Genoa, strongly leagued.
 Excellent, excellent! I'll conquer Rome,
 Pop out the light of bright religion;
 And then, helter-skelter, all cocksure!
 (IV.iii.136-144)

Yet it is not to be. Mellida is dead, and forces are at work

²⁷Ibid, p. 81

that Piero knows not of. The ritual of Antonio's revenge commences as Pandulpho and Alberto, on their way to bury the body of Feliche, and coming across the prostrate, grieving Antonio, lay Feliche's body across that of Antonio. Much is suggested visually as Antonio assumes the burden of the unavenged death of Feliche, in addition to the deaths of Andrugio and Mellida which he is mourning. In this scene Pandulpho, hitherto an emotionless Stoic in confronting the death of his son, renounces his Stoicism as a role that has disguised his true feeling, in a speech filled with images of the theater:

Man will break out, despite philosophy.
 Why, all this while I ha' but played a part,
 Like to some boy that acts a tragedy,
 Speaks burly words and raves out passion;
 But when he thinks upon his infant weakness,
 He droops his eye. I spake more than a god,
 Yet am less than a man.
 I am the miserablest soul that breathes.
 (IV.v.46-53)

The audience would have been aware that the lines were being spoken by a boy actor, a "boy that acts a tragedy" but is "less than a man," playing the part of an adult who likens his behavior to that of a boy actor. More important, however, than the reminder to the theater audience that they are viewing a play with its many inherent correspondences to life, is the significance of Pandulpho's action. In rejecting Stoicism and embracing vengeance--"And shall you bloodhound live?" (IV.v.59), he asks, of Piero--he joins with Antonio and Alberto in planning and executing the revenge. Their resistance to Piero gathers momentum as they wreath their arms together and share in a vow of vengeance:

Now swear we by this Gordian knot of love,

Ere night shall close the lids of yon bright stars
 We'll sit as heavy on Piero's heart,
 As Etna doth on groaning Pelorus.
 (IV.v.88, 91-93)

The opening dumb show in Act V further reveals the gathering opposition to Piero. In addition to Alberto and Maria, who point weapons toward the duke, Galeatzo and two Senators also raise clenched fists at him. Then Andrugio's ghost crosses the stage, waving a torch above his head triumphantly, before turning to the audience as Presenter to deliver word that the revenge is about to occur, that Galeatzo has changed sides, and that all Venice hates Piero, incriminating letters having been found in Strotzo's study. He is actually speaking the Prologue for the play-within-a-play that he has commanded.

The action accelerates as in short, successive scenes the revengers--Antonio, Alberto, Pandulpho--are masked, Balurdo enlisted in their cause, and Piero gluttoned with blood and wine as he carouses on his marriage eve. Word comes to the masquers, attired and waiting for the music to begin, that they are supported without by a troop of soldiers representing the Venetian states. With all in readiness, all the actors in place, the ghost of Andrugio returns and "is placed betwixt the music houses," from which vantage point he will view the proceedings, a "spectator of revenge" (V.v.22), applauding and commenting on this play he has authored. Bringing to mind Don Andrea's ghost in The Spanish Tragedy, he oversees the action from a position that is both related to and yet separate from the world of the play. Serving at once as Dramatist and onstage audience, Andrugio's ghost by his presence turns the action which he observes into a play-within-a-play, visually reminding the theater audience of the relationship of actors and audience, of illusion and reality.

The setting of the masque, in which the revenge occurs, further heightens the ritualistic and theatrical qualities of what takes place. The actors are costumed, as masquers, their movements well-planned. In addition to Andrugio's ghost, there is the additional onstage audience of courtiers attending Piero, who watch the dancing. When the time has arrived for the banquet and the revengers request that everyone leave except Piero, the duke remains on the stage, poised for a moment before his fall in his last moment as Dramatist, unaware that he too is audience to Andrugio's production in which he is about to play a starring role. In that pivotal moment, different levels of reality are represented by the theater audience, the ghost of Andrugio, the masquers, the courtiers, and Piero as he complies with their directions:

The maskers whisper with PIERO.

<u>Pie.</u>	Marry, and shall; i'faith I were too rude If I gainsaid so civil fashion. <u>[To the Courtiers and Attendants]</u> The maskers pray you to forbear the room Till they have banqueted. Let it be so; No man presume to visit them, on death. <u>The maskers whisper again.</u> Only my self? O, why, with all my heart. I'll fill your consort; here Piero sits. Come on, unmask; let's fall to.	<u>[Exeunt Courtiers and Attendants.]</u>
--------------------	---	--

The conspirators [unmask and] bind PIERO.

The revenge itself is vicious enough to satisfy anyone's desire for blood. Piero, outnumbered, is suddenly surprised and overwhelmed. When his tongue is plucked out, the ghost blesses his son's deed: "Blest be thy hand. I taste the joys of heaven, / Viewing my son triumph in his black blood" (V.v.36-37). The revengers are merciless, telling Balurdo to vex Piero, rejoicing when he weeps. Then they serve him the banquet, with its grisly pièce de résistance:

Ant. [Points to the table of sweetmeats.]
Fall to, good Duke. O these are worthless cates.
 You have no stomach to them. Look, look here:
 Here lies a dish to feast thy father's gorge.
 Here's flesh and blood which I am sure thou lovest.
[Uncovering the dish that contains JULIO'S limbs]
PIERO seems to condole his son.

Pan. Was he thy flesh, thy son, thy dearest son?
Ant. So was Andrugio my dearest father.
Pan. So was Feliche my dearest son.

The words "father" and "son" ring throughout the scene as Antonio avenges the death of a father, Pandulpho that of a son, by demanding Piero's own life, as well as that of his young son. Antonio chants, "My father found no pity in thy blood," and Pandulpho, "Remorse was banished when thou slew'st my son" (V.v.54-55). They torment Piero before they kill him, pretending to run at him, then suddenly stopping, all the while loudly consigning his soul to hell. Finally they stab him repeatedly--"This for my father's blood! . . . This for my son! . . . This for them all!" (V.v.77-79)--after which the ghost of Andrugio closes the scene with his blessing: "'Tis done, and now my soul shall sleep in rest. / Sons that revenge their father's blood are blest" (V.v.81-82).

Thus, the orgy of killing by the revengers quite balances out the orgy of killing by Piero with which the play began.²⁸ Of the six people who make up the three pairs of fathers and sons--Andrugio/Antonio, Piero/Julio, Pandulpho/Feliche--only two are still alive at

²⁸W. Reavley Gair, "Introduction" to John Marston, Antonio's Revenge (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 23, points out that both Piero and Antonio commit murder in front of the theater audience, and it has frequently been noted that Antonio's behavior after killing Julio closely resembles that of Piero after he has slain Feliche.

play's end: Antonio and Pandulpho. Both dukes are dead, as are both of Piero's children. In fact, the fate of poor Julio--stabbed in a church at midnight by a supposed friend, offered as a sacrifice to a vengeful ghost, then hacked to pieces and served up to his father for dinner--certainly must have given pause to all but the most bloodthirsty in the audience.

Likewise, the play's resolution gives pause to those concerned with moral issues. Ten lines after the ghost has blessed the revengers, a senator adds a blessing of his own--"Blest be you all, and may your honours live / Religiously held sacred, even for ever and ever" (V.vi. 10-11)--as the pomp and fortune of the Venetian state are made available to them. But Antonio refuses to be so honored, "amazed" at a "benignity" that will overlook the violence so easily; he and others "will live enclosed / In holy verge of some religious order, / Most constant votaries" (V.vi.28, 34-36). Certainly this ending, which calls the work of the revengers sacred and avoids pronouncing judgment, is not typical of a revenge play.

The fact which is often overlooked by those studying this play is that it is more than a straightforward treatment of such themes as "the moral cost of immersion in the destructive element"²⁹ or "the total moral abandonment which inevitably follows the surrender of reason to passion."³⁰ Indeed, Antonio's Revenge is a satire of its genre;³¹

²⁹Finkelpearl, p. 161.

³⁰G. D. Aggeler, "Stoicism and Revenge in Marston," English Studies, 51 (1970), 512.

³¹Critics occasionally fail to recognize the satire or downplay it. Gair points out that "no unanimity of opinion exists as to what Marston's overall dramatic purpose was" (p.35). Ingram refers to "the

in it, Marston not only satirizes the conventions of revenge tragedy, but he is also highly experimental with other theatrical conventions.³² Hence, while points that have been made earlier in this chapter may be reiterated here--that Piero's sin, like Franceschina's, is the subverting of theatrical skills to his own unscrupulous ends, thereby destroying the world of order and reason, and that Antonio is blessed because he restores the world of the play to a state of balance and proportion--more than this must be said of this play. For here Marston even satirizes his own favorite theme. If the end (order and proportion) may justify the means (role-playing and directing), in Antonio's Revenge Marston pushes the idea beyond its limit: Antonio employs behavior as extreme as any of Piero's in order to restore "proportion." Certain questions are implicit: Does a worthy end justify any means at all? Deceptive role-playing, murder, butchery?

The satire in this play raises such questions by straining the ability of the audience to accept what is happening as conventional. If the convention of revenge tragedy calls for a ghost to demand his son to avenge his death, what happens if the ghost is explicit beyond doubt, and if the revenger, without question, carries out both the

uncertain quality of the satire and humor in Antonio's Revenge" (p.80), evidently considering the satire so uncertain that he chooses not to give it further attention, whereas Foakes correctly bases his reading of the play on the fact that "it mocks the conventions of heroic tragedy, with especial reference to Seneca and Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy" (p. 16).

³²For instance, such references as those by Scott (pp.15-16), Gair (pp. 26 and 38), and Ingram (pp. 80-85) leave one curious to hear more. Ingram perceptively comments that while Kyd "accepts the genre of revenge tragedy and plays it to the hilt," Marston "takes up revenge tragedy to discuss it: his play might almost have been called Antonio's Revenge Discussed" (p. 152).

letter and the spirit of the instructions? Is such a revenger responsible? Marston gives us a ghost who demands blood for blood and a revenger who is much more prompt than Hamlet in performing his task, much less troubled by his conscience, less inclined toward introspection. And in bringing to the stage an excessive amount of blood-letting, on Antonio's part as well as Piero's, which is followed up by a neat "religious" blessing, the play forces the audience to question violent behavior normally accepted as conventional. In effect, Marston goes beyond the boundaries of drama to question the entire concept of revenge in a Christian or humanistic world.

In this play Marston also looks beyond revenge tragedy to probe the very nature of theater. As this essay has shown at some length, the clash between two Dramatists, Piero and Andrugio's ghost, has illustrated the lengths to which the use of theatrical skills, whether justified or not, may carry one, and thus offers a bitter warning to would-be Dramatists. But in addition to this, Antonio's Revenge is daring and even irreverent with theatrical convention, constantly crossing traditional boundaries between audience and actors, or between actors and their roles, in order to remind us that we are watching a play. For instance, the play is heavily laced with play language, from Pandulpho's "Come sit, kind nephew; come on; thou and I / Will talk as chorus to this tragedy" (I.v.62-63), to Antonio's "I will not swell like a tragedian / In forced passion of affected strains" (II.iii.104-105), to the elaborate epilogue.³³ There are also innumerable uses of words such as "act," "scene," "plot," "player," "tragedy," "hypocrisy," "seeming,"

³³The epilogue is discussed in Chapter I, pp. 47-48.

"pretence," and "feign." And there is finally the unexpected moment, following Piero's opening soliloquy in Act II--spoken to the body of Andrugio lying in state in its coffin--when Balurdo responds to his summons by running onto the stage with his beard only half on. The effect is startling when Piero's lines, "I have been nursed in blood, and still have sucked / The steam of reeking gore" (II.i.19-20), are soon followed by Balurdo's exclamation: "I must be forced to conclude --the tiring man hath not glued on my beard half fast enough. God's bores, it will not stick to fall off" (II.i.30-32). Many such references can absolutely destroy the world of the play by allowing the world of the "tiring man" and of the audience to intrude upon it. But Marston allows exactly that to happen, not just in Antonio's Revenge, but in all his plays, because he wants to blur the distinction between actors and audience, and even between heroes and villains, all of whom appear "nursed in blood." His message to us is that we are all related. No one is spared, none separate.

In yet another play, The Malcontent, this message is reinforced. Malevole and Mendoza join such pairs as Freevill and Franceschina, Hercules and Gonzago, Antonio and Piero, all of whom struggle, not in a world of black and white alternatives, but in the gray area inhabited by most human beings.

V. DISGUISED DUKE: THE MALCONTENT

The Malcontent, widely recognized as Marston's finest offering to the world of theater, is yet another play about revenge. The play is filled with dukes--would-be dukes, usurped and usurping dukes, disguised dukes--and with Dramatists--would-be Dramatists and disguised

Dramatists. The action is fast-paced, with intricate plotting, moving so rapidly to establish plot and counter-plot that by the end of Act II no fewer than eight levels of illusion are operating simultaneously, one growing out of another.

The primary Dramatist is Giovanni Altofronto, the deposed Duke of Genoa, who is situated in disguise within his court, awaiting a moment in which to seize power from the usurper, Pietro Jacomo. The disguise that he has chosen is that of a malcontent, one who takes the stance of a "worthy intellectual, undervalued and misunderstood, and so made bitter, who lashes out at the hypocrisy and vice he sees around him, provoking hatred by his onslaught."³⁴ It is a most fortunate choice of disguise for Altofronto in several respects. In the first place, as Malevole, railer and snarling satirist, he embodies Marston's happiest blending of satire with drama. For in Altofronto/Malevole, Marston not only brings the satiric commentator from the page of poetry to the stage, but makes him protagonist and disguised duke, then creating a correspondingly depraved society for him to rail against.

Also, the frequently-noted parallels between the usurped duke and his assumed role both enhance and complicate the relationship of this protagonist with the play's central theme, which revolves around the illusion created by the wearing of masks. M. L. Wine suggests that the disguise of Malevole

is a mask for survival for Altofronto, a mask that is necessary in a society where everyone dons one; . . . it enables him to vent the anger in his heart while it leaves him free to work his own counter³⁵ plots against the villainy that has driven him to this recourse.

³⁴Foakes, p. 12.

³⁵Wine, pp. xx-xxi.

The point, underscored by Finkelpearl, is that it cannot be very difficult for a deposed duke to act discontented; in fact, this venting of genuine anger while he is supposedly playing a role will perforce leave the audience wondering where Malevole ends and Altofronto begins. "In an original variation," says Finkelpearl, "Marston's figure is a true malcontent posing as a malcontent," and Ingram pushes the idea further:

One cannot always be sure of how much Altofronto is acting a role, for Marston's dexterity with the metaphor of acting in this play is bewildering. To achieve his ends, Altofronto disguises himself, and the essentially theatrical nature of this device cannot be over-emphasized. Altofronto is both actor and producer, even author, of his own play; many of those around him move at his dictate or perform under his scathing direction. He ³⁶lives in a world of sham and hypocrisy, an actor in a world of actors.

This last point of Ingram's, which indicates those qualities that make Malevole a Dramatist, bears further investigation and will be the basis of this discussion of The Malcontent.

³⁶Finkelpearl, p. 185, and Ingram, p. 100. Ingram makes a further interesting association--this time between Malevole and Marston: "Altofronto acts the part so well that it appears natural to him; it is not all impersonation. The same confusion is sensed between Marston the author and Marston in the role of the Satyre in The Scourge of Villanie. Possibly a neat distinction between the two aspects of Malevole and of Marston cannot be made, and Marston wins in The Malcontent the plaudits he does because he has managed to dramatize so effectively a fundamental duality in his own character" (p. 108). Michael Scott raises a similar question and answers it with yet another twist: "Is Altofront merely acting a part in his disguise or is he really as obscene as Malevole? The answer . . . is that both Altofront and Malevole are disguises of a faceless individual living in a court that revels in role-play, hypocrisy and perversion. . . . [He] plays deposed duke and malcontent." Reminding us that there is a necessary affinity, pointed out by Stanislavsky, between an actor and his role, the role being "an extension and recollection of feelings already experienced or presently being felt in real life," Scott proposes that "it is not in the deposed duke that we should look for the man behind the mask, but in the malcontent." And finally, this "creation of dramatic caricature and role-play rather than character delineation allows Marston . . . to express his own cynical vision of society through a dramatic metaphor" (pp. 27, 29).

Our first awareness of Malevole comes in the play's opening scene when vile, discordant music wafts from his chamber, disrupting the bawdy exchanges of Duke Pietro and his minions. The duke calls Malevole to come down, introducing him as "one of the most prodigious affections that ever conversed with nature, a man, or rather a monster, more discontent than Lucifer. . . . His highest delight is to procure others vexation; . . . therefore does he afflict all in that to which they are most affected" (I.ii.17-19, 21-22, 25-26). Malevole then enters, ridicules the church, abuses Ferrardo, Bilioso, Guerrino, and Equato, pities Celso for being honest, then summarizes the goings-on in the court of Genoa as "dreams, dreams, visions, fantasies, chimeras, imaginations, tricks, conceits!" (I.iii.55-56).

Shortly finding himself alone with Duke Pietro, Malevole begins his work as Dramatist. He crudely informs Pietro that he is a cuckold and Mendoza is the man; he denounces adultery, stirring Pietro to desire revenge:

<u>Mal.</u>	. . . thy wife is a close drab; and thou art a notorious cuckold. Farewell, Duke.
<u>Pietro.</u>	Stay, stay.
<u>Mal.</u>	Dull, dull Duke, can lazy patience make lame revenge? O God, for a woman to make a man that which God never created, never made!
<u>Pietro.</u>	What did God never make?
<u>Mal.</u>	A cuckold. . . .
<u>Pietro.</u>	Vengeance and torture!
<u>Mal.</u>	Catso!
<u>Pietro.</u>	O, revenge!

(I.iii.90-97, 105-107)

But Pietro's is not the only heart harboring thoughts of revenge, as Malevole soon reveals in soliloquy; he plans to be revenged on his usurper by disturbing his peace of mind:

Well, this disguise doth yet afford me that
Which kings do seldom hear or great men use--

Free speech; and though my state's usurped,
 Yet this affected strain gives me a tongue
 As fetterless as is an emperor's.
 I may speak foolishly, ay, knavishly,
 Always carelessly, yet no one thinks it fashion
 To peise my breath; "for he that laughs and strikes
 "Is lightly felt, or seldom struck again.
 Duke, I'll torment thee; now my just revenge
 From thee than crown a richer gem shall part:
Beneath God, naught's so dear as a calm heart.
 (I.iii.161-172)

It must be noted, however, that the worst that Malevole has done in seeking revenge on Pietro has been to tell him the truth about the duchess' infidelity. Though this play has assuredly been influenced by revenge tragedy, Malevole is no Iago, no Piero, no Antonio even; he does not fabricate lies or resort to violence. It is this tempered treatment of the subject that has caused Ingram to term The Malcontent "revenge comedy."³⁷

When Celso enters, Malevole takes the opportunity to reveal his identity to his friend: "Behold forever-banished Altofront, / This Genoa's last year's Duke" (I.iv.7-8). He has lost his throne, he says, through an honesty that neither engaged in role-playing nor suspected others of it:

I wanted those old instruments of state,
 Dissemblance and Suspect: I could not time it, Celso;
 My throne stood like a point in midst of a circle,
 To all of equal nearness, bore with none,
 Reigned all alike, so slept in fearless virtue,
 Suspectless, too suspectless; till the crowd
 (Still lickerous of untried novelties),
 Impatient with severer government,
 Made strong with Florence, banished Altofront.
 (I.iv.9-17)

Had he rightly understood the politician's role, he might still be in control of his kingdom, but he failed to counter the alliance between

³⁷Ingram, p. 99.

Pietro and Aurelia, daughter of the Duke of Florence. Now his wife Maria is imprisoned and he is at leisure to have a belated lesson in acting, as he observes counterfeiting in the court and himself walks abroad in disguise. He rejects Celso's proposal that the two of them lead a mutiny; he has a better idea:

Hope, hope, that never forsakest the wretched'st man,
 Yet bid'st me live, and lurk in this disguise!
 What, play I well the free-breathed discontent?
 Why, man, we are all philosophical monarchs or natural fools.
 Celso, the court's afire; the Duchess's sheets will smoke
 for't ere it be long; impure Mendoza, that sharp-nosed Lord
 that made the cursed match linked Genoa with Florence, now
 broad-horns the Duke, which he now knows.
 Discord to malcontents is very manna;
 When the ranks are burst, then scuffle Altofront.
 (I.iv.29-39)

He will lurk nearby until the hypocrisy and corruption within the court bring Pietro's government crashing to the ground, at which time he, having learned his lesson in proper political action, will step in to take advantage of the situation. At this point, "BILIOSO entering, Malevole shifteth his speech" from the temperate blank verse of a lord to the rough prose of the malcontent, shifting back into his role in view of the theater audience.

Malevole's plan to wait proves to have been a wise one. The factions of which he is aware are indeed at work, and like Hamlet, he waits for the right moment for his revenge. Brian Gibbons provides yet another reminder of the histrionic nature of Malevole's situation:

Marston's originality and achievement are seen most clearly when we realize that the echoes of Hamlet are serious parody: Malevole acts Hamlet because he judges the performance will convince Pietro; it is a most sophisticated and subtle modulation on the play-within-the-play.³⁸

³⁸Gibbons, p. 103.

Soon two other Dramatists set in motion further plays-within-plays: Ferneze plots to replace Mendoza as lover of the Duchess Aurelia; and Mendoza, using tactics reminiscent of Piero's in Antonio's Revenge, unwilling to lose the position of favor he has been enjoying with the duke as well as the duchess, counters by mounting a revenge play whose scope expands with its initial seeming success.

First, then, Ferneze convinces Aurelia that Mendoza prefers Emilia, a lady-in-waiting. This is quite simply accomplished with the help of Maquerelle, an old bawd who panders for the duchess and her ladies. Plying Maquerelle's hands with jewels, he plans and carries out his plot with dispatch. At first he and the bawd are actors, Aurelia the audience. Maquerelle corroborates his tale that Mendoza has called Aurelia "witch" and "dried biscuit"; nay, that he has gone even further, saying that "at four, women were fools; at fourteen, drabs; at forty, bawds; at fourscore, witches; and a hundred, cats" (I.vi.18, 34-36). Aurelia, fickle and malleable, promptly bestows her love upon Ferneze, "be it but in despite / Of that Mendoza" (I.vi.46-47), inviting him to visit her chamber that night, with Maquerelle bribed to smooth the way. It is then that an impromptu second scene of their play occurs, as the unwitting Mendoza wanders in, proofreading a sonnet that he has, in fact, just written to Aurelia. He plays right into the hands of the conspirators, for every time he reads a line Maquerelle whispers to the duchess that he speaks of Emilia. Aurelia, thus blindly swayed, grandly denounces the amazed Mendoza, then sweeps from the stage.

Mendoza, no fool he, quickly recognizes that he has been set up by Ferneze. In the next moment Pietro accosts him, sword drawn,

with accusations of adultery in response to Malevole's earlier prompting. Suddenly Mendoza has reason to be angry with Ferneze for ousting him, Aurelia for abandoning him, and Pietro for accusing him. The ease with which Mendoza concocts a plot that will reverse his position, and the speed with which he thinks while confronting Pietro's sword, are those of a gifted Dramatist. In a moment he moves back into the duke's favor, at the same time plotting a play-within-a-play that will bring him revenge simultaneously on all three--Pietro, Ferneze, and Aurelia. He begins talking rapidly, explaining that far from betraying the duke, he has been keeping watch at night to observe the comings and goings of the real traitor. Soon Pietro is begging for the man's name, and Mendoza does not miss the opportunity to implicate his rival: "Why, Ferneze is the man, Ferneze; I'll prove't; this night you shall take him in your sheets; will't serve?" (I.vii.54-56).

His mind has been racing as he talked, for he now delivers to Pietro a plan that shows him to be a Dramatist of no mean skill:

You, with some guard, upon the sudden
 Break into the Princess' chamber. I stay behind,
 Without the door through which he needs must pass.
 Ferneze flies; let him. To me he comes, he's killed
 By me; observe, by me; you follow; I rail,
 And seem to save the body. Duchess comes,
 On whom (respecting her advanced birth,
 And your fair nature), I know, nay, I do know,
 No violence must be used. She comes, I storm,
 I praise, excuse Ferneze, and still maintain
 The Duchess' honour. She for this loves me;
 I honour you, shall know her soul, you mine.
 Then naught shall she contrive in vengeance
 (As women are most thoughtful in revenge)
 Of her Ferneze, but you shall sooner know't
 Than she can think't.

--Thus shall his death come sure,
 Your Duchess brain-caught: so your life secure.
 (I.vii.63-79)

The plot is thus laid, but the duchess is not the only one "brain-

caught" within it. Mendoza has become Marston's version of the Machiavellian villain, reaching out to ensnare others: "Who cannot feign friendship, can ne'er produce the effects of hatred. Honest fool Duke, subtle lascivious Duchess, silly novice Ferneze, I do laugh at ye. My brain is in labour till it produce mischief, and I feel sudden throes, proofs sensible the issue is at hand" (I.vii.81-85).

As nightfall approaches, all is made ready for Mendoza's drama. In dumb show, Dramatist Mendoza watches as Ferneze is conveyed to Aurelia's chamber by Maquerelle. Soliloquizing on his motives for revenge, Mendoza reveals that he will not be reduced from his position of influence to poverty:

I'll be revenged. Duke, thy suspect, Duchess, thy disgrace,
 Ferneze, thy rivalry, shall have swift vengeance. Nothing
 so holy, no band of nature so strong, no law of friendship
 so sacred, but I'll profane, burst, violate, 'fore I'll endure
 disgrace, contempt, and poverty.
 Shall I, whose very 'hum' struck all heads bare,
 Whose face made silence, creaking of whose shoe
 Forced the most private passages fly ope,
 Scrape like a servile dog at some latched door?
 Learn now to make a leg, and cry 'Beseech ye,
 Pray ye, is such a Lord within?', be awed
 At some odd usher's scoffed formality?
 First sear my brains!

(II.i.13-25)

Intermittently, Malevole exchanges taunts of possets and aphrodisiacs with Emilia and Bianca, who are being escorted to bed by Maquerelle; the panderess' question to Emilia, "Have you the art to seem honest?" (II.iv.26)--or to seem to be a virgin--provides the background against which Mendoza's act of mischief will be carried out, suggesting that depraved sexuality permeates the entire court, a place where being honest is merely the art of seeming to be so. Pietro and his lords review the plot with Mendoza, whose role Pietro recalls; "You shall both kill, and seem the corse to save" (II.iii.52). (Certainly Mendoza has

refined the art of seeming honest; while seeming to be Pietro's friend he will seem to save Ferneze, all the time planning to injure the one and kill the other.) Ferrardo dubs the scheme a "most fine brain-trick," but Pietro's term for it is less admiring: "My Lords, the heavy action we intend / Is death and shame, two of the ugliest shapes / That can confound a soul" (II.iii.53-56). The duke, heavy-hearted at the thought of the spectacle of his wife's adultery which he is about to witness, gives those who are about to participate in it some final instructions: "Make frightless entrance, salute her with soft eyes / Stain naught with blood; only Ferneze dies, / But not before her brows" (II.iii.62-64). Such considerations show that while Pietro may be a fool, to love such a wife, he is redeemable precisely because he loves such a wife.

Mendoza's play-within-a-play goes smoothly, exactly as planned, yielding a response from the duchess that exceeds his fondest expectations. The principal actors are the lovers and Mendoza; Pietro and the lords are spectators, as the surprised Ferneze runs out of Aurelia's apartment. Alone on the stage with Ferneze for a moment, Mendoza thrusts his rapier into his rival's body, and when the others enter, he plays his role to the hilt, feigning grief and trying to revive Ferneze. Shortly, as the duke and courtiers leave, Mendoza continues playing his part for Aurelia, giving the performance of his life. He has told Pietro that whatever he learns from the duchess will be duly passed on to him, but this is one conversation of which Pietro is never informed. He protests he loves her, gets her to confess that she has been to bed with Ferneze, then declaims, not unlike "honest Iago":

O God, O God! how we dull honest souls,
Heavy-brained men, are swallowed in the bogs

Of a deceitful ground, whilst nimble bloods,
 Light-jointed, spirits spent, cut good men's throats,
 And 'scape. Alas, I am too honest for this age
 (II.v.59-63)

He establishes a bond between them by suggesting that the duke will now kill them both, only to hear Aurelia make some startling suggestions of her own:

Aur. Instantly, before he casts a plot,
 Or further blaze my honour's much-known blot,
 Let's murder him.
Men. I would do much for you; will ye marry me?
Aur. I'll make thee Duke. We are of Medicis;
 Florence our friend; in court my faction
 Not meanly strengthful; the Duke then dead;
 We well prepared for change; the multitude
 Irresolutely reeling; we in force;
 Our party seconded; the kingdom mazed;
 No doubt of swift success; all shall be graced.
 (II.v.75-85)

With one lover, newly slain, lying at her feet, she cold-bloodedly makes arrangements with another lover to murder her husband and usurp his throne. It would appear that she has just made Mendoza's fortune, but he counters this thought by confiding to the theater audience that he is privately the duke's "adopted son," that Pietro has made Mendoza heir to the throne. He is therefore in a position to wed Aurelia if he wants to, but he does not need her influence to make him duke.

The evening is not yet over. Malevole enters in time to be enlisted to bury Ferneze; but after Mendoza's exit Ferneze returns to consciousness, calling for a surgeon (one of several such resurrections in the play). Malevole bears him away, noting, "Now 'gins close plots to work; the scene grows full" (II.v.160). Like Strotzo's death in Piero's secondary play in Antonio's Revenge, the death of Ferneze has been planned secretly by the plotters--but unlike Strotzo, Ferneze survives. This is a flaw in Mendoza's dramatic design of which he is

unaware, and there is also another: Altofronto in disguise stalks the court, awaiting the moment to be revenged, and is even acting in Mendoza's secondary play. In this respect Mendoza's situation resembles Piero's; he seems to succeed, but his fall is inevitable due to the presence of a disguised Dramatist.

If we may pause for a moment to assess what has taken place so far, it may be seen that a very complex network of theatrical illusion has been constructed (see Figure 1). The result is a precarious pyramiding of plays within plays within plays, like boxes nesting one within another. Existing at once, in the last scene of Act II, are numerous perceptions of the play world's reality, each one superseded by or dependent upon the one below it. The first is the encompassing view enjoyed by the spectators in the audience, who see all and know all. The second level is that of Altofronto, the rightful duke, hoping to be restored to power, disguised as Malevole, railer and malcontent. This perspective on the play's proceedings is shared only by Celso at first, then gradually by one ally after another; it is Malevole who warns Pietro of Mendoza's treachery, saves Ferneze, and later saves Pietro. Third is yet another role assumed by Malevole, that of willing actor under Mendoza's direction, who in Act II, scene v is enlisted to bury Ferneze, and who later plots with Mendoza to kill both Duke Pietro and the hermit (Pietro disguised). Mendoza's ambitious nature comprises the fourth level. Attempting to usurp a throne while achieving revenge on several people, Mendoza confides in no one and keeps this level of reality a secret until Malevole finds him out. Fifth is Aurelia's perspective as she plots with Mendoza to kill Pietro, marry, and share the throne; the illusion is cast by Mendoza, who fosters Aurelia's belief

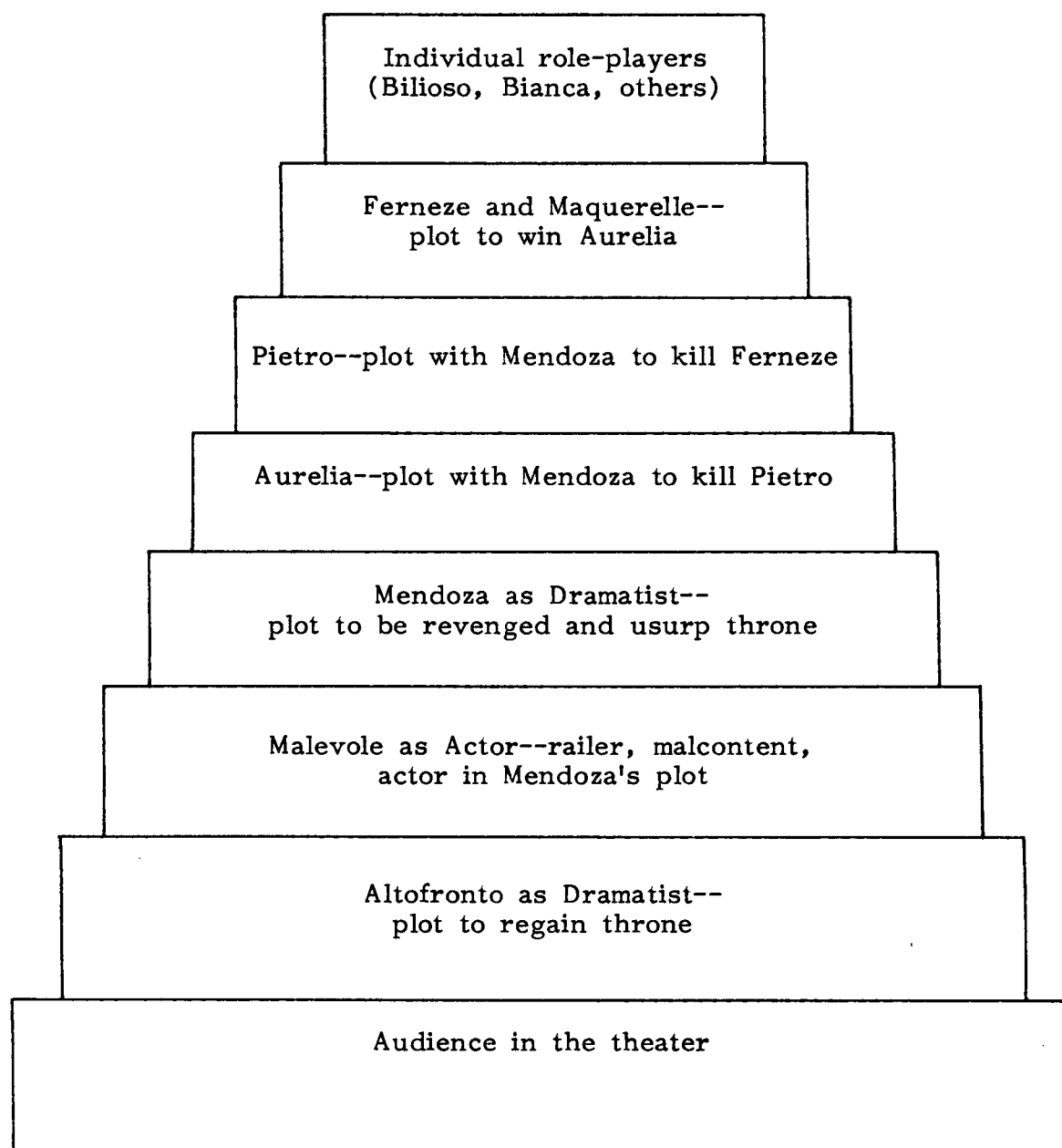


FIGURE 1
LEVELS OF THEATRICAL ILLUSION (Mal.II.v)

that he loves her and is honest with her. The sixth level is that of Pietro in his plot with Mendoza to kill Ferneze in order to avenge Aurelia's infidelity, and again, the illusion is Mendoza's appearance of loyalty to Pietro. Yet another level, the seventh, is the limited perspective of Ferneze and Maquerelle, who act as if the court is a brothel and plot to seduce the duchess, seriously underestimating Mendoza, viewing him only as a lover of Aurelia's, easily duped and quickly replaced, falsely representing him as unfaithful to her. This is the plot that precipitates all of the others. The eighth level is represented by the courtiers and ladies, with their varying individual forms of hypocrisy and role-play--Emilia following Maquerelle's instructions for seeming honest, Bianca telling her husband to flatter greatness, Bilioso shifting allegiance to whoever appears to be in power--unaware of most of the other levels of illusion operating around them.

The circumstances which are indeed real in the play world, such as Altofronto's presence and Mendoza's ambitious goals, are concealed from others by illusion. Likewise, these states of illusion, such as the Malevole disguise and Mendoza's several plots, appear to most characters to be reality. At the end of Act II, there is at least one character, a plotter, within each level who helped to create it and believes it to be the main one operating. That is, while these characters--Bilioso and others (Level 8), Maquerelle (7), Pietro (6), Aurelia (5), Mendoza (4), Malevole/Altofronto and Celso (3 and 2), and the individuals sitting in the audience (1)--may be aware of levels above them in the pyramid, they are unaware of those below. The last three acts of The Malcontent are occupied with untangling and resolving these various strands. Levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8 continue until the play's end,

when Malevole unmask himself and others in the Masque of Dukes. Level 7, the plot of Ferneze and Maquerelle, ends in Act II, although Ferneze still lives to return at the appropriate moment. Levels 6 and 5, the plots of Mendoza with Pietro and Aurelia, continue into Act IV until they are no longer useful to Mendoza and thus superseded by Level 4. Mendoza as Dramatist is responsible for Levels 4-8, but he is doomed to fail because Malevole/Altofronto hovers nearby and thus controls all (Levels 2-8).

In Act III Malevole finds circumstances changing in his favor, and he correspondingly steps up his activities as Dramatist. Learning that Bilioso has been dispatched to Florence to tell that duke of his daughter's disgrace, Malevole feels encouraged, certain that the Florentine will be sympathetic to one with a legal claim to the throne: "[I]t may prove good, it may! / And we may once unmask our brows" (III.ii. 50-51). Indications throughout the play show Malevole's role to be a burden of which he longs to be relieved, and he decides to wait only for the Florentine's hoped-for rejection of his daughter and Pietro, at which time he will step forward. Of Mendoza he also is confident:

O, my disguise fools him most powerfully.
 For that I seem a desperate malcontent,
 He fain would clasp with me; he is the true slave
 That will put on the most affected grace
 For some vild second cause.

(III.iii.33-37)

Mendoza soon approaches Malevole, gives him a purse, and asks him to murder Duke Pietro, who that morning is out hunting with his lords. Mendoza then unwisely cannot resist boasting to Malevole, revealing all of his design to his unknown enemy:

My utmost project is: to murder the Duke that I might have his state, because he makes me his heir; to banish the Duchess, that I

might be rid of a cunning Lacedemonian, because I know Florence will forsake her; and then to marry Maria, the banished Duke Altofront's wife, that her friends might strengthen me and my faction; this is all, la.

(III.iii.94-100)

He does not realize that he is trying to direct a Dramatist more powerful than he, one to whom he has just given the upper hand, when Malevole counters Mendoza's stage direction--"single him, kill him, hurl him i' the main, and proclaim thou sawest wolves eat him" (III.iii.105-106)--with another idea, to make it look like Pietro has committed suicide over his wife's disgrace:

Mal. Um! not so good. Methinks when he is slain, to get some hypocrite, some dangerous wretch that's muffled o'er with feigned holiness, to swear he heard the Duke on some steep cliff lament his wife's dishonour, and in an agony of his heart's torture hurled his groaning sides into the swollen sea. This circumstance well-made sounds probable; and hereupon the Duchess--

Men. May well be banished. O unpeerable invention! rare! thou god of policy! it honeys me.

(III.iii.107-115)

Of course, introducing the feigned holy man also gives Malevole the chance to support himself with an ally close by. Both Dramatists are pleased with this arrangement--Mendoza to have one duchess (Aurelia) out of the way so that he may court another (Maria); and Malevole, who quickly volunteers to approach Maria, to be able to see his wife after their long separation.

Malevole moves rapidly to locate Pietro, whose grieving for Aurelia has led him to seek solitude in the wood. He awakens the duke, revealing Mendoza's plot:

Mal. . . . I am feed to murder thee. Start not! Mendoza, Mendoza hired me; here's his gold, his pistol, cross-bow, sword; 'tis all as firm as earth. O fool, fool, choked with the common maze of easy idiots, credulity! Make him thine heir! What, thy sworn murderer! . . .

Pietro. Discovered he not Ferneze?

Mal. Yes, but why? but why? For love to thee? Much, much!

--To be revenged upon his rival, who had thrust his jaws awry; who being slain (supposed by thine own hands, defended by his sword) made thee most loathsome, him most gracious with thy loose princess. Thou, closely yielding egress and regress to her, madest him heir; whose hot unquiet lust straight toused thy sheets, and now would seize thy state. Politician! wise man! death!
(III.v.3-8, 11-20)

Malevole, having lost his state by lacking "Dissemblance and Suspect" (I.iv.10), now sees Pietro's lack of political skill leading to precisely the same end. Both are about to have a lesson in dissembling, as Dramatist Malevole disguises Pietro as the feigned holy man, in the beard and robe of a hermit, and takes him back to court posthaste for two of the most theatrically intricate scenes in the Marston canon--scenes loaded with dance and pageantry, disguise and undisguisings, reversals, resurrection, and recognition.

The first of these moments occurs as soon as they reach the court. Its effect is heightened by the way in which the spectators, both on and off the stage, are prepared for it. Maquerelle, reporting to Emilia and Bianca of the disastrous killing of Ferneze the night before, relates that the duchess is defying infamy and calling for dances. Ferrardo then expresses worry that the duke is not yet back from hunting. Against this background, the duchess is ushered in by Mendoza and others, ordering music for dancing. During the dance, people come in one by one asking for Pietro, their questions ringing out over Aurelia's music:

Enter PREPASSO.

Aur. Music, music!
Pre. Who saw the Duke? the Duke?
Aur. Music!

Pietro (as hermit) tells the story with great detail--that Duke Pietro, after crying out that he can no longer live as a cuckold, flung himself from a cliff into the sea. Mendoza, acting on cue, immediately assumes his position as Pietro's successor and banishes a protesting Aurelia, using the royal "we": "Woman of shame, / We banish thee for ever to the place / From whence this good man comes" (IV.iii.61-63).

Mendoza then wastes no time in putting the next step of his plot into operation. Finding occasion to speak privately with both Malevole and Pietro, he instructs each one to poison the other at supper. His motive is to protect himself:

We that are great, our sole self-good still moves us.
They shall die both, for their deserts craves more
 Than we can recompense; their presence still
 Imbraids our fortunes with beholdingness,
 Which we abhor. . . .

(IV.iii.137-141)

The doubling in this play continues as, for the second time, Mendoza hires Malevole to kill Pietro. And for the second time the two ex-dukes discover the fact, Pietro reacting by raging and cursing life--"O let the last day fall, drop, drop on our cursed heads! / Let heaven unclasp itself, vomit forth flames!"--and the more experienced Malevole calming him by using play language: "O do not rand, do not turn player; there's more of them than can well live one by another already" (IV.iv. 2-5). Although both have turned player, of necessity, in wearing disguises, Malevole is growing weary of it all.

Signs continue to indicate that the time is drawing near for Altofronto to return to power. Maria, refusing Mendoza's offer of marriage, stands loyal to her husband, as does the captain of the Genoan citadel. Faced with his wife's sterling faithfulness as he

frivolously woos her for Mendoza, Malevole is brought to the limits of his patience with his role: "O God, how loathsome this toying is to me! That a duke should be forced to fool it! Well, stultorum plena sunt omnia: better play the fool lord than be the fool lord" (V.iii.43-46). But he will not have to play the fool lord much longer. The word from the Duke of Florence, as was expected, is that Aurelia should die, Pietro be banished, and Altofronto reinstated. Hearing this, Pietro renounces all claim to the throne, dedicating himself to the restoration of Altofronto, who then unmask before him and reveals that Ferneze lives. Pietro, who has recently seen his wife fully contrite and penitent, praising her lost husband, is filled with wonder: "My vows stand fixed in heaven, and from hence / I crave all love and pardon" (IV.v. 139-140). Malevole's response is significant in any consideration of the themes of The Malcontent:

Who doubts of Providence that sees this change?
 A hearty faith to all!
He needs must rise who can no lower fall. . . .
 (IV.v.141-143)

The changes that are coming about, and which he has set in motion, are taken to be providential, and both Malevole's role-playing and directing of others must be interpreted with this in mind.

There remains for Malevole as Dramatist--and for Marston--one last scene to be staged. Since the overthrow of Mendoza is by now a foregone conclusion, Marston successfully focuses all the dramatic interest at this crucial point in The Malcontent on the central theme and symbol of the mask-disguise, in anticipation of the multiple undisguisings of Malevole and of others thought to be dead. Malevole calls Pietro, Celso, and Ferneze together for a rehearsal, much as the

conspirators against Duke Pietro are called together at the end of Act IV of Antonio's Revenge:

The time grows ripe for action; I'll detect
My privat'st plot, lest ignorance fear suspect.
Let's close to counsel, leave the rest to fate:
Mature discretion is the life of state.
(IV.v.148-151)

But before anything else can happen, Mendoza tries to murder Malevole, who after Mendoza's coronation ceremony is reporting on deeds done for the new duke. Mendoza misses the double meaning in Malevole's response when asked about the hermit--

Men. Stay, where is the hermit?
Mal. With Duke Pietro, with Duke Pietro.
Men. Is he dead? is he poisoned?
Mal. Dead as the Duke is
(V.iv.2-5)--

and learns that Maria is "cold, frosty" (V.iv.21) toward the idea of marrying him. Then she, too, must die, Mendoza decides, finding death the easiest role to assign to actors in his production. In fact, dealing out death is becoming a habit, as he soon demonstrates to Malevole:

Men. Canst thou empoison? Canst thou empoison?
Mal. Excellently; no Jew, pothecary or politician better. Look ye, here's a box--which, opened and the fume ta'en up in conduits thorough which the brain purges itself, doth instantly for twelve hours' space bind up all show of life in a deep senseless sleep. Here's another, which, being opened under the sleeper's nose, chokes all the power of life, kills him suddenly.
Men. I'll try experiments; 'tis good not to be deceived.--So, so; catso!
Seems to poison Malevole.
(V.iv.35-45)

Of course the box contains no poison and Malevole only feigns death, having just staged a brief play-within-a-play for Mendoza's benefit, but in a sense Mendoza has killed Malevole, for this is Duke Altofronto's final appearance in disguise.

At this point, the extent of illusion within illusion in The Malcontent is about to reach its peak. Mendoza, again echoing Piero, aids the conspirators by calling for a masque, "any quick-done fiction / As some brave spirits of the Genoan Dukes, / To come out of Elysium, forsooth" (V.iv.65-67). He wishes to celebrate his installation as duke, and also to court the reluctant duchess of his rival--as Piero courts Andrugio's wife, whose name is also Maria. Having commanded Celso to bury the body of Malevole and prepare the masque, Mendoza is supremely self-assured:

Now is my treachery secure, nor can we fall;
Mischief that prospers, men do virtue call.
I'll trust no man: he that by tricks gets wreaths
Keeps them with steel. . . .
 (V.iv.76-79)

He has scripted death for Ferneze, Pietro, the hermit, Malevole, and possibly Maria, and feels secure that his tactics of trickery and dramaturgy will maintain the position that they have helped him to win.

However, he has been caught up in a counter-illusion from the moment in which he stabbed Feliche. Not a single person whom he has consigned to death, including Feliche, has died, and all are waiting in the wings to bring down the curtain on his performance. The first reversal comes when "dead" Malevole startles Celso by coming back to life, springing up with his final plot complete: "Death of the damned thief! I'll make one i' the mask; thou shalt ha' some brave spirits of the antique Dukes" (V.iv.84-86). Celso's "My Lord, what strange delusions?" (V.iv.87) is to be echoed by Mendoza and others shortly.

The Masque of Revengers in Antonio's Revenge, a play-within-a-play, takes place before the onstage audience of Andrugio's ghost, since the masquers request the courtiers to leave the presence before

they kill Piero; the Masque of Dukes in The Malcontent is also a play-within-a-play because the full cast of courtiers and ladies is present, looking on. The settings of the two masques in the respective plays are similar--two vengeful, murderous dukes, two corrupt courts, two disguised groups of revengers. But the similarities end there. All of Piero's victims are dead, none of Mendoza's. There is no rightful duke to replace Piero--who is, unfortunately, the true Duke of Venice--but there is a merciful Altofronto waiting to set things right in Genoa.

The masquers enter to the sound of cornets: "MALEVOLE, PIETRO, FERNEZE, and CELSO, in white robes, with dukes' crowns upon laurel wreaths; pistolets and short swords under their robes" (V.vi.68.1-4). The first three of the four are people thought to be dead; the first two are former Genoan dukes disguised as former Genoan dukes. Malevole dances with Maria, Pietro with Aurelia, Ferneze with Maquerelle, Celso with Bianca. After Malevole and Pietro have secretly revealed their identities to their two wives, the unmasking follows, thus:

Cornets sound the measure over again; which danced, they unmask.

Men. Malevole!

They environ Mendoza, bending their pistols on him.

Mal. No.

Men. Altofront! Duke Pietro! Ferneze! Ha!

All. Duke Altofront! Duke Altofront! Cornets, a flourish.

Men. Are we surprised? What strange delusions mock
Our senses? Do I dream? or have I dreamt
This two days' space? Where am I?

They seize upon Mendoza.

Mal. Where an arch-villain is.

Men. O lend me breath till I am fit to die.

For peace with heaven, for your own soul's sake,
Vouchsafe me life.

(V.vi.113-123)

Levels of illusion are destroyed, one after another, in rapid succession. Malevole wears a double disguise, and is recognized first as Malevole, and second as Altofronto. Only then does Mendoza see Pietro and Ferneze. Repeating Celso's earlier query, he wonders what delusion he is experiencing; Mendoza has lived with illusion for so long that he can no longer recognize reality when he encounters it. Even while he is talking he shifts from using the royal "we" to "I." He is forced to change roles quickly--from death-dispensing duke to prisoner begging for his life, asking of Altofronto that which he as duke would never have granted.

As Mendoza's villainy has yielded more threatened than actual damage, so the punishment which he receives at Altofronto's hand is more verbal than physical:

Slave, take thy life.
Wert thou defencèd, through blood and wounds,
The sternest horror of a civil fight,
Would I achieve thee; but prostrate at my feet,
I scorn to hurt thee.
(V.vi.129-133)

Duke Altofronto has learned much during his period of exile--that "th'inconstant people / Love many princes merely for their faces / And outward shows" (V.vi.143-145), and he has seen the "flatterer, like the ivy, clip the oak, / And waste it to the heart" (V.vi.138-139). It is suggested that he will avoid making the same mistakes of trusting flatterers a second time, that it is an infinitely wiser Altofronto who reassumes the throne, and that his experiences in role-playing and directing have provided much of his instruction. The good duke rejoices with the courtiers, kicks out Mendoza, commends Pietro and Aurelia to renewed vows and Maquerelle to the suburbs, and embraces Celso, the loyal Captain and the faithful Maria.

Although some have found the play's ending to be unsatisfactory because Altofronto's revenge takes such a mild form, there is much that is satisfying in it if one is not predisposed toward blood baths--and especially when contrasted with the savage blood-letting of Antonio's Revenge (for which Marston has also received criticism). Everything has come full circle, as Altofronto is duke again, Maquerelle sent back to the brothels, Pietro and Aurelia--usurper and adulteress--reunited. The play is not, after all, Altofronto's Revenge, but is more nearly Altofronto's Forgiveness. R. W. Ingram, who termed the play "revenge comedy," points out that Pietro, "who ought to be pursued to his doom by Altofronto, is instead hounded to his salvation."⁴⁰ Repeatedly in The Malcontent we are reminded that, in Malevole's words, "[s]uch / is the state of all humanity" (III.iii.65-66); all are deserving of punishment but are offered grace instead. Seeming death leads to renewed life, and no one at play's end--not even Mendoza--is left hopeless and unredeemed. All still have the opportunity to start again, to apply their energies to constructive pursuits. The comic goal of restored order and sanity is achieved.

There is a strong link in this play between the ideas of providential grace and role-playing. The suggestion offered in The Malcontent is that role-playing is "a physical necessity for moral man in an immoral society."⁴¹ If salvation is offered to sinners in a fallen world, role-playing is certainly one means whereby it may be found. Malevole and Pietro are two cases in point. Each has lost a dukedom

⁴⁰Ingram, p. 111.

⁴¹Finkelpearl, p. 193.

because he neither played a role nor understood those who did. In Malevole's words, "I wanted those old instruments of state, / Dissemblance and Suspect" (I.iv.9-10). He has to learn to dissemble and suspect if he is to rule in a world of dishonest and hypocritical people. Pietro, too, has been vulnerable to the pretence of Mendoza and the lies of Aurelia, which have not only concealed adultery but have led him to usurp Altofronto's position. Malevole does for him what someone should have done for Altofronto--he opens his eyes to deception, by teaching him to wear a disguise and to play a role. Both wear disguises, act parts, learn a lesson about human nature, and are finally restored to their rightful places in society.

The last three lines of The Malcontent afford the audience the opportunity to watch one more undisguising. Altofronto, a Dramatist to the end, having made disposition of everyone on the stage, turns to direct the spectators:

The rest of idle actors idly part.
And as for me, I here assume my right,
To which I hope all's pleased. To all, good night.
(V.vi.165-167)

His words "idle actors" include everyone in the theater, obliterating the boundaries between those onstage and those off, suggesting that all are actors on the stage of the world. Finally, Altofronto steps out of his role, becoming one more "idle actor" about to go home. In quick succession he has brought closure to the various "strange delusions" of the play world, unmasking the others, and himself moving from masked duke to malcontent to actual duke to actor who has only been doing his job, and who will now leave the theater, though being human, he will not completely leave off acting. If members of the audience, who

inhabit the theater of the world, learn from Malevole's example, they will not completely leave off acting, either.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRAGEDY OF SOPHONISBA AND MARSTON'S IDEA OF THE PLAY

Although a stagelike passion & weake heate
Full of an empty wording might sute age,
Know Ile speake strongly truth.

(Soph. II, p. 21, Vol. II)

Marston's last complete play is a heroic tragedy, The Wonder of Women, or The Tragedie of Sophonisba. Evidence suggests that Marston was trying to present not only an ideal character, but also an ideal play; at least, he hoped that this would be his finest and most admired theatrical piece. The most important feature of Sophonisba, for the purposes of this discussion, is that the play's main character is neither Dramatist nor role-player, and none of the action falls into the category of the play-within-a-play. This play, which Marston hoped would be his best, gives as much insight into his Idea of the Play as The Malcontent and others with their explorations of theatrical illusion.

Sophonisba is virtuous, honest, courageous--a martyred virgin. Two things stand out when considering the life of the character: (1) she lives a blameless life, refusing to compromise her high principles, and (2) she dies as a result. Marston suggests several things in presenting such a character who meets such a death, and what he suggests is consistent with his views in other plays. First, he shows a fallen world, filled with deception--a world containing very little innocence, and where the innocent suffer. Sophonisba is used as a pawn in the bickering between Carthage and Rome. Even in The Fawn, his most lighthearted play, both dukes are surrounded by flattery and selfishness, qualities present in courtiers in all nine of Marston's plays.

Histrionastix shows a cyclical view of history, indicating that Pride and Envy will always be present or about to return. Malevole has lost his dukedom, and Andrugio has been murdered in the court of Piero.

Second, he shows that in this world of destructive forces, those who refuse to compromise, those who hold to idealism, those who refuse to erect defenses or to meet the world on its own terms will not survive. Interestingly, Sophonisba is the only such character that Marston has placed at the center of one of his plays. Most of his protagonists, of both sexes, set up plots which oppose the counterfeiting and illusion which surround them. But Sophonisba, in spite of ample opportunity, never thinks of putting on a disguise or of setting up a secondary plot. After she has vowed never to kneel to Rome and Massinissa has sworn to uphold her vow, when the inevitable word comes from Scipio that she is to become a Roman prisoner, the only solution that occurs to either of the lovers is for Sophonisba to die, thereby allowing Massinissa to keep his vows both to his bride and to his general. It is a sad picture of an unfriendly world that Marston presents, a world in which virtue and honesty are swept away. Marston, a man of decidedly ambivalent nature, admires those who see the world in black and white terms and refuse to compromise their honesty, but fortunately he offers an alternative to martyrdom in the rest of his plays--the alternative of histrionic activity. Only in an ideal world can life be lived without a certain amount of informed role-playing.

In Marston's world, idealists cannot survive, but Dramatists can. By presenting Sophonisba as a character who refuses to employ theatrical techniques, and who willingly loses her life, Marston strongly implies that some form of role-play is not only appropriate, but

necessary for survival in a world whose reality is often masked. The same idea is underscored, similarly, when he presents characters like Malevole and Hercules who succeed through careful use of dramaturgy. Malevole recovers his dukedom, Hercules finds his son a wife, (both gaining knowledge of human nature), Freevill saves Malheureux from Franceschina, and Antonio avenges his father's death. This is an elevated view of theatrical activity indeed. Playing, both on the traditional stage and on the world's stage, is at times the only effective defense against those who manipulate theatrical illusion for their own dark purposes--people like Piero, Mendoza, and Franceschina. The hope is that there is a way out for people who find themselves in difficult situations.

If Marston has shown theatrical behavior to be a viable alternative in a problematic world, he has not stopped there. He has again exhibited ambivalence by showing as much abuse as proper use of his craft. He sees acting as a skill which may be used for great good or great harm, and always opposes its use for undeserved self-advancement. He not only condemns the Pieros and Mendozas, major dramatists who usurp, plot murder, and disguise the reality of the play world, but he also dislikes the feigning of the Amorists and Flatterers--the Biliosos and Simplicius Fabers--who risk permanent confusion of the self with a desired role, as they try to gain love or prestige.

Marston is not so interested in how one views a play (a major concern of Jonson's)--though the audiences viewing the dramatic productions of Faunus and Malevole were perforce instructed, corrected, given insight--as in how and why we act and direct. Marston's perspective is from the stage rather than from the audience. He approves

of playing when it enables one to survive the stupidity (Fawn), the disorder (DC), the brutality (AR), and the displacement (Mal.) which the world has to offer. R. W. Ingram has commented:

Marston's willingness to talk about acting and dramatic genres before and during his plays is a part not only of his concern about theatricality, but of his views of and preoccupation with the problems of life and thought itself. Probing the appearance of things at large meant, in the theater, investigating the accepted genres and modes of representing and imitating life.¹

Shortly after writing Sophonisba, Marston himself left life in the theater for life on the "world's stage," and aside from the fact that he entered the church, very little else is known about him. He left the world nine complete plays and two collaborations. Six of his plays were reissued in 1633, an indication of the regard in which his works were held. Although he has been overshadowed in the centuries since his death by Jonson and Shakespeare, his more practiced and prolific contemporaries, Marston was the only playwright of his age to join them in having such a collection published. He is also further linked with these two colleagues by a shared fascination with the theater as an emblem of the world. He did not go through so many phases as Shakespeare in his attitude toward his profession, nor was he perhaps as fixed in his mind about the purpose of writing plays as was Jonson. But his dramatic works did present a consistent pattern around the tenets of self-knowledge, honesty, and the restoration of balance and proportion as the goal of dramatic activity. Marston joined his humanistic age in its belief that people could change the world and themselves through their art (though Marston's world was so corrupt that at times

¹Ingram, p. 157.

it hardly seemed worth changing). He never lost his belief in the paradox that through role-playing we come to shed our roles at last, to find ourselves; that the theater may be the only place where beneath the illusion, the reality about human lives may be glimpsed.

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