INSET FORMS OF ART IN THE PLAYS OF

PHILIP MASSINGER

By

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of English
University of Toronto

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0-612-53732-3
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the use of metatheatrical inset pieces in the work of Philip Massinger, the dominant professional playwright of the London stage in the reign of Charles the First (1625-1642). Although all Renaissance drama contains metatheatrical insets, the Caroline period is particularly rich in these devices. I examine Massinger’s use of such insets to posit some reasons for the development of a peculiarly Caroline metadrama and to examine their dramaturgical function in his plays. Massinger’s presentation of inset pieces focusses on their function as spectatorial objects – pieces of art which are interpreted by spectators – which permits him to theatrically examine the process of spectatorship, and thus, to analyse the process of theatre itself. The introduction maps out the Caroline theatrical landscape, surveying some of the potential causes for the development of self-reflexive drama in the period, and placing Massinger within this context; the thesis itself focusses on Massinger’s use of four forms of inset art.
The first chapter examines Massinger's staging of pieces of visual art—paintings and statues—as metadramatic insets, objects which are read by spectators on the stage. The focus of the chapter is the dramaturgical use of the miniature of *The Picture* (1629); Massinger structures the plot of his play around Mathias's reactions to his 'readings' of this image. The second and third chapters examine Massinger's two types of inset masques; Chapter Two focusses on masques which are staged for a single on-stage audience, and which simply function as dramatic images. Chapter Three examines the masques of *The City Madam* (1632) and *A Very Woman* (1634), both of which are ostensibly staged for a single audience member, who is then watched by a second on-stage audience who judge his reactions to the show he sees. Both masques function, like the miniature of *The Picture*, to allow access to the interior of their spectators. The final chapter examines the plays-within of *The Roman Actor* (1626), Massinger's metatheatrical analysis and defence of his stage.
This thesis would not exist were it not for a number of very patient people:

Alexander Leggatt, who supervised it.

The members of my Thesis Reading group (Susan Carter, Tanya Hagen, Tanya Wood, Margaret Reeves, Kelly Quinn and Holly Forsythe) who read, critiqued and corrected it.

And my parents, Harry James and Tordis Rochester, who paid for it.

I am also grateful for the financial assistance provided by the University of Toronto in the form of a Connaught Fellowship and an Open Fellowship.
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Fig. 4. A Table describing the burning of Bishop Ridley and father Latimer at Oxford, D. Smith there preaching at the time of their martyrdom. Woodcut from Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*. 1563. 5th ed. 2 vols. London: P. Short by the Assignment of John Day, 1596. II: 1606.

I thank the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library and the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies for allowing me to reproduce images in their collections.
Introduction

This thesis investigates the use of inset forms of dramatic and non-dramatic art (visual art, masques-within, and plays-within) in the plays of Phillip Massinger, who, as the head playwright for the King's Men from 1625 to his death in 1640, was the dominant professional playwright of the London stage in the reign of Charles the First (1625-1642). Massinger's plays and the drama of his immediate contemporaries stand somewhat apart, in both attitude and structure, from the body of Renaissance Drama as a whole; the thesis began as an attempt to explain this difference. Its final form is rooted in my interest in Massinger's plays, in the drama of the Caroline period, and in general problems of spectatorship and interpretation. It examines Massinger's use of the commoner inset forms (images, masques, and plays-within) in his drama, and explores how his use of them differs from the work of earlier Renaissance dramatists. In particular, the thesis explores the dramaturgical function of these forms in his drama; that is, how he uses the reactions of the on-stage spectators to the inserts to structure his plays. Finally, it attempts to rough out a sense of Massinger's overall understanding of dramaturgical structure and dramatic function.

1 This analysis of the audience-play relationship is based on current treatments of spectatorship, contemporary staging and audience response (including treatments of anti theatricality) in the period; these include Jonas Barish The Antitheatrical Prejudice, Celia Daileader, Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage, Andrew Gurr, Playgoing in Shakespeare's London, Michael Shurgot, Stages of Play: Shakespeare's Theatrical Energies in Elizabethan Performance, and Meredith Anne Skura, Shakespeare the Actor and the Purposes of Playing. Papers on spectatorship, the audience and the drama/audience relation include Peter Carlson, “Judging Spectators”, Marco De Marinis, “The Dramaturgy of the Spectator”, Katharine Eisaman Maus, ”Horns of Dilemma: Jealousy, Gender
However, because Massinger’s use of these forms is rooted in his particular historical moment – Massinger is a Caroline playwright, and his dramatic practices are related to those of his immediate contemporaries – this introduction will begin by mapping the Caroline theatrical landscape, and will explore some of the reasons for the development of explicitly metatheatrical plays in the period, before situating Massinger in his critical context and finally, discussing the form of the thesis itself.

The Caroline playwrights, the last generation of writers to enter a long-established and somewhat crowded theatrical marketplace, were aware of their status as the inheritors of

the traditions of the previous generation. In fact, Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome, the four major Caroline “professional playwrights” (Clark, *Professional* 1) were not only inheritors of the traditions of the earlier stage, but were in some ways still in competition with them, since older plays were still staged. The number of new plays purchased dropped significantly after 1616; Gurr notes that the “King’s Men were taking only four new plays a year by the 1630s, when more than 80% of the plays offered at court were old favourites” (*Playgoing*, 179). Although new plays still drew audiences – James Howell writes to an absent friend in 1624 tempting him to town with the offer of “a Play spick and span new” (Gurr *Playgoing* 203) – and took in the highest profits (Bentley “Theatres” 97), older works, particularly those of Fletcher and Shakespeare, still pleased. Furthermore, old plays were known commodities, and were already part of the holdings of the Caroline companies; by contrast, a new play had to be good enough to warrant the financial risk involved in its purchase. These facts may account for the drop in the purchase of new plays by London’s four theatres in the Caroline period (Gurr *Playgoing* 179).

One result of this economic and artistic pressure on the Caroline dramatists is, predictably, a tendency to reproduce the themes and approaches of popular Jacobean plays. This is the source of the common critical accusation that the Caroline playwrights were derivative; however, as James Bulman points out in his discussion of Ford’s *The Lover’s Melancholy*, this is not in fact true – rather, Bulman argues that Ford “transfigures Shakespearian material to advance his own ideas” (367). Caroline playwrights in general ‘transfigure’ earlier material, ringing significant changes on the themes they borrow. This is not to deny that many of the works of the period are indebted to the works of earlier writers. In Massinger’s canon, for example, *The Duke of Milan* (1621) is a reexamination

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2 Of the twenty plays performed at court by the King’s Men in 1630-1, ten were by Beaumont and Fletcher (Bentley *Jacobean* I:27-9). Herbert, choosing plays for his benefit performances from 1628-31, selected *The Custom of the Country, The Prophetess* and *The Wild Goose Chase*, (all Fletcher or Fletcher/Massinger plays) *Othello, Richard II, The Alchemist* and *Every Man in His Humour* (Bentley *Jacobean* I: 23-4).
of *Othello*’s themes of jealousy, uxoricide and faulty perception; *The Roman Actor* (1626) deliberately recalls *Julius Caesar* in both its discussion of the moral problems of resistance to tyranny and in the assassination of its Emperor, Domitian; and *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625) and *The City Madam* (1632) return to the ground covered in Middleton’s *A Trick to Catch The Old One* and Jonson’s *Volpone*. Such influence is inevitable; not only was the Renaissance stage traditionally open to revision, influence and response, but, given the conditions under which they were writing, it would be surprising if the Caroline playwrights had not shown the influence of those who had gone before. Writing for the same stages and companies as the playwrights of the previous two decades, attempting to please audiences whose taste had been formed by the work of these writers and working within the same dramatic structures as their predecessors, the Caroline dramatists were constrained to repeat, or at least analyse, the genres and dramaturgy of the Jacobean playwrights.

But there is a second, and more important, effect of this pressure on the work of these dramatists: the proliferation of metatheatrical and metadramatic forms in their plays. Caroline drama is, in general, more self-reflexive than the work of the previous generation. As Bulman puts it, since “[t]hroughout the Caroline period [. . .] dramatists were intensely preoccupied with the ideological implications of theatre [. . .] in their plays, consequently, theatrical self-reference took a decidedly introspective turn” (368). This, too, is a development from earlier forms: metadramatic inserts (plays-within, masques and dumb shows) are used by English playwrights from *Gorboduc* on, and they are a commonplace of the drama by the time the Caroline playwrights begin to work. However, the use of such devices rises dramatically in the later period (Fuzier, 461-7).³ There is also a significant shift

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³ There are several checklists of plays containing metatheatrical insets (plays-within, masques, dumbshows and other forms), but Fuzier’s is the most recent and complete (*The Show Within* pp 461ff). Fuzier lists 281 plays containing what he calls ‘inset spectacle’ from the years 1560-1642; these comprise 35% of extant plays of the period. 121 of the plays date from between 1620 and 1642, and 84 date from the Caroline period itself (1625-1642), meaning that roughly one-third of plays containing metadramatic insets were produced in the last 17 years of the 82 year period. More importantly, 10 of the 22 plays which contain actual plays-within post-date 1625. This means that almost as many plays dealing directly with the theatre as a subject were produced in the last two
in approach: the Caroline works place a heavier emphasis on the metadramatic elements which are secondary elements in earlier plays. Not only does the use of metatheatrical insets in general increase in the period, but several Caroline plays have plots which are entirely structured around the device: Massinger's *Roman Actor* (1626), Brome's *The Antipodes* (1638), and Randolph's *The Muses Looking Glass* (1630). These plays are set in the theatre, have actors as characters, and not only contain inset representations of dramatic performances, but are, narratively, about the theatre and the work of actors and spectators. They also differ from the earlier usages of the play-within in using frame play and inset play as equally balanced elements -- as Liebler says of *The Roman Actor*, the plays-within are conflated with the play-without (20). While in the Elizabethan and Jacobean uses of the device, the inset play illuminates or illustrates the world of the outer play (as in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*), in the Caroline plays, the inner and outer plays merge into one 'play about playing'. It is also significant -- particularly in regards to this thesis -- that these plays focus as much on the on-stage audiences' interpretations of the plays-within as on the process of playing, which is something of a departure from the Elizabethan and Jacobean practice. While the earlier stage was deeply interested in the process of playing and the relationship decades of the drama as in the previous six decades combined. However, it is important to note that although Fuzier's list is the most comprehensive survey to date, it is necessarily limited to an examination of surviving plays. I speculate on his data knowing that my conclusions cannot be definitive, since the extant plays may well be anomalies.

I do not mean to imply that the earlier drama does not contain inset forms which reflect on the nature of theatre. All drama from the 1550s on is enormously concerned with such issues as distinguishing roleplaying from truth, examining the status of images, and the relation of poetry and spectacle. Further, much earlier metadrama, including Shakespeare's 'mousetrap' in *Hamlet* and 'Pyramus and Thisbe' in *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, reflects on the nature of the theatre and its relation to its audience. However, the Caroline metadramatic plays actually take the stage itself as a subject, rather than presenting inset plays as a single element in a larger whole.

Jonson's *The New Inn* (1629) and Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628) may also be included in this group: the first presents formal and informal 'playlets' staged in an 'Inn' which is, as Lawry has argued, intended as a direct parallel to the theatre (309), and the second, as Bulman argues, "tests the power of theatre to effect psychological cures in a manner reminiscent of Shakespeare's late romances" (365).
of acting to being (a problem which underlies much of Hamlet, for example) the Caroline writers are as interested in staging the process of audience interpretation – they present on-stage audiences ‘reading’ plays, masques and other shows, in order to explore the audience-stage relation. In effect, Caroline metatheatrical plays are an analysis of how drama works (or doesn’t work). They are a new approach to an old concept and, with the exception of Beaumont’s The Knight of the Burning Pestle, the drama of the earlier period has nothing that closely resembles them.

There are several explanations for this development. James Bulman argues that Caroline metatheatrical plays are born of a defensive reaction to the threat posed by the reduction in commissions for new plays, growing censorship and the threat of Puritan anti-theatrical prejudice: “The Roman Actor [. . .] was the first among several plays to take theatre as its subject; collectively, they provide evidence that the theatre was suffering a crisis of identity in which dramatists asserted their power to influence an audience while in fact fearing their own impotence” (365). It is also possible that the Caroline writers are continuing their usual pattern of expanding or elaborating on forms found in the earlier drama – that is, that they are all imitating The Knight of the Burning Pestle. However, this expanded interest in metatheatrical devices may also be due to the writers’ belated status in Renaissance Drama as a whole: Caroline dramatists use metatheatrical inserts to analyse the nature of the form they are practising. Because they have come so late to their stage, the Caroline writers are forced into a new self-consciousness about their professional status as dramatists and about the forms they are using. Their belated perspective is inducive of an analytic bent which engenders a pervasive reflection on the stage. This is not unlike the reassessment that the theatre undergoes in the Restoration, which leads to the writing of the first formal theory of drama in English, Dryden’s 1668 Of Dramatic Poesie. Unlike Dryden and the other Restoration dramatists, however, the Caroline playwrights lack the temporal distance from their predecessors which allows Dryden to write a critical analysis of a theatre which is a historical fact. Therefore, the Caroline impulse to analysis takes the form of writing plays about the process of playing: they analyse the process of players performing
and audience responding as they take part in it. This does not mean that these plays are 'theories of drama' — they are not descriptions of how drama ought to work according to theoretical rules, but rather, analyses of how the drama actually works, practical examinations of the ways in which drama and audience interact.

There is, as well, another factor which must be taken into account. The Caroline professionals wrote for a fragmented theatrical market which was under a new and unprecedented pressure from an unexpected source — the court itself. Prior to 1625, the public theatres had been the exclusive preserve of professional writers, but upon the ascension of Charles and his Queen, Henrietta Maria, court interest in both court-based and professional theatre increased exponentially. Henrietta Maria herself acted in a 1626 Court production of *L'Artenice* (Harbage Cavalier 12); while this did not meet with approval among her English subjects, it was a precursor of things to come. For much of the 1620s, Henrietta Maria's influence over her husband was held in check by a number of factors, the most important being the presence of Charles's long-time favourite Buckingham; she was also a Catholic in a Protestant country, and was hampered by her poor grasp of English and her youth. Upon the assassination of Buckingham in 1628, however, Henrietta established herself in her husband's affections, and her interests — theatrical interests among them — began to drive court fashion (Harbage Cavalier 13). By the 1630s, she had broken with previous royal precedent and was attending Blackfriars itself, albeit for special performances (Gurr Playgoing 203); she saw Massinger's *Cleander* in 1634, Carilel's *Arviragus and Felicia* in 1636, and Davenant's *The Unfortunate Lovers* in 1638 (Harbage Cavalier 19; Gurr Playgoing 203). It also became the fashion for courtiers to write plays, as well as the more conventional poetry (Harbage Cavalier 20-5).  

6 From 1629 onwards at least twenty-five plays written by members of Charles's court were staged at Blackfriars and the Cockpit. The output of the gentlemen ranged in quality and quantity from the semi-professionalism of Lodowick Carilel (Master of the Bows and Gentleman of the Privy Chamber) who wrote eight plays between 1629 and 1637, to Suckling's triad of plays, to the single offerings of figures like Lovelace. See Harbage for further titles and authorship (Cavalier 22-45; 93-124).
This development would have been less disastrous for the professional playwrights if the courtier playwrights had been content to stage their shows within the court; although this would have put a dent in the professionals' prestige, it would not have jeopardized their primary source of income, selling scripts to the private theatres. Unfortunately, when the court, "invaded the drama" as Harbage puts it (Cavalier 7) it also invaded the theatres. Blackfriars was their venue of choice, although some of the courtiers' plays were initially presented at court; Gurr notes that Carlell, the most prolific of the courtier playwrights, "wrote for Court performance but passed his work on to the King's Men" (Playgoing 185). This development should have been no trouble to the professionals, since (to judge from Harbage's treatment) the quality of the courtiers' plays ranged from rather bad to very bad, and one of the virtues of the long theatrical apprenticeship which the Caroline market demanded of the professionals (Clark Professional 1) was the development of an ability to write good, workmanlike plays. The professionals, while not all magnificent poets, had a comprehensive grasp of dramaturgy – the structuring of a dramatic narrative. By contrast, the court playwrights had no theatrical experience and little understanding of plotting, pacing and development, seeing the form as a venue for poetry orally delivered by actors. As a consequence there should have been no teeth in the court challenge to the professionals.

However, two factors – money and fashion – intervened. To begin with, the courtiers, who did not rely upon income generated by the sale of plays, badly undercut the market for new plays (Clark Professional 2-5); Brome, the most outspoken of the professionals, "fulminates [. . .] at length in The Court Beggar (1640) against these 'love toys' which deprive him of bread and sack" (Morillo 111). There is direct evidence that at least some courtiers simply gave their scripts to the players: Suckling not only gave Aglaura (1637) to the King's Men outright, but provided lavish costumes: "Garrard, in reporting how [Suckling] and his fellow privy-chamberman, William Berkeley, had each written a play, tells how Suckling's 'cost three or four hundred pounds setting out, eight or ten suits of new cloaths he gave the Players; an unheard of prodigality' (Harbage Cavalier 110). As well, Charles financially supported the theatrical efforts of his courtiers: he "bore the expense so
that Mayne’s City Match might be acted at Blackfriars” (Harbage Cavalier 10), and evinced a direct interest in writing for the stage; he provided plots to Carlell, a courtier playwright (The Passionate Lovers, 1638) and to Shirley, a professional (The Gamester, 1633) (Harbage Cavalier 10).

Court support would have been useless had the plays not drawn an audience; however, it is clear that they did, and in this fashion undeniably played a role. Ordinary audience members would have been drawn by the novelty value of a play by a courtier, by the high production values that could be wrung from the gifts (including, perhaps, scenery from court performances) which accompanied the courtiers’ plays, and by the cachet of seeing a performance frequented by the nobility and gentry; all these elements would have conspired to draw audiences into the theatres, even if all they experienced there was glittering, florid boredom. More importantly, courtiers attended courtier plays, and set a new fashion for the reception of plays as serious literary work; as Gurr puts it, “for the first time plays had become respectable material for serious discussion” (Playgoing 184).

Unfortunately, the self-consciously fostered critical judgement of the Caroline audience was exercised at the expense of the professional playwrights, since the kind of ‘wit’ valorized by the gallants had very little to do with the quality of the plays and a great deal to do with the social status of the writer. Court writers and their supporters seem to have functioned as English theatre’s first ‘claque’; at least one of Massinger’s plays of the early thirties failed because it was “decried by a faction of gallants in the audience” (Gurr Playgoing 185). In fact, Gurr suggests that:

> Although it may be too simple to see Davenant and his allies making a concerted attempt to displace Massinger from the Blackfriars and make him join Shirley at the Cockpit […] the circumstantial evidence does suggest that a campaign aimed at some such change did run for a while at the Blackfriars. The transfer of writers like Ford from the Blackfriars to the Cockpit, the failure of several Massinger plays, and Shirley’s difficulties, including his

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7 Charles also read, commended and censored playtexts; Massinger’s lost The King and the Subject (1638) is only known by a passage quoted by Henry Herbert, “in honour of Kinge Charles, my master, who, readinge over the play at Newmarket, set his marke upon the place with his owne hande, and in thes words: ‘This is too insolent, and to bee changed’” (Herbert, Control, 203-4).
brief transfer from the Cockpit to Salisbury Court, in the period from 1629 to 1633, offer confirmation that some upheavals in taste did take place when Davenant and his allies established themselves at the Blackfriars. *(Playgoing 185)*

Harbage’s term for the activities of the courtier playwrights – the court invasion – is thus accurate in a quasi-military sense as well.

This invasion has considerable impact on Caroline dramatic forms, both directly and indirectly. As Harbage’s study makes clear, the court had a direct influence on theatrical tastes; by the mid 1630s the professionals were forced to work what Harbage labels “the Cavalier mode” *(Cavalier 155)*:

The court’s invasion of the theatre consisted not only in the creation of a special group of writers, with whom professional playwrights soon found themselves in competition, but also in the creation of a special type of play, which some of the professionals soon found it wise to imitate. *(Harbage Cavalier 24)*

Adoption of the new mode was one possible response, and all the professionals did produce this kind of high romantic tragicomedy towards the end of the thirties, although such works as Massinger’s *The Bashful Lover* (1636) and Brome’s *The Lovesick Court* (1639) read more like parodies than straight-faced imitations of the new style. 8

Indirectly, however, the development of the particularly Caroline brand of metatheatrical drama may be a subsidiary result of the professionals’ defence against the courtier invasion. The real problem was not just the change in taste, but what Harbage *(Cavalier 153-5)* identifies as the economic threat the courtiers and their ally Davenant represented. In economic terms, the situation of the professionals was dismal; Massinger, Shirley, Brome, Ford, Heywood and their contemporaries were already struggling to sell their

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8 It is important to note that Butler, the only critic besides Harbage to have examined the Court drama, reads it very differently, seeing the plays’ romantic plots as a veiled means to discuss politics: “a number of dramatists [. . .] [employed] romantic motifs less for their own sake than as vehicles for what were essentially political significances. In particular, plays about princes in love provided useful devices to enable discussion of the problem of a king whose resources and popularity were, in the late 1630s, coming to look increasingly limited [. . .]” *(Theatre and Crisis, 56)*. This view, which makes political issues central to the plays’ interpretation, is diametrically opposed to Harbage, who sees the courtiers as fiddling while Rome burns. Neither may be absolutely correct.
work in a fragmented theatrical market saturated with popular older plays. Even without the kind of direct attack Gurr alleges may be underway (Gurr Playgoing 185), the arrival of the courtier poets would be a potentially career-wrecking threat. Not surprisingly, then, the professionals mount a vigorous counter-offensive to the courtly assault. Massinger, Heywood and Shirley all take part in the 1629/30 ‘war of the theatres’, Brome jeers at the court playwrights themselves in The Court Beggar, and at their “Scene magnificent and language high; / And Cloathes worth all the rest. . .” in the prologue to The Antipodes (5-6), and Heywood attacks their style in his Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells (1635). Heywood’s defence, in particular, evidences a resentment of the courtiers’ arrogant assumption that they know more about dramatic writing than men who have been composing plays for years:

How comes it (ere he know it)
A puny shall assume the name of poet
And in a Tympa’ nous and Thrasonicke stile
(Words at which th’ Ignorant laugh, but the learn’d smile
Because Adulterate and Undenizen’d) he
Should taske such Artists, as have took Degre
Before he was a Fresh-man?
(Hierarchie pg 208; qtd in Grivelet 102)

It is over the course of this conflict, I would argue, that the professionals self-consciously forge a new identity as professional playwrights, defining themselves in opposition to their courtly competitors. Previous metadramatic plays had as their focus the nature of playing,
and on the value and function of the theatre in the world – the relation of acting to being and the value of fiction. As David Mann suggests in *The Elizabethan Player*, such metadrama is actor-centred; works such as *Midsummer Nights Dream*, *Taming of the Shrew* or *Hamlet* either defend or attack the players themselves, and issues of playing, rather than issues of playgoing, are their focus of anxiety. In the case of the courtly invasion, it is the *writers* who are under attack, rather than the actors or the theatre itself (Harbage *Cavalier* 153). In fact, the professionals now face an audience and a culture which is extremely supportive of actors, the theatre and plays in general – but not the plays of the professionals in particular. Therefore, rather than exploring the nature of playing, these plays now explore the nature of dramatic structure, in particular; the Caroline playwrights are as interested in exploring the audience-play interaction as analysing the ontological problems of playing. This may well be a result of their difficulties with their own audience; the problems in the theatre reproduce themselves on the Caroline stage. The pressure from the court invasion forced the professionals to evaluate the forms of their art and the nature of its relation to the audience, fostering the development of the self-consciously metatheatrical plays-within and other insets which mark professional Caroline drama.

In particular, the professionals’ self-definition is rooted in their need to set dramatic writing off from non-dramatic poetry. From the inception of the professional theatre playwrights had seen themselves as ‘poets’, roughly equivalent to writers of non-theatrical verse. However, the courtier playwrights were men with considerable reputations as lyric poets. The element lacking in their plays has nothing to do with their lack of theatrical experience; they have no understanding of how to make a *play* work on the stage. Therefore, when the professional playwrights defend themselves in prologues, epilogues, dedications and poems, they call attention to the specific nature of their work – their mastery of dramatic and dramaturgical structure, their understanding of the work of the stage, and their close relationship with the players.

Some evidence for this new professional self-definition is provided by Massinger’s contributions to the “Untuned Kennel” theatre war of 1629/30 (Bas 1963; Beal 1980).
Blackfriars failure of Davenant’s *The Just Italian* (1629) led Thomas Carew (not a playwright, but a court-affiliated poet and Davenant’s poetic patron) to attack Shirley’s *The Grateful Servant*, the success of the season, staged at the Cockpit in November of 1629; the main thrust of his attack was to argue that the Cockpit was an “adulterate stage” with an “untun’d Kennell” of an audience, while the Blackfriars, the scene of Davenant’s failure, was neglected – thus explaining the failure of his friend’s play. Massinger, who wrote regularly for Blackfriars, responded with an introductory verse in the 1630 quarto edition of Shirley’s play, arguing that *The Just Italian* had failed because it was badly written, not because it was staged in an unpopular house. The exchange that follows is illuminating for a number of reasons; first, as Garrett puts it in his introduction to *Massinger: the Critical Heritage*:

> the argument is not so much between two companies or theatres as between the established playwrights Massinger, Shirley and Heywood and their newer courtly rivals (Massinger is defending the Phoenix actors while continuing as staple dramatist at the Blackfriars). Forced into a defensive position by their fashionable rivals’ easy exclusiveness, the professional and his adherents are compelled to redefine his virtues.

*(Garrett, CH, 5)*

The conflict is fought on the grounds of caste more than ability, and the lines are explicitly drawn between the professionals and the amateurs. The nature of the quarrel – both its “sheer vitriol” (Garrett *CH* 5) and the framing of its arguments – are made clear in Beal’s 1980 publication of the responses which followed the first exchange. Massinger attacks the morality and originality of Carew’s poetry in the prologue for a revival of his *The Maid of Honour* (Beal 192-3); Davenant\(^{10}\) then attacks Massinger in “To my Honoured ffriend Mr Thomas Carew” (Beal 193-95) and Massinger responds directly with “A Charme for a Libeller” (Beal 196-201).

Both Davenant’s attack and Massinger’s defence deal with the nature of the playwright’s work versus the writing of poetry, and provide two very different views of the status of the playwright in relation to the audience. Davenant, in “To my Honoured ffriend” begins by making a comparison between the base-born paid professional and the noble

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\(^{10}\) The attack is unsigned, but both Beal (201-3) and Garrett (*CH* 4-7) assign it to Davenant.
The `mechanic’ slur is a common one, along the lines of ‘Jonson the Bricklayer’ insults. But there is also a strong suggestion of a new relationship between audience and dramatist: an inverted master-servant relation. Davenant argues that it is the “Ingenious Gentlemen” (34) of the audience, rather than the playwright, who should dictate the direction of the drama, because they pay the bills. Both writers and actors are slaves, providing their betters with fodder for an idle hour:

Shall wee y' feed y' knaves
ffor our owne sporte & pastime bee there slaues
That liue by vs, not dare to judge but stand
in awe of such a Mercenary hand?

And Massinger is then established as a hireling, not only of the audience, but of the players:

...Alas, hee'le say
hee pleads his Masters cause, receiues the pay
And salary of a hirelinge, which brings
The oyle to grease his hinges when hee sings.
How poor a trade is there! Were it not more
Gentile to squire some prostitutes whore
Then bee a players Brauo?

However, Davenant’s metaphor – the playwright as Mason, as builder – opens the door to recognition of the structural basis of the playwright’s art. Within the ‘mechanic-for-hire’ insult there is a faint hint of the difference between lyric poetry and dramatic narrative; a playwright must frame and build a plot. The profession of playwright is defined, however negatively, as a different type of work from that of a court poet, and Massinger’s defence of his work exploits this. Interestingly, this exchange of barbs is one of the earliest appearances of the term “playwright”, predating the earliest OED citation by several years; the dictionary’s first citation of “playwright” is in 1687, and that of “playwriters” is 1644. It cannot be the first, however, since Gurr makes reference to “Webster’s social allegiance as the crabbed citizen ‘playwright-cartwright’” (Playgoing 83), but I have not been able to trace his reference. The Caroline period thus may not see the coinage of the word, but its use in this exchange implies that it was recognizable; the period may see the development of the professional category as a concept.
The poem ends defining the "difference/twixt you & him [which] will well be understood/whil'st you for pleasure sing, he sweats for food" (56-8). The terms of abuse are conventional; the stance is the contempt of the noble for the base, the artist for the mechanic. But it is the suggestion that the professional playwright is a servile hireling who must truckle to his audience of 'betters', rather than a respected authorial voice, that is the trigger for Massinger's anger.

His response – framed by the conceit of a magician binding a demon within a circle – is illuminating.12 As Garrett notes, the response is "a blow in the battle to establish the respectability of writing public plays rather than private poems [. . .] Massinger is defending professional playwrights, professional actors and [. . .] his own conception of his moral and skilfully worked art" (CH 63-4). Refusing to accept the judgement of Carew as the "Poets Tribu[n]e" (44), he also refuses to accept Davenant's conception of the audience as master, for either himself or the players: "What fee/ or pension did [the players] ere recieue from thee/ Or such as though art?" (91-3). He provides an aggressive defence of his own work: claiming that "Mechanique playwright" is a "none=sence name" (61-2), he declares that professional playwrights, as a class, are far from base mechanics, and turns to the examples of the classical playwrights Terence and Statius to defend his profession (101-21). Significantly, he argues that classical drama had value because it was professional, paid labour, which allowed the poets in question to survive: Terence sold his Andria (101-6), and Statius was only able to complete the Thebiad by surviving on the sale of Agave (106-17). Massinger's argument that the classical drama was valuable specifically because it was a professional drama is something new, although earlier defenders of the stage such as

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12 Because the attack was unsigned, Massinger conjures the nameless "rag of a rhyme" to take the form of its author. The document's anonymity may also contribute to Massinger's rage; the first three exchanges in the war were publicly presented (one published dedicatory verse and two theatrical prologues), but Davenant's decision to circulate his attack as a privately circulated manuscript moved the debate into the field of unpublished manuscripts circulated amongst gentlemen, from which a mere 'mechanic playwright' is perforce excluded. This may be why Davenant does not sign his attack – as a fellow playwright, he too is in the pay of the players, but he wishes to place himself in the 'gentlemens' camp.
Heywood and Jonson had used the examples of classical dramatists; the strategy seems rooted in the conflict between courtly amateur and professional playwright which underlies the attack.

In claiming poetic descent from the ancients and direct precedent for the job of professional playwright Massinger also allies himself with the virtue and skill of the Romans, while troping the work of Carew and his followers as poetic pimping – or worse – thus inverting the traditional public/private scale of poetic value, tipping the scale in favour of the public stage:

Champ on this bitt and then  
Let it bee iudg'd whoe are the baser men:  
Wee that descend from our owne height no more  
Then those old Claisque Poets did before  
or yo' o' the wiser few. Indeed, yo' write  
In corners and amonge yo' selues recite  
yo' Compositions & [mutually],  
The blind, the lame, you well agree\(^{13}\)  
To cry upon an other and soe rest,  
not daringe to indure the publique test.  
(117-26)

By contrast to his classically descended public work, the private poetic discourse of Davenant’s circle is troped as hole-and-corner obscenity: the open insult, which frames Davenant’s privacy as cowardice that cannot endure the public stage (126), covers a covert one, which frames the private exchange of poetic effusions as effusions of another sort, deeds done by gentlemen who practice mutual ‘etcetera’s’ in a corner. When Massinger moves to more explicit insult, the corruption of ‘privacy’ continues, in his description of court poets as flatterers whose

\[\ldots\] frequent subject [is] to frame  
seruile Encomions to some greate mans name  
Or when hee’s burn’t vp with libidinous fires  
like Panders to make way for his desires  
With ruine of a chastety. And this  
Y’are deerely paid for. . .  
(127-32)

Public payment for public writings becomes, when contrasted with this, the mark of clarity, openness, honesty and honour, while amateur court writings, ordinarily marked as

\(^{13}\) The gap in this line is present in the original manuscript.
honourable and disinterested, stand for backstairs pimping for profit. The mark of what is shameful – usually attached to the public writer – has been shifted.

Massinger is writing invective, and so his strategy is transparent and at times clumsy, but it is a mark of his own view of his writings for the stage that he is able to construct such a defence. The fact that his works are publicly presented, financially motivated plays is what marks them as virtuous and disinterested. It is interesting, too, to note the defences he does not mount; he doesn’t resort to the common view of plays as didactic tools, except to suggest that Davenant steals all his wit from the stage (95). Rather, he argues that plays, as such, have value in and of themselves, and differentiates his writings from the forms practised by the courtly amateurs.

Other professional writers – notably Brome and Shirley – also defended their work and its context against the court threat; I have chosen to focus on Massinger’s defence to demonstrate that he had a professional identity tied to the practice of writing for the stage, and that this was born of the conflict over control of the stage. Such self-conscious professionalization seems to me essential to the development of his metatheatrical dramaturgy; Massinger may increasingly structure his drama around inset pieces which permit him to examine the mechanics of the stage because the pressures of his environment were forcing him into an awareness of the specifically dramatic nature of his writing. Caroline metadramatic plays and metadramatic dramaturgy may well be a byproduct of the specific economic and social pressures produced by the court invasion of the theatres.14

Critical History

Massinger’s critical reputation has fluctuated considerably since his death in 1640, and the beginning of his critical history marks its lowest ebb. Massinger, along with the other Caroline professionals, was largely ignored in the Restoration re-assessment of the earlier drama. This decline in their reputation has two main sources: first, no Caroline dramatist had published a folio edition of collected works. Although quarto editions of individual plays survived into the Restoration, complete editions of the works of Massinger

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14 The fact that his most metadramatic play, The Roman Actor, pre-dates the court invasion of the theatres indicates that his interest in the subject precedes the problem; the return to the subject in his Caroline plays may be influenced by the pressures of his environment.
and his contemporaries do not appear until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Second, the Caroline professionals had been in direct and acrimonious competition with the Court writers Davenant and Killigrew, who survived to revive the theatre in 1660. It is not surprising that Davenant did little to maintain the reputations of those who had been a thorn in his side at the beginning of his career. In fact, the excision of Massinger, in particular, from the critical heritage was something of a necessity, since the plays of the Beaumont and Fletcher Folio (acknowledged as the foundation of Restoration drama) were partly his work, and Massinger, having been Fletcher’s second partner after Beaumont’s retirement and having taken on the position of head playwright to the King’s Men after Fletcher’s death, was the obvious candidate for the title of Fletcher’s successor. Any Restoration playwright who wanted to present himself as the heir to Beaumont and Fletcher – which Davenant did – had to first remove Massinger from the historical picture. It helped, of course, that Massinger’s name was not appended to the plays of the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher folio. Garrett suggests that this omission may be due to Massinger’s political stance:

Massinger’s political reputation was less amenable than his colleagues’ to the strongly Royalist vein running through the [dedicatory] verses [of the 1647 Folio], and his aesthetic reputation was not primarily […] for the witty artifice so emphasized in the verses and in Shirley’s address to the reader. It was more poetically appropriate – and more likely to sell the book – to say with Sir John Berkenhead that Beaumont’s soul had entered Fletcher than that a new contract had been drawn up for Massinger.

(Garrett, CH 10)

Whatever the reason for this omission it “separated [Massinger] from the Restoration triumph of the folio plays and saved him for the late eighteenth century to discover” (Garrett, CH 10).

Massinger’s ‘rediscovery’ was sparked by the eighteenth century’s interest in Renaissance literature in general, and he was by no means the only writer resurrected by the antiquarians (E&G I:xlviii). But he was accorded a great deal of attention. The period produced a flurry of editions: Dodsley produced Massinger’s first modern edition in 1744 when he collected A New Way to Pay Old Debts, The City Madam, The Guardian, The Picture, and The Unnatural Combat. This paved the way for the first complete collected edition, Coxeter’s The Dramatic Works of Philip Massinger, in 1759. Coxeter’s work was

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15 Humphrey Moseley’s Three New Plays (Massinger) in 1655, Six New Plays (Shirley) and Five New Plays (Brome) in 1653 were the only collected seventeenth-century editions.
re-issued in 1761, was followed by the 1779 edition of James Monk Mason, and then by Gifford's edition in 1805. The opening of the nineteenth century thus had greater access to Massinger than any previous period, and he quickly became very popular. Edwards and Gibson characterize this period “between the Monck Mason edition in 1779 and the publication of Harness's [bowdlerization] in 1830” as “Massinger's great half-century” (E&G, I:lv). The playwright is now ranked second to Shakespeare (CH, 21) and is (unusually for him) considered a magnificent poet: Gifford, his editor, argues that in “the general harmony of his numbers [...] Massinger stands unrivalled” (CH, 119), ranking him above Shakespeare. Indeed, *The Edinburgh Review* argues that Massinger was “an eloquent writer; but an indifferent dramatist” (CH 120), a judgement usually reversed today.

There are two probable reasons for Massinger's popularity. First, as Garrett notes, he was one of the few playwrights whose work was widely available (CH 21); Webster, Ford and many others existed only in fragments and single editions. Massinger’s early popularity and later decline may simply be a function of the increasing availability of other Renaissance playwrights. Second, Massinger’s verse and his moral and political views were very much to the Romantics' tastes: the plays were read and praised by Keats, Lamb and Byron, lectured on by Coleridge and imitated by Shelley in *The Cenci*. Massinger’s reformist but not radical political stance also seems to have pleased – Coleridge saw him as “a Democrat” (CH 124), and Davies, writing in 1779, described him as “not a favourer of Arbitrary Power, or inclined to put an implicit Faith in the Word of Kings; he was [...] a good subject, but not like other Poets, his contemporaries, a slavish Flatterer of Power, and an Abettor of despotick Principles” (E&G; I:lii). Although Davies’s assessment is largely true, it is strongly influenced by the time in which it is written; the view is proto-Romantic in its valorization of the independent judgement of the poet, and the political sentiments Davies attributes to Massinger are those of his own century.  

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16 Not only are the story's roots in *The Unnatural Combat* fairly obvious, but, as Anne Barton points out (“Voice” 232) there is at times a distinctively Massingerian quality to Shelley’s verse. That Shelley was imitating Massinger is not certain, but likely, given that Massinger’s verse was advanced as a model by Coleridge (CH 125) and others.

17 Because political interpretation is not directly relevant to my thesis, I have largely ignored it. However, Massinger’s work is remarkably open to divergent political interpretations, as Catherine
But, whatever the reason, as Garrett puts it:

in the early nineteenth century Massinger became an institution, with all the privileges and penalties involved in that, as a result mainly of 'the admirable manner in which he has been edited by Mr. Gifford and . . . the circumstance of some of his Plays having been illustrated on the Stage by the talents of a popular Actor', Edmund Kean.

(CH 21).

However, this institution is destroyed by its own success. One reason for Massinger's popularity, as Garrett's quote makes clear, was Edmund Kean's success as Overreach in the 1816 Drury Lane production of *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. The play had been relatively popular in the eighteenth century; Overreach was established as a star turn by Henderson in the 1780s, and the play was revived seven times between 1740 and 1800 (Griswold 220-1). But it was Kean's electric portrayal of Sir Giles, a performance which purportedly induced seizures in his audience, that pushed the part into the realm of those which every great actor must attempt (Griswold 142-3). From the teens to the seventies, the play rarely left the stage, and the reflected glow from the theatres served to elevate Overreach's creator to the status of Shakespeare, the begetter of Kean's other 'triumphs', Richard III and Shylock. But the play's popularity also contained the seeds of Massinger's late-nineteenth century downfall; *A New Way* served as a lightning rod for nineteenth-century anxieties about social mobility and class miscegenation. Because of this, the period's view of Massinger became distorted; the roots of *A New Way* in the genres and anxieties of its own time were forgotten, and Massinger's views were equated with a reactionary Toryism which was imaginatively affiliated with the decaying court of Charles the First. Massinger's views were extrapolated from and conflated with those of his audience, and the playwright, by degrees, donned side

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Milsum's story of an exchange at the 1987 MLA indicates: an audience member at a session on 'opposition drama' "argued for a conservative stage culture and cited a Massinger play as proof: [Annabel] Patterson protested that one could have picked a different play by Massinger and argued the opposite" (Milsum, 8). As Clark has said, Massinger is commonly seen as either an arch-conservative or a proto-revolutionary, and almost never as the independent social critic he actually was (*Moral* 14). Further, he has suffered by being used more as a political touchstone or stalking-horse than examined as a writer; this may happen because Massinger consistently dramatized contemporary political issues which resist modern classification, thus laying him open to charges of, as Clark puts it, either not being "a manly and courageous enough Whig" or not being "an imaginative and committed enough Tory" (*Moral* 13).
whiskers and a frockcoat.  

This happens most obviously, and most ludicrously, in popular books intended for a wide audience: Henry Hallam, in his 1839 literature survey, describes him as “a gentleman [. . .] [whose] style and sentiments are altogether those of a man polished by intercourse of good society” (CH 161). A more ludicrous portrait emerges from the fictional ‘biographical introduction’ of Hartley Coleridge’s Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford (1840). Here, Massinger is a proto-Victorian decayed gentleman, sadly penning his plays while mourning his lost childhood at Wilton House, bearing the pains of a loveless life with a courageous melancholy which betrays his true (noble, and thus Tory) roots, and dying in obscurity after having, “like the nightingale [. . .] sung darkling – it is to be feared, like the nightingale of the fable, with his breast against a thorn” (CH 171). He is lumbered with a toddlerhood wandering the marble halls of Wilton (CH 165) and a godfather in Sir Philip Sidney (CH 166), while his father is changed from the Earl of Pembroke’s solicitor to something approximating a cross between a butler and Uncle Tom, the better to shoulder Phillip with a “reverence for descent and degree, always stronger and longer strong, in the retainers of great houses than in the great themselves” (CH 168). That Massinger’s plays did not treat the powerful with much reverence Hartley dismisses on the grounds that although “Massinger [. . .] fell short of Shakespeare in his veneration for constituted authority, [he] had a far more exclusive devotion to rank and blood” (CH 169). Hartley, Coleridge’s son, even manages to overturn his father’s judgement of the playwright as “a decided Whig” in a noxious blast of filial piety mixed with sentimental fictionalizing:

My revered father, in a lecture which I shall never forget [. . .] contrasted the calm, patriotic, constitutional loyalty of Shakespeare, with the ultra-loyalism of Fletcher on the one hand, and the captious whiggism of Massinger on the other. He should have remembered that Shakespeare was a prosperous man, of a joyous poetic temperament, while Massinger’s native melancholy was exacerbated by sorrow and disappointment.

(CH 168)

18 Both dynamics functioned in the RSC’s 1985 production of A New Way; the show was performed in Victorian dress and played in a melodramatic style as a tribute to the work’s stage history. In order to enforce audience awareness of the Civil War, the show opened with a young boy chalking an enormous ‘1642’ on the stage, which was then left in place to be effaced by the feet of the actors over the course of the play (Davies, 52). As Davies’s review emphasizes, the staging ignores the fact that Massinger was not writing in the shadow of the Civil War, since the play dates from 1625-6 (52-3).
In other words, Massinger’s criticism of abuse of power was only the whimpering of an underfed Tory.

I am not just including all this for amusement’s sake; this unfortunate portrait gained considerable currency. Coleridge’s collection (a reissue of Gifford’s edition) was the last complete collection of Massinger’s works published before the 1976 Oxford edition. It was also a compact single folio that ran into three printings and, consequently, had a wide distribution; copies are still fairly easy to find now, one hundred and fifty years later. Thus, Hartley’s insufferable melancholic, forelock-tugging, decayed gentleman was the definitive portrait of the playwright, at least for the general reader, for more than a hundred years. It is possible to trace the influence of this fiction right through the critical reactions of the twentieth century: for example, it is a version of this figure which Fothergill sets up as a straw man to knock down in his extremely negative paper “The Dramatic Experience of Massinger’s The City Madam and A New Way to Pay Old Debts” (1973).

Not surprisingly, when writers and critics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries begin to reject the values of the mid-Victorians they also reject Massinger, in some cases throwing the playwright out with his fictionalized biography and in some cases producing reasoned and fair corrections of the Victorian misconceptions. This period produces the first literary critical analyses of Massinger’s work, and the two approaches which emerge here — setting the writer in a historical context or analysing his writing purely as poetry — continue through the twentieth century. S. R. Gardiner, the historian, begins the process of reading the writer in his historic context in “The Political Element in Massinger” (1876); although he views the plays as specific allegories on particular figures and is thus often dead wrong, he still manages to draw a real human being in a real historical world, allying Massinger with “the standpoint of the Herbersts” (324) and setting him in the political context of his own day. The approach prefigures the readings of L.C. Knights (1937), Thompson (1956) and Gross (1966), as well as the New Historicist approaches of such critics as Goldberg, Patterson, Heinemann, Butler, Tricomi and Neill.

The second approach leads to less complimentary assessments, all founded on a simple truth; Massinger was a better playwright than a poet. Tastes in Renaissance dramatists were changing: it is not surprising that a reading public beginning to appreciate the flamboyant magnificence of Webster and Ford found Massinger’s plainer verse
unpalatable. Unfortunately, however, many of the turn of the century commentators tie Massinger’s moral fibre to the quality of his poetry. Sir Leslie Stephen (1877) is the first of these writers, and his Massinger still has a hint of Hartley Coleridge’s spineless melancholy about him; Stephen is the originator of the view of Caroline Drama as a decadent declination from the muscular virility of the Elizabethan theatre (CH 193), and he ties Massinger’s supposed poetic flabbiness to the corruption of his theatre (CH 191). Both Arthur Symons (1887) and Edmund Gosse (1894) follow Stephen closely; Symons, after stating that “the characteristics of any poet’s genius are seen clearly in his versification” (CH 221) points out that “the pitch of Massinger’s verse is [...] somewhat too near the common pitch of prose” (CH 222) and that his plays contain “scarcely a dozen lines of such intrinsic and unmistakable beauty that we are forced to pause and brood on them with the true epicure’s relish” (CH 222). Gosse, likewise looking for poetic effusions which are not there, attacks Massinger’s lack of Websterian “sudden sheet-lightning of poetry illuminating for an instant the dark places of the soul” (CH, 234). He also follows Stephen in the ‘decadence’ characterization; saying that Stephen “has noted [...] ‘a certain hectic flush, symptomatic of approaching decay’ and we may go even further and discover in [Massinger] a leaden pallor, the sign of decreasing vitality” (CH 234). Finally, Gosse sees Massinger as a man crippled by a too-long apprenticeship with Fletcher, who lacked confidence to write plays on his own (CH 235), an argument which would also be advanced in the twentieth century by Eugene Waith and Cyrus Hoy.

The most influential of this line of critics is T. S. Eliot, who attacks Massinger in his review of Cruickshank’s Philip Massinger (1920), “Philip Massinger” (1921). The influence of this essay – “one of Eliot’s more dismissive pontifical pronouncements” (Leggatt Review 1987) – is still critically felt; Fothergill (1973) and Putt (1980) are its two most recent adherents. The essay’s power may stem from its vagueness; as Barton points out, its conclusions are “generalized and highly questionable” (“Voice” 221). Eliot demolishes Massinger in high-sounding terms which make little concrete sense; all that can be definitively drawn from the article is that Eliot thinks Massinger is dreadful. Where Stephen outrightly accused Massinger of being poetically and socially impotent (the meaning of the ‘vigorous healthy blood’ imagery running through his essay) Eliot is more subtle, but so subtle that it is difficult to know exactly what he means: Massinger has a defective poetic
nervous system (141), "[h]e was not guided by direct communications through the nerves" (145) and he "deal[s] not with emotions so much as social abstractions of emotions [...] quickly and easily interchangeable within the confines of a single action" (145). He does make the (by now traditional) tie between the Caroline Dramatists, bad verse, and decadence: "If Massinger's age, 'without being exactly corrupt, lacks moral fibre', Massinger's verse, without being exactly corrupt, suffers from cerebral anaemia" (141). As Barton says, Eliot firmly established Massinger as the "villain of the seventeenth century dissociation of sensibility - an artist hurrying us, fatally, down the primrose path to Milton" and thus "effectively annihilated Massinger for two generations of readers" ("Voice" 221). Had Stephen and other the late Victorians been the only ones to make these accusations, Massinger's reputation would have been lowered but not destroyed; however, given Eliot's status as poet and critic, his essay became the definitive piece of criticism on Massinger, affixing the label 'dreadful' almost indelibly to the playwright for the next fifty years and making the mid-twentieth century a wasteland for Massinger studies. The work of the writers who chose to focus on him is often marked by a strong air of apology; T.A. Dunn's 1957 Phillip Massinger, the first book length study since Cruickshank, can barely manage to argue that Massinger is competent, let alone good.20

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20 Certain plays, in particular the comedies A New Way and City Madam, were somewhat immune to the general affliction; L.C. Knights treated them both in his Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson (1937), Ball published The Amazing Career of Sir Giles Overreach, his remarkable stage history of A New Way, in 1939, and the play was treated by Enright (1951), Thompson (1956), Gross (1967 and 1966) and Leggatt (1973). The Roman Actor also fared reasonably well; Thompson (1970) and Hogan (1971) wrote on its use of the Theatrum Mundi trope, it was included in larger treatments of the play-within by Brown (1960) and Mehl (1965), and was the subject of source and structure studies; Crabtree (1960), Gibson (1961) and Davidson (1963). Roma Gill (1965) and A.P. Hogan (1971) both produced studies of Believe as you List, and Edwards and Gibson, Massinger's editors, published textual articles on various plays throughout the sixties. The collaborative plays Massinger wrote with Fletcher were examined by Eugene Waith in The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher (1952), and by Cyrus Hoy in his bibliographic series "The Shares of Fletcher and his Collaborators in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon" (1956-63). Finally, a number of publications emerged from dissertations, among them Donald Lawless's biographical study, Philip Massinger and his Associates (1967). Compared to the flourishing industry in other non-Shakespearian dramatists, however, the amount of work was low.
With the publication of the excellent 1976 Oxford edition of his plays, however, Massinger’s reputation turned a corner. Partly because the works themselves were now available, allowing readers to judge his value for themselves, partly because critics no longer perceived Jacobean dramatists primarily as mines for poetic flamboyance, but mostly because scholarship had established a broad theatrical context in which to view him, scholars began to view Massinger’s works in a more comprehensive light. Massinger has been more fortunate in his commentators in the last twenty years than at any time in the past three hundred and sixty. In particular, the appearance of the socio-political and theoretical approaches known collectively as New Historicism have permitted serious examination of many formerly marginalised figures, Massinger among them. As Patterson suggested it might (87) the political bent of much contemporary criticism also benefited Massinger, since the political bent of his plays, not to mention the extremely contested period in which he wrote, lends itself to sociopolitical readings. Although large-scale ‘oppositional’ treatments of Renaissance drama such as Heinemann’s Puritanism and Theatre (1980), Jonathan Goldberg’s James the First and the Politics of Literature (1983), Martin Butler’s Theatre and Crisis (1984), Annabel Patterson’s Censorship and Interpretation (1984), and Albert Tricomi’s Anticourt Drama in England, 1603-1642 (1989) only deal with Massinger in single chapters, they have stimulated complex readings of his work and have changed the face of Massinger criticism. Heinemann’s now classic work is an essential map of the critical approach, and Butler’s work, an equally essential revisionist view of the Caroline drama as a whole, is a cornerstone for most later work on the period, and for this thesis as well.

Individual studies of Massinger were a bit slower in coming. The work was stimulated by two critics, Martin Butler and Michael Neill; Neill, whose publications show a consistent interest in non-Shakespearian dramatists (in particular Ford and Fletcher) published articles on two of Massinger’s best known plays, “Massinger’s Patriarchy: the Social Vision of A New Way to Pay Old Debts” (1979) and “Tongues of Angels: Charity and the Social Order in The City Madam” (1985). These, together with his “Wits most accomplished Senate’: The Audience of the Caroline Private Theatres”(1978) reexamined Massinger’s work in a specifically Caroline intellectual context, opening up discussion on the plays to include more than arguments over poetic value. Martin Butler was the first critic to consistently apply New Historicist approaches to the Caroline drama; his essay “The City
Mudam and the Caroline Audience" (1982) set the play in the context of a socially inclusive Blackfriars audience. Theatre and Crisis (1984) continued this revision of a theatrical landscape which had traditionally been seen as overwhelmingly conservative, permitting exploration of divergent political and social views in the plays. In particular, Butler sets Massinger in the political and social context of a ‘country party’ of elite resistance to the policies of Charles the First; he is joined in this view by Tricomi (Anticourt 153-64) and Heinemann (Puritanism 213-21).

The bulk of contemporary work on Massinger, however, was launched with the publication of Phillip Massinger: A Critical Reassessment (1985), a collection of essays which included work by Neill on The City Madam, Butler on The Roman Actor, Hoy on Massinger’s collaborative work, and Edwards and Gibson on gender issues in the plays and Massinger’s theatrical language, respectively. Also included is McDonald’s essay on The Maid of Honour, one of the first serious treatments of Massinger’s tragicomedy – a genre central to his canon – in twentieth century criticism. The broad basis of this collection stimulated work on Massinger’s less well known plays; while excellent work continues to be published on his staple plays A New Way, The City Madam, and The Roman Actor, Massinger’s minor work is no longer ignored.21

And finally, several books have specifically or substantively focussed on Massinger. The most significant of these is Ira Clark’s The Moral Art of Philip Massinger (1993), a treatment which returns to an old view – Massinger as a moral playwright – in a new mode. Clark reads Massinger’s work through his tragicomedy, arguing that Massinger’s drama attempts to fuse the “clashing absolutes” (Moral 14) of Caroline society into a harmonious whole in the same way that Massinger’s preferred genre integrates the tragic and comic. In Clark’s view, Massinger’s plays accommodate conflict through dialogue, modelling

21 Recent treatments of his tragicomedy include papers by Champion (1984), Edwards (1986), and Turner (1987 and 1995); Loftis examines The Renegado in Renaissance Drama in England and Spain (1987). There have been several treatments of the collaborative plays, Prager (1988), Masten (1995), and Hattaway (1996) among them, and work has been done on Massinger’s treatment of gender by Clark (1990) and Otten (1991). The old favorites are still well represented: Tricomi (1986) Paster (1986), and Butler (1994) have all written on A New Way, and Fuzier (1984), Barish (1986), Burt (1988), Peyre (1990), Bushnell (1990), Habicht (1990), and Reinheimer (1998) on The Roman Actor.
behaviour to his audiences, in an attempt to "reform and reintegrate personal, social and political society" (Moral 14). Clark's companion volume, *Caroline Professional Playwrights* (1992), treats Massinger in the context of his contemporaries, Ford, Shirley, and Brome, and provides the most useful definition of the work and problems of this group of dramatists yet seen. Martin Garrett has produced both the *Critical History* volume for Massinger and *A Diamond, though set in Horn* (1984) a study of Massinger's use of spectacular elements in his drama, based on his Oxford D.Phil thesis; Garrett argues that Massinger is resistant to spectacle, preferring to produce an essentially intellectual drama. His book has been an essential resource for this thesis, although in many cases my conclusions do not jibe with his. Finally, Doris Adler's *Philip Massinger* (1995) a volume in the Twayne English Authors Series, provides a useful overview of Massinger's work, but lacks the interpretive frame of the best work done on the dramatist.

As is evident, then, Massinger is a somewhat neglected major writer whose complex and nuanced drama is experiencing a critical renaissance – one reason I have selected him as a subject for the thesis. My approach is heavily influenced by the historicist approaches of Butler, Neill and Clark; although, since the form of the thesis focusses on how the plays work as drama within the theatre, I deal with issues of formal structure and reception and do not deal with Massinger's social or political commentary to any great degree. However, the "oppositional" readings of such figures as Heinemann, Goldberg, Neill and Butler have permitted more complex readings of Massinger's work than had been previously possible. Massinger must be approached within his historical context; as this introduction has attempted to show, his work is framed by his world, and any reading of it must be grounded in relation to both literary and theatrical history and contemporary events. Despite the recent burst of activity in criticism of both Massinger and the Caroline writers, however, little work has been done on the metadramatic material covered by this thesis, although I am greatly indebted to two recent pieces; Nova Myhill's unpublished dissertation, ""Judging Spectators': Dramatic Representations of Spectatorship in Early Modern London, 1580-1642."" and Martin Garrett's *A Diamond Though Set in Horn*. Myhill's work, which focusses on the representation of on-stage audience responses in the drama, has provided me with a general approach to stagings of spectatorship, and has affected the form of the thesis as a whole. Garrett's book deals with Massinger's use of 'spectacle', a category which includes
many of the playwright's inset shows and masques; it has been invaluable, despite the fact that Garrett is concerned with Massinger's imagery rather than his stagings of interpretation of inset forms.

The focus of the thesis is an examination of Massinger's use of metadramatic insets – in particular, his staging of the interpretive relationship between art and its viewer or audience, the "spectatorial" relation. While this introduction has laid out some of the possible reasons for the development of metadramatic plays in the period, the thesis itself concentrates on how metadramatic insets function in his drama – what Massinger does with such pieces. In other words, the thesis attempts an analysis of the analytic impulse in Massinger's use of metadramatic forms, rather than tracing a historical development of Caroline metadrama in general. This is why I have chosen to focus solely on Massinger's work, rather than examining several Caroline metadramatic plays. Moreover, Massinger is a good practical choice; his career spans the whole of the Caroline period and reaches far enough back into the Jacobean period to allow some consideration of the shift in tone between the two stages.  

He is also the oldest, most prolific and best known of the dramatists of this period, and his work contains a broad range of inset forms. As well, his inset pieces are also profoundly implicated in his dramaturgy; he uses the onstage audience's reaction to the masques, plays, and pieces of art that they interpret to explore their characters and to structure the plots of his plays. Characteristically, he is more interested in the response of the on-stage audiences to the inset forms of drama than he is in the images contained in the inset pieces themselves (which explains why his masques, in particular, often seem to be woefully unspectacular beside the work of such figures as Fletcher). His analytic approach to such insets makes it possible to examine his use of such diverse spectatorial elements as pieces of visual art, masques and plays in the same thesis; Massinger presents the examination of all three forms

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22 Philip, the son of Arthur Massinger, the Earl of Pembroke's solicitor, was born in 1583 in Salisbury; his mother, Anne Crompton, was the daughter of a London mercer (E&G I: xv). Massinger was sent to Oxford in 1602, but left on his father's death 1603. Massinger's mother and sisters were supported by the Cromptons, and Philip may have been assisted by his uncles as well (Adler 1-3), but he began working on collaborative plays for Henslowe sometime before 1613/4 (Henslowe Papers 65-6). He became Fletcher's primary partner between 1618 and 1625 (producing at least 16 plays, possibly more) and began writing solo work from 1620 on. He became the attached playwright for the King's Men upon Fletcher's death in 1625 (E&G I: xxiii), and held this position until his death in March 1640. (E&G I: xliii).
with an almost forensic care.

The thesis consists of four chapters, each of which deals with a separate form of 'inset art'. Chapter One examines Massinger's use of pieces of visual art as spectatorial objects (that is, objects interpreted by on-stage spectators) in *The Renegado* (1624), *The Emperor of the East* (1631) and *The Picture* (1629). It begins by examining some of the social and cultural meanings that visual art carried in the period. This is of particular importance because the iconophobia inherited from the iconoclasm of the Reformation rendered visual art interpretively fraught; I discuss some of the effects attitudes to visual art in the larger world could have on the presentation of art on the stage. I then examine Massinger's staging of three different forms of paintings, concluding with his remarkably complex treatment of the magic miniature in *The Picture*. The second and third chapters examine Massinger's use of the most common form of metadramatic inset, inset masques. Chapter Two looks at his conventional use of this form in *The Duke of Milan* (1621), *The Guardian* (1633), and *The Picture* (1629). The masques of these plays function in a conventional fashion in the world of the play, epitomizing the action and presenting images which relate to the themes of the play as a whole, but do not function as spectatorial objects – that is, they are not subject to extensive interpretation by their audiences, and the audience-show relation is not significant to their staging. The two masques examined in Chapter Three – the 'spectatorial' masques-within of *The City Madam* (1632) and *A Very Woman* (1634) – are spectatorial objects which are explicitly interpreted by on-stage audiences. To make this function clear, they are staged for double audiences; they are ostensibly presented to a single audience member, who is then himself subject to the interpreting gaze of a second on-stage audience who judge his interpretation of the show he sees. Thus, these masques explore the process of spectatorship itself. The final chapter examines the plays-within of *The Roman Actor* (1626), Massinger's magnum opus, his most complex examination of the process and interrelation of staging and spectatorship.

The thesis thus moves from the static forms of visual art (paintings, sculptures and the special case of the 'magic miniature' of *The Picture*) to the still imagistic but acted form of the masque, to the pure enactment of the plays-within of *The Roman Actor*: that is, it moves from the examination of less complex to more complex representations of the work of interpretation. Although all the inset forms presented carry meaning, and all must be read
and interpreted by their spectators, the static nature of visual art means that the object itself remains unaffected by the spectatorial process, while the more complex and interactive relationship between the audience and the drama actually triggers the tragedy of *The Roman Actor*. This structure avoids a chronological approach to Massinger’s work, eliminating the built-in tendency to argue for a ‘development over time’ endemic to such an approach, and allows me to focus on his particular use of each form of inset art – approaches which are relatively consistent across his career.
Chapter One

Visual Art as Dramatic Inset: The Picture.

This chapter examines Massinger’s staging of pieces of visual art as sites for spectatorship and interpretation, focussing primarily on the spectatorial function of the magical miniature in his 1629 tragicomedy The Picture. This play, Massinger’s most complex exploration of the dramatic function of visual art, uses the picture of the title as an interpreteive spectatorial element within the play; it acts as a dramaturgical catalyst in much the same fashion as do the plays-within and inset masques examined in the later chapters of this thesis. However, although this play is Massinger’s most complex use of a staged artwork, it is by no means his only staging of visual art — he presents paintings in The Emperor of the East (1631) and The Renegado (1624) and statues in The City Madam (1632), The Virgin Martyr (1620?), The Parliament of Love (1624) and The Roman Actor (1626). Therefore I will begin by examining Massinger’s less complex use of statues (in The Parliament of Love and The Virgin Martyr) and paintings (in The Renegado and The Emperor of the East), before using some of the patterns established by these readings to examine the dramaturgical function of the picture in The Picture.

Before moving to the plays themselves, however, I would like to explain the inclusion of pieces of visual art in this thesis, by examining the status of visual art in Massinger’s period, both in the real world and on the stage. The perception of visual art in general in the

1 The statues of The City Madam and The Roman Actor will be discussed in the chapters dealing with masques and inset plays, respectively, since they are both staged in a context which makes it clear that they are theatrical props rather than ‘real’ artworks.
Protestant nations of Early Modern Europe was particularly overdetermined; in England, as Margaret Aston shows, the purging of visual images from the Anglican church over the course of the Reformation led to a general anxiety over the status of all visual art, not just religious images, although these remained the prime targets for iconoclastic attack throughout the reigns of Edward and Elizabeth (Aston 94-100, 108-12). Although the extreme iconoclasm of the sixteenth century was on the wane in the first few decades of the seventeenth century, the importation of Continental artistic forms by aristocratic connoisseurs exacerbated conceptual conflicts over the status of visual art. The perception of art was in interpretive flux, caught between the newly developing view of paintings and sculptures as purely aesthetic creations, and the older, iconophobic view of visual images as idols.²

When pieces of art are presented on the stage the interpretive issues expand yet further. First of all, as the antitheatrical writings of the time demonstrate, theatre in and of itself was seen as dangerous because of its visually imitative nature; plays presented false exteriors — most famously the false exterior of the boy player — as if they were truth, and these images were seen as seductive and corrupting (Barish Anti-Theatrical 89-96). The great fear of the antitheatrical writers was that the visual fiction would be taken for truth and imported wholesale into the real world. This pervasive interest in the relation of imitation and reality — being and seeming — is also to be found in the work of the playwrights themselves, a fact which indicates the pervasive nature of the problem; all mimetic representation (which theatrical representation is) raises the issue of distinguishing reality from resemblance. Setting a piece of mimetic visual art, itself interpretively fraught, into the interpretively fraught milieu of the theatrical frame functions, by definition, to highlight the relation of mimetic representation to reality. While paintings and statues are props, they are unlike most other props in that they present an interpretive task; they must be 'read' in much the same way as are inset forms of theatrical art (plays-within, masques and dumbshows).

² Margaret Aston's The King's Bedpost examines the iconoclasm of the sixteenth century and its relation to conceptualizations of visual art; both David Evett's Literature and the Visual Arts in Tudor England and Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn's collection of essays, Renaissance Bodies: The Human figure in English Culture 1540-1660 examine the impact such anxieties had on later artists. Michael O'Connell's "Idolatrous Eye", and Huston Diehl's Staging Reform and Reforming the Stage examine the impact iconoclastic attitudes had on the Tudor, Elizabethan and Stuart stages.
While staged pieces of art do not reflect the form of the play itself in the same way as do plays-within and their analogues, they provide a reflection on the status of the image within theatrical presentation, on the problem of visual perception in the enacted world of the stage.

In short, the presentation of a piece of art on the stage raises issues of the status of visual representation and the problems of visual interpretation. I therefore view Massinger's presentation of paintings and sculptures, which are pieces of art that need to be 'read' or interpreted, as analogues of his more specifically theatrical inset plays and masques, insets which call forth both extra-theatrical attitudes and approaches to such interpretation. Within Massinger's plays, in particular The Picture, the dramatist's focus is on the staging of the interpretive dialogue between the work of art and its viewer. Visual artworks are objects which carry meaning, and the extraction of that meaning by the viewer is at the centre of the staging of such artworks. Massinger is not staging the interpretation of paintings because he is particularly interested in paintings, but because he is interested in the staging of the act of interpretation.

The interpretation of visual art in the early seventeenth century is complicated by the fact that there were, in the period, three different types of artistic images, or at least, three different approaches to interpreting artistic images. First, images could be seen, negatively, as idols. This stance, common to most iconophobic attacks, stems from the notion that images of (for example) Christ or God are visual replacements of the deity, an attempt to replace the non-material spiritual truth with a material image, which would then be worshipped in place of the deity which it represents. Such anxiety was extended to non-religious images as well, and resulted in the destruction of tomb sculptures and public monuments with no specifically Catholic overtones.

Second, images could be emblems or allegories. Such images were probably the best known artistic mode of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, in the form of printed collections, emblematic pageant images, and the emblematic staged pictures of the professional theatre. While such emblematic images may be largely symbolic or seemingly mimetic — that is, they may present recognizable images of people or things or be simple assemblages of symbolic elements — their true meaning is only available to those who can interpret the signs which they contain. Most commonly emblematic images serve to illustrate a moral or spiritual truth by means of iconographic signs and symbols; in this context, a
pretty woman with a hand-glass is an image of Vanity, not just a picture of a pretty woman with a hand-glass. These images require interpretation, but their meaning is fixed and precise rather than open to any available interpretation, and a successful reading of them requires an understanding both of the function of emblematic images and of the meaning of the symbols on which such images draw. They present a puzzle which has one right answer: they are intended to point beyond the material world to some higher social or spiritual meaning, rather than being a reflection of the surface of reality.

Finally, images can be mimetic — that is, they can be realistic representations of outer reality, images of their subjects as such. Although there may be symbolic elements within such images, they do not dominate the image's meaning. Indeed, an image of this type requires a more aesthetic than intellectual interpretation; while the idol does not need to be interpreted at all, since it is what it is and doesn't stand for anything, and the emblem requires importation of interpretive elements from outside itself, a mimetic image demands to be read aesthetically, that is, in terms of its medium — in terms of light, shade, colour and form. A mimetic image is both a reproduction of the surface of reality and an interpretive artistic construction, one which calls attention to the medium by which it represents the world.

The issue of emblematic versus mimetic representation is most significant in regards to painting, since the history of English easel painting between the accession of James and the accession of Charles is largely the story of its transformation from the emblematic to the mimetic. The native English style of oil painting (mostly an art of portraiture after the Reformation abolished religious images) was emblematic, perspectively flat and more iconic than mimetic; as Peacock puts it, English easel painting was “decorative, schematized and two-dimensional”, a “representational style which turned away from naturalism towards abstraction” (220). Evett’s description of the state of English painting in the 16th century is

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3 For example, Roy Strong’s examination of the Van Dyke portrait Charles the First on Horseback explores the image’s layers of meaning: “Charles is shown to us not only as ‘the Lord’s Anointed’ but as ‘Imperator’: not only as a warrior but as a knight – and as a knight in the service of both religion and love: not only as St. George but as Albanactus. He is shown to us as humanist – philosopher – Maecenas.” (Strong Charles 43). But it is not necessary to understand all this to read the basic image – a portrait of Charles on a horse. This may be compared with, for example, the Rainbow Portrait of Elizabeth, which must be read emblematically to have any meaning.
a reasonable summation of the conditions up to the accession of James:

For reasons that no one has satisfactorily explained, the system of vanishing-point perspective remained a mystery sealed off from most English artists until the seventeenth century [. . .]. There are a few mid-sixteenth-century pictures in which space is treated with some skill; they almost all turn out to have been executed by travelling artists from the Continent. But English artists, and most Continental artists who took up residence in England, even when skilled in the delineation of the human figure, handled space as though their heraldic concerns forced them to paint in gauntlets. At the very end of the sixteenth century, we find Rowland Lockey and Robert Peake exulting in their discovery of the rather rudimentary spatial devices that had exhilarated Uccello 150 years earlier, as if every hack painter in Italy had not in the meantime mastered vastly subtler tricks of perspective.

(Evett, 60)

Evett goes on to suggest that the English resistance to single-point perspective was not born of ignorance, but of adherence to a different set of "aesthetic systems with their own underlying principles" (60). The function of an Elizabethan image was to represent the subject's social body rather than to produce a mimetic representation of his appearance. For example, the numerous portraits of Elizabeth focus on her attributes and social role, rather than her face (itself more an icon than a realistic portrait of the aging Queen). Portraits of private individuals likewise present images of their social roles, in some cases displaying episodes from the subject's life, or, more commonly, gesturing towards a single role or event (as in portraits in tilting armour or in masquing costume) or toward extramimetic markers of social status and descent (as in portraits which incorporate arms and impresa into the picture plane). The Portrait of Henry Unton is an excellent example of the strength of such an approach. The train of little identically dressed Henries trooping around the right side of the picture plane, banqueting at his wedding, wandering from Paris to Florence to Brussels, dying overseas and being buried in a suitably splendid funeral, irresistibly recall the figures of Egyptian tomb painting, and may have something of the same memorial function. Because the portrait recalls his life as a social being, rather than merely recording his face, it gives a far better idea of the man and his history than an anonymous mimetic image. Such images were as much signals of social presence and role as records of the subject's appearance.

However, the neo-medieval, emblematic Elizabethan approach to painting dramatically changes in the first three decades of the 17th century. The importation of Continental ideas into native English easel painting begins with Peake's clumsy experiments
in perspective in the century's opening decade, and continues with the immigration of such figures as Mytens and Van Dyck. The collections of Continental art amassed by Arundel, Pembroke, Buckingham and Prince Henry in the first two decades of the century import the spatial and pictorial conventions of the Continental High Renaissance and Mannerist schools, and Charles's collections of Italian and Spanish art and his commissions to Rubens and Mytens in the 1620s and to Van Dyck in the 1630s bring English courtly taste fully into line with the Continental Baroque by the outbreak of the war (Smuts, Court Culture 117-23, 139-62). The transformation, judged by any standard, is radical: easel painting in England jumps over at least a century's worth of development in about twenty-five years.4

What this means, then, is that in Massinger’s generation there existed two concepts of painting; the older, Elizabethan view that a painting symbolized, rather than represented, its subject, and the newer, Continental view that the value of an image lay in its masterful representation of the surface of reality. The overlap of these two approaches (emblematic/mimetic) to painted images must have charged the presentation of visual images with an extra energy. Most significant for the purposes of this thesis, however, is the fact that the changes in pictorial representation between 1610 and 1630 would have served to make viewers of art aware of the processes of interpretation involved in the viewing of art; because the nature of painted images had changed so dramatically, viewers would have needed to develop a new vocabulary and set of aesthetic principles for their interpretation, and this would have raised their conscious awareness of the nature of their response. In other words, looking at a new type of image highlights awareness of the interpretation implicit in 'looking'.

The implications of all this to presentation of art on the stage are interesting, if unclear. Indeed, it could be argued that the changes in visual arts would have no impact on the theatre at all, since court culture and popular theatre move in two very separate spheres.

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4 Sculpture doesn't undergo as radical a transformation. There is a shift in taste from painted statues to classicized unpainted marble ones (Sokol, 250), but this does not match the kind of radical conceptual transformation of the picture plane introduced by adoption of full perspective in painting. As well, stonecutting was a native art form, and most of the stone-masons' yards were located in the theatre district of Southwark (Sokol, 250), whereas the newly fashionable paintings were mainly of Italian and French origin. Massinger's apparent greater comfort with sculptured images may be based on familiarity.
Before the advent of mechanical reproduction and public galleries, painting was the most exclusive of the arts, since one needed physical access to a gallery to view it; most of Charles's subjects would never have seen an oil painting, let alone have known about the stylistic developments discussed above. While it is certainly true that the King's Men may have been able to see some of Charles's collection when they performed at Court, this does not clear away the problem of the ignorance of the bulk of the audience. Such an argument would conclude that there could be no connection between the use of images on the stage and the wider artistic world, making this a very short chapter.

The argument against such a contention lies in the fact that playwrights presented (or at least described) paintings on the stage. Such stagings indicate that new approaches to visual art, and the new intellectual and social standing of artists and artistic activity — indicated by such fashions as noblemen collecting paintings and the development of art appreciation as a body of knowledge — influenced, and perhaps stimulated, the presentation of works of art on the stage. In order for staged artworks to have meaning, the audience must have understood some of the aesthetic and social implications of visual art; Massinger and his fellow playwrights are playing off the 'popular culture' of the period.5

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5 Such stagings are not limited to the Caroline period; in The Taming of the Shrew (1591) the Lord shows Sly Italianate erotic paintings (1.i 187-98) as well as a 'wife' and fine clothing, in order to convince the beggar that he is "...a Lord, and nothing but a Lord" (1.i.199). However, these images are primarily embroidery for the staged fiction; they are not interpreted or read, but only signify 'wealth' in the same way as the rich clothes. The key difference in Caroline approaches (and Massinger's in particular) is simply a greater interest in the character's interpretation of the works as they are staged. Still, it is evident that audiences from Elizabeth on knew about the kinds of paintings great lords kept in their bedchambers. Knowledge does not imply appreciation, as Tricomi points out in his discussion of a similar gallery of nudes in Middleton's Women Beware Women: Guardiano, leaving nothing to chance, recalls how he prepared Bianca's stomach for Italianate erotic images "Cupid's feast because I saw 'twas queasy" and "showed her the naked pictures by the way" (2.2.402-3). [...] Considering that many members of Middleton's audience had Puritan sympathies Guardiano's account of his temptation of Bianca must have aroused hostility towards the decadent aestheticism associated with Renaissance courts, particularly in the visual arts — the masque, portrait painting, and sculpture. The pagan subject matter of such Flemish artists as Daniel Mytens and Rubens, the latter of whom Charles I commissioned in 1637 to decorate the ceiling at Whitehall, suggested a courtly preoccupation with the body and carnal pleasures. [...] The message underlying Guardiano's report...is that courtly sophistication and moral turpitude are akin.
Massinger's approach to the artworks he stages provides evidence for such a view. He falls neither in the category of the ignorant nor of the adept; he is a practical man of the theatre. But the number and importance of the artworks in his plays, more than in those of his immediate contemporaries or his predecessors, suggest an interest in the subject which may be rooted in the rising prominence of the visual arts in England. This assumption is at least partly supported by the fact that he draws on all three modes of interpretation in his approach to his inset pieces of art; he stages images which are idols, images which are emblems and images which are mimetic representations. The two statues which I intend to treat first in this chapter are given the simplest treatment of any of Massinger's staged artworks, and this is at least partly because they are, respectively, an idol and an emblematic image. By contrast, Massinger's paintings (all of which are mimetic images) are explorations of the illusory nature of painted surfaces, and stand, in different ways for the deception of outer show; their staging is considerably more complex than that of the statuary, and they will be the focus of the bulk of this chapter.

By contrast to Massinger's more elaborate treatment of paintings, his statues (Cupid in *The Parliament of Love* and Jupiter in *The Virgin Martyr*) function more like tavern signs than complex mimetic images. In fact, the statues are only visual symbols – Cupid of virtuous love, Jupiter of vicious paganism – but the two work in very different ways. The statue of Jupiter in *The Virgin Martyr* is functionally the simplest of all of Massinger's artworks; it is an idol provided for the Vestals Calista and Christeta to worship in Act One Scene One, and then, as newly converted Christians, to defile in Act Three Scene Two. Its function is simple in part because it is so negative; as an idol it requires no interpretation. The Protestant iconoclastic fear of images, particularly religious ones, was rooted in their status as idols or false gods, but this statue is a false god, introduced to underscore the invisible (and therefore true) status of the Christian God. Its smashing by the converted vestals is a rare staging of religious iconoclasm, which may have cheered the citizen audience.

For Middleton, sophisticated aesthetics are tied to corruption. Massinger's attitude is somewhat more complex, but not necessarily more positive; Massinger is aesthetically and intellectually nostalgic, and the fact that the new mode of painting is, first, a departure from Elizabethan practice and, second, Catholic and Continental, may have something to do with his mistrust of its formal mimesis. The important thing to note, however, is that art has meaning in a theatrical context.
of the Red Bull and made the rest of the play's astoundingly Catholic spectacle go down a little easier. It has an ideological rather than an aesthetic function, and contributes little to the action of the play beyond standing for the debased paganism overcome by Dorothea.

The emblematic statue of Cupid of *Parliament of Love* raises more interesting issues, since it is the only piece of art in Massinger's work that stands for a virtue; it is brought into the Court of Love as an illustration of the virtues of Platonic Love (*Parliament of Love*, 5.1.30-70). However, this emblematic status is dependant on King Charles's rhetorical embroidery, and his arguments demonstrate some of the problems of interpreting visual images. Charles explains the statue's significance with great care; Cupid is not an idol placed for "superstitious reverence/ [to] Fall downe and worship" (5.1.37-8) but is an allegory of "pure Loue, that had his birth in heaven" (5.1.43). He then presents an iconographic, emblematic reading of Cupid's image:

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...That celestiall fyre
Which herogliphically is describ'd
In this his bow, his quier, and his torch,
First warmd theire bloods and after gau'e a name
To the old heroicque sperrits, such as Orpheus,
That drew men differinge little then from beasts
To civell gouermant. . .
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(5.1.47-56).

Cupid, according to Charles, has historically been a force which spurs men to virtuous conduct, rather like the music of Orpheus with which this interpretation allies him. This interpretation seems unrealistic in the context of the play. Love may be the highest virtue of the human heart, but the 'crimes of love' the court is meeting to try are brutal: attempted rape and actual murder. This dissonance matches the play's blend of Neo-platonic idealization of love and what Edwards describes as its recognition of the "grim primitiveness" of desire (E&G II:104); the statue is the embodiment of the idealized form of love that the men and women under examination have violated – a reminder of what their passion could have resulted in. The statue is an image of an ideal unrealizable within the world of the play, and Charles's speech, which explicitly places this reading of Cupid in the virtuous past as opposed to the corrupt present, makes this clear.

This allegorical reading is the most significant element of the statue's presentation, since its allegorical function is what marks it as a symbol of virtue. In general, Massinger's dramatic presentation of visual art — in particular his use of paintings — bears out Martin
Garrett's suggestion that the playwright is deeply suspicious of all aspects of outer show; according to Garrett, painting is "a form of illusion which [. . .] would lend itself to pejorative association for Massinger" (Garrett, Diamond 117). But the playwright's presentation of this allegorized statue suggests that his problem is not with images as such, but with mimetic art, which mirrors the surface of the world without clearly representing an inner truth or a higher meaning. The visual seems fully acceptable if it points to a meaning beyond itself – if it functions as a sign rather than presenting an image that needs to be interpreted. Ironically, however, as comfortable as Massinger seems to be with emblematic art, his dramatic interest lies in the exploration of the problematic interpretations of mimetic art (indeed, this thesis is an exploration of his stagings of spectatorship of such visual and performative art). Art which clearly states 'what it means' and cannot be misread may be safe and simple, but Massinger's much more complex treatment of his paintings, which are all mimetic images, suggests that the ambiguity of mimetic art is more dramatically useful.

Massinger's paintings are all mimetic, but they are also each identifiable as particular genres of painting; the pictures in The Renegado are Italian nudes, those in The Emperor of the East are court portraits, and the picture of The Picture is a miniature. Even though some of the genres are drawn from the sources of the various plays, the approach that the characters take to viewing the paintings and the effects the artworks have on them is consistent with contemporary approaches to each genre, suggesting that Massinger is making reference to contemporary approaches to visual art. As well, elements of his approaches to the images can be found in the traditions of his own theatre. Since 'painting' – face painting, specifically – was much used on the stage as a figure for false exterior show which covered corruption (Drew-Bear 13-34), Massinger's mistrust of illusory mimetic art can be seen as an extension of this tradition. His use of paintings is consistent with common theatrical practice in another sense; all the paintings presented in his plays are of women, all are used as examples of false exterior show, and all are described as shadows compared to the substance of their subjects. This trope of nature outdoing art (a commonplace of the period)

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6 The simplest example of this Neo-platonic use of an image as the shadow of a substance occurs in The Bashful Lover (1636); Lorenzo, infatuated with Mathilda, recollects having seen her portrait: "I now call to my memory her picture;/ And find this is the substance; but her Painter/ Did her much wrong, I see it" (4.1.158-161). The painting had no effect on him at all, while the woman
underlies every painting Massinger presents on the stage, but his more complex treatments deepen its range of meaning. His paintings serve as triggers for action, mirrors of character, and reflections on the nature of the world in which they occur; they stand for false exterior show, but they are also functional elements in Massinger’s dramatic structure.

_The Renegado_ opens with a description of the paintings which form part of Vitelli and Gazet’s stock of merchandise; they intend to pose as merchants as a cover for their attempt to rescue Vitelli’s sister Paulina from the Viceroy’s harem. Their wares are fragile, fashionable delicacies, which Gazet, Vitelli’s comic servant, describes as follows:

choyce _China_ dishes, your pure Venetian Christall, of all sorts, of all neate and new fashions, from the mirror of the madam, to the private vtensile of her chamber-maide, and curious Pictures of the rarest beauties of _Europa_. . .

(1.3.1-5)

All of the items listed carry associations with female vanity (the mirror), fashionable frivolity (neat and new fashions), female ‘privity’ (the chamber-pot) and the fragility of life in general (the glasses and china). Gazet even manages to sexualize the glassware, describing it as “brittle as a maydenhead at sixteene” (1.1.3). The connection thus made between women, paintings, and consumer goods is, as Foss (245) points out, appropriate in a tragi-comedy which deals with piracy, slavery, and traffic in women or ‘beauty’ in a wider sense.

The paintings, specifically, have a close association with traffic in women, made explicit when Gazet describes the way he will market them and what they really portray:

. . .I haue studied speeches for each Peece,  
And in a thrifty tone to sell ‘em off,  
Will swear by _Mahomet_, and _Ternangent_,  
That this is Mistris to the great Duke of _Florence_  
That Neece to old King _Pippin_, and a third,  
An _Austrian_ Princesse by her Roman lippe,  
How ere my conscience tels me they are figures  
Of Bawdes and common Courtezans in _Venice_.  
(1.1.6-13)

The paintings, like the public “peece[s]” who posed for them, are beautiful but false commodities, painted up (as are the whores who posed for them) and foisted on their lustful purchasers with the aid of a concocted fiction — in this case, the fantasy of the possession of an image of a woman of nobility and power. A similar erotic fantasy is implied in Gazet’s

herself inspires a frenzy of self-abasement; the painter did not capture her true beauty.
description of a painting as “a dumbe Mistres to make loue too” (1.3.36). Gazet’s lies about the identity of the paintings’ subjects are later extended to the identity of the painter, in Vitelli’s attempt to pass one off as “the master peece of Michael Angelo” (1.3.131). In short, everything about the paintings — from their subject matter, to their implied usage, to their purported creators — is false.

This lying nature is underscored by the fact that Vitelli’s paintings, like the men who sell them, are Italian, specifically Venetian — a city associated both with trade in rare objects and with outer show linked to inner corruption. Their Venetian provenance indicates their moral connotation; the fact that they are Italian indicates their genre and style. The sensual description may mean that they are nudes, although it does not matter much if they are not, since they are certainly erotic and intimate, as were all such paintings (Goffen111-12; Yavneh, 143-45; Pope-Hennessy 143-44). The context and the description makes it clear that the audience is not meant to see a portrait in the native English tradition of flat, emblematic linearity; the paintings are recognizably foreign and pleasantly stimulating in substance and style.

Their exoticism as well as their eroticism relates to their functional and symbolic roles, which are explicitly delineated by the fact that they are instrumental in beginning Vitelli’s affair with Donusa. Both he and Donusa are in disguise when they meet, since she has veiled herself to window shop, feeding a “Virgins longing” for “strange commodities” (1.2.114-17); as Garrett says, they both present surfaces as false as the commodities Vitelli sells (Diamond 94-5). Vitelli’s elaborate description of his wares interests Donusa in him rather than them (1.3.127-30), emphasizing the fact that he is a strange commodity too — the one that she will ‘buy’. His sales pitch verbally transforms his cheap trinkets into impossible wonders: an ordinary mirror outdoes Narcissus’s pool (1.3.110-15), glasses become Olympian goblets (1.3.118-21), and the china is so loyal to its owner that it explodes rather than hold poison (1.3.123-7). The pinnacle of this discourse is the paintings; specifically, the description of a nude which outdoes Pygmalion’s statue (1.3.132-36).

Although Donusa has listened appreciatively up to this point, when he boasts of his paintings’ unequalled beauty (1.3.138), she insists that she “instantly could shew you one, to theirs/ Not much inferior” (1.3.140-1) and unveils, thus becoming a debased Galatea, the living replacement of the dead image. Vitelli, who does not know how to read her gesture,
retreats in fear, and in frustration she smashes the glassware (1.3.144 SD). This gives her an excuse to invite him to the palace — ostensibly so that she can pay for the damage — and foreshadows the fact that she will give him her virginity, since the glasses have already been described as “brittle as a maydenhead” (1.1.3). Despite the fact that Vitelli’s stock is all emblematic of vanity and false surfaces, it is the paintings which actually stimulate Donusa’s self-revelation; because of this, her unveiling not only “draws attention to her own exterior” (Garrett Diamond 95) but puts her on the same level as the paintings’ subjects. While her beauty is recognized as greater than that of the pictures, her urge to compete with images of courtesans marks her as whorish, and her subsequent affair with Vitelli bears this out.

In both their symbolic and functional effects, then, the paintings are linked to the play’s theme of beautiful but false exteriors opposed to inner truths. Further, they relate to the themes of captivity, slavery, and the marketing of women; Vitelli’s bevy of painted beauties is a visual analog of the unseen slave market which Grimaldi’s piracy fills (1.3.74-6). The primary function of the paintings is to represent the illusory beauty of corrupt exteriors in contrast to the invisible true beauty residing in the soul, which emerges after Vitelli’s repentance and Donusa’s conversion, and is illustrated by such comments as Vitelli’s praise of Donusa’s “full luster” (5.3.67) prior to their threatened execution.

The connection made in The Renegado between the marketing of women, the marketing of images and the false surface of both is also present, in a more decorous form, in the court portraits the young Emperor Theodosius examines in The Emperor of the East. This time the intended affect is an alliance of empires, and the paintings are portraits of specific women, but the judgement on them is virtually the same as that of the “curious Pictures of the rarest beauties of Europa” (Renegado 1.3.5); they are “shadowes” to the “substances” of their subjects (Emperor of the East 2.1.244), and are outdone by the beauty of Athenais, who “in no way borrow[s]/[t]h’adulterate aydes of art. . .” (Emperor of the East 2.1.312-3). But although the approach superficially resembles the approach to Vitelli’s nudes, the genre of the works, their viewer’s approach to them and the effect the viewing has on him are fundamentally different. Vitelli’s paintings are anonymous ‘nudes’, while these are court portraits. Quite apart from the social context of each genre, the relation of the viewer to the image is different in each form. The focus of the nude is on the image itself and the viewer’s reaction to it; the identity of the model matters little, since the image itself is the
focus of erotic desire. In contrast, the point of the portrait is to portray, and the viewer’s focus is the recognition and assessment of the face that lies behind the image; the image itself, as Theodosius says, can block that assessment if it idealizes and beautifies (Emperor of the East 2.1.245-9). The stance of the viewer is entirely different from that of the viewer of the nude, even though both portrait and nude portray beautiful women.

 Appropriately, then, the portraits do not stimulate Theodosius’s desire. Rather, these paintings serve dramatically as mirrors which reveal the character of their viewer rather than that of their subjects; this is one of Massinger’s characteristic uses of both performative and plastic inset artworks, and is repeated in The Picture. Theodosius’s attempt to ‘read’ the portraits reveals his own immaturity rather than the supposed characters of the sitters, a function which is fitting in a play which concerns Theodosius’s education in managing his empire and himself. As the play opens the adolescent Emperor is under the wardship of his sister, Pulcheria, an idealized Elizabeth-figure, but he is soon provoked by his eunuchs into demanding the throne, and Pulcheria has no choice but to relinquish it. However, she demands that he marry, intending, as the eunuch Gratianus says, to “prefer a creature of her owne / By whose meanes she may still keepe to her selfe / The government of the Empire” (2.1.409-11). Theodosius agrees but insists on his right to choose his own wife, significantly couching this insistence in terms of sight:

 . . .You will not confine mee
To your election, I must see deere sister
With mine owne eyes.
(2.1.227-9)

At this point, Pulcheria points out the dreary path of imperial marital duty, lectures him on his lack of choice and presents him with two portraits of bracket-faced but princely prospects — all of which is intended to make her chosen candidate pleasing by comparison. Although the portraits pretend to offer the young Emperor the right to see with his own eyes, they actually permit Pulcheria to control what he sees. Theodosius’s satiric treatment of the portraits, intended as an expression of his independent judgement, thus serves his sister’s ends; his witty rejection of them is thus less impressive than it seems. But the manner in which he “iudge[s] the substances by the shadowes” (2.1.244) is interesting, both in itself and for what it reveals about him.

 Theodosius tries to analyse the portraits in a sophisticated manner, in an attempt to
reinforce the adult status he is claiming. Unfortunately, the approach is one he has read up on (2.1.261) but, as the eunuch Philanax asserts, “[h]ee has the theorie only, not the practick” (2.1.275).

The type of portrait that Theodosius is examining was painted to be sent abroad in place of the suitor during the course of marriage negotiations, which purpose dictated that the image be a reasonable likeness while still making the sitter look as appealing as possible. The flattery of portrait painter is so well-known as to be proverbial, and Theodosius’s assessment therefore opens with a statement on the innate flattery of the portrait, couched in terms of feminine vanity:

...painters are most envious, if they want
Good colours for preferment: virtuous ladies
Loue this way to bee flatterd, and accuse
The workeman of detraction, if he addde not
Some grace they cannot truely call their owne.
(2.1.245-9)

This comment contains an interesting displacement. The assertion that the court artist keeps his job through flattery of the noble women he paints switches the responsibility for the false “good colours” of the portrait from the artist to the subject; the false colours of the portrait artist become emblems of the subject’s vanity, relating the portraits to women’s cosmetic painting, traditionally a token of false show (Drew-Bear 1-34; Honig, 79). The implication is not only that the images are flattering lies, but that their subjects are equally lying, false and painted.

Of course, this renders Theodosius’s interpretation of the portraits utterly futile, since he first declares that the portraits are inherently inaccurate, and then attempts to interpret them anyway. Moreover, his analysis moves swiftly from the candidate’s looks — “her
brow, [is] so so; / The circles of her sight, too much contracted" (2.1.264-5) — to their characters:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[if] the countenance be} \\
\text{The index of the minde, this may instruct me,} \\
\text{With the aydes of that I haue read touching this subject,} \\
\text{What she is inward. . .} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(2.1.259-262)

Here, he is attempting to read inner truth by means of a picture he has just declared to be a flattering lie.\(^8\) Not surprisingly, his interpretation (being founded on nothing more than his own fantasies and fears) allows him to see things that aren’t there — in particular, evidence of sexual voraciousness in both portraits. He interprets Cleanthe’s features as indicators of shrewish sexual desire:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{. . . heeres a sharpe frost,} \\
\text{In the tippe of her nose, which by the length assures mee} \\
\text{Of stormes at midnight, if I faile to pay her} \\
\text{The tribute she expects. I like her not . . .} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(2.1.267-70)

The suspicion that he’s projecting his own anxieties here is confirmed by his similarly sexual treatment of the second portrait. Although he initially intimates that Amasia’s advanced age (eighteen) and “Philosophicall aspect” (2.1.281) imply frigidity rather than the voraciousness implied by Cleathe’s forward youth (fourteen) and long nose, his reading of Amasia’s portrait also climaxes on a satiric but frightened description of imagined sexual voracity:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{. . . sheele tire mee with} \\
\text{Her tedious Elocutions in the praise} \\
\text{Of the increase of generation, for which} \\
\text{Alone the sport in her moralitie} \\
\text{Is good and lawfull, and to bee often practis’d} \\
\text{For feare of missing. . .} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(2.1.288-93)

The anxiety implied by his return to this topic says more about the young Emperor’s fear of sexual initiation than it does about the image or his capacity to interpret it. The aesthetic distance created by the presence of the women in portraits, rather than the flesh, allows Theodosius the freedom to exercise his wit, but his sexual anxiety is still apparent under the

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\(^8\) The notion that a great painter could “mirror the soul” was current in the period; however, such insight requires great skill on the part of the painter and deep discernment on the part of the viewer — neither of which applies here (Smuts 159-62).
veil of his aesthetic judgements. In short, what underlies Theodosius’s attempt to read the paintings is an attempt to ‘read’ women, as is emphasized by the whispered comments of his eunuchs, who wonder “How [he] hath...commenc’d/ Doctor in this so sweete and secret art, / Without our knowledge?” (2.1.271-3). It is equally clear that his expertise in both areas is merely theoretical.

Theodosius’s unsophisticated response to Athenais, the chosen bride his sister then presents to him, confirms this. As Garrett points out (Diamond 118) while the emperor is able to discourse easily and with a certain facile smuttiness about the paintings, the presence of a pretty girl in the flesh produces only twenty lines worth of silent goggling, marked as such by the courtier’s commentary (2.1.310-334). When he finally does speak to Athenais, or rather, of her, he describes her as a statue (2.1.334-5), which again implies that he relates to sexual urges through the false sophistication of art. Tellingly, he describes her with reference to the Pygmalion myth, but with a peculiar inversion:

. . .Suppose her [a statue],
And that shee had nor organs, voice, nor heat,
Most willingly I would resigne my Empire
So it might be to after-times recorded
That I was her *Pygmalion*, though, like him,
I doted on my workmanship, *without hope too*
Of having Cytheria so propitious
To my vows, or sacrifice, in her compassion
To give it life or motion.

(2.1.335-43, my italics)
The fantasy is an inversion of the legend; he wishes, not that the statue would come alive, but that the living woman would stay static as a statue. Of course, the intent of the speech is to emphasize the depth of his passion, since he, unlike Pygmalion, would be content only to look and never possess; but the inversion of the tale confirms the suspicion that for all the supposed sexual sophistication of Theodosius’s ‘reading’ of images of women, he is only comfortable with them when they are images, rather than realities. It is Pulcheria who finally pushes him into action and away from art:

Pray you be not rap’d so,
Nor borrow from imaginary fiction
Impossible aydes; she’s flesh and blood, I assure you,

(2.1.343-5)

At this urging, he kisses Athenais, and the marriage proceeds as Pulcheria planned.

The use of these portraits as foils to the beauty of Athenias is remarkably similar to
the use of the Venetian pictures in *The Renegado*, but this is the least of their uses. Here, the paintings' most important dramatic function is to illuminate the flaws of the man who judges them; Theodosius's response to the portraits reveals his lack of practical knowledge in both painting and women. It also reveals the ignorant arrogance which allows him to think that theoretical knowledge is the same as practical experience, and it is this arrogance which causes the disruption of rule that is the focus of the play. Here, portraiture stands for false seeming, but the false seeming revealed is more the self-deception of the man who is reading them than that of the women depicted. This idea — that a painting can become an image of its viewer as well as its subject — is further developed in Massinger's most complex use of a painted image, *The Picture*.

In both *The Renegado* and *The Emperor of the East*, then, the 'painting' scenes are short and occur early in the action, and the paintings introduced serve relatively simple functions. In *The Renegado* the paintings are symbolic images tied to the play's theme of outer beauty linked with inner corruption, most notably the magnificence of the Moorish court and its corrupt spiritual nature. They are also used as initial triggers for a plot point — they stimulate the affair between Vitelli and Donusia, by stimulating her vanity, so that they serve both a symbolic and a practical dramatic function. In *The Emperor of the East* the paintings are used both to set off the beauty of Athenais and, more importantly, to reveal the folly of the young emperor. They function, as do the nudes in *The Renegado*, as a practical dramatic trigger, but their primary function is to reveal the immaturity and inexperience of the young man who 'reads' them. All three of these functions — practical dramatic trigger, symbolic element and spectatorial object which exposes the character of its viewer — are performed by the miniature which is at the heart of *The Picture*. This magical image carries the nuances of all the paintings already discussed: it is a form of failed art, ultimately vanquished by the beauty of the living woman it portrays: like the paintings in *The Renegado*, it acts as a plot device by stimulating Honoria to 'outdo' its beauty: and like *The Emperor of the East's* princely portraits, it reveals the obsessions of its viewer rather than its subject.

Yet the function of *The Picture's* miniature in its structure is much more complex than that of the paintings previously discussed. Mathias's spectatorial relation to the image is the core of the play; the changes he perceives in it determine his actions, and in directing
his actions, the picture directs the play’s plot. Mathias’s reactions illuminate his jealousy.

*The Picture* involves a magical chastity test imposed on the aptly named Sophia — although the testing ultimately comes to involve every figure in the play. Mathias, a newly married knight, wishes to gain wealth and honour by joining the Hungarian army in its fight against the Turks. His one concern is leaving his bride, Sophia, to her own devices, since he is convinced — against all the evidence of her manifestly devoted and virtuous character — that she will cuckold him. He therefore commissions a magical portrait of her from a ‘scholarly’ friend, Baptista, which will change colour if she is unfaithful. The picture will stay “intire, and perfite” (1.1.177) if she is chaste, but if she is “courtred but vnconquer’d” (1.1.182) it will turn yellow, and if she commits adultery, it will go black. Armed with this magical ‘spyglass’ Mathias goes off to war, where he rescues the Hungarian general and turns the tide of victory against the Turks; he is taken back to the Hungarian court and lavishly rewarded by Laudislaus and Honoria, the King and Queen. They urge him to stay but he declines, explaining that he wants to get home to his wife, whose picture he displays. Unfortunately, the mixture of the confidence inspired by the still-unchanged picture and his fixation on his wife’s chastity leads him to boast to of her impregnable virtue and great beauty. His extravagant praise provokes a fit of jealousy in the egomaniacal Honoria (whose self-image has been overfed by Laudislaus’s uxorious doting) who determines to destroy the couple’s mutual devotion; she will keep Mathias at court and seduce him herself and send two of her courtiers, Richardo and Ubaldo, to seduce Sophia.

Once this plot has been set in motion, the play cuts back and forth between the faithfulness tests of Mathias and Sophia. The Queen’s two courtiers, in an attempt to make Sophia jealous, tell outrageous lies about how Mathias has earned the money and jewels he has sent her, implying that he has become a male whore; this ploy works, and for a short time she considers cuckolding him in revenge, although she does not ultimately do so. Mathias, who originally resists the Queen’s advances, unfortunately finds his continence on Sophia’s faithfulness as represented by the picture; once she believes the lies of the courtiers the picture yellows, leading him to jump to the incorrect conclusion that she has ‘turned whore’. He then throws himself at Honoria, and only her reluctance to cuckold her own husband saves him from adultery. Therefore, although neither partner actually commits adultery, both fall off from their own standards of purity. Sophia recovers her composure first, and imprisons and humiliates her would-be seducers; the picture clears up and Mathias refuses Honoria’s final offer when she returns with the King to exhibit her new erotic captive. Mathias then confronts Honoria with the moral effects of her actions, using the magic picture as an image of the human soul; she repents and reveals the plot against Sophia.

In the final act, the court rides out to the country to save Sophia, who, unbeknownst to them, has been told of the picture and the Queen’s attempted seduction of Mathias by the contrite Baptista. She is deeply insulted that Mathias has spied on her and takes a corrective revenge on him, publicly revealing and playing on his irrational jealousy. First, she leads him to believe that she has been unfaithful after all, welcoming the male visitors with extremely warm kisses and thanking the Queen for the loan of her gigolos; when Mathias tells her that he knows she hasn’t been unfaithful, she points out that he has no grounds to believe that the picture’s information is accurate. This quickly reduces him to incoherent jealousy, whereupon she displays her supposed seducers, whom she has stripped, starved and forced to spin and reel thread; she points out that Mathias’s jealousy has rendered him absurd and emasculated in much the same way. Finally, she demands a separation and is only won over by the pleas of the entire court — including those of the misogynist Eubulus — and by Mathias’s shamefaced promise to destroy the picture and trust her absolutely.
and also raise the issue of jealousy as a visual psychosis, literally, a disorder of vision (Maus, "Horns", passim). Finally, because Mathias’s perspective on the image changes dramatically over the course of the play, its treatment is unstable; it is never seen in the same way twice. Mathias’s emotions and circumstances influence his perceptions, so that over the course of the play he ‘sees’ the picture as an ordinary miniature, a devotional icon, a distorting mirror, a mirror of conscience and, finally, as a moral emblem. The image’s flexible interpretation is born of the flexible nature of the process of interpretation; because the whole of the play is framed around the interaction of Mathias and this piece of art, the act of looking and the means of perception are both problematized and explored.

Unlike the easel paintings of the earlier two plays, Sophia’s portrait is a miniature; it is small enough that Mathias can carry it on his person at all times, and can produce it on a moment’s notice in the Court (2.2.327). Baptista describes it as a “... little modell [. . . ] /With more than mortal skill limde to the life” (1.1.166-7), using a term – ‘limning’ – which specifically refers to miniature painting (Murrell 4; Hilliard 16; Strong Miniature 7-11). Further, both the vivid colours and the liveliness which Baptista describes (1.1.169-70) are peculiarities of the miniature form. Indeed, the magical picture’s most important aspect, its changeable colouring, may be related to the delicacy of colour in real miniatures. Bright, jewel-like “lively colours” (Strong Miniature 135) are a defining characteristic of miniatures; the watercolour pigments in which they are painted are much clearer and purer than those of oils (Murrell 2-3; Salamon 78-80). However, because the watercolour medium is delicate, miniature colours are fugitive and prone to deterioration. Hilliard’s treatise specifies that “the culers them selives may not endure some ayers, especially in the sulfirous ayre of seacole and the guilding of Gowldsmiths” (22); corrosive or caustic smoke and fumes would cause the colours to change, to fade (Murrell 9), or (significantly) to go yellow (Murrell 10-11).

The terms by which the picture is described thus tie it explicitly to the miniature tradition. I stress this because Massinger does himself; Massinger’s audience could easily

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10 This “spontaneity and vivacity” (Strong Miniature 9) is due to the miniaturist’s practice of working directly from life rather than from sketches or models. Hilliard’s treatise describes the need for the “curious drawer” to “wach, and as it [were] catch thosse lovely graces wittye smilings, and thosse stolne glances which sudainely like light[n]ing passe and another Countenance taketh place...” (23).
have seen the image as a unique magical item (akin to the glass of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*) rather than a piece of art, and the pains which the playwright takes to tie his magical image to the real artistic genre indicates that he intends his magical picture to be read as a miniature. This choice can be related to the social significance and emotional ramifications of miniatures, all of which are related to the play’s themes of jealousy, love, and marital trust. The fact that the picture is a miniature, just as Vitelli’s paintings were nudes, and Theodosius’s state portraits, means that (as in the latter plays), the genre of the artwork has emblematic and social significance which directs the readings of the characters within the play. In this case, the usual function of the miniature, particularly in the context of romantic relationships, contrasts directly with Mathias’s use of the magic picture.

Miniatures have a narrow range of potential significations, based primarily on their scale. An easel portrait is designed for public display and shows the subject in a given role or public persona; a miniature, because of its tiny size, is an intensely private object both to display and view (Fumerton “Secret” 61). They were either worn as jewelry (in a locket or picture box pinned to the clothes or hung around the neck) or kept locked in a private case. Whether worn publicly or carried secretly, the possession of a miniature implied intimacy with its sitter. They were, in Evett’s words, “‘speaking pictures’ in that they were intended to carry very particular messages of devotion or longing to very specific recipients” (Evett 259). A miniature was carried as a reminder of a loved one, frequently one who was absent or secret, and, as early as the 1590s, was a token given between lovers (Fumerton “Secret” 60). Because of their small scale, they must be viewed “in hand near unto the eye” (Hilliard 87, qtd in Fumerton “Secret” 61), thus emphasizing the intimacy of the tiny portrait’s gaze. There is not generally room in the picture frame for anything but a tight focus on the subject’s face and hands, which obviates any social or political regalia; as Fumerton puts it, the face within the miniature is personal, not public (“Secret” 60). They were worn on the body, meaning that viewers had to huddle together with the bearer to view them; showing one meant letting the viewer come within arms reach, into personal space. Carrying one,

11 Of course, the true source of the painting’s scale, its ‘life-likeness’ and its responsive colouring is Massinger’s source; the last element is of course due to enchantment rather than bad air! I only want to stress that Massinger invests his selected source with elements drawn from the miniature tradition.
looking at one and displaying one were, perforce, very intimate rituals.

The social significance of the miniature is formed by this intimacy; the form signifies love, intimacy and trust between the sitter and the recipient. By definition, it was a gift from the sitter to a lover, a friend or a relation, and its purpose was to act as an aide-memoire. As Evett puts it:

But for Hilliard, Oliver and their clients the miniature was explicitly an icon, a sign, the present or phenomenal emblem of the ideal subject [. . .] the purpose of the piece [was] [. . .] to provoke contemplation of the subject’s meaning to the viewer. (Evett 90)

The point of a miniature is to bolster the bearer’s memories of and affection for the subject. In the case of a lover, it is a reminder of their commitment to the sitter; it ‘surveys’ the bearer on behalf of the subject, who cannot be with him.

In this context, it is easy to see that Mathias’s magical picture inverts the normal function of a miniature; in particular, the picture’s function as a surveillance device that permits Mathias to eavesdrop on Sophia, to “know how shee’s affected” (1.1.175) and its status as a psychological emblem of his mistrust of her is in direct opposition to the usual meaning of a miniature. First, Mathias’s picture is a stolen likeness, taken without Sophia’s knowledge or consent; since she complains to Baptista that “I neuer sate to be drawne, / Nor had you sir comision for’t” (5.2.3-4) she evidently sees this as a violation. Second, it inverts the usual relation of picture and bearer; it is used to spy upon the subject, to survey her behaviour, rather than performing the normal function of a miniature and acting as a check upon the bearer’s behaviour. Third, it is an expression and a vehicle of mistrust rather than trust. Throughout the play, it acts as a visual reminder of Mathias’s fear of Sophia’s potential infidelity and of his own lack of faith; instead of binding him to his wife, as a miniature is supposed to do, it serves to separate him from her emotionally. Mathias’s obsession becomes an inversion of the notion of the miniature-bearer as a ‘prisoner of love’ who cannot stop gazing at his mistress’s beauty; rather, he obsessively scans his wife’s image for evidence of corruption and decay. Each glance assures him that she is faithful, but only for the moment, and in hopes to be assured of her chastity, he watches compulsively. But any assurance evaporates as soon as it is given, since Sophia is in his view a potential adulteress who may fall at any moment. Therefore he becomes the victim of the picture’s enchantment; in his
desire to have “those doubts [. . .] made certainties” (1.1.150) he is trapped by his own gaze.

Finally, and most importantly, the picture represents a disorder of the memorial function of the miniature; Mathias refuses to accept the past loyalty and love of his wife as evidence of her future behaviour, (1.1.135) and the picture is physical evidence of this mistrust. Miniatures are meant to act as a reminder of the past, but the magic miniature erases Mathias’s memories of the past, replacing them with a perpetually tormented present in which Sophia, divorced from her past actions, is always on the verge of a sexual fall. He forgets his wife’s true nature even as he looks at her face.

These psychological and social overtones of the magical picture are not to be found in Massinger’s source for the Mathias and Sophia story, which is, as Gibson notes, the tale of “The Lady of Boeme” from Painter’s Palace of Pleasure (E&G III:182). Indeed, although Massinger lifts the plot of the tale almost verbatim, his renovations to the moral and meaning of Painter’s tale are so extreme as to be repudiations of both its view of marriage and its view of the proper use of art. His changes shift the story’s focus from the trick played on the importunate suitors to the nature of the relationship between the husband and wife; in particular, the nature of Massinger’s picture changes it from an agent of comedy to a symbol of mistrust and an agent of potential disorder.12

Massinger’s most important change to the source tale lies in his characterization of the married couple and the nature of their marriage; as Dawson points out, he “shifts the whole emphasis to a psychological development of the two principal characters” (qtd in E&G III:183). Painter’s husband and wife are dutiful and respectful, but not demonstrative; in fact, Painter’s knight cold-bloodedly wagers his fortune on his wife’s chastity. In contrast, Mathias’s and Sophia’s union is deeply affective and necessary to the emotional well-being of both; Mathias wants to return to Sophia after only ten days away (2.2.307), and Sophia literally mourns during his absence (2.1.18-31). Massinger’s presentation of the magical picture

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12 The events of Painter’s story are identical to those of the play, but the treatment of jealousy very different. In Painter’s tale the picture cures the husband’s jealousy, enabling him to wager on his wife’s virtue; the would-be seducers bet their land on their success, and the wife’s resistance makes her husband’s fortune. In Painter the conflict is between the wife as the husband’s surrogate and the arrogant assurance of the seducers, while in Massinger’s version of the tale, the conflict is between Sophia and her husband’s jealousy. Massinger reduces Painter’s arrogant barons to the court-fops Richardo and Ubaldo because their role in the story is much less significant.
picture as an agent for the testing of Mathias’s and Sophia’s marriage (as well as their moral testing as individuals) builds a model of a marriage founded on mutual sexual continence, reciprocal trust, shared education and guidance, and an acceptance of one’s partner’s flaws (Barton “Voice” 229-30; Clark Professional 59). Neither Mathias nor Sophia are ideal individuals, but the marriage they finally achieve is held up as a model both for the Hungarian royal couple and for the audience. That the delineation of this model marriage is one of the core concerns of the play is indicated by the fact that it contains two marriages, both of which are reformed by their interaction; one of its central themes is the reciprocity of relationships, both within companionate marriage and within a larger society (Clark Professional 51-60). This theme relates to the central image of the miniature itself, of course, through the strong tie between the miniature genre and affective relationships already discussed.

Massinger’s treatment of the meaning and function of the miniature is his second major change to the tale. In the source tale, as in the play, the picture acts as a surveillance device, mirroring the wife’s actions and emotions, and (as in the play) it is a sign of the husband’s mistrust of his wife. The underlying misogyny of Painter’s tale justifies this mistrust; Pollacco (Painter’s name for the enchanter) commends the wisdom of the husband in commissioning the picture, given the innate dishonesty of women, whom he describes as “flippery Catell, prone and ready to luft, eafy to be vanquifhed by the fuites of erneft purfuers” (3: 203). The fact that the wife turns out to be chaste is a surprise bonus; there is no sense that the husband feels any shame for spying on her, she is never informed of the existence of the picture, and she sees the test as proof of her husband’s trust in her chastity (3:216). Although there are a few narrative asides on the “lying Science of Sorcery” (3: 202), Painter’s picture is a remarkably beneficial, unproblematic object; it reassures the Knight, cures his jealousy, and is an ace up his sleeve in his bet with the barons. Mathias is not permitted this comfortable surveillance; his use of the picture reflects badly on him, while it marks the knight of the source tale as clever and provident.

In fact, Mathias’s picture has precisely the opposite effect to that of source tale; this is partly based on Massinger’s focus on the corrosive nature of jealousy, but it is buttressed by three changes which he makes to Painter’s picture. First, Mathias’s picture is not a secret; second, the information that it provides is slightly different from that of the source tale; and
third, it reflects and exacerbates, rather than heals, Mathias’s jealousy. The net effect of these changes is to shift it from a magical plot device to a psychological mirror, and an active element in the reconstruction of the character of Mathias.

That Mathias cannot keep his picture a secret is obvious well before the fifth act revelation that it is enchanted. While the Knight of the source tale keeps his image hidden in his purse (3: 217), Mathias displays his painting openly and uses it to boast of Sophia’s virtue and beauty almost as soon as he gets to court (2.2.312-27). This boasting triggers Laudislaus’s praise, Honoria’s jealousy and the subsequent testing of Sophia; in other words, the picture instigates the temptation of the wife. This is the case in the source tale too, but there it does so because the husband checks it before making the calculated risk to gamble on his wife’s chastity; no-one else knows of its existence, and so the Knight appears (to the other characters) to have an almost superhuman faith in his wife. Mathias is not in control of his picture in the same way, at least in part because he does not keep it a secret; once its enchanted nature is revealed to Sophia (5.2.1-30) and the court (5.3.175-82), he stands publicly revealed as a jealous fool (5.3.157). His open use of it permits it to function as a public image of his own folly rather than a private spyglass on his wife’s virtue.

The change in the nature of the information Massinger’s picture provides is based on his subtle (but significant) modification to its changing colours. In the source tale, the picture has four different ‘colour states’, described as follows:

> If the wife doe not breake hir maryage faith, you /hall ftil fee the fame fo fayre and wel coloured as it was at the firft making, and feeme as though it newly came from the painter’s fhop, but if perchaunce fhe meane to abu fe hir honefty the fame wil waxe pale, and in deede committing that filthy Fact, foidainly the colour will bee blacke, as arayed with Cole or other filth, and the fmetal thereof wyl not be very pleaf aunt, but at al times when fhe is attempted or purfued, the colour will be fo yealow as Gold.

(3: 203)

Here, the picture has four possible states: unchanged pure colours indicate the wife’s chastity, fading or pale colours indicate her adulterous desire, black indicates adultery and yellow indicates pursuit by a seducer. Massinger’s picture, in contrast, lacks a marker for Sophia’s desire:

> While it keepes
> The figure it now has intire, and perfit,
> She is not onely innocent in fact
> But vnattempted: but if once it varie
From the true forme, and what's now white and red
Incline to yellow, rest most confident
Shees with all violence courted but vnconquerd.
But if it turne all blacke 'tis an assurance
The fort by composition, or surprize
Is forc'd or with her free consent surrendred.
(1.1.176-85)

Mathias’s picture has only three states: pure for untempted, yellow for an attempted seduction, and black for adultery. The yellow state indicates either desire or temptation, or both at once; Massinger has deliberately elided the two intermediate stages, removing Painter’s ‘pale’ state and thus making the picture’s information much more ambiguous. Painter’s husband has a window on his wife’s sexual desires; Mathias only has a spyglass with which to view Sophia’s actions and reactions at a distance, as Baptista says:

...when you are distant from her
A thousand leauages as if you then were with her
You shall know truly when she is solicited
And how far wrought on.
(1.1.162-65)

The problem, of course, is that Mathias has to interpret the picture as he would an overheard conversation in a spying scene; it provides a record of what is happening to Sophia, rather than a window on her desires and emotions. As Baptista states, he cannot know Sophia’s intentions: “I am no God, nor can I diue into / Her hidden thoughts, or know what her intents are. / That is deni’d to art...” (1.1. 155-157). This precludes the kind of inner view the source story provides. While Painter’s image tells the husband what is happening within his wife’s psyche, Mathias’s only tells him what is happening to Sophia, leaving him in the position of an audience watching a character in a play. Painter’s husband does not have to interpret his picture’s changes, but Mathias needs to determine what he truly sees by interpreting the inner meaning of the image presented. Massinger’s picture is problematic because it requires interpretation, and Mathias’s problems arise from his misreadings of it.

It is the necessity of interpretation in Massinger’s version of the picture which leads to the third difference from the source tale — the inversion of the picture’s effect. Because Painter’s picture provides the knight with a clear picture of his wife’s desires, it cures his jealousy completely:

The Boeme Knight, who was affured of hys Wyue’s great Honesty, and Loyall fayth, beleued fo true as the Gospell, the proportion and quality of the Image, who in all the tyme that hee was farre of, neuer percyued the
fame to bee eyether Pale or Black, but at that tyme lookinge vpon the Image, hee percieued a certayne Yealow colour to ri/e, as hee thought his Wyfe was by fome loue purfued, but yet fodeynly it returned agayne to his naturall hewe. . .

(3: 208)

This assurance of his wife’s good faith encourages him to take the Barons’ bet.

Massinger’s picture, by contrast, increases Mathias’s jealousy rather than soothing his fears. This is based partly on the ambiguity of the information it provides, but it is also based a more personal and psychological reading of the character of both marriage partners. As has already been noted, Massinger resists the misogyny inherent in the folktale; Baptista stresses Sophia’s virtue, and describes Mathias’s mistrust as irrational:

. . . I haue found
By certaine rules of Art your matchlesse wife
Is to this present hower from all pollution
Free and vntainted. . .
. . . In reason therefore
You should fixe heere, and make no further search
Of what may fall hereafter.

(1.1. 130-35)

Baptista points out that there is no evidence to back up Mathias’s conviction that Sophia will be unfaithful, and that the picture is an expression of an irrational obsession. Because of this, it does not and cannot relieve Mathias’s fears; in fact, the process of being reassured by it feeds the fears it is designed to combat, as happens when Mathias boasts of Sophia’s honesty when he first arrives at court. This scene parallels the scene from Painter cited above, but while Painter’s knight is simply reassured by the picture’s continued clarity, Mathias’s language reveals his fears more than his pride. He publicly praises his wife in terms which virtually conjure up the “army of lasciuious wooers” (2.2 320) that he fears:

Though in my absence she were now beseeg’d
By a strong army of lasciuious wooers
And euery one more expert in his art,
Then those that tempted chast Penelope
Though they raisd batteries by Prodigall guiftes,
By amorous letters, vowes made for her service,
With all the Engins wanton appetite
Could mount to shake the fortresse of her honor,
Heere, heere is my assurance she holds out
And is impregnable.

kisses the picture

(2.2.319-28)

Although he means what he says when he declares his conviction that his wife is impregnable, the dynamic of the speech pulls in the opposite direction; the hectic rhetorical
surge of this army of imaginary lovers is too overwhelming to be held by the bulwark of the tiny painted image, kissed to underline his security on “heere, heere is my assurance” (2.2.327). Although the picture shows that Sophia is untainted, Mathias’s reading of it focuses primarily on the possibility of her fall; the fact that she is uncorrupted leads to the thought that she is still corruptible, even when he is boasting of her honour. What the picture shows, and what Mathias sees are, presumably, two different things; the problem is not with the picture’s information, but with his interpretation of it.

Massinger has therefore made two significant changes to the picture of the folktale; he has made it an identifiable piece of art, a miniature, rather than just a magical image, and he has made it into a spectatorial object — something that must be read and interpreted in the same way as a play-within or a spying scene. The entry of interpretation — interpretation which is expressed throughout the play by the picture’s literal and figurative changes — into the equation is the significant difference between his treatment of the image and that of Painter.

One reason for the miniature’s protean portrayal is its dramatic function — it is the cause of much of the plot. This can be as simple as its use as a spur to Honoria’s vanity or as complex as its mirroring of Mathias’s expectations of his wife’s fall. In this function it becomes a concrete expression of Mathias’s jealousy, an embodiment of the imaging faculty of the diseased imagination which allows a jealous man to look at an obviously virtuous woman and see a whore. It is, both in its own physical changes and in the perceptual changes that Mathias writes over it, a syndrome made real. As this suggests, the source of Mathias’s shifting passions are the source of his changing readings of the picture; one of its most important functions is to provide a mirror in which the audience, if not the character, can see his anxieties. The picture is, literally, a creation of Mathias’s jealousy; it exists as a physical

13 In fact, Mathias’s fears that “I in praying of my wife, but feed /The fire of lust in others to attempt her” (2.2.316-7) are fulfilled, although the lust does not come from the source he expects. It is this fulsome speech, mixed with the King’s praise of Sophia’s “excellent face” (2.2.329), which leads to Honoria’s determination to “taint [Sophia] in her honor / Or loose my selfe” (2.2.411-12).
object because of his anxiety. Likewise, its changes (all but the truly magical one of Act Four) are products of Mathias's changing emotional state; the picture, which is intended to indicate Sophia's sexual behaviour, actually reflects Mathias's jealousy. This is one reason why one of Mathias's varying 'readings' of the painting is of the 'painting-as-mirror' — like Theodosius's reading of his portraits, Mathias's reflect primarily on him.

There is, of course, another sense in which the picture and Mathias act as mirrors — the theatrical one. As a miniature, the image is far too small to be seen from the audience, so the audience can only perceive the picture's changes through the medium of the actor. This is of course the way we perceive anything too small to be 'read' from the front, and even those objects large enough to be clearly perceived are usually glossed or explained, as Massinger has done in his presentation of easel paintings. The actor's mirroring of the prop is common theatrical practice, but this does not eliminate its significance, which is profound: the picture is the dominant image of the play, one that is central to every action of the plot and symbolic of its most important relationship, and yet it is invisible and can only be perceived through the reactions of the character who bears it. An analogue, and quite possibly a source, is Othello's handkerchief, transformed by Iago's rhetoric into certain proof of a literally impossible adultery. Like the enchanted picture, Othello's handkerchief is a foolish trifle that becomes central to the plot through Iago's machinations. However, The Picture has no Iago-figure. Mathias's jealousy paints over his wife's face with lying assistance only from himself; the fiction of the magic miniature is what allows the play's plot to be founded on Mathias's self-reflecting engagement with his own imagination, rather than treachery from an outside source.

Finally, the fact that Mathias has to 'mirror' the picture to us puts the interpretive focus of the play back on the actor; the visual image is mediated through action and words, Massinger's own art form. This gives us an oddly binocular view of Sophia's actions, since the pattern of the play, which cuts back and forth between court and country, allows us to watch Sophia's actions directly and then watch Mathias reading her through the miniature. This foregrounds the process of its interpretation, in that we see for ourselves what the real
events are, and then watch Mathias misread their reflection in the mirror of art. Garrett suggests that Mathias's pervasive misreading of the image is simply another general indictment of visual representation: he claims that the picture "registering but oversimplifying Sophia's temptation, proves a poor copy of nature" (Diamond 117 nt 40). I think it is more likely that the picture's 'failure' is designed, like the 'failure' of the playlets in The Roman Actor, to be an examination of the process of interpretation, not a blanket condemnation of the form interpreted. Although the picture's foundation in Mathias's mistrust of his wife — not to mention its roots in sorcery — is meant to justly condemn it from a moral perspective, it actually does the job it was made to do, changing colour to reflect Sophia's actions. Its true instability resides in Mathias's misreadings of it; the messages of art are only as accurate as their perception by their audience. Mathias reads the actual image through a veil of jealousy and narcissism, ultimately seeing a false image of Sophia's inner nature, just as Dominitian views his plays as expressions of his own self-image in The Roman Actor. However, in neither play does the failure of the viewer to understand the art imply that all art is not worth understanding.

Mathias's rhetorical interpretations of his miniature present it, consecutively, as a mechanical spyglass (1.1.166-85), an ordinary miniature (2.2.314-28), an "Idoll" (3.5.180-96), a distorting enchanted mirror (4.1.25-91) and, finally, a 'mirror of conscience', an emblem for the human soul (4.4.69-82).14 His first two viewings of the picture — its initial presentation (1.1.166-85) and his examination of it at court (2.2.314-28) — have already been examined, and do not need much more discussion. However, one element of the picture's introduction has not been discussed; its relationship to its context. Mathias's meeting with Baptista is immediately preceded by his farewell to Sophia, a conversation which serves both to confirm their mutual affection and to provide us with an independent

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14 Interestingly, this pattern moves the focus of the miniature from mimetic representation to emblematic signification; the miniature is first described as a mimetic portrait, then as an icon or an idol, then as a mirror of the man who bears it, and then as a purely emblematic image of the human soul. All three modes of reading art available in Massinger's period are 'enacted' by the picture over the course of the play.
view of Sophia herself. Sophia vainly tries to stop Mathias from leaving for the wars, but when she cannot, says farewell in what is surely the loveliest speech in the play:

You blest Angels,
Guardians of humane life, I at this instant
Forbeare t’invocу you, at our parting ’twere
To personate devotion. My soule
Shall goe along with you, and when you are
Circl’d with death and horror seeke and finde you:
And then I will not leave a Saint vnsw’d to
For your protection. To tell you what
I will doe in your absence, would shew poorly,
My actions shall speake me; ’twere to doubt you
To begge I may heere from you, where you are,
You cannot liue obscure nor shall one post
By night, or day passe vnexamined by me.
If I dwell long upon your lips, consider
After this feast the griping fast that followes
And it will be excusable. Pray tume from mee.
All that I can is spoken.

(1.1. 74-90)

The speech’s style, as well as its content, is evidence of Sophia’s love of her husband; it is poignant, earnest and above all, memorable. It needs to be, for within fifty lines we have moved from the devotion expressed in this “eloquent simplicity of language” (Gibson, “Theatrical Language” 37) to Mathias’s view of Sophia as a cuckolding wanton (1.1.138-49). One of the functions of the speech is to enable us to condemn Mathias’s view as foolishness, even without Baptista’s comments (1.1.133-5).

The speech also provides a description of Sophia’s intended spiritual surveillance of Mathias, which contrasts with his magical surveillance of her: “My soule / Shall goe along with you, and when you are / Circl’d with death and horror seeke and finde you. . .” (1.1.77-79). The “blest Angels, / Guardians of humane life” (1.1.74-5) who are the agents of her surveillance form an obvious contrast to the “diuels” (1.1.158) who manufacture the picture. Finally, there is the contrast between Sophia’s firm declaration that “my actions shall speake me. . .” and Mathias’s plea to Baptista to “[i]nstruct me what I am” (1.1.126). Sophia’s promise that her behaviour will bear witness to her concern for Mathias is born out by the dramaturgical structure of the play; the audience watches Sophia’s actions directly, and thus knows her by watching her. By contrast, Mathias’s request, which really means ‘tell me if
I'm a cuckold', is phrased in such a way as to place responsibility for his identity in the hands of the magician. This responsibility for his self-knowledge is quickly transferred from Baptista himself to the picture, the instrument which Baptista has made; it literally tells him who and what he is. Mathias eventually gives over all responsibility for his actions to the picture's changes, and it is this abdication of responsibility that leads him to the brink of destruction.

This reliance on the picture begins early in the play; the first suggestion that the picture will provide support for Mathias's own actions as well as a reflection of Sophia's actions is broached just prior to his abduction by the Queen's bravos. Suspicious of Honoria's intentions, Mathias is confiding in Baptista:

What her intents are, but her carriage was
As I but now related.

Baptista: Your assurance
In the constancie of your lady is the armor
That must defend you, wheres the picture?

Mathias: Heere.
And no way alter'd.

Mathias: If she be not perfit,
There is no truth in art.

(3.3.13-19)

Baptista's suggestion — that Mathias bolster his resistance to Honoria's threatened seduction by using the picture as an aide-memoire of his wife's constancy — differs very little from the use of a non-magical miniature in the same circumstances. Unfortunately, the proposal that Mathias base his faithfulness on the picture's assurance of Sophia's faithfulness ultimately suggests that Mathias base his own behaviour on the information provided by the picture. Mathias's problems stem from the fact that he does this, starting with his very next examination of the picture.

This comes immediately after his rejection of the queen. Understandably frustrated at having to turn down a woman "[w]hose rauishing beauties at the first sight had tempted / A hermit from his beades" (4.1.71-2) Mathias turns to the picture as an oddly double-edged support:
How my blood
Rebels! I now could call her backe and yet
Ther's something stayes me: if the King had tenderd
Such fauours to my wife 'tis to be doubted
They had not bene refus'd, but being a man
I should not yeeld first, or proue an example
For her defence of fraylty. By this sans question
She's tempted too, and heere I may examine
How shee holds out.

(3.5.180-8, italics mine)

The image of his wife falling to the King is, of course, the "something that stays [him]" from calling back the Queen; this is a fantasy which overlays the vision of his own possible capitulation to Honoria herself, his real source of anxiety. He turns to the miniature both to drive out this image and to bolster his own continence, although the fear of cuckoldry which underlies every viewing of the picture persists in his fear that his own seduction would "proue an example / For [Sophia's] defence of fraylty" (3.5.185-6). Here, he sees his own chastity as the foundation of Sophia's faithfulness, an attitude which would be more praiseworthy were it not for the fact that he seems to be checking the picture in the hopes that she'd have fallen, which would both confirm his superiority and free him to take the Queen’s offer.

But the view the picture offers of Sophia as “still the same, the same / Pure Christal rocke of chastity!” (3.5.188-9) acts as an anaphrodisiac:

. . . perish all
Allurement that may alter me, the snow
Of her sweet coldness, hath extinguished quite
The fire that euen now began to flame!

(3.5.189-92)

Confirmed by Sophia's untouched purity, he "resolue[s] to be /Loyall to her, as she is true to me" (3.5.195-6). Now the picture’s initial function and his relation to it are inverted; rather than providing surveillance of his wife, it provides direction for him. In allowing himself to be “by [Sophia] confirm’d” (3.5.193), Mathias inverts the priorities he initially set at the opening of this passage. Given that his only view of her circumstances is the picture, he has effectively given responsibility for his own behaviour over to the picture itself, so that it is now both mirroring his anxieties and directing his behaviour. Moreover, he has mentally
transformed the image from a mimetic representation of his wife into an idol of purity; its ‘magical’ effect on his bodily desire is an indication that he no longer sees the image as a mere representation of either his wife’s face or her behaviour, but as an affective object which can transform his own responses. His use of it is related to, but significantly different from, the traditional use of the miniature as a reminder of the loved one, for in his view it is not the thought of his wife that has “extinguished quite / The fire that euen now began to flame” but the properties of the object he holds in his hand. It is, as he himself later says “[m]y Idol” (4.1.59) and his relation to it is now very close to worship — it directs his actions and completely obscures any alternate view of his wife. This leads to disastrous consequences upon his next reference to the picture, which shows the effects of Ricardo and Ubaldo’s temptations.

The speech which leads into the scene is Mathias at his most priggish. Bolstered by the picture’s confirmation of Sophia’s virtue, he faces down the Queen’s threat to have him executed if he will not sleep with her, insisting that “[he] would not buy / An howers repriue with the losse of faith and vertue / To be maide immortall heere” (4.1.6-8) and reading the miserable Baptista, who also faces execution, a moral lecture on the virtues of a death for the sake of chastity (4.1. 5-27). The discovery of the change in the picture punctures this disquisition at just the right psychological moment, as he is declaring his intention to follow his spotless wife equally spotless to a spotless mutual grave (4.1.27). The rage and despair that follow tip over into comedy in their overblown intensity; however, the comedy develops several of the concepts that have been latent in the picture’s presentation from the beginning.

First, the issue of interpretation is foregrounded explicitly. Mathias initially thinks the changes to be a vision induced by melancholy, literally a disorder of the eye (4.1. 28-31). This link of the picture with false vision associates his speech with Sophia’s earlier parallelling of her “curious jealousie” (3.6.20) with “fancie[s]”, “apparition[s]” and “dreames” (3.6.8-22). This minor reference makes explicit the idea, always implicit in the picture, that jealousy is productive of false visions, a premise borne out by the rest of the scene.
Mathias, in order to confirm the picture's condition, hands it to Baptista, who provides a more accurate, or more disinterested, description of the picture's changes:

..besides the yellow
That does assure she's tempted there are lines
Of a darke color, that disperse themselues
Ore euery miniature of her face, and those
Confirmes –

(4.1.32-6)

Mathias completes the sentence: "She is turnd whore" (4.1.36). However, Baptista's continuation is a more accurate interpretation:

I must not say so.
Yet as a friend to truth if you will haue me
Interpret it, in her consent, and wishes
She's false but not in fact yet.

(4.1.36-9)

In fact this is accurate, since our last view of Sophia showed her determined to repay Mathias's supposed adultery in kind:

..with the same trash
For which he hath dishonor'd me, I'll purchase
A iust reuenge. I am not yet so much
In debt to yeares, nor so misshap'd that all
Should flie from my Embraces...

(3.6.152-6)

The picture is accurately depicting Sophia's intentions rather than her acts. Since Massinger's version of the picture's colour changes are inherently ambiguous and open to interpretation, the two men come to quite different conclusions on Sophia's state. Baptista's observations are, as the audience can attest, accurate, while Mathias's conclusion that "she

There is an interesting problem in the mechanism, here. Baptista earlier declared that the picture could not show Sophia's "hidden thoughts" (1.1.156); this is partly why the miniature has no marker for Sophia's desire. However, Sophia is only planning to commit adultery; why then does the picture change colours? The oddly intermediate yellow/black mixture of the defacement indicates that it does recognize her consent in some way, despite Baptista's earlier assertion. One explanation for this could be that Mathias is being given the same amount of information as the audience — Sophia's last scene does show her false "in her consent and wishes [...]. but not in fact yet" (4.1.38-9). Since the picture's mechanism allows Mathias to view her behaviour from a distance, he now has exactly the same perspective as he would have heard overheard her last speech. The difference is one of context, since the audience is aware of the source of Sophia's anger (the lies of the fops), and the reason for her determination; Mathias only 'sees' the fact of it. Yet more important is Mathias's athletic jumping to conclusions; his interpretation of the picture is overlaid by his own anxieties.
is turnd whore” is based on the overwriting of the picture’s limited information by his assumptions about the nature of female desire:

Did e’re woman  
In her will decline from chastity, but found meanes  
To giue her hot lust fuell? it is more  
Impossible in nature for grosse bodies  
Descending, of themselues, to hang in the ayre,  
Or with my single arme to vnderprop  
A falling tower, nay in its violent course  
To stoppe the lightening, then to stay a woman  
Hurried by two furies, lust and falshood  
In her full carier to wickednes.  

(4.1.42-51)

His misreading of the picture swiftly moves to a misreading of his wife as the fallen Eve, an image implicit in the ‘falling bodies’ of the speech, which echo his unspoken mental image of Sophia’s ‘falling body’. More importantly, his speech defines the space between will and act, desire and fulfilment, as no more substantial than air. This is based on a misogynistic reading of his wife as a creature “hurried by [. . .] lust and falshood” (4.1.50); the irony is that Mathias is more controlled by passion than his wife, and his speech is proof of this. Appropriately, then, his speech then shifts to pictures of his own fall:

...I am throwne  
From a steepe rocke headlong into a gulph  
Of misery, and find my selfe past hope  
In the same moment that I apprehend  
That I am falling. . .  

(4.1.54-7)

Ironically, this is what actually happens; he falls, fully, in his intentions, while Sophia does not; the keynote of Sophia’s character, the wisdom signified by her name, allows her to determine not to cuckold him. Mathias, not his wife, is the one hurried by the “violence of [his] passion” (4.1.52) to “hold [his] temperance a sinne / Worse then excesse, and what was vice a vertue” (4.1.68-9), and to enthusiastically, if somewhat clumsily, accept the Queen’s offer. Honoria’s refusal leaves him humiliated in the discovery is that it is indeed possible to “sinne but in [. . .] wishes” (4.1.161), stuck in the space between desire and fulfilment which his earlier speech implied could not exist. His discovery that his misplaced desire has put him in the morally ambiguous position of “neither [. . .] Disloyall, nor yet honest”
(4.1.165-6) is followed by the audience’s discovery that his wife can be both loyal and honest (4.2.1-22).

What actually happens, then, is an altered version of what Mathias now ‘sees’ in the image:

And this the figure of
My Idoll a few howers since, while she continued
In her perfection, that was late a mirror
In which I saw miracles, shapes of duty,
Stayd manners, with all excellency a husband
Could wish in a chast wife, is on the suddaine
Turnd to a magickall glasse, and does present
Nothing but horns, and horror.

(4.1.58-65)

This overblown description is surprisingly accurate, although not in the sense that he means. The miniature which Mathias earlier saw as an idol now really has become a transforming mirror — he thinks that it shows him wearing the horns of the cuckold, but it actually transforms him in a different fashion, triggering his own attempt to commit adultery. His use of the term “idoll” is accurate; the picture now is one, both in the sense of ‘worship of purity’ that he doubtless intends, but also in the sense of an image that has usurped the place of the thing it represents. Mathias gives no thought to his wife’s character, judging her behaviour according to the image presented by the miniature. This idol, which he earlier used as a moral model “of duty” after which he self-consciously modeled his own behaviour, has now become an active transforming force, a distorting mirror which disfigures its viewer. In Mathias’s mind, the image of the cuckold which he ‘sees’ in the miniature moves out of the picture-as-mirror and imposes itself on him. This ‘homing’ is, of course, exactly what Sophia’s dishonour would have done to him, socially; I hasten to stress that the standard description of the horned cuckold is not what is of interest here, but the fact that in Mathias’s speech, the picture moves from idol to mirror to transforming charm. The focus of the image’s magic has been rhetorically shifted from its subject to its viewer.16

16 I am indebted to A.M. Leggatt for pointing out that ‘horns’ are not only the traditional crown of the cuckold, but a mark of the lustful satyr; given that Mathias is about to attempt adultery himself, the face he imagines in the picture is an accurate image.
In its final use, the picture functions in a similar fashion — reflecting the nature of its viewer — but in this case, the viewer is Honoria, not Mathias. The morning following Mathias’s enthusiastic capitulation to her seduction, the Queen arrives to demand that Mathias pay “supersitious addoration [...] captiue like to my triumphant beauty” (4.4.14-5), with the intent of displaying her conquest to her husband. However, Mathias refuses and reads her a moral lecture instead. Mathias’s final rhetorical transformation of the picture is directed at the author of his wife’s temptation; his lecture climaxes on his use of the picture as an image of the effects of repentance on the soul of man:

When we are growne vp to ripenesse, our life is  
Like to this picture. While we runne  
A constant race in goodnesse, it retaines  
The just proportion. But the iourneye being  
Tedious, and sweet temptations in the way,  
That may in some degree duert vs from  
The rode that we put forth in, ere we end  
Our pilgrimage, it may like this turne yellow  
Or be with blacknesse clouded. But when we  
Finde we haue gone astray, and labour to  
Returne vnto our neuer fayling guide  
Vertue, contrition with vnfained teares,  
The spots of vice wash’d off, will soone restore it  
To the first purenesse.  

(4.4.69-82)

Honoria’s response — “I am disenchanted! / Mercy, O mercy heauens!” (4.4.82-3) — indicates that the use of picture as a moral illustration is at least somewhat effective. However, this reading of the picture makes its subject (the face of Sophia) less important than the damaged miniature’s use as an image of Honoria’s moral degeneration. Honoria is the source of Sophia’s temptation, and thus of the changes to the picture, but Mathias does not know this; rather, he is using the image to illustrate a moral point which is in no way related to the picture’s mimetic function. The verbal gloss overwrites the image’s intended function, making its subject immaterial.

This final shift of function turns the picture into an emblem; it is no longer a mimetic

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17 The fact that the Queen is responsible for the changes to the miniature is not made public until 4.4.111.
or a magical representation of Sophia or a reflection of Mathias's psyche, but only a discoloured miniature used to illustrate a moral point. It is significant that this is the only point in the play where the miniature functions beneficially; its effect on Mathias himself has been negative, and Sophia, when she learns of its existence, will demand a separation. In effect, the picture can only do Honoria good because she is ignorant of its function and of its true meaning; for her it is an emblem which stimulates inner moral reflection; this inner reflection, because it is internal and immaterial, not relying on artistic representation, must always be a true image. But the source of the function of the picture-as-emblem is Mathias's gloss, not the image itself. Ultimately, this final use of the picture is Massinger's recuperation of the only safe form of visual art — the emblematic, which signifies by importing extra-mimetic, extra-pictorial concepts, and gestures towards a hidden and higher reality by means of mimetic images. It also allows the intersection of Mathias's and Honoria's corrections; in a play which deals with the correction of two flawed marriages, it is fitting that the Queen's correction is brought about by the object of Mathias's fixation. Mathias's own correction, brought about by Sophia herself, is a much more complex affair, and ultimately results in the picture's destruction.

That this destruction is necessary is of course obvious from a narrative point of view, but it also relates to an aspect of the picture's function which has not yet been discussed. The miniature is a replacement for Sophia, and a field of projection for Mathias's anxieties, but it is also, in an odd way, a distorted image of their marriage. The normal function of a miniature, the aide-memoire, keeps alive the emotional connection between the subject and the bearer; miniatures are signs of relationships as well as images of loved ones. In this case, the mirroring function of the picture parodies the mutuality implicit in marriage. Mathias and Sophia try to mirror each others' behaviour; Sophia's intention to cuckold Mathias is based on his behaviour as reported by the fops, and Mathias models himself on her behaviour as reported by the picture. Sophia is ultimately able to reject the lies of Ricardo and Ubaldo because she recognizes their 'representation' of her husband as a lie. For Mathias, however, the picture (a concrete image of his own jealousy) prevents him from actually seeing his wife;
what he sees instead is the miniature, and in ‘mirroring’ it, he mirrors his own obsessions. The picture thus lies between the two marriage partners, obscuring the mutual gaze between lovers which an ordinary miniature is designed to mimic; like the jealousy that created it and which it symbolizes, the picture must be destroyed in order to permit the true mutuality which marriage demands.

This is the reason the picture is destroyed after Sophia’s curative fiction has brought about Mathias’s repentance. Sophia’s cure is an enactment of the nightmare of the cuckolding wanton that has lurked within the picture from the beginning, followed by a display of the emasculated gallants, whom she tropes as mirrors of his “womanish” jealousy (5.3.178). Sophia’s use of Richardo and Ubaldo as living illustrations for her husband echoes Mathias’s moralizing use of the picture-as-emblem in his cure of Honoria. This is extremely apt, since it allows the country to correct the court using the characters who are the play’s best examples of exterior display as a means of self-construction – the principle on which the court is based.18 Everything the two fops do is based on appearances and artificial props, from their planned Academy of Courtship, which will teach the “congees, cringes, postures, methods, phrase / Proper to everie Nation” (2.2.19-20) to their preparations for Sophia’s seduction, which consist of a series of aphrodisiacs (artificial aids to seduction) (4.2.25-33) and an afternoon’s extensive preening (artificial aids to appearance) (4.2.33-5). Both men are what Richardo claims Ubaldo is, creations of ‘art’:

that he liues he owes
To art not nature, she has giuen him ore.
He moues like the faery King, on scrues and wheeles
Made by his Doctors recipes and yet still
They are out of ioynt, and euery day repairing.
(4.2.97-101)

The comparison of the courtiers to a masquing prop or a pageant show moving on badly oiled

18 Sophia’s cure accords with the status of her country house as a corrective anti-court. This is demonstrated by several oppositions and contrasts; her mourning for the absent Mathias (2.1.36-79) contrasts with the revels of the court (2.2) and her vehement rejection of Hilario’s “anticke” show of military pomp – which, as Garrett points out, functions as an anti-masque to the Court masque (Diamond 157) – shows up the court’s pleasure in the reductive and frivolous masque.
wheels is apt, for they have been Honoria’s props in her plot to destroy Sophia.

Sophia’s reconstruction of the pair is based on a literal removal of externals; they each strip themselves in happy anticipation of an assignation with her but are instead locked into the rooms and given, respectively, “a clownes cast suite” (4.2.153) and a “pettycote for a couerlet. . . / And an ould womans biggen for a night cappe” (4.2.136-7). This “enforced transvestitism” (Milsum 217) divests them of the signs of their nobility and wealth as well as their masculinity, as is suggested by Ubaldo’s pained bellow “I am a Lord, and that’s no common tittle, / And shall I be vsed thus?” (4.2.142-3). The cure for their lust is completed by spinning, with proverbial reference to Hercules spinning for Omphale (4.2.180), and by hunger: “hunger with her razor / Hath made me an euenuch (5.1.101-2). They are unmanned and moved down the social scale, becoming the butt of abuse from Sophia’s servants. The success of this treatment is based on the fact that neither their masculinity and nor their nobility are intrinsic, but rather inhere in their clothing and manners. In fact, even their identities are made up of externals; Honoria can barely recognize the unfortunate Ubaldo in the ridiculous object paraded before her; as he himself says “I am now I know not what” (5.3.136). These stripped nullities then become Sophia’s image of her husband’s inner self.

Sophia’s fiction begins with a neglect of hospitality and proper decorum, leaving her honoured guests standing at the door, forcing Mathias to make awkward excuses and fetch her (5.3.26-32). When he returns with her, she kisses Ferdinand and Eubulus very fully (5.3.60-5) and thanks the Queen for the loan of Ubaldo and Richardo in suggestive terms, calling them “[t]wo principal courtiers for Ladies servuce, / [. . .] and as such / Imployd by her” (5.3.87-9). When Mathias objects that she behaves with the “boldnes of a wanton courtezan, / And not a matrons modesty” (5.3.65-6), she makes the first reference to the picture:

you know
How to resolue your selfe what my intents are,
By the helpe of Mephostophiles, and your picture,
Pray you looke vpon’t againe.
(5.3. 76-79)

When he insists that she is lying and that he “know[s] that in [his] absence thou wer’t honest
However now turnd monster” (5.3. 93-4), she raises an issue he has not considered — the legitimacy of the picture’s information:

The truth is
We did not deale like you in speculations
On cheating pictures; we knew shadowes were
No substances and actuall performance
The best assurance; I will bring [the fops] hither
To make good in this presence so much for me.
(5.3.94-99)

The one thing that Mathias has not doubted is the status of the picture as an accurate reflection of Sophia’s actions. He has been reading the picture ‘transparently’, forgetting that its view of Sophia was also an interpretation of her. The issue of the speculative status of the picture’s image, discussed throughout this chapter, has not been yet been raised within the play itself. Mathias has been a naive spectator of the picture just as he is now a naive spectator of Sophia’s show.

His reaction to the suggestion that the image he has trusted, built on, obsessed over, and allowed to direct his behaviour is only a construction of fiction is predictable — a return to jealous madness. He rants at Sophia, calling her a Gorgon (5.3.104) in an image which makes explicit the fear of the castrating effects of cuckoldry that has lain behind his mental construction of the picture from the beginning:

...in her tongue
Millions of adders hisse, and euer y hayre
Vpon her wicked head a snake more dreadfull
Than that Tisiphon, threw on Athamas,
Which in his madnes forc’d him to dismember
His proper issue.
(5.3.105-10)

The horror implicit in the picture is overcome by the horror that his paranoia projects onto Sophia herself, and she defeats the picture in ugliness, in an ironic and inverted use of the trope of the portrait outdone by reality.

Although Mathias is completely fooled by Sophia’s play-acting — for the same reasons that he so readily believed in the picture – her act is transparent to the rest of her audience, particularly to Honoria, who warns the maddened Mathias of the difference between acting and reality (5.3.124-27). Her return with the humiliated gallants is greeted by cheerful joking
from everyone but Mathias, who is silent until Sophia directly confronts him:

And now to you sir, why doe you not againe,
Peruse your picture? and take the aduice
Of your learned consort? these are the men, or none
That made you, as the Italian sayes, a beco.
(5.3.155-58)

Having tricked him into a public display of his obsession, she now holds up the unmanned gallants both as proof of the absurdity of his jealousy and as a mirror of his own "more then womans weaknes" (5.3.178). Richardo and Ubaldo have been feminized for the purposes of this display; their emasculation serves to demonstrate the folly of his paranoid jealousy, and they also serve as a displacement for the castration anxiety expressed in his earlier speech. Her implicit argument is that it is mistrust, the fear of cuckoldry rather than cuckoldry itself, which has 'unmanned' her husband, and her language also implies that he is just as impotent (perhaps even in the literal sense) as Ubaldo and Richardo. Mathias has been looking the picture of Sophia seeking the knowledge of "what I am" (1.1.126), and now Sophia herself, through the gallants, shows him what his "vnmanly doubts" have made him (5.3.169).

Mathias's curative humiliation via the monstrous mirror-image of the gallants is appropriate in a play which deals so much with mirroring and displacement onto art. However, this curative display is not created by art, but by the removal of the outer sartorial arts which have allowed the weedy and unattractive gallants to pose as ladykillers. Because their stripping reveals their essential vacuity, Sophia's remaking of them is more an unmasking than a transformation (for all that Richardo calls her "Circe" (5.3.138)), part of the finale's curative repudiation of art which is continued by Baptista's abjuration of magic (5.3.215-16) and Mathias's burning of the picture (5.3. 214-215). But when Sophia moves to repudiate Mathias as well as his actions, the outcry is universal; all the characters, including the courtiers (5.3.206-7) and the Queen "begge remission for him" (5.3.204). The most obvious reason for this resistance is the generic one; her threatened retreat into a nunnery would destroy the reproductive energy necessary to a comic conclusion, as Eubulus's explicit commentary makes clear:
To the ould sport againe with a good lucke to you!
'Tis not alone enough that you are good,
We must haue some of the breed of you: will you destroy
The kind, and race of goodnesse?

(5.3.196-99)

There is more in this resistance than a generic need for closure; marriage in this play is more than four legs in a bed. Mathias’s use of the picture has served to separate the spouses; the false image has prevented the mutuality of marital trust. Yet for all its corruption and failure, the picture’s art provides an image, however distorted, of the reciprocity inherent in “Massinger’s ideal of marriage as a frank and reciprocal relationship based on mutual respect and trust” (Barton “Voice” 229-230). Marriage itself is the true substance that the shadows of art have mimicked. Therefore, Sophia cannot be permitted to retreat to the solitary reflection of the nunnery; the demand that she forgive Mathias is not just generic, something she is forced into to maintain the comic ending, but aesthetic and moral. The true overcoming of the illusory mutuality of the art of the picture lies not just in its destruction and the scourging of Mathias’s jealousy, but in its replacement by the truly mutual mirror of a loving marriage.
Chapter Two.

Massinger's Inset Masques:

*The Picture*, *The Duke of Milan* and *The Guardian*

The inset masque is the commonest form of metadramatic insert on the Renaissance stage. Most dramatists working in the professional theatre in the period 1560-1642 insert various spectacular elements such as dumbshows and pageants into their plays; the masque is the only form used consistently throughout the period and across all genres. Ewbank defines the inset masque as:

> an entertainment with the essential features of the court masque [...] put on by one or more of the dramatis personae before other dramatis personae. By the essential features, I mean a ritual in which masked dancers, with or without a presenter, arrive to perform a dance, sometimes to sing, and nearly always to 'take out' members of the stage audience. For several obvious reasons (lack of time, lack of machinery [...]) the inserted mask is briefer and less elaborate than the court masque proper.

(409)

This definition is the one I use, with one caveat; because not everything that is called a masque by on-stage audiences actually follows this pattern, I assume that anything called a masque by the play's characters is one, regardless of form. Similarly, scenes which have masque-like elements (disguise, songs, dances) but lack a scripted performance may recall the masque, but are not masques proper. This chapter and the next will focus on Massinger's

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1 Fuzier's checklist counts 110 plays containing masques, 82 containing dumbshows, and 55 with other 'various entertainments'. This is by far the largest category of inset forms.
formal inset masques, and not on these proto-masque forms.

The widespread usage of inset masques makes it difficult to define a single dramatic use for the form over the period; the cross-generic application of the inset masque over some sixty years of dramatic composition tends to atomize critical conclusions. Critical studies fall into two categories: the blanket survey or the narrowly specific study. General surveys, although often enlightening in relation to specific plays, are usually of little use in outlining the general function of the inset masque. A good example is Catherine Shaw's 500 page study *Some Vanity of Mine Art: The Masque in English Renaissance Drama*; its scope is monumental, covering every use of the form in every genre from the mid-sixteenth century to the close of the theatres. However, the scale of the approach works against the development of an overarching theory on the use of the masque in general over the period; rather, Shaw's study is a series of readings of individual plays. By contrast, studies which limit themselves to the use of the masque in a specific genre have the opposite problem; they posit a specific function for the inset masque in general by examining the use of the device in a generically related set of plays. Sarah Sutherland's excellent study *The Masque in Jacobean Tragedy* is a good example: she examines the inset masque in six major tragedies dating from the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Her conclusion is that the marriage of contraries in the masque, the simultaneous "celebrat[i]on of decorum through a show full of wonder and honorable praise [...][and] violat[i]on of] decorum by exploiting disguise and then subsiding in madness, mayhem or murder" (113) is linked to "the Jacobean sensibility" (115). Yet this conclusion cannot be readily applied to the use of masques in comedy or tragicomedy, since these rarely end in tragedy; the selectivity which enables her

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2 The general studies include Inga-Stina Ewbank's "These Pretty Devices: a Study of Masques in Plays" in *A Book of Masques*, Francesca Dunfey's "Mighty Shows: Masque Elements in Jacobean and Caroline Drama", Enid Welsford's chapter on the inset masque in her *The Court Masque*, Reyher's chapter in *Les Masques Anglaises* and Catherine Shaw's *Some Vanity of Mine Art: The Masque in English Renaissance Drama*. Studies of masques in specific genres and plays include Susan Sutherland's *Masques in Jacobean Tragedy*, and Marie Cornelia's *The Function of the Masque in Jacobean Tragedy and Tragicomedy*. Masques in individual plays have been the subject of many papers; see bibliography for a partial listing.
to draw her conclusions means that they cannot be extrapolated to masques in other genres.

This said, it is still possible draw some very basic general conclusions on the use of masques in plays, as Ewbank has done in "These Pretty Devices", the most useful of the surveys. The masque is a mark of high social status — 'courtliness' — in all genres; it can signify would-be courtliness (No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's), corrupt courts (The Maid's Tragedy), true courts hidden in the wilderness (The Tempest), or simply courtliness in general. Masques are performed to mark particular events within plays, as Ewbank notes: "in all plays [...] the inserted masque has some plot motivation: it is performed on the pretext of a wedding (most frequently) or other celebration, such as a royal accession, the return of a victorious general, or just a banquet" (409). They also function as "a functional dramatic device -- a way of starting, furthering and resolving plots and of adding meanings to plots" (Ewbank 410); in tragedy, conventionally, masques provide a witty venue for murder, while in comedy, they provide opportunities for elopements and courtship, as well as celebrating the marriages which close romantic plays. Finally, they can be used to comment, thematically, on the action of the play as a whole (Ewbank 411-2). In this case "the inserted masque provides the crucial point in the action, the climax, the denouement, or even the centre of moral insight" (Ewbank 412). The thematic and dramatic functions often overlap; a masque may be both a wedding celebration and a reflection of the corruption of the society for which it is staged, as is the case of the masque in The Maid's Tragedy.

These two functions — the masque as a means of triggering events, and the masque as thematic commentary — blur together in the later decades of the period. By the twenties and thirties, the use of the masque as a means to trigger action (as in tragedy, as a cover for revenge-murder) has lost the power to surprise the audience. In later plays, such masques seem to be parodied even as they are staged, as in Middleton's Women Beware Women (1622). The layers of practice built up by this point means that the masque as a functional trickster device fades; during the period in which Massinger wrote his solo works the masque is normally used as thematic commentary.

Massinger's work contains six on-stage masques of greater or lesser complexity; the
interrupted masque in honour of Marcelia’s birthday in *The Duke of Milan* (1621), the victory masque in praise of war in *The Picture* (1629), the masque which reveals Luke’s hypocrisy at the close of *The City Madam* (1632), the two shows of *The Guardian* (1633), the marriage masque of Juno and Hymen in Act Four Scene Two and the “entertainment of the Forest Queen” in Act Five Scene One, and, finally, the Burtonian healing show inserted into his revision of *A Very Woman* (1634). These six shows break down into three types, only one of which is actually integral to this thesis. The first type is the masque staged at court which, as Martin Garrett’s study *A Diamond, though set in Horn* makes clear, is associated with corruption, illusory outward show and the inversion of sexual and social order; the masques of *The Duke of Milan* and *The Picture* are of this type. The second is the celebratory country masque of comedy, associated with healthy order, comedic wholeness and forgiveness; the two shows of *The Guardian* are of this type. The final and most complex type is the curative masque of satire, which functions in a purgative manner to heal social and psychological disorder in *The City Madam* and *A Very Woman*. This last form, alone of the three types, places heavy emphasis on the interpretive relation between the masque and spectator; both masques have double audiences, that is, one primary audience member who directly responds to the masque, and a secondary audience who watches their response to the show. In this last form, as in Mathias’s relation to the miniature of *The Picture*, the spectator’s interpretation of the inset piece of art (the masque) serves to illuminate the interior of the character watching it and to explore the process of interpretation more generally. The first two types of masque (the court and country masques) do not foreground interpretation in the same way; rather, they function in the standard mode, as thematic commentary on the moral and social status of the playworld. Although they are interesting of themselves and in relation to the plays in which they are set, they are not as essential to the project of this thesis as the satiric/curative form. However, a study of Massinger’s inset pieces of art obviously cannot ignore four of his six inset masques; moreover, an examination of the playwright’s earlier and less complex use of the inset masque will help to point up his slightly different use of the later form. Therefore this chapter will deal briefly with the ‘court’ and ‘country’ masques,
preparatory to examining the third form at greater length in the next chapter.

Both the court and country forms are thematically related to their setting, and serve as concrete expressions of the moral context of their playworlds: the court masque is an expression of the corruption of the court setting, and the celebratory and unifying nature of the country masques celebrates the beneficial social context of the country. Both also relate to the gender politics of the plays in which they occur: the court masques are related to the uxorious inversion of proper sexual order in the marriages of both Duke Sforza and King Ladislaus, while the country masques celebrate the traditional comic restoration of social order through marriage. Structurally, the masques in all three plays function as part of a larger network of images and events; they are embedded in texts that contain elements which expand on the ideas initiated by the masques. As Garrett puts it, Massinger "uses masques and their associations [. . .] as an illustration, or series of illustrations, of a theme" (*Diamond* 139). Thus, the transformation of Marcelia’s corpse to a poisoned effigy in the final act of *The Duke of Milan* connects with the masque of the first act (since the debasement of her body is a perversion of a masque transformation) and the masque of *The Picture* connects with the self-aggrandizing displays of Honoria, the Hungarian Queen. Likewise, the country masques of *The Guardian* tie into the play’s comic confusions of character more generally; in particular, they are contrasted with (and ultimately resolve) the darker misunderstanding of the ‘Cimmerian lady’ plot which precedes them.

Finally, both forms are, as Martin Garrett’s study concludes, oddly restrained in their spectacular elements, particularly by comparison to the elaborate masques-within staged by Massinger’s old partner, Fletcher. Garrett argues that Massinger’s attitude to spectacle in general (and masques in particular) is one of profound mistrust; at worst, masques are vehicles for the expression of the worst forms of court vices and at best, “a frivolous activity that should not unduly concern the virtuous” (Garrett *Diamond* 142). This statement is accurate with regard to the playwright’s treatment of court masques, although Massinger’s more positive stagings of the country and curative masques call for slightly different conclusions. It is my contention that Massinger does not have a blanket ‘attitude’ to the
masque; his inset masques are positive or negative depending on their function in relation to the play in which they are set. But Garrett’s argument that Massinger consistently plays down the potentially dazzling effects of visual splendour is accurate. Massinger’s primary interest in all inset forms of art, the masque included, seems to be analysis of the process of interpretation. He therefore intellectualizes and moralizes his shows, demanding an analytic rather than an awestruck response from his audiences.

The court masque, both on and off the stage, is designed to bedazzle and delight rather than explicate or edify, and it is not surprising that Massinger’s treatment of this form is particularly sceptical. The court masques staged in The Duke of Milan and The Picture are forms of false outward show, signs of the folly of those for whom they are staged; practically, they form a part of the fantasies of power which destroy or threaten the rulers of both plays. They are, as Garrett points out, surprisingly simple and brief (Diamond 147); their performances occasion little comment from their audiences, and they seem to have little effect on the plot of the play. Indeed, Garrett argues that Massinger cares more about masques as ideas than as events, which explains his tendency to interrupt them rather than staging them fully (Diamond 146). However, in the case of the masque in honour of the Duchess’s birthday in The Duke of Milan, the aborted performance is more significant than a full staging would have been — the power of this masque lies in the fact that it is brief, wordless, and cut off by messages of death.

The play links the Duchess’s birthday celebrations to social chaos and destruction, from the public drunkenness and rowdyism of the first scene to their suspension in the face of imminent invasion by Spanish troops. The speech by the clown Graccho which opens the play is a classic piece of carnival revelry, from his proclamation of himself as “state drunkard” (1.1.2) to his statement that sobriety is “Capitall Treason” (1.1.13). This could be seen as all in good fun, were it not for the fear of political collapse that lies behind the celebrations. The timing of the drunken revelry, staged on the eve of the decisive battle between Milan’s ally, France, and its enemy, Spain, marks the revels as unseasonable (1.1.97).
The masque is therefore staged in the context of a threatened state; while the public drunkenness of the opening scene is muted into the more refined revelry of Duke Sforza’s court in Scene Three, the celebrations are still marked as inappropriate, partly because of the reductive view of the masque itself. The gentlemen setting out a banquet discuss the masque as well as the other birthday preparations, all of which are designed to please the senses rather than the mind, containing “[a]ll that may be had / To please the eye, the eare, taste, touch, or smell” (1.3.3-4). The masque, which only forms a part of this “[c]ost, and brauerie” (1.3.2), is no more significant than the banqueting stuffs the gentlemen set forth. Indeed, the question “haue you heard what’s the inuention” (1.3.6) raises the issue of deeper meaning only to have it summarily dismissed:

No matter,  
It is intended for the Dutches honour  
And if it giue her glorious attributes,  
As the most faire, most vertuous, and the rest,  
‘Twill please the Duke. . .  

(1.3.6-10)

In the Jonsonian sense, the masque is a ‘body’ without a ‘soul’; as Garrett notes, the comment echoes Strato’s judgement, in The Maid’s Tragedy, that masques are “tied to rules of Flatterie” (Diamond 147).

Upon the ducal couple’s entrance, Sforza confirms the celebration’s status as flattery, fulsomely praising Marcelia, the Duchess, in a long and immoderate speech which is cut short by the news that battle has been joined between France and Spain. In defiance of this momentary expectation of victory or defeat Sforza calls for the masque at line 132; the entrance of the masquers is immediately interrupted by the entry of the messenger bringing news of the French defeat at line 136. It is possible that the masque is not staged at all: to Sforza’s “I was told / There was a Masque” (1.3.130-1) Francisco responds “They waite your

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3 I assume that the gentlemen are setting out a true banquet – a dessert course served after a feast, rather than a feast itself. The general associations of the banquet were of pleasure, leisure and waste, as opposed to the associations of feasts, which invoke hospitality and generosity; banquets are particularly associated with masques. See Patricia Fumerton’s chapter on banqueting in Cultural Aesthetics and the essays in Anne Wilson’s collection Banqueting Stuffe.
Highnesse pleasure...” (1.3.131) and Sforza orders “Bid 'em enter” (1.3.132). There is no stage direction for the entrance of the masquers, but Sforza’s references to “my present pleasures” at line 138 and his commands to “[s]ilence that harsh musicke” (1.3.149) and “[r]emoue / These signes of mirth...” (1.3.154-5) suggest that they are on stage. Although the masque is certainly interrupted before it is fully underway, its entrance is probably staged, since, as Garrett says, “it would be dramatically and theatrically effective for the revelry to continue desperately as the tension rises at the sound of the horn” (Diamond 148). Moreover, such an aborted staging between two messages of doom would emphasize the masque’s role as the epitome of the inappropriate and futile birthday celebrations.

Such a presence, no matter how fleeting, is significant. Garrett argues that “it does not matter, from Massinger’s point of view, whether the masque is there or not. The play [. . .] would be much the same without it” (Diamond 149). This is correct in regards to the plot, since the presence of the masque makes little difference to the events which follow. But thematically this half-staging is what gives the masque its significance, since its stillborn status relates it to the play’s general linkage of exterior show with death; in fact, given that we have no information about the masque’s matter, its abrupt severance is the most important thing about it. Obviously, the silencing of a celebratory masque is an appropriately ominous way to open a tragedy, but as Garrett points out, the masque’s destruction is tied to later imagery of art in the play. He argues, convincingly, that Sforza and the other members of his court “employ art as a means of attempting to order reality” (Diamond 152) and that Sforza, in particular, is destroyed by this reliance on artifice. The ultimate expression of the idea is Sforza’s embrace of the poisoned corpse of his Duchess in Act Five:

Artificially painted to seem alive by Francisco, the corpse deludes Sforza as did the ill-founded ‘cost and braverie’ of the First Act. Just as the cost and bravery were ill-founded, the corpse is poisoned. When he kisses the lips painted with poison, his faith in appearance finally destroys him [. . .] it is possible to suggest that masque and antimasque – ideal and grotesque truth—

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4 The absence of a stage direction for the actual entrance of the masquers is common in Massinger’s masques; for example, the stage directions for the entrance of the masquers in The Picture are appended to the text of the song that they sing, but they are on stage before this point.
come together when Sforza embraces the body of Marcelia...
(Garrett Diamond, 153-4)

The play's concluding image is the ultimate expression of the theme of 'destruction via art', but the silenced masque of Act One is imagistically and thematically linked with this final, masque-like death. As Garrett here notes, Sforza's death is a corrupted version of a masque; the Duchess's dead body is transformed into a masquing prop, a painted property, rendering Sforza's murder a perverse completion of the interrupted opening masque. Since the masque is tied to Marcelia in its staging in her honour and at her instance (1.3.120-2), its silencing in favor of "[a] tolling Bell, / As a sad Harbinger to tell me, that / This pamper'd lumpe of Flesh, must feast the Wormes" (1.3.150-2) parallels her own. Finally, the play's use of masque imagery is an inversion of the masquing ideal: rather than the masque imagistically transforming the court into an image of harmony, a brutal parody is staged in which the beauty celebrated is reduced to a painted prop. The transformation that masquing promises ultimately becomes a reduction and destruction via art, a cumulative fiction in which masque and anti-masque join (Garrett Diamond 154). The masque is not destructive in and of itself. Rather, its own destruction ties it to the play's theme of destruction via exterior show; the final image of the play 'completes' the interrupted masque which opens the show.

The victory masque staged at the court of Hungary in The Picture is likewise linked to the play's presentation of courtly shows as corrupt and destructive illusions. Because the play is a tragicomedy, the masque of the court is countered by the country show of Sophia and the rival illusion of the portrait, yet the linking of the court masque and the court's sexual and social disorder is even more explicit in this play than in The Duke of Milan. As Garrett points out (Diamond 158-61), Queen Honoria is associated with all of the play's shows; the masque is staged for her, her seduction is in the form of a masque, and even her conversion is a "pageant" (4.3.22). The connection is stronger than mere association, however, since Honoria is herself a performer whose self-presentation, as Milsum puts it, "attempt[s] the liberalization of royalist-drama's image of the queen as superior to all" (215). Honoria's identity is based on her image as 'the glorious queen', an image constructed via a series of
masque-like performances. Her position of power in the Hungarian court depends entirely on this fictional construct; her theatrics of power not only establish her as the visual centre of court life, but demean the monarchical and patriarchal power of her husband. Ladislaus and Honoria's theatrics of exaltation and subjection, for all that they are masque-like, invert the celebratory function of the masque; by using the symbols of state and royal power as erotic love-tokens, Honoria's masque-imagery debases the status of kingship.5

The masque itself becomes a part of this series of 'playlets', all of which work to displace patriarchal order. The initial anxiety of the Hungarian plot — the threat of war, of invasion from without — is rapidly replaced by the fear of corruption from within, as the queen's pride disrupts her husband's authority. The problem worsens as the court action moves from the public rooms of Act One Scene Two into Honoria's bedchamber in Act Three Scene Five; the site of power moves from the public space of the throne room to the private space of the bedroom. Likewise, the series of 'shows' move from her playful usurpation of the first act (see footnote 8), to the masque proper, which symbolically displaces the masculine art of war with Honoria's court theatrics, to her seduction of Mathias in the third act and her final attempt to display her new 'captive' to Ladislaus in the fourth. The formally staged masque, initially intended as a celebration of the returning army, becomes another example of Honoria's courtly theatrics; although the show is staged to

5 The royal couple's first appearance in Act One Scene Two illustrates this. As in The Duke of Milan, the Hungarian court spends the eve of their army's engagement with the Turks preparing "musicke and masques" (1.2.77) for the queen rather than praying for victory. Ladislaus's description of Honoria as a Goddess descending to "sanctifie" the court (1.2.89) and Honoria's splendid arrival "in state vnder a Canopy" (1.2.128 SD) intimate that the couple's marital relationship is built on masque-like fantasies. The indecorous scene which follows bears this out; Ladislaus enacts his own deposition (1.2.151-62), placing Honoria in his throne, kissing the hem of her gown (1.2.162), and "surrendring vp My will and faculties to your disposition: / . . . not for a day or yeere, / But my whole life. . . ." (1.2.154-7). That the abdication is fiction is made clear by Honoria's own statement, upon the objections of Eubulus, that "I doe but act the Part you [Ladislaus] put vpon me. . . ." (1.2.246). However, this 'play-acting' reduces the throne and the crown, the signs of monarchy, to props in a show. Such an inversion of marital and royal prerogatives threatens the order of the state as well as the marriage, and is related to Honoria's inappropriate seizure of power through the rest of the play (Clark Professional 62).
celebrate the masculine honour gained in warfare, it is ultimately a triumph of her beauty.

The masque itself represents a displacement of the masculine honours of war by the female theatrics of court, but this process begins with the arrival of the victorious army at court at the opening of the scene. The heroes are greeted, not by a military triumph, but by the queen’s fops, Ubaldo and Ricardo, who resolve to “fight at complement with [the General]” (2.2.42); the verbal jousting in fulsome effusion which follows begins the court’s debasement and displacement of the war. The replacement of the language of war with the rhetoric of courtly compliment is emphasized by Ebulus’s satiric asides and in particular by his long speech on the peacetime repudiation of soldiers which follows the exit of the courtiers. In this instance, what Ebulus says is less important than when he says it; the speech is one of Massinger’s standard formulae. However, its insertion between the foppery of the courtiers and the delicacy of the masque which follows underscores the division between the earnest danger of war and the dishonest frivolity of the world the soldiers have now entered.

The masque itself, staged upon the entrance of the royal couple, is a dance of classical deities that is almost a parody of war. Ladislaus describes it as:

. . .a French brawle, an apish imitation
Of what you really performe in battaile,
And Pallas bound vp in a little volume
Apollo with his lute attending on her
Serue for the induction.

(2.2. 195-200)

Garrett asserts that “the abrupt transition from martial achievement to this rather effete-sounding courtly show is intended to hint that, although Mathias has won his straightforward battle honours, more complicated challenges await him in the less simple world of the peacetime court” (Diamond 159).

The masque itself contains clues as to the nature of these challenges. Most importantly, it is obviously a modified version of the masque which had been planned to celebrate Honoria in the first act (1.2.304); the roots of the original design are still visible under the martial overlay. Although the song in praise of soldiers and the dance both relate the performance to the glory of the returning army, neither its style nor its presiding deities
suit its ostensible subject. The boy presenters are costumed as Pallas, the goddess of wisdom, craft and (in her Roman form of Minerva) the theatre, and Apollo, traditionally associated with poetry and song. Classical deities are a masque convention, but it is remarkable that a masque celebrating warriors contains no warrior figures to express masculine power; there is no Mars, no Hercules. Rather, the only armed figure is Pallas Athena, who, as a ‘martial maid’, is a perfect figure to express the female dominance of the triumphant queen.

The song is also unorthodox. First, it is hubristic, moving from a celebration of victory to a statement of moral invulnerability, claiming that the soldier:

\[ \text{by your powerfull arme haue binne} \]
\[ \text{So true a victor, that no sinne} \]
\[ \text{Could euer taint you with a blame} \]
\[ \text{To lessen your deserved fame.} \]

(2.2.203-6)

The argument parallels the Queen’s later assertion that, as Garrett puts it, “eminence of place makes base action eminent” (Diamond 160). Ironically, the moral virtue which the masque equates with martial victory is the element of Mathias’s character which Honoria will try to damage; Mathias’s “sinne” will not only “taint him with blame” but publicly humiliate him. Moreover, the song draws attention to its own inadequacy. The performers “contemplate to expresse / The glory of your happinesse” (2.2.201-2) and “contend to set / Your worth in the full height. . .” (2.2.207-8) but the glory of the victory remains inexpressible, and thus unexpressed. Although this notion is a commonplace of panegyric, the combination of the parodic dance, the inappropriate presiding deities and the bathetic song produces an odd sense of dislocation, a feeling that the celebration does not match its occasion.

The Queen’s insistence on rewarding the victors with her own hands and own jewels further shifts the scene’s focus from the warriors to herself. Although her payment is generous, earning Ebulus’s praise, her rewards are not the honours Ferdinand called for in his description of Mathias’s heroism. Ferdinand asks that Mathias be given the classical honours of the field:

\[ \text{. . .all rewards} \]
\[ \text{And signes of honour, as the Ciucieke garland,} \]
\[ \text{The mural1 wreath, the enemies prime horse,} \]
With the Generals sword, and armour (the old honors
With which the Romans crown'd their several leaders)
To him alone are proper.

(2.2. 182-87)

But the reward Mathias gets is Honoria’s diamond necklace. At this point, of course, the necklace is only a spectacular gesture on the part of the Queen; Honoria’s presentation of the jewels turns Mathias’s heroism into action in her service, a way by which she can accrue the glories of war.³ Visually, the presentation of the necklace (which she throws around Mathias’s neck) overlays his battle-scarred armour with courtly ostentation. It is no accident that Honoria’s verbal imagery recalls masque costume: she tells him to wear the diamonds “[a]s studded stars in your armour, and make the Sun / Looke dimme with jealousie of a greater light / Then his beames guild the day with” (2.2. 251-3). He has become an actor in her larger masque; the presentation of the gage makes him her ‘knight’, and, in doing so, makes him her courtier.

Finally, the presentation of the necklace shifts the focus of the scene from the honour of the recipient to the glory of the giver. The displacement of masculine reward with feminine frippery is emphasized, as usual, through Ebulus’s grumbling commentary – “the Kingdome / Is very bare of mony, when rewards / Issue from the Queenes iewell house...” (2.2.234-6) – but Honoria’s own words underscore the transformation of Mathias’s reward into her gift:

Expos’d to view, call it Honorias guift
The Queene Honorias guift that loues a souldier,
And to guie ornament, and lustre to him
Parts freely with her owne.

(2.2. 253-257)

The movement of the speech shifts the focus of the scene and the action from Mathias’s deserving bravery to the queen’s generosity: the focus is no longer on the hero of the hour,

³ Later, the necklace is transformed into an indecorous sign of masculine subjection by Ubaldo and Ricardo, who use Mathias’s possession of it as evidence of his supposed adultery in their temptation of Sophia. Although, at this point, there is no indication of sexual disorder, the payment of jewels rather than money lends itself to the implication that they were earned in ‘ladies service’, Ricardo and Ubaldo’s euphemism for male prostitution.
but on the source of the diamonds adorning his armour.

The conclusion of Honoria's speech echoes her playful occupation of the throne in the first act: it is a second, more direct, usurpation of the King's authority:

... Yet not to take
From the magnificence of the King, I will
Dispense his bounty to, but as a page
To wait on mine; for other trifles take
A hundred thousand crownes, your hand deere sire,
And this shall be thy warrant

Takes of the Kings signet
(2.2.257-62)

Although the King is pleased with what she has done (2.2.275-6), Honoria's 'theft' of his signet ring is a physical appropriation of a material sign of monarchal power; together with her declaration that his bounty is "a page / To wait on mine" (2.2.259-60) the speech, like her earlier occupation of the throne, reduces the status of the legitimate ruler to a prop.

Like the earlier masque of The Duke of Milan, the masque of The Picture initially seems to be of little importance; all indications are that it is a brief interlude, minimally staged. But its dual function — celebrating both the soldiers and the queen — makes it the play's first connection between Mathias and Honoria; the fact that the show fails to celebrate the martial glory of the victorious army but does manage to visually transform the soldiers into courtiers foreshadows the outcome of this connection.

Finally, both court masques in some ways displace the women that they celebrate, as their focus on surfaces leads to the perception of the beauty they celebrate as only surface; the real world is dislocated and distorted by the art designed to adorn it. Both Honoria and Marcelia are celebrated by courtly shows designed to glorify their beauty, but the ultimate effect of these shows is to transform them from real women into 'special effects'. In the case of the Duchess of Milan, this transformation is horribly literal, but the imagery that Mathias uses in his final confrontation with Honoria (4.4.30-82) suggests that she too has become a creation of art. Although the main thrust of his lecture is that Honoria's actions have ruined her morally and thus tainted her physical beauty, there is also an underlying suggestion that the expression of her beauty through display has made it as insubstantial and fictional as the shows which celebrate it: "all that was gratious, great, and glorious in her / ... like seeming
shadowes / Wanting true substance vanish'd” (4.4.51-3). Because Honoria’s power is constructed by the masque-like shows which celebrate it, it can also be as evanescent as a vanishing antimasque. Mathias’s description of her as Thetis emphasizes the uncertain and mutable qualities that such an acted persona implies:

...as you play, and iuggle with a stranger
Varying your shapes like Thetis, though the beauties
Of all that are by Poets raptures sainted
Were now in you vnitied, you should passe
Pittied by me perhaps, but not regarded.
(4.4. 59-63)

Honoria, through her reliance on an acted role, has become a shifting, unstable creation of art. The protean nature that her acted transformations give to her public role is here expanded to refer to her moral role; in playing parts – “play[ing]” and “iuggl[ing]” – she has become changeable, and thus corrupted.

Therefore, the court masques are not only corrupt because they are set in corrupt courts and performed to celebrate unhealthily uxorious marriages; they are also suspect because they set out to create reality out of illusions, to create something that does not exist and set it moving in the real world. Although they are short and seemingly unimportant performances, they act together with the rest of the imagery of the plays which contain them to at once celebrate and debase the women who are their subjects.

The country masques of The Guardian, by contrast, are non-illusory performances which celebrate the real-world transformation of marriage. Although they too transform the world, they do it without visual bedazzlement, through simple communal celebration. In fact, the disordered world of The Guardian is healed by the marriages which the masques mark and celebrate. These beneficial masques are inversions of the court masques of The Picture and The Duke of Milan in function, setting and implications, although not in dramaturgical use. Like the court masques, these ‘country’ masques are expressions of the nature of their play world; while the court masques are rhetorically linked with the outer show and illusory beauty, the country celebrations are expressions of social health, both the health of their performers and the health of body politic they symbolize. Part of the reason
the country masques are beneficial while the court ones are negative is that the country shows celebrate the real-world unification of marriage, while the court shows glorify the worst aspects of two damagingly distorted marital relationships. It is not so much that the country shows are good things of in and of themselves as that they denote marriages which are beneficial.

Each of The Guardian’s two plots stages a masque, and both celebrate the union of a couple.7 As in all romantic comedy, the problem of the play is the integration of sexual

7 The main plot involves the efforts of Durazzo, the guardian of the title, to help his overly shy ward Caldoro marry Caliste, with whom he is infatuated. Caliste, who is kept in strict isolation by her mother, Iolante, is infatuated with Adorio, a libertine who refuses to marry her – although he’s willing to have sex. The plot is a reworking of the night-time confusions of the quartet of lovers in Midsummer Night’s Dream; Caliste cajoles Adorio into ‘eloping’ with her, and dresses her maid, Mirtilla, in one of her gowns to fool her watchful mother. On the night set for the elopement, Caldoro and Durazzo arrive by chance as Caliste runs from the house; prompted by Durazzo and aided by the darkness, Caldoro claims to be Adorio and carries her off. Adorio arrives a few seconds later and carries the disguised Mirtilla off to his country villa where he stages a marriage masque to welcome his ‘new bride’. Once the mistaken identities are revealed the mis-matched couples spend two acts wandering the woods in search of one another; in the process it becomes apparent that the mis-matches are no such thing, and the play ends on marriages between the two chaste lovers and the serving-maid and the libertine.

The second and more serious plot involves the trials of Severino and Iolante, Caliste’s parents. Severino has fled Naples after killing his brother-in-law in a duel and is now leading a band of ‘Robin Hood’ style bandits in the woods; Iolante, left behind in Naples, has become obsessively proud of her chaste “widowhood”. However, Iolante’s brother did not actually die from his wounds, and has been in hiding in Paris. He returns to Naples disguised as a Frenchman (for no reason other than the furthering of the plot) in order to beg a pardon for Severino; while he is there Iolante (his sister) becomes infatuated with him, and, prompted by her pandering maid, Calypso, propositions him. Their tryst is set for the same night as Caliste’s elopement; however, Severino arrives for an unexpected conjugal visit and catches Iolante in preparation for the meeting with her ‘lover’. Enraged, he ties her up, threatens her and then leaves her alone for a moment; Calypso enters in the interim and is convinced to trade places with her mistress, allowing her to meet her lover. Severino returns, cuts off the maid’s nose and leaves again; Iolante returns from her meeting with ‘the Frenchman’ (who has of course rejected her) takes the maid’s place and prays loudly for the ‘restoration’ of her nose as proof of her chastity. Severino, finding her face unmarred, is stricken with remorse and takes her back to the forest with him, where his bandits welcome her with the play’s second show.

In the finale, Severino’s bandits capture the two sets of wandering lovers, as well as the King of Naples, who has disguised himself as a wealthy merchant to capture Severino. The unmasking scene which follows reveals the identities of Monteclaro (really Iolante’s brother, not murdered at all) Alphonso (really the king come to pardon Severino, and not an aged merchant at all) Severino himself (really a noble and generous gentleman, and not a thief at all) and — preposterously — the
desire into the existing order of society. At the play's opening Naples is a world without unified families; Caldoro and Mirtilla are orphans, Adorio's parents are not mentioned and the guardian Durazzo is a childless bachelor. The play's only complete family is Severino's atomized one: Severino is living in hiding in the forest, his wife Iolante is left alone in Naples with their daughter Caliste (whom she keeps in isolation) and Iolante's brother, whom everyone thinks dead, has been living in isolation in Milan. The duel between Severino and his brother-in-law which separated his family has also violated the order of the state, since Severino, fleeing from the murder charge, has set up an alternate 'kingdom' amongst the bandits. Because the initial violation was an inter-familial one which then had repercussions for the larger community, the comic reunions start within the family and move outward to the political and social realms. The separation of Severino from his family is the primary gap that the play works to heal; the reunion of the broken family finally heals all other severances.

Furthermore, over the play as a whole, the male and female characters are isolated from one another. Male vitality is located in the country — at Durazzo's estate, amongst Severino's bandits, and at Adorio's villa. Naples is associated with isolated female desire, embodied in Iolante's household, a "Nunnery of pureness" (1.2. 46). Iolante is the prisoner of her pride in her widowed chastity: she is so concerned with the appearance of virtue that she will not keep a male servant (1.2. 40), denies her own natural affection for her husband (1.2. 49-54) and keeps her daughter and her maid from normal social intercourse with eligible men (1.2. 71-76). This unnatural strictness breeds rebellion both in the girls, who decide to run away, and in herself, leading to her disastrous attempt to seduce her brother; the hypocritical bawdry of her pimping maid, Calypso, is the natural correlative of Iolante's own distorted chastity.

The comic project of the play is the integration of the all-male communities of the maid Mirtilla (really the daughter of a noble captain and not a servant at all). Marriages are confirmed and pardons dispensed all round, and everyone goes back to Naples happy. The play is absurd, but great fun.
country with the sterile chastity of Iolante’s “nunnery”, resulting in the healthy mutuality of marriage; the masques, which mark the arrival of the women in the domain of the men, “resituate the restoring green world” (Clark Moral Art 282). Both shows are expressions of the green world of romantic comedy — although the first functions as an anti-masque for the second and has a strong satiric element. The country settings of both celebrations are symbolic of the shift from city to country over the course of the play; as Butler says, “the characters progress, in a series of steps [...] from city to country where together they are made whole” (Theatre and Crisis 257). Because of their socially transfiguring function, these country masques are truly transforming in a way that the court masque cannot be, despite the insistence on their lack of any illusory powers of metamorphosis. The green world of which they are an expression is the key to the social integration which crowns the comedy: they are the epitome of the force which unifies and vivifies the severed, atomized society that we see at the opening of the play.8

Structurally, both masques are simple. They consist solely of dances accompanied by songs, and neither is spectacular. The assertive, seductive magic of courtly staging is missing; there is no magic, either visual or verbal, and no imagistic transformation. And they

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8 Massinger’s country in this play is quite different from the use of the country as an antithesis to the court in The Picture. There, the country is a populated space with a political and social stance that serves as a corrective to the court – the space which Butler describes as the “cultivated countryside”, and affiliates with Massinger’s ‘country’ politics (Theatre and Crisis 261). Butler sees The Guardian’s woods this way as well, arguing that the “gentlemanly figures from the pasturelands [...] are] being ‘naturalized’ against the more radical background of the forests” (Theatre 261). However, it seems to me that the woods inhabited by Severino’s bandits are more closely allied to Frye’s “green world” (182) than to the Caroline use of the country as a political construct. According to Frye, in romantic comedy the action “begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world” (182). This is an accurate description of the action of The Guardian; here, the wood is a fantasy world of escape which cures and balances the problems of ‘civilization’ in a wider sense, echoing a similar division in Shakespeare’s romantic comedies. As in Midsummer Nights Dream, As You Like It and Two Gentlemen of Verona the ‘green world’ of The Guardian does not provide an alternate form of society, but a place where society can correct itself. When Severino’s bandits parade across the stage singing praises to the oaken-garlanded Iolante and Severino we are closer to the Forest of Arden than we are to Sophia’s kitchen garden.
are, at least ostensibly, unmediated expressions of community feeling without formal artistic intervention; Adorio’s marriage masque is presented in a deliberately rustic fashion, and Iolante’s entertainment is wholly spontaneous, a communal celebration untouched by art. Finally, both celebrations are comical mistakes; the marriage masque is staged to welcome the wrong bride, and the entertainment is staged to celebrate Severino’s reunion with an attempted adulteress. The off-stage audience is aware of the mix-up even if the on-stage characters are not, an effect which undercuts the celebrations even as they are made. This undercutting does not render the masques meaningless, since the unions that they celebrate are ultimately completed, but it does serve to deflate the pretensions of their presenters.9

This puncturing is particularly effective in the case of the first masque staged, the marriage masque intended for Caliste but staged for Mirtilla, Caliste’s maid. Despite its artfully ‘rustic’ presentation it is actually planned with a good deal of art and forethought. The first mention of it comes in Adorio’s preparations for his ‘elopement’; sending his town servants to the country, he orders:

Haste you unto my Villa, and take all
Provision along with you, and for use,
And ornament, the shortness of the time
Can furnish you; let my best Plate be set out,
And costliest Hangings, and if’t be possible
With a merry dance to entertain the Bride,
Provide an Epithalamium.

(3.3.1-7)

The masque, along with the plate and the hangings, is a luxury that ties the supposedly rustic

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9 In particular, Adorio’s ‘marriage’ masque allows Massinger to have it both ways rather neatly. The masque performs several functions: it blocks Adorio’s planned ‘elopement’ with Caliste, freeing her to marry Caldoro, it raises a laugh at Adorio’s expense, and it celebrates his ultimate marriage to Mirtilla. The event both mocks and celebrates him. The fact that such satire does not impede the comic resolution is due to the nature of the play; there is considerable comic tolerance in this world, allowing the arrogant lecher Adorio and the would-be adulteress Iolanthe to be somewhat insulated from the effects of their behaviour. This is helped by the fact that they are not evil, but only flawed: both Adorio’s pride and Iolanthe’s erotic obsessions are correctable, while the evils revealed in the tragic masques threaten the stability of the state. The only figure who is exiled from the general pardon at the play’s close is the corrupt Calypso, whose mutilation allows her to function as a scapegoat for Iolanthe’s threatened adulterous incest and, more generally, for the sexual disorder of Naples as a whole.
atmosphere of the country to the pleasures of the town. This is not a spontaneous country celebration of joy for the wedding of the young master — it is a formally arranged and scripted event, the ‘art’ of which is to appear to be a spontaneous country celebration.

The servant Cario’s response to his master’s anxiety about the staging is laconically casual:

    Trust me
    For belly timber, and for a song I have
    A Paper blurrer; who on all occasions,
    For all times, and all seasons, hath such trinkets
    Ready i’th’ deck. It is but altering
    The names, and they will serve for any Bride,
    Or Bridegroom in the Kingdom.
    (3.3.7-13)

The interchangeable names faintly foreshadow the interchangeable brides, and the ‘off the peg’ nature of the proposed song emphasizes the provisional nature of the celebration. (When the song is sung there are no names; only this comment lets us know that it was not composed for the occasion). Massinger may also intend an ironic commentary on Adorio’s priorities; he hurriedly supplies all the requirements of a fashionable wedding — a feast, plate, hangings, masque and song — but neglects to call for a priest.10

The relationship of the masque performers to the masque is emphasized when Adorio anxiously asks about the dance, and Cario replies:

    I will make one my self, and foot it finely,
    And summoning your Tenants at my Dresser,
    Which is indeed my Drum, make a rare choice

10 Adorio’s ‘conversion’ from libertinism in Act Two Scene Three is read as sincere by Clark (Moral 267-9) but I doubt its validity. Mirtilla arrives with a letter from Caliste begging Adorio to elope with her, and Adorio (between ribald exchanges with his friends about the maid) reads the letter and ostensibly experiences a classic tragicomic conversion: he declares that all his loose passions have been purged by the beauty of Caliste’s sentiments, and agrees to marry her. Such a conversion seems under-motivated even by tragicomic standards. Adorio has a perfectly good reason to lie: he has already declared that he wants to sleep with Caliste rather than marry her (1.1.122-38) and an ‘elopement’ would provide him with the perfect opportunity. The marriage masque is evidence for this argument; it is sung by Juno and Hymen and includes explicit discussion of the joys of the wedding night, but Adorio’s orders for the wedding preparations do not include a priest, there is no evidence of one in the scene at his villa, and he has not stopped to get married at any point along the way. Given that the masque is usually the immediate prelude to the bedding of the couple, I find the omission of a cleric suggestive.
Of th’able youth, such as shall sweat sufficiently,  
And smell too, but not of Amber, which you know is  
The grace of the Country-hall.  

(3.3.14-19)

This of course means that he will look over the tenants and find the best dancers among them. However, there is also the implication that he will choose the most rustic, the sweatiest, to emphasize the ‘country’ nature of the entertainment — sweat (the mark of effort) is the grace of the country hall, while ease (the mark of sprezzatura) is the grace of the court. The town servant is ‘casting’ the country tenantry; the country is going to play itself in an enacted myth of Horatian retirement. Cario is seemingly aiming at an effect of ‘bucolic tenancy rejoicing at the young master’s marriage’, the kind of celebration that will later be offered, spontaneously, to Iolante.

This aspect is more obvious when the masque is actually performed in Act Four Scene Two. Cario’s elaborate instructions to the “Country Men” and musicians are at once comic and illuminating:

Let your eyes be rivetted to my heels, and miss not  
A hairs breadth of my footing; our Dance has  
A most melodious note, and I command you  
To have ears like hares this night for my Lords honor,  
And something for my Worship: your reward is  
To be drunk blind like Moles in the Wine-cellar,  
And though you ne’r see after, ‘tis the better,  
You were born for this nights service: And do you hear,  
Wire-string and Cats-guts men, and strong-breath’d Hoboys,  
For the credit of your calling, have not your Instruments  
To tune, when you should strike up; but twang it perfectly  
As you would read your Neckverse; and you Warbler  
Keep your Wind-pipe moist, that you may not spit and hem,  
When you should make division. How I sweat!  
Authority is troublesom. — They are come,  
I know it by the Cornet that I plac’d  
On the hill to give me notice: Marshal your selves  
I’the Rear, the Van is yours. Now chant it spritely.  

(4.2.1-18)

The comedy of Cario’s fussing serves to underscore the planned, ordered and scripted nature of the entertainment, and to stress its differences from the dancers who perform it. The consort of instruments, a ‘broken consort’ consisting of bandoras or citterns (wirestring), lutes, viols or violins (catgut) and shawms or oboes (hoboy), is a version of the orchestra
conventionally used for court masques. Likewise, the instructions to the singer, that he not "spit or hem / When [he] should make division" imply that the song is complex, since 'division', according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means "the execution of a rapid melodic passage [...] a florid phrase or piece of melody, a run". Neither the instruments nor the style of song suggests the kind of music that would accompany a country dance. Cario's orders to the dancers imply that the dance itself is a figured form tightly linked to the music and designed to be performed in unison and in time — completely alien to the spontaneity of a country dance (Howard Dancing 2:13). The dancers must both mind the steps ("let your eyes be rivetted to my heels") and keep the beat ("have ears like hares"); Cario's final instructions as to placing indicate that there are at least two lines of dancers ("marshal your selves / I' the Rear, the Van is yours"). This eliminates the possibility of a round, the commonest country dance form (Howard Dancing 8-16) and almost assures that the dance is figured, consisting of multiple lines of dancers moving in patterns. According to Howard "the theatrical dances of the masque proper were influenced by the figured dancing that had originated in the French court" (Dancing 115); this once again links the performance with the standard masque form.

All this serves to emphasize that we are not watching country men dancing a country dance, or even performing a choreographed dance that recalls such an event. Rather, we are watching an extravagant joke: 'country men' identified as such by the stage direction, and thus presumably visually marked as bumpkins, put on an elaborate entertainment for their lord's new bride under the direction of his servant. This is not a country festivity; it is the use of the country as raw material for a more sophisticated celebration, and the formal nature

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11 Edwards identifies the instruments (E&G V: 248), and Sheila Beardslee Bosworth, the Editor of Boston Early Music News, confirms that the wire-strung instruments are "Citters and bandoras, the wire-strung components of the Elizabethan pit band, the Broken Consort..." (personal communication, Oct 29, 1999). This mix of instruments figures in the libretto for the "Masque in Honour of the Marriage of Lord Hayes" (1607) (New Grove Dictionary of Music 11:759-60), while the New Grove entry on folk music states that "the instruments traditionally associated with English folkdance are the pipe and tabor, the fiddle and the bagpipes [...] the pipe and tabor used also to accompany the country dance..." (6:190).
of the entertainment contrasts amusingly with the clownish fussing of Cario and the awkward nature of the performers. In fact, the performance of a figured dance by ‘country men’ recalls the comic dances of the anti-masque, a connection also implicit in the comic bathos of the discord that follows the revelation of Mirtilla’s identity.

The song, a formal epithalamium with three stanzas, sung by the deities Juno and Hymen, is a thematically commonplace treatment of the joys of consummation with one interesting variation. The first verse, directed by Juno to the bride, is standard encouragement to the timid bride to “be bold, and freely taste / The Marriage Banquet ne'er deny'd / To such as sit down chaste” (4.2.20-2), coupled with a demand for marital chastity: “Those Joys reserv'd to him alone, / Thou art a Virgin still” (4.2.25-6). But the verse addressed by Hymen to the bridegroom, unusually, puts equal stress on masculine chastity:

Hail Bridegroom, hail! thy choice thus made,  
As thou wouldst have her true  
Thou must give o’r thy wanton trade,  
And bid loose fires adieu:  
The Husband who would have his Wife  
To him continue chaste,  
In her embraces spends his life,  
And makes abroad no waste.  
(4.2. 27-34)

The emphasis on the finality of the bridegroom’s choice and the necessity of masculine marital chastity is a deviation that points directly towards Adorio, the supposedly reformed libertine. The unmasking of Mirtilla makes this demand for marital exclusivity seem foolish, since the song is sung to the wrong girl. Ultimately, though, Adorio will marry Mirtilla: whether he knows it or not, he has already made his choice, and the song is thus an accurate celebration of the bride and bridegroom.

Practically, then, the masque serves as a comic commentary on the nature of the match between the lord and the serving maid. As Garrett notes, the performance echoes the nature of the lady in whose honour it is performed: country bumpkins dance an elaborate formal entertainment for a servant dressed up in her mistress’s gown (Diamond 164). As well, Mirtilla’s presence as primary audience has ramifications for its reception; Adorio furiously bellows that her participation transforms the show into a “maygame” (4.2.72), the
kind of comical country event it is not supposed to be. Ironically, and perhaps unsurprisingly given Massinger’s negative treatment of the court masques which this has mimicked, the masque’s wit is destroyed by the revelation of Mirtilla’s identity. At the moment of her unmasking, the joke — designed to be on the dancing bumpkins sweating with anxiety and effort — rebounds neatly onto the head of the watching Lord, who becomes “discourse for fools, and drunkards” (4.2.69). The target of the masque’s ironic comedy is revealed to be Adorio himself; the artificial sophistication which he has tried to introduce into the country setting collapses on top of him. In fact, the masque is the first of a series of corrective humiliations which serve to reveal Adorio’s singularly obnoxious character and pay him out for his libertine intentions towards Caliste – the fruitless search of the woods for Caliste and Caldoro, which ends on foot after Durazzo steals their horses, a capture by Severino’s bandits, and the final marriage to Mirtilla. His is a much gentler version of the stripping and purging of Richardo and Ubaldo in The Picture.\(^\text{12}\)

But the collapse of Adorio’s sophisticated joke does not negate the masque’s alternate meaning — its relation to larger comic structure of the play. In these terms, the masque has a serious role, marking the entry of marriage into the playworld: Garrett argues that “its main dramatic function is the infusion of rustic enthusiasm and simplicity to assist the transition from town to country, from fierce emotions and hopeless love to the resolution of intrigues in wedded happiness” (Diamond 164). Parody or no parody, it is the play’s first celebration

\(^{12}\text{Seen in retrospect, the masque also reflects Adorio’s nature: he may be a lord by birth, but his churlish behaviour to Mirtilla over the course of the play eliminates any pretensions to nobility of character (an essential for Massinger’s noble heroes). He abuses Mirtilla, calling her his punishment for “defended wantonness” (4.2.103), accuses her of being a social climbing slut who “contemning / Th’embraces of [your] Equals, aim[s] to be / The wrong way Ladifi’d by a Lord” (4.2.107-10) and threatens her with torture (4.2.65). When he loses the jewel Caliste sent him, he accuses Mirtilla of stealing it (5.2.16) and attacks her physically; he is only prevented from disemboweling her to recover the jewel (which he thinks she has swallowed) by the arrival of Severino’s bandits (5.2.131-141). His cruelty in this scene is emphasized by the respect shown her by his companions and by the bandits, who lecture him on “meddl[ing] with wenches in our walks” (5.2.141). Add to this abuse the muttering petulance that he displays, and the comic masque is almost more appropriate to him (a Lord with the moral and emotional stature of a swineherd) than it is to his bride.}
of the lawful connection between the worlds of country and city, male and female. As such it emphasizes the generative nature of marital sex, in opposition to the non-reproductive forms of sexuality already seen — the libertine waste of Adorio, the frustrated chastity of Caliste and Mirtilla, the attempted incestuous adultery of Iolante and the hypocritical pimping of Calypso. Although the masque uses the country in a parodic way, I would argue that the generative nature of its country setting and performers overcomes this aspect. In fact, the show’s transformation to a “maygame” from the rather sophisticated entertainment it was intended to be emphasizes its comic country setting, and links it to the play’s second show, the “Entertainment of the Forest Queen”. The collapse of the masque’s intended sophistication turns it into a comical anti-masque for the much simpler forest show. Although the main plot and sub-plot are not formally linked until the play’s conclusion, the placing of the two shows back to back — the two scenes are separated by only fifty lines — makes them, visually, one show, tying the plots together long before the play’s conclusion.

The second entertainment, the triumphal entry of Iolante into the bandit kingdom, is also somewhat mixed in tone but is, oddly, much more serious in effect. As Clark has noted (Moral Art 282) it is a celebration of the purity of a would-be adulteress by a band of outlaws, a factor which calls into question the unity it celebrates. However, its ritual function works against this comic undercutting; although the audience must be aware of the absurdity of the celebration, its presentation, unlike that of Adorio’s show, is not comic. Since it marks the reunion of the couple whose separation is the root of the play’s disorder, it contains the seeds of marital, social and political order for the play as a whole. The first step in the reintegration of the play’s larger society is the reunion of Severino and his wife, and the “Entertainment”, in celebrating the reunion of the long-separated couple, symbolically undoes the work of the brother-on-brother duel and begins the process which will integrate Severino back into Neapolitan society. The marriage masque of the young people opens the society of the play to the future, but the reunion of Iolante and Severino begins the process of healing the wounds of the past.

Before examining the “Entertainment” however, it is first necessary to look at the
couple's first reunion, the 'Cimmerian Matron's tale' or adultery-discovery of Act Three Scene Six, since its violence and darkness recapitulate the violence implicit in their separation and set off their later reconciliation. In many ways, the violence and passion of this scene are the dramatic analogue of the violence of the duel that separated the couple; like the duel, it is a moment of family violence triggered by uncontrolled passions. It also, more simply, provides a direct contrast—night to day, dark to light, love to hate—with the daylit celebration of the "Entertainment" to which it is the preamble.\textsuperscript{13}

The scene's confusion of identities in the dark links it with the comically confused elopements taking place outside the house; here, however, the confusion is more dangerous and more dramatically significant. The scene is set off from the rest of the play in its tone and its genre; it is the only tragicomic element in the play, and its gestures toward tragedy are remarkably strong. The scene is driven by the passion of sex and rage; Iolante's opening speech on the tyranny of "Imperious Blood" (3.6.1) introduces the idea of uncontrollable emotions as a prelude to tragedy, and when Severino, expecting to find Iolante "at her devotions" (3.6.20) draws the curtain and instead finds her at the centre of an erotic set-piece, his love immediately swings into murderous rage. Throughout the scene, Severino uses the language of tragedy and horror, employing several metaphors—the self as a falling tower, rage as an earthquake, horror as a lighting strike—found in Massinger's tragedies of passion. Other elements denote the scene's tragic potential; Severino's sudden and insane jealousy recalls that of Sforza, he calls the mutilation of Calypso "an induction" to "Tragedy" (3.6.162-3), and the threat of uxoricide in a bedchamber by candlelight recalls

\textsuperscript{13} The name given this story in seventeenth-century England was 'the Cimmerian Matron's tale', after the title of the most common sixteenth-century translation; I therefore refer to the plot as 'the Cimmerian Matron's tale' throughout this chapter. Edwards identifies Massinger's source as the Comus of Puteanus, which is also the source of the love plot and the figure of Durazzo; he unites the two plots by making the adulterous wife the mother of one of the lovers (E&G IV: 108). He also renovates the cynical tale of adultery—treati it as a tale of miraculous repentance—and thus connects it to the play's larger theme of family reconciliation. The source is the tale of a clever adulteress who gets off, but Iolante's repentance seems quite real, and the sexual prurience of the scene is displaced onto the maid, Calypso, who also bears the brunt of the violence.
Otello. Although Severino’s shift from murderous rage to sceptical acceptance upon witnessing the ‘miracle’ of his wife’s ‘restored’ face changes the scene to tragicomedy, it does so without eliminating the darkness of its opening images; the echoes of Otello, in particular, gesture to the danger the couple is courting.

The turning point of the scene from tragedy to tragicomedy is the set of quasi-sexual mutilations wreaked on the supposed body of the erring wife – the severing of Calypso’s nose, in particular, is an displaced castration image, linked to the pox when Calypso flees to a whorehouse. These sexualized mutilations substitute for the consummation of the sexual desire that drove Severino to Naples, and also echo the wounding of Iolante’s brother in the duel which preceded the play. The fact that the man Iolante plans to sleep with is really her brother in disguise makes him the instigator of this violence as well as that of the duel, and his presence off-stage links this scene with the earlier wounding. This scene is thus an echo and an intensification of the initial violence that divided husband and wife; the threatened tragedy (Iolante’s attempted adultery, symbolically, and Severino’s attempted uxoricide, in reality) would destroy the marriage without hope of recovery.

The comic substitution of the pandering maid for the repentant wife therefore does double duty, defusing the scene’s tragic potential, deflecting the punishment onto a deserving victim, symbolically ‘cutting off’ the corruption Calypso represents and providing Iolante with a false sign for her real repentance (3.6.210-2). Likewise, the lie that Iolante enacts for her husband is a benefit to both partners: she takes the wounded Calypso’s place and prays to the “blessed Guardian’s / Of matrimonial faith”;

  to free me
  From the unjust suspicion of my Lord,
  Restore my martyr’d face and wounded arms
  To their late strength and beauty.
  (3.6.228-231)

Iolante’s asides mark the ‘miracle’ as a fiction indulged in only to “preserve my life / To be better spent hereafter” (3.6.211-12) and Severino is openly sceptical, wanting to not “be fool’d / With easiness of belief, and faintly give / Credit to this strange wonder” (3.6.252-4). Fakery though it is, the lie saves her from death and him from murder. His repentance,
although equally feigned, opens the door to reconciliation; he takes Iolante back to the woods with him out of suspicion and mistrust, but his wording, "until death / Divorce us, we will know no separation" (3.6.266-7) foreshadows the renewal of their marriage vows which the "Entertainment" stages.

The "Entertainment of the Forests Queen" Severino's bandits stage for the couple on their arrival is not, correctly speaking, a masque; it has no dances or disguised deities. Its inclusion in this chapter is justified, however, as it does the symbolic work of a wedding masque, celebrating the unity of the couple as a symbol of communal health. Moreover, its relation to Adorio's parodic marriage masque is that of masque to burlesque anti-masque, so that it functions as a continuation of the earlier show. Symbolically, it undoes the threat of the 'Cimmerian Matron's tale' every respect imaginable. It is set in the country as opposed to the city; staged in the light, instead of the darkness; set in the open woods and performed in company, instead of the isolation of Iolante's bedchamber. Here, the false servant who attempts to destroy the marriage is replaced with true servants who celebrate it, and images of spring, life and revivification replace the earlier images of death and horror. It is a celebration and symbolic renewal of their marriage; appropriately, it is staged on their anniversary (3.6.62-3).

Formally, it is very simple: it consists only of a song sung by "all the BANDITI (making a guard)" to "SEVERINO and IOLANTE ([crowned] with Oaken-leav'd garlands)" (5.1.1 SD). It has much less artifice than Adorio's 'rustic' masque; since Iolante's presence is wholly unexpected there can have been no time to formally arrange it. As such, it really is the sort of spontaneous community celebration that Adorio's marriage masque attempted to artificially craft, a celebration of the couple's reunion sung by banditti who trope themselves as feudal subjects: "From you in Fee, their lives your Liegemen hold" (5.1.12). The celebration of a lord and lady by country dwellers recalls a country house entertainment of the kind offered to Elizabeth (Milsum 237); this is appropriate, since Severino's 'kingdom' is, effectively, an idealized version of a country estate in its unity, mutual support and careful hierarchy. The outlaw band performs the traditional work of the lord and the law, punishing
those who abuse the community and supporting the needy.14 This connection is underscored by Severino’s demand for booty from his captives; he states that he does not rob for himself, but “... for the pay of these my Squires, who eat / Their bread with danger purchas’d, and must be / With others fleeces cloth’d, or live expos’d” (5.4.76-8). The rhetoric very carefully tropes the theft as a contribution to the maintenance of a household.

The show also suggests a May Day celebration — in particular, the oaken garlands worn by Iolante and Severino recall the garlands worn by the May King and Queen. These mark the two as ritual figures, a King and Queen of festival significance, but they also link this rather formal and dignified entertainment to Adorio’s show, the ‘maygame’ that functioned as an anti-masque. Moreover, much of the play — particularly the wanderings of the lovers in the woods — can be related to May Day festivities. The holiday, one of the most important festivals in the calendar, was formally celebrated with Maypoles, Morris dances, Robin Hood plays and church ales, but it was also associated with lovers, and was — rather notoriously — the occasion for considerable sexual licence (Laroque Festive 111-14). The custom of ‘bringing in the May’, going out into the woods in the predawn and bringing back boughs of greenery, involved a good deal of illicit but tolerated frolicking in the bushes, the sort of thing that Durazzo twits his nephew with when he suggests that Caldoro and Caliste have been “billing in the brakes” (5.2.101). Given that the Caldoro/Caliste plot incorporates or at least suggests such festival disorder, the celebration of the garlanded Iolante by the bandits, which suggests the crowning of a May Queen, is an appropriate climax to the play as a whole. Moreover, symbolically transforming Severino and Iolante into a festival lord and lady changes the political valence of Severino’s ‘rebellion’. May Day, like all popular

14 Severino’s forest kingdom is also linked to the Sherwood of Robin Hood; the bandits are an organized force who prey on common social abuses, “the Cormorant that. . .smiling grindes/The faces of the poor” (2.4.80-1), “the grand Incloser of the Commons, for / His private profit, or delight” (2.4.83-4), usurers (2.4.87) iron mill owners who deforest the land (2.4.94), and cheating shopkeepers (2.4.98-9), but they are forbidden to attack scholars, soldiers, poor farmers and market folks, laborers, carriers, and women (2.4.106-14). Given the links between May Day celebrations and the figure of Robin Hood (Laroque Festive 37-41) the simultaneous evoking of both elements in this play is probably deliberate.
festivals, contained an element of festive carnival; it represented the mock overthrow of the valid authority by the forces of misrule for a specific, limited time. Relating Severino’s woodland ‘kingdom’, however tangentially, with the evanescent rule of a carnival figure reduces the possibility of his kingdom being read as a serious political attack on the King of Naples, and facilitates his return to the larger society of the play.¹⁵

But most importantly, the “Entertainment” celebrates the marital reunion of the couple; Iolante’s arrival is heralded as a renewal of the couple’s sexual and emotional unity:

Bless then the hour
That gives the power
In which you may
At Bed and Board
Embrace your Lord
Both night and day

(5.1.15-20)

The entertainment is a variation on a marriage masque, one which celebrates the couple’s reunion. The imagery seems to draw on the panegyric of the Caroline court masque, which

¹⁵ In suggesting this I am going against several critics who read Severino’s kingdom as political commentary. This approach starts with Butler, who reads the play in conjunction with The Goblins, The Sisters and Brome’s The Jovial Crew as a drama of country resistance to an amoral court, in which “Severino’s woodland outlawry is made in to a country kingdom specifically in antithesis to the Neapolitan norm” (Theatre and Crisis 256). Other commentators build on Butler’s argument: Adler reads the “exiled kingdom of Severino” as “the model kingdom of the play”, in which “the predominant false values of Naples (pointedly similar to the predominant false values of England) are rejected and […]the problems of Naples and of the play are resolved” (104). Milsum goes yet further, reading Severino’s bandits as “gentlemen in buckskin” who are “represented as outlaws to emphasize their alienation from the (play-world) court” (231-2) and stressing the connection between Severino and the “banished-duke figures of revenge tragedies and satirical […] comedies” in that “his “absence from the court is made to appear the result of a profound and pre-existing alienation from its values” (235). All these readings assume that the valorization of Severino’s world implies condemnation of the Neapolitan court. But there is no indication within the play that Alphonso is anything but a just ruler; the problems of the play are not tied to his rule, he is never criticized (unjust rulers, in Massinger, are always criticized) and there are no references to his court as corrupt. More importantly, Severino is not an exiled ruler; his green world retreat is not like the woodland court of Duke Senior in As You Like It or Prospero’s island kingdom in The Tempest, although it may recall them. The exiled dukes of these plays are rightful rulers forced into exile; Severino, however noble he may be, is a rebel subject. And finally, Severino is not a political exile; he is wanted for the killing of his brother-in-law in a duel, a type of murder which raises larger issues of public and private justice. King Alphonso’s refusal to pardon him is explicitly based on legal, not political reasons; as he says, murder is murder, even in the form of a duel, which is only “Revenge appearing in the shape of valor / Which wise Kings must distinguish.” (2.1.74-5).
focussed particularly on the blessings provided by the unity of Charles and Henrietta Maria (Veevers, 12). In one stanza, Iolante is addressed as a light-bearing deity, a nature goddess whose presence brings spring in winter:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The Trees begin to bud, the glad Birds sing,} \\
\text{In winter chang'd by her into the Spring.} \\
\text{We know no night,} \\
\text{Perpetual light} \\
\text{Dawns from your eye.}
\end{align*}
\]

(5.1.3-7)

This address is reminiscent of Henrietta Maria’s role as the light-bearing Divine Beauty in *Tempe Restored* (1632) (Veevers 195), and relates to the public focus of the song’s imagery, the social unity engendered by the union of the couple: the bandits are feudal tenants who hold their lives “in fee” to Iolante, for whom they fight, and to whom they submit:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{From you our Swords take edge, our Hearts grow bold.} \\
\text{From you in Fee, their lives your Liegemen hold.} \\
\text{These Groves your Kingdom, and our Law your will;} \\
\text{Smile, and we spare; but if you frown, we kill.}
\end{align*}
\]

(5.1.11-14)

This pseudo-feudal unity is a response to the couple’s marital unity, just as the Caroline Court masques make the marital unity of Charles and Henrietta the foundation the unity of the kingdom. And just as the reunion of the couple revitalizes the ‘kingdom’ that they serve, the homage of the bandits revivifies their marriage. Severino’s response to the song is the installation of his wife “as a Queen, [to] share in my sovereignty” (5.1.23) to which Iolante replies:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{In you sir} \\
\text{I live: and when, or by the course of nature,} \\
\text{Or violence you must fall, the end of my} \\
\text{Devotions is, that one and the same hour} \\
\text{May make us fit for heaven.}
\end{align*}
\]

(5.1.34-8)

His response, “I join with you / In my votes that way...” (5.1.38-9), is tantamount to a restatement of marriage vows. Although the entertainment does not cause their reunion, it celebrates it and dramatically marks it.

Finally, the show triggers the series of pardons and reconciliations which climax with the ‘resurrection’ of the ‘dead’ brother-in-law, Monteclaro and the re-entry of Severino into
the society of Naples. Severino sends his bandits out to bring in tribute for Iolante, and they return with the young lovers and the disguised Alphonso; this reunites the parents with their children and the lovers with their rivals, and then repatriates Severino through Alphonso’s test of his generosity. The fact that the unmasking of the final act is triggered by the entertainment makes the conclusion of the play itself replace the unmasking which traditionally concludes the masque; in this case, the tragicomic revelation takes the place of the transforming ‘magic’ of the masque. Clark argues that the play as a whole links forgiveness with the surprises inherent in tragicomic plotting to ‘magically’ heal otherwise insoluble conflicts (Moral 279), a dramatic structure which Waith links to masque structure (Pattern 37). In this case, Severino’s forgiveness of Iolante and the show which results from it directly usher in the “general pardon unto all” (5.4.224) pronounced by Alphonso; the real-world transformation of forgiveness and mercy functions in much the same way as a masque resolution. In fact, the tragicomic unmasking is even more preposterous than a masque transformation; although Massinger refuses to provide masquing magic, he has no difficulty performing its dramatic equivalent, resurrecting the supposedly murdered brother-in-law, transforming the maid Mirtilla into “the daughter of a noble Captain” (5.4.238) and even pardoning the murderous bandits, all in the space of two hundred lines.

While neither the “Entertainment” nor the marriage masque actively cause the reconciliation that they celebrate, they function as symbolic triggers for the sexual and social harmony which the play works towards; in the same way, the celebratory masques of the corrupt courts become figures for the marital tragedies of both royal couples. The country masques are beneficial not only because they are relatively straightforward community celebrations as opposed to the complex flattery of the court shows, but because they celebrate and epitomize a real-world transformation. They are not appreciably different from the court masques — this is particularly true of Adorio’s show, which is elaborately, ‘artfully’ rustic in its presentation — but the marriages they celebrate and the reunions to which they ultimately lead to are a real-world version of the communal harmony which off-stage court masques seek to produce. Massinger’s plain staging places the emphasis on the real-world
setting of his country shows; it is their reality that makes them beneficial, since they celebrate a ‘real-world’ change. The court masques, by contrast, are used to prop up the elaborate fantasies indulged in by those for whom they are staged. The function of the court masque is to hide reality; that of the country ones, to reveal it.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, both types of masque form part of the superstructure of the plays which contain them; they ‘bleed into’ the plays of which they are a part. Both The Duke of Milan and The Guardian conclude with masquelike transformations which, while very different in effect, relate the larger structure of the plays to the masques they contain; the death of Sforza is a reiteration of the imagery of the first act masque, and the comic ‘commoning’ of The Guardian’s conclusion is directly related to the commoning that ends the court masque. Both plays are informed, thematically and dramatically, by the masques they contain. This may well be because both romantic comedies and revenge tragedies traditionally conclude with inset masques; the use of the masque is thus appropriate in generic terms, and may explain why the masquing imagery of The Picture, a tragicomedy, is less all-pervading — although it too is essential to our understanding of the nature of Honoria’s court.

As I stressed at the beginning of this chapter, this is a standard use of the masque as thematic commentary; Massinger’s use of these masques does not differ much from the earlier use of the form by his old partner Fletcher and others. However, this use does differ from the presentation of the ‘curative’ or satiric masques dealt with in the next chapter; the curative masques do not interact with the plays which contain them to anything like the same extent. Rather, they are offset from the larger fiction; although they affect the plots of the plays which contain them, they function as an event rather than a set of informing images, and the masque imagery does not pervade the plays. This ‘offset’ quality is common to all Massinger’s spectatorial pieces, and seems intrinsic to their presentation; any piece of inset art which is staged primarily to be interpreted by an on-stage spectator rather than to directly entertain the theatre audience or inform the imagery of the play is, by definition, ‘framed’ by that spectator’s reactions to it. The theatre audience is distanced from the piece of art
presented because their attention is focussed on both the inset piece and the spectator's reaction — most obviously in the case of Mathias's miniature, which is literally invisible and can only be 'seen' via his reactions, but also in the case of the plays-within of *The Roman Actor*, which are framed by the reactions of their on-stage audiences, and in the two masques to which I will turn. The important thing to note, here, is that the importance of the process of interpretation is intrinsic to and stressed by the 'offset' quality of the inset's presentation.

This insight is helpful in two ways. First, it explains the isolated and intellectualized quality of many of Massinger's inset pieces of spectacle, which Garrett believes stems from the playwright's desire to "remove all mystery, all potential ambiguity" (*Diamond 11*) from the images he stages. Garrett is right about Massinger's tendency to analyse and interpret the pieces he stages, but he's right for the wrong reason. Massinger is not attempting to "divert attention from potentially distracting visual effects" (*Diamond 11*), to damp down the visual power of his own theatre. Were this the case, I would argue, he would have chosen a different medium — a non-performative one — in which to work. Rather, he is interested in staging the interpretation of the shows by their spectators — in presenting, on stage, the process of extracting meaning from visual images and enacted forms. The focus on the process of interpretation — on reading the meanings of the shows presented — is itself, I would argue, something new. Massinger can do the kind of integrative use of visual imagery common to earlier presentations of inset forms, as the masques of this chapter demonstrate. But he is more interested in using the presentation of the art/spectator interaction to explore the process of reading art itself, the psyche of the spectator, and the dynamic between art and spectator which lies at the heart of his own performative art. The masques of *The City Madam* and *A Very Woman* both have as their core function the exploration of the psyches of their spectators; they do this by staging the spectators themselves as spectacle, psyches anatomized upon the stage.
Chapter Three

Massinger’s Inset Masques: *The City Madam* and *A Very Woman*

The satiric and curative masques of *The City Madam* and *A Very Woman* are what I have been calling ‘spectatorial’ insets; that is, inset pieces in which the interpretation of the show by its on-stage audience is as significant as its staging. Their presentation is designed to emphasize their relationship with their audiences; the interpretation of the show by its on-stage spectators reveals aspects of their character to the other characters and to the larger theatre audience. By contrast, the ‘spectacular’ masques found in the previous chapter signify by epitome; they echo or sum up the images in the play in which they are set. As significant as their staging may be, their importance comes from their status as theatrical images, rather than from their impact on their on-stage audiences. In fact, the on-stage audience for these masques may not be affected by them at all: Sforza, in *Duke of Milan*, barely acknowledges the masque performed for him, and the on-stage audiences of *The Picture* and *The Guardian* make only perfunctory remarks on theirs. Even if the shows are praised, their meaning is not analysed; there is no acknowledgment within the playworld that this type of masque has a meaning beyond pure spectacle. It does, of course, but it is only visible to the off-stage audience, the theatre audience watching the plays of which the masques are a part.

The two masques examined in this chapter function differently. While they are by no means identical to each other in either form or function, they are related, as Ewbank says: “The masque as morally purgative [is] related to [. . .] the inserted masque which attempts the less moralistic and more psycho-pathological cure of some character. If the former deals
in the vice/virtue opposition, the latter is more concerned with passion versus reason. . .” (434). Both the “morally purgative” masque of *The City Madam* and the “psychopathological” curative show of *A Very Woman* are designed to act directly upon a primary spectator, either curing him or exposing him. Their interrelation with this spectator is vital to their meaning; they are staged in order to be interpreted by their on-stage audiences. In fact, both masques have double audiences; they are staged by one set of characters in order to judge or assess another character by watching his interpretation of the show. Luke’s ‘birthday’ masque in *The City Madam* is (at least ostensibly) staged by Sir John Frugal to demonstrate Luke’s hypocrisy to Lord Lacie, who is watching offstage; the masque in *A Very Woman* is staged by Doctor Paulo in order to cure the melancholy of Don Martino Cardenes, a cure watched by the patient’s father.

The two masques share a number of other similarities, beyond this central one. First, both serve to mirror the character of the primary audience member back to himself, in a kind of curative satire. This is at once an exercise in self-recognition and a test, for in order to derive benefit from the show the primary audience member must first recognize the show as a fiction and, second, recognize its relation to himself, that is, recognize attributes of himself in its reflection. Martino does both, while Luke does neither; this is why the show of *A Very Woman* cures Martino of his melancholic lunacy, while the show of *The City Madam* ‘cures’ the world Luke has abused by stripping and ejecting him. Second, both shows have two on-stage audiences: for the secondary on-stage audience, the spectacle is not the show itself but the reaction of the primary audience (Luke and Martino) to the show proper. The secondary audience does not have to be physically present as a visible, seated row of spectators to exert this kind of interpretive pressure: although the secondary audience of *A Very Woman* is present throughout the action, that of *The City Madam* is backstage and only enters at the end, but in both cases the show is performed for them as well as for the primary spectators Martino and Luke. Third, both shows are ‘directed’ by an omnipotent character, the masque presenter, who self-consciously marks the show as fiction and is aware of the presence of the secondary audience, while the primary audience member is not. The
melancholy-mad Martino is convinced that the Doctor and his slave-actor are either figments of his imagination or real people come (fortuitously) to talk to him; he thinks that the fiction he witnesses is real. Luke is fully aware that he is witnessing a show, but he believes that the real actors and dancers are spirits conjured up by Virginian devil-worship: he thinks that the reality that he witnesses is fiction. Neither has the least idea that he is himself an object of observation. The fourth element shared by both masques is the framing vision of the theatre audience — which seems too obvious to mention, except that this is the perspective point of the image as a whole — which sets all elements into the larger fiction of the play, and to which all the characters, the ‘omnipotent’ presenter included, are merely players in a play.¹

Finally, both Luke’s birthday masque and Don Martino’s ‘cure’ are somewhat independent from the plays in which they are set. As Roma Gill argues, the masque in A Very Woman seems to be a separate component tacked on to the play during Massinger’s revision of the original document; it has little to do with the surrounding play, and can readily be separated from it for the purposes of study (Gill 144-5). In contrast, The City Madam is a much more metadramatic play; characters stage spying scenes, gulling scenes and various other ‘performances’ for each other within the larger play. However, none of these informal inset fictions are as explicitly set off from the rest of the play as the final masque, which is absolutely unnecessary to the plot. Luke’s enacted testing is not about unmasking him; he has been displaying his own evil, Vice-like, to both the theatre audience and his fellow characters since Act Three. Rather, the masque’s superfluous staging emphasizes its theatricality; it is staged to let us watch Luke, the master actor, get caught in his own

¹In other words: there’s one simple show: the masque. It’s staged by one character who knows he’s both in a show and watching a show: the presenter. The masque is watched by one man who may or may not know that he’s watching a show, but who doesn’t know he’s in a show: the primary audience. The presenter and the primary audience debate back and forth over the meaning of the masque before them. This debate between the presenter and the primary audience over the meaning of the masque is the show watched by the secondary audience. The focus of their attention is not the masque itself, but the reaction of the primary audience to the masque and the presenter. Finally, the secondary audience, primary audience, presenter and the masque are all watched by the theatre audience; it is the interaction of all these elements that makes the inset piece function within the play.
theatrical trap. The point of the masque is to allow us to watch Luke interpreting the show.

Both plays use similarly structured inset masques to perform similar functions. However, as was the case in the previous chapter, the plays themselves have little in common beyond the similarities of the shows they contain. Both *The City Madam* and *A Very Woman* are comic plays, but one is a city comedy which deals satirically with trade, money and power, and the other is a Fletcherian tragicomedy largely concerned with sexual politics. Moreover, although the two masques work on their viewers in similar ways, they perform different dramaturgic functions within each play. The show of *The City Madam* makes Luke’s villainy concrete, allowing him to judge and condemn himself; the show of *A Very Woman* heals Martino, readmitting him to the society of the play and solving the usual Fletcherian conundrum (two friends in love with the same woman) along the way. Although both shows permit an examination of the psyche of their primary audience in the same way the miniature of *The Picture* allowed an examination of Mathias’s jealousy, each play uses this access to interiority to further its specific project. Because of this divergence, I deal with each play individually, and discuss some of their similarities and differences at the chapter’s close.

*The City Madam* is a satiric social comedy, usually categorized (along with *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*) as a city comedy. It is Massinger’s most Jonsonian play, a mercantile morality about the unmasking of a Volpone-like hypocrite and the scourging of a trio of foolish City women; it is a morality play as well as a satire, and its targets are hypocrisy, avarice and pride².

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² Sir John Frugal, a self-made merchant prince and a well-born gentleman, has made a hundred thousand pound fortune in the East Indies cloth trade but has no male heir. Therefore his two daughters have massive dowries, which have, at the play’s opening, attracted the attentions of Master Plenty, a newly wealthy “country gentleman”, and Sir Maurice, the son of Lord Lacie. However the girls and their mother are arrogant, domineering and exorbitantly expensive; their excessive demands horrify the suitors, and the young men refuse to go through with the marriages. For the hen-pecked Sir John this is the last straw, and, together with the suitors and Lord Lacie, he cooks up a *Measure for Measure*-like scheme to frighten his wife and children into submission. The figure that he chooses as his Angelo is his impoverished younger brother, Luke, an apparently reformed prodigal whom he has rescued from debtor’s prison some time before. The poor relation
The play’s links to two genres — city comedy and the morality — are underscored by its borrowings from earlier dramatists, many of which seem to be overt allusions designed to situate the play in the theatrical tradition. For example, the fact that the ‘disguised Duke’ device is taken explicitly from Measure for Measure and not, for example, Marston’s The Dutch Courtesan, is emphasized by Sir John’s ‘retreat’ to a monastery, a peculiar incursion of Catholicism into what both Neill (“Charity” 195-6) and Butler (“Audience” 184-5) identify as an almost Calvinist play. By causing us to recall Shakespeare’s Duke and his Angelo, Massinger broadens the context of the play’s seemingly private events. Like the actions of Vienna’s Duke, Sir John’s actions have a civic, as well as a familial, context; the

is used by his sister-in-law and nieces as an unpaid footman, drudge and scratching-post; the fact that he bears this misuse with ostentatious piety has convinced Lord Lacie that he is a reformed character, a religious and honest man who will “prove / True gold in the touch” (1.3.158-9). Sir John is convinced that his brother is merely a hypocrite. To resolve the dispute and to cure the women, Sir John pretends to withdraw to a monastery on the continent, leaving Lord Lacie to deliver an ostensibly will leaving his fortune to Luke. Sir John then disguises himself and the two young suitors as Algonquin Indians sent from Virginia to be converted, and stands back to witness results.

Luke, predictably, proves ‘true lead’ in the touch; he is predatory, avaricious and cruel. In his role as scourge he manages to clean up a number of the abuses within Sir John’s household, but the cure is worse than the disease. He tempts Sir John’s two apprentices to embezzlement in order to arrest them and seize their fathers’ bonds; he literally strips and humiliates his kinswomen, dressing them in green aprons, the clothing of whores; he defrauds and imprisons three of his brother’s poorest debtors; and he threatens foreclosure on Lord Lacie’s manor — a particularly venomous act because Lord Lacie has been his champion and friend. When, in a final extravagant test the ‘Indians’ offer him a “Mine of Gold” (5.1.45) in exchange for three women to serve as human sacrifices in Virginia, he blithely offers his sister-in-law and nieces. By the time the concluding masque is staged, therefore, Luke’s character is clear; the masque simply epitomizes and reflects Luke’s evil back to him, allowing him to judge himself. The masque (staged in honour of Luke’s birthday, ostensibly by ‘Indian magic’) is very elaborate; it consists of a dance by Orpheus, Cerebus and Charon, a procession of Luke’s victims “as from prison” (5.3.59 SD), and a transformation scene, in which ‘statues’ of the two suitors are supposedly brought to life by the ‘magic’ of the disguised Sir John. Luke’s response to the morally significant masque is uniformly heartless. His reaction to the ballet of Orpheus — a general statement of the saving principle of forgiveness and love — is disbelief that “musick should / Alter in fiends their nature” (5.3.44-5); his response to the pageant of his suffering victims is laughter and delight (5.3.59-75); and his response to the emotional pain of his nieces and sister-in-law is indifference (5.3.80-1). These reactions allow Luke to literally pronounce sentence on himself, so that when the ‘Indian Priest’ reveals himself as “your absent brother” (5.3.109) there is very little action left. The repentant wife and daughters happily embrace their lost menfolk, Lord Lacie admits his error regarding Luke, the imprisoned victims are forgiven and released and Luke the “Revengefull, avaritious Atheist” (5.3.134) is physically stripped and ejected, to “some desart, / Where good men ner’e may find thee” (5.3.142-3).
practices of Luke are a danger to the city of London itself.

The play’s debts to the city comedies of Jonson and Middleton have been pointed out by L. C. Knights and others. The debt to Jonson is the larger of the two, since Volpone underlies the whole of The City Madam. Luke’s dissimulation echoes Volpone’s throughout, his address to the counting-house key is built on Volpone’s address to his gold (Volpone 1.1.1-27) and his final expulsion echoes Jonson’s “Mortifying of a Fox...” (Volpone 5.12.185). However, Luke is Massinger’s villain, not his hero (or even his hero-villain). Massinger aligns himself deliberately with Jonson’s purgative satire as self-consciously as he ties his socio-political context to Shakespeare’s satiric tragicomedy, but he does not adopt Jonson’s ambiguity of tone. The connections to Middleton are more generic than specific; Massinger is self-consciously occupying Middleton’s city territory, but he does not draw on a specific Middleton play. Moreover, Massinger plays against Middleton’s city comedy conventions as much as he follows them. His London is one of magnates rather than

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3 The City Madam has traditionally been read, in tandem with A New Way, as a measure of Caroline class tensions; this approach is launched by T.S. Eliot in his “Philip Massinger” (1921) and developed by L.C. Knights in Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson (1937), and Alan Gross in “Social Change and Philip Massinger” (1967). Eventually, this approach leads to a view of Massinger as a social conservative frantically shoring up the walls of class privilege, epitomized by Robert Fothergill’s “The Dramatic Experience of Massinger’s The City Madam and A New Way to Pay Old Debts” (1973). Fothergill argues that Massinger’s drama is “the response of a grave conservative to...the power of money (72), and that the play and the writer are both entirely devoted to the affirmation of an inflexible social hierarchy. But if the play’s only point is the regulation of class lines, it is difficult to see why it ends with marriages linking the City, the Country and the Court. Further, as Butler points out it, is hard to read the play as anti-citizen when it has a citizen (Sir John) as its hero (“Audience” 166), and presents a world in which blood and money marry industry, in which a Lord and a magnate are friends and in-laws, in which gentleman’s sons are apprentices, and in which Plenty and Lacie’s quarrel over degree is rendered absurd by being paralleled with the brawls of the roaring boys Ramble and Scuffle. This dichotomy between the play and the critical response to it have produced new interpretations which relate the play to newer views of Caroline social and economic realities — in particular, Martin Butler’s seminal re-reading “Massinger’s City Madam and the Caroline Audience” (1982), which argues that the play “adopts a basically sympathetic and enlightened attitude toward the great citizenry, endorsing entirely the values of Sir John Frugal, the godly citizen” (“Audience”185), Michael Neill’s reading of the play as a citizen moral allegory, “‘The Tongues of Angels’: Charity and the Social Order in City Madam” (1985), and Ira Clark’s reading of the play as a moral exemplum in The Moral Art of Philip Massinger (41-9). All three argue that the play is a pro-citizen drama, situated in a Caroline London which is much more socially complex than has been previously recognized.
Cheapside traders, his ladies stand for pride rather than lechery, and the story has much more to do with civic virtues and values than coney-catching and sexual gulling. His mercantile world is several economic and social cuts above that of Middleton; as Luke points out to the two apprentices, Sir John is not “some needy shop-keeper, who surveighs / His every-day-takings” (2.1.53-4) but a figure of aldermanic status. The purely appetitive energy of Middleton’s comedies is missing, too; the hunger for food and sex which dominates his Cheapside is replaced by sartorial extravagance and conspicuous consumption. Although the feast provided by Lady Frugal for her daughter’s suitors is appallingly extravagant (2.1.8-31) Lady Frugal is most concerned with the quality of the cooks and footmen, rather than the food: “I’le have none / Shall touch what I shall eat [. . .] /But French-men and Italians; they wear Sattin, / And dish no meat but in Silver” (1.1.154-7). Finally, unlike most such civic satire, the play has a merchant as its hero and addresses itself to a mixed city/town audience; as an audience, we are on the side of Sir John and Lord Lacie, not Luke. For all that it borrows the forms of Middleton’s city comedy, the play actually reverses the genre’s usual practice in both tone and events; the prodigal gallant is conned by the hard-working merchant, the whores and knaves are defeated (if forgiven), the elder brother tricks the younger, and the concluding marriages are arranged by the connivance of age rather than youth.

Massinger’s tone of quasi-religious moral judgement is dictated by his second exemplar, the morality tradition. As Neill points out (“Charity”193-4) the play’s theme — the test of charity — is drawn from two parables, the parable of the unjust debtor (Matthew 18.21-35) and that of the steward who abuses his authority (Luke 12.45-6). Both tales deal with abuse of authority and lack of charity; Neill argues that the play, in dramatizing Luke’s repudiation of charity, demonstrates its necessity (“Charity” passim). This moral and religious superstructure explains why the play often seems like a Caroline update of a Tudor moral interlude, populated by emblematic characters who are identified by ‘type names’. All or most of the characters are morality figures as well as mimetic characters. Luke and the Frugal women, in particular, are modeled on Vice figures; Luke is both Avarice and
Hypocrisy, while the Ladies Frugal are Pride (Vanitas) as well as proud. Stage images are used to reinforce these identifications. The Frugal ladies first enter "in several postures, with looking-glasses at their girdles" (1.1.46. SD); these "postures"—presumably a dumbshow of preening themselves in their mirrors—provide a background for Goldwire's explanation of their follies to the newly-arrived Tradewell and the audience (Neill "Charity" 203-4). But the poses also echo the figure of Pride in the emblem tradition, a young woman admiring herself in a hand-glass (Peacham 5). Luke's ode to the counting-house key (3.3.1-45) has similar emblematic overtones. Massinger used the image of 'Avarice clutching the key to his hoard' in "The Cure of Avarice", his morality play-within in The Roman Actor; Luke's address to the key seems a conscious echo of this earlier image. Moreover, the image is a deliberate construction; Massinger is explicitly echoing Volpone (1.1.1-27), but he has changed the subject of the worship from the gold itself to the counting-house key, in order to present the 'usurer and key' image on stage.

Although none of the other characters can be so straightforwardly identified with given vices, Massinger's minor characters are nonetheless types, either thinly-disguised moral personifications drawn from the morality tradition or the social types of estates satire, marked as such by their names. The symbolic status of the minor characters is further emphasized by their presentation in pairs or sets, which stresses their status as walking concepts; the pairing of Plenty and Lacie stresses their identification as Wealth and Birth, the two daughters, Ann and Mary, plump for City and Country pleasures, Goldwire and Tradewell fall into wenching and gaming respectively, and the three debtors, Hoyst (the

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4 The corrupters of the young apprentices are Gettall the gambler, Dingem the pimp, Shave'm the whore, and Secret the bawd, with Ramble and Scuffle the roaring boys making a brief appearance. Sir John's household includes Stargaze the astrologer, Holdfast the honest steward, and the apprentices Goldwire and Tradewell; the debtors which Frugal frees and Luke abuses are Penurie the poor man, Hoyst the prodigal and Fortune, the decayed merchant. Add to this catalogue Plenty the rich suitor, and Lacie the noble one, as well as Sir John Frugal himself, and one pretty much has a full hand. As in the figures of the moral interludes from which they are visibly derived, the nature of the minor characters is revealed in their names, and they can get on with the business of being the Steadfast Steward or the Wealthy Hick.
prodigal) Fortune (the decayed merchant) and Penurie (the poor man) represent three common forms of financial ruin.

For all this emblematic simplicity of characterization, however, the play is a complex fiction. While it is built on a morality base, it enacts a more complex moral code than merely vice versus virtue; while it is formally related to city comedy, it presents a very Caroline integration of city comedy’s antithetical social terms, citizen and gentleman. Butler’s definition of Caroline city comedy in contrast to the Jacobean form in *Theatre and Crisis* makes the terms of this transformation clear:

Jacobeans city comedy is moral rather than social, and takes greed and folly for its principal preoccupations [...] The main social antagonism with which it deals is between citizen and gentleman, Money and Land; London means the city, a place of legalism and sharp practice. This polarization did not greatly obsess the dramatists of our period. London in the 1630s implies the Strand, not Cheapside [...] although London comedy is still a serious form, the vices it castigates are promiscuity and pride rather than greed, and its yardstick is civilized behaviour rather than human kindness. Moreover, as we have seen, many playgoers were making connections with the rich merchant classes, and the plays they saw rarely suggested that the city was out to destroy the gentry.

(158-9)

Butler’s model for the Caroline form of city comedy is the work of Shirley; Massinger’s play actually lies at a mid-point between the two forms. Massinger displaces the focus of Jacobean city comedy’s conflict between citizen and gentry, making Sir John Frugal both a citizen and a gentleman (1.1.12-13), but he still presents a conflict of money and morals, as well as manners and pride. Massinger’s play is built on moral conflict, but it is conflict between good and evil citizens, rather than between citizen and gentry.

The civic focus of the play’s project, defining virtue and vice in a specifically mercantile context, is stressed by both Neill and Butler. Butler declares that the play not only reflects real-world connections between merchants and gentry (“Audience” 159-66), but “illustrates the mutual deference at the level of manners which is the exterior manifestation of a society cooperating healthily [...] [t]he play is not opposed to social advancement as such, but is committed to ensuring that modifications in the shape of society occur smoothly and without undermining the survival and good order of the whole” (174). Part of this
balance is the definition of mercantile activity that does not damage the larger society ("Audience" 166-69). Neill likewise notes that the play's setting in the "conspicuously mobile world of City commerce" ("Charity" 201) leads to a surprisingly flexible social ideology: Sir John and Lord Lacie are friends and would-be in-laws, and the marriages of Sir John's two daughters to the farmer, Plenty, and the young lord, Lacie, link the three great social terms of City, Country and Court. This flexibility inheres in the civic context of the play, since London's economy and social structure both rely on social mobility linked to economic development: the civic government is based on ritualized social change (there is a new Lord Mayor every year) and the city's economy is a classic trickle-down one. As Neill argues, the "distance 'twixt the city and the court" which the play's closing verses insist on is "determined not by inherited rank, but simply by the contingencies of acquired status [. . .] on the individual's immediate relationship to the social order" (202). This is a world of place and role rather than birth and breeding.

In the mercantile world of London, status as well as wealth emerges from a social nexus of trade, social obligations, contracts and mutual reliance: "Status [. . .] can be conceived of as something lent rather than given, an object of stewardship, another counter in the elaborate system of debt and obligation that makes up the bonds of society" (Neill, 202). London is therefore the site of two tightly related systems of debt and obligation: the social nexus of family connections, friendships and charitable acts (which produces status), and the material/financial nexus of trade and exchange of material goods (which produces wealth). The system of social connections is parallelled by and connected to the complex system of debt and obligation that makes up the Early Modern trading economy, and which

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The treatment of the two suitors is a good example of the play's approach. In Act One, the two young men quarrel publicly over precedence and degree, Plenty sneering at young Lacie's poverty, and Lacie abusing Plenty's low origins. Fothergill draws heavily on this quarrel in support of his argument that Massinger's play is concerned solely with defining social place (72-3). However, not only is the quarrel strongly criticized by both Sir John and Lord Lacy, but the suitors' humiliation by the girls unifies them: they declare to Sir John that "we were rivals, but now friends / And will live and die so" (2.3.43-4), take part in Sir John's gulling plot and, at the play's conclusion, become brothers-in-law. Class antagonism is introduced only to be dispelled.
we see operating within the play through Sir John’s relations with his debtors. The two systems, social and economic, operate on the same logic of bond and obligation; one cannot exist without the other. Luke’s rejection and abuse of the literal system — the threat of premature foreclosure on Lord Lacie, his cheating of the debtors — is intimately connected with his repudiation of the family and social system — his rejection of charity, his corruption of the apprentices, his attempt to sell his kinswomen.

However, connections between the two systems — and between classes — can produce considerable anxiety; Lord Lacie’s worry about his alliance with a merchant family is based on his disquiet over the ethics of Frugal’s business practices rather than concern over degree: “I have heard / In the acquisition of his wealth, he weighs not / Whose ruines he builds upon” (1.2.137-9). Although ethical social behaviour is clearly established for all classes of society, ethical financial behaviour — virtuous trading — is just beginning to be defined.

The project of the play, therefore, is the definition and celebration of beneficial trade; Luke’s function as a villain is to define the abuses of economic exchange and trade, thereby allowing Sir John to stand as an exemplar of virtue. The play ‘magically’ dispels anxiety over business ethics by building up a contrast between legitimate and illegitimate trade and exchange, using evil practices to delineate good ones. Thus, all forms of legitimate exchange are parodied or shadowed by parallel forms of corrupt exchange. The legitimate sexual exchange of the Frugal daughters’ marriage negotiations is echoed by the marketing practices of the whore Shave’rn, whose customers are “suiters. . . .for marriage, and the other thing too. / The commoditie is the same” (3.1.79-81). The East Indies trade of Sir John is paralleled by Luke’s debased American trade in human flesh. And, in a overt reduction of the principle of credit to theft, Goldwire, Sir John’s bookkeeper, explains how he will conceal his embezzlement of six hundred pounds with the help of his fellow apprentices:

\[
\text{. . .We cash-keepers} \\
\text{Hold correspondence, supply one another} \\
\text{On all occasions. I can borrow for a week} \\
\text{Two hundred pounds of one, as much of a second,} \\
\text{A third lays down the rest, and when they want,}
\]
As my Masters monies come in, I do repay it,
Ka me, ka thee.
(2.1.121-27)

In effect, this is a parody of the system of early modern credit; in the absence of a formal English banking system, trade was financed by a loosely integrated system of interlocking loans, bills of exchange drawn on foreign banks, and the transfer and sale of goods (Braudel 1: 470-8; 2: 382-395). Such a system involved quasi-commercial, quasi-personal loans, so that entering into a business arrangement also meant entering into a social one. Financial exchange built relationships of the sort which exists between Sir John and Lord Lacie, which Goldwire’s “ka me, ka thee” parodies and echoes. Goldwire is doing what his master does — with the vital difference that his circulating currency lessens, rather than increases, the pile.

Finally, the most important of these paralleled images is Luke himself. His status as the model of a corrupt, irreligious, avaricious and cruel trader, who cheats his debtors and will sell his kinswomen for money, helps to support the image of Sir John as the model of a virtuous trader:

...The noble Merchant
Who living was for his integritie
And upright dealing (a rare miracle
In a rich Citizen) Londons best honour... 
(3.2.39-42).

In order to present the image of a ‘noble Merchant’ at Blackfriars, a theatre which had no tradition of positive images of mercantile activity, Massinger inverts the conventional use of city comedy, a genre normally used to attack rather than valorize the city. Moreover, he uses images from a number of sources — the biblical tradition, the morality play, the emblem tradition, civic pageantry and the court masque — to bolster his moral and social satire. These are strewn through the whole of the play, but culminate in the concluding ‘birthday masque’.

As has been stated, the masque is not necessary from the narrative point of view; Luke is transparent to the audience from the counting house scene in Act Three Scene Three, if not earlier, and his moral corruption is obvious to all the other characters by the time the masque is staged in the fifth act. But if the masque has no narrative function, it does have
dramatic, spectatorial, and symbolic functions. Dramatically, it is a ritual enactment of Luke’s cruelty, and serves as an ‘epitome episode’ for the work of the play as a whole (Neill, “Charity” 205-7). Spectatorially, forcing Luke to sit as his own judge (5.3.58) provides an enacted justification of his ejection; his reaction to the show, more than the show itself, condemns him. And symbolically, the show plays off two forms of pageantry, the civic pageant and the court masque (which is appropriate for a ‘courtly masque’ presented in the house of a city merchant). Its form and its two dominant figures — the figure of Orpheus and the ‘Indian’ presenter — are drawn from the masque, while the influence of the civic pageant emphasizes the social effects of Luke’s moral blindness.

The pageant tradition supplies two major elements to the masque and the play as a whole; the moral frame for the ‘civic virtue’ that the play constructs, and the spectatorial relation between the primary audience and the actor/spectators. There are references to the civic pageant in the staging of the masque-within itself: the show is called a “pageant” by Sir John (5.3.111), and Luke refers to the parade of his victims as a triumph — “I could not triumph / If these were not my captives” (5.3.69-70) — which recalls the construction of the Lord Mayor’s Show as a ‘triumph’ of civic virtue (Leinwand 140). And there is direct reference to the pageant tradition earlier in the play; the three debtors make explicit reference to the Lord Mayor’s Show when they come to flatter Luke on his ‘inheritance’:

*Fortune.*  
His Worships?  
I see Lord Mayor written on his forehead;  
The Cap of Maintenance, and Citie Sword  
Born up in state before him.  
*Hoyst.*  
Hospitals,  
And a third Burse erected by his Honour.

6 The civic pageant may also be a source for the play’s use of moral allegory, emblems and biblical imagery; because civic pageantry followed a formula developed under Elizabeth, pageants were a time capsule of dramatic imagery (Bergeron *Civic Pag* 123-24). Bergeron argues that the neo-Elizabethan style of the pageants was as specifically linked to the city as the masque was to the court (*Civic Pag* 105); the archaism of Massinger’s play may be a reference to this ‘civic style’.

7 The shows were modelled on the Renaissance conception of a Roman Triumph, and ‘triumph’ was an alternate name for the pageant itself: Dekker praises Christmas (the pageant maker) for his help in “sett[ing] out the beauty of the great Triumphant-day.” (Bergeron *Civic Pag* 256).
Penurie. The Citie Poet on the Pageant-day
Preferring him before Gresham.
Hoyst. All the Conduits
Spouting Canary Sack.
Fortune. Not a prisoner left,
Under ten pounds. (4.1.69-77)

In this context, the Lord Mayor’s Show is related to the civic generosity which Luke travesties. The allusions to the Lord Mayor’s Show in Luke’s remarkably ungenerous birthday masque, to which he will invite no-one, are thus richly ironic.

Perhaps more significantly, the play as a whole, and the masque within it, share their project with the pageant tradition. As is suggested by the flattery of the debtors, the project of the Lord Mayor’s Show is the same as Massinger’s play -- to define ‘virtue’ in mercantile terms, transforming the potentially corrupting and dangerous forces of trade, profit and consumption to signs of virtue and honour. As Leinwand puts it:

The merchants who built and ruled London represented capital, and capital is figured in a discourse that [...] shades as easily into rapacity and unbridled power as into generosity and love. It is impossible to measure the value of a successful self-presentation on the part of the merchant elite – one that equates merchant wealth with merchant care for the city. (151)

An example of the approach is Heywood’s London’s Jus Honorarium, the Lord Mayor’s Show presented on October 29, 1631, six months before the first staging of The City Madam. As Bergeron states, the pageant is framed around issues of ethical government, “binding the dramatic events together [with] the concern for the preservation of the city” (Civ Pag 222). Charity is an integral part of this: the Mayor is called upon “[t]o curbe the opressor, the opprest to inlarge; / To be the Widdowes Husband, th’ Orphans Father, / The blindmans eye, the lame mans foot. . .” (Ius Honorarium lines 334-341). However, Heywood’s show also argues that commerce is honourable in itself. The personified figure of Honour “discovers all / the true and direct wayes to attaine unto her” (Ius Hon 283-4) with commerce included alongside valour, knowledge and birth:

A King: / Eyther by succession or Election. A Souldier, by valour and martiall / Discipline. A Churchman by Learning and degrees in scooles. A / Statesman by Travell and Language &c. A Lord Maior by Commerce and
Finally, the sins which Heywood's show attacks as the greatest threats to civic harmony are also the targets of Massinger's play — dissimulation and pride (*Ius Hon* 210-11).

But the most important element the Mayor's Show lends Luke's masque is the spectatorial relation between 'actor' and spectator. Like the court masque, the pageant is a semi-dramatic ceremonial form of address to the great, but unlike the masque, it is didactic; in it the city celebrates but also instructs their incoming Lord Mayor. In Leinwand's terms, the pageants present a "mirror for magistrates and a mercantilist mythos. . . both the direct counsel and the enacted scene point to what has been called 'a rulers' ethic,' an unwritten code that demanded service of the merchant elite" (140). The pageant is intrinsically public, staged before an audience of London citizens who watch the Mayor watching its shows; as such, the pageant is a dialogue between the ruler and the ruled, tying Mayor and citizens together in performance and spectation. Like Luke, the Mayor is both spectator and spectacle; he both watches and is seen to watch. Similarly, the players performing for the new Mayor also 'speak for' the city; the watching crowd, both really and symbolically the London frame for the show (Leinwand 140) are judging spectators, assessing their mayor's reactions to the pageants. The interlocking spectatorial relation between the Mayor watching the pageants before the eyes of the watching London crowd is much like the relation of Luke, his masque and the secondary audience.

This element of the pageant is particularly strongly evoked in the second portion of the masque, the parade of Luke's victims. The civic pageants, like Luke's show, are public stagings of moral judgement; in the pageant, as in Luke's show, the primary spectator is also the principal actor, who is being judged by both the spectators and the other actors. This process is explicitly staged in the play; although we do not know if Luke's victims understand that Luke is being gulled (presumably at least the sergeants do) we still watch a tableau that interacts with its spectator in the same way as the pageant tableaux. The dumbshow of the victims "*kneel[ing] to Luke, heaving up their hands for mercy*" (5.3.59 SD)
places Luke in the position of the magistrate passing public judgement, in the fashion of the civic pageant. Moreover, this is the section of the show which explicitly pushes Luke towards judgement. Although Sir John prods Luke towards interpretation several times in his introduction to the earlier (Orpheus) section of the masque, he does not emphasize the importance of Luke's response until he introduces the dumbshow, when he becomes explicit and leading:

Sir John.

Should I present
Your servants, debtors, and the rest that suffer
By your fit severity, I presume the sight
Would move you to compassion.

The music that your Orpheus made, was harsh
To the delight I should receive in hearing
Their cries, and groans. If it be in your power
I would now see 'em.

Sir John. Spirits in their shapes
Shal shew them as they are. But if it should move you?
Luke. If it do may I ne're find pity.

Sir John. Be your own judge.

(5.3.49-58)

Sir John directs Luke's interpretation through a series of statements and questions which grow more and more emphatic: "I think that I could stagger you", "I presume the sight/ Would move you to compassion", "But if it should move you?", finally culminating on "Be your own judge", which means both 'judge for yourself' and 'pass judgement on yourself'. The staging serves to frame Luke's responses, to make him subject to the judgement of the spectators as well as the (unknowing) subject of his own judgement. Just as the pageant is a dialogue, a discourse between the citizen spectators and their new ruler, the secondary audience of the play witness Luke's reaction to his 'triumph' in a dialogue between the watching 'judge' and the pageant show.

The influence of the court masque on the show is more obvious than that of the pageant, mainly because the show is a masque. As Garrett points out, Luke's masque owes its structure and movement to the court form:

[T]here is much [...] that recalls the form of masques at court. Sir John acts as presenter, and there is a rough correspondence with the structure of antimasque, main masque and revels in the three phases of the show [...] As in the incorporated mask of tragedy as well as the masque at court,
revelations and transformations are everywhere apparent: the Indian presenter, the 'spirits' and the 'statues' become the characters once more, and Luke, exposed morally, is forced to 'uncase' physically. (Diamond 169)

There are other allusions to the court masque as well. Luke’s position as the show’s primary audience is explicitly compared to the placement of the king: “His chair in state, he shall feast like a Prince” (5.3.9), and his ‘birthday banquet’ recalls the banqueting which ended masques at court.

Massinger also draws on particular masque performances as well as general formulae; the imagery of Luke’s masque has direct links to the masques presented at court earlier that year. Gibson suggests that Massinger’s use of Virginian Indians may have been inspired by their presence in Aurelian Townshend’s 1632 Shrove Tuesday masque, Tempe Restored (E&G IV:5). Massinger may have taken Orpheus specifically from the 1632 Twelfth Night masque, Albion’s Triumph, which opens with Mercury raising Orpheus from the dead to sing of Albanactus (Charles) to Alba (Henrietta Maria). Orpheus does not play a major role in the masque — nor do the anti-masking Indians of Tempe Restored — but the fact that both types of figures had appeared in the Banqueting House within the preceding five months would serve to make the necessary connections in the minds of a Blackfriars audience watching an Indian present a masque of Orpheus.

Finally, Luke’s masque inverts the form of the court masque. As Garrett’s identification of the show’s three parts indicates (Diamond 169), the main masque and the antimasque are reversed — the dance of Orpheus, an appropriate subject for a main masque, is in the position of the antimasque, while the grotesque parade of suffering victims is in the place of the main masque. This inversion reflects Luke’s inverted values; he rejects the “ravishing strains” of Orpheus, who symbolizes music, poetry and harmony, and who is a

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8 The City Madam was licenced for performance on May 25, 1632; Albion’s Triumph was performed on January 8, 1632, and Tempe Restored on February 14, 1632. In addition, Gibson speculates that the Indian costumes used in the Blackfriars may have been the same ones used in Tempe Restored (E&G IV: 5 nt 4); if so, this would provide a material link between Massinger’s show and the court masque.
moral exemplar and type of Christ (Friedman 38-85), in favor of the “cries, and groans” (5.3.55) of his victims. The rejection of Orpheus, a classical precursor of Christ, is evidence of Luke’s moral turpitude, but is also an indication of his aesthetic blindness:

Luke. ...You promis’d musick?
Sir John. And you shall hear the strength and power of it,
The spirit of Orpheus rais’d to make it good,
And in those ravishing strains with which he mov’d
Charon and Cerberus to give him way
To fetch from hell his lost Euridice
Appear swifter then thought.

Musick. At one door CERBERUS, at the other,
CHARON, ORPHEUS, Chorus.

Luke. ‘Tis wondrous strange.
Sir John. Does not the object and the accent take you?
But that musick should
Alter in fiends their nature, is to me
Impossible. Since in my self I find
What I have once decreed, shall know no change.
(5.3.36-47)

Luke, taking Orpheus’s story at face value and belittling it as “[a] pretty fable”, is untouched by its moral implications. Yet the masque’s presentation of Orpheus as a lover who rescues Euridice by swaying Charon and Cerberus with his music draws on three moralized versions of the myth: Orpheus as a type of Christ harrowing hell, as a civilizing musician, and as a lover restoring the dead through art.9 All three elements have direct application to Luke’s own position and to the larger play.

First, Luke rejects the “pretty fable” of the classical type of Christ just as he rejected

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9 As Robbins explains, the Renaissance Orpheus was “a type of Christ, overcoming death, a psalmist or a troubadour, courtly lover and singer of pretty lyrics. From the Renaissance on, Orpheus [was] the very incarnation of the power of music...” (4). The poetic/musical archetype becomes an archetype of the musician as magician through the analogy of poetry and music: his music tames wild beasts and causes rocks to move. In the later Middle Ages he becomes a minstrel hero of courtly romance (Friedman 146), making his rescue of Euridice an example of the power of love (Vicari 67). Both these episodes were heavily allegorized in the Middle Ages; the descent of Orpheus to Hades becomes a classical ‘type’ of the figure of Christ harrowing Hell (Friedman, 58-9; Vicari 70-1), and his ‘taming of the beasts’ a metaphor for the civilizing of savage humanity (Bergeron Civic Pag 290; Vicari, 66-7). Massinger uses this image of Orpheus the civilizer in The Parliament of Love: “the old heroicque sperrits, such as Orpheus, /That dew men differinge little then from beasts / To civell gouerment” (5.1.47-50).
the real Christ in his conversion to the “sacred principles” of the Indians (3.3.126). Significantly, his rejection of the music, which can “alter in fiends their nature” (5.3.45) but cannot alter him, compares him to disadvantage with the demons Cerberus and Charon. He is worse than the guardians of Hell; they are affected by the music and repent of their harshness, while he prides himself on his unchanging fiend-like nature. This is further played up in his “flinty, and obdurate” (5.3.63) response to the pageant of his victims and to the suffering of his kinswomen. As Neill points out, his self-description makes it seem “as though he were turned to stone, as hard, cold and inflexible as a marble statue” (206) which Neill links to the transformation of the suitor’s statues. Luke willingly becomes stone-like, inverting the redemptive transformation of love — both divine and human — which the masque plays out metaphorically in the Orpheus section, and ‘literally’ in the vivification of the statues (Neill, 206).¹⁰

Secondly, since Orpheus’s swaying of Charon and Cerberus is linked to his ability

¹⁰ Neill assumes that the suitors are imitating statues, while all of the play’s editors (Hoy, Gibson, Kirk and Craik) argue that the images which Sir John ‘brings to life’ are actually paintings. I’m inclined to agree with Neill; it is most likely that the suitors are playing statues, primarily because bringing a statue to life is a trick with a long stage tradition, and because of this ‘vivified statues’ have emotional overtones which ‘vivified paintings’ lack. Not only are they a common masque device (*Lord Hay’s Masque*, *The Lord’s Masque*) but they irresistibly recall the redemptive forgiveness of the last act of *Winter’s Tale*; the genders are reversed here, but the penitent daughters, like Leontes, are being given a second chance. Textually, the ‘painting’ argument is based on the OED citation of “statue” as meaning “image”, on Sir John’s reference to the images as “pictures” at 5.3.2, and to his description of them as “A superficies, colours and no substance” at 5.3.104. However, the images are called “statues” three times and “pictures” only once. Moreover, the citations given for the OED definition of “statue” as “an image or effigy” all refer to three-dimensional images such as Elizabeth’s funerary effigy or the Trojan horse. By contrast, one OED definition for “picture” is “an artistic representation in the solid, esp. a statue or a monumental effigy or image”: the seven citations illustrating this refer to portrait sculptures, and all date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Therefore, “picture” could refer to a statue, but “statue” couldn’t refer to a painting. Finally, Sir John’s description of the images as a “superficies, colours and no substance” applies equally well to three-dimensional images. Statues, especially portrait busts, were painted even as late as the 1630s; “colours” is therefore appropriate. The OED cites “superficies” as meaning the “outer surface of a body” and “superficial outward appearance”; “substance” could mean either “the matter or tissue composing [. . .] a body part or organ” or “any kind or corporeal matter”. A reasonable translation of Sir John’s statement would be “these are only lifeless images” not “these images are flat”.
to charm the beasts, and thus to his ability to charm bestial men, Luke’s sceptical immunity to both music and pity marks his resistance to music as a civilizing force as well. He is rejecting, as Neill says, the “power of harmony (that characteristic expression of the principle of love)” (206) but he is also rejecting harmony in the broader context of civic life. In the tradition of the city pageant, Orpheus stands for the harmonizing quality of good government: “every wise magistrate that governs thus, / May well be call’d a powerful Orpheus” (Middleton _Triumphs of Love_ VII, 320 qtd in Bergeron _Civic Pag_ 290). Luke’s rejection of Orpheus’s music is also a rejection of civilization; his ejection to “some desart” is appropriate, since he has proven, throughout the play and here in epitome, that he cannot maintain the implicit social contract of civilized life.

Finally, of course, the masque foreshadows what is about to happen. In the play as in the fable, love will return the ‘dead’ to life, and — since, in _Metamorphoses_ 10 Orpheus sings the story of Pygmalion — it will bring to life those hardened into stone. Metaphorically, the masque of Orpheus reflects Luke’s character and demonstrates his failings; literally, it tells him what is coming, if he only had the ability to read it properly. Luke cannot see the masque as either a metaphor or a warning, since he refuses to acknowledge that it could be a fictional construction with moral implications. In part this is because, as Garrett argues, his gullibility is linked to his materialism:

[Luke] is therefore ready to be gulled by the Indians and their claims precisely because they reject higher orders — only the Devil exists — in favor of the cult of the self which is so congenial to his avarice and hypocrisy [. . .] Somewhat paradoxically, once the strangers have persuaded Luke of their fully-fledged materialism he is able to accept that they are able to conjure spirits.

(_Diamond_ 172-3)

Luke’s materialism blinds him, not just to morality, but to the fictional nature of the show he watches. Because he is convinced that he is watching ‘reality’ — the real Charon, Cerberus and Orpheus, conjured up from Hell by demonic powers — he is unable to see the show as a fictional construction, and thus cannot read the masque’s fictional implications.

The final element which affects the meaning of the masque is its presenter: the ‘Algonquin Indian’ played by Sir John. Although the theatre audience knows the true
identity of the Indians, the image of the Devil's "deep Magician" doing wonders (5.1.30) is one of the most spectacular elements of this very spectacular masque. Butler and Neill have already identified some of the meanings that the Indian disguises could carry: Neill sees them as a purely demonic force, and links their devil-worshipping Virginia with "Massinger's London [which] is [...] an idolatrous society, whose mores are not fundamentally different from those of flesh-trading 'pagans' such as Shavem and Secret" (209). Butler connects them to "Sir John's charitable activities" (City Madam 178) and suggests that "they bring to bear [...] a consciousness of the godly citizen ideals underlying the North American trade as a framework within which Luke's actions may be judged" (City Madam 178). He links North American colonization with the play's Puritan ethic; the settlement of America is seen as a desire to reclaim the heathen for God, and Luke's refusal to convert the Indians is one more rejection of Sir John's virtues.

Both of these interpretations are valid, but the colonization of Virginia had meanings beyond conversion of the natives or fear of their demonic gods. I would argue that the 'Indians' also symbolize the idea of America itself; the new, open, penetrable continent which had been the subject of a flood of pamphlet literature in the years since Massinger's birth. The Virginia colony, set up in 1607 and still standing on rather shaky ground, was the subject of an aggressive and highly successful marketing campaign, primarily designed to get men to invest or to emigrate, preferably both. The idea of converting the Indians

11 Peter C. Mancall's Envisioning America: English Plans for the Colonization of North America, 1580-1640 provides a useful introduction to the pamphlet literature. I have also consulted several treatments of the pamphlets as documents in cultural history: Shannon Miller's Invested with Meaning: The Raleigh Circle in the New World, Joan Linton's The Romance of the New World, and Mary Fuller's Voyages in Print: English Travel to America, 1576-1624 provide useful analyses. Kathleen Brown's Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia is illuminating in regards to the role of women in the colonies.

12 There are literally hundreds of such documents: all have been collected in the five volumes of David Quinn's New American World. I have referred to Hakluyt's "A Discourse of Western Planting" (1585), Peckham's "True Report of the Late Discoveries... [by]...Sir Humphrey Gilbert" (1593), Harriot's "A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia" (1590), Percy's "A Discourse of the Plantation..." (1606-7) and Smith's "A General History of Virginia" (1624).
played some part in this, but it was patently subordinated to the real goal – the extraction of wealth. Quinn notes the skill and success of the Virginia Company’s marketing campaign when compared to its material returns:

The Virginia Company rarely lacked ingenuity and enterprise in seeking to accumulate capital for its ventures [...]. In sermons [...] the theme that the company was set up largely to save the souls of the heathen could be pressed and the missionary impulse stirred in the Protestant audience [...] even if, during the years 1606-1612 at least, the company made no attempt to implement its pious promises. Yet [...] the company must be regarded as highly successful [at propaganda]. Seeing that in these years no really valuable cargoes came to England and that each expedition cost more than the last with less return, the bringing in of money [...] must be regarded as an outstanding achievement in promotion.

(Quinn New American World 5:233)

The sermons may have stressed the pious need to save souls, but the pamphlets turned out by the company stress the opportunities for investment. In most of these documents, America is linked with fantasies of wealth; all the pamphlets provide lists of natural resources, most discuss the potential for mining, manufacture, industry, and trade, and many hint at the potential of gold, either real or metaphoric. The promise of wealth, either in the form of natural resources that could be turned to gold via trade, or in the form of possible gold mines, played an important part in the marketing of the colony. Many pamphlets represent Virginia as a world of natural abundance and beauty, ready to drop Edenic bounty

Massinger’s one identified source is John Smith’s “General History of Virginia. . .” (1623) (E&G V:240-1), but he may have known Harriot’s “Briefe and True Report” a well known document lavishly illustrated by woodcuts of John White’s paintings of the Algonquian culture; this may have provided him with images of his “Indians”. Smith and Harriot are informative and balanced; Smith, a former governor of the Virginia colony, is honest about its history and abundantly detailed (if self-vaulting). Massinger has a family connection with New World exploration as well; his father Arthur sailed with the first voyage of Sir Humphrey Gilbert in 1578 (E&G 1:xv; Quinn Voyages 212). Their intent was to colonize Newfoundland, but they turned back after 20 days at sea (Quinn, England 250-1), and Arthur Massinger did not go on the expedition of 1583, in which Humphrey and his ship were lost at sea. Finally, it is worth noting that the later Puritan New England pamphlets, such as Wood’s “New England’s Prospect” (1635), published at about the same time as the play, are considerably more practical and realistic than the Virginia pamphlets, emphasising both the harshness of the conditions and the religious and social benefits of emigration. This seems to imply a broader general knowledge of conditions in America; perhaps by the 1630s enough had been published that it was no longer possible – or necessary – to spin elaborate yarns about riches. This makes Luke’s gullibility yet more striking.
into the hand of any gentleman who deigns to take ship; even the more balanced treatments, such as Harriot's, hint at wealthy tribes of Indians and possible gold mines, and provide long lists of plants, minerals, fish, game and other resources. The America of the Virginia Company's pamphlets was, if not Eden, at least Arcadia.

However, a much harsher image of North American settlement was becoming generally known by the twenties – ironically, at about the time that the situation was beginning to improve, thanks to the tobacco cash crop (Quinn *New American* 5:187). The early days of settlement were immensely difficult; in its first years 1607-10, the Virginia colony were appallingly managed, badly provisioned and worse prepared, often dependant on the Algonquian for food (Percy in Mancall 124-6). This period, known as “the starving time” (Quinn *New American* 5:187) saw the deaths of the majority of colonists, some from disease, exposure and Indian attack, but most simply from malnutrition and bad water; at one point, the population was reduced to 70 men (Quinn *New American* 5:187). Several personal narratives describing the conditions were printed, including George Percy’s “A Discourse of the Plantation...” (1606-7), whose final few pages are a simple catalogue of deaths from swellings, fluxes and fevers (Quinn *New American* 5:273). Even when things improved, as they did by the twenties, life was not easy: tobacco provided a cash crop, but required back-breaking labour to cultivate, and the Algonquin, becoming suspicious of the invaders, began to make war in earnest, decimating Jamestown in 1622. Finally, the Virginia company collapsed in 1623, after a royal investigation had revealed “the company’s insolvency, the failure of all of its plans, the mismanagement of the colony’s affairs, the exceptionally high rate of mortality among its settlers, and the poverty-stricken state of the colony” (Craven 304).

Even at its best, Virginia never provided the kind of trade imagined by the hopeful investors; there was no gold, and little natural wealth. The only profitable export of Virginia was tobacco (a disturbingly bestial, ‘native’ kind of product) and the only product England ‘sold’ to Virginia was slaves — English bondslaves, usually women, who were supposed to supply the want of wives but really provided field and house labour (Maxwell 155-59).
Lady Frugal and her daughters make direct reference to this trade when Luke first broaches the Virginia scheme:

*Ladie:* How, Virginia!
High Heaven forbid. Remember Sir, I beseech you,
What creatures are shipp'd thither.

*Anne.* Condemn'd wretches,
Forfeited to the law.

*Mary.* Strumpets and Bauds,
For the abomination of their life,
Spewed out of their own Country.

(5.1.105-10)

As Neill observes, this comment connects the sex trade of Shave'm, the fantasy world of the 'Indians' and the corrupt practices of Luke (209); however, it also foregrounds the real nature of Virginia and emphasizes its status as a "desart" (5.3.142-4). Even if conditions in Virginia have improved from the disastrous early years, the popular image still of a brutish and dangerous place. As Mancall stresses, "whatever success the English might have found in tobacco production must have been tempered by the other lesson of early Virginia: America could be deadly for anyone who went there" (Mancall 21).

It is in this context that one must read the picture drawn by Massinger's 'Indians'; their Virginia is even more of a cloud-cuckoo land than that presented by the pamphlets. They present their land as an idealized storehouse of wealth, parallel to the storehouse of easy money that Luke hymns in 3.3.1-45. The masque itself is 'proof' of this abundance: the Indians produce real commodities – food, music, actors, money – out of thin air, implying that in their nation the mere desire for wealth produces it. As Garrett (*Diamond* 172) and Butler ("Audience" 181-5) have noted, their 'religion' is a mirror of Luke's own avarice: "there being no religion, nor virtue / But in abundance, and no vice but want" (3.3.106-7), and the materialism of their magic is an expression of this. They are a living projection of Luke's own fantasies of the possession of limitless abundance in a purely materialist world; their con job works by mirroring fantasies back to the fantasist.

Their 'offer of marriage' to the women is a good example; the picture of Virginia they draw is a fantasy of barbarian splendour linked with the pomp earlier falsely promised to the women by Luke (3.2.179-99). Claiming to be "Kings of [ . . . ] spacious territories, and
dominions” (5.1.115) they offer a land of wealth and glory:

Lucie: You shall be ador'd there
As Goddesses.
Sir John: Your litters made of gold
Supported by your vassalls, proud to bear
The burthen on their shoulders.
Plenty. Pomp, and ease,
With delicates that Europe never knew,
Like Pages shall wait on you
(5.1.118-22)

The women’s refusal of this offer indicates their moral development; they can now recognize an impossible fiction when they hear it. But the fantasies they offer Luke – in particular the “mine of gold” – are no less preposterous, and they are swallowed whole.

And this, of course, is where the Indians serve as one more point of contrast between Luke and his brother — where John trades with the East Indies for valuable goods, resulting in a tangible benefit to his family and society, Luke trades human flesh (and souls) to the demonic West Indies in exchange for a mythical mine of gold. America, in this play, is an illusory dream of ease and luxury, a projection of the fantasist. Trade with such a fantasy land is impossible; Luke is obviously buying into a stock bubble, a world that exists only in his own imagination, as opposed to the true world of the East Indies trade.

It makes sense, then, that Luke’s masque — the play’s crowning illusion — is framed as a gift of Indian magic, offered as a business courtesy upon the closing of the ‘deal’ over the women: “yet ere we part, / Your worldly cares defer’d, a little mirth, / Would not misbecome us” (5.1.130-33). What Luke is offered is an opportunity to appear flamboyantly generous at no expense; the ‘Indian Priest’ offers to:

By my art. . .prepare you such a feast,
As Persia in her height of pomp, and riot
Did never equall: and ravishing Musick
As the Italian Princes seldom heard
At their greatest entertainments. Name your guests.
(5.1.136-40)

Sir John’s intent must be to unmask Luke in a public setting, before a secondary audience unconscious of his crimes. This is stymied by Luke’s refusal to invite anyone:

Sir John. Not the City Senate?
Nor yet poor neighbours. The first would argue me
Of foolish ostentation, and the latter,
Of too much hospitality, a virtue
Grown obsolete, and uselesse.

(5.1.141-5)

There is no apparent reason for this refusal of guests, since their presence will cost Luke nothing, and gain him a good deal of social status. However, Luke takes pleasure in the revels because they are solitary: “I will sit / Alone, and surfeit in my store, while others / With envy pine at it” (5.1.145-7). To Luke, the existence of anyone to share the feast (which is magically produced, and thus free and unlimited in supply) will detract from his pleasure. In this context, the kind of win/win scenario that operates in trading or gift economies becomes impossible, since the fundamental principle of the act of trade is that you give away surplus goods in order to gain supplementary goods. Luke is incapable of accepting the notion of surplus; any sharer becomes a rival, all bonds exist to be broken, all society must be shut off and denied. He therefore refuses to offer hospitality, even free hospitality, because he is incapable of forming any social connections, either bonds of trade, gift or obligation; the nexus of trade and social connection that has built Sir John’s fortune is replaced with Luke’s solitary revels.

Of course, the play’s culminating irony is that the masque’s ‘Indian Magic’ ultimately restores the real world; the last act of ‘the Indian’ is the transformation of the statues of Lacy and Plenty. This final triumph of ‘Indian art’ is prefaced by “[y]et one thing reall. . .” (5.3.76), the lamentation of Ann, Mary and their mother over the images of the suitors. Their sincere regret for their former shrewishness bears witness to their cure, while Luke’s complete indifference to their sorrow provides final proof, if any is needed, of his cruelty:

Sir John. Does not this move you?
Luke. Yes as they do the statues, and her sorrow
My absent brother. If by your magick art
You can give life to these, or bring him hither
To witnesse her repentance, I may have
Perchance some feeling of it.
Sir John. For your sport
You shall see a Master-piece. Here’s nothing but
A superficies, colours, and no substance.
Sit still, and to your wonder, and amazement
I'le give these Organs.

(5.3.97-106)

Luke is only asking for a striking special effect, further proof of the demonic power of the 'Indian' magic he's buying into. What he gets, instead, is a real transformation, a breathtaking tragicomic reversal which uses the high point of the masque fantasy to bring his edifice of dreams down around his ears. This works partly because the transformation is an established form of theatrical magic, a trick played on the watching theatre audience as well as on Luke; although the audience knows the young men are present, and may assume that they will be used in Luke's unmasking, the moving statues will still be a shock, a moment of transformation for them as well as for Luke. The piece of theatrical magic is both a coup de théâtre and an illustration of the forgiveness of the girls. As in its source, the transformation of Hermione in The Winter's Tale, the redemptive transformation of the dead image into the living body is born of the penitence of the offender; emotion affects dead stone and transforms reality through the bounds of theatrical fiction (Neill 205-7).

Finally, the statues' transformation is paralleled by Luke's own apparent ossification. He is silent and motionless throughout the pardons and embraces that follow the appearance of the suitors and the entry of Lord Lacie and the prisoners; Sir John finally turns to him on the words: "My kind, and honest brother, / Looking into your self, have you seen the Gorgon?" (5.3.129-30). The gaze of the Gorgon turned its victim to stone; here, the mirror of the show has reflected Luke's monstrosity back to himself, figuratively changing him into a replica of the statues which have just been brought to life. As Neill points out, Luke's boasts that he is as hardhearted as a statue (5.3.98) and as unmoved as marble (5.3.64) are here almost made real; his self-division from the forgiveness and affection of the world of the living, which up to this point has been a position of power, now freezes him into a physical immobility that separates him from forgiveness and restoration (Neill 217). The re-entry of the society that he had severed himself from transforms him literally, as well; with the suddenness of a masque transformation, in the space of thirty lines, he is castigated, stripped, and sent packing to the real Virginia, a type of hell on Earth, to "repent" (5.3.144).
The City Madam's masque, particularly its interaction with its primary audience member, uses explicitly staged fantasy to reveal truth – the truth of Luke's character, but also, figuratively, certain truths about the nature of the playworld as a whole. Likewise, the masque of A Very Woman also reflects on the character of its primary audience, although it performs a very different dramaturgic function. Luke's masque makes his villainy clear; it re-enacts his behaviour, and forces him to be his own judge. In A Very Woman, a similar focus on the responses and interpretations of the primary audience acts as cure, not judgement.

A Very Woman is something of an ugly duckling in Massinger criticism; it has aroused less critical commentary than any play in the Edwards and Gibson edition. This is partly because the extant text is Massinger's revision of an original Fletcher/Massinger collaboration, one of four such plays he revised in the early 1630s (McMullan Politics of Unease 267-9). Much of the critical work has sought to establish source material, authorial hands and dates: Gill uses source study to reconstruct and date the Fletcher/Massinger original, and to identify the sections that Massinger revised in 1634 — among them, the curative masque-within (138-44). Edwards points out that Gill's evidence is supported by textual inconsistencies in the 1655 edition; the stage directions for 4.2 and Act 5 are more descriptive than those in the rest of the play, and he posits that "those parts of the play with

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13 The masque-within, one portion of the play which is assuredly Massinger's, has received two excellent treatments; Martin Garrett's chapter in A Diamond, though set in Horn, and Charlotte Spivack's "Alienation and Illusion: The Play-within-a-Play on the Caroline Stage" which focuses on the medical plays-within in A Very Woman, Brome's The Antipodes and Ford's The Lover's Melancholy. Spivack argues that these plays "use [...] the interior play for psychological purposes" (196) staging a form of psychodrama reflective of a new sense of interiority; she claims that this differs from the "conventionally didactic purpose" (196) of the Elizabethan and Jacobean inset plays. There are two source studies which focus on problems of authorship: Maxwell's Studies in Beaumont, Fletcher and Massinger (177-93), and Roma Gill's "Collaboration and Revision in Massinger's A Very Woman". The rest of the play has received little attention; it is barely mentioned in Clark's and Dunn's book-length studies of Massinger, and gets similarly short shrift in the essay collection Philip Massinger: A Reassessment. Philip Edwards treats the play briefly in his survey essay "Massinger the Censor", and Doris Adler's reading — the only extended treatment — focuses on the play's treatment of slavery and tyranny as a commentary on Caroline politics (106-9).
the uninformative stage-directions represent a transcript of the original collaborative play, and that Act IV, Scene ii and Act V represent the manuscript of Massinger’s later revision” (E&G IV: 202-3).

The therapeutic play/masque-within, the core of Massinger’s 1634 revision, is an oddity; as Garrett says, it is “distinctly unlike most inset masques [...] the label ‘entertainment’ attaches to it uneasily: performer and spectator [...] are present for ends other than celebration or delight” (Diamond 179). It consists of a series of moral dialogues between the suicidal, melancholy Martino and his Doctor/Actor, Paulo; playing the roles of a Friar, a Soldier, and a Philosopher, and aided by a comic slave/actor, Paulo wins Martino back to rationality through a mix of fictitious stories, rational argument and comic exempla. The climax of the show integrates the patient’s shattered psyche through music and song, restoring him to mental and emotional health. Formally, it owes little to the court masque and nothing at all to the pageant tradition. In fact, there is little agreement as to what to call the inset; Spivack calls it a play, Gill does not label it, and Garrett calls it a masque, although he argues that “[it owes] less to the court masque than to the separate tradition of the ‘moral masque’ with its greater emphasis on dialogue” (Diamond 179). In calling it a masque, I follow Garrett, who argues that it has a masque’s spectatorial structure: “the entire proceedings are directed specifically at Martino, having nothing of the independent existence of an inset play [...] it is the relationship between the performer and the spectator of a masque that is most clearly recalled” (Diamond 176). Moreover, he sees the show’s movement from discord to harmony as inspired by the form of the court masque. Plays-within entertain or instruct their audiences, but Paulo’s show transforms, reintegrates and cures Martino, a quasi-magical function which belongs to the masque. Moreover, it is the characteristically masque-like mix of music, dance and theatrical illusion (including the use of trapdoors and flying machines, described at 4.2.14) that actually completes Martino’s cure. The show’s form and function justify the label of masque.

A more serious problem is the show’s relation to the play that contains it. Several critics have pointed out its incongruity (Garrett Diamond 180; Gill 144); its metadramatic
exploration of the melancholic psyche sits like a granite boulder in the happy froth of Fletcher's plot. As incongruous as it is, however, Massinger chose to insert it and must have had some purpose in doing so; I will therefore examine the ways it changes the original plot before examining it in isolation. As Gill says, it is possible to discern the original collaborative play, which she calls "a fairly conventional comedy with a light-hearted treatment of feminine unreasonableness" under the Massinger revision (148). Although what remains of the original play is a conventional comedy, describing Almira, the play's volatile, wilful title character, as "unreasonable" is understating the case. The play's unaltered portions present female desire as a manic, destructive passion (although Fletcher's lightness of touch frequently casts such behaviour as absurd rather than repugnant); Almira is the crux of this gendered conflict between masculine reason and feminine passion. She is irrationality embodied, stressing the opposition of her will, "[t]he privilege of my sex", to masculine reason (1.1.89-91). The near tragedy of the main plot is rooted in her willful selfishness in love; her stubborn refusal to love Don John causes the quarrel between her suitors and the wounding of Martino, and her inconstant shift of affection from Martino to the disguised Don John triggers the play's closing crisis.

Massinger's revisions, including the masque-within, significantly alter the gender

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14 Don John, the Prince of Tarent, is in love with Almira, the daughter of the Viceroy of Sicily. She does not love him, of course; she is in love with Don Martino Cardenes, the son of the Duke of Messina. At the play's opening she quarrels with Pedro, her brother, who is pleading Don John's cause; Don John arrives to see her only to meet Martino, who picks a fight with him. Don John wounds Martino severely; Almira hears the fighting, arrives to find her lover 'dead', and attacks Don John with Martino's sword. The wounded Don John escapes with help from Pedro, who disguises him as a Turk and smuggles him onto a ship bound for Naples; this ship is then captured by pirates, and Don John is returned to Sicily and sold as a slave. Meanwhile Almira, who is convinced that both Martino and John are dead, has gone mad with vengeance, while the wounded Martino, convinced he has murdered Don John, has gone mad with guilt. Martino is given into the care of Dr. Paulo, and Almira and her companion are put in the care of the drunken maid Borachia; the disguised Don John is bought by Borachia's husband to guard the two girls. Almira recognizes his innate nobility and falls in love with him, which cures her madness, and the Doctor uses theatrical medicine to cure Martino. The play ends with Don John's rescue of the two girls from an attack by pirates; he is publicly rewarded for his heroism, but is immediately threatened with execution when Almira declares that she loves him and not the now recovered Martino. Don John then reveals his identity, forgives Martino and marries Almira.
politics of the source play, shifting its focus from misogynist comedy to a psychological analysis of the effect of emotion on inner vision in both sexes. On a dramaturgical level, the masque, a mechanism used to correct the defects in Martino’s inner vision, is also used to change the thrust of the play’s satire. Massinger’s revision ‘frames’ his old partner’s material, using the masque to re-orient the Fletcher material without changing a word of it. The play’s focus is no longer the vagaries of sexual desire, but the problem of self-knowledge, a theme which further relates to the typically Fletcherian disguises, role-playing and masquerades the various characters enact. Finally, Massinger’s revision shifts the parallel between Almira’s madness and Martino’s melancholy; I will first examine the treatment of this parallel in the original portions of the play, and then look at how the revision changes its interpretation.

The paralleled mad scenes of Acts Two and Three, which Gill argues belong to the original play (144), displace the passion of Martino’s madness onto Almira as part of the general anti-feminist satire which seems to have been the original play’s core project. Almira’s passionate madness provides a comic contrast with the ‘serious’ melancholy of Martino; this is related to the tendency, throughout the play, to displace will, desire or passion from male to female characters. Although Martino’s madness is first described at 2.2.77-86, it is not staged until the next act. Instead, “[m]elancholy / [. . .] near of kin to madness” (2.2.80-1) is shown in Almira’s mad scene, which begins within twenty-five lines of the discussion of Martino’s symptoms.

The scene is oddly comic. It opens with Leonora and the waiting-women discussing Almira’s disturbed rest:

. . . If she slumbred, strait,
As if some dreadful vision had appear’d,
She started up, her hair unbound, and with
Distracted looks, staring about the Chamber
She asks aloud; where is Martino? where
have you conceal’d him?

(2.3.2-7)

The lunacy promised by the conventions of unbound hair, sleeplessness and waking dreams is amply fulfilled in the following scene. Almira enters “in black, carelessly habited” (2.3.23
SD) and rants absurdly for forty lines, directs prayers to a star she is convinced is Martino’s soul (2.3.39), and finally “grow[s] into a phrensie” (2.3.49) as she ‘hears’ Don John (whom she believes dead) tortured in Hell:

I’ th’ Vault... on the infernal rack,
Where murtherers are tormented: Yirk him soundly,
‘Twas Rhadamanths sentence; Do your office Furies.
How he rores!

(2.3.53-56)

Almira’s misery is played for laughs: the folly of her discourse, the bathos of Leonora’s interjections, the absurdity of the women’s postures (ears to the ground, rears in the air) as they listen to the ‘racking’ of Don John, and the fact that the audience knows that both men are alive all heighten the comedy. This passionate irrational madness is then contrasted with Martino’s hyper-rational melancholy.

Martino’s madness is a ‘higher’ form; a melancholia born out of conscience-ridden guilt; although his reasoning is twisted by despair, he is sober and reasoned. His opening speech upon his first appearance ‘mad’ makes the point:

Certain we have no reason, nor that soul
Created of that pureness books perswade us:
We understand not sure, nor feel that sweetness
That men call Vertues chain to link our actions.
Our imperfections form, and flatter us;
A will to rash and rude things, is our reason,
And what we glory in, that makes us guilty.

(3.3.7-13)

This is an astoundingly philosophical frame of mind for a madman. Martino has not lost his senses, but his moral frame; he is a convert to a debased and pessimistic materialism, convinced that the soul does not exist and that there is no moral impulse in man. His conviction that reason is only passion — “a will to rash and rude things” — is a reflection of his being led by sexual desire (his will). In submitting his reason to passion he has descended the Chain of Being: “I am a beast, the wildest of all beasts, / And like a beast I make my blood my master” (3.3.23-4). The continuation of the speech, which focuses on his guilt for his “unmanly” abuse of Don John, ends with an explicit statement of the play’s gender politics: “Why didst thou do this, fool? a woman taught me, / The Devil and his Angel
woman bid me” (3.3.21-2). With the connection between passion, women and madness firmly made, Martino repudiates love of women in favour of love of virtue, and the rest of the scene is an elaborate anti-feminist dialogue with the Doctor; women are “dangerous creatures, / [that] sting at both ends” (3.3.29-30) and “worthless creatures / [. . .] all their loves and favours end in ruines” (3.3.30-1).

In these two scenes, both of which belong to the original portions of the play, Almira’s emotive lunacy serves as a foil to Martino’s rational melancholy, and serves to prove the correctness of his melancholic conclusions. In this context Martino’s madness is not madness at all, but a clear-headed statement of the nature of relations between men and women. In fact, the ‘curing’ scene of the original collaboration may have been more satire on women rather than an exploration of Martino’s psyche; the ‘happy ending’ could well have been the humiliation of Almira, showing the princess too proud to love a prince rejected by a ‘slave’. Although I am obviously speculating here, if the ending of the lost original play was something of this kind, Massinger’s decision to revise the play would make sense, if only for marketing reasons. In 1634 he is writing for a theatre in which this kind of misogynist satire was going out of style, possibly because of an increased percentage of women in the audience. In order for the piece to succeed the attitude, and thus the ending, would have to be changed.

The change his revision makes to the play as a whole can be seen in the differences between the original and the revised sections of the last two acts. In Fletcher’s unrevised portion of Act Four, Scene Three, Don John, (in disguise as a slave) tells Almira the story of his lost love — that is, the story of her rejection of him. Almira’s reaction is disgust with herself, but whether it is produced by guilt over her behaviour towards Don John or guilt

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15 The original play trades heavily on the traditional connection between women, the body and madness; since Martino’s melancholy is a result of his passion for Almira, he has ‘caught’ desire from her as one catches a disease. This body-based desire leads to madness, and in order to re-order his psyche his reason must be put in charge of his body again. By contrast, Almira’s madness is cured the minute she is confined, and her lingering obsession with revenge is relieved as soon as she falls in love with the ‘Turkish slave’; women, who are ambulatory bodies without reasoning souls, only need to be put under the power of masculine reason in order to be cured.
over her desire for a slave is hard to tell:

In this mans story, how I look! how monstrous!
How poor and naked now I shew! What Don John
In all the vertue of his life, but aim'd at,
This Thing hath conquer'd with a tale, and carried.

(4.3.184-6).

Her horror seems to stem equally from the recognition of the baseness of her behaviour to the prince and the baseness of her desire for “this Thing”. The focus is on the contrast between Prince and slave, and the vulgarity of appetite that would choose the slave over the prince.

In Massinger’s re-written Act Five, by contrast, Almira’s love for ‘the slave’ is presented as the result of her ability to see through the servile exterior to the noble man beneath. She declares that she selected a husband through inner vision:

... In [my choice] I have us’d
The judgment of my mind, and that made clearer
With calling oft to heaven it might be so.

(5.4.91-3)

And she declares that her love is based on virtue, not status:

... the man I love, though he wants all,
The setting forth of fortune, gloss, and greatness,
Has in himself such true and real goodness,
His parts so far above his low condition,
That he will prove an ornament, not a blemish
Both to your name and family.

(5.4.101-06).

This paragon is the same man that Fletcher’s Almira called “this Thing” at 4.3.186. Further, Massinger turns the very element that Fletcher used to stress Almira’s foolish inconstancy — her choice of a slave over a prince — into proof of her inner perception:

[love] Thou art fain’d blinde,
And yet we borrow our best sight from thee.
Could it be else, the person still the same,
Affection over me such power should have,
To make me scorn a Prince, and love a slave?

(5.4.11-15)

The point of the play has been shifted from a jeer at the inconstancy of women to a study in ‘right seeing’, proper perception.

It therefore makes sense that the masque which Massinger inserts into the play is
itself focussed on the problem of perception, both in its theme — the correction of Martino’s inner vision — and in its presentation, framed by an on-stage secondary audience who watch and judge Martino’s interpretation of the theatrical images Paulo presents. Paulo’s show is a psychomachia used to restore the emotional balance of the man who watches it; formally and thematically, it is entirely concerned with the problem of ‘inner vision’ or self-perception.

The show itself is, as I have already noted, not immediately identifiable as a masque at all; it consists of three dialogues staged for Martino by the Doctor (in the characters of a Friar, a Soldier and a Philosopher, respectively), and only breaks into spectacle at its close, when the final cure is accomplished by a dance and song performed by a “good and evil genius”. Formally, it is unrelated to Massinger’s other inset masques; it belongs in the newly developed mode of inset masques featuring melancholy or madness (among them Fletcher’s The Mad Lover, The Nice Valor and The Humorous Lieutenant, Middleton’s The Changeling, and Webster’s The Duchess of Malfi). According to Gill (145) Massinger’s most likely source is Corax’s Masque of Melancholy in Ford’s The Lover’s Melancholy (1628).

Unlike the ‘masque of Melancholy’ performed by Ford’s Corax, however, Paulo’s masque is enacted specifically to reflect and transform Martino’s emotional world; Paulo does not present generalized or entertaining images of melancholy, but presents characters who respond to Martino’s impulses directly.¹⁶ The show controls Martino’s mind by acting out his thoughts, using illusion to cure him by harmonizing the discords of his soul. Its ‘plot’ has its roots in his divided psyche:

\begin{quote}
His inhumanity to Don Anthonio
Hath rent his mind into so many pieces
Of various imaginations, that
\end{quote}

¹⁶ Corax’s Masque of Melancholy is, as Ewbank says (437), a collection of entertaining images which have little to do with Palador’s specific case. Palador’s moment of self-recognition is not forced by his dialogue with the masque, but only comes when he recognizes his affinity with the problems presented. Corax’s masque cures by analogy, not by psychodrama, while Paulo’s interacts with Martino’s psyche and cures him directly.
Like the Celestial Bowe, this colour's now
The object, then another, till all vanish.
(4.2.4-8)

The multiple characters that the Doctor and his servant play are thus related to elements of Martino's divided mind; the masque is an enacted psychomachia. Thus, when Paulo tells the secondary audience that they shall be "Be witness to [Martino's] fancies, melancholy, / And strong imagination of his wrongs" (4.2.2-3) he is speaking of the show as well as the patient, since the show is actually a staging of Martino's interior conflicts. While the roles of Friar, Soldier and Philosopher do not directly represent Martino's soul, honour and reason, each of them interacts with the appropriate portion of his divided self. The characters replace each other as his 'imaginations' shift; as he says, on the entrance of the Soldier and Courtier, the characters respond to his thoughts: "My thoughts are search'd and answer'd; for I did / Desire a Soldier and a Courtier / to yield me satisfaction. . ."(4.2.121).

This tight relation to the responses and needs of the patient/audience is what results in Martino's cure or reintegration; framed in the illusion of the show, Martino cannot distinguish between his own delusions, external illusions or reality until the full cure has taken effect. The restoration of his ability to distinguish the show as fiction, to distinguish between illusion and reality, is evidence of his restored health:

With delight I now perceive
You for my recreation have invented
The several Objects, which my Melancholy
Sometimes did think you conjur'd, otherwhiles
Imagin'd 'em Chimera's.
(4.2.172-76)

Despite the overt morality of its dialogues, Paulo's show does not succeed by preaching at

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17 This shifting of the spectacle in relation to the emotional response of its spectator is very like Bosola's horrific role-playing with the Duchess in the fourth act of The Duchesse of Malfi. In fact, Webster's play may be a source for Massinger, since Bosola's show is an inverted and sinister precursor of the sort of 'healing' masque Massinger stages here.

18 The cure itself is effected by music; the music which accompanies the song of the Good and Evil genius tunes "the discords of [Martino's] soul" (4.2.158) and the song itself provides "A cheerful heart, and banish[es] discontent" (4.2.182). But it is the enacted intervention of the characters which brings Martino to the point of cure.
its primary audience, but by playing off his emotional responses to their speeches. Paulo’s description of the upcoming performance to the secondary audience emphasizes the theatrical, illusory and mimetic nature of the performance, but makes no mention of a pre-arranged plot:

...to all [his] humors,
I do apply myself, checking the bad,
and cherishing the good. For these, I have
Prepar’d my Instruments, fitting his Chamber
With trap-doors, and descents; sometimes presenting
Good spirits of the air, bad of the earth,
To pull down, or advance his fair intentions.
He’s of a noble nature, yet sometimes
Thinks that which by confederacie I do,
Is by some skill in Magick.
(4.2.10-19)

The fictional magic, here as in *The City Madam*, serves to emphasize the show’s status as a curative illusion. The difference is that there is no framing fiction played out, as there was in Luke’s masque; Paulo is merely using the apparatus of the theatre to hold a mirror to one man’s mind. The moral dialogues which the fiction presents work to heal the patient because they are tailored to fit his emotional reactions, which change throughout the course of the show.

The odd blend of psychological mirror and theatrical magic is emphasized by the two speeches which open it: the scene starts with Paulo’s explanation of his methods, quoted above, and then continues on with the entry of Martino “*A bed drawn forth, MARTINO upon it, a book in’s hand*” (4.2.19 SD). The book and the reclining attitude form a standard melancholic pose, but the entrance is peculiarly theatrical; the stage is the only place one will find a self-propelled bed. This underscores Paulo’s assertions about his “instruments” (4.2.13) and emphasizes the theatrical nature of what we are about to see. But Martino follows this assertively staged entrance with a soliloquy on the harmony of the soul “[t]hat every Soul’s alike, a musical Instrument, / The Faculties in all men equal Strings, / Well, or ill handled; and thus sweet, or harsh.” (4.2.22-4). This of course relates to the musical close of the show; the strings of his soul are now out of tune, but will be harmonized (4.2. 158-9), and the focus on his inner turmoil emphasizes that the show, while being explicitly theatrical,
will stage his emotional states and his modes of thought.

The "plot" moves Martino from his initial despair (what we would call depression) to self-hatred and attempted suicide, to reasoned reflection on his actions, and finally to content. The show only consists of three 'moral' dialogues that model forms of Martino's behaviour back to him. The first of these, the tale told by the Friar, is a fictionalized version of Martino's own actions: the Friar, infatuated with the beloved of his closest friend, forced his friend into a duel and killed him. This is a worse violation of honour than Martino's own, yet the Friar is "quiet in [his] bosom" (4.2.69); he has found peace through repentance and reason (4.2.73-5). This conversation banishes Martino's catatonia but does not ease his disquiet.

Upon the Friar's exit Martino swings into contemplation of his own despair - "where keeps peace of conscience, / That I may buy her? No where, not in life" (4.2.80-1) - then into reflection on life's mix of pleasure and pain: "Hence is it we have not an hour of life / In which our pleasures relish not some pain, / Our sours some sweetness. Love doth taste of both." (4.2.87-9). The fact that this oddly philosophical disquisition is a theatrical presentation is emphasized by the wondering commentary of the on-stage audience (4.2.93-5). This, the first of a series of asides made by the Viceroy, Cuculo and the Duke of Messina, also recalls the reason for the performance; their comments on the irrationality of Martino's discourse helps us to remember that the focus of the show is his cure. Although this audience makes little interpretive commentary by comparison to the much more analytic audiences of The Roman Actor, their presence and their comments help to keep the theatre audience aware of the show's status as a show.

Martino's speech then slides into self-hatred (4.2.103-6) and finally culminates in attempted suicide:

Then on honour
Wronging [Don Pedro] so, I'll right him on my self:
There's honor, justice, and full satisfaction
Equally tender'd; 'tis resolv'd, I'll do't.
They take all weapons from me.
(4.2.106-10)
The conversation with the Friar has released him from the passivity of despair, but only to attempt suicide out of self-loathing and rage. The scene with the Courtier and the Soldier (who represent Love and Honour respectively) deals with this suicidal impulse, the remaining “Doubts / not yet concluded of” (4.2.123-4). The morally opposed roles of foolish worldly lover and honourable warrior serve to convince Martino that the true route to honour is not suicide, but Stoic resistance to despair:

Tis poor in grief for a wrong done to die,  
Honor to dare to live, and satisfie...  
...Who fights  
With passions, and overcomes 'em is indu’d  
With the best vertue, passive fortitude.  
(4.2.151-5)

The final mental integration is accomplished by music; Massinger is of course drawing on music as the standard Renaissance metaphor for harmony. The climax of the cure is not a reasoned dialogue or an extended metaphor, but a song, to which Martino has a non-rational, somatic response:

The discords of my soul  
Are tun’d, and make a heavenly harmony:  
Musick  
What sweet peace feel I now! I am ravish’d with it.  
Viceroy. How still he sits!  
Cuculo.  
Hark, Musique.  
Messina.  
How divinely  
This Artist gathers scatter’d sense; with cunning  
Composing the fair Jewel of his mind,  
Broken in peeces, and nigh lost before.  
Viceroy. See Protean Paulo in another shape.

Enter DOCTOR, like a Philosopher: A good, an ill Genius presented. Their Song. While it’s singing, the DOCTOR goes off, and returns in his own shape.

Doctor. Away, I’ll bring him shortly perfect, doubt not.  
(4.2.158-66)

The music can only work once the reasoning of the Soldier has alleviated Martino’s immediate pain; like the characters invented to discourse with him, it externally expresses his inner state. The “ravishing” of the music brings him to a physical peace — “how still he sits!” — which mirrors the stillness of his soul. Despite the overt focus on reason and talk, the show, like other masques, works via art and illusion; Martino’s cure is completed by his
emotional responses to the characters he meets, and the final cure is accomplished by music, not reason.

The key to the process, therefore, is not the conventional morality delivered by the Friar, the Soldier and the Philosopher, but their tight relation to Martino’s emotions. As Spivack notes, the show, while overtly moral, is really psychological in focus: the point is to cure Martino, not to bring him to repentance (198). The show’s theatricality, seemingly so extraneous, is also integral to the cure; Martino’s uncertainty about the status of the characters he meets is an essential part of his cure. Like Luke, Martino has no sense that he’s trapped in a fiction; he believes that he is the victim of magic. His question to the Friar, on his entrance—“what art? an Apparition, or a Man?” (4.2.36)—indicates his uncertainty about the Friar’s ontological status; he’s not really sure what this man is, or if he’s a man at all. Like Luke, he imagines the show he sees is magical but real; like Luke, he is situated in a fiction visible to all but him. But where Luke’s inability to recognize the obvious theatricality of the illusion was proof of his spiritual and social blindness, Martino’s inability to recognize the masque as illusion is what cures him. Paradoxically, the purpose of the theatrical illusion is to be as ‘real’ as possible until the point when Martino can once again see the difference between fantasy and reality.

This blurring of the division between theatrical ‘reality’ and metatheatrical fiction makes the presence of the onstage audience vitally necessary, despite the fact that they say little (they have 23 lines between them, in a 191 line scene) and perform little interpretation. The visible presence of the on-stage audience emphasizes the fictional status of the show-within; while Martino may be confused by the difference between reality and fiction, the theatre audience are not permitted to forget the (fictional) ‘real’ world which frames the masque. Moreover, their presence emphasizes the interpretive status of the show-within for the larger theatre audience; we do not just watch the show directly, but watch the on-stage audience watch Martino’s reactions. The brief interjections of the three watchers position us, as a theatrical audience, as spectators, not just of a masque-within but of the spectatorial process; they help us to interpret the meaning of Martino’s responses to the show. Further,
their presence foregrounds the problematic position of Martino in relation to the show; he is both its primary spectator and its central character — indeed, insofar as the show is a psychomachia, he is also its ‘plot’.

As well, their interjections pull us back from total involvement in the show but also provide us with what Myhill calls “models for spectatorship” (1). The triad of spectators occupy three very different spectatorial positions; the Viceroy is a wise and perceptive spectator, Cuculo an utter fool who can be counted on to misunderstand the action, and Messina, Martino’s father, an emotionally involved spectator. Messina’s reactions to the spectacle of his son’s illness are, understandably, primarily affective: he blesses Martino when the young man attempts suicide (4.2.110) and exclaims over Paulo’s excellence — “Rare man! How shall I pay this debt!” (4.2. 111-12). His praise of Paulo’s “Art” in “Composing the fair Jewel of Martino’s mind” (4.2.163) stresses the Doctor’s skills as a healer, not as an actor. Messina’s appreciation for the effects of the show are more emotional than aesthetic; he watches hoping for his son’s recovery, and the means by which this is accomplished is far less important than the fact of its accomplishment. He is the spectator, above all, who keeps us aware of the show’s purpose — the cure of Martino’s madness.

The Viceroy and Cuculo, by contrast, are more interested in the mechanics of the show as an entertainment or aesthetic construction, commenting on the entries and actions of the Doctor, on Martino’s reactions, and on dramatic effects. The Viceroy is a responsive and engaged spectator who is more interested in the means by which the cure is performed than in the fact of the cure; he draws attention to the specifics of entrances (4.2.111), costumes (4.2.116) and to Paulo’s control of his audience/patient: “Mark how he winds him” (4.2.153) during the Soldier’s speech. Cuculo’s commentary is comically fatuous; he is distracted by detail, bites at every red herring, and is incapable of reading the images presented beyond face value. He delights in the English slave’s portrayal of a foppish courtier, praising its accuracy at length without grasping the point of the satire, and indeed without seeing the character as a type of himself. Further, he draws attention to the obvious (“Hark, Musique”), is incapable of comprehending the subtleties of Martino’s madness or of
the cure, and generally acts as comic relief. The differing approaches of the three are illustrated at the show’s musical climax; Messina thankfully praises the Doctor, the Viceroy draws attention to Martino’s stillness, and Cuculo comments on the obvious.

And finally, the onstage audience serves as a bulwark against the kind of vertigo that Spivack’s interpretation suggests is intrinsic to the exploration of the psyche on the stage (199): the judgement and commentary of the secondary audience frames the fiction within an artistic construct that we, as the theatrical audience, may judge as they judge it. Their spectatorial position confirms our own; we are watchers of the construction of a self, not selves under construction ourselves. This use of the on-stage audience as protective bulwark keeps the ambiguity of the fiction within careful and safe limits. This is particularly important in relation to Martino’s masque because what is being engaged is not his judgement, as in Luke’s masque, but his intellect and his soul. Martino is manipulated by his show, where Luke is tricked by his; Martino’s psyche is dramatized, while Luke is only made to put himself, unknowingly, on trial. While Martino’s show is considerably less elaborate and less dramatically complex than Luke’s show, it is in fact more significant; Luke’s masque was a moral mirror, a re-iteration of Luke’s actions in the larger play. Martino’s show is an exploration of the construction of his psyche; the doctor really can change the way he thinks by presentation of theatrical imagery. Paulo’s theatre works as thought-control. This is rather unnerving, as Spivack points out (199); the audience is saved from vertigo by the fact that this performance is differentiated from the usual theatrical fictions in two ways: first, the show works because it is performed for a madman who does not recognize it as a theatrical presentation, and second, it has no psychological effect on the secondary audience, who do recognize it as a theatrical presentation. Awareness of the process of theatre allows them to judge the show as theatre, rather than to be anatomized or judged by it.

It is to the ultimate example of the self-aware audience – that of the plays-within of *The Roman Actor* – to which I now turn.
Chapter Four

Plays within the Play: *The Roman Actor*.

The plays-within of *The Roman Actor* are the most complex of Massinger's inset pieces; the three playlets performed by Paris's company before the Emperor Domitian are more complex, in and of themselves, than any of the insets examined so far. Moreover, the use of the multiple plays-within to structure the outer play is the most complex of all the works treated in this study. Indeed, the play's dramaturgical complexity has been the focus of almost all the commentary on the work.¹ *The Roman Actor*’s status as Massinger’s most metadramatic play makes it the logical climax of a thesis on the playwright’s use of inset metadramatic pieces.

Yet chronologically there is a paradox: *The Roman Actor* is the earliest of the plays to be treated in this study. It occupies a unique position in Massinger’s canon, marking a stylistic shift between his Jacobean plays, many of which deal with social and political issues (*The Bondman, The Duke of Milan, The Unnatural Combat*) and the more metadramatic but lighter Caroline plays which have been the focus of this thesis.² Like the earlier plays it is a political commentary, dealing with the relations between tyranny and art; like the Caroline plays, it is dramatically structured by the complex interrelation between the metadramatic

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¹ Of the 34 pieces of criticism on the play, 24 deal with the relation of the metatheatrical inset plays and the outer play, with most arguing that the play uses some form of the theatrum mundi trope to connect the political play of Domitian with Paris’s use of the stage.

² Although the distance between 1626 and the dates of *The Picture* (1629), *The City Madam* (1632), *The Guardian* (1633) and *A Very Woman* (1634) is brief, the half-decade looms quite large in terms of Massinger's theatrical approach.
insets and the frame play. As I explained in the introduction, I deal with the play at the end of this thesis rather than the beginning because it is both the most complex and the most performative of Massinger’s metadramatic works; its inset pieces are plays rather than images or enacted images, and the play itself is an exploration of the specific relations between the drama and its spectators, rather than an exploration of spectatorship and interpretation more generally. We have moved from art to acting.

*The Roman Actor* is a turning point of Massinger’s career in practical as well as artistic terms. It is the play that marks his entrance to the position of attached solo playwright for the King’s Men; staged the year after Fletcher’s death, it may even have been an audition piece for the position of company dramatist. That Massinger got the job is obvious evidence of the play’s success, as is the presence of a number of theatrical professionals in the prefatory material for the 1629 edition. Massinger’s introductory reference to Knyvet, Jay and Bellingham as his ‘only supporters’ (E&G III: 15 line 10) is somewhat belied by the poetic presence of the play’s real patrons, the players, whose pleasure is marked by a verse from Joseph Taylor, the actor who played Paris. Prefatory matter is justly suspect — the motives for the composition of dedicatory verses, in particular, are never disinterested — yet the presence of verses by the actor Taylor and two fellow playwrights (John Ford and Thomas Jay), the unusually large number of dedicatory verses

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3Massinger’s proud assessment of *The Roman Actor* as “the most perfit birth of my Minerua” (E&G III: 15 line 20) in his letter of dedication to the play’s 1629 edition has somewhat overshadowed his statement, earlier in the same document, that the play was penned as something of a gamble: he dedicates it to Knyvet, Jay and Bellingham as its only begetters: “In the composition of this Tragdie you were my only Supporters, and it being now by your principall encouragement to be turn’d into the world. . .” (E&G III:15 lines 10-11). The intimation is that the triple dedicatees had encouraged a not-yet-burgeoning solo career. Although the terms by which he praises his own work suggest that the play was a *success d’estime* rather than an unqualified hit, this may simply be, as Gibson suggests, (E&G III: 8-9) designed to flatter the volume’s purchasers by casting them as “learned and judicious Gentlemen” (E&G III:15 line 13) in opposition to “such as are only affected with ligges, and ribaldrie” (E&G III:15 line 16).

4 Taylor’s letter is placed at the end of the dedications, just before the text of the play; it thus occupies the position of a spoken prologue in theatrical presentation, so that the actor’s verse takes the place of a formal prologue in “Vshering this Worke. . .” (E&G III:20 line 13). This serves to emphasize the play’s status as a piece of functioning theatre even in its printed form.
(six), and Massinger's terms of address to his dedicatees, all mark him as an inhabitant of the inner circle of the London professional theatre. Although the play's appearance in print in 1629 marks a period of financial difficulty for Massinger, he is now an established member of the London theatrical community: he is no longer "[n]ot knowne beyond A Player or A Man" ("Copy of a letter" E&G IV: 390 line 43). The prefatory material both exploits this and implies that The Roman Actor won him this position.

Written in 1625 and staged in 1626, The Roman Actor is (at least temporally) a Caroline play, but its formal roots are deep in Jacobean soil. Massinger's 'frame play' is in the tradition of the Roman play of the previous three decades, and the framing vision of this Romanism is, as Goldberg argues in his James I and the Politics of Literature, a sociopolitical one. However, The Roman Actor is not a clearly polemical play; it is ambiguous enough that it has been argued to be both a drama in support of absolutism and an attack upon it. Goldberg, who views the play as a pro-absolutist work, reads it in the context of a series of late Elizabethan/early Jacobean Roman plays: Jonson's Sejanus (1603) and Catiline (1611) and Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (1599) and Coriolanus (1608). Goldberg argues that Massinger's play is the 'recurrence' of the "high Roman style of Jacobean absolutism" (203), the final crowning proof of the link between the Roman plays and James's absolutism:

The Roman plays that came to claim the stage in the Jacobean period reflect the style of the monarch and James's sense of himself as royal actor. They bear, as romanitas does in the Renaissance, a strong notion of public life, the continuities of history, the recreation of Rome as England's imperial ideal. In this Roman world, a particular kind of hero exists. In him, the absolutism that James espoused in his own self-division is tragically revealed.

(Goldberg James I 165)

Martin Butler's "The Roman Actor and the Early Stuart Classical Play" places it in a theatrical and political context diametrically opposed to Goldberg's. Butler's paper sets the play in the context of less familiar but "similar and near-contemporary [Roman] plays [...] the anonymous Nero (before 1623), Thomas May's Julia Agrippina (1628) and Nathaniel Richards's popular melodrama Messallina (1635)" (139). He argues that these works, which use Tacitus as an exemplar of Puritan/Parliamentarian resistance to absolutism, build on a
classical model of Republicanism violated by tyranny in order to criticize Stuart absolutism. He therefore sees *The Roman Actor* as an anti-absolutist and anti-theatrical play, which presents “Paris and his fellows in a light which is powerfully ‘puritan’” (160).

Both readings connect Domitian’s tyranny with contemporary absolutism and argue that the work is a specific comment on it. Butler’s reading has the virtue of seeing Massinger’s play in the context of contemporary works, rather than lumping it together with plays written twenty-six years earlier, but Goldberg’s has the virtue of tying the play to the sources to which it is obviously, and gracefully, in debt. Both readings, opposed as they are, foreground the problematic relation of the play to its political and social context. Butler, who finds the presentation of Domitian as simultaneous tyrant and patron of the arts particularly distressing, argues that “the play seems to pull simultaneously in contradictory directions, articulating points of view which are radically incompatible and which [. . .] ultimately obscure Massinger’s intentions” (*Roman* 161).

I would argue, however, that the play’s politics are slippery because Massinger’s true interest lies as much in the play’s structure as in its plot; in fact, the play’s politics are built into its structure. Although Massinger is working in the tradition of the Jacobean Roman

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5 Such usage of the Tacitean model pre-dates these Caroline plays by many decades; Smuts discusses the use of Tacitean models for criticism of the court from Elizabeth’s reign (by the Earl of Essex and his circle) through to that of Charles (“Court-Centred” 25-30). Jonson’s *Sejanus* is drawn from Tacitus among other classical sources; Butler and Goldberg are therefore arguing from the same sources.

6 Richard A. Burt’s “‘Tis Writ by me’: Massinger’s *The Roman Actor* and the Politics of Reception” argues that both Goldberg and Butler (along with Heinmann and Patterson, who also argue that the play is ‘oppositional’) are wrong. He argues that the play is a deconstructed image of the theatre which dramatizes the ways in which “reception overrides the intentions of authors and actors” (334). I am indebted to this idea, which is very close to my own reading of the play. However, although he is correct in claiming that the play presents the reception of theatre as a political act in and of itself (337), he ends, I think injudiciously, by assuming that the work has no politics beyond those imported by its audience (341).

7 Here, as in much else, I am following the lead of Nova Myhill, whose doctoral dissertation has heavily influenced my approach to this thesis. Myhill’s thesis deals with the presentation of on-stage audiences; in particular, she examines how pro- and anti-theatrical concepts of the drama’s effect on spectators structure the presentation of audiences in works ranging from *The Play of Sir Thomas More* to *The Antipodes*. She thus approaches *The Roman Actor* as an illustration of the
plays, framing contemporary political questions in the classical past, the play’s political allegory is overshadowed by its relentlessly play with every metatheatrical device the stage has to offer. *The Roman Actor*’s plot is a rather simple narrative, but its dramaturgical structure is immensely complex. The play is about the stage and its relation to its audience, and its

"reciprocal influence and dependence of the theatre and its audience" (Myhill viii), an approach which parallels my own. As a consequence, I rely heavily on her work.

The play opens with an induction-like discussion between three actors (Paris, Aesopus and Latinus) on the state of the Roman theatre; they are then summoned to the Senate to answer libel charges brought by their political enemies (1.3.34). Paris’s speech in their defence, a stunning hundred-line oration on the moral and social value of the stage, is capped by the return of the Emperor Domitian from the wars and the withdrawal of the charges. Domitian then orders the actors to provide entertainment to celebrate the end of the wars. The bulk of the first act is thus taken up with theoretical discussions of the nature and place of the stage (although Scene Two shows us Parthenius, Domitian’s pandar, forcing Lamia to ‘divorce’ his wife, Domitia, in order that she may become Domitian’s Empress). The bulk of acts Two, Three and Four are made up of the three plays within that Paris’s company stages for the court, and the fifth act deals with the assassination of Domitian.

At the opening of Act Two, Domitian is informed of the political criticisms of the Senators Rusticus, Sura and Lamia (Domitia’s ex-husband). He resolves to eliminate them, starting with Lamia, whom he summons to hear an impromptu vocal performance by Domitia; when Lamia fails to praise his ex-wife’s voice sufficiently, Domitian pronounces him guilty of treason, and has him executed. This scene serves as an informal introduction to the staging of Paris’s first play, “The Cure of Avarice”, intended as an illustration of the moral function Paris claimed for the drama before the Senate. Parthenius, the emperor’s pandar, is frustrated by the miserly ways of his father, Philargus, and Paris stages the playlet in order to provide a curative reflection to the old man. Instead of being moved to repentance, however, Philargus is confirmed in his avarice, and the irritated Domitian has him hanged for his ‘misreading’ of the play. “The Cure of Avarice” has unfortunate results for Paris as well, since the play arouses the Empress Domitia’s erotic interest in him, and she orders the staging of the second play-within, “Iphis and Anaxerete”, in order to see him play a lover. This playlet is also framed by Domitian’s theatre of cruelty, being immediately preceded by his torture of the stoic philosophers Rusticus and Sura, the two remaining ‘malcontent’ Senators. Their calm under torture — which they claim they “owe to graue Philosophie” (3.2.99) — leaves Caesar deeply frustrated, and Domitia presents the love scene as “sport/[to] banish melancholie” (3.2.129-30). The primary dramatic function of “Iphis” is to reveal Domitia’s lust for the unfortunate Paris; she halts the performance rather than watch his character commit suicide, thus arousing the suspicions of her enemies.

The final play-within, “The Unfaithful Servant”, is staged as punishment rather than entertainment. Domitia sends for Paris and demands that he make love to her, on pain of execution. He reluctantly complies, but the scene is watched by Domitian, who has been informed of Domitia’s impending infidelity by her jealous waiting-women. Domitian breaks in on the pair and, after having Domitia and the informants arrested, orders Paris’s company to stage, impromptu and without an audience, “The False Servant”. Domitian takes the role of the betrayed master and kills Paris while in character. The scene closes with an echo of a conventional tragic funerary procession: “A sad
plot is actually made up of the reaction of the on-stage spectators to a series of nested plays-within and other inset spectacles. As has already been discussed in the introduction, it is the earliest of the distinctively Caroline metadramatic plays; it is the first play in the English drama with an actor as hero and the theatre as subject, and its only true precursor is The Knight of the Burning Pestle. In fact, as Patricia Thompson points out, the play as a whole can be read as a tragedy with the theatre itself as hero:

where [... unbridled passion and tyranny, do run amok, there drama, with other potentially good forces, is inevitably trampled underfoot [...]. Drama [...] may be said to be martyred. In spite of appearances to the contrary, it has no real audience, none capable of benefiting from its influence. Paris’s ideals remain valid in principle. In practice their defeat makes the Roman Actor a tragedy, not only of an actor, but of acting.

(World Stage 425)

musicke, the Players bearing off PARIS body, CAESAR and the rest following” (4.2.308)

Act Five has the air of an afterthought. An astrologer warns Domitian of his impending death “to morrow, being the fourteenth of / The Kalends of October, the hour five” (5.1.116-7); the astrologer adds that he will shortly die himself, and prophesies that his body will be eaten by dogs. In an attempt to avert both prophecies Domitian orders the astrologer executed and his body burned; he then writes Domitia’s death warrant and goes to sleep. While he sleeps Domitia steals the warrant from under his pillow, discovers her name and resolves to kill him; meanwhile the ghosts of the philosophers Rusticus and Sura appear to Domitian as if in a dream, curse him and steal his statue of Minerva. When Domitian wakes to discover that the statue is really gone (5.1.200) he is convinced that he is doomed; this is confirmed when his guard enters with the news that astrologer’s body would not burn, and that the guard had not been able to save it from the arrival of thousands of famished dogs. The terrified Domitian barricades himself in his room to await his death. His terror is only broken by the arrival of Parthenius with the cheerful (and false) news that the clock must have stopped since it is now six, and that his troops have won yet another victory and wait to bring him tribute. Domitian is thus enticed away from his bodyguard and led to an inner room, where the conspirators – Domitia, her three waiting women, Parthenius, Stephanos and two entirely new characters included to make the number of assassins seven, the number of Julius Caesar’s murderers – stab him to death. The Tribunes then break down the locked door and arrest them all, arguing that “he was our Prince / How euer wicked, and in you ‘tis murther” (5.2.77-8) and Domitian’s body is borne off with much less ceremony than that of Paris at the close of Act Four. The assassination and conclusion take place in a bare thirty lines and the cast exits the stage with indecorous haste, making the disposal of the “adored Monarch of the world” (1.4.28) a hurried theatrical endnote.

While Roman Actor’s self-conscious status as a theatrical structure is close to that of The Knight, it lacks that play’s overlapping categories of frame play, citizen ‘audience’ and impromptu insets. Beaumont’s satire is based on the struggle of two different dramatic forms – citizen drama and boys’ company drama – within the playhouse. Beaumont’s Rafe is not a professional actor, and the relation of the theatre to political power does not concern him. In contrast, Massinger’s tragedy is based on the contentious relation of the theatre and the state; the problem for Paris is not so much keeping decorum in the theatre as situating the theatre in the wider world of power politics.
Massinger's tragedy presents the murder of Paris and the fall of Domitian, but it also shows the manipulation and destruction of an independent professional theatre by a corrupt and tyrannous state (Reinheimer 330-1). It is this independent theatre — Massinger's chosen instrument, the medium by which the play is presented and about which it is written — that the play seeks to defend.

Massinger does this, not by means of the ostensible defence which Paris delivers before the senate, but by staging the abuse and destruction of Paris's professional stage by Domitian's 'theatre of cruelty'. Contrary to the complaints of some critics, the play's complexity is not a dry experiment in metadrama. Massinger's moral and political message, far from being contradictory or confused, is embedded in and intrinsic to his dramaturgic structure; the paralleling of Domitian's explicitly staged tortures and executions with the staging of Paris's plays contrasts the spectacle of power with the competing spectacle of the drama, which can criticize the abuses of power. Although Paris's theatre does not get the chance to do this, Massinger's own theatre does; the play as a whole argues that freedom for the stage is not only necessary for artistic purposes, but for moral and political ones as well.

I hope, in this chapter, to demonstrate the way in which the play's dramaturgical complexity is integrated into its political analysis; here, I would simply like to state that in focussing on the relation between the inset pieces, the on-stage spectators, the framing fiction in which they are staged and the ultimate perspective of the theatre audience, I am not ignoring the play's political message, since Massinger's analysis of the function of power is built into this interlocking set of interpretive gazes.

Unlike the shifting theatrical frame of The Knight of the Burning Pestle, Massinger's metatheatrical play takes place within a stable temporal and spatial 'frame'; everything we see takes place in Domitian's Rome. Within this stable outer frame, however, Massinger blurs theatrical ostention codes (Elam 59) with a vengeance. Most of the action we see on stage is self-consciously framed theatre; of the play's eleven scenes, only five do not contain some form of framed metatheatrical device. The most obvious of the metatheatrical insets are the three playlets, all formally marked as 'plays-within' — "The Cure of Avarice", "Iphis
and Anaxerete” and “The False Servant” — which are staged by Paris the actor and his colleagues. But the play is studded with numerous other less formally marked ‘inset pieces’, including Paris’s speech in defence of the players before the Senate, (Act One, Scene Three); the Emperor Domitian’s triumphal entry (Act One, Scene Four); the condemnation of Lamia, Domitia’s former husband (Act Two, Scene One); the execution of the philosophers Rusticus and Sura (Act Three, Scene One), and Domitia’s seduction of Paris (Act Four, Scene Two). All these are consciously or unconsciously staged for on-stage spectators whose reaction to the framed events they witness is vital to the interpretation of the ‘framed’ scene and to the events of the larger play.

There is more involved here, however, than the studding of a Roman play with metatheatrical elements for the sake of entertainment. The play is about the dynamic relation of spectatorship, and shows how the drama is structured by its spectators and structures them in its turn, in a number of ways. In essence, the play is an exploration of the spectator/drama contract. The interpretive freedom of the audience in this ‘contract of attention’ is the foundation of Paris’s speech in his defence of the stage in Act One Scene Three, although, (paradoxically) he argues that audience’s interpretive freedom undercuts the intention of the performance. As he says, the actors cannot absolutely control the audience’s reading of the play:

\[\text{An heyre, that does conspire against the life}
\text{Of his deare parent, numbring eueryhoure}
\text{He liues as tedious to him, if there be}\]

10 The drama-spectator relationship, in Massinger’s theatre as in our own, is based on mutual interdependence and freedom of interpretation amongst three elements: the text, the players and the audience. While the author, in writing the text, presumably has an ideal performance in mind, the players, in learning the text and framing it for performance, will make interpretive decisions which may deviate from this ideal. This interpreted text is then performed for an audience who has no access to the authorial original; their only access to the intentions of the writer is the performance. Moreover, the spectators do not enter the theatre as blank slates; they bring to the performance certain expectations, memories of previous plays, habits of mind or prejudices, which make them deviate from the ideal audience envisioned by the author, in composing the text, and the players in interpreting it and framing it for performance. The performance proper is made up of a contract of attention between this particular audience and the particular staging of the play they see.
Among the auditors one whose conscience tells him,  
He is of the same mould, we cannot helpe it.  
(1.3.109-14)

Paris's argument is that the players (the targets of the Senate's censorship) cannot be held responsible for audience reaction – a somewhat disingenuous argument, since the point of playing is to influence audience response. However, as disingenuous as Paris's argument may be, it emphasizes the fact that theatre is an open-ended process of interpretation and judgement, intrinsically structured around ambiguity and freedom of interpretation.

Massinger's play stages this process of interpretation three times, with each of the plays-within. But in this staging something happens to the freedom implicit in the spectator-drama contract, for Paris's plays are subject, not only to the judgement of their audience, but to the control of Domitian and Domitia, both of whom act as 'directors'. First they frame the context in which the players will play, and they then dictate, cut and adapt the texts to be performed, and finally, they attempt — with a notable lack of success — to direct the spectators' reaction to the plays as they are staged.\(^\text{11}\) Domitian, in particular, tries to reduce the freedom of interpretation inherent in the theatre to a dictatorial, univocal contract; to expunge the ambiguities innate to the form and replace them with a single 'correct'  

\(^{11}\) David Mann criticizes Massinger's emphasis on this 'directorial' truncation, arguing that he does not need to present "elaborate excuses for the perfectly normal convention of truncating inner plays" (223). However, it seems to me that Massinger is stressing the control Domitian has over Paris's theatre. Mann's other major criticism, that this is a world in which role-playing on the stage and in the real world blend into one, is in fact one of Massinger's main points (223). Paris's tragedy is triggered by the inability of his audience — and, indeed, himself — to tell the difference between action on the stage and action in the world. As Mann points out, for Paris and his fellow actors, "to 'act ourselves' now means the same as 'to be ourselves'" (223). Yet it is this very blending that leads to Paris's inability to defend himself against Domitia's projected fantasies. As an actor, he has no essential self beyond the roles he plays — he is a role-player by nature and profession — and it is this role-playing that excites her. It is appropriate that he meets his 'real' end within the fiction of a play; for Paris, the lack of division between stage and world in Domitian's Rome precipitates and consummates his tragedy, although Domitian's own tragedy is more complex. The problems with Mann's reading stem from his separation of the defence before the senate from the plays-within which follow, forcing him to read the play as a failed defence of the stage. In addition, Mann's focus on representations of the player on the Elizabethan stage blinds him to the fact that Massinger is as interested in audience response as in player presentation. The complex on-stage audience responses to his inset plays are not merely failures of the stage, but examinations of the theatrical process of interpretation.
interpretation dictated by himself. At no time is he successful in this; his only power over resistant audience interpretation (such as the resistant reaction of Lamia to Domitia’s song in Act Two Scene One, or Philargus’s ‘misreading’ of ‘The Cure of Avarice’) is that of execution. He can kill resistant audiences, but he can’t make them agree with him.

In fact, Massinger’s defence of the stage actually lies in the imperial failure to dictate the responses of the audiences of the play’s playlets, inset performances and tortures, despite the fact that the resistance of the on-stage spectators also ruins Paris’s plays. This is because the resistant spectators of Paris’s stage parallel the independent spectators of Massinger’s own stage, who are, in their capacity of audience, in control of the interpretation of all The Roman Actor’s characters (Domitian included) and as such pass judgement on their actions. Domitian’s attempted control of the spectatorial process only serves to highlight his own status as a product of the theatre, subject (however little he may suspect it) to the spectatorial process himself.

Furthermore, the presence of multiple analogues for the audience on the stage of Massinger’s play serves to focus the Blackfriars audience on their own position as spectators; the playlets set up a pattern of repeating reflections which cause the theatre audience to become aware of their own relation as audience to Massinger’s play.12 Paris’s defence of the theatre is only a speech within the play, the performance of an actor which can only have an effect in so far as its auditors allow, in so far as they are convinced by it and act upon that conviction. By contrast, Massinger’s defence of the theatre is the whole play, framed from first to last scene by a consciousness of its status as a piece within the theatre. The process of playing — from text to reception — is what he is defending, and he defends it by staging its misuse and ultimate destruction within Domitian’s theatre of power, which in its turn is presented on his own stage, surrounded by his own audience. The metatheatrical inset plays

12 I treat The Roman Actor as a Blackfriars play; I consider that Massinger probably had this theatre, its audience and its company in mind when he composed it. It was certainly played there, possibly exclusively, since the title page of the 1629 edition mentions Blackfriars performances only. Although there is no direct evidence that the play was premiered at Blackfriars, it was licensed on Oct 11 1626, and the King’s Men would likely have moved to the indoor house by that date.
serve to make the Blackfriars audience aware, through the medium of the play, of their status as spectators of theatre and their part in the process which they watch being violated. This relation is pushed yet further in the moments where the fictional frame of the stage widens to take in the Blackfriars audience as a Roman audience — the audience are 'cast' as extras, and are alluded to as such within the playtext.\textsuperscript{13} This popping of the frame out beyond the audience makes the audience doubly aware of the instability of the theatrical frame, which in turn makes them aware of their own position in relation to Massinger’s fiction. The live audience of Blackfriars is the final frame of the play’s multiple theatres-within, and any study of the interlocking relation of the inset pieces must take this into account. Although it may seem as though Massinger’s play is skeptical of the theatre’s power over its audience (Barton, “Voice” 231), the framing of the staged plays-within inside Massinger’s own play, and inside his own theatre, contextualizes the failure of inset plays to control the internal audience and leaves open the possibility that the main play will succeed.

This works because the play as a whole is self-consciously structured by the relation between three framed levels of reality. The widest frame, which contains the other two, is the audience-drama relation of Massinger’s play with the Blackfriars audience: this connection is affirmed, within the play itself, in the metatheatrical ‘induction’ of the first act, which is about the theatre, and in the final, unmediated action of the last act, in which the Emperor’s death becomes a tragedy played on the Blackfriars stage, unmediated by any framing structures. Within Massinger’s play lies the second frame, Domitian’s self-dramatizing theatre of power; this reality, while it sometimes admits to the existence of the Blackfriars audience, does so by ‘casting’ them as a Roman crowd, thus pulling them into the fiction. The third and innermost frame is that of the theatre of Paris and his troupe; they are completely unaware of the existence of the Blackfriars audience, and their performances are

\textsuperscript{13} These include Act One Scene One, in which the Blackfriars audience both is and is not present as an audience in the Roman Amphitheatre, Act Two Scene One, in which Domitian commands them to be silent, and most notably Act Three Scene Two, in which they ‘play’ the Roman crowd which witnesses the execution of Rusticus and Sura. All three moments will be examined further on in the chapter.
entirely framed by Domitian’s theatre of power, which both directs them and serves as their audience. The three frames are embedded conceptually, but also temporally; Massinger’s play directly connects with the audience in Acts One and Five, framing our perception of Domitian’s theatre of power. Domitian’s theatre of power then brackets Paris’s performances in a similar fashion: before Paris’s troupe stages “The Cure of Avarice”, Domitian stages the vocal performance by Domitia which allows him to condemn Lamia, thus providing the formal inset play with an informal induction (and an indication of the likely fate of ‘bad spectators’ in Domitian’s Rome). Likewise, Paris’s final performance concludes with Domitian’s eulogy over the actor’s dying body, which makes Paris’s death an element in the Emperor’s self-defining drama. Domitian’s speech effectively silences the dying actor, displacing the traditional hero’s last speech; Paris’s body becomes a ventriloquist’s dummy for the self-vaulting Domitian, just as his theatre has become another imperial show. In some way, the restoration of the outer frame of Massinger’s drama, which allows us to see Domitian as only an actor himself, revenges the botched death of the actor of the inset frame.

The interaction of these three theatrical frames is buttressed by the play’s spatial shift from public to private space; each act is set in an increasingly smaller world. Act One opens in the explicitly public arena of the theatre, moves to the political world of the senate, and then moves onto the Roman streets (the ultimate public venue) for the triumphal entry of Domitian. Act Two moves from this public, political context to the quasi-privacy of Domitian’s court, where the professional actors stage the first play to an audience which contains members of the public as well as courtiers. Act Three, while opening on a public scaffold for the execution of Rusticus and Sura, presents a still more private mode of drama, “Iphis and Anaxerete”, which is played entirely for members of the court, and in which the professional players are joined by the amateur actress Domatilla. “The False Servant” of Act Four, the most private of the three theatricals, is performed *impromptu*, without an audience, in Domitia’s “private walk”. Not only is it the most circumscribed and restrained of the three inset plays, but it is entirely subjected to the control of the Emperor, who takes the lead role
and uses it as a means to exact private revenge. Finally, Act Five moves entirely within Domitian’s private apartments and, indeed, into his mind, staging the dream-within which convinces him of his damnation. The final scene, his assassination, withdraws (spatially) yet further; it is played in an inner room with a locked door. The play therefore moves from the outer world of the public theatre through to the inner world of private power, and eventually into the wounded psyche of the Emperor, who becomes ‘anatomized’ on the Blackfriars stage, subject to the judgement of the dually invisible theatre of the gods and the theatre of Blackfriars. The space of the stage, which is initially the Emperor’s world-stage upon which he performs his glory, eventually narrows down to a prison of terror and subjection from which he can only escape with his death. This is simultaneous with the transformation of the Emperor from the gazing director/spectator of the inset theatre to the subjected object of the gaze of the Blackfriars’ audience — the return of the Emperor to the status of character in Massinger’s outer play.

The outer frame of Massinger’s play, the most explicitly metatheatrical of all three levels, is set by the opening of the play on a doubled stage, a setting called into existence with the play’s first line; Paris, Aesopus and Latinus, the three actors enter on the line “What doe wee acte to day?” (1.1.1). The answer “Agaves phrensie / With Penteus bloudie end” (1.1.1-2) – *The Bacchae* – as well as the actors’ Roman costumes, explicitly sets the action in the Roman theatre, but the discussion which follows could easily be applied to the Blackfriars stage (Myhill 193; Fuzier Espace 109). This provides an oddly doubled vision;

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14 As well, the play is almost a catalogue of the various modes of drama available on Massinger’s stage: the three plays-within each stage a different genre (a moral interlude, a Fletcherian court romance, and a domestic revenge tragedy), Paris’s defence of the stage is a moral oratory, the torture of the Stoics reads very like a Red Bull miracle play (for example, Dekker and Massinger’s *The Virgin Martyr*), and the final act stages Domitian’s fall as providential tragedy, complete with supernatural interventions (ghosts, divine thunder, fulfilled prophecies) and soliloquies which expose the Emperor’s inner guilt. This very catholic selection seems designed to bolster the play’s demonstration of the power of the theatre.

15 A.P. Hogan (*Imagery* 274) is the first to point out the significance of *The Bacchae*, the play which Latinus proposes but the actors never perform. As Hogan puts it, although *The Bacchae* is a play in honour of Dionysus, the god of theatre, it is as ambiguous a story as *The Roman Actor* itself:
although metatheatrical inductions are a commonplace of Renaissance theatre, in general the players in these inductions are recognized as contemporary actors preparing to present a fictional part. Here, the actors are already acting within the fiction; we are already in Rome. Yet, as Myhill says, because the complaints of Paris and his colleagues regarding the neglect of the Roman theatre are also applicable to the Caroline theatre “the status of what the theatre audience is seeing is uncertain” (193) given that the same type of complaints as to the condition of the stage are not uncommon in the contemporary drama. Therefore, “[t]he initial possibility that the stage represents itself rather than a fictional locale never quite vanishes, even after the scene is established as also representing ancient Rome” (Myhill, 193).

Fuzier goes yet further, arguing that Massinger intends the scene to be read by the audience as taking place on the stage of Pompey’s Amphitheatre, despite the lack of explicit stage directions to that effect. His assumption that the action “commence sans aucun doute dans un théâtre” [starts in a theatre without any doubt] (Espace 108), allows him to interpret the unique doubling effect produced by this binocular vision:

Cette localisation implicite est un exemple unique à ma connaissance, du moins à l’époque, de la matérialisation d’un authentique théâtre, en tant que lieu représenté, sur la scène d’un autre théâtre non moins authentique, en tant que lieu de représentation. C’est le théâtre mis en abyme, mais aussi mis en exergue, l’emblème le plus parfait du ‘théâtre dans le théâtre’. Cette première scène n’est ailleurs rien d’autre […] qu’une ‘induction’ déguisée, procédé qui relève lui-même du ‘théâtre dans le théâtre’, car il introduit un filtre critique entre le spectateur et la pièce à laquelle il assiste ou va assister, le tranformant ipso facto en spectateur au second degré malgré qu’il en ait.

(108)

[This implicit localization is an example unique in my knowledge, at least in]
the period, of the materialization of an authentic theatre, as a staged scene, on
the stage of another no less authentic theatre, as a place of representation.
This is the theatre "mis en abyme" but also foregrounded, the most perfect
emblem of the "theatre within the theatre". This first scene is also nothing
more [. . .] than a disguised induction, a technique which springs from
the theatre within the theatre, since it introduces a critical filter between the
spectator and the play he is watching or going to watch, transforming him
_ipso facto_ into a secondary spectator, even against his will.] (my own
translation)

The disguised induction frames the theatrical experience as a whole, setting the spectator at
a critical distance from the play even as it begins; the opening of the play forces us to
recognise that we are in the theatre -- although whether we are in Blackfriars or in the Roman
Amphitheatre is somewhat ambiguous. Fuzier's interpretation is based on an assumption
which could be questioned; in fact, the scene is unlocalized, and we are never explicitly told
that we are on the Amphitheatre stage\(^{16}\). However, Fuzier's argument is compelling despite
this hitch, because he has correctly identified the scene's effect. The simultaneous effect of
_mis-en-abyme_ and _mis-en-avant_ provides an oddly binocular vision; we examine the
theatrical fiction of Paris's stage and the real-world reality of the Blackfriars stage at the
same time, and this vertiginous perspective forces us into an awareness of the status of the
staged action we are watching. Fuzier's assessment of this opening as unique is correct;
even though numerous plays in the period open with framing inductions, these are
presentations of 'real', not fictional, actors. Moreover, the plays that such actors go on to
present, while framed by the metatheatrical induction, are explicitly set off from it. Here, the
lines between fiction and reality are blurred at the play's outset, and there is no point which
marks the movement of the show into a story which is comfortably divided from the process
of its presentation. We are forced into an awareness of the play's status as theatre and our
own status as spectators from the very opening, and Massinger never lets us lose that double
vision, even as we are pulled into the fiction of the play.

\(^{16}\) The appearance of the three Senators at 1.1.58 calls the 'playhouse' setting of this scene
into question, since they'd be unlikely to appear on the Amphitheatre stage. However, a change of
locale in the middle of a scene is not unknown (_cf Romeo and Juliet_ 1.2), and even if one assumes
that the entire scene is set in the street, the Senators make their appearance after the audience has
experienced the doubling effect Fuzier describes.
The double vision is further emphasized by the actors’ discussion. Paris, apathetically rejecting Latinus’s suggestion for the playbill, launches into the perpetual complaint of the theatre, a lack of spectators and a lack of money:

> It skils not what [we act];
> The times are dull, and all that wee receive
> Will hardly satisfie the dayes Expence.

... ...our *Amphitheatre*,
> Great *Pompies* worke, that hath giu’n full delight
> Both to the eye, and eare of fifty thousand
> Spectators in one day, as if it were
> Some vnknowne desert, or *great Rome* vnpeopl’d
> Is quite forsaken.

(1.1.2-13)

The complaint is familiar even now, of course. More important is the theatrical context of this speech; if Paris the character is, as I suspect, standing on the stage of the theatre he describes morosely gazing out over the empty seats of Pompey’s Amphitheatre, Joseph Taylor, the actor playing him, is standing on the stage of the Blackfriars, looking out over the filled seats of the house of London’s premier theatre. The spectators, who are the audience for this complaint that there is no audience, are thus troped as simultaneously there and ‘not there’, a status that further emphasizes the double vision of the play they are about to see. Paris’s lines signal to the real audience over the heads of the non-existent fictional audience, forcing them once again to recognize the “double existence” (Jones-Davies 83) of the theatrical representation in which they take part.

Moreover, this speech and the ones which follow, which discuss the Roman audience’s desertion of the theatre for “sports the *Stewes* would blush at” (1.1.15) while grudging the actors “That with delight joyne profit, and endeavour / To build their mindes vp faire. . .the salarie / Of six Sestertij” (1.1.21-6), implicitly enlists the Blackfriars audience — who have paid their admission and not deserted the theatre for the pleasures of the Bankside — on the side of the actors, in both the fiction and reality. There are, of course, multiple parallels between the fictional world of the Roman theatre that the actors’ complaints describe and the real world of the Caroline theatre. The problems are the same in both worlds: the difficulty of attracting audiences who prefer to spend their money on
prostitutes and other expensive pleasures, the presence of anti-theatrical forces (in Rome, the Greeks and in England, the writers of anti-theatrical tracts) and political opposition to the theatre – in Rome, from the Senate; in England, from Parliament (Reinheimer 318) and the Privy Council (Bentley Jacobean VI: 61). Finally, the actors’ blithe assurance that they can rely on Caesar’s patronage rather than the box office for their survival underscores the dangers of the growing connections between the court of Charles and Henrietta Maria and the stage:

For the profit Paris,
And mercinarie gaine they are things beneath vs,
Since while you hold your grace, and power with Caesar,
We from your bounty finde a large supply
Nor can one thought of want euer approach vs,

(1.1.26-30)

Of course, their patron Caesar will destroy them, not save them.

Finally, the theatre of Paris’s Rome, divorced from its audience and dependant on the support of the court, implicitly emphasizes the different relation of the King’s Men to their audience; Blackfriars, unlike Paris’s theatre, is an independent stage, supported by the (in)visible audience of Massinger’s play. Significantly, although the play opens in the context of the Roman Amphitheatre, we never see Paris’s company perform there; they leave their playhouse upon their summons to the Senate (1.1.47), and never return to it over the course of the play. All the plays-within of The Roman Actor are performed at court – outside of the playhouse implicitly sited as staged within but contrasted with Blackfriars itself. This opening, superimposing the deserted and soon to be abandoned Roman public theatre upon the crowded Caroline private theatre foregrounds the different status of the drama and the audience within the play’s fictional world and Massinger’s real one, even while it draws parallels between the conditions of the Blackfriars stage and the Roman stage. Paris’s theatre can be controlled, at least in part, because it is displaced from its site of greatest power, the professional theatre, within which Massinger’s play is performed. The most significant difference between court theatre and the professional stage is that the professional stage is supported directly by its audience – and Massinger demands that his audience be aware of
their own presence.

The nature of the court which controls the actors is explicitly described upon their exit, which is also the cue for the entry of the three Stoic Senators, Lamia, Rusticus and Sura. The hurried and frightened conversation of these three on their “dangerous...age” (1.1.70) provides a very different view of Paris’s “strong Auentine” (1.1.39) Domitian. Where the actors’ complaints had been largely the self-obsessed worries of the theatre in any age, the dialogue of the Senators provides a wider and more accurate view of the nature of Domitian’s Rome:

So dangerous the age is, and such bad acts
Are practis’d every where, we hardly sleepe,
Nay cannot dream with safetie. All our actions
Are cal’d in question, to be nobly borne
Is now a crime; and to deserve too well
Held Capitall treason. Sonnes accuse their Fathers
Fathers their sonnes; and but to winne a smile
From one in grace in Court, our chastest Matrons
Make shipwracke of their honours. To be vertuous
Is to bee guilty. They are onely safe,
That know to sooth the Princes appetite,
And serve his lusts.

(1.1.70-81)

These are conventional accusations against an ill-governed state, but as we will see, they are also perfectly accurate; the Senators’ description of tortures, executions and betrayals are all enacted, over the course of the play, by Paris’s patron and his creatures. Moreover, their description of Domitian’s blasphemous self-deification “[i]n his edicts / He does not blush, or start to stile himselfe. ...Great Lord and God Domitian” (1.1.105-8) is echoed by Caesar himself upon his triumphal entry: “the stile / Of Lord, and God, which thankefull subiects giue me /(Not my ambition) is deseru’d” (1.4.35-7). In the context of the Senators’ speeches, Paris’s confidence in his ability to please Domitian “whom we oft haue cheer’d / In his most sullen moods” (1.1. 40-1) links him to those “that know to sooth the Princes appetite / And serve his lusts” (1.1. 80-1), that is, to vice rather than virtue.

But Paris’s speech before the Senate does link the theatre with virtue. The speech is, as Howard says, a conventional defence of the drama and of acting (“Political Tragedies” 123), but one which seems to have been popular for that very reason. Thomas Jay in his
prefatory verse for the 1629 edition praises the speech because of its derivative nature:

And when thy PARIS pleades in the defence
Of Actors, every grace and excellence
Of Argument for that subject, are by Thee
Contracted in a sweete Epitome.

(E&G III:16 lines13-16)

Massinger is not so much composing an original defence as epitomizing commonplaces which his play then proceeds to test and find wanting. The speech draws heavily on Heywood’s *Apology for Actors* (1612) and other prose defences, to which Massinger simply gives a dramatic form (Barish “Caroline” 196).

The form is, however, one which demonstrates the power of theatrical declamation even as it defends it; this is the play’s most memorable scene. Although the Senate is a political space which will soon be displaced by Caesar’s self-styled omnipotence, we do not know that at this point, and the image of the actor defending himself and his profession against the accusation of “treason /As libellers against the state and Caesar” (1.3. 33-4) is a powerful one. Moreover, Massinger loads the rhetorical dice, providing the prosecutor Aretinus with an awkward, stilted opening speech (1.3.1-30) as a foil to Paris’s eloquent oration. The admiring asides of the two virtuous Senators Rusticus and Sura add to its luster by pointing out its effect on the hearers: “He has put / The Consuls to their whisper” (1.3. 95-96). Although, as Barish (“Caroline” 197), Thompson (422-4) Hogan (275) and Reinheimer (323) point out, the on-stage audiences’ reception of the inset pieces completely undercuts the defence, it would still have been a treat to deliver and to watch.

Paris’s argument is twofold. Curiously enough, the two sections contradict each other

17 The speech had a long independent stage life during the 19th century, as Gibson’s introduction makes clear: Kemble, Macready and Kean all performed versions of “The Roman Actor” which seem to have been made up of Act One, Scenes One and Three excerpted from the rest of the play (E&G III: 10-12).

18 The speech has been argued, accurately, to be Paris’s theory of drama as well as his defence of it (Hogan 275, Thompson 421-2, Howard “Political”123) and has been argued by Howard (“Political” 123-4) and Spencer (1-6) to be the theory of Massinger himself, a notion I find more doubtful, particularly because the enacted defence constituted by the play itself shows a much more sophisticated understanding of the function and value of theatre.
to some extent; the speech’s eloquence overcomes its faulty logic. He answers Aretinus’s question “[a]re you on the Stage / You talke so boldly? (1.3. 49-51) with a paraphrase of the commonplace ‘all the world’s a stage’ – “The whole world being one / This place is not exempted” (1.3.50-1) – and then begins the first half of his argument, which is founded on the conventional idea of the theatre as a model for behaviour. The concept of the theatre as model or as mirror was endemic in both the anti- and pro-theatrical pamphlets of the time; the anti-theatrical writers argued that plays, by presenting lust, violence and corruption, would incite their audiences to imitate what they saw presented. The pamphlet defences, which, as Barish notes “usually share the assumptions of their opponents” (Anti-Theatrical 117), simply reverse the argument, arguing “that the plays are transparently positively (rather than negatively) didactic” (Myhill 19).

Paris presents this argument in the first 45 lines of his speech; first, he asserts that when the theatre presents vice, the audience is dissuaded from imitation: when the actors show “a man sould to his lusts / Wasting the treasure of his time and Fortunes” (1.3. 56-7) they also show “to what sad end / A wretch thats so giuen ouer does arriue at” (1.3. 58-9), as a result “[d]ettering carelesse youth, by his example / From such licentious courses” (1.3. 60-61). In this theory, enacted vice is read by the ideal audience as encouragement to virtue – in other words, the audience will not imitate the action they see on stage. Next, Paris argues that theatrical representation of virtue provides an active inducement to imitation, reproducing itself directly:

    if to inflame
    The noble youth with an ambitious heate
    T’indure the frost of danger, nay of Death
    To be thought worthy of the triumphant wreath
    By glorious undertakings, may deserve
    Reward, or favor, from the common wealth
    Actors may put in for as large a share
    As all the sects of the Philosophers.
    They with could precepts (perhaps seldom reade)
    Deliver what an honourable thing
    The active virtue is. But does that fire
    The bloud, or swell the veins with emulation
    To be both good, and great, equall to that
    Which is presented on our Theatres?
(1.3. 70-83)
The examples which follow – Scipio conquering Carthage, Hercules’s twelve labours – are, he argues, examples which will be followed. Acting here becomes the analogue of action in the real world: to act, implicitly, is to incite the audience to do.

Up to this point, the argument is based on the Renaissance commonplace of theatre as mirror; audiences are framed and formed by the spectacles they behold, they are a passive slate upon which the image of the stage reproduces itself, and the stage has full control over its spectators. However, the second half of Paris’s speech explicitly argues the opposite point: that the theatre has no control over the interpretations individual spectators place on what they see. This is partly because Paris is now responding to the specific charge of libel, which forces him to argue against the idea that characters are based on particular figures by claiming (disingenuously) that audience members who see themselves in a character are only projecting, and that the players have no control over this: “we cannot helpe it” (1.3.114). The disability topos, “we cannot helpe it”, is a rhetorical flourish which caps each of the specific examples he provides: if a conspiring heir, “a loose adultresse” (1.3.115), “a couetous man” (1.3.123) or a corrupt judge should recognize themselves in the characters onstage “tis not in vs to helpe it” (1.3.140), displacing the guilty association from the actors, “as innocent /

As such as are borne dumbe” (1.3. 108-9) to the watching audience.

In the last example, the refrain becomes less a defence than an attack explicitly directed at the judge Aretinus himself, a magnificent example of the very kind of negative innuendo that Paris is claiming cannot be attributed to the actors:

Or when we show a ludge that is corrupt,  
And will giue vp his sentence as he fauours  
The person, not the cause, sauing the guiltie  
If of his faction, and as oft condemning  
The innocent out of particular spleene,  
If any in this reuerend assemblie,  
Nay e`ne your selfe my Lord, that are the image  
Of absent Caesar, feele something in your bosome  
That puts you in remembrance of things past,  
Or things intended tis not in vs to helpe it:  

(1.3.131-40)

This is a direct, if veiled, reference to Aretinus’s threat to “silence [the players] for euer” (1.1.38). As a biassed judge, he does intend to condemn them “out of particular spleen”
Paris deliberately throws down the gauntlet even as he urges that Aretinus is not meant to recognize himself in the 'fictional' judge described. In Patterson's words, the repeated refrain, which is "part of an ingenious deployment of one of the central disclaimers in the discursive mode of self-protection" here becomes "a transfer to the reader, or to the bosom of 'my Lord' of unacceptable intentions" (99).

The success of the speech as a functional defence is never determined, however, since its conclusion is capped by "A shoute within" (1.3.146 SD) indicating the return of Domitian from the wars, and the court "reseure[s] to him / The Censure of this cause" (1.3.149-50). The question which the court scene raises - the function and responsibilities of the stage - is left open, only to be answered through the more ambiguous but nuanced form of theatrical performance. It is important to note, however, that although Domitian's arrival looks very much like a rescue, the breaking up of the court upon his arrival enacts Parthenius's earlier statement to Domitia; "When power puts in its Plea the lawes are silenc'd" (1.2.44). The arrival of the tyrant eliminates all other authority. The attack by the senators was personally motivated and thus was an abuse of power; however, since the attack was made within a court of law, Paris was allowed to defend himself. Domitian's arrival eliminates this aspect of justice; the law has been eliminated, and all characters now stand or fall according to his whim.

Moreover, Domitian's entry not only displaces the legal power of the Senate but also introduces a competing form of theatrical performance into the play: the explicitly theatrical power of the tyrant (Bushnell173). Domitian enters in a triumph which is a politically motivated form of street theatre, and the point is in emphasized several ways: as Garrett points out (Diamond 202), not only does his entrance speech - "As we now touch the height of humane glorie / Riding in triumph to the Capitoll" (1.4.14-5) - echo the self-conscious theatricality of Tamburlaine, but the spectacle of his entrance "in his Triumphant Chariot" leading prisoners and flanked by captains bearing laurels (1.4.13 SD) is as elaborate as an
inset masque. Rusticus's aside upon Domitian's order for the mass execution of the prisoners—"A bloudie entrance!" (1.4. 20)—underscores the entrance's theatrical quality, as does Domitian's own (negative) comparison of himself to the Plautean milus gloriosus:

\[\ldots[\text{to boast}]\text{what horrors}\]
\[\text{The Souldier in our conduct hath broke through},\]
\[\text{Would better suite the mouth of Plautus bragart}\]
\[\text{Then the adored Monarch of the world.}\]

(1.4. 24-28)

The theatrical references are appropriate, since the purpose of the triumph is to stage a fiction: to allow Domitian to play the role of hero accepting the grateful acclaim of his people. This fictional role, in addition to being congenial, permits Domitian to frame his seizure of Lamia's wife Domitia (which took place in Act One, Scene Two) as a gift freely given rather than the forced divorce it truly is. Claiming that his audience owes him a debt of gratitude beyond that owed to Julius Caesar, Vespatian or Titus (1.4. 30-31) he states:

With justice he may taste the fruits of peace,
Whose sword hath plowd the ground, and reap'd the harvest
Of your prosperitie. Nor can I thinke
That there is one among you so vngratfull,
Or such an enemie, to thriuing vertue,
That can esteeme the iewell he holds dearest
Too good for Caesars vse.

(1.4. 43-49)

As it is meant to, this speech calls forth a flood of offers from the audience of Senators and courtiers "All we possesse. Our liberties. Our children. Wealth. And throates. / Fall willingly beneath his feete" (1.4. 49-50). The one 'possession' that is not named here is 'our wives', but when Domitian proclaims his ownership of Domitia, his comment "Lamia 'tis your honour that she's mine" (1.4. 68) implicitly recasts the extralegal rape as an act of tribute to an honoured ruler.

Finally, Domitian's entry reframes the context of the actors' art; the last person

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19 According to Garrett, Massinger's sources indicate that Domitian's triumph celebrating his victory over the Dacians was, in fact, nothing but a theatrical fiction: "He graced the festival that followed with many exhibits appropriate to a triumph, though they came from no booty that he had captured [ . . . ] the exhibits which he displayed really came from the store of imperial furniture" (Dio Cassius, qtd.in Garrett Diamond 205).
Domitian greets is Paris, from whom he commands entertainment of a particular kind:

The wars are ended, and our armes layd by
We are for soft delights. Command the Poets
To vse their choisest, and most rare inuention
To entertaine the time, and be you carefull
To giue it action.

(1.4. 76-80)

The change in definition of the drama from Paris's didactic force to Domitian's "soft delight"—equivalent to the embraces of Domitia—indicates a shift in the drama's status. The moral force which Paris has claimed for the theatre is entirely subsumed within the imperial view of drama as quasi-erotic pleasure or distraction.

The conflict between the two views is made explicit in the staging of the first of the inset pieces, "The Cure of Avarice", the only one of the plays-within which Paris chooses to stage himself. The circumstances of his choice explicitly link it with the didactic function he claimed for the drama in his speech: Act Two opens with Parthenius trying unsuccessfully to convince his miserly father, Philargus, to spend some of his hoard on food, clothes and medicine. Parthenius's failure to "make my Father know what crueltie / He vses on himselfe" (2.1.63-4) causes him to complain of Philargus to Paris, who has come to see what play the Emperor wants staged that night. Paris's solution to the old man's obstinacy is, of course, to put on a play:

Your Father looking on a couetous man
Presented on the Stage as in a mirror,
May see his owne deformity, and loath it.
Now could you but perswade the Emperour
To see a Comedie we haue that's stilde
*The Cure of Avarice*, and to command
Your Father to be a spectator of it,
He shall be so Anotamiz'd in the Scæne

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20 It is worth noting, however, that Parthenius's desire to loosen his father's pursestrings could also be motivated by self-interest. Parthenius is Domitian's pander, and we have recently witnessed his seizure of Domitia on Domitian's behalf. Further, he is the most astute of Caesar's creatures; he survives the general holocaust of the play by inciting others to action while avoiding any himself. Further, Philargus is not merely a foolish miser; his refusal of Domitian's imperial dictates is accorded a good deal of dignity, and is affiliated with the proto-Christian stoicism of the Stoic senators. Moreover, his avarice at times shades into rectitude: "wise nature with a little is contented, / And following her, my guide, I cannot erre." (2.1.32-3).
And see himselfe so personated; the basenes
Of a self torturing miserable wretch
Truely describ'd, that I much hope the obiect
Will worke compunction in him.
(2.1. 97-108)

The intention is obviously drawn from the argument before the Senate; the old man will see himself in the mirror of art and be transformed. Of course, this is not what happens; Philargus does initially respond to the show as intended, recognizing himself in the character — "we were fashion'd in one mould" (2.1. 298) — but he judges the play-miser's repentance as the act of "[a]n old foole to be guld thus!" (2.1. 407). The didactic mirror of art is, to say the least, a little cloudy. Philargus's stubborn refusal to be converted by the play causes Domitian to 'cure' him in characteristic fashion: "...thou shalt neuer more / Feele the least touch of avarice. Take him hence / And hang him instantly" (2.1. 437-9). The show is framed and trumped — as are all Paris's shows — by Caesar's abuse of power.

But there is more going on in the staging of "The Cure of Avarice" than just the failure of Paris's claimed function of the stage and the black comedy of Caesar's 'forced interpretation'. To begin with, the play, the longest and most complex of the plays-within, has the most complex audience relation of the three; like Luke's masque and Martino's medicinal masque, it has both a primary audience (Philargus, at whom the play is directly aimed) and a secondary one, consisting of Caesar and Parthenius, whose attention is focussed on Philargus's reaction to the show rather than the show itself. The audience also includes another constellation of spectators, Domitia, her ladies, and Aretinus, who react very differently to the play presented. Finally, the show is set within the context of Caesar's 'theatre of power', being immediately preceded by Domitian's condemnation of Lamia.

Domitian's attack on Lamia is prompted by Aretinus's report that the three "malecontents" (2.1.115) Rusticus, Sura and Lamia, are literally resistant spectators of the imperial theatre: they "murmure at your triumphs as meere Pageants" (2.1.117). As Myhill says, "the charges that Aretinus makes against Lamia and the other Senators are largely based on renaming things" (199): what he calls justice, they call tyranny (2.1.118-19), what he calls love for his niece they call incest (2.1.127-29), and the forced divorce of Lamia and Domitia
which Caesar staged in his homecoming triumph as the gift of a grateful citizen, they call a rape equivalent to that of Tarquin (2.1.130). The problem for the tyrant is not just their political opposition but their status as resistant spectators, men who refuse to accept his staged fictions as truth. This probably underlies Domitian’s choice to destroy them all via a form of imperial theatre, since he seeks to contravene their judgement as well as take their lives. Lamia’s condemnation is framed by a performance which Domitian prepares in advance:

Goe you to my Empresse,
And say I doe entreate... 
. . . she would vouchsafe
The musicke of her voice, at yonder window,
When I aduance my hand thus. 

(2.1.170-74)

Domitian then greets the Senator with a show of warm affection, thanking him for his ‘gift’ of his wife in terms designed to humiliate her former husband. Lamia straightforwardly reads this behaviour for what it is, an “insult / On my calamitie which you make your sport” (2.1. 210-11), and this resistance prompts the Emperor to cue Domitia’s song:

Harke. I thinke prompted
With my consent that you once more should heare her,
She does begin. An vniuersall silence
Dwell on this place. ‘Tis death with lingring torments
To all that dare disturbe her. 

(2.1. 217-221)

As Myhill points out, the command for silence is addressed not only to Lamia, “but to the audience in the theatre [... ] [the] demand for ‘vniuersall silence’ extends beyond the boundaries of the stage, although it can only be enforced within those boundaries” (204),

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21 This is emphasized, within the first half of the play, by their “privileged relationship with the theatre audience [...] they are the only characters who have any sort of direct address to only the theatre audience” (Myhill 200). Their critical asides and commentary throughout the first act link their moral perspective to that of the theatre audience, and help to shape the audience’s response to Domitian. The asides mark them as the only characters within the play who are aware of the existence of the theatre audience, and their status as the normative characters of the play – the characters whose judgement we are implicitly intended to share – helps to establish the link between the Blackfriars audience and the theatre of the Gods, both of which belong to a place “outside the world that Domitian controls” (Myhill 200), and who exercise judgement which contradicts the meanings insisted on by Domitian and his toadies.
which "highlights the difference between [Lamia’s] position and [the theatre audience’s], and the limits of Domitian’s power over interpretation. Domitian cannot demand the theatre audience’s response, or punish its interpretive distance from him” (204). This moment, like the later execution of Rusticus and Sura, pops the frame of the fiction out to embrace the theatre audience, and thus to highlight Domitian’s status as a character, subject to interpretation.

Within the fiction, however, Domitian’s judgement is all-powerful if corrupt. His flamboyant praise of Domitia’s voice, which he ranks above the song of Calliope and the music of the spheres, (2.1. 223-28) causes Lamia to prudently reserve judgement: to the question “Say Lamia, say / Is not her voice Angelical?” (2.1. 228-9) Lamia replies “To your eare. / But I alas am silent” (2.1. 229-30). This cues Caesar’s preplanned response:

Bee so euer,
That without admiration canst heare her.
Malice to my feliciitie strikes thee dumbe,
And in thy hope, or wish to repossesse
What I loue more then Empire, I pronounce thee
Guiltie of treason. Off with his head.
(2.1. 230-35)

Domitian’s reading of Lamia’s silent reservation of judgement as malice, evidence of a plan to repossess the Empress, transforms the Senator from a judging spectator into a judged spectacle. This foreshadows Domitian’s treatment of Philargus’s equally resistant spectatorship, but it also displays his tendency to label all judgements which contradict his own as ‘bad spectatorship’, turning the world into a theatre in which he is both the only actor and the only spectator of any consequence. Rome is a fiction written by his will, a fiction which he stages, and of which he is the only valid judge.

It is in the context of this framing imperial fiction that Paris’s theatre is staged, literally as well as metaphorically; “The Cure of Avarice” is staged “in the Court / [at] the Emperours charge” (2.1. 266-7), and both the form of the performance and its reception are dictated by Domitian. He exhorts Philargus to attention upon threat of death “Sirra sit still / And giue attention; if you but nod, / You sleepe for euer” (2.1. 272-4) and then proceeds to cut the play:
Let them spare the Prologue,
And all the Ceremonies proper to our selfe
And come to the last act, there where the cure
By the Doctor is made perfect.
(2.1. 274-77)

The players' economic dependance results in interpretive dependance as well. However, of
the three plays-within "The Cure of Avarice" is the least subject to imperial interference; it
is chosen and acted by Paris's professionals (the other two plays are chosen by the Empress
and Emperor respectively, and both contain amateur actors) and is the longest, most elaborate
and most professionally staged of the three. It is also the only one of the three shows permitted to
reach its natural conclusion without interruption from its audience.

The playlet is a moral drama, based, as Jerzy Limon has shown, on one of Whitney's
emblems ("Theatrical" 372). The form of the playlet is much less important than the effect
it is intended to have, and actually has, upon its spectators; this is the case with all three
plays-within, and explains why I will spend comparatively little time examining the matter
of the plays-within themselves. The only significant aspect of the conventional and old-
fashioned playlet is the fact that it contains a play-within itself (Habicht 364), thus bringing
the number of represented audiences to three – the Miser within the show, Philargus outside
of it, and Domitian and his court as secondary audience. The play consists of a curative
fictional performance which the Doctor and the Son stage for the Miser; they rip open his
treasure chests, ignoring his desperate ravings, and tell him to hurry up and die so that the
Son can inherit. This fictionally enacts what will happen after his death:

And what then followes al your carke, and caring,
And selfe affliction when your staru'd truene is
Turn'd to forgotten dust? This hopefull youth
Vrines vpon your monument.
(2.1. 375-78)

The stage miser reacts appropriately:

'Twill be so, I see it.
O that I could redeeme the time that's past!
I would liue, and die like my selfe; and make true vse
Of what my industrie purchas'd
(2.1. 389-91)

The Doctor then reveals the deception as "a deuice / In you to shew the Cure of Avarice"
The fiction of the inner play sets up the Miser as a model spectator, whose cure by
fiction Philargus is supposed to imitate directly; however, the old man, who has identified
with the Miser throughout the play, as his five asides indicate, rejects his conversion as folly
— significantly, as a misreading of the inset fiction. Philargus’s judgment — “had [the Miser]
died / As I resolue to doe, not to be alter’d / It had gone off twanging” (2.1. 407-9) —
demonstrates that he is aware of the fictional nature and purpose of the show he has seen, but
that he is also capable of resisting fictions which present him with behaviour he finds
inexplicable. The show, which is supposed to be monovocal as well as didactic, to present
behaviour which can only be interpreted in one way, is actually given a more sophisticated
reading by its primary audience than its simple structure would seem to allow.

The playlet is interpreted in an entirely different light by the secondary audience. The
Emperor, of course, has very little interest in the playlet itself; he wants to see Philargus react
‘properly’ to it. Domitian’s interest lies in the magical effects he expects the show to have
on its spectator; it is supposed to work as a system of thought control. In his interview with
Philargus he demands that the old man model himself after the fiction he has seen:

Canst thou make good vse of what was now presented?
And imitate in thy suddaine change of life,
The miserable rich man, that expres’d
What thou art to the life?
(2.1. 431-44)

Domitian assumes that Philargus needed only to see himself staged in order to convert; he
does not see the show as a persuasive model or sermon, but as a system which dictates

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22 This is despite his frantic attempt to break the fictional frame upon the breaking of the
chest, when he calls on Caesar to “[d]efend this honest thriftie man” from “the theeues. . .come to
rob him” (2.1. 337-9). Philargus here seems carried away by passion, much as Domititia will be on
viewing “Iphis and Anaxarete”, but the passion does not remove his judgement and his awareness
of the fiction for more than a moment or two. Moreover, this passion cannot be used against itself;
Philargus identifies with the Miser as long as the character is a reflection of himself, but declines to
make the character his model when the Miser reforms. Indeed his judgement of the Miser as a fool
for having modelled his (real) behaviour on a (staged) fiction indicates that he has understood the
play as a model of how fiction is supposed to work and explicitly refuses to apply the lessons to
himself.
opinions. The appeal of this is obvious; it will allow him to control the one portion of his subjects – their independent judgement – in which they can resist his will. This explains his anger at the old man’s initial response, “This craz’d bodies Ceasars / But for my minde–” (2.1.429-30). Philargus’s partial echo of Luke 20:25 – “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesars, and unto God the things which be God’s” – serves to link the resistant spectatorship of the foolish old man with the proto-Christian stance of the Stoic philosophers. Philargus may be crabbed, foolish and miserly, and he has certainly completely misconstrued the play, but he knows that his judgement (however flawed) belongs to himself, and not to the imperial authority. The notion that there is any area out of his control sends Domitian into the rage in which he commands the old man’s death; significantly, he describes Philargus’s death as deserved: “such as wilfully, will hourely dye / Must tax themselues, and not my crueltie” (2.1.446-7).

Ironically, though, the most significant spectatorial reaction to the play is that of Domitia, who, like Philargus, reads the show in a manner very different from that intended by Paris. But while Philargus’s resistance effectively destroys Paris’s theory of the drama as corrective moral mirror, it is at least founded on a critical response to the play as it was intended to be seen, the difference being that the old man “seeing himselfe personated” (2.1.105) responds with pleasure and approval rather than the disgust Paris hoped he would feel. Domitia, on the other hand, completely discounts the matter of the playlet – “[f]or the subiect / I like it not, it was filch’d out of Horace” (2.1.410-11) – but is quite taken with Paris’s person:

but the fellow
That play’d the Doctor did it well by Venus;
He had a tunable tongue and neate deliuery,
And yet in my opinion he would performe
A louers part much better.
(2.1.412-16)

Her ostensible appreciation of Paris’s ability as an actor is really an appreciation of his physical appearance, a fact that is made explicit by the context of her earlier aside upon the Doctor’s description of his intended cure:
Her interpretation of Paris’s lines – founded on the eroticism inherent in the notion of the fancy freeing the organs of the body – casts her reading of the play as an erotic fantasy. But she is also aware of the division between the person of the actor and the fiction of the character he plays; “if he were indeed a Doctor”, Paris would service her in bed in a different fashion. Her response to the play is on a much more distant level than that of Philargus; she judges the fiction as an aesthetic object rather reacting to it directly, dividing the matter from the performance and the performance from the person of the actor (the only aspect of the show she likes).

According to Michael Neill in “Wits most accomplished Senate: The Audience of the Caroline Private Theatres”, this kind of distanced spectatorial response is typical of the more sophisticated portion of the Caroline audience. Neill suggests that the shift to the hall playhouses coincided with the development of “a general connoisseurship [ . . . ] analogous to that of the patrons of painting” (344). He ties this aesthetic response to theatre with the self-conscious artistry of Caroline playwrights, who see themselves as “artists supplying demonstrations of their individual genius (‘works’) as cunningly fabricated as any mannerist painting or sculpture, for the pleasure of a select and informed audience” (346). Although

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23 Since many of the prologues, poems and comments Neill cites in support of the development of this new stance postdate the arrival of the courtier playwrights discussed in my introduction, and several of them are, in fact, documents from the 1630 ‘war’, it may be anachronistic to discuss this approach in relation to a play written in 1625. However, Neill argues that this “constant dialogue with a hyper-critical audience” (347) dates back to Marston’s complaints as early as 1601 (347), although he does suggest that “the contrast between Marston’s satire of his audience in the prologue to What You Will (1601) and Ford’s in the epilogue to The Broken Heart (c. 1625-1633) does suggest how the private house audiences had grown in sophistication in the intervening quarter-century” (353). I will assume, then, that the kind of “interest in dramatic form for its own sake” (353) which he identifies was, in fact, a factor in the Blackfriars audience for The Roman
“The Cure of Avarice” is by no means a cunningly fabricated work, Caesar and Domitia discuss it in a sophisticated way; Caesar asks Domitia how she approves “of the matter, and the Actors” (2.1. 410) and her response, already quoted above, indicates her ability to divide the performance into the individual categories of subject, style and performance, and to judge each separately. Furthermore, the play which Domitia requests be performed the next day – “Iphis and Anaxerete” – corresponds perfectly to the kind of theatrical experience Neill asserts this audience relished:

A chief function of drama, like other forms of rhetoric, had always been to move the emotions; but this traditionally had been with a persuasive, and normally with a moral-reformatory purpose [. . . ] But in the Caroline period the dramatist’s power to stir up the passions is widely regarded as a source of pleasure in its own right.

(355)

This is accompanied by a pleasure in detachment:

One of the striking things about Shirley’s description of the audience’s response to Fletcherian drama is the emphasis he places on the control of emotion by witty self-awareness: of course the viewer [. . . ] is meant to find himself drawn empathically into the action, but only to be forced, a moment later, to step back and contemplate the witty artifice by which this emotional identification was brought about — to “stand admiring the subtile Trackes of [his] engagement”. The double effect which Shirley describes — the paradoxical yoking of strongly emotive detail with a purely intellectual appeal to the connoisseur’s sense of formal elegance — is a typically mannerist device.

(359)

Barring the play of the passions, this is a good description of the dramaturgical structure of The Roman Actor itself; the play requires its audience to become embedded in the drama while remaining explicitly aware that they are watching a play. But it is an even better description of the kind of spectatorial connoisseurship which Domitian and Domitia consistently attempt to display.24

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24 It is telling that this kind of sophisticated detachment ultimately proves beyond both Domitia and Domitian; Domitian’s shocked response to Domitia’s outburst of passion at the threatened suicide of Iphis “Why are you / Transported thus Domitia? ’tis a play, / Or grant it serious, it at no part merits / This passion in you.” (3.2. 282-5) marks her breach of distanced aesthetic appreciation, while Domitian’s own incoherent rage as he stabs the helpless Paris in “The False Servant” (4.2. 281) marks an even worse rupture of spectatorial decorum. For all their apparent
Domitia’s erotic response to “The Cure of Avarice” is both completely unlooked-for and yet, paradoxically, is the most important of the three audience responses. Not only does her infatuation dictate the next play Paris and his company perform, but it is the ultimate cause of the murders of both the actor and the emperor; Paris’s death is caused by his seduction by Domitia, and Domitian’s own assassination is rooted in Domitia’s rage over his murder of Paris. Therefore the spectatorial response of the only sector of the audience to which “The Cure of Avarice” did not directly or indirectly address itself dictates the events of the rest of the play.

The performance of the next inset play, “Iphis and Anarexete”, is prefaced by the play’s most striking performance of imperial theatre: the torture of the Stoic Senators Rusticus and Sura. This, like the condemnation of Lamia, is another demonstration of Domitian’s tyranny, that serves as a ‘theatrical’ induction to the piece of drama which immediately follows it. However, its relation with the theatre audience and its effect on the status of the Emperor is considerably more complex than the earlier scene.

The scene opens with Parthenius attempting to dissuade Caesar from publicly executing the Senators, an argument which is founded on the possible audience response to such a show:

...Yet in my opinion,
They being popular Senators, and cried vp
With loud applauses of the multitude,
For foolish honestie, and beggerly vertue
T’would rellish more of pollicie to haue them
Made away in priuate, with what exquisite torments
You please, it skils not, then to haue them drawne
To the degrees in publike; for ’tis doubted

intellectual comprehension of theatre, they have no real understanding of it, and are incapable of being touched by it in any meaningful way. Each strives for an elegant detachment, yet neither can resist being moved by the spectacles they witness; however, both are moved to evil action. Massinger comes close, here, to ceding a point to the anti-theatrical faction: theatre can stir the passions and thus prompt bad behaviour. But he also makes it very clear where responsibility for such behaviour lies: the fault is not in Paris’s plays, but in Domitian and Domitia themselves. Audiences must take responsibility for their own responses: in order to grasp a play’s meaning, appreciation of its formal structure and emotional responses to its stirring scenes must go hand in hand with a capacity to be significantly touched by its intellectual and moral content.
That the sad object may beget compassion
In the giddie rout, and cause some sudaine vprore
That may disturb you.
(3.2.14-24)

The fear is not so much of riot or rebellion, as of ‘misinterpretation’ of the performance.

Domitian’s response pours contempt both on Parthenius’s fears and on their source.
The common people are worthless, and their “loye” or “worst of hate” (3.2. 26-7) is beneath
the consideration of both himself and the gods. He then responds to a question which
Parthenius has not raised – the notion that the gods pay any attention to the prayers and
supplications of common humanity:

If there are Gods aboue, or Goddesses,
(But wise Minerua that’s mine owne and sure)
That they haue vacant houres to take into
Their serious protection, or care,
This many headed monster? mankind liues
In few, as potent Monarchs, and their Peeres;
And all those glorious constellations
That doe adorne the firmament, appointed
Like grooms with their bright influence to attend
The actions of Kings, and Emperours,
They being the greater wheeles that moue the lesse.
(3.2. 29-40)

Domitian here casts himself as the only actor of note on the world stage, the only
representative of the section of humanity observed by the Gods, the powerful. This seemingly
anachronistic intrusion of the theme of divine justice into Domitian’s playworld is related to
the spiritual and spectatorial aspects of the show he is about to stage, since the torture of
Rusticus and Sura will leave the Emperor himself a judged and subjected spectacle rather
than a comfortable spectator.25

Domitian declares that popular unrest can be easily controlled, and he gives orders

25 Of course Parthenius’s argument in favour of a private execution eliminates the possibility
of the control of spectator response by eliminating the audience itself, and this is why Domitian
objects to it. Domitian is enacting a piece of Foucauldian ‘theatre of the scaffold’; the execution is
meant to display the subjection of the bodies of the Senators before imperial control and
simultaneously to enforce the subjection of the audience’s judgment. The threat of interpretations of
the spectacle which differ from his own — of pity, of compassion, or of anger — is one which he
must overcome directly; he needs the execution to be public, since its power lies in its status as public
spectacle which ‘the people’ can be forced to watch and to approve.
to this effect. However, the object of these orders is not a represented on-stage audience, but the theatre audience itself, over which Domitian’s threats can have no effect. The passage is complex enough, and clear enough, to merit quotation in full:

Bring forth those condemn’d wretches; let me see
One man so lost, as but to pittie ‘em
And though there lay a million of soules
Imprison’d in his flesh, my Hangmens hookes
Should rend it off and giue ’em libertie.

Caesar hath said it.

Exit PARTHENIUS

Enter PARTHENIUS, ARETINUS, and the Guard, Hangmen dragging in IUNIS RUSTICUS and PALPHURIUS SURA, bound backe to backe.

Aretinus: ’Tis great Caesars pleasure
That with fix’d eyes you carefully observere
The peoples lookes. Charge vpon any man
That with a sigh, or murmure does expresse
A seeming sorrow for these traytors deaths.
You know his will, perfornme it.

(3.2. 41-51)

When Caesar makes the first threat, which seems to be pointed directly at the ‘crowd’, he and Parthenius are alone on stage, as they have been from the opening of the scene. The entry of the prisoners, the hangmen and the Guards likewise makes no mention of an on-stage audience for the execution, and yet Aretinus’s orders to the Guards — “carefully observere / The peoples lookes” — implies the presence of an audience and reiterates the explicit physical control to which the ‘people’ are to be subjected. The threat is relentlessly emphasized, repeated three times, and obviously acted upon by the Guards — and yet there’s no-one there to threaten.

Yet of course there is — the stage sitters, in particular, and the Blackfriars audience in general. I suspect that Domitian’s initial threat would have been directed at the gentlemen on the stage, and the emphatic re-iteration which concludes his speech, “Caesar hath said it” (3.2. 46) would make it quite clear that this is a textual intention, rather than just interpretive staging.²⁶ Aretinus’s instructions set the Guards up as a visual reminder of Caesar’s

²⁶ Physical or verbal threats aimed at the audience occur regularly in the Cycle plays (the Guard of Herod threaten the audience in the Herod plays), in the actions of the Vices in Tudor moralities and, as Mann’s discussion of Tarlton’s clowning makes clear (59-65) in Elizabethan
instructions, one which is implicitly present as a visual frame on the stage throughout the rest of the scene; the Guards stand facing outward over the stage sitters (and perhaps also at the points of the stage, facing out into the auditorium) marking the audience as the watching crowd, ‘subject to Caesar’s power’.

This is perhaps the most vertiginous moment in the play — Massinger is casting the theatre audience as an actor in the drama, directly, visually and emphatically pulling them into the frame of the fiction. It is a practical and ingenious solution to a problem of staging, of course — Massinger needs to turn the stage of Blackfriars into a scaffold surrounded by a crowd, and so uses the crowd which he already has at his disposal. But the power dynamic implied by the threat, the position of the audience and the earlier discussion of the theatre of the gods is belied by the absolute lack of power which Domitian, a character restrained within the limits of fiction, has over the theatre audience. In fact, the repeated and enacted emphasis on the subjection of the audience to the surveillance of the guards and Caesar himself serves to underscore this lack of power. The Guard, facing out from the stage prepared to perform crowd control on a crowd over which they have, in fact, no control at all, stands as a (fictional) emblem of Caesar’s power and a (real) emblem of the fiction’s complete lack of agency. As in the first act, the real and fictional worlds intersect, but in this case the intersection is explicitly commented upon; the audience cannot miss their simultaneous function as real audience and fictional crowd, and the scene which follows plays off this blend of fiction and reality in a number of ways.

First, the victims of the torture are, as has already been discussed, the normative characters of the play, the ones who have modelled the appropriate interpretive stance to the audience throughout the play’s first half (Myhill 200). The spectacle upon the stage is therefore one which the audience is intended to resist; these are men who have been established as the audience’s allies, and the audience is meant (like the ‘giddie route’ in extemporizing. Therefore, such actions are a part of the Renaissance theatrical vocabulary, but they were usually controlled by the actors. In this scene, the textual stress on Domitian’s orders emphasizes that the framebreaking is done by the writer.
whose role they have been cast) to feel distress at their abuse. Second, Rusticus and Sura are presented as classical models of Christian martyrdom; their first exchange with Domitian emphasizes the link between their proto-Christian status and Domitian’s speech on the theatre of the gods:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Sura:} & \quad \text{Giue vs leaue} \\
\text{To dye fell tyrant.} & \\
\text{Rusticus:} & \quad \text{For beyond our bodies} \\
\text{Thou hast no power.} & \\
\text{Caesar:} & \quad \text{Yes, I’ll afflic your soules.} \\
\text{And force them groaning to the Stigian lake} & \\
\text{Prepar’d for such to howle in, that blaspheame} & \\
\text{The power of Princes, that are Gods on earth;} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

(3.2. 52-57)

Domitian’s intention is to damn the Senators’ souls, to demonstrate that his authority extends beyond the physical limits of his fictional world, just as his threats to the theatre audience are intended to demonstrate that his authority extends beyond the limits of the fiction in which he is imprisoned. Both intentions are impossible and frankly absurd; the failure of both attempts links the theatre audience with the theatre of the gods that Domitian has blasphemed. Both heaven and the Blackfriars audience lie outside his jurisdiction as, respectively, earthly ruler or fictional character. The audience is thus told (however subliminally) that their judgements and responses to the torture are valid, despite the tyrant’s fulminations. Goldberg’s reading notwithstanding, this is a profoundly anti-absolutist scene.

The Stoics’ declaration of freedom of conscience is further rendered proto-Christian by Rusticus’s reference to the death of their teacher, Thraseas. They are not afraid to die, he says, because they will be following the example of their master:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{In my thought I see} & \\
\text{The substance of that pure vntained soule,} & \\
\text{Of Thraseas our master made a starre,} & \\
\text{That with melodious harmonie invites vs} & \\
\text{(Leauing this dunghill Rome, made hell by thee,)} & \\
\text{To trace his heauenly steps, and fill a Spheare} & \\
\text{Aboue yon Chrystall Canopie.} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

(3.2. 62-8)

Thraseas’s status as a thinly disguised image of Christ, waiting to receive the martyrs into heaven, transforms the torture scene into an analogue of Christian martyrdom and Domitian
into a pagan tyrant, thus completely destroying his claim to spiritual authority. Furthermore, I would like to suggest, the stage image the audience sees — two victims bound back to back prepared for execution, being jeered at by a richly-dressed member of the temporal authority and surrounded by a resistant crowd held back by guards — is one that would have been instantly familiar from the woodcut illustrations of Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* (see Illustrations 1, 2, 3 and 4).27 As Huston Diehl points out in *Staging Reform. Reforming the Stage*, *Actes and Monuments* was a text that used visual images to construct martyrdom as theatre:

Foxe constructs Protestant martyrdoms as spectacular theatre that is observed by witnesses. Many of the illustrations in *Actes and Monuments* show martyrs at the moment of death, surrounded by spectators who stand or sit around the scaffold, watching the proceedings like the audiences of a stage play. Displays of power, gestures of defiance, spectacles of suffering and death: all are recorded as high drama, played out on public stages, watched by crowds of spectators. Their gazes mark the spectators as witnesses.

(Diehl, Staging 186-7)

Diehl argues that Foxe’s illustrations deliberately emphasize the presence of witnessing crowds, and by “stress[ing] the presence of the historical witnesses [. . .] constructs his own readers as witnesses” (193): Massinger, borrowing the image, constructs his spectators as resistant witnesses in the same fashion. The construction of the reader (or the audience member) as a self-conscious witness via the presentation of audiences within the illustrations also serves to link the judgement of the spectators and the judgement of God:

By emphasizing the response — and responsibility — of the spectators [Foxe] fosters in his readers a self-conscious attention to their own seeing. Witnessing is, for Foxe, a reflexive act. He depicts the martyr as both a spectacle — the object of everyone’s gaze — and a witness whose actions affirm God’s truth; and he portrays the onlooker as an eyewitness whose own

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27 The stage image of the philosophers themselves, in particular, goes some way to proving this point. Foxe’s book is illuminated with stereotyped woodcuts, many of which are used several times over, thus providing each tale of Protestant martyrdom with a visual image at reduced cost. The images which illustrate double burnings always present the two martyrs bound back to back with their profiles displayed to the picture frame — the Janus image which the philosophers present (Ill. 1, 2 and 3). The larger images of the more famous burnings present an even more explicit portrait of what I assume the staged scene was meant to recall. The woodcut of the burning of Latimer and Ridley, in particular, presents the two victims in the fire dispassionately watched by a richly dressed judge and surrounded by a crowd of onlookers, flanked by armed guards. (Ill. 4)
Figure 4. A Table describing the burning of Bishop Ridley and father Latimer at Oxford, D. Smith there preaching at the time of their martyrdom.
watching — hostile or compassionate — is itself an action with spiritual consequences. In addition, he reminds his reader that God is a divine spectator, who watches and judges both the actors and the human spectators in the theatre of the world.

(Diehl, Staging 193)

This multiple perspective is one which Massinger borrows, along with the image he presents. Rusticus and Sura judge Domitian, not the other way around, as he himself says — "By my shaking / I am the guilty man, and not the Judge" (3.2.116-17) — and their explicit and implicit links to the images of Protestant martyrs serve to type Domitian as parallel to the illegitimate Catholic authorities of the Marian persecutions. The scaffold scene does not, as Domitian hopes it will, display the legitimacy of his omnipotent authority, but reveals his power as invalid and corrupt, and then subjects him to judgement in his turn — the judgement of Rusticus and Sura themselves, calm under the hangmen's tortures, and the twin judgement of the watching witnesses and the theatre of God.

This stage image of Rusticus and Sura as Protestant martyrs is external to the fiction of the play, although the theatre audience would have been able to appreciate its meaning. Within the fiction itself, however, Domitian's subjection comes from his reduced status before the gaze of the philosophers themselves (Myhill 207). Their passive resistance to torture marks them as the superior actors on the imperial theatre of the scaffold, and Domitian's sense of his own authority begins to waver under their smiling and silent suffering:

Againe, againe. You trifle. Not a groane, 
Is my rage lost? What cursed charmes defend 'em!
Search deeper, villaines. Who lookes pale? or thinkes 
That I am cruell?

(3.2. 77-80)

Domitian, rather than his victims, roars in response to the torture: "I am tortur'd / In their want of feeling torments" (3.2. 88-89). He becomes a spectacle of weakness, the object, as Myhill points out, of the doubled gaze of the Janus-figure formed by the two Stoics (207).

In this context, his renewed threats to the audience serve to re-emphasize the metatheatrical frame around the scene, and further underscore the failure of his attempt to stage himself as omnipotent. The resistant self-control of the philosophers, who refuse to act
the parts they have been cast, "[o]'recome[s]" (3.2.84) Domitian's theatrically constructed power, forcing him to reveal his omnipotence as a fiction: "It is vnkindly done to mocke his furie / Whom the world stiles omnipotent" (3.2.87-8). The very spectacle which he hoped would demonstrate his supreme authority reveals its limits.

Finally, the Senators' speeches seize control of the spectacle of the scaffold, transforming it from an object lesson in the imperial power to an illustration of the power of philosophy. Ironically, the Senators are capable of this astounding feat of upstaging because of their adherence to the "could precepts" of philosophy (1.3.78) that Paris had derided in his defence of the theatre:

[we] Liue to deride thee, our calme patience treading
Vpon the necke of tyrannie. That securely,
(As t'were a gentle slumber,) we indure
Thy hangmens studied tortures, is a debt
Wee owe to graue Philosophie, that instruct's vs
The flesh is but the clothing of the soule,

(3.2.95-100)

The Emperor, for the first time subjected by a spectacle not of his design, declares "We will heare no more" (3.2.108), but Rusticus continues, prophesying their reappearance as ghosts in Act Five:

...I giue thee warning of it.
Though it is thy will to grinde this earth,
As small as Atomes, they throwne in the Sea to,
They shall seeme recollected to thy sense,
And when the sandie building of thy greatnes,
Shall with its owne weight totter; looke to see me
As I was yesterday, in my perfect shape,
For I'll appeare in horror.

(3.2.109-16)

This final judgement is the verdict which makes Domitian shake as if he were "the guiltie man, and not the iudge" (3.2.117) and he belatedly takes Parthenius's advice, ordering the hangmen to execute the two now mangled Senators in private (3.2.121).

This extremely gory and yet morally serious show is the framing context for the second play-within, staged at the command of Domitia as "sport / [that]WIll banish melancholie" (3.2.129-30). Significantly, there is no explicit move away from the blood-soaked scaffold, although the crowd that framed it shrinks back into the usual 'invisible'
space of the watching audience. As was the case with the play’s ‘binocular’ opening scene, the setting for “Iphis and Anaxerete” is unlocalized, so it is possible to argue that the scene shifts, despite the lack of direction in the text; however, the scene must still be acted on the stage which the hangmen have just vacated. That is, even if we are no longer on the scaffold, (and there is no indication that we are not) the stage on which Paris and Domatilla perform their piece of romantic drivel must still be wet with the Stoics’ blood — which is a perfect symbol of the status of theatre in Domitian’s Rome.

No matter where “Iphis and Anaxerete” is set, however, it is indelibly marked as a court presentation. Not only is it courtly in both matter and style — an Ovidian romance with a quasi-Fletcherian tone — but it features an amateur actress, Domitian’s cousin Domatilla, cast as Anaxerete by the Empress in order to “humble / [her] pride” (3.2.140-1). The court was the only context in which women acted, and professional companies often provided supporting roles for court performances (in particular, for masques). Domitia’s artistic control of the show also marks it as a court performance. Although Domitia does not

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28 Rusticus and Sura are dragged off at line 122, and “Iphis and Anaxerete” begins at line 145. I’d argue that there isn’t enough time to clean the blood off the stage, and that, given the nature of the torture there would assuredly be blood on the stage (the hangmen are ‘searching’ in the Senator’s bodies, presumably with hooks or pincers).

29 The presence of the actress, as well as the active involvement of Domitia in the preparation of the play, may be intended as a reference to Henrietta Maria’s production of Artenice, performed at court on February 21, 1626. The romance was performed by the Queen — who took the lead — and her ladies, and caused something of a scandal: a letter in the Venetian state papers states that “the English objected to the first part (attione) being declaimed by the queen” (Bentley Jacobean IV: 549). Bentley makes it clear that “it was Queen Henrietta’s speaking like a common player in the first part of her performance. . .which raised the eyebrows” (Jacobean IV: 549). It is unlikely that this escapade would have been forgotten by November of the same year, raising the possibility that Domitia’s somewhat fatuous delight in meddling with the players might be a criticism of the Queen’s theatrical hobby. Although Domitia’s actions are not an exact echo of Henrietta Maria’s, since she does not act herself but forces Domatilla to do so, Massinger emphatically argues that women demean themselves by acting. Domitia forces Domatilla onstage in order to humiliate her, and Stephanos reads her performance as one step above streetwalking: “sit down with this, / and at the next action like a Gadatine strumpet / I shall looke to see you tumble.” (3.2. 297-9). I suspect that this brief vignette of a foolish female monarch happily meddling in theatrical affairs is intended to recall the Queen’s theatrical gaffe, and that Massinger may be pandering to the public displeasure Bentley’s sources record.
act herself, she is deeply involved in its staging, a fact commented on, critically, by her waiting women:

\[\text{[she is]}\] Among the Players, where all state layd by,  
She does enquire who acts this part, who that,  
And in what habits? blames the tire-women  
For want of curious dressings...  
(3.1. 88-91)

And Domitia herself delights in explaining her new-found talents to Domitian:

Sirrah, Caesar,  
(I hugge my selfe for't) I haue beene instructing  
The Players how to act, and to cut off  
All tedious impertinencie, haue contracted  
The Tragedie, into one continued Scene.  
I haue the art of 't, and am taken more  
With my abilitie that way, then all knowledge  
I haue but of thy loue.  
(3.2.130-37)

The play which follows is wholly under her control, a control even more restrictive than that which Domitian exercised over "The Cure of Avarice". Where he simply cut the play to the final scene and tried to dictate its reception by its audience, Domitia has rewritten, cast and directed the play (as is implied in "instructing / The Players how to act") and even, as we see upon its opening, done the costumes and makeup. Indeed, when the performance begins, on her command, her aside frames the play:

\textit{After a short flourish, enter PARIS as Iphis.}

How doe you like  
That shapre? me thinkes it is most suitable  
To the aspect of a despairing lover.  
The seeming late falne, counterfeited teares  
That hang upon his cheekes, was my deuice.  
Caesar: And all was excellent.  
Domitia: Now heare him speake.  
(3.2.147-53)

Only then is the play allowed to begin.

Her involvement, and the terms of her delight (the costumes and makeup) firmly establish the show as theatre-as-bauble. Hogan accurately describes the playlet as a romantic piece of wish-fulfilment, in which Paris as neglected lover permits [Domitia] to indulge in fantasies about how much more tenderly she would treat him, were he hers [...] no moral is intended by the actors or taken by the audience: Paris has become a court performer, pandering to the pleasure of
titled ladies. There is something of the prostitute about him.

(Imagery 278)

In its overt stimulation of the passions for their own sake, "Iphis and Anaxerete" resembles the artful but hollow forms described by Neill ("Wits" 359); the show stimulates no moral or intellectual response, only an emotional one, and Domitia delights in it.

Domitia is not just the controlling mind behind the play's performance; she is also its primary audience, whose responses are watched by the rest of the spectators. She is much more directly involved in "Iphis and Anaxerete" than Philargus was in "The Cure of Avarice"; she delivers eleven asides in the course of a 130-line performance, peppering the show with commentary, responses and emotional ejaculations. Her responses are initially framed in terms of aesthetic appreciation: "Do's he not act it rarely? / Observe with what a feeling he deliver's / His orisons to Cupid; I am rap'd with 't" (3.2.175-8). However, any detachment soon gives way to her passionate interest in Paris himself, and she begins to read the performance naively, assigning the attributes of characters to the actors who play them (Myhill 214). Her rage at Latinus, playing the porter who ejects Iphis from his beloved's doorstep, is a good example: "Churlish devil! / But that I should disturb the Scene, as I live / I would tear his eyes out" (3.2.207-9). She is still aware that what she is watching is a fiction — hence her comment "[b]ut that I should disturb the Scene" — but her emotional response is to conflate the actor and the character.

Eventually, the lines between fiction and reality blur completely and she loses all aesthetic distance, breaking into the theatrical frame upon Iphis's decision to hang himself: "Not for the world. / Restraine him as you love your lives" (3.2.281-2). Domitian's distressed reminder that she is watching a fiction — "Why are you / Transported thus Domitia? 'tis a play" (3.2.282-3) — coupled with Paris's breach of character to tell her that "I never purpos'd Madam / To do the deed in earnest" (3.2.285-6) restore her decorum, but she still cuts the play short, reluctant to witness Paris's death. This raises doubts as to the nature of her reaction in the secondary audience, for whom she has unwittingly made herself a spectacle. The judgement of the secondary audience is marked in the scene itself by the
aside of Aretinus — "There is something more / In this then passion, which I must find out / Or my intelligence freezes" (3.2. 293-5) — and continues in the discussion of her ladies-in-waiting: "the violence of her passion, / When personating Iphis, [Paris] pretended... To hang himselfe... all heere saw, and mark'd it" (4.1. 2-9).

This spectatorial response — both Domitia's response to the play-within and the secondary audience's response to Domitia's reaction — marks the beginning of the downfall of the imperial couple and the destruction of Paris. It also marks the final destruction of Paris's theory of drama. The failure of the moral interlude to work compunction in its audience has destroyed the argument that audiences model themselves on the stage, positively in the case of virtue and negatively in the case of vice, but here a presentation of virtuous passion has lead to the stimulation of vicious passion in the audience: Domitia incorrectly imitates the stage just as Philargus incorrectly refused to imitate it (Habicht 365).

The secondary audience's observation of Domitia has a direct effect on the events of the next act; in the first scene the three court ladies and Aretinus, all of whom have had their suspicions raised by Domitia's reaction to the play, spy on her and correctly interpret the meaning of her appointment with Paris. They then betray her to Domitian, who is brought to the meeting place as a reluctant witness. Domitia's seduction of Paris is therefore implicitly a piece of theatre, staged before witnesses, even though she intends it to be private. This may explain why the seduction is framed by a discussion of acting, in particular the actor's relation to the parts he plays. Domitia's attraction is based, at least in part, on Paris's role as player, as her opening speech indicates:

[I] cannot find
In reason but that thou whom oft I haue seene
To personate a Gentleman, noble, wise,
Faithfull, and gamsome, and what vertues else
The Poet pleases to adore you with,
But that (as vessels still pertake the odour
Of the sweete pretious liquors they contain'd)
Thou must be reallie in some degree
The thing thou dost present.
(4.2. 31-39)

Here, she conflates the character with the actor, just as she did while watching "Iphis". Paris
counters her argument with its inverse, "that I acting / A foole, a coward. . . / Or any other weake, and vitious person / Of force I must be such" (4.2. 44-7), arguing that there is no connection between the fictions he plays and the reality in which he lives. Unfortunately, the error of this assumption will be revealed in the result of the final play-within, "The False Servant".  

Although Domitia's error is a common one (of which actors often complain), in the context of a drama which makes play with the double nature of representation and reality it is deeply significant. Paris’s argument affirms his status as only an actor; his insistence on his essential lack of heroism prepares us for the scene which we are about to see, but also emphasizes the status of the actor as a blank slate, a field for the projection of concepts and desires. Paris is in danger because of his profession in two ways; first, because theatrical representation has directly produced Domitia’s desire, and second, because the nature of his function in theatrical representation (to be whatever the text calls him to be) has left him open to the projection of her desire. He cannot argue effectively against Domitia’s assumptions because he is, in himself, nothing more than an impersonator of roles. He has no essential self to which he may point in refutation of her claim; all he can say is that he is not the thing he represents:

      How glorious soeuer, or deform’d,
      I doe appeare in the Scenane, my part being ended,
      And all my borrowed ornaments put off,
      I am no more, nor lesse than what I was
      Before I enter’d.
      (4.2. 48-52)

The problem, of course, is to determine what he was before he entered; in Paris’s case, the answer is ‘an actor’, a role which can only be taken in acting another role, wearing the ‘borrowed ornaments’ which Domitia finds so appealing. He is caught in a circular trap.

This may seem like semantic quibbling, but the problem lies at the root of this scene and the play-within which follows. First, both Domitia and Domitian can manipulate and abuse Paris using theatrical models because he is an actor. Domitian’s use of this is obvious — "The False Servant" literally restages the scene Domitian watches Paris enact with
Domitia — but Domitia, too, plays on Paris’s status as a person whose self is defined by the performance of roles. Barish argues that Paris gives in to Domitia’s ‘casting’ of him as Paris to her Helen because “[a]s an actor, he has been trained to please, and he almost literally does not know how to say no” (“Caroline” 199). But this is not quite accurate. Paris knows very well how to say ‘no’, he just doesn’t know how to act it: Domitia alternately argues, orders, threatens and bribes him, with no effect on his resolve not to “make payment for [Caesar’s bounties] with ingratitude, / Falshood, and treason” (4.2.68-9). All she has to do to create the appearance of adultery, though, is to trick him into kissing her, and then tell him he’s playing a role:

Denie not that yet which a brother may
grant to his sister: as a testimonie

CAESAR, ARETINUS, IULIA, DOMITILLA, CAENIS above.

I am not scorn’d. Kisse me. Kisse me againe.
Kisse closer. Thou art now my Troyan Paris,
And I thy Helen.
Paris: Since it is your will.
(4.2. 100-04)

Caesar, observing, casts himself as Menelaus, and descends in a rage.

But in fact, all Paris has done is kiss the Empress. He has only taken direction, something he has been trained to do, but unfortunately the process of being observed layers a series of interpretations on his action. In this moment he is the site of the projected fantasies of three observers: those of Domitia, who interprets his passivity before her kisses as consent, those of Domitian, who reads what he sees through his wife’s theatrical fantasies and sees himself cuckolded, and those of the theatrical audience, or here, the reader. As Maus puts it, “one of the many ironies of “ocular proof” [of adultery] is that it does not exist and could never exist in a theatre in which the representation of sexual intercourse is taboo” (575). Because the structure of the scene and the structure of the play suggest that Paris intends to sleep with Domitia, the reader will see the kiss as prologue to an adultery that could never be staged. However, we cannot be sure that this is what’s actually going on. Paris plays, as he always does, the role he is cast in; he kisses Domitia, a rather harmless
thing which he has done (on stage) many times before. But he is a black box. We have no way of knowing the status of his desire, because we do not hear his response to her suggestion that they move from kissing to intercourse. Caesar enters at the crucial moment, leaving Paris's response unspoken, and leaving us without proof that in this scene, as in so many others, Paris isn't just acting.

Domitian, however, has no doubts about the meaning of the scene he has just witnessed, and his spectatorial certainty leads to the staging of the final play-within. "The False Servant" is staged at his command in order to allow him to fictionalize and recuperate the betrayal which has made him, in his own eyes, a cuckold. In this, as in a great many other ways, it is utterly unlike the other two inset plays; it is not staged as an entertainment, but as a functional frame for Domitian's revenge, a means by which he can re-enact, and thus control, the embrace between Domitia and Paris. It bears a good many of the marks of this function: it is staged in Domitia's "private walk" with no audience and little costuming, and the role of the injured lord is taken by the "new Actor" (4.2.237), Domitian himself. In short, it has almost none of the ostention codes which marked the other two plays as inset fictions.31

30 Caesar enters with Aretinus, Julia, Caenis, Domatilla and the guard at line 113; he orders Domitia taken to her chamber at line 152, commands Aretinus's removal at line 160, and has the ladies-in-waiting removed at line 164. This leaves him alone on stage with Paris. The only figures who enter before the end of the scene are the actors Latinus, Aesopus, and "a BOY drest for a Ladie" at line 222. The play therefore cannot have an audience; moreover, no reference is made to one over the course of the scene.

31 Paradoxically, this unspectated play-within has more theatrical and dramatic ostention codes drawn from the Renaissance stage than any of the shows presented so far: Domitian, preparing to act the injured Lord, removes his "Robe, and wreath" (4.2.224) and puts on "This cloake, and hat without / Wearing a beard, or other propertie" (4.2.226-7), thus transforming his costume from that of a character in a 'classical' drama to a contemporary one. The part of the wife is played by "a BOY drest for a Ladie", which implies that the boy actor must be recognizable as such. The dialogue has at least one Renaissance convention, as Paris's character has an aside (4.2.274-9); ironically, this his only aside in the entire play, and highlights the fact that the 'hero' has never before directly addressed the audience. The funeral march which concludes the act echoes the conclusion of any number of contemporary tragedies; although it is not part of the text the actors perform, its position at the end of Caesar's speech over Paris's body allows it to function as the conclusion of the play-within. And finally, the playlet's rehearsal-like staging permits us to see the backstage business normally hidden
Its status as an acted antidote to the earlier, uncontrolled piece of ‘erotic private theatre’ which Domitia forced Paris to act is obvious; it is almost a word for word re-enactment of the earlier scene, with a few important twists:

we remember
A Tragedie, we oft haue seen with pleasure
Call’d the False Servant. . .
In which a great Lord takes to his protection
A man forlorne, giuing him ample power
To order, and dispose of his estate
In his absence, he then pretending to a journey.
But yet with this restraint that on no tearmes
(This Lord suspecting his wives constancie
She hauing playd false to a former husband)
The servant though sollicited should consent,
Though she commanded him to quench her flames.

(4.2. 205-216)

As Myhill says, the plot is “Domitian’s version of his relationship to Paris” (218), an altered version which allows the Emperor to see himself as virtuous and injured:

The differences between this plot and the Domitian-Paris-Domitia plot are all in Domitian’s favour. The plot of The False Servant as Domitian tells it casts suspicion on the wife for her treatment of her first husband without involving her second husband in the separation. It also suggests that the husband’s discovery of the scene occurred on his own suspicion and decision, rather than having a large group of people insist that Domitia was unchaste. In taking the part of the husband [. . .] Domitian takes a role which is simultaneously more innocent and less blind towards Domitia than his own actions have shown him.

( Myhill 218)

By fictionalizing the events, Domitian re-writes them, using the theatre to erase and reconstruct a reality which he did not script.

Finally, Domitian’s decision to act the role of the injured lord himself may be related to the affiliation which Maus argues exists between the position of the theatrical spectator from view. All in all, the effect is of watching a Caroline company rehearse a scene from a contemporary domestic tragedy. There is no audience; all the players are on stage, which is marked as only half a stage by the presence of Aesopus and Latinus standing ready to enter and prompting Caesar at his cue; half of the players are in contemporary dress and half in ‘Roman’ garb, as if wardrobe had only got done with half of them; the ‘ladie’ is stilted and awkward, possibly played by a newly recruited boy-actor; the play, not formally cut, begins halfway through the concluding scene upon a verbal “why when?” from Caesar; and the new ‘lead actor’ forgets his lines but manages to remember his business.
and the position of the cuckold-as-voyeur which Domitian has just occupied:

The scene of betrayal is typically staged in a way that insists upon this separation; the jealous male conceals himself "above" while the lovers embrace "below", or vice versa. Unlike an ordinary voyeur, moreover, he has a proprietary claim upon the sexual scene acted out before him [. . .] the unacknowledged presence of the cuckold clarifies for him his impotence and helplessness; that is why it is so galling. At the same time, however, his marginality confers a compensatory form of potency: the power of superior discernment.

(570-71)

This power — a function of spectatorial distance — evaporates as soon as the cuckold ceases to be a spectator and becomes an actor again:

Once the cuckold's plight becomes public he loses his peculiar privileges as unseen witness and becomes himself a feminized spectacle at which others point mocking, phallic fingers. Any act of sexual assertion or self-justification thus threatens to emasculate him.

(572).

Domitian, in his Roman theatre of power, usually occupies a position which encompasses the best aspects of both actor and spectator; he is an actor, but one who (he believes) controls the interpretations of the spectators who watch him. He is also the only audience that matters, controlling the actions of others as an imperial director, and, as is obvious, he refuses to believe that there is any area in the theatre of the world which is out of his control. His unintentional occupation of the spectatorial position of the cuckold is only the second time in the play that he has been subject to a performance that he could not control, the first being the torture of Rusticus and Sura. Maus's terms would argue that in order to erase the castrating effect of the uncontrolled spectacle, Domitian must take up the position of actor, but in order to avoid being subjected himself to the mocking gaze of the audience, he must occupy a private theatre which he himself controls, in which he is both (phallic) actor and (all-powerful) spectator. The play-within permits him to do this.

This curative use of the fiction also explains his status as both audience and actor, for although the scene has no formal on-stage audience, it is not without a spectator. This is Domitian himself, who here acts, on the 'real' stage, the role of actor/director/spectator that he has adopted as his posture on the world-stage throughout the play. Since the purpose of the play is to erase the image of himself as cuckold and replace it with that of revenger, the
theatre in which the performance really takes place is his mind, foreshadowing the ‘dream-within’ which will more accurately stage his psyche in act Five. Perhaps because of this, he controls the playlet more completely than he did “The Cure of Avarice” or Domitia did “Iphis and Anacerete”. Not only does he seize control of his chosen part, costuming the character and (significantly) refusing the offered “foyle / The point, and edge rebutted, when you are / To doe the murther” (4.2. 228-30) but he controls the performance itself:

We’ll haue but one short Scene. That where the Ladie
In an imperious way commands the servant
To be unthankful to his patron. When
My cue’s to enter prompt me, nay begin
And doe it spritely. Though but a new Actor,
When I come to execution you shall find
No cause to laugh at me.
(4.2. 233-39)

He frames the performance and prompts the bewildered actors to begin, while assuring them of the strength of a performance that he will not be able to give; the pun on the word “execution” is of course intentional.

As Myhill has noted (218), the scene Domitian demands is an exact mirror of the earlier scene between Domitia and Paris, from the wife’s assurances that she can “mould [her husband] any way” (4.2. 255) to the servant’s resistance to “[un]thankefulnesse” (4.2. 257), to the wife’s threat of death if she is not obeyed (4.2. 266-74). But there is one significant addition: an aside which provides a guilty context for the kiss:

This he will beleuee
[Aside]
Vpon her information. ’Tis apparent.
And then I am nothing. And of two extreames
Wisedome sayes chose the lesse. — Rather then fall
Vnder your indignation, I will yeeld.
This kisse, and this confirmes it.
(4.2. 274-79)

Unlike Paris himself earlier in the scene, the servant is not a black box; his guilty interior is theatrically visible, and the rage of the injured lord thus fully justified.

Domitian’s entry, for which he has to be prompted twice by Aesopus, is incoherent but effective: “O villaine! thankelesse villaine! I should talke now; / But I haue forgot my part. But I can doe, / Thus, thus and thus” [kils Paris] (4.2. 281-3). His performance is only
marked as fiction in the first ejaculated line (although this may not actually be part of the script); it then fades away into action, the action that he should have taken the first time he ‘saw’ this scene. Because the performance is staged in order to allow him to replay the spectacle that has unmanned him, his performance is not really of a fictional character but of himself; the role he really plays is a reprise of his role as spectator to the earlier betrayal. This breach of spectatorial decorum, which is in the same vein as Domitia’s breaking the theatrical frame of “Iphis”, is a more serious blurring of the lines between theatrical fiction and lived reality, and not only because it results in the murder of Paris. In this final annihilation of the fictional space of the stage, theatre has become, in reality, what it has always been in Domitian’s mind – an extension of his psyche. In his mind, reality and fiction are both scripts which he writes; he sees no division between them. The stage, like the world, belongs under his control, and the critical distance which a true understanding of theatrical art requires has been completely dissolved in the acid of his egotism. This is worse than Domitia’s misreading of “Iphis”, since she is at least aware that she loves Paris because he is an actor.

Paris’s last line — “Oh, I am slaine in earnest” (4.2.283) — is capped by Domitian’s twenty-four line speech over his dying body. This oration, delivered by Domitian in his own person, replaces the traditional death speech of the tragic hero; Caesar, having murdered Paris, now steals the actor’s last moments on stage. This is emphasized by the fact that Paris is alive for most of it, a necessity since it is delivered to him; Domitian explains the honour that he has done his servant, recasting the murder as an execution:

‘Tis true, and ’twas my purpose my good Paris
And yet before life leaue thee, let the honour
I haue done thee in thy death bring comfort to thee.

...to comfirme I lou’d thee, ’twas my study
To make thy end more glorious to distinguish
My Paris from all others, and in that
Haue showne my pittie. Nor would I let thee fall
By a Centurions sword, or haue thy limbes
Rent peece meale by the hangmans hooke (howeuer
Thy crime deseru’d it) but as thou didst liue
Romes brauest Actor, ’twas my plot that thou
Shouldst dye in action, and to crowne it dye
With an applause induring to all times,
By our imperall hand.
(4.2. 284-300)

Paris dies on line 300, silenced during his last moments on stage, having listened to his murder recast as a gift bestowed by imperial kindness.\(^{32}\) "The False Servant" ends as just another of the Emperor's "plot[s]", another form of real-world theatre designed to demonstrate his glory, with the body of the actor as a prop.

Domitian then speaks Paris's epitaph, and the act concludes on a tableau which explicitly evokes the conclusion of a tragedy:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And for this truncke, when that the funerall pile} \\
\text{Hath made it ashes, we'1 see it inclos'd} \\
\text{In a golden urne. Poets adorne his hearse} \\
\text{With their most rauishing sorrowes, and the stage} \\
\text{For euer mourne him, and all such as were} \\
\text{His glad spectators weepe his suddaine death,} \\
\text{The cause forgotten in his Epitaph.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Exeunt. A sad musicke, the Players bearing off PARIS body. CAESAR and the rest following.\(^{33}\)
(4.2. 302-8)

This is a much more formal funeral procession than that which will be accorded Domitian himself in the last act, and this seems to be intentional. Not only does it honour the fall of the play's title character, but it also formally marks the conclusion of the stage's dual status

\(^{32}\) There is no stage direction indicating his death, but this is the logical position for it, since the remainder of Domitian's speech is delivered to the remaining actors. The lack of a marker for Paris's death may mean that the audience is intended to be too distracted by Domitian's speech to notice it. (I am grateful to A. M. Leggatt for this insight).

\(^{33}\) This stage direction disturbs me; "the rest" seems to indicate that there is an audience on stage, yet there is no stage direction for their entrance nor any internal clues indicating their presence in the scene itself. The second point is the more important of the two; Gibson indicates that the text of the 1629 edition was probably an authorial fair copy rather than a theatrical prompt-copy, in part because exits and entrances are not always marked (E&G III: 5-6). It is therefore possible that Massinger intended there to be an audience on the stage, and simply forgot to bring them on (or forgot, in writing the final stage direction, that they were never there). Against this argument is the negative evidence offered by the scene itself; the lines make no mention of an audience, and no indication is ever given that there is one on stage, an omission that is particularly notable because the other plays-within have so emphasized the presence of the on-stage audience. I am inclined to think that the scene would be staged with the minimum of actors and thus without an audience (if only because it would be easier to do so): there is no reason for an audience to be in Domitia's "private walk" in any event, since the staging of the playlet itself is a bizarre anomaly.
as inset stage and real stage; it reminds the audience of the existence of the final ‘outer frame’ of the play. The funeral procession is actually a false ending; it exactly mimics the close of a tragedy, leaving the audience to be startled upon the entrance of Parthenius and Stephanos to open the next act. This seems calculated to increase the audience’s awareness that they are, in fact, watching a play – to snap them out of the comfort of the fiction, and confront them with the activity in which they are taking part. It is vital, because the last act will only work if the audience acknowledges that its space is the space of the Blackfriars stage itself, with Domitian reduced to the status of an actor before the theatre of the Gods and the theatre audience. The false ending of the funeral procession thus marks the destruction of the metatheatrical frame that has been tacitly in place around the stage for the first four acts, and moves the theatre audience into a new, much more direct, relation with the stage.

The effect is strengthened by the resemblance of Act Five, Scene One to a first act opening: a conversation between Parthenius and Stephanos ‘sets the scene’ for us, just as, for example, the conversation between the apprentices Goldwire and Tradewell sets the scene at the opening of The City Madam. We seem to be meant to feel that we are in a new play, one which, as Myhill notes, has an entirely different structure:

The fifth act contains almost no references to acting or to the theatre. But as explicit references to theatre disappear, the play begins to demonstrate presentational conventions of a different sort [. . .] For the first time, providence enters the picture. The Stoics’ ghosts appear. Ascleptario the soothsayer [. . .] prophesies both Domitian’s death and his own. Prophecy implies a deterministic universe, one in which the actors may not improvise. (220)

Domitian has moved from being a director in his own theatre of power to being an actor, controlled by the script of fate and the author, and subject to the gaze of the judging theatre audience and the theatre of the gods (Myhill 220). Domitian is observed throughout the act, from its opening, in which his attempt to reconcile Domitia is observed by Parthenius and Stephanos, to the various irruptions of the supernatural, which suggest the watching eyes of

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34 This shift is marked by the appearance of psychodrama in the form of soliloquies and dream-visions, theatrical ostention codes which permit the theatre audience access to the interior, as well as the exterior, of the characters (Myhill 219).
the fates, to his assassination, directly presented without the mediation of any framing fiction.

In other words, with the closure of Paris's inner theatre and Domitian's theatre of power, we have re-entered Massinger's play, the outer play in which the other two 'theatres' have been set. This explains why this act is so recognizably Renaissance drama, featuring a string of Renaissance stage conventions which the rest of the play lacks — the messenger speech, soliloquies, dream-visions and supernatural interventions — and having no metatheatrical elements at all. Paradoxically, the lack of metatheatrical framing devices in Act Five links it with the extremely metatheatrical Act One; the previous four acts, and particularly the close of the last act, have rendered the audience hyper-aware of the play's status as theatre. This means that we now become aware of Massinger's own stagecraft, which we would ordinarily read as transparent 'reality'. The conventional theatrical 'realism' of the last act is framed by the metatheatrical framing of the previous four acts.

As well, the elements staged in the fifth act are, themselves, theatrical — that is, events which can only take place on a stage. The kind of interiority Domitian now displays — via soliloquy — is a convention of Massinger's own theatre, as are the stage ghosts and the psychodrama/dream in which they appear. It is significant that both inset theatres (Domitian's and Paris's) have been limited to representing the material world. Paris's theatre, because it is limited and framed by Domitian's theatre of power, has been restricted to reference to the real world of human relations, an area that Domitian is convinced he can control, while Domitian's own theatrical tyranny is obviously only interested in controlling the material world, however often he may boast of his alliance with the Gods. Massinger's theatre, which has framed and constructed the limited world in which both fictional characters perform, knows no such limitations: Massinger can depict invisible elements such as offstage events, supernatural occurrences and the interior of the self, via set piece

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35 Acts One and Five are also linked via a split metadramatic device — allusion to Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. Massinger presents "Great Pompey's theatre" (1.1.8-13), the setting of Caesar's assassination in Act One, but does not present his own imperial assassination until Act Five. That Domitian, like Julius Caesar, is stabbed by seven dagger-wielding conspirators suggests that he intends his stage picture to recall Shakespeare's as directly as possible.
descriptions, special effects and the soliloquy. Crowding all these conventions into the three hundred line space of Act Five, Scene One is a deliberate indication that this act is a demonstration of the range and power of the Renaissance stage itself.

The scene opens with the dictator being dictated to: Domitian begs the unrepentant and arrogant Domitia to forgive him for killing Paris. Domitia jeers at her husband, describing him as “a weake feeble man, a bondman to / His violent passions” (5.1. 48-9) the first time in the play that weakness has explicitly entered his characterization. Upon her exit, Domitian delivers a soliloquy – the play’s first – in which he fights against and ultimately confirms the validity of her jeers (5.1. 81-99). The speech opens with an indication that he has lost his sense of himself — “I am lost / Nor am I Caesar” (5.1. 81-2) — a sense of self which he attempts to recuperate in the usual way, ordering Domitia’s execution. Significantly, he can neither speak the order nor act it as he did upon Paris: “(. . .I weare not a sword to pierce her heart / Nor haue a tongue to say this, let her dye)” (5.1. 92-3). In the absence of the power to act, he can only represent his order silently, writing her name in his “Table booke” (5.1. 94 SD) “Among the list of those I haue proscrib’d / [who] are, to free mee of my doubts, and feares / to dye to morrow” (5.1.97-9). This is the first indication of the emotional weakness which underlies Domitian’s tyranny, and in this scene and the ones that follow, Domitian’s “doubts and fears” are externally staged both through his soliloquies and his staged ‘dream’.

Immediately after this deferred condemnation, Domitian orders the slaughter of his last victim, Ascletario, the astrologer who has predicted both Caesar’s death and his own. Since the seer’s prophecies are material evidence of the intervention of the gods into the world, Domitian’s attempt to “mocke the starres” (5.1.123) by burning the astrologer’s body is his last attempt to assert his omnipotence. Ascletario’s prophecy (that his body would be eaten by dogs) is fulfilled despite the Tribune’s efforts to cremate him; this scene, impossible to stage, is ‘enacted’ in the long set piece delivered by the Tribune (5.1.212-60). Like the earlier soliloquy, this ‘messenger speech’ is a theatrical convention, calls attention to its own theatrical presentation and forces the audience into an awareness of the medium which they
are watching. As well, the description of the quenching of the fire by lightning, the downpour which prevents the soldiers from the lighting the pyre again, and the descent of “all the Dogs of Rome / Howling, and yelling like to famish’d wolues” (5.1. 256-7) projects vivid images for the inner eye of the Blackfriars audience, who have been trained to interpret a player’s verbal speeches visually. The conventions of Massinger’s own theatre are thus used to emphasize the range and power of his stage by comparison to the limited stages of Paris and Domitian himself.

This use of the audience’s ‘mind’s eye’ is immediately preceded by the scene’s most striking use of the power of Massinger’s stage: the presentation of the interior of Domitian’s psyche via his enacted dream. The dream is prefaced by Domitian’s second soliloquy, delivered after his condemnation of Ascleptario, a speech which is a blend of defiance and vulnerability:

...I rest vnsmou’d,
And in defiance of prodigious meteors,
Chaldeans vaine predictions, ieaious feares
Of my neere friends, and freemen, certaine hate
Of kindred, and alliance, or all terrors
The soldieryes doubted faith, or peoples rage
Can bring to shake my constancie I am arm’d.
That scrupulous thing stil’d Conscience is sear’d vp
And I insensible of all my actions
For which by morall and religious fooles
I stand condemn’d, as they had never beene.
And since I haue subdued triumphant loue
I will not deifie pale captiue feare
Nor in a thought receive it. For till thou
Wisest Minerva, that from my first youth,
Hast beene my sole protectresse, dost forsake me,
Not Iunius Rusticus threatned apparition,
Nor what this Southsayer but eu’n now foretold
(Being things impossible to humane reason)
Shall in a dreame disturbe me. Bring my couch there.
(5.1.135-54)

Domitian is attempting to convince himself that he is just the same as ever, and on the face of it, he does. But the list of threats which opens the passage is opposed only by his ‘constancie’ and his sealed conscience, bulwarks which seem too feeble to hold. Moreover, his reliance on his ‘sear’d up’ conscience as a defence against the condemnation of “morall and religious fooles” (5.1.144) emphasizes the fact that he is subject to moral judgement
despite his assertions to the contrary. His denial of both fear and guilt actually reveals him to be both fearful and guilty; his conscience cannot be “sear’d vp” if he is conscious of it, the more so since the bulwark of the ‘sealed’ conscience visibly gives way in the dream-sequence which follows. Likewise, his refusal to receive a thought of “pale captive feare” is a self-contradiction; he must be thinking of it already in order to frame the thought.

The concluding lines of the soliloquy are an abstract of the dream to come. Indeed, it is these lines which (seemingly) identify the apparitions of the Stoics as a dream rather than a ghostly visitation; Domitian sees them because he has been thinking of them, admitting the event as a possibility even as he denies it this status. His speech both foreshadows what will happen — the appearance of the Senators’ s ghosts, their theft of the statue of Minerva — and scripts it. The scene can either to be read as a supernatural intervention, a message from the gods, or as a vision induced by a guilty conscience. Yet although the scene is a stock element lifted from theatrical tradition, its ontological ambiguities and the impossibility of the theatrical space it occupies lend it greater power than it would otherwise have.

The scene is obviously drawn from Richard III (5.3); like that scene, it is one-half inner vision and one-half divine judgement. It also borrows the structure of Shakespeare’s scene — vision followed by soliloquy — although, significantly, Massinger’s ghosts appear as a dumbshow. The scene merits extensive quotation:

_A dreadfull Musicke sounding, Enter IUNIUS RUSTICUS, and PALIPHURIUS SURA, with bloudie swords, they waue them over his head. CAESAR, in his sleepe troubled, seemes to pray to the Image, they scornfully take it away._

_Caeser:_ Defend me goddesse, or this horrid dreame
Will force me to destruction. Whether haue
These furies borne thee? Let me rise! and follow!
I am bath’d o’re with the cold sweat of death,
And am depriu’d of organs to pursue
These sacriligious spirits. Am I at once
Robd of my hopes, and being? No, I liue
Yes liue, and haue discourse to know my selfe
Of Gods, and men forsaken. What accuser
Within me cries aloud, I haue deseru’d it,
In being iust to neither? Who dares speake this?
Am I not Caesar? how! againe repeate it?
Presumptuous traytor thou shalt dye. What traytor?
He that hath beene a traytor to himselfe
And stands conviected heere. Yet who can sit
A competent judge ore Caesar? Caesar. Yes
Caesar by Caesar’s, sentenc’d, and must suffer.
Minerva cannot save him. Ha! where is she?
Where is my goddesse? vanish’d! I am lost then.
No, ’twas no dreame, but a most reall truth
That Iunius Rusticus, and Palphurius Sura,
Although their ashes were cast in the sea,
Were by their innocence made vp againe
And in corporeall formes but now appear’d,
Waving their bloudie swords aboue my head,
As at their deathes they threatened. And me thought
Minerva raish’d hence whisper’d that she
Was for my blasphemies disarm’d by Ioue
And could no more protect me. Yes ’twas so,
His thunder does confirme it... 

(5.1.181-210)

The soliloquy opens in sleep, with Domitian simultaneously dreaming and aware that he is
dreaming, then moves (5.1.186) to his distracted self-accusations, in which he argues with
his now unsealed conscience (5.1.189-97). Up until this point, the scene has been a perfectly
consistent staged inner vision: both the action that we have seen on stage and Domitian’s
commentary reinforce the reasonable conclusion that what we are seeing is psychodrama, an
outer expression of inner conflict. The fact that the ghosts are silent, forcing Domitian to
condemn himself, seems to confirm their status as projections of his mind.

Yet this conclusion is immediately proven wrong. Domitian’s waking discovery of
the missing statue proves the material agency of what seemed to be only dream figures. Since
the statue’s removal has been witnessed by the audience as well as Domitian, there is no
question as to its absence. This raises an interesting problem, as Fuzier points out: the stage
directions indicate real action on the part of immaterial dream-ghosts. The presentation of
a dream on stage is an old convention, but the events which take place within this dream
space are unusual:

Ce qui distingue le rêve spatialisé sous forme de masque dans The Roman
Actor des autres occurrences du même phénomène [... ] c’est que la vision
onirique s’y assortit de conséquences concrètes, matérielles [... ] En vertue
de quelles lois spatiales une statue parfaitement concrète, qu’elle fût de
marbre ou de bronze, a-t-elle bien pu disparaître par l’action de deux ombres
doublement immatérielles, car il ne s’agissait [... ] que de deux ombres vues
en rêve, et non de ces fantômes incarnés à quelque degré qui peuvent vous
tourmenter à l’état de veille? [... ] [Massinger’s scene] est celui de l’espace
onirique dans le quel se déroule, inexplicablement, un phénomène matériel
d’importance capitale. Car c’est un object matériel, sis dans un espace que
ne l’est pas moins, qui disparaît de cet espace physique par l’entremise d’un espace imaginaire qui est celui de rêve.

[That which distinguishes the staged dream of the ‘masque’ in The Roman Actor from other occurrences of the same phenomenon [...] is that the dream vision here produces concrete, material consequences [...] by virtue of what spatial laws can a perfectly concrete statue, be it marble or bronze, disappear through the actions of two doubly immaterial spectres, since they are only spectres seen in a dream, and not those somewhat incarnate phantoms which may torment us in a waking state? [Massinger’s scene] is a dream space within which takes place, inexplicably, a material phenomenon of prime importance. For this is an material object, situated in a space no less material, which disappears from this physical space by the intervention of the imaginary space of the dream.] (my translation)

(111)

Fuzier’s joking suggestion is that the theft of the statue takes place in the fourth dimension (111) but his identification of the spatial problem is correct.36 In fact, the dream-ghosts are not stable even as a dream: Domitian’s soliloquy moves back and forth across the range of possibilities, from his initial identification of the dream as a “dreame” (5.1.181) to his decision that “twas no dreame, but a most reall truth” (5.1.200), that the re-animated bodies of the Senators “in corporeall formes” (5.1.204) have stolen the equally real statue. This latter seems a more reasonable explanation of the puzzle, but it of course does not explain how figures which are manifestly dream-figures in the eyes of the audience can perform such material functions. To the theatre audience, the ghosts appear as a silent vision while Domitian sleeps; the implied identification of them as the projection of his mind is quite reasonable, especially since their appearance is framed by two soliloquies which emphasize their status as figures drawn from his guilty conscience. Their ‘material’ appearance could be accounted for in the same manner as the ‘audible’ voice of Domitian’s conscience, with which he argues in lines 190-5, and which ‘passes sentence’ on him: “Caesar by Caesar’s,

36 An earlier parallel to the scene is Posthumus’s vision of Jupiter in Cymbeline 4.4.; the vision of Jupiter leaves a tablet upon the chest of the sleeping hero, and it is still there when he wakes up. But the status of Jupiter as a supernatural visitation is less ambiguous; he is manifestly a god descending into the lesser world of men, and Posthumus only interprets the vision as a dream upon waking. The presence of the tablet is evidence that Jupiter was, after all, real. In Massinger’s play the ghosts seem to be dream figures to the audience as well as to Domitian, and it is only the missing statue which suggests that they may well have been real – but even then, as Fuzier points out, how can immaterial ghosts steal a real statue?
sentenc’d, and must suffer” (5.1.197).37 The ghosts, then, are alternatively ‘real’ ghosts, dream ghosts, visions generated by a guilty conscience, or ‘real’ re-animated zombies, and their status cannot be logically determined. Massinger has presented his audience with an insoluble problem – at least, with a problem insoluble within the fictional context of Domitian’s Rome.

Yet once one steps back from the framing fiction and remembers the play’s venue, there is a very simple explanation. As uncertain as their ontological status is within the fiction, theatrically the ghosts are one thing, and one thing only — costumed actors who take away a prop via a stage door. To be blunt, the ghosts can do the thing which (in the fiction) is impossible for them to do because the fiction is a play, staged within a theatre, a place in which spatially impossible things happen all the time. I do not mean to be flippant here; rather, I am convinced that the ontological uncertainty of the ghosts is explicitly designed to underscore the theatrical nature of the space which Caesar occupies, and thus to stress his status as a character in Massinger’s theatre. This emphasis on his status as a character also makes sense of the ease with which he is led to his death and the brevity of the assassination itself. Because Domitian is only a character he can be made to condemn himself and to walk trustingly into the room where he will be slaughtered; because he is a character, he can be manipulated to act against his ‘will’, just as he manipulated Paris. He is not the god on earth he imagines himself to be: rather, he is a puppet in a world made of illusions, and the hand of the author has a firm grasp on his strings.

The impossible puzzle of this show-stopping scene (which doubtless isn’t as puzzling in performance as it is on paper) is designed, it seems to me, to pull the audience back into the awareness of the theatre in which they sit – to superimpose the real world on the fiction which they are watching. In other words, this scene closes the frame of Massinger’s play

37 Domitian’s claim that “Minerva rauish’d hence whisper’d that she / Was for my blasphemies disarm’d by Ioue” inserts another level of doubt, since the stage direction does not indicate that the statue speaks, raising the possibility that the whole scene is only a fantasy induced by terror and a guilty conscience.
around the inner fiction of Domitian's Rome. Dramatically, it is a deliberate repetition—in fact an inversion—of the 'binocular vision' of the play's first scene, in which the audience was called upon to be simultaneously aware of the superimposition of the Blackfriars stage and the Roman stage. In the opening, they were reminded of their own presence in Blackfriars while they watched a fiction set in Ancient Rome. Here, they are presented with an insoluble puzzle within the fiction, which can only be understood if they again become aware that they are in a theatre. Because the scene can only make sense when viewed from outside the framing fiction, the audience must again become aware of their own status as spectators of Massinger's play.

Yet there is a subtle difference in the nature of the metatheatrical awareness the audience is being asked to adopt: in the play's opening scene the audience was presented with an actor (Taylor) playing an actor (Paris). The point of the opening scene's double vision was to emphasize the difference between their relationship to Massinger's play and the fictional audience's relationship to Paris's drama; Blackfriars then contained both the real stage and a fictional stage. Now, the audience is asked to recognize, not the difference between real and fictional stages, but that the real (Blackfriars) stage is the only one that exists—to recognize reality, in its purest form, trumping fiction. In doing so they are also, I would submit, asked to become aware of the presence of the author, or at least of his framing vision—to recognize that the characters and the actors both are only the means by which the writer projects a vision onto their inner eyes. The point of the metatheatrical frames, the multiple inset fictions, and this last drama of Caesar's internal struggle is to make Massinger's audience aware of their relation to Massinger's drama, staged with the purpose of condemning Domitian, the tyrant. They must see that the show is only a show, nothing but an illusion, but at the same time see it as an illusion which emphasizes a lesson—not just the obvious lesson on the evils of tyranny, but a specific experiential lesson on the necessary relation of the theatre and its audience.

This restoration of the outer frame of the audience around the play places the last bracket around Massinger's tremendously complex nested fiction: The Roman Actor is now
revealed as itself an inset fiction, set into the frame of the Blackfriars audience. As I suggested in the opening of this chapter, Massinger’s use of the inset pieces in *The Roman Actor* cannot be considered outside of the context of his own theatrical frame, since the metatheatrical nature of his play is specifically designed to force his own audience into an awareness of their own status of spectators. The multiple insets prompt the consideration of the function and purpose of the theatre, the question that the play overtly raises throughout. It seems to me that Massinger is arguing that the role of the theatre is dependant on its relation to its audience; whatever power the drama has in the world only exists through its contract with the audience, and without the active engagement of its audience in the process, its force is lost. Massinger does not lay out an explicit statement as to what theatre may do in the wider world; he is primarily concerned with the relation of his audience to his drama, since they are the vehicle which will allow the play to function in the wider world. His requirement is that the audience must understand what is at stake in their role in the process of interpretation.

Anne Barton recognizes something of the onus Massinger’s play places on his audience:

> There is a sense in which *The Roman Actor* is more pessimistic about the power of art to correct and inform its audience than any other play written between 1580 and 1642. Yet there was something in Massinger which refused to abandon the effort, while insisting that the game should not be played with marked cards. This is why he placed his audience, too, at risk. (“Voice” 231)

I would submit that Massinger is realistic, not pessimistic, about the power and function of his art; he is fully aware that he can only frame, not dictate, his audience’s interpretation. Paris’s view of the theatre as a machine for moulding audience behaviour is proven too simplistic; Domitian’s attempt to use the theatre as a means of controlling the world is shown to be impossible, destructive, and ultimately suicidal, since it extends beyond the limits of art, morality and sanity. Massinger’s own view seems to be of drama as a dialogue, a process which he only partially controls, and this is why he insists that his audience take their work seriously. He does this because he is a practical and practiced playwright; he knows that half the game is up to them, and that they frequently fail to grasp this. His play
therefore lays their role out before them, very explicitly. In doing this he places his audience at risk of misinterpretation; the play not only provides multiple models of poor spectatorship, but also contains numerous interpretive pitfalls. The play they see depends on the depth of their understanding: a spectator who sees only the bare plot, the failure of the inset plays to reform or mould their audiences, will only see the stage going down to defeat (Barish “Caroline” 201). A spectator aware of the judgement implicit in the condemnation of Domitian’s theatre of power will grasp the play’s anti-absolutist implications. Finally, if the audience is aware, as I have argued Massinger intends them to be, of their own position as judges of Domitian, judges of the play, and supporters of Paris’s mangled and abused stage, they will know that they are taking part in the only process that can limit the abuses they have seen on the stage.

Massinger’s approach does not suggest that the audience’s job is easy, but it does insist that it is important, an intrinsic part of the process of theatre. In order for his play to function at all, it must be viewed and understood by an audience capable of grasping the various changes it has rung on the theme of spectatorship. It seems to me that Massinger is also arguing, explicitly, that this kind of audience is only to be found in the professional playhouse. Court drama, in Domitian’s Rome and Massinger’s England, is not only easily manipulated but simply incapable of doing the real job of the theatre, which is to speak as directly as possible to its audience: court theatre, as Strato says of the masque in The Maid’s Tragedy, is “tyed to rules of flattery”(1.1.11), dictated to by forces other than a paying audience. The professional stage, the place where his own play is played, is the only theatrical context founded on the audience/drama contract in its most explicit form: the audience pays directly, and the discussion is unmediated by other desires, however virtuous. There is space, in the room of the public stage, for argument, misunderstanding, disagreement and discussion; this is what gives this space and the theatre produced there its power, and this is at the heart of Massinger’s defence of this stage.
Conclusion

Massinger’s inset pieces function in individual and in general ways; that is, although each category of inset – pieces of visual art, masques and plays-within – has a specific set of functions within his dramatic art, some of these functions overlap all three categories. This conclusion will therefore move from the particular to the general. First, I will examine Massinger’s use of each individual category of insets, chapter by chapter, and then extrapolate from these the function of the category of ‘inset pieces’ as a whole, drawing some general conclusions about Massinger’s use of the category. I then move to a discussion of what these conclusions mean for the study of Caroline drama and Renaissance Drama more generally, situating this thesis in the wider context of the study of drama in the seventeenth century as a whole.

Massinger’s staging of pieces of visual art contains the widest range of uses and responses of any category covered in this study, perhaps because statuary and paintings are both props and inset pieces at once; that is, they can simply serve as iconic or emblematic stage images, or they can be ‘read’ as spectatorial objects in the same way as plays-within, and can thus serve as mechanisms which reveal character, direct behaviour, and structure plots. On the simplest level, just one step above the signifying level of the prop, occupied by the statues of Jupiter in *The Virgin Martyr* and Cupid in *The Parliament of Love*, the artworks function as signs of concepts. The statue of Jupiter is an idol which exists to be trampled on by the recently converted Christians Calista and Christeta; it has no higher interpretive valence beyond standing, quite concretely, for false and evil paganism. The
statue of Cupid in *The Parliament of Love*, read allegorically by King Charles as an illustration of the virtues of Platonic Love, is an emblematic image of one of the play's larger concepts. Both images are simple representations of ideas, are subject to little interpretation, and have little effect on the events of the play. In part, this is because their function is symbolic rather than mimetic, and as such, they don't have to be interpreted by their on-stage spectators.

However, when visual art is used as a 'spectatorial object' interpreted by on-stage spectators, rather than merely standing for concepts, its dramatic function increases significantly. First, and at the most basic level, all of Massinger's forms of inset art (his visual art but also the masques and the plays-within of *The Roman Actor*) have two functions: they epitomize the nature of the world in which they are set, and they serve as triggers for action, affecting the plot of the play. Thus, the brief staging of the 'nudes' of *The Renegado* uses them to represent (along with a good many other images of corrupt beauty) the illusory beauty of corrupt exteriors, but also uses them to evoke a vital response from their viewer Donusa; her desire to prove herself more beautiful than the pictures causes her to unveil, and leads to her affair with Vitelli. Interpreted images prompt responses from their spectators, and thus affect the plots of the plays in which they are set. This is the baseline function of all Massinger's inset pieces; even the plays within of *The Roman Actor*, his most complex artworks, epitomize the world in which they are set and elicit spectator response, in addition to their much more complex dramaturgical functions.

The process of interpreting art also permits insights into the mind of the viewer, allowing a painting to become an image of its spectator as well as its subject. This function, explored briefly in *The Emperor of the East* and at length in *The Picture*, is one of the most significant applications of all of Massinger's inset pieces. In the case of *The Emperor of the

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1 The two emblematic pieces of statuary discussed above are the only exceptions to this rule. Their interpretation has little effect on the plot, probably because they don't demand complex analysis and response; they stand for what they stand for, and are clearly and easily read. By contrast, mimetic art, which is open to multiple interpretations, demands greater interpretive attention.
East, Theodosius’s attempt to ‘read’ the portraits of the foreign princesses reveals far more about his sexual anxieties and emotional immaturity than it does about either the portraits or the women who are their subjects. In the much more complex case of The Picture, the magic miniature is both the creation of Mathias’s paranoid jealousy and a concrete expression of it; his ‘readings’ of the picture stem, ultimately, from his jealous imagination. The picture becomes the image of his mental state and, ultimately, the driving force behind his every action; in this way, Massinger is able to create an external image of Mathias’s mental condition, and to stage a drama almost entirely structured around an internal emotional conflict. Where Othello’s jealousy is manipulated and fuelled by Iago’s machinations, the fiction of the picture allows Massinger to stage Mathias’s own self-manipulation. The result is a psychologically effective drama that works theatrically because of the splitting and externalization of an inner emotional conflict made possible by the inset piece of art.

This function is not restricted to visual art; the inset masques of The City Madam and A Very Woman and the plays-within of The Roman Actor similarly reveal the interiors of their spectators, although none of these plays develops the device as complexly as The Picture. In the case of the richest uses of this function, The Picture and The Roman Actor, the show-within takes the place of the soliloquy as a means of accessing a character’s inner vision – as Mathias and Domitian read the artworks they examine, the theatre audience is permitted to ‘read’ them in their turn. In the case of A Very Woman, the masque which we witness is an enactment of the spectator’s psyche – not only do Martino’s readings of and responses to the masque explicate and cure his madness, but the masque itself is a direct window into his psyche.

Massinger’s inset masques are, in general, less complex than either the miniature of The Picture or the plays within of The Roman Actor. This is probably because his use of the masque is less idiosyncratic; as far as I have been able to determine, Massinger’s use of the miniature in The Picture is unprecedented within English drama as a whole and in the Renaissance drama in particular. His use of the plays-within of The Roman Actor is likewise, if not unique, then unprecedented in its dramaturgical complexity. But the masque-within
is a commonplace of Renaissance drama in general, and Massinger’s use of it follows established practice. This is particularly true of the inset masques which I have labelled ‘non-spectatorial’, those of *The Picture, The Duke of Milan* and *The Guardian*. These masques primarily function as epitomizing imagery within the plays, a function shared by most other inset masques of the period, and serve as triggers for dramatic action, a function shared by virtually all his inset pieces.

The masques-within of *The City Madam* and *A Very Woman* are slightly different, however. These function as spectatorial objects; they are staged in order to be interpreted, or read, by their primary audiences within the sight of a secondary audience; this allows the secondary on-stage audience to judge the process of interpretation. In both cases, the masques are redundancies, at least from the point of view of the plot; neither adds information to the world of the play. Rather, they provide a synopsis of key events of the plays, emblematically re-staging elements in order to enable their primary spectators to take stock of their past behaviour. This is most evident in the case of the masque of *The City Madam* – neither the theatre audience nor the on-stage audience needs the masque to reveal Luke’s villainy, since he has been proclaiming his delight in cruelty and greed from the second act, at least. We could readily condemn Luke without the ‘morally purgative’ (Ewbank 434) masque; it is not necessary from the point of view of the plot. Rather, the masque allows Luke to review and re-affirm his past behaviour – particularly in the case of the parade of his victims – and to pass public judgement on himself, validating the moral condemnation which is the heart of the play. It is both an exercise in self-recognition and a test, one which Luke not only fails but is seen to fail. This redundancy may explain the masque’s incongruous quality; as Garrett says (*Diamond* 169), it is the most formal of all Massinger’s masques, the only one which contains all elements of the court masque (antimasque, masque and ‘commoning’), yet it is set in a city comedy, the least courtly of genres, and is staged in the house of a London merchant for the ‘entertainment’ of a usurping younger brother. It is not an ‘entertainment’ but a moral show which uses explicitly staged fiction to reveal truth, and is thus of a piece with the play’s moral and social satire. Martino’s
curative masque in *A Very Woman* is similarly, and more obviously, anomalous. As Garrett says, it is “distinctly unlike most inset masques [. . .] performer and spectator are present for ends other than celebration or delight” (*Diamond* 179); the curative masque has no plot, contains little spectacle, and is largely framed on the conceit of reflecting Martino’s melancholy back to himself. The comments of the on-stage secondary audience force the theatre audience to be aware of the masque’s function as the primary reason for its staging — we are not permitted to lose ourselves in the staging, but are always forced to recognize its status as ‘curative’ theatre, as a means by which we can ‘see into’ Martino’s mind.

Finally, the plays-within of *The Roman Actor* provide Massinger’s fullest reflection on the nature of the relationship of audience and art, largely because they are not just ‘inset pieces’ but inset *plays*, miniature images of Massinger’s own chosen form, set into an analogue of his own theatre. The play’s exploration of the nature and function of drama itself, which seems to Barton so radically sceptical (“Voice” 231), is in fact immensely, aggressively hopeful when viewed in the framing context of the Blackfriars stage. Massinger uses the metatheatrical conceit of the inset plays in order to present his audience with a series of images of the abuse of the theatre, of its misinterpretation, violation and destruction; but he does this in order to demand that they, in their turn, correctly interpret his own play and the other plays of the Blackfriars stage, and to force them to a recognition of the importance of the independent theatre as a venue for dialogue between drama and audience, as a place founded on both freedom of speech for the players and audience interpretation and response. For all that the destruction of Paris’s stage looks like a despairing abandonment of the theatre, the fact that Massinger chooses to stage it in his own theatre transforms it into an explicitly metatheatrical defence of his own stage, and — in an odd way — his own audience, since the presentation of the play implies that his audience will be capable of grasping his point.

Massinger’s focus, in *The Roman Actor* as in all his stagings of inset pieces, is never on the artistry of art, or on ‘art for art’s sake’, but on what art means and how that meaning is extracted and extrapolated on by its spectators. This is perhaps because his own art — his
drama – is rarely presented only as entertainment. Rather, Massinger’s plays attempt to inculcate lessons, explore moral, social and intellectual problems, and, most notably in the case of *The Roman Actor*, analyse the meaning and function of the drama itself. The works are all founded on intellectual and moral questions – from the early *Fatal Dowry* (a disturbingly open-ended play based on a Senecan controversy), and *Maid of Honour*, (a tragicomedy which concludes with the heroine’s rejection of her Bertram-like lover and her retreat to a nunnery), to his final extant play, *The Bashful Lover* (which initially appears only to be a piece of romantic nonsense, until one realizes that the play deliberately places the fluffy bunny of neo-Platonic love directly under the tank treads of seventeenth-century imperialism) – all his plays need to be read with one’s brain fully engaged, and, moreover, with a full awareness of their status as pieces of theatre. He makes demands on his spectator’s moral and intellectual judgement rather than providing light-hearted entertainment. This is why, in *The Roman Actor*, Massinger seems so sceptical, or indeed negative, about the ability of the drama to affect its audience: it is not that he thinks that art does not matter, but rather, he knows that it does, and his own work makes heavy demands of his audience. Therefore, one of the recurring elements in his plays is the staging of interpretation, the presentation of the uses and functions of art and their readings and mis-readings by audiences as varied, biassed and obtuse as Domitian, Mathias, Luke and Martino. His on-stage audiences allow him to examine the spectatorial reactions of the powerful, the corrupt, the mad and the obsessed because his off-stage audience was also flawed and foolish. His drama ultimately holds up a mirror, not to nature, but to his audience in their capacity as audience; his self-conscious, self-reflexive moral art is designed to evoke an answering self-awareness in his own audience, to draw them to an awareness of their function in the theatre of which they are a vital part.

It is this final theatrical frame which I would, briefly, like to extend. Massinger’s peculiarly self-conscious dramatic art is, as I hope this thesis has shown, worthy of study for its own sake. Massinger betrays a supreme awareness, not only of the nature and forms of the dramatic structures he works with, but of their specific function within the context of the
stage; his plays must be read in their specific theatrical and social context to make any sense at all. In this sense, he is very much a dramatist defined by and framed within a particular and brief moment; his works do not speak to 'all time' and cannot be forced to do so. But if we lose sight of the presence of Massinger and his contemporaries in their specific moment, then we lose perspective on the nature of the theatre in the last years of Charles. Massinger’s articulate dramas speak clearly of the theatre’s nature and function in the wider social world; they present metadrama as much as political commentary as theatrical device, and as such are founded on the implicit assumption that theatre has a voice in the wider social world, that it can and will affect and frame the thinking and assumptions of its audience.

As enjoyable and challenging as I have found it to work on Massinger’s plays for their own sake, the most valuable aspect of this thesis, and indeed of any thesis on this neglected area, must be in its contribution to a broadening of the approach to the entire field of Renaissance Drama. Any examination of Caroline drama must, by definition, shift the perspective on the ‘map’ of the period; once one becomes aware of the number, complexity and intricacy of the plays produced in Charles’s reign, it is impossible to perpetuate the still too common view of Renaissance Drama as effectively ending circa 1620. As studies by Waith, Harbage, Danby, Maguire, Kewes, Sprague and Wilson have all made clear, the presence of Caroline drama on the mental map of the Renaissance stage provides a vital link between the drama of Shakespeare and his immediate contemporaries and the beginnings of the Restoration stage. As well, and more importantly to my way of thinking, the works of the Caroline dramatists provide an important reflection on the works of the earlier stage,

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2 For example, a participant at the 2000 SAA conference in Montreal referred to the study of Renaissance Drama as “the study of drama from 1590 to 1620”. As well, Arthur Kinney’s new teaching anthology, Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments, effectively ends in 1620. Although the coverage is rich in the earlier half of the period, containing texts as diverse as “The Quene’s Maiestie’s Passage” and Sidney’s “Lady of May”, Caroline drama is represented by a single play, Ford’s “Tis Pity She’s a Whore”. Neither Massinger, nor Brome, nor Shirley nor Davenant is included or mentioned. As a new teaching anthology, this can do little to correct the problems of perspective inevitably fostered by the amputation of the final twenty years from the history of Renaissance Drama.
through their accommodation, interpretation, and reiteration of earlier dramatic structures and processes. In effect, what we have in the work of the Caroline dramatists is the first 'reception study' of the dramatic structures of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher and Jonson; the work of the Caroline playwrights as a whole is marked by their efforts to analyse and build upon the work of the earlier writers, while at the same time, in Ezra Pound's words, struggling to “make it new”. Massinger's use of inset forms of art is a vital contribution to this process.
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