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Patchwork Piéces and the Fabrication of Dramatic Texts

BY

© GERRY WEAVER

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts.**

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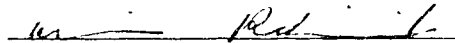
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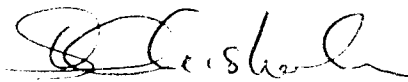
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ABSTRACT

The thesis explores alternative dramatic structures to the traditional Aristotelian model in a body of work drawn from Jacobean, Restoration, eighteenth and twentieth century playwrights. John Webster, Delarivier Manley, Mary Pix, Hannah Cowley and Caryl Churchill have been chosen as representative (though not originary) texts for the analysis of dramatic structures which disrupt or deconstruct traditional constructions of gender, in particular the naturalisation and classification of "essential" gender characteristics.

Chapter one explores the connections between style and substance within certain knowledge/discourse formations, beginning with an Aristotelian position and moving on to the Sophists, Ernesto Grassi, John Locke and Judith Butler. The chapter explores how these critics view the function of rhetoric and how this function affects dramatic structure. Finally, the discussion focuses on some specific alternative dramatic strategies, which are designated "patchwork" structures because of their switch in emphasis from closure to the gaps between discourses.

The alternative strategies explored in the following four chapters includes weaving types and plots together in unusual ways which question their usual reception, stripping narrative conventions of transparency in order to emphasise their cultural and historical patterns, using masquerade to illustrate the gap between identity and body, and resisting closure in favour of rearranging social constructions of identity to provide the distance for revision.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I will explore alternative dramatic structures to the traditional Aristotelian

model in a body of work drawn from Jacobean, Restoration, eighteenth and twentieth

century playwrights. The focus of this thesis will be upon the ways these plays utilise

dramatic structures which disrupt or deconstruct traditional social constructions of gender,

in particular the naturalisation and classification of "essential" gender characteristics. The

playwrights I have chosen are as follows: John Webster (c.1578-c.1632), Delarivier

Manley (c.1663-1724), Mary Pix (1666-1709), Hannah Cowley (1743-1809), and Caryl

Churchill (1938-). To provide a little more depth to my argument, I will occasionally

support it with references to Aphra Behn (c.1640-1689), Sharon Pollock (1936-), and

Judith Thompson (1954-). These texts are representative texts only in terms of my

argument; there is no intent to suggest that they are originary of the ideas my analysis

constructs.

Theoretical Overview

The first chapter will provide a theoretical background and context for my argument. I

will place specific dramatic structures within certain knowledge/discourse formations, and

explore the connection between style and substance within those formations. The chapter

will acknowledge that the interpretation of Aristotelian concepts is an ongoing and very

interesting field, and will indicate that my focus is upon an influential thread of past

reception of such works as the *Poetics*, and on the later Renaissance development of neo-Aristotelianism. In the sections on Trimpi's and Edinger's discussion of Aristotelianism, I shall note how these critics also construct Locke as an explanatory icon of empiricism, complete with *a priori* assumptions. After a discussion focusing on Aristotelian rhetorical strategies, the chapter will explore how certain other writers have viewed the function of rhetoric, and how this function affects dramatic structure. I shall take another look at Locke, and emphasise the nominalist underpinnings of his essay, a nominalism which points back to medieval nominalists such as William of Ockham and, in my argument, forward to such a social constructionist as Judith Butler. I shall then arrive at some specific alternative rhetorical strategies, which I shall designate as "patchwork" structures because of their switch in emphasis from closure to the gaps between discourses. Finally, I will investigate the interesting applications of patchwork and weaving metaphors to the dramatic structures found in the selected plays.

Alternative Dramaturgical Methods

The alternative dramatic strategies I shall explore include: weaving types and plots together in unusual ways which question their usual reception; stripping narrative conventions of transparency in order to emphasise their cultural and historical patterns; using masquerade to illustrate the gap between identity and body; and resisting closure in favour of rearranging social constructions of identity to provide the distance for revision. I shall pay attention to embedded assumptions in the texts which may serve to counteract some of the destabilising elements. Additional critical arguments from such

critics as Elin Diamond and Mary Ann Doane will be drawn upon as needed to support my proposals.

Patchwork Thesis

Since the theme of this thesis involves the relationship between style and content, I felt my own writing style should reflect this concern as much as possible. Therefore, I decided to try for a combination of a patchwork and a weaving effect, breaking down individual theoretical arguments into pieces, including my own, and reaggregating them together in such a way as they illuminate each other--bringing the intertextual aspect of criticism to the surface of my text--and clarify my proposals on dramatic structure-- illustrating how synchronic and diachronic layers of meaning affect signification. My selection of plays also follows patchwork principles. I have woven and patched together a narrative concerning plays from different historical periods, not because I wish to suggest that they have ahistorical universal elements in common and therefore naturally belong together, but rather because I believe that bringing these texts together allows me to make a useful pattern which illuminates how the function of rhetoric may be viewed and has been viewed at different times and in different places in terms of drama. This pattern exists only for the purposes of my provisional narrative, and will as a matter of course be unravelled by other critics as they create their own designs to illustrate their own stories (for example, much more can be done with issues of class in many of these plays than I have had the space to do). In other words, though I recognise that my selection of plays and critics is in its way an explanatory metadiscourse of my own, it is an explanatory metadiscourse which I openly acknowledge to be rhetorical.

4

Discourse Snippets and Functional Titles:
Weaver's Stitchwork

The use of the patchwork and the weaving metaphors, as will be suggested in the later

sections on *métissage* and patchwork, is to bring to the reader's attention the plural

directions to which individual snippets of recombined discourse can point. Not only does

my blending of various critics and plays yield both synchronic (several discourse snippets

acting upon each other) and diachronic (the "heirloom" power of each snippet) layers of

meaning, but the use of titles for the individual snippets continues the metaphor. The

headings are functional in more than one way: they not only point to what is to come in

the following section, but they also often point to other snippets or strands, either earlier

in the thesis or still to come. As well, the titles sometimes link the ideas directly shown

in a discourse piece to other discourses outside the thesis. The layers of meaning

contained in the titles emphasise the plural relations of patchwork in particular, as they

form temporary stitches to bring together snippets of discourse separated by space or time.

RHETORIC REVISITED

Non-Aristotelian Dramatic Structures: "Poor training" or
different knowledge/discourse formations?

Dramatic structure has not often enough been perceived as involving knowledge/discourse

formations, as being embedded in time and culture and containing specific notions on the

function of rhetoric. The deficiency of this type of structural criticism has analogues in

some other mimetic arts: Linda Woodbridge, while investigating attitudes toward

patchwork quilting, quotes Jane Schneider as noting the ethnocentric error Boas castigated

in 1927 was that of "treating representational depiction as the highest standard of artistic

ability, as if other alternatives were degenerative manifestations of poor training or

unresolved technical differences" (Woodbridge 43). Something of this same attitude can

be found in the area of drama (perhaps not so surprising, considering the links between

patchwork and rhetoric which will be investigated later in this paper), where

"representational depiction" can be likened to the dramatic theory found in Aristotle's

Poetics, or at least to a certain influential reception of that work, and "other alternatives"

relate to what I will designate "patchwork" structures, offered by such diverse groups as

the Sophists, some modern feminist literary critics and various playwrights from a wide

variety of periods. In this chapter, I will discuss these different dramatic structures, not

in terms of "highest standard," "poor training" or "unresolved technical differences," but

rather in terms of the knowledge/discourse formations which underlie them.

Illustrations of Two Different Knowledge/Discourse Formations
(Figure 1)
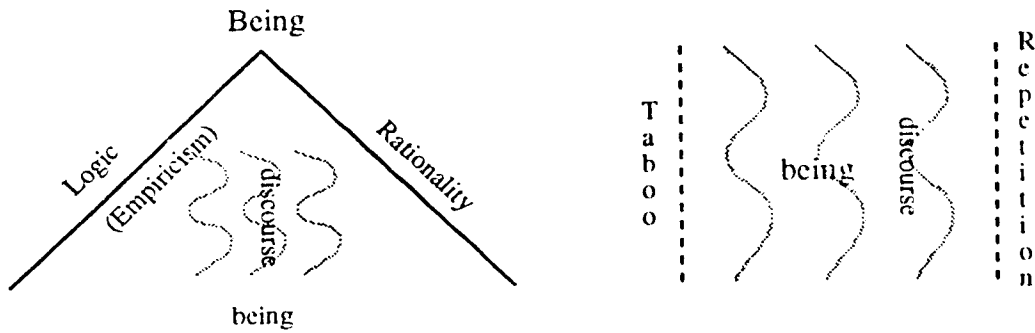
The first formation is my interpretation of Wesley Trimpi's analysis of Aristotle's position in *Muses of One Mind: The Literary Analysis of Experience and its Continuity*. In that work, he argues Aristotle recognised that the relationship between Being (Ideal Forms or intuited first principles) and being (process of becoming) had to be negotiated through time and culture. However, Trimpi still allows for knowable non-discursive Truth (or ontology) in the state of Being, and he proposes that the discourses of logic and rationality limit and mediate the negotiation between the two states. These discourses, constituted as ahistorical, are not available for analysis. The second formation is one that I have devised, using my interpretation of such various critical thinkers as John Locke, Ernesto Grassi and Judith Butler to modify Trimpi's paradigm. In this model, there is no Being, or at least no ontological categories that we have any ability to perceive outside of time and culture. Thus, there is only being, which, however, is stabilised into certain positions which fit comfortably into the dominant value system (or hegemony) through cultural taboos and repetitions. The discursive nature of being allows for many threads of meaning at any one site, and these threads are woven by context into an intricate web of signification--every strand available for analysis.

A Note on my Use of Trimpi's Analysis of Aristotle's Works

I recognise that there is currently a lot of work being done revising our understanding of this philosopher's ideas and some of this work may lessen the distance between my two models. However, I have accepted Trimpi's analysis as a well-received position on Aristotle and as revealing an influential thread in the historical tangle of the reception of the *Poetics*.

The sites which are analytically available in a knowledge/discourse formation influence the structures of discourses within the formation

Trimpi argues that Aristotle's assumption of a logical and rational discursive negotiation between Being and being also informs his rules on dramatic structure found in the *Poetics*. He proposes that these rules are simply and ahistorically logical and rational. William Edinger is another critic who argues along these lines, as will be later discussed. However, I propose that the discourses of rationality and logic occupy a particular place in culture and time, and Aristotle's rules are neither ahistorical nor outside of culture. I have gathered together pieces of work from such various writers as John Locke, Ernesto Grassi and Judith Butler in order to show how weaving together their analyses of the function of rhetoric forms a pattern which modifies Trimpi's design. And compositions from Susan Jarrett, Linda Woodbridge and Françoise Lionnet add more detail to this pattern, as these writers weave into their analyses of rhetoric specific structural implications in terms of the mimetic arts--in particular, drama.

The Ancient Dilemma, or
the Aristotelian model as analysed by Trimpi

Before discussing the second paradigm in detail, I will examine the model it revises: the Aristotelian model. In *Muses of One Mind*, Trimpi takes a close look at classical, and especially an Aristotelian, attitude toward the relation between style (structure) and content. He places this topic squarely within the parametres of an ancient argument concerning knowledge and representation. "The ancient dilemma arises from a distinction between the excellence of an object to be known and represented and the accuracy with which we can know and represent it" (Trimpi 229). Trimpi notes that "both Plato and Aristotle analyzed the objects of knowledge into two 'elementary' types: objects which are better known with respect to themselves and those known with respect to our own perceptions" (Trimpi 229). Therefore, "the nature of the subjects . . . will influence the kind of knowledge we can have of them; what and how much we can know of them will influence how we can represent them with the greatest decorum" (Trimpi 235).

This division of knowledge clearly falls into a
hierarchised binary opposition[1]

In *On the Soul*, Aristotle writes: "Now there is this difference between sciences, that some excel in certainty and yet are concerned with inferior objects, while others with higher and better objects are nevertheless less certain. All the same, that science is the

---

[1] Binary is defined in *The Oxford Dictionary of Current English* as "consisting of two parts, dual"(68). Binary thinking is described by Peggy Reeves Sanday in "The Reproduction of Patriarchy in Feminist Anthropology" as a "dialectical thinking associated with pairs of opposites" (54). In terms of western binary thought, at least, one of the pairs is often culturally valued higher than the other, and a strong current in feminist writing has argued that the higher valued element is often (though not always) associated with culturally defined masculine attributes.

better which is about better and nobler things--even for a conjectural and probable knowledge--than for a great and certain knowledge of inferior things" (Trimpi 127). The more exceptional knowledge relates to the divine (the unchanging Platonic Forms or intuited first principles) and the less exceptional to the empirical study of the earth and nature. Aristotle explains that "we have better means of information . . . concerning the things that perish, that is to say, plants and animals, because we live among them; and anyone who will but take enough trouble can learn much concerning every one of their kinds" (Trimpi 98). Though Aristotle's statement implies that this conclusion is self-evident, John Locke holds quite a different view, to be discussed later in this chapter.

Plato's Parable: A State of War
Between the Gods and Giants

Trimpi restates Aristotle's division by means of a parable taken from Plato: there is a state of war between the gods, who rule the realm of changeless Form, and the giants, who rule the realm of process and Becoming. Trimpi argues that the way to peace between the two camps is to realise that each must share reality with the other through a process of negotiation: "[the giants] bring the unvarying Forms to life in the motion of the psychic processes to which these Forms give order" (Trimpi 110). In an analogous fashion, "in the arts of discourse, some terms of predication can combine with others in definition and some cannot just as certain letters can combine to make up syllables while others cannot" (Trimpi 110-111; Plato 253AD). Trimpi sums up the argument as follows:

> Plato describes the reconciliation between the gods as a
> parable for the integration of the changing forms of
> Becoming with the changeless forms of Being. Such an
> integration offers a paradigm for all the processes of reality
> as well as of the dialectical description of them as a

blending and combining of *genera* and *species*. All the arts
preserve a knowledge of these processes in ways analogous
to that in which the arts of discourse disclose what terms of
predication can combine with others to establish definitions
and what letters can combine with others to make up
syllables . . . Plato's insight that the divinely conceived
Forms of Being and humanly conceived forms of Becoming
must be reconciled by a discursively articulated negotiation
between them is, in itself, an attempt to resolve the ancient
dilemma of knowledge and representation. (Trimpi 116)

Grammar as A Priori Knowledge

What Trimpi does not examine is the extent to which he relies on the rules of grammar

as non-discursive *a priori* knowledge. The arts of discourse in his example seem to be

allied with the Changeless Forms of Being, providing unassailable guidelines for the make

up and use of discourse. He does not place these arts in any sort of cultural context,

though such a feature as gendered nouns seems to beg that a critic do so. Christina

Luckyj, in relation to Webster's dramatic structure, examines the "logic" of grammar in

regard to knowledge/discourse configurations, and, as early as the seventeenth century,

Margaret Cavendish analysed the artificial structure of gendered nouns--their work will

be examined in a later chapter.

Mimetic Representation: Cognitive Discovery or Pale Imitation?

Trimpi writes that Plato, despite his recognition of the place for discursive negotiation,

still repudiates mimetic representation on the grounds that it is an imitation of an imitation

of the Ideal Forms and thus is too far from them to have any truth value, and that it does

not engage the rational parts of the soul but only the emotions. Trimpi goes on to argue

that Aristotle counters Plato's objections by reevaluating the place of emotion in cognitive

discovery. Aristotle distinguishes the "'universal' [Ideal Form or intuited first principles] of poetic imitation from the thesis of rhetoric and, by implication, from the thesis of Platonic dialectic" (Trimpi 64). This literary thesis of poetic imitation functions so as to "select among ethical alternatives, to verify definitions, or to reveal structures of causation rather than to posit formal assumptions, axiomatic principles of a science, or the arbitrary points of departure for self-consistent demonstration" (Trimpi 66). Trimpi argues that the functions of poetic imitation reappear in slightly different form as the rules for tragedy and comedy, found in the *Poetics.*

Mimetic Representation: Finding the Gradations of Truth between the Many and the One

Trimpi proposes that Aristotle's position on mimetic representation is that it works with rhetoric and dialectic to bring out "the gradations of being and truth between the infinite and the one . . . . So, of course, in all matters of knowledge and representation, Aristotelian demonstration . . . deals with the intermediate steps between what can be (more or less) immediately grasped and what cannot" (Trimpi 231-32).

Trimpi's Application of the Above to Literature

Trimpi writes that Literature tries to present our understanding of experience "at that point where the acquisitions of intellective and aesthetic intuition attain their most discursively articulated negotiation" (Trimpi 234). He recognises that the different subject positions which make up any audience of an event involving representation make flexibility in this mediation critical, arguing that "any such negotiation is a continuous process of adjustment, not a condition to be achieved, fixed and maintained; it is an activity, rather

than a possession, of the consciousness. A style which is to represent that activity must achieve decorum through the flexible articulation of this cognitive process with respect to a subject, to an audience, and to an occasion" (Trimpi 234). The negotiation is accomplished by means of "some rational principle, method or art by which it can be transmitted and verified by the experience of different people in different periods . . . Any such inquiry, in seeking to penetrate the *terra adhuc incognita* of 'nature' by 'art' in order to understand, represent, and utilize her territory, reflects our continuing effort to find empirical or logical conclusions about what we experience" (Trimpi 103-105). The work of critics John Bender and David E. Welbery has interesting conjunctions and disjunctions to Trimpi's argument: they coin the word "positionality" to describe the flexible negotiation of meaning endemic to rhetoric, but they argue against placing empirical principles in classical antiquity.

Rhetoric: An Art of Positionality--and Power

Bender and Welbery, in "Rhetoricality: On the Modernist Return to Rhetoric," write that "rhetoric is an art of positionality in address" (Bender 7). However, these critics go on to analyse the nature of that positionality, as Trimpi does not. They write: "Rhetorical speech marks, and is marked by, social hierarchy . . . Rhetorical speech adheres to power and property . . . As a specialized system of knowledge acquired, through formal education, in order to maintain property and negotiate social interaction, the art of rhetoric discriminates among audiences according to rank, education and social character . . . the cultural hegemony of rhetoric as a practice of discourse, as a doctrine codifying that practice, and as a vehicle of cultural memory, is grounded in the social structure of the

premodern world" (Bender 6-7). Therefore, it allowed for an explanatory metadiscourse in which truth was not figured as always and inherently rhetorical.

Ideal Forms, Logic and Rationality as Metadiscourses

Although Trimpi posits a negotiation between Being and being, this negotiation is limited by the boundaries placed upon it by Ideal Forms or intuited first principles. Therefore, although Trimpi allows that "the reader should keep in mind that the more excellent, inclusive, complex, permanent, or simply desirable object of knowledge will change from period to period," his argument implicitly insists upon a view of knowledge as an object to be retrieved, rather than as rhetorically constructed. His argument also requires a view of logic (rationality) as a transparent, universal discourse equally accessible to all people (as critics like Ernesto Grassi and Judith Butler do not). Trimpi's assumptions have a strong impact on his conclusions about the relationship between representation and knowledge in regard to dramatic structure.

Aristotelian Dramatic Structure:
A Statement Forced to Suit a Hypothesis

Trimpi analyses Aristotle's syllogistic process of logic and concludes that "Aristotle selects hypotheses advanced by his predecessors, revises them, and then confronts the consequences directly derived from them with the facts. They are then perceived as the principles in the consequences of which we are able to see the meaning of the factual situation" (Trimpi 48). The arguments which demonstrate truth must prove what is uncertain by means of what is certain--*a priori* principles shape knowledge, and therefore, representation. Trimpi then proposes this process offers an analogy to that of literary composition.

By the time one actually begins to write, he would ordinarily have more or less in mind the essential facts (incidents or situations) capable of containing and generating the completed action. This initial sketch or skeletal plot may serve as the premise or hypothesis **in which the conclusion as well as the beginning is 'given'** . . . . The immediate question is why, and the 'middle' hypothetical premise or premises are 'discovered', which reveal why things happened as they happened. The interconnections of the actions emerge as causes, revealed as 'qualities' and as feelings or motivation: 'an intelligible structure between things' is traced . . . . We now arrive at the 'conclusion' but not the conclusion simply asserted in the outline of the initial hypothesis. Our conclusion now is that of a 'demonstration' that events happened as they might or ought to have happened, the demonstration that, **granting our first premise,** our 'middle' or explanatory premises are indeed as they ought to be. We can accept them and acquiesce in them, seeing that, in looking again from the catastrophe back over the action, they appear probable or necessary. We approach here a concept of fiction as a consistent hypothetical construction in the sense that Aristotle can say that statements, however contrived, may be accepted as correct with respect to the hypotheses. In fact, a fiction may be regarded as such a statement forced to suit a hypothesis. (Trimpi 48-49; *Meta.* 13.7, 1082b2, 32-33) (all emphases mine)

Although Trimpi does not explicitly write that this application of force is justified because the hypothesis is an intuited first principle or Ideal Form, his argument shows that this is, indeed, the case. In his initial explanation of Aristotelian logic, he notes that the hypotheses are "perceived as the principles in the consequences of which we are able to see the meaning of the factual situation." Trimpi justifies his extension of Aristotle's definition of logic to his *Poetics* by writing that, "although Aristotle does not use the noun 'hypothesis' in the *Poetics*, he uses its verbal forms to describe how a subject should be set out and treated in a drama" (Trimpi 50).

Specifically, then, a proper Aristotelian drama is constructed by the playwright selecting "the general or 'universal' structures of his own plot," and then building episodes, "offering causes and establishing consistency with sequential connections"

(Trimpi 51-52). Closure of the plot is necessary to this structure, as the "completed drama ultimately 'demonstrates' that the actions outlined can indeed be seen to happen with probability or necessity in accord with the middle terms of causation 'discovered' by the dramatist" (Trimpi 53). An investigation or problematisation of the terms of causation themselves does not easily fit within this structure.

Logic: universally accessible discourse?

Trimpi writes that "an intelligible structure" must be the outcome of the dramatist's work. In other words, episodes must have a logical connection, so as to prove the predetermined conclusion. Trimpi asserts that logical coherence can be divided into two methods: inductive logic and deductive logic. He contends that his analysis of Aristotelian rhetoric shows how it transmits "the structural requirements of Aristotle's *Poetics*" (Trimpi 296). Trimpi writes:

> His first method [inductive logic]. . . might be regarded as more congenial to the *controversia* and to comedy, the second to *suasia* and to tragedy. In both the *controversia* and comedies, the plot is 'made up' of private and hence less familiar, persons and circumstances. The historical or legendary anonymity of the characters permits them often to become recognizable general types whose interrelationships must be restipulated by the action of each new exercise or play. The particular delightfulness of the plot arises from its plausible resolution of the initially enigmatic stipulations of the given situation. Its tact and grace lie in the variations which can dispose the apparently alogical events to their logical conclusion. Since the persons, being more typical than individually "known," are to be characterized primarily through incident, the given circumstances must be clearly "propounded" if the author's ingenuity is to appear in their analysis and synthesis. He must satisfy our need for logical arrangement by a "dialectic" of character and incident rather than by arousing our emotions enough to acquiesce in a catastrophe. (Trimpi 303)

Structurally, then, a comedy should use recognisable types in a "logical" fashion so as to meet the audience's expectations surrounding those types. Meeting these expectations

satisfies the audience's need for a "logical" conclusion, which is, in this analysis, based

on transparent common sense.

Trimpi then analyses the deductively logical structure of tragedy:

> The *suasia* and tragedy, on the other hand, may more often take for
> granted the audience's familiarity with their speakers and plots. As
> specific individuals, their characters are exemplary rather than typical, as
> famous 'situations," their plots fulfil, rather than surprise our expectations.
> Like the proposition of the argument *ad motum*, the premises of the suasial
> argument emerge simultaneously with their demonstration. They contain
> within them the potential thesis and catastrophe, which the successive
> stages of the presentation, unfolding as consequences, confirm. (Trimpi
> 303)

This view of tragedy not only takes the audience's familiarity with situation for granted,

it also insists upon remaining tacit "about the selection and acceptance of its premises,"

as these premises are associated with first principles (Trimpi 299). And again, logic is

presented as objective and transparent. Indeed, Trimpi explains, "The knowledge

expressed by [logical] processes is said to be unqualified or absolute . . . when an event

cannot be otherwise than as it is known and when its cause is certain" (Trimpi 119).

The Tyranny of Truth, or Engaging with Trimpi

Although Trimpi allows a sense of probability in his discursive negotiation between Being

and being, his definition does not exclude a knowledge of Truth and Ideal Form. He

argues that Aristotle thought that normal everyday things can be known with exactitude,

while wondrous things can only be conjectured, but the two working together produce

probability. Not only is there access to some parts of Being, but knowledge is also

strictly binarised and hierarchised. He does not allow for the investigation of the "natural"

as a category, nor of *specie* and *genus* as terms of discourse, as Ernesto Grassi, John Locke and Judith Butler will do in their pieces of this thesis.

As well, Trimpi contends that "logical development is as necessary to the persuasiveness of rhetoric as of geometrical proofs," but he does not examine logic as a rhetorical strategy (Trimpi 304). Instead, he defines logic as what is reasonable, as if common sense reveals logical discourse to be transparent (Trimpi 292). His allowance for the power of discourse in the negotiation between what is known and what cannot be known precisely is placed within the limits of logical, rational language; he sees the relation between the two as negotiated through logical principles which are comprehensible across place and time, principles that he explicitly compares to rules of grammar, which he argues are logical and rational and give shape, through discourse, to logic and rationality.

Aristotle's Arguments concerning Truth Have Interesting Conjunctions with Those of Plato and Cicero

Trimpi suggests that Aristotle's confidence in certain knowledge and universally accessible intuited first principles is Platonic in origin: "Platonic *dynamis* 'can be defined as the property or quality which reveals the nature of a thing.' It is the *dynamis* which 'makes it possible to give each thing a name conforming to its peculiar constitution, and places things in separate groups.' It is at once a principle of knowledge and a principle of diversity" (Trimpi 109). Trimpi also contends that another influential philosopher had a similar view of essential knowledge: "Cicero . . . sees the mind, when it is struck by any

likeness to truth, as filled with the deepest pleasure a human being is capable of" (Trimpi 295).

According to Trimpi, this Aristotelian and Ciceronian concept of knowledge fits into the Academic camp of rhetoric, even though the Academics recognised the fallibility of sensory perception, and therefore advocated the method of arguing on both sides of a question, as did the Sceptics (Sophists). Trimpi's reasoning is that, unlike the Sophists, the Academics did not define knowledge as inherently rhetorical. Cicero writes: "Our position is not that we hold that nothing is true, but that we assert that all true sensations are associated with false ones . . . so closely resembling them that they contain no infallible mark to guide our judgement and assent" (Trimpi 289; *De nat deor* 1.12). As discussed above, Cicero felt that, despite these difficulties, it is possible to discern the truth by the pleasure it affords when it is revealed, a revelation Trimpi argues is made possible through the representation of plausible (logical) causation. The difference between Cicero's position on recognition and that of Locke is that Cicero argues that the pleasure felt from the recognition of sensations springs from a discernment of "Truth"; as I will later show, Locke argues that this pleasure springs from a discernment of cultural patterns which have become naturalised and therefore shape the interpretation of sensation.

Trimpi's Argument has Interesting Disjunctions to That of Bender and Welbery.

While Trimpi argues that Aristotelian logic is based on the need for all human beings to find logical empirical explanations for observed reality, Bender and Welbery have a very different position (Trimpi 103-105). They argue that classical rhetoric, including logic,

despite its explanatory metadiscourse, nevertheless was always positional, and syllogistic logic, because of the pro and *contra* argument style and investigation into abstract meanings, was never perceived as neutral. This latter construction arose during the ages we call the Enlightenment and the Romantic due to social changes: discoveries in natural philosophy and writing by philosophers like Bacon gave rise to "a mode of discourse conceived as neutral, non-positional, and transparent. Nowhere is this tendency more apparent than in the emergence of science" (Bender 8). According to Bender and Welbery's argument, Trimpi's assertion that Aristotelian logic is based on a human need for logical empirical explanations ignores the historical changes between classical antiquity and the modern era. William Edinger, though drawing on Trimpi's work for parts of his book, nevertheless traces the changes in logic, knowledge and representation in a similar manner to Bender and Welbery.

Edinger and the Relationship
Between Style and Content

In *Samuel Johnson and Poetic Style*, Edinger examines classical and neoclassical rhetoric in his attempt to define the poetic stances found in the Enlightenment and Romantic periods and how they evolved from earlier positions. He notes that a critic like Johnson had affinities with "the liberal critics of both ages [classical and neoclassical] who are linked by their common refusal to separate the theory of style from the broad cultural and philosophical issues which determine its most general function" (Edinger xiv). He traces the issue of style and substance from the Socratic repudiation of rhetoric and valorisation of dialectic through critical thinkers such as Cicero who attempted to sew the two back

together to one such as Locke, who provided the Enlightenment with the means for that stitchwork.

Embodying Truth in Fiction

Edinger writes that the "problem of reciprocal relations between the *thesis* (moral philosophy: abstract generalization: universal truth) and the *causa* (rhetoric: the details of the particular case) exists for poetic theory as the problem of the moral value of literature--the question of how fictional particulars are made to embody general truth, or conversely, how moral truth is made persuasive by being embodied in a fiction" (Edinger 5). He begins his exploration by noting the influential Platonic repudiation of rhetoric and the counterarguments to that repudiation by Aristotle and Cicero.

Plato, in his *Socratic Dialogues*, separates rhetoric, which he defines as the art of persuasion and thus a mode of expression only, from dialectic (moral philosophy), which he perceives as a mode of inquiry. However, Edinger notes that other classical authors refuted this separation. "Cicero traces the problem of words and things to its source in the Socratic repudiation of rhetoric, which by creating a divorce between rhetoric and moral philosophy led to their establishment as separate and competing disciplines--a crucial error, since these studies are by nature interdependent, or rather, Cicero argues, they are aspects of a single concern . . . [He] repeatedly insists upon the indivisibility of style and subject" (Edinger 2-4).

An Objective Sense of Truth Still a Part
of Edinger's Analysis.

Although Edinger argues strongly for locating structure as a site of meaning, he still accepts a sense of accessible Truth ("general truth", "moral truth") as part of his argument.

Grassi, in his segment of the thesis, will challenge Edinger's assumption that separating out the details of the particular in order to arrive at the universal elements is the function of rhetoric.

Metaphor: Objective or Subjective Comparison?

Edinger defines an Aristotelian position on rhetoric as one that "stressed the objective dimension of mimesis over the subjective" (Edinger 110). Critics following this line of argument "were more interested in the writer's fidelity to objects or 'things' than in his fidelity to his perception of objects or things. They were not unaware of the latter but tended to take it for granted that the two would or ought to coincide: poetry told the truth when the poet's concept of the thing and the thing itself were the same--when, in effect, the poet knew its essence" (Edinger 110). Aristotelian rhetoric readily identifies the concept with its existential referent, and thus Aristotle traces "the pleasure afforded by mimesis . . . to that delight which accompanies all acts of cognition," and not to "that action of the mind, which compares the ideas arising from the original objects, with the ideas we receive from the statue, picture, description or sound that represents them" (as argued by Addison and Archibald Alison in the Enlightenment period) (Edinger 112). Edinger concludes: "For Aristotle metaphor involves the discovery of objective similarities--similarities founded on the real properties of things" (Edinger 116).

The Evolution of Logic

As Edinger shows, the later neo-classical critics both follow and diverge from Aristotelian reasoning. Antoine Arnauld, in *Logique, ou L'Art de Penser* (1662), dismisses Ramist theory (heavily influenced by Aristotle) as "of little use, not merely because it relies on

an inadequate (i.e. Aristotelian) logic, but because its very conception of the arts of logic and rhetoric is pedantic and narrow" (Edinger 15). Arnauld bases his dismissal on "the characteristic Scholastic assumption that the human mind 'naturally' thinks in accordance with the rules of Aristotelian logic and will therefore be best instructed by a method which adheres to those rules as closely as possible" (Edinger 16). Arnauld refuses to accept Scholastic logic as 'natural,' and Edinger posits that implicit "in [his] rejection of the doctrine of commonplaces, for example, is a rejection of the authoritarianism which supported the accumulation of that vast body of traditional argument and opinion within which the intellectual life of the earlier periods found its community" (Edinger 20). This argument has similarities to Bender's and Welbery's contention that "the demise of [traditional] rhetoric coincides with that long and arduous historical process . . .: the replacement of a symbolic-religious organization of social and cultural life by rationalised forms, the gradual shift from a stratificational differentiation of society to one that operates along functional axes" (Bender 7).

Edinger too argues that a paradigmatic shift underlies this rejection of Aristotelian logic. A neo-classical writer such as Fénélon, in *Dialogues on Eloquence*, is seeking a style that is "an absolutely transparent medium through which one sees only the things and actions themselves . . . [because] to be aware of manner is to be aware, however marginally, of the distorting influence of an agency intermediate between the experience itself and the hearer at whom its representation is directed" (Edinger 29). The positionality of classical rhetoric is rejected. Fénélon's book was influential; Edinger explains that, for a neoclassical author,

it is not that his responses confer importance upon his subject, but rather that the subject itself compels an appropriate response. The author is effaced, in short, owing to the very centrality of his moral intelligence. He is the ideal, therefore, representative, human observer, whose ability to render events with a fully circumstantial plausibility is at once a certain proof of his perceptions and the basis of his moral authority, for it is the completeness of his contact with a concrete and objective reality which validates the general truths which he is attempting to explain. (Edinger 30)

In the seventeenth century, the theory of inquiry for language arts is no longer Aristotelian or Cartesian; "it consists instead in the empiricist principles laid down by Bacon and Locke and increasingly came to be regarded as defining the only valid approach to knowledge" (Edinger 31). Edinger bolsters his contention by referring to Campbell, Priestly, and Adam Smith as examples of writers who adapted rhetorical theory to empirical principles (Edinger 31).

Yet the Evolution Contains the Threads of the Past

Though the differences between an empirical approach to logic and a Scholastic approach are obvious (neutrality vs. positionality), there remain similarities as well. "Empiricism posits an organic relationship between the general and the particular comparable to the one implicit in Aristotle's notion of fictional probability" (Edinger 61). The general is constructed as Truth, Ideal Form, first principles, and the particular gives specific embodiment to those truths.

Edinger acknowledges there is a problem with this argument: rooted within it is a "respect for the authority of concrete fact and immediate observation" (Edinger 78). He writes that "Johnson's notion of the 'species' functions . . . to emphasize the difference between significant and insignificant detail. But what enables us to make this distinction in the process of actual perception?" (Edinger 95). The myth of the unconditioned

perceiver forms an integral part of seventeenth century (and later!) empirical thinking, but Edinger argues that critics such as Johnson, though sharing in this assumption to some degree, did not really base their distinctions on Ideal Forms, but rather on "noting the differences and similarities among many individuals of the same species," which he views as an empirical but not universal basis for selection. Yet this line of argument assumes that species and genus are not themselves rhetorical constructs, and bears strong similarities to Trimpi's interpretation of Aristotelian principles: "In the *Posterior Analytics* (2.19) [Aristotle] writes that although memories are multiple, they may constitute a single experience. This experience, in relation to them, is a universal which comes to rest as 'a whole in the soul,' as 'the One that corresponds to the Many, the unity that is identically present' in each individual memory. . . . The universals produced in this way by this 'generic' capacity of the senses themselves form the intellective principles . . . of the arts and sciences" (Trimpi 122). Thus, if wisdom "demands a knowledge of first principles and of the conclusions which follow them, the intuitive first procedures of intelligence . . and the demonstrative procedures of scientific knowledge . . . must complement one another" (Trimpi 118). As I shall show later in this chapter, Edinger acknowledges that Locke provides a quite different way to view the "intuited" first principles of classification.

Limited Positionality: The Basis of Trimpi's and Edinger's Similarities

Both Trimpi and Edinger posit that rhetorical strategies assume a knowledge of intuited first principles which are not discursively based but are true, and reality is formed through a discursive logical relationship between these principles and temporal and social

positionality. Both the principles and the logical discourse limit the sorts of structures well-written fiction (which is most frequently illustrated in terms of drama) can have (in other words, limit the positionality). In terms of dramatic structure, Trimpi asserts that a playwright must begin with a knowledge of first principles and then use deductive or inductive logic (depending on whether he is writing a comedy or tragedy) to persuade the audience that the action of the play or the types of characters follow the probability or necessity of these principles. The whole process contains the complete action of the drama. The audience's desire for a recognisable causation pattern is left unanalysed, as is its position of familiarity toward narrative patterns. Edinger qualifies Trimpi's position somewhat, as he acknowledges that "logic" has had different definitions in different periods, and it is not an ahistorical or completely neutral discourse, yet he still valorises empirical principles as giving access to truth. Rational logic is posited as a universally valid discourse.

Metaphor as a Subjective Grasp of Meaning, or Ernesto Grassi's Contradiction in Being

Ernesto Grassi, in "The Denial of the Rational" and "Why Rhetoric is Philosophy," drawing on the work of Heidegger, argues against perceiving rational logic in the above described way. Like Aristotle, Grassi sees man's grasp of meaning as made possible in terms of metaphor: "By means of the metaphor being becomes clear, discloses itself in meaning for man" ("Denial" 153). However, unlike Aristotle, he does not see metaphor as involved in the discovery of objective similarities founded on the real properties of things. He notes that the "theory of the preeminence of logic and therefore of rational language--implying the exclusion of rhetorical language from the field of speculation--

characterizes Western thought and leaves its seal upon it" ("Rhetoric" 201). This preeminence leads critics to "look therefore for non-subjectivity, for ahistoricity" ("Rhetoric" 201). In contrast, Grassi argues that Being must be defined as that which is most universal: "only because of this universality can we affirm of all beings that they are. At the same time, and in contradiction to this affirmation, we are obliged to define Being as that which is most particular; in all individual beings Being is. This obligation to define Being as that which is both supremely universal and particular is a contradiction" ("Rhetoric" 203). He also argues that we "must define 'Being' as that which is essentially intelligible; in fact we recognize beings as such insofar as they participate in Being. On the other hand, we are obliged to define Being as that which is most hidden because it escapes any rational definition, precisely as we ourselves are now experiencing. The contradiction between intelligible and hidden is obvious. The sphere of Being is therefore not a rational one, based upon the principle of identity and of non-contradiction" (Rhetoric" 203). He continues this process of thought in a way which casts doubt on Trimpi's assumption that grammatical rules, like intuited first principles, being non-discursive, are Truth.

Language is a game

Grassi argues that "language is a game" and "it is impossible by means of a rational identification of the beings which are employed in a game (the playing cards, the dice, the ball) to reconstruct either the rules or the specific actions required for a game in order to distinguish it from other games. The same elements, in different games, can have completely different meanings. Abstract rational determination of the elements of the

game is not provided by the 'key' (nowadays we speak about the 'code') which does not help us to understand their meaning, their function" ("Rhetoric" 204).

He brings this discussion on language directly to bear on the problem of the discursive relationship between Being and being. "In the case of the problem between the relationship between Being and beings, and of the language with which we can reach them, it is clear that the beings, precisely in that they participate in Being, are unidentifiable in the meaning if the Being, of which they are 'participles,' is not known . . . . But does Being therefore have a language, and in this case, what language?" ("Rhetoric" 205). Grassi asserts that this language is metaphorical, not rational, and in his definition, metaphor is linked to subjectivity and temporality, not objectivity.

The Great Theatre of Our World

Grassi writes that even in Plato's argument in *Philebus*, the originary "indicative" (not "demonstrative") terms are "sorrow" and "pleasure"--and neither the "object of the sorrow nor that of the joy can be indicated abstractly: they have a 'figurative' meaning in each 'situation.' What may appear as 'pleasant' in one situation . . . may become 'unpleasant' in another" ("Rhetoric" 207). Therefore, the fundamental signs from Being by which we derive our "rules" for our world "are not revealed 'outside' time (as Plato wished, *Timaous* 37, C8, 37, D5), but in time, in the tension that forces us to play, in the sphere of here and now" ("Rhetoric" 207-08). There is no rational truth, abstracted from time and space. "The task of rhetoric is therefore no longer one of 'persuasion,' intended to convince us of an ahistorical truth, but to disclose the reality signified in terms of constantly new 'situations'" ("Rhetoric" 209). And scientific, empirical thought, far from

being transparent and ahistorical, "can take place only within the boundaries of a system"

("Denial" 140).

Grassi's argument can be summed up as follows:

> Being is at home in the realm of logical contradiction, in that which cannot be founded, and, as a consequence, in the abysmal. . . Because the problem of truth first of all appears as the question of the relation within being, that between subject and object, the question of rational truth loses its primacy . . . The finding of relations between what has been experienced and what concerns man makes possible the transference of meaning [or metaphor-- inventive discourse] . . . Only by means of inventive disclosure and the judging faculty is the world in which man lives, thinks, and acts, revealed . . . Inventive discourse shows itself to be rhetorical, as different from rational discourse, for inventive speech originates in experience, in the pathos of the claim of the Being which is different at each time. ("Denial" 151, 155)

Grassi takes his argument to the question of style and observes that only "in the interpretation of the different meanings of the same term in various contexts can we experience the metaphorical and rhetorical character of the term . . . . Every actor in the great theatre of the world has his true identity only for the part which has been assigned to him in the game of our world" ("Rhetoric" 210, 212).

Grassi and the "relativistic theses" of the Sophists

In another essay on the function of rhetoric, "Remarks on a Prolegomenon to the Problem of Rhetoric," Grassi notes that the "essence of rational thinking consists in a process of abstraction that separates out the specific characteristics from every 'here' and 'now,' considering them relative elements, in order to arrive at the universal element that is valid for all places and time. This is the fundamental thesis of Platonic thought and its interpretation of Socratic philosophizing, as retaliation against the relativistic theses of the Sophists" ("Remarks" 213-14). As is obvious from his emphasis on the primacy of

subjectivity and temporality in determining meaning, Grassi disagrees with the Platonic position and is much closer to the "relativistic theses of the Sophists." His arguments complement those of Susan Jarrett in many ways, in her *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured.*

The Sophist As Image Maker

In her work, Jarrett reminds us that rhetoric involves knowledge/discourse formations, when she writes that Aristotelian and Platonic rhetoric is dependent "on non-verbal object knowledge as a precondition for discourse about reality" (Jarrett 8). She acknowledges that some recent critical work on rhetoric re-evaluates the Aristotelian position on that subject (my examples of this reworking are Trimpi's and Edinger's texts which reveal that an Aristotelian position allows for a discursive negotiation between objective knowledge and social and temporal positionality), but nevertheless, Jarrett suggests there remains an assumption that knowledge is an object to be retrieved and discourse functions so as to retrieve that meaning and communicate it to the best of its ability. This assumption is indeed evident in Trimpi's interpretation of Plato's attack on the Sophists: "Since the Stranger describes the sophist as an image maker . . . he foresees the sophist's relegation of the image . . . to the status of other types of falsity which have no existence (239D). By arguing for the epistemological necessity for degrees of existence, he can defend the capacity of the verisimilar image itself to express intermediate degrees of truth" (Trimpi 107). The Sophists, of course, had a different view of matters.

Rhetoric: A Way of Knowing in Itself

Jarrett argues that the philosophers known as the Sophists viewed rhetoric as a way of knowing in itself--rhetoric is part of a process which allows humans to act in the absence of *a priori* truth. Rather than positing that knowledge exists as Ideal Forms or intuited first principles, the Sophists located the source of knowledge about reality in the conversation of a social group. For example, Protagoras explained how group values evolve out of custom or habit as "pragmatic solutions to temporal and historical needs" (Jarrett 10). The Sophists held that "the only permanent reality is the historical process through which social structures and the values which undergird them are developed" (Jarrett 10). They concentrated on the power of language to shape human social behaviour within the limits of time and space.

Rhetoric: Illuminating Meaningful Connections, Disjunctions, Overlaps and Exclusions in Discourse

This concentration on the social construction of knowledge through language had consequences for rhetorical form: the Sophists did not see the goal of rhetoric as the impossible task of knowing everything and ordering it, but rather in illuminating "meaningful connections, disjunctions, overlaps, or exclusions" in discourse (Jarrett 14-15). Jarrett's contention bears a striking resemblance to Grassi's proposal that only "in the interpretation of the different meanings of the same term in various contexts can we experience the metaphorical and rhetorical character of the term." She argues that the Sophists encouraged increased self-consciousness about the process of reconstruction "as it functions to open for investigation fruitful questions about belief, purpose and self-definition rather than answer questions of 'fact'" (Jarrett 16). In contrast to Trimpi's

proposal that good dramatic structure should show history as a continuous, complete story leading to a pre-understood end, sophistic discourse consciously disrupts a stable historical narrative. Closure is not privileged in a sophistic rhetorical structure.

The Method as the Message

Jarrett contends that much of the disruption of a stable narrative happens at the level of structure: method becomes crucial and problematic. She outlines two sophistic methods in detail to show how these philosophers handled the correlation between form and content. The first structure she explores is antithesis, which focuses not on reaching conclusions, but on uncovering possible contradictions. She then illustrates how a second structure complements the first: parataxis demands "the employment of probable arguments in the reconstitution of provisional historical narratives" (Jarrett 21). Parataxis is flexible, free of the tighter bonds of hypotaxis, with its hierarchal connectives and embedding. Using both antithesis and parataxis, the Sophists opened up an inevitable (and therefore tragic) gap in discourse and then sutured it up "in a consciously constructed story: a temporary comic resolution" (Jarrett 29). A "temporary comic resolution" again points to a disruption in closure. A stable conclusion is not the aim of this discourse: with both antithesis and parataxis, the point is not exposing or discovering the unknown, but "rearranging the known"--a rearrangement that allows the critical distance for re-vision (Jarrett 29). Again, Jarrett's argument intersects with Grassi's work: to repeat, he too holds that rhetoric's task was not to convince the audience of an ahistorical truth, but to "disclose the reality signified in terms of constantly new 'situations.'"

Implications of Jarrett's Arguments on Dramatic Structure

Jarrett's Sophistic assumptions in regard to knowledge/discourse formations suggest quite

different dramatic structures and functions from those of Trimpi. Whereas Trimpi argues

that a playwright starts with a knowledge of first principles and endeavours to write a play

to persuade the audience that the action of the play or the types of characters follow the

probability or necessity of these principles, Jarrett's proposals imply that a sophistic

playwright would write a play which would call into question any certain knowledge of

first principles. Instead of following the audience's demand for "logical" causation, this

playwright would examine the audience's desire for a recognisable causation pattern, as

well as its position of familiarity toward narrative designs. Defamiliarising conventional

dramatic patterns--recognisable types, logical sequential causation and plot closure--would

be a cornerstone of sophistic dramatic structure.

A Summary of Some of the Differences Between
Sophistic and Aristotelian
Knowledge/Discourse Formations

Jarrett contends that the Sophists did not view rational logic as a transparent discourse,

metaphor as the discovery of objective similarities founded on the real properties of

things, or reality as made up of the process of Becoming "bringing the unvarying Forms

to life in the motion of the psychic processes to which these Forms give order." She

argues that this latter Aristotelian theory provides clear generic distinctions and hierarchal

logical discourse which allows the rigour of "science" and dialectic to dominate the looser

probabilities of rhetoric. She sees Aristotle as exercising a tight control over the kinds

of responses rhetoric elicits, and to do so, he privileges closure, in the form of a complete

action (as previously discussed in Trimpi's investigation of the *Poetics*). Although Trimpi's and Edinger's discussion of the discursive relationship between Being and Becoming, and of the impossibility of knowing concretely divine concepts, mitigates the sharp binary Jarrett wishes to draw between Aristotelian and Sophistic theories, her point remains valid that there are significant differences between the two.

The Sophists' theory posits that knowledge exists within and is communicated through persuasion--there is no foundation in Ideal Forms or intuited first principles. One of the group, Gorgias, specifically drew attention to "the importance of the audience's reception of a discursive performance; their mental participation and, eventually, their assent is required for any discourse to have the force of knowledge" (Jarrett 26, 56). Closure can only be problematic in a system where, even as we select a position, we acknowledge that there are other possible configurations of "truth."

Linking Jarrett to Locke, Butler and Lionnet: Strands of the Past in the Future

Jarrett's book illustrates that there have been different knowledge/discourse formations posited since classical antiquity, and that the sophistic construction is based on a recognition that there are no Ideal Forms or intuited first principles underlying social structures. Without positing any direct line of influence, the author argues that sophistic theories nevertheless can provide fruitful ground for analysis of subsequent historical moments. I would like now to examine how well Jarrett's argument is complemented by the positions of critical thinkers from such different periods as Locke from the seventeenth century and Judith Butler and Françoise Lionnet from the twentieth.

Locke and the Socratic Split Between
Rhetoric and Dialectic

Locke must occupy an interesting position in any discussion on links between rhetoric and structure. His position on rhetoric has often been summed up by his infamous statement: "we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats" (Locke III, x. 32; Edinger 32). However, Edinger notes that Locke was writing in an intellectual climate which was greatly concerned with the Socratic split between rhetoric and dialectic. I propose that Locke's outburst is aimed at a view of rhetoric contained within this split and hence concerns rhetoric as a mode of perception only. Rhetoric defined in this way had, since Cicero, been described as "the study of form without content, a compendium of rules for finding arguments, constructing speeches and embellishing styles"--and many critics before Locke had criticised this particular conception (Edinger 5-6).

Locke: Closing the Gaps
Between Liberal and Scientific Inquiry

I further propose that a close reading of *On Human Understanding* shows that Locke himself actually held a quite different definition of rhetoric, one that is much more similar both to the Sophists and to Judith Butler. Edinger notes that by the middle of the eighteenth century, the conflict between dialectic and rhetoric had ceased to be an issue, and he writes that this makes the history of the question "oddly discontinuous" (Edinger 36). However, he also notes that "the premises required for seeing experimental and

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liberal enquiry as complementary were available in Locke, as an obvious inference from his doctrine of nominal essences" (Edinger 39). I agree, and I believe that these premises work against an acceptance of Locke's antirhetorical outburst as his definitive position on the subject.

Universal Consent Proves Nothing Innate

Locke begins his work by strongly stating his objections to the ideas of universal knowledge and intuited first principles. He contends that there is no knowledge whose acquisition cannot be accounted for by other means than innate sources; therefore, there is no reason to propose that this sort of knowledge exists. He writes that "universal consent proves nothing innate," because there are other ways "how men may come to that universal agreement in the things they do consent in . . ." (Locke 67-68). Locke goes further and argues that "this argument of universal consent, which is made use of to prove innate principles, seems to me a demonstration that there are none such, because there are none to which all mankind give an universal consent" (Locke 68).

Causal Processes as Cultural Constructs

A.D. Woozely, in his introduction to the Fount edition of Locke's essay, argues that Locke failed to realise that an "*a priori* concept could be characterised negatively as one which the mind does not and could not derive from experience, positively as one which the mind contributes to experience" (Locke 22). Woozely gives qualities of objects and causal processes as examples of universal structural elements which organise sense into patterns. However, I suggest that Locke, by grounding human knowledge solidly in experience, considered that these formal or structural patterns are not universal and

separate from experience. In particular, causal processes seem to me (and to Grassi, Jarrett and, I would argue, to Locke) a potential site of contention both temporally and culturally.

No Such Thing as Truth At All; or
Locke as a Sophist

Locke writes that if we take notice of "the opinions of mankind, observe their opposition, and at the same time consider the fondness and devotion wherewith they are maintained, [we] may perhaps have reason to suspect that either there is no such thing as truth at all, or that mankind hath no sufficient means to attain a certain knowledge of it" (Locke 64). Though Locke seems at times in his essay to soften this stance, his often repeated warnings on the unreliability of sensory perception continue this theme.

Experience Orders Experience, or
Locke's Links to My Second Knowledge/Discourse Formation

Locke asserts that in "[experience] all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself" (Locke 89). From arguments like these, Locke has gathered the reputation of being one of the founders of empiricism, that bastion of logical transparent thinking. However, despite this reputation, Locke is very clear in his refutation of transparency in any discourse. Perception supplies the mind with the materials of thinking, but Locke argues that perception is in turn influenced by the mind. Woozely sums up Locke's argument as "perception is sensation determined or interpreted according to previous experience, to what has already been learned, to what the mind, through custom or prejudice, has come to accept" (Locke 25). This position is very different from

one based on innate forms or structures which order experience. Here, experience orders experience.

Breaking Aristotle's Binaries

Locke furthers his argument about the difficulties of accepting sensation unproblematically as a source of information and knowledge by exploring the nature of observation. Woozely interprets his stance as that "observation requires an observer, with the consequence that an observer may not observe things right, and . . . there is no guarantee that things are exactly as we observe them to be. In this sense, he thought the real essence of material objects is forever, and in principle, unknowable, for we can never get beyond our observations" (Locke 29). The difference between Locke's view of natural philosophy and that of Aristotle is striking. As before noted, Aristotle proposes that "we have better means of information . . . concerning the things that perish, that is to say, plants and animals, because we live among them; and anyone who will but take enough trouble can learn much concerning every one of their kinds," and he also asserts that objects better known in relation to themselves (what Locke calls "mixed modes") can be much less certainly known. I will argue that Locke does more than propose the opposite-- he actually goes a long way toward breaking down the Aristotelian binary opposition of knowledge.

Locke on Substance, or
Classification as Social Construct

Locke's ideas on perception shape his ideas on substance. He argues that our idea of substance is really that of certain simple ideas co-existing together, and these simple ideas are the result of perception and reflection, but not of knowledge of the essence of

substance itself, which we can only hypothesise from the simple ideas brought to the mind by the senses. Although he asserts that "ideas of Substances are real when they agree with the Existence of things," he questions this "reality" by also noting that with substance, "it is true, we have patterns to follow, but patterns that will make the signification of their names very uncertain, for names must be of a very unsteady and various meaning, if the ideas they stand for be referred to standards without us, that either cannot be known at all, or can be known but imperfectly and uncertainly" (Locke 303).

Locke contends that, despite the difficulties inherent in observation, we form general ideas about substances on the basis of similarities and differences which we observe (a position similar to Edinger's proposal of empirical intuited principles) but (unlike Edinger) he then examines classification as a social construct. He writes that it is we who divide things up into kinds, we do not find them divided up for us by nature; "essences of the sorts of things, and consequently the sorting of things, is the workmanship of the understanding" (Locke 43). The similarity to Jarrett's interpretation of the Sophists' position is striking. Locke is arguing that sorting and classification, activities which are vital to western rational thought, are done through the windows of cultural paradigms.

Locke on the Rhetorical Nature of Reality

As Locke develops his ideas concerning substance, his stance on the rhetorical nature of reality becomes clearer. He differentiates our idea of substance into nominal essences and real essences, and concludes that our ideas of substance are in fact abstract ideas, or

nominal essences, which do not necessarily correspond to real essences. "It being evident that things are ranked under names into sorts or species only as they agree to certain abstract ideas, the essence of each genus, or sort, comes to nothing but that abstract idea which the general, or sortal, . . . name stands for" (Locke 270). Locke then differentiates the nature of the names of substances from the nature of the names of mixed modes in a way that I suggest is not only inconsistent with his argument of nominal essences, but also with his previously noted suspicions concerning our knowledge of patterns of existence.

The Similarities Between
Nominal Essences in Substances and Mixed Modes

Locke writes that because substance has an existential referent, we can know that our ideas concerning them are correct if they agree with things as they actually are; mixed modes, lacking this referent, cannot be known with this certainty. This position is contradicted more than once throughout the essay, and I will draw on Woozeley's explanation that the length of time it took Locke to write this text partially explains "the many inconsistencies . . . it contained . . . [A] more important cause was the fact that Locke was feeling his way in what was a new approach to philosophy, and that consequently he was consistently amending and amplifying his first thoughts" (Locke 10). I suggest that it is not inconsistent with Locke's main ideas to suggest that nominal essences in substances work in much the same way as nominal essences in mixed modes; as he himself argues, despite substance having a separate existence from the mind, we have no sure knowledge of existential referents.

Knowledge Neither True nor False, only Relational

On the subject of mixed modes, Locke proposes that as they are complex ideas with no existential referent, they can never be true or false, only relational to other men's use of the word signifying the complex idea: "when a man is thought to have a false idea of justice, or gratitude, or glory, it is for no other reason but that his agrees not with the ideas which each of those names are the signs of in other men" (Locke 32). Thus. I disagree with Edinger's interpretation of Locke's position as distrusting all empirical science and only validating moral inquiry because mixed modes, being purely ideal, can be universally known (Edinger 43). Locke always places the knowledge precise definition can give within the twin nexes of time and place. Edinger does acknowledge this aspect of Locke's argument, though he withholds the realisation of it from Locke: "Yet [Locke's] exhaustive analysis of the difficulties involved in fixing the meaning of the mixed modes, and especially in communicating them with precision, may easily convince an unbiased reader that his faith in the possibilities of definition must be in large part misplaced" (Edinger 44). Edinger notes that later critics such as Johnson refuted Locke's ostensible belief in the universal knowledge of morality; I suggest that, despite undeniable inconsistencies in Locke's essay, his position was quite different.

The Complex Relationship Between Language and Classification

Locke's appreciation of the rhetorical nature of reality is evident throughout his essay. In connection to mixed modes (which I have extended to include the nominal essences of substances), Locke argues that the relationship between names and classifications is so close that it is difficult to conceive of sorting without also conceiving of a name to sort

under. "For it is by their names that men commonly regulate their account of their distinct species of mixed modes, seldom allowing or considering any number of simple ideas to make one complex one, but such collections as there be names for" (Locke 181). In other words, language is not only shaped by but also shapes classifications.

The contention that the nominal essences of substance can be considered in a similar manner to the nominal essences of mixed modes is supported by Locke's assertion that the nominal essence of a substance does not necessarily have to have a close correspondence with the unknown and unknowable real essence, especially as one of the cultural models interpreting perception is the idea of classification, and this idea is an arbitrary complex (mixed) mode. He writes:

> Since then it is evident that we sort and name substances by their nominal and not by their real essences, the next thing to be considered is how, and by whom, these essences come to be made. As to the latter, it is evident they are made by the mind, and not by nature; for were they Nature's workmanship, they could not be so various and different in several men as experience tells us they are. (Locke 291)

Unravelling the Ideology Hidden in "Nature"

As Locke develops his argument, he reaches the conclusion that, contrary to Aristotle's assertion, "species of artificial things [are] less confused than natural" (Locke 295). Locke's point is that the common belief in a straightforward correspondence between the nominal essence of substance and a natural existential referent obscures the actual nature of our knowledge about substance, which is based on cultural interpretations of perception. As mixed modes lack a grounding in "Nature," we are freer to analyse their definitions. The ideology is less hidden. I suggest that Locke's position is not a simple reversal of the Aristotelian binary concerning objects which are better known with respect

to themselves and those known with respect to our own perceptions, but rather that his argument collapses the binary, as the distinctions between the two types of knowledge break down.

It Is the Name That Preserves Essences

Locke places all of our access to knowledge within the confines of language. He proposes that

> it is the name that ties the Combination together, and makes it a species. The near relation that there is between species, essences and their general name, at least in mixed modes, will further appear when we consider that it is the name that seems to preserve those essences, and give them their lasting duration. . . . Though therefore it is the mind that makes the collection, it is the name which is as it were the knot that ties them fast together. (Locke 281)

Locke is pushing toward a realisation of the power of language to restrict agency. If sorting is an arbitrary activity that takes place through language (note Locke's previous comment on the difficulty of sorting something under a category that has never been named), and if mixed modes are preserved through naming, the difficulty of trying to create and sort a complex idea under a category which hegemonic language has never named becomes clear.

Universality Belongs Not To Things Themselves

Locke sums up the implications of his investigation as follows: "universality belongs not to things themselves, which are all of them particular in their existence, even those words and ideas which in their significance are general. The signification they have is nothing but a relation that, by the mind of man, is added to them" (Locke 267-68). Even in the case of substances, he writes that

nature makes many particular things, which agree one with another in
many sensible qualities, and probably too in their internal constitutions; but
it is not this real essence that distinguishes them into species; it is men
who, taking occasion from the qualities they find united in them, and
wherein they observe often several individuals to agree, range them into
sorts, in order to their naming, for the convenience of comprehensive signs.
(Locke 294-95)

The correlations of this argument to that proposed several centuries later by Judith Butler

are very interesting. Before this discussion shifts to Butler, however, I will examine

Locke's thoughts on identity, as that subject is very important to Butler's work.

Absolute Terms Often Stand for Relations

Locke follows up his ideas on "relation" and notes that there are many relative terms

"which are not looked on to be . . . relative . . .; which yet, under the form and

appearance of signifying something absolute in the subject, do conceal a tacit, though less

observable, relation" (Locke 201). In fact, he concludes that "absolute terms often stand

for relations" (Locke 206). These ruminations of relation become quite interesting when

added to Locke's thought on identity.

Identity As a Relational Construct

On the subject of identity, Locke writes that "consciousness alone makes Self"; self

(identity) is separate from the physical body (Locke 218). He proposes that "as far as any

intelligent being can repeat the idea of any past action with the same consciousness it had

of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present action, so far it is the

same personal self" (Locke 213). For the most part, Locke only discusses changes in

"personal self" in the context of a person forgetting past actions or acting while insane;

however, he does briefly speculate that "if it be possible for the same man to have distinct

incommunicable consciousness at different times, it is past doubt the same man would at different times make different persons" (Locke 217). This speculation, added to Locke's ideas of identity--as separate from the physical body, consisting of the relations between memory and present consciousness and governed by repetition--brings Locke close to Butler's idea of identity being a relation between different cultural matrices the body is situated in at a particular place and time.

Butler on Binary Thinking

In *Gender Trouble,* Butler examines the concept of binary thinking and concludes that it is a cultural construction. She suggests that theorists who wish to disrupt binary oppositions by equalising the value of the two terms (because they object to one half of these pairs being more heavily weighted than the other) would accomplish more disruption if they attempt instead to subvert binary thinking in general. She focuses upon the binary opposition "masculine/feminine" to show that "the binary regulation of sexuality suppresses the subversive multiplicity of a sexuality that disrupts heterosexual, reproductive, and medicojuridical hegemonies" (Butler 19).

Gender and Sexuality: Collapsing the Binary

Butler notes the way that some feminist thought has separated gender from sexuality in order to argue that there may be only two sexes but the genders that we connect with those sexes are in fact cultural constructions and bear no necessary connection to sexuality (Butler 29). She acknowledges that this separation is done in order to address gender disparity, but suggests it is in fact a backward move which in the long run will enforce binary thinking (and the injustices generated from this thinking) because it leaves the

binary opposition of sexuality (male/female) untouched. Butler proposes that this binary

pair is just as constructed as that of gender, and, therefore, gender and sexuality are

indeed the same thing, though not in the same terms that conservative critics may

maintain. She writes that to argue otherwise (as in to suggest that there is an essential

"precultural" femaleness that the patriarchy has covered over) "tends not only to serve

culturally conservative aims, but to constitute an exclusionary practice within feminism,

precipitating precisely the kind of fragmentation that the ideal purports to overcome"

(Butler 36). This fragmentation occurs because of the difficulty in defining an "essential"

femaleness which women from different classes, cultures and races accept. Butler's own

suggestion is to accept that there is no essential femaleness or maleness, that there is no

biological truth to the classification of people as only male or female.

Butler's Arguments have Conjunctions to those of Foucault and Locke

Butler draws upon the work of Foucault to support her argument on sexuality; Locke's

general propositions on universality and the boundaries of species support her argument

equally well. Butler quotes Foucault in his *The History of Sexuality* as follows:

> the notion of "sex" made it possible to group together, in an
> artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions,
> conducts, sensations and pleasures, and it enabled one to
> make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an
> omnipresent meaning: sex was thus able to function as
> unique signifier and as a universal signified. (Foucault 154;
> Butler 92)

Compare this idea to Locke's proposal that "universality belongs not to things themselves

. . . The signification they have is nothing but a relation that, by the mind of man, is

added to them" and to his proposal that nature makes particular substances and it is men

who use complex ideas. not real essences. to range those substances into sorts. It seems that Butler, Foucault and Locke share some critical assumptions about the classification of substances, a classification that includes sex identification. and about the nature of "causal processes" as non-transparent and socially based. Butler's own contribution to the discussion of this issue is: "These numerous [body] features gain social meaning and unification through their articulation within the category of sex. In other words, 'sex' imposes an artificial unity on an otherwise discontinuous set of attributes. As both discursive and perceptual, 'sex' denotes an historically contingent epistemic regime, a language that forms perception by forcibly shaping the interrelationships through which physical bodies are perceived" (Butler 114). Again, I draw attention to Locke's proposals on the reciprocal relationship between the mind and perception and between language and classification in order to indicate the similarities in these two theorists' arguments.

Repetition as a Naturalising Agent

Both Butler and Locke suggest that culturally constructed complex ideas become naturalised to most people. Locke writes that

> "some of our ideas have a natural correspondence and connexion one with another; it is the office and excellency of our reason to trace these. and hold them together in that union . . . Besides this, there is another connexion of ideas wholly owing to chance or custom. Ideas that in themselves are not all of kin come to be so united in some men's minds that it is very hard to separate them. Custom settles habits of thinking in misunderstanding. as well as of determining in the will, and of the motions in the animal spirits, which, once set a-going, continue in the same steps they have been used to, which, by often treading. are worn into a smooth path, and the motion in it becomes easy, and as it were natural . . . That which thus captivates their reasons, and leads men of sincerity blindfold from common sense, will, when examined, be found to be what we are speaking of; some independent ideas, of no alliance to one another, are, by

education, custom and the constant din of their party so coupled in their minds that they always appear together. (Locke 251, 254)

The similarity of this argument to Butler's more specific contentions on gender are marked. Like Locke, she argues that it is a certain kind of repetition that paints artificial constructs as natural; "the power regimes of heterosexism and phallagocentrism seek to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysic, and their naturalized ontologies"--not so different an argument from education, custom and the constant din of a party! (Butler 32).

Discrete Polar Identities: Consolidating Hegemonic Power Paradigms

However, Locke and Butler differ when ascribing cause to this phenomenon. Locke writes that classification is the result of "the convenience of comprehensive signs," and the naturalisation of artificial constructs is the result of laziness (Locke 254). Butler explores these concepts in much more detail. As above noted, she proposes that patriarchal power regimes (she always stresses the plurality of patriarchies) enforce the repetition of paradigms of logic which fix their bases of power in place and remove the paradigms themselves as sites of analysis. Thus,

> discrete genders are part of what "humanizes" individuals within
> contemporary culture; indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do
> their gender right. Because there is neither an "essence" that gender
> expresses nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because
> gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender,
> and, without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is . . . a
> construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit agreement to
> perform, produce and sustain discrete genders as cultural fictions and polar
> genders is obscured by the credibility of those productions--and the
> punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction
> "compels" our belief in its necessity and naturalness. (Butler 140)

Butler argues that discrete and polar genders serve an ideological purpose; they depend upon an expulsion of an other in order to define themselves. She writes, "as Iris Young has suggested in her use of Kristeva to understand sexism, homophobia, and racism, the repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality and/or color is an 'expulsion' followed by a 'repulsion' that founds and consolidates culturally hegemonic identities along sex/race/sexuality axes of differentiation" (Butler 133). Butler suggests that the idea of "essential" differences is crucial to maintaining these culturally hegemonic identities as the only available options; the removal of paradigms as sites of analysis is critical to maintaining the dominant (currently western and rational) models as seemingly natural and therefore inevitable selections.

Identity As Always a Repetitive Performance.

Butler does not suggest that we should or could stop the repetition of actions that form gender identity. Indeed, she writes that gender identity, which she thinks is the basis of identity itself, will always be the result of repetitive performances. We cannot attempt to alter current gender configurations by stepping out of culture to something "precultural" because there is nothing precultural. "There is no self that is prior to the convergence or who maintains 'integrity' prior to its entrance into [the] conflicted cultural field" (Butler 145). Subversion of patriarchal systems, then, can only lie in "subversive repetition [that] call[s] into question the regulatory practice of identity itself," thus allowing for the configuration of equally performative but different identities (Butler 32). One of Butler's political targets is identity politics, and she counters possible objections from adherents to this camp by proposing that "the deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction

of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated" (Butler 148). Thus, for Butler, the proper target for feminists is binary thinking itself, as this classification system creates the idea of binary sex, which equals the conservative idea of gender, which equals conservatively regulated identities. And one way to disrupt binary thinking is to perform identities which do not fit into a simple binary opposition.

Dissonant and Denaturalised Performance

Butler further examines the notion of performance in relation to identity. She suggests that the illusion of gender is produced through the stylisation of the body; body costumes, gestures, movements and other styles give the illusion of an abiding gendered self. "This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial [humanist] model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as constituted social temporality" (Butler 140). Butler concludes that performative acts which show that "the 'real' and the 'sexually factic' are phantasmatic constructions--illusions of substance--that bodies are compelled to approximate but never can," are subversive repetitions (Butler 146). "Just as bodily surfaces are enacted as the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself" (Butler 146).

Agency: A Variation on a Repetition

Butler argues that this subversive repetition can lead to political reform. She writes:

> As a process, signification harbors within itself what the epistemological discourse refers to as 'agency.' The rules that govern intelligible identity, i.e. that restrict the intelligible assertion of an 'I,' the rules that are partially constructed along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory

heterosexuality, operate through repetition. Indeed, when the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity. The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency,' then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. (Butler 145)

Note how different this formulation of regulated discourse is from that of Trimpi, where

grammar appeared to be intuitively "true."

Butler's examples of subversive repetition focus on drag shows and different

homosexual identities. However, she also has a brief but interesting discussion on

masquerade as a site of subversive repetition, a discussion I will take up later in relation

to specific plays.

Métissage: An Examination of Tyranny

Butler's interest in disrupting binary thinking, and the sophistic (and Grassi's) challenge

to the primacy of rational logic are also to be found in the work of Françoise Lionnet,

particularly in *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*. Like Jarrett and

Grassi, she too is interested in exploring language's "meaningful connections, disjunctions,

overlaps, or exclusions" (Jarrett 14-15). Lionnet uses the word *métissage* to explain a

type of discourse structure that examines "the tyranny of rationalism, the conflicts of

consciousness, and the symbolic structures that artificially order perception, feelings,

selfhood" (Lionnet 20). *Métissage* has been coined from the French word *métis*. "It

derives etymologically from the Latin *mixtus*, 'mixed,' and its primary meaning refers to

cloth made of two different fibres . . . it is a neutral term with no animal or sexual

implication" (Lionnet 14). Lionnet further explains that *métis* has a homonym in Greek

(*metis*), which refers to an allegorical figure for a power which opposes transparency. "It

is a form of savoir faire which resists symbolization within a coherent or homogenous

conceptual system since it is also the power to undo the logic and clarity of concepts"

(Lionnet 14). Finally, she notes that *Metis* is also a proper name: she was the wife of

Zeus and had the power of transformation. Zeus swallowed her to subjugate her power.

Lionnet suggests this myth is a fitting metaphor for how a literate hegemonic Western

society has colonised and swallowed *métis* discourse practices. Indeed, this metaphor

sheds light on the changes the word *métis* acquires when it travels from European French

usage to a Canadian context: when *Métis* refers specifically to the people generated from

the mingling of white colonialists **and** native Indians, the neutrality of a mixed fibre

metaphor is largely replaced with racial (and racist) overtones.

Weaving: Privileging the Intermediary Spaces

Métissage, then, is a discourse associated with weaving, with transformation, and with the

power to disrupt logic and clarity. Lionnet writes that this last attribute is necessary as

western rational discourses (of which logic and clarity are key concepts) are made up of

binary oppositions, and *métissage* can be an analytical tool to bring about "egalitarian

interrelations in which binary impasses are deconstructed" (Lionnet 5). The disruption

comes from "privileging (more or less explicitly) the intermediary spaces where

boundaries become effaced and Manichean categories collapse into each other" (Lionnet

18). *Métissage* discourse allows denotative and connotative layers of the text to

undermine, contradict, sabotage, reinforce or strengthen each other, depending upon the

way they are stitched together. I think the similarities to Jarrett's interpretation of sophistic rhetorical strategies are interesting, and both concepts are linked to the power of weaving as a compositional method. Linda Woodbridge connects this view of weaving with that of patchwork: both styles break down narrative material into small pieces in order to reassemble those pieces into a new narrative whole which takes its meaning from the conjunctions and disjunctions of the overlapping pieces.

The Power of Patchwork

In "Patchwork: Piecing the Early Modern Mind In England's First Century of Print Culture," Linda Woodbridge explores the metaphorical power of patchwork and weaving in a way that complements Lionnet's definition of *métissage*. Woodbridge points out that "breaking in pieces to promote new life partakes of ancient magical thinking," and "patchwork and quilting--joining pieces, joining layers--are old and magical" (Woodbridge 221). The magic Woodbridge refers to is the belief that "objects gather power from re-use" (Woodbridge 20). She cites as an example the idea found in some cultures that a garment made from many animals combines their vital sources, and notes that "as recent oral history shows, quilting is still seen as drawing power from many sources" (Woodbridge 23, 26). Viewed in this light, the recycling of diverse pieces of discourse is empowering.

Patchwork as Composition

Woodbridge also traces the long association between such reaggregation crafts as patchwork and weaving, and language. She writes that weaving is an old metaphor for storytelling, and "sometimes the early Greek artists are described as *rhapsodoi* or 'weavers

of songs'" (Woodbridge 30, 31). She notes that B. Gentili says that "'*rhaptein*' is a concrete metaphor for the process of composition, describing the operation by which the strands or web of discourse are woven together" (Woodbridge 31; *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece*, 7). And specifically in regard to rhetoric, Woodbridge explores how the various myths of power through dismemberment were used by Neoplatonists "to symbolise the descent of the One into the Many, followed by its Resurrection, when the Many are recollected into the One" (Woodbridge 18). I propose that the Sophists, by changing the concept of "*the* One" to "*a* One," drew even more power from reaggregation: dismemberment and recollection are part of the continuous process of forming temporary comic resolutions in a rhetorical reality.

Dramatic Patchwork: Joining the Layers

In regard to drama, Woodbridge argues that the conjunctions and disjunctions of the overlapping pieces give some of the meaning to the reaggregated whole. She gives the example of mystery plays as pieces of the bible broken down into small units for reaggregation into a play sequence, "the units reproducing the structure of the craft guilds which acted the plays: a dramatic structure modelled directly on a social structure" (Woodbridge 12). She also proposes that in Renaissance drama, the stitching together of pre-used plots allowed meaning to come not only narratively, but also from the layers: synchronically from the using of several tales, and diachronically from the "heir loom" power of each tale (Woodbridge 29). It is these synchronic and diachronic layers of meaning Lionnet is drawing upon when she argues that a *métissage* compositional structure allows an examination of the gaps between strands of discourses.

What in the history of thought may be seen as confusion
or an overlapping is often the precise moment of the
dramatic impulse: since it is because the meanings and experiences are uncertain
and complex that the
dramatic mode is more powerful, includes more than could
any narrative or exposition. (Raymond Williams 72)

William's statement emphasises what I will explore in the following chapters: drama by

its very nature is well suited to the sorts of explorations Grassi, Jarrett, Locke, Butler and

Lionnet engage in. In the following chapters, I will explore in relation to specific plays

the structural implications of Grassi's suggestion that the interpretation of the different

meanings of the same term in various contexts allows us to experience the metaphorical

and rhetorical character of the term, and that every actor in the great theatre of the world

has his true identity only for the part which has been assigned to him in the game of our

world; Jarrett's suggestion that illuminating meaningful connections, disjunctions,

overlaps, or exclusions in discourse leads to temporary comic resolutions that

acknowledge the rhetorical nature of reality; and Lionnet's concept of *métissage* as a

method of disrupting binary thinking by examining the spaces between patchwork

elements. This exploration will illustrate how the dramatic structures used by my chosen

playwrights allow them to challenge certain hegemonic structures such as gender identity,

a challenge that contains an embedded notion of the function of rhetoric in shaping

reality.

DEFAMILIARISING THE FAMILIAR

Atypical Types

The focus of this and the following chapters is upon dramatic structures found in the material of my selected playwrights which work to destabilise certain hegemonic gender identities and narrative patterns. The primary area of exploration for this chapter is the employment of stock character types in a deliberately defamiliarising fashion in order to interrupt, rather than meet, audience expectations concerning those roles. This disruption emphasises that the binary oppositions underlying many dramatic conventions are not produced naturally but rather are cultural constructions and thus open to change. My analysis will focus upon the work of Mary Pix, Delarivier Manley, Caryl Churchill and John Webster. To begin, I will look at some snippets of discourse involving gender from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially as expressed by playwrights, in order to add detail to the design of my patchwork of authors.

Renaissance Dramatists and Women's Facelifts

The work of Christina Luckyj and Linda Woodbridge bolsters my selection of Webster as a Renaissance playwright concerned with gender issues. Luckyj writes in the notes to her book, *The Winter's Snake: Dramatic Form in the Tragedies of John Webster*, that "Webster's treatment of both his minor and his major female characters reflects a general trend in the drama of the second decade of the seventeenth century. Dramatists increasingly overturned stereotyped images of women, and, as Woodbridge notes, 'even the image of prostitutes underwent a face-lifting in the drama'" (Luckyj 159; Woodbridge

1984 p. 261). As Luckyj also notes, recent scholarship on Shakespeare's plays reveals a persistent thread of destabilisation of many roles, including those of women (Luckyj xx, 80, 87). My pinpointing of a design of exploration of gender issues in Webster's compositions fits within Luckyj's and Woodbridge's socio-historical patterns of early seventeenth century drama. There is even stronger evidence to illustrate that gender issues were very much on the minds of writing women and critical thinkers in the later seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

Cavendish: An Early Patchwork Poet

In Margaret Cavendish's work: *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess, The Lady Marchioness of Newcastle*, (1662), she discusses her method of composition. with some particularly illuminating pieces on patchwork and on grammar as a cultural construct. In her beginning addresses to the Readers, Cavendish first discusses her choice of structure, specifically noting that she has chosen not to fashion her plays after the neo-Aristotelian classical model. She writes:

> Although I expect my Playes will be found fault with, by reason I have not drawn the several persons presented in a Circular line, or to a triangular point, making all the Actors to meet at the latter end upon the Stage in a flock together; likewise, that I have not made my Comedies of one dayes actions or passages; yet I have adventured to publish them to the World .
> . . . for Poets are to describe in Playes, the several Ages, Times, Actions, Fortunes, Accidents and Humours in Nature, and the several Customs, Manners. Fashions and Speeches in Men: thus Playes are to present the natural Dispositions and Practices of Mankind. (Cavendish A4)

Clearly. Cavendish views plays in terms of a multiplicity of themes, and it is very interesting that she views play composition in terms of patchwork metaphors, as is illustrated in such a passage as: "I like as a poor taylor was forced to all my self, as to

cut out, shape, join, and sow each scene together, without any help or direction; wherefore I fear they are not so well done but that there will be many faults found; but howsoever, I did my best endeavour, and took great pains in the ordering and joining thereof, . . ." (Cavendish A10). Although Cavendish sounds somewhat apologetic here as to her "best endeavour," she strongly defends her ability to compose in her commentary on the conventions of grammar.

Cavendish on Grammar: A Clear Tie to Grassi

In a further address to the Readers, Cavendish explores the cultural construction of grammar, and in particular, the gendering of nouns. She writes:

> I know there are many Scholastical and Pedantical persons that will condemn my writings, because I do not keep strictly to the Masculine and Feminine Genders . . . . but I know no reason but that I may as well make them Hees for my use, as others did Shees, Shees as others did Hees . . . so that if my writings be understood, I desire no more; and as for the niceties of Rules, Forms, and Terms, I renounce, and profess, that if I did understand and know strictly, as I do not, i would not follow them. (Cavendish A11)

That Cavendish's own gender was a problem if she desired to describe herself by the noun "playwright" is dramatically illustrated in the introduction to her collection of plays. Three gentlemen discuss a play by a woman, and one criticises the piece in terms that may explain Cavendish's disdain of gender rules in writing.

> II Gentleman:　　A Woman write a Play! Out upon, out upon it, for it cannot be good, besides you say she is a lady, which is the likelier to make the Play worse, a woman and a lady to write a Play; fye, fye. (Cavendish "Introduction")

The problems women playwrights faced from such structures as grammar are even more strikingly illustrated in criticism levelled at another generation of female writers--one that includes Pix and Manley.

'Tis False Grammar

Pix and Manley were part of a group of women playwrights who arrived upon the theatrical scene in the season of 1695-96. Constance Clarke, in *Three Augustan Playwrights*, argues that their collective accomplishment in successfully breaking into the theatre was due to the "secession of Thomas Betterton and the majority of the leading players from the United Company, which resulted in the co-existence and competition between two rival theatres, opening up a market for new plays" (Clarke 20-21). This influx of women into a hitherto fairly closed club (though Aphra Behn had previously most successfully breached its defences) did not go unremarked. In *A Comparison Between The Two Stages* (attributed to Charles Gildon), in a piece which recalls Cavendish's three gentlemen discussing her play, three wits discuss a woman playwright:

> Critick: Sir I tell you we are abused: I hate these Petti-coat-
> Authors; 'tis false grammar, there's no feminine for the
> Latin word, 'tis entirely of the Masculine Gender, and the
> language won't bear such a thief as She-Author. ([Gildon]
> 26)

The Critick invokes grammar as a first principle in order to construct writing as a naturally gendered activity and "author" as a naturally gendered noun. From this standpoint, a woman attempting to identify herself as a writer can only be unnatural, and indeed other criticism directed at female writers concentrated on their "unnaturalness"-- most often discussed in terms of sexuality. In *A Journal from Parnassus* (1688), an

anonymous contribution reads as follows: "Apollo seeing a body of a more than female

size wrapt up in Hoods and Petticoats . . . was about to appoint a Committee of Muses

to examine her sex: . . . In short, since her Works had neither Witt enough for Man, nor

Modesty enough for a Woman, she was to be look'd upon as an Hermaphrodite, and

consequently not fit to enjoy the Benefits and Privileges of either Sex, much less of this

society" (*JFP* 25-27). This sort of criticism had its analogy on the stage, where the

intellectual woman became "a new Jonsonian humour in the comedies of the time--a

female fop, affected, arrogant, her self-esteem far in excess of her capacity" (Clarke 12).

However, several writers of the era, including some female playwrights, criticised the use

of "natural" gender categories to exclude women from education and writing.

A Defence of the Sex

Several tracts were published which defended women's intellectual capacities on the

grounds that such deficiencies as may have been frequently noticed were the results of the

differences in education between men and women, not any natural inadequacy. Clarke

lists Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True

and Greatest Interest* (1664); Daniel Defoe's *Essays Upon Several Projects* (1697);

William Walsh's *A Dialogue Concerning Women, Being a Defence of the Sex* (1691); and

An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex (1696), attributed to Judith Drake, as works that

advocate women's education and academies. Mary Astell specifically argues that

"ignorance is the cause of most feminine vices" (Clarke 10). Clarke notes that Charles

Gildon, in his continuation of *Langbaine's English Dramatic Poets*, applies a similar

argument to women's success in the theatre. In reference to Manley, he writes: "The

Lady has very happily distinguished herself from the rest of her sex, and gives us living proof of what we might reasonably expect from Womankind, if they had the benefit of those artificial improvements of Learning the Men have when by mere Force of Nature they so much excel" (Clarke 142; Gildon 90-91). The women playwrights themselves perceived much of the criticism levelled against them as socially and culturally based, rather than resting upon "natural" logic.

The Bare Name of Being a Woman's Play Damn'd It

In *Women Playwrights in England,* Nancy Cotton reviews several female playwrights' attitudes toward their own roles. She notes that Catherine Trotter used her dedication to Lady Harriet Godolphin of *The Revolution of Sweden* to argue that France's ability to produce intellectual women who successfully attended educational academies (and even breached traditionally male societies) had its basis in societal attitudes to women; Trotter writes: "This [ability] without doubt is not from any Superiority of their [women's] Genius to ours; But from the much greater encouragement they receive . . . " (Cotton 109). Delarivier Manley was very outspoken on the artificial nature of gender roles. In her autobiography, *The Adventures of Rivella,* under the guise of Sir Charles Lovemore, she writes: "'If she had been a Man, she had been without Fault: But the Charter of that Sex being much more confin'd than ours, what is not a Crime in Man is scandalous and unpardonable in Woman, as She herself has very well observ'd in divers Places, throughout her own Writings'" (*Rivella* 7-8). Manley credited this narrowly defined women's charter as having a negative impact upon her career. In regard to her play, *The Lost Lover,* she argues: "I think my Treatment much severer than I deserved: I am

satisfied that the bare Name of being a Woman's Play damn'd it beyond its own want of

Merit" (Cotton 86). Mary Pix made a contribution to the topic in the poem she produced

for Sarah Fyge-Egerton's *Poems on Several Occasions*, in part of which she writes:

> Mankind had long upheld the learned way
> And Tyrant Custom forced us to obey.
> Thought, Art and Science did to them belong,
> And to assert Ourselves deemed wrong. (Clarke 198)

Unsurprisingly, in Pix's own plays, "Tyrant Custom" regarding gender roles is often one

of the themes.

Women Players in Male Arenas

Mary Pix's *The Innocent Mistress* examines the ability of women to become players in

traditionally male arenas of power, including sexual and economic games and the domain

of writing itself. She does so by placing what appear to be immediately recognisable

types in stock situations on the stage, but then reversing many of the expectations

surrounding those types, thus engaging in a dialogue with earlier texts which resists

unproblematically following the conventions of those texts, a technique Lionnet describes

as central to her concept of *métissage* (Lionnet 4-5). Pix's manipulation of comic

conventions places their terms in different contexts, disrupts their definitions, and reminds

us of Grassi's argument that meaning is always rhetorical and metaphorical, and disclosed

in terms of constantly new configurations of reality.

Presumptuous Poetess

In "Presumptuous Poetess, Pen-Feathered Muse: The Comedies of Mary Pix," Juliet

McLaren proposes that Mary Pix's *The Innocent Mistress* is a burlesque of many

contemporary plays (McLaren 95). To support this contention, she analyses the

relationship between some of the social changes in the *fin de siècle* and the plays of the same period. She argues that such changes as legal separation and divorce (after 1697) and the more general access to and desire for education by women contributed to a rapidly changing social reality (McLaren 86). One of the responses to these changes was a call for moral reform, including a refinement of gender roles. Robert Gould's *The Playhouse* (1685) was a typical example of antifeminist rhetoric directed against women associated with the theatre and with writing. "This work contains a text which attacks women as actors, writers and members of the theater audiences for their 'whoring,' lewdness, dirtiness, and bad breath. In this same volume Gould includes another poem on the specific immorality of women writers in which he says, 'Their verses are as vicious as their tails / Both are exposed alike to public view'" (McLaren 88-89). On the stage, comic conventions such as women's uncontrollable sexual appetites, dishonesty, greed, helplessness, passivity, and competitive relationships with each other dominated the plays of D'Urfey, Southerne, Cibber, Vanbrugh and Crowne. McLaren proposes that Pix alters these comic conventions in order to mount a defence against these sorts of antifeminist attacks, particularly against educated women (McLaren 88).

Rearranging the Old and the New: Pix's Patchwork

McLaren writes that Pix rearranges old and new comic devices to counter the argument found in many earlier and contemporary plays that a "lack of learning and a limited experience of the world make women somehow more moral and attractive" (McLaren 91). Pix's manipulation of such stock types as the witty heroine, imprisoned heiress, educated lady, untutored raw girl, vulgar older wife, clever lady's maid, kept woman, heroic lover,

virtuous damsel and rake allows her to expose these conventions as just that, and to superimpose her own vision of women working together to open up space in which to enter traditionally male fields of power.

The Helpless Rake and Other Characters

McLaren's analysis of *The Innocent Mistress* (1697) constructs Sir Charles as the wronged husband, the virtuous partner of an unhappy marriage--a type more commonly formulated as the wife (McLaren 90-93). Pix distinguishes this reversal from the misogynist tradition of the shrewish wife by having frequent jokes concerning Sir Charles' excuse of a headache in order to avoid sex with his wife. Sir Charles also functions as a Petrarchan romantic lover, and this mixture of masculine and feminine attributes not incidentally disturbs the binary opposition masculine/feminine--gender roles for both men and women are not clear cut in this play. Not only does Charles Beauclair dispense with libertine characteristics, but the ostensible rake of the play finds them in short supply as well. Though Wildlove indulges in some typical antifeminist rhetoric, his actions in regard to Mrs. Beauclair so far avoid misogynist connotations that he finds himself in the unusual position of the helpless rake--an interesting variation on the helpless virgin (McLaren 93). One of the helpless virgins of the play, Bellinda, breaks with that convention by independently fleeing to London to live under an assumed name in order to escape an unhappy marriage. Young women in trouble more commonly retired to the country; Bellinda's action calls to mind a young man fleeing debts (McLaren 92). And Peggy, the spoiled selfish grasping young girl, "wants adult freedom more than sex or money-- another reversal" (McLaren 94).

Women Working in Concert

McLaren uses the interaction between Peggy and Mrs. Beauclair in the last act to illustrate her point that Pix focuses upon women working together, rather than competing with each other (McLaren 95). Previously in the play, Mrs. Beauclair befriended both Bellinda and Arabella; however, as both are considered to be virtuous by everyone in the play except Lady Beauclair, this friendship is not surprising. Her decision to gather her friends to rally around Peggy is more unusual. To Spendall's request that Mrs. Beauclair intercede to defend his and Peggy's marriage, she replies: "Ay, ay, we'll all speak for ye" (321). Mrs. Beauclair's generosity is extended to Mrs. Flywife and even to Lady Beauclair, both of whom have abused her in the play. She directs Wildlove to "save [Mrs. Flywife] . . . Return her ring, that may help console her," and when Lady Beauclair exits the scene in a rage, she instructs Arabella: "Let's follow and appease her" (325, 326). Many of Pix's female characters, and in particular Mrs. Beauclair, befriend other women in need and attempt to educate them, thereby breaking the link between education and immoral women dramatic convention of the day had established (McLaren 95). Pix creates a clear alternative to this convention when she has Beaumont praise Bellinda by saying: "How strong are the efforts of honour where a good education grounds the mind in virtue" (297).

The Verge of Innocence

Pix's manipulation of comic conventions, particularly those involving passive women, opens up space for women to act, and Mrs. Beauclair and Sir Francis most particularly illustrate Pix's interest in disrupting audience expectations concerning gender roles.

Although previous plays of the Restoration to some extent had disturbed the usual relationship between a rake and virtuous lady (for an illustration of this relationship, see the poetry of Sir John Suckling, the cavalier poet), the lady generally avoided passivity by shaping the action from the sidelines; that is, she did not attempt a major transformation of her own role, but rather that of the rake. In Etherege's *The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676), Harriet recasts Dorimant from the role of rake into that of honourable lover, particularly when she renames him Courtage (Etherege 178). However, Harriet recasts only the masculine role; though she acknowledges that performance is very important to her own position as lady of quality ("I will lean against this wall and look bashfully down upon my fan, while you, like an amorous spark, modishly entertain me"), she does not push against the confines of her part (Etherege 169-70). In contrast, Pix's heroine is not content to manipulate action from the sidelines. She insists upon becoming an active player in the sexual games upon the stage. Mrs. Beauclair provides an insight into her view of her role when she says to Bellinda: "I am wild to the very verge that innocence allows" (270). Undoubtedly, she is interested in the boundaries society has imposed upon her, and as the play unfolds, she is shown to push "the verge" further than most ladies were wont to do.

When Mrs. Beauclair realises she wants to know whether Sir Francis loves her, she decides to disguise herself as a woman of easy virtue (signalled by the wearing of a mask--a sign I will discuss in a later chapter) and to allow him to accost her in the park. Bellinda is horrified: "You will not, sure" (287). Mrs. Beauclair will, and does-- successfully. Far from incurring harm, she gathers the information she wants and is quite

appreciative of the attentions she receives from Sir Francis. As far as she is concerned, it is "no great harm neither to have a hearty hug from the man one loves" (287). A further illustration of Mrs. Beauclair's unconventional attitude toward female sexuality occurs later in the play, when she scolds Lady Beauclair by saying: "All virtue does not lie in chastity, though that's a great one" (294). Bellinda's chastisement for the park episode ("If you had come to any harm, madam, you might have thanked yourself") is a pointed reminder that Mrs. Beauclair's action in appropriating the role of a "loose" woman is a transgression: at a time when the passive and chaste madonna-like figure was the ideal for women, and the active sexual whore figure was often posed as the only alternative, Mrs. Beauclair chooses to be active and sexual without accepting the label of whore (287).

Thou Art a Mad Girl

Mrs. Beauclair's disturbance of the madonna/whore binary to which women were and are subject is successful partly because she is careful in her disruption: she convinces the men who are important to her to accept her transgression. Sir Charles says of her plan, "Well, thou art a mad girl but I dare trust thee" (285). Nevertheless, her madness is contagious: Sir Francis finds himself acting further and further from the role of libertine the more he encounters this unconventional woman. When Mrs. Beauclair decides that in order to tame her rake, she should be a better rake, she assumes the role of a sexual predator and stalks Wildlove's mistress--successfully. Sir Francis responds to this transgression, not by mourning his lost mistress but by thinking longingly of Mrs. Beauclair: "This unaccountable jilt [Mrs. Flywife] has so abused me I could find in my

heart to forsake the gang and lay a penitential dunce at the feet of virtue, fair Mrs. Beauclair" (305). Wildlove's description of his true love as the personification of virtue is a familiar trope, but his application of this trope to the very active Mrs. Beauclair is unusual. And upon finding out that the virtuous feet of the fair Mrs. Beauclair were the very ones which walked away with his mistress, Sir Francis begs pardon for his own frailties, and does not find any fault with the lady. In fact, he thinks: "Go thy ways for a pretty, witty, agreeable creature" and suggests that "this charming little Beauclair has me under a spell and I shall meet with nothing but disappointments till I submit to her" (307, 317). He accepts Mrs. Beauclair's foray into the male sexual arena and he himself adopts the language of submission more commonly associated with women. The disruptions in Wildlove's characterisation as a libertine are also illustrated when Mrs. Beauclair's derision of marriage ("Sir Francis, here's an excellent argument on your side, here's matrimony in its true colours") leads Sir Francis to play a role closer to a woman defending her sex than a ruthless rake (293-94). He refuses to take the opening handed to him and replies instead: "No Madam, [Lady Beauclair's] carriage is not a satire on the whole sex. It but sets off better wives" (294). Mrs. Beauclair's madness in refusing to accept traditional gender boundaries reverberates throughout the play, producing a rake who takes on certain feminine attributes without censure, thus disrupting further the masculine/feminine category.

Pix: A Female Wit

In fact, Mrs. Beauclair's actions reverberate beyond the action of the play itself; the plot moves in other spaces than linear--Pix's stitchwork incorporates her own position as

author into the play's exploration of gender categories. The theme of women encroaching upon male arenas of power is extended beyond the confines of the play when Pix associates Mrs. Beauclair with a female author. She has Spendall insult Mrs. Beauclair by accusing her of being a writer. He sneers, "I said, a she-wit was as great a wonder as a blazing star and, as certainly foretold the world's turning upside down. Yet, spite of that, the lady will write" (273). The insult is especially noticeable because the lady denies she is a writer and there is no evidence to suppose that she is lying. Pix clearly wants to emphasise that writing is considered a male arena and female encroachment into this area stirs up anger. As Mrs. Beauclair's gender transgressions are successful and empower her, and as associative logic extends her empowerment to Pix, the play as a whole works to denaturalise gender categories, particularly in regard to education and writing. Pix's stitchwork exhibits similar aspects to Lionnet's definition of *métissage*: both methods can be used as an analytical tool for deconstructing binary impasses in language. The play's weaving together of conventional types in unconventional ways helps Pix to examine many of the binary structures implicit in the dramatic conventions of her day and show them to be artificially constructed and capable of change.

Manley and Métissage

Like Pix's *The Innocent Mistress*, Manley's *Lucius: The First Christian King of England* (1717) resists the refinement of gender roles found in plays of moral reform. She too uses conventional characters and situations in unconventional ways to expose the naturalised binary oppositions underlying hegemonic identities and narrative patterns. The play is made of snippets of discourse from a wide variety of styles and sources, and the

synchronic and diachronic layers of meaning surrounding those snippets push the codes found in the different styles of language into artificiality. These synchronic and diachronic layers allow an examination of the gaps between strands of discourses, again recalling Lionnet's concept of *métissage*. Manley's characters shift constantly among such discourse modes as: oral epic, neoclassical heroic, romantic quest prosaic, Petrarchan romantic poetic, Shakespearean, classical mythic, folkloric, Greek tragic, Christian, Machiavellian, and anti-feminist. In the stitchwork joining these diverse pieces lies the meaning of her play.

Lucius: Torn In Two

Neoclassical heroic language is one of the discourse snippets found throughout the play, and Lucius--the son of the usurper to the English throne, Vortimer--is the character principally associated with this type of speech. Arminius, the corrupt prince, chides Lucius as follows:

> Why does my Lord, with Secret sorrow mourn,
> . . . When fortune crowns you with her choicest Favours?
> Makes you the Soldiers Pride, and Wish of Beauty?
> The Coldest Maid that ever grac'd a Court
> At your approach, drops all her haughty Airs. (1)

This type of description is commonly given to heroic sons in neoclassical heroic tragedies, one example being Corneille's *Le Cid*. Rodrigue's description is given as follows: "Young Don Rodrigue has a most noble countenance / In every feature speaks the man of courage / . . . . this young knight, / this valiant lover" (Corneille 2,4).

Like Rodrigue, Lucius is the epitome of the dutiful son in a patriarchal system, and, like Rodrigue, Lucius soon finds that his love for a woman can only exist in a state

of tension with his duties as a warrior. Manley emphasises this conflict by having Lucius

woo Rosalinda with the discourse of Petrarchan romantic love.

> Lucius: For you, I resign the foremost Rank in Fame
>   For you, I leave the Glories of a Crown . . . .
>   But she, regardless, pities not my Pain,
>   Or she ungrateful triumphs in r iy Ruin. (11)

The pull Lucius feels between following his emotions and his duty is clear: he views his

love in terms of resigning his position as heir to the throne, and the underlying thread of

blame and anger in his wooing speech becomes more understandable when placed next

to his duty as a warrior son.

Vortimer, or, Boasts and Peace Pledges

Lucius's feelings for the widowed captive queen place him in a state of conflict with his

father, Vortimer. Vortimer is associated with oral heroic epic--he is the conquering king

who boasts of his exploits and expects Rosalinda to be given to him as a peace pledge

between neighbouring kings. He strides into Honorius's castle, shouting:

> By us, and our brave Troops, thy Father vanquish'd,
> And drove the Roman Tyranny away.
> The Romans! who had, since great Cesar's Conquest,
> Left ye but titular Kings, and Gaul a Province. (15)

However, Honorius's deflating rejoinder--"I have heard the obligation"--illustrates that oral

epic traits will not fit neatly into this play (15). Not only does Vortimer have trouble

convincing Honorius to respect oral English tradition, he has trouble convincing himself

to accept the role of lover as well as fighter. His speech to Rosalinda reveals the conflict

he feels between these two identities: "On War, on Empire, all my Thoughts were fix'd,

/ 'Till thy malignant Form intruded here. / Give me my self!" (36). Vortimer's solution

is to rape Rosalinda. an answer that casts uncomfortable connotations on both the exchange of women as peace pledges and the valorisation of male desire over female self-determination.

Rosalinda and the Quest for Agency

Rosalinda, too, has difficulty reconciling the different discourse elements connected with her. She is associated with Christian ideals, as Lucius makes clear when he announces his conversion: "I am Christian, Follower of your Virtue" (10). Christianity appears to be in conflict with paganism, as Vortimer uses this conversion to condemn his son and daughter-in-law to death. This conflict goes against the synthesis of Christian and pagan attributes very common in the sixteenth century, a synthesis that tended to sublimate pagan ideals into Christian. Nevertheless, this Christian queen frequently invokes pagan mythical figures, as when she cries:

> One secret Pain, or one important Joy,
> To make the Royal Lucius ever mine!
> Or else, ye Pow'rs, contract my narrow Span:
> From your Eternal Loom tear short my thread;
> I cannot taste of Happiness without him. (14)

This invocation to the Fates is very odd for a Christian figure in a play which purports to place Christian against pagan, and it is especially odd for a Christian woman to speak of cutting short her life instead of passively accepting what God has chosen for her. It is difficult to resist pointing out the persistent thread imagery seen here and elsewhere in the play as revealing the actual site of meaning: Manley is deliberately emphasising the disjunctions between Christianity and paganism in terms of women's ability to act. Manley does not allow this comparison any stability, however. Though Rosalinda seeks

to avoid passivity through mythic language, Vortimer justifies his decision to rape her through the same language. Just before accosting the young woman, he explains, "Therefore, like Jove, disguised to gain our Love, / We veil our Majesty, and drop our Thunder. / The Queen appears! That glorious Prize is mine" (35). Rosalinda's difficulty in accessing a language that unproblematically allows her to be active is highlighted.

In her desire for agency, this Christian queen also turns to curses.   When Rosalinda is captured by Vortimer, who disregards the fact that she is married to his son, she cries:

> But for this impious King and me,
> War, Fire, Fury, Blood and Devastation
> Pursue us, as ye did my wretched Father;
> . . . And when ye come, I shall account it Gain,
> That the curs'd Briton suffers in my Pain. (43)

The curse is a weapon common to folklore, but for the queen, like classical myth, it has its limitations--in fairy tale, the speaker of a curse is usually a witch, or at the very least a bad fairy. She is seldom the representative of Christian virtue. Rosalinda's desire for agency places her in a state of tension with Christian discourse, a tension that is further complicated by the nuances associated with her chosen weapons.

Law of the Father: To Follow or Not to Follow?

Vortimer's determination to disregard Rosalinda's and Lucius's marriage also places Lucius in a difficult situation. Romantic tradition tells him he should rescue his true love from her ravisher. Neoclassical heroic tradition tells him he should obey his father, and oral epic and Greek classical traditions tell him parricide is always an unnatural and terrible act. When Lucius unknowingly kills his father while saving Rosalinda from a

rapist, Manley's patchwork blend of the different discourse traditions the young man has

been associated with throughout the play deliberately places him in an untenable position.

Lucius begins the fatal confrontation in the guise of the romantic lover saving his

true love:

> Stay ruffian, take thy Death from Lucius Hand.
> Where is my Rosalinda? . . . .
> My dearest Queen, the Ravisher's no more:
> The sordid, ignominious Slave is dead. (51)

His discourse undergoes a radical change, however, when he discovers that the "sordid,

ignominious Slave" is none other than his father. He cries in despair:

> Now he pulls down the righteous Veng'ance on me,
> Invokes the Thunder, and all-piercing Lightning.
> How full it glares on my defective Sight:
> . . . Down, down I sink to meet the Fate of Parracides:
> Avenge my Father's blood, Despair and Death:
> A King's, a Parent's Blood! Despair and Die! (51)

Lucius's abrupt switch in tone toward his father is never reconciled to the fact that the

king was in the process of raping Rosalinda when Lucius killed him; though a conflict

between the codes of honour and love is part of the definition of standard neoclassical

tragedy, seldom does the meaning of the code personified by the father become as

obviously incoherent as in this play. This incoherence is intentional: though Lucius's

language refers to both romantic and heroic traditions, the playwright's patchwork blend

of these conventions challenges their usual reception--Manley's discourse quilt contains

deliberately jarring motifs.

Another problem with Lucius's fine heroic (and Greek tragic) speech is that he is

now a Christian, a tradition which, of course, frowns upon despair and suicide. Rosalinda

points out this problem to Lucius (again illustrating that Manley is not attempting a synthesis of the two traditions in this play): "The Gates of Mercy are forever shut against Self-Murtherers" (52). He is aghast at the position these discourses placed side by side have put him in: "What, cut a Father's Thread, / And calmly wait the breaking of my own?" (52). Clearly, a heroic son can do no such thing, and equally clearly, a Christian man must do just that. The gaps between Lucius's various discourses are not only clearly revealed but appropriate the focus of the play.

The Design in the Patchwork

The various untenable positions within which the characters of the play have been placed reveal the actual design of Manley's patchwork. Her quilt of discourse snippets reveals a prince who is both a warrior son and a romantic lover, and a father who is both a king (the law) and a rapist (the criminal). It also shows a queen who is a chaste Christian symbol but who finds limited agency in pagan myth and folklore. These positions do not fit into simple binaries like: father/son; active/passive; Christian/pagan; masculine/feminine. Manley's patchwork reveals her interest in exploring how limited binary thinking can be, and how the weaving of several types of discourse together can disturb simple binaries.

Privileging the Gaps

Manley's stitchwork deliberately defies any logical attempt to make linear sense of all the separate pieces. The junctures between the snippets are plainly visible and meant to be so. The wholeness of the play comes from the discrepancy of its parts. This play interrupts received orthodox literary opinion by weaving together different traditions and

allowing the synchronic and diachronic layers of meaning associated with one discourse to undermine and sabotage the next. Her patchwork technique exposes the way that western scholarly discourses, when woven together, are not necessarily logical, and that classifications, when placed side by side, do not necessarily remain distinct. Man is not naturally separated from emotion, nor is woman naturally associated with passivity. Manley's play resists the hardening of gender roles that was taking place in the post-Collier world of the London stage.

Churchill: Cross-Stitch Casting

Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9* (1979) also exhibits a patchwork approach to structure, and she too investigates the artificiality of gender codes. Churchill's focus in this play is upon examining gender oppression, and on the way race and age work as intertwining oppressions. The first act is set in Victorian England, and it explores the codes of behaviour that many contemporary people associate with that era. Churchill weaves together disparate elements to create roles which allow her to analyse many of the binary oppositions underlying certain dramatic and social conventions. She uses cross-gender, cross-racial and cross-generational casting of characters to emphasise the artificiality of age, race and gender codes by which characters are confined and defined.

Some of the binary pairs which *Cloud 9* examines are: **masculine/feminine**; **straight/gay**; **white/coloured**; **adult/child**. The characters in Act One fill out these pairs nicely: **Clive/Betty**; **Clive/Harry**; **Clive/Joshua**; **Clive/Edward**. Clive's presence on the empowered side of each of these pairs illustrates that patriarchal power structures are sites of interest in the play. In her introduction to *Cloud 9*, Churchill writes that she uses

different types of cross-casting to emphasise the hierarchy of the oppositions. Betty is played by a man because she wants to be what men want her to be. In her opening speech, she says the whole aim of her life "is to be what [Clive] looks for in a wife" (251). She is a madonna figure, completely defined by the home. Harry says of her, "When I think of you I always think of you with Edward in your lap . . . And you are safety and light and peace and home" (260). Joshua is played by a white man to emphasise the way his identity is shaped by his desire to fit into a white patriarchal world. He announces that his "skin is black but oh [his] soul is white" (251). The same type of reasoning applies to the choice of the child, Edward, being played by an adult. Churchill further uses casting as means of exploring codes of representation by having the female child, Victoria, represented as a doll, which is how she is seen by the adults in her life.

Deconstruction: A Function of the Borderlands

The disparity revealed on the stage between the choice of actor for a role and the role itself emphasises the instability of identity. Churchill deliberately breaks the convention of unified role representation in order to show that the various constructions of difference, of "otherness" that the audience can identify on the stage are simply constructions, with no natural relationship to the physical body portraying the role. Nor is cross casting the only example of patchwork structure Churchill employs. Using a similar technique to Manley, she then blends different conventional discourses with the already unstable personas (due to the cross-casting) to show how blurry the borders between seemingly oppositional personas are. Betty disturbs her image of the madonna when she attempts to have an affair with Harry, declaring: "But I want to be dangerous" (261). Her fall

from "grace" has already been foreshadowed when Clive declares, "There is something dark about women, that threatens what is best in us" (282). Betty cannot possibly be both madonna/whore; safety/danger; peace/destruction. The existence of both sides of these oppositions in one character causes the borders between the pairs to waver; the contradictions deconstruct the seemingly clear categories. Another example of this deconstruction is Harry's admission of homosexuality, which disturbs his role of the hypermasculine "great white hunter" and Clive's role of a man's man. Harry's interaction with Clive on the veranda in Act One, Scene four shows how precarious the border is between hypermasculinity and homosexuality. Elaine Showalter writes in *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* that late Victorian

> Clubland existed on the fragile borderline that separated male bonding from homosexuality and that distinguished manly misogyny from disgusting homoeroticism . . . . In Caryl Churchill's contemporary play *Cloud 9*, set in Africa in 1880, Clive tells his friend Harry, 'There is something dark about women that threatens what is best in us. Between men the light burns brightly.' But when Harry responds by embracing him, Clive is disgusted. 'The most revolting perversion. Rome fell, Harry, and this sin can destroy an empire.' The light that burned brightly between men could also be the sin that destroys an empire. In her important book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (1985), Eve Sedgwick pointed to the double bind of masculine identity that structures the spectrum of relationships between men. 'For to be a man's man,' Sedgwick noted, 'is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being 'interested in men.' (Showalter 13-14)

Churchill's unconventional casting and blending of discourse practices illustrates the artificial nature and instability of several important binary pairs underlying certain dominant gender identities.

Bosola and the Borderlands

Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623) also blends seemingly oppositional dramatic conventions in single characters in order to destabilise those oppositions. Both Bosola and Julia exhibit recognisable but contradictory characteristics which prevent their easy moral categorisation. Bosola is seemingly both a prince's conscience and a sycophantic follower, Julia both a stock Jacobean whore and a woman who shares characteristics with the Duchess, who is not portrayed as a whore, though she is accused of whoredom. These contradictory positions disturb the narrative patterns of the play as a whole: Webster's *Duchess* has some characteristics of a Jacobean revenge tragedy but the chief revenger (Bosola) takes revenge for his own murders--a rather ridiculous proposition. The play is perhaps even more strikingly a tragedy, but one in which Julia, the Cardinal's mistress, complicates the characterisation of the Duchess, the heroine of the piece. Like Churchill, Webster blends discourse conventions in order to destabilise them.

Webster's Ambiguity: Resisting Reduction

In her book, Luckyj examines the role of Bosola and finds that he functions so as to undercut the audience's expectations of a clear linear progression of a single moral viewpoint. Webster deliberately blurs any attempt to define Bosola in conventional terms, and thus resists any reduction of his play to a single ideal principle (Luckyj xix-xx). Instead, he focuses upon the construction of moral principles and emphasises their artificiality. The opening scene of Act One has Antonio describe to Delio the "complementary functions of ideal ruler and ideal subject" (Luckyj 41).

> [A] judicious King
> . . . Quits first his royal palace

Of flatt'ring sycophants, of dissolute,
And infamous persons . . . .
And what is't makes this blessed government,
But a most provident Council, who dare freely
Inform him, the corruption of the times? (I.i 6-9, 16-18)

Antonio follows his description of the ideal subject with a description of Bosola:

Here comes Bosola
The only court-gall: yet I observe his railing
Is not for simple love of piety:
Indeed he rails at those things which he wants,
Would be as lecherous, covetous, or proud,
Bloody, or envious, as any man
If he had means to be so (I.i. 22-28).

This portrait of Bosola is disorienting; Luckyj points out that after "declaring that instructing princes is a 'noble duty,' Antonio introduces Bosola as 'the only court-gall.' That the first words he uses to describe [him] are intended approvingly becomes clear when the next clause begins its string of qualifications with the negative conjunction, 'yet'" (Luckyj 42). If Antonio's opening description can be seen to construct such oppositions as court-gall/sycophant and court-gall/infamous person in order to illustrate an even more basic binary: good citizen/bad citizen, Bosola's character would appear to contain all these characteristics. His encounter with the Cardinal illustrates the difficulty of categorising this man.

The courtier scolds the Cardinal's behaviour toward him with the words: "I have done you better service than to be slighted thus. Miserable age, where the only reward of doing well, is the doing of it!" (I.i 32-34). Antonio and Delio then give conflicting opinions as to Bosola's merits. Delio remarks, "I knew this fellow seven years in the galleys, / For a notorious murther," but Antonio counters with "'Tis great pity / He should

be thus neglected. I have heard / He's very valiant" (I.i 69-70, 73-75). Luckyj points out that, according to Antonio's scheme, "the Cardinal may appear to be the ideal ruler shaking off a sycophant . . . Yet Bosola seems to be equally an instructor, rather than flatterer--a 'court gall' . . . who 'haunts' the Cardinal to remind him of what he is, and who does what Antonio himself is perhaps incapable of doing" (Luckyj 41). As Frank Whigham notes in "Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*," Bosola's conflicting characteristics "coincide in uneasy dissonance," embodying the complexities of a play which discourages the acceptance of ideal principles (Whigham 177).

Deconstructing the Ideal

Luckyj suggests that Bosola's contradictions serve to undercut Anto°   s model of ideal political behaviour "before it can serve as a standard for the Duchess's behaviour" (Luckyj 40). She goes on to suggest that the Duchess's actions should only be judged as private actions and not as part of her public role. Though my reading of the play supports Luckyj's first suggestion, I disagree with her second. Undercutting Antonio's propositions of ideal behaviour, and with them the notion that anyone has access to ideal principles, has as many political implications as private. Throughout the *Duchess*, Bosola's contradictions continue to disturb the fabric of a play designed to destabilise expectations of identity--personal and public.

Bosola: Torn in Two

Bosola's contradictory characteristics of sycophant and court gall continue to place him in untenable positions. When he tempts the Duchess to reveal her marriage, his role appears to be straightforwardly negative as he acts as a tool for the Duchess's enemies.

However, upon uncovering the vital information, Bosola exclaims: "Do I not dream? Can this ambitious age / Have so much goodness in't, as to prefer / A man merely for worth?" (III.i 276-79). In light of his difficulties in having his own worth recognised by his masters, this exclamation appears to be authentic in its approval. Bosola seems attracted to the Duchess's political alternative to the hierarchal power structures currently in place even as he works to destroy her. His contradictory position finds its most dramatic expression when he assumes the role of revenger in the fifth act. He cries:

> Revenge, for the Duchess of Malfi, murdered
> By th' Aragonian brethren; for Antonio,
> Slain by this hand; for lustful Julia,
> Poison'd by this man; and lastly for myself,
> That was an actor in the main of all,
> Much 'gainst mine own good nature, yet i' th' end
> Neglected. (V.v 80-86)

Bosola's assumption of this role can only be ridiculous considering that not only did he murder Antonio, but he also orchestrated the murder of the Duchess, and it is neglect of any reward for this act that he complains of at the end of the speech. Though Bosola self-consciously tries to stabilise his role into one that fits revenge tragedy, his own words refute the stabilisation and force the moral complexities of the play to the fore. Despite Antonio's opening speech, ideal principles and clear classifications have no place in Malfi or Rome. Julia is another example of Webster's use of patchwork characterisation to complicate classifications.

Julia: Witty and False?

As Luckyj notes, Bosola prepares the audience for Julia's first entrance upon the stage (Luckyj 80). He closes Act II, scene iii with the following couplet: "Though lust do

mask in ne'er so strange disguise, / She's oft found witty, but is never wise" (II.iii 75-76).

During the opening of the next scene, the Cardinal's description of Julia echoes Bosola's

description; he says to Julia: "Thou art a witty false one" (II.iv. 5). Julia's first speech

appears to continue her representation as a stock Jacobean whore, as she laughs about

faking a pilgrimage to delude her husband about her affair with the Cardinal. She jokes:

"Why my Lord, I told him / I came to visit an old anchorite / Here, for devotion" (III.iv.

2-4). However, with her next speech, Julia unsettles her conventional depiction. She

cries to the Cardinal, "You have prevailed with me / Beyond my strongest thoughts: I

would not now / Find you inconstant" (III.iv 6-8). Though the Cardinal continues to

respond to her as if to a whore ("Sooth, generally for women; / A man might strive to

make glass malleable, / Ere he should make them fixed"), Luckyj argues that Julia's

words hardly "convey the lust and avarice of a flagrant adulteress (II.iv 14-15). On the

contrary, they imply that her decision to commit adultery was a painful one, the result of

an ongoing struggle between the demands of sexuality and morality . . . . The scene is

clearly written to overturn an audience's initial impression of Julia. The 'whore' and

'adulteress' cannot be quite so easily dismissed" (Luckyj 81).

Untying Female Sexuality and Whoredom

Just as Pix strives to break the convention that links female education with whoredom,

Webster uses Julia to help break the convention that links female sexuality with

whoredom. Though her language is full of sexual references, it also contains defences of

her morality, and Julia's interaction with Delio emphasises the blurring of identities her

discourse produces. Delio is aware of Julia's position as mistress to the Cardinal and he

accordingly addresses her as a whore. He offers her money, declaring: "I would wish you, / At such time, as you are non-resident / With your husband, my mistress" (II.vi 72-74). Julia refuses the money and the offer, telling her would-be lover: "Sir, I'll go ask my husband if I shall, / And straight return your answer" (II.vi 75-76). Without lying about her inconstancy with the Cardinal, Julia emphasises that her decision to commit adultery was neither taken lightly nor for monetary reasons, and her attributes force Delio to admit that she is difficult to categorise: "Is this her wit or her honesty that speaks thus?" (II.vi 78). This sexual woman destabilises binary pairs such as madonna/whore and active/passive.   Julia's language also contains many echoes of the Duchess's speech. The Duchess, too, makes a false pilgrimage to defend an "illicit" love affair. This piece of stitchwork emphasises the importance of Julia's unstable characterisation: the audience's attempts to classify her reflect upon the Duchess's classification as well. Julia is not the only active sexual woman in this play.

Patchwork Grammar

Luckyj notes that Webster's non-linear dramatic construction, both in scene building and in characterisation, has been criticised in grammatical terms. She writes:

> This kind of non-linear construction, in both sentences and plays, has been condemned as loose and fragmented. Thus 'minds trained solely in the logical and grammatical aspects of language' dismiss the sentences of Montaigne, Bacon, and Browne as 'quaint failures in the attempt to achieve sentence unity' (Croll 230-31). . . . Yet, as Croll points out, their 'criticism, is, of course, sound if the mode of progression is a logical one, but in fact there is a progress of imaginative apprehension, a revolving and upward motion of the mind as it rises in energy, and views the same point from new levels.' (Croll 219; Luckyj 150-51)

As I will show in the next chapter, Webster's shaping of narrative conventions illustrates Croll's description of the grammar of imaginative apprehension, a grammar which is very similar to Grassi's argument that meaning is disclosed in terms of constantly new configurations of reality.

Judith Thompson and Imaginative Apprehension

Judith Thompson's manipulation of grammar in her plays, particularly *The Crackwalker*, is another illustration of "loose" and "fragmented" structure which the playwright uses to explore, among other themes, supposedly ontological class categories. In *The Crackwalker*, Thompson creates characters who at first glance and hearing appear to be stereotypical lower class drifters. However, Thompson, using the vernacular associated with this class, makes them articulate, poetically revealing her characters' innermost thoughts and showing them to be not dissimilar to middleclass fears and hopes. Alan, an insecure young man who will eventually murder his baby, explains his state of mind as follows: "Did you ever start thinkin somethin, and it's like ugly . . . ? And ya can't beat it out of your head? I wouldn't be scared of it if it was sittin in front of me, I'd beat it to shit--nothin wouldn't stop me--but I can't beat it cause it's in my head fuck. It's not like bein crazy, it's just like thinkin one thing over and over and it kinda makes ya sick . . ." (Thompson 50). The young man's speech, obviously not based on the "logical and grammatical aspects of language" nevertheless effectively uses metaphor and simile to allow "imaginative apprehension" in a sensitive spectator, allowing him/her to view Alan's character from a new level, a level that may include an appreciation of the social construction of class and how class identity is shaped by discourse.

Thompson emphasises the relationship between discourse and class identity by having Alan's friend Joe change from speaking much the same as Alan to a more middle class Canadian speech pattern when he gets a good job in Calgary. Joe's description of Calgary ("It's a great place, man, lots of work, nice people. Hell of a lot better than this hole, I'm tellin you") not only separates him from his earlier self but also from his friend (Thompson 56). The two men are unable to pick up their friendship on the same terms as they left it. Like Webster, Thompson is not interested in a linear moral viewpoint, but rather in destabilising conventional classifications of identity, and she uses grammar as a tool to emphasise the power of language in shaping those classifications.

Subverting Conventions

The employment of stock character types in a deliberately defamiliarising fashion is used to full advantage by Pix, Manley, Churchill and Webster as they attempt to subvert audience expectations surrounding certain classifications, particularly in regard to gender identities. Their weaving together of disparate conventions and discourses forms characters that exhibit contradictory characteristics, thus exposing the logical binary oppositions which support those conventions and discourses as artificial and capable of change, rather than natural and fixed. This disruption in audience expectations also forms part of the next dramatic structure to be examined: shaping narrative patterns so as to reveal them to be historically and culturally fashioned.

STORY TELLING/TELLING STORIES

Narrative Convention and Identity

In this chapter. I will examine the ways Churchill, Webster and Pix explore the connections between narrative conventions and identity, illustrating that discourse conventions are not transparent and narrative itself is historically and culturally shaped. The playwrights probe these connections by exposing dramatic and narrative conventions to the audience. thereby stripping the conventions of transparency and uncovering how the narrativising activities of audience members give meaning to conventional configurations of identity.

Working Off Fénélon

As previously examined in the theory overview during Edinger's discussion of Fénélon, one way of handling narrative style is to seek a technique that appears absolutely transparent and seems to reveal only the things and actions themselves. In this narrative paradigm, transparency is valorised as a way to pin down Truth, because, as Edinger points out, to be aware of manner is to be aware of a distorting agency between experience and the spectator or hearer at whom representation is directed. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that anyone holding the view that there is a distorting agency (such as cultural and social relations), which always shapes representation of any kind, would seek a style which resists transparency in order to bring the distorting forces to the surface of the narrative. Elin Diamond, in "Refusing the Romanticism of Identity:

Narrative Interventions in Churchill, Benmussa, Duras," gives an illuminating discussion of reasons why a playwright may choose to make the audience aware of manner.

Dissolving Identities

Diamond draws upon the work of Kristeva to argue that representing female identity can be a problem for dramatists. The problem is at heart a problem of language: "Entering language we are positioned in a system based on fixed hierarchies; we become not unique selves but speaking subjects, our individual expression shaped by a pre-existing field of social practices and meanings" (Diamond 93). By Kristeva's analysis (based on Lacan's work), the "symbolic order is by definition patriarchal"; it does not represent woman, except as a lack (Diamond 93). Diamond notes that Lacan's work has attracted the criticism of some feminists because "the position of the female in Lacan's model is as fixed as the linguistic system in which it is inscribed, as binary opposite (lack) to phallic fullness. Because she recognises the tyranny of sexual difference, Kristeva prefers work that 'dissolves identities, even sexual identities'" (Diamond 93).

Deromancing Identity

Diamond writes that many authors, even those with feminist interests, are unwilling to dissolve sexual identities because to do so seems to ignore the way sexual difference is actually inscribed in female experience. Authors with these concerns may wish to emphasise sex-gender configurations which, "Gayle Rubins reminds us, are not 'ahistorical emanations of the human mind but products of historical human activity'" (Diamond 94). Diamond argues that Churchill is an example of a playwright who meets the challenge of dissolving sexual identities while at the same time acknowledging this historical activity.

Churchill's solution is a "radical representation of history itself--not as a backdrop or setting but as a narrative text which insistently shapes or interrupts the dramatic present and thus alters audience perspective on the event" (Diamond 94).

Narrative and the Subordination of Women

Diamond uses the work of Teresa de Lauretis to argue that narrative conventions by their very structures subordinate women. She writes:

> As Teresa de Lauretis has demonstrated, sexual identity is destiny in the major quest myths of Western culture: the female is positioned as static obstacle or as nondynamic space to be entered by the male and traversed. Along with other feminists, de Lauretis extends description to prescription, arguing that the subordination and exclusion of women is endemic to narrative, inherent in its very morphology. Of vital concern here is the issue of narrativity: the process by which a spectator of any representational medium will construct a narrative . . . [A] feminist revision of narrative texts means not only exposing a representational form that delimits the female but also interrupts those processes of audience participation that collude in female subjugation. (Diamond 94-95)

Diamond's argument becomes especially interesting in relation to this thesis when she discusses dramatic form. She notes that the theatre is, by its very nature, well disposed to a critique of narrative conventions--it emphasises a series of dramatic presents but assumes a storyline to be inferred by the spectators (Diamond 95). This inferred story is a metatext which guides the interpretation of the enactment, and th'   it causality between metatext and enactment is precisely what Churchill . . . make[s] explicit" (Diamond 96). Audience activities such as listening, seeing, narrativising are made to signify; spectatorship "loses its ahistorical innocence and enters into the play of forces producing (and being produced by) the dramatic texts" (Diamond 96). Diamond's critique bolsters my interpretation, not only of Churchill's text, but also those of Webster and Pix.

History and Sites of Difference

Churchill's play. *Cloud 9*, examines sites of differentiation among hegemonic gender identities, exposing them not only as culturally constructed but just as operative today in most people's minds as in the Victorian era, a location more commonly viewed as the site of obvious gender, racial and age oppressions. The playwright illuminates the way history is used to distance the process of "othering" certain identities, while showing how narrative conventions both in the theatre and assumed by the spectators continue this process in contemporary society. The discussion on Butler and Young's work in chapter one on sexism, homophobia and racism, combined with Diamond's critique, allows for a very interesting analysis of Churchill's dramatic structure in *Cloud 9*.

Purity: Expulsion and Repulsion

As noted, Butler's analysis of Young illustrates that we must understand sexism, homophobia, and racism in terms of a repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality and/or colour, an expulsion followed by a repulsion that founds and supports culturally dominant identities along sex/sexuality/race axes of differentiation. Butler also suggests that the idea of "essential" differences is crucial to preserving these dominant identities as the only accessible options, thereby making the removal of paradigms as sites of analysis critical to contemporary western rational hegemonic culture. Churchill's play not only supports this analysis but also illustrates how "history" is used to remove sites of differentiation of identity (hereafter simply referred to as "sites of difference") from analysis.

When Narratives Collide

As I have already shown, *Cloud 9*'s patchwork characters problematise sexual identities by presenting radically disorienting stage personas. Churchill uses this technique to extend her critique to narrative itself. She allows a metatext of gender expectations to collide with her text of gender construction in order to produce the play's edge of humour, thus implicating the audience in the production of meaning for the play. She assumes that, despite her patchwork construction, audience members will immediately recognise the conventional codes of representation (such as the passive wife or masterful husband) on the stage, thus highlighting both the ubiquity of the conventions and their artificiality. When she shows the difficulties various characters have in living within the confines of their codes (as discussed in the previous chapter), there is every expectation that the audience will notice those difficulties as well; again, the artificiality of narrative conventions is emphasised, as well as the limits in agency some characters endure as a result of those conventions. As Diamond points out, having a male actor mouthing stereotypically feminine inanities is meant to convey that Betty is included "in the symbolic order only insofar as she is male. The point is not that the male is feminized but that the female is absent. What remains is a dress, a palpitation, a scream, all encoded female behaviours adding up to a trace denoting absence" (Diamond 96-97). Churchill further uses her cross-casting technique to play upon the audience's expectations of gendered behaviour--the humour generated by the cross-casting depends to a large extent upon contemporary expectations of behaviour. Betty's complete subjugation in the opening scene ("I am a man's creation as you see") is shocking not only for its stark

depiction of female identity but also because a man actually speaks the lines. Such

comp!... and happy subservience is still so much against the code of behaviour for a man

that it comes across as humour. The same edge of humour belongs to the portrayal of

Joshua by a white man. Edward by an adult. and Victoria as a doll. The audience may

perceive Victorian England as the sign for gender, race and age oppression, but the

humour of the play would not be as successful as it is unless today's society locates sites

of difference in much the same places. Indeed, there was no need for the playwright to

attempt to find some obvious method of physically cross-casting the homosexual

characters because the contemporary view of the **straight**/gay binary pair is still so similar

to the perceived Victorian view that no added edge is needed for humour. Churchill does

play with cross-casting within a single homosexual character, as in when she has Edward

declare: "I think I'm a lesbian" (307).

Drawing the Curtain of Time

Churchill uses the humour to force a recognition that contemporary society tends to look

back in time critically at gender construction but not toward its own age. The playwright

uses to her own advantage the fact that spectators very likely have constructed Victorian

England as their "other"--the identity that defines our own purity. She forces her audience

to recognise that the codes of behaviour which they have assigned to the past are still

current today. Churchill effectively "de-others" the Victorian era by making spectators

uncomfortable in locating sites of difference there.

Patriarchal Narratives in Action

In Act One, the patriarchal order embodied by Clive is shown inscribing the identities of almost everyone around him--Betty, Ellen, Mrs. Saunders, Edward, and Harry. Betty's position as a male construction is made evident in Clive's opening speech when he sings: "My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be, / And everything she is she owes to me" (251). Joshua's place on the subordinate side of the man/boy binary pair and his identity as a chattel are illustrated when Clive declares: "I am father to the natives here / . . . My boy's a jewel. Really has the knack. / You'd hardly notice that the fellow's black" (251). Edward's inclinations towards domesticity are sharply checked by his father ("Ellen minds Victoria, let Ellen mind the doll"), and Harry's admission of homosexuality results not only in Clive's refusal to respect the confidence but in his insistence that Harry maintain conventional appearances by marrying Ellen (257). And Mrs. Saunders, though she is described in admiring tones by Clive as having "amazing spirit," is similarly confined to a rigid convention (259). Clive assumes that, having convinced this widow to have sexual intercourse with him once, she has lost the right to withhold her body from him, as the following exchange illustrates:

Clive:	But you've already answered yes.
Mrs. Saunders:	I answered yes once. Sometimes I want to say no.
Clive:	Women, my God (263).

Woman as Reader as Well as Read

The coercive narratives of feminine, racial and homosexual subjugation are aided and abetted by the divisiness of the female characters and their participation in this patriarchal

order, primarily through their mothering activities. Diamond suggests that the theatrical convention of doubling has a double edge in this play. She argues that Betty is contrasted with both the sexually aggressive Mrs. Saunders and the frustrated lesbian Ellen. As the same actress can play these last two roles, the doubling emphasises that they are "two versions of female marginality, virtual doubles. Sharing the same body they must never meet . . . . Churchill's message is painfully clear: in patriarchy women are divided not only from other women (in this case the "woman" Betty) but from themselves" (Diamond 97). And women's participation in patriarchal narratives is clearly emphasised when Betty uses Edward to force Joshua to occupy his place as a servant. Aware of her own helplessness, she moulds Edward's behaviour to reflect Clive's when she demands: "Edward, are you going to stand there and let a servant insult your mother?" (278). Her mothering is successful. Edward's speech becomes an echo of his father's as he barks to Joshua: "You fetch her sewing at once, do you hear me? You move when I speak to you, boy" (278).

Seams as Outerwear

However, the unusual time gap between Act One and Act Two undermines the coerciveness of narrative history. Act Two is sewn onto Act One with the seam showing when the location changes without explanation to London twenty-five years later in the play's chronology but one hundred years later in the audience's time frame. The obvious seam helps to focus the audience's attention upon the contrasts in scene construction between the first and second acts. The first half of the play is tightly structured with a strong linear narrative line emphasising the strong patriarchal narrative conventions

classifying the characters; the second half uses patchwork composition openly, juxtaposing one scene against another without connecting links, emphasising the weakening of those narrative conventions. This weakening of conventions is further illustrated by the characters, many of whom have made changes in their lives that Churchill has set the audience up to view positively. The ability of the marginalised characters from Act One to make changes to their roles is accentuated by Churchill's decision to drop the cross-casting in the second act (except for the child, Cathy). The fluidity of identity no longer needs the same stress. However, the continuation of cross-casting with Cathy allows Churchill to qualify the success of contemporary characters in disregarding narrative conventions, and this qualification is also emphasised by the play's timeline; like the casting, history has a double edge.

Seams as Couplings

The shifting distance between the first and second acts emphasises that the narrative patterns in the Victorian era "can now be read as a set of coded practices that continues to bear pressure on the contemporary characters of Act Two" (Diamond 97). Though Edward is now openly gay, he has difficulty getting his male lover to accept his desire for domesticity. Gerry responds to Edward's chiding about staying out without explanation by saying: "There was a phone and I didn't phone you. Leave it alone, Eddy, I'm warning you" (297). Victoria decides to leave her husband to live with Lin, but has trouble finding direction for her life. She explains: ". . . I feel so apologetic for not being quite so subordinate as I was" (303). And though Lin appears to give an illustration of a new way to mother, she finds that her willingness to break gender stereotypes does not

produce instant results. She observes of her daughter: "I dress her in jeans, she wants to wear dresses" (303). Lin is not the only influence in her daughter's life—Cathy is also "mothered" by narrative conventions of femininity disseminated by patriarchal institutions (in this case, the school)—conventions which look suspiciously similar to those prevalent in Act One. And Churchill's decision to have a male adult actor play the little girl further emphasises that narrative conventions continue to shape her identity, both as a female and as a child.

Seams as Hecklers

Though Act Two allows some sense of progress from the stereotypical Victorian gender identities shown in Act One, Churchill's main focus in the second act is to emphasise the constructions of identity through narrative. The unusual time shift between the acts and the patchwork structure of the second challenges the audience's desire to construct a coherent narrative. Diamond concludes: "What is most effective in Churchill's conception is that the narrativizing desire of the audience of *Cloud 9* must do battle with the aggressive narrative constructed by the playwright. We are able to 'read' Churchill's historical narrative because our conventional habits of reading a performance have been, at least to some extent, interrupted and refocused" (Diamond 97). Diamond's analysis reveals similarities to Jarrett's examination of the way in which sophistic discourse disrupts the stability of historical narratives and deliberately resists showing history as a continuous, complete story leading to a pre-understood end in order to emphasise the rhetorical nature of reality. Churchill's play shows many connections to Jarrett's

argument that an audience's mental participation and assent is needed for any discourse to have the force of knowledge.

Spectators as Hecklers

Act Two also allows a perceptive audience member the opportunity to critique Churchill's own narrative practices. The second act does not continue to weave together all of the strands found in Act One. Joshua is not carried forward as a character, and his disappearance creates a noticeable break in the patchwork which Churchill does not try to cover over or explain. Joshua's shooting of Clive at the end of the previous act gives dramatic evidence of Churchill's contention that racism and sexism are intertwined oppressions: patriarchal narratives seem to have something to do with the construction of both. However, Joshua's disappearance from the play creates a gap in the play's exploration of the issue. And although Cathy appears in the second act as a problem linking the two acts together, the **adult**/child binary opposition is left largely intact, in fact, largely unexplored. Act Two narrows its focus to concentrate on gender, an area with which Churchill is clearly more comfortable. The playwright's use of *métissage* structure, because it focuses audience ↑ .ention upon strands of discourse and the gaps in between, allows spectators to include Churchill's own narrative conventions in the set of conventions to be analysed.

The same sort of analysis is useful when applied to Aphra Behn's *The Rover--Part Two.* In that play, Behn associates her Rover with Royalist discourse, particularly in her dedication of the play to Charles II:

> Yet You, Great Sir, denying Yourself the Rights and Privileges the
> meanest subject Claims, with a fortitude worthy Your Adorable Vertues,

put Yourself upon a voluntary Exile to appease the causeless murmurs of
this again gathering Faction . . . . [The Rover] is a wanderer too, distrest;
belov'd, the unfortunate, and ever content to Loyalty; were he Legions he
should follow and suffer still with so Excellent a Prince and Master. (Behn
113)

The Rover's loyalist discourse is interwoven in the play with a discourse valorising

women's desire: Ariadne is destined for a marriage her parents have arranged, and she

has decided she does not want. She is supposed to marry her cousin Beaumont, but she

finds she has sexual feelings for the Rover. When she first sees him, she exclaims:

"Hang me, a lovely man!" (Behn 128). Her discourse shows many similarities to the

rakish Rover's, especially when she remarks: "new lovers have new Vows and new

Presents, whilst the old feed upon a dull repetition of what they did when they were

Lovers; 'tis like eating the cold Meat ones self, after having given a Friend a feast" (Behn

139). And the young girl also recalls the courtesan La Nuche, when she remarks: "What

a poor sneaking thing an honest Woman is!" (Behn 177). However, in the last part of the

play, the discourse of women's desire is dropped as a thread of the overall design. Behn

allows female desire to be subsumed by a narrative of support for a masculine system of

hierarchic rule. The gap created by the dropped strand is noticeable: La Nuche's final

decision to follow Willmore to the army camps makes very little sense in light of her

previous, quite prudent, objections to that choice. The only creditable projection of the

courtesan's future is that of becoming a camp whore when she has aged enough that

Willmore's roving eye looks for someone younger. Behn ignores the differences between

Willmore's decision to accept poverty in service to his king and La Nuche's decision to

accept ruin and eventual abandonment in service to her lover. As these two analyses

show, one of the most useful characteristics of *métissage* as an analytical tool is that all sites of meaning in a text are available for exploration.

Critical Repetitions: Extrapolating Diamond to Webster

The themes of Churchill's play have interesting connections to Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, and similar analytical techniques allow for engaging readings of both texts. A brief recap of Diamond's analysis of Kristeva will be worthwhile to show how valuable her analysis is when applied to Webster's play. Diamond's interest in Kristeva's comments on language and sexual identity focuses upon the plights of playwrights who wish to dismantle the conventional representations of female character, and who are also concerned with the historical human activity "that confuses or conflates identity and gender" (Diamond 94). Diamond suggests that patriarchal narratives possess "a structure, an order or meaning, a beginning, a middle, an end"; it is the "discourse of authority and legitimation" (Diamond 95). And its very structure excludes the female as a subject. As Diamond argues in relation to Churchill, audiences in a theatre have been conditioned to impose this sort of narrative on the events on a stage--a metatext of narrative conventions is always woven into the series of dramatic presents enacted by the actors to produce meaning. A playwright who wishes to force an audience to "understand female as a historical and cultural construction whose causes and consequences constitute the drama being enacted" must interrupt a patriarchal narrative (Diamond 96). Webster's play is very fertile ground for applying such an analysis. He constructs an active sexual duchess who is aware that she is attempting to create a role for herself for which she has no precedent. The many self-conscious dramatic references in the play emphasise that the

Jacobean stage, with its preconceptions and prescriptions concerning gender roles, had no precedent for that role, either. Webster constructs a disruptive narrative structure which forces an audience to realise that it is conditioned to impose a narrative on the events on the stage that resists the very role the Duchess tries to create.

The Mark of a Woman

The Duchess of Malfi presents a world in which patriarchal rhetoric dominates; this play illustrates the ways in which women are defined and confined by this rhetoric, and the difficulties women face in trying to redefine their identities. Ferdinand and the Cardinal make it clear that they regard the Duchess as an extension of their own identities, rather than a subject in her own right. When the brothers are given proof that the Duchess has secretly married, the Cardinal responds: "Shall our blood? / The royal blood of Aragon and Castile, / Be thus attainted?" (II.v 22-24). Ferdinand makes the Duchess's lack of personhood even clearer when he cries: "Foolish men, / That e'er will trust their honour in a bark / Made of so slight, weak bulrush as is woman, / Apt at every minute to sink it!" (II.v 33-36). The Duchess here is merely a vessel in which men measure their honour. Ferdinand's language supports the contention Christina Malcolmson makes in "As Tame as the Ladies: Politics and Gender in *The Changeling*" that, in a patriarchal system, men only know themselves as masculine, sexually and politically, through the subjugation of the women associated with them (Malcolmson 328).

Webster uses the Duchess to critique this system: her rebellion against her brothers' construction of her identity is presented in a positive light. The Duchess's marriage to Antonio produces three healthy children and appears to be healthy in its own

right. Scene ii in Act III, with Antonio, the Duchess and Cariola, presents the marriage as a successful romantic liaison between two people who regard each other as companions.

> Duchess: To what use will you put me?
>
> Antonio: We'll sleep together.
>
> Duchess: Alas, what pleasure can two lovers find in
> sleep? . . . .
> I'll stop your mouth.
>
> Antonio: Nay, that's but one, Venus had two soft
> doves / To draw her chariot: I must have
> another (10-12, 20-21).

That the successful marriage has political as well as private implication has already been pointed out in the previous chapter. Bosola's approval of the Duchess's choice of husband, even as he uses the information to betray her, emphasises that she presents a real alternative to the patriarchal structures currently in place.

The Monstrous Regiment of Women

Theodora Jankowski suggests in "Defining/Confining the Duchess: Negotiating the Female Body in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*" that Webster's interest in searching for alternative power structures arose from the lack of a discourse to explore female authority at a time when England had just had three female monarchs. The presence of Mary Tudor, Mary Stuart and Elizabeth I had pointed out ""that no language existed for describing the nature of female rule" (Jankowski 221). That there was a long tradition of discourse for describing the position of women in relation to men made the task of creating a discourse for female rule very difficult, because of the inescapable

tension between monarchal authority and the construction of the feminine as ideally passive. John Knox got himself into trouble by writing in the reign of Mary a work titled "The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women" in which he stated that female rule was unnatural. By the time the work was published, it was the reign of Elizabeth I: he had to issue two apologies. In an interesting variation of patchwork structure. Elizabeth I tried to handle the problem by drawing upon a medieval theological distinction: she was legally endowed with two bodies: a body politic and a body natural. However, she never tested the seams of this construction, as she remained unmarried and childless.

The Duchess Torn in Two

The limits of this construction are very much the focus of *The Duchess of Malfi*. The Duchess too tries to separate her body politic and her body natural when she secretly marries Antonio but remains the ruler of her dukedom. The fact that her two fictional bodies reside in her own singular female physical body places the fiction under extreme pressure. In the Duchess's wooing speech to Antonio, she constantly shifts between discourse modes associated with her public and private roles, and the tensions between the two are apparent. She sends for Antonio in her capacity as ruler, but she quickly switches to personal language when she says, "It's fit, like thrifty husbands, we inquire / What's laid up for tomorrow" (I.ii 285-86). Her choice of personal role is "husband" rather than wife, and this choice places Antonio in an awkward position, which he makes clear a little later when he remarks: "These words should be mine, / and all the parts you have spoke" (I.ii 388-89). The Duchess cannot simply switch at will between the two

types of discourse because her female body connects her two roles. She needs a new discourse in which "female" and "authority" are not oppositional terms.

The Duchess in the Wild

The Duchess is aware of her need for a new type of discourse; when she decides to take the lead in wooing Antonio (in a manner Whigham suggests on page 71 of his essay is reminiscent of the male Renaissance hero), she exclaims: "For I am going into a wilderness, / Where I shall find nor path nor friendly clew to be my guide" (I.ii 278-80). She seeks a new rhetoric that will allow her both to wield authority and act upon sexual desire. Bound by her society and history, the Duchess attempts to appropriate humanistic discourse in order to create this new rhetoric. Jankowski argues that the Duchess's wooing scene draws upon a rationalist humanist perception of marriage as a partnership of love and mutual helpfulness. This same tradition "recognised the great importance of nobility of character in a man and validated a woman's right to the free choice of a husband" (Jankowski 230-31). However, the dangerous nature of the Duchess's journey through the wilderness is illustrated when Cariola remarks: "Whether the spirit of greatness, or of woman / Reign in her, I know not, but it shows / A fearful madness" (I.ii 417-419). Like Rosalinda in Manley's play, the Duchess finds that her choice of language offers severely restricted agency. That humanistic tradition allows women more space within which to move is true; that it does not allow women to redefine themselves as powerful sexual beings is also true. Though humanistic rhetoric is somewhat less structured than some forms of Christian rhetoric, both of these narratives are essentially patriarchal.

The Duchess as Strumpet

The Duchess discovers the limits of her appropriated language when first her pregnancies and then her marriage are revealed. Earlier in the play, she decides that her love and her political power justify an attempt to expand humanistic discourse to include female desire. She explains to her lover: "Sir, / This goodly roof of yours, is too low built, / I cannot stand upright in't, nor discourse, / Without I raise it higher" (I.ii 332-25). However, when her body, through her pregnancies, betrays to the general public that she has been acting on female desire, she is condemned. Antonio says that the "common rabble do directly say / She is a strumpet" (III.i 25-26). After Ferdinand discovers that not only has the Duchess had children but that their father is a lower class man, he declares that her actions show that "she'll needs be mad," recalling Cariola's fears on the subject of her mistress's self-determination (IV.i 124). And unlike Pix's heroine, the living Duchess is unable to persuade male authority figures to accept her transgressions. She is aware that she has no sturdy defence to these charges of sexual impropriety; upon learning that she and Antonio have been banished, the Duchess sadly states: "For all our wit / And reading brings us to a truer sense / Of sorrow" (III.v 66-68).

The Duchess as Nothing

Act IV makes the nature of that sorrow quite clear. After the Duchess has been captured and imprisoned by Ferdinand, her attitude toward rational humanistic discourse is much changed: "nothing but noise, and folly / Can keep [her] in [her] right wits, whereas reason / And silence make [her] stark mad" (IV.ii 5-7). The Duchess discovers that an active sexual woman is an absence in patriarchal discourse, and her attempt to appropriate

masculine discourse (reason) to justify her presence is doomed to silence, to cancellation. When Cariola asks the imprisoned Duchess of what she thinks, the Duchess answers: "Of nothing" (IV.ii 16). Laurie A. Finke, in "Painting Women: Images of Femininity in Jacobean Tragedy" writes that "Susan McCloskey notes that *The Duchess of Malfi* abounds in images and scenes which emphasize the Duchess's entrapment in a world in which she can talk eloquently, but cannot speak" (Finke 232). Rick Bowers, in "The Cruel Mathematics of *The Duchess of Malfi*", argues that Ferdinand's charge to the Duchess in Act III, scene ii, lines 74-75 ("thou art but a bare name, / And no essential thing?") illustrates the significance of the Duchess's namelessness: her lack of a self-determined identity, of a subject position from which to speak, allows "Ferdinand's consequent obliteration of her" (Bowers 375). In mathematical terms, women are divisible by "nothing" (namelessness) in patriarchal narratives--they become zero. According to Bowers, "everything adds up to nothing" in Webster's play (Bowers 372).

Patriarchal Narratives in Action

Whigham proposes that Ferdinand, as one of the representatives of patriarchal power in the play, is determined to cancel out the Duchess because her marriage "suggests that the supposedly ontological class categories are brittle and imperiled by the powers of flexible self-determination exhibited by the Duchess and her base lover" (Whigham 170). I would extend that argument to cover supposedly naturally defined gender categories as well. The Duchess's ideas are incompatible with patriarchal hierarchies. It is this threat to an existing power structure which leads the Church to banish the Duchess and allow her brothers to imprison her "like a holy relic" (III.ii 138). The conversation between the two

pilgrims at the shrine illustrates the rewriting of the Duchess by discourse conventions, even as the men question the Pope's edict:

Ist Pilgrim:	But I would ask what power hath this state Of Ancona, to determine of a free Prince?
2nd Pilgrim:	. . . the Pope, forehearing of her looseness, Hath seized into th' protection of the Church The Dukedom she held as dowager. (III.iv 28-29, 31-33)

The Church's narrative of the unnaturalness of sexual women overwrites the Duchess's narrative of female self-determination, with the full assent of the populace.

Do Si Do-ing with Death, or the Duchess as Martyr

The Church's support for patriarchal narratives makes the Duchess's embracement of religious discourse in Act IV quite ironic; her use of Christian language emphasises again the lack of a language which will allow her self-definition. Although the Duchess realises that she cannot maintain herself as an authority figure, she is not willing to allow herself to be read as a whore. Her only choice is to take on the identity of a Christian martyr and saint, whose qualities of passivity and suffering are very different from the qualities the "lusty widow" exhibited earlier in the play (I.ii 259). The Duchess is caught within the madonna/whore binary opposition, and she is unable to escape.

She begins her transformation into a martyr when she refuses to fight for her freedom and instead states: "My laurel is all withered" (III.v 90). The transformation continues in the images of confinement and torture the Duchess evokes when she refuses Bosola's advice to leave sorrowing:

Persuade a wretch that's broke upon the wheel
To have all his bones new set: entreat him live,

To be executed again. Who must dispatch me?
(Webster IV.i 80-82)

Luckyj argues that the "Duchess is a consummate actress in the death scene. She gains dramatic control over assassins and maintains her dignity by colluding with Death . . . Yet her demeanor at the same time exposes the contradictions inherent in the scene . . . The highly formal ritualistic structure of the death scene allows the Duchess to be both mistress and victim of the occasion, to control the situation over which she has no control . . . And this complexity is derived from the 'impurity' of Webster's art . . . . [The death scene] gather[s] into [itself] various strands of meaning and powerfully synthesize[s] and transform[s] them into a resonant dramatic experience" (Luckyj 142-43). However, Luckyj stops short of pointing out that the Duchess's control is limited to the tone of her death--martyrdom offers very few options for agency.

The Duchess as Mary

The Duchess's martyrdom is placed in a specifically Christian context by Bosola's words after her death: "Return fair soul, from darkness, and lead mine / Out of this sensible hell . . . / To take me up to mercy" (IV.ii 336-37, 343). The Duchess has completed her transformation from lusty widow into Our Lady of Mercy--the Madonna, the Christian symbol of feminine chastity--Ferdinand's imprisonment of his sister "reisolates her, puts her in her place, and so restores her status as untouchable . . . " (Whigham 170).

Renaissance Dramatists: Resisting Linearity

However, despite the Duchess's death, Webster does not allow patriarchal linguistic and narrative structures to become privileged in the play. Instead, he constructs a deliberately disruptive plot to force his audience members to become aware of their own narrativising

activities. Luckyj argues that Renaissance dramatists in general did not attempt to create a linear causally connected narrative "proceeding logically like a lawyer's brief from point to point"; instead, "they built a broadly analogical framework for the action" (Luckyj xv). Coleridge was one of the first critics to defend Shakespeare's non-classical construction; his eloquent response to such criticisms "was that Shakespeare, unlike the ancients, constructed his plays 'by blending materials and fusing the parts together'" (Luckyj xviii). Luckyj proposes that, like "Shakespeare, Webster uses repetitive form, de-emphasizing the play's linear progression for the advantage of reworking and expanding his basic material" (Luckyj 1). His disavowal of a straightforward linear style can also be seen in his refusal of a transparent narrative technique: self-conscious dramatic references abound in this play.

Manner as Substance

Webster displays his interest in stripping dramatic conventions of transparency throughout his play. Luckyj examines one such place: the meeting between Antonio and Delio in the first scene of Act Three. Delio refers to the break in time of at least two years between Acts Two and Three when he says: "Methinks 'twas yesterday. Let me but wink, / And not behold your face, which to mine eye / Is somewhat leaner: verily I should dream / It were within this half hour" (III.i 8-11). Luckyj notes that "Webster here makes a humorous, self-conscious reference to his violation of the unity of time between the second and third acts . . . . Dramatic convention is thus exposed" (Luckyj 19). References to acting are the most numerous type of dramatically self-conscious speech;

stressing the disjunction between actor and character emphasises one of the play's themes: identity as performance, rather than natural.

I Have Played A Part In't 'Gainst My Will

Early in the play. Antonio's assertion to the Duchess during the wooing scene that her words should have been his focuses the audience's attention on the shifting of roles taking place during the Duchess's speech. Later, Ferdinand explains Bosola's guilt to him by referring to dramatic convention. He says: "as we observe in tragedies / That a good actor is curs'd / For playing a villain's part" (IV.ii 282-284). Bosola continues this theme when he excuses his accidental assassination of Antonio by saying it was "such a mistake as [he has] often seen in a play" (V.v 94-95). Webster's playful exposition of dramatic form forces his audience to remember that they are watching actors who use dramatic conventions to impersonate the characters of the play--as in Churchill's *Cloud 9*, the disparity revealed on the stage between actor and role emphasises the instability of identity. This point is made especially clear by the Duchess when she declares: "I account this world a tedious theatre, / For I do play a part in't 'gainst my will" (IV.i 83-4). Webster interrupts the narrative of female identity imposed on her by masculine authority in strikingly similar terms to those we have seen used by Grassi: "Every actor in the great theatre of the world has his true identity only for the part which has been assigned to him in the game of our world."

Blood Relations and True Identities

Sharon Pollock's play. *Blood Relations* (1980), shows many of the same characteristics as Webster's play. and for the same purposes. Her play also refuses a transparent

narrative structure in order to emphasise the artificiality of narrative conventions. Pollock constructs a play within a play in which the characters from the framing sequence change identities in the inner play, self-consciously acknowledging that they are playing new roles. The game of language is emphasised when Miss Lizzie decides to make her "confession" a game. She tells her friend, who is an actress: "And you'll play me . . . It's your stock in trade, my love" (Pollock 572). The Actress's (by definition) unstable identity further emphasises Pollock's exploration of gender: the disparity between identity and body is one of the themes of Pollock's play. Like Webster's, her characters too live in a "tedious theatre" in which narrative conventions are stripped of transparency to show their social construction.

Julia as Key

Webster's interest in examining narrative conventions finds further expression in his manipulation of Julia. Julia's presence in the play has long perplexed critics, who tend to categorise her as a whore but are then puzzled by her similarities to the Duchess (Luckyj 77-79). Julia's actions throughout the play are analogues to those of the Duchess. Luckyj writes that whereas "Julia's first appearance reflects the Duchess's position as a victim of the cruel cynicism of men and anticipates the Duchess's restoration, her final appearance recalls the Duchess's fate in miniature and anticipates the futile revenge of Bosola" (Luckyj 86). Luckyj also points out that "repetition of the same pattern assures clarity in the aesthetic design": Julia acts as an interpretive key for the Duchess.

Audience as Storyteller

Webster uses the figure of Julia to illustrate how active women traditionally have been interpreted on the Jacobean stage. Luckyj describes her role as follows: "When Julia comes onto the stage, the audience is set up to judge her as the Duchess's enemies have judged the Duchess" (Luckyj 275). After having watched the ruler of Malfi try to redefine herself and fail, Webster provides his audience with one reason why she failed: narrative convention labels active women as whores. The playwright uses Julia to rescue himself from a double bind Finke describes as follows: "The tragic playwright's role is paradoxical: the closer his attention to the dynamics of feminine idealization and desecration, the stronger become the repressive mechanisms that reinforce cultural perceptions of women as either saints or whores" (Finke 226). Finke argues that *The Duchess of Malfi* "illustrate[s] the ways in which patriarchal ideologies, the 'masculine consciousness' Gohlke discusses, both create and ultimately judge the Duchess even for modern readers" (Finke 231). Webster exposes the narrativising activities of his audience by allowing an insightful spectator to realise that if s/he judges Julia to be a strumpet, this judgment is uncomfortably akin to that of the "common rabble" who pinned this label on the Duchess. The two women's corresponding characteristics permit Julia's murder to be read as a repetition of the Duchess's treatment at her brothers' hands, and this repetition focuses the audience's attention upon the destructive power of the patriarchal narratives the play examines.

De-exalting the Duchess

Julia also functions to remind the audience that, although the Duchess was forced to assume Christian discourse so as to avoid being read as a whore, she was as sensual a woman as Julia. Julia's wooing of Bosola has many echoes of the Duchess's wooing of Antonio, and as Bosola will later include the young woman's name among those who deserve revenge in the play, it is difficult to accept that she is intended as a parody of the main protagonist. Instead, her sensual pursuit of Bosola recalls the audience's attention to the Duchess's open sensuality. Luckyj notes that "the recollection is a timely one in the play's dramatic rhythm, since Bosola's perspective on the Duchess as 'sacred innocence' (IV.ii 355) threatens to distort her by exalting her" (Luckyj 88). And the repetitive action concerning Julia is just one of the recurrent motifs Webster uses in the fifth act. That this act has long puzzled critics is reason enough to take a close look at it.

Act V: Fragmentation in Action

Critics have long had a tradition of disparaging the fifth act. Luckyj writes that "Archer baldly states that 'with the death of the Duchess, the interest in the play is over'" (Luckyj 91). Luckyj holds a different view; she writes: "The play proceeds in one direction, culminating in the death of the Duchess, and then changes its direction for the final act . . . Critics have long noted the shift from a strong unified world of order and value in the first part to a fragmented world of disorder and chaos in the second" (Luckyj 132). The second part of The Duchess of Malfi exhibits many similarities in structure to the second act of Cloud 9: Webster's last act openly uses patchwork structure; scenes are

juxtaposed one upon another with very little connecting narrative. During the first two scenes alone, the audience is swiftly taken from Antonio and Delio in Milan to Ferdinand's consultation with the doctor to Julia's wooing of Bosola and her death at the hands of the Cardinal. Like Churchill, Webster's decision to allow the seams to show between the two parts of his play has a specific purpose: the fragmentation and disorder in the last act illustrate the weakening of patriarchal narratives in the play and allow for the possibility of new narrative structures.

Everything From Nothing: Return of the Duchess

Although the end of the fourth act showed the Duchess obliterated, become "nothing," metaphorically, zero has some properties which permit an interesting reading of the fifth act. Any number multiplied by zero is zero; it is possible to regard this number as the ultimate absorber as well as the ultimate canceller. In set theory, zero is the number from which all other numbers arise; everything is built from nothing. I propose that Act V in *The Duchess of Malfi* allows the possibility that, although the Duchess has been reduced to "nothing," her ideas may still give rise to new narrative and political structures. The repetitive action in the final piece of the play, as it works to overturn the judgements made upon the Duchess, supports this reading.

The World Gone Mad

The fifth act shows the world of Ferdinand and the Cardinal gone mad--madness is a very interesting motif in Webster's play. In the fourth act, Ferdinand, having defined the active and sexual Duchess as mad in terms of patriarchal narrative convention, arranges a masque of madmen designed to convince the Duchess of her errors. She, however,

appropriates the metaphor, saying: "Indeed, I thank him" (IV.ii 5). As I have shown, the Duchess is suspicious of "reason" which has only silenced her; only "folly" can keep her "in [her] right wits." Ferdinand's subsequent descent into madness in the fifth act works to associate him with the disruptive discourse of his sister and alienate him from the rational discourse he used to obliterate her. The fragmentation he used to torture his sister when he offered her a severed hand has now visited itself upon him with a vengeance: his lycanthropy drives him to rob graveyards for bits of bodies.

The Cardinal occupies a similar disordered position. He attempts to retain his hold on narrative convention by directing a play designed to cover over his murder of Ferdinand. He warns his courtiers: "It may be to make trial of your promise / When [Ferdinand's] asleep, myself will rise, and feign / Some of his mad tricks, and cry out for help, / And feign myself in danger" (V.iv 13-16). However, his direction is no longer sure; Bosola changes the Cardinal's role from murderer to murdered, and the courtiers, following the Cardinal's instructions, remain oblivious to the change. What the Cardinal intends as a murder mystery takes on some aspects of a crazy farce.

The Aragonian Brothers: Reduced to Nothing

Yet, as Luckyj points out, the fifth act remains tragic. She writes that both

> Ferdinand and Bosola are haunted by the Duchess and by their crimes against her. Ferdinand's attempts to 'throttle' (V.ii 38) his own shadow for haunting him in a mad gesture suggestively evokes both the original murder and his subsequent self-disgust . . . . [His] deep sense of guilt as one of the 'worst persons' destined for 'hell' (V.ii. 41-43) is matched by his terrible implied regret (Luckyj 94-96).

And the Cardinal too manages to attract some sympathy as he ruminates on hell:

I am puzzl'd in a question about hell:
He says, in hell there's one material fire,
And yet it shall not burn all men alike.
Lay him by. How tedious is guilty conscience!
When I look into fishponds, in my garden,
Methinks I see a thing arm'd with a rake
That seems to strike at me. (V.v 1-7)

Luckyj writes that the "dramatic impact of the moment is heightened by the Cardinal's unusual isolation, suffering, and remorse, and by the audience's knowledge that Bosola will return to strike at him" (Luckyj 98). The two brothers have shifted from being polarised against the Duchess in the first four acts to being in some manner associated with her in the fifth act. This shift has the effect of further valorising the Duchess's vision of the world. Her transgressions can clearly now be seen to be against social constructions of identity, rather than natural, as her brothers had claimed. Luckyj suggests that in the fifth act, "the Duchess's murder becomes the product of the human world, no longer simply terrible but also wrong" (Lucky 100). And her brothers, relinquishing their firm hold on patriarchal narrative conventions, join her in silence.

Zero as Divisor: Indefinable?

This disorder and fragmentation of the fifth act, as well as the valorisation of the Duchess's ideas by formerly opposed forces, give some basis for hope for change in Malfi. Delio's backing of matrilineal succession in proposing the Duchess's and Antonio's son as the heir to the dukedom gives dramatic expression to this hope. Disorder is sometimes necessary to allow new models to emerge from the old--madness is a matter of definition. Again, the metaphorical properties of zero offer some illumination: when zero becomes the divisor rather than the divisee, it leads to something

indefinable. In mathematics, zero is forbidden as a divisor because of this property. I suggest that active women in *The Duchess of Malfi* may be read in an analogous fashion. In a patriarchal system where they have been divided down to "nothing," when women insist upon being active (the divisor) they lead to something indefinable within the system, and are feared. However, the spreading of the Duchess's "madness" to her murderer and her brothers shows that the system is changeable. The strength of the Duchess' ideas allows for the possibility that representatives of patriarchal narrative conventions may someday join another duchess when she boldly walks into a "wilderness" in order to bring a new system into being. Unlike zero, women as divisors do not have to remain indefinable.

Pix's Plot and Story: At Odds?

Like *Cloud 9*, and *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Innocent Mistress* too exhibits a tension between plot and story. Not only does Pix's manipulation of comic conventions engage in a dialogue with earlier texts, the play also has several instances of self-referring speech performances. The dialogue shows conscious play with epic and romantic language; dramatic devices are treated with irony and thus lose transparency. As Pix forces her audience to be aware of manner, narrative conventions are thrust to the surface of her play in order to interrupt the dramatic present. By doing so, Pix blurs the boundaries between subject and object, illustrating both how identity is shaped through narrative and the opportunities available for the reshaping of those identities through a disruption of conventional discourse.

Naked Conventionality

Many of Pix's characters self-consciously use and comment upon other's use of discourse conventions. Pix's *métissage* technique publicly exposes the strands of discourse in the play, and in doing so, robs them of their authority and legitimation in shaping narrative identity. In the opening scene between Sir Francis and Beaumont, Wildlove uses a number of discourse modes, beginning with rather formal heroic language: "Welcome, dear friend. I pr'ythee pardon my omission, faith 'twas business that could not be left to other hands" (266). Beaumont immediately exposes the artificiality of Wildlove's entreaty when he correctly remarks: "Women, I suppose . . ." (267). Sir Francis then drops into "rake" mode, discussing the types and merits of the women in London as if they were commodities on a shelf: "As for the damosels, three sorts make a bushel, and will be uppermost" (266). However, he also shows an awareness of the performative aspect to the social scene as he describes his own role in it: "Sometimes I think it worth my while to make a keeper jealous; frequently treat the coquette, till either she grows upon me, or I grow weary of her. Then 'tis but saying a rude thing, she quarrels, I fly to the next bottle, and there forever drown her remembrance" (267). Wildlove's cheerful admission of his own rather unadmirable behaviour mitigates the damning judgements he has just made upon the women of his acquaintance. They all appear to be involved in the same game, the rules known to all. Beaumont, who draws upon the discourse of romance to play his role of lover, is shocked at Wildlove's honesty. He chides in fine heroic romantic style: "'Tis pity that the most noblest seeds of nature are most prone to vice" (267). However, his friend's laughing rejoinder both exposes the conventionality of such

discourse and suggests its limitations in this play. Wildlove forces his friend to adopt less formal language by chuckling: "Such another grave speech would give me a fit of the colic" (267). When Beaumont explains his reason for coming to London, he does so with a self-conscious awareness of its narrative conventionality: "Now you talk of romantics, in troth, I think I'm a perfect knight errant, for besides my own lady, I'm in quest of another fair fugitive by the desire of her father" (269). His ironic tones follow the lead set by Wildlove.

Knee Deep in Romance

If Beaumont dabbles in romantic language, Bellinda and Sir Charles wallow in it. Beaumont's description of Bellinda's troubles illustrates the conventional lines of her love affair: "Too studious for her sex, she fell upon the seducers of the women: plays and romances. From thence she formed herself a hero, a cavalier, that could love and talk like them . . ." (269). Sir Charles is well read and dramatically aware enough to know how to play this role--Pix again emphasises the conventionality of both Bellinda's and her lover's identities by having them meet "coming from the play" (271). The obstacle to the love affair is also from romantic tradition: Sir Charles is married to one he does not love and so must love his mistress chastely, causing his niece to remark that she did not know "platonic love in real practice" existed (270). With remarks like these, Mrs. Beauclair takes over Wildlove's role of the ironic commentator on the action. Though sympathetic to Bellinda's plight, she nevertheless laughs at the high flown rhetoric that damsel indulges in. To Bellinda's plaintive inquiry "Dost not thou think me mad?," Mrs. Beauclair replies: "A little crazed or so, my dear" (270). And she interrupts her friend's

flowery description of her meeting with Sir Charles with a blunt "But oh, he was married, and that spoiled all" (271). When Bellinda places her story in the context of divine and human laws (again, in fine romantic tradition), Mrs. Beauclair firmly brings her back to earth, declaring: "For human laws I know not what to say; but, sure, Heaven had no concern, 'twas a detested match" (271). And she is not above adopting the romantic style herself, if only to tease her friend's display of that language. When Sir Charles enters the room, she exclaims: "Ha, see who appears, comely as rising day, amidst ten thousand eminently known. Bellinda, this heroic is designed for you, though somewhat barren in invention. I was forced to borrow it" (272).

Nor is Mrs. Beauclair the only character to borrow discourse modes upon need. Sir Charles' remarks to his niece emphasise that he self-consciously fits himself into a role pleasing to Bellinda. His plain speech to Mrs. Beauclair--"Cousin, I am glad to find you here. You shall help persuade Bellinda to go abroad"--is in marked contrast to the romantic tone of his first exchange with Bellinda: "See thee no more! Yes, I would see thee, though barred by foreign or domestic foes, set on thy side father or husband, on mine wife and children, I'd rush through all nature's ties to gaze on thee, to satisfy the longings of my soul, and please my fond, desiring eyes" (272-73). Bellinda carries on in the romantic mode as she cries: "Chide him Beauclair, let him not talk thus" (273). But Mrs. Beauclair again rescues the scene from pathos, as she dryly responds: "Before he came you were at it. What can I say to two mad folks?" (Pix 273).

Shakespearean Criticism

Though Wildlove and Mrs. Beauclair ironically force the traditional narratives in their friends' language to the surface, Beaumont's, Sir Charles' and Bellinda's awareness of narrative conventions, particularly in the theatre, spares them from caustic criticism. They need to be taught to acknowledge their narrativising activities, but they do at least know where conventional identities spring from. Lady Beauclair and Peggy show no such awareness and therefore come in for the severest criticism in the play. The following exchange gives an example of their inability to understand how narrative conventions and identity interact:

Lady Beauclair:	But come, sing us a song of your own. Husband says you can make verses.
Peggy:	But let it be as like that as you can, for methinks that is very pretty.
Spendall:	(Does the fool think I shall make it extempore?) (282)

Peggy's acceptance at face value of Spendall's romantic role is portrayed as ignorance in the play--her suitor later snipes: "She's damned silly. I am forced to let all courtship lie in kissing, for she understands a compliment no more than algebra" (285). As Peggy's teacher in life has been her mother, Lady Beauclair shares the criticism heaped on her daughter, and Sir Charles makes explicit the source of her ignorance. When his wife complains of his taking her to the playhouse ("Yes, you had me to the playhouse, and the first thing I saw was an ugly, black devil kill his wife for nothing . . . and all the rest. Nonsense! Stuff! I hate 'em"), Beauclair responds: "I need say no more. Now Madam,

you have shown yourself" (294). In a world where the performative aspects of identity are openly acknowledged, an unfamiliarity with drama is a serious fault.

Performance Gaffs

An ability to shape and use narrative conventions leads to agency in this play; the better a character can act, the more space s/he has to move. Mrs. Flywife is a fine player in London's game until she accepts Mrs. Beauclair's performance as cavalier at face value and then compounds the error by allowing her husband to view the gap between her roles of loving mistress and London flirt. Mrs. Flywife chastises herself for her stumble in the game: "Sure, this will humble the damned opinion I have of my own wit and make me confess to myself at least I am a fool" (311). Unfortunately, her performance skills are still not at their best, and she says in her lover's hearing: "What's my doting keeper good for, unless it be to give me more?" (311). Mr. Flywife's newfound ability to perceive his mistress's acting sharpens his sight: when he is faced with the choice of an unattractive, unpleasant and legal wife and an attractive, unpleasant and clandestine mistress, he refuses to follow narrative conventions which would either validate the choice of the wife because of her legality or the choice of the mistress because of her beauty. Instead, he focuses upon their unpleasant behaviour and declares: "In troth, I think there's scarce a pin to choose"--the roles of wife and mistress are placed on the same level, and Mrs. Flywife loses the contest only because of her recent poor playing.

Wildlove and Mrs. Beauclair: Embedded Again

Pix further emphasises the unstable nature of identity by refusing to give stability to any role, even those played by the best players. She shows a tension between the

interpretation of any role and the enactment of it. Even her ironic commentators' acting embeds them in the action. Though Wildlove appears to have an ironic distance from the text when he exposes Beaumont's use of discourse conventions, he loses that distance when he is himself exposed playing both the rake and the lover. Sir Francis acts his favourite part of a cavalier to Searchwell when he chastises his servant for losing Jenny: "D'ye hear, if you do not find her out I shall discard you for an insignificant blockhead, for I am damnably and desperately in love with her mistress" (290). Searchwell points out the artificiality of this language to the audience when he sniffs: "Ah lard, ah lard, desperately and damnably in love with her, and never saw her but twice at a play, and then she was in a mask" (290). Searchwell continues to undercut Wildlove's ironic distance from the action by planting him squarely within it. The servant deliberately disrupts his master's performance as a gentleman lover when he allows Mrs. Beauclair to overhear him telling Wildlove: "Sir, sir, the lady you are so damnably in love with sends word if you'll disengage yourself from your company, she'll be at Locket's in half an hour" (295). Sir Francis' pathetic attempts to convince Mrs. Beauclair that the message refers to an old uncle fool no one, and this stumble in the game of sexual intrigue throws Wildlove off balance for the rest of the play. He fails to see through Mrs. Beauclair's performances as rake and as unhappily married wife, and when he accedes to her plot to force him to declare his love for her, the young woman still does not allow him any stability of role. Sir Francis vows: "When I forsake such charms for senseless, mercenary creatures you shall correct me with the greatest punishment on earth, a frown" (321). Mrs. Beauclair ironically responds: "You'll fall into the romantic style, Sir

Francis" (321). And although this talented woman has managed thus far to keep her ironic distance from the text because of her superior dramatic awareness, this last exchange with Sir Francis illustrates that she too recognises that she is embedded in the action of her world. Though she has gained Sir Francis' love, she is not at all sure of his fidelity, and, the play hints, never will be. Mrs. Beauclair's awareness of the relationship between dramatic conventions and identity allows her to reshape to a certain extent the part the game of her world has assigned her, but she also recognises the force that social constructions of identity have. Her quest for agency never ignores the way sexual difference is actually inscribed in female experience.

Audience as Narrator

Though Pix concentrates her efforts on exposing and exploring the narrative conventions within her text, she does specifically extend her critique to the audience's narrativising activities through her association of Mrs. Beauclair with a female writer. As I have shown, the apparently gratuitous insult Spendall delivers to the young woman works to associate her with Pix. The difficulties Mrs. Beauclair encounters in her efforts to expand "the verge of innocence" can be read as analogous to the difficulties female playwrights of Pix's era experienced upon entering the public arena of writing. The play clearly focuses the audience's attention upon the artificiality of discourse conventions and hints that insults aimed at the "unnaturalness" of women playwrights are equally based upon those conventions. Pix's critique of artificially gendered activities such as writing implicates audience members who may have participated (through laughter) in discourse conventions which lampoon Pix as writer. The success of a play like *The Female Wits*

(*c.* 1697), which ridicules Pix, Manley and Trotter, illustrates why this topic would be of concern to a woman writer.

Language as a Game

Though Churchill, Webster and Pix write with widely varying styles, each playwright has an interest in exposing narrative conventions to the audience, thus stripping them of transparency. Churchill's interest in exposing history as a text that acts upon the present, Webster's interest in exposing his audience's desire to overwrite his Duchess, and Pix's interest in showing how the manipulation of discourse conventions leads to agency are all based on a recognition that identity and narrative are inextricably intertwined. In choosing to make audiences aware of manner, these playwrights dissolve the artificial stability of narrative identities, including that of the neutral spectator. The narrativising activities of the audience are as important to these plays as those of the author.

MASQUERADE: THE BODY AS PROP

The Female Body as Term

In this chapter, the focus will be on examining how masquerade serves to emphasise the way femininity is produced as a function of discourse, as well as how femininity as a term is placed very precisely within a network of power relations. An exploration of Pix's and Cowley's texts illustrates how disguise can either disrupt or be incorporated into discourse conventions. My discussion will also emphasise one of the dangers of *métissage* discourse techniques: a playwright may intend his or her engagement with the terms of hegemonic discourse to resist unproblematically using that discourse's own terms, but the repetition can slip the terms back into their patriarchal positions if the disjunctions between strands of narratives are not visible enough. As current feminist discussions concerning these issues draw heavily on psychoanalytic theory, a brief overview of psychoanalytic discourse concerning femininity, as set out by Mary Ann Doane, will be useful.

Woman as Narrative

In "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator" and "Woman's Stake: Filming the Female Body," Doane analyses how "woman" as term has been theorised within psychoanalysis and the implications of that theorising upon feminist cinematic discourse. The value of her critique to my thesis is illustrated when she writes: "It would seem that what the cinematic institution has in common with Freud's gesture is the eviction of the female spectator from a discourse purportedly about her (the cinema,

psychoanalysis)--one which, in fact, narrativises her again and again" ("F&TM" 77). Doane too explores how women are overwritten by patriarchal narratives.

The Oedipal Moment, or Men as Fetishists

Doane examines the term psychoanalysis has constructed as crucial in identity formation: the oedipus complex. According to classic Freudian and Lacanian theories, both small boys and girls take the mother as their first object of desire. Small boys then replace the mother (the body) with the father (the symbolic, signified by the phallus), first because of castration anxiety when they view the mother's genitals and then because of oedipal anxiety as they realise their love for the mother puts them in competition with the father. The small boy "is capable of a re-vision of earlier events, a retrospective understanding which invests the events with a significance which is in no way linked to an immediacy of sight. This gap between the visible and knowable, the very possibility of disowning what is seen, prepares the ground for fetishism"--a condition Doane constructs as balancing knowledge and belief ("F&TM" 79). Doane suggests that perceiving the gap between what is visible and what is known is necessary to enter language as an active subject, because language, even when it appears mimetic, actually consists of arbitrary signifiers.

Woman as Noise

Women, however, take quite a different journey through the oedipal moment. Doane draws upon the work of Michelle Montrelay to argue that, while the male displaces the mother, the female must first reject but then become the mother in order to enter the symbolic, and this process is very problematic in terms of representation. Freudian theory

posits that small girls desire their mothers with a masculine libido until they notice her--

and therefore their own--lack of a penis. They then become angry with the mother and

turn toward the father, hoping to gain phallic power from him. The father, however,

refuses the advances of the little girl, forcing her to realise her only access to the penis

is to marry another man and have a male child. Lacan has influentially argued that the

penis in this argument should be read as the phallus, which is the signifier of lack (desire)

and provides entrance into the symbolic. Doane writes that Montrelay sums up the

position of the woman as follows:

> Recovering herself as maternal body (and also as phallus), the woman can
> no longer repress, 'lose,' the first stake of representation [desire for the
> mother] . . . From now on, anxiety, tied to the presence of this body, can
> only be insistent, continuous. This body, so close, which she has to
> occupy, is an object in excess which much be 'lost,' that is to say,
> repressed, in order to be symbolised. ("F&TM" 79)

Women then, unlike men, face a lack of a lack--"the male body comes fully equipped

with a binary opposition--penis/no penis, presence/absence, phonemic opposition--while

the female body is constituted as 'noise,' an undifferentiated presence which always

threatens to disrupt representation" ("Women's Stake" 28). Doane proposes that "from a

semiotic perspective, [woman's] relation to language must be deficient since her body

does not 'permit' access to what, for the semiotician, is the motor-force of language--the

representation of lack. Hence the greatest masquerade of all is that of the woman

speaking (or writing, or filming), appropriating discourse" ("Woman's Stake" 30).

Women: Looking Differently

In classic psychoanalytic discourse, woman's overidentification with the female body creates a lack of a distance between seeing and knowing, a lack that constructs the woman differently in relation to the processes of looking. Doane quotes Irigaray as follows:

> The masculine can partly look at itself, speculate about itself, represent itself and describe itself for what it is, whilst the feminine can try to speak to itself through a new language, but cannot describe itself from outside or in formal terms, except by identifying itself with the masculine, thus by losing itself. ("F&TM" 79)

Doane's argument begins to take on a dramatic focus as she expands upon the female position; she quotes Laura Mulvey as writing: "as desire is given cultural materiality in a text, for women (from childhood onwards) trans-sex identification is a habit that very easily becomes **second nature**. However, this Nature does not sit easily and shifts restlessly in its borrowed transvestite clothes" ("F&TM" 80).

A Sweet Transvestite

Doane suggests that women, unlike men, easily take to transvestism, as dressing in male clothes signals a sexuality that "allows a mastery over the image and the very possibility of attaching the gaze to desire" ("F&TM" 81). She supports this argument by noting that in cinema, "male transvestism is an occasion for laughter; female transvestism only another occasion for desire" ("F&TM" 81). Transvestism, then, as a weapon against the construction of the female as passive, is fully recuperable in a patriarchal narrative; female transvestism is understandable within those narratives, "for everyone wants to be elsewhere than in the feminine position" ("F&TM" 81). Masquerade, however, is a much less recuperable weapon.

Flaunting Femininity

Doane argues that masquerade by women, when it flaunts feminine characteristics and thus produces the woman as an excess of femininity, remains disruptive in a patriarchal system because it "constitutes an acknowledgment that it is femininity itself which is constituted as mask--as the decorative layer which conceals a non-identity . . . . The masquerade, in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance" ("F&TM" 91). And this distance is very useful in a re-visioning of psychoanalytic discourse: the "lack of a lack" which prevents women from having a stake in representation is clearly shown to be a social construct, and thus space or the possibility of creating an "autonomous symbolic representation" for the feminine is established ("Woman's Stake" 33). Women's stake in representation becomes "the syntax which constitutes the female body as a term"--and Doane (and Butler) define masquerade as part of just such a syntax ("Woman's Stake" 34).

Mrs. Beauclair in Disguise

In *The Innocent Mistress*, Pix's heroine, Mrs. Beauclair, uses both transvestism and masquerade to disrupt naturalised discourse conventions such as active (masculine)/passive (feminine) and madonna (chaste)/whore (sexual). She dresses in her uncle's clothes in order to compete with Wildlove over Mrs. Flywife, his potential mistress. However, her decision to use transvestism to "find these pleasures that charm this reprobate" does indeed have limitations, as Doane suggests (295-96) As a rake, she acts upon desire, but it is clearly masculine, rather than feminine desire. Though she uses her foray into transvestism as a component of her plan to gain Wildlove, it is part of a very circuitous

route to her goal: her successful pursuit of Wildlove's prize delays his possession of it. She herself has no interest in Mrs. Flywife (Pix does not appear to be exploring lesbian desire) and, therefore, as soon as she possesses the prize, must divest herself of the woman. Though her transvestism allows Mrs. Beauclair to enter the sexual games on the stage, and thus to distance herself from female passivity, the heterosexual context of the play removes the possibility for this transvestism to signify the heroine's acting upon female desire. Masquerade offers Mrs. Beauclair a more truly disturbing means of expanding her ability to act.

Masquerades in the Park

Mrs. Beauclair's decision to don a mask in the park is a sign she does not accept that sexual passivity must form a part of a virtuous woman's identity. The wearing of a mask is used in the play as a sign of a "loose woman"--Mrs. Beauclair herself uses it in this way when she says to Sir Francis: "Have I not seen you at a play slighting all the bare-faced beauties, hunting a trollop in a mask with pains and pleasure?" (291). The hostile attitude toward masked women in this narrative (an attitude which had travelled outside of strictly theatrical circles: a masked woman at this time was a common convention to signify a prostitute) supports Doane's contention that "this type of masquerade, an excess of femininity, is aligned with the *femme fatale* and, as Montrelay explains, is necessarily regarded by men as evil incarnate: 'It is this evil which scandalises whenever woman plays out her sex in order to evade the word and the law . . . By destabilising the image, the masquerade confounds [the] masculine structure of the look. It effects a

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defamiliarisation of female iconography" ("F&TM" 82). When women participate in conventional narrative patterns, they too find this defamiliarisation frightening.

Though Mrs. Beauclair on the one hand repeats patriarchal conventions regarding masquerade, on the other hand she is willing to use this device to act on female desire. She wears a mask in the park in order to trick Sir Francis into admitting he cares for her, knowing full well that in doing so, she marks herself as a "loose" woman. Bellinda's scandalised protests emphasise how powerful a sign the mask is, but Mrs. Beauclair gambles that Wildlove, upon realising that the mask hides the young woman he loves, will accept her destabilisation of female iconography (madonna/whore). Sir Francis's sanction, rather than fear, of Mrs. Beauclair's use of excess femininity, illustrates the valorisation of female desire in the play, and Mrs. Beauclair's association with Pix as author supports Doane's contention that the greatest masquerade of all is that of a woman writing--appropriating discourse.

Slippery Repetitions

However, Doane's warning that the repetition of patriarchal conventions can reinscribe those conventions, even when the intent is to disrupt them, is pertinent to this play. Mrs. Beauclair's transvestism, falling into a long tradition of women dressing as men on the stage, is to a large extent recuperable into narrative conventions, though Wildlove's complete acceptance of his true love's cross-dressing remains somewhat disturbing--not only does Mrs. beauclair undercut libertine conventions but she also emphasises gender mobility. (It would be an interesting topic to explore how the pre-Restoration stage convention of men playing women who occasionally play men fits into Doane's theories

of transvestism. Unlike the cinema, the stage does have a tradition of accepting male transvestism, though perhaps not when played self-consciously). Mrs. Beauclair's derogatory description of masked women at the playhouse also illustrates her involvement in discourse conventions, even as her own use of the mask disrupts them. Cowley's play, *The Belle's Stratagem* (1782), though it displays a much more thorough examination of masquerade as a mechanism to constitute the body as a term, has some of the same problems as Pix's play.

Masquerade: The Belle's Stratagem

As in Pix's play, *The Belle's Stratagem* also shows a young woman using masquerade to successfully act upon female desire. Letitia's ability to don and doff different "feminine" characteristics illustrates the artificiality of those traits and of the roles they indicate. Letty's patchwork identities and narratives disturb Doricourt's classification of women as either foreign and sensual or English and frigid. Indeed, the play's exploration of sexual identities has ramifications for patriarchal institutions in general: not only are Doricourt's seemingly clear national identities blurred, but Sir George extends the impact of the masquerade from blurring identities to destabilising the patriarchal institutions founded upon those identities. Constructing the body as a term of discourse has far reaching implications.

French and Italian Designer Labels

The central plot of Cowley's play concerns the romance, or lack of, between Doricourt and Letitia. Doricourt's travels on the continent have led him to classify women into two groups: sexy foreigners and inhibited Anglo-saxons, and he interprets Letitia's modesty

as a sign of her conformance with the second group. His own words should point out to him the error of assuming Letitia's retiring ways are natural. The young man's explanation to Saville of his appreciation of foreign women focuses upon their ability to act and not upon any "natural" attributes. He says: "Why I have known a Frenchwoman, indebted to nature for no one thing but a pair of decent eyes, reckon in her suite as many Counts, Marquisses, and *Petits Maitres* as would satisfy three dozen of our first-rate toasts" (9). Yet Doricourt fails to realise that Letitia has the same appreciation of performance in identity construction, and the young woman uses masquerade to teach him to recognise her qualities.

Bumpkins and Fine Ladies

The first costume Letitia slips into is that of country bumpkin: she embodies the description of Courtall's country cousins that gallant gives in the opening scene of the play. Courtall complains to Saville: "After waiting thirty minutes, during which there was a violent bustle, in bounced five sallow damsels, four of them maypoles;--the fifth, Nature, by way of variety, had bent in the Aesop style.--But they all opened at once, like hounds on a fresh scent" (2). Courtall is horrified at the thought of squiring the young ladies around, as they could damage his reputation as a *beau garçon*, thereby indicating he by no means regards his own identity as stable or free from performance. However, when he sneers at his cousins' manners, he reveals that he withholds acting ability from them: "but the cousins of our day come up Ladies--and, with the knowledge they glean from magazines and pocket books, Fine Ladies" (3). Yet Courtall's dismissal of discourse as a source of identity is undercut by Letitia's clear ability to costume herself as a country

bumpkin at will. If a Fine Lady can act the country bumpkin, the bumpkin theoretically should be able to act the Fine Lady as well. The body is a fluid construct to those who appreciate performance.

A Diamond in the Rough

Letitia's performance as a simple rustic girl is masterful; she stutters, gapes and babbles nonsense to Doricourt, as the following example shows: "Well, hang it, I'll take heart,--Why, he is but a Man, you know Cousin;--and I'll let him see I was'nt born in a Wood to be fear'd by an Owl" (37). Doricourt is completely taken in, to the point that he misreads all Mr. Hardy's attempts to hint that he should be suspicious of the presentation. To Hardy's comment "I tell you, Sir, that for all that, she's dev'lish sensible," the young man replies weakly, "Sir, I give all possible credit to your assertions" (39). Letitia's appropriation of discourse conventions for her own ends destabilises sites of meaning for several characters; language is anything but transparent in the play, and it is at its murkiest at the masquerade.

Letitia: Clod to Star

Letitia makes her next costume change, appropriately enough, at the masquerade. She appears as an approximation of Doricourt's desire: a sensual, witty, active woman. Again, Doricourt is completely taken in; he sighs to this mysterious masked woman: "And you, the most charming being in the world, awake me to admiration. Did you come from the stars?" (55). That Letty has in fact just come from the farm, so to speak, emphasises Doricourt's lack of expertise in identification. He is also no expert in

semantics, as he shows when he again misreads Mr. Hardy's revelation of his daughter's identity:

Hardy: I tell you that the Lady you admire, is Letitia Hardy.

Doricourt: I am glad *you* are so well satisfied with the state of my heart.--I wish *I* was" (61).

However, Doricourt is not alone in finding the masquerade a source of confusion.

There's No Depending On What You See

The masquerade by its very nature emphasises the ambiguities in the performance of identities that commonly, but obscurely, takes place in society. Flutter attempts to impress Lady Frances by claiming to see beneath masks to the essential identity underneath, but fails miserably. To Lady Frances' surprised comment: "Why, you know everybody," he replies: "Oh, every creature.--A mask is nothing at all to me" (52). He then proceeds to make a very serious misidentification concerning Letitia, and is in general ridiculed for his inability to distinguish people. In this play, Flutter's remark that "a mask is nothing at all" can only be ridiculous; Hardy's remark that "there's no depending on what you see" has much more currency (51,52). That people frequently accept Flutter's point of view, despite his unreliability, is illustrated when Doricourt trusts the fop's misidentification of Letitia, a move which predictably costs him dearly. Unless Cowley's spectators wish to identify themselves with Flutter, their own tendency to rely on essential identities must be questioned.

Masquerade: A Meer Chaos

The play suggests that the performative aspects of identity construction should not be obscured, but at the same time gives one reason why they frequently are. Sir George

fears the masquerade because of the blurring of identities it effects, and he makes the connection between self-consciously donning a mask for a ball and wearing a mask in every day life:

> And what is this society of which you boast?--a mere chaos, in which all distinction of rank is lost in a ridiculous affectation of ease, and every different order of beings huddled together, as though they were before the creation. In the same "select party" you will often find the wife of a Bishop and a Sharper, of an Earl and a Fidler. In short, 'tis one universal masquerade, all disguised in the same habits and manners. (27)

To one that wishes to maintain distinctions in class, any denaturalisation of categories is frightening. Sir George's fear of losing class distinction because of masquerades emphasises that Letitia's exposure of the body as a term of discourse has far reaching implications: patriarchal institutions are founded upon clear identity categories, and a blurring of identities produces instability in those institutions. However, even such a firm believer in natural categories as Sir George cannot deny the power of discourse in shaping identity. Though he says that his wife, Lady Frances, has the "simplicity of heart and manners, that would have become the fair Hebrew damsels toasted by the Patriarchs," he admits that these attributes are not natural: "Lady Frances despises high life so much from the ideas [he has] given her"; upon exposure to other ideas, she may change her own, and that is why her husband fears her interaction with other people (20). Indeed, his desire that spinster women should force other women to conform to conventional roles through gossip emphasises the social construction of roles through language. He wishes unmarried older women to be "impowered to oblige every woman to conform her conduct to her real situation" (17). Sir George's fears that unmarried women are not accepting

this responsibility has some justification, as Lady Racket decides to transform Touchwood's naive young wife from a country rustic into a Town Belle.

The Rackety Widow

The plot concerning Racket and Lady Frances is very interesting, because of the difficulty in categorising the merry widow. Racket is frequently described in conventional terms as a sexually rapacious woman on the hunt for a man. Sir George says disparagingly: "your air should be sedate, your dress grave, your deportment matronly, and all things an example to the young women growing up about you!--instead of which you are dress'd for conquest, think of nothing but ensnaring hearts; are a Coquette, a Wit, and a Fine Lady" (27). Mrs. Racket pounces upon his words to show that they can be read in more than one way. She decides to interpret his censure as praise: "A Coquette! a Wit! and a Fine Lady! Who would have expected an eulogy from such an ill-natur'd mortal!" (27). The widow is determined to interpret "Fine Lady" in her own terms, and she takes pride in her definition: "She is a creature for whom Nature has done much, and Education more; she has Taste, Elegance, Spirit, Understanding" (25). The widow then engages in a tug of war with Sir George over Lady Frances' definition of the term, and it is difficult to determine a clear winner.

A Woman of the World or Jewel in a Cabinet

Lady Frances at first accepts Mrs. Racket's definition of a Fine Lady, and complains to her husband: "You painted Fashionable Life in colours so disgusting, that I thought I hated it; but, on a nearer view, it seems charming" (26). Sir George is horrified, as he married his wife in order to "engross her [him]self," or, as Doricourt remarks, to have "a

jewel in [his] cabinet" (21). Lady Frances, however, curbs her efforts to redefine herself after finding out first hand how powerful discourse conventions are. Courtall's attempt at the masquerade to ruin her reputation as he expands his own reminds her of how precarious the line is between madonna/whore. She decides not to risk the consequences of redefining herself as Town Belle. She tells her husband: "The danger I was in has overset a new system of conduct that, perhaps, I was too much inclined to adopt. But hence-forward, my dear Sir George, you shall be my constant Companion, and Protector" (69). Yet her firm declaration, even as it moves her closer to her husband's definition of proper wife, still detaches her from the status of child that Sir George so clearly hoped she would accept.

Court Ornaments and Femme Fatales

And Sir George is himself schooled by public opinion. At the masquerade, he realises that his domineering ways have made him "the Town-talk," and though he wishes he were "not such a fool as to be govern'd by the *fear* of that ridicule which [he] despise[s]," he does in fact modify his behaviour, much as he hoped young girls would do because of gossip (51, 52). He too is vulnerable to social construction. His recognition of this vulnerability makes him amenable to Saville's suggestions of proper behaviour in regard to his wife. Saville gently remonstrates: "Lady Frances was born to be the ornament of Courts. She is sufficiently alarmed, not to wander beyond the reach of her Protector;-- and, from the British Court, the most tenderly-anxious Husband could not wish to banish his Wife" (77). Sir George's acceptance of this advice, though given by Saville, further complicates Mrs. Racket's role, because it closely repeats the words with which she

challenged Touchwood to a social duel over Lady Frances. She swoops down upon Lady Touchwood, saying: "Come, then; let us begin directly. I am impatient to introduce you to that Society, which you were born to ornament and charm" (26). Though Cowley withholds from the widow an onstage triumph over Sir George, her ideas concerning a "Fine Lady" appear to be validated in the play. She is further validated when her actions refute the accusations made against her by Villiers and Doricourt that her envy of other women makes her a poor friend. Neither Villiers's smirking comment that "no woman ever praises another, unless she thinks herself superior in the very perfections she allows," nor Doricourt's uncharitable "there must be some envy in this! . . . but one must allow for a Lady's painting" are supported by the play's action. Mrs. Racket is a good friend to Letitia, as she shows when she declares: "But *I* have taken the scheme into my protection, and you shall be Mrs. Doricourt before night" (65-66). This "femme fatale" does not fit comfortably into the confines of narrative conventions for that role—Doricourt's fear of her because of her perception ("I don't like encountering Racket.—She's an arch little devil, and will discover the cheat") is given much more weight than Sir George's fear of her sexuality (73).

Letitia as Director

The main plot concerning Letitia and Doricourt exhibits the same destabilisation, as well as the same tendency to settle in conventional patterns. Letitia's decision to use the masquerade to act on female desire is validated when Villiers triumphantly announces at the breakfast table: "Here comes the Enchantress, who can go to Masquerades, and sing, and dance and talk a Man out of his wits!" (64). And Doricourt is so far from holding

his previous clear categorisations about women that Villiers says that in regard to Letitia, he is "dying for her, and hates her; believes her a Fool, and Woman of brilliant understanding" (64). Yet just as she is about to triumph in her plot, Letitia chooses to relinquish her control. Although she remains disguised in the fifth act, she gives up the position of director to masculine control when she does not contradict her father's request to Villiers to "contrive something" (64). This return to a more passive role foreshadows Letitia's decision to accept Doricourt's definition of her in order to become his wife. She moves from "delightful wildness" to the "cage of his arms," fulfilling romantic conventions for comedies (59). Cowley's repetition of conventional narratives shows some slippage into patriarchal configurations.

Letitia's Choice

Yet Cowley's text remains disturbing. Butler's argument that any performative act showing the discursive nature of identities (including sexual identities) constitutes a subversive repetition is appropriate here. Though Letitia gives up her power to direct throughout most of Act V, she briefly takes it back when she refuses to allow Villiers to take responsibility for her designs. She announces: "I will not allow that. This little stratagem arose from my disappointment, in not having made the impression upon you I wish'd" (81). In fact, her very relinquishment of power contains an acknowledgement of her ability to wield it; she states: "You see I *can* be anything; chuse then my character--your taste shall fix it" (81). Even when accepting a conventional role, Letitia's speech reveals the artificiality of that role. Custom, not nature, fixes identity. The play

still illustrates Doane's proposal that women's stake in representation lies in constructing a syntax that exposes the female body as an artificially constructed term.

The Mask Below the Mask

Both Pix's and Cowley's texts use masquerade to illustrate the social construction of the body, and the power relations those constructions are embedded within. Though the stylised repetition of discourse conventions shows some slippage into patriarchal configurations in both plays, the masquerade remains much less recuperable than a device such as transvestism, at least within a heterosexual context. The shifting categories the heroines and heroes occupy discourage any sense of a natural face beneath the masks they wear: the removal of one disguise only reveals another, masks within masks without end.

ENDINGS AS PROVISIONAL BEGINNINGS

Unstable Marriages and Identity Revelations

In this final chapter, the focus will be upon how the dramatic structures previously examined work to resist closure in all of the primary texts I have chosen. *The Duchess of Malfi* and *Cloud 9* exhibit openly unstable endings, while *Lucius: The First Christian King of England, The Innocent Mistress* and *The Belle's Stratagem* appear to reach conventional resolutions through marriages and identity revelations, while actually revealing that the reverberations from the exposed gaps in discourse continue to destabilise any sense of closure. Manley's, Pix's and Cowley's texts reach "temporary comic resolutions," as defined by Jarrett in her examination of the Sophists.

Temporary Comic Resolutions

As stated, Jarrett suggests that the Sophists exposed gaps in and among discourses and then sutured them up "in a consciously constructed story: a temporary comic resolution." Sophistic structure does not strive for a stable conclusion to a narrative; rather it focuses upon "rearranging the known" in order to provide the critical distance for revision; as Doane notes, this revision may include positing identity, even gender identity, as a term of discourse. Jarrett's and Doane's proposals are strikingly similar to Grassi's contention that the task of rhetoric is not one of persuasion, intended to convince us of an ahistorical truth, but rather to disclose the constantly changing nature of reality by examining the different meanings of the same term in various contexts. The texts I have examined in

this thesis, as they rearrange the known, refuse to settle on one certain vision of the future.

Churchill: Past, Present and Future

Churchill's patchwork structure in *Cloud 9* makes any sense of closure seem temporary. The future is as much under construction as the present and the past. The social codes of the nineteen seventies are still very much in flux: a new order has not come about. Although the formerly marginalised characters of Victorian England have made many changes, none of them is occupying a new stable identity. As I have shown, Edward does not know if he will have a solid relationship with Gerry, Victoria does not know if she will focus her energy upon her career and move to Manchester, Lin's attempt to develop new mothering skills is not a complete success, and the child Cathy occupies much the same position in relation to adults as did Edward in Act One. Churchill emphasises the instability of her character's roles by ending the play with the interaction among Gerry, Betty and Clive. Betty takes the important step of attempting to establish a new relationship with a man, thereby admitting that she has desires and the ability to act upon them. She tells Gerry: "I don't usually give strange men my address but then you're not a strange man, you're a friend of Edward's" (319). However, she is gently told by Gerry that he is gay, and if he is involved with anyone, it is Edward. Betty's courageous first step is not a complete failure, as Gerry offers to be her friend, but it is far enough from success that Clive makes a final appearance on the stage, saying: "You are not that sort of woman, Betty" (320). The play ends on a very ambiguous note, with Betty framed between acting on desire and having her identity inscribed by Clive. The ending

emphasises what the play's timeline implies: it is a much shorter distance between our age and the Victorian era than we may like to think.

Provisional Beginnings and Endings

Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* also resists any sense of closure to the plot, and one of the most clear indications of this resistance is the placing of the Duchess's death at the end of Act Four. During the death scene, the Duchess' acceptance of a Christian martyr's discourse and her association with the Virgin Mary appear to illustrate her brothers' success in effacing the "lusty widow" and the political alternatives she offered. However, as Luckyj notes, quoting Emrys Jones: "at the end of the fourth act, 'we have reached a point of partial fulfilment and rest (a provisional ending), but the situation is rich in unrealized potentialities (a provisional beginning)'" (Luckyj 144).

The fifth act works even more toward thwarting any sense of closure; as I have shown, most of the actions within this act repeat earlier actions but are patched onto different characters. The circling action disrupts any judgments made upon the Duchess, reanimating her as a force within the play. Webster emphasises the Duchess's force as a sign of identity redefinition by ending his play with Delio's backing of matrilineal succession in the person of Antonio's and the Duchess's son. He exclaims: "Let us make noble use / Of this great ruin: and join all our force / To establish this young hopeful gentleman / In's mothers' right" (V.v 109-112). However, the same words emphasise the unstable nature of this provisional ending; the Duchess' son by her former husband has already been sent for to assume the position as duke. The Duchy of Malfi appears to be on the verge of civil war, with the odds in favour of the established heir. The play ends

on a note rich with "unrealized potentialities"--the provisional ending can also be read as a provisional beginning.

Deus Ex Machina and the Quest For Stability

Manley's play at first glance seems to reach a more conventionally stable ending than those of the former two playwrights. However, it is worth noticing that Rosalinda's and Lucius' path to happiness is cleared through a series of extremely fortuitous events--in fact. by what even the play's characters refer to as miracles. The first miraculous event which restores stability to this play is Lucius' and Rosalinda's fortuitous discovery of the dying Sylvius/Alenia. and her equally fortuitous desire to want to clear up the misunderstandings the Machiavellian Prince Arminius has created. Manley pokes fun at this piece of *deus ex machina* as she has Rosalinda exclaim before the discovery of Sylvius: "A Miracle can only clear thy Fame, / And heal my wounded Heart" (Manley 40). Right on cue. Sylvius plops onto the stage, dying, and gasps out a final confession of Arminius' machinations and her real identity. Just in case the audience misses how improbable this encounter is. Manley has Rosalinda cry, "Thy Death's a Miracle to clear my Fame. / My jealous Lord requir'd a Miracle: / It is Alenia [disguised as Sylvius], false Arminius's sister" (Manley 41).

Nor is this encounter the only miracle required to restore order in England. Lucius' untenable situation as murderer of his father is solved by the completely unexpected and unmotivated arrival of his uncle, who has waited all these years to reveal that Vortimer was not Lucius' true father and therefore Lucius has not committed parricide. This sort of contrived ending is reminiscent of plays like *The Conscious Lovers*

and *The Beaux' Stratagem*, where unlikely revelations cause shifts in identity which rearrange the plays' relationships so that all conflicts are solved. That Manley makes her use of *deus ex machina* so ridiculous is undoubtedly a comment on the restoration of order in those types of plays. Her extremely improbable identity revelations do not fill in the gaps created by her *métissage* techniques, and Manley's tongue in cheek manipulation of plot closure emphasises that exposed gaps are intentionally left in view, working against any conventional sense of order.

Shaky Marriages

Pix's *The Innocent Mistress* and Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem* end conventionally with marriages between the main sets of lovers. However, as in Manley's play, the previous action of the play resists the seeming stability offered by the nuptials. The engagement between Mrs. Beauclair and Sir Francis appears to offer a solution to Mrs. Beauclair's desire for a rake, but the lady's refusal to accept at face value Wildlove's vows of fidelity disturbs the virtuous lady/gentleman lover configuration which seems to secure the identities of these characters in conventional molds. Mrs. Beauclair's recognition of the force contained within social constructions of identity, combined with the agency she has attained through a manipulation of those conventions, implies that her future may be as turbulent as her past. The same implication of future instability is found in the marriage between Spendall and Peggy. Peggy's support of her husband even after her discovery of his lies, combined with Mrs. Beauclair's support for her, suggests that the marriage may be successful, despite its rocky beginning. However, Mr. Flywife's threat to disinherit his daughter, combined with Spendall's counterthreat to be a "second Mr.

Flywife," suggests that the marriage's shaky beginning will overturn any chance at success (326). Wedlock in this play functions much the same as death in Webster's: both conditions signal provisional beginnings as much as endings.

The Belle's Choice

The marriage which ends Cowley's play shows many of the same characteristics as the marriage between Wildlove and Mrs. Beauclair. Cowley seems to wish to stabilise the ending within the confines of dramatic and social convention, as Letitia relinquishes dramatic power to Doricourt. Yet Letty's decision to accept her place as a "proper" wife is clearly a choice, not the consequence of a "natural" feminine identity. As I have shown, the contingency of identity is highlighted in the very words with which Letty gives up agency. She begins her surrender by declaring: "You see I *can* be anything" and Cowley's emphasis on the verb of potentiality suggests that Letitia still appreciates the agency that performance gave to her. Indeed, throughout the play, hints are given that Miss Hardy may choose to fit herself within narrative convention, but she has always known how to shape it to her needs. Though her father is scandalised by her audacious plan to gain Doricourt's heart, he nevertheless sighs: "Well, 'tis an odd thing--I can't understand it--but I foresee Letty will have her way, and so I shan't give myself the trouble to dispute it" (19). Letitia's ability to convince her father to accept her unorthodox methods hints that Doricourt may have his hands full if he tries to keep his "delightful wildness" in a "little cage." As in Churchill's, Webster's, Manley's and Pix's texts, the action of Cowley's play undermines the apparent stability of the endings, and suggests that the future is as open to construction as the past and present.

Patchwork Structure and Knowledge/Discourse Formations

The resistance to closure found in all my selected works gathers its potency from the patchwork structures which make up the plays; the rearrangement of old and new pieces of dramatic conventions and narratives allows the synchronic and diachronic layers of meaning--produced as the gaps between the various pieces undermine, contradict, sabotage, reinforce or strengthen each other--to loom from the inner shadows to the surface of the texts. The instability of meaning produced by the exposure of these layers of signification illustrates that the function of rhetoric can be seen as disclosing reality in terms of continually new patterns and significations: knowledge and discourse are always embedded in culture and history, and therefore the relationship between them can only be rhetorical.

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