

Marriage and Adultery in Renaissance Drama

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Abstract

Many significant changes occurred in the early modern age. English society was influenced by many factors, including foreign trade, educational expansion, and land marketing. All these changes affected English family behavior and provoked new social conflicts, such as adultery and cuckoldry. Literary culture responded to these changes: dramatists, for example, did not just reflect English social norms in their literary works, but also investigated social conflicts, as well as offering solutions to these conflicts. Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* offers a reflection of social change within English urban society, and particularly how commerce and economic self-interest were seen to violate social values. This play portrays greed as well as social and sexual corruption. *Tis Pity She's a Whore* is John Ford's most famous play; It is a revenge tragedy that takes place in Parma, and presents different sexual relationships between several characters. In this play, Middleton shows us a relationship between individualism and sexual love.

Keywords: marriage; adultery; Renaissance era; drama; Thomas Middleton; John Ford

1. Marriage and Adultery in the Renaissance Era

Many significant changes occurred in the early modern age (Rose, 1988; Wells, 1981). English society was influenced by many factors, including foreign trade, educational expansion, and land marketing (Rose, 1988).

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All these changes affected English family behavior and provoked new social conflicts, such as adultery and cuckoldry (Rose, 1988; Pohlig, 2009). Literary culture responded to these changes: dramatists, for example, did not just reflect English social norms in their literary works, but also investigated social conflicts, as well as offering solutions to these conflicts (Rose, 1988).

Much of the research studying the status of men and women focus on the English man as father or husband, and represent woman as wife, daughter, or widow (Marriot, 1994). Leinwand believes that all these three types of women were required to show obedience to a man as father or husband (1986). Women were considered lower in status than men, physically, mentally, and morally, and needed to be controlled by males (Leinwand, 1986). Women were known as sinful because they were daughters of Eve, who caused Adam to be driven out of the Garden of Eden (Marriot, 1994). It was commonly believed that women lived their lives through emotion rather than logic (Marriot, 1994). And although both men and women were required to be chaste, society focused on women's chastity more because they were thought to be less moral and less logical than men (Leinwand, 1986). Leinwand states that English women were instructed not even to befriend unchaste women – i.e. those who committed adultery or encouraged women to do so – because unchaste women could influence other women and make them think of adultery or illicit relationships (1986).

John Ford's *Tis Pity She's a Whore* investigates this issue by showing how Putana influences Annabella to forge an illicit relationship with her brother by giving her a seemingly logical reason to pursue her action (Gauer, 1987), saying: What though he be your brother? Your brother's aman, I hope, and I say still, if a young wench feel the fit upon her, let her take any body, father or brother all is one. (2.1.47-49)

Discussing this freedom, Burks notes that according to the law women were considered part of a man's property, and so lack freedom (1995). Leinwand states that society treated women better than servants, but allowed them less freedom than men (1986). Regarding to this, they had to show a sense of simplicity, obedience, and temperance towards their men (Leinwand, 1986). Leinwand (1986) emphasizes that all three types of woman lacked freedom except widows, who, in some circumstances at least, were not controlled by men, and were permitted to choose another husband.

However, Kelso states that although a widow may have had fewer household responsibilities, such as taking care of a husband and/or children, her life may still have lacked freedom because she was required to follow social norms, which demanded that she should not marry another man or wear colorful clothes (as cited in Leinwand, 1986).

Regarding marriage in the Renaissance era, English Protestants' view was typified by the following definition: "a conjoint state that is both secular and sacred led to an internally fissured ideal of marriage and love" (Mukherjee, 1996, p. 2). John Milton, in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, defines marriage as "a covenant, the very being whereof consists, not in a forc't cohabitation, and counterfeit performance of duties, but in unfained love and peace" (as cited in Mukherjee, 1996, p. 40). In the Renaissance period, marriage was thought of as a union between men and women's souls (Mukherjee, 1996). This spiritual dimension meant that by loving God, couples would be able to live happily and comfortably (Mukherjee, 1996). Milton also admits that love is an essential factor in marital success (as cited in Mukherjee, 1996). Supporting his idea, Macfarlane believes that love is important and it must come before obedience, just as it appears in a marriage contract (1986). Hume argues that a friendship must be established between husband and wife in order to engender love between them (as cited in Macfarlane, 1986).

In her research, Mukherjee states that in the early modern age a successful marriage was thought to depend on chastity and a husband and wife's ability to control themselves and avoid committing adultery (1996). Sexual acts were only deemed acceptable within marriage; marriage was therefore important because it was thought to protect humanity from transgressive relationships and offer a stable environment for raising children (Mukherjee, 1996). Sexuality was highly prized within the institution of marriage, but based on Puritan marriage rules, a man must not marry a woman for her beauty or rank, but for God's love (Mukherjee, 1996). Freedom of choice regarding who to marry depended on social and economic fitness, because a woman would be treated as a servant if she were to get married to a man from a higher social or economic class (Mukherjee, 1996).

Rogers, however, believes that women's beauty was also considered as important as other factors in preserving men's chastity (as cited in Mukherjee, 1996), even though he also admits that money was an important factor in choosing a husband or wife, because a luxurious life could arouse love between couples (as cited in Mukherjee, 1996).

However, Burks states that in reality English people got married to enhance their social rank and share property, ignoring other factors (1995). Women had no autonomy to choose a future husband, a fact supported by English law, which denied the legitimacy of any marriage that took place without the father's approval (Burks, 1995). On the other hand, Atkinson argues that arranged marriages were not actually common, but occurred when two lovers did not match their parents' expectations, or when a woman committed adultery, causing her parents to force her to get married in order to keep the family honor (1986). Although arranged marriages take place frequently in Renaissance drama, this does not exactly mirror contemporary social reality (Atkinson, 1986).

However, adultery was legally a more complicated relationship than marriage (Pohlig, 2009). Downname defines it as "an offence committed by both betrothed and married people" (as cited in Pohlig, 2009, p. 42). Depending on the court records, adultery was divided into different kinds. One was an illegal relationship between an unmarried man and woman – for example, the relationship between Annabella and Giovanni in John Ford's *Tis Pity She's a Whore* (Pohlig, 2009). Another type was a single adulterous act, and occurred if a married woman or man formed an illicit relationship: in *Tis Pity She's a Whore*, for example, Hippolita commits adultery with Soranzo, although she is married to Richardetto (Pohlig, 2009). The third type was a double adultery, which occurred when both a married man and woman formed transgressive relationships with outsiders (Pohlig, 2009).

According to Pohlig, adultery was considered different from cuckoldry, and he states that cuckoldry occurred when a married man knew that his wife was committing adultery (2009). Middleton provides a clear example of this kind of relationship in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (Bevington, Engle, Maus, and Rasmussen, 2002). The sexual relationship between Mrs. Allwit and Sir Walter Whorehound is obviously known to Mr. Allwit, and he even encourages Sir Walter to sustain this relationship by offering him money (Bevington et al., 2002).

However, there were different reasons for committing adultery, such as internal marital conflict, which could be used to justify illegal sexual acts, as in the case of Giovanni and Annabella in *Tis Pity She's a Whore* (Pohlig, 2009). Also, forced marriage could lead to frustration and, ultimately, adultery (Mukherjee, 1996).

Although – and perhaps even because – illegal sexual love offered a greater sense of freedom than marriage, it was considered a driver of social and economic destruction (Pohlig, 2009). According to Pohlig, adultery was considered to be an unsatisfactory relationship in the Renaissance period because it opposed social norms (2009). Adultery was thought to lead to socially tragic ends, such as the death which occurs at the end of *Tis Pity She's a Whore*, when Giovanni kills his sister, Annabella (Burks, 1995). Also, it could lead to illegitimate children, such as Annabella and Giovanni's unborn baby (Chen, 2011). Further, it could break the bond between marriage partners (Mukherjee, 1996). Finally, this type of relationship could lead to economic mismanagement, as happens in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, when Sir Walter spends his money on his adulterous relationships with Mrs. Allwit and the Welsh whore, which ultimately makes him bankrupt (Pohlig, 2009).

Early modern English law and the Christian Church played important roles in trying to reduce illegal sexual acts by establishing symbolic punishments for people who committed them, such as public penance (requiring them to wear marked clothes in public, for example) (Chen, 2011). Chen states that in the Renaissance period, unchaste women and their bastard children were not only symbolically punished, but women were also sent to correction houses for a year, and their children lost social rank and financial benefits (2011). Chen relates this to *TIS Pity She's a Whore*, and argues that when Annabella first discovers her pregnancy, she does not get married simply to preserve her family's honor, but also because she is afraid of social punishment, wants her baby to maintain its social status, and wants to secure herself financially by marrying Soranzo (2011).

2. Marriage and Adultery in Early Modern Drama

Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* is a city comedy play, first produced in 1613 (Bevington et al., 2002). The play offers a reflection of social change within English urban society (Frassinelli, 2003), and particularly how commerce and economic self-interest were seen to violate social values (Frassinelli, 2003).

Rose states that this play portrays greed as well as social and sexual corruption (1988). She suggests that most of the characters in the play are morally deficient, and whose behaviors contradict religion, tradition, and social norms (Rose, 1988).

Wells shows that in this play the need for money increases licentious behavior, not only fuelling prostitution, but also increasing the levels of erotic, illicit relationships between individuals (1981). Depending on the relation between Moll and Touchwood Jr., Mukherjee identifies one different theme, which is how English society rejected individual choice in marriage (1996).

Middleton clearly shows how the different characters in the play are linked together through erotic or pure relations (Bevington et al., 2002). Starting with Moll and Sir Walter, there is no discernible relationship between the two characters (Pohlig, 2009). Moll is being forced by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Yellowhammer, to get married to Sir Walter in order to gain social rank (Pohlig, 2009). Sir Walter also wants to marry this lady, but for financial reasons (Pohlig, 2009). Middleton thus shows how forced marriage mainly depends on financial and social benefits, rather than love (Pohlig, 2009).

However, the play shows that Moll is a chaste lady who loves Touchwood Jr., a poor boy who lacks both social title and money (Pohlig, 2009). Moll and Touchwood Jr. refuse to follow the social norms, insisting instead on their personal choice to get married (Mukherjee, 1996). Touchwood Jr.'s plan to buy a wedding ring for her indicates the purity and chastity in their relationship (Mukherjee, 1996). The following lines show how Touchwood Jr. is determined to marry Moll: Touchwood Jr. [Aside] My knight, with a brace of footmen, is come, and brought up his ewe mutton to find a ram at London. I must hasten it, or else peak o' famine; Herblood's mine, and that's the surest. Well, Knight, that choice spoil is only kept for me. (1.1.150-54)

He wants to win her as his wife because he truly loves her, and he rejects the idea of letting her get married to her parents' chosen suitor (Mukherjee, 1996). He expresses his love and desire by linking them to food, rather than by using Petrarchan language, and he indicates the importance of chastity in his relationship with Moll (Mukherjee, 1996): Moll. [aside to him] Sir? Touchwood Jr. Turn not to me till thou mayst lawfully; it but whets my stomach, which is too sharp-set already. (1.1.155-85)

The previous lines show how their love is virtuous and chaste, and lacks any element of lust (Mukherjee, 1996). Moll and Touchwood Jr. are clearly not passive characters in the play, but are able to control their destiny (Mukherjee, 1996).

One of the ways they do this is by using clever tricks, such as when Moll pretends to be sick and near to death (Mukherjee, 1996). They don't want to give each other up, even though they face social and economic obstacles, and they try to find ways to live together, as when Touchwood Jr. asks her brother, Touchwood Sr., for money in order to proceed in the marriage preparations (Mukherjee, 1996). The lovers encourage and comfort each other as they strive towards their goal; so, when they fail in their first plan and cannot run away to get married, Moll comforts Touchwood (Mukherjee, 1996): All content bless thee. And take this for comfort: Though violence keep me, though canst lose me never; I am ever thine, although we part forever (3.1.47-48)

Turning to the relationship between Sir Walter and Mrs. Allwit, Middleton indicates that marriage can never make women chaste if they are morally deficient (Mukherjee, 1996). The relationship between these two characters certainly depends on money rather than love (Mukherjee, 1996). Mr. Allwit, who is middle class, has no material means other than a high social rank, and so asks his wife to start a relationship with Sir Walter, a rich man, for the sake of money (Frassinelli, 2003). He is thus a cuckold who has no authority in his house, but Sir Walter, who is carrying all the financial responsibilities of the household, has a clear degree of authority, so that even Mr. Allwit's servants obey him, taking off his shoes when he visits Allwit's house (Pohlig, 2009). He even asks Mr. Allwit not to pursue his relationship with Mrs. Allwit, due to his jealousy, insisting that he alone can have sexual intercourse with her (Pohlig, 2009).

In this relationship Mrs. Allwit also has no role or authority; she is a just sexual object who acts depending on men's desires (Frassinelli, 2003). She is foolish; a whore who plays a chaste woman's role (Frassinelli, 2003). Although she gets bastard children from Sir Walter, she still has no value: she is just an article of exchange in a monetary transaction (Mukherjee, 1996). Kucher (as cited in Pohlig, 2009) sees the sexual act between Sir Walter and Mrs. Allwit as indicative of the lack of love between the husband and the wife.

Mr. Allwit does not have any emotion or even sexual desire for his wife, which makes him prefer money and a luxurious life over being a responsible husband or father: 'Tis the KnightHath took that labor all out of my hands. I may sit still and play; he's jealous for me, Watches her steps, sets spies. I live at ease; He has both cost and torment. (1.2.51-55)

His love of money leads him to intervene in Sir Walter's private life by not letting him get married to Moll, so as not to lose Sir Walter's financial support (Pohlig, 2009). When he hears about these marriage plans, he declares:

I have no time to stay, nor scarce can speak!
I'll stop those wheels, or all the work will break. (3.2.236-37)

However, Pohlig sees Mr. Allwit's character differently. She argues that Mr. Allwit is misjudged by many critics, including Bowers and Kuchar, suggesting that he is neither passive nor an idiot (2009). His name, Allwit, indicates that he has a high level of intellect and quick-wittedness; he is an opportunistic and clever man who draws financial support from Sir Walter (Pohlig, 2009). He is not selfish; rather, he controls his house and provides his family with a good life – for example, he even provides a nurse to take care of his wife and the new baby as if they were a high-class family (Pohlig, 2009). His intelligence appears in his decision to keep the source of his fortune secret (Pohlig, 2009). Also, he agrees with Sir Walter that

The better policy; it prevents suspicion.
'Tis good to play with rumor at all weapons. (2.2.39-40)

Although the play shows that Mr. Allwit lacks any sexual interest in his wife, Pohlig admits that he is a trickster who makes Sir Walter believe that the children are his own in order to take more money from him (2009). Pohlig argues that Mr. Allwit hides his relationship with his wife, and that the children are actually his own (2009). His wit makes him enjoy his wife sexually without "toil." This quote justifies Pohlig's point of view: Allwit. Thou hast hit it right, Davy.

We ever jumped in one, this ten years, Davy. (2.3.8-9)

Drawing on this remark, Jennifer Panek also points to Mr. Allwit's paternity (as cited in Pohlig, 2009). She believes that Mr. Allwit is not really an idiot and cuckold, but Sir Walter is (as cited in Pohlig, 2009). Mr. Allwit's actions are specifically calculated to keep him ahead of the game; ultimately, he goes on to look for another rich man to continue with his sexual trade, whereas Sir Walter falls into debt and goes to prison (Hallett, 1969; Pohlig, 2009).

At the end of the play, Middleton shows us that neither chastity nor virtue makes a marriage successful. Mr. and Mrs. Allwit proceed happily in life and are socially successful (Pohlig, 2009). Pohlig states that although Mr. and Mrs. Allwit are contrasting figures to Moll and Touchwood Jr., both couples reach a happy ending (2009). However, Hallett argues that both Mr. Allwit and Sir Walter lack morals, and so participate in violating social tradition (1969). The only difference between the two is that Sir Walter ultimately feels shame for his actions, whereas Mr. Allwit does not feel any sense of guilt (Hallett, 1969).

Tis Pity She's a Whore is John Ford's most famous play, and is frequently performed (Eliot, 1964). It was first put on between 1629 and 1633 (Bevington et al., 2002). It is a revenge tragedy that takes place in Parma, and presents different sexual relationships between several characters (Livingstone, 1967). The play's unique theme is a love story between brother and sister, Giovanni and Annabella, which leads to a tragic end (Eliot, 1964). In this play, each character is responsible for his or her actions (Bose, 1978). Bose states that the play depicts the social pressures working against individualism, and shows how a false perception of the world leads to a disastrous end (1978).

People's behavior within any society must fit with social traditions and norms (Bose, 1978). Kaufmann states that in this play Middleton shows us a relationship between individualism and sexual love (1960). In Parma's greedy society, most characters want to forge relationships for financial gain – all except for Giovanni and Annabella (Gauer, 1987).

Giovanni and Annabella are brother and sister who are greatly cared for by their father: he offers educational opportunities to Giovanni and a teacher for Annabella (Bevington et al., 2002).

Despite this great educational support, the two characters perceive the world and their society incorrectly (Bose, 1978; Hopkins, 1998). After leaving university, Giovanni starts to develop strong feelings for his sister (Chen, 2011). Livingstone argues that she accepts his love directly because she has not found a suitable suitor who attracts her (1967). According to the orthodox cultural and religious Renaissance view, their relationship exposes a free choice in love which is irregular, dark, and unethical (Bose, 1978). As a result, both lovers face tragic ends due to their unacceptable, even childish behavior (Defaye, 1979).

Defaye states that because the lovers don't follow either God's rule or social norms, they are punished for their sin at the end of the play (1979).

Giovanni is a highly educated man who tries to justify his love (Livingstone, 1967). He suffers internal conflicts between passion and idealism (Livingstone, 1967). He gives himself an opportunity to make the right decision regarding his abnormal love for his sister by discussing things with Bonaventura, the friar (Livingstone, 1967). The friar repudiates his lust and asks him to make prayers and fast to get rid of his evil ideas (Livingstone, 1967).

Giovanna's false reasoning increases his passion, which prevents him from comprehending religious and social norms in a correct way (Hogan, 1977). He justifies his love in different ways so as to allow him to pursue his inappropriate action (Hogan, 1977). First, he connects his love to reason and philosophy, which are the main motivations for his actions throughout the play (Livingstone, 1967). He believes that he is guided by Platonic love, a love more important than marriage, which leads to virtue and liberty of action, and is guided by fate (Livingstone, 1967). By analyzing Giovanni's love motives, it appears that he attributes all his immoral love to fate ("My lust, but 'tis my fate that leads me on." 1.2.159), and he replaces obedience to God with philosophic theories and a belief in destiny (Hogan, 1977). He also tries to convince himself in regard to this love by relating it to nature (Hogan, 1977). In the first act, he encourages his sister to love him: Giovanni. My sister, Annabella. I know this, And could afford you instance why to love So much the more for this; to which intent Wise Nature first in your creation meant To make you mine. (1.2.233-37). He believes that although they are siblings, from one father, nature gives each one of them "a double soul" (1.2.238) that allows them to love each other (Hogan, 1977). Interestingly, Giovanni links his love to religion in order to idealize his relationship with Annabella and so reduce his level of guilt (Hogan, 1977):

I have asked counsel of the holy church,
Who tells me I may love you, and 'tis just. (1.2.241-42)

Even after justifying his irregular love, however, he is internally not fully convinced, which makes him call for wedding rituals with Annabella in order to get make their relationship more worthy and secure (Chen, 2011).

However, Middleton shows how innocent and naïve Annabella is, who loves her brother naturally, without reason (Chen, 2011). Although she is naïve, however, she thinks more logically than him (Chen, 2011). After sustaining a relationship with him for nine months, she becomes pregnant; her pregnancy means that she has to act in accordance with social norms (Chen, 2011). In order to keep the family honor and take care of her future child, she decides to get married to Soranzo (Chen, 2011). Once she is married, different aspects of her personality start to appear (Livingstone, 1967). When Soranzo learns that she is pregnant, and reacts violently, she refuses to tell him her lover's name, which indicates her strength and loyalty (Livingstone, 1967):

Annabella. At what? To die? No, be a gallant hangman.
I dare thee to the worst; strike, and strike home.
I leave revenge behind, and thou shalt feel't.
Soranzo. Yet tell me ere thou diest, and tell me truly:
Knows thy old father this?
Annabella. No, by my life. (4.3.69-73)

She is faithful to her brother, and even tries to protect him by sending him a letter to warn him about Soranzo's desire for revenge (Chen, 2011). She is eventually forgiven by her husband, and then becomes more faithful to him and feels how sinful she was when she was in a relationship with her brother (Chen, 2011). She decides that her love affair with Giovanni is sinful, saying, "false joys have spun a weary life!" (5.1.2) (Chen, 2011). Before her death, she makes a prayer which indicates her repentance (Chen, 2011). Chen believes that Annabella is the most faithful character in the play, despite her sinfulness – one who loves truly – and that her repentance indicates her chastity (2011). At the same time, Giovanni is a selfish and jealous man who does not agree with his sister getting married, even though he is aware of her difficult situation (Chen, 2011). His selfishness prevents him from understanding the reason for her marriage (Chen, 2011):

Marriage? Why, that's so damn her! That's to prove
Her greedy of variety of lust. (2.5.41-42)

His jealousy makes him neither rational nor religious, but God still chooses him to be a tool of punishment (Hogan, 1977). At the end of the play, Giovanni the lover loses all sense of reason, which is replaced with revenge (Kaufmann, 1960). As a result, he kills his sister (Kaufmann, 1960).

Another significant transgressive love relationship driven by lust is that between Soranzo and Hippolita (Bose, 1978). Hippolita is Richardetto's wife, and she engages in an illicit sexual act with Soranzo (Bose, 1978). Soranzo promises to marry her after her husband's death, but in Act 2 Soranzo changes his mind, after falling in love with Annabella, and so rejects her as his lover (Bose, 1978). Pretending to be a wise man, he justifies his action by telling her that breaking a promise is better than continuing with their sinful love affair (Hogan, 1977). As a result, her passion towards him changes from love to hate (Hogan, 1977).

She is like Giovanni, and now tries to justify her illegal love by appealing to logic. She believes that a natural force guides her to love Soranzo (Bose, 1978). Soranzo's "sensual rage of blood" (2.2.29), as well as what she calls "The devil in my blood" (2.2.74), make her challenge society and sacrifice her "modest fame" (2.2.32) and chastity (Bose, 1978). Like Giovanni, she wants to defend her honor by killing the man she loves (Hogan, 1977). She makes a plan with Soranzo's servant, Vasques, to poison his master (Hogan, 1977), but, due to her evil, she drinks the poison which she has prepared for Soranzo. Before she dies, she cries out, "cruel, cruel flames!" (4.1.94) to express the passion that burns in her heart (Hogan, 1977). Her jealousy and immorality destroy her (Hogan, 1977). Bose states that Hippolita rejects the social law, just like Annabella and Giovanni, and so society rejects her (1978). In the end, both Soranzo and Hippolita are shown to be guilty and sinful characters (Gauer, 1987).

In *Tis Pity She's a Whore*, Ford establishes several different relationships, including that between Soranzo and Annabella (Hamilton, 1979). As mentioned above, Annabella marries Soranzo, who does not know about her condition, in order to save her honor and secure the future of her illegitimate child (Chen, 2011).

Although Annabella accepts the idea of getting married, she has no feelings toward her new husband, who is just "a creature; but for marriage," (4.3.48) (Chen, 2011). Her only emotion is for her brother, Giovanni (Chen, 2011).

Ford clearly shows that her marriage is unhappy (Hamilton, 1979), and how she is mistreated by her husband directly after marriage as soon as Soranzo realizes that she is pregnant (Hamilton, 1979). Although Act 4, Scene 3 starts with a fight which may destroy their marriage, both characters' behavior is greatly changed (Chen, 2011). The furious Soranzo becomes calm, and he forgives her (Chen, 2011). Annabella, due to her purity, starts to have feelings for her husband Soranzo after gaining his forgiveness (Chen, 2011), and to feel guilty about the sexual relations she has had with her brother, and she refuses to continue in a relationship with him. This, of course, leads to her tragic death at the hands of her jealous and irrational brother (Chen, 2011).

Conclusion

This article has linked two social phenomena, marriage and adultery, as depicted in the Renaissance plays *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and *Tis Pity She's a Whore*. The first section of the article showed the relative status of women and men. The literature shows us that men had greater status than women. Early English law and contemporary Christianity were very important in making society male-dominant. With regard to marriage, Burks believes that arranged marriage was very popular at that time (1995). However, Atkinson argues that compulsory marriage rarely happened when a daughter was adulterous, or when the admired love did not match the family's expectations. The article has offered a definition of adultery (1986). Depending on English law, adultery takes different forms, including single and double sexual relationships. Also, there were significant differences between the concepts of adultery and cuckoldry. The nature of the relationship between various characters in the two plays was also discussed. Moll and Touchwood Jr. are pure characters who pursue a chaste relationship that ends with marriage. In contrast, Sir Walter and Mrs. Allwit are sinners who engage in socially transgressive sexual acts, encouraged by Mr. Allwit, for monetary gain. In the tragic play *Tis Pity She's a Whore*, both Annabella and Giovanni pursue an abnormal relationship which ultimately dooms them.

Hippolita and Soranzo are, for their part, immoral characters who build an erotic relationship, and they are also punished in the end due to their evil behaviors.

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