

The use of shocking and striking visual effects in tis pity she's a whore essay ...

[Literature](#), [Drama](#)



Early seventeenth century plays often make striking use of visual effects to shock the audience. Explain the ways Ford creates striking or shocking dramatic effects in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore.

Plays of the seventeenth century are notoriously known for being rife with gory representations and some critics have gone as far as to suggest that Ford is a prime example of the glorification of violence and sex on the stage. However, this stylistic use and representation was not unwanted by his audience – seventeenth century theatre goers of that age expected shocking scenes with the purchase of a ticket. This very apparent made it necessary for Ford to sometimes over dramatise or make more bounteous his shocking and striking scenes – John Ford, many would argue, went just that one step further.

Undeniably, one of the most shocking moments that Ford creates is seen fairly near to the beginning of the play in an exchange between Giovanni and Annabella. The play's main plot revolves around the two siblings and their growing love for one another, and we see this love addressed and first reciprocated in Act I, Sc 2. Giovanni is first to admit his love, offering Annabella a dagger to “ strike” him with if she does not requite this love. This moment is extremely dramatic and shocking to the audience, as Giovanni's desperate nature is revealed here; Ford establishes both his character and his character's intentions very forcefully.

Later in the scene, the two kneel together, making a commitment to one another. They both say the exact same thing, except ' brother' is changed to ' sister' where applicable. Ford here creates a dichotomy for his audience;

without our prior knowledge, this scene is strikingly beautiful, but we as an audience are ultimately repelled and shocked by their declaration of love upon “our mother’s dust”.

Ford uses the proxemics of Annabella and Giovanni as a method of shocking the audience. The kneeling suggests a greater commitment, almost a spiritual marriage between the two or giving oneself up to the other. Giovanni follows suit by kneeling by Annabella. This not only creates an effect use of the stage, but also a differentiation between normality, but a consistency and uniformity between the two.

The shocking element of this scene is aided by the repetition of speech and the language used; they both start and finish addressing each other as their siblings. This reinforces the ‘wrongness’ – the repulsion, unsettling feeling toward the shocking situation. They also swear on their dead mother, creating more family ties and emphasising the severity of their actions, or the actions they would be willing to carry out. The two then declare, “love me, or kill me”; this again shows the severity of passion between the two. It is interesting to note that this proclamation of love is the only one found throughout the play that is true, deep and meaningful. In retrospect, Ford’s creation and portrayal of an incestuous relationship as the only one that is ‘right’ throughout the play, shocks the audience and forces them to make judgements between what they believe are right and wrong.

This small section between Giovanni and Annabella culminates in a kiss – another shocking event due to the taboo nature of incest, and something

that could arguably, be presented as strikingly beautiful. We are also shocked and disgusted when Annabella tells Giovanni he must do “ what you [he] will” to her as they exit to “ kiss and sleep”. Again, the incestuous nature of incest forces us to consider certain things; why is their love so impossible? Who decides what is right and wrong? Incest is condemned by both the church and society as a whole, but just because it’s a taboo, is it still wrong if they are in love?

However, even though we are challenged by such questions, we are, overall, shocked by the entire scene, especially by this last revelation; that Annabella is giving her body up to Giovanni’s “ will”.

In the first scene, Giovanni is seen conversing with his mentor and guide, Bonaventura, the Friar. The Friar expresses a deep disgust and concern toward Giovanni’s “ leprosy of lust” and tells him to “ acknowledge what thou [Giovanni] art, a wretch, a worm” by having such feelings. This is a reaction we expect and the Friar shows his religious concern for Giovanni when he tells him to “ weep, sigh, pray, three times a day.”

However, Giovanni tells Annabella the opposite, that they may be lovers, in an attempt to secure and validate their love. He professes: “ I have asked... they Holy Church, who tells me I may love you...I should; and will, yes, will!”

Giovanni outright lies to his sister and now-lover here, which shocks the audience; when in love, partners do not lie to one another, especially over something so sinful or evil. Ford here creates this shocking situation through

a simple lie, but the audience are left pondering whether this lie is truly wrong, if it's foundations, bases and motive are based on pure love.

Like many other playwrights from the same era, much of Ford's shocking and striking effects are created by mainly visual means, so audiences were not restrained by any language constraints or barriers, meaning the gore-loving poor could still follow the plot, and so could those far away from the stage. Using highly visual events, certain over dramatisations or scenes which seem extremely implausible are easily understood regardless of complex language or lost subtleties and subtext.

An example of this is seen in the death of Hippolita, who sent her husband away on a dangerous voyage, in order to create a relationship with Soranzo. In her attempts to kill Soranzo, after humiliating her, she accidentally drinks the poison intended for him. She goes on to die a horrific and torturous death, with "cruel, cruel flames" burning her insides. Ford creates a shocking dramatic effect by killing a woman, in full view and in the most painful way possible, her insides burning. This is of course very visual, but a psychological factor is involved, and that is in the lack of reaction by those around her.

Through her "torment" and "flame's intolerable", no one attempts to aid her passing, or even the least bit concerned over the situation. No one is grieved by her death and she receives such plain and unsympathetic comments like "Was e'er so vile a creature?" The indescribable gore presented here by Ford contrasts strongly against the desensitised and

passive characters, highlighting the dramatic effect. The audience are shocked into thinking, “ Who could stand by and watch this woman die?”

Bergetto’s death also provides another shocking dramatic effect in the play. Bergetto, along with Philotis, is noted as being innocent and undeserving of any harm that comes his way, he himself being completely harmless. The unneeded and remorseless slaughter of one of the plays only innocents shocks and distresses the audience. His death seems truly unfair, especially when considering his and Philotis’s recent love; the innocent, virginal Philotis and the ‘ daft but sweet’ Bergetto are torn apart far too early.

Another striking effect created in the play is found where Ford has Vasques order the Banditti to “ gag [Putana] her instantly and put out her eyes.” This is especially shocking as Vasques first lures her into a false sense of security by saying he will put his “ life between you [Putana] and danger” right before ordering her torture. Vasques continues, “ If she roars, slit her nose.” Many would argue that Putana does not even deserve this punishment, as she never set out to hurt anyone and was maliciously manipulated by Vasques; this makes the dramatic effect much more shocking and heightened greatly.

The shocking dramatics of this action is also intensified by the physical representation of the Banditti onstage. They swarm on, seize and restrain her, as Vasques gags her, before she is dragged offstage. The extreme use of physical force here shocks the audience and Putana’s resistance is inevitably be futile, even in the face of such grave danger. Vasques use of language is also shocking, calling Putana a “ damnable old hag” and a “

toad-bellied bitch”, strong terms even for Ford. This type of language is here cleverly put into practise doing what it does best; to shock. Such harsh language, teamed with the extremely physical struggle and Vasques complete two-facedness and ruthless nature shock the audience into feeling instantly horrified and distraught for Putana.

The most shocking dramatic effect is arguable where Annabella is slain, through love, by her brother. By creating an intimate scene between the two, the contrast of Annabella’s murder is intensified. Giovanni becomes more possessive of Annabella and subsequently kills her “ to save thy fame.” Some may even argue the artistic and striking beauty of this scene; a lover’s immolation, for her own sake- through complete love and devotion to her. If anyone were to kill her, it would be him. This shocking emotion, though complexly hidden, is still apparent by the obvious juxtaposition of Annabella’s love and murder.

The death of Annabella is made more harrowing and shocking by Annabella’s final lines: “ Forgive him...Brother, unkind, unkind.” It is possible from an audience to take from this a feeling that perhaps Annabella is not truly ready to die, seeing as Giovanni takes her practically unawares.

The twisted element is further deepened by Giovanni’s proclamation that “ revenge is mine!” straight after stabbing Annabella. This as a dramatic device is extremely shocking as it shows part of Giovanni’s reasoning for killing the mother of his unborn child is for revenge.

Giovanni then carries her body offstage, rips out her heart and enters the banquet scene with “ a heart upon his dagger”. Carrying in the heart, in such a proud and bold way is extremely shocking and disturbing for the environment, because all normal, rational human ways seem to have been abandoned. It is one thing to kill someone, but to rip out their heart for a husband and father to see, is a whole other thing. The shock for the audience is made even greater here by the other characters’ lack of reaction or interest to a heart on a dagger, even after claims of its origin. This again shows the desensitised nature Ford’s presenting in order to shock the audience.

When the heart is verified as being Annabella’s, Florio dies, suddenly, and supposedly of a broken heart. The imminence and unjustness in Florio’s death are main factors in making it so shocking; it is completely unexpected, and in many ways, accidental. This shockingly sad moment however, is just the start of the bloodbath.

Giovanni stabs Soranzo, ironically and symbolically in the heart, with Annabella’s still on the dagger he pushes the two hearts together. Any death onstage is shocking but such a twisted and brutal death is especially so. Again, Giovanni mentions his “ brave revenge” making the audience even more suspicious of his true and warped motives. The technicalities of this stabbing help to make it even more shocking; once stabbed, he does not immediately die, but is mortally wounded, the heart of his wife pressed up against him as he slowly dies; the twisted and almost demented nature of this makes it almost scarring. The imagery and symbolism created by putting

the two hearts which were never meant to be together, together is extremely shocking and connotative.

Defending his master, Vasques fights Giovanni and uses a codename to call in the Banditti, a shameful and cowardly act. The speed of which they fill the stage, attack and injure Giovanni add to the shocking effect created by the 'below the belt' tactics of Vasques.

The deaths of both Soranzo and Giovanni are both shocking; Soranzo demands revenge with "let not that lecher live-!" whereas Giovanni wishes that wherever he goes, he will be blessed enough to see Annabella's face. Soranzo's death is well received by an audience, but the conditions and gore by which he dies are strikingly cruel. The same is obviously applicable to Giovanni, but with that there is also the added shock that Giovanni, after such brutal acts of murder and incest, still hopes to "freely view my [his] Annabella's face". However, this shock does force is to wonder whether his death was in fact just or deserving; what caused it all was love. Is then his biggest crime that of loving? "Yes, you may love, fair son" says the Friar but this is plain and simply untrue. This is emphasised to us in his dying moments - a time which is emotionally charged and full of ambivalence - creating a harrowing and shocking effect.

We are also shocked by the apparent "strange miracle of justice" that has occurred; everyone seems quite contented by the events. We are even more shocked and enraged by Vasques's lack of punishment and Putana's death penalty "for examples sake." The shock is created by inverted what the

general consensus would be; meaning those who deserve punishment, receive none, whilst some pay the ultimate sacrifice.

John Ford creates many shocking and striking dramatic effects, which are mainly visual representations, in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, as done so by his contemporaries; the disturbed and gorish themes throughout shock the audience. The dramatic representations are far and wide, ranging from striking beauty through the simple declaration of love, desperate immolations and the slaughter of innocents so shocking an audience is left enraged, screaming for "brave revenge".