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'On Cheating Pictures': Gender and Portrait Miniatures in Philip Massinger's *The Picture*

Philip Massinger's *The Picture* is as much a drama about marriage and gender as it is a commentary on painting. In many ways, it chronicles the English public's raised consciousness regarding the function of art in society as well as the general knowledge of the mechanics and theories of painting. Roy Strong contends, 'It was only at the close of Elizabeth's reign that England began to assimilate the technical terms and aesthetic commonplaces of Renaissance art and it was not until the 1620's that this was to a large degree achieved'.¹ *The Picture*, licensed in 1629 and published in 1630, bears witness to this assimilation of artistic knowledge. It primarily concerns itself with the genre of portrait miniatures and the value placed upon them, examining the power of the gazer, the subject, and the painter.

A portrait miniature, regularly exhibited in private cases or worn or carried by the owner, offers an important gloss on gender and art. As Patricia Fumerton notes in her important work on the miniature, trivial and ornamental fragments are what 'enabled the Renaissance to achieve an aesthetic understanding of itself as cultural artifact'.² For Fumerton, the trivial, ornamental, and fragmented pieces of renaissance culture become the story they tell themselves about themselves, in aesthetic terms. Thus, the painting becomes a sort of meta-text for the characters in the play, as well as for the theatre spectator. Massinger clearly guides the audience to invest the portrait with meaning as his title for his play privileges the fragment (painting) over the person it represents (Sophia). Reading *The Picture*, then, means to read the picture.

The Picture features a young couple, Mathias and Sophia, who separate when Mathias goes off to war. Baptista, a scholar and magician, gives Mathias a picture that reflects the 'constancy' of Sophia; in sum, it will 'discolour' if she 'turn'd whore'. The play winds through various temptations (largely orchestrated by Queen Honoria), disguises, and false accusations, each aimed at examining the question of chastity and jealousy among the sexes. The play

ends with Sophia reprimanding Mathias for trusting a 'cheating' picture and Baptista resolving to 'abjure / The practice of my art' (5.3.215–16).³ Massinger's theme—gender roles and the representations of gender in art and marriage—illustrates the intertextuality of portraits and plays, viewers and subjects. *The Picture's* artistic language regarding discoloration and representation parallels language of gender and sexual purity. The two discourses work together to create a common standard for interpreting female beauty and respectability.

Renaissance poets and painters themselves were indeed aware of such intertextual practices, as evidenced in Nicholas Hilliard's development of the *imprese*, a phrase written upon a portrait to hint at the person's identity, and John Donne's and Ben Jonson's poetry on paintings which celebrate and chastise, respectively, the role of the painter and painting.⁴ The practice of verbal portraiture by John Aubrey in *Brief Lives*, his collection of short autobiographical sketches, suggests an even closer convergence of the two disciplines into a single medium. Hakewell's *The Vanity of the Eye* (1608) includes chapters warning of the deceptive nature of painting and limning, as well as the dangers of the theatre and the body, all under the common rubric of the gaze.

One significant aspect of Massinger's discourse on painting highlights gender relations. Reading the play through the picture works to include women and the construction of their roles in the play. The play shows the ways in which gender literally gets made in the renaissance by invoking the relationship between the (male) painter and the (female) sitter concomitantly with the traditional marriage relationship. By layering the two systems, Massinger explores the ways men attempt to control women through normalized structures. The theatrical context reveals the implications of women entering the public sphere. Jean Howard notes a general fear of women appearing in public because of their freedom to gaze, and be looked upon by men other than their husbands.⁵ Hakewell warns in *The Vanity of the Eye* of the 'abuse' of 'pageants, theaters, amphitheaters ... when they tie the eye in such a manner unto them as they withdraw the mind from the contemplation of ... glory'.⁶ Later, he warns of women's ornamental attire as designed for 'pleasure' and not 'use'.⁷ In essence, the female audience members circulate in the public realm of the theatre in the same way a woman's portrait circulates in social circles. Understanding the shared conventions of visual culture between painting and theatre, Massinger uses

both arenas to highlight the process through which the viewers interpret women.

Significantly, the main origin for the miniature is in the illuminated manuscript; the word 'limn' finds its roots in 'illumine.'⁸ The addition of human faces was 'a late and incidental adjunct to the illuminated book.'⁹ The text was paramount, and only towards the end of the medieval period would the limner portray a figure from religious history or a royal personage or donor.¹⁰ The portrait conformed to the shape of the page and served the function of the page; it almost became an *imprese* to the text. Considering the miniature's origin allows us to view Massinger's play as a different type of 'illuminated manuscript' in which textual and visual elements form a single discourse.

The play and the portrait miniature inscribe and even challenge the rules of art and gender. By examining the technique and social function of miniatures alongside Massinger's incorporation of artistic theory and process in the play, we see how Massinger attempts to revise some of these aesthetic standards. The representation of gender in art, furthermore, leads us to view the ideology of making art and making gender as a single task. *The Picture* works with such representations by joining the aesthetic projects of drama and painting through a common rubric of gender ideology.

Fundamental to both playwright's and limner's work is the methodology of representation. Both artists construe the qualities and appearance of the human figure so to highlight particular virtues and vices. As Griselda Pollock contends, representations are no 'mirrors of the world' but rather something 'refashioned, coded in rhetorical, textual, or pictorial terms'.¹¹ She further argues, building on this first conception, that 'representation articulates—puts into words, visualizes, puts together—social practices and forces which are not ... there to be seen but which we theoretically know condition our existence'.¹² The artist thus moves between symbol systems, refashioning the original into a new form. The artwork is a particular version of the first, not a mirror image but a construction which then bears marks of the artistic process. To represent is to build a work that is simultaneously the original and not the original.

There are many kinds of representation in *The Picture*, the most significant being the actual portrait. If we consider how this portrait is made, we find that it conforms to certain qualities of a portrait miniature. It is 'limned' rather than painted and emphasizes the 'line' rather than shadow. Baptista describes it:

this little model of Sophia
 With more than human skill limn'd to the life;
 Each line and lineament of it in the drawing
 So punctually observed, that, had it motion,
 In so much 'twere herself. (1.1.166–9)

Though miniatures are obviously smaller in size than regular portraits, what distinguishes the genre is the ostensible quality of being a faithful representation of the person. Roy Strong contends, 'These objects present the men and women of their age as they really were'.¹³ Baptista certainly desires Mathias and the audience to consider the portrait a life-like image.

Yet we know that portrait miniatures are representations like any other art form and therefore within the realm of ideology. Choices made regarding the painting's construction highlight certain aspects of the figure. As Richard Wendorf notes, the miniature operates in 'synechdochic' terms, or having a part stand for the whole.¹⁴ Miniaturists in the seventeenth century mainly chose to paint the subject's head rather than a full body image, but even if this portrait of Sophia were a full-length portrait miniature, the characters choose to have the face stand for the whole. Baptista designs the image so that 'what is now white and red' (1.1.180)—presumably her face and lips—will incline to yellow and then black when threatened and conquered. Sophia's face (signifying her chastity) thus comes to represent the whole of her being. This synecdoche is an interesting adaptation of what Harry Berger terms a 'physiognomic' interpretation, or 'reading the face as the index of the mind'.¹⁵ What happens in Massinger's play is a different sort of physiognomic interpretation which involves reading the face as the index of the body. Here, the viewer questions not Sophia's internal emotional or mental activity but whether another man violates her body. The portrait's ideology is of course not far from the conventional renaissance understanding of femininity.

Massinger departs from the conventional when presenting the act of gazing at a portrait miniature. Patricia Fumerton notes: 'Viewers of the miniature could not stand back as disinterestedly as viewers of a large-scale painting. They had to "press" together, in Melville's phrase, so as to get close to the limning and to each other.'¹⁶ The miniature not only forces us to look closer, Wendorf adds, but also asks us to look longer at it than a larger painting would demand.¹⁷ Nicholas Hilliard, the most prominent of portraitists, says in his treatise, 'it is to be veewed of nesity in hand neare unto the eye'.¹⁸ There are proper ways to gaze at the miniature, then, and many of them are

not practiced in *The Picture*. When Mathias receives the picture, he immediately asks for its ‘advantage’ to him and after Baptista describes its capabilities, Mathias changes the topic to his participation in the war. They do not dwell on the image or examine it closely and indeed, considering the way that Baptista created it, it needs no careful examination. He reduces the craft to colour, something which can be seen at a glance. When Mathias shows it in court, Ladislaus sees it and immediately exclaims, ‘An excellent face!’ (2.2.328). The miniature in the play is thus not for close examination but rather is simply a gauge—like a modern closed-circuit security camera—which allows for quick and easy analysis of a woman’s ‘changed’ state of purity.

One regular purpose of the portrait miniature was as a love token, given from one lover to the other. Many of the tokens were located in private rooms and cabinets, encased and enclosed from the public eye. After 1560, the miniature started to be worn in public.¹⁹ Fumerton relates the story of Sir James Melville being led into Queen Elizabeth’s bed-chambers to view her collection of miniatures, in particular the image of Mary, Queen of Scots.²⁰ This moment is one of secrecy (only Melville can look) and also one of exposure (because the Queen lets Melville look while others are in the room), the typical paradox for the miniature. The miniature embodies the Elizabethan tendency to represent ‘private experience as inescapably public’.²¹ The miniature can be exchanged like a love letter, displayed like jewelry, and freely circulated like a broadside. The ornate cases that house the portrait serve to protect and hide the image but still are easily accessed.

Massinger ignores or reworks the typical functions of the portrait miniature as love token. The portrait is given as an instrument of control, rather than a love token. The exchange becomes a male project rather than an affectionate exchange between Sophia and Mathias. Indeed, Mathias says, ‘if it have not/ Some hidden virtue that I cannot guess at, / In what can it advantage me?’ (1.1.171–3). He sees no use in carrying a miniature of Sophia unless it gives him ‘advantage’ over her. It also allows for transformation and ways to control its subject. Nicholas Hilliard says that the ‘eye is the life of the picture’, obviously referring to the rendering of the sitter’s eyes on the canvas.²² His comment, however, invokes the life of the limner’s eyes and the observer’s eyes in their gazes upon the sitter’s image. Michel Foucault imagines ‘a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre toward which all gazes would be turned’; Massinger’s portrait becomes such a centre as we see Mathias’s struggle to keep his gaze, and all others, turned towards the picture.²³ In his effort, the traditional purpose of the miniature instigating a further love for the sit-

ter fades. The public and private qualities of these images rearrange so that nothing seems to hide Sophia's image from the public eye. Though Mathias is usually the sole viewer, he readily shows the portrait to others and makes no effort to conceal it. This exhibitionism further accentuates the violation done to Sophia as she gains, without her knowledge, regular observers. The privacy of the image stems not from an intimate moment in which the lover gazes upon his beloved's image, but rather from the absolute underhanded creation of the miniature. Born out of magic, the miniature stays hidden from the person it is said to represent, thus breaking many conventions of the usual purpose of miniatures. It also awards much power to the outside (male) gaze.

Wendorf posits that the miniature, through its focused representation, 'eliminates all that is peripheral'.²⁴ Backgrounds rarely receive attention in miniatures, and one sees only a carefully wrought face or figure. The introduction of the *imprese* complicates this assertion. If Wendorf means this comment to apply to the periphery in the sense of the actual location of the viewer or the occasion for which the miniature is worn or shown, then we can see the miniature both interacting and retreating within its environment. Certainly in Massinger's play we find that the miniature works *with* the peripheral, in the sense that it gains meaning through Mathias's anxiety, Honoria's jealousy, and Sophia's chastity. Mathias's situation becomes more complex because of his display of the portrait in court, prompting the queen's 'contest' for favor and Mathias's own temptation. The miniature then serves to draw out a periphery that may have otherwise remained muted, allowing the gaze to encompass the image *and* the events surrounding it. The miniature in Massinger's play does not eliminate but rather consciously participates with the peripheral.

By refusing a removed isolated existence, the portrait in *The Picture* introduces the idea of revision and instability in representation. Indeed, most acts of self-fashioning shift or change throughout the play. A century earlier, Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1507) offered instruction for the self-development of court figures. Painting became a topic of conversation (deemed worthy knowledge for the courtier), and Giovan Cristoforo asserts that painting 'can be gone over a thousand times, being improved all the time as parts of the picture are added to or removed'.²⁵ This conception of painting captures an important quality of the process: revision. Another brush stroke easily threatens the permanent image, changing it in a matter of minutes. Painting itself invites change even when its producers are insisting upon

its stability. Baptista's picture embodies this contradiction as its entire significance rests upon its ability to change and to present a truthful image. We regard the revision as trustworthy rather than a quality of weakness or mistake. It is possible for the actual female figure, Sophia, to remain unchanged and for the portrait to be altered, thus signifying the inherently unsteady nature of the image.²⁶

Mathias insists on reading the portrait's physiognomy for signs of constancy and thus completeness. He is preoccupied with the threat of change to the portrait and by extension, to Sophia. In relaying his anxiety to Honoria, he invokes the story of Penelope. He imagines every one of Sophia's wooers to be 'more expert in his art, than those that tempted chaste Penelope' (2.1.321–2). He avoids the important piece of the story that might have kept his worries at bay: that Penelope was cleverer than her suitors by weaving and unweaving the same threads each day, making it virtually impossible for any of them to gain access to her. Mathias convinces himself that a woman's constancy is so precarious that she must be monitored at all times; he cannot even take comfort in Penelope's example which upholds female loyalty. We might also point out that the inconstant character in the play is Mathias himself, as he is easily swayed by 'violent passion' and quickly changes his mind regarding his own allegiance to Sophia. The device that Baptista creates for Mathias, furthermore, depends upon its ability to reflect change. It is either a 'mirror' reflecting 'miraculous shapes of duty' or a 'magical glass' that 'does present /Nothing but horns and horror' (4.1.61–5). Mathias's comments suggest it represents his own experience as either honoured husband or horned cuckold. In addition, the portrait's inaccurate fluidity brings Mathias's self-destruction, providing one more reason to regard the picture as a representation of Mathias's own inconstancy.

The methods of representation—from creation to display—draw out similarities between artistic and literary forms. First, we find that the portrait miniatures set up a pattern for the adoration of the opposite sex, an interesting parallel to the Petrarchan sonnet (although the female does not remain unattainable but graspable).²⁷ For Massinger's play, it is the 'rules of art' that allow Baptista to develop a system to assure Mathias that Sophia remains 'free and untainted' (1.1.133). The aesthetic realm thus applies itself in terms of judgment and evaluation to the regulation of female sexuality. The miniature is the appropriate genre for this action because it already participates in courtship patterns. Massinger's adaptation of it for the purposes of spying upon Sophia stands in sharp contrast to the affectionate lover's exchange. Now the

miniature is a sign of male desire and the marriage bond and is also a physical tool to control female behaviour. Massinger recasts the miniature's meaning as a sign of female infidelity and male anxiety, rather than an ideal image upon which the male eye can cast his desire.

Portrait miniatures also help to uphold and develop standards of beauty. Again, Castiglione offers an interesting comment, that painting 'reveals the beauty of living bodies, with regard to both the delicacy of the countenance and the proportion of the other parts, in man as in all other creatures'.²⁸ For miniatures, the countenance becomes paramount and therefore artists like Hilliard develop theories regarding the line and shadow. Leon Battista Alberti, in 1435, suggested this (stilted) conception of natural beauty: 'painting aims to represent things seen,' but also that 'grace and beauty must above be sought'.²⁹ An artist must revise and conform an image to certain proportions, equalizing small and large surfaces. Hilliard agrees, in essence, saying, 'I find also that many drawers after the life for want of true Ruell or Jugment often times fayles more in true proportion'.³⁰ He continues by insisting that "when the shadowe is gone it will resembel beter then before, and may if it be a faire face, have sweet countenance even in the lyne".³¹ Shadow is 'like truth ill towld' and thus the 'truth of the line' becomes the tool to represent beauty.³² Massinger demonstrates a knowledge of the miniature's preference for the line over shadow, as Baptista relies on the 'lines/ Of a dark colour, that disperse themselves / O'er every miniature of her face' (4.1.33–5) to tell the truth of her temptations. The 'truth of the line' becomes Sophia's death-sentence, as Mathias vows that 'this hand, when next she comes within my reach,/ Shall be her executioner' (90–1). The conventions for drawing Sophia's matchless beauty become the very standard by which she is judged. The rules of portrait miniatures become yet another apparatus which monitors and evaluates women. The disparity between idealism and realism, actualized by situating the portrait alongside the female subject on stage as well as in the presence of female audience members, further accentuates the paradoxical nature of the double discourse of portraiture and gender.³³ A woman must be the ideal image while the display (on stage) shows that she cannot be.

John Aubrey said of Samuel Cooper's craft that 'limning is too effeminate. Painting is more masculine and useful'.³⁴ The art of limning has regularly been categorized as a lesser, secondary form, serving decorative purposes. It is no surprise that Aubrey categorizes it as 'effeminate' then, as the supplement or lack to the more masculine act of painting. Massinger embeds this assess-

ment into the play when Sophia shrewdly points out to Mathias that his male cohorts are the creators of his imagined cuckoldry:

Why do you not again
Peruse your picture, and take the advice
Of your learned consort? these are the men, or none,
that made you, as the Italian says, a *becco*. (5.3.155–9)

Though the portrait bears her likeness, she absolves herself from causing any of his anxiety and jealousy, thus showing how the miniature's male domain backfires. The creation of this miniature involved a male patron and a male limner, as Mathias convinces an unwilling Baptista 'to do as much as art can' (1.1.121). The realm of portrait miniatures was indeed a powerful arena as Hilliard achieved a monopoly over painting the royals and Donne celebrates him in a famous line: 'A hand, or eye By *Hilliard* drawne, is worth an history'. This world is not a male monopoly, however, as the women occupy positions as limners, patrons, sitters, and observers, and Mathias's and Baptista's desire to make it so only serves to ridicule such men.

The most significant way that the discourses merge in their articulation of gender construction is the way that colour signifies female sexual purity. Massinger first describes Sophia's face as white but the term quickly slips into metaphorical use. Honoria questions Mathias regarding Sophia's chastity, asking 'tis not in man/ To sully with one spot th' immaculate whiteness/ Of your wife's honour?' (2.2.359–61). Sophia's image is white both literally and figuratively. This language regularly appears in Renaissance texts, especially by Shakespeare. His sonnet 130 parodies the convention, saying of his mistress 'If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun.' He uses colour more forcefully in *Othello*, describing Desdemona's figure as 'monumental alabaster' and then racializes the term by comparing it regularly to blackness.³⁵ Kim Hall points out that for the renaissance, 'white femininity and beauty truly exist only when posed next to blackness'.³⁶ The juxtaposition of white and black functions to uphold a white femininity and beauty that are metaphorically pure, free from any spot. Not surprisingly, the language of portrait miniatures replicates similar standards. Hilliard finds that 'a picture a littel shadowed maye be bourne withall for the rounding of it, but so greatly smuttet or darkend, as some usse disgrace it, and is like truth ill towld'.³⁷ He sees it as a mishap in form and practice for an artist to darken a face in any way, as it misconstrues a truth. Later, he presents this anecdote: 'if a very weel

favoured woman stand[d] in place wher is great shadowe, yet showeth shee lovly, not because of the shadow, but because of her sweet favor consisting in the lyne or proportion'.³⁸ Avoiding shadowing for a 'weel favored woman' (read 'pure') is the limner's responsibility.

While this avoidance may be easily accomplished in a technical sense, spots of a metaphorical kind are not easily removed. Sophia tells Mathias that 'your unmanly doubts, cast on my honour, cannot so soon be wash'd off' (5.3.167–9). Sophia suffers many violations of her character throughout the course of the play, the first being the construction of her portrait without her consent. Mathias's doubts and his apparatus of control devised to 'spy' upon her tarnish her whiteness. Ironically, the portrait, the representation of her whiteness, is the device that brings the cloud of doubt. Massinger's play shows how a man can be the impetus for 'discolouration' and cast a shadow upon the female subject that marks her gender as violated or suspect. Thus, the language of painting in terms of hue and shades parallels the language used to talk about gender and sexual purity. The two work maintain a common standard for female beauty and respectability.

The play works to emphasize the way the language of art extends to the social and ideological realms of gender roles; language cannot be restricted in its meanings. Not surprisingly, then, the portrait represents someone other than the sitter as much as it represents the sitter herself. The creation of the portrait represents in no uncertain terms the male attempt to control female sexual behaviour. Not only does a part of the miniature stand for the whole of the female, the portrait itself is the part that represents the male. Sophia's chastity represents Mathias's masculinity. She is Mathias's property and her violation is his violation.³⁹ Woman becomes a sign for the male, thus representing something that is not the female sex. Art historian Griselda Pollock explains, 'When women are exchanged in marriage, for instance, the empirical signifying thing is a woman, a female person. The meaning carried through the exchange by that signifying element is not femaleness but the establishment and re-establishment of culture itself, ie, of a particular order of socio-sexual relationships and powers'.⁴⁰ Mathias attempts to have two female signs of his power, one in the person of Sophia, the other in the portrait. Both signify the cultural order which places him in control. Of course, the sign can be unstable if used in subversive ways. When the picture (wrongly) discolours, so does Mathias's masculine power, and the order is obviously threatened. It becomes a portrait of Mathias's control *and* Sophia's chastity, parts of the order that are tenuous at best.

The process of representation—for image or text—involves an aspect of displaced or deferred meaning. We have already seen how the portrait represents Mathias's inconstancy and anxiety; Massinger also demonstrates how the portrait bears traces of the painter's identity. Berger suggests that portraits 'are representations of both the sitter's and the painter's self-representation'.⁴¹ In some ways this is unavoidable as an artist's technique becomes his signature; his self-representation *is* the painting. For example, when Samuel Cooper makes bolder brush strokes than his predecessors (Hilliard, Isaac and Peter Oliver) he forever marks his pieces with his own style.⁴² Portraits are regularly attributed to a certain artist because of the distinctive style for both technique and composition. Oddly enough, the notion of aesthetic distance seems to be glossed over in Massinger's *The Picture*. We are told nothing of the process and are given even less information about the actual technique, beyond the words that it is 'limn'd to the life.' Instead, Massinger casts the limner's work as the work of magic requiring a particular male knowledge. Baptista, described as 'a general scholar', is 'deeply read in nature's hidden secrets' (1.1.118–19). His knowledge is private and obscured from common minds.

Baptista's character draws from the experiences of limners in Massinger's age. Though Nicholas Hilliard dies ten years before this play was written, his contribution to the miniature craft was substantial. He was both a goldsmith and a limner, earning the sole right to paint Queen Elizabeth's miniature and given a monopoly over royal portraiture by James I in 1617.⁴³ His work with metals draws from alchemy and he strives to keep the techniques of limning secret. As Roy Strong suggests, 'Limning emerges therefore as a technical skill and craft full of covert tricks and recipes passed secretly from master to pupil. Even in his *Treatise* Hilliard never actually divulged all his processes'.⁴⁴ Strong further posits that this exclusivity added to its appeal and that its position as a 'rarefied and royal' art form kept the process from being diluted or easily mimicked.⁴⁵ Thus, Massinger's representation of an artist—a learned man who knows the secret art of magic and the secret magic of art—accents particular powers of the painter that keep the sitter vulnerable and unknowing.

While the 'magic' of art presupposes boundless knowledge and power of the painter/creator, there are boundaries to such representation. Baptista admits at the beginning that his own knowledge has limits, and indeed all art does. He explains to Mathias:

I am no god, nor can I dive into
 Her hidden thoughts, or know what her intents are;
 That is denied to art, and kept conceal'd
 E'en from the devils themselves. (1.1.155–8)

The secrets of limning, embellished by the magical art of alchemy, still cannot probe the secrets of the sitter's mind. The play revises the very epistemology of a physiognomic reading of a face as an 'index to the mind,' as we see the artist suggest that his representation cannot be a faithful representation of his subject's 'hidden thoughts'. Miniatures, though life-like, are still approximate readings of a figure and cannot be anything more. The sitters harbor secrets that can never be told through art.

Berger suggests awarding the sitter agency by focusing on the 'act of portrayal' and to imagine the encounter from both ends of the paint brush while knowing that the encounter itself as recorded in the portrait is a fiction.⁴⁶ Massinger hyperbolizes the fictional aspect of the creation because there was *no original encounter*, and thus no possibility for the sitter to self-fashion herself for the portrait. The magical creation of her portrait and the interpretation offered by her chief observer disarms and subsumes Sophia. In essence, Massinger finds a piece of the creative process unrepresentable. The language of the play, the form of the plot, and the gendered roles presented seem to depend on this conspicuous silence. The play does eventually address the issues of consent, violation, and virtue—which pertain both to the act of painting and the act of sexual encounter. At the end, Massinger's inscribes a *querelle des femmes* between representations of woman, literally the sitter commenting on the representation of herself.

The play draws attention to the female sitter and her work, but does not acknowledge the many female miniaturists of renaissance England. Of certain importance is Levina Teerliner, gentlewoman and miniaturist to Queen Elizabeth and possibly Nicholas Hilliard's teacher.⁴⁷ She continued painting even after Hilliard arrives and displayed a broader range of subject matter than Hilliard ever attempted.⁴⁸ Women regularly paint and serve as patrons of the miniaturists, with Queen Elizabeth herself ushering in the popularity of the art form. After 1570, the miniature spreads to classes other than royalty, so that gentry, and even the wives of London citizens sit for portraits.⁴⁹ The regularity with which women were painted was high, and women painters were certainly not unheard of.⁵⁰ Hence, it is not the artistic medium of the miniature portrait that finds Sophia unrepresentable, but a masculinist

language that insists on a controlled subjectivity that deems the female unrepresentable. As Judith Butler posits, 'Within a language that rests on univocal signification, the female sex constitutes the unconstrainable and undesignatable.'⁵¹ Through a concerted attempt to maintain a univocal meaning of the female image, largely by denying her a presence in the 'act of portrayal' (an act in which she could perhaps assert a pose other than what Baptista desired), the image continues as a male dominion. The female does constitute the 'unconstrainable' and 'undesignatable' because, as the play progresses, we find the male authored image and the actual female figure contradicting each other, with the latter achieving a greater subjectivity.

Massinger does award some agency to the sitter, or the subject that all gaze upon, in fashioning his or her image. Although the actual portrait miniature denies the sitter the opportunity to represent herself, other acts in the play allow for self-representation. In fact, female and male characters alike issue forth multiple versions of themselves, or in artistic terms, conscientiously 'pose.' Berger's work attempts to 'recuperate the sitter's contribution' to the portrait and to the activity of painting.⁵² We might say that Massinger rehabilitates the play's initial refusal to award the sitter agency as well. In *The Picture*, Honoria demonstrates how the sitter accrues a portion of power. Honoria, self-described as 'the most ambitious of [her] sex' (1.2. 264), claims her intent to be humble towards Ladislaus and not to seek command over him. Yet, Ladislaus exclaims, 'I am transported/ beyond myself' (276–7) when she leads him to his throne. Ladislaus repeatedly affirms the power of her beauty and Honoria acknowledges such. As the all-consuming subject, she controls those who gaze upon her. Ladislaus explains, 'one glance from her fair eyes must make all gazers her idolaters' (111). Later, Honoria admits her own confidence in her power when she says 'I thought one amorous glance of mine could bring/ All hearts to my subjection' (2.2.406–7). Against this backdrop we can see the portrait having a similar effect upon Mathias, as the sitter's look dictates his response. Baptista observes that Mathias is 'much alter'd' and Mathias himself attributes his changed appearance to the 'vision' he saw that morning (4.3. 1–3). The portrait fashions Mathias, making his performance one of reaction rather than action. The power of the (female) sitter to illicit idolatry or mood changes from her observers suggests the forceful influence of her look.⁵³ The sitter has the ability to return the gaze and thus draw forth some (uncontrollable) reaction on the part of the observer.

The theatre furthermore had an obvious visual influence over its audience. As Jean Howard argues, 'antitheatricalists obviously regarded the entire

playhouse-pit, galleries, and stage—as an arena of visual display encouraging transgressive transformations of identity.⁵⁴ The theatre ‘put certain privileged symbols such as representations of monarchy into broad circulation’ and could ‘strip’ them of certain meanings.⁵⁵ Massinger’s drama, played at both the Globe and Blackfriars playhouses, obviously participated in this revisionist activity. The transformation of identity within the play, as shown via the portrait, also operates between the players and the audience, stripping the portrait miniature of some of its stabilized meanings and showcasing the ways the female and male gazes interact. The common language of the visual for both drama and portrait works to accentuate the genres’ power to display transgression and even encourage it. The ‘posing’ in drama parallels the posing in pictures, as we find characters re-dressing themselves and occupying many roles. Hilario claims, ‘I have play’d the fool before’ (1.2.3) and comes dressed in ‘with a long white hair and beard, in an antique armor’ (86). His poor performance reveals his disguise but the idea of casting oneself as another figure remains. When Ricardo and Ubaldo appear with false information about Mathias, they too capitulate under Sophia’s shrewd eye. Honoria’s performance as a masked dancer elicits a more prolonged reaction from her observer. Mathias deems his ‘mortal eyes’ too limited to gaze upon her and her unknown identity bewilders him (3.5.55). Interestingly, Honoria calls her performance a ‘rape’ upon Mathias, which suggests the possible violent power of the female poser. She admits her own control, saying, ‘I / By my instruments made upon you’ (59–60). She further extends her influence by sequestering Mathias in a private room for her own, and the viewers’, consumption. We might read this as a counter-example of the male miniaturist’s invasion of Sophia’s privacy in painting her portrait without consent. Honoria positions Mathias without his consent as the sole viewer of her beauty, but also as a spectacle himself. Here, we see singular meanings and roles de-stabilize, as the poser becomes male, the viewer, female. At nearly the same dramatic moment, Sophia finds herself locked up by her male visitors.

As part of the pose, we find differences in the attention given to the surfaces of art objects (the external) over their inner existence. We watch characters transform externally but remain (for the most part) constant in their internal qualities. Butler offers a helpful conception of the body as ‘figured as a mere *instrument* or *medium* for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related’.⁵⁶ She further argues that the body has no significance until the ‘mark(s) of gender’ are written upon it.⁵⁷ This surface then gives the effect of an ‘internal core’.⁵⁸ Wendorf uses similar language to describe Aubrey’s tal-

ent: 'Aubrey's distinction [was] to be the first English biographer to write with the painter's eye—to pay loving attention to the surfaces of his characters, and to suggest their complexity through the imaginative use of detail.'⁵⁹ The painter's eye attends to the surface, in both word and image. Thus, artists can literally mark their subjects with gendered signs which allow us to interpret them as virtuous, honorable, or base.

Massinger's play illustrates this quality of constructing external meanings through the main female characters, Sophia and Honoria, as they externally mark male figures to their liking. Though not explicitly limners, they participate in an act of representation that changes the man's appearance. When Mathias returns from war and the king and queen receive him, Honoria adorns him with jewels. Eubulus believes the materials unworthy and useless. He asks,

Good madam what shall he do with a hoop ring,
And a spark of diamond in it, though you take it,
For the greater honour, from your majesty's finger?
'Twill not increase in value. (2.2.236–9)

Eubulus attempts to fumble Honoria's decorative acts by belittling her materials and their meanings. She instructs him to 'wear these/As studded stars in your armour' (251) which transforms the male costume of war apparel to embody female apparel. In a sense, the jewels become an impresse upon his figure, identifying him as a soldier deemed worthy by a queen.⁶⁰ In her addition to Mathias's costume, Honoria clearly sees herself in the image. The jewels are 'Honorias gift' which by giving 'ornament and lustre to him, parts freely with her own!' (255–7). Thus, Honoria's re-clothing Mathias with her own marks parallels an artist's self-representation on her work of art. Honoria's markings of Mathias cast his honour as a war hero in the sexual markings of a female (who is not his wife). He must wear these as a badge of strengthened and threatened masculinity.

When Sophia revises the appearances of Ricardo and Ubaldo she too remarks their bodies. Though she orders a waistcoat, 'cambric shirt perfumed' (4.2.77), and a cap to be brought to Ubaldo, he is actually given 'a little fresh straw/ A petticoat for a coverlet, and that torn too,/ And an old woman's biggin for a nightcap' (135–7). Ricardo, ordered to be 'unclothed,' is left with a 'clown's cast suit' (152). She effeminizes their appearances, leaving them exposed and clothed in women's rags. Sophia denies their own assertions of

self-representation by removing their own masculine markings and erasing an environment which may encourage demonstrations of male virility (ie, the bedchamber). Instead, the state of denial of all bodily nourishment remains. The hunger they complain of is an obvious metaphor for sexual appetite and they acknowledge that 'this comes of our whoring' (204). Their activity that 'transgress'd against the dignity of men' finds reprimand by enforced abstinence, that suppression required of women if they are to maintain any sort of power. Sophia marks their bodies as feminine and makes them pay penance in a feminine manner by placing them in an atmosphere of denial.⁶¹

Sophia's verbal prowess stands as another instance of female fashioning of male subjectivity. It provides an interesting adaptation of the synecdochic quality of the miniature in which Massinger takes the traditional reading of the female member (tongue/mouth) and allows this to stand for her whole. The power of the tongue has been well-charted in renaissance studies, most lucidly by Carla Mazzio, who writes that 'as the one organ that can move in and out of the body, its symbolic position in a range of discourses lies on the threshold between framed and unframed, between the space of the self and the space of the other'.⁶² Mazzio's conception of 'framing' is particularly fruitful for our considerations of the portrait. The picture does not possess the same linguistic and symbolic influence as Sophia has with her un-framed, un-tamed tongue. Moving from self to other, Sophia uses her mouth to evaluate Mathias's liaison with the queen (via a kiss) and then to comment upon it in public: 'Without a magical picture, in the touch / I find your print of close and wanton kisses / On the queen's lips' (5.3.53-5). Her alleging of his transgression horrifies Matthias, prompting him to term her behaviour 'monstrous'. He later asks for help in articulating a response: 'Will none speak for me? shame and sin have robb'd me/ Of the use of my tongue' (187-8). Matthias conflates the tongue and the male sexual organ here, being robbed of sexual potency and voice at once. The regular entwining of the male and female 'parts' is seen as Sophia hardens Mathias—he 'turn'd statue' from the shock—by rendering him silent in word and sexual act. Sophia creates a metaphorical work of art out of the male figure, and exposes his sexual vulnerability through the use of her tongue. Mazzio asserts, 'An unruly "member", an "insubjectible subject," the tongue figures in a range of early modern discourses as a somatic manifestation of all that resists containment'.⁶³ The tongue's movements and 'range of discourses' are practically unrepresentable and unchartable in the language of the painting. As it resists containment, both bodily and

metaphoric, it finds the best representation in the sitter herself where it can perform and not be muted.

Ultimately, in an effort to shirk all forms of artifice and perhaps to break open the tightly woven discourse fusing art and gender, Sophia privileges the lived performance apart from the theatre and the limned portrait. She remarks:

The truth is
We did not deal, like you, in speculations
On cheating pictures; we knew shadows were
No substances, and actual performance
The best assurance. (94–8)

She has low regard for art, treating it as a speculative, unreliable substitute for real assurances.⁶⁴ We might read this as a particularly female opinion, from one who has been abused by art, her image fabricated and used against her.⁶⁵ But Sophia does not discount artistic creation altogether; she only indicts those who profess that the miniature is “life-like” and rely upon it to foster false emotions (Hilliard and Oliver included). She understands how portraiture is ‘a double conquest of nature. First you [conquer] nature in the sense that you [master] natural appearances through the science of art; then you [conquer] it (or her) in the sense that you [produce] more perfect images than nature did’.⁶⁶ Her sense of the natural is the actual, allowing no space for the production of Alberti-type beauties who are figures assembled with pieces of the best nature offers. Sophia’s reconciliation comes in the burning of the picture—the copy—which eliminates the controlling device of the male gaze. Now, Mathias must meet a live female gaze in his watch, one which can survey his body as well. She sees herself to be made more real, obtaining a greater presence in this destruction. Massinger’s discourse on painting ends by eliminating the portrait, but retaining the female figure. Woman is not written out of the drama but instead written back into it. Sophia can now represent herself to Mathias, not in life-like images, but *in life*.

Philip Massinger’s *The Picture* puts the illumined text on stage. The play is a discourse on painting that, like a late illumined manuscript, showcases a dialogue between text and image. It also bears the marks of gender, the signature of the artist and the problematic representations. It is a ‘picture’ of renaissance aesthetic sensibility. For us, it is a portrait miniature of a different

sort, one which directs us to read, via a fragment, the gendered theory about art and life that focuses upon the female subject. If the 'eye is the life of the portrait' then the portrait is the life of Massinger's drama, encouraging a visual exchange on all levels of subjectivity. It is the part of the whole that sees itself while others see it. It is the 'cheating picture' but a picture nonetheless of a shared aesthetic language of visual and verbal texts on the stage, on the canvas, and in the gendered culture of renaissance England.

Notes

The author wishes to thank Dr Sara van den Berg for her comments and assistance in the early stages of this article.

- 1 Roy Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature* (New York, 1983), 134.
- 2 Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago, 1991), 2.
- 3 Philip Massinger, *The Picture* in *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger*, ed. Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson (Oxford, 1976). All references, given parenthetically in the body of this essay, are from this edition.
- 4 See Donne's 'The Picture' in Arthur L. Clements (ed.), *John Donne's Poetry*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1992) ll 1–2: 'Here take my picture; though I bid farewell, / Thine, in my heart, where my soul dwells, shall dwell'; and Jonson's *Underwoods*, 'LII (A Poem Sent Me by Sir William Burlase)', in Geroge Parfitt (ed.), *The Complete Poems* (New York, 1996): the poem is a dialogue in which the painter begins, 'To paint thy worth, if rightly I did know it, / And were but painter half like thee, a poet', to which the poet responds 'A poet hath no more but black and white, / Ne knows he flattering colours, or false light' (ll 1-2 and 20-1).
- 5 Jean Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York, 1994), 25.
- 6 George Hakewell, *The Vanity of the Eye* (Oxford, 1608), 18.
- 7 *Ibid*, 19.
- 8 Richard Wendorf, *The Elements of Life: Biography and Portrait-Painting in Stuart and Georgian England*, (Oxford, 1990), 125.
- 9 Graham Reynolds, *English portrait miniatures*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, 1988), 1.
- 10 *Ibid*, 1.
- 11 Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art*, (London, 1988), 6.

- 12 Ibid, *Vision*, 6.
- 13 Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature*, 9.
- 14 Wendorf, *Elements of Life*, 130.
- 15 Harry Berger, Jr., 'Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture', *Representations* 46 (1994), 87.
- 16 Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, 71.
- 17 Wendorf, *Elements of Life*, 133.
- 18 Nicholas Hilliard, *Treatise concerning the arte of limning* (Boston, 1983), 29.
- 19 Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, 72.
- 20 Ibid, 67.
- 21 Ibid, 69.
- 22 Hilliard, *Treatise*, 24
- 23 Michel Foucault, "From *Discipline and Punish*," (1977) trans. Alan Sheridan in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York, 1984), 191.
- 24 Wendorf, *Elements of Life*, 133.
- 25 Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (1507), trans. George Bull (New York, 1967), 99.
- 26 Queen Elizabeth resists this tendency towards change by privileging line over shadow and thus employing Hilliard as her chief miniaturist. His technique allows her (aging) features to be represented as unchanging. See Hilliard, *Treatise concerning the arte of limning*, 28–9.
- 27 Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky's 'Taming the Basklisk' in David Hillman and Carla Maz-zio (eds), *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1997), 195–217, discusses in more detail the sonnet form as used by Sidney and Donne in terms of the epistemology of the gaze.
- 28 Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, 101.
- 29 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* (1435), trans. Cecil Grayson (New York, 1991), 64–71.
- 30 Hilliard, *Treatise concerning the arte of limning*, 25.
- 31 Ibid, 28.
- 32 Ibid, 28–9.
- 33 The renaissance woman on stage of course creates a larger expanse between portrait and actor because the woman is actually a man.
- 34 Quoted in Wendorf, *Elements of Life*, 122.
- 35 See 'an old black ram / is tuppung your white ewe' (1.1.88–9), 'Your son-in-law is far more fair than black' (1.3.290), and the word play on colours 'If she be black, and therto have a wit, / She'll find a white that shall her blackness fit' (2.1.132–3); see

- M.R. Ridley (ed.), *Othello*, The Arden Shakespeare (London, 1958). Othello's pre-occupation with ocular proof also intersects with Massinger's play.
- 36 Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, (Ithaca, 1995), 240.
- 37 Hilliard, *Treatise concerning the arte of limning*, 29.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Consider the situation of Italian artist Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1653), daughter of Orazio Gentileschi. She was raped by her father's collaborator, Agostino Tassi and a nine month rape trial ensued, an incredibly long court case for the time. Orazio sued Tassi because he felt his property (ie. his daughter) had been damaged. For more information, see Pollock's *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art Histories* or the novel/biography of Artemisia by Alexandra Lapierre entitled *Artemisia*.
- 40 Pollock, *Vision*, 32.
- 41 Berger, 'Fictions of the Pose,' 87.
- 42 Wendorf, *Elements of Life*, 131. Wendorf cites the disagreement between Piper and Murdoch regarding whether Cooper hides behind a style to convey an almost pure image of the sitter or whether the style places Cooper more in the picture than the sitter. See Wendorf, 124.
- 43 Patrick J. Noon, *English Portrait Drawings and Miniatures* (New Haven, 1979), 3.
- 44 Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature*, 8–9.
- 45 Ibid, 9.
- 46 Berger, 'Fictions of the Pose,' 89.
- 47 Strong, *The English Renaissance Miniature*, 8.
- 48 Ibid, 55–6.
- 49 Ibid, 9.
- 50 We should note that Artemisia Gentileschi, the Italian female painter, also painted in England having collaborated with her father Orazio on a series of nine canvases for the ceiling of the central hall at the Queen's House, Greenwich. The series, entitled *Allegory of Peace and the Arts under the English Crown* was finished circa 1639 in London.
- 51 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York, 1990), 9.
- 52 Berger, 'Fictions of the Pose,' 94.
- 53 Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky describes Renaissance literary texts as "narratives of an eye under siege" (197). Here, the female eye threatens the male gaze.
- 54 Howard, *Stage and Social Struggle*, 34.
- 55 Ibid, 31.

- 56 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 8.
- 57 Ibid..
- 58 Ibid, 136.
- 59 Wendorf, *Elements of Life*, 109.
- 60 It is worthwhile to note the frequent use of the jewel (both in his craft and metaphorically) by Hilliard. He writes in his treatise that 'the fyve precious Stones resemble unto us the true beautie of each perfect cullor in his full perfection without mixture in perfect hard bodies and very transparent ' (Hilliard, *Treatise concerning the arte of limning*, 38).
- 61 In a perhaps serendipitous and coincidental link, Hilliard talks of the limner's life as one of denial: 'Concerning the best waye and meanes to practice and ataine to skill in *Limning*, in a word before I exhorted such to temperance, I meane sleepe not much, watch not much, eat not much, sit not long, usse not violent exercize in sports, nor earnest for your recreation but dancing or bowling, or littel of either, then the fierst and cheefest precepts which I give, is cleanlynes' (Ibid, 21).
- 62 Carla Mazzio, 'Sins of the Tongue,' in David Hillman and Carla Mazzio(eds), *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporality in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1997), 55–6.
- 63 Ibid, 54.
- 64 It is interesting to note that Puck's closing soliloquy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* uses the word 'shadows' to refer to the actors and the play, further linking drama and portraiture together.
- 65 Miniaturists contemplated this conflict between the real and representational; Isaac Oliver (Hilliard's student) sought to move the miniature out of Hilliard's decorative sense into the realm of realism. Indeed, for Isaac Oliver and his son Peter, *copies* (representations of representations) of larger portraits or histories were more valuable than original miniatures. See Reynolds, *English Portrait Miniatures*, 25.
- 66 Berger, 'Fictions of the Pose,' 104.