Is not this a grievous sin in the eyes of the church?

Not if it be performed in the bedchamber
Of a palace.

Who would have thought
So great a lady would have matched herself
Unto so mean a person.

Nay, lechery
Is a great equalizer. 'Tis blind to rank.

The ceremony begins. Sounds of organ music and chanting.

Tis strange so many monks in yon procession.

Who is that woman, clad like a penitent;
It seems she hath a man and three small children by her side.

'Tis the duchess, I saw her
As she drove along the streets of fair Ancona.

Meseems she's very pale.

Here comes the cardinal
From out the sacristy. What is that parchment
He carries in his hand?

Herefore, through the authority of the Almighty God, Father of Heaven and His Son, Our Saviour, I, Cardinal of Ancona, denounce, proclaim and declare Margarita Gloria, Duchess of Malfi and her paramour, Antonio Bologna, together with their children, anathema by the avise and assistance of our Holy Father, the Pope, and all bishops, abbots, priors and other prelates and ministers of our Holy Church, for her open lechery and sins of the flesh.
1ST PILGRIM
He hath excommunicated her!

VOICE OF CARDINAL
I curse her head and the hairs of her head, her eyes, her mouth,
her nose, her tongue, her teeth, her neck, her shoulders, her
breast, her heart, her arms, her legs, her back, her stomach,
her womb and every part of her body from the top of her
head to the soles of her feet.

2ND PILGRIM
There hath been no rumour
She was to be judged.

1ST PILGRIM
And to think 'twas said
She came here for sanctuary!

VOICE OF CARDINAL
I dissever and part them from the Church of God and likewise
from contracts and oaths of law. I forbid all Christian men to
have any company with them and all her earthly goods I
seize in the name of the Holy Church. And as their candles go
from our sight so may their souls go from the visage of God
and their good fame from the world.

2ND PILGRIM
Then she is no longer Duchess of Malfi!

1ST PILGRIM
By what justice hath her brother
Seized her estates?

2ND PILGRIM
Sure I think by none.

1ST PILGRIM
I have not seen a goodlier ceremony than this
Though I have visited many.

2ND PILGRIM
What was it with much violence he took
From off her finger?

1ST PILGRIM
'Twas her wedding ring.
Scene 6

A road near Loretto. Enter Antonio, Duchess, children, Cariola, servants.

DUCHESS

Banished Ancona!

ANTONIO

And what is worse our love
Is named a sin and published throughout all Italy
That all may shun us and you are ravished of your goods.

DUCHESS

Is all our train shrunk to this poor remainder?

ANTONIO

These poor men which have got little in your service
Vow to take your fortune; but your wiser birds,
Now they are fledged, are gone.

DUCHESS

They have gone wisely.

ANTONIO

Right the fashion of the world.
From decayed fortunes every flatterer shrinks;
Men cease to build where the foundation sinks.

DUCHESS

I had a very strange dream last night.

ANTONIO

What was it?

DUCHESS

Methought I wore my coronet of state
And on a sudden all the diamonds
Were changed to pearls.

ANTONIO

My interpretation
Is you'll weep shortly for to me the pearls
Do signify your tears.

DUCHESS

The birds that live in the field
On the wild benefit of nature, live
Happier than we for they may choose their mates
And carol their sweet pleasures to the spring.
Dear Antonio, I’ve brought you this misfortune
For which I am sorry.

ANTONIO
You are not the cause of it.

For since that hour, scarcely now remembered,
For ’tis obscured by so much later sorrow,
Wherein I broke reason on the wheel and sought
To ’scape these toils through running craft alone,
I am myself no more.

DUCHESS
If the Lord Cardinal treat us so harshly,
My brother Ferdinand is yet more cruel.
I do suspect some ambush.
Therefore by all my love I do conjure you
To take our eldest son and fly towards Milan.
Let us not venture all this poor remainder
In one unlucky vessel.

ANTONIO
You counsel safely.

Best of my life, farewell. Since we must part,
Heaven hath a hand in it, but no otherwise
Than as some curious artist takes in sunder
A clock or watch, when it is out of frame,
To bring it to better order.

DUCHESS

To eldest son:

I know not which is best,
To see you dead or part with you. Farewell, boy;
Thou art happy that thou hast not understanding
To know thy misery, for all our wit
And reading brings us to a truer sense
Of sorrow.

Pause, she draws the boy back.

No, give me back my boy.
He is weak in the lungs. He'll take some harm.

To second son.
Go, thou, with thy father. Alas, thou art so small.
Haply wilt cry for thy mother i' the' night.
Yet thou art stronger and thou hast far to go.
In the eternal church I hope we do not part thus.

ANTONIO

Oh, be of comfort.
Man, like to lavender, is proved best being bruised.

DUCHESS

'Tis true. O heaven, thy heavy hand is in it.
I have seen my little boy oft whip his top,
And compared myself to it. Naught made me e'er
Go right but heaven's scourging stick.

ANTONIO

Do not weep.

Heaven fashioned us of nothing and we strive
To bring ourselves to nothing. Farewell Cariola,
And thee sweet armful.

To the Duchess:
If I do never see thee more,
Be a good mother to our little ones
And save them from the tiger. Fare you well.

DUCHESS

Let me look upon you once more for—
Kisses him.

Fare you well.

He goes out with second son.
My laurel is all withered.

CARIOLA

Look, madam, what a troop of armed men
Make toward us, with their visors closed.
Why do they hide their faces? They are brigands surely.

Enter Bosola, helmeted, with a guard

DUCHESS

O they are most welcome.
Worse than brigands.
I would have my ruin be sudden.
I am your adventure, am I not?

**BOSOLA**

You are. You must see your husband no more.

**DUCHESS**

Come, to what prison.

**BOSOLA**

To none.

**DUCHESS**

Whither, then?

**BOSOLA**

To your palace. Your brother means you safety
And pity.

**DUCHESS**

Pity? With such pity men preserve alive
Pheasants and quails when they are not fat enough
To be eaten.

**BOSOLA**

These are your children?

**DUCHESS**

Yes.

**BOSOLA**

Can they prattle?

**DUCHESS**

But little, and I intend, since they were born accursed,
Curses shall be their first language.

**BOSOLA**

Fie, madam!

Forget this base, low-born fellow.

**DUCHESS**

Were I a man,
I’d beat that counterfeit face into thy other.
But come, whither you please. I am armed against misery,
Bent to the sways of the oppressor’s will.
There’s no deep valley but near some great hill.
Scene 7

A room in the Cardinal's palace.
The Cardinal is reading a book. A monk sits near him telling his beads.

CARDINAL
I am puzzled in a question about hell.
Looks at book.
He says in hell there's one material flame
And yet it shall not burn all men alike.
Lay him by.
Closes book.

How tedious is a guilty conscience!
When I look into the fish pond in my garden,
Methinks I see a thing armed with a rake
That seems to strike at me.
Enter Ferdinand with two swords.

How now Ferdinand?

Thou lookest ghastly.
There sits in thy face some great determination.
What is it?

FERDINAND
I am come to kill thee.
Take this sword and draw.

CARDINAL
Am I to fight with thee?
Hast thou gone mad, brother? Why dost thou threaten thus?

FERDINAND

You have published our sister's shame and publicly
Dishonoured her. For this you shall die.

CARDINAL
Now you are mad indeed!

FERDINAND
Will you fight, brother?
Or shall I softly slit your throat with my poignard?
I give you the honour of arms.
CARDINAL
I am a churchman. I will not take the sword.

_Holds up the book like a sword._

This holy book is my defence. Pierce it an thou darest.

_Ferdinand strikes it aside with his sword._

Hold! Thou thyself didst rage against her most
Intemperately. 'Twas you did call her strumpet.

FERDINAND
I did. But not i' th' market place.
You have so wrought it that the rabble shall soil
Her charms in the tavern and in the baths
They'll reckon whether her breasts be large or small.
You shall pay for this.

CARDINAL
Shall you defend her?
Shall she go scot free?

FERDINAND
She hath injured me, not you,
And I will punish her.

CARDINAL
These are strange words indeed.

FERDINAND
Will you fight or die like a poltroon?

_He throws him the sword._

CARDINAL
_Leaping up and snatching sword._
Hah!—Help!—Our guard!

MONK
Ho, guards! Guards!

FERDINAND
You are deceived.

They are out of reach of your howling.

CARDINAL
'Twas not I but my holy office did constrain me.
She had sinned.
FERDINAND

Attacking.

I think your purse constrained you.
You have stolen her lands.

CARDINAL

And to have these same estates you'd kill your brother.

FERDINAND

So be it. Choose for your death a cause that you
May best conceive. In this there sits a deeper
Reason which you shall never know.

MONK

Help! Help!

He is your brother!

Ferdinand wounds him. The Cardinal drops his sword.

CARDINAL

Thou hast hurt me!

FERDINAND

Not enough!

Drives him back and stabs him.

CARDINAL

Oh justice!

I suffer now for what hath former been;
Sorrow is held the eldest child of sin.

Exit Ferdinand.

MONK

Oh what a death was this! In quest of greatness,
Like wanton boys whose pastime is their care
We follow after bubbles blown i' the air.
Alas that thou which stoodst like a huge pyramid,
Begun upon a large and ample base,
Shouldst end in a little point, a kind of nothing.
ACT THREE

Scene 1

A ruin near Milan. Enter Antonio and his son. They hold their cloaks close against them as if walking against the wind.

ANTONIO

Yonder lie the ruins of a noble abbey.
Whene’er we tread upon these ancient stones
We set our foot upon some reverend history.
Here in this open court that now lies naked
To the injuries of the stormy weather
Some men lie interred who loved the church so well
They thought it should have canopied their bones
Till doomsday. But all things have their end.
Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men,
Must have like death we have. Come, boy, we must make haste.
Until we reach Milan.

BOY

Why can’t we stay with mother?

ANTONIO

We are too small to live with greatness.
Our littleness is crushed between the millstones
Of their intemperate actions.

BOY

Shall we not see her more?

ECHO

Not see her more.

BOY

Oh hark to the pretty echo from the ruin!

ANTONIO

Poor boy, well I know your feet are blistered
Yet we must fly our danger. Do not stay!

ECHO

Do not stay!

BOY

If we run fast, father, think you we will die?
ECHO

Still die.

BOY

What does the echo say?

ANTONIO

It seems to tell us, boy, how bitter is the fate
Of him who is forbid to fight. Alas
Now I remember once, ahawking with my father
Upon the plains of Brittany, our falcon
Spied a hare and coursed it till the poor beast
Was wearied unto death and so, despairing
Turned upon its back and with its stony feet
Hardened by a whole life of timid flight
Beat in the falcon’s breast. Yet we must fly.

They exit. Bosola enters and looks after them. He is accompanied by
two murderers.

BOSOLA

Where is that letter for Antonio?
One murderer gives it to him.
’Twill shortly make him run the other way.
Though they fare fast yet death is speedier than they.

Scene 2

A room in the Duchess’ palace. Enter Ferdinand and Bosola.

FERDINAND

How doth our sister duchess bear herself
In her imprisonment?

BOSOLA

Nobly. I’ll describe her.
She’s sad as one long used to it and she seems
Rather to welcome the end of misery
Than shun it, a behaviour so noble
As gives a majesty to adversity.
You may discern the shape of loveliness
More perfect in her tears than in her smiles.
She will muse four hours together and her silence
Methinks expresses more than if she spoke.

**FERDINAND**
Doth she inquire for her steward-husband and her cubs?

**BOSOLA**
Call them her children.
For though our national law distinguishes bastards
From true legitimate issue, compassionate nature
Makes them all equal.

**FERDINAND**
Doth she weep for them?

**BOSOLA**
Aye, for she is ignorant if they be safe or no.

**FERDINAND**
She shall learn. Give her my gift. With it I intend
She shall be distracted from her sorrow.

**BOSOLA**
Is not this too cruel?

**FERDINAND**
No. Unseen I'll mark how deeply her lecherous sin
Is rooted in her mind. Now first, the letter.

*Ferdinand hides upon the balcony. Duchess and attendants and Cariola enter.*

**BOSOLA**
All comfort to your grace!

**DUCHESS**
I will have none.

Prythee why dost thou wrap thy poisoned pills
In gold and sugar?

**BOSOLA**
Your brother,
The Lord Ferdinand, is come to visit you
And he hath likewise bid Antonio return.
In proof that he hath sealed his peace with you
Here is a copy of his letter to your husband.
He would have you read it.  

*Gives letter.*
Duchess

Reads.

'To the right worshipful Antonio Bologna:
  Sir—
  Why do you not come to Malfi? Your wife, the noble
  Duchess misses you and I myself I must confess want
  your head in a business.—'
Strange words.

Bosola

Strange? Antonio is an upright treasurer.

Duchess

I perceive my brother's meaning. He does
Not want his counsel but his head. 'Tis written here.

Bosola

In this you are deceived. Prythee read on.

Duchess

'I have discharged the Milanesian bonds and am satisfied you
were falsely accused in this matter. Thus I have made sure
of your honest service to my sister. Think no more of the
money, I would rather have your heart.'
That I believe.

Bosola

What do you believe?

Duchess

I think my brother can not sleep until
Antonio is dead. I trust he will not come.

Bosola

Why? Is not this offer reasonable?

Duchess

That is his devilish cunning. 'Tis cut
To Antonio's measure. For he believes
In reason to a mortal degree.

Bosola

Meseems your fear is stronger than your love.

Duchess

Since all my love is long since turned to fear.
Act Three, Scene 2

BOSOLA
I think Antonio will come. His love for thee
Will fetch him. Meanwhile
For your diversion and to cure you
Of your melancholy study of what’s past,
The Lord Ferdinand presents you with a rare
And precious gift.

DUCHESS
It is not gifts I’d have
My brother send me. The noblest boon within
His power to grant is friendship to my friends.

BOSOLA
Bring on the gift.

DUCHESS
To Cariola.
Methinks I hardly know my brother now
Yet once he loved me well.
The servants bring on a huge carved chest. They are preceded by a
flute-player playing on his instrument.

BOSOLA
Here is the key.

CARIOLA
’Tis a costly gift.

DUCHESS
Set it in my bedchamber.

BOSOLA
There’s more within.

DUCHESS
Must I open it?

BOSOLA
Aye.
She slowly goes to it, unlocks the doors and flings them open. The
bodies of Antonio and her child fall out. Cariola screams. Duchess
stands frozen with horror.
Your brother does present you this sad spectacle
That now you know directly they are dead
Hereafter you may wisely cease to grieve
For that which can not be recovered.
*The Duchess faints.* Flutist suddenly perceives what has happened and stops abruptly. *Bosola raises duchess.*
Remember you are a Christian.
Leave this vain sorrow.
Things being at the worst begin to mend,
The bee when he has shot his sting into your hand
May then play with your eyelid.
*The Duchess faints again and is carried off by her women.*

**CARIOLA**

Good comfortable fellow,
Persuade a wretch that’s broke upon the wheel
To have all his bones new set!
*She follows the Duchess.*

**FERDINAND**

*From the gallery.*
She is lost! I can not save her.

**BOSOLA**

Why do you do this? Is it not too cruel?
She hath suffered much.

**FERDINAND**

*Coming down.*
Base varlet, there’s too much pity in thy pleading!

**BOSOLA**

Sir, I have served you well. I have rather sought
To appear true than honest. I swear to you
She hath had eyes for no one but her husband.
Faith, end here. Furnish her with beads and prayer book
And let her save her soul.

**FERDINAND**

Damn her, that body of hers,
While that my blood ran pure in it, was worth more
Than that thing thou wouldst comfort called a soul.
I see her sin sits deeper than I thought.
To this vile appetite for her own steward
She now adds shameful tears and mourns his death
And in her lecherous grief she naked stands,
The widow of a sweaty stableboy.
To cure such maladies the surgeon's knife
Must cut until it pricks the patient's life.

Scene 3

A room in Ferdinand's castle. On stage, Delio, a physician,
Ferdinand's Negro page.

PHYSICIAN
Is the duke of a melancholy or choleric humour?

PAGE
He oft hath had these violent fits of late.

DELIO
On the morrow of the cardinal's strange
And sudden death his gentlemen found him
All on a cold sweat and altered much in face
And language.

PAGE
Since when he hath grown worse and worse
And yet, at times, he seems himself again.

PHYSICIAN
What other symptoms
Doth his indisposition shew?

DELIO
One met the Duke 'bout midnight in a lane
Behind St. Mark's church with the leg of a man
Upon his shoulder and he howled fearfully,
Said he was a wolf, only the difference
Was a wolf's skin was hairy on the outside,
His on the inside, bade them take their swords
Rip up his and try.

PAGE
Straight you were sent for.
PHYSICIAN
'Tis a very pestilent disease, good sir.
They call it lycanthropia.

DELIO
What's that?

PHYSICIAN
In those that are possessed with it there o'erflows
Such melancholy humour they imagine
Themselves to be transformed into wolves,
Steal forth into churchyards in the dead of night
And dig dead bodies up.

DELIO
Can you cure it?

PHYSICIAN
Let me hear more. I must sound the depths
Of his distraction.

PAGE
Once I did ask him why he loved solitariness. And he replied
that eagles commonly fly alone. They are daws, crows and
starlings that flock together. And on a sudden he started most
fearfully and cried 'What follows me?' And then he flung him-
self upon the gound and said he would throttle his shadow.

PHYSICIAN
'Tis most grave.

PAGE
Straightway he sprung up violently and stared about him and
cried out, 'Rogues, knaves, bawds! Oh the world is sick.
I think only the cold tomb can cure it. Blood's the potion for
this disease. When I go to hell I mean to carry a bribe. Good
gifts make way for the worst persons'. And then he drew his
sword, howling most horribly, 'Hence, hence! There's
nothing left of you but tongue and belly, flattery and
lechery!' And all must flee before him.

PHYSICIAN
This is a sickness past all curing.

DELIO
And what of the book?
The Lord Ferdinand did enquire concerning
A certain apothecary, a poor
Quack-salving knave whom 'tis whispered
Poisoned his mistress with a book.

DELIO
I like it not. I do fear for the Duchess.
Nature is contrary in these fits. 'Tis known
That madmen mischief those they love.
I'll to the Count Malatesta. 'Tis time
My lady was married. Oh in her widowhood
She's weaker than a bulrush and I fear
This raging wind will bend her till she breaks.

Scene 4

A room in the Duchess' palace.
On stage Duchess and Cariola.

CARIOLA
Be of good cheer, my lady! There is a great tumult in the
city. Methinks the noble Count Malatesta comes hither to pay
you court. Pray let me set this pillow beneath your head; 'twill
raise you so that you may feel the sea breeze on your face.
They say it is a restorative.

DUCHESS
If they would bind me to that lifeless trunk
And let me freeze to death!

CARIOLA
Come, you must live.

DUCHESS
This is a prison.

CARIOLA
Yes, but you shall live.

To shake this durance off.
Duchess
Thou art a fool.

Cariola

What think you of, Madam?

Duchess

Of nothing. Sing me somewhat. Do you remember
That song of men unburied?

Cariola

Starts to sing

Call for the robin red breast and the wren,
Since o'er shady groves they hover,
And with leaves and flowers do cover
The friendless bodies of unburied men.

Duchess

Nay, do not sing. Repeat the words to me.

Cariola

Call unto his funeral dole
The ant, the field mouse and the mole
To rear him hillocks that shall keep him warm.
And, when gay tombs are robbed, sustain no harm;
But keep the wolf far thence that's foe to men
For with his nails he'll dig them up again.

Duchess

Let holy church receive him duly
Since he paid the church tithes truly.

Pause.
Dost thou think we shall know one another
In the other world?

Cariola

Yes, out of question.

Duchess

O that it were possible we might
But hold some two days conference with the dead!
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure
I never shall know here. I'll tell thee a miracle:
I am not mad yet, to my cause of sorrow.
I am full of daggers and yet I am not mad.
I am acquainted with sad misery
As the tanned galley slave is with his oar;
Necessity makes me suffer constantly
And custom makes it easy. Who do I look like now?

CARIOLA

Like to your picture in the gallery,
A deal of life in show but none in practice.

DUCHESS

In my last will I have not much to give
As many hungry guests have fed upon me,
Thine will be a poor reversion, Cariola.
What noise is that?

Four waiting women enter and begin to attir[e] the Duchess in her
robes of state. Meanwhile a priest enters and reads a Latin pro-
clamation lifting the excommunication and restoring her estates.
Bosola enters with a book.

What means this? Pray Heaven

It is the end.

WOMAN

’Tis by order of the Duke, your brother.

BOSOLA

As bells begin to peal.

At the instigation of the Duke, your brother,
The Pope hath revoked your excommunication
And restored you your estates.

CARIOLA

You are Duchess

Of Malfi once more! See, ’tis the end of all
Your sorrow.

DUCHESS

What says the Cardinal?

BOSOLA

Corpses do not speak.

DUCHESS

Aye, but what says the Cardinal?
BOSOLA

His Holiness, the Lord Cardinal, Prince
Of Ancona, is dead.

DUCHESS

Dead? What did you say?

BOSOLA

Lord Ferdinand would not forgive his publishing
Of your misfortunes.

DUCHESS

My brother? Slain by my brother?

BOSOLA

Executed.

DUCHESS

And I? He'll slay me, too.

BOSOLA

Who speaks of that? Surely your brother
Would have you live, my lady.

DUCHESS

Then say to him:

I long to bleed;
It is some mercy when men kill with speed.

BOSOLA

Come, be of comfort. The Duke hath done this
On your account and you must live.

DUCHESS

That is the greatest torture souls feel
In hell; that they must live and can not die.
Come, wish me long life and I would thou wert hanged
For the horrible curse that thou hast given me.
I do feel that I shall shortly grow
One of the miracles of pity yet a thing
So wretched as can not pity itself.
Why do I waste these words upon you?
I account this world a tedious theatre
For I do play a part in't against my will.
Bosola, is my brother mad?
Only in what concerns you. He thinks of naught
Save your welfare and desires of you but one thing,
That you shall swear upon this prayer book
Never to marry again. Here is the book
And you must kiss it.

Duchess
Methinks I do begin
To know somewhat I never knew before.
O my poor brother! Give me the book!
If that will cure him of his fearful rage,
I'll swear it gladly

Takes book.

I swear I'll never marry.
May this put his mind at rest.

Kisses book.

Bosola
By this he doth make sure you shall not break your oath.
He'll visit you anon.

Exits with waiting women.

Cariola
Beloved lady you should rest.

Duchess
How?
My mind is full of shadows. There are fearful
Questions, half forgot and never answered
Which do concern my brother, Ferdinand.

Cariola
My lady, you are pale. Think not upon your brother.
'Tis clear he hates you.

Duchess
I think you are deceived. I would you were not.
Cariola, there are sins with deeper roots
Than hate and there are wishes that shall be nameless—
You do not understand, for this I envy thee.
CARIOLA

Nay, my lady, such thoughts are bred of sickness. When you are sound again they'll fly out of the window.

DUCHESS

I grow sicker, Cariola. I think I must die shortly.

CARIOLA

'Tis a denial of God to speak so.

DUCHESS

My legs grow numb. 'Tis not pain I feel yet my foot seems to be sleeping.

CARIOLA

How strange you look! Surely somewhat you have eaten sits ill upon your stomach. I will chafe your legs.

Suddenly.

The book you kissed! 'Twas the book! Villains, poisoners, murderers! Help! My lady is stricken. Cry out for help!

DUCHESS

To whom?

Waiting women rush on.

CARIOLA

Heat water! Fetch some cordial!

The Duke hath done this! Fetch water, wine!

My lady is poisoned. Quickly, seek a doctor!

DUCHESS

There is none for me. My sickness is mortal.

I know his secret now. I do perceive the cause

Of this enforcing of my chastity,

This spying, this present in the chest,

And this distracted slaughter of his brother

Who bared my woes in public! All this fury,

This cruelty and this despair, even the poison,

To punish me 'cause I had shared my bed.

CARIOLA

Pray drink this cordial.

DUCHESS

To what end?

Nay, give it to me for I must live until
Act Three, Scene 4

My brother comes that I may speak to him
And tell him what I know. I do feel such pity
That all is washed away, the ruin he hath wrought,
I am so weary I would rest.

CARIOLA

No, my lady.

From these slumbrous poisons no one wakes again.

DUCHESS

Why then I must not sleep. Help me, Cariola.
Let's walk and never let me rest. Thy promise!

She is helped up and begins to walk up and down supported by

Cariola. The women weep.

Let someone watch to see when the Duke be come.
Make haste. My time is short.

Some go to the window to watch.

Do not weep so loud.

I am not deaf yet and this noise disturbs me.

To Cariola:

I pray thou givest my little boy
Some syrup for his cold and let the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep. Put I must walk
And when I falter, do thou urge me on. Cry loudly
In my ear: do not stay.—I grow giddy.

CARIOLA

Lean on me, my lady.

The Duchess staggers.

DUCHESS

Now all the coldness of this icy world
Creeps in about my heart. My brother is too slow.
For once this lingering pain is o'er.
Oh let me die for I can wait no more.

She dies. Women wail. Ferdinand enters with his train accompanied

by Bosola.

FERDINAND

Is she dead?
CARIOLA

Weeping.

She is what you'd have her.

FERDINAND

Cover her face. Mine eyes dazzle. She died young.

CARIOLA

I think not so. Her infelicity
Seemed to have years too many.

FERDINAND

She and I were twins. She was born some minutes
After me and died some minutes sooner.
Let me see her face again.

To Bosola.

Why didst thou not pity her
Or, bold in a good cause, oppose thyself
Between her innocence and my revenge!
I bade thee, when I was distracted of my wits,
Go kill my dearest friend and thou hast done it.
For let me but examine well the cause.
What was the meanness of her match to me?
Only, I must confess, I had a hope,
Had she continued widow, to have gained
An infinite mass of treasure by her death.
This hath an evil sound yet not so evil
As another reason I'll not speak of.
We'll say the cause was my ungoverned passions,
My cruelty and spite. Only I fear
It is not true. Oh my sister!

He kneels by the body.

Return fair soul from darkness and lead mine
Out of this sensible hell. She's warm! She breathes!
Upon thy pale lips I will melt my heart!

BOSOLA

Nay, she is gone. Indeed we can not be suffered
To do good when we have a mind to it!
Act Three, Scene 5

FERDINAND

Where is the book?
Bosola gives it to him.

Is this the spot?
He kisses it.
I am weary. Pray fetch me a chair, Bosola.
He seats himself and stares straight before him.
I have come a long way to sit here
And from this spot I'll never stir while I do live.

Scene 5

The courtyard of the Duchess' castle.
Enter Bosola.

BOSOLA

We are like dead walls or only vaulted graves
That ruined yield no echoes. Oh this gloomy world,
In what a shadow or deep pit of darkness
Doth womanish and fearful mankind live?
I stand like one hath ta'en a sweet and golden dream,
I am angry with myself now that I wake.
What would I do were this to do again?
O penitence, let me truly taste thy cup.
Hark, here comes the noble Count Malatesta
That would have wooed our Duchess and arrives
Only to number in her funeral train.
Come, I'll be out of this ague. I will not
Save myself. Now Justice do thy worst.
Enter Count Malatesta and his train, Delio and Duchess' eldest son.
My lord, a sad disaster!

MALATESTA

Why? How's this?
BOSOLA
The Duchess of Malfi lies within
Murdered by her brother, the Lord Ferdinand, dead, too,
Myself an actor in the main of all,
Much against my better nature and in the end
Neglected.

MALATESTA
Let him be bound. Good Delio,
We come too late.

DELIO
I heard so and
Was armed for't ere I came. Let us make noble use
Of this great ruin and join all our force
To establish this young and hopeful gentleman
In his mother's right.

MALATESTA
Yet I have heard
He is not wholly of noble birth.

DELIO
An idle rumour,
As ill founded as all which hath befallen
Within these ancient and too firmly mortared walls.
And, were it true, if here should spring
A new shoot from a hundred-year-old tree
Whose trunk too long hath twined upon itself
It were a hopeful portent.

MALATESTA
So let us now
Convey to burial these unhappy brethren.
From hidden causes their misfortunes grow;
We'll pity when the cause we can not know.
Notes and Variants
Texts by Brecht

BRECHT'S VERSION OF WEBSTER'S 'DUCHESS OF MALFI'

1. Backed by his brother the Cardinal, the Duke of Aragon, prior to going to war on her behalf, forbids his widowed sister ever to remarry, and places a spy in her household.
2. Hardly has her brother left than the Duchess tells her steward that she loves him, and they go to bed.
3. The spy discovers this when she becomes pregnant, and he sends a letter to the Duke.
4. The Duke gets the letter just before a battle. Confused by the idea of having to hurry back, he fights badly and is taken prisoner. (Evasion.)
5. After spending some years in captivity the Duke returns and finds that his sister has remarried. He bombards her with threats. The Duchess turns down the steward's offer to fight for her, seeing this as an interference in her dispute with her princely brother; she decides to take refuge with her brother the Cardinal. (Evasion.) None the less she is moved to confide her plan to the spy by his praise for her beloved.
6. The Duke denounces his sister to the Cardinal as a whore. The Cardinal decides to excommunicate her and confiscate her duchy. He recommends a cooler approach to his brother, whose passion astounds him.
7. Having fled the Cardinal, the Duchess and her family are excommunicated by him and banished.
8. Fleeing once more, and free as a bird, the Duchess comes to realize that her brother the Cardinal acted out of avarice, but fails to understand the Duke and his motives. A letter from him shows her what a deadly hatred he bears her husband, and she sends the latter ahead with one of the children. She is arrested. (The Duchess's uncertainty about the Duke is an evasion.)
9. In his flight the steward complains to his young son about
the fate of those who let themselves be persuaded not to fight. (Evasion.)

10. The Duke has the dead bodies of her husband and little son shown to the Duchess. Deeply wounded by her despair, he decides to use the surgical knife to cut deeper. (Evasion.)

11. On seeing her executioners, the Duchess realizes that her brother's pronouncement of the death sentence is a declaration of love, and expresses her sympathy with him. Over her coffin the Duke threatens the executioner for having put his sentence into effect. (The Duchess's realization, an evasion.)

12. Arriving posthaste after hearing of the Duchess's murder, the Cardinal finds the Duke close to madness. During a memorial service organized by the Duke, the Cardinal, to stop him blaming himself, reminds him that the Duchess was no better than a whore, and the Duke kills him for the insult. He in turn is killed by his lieutenant, who has provoked his hostility by a cynical remark. (Evasion.)

[BBA 500/47-49.]

**HOW 'THE DUCHESS OF MALFI' OUGHT TO BE PERFORMED**

The model to be followed is the Broadway musical which, thanks to certain fiercely competing groups composed of speculators, popular stars, good scene designers, bad composers, witty if second-rate songwriters, inspired costumiers, and truly modern dance directors, has become the authentic expression of all that is American. Alienation effects are extensively used by the designers and dance directors, the latter deriving theirs from folklore. The painted backdrops which constitute the main scenery reflect the influence of modern painting, including good surrealist ideas. In the dance numbers, some of them intelligently worked-out mimes, one now and again finds gestic elements of the epic theatre. The plot
is strongly outlined and provides a sturdy scaffolding for the various insertions.

Unless the groupings in Malfi have as much meaning as the dispositions in a musical, and the delivery of the verse arias the . . .

[From Schriften zum Theater 4, p. 196. The typescript ends thus at the foot of a page, so that it is not clear if Brecht left it unfinished or if the rest has been lost.]

LETTER TO PAUL CZINNER

Dear Dr. Czinner,

Herewith a few points as to essential alterations.

1. The lighting needs to be much brighter, since long passages spoken in verse are virtually unintelligible.

2. The grouping of the actors should at least be changed so as to prevent them having to deliver scarcely intelligible (and sometimes imperfectly spoken) passages with their backs to the audience.

3. It is essential to return to the adaptation provided by Auden and myself. No cuts should be made without the agreement of both of us. Nor should additional passages from Webster be introduced without our being consulted, since the adaptation consists in a series of carefully considered cuts which were thoroughly and frequently discussed with Elisabeth Bergner, who approved them.

4. Not enough thought has been given to the casting of Ferdinand, as Elisabeth herself says. What is more, the director's conception of the part is a wrong one, as you and Elisabeth both say—so wrong as effectively to obscure and distort the whole sense of the play. You must engage a different Ferdinand.

5. Almost every scene needs to be redirected so as to make the story intelligible to the audience. I suggest that for this you should engage a fresh director. The present director has ignored the adaptation and seems quite incapable of directing in such a way as to allow the audience to follow the plot. (I
understand that the London critics likewise complained of
the 'obscure plot' in his direction of the original Webster
version.)

Would you let me know by Monday, 30 September, what
you propose to do about these points?

Yours,

Bertolt Brecht

[BBA 1175/01-02. Copy of a letter dated 'Boston, 26
September 1945'. These appear to represent the changes
which Brecht felt were needed before the Boston pro-
duction could move on to New York.]

ATTEMPTED BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF
'THE DUCHESS OF MALFI'

The adaptation of John Webster's Duchess of Malfi was
undertaken at the request of an émigré German actress who
had had success on the English stage. The additional verses
were translated by Auden, who also saw to it that the original
was not unduly maltreated. The actress feared that the New
York critics might be provoked by the amputation of a
literary monument. However, it turned out that the critics in
question were little concerned about careful restoration and
largely ignorant of the work (not a single comparison being
made with any passage of the original). The production was
supervised by an English director and involved old-style
declamation in accordance with that so-called Shakespearean
tradition whose style derives from the nineteenth century
and has of course nothing to do with the Elizabethan theatre.
The shortcomings of this tradition could be clearly observed.
The story narrated by the play was not performed; wherever
it came through none the less everything possible was done
to damp down its startling twists. The characters were
flattened out by the pernicious practice of stressing the 'eter-
nally human' element, while the shabby attempt to make each
event a typical case purged of any operation of chance, so that
the audience might blindly follow the workings of 'fate',
stripped those events of all reality. The actors clung to their purple passages, their arias, for dear life, but without being able to ground them in the action (and for that matter without knowing how to sing). The leading actress refused to let the Duchess’s experiences determine her character, nor on the other hand did she stick to one kind of character throughout; thus up to a given scene it was Countess Mitzi and thereafter Mary Queen of Scots. The line taken in the adaptation was that the Duchess’s brothers were using her bourgeois love affair as the rope with which to hang her (the Duchess embarks on a bourgeois marriage), but the production saw the ‘master of the Duchess’ household’s as a comely princeling, and cut the scene where she tells her bourgeois husband not to interfere in the dispute between her and her noble brothers. The steady aggravation of the tortures to which she is subjected by Ferdinand, himself in love, lost all meaning because his helplessness was not portrayed; while in the final act the actress rejected a scene where the Duchess sees that her death sentence is also her brother’s declaration of love. This sprang from a lack of intelligence and stature, and still more from a technical inability to play such episodes. This was something which she shared with the American Antonio and the English Ferdinand. Trained at the Munich Kammerspiele at the end of the First World War and subsequently at Reinhardt’s and Barnowsky’s theatres in Berlin, she did not command the technique of the German epic theatre. As for the rest of the cast, they lacked (and no doubt despised) that of the American musical, which may be entirely phony and provide nothing but empty entertainment in greedy obedience to the fashions of the day, but has nevertheless managed to evolve certain primitive epic methods which could at least serve to present the great Elizabethans in something halfway resembling a contemporary manner.

[From Schriften zum Theater 4, pp. 194-6. Not included in GW. The Broadway production opened on 15 October 1946.]
Editorial Note

1. General

The U.S. Copyright Office contains three complete adaptations of the Duchess by Brecht and his collaborators: Brecht–Hays (1943); Auden (1945); Brecht–Auden (1946). The Brecht Archive, Berlin, contains no fewer than five complete or near-complete texts of the adaptation, as well as more entries for subsidiary materials than for any other of Brecht’s works apart from Galileo. Two of these texts (BBA 144 and 146) predate the 1943 copyrighted version or belong to that immediate period; a third (BBA 1167) has a notation by Elisabeth Hauptmann, ‘Auden’; a fourth (1177) is a major revision of the 1943 copyrighted text and has manuscript additions and changes most of which have been incorporated in the typed text called ‘Exemplar Barbara B’ (BBA 1419). This last text, then, in the possession of Brecht’s daughter, seems to be the one most likely to summarize Brecht’s contribution; it shows many signs of his revision, mostly in deleting and adding lines and speeches, tightening scenes and shortening them. The mass of material numbered 1174, however, contains more than two acts of a freshly typed text which includes all of Brecht’s changes in 1419 and which apparently was meant to depend upon 1419’s unchanged portions to form a complete play. In this text (1174), the manuscript modifications are fewer, though single sheets and groups of sheets following the coherent revised section (1174/01-64) reveal subsequent modifications and/or alternate versions of material in earlier parts of 1174 or in the formerly unchanged parts of the Barbara Brecht script.

Although no certain dates can be put on these last two texts (they are demonstrably later than mid-1943 and were typed by the same New York firm which typed the 1945 and 1946 copyrighted texts), both show careful work by Brecht and represent his continued, perhaps his conclusive, work on the play. Significantly, neither relies very extensively on The White Devil: whether this situation indicates that both texts date from a period before (or after) such insertions were contemplated or that Brecht decided not to attempt the amalgamation cannot be judged. Certainly the inclusion of material from The White Devil, having been considered by the collaborators part way through their work, was eventually dropped. Possibly the Barbara Brecht script and more probably BBA 1174 date from the latter part of the period during which
Brecht worked on the play (i.e. 1945 and 1946). A reconstructed text using the coherent portions of BBA 1174 supplemented by BBA 1419 appears as an Appendix to Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays, Vol. 7 (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 330–450. Here we have chosen to print the chief adaptation preceding W. H. Auden's entry into the work—a text based on the 1943 copyrighted version but incorporating subsequent changes by Brecht and H. R. Hays. Brecht and Auden made significant revisions in their further work, and these have been cited in the notes through reference to the Random House text.

The draft plan entitled 'Brecht's version of Webster's Duchess of Malfi' (pp. 419–20) gives a general view of Brecht's design for the play and his attitude towards his work on it. Although this story cannot be directly linked with any of the surviving texts (for example, paragraph 5 describes Ferdinand's captivity whereas all the surviving texts account for the passage of time by delaying Bosola's arrival with news of the Duchess's activities), most of the major points of Brecht's adaptation appear in the list. Brecht apparently criticizes Webster, and perhaps himself, with the word 'evasion', specifically the muting of Ferdinand's incestuous jealousy of the Duchess. Each time the action provides an opportunity for explicit recognition or statement of this motive, the characters turn aside. The very basic decision to emphasize this motive (in the original it remains implicit and one among several possibilities) eventually led to the introduction of a prologue (partly from John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore) in the Barbara Brecht script and to many other interpolations throughout the play. Brecht also decided to give both the Cardinal and Ferdinand an economic motive (possession of the Duchess' estates), and there are increasingly frequent references to this mercenary incentive from the time of the 1943 copyrighted version forward.

A second, more structural, change comes with the very end of the play. Webster's controversial decision to place the Duchess's death in the fourth, rather than the final, act is replaced by a conclusion in which the deaths of brother and sister occur closer together and nearer the play's end. This second modification meant recasting material from the original fourth and fifth acts and also required several adjustments in earlier scenes. Webster's Act IV (all citations in roman numerals refer to J. R. Brown's 'Revels' edition of The Duchess of Malfi, Methuen, consists almost entirely of a powerful scene in which Bosola half-tortures, half-comforts the Duchess before executing her. In Act V, interest
shifts to Bosola and to an extraordinary series of ironic reversals, unintentional murders, and plans gone astray. The 1943 copyrighted text and its subsequent revision given here have a crescendo of deaths: Ferdinand murders the Cardinal (2, 7); Bosola, acting for the Duke, poisons the Duchess (3, 4); Ferdinand commits suicide (3, 4).

Carrying out this second decision had two chief effects: it greatly reduced Bosola's part and led Brecht to create a new scene (2, 7) in which Ferdinand kills his brother out of an irrational rage at the excommunication which he himself had proposed and engineered. Through Brecht's drafts, this scene develops from a crudely direct murder (in BBA 1177) to a complicated statement of the Cardinal's remorse and Ferdinand's insane jealousy. The proper use of Webster's extensive psychological analysis of Bosola puzzled Brecht throughout his work. Eventually, Bosola becomes a much less fully developed character, almost purely the Duke's tool; lingering traces of Webster's treatment occasionally blur his characterization in Brecht's versions. An example will clarify Brecht's difficulties and decisions. Immediately after Webster's 'excommunication scene' (III.iv), Bosola makes two entrances, the first with an equivocal letter from Ferdinand, asking for Antonio's 'head in a business', and the second (after Antonio has escaped) as the leader of a military guard come to arrest the Duchess and her commoner-husband. Brecht appears to have liked the letter episode, and BBA 1177 shows him employing first one of the entrances and then the other, trying to simplify the scene and yet retain Ferdinand's duplicity. Ultimately, in a part of the Barbara Brecht script which shows signs of continued indecision (2, 6), Brecht retains Webster's organization, though Bosola's double entrances clearly distressed him. How to dispatch Antonio also posed a problem. In Webster's play, Bosola kills Antonio unintentionally (V.iv), having mistaken him for Ferdinand. This solution Brecht could not use, for it had been decided that the Duchess must receive (as Ferdinand's gruesome 'gift') a chest containing the bodies of her husband and child (see 3, 2; Webster's analogous scene, IV.i, uses wax-works). Moreover, a remorseful or partially penitent Bosola was not part of Brecht's conception. Many early versions (1177, for example, and the Barbara Brecht script until a manuscript cancellation by Brecht) conclude the 'echo scene' (3, 1) with Bosola's pursuit of Antonio. In the version printed here, Antonio's death is not shown, though our text implies Bosola's responsibility (see 3, 1 and 3, 2).
Having diminished Bosola’s role, Brecht could write a first act much less complicated than Webster’s, although the introduction of set-speech portraits of the major characters still provided problems; the various versions reveal Brecht’s experiments in conveying this material. Brecht was more interested than Webster in Duke Ferdinand’s foreign wars, and he uses them to explain the curiously long gap (more than two years) between Bosola’s discovery of the Duchess’ pregnancy and the Duke’s return to Malfi. Webster actually mentions two series of battles (in I.i and III.iii), but shows neither; Brecht amalgamates these occasions and suggests a parallel between the Duke’s making war for his sister and making war on her. Act two, scene 2, later rather truncated, here concludes with an elaborate discussion of war’s significance and of Ferdinand’s attitudes towards both it and his sister. Brecht’s anger at Antonio’s portrayal as a ‘comely princeling’ (see ‘Attempted Broadway Production of The Duchess of Malfi’, pp. 422–3) indicates another of his significant modifications: Antonio gradually recognizes that his social status, or his acceptance of it, oppresses him and restricts his actions. While Webster remained content to show the perhaps ‘bourgeois’ and quite private pleasures of the Duchess’s marriage, Brecht found Antonio a means to convey the social consciousness of those ‘too small to live with greatness’ (3, 1). Thus, ‘greatness’ becomes less a moral and tragic quality, as it had been for Webster, and more a sense of social class and prerogative, a sense shared by the Duchess and her brothers (see 2, 3 where the Duchess forbids Antonio to fight back).

Brecht eventually excised Webster’s subplot, which involves the Cardinal’s mistress, Julia. On this point, too, he seems to have wavered: the 1943 copyrighted text omits her; some relevant sections in this version append a conversation between the Cardinal and Julia to Act two, scene 4; the Barbara Brecht script and BBA 1174 make no mention of her. At one crucial point Brecht did, however, salvage an episode from the subplot: Webster’s Cardinal murders Julia by demanding that she confirm an oath by kissing a book whose cover has been poisoned (V.ii). Brecht employs this device as Ferdinand’s weapon against the Duchess (3, 4). While Webster’s Pescara (a reasonably ‘good’ nobleman who survives the débâcle) and Malatesta (the foolish second husband proposed for the Duchess) both eventually disappear from the adaptation, Delio is given a larger role than in Webster’s play. Delio’s final restoration of order and especially the
epilogue which subsequently joined the text make Brecht's conclusion rather more optimistic than Webster's.

2. NOTES ON SPECIFIC SCENES

The following notes on individual scenes have two chief purposes: to indicate significant differences between the text printed here and the reconstruction of the 'final' and most 'Brechtian' version printed in Bertolt Brecht: Collected Plays, Vol. 7 (New York: Random House, 1974; cited here as 'Random House ed.' followed by the appropriate page number or numbers); to offer versions of speeches and scenes never incorporated into a complete text, but which Brecht thought promising enough to develop quite fully. In this second regard, BBA 1177 is extremely suggestive. Like 1174, it opens with a coherent and carefully revised partial text, in this case based on the 1943 copyrighted text (thus post-dating July 1943) and then becomes a series of loosely related working drafts of scenes and speeches. These working papers reveal more clearly than the analogous material in 1174 just which parts of the play gave Brecht trouble and which interested him most as a field of adaptation and modification.

One further textual oddity must be mentioned. File 1178 contains a note by Ruth Berlau: 'Material not used—the remainder having been used for complete new script.' This note may indicate that an entire text (composed in unknown proportions by Brecht and Auden) has not survived or yet been identified. On the other hand, the note may refer to the 1946 copyrighted version. The adaptation seems to have moved along a parabola from Brecht's and Hays's work—revision and rewriting which follow Webster fairly closely though beginning to incorporate some White Devil material as well as to adjust motivations and to introduce new scenes—to a stretch of Auden's collaboration, represented by the 1945 copyrighted text, and on to a period of Brecht's continued reworking of the play. Through various production decisions, with which Brecht disagrees in his letter to Paul Czinner, the final Broadway version returned to almost pure Webster, reduced and clarified with relatively little of the work Brecht had done before Auden's participation and after he joined the project.

[Prologue]

Brecht eventually added a prologue, based on the first seventy-seven lines of John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, which empha-
sizes Ferdinand’s incestuous desires through a conversation with an anonymous friar (Random House ed., pp. 337–8 and sec 431–3).

Act one, scene 1
This text, like the 1943 copyrighted version, diverges from Webster and from later versions (Random House ed., pp. 343–5) in having Bosola hired as spy after the two brothers have warned their sister not to remarry. Our text also sharply reduces Bosola’s part as it appears in Webster and even in later revisions. Here, none of his previous history is given; he appears a mere tool of the Duke, rather than the melancholic and alienated figure of the original.

Act one, scene 2
Our version gives a very spare example of this scene when compared with the original and some later modifications by Brecht. Two important changes later occurred: the Duchess recognizes that her brothers hope to gain ‘an infinite mass of treasure’ should she die a widow, and Antonio admits that his ‘tongue’ has ‘been too long used to servitude’ (Random House ed., p. 352). This text uses much more material from the analogous exchange in Webster’s original (I.i. 341–506). Some later drafts, including the 1946 copyrighted version, insert the dirge from The White Devil as an ‘interlude’ after this scene (Random House ed., p. 433); our text later employs this dirge (‘Call for the robin redbreast and the wren’) in Act three, scene 4.

Act one, scenes 3 and 4
Antonio’s decisiveness and his complicity with Cariola in concealing the Duchess’s pregnancy later became important elements in this episode (Random House ed., pp. 357–60). Our text also lacks some curious exchanges between Bosola and an Old Woman which emphasize the scene’s ominous quality as well as Bosola’s villainy (Random House ed., pp. 353–4); the Old Woman appears here only to announce the birth of the Duchess’s first child.

Act two, scene 1
Our text revises almost completely the analogous scene in the 1943 copyrighted version by introducing the soldier’s song and Ferdinand’s conversation with his page. Brecht evidently liked this change, for it remains in subsequent versions (Random House ed.,
The German text of the soldier's song ('I wrote my love a letter') is in Brecht's GW Gedichte, p. 879. Our text gives only the first verse, without its refrain, and the third; the translation reads like Ander. The missing portions (our translation) read approximately:

I never got an answer
And the war went on five years
But that wasn't so surprising.
So I drank instead, supposing:
There she lies, in the embrace
Of the man who took my place.
And we burnt the town around us
When we captured fair Milan
Till its palaces were gutted
And for seven days we looted
And we raped them old and young
For we knew they'd done us wrong.

How could she go on waiting
With the nights becoming lighter and the spring wind
blowing fresh?
Now it's time I found a lover
He can't make me wait for ever—
Women have such itching flesh.

One of the odd links among the plays in this volume is the Schweyk song 'When we marched off to Jaromir', which not only appears in Brecht's Schweyk play but evidently inspired both the present song and Simone Machard's 'As I went to Saint-Nazaire'. Nor is Grusha's 'Four generals set off for Iran' in scene 3 of The Caucasian Chalk Circle all that remote. The two further poems which follow 'Als wir vor Milano kamen' in GW also relate to the Duchess, though they were not meant for use in the play. Of these the second, 'Light as though never touching the floor', will be found in Poems 1913–1956. Later versions shorten this scene considerably by cutting Ferdinand's triumphal procession and Delio's grim comments on the war's cost (Random House ed., pp., 368–70). Brecht later decided to have Antonio admit (to Delio) his paternity (see Random House ed., pp. 434–5 for Brecht Archive material on this scene). Our text's version of the scene ends with pure Webster (III.i,38–86).
Act two, scene 3
Comparison of this scene in our text and in the 1943 copyrighted version indicates that it is one place where White Devil lines eventually entered the adaptation. Cariola’s speech about the silkworm comes from Webster’s other tragedy and remains in later versions (Random House ed., p. 372). Our text emphasizes Antonio’s desire to meet Ferdinand’s threats with rational argument and the defence that the Duchess has made an ‘honourable marriage’. Oddly, the Duchess claims here that ‘Such love as ours defies / Nature, duty and established law’; Webster’s original hardly endorses this view, or rather, hardly puts it in the Duchess’s mouth. Later versions (Random House ed., p. 376) omit it while retaining Antonio’s reluctant acceptance of the Duchess’s decision to separate. Her belief that the Cardinal may be bribed enters the adaptation with the text here printed; this addition coheres with Brecht’s changing view of the brothers’ motivations (see note on Act one, scene 2).

Act two, scene 4
The exchange between the Cardinal and his mistress, Julia, has been added by our text to the 1943 version; all subsequent versions omit this plot completely, though the Broadway production, in keeping with its generally greater fidelity to Webster’s original (see Brecht’s remarks in ‘Attempted Broadway Production of Webster’s Duchess of Malfi’, pp. 422–3), restored it. For Webster’s much more ample treatment, see II.iv. This section of the adaptation seems to have been considered most susceptible to change: another, working version (BBA 1174/124–90) replaces the excommunication scene (2, 5) with a scene based on the trial of Vittoria Corombona in The White Devil. The following speech (from 1174/131) seems intended to replace Ferdinand’s last speech of 2, 4 as preparation for the trial:

CARDINAL
Come, put yourself in tune. It seems she cannot be saved. It’s a scandal that will shake all Italy. It’s up to us, her brothers, to look after her dukedom. We must not hide anything, but proceed openly and fairly. I’ll instantly solicit a clerical court and I’ll invite all the lieger ambassadors. She is unworthy: her dukedom must be taken away from her and put in the custody of the Holy Church. Brother, let’s in to make our preparations.
Act two, scene 5

BBA 1174/124-30 gives an alternate version of this scene, based upon the trial scene in Webster’s The White Devil. This alternate version follows; use of this scene would require substituting the speech quoted above in the note to 2, 4.

Enter French and English ambassadors.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR
They have dealt discreetly to obtain the presence
Of all the grave liege ambassadors to hear the Duchess’ trial
Trusting our approbation to the proof
Of her black lust shall make her infamous
To all her neighbouring kingdoms.

ENGLISH AMBASSADOR
But I would ask what power have the state
Of Ancona to determine a free prince.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR
This is a free state, sir, and her brother, the Cardinal
Forewarning of her looseness, took occasion
Of their pilgrimage hither to arrest them all,
Duchess and steward and the indeterminate fruit
Of their mismatching, and is in haste
To bring them straight to judgment.

ENGLISH AMBASSADOR
But by what justice?

FRENCH AMBASSADOR
Sure, I think, by none.
These factions among great families are like
Foxes, when their hands are divided
They carry fire in their tails and all the country
About them goes to wrack for them.

ENGLISH AMBASSADOR
Still, she has offended. Who would’ve thought
So great a lady would [have] matched herself
Unto so mean a person.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR
They that are
Great women of pleasure are oft sudden in their wills
And what they dream they do.

Enter officer.
OFFICER
Pray, silence in the court, their lordships do convene.
*Enter Ferdinand, Cardinal, guards leading the Duchess, Antonio, and children into the dock.*

OFFICER
*To Antonio:* Sirrah, stand off and take your proper station. This court is not the Duchess' bedchamber. But the home of justice where you may not stand beside your betters.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR
Certain people should travel as Dutch women go to church, bear their stools with them.

OFFICER
The court's in session, signior.

CARDINAL
Stand to the table, gentlewoman, now signior, fall to your plea.

LAWYER
Domine judex, converte oculos in hanc pestem, mulierum corruptissimam.

DUCHESS
What's he?

FERDINAND
A lawyer that pleads against you.

DUCHESS
Pray, my lord, let him speak his usual tongue. I'll make no answer else.

FERDINAND
Why, you understand Latin.

DUCHESS
I do, sir, but mongst the auditory
Which come to hear my cause, the half or more
May be ignorant in 't.

CARDINAL
Go on, sir.

DUCHESS
By your favour
I will not have my accusation clouded
In a strange tongue: all this assembly
Shall hear what you can charge me with.

FERDINAND
Pray, change your language.

CARDINAL
Oh, for God's sake, gentlewoman, your credit
Shall be more famous by it.
Well, then, have at you.
Most literate judges, please your lordships
So to connive your judgments to the view
Of this debauched and diversivolent woman;
Who such a black concatenation
Of mischief has affected, that to extirp
The memory of it, must be the consummation
Of her, and her projections—

What’s all this?

Hold your peace!
Exorbitant sins must have exulceration.

I shall be plainer with you, and paint out
Your follies in more natural red and white
Than that upon your cheek.

Oh, you mistake!
You raise a blood as noble in this cheek
As ever was your mother’s.

My honourable lord
It doth not suit a reverend cardinal
To play the lawyer thus. If you be my accuser,
Pray, cease to be my judge! Come from your bench!

You see, my lords, what goodly fruit she seems.
Yet like those apples travellers report
To grow where Sodom and Gomorrah stood
I will but touch her, and you straight shall see
She’ll fall to soot and ashes.

O poor charity!
Thou art seldom found in scarlet.

I pray thee, mistress, are you to deny that you did use our most
unfortunate absence to lead a vicious and lascivious life?
DUCHESS
You are deceived: 'twas marriage. 'Twas a contract
In a chamber per verba presenti.

CARDINAL
I am resolv'd
Were there a second paradise to lose
This devil would betray it.

DUCHESS
Terrify babes, my lord, with painted devils.
I'm past such needless palsy. For your accusations
Of 'vicious' and 'lascivious': they proceed from you
As if a man should spit against the wind:
The filth returns in 's face.

CARDINAL
Does it? Pray you, mistress, satisfy me one question: While we
were absent did nothing leak into the open, blemishing the
noble house of Malfi?
To Antonio.
Who made you overseer?

ANTONIO
Why, my honesty; my honesty, I think.

CARDINAL
Your lust. And while you were the master of her household,
didn't you deal falsely with her in your accounts?
Antonio remains silent. Cardinal turns to Duchess.
Stood not your brother Ferdinand engaged with you for monecy
ta'en up of certain Neapolitan Jews? And did he not let the
bonds be forfeit?

DUCHESS
He did not.

CARDINAL
And whereupon, as you didn't testify yourself, our brother's
bills at Naples were protested?

DUCHESS
They were not.

CARDINAL
But didst say so before your officers.

DUCHESS
To save my husband's life.
Condemn you me for that I do love him?
CARDINAL
And look upon this creature was her husband.

DUCHESS
Had he been in the street
Under my chamber-window, even there
I should have courted him.

CARDINAL
Hear you, my lords, how she calls lechery love, a life in sin she
calls a solemn marriage. This whore, foresooth, is holy.

DUCHESS
Hail Whore! What's that?

Murmurs in the court. Ferdinand rises and comes down slowly to
confront the Duchess. Sudden silence.

ENGLISH AMBASSADOR
There is that in his look
Would wither all that's green, deform all music
Into a witch's whisper.

FERDINAND
What's that? What's that?
Shall I expound whore to you? sure I shall;
I'll give their perfect character. They are first
Sweetmeats that rot the eater, in man's nostrils
Poison'd perfumes. They are cozening alchemy;
Shipwrecks in calmest weather. What are whores?
Cold Russian winters, that appear so barren
As if that nature had forgot the spring.
They are the true material fire of hell.
What are whores?
They are those flattering bells have all one tune
At weddings, and at funerals. They are worse,
Worse than dead bodies which are begg'd at gallows
And wrought upon by surgeons to teach man
Wherein he is imperfect. What's a whore?
She's like the gilt counterfeit'd coin
Which, whosoever first stamps it, brings in trouble
All that receive it.

DUCHESS
This character 'scapes me.

FERDINAND
But you shall not escape
What you have made yourself. There is no court
Can punish what you are. Had I a sister?
I have a limb corrupted to an ulcer.
And I will cut it off.
Exit Ferdinand.

ENGLISH AMBASSADOR

Some horrid thing
Glared through his human windows as he spoke.
I wish I had not seen it.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR

'Tis said he loved her
Dearer than life. The question of her shame
Wrecks his proud soul. There are your true pangs of death,
The pangs of life that struggle with great spirits.

ENGLISH AMBASSADOR

Hush! The Duchess is about to speak.

DUCHESS

I have no writ to rend
Such incantations save they mean
Like you, grave reasoners, to undo me,
Whose hates are plain. Brother, you had a hope
Had I continued widow to have gained
An infinite mass of treasure by my death.

CARDINAL

See, my lords,
She scandals our proceedings.

DUCHESS

I have houses,
Jewels, and a poor remnant of crusadoes.
Would these make you charitable?

CARDINAL

Hark, with what insolence she offers bribes
To hush the voice of justice. Get this down
In evidence against her plea of innocence.

DUCHESS

Humbly thus,
Thus low, to the most worthy and respected
Lieger ambassadors, my modesty
And womanhood I tender, but withal
So entangled in a curs'd accusation
That my defence must personate masculine virtue.

CARDINAL

This is the tedious prolixity of guilt.
Have done.
DUCHESS
Find me but guilty, sever head from body
We'll part good friends: I scorn to hold my life
At yours or any man's entreaty, sir.

CARDINAL
Speak no more for our opinions are concluded
Hear then, Giovanna, your public fault
Join'd to th' condition of the present time
Takes from you all the fruits of noble pity
Such a corrupted trial have you made
Both of your life and beauty, and been styl'd
No less an ominous fate than blazing stars
To princes. Attend your sentence.
The Cardinal and the clerical judges rise, so do the rest at a hint of the
Cardinal. The Duchess, Antonio and the children are placed before him.

CARDINAL
Herefore, through the authority of the Almighty God, Father of
Heaven and His Son, Our Saviour, I, Cardinal of Ancona,
denounce, proclaim and declare Giovanna Teresa, Duchess of
Malfi, and her paramour, Antonio Bologna, together with their
children, anathema by the advice and assistance of our Holy
Father, the pope, and all the bishops, abbots, priests, and other
prelates and ministers of our Holy Church, for her open lechery
and sins of the flesh.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR
He hath excommunicated her!

CARDINAL
I curse her head and the hairs of her head, her eyes, her mouth,
her nose, her tongue, her teeth, her neck, her shoulders, her
breast, her heart, her arms, her legs, her back, her stomach, her
womb, and every part of her body from the top of her head to
the soles of her feet.

DUCHESS
A rape! A rape! Yes, you have ravished justice.
Forced her to do your pleasure.

CARDINAL
I dissemble and part thee from the church of God and likewise
from contracts and oaths of law. I forbid all Christian men to
have any company with thee and all her earthly goods I seize in
the name of the Holy Church. And as their candles go from our
sight so may their souls go from the visage of God and their
good fame from the world.
Away with her!
*Cardinal steps down from the bench.*

To an official:
Take her right hand and raise it!
*Cardinal takes something off the Duchess’ finger.*

Exeunt Cardinal and the clerical judges.

**ENGLISH AMBASSADOR**

What was it with such violence he took
Off from her finger?

**SPANISH AMBASSADOR**

’Twas her wedding ring.

**Act two, scene 6**

As described on p. 426 above, this scene underwent several changes in the course of the adaptation; the most striking variant is the number of times Bosola enters. In Webster (III.iv) and in later versions (Random House ed., pp. 388–9), Bosola appears first with an equivocal letter inviting Antonio to return to Malfi and then later, disguised, comes to arrest the Duchess. Our text omits the first entrance and moves much of Webster’s material to Act three, scene 2.

**Act two, scene 7**

This scene, largely original with the adaptors, went through many versions; a later one (Random House ed., pp. 393–6) develops the Cardinal’s mercenary goals even further and provides more evidence of Ferdinand’s incestuous jealousy.

**Act three, scene 1**

Webster’s version of this scene takes place between Antonio and Delio; many different arrangements of the scene appear in archival texts and others. Our text adds to the 1943 version Antonio’s evocative lines on ‘the plains of Brittany’ and retains Bosola’s un-Websterian entrance (later cut, see Random House ed., pp. 396–7 and 444–6). BBA 1174/107 has another version of the scene’s conclusion with the note, ‘Brecht’s rough translation’ opposite Antonio’s last speech:

**ANTONIO**

O fearful echo that accuses my life
Of its long weakness; that has not made its path
By definite steps but sought its shelter
In the strong wills of others. Now
I am caught between their fighting stars, a clerk
Unpractised in the sword.

SON
Why can't we go with mother?

ANTONIO
We are too small to live with greatness, son.

SON
Shall we not see her more?

ECHO
Not see her more.

SON
Why does the echo say so, father?

ANTONIO
It tells us, son, how bitter is the fate
Of him who is not allowed to fight. The whole day
(Which now will be ended soon) I have been thinking
Of another day, when I went a-hawking with my father
Upon the plains of Brittany, and saw our falcon spying a hare
And coursing it till the poor beast
—Since flying is much easier than running—
Was wearied unto death and, despairing utterly,
Turned upon its back and with its stony feet
Hardened by a whole life of timid flight
Hammered to pieces our falcon's chest. Lucky hare!
O 'tis impossible to fly your fate.

ECHO
O, fly your fate.

Act three, scene 2
This scene concludes the action implied by Bosola's appearance at
the close of the preceding scene; in Webster's original, Antonio
survives to participate in the final series of murders and counter-
murders, and Ferdinand sends the Duchess wax-work imitations
of their bodies. BBA 1174 has variants of the concluding exchange
between Bosola and Ferdinand, showing the way in which Brecht
reduced Bosola's express motives and justifications for his actions.
Three versions will illustrate Brecht's working methods:

FERDINAND
Damn her! that body of hers,
While that my blood ran pure in't, was more worth
Than that which thou wouldst comfort, called a soul.
Curse upon her!
I will no longer study in the book
Of another's heart

**BOSOLA**

Must I see her again?

**FERDINAND**

Your work is not yet ended.
To cure such maladies the surgeon's knife
Must cut until it pricks the patient's life.

*Exeunt.*

(1174/75)

**BOSOLA**

Right. Give me that scholarship
You promised me and I'll be off to Bologna
And never see her again.

**FERDINAND**

Your work is not yet ended.
I found her sin sits deeper than I thought.
Vile appetite has turned to lecherous grief.
Such mourning is unbearable.
To cure such maladies the surgeon's knife
Must cut until it pricks the patient's life.

*Exeunt.*

(1174/80)

**BOSOLA**

Right. Give me my scholarship and I'll go
To complete my education, never see her again.

**FERDINAND**

Your work is not yet ended.
I found her sin sits deeper than I thought.
Vile appetite has turned to lecherous grief
With pallidness hardly hidden, impudent [sic] tears.
Such mourning is imbearable [sic]. Nacked [sic] she stands
The widow of a sweaty stableboy.
To cure such maladies the surgeon's knife
Must cut until it pricks the patient's life.

(1174/79)

Between this scene and the next one, the 1946 text copyrighted by Auden and Brecht inserts an 'interlude' by Bosola. The text comes from Webster's play (IV.ii.178–95) and is spoken by Bosola in an attempt to bring the Duchess 'By degrees to mortification.' It is cited here from 1174/85:

**INTERLUDE**
BOSOLA

Hark, now everything is still
The screech-owl and the whistler shrill
Call upon our dame aloud,
And bid her quickly don her shroud!
Much you had of land and rent;
Your length in clay's now competent:
A long war disturbed your mind;
Here your perfect peace is signed:
Of what is't fools make such vain keeping?
Sin their conception, their birth weeping,
Their life a general mist of error,
Their death a hideous storm of terror.
Strew your hair with powders sweet,
Don clean linen, bathe your feet,
And (the foul fiend more to check)
A crucifix let bless your neck.
'Tis now full tide 'tween night and day;
End your groan, and come away.

This text also appears on 1174/109 and 123.

Act three, scene 3
Our text is the first to introduce this scene and Ferdinand's 'lycanthropy'; the 1943 text has nothing like it, though Webster (V.ii) provides most of the lines.

Act three, scene 4
As Hays's comment on the collaboration suggests, the conclusion of the play provided difficulties, partly because of the original's complexity, partly because of certain production requirements made by Elisabeth Bergner and Paul Czinner. In Webster's play and in later versions of the adaptation, Bosola executes Cariole and the Duchess' surviving children (Random House ed., pp. 411–12), while no mention of such an action occurs here. The manner of Ferdinand's death also undergoes some change. Here, he dies poisoned by the book which killed the Duchess, presumably a comment on his love for her; in a later version (Random House ed., pp. 413–14), Bosola stabs his employer after demanding some recompense 'due . . . [his] service.'
Act three, scene 3
Malatesta, a character from Webster's original, disappears as a 
speaking part in subsequent versions of the adaptation, and the 
concluding conversation takes place between Delio and an anony-

[Epilogue]
Later texts add an epilogue, partly based on lines from Webster's 