

**“When I am in game, I am furious”:
Gaming and Sexual Conquest in Early Modern English Drama**

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Abstract

This thesis argues that games and gaming in early modern English theatre serve as the conduit through which certain forms of masculine conquest are embodied. Representations of games in Renaissance drama, such as backgammon or chess, or now obsolete pastimes like fast-and-loose or barley-break, by way of both textual references and staged examples, serve to conflate success at gaming and sexual dominance as originating from the same imperative. Such games, popular throughout the period, contained analogies of conquest within their rules and socially accepted methods of performance because they echoed the values of a patriarchal society that placed critical importance upon the same. Indeed, in the newly urban culture of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, games and gaming became a substitute for warfare, providing men an opportunity to test their aptitude for masculinity, a perceived necessity for the health of individual and society. To neglect the practice of masculine acts risked not only the individual male's masculinity, but could subsequently place the patriarchal society in jeopardy. The regular conflation of sexual and gaming metaphor can be seen as a critical precaution against the possibility of effeminacy attacking a man in the midst of heterosexual congress. In relation to these concepts, this thesis provides new readings of the anonymous Arden of Faversham, Thomas Middleton's Women Beware Women and his William Rowley collaboration The Changeling, William Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost and Antony and Cleopatra, along with an extended analysis of Middleton's A Game at Chess, suggesting that a full appreciation of the games and gaming references is essential to understanding these plays in Renaissance terms.

Certification of Thesis

I hereby certify that the research, experimental work, analysis, findings, and conclusions reported in this thesis are entirely my own effort, except where acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been submitted for any other award.

Signature of Candidate

Date

Endorsement

Signature of Principal Supervisor

Date

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Introduction

Act I Scene ii of Thomas Middleton's Women Beware Women (1621) launches the introduction of the Ward, a particularly childish young man whose passion for games and gaming is more all-encompassing pursuit than mere pastime. Befitting his name, he is in the care of his guardian, the aptly named Guardiano, who has been at pains to find a suitable bride for his now 20 year old charge. Having finally settled upon the beautiful Isabella for the task at hand, he and a group of others await the arrival of the prospective husband. The Ward finally appears with his man Sordido after what he soon describes as a rather engrossing game of "tip-cat", carrying with him a piece of gaming apparatus called a "trap-stick" (also known as a "cat-stick"), a cudgel used to play this now little known game (Jowett 1497). 'Tip-cat' is thought to have been played within a ring, where the player would use his "cat-stick" to both flick the "cat" (a small, hour-glass shaped piece of wood) into the air and bat it out of the ring. The length of the hit would then be measured in the lengths of the stick (Jobling et al, 68-69). Initially oblivious to others in the room, the Ward boasts of his prowess to Sordido, claiming that after he beat his opponent he similarly thrashed those who tried to attack him. Sordido's reminder that he has been somewhat too volatile, having drawn a complaint from the poulterer's wife that, "you struck a bump / in her child's head, as big as an egg" (I.ii.96-97), is disregarded by the young man who, by his explanation, boasts of the importance of gaming to his life, but equally draws attention to the failings that will overcome him:

An egg may prove a chicken then, in time; the poulterer's wife will get by't.
When I am in game, I am furious; came my mother's eyes in my way, I would not lose a fair end. No, were she alive, but with one tooth in her head, I should venture the striking out of that. I think of nobody when I am in play, I am so earnest. (I.ii.98-103)

With this declaration, the Ward sets himself up as a ludicrously extreme example of a character for whom gaming is not only pursued in “earnest” violence, but as one that conflates games and gaming success with sexual conquest. Yet, it is his extremities that mark him as both ludicrous and ultimately pathetic: the conflation of gaming with the aggression and implicit/explicit violence required for the male to be sexually dominant was an accepted and entrenched part of early modern culture. To be “in game” within the Renaissance period could apply equally to being involved in sexual coupling as it could refer to more innocent pastimes, emphasised by the Ward’s boast that he would not lose a “fair end” for anything. The Ward sees no disparity between recreational amusement and seduction, viewing them as one and the same, an ethos of little controversy in this period. Both require victory above all else, to avoid “los[ing] a fair end” and, as a consequence, each must be pursued “furiously”. His violent actions and language align both conquest and aggressive sexuality to games and gaming. It is the depths to which he will descend in pursuit of these ends that will destroy him. Physically, his assault of the son of the poulterer’s wife is baseless and wanton enough to draw some censure even from Sordido. Nor is that the limit to the depths that the Ward argues himself capable of scraping, as he continues on to imply that his sexual conduct may be even more monstrous. “Eye”, as used in Renaissance plays, was a common double-entendre for the vagina (Williams 118). More than willing to physically assault his mother for advantage, he thus implies that whether this encounter would include incestuous relations or not is of little concern to him. For the Ward, to play the game so as to achieve the conquest of a “fair end” is a matter of such import that he would transcend any sense of proper moral conduct or social boundary to obtain it. He thus has the potential to literally transgress any recognized boundary of morality and bring havoc to anyone unfortunate enough to be near him at the time. By comparison, those men with a greater degree of self-control and maturity

can use the same basic mentality and attitude towards gaming and, rather than causing destruction, they can construct themselves as greater examples of manhood.

Middleton further developed this link between games and acts of violent conquest in his next work, a collaborative effort with William Rowley entitled The Changeling. In this play, the Duke of Alicante's daughter Beatrice-Joanna engages a servant, De Flores, to murder a potential husband and any others who pose a threat to her security. De Flores demands his payment in secret sexual congress with Beatrice, after whom he lusts. When their adultery is exposed, De Flores kills Beatrice and inflicts a fatal wound upon himself. As he is dying he informs Beatrice's husband Alsemero of the affair, stating, "I coupled with your mate at barley-break, / And now we are left in hell" (V.iii.162-163). Now obsolete, "Barley-break" was a rustic game played by a three sets of couples. De Flores' use of this game as an analogy for his and Beatrice's adultery defines their sexual liaison as a game in which success requires evading capture. Their crime of adultery only carries the consequence of a metaphysical hell once they have been caught and placed within the 'hell' of the game. It is my contention that this single reference to Barley-brake is the key to unlocking the entire play, revealing that The Changeling plays its action out like one large game of barley-brake, where the focus for characters is not to avoid sin, but to avoid being caught at it. These two plays are far from the only such examples.

These two examples point to a continual pattern in Renaissance drama of connecting gaming to the violence of masculine conquest, particularly sexual conquest. Both textual and staged examples of games and gaming were repeatedly used as analogies for the inherent violence of conquest and the masculine desire to dominate. The backgammon game presented onstage in Arden of Faversham (1587) depicts Arden being 'taken' like a backgammon checker, killed for his wealth by his wife's lover. Even aside from the Ward, Women Beware Women (1621) juxtaposes an onstage chess game with an offstage act of carnal aggression,

serving as a prelude to the shadow of barley-break that constantly lurks within The Changeling (1622). The old gypsy cheating game “Fast-and-Loose” is used in William Shakespeare’s Love’s Labour’s Lost (1598) and Antony and Cleopatra (1607) to suggest that the emasculation of male characters is directly linked to their failure within the human game that comprises their environment. Finally, Middleton’s A Game at Chess (1624) stages a literal game of chess where both the ‘white’ and ‘black’ house strive to conquer the other either militarily or sexually. The use of gaming scenes and terminology as representations of the desire for conquest in these plays was a pattern that seemingly revelled in both the sense of competition and the implied potential for violence.

The use of games in these, and other, plays to encompass both sexual conquest and/or a lust for victory over others inspires several questions. Why are games so frequently linked with notions of manly domination in English Renaissance drama? Did these connections represent a change in the conception of gaming from Medieval England? If so, what precipitated such changes? What societal and gender constructions in the Renaissance were responsible for viewing games and gaming terminology as such appropriate expressions for aggressive sexuality and violence? Which element/s of Renaissance-era games represented violence and carnal aggression to the greatest extent? Finally, what do these links between elements of gameplay, and Renaissance constructions of society and gender indicate for early modern plays that either used gaming terminology in their text or presented scenes of gaming onstage?

In response to such questions, the focus of this dissertation is an examination of the connections between gaming and theatre in early modern culture, and will be particularly concerned with the recurrent use of games and gaming terminology in English Renaissance drama. The plays to be studied span from 1587 (Arden of Faversham) to 1624 (A Game at Chess). The references in these plays to gaming are comprised of both medieval and

Renaissance era couples and cheating games that are now obsolete (barley-brake, fast-and-loose, tip-cat) to pastimes that still survive today (chess, backgammon, archery). Of particular concern will be how these games were consistently connected with concepts of conquest and aggressive sexuality both in early modern culture and on the public playhouse stage. The thesis will argue this to be the result of a paradigmatic shift between medieval and Renaissance conceptions of gaming, from a mirroring of communal unity to a focus upon conquest. Crucially, this shift mirrored others of its period: both in national security, from intermittent military strife to the relative peace of Elizabeth's reign; and changes in the notions of masculinity, gradually replacing the warrior with the courtier.

The main argument I will advance is that games and gaming within Elizabethan and Jacobean England contained analogies of conquest within their rules and socially accepted methods of performance because they echoed the values of a patriarchal society that placed critical importance upon the same. In the culture of the Renaissance, games and gaming became a substitution for the nearly continual warfare of the Middle Ages that had supposedly been renowned for its effectiveness at providing men an opportunity to test their skills. In a newly urban culture with more stability and less war-mongering than was commonplace in the centuries before, such conquest-oriented game-play served both to offer training and re-enforcement for men who required new opportunities to actively dominate, and to function as a means by which these individuals could be seen in public displays of genuine masculinity. Not only did this encompass both the public and private sphere, each was conflated into this continual requirement of victory, with victory or failure in one area serving as an impetus for similar results in other locations. To this end, gaming within the Renaissance occupied a space as both a piece of fantasy within an area of clearly defined 'play' with rules that separated it from life, and as an exaggerated form of reality that expressed social and cultural ideals. English Renaissance society held a hierarchical social

order as supreme, considering its subversion to be inherently catastrophic. By partaking in such activities that required the participant to enforce his masculine skills in order to achieve the conquest necessary to further enforce himself as worthy of manhood, the early Modern male could simultaneously assist in solidifying a culture that relied upon the presentation of a patriarchal hierarchy as the natural order of things in order to further entrench a societal model that was believed to avert chaos. The regular conflation of sexual and gaming metaphor, in particular, can be seen as a critical precaution against the possibility of effeminacy attacking a man in the midst of heterosexual congress.

Sexual congress was a location of great potential danger for the Renaissance male, a danger that was best averted by a devotion to the aggressive act of conquest during the deed itself. In order to entrench himself within society as a proper member of the hierarchy, a man was obligated to procreate within marriage, hopefully leaving legitimate sons to continue on his legacy. Yet, to do so was to necessarily expose himself to the corrupting effeminate nature of a lustful woman, which would threaten to undermine his productive masculinity into the luxurious degeneracy of femininity and overt sexual desire. The avoidance of such peril lay in his capacity for aggressive masculinity. To protect against the debasement of effeminacy, sexual congress for the Renaissance male needed to be construed in language and deed as a form of pitched battle to combat any notion of lustful indulgence. To this end, using the spectre and terminology of success at competitive gaming as a metaphor for sexual conquest was an extension both of the requirement that the male engage in the physical display of conquestorial behaviour for the maintenance of his masculine powers and of the belief that all legitimate forms of conquest necessary for manly identity were connected. Sex was to be construed as an arena where the male was again to engage in an act of conquest, to bend the weak will of the woman to his own masculine glory. The language and the imagery used was to further render the process as analogous to open conflict in the public imagination;

whereby the male could conceivably talk of “boarding” his partner as if she was an enemy vessel so as to “occupy” her thus, and to “ravish” a woman was to spoil her as if she were a commodity, an insult therefore to the injured husband, owner of that particular item (Fletcher 93). The use of conquest-oriented gaming as a surrogate form of warfare served additionally as a protection against the forces opposing masculinity in heterosexual congress, providing metaphors and euphemisms that solidified the necessity of aggressive, even violent, sexual conquest to the culture, as well as the immutability of such an outlook to the Renaissance man. In the plays from the period that will be examined in this dissertation, games and gaming terminology serve as a method by which such modes of dominant masculinity could be implicitly suggested and entrenched as integral to the performance. To consider gaming as a purely frivolous activity is to forget that the concept of “play” to the Renaissance mind was imbued with an importance that belies the current definitions.

Playing at Domination: Gaming as Surrogate for Masculine Conquest

Games and game-play in Renaissance England occupied an ambiguous status as both idle recreation and a mirror of the society’s structure and cultural ideals. Despite the invocations of certain representatives of morality that railed against these activities, they were widespread among individuals from every stratum of society. The specific game played indicated the hierarchical status of the participant. Hunting and hawking were understood as aristocratic pastimes, in comparison to card-play and dice-play that were considered the province of the lowly criminal and vagrant. The word “game” was itself derived from the word “play”, an equally ambiguous term within Medieval and Renaissance vernacular, consistent with both “a particular amusement, or diversion: a game, a sport” and “a mimetic representation of some action or story, as a spectacle upon the stage, etc. a dramatic or theatrical performance” (OED II.8.a; III.14.a). Theatrical playing, in a culture which

promoted hierarchical order as immutable, yet remained uneasily conscious of how dependent it was upon representation, could comprise social comment as much as pastime: society's cultural ideas and structuring were potentially as fluid as their stage representation (Greenblatt 14-15; Montrose, Purpose of Playing 49-50). Often the invocations against sin would combine games and theatre within the one breath, as one medieval priest plainly showed, warning his parishioners and clergy that they should take part in, "ne dauncys, ne werdly songys, ne interlodyes, no castynges of the stone . . . ne pleying at the balle, ne other ydell japys and pleyis" (Clopper 17). It is when Renaissance theatre included gaming references and symbolism that both their ambiguities and differences are most explicit. Blasted as sinful 'japys and pleyis', both represented powerful social ideals of early modern culture. Yet the commentary of theatre could move beyond mere representation into a critique of not only early modern culture, but the role that gaming played within it.

Despite the modern connotations of idleness and frivolity that are attached to such terms as 'game' and 'play', historically games and gaming have intertwined such meaning with a respect for the seriousness of play. Johann Huizinga explains that the English term "play" was derived from the Anglo-Saxon "plega", from which the meaning of "plegan" is not only "play" or "to play", but "also rapid movement, a gesture, a grasp of the hands, clapping, playing on a musical instrument, and all kinds of bodily activity" (Homo Ludens 58). The oldest meaning of this word, however, is the abstract concept that "to play" is "to vouch or stand guarantee for, to take a risk, to expose oneself to danger for someone or something" (59). Furthermore, from the modern Germanic derivative "plegan", Medieval Latin formed "plegium", itself to become the term "pleige" in the old French, "whence the English 'pledge'" (60):

The oldest meaning of this is 'surety', 'warrant', 'hostage', hence 'gage' in the sense of the challenge or a 'wager' ('wage' being a doublet of 'gage'), and

finally the ceremony of taking on the ‘engagement’, and so ‘the drinking’ of a pledge or of someone’s health, a promise or a vow. Who can deny that in all these concepts – challenge, danger, contest, etc. – we are very close to the play-sphere? Play and danger, risk, chance, feat – it is all a single field of action where something is at stake. (60)

To determine that what is at stake in any game is necessarily always and only one emerging victorious over other players is, however, to limit the levels on which games can work. If “something is at stake”, as Huizinga claims, it may simply be “the game”: “the ideal fact that the game is a success or has been successfully concluded” (70). Play cannot be denied, according to Huizinga, because it confirms “the supra-logical nature of the human situation . . . We play and know that we play, so we must be more than merely rational beings, for play is irrational” (24). Yet, he also posits that its existence is one of continual fragility. Defining the three characteristics of play, Huizinga writes that, firstly, “play is a voluntary activity . . . [it] can be deferred or suspended at any time” (26). Secondly, play is not “ordinary” life, but “rather a stepping out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own” (26), although this does not alter the seriousness with which it can be regarded. Most importantly, however, due to the distinctness of play from reality in both “locality and duration”, the third main characteristic is “[play’s] secludedness, its limitedness. It is ‘played out’ within certain limits of time and place” (28). Furthermore games are defined by an adherence to a certain order. No matter how supposedly chaotic the game would appear, the existence of play creates “an absolute and peculiar order” (29).

According to Huizinga:

Into an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, a limited perfection. Play demands order absolute and supreme. The least deviation from it ‘spoils the game’, robs it of its character, and makes it

worthless . . . Though play as such is outside the range of good and bad, the element of tension imparts to it a certain ethical value in so far as it means a testing of the player's prowess: his courage, tenacity, resources, and, last but not least, his spiritual powers – his 'fairness'; because, despite his ardent desire to win, he must still stick to the rules of the game . . . The player who trespasses against the rules or ignores them is a 'spoil-sport'. The spoil-sport is not the same as the false player, the cheat; for the latter pretends to be playing the game and, on the face of it still acknowledges the magic circle. It is curious to note how much more lenient society is to the cheat than to the spoil-sport. This is because the spoil-sport shatters the playworld itself . . . Therefore he must be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play-community. (29-30)

To this end, games and gaming contain certain similarities to the 'truths' that the societies of Medieval and Renaissance England held to be evident, such as the absolute belief placed in order, as being of crucial necessity for the survival of society. In each society, hierarchical order was literally presented as an order that was perfect, deviations from which were falsehoods that could not be maintained in the face of the truth. Subconsciously, however, as evidenced by the importance placed upon the representation of 'order' in public displays and, in particular, the importance placed upon the public display of masculine dominance, such 'perfect' order was understood to be all too fragile. If play, as Huizinga argues, must be entered into voluntarily, it is still subject, as are the specific games and gaming practices, to cultural shifts and changes within cultural paradigms. As the opportunities for dominant masculinity to be exercised decreased as the almost continual warfare of the Middle Ages gave way to the relatively restrained and peaceful Renaissance, gaming became one of the

surrogate forms by which the male could exercise his supposedly inherent desire to dominate others.

Medieval games and gaming had traditionally been located in communal function as much as in competitive valour. Rather than occupying a time of leisure that existed separate to work or community, Victor Turner identified play for agrarian communities as an event of communal cohesion that solidified ties between its members, enforcing a status quo (Liminal to Liminoid 204-205). According to Mikhail Bakhtin, in his seminal study from 1948, Rabelais and His World, the medieval carnival drew its power from its universal status: “it was the drama of the great generic body of the people, and for this generic body birth and death are not an absolute beginning and end but merely elements of continuous growth and renewal” (88). The Belgian painter Pieter Breugel’s 1560 painting “Children’s Games” documents an entire village at play, combining a mixture of game-play and intentional degradation, celebrating the community itself rather than winners or losers (Snow 3-4, 31). Gradually shifting to more explicitly resemble a battleground for male supremacy, the potential of Renaissance games to solidify communal cohesion dissipated, and the aspects of competition were increasingly lauded, especially the potential for the male to achieve conquest over another.

The shift in the practise and status of games at all levels of society from medieval to Renaissance England not only paralleled the shift from feudalism, with its numerous agrarian communities, to the competitive nature of nascent capitalism, with its individual focus, it was accompanied by an anxiety that these changes would compromise those essential components of masculinity. The aristocracy gradually morphed from a militarized class to one defined by consumption, ruled by a female monarch who, as stated by Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin, was seen as responsible for “the transformation of the medieval culture of aristocratic honour from martial service to courtly display”, leading to concern over perceived emasculation for

many (143). Without warfare, other means were required to provide the male with opportunities for testing and reaffirming his masculinity and manly instincts.

The increased focus upon conquest within games was critical for the Renaissance conception of 'true' masculinity. Conquest suggests a victor who now reigns over his competitors due to his greater ability and his aggressive demeanour. Gaming was therefore bound up with other socially important events that require the man who was "stout of courage, fierce, testy, crafty, subtle, industrious, politic" (Fletcher 61) to conquer and dominate, such as war, kingship and, especially, procreation. Only a masculine male could produce enough of the "valiant heat" in his body and loins to be able to impregnate his wife and ensure the continuation of his lineage (Bach 9; Finucci 20). Competitive games formed an appropriate substitute for signifying a need to appear dominant, even if that violence was simply implied in the language or implicit structure of the method of play, rather than physically expressed. Despite a lack of armed conflict to provide an outlet and a training ground for masculine conquest, Renaissance games allowed a culture predicated upon performance of gender roles to fight off effeminacy and continue to create men who could both conquer others and produce generations of future conquerors.

Setting the Scene: The Critical History of Conquestorial Gaming

Through an analysis of the plays that this thesis is centred around, the dissertation will aim to understand them in Renaissance terms, i.e. how these plays either attempted to fit with the dominant ideas and themes of the surrounding culture or acted as an opposing voice in some fashion. To this purpose, the dissertation is grounded in qualitative historical analysis, using secondary sources and contemporary documents from the same timeframe that are not normally given the status of literature, such as royal proclamations or popular pamphlets on gaming etc (Howard, "New Historicism" 31). Within these parameters of historical analysis,

this dissertation carries an influence of new historicism, concerning itself with, as Steven Mullaney describes it, “a decidedly more heteroglossic interpretation of the social, political and historical conditions of possibility for literary production, and of the recursive effects of literary production and dissemination upon those conditions” (19). Rather than seeing literary texts as “monologic, organically unified wholes” (Howard, “New Historicism” 32), this thesis will treat them as “bound up with collective social energy” (Greenblatt 56), providing insight into the social and cultural ideals in the midst of which these plays were written. In this dissertation, I will seek to understand the surrounding society of the time as a means by which to penetrate how these plays expressed and reflected their cultural ideals. Furthermore, by understanding the context surrounding these works, it will be possible to locate the thematic narrative within these plays that would have been understood by Renaissance audiences and the elements of the narrative that were the most resonant for them.

To the best of my knowledge the significance of games and gaming metaphor in English Renaissance drama has largely been ignored by scholarship in this field. Francois Laroque’s Shakespeare’s Festive World (1991) and Edward Berry’s Shakespeare and the Hunt (2001), in these respects, are essentially anomalies, in that they use the pastime(s) that they examine to provide context to their analyses of particular Shakespearean works, whether that be, respectively, the games of that era’s festive periods or an in-depth analysis of the importance of hunting within Renaissance culture. The thesis hopes to build on these two important works, to examine the importance of gaming as a whole, rather than a specific pastime, in a culture that predicated masculine conquest as a synonym for success.

Consequently, the majority of sources I have examined, both contemporary documents and secondary sources, have been confined to a single area: games, sexuality, masculinity etc, with secondary documents providing perspective to the first hand observation of contemporary sources. Apart from the play-texts, the majority of archival sources that deal

either exclusively or tangentially with gaming tend to do so in one of three ways. Firstly, there are proclamations or instructional works that either praise certain games as wholesome, moral pastimes [such as King James' Book of Sports (1618)], or provide guidelines to certain approved games, as Arthur Saul's and Damiano Odermiro's books on chess [The famous game of Chesse-play (1614) and Luddus Schacchiae (1597), respectively] do. Secondly are a number of cautionary pamphlets and moralistic tracts that see certain games as the paths to iniquity and sin [eg the anonymous (attributed to 'W.N., Gentleman') Barley-breake; or a Warning for Wantons (1607), or Lambertus Daneau's True and Christian Friendshippe . . . Together also with a right excellent invective of the same Author, against the wicked exercise of Diceplay and other Prophane Gaming (1586)]. Some works, like Roger Ascham's Toxophilus: the schole of shootinge (1545) encompass both areas, promoting a particular pastime (in this case, archery) as wholesome and honourable, providing instructions for its practise and contrasting it with supposedly 'idle' games of chance. There is a third category of contemporary documents that, although they do not discuss gaming as such, explicitly attempt to instruct in the 'proper' or healthful practise of masculinity, preaching amongst other points the importance of masculine behaviour to optimum physical and moral health and success. Examples of such texts include Helkiah Crooke's medical textbook Mikrokosmographia (1631), Henry Peacham's The Complete Gentleman (1622) and William Segar's text on the attainment of HONOR: Military, and Ciuill (1602).

Examining games and gaming in Medieval England requires analyses of materials in the areas of popular and rustic gaming of the period, as well as an examination of the height of community-shared gaming and play that was carnival. Crucial works include those that catalogue numerous games from the Middle Ages, such as Joseph Strutt and Ian F. Jobling, Keith L. Lansly and Glen G. Watkins, as well as those that argue the medieval carnival as a time for both collective degradation and communal cohesion, the massively influential work

of Mikhail Bakhtin, and those inspired by him (Michael D. Bristol, Victor Turner). My contribution to this field is to suggest that the importance of conquest and warrior training in various games, inspired partly by the dire necessity of frequent battle, was balanced by events such as carnival which reaffirmed the community as a community rather than individuals. The conception of game as predominantly focused upon conquest took root within the Renaissance.

The critical components to analysing the change within conceptions of games and gaming that evolved in the English Renaissance comprise both anthropological works and works upon specific games within the period. The conception of gaming, as argued by Johan Huizinga, Roger Callois, and Clifford Geertz, locates gaming as existing outside of reality, yet simultaneously reflecting the ideals that a community locates within itself. Edward Berry's work, as a rare example of a book that uses a particular Renaissance game as a pathway into theatre, argues that hunting held especially significant meaning for the early modern aristocracy as a symbol of their dominance over all, a training ground for the young warrior and as a pastime that assisted the young man in proving his masculinity. I intend to continue this line of thought by applying the seemingly dual purpose of gaming in the Renaissance to a number of other pastimes, besides hunting, arguing that the desperation to conquer was a theme that ran within the majority of Renaissance games, mirroring a culture anxious to prove itself as intrinsically masculine. Whether this was through war, sex, or games was of little difference.

In analysing the Renaissance linking of conquest, particularly sexual conquest, with masculinity, it is necessary to study both works on gender studies and identity within the Renaissance and, consequently, works upon early modern sexuality. Linda Woodbridge, Anthony Fletcher, Mark Brietenberg and Elisabeth A. Foyster, in particular, explain the conundrum that lay at the heart of Renaissance masculinity: that the effeminacy of a peaceful

age could only be countered by a reaffirming of patriarchal dominance, in which violence was an expected element. This is compounded by the line of argument that Renaissance society viewed masculinity as inconstant enough to be threatened by even contact with women, again requiring reaffirmation of dominance, expounded by Rose, Thomas Laqueur, Stephen Orgel and Bruce R. Smith. The thesis will further these ideas by suggesting that the Renaissance male could only protect himself against the effeminacy of lust by dominating a woman through sexual conquest. The male who was dominant over others in competitive games, could be therefore construed as the most successful at sexual conquest, since he was aggressive enough to dominate a woman and masculine enough not to be tainted by her lustful emotions. Games of conquest were not merely training for war, but training and signification for a variety of conquestorial endeavours, of which sex and procreation was a crucially important one. This is the all-encompassing cultural subtext that Edward Berry applies in his examination of hunting in the early modern era.

Berry's work on hunting, in particular, argues that this pastime is one of the most direct examples of a recreational activity that served this cultural narrative, regarding the connections between conquest, war, masculine aggression, and sex. Hunting was constructed as a representation of the masculine hierarchy and served as a reflection of the importance that such a hierarchy placed upon domination and conquest for their identity. The monarch was the head of society and, therefore, the ruler and owner of all the land. As owner of the land and, as a consequence, the people of that land, the King was likewise owner of the forests and, therefore, his ownership extended to those animals within them. Furthermore, as Berry writes, it could be argued that it was the monarch's duty to dominate such animals through such ritualized killing, as the Christian bible espoused that nature was to be controlled by man (22). Hunting, in the variety of forms it took, remained a continually favourite pastime of the English aristocracy, especially English royalty throughout the

centuries. Berry tells that the democrat Tom Paine commented in the eighteenth century that reading the history of kings would incline the average man “to suppose that government consisted of stag hunting”. Of the recorded rulers of England from the Norman Conquest to the late seventeenth century, only Edward IV and Queen Mary were not either regular or obsessive devotees of the hunt. Henry VIII hunted to such a degree that some complained that he appeared to be attempting to martyr himself to it (3). Elizabeth was still spending long hours on horseback in pursuit of beasts every second day at age 67 and delighted in viewing the hunt if she was not inclined to participate (Strutt 71). James pursued hunting to such a degree that he was felt to place affairs of state second to his mad passion (Vale 28-29). Furthermore, as indicated by the privileged positions of these avid hunters, while Renaissance hunters did eat what they killed, the practice of hunting was more about the mythology of the chase than a means to a dietary end. Such an approach also extended into conceptions of masculine sexuality within hunting, displaying that both the instinct to hunt and kill and the desire to seduce originated from the same impulse for aggressive conquest.

Even more than other areas relating to masculine conquest, the hunt was a continually popular metaphor for the masculine pursuit of sexual partners and love. The aggressive, combative terms that were continual reference for sex (break, entice, besiege, hit – all suggesting that the man was to succeed in forcing a woman in matters of love (Fletcher 93)) doubtless formed a part of what Berry informs us was “the most common use of the hunting metaphor [in matters of sex]”, that which “places the male in the role of hunter and the female in the role of prey” (32). Several artworks from the Medieval and Renaissance periods represented this conjunction of attempts at seduction while at the hunt. Often, it was the conventional image of the aristocratic hunter touching and fondling a common woman, “as if the poetic convention of the love-chase were so strong it became inevitably realised in the literal hunt” (33). Such an image suggests the even stronger connection that, much as the

hunter asserts his virility by proving himself master over an animal by dominating and owning the animal (expressed most vividly in the rituals of dissection), he equally asserts his virility by owning a woman, expressed in such an instance by reducing her physical body to an instrument for his pleasure. Hunting fed the instincts for conquest that fuelled both war and sex. Moreover, this pastime was simply the most overt example of such a conflation available. It was an inbuilt concept of conquest that carried such power rather than overt physical domination.

This dissertation will look to extend the work of Berry into examining games where the concept of conquest is inbuilt into the framework, rather than externalised through open violence, such as the parlour and cheating games to be studied. In this, I will attempt to further Berry's analysis of one single activity (the hunt) into a much broader consideration of the status of games in the Renaissance. The predominantly important focus of these games, this dissertation puts forward, is conquest as the prime motivator for the Renaissance male. The euphemisms that result from this desire for conquest, it will be argued, are primarily understood in regards to sexual conquest. However, they are also understandable when expressed in terms of military conquest, political victory, or any activity requiring a degree of ruthless ambition, aggression, strategic thinking or the potential for violence in order to succeed. The masculine need for conquest that had been previously satisfied by the prevalence of political volatility and warfare in medieval England was now channelled through the domination of others through games. This, in turn, required a change in the conception of gaming, from a grouping of activities pursued for primarily communal purposes to a signifier of aggressive masculine conquest. Games and gaming within theatre, therefore, were used to similarly suggest these modes of conquest and incorporate them into the action. However, far from merely mirroring cultural ideas, theatre functioned as a site where participants could potentially critique both concept and method of conveyance. In the

plays that will be examined, while one may conquer another, the aftermath of the battle may be even more profound.

The thesis will proceed in four chapters, with each chapter examining a particular aspect of the connection between gaming and conquest. In a sense, the plays will be examined in a roughly chronological manner, beginning with one of the first extant examples of domestic tragedy in Arden of Faversham in 1587, in the midst of Elizabethan England, to Thomas Middleton's biggest success in A Game at Chess (1624), a lone year away from the death of James I. After the anonymous Arden is used to unpack the needs of the modern Elizabethan man as regards leaving the genuine battle-field behind to deal with the metaphorised war-ground of wealth creation and backgammon in Chapter One, the two critical late tragedies of Middleton, Women Beware Women (1621) and The Changeling (1622) will be used in Chapter Two to analyse the perils of attempting sexual dominance in worlds where no-one has the masculine wherewithal to either succeed sexually or to protect the world they live in from the destructive iniquities of the inhabitants' devotion to games such as chess, tip-cat or barley-break. The Shakespearean plays that will occupy Chapter Three, Love's Labour's Lost (1598) and Antony and Cleopatra (1607), will contrast by studying worlds where the potential iniquities can still be counteracted by those masculine and successful enough to emerge victorious from the "Fast-and-Loose" games being played to keep these societies together, while Middleton's A Game at Chess uses chess as the means by which the world can be saved from pernicious evils, since only the pure of heart can be truly successful at the game. From victory for personal gain to the personal and empire-wide risks accompanying conquest and sexual desire to the future of the world as was known, the games and the plays provide all permeations of conquest and the quest for it in Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

The first chapter will analyse the conceptions of gaming in both Medieval and Renaissance English culture in regards to the transitional shifts happening between these periods. Critical to this examination will be a focus on the desire for communal uniformity within the Medieval agrarian community, epitomised best in the rustic carnival. Aristocratic preoccupations with competitive gaming will be explained as martial preparation and training, crucial in an age of prevalent warfare. By comparison, the gaming culture of the English Renaissance was continually pre-occupied with conquest, both in language and in practice. This study will encompass, firstly, the individualistic impact of nascent capitalism upon society and, secondly, the relative stability of Elizabeth's reign. As this stability decreased the prevalence of warfare, it was compensated for by a rise in competitive gaming. I will argue that the connotations of violent conquest within Renaissance gaming were intended and normalised as the male's province for demonstrating aggression and strength as the masculine ideal shifted from the imperial warrior to the refined courtier and the urban householder. To this end, the anonymous play Arden of Faversham uses backgammon as the climactic moment for the murder of the titular character to take place as a comment upon the surrogate "battle-ground" of the back-gammon board as the appropriate location for the new vistas of combat awaiting the newly urban and socially mobile gentleman. Mosby, the main instigator of this crime, seeks Arden's wealth and to rule the dead man's household rather than the glory of an international military campaign, but the method of achieving his more modest ends is still based in conquest above all else. Even his plan to marry Arden's wife after the murder is rooted more in a plot to marry into the money and wealth that will be left to Alice than a lust for sexual conquest. Inevitably, however, Mosby finds himself a victim of the gaming strategy of backgammon itself, where neither skill or luck can be foregone. Regardless of Mosby's original intentions in using backgammon for his ends, he has little

choice in continuing to do so: he must play the game out to the last gasp and accept the consequences.

Chapter 2 will further and deepen this examination of gaming by extending the analysis of conquest into a focus upon the dangers that hetero-normative sexual congress posed for the masculine character. Essential part of Renaissance manhood though it may have been, engendering a family could just as easily prove the site of the male's intrinsic undoing, with only his sense of aggressive conquest to guard his gender superiority. The discussion will focus upon the coded differences between the masculine and feminine gender, especially the supposedly immutable mental characteristics, with the male's tendency towards constancy and vigour contrasted with the female's physical and moral weakness, particularly in her susceptibility to the indecency of lustful indulgence. A man who succumbed to that effeminate lust was culpable in allowing feminine debasement to infuse his naturally superior being, thus ultimately undermining his masculine resolve. In light of this, further interrogation will be made of the requirement of aggressive conquest in order to maintain the illusion that one's dominance and power was intrinsic to the masculine character, with particular emphasis placed upon the verbal and physical connections between competitive gaming and sexual congress. Thomas Middleton's Women Beware Women serves as an example of both these connections and the consequences awaiting those who do not control their own desires for sensual luxury. The seduction of Bianca is a glorified rape, carried out in the balcony during an onstage game of chess that mirrors and foreshadows the act of sexual aggression through its own language of surrogate battle that will result in the pawn being "taken", consensually or not. Yet the lustful and emotional excesses that the majority of the characters (including the Ward) cannot stem within themselves are what finally cause the massed tragedy in the final scene. Even the Duke, architect though he is of the aforementioned chess game, cannot be saved from the consequences of his own desires. By

comparison, Middleton and Rowley's The Changeling uses the game of barley-break as the key motivator and impetus for the action onstage to reveal a couple who, despite their own lustful excesses, are clearly more adept at the subterfuge and dissemblance required for the human game than the other characters in the main plot. If De Flores lusts furiously for Beatrice-Joanna, he is also the man of action who conquers his enemies and ends the play as the sole man who has conquered Beatrice-Joanna sexually even as he has destroyed the kingdom in the process. The influence of sex in these plays increases the difficulty in finding any definitive winner, since even at one's moment of ultimate conquest, they may be sowing the seeds for their own eventual destruction in the process. This difficulty is only increased in the plays to be examined in subsequent chapters, where both the motivations of the characters and the action of the plays are involved more deeply with the games themselves.

It is in Chapter 3 that not only is a single game (the tavern cheating game, "Fast-and-Loose") examined for its influence in two separate plays, but the action of each play is inextricably woven into this same pastime. In both Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost and Antony and Cleopatra, the action and terminology of "Fast-and-Loose" are connected to the framework to such a degree that each play represents a human variation on the game, where the battle to keep one's opponent/s "fast" is matched only by efforts to keep oneself "loose", providing examples of gaming terminology being critically necessary to understanding conceptions of masculinity and sexuality in the performance. Examination of Love's Labour's Lost will take into account the importance of the game in informing the viewer on the attempts of the men in the play to pursue sexual conquest, while equally explaining the subsequent misadventure of their efforts. Their lack of masculine ability thus explains their inability to succeed at such attempts to remain "loose", thus leaving themselves by the play's end unable to even secure a successful conclusion to the play, leaving any proper conclusion to happen beyond the play's end. By comparison, Antony and Cleopatra uses fast-and-loose

to critique Antony's lack of masculinity, evidenced by both his failure to effectively dominate the women in his life and in his being dominated by the greater masculine figure of Caesar. Such analysis, in this case, will place greater emphasis upon the gypsy origins of the game, drawing upon both the cultural narrative concerning the gypsies (so called because they were believed to be Egyptian in origin) as well as the somewhat contradictory public attitude towards them. By this, it will be explained both how Antony's complete devotion to Cleopatra could emasculate him to the point where even his suicide attempt leaves him awkwardly "fast" to a life he wishes to leave, as well as the sway of popular feeling in 1607 that would have interpreted Cleopatra's final escape from the power of Octavius Caesar as more ambiguous than merely the end of a thieving gypsy queen. From this point, it will remain to analyse a play in which such links are not only established in the most overt of fashions, but where the stakes are the highest possible over which anyone could compete.

The argument culminates in Chapter 4, where Thomas Middleton's 1624 work A Game at Chess is examined as the most direct and comprehensive example of a play in which not only is a chess game used to link together the overtly aggressive conquest of physical battle and the implicitly violent domination of masculine seduction, but this pastime is explicitly used as the most appropriate setting for a contest in which the fate of the known world will be decided. Written and presented in the joyous aftermath of the proposed match between Prince Charles and Spanish Infanta crumbling to nothing, the play is openly in alliance with public opinion at the time, using anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish sentiment to create a fictionalised political situation where the battle is unambiguously between the righteous honesty of the White House as a surrogate for England and the scheming dissemblance of the Black House, standing in for the perfidious Spaniards. The history between Protestant England and Catholic Spain in the 16th century and the Hispanophobia that suffused English attitudes will both be examined, with particular attention paid to how

this was manifested into the omnipresent concern that Spain would look to institute the “Universal Catholic Monarchy” at the first sign of weakness from Protestant countries. By analysing the complex and sometimes contradictory political machinations by both countries in the lead-up to the Spanish match, it will be seen why it was necessary for Charles and Buckingham to represent themselves as the heroes of a supposed conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism. The exalted status of chess at this time, as a noble game of pure skill directly influenced by the strategies of the battlefield, will then be discussed, including the importance of the term “checkmate by discovery” both as the end result and as a form of play that requires the calm planning and clear focus of the genuinely masculine mind in order to achieve conquest. These conquests (or “takings”) of various pieces throughout the play, whether it be military or religious or sexual, should ideally tend to the same purpose of one House’s overall victory. That members of the Black House seem destined to fail from the hints dropped in the Induction will be argued as a result of the difference between the joyful scheming and dissemblance of the Black House, particularly the Black Knight, and the focused honesty and purity of the White House, especially the White Knight and the White Duke as they induce the Black House to betray their genuine motives on route to a spectacular victory. Having turned from the true path of Protestantism, the Black House are perforce wrong and consequently not masculine enough to defeat their opponents, who only compromise enough for a final victory and can therefore lay claim to an undiminished power of manhood that virtually ensures that they will win. The victors, in this sense, are the ones who have kept their eye on the main objective of victory, as opposed to the defeated who became entranced by the playing of the game itself, particularly Gondomar. In the game of chess that comprises the play and will decide whether the world will fall under the spell of Catholicism on the path to inevitable destruction, evil cannot prevail for the simple reason that it is not masculine enough for victory. The importance of masculinity for

one's own success is as critical in the matter of universal stability as it is for the maintenance of a household.

This thesis aims to both provide insight into the meaning of gaming in the culture of early modern England, and to contribute a greater understanding and new readings of the plays under consideration. In particular, it will be argued that games and gaming of the period are intrinsic to our understanding of Renaissance drama in early modern terms, specifically the influence of conquest on games in a society that valorised a man's ability to dominate his gaming opponent as indistinguishable from the capacity to aggressively enforce his masculinity in real-life. No matter the various preoccupations of the Renaissance male, whether war-mongering or capitalistic or sexual, the aptitude for conquest was inextricably linked with all of them. It was a means by which that aggressive masculinity, crucial to the well-being of a culture that viewed both a dominant hierarchical patriarchy and its own public demonstrations of power as the only option to ensure its own glorious existence, could be cultivated and displayed. This was a culture that viewed one male's domination of a single household as an intrinsic part of a nation, a small kingdom that must be maintained for the well-being of the country at large. The first play to be examined, therefore, will be Arden of Faversham, where a game of backgammon becomes a location where enemies may be vanquished in a battle for the wealth of a household.

Chapter One

Gaming the Masculine Void: Staging Conquest for the 'New Man' in

Arden of Faversham (c1587)

The 24th of May 1618 saw the publication of The Book of Sports by his Majesty King James I, a revision of his Declaration of Sports from the year before. In 1617, James had desired to settle a dispute in the county of Lancashire where the Puritans, in opposition to both tradition and the gentry, favoured a ban on all forms of Sunday games. According to the preface of the 1633 edition that was published by Charles I, after “[James’] Return from *Scotland*, and comming thro *Lancashire*, found that his Subjects were debarr’d from Lawful Recreations upon *Sundays* after Evening Prayers ended; and upon Holy Days” (A3^r). Denouncing the “Papists and Puritanes” who he felt had “maliciously traduced and calumniated those Our just and honourable proceedings” (B1^r), the King’s pleasure was to side with tradition and throw his support behind making a remarkably vast array of pastimes lawful Sabbath-day recreation for his subjects in that county. The only change between the 1617 declaration and the publication in 1618 was a single paragraph that applied that same edict to all England, for “He farther saw, that His loyal Subjects, in all other Parts of His Kingdome, did suffer in the same kinde” (A3^v). His pleasure extended to instructing the priests that:

And for our good Peoples Lawful Recreation, our Pleasure likewise is, That after the End of Divine Service our good People be not disturbed, letted or discouraged from any Lawful Recreation, such as Dancing, either Men or Women, Archerie for Men, Leaping, Vaulting, or any other such harmless Recreation, nor from having of May-Games, Whitsun-Ales, and Morris Dances, and the setting up of May Poles and other Sports therewith used, so as the same be had in due and convenient time without impediment or Neglect of

Divine Service: And that the Women shall have leave to carry Rushes to the Church for the Decoring of it, according to their old Custom. (B3^v-B4^f)

It was a desire to avoid political conflict rather than mainstream opposition to gaming practices that led to the King eventually abandoning these objectives. Originally ordering that all of the English Clergy read the Declaration from the pulpit, the Puritan outrage to this (including several priests who refused this command) eventually led to the King dropping the matter. It took the ascension of Charles, much less willing to tolerate religious opposition than his father, for James' tract to be reissued in 1633 and made a fixture of the church service. In regards to culture and societal mores, however, James' writings fit a tradition of games and gamesmanship in England. If the conception of a King publishing an entire text devoted to supporting the rights of his subjects to recreation on Sunday may suggest pure frivolity, James saw free access to games as one of the methods by which he could maintain both the domestic and international strength of his kingdom. Taking best advantage of populist feeling whenever possible, the royal opinion gave voice to concerns that the banning of Sunday gaming "cannot but breed a great Discontentment in our Peoples hearts" (B2^f). The implication of such discontentment was, of course, that of rebellion against the social order. By both depriving people of such recreations and forcing these disgruntled individuals to find other means of entertainment, it was feared that "[this prohibition] sets up filthy Tiplings and Drunkenness, and breeds a number of idle and discontented Speeches in their Ale-Houses". Nor was the threat of an idle population limited to domestic tensions. Such "idle and discontented speech", it was feared, would flourish at the expense of "the common and meaner Sort of People . . . using such Exercises as may make their Bodies more able for War, when we, or our Successors shall have Occasion to use them" (B2^v). While the suggestion that specific games could be used as a preparation for war was not new for the time, the King stated his rationale as plain fact, neither qualifying nor defending it.

Furthermore, in linking the downfall of both domestic and foreign affairs to an absence of games and game-play, James appears to have at least been willing to consider the possibility that the same qualities imparted by sports that prepared one for battle were of equal service in day-to-day life. What does remain unspoken is the assumption that, aside from the “women carrying rushes into church”, the game-player would be male. Intentional or not, such discrimination was not incongruous for it went to reaffirm both what it meant to embody the masculinity of the period and how gaming could be used to that purpose.

Games and gaming in Renaissance England, I suggest, were used as a location for the contemporary male to both attain and display that aptitude for aggressive conquest that was essential to the make-up of masculinity in Renaissance society, serving as a surrogate for military action. In the midst of a patriarchal hierarchy that relied upon visual spectacle to promote its aura of immutability, a man required opportunities to openly display the myth of his own enduring quality. The most acceptable arena for such an exhibition was the battlefield, a frequently occurring venue in the Middle Ages with its almost constant political and military turmoil, and an avenue without parallel for the male eager to prove himself an inseparable part of a system that praised one’s aptitude for aggressive dominance of an opposition. By comparison, the relative peace and stability of the reigns of Elizabeth and James reduced the need for constant military preparedness, as well as playing home to a newly urban culture that was to be more renowned for the sophisticated gentility of the courtier than it was to the bellicose ferocity of the imperial warrior. This was a shift that occurred in a society that still considered aggressive masculinity as a symbol of the nation’s health as well as a necessity for social advancement. The games and gaming of this period, therefore, became an increasingly critical way for the male to both become proficient in the practice of masculine conquest and to be seen by his peers as such. In the absence of continual warfare, the Renaissance male was obligated to locate other means by which to

display a manly image. The answer for this new man was to take advantage of the new opportunities for social mobility and financial success in order to distinguish oneself as the master in more domestic situations, such as modelling oneself as a successful property owner and authoritative family patriarch. Even if this new male had fewer opportunities to head an armed battalion, he could still become master of a household and an owner of material goods, such as land. He could additionally serve notice as to his masculinity through the practice of competitive games, whether or not the method of play required express physical violence. Whether physical or mental, the player was obligated to aim for the conquest of any opponents.

While James' Book of Sports may have played somewhat coy on such connections, other popular manifestations were more explicit in not only highlighting the result of these shifts, but in linking the symbolic conquest within popular gaming to acts of violent dominance. In particular, the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre offered a unique opportunity to not only stage examples of overt and aggressive conquest but to imply, through language and/or overt display, that contemporary games could both inform the play-structure and become manifestations of such a battle. The anonymous play Arden of Faversham provides an especially prescient example of such, using the game of backgammon both as a climax in which the titular character is murdered and as a format by which the action will proceed. One of the first extant domestic tragedies of the sixteenth century, its murder plot will decide the fate of a household owner whose enemies would capture and dominate his position. In a culture where the ability for social ascension was dependent upon a capacity for dominance, those that covet Arden's wealth and status must forcibly defeat him and establish themselves as victorious. The skill of the protagonists however will nevertheless remain subservient to chance, analogous to the dice-play that the player at backgammon cannot negate, regardless of his skill. In this context, to "take" Arden at backgammon is one of the methods for one

born with few advantages to assertively move his way up in wealth and social rank. Moreover, the staging of Arden's murder in the midst of a backgammon game being played on stage provides an especially germane example of these societal changes and conflicts, as well as highlighting the violence (symbolic or actual) still required to establish one's identity as a man.

Arden of Faversham, as one of the first in a genre of "domestic homiletic tragedy", according to M. L. Wine (lvii), provides an apt illustration of these shifts, both in its reinterpretation of the real-life crime upon which the play is based and in the subsequent symbolism of the backgammon game as the location for Mosby's conquest of Arden's life. The actual case from 1551, according to the account written by the chronicler Raphael Holinshed (regarded by Wine as the main source for the play (xxxviii-xxxix)) concerned a wealthy landowner by the name of Arden who was notable for being one of the 'new men' of the Tudor age, taking advantage of the opportunities for social mobility to overcome a relatively base heritage. His wife Alice had secretly given her heart to a man by the name of another new gentleman named Mosby, a tailor by trade, eventually conspiring with Mosby at her husband's death so as to gain his fortune and provide the way clear for them to marry. Gathering a group of servants and miscreants together to complete this task, they began to strategise and plan the ways and means of murder. Committing the deed, however, proved more difficult than anticipated at first as Arden avoided the first number of attempts by the purest of luck and circumstance, finally coming to pass only when he was ambushed at a game of backgammon, "tables" in sixteenth century parlance, in his counting-room. Playing against Mosby, who conspired to bring his comrades in, he was held down with a towel and bludgeoned with the fourteen-pound pressing iron that Mosby carried around his waist. Their triumph was short-lived however, as the plot was quickly discovered and many of the conspirators, including Mosby and Alice, were arrested and sentenced to execution. The

play's anonymous author, self-consciously apologising in the epilogue for "this naked tragedy" (Epilogue. 14), may have made few changes to the original story, but those changes both simplify the tragedy slightly and serve to heighten a sense of class conflict.

The changes made by the playwright to Holinshed's account serve to not only set up Arden as a more explicitly innocent dupe, but to position him as a character of more established means that Mosby yearns to overcome in his own quest for legitimacy. According to a contemporary account (1551) by John Stow who was Holinshed's main source for his account (Beer 258), Arden was largely cognisant of the developing relationship between Alice and Mosby but, desiring favour from Lord North (Mosby's patron), decided to appease Mosby. For that reason, "he winked at that shamefull disorder and bothe parmytted and also invited hym very often to be in his house" (qtd. in Kinney 719). By comparison, the play displays an Arden who dreads the accusation of cuckoldry and must be assured of Alice's fidelity before he can be coerced into showing any warmth towards Mosby. Arden's coldness and suspicion of Mosby is additionally exacerbated by Arden's sneering at Mosby over his working past. If the Arden of the play is dependent upon the Duke of Somerset for his lands and wealth, he can at least make claim to being "by birth a gentleman of blood" (i.36). By contrast, Mosby's background is no longer just that of a tailor: he is a 'botcher', a mender of old clothes, thus making him a target for class-based taunts from Arden as well as Franklin who wonders why any "nobleman [would] count'nance such a peasant" (i.31). Both elements fuel Mosby's desire to gain Arden's property, even if by marriage to Alice. By streamlining the story and emphasising Mosby's determination to rise to Arden's current position, the author posits Mosby as a 'new man' who is determined to gain the material wealth of one of the more successful of his number by any means necessary, in a world where such accoutrements of masculine success dictated one's acceptance as a man. The backgammon game at which Arden dies thus becomes the ground upon which Mosby can practice that

dominance inherent to his character. His defeat of Arden on the metaphorical battleground of the backgammon board is necessary to prove his masculinity, both in his ability to conquer Arden and in his ability to fashion himself as the head of a household. In times past, an individual like Mosby may have been a soldier fighting under the auspices of the state for King, Country and fortune. In the socially unstable and somewhat more domesticated atmosphere of Elizabethan England, Mosby and those like him, while they have more potential for social climbing, were forced to try other means to position themselves as gentlemen as the societal paradigm shifted. Games were one of the means by which such a void could be filled.

For an examination of how early modern games were bound up with such shifts, an analysis of both how these shifts influenced the society of the time and the effect of these changes upon the performance of masculinity will be imperative. In light of the increasing urbanisation of Renaissance England and the nascent capitalism of that period, it will be examined how the agrarian Medieval community with its focus on stability compared and contrasted to Elizabethan society's greater emphasis on an individualistic ethos, including the capacity for social mobility. From here, discussion upon Renaissance conceptions of masculinity, with especial attention paid to the need to display a capacity for aggressive conquest to substantiate one's manly credentials, will be coupled and informed by an examination of the importance played by warfare throughout both periods as a site where the male could actively display and be recognised as active in the perpetuation of the accepted hierarchy. Recognition of how critical this need was in the culture will subsequently be extended into analysing how decreasing opportunities for the average man to engage in warfare in the relative peace of the Renaissance left an opening to be filled by competitive games and gaming, to function as a new battleground for masculine prowess. Arden of Faversham's use of backgammon will thus be interrogated in relation to this surrounding

culture, showing not only a play that conforms to the combination of skill and luck required to succeed at the 'table', but an individual in Mosby whose masculine success in the world depends upon his abilities in one of the culture's symbolic war-zones. Without tasting the fruits of conquest, his existence will become bereft of meaning.

Conquest and its Pre-eminence in Early Modern Masculinity and Warfare

While the historical killing of a man named Arden in a scheme hatched by his wife Alice and her secret lover Mosby is on record as occurring in 1551, the play itself was a product of the late 1580s and the latter stages of Elizabeth's reign, an age in which the order of society was in a particularly volatile state of flux, shifting gradually yet remorselessly from hubs of communal agriculturalism to a largely urbanised population with greater ideas of individualism. The impact of such a change was a society that offered more opportunities for social advancement regardless of birth station, yet taught its members that such freedom may decimate them. Such progress was believed to need a counter-balance in the maintenance of a hierarchy that supposedly guarded against dystopia by its strength, dominance and immutability. The early modern conception of masculinity was a particular bulwark of such a system, yet also a site of especial anxiety, focused as it was on explicit displays of a similar strength and stability to mirror the supposed immutability and virility of a patriarchal hierarchy. Of all the ways in which aggressive conquest could be displayed, the role of warfare in both proving the virility of the nation and protecting its territory made it particularly suitable. In a world that was becoming ever-more urbanised and (due to the relatively pacifistic reigns of Elizabeth and James) less war-like, new avenues were therefore required for those men whose sense of manhood depended on such displays of conquest and the prevailing notions of dominance.

It is practically impossible to place a definitive date as the juncture for the end of the Middle Ages and the start of the English Renaissance. Various attempts by historians have been made, including the end of the War of the Roses in 1485 that gained Henry VII the throne; and the ascension of the incredibly powerful Henry VIII in 1509. It is more accurate, however, to discuss the shift between Medieval and Renaissance England as a gradual transition, where the country slowly succumbed to urbanisation and mercantile capitalism. Richard Britnell has suggested that the tendency to regard the period between those dates as either mere epilogue to the Middle Ages, or as a prologue to early Modern England has “much more to do with the way in which historians specialize than with any intrinsic characteristics of these particular years” (1). By the start of the Norman Conquest in 1066, urban communities were already a feature of England, with populations that could number beyond 5 000 and markets that provided an avenue for artisans and traders to sell their product directly to their own townships (Miller and Hatcher 1995, 10). Yet, if urbanisation was already a feature of England as early as 1066, Susan Reynolds reminds the reader that “we should not assume that chivalric stories or feudal values were alien to them”. If a large number of people lived and worked in town, they had also “spent their childhood or, if they were apprenticed young, at least their early childhood in the country”, and “still shared many of the values of the countryside” (89). Although London had by 1250 developed a local administration strong enough to gain a degree of independence from feudal lords (90), the majority of townspeople who occupied land still paid tenure to the King who might at times share these profits with the earl of the shire (93). If Elizabeth’s reign was considerably closer to conceptions of the Renaissance than the Middle Ages, medieval influences were still in existence, with agrarian and village communities continuing in small part even after her death. The communal workings that Victor Turner argued were unique to “tribal and agrarian

societies” were still in place, for the most part, well into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as were the social strictures from which they derived their unity and their strength.

Turner defined this group as collectively concerned with social order and community, considering that while such a community may engage in satire or “disorder”, the prime function of such chaos was to display the impermanence of chaos and therefore reinforce the societal status quo (From Ritual to Theatre 40-41). Rather than conceiving of leisure as the opposite of work, as a ‘free-time’ for the individual, work and play were much more intertwined and ritual became an intrinsic part of communal involvement (35-36). Even in the urban communities of 1471-1529, according to Britnell, the hierarchical standards of medieval community and the sense of a public good that was required to be maintained by all “received expression in the language of social degree, in the details of constitutional forms and in the style of public ritual” (199). Participation in the community, including public ritual, was important for learning one’s place in that community and was a means by which the community member was taught to accept the prevailing social order as a natural, indeed “sacred” thing (199, 201). The Feast of Corpus Christi (the body of Christ), traditionally held on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday, was dedicated to openly expressing and glorifying in this inequality. The urban community’s politically recognized figures were honoured and compared, symbolically, with the body of Christ, with other urban groups taking subservient roles, with potential fines to any group that did not fulfil its role. Even though rivalries between groups of different status could happen, they were rare. The concept of the common good, rather than code for egalitarianism amongst community members, was devoted to hierarchy.

This belief in the importance of communal solidarity affected other holy days and public holidays in much the same manner as all were expected to involve themselves in festivities. If, as Turner states, the prime function of chaotic behaviour is to show its

destructive quality, then “even the normal orderly, meek and ‘law-abiding’ people would be *obliged* to be disorderly in key rituals, regardless of their temperament and character” (43). There could be up to 115 days in a year, planned or not, where an individual did not work. Feast-days were times when few farmers dared to defy community expectations in harvesting crops, rather than celebrating. Both men and women would dance, play games such as blind man’s bluff, drink and socialise (Mate 281). Whilst Sundays were given over to worship, even the churchyard could become an arena in which to celebrate. Parish ales, which were commonly held on the feast days of saints, would be held on church-grounds and usually with the consent of the parish priest. Alongside the implied drinking would be socialising, dancing and wrestling, all of which were railed against by the bishops as unseemly (Clopper 65-66). In 1451, the Bishop Lacy was adamant that there be a stop to “laughter, shouting, immoderate mirth, indecent and indiscreet dances . . . proper to the market-place or the *theatrum* . . . where men are accustomed to come to spectacles, not in sacred places” (67). Appropriate or not, according to Clopper, such a blanket dismissal ignored the practical realities faced by the local parish priest:

If we move down the ecclesiastical hierarchy and from the regular to the secular clergy, we find that despite canon law, synodal legislation, and reformist directives, clerical authorities were least successful in maintaining decorum and controlling *ludi* at the parish level . . . The resistance to reform at this level no doubt had a variety of reasons: ales were fun and were used widely as a means to raise funds for church ornaments and repairs. I also suspect the parish priest, who helped promote the ales by calling the banns, was less inclined to separate himself from lay *spectacular* than the higher or monastic clergy because he was very much a part of the village or parish, perhaps even from one of the local families, and certainly economically bound

to the fortunes of the community. If he lived in a rural parish, he had his glebe land to farm, thus making him both a parson and a plowman. (121)

Even more than the Parish ale, carnival was a time where, through the process of sanctioned chaos, communal values were reinforced. According to Bakhtin, the medieval carnival drew its power from its universality: “it was the drama of the great generic body of the people, and for this generic body birth and death are not an absolute beginning and end but merely elements of continuous growth and renewal” (88). While the potential utopia of this view is challenged by Michael Bristol, he does not deny the involvement of the community en masse. In asserting that carnival could play host to a victimisation of those with the lowest possibility of legal recourse (prostitutes, actors etc) just as easily as the participants could air their grievances against corrupt authority, he lends weight to the notion of community being based upon hierarchy and station in life (Bristol 69-70). Those members of society with wealth were as likely to celebrate parts of carnival in private dwellings as in public. Even in the appearance of disorder, “order” and boundaries of oligarchic hierarchy were given pre-eminence. Bristol places his discussion of carnival in the context of the Renaissance, showing that the community aspects of carnival, if changed slightly by the time of Elizabethan England, were still looked upon as, if not a representation of society, then as a model to emulate. As stated above, the shift from England’s medieval era to the Renaissance was gradual rather than sudden. However, certain aspects can be identified as important to leading to this shift. Urbanisation began to be centred upon and around London, predominantly. Trade and mercantile endeavour became increasingly more central to the common culture. Moreover, the shift away from a sense of ‘communal good’ to a greater focus upon the individual became more apparent in the English culture of the sixteenth century, particularly by the reign of Elizabeth, a factor that caused a certain amount of concern to authorities.

London, while it had experienced remarkable growth already, entrenched itself even further in its importance to trade and emerging industrialisation. If England, as a country, had been growing increasingly more urbanised throughout the Middle Ages, with greater numbers of townships being created and greater numbers of people being attracted to them, then the Renaissance marks a time when London quickly became England's trading and population centre. Alan Dyer writes that, despite the plateau or surge of people in other areas, London's population expanded dramatically, with approximately 40000 in 1377 that grew to a rough estimate of 70000 in 1500. By 1550, approximately 120000 people crowded the streets of London, with this figure increasing threefold to 375000 by 1650. The economy of England's largest city by the time of Elizabeth's reign was equally strong and evermore in favour of capitalistic endeavour and enterprise. It had already established itself as the country's greatest port and as the greatest economic centre of the South-east, the wealthiest of the provinces (Dyer 25). D. C. Coleman estimates that by the mid-sixteenth century, London accounted for approximately 90% of exports of woollen cloth, themselves making up around 75-80% of England's entire export market (51). The vast majority of this cloth went through London (Carus-Wilson 255), with the bulk of these exports under the control of the regulated company 'The London Company of Merchant Adventurers', incorporated as 'The Merchant Adventurers' in 1564 (Wagner 200-201). At their insistence, the Crown designated as inferior those English merchants operating from other ports, requiring that they pay an entry fee and accept inferior status before they could trade legally (201).

Increasingly, English exploration and discovery from the fifteenth century onwards provided increasing numbers of markets to trade with, including the Middle East, Asia and Russia (Wagner 114), providing ever more positions for employment and opportunities for entrepreneurial advantage. The creation of a 'funnel' between London and Antwerp (the latter as the commercial port through which large amounts of English cloth were exported to

the Netherlands), according to Coleman, “emphasized the existing tendency for southern and particularly south-eastern England to be the richer and more active area of the economy, sucking in people, goods, and trade” (51). A good deal of this migration was an indirect result of the cloth industry, as it began to take over in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In an effort to capitalise on this new export, landowners, instead of renting their land out to numerous tenant farmers for tilling, were evicting tenants in greater numbers and enclosing their land for grazing sheep (Heard 23). With few prospects outside of vagrancy, it is overwhelmingly likely that a large number of these tenant farmers migrated to London to find work. As Jean Howard informs, “Agricultural workers displaced from the land by enclosures; retainers who found themselves cut adrift from their positions in great households . . . gave up ‘house-keeping’, and moved to London” (44). London, for better or worse, was an increasingly populated, urbanised centre in which the old feudal system was being slowly set aside in favour of a focus upon the capitalism described above and in favour of Renaissance humanism. Rather than a predominant focus upon communal good, the culture began to centre more often on individual good and, at least in theory, upon the new forces of humanism that would inform not simply conceptions of the self, but conceptions of the masculine self.

The idea (however limited its practical scope in reality) that an individual, particularly a man, in Renaissance society could stand and rise in social importance as a result of his own efforts rather than his station at birth, was a direct result of the conception of Humanism. Humanism was originally an intellectual movement arising from a desire for the revival of classical antiquity (Caspari 1), a term to describe the new educational style that placed emphasis upon ‘classic’ works from ancient Greece and Rome, to be read in the authors’ original texts (Nauert 9-10). The pre-eminence of original texts was an attempt to locate the author’s genuine meaning by taking into account the original context of their words in order

to study the moral and intellectual values that such texts embodied (18, 14-15). The early authors, therefore, “re-emerged as real human beings . . . [responding to] the historical milieu in which [they] wrote” (18-19). First arising in Renaissance Italy in the fourteenth century, it began to seep into intellectual quarters in England by the mid-to-late fifteenth century (125). Henry VIII’s education was in the humanist tradition and he further instructed that his children, including Elizabeth, should have the same (Wagner 162). Amongst the skills that such an education taught and promoted was that of rhetorical argument for wise and moral leadership, considering it an inordinately practical tool for any aspiring leader of men to both embody and lay claim to embodying (Nauert 15). Equally important were “classic” civic values, teaching that involvement in public affairs and service to the state were worthwhile activities to undertake. However, rather than an idea of the population as a generic whole that should conform to public standards, humanism taught the importance of individual selfhood, dignity, and logical reasoning. Man’s nature was derived from God who, by assigning a man no fixed place in the ‘hierarchy of creation’, gave the individual the ‘freedom’ to, as emphasised by Nauert, make his own destiny:

Instead of a nature, man – and only man, not even the angels – received freedom [from God], the freedom to choose his own place in the hierarchy and to choose for himself any created nature. The man who makes the right choice will cultivate the spiritual part of his being and become spiritual. Of course the man who makes an unwise choice, who follows his baser instinct, will become like a beast. The true ‘nature’ of man is to have no nature that rigidly determines what he becomes. By his own free choice, man creates himself.

(75-76)

By doing so, he is best able to serve both himself and his state. A man could fashion himself as an individual and prove his worth to society by those actions that elevated him above others. He could in effect subvert hierarchy in order to further entrench it.

Combined with the nascent capitalism that was entrenching itself further and further into the culture by the early 1500s as the way for the newly fashioned man to make his living, Renaissance humanism influenced many in English society to regard themselves more as autonomous individuals rather than part of a community. Yet, Caspari argues, the English humanists had no interest in changing the hierarchy of society:

They largely accepted what they found and infused their ideas into the society that surrounded them. Humanistic ideas thus became a powerful element in the predominant sixteenth-century belief in a social hierarchy which it was the duty of the ruler and of the aristocracy to maintain and in which every man had his place, high or low. (6-7)

Still, the changes in society were significant, if sometimes subtle:

It could no longer be maintained with the same strength of conviction as before that a man belonged to that place in the hierarchy to which he had been born, that his station was fixed . . . The system had been more rigid in the countryside, and it was there that its softening became evident during the sixteenth century, and posed problems for the defenders of the aristocratic order . . . The partial commercialization of land, as manifested in the enclosure movement – so bitterly denounced by Thomas More in 1516 – indicated the weakening of the ties that held medieval society together and, by impairing the old ‘organic’ relationship of the social groups, itself contributed to their greater fluidity. (7-8)

Humanist ideas were being injected into England at a time when the newly capitalist culture was assisting social mobility: even if only to a degree that if a man had a sense of business and the desire to accumulate and exploit any land or possessions he had, he “had a fine chance of improving his lot, of becoming not a “knight” – although he might still receive that title – but a “gentleman” (9). The respect that such individuals still paid to the current hierarchy directly influenced the way that such social aspiration was measured.

Even with such new opportunities, the man seeking to improve his social standing had to climb and perpetuate a hierarchy as entrenched in competitive masculinity as it was in previous generations. The male who sought to ascend such a structure should ideally therefore both embody and perpetuate the same manly ideals, as authors such as Henry Peacham dictated. Peacham, a Master of Arts at Trinity College, published in 1622 the instructional guide *The Compleat Gentleman: Fashioning himself absolute in the most necessary commendable qualities concerning Minde or Bodies that may be required in a Noble Gentleman* in which, amongst other advice, he centred the capacity for conquest and the recognition of those who could conquer as critical. The “generous, and best Natures” of the noble, he reminds the reader, “are won by commendation”. To such upstanding individuals, “conquest and shame are a thousand tortures” (23). In likewise fashion, devotion to capitalistic endeavours was an applicable way for the aspiring man to entrench himself as a ‘gentleman’. Furthermore, for the aspiring male, such open display of a capacity for conquest was equally effective as ensuring that he would be recognised as indisputably masculine, a promoter of English hierarchy in all aspects of life.

The male’s ability to both embody and perform ‘true’ masculinity in both Medieval and Renaissance England was critical for reasons that, whether public or private originally, could bring into question the national character. England was, itself, perceived in the public consciousness as a masculine culture that represented the epitome of self-sustaining purity

and health in its hierarchy (Fletcher 83). Any perceived negation in masculinity was ultimately detrimental to the national character and, therefore, the nation itself (Howard and Rackin 44). The contradiction is that such genuine masculinity, which was supposedly inherent to the ideal male, required overt display through acts of manliness. The man who neglected such actions risked not simply stagnation in his masculinity, but regression into effeminacy (Foyster 31). Masculinity, therefore, required continual opportunities for its performance to safeguard against feminine influence. In particular, the Elizabethan and Jacobean male required avenues by which he could achieve conquest via defeating or maintaining control over another party, so as to establish an aptitude for aggressive masculinity. Traditionally masculine arenas (such as war, politics and leadership) and the practice of those qualities connected with the ideal Renaissance man (strength, aggression, craft, etc.), were a way for the male to actively conquer in those traditionally masculine areas and to safeguard his essence in situations that may compromise it. The relative lack of war in Elizabethan England combined with the rise of the increasingly urban courtier in perception as the new masculine model required a new avenue for masculine qualities to be expressed and conquest to be achieved. Even apart from international defence of the homeland, it was on such conquests that the country's peace and prosperity relied.

Masculinity in Elizabethan England was one of the perpetual safeguards for societal stability, both in its international and its private applications of implicitly aggressive 'conquest' and dominance. Most explicitly, warfare was the masculine site of conquest that provided freedom from and glory over international foes. However, the same intrinsic masculinity was moreover responsible for the maintenance of the hierarchy that was figured as both proper and natural. The male was the head of the family unit and, regardless of the love and affection that he may have felt for those underneath him, was the ruler over them, to be obeyed and served. The Elizabethan Homilie on Obedience proclaimed that, for society's

health, “Every degree of person in their vocation calling and office, hath appointed to them their duty and order: some are in high degree, some in low, some kings and princes, some inferiours and subjects . . .” (Certain Sermons 68). Michael Bristol further reinforces that, “Conflict and social dissonance arise from marginal or subordinated levels of creation that refuse to remain in naturally prescribed positions, but the pretense can never be sustained” (61). The superior position of the male in society was one of these ‘naturally prescribed positions’. According to Thomas Smith, nature had “forged eche part to his office . . . the man stern, strong, bold, adventurous . . . the woman weak, fearful, fair” (qtd. in Fletcher 61-62). It was his masculinity, and the qualities implicit within that masculinity, that gave him both the right to demand such respect and the ability to enforce it.

The male, according to physicians, moral commentators and scholars was defined by the heat that his body produced. It was the heat that emerged with the two humours that the male was meant to exemplify above others, blood and choler (Smith 15). Galenic medicine stipulated that the body was made up of four humours: blood; yellow bile; black bile; and phlegm. These humours were responsible for the four basic personality types that individuals fell into. While a balance between the humours was ideal, the specific individual would necessarily tend more towards one type. These personalities were that of the sanguine (typified by blood), the choleric (yellow bile), the melancholic (black bile) and the phlegmatic individual (13). The predominance of blood in the sanguine person was responsible for warmth, displayed in their tendency towards alertness and good health, while the choleric being’s excess of yellow bile prompted testiness, irritability and implacability. The phlegmatic individual’s mucus foundation emphasised the slowness of their mental efforts, their physical actions and their tendencies towards sloth, while the melancholic’s black bile typified, by its bitterness, a sour outlook on life and a general misanthropy which led inevitably to the body following the malady of the mind. Ideally typified by blood and

choler, the male would thus be both strong enough (physically and mentally) and personally aggressive enough to delight in displaying his capacity for conquest. The “heat” of the masculine body was perceived as the biochemical evidence that his ideal function was to dominate over lesser beings, which consequently extended to an innate superiority over them. The Dutch physician and author Levinus Lemnius, after considering the differences between the two sexes, wrote that the main difference between them was the “vehement heat” of the male which “maketh men stout of courage, fierce, testy, crafty, subtle, industrious, politic, of which sort of men . . . in their entrails and inward parts have been found rough and hairy” (F3^f-F3^v). Helkiah Crooke in Mikrokosmographia emphasised both the commonsense of this belief and also intimated the proper purpose of the male’s superiority: “his body was made to endure labour and travail, as also that his mind should be stout and invincible to undergo dangers, the only hearing whereof will drive a woman as we say out of her little wits” (274). The male was considered stronger, braver and more aggressive in his actions, and more rational and logical in his thought processes. The facility and desire for aggressive conquest was the method by which a male attained the prize of masculinity, but it was also the way by which he could defend his masculinity.

The Expression of Aggressive Conquest from Medieval to Renaissance England

The word ‘conquest’ is one that had a myriad of contexts in which it was considered appropriate in both Medieval and Renaissance England. Yet one factor remained constant: the main definition, whether public or private, was that of a victory over another entity, who or which would then become subject to the whim of the conqueror. It applies most obviously to war: “the action of gaining by force of arms” (OED 1), but it can equally apply to “the gaining or captivating of the favour, affections, or hand of another” (1.c.) and to “the personal acquisition of real property otherwise than by inheritance” (6.a.). Conquest suggested a victor

who now reigned over and, in some sense, possessed his competitors (whether they be human or material) due to his greater ability and his aggressive demeanour. Even when the context is not openly violent, the subtext of dominant aggression was a continual feature. As such, it was a particularly appropriate ground for the representation and display of those pointedly aggressive qualities that represented masculinity in early modern England. He who was adept at conquest proved himself (excepting the strictures of class and race) to be a genuine male. Dominating others was an excellent way to display the stoutness of courage, fierceness, testiness, craft, subtlety, industry, political ability that comprised a proper male. Being the recipient of such cherished gifts, it was imperative for the male to exercise them in the pursuit of opportunities for aggressive conquest to ensure that both his own masculinity and the hierarchical society in which he existed remained intact. Such conquest oriented men were more likely to achieve and maintain hierarchical status, both in public life (succeeding in business enterprise) and in domesticity (heading and ruling the household). Even as the images of the truly masculine male shifted in the cultural transition from Medieval to Renaissance England, one imperative constant for all of them was the ability for a male to achieve conquest. Whether implicit or explicit, without such an aptitude, the image of masculinity was incomplete. For a society in Medieval and Renaissance England, chief amongst such activities was warfare. Conquest could be represented literally as a means by which to ensure one's gender identity within a powerful and stable society.

The battlefield was idealised as the predominant site for overt displays of violent conquest to take place, particularly with the preponderance of international and civil conflict in Medieval England. First and foremost, such exertions could be for a country's prestige, gaining extra territories, more people, greater wealth and a stronger base of power. Richard Benjamin writes of the desire to increase the size of one's homeland: "There were really only two effective ways of doing this in the Middle Ages. One was to kill your neighbours and

take their land; the other was to marry their daughters in the hope that you or your children might inherit their lands” (67). While marriage was a frequent tool, war was equally frequent for both offensive and defensive purposes. It was also, as mentioned, a site where the male’s capacity for violent conquest could be displayed and exploited to the full. The decrease in continual warfare, as the warmongering of England’s Middle Ages gave way to economically driven attempts for peace in the Renaissance, thus threatened to deprive the male of an avenue where he could both utilise his masculinity for the purpose of conquest and utilise the pursuit of conquest to practise what it meant to be a man in Renaissance England. Chivalry, as both a metaphorical and a practical concept, was less an impediment to conquest than a rudder by which conquest could be directed for the greatest benefit of both state and individual. By fighting, a man could increase the longevity and strength of his own nation and, in the process, prove his own prowess at manly endeavours, maintaining his own masculine essence and thus display his suitability to exist within the reach of the powerful society that he had a hand in creating. Exulted and viewed by many as the main undertaking to present oneself as an idealised man, the possibility that warfare would become less prevalent was a concern that came to life in Elizabeth’s England.

Regardless of the importance of the battlefield to conceptions of English masculinity throughout the Renaissance, the prevalence of warfare decreased substantially, especially as Elizabeth desired a foreign policy that was reactive as opposed to proactive. Warfare, civil and international, was a near continuous feature of Medieval England. Richard I, while campaigning to Israel in the Third Crusade, conquered Cyprus as an adjunct to his main purpose. Edward I made his name by defeating the rebel barons that had defeated his father Henry III, restoring the throne to its former glory. Henry V gained renown for uniting England and France as one through decades of war, only for it to be squandered by Henry VI who steadily lost French territories throughout his reign. Indeed, it was the defeat of Richard

III by Henry Tudor that began the Tudor age. In contrast to the bloodshed of its beginnings however, Tudor England was relatively peaceful and stable. Henry gave a somewhat free hand to his nobles to rule their own regions, provided that they showed him loyalty and paid taxes. His son Henry VIII displayed his power by consolidating his authority and defying the Church, easily crushing rebellions in the north of England. Mary I's bloody persecution of Protestants was something of an aberration by this time in England. Elizabeth's reign was much more sedate by contrast, preferring to use diplomacy and compromise and using military action as a defensive tactic rather than for means of conquest (Loades 151). The Queen's desire, and that of her council, in light of how financially draining such campaigns could be even if they resulted in success, was that England should, to the best of its ability, avoid open conflict with nations and only take up military causes that had a better than average potential to meet the cost of expenditure (219). The requirements of keeping control over the ever volatile Scots and Irish could easily entail open battle, just as the income generated via the trade routes of the Netherlands made their costs of battle with Spain over their defence worthwhile (238-239; Wagner 207-209). The Armada, in particular, was one of Elizabeth's great successes, dealing a devastating blow to the seemingly invincible nation of Spain and boosting both the morale of England and its independence. Apart from such occasions, however, war was relatively rare in Elizabeth's England. Such a change, while economically sound and one of the reasons for England's relatively powerful position in Europe by the 1590s and turn of the seventeenth century, was a change from a previous focus by rulers upon continual expansionist warfare as the marker of a great nation's prosperity and of the greatness of its citizens, particularly the men. For those desirous of conquest, the danger and risk involved were more the features of a cherished task than a burden, allowing the male experience in a form of conquest that was regarded as being both of national importance and important for an individual moral 'good'.

Warfare in Medieval England was a dangerous undertaking, yet it was glorified as courageous, chivalrous and, to an extent, holy. It also included a greater degree of the population than even Roman times. Although warfare was one of the cornerstones of Roman society, by the early-to-mid centuries AD, the armies where every free born Roman man served as defender of the empire had been compartmentalized and specialised even further to hold primarily those in families of soldiers, who formed a separate social group from the rest of the populace (Damon 275). Both before and after the Norman Conquest, however, Anglo-Saxon society (including Germanic cultures) drew armies from every part of society. By the time of Richard's crusades, this included priests and bishops who prayed for victory rather than peace (282). While few men actively benefited financially from fighting, rewards for notable service could be substantial. As far back as 1120, when the feudal model would indicate militaristic service as an obligation to the King, Henry I paid generous wages to his knights for their loyalty and dedication to him during campaigns in Normandy (Prestwich 113). In cases such as the conquest of Normandy under Henry V, numerous military commanders and others received valuable land and material wealth (101). More than financial compensation or reward, however, the belief of warfare as both inherently chivalric and as a means by which to enforce oneself as properly masculine was continually pervasive.

Chivalry, at its heart, was an ethos that the military elites of Western Europe felt was a way to both increase their own standing and keep their honour in the course of battle. The chivalric soldier was, ideally, a member of the cavalry who, if he had not achieved knighthood already, was aspiring to such status. He was to display loyalty to his lord and his kin, good judgement in military counsel, a capacity for diplomacy, piety, courage, calmness and a knowledge of correct courtly behaviour (Strickland 99). This was not a sole invention of Medieval England. Rather, as Malcolm Vale argues, "there can be no doubt that the ideal qualities of chivalry – honour, loyalty, courage, generosity – have fulfilled a fundamental

human need, felt especially amongst warrior elites whose social function has been to fight” (qtd. in Strickland 24). To display chivalric behaviour was to identify oneself as an honourable man, worthy of both his standing in the community and of the trust placed within him, contributing to a reputation that could substantially help both himself and his male heirs. To fail in chivalric behaviour was to risk one’s honour, both personal and in standing in the community and pass that shame down through familial lines. The most usual venue for the individual to either serve or disgrace his honour was the battlefield, where disgrace could incur more suffering than many wounds.

Elements of chivalry such as generosity and piety, while not to be neglected by the aspiring knight, were ultimately subservient to the importance of military prowess. A knight’s reputation lay in his capacity for not only loyalty to his lord and king, but the military bravery he could show in the process and the victories that this would lead to. According to Geoffrey de Charny, the French knight and author, “he who achieves more is the more worthy” (qtd. in Strickland 99), an ethos essential to the legends of rulers as much as to those of knights. Richard I was renowned for not only strategic brilliance, but for the acts of daring and feats of ability that he undertook in his various military exploits, giving him a much prized reputation for fearlessness. When rumours were circulating that he had lost his warrior edge, Richard saw fit to attach several decapitated Turkish heads to his bridle to emphasise his martial achievement and thus reclaim his reputation. Such concern over legacy and reputation was not confined to kings alone. At Mansourah in 1250, despite he and his company being outnumbered and surrounded by Turkish soldiers, and having just lost his nose (a wound from which he would later die), a French soldier named Erard would only abandon the battle to fetch help nearby once, as Strickland informs, he had been assured that “neither I nor my heirs will incur reproach for it” (123). It becomes understandable just how necessary such acts were for those with reputations to defend, when the costs of any equivocation in military

matters are taken into account. Reputation and the future of a familial line could rest on a single moment. When Henry of Essex, believing Henry II to have been slain in an expedition into Wales in 1157, lowered the royal standard and took flight, the consequences for such a momentary lapse in judgement were disastrous. While the King commuted a death sentence for treason, he confiscated Essex's inheritance and ordered him to enter a monastery for the remainder of his days (122-123). Penalties in the same spirit for military failure or perceived desertion continued to a degree through Elizabethan England. Hardly the most egregious of his faults, the failures of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, in Ireland in 1598 were undoubtedly part of the reason that he found his stock sinking at Elizabeth's court. As can be shown from such examples, while chivalry extended to aspects of mercy for enemies and matters of proper conduct at court, it was maintained primarily through military valour and victory.

An important part of the reputation that the male could earn through military success, as intimated by the previous examples, was the public image of encompassing supposedly 'genuine' masculinity. Huizinga's explanation for the code of chivalry in Western Europe, and its equivalent in earlier empires states that "warlike aristocracies need an ideal form of manly perfection" (Waning 66). The chivalric warrior in the English Middle Ages was perceived as a particularly prescient example of ideal masculinity. A cavalry officer, either aspiring to or having already attained knighthood, was a figure to be respected in hierarchical terms at the very least. His behaviour indicated an example of both courtly manners and Christian piety to be admired by all. Most of all, however, he was a fearsome and courageous soldier who would both play a part in assisting his country to conquer others and achieve victory, and conquest over his own enemies. Even if the killing of knights in battle was to be avoided if unnecessary, the domination of an opponent was crucial for the sake of honour. In his posthumous and somewhat hagiographic biography, Historie de Guillaume le Marechal,

William Marshall, the Earl of Pembroke, is depicted rallying the royal army to defend England against the invading forces of France's Prince Louis. In accordance with his fearsome military reputation, he appeals to the soldier's sense of honour and reputation. Additionally, he connects it to a concept of masculinity where to fail in these military matters is to fail oneself as a man:

Hear ye, true and loyal knights! At a time when, to preserve our reputation, to defend ourselves, our wives, our children, our friends and our land, to win great honour, for the peace of the Holy Church which our enemies have broken, to be pardoned for our sins, we support the burden of arms, beware that there is amongst you no coward! . . . We should be soft indeed if we did not take vengeance upon those who have come from France to rob us of our heritage. They desire our destruction. For God's sake, let us make a great effort, for, if we are victorious, we shall have increased our glory and defended our freedom and that of our lineage . . . (qtd. in Strickland 98)

To fail in military conquest, in this sense, is to fail one's reputation and, as a result, to represent oneself as lacking in masculinity. He who is unable to "support the burden of arms", and consequently unable to protect either "glory, freedom or lineage", may therefore be termed "cowardly" and "soft". Conversely, the way for the soldier to avoid such damage to reputation is to take vengeance upon those who would attempt to dominate him, so he can instead dominate them. Such an attitude towards the importance of war to both noble reputation and masculine prowess was present not only in the times of Medieval England, but throughout Elizabethan and Jacobean England. According to Peacham, casting back to the classical period for information, it was the valiant soldier who "measureth out of the whole cloath his Honour with his sword" (5) who embodied nobility for the greater good of all concerned. Glorious actions were required to prove not only Honour, but that masculinity

figured as essential for the continuation of society in early modern England. In comparison to the rhetoric on the “valiant soldier”, Arden of Faverham is concerned at its heart with two men, Arden and Mosby, who are defined by their adherence to a world without such military responsibilities or the opportunities to be potentially derived from such endeavours. Nor are they as established socially as the gentlemen of the past: Arden may be a gentleman by blood, but he remains subservient to his patron who has furnished him with his lands and wealth, whereas Mosby was born a botcher, reminding the audience of this by carrying his botching iron on his belt. Yet, even in a world that has replaced a thirst for armed conquest with a priority upon property and wealth, the importance of stable gender identity had not dimmed. Masculinity, along with the patriarchy that exemplified it, was critical to prevent the hierarchy from disintegrating. In the relative absence of opportunities for men to define themselves as warriors on the battle-field, both alternative avenues apart from the decreasing chances for militaristic engagement and new models of manliness that took these circumstances into account were required.

Without warfare, the Renaissance man was obligated to find a model of acceptable masculinity to which to aspire. In Shakespeare and Masculinity, Bruce Smith compares the five ideal types of men that he believes “offer themselves for emulation in Shakespeare’s scripts” (44). They are the ‘chivalrous knight’ who combines warrior instincts with courtly manners and piety, represented by Richard II’s Henry Bolingbroke (45); the ‘herculean hero’ in his physically dominating yet arrogant splendour, such as the titular character of Coriolanus (48); the ‘humanist man of moderation’ that Julius Caesar’s Brutus exemplifies in his combining of masculine traits with a degree of equanimity in temperament; the ‘merchant prince’ that Masters Page and Ford take after in Merry Wives of Windsor (52); and the ‘saucy jack’ whose sharpness of wit and habit of mockery matches him, at least in part, to the majority of Shakespeare’s clowns (55). What these five masculine ideals hold in common,

apart from reliance upon other men to define them, is the very ideal nature of these types (60, 63). It is not necessarily expected that a man will be able to live up to such standards, but it is expected that such standards will inspire men to improve themselves to gain some semblance of such qualities.

What does become apparent, however, is that in all these supposedly ideal types, there is an expectation that the ability to dominate and achieve conquest on some level is the least that should be achieved. Even within the innate domesticity of home ownership, as portrayed in Arden of Faversham, the battles for conquest and masculine authority continue. If the chivalrous knight, according to the Count Ludovic in Castiglione's Book of the Courtier, "who is modest, speaking little and boasting little" is that "much more pleasing and . . . praised as a gentleman", then, as Castiglione teaches, it is taken for granted that his profession is that of arms (33). More specifically, "I wish him to exercise (his arms) with vigor; and let him be known among the others as bold, energetic . . . the more our Courtier excels in this art, the more he will merit praise" (24). While flawed in his relationship with the society he inhabits, the redemption of the herculean hero is in his overwhelming physical prowess in the field of battle (48). The humanist man of moderation, according to the humanist scholar Roger Ascham in The Schoolmaster as quoted by Smith, was much like the successful ship master "having tide and wind at will" (F2^r), using intellect and consideration to guide himself to virtuous success, much like the best captains of war (Smith 50). If the merchant prince's main characteristics were more modest than others (an honourable vocation and a family that showcased goodness, honesty and lawfulness), this was more characteristic of his modernity and his adaptability to the specific demands of Elizabethan culture than any definitive lack in masculine prowess. In particular, writes Robert Cleaver in his 1598 text A Godly Form of Household Government, such individuals are expected to use their strength and authority to govern and rule a household properly, as well as relying upon

subtlety and craft: “when a man spieth an opportunity for honest gain and commodity, he is to follow that while the time serveth” (E6^f). It is Mosby’s subtlety and craft, if not his honesty, that will be tested when he attempts to exert his dominance over both Arden and, perforce, the household he seeks. Even the “saucy jack”, if he is not a physically imposing specimen, achieves victory over others through a battle of wits, showing craft, guile and using words as armour (Smith 54-55). The main purpose of such masculine ideals, anyway, is not to breed perfect examples of them, but to inspire men to improve themselves. In translating Plutarch’s Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans Compared Together (1579), according to Smith, Thomas North hoped that this book, addressed to “the common sort of your subjects” (ij) would inspire them to “perform for the queen deeds of service in war and honour in peace” (Smith 63). Acts of dominance for the male were expected and the most acceptable form for them to take was through acts of conquest over those beneath them. As will be seen, Arden of Faversham displays Mosby considering that his fortune will be made once he can carry forth his plan to murder Arden and steal his property, but such proceedings would equally prove his masculine ability for ‘conquest’. The male who owned a household could lay claim to masculinity not simply from the act of dominance required to gain that household, but from the authority needed to maintain it. Even if a particular act is unacceptable, the failure is in the particulars of context, not in the act of conquest itself. That remains immutable.

The increasing focus upon games and gaming for these purposes was one of the ways in which Renaissance society attempted to maintain a discourse of dominance. These games were not simply analogised to military campaigns: they became methods for men to enforce their desire for conquest at whichever masculine skill they chose to embody. In the game of backgammon that marks the climax of Arden of Faversham, Arden and Mosby metaphorically face each other on the battleground of the game board, but they fight not for the right to rule a nation, but for the right to ‘rule’ Arden’s estate. Games and gaming became

a surrogate by which men could both achieve conquest and display their abilities at dominating their opponents. As the focus upon the agrarian communities and small towns of Medieval England began to evolve into the predominantly urban individualism of Tudor England (especially by the time of Elizabeth), the games similarly changed from being a source for solidifying the community to being a source for individual advancement and achievement.

Playing at War: Rehearsing Masculinity through Gaming

Even in Medieval England, gaming was considered an important training implement in preparing men for warfare. In particular, specific games were prized for their abilities in replicating the skills and dominance required for battle. Many of these games were explicitly concerned with rewarding ability at handling military weapons, privileging strength, speed and aggression and the desire to conquer an opponent. Nor were these games completely cut off from the lower classes who, on some occasions, would practise their own variations. Archery, in a special exception, was encouraged and institutionalised as a sport for all. Yet, it was predominantly the upper classes that were able to spend significant portions of their leisure time involved in such pastimes. Such recreation was significantly more limited for the vast majority of the populace who had neither the time nor the money for such all-encompassing involvement. The majority of their pastimes were for days of festivity, civic and religious holidays, during which the focus was upon the community, rather than the individual. The majority of pastimes, as per the purpose of the occasion, followed suit.

John Marshall Carter writes that “When the eleventh-century lord was not fighting – which was rare – he was preparing for the fight through sport”, going on to suggest an inseparable link between sporting life and warfare: “the former was a preparation for the latter, however unconscious” (33). In contrast to this statement, certain games were an

explicitly conscious preparation. The medieval tournament, in particular, was an explicit training ground for the knight to gain experience in handling weapons, harnessing the required skill and aggression to gain victory and building the desire for dominance over an opponent. The traditional joust was a game requiring money for equipment, strength and accuracy with a lance, and a large degree of raw nerve. Along a course of approximately one hundred metres, horsemen bearing lances were required to charge at each other aiming for the head and upper part of the body (McClelland 81). Both participants would be encased in heavy armour with the lances anywhere between 3.5 to 5 metres long, with the purpose of generating a force capable of unseating the opposition (81-82). Another combat-focused game for the tournament was that of 'barriers'. According to Jobling, Lansley and Watkins, "two tried to force a barrier across the lists using axes, swords and maces as weapons . . . after fixing their shields and tents, they declared their intention to defend it against all comers" (16-17). If the church at first outlawed tournaments because of the possibility of injury to the participants, they came to express a tolerance for these diversions because of the instrumental part they played in training the Crusaders (Carter, Sports and Pastimes 39). Richard I legalized the tournament in England in 1194 and, by 1316, Pope John XXII officially re-allowed the tournament as he observed that there was a great difficulty in obtaining trained soldiers to continue fighting the Crusades (39-40).

The church had certainly not overestimated the degree to which such recreational combat could result in severe injury for participants. John McClelland notes that the sport of the joust claimed victims not only from the potential of being fatally struck but from heat exhaustion, heart attacks and suffocation (84). While knocking the opponent from his horse was the original objective, as time went on, it changed to a system by which hits were awarded points depending upon their force and accuracy. Even with precautions, it was common for participants to avert their eyes or heads reflexively just before the point of

impact, resulting in numerous misses even amongst experienced practitioners (85). Given its difficulty and the pure force and speed combined with the aggressive intent, it should not be surprising that, “To be killed in a joust was not common, but it was not unexpected either” (85). Neither were the aristocracy immune to such risk. Henry II of France died at a joust in 1559, after being run through the eye with a lance (86). Geoffrey Plantagenet, the fourth son of Henry II of England, lost his life as a result of tournament injuries in 1186 (84). Yet, even if the prospect of losing a monarch hung over jousting, the traditional sport itself continued to be lauded, due to both “the image of virility it projected and the difficulty in mastering its techniques” (91). Because these occasions were the equivalent of a genuine battle, tournaments were events where the ambitious could quite conceivably entrench his heroism as much through such competitions as he could through military feats, maybe even moreso due to the number of spectators present (89). Peasants and the lower classes, despite their lack of access to the trappings and equipment of nobility, were more than willing to improvise their own versions of tournament games for pleasure even if the focus, as described by Richard Strutt, was noticeably less warlike: “The youths, being divided into opposite companies encountered one another; in one place they fled and others pursued without being able to overtake them; in another place one of the bands overtook and overturned the other” (99:28). If such a game was based more upon participation and a community-driven effort rather than conquest, other pastimes that prioritised a focused and dominant individual conquering his peers were allowed and in fact encouraged as the preferred pastimes for all classes.

One such sport that was specifically encouraged for all men in all classes was archery, viewed not only as a useful national tool, it was promoted as a cure for idle hands. Regular practice in every stratum of society was seen as both a defence measure and a means of social control. Roger Ascham’s book Toxophilus: The Schole of Shootynge (1545) is dedicated to

the praise of archery, lauding it as a pastime suitable for all classes of men. Princes should be instructed in archery in their youth for both the benefit of exercise and the honest effort of the pastime: “labour prepareth the body to hardnesse, the minde to couragiousnesse, sufferieng neither the one to be marde with tendernesse, nor yet the other to be hurte by idlenesse” (7). For other classes of people, however, the main advantage of shooting is that it will discourage idleness and, as a consequence, reduce the clamour for less desirable games:

But to be shorte, the best medicine for all sortes of men both high and lowe, yonge and oulde, to put awaye suche unlawfull games (games of chance, such as dice and cards) is by the contrarye, lykewyse as all physicions do alowe in physike. So let youthe in steade of suche [unlawful] games . . . use suche pastimes as stand by labour: upon the daye light, in open syght of men, havinge suche an ende as is come to by coning, rather than by craftte: and so shulde vertue encrease, and vice decaye . . . And thus we se Philologe, that shoting is not onely the moost holesome exercise for the bodye, the moost honest pastime for the mynde, and that for all sortes of men: But also it is a moost redy gaming, wherth many tymes: it is sore troubled and ill at ease. (F2^v)

The key attribute of archery that Ascham considered the most responsible for its positive effect was the philosophy of conquest within the practice. Those who might be otherwise drawn into the lawlessness of games of chance could be saved from such ignominy by the opposite effect of “comparison and honeste contention” (44A). In Book 2 of *Toxophilos*, Ascham is clear: to strike the target [“hyt the marke”] is “the cheyfe poynte in shootynge, that everye manne laboureth to come to” (A3^r). Book 1 states clearly not only that this desire is the key to the worthiness of archery, but that the psychology of a man is such that it is what will keep him to this straight and honest path: “Where is comparison, there is victorie: where is victorie, there is pleasure: And where is pleasure, no man careth what labour or payne he

taketh, because of the prayse, and pleasure, that he shal have, in doynge better than other men” (44A). Ascham further connects such a desire to that of war, since “The strengthe of war lyeth in the souldier”, who, if at his best, “maye boldlie with all courage, hope to overthrow his enemy” (25). Rather than merely a useful supplement to a pastime that was prudent for the maintenance of national security, the desire for conquest was an integral part of what made archery a morally good activity. Such a love of conquest was equally encouraged with as much enthusiasm in other sports. Apart from archery, the most popular of aristocratic pastimes throughout both Medieval and Renaissance England for both the dominance that the participant could express over nature merely through its practice, and its renown as a training vehicle for the warrior, was that of hunting.

Hunting, in the variety of forms it took, was constructed as a representation of the masculine hierarchy and served as a reflection of the importance that the aristocracy placed upon domination and conquest for their identity. Particularly for English royalty, as mentioned in the introduction, participation in hunting was an act symbolic of power over their dominion, both land and the people of that land. Furthermore, it could be argued that it was the monarch’s duty to dominate such animals through such ritualized killing, as the Christian bible espoused that nature was to be controlled by man (Berry 22). Especially for the stag hunt, the ritual was one that encompassed dominance over the animal in the sight of others, such as the chase itself:

During the early period of the running of the chase, all the retainers and attendants of the King would assemble and surround the forest, so as to drive back the deer that might attempt to escape during the time that the hunters and dogs were arriving and preparing for the hunt. At a given signal all the stag hounds were released and the hunters, mounted on horses, took off in pursuit of the hounds. When a stage was sighted, a horn sounded and the hunt was on.

The hunt could last for hours, and usually by the time the deer was cornered it was dying from sheer exhaustion. Quite often, with the beast in this state, the leading lady of the party was given the privilege of slitting its throat. (Jobling et al 34)

Yet, if the hunt was designed to display the dominance of man over nature, it was due in part to the effectiveness of hunting in training participants for war. Hunting, as essayed by numerous manuals of the time, required from the participants a will to travel long distances, withstand pain, fatigue, hunger and the elements, and undergo hours of continual exercise to harden the body (22-23). As Berry explains, “the youth who can achieve mastery over a deer promises to be a warrior” (24). By the sixteenth century, alongside the concern already discussed that men were being effeminised by the current popular culture, a number of those who preached of hunting’s capacity for both proving and promoting masculinity accompanied such praise with a nostalgia for past methods of hunting that supposedly required a greater degree of masculinity. Thomas Elyot believed that the benefits of hunting lay in endurance of extreme hardships, fasting until the opportunity to eat what one had killed and the use of weapons such as the javelin which, for Elyot, was the most warlike of all weapons. Even if James I did not go to such lengths, he was dismissive of the use of guns as a “theevish forme of hunting”, regarding his preferred method as a more “martiall” pastime (on horseback with a sword, with dogs who tracked by scent) (T4^v-U1^r). Furthermore, the degree of masculinity in the hunt was contingent upon the magnificence and danger of the animal being chased. While the fallow deer was the most common and often the most prized for its meat, it was the hart, a six-year old male red deer (the variety most prized for its strength and stamina), which carried the greatest symbolic potency in Elizabethan society, for “The hart was a potentially dangerous fighter, physically magnificent, and sexually powerful. It was, in short, the wild counterpart to a warrior prince” (Berry 76). The other animal protected for

hunting was the wild boar, an animal viewed in both Medieval and Renaissance England as the most dangerous proposition to hunt, capable according to some contemporary writers of killing either man or hound with one blow. As a result, hunting the boar was the supreme test of manhood, in full of accord with the values espoused by those concerned for the masculinity of the men of England: physically demanding, dangerous and requiring a great degree of skill and physical stamina (45-47). If, as previously stated, the youth who can dominate a deer shows promise to being a warrior, then the youth who could kill either hart or boar was even more likely to achieve such masculine status.

The period of the English Renaissance saw the average male gradually increase his devotion to pastimes that, despite their brutal subtexts, were less directly connected, in either word or deed, to warfare. While these overtly violent activities would never disappear, a developing urban culture without a threat of constant warfare became more likely to embrace the activities that were present around them, sedentary and otherwise. Even those activities that had been considered part of any military man's informal training were undergoing mutations in accordance with fashion and a new philosophy on life. If hunting never decreased in popularity, it certainly changed in practice. In comparison to a character like Henry VIII, who took pride in staging impromptu hunts as the fancy struck him in his travels around the country, the hunt for later Tudor and Stuart rulers was just as focused upon the pageantry and formality of the occasion, to where the ceremony and the express ritual of the hunt was just as important as the action itself (Berry 19; Moss 78). The tournament, while continuing into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, offended many purists of the traditional model's unforgiving fury with straw and mulch to break the fall of unsuccessful jousts and, increasingly, the overtly combative joust itself being forgone in favour of "Tilting at the Ring" (with a metal ring being the target of the lance rather than an opponent's body) (Moss 80). Furthermore, the public enthusiasm of the tournament itself in the

Renaissance tended to rise and fall depending upon the particular monarch. They became important showcases on certain occasions for Elizabeth and James, despite his own aversion for the dangers of the crowds, had two sons who often participated: apart from that, tournaments were never as popular or as widely practiced as they had once been (Young 35 & 38). Even public sword-fighting changed from the medieval sword-and-buckler (two-edged broadsword and rounded small shield) that was a direct influence of the battle-field to the Continental practice of fencing with the lightweight rapier, to the consternation of George Silver who, in his Paradoxes of Defense (1599), implored Englishmen to leave behind “these Italianate weake, fantasticall and most divillish and imperfect fights”, and instead aim, “by exercising their owne ancient weapons to be restored or atchieve unto their naturall and most manly and victorious fight againe” (B1^r). Given a respite from a continual immediacy of battle, the early Modern male preferred that his recreation be more removed from the physical exhaustion of military training, even if the idea of game-oriented conquest was still crucial, a dynamic that applied as well to the increased prevalence of board and parlour games.

Increasingly, throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James, much in the same way as the martial exercises of the Middle Ages were being contemporised and fashioned for a newly urban population, the average male was becoming more devoted to the sedentary and morally conflicted nature of board-games and gambling. If taverns and ale-houses were not unknown before the advent of Elizabeth, the more disreputable of them certainly became renowned throughout her reign and beyond as perversely fashionable dwellings in which gentlemen and commonfolk alike could get a game of cards or dice, forming a part of the other entertainments that the city had to offer, such as the brothels, bear-baiting rings, cockfights and the theatre. Even as James abhorred the “filthy tiplings” of the tavern in his Book of Sports, his Basilikon Doron gave cautious approval to the prince who wished to

partake in card and table play, judging that, “when yee haue no other thing a-doe . . . & are weary of reading . . . then, I say, may ye lawfully play at the carts or tables” (U2^v). Perhaps this was recognition that those devoted to such pastimes came from all walks of life, including the aristocracy. The immensely shrewd and far-sighted Robert Cecil, councillor to Elizabeth, incurred repeated heavy losses at cards himself over the 1602-1603 festive period, less an admission of moral weakness it would seem than a simple statement as to the popularity of such a pastime amongst all classes (Vale 135). The various Games at Tables (of which only back-gammon is still in regular contemporary practice), after the last ban on them was lifted by Elizabeth in the 1570s, were no less widespread. Apart from the main games explained by Charles Cotton in The Compleat Gamester (Back-gammon, Irish and Tick-tack, of which only back-gammon was first mentioned later than 1600 [OED]), Cotton also made dismissive reference of “several foolish pastimes to be plaid in the Tables which are ridiculous to treat of, whereof I shall only mention these Three” (116), those three variations being Doublets, Sice-Ace and Ketch-Dolt. Foolish or not, that he was so adamant picking “only” speaks to the interest that an increasingly urbanised population held for such activities. Chess was equally popular in all strata of English society, from the commoners who took up an increasingly popular pastime, all the way to Elizabeth (Yalom 223-224). Even if James considered it “over fonde, because it is overwise & Philisophick a folly” (Basilikon Doron U2^v), and Robert Burton was equally concerned in The Anatomy of Melancholy (1621) that “it is a game too troublesome for some men’s brains, too full of anxiety” (81), they were obviously in the minority of public opinion. If Arthur Saul’s decision to term his 1614 manual The Famous Game of Chesse-Play was partly marketing strategy, it would still make little sense unless chess was well-known enough for his readers to appreciate the wit of the title. Much as the physical games and military training exercises of the Middle Ages were having their overt violence moderated to appeal to a new generation for whom the ever-

present tension of international conflict was thought to be in the past, so did these urbanised men concurrently involve themselves more in the sedentary games based on conquest and victory that were rapidly increasing in popularity. Regardless of the status of the participant, a latent and implicit will to victory in game-play was triumphing over the physical act of violent conquest itself, similarly to the rest of life at this time.

Alongside the change represented by Renaissance culture, from a culture of overt military aggression in which a generation of men defined their masculinity through both their own individual capacity for military conquest and England's skill in international warfare and conquest to a society where the early capitalism of the urban householder was taking pre-eminence as a marker of manliness, the styles and types of gaming were shifting in the same direction. With a capacity for enforced dominance now being expressed through the implicit framework of acquiring wealth and building oneself a household, the pastimes and activities that accompanied such a shift were more likely to express the inherent violence of Renaissance masculinity through their imagery and language as opposed to physical brutality. Yet, the furious implications of such games were still clear for all to construct. The game at tables that serves as the occasion of Arden's murder of Arden of Faversham is a location where the implicit violence involved in "taking" a player's pieces becomes physically manifested in an act of masculine conquest. In Mosby's mind, "taking" Arden in the process of playing at backgammon will have a far more immediately practical outcome than actual military victory. It will begin the process that will enable him to snatch Arden's lands and his fortune, allowing him to thus transcend his base origins and solidify himself as a wealthy landowner and head of a household. That discovery and capture awaits the main participants by the end is just the final example of this human game at tables enveloping the play and all within it in a world where, regardless of one's efforts, the risks at the hand of chance can never be thrown off completely.

“We will do nothing but take you up, sir, nothing else”: Arden of Faversham

The murder of the title character in the anonymous Arden of Faversham finally comes to pass in the fourteenth scene of this single act domestic tragedy, but it is only after the perpetrators have been circumvented eight times. Alice, Arden’s wife, her clandestine lover Mosby, and the assorted characters that they bring into their strategy have been foiled at practically every turn thus far. Through attempted poisonings, to foiled house-breaking, to ambushes going awry, both inept planning on the part of the villains and the pure good fortune of their intended victim have taken turns in delaying the culmination of the act. The final successful attempt takes place at Arden’s house as he and Mosby sit down to a game of ‘tables’, now known as backgammon. While Arden is absorbed in the game, the trap is laid. Black Will, one of a pair of cut-throats hired by Mosby for this purpose, creeps between the legs of Arden’s servant Michael to avoid being seen by his prey and awaits from Mosby the signal for himself and his companion Shakebag to strike:

MOSBY: One ace, or else I lose the game. [*he throws the dice.*]

ARDEN: Marry, sir, there’s two for failing.

MOSBY: Ah, Master Arden, “Now I can take you.”

Then Black Will pulls him down with a towel.

ARDEN: Mosby, Michael! Alice! What will you do?

BLACK WILL: Nothing but take you up, sir, nothing else. (xiv.239-243)

The phrase ‘now I can take you’ is one that the conspirators have decided upon as the signal for Will to perform his role and for the murder to begin, understandable since its gaming connotation is superficially innocuous enough to evince no suspicion from Arden. Closer examination, however, reveals not only that Arden has been ‘taken’ in the same manner as a backgammon piece, but that his murder has part of a scheme that has played out as a human

game of backgammon. On the battle-field of the backgammon board that will be rendered real rather than metaphoric within this play, the conspirators seek to dominate Arden in order not only to gain riches and/or position that they could not get otherwise, but to distinguish themselves as conquerors deserving of both their victories and the fruits to be attained. Mosby's desire in particular is to remove Arden so as marry his wife for the material wealth he would gain access to, thereby transcending his humble origins and solidifying himself as a gentleman land-owner in a society that prized such a role as one of the new models of masculinity. 'Taking' Arden is an attempt not only for Mosby to gain the kind of riches that he has never known, it is a move for one of the age's 'new men' to display that all important quality of aggressive masculinity via one of society's new battlegrounds in order to elevate and prove himself worthy of land ownership. In this human game 'at tables', however, the resemblance to this board game is even more marked when it is revealed that skill is forever influenced by luck. Much as the victor at backgammon needs the luck of the dice as a complement to his skill, the best laid plans of the conspirators are ultimately at the mercy of chance, as proven by both the numerous misfires that occur regardless of the particular skill involved in that particular attempt on Arden's life, and in the discovery of the crime. The staged game 'at tables' may prove the moment for Mosby and his compatriots to gain the conquestorial advantage they seek, but the symbolical human game that infuses the play can remove such advantage even more quickly than it can give it.

Past analyses of Arden of Faversham have focused primarily upon the potential subversions that the plot poses to the play's established order. M. L. Wine, in his introduction to his 1973 edition of the play, depicts the events as happening in a "bleak, amoral world" (lxv) where "[t]he economic individualism of an acquisitive society appears in the play as only a manifestation of something far more corrosive and pervasive . . . the collapse of traditional values furnishes the climate for violence" (lxiv). Catherine Belsey and Julie

Schutzman choose to analyse particularly the subversive danger of Alice, in asserting herself as both a member of the conspiracy against her husband and as active within that role. Frank Whigham extends this to focus on the other side of the equation, examining the portrayals of masculinity and especially what he believes to be Arden's failure to be sufficiently masculine in his inability to fight against Mosby's incursions, while Ian McAdam furthers this into an examination of Protestant manliness, where Mosby's strength and independence of purpose makes him the "bad usurper" who nonetheless "embodies the way of the future" (64). In examining Arden of Faversham, I will extend this work on the gender relations in the play in conjunction with an examination of the back-gammon game which serves as the location of Arden's death, arguing that this as yet seemingly unexamined piece of stage business provides an understanding of a play in which success seems to be predicated both in the strength and subtlety of masculine conquest and in pure chance, to the extent that each intertwine. If Arden dies while playing at 'tables', then Mosby and his confederates will live and look set to prosper, only to be finally undone by the same chance of the dice-throw that drew the authorities of Renaissance England into an uneasy and volatile relationship with the game.

The pastime of 'playing at tables' has something of a chequered history within early modern England. Thought to have originated in Persia in approximately 3 000 BC and been introduced to England by the first Century, it gained popularity throughout the Middle Ages and continued into Tudor England. 'Tables' itself was a term that was, according to Richard Strutt, "always employed for these dice games of mixed chance and skill, until the seventeenth century, when the word backgammon came gradually into use" (248). The direct ancestor of the back-gammon variant was the now obsolete game 'Irish', but Charles Cotton listed another four "Games Within the Tables" in his 1674 work The Compleat Gamester: Tick-tack, Doublets, Sice-Ace, and Ketch-Dolt (115-118). Of these games, Tick-tack is the

sole term to have been in use in the 16th century, according to the OED (first used publicly in 1558). Very popular with the upper classes due to the opportunities for gambling presented, legislators had passed several bannings against this group of games in the centuries before the reign of Elizabeth. With her rule came one last injunction against table in 1571, to then be forgotten as the games became exceedingly popular, especially amongst those with money (Murray, Board Games 119). While Richard Strutt stated that, by 1800, “this pastime [had] become unfashionable”, he was equally adamant that, “[a]t the commencement of the eighteenth century backgammon was a very favourite amusement, and pursued at leisure times by most persons of opulence” (249). The attempts of the authorities to curb such a pastime may be understood better with the knowledge that such ‘games at tables’ were played with a combination of skill and luck, with the imagined deleterious effects that would result from such a combination.

To play at ‘tables’ was to both test one’s abilities at masculine conquest as well as place oneself in the hands of chance. While strategy was critical in planning how to move one’s men around the board for the greatest chance of moving ahead of the opposition, it could not be forgotten that the roll of the dice could just as easily be the final determining factor. Such chance was endemic between the highest and the lowest forms of ‘tables’. James Howell, in one of the letters compiled in the multi-volume Epistolae Ho-elianae (1650), instructed a ‘Master G. Stone’ in November 1637 that, “though you have learnt to play at *Baggammon* [backgammon], you must not forget *Irish* which is a more serious and solid game” (Vol.2, 105). Yet, neither seriousness nor solidity could overcome chance. Even Charles Cotton, despite starting his section of *Irish* with an approving nod to an “ingenious” game that “requires a great deal of skill to play it well, especially the After game”, must advise in the end that the player must “trust to your own judgement and the chance of the Dice” (112). The chance of dice-play, as previously stated, was decried by the authorities of

the Renaissance who found danger in the chance of pure luck winning out over a superior opponent, fearing both a lack in masculinity and the vile tempers that could result from those who lost. These particular risks inherent in backgammon continued in later years, such as in Daniel Bellamy's 1734 "tragi-comic" poem, Back-Gammon, or, The Battle of the Friars. Included within the text was, in Bellamy's words, "a Short Essay on the Folly of Gaming, by Way of Application", in which he railed particularly against the individual "with a Box and Dice", claiming in particular that the pastimes of such an individual unleashed numerous evils upon the practitioners, primarily in the following "losses; . . . *Loss of Time, Loss of Reputation, Loss of Health, Loss of Fortune, Loss of Temper, and, what is often the Effects of it, the Loss of Life itself*" (17-18). He had already set up this tension in the previous poem where he would both compare the opponents to military campaigners and warn of the toll that the game takes on their morality:

Of two Battalions set in Rank and File,
 And of the various Plunder and the Spoils
 How each th' Approaches of the other dreads,
 With two sagacious *Gen' rals* at their Heads;

 How Luck and Skill alternately advance;
 (The Force of Judgement , and the Pow'r of Chance)
 Of Passions overflowing in a Trice,
 And all the dreadful Tyranny of Dice (1-2)

Bellamy continues wrestling with these issues throughout the poem. Those who are victorious at backgammon are conquering heroes, yet they are never able to fully negate the perils of fortune. His main character, "[a] doughty friar [named] *Fabris*", begins the poem as a veteran of conquest in this medium who, in backgammon, "many a Foe had slain; / And

was become the Champion of the Plain / . . . / The Males against him never could succeed, /
 And all the weaker sex were weak indeed. / . . . / In numerous conflicts he had never fail'd; /
 When art fell short, th' almighty *Dice* prevail'd ” (2-3). Fabris, needless to say, comes to find
 his luck turn against him, at which point any skill he possesses becomes irrelevant. He loses a
 ‘battle’ against his opponent *Vituelo*, where he is so passionate about his losses that “[t]he
 Friar almost did his faith renounce / And lost a triple victory at once” (7). At this point,
 “[a]nother battle *Fabris* then demands; / But Found that Fortune had forsook his Hands: /
 Quite vanquish'd, He began to sue for Peace; / And still *Vituelo*'s triumphs did increase” (8).
 Similarly, to the early modern audience, to play at tables was to purposefully intertwine skill
 and luck to try one's hand at both. Additionally, the necessity of luck had little impact upon
 the ‘seriousness’ with which such a game could be viewed. The murder plot of Arden of
Faversham, despite the best attempts of the conspirators, winds up as one of chance,
 incompetence, ruthless efficiency and misfortune, rather than a flawless game-plan, yet it is
 no less lethal for all of that. Much like Bellamy's *Fabris*, Mosby's game of tables against
 Arden is a virtual battleground where Mosby aspires to ‘slay’ Arden both metaphorically and
 physically. Likewise, the murder of Arden, if carried off successfully, would allow several of
 the conspirators access to that which they themselves desire. Whether for gains large or small,
 the defeat of Arden promises them an opportunity to taste the fruits of conquest.

Arden's death would be to the enduring benefit of several of the murderers, not
 simply in respect that all will be compensated for their role in the crime, but that their reward
 will come in the form of conquest. For the ruffian Black Will, apart from his pay for the deed,
 he dreams that this assignment may prove the impetus for the career of murder he desires,
 where he would conquer both victims and his competition. The glee in Will's boast that, “I'll
 stab him as he stands pissing against a wall, but I'll kill him” (ii.105-106), is matched only in
 his salivations at the fantasy that he would be presented with more of such work, “thus

through the year and that murder would grow to an occupation, that a man might without danger of law – Zounds, I warrant I should be warden of the company!” (ii.115-118). In this context, Michael’s fear that “[m]y death to [Black Will] is but a merriment, / And he will murder me to make him sport” (iv.83-84), means precisely that: murder to Black Will is a game of violent domination in which his victories are a source of great pride. By comparison, the man who directly employs Black Will and Shakebag for the purpose, Greene, wishes for the lands of the Abbey of Faversham to be returned to him, land which, it has been earlier revealed, “the Duke of Somerset, / Hath freely given to [Arden] and to [his] heirs, / By letters patent from his Majesty” (i.2-4). For Greene, “My living is my life; only that / Resteth remainder of my portion” (i.472-473); Greene is fighting not only for a way to maintain desperately needed assets, he is fighting for a symbol of his identity as a rightful descendant who will take over the lands and thus maintain the ‘living’, which he asserts as his ‘life’.

While Alice Arden prepares the ground for requesting Greene’s help in the murder by implying that she has suffered abuse at her husband’s hands, Greene is half-way there already, having vowed, “seeing he hath taken my lands, I’ll value life / As careless as he is careful to get / . . . / . . . I’ll be revenged, / And so as he shall wish the Abbey lands / Had rested still within their former state” (i.478-482). Alice’s implications build on an already erect foundation. Michael similarly desires Arden’s death for the living that he feels he will be able to garner from his role. The promise of Susan’s hand as payment leads him to begin laying plans for further acts of brutal conquest that will elevate him above servitude. His plot to “rid mine elder brother away, / And then the farm of Bolton is mine own” (i.172-173), is thoroughly acceptable in his view since, in a world enamoured of triumphant masculinity, “Who would not venture upon house and land / When he may have it for a right-down blow?” (i.174-175). Neither is such masculine posturing limited to actual violence. This same ability at conquest will allow him to claim Susan for his own and, as a result, reign victorious

over any other potential suitors. Painters such as Clarke, as Michael delights in telling his rival for Susan, are limited to “[p]aint[ing] lambs in the lining of wenches’ petticoats, / And we servingmen put horns to them / To make them sheep” (x.65-67), an outcome only to be expected given the painter’s “dagger made of a pencil”, an inadequate weapon that, “Faith, ’tis too weak, and therefore / Thou too weak to win Susan” (x.69-71). Unlike the painter, Michael will prove the strength of his ‘dagger’, first upon Arden, then upon his brother and Susan, which will garner him the status of a dominant man. Yet, while all three are hungry for the fruits of conquest, only Mosby is rapacious enough to desire stealing Arden’s position as well as his life.

Mosby’s motivation for Arden’s death is the wealth of his victim, money and land that will assist him in escaping his humble origins. Arden has already dismissed Mosby as nothing but an upstart, revealing him to be a “botcher [a tailor specialising in mending], and no better at the first, / Who, by base brokerage getting some small stock, / Crept into the service of a nobleman” (i.25-27). Mosby, apart from his dissimulation in the presence of others, is cold-bloodedly determined to ascend the social ladder. Such a focus has taken its toll: with every step “to build my nest among the clouds, / Each gentle starry gale doth shake my bed / And makes me dread my downfall to the earth” (viii.16-18). Yet, he reasons, “whither doth contemplation carry me? / . . . / . . . I cannot back / But needs must on” (viii.19-22). Marriage to Alice, for him, is simply a means to this end, rather than being based in any genuine feeling for her. Once he has gained the property, her usefulness to him will end. Instead, Mosby indicates, his desire to safeguard his position will triumph over any notion of loyalty to anyone, even to his confederates:

Then Arden, perish thou by that decree,
For Greene doth ear the land and weed thee up
To make my harvest nothing but pure corn.

And for his pains I'll heave him up awhile
 And, after, smother him to have his own wax;
 Such bees as Greene must never live to sting.
 Then is there Michael and the painter too,

 I can cast a bone
 To make these curs pluck out each other's throat,
 And then am I sole ruler of mine own.
 Yet Mistress Arden lives; but she's myself,
 And holy church rites make us two but one.
 But what for that I may not trust you, Alice?
 You have supplanted Arden for my sake,
 And will extirpen me to plant another.
 'Tis fearful sleeping in a serpent's bed,
 And I will cleanly rid my hands of her. (viii.23-43)

For Mosby, the desire to be 'ruler' is one that over-rides all others. Anyone who could even potentially be a threat to such a position will be eliminated just as ruthlessly as Arden will be. Such people include those who participate in the murder, who must never get a chance to turn their 'stings' onto Mosby, but must instead be inspired to destroy each other while the dominant male looks on. Even Alice's help is a premonition of doom, for she could just as easily surrender to another man and, as she did to Arden, help a new lover to conquer Mosby. He will therefore destroy them to safeguard himself. Yet every step further up for Mosby portends to him greater dangers. In comparison to his confidence in dealing with his fellow plotters, he fears that any 'gentle starry gale' may undo him. Mosby appears, if anything, to predict and resign himself to this large game at tables, where the player can never be quite

sure where skill becomes subordinate to pure chance. It is a combination of incompetence and misfortune on the part of the would-be assassins that informs Arden's continual escapes from death, as well as in his final succumbing to the conspirators.

Much as a game at tables depends upon both skill and luck, in the human backgammon that is played in the attempts on Arden's life, neither factor can be given sole credit in the continual frustration of the murderers' hopes. On several occasions, in fact, both factors work in tandem. Even those occasions where Arden escapes by luck contain examples of remorseless killers become momentarily ineffectual, whether by the fearsome Will suffering the window inadvertently dropping on his head or the remorseless Shakebag reduced to the indignity of falling into the ditch. More specifically, however, the plotters are often frustrated at the ineffectiveness of their own methods. Their errors tend to be made through over-estimating either their own competence or the abilities of their confederates, meaning that such efforts are either ineffective or they backfire onto the perpetrators. The plot that Alice and Mosby concoct to kill Arden before he sets off to London on business relies upon poison obtained from the painter Clarke who instructs them to put a little of it into his food. Arden, however, eats only a little before he detects "something in this broth / That is not wholesome" (i.365-366), leaving Alice to divert suspicion by pouring the broth onto the ground, and both her and Mosby to rant after Arden's departure on the incompetence of the painter: "It should have been some fine confection / That might have given the broth some dainty taste. / This powder was too gross and populous" (i.423-425). Similarly, Black Will's and Shakebag's trust of Michael to leave the doors and windows of the house in Aldersgate open, whereby they may steal and kill his master, fails to take into account Michael's nervousness in dealing with them. In the fear that Black Will would murder him after Arden, Michael involuntarily lets out a cry that alerts both his master and Franklin who close and lock all the doors and windows, frustrating the efforts of the murderers. In the penultimate

attempt on Arden, Mosby and Alice devise a plan to arouse Arden into a brawl with Mosby, whereupon the ruffians will interject themselves and finish him off. However, Franklin and Arden prove too much for their attackers, wounding both Mosby and Shakebag, forcing them and Black Will to retreat. In these circumstances, the fault lies with the preparation and execution of the murderers who suffer momentary defeats through a lack of insight.

Alongside this frustration, however, is the element of chance that cannot be eliminated and sometimes appears to take the lead in determining how things unfold.

Despite the belief on the part of the murderers that such a task is a relatively simple matter of pure conquest where skill is the over-riding necessity for success, the majority of their attempts are foiled by utter chance. Such chance is far beyond the thoughts of Black Will or Shakebag, or Greene who, when attempting to rally both ruffians for yet another attempt on Arden's life, analogises it to a hunt: calling for Will and Shakebag to "take your fittest standings, and once more / Lime your twigs to catch this weary bird" (ix.40-41). Yet to catch Arden proves more difficult than they could have anticipated as he evades trap after trap by pure luck, to a degree that is almost farcical. The ruffians' first attempt to ambush Arden in the streets of London ends ingloriously with the 'Prentice' of the stall they are hiding beside letting down his shop window whereupon it crashes onto Will's head, whose cry of "Zounds! Draw, Shakebag, draw! I am almost killed" (iii.52) starts a brawl that allows Arden to obliviously escape what Franklin blandly suggests as possibly a "paltry fray, / Devised to pick men's pockets" (iii.56-57). A planned ambush to take Arden by pistol shot on the road as he travels back home is frustrated by the appearance of Lord Cheyne and his men inviting Arden and Franklin to travel back to his abode for dinner. If that were not infuriating enough, Cheyne notices Black Will by the side of the road and, knowing of his reputation, takes it upon himself to lecture the scoundrel that he should "leave this kind of life. / If thou beest 'tainted for a penny matter / And come into question, surely thou wilt truss"

(ix.125-127). The final indignity is left for the attempt to take Arden as he and Franklin pass the ferry on their way back to Faversham. Black Will and Shakebag appear at separate doors onstage, too late since Arden and Franklin caught the ferry and left in the previous scene. The mist and smoke around the river-bed obscure their path and, in trying to find each other, Shakebag falls into a ditch, to be rescued by the ferryman who informs them that Arden passed him just a little earlier. Black Will, who would like nothing better than to make murder his profession, cannot help but rail against his fate later, ranting to Greene, “when was I so long in killing a man?” (xiv.1), while Shakebag’s fury at Arden’s “wondrous holy luck” (ix.135) leads him to furiously fire “my pistol at the sky, for by this bullet Arden might not die” (ix.137-138). Yet, neither can it be discounted that a number of Arden’s escapes come from mistakes by the plotters, where their reach exceeds their grasp.

Arden’s murder is the point at which both skill and luck go against him, much like the final rout at the tables. Not only have the conspirators carefully set their plot, they have managed to control for outside circumstances as well, at least during the killing itself. Arden, in fact, finds his life ending in the very way suggested by a nightmare. In scene 6, the morning after he has unknowingly avoided a deliberate attempt on his life, he shares with Franklin the previous night’s bad dream that transmits the sense in which his own death will occur. In this dream, Arden’s enjoyment of what looked to be a deer hunt turns suddenly to proclaim him as the object to be pursued unto death, with a ‘falchion’ [a curved broadsword] aimed to end his life:

This night I dreamed that, being in a park,
 A toil was pitched to overthrow the deer,
 And I upon a little rising hill,
 Stood whistly watching for the herd’s approach.

.....

But in the pleasure of this golden rest,
 An ill-thewed foster had removed the toil
 And rounded me with that beguiling home
 Which late, methought, was pitched to cast the deer.
 With that he blew an evil-sounding horn;
 And at the noise another herdsman came
 With falchion drawn, and bent in at my breast,
 Crying aloud, "Thou art the game we seek." (vi.6-19)

Arden literally prefigures how his death will eventuate, from the peace he initially felt to the sudden turnaround, onwards to the horror when he realises that he is the target. Arden, he intimates through his watching and waiting, likely has a stake of some kind in the hunt, even if he is not an overtly active participant. He begins his dream literally in the field of play (the deer-park), where he awaits the net, or the "toil", to capture the herd so the sport can begin, only to metaphorically become one of those deer himself. While he awaits these events in "the pleasures of this golden rest", one of the foresters ("forster"), a spectacularly ill-natured or "ill-thewed" one, removes the "toil" and uses it to "round" (surround) Arden without warning (Kinney 117). Arden has thus become the "game we seek", or the object of such a hunt, according to the OED (10.a), to be perforated by the "falchion drawn, and bent in at my breast". Similarly, the backgammon played at Arden's death will end with his being ambushed by the ruffian Will who, rather than a "toil", will use a towel to immobilise the man who is the real "game" sought by Mosby, rather than the backgammon contest that misdirected Arden so effectively. Even without a "falchion", the dagger strikes of Shakebag and Alice will serve just as well, along with blows by Mosby with his botching iron. Nor is such a premonition alone in indirectly warning Arden of what could be his fate. The way in which Arden's death will unfold is further hinted by Alice Arden who must restore Mosby to

her husband's good graces after the plan to lure him into a street-fight in which he would be killed goes awry. Alice's claim that she and Mosby, by their kiss intended to provoke Arden into the trap, only "intended sport" (xiii.90), is a more truthful one than would be supposed. She and Mosby did intend sport, except that the sport was to comprise the violent conquest of murder, in which Arden would find the tables turned on him. This is the method that will be refined in the final, ultimately successful attempt.

For the final attempt on Arden's life, luck is no longer on his side. From this point on, the skill of the murderers is the sole factor in determining his fate. Alice's arguments of Mosby's innocence convince her husband to attempt reconciliation with him. Franklin will be kept from joining Arden by Greene who will engage him in conversation until the deed is done. Mosby plans that he will suggest to Arden that they play at tables and that upon those prophetic words, 'Now I take you', Black Will, who has alongside Shakebag been hiding in the counting house, will "with a towel pull him to the ground, then stab him till his flesh be a sieve" (xiv.132-133). This time, the plan works perfectly, with any potential obstacles being overcome shrewdly. Black Will's concerns that "he will spy me as I am coming", are allayed by Michael's suggestion that, "[t]o prevent that, creep betwixt my legs" (xiv.237-238). Arden himself is transfixed with playing at tables with Mosby and is in fact on the verge of defeating him ['Marry, sir, there's two for failing' (xiv.240)] when Mosby turns his apparent conqueror into helpless prey with the signal. Once Arden has been pulled down by Black Will's towel, he is destined to be perforated with the daggers of the opposition. Mosby further emphasises how he now conquers Arden, by proclaiming his stabbing of Arden to be "for the pressing iron you told me of" (xiv.244), announcing his new economic freedom. Earlier derogated as inferior due to his former career, Mosby pays Arden back by physically announcing himself as Arden's conqueror and implying that he will therefore take charge of those vast lands and monies. Much as in the game at tables which he plays with Mosby,

Arden's luck and the occasional incompetence of his opposition have saved his life up until this point, but the disappearance of that luck has made way for the considered planning of the conspirators which finally proves to be his downfall. The conspirators, for the moment, have successfully staved off that luck with a considered strategy that finally dominates the out-of-luck Arden. Yet, the direct aftermath of his death again brings light to the intersection of luck and skill, as both play a part in uncovering the crime to the law.

The uncovering of Arden's murder is motivated partially by the ineptitude of the murderers in covering their crime, yet that is seemingly subordinate to the sense that fate has decreed that they should fail at this final hurdle. It is Michael's mistake that, as Susan puts it, "hast betrayed and undone us all" (xiv.395), when he leaves the knife and hand-towel used in the deed in the house. Failure to eliminate all traces of Arden's body being moved from the house into the field has similarly caught them up since, as Franklin informs the authorities, "from that place / Backwards and forwards may you see / The print of many feet within the snow" (xiv.403-405), and furthermore, "in [Arden's] slipshoe did I find some rushes / Which argueth he was murdered in this room" (xiv.408-409). Yet, more than this, fate is simply against the murderers. Despite Susan washing the floor where Arden's blood spilt, "[t]he blood cleaveth to the ground and will not out" (xiv.265). In fact, as Alice exclaims, "[t]he more I strive, the more the blood appears. / . . . / Because I blush not at my husband's death" (xiv.267-269). Confronted by the law with the body of her dead husband, Alice is left to wonder, "[t]he more I sound his name, the more he bleeds. / This blood condemns me" (xvi.4-5). The epilogue itself states that, "in the grass [Arden's] body's print was seen / Two years and more after the deed was done" (12-13). Mosby's premonitions about the consequences of fate give him an oddly philosophical approach to his death, requesting that his captors "bear me hence, for I have lived too long" (xviii.35). Moments of discontinuity

and incompetence aside, the conspirators are finally at the mercy of the luck of the draw. They have indeed all lived too long, for their luck has run out.

Arden of Faversham offers not only the earliest extant example of the sophisticated theatre that would soon populate the stage in Elizabethan and Jacobean England but, in its focus upon the domestic sphere, a dramatic examination of how this emerging gaming landscape affected the 'new man' in his fight for masculine status. More than just a motif for the death of Arden, backgammon infuses the structure of the play to where Arden's murderers, regardless of their precautions and planning, must ultimately accept the quirks of chance that come their way. In an age where gaming is one of the locations where the male can engage in the conquestorial display deemed essential by society to the preservation of his gender identity, killing or 'taking' Arden on the 'battleground' of the backgammon board is the sole act that should allow the characters to gain those goods that are the exclusive province of those with a capacity for violent conquest. In particular, Mosby should be able to establish himself as a successful and wealthy householder. The happenstance of the game has ultimately rendered such subtlety to be for nought. Both skill and luck have triumphed over Arden and the conspirators, but one cannot be sure where one ends and the other begins. Ironically, one of the factors in Mosby's favour has possibly been that his conquest-oriented focus was never compromised by a love for Alice. His relationship with her was primarily for the purpose of a marriage that would satisfy him financially and in regards to social position. A sense of devotion or a desperate lust for Alice herself would most likely have exacerbated matters. The next chapter will examine the paradox of sexuality in the renaissance, where it was only through marriage and the conjugal relations required for legitimate progeny that a male could be considered properly mature and masculine, but sensuality and lust were inherently effeminising. To conquer a woman sexually without being conquered by sexuality itself was one of the challenges facing the early modern man.

Chapter Two

We Couple at Games: Masculine Sexuality in the Tragedies of Thomas Middleton

To examine the relationship between the Renaissance male and contemporary attitudes towards heterosexual congress is to not only reiterate and extend the early modern anxiety over the impermanence of masculinity, but additionally to highlight the critical importance played by conquest in guarding one's masculine essence against corruption. The cultural belief that masculinity was the natural result of the stable foundation of a divinely ordered English hierarchy made it critical that masculinity be maintained in a manner consistent with such a patriarchal system, as exemplified by the household, where the male head could fashion it in his own masculine image and judge it according to its stability. An inescapable part of proving oneself a leader of a household was populating such a dwelling with heirs so as to ensure the succession of one's family, necessitating that a man choose a wife and perform his marital and procreative duties with a degree of regularity. Yet, this most critical of duties was fraught with peril, opening the male to both the inherently damaging influence of the lustful and indulgent woman and the risk of becoming lustfully effeminate himself. His barrier against such an outcome was his masculine sense of aggressive conquest, expressed through the language and imagery used to describe sexual coupling as well as his performance of the act, to be viewed and performed as a triumph of the man over the forces of effeminacy. The use of games and gaming that prioritised conquest above all else was one such method by which the male could display his capacity for aggressive masculinity and therefore protect himself against the potentially effeminising influence of sexual congress. The flip-side to such an outcome, of course, was that the man who was unable to conquer another in the scope of games would likewise fail in avoiding the debasement of femininity.

In the two Middletonian tragedies to be analysed in this chapter, gaming is predominantly used as a mechanism to signify the inadequacy of the male participants in

adherence to the strictures of gender (primarily the ideal performance of sexual conquest), subsequently extending that failure to the destruction of the hierarchy and thus the population at large. Both Women Beware Women (1621) and The Changeling (1622), (written with William Rowley) use games to pass judgement on their characters' capacity for sexual conquest, whereby either poor performance or conduct that disregards those critical masculine qualities becomes representative of that character's inadequacies. Women Beware Women, in particular, uses game after game in alluding to and defining the peccadilloes of its characters. The now obsolete pastimes of tip-cat and stool-ball, as well as the still contemporary game of the shuttle-cock, all assist through their mention in suffusing the play with gaming. Even apart from these games, the chess match played simultaneously alongside the rape of Bianca serves as both a cover for this act and as a commentary. By comparison, The Changeling focuses predominantly upon the obscure rustic couples game of barley-break, in order to define the relationship between the two main protagonists, De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna. Besides the direct use of these games to assist in understanding the need held by individual men to conquer, their use for contextualising largely unsuccessful attempts by individual men at sexual conquest serves the purpose of establishing a sense of failure that is virtually miasmatic, manifesting itself throughout the structure of each play and virtually all the characters. They are inadequate for, if nothing else, forgetting the fundamental rule of the Renaissance man: whatever his profession, he must have the capacity for conquest.

The early modern man who exemplified his ideal masculine self could take on numerous forms. He could be the questing merchant adventurer and man of industry who set out to compete and crush opposition whilst accumulating wealth. As considered previously, he might be the military campaigner tasked with vanquishing his foe by his ability to dominate in combat, thus protecting his own homeland and potentially gaining material wealth in campaigns abroad. More domestically, he could involve himself in local or national

politics, using his subtlety and craft to thwart his foes while working to avert any catastrophe to himself. Above all, however, he was a husband and a father, using his range of masculine qualities to keep those closest to him from labouring under any misapprehension as to his ultimate authority. If he was not the ruler of a realm or a company, the man could be the ruler of his own household (Smith 51). Furthermore, by engaging in procreative sex, he could produce future men who would one day compete for reputation and wealth as he had, continuing his lineage. Yet, the act of sexual congress, critical for the propagation of the species and of future generations of masculine leaders, was ironically a site of potential risk for the male, where his coupling with a woman could lead him to emasculation. The ability for sexual congress to effeminise a man could only be combated with a more focused performance of masculinity in order to avoid any subversion of gender hierarchy.

Despite the critical importance of sexual congress to produce legitimate heirs, the male could easily find himself and his masculine superiority at risk if he lost his head. If the male was the superior sex, then the female was definitely inferior. According to Anthony Fletcher, “the subordination of women began with the hierarchical ordering of the bodies and ended with firmly defined gender roles” (60). Renaissance concepts of difference in biological sex explicitly coded a woman as not merely ‘less’ than a man but, in some cases, as the perversion of one. Rather than a concept of two distinct sexes, the Galenic model of society worked on the premise of a single sex. The perfect embodiment of this sex was the truly masculine male, while other variations were, by definition, inferior. It was not until 1618 that Helkiah Crooke, after weighing up evidence, came to the conclusion that there was more evidence to suggest two sexes rather than one. Even so, Crooke echoed his predecessors in the belief that the female was inherently weaker and lesser than the male, arguing that “*Hippocrates* . . . concludeth that of the male seede, that is the hotter and more vigorous, a man is generated; out of the weaker, a Woman” (273). As the seeming antithesis of

masculinity, the female was therefore the virtual opposite of its glorious characteristics. The superior male was hard, aggressive and dominating; the inferior female was soft, retiring and subservient. The male was suited to the glories and achievements of public life; the woman was suited to the invisibility of the private home, where her main achievement was to, against the odds given her perceived lack of bodily control, maintain her sexual purity until marriage and then obligingly give birth. Crooke exulted this inequality as natural and right:

The woman was ordained to receive and conceive the seede of the man, to bear and nourish the Infant, governe and moderate the house as home, to delight and refresh her husband foreswunke with labour and well-nigh exhausted and spent with care and travel; and therefore her body is soft, smooth and delicate, made especially for pleasure, so that whosoever useth them for other doth almost abuse them. (274)

The ideal woman was obedient to the male figures in her life, first her father and then, in the natural scheme of things, her husband. Where the male was exalted for controlling his wife, her role was to expect to be controlled, accept that her inherent frailty and weakness in both body and mind required her to be subject to her superior for protection, and express gratitude for such safekeeping. Yet the vagaries of this ‘one-sex’ model made it a concurrent source of anxiety to those interested in the promotion of ‘true’ masculinity. One did not need to be actively feminine to be regarded as effeminate, one only needed to fail at being actively masculine.

To regard oneself as a naturally masculine man required that one acknowledge the fragility of the concept. With just one sex to encompass the entire spectrum of males and females, it was entirely possible for a male to slide into effeminacy without constant vigilance. Rather than requiring the performance of feminine acts, effeminacy was simply a condition of the instability of the supposedly inherent quality of masculinity. The effeminate

man became something worse than merely ineffective; he became amorphous. The stability of the male, represented by his defining characteristics (strength, aggression, hardness), could become ‘unglued’ according to Thomas Laqueur, leading instead to “unstable but protean imperfection” (125). The anxiety fuelled by the recognition of just how easily one’s masculine sense of self could ‘slip’ into the reviled other, was expressed not only in terms of personal humiliation and loss of reputation but, ultimately, in concern for the health of the state’s perfection and stability. While the male dominated culture of early modern England was represented as the ideal order, the haunting concern was that it could be compromised by the male’s loss of masculinity, especially a failure to adequately perform one’s manliness. Sumptuary laws, apart from placing restrictions on dress to distinguish between the different classes, were also used to enforce the difference between men and women, in the process hoping to create a sense of a stabilized gender. Even further, men were encouraged to avoid contact with women for fear that heterosexual sociability could seemingly place gender at risk: “Being with women too much or being too devoted to them seems to lead to the blurring of what we would call sex” (Laqueur 124). This transferred into an implicit fear of sexual congress, ironic because marital procreation was the goal of a truly masculine man, in order to continue his lineage. Women Beware Women’s Fabritio commands Isabella that her marriage to the Ward must go ahead quickly since “’tis time / He were getting lawful heirs, and you a-breeding on ’em” (I.ii.79). Alsemero’s virginity test that he gives to Beatrice after their wedding in The Changeling is specifically a method by which “to know whether a woman be with child or no” (IV.i.26), for a woman already with child before the marriage night cannot be trusted to provide legitimate heirs for her husband. Nonetheless, sexual congress was also a site of great risk, enforcing contact with that which could destroy a man.

Sexual congress was simultaneously the consolidation of a man and the potential location of his undoing. The masculine male was necessarily a being who controlled a

household and, just as importantly, controlled the woman who was a necessary part of it. While Lyndal Roper's discussion on gender relations within the period is focused on early modern Germany, it is equally applicable to the boundaries and hierarchies that were present in England: "What gave one access to the world of brothers was one's mastery of a woman which guaranteed one's sexual status" (46). A husband owned his wife and maintained this ownership with his masculine authority. It was equally the male's strength and industrious authority that would bear the best fruit within the confines of procreation. It was the male's heat and strength that ensured a strong and hot seed (ironically manifesting itself into a preference for a smaller penis, since it reduced the distance for the sperm to travel, thus increasing the chance that it would maintain its heat by the time it reached its target for impregnation). The stronger and hotter the seed, the greater the likelihood was that the male would impregnate his wife and the more likely that the resulting child would be both male and properly masculine. As figured in terms of gender, the more perfect and masculine the male, the more perfect and masculine his sperm would be and, as a consequence, the more likely that he would father a child who could potentially carry on his lineage. Yet, sexual congress was also the most vulnerable area for the male. It was the location where he could risk the loss of his masculinity even while attempting to enhance and solidify it.

To engage in sexual congress was to bring oneself into contact with a woman in an act that presented opportunities for lust and for the pleasures of the flesh. To be in the company of a woman was itself a risk to masculine qualities as the tendencies in women towards softness, sloth, irrationality and debasement worked to corrupt physical courage and moral strength. Sexual congress exacerbated such a risk exponentially, directly exposing the male to the tendencies that he needed to combat for the sake of his own sense of identifying himself as a man. If the imperial warrior's conquestorial ability increased his attractiveness to women, the proof of his masculinity lay in refusing to luxuriate in such lustful pleasures. When the

young Lorenzo del Medici died prematurely in 1519, his posthumous reputation was built with emphasizing his stoic and rational masculinity, explaining that “day and night he kept his cuirass [breastplate] on, slept very little, ate and drank frugally, was moderate in his indulgence in sex” (qtd. in Hale 130). In his discussion of how the male is hotter than the female, Helkiah Crooke explained the difference by way of animalistic imagery (276):

There are some creatures which because of their giddy madnesse make a shew of generosity, as the Female Elephant: some also there are in whom the feare of a worse condition begets boldness, such are Panthers. In a Dogge partly his trustinesse to his maister partly his envy maketh him fierce. We say therefore that Females are more churlish and fierce, but not stouter or stronger hearted. That which is objected concerning the strength of their naturall faculties is of all the rest the most frivolous and vaine . . . That Females are more wanton and petulant than Males, wee thinke hapneth because of the impotencie of their minds; for the imaginations of lustfull women are like the imaginations of brute beasts which have no repugnancie or contradiction of reason to restraine them. So brutish and beastly men are more lascivious, not because they are hotter than other men but because they are brutish. Beastes do couple not to ingender but to satisfie the sting of lust, wise men couple that they might not couple. (276)

To Renaissance thought, therefore, lust and the attendant vices that accompanied those who succumbed to it (envy, fear, frivolity, vanity) were the result of a weaker mind that was continually prey to the “giddy madnesse” of the female. Yet, Crooke, perhaps unconsciously, displays the fear that the male may not be able to resist such debasement. The lasciviousness of the brutish individual is caused by a lack of “repugnancie” and “reason”, not because such qualities would cause one to find such desires distasteful, but that they would assist one to

“restraine” themselves from revelling in the pleasures of the flesh. Furthermore, since “beastes” engage in sexual congress “not to ingender but to satisfie the sting of lust”, then the stage is set for a self-perpetuating cycle, where the beast engages in sex to satisfy its lust but, since it has no restraint, gives in to lust and further engages in sex, not only feeding a sense of lust, but increasing involvement in the very activities that steadily decreases the ability to restrain oneself against lustful feelings and thoughts. The male could only protect his sense of masculinity by both masculine practices and using his masculine intellect and will to restrain himself from those pleasurable practices that could potentially erode his masculinity. Yet, his status as a genuinely masculine male was dependent upon engaging in procreative sex, thus placing himself in direct contact with lust. If he could not avoid this act, he must therefore overcome its effeminacy with the power and logically mandated rationality of his masculine prowess. To this purpose, heterosexual conjugal relations were figured as acts of conquest over the weakness and potentially damaging qualities of the woman. By engaging in the conquestorial act, the male could not only combat the debilitating effects of effeminacy, he could engage in the behaviour and mindset that not only defined him as a male, but also enhanced and further entrenched his masculinity.

Armed combat was often used as a metaphor for sexual activity in both Medieval and Renaissance England because it was the most traditional, and all things being equal, the preferred method for a man to establish his status as a truly conquering and therefore masculine being. What it provided above all else was an activity which directly required the skills of the masculine male for success: physical strength, courage, mental toughness and the aggressive desire to dominate another. In his work Book of the Order of Chivalry, printed in the 1480s, Raymond Lull expressed his opinion that virtue in a knight was essentially “courage”. Later, in The Accedens of Armory (published in 1562 and reissued in 1597), Gerald Leigh was adamant that “‘martial prowess’ is ‘the chief advancer of gentry’ and that

the virtue which conferred honour on a man was a ‘glory got by courage of manhood’” (qtd. in Fletcher 129). When William Marshall, as previously stated, charged his forces for battle against France by proclaiming, “We should be soft indeed if we did not take vengeance upon those who have come from France to rob us of our heritage. They desire our destruction”, the impetus is clear: we could be more accurately termed effeminate and unnatural if we would fail to take vengeance and dominate our enemy, for they would do so to us if given the opportunity. They who fail to dominate will be dominated. Therefore, “let us make a great effort, for, if we are victorious, we shall have increased our glory” (qtd. in Strickland 98). Not only would his men increase their military glory, they would have reaffirmed themselves as manly specimens who were dominating those inferior to them, such as lower classes or women or upstart foreigners, as they were purposed for by God and the social structure. Similarly, to navigate successfully through the eternal spectre of effeminacy carried by conjugal relations required an aggressive determination to conquer the corruption carried by the effeminacy of a woman, if not in literal deed then in the language and metaphor surrounding the act.

The potential degradation of masculinity to which sexual contact with women could lead was best combated by contextualising the act as one of victorious conquest over a woman. Much as Helkiah Crooke explains, wise men “couple that they might not couple” or “to ingender”. The paradox of this position is explained by the absolute responsibility placed upon the male to prioritise sexual control in his marriage as an act of protecting the manhood necessary for the generation of heirs. Breitenberg informs that, in the Renaissance imagination, “[s]emen is a form of rarefied, heated blood (a sort of ultra-blood) . . . the most purified form of English, masculine and aristocratic blood: it is the very substance of masculine power, as well as its signifier” (49-50). The conundrum, however, is that for an act of critical importance to manhood, the process rendered a man akin to a woman unable to

control the occurrence of menstrual blood “threaten[ing] masculine agency and self-control . . . represent[ing] a ‘feminine’ inability to regulate the flow of one’s fluids . . . masculine erotic desire generates the material of masculinity but also destroys it” (50). William Vaughan in Approved Directions for Health (1600) was even more alarmist on the matter, warning the reader that, “Sperme or seede of generation is the onely comforter of nature, which wilfully shed or lost, harmeth a man more, then if he should bleed forty times as much” (E3^v). In order to protect oneself from such effeminisation, according to Foyster, the male was required to exert control, both in avoiding excessive coupling and in actively treating masculinity as an opportunity for a display of dominant manhood (75, 73). It was done not for the pleasure of the act itself, but for what could result from it if the male is properly masculine: the production of legitimate male heirs who will themselves be properly masculine. To do this, however, the masculinity that ensures the heat of his ‘seed’ must withstand the potential weakening that sexual contact with a woman might perpetuate. Contextualising the sex act as a location where a victory based in aggressive masculinity should ideally be achieved through procreation and domination was both a way to defend masculine qualities and a method by which to normalize and justify patriarchal control. The correct way for a male to approach marital sex, according to Foyster, was when “[t]he emphasis [was] placed on penetrative sex in which men establish their difference to women and their ownership of them” (73). By maintaining a dominant attitude over his betrothed, whose subjugation was deemed “justified by the subordinate status of the body”, he could actively conquer her (Rackin 76). To complete the necessary task of conquering a woman, violence was regarded as a predominantly legitimate method of assistance, as Linda Woodbridge has summarised:

The obvious starting point . . . is the fact that violence was (by long historical precedent) a way to prove masculinity, and although male violence against

other males (as in war or sport) was a prime validator of masculinity, the instrumentality of violence in the male ego's self-fashioning is relevant to women too in several ways . . . According to the essentialist gender theory of the age, males were aggressive by nature, and only men could legitimately commit violence . . . when women were objects of male violence, it graphically established their subjugated status and hence ratified male superiority. (Women xii)

The Renaissance male, to avoid being consumed with effeminate sexual desire, was required to regard sex as a location for him to display his hard-won status as a dominant male and to further reinforce (with brute force, if need be) that his partner was his property, to be docile and submissive before his dominating power, achieving the dichotomy necessary for effective procreation. He would use his craft and subtlety to 'entice' a woman into letting her guard down so that he could 'besiege' the castle of her body. His aggression and his strength would assist him in 'boarding' her and 'hitting' her to his satisfaction. If she was his wife, then by 'ploughing' her furrow, he would reap the benefits of a child. If she happened to be a virgin, then he would 'deflower' and 'ravish' her. It was his god-given right to have complete sexual ownership over his wife and his duty to enforce it as absolutely as he wished.

To procreate with a woman was analogised similarly to a military campaign. Yet warfare was much less encumbered with the potential to debase the participating male. If, as mentioned above, the masculine ideals were expected to display ability at either public or domestic conquest, the most ideal form of such acts was that of war, to directly embody not only the strength and stamina that matched with the "hardness" of the male body (as opposed to the softness of the female), but the aggression that would desire to not only dominate but to continue dominating for centuries to come. Without continual warfare, the integrity of the truly masculine individual was at stake.

In the absence of warfare, the male was in danger of growing apart from violent conquest as both a way of life and an ethos. With the changing of times, opportunities for military action and the glories of imperial conquest were decreasing. Elizabeth's reliance on diplomacy and compromise to keep England stable, as stated earlier, may have been economically sound, but was antithetical to the traditional method by which the power and masculine abilities of men were tested. Additionally, as a woman, Elizabeth would have been expected, according to Paul E. Hammer, to demonstrate the feminine and retiring quality of peace, rather than the aggressive role of imperial conqueror (242). The role that was required to be taken by a female monarch was, ironically, the opposite role that the male aristocracy desired England to play. Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin consider that the majority of aristocratic men found the age of Elizabeth, while potentially profitable, a commensurate source of uneasiness and anxiety over their sense of masculinity. Not only were they moving from a militarized class to one that was defined by consumption predominantly, they were threatened by "the presence of a female monarch and by the queen's transformation of the medieval culture of aristocratic honour from martial service to courtly display" (143). Peacham, the Master of Arts who regarded "glorious action" as the principal prerequisite for manly honour and nobility, was amongst those who regarded such exquisite models of nobility and masculinity as being drowned out by the luxury and vice represented in modern society, fretting that "such are the miserable corruptions of our times, that Vices go for prime Vertues; and to be drunke, sweare, wench, follow the fashion, & to do just nothing, are the attributes and marks now adaies of a great part of our Gentry" (9-10). Such an opinion was not his alone, but the theme of several authors who felt that the modern age was subverting the good of the past and contributing to England's moral decay. The Elizabethan puritan Philip Stubbes worried that the new urban culture and outlandish fashions were perverting and effeminising men, "as we may seeme rather nice dames, and young gyrles, than pussainte

agents or manlie men as our forefathers haue bene” (E3^r). A disconcertingly effeminate new urban culture and a relative lack of warfare signified danger not only for the vitality of men but for the vitality of the nation itself. Scott, the preacher responsible for the Vox Populi pamphlets that aimed to incite further animus against Spain (Lake 805), considered war to be a restorer of society, writing in The Belgick Souldier . . . or, Warre was a Blessing (1624) that “All the beggerly nations of the world became rich and potent by raysing of warre, and were diminished and consumed to nothing by the corruption of peace and bewitching of pleasure” (B1^v). To combat this increasing focus upon effeminate pleasure, avenues apart from the decreasing chances for militaristic engagement were needed to assist the male in expressing and defining his masculinity. Games and pastimes that rewarded the skills inherent within masculine conquest by crowning those practitioners victorious were one of these methods.

The increasing focus upon games and gaming for these purposes was one of the ways in which Renaissance society sought to negate the prospect of a new un-militarised population of men succumbing to lustful degradation, by centralising a discourse of dominance and aggressive sexuality. The conjunction that Woodbridge draws between war and sport is instructive, since it displays the importance of metaphorical violence in games and gaming language, as a means by which to strengthen and entrench the masculine qualities of the participants (Women xii). These games were not simply analogised to military campaigns, they became methods for men to enforce their desire for conquest. Games and gaming became a surrogate by which men could not only achieve conquest and display their abilities at dominating their opponents, but conquest was the explicit point. Furthermore, as much as both sexual coupling and gaming used military metaphor and symbology to heighten their own connections to conquest and dominance, so could gaming be used as metaphor for sexual activity and vice versa.

For the Renaissance male, the dangers attached to sexual conquest could all too easily render him effeminate unless he guarded against them by avoiding lust and the luxurious pleasures of the flesh. The Renaissance tendency to use the aggressive metaphors of military action to euphemistically describe the sexual act echoed a similar desire to control and dominate such situations as if it were a war between two parties that must be won by the male in order for hierarchy to further reign. The Medieval and Renaissance aristocratic hunt, apart from serving the needs of a hierarchy that saw killing a beast of the forest as an adequate substitute for military conquest, was just as commonly used to equate the seduction of a woman with the conquest of a deer. Much as the hunter proved his dominating aura through bringing the beast under his control, so was the hunter/lover to prove himself a potent vessel of masculine sexuality through the seduction and subsequent ownership of a woman. Furthermore, as games and pastimes that placed supreme importance on conquest became increasingly entrenched in a culture that sought other means by which patriarchal victory could be established, so too did their modes of language and practice become increasingly entrenched in Renaissance masculinity. Such an aggressive and conquest-centred foundation acted as a supposedly necessary precaution when dabbling in sexual matters. Similarly, in both Women Beware Women and The Changeling, the threat lies not in the use of games and gaming to establish and refer to sexual conquest, but in the realisation that the participants are insufficiently guarded to protect themselves against the effeminising influence. The price of such personal failings is extracted from the individual first, then from the society that surrounds them.

“So where lust reigns, that prince cannot reign long”: Women Beware Women (1621)

When, as explained in the introduction, the Ward uses his first scene in Thomas Middleton’s Women Beware Women to position the games he plays as an avenue for the

aggression and violence that is innate within him, he inadvertently reveals the over-riding flaw of his character, the uncontrolled lust and emotion that will drive him to his own destruction. The statement that he is “furious” in the playing at games is redolent of the uncontrolled passion that leads him to assault the son of the poulterer’s wife for no reason at all, yet the Ward follows his boast with another hinting darkly at lustful excesses that he cannot control. His fury when he is in game is such that “came my mother’s eyes in my way I would not / lose a fair end; no, were she alive but with one tooth / in her head, I should venture the striking out of that” (I.ii.100-103). With the knowledge that ‘eye’ in Renaissance parlance was a common double-entendre for the female genitals, the Ward essentially argues that even the monstrous possibility of committing incest would not deter him in his sexual desires for an instant: he would never “lose a fair end” if the opportunity arose to “venture the striking out” of any woman, even his own mother if need be. Far from being an aberration, however, the Ward is simply the most overtly flawed and the least discreet of the characters in the play. It is the lack of control that the majority of them are able to exercise over their own passions that serves to seal their fates in the mass tragedy of the final act.

The play’s final act features the masque at which, as J. Jowett posits, “[t]ragedy competes with tragedy parodied; pity and horror compete with horrified laughter” (1492). In the process of performing a masque to celebrate the Duke’s marriage to the new widow Bianca, several of the players have planned to revenge themselves on those who have wronged them. Under the guise of play, the various plots go forth, with some coming off well and others missing the mark or even turning on the original planner, yet all delivering a death sentence. Livia is killed when Isabella suffocates her with poisoned incense, but before she dies, she throws at Isabella a lethal shot of what the stage directions term as “flaming gold” which, as Jowett believes, was most likely an ornamental arrow or short spear with the tip poisoned (1539). The Ward, missing his cue to drop Hippolito through the trapdoor onto a

caltrop, accidentally drops Guardiano instead. Yet, Guardiano has planned for the play's Cupids to shoot their (unknowingly poisoned) arrows at Hippolito, causing him such torment that he chooses to run into a guard's halberd so as to escape further pain. In the midst of this chaos, Bianca plans for the Duke's brother, the elderly and morally strict Cardinal, to drink from a poisoned cup, so as to prevent him from any future interference in her marriage to the Duke. However, the cups of the two brothers have been inadvertently switched, leaving the Duke to suffer death, followed closely by a distraught Bianca. It is up to the Cardinal to deliver the final words of the play, grieving for the dead, yet reminding the audience that the faults of the deceased Duke nonetheless served to invalidate his reason for being before his life was extinguished:

Sin, what thou art these ruins show too piteously.

Two kings on one throne cannot sit together,

But one must needs down, for his title's wrong;

So where lust reigns, that prince cannot reign long. (V.i.263-266)

While most directly applying to the Duke, the Cardinal's reasoning that the lustful are *ipso facto* unfit to rule penetrates to the heart of the play's structure. The majority of characters, even as they consider themselves superior to the overwhelmingly overt excesses displayed by the Ward, find themselves falling prey to the same desires that he embodies. In particular, the men in the play who succumb to the lusts of the flesh, as events reveal, lack the necessary masculinity and masculine virtues to properly dominate over what is supposedly their own sphere of influence, whether it be a kingdom, a household or simply one's own moral compass. The use of games and gaming metaphor serves to highlight these fatal flaws, occurring all too often from both excessive gaming itself and from the use of these games for the purposes of lustful indulgence. The Ward, as has already been discussed, uses his gaming as an expression of his immature and unbalanced personality, but even the game of chess that

covers the Duke's seduction of Bianca is complicated by his desire for a married woman. Despite the pastime's reputation as a game of intricate skill and ability that only the purely masculine can win, his victory over Bianca is one critical impetus for the final masque that will end in his own eventual destruction. If games and gaming are used as instruments of conquest within the play, that does not keep the instigators from undermining themselves in the aftermath of play as they mistake their victories as a free pass to engage in the very displays of excessive lust and debauchery that will both make it much more difficult to be victorious in the future and will contribute to the destruction of the very social hierarchy that they are successful within. This not only wreaks social and hierarchical havoc by its own device, it leaves the way open for the lustful indulgences of the women to claim ownership and complete the cycle of turmoil.

The critical heritage of Women Beware Women, according to J. R. Mulryne, has travelled from criticisms of what was perceived as its lack of internal consistency (such as the supposed ludicrous extremities of the final masque) to an appreciation of its plotting, use of language and psychological realism, especially in regards to women (li). What Mulryne himself terms as Middleton's analysis of "what happens when marriage, the representative social and moral bond, is undermined by moral blindness or lack of scruple" (lv), is a concept which has been carried on by Michael McCanles, who posits the start of the various tragedies to be Leantio's naive inability to deal with the fallout (moral and otherwise) from stealing his bride from her family, which is manifested in his subsequent loss of her to the Duke (207), and Ann C. Christenson who argues that the play is concerned with the setting up of these households, "foreshadowing in these events the inevitable falls to come" (493). Anthony Dawson's analysis of the Ward that concludes him to be "a brutalised embodiment of the male fantasies in operation for the rest of the play – he does the same thing as Leantio and the Duke, only in a cruder way" (307) is extended by Jowett into an examination of the final

tragedy itself as a brutalised and lethal reimagining of the earlier chess game (1492). I wish to extend this idea into an understanding that the gaming that the Ward participates in, for all the ludicrous aggression and inherent destructiveness that it reveals about him, serves as an extended metaphor of the issues that plague the other characters, namely their own lacking masculinity that undermines whatever victories they can achieve. Even without the Ward's obsession with gaming at the expense of any direction to his life, there is little perceivable intellect or steadfast masculinity to Hippolito lusting and actively coupling with his niece. Neither can the Duke, despite pulling off a coup of masculine intellect and force in the use of a chess game to lure Bianca into a position to be forcibly seduced, get beyond the immoderate lust he feels for a woman who is already married, a desire which will return to haunt him. In all of these cases, the lustful and therefore inadequate masculinity that these men display will come back to haunt them. It is then left to Livia to provide the rest of the horror, with her cunning in the games and attempts at conquest that permeate the play eventually being outmatched by her own passion that helps to precipitate the final, deadly sequence of events. The wages of failing to maintain masculine constancy in favour of lustful indulgence, as shown in the world of Middleton's play, are death and destruction to all that is good. It is not simply the lustful prince who cannot reign long, it is the lustful male who weakens the hierarchies surrounding him.

The inadequately masculine male was, at the very least, a figure of scorn in early modern European culture due to the danger he posed to the current system. This applied equally to the private male who failed to display adequate masculinity within his own immediate circle of influence as it did to those of greater public importance. Military misfortunes notwithstanding, those men unable to restrain their wives from adultery risked not only damage to their reputation via being labelled as cuckolds and having their reputations damaged, but damage to the viability of their society. In a world where the

patriarchal family structure was venerated as a microcosm of the supposedly natural order inherent in a healthy and prosperous society, the male that was unable to enforce such authority within his own personal sphere threatened to unleash the monstrosity of a woman that was free from the control of rational masculinity. In order to satisfy such private and public obligations, a man required evidence that his attributes encompassed both aggression to fight and the good judgement to engage in appropriate conquests. He who lacked such calm logic was not one who could be relied upon to properly contribute to either the maintenance of an obedient household, or the stability of society's hierarchies. He was, if not more woman than man, then certainly more boy than man.

Within early modern European culture, a man's aptitude for calm reasoning defined his masculinity just as much as his physical strength, yet such skills could only be gained from experience and age. From the time a boy was 'breeched' (dressed in doublets and hose rather than the genderless gowns of the toddler) at age seven, he was expected to begin striving towards manhood, a process that would lead him to occupy, as Bruce Smith explains, "a precarious position in the social order . . . expected to defer and submit to parents and masters . . . [yet] encouraged to be independent . . . The result was often a confusion of control and licence" (78). Between 17 and 27 according to Roger Ascham in The Schoolmaster, quoted by Smith, was "the most dangerous time of all in a man's life and most slippery to stay well in" (F1^v). In the midst of exemplifying the strength and boldness implicit within his masculine heat, the youth was equally required to become proficient in cool logic and rationality, a gradual process that could only be done through experience. The male without this calm reasoning would be, despite his physical strength and aggression, only part of the way to either properly displaying or reaping the fruits of his labours. Renaissance culture encouraged masculinity not only because of its abilities to succeed in the rough-and-tumble world of immediate conquest through brute force, but because of its ability to solidify

and maintain such conquests through rational thought and steadfast leadership. The immoderately raging and aggressive youth was one who was just as likely to tend towards destruction as he was towards the upkeep of society. Particularly in regards to sexual congress, he risked derogating himself to a beast. The Renaissance man should ideally only “couple that [he] might not couple”, indulging only as far as was necessary to assert a marriage and produce heirs, while a beast would instead “couple not to ingender but to satisfy the sting of lust”, thereby losing himself in the sins of the flesh rather than triumphing over them. In keeping with this necessity for marriage to be a site of societal harmony through masculine domination, the marriage age for most young men at the time was twenty-eight or twenty-nine, except for the rich and influential where such considerations were forced to take a backseat to financial and political necessities (Smith 78). Middleton shows such shenanigans openly with the Ward, as his Guardian desires to marry him off so that he may make use of the dowry. Coupled with his rather tender age, the Ward’s unfocused aggression in his game-play gives him away as a male who is really more of a boy, who thus lacks the masculinity to properly succeed.

The reactions of those awaiting the Ward’s arrival give the first indication as to where his flaws lie, amplified by the Ward himself as he converses with Sordido about his sexual indulgence. Isabella’s father, Fabritio, specifically instructs his daughter beforehand that he will brook no dissent from his idea that she should marry the Ward. Her only real purpose to the proceedings is to “[s]ee what you mean to like; nay, and I charge you, / Like what you see” (I.ii.76-77), since “There’s no dallying. / the gentleman’s almost twenty, and ’tis time / He were getting lawful heirs, and you a-breeding on ’em” (I.ii.77-79). The young man’s foolishness is irrelevant to Fabritio, since “he’s rich; / The fool’s hid under bushels” (I.ii.84-85), but to Isabella’s aunt Livia, the fool is “not so hid, neither”, given that she spies “a foul great piece of him” (I.ii.86-87). The manner of his entrance thus hinted at, the Ward proceeds

to live up to the worst of all fears, revealing himself to be perceptibly lacking in any sense of control. His ‘tip-cat’ games, while displaying his skill at that pastime and his dedication to winning them, have tendencies to spill over into indiscriminate violence against innocent parties, such as the son of the poulterer’s wife. Furthermore, this attitude towards violent conquest is directly related to the indiscriminate attitude he displays towards sexual coupling. Boasts that he would not lose a “fair end” for anything are accompanied by Sordido’s lewd double-entendre that the Ward should lay his “cat and cat-stick safe . . . i’th’chimney-corner [female genitals]” (I.ii.104-105), further opining that “your cats [whores] are always safe i’th’chimney-corner, / unless they burn their coats [display the symptoms of venereal disease]” (I.ii.106-107). The Ward cannot help but admit to the truth in such a jest, commenting that “Marry, that I am afraid on” (II.i.107), further revealing that whether or not he has participated in such acts in the past, he is more likely than not to indulge in them in the future. Indeed he delights in such debasing animalistic imagery, proudly stating that “I can stoop gallantly / And pitch out when I list; I’m dog at a hole” (I.ii.111-112). Any further evidence that he lacks the facility for control is provided by his own words as he vows that, if not satisfied, his sexual passions will drive him to further acts of depravity:

WARD: I mar’l my guardianer does not seek a wife for me;

I protest I’ll have a bout with the maids else,

Or contract myself at midnight to the larderwoman

In presence of a fool or a sack-posset.

GUARDIANO: Ward!

WARD: [*to Sordido*] I feel myself after any exercise

Horribly prone. Let me but ride, I’m lusty –

A cock-horse straight, i’faith.

GUARDIANO:

Why, ward, I say!

WARD: [*to Sordido*] I'll forswear eating eggs in moonshine nights.

There's ne'er a one I eat but turns into a cock

In four-and-twenty hours. If my hot blood

Be not took down in time, sure 'twill crow shortly. (I.ii.114-125)

For the Ward, the desire for sexual coupling approaches obsession. A wife is less a necessary adjunct to beginning the masculine business of running a household than a site for lustful indulgence. Without a wife, the Ward promises that the female servants would not be safe from him, even raising the possibility that for the sake of sexual gratification itself, he would verbally contract himself to the larderwoman, albeit within the presence of “witnesses” that could be repudiated, such as a “sack-posset” (a hot milk dish that would be curdled with white wine and flavoured with sugar and spices) or a fool (in the context, possibly also meaning a custard or dish of whipped cream) (Jowett 1498). Even masculine exercise, that should impart by its process the calm reasoning of the true male, merely leaves him ever more eager to indulge in lustful excess, an outcome that should not be so surprising given his mentality when he plays at any game. The common egg may have been regarded as an aphrodisiac in Renaissance times (1498), but the Ward's lust is so overpowering that even one would turn into a “cock”, which the Ward insists is already on the verge of “crowing”. Yet, the Ward neither cares nor desires to extend his mind to more mature or controlled purpose. Guardiano's comment that “I must new school you” (I.ii.126) (possibly in the arts of mature manhood), is treated with derision by a fool who “scorn[s] that now; I am past schooling. / I was not so base to learn to write and read; / I was born to better fortunes in my cradle” (I.ii.127-129). Even when Fabritio instructs his daughter that, “This is your husband. / Like him or like him not, wench, you shall have him, / And you shall love him” (I.ii.130-132), Isabella confesses in an aside that her father asks an impossibility of her: “Men buy their slaves, but women buy their masters” (I.ii.178) after all, and, “Marry a fool! / Can there be

greater misery to a woman / That means to keep her days true to her husband / And know no other man?" (I.ii.161-164). In the thralls of such a marriage, Isabella asks rhetorically, "Why, how can I obey and honour him, / But I must needs commit idolatry?", since "A fool is but the image of a man" (I.ii.165-167). By his foolishness and monstrous nature, the Ward's 'furious' gaming is ultimately futile since he cannot command respect or order in a marriage. Rather than a genuinely masculine man, he is but a mere 'shadow' of one, as will be proved with both Isabella's adultery and the Ward's obliviousness to it.

The relationship that Isabella pursues with Hippolito is one which further demonstrates that the Ward is primarily a fool, not simply in the sense that he has driven Isabella to such an act, but in his absolute obliviousness to the reality of the situation. His talk of his own gaming excellence, while initially impressive, is soon proved to be more than a little shallow. His gaming may be furious but is filled with evidence of both sexual impotence and an inability to stop himself from jumping the gun. Just after a game of shuttle-cock, the Ward jests that upon the very thought of his soon-to-be wife, "[t]here's e'en another thing too / Must be kept up with a pair of battledores [shuttlecock rackets / slang for testes]" (II.ii.82-83). Yet, such sexual bravado is more fantasy than reality. When Guardiano allows that the Ward may see Isabella without his presence for a short time, the analogies to the sport of "birding", along with the innuendos of "thrumming", "shooting the bolt" and "missing the mark", further present the Ward as both prone to "shooting" too soon and lacking any semblance of consistent success:

WARD: I warrant you, guardiner, I'll not stand all day

thrumming,

But quickly shoot my bolt at your next coming.

GUARDIANO: Well said: good fortune to your birding then.

[Exit GUARDIANO]

WARD: I never missed mark yet.

SORDIDO: Troth, I think, master, if the truth were known,

You never shot at any but the kitchen wench,

And that was a she-woodcock, a mere innocent

That was oft lost and cried at eight-and-twenty. (III.iii.16-23)

This rather limited ability is emphasized even more when he is conversing with Isabella. The Ward's preoccupation with seeing all of Isabella's teeth, "For I'll not bate her / a tooth, nor take a black one into th' bargain" (III.iii.83-84), and his delight when she reports that she plays both at 'shittlecock' and "at stool-ball, sir; I have great luck at it" (III.iii.90) leads him to then miss the adulterous implications of Isabella's answer: "I have caught two [balls] in my lap at one game" (III.iii.92). A little earlier, he has symbolically, if unwittingly, allowed his place to be taken by Isabella's uncle Hippolito, who is conducting a clandestine affair with her, under the guise of having no genuine birth relation to her. Indeed, in the Duke's banquet, the Ward turns down the opportunity to partake in courtly dancing with Isabella, despite the advice from Fabritio that it will give him an opportunity to "see, young heir, what you've [got] for your money, / Without fraud or imposture" (III.ii.176-177). The symbology of courtly dancing defined it as a manifestation of the ideal form that masculine desire should take, with the male presenting himself as truly dominant and controlling while the woman was to conform to the qualities of her own gender, to be shown submissive and pliant to her partner's demands. Whether the dance undertaken was to be the stately "pavane", or the more acrobatic yet still male-centred "galliard" (to be somewhat disregarded in the seventeenth century in favour of the "coranto", a foreign dance requiring even more vigorous displays of athleticism from the man), courtly dancing acted as a representation of the correct gender roles (Howard, Courtly Dancing 51). Nor was dancing free of sexual double-entendre (Jowett 1521), innuendo that was most likely unavoidable, given that it was practiced by male-female

couples and that proper performance relied upon the virile and actively controlling male taking the lead. Consequently, therefore, it is appropriate and expected that the immature Ward, in the words of Guardiano, “has not the wit himself [to undertake the task]” (III.ii.193). Instead, he points to Hippolito, unwittingly being more accurate than he realises when he supposes “[p]erhaps he knows the manner of her dancing too. / I’ll have him do’t before me” (III.ii.184-185), later dancing with Isabella in a manner that, according to the stage direction, “ridiculously imitates Hippolito”. Much like Isabella has said previously, the Ward is a ridiculous image of the truly masculine man who would have properly dominated her, and has become a cuckold as a direct result of his own masculine inadequacies. Upon learning of this infidelity, the Ward bemoans himself to be thus “damned! / . . . / One of the wicked – dost not see’t? – a plain reprobate cuckold” (IV.ii.79-81). By becoming the victim of cuckoldery, the Ward himself is now “damned” and “wicked”, a symbol of inadequate manhood who can only regain his status through future victory, which he will both attempt and ultimately fail at in the climactic mass performance of Act 5. His ‘furious’ gaming passion brought to the fore by this infidelity, the Ward responds with glee to Guardiano’s suggestion that they conspire at Hippolito’s death. In accordance with his guardian’s instruction, he will set a “caltrop” [an “instrument of war with four metal spikes arranged so that one always projects upwards” (Jowett 1536)] beneath a trap door, waiting for the “stamp” signalling that Hippolito is overhead. Yet Guardiano must still consider an alternate plan in the rather likely event that the Ward will fail even in this simple task:

GUARDIANO. But when thou hear’st me give a stamp, down with ‘t –

The villain’s caught then.

WARD. If I miss you [giving the signal], hang me; I love to catch a

Villain, and your stamp shall go current I warrant you.

.....

GUARDIANO: If this should any way miscarry now,

As [even though], if the fool be nimble enough, 'tis certain,

The pages that present the swift-winged Cupids

Are taught to hit him with their shafts of love –

Fitting his part – which I have cunningly poisoned.

He cannot 'scape my fury . . . (V.i.11-33)

The Ward, in fact, reacts to Hippolito striking the floor in grief upon Isabella's death and, in pulling the lever for the trap-door, lets down Guardiano to die upon the 'caltrop'. Much like the games of 'tip-cat' that he played before his entrance where his shots strayed beyond his target to assault innocent bystanders, his final attempt at violent retribution has resulted in the murder of his benefactor rather than his enemy. Having thus lost both his guardian and the money that he was dependent upon, he has little choice but to flee potentially beyond the boundaries of the law: "Fear put to present flight at the voice of [a dying Guardiano]" (V.i.220). This final miscalculation is the last straw for the Ward whose immature capacity for indiscriminate gaming and lack of masculine reason have essentially destroyed any future life for him. His devotion to gaming is not matched by a logical mind that he requires to be a true conqueror. He is a lustful fool, a cuckold and now, albeit inadvertently, an outcast. To be furious when in game may be potentially admirable, but without the calm, manly rationality to control himself properly, the Ward can never become more than an 'image' of a truly masculine man.

In comparison, the machinations of the chess-game in Act 2 Scene 2, the means by which Bianca is seduced by the Duke, show how the exercise of subtlety and careful planning can result in the type of successfully aggressive sexual domination that is the domain of the genuinely victorious. The Ward may claim that he would not lose 'a fair end' for anything, but it is left to those with a greater capacity for rational thought, such as the Duke, Guardiano

and Livia, to achieve such a goal. The use of the chess-game, to match Livia's victory over Leantio's mother at the game with the Duke's successful seduction of Bianca, highlights not only the relationship in the period between gaming and sexuality, but the importance of chess itself as a game where sexual and physical domination are one and the same.

Certainly during the English Renaissance, chess's origins as a simulation of warfare were equally infused with concepts of sexual dominance. H. J. R. Murray, in his 1952 history of chess, may begin by stating that, "Historically, chess must be classed as a game of war" (25), but his analysis shows that sexual implications in the game were relatively commonplace as early as the Middle Ages. Indeed, "at chess the sexes met on equal terms . . . It was even permissible to visit a lady in her chamber to play chess with her, or for her amusement" (436), one of very few situations at the time when a gentleman entering a lady's chamber would not be frowned upon (Poole 52). Perhaps inevitably, in the examples presented by Murray, this situation is presented as ripe to be abused by the amorous. Literary allusions to chess, according to Murray, go back to the middle ages: "In *Raoul de Cambrai* [twelfth-thirteenth century France], Beatrix has fallen in love with young Bernier, but he is afflicted with shyness; she invites him, therefore, to play at chess or tables in her room, in order to give him a chance of speech" (*History of Chess* 436-437). William Poole goes further when discussing the chess scene from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, noting that "[w]hen using chess metaphors, Shakespeare seems to have privileged the military, oppositional dimension of the game, not its air of courtly relaxation" (55), before concluding that, in order to understand the resonances in the chess game between Ferdinand and Miranda, the reader is required "to understand a tradition identifying chess with combat, gambling, and sexual strife" (69-70). What stands out clearly in the exchange between the two lovers is Miranda's conflation of material gain with sexual domination, implying subtly yet strongly that success at the game is

an example of the success that he would enjoy at acquisition of property, which may well include her:

MIRANDA: Sweet Lord, you play me false.

FERDINAND: No my dearest love,
I would not for the world.

MIRANDA: Yes, for a score of Kingdoms, you should wrangle,
And I would call it fair play. (V.i.172-175)

Miranda not only holds no animosity towards Ferdinand upon the suspicion that he has cheated, she considers it imperative for success. Indeed, she feels that, when the stakes are high, it is only appropriate to “wrangle” for such material goods. Furthermore, she represents herself as one of those items that he would gain upon victory, an outcome that she would regard as “fair play” regardless of how such a victory is obtained. One of the few games where a man and woman could legitimately spend unsupervised time together, but which was historically notorious for inspiring sexual misconduct, these instincts that guide a man towards material success and conquest are conflated with the same instincts that push a man towards aggressive sexual conquest. Furthermore, such inclinations are considered critical for him. Within the chess scene of Women Beware Women, those conspirators against Bianca equally conflate successful game play with successful sexual domination, resulting with the Duke, at least for a time, gaining conquest and expressing dominance over not only Bianca but her now estranged husband Leantio, who has been deprived of this particular ‘Kingdom’. For a time during and after this victory, the Duke is practically unassailable.

The game of chess planned at Livia’s house is the apogee of the plot hatched between her, the Duke, and Guardiano, to isolate Bianca so that the Duke may sexually pursue her. Livia first invites the Mother, who happens to be the wealthy Livia’s “Sunday-dinner woman”, and “Thursday –supper woman”, either one who assisted in preparing these meals

for her, or a poorly-off guest who was invited twice a week as an act of charity (Jowett 1505, Carroll 34). The Mother has been charged by Leantio with keeping Bianca, his new wife, out of sight for fear that she may be taken from him, but neither of them have reckoned with the mental capacity of Livia, who proudly claims to Guardiano that if she does not match his considerable abilities for guile and Machiavellian planning, “I’ll quite give o’er, and shut up shop in cunning” (II.ii.27). Seemingly in the spirit of hospitality, Livia summons the Mother to her and good-naturedly refuses her leave to exit, offering “Come, we’ll to chess or draughts. There are an hundred tricks / To drive out time till supper, never fear’t wench” (II.ii.187-188), mockingly berating her when the Mother naively reveals that Bianca is still at home, and chiding her that “Now I beshrew you! / Could you be so unkind to her and me / To come and not bring her? Faith, ’tis not friendly . . . Make some amends, and send for her betimes” (II.ii.213-223). Once in the house, Guardiano lures Bianca to an upstairs bedroom where the Duke is waiting for her under a pretense that “[t]he gentlewoman [Bianca], / Being a stranger, would take more delight / To see your rooms and pictures” (II.ii.270-272). Guardiano, in reality, takes much joy in “[h]ow prettily the poor fool was beguiled, / How unexpectedly! It’s a witty age” (II.ii.394-395), further revealing after the act that “to prepare her stomach by degrees / To Cupid’s feast, because I saw ’twas queasy, / I showed her naked pictures by the way: / A bit to stay the appetite” (II.ii.400-403). Upon the exit of Bianca and Guardiano, the plot climaxes as the chess game continues on the main stage, acting as a commentary on what is effectively the rape of Bianca happening in the upper balcony, embodying both the violence and the sense of conquest that the Duke brings to the situation.

The chess game mirrors the seduction happening in the upper balcony in its aggression and the violence that, while symbolic in the chess game, are physically manifest in the actions of the Duke. Both Livia and the Mother engage in sexual metaphor (intentional and unintentional, respectively) as their game begins and progresses. Guardiano reassures

them that there would be no better impetus for him and Bianca to converse pleasantly, “[t]han your discourses and your partner’s there” (II.ii.288-289), leaving the Mother to innocently marvel, in her last words to Guardiano before he disappears with Bianca up the stairs, that “I listened to you, sir; / Though when you spoke there came a paltry rook / Full in my way, and chokes up all my game” (II.ii.290-292). The game continues in a similar vein, with Livia outmatching the Mother and using double-entendres to exult in the victory over Bianca, once it happens:

LIVIA: Alas, poor widow, I shall be too hard for thee.

MOTHER: You’re cunning at the game, I’ll be sworn, madam.

LIVIA: It will be found so, ere I give you over.

She that can place her man well –

MOTHER: As you do, madam.

LIVIA: As I shall, wench – can never lose her game.

[Mother offers to move at chess]

Nay, nay, the black king’s mine.

MOTHER: Cry you mercy, madam.

LIVIA: And this my queen.

MOTHER: I see’t now.

[She moves at chess]

LIVIA: Here’s a duke

Will strike a sure stroke for the game anon.

[She moves at chess]

Your pawn cannot come back to relieve itself. (II.ii.293-301)

It is very soon after this point that the action switches to the upper balcony. Surprised by the Duke and left unprotected by Guardiano, Bianca is now in a position where the Duke can put

into practice the game-play that Livia has mentioned upon Bianca, making more explicit the latent violence of the chess game, through his vows and his veiled threats:

[He takes hold of her]

BIANCA: O, treachery to honour!

DUKE: Prithee, thremble not.

I feel thy breast shake shake like a turtle panting

Under a loving hand that makes much on't.

.....

You know me, you have seen me; here's a heart

Can witness I have seen thee.

BIANCA: The more's my danger.

DUKE: The more's thy happiness. Pish, strive not, sweet.

This strength were excellent employed in love now,

But here 'tis spent amiss. Strive not to seek

Thy liberty and keep me in prison.

I'faith, you shall not out till I'm released now.

We'll be both freed together, or stay still by't;

So is captivity pleasant.

BIANCA: O, my lord!

DUKE: I am not here in vain. Have but the leisure

To think on that, and thou'll soon be resolved.

The lifting of thy voice is but like one

That does exalt his enemy, who, proving high,

Lays all the plots to confound him that raised him.

Take warning, I beseech thee. Thou seem'st to me

A creature so composed of gentleness
 And delicate meekness, such as bless the faces
 Of figures that are drawn for goddesses
 And make art proud to look upon her work,
 I should be sorry the least force should lay
 An unkind touch upon thee. (II.ii.319-344)

The parallels between the chess game and the seduction/rape are open and clear. Livia, as the Mother must confess, is “cunning at the game”, while the Duke, as he brags when coercing Bianca, is the man who “lays all the plots to confound him”. Livia claims that she who can “place her man well – can never lose a game” and can then point to her duke that “will strike a sure stroke for the game anon”, while the Mother’s pawn “cannot come back to relieve itself”. Similarly, the Duke has Bianca literally trapped, physically holding her and claiming that, while he is in prison himself, “you shall not out till I’m released now”, promising that until he has symbolically “struck a sure stroke”, she will not leave. Nor is this conflation between sexual coupling and violence on the part of either the Duke or Livia a mistake. Fully expectant that he will be successful, the Duke is certain that “I am not here in vain”. Yet, he further coerces her with a delicately phrased yet unambiguous threat that, given her beauty and mildness, he would regret if “the least force should lay / An unkind touch upon thee”. While the Duke plans his “sure stroke” to be the sexual conquest of Bianca, he displays himself equally prepared to deal a similar “stroke” in physically conquering her in the process if the need should arise. Much as Livia’s goal within the rules of the game of chess is to reign victorious over her opponent, the Duke’s prerogative is to dominate Bianca. By using the chess-game to mirror the seduction in the upper balcony, the play comments on not only the plot being hatched, but the aggression with which each is pursued. In the context of both the chess game between Livia and the Mother, and the seduction/rape of Bianca, violence and

sexual conquest are immutably linked. Whether implicit or explicit, the threat of violence and physical domination is ever-present. Nor do the parallels between the game and the plot stop with Bianca's seduction. Much as Livia achieves the conquest of the Mother, so does the Duke achieve the conquest of Leantio.

Livia and the Duke's defeat of Bianca is not merely limited to a conquest of her, they are responsible for the conquest of the Mother and her husband, who are both defeated and deprived of their property, whether it be the chess pieces in the game or a wife. Leantio has left town on business and charged his Mother with keeping his new bride out of sight, for fear that she will be stolen away from him. Acting in the stead of Leantio, therefore, the Mother is the temporary owner of Bianca. What happens to the Mother in the chess-game, in effect, is carried over to what the Duke can perpetrate upon Leantio at the banquet and beyond. When Livia claims "your pawn cannot come back to relieve itself", the word 'your' is instructive. Bianca, for the time that her husband is away, is the property of the Mother, currently being used without her knowledge: as Livia crows to her adversary, "I have given thee blind mate twice" (II.ii.387). However, such ownership then transfers back to Leantio who, unaware that his property is being spoiled, has also been given "blind mate" by those seeking to conquer his wife. When the Mother claims at the game's conclusion that it is Livia's "duke" (the rook) who has "done me all the mischief in this game" (II.ii.415), it is equally to Leantio that the Duke has done and will continue to do such mischief. The Mother loses the "pawn", as will Leantio, who is ordered to attend the later banquet, where both the Duke flaunts his implied sexual victory over Bianca (who leaves her husband to sit alongside her sexual conqueror) in front of the defeated husband. The Duke goes on to emphasise his victory over Leantio by presenting him with the dubious honour of the "captainship of Ruinese citadel" as sneering compensation, dubious because the position is "a place of credit, / I must confess, but poor. My factorship / Shall not exchange means with it" (III.ii.344-346). In fact the last man to

have the position, “was no drunkard, yet he died a beggar, / For all his thrift” (III.ii.347-348). By throwing Leantio such a poisoned chalice, the Duke further exemplifies his ability to dominate over his competition. The use of the chess-game to both mask and comment upon the Duke’s seduction of Bianca highlights not only the conflation of sexual conquest with the aggression of physical conquest but, with the similarities between Livia’s victory over the Mother in the game and the Duke’s continued control over Leantio beyond the end of said game, places in stark relief the sexual and material conquest that can accrue for those who have the control and cool, subtle mind to actively dominate those that they take up against, consequently depriving those adversaries of any such fruits of conquest. Furthermore, much like the Ward, it is not simply that those who are victorious display those abilities that mark them as properly masculine. The victims of such schemes and individuals tend to be those who are lacking precisely those critical attributes.

The characteristics of this play are summed up by the Ward. Characters, by and large, are anxious to acquit themselves as victorious, particularly in matters of sexuality. In satisfying such desires for sexual conquest, they engage in behaviour which, ostensibly at least, displays the tendencies thought to be a necessity for those bent upon conquest. However, the gaming aggression engaged in has not been tempered by the control and maturity of the genuinely victorious. Such issues for men such as Leantio and Hippolito mark an incapability to maintain hierarchical control, manifested in the roles played by each in precipitating the chaos of the final scene. Not even the Duke is immune to such lustful excess, which eventually brings about his downfall. In women such as Livia, Bianca and to a somewhat lesser extent Isabella, such sexual aggression is virtually fated to lead to anarchy. If the Renaissance male ideally “coupled so as to not couple”, then both the men and women of Women Beware Women couple in order to gorge themselves upon sensual delights, a lack of control that extends to the scenes of excessive violence. The lack of control is not

necessarily in the violent acts themselves, but rather is manifest in the continual mistakes and misfortunes that result from these attempts to exercise dominance. By the end of the play, the only character left to take over and continue the kingdom is the elderly, childless Cardinal, who will likely die without leaving an heir. Such an end, as the lack of masculinity was feared to bring about, would imperil a kingdom that depended upon a patriarchal lineage for rule.

From the opening scene comes the concept of men whose desire over-rides any sense of reason. Leantio begins the play openly regarding his wife as an especially valued piece of property, describing her as “the most unvalued’st [priceless] purchase / That youth of man had ever knowledge of” (I.i.12-13). Even in stealing his new wife away from her family: “From parents great in wealth, now more in rage” (I.i.50), this is a crime justified by the valued conquest that ensued, such that it is “never to be repented, mother, / . . . I had died if I had not sinned. / And here’s my masterpiece; do you now behold her. / Look on her well, she’s mine” (I.i.39-42). Yet, despite his claims to clear conscience, Leantio is constantly worried that “If [the marriage] be known, I have lost her” (I.i.47), compounded by his own lack of funds since, as the Mother points out, “You’re to blame, / hitherto your own means has but made shift / To keep you single, and that hardly, too. / . . . / . . . We are full of wants, / And cannot welcome worth” (I.i.56-121). His masculine rhetoric aside, Leantio’s desires have inspired him to grasp beyond what he is able to reasonably maintain. In light of the Duke gaining Bianca for his own and proclaiming so to the world at large, Leantio’s acceptance of Livia’s expressions of lust is the shedding of the masculine rhetoric he aspired to earlier. He had previously scorned the idea of lustful pleasure as “but the idiot to affection, / That plays hot-cockles with rich merchants’ wives” (I.ii.25), connecting it with the collective debasement implicit in the practice of the old rustic game. When approached by Livia, however, he forgets his lamentations over the loss of his wife to grab at the chance for

wealth, even if he will have no masculine authority. Livia will give him all his avarice could want, “Only, sir, wear your heart of constant stuff. / Do but you love enough, I’ll give enough” (III.ii.374-375), to which Leantio gleefully promises, “Troth then, I’ll love enough and take enough” (III.ii.376). Regardless of what masculine airs he had given himself earlier, the loss of his ‘possession’, Bianca, coupled with the vista of becoming a sexual servant to a wealthy woman reveals him for the innately weak and lustful man he is. Indeed, it is his future appearance at court to shamelessly parade that he is now kept in luxurious comfort by Livia: “A cheerful and a beauteous benefactor, too, / As e’er erected the good works of love” (IV.i.72-73) to infuriate Bianca, that gets him killed. Yet, nor is he the only man to be exposed as lustful beyond good sense. Such flaws also plague the man who will eventually go on to kill Leantio in hand-to-hand combat, Hippolito.

Hippolito may not be as openly lustful as either the Ward or Leantio, but his fatal passion for his niece Isabella is that which will ultimately determine his death, a passion by which he is tormented from the start. In the midst of Livia embracing her brother and endorsing him as a site “[w]here all good parts better express themselves” (I.ii.149), he is struggling with the knowledge that his niece will soon be married off to the Ward, proclaiming of his incestuous desires to the audience only that, “Heaven has forbid it, / And ’tis most meet that I should rather perish / Than the decree divine receive the least blemish” (I.ii.155-157). Regardless of such attempts, he soon confesses his feelings to Isabella that, “As a man loves his wife, so love I thee” (I.ii.219), an admission that horrifies her and leaves him bereft. Aware as he is of the monstrous nature of such desire, he is only too willing to fulfil it once, misled by Livia’s lies, Isabella reciprocates his affections. He may remind himself that her marriage to the Ward, “is the only veil wit can devise / To keep our acts hid from sin-piercing eyes” (II.ii.237-238), but he still exults at such a change, “Never came joys so unexpectedly / To meet desires in man” (II.ii.229-230). Despite his

privately sneering at the Ward's ineptitude with Isabella, "fear't not fool; she's took a better order" (III.ii.181), he is little better in regards to his own sense of rational control. The Duke judges Hippolito similarly when planning to inflame him towards killing Leantio, remarking that "[h]e is a blood soon stirred; and as he's quick / To apprehend a wrong, he's bold and sudden / In bringing forth a ruin. / . . . / The ulcerous reputation feels the poise / Of slightest wrongs, as sores are vexed with flies" (IV.i.132-141). Hippolito matches that description perfectly, accepting without question the Duke's fiction that Livia's antics with Leantio destroyed the plans for her to marry the rich Vincentio and quickly deciding to "take the course, / Which she shall never know till it be acted" (IV.i.169-170). On the contrary, when Livia discovers her lover dead at his hands, she discloses all the details of "the black lust 'twixt thy niece and thee / That has kept close so long" (IV.ii.66-67). Hippolito may place himself somewhat above Leantio and the Ward, but he suffers from a similar lack of masculine reason to control his aggression or his lust. Yet, such a sense of excess pervades the play that few characters can escape. Not even the main architects of the subtle machinations of the chess-game, the Duke and Livia, are free from such destructive excess. Indeed, it is at least partly because of their unchecked sexual desires that the tragedy of the play within a play at the end claims not only the lives of most of those surrounding them, but their lives too.

This effeminate tendency towards wanton sexuality at the expense of the form of rational self-control necessary for masculine conquest affects even the Duke who, despite his prowess, indulges in a relationship that results in his own death. In comparison to the endless gaming and empty bragging of the Ward, the Duke's attempt at gaming for sexual advantage is much more successful. His seduction/rape of Bianca shows both his capacity for not just the aggressive desire for conquest, but an inclination towards cool-headed rationality and subtle planning that marks the truly masculine individual who can both gain and keep the

fruits of conquest. Yet, successful as it may be, the impetus for this seduction is based upon his complete infatuation with her, which Guardiano suggests is beyond any sense of rational thought: “The Duke himself first spied her at the window; / Then in a rapture . . . / . . . / pointed to the window warily . . . / . . . / I ne’er knew him so infinitely taken with a woman” (II.ii.8-14). To his sternly moralising brother the Cardinal, in fact, the sight of his philandering brother appears “[t]o my eyes, lost for ever” (IV.i.187), lost both in his enrapture in Bianca and in his damnation, which must eventuate as a result of his taking of a married woman. The Duke may promise to himself afterwards that until he and Bianca are married, they will not couple sexually, for “I have vowed / Never to know her as a strumpet more, / And I must save my oath” (IV.iii.269-271), but he has already set the stage for Leantio’s death, planning that “[Bianca’s] husband dies tonight, or at the most / Lives not to see the morning next . . . / Then will I make her lawfully mine” (IV.i.272-274). The Cardinal’s condemnation and implicit promise that “Lust is bold, / And will have vengeance speak ere’t be controlled” (IV.iii.71-72) is proven true not only by the scheming of the Duke, but by the subsequent fury and grief from Livia as she finds that the nefarious plotting she once engaged in has now claimed her as a victim as well.

Despite her own mental acumen and capacity for conquest, displayed to perfection in the chess-game against the Mother, Livia spends the rest of the play satisfying her own desires with so little concern for either law or considered thought that, much like the Duke, she ends the play in death, killed as a result of her own iniquities. It is indeed in the aftermath of the chess-game when Bianca, having now been violated, curses her in an aside, muttering “[y]ou’re a damned bawd” (II.ii.464), that Livia exposes herself as one experienced in the matter of ‘sinning’, dismissing Bianca’s agony and injury as “but a qualm of honour; ’twill away; / A little bitter for the first time, but lasts not. / Sin tastes at the first draught like wormwood-water, / But drunk again, ’tis nectar ever after” (II.ii.473-476). She has earlier

acted as a bawd when attempting to indulge her brother's passion for Isabella, remarking after she promises to deliver her for him that, "Would I loved you not so well / I'll go to bed, and leave this deed undone . . . I took a course to pity him so much now / That I have none left for modesty and myself" (II.i.63-69). Upon meeting Leantio, Livia grasps the opportunity for further indulgence of her sexual desires. Much as the Duke was infatuated by Bianca from first sight, Livia is likewise smitten immediately, both marvelling that "[n]or [did I] ever truly feel the power of love / And pity to a man til I knew him" (III.ii.62-63), and determining that "I have enough to buy me my desires, / And yet to spare, that's one good comfort" (III.ii.64-65). When she finally gets Leantio's full attention, she proposes that he become her richly-attired possession and indulgent play-thing, rather than a properly masculine male. She promises the base, yet greedy Leantio that she is incredibly wealthy "[i]n wordly treasure. Trust me, I have enough, sir, / To make my friend a rich man in my life . . . The gallanter you go, the more you please me. / I will allow you too your page and footman, / Your racehorses, or any other pleasure / Exercised youthful delights in" (III.ii.361-373). In doing this, however, she forgets that former discretion that she practised, admitting all when she discovers that Hippolito has killed Leantio in a duel. Isabella hears that she is now in a relationship that makes both her and her uncle "[a]s monstrous as a prodigy, and as dreadful" (IV.ii.60) as a result of "the black lust 'twixt thy niece and thee / That has kept close for so long" (IV.ii.66-67). Additionally, "'Twas I [Livia] betrayed thy honour subtly to him / Under a false tale" (IV.ii.73-74). Livia's frenzied revelations of her own doings effectively serve as her death warrant. She recovers and undertakes to "dissemble [her] heart's griefs" (IV.ii.157) so as to deceive those she wishes to destroy, but her outburst has already done its damage. Isabella is now determined that "I may practise the like cruel cunning / Upon her life as she has on mine honour" (IV.ii.149-150) on the woman who "durst dally with a sin so dangerous / And lay a snare so spitefully for my youth" (IV.ii.146-147). The climax for this revenge is the location

for all other revenge in the play to be resolved, the final masque, the play within a play, that results in convoluted strategies for vengeance that target all and kill most. The excesses of those characters that have already been expressed sexually are now expressed through multiple murders, approaching a mass slaughter. Such a debacle bespeaks the seemingly inevitable carnage that results from those without the faculty for calm, subtle reasoning, in the bloodiest way yet.

The ending masque is the culmination of, according to G. B. Shand, Middleton's "unsympathetic treatment of the morally mediocre" (29). It is the point where the lustful and violent excesses that the characters have engaged in are visited back upon them in a scenario which serves as a combination of machiavellian design and fatal accident, neither of which can be separated from the other. Guardiano and Livia, intent on vengeance against Isabella and Hippolito, may consider that "mischief acted / Under the privilege of a marriage-triumph / At the Duke's hasty nuptials will be thought / Things merely accidental" (IV.ii.159-162), yet the truth is probably closer to Hippolito's exchange with a befuddled Duke. The Duke must confess that "I have lost myself in this [play] quite" (V.ii.142), only to have a poisoned Hippolito, who has seen Isabella die and knows that he is dying as he speaks, recognise that confusion as an inevitable state of the schemes of the "morally mediocre": "My great lords, we are all confounded" (V.ii.143). Livia, despite Guardiano's statement that the victory of vengeance can be theirs, reveals herself so distraught by Leantio's death that she confides to him "here the weight of thy loss lies, / Which nothing but destruction can suffice" (IV.iii.230-231). It is indeed mass destruction that rules the play, prompted by the confusion of those who have similarly 'lost' themselves in the play, to leave themselves 'confounded' by their violence, rather than appeased.

Even to the active participants, the violence of the play serves to obscure any purpose rather than illuminate it. From all this myriad of stratagems and counter-stratagems comes a

litany of death. Isabella poisons her aunt with smoke from incense, sneering that, “’Twill try your immortality ’ere I be long” (V.ii.102). Dying, Livia throws “flaming gold” (V.ii.117) at Isabella, killing her. Hippolito, shocked by Isabella’s death, gives a stamp while Guardiano is positioned on the trapdoor. The Ward, as previously discussed, does not “miss” Guardiano, mistakenly dropping him to his death. Just after Livia’s death, the pages/cupids shoot their poisoned arrows at Hippolito. Hippolito, in agony from the poison, runs himself onto a guard’s halbert, killing himself. The poisoned cup that Bianca prepares for the Cardinal is accidentally drunk by the Duke. Upon the death of the Duke, Bianca drinks from the same cup, desiring death. The words of Guardiano to Livia when planning their revenge are blackly humorous, since not only will the designs be thought to be “merely accident” (IV.ii.165), they become accidental, with Guardiano falling prey to his own scheme and the Duke dying from drinking from the wrong cup. Yet, such accidents and unintentional tragedy are perversely appropriate for those who have disregarded the constancy and security of masculine reason, in favour of the alarming rises and falls that accompany the indulgence of passions. The Ward fails in his masculine duty and thus destroys his Guardian and in the process, his future. Hippolito, Isabella, Livia, the Duke and Bianca find themselves equally bereft when their separate sexual and violent indulgences are paid back on their heads. It is the fate of the Duke, however, which is more arbitrary than most.

The accidental poisoning of the Duke, while ostensibly referring to the dangers that surround the actions of the lustful Bianca, speaks equally in a deeper context to the destruction that the Duke unknowingly visits upon himself through his own adherence to overwhelming passion at the expense of the strictures of masculine conquest. Bianca has originally planned to kill the Cardinal because of his opposition to the marriage between the Duke and herself, fearing that such a person alive bodes ill for the future: “He that begins so early to reprove, / Quickly rid him or look for little love . . . Cardinal, you die this night”

(V.i.55-58). Before the performance begins, three servants dressed as masquers, one of whom is quite drunk, present cups of wine to Bianca, the Duke and the Cardinal. It is only when the Cardinal appears unharmed to Bianca's consternation and the Duke remarks that he is "lost in sight and strength" (V.i.222), that the truth is apparent: Bianca contrived for the Cardinal a poisoned cup of wine, but it went to the Duke instead who succumbs quickly and dies.

Distraught with the result of this mistake, Bianca then drinks from the same cup, thereby sealing her own fate. The actual reason for the mistake, as explained by Jowett, is that the drunken masquer mixes up which cups he hands to whom (1537). Yet, the Duke's death is more emblematic of the confusion that he has thrown his life into as a result of his excessive passion for Bianca. Instead of poignant reflection, he records pure confused sensation, crying in his last statement on earth that "My heart swells bigger yet. Help here; break't ope. / My breast flies open next" (V.i.228-229). Furthermore, regardless of the actual mistake that caused his death, it is inescapable that his devotion to a life of lust has killed him. If he had not defied the Cardinal by continuing a sinful existence with Bianca, he would not have inadvertently inspired her to conceive the murderous plans that backfire so disastrously. The last words of Act 4, spoken by the Cardinal, foretell as much, warning that "[l]ust is bold, / And will have vengeance speak ere't be controlled" (IV.iii.71-72). The lack of control has, by now, manifested itself in an event of utter destruction that serves to obscure more than explain. When the Cardinal soberly intones in the last spoken words of the play that "where lust reigns, that prince cannot reign long", he is both symbolic and practical. The destruction of the Duke has been both mental and physical. He loses not simply the morality to reign, he loses any physical capacity to. The excesses of lustful abandon have crushed him utterly.

Far from being unique in the world of the play, the Ward is merely the most overt example of the lustful indulgence that suffuses the characters of Women Beware Women, despite their pretensions to conquest. From his open debasement to the supposed majesty of

the Duke, the possibilities for the constructive influence of masculine conquest and behavior go unfulfilled, to be replaced by the iniquities that come from a worship of pleasure and result in their destruction. For such perverse beings, game-play is a means by which to further their debasement through indulgence, rather than overcome it through conquest. The violence obfuscates, it does not enlighten. If the open lust and directionless violence of the Ward's games at tip-cat serve as a clear precursor to the devastation that he will wreak upon his own future, the more covert iniquities of others serve to reduce both their own futures and the very kingdom they inhabit to the metaphorical rubble of death that envelops the characters. It is Leantio's loss of control over Bianca that foretells his descent into sexual subservience to Livia and his subsequent death by Hippolito. Similarly, Hippolito's skill at the masculine rituals of courtly dancing are a cover for his incestuous desire, as well as the excessive anger that leads him to both kill and be killed. It is a morally lax Bianca who plans the Cardinal's death during the ending masque to ensure her marriage to the Duke, only to fail and accidentally poison her lover. Even those who show an aptitude for the cool thinking and planning imperative for proper conquest cannot escape the consequences of their debasement. The chess game that Livia and the Duke use to forcibly seduce Bianca is a strategic piece of misdirection that both hides and choreographs the rape that the Duke plans upon Bianca. The fallout from this however exposes the weaknesses and lustful indulgences that result in the macabre finale, whereby they will lose themselves in the masque. Not only does Livia's immorality lead her to connive at incest between Hippolito and Isabella, her desire for Leantio kills him and leaves her bereft, except for the planning of vengeance which will ultimately take her life too. Nor is the Duke able to escape. His infatuation with Bianca will lead him to incite murder, defy the moral codes of the land and link himself to a woman who will (albeit accidentally) be the death of him. In the final analysis, the Ward's open debasement is no more destructive or emasculating than that of the people surrounding him.

By comparison, The Changeling further extends this argument into a setting where, despite his open debasement, the seemingly vile De Flores becomes the effective victor in a play where others participate in the same metaphorical game of barley-break that will leave all in ‘hell’. He may not be moral, but he is a conqueror nonetheless and is therefore destined to stand above those he has defeated.

“I coupled with your mate at Barley-break”: The Changeling (1622)

The final scene of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s The Changeling (1622) portrays the final appearance of Beatrice-Joanna, and her lover/partner-in-crime, the repulsive De Flores. With the knowledge that they were responsible for the death of Beatrice’s previous suitor, Alsemero locks them both in his closet to secure them until Beatrice’s father Vermandero, the governor of Alicante, can arrive to render his decision. When they appear back on stage, De Flores is holding Beatrice close to him, having fatally wounded her. While they are both standing there, Beatrice explains to Alsemero that, aside from the murder, she has never lain with him in bed, having instead substituted her waiting-woman Diaphanta. De Flores continues on to describe the situation using the idiom of a contemporary couples-games that is now obsolete. The metaphor is then extended by a distraught Vermandero who feels that the circumstance now encircles the entire world of the play:

BEATRICE: Mine honour fell with him [De Flores], and now my life.

Alsemero, I am a stranger to your bed;

Your bed was cozened upon the nuptial night

For which your false bride died.

ALSEMERO: Diaphanta!

DE FLORES: Yes, and the while I coupled with your mate

At barley-break; now we are left in hell.

VERMANDERO: We are all there; it circumscribes us here. (V.iii.158-164)

Referenced first in 1557 (according to the OED), barley-break was similar to what is now known as Prisoner's Base. The field in which the game was to be played would be marked into 3 sections, with the middle-section being termed as "hell" (Jobling et al, 87). It was in hell that one couple would have to reside until they were able to catch one of the other two couples involved as they ran across the field to get to the other side. Richard Strutt writes that to do so was more difficult for the couple in hell than might first be supposed, "as by the rules of the game, the middle couple were not to separate before they had succeeded, while the others might break hands if they found themselves hard pressed" (372). Apart from Vermandero's immediate meaning in applying this gaming term, that such actions have damned his kingdom and lineage, his statement applies to the entirety of the play, in that both the plot and the sub-plot have essentially comprised metaphorical games of barley-break; characters engaging in deceit attempt to out-run pursuers in an effort to evade capture at all costs. By conspiring with De Flores in a plot to murder the man chosen by Vermandero to be his daughter's future husband, Beatrice-Joanna is thus forced to both sexually "couple" with De Flores as payment for his services and to subsequently plan further deceit and murder to avoid the discovery of her infidelity. The sub-plot, believed to be Rowley's contribution to the enterprise, is an intentional comedic mirroring of the inspiration's tragic purpose, with a pair of gentlemen named Antonio and Francisus pretending to be insane so as to place themselves in proximity to the asylum owner Alibius' young wife Isabella, for the purposes of seduction. Isabella, unlike Beatrice-Joanna, manages to expose their fraud to the world and thus stay true to her husband. The avoidance of capture is the key to judging one's success, since any chicanery plotted can only really visit ill-effects upon the offenders once they are caught. It is only with the discovery of Beatrice-Joanna's adulterous liaison with De Flores that they find themselves in the "hell" of their final embrace before death, or that Antonio and

Franciscus are charged with Alonzo's murder. Until that point, all are in the advantageous position of being powerful enough to satisfy their wildest desires, whether it assists in transforming the world around them into a "hell", or not.

The critical heritage of The Changeling is one of both praise and wonder: Dorothy Farr openly considered it "[t]he greatest dramatic achievement of Middleton and Rowley" (132), while Annabel Patterson is even more fulsome in her praise: "[The Changeling] has [both] defined Middleton's canon around itself [and] enhanced the otherwise slim reputation of William Rowley". Much of this praise has been garnered as a result of, as Patterson states, "a toxic brew of domestic violence, sexual obsession and madness" applied to the "'normality' in the protagonist's consummated sexual relationship" (1632), a description that led the majority of analyses on it, focusing predominantly on the destructive effects of sin and the misogyny that is encouraged in the view of Beatrice-Joanna. J. L. Simmons openly posits that "Beatrice physically and psychically conjoins the feminine abandon and masculine aggression that lead towards a grotesque infinity" (140), a point continued by Michael Neill who suggests that "[the situation with Beatrice] is as if Desdomona had been transformed to the embodiment of female changefulness that Iago made of her" (169). It is Ann Pasternak Slater who discusses "the little hell of barley-break" as swelling "into the ultimate embodiment of the play's central theme" (438), whereby the laws of society are inverted and, in the final scene, "Love becomes murder; the cry of consummation is the cry of destruction; extreme antitheses become one" (439), that leads into Naomi C. Lieber indicting characters other than Beatrice-Joanna for their lack of masculine efficiency, suggesting that "when patriarchy ignores the rules of its own game, it must assume some responsibility for a chain reaction of consequent violations" (372).

My examination of Middleton and Rowley's work will focus on how the final reference to both barley-break and the hell that encompasses all in the main plot serves as an

explanation for the behaviour of those who desire to benefit from surreptitious lust, as well as why they are either successful or unsuccessful. The purity of Isabella when confronted by the two potential suitors in the asylum is what saves her from ruin and her husband's household from collapsing, while Beatrice's own sexual looseness is what damages hers, beginning with her desire to marry Alsemero rather than her Alonzo, beginning a game of barley-break in an effort to get to a bed with Alsemero alone. The tradition of a couple joining hands in the game is carried on by De Flores' use of hands and particularly severed fingers in his (successful) attempt to convince/coerce Beatrice-Joanna into joining sexually with the man that she formerly loathed, subsequently resulting in her becoming an equal conspirator in his schemes and the victims of the barley-break game being extended to Alsemero as well. Yet, it is the weakened and ultimately shallow masculinity of Alsemero and company that ultimately brings about their loss to a superior player in De Flores. De Flores himself is somewhat akin to Women Beware Women's the Ward in his lustful desire; he is differentiated by a cunning and intelligence that is more developed than that particular young fool and his direct competitors. The short-lived nature of his successes nonetheless make him amongst the most successful of characters within the play. If De Flores has flaws, he is able to turn them into virtues through his suitability for the game that informs and instructs the action of this play, namely the pastime of barley-break.

By using barley-break [or barley-brake] as a motif for the action in both main and sub-plot of The Changeling, Middleton and Rowley were able to convey both the importance and the dangers of sexual congress that existed within the cultural ideas of early Modern England. Reportedly widely played in rustic areas throughout the 16th century, one potential reason for barley-break's popularity was that the couples format allowed both sexes to take part. It should not be surprising therefore that sexual innuendo was rife within cultural references to the game. James Shirley's 1633 comedy The Bird in a Cage includes the

character Morello who, prior to the play's reconciliation, has disguised himself as a woman in an attempt to enter the guarded tower in which the Duke of Mantua has concealed his daughter Eugenia, for the purposes of seduction. Upon being discovered, he is arrested and sent before the Duke who condemns Morello to spend a month in that same petticoat. With the announcement of his daughter's marriage in the final scene, the Duke happily pardons all offenders, including Morello who remarks after the news, "shall we to barley-break? I was in hell last, 'tis little less to be in a petticoat, sometimes" (V.i). Hell is thus conflated not only with the garment itself but additionally, at times, with the sexual organs lying underneath. Nor was such a conflation necessarily regarded negatively. Robert Herrick, in Hesperides (1648), represented this particular dichotomy in a short poem simply titled "Barley-break; or Last in Hell":

We two are last in hell: what may we fear
 To be tormented, or kept pris'ners here:
 Alas, if kissing be of plagues the worst,
 We'll wish in hell we had been last and first. (111)

A moralistic poem from 1607, written by an individual choosing to go by the pseudonym of W. N., Gentleman, was even more explicit in such sexual metaphor, focusing on the ways in which the symbology of a couple in hell could be 'abused' by the unscrupulous in Barley-break: A Warning for Wantons. Amongst the players in the verse is a young woman named Euphema, watched from the sidelines by her father Elpin, who is properly concerned when a young 'wanton' by the name of Streton conspires to make her loose her grip from her original partner, whereupon he can join with her and end up in "hell": "She strives, he holds, his hand goes out and in: / She cries, Away and yet she holds him fast" (6). Her partnership with Streton destroys Euphema, who ends the poem pregnant and abandoned: "And then on *Streton* she 'gan lowd exclaime, / Who had forsaken her in this her neede, / Leaving a marke

for shame to take her aime. / The vulgar fruit that springs from wanton seede” (29). Yet, for all his amorous exploits, Streton is assuredly more irrationally lustful than rational in his conquest, essentially losing himself in his desire for Euphema, even to the point of ignoring his duty:

Euphema now with *Streton* is in hell:

(For so the middle roome is always cald)

He would for ever, if he might, there dwell;

He holds in blisse with her to be intralld.

.....

[Streton's] sheepe, for him, might all at riot run

And fold themselues, or else do what they would:

He feares no woe, he dreads no losse to come,

The Shepherdesse hath all his thought in hold.

His studie is, which way he might contrive

A place and time, where they might fit confer,

And how he might a cause sufficient give,

To make his love and passion knowne to her. (7, 10)

Barley-break, as observed within these examples, was relatively ambiguous in its morality.

Not only was the game dependent upon a man and woman to hold hands or “couple”, but to switch partners was accepted and encouraged practice in order to avoid being caught. By comparison, to be caught in the process of either joining with a partner or switching partners was to consign oneself to hell where one would reside until another team could be caught.

Barley-break in The Changeling serves a similar purpose in the main plot, pointing to a world in which iniquity itself is not the sin so much as the discovery of such. While kept to the

shadows, the crimes of De Flores in particular serve only to strengthen him and assist his gaming abilities, at the expense of the rest of the characters in the main plot. In comparison with the morality and strength shown by Isabella in the subplot that exposes the pretended madmen and fools for the lechers they are, the lacking masculinity of the characters in the main plot ironically makes the lusty and lecherous De Flores to be all the more masculine. The very unsuitability of this foul-faced, raging knave to be considered a truly masculine figure merely serves to highlight this discrepancy all the more.

The very appearance of De Flores would have been seen as a warning signal as to the unbalanced and lustful nature that can lead only to destruction rather than growth, which is then proven by his inordinate lust towards Beatrice-Joanna. Beatrice, for her own part, never loses an opportunity to remind him or mention to others not only the dimensions of his ugliness, but how such a flaw causes foreboding within her. He is an “ominous, ill-faced fellow” (II.i.52), a “standing toad-pool” (II.i.58), and a “thing most loathed” (II.i.72), but even more seriously, Beatrice likens him to “[t]he same that report speaks of the basilisk” (I.i.115), the mythical serpent that could kill by its glance, remarking to herself later yet that “I never see this fellow but I think / Of some harm towards me. Danger’s in my mind still; / I scarce leave trembling of an hour after” (II.i.90-92). When she first decides to flatter De Flores to persuade him towards carrying out a murder for her, she may believe herself capable of hiding her dislike for a time, but she still diagnoses, “but the heat of the liver” (II.ii.80). Not only was the liver, as Kinney states, regarded as the seat of passion and violence (639), it was the site where the four humours of the body (blood, yellow bile, phlegm and black bile) that constituted the make-up of the body were believed to be concocted (Smith 13). An excessively hot male, as discussed previously, is one whose lust and temper will over-run any concept of calm reason or rationality, marking an individual more likely to destroy a hierarchy than help solidify it. For De Flores to suffer from heat of

the liver implies both an excess of passionate lust (related to the blood) and an excessively choleric temperament (yellow bile/choler). Such passions are certainly born out on his face, which he cannot help but describe himself as “foul chops” (II.i.85), imparting a nearly bestial aspect to “such pig-haired faces . . . / Wrinkles like troughs, where swine-deformity swills / The tears of perjury that lie there like wash / Fallen from the slimy and dishonest eye” (II.i.40-45). Upon murdering Alonzo, he claims to Beatrice that his sexual excitement has reached such heights that “I’m in pain, / And must be eased of you. ’Tis a charity. / Justice invites your blood to understand me” (III.iv.101-103). He more resembles the monstrosity of the lustful beast than rational male. Yet, he is still capable of conquest, particularly when the other men around him are rendered virtually impotent. De Flores’ flaws, as rampant as they are, still place him above his direct opponents for Beatrice, Alsemero and Alonzo.

Alsemero and Alonzo, despite their initial status as the proper males who do not share in De Flores’ ‘monstrous’ deformities, are soon revealed to be either inherent dupes (as Alonzo is) or participants in gaming subtlety who are less effective than De Flores (such as Alsemero). Alonzo’s short appearance within the play serves notice of him as a man who, regardless of the intelligence he may normally show, is love-struck beyond any rationality, realised by his brother Tomazo as “love’s tame madness: thus a man / Quickly steals into his vexation” (II.i.156-157). Tomazo clearly finds the behaviour of Beatrice lacking in the joy that should accompany an eagerly awaited match, pointing out to his brother both “I see small welcome in her eyes” (II.i.107) and finally exploding, after Beatrice has asked that the match itself be delayed three days, to his brother his grave suspicions that “your faith’s cozened in her, strongly cozened” (II.i.129), imploring, “[u]nsettle your affection with all speed / Wisdom can bring it to; your peace is ruined else” (II.i.130-131). Alonzo, by comparison, ridicules such fears as the fantasies of one who is “too severe a censorer / Of love in all points” (II.i.108-109), further instructing Tomazo that he should “[p]reserve your friendship

and your counsel, brother, / For times of more distress” (II.i.146-147), a sentiment that will prove tragically ironic as his own lack of vigilance in these early stages is endemic of how he is lured into a hidden area by De Flores to be murdered. Alsemero, while more inherently suspicious and wary of adultery, suffers from a similar love-sickness, or as he disguises it, he feels well, “[u]nless there be some hidden malady / Within me, that I understand not” (I.i.23-24), a state out of the ordinary for him, as his friend Jasperino initially refuses that it could be love, since “the stoic / Was found in you long ago – your mother / Nor best friends who have set snares of beauty / (Ay, and choice ones too), could never trap you in that way” (I.i.36-39). Alsemero has certainly been trapped now and it is to the detriment of his own subtle practice. He may praise the concept of Diaphanta functioning as her “[lady’s] cabinet; / Things of most precious trust are locked into ’em” (II.i.6-7), but he forgets to bring the key to his own cabinet in which is contained, as he brags to Jasperino, “a pretty secret, / By a Chaldean taught me, and I’ve spent / My study upon some” (IV.ii.112-114). The secret is the potion which, when applied, allows the giver “to know whether a woman be a maid or not” (IV.i.41), which Beatrice-Joanna is able to find and circumvent, thus keeping her liaison with de Flores secret for the time being. In comparison with these other men, De Flores is more suited to attaining conquest, having both the furious desire and the wit to attain his desires, at least for the time-frame of the play. Nor are such fools limited to the main plot. The attempts on the virtue of Isabella in the comical subplot are carried out by similarly inadequate males, with the exception being that it is Isabella’s virtue that renders their attempts all for naught.

The subplot portrays the attempts of Antonio, Franciscus and Lollo to seduce Isabella as those carried out by fools and therefore ultimately destined to be unsuccessful. Alibius, fearful that his young wife will be enticed away by those gentlemen “[o]f stature and proportions very comely” (I.ii.56) who come to entertain themselves by watching the madmen, charges his man Lollo to keep her locked within, out of sight. Unbeknownst to him,

two gallants, Antonio and Franciscus, infiltrate his hospital, feigning idiocy and madness respectively, and attempt a seduction. In time, Lollio also attempts to sexually conquer her. However, apart from such feigning, all three are inherently fools. Despite the roaring by a madman as Antonio (who is feigning madness) is conversing with Isabella to, “Catch there! Catch the last couple in hell” (III.iii.181), Lollio presents the blank truth when he assures Alibius that between the fools and madmen that are in the asylum/house, “[t]he one has not wit enough to be knaves, and the other not knavery enough to be fools” (I.ii.45-47). By evidence of their feigning, both Antonio and Franciscus certainly have enough knavery to elevate themselves to beyond madmen, but they also lack the wit to transform intent into action. Unknowingly, however, Lollio ends up describing himself as an equal fool. Informed by Lollio that her husband desires that she be kept in the hospital for fear of adultery, Isabella is unsparing, sarcastically considering such an order “very well, and he’ll prove very wise” (III.ii.12). Lollio’s protests that the population will not only be fools and madmen, since “[t]here’s my master and I to boot” (III.ii.18), merely draws a rejoinder that that makes no difference at all to the proportion of inhabitants: “Of either sort one, a madman and a fool” (III.ii.19). Similarly to Alonzo and Alsemero, the individuals attempting to conquer Isabella, by their foolishness, lack the necessary masculinity to complete such a task. Yet, equally important is the chastity and faithfulness of Isabella, enabling her to resist such advances.

Throughout the advances made on her, Isabella is safe from being sexually conquered by either Antonio, Franciscus or Lollio primarily because of her own lack of excessive passion and her faithfulness to her husband. Even Lollio’s attempt to blackmail her into bed falls short, with him left to merely deliver a warning as to what would happen if she did stray. Lollio, in displaying the fools and madmen within the asylum, brings Antonio (disguised and answering to the name of Tony) to Isabella. At the first moment that he can do so unobserved by Lollio, he removes his disguise as represents himself instead as “the truest servant to your

powerful beauties, / Whose magic had this force thus to transform me”, further indulging in sexual innuendo by claiming, “I bring naught but love / And his soft-wounding shafts to strike you with” (III.iii.144). Isabella however is adamant that such pronouncements merely make him a rather bold fool who should “[k]eep your habit [disguise]; it becomes you well enough” (III.iii.156). Left to her own devices, she is both amused and shocked, remarking, “[h]ere [in the asylum] the restrained current might make breach, / Spite of the watchful bankers. Would a woman stray, / She need not gad abroad to seek her sin” (III.iii.230-232). Approached by Lollio, who has overheard part of Antonio’s conversation and believes that “thou giv’st thy mind to fool’s-flesh” (III.iii.241), she likewise slips from his embrace, warning that she is so offended by such an attempt that, if he continues with it, “[Antonio’s] injunction / For me enjoying shall be to cut thy throat; / I’ll do it, though for no other purpose, / And be sure he’ll not refuse it” (III.iii.261-264). Lollio may promise Isabella that, “[i]f I find you minister [to any fool or madman] . . . I put in for my thirds [after Alibius and your new lover]” (IV.iii.36-37), but the chaste Isabella mocks such suspicion by claiming “[t]he first place is thine, believe it, Lollio, / If I do fall” (IV.iii.39-40). She can afford to be confident that such an eventuality will never pass, because the “restrained current” of her passions will never “make breach” into an excess that would inspire her towards such indulgence. Her control of her desires allows her to maintain her faithfulness and reputation, and thus avoid the dire consequences impressed upon Beatrice, a woman who, regardless of her beauty and status, is engulfed by her own passions. Indeed, it is this overwhelming passion at the expense of reason that places her at the mercy of De Flores to start with.

It is Beatrice’s overwhelming desire for Alsemero at the expense of all sanctioned matches that initiates the sequence of events that will encompass her coupling with De Flores and end with her disgrace and death. Upon meeting Alsemero in the flesh for the first time, Beatrice privately pines that “[t]his was the man meant for me. That he should come / So near

his time, and miss it!” (I.i.86-87), tormented in the knowledge that she was betrothed to Alonzo before Alsemero came to stay a while. However, such a passion soon becomes more present and fully formed as the play goes on. A short period of talking to Alsemero leaves Beatrice wavering in both her faithfulness and any sense of duty that she should ideally hold to the future of masculine hierarchy, a wrong that she admits (if only to herself) is close to heretical: “I shall change my saint I fear me, I fear; I find / A giddy turning in me” (I.i.157-158). She may be inherently disturbed by De Flores, but it is nevertheless only in comparison to “all my other passions” (II.i.54), a feeling that De Flores exploits expertly once he has killed Alonzo and is attempting to gain his sexual reward from Beatrice. Futile arguments that attempt to shame him for attempting her virtue are met by open derision. Despite her initial impressions as she begins to formulate her scheme that “blood-guiltiness becomes a fouler visage” (II.ii.40), De Flores turns such an argument around on her after the act as he mocks “[a] woman dipped in blood, and talk of modesty” (III.iv.129). Beatrice may believe that “Vengeance begins; / Murder, I see, is followed by more sins” (III.iv.166-167), but De Flores more precisely instructs her to “[l]ook into your conscience; read me there. / ’Tis a true book; you’ll find me there your equal” (III.iv.135-136). In fact he argues, much like himself, her shift from pure maid to “whore in thy affection, / ’Twas changed from thy first love, and that’s a kind of whoredom in thy heart” (III.iv.145-147). With such a woman as both his victim and, eventually, his accomplice, De Flores’ abilities in both subterfuge and violence pay dividends. The metaphorical barley-break he plays throughout the play not only allows him to achieve his desires, it enables him to hide his dishonesty until his final comeuppance even as he moves to both symbolically and physical “couple” with Beatrice.

In accordance with De Flores’ ending statement about having played at barley-break, he begins his first attempt in the opening scene by a focus upon Bianca’s hand and its trappings. Befitting the pre-occupation in barley-break with a couple joining hands, the man

with the ‘foul chops’ seeks to join hands with his object of desire, only to be cursed for his troubles. In the middle of a group conversation, Beatrice drops one of her gloves. Instructed by Vermandero, De Flores picks it up and makes to return it, only to be met with a torrent of abuse by Beatrice who claims, while throwing down the other glove, that “[these gloves] touch my hands no more: / There, for t’other’s sake I part with this. / Take ’em and draw thy own skin off with ’em” (I.i.232-234). A bemused De Flores continues on with a further double-entendre on the practice of joining hands, speculating that “she had rather wear my pelt tanned / In a pair of dancing pumps than I should thrust / My fingers into her [finger] sockets [on her glove] here” (I.i.236-238). In fact, Bruster suggests that the glove may have been intentionally dropped for Alsemero to pick up (1641), despite the fact that Vermandero intends his daughter to be married to the lord Alonzo de Piracquo “within this sevensnight” (I.i.193). Despite her contempt, De Flores remains adamant that “if but to vex her, I’ll haunt her still; / Though I get nothing else, I’ll have my will” (I.i.240-241). He gets that opportunity to exercise that “will” when, at the behest of Beatrice, he murders Alonzo and removes his finger, an act that allows him to physically “couple” with Beatrice through the barley-break inspired double-entendre of “joining hands”.

By both removing and then presenting Beatrice with the finger of Alonzo, De Flores gets the chance to both literally and figuratively ‘join hands’ with Beatrice, symbolically both surreptitiously gaining the advantage over the other competitors for her and simultaneously binding her to him. He does not originally plan to take the finger off the dead body, merely desiring “a diamond / He wears upon his finger. It was well found: / This will approve the work” (III.ii.22-24). He mutilates the body only when he discovers that the ring is “so fast on? / Not part in death? I’ll take a speedy course then: / Finger and all shall off” (III.ii.24-26). However, it ultimately proves as a conduit whereby De Flores can coerce Beatrice-Joanna into coupling with him exclusively. Beatrice, for her own part, plans that upon Alonzo’s

murder, “I’ll furnish thee [De Flores] with all things for thy flight; / Thou mayst live bravely in another country” (II.ii.144-145), envisaging to herself that, if this scheme goes according to plan, “I shall rid myself / of two inveterate loathings at one time: / [Alonzo] and his dog-face” (II.ii.146-148). The presence of the ring, however, proves her drastically mistaken. The ring itself, as confirmed by both de Flores and Beatrice, provides the impetus for the ‘dog-face’ to essentially claim her as his own:

DE FLORES: I could not get the ring without the finger.

[He shows her the finger]

BEATRICE: Bless me! What hast thou done?

DE FLORES: Why, is that more than killing the whole man?

I cut his heart strings:

A greedy hand thrust in a dish at court

In a mistake hath had as much as this.

BEATRICE: ’Tis the first token my father made me send him.

DE FLORES: And I made him send it back again

For his last token; I was loath to leave it,

And I’m sure dead men have no use for jewels.

He was as loath to part with’t, for it stuck

As if the flesh and it were one substance. (III.iv.29-40)

Through the finger, De Flores thus stakes a figurative claim upon Beatrice, which he will both transform in a literal claim upon her and bind her to him. The finger itself symbolizes the sexual relationship that Alonzo was to have enjoyed as Beatrice’s husband; that of inserting his finger/penis into her ring/vagina (Malcolmson 150). The innuendo is made even more explicit when De Flores finds it impossible to separate ring or finger from each other, as if they had become the “one substance” belonging to a hand that, once its owner had a legal

right to Beatrice's body, would be "thrust in a dish". Similarly, Alibius confides in Lollio when he is fearful of whether his wife would commit adultery or not, "I would wear my ring on my own finger: / Whilst it is borrowed it is none of mine, / But his that useth it" (I.i.27-29), analogizing the ring as a symbol for his wife's devotion. De Flores, by taking and presenting the finger, thus announces his intention to take Alonzo's place in sexually partaking of Beatrice. Furthermore, he further reveals his intention to take Beatrice as a permanent partner in this metaphorical game of barley-break. Alongside the direct sexual implications towards Beatrice, De Flores presents her with a finger, formerly of Alonzo's hand, within his grasp. Much as ring and finger resembled one and the same entity, from this point on, both De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna will be joined as one, both figuratively as a couple at barley-break and literally in death. Beatrice in fact has little choice in the matter, as she is reminded by her tormentor:

DE FLORES: Why, are you not as guilty, in, I'm sure,
 As deep as I? And we should stick together.
 Come, your fears counsel you but ill. My absence
 Would draw suspect upon you instantly;
 There were no rescue for you.

BEATRICE: [*aside*] He speaks home.

DE FLORES: Nor is it fit we two engaged so jointly
 Should part and live asunder. [*He kisses her*] (III.iv.86-92)

De Flores' presentation of Alsemero's finger, more than simply evidence of his deed, is an indicator of how his relationship with Beatrice-Joanna will proceed throughout the rest of the play, which is similar to a couple at barley-break. His first attempt to initiate contact with Beatrice was repulsed when she refused to collect her glove. When he is approached to murder Alonzo however, he uses the finger to signify that Beatrice's complicity in his act

joins her with him completely. She is joined with him sexually, partly because De Flores demands it as his reward and also because, having taken over the ring-clad finger, De Flores has essentially taken over Alonzo's role as the "greedy hand" that will claim Beatrice's "dish" for himself. Additionally, she is joined with him for protection from the law, since otherwise "there were no rescue for you". Despite his flaws, in fact, De Flores is the natural conqueror and protector of Beatrice, a status that he arguably deserves more than Alsemero due to how he earns his reward.

While De Flores murders as much because he finds joy in wanton violence, it can be argued that, by his murder of Alonzo and his subsequent subterfuge, he becomes in essence more worthy than Alsemero to claim Beatrice-Joanna as his own. Beatrice herself prefigures this eventuality when she is flattering De Flores, hoping to persuade him to carry out the bloody deed. She has formerly claimed to find him repulsive, yet she inexplicably adds in an aside to the audience, "[w]hen we're used / To a hard face, 'tis not so unpleasing" (II.ii.87-88). Thus, when moving back to complimenting a man who she has formerly claimed as "the ugliest creature / Creation framed for some use" (II.ii.43-44), it becomes more likely that Beatrice lapses into at least a partially true statement when she posits that, "[h]ardness becomes the visage of a man well; / It argues service, resolution, manhood, / If cause were of employment" (II.ii.93-95). In this sense, De Flores proves that such properties indeed exist within him when he does away with the intended suitor. Alonzo's blind acceptance of his invitation to show him "the full strength of the castle" (II.ii.160) leaves him "safely thrust upon me beyond hopes", in a successful murder that De Flores contentedly refers to as "an undertaking well accomplished" (III.ii.20). In comparison, Alsemero mentions that he would be willing to undertake "[t]he honourablest piece [of service] 'bout man: valour. / I'll send a challenge to Piracquo instantly" (II.i.27-28), but is talked out of it by Beatrice who instead plans for De Flores to shoulder that burden. De Flores, by killing Alonzo, has thus proved

himself, despite his flaws, as more capable of conquest and “undertakings well accomplished” than Alsemero, who failed to undertake the “honourablest piece” he began planning. Equally, when planning to kill Diaphanta to prevent her from revealing that she had taken Beatrice’s place in Alsemero’s marriage bed, De Flores draws genuine gratitude from his accomplice who is “forced to love thee now, / ’Cause thou provid’st so carefully for my honour” (V.i.47-48), considering, “look upon his care, who would not love him? / The east is not more beauteous than his service” (V.i.70-71). De Flores thus reigns victorious over Alsemero. It was him, not Alsemero, who rid Beatrice of Alonzo. It is thus De Flores who is able to similarly take his reward and ‘conquer’ Beatrice-Joanna by lying with her, while Alsemero ends the play without actually successfully consummating his marriage. It is De Flores who Beatrice turns to for protection and masculine action, not Alsemero. Furthermore, it is De Flores who she is bound together with in reality, in both guilt and ability in playing at this metaphorical game of ‘barley-break’, as she assists in avoiding capture by surreptitiously ‘joining’ Diaphanta with Alsemero, thus allowing her to release her grip from him and change partners.

If De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna, after the murder of Alonzo, form a secret coupling that will seek to remain hidden from those who aspire to capture them, Alsemero is joined by Beatrice with Diaphanta in a pairing where the participants are themselves unaware of the repercussions that it will have. Although her recital of the effect that Alsemero’s virginity test drug should have on the chaste is worrying for her, with the entrance of Diaphanta, “[a] trick comes in my mind” (IV.i.55). Under the guise of fearing the first time in the marriage chamber, Beatrice claims that “I will give a thousand ducats to that woman / Would try what my fear were, and tell me true / Tomorrow, when she gets from’t” (IV.i.76-78), provided that the woman “be a true maid, / Else there’s no trial; my fears are not hers else” (IV.i.82-83). Tempted by both money and the pleasures of the marriage chamber, Diaphanta accepts and,

at the insistence of Beatrice, additionally accedes to having her virginity tested. Beatrice takes this opportunity to ply her with Alsemero's virginity drug and observe her reactions. By reproducing Diaphanta's perceptible symptoms (gaping at the mouth, a sneeze, violent laughter and equally overt melancholy), she inspires an overjoyed Alsemero to celebrate and embrace "[m]y Joanna: / Chaste as the breath of heaven, or morning's womb, / That brings the day forth; thus my love encloses thee" (IV.ii.149-151). Indeed, his love certainly does enclose she who is "chaste as the breath of heaven", when he beds Diaphanta, who takes Beatrice's place in the darkened chamber. It is Diaphanta's virginal reaction to the drug, as copied by Beatrice-Joanna, that reassures Alsemero. Under the illusion that he is consummating his marriage with a chaste Beatrice, he physically couples and bonds with Diaphanta. Unlike the coupling of De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna that enables them freedom to change partners as necessity dictates, Diaphanta and Alsemero are effectively the couple in the middle trying in vain to catch any other couple. Diaphanta is killed soon after she and Alsemero have coupled and he is forced to understand that he has become a cuckold. It is finally in the last act that it finally becomes understood not only the degree to which those in the main plot are indeed "left in hell" but moreover, how De Flores manages a form of triumph even at that point.

The last appearance of De Flores serves as a final reminder to the rest of the characters that he had proved himself more masculine than the others, due to his success at sexual 'coupling', which additionally points to a conquest over his opponents, including Vermandero as well as Alsemero. Having spied both Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores in a clandestine meeting, Alsemero taxes Beatrice with a charge of dishonesty. Beatrice admits her connection with De Flores as well as the murder of Alonzo. A distraught Alsemero "must ask pause / What I must do in this. Meantime you shall / Be my prisoner only; enter my closet" (V.iii.84-86). He may claim, "I'll be your keeper yet" (V.iii.87), but with the entrance

of De Flores and his admittance under Alsemero's interrogation, Alsemero's passionate fury inspires him to lock De Flores in the same closet, so he may "[t]ake your prey to you; get you in to her, sir". Rather than Beatrice's "keeper", with the entrance of De Flores into the same space as his lover, "I'll be your pander now; rehearse again / Your scene of lust, that you may be perfect / When you shall come to act it to the black audience" (V.iii.114-116). Rather than finally assert a degree of masculine control over the situation, Alsemero seems intent upon providing the impetus by which De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna will couple, once again allowing De Flores to usurp his position as the masculine dominator/"keeper" of his wife and thus proving his own lacking ability at sexual conquest. With Alsemero's discovery in this scene that his "bed was cozened" with Diaphanta, De Flores' coupling with Beatrice-Joanna, apart from a display of iniquity, serves as a final parting shot about the coupling that Alsemero desired, but that his insufficient gaming ability could not achieve. This is further reinforced by the reappearance onstage of De Flores and Beatrice, coupled and intertwined in life and death. Even in death, De Flores is recognized as the conqueror of Beatrice-Joanna and therefore of Alsemero. Additionally, it is in the midst of this final coupling that Vermandero must accept that his kingdom has been infiltrated and thus left him and those around him in disarray.

Vermandero's shock and despair at the coupling of De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna, apart from the iniquity of the acts they have conspired in, is motivated by the infiltration which has occurred to his kingdom, leaving it and him as perpetually damned. Vermandero, when first meeting Alsemero, demands to know his country of origin because, "we use not to give survey / Of our chief strengths to strangers. / Our citadels / Are placed conspicuous to outward view / On promonts' tops; but within are secrets" (I.i.166-169). Nor does he wish veiled suspicion to compromise his kingdom's moral strength. The knowledge that two of his gentlemen are unaccountably missing (Antonio and Franciscus, pretending to idiocy and

madness in Alibius' hospital) draws an immediate reaction to "pursue 'em suddenly, and either wipe / The stain off clear, or openly discover it" (IV.ii.14-15). In such a kingdom, the foolish gentlemen may "have been disguised / E'er since the deed was done" (V.iii.126-127), but the actual murderers were "more close disguised than your two could ever be" (V.iii.128). Vermandero's astonishment that "[a] host of enemies entered my citadel / Could not amaze like this" (V.iii.147-148), moves to sorrow when he responds to De Flores' claim that he and Beatrice now occupy a barley-break 'hell' by instead claiming that hell instead 'circumscribes us here'. The 'black audience' that, according to Alsemero, De Flores and Beatrice will be perfectly coupled for, is in fact the other characters in the main plot. The lacking masculinity of the characters in the main plot, alongside the iniquities of Beatrice-Joanna, has left the way open for De Flores to infiltrate and destroy through his lustful 'coupling', which has left him and Beatrice in hell. Yet, in the 'hell' which Vermandero implies is of everyone's making, De Flores' skill at the metaphorical 'barley-break' being played has resulted in his sexual and masculine ascension to the top of this particular mountain. His death thus leaves an emasculated kingdom. For Alsemero to attempt to placate Vermandero with a reminder that "you have yet a son's duty living; / Please you accept it" (V.iii.216-217) is to offer cold comfort from a son-in-law who was spectacularly ineffective at stopping any iniquity. More accurate would be the epilogue, spoken by Alsemero, in which he begins by acknowledging the limitations of both himself and the rest of the living characters, simply stating "[a]ll we can do is comfort one another" (Epilogue.1), as they are left with a destruction that they were powerless to prevent.

The significance of the human game/s of barley-break that comprise the play is brought home most conclusively in that final scene when the household of Alibius the doctor is left intact, by comparison to the survivors of the main plot who must confront their limitations when faced with the world that they were unable to save. While the faithfulness of

Isabella has helped her to act to protect all that she holds dear, the failings of Beatrice-Joanna required the men of the royal household to act in order to prevent a villain like De Flores from triumphing over them. Instead, De Flores has managed to reign victorious. His lustfulness and treachery notwithstanding, he is also the most masculine of those in his immediate surroundings and therefore the best example of a conqueror. It is De Flores who first manages to dominate Alonzo through murder, thus indirectly proving himself to be the victor over Alsemero and over Beatrice-Joanna. Likewise, it is he who first “couples” with Beatrice-Joanna through his presentation to her of not only Alonzo’s ring, but the finger that held that ring, thus in effect being the first to join hands with her in this large game of barley-break. Neither Alsemero nor Vermandero can lay any serious claim to masculine credibility, for they were unsuccessful at capturing the two most successful players, De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna. Alsemero finds himself tricked not only into thinking that his wife is a virgin, but he is additionally fooled into “coupling” with Diaphanta as opposed to the woman that he thinks is his wife. Vermandero’s obsession with banning entry to those who may act to destroy his kingdom is proven ludicrous by the perfidious happenings that occur at the hands of his trusted servant and daughter. Alibius will be able to return to his hospital a little wiser than the audience first encounters him, yet the royal family and entourage indeed find themselves within a hell that De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna will be able to escape, thereby solidifying the conquest of the inadequate men left behind. In the game of barley-break that encompasses the action of this play, the tragedy is reserved for those lacking the skill to attain victory, for they will remain alive and cognizant of their defeat. In a similar vein, the next chapter will discuss how the old cheating game of “Fast-and-Loose” provides the key to understanding both Love’s Labour’s Lost and Antony & Cleopatra, except that neither play ends with such complete tragedy, preferring rather to deal with the possibility of redemption after defeat.

Chapter Three

Victory as the Measure of Virility: Playing at “Fast-and-Loose” in Love’s Labour’s Lost (1598) and Antony & Cleopatra (1607)

While both Shakespeare and Middleton make mention of particular games that are now obsolete, Shakespeare’s game of choice in these two plays comes to the modern reader with an uncommonly clear certainty of origin. Some of the now obsolete games practiced in Elizabethan and Jacobean England (tip-cat, barley-break, etc), have a degree of uncertainty or mystery about their beginnings; like much of the history of this period’s unofficial culture, deduction is reliant upon comparison between several momentary, and at times potentially apocryphal, allusions in contemporary writings. The origins of the tavern game “Fast-and-Loose”, referenced in both Love’s Labour’s Lost and Antony and Cleopatra, stand as an exception to this general rule. Thanks largely to the extant contemporary documentation, both its introduction to England and its rules are refreshingly clear. Ironically, this precise history was due most likely to the disapproval of society at its practice, the authors making little attempt to hide their criticism or their opprobrium.

Reginald Scot, in The Discoverie of Witchcraft, claims that ‘fast-or-loose’ was a cheating game introduced to England as part of “The Aegyptians juggling witchcraft”, ‘Aegyptians’ being the collective term by which the English knew the Romany gypsies (Book 13, Chapter 29, 336). The Romany gypsies originally migrated to Europe from Northern India in the early fifteenth century, with records of them reaching England by the 1490s. The English themselves believed the gypsies to have been Egyptian originally due to the belief in Egypt as, “a country that anciently outvied all the world for skill in magic” (Salgado 152). Scot explained two variations of the game, one with a ‘handkercher’ and one with beads on a cord. He instructs that the swindler should make a loose knot with a corner of each handkerchief, “Then close up handsomlie the knot which will yet be somewhat loose,

and pull the handkercher so with your right hand . . . then will it seeme a true and firme knot” (Book 13, Chapter 29, 336). At the game’s conclusion, “after some words used, and wages laid, take the handkercher and shake it, and it will be loose” (337). James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips, author of A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words (1848) documented a Renaissance variation involving a stick and belt or string, “so arranged that a spectator would think he could make the latter ‘fast’ by placing a stick through its intricate folds, whereas the operator could detach it at once” (348). The open denunciation practiced by the official hierarchy for a pastime that was predicated upon a cheating trick is not difficult to fathom therefore. Yet this game additionally serves as an unusually prescient example of the winner gaining the acquiescence of the loser to their will as part of the fruits of victory. The representation of such control is especially accurate in regards to Renaissance conceptions of sexual conquest, where the capacity for aggressive domination applies to compelling the woman to the act as much as completing the act itself. In this vein, both Love’s Labour’s Lost and Antony and Cleopatra employ the language of ‘fast-and-loose’ as a symbol of the obsession with freedom and control that permeates throughout.

I suggest that the seemingly fleeting references to fast-and-loose in both of these plays in fact serve as revelatory moments by which the interior worlds of these plays may be understood. Each play serves, in its own way, as the embodiment of a game of fast-and-loose in which the capacity for sexual conquest on each side is represented through the capacity to dominate. The male has those qualities of his gender properly tested through the practice of this metaphorical game, defining if he can conquer sexually. Crooked or not, the aim of ‘fast-and-loose’ for each participant was to conquer their adversary, holding them in a submissive position so as to enforce their own dominance. The dupe, by driving the stick through what he thought was the centre of the belt, sought to hold the belt “fast” and therefore display his power over the cozener by demanding his winnings. By contrast, the cozener sought through

his machinations to pull the belt, and similarly himself, loose, to enable himself the advantage of keeping the wagered amount. In this struggle between two individuals for dominance, which can only be achieved by holding their opposition to a submissive position, ‘fast-and-loose’ becomes metaphorically associated with notions of conquest, an entirely masculine prerogative in this period. The conflict in both plays, similarly to those of the previous chapter, relates to the continual anxiety tormenting a population that desired men to engage in conquestorial sex, preferably in service of marital procreation, yet feared that a male could, by giving in to sexual lust, effeminate and consequently debase himself, shown by their inability to win at the game of “Fast-and-Loose” that suffuses their world. Where Shakespeare’s plays differ from the works of Middleton in this context is the degree to which the failed masculinity of these men affects the surrounding social fabric.

In comparison to the Middleton plays already examined, Shakespeare offers an image of a world where the failings of a single man or a single group of men can only imperil the hierarchical structure if they are unopposed. In both Women Beware Women and The Changeling, the men who commit those misdeeds that defy any sense of hierarchically proper masculine conquest are simply the most egregious offenders. Even without their acts, both of these plays suggest, not only were the structures in place already on the verge of collapse, the other individuals are incapable of either safe-guarding or repairing them at these points. Indeed, as I have argued, The Changeling’s De Flores, for all his iniquity, is in many regards the most conquest-oriented male of the play who ends the play victorious over the survivors. By comparison, the structures in place for both Love’s Labour’s Lost and Antony and Cleopatra are strong despite the singular evils visited upon them, because of those who take the action needed to refocus the power of the state. Even if Octavius defeats Egypt in Antony and Cleopatra, he does so with the purpose of subjecting it to the masculine values of Rome, aiming to rebuild it into a valued part of his empire. Nor is this morality restricted to men,

necessarily. While the men of Love's Labour's Lost end the play subservient to those that they have become infatuated with, the Princess and her ladies forego the easy pleasures of lust, choosing instead to give the men an ultimatum: they must regain the masculinity they have lost if they wish to have any hope of sexually conquest in the future. The personages and the surface of such worlds may change, but only to the degree needed to guard the essentials of the structure itself from corruption.

In the differing aspects between how the emasculated males in each play affect their surroundings, it is important to understand how the style of each piece influences some of the end results. Love's Labour's Lost is one of Shakespeare's early comedies, written in the latter stages of Elizabethan England and in fact regarded by Anne Barton as "perhaps the most relentlessly Elizabethan", due to its emphasis on wordplay and topical allusions that are now obsolete (208). It is one of a short list of plays where Shakespeare appears to have relied upon no contemporary documents in particular for his conception of the King of Navarre dragging his nobles into an appearance of chastity in the midst of attempting to woo the Princess of France and her ladies. Unlike the traditional comedy, the discovery of these schemes does not end in either a spate of marriages or a promise of immediate marriage: rather, the conventional ending is delayed beyond the end of the performance, as the King and his men are bound to a year of toil as a penance for their iniquities, after which any opportunity to gain a wife will depend on the performance of their tasks. Antony & Cleopatra, by comparison, tells a well-known story from the classics that in addition was a subject written on by contemporary authors, including Thomas North in "The Life of Antony", one of the entries in his collection of Lives (1595). This playtext has come to be regarded as one of Shakespeare's crowning tragic achievements during his classic period in the early years of James I's rule, a play that, according to Coleridge, displayed "a giant power in its strength and vigour of maturity". A mixture of both a tragedy and a history play, it covers the final

stretch of the eponymous duo's lives, from the battle of Actium to their suicides. The final scene displays Octavius Caesar, victorious over all his enemies and the lone ruler of Rome's newly expanded empire, looking with some ambivalence upon the destruction of Cleopatra's suicide. The difference between these two endings, the delayed yet hopeful rebuilding of the world of the comedy against the replacement of a supposedly corrupt regime, tells of the differing degrees to which the corruption of manly inadequacy can influence these two worlds, yet the capacity and the opportunity to rebuild is never lost. In the examination of LLL to come, while the men that prove themselves inept at these expanded games of "Fast-and-Loose" must be adequately punished for their inadequacies, such penalty is never void of an opportunity at redemption.

"I will fast being loose": Love's Labour's Lost

Act 4 scene 1 of Love's Labour's Lost presents a hunting party of the Princess of France, her ladies and the lord Boyet that reveals a philosophy of love that, playful though it may be, carries violent undertones. Friendly verbal sparring between both the Lady Rosaline and Lord Boyet soon turns to matters of love, with the bow and arrow that Rosaline is carrying for the hunt becoming fuel for Boyet's wit. The Lady Katherine's praise for both 'combatants' for "a mark marvellous well shot, for they both did hit it" (IV.i.115) is subverted by Boyet who instead claims, with full knowledge his double-entendre, that the "mark [should] have a prick in't" (IV.i.117). In one sense merely an archery term that signals the desired outcome of the game for both participants, it is similarly a statement of implicitly violent intent, arguing that a simple battle of wits should be fought as if one were trying to literally "pierce" the other. Applying such a definition to the concept of sex highlights the wide-ranging applicability of 'conquest' as a metaphor for numerous practices within Renaissance society that involved concepts of dominance and submission, particularly in the

language of archery and hunting as they appear throughout the play. The parallel, however, is of even greater interest when considering the use of “Fast-and-Loose” in Shakespeare’s Love’s Labour’s Lost.

“Fast-and-Loose” as it appears throughout LLL echoes markedly equivalent concepts, not simply in its focus upon victory and the subsequent requirement to label its practitioners as either triumphant or defeated, but in the violence implied through such imagery. The potential for the Renaissance male to achieve sexual conquest, through seduction and/or marriage, and therefore be considered a truly masculine male was directly proportional to his capacity for aggressive sexuality. Furthermore, such a skill was directly related to his appetite for conquest in general, including (as previously mentioned) competitive gaming. By comparison, the failure of the aristocratic men in LLL to succeed at the metaphorical game of ‘Fast-and-Loose’ being played around them is emblematic of an essential lack of proper masculinity. Through pursuing an Academe that must necessarily eschew hospitality to the Princess of France, and swearing oaths that are impossible to logically keep, the King of Navarre and his men display both their foolishness and their deficiencies in masculine status, and this impression is subsequently reinforced over the length of the play. Vacillating between frustration at the strictures of their oaths and unsuccessful attempts to evade the consequences of them, the men quite simply appear to take leave of their senses. Rather than conquering and dominating the women, their lack of masculinity leaves them as easy prey to be conquered and, consequently, become engrossed in the Princess and her ladies beyond all reason, an outcome revealed by the play’s ending. Upon the news of the death of the King of France, the Princess and her ladies plan to return home immediately, but not before informing the male characters that any potential marriages will be delayed for at least a year. A more positive outcome for such men would be impossible. Such an analysis is a continuation of the previous critical history on LLL, where initial opinions of the play as a lesser effort by a

playwright still trying to find his voice have slowly morphed to admiration for its facility with language, as well as numerous attempts to explain an ending that is viewed more as interruption than conclusion.

The artistic reputation of Love's Labour's Lost is one that has built over time for play historians, taking until the 20th century to solidify. Apart from the reactions of those such as Coleridge, who gave qualified plaudits to Shakespeare's creation in 1818 as "all intellect. There is little to interest as a dramatic representation, yet affording infinite matter of beautiful quotation" (251), the main appraisal from early critics leaned more towards the opinion of William Hazlitt from 1817: while the world would "hardly venture to 'set a mark of reprobation on [the play]' . . . [i]f we were to part with any of the author's comedies, it should be this" (332). Indeed, Richard David reported in 1951 that a change in feeling on behalf of the critics was a relatively recent occurrence, such as the praise from Muriel Bradbrook in that same year that "[t]he elegance of Shakespeare's courtly comedy is nowhere so polished as in LLL . . . [it] implies a clever audience . . . a bout of verbal fencing, carried out before experts" (212). This sentiment has been further echoed by Anne Barton who starts her introduction to the play by categorising it as "perhaps the most relentlessly Elizabethan of all Shakespeare's plays. Filled with word games, elaborate conceits, parodies of spoken and written styles and obscure topical allusions, it continually requires – and baffles – scholarly explanation" (208). Barton goes on to discuss the comedy as one "built upon paradox" (211), a sentiment that expresses the additional endeavour on the part of many to explain the meaning of an ending that defers any traditional ending, opting instead to extend the resolution of the potential couplings beyond the play's end.

The critical efforts to take the ending of LLL into account have been similarly divergent, although the majority of critics fall on the side of the extended resolution representing a kind of imposed penalty on the men. R. S. White and Judith Perryman, in

particular, regard the ending as a punishment or penance for the frivolity with which the King and his men regard the oaths they have taken. Louis Montrose incorporates this argument into the spectre of sport, analogising the end the play to the final victory for the ladies who will deny their 'grace' to the men who (by denying their oaths) have lost, adding that Shakespeare achieves this success by treating such 'games' as matters of the utmost import. Similarly, Barton in the quote previously stated regards the 'word games' of the play as never-ending. Mark Breitenberg's examination of masculine desire presents the women as using the inconstancy of the King and his lords (inspired by the conflict that they place themselves in) to truly reign dominant, a concept further examined by both Ursula Hehl and Cynthia Lewis, who show the males reaping what they sow in their attempts to escape reality, specifically with the idealised fantasy of the Academe and their avoidance of responsible adulthood. My contribution is to focus exclusively on 'Fast-and-Loose' as a key by which to unlock the ways in which gamesmanship and conquest are tied into concepts of masculinity in the play. This will include an examination of the critical necessity of aggressive sexuality in order to achieve conquest, which will itself be scrutinized, specifically in regards to the male need to be considered properly masculine. The aim of this section is to show that the men of Navarre, having lost the necessary moral strength for adequate gender performance will be undeserving of victory either in the games of the play or of marriage. Only when they reconnect themselves to that supposedly inherent sense of manly control will they be capable of domination.

Even in the world of the Renaissance court, where the civilised courtier was the model of masculinity, anxiety was often expressed over the absence of military violence as potentially effeminising (Woodbridge xiv-xv). Violence served as a tool by which the Renaissance male could help to fashion and solidify his own masculinity, and protect himself against the degradation and subordination of effeminacy. Violent sport was one method by

which a male could exercise masculinity, especially when the sport could be considered a metaphor for sexual dominance. Within LLL, both archery and hunting are representative of activities that are both inherently violent and, as a result, symbolise sexual dominance.

Archery is referred to throughout the deer hunt that occurs in Act 4, Scene 1. Although firearms had been invented and were of increasing importance on the battlefield, archery continued as both an important part of warfare, until the mid 17th century, and a competitive sport (Vale 59-60). It continued a reputation as both a masculine practice that, “al Noble men and Gentlemen . . . shoulde entertaine”, and a method to keep the poor occupied in fruitful labour, preventing lawlessness (58-59). The word ‘prick’, in the context of archery, contained two main meanings: the colloquial term for the target that the archer would aim at; and a term referring to a pointed weapon or implement i.e. potentially the arrow itself. The main goal of archery was to achieve the ‘pricking of the mark’, the mark being the target that could comprise, amongst other things, the clout: a piece of cloth pinned at the centre of the target (Barton 226). Since the Princess and her companions are hunting with the longbow, it would be expected for archery terminology to abound. The Princess wittily puns on her beauty by explaining to a forester, “I thank my beauty, I am fair that shoot, / And thereupon thou speak’st the fairest shoot” (IV.i.11-12); an argument between Boyet and Rosaline leads to Maria praising the rhetorical skills of both, stating that it was “a mark marvellous well shot, for they both did hit it” (IV.i.130), and Costard’s advise to Boyet, upon another inconclusive argument with Maria, is that “She’s too hard for you at pricks, sir, challenge her to bowl” (IV.i.138). Yet, ‘prick’ had additionally been a colloquial term for penis since at least 1555 (OED). As such, the pastime of archery could potentially be seen as a metaphor for sexual conquest.

Hunting, unlike archery, is explicitly presented in the play, with a deer hunt comprising the action of Act 4 Scene 1. However, much like archery, it was a sport that

contains various sexual connotations itself. Hunting, especially deer hunting, was considered to be the province of the truly masculine. The male hunter was that who comprised virility, bravado and sexual aggression, whereas, “the female [was perceived] in the role of the prey” (Berry 32). The use of arrows in hunting intimates the prey will be ‘pricked’ with an arrow by a ‘skilled hunter’. In their explicit aggression and sexual undertones, these games link directly to the aggression of sexual conquest within LLL. Yet, despite its lack of explicit violence, the conquestorial subtext of “Fast-and-Loose” cannot be dismissed. Furthermore, neither does it want for sexual innuendo or implicit sexual aggression.

Fast-and-Loose, as a feat of trickery, was a game of dishonesty. It was introduced by the gypsies, but also played extensively by ‘cony catchers’: a collective name for swindlers who tricked others, who might attempt at times to pass themselves off as gypsies (Salgado 32-33, 154-155). The cony-catcher would persuade the ‘cony’ (the dupe, literally meaning ‘rabbit’) or ‘bird’ that they could win at the proposed crooked game (219-220). Similarly, the terms “fast” and “loose” have multiple meanings themselves. ‘Fast’, in the game’s sense as “fixed to the spot”, in use since 1400 (OED), could also refer to being confined, with ‘Loose’ oppositionally meaning “free from physical restraint”, in use since 1300 (OED). Additionally, sexual “looseness” has indicated unchaste behaviour since 1470 (OED). This is apparent in LLL from the first mention of the game.

‘Fast-and-loose’ is invoked for the first time in the subplot by Costard, a knave who has been caught in the company of Jacquenatta, a country wench. He has been turned in by Armado, a Spanish Knight and a braggart, who desires Jacquenetta for himself and sets the law upon Costard. In punishment, Costard will spend a week in gaol, fasting with bran and water. Costard’s exchange with Armado and his page, Moth, reveals the ambiguities inherent in the language of the game:

ARMADO. Take away this villain shut him up

MOTH. Come, you transgressing slave, away.

COSTARD. Let me not be pent up, sir; I will fast being
loose.

MOTH. No, sir, that were fast and loose; thou shalt to prison. (I.ii.153-158)

Costard metaphorically plays fast-and-loose on three levels. Firstly, he has been sexually “loose” with Jacquenetta. Secondly, he has attempted to ‘loose’ himself from the strictures of the rule to know no women. Thirdly, he argues that he will fast (as in starve, as well as remain “fast” to his punishment) just as well when he is “loose” from the confines of prison; a claim to which Moth refuses to grant credence, suspecting it to be Costard’s sly means to “loose” himself from punishment altogether. Costard, therefore, is the first to mention fast-and-loose and is the first to ‘play’ it as a way of life. However, he is certainly not the last.

The metaphor of fast-and-loose as a method for performing immorality becomes the *modus operandi* for the majority of aristocratic male characters in LLL. Armado’s prime reason for setting the law on Costard is so that he can liaise with Jacquenetta. Armado, therefore, is also playing fast-and-loose: by having Costard placed in gaol or fastened to his punishment, he may ‘loose’ himself from the obligation of isolating himself from women that he swore to the King of Navarre and indulge himself sexually. Navarre and his men similarly desire to be ‘loose’ themselves from these same oaths that they have sworn as they find themselves desiring the Princess and her ladies. When it is clear that they have been betrayed to each other as breaking their oaths, they make a concerted effort to present themselves as remaining true to their original intent, whilst still being able to pursue their ‘looseness’. Disguised as Muscovites, they attempt to approach their separate loves and bestow presents on them in an attempt to overwhelm them. However, none of these attempts work. Armado is found out during the Pageant of the Nine Worthies when Costard reveals that Jacquenetta is pregnant: “the child brags in her belly. ’Tis yours” (V.ii.676-677). Armado, intending to

‘loose’ himself from the oath in private, is now exposed as a fornicator. The Princess and her ladies discover the plan of the men, disguise and mask themselves beforehand, and defy their attempts at seduction. The news of the King’s death leads them to depart for France, instructing the men as to individual tasks that they must complete before they can approach the ladies again with intentions of love. Much like Armado, the King of Navarre and his men attempt to loosen themselves from their obligations. Their desire to seduce the Princess and her ladies lead them to attempt ploys in which they will be able to locate (fasten) those they yearn for. The failure of these attempts leads to the men being fastened in tasks to prove their steadfastness, while the women can remain ‘loose’ (free) from being pinned down by seduction or marriage.

In light of such potentially dire implications, gaming within Love’s Labour’s Lost can thus be seen as separate to mere recreation, if recreation is defined as “relaxation or amusement” (Arcangeli 3). The pedantic schoolmaster Holofernes separates them distinctly: “Away, the gentles are at their game and we will to our recreation” (IV.ii.165-167). The recreation, in this context, is the entertainment of ‘The Nine Worthies’ that will be performed for the lords and ladies. The “game”, by comparison, is a hunt, with a subtext of amorous play (Woudhuysen 198). The attempts at seduction, therefore, indicate aggressive competition, with the men intent on victory over their potential partners. Armado seeks victory by being able to sleep with Jacquenetta, much as the King and his men attempt to ‘fasten’ the women in wedlock. Their inability to achieve these objectives is construed as a loss. Armado pledges to be faithful to Jacquenetta, but the revelation of his adultery costs him his freedom. The Princess and her ladies leave the Kingdom of Navarre ultimately victorious over Navarre and his men. Berowne confusedly states, at the end, that, “These ladies’ courtesy / Might well have made our sport a comedy” (V.ii.875-876). The play was supposed to end as a conventional comedy, with consummation as reconciliation between

man and woman, but it has ended without this “phallic completion” of marriage (Parker 472-473). Rather, the play ends as a contest in which the women have triumphed. While the violence of the gaming terminology traditionally limited it to the truly masculine male, the women’s triumph is ultimately rendered appropriate since it speaks to the ineffectual attempts of the men to enforce their dominance over the women, either through sexual desire or moral superiority. The sexual seductions within LLL are games that are represented as those which only a strong, dominant individual, i.e. a truly masculine male, can win. Ultimately, therefore, the men of Navarre lose to the women, pointing out their own inadequacies.

The intertwined violence and sexuality within LLL is revealed through the gaming imagery of the characters. The Princess and her ladies, along with the French lord Boyet, often use hunting and archery terminology as double-entendres for sex. Apart from a term for male genitalia, the term ‘prick’, since the early 15th century, could also connote the violence of “stick[ing], fix[ing], impal[ing] anything on the point of an instrument” (OED). This use equally affirms the parallel in the play between inherent sexuality and latent violence that is displayed via the conversations on gaming amongst the characters. Act IV Scene I shows Boyet using archery terminology to chide Rosaline on the prospect of a romantic entanglement with the supposedly chaste Berowne. Yet the ensuing double-entendre laden verbal sparring that they undertake is similarly shot through with references to fast-and-loose. The good Lord Boyet teasingly asks the Princess’s lady Rosaline, just before the Princess’ deer hunt will get underway, “Who is the shooter? Who is the shooter?” (IV.i.108), with a subtext of *suitor*, which would have been pronounced ‘shooter’ in the period (Barton 225). In this way Boyet sets the tone for the subsequent battle of wits between himself and Rosaline, slyly equating the active aggression of the shooter with the dominant sexual aggression of the individual who similarly pursues a marriage with another. Rosaline’s response, by cleverly referring to the armed Princess, furthers this analogy, stating that this dominant individual

ROSALINE: [Sings] Thou canst not hit it, hit it, hit it,
 Thou canst not hit it, my good man.

BOYET: [Sings] And I cannot, cannot, cannot,
 And I cannot, another can.

.....

MARIA: A mark marvellous well shot, for they both did hit [it].

BOYET: A mark! O, mark but that mark! A mark, says my lady!

Let the mark have a prick in't, to mete at, if it may be.

(IV.i.114-132)

The aim of these conversations is to strike, hit and wound with sexual puns. Boyet makes a sexual pun on archery terminology, claiming, in response to Maria's remark on the 'mark marvellous well shot' that Rosaline should let the mark 'have a prick in 't'. In this analogy, the potential violence of the 'loosed' arrow is connected with sexual penetration. Between the first and second scene, the Princess and her ladies engage in the hunting of the deer with arrows, where the audience is informed second-hand by the constable Dull, Holofernes, the pedantic schoolmaster, and Sir Nathaniel, the curate, that the Princess has killed a pricket, a buck in its second year, a very worthy prey. 'Prick' is again an act of violence: "The preyclful Princess pierced and pricked a pretty pleasing pricket" (IV.ii.56). Pricking and piercing are both used to refer to the act of mortally wounding prey. Furthermore, violent imagery is not construed as inappropriate by any character.

The dominant competitor in the game of 'Fast-and-loose' is the individual who holds the other participant 'fast' to a monetary obligation. Similarly, within the play, the individuals who are held 'fast' are submissive to those who have 'loosed' themselves from the confines. Don Armado becomes Costard's keeper, responsible for keeping him 'fast' in gaol, while

attempting to 'loose' himself from his oath in order to seduce Jacquenetta. His letter of intent to Jacquenetta announces him as her conquerer:

Thus dost thou hear the Nemean lion roar
 'Gainst thee thou lamb, that standest as his prey.
 Submissive fall his princely feet before,
 And he from forage will incline to play. (IV.i.87-91)

The King and his men similarly wish to pull 'loose' from the confines of their oaths to renounce women. In pulling loose, however, they contextualise their attempts to woo the ladies to be equivalent to a battle, in which they will 'down' the objects of their affections in a 'conflict':

KING. Saint Cupid, then! And, soldiers, to the field!
 BEROWNE. Advance your standards and upon them, lords!
 Pell-mell, down with them! But first be advised
 In conflict that you get the sun of them.
 LONGAVILLE. Now to plain dealing. Lay these glozes by.
 Shall we resolve to woo these girls of France?
 KING. And win them too! Therefore let us devise
 Some entertainment for them in their tents. (IV.iii.363-370)

Boyet reports: "Their purpose is to parlay, court and dance, / And every one his love-suit will advance / Unto his several mistress" (V.ii.122-124). Much like the swindler with his victim, or Armado's conceits with Jacquenetta, the King and his men attempt to dominate the ladies, who would conversely become submissive.

However, the men do not achieve their conquest. If the marriage at the end of a comedy "is traditionally a consummating or phallic point", then "it is this phallic complement that (for the men frustratingly) is unconventionally missing" (Parker 472-473). Moreover, the

play has continually shown the Princess and her ladies have greater skill at aggressive games and sports than the King and his men, whether the sports be verbal or physical and, by implication, leaving them 'ravished'. Rosaline has previously described that her previous social contact with Berowne revealed a man of considerably quick wit, to such an extent, "That aged ears play truant at his tales / And younger hearings are quite ravished, / So sweet and voluble is his discourse" (II.i.74-76). However, he achieves little next to the wit of the women. When Berowne asks Katherine, "Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?" (II.i.114), she turns the question around: "Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?" (II.i.115). Courtly dancing of the period consisted of a ritual whereby the dominant courtier led a pliant woman, with the expected sexual connotations applied (Howard 48). Katherine, by implying that *she* danced with Berowne, not he with her, presupposes herself as the dominant party. Additionally, 'to dance' was another common euphemism for sexual congress, 'dancing school' being an equally frequent colloquialism for a brothel (Kiernan 44). When Katherine claims that she took the dominant role, she is referring to herself as the one who penetrates the other with a 'prick' which leaves Berowne as the one who has been 'pierced' (and, in particular, 'ravished'), much like the buck that the Princess will hunt down and kill in the future. The argument that ensues makes this even more apparent as Katherine defeats her opponent with ease:

BEROWNE: Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

KATHERINE: Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?

BEROWNE: I know you did.

KATHERINE: How needless was it then

 To ask the question?

BEROWNE: You must not be so quick.

KATHERINE: 'Tis long of you that spur me with such

questions.

BEROWNE: Your wit's too hot, it speeds too fast, 'twill
tire.

KATHERINE: Not till it leaves the rider in the mire.

BEROWNE: What time a' day?

KATHERINE: The hour that fools should ask. (II.i.114-122)

Pauline Kiernan explains that as Katherine “skilfully deflects [Berowne’s] probes and wins the fight, he gives up, attempting to cover his humiliating ‘defeat’ by changing the subject and asking what the time is – only to become the butt of another caustic jibe” (43). Katherine has dominated her male adversary, reversing the culturally accepted trend of male superiority in aggressive play. In a similar reversal, the Princess is aware that her dominant role in the hunt is unusual for women, yet she still hunts successfully, bringing down a buck. When Boyet informs her of the plan of the men to disguise themselves, she instructs her ladies to deny them. Boyet remarks: “Why, that contempt will kill the speaker’s heart” (V.ii.149), to which the Princess replies, “Therefore I do it / . . . / There’s no such sport as sport by sport overthrown” (V.ii.151-153). The Princess and her ladies, through these displays of actual and metaphorical violence, will ‘kill’ the speakers’ hearts, showing themselves to be the dominant and therefore masculinised participants within the potentially violent games of the play.

By contrast, the men show no aptitude for such aggression or domination. They are instead shown as predominantly weak, lustful and inconstant: “Cupid’s butt-shaft is too hard for Hercules’ club” (I.ii.175-176), according to Armado as he details his lust for Jacquenetta. It is Armado in particular who is the most directly linked to such character flaws, especially the suggestion that he is insufficiently masculine. Navarre, when asked about prospects for entertainment in the newly aesthetic kingdom, is quick to remind his friends that “Our court you know is haunted / With a refined traveller of Spain / . . . / One who the music of his own

vain tongue / Doth ravish like enchanting harmony” (I.i.162-167). Armado’s self-aggrandizing letter to Jacquenetta, characterizing himself as the “Nemean lion” to her “lamb/prey”, is thus more evidence of his own lacking masculinity. Rather than being given to Jacquenetta, the letter is delivered by mistake to the Princess and her ladies, who dismiss the Spaniard as a “vane” and a “phantasime”, meaning “one who is full of fantastic notions” (Barton 225). Armado, despite impregnating Jacquenetta, does not ravish her as much as he ravishes and defeats himself, being taken away by “fantastic notions”. He displays not the ability for domination but, instead, the weakness and instability of the supplicating female.

Yet Navarre and his lords, despite their contempt for the Spanish braggart, are themselves less than appropriately masculine, as is best exemplified by the restrictive oaths they take, betraying their lack of rational judgment. Louis Montrose suggests that Navarre’s most enduring trait is that he is “ineffectual at best” at his patriarchal duties (“Sport by sport” 531), expressed most vividly in his desire to turn his kingdom into an Academe which will be devoted purely to book-learning and require participants to refrain from even speaking to women (532-533). By pursuing this capricious bid for unrealistic aestheticism, Navarre swears an oath that will require his abandonment of courtesy to the visiting Princess, to the point of not allowing her or her ladies to lodge within the kingdom. Navarre’s insufficiently masculine mind forgot that the Princess was due, merely high-lighting both the foolishness of the scheme and the insufficiently masculine minds that would think of this scheme and forget the realities of the world in favour of idealised fantasy. The Princess makes point of articulating this lack of rationality or good judgment shown by the King and his men when they meet for the first time outside the gate of the court. The Princess disregards his greeting of “welcome to the court of Navarre” (II.i.90), with the cynical observation that meeting her in the fields does not constitute a welcome to the court: “The roof of this court is too high to be yours, and welcome to the wide fields too base to be mine” (II.i.92-94). She goes on to

verbally censure the King, detailing the bind that he has put himself and his followers in, for, “I hear your grace hath sworn out housekeeping. / ’Tis deadly sin to keep that oath, my lord, / And sin to break it” (II.i.104-106). Unlike the astute verbal gaming that Boyet and Rosaline engage in, evading arguments and placing the onus back onto the accuser, Navarre and his men manage to make themselves ‘fast’, to then spend the rest of the play attempting to get themselves ‘loose’ of their obligations, whilst avoiding the ‘deadly sin’ of breaking them.

In the process, Berowne predicts the lack of masculine constancy that will plague himself and his fellows, claiming cynically that, “I’ll lay my oath to any goodman’s hat / These oaths and laws will prove an idle scorn” (I.i.308-309). They are proven to be nothing more in Act 4 Scene 3, where Berowne, the King, Longaville and Dumaine enter the stage confessing their love for one of the women, then hide to catch the next respective person in their perjury. For a man who, supposedly, could ‘ravish’ others merely by the act of discourse, Berowne’s love for Rosaline is, by his own admission, that of a disordered mind: “as mad as Ajax. It kills sheep, it kills me – I a sheep” (IV.iii.6-7). From this point on, as the King and the other lords enter the stage one after the other, Berowne is able to hide and spy on the King’s inconstancy; the King and Berowne overhear that of Longaville; and all three, unbeknownst to each other, bear witness to an unsuspecting Dumaine. The order in which their miscreancy is discovered by their compatriots is the opposite of what originally took place: Longaville surprises Dumaine; The King reveals the perjury of them both; and Berowne catches all three, mocking them (hypocritically) for their hypocrisy, likening them to children in their inconstancy:

O, what a scene of foolery I have seen,
 Of sighs, of groans, of sorrow and of teen!
 O me, with what strict patience have I sat,
 To see a king transformed to a gnat!

To see great Hercules whipping a gig,
 And profound Solomon to tune a jig,
 And Nestor play at push-pin with the boys,
 And critic Timon laugh at idle toys. (IV.iii.161-168)

Berowne's perjury is then uncovered by Costard's appearance with a letter that he wrote to Rosaline, to which he finally confesses, "That you three fools lacked me fool to make up the mess. / He, he and you – and you, my liege – and I / are pick-purses in love and we deserve to die" (IV.iii.203-205). All four, rather than 'ravishing' the women as a symbol of their masculinity, have been 'ravished' in their love for them. This has thus left them 'rapt', in that they are removed from their own masculinity, with an implication that they have lost any sense of 'manly autonomy' in the matter. The four men then prove themselves as 'rapt', not by reverting back to their previous oaths, but by attempting to think of a plausible argument to justify their lust:

KING. Then leave this chat and, good Berowne, now prove

Our loving lawful and our faith not torn.

DUMAINE. Ay, marry, there; some flattery for this evil.

LONGAVILLE. O, some authority how to proceed.

Some tricks, some quilllets how to cheat the devil.

DUMAINE. Some salve for perjury. (IV.iii.280-285)

Their attempt to play 'Fast-and-Loose' failed with each other when they were all held 'fast', so they will now attempt to conquer the women through the metaphorical war of the Muscovite masque. Berowne argues that it was folly to even attempt to maintain those vows since "abstinence engenders maladies" and moreover, "For when would you, my lord, or you, or you, / Have found the ground of study's excellence / Without the beauty of a woman's

face?" (IV.iii.295-297). Furthermore, he posits, breaking these vows is the best way to reclaim their masculine dominance, their sense of honour and their ability to 'ravish':

For valor, is not Love a Hercules,
 Still climbing trees in the Hesperidies?

 Never durst poet touch a pen to write
 Until his ink were temp' red with Love's sighs:
 O then his lines would ravish savage ears
 And plant in tyrants mild humanity.

 [Let] us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,
 Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths (IV.iii.337-359)

Again, however, the women remain 'loose', defeating them with 'violent' speech. Boyet remarks during the verbal sparring that the ladies' tongues are, "as keen / As is the razor's edge invisible / . . . / Their conceits have wings / Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind, thought, swifter things" (V.ii.256-261). Berowne considers, as the ladies break off from contact, that he and the men have been thrashed in the exchange: "By heaven, all dry-beaten with pure scoff" (V.ii.263). The revelation of the ladies' knowledge of the scheme makes him positive that the men were crushed in the contest. The Princess describes the pleasure of watching the Pageant of the Nine Worthies: "Their form confounded makes most form in mirth, / When great things labouring perish in their birth" (V.ii.519-520); Berowne remarks: "A right description of our sport, my lord" (V.ii.521).

In reality, the men are never able to make up for the defeat since the common end of marriage, both a reconciliation device and a display of 'phallic completion' for the male, require the aggressive and rational nature of the true male. The messenger Marcade brings

news of the death of the King of France to the Princess who then announces that she will leave Navarre immediately to go home. The appeals of the King and his men for marriage are rejected on the grounds that they are felt to be light and comedic, rather than genuine, a claim that the men cannot deny. Berowne, in fact, uses the analogy of a childlike desire as part of his supposed ‘plain-speaking’ in his appeal:

For your fair sakes have we neglected time,
 Played foul play with our oaths. Your beauty, ladies,
 Hath much deformed us, fashioning our humours
 Even to the opposed end of our intents;
 And what in us hath seemed ridiculous –
 As love is full of unbefitting strains,
 All wanton as a child, skipping and vain,

 Which parti-coated presence of loose love
 Put on by us, if, in your heavenly eyes,
 Have misbecomed our oaths and gravities,
 Those heavenly eyes that look into these faults,
 Suggested us to make. (V.ii.755-770)

The Princess, however, states that her ladies and she considered these appeals and letters to be, “pleasant jest and courtesy, / As bombast and as lining to the time” (V.ii.780-781), therefore they decided to meet these requests, “In their own fashion, like a merriment” (V.ii.784). The King’s appeal to, “Now, at the latest minute of the hour, / Grant us your loves” (V.ii.787-88), is refused as, “A time, methinks, too short / To make a world-without-end bargain in” (V.ii.788-789). The Princess goes on to censor the King predominantly

because of the violation of his oath: it reveals him to be impetuous and foolish, rather than a rational, pure male:

No, no, my lord, your grace is perjured much,
 Full of dear guiltiness; and therefore this:
 If for my love – as there is no such cause –
 You will do aught, this shall you do for me:
 Your oath I will not trust, but go with speed
 To some forlorn and naked hermitage,
 Remote from all the pleasures in the world,
 There stay until the twelve celestial signs
 Have brought about the annual reckoning.
 If this austere insociable life
 Change not your offer made in heat of blood;

 Then at the expiration of the year,
 Come challenge me, challenge me by these deserts,
 And, by this virgin palm now kissing thine,
 I will be thine. (V.ii.790-807)

The other ladies set the rest of the men variations of this same test, all of them lasting a year in length until they will have the opportunity to proclaim their love again. Rosaline tells Berowne that he shall visit the weak, sick and feeble, his task being, “With all the fierce endeavour of your wit / To enforce the pained impotent to smile” (V.ii.853-854). She considers it to be, “the way to choke a gibing spirit, / Whose influence is begot of that *loose* grace / Which shallow laughing hearers give fools” (V.ii.858-860). The use of the term ‘loose’ is instructive. Berowne’s speech is ‘loose’ in that it is free and full of mocking charm,

but also in that it is potentially licentious or sinful (Woudhuysen 292). Much like the Princess considers the King as making his offer, “in the heat of blood”, Rosaline believes that Berowne is too sinful and “shallow” in his easy, mocking speech. The task is to teach him to be spiritually pure and strong, again, so that he can be a genuinely masculine male instead of the mocking courtier who, like the King, disgraced his oath. Dumaine tells Katherine that, for the year, “I’ll serve thee true and faithfully till then”, but she warns him, “Yet swear not, lest ye be forsworn again” (V.ii.831-832). Armado’s promise to Jacquenetta, that he will “hold the plough for her sweet love three year” (V.ii.884), is the one way to avoid punishment after being found out as a fornicator. He will renounce living as a braggart and will attempt to rebuild himself as a genuine man. In all of these situations, the men embroiled in violating oaths and indulging in a foolish, luxurious way of life must carry out tasks of penance in order to prove themselves as masculine. Since they are not masculine at the moment, however, they cannot be rewarded with the combined reconciliation/victory of marriage, because such victory requires the aggression and potential violence found only in truly masculine men. In the game of seduction contained in the play, therefore, they will not triumph until they prove themselves worthy.

Louis Montrose has suggested that Love’s Labour’s Lost shows a world where play has taken over the “rituals of verbal, sexual and social bondage”, and that Shakespeare “makes a comedy by refusing to make his characters’ sport a comedy” (“Sport by sport” 548). My aim has been to show how the language of games and gaming in early Modern England is of critical importance to understanding this particular play. Through analysing the references in the play to ‘Fast-and-Loose’, archery and the metaphorical importance of the hunting scene, the lack of marriages at the end of Love’s Labour’s Lost is shown as an appropriate consequence of men who are not masculine enough to conquer and control a woman. The continuing sexual subtext of the gaming terminology makes explicit both the aggression and

violence that the truly ‘masculine’ male of the period was required to conduct his sexual relationships by in order to attain conquest, as well as the subsequent sexual inferiority of the majority of men within the play who are defeated. Their lack of specifically masculine qualities, such as rational judgment, constancy and aggressive strength, becomes a weapon for the women of the play to wield with surprising skill and aggression. Without the dominant masculinity that would normally assist them in ‘ravishing’, they are therefore prey to being ‘ravished’. In the process, the women make the men even more aware of their own inadequacies, leaving them ‘rapt’, both a symbol of their effeminacy and a malady requiring a cure that will extend beyond the end of the play. Until then, these men not only do not attain victory, they are presented as not being masculine enough to deserve victory. Being offered the opportunity to rebuild that manliness through arduous tasks, the completion of which is by no means assured, serves as an explicit warning to both characters and audience of the dangers of succumbing to the effeminising effects of lust. It is in Shakespeare’s later play Antony and Cleopatra that the full dangers of such indulgence are explicitly realised.

“Beguiled to the very heart of loss”: Antony and Cleopatra

The war between Rome and Egypt portrayed in Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra comes to an end in Act IV Scene xii. The day before (scene viii), despite previous warnings about the invincibility of Rome’s Octavius Caesar, Egyptian forces under Marc Antony and Queen Cleopatra have beaten Caesar back to his camp in a land assault. Antony anticipates that the next day’s battle will see his force “spill the blood [of Caesar’s force] / That has today escaped” (IV.viii.3-4), and prepares for the next day’s sea battle. Antony’s optimism is tempered by confusion when he reveals that the two forces “are not yet joined [engaged in battle]” (IV.xii.1), only to change to despair and rage when he discovers that Egypt’s force is aligned with Caesar: “My fleet hath yielded to the foe, and yonder / They cast their caps up

and carouse together / Like friends long lost” (IV.xii.11-13). From this moment on, as he proclaims, “Fortune and Antony part here”, to never be reconciled (IV.xii.19). The focus of Antony’s fury in this rant is his lover, Cleopatra, and what he believes to be her betrayal of him. As he rails against her, he invokes the contemporary cheating game “Fast-and-Loose”, the analogy of which labels Cleopatra as the deceiver who had reduced Antony to a mere dupe:

All is lost!

This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me.

.....

Triple-turn’d whore! ’tis thou

Hast sold me to this novice, and my heart

Makes only wars on thee.

.....

O this false soul of Egypt! This grave charm,

Whose eyes beck’d forth my wars and call’d them home

Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end,

Like a right gipsy, hath at fast and loose

Beguiled me to the very heart of loss. (IV.xii.9-29)

Similar to the use of the game in LLL, I will argue that this reference to ‘fast-and-loose’, far from being incidental or meaningless, is emblematic of the play’s structure, action and conflicts. It is literally played out as a large game of fast-and-loose, where participants compete to keep themselves ‘loose’ from confines and to, in turn, hold another ‘fast’ and subject to their will. Egypt and Rome battle to gain an empire that will include domination of the loser of the battle. To win this battle, the participants must embody the qualities of ‘genuine’ masculinity, predominantly in their ability to conquer others. The Egyptian Queen

Cleopatra, as the “right gypsy” she is by origin, beguiles Antony into being held ‘fast’ in defeat by Octavius, enabling herself to remain ‘loose’ in loyalty and affection. Antony’s loss, by comparison, is a metaphor for his inability to succeed in these areas and a symbol of his debauched lack of masculinity in a culture that required its display through conquest.

The argument that the previously masculine Antony is presented within Antony and Cleopatra as a considerably emasculated figure is not unusual in scholarly writings on this play. In fact, the debauchment of Antony’s gender identity has been a continuing theme in a stream of critical inquiry. Paul Lawrence Rose in a 1969 article posits that Antony’s passion “swamps” his political acumen and serves to undermine his authority, showing him, according to Rose, “unfit for politics . . . [he] has become enchanted by the false soul of Egypt” (383). Susan Snyder presents his ludicrous single person combat challenge to Caesar as evidence of his lack of rational judgement and emblematic of his lack of authority (204, 207), a point echoed by W. B. Worthen who sees Antony as struggling to regain his past authority and greatness (301). A. P. Riemer furthers this aspect, stating that “Antony’s political irresponsibility is presented as effeminate decline”, by which he “infringes the rigid social hierarchies and the cult of manliness on which the control of power rests” (12). Both Cynthia Marshall and James W. Stone indicate Antony’s desperation at losing the armour of a solid masculine identity, instead existing somewhat amorphously between masculine and feminine, an attitude which Juliet Dusinberre shows has persisted into more modern productions of the play, with Laurence Olivier’s pithy advice to “all you future Antonys . . . Cleopatra’s got you firmly by the balls” (60). Nor has the conception of games and gaming gone without mention. Linda Woodbridge considers that both Antony and Octavius are engaged in a form of gambling, while Rick Bowers further considers that “in a sense, Caesar ‘holds all the cards’, forces the play, and manipulates the action” (524). Riemer continues this line with a brief mention about the play’s linking of Cleopatra with “enchantment, witchcraft,

treachery and deceit, together with a highly revealing allusion to ‘fast-and-loose’, a gambling-game notorious in Shakespeare’s age for malpractice” (10). My contention is that the emasculation of Antony is best articulated through an examination of the games and gaming terminology used within the play, specifically the use of ‘fast-and-loose’, a game thought to have been introduced to England via the nomadic Romanies wandering England, who acquired the colloquial term ‘gypsies’ from an impression that they were originally Egyptian. Antony’s use of the term to describe his loss suggests both the extent to which Antony has come to embody those Egyptian values, and the deleterious effect they have upon his masculinity. Yet to categorise the play as a mere morality tale is to forget the attraction of Shakespeare’s Cleopatra, both through her embodiment of the colourful gypsy and by her evocation of the late Elizabeth I in parts of her performance, ending with her depriving Octavius of the symbolic victory of maintaining her as a kept trophy with her suicide. Through an analysis of the resonance of ‘Fast-and-loose’ in the play, particularly the cultural significance of the term ‘gypsy’, the importance of violence and sexual conquest to masculine identity in Renaissance England, and the perceived cultural danger in not fulfilling such masculine obligations, this section will argue that the allegorical game of fast-and-loose echoes Antony’s eventual destruction. It is his embodiment of Egypt and Egyptian values that dissipates his masculine ability to conquer at play, sex or war. However, while Caesar is the overall victor, Cleopatra’s last game denies him complete symbolic power and marks her as a clear, if disreputable, audience favourite.

“Fast-and-Loose”, Gypsies and the Threat to Hierarchy

As previously stated in this chapter, the goal of fast-and-loose is to achieve victory by holding another person fast to a subservient position. The dupe imagines that, by holding down what they think is the centre of the arranged strap with the pointed end of a stake or

skewer, they can not only hold the gypsy/cozener's strap fast to the table-top, they will also hold them in an obligation to pay them the money promised. The cozening figure, by arranging the strap in a specific pattern, plans to always be able to pull the strap 'loose'. As a result, they can then hold the dupe 'fast' to their wager. The sexual metaphor implicit in this game, as previously discussed, is clearly one of domination over another. Much as the successfully sexual male was the one who enforced a degree of aggressive conquest on his partner, whether literal or metaphorical, the winner is the individual who can enforce a degree of dominance over his opponent. And such a metaphor for success applied to various other aspects of Renaissance life. The 'perfect' male embodied the qualities perceived as integral to his decidedly stronger sex, such as courage, ferocity, subtlety, industry and political cunning (Laqueur 123; Fletcher 61). A man who indulges in luxury or lust is, by contrast, in danger of effeminating himself and thus losing these qualities. By losing these qualities, he consequently diminishes himself into an individual incapable of conquest. He who is held 'fast' by another, whether through a game, sexual congress or political situations is being dominated by them.

Its deceitful method notwithstanding, as a game thought to be introduced to England by gypsies, fast-and-loose was by association considered a dishonest game. The nomadic Romanys were the recipients of intense prejudice from the authorities. James IV of Scotland had originally given them protection, but for an unknown reason he withdrew it in 1541, thereafter ordering them out of Scotland under penalty of execution (Knoblock 36). Edward VI passed the Statute of Vagabonds in 1547, grouping gypsies together with other itinerants, ordering that they be branded with a large V (for 'vagabond') and condemned to two years of slavery (Davies 534-535). Even when slavery was removed from the statute in 1549, the gypsies were intermittently threatened with corporal punishment, gaol, loss of goods and oftentimes death if they did not depart England. By grouping them together with vagabonds

under the law, the authorities made an inadvertent statement about the threat that they perceived from gypsies and the potential consequences of allowing them to roam freely.

Gypsies were predominantly feared for their status as outsiders, an exceptionally frightening position to a society that valorised hierarchical structure and conformity to proper social roles as imperative for state progress. As wandering individuals of foreign origin, who made their living through the performance of seemingly exotic culture, including claims to divining the future and telling fortunes, often as a cover for petty theft (Salgado 170), the Romanys inspired both prejudice and fear. Their nomadic status gave comparison to those who were termed ‘masterless men’, defining those able-bodied individuals without an occupation (vagabonds, vagrants etc.). Those without employment or occupation contradicted such edicts as the Elizabethan “Homilie Against Idleness”, that preached on the necessity of “honest and godly exercise and labour” to guard against the evils of idleness, which could lead to “wickednesse and sinne, to the everlasting destruction of mans soule” (Carroll 4). Idleness was believed to lead not to inactivity, but the wrong kind of activity: from theft and existing parasitically off the work of the honest, to potential rebellion and sedition (Carroll 5). Just as much as the Romanys’ nomadic wandering, crossing the boundaries of townships and roads, their perceived Egyptian heritage increased the likelihood of a transgression of social roles. The epithet “Moon men” that the playwright Thomas Dekker referred to them by, was as much a reference to their supposedly “mad and changeable” natures and lifestyles, as it was used to signify connection to magic (qtd. in Salgado 165). Elizabethan and Jacobean dictum viewed such individuals as dangerous for both their disregard of hierarchical standards and ethics, and the possibility that they would influence others to do likewise, “infecting” those who viewed them with the “plague” of idle troublemaking and disregard for consistent stability (Carroll 7). The gypsy, like all who violated the strictures of Elizabethan society, could, in this sense, virtually debauch all they came into contact with.

The magic performances and tricks that many gypsies relied upon to live, along with their seemingly exotic heritage, both exacerbated the fear that they inspired in authorities and some citizens, yet also made them endlessly fascinating to others. The increased knowledge of the classical world by Renaissance scholars included a degree of knowledge about Egypt. The Egyptian procedure of mummification led to the English practice of using ‘mummiā’ (ground-up and specially prepared embalmed flesh) as a curative substance (Dannenfeldt 17-18). However, Egypt was also viewed as fundamentally opposite to those values of England. Richard Thorton, a fellow of the Lincoln College, gave two sermons which were published together in a single volume named The Aegyptian Courtier in 1635, spoke of an Egypt that had been led astray by “this prophane Art of Divination . . . a blacke Art, farre beyond the light of flesh and blood” (11, 10). The 1530 “Act concerning Egyptians” gave voice to more practical concerns that gypsies “by craft and subtlety have deceived the people of their money and also hath committed many and heinous felonies and robberies” (Salgado 158). With “their swarthy faces painted red or yellow . . . embroidered turbans and coloured scarves worn over shreds and patches and with little bells tinkling about their feet”, the Romanys reinforced the xenophobia of officials and the fear of the unusual (156-157). Yet such attire and behaviour made them fascinating to the populace, many of whom carried a belief in the power of the supernatural alongside Christian belief and would, at times, seek to benefit from the skills of divination supposedly possessed by the exotic foreigner (165). Furthermore:

Although Justices of the Peace rarely relaxed their severity towards them, the gypsies survived because they brought into the lives of people a sense of mystery and excitement which could not often be found elsewhere. When the gypsies entered a village with their captain or jackman at their head, decked in all their finery, bells ringing and tabors playing, it is easy to imagine the villagers rushing out to see them, leaving their houses open for robbery by

some of the gypsy band – though at the next fair day they could probably retrieve their lost goods, albeit at a price. (169-170)

By implying that he has been “beguil’d” by “a right gypsy”, Antony connects Cleopatra to a culture that threatened both the goods and identity of the individual who succumbed to its machinations, as well as the fabric of a society where it continued unimpeded. Such a connection can be seen as equally appropriate when discussing the risk involved in heterosexual relations for the male. Since the one recognized gender was that of the male, any departure from either masculinity or the male-dominated hierarchical order of early modern England was considered corrupt. Furthermore, the excitement and seductive power of these subversions ensured their popularity among the populace and consequently made their inherent debasement disturbingly easy to succumb to. Antony’s intoxication with Egypt and Egyptian culture has indulged his lustful desires and, as a consequence, debauched those qualities that previously made him masculine.

The lack of respect that Antony can inspire amongst others is further evidence of his lacking masculinity. Tied into a focus upon hierarchical status was the belief that those intrinsically higher individuals must command the respect of those lower. For example, it was the job of a man to dominate his wife, inspiring her respect and loyalty. His failure to do so could be considered both a shirking of his societal obligation and an expression of his lacking masculinity, since it was his masculine qualities (his physical and mental strength, his bravery, his cunning and rational mind) that would allow him to achieve her awe and undying respect (Foyster 29-30). As a ruler in Egypt and as a former general, Antony should ideally inspire respect from his soldiers, from his contemporaries (such as Caesar) and, at the very least, from his lover Cleopatra. That he is often the target of disrespect from these individuals merely provides more evidence as to his emasculated status within the play and, especially, his emasculated status in comparison to Cleopatra.

“A Strumpet’s Fool”: Antony and “Fast-and-Loose”

Antony’s main failing is presented as his embodiment of the debauched values of Egypt. Rather than conquering Cleopatra and proving himself to be the master over a ‘weaker vessel’, he has become a victim of her seductive powers, serving her desires rather than his political responsibilities. As a direct consequence of being tricked by the ‘gypsy’ into a metaphorical game of ‘fast-and-loose’ by the appearance of sensual pleasure, he has immersed himself in Egyptian values and sensual indulgences and diminished those qualities that signified him as a conquest-oriented male. As a result, Antony has lost the qualities that marked him as a man of leadership and authority. He has lost his temperate disposition, his self-control, his military aptitude and his political cunning, all of which results in his diminished authority throughout the play. Yet, despite infrequent glimmers of reason, Antony is deluded enough to believe that he holds the power not only in Egypt, but in his relationship with Cleopatra and in military authority over Caesar. It is only in the aftermath of Egypt’s loss against Rome that he understands that he has been led by Cleopatra to a loss, that Cleopatra’s game of ‘fast-and-loose’ has resulted in himself becoming the ultimate loser.

The first evidence for the conception of Antony being Cleopatra’s dupe comes from the first speaker in the play, Philo. In conversation with Demetrius, he leads an “impassioned tirade against Antony’s irresponsibility” (Riemer 6). As he rails, Philo reminds his friend of Antony’s glorious masculine past and compares it to his rather more ignoble status at that moment. Antony’s failing, according to Philo, is his excess and lack of self-control, which stems from his infatuation with, not just Egypt, but Cleopatra in particular. The past was home to a fierce warrior whose emotional equanimity was accompanied by an implicitly healthy desire for war, where “his goodly eyes / . . . o’er the files and muster of the war / Have glowed like plated Mars” (I.i.2-4), and his “captain’s heart / . . . in the scuffles of great

fights hath burst / The buckles on his breast” (I.i.6-8). The current Antony has betrayed this. His eyes are now debased not only by his service to a woman’s desires, but that they “now turn / The office and devotion of their view / Upon a tawny front” (I.i.4-6). His once valiant heart now “reneges all temper [temperance], / And is become the bellows and the fan / to cool a gypsy’s lust” (I.i.8-10). As Antony, Cleopatra and her entourage enter the vicinity, Philo drives his point home to Demetrius even more bluntly:

Look where they come!

Take but good look, and you shall see in him

The triple pillar of the world [Antony] transform’d

Into a strumpet’s fool. Behold and see. (I.i.10-13).

The use of “fool” is instructive as it directly defines Antony as a victim of Cleopatra. He does not just cavort with the lustful gypsy, he has been tricked by her into becoming inferior to her. In doing so, he has thrown away his honourable career and a position of privileged masculinity to become a slave to lust. When Antony is informed that messengers from Rome have come to inform him, he summarily dismisses them without even hearing them, preferring to plan for the evening’s entertainment: “There’s not a minute of our lives should stretch / Without some pleasure now. What sport tonight?” (I.i.46-47). He is a less responsible ruler than the “strumpet” Cleopatra in this instance, who reasons that a messenger coming from Octavius Caesar should be heard immediately. He and Cleopatra then leave to prepare for the evening’s frivolities, prompting Philo’s exasperation that, “sometimes when he is not Antony, / He comes too short of that great property [quality] / Which still should go with Antony” (I.i.57-59). For Philo, the man who has just ignored the message of a military compatriot is not the Antony that he admired but rather a “fool” who been tricked out of such greatness and masculinity. He no longer represents the fine, masculine male who was one of the “triple pillars”, ruling over a third of the known world, on a par with Caesar. He now

displays excess, indulgence, a lack of self-control, and lack of either personal or political judgement. As such, he goes on to lose the authority and respect that only a truly masculine male can engender in others. By becoming entrapped in Cleopatra's metaphorical game of fast-and-loose, it becomes apparent that, even when Antony becomes aware of his diminishing masculinity, he simply hasn't the faculty to avoid losing it.

Antony's subservient status to Cleopatra is figured in terms of 'fast-and-loose'. Cleopatra is able to hold Antony 'fast' in situations where she can dominate him, thereby proving his effeminacy. In conversation with her attendants, in concern that Antony's devotion may be wavering slightly, Cleopatra instructs Alexas to find Antony and tailor his message to the mood of Antony in order to bind him to Cleopatra again: "I did not send you. If you find him sad, / Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report / That I am sudden sick" (I.iii.3-5). When Charmain questions the wisdom in this, Cleopatra laughingly refutes her:

CHARMAIN: Madam, methinks if you did love him
dearly,
You do not hold the method to enforce
The like from him.

CLEOPATRA: What should I do, I do not?

CHARMAIN: In each thing give him way, cross him in
nothing.

CLEOPATRA: Thou teachest like a fool: the way to lose
him. (I.iii.6-10)

Cleopatra will not give him way in everything, because to do so would potentially encourage Antony to become truly dominant and masculine again, which Cleopatra considers a distinct possibility. The current Antony is far from this ideal, as Caesar makes plain. Discussing

Antony, he starts to list his transgressions and debauchment. High on the list of such transgressions are his revelling, his indulgences and his lust for Cleopatra:

From Alexandria

This is the news: he fishes, drinks, and wastes
 The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike
 Than Cleopatra; nor the queen of Ptolomy
 More womanly than he;

Let's grant it is not

Amiss to tumble on the bed of Ptolomy,
 To give a kingdom for a mirth, to sit
 And keep the turn of tippling with a slave,
 To reel the streets at noon, and stand the buffet
 With knaves that smell of sweat. (I.iv.3-21)

The current Antony, that spends much of his time pursuing such pleasures and effeminate luxury is simultaneously degrading himself, cavorting as he does with slaves, rank knaves and gypsies as he drinks, gorges and lusts for fleshy delights. Such a man is neither dominant, nor masculine but is instead the type who would “give a kingdom for a mirth”. Such an individual is unlikely to attempt to escape from the ‘fast’ grip of the individual currently dominating them, let alone turn the tables and hold ‘fast’ those responsible for previously conquering them. Cleopatra’s interests lie in keeping Antony as subservient to her as possible, therefore she is careful to not allow his devotion to flag.

The impetus for Cleopatra’s instructions is earlier when she muses that Antony was “dispos’d to mirth, but on the sudden / A Roman thought hath strook him” (I.ii.82-83). The ‘Roman’ thought was one more inclined to stoicism than mirth but, even more importantly, it

was also predicated upon, “the logocentric, masculine tradition of Renaissance historiography . . . glorifying the masculine virtues of courage, honor, and patriotism” (Singh 111). Cleopatra’s suspicion is thus even more potentially prescient. Antony, while in a ‘Roman’ frame of mind, could conceivably regain his masculinity and masculine virtues and either dominate Cleopatra or leave Egypt, loosening himself from the lust and luxury which have previously held him ‘fast’. During Antony’s time in Rome, Cleopatra occupies her time with games of billiards with the eunuch Mardian, and decides to go fishing as well, symbolically revealing how she conducts and regards her relationship with Antony:

Give me mine angle, we’ll to th’ river; there,
 My music playing far off, I will betray
 Tawny[-finn’d] fishes; my bended hook shall pierce
 Their slimy jaws; and as I draw them up,
 I’ll think them every one an Antony,
 And say, “Ah, ha! y’ are caught.” (II.v.10-15)

To Cleopatra, Antony is the equivalent of a “tawny fish”, to be “betrayed” with bait, pierced, caught and dominated. By being “pierced”, the fish “Antony” is not only being held ‘fast’ but, by implication, is also potentially being penetrated by a phallic implement. Cleopatra imagines her lover, not only as one to be caught and held onto, but one to be consciously dominated and effeminated through conceptualised acts of phallic, aggressive sexuality which conquer him. Cleopatra and Charmain go on to reminisce about an occasion where she tricked the fishing Antony, much like ‘fast-and-loose’, into accepting a crooked wager and being thus humiliated by loss. In the revelling aftermath, Cleopatra succeeds in figuratively emasculating and castrating the former Roman hero:

CHARMAIN: ’Twas merry when
 You wager’d on your angling; when your diver

occasion, he was not only the approximation of a woman and deprived of his weapon, it ended up in the hands of Cleopatra who then took to wearing it during Antony's inebriation. Cleopatra successfully emasculated Antony to below her.

In his darkest moment, Antony understands his depth of emasculation as well. The aftermath of his final military disaster leaves him preparing to kill the lover who, he believes, played and betrayed him. He ends his rant, in confidence to Eros, with the accusation, "O, thy vild lady! / She has robb'd me of my sword" (IV.xiv.22-23). Frank Kermode, in his footnotes for the Riverside edition of the play, interprets "sword" as a metaphor for "martial prowess" (1426), however the term, as explained above, reveals more layers as to the connections between martial ability, sexual prowess, and Renaissance masculinity. This statement by Antony symbolically mirrors Cleopatra's revelation that she actually did take her inebriated lover's sword from him. Antony, in the speech before he hurls this charge, discusses the emasculation that he underwent as a result, along with the losses that Cleopatra inflicted upon him:

Here I am Antony,
 Yet cannot hold this visible shape, my knave.
 I made these wars for Egypt, and the Queen,
 Whose heart I thought I had, for she had mine –
 Which whilst it was mine had annex'd unto't
 A million moe (now lost) – she, Eros, has
 Pack'd cards with Caesar, and false play'd my glory
 Unto an enemy's triumph. (IV.xiv.13-20)

The result of Antony having lost his "sword" is his subsequent lack of masculine identity. He implicates himself as being unable to hold the "visible shape" of Antony, identifying the lack of masculine stability which is entrenched within Rome and "roman thoughts" of courage,

patriotism and duty (Singh 111). Unlike the prudent male who is wary of lust's potential to destroy his manly qualities, Antony compromised in giving his heart to Cleopatra. Ownership of Antony's heart allowed Cleopatra to take possession of him, convincing him to give up his sense of reason to make wars for Egypt and Cleopatra. In Antony's mind, Cleopatra did not return this overwhelming devotion but went on to betray him to Caesar, leaving him defeated, disgraced and unable to maintain the previous stability of his masculine self. Cleopatra's theft of his 'sword' has resulted in both a physical loss of shape, losing his phallic 'sword', an item that symbolised him as both male and masculine; and a loss of the capacity for military prowess/conquest, which extends to a lack in capacity for sexual control and leadership.

In the terms of 'fast-and-loose', Cleopatra literally brought Antony into a physical state of stasis and incomprehension, holding him definitively 'fast', while she was conversely able to remain mobile and, therefore, dominant. Furthermore, by taking his sword, Cleopatra availed herself of a tool which would have more ability to hold Antony 'fast' and 'pierce' him, as she plans, in the present day, on metaphorically doing to the fish that she is planning to catch and taunt in lieu of Antony. In this past exchange, Cleopatra was master over Antony. Due to his embrace of Egyptian values, such as frivolity, lust, luxury and idleness, Antony has debauched himself and ended, as Philo states, little more than a 'strumpet's fool'. Antony's glimmers of reason, such as his 'roman thoughts', leads him to these conclusions and an attempt to break free from such emasculation.

Octavius Caesar, by comparison, is an incredibly able politician who specialises in winning 'games' and, in particular, in winning games against Antony. The Soothsayer points this out to him, as he is relaxing in Rome after marrying Octavia: "If thou dost play with him at any game, / Thou art sure to lose; and of that natural luck, / He beats thee 'gainst the odds" (II.iii.26-28). While Antony scoffs and sends the old man away, he cannot help but wonder at the truth in the remarks, musing that "If we draw lots, he speeds; / His cocks do win the battle

still of mine” (II.iii.36-37), and considering that, in a symbolic gesture of being confined (much like a loser at ‘fast-and-loose’), “his quails ever / Beat mine, inhoop’d [fighting in an enclosure], at odds” (II.iii.38-39). According to Antony, “The very dice obey him, / And in our sports my better cunning faints / Under his chance” (II.iii.34-36). However, Antony also contradicts himself in this assessment. Antony’s ‘masculine’ cunning is most identifiably not better than Caesar’s, for he has been reduced to little more than a dupe for Cleopatra, who has been successful, in the recent past, at holding Antony physically ‘fast’, taking his weapon and thereby symbolically effeminating him. Antony has helped this process with his interminable passion for lust and luxury. Cleopatra, in the build-up to her suicide, mocks him for “Not being fortune, he’s but Fortune’s knave, / A minister of her will” (V.ii.3-4). While Caesar’s fortune may or may not be exceptional, what distinguishes him from Antony is his ability at conquest and the masculine abilities of rational thinking and subtle cunning that guide him:

The play’s ultimate political victor, Caesar, is by contrast [to Antony] a masterful military organizer, who builds his power partly on the cooperation of trusted subordinates. His first entry shows him mid-conference with Maecenas and Agrippa (2.2.18). These counsellors accompany Caesar in almost all his scenes of negotiation and warfare, while he also makes skilful use of his emissary Thidias (3.12.26-35). In addition, Caesar gathers information methodically (1.4.34-36); his military movements are marked with a celerity that takes his opponents by surprise (1.4.74-78, 3.7.20, 54, 74); he takes pains over small but telling matters, such as misleading spies about his intentions (3.7.75-77) . . . Physical force requires mental, organizational, or psychological support. (Miller 48).

Shakespeare has therefore constructed Octavius as the antithesis of Antony: “differentiating changing Antony from unchanging Caesar” (Stone 28). Marilyn Williamson observes that,

despite his potentially cold personality and his ruthlessness, “we should not miss the fact that Shakespeare seems to have had some interest in stressing Octavius’ control and responsibility”. If “we seldom warm to effective rulers in Shakespeare” (244), it may originate from their characteristics: Riemer classifies Caesar as “stoic, calculating, pragmatic; full, whole, solid”. Unlike Antony, he has a “characteristic appetite for dominion . . . it melts, inundates, floods all opposition” (28). He may have good fortune, but he augments that with masculine abilities derived from his embrace of Rome and Roman values, elevating courage, patriotism, rationality and duty over luxurious pleasure and lust. When ‘playing’ against his competitors, with such manly and military advantages, “In a sense, Caesar ‘holds all the cards’, forces the play, and manipulates the action” (Bowers 524). Bowers further argues that the play showcases his “complex, youthful paternalism, a paternalism that integrates personality and power within a game-sphere where Caesar makes the rules and the only thing disallowed is losing” (525). Consequently, he keeps his masculinity through his actions. It is these characteristics that Antony’s ‘roman thoughts’ are inclining him towards, alerting him to the necessities of masculinity.

Antony’s ‘roman thought’ leads to him finally attending to political business, hearing out the Roman messengers that he previously dismissed. Despite the negative nature of the news, Antony is hungry for it, regarding it as a possible excuse to leave Egypt, the effeminising grip of which he recognises as inherently destructive: “These strong Egyptian fetters I must break, / Or lose myself in dotage” (I.ii.116-117). Upon hearing that his estranged, loathed wife Fulvia has died, Antony finds himself unexpectedly bereaved and decides that he must break from Cleopatra to save himself:

The present pleasure

By revolution low’ring, does become

The opposite of itself. She’s good, being gone;

The hand could pluck her back that shov'd her on.

I must from this enchanting queen break off;

Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know,

My idleness doth hatch. (I.ii.124-130)

In discussion with Enobarbus, Antony is again vehement that he must leave Egypt to attend to business in Rome. Ostensibly, the voyage to Rome must be undertaken for matters of state, since, "For not alone / The death of Fulvia / . . . / but the letters too / Of many our contriving friends in Rome / Petition us at home" (I.ii.179-183), yet Antony is equally resentful of Cleopatra's power over him: "She is cunning past man's thought . . . Would I had never seen her" (I.ii.145-152). When the faulty military strategy at Actium begins to fail Egypt, Cleopatra's desertion from the battlefield prompts Antony to follow her, with the rueful Antony afterwards contemplating the possibility of peace with Rome. He begins to critique himself and the hold that Cleopatra and Egypt have upon him, considering this hold to be the reason why he dishonoured himself so by running:

Egypt, thou knew'st me too well

My heart was to thy rudder tied by th' strings,

And thou shouldest [tow] me after. O'er my spirit

[Thy] full supremacy thou knew'st, and that

Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods

Command me.

.....

You did know

How much you were my conqueror, and that

My sword made weak by my affection, would

Obey it on all cause. (III.xi.56-68)

The hold over him is so strong and he has been so weakened that, even when he recognises the need to break away from her influence, Antony is left to words that beget no action.

Berating Cleopatra, he rails that, “You have been a boggler ever, / . . . / . . . what hotter hours, / Unregist’red in vulgar fame, you have / Luxuriously pick’d out” (III.xiii.110-120), equally blasting himself, asking, “Have I my pillow left unpress’d in Rome / Forborne the getting of a lawful race, / And by a gem of women, to be abus’d / By one that looks on feeders?”

(III.xiii.106-109). Fittingly for such a debased individual, Antony is afterwards placated by Cleopatra after this outburst. It is not until the final, disastrous naval battle, and the defection of Cleopatra’s forces that Antony understands that he has been “beguil’d to the very heart of loss” (IV.xii.29) by both Cleopatra and those Egyptian values that he fell prey to. Antony realises that Cleopatra’s power over him has destroyed his sense of self and that any success he had is now at an end:

O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more,
 Fortune and Antony part here, even here
 Do we shake hands. All come to this? The hearts
 That [spannell’d] me at heels, to whom I gave
 Their wishes, do discandy, melt their sweets
 On blossoming Caesar; and this pine is bark’d,
 That overtopp’d them all. (IV.xii.18-24)

Yet Antony also reveals another of his fundamental flaws, that his actions were dictated by “this false soul of Egypt! this grave charm, / Whose eye beck’d forth my wars and call’d them home, / Whose bosom was my crownet, my chief end [main objective]” (IV.xii.25-27). Unlike the accepted masculine values of courage, honour or patriotism (Singh 111), Antony made his decisions on the whims of Cleopatra whose “bosom/heart” was his reward for these actions. Whether Antony is referring to an emotional reward or the physical reward of his

lover's body, to be controlled by either is an example of bad judgement on his part. Fortune and Antony do part, but Antony's choices in both his personal life and in affairs of state have precipitated this split.

Antony's Debased Irrationality

The loss of his judgement in matters both personal and political is disturbing evidence of Antony's debasement. The masculine temperament, according to Helkiah Crooke, is a stout and invincible mind to undergo hardships and to think clearly in events that "the only hearing whereof will drive a woman, as we say, out of her little wits". As in repeatedly shown, Antony can be driven to irrational acts with alarming ease, replacing calm masculine reason with the overwhelming passion and stupidity befitting a much lesser entity. His agreement to marriage with Octavia to solidify the bond between himself and Caesar is a move that would be politically expedient, according to Agrippa: "To hold you in perpetual amity, / To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts / With an unslipping knot" (II.ii.124-126). His return to Cleopatra, however, is a clear desire for indulgence: "I will to Egypt; / And though I make this marriage for my peace, / I' th' East my pleasure lies" (II.iii.39-41). Such an act is in contradiction with the sound advice he has obtained earlier from Enobarbus who, in musing on the politics of leaving Egypt, has stated that duty must be pre-eminent, even in the circumstance of personal tragedy:

Under a compelling occasion, let women die.

It were pity to cast them away for nothing, though
between them and a great cause, they should be
esteem'd nothing. (I.ii.137-140)

According to Paul Lawrence Rose, "the melting of Antony's authority is accompanied by the swamping of whatever political acumen he has left in the flood of his passions" (383). The

political ramifications are dire, resulting in the final impetus for Caesar's declaration of hostility against Antony. As he tells Octavia, "Your letters did withhold our breaking forth, / Till we perceiv'd both how you were wrong led" (III.vi.79-80). By this point, Caesar has already made war upon Pompey, and has deposed Lepidus. However, he is potentially willing to make a genuine partnership with Antony: "For what I have conquer'd / I grant him part" (III.vi.34-35). By choosing pleasure with Cleopatra over political prudence with Octavia, Antony has either defied his honour and injured Caesar's family or he has given Caesar the excuse desired to go to battle in an attempt to seize complete power. His future entreaties that desire a truce in the battle of Actium are dismissed by Caesar, instead stating "For Antony, / I have no ears to his request" (III.xii.19-20), preferring to listen to Cleopatra and send Thidias to entreat her. Whether Caesar ignores Antony because of his abandonment of Octavia or not, Antony's decision, certain to guarantee offence to a powerful contemporary, is the result of an incredibly poor political judgement on the part of a man who has debased his masculine powers of political cunning and devotion to duty, instead clouding his thinking with irrational levels of passion and lust for a gypsy.

Antony's preparation for the battle of Actium is further evidence of his predilection for irrational decisions and bad reasoning. To the approval of no-one, apart from Cleopatra, Antony instructs his lieutenant-general Canidius "we / Will fight with [Caesar] at sea" (III.vii.27-28). Enobarbus presents Antony with numerous facts and realities, all of which argue against a naval battle: "Your ships are not well mann'd / Your mariners are [muleters], reapers, people / Ingross'd by swift impress. In Caesar's fleet / Are those that often have 'gainst Pompey fought; / . . . No disgrace / Shall befall you for refusing him at sea" (III.vii.34-39). In attempting to use a fleet, Enobarbus further argues, "Most worthy sir, you therein throw away / The absolute soldiership you have by land / . . . / The way which promises assurance" (III.vii.40-46). Yet it does not move Antony, who prefers to listen to

Cleopatra who extols “I have sixty sails, Caesar none better” (III.vii.49). Canidius’s opinion that “our leader’s [led], / And we are women’s men” (III.vii.69-70), is further validated when Antony deserts the battlefield to follow a leaving Cleopatra, “Yon ribaudred nag of Egypt” (III.x.10). In distress, Enobarbus claims that when he saw Antony’s cowardice in battle, “Mine eyes did sicken at the sight and could not / Endure a further view” (III.x.16-17). Equally upset and ashamed at Antony’s behaviour, Scarus dissects the conduct of Antony, displaying a man who, as Canidius claimed, is being led by Cleopatra:

She once being loof’d [ready to sail away],
 The noble ruin of her magic, Antony,
 Claps on his sea-wing, and (like a doting mallard),
 Leaving the flight in heighth, flies after her.
 I never saw an action of such shame;
 Experience, manhood, honor, ne’er before
 Did violate so itself. (III.x.17-23)

The former hero of Rome’s masculinity has deteriorated to such an extent that he is now under the influence of a woman and controlled by her whims and cowardice. Such an effeminate individual cannot plan for military conquest and is instead relegated to irrational moves that guarantee both defeat and shame. Instead of testifying to his masculine confidence, such foolhardy moves bespeak a man who moves out of a weakness of will, to throw away ‘absolute soldiership’ for the desire to please a woman.

Such weakness and desperation is expressed even further when Antony sends Caesar a challenge to meet in single combat, “sword against sword, / Ourselves alone” (III.xiii.27-28). The challenge is a transparent attempt to “retrieve [his authority] by the most elementary show of force” (Miller, “Varieties of Power” 47). Caesar responds predictably, refusing to be drawn into such wasteful display, instructing, “Laugh at his challenge” (IV.i.6). Such an act

on Antony's part is not merely juvenile, it is counter-productive, alerting his enemy to his lack of military or political forethought. Even more revealingly, the message is accompanied by the freshly whipped Thidias, who has been punished for rousing Antony's excess passion. Antony walks in on Thidias embracing Cleopatra's hand and immediately demands to know his identity. Thidias responds with the ambiguous and vaguely insulting answer that he is "One that but performs / The bidding of the fullest man, and worthiest / To have command obey'd" (III.xiii.86-88), thereby implying Caesar's superiority to Antony. Antony responds with wrathfully ordering Thidias whipped, "Till like a boy you see him cringe his face, / And whine aloud for mercy" (III.xiii.100-101), with a clear subtext of attempting to regain his masculinity by reducing his supposed tormentor to a figure less than a man, further sneering to the punished messenger "If that thy father live, let him repent / Thou wast not made his daughter" (III.xiii.134-135). It is a badly-directed display of violence which, as Miller notes, "tends to suggest impotence rather than strength" ("Varieties of Power" 47). Enobarbus realises this, remarking in a cynical aside, "'Tis better playing with a lion's whelp / Than with an old one dying" (III.xiii.93-94). As Caesar, with the freshly whipped Thidias just returned, reads and dismisses Antony's challenge as ludicrous, his friend Maecenas muses that "When one so great begins to rage, he's hunted / Even to falling" (IV.i.7-8), and advises Caesar to "Make boot of his distraction [frenzy, rage]: never anger / Made good guard for itself" (IV.9-10). Antony has foolishly revealed his lack of masculine focus, forewarning others to his poor judgement, alerting enemies to these weaknesses and, on this occasion, alienating Enobarbus, who realises in the wake of this outburst that "to be furious / Is to be frightened of fear / . . . / When valor [preys on] reason, / It eats the sword it fights with" (III.xiii.194-199), and resolving to himself "I will seek / Some way to leave him" (III.xiii.199-200). Enobarbus, who has supported Antony up to this point, finally loses too much respect for Antony and resolves that to stay with him will be to continue to destruction. This is not an isolated phenomenon.

Antony is often unable to engender appropriate degrees of respect throughout the play, from Caesar, his own men or, most significantly, Cleopatra.

The Undermined Authority of the Former Conqueror

The lacking authority that Antony is left to wield is derided by virtually all who witness his now-diminished masculinity. There is no respect from his compatriot, Caesar, nor can he command those who he should, by all rights, have power over, such as his men and, the lustful gypsy, Cleopatra. Caesar, however, is the most vocal about the reason why he believes Antony to be unworthy of the respect he once had. Caesar feels that his conduct in Egypt, his revelling, his indulgences and his lust for Cleopatra have not only debased Antony but, judging his conduct during and after the battle of Actium, have debased beyond any hope of rejuvenation. Caesar's first speech compiles all of Antony's corruptions and damns him as the worst of all debauchers: "You shall find there [Egypt] / A man who is th' [abstract] of all faults / That all men follow" (I.iv.8-10). Lepidus' attempt to see Antony in a positive light earns scoffs from his fellow triumver. The optimistic opinion that "I must not think there are / Evils enow to darken all his goodness" (I.iv.10-11), and that his faults "seem as the spots of heaven, / More fiery by night's blackness" (I.iv.12-13) is argued by Caesar as too indulgent, especially since Pompey's campaign to battle against Rome is coming nearer by the day:

Say this becomes him

(As his composure must be rare indeed

Whom these things cannot blemish), yet must Antony

No way excuse his foils, when we do bear

So great weight in his lightness. If he fill'd

His vacancy with his voluptuousness,

Full surfeits and the dryness of his bones

Call on him for 't. But to confound such time
 That drums him from this sport and speaks as loud
 As his own state and ours, 'tis to be chid –
 As we rate boys who, being mature in knowledge,
 Pawn their experience to their present pleasure,
 And so rebel to judgment. (I.iv.21-33)

For Casar, Antony's flaws are not only injurious to himself but, on this occasion in particular, will potentially harm his friends. Caesar's comparison, like Philo's about Antony coming short of that great quality of leadership that he used to claim, similarly argues that Antony is more an immature child who cannot control his recklessness and wanton indulgences like a truly mature, masculine adult would. Caesar's criticism of this Antony is more marked because he juxtaposes such a damning of him with the memory of Antony as a true warrior, whose physical and mental stamina, and warrior instinct, was a true source of admiration to those around him:

When thou once
 Was beaten from Modena, where thou slew'st
 Hirtius and Pansa, consuls, at thy heel
 Did famine follow, whom thou fought'st against
 (Though daintily brought up) with patience more
 Than savages could suffer

On the Alps

It is reported thou didst eat strange flesh,
 Which some did die to look on; and all this
 (It wounds thine honor that I speak it now)

Was borne so like a soldier, that thy cheek

So much as lank'd not. (I.iv.56-71)

As the play continues, Caesar moves from a man who would like a means to reconcile with Antony, if it could be a reconciliation that would “hold us staunch from edge to edge / A’ th’ world” (II.ii.115-116), to a man who, in the wake of Antony’s flight from the battlefield at Actium, dismisses Antony’s appeal for peace: “I have no ears to his request” (III.xii.20), and regards Antony’s later fury and whipping of Thidias as the work of an “old ruffian” whose challenge to single combat deserves only laughter. Caesar now regards Antony as unworthy of respect, made even more contemptible by the fact that, in his embrace of Egyptian luxury and effeminacy to become no more ‘manlike’ than Cleopatra, he has thrown away an honourable, masculine past as the imperial warrior at which he had few equals. While they make no such detailed reference to Antony’s past, his men regard him in a similar sense, with a mix of contempt and fear for what he has become, and a sadness and longing for what he once was.

This lack of respect that Antony commands in his men is particularly evident from Enobarbus, full of gibes and taunts at the expense of his commander who is unable to quell them. When, in the wake of Fulvia’s death, Antony believes that he must leave Egypt to deal with the political repercussions: “The business she hath broached in the state / Cannot endure my absence” (I.ii.171-172), to which Enobarbus slyly reminds his superior, “And the business you have broach’d here cannot be without you, especially that of Cleopatra’s, which wholly depends on your abode” (I.ii.173-175). By this double-entendre, he remarks upon the sexual “business” that Antony has “opened up” with Cleopatra, yet it is equally a cynical critique directed at Antony for undertaking such lust. Even when counselled by Lepidus before the meeting of the three triumvers in Rome to attempt to entreat “your captain / To soft and gentle speech” (II.ii.2-3), and to “stir no embers up” (II.ii.13), Enobarbus blatantly

disregards this. Bluntly advising Antony and Cleopatra to reconcile at least while the challenge of Pompey remains, since “You shall have time to wrangle in when you have nothing else to do” (II.ii.105-106), Antony’s reprimands draw only sarcastic replies: “That truth should be silent, I had almost forgot / . . . / Go to then – your considerate stone” (II.ii.108-110). Standing in stark comparison to the respect shown to Caesar by all, Enobarbus grows more dismissive of his captain as the play continues. The final straw for him is Antony’s whipping of Thidias, that “the full Caesar will / Answer [Antony’s] emptiness! Caesar, thou hast subdu’d / His judgement too” (III.xiii.35-37). With that, Enobarbus finally resolves to leave. For such a loyal soldier to finally abandon his leader is evidence of just how completely Antony’s ability to engender respect has diminished.

If the role of Enobarbus is reminiscent, as some critics have suggested, of the role of the Greek chorus, remarking upon situations as an audience member would (Willimson 246), then his decision to desert Antony is the culminating point of Antony’s alienation from reason and reasonable people. Antony’s subservience to Cleopatra within the play’s metaphorical game of fast-and-loose has reached a point where he will not be able to regain his masculinity. Cleopatra’s metaphorical game of fast-and-loose has entrapped him into a lifestyle that has deprived him of his masculine senses of restraint, reason, conquestorial skill and political subtlety. This has, in turn, deprived him of the ability to make responsible personal and political decisions, which merely increases the lack of respect he has amongst his contemporaries and his men. Furthermore, he lacks the masculinity that could inspire him to break from this cycle of disempowerment, where he lacks the masculinity and authority to regain his masculine abilities, which then leads to a further loss of respect and a further loss of masculine abilities and authority. He is held ‘fast’ and lacks the ability to ‘loose’ himself from his constraints, which simply increases the grip that he is held with. The final display of this dynamic is Antony’s suicide, in which ‘fast-and-loose’ symbology, and the resulting

flaws that he has become subject to as a result of his diminished manhood are combined, showing Antony as definitively less than Cleopatra.

Antony's Suicide

Antony's suicide is the final display of his lack of masculinity, combining 'fast-and-loose' symbology, Cleopatra's trickery, a lack of judgement and his deficient authority. The impetus for his final act occurs under the pretence that Cleopatra has committed the same act before him. Under the impression that the 'right gypsy' Cleopatra has, at 'fast-and-loose', beguiled him, her entrance upon the scene incenses Antony to the point where Cleopatra, fearing for her life, exits quickly. The same Egyptian trickery that inspired her earlier to spread dishonest information to Antony to bind him 'fast' to her, while remaining 'loose' herself, leads to her instructing Mardian, "go tell him I have slain myself" (IV.xiii.7) and makes her way to the monument to hide from Antony. Her lover, meanwhile, resolves that she shall die, until Mardian interrupts him and Eros to tell him the fabricated story of Cleopatra's death. Antony's decision, after Mardian leaves, is that he has been proven to "lack / The courage of a woman – less noble mind / Than she which by her death our Caesar tells, / 'I am conqueror of myself'" (IV.xiv.60-62), and therefore orders Eros to kill him, both to save him from the ignominy of being subservient to Caesar and to allow him to "o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and / Weep for my pardon" (IV.xiv.44-45). As the dupe and he who has been held 'fast', Antony lacks the rational logic to 'loose' himself from the lies of the gypsy. The difference is that this trick has fatal consequences for the dupe. Yet these consequences lead to further indignity and proof of his lack of masculine authority.

The sequence by which Antony deals himself his death wound underscore the degree to which the masculine Antony of old has deteriorated. Even at his point of death, Antony is unable to command authority, to the simple matter of getting his men to obey direct orders

and pleas. Just at the moment that Eros seems ready to deal the fatal blow, he turns his sword on himself, proclaiming as he dies, “Thus I do escape the sorrow of Antony’s death” (IV.xiv.94-95). When Antony attempts to dispatch himself with honour by falling on his sword, he botches it, leaving himself dying slowly and begging the entering guards and Decretas to dispatch him. They not only refuse, but Decretas plans to desert to Caesar’s camp, snatching up the sword from Antony’s wound, observing that “This sword but shown to Caesar, with this tidings, / Shall enter me with him” (IV.xiv.112-113). Furthermore, Antony’s sense of shame only increases with Eros’ death, as he understands that the duty of suicide should be undertaken by him alone. Eros, through this disobedience of his direct order, is “Thrice-nobler than myself! / Thou teachest me, O valiant Eros, what / I should, and thou couldst not” (IV.xiv.95-97). Eros has managed to escape the onerous task of killing his superior and has left his superior ashamed that he lacked the courage to do the deed himself.

Antony’s attempt at suicide, however, is an incomplete job that only serves to hold himself even more ‘fast’ to his emasculation. To fail to suicide when it is necessary is the act of an insufficiently noble and courageous man, according to Antony: “My queen and Eros / Have by their brave instruction got upon me / A nobleness in record” (IV.xiv.97-99). Antony’s botching adds to the perception of him as a wreck of a man who has lost the ability to adequately display his masculine authority and qualities through conquest, whether through battle, sexual congress, political matters or by the conquering of his own life. By leaving himself “not dead? not dead?” (IV.xiv.103), he is reduced to pleading, “I have done my work ill, friends. O, make an end / Of what I have begun” (IV.xiv.105-106). Their refusal leaves him in a limbo of agony, a failure at the attempt to properly suicide with honour yet unable to convince any of his subordinates to complete the job for him. At this moment, Antony is literally held ‘fast’.

Furthermore, Antony is held from the ability to 'loose' himself from his predicament by a sword wound, having literally fallen on his sword. Much like Cleopatra's earlier plans to 'betray' the fish that she will imagine as substitutes for her lover, Antony has been tricked into thinking her dead. The actions that he undergoes, as his lover imagines doing to her surrogate 'Antonys', leave him 'pierced', much as his lover imagines doing to the fish. He ends up 'caught' or 'fast', without recourse to 'loose' himself. Yet the piercing is accomplished by a 'sword', the same symbol of masculinity that Antony accuses Cleopatra of robbing him of, thereby effeminating him, and the weapon that Cleopatra took from a drunken Antony in women's clothing to wear for herself. The symbolic risk that can befall the emasculated man has thus befallen Antony. He has been physically penetrated by a 'sword', a weapon which enabled him to penetrate those that he wished to dominate, keeping them 'fast' while he could remain 'loose'. This masculine 'weapon' was lost by becoming subservient to woman and to effeminate desires, such as lust and indulgence, thus diminishing his masculine capacity for using his weapon and further 'tricking' him into devotion to a lifestyle that further feeds his desire for its effeminate luxuries. He has become the dupe who has been skewered 'fast' and at the mercy of those whom he is insufficiently masculine to order. During Antony's final minutes, such an assessment is reinforced to an even greater extent by Cleopatra.

Cleopatra manages to turn Antony's attempt at a poignant farewell into a performance built around her. It is only with Diomedes' entrance that Antony learns that Cleopatra lives and begs to be carried to her tomb. He may announce grandly that his death will raise him above his current status, claiming "Not Caesar's valor hath o'erthrown Antony, / But Antony's hath triumph'd on itself" (IV.xv.14-15), yet the current Antony is subject to the actions of the people around him. It is Cleopatra's decision, "we must draw thee up" (IV.xv.30), which compels the characters to lift Antony to the balcony where Cleopatra

resides. The dying man urgently tells them, “O, quick, or I am gone” (IV.xv.31), only for Cleopatra to both emphasise his helplessness and interject a degree of farcical comedy into the situation, as she exclaims when lifting, “Here’s sport indeed! How heavy weighs my lord! / Our strength is all gone into heaviness, / That makes the weight” (IV.xv.32-34). Even after this farcical task is completed, and the dying man is making the poignant request that, “I am dying, Egypt, dying. / Give me some wine, and let me speak a little” (IV.xv.41-42), he is interrupted by Cleopatra who instead demands of the man who is near dying, “No, let me speak, and let me rail so high” (IV.xv.43). When Antony finally has the opportunity to speak, he instructs the queen to seek her honour with Caesar, but to trust none in Caesar’s camp except Proculeius. Even his parting advice shows his bad judgment, as Proculeius, upon gaining Cleopatra’s trust, establishes a guard on her and takes away her dagger.

The moment that should be Antony’s triumph, his conquering of himself to bypass dishonour, is undercut by the continuing events that emphasise his lack of masculine ability and his subservience to the woman who is able to hold him to her. He is tricked into immediate suicide by a lying report, fails to impress his authority upon his subordinate to kill him and then, after failing to achieve a quick death, leaves himself floundering like a pierced trout, unable to finish the job, or convince others to complete it for him. Upon finding Cleopatra, he is carried to her, only to have the poignant last few moments of his life played as virtual farce. He is hauled up like a dead weight by a jesting Cleopatra, is denied the chance to speak until his lover has spoken and, as his last demand while alive, makes a political and tactical gaffe. It is the final display of the dominance that Cleopatra holds over Antony, of the fast-and-loose game that has beguiled Antony to the loss of his manly abilities. It has been his embodiment of Egypt and Egyptian values that has dissipated his masculine ability to conquer at play, sex or war. However, the play does not end on the wreckage of Antony, but rather with Cleopatra’s final trick to deprive Octavius of a final symbolic victory.

Cleopatra, in this instance, culminates her performance as the colourful, if illegitimate, gypsy who resembles the late Elizabeth I.

Representations of the Gypsy Queen

Cleopatra, ever the gypsy, uses her cunning, previously used in holding Antony under her sway, for a final deception against Octavius, who had planned to display the captive Cleopatra as a symbol of his authority over Egypt, an act rendered impossible by her suicide. Rather than the bitter move of a villainess against the perfect hero, it is portrayed as an emotional finale for a character who has connected and reached out to audiences. Partly, this is a result of the fascination that gypsies inspired in the mass populace of England. As stated above, their colour and exotic spectacle, whilst reviling the authorities, drew them crowds that revelled in the excitement and mystery of the strange. Another important factor which helps to explain the sympathy that Shakespeare seems to expect for Cleopatra is the length to which Cleopatra evokes certain mythic elements of the late Queen Elizabeth I, resulting in an extension of the analogy to locating certain elements of James I within the character of Octavius Caesar. By displaying certain well-worn fables and stories about the late Queen in the person of Cleopatra, taking into account the circumstances in which James I took the throne and struggled to gain acceptance, it becomes apparent that Cleopatra's final implicit use of fast-and-loose to deny Caesar his final legitimisation of power would have been seen as a subtle glorification of Elizabeth and a dextrous skewering of James. Octavius may win the war but, in the process, he must concede a momentary defeat to his total ambition.

Antony and Cleopatra is commonly believed to have first been performed in 1607, 4 years after the death of Elizabeth I (1603) and into the kingship of James I (1603-1625).

While James was generally felt to be a reasonably competent ruler, his public image was that of a physically unappealing, excessively Machiavellian sodomite who presided over a court

that became infamous for debauchery and, on occasion, drunken riots (Kernan 112). His Scottish heritage practically made him a foreigner, never mind a foreigner following the exceptionally long and prosperous reign of Elizabeth (Walker 21-22). James' remedy for the lack of public approval (even if only somewhat efficacious) was to continually affirm his legitimacy and god-given right to the throne while attempting to avoid mention of Elizabeth. Rather than his predecessor, James focused attention upon his direct descent from Henry VII (20), to the degree of commissioning a "central picture over the archway . . . showing Henry VII giving him the sceptre as the true successor to the Tudor line" (20). To further such self-promotion, an alliance with the credibility of Augustus/Octavius Caesar was attempted, according to H. Neville Davies:

The coronation medal, for instance, minted for distribution to his new subjects, had depicted James wearing a laurel wreath, while a Latin inscription proclaimed him Caesar Augustus of Britain, Caesar the heir of the Caesars. Such versifiers as Henry Petowe and Samuel Rowlands had been quick to respond with titles like Englands Caesar: His Majesties Most Royall Coronation (1603) and Ave Caesar: God Save the King (1603) . . . Both in the Temple Bar and in the Strand James had been feted as successor to Augustus, so that when Commons then declined to accept the proposal of a Welsh MP that James be styled "emperor of Great Britain," they were rejecting an idea that was already gaining currency. (125)

Despite the expense and trouble that James went to for such acceptance, he continued to have trouble throughout his reign. By 1606-7, both the passage of several years and the notorious excesses of James' court contributed to a nostalgia for the days of Elizabeth. Her remarkably long reign (1558-1603) and fond remembrance of England's prosperity led to its construction in popular myth as:

increasingly moral and splendid . . . the good old days, in which the Armada was defeated and red-haired Queen Bess ruled with love and firmness over all Englishmen . . . Approving jokes were told about the way Elizabeth had kept James dangling for years, grinding his teeth up in the damp rooms of the palace of Holyrood in Edinburgh, waiting to be named her heir. When she was old, it was said, her younger maids, at her urging, would mask themselves to look like her and dance so lustily that spies reported to James that the old queen seemed likely to live forever. (Kernan 108-109)

Equally, Elizabeth had been a colourful public figure during her reign, with stories and pieces of gossip concerning her permeating both the court and the public. As she aged, Elizabeth's irritability increased and, at times, "Her Highness was not above throwing things to relieve her feelings, or boxing the ears of any unfortunate person who had annoyed her" (Plowden 112). Neither was she lacking in vanity, even in her younger years. When Sir James Melville, the envoy of Mary Queen of Scots, visited London in the September of 1564, to help negotiate a peace between his mistress and Elizabeth, he later reported that Elizabeth intently grilled him over a comparison between her beauty and Mary's. Mary was at this time (1564) considered very beautiful and, next to Elizabeth, the best match in Europe (Plowden 88). During the nine days that Melville spent in England, he was pressured to answer questions relating to hair, complexion, stature and who danced the best (90-92). Melville eventually admitted that despite Mary's beauty, Elizabeth was 'whiter'. Upon hearing from Melville that Mary was of the 'highest stature', "Then, saith she, she is too high and that herself was neither too high nor too low" (91). Lastly, the envoy was required to watch Elizabeth dance and answer "the inevitable question 'whether she or my Queen danced best'. His Queen danced 'not so high and disposedly', said Melville" (92). Such stories would certainly have made the rounds at court and on the street. Shakespeare would doubtless have heard them and,

in the midst of a national nostalgia for the former Queen, would have found audiences eating up references to former escapades and stories about the beloved Queen, especially in the persona of a queen who combined the illicit excitement of the outlandish gypsy with the tactical ability to check her enemies, however slightly. The current king's continual use of Caesar Augustus/Octavius as a way to secure his own reign would have merely made the internal comparisons all that much easier for the audience to unlock.

Act II scene V is the most explicit indication of Cleopatra evoking the hot temper that Elizabeth was reasonably notorious for in her later years. Previously, Antony has agreed to wed Octavia in order to provide the ground for peace between himself and her brother Octavius. Cleopatra is as yet unaware of this and it is left to a messenger to inform her. As the messenger hesitates to inform on Antony, Cleopatra's temper starts to break forth, alternately promising him praise and fury:

MESSENGER: First, madam, he [Antony] is well.

CLEOPATRA: Why, there's more gold.

But, sirrah, mark, we use

To say the dead are well. Bring it to that,

The gold I give thee will I melt and pour

Down thy ill-uttering throat. (II.v.31-35)

Such threats accompany the drawn out process of the messenger delivering his news, "I have a mind to strike thee ere thou speak'st", followed by promises of great rewards if the news is positive, "Yet if thou say Antony lives, 'tis well, / . . . / I'll set thee in a shower of gold" (II.v.42-45), until he delivers the crux of his message: "He's bound to Octavia / . . . / For the best turn i' th' bed" (II.v.58-59). Upon this news, much like an elderly, irritable Elizabeth supposedly striking those who seriously displeased her, Egypt's queen proceeds to vent her rage as violently as possible:

MESSENGER: Madam, he's married to Octavia.

CLEOPATRA: The most infectious pestilence upon thee!

Strikes him down

MESS: Good madam, patience.

CLEO: What say you? *Strikes him,*

Hence,

Horrible villain, or I'll spurn thine eyes

Like balls before me; I'll unhair thy head,

She hales him up and down.

Thou shalt be whipt with wire, and stew'd in brine,

Smarting in ling'ring pickle

.....

MESS: He's married, madam.

CLEO: Rogue, thou hast liv'd too long.

Draws a knife.

MESS: Nay then I'll run.

What mean you, madam? I have made no fault. *Exit.* (II.v.60-74)

In time, Cleopatra calms down and dismisses the messenger with more self-control. However, before she is taken off, she instructs Alexas, "Go to the fellow [messenger], good Alexas, bid him / Report the feature of Octavia, her years, / Her inclination; let him not leave out / The colour of her hair" (II.v.111-114), and adds just before she goes offstage, "Bid you Alexas / Bring me word how tall she is" (II.v.117-118). The outcome of this scene is directly emblematic of Sir James Melville's account of Elizabeth's inquiries upon Mary. Act 3 scene 3 shows Cleopatra questioning the same messenger as before (albeit non-violently this time), inquiring about Octavia's appearance, attempting to judge who will have the greatest hold on

Antony's affection. After learning that Octavia is not as tall as she is and Antony's new wife is 'low-voic'd', Cleopatra remarks with satisfaction, "That's not so good [for Octavia]. He cannot like her long" (III.iii.14). Much like Melville had to answer as to who was a better dancer, the Messenger must tell, "What majesty is in [Octavia's] gait? Remember, / If e'er thou look'st on majesty" (III.iii.17-18). Informed that instead, "She creeps; / Her motion and her station are as one; / She shows a body rather than a life, / A statue, than a breather" (III.iii.18-21), Cleopatra again shows pleasure, praising the messenger in his negative description of Octavia: "He's very knowing, / I do perceive't. There's nothing in her yet. / The fellow has good judgement" (III.iii.23-25). In the final appraisal, Cleopatra questions her age and facial features. Upon learning that, according to the Messenger, "I do believe she's thirty" (III.iii.28), her face is "[r]ound, even to faultiness" (III.iii.30), and that her hair is "Brown, Madam; and her forehead / As low as she would wish it" (III.iii.33-34), the Queen is relaxed and calm, commenting, "Why methinks, by him, / This creature's [Octavia] no such thing. (III.iii.40-41). Just as Melville implied that the Queen was asking these questions for her own satisfaction and ego, Cleopatra's comments highlight a similar awareness of her own royal presence and a continuing vanity, even echoing the method of questioning itself, right down to her dismissal of Octavia as serious competition. The combination of this scene with Cleopatra's tendency to physical violence against those who seriously displease her is evocative enough of the Elizabeth known to the public to mark her persona as something more than just a destructively lustful woman. Indeed, when combined with the public attitude towards the gypsies as joyously colourful and exciting, if officially dangerous, Cleopatra would have been, if not a firm favourite with the audience, quite a sympathetic character. The ending of the play, a clear if potentially irrelevant defiance of Octavius, presents an ending conjunction of both Cleopatra, the gypsy playing a last trick on her would-be captor, and Elizabeth, causing problems for her now quite disliked successor.

The news of Antony's death is followed for Caesar by a message from Egypt that Cleopatra will surrender herself to him and "Of thy intents desires instruction, / That she may prepare to frame herself / To the way she's forc'd to" (V.i.54-56). Caesar suspects that she may attempt suicide, which would be a defeat (albeit, relatively infinitesimal) for Caesar, since "her life in Rome [my triumphal procession to Rome] / Would be eternal in our triumph" (V.i.65-66). Just as James I coveted legitimacy in his reign, Octavius is mindful of the legacy of his triumph and his historical memory. James' reiteration of his descent from Henry VII required a figurative erasure of Elizabeth's legacy, whereas Caesar desires Cleopatra's presence, but the point is the same: to elevate themselves in stature over those they follow. Cleopatra, similarly to Elizabeth's mythic toying with James' ambition, uses fast-and-loose methodology to deprive Octavius of a complete triumph.

Caesar plans to hold Cleopatra 'fast' to his desire for a living Cleopatra to march in his triumph, as one of Caesar's conquests that will consequently subjugate her and enable him to elevate his own status. Cleopatra plans to get 'loose' of such a confinement, by "do[ing] that thing that ends all other deeds" (V.ii.5), and is only prevented initially by the swift subterfuge of Proculeius, prising away her dagger before Cleopatra can strike herself. Octavius then enters and, as Martha Tuck Rozett states: "Cleopatra enacts the humble, self-belittling captive and Caesar the gracious captor" (161). Yet, Cleopatra is also playing the part of woman who has no intention of dying. Rather than betraying her, Rozett argues, by revealing the money she kept back, presumably to keep herself in comfort and style, Seleucus unintentionally gives Cleopatra the appearance of one who wants to live. In either event, Caesar's mind is relieved in the belief that he will present a 'fast' Cleopatra as a testament to his imperial power. He leaves, allowing Cleopatra to learn from Dolabella that Octavius will come for her in three days. This presents her with ample time to turn the tables on Caesar, 'loosing' herself from the ignobility of captivity.

Although she was willing to try a dagger to escape her bonds, Cleopatra was planning a subtler method by which to 'loosen' herself from Caesar. Even before Proculeius' entrance, she mocks Octavius, musing, "'Tis paltry to be Caesar; / Not being Fortune, he's but Fortune's knave, / A minister of her will" (V.ii.2-4). Her escape is revealed when the rural Clown enters with a basket of figs that cover several asps, the way for Cleopatra and her ladies to keep themselves 'loose' of Caesar's domination of them. Indeed, the dying Cleopatra glories in this victory, however small, whimsically asking the asp, "O, couldst thou speak, / That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass/ Unpoliced!" (V.ii.306-308). This consequence is referred to again by one of the guards who break in on the scene: "Approach ho, all's not well; Caesar's beguil'd" (V.ii.323). There is nothing Caesar can do upon his arrival, except pay tribute to the bravery of an opponent: "Bravest at the last, / She levell'd at our purposes, and being royal / Took her own way" (V.ii.335-337); and make alterations to his arrangements. Machiavellian that he is, however, Octavius uses his last words of the play to attempt to gain a degree of sympathy and possible political advantage in planning the funeral:

High events as these
Strike those who make them [Caesar]; and their story is
No less in pity than his glory which
Brought them to be lamented. Our army shall
In solemn show attend this funeral,
And then to Rome. Come, Dolabella, see
High order in this great solemnity. (V.ii.360-366)

It is important to note that Octavius has not been defeated by Cleopatra militarily, but rather in a chance to absolutely legitimise his regime. However, it will have a tangible, if subtle, effect. A solemn funeral must be held and, while Caesar will then continue to Rome, his

procession will be lacking the presence of the living Queen who was to be his possession and figurative prize. When James I tried to avoid the mention of his predecessor Elizabeth and enhance his legitimacy to the throne by erasing images of Elizabeth from the public eye and comparing himself to Augustus/Octavius, he was defeated by the nostalgia of the populace for the Queen and her legacy. Octavius desires a live Cleopatra, but the effect of Cleopatra's suicide is much the same: complete legitimacy is now replaced by a success which has been soured somewhat. Furthermore, Cleopatra's subterfuge allows her, in the model of 'fast-and-loose', to escape the grasp of Caesar and, instead hold Caesar 'fast' to being beguiled and an 'ass unpoliced'. The vanity and furious temper that Cleopatra shares with Elizabeth are the same which entertain the audience. Her games and gaming spell trouble for Antony and the Kingdom of Egypt, but it serves as the ultimate protection against her enemies.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to reveal how fast-and-loose in Antony and Cleopatra both metaphorises and represents the cultural values that surrounded contemporary performances. The implications of Cleopatra's skills at this human game of fast-and-loose extend to the fate of Egypt, yet the prelude to this fate are the changes that this same "trickery" effects upon Antony. This analysis began with Antony railing against being "beguil'd" by the "right gypsy" Cleopatra, railing for his broken heart, yet even more aggrieved at the masculine identity that he has so freely given away in the process. The concept, origins and practice of fast-and-loose in early Modern England define both the hold that the gypsy Cleopatra maintains upon Antony, and the degree to which his masculinity suffers in the process. Through analysing the reference in the play to 'Fast-and-Loose', the focus that it places upon the symbology of sexual domination and the masculinity of the winner and the effeminate corruption that the loser becomes subject to, the breakdown in

Antony's masculinity of aggressive conquest is shown as a direct consequence of his embrace of Egypt, through his lust for Cleopatra, turning himself into literal "fool" and a "dupe". Losing his wits, his sense of judgement and his reputation, the former Roman warrior cannot break the sensual bonds that tie him to his downfall because he has neither the physical or the mental will to build himself up again. Antony's embodiment of the effeminate and effeminating luxury of Egypt comes to a head as, trapped on the ground, the metaphorical game of 'fast-and-loose' that Antony becomes entangled in is symbolic of the Egyptian values that he has chosen to embody. Similarly, deprived of the strength of Rome, Egypt cannot stop themselves from being taken by Octavius. Clear and sharp of mind, as well as politically subtle, Octavius Caesar is seemingly as destined to be a winner at this conquest-oriented game as Antony and Egypt are destined to be the losers. Yet, the ambivalence about Cleopatra serves to deepen the analogy, to a point where "Fast-and-Loose" is as much a comment on the recent historical past as a conquest-laden pastime.

More than a game that serves as a conduit through which the play can be understood, fast-and-loose additionally serves as a means by which to reflect popular opinion concerning the transition from Elizabeth as monarch to rule by James. To embody Cleopatra on the Renaissance stage as a figure that, regardless of her iniquities, is given the last laugh over Octavius Caesar in 1607 was to echo a nostalgia for the supposedly golden period in which Elizabeth I both ruled England and frustrated an anxious James the opportunity to rule for a number of years. Looking tolerantly and perhaps even lovingly at Cleopatra's vanity, her fits of temper and her sensual presence, the play views her last game of fast-and-loose that will serve to inconvenience the conqueror of Egypt as an act that is truly deserving of the plaudits that Octavius himself will lavish her with. In comparison to this entertaining license, both Octavius and the King that he was meant to represent offer little to inspire the imagination: neither Octavius' cold and somewhat Machiavellian schemer nor James' awkwardness and

supposed taste for young men were tremendously appealing to such crowds. The final message of the final game of fast-and-loose that leaves the new monarch slightly bereft even if he is still ultimately victorious, if subtle, is nonetheless clear: James may have been the monarch but, at least at this early date, he would never be so utterly loved by the people. Using fast-and-loose in Antony and Cleopatra served as an insight and a comment upon the popular attitude to the succession of monarchs in England. The next chapter will examine Thomas Middleton's A Game at Chess, a play that used the titular game as a metaphor by which to construct a play that dealt as an in-depth representation of popular opinion surrounding the contemporary hostilities between England and Spain in 1624, especially the aftermath of the failed Spanish match between Prince Charles and the Infanta of Spain. Whereas Love's Labour's Lost and Antony and Cleopatra deal with, respectively, the future of a Kingdom and the fate of the Egyptian empire, Middleton's extended metaphor for current political situation concerns, potentially, the fate of the known world.

Chapter Four

“Checkmate by Discovery”: Exposing Spanish Villainy in A Game at Chess (1624)

In the final scene of A Game at Chess, Thomas Middleton’s most overtly political piece of theatre, the virtuous White House are finally able to defeat the villainy of the Black House. The contest is visually represented as a human chess game, but the political overtones are unambiguously relevant to the recent conflict between England and Spain, particularly the termination of the rumoured engagement plan between Prince Charles and Donna Maria, the Infanta of Spain. Even without the official details, few would mistake the Black Knight’s clear caricature of the former Spanish Ambassador to England and champion of the marriage, Count Gondomar. With his modified sedan chair and litter onstage, items required by the real-life Ambassador to provide relief for his anal *fistula* [that “long, sinuous pipe-like ulcer with a narrow orifice (OED 1.a)], the Black Knight is every bit the amoral Machiavellian schemer that Gondomar was rumoured by the fearful English to be, skilled foremost in deception and dissemblance. It is this skill which has allowed the Black House to maintain a reputation for fair dealing with the White House whilst working surreptitiously to undermine the moral purity of their opposition through lechery and vice. Thus do they hope to weaken Protestant morality, thereby entrenching Catholicism throughout the known world. It is only by exposing this dishonesty that the Black House can be defeated. The task falls to the White Knight and the White Duke who, regardless of “the pain it is / For truth to feign a little” (IV.iv.16-17), will use dissemblance themselves so as to gain the victory.

To the increasing delight of the Black Knight and King, their visiting guests apparently confess to gluttony, grasping usury, lechery and finally dissemblance. Rejoicing in this seeming brotherhood, the Black Knight (in the company and approval of the Black King) mocks any notion of honesty and reveals the ultimate agenda of the Black House, only to be thus ‘taken’ by the White House in the ‘noblest mate of all’:

BLACK KNIGHT: You never came near our souls till now.

Now you're near a brother to us; what we have done

Has been dissemblance ever.

WHITE KNIGHT: There you lie then

And the game's ours – we give thee checkmate by

Discovery, King, the Noblest mate of all! (V.iii.157-161)

Middleton's use of the concept of "Checkmate by Discovery" as "the Noblest mate of all" was an exact quotation of J. Barbier's revision of Arthur Saul's work (E5^r) who specifically described a "check by discovery" as "one of the pretyest trickes thou canst put upon thy adversarie at Chesse, and most hurtful unto him" (E4^r). The skill and difficulty involved in the move make it so, with Barbier warning that to achieve such an advantageous position, "thou must be vigilant to espye the occasion for to bring it about" (E4^r). The player must wait for a time when his opponent's King is weakly guarded or unprotected, then "before thou bringest thy piece that may check him there, bring some other piece in that course: afterwards bring that piece of thine there that will check him, thy first brought piece being away" (E4^r-E4^v). From this point, as soon as reasonably possible, "remove away that former piece where it may most annoy him, crying *Checke* by discovery of that last brought piece" (E4^v). The trap has thus been sprung for the opposing King "being forced to cover, or remove from [the piece holding him in check], then mayest thy piece (which thou removedst from between the Check) doe him againe a worse mischief at her next draft" (E4^v). Barbier then gives an example of 'check by discovery' where, in a series of ten moves, the tenth move is for the White Knight to move out of the path of the White Queen, who then automatically places the Black King in check, whose escape will require the sacrifice of the Black Queen to the White Knight (E4^v-E5^r). The efficacy of the mate is derived from the seemingly ineffectual White Knight's movement so that the direct threat of the White Queen can be 'discovered', while

the Knight is free to do a worse mischief. When such a method can be incorporated into an actual ‘mate’, it is further aggrandized, from “one of the pretyest tricks” to “the noblest mate of all”. The ability required and the risks accepted to play this move aside, the concept of achieving checkmate “by discovery” carries an especially potent dual meaning when used to proclaim victory over a fictionalised representation of Catholic Spain, both in the threat posed by the enemy and in the weakness that will ensure its downfall.

I posit that A Game at Chess is the culmination of the way in which games of Elizabethan and Jacobean England became a training ground of sorts for men existing in a society that prioritised conquest, particularly sexual conquest, as essential. If the plays previously discussed were either reliant upon spoken references to games or were discovered to be suffused with certain games that served as the key to understanding their core, Middleton’s last major work is utterly overt in its devotion to chess. Characters are named as one names the pieces of the game (White Knight, Black Knight, Black Bishop, etc); they are represented as members in either a White or Black House who clearly oppose one another. The stakes in this work could not be higher, it is literally being played to decide the fate of the known world, yet the play also succeeds in internalising the violence of conquest. By fictionalising the conflict between England and Spain in the manner of a chess match, to be won with this particular endgame, Middleton not only plays into the contemporary public account of the proposed marriage as a Spanish trick that was uncovered and averted by Charles and Buckingham, he presents the ideological enemies of England/the White House attaining their victories through subtle machinations rather than open battle. Furthermore, the concept of victory is linked even more explicitly to the idea of sexual conquest. Characters are “taken”, but their opponents prefer undertaking seduction to open battle. The threat posed by the Black House is one of conquest via indirect religious conversion, just as the English feared that the forces of Catholic Spain would spread Catholicism to Protestant countries via

a love-smitten Charles who would convert in order to marry the Infanta, thereby uniting all the countries of the globe to serve them. Much as “checkmate by discovery” relies upon misdirection and guile, this victory will be sought through the seduction of enemies rather than the overt force of direct opposition. Not only does the Black House view victory as the enactment of violence and the dystopian visions of Catholicism, these goals are hidden behind the soft words of spoken piety and supposedly peaceful intentions, serving to make their attempts at conquest even more dangerous. While force may work in smaller instances, the only conclusive way for the forces of good to defeat foes of this stripe is to expose them for the dissemblers they are, or to “discover” their true motives. The White House must therefore be skilled in all manner of masculine resistance, be it in the arts of war and open combat, or as strategists with hidden reserves of subterfuge themselves, much like the Prince and the Duke argued that they must play at being dupes in order to induce the Spanish to expose themselves. With its capacity for “discovery” therefore, the chess game becomes the perfect setting to both stage such a battle and to decide whether the world is to bask in Protestant utopia or crumble in Catholic dystopia.

While there has been little consensus amongst critics on the quality of A Game at Chess, the understanding that Middleton used the motif of chess to directly represent and comment on the failed Spanish match between Charles and the Infanta is practically universally understood. Norman Brittin (70-76) claims with confidence not only that the Black Knight was an obvious representation of Gondomar, but that the term “checkmate by discovery” is a double-entendre referring equally to “the White Knight and Duke discover[ing] the Catholics’ policy of dissimulation” (75-76). Paul Yachnin’s (317-330) only qualification is that Middleton’s knowledge of chess, rather than derived from personal enthusiasm, was mostly gleaned from contemporary sources, such as Arthur Saul’s The Famous Game of Chesse-Play. Researchers have thus been concentrated more on the use of

chess to analogise this political situation, a more contentious issue. From Brittin onwards, the consensus has been that the chess-game of the play was of a piece with the majority of nationalistic propoganda around in 1624. Jerzy Limon considers that the play “reveals striking congruity with the ideology of the ‘war party’ headed by . . . Buckingham and Prince Charles” (98), by presenting “cunning diplomacy . . . applie[d] both to the chess world on stage and to the activity of the black pieces in the ‘human world’ off-stage” (106). Similarly to Yachnin’s (107-123) mention that the play reduces the role of the White King to instead pointedly transform Charles, “the heir apparent (as the White Knight) into the play’s true hero” (114), Howard-Hill regards the play’s representation of the destruction of the Spanish match as “a moral-religious allegory” to be infinitely more powerful than if it just remained a reference to specific political events. By comparison, Richard Davies and Alan Young (236-245) have regarded the play as Middleton’s ironical comment on the convenience of either side being argued as primarily good or evil, considering that the White Queen’s Pawn’s absolute virtue is eternally vulnerable, saved only by dissension in the Black House, a point extended by T. L. Darby who states that “Middleton’s heart is with his villain” (10). Indeed, he suggests that political identification with the purely virtuous White House effectively “constrained [Middleton’s] own creativity . . . the devil does indeed have the best tunes . . . the play revolves around the anti-hero, the Black Knight who represents Gondomar” (7). Indeed, Gary Taylor (1825-1829) bemusedly states that the layering of chess upon the political framework of the times has given the play “*too much meaning*. Readers can begin to feel overwhelmed” (1826).

In contrast to this, my argument is that Middleton used the game of chess as the best analogy for the political situation between England not only because the term “checkmate by discovery” suited the public narrative of the Spanish match so well, but because such a motif meant that, in this construction of events, the genuinely masculine society of England was

guaranteed to emerge victorious. If the plays examined in previous chapters figured conquest as predominantly a manly domain, with the effeminate either unable to achieve victory or perverting what they do gain to ultimately destructive ends, A Game at Chess presents the Black House as not just being unable to conquer but, in some cases, sabotaging their own attempts so as to continue playing at this human game of chess. In particular, the focus upon the Black Knight serves primarily to show how close he comes to the destruction of the White House and subsequently just how far his own inadequacies fail him in that endeavour. Traditionally, chess was figured as a game that privileged the subtle intelligence of a genuinely masculine mind in its method of play. Such manhood was considered the exclusive province of those men who contributed to the construction of England's supposedly God-given hierarchical society. It was this cultural narrative that Charles attempted using for his own purposes, to avert the public from the utter debacle that had been the attempted Spanish match. Likewise, the play was the re-telling of the Prince's trip to Madrid that Middleton used to create a conflict between pure good and pure evil. The male that himself echoed the supposedly moral structures of England was the most likely to be masculine enough to succeed in at this game. Providing an avenue for its contemporary practitioners in the cool and subtle thinking necessary for masculine success within the direct context of a battle, the violence in a game of chess, just as in its theatrical equivalent, is latent rather than explicit, but no less serious for that. In this instance, the White House's is a result of their own masculine efforts to reign victorious, assisted by the dissention between members of the Black House, as their feared abilities at dissemblance are turned upon their own housemates even more than their opposition. The Black Knight, the character most obsessed with both game-play and dissemblance is, not coincidentally, the worst of these offenders. His addiction to dissemblance and game-play is so desperate that, to ensure the continuation of the game, he would rather lose his fellow House members than take the White House. His

desire for game-play overrides his determination to conquer, ultimately destroying the Black House. Game-play, no matter how well conceived, is doomed unless one's goal is to reign victorious.

The first necessity to understanding Middleton's use of the game in the play is to realise the circumstances in which he wrote A Game at Chess. When Prince Charles and the Duke of Buckingham left England for Madrid to hash out the details of the match with the Infanta, public fears that the Spanish would attempt to turn the Prince of Wales into a dupe for their sinister purposes were continually stoked. Charles' return, unencumbered by either the bride or religion of Spain, was the impetus for mass celebration. A Game at Chess was the greatest success of that era, playing for nine days straight to houses of near 3 000 people, unprecedented at a time when theatre's repertoires would change almost daily (Dutton 424). Only stopped because of a court-ordered ban, the punishment itself was remarkably mild, allowing the acting company to keep the profits from nine days of playing (Howard-Hill 22). Yet, Charles' new narrative that positioned himself as England's steadfast Protestant saviour was necessitated just as much by a pressing need for public approval. Without the political ramifications that both led to talk of the Spanish Match and to its eventual failure, this narrative may never have eventuated.

The Spanish Match

The tensions between England and Spain that not only ruined the possibility of a match between Charles and the Infanta, but additionally contributed to the wide-ranging public celebrations at the failure of the union to eventuate, had started around the middle of the sixteenth century. This rivalry was, in one sense, the inevitable result of two powerful forces placed at loggerheads as their domestic and international interests forced them into conflict with one another. More specifically, however, it was the question of religion that

poisoned the potential of the Spanish match both diplomatically and publicly. No matter how potentially prudent a union with Spain could have proved to be for England and James I internationally, the possibility of Catholicism insinuating itself into the Royal household and subsequently all of England was simply untenable.

If the conflict between Spain and England was initiated through political and financial tensions, the unrelenting religious schism between Catholic and Protestant soon became dominant. During the sixteenth century Spain was perhaps at the zenith of its power and size, while England by comparison placed more emphasis in strengthening the mercantile trade that was its main source of income. Each power was interested in maintaining the port at Antwerp for their own exclusive use and Elizabeth's (limited) support of the Protestant rebels of the Netherlands who attempted to break away from Spanish rule was regarded by Philip II to be intolerable. This, alongside the English attempts to encroach on Spanish territory in the Americas, provided the official reason for the Spanish Armada of 1588. Underlying such official meddling, however, was the further tension between a strongly Catholic nation and a nation ruled by one who, if she did not persecute Catholics to the extent of rulers before her, was nonetheless efficiently removing Catholicism from the governmental influence it had enjoyed previously in England. Described as "extremely pious" (Kilsby 54), the Catholic Philip II claimed that, rather than let any other religion influence a single part of the Spanish Empire, "I would lose all my estates and a hundred lives, if I had them because I do not wish to be the ruler . . . of heretics" (61). Neither was England willing to concede to a Catholic nation which the majority of the aristocracy and citizenry absolutely opposed. Though partly driven by fear and uncertainty concerning an incredibly powerful neighbour with an appetite for empire, it cannot be disregarded that England equally despised Spain for what were believed to be its iniquities in the name of Catholicism.

Staunch anti-Catholic works such as Reginaldo Gonsalvius Montanus' A Discovery & Plaine Declaration of sundry Subtill Practices of the Holy Inquisition of Spain (1568) and John Foxe's Book of Martyrs (1554) represented the Spanish Inquisition as a totalitarian body that delighted in mass torture, monetary greed, harshly restrictive levels of censorship, and various other cruelties that they carried out for their own amusement and profit (34-37). The growth of the Spanish empire, particularly its expansion into the Americas, generated descriptions of an imperial power that practised mass slaughter upon natives as a matter of convenience and generally performed the type of cruelty that no truly civilised nation (aka, those European powers apart from Spain) could ever defend happening in its own name. The fact that, whilst being both brutal and oppressive, neither the Inquisition nor Spain's colonial expansion approached the wildest rumours presented was no impediment. To those writers opposing Spain, and the increasing numbers wishing to read and believe such stories, the empire's combination of great wealth and fervent Catholicism made such tales all the more likely. Especially prescient to the English, during Elizabeth's reign, was the brutality of Spain's treatment towards the Dutch Protestants, particularly the notorious conduct of the Duke of Alba who executed over 1000 of the rebels in the name of Catholic Spain. It highlighted all the factors that the English found ominous about Spain: power; proximity to the English homeland and evident brutality. The Catholic religion and its followers were excoriated in print as vain, hypocritical, degenerate and fundamentally untrustworthy. Similarly to how masculinity was constructed as the 'natural' mode for a successful empire by constructing femininity as an inversely 'un-natural' mode, Catholicism was constructed as the inverse of English Protestant thought. In later Elizabethan and much of Stuart England, both Catholicism and, especially, the Pope became reviled as an inherently destructive force:

Catholicism could be seen as the intaglio of the true church, with the true church defining itself in the process of establishing an other . . . Popery was

regarded as the debasement and perversion of Christ's teaching, with Antichrist, the Pope, being the negative image of Christ . . . [According to Peter Lake], popery [was seen as] an 'anti-religion, a perfectly symmetrical negative image of true Christianity'. (Shell 26-27)

With the emergence of what Paul E. Hammer termed a "new Protestant 'super-patriotism'" in the 1570s, this duality came to the fore, as authors took it upon themselves to represent the Spanish Catholics as not simply different or misguided, but as fundamentally malevolent, evil and fraudulent (84-85), a level of iniquity that deserved all manner of condemnation.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that the belief that such behaviour arrived from Spain in the form of Catholicism led to such widespread distrust. Sir Walter Raleigh considered in passing that "it would require a particular volume, if I should set down how irreligiously [the Spaniards] cover their greedy and ambitious pretences with that veil of piety" (Maltby 30). James Wadsworth, an English double agent, regarded the Spanish as practically Atheistic, using the Pope for their own selfish ends, "as to confirm and establish him in unlawful monarchies, and under colour of Religion to make Subjects become Slaves" (30). More than just an entity seemingly capable of occupying England on a whim, Spain was a force that, with their apparently natural facility for fraudulence and pretence, would subvert the English commitment to nation-wide prosperity into a vassal for Catholicism's dystopia. The Spanish Match between Prince Charles and Donna Maria, the Infanta of Spain, viewed as a distinct possibility from 1618-1623, would be regarded in similar terms by the majority of subjects under James I: as the subtlety of a nation that was seeking to undermine the Protestant structure of England, through inducing Charles to converting to Catholicism in order to claim his potential bride. The celebrations that were ignited by the news that Charles had escaped the clutches of both Catholicism and the Infanta obscured the fact that such an ending was far from what either King or Prince had in mind.

One of James I's earliest major acts as king was the establishment of a cease-fire between England and Spain, eventually ending the official hostilities with the Treaty of London in August of 1604 (Redworth 7). Devoted to peace for personal and financial purposes, James saw diplomatic solutions, such as marriage between the dynasties of continental Europe, as infinitely preferable solutions to international incidents. It was the peace in 1604 that first hinted at the prospect of matrimonial alliance between Spain and England, with a tentative offer made for a marriage between the Infanta Ana and Prince Henry, James' eldest son. Unwilling to satisfy the unambiguous requirement that the young Prince be educated in Madrid and convert to Catholicism, the King instead turned his interest to France for a bride (Redworth 9-10). Henry's death in 1612 changed little: France was still considered the main source from which a bride for the new heir, the young Charles, would be cultivated (11). The indirect impetus for change in this situation would be James' daughter Elizabeth marrying Frederick V, the Elector Palatine, ruler of the Palatinate (encompassing the Rhineland predominantly) and the head of the Protestant Union, a group of German princes who opposed the Catholic Hapsburgs in Spain and Vienna, and their allies. Unlike his son-in-law, James further desired linking himself to a state as powerful in both wealth and knowledge as the Palatinate, as well as for his over-riding desire to live in a Europe joined together in peace. By comparison, Spain saw such a marriage as a possible distant threat to both them and the Catholic religion, both because of the religious views of Frederick and the persecution of Catholics that had taken place under Elizabeth. The precautionary measure to attempt to avert such potential catastrophe was to send the Spanish ambassador to England to speak directly to the King. Therefore, in August 1613, six months after Elizabeth's marriage to Frederick, the Spanish Ambassador don Diego Sarmiento de Acuna, lord of Gondomar, arrived in London. The Ambassador quickly became one of the most controversial, feared and loathed figures in London.

Perceptions of Sarmiento have traditionally either condemned or exalted him as a figure bordering on the omnipotent. During his times in England as the Spanish Ambassador (1613-1618 and 1619-1622), he was perceived by the English as a crafty, malevolent force, possessing infinite diabolical tricks with which he both maintained complete control of James and very nearly achieved the ruin of England through his machinations to bring the Spanish match to fruition. The puritan preacher Thomas Scott, in a series of virulent anti-Spanish writings, explicitly figured Gondomar as a Machiavellian figure, an especially potent label at that time. The basic meaning of the term ‘Machiavellian’ denoted an individual or a mindset preferring expediency to morality (OED), a seemingly natural fit for a man whose religious ideology was so opposed to the moral righteousness of Protestantism. The second of his Vox Populi (‘The People’s Voice’) books, The Second part of Vox Populi, written in 1624 after the attempt at the Spanish match had ended in failure and published anonymously to avoid official repercussions, uses its alternate title to drive home this connection and the subsequent implication: “Gondomar appearing in the likenes of Matchiauell in a Spanish Parliament: Wherein are discovered his treacherous and subtil Practises To the ruine of England as the Netherlands”.

Gondomar’s abilities as a diplomat, however, were never in question. He was so successful at gaining favour and a degree of trust with James that, in concession to the departing Gondomar in 1618, the King released from prison eighty Catholic priests and presented the ambassador with Spanish artillery (captured from vessels by unofficially lauded pirates like Sir Francis Drake) to return to Spain. Moreover, the Spanish ambassador initiated the serious possibility of marriage between the Infanta and Charles after James’ dissolution of the ‘Addled Parliament’ in 1614. The rancorous descriptions of the Spanish Ambassador do not merely serve to render him more myth than man, they also overlook the genuinely amicable relationship that struck up between the two men, and the extent to which James felt

that a marital alliance with Catholic Spain would further the ends of both England and himself. The commonalities between the English King and the Spanish diplomat bred between them a degree of empathy. Each, in their own way, was a foreigner in England (James' Scottish heritage was one of the factors that saw him compared unfavourably by some to Elizabeth), both were intellectually inclined and peace within Europe (albeit for different reasons) was a common goal for them. In addition to bringing peace though, James looked to the monetary freedom from Parliament that the marriage would potentially deliver to him. By 1614, both frustrated by what he felt were the impudent strictures that the House of Commons attempted to place upon him, and believing that the dowry would alleviate him from needing to beg money from Parliament, James was infinitely more receptive to Gondomar's proposal.

From this point began the long process of drafting a treaty in an attempt to appease the religious convictions of each kingdom. Gondomar sent a draft treaty of the marriage to Madrid by 1615, while James did not formally start to negotiate until 1617. He was willing to allow the Infanta the private exercise of her religion and even raise resulting progeny similarly, but public tolerance of English Catholics was simply impossible. Spain's prominent desire was for the persecution of English Catholics to cease, making James' adamant refusal of same the main sticking point in negotiations. Additionally the Pope, unbeknownst to the English and indeed many Spanish nobles and clergy, was unambiguous: such a union between Catholic and Protestant could only take place after the conversion of the non-Catholic participant. This was an omen for the practical impossibility of the match ever genuinely working. For James, to pursue the marriage would be acting in defiance of the popular mood of Hispanophobia in England and Parliament, while Gondomar was labouring under the misapprehension that Catholics in James' kingdom were many times more numerous and a great deal wealthier than they actually were. It was only the disastrous

foreign policy of James' son-in-law that again raised the possibility of such a match happening, in that it both saw James and the Spanish aristocracy united in the aim of preventing what would come to be known as the Thirty Year War, and reinstated within James the idea that his financial autonomy lay in securing the match.

August 1618 saw Archduke Ferdinand of Styria, the fervently Catholic King of Bohemia and a descendant of the Viennese House of Hapsburg, dethroned by the Bohemian estates that threw their support to the Protestant Union, headed by Frederick V, Elizabeth's husband. By accepting the crown offered him, Frederick placed himself in direct conflict with Ferdinand, now elected Holy Roman Emperor and preparing to stamp out the rebellion by force. James, at the mercy of his son-in-law's hubris and stubbornness, was in an incredibly difficult position. To ignore the requests for English forces to move against Ferdinand would be to publicly abandon not only Frederick but Elizabeth, for whom public support was overwhelming, representative as she was of Protestant royalty facing down the Catholic dynasty. However, to accede to public demands for open war against the Viennese Hapsburgs would necessarily risk him landing in direct antagonism with the Spanish Hapsburgs and serve as a rebuke of his policy of peace within Europe. Spain, for its own part, was nearing the end of the Twelve Year Truce with the United Provinces of the Netherlands (signed in 1609). Anxious to rekindle old hostilities there, being drawn into warfare in Bohemia would have been both a distraction and a drain on resources. To the rulers of both countries, peace in Bohemia was infinitely preferable to open war. Ironically, considering their stance on Spain, it was the House of Commons that provided the final impetus for James to inquire again about the possibility of the Spanish match when they had vehemently opposed any alliance with Spain and, on December 18, 1621, made a protestation that claimed their inalienable right to petition the King upon affairs of state, opting instead for unwavering support of Frederick and Elizabeth, regarding the war in the Palatinate as "itself a diversion –

the real aim being an evangelical crusade” (Redworth 37). The ability to provide military support for the Palatinate depended upon appeals to parliament for money, unlikely to assist unless James submitted to their views on Spain. From James’ perspective, to pursue a policy of aggression towards Spain would have been admitting that his vision of himself as a peacemaker, a British ‘Solomon’ (Carrier 25), had been one of deluded naivety. To obtain assistance in resolving the Rhineland situation peacefully and to gain financial independence from the House of Commons (in the form of a dowry), a marriage with Spain was the only way out, or so James thought.

Negotiations with Madrid started again in earnest, with Gondomar pressing Spain as much as possible to drop the requirement for Charles to convert, and to moderate other demands. Meanwhile, James was busy working to increase his concessions to Spain. He agreed to contribute troops and money towards the campaign against the Dutch Provinces, and the Infanta would be free to remain Catholic and the prospective children would remain with their mother until nine years of age. While the recusancy laws against Catholic worship could not be repealed, James promised that his Catholic subjects would be free to worship how they chose, provided it was confined to their own homes. The terms were agreeable to the royal families of both Spain and England, with only the Pope left to placate, and the match appeared on each side to be closer to certainty than ever before.

Still, despite Charles’ belief that the match was a certainty, it was a bold and rash move for the Prince, along with the Duke of Buckingham, to journey to Madrid in the hopes of claiming a bride. The journey was presented by the King, quite reasonably, as the Prince’s fulfilment of his destiny. It was the tradition among the men of the House of Stuart to journey abroad for a wife with whom they would triumphantly return home: “for the chivalrous knight to capture his princess” (Redworth 76). Tradition or not, it was an ill-advised venture that placed not only King and Prince, but certain members of the Spanish Kingdom, in an

incredibly difficult position. Through his ignorance of foreign diplomatic culture, the excessive trust he placed in Gondomar and the plans that this journey threw into disarray, Charles' failure to bring the Infanta back home with him, whilst received as good news by a populace that wanted nothing to do with Catholicism, was more recognisable as the ignominious end to a piece of foreign diplomacy that both King and Prince had set their hearts on.

According to Redworth, it was Charles who initially approached Gondomar with the offer that he would travel to Spain, if it was necessary to ensure that the King of Spain would approve the match. While Charles may have merely thought that he was planning to exercise his royal and familial prerogative as a Stuart, Gondomar took his willingness as a none-too-subtle hint that he was prepared to convert to Catholicism since, as Redworth explains, "To be at the Spanish court meant to be a Catholic . . . It was almost unheard of for a prince of one religion to pay an official visit to a prince of a different confession, at least outside the Holy Roman Empire" (51-52). Gondomar, basking in his afore-mentioned delusions as to the extent of England's Catholic population, was utterly in favour of the proposed journey and Charles, trusting Gondomar absolutely, even took to joking in numerous letters that the Count was his *Alcahuete*: his procuress or pimp, the man who would pave the way for the valiant future monarch to claim his foreign bride and bring her back to England in glory. Such belief elevated the Count in the mind of the Prince to a position of power that seriously exaggerated his influence, as well as his ability to carry off a marriage that Spain was increasingly unwilling to support. Far from influential in the inner circles of the Spanish court, Gondomar's opinion of the viability of the Spanish match was the absolute opposite to the growing squeamishness to the concept in Madrid. For Charles to present Gondomar with the news of his venture rather than pursuing official channels with the information, therefore,

was a serious mistake. Charles and Buckingham were now making a journey that neither England nor Spain supported.

The prince found his hosts generously welcoming at first and after seeing and becoming somewhat smitten with his prospective future bride, Charles was anxious to clear all obstacles from the path of claiming her. Soon after the negotiations started, however, they were essentially locked in a stalemate. The Prince would not budge from his Protestant faith, despite the numerous religious debates that the Spanish religious officials and priests engaged in for his benefit. In agreement with the Infanta, the King and Roman authority that marriage with a heretic could not take place, Count Olivares, Philip IV's favourite, also quickly came to understand that Charles would never convert. The challenge for Olivares then was to pursue two different policies, yet remain on good terms with England. While publicly calling for the match to occur, Olivares was privately blocking the path, encouraging Pope Gregory XV to place more demands within the Papal Dispensation that was to be presented to Charles (willingly undertaken by Gregory who vehemently opposed the prospect of legitimising a marriage between Catholic and Protestant). The terms eventually laid before Charles were stark and practically impossible: either England must repeal the Catholic Recusancy Law and allow Catholics the freedom to practise their religion in public, or the Prince must convert. The House of Commons, as already stated, would have never agreed to a repeal of the Recusancy law, nor was Charles prepared to become Catholic. Despite this deliberately constructed impasse, however, Olivares was equally aware that the appropriate fiction must be played out. Charles' wish to return to England and place the now severe terms of negotiation before his father himself could not be granted: it would not do to spoil his own image, or that of Spain, as tough negotiators; yet, neither could he disappoint his ruler who was expecting something akin to a miracle from the negotiation process. Charles was, by this point, a virtual prisoner.

It was during this time in Spain that Charles was to learn, according to Glyn Redworth, “the hard lesson of insincerity . . . fear and pride contriving to induce him to sign an agreement he had precious little intention of honouring – unless, of course, he and dona Maria departed together” (123). His initial reaction to this confinement was a combination of understanding the political corner he was backed into whilst naïvely believing that, if pressed enough, Spain would give him his bride. At the same time as he appealed to the King to grant the Infanta’s passage to England, he was equally persistent in demanding to all that he be allowed to return home. Neither request, however, would be granted without religious toleration extended to English Catholics beforehand, despite Charles’ repeated insistence that the only one who could make such a decision was his royal father. Finally accepting after four months of stalling that the Spanish Court would most likely never allow him to return to England with his potential bride, Charles’ priority became to ensure himself safe passage out of Spain by any means, honest or not. Demanding an audience with the King on July 7, Charles announced to the dumb-founded astonishment and delight of Philip IV that he was accepting the terms of Spain: the final terms of James, according to the Prince, were that the Recusancy law would be repealed entirely. Privately gambling on James’ ability to persuade the parliament to the importance of religious tolerance, Charles reasoned that if his superficial acquiescence prompted Philip to enable the Infanta’s passage to England before the year was out, he could return the favour by genuinely implementing these promised changes. Any deviation from this ideal situation and Charles would feel no obligation to honour such promises once he had left the Spanish shore. The final word on the Spanish position, that marriage could happen within ten days of a new papal dispensation only if he remained in Spain until Christmas, left Charles planning his departure. He played the masquerade of the happy groom-to-be all the way up to his departure on the 3rd of September, however he wasted no time in renouncing both the Infanta and the concept of the match. The task for the

Prince now was in constructing a plausible yet favourable narrative once back in England. To reveal himself as a failure of a would-be lover would never do.

Instead, the Charles coming back to England was a fearless and devout champion of the Protestant cause. Regardless of the Machiavellian Spaniards attempting to move him from the path of the 'one true religion', the Prince had seen through their lies and rejected the easily available Infanta on Protestant principle. Indeed the knowledge that Charles had returned safely to England, unencumbered by ties to Catholic Spain, was the cause of intense euphoria amongst the public. Along with celebratory ringing of the bells in Cambridge and feasting in the streets, more than 335 bonfires were lit within London in a period of several months after Charles' return and a service of national thanksgiving was given in St Paul's Cathedral. The local purveyors of anti-Spanish sentiment were in their element, especially the puritan preacher Thomas Scott.

Scott, whose 'Vox Populi' books were unambiguous in their anti-Catholic sentiment, had already paid a price for publishing the first 'Vox Populi' in 1620. Under a king who was anxious to temper English hostility towards Spain, the author was forced to flee to the Netherlands in 1622, where he took up service in the English civilian congregation in Utrecht until his murder in 1626 (by a deranged soldier). Scott used his free time to create further anti-Spanish works, including "The Second part of Vox Populi" in 1624. Proclaiming to be the perspective of a concerned citizen reporting a transcript from a Spanish parliament, the text offered a politically correct (for an English Protestant audience) take on the Spanish match. The match was a Spanish invention to assist in achieving the diabolical end of universal Catholicism, by persuading the Prince to both relax the strictures upon the traitorous Catholics of England and convert to Catholicism himself. The perfect result for the Spaniards would have been to achieve the marriage while keeping Charles in England, so as to maintain a façade of honesty. Unfortunately for the Spanish, "The Prince of *Wales* by

coming in Person discovered our plot . . . he found the Honor of our glorious entertainment to be but a delicate sawce to helpe digestion” (Scott 22-23). Seeing through the veneer of honest dealing, Charles and Buckingham outsmarted the treacherous Spaniards and saved their England from the horrors of universal Catholicism. According to Maltby, whether Scott’s ‘Vox Populi’ was regarded as completely factual by the populace or not, what Scott achieved was a “crystalliz[ing of] the hatreds and frustrations of a people who still longed for revenge and the secure establishment of Continental Protestantism” (108). The main fears were clear: Spain, if allowed an opportunity, would remould Protestant England into a vassal for Catholicism; no Catholic, English or not, could be fully trusted in such matters; and, it would be through trickery, dissimulation and treachery that Spain would achieve their aims. The triumph of the returning Prince, who had seen through Spain’s deceits and escaped unscathed, further emphasised the critical importance of this struggle. It was these fears, along with the loathing of Count Gondomar as the supposed primary instigator of the Spanish match and the joy over Charles’ recent ‘triumphant escape’ from Spain, that the playwright Thomas Middleton exploited with A Game at Chess in 1624.

The Game of Chess

Middleton played expertly into public prejudice against the Spanish not only in his characterisation of the Black House as a safe haven for malevolent dissemblers, but in his representation of the conflict as an ever-present human game of chess. Overtly drawn from the ranks of battle, the chess-game for the contemporary audience was a location where a surrogate battle of conquest could be fought and, in this case, could be waged to decide the fate of the known world. To claim victory in this pastime, the player was required to display those qualities consistent with Elizabethan and Jacobean conceptions of supposedly ‘genuine’ masculinity: mental coolness, subtle thinking and strategic brilliance. Consequently, in the

public imagination, such a game between Spain and England would end in the victory of England with re-establishment of the correct moral order. In this conception, masculinity was fundamentally opposed to the supposed dystopia and misery that Catholic Spain was apparently determined to institute via the much-feared 'universal monarchy'. By not standing for Protestant truth, Spain was unable to draw upon the same masculinity to which England had access and was therefore doomed to failure.

While it would seem possible that chess had come to England as a result of William the Conqueror's invasion of 1066, the first mention of chess within England is commonly believed to have been the 12th century. H. J. R. Murray points to an anonymously authored Latin poem, that he terms "The Winchester Poem" due to its origins, as one of the first written mentions of the game in England (History of Chess 499). Unlike the transformations that the game underwent in the Mediterranean countries where it was first introduced by the Persians, chess as it became known in England bore remarkable similarity to chess in France (464). The few major changes in play method to create what has become known as "modern chess" emerged in Spain and were in turn taken up by the majority of other European countries, including England (Yalom 192, 223). The Queen, previously capable of moving only one and then up to three squares in any direction at a time (the same powers given to the Bishop), was now able to engage the full length of any clear direction in a straight line. The Bishop in turn had the scope of any diagonal line. The Pawn, already able to move a double draught for its first move and gain promotion to a higher ranking piece upon reaching the opposite end of the board (including Queen or Bishop), gained extra power as a result (Murray, History of Chess 777). Throughout these changes, however, the purpose of the game never changed which was for a participant to conquer his opponent.

Chess in Elizabethan and Jacobean England provided a means of vicariously and bloodlessly performing ritual displays of conquest for a society that feared the potential

effeminising effects of military peace. Neither were contemporary authors shy about either using the language of violent domination to further conflate the game with war or promoting works that did so. In one such example, the Italian poet Marcus Hieronymus Vida's early poem on chess Scacchia Ludus, ('The Game of Chess') from 1513 (although only published officially in 1527) was still in translation and publication in England in 1597. Pieces were "slaine", according to Vida: "they spare not one, but murder all / that in their way doo stand" (7). The goal was to conquer and to literally take over another's positions: "Who anie kills must straightway stand / within his dead foes place" (7). Arthur Saul echoes this focus on conquest and protection from such, emphasising that the King "giueth guard to fīue persons before hee goe forth . . . his Queene . . . his owne Bishop . . . his owne Pawne . . . his Queenes Pawne . . . lastly his Bishops Pawne" (12-13). Furthermore, protection has little emphasis, according to Saul, unless it is backed by aggression and an imperative to attack is provided by the continual meme that urges attack. It is more important to 'take' an enemy's piece than it is to avoid loss, a theme that Saul returns to in considering whether any mercy should be allowed upon this battlefield. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he posits that mercy should be avoided if possible:

I remember that a Noble-man vpon a time said, too much mercy was rigor, wherefore he that hath the better of his enemy let him make vse of it . . . that King is worthy of much blame, who after hee hath the better of his enemie, doth notwithstanding loose the same againe, by forbearing his sword, when with praise and honour he might boudly vse it, and for reward be crowned King of the field. (37)

Chess without conquest, in this context, is an inherent waste compared to the glories that await the man who strives for victory in this arena where to strike the final blow, even more than an opportunity for gain, is in fact a moral imperative. Vida's poem similarly seeks to

glorify the individual who conquers another, when Jove looked to preside over the inaugural chess game, he “promised the Conqueror / to haue a just reward” (10). Such talk of conquest permeates the chess scene in The Tempest, with Miranda’s statement that it is reasonable to cheat when the stakes are high:

MIRANDA. Sweet lord, you play me false.

FERDINAND. No my dearest love

I would not for the world.

MIRANDA. Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle,

And I would call it fair play. (V.i.172-175)

According to Miranda, if the prize for victory is high enough, it is worthwhile to gain the win by any means, legal or not. Such an attitude extends to a praise of that chess piece that derives its power not from raw strength, but for the subtlety and guile of its movement, the Knight. This piece’s ability to, as Saul stated, “leape ouer ranke and file”, makes for a character that escapes any censure by dint of being one whose “checke is more dangerous then a Bishops . . . the Knight passeth into all the houses in the field” (21-22). Saul may caution the player to be wary of such a piece, but he never condemns the piece; on the contrary, the tricky ways and means of the Knight earn his admiration. Conquest, in this particular usage, is thus so overwhelmingly important that it could potentially absolve those who attain that ends from the means they were required to pursue in the process. Nor was such a mentality confined to rhetoric alone.

The connection of chess to politics overtly displays this potential moral ambiguity overtly. Chess, partly due to its status as a game “so much esteemed of by the Nobility and Gentry of this our Kingdome” (Saul A2) was a game where strategy was lauded. The 1597 English translation of Vida’s work coupled Scacchia Ludus with an abridged translation of Damiano de Odemiro’s Libro de imparare giocare a scacchia (1512). The preface by the

gentleman who translated both works (an Englishman known only as G.B.) considered chess as a game that encouraged qualities of leadership:

[F]orasmuch as this Game or *kingly pastime* . . . also breedeth in the players, a certaine study, wit, pollicie, forecast and memorie, not onely in the play thereof, but also in the actions of publike gouernement . . . wherein both Counsellors at home, and Captaines abroade may picke out of these wooden peeces some pretty policy, both how to govern their subiects in peace, and howe to leade or conduct liuely men in the field or warre . . . [italics added]
(A2^r)

The “pretty policy” that chess-play relied on, referred to by Odemiro later as the “subtleties and hidden gyles of this game” could only be distinguished from the games of cards and dice that relied upon, according to Roger Aschamm, “false dealing, crafty conueyaunce”, primarily because of its necessity for strategic play, rather than the “blynde fortune” inherent in the cards and dice (18).

The political metaphors for chess, for this reason, were readily apparent. The game required the participants to strategise and figuratively govern their own men. As such, the game was perceived as most useful to those who would govern others in their lifetime. The “study, wit, pollicie, forecast and memorie” bred in the players would lead, according to Odemiro, to “both Counsellors at home, and Captaines abroade” developing a capacity for “pretty policy”. Saul, in turn, reminds his readers that there is no fixed rule for the game to proceed along: “If there were a Rule for this game euery Woodcocke would bee a Chesse-player; but indeed there is none” (24). The ability to defeat an opponent is partly determined by those who are the most adept at the “subtleties” and “gyles” of strategy and politics. Since the concept of conquest in chess was linked within political guile as much as aggression, the sexual metaphors implicit within this game followed suit.

As a game that could involve men and women playing together, the sexual metaphor of chess was only made more explicit. As a common game among aristocrats, it was one of the few situations where male could enter a lady's chamber without overt scandal in the culture of Medieval and Renaissance Europe (Poole 52). Such a subterfuge is used in John Fletcher and Phillip Massinger's The Spanish Curate (1622), where a young man finds a chess game the perfect location for surreptitiously making an attempt upon the virtue of a lawyer's wife. One side-plot concerns a young gentleman named Leandro who is lustfully desirous of Amaranta, the wife of the covetous and miserly lawyer Bartolus. Desperate to gain access to the house and to the woman, he pretends to be an ascetic student of law who can pay Bartolus handsomely for his keep and experience. Convinced that his new tenant is reluctant to even look upon a woman, Bartolus has no fear in imploring Leandro to watch that the pieces on the board remain where they are when he must leave the game he is playing with his wife in order to attend to business, all the while commenting unwittingly on what Leandro will attempt to perpetrate when his back is turned. With Leandro standing close by the game, Bartolus obliviously informs his wife, "I have you now close, / Now for a mate" (III.iv.41-42), having earlier crowed "'Twas subtilly playd: your Queen lies at my service" (III.iv.37). Ignorant of Leandro's lustful asides where he yearns, "You are a blessed man / That may so have her. Oh that I might play with her" (III.iv.42-43), Bartolus instructs his pupil to watch the board and promises his wife that when he returns to take up the game again, "Nay you shall know I am a Conqueror" (III.iv.59). Of course, once his employer has exited the stage, it is Leandro who attempts to prove himself the conqueror over both Bartolus and Amaranta, advising her of the best way to move against her husband to conquer him in the game and by the same token making an attempt to seduce her. Seeking his instruction in chess, Amaranta wonders if Leandro can "tell me / How to avoid this Mate, and win the game too" (III.iv.61-62), further asking him to "tell me, / Whether I may remove, (Ye see I am set

round) / To avoid my husband” (III.iv.67-68). Despite these words, Leandro’s open attempts to seduce her lead to getting the chessboard across his head as Amaranta protests. Explaining to Bartolus the noise and the ruination of the chess-game, Amaranta protects the young man by concocting a story in which Leandro sat down to play and, startled by her husband’s return, she stood up, catching the board with her dress and upending it. The action she describes, however, is more accurate than Bartolus realises:

BARTOLUS: Why these [game pieces] lie here? What anger (deare?)

AMARANTA: Why none, Sir,

Onely a chance, your pupil said he plaid well,

And so indeed he do’s: he undertook it for ye

Because I would not sit so long time idle,

I made my Liberty, avoided your mate,

And he again as cunningly endangered me,

Indeed he put me strangely to it. (III.iv.101-107)

Leandro’s attempt to couple with Amaranta, as her commentary implies, was an act born out of a need for violent conquest and domination. Not only does he “play well”, he wishes to prove his aptitude for masculine conquest by literally “undert[aking]” her husband’s place on both the chess board and symbolically taking his place in the marriage chamber. To this effect, “your [Bartolus’] mate” for the game described now belongs to the momentary usurper Leandro, a mate that Amaranta must “avoid” in order to “ma[k]e my Liberty”. However, Leandro’s masculine guile and subtlety enabled him to again “cunningly endanger me”. While Leandro never actually attains his desire (by the play’s end, Amaranta has maintained her virtue and reproclaimed her faithfulness to her husband), the chess game is not only a cover for his attempt, but acts as a location whereby victorious gamesmanship can serve as

shorthand for sexual conquest. Furthermore, the language of the game itself could be redolent of these double-meanings.

In accordance with the connection between conquest on the chess board and sexual conquest, the language used within the game itself was equally loaded. The act of ‘taking’ a piece in chess could be equated with sexual congress as well as military violence, a factor used to advantage in Middleton’s own Women Beware Women. Livia’s triumph to Leantio’s Mother that “your pawn cannot come back to relieve itself” (II.ii.302), refers equally to the role of a pawn on the chess board (it cannot move backwards) and to the seduction/rape of Bianca at the hands of the Duke offstage. Unlike The Spanish Curate, where the intended seduction was never carried through successfully, Women Beware Women shows a chess game used as directly violent analogy for a seduction which, in its force and threat of dire consequences, is effectively a rape. Within this example, chess is both an allegorical device referring to Bianca’s seduction, yet it is also a piece of policy, Livia duping the Mother into the game onstage, so the seduction/rape can be pursued elsewhere. Chess, as a metaphor for sexual conquest, applies to the violence and aggression of the winning side in ‘taking’ a piece, yet applies equally well to the strategy and misdirection that may be required for success. By using chess as an analogy for the conflict between England and Spain in A Game at Chess, Middleton drew reference not only to what were seen by many as Spain’s attempt to conquer England, but also to the means by which Spain would conquer. The “checkmate by discovery” that is successfully completed by the White House at the expense of their opposition in the last scene is the final application of a strategy that was thought a perfect fit for the Black House/Spain given that it was through dissimulation, misdirection and the ‘seduction’ of Charles by the Infanta that Spain was popularly believed to have been targeting the Prince and therefore England for conquest. Without properly executed “discovery”, it would seem, neither major nor minor players are able to achieve conquests.

“The noblest game of all”

Act 3 Scene 2 plays home to an especially straightforward example of conquest via “discovery”. Alone for all apparent purposes, the Black Jesting Pawn (a minor character without a specific master) is bragging to himself about how he would dominate any white pawn that came near him. Upon capturing such a pawn, he claims, “I would make him do all under-drudgery, / . . . / I’d make him my white jennet when I pranced / After the Black Knight’s litter” (III.ii.2-6). The captured pawn would not simply become a slave, he would essentially become a horse to be ridden (‘jennet’ was an all-purpose name for a small Spanish horse). Enraptured by these visions, the Black Jesting Pawn appears to leave himself open for a White Pawn (also with no specific master) to appear, promising his supposed captive that he shall work as a slave, otherwise “I will fit you then / With a black whip that shall not be behind-hand” (III.ii.19-20). With the appearance of a second Black Pawn, however, the White Pawn is forced to concede, “I am snapped too, a Black Pawn in the breech [back] of me” (III.ii.31), and further commenting on his predicament, “We three look like a birdspit, a white chick / Between two russet woodcocks” (III.ii.32-33). The White Pawn, seemingly unthreatened by the Black Jesting Pawn (and in fact looking forward to that conquest), has been slickly out-manoeuvred by opponents he was inclined to underestimate. Their method of subterfuge is one to be continued throughout the play, as continual efforts at conquest via ‘discovery’. The strategy for the pieces is to lure their opponents into seemingly safe situations, which then reveal or ‘discover’ the real purpose or the piece that presents the genuine danger to an opponent in that context, from which the piece can be ‘taken’. Unlike the above example of straightforward violence, the majority of future attempts will make their attempts through seduction, a better tool in this context to divert attention from attempts for victory.

As in the board game, the prize at stake in the human chess game that ensues once the play begins is the conquest of the opposition. In accordance with the official and unofficial Hispanophobic propaganda that was being disseminated throughout society during the fervent nationalism of 1623-1624, the primary goal of the Black/Spanish House is the conversion of the White/English House to Catholicism, particularly a close alignment with the Jesuit order. Such a conversion would result in the subservience of the White House to Spain and the Jesuits, resulting in utter destruction. Given the religious degradation of their opponents, the Black House can then achieve their prime endeavour of a universal monarchy based upon the Catholic religion. While this may be achieved partially through militaristic violence, the preferred method is for the forces of good to have their pieces 'taken' via the seductive lies practiced by the keepers of the Papacy, thereby both compelling them to submit to a Catholic power and concurrently sapping the moral strength of the White House to the point where they are helpless in the face of evil. The English conception of Catholics as inherent dissemblers is turned in the play to the service of conquest, particularly to the conception of seduction as conquest.

To protect themselves, the White House is required to avoid being taken in by these attempts at seduction. They must have access to the full range of masculine qualities: strength, aggression, subtlety, cunning, etc. Only by being more inherently masculine than their opposition can they achieve victory at this game. Indeed, against such a malevolent force as international Catholicism the White House must not only move to protect themselves from such ignominious ruin, they must move to protect those beyond their House from the degradation of becoming vassals to a Catholic entity.

The Induction scene specifically locates the targets of the play's derision, their malevolent aims and the means that they will use to enforce their will. Sir Ignatius Loyola, the Spanish founder of the Society of Jesuits, enters the stage with his servant Error sleeping

by his feet, inadvertently advertising the corruption of his lifework with only his appearance. Protestant theology of the period maintained that only those souls that had been damned could possibly return to the earth as ghosts. The mere fact that Loyola, who died in 1556, would appear upon stage is an indication not only of the evil surrounding his soul and the souls of the Jesuits, but the falsity endemic in Catholicism. A servant by the name of 'Error' only strengthens such an interpretation, the link between an error of religion and Catholicism common knowledge for a contemporary audience (Howard-Hill 68). His Papal *bona fides* thus presented, Loyola is struck with confusion at the sight of able resistance to the religious theocracy practiced by his followers. Expecting that his disciples would have taken the world under the thumb of a universal monarchy by this time, he can do little but question:

Hah! Where? What angle of the world is this,
 That I can neither see the politic face
 Nor with my refined nostrils taste the footsteps
 Of any of my disciples, sons and heirs
 As well as my designs as institution?
 I thought they'd spread over the world by this time,
 Covered the earth's face and made dark the land
 Like the Egyptian grasshoppers.
 Here's too much light appears shot from the eyes
 Of truth and goodness never deflowered;
 Sure they were never here. (1-11)

In context, suggestions of Jesuits spreading en masse over a land were occasioned at least partly by the relatively large numbers of Catholic priests and Jesuits supposedly in London in the 1620s. Thomas Scott estimated approximately 250 in the Second Part of *Vox Populi* (D4^v), a significant step up for a segment of the population who, under Elizabeth in 1602, had

been ordered to leave. To the majority of the audience attending Middleton's play, however, such an opening would have been viewed as nothing less than a peek behind the peaceful façade of Catholicism, especially that practiced by the Spanish Jesuits. Ignatius Loyola reveals his explicit desire for such a universal monarchy and a longing for the disastrous consequences that would follow. His guide to locating territory not yet under the spell of his followers is explicitly that the goodness and truth accompanying this heroic refusal of Papal myth give off a "light". The "light" that acts as a signifier of moral force can only be extinguished once "truth" and "goodness" have been "deflowered". According to the OED, whether used sexually or not, to "deflower" an entity (whether human or otherwise) is to "violate", "ravage" or "spoil" it (1.2). By violating the "truth" that opposes Catholicism, the land will be free to be similarly blighted by the "Egyptian grasshoppers" that he represents. Rather than people, his followers are presented as akin to the devastation of a biblical plague. They will swarm into every moral enclave and, as a result of the connections between spiritual issues and matters of state in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, replace the light-filled decency of the free world with spiritual and literal barrenness, emptiness and darkness. Most alarming of all for those opposed to such evil, this dystopia is very close to becoming a reality.

Without the domain of the White House under Jesuit control, Ignatius reasons, "Then is their monarchy / Unperfect yet" (11-12), implying that all "angles of the world" have fallen under Catholic influence, except this current (English) space. The opposition to the Jesuits in the play, therefore, is the last line of defence. To a populace that had just watched Frederick of Bohemia deprived of the Palatinate, while the King pursued diplomatic negotiations with Spain, the prospect of universal Catholicism must have seemed infinitely more possible. Even worse was Charles and Buckingham electing to travel to Madrid and place themselves in the hands of the enemy in order to pursue the Infanta, threatening a new age of Catholic tolerance

to Protestant England. Any tolerance of the 'lie' represented by Catholicism in such a climate was too dangerous to make sound policy. The revelation from Ignatius, therefore, that his followers are but one victory away from total success raises the stakes in the play as high as they possibly could be. The fate of the world will be decided upon this final battle and, as the play argues, the perfect game for a struggle of these epic proportions is that of chess.

Such is the feeling of Error, who complains when he is awakened by his master that his dreams were of the most pleasant kind, since "I saw the bravest setting for a game now / That ever my eye fixed upon" (40-41). "Game? What game?" (41) Ignatius inquires curiously, which is all Error requires to rhapsody upon the wonders of the game: "The noblest game of all, a game at chess / Betwixt our side and the White House, the men set / In their just order ready to go to it" (42-44). The further revelation that two of the children of his order are on the Black side (the Black Queen's Pawn and the Black Bishop's Pawn) makes it a simple matter for the ghostly founder of the Jesuit movement. Error's protestations that "'Tis but a dream, / A vision you must think" (49-50) are drowned out by his master's insistence that he revive it once again, "So I behold the children of my cunning / And see what rank they keep" (51-52). He is disappointed that his followers are relegated to pawns, for "Pawns argue but poor spirit and slight preferments, / Not worthy of the name of my disciples" (62-63), echoing the limited degree of power given to pawns within the contemporary game (similar to today). Nevertheless, the compulsion to watch "the noblest game of all" is overwhelming. The last words of the Induction (and the last words that he will speak in the play) exemplify both the critical importance of this contest and his admiration for the context in which it will be fought: "O with what longings will this breast be tossed / Until I see this great game won and lost" (77-78). This is the time, as told by Sir John Holles who directly after viewing A Game at Chess described the play in a letter to his patron the Earl of Somerset, when Loyola chooses to leave the stage: "with this he vanisheth, leaving his benediction over the work"

(Braunmuller 342). The induction ends, therefore, with a statement of purpose. This game of chess is of crucial global implications, providing a context to a war between the righteousness of Protestantism, and the evils represented by the Spanish Catholics and their Jesuit associates. No other game would be better suited to such a grand or critical purpose, as can be seen once the acts and scenes of the play start. Neither is it any great surprise that there is no more ardent and successful proponent of both this game and the studied guile that informs the attempts at conquering pieces by way of “discovery” in the Black House than Middleton’s caricature of the loathed Count Gondomar, the Black Knight.

The Black Knight

The most obvious character analogy for the audience to understand within the play was the Black Knight. The character who had occasioned such disdain and fear in the populace of England, from both the popular perception of his role in the attempted Spanish match and the supposedly superhuman Machiavellian skills that he used in his quest for the advancement of Catholicism, was bound to be referred to in a play that focused upon the political situation of recent years. Yet, Middleton was even more overt in this connection, using the Black Knight to satirise not only Gondomar’s physical incapacities, such as including amongst the props his “open chayre for the ease of that fistulated part” as John Holles described it to his patron (Braunmuller 342), but particularly the legend of his extraordinarily subtle cunning. In accordance with Gondomar’s reputation as an expressly Machiavellian figure, the Black Knight is consequently figured as the greatest dissembler of the game. His embodiment of the chess knight may be the first signifier that his skill is derived from more ambiguous means than brute strength, but such a title becomes a mere introduction to a character whose skill at taking other pieces by “discovery” is second only to his abject love for all manner of dishonesty. Serving the ends of Catholicism, his abilities at

dissembling are critical for his attempts to conquer members of the White House. The Black Knight's speciality is his outward appearance of pious respectability and unimpeachable morality, which he uses to seduce his prey into submitting to his desires, except that both his past successes and his current ambitions place him in the upper echelon of perfidy. More than any other character, he gleefully revels in a capacity and appetite for falsehood that dwarfs even the other members of his House.

The first appearance by the Black Knight takes the form of a soliloquy that celebrates himself in all his Machiavellian glory, and presents a battle being currently waged by the Black Bishop's Pawn over the soul of the White Queen's Pawn as a single conflict in the war for the 'universal monarchy'. His confidence that the imminent endgame will end in a final checkmate by discovery for his House is fuelled predominantly because he has fought and won so many battles in a likewise manner before. Upon his entrance to this scene, the play's arch-gamester announces himself in an aside dedicated to the celebration of himself and the cause that he stands for:

[*Aside*] so, so,

The business of the universal monarchy
 Goes forward well now, the great college pot
 That should always be boiling, with the fuel
 Of all intelligences possible
 Through the Christian kingdoms. (I.i.242-247)

Unlike the Black Bishop's Pawn who, despite his part in the main objective, is concentrating for the moment on the White Queen's Pawn, the Black Knight identifies himself as primarily interested in "the business of the universal monarchy". Indeed, he argues with rapacious enthusiasm, all of the Black House should be similarly devoted to this evil; the "college pot" of their efforts should "always be boiling". While he may have talked less about iniquity than

anyone, he has achieved more than the rest of his comrades combined. These results have been achieved through the experienced deployment of dishonest representation and seduction which, despite their innocuous surface, are purposed towards enforcing Catholic dominance over the world. The Black Knight is the most skilled in these matters, as he joyfully compares himself to the rest of the Black House, considering, "I've bragged less, / But have done more than all the conclave on'em" (I.i.254-255). What he has achieved, "I have done facetiously, / With pleasant subtlety and bewitching courtship, / Abused all my believers with delight" (I.i.257-259). Indeed, "to many a soul I have let in mortal poison [Catholicism]" (I.i.261), for it was presented by a man who "could so roll my pills in sugared syllables / And strew such kindly mirth o'er all my mischiefs" (I.i.263-264), that his victims drank up this "mortal poison", "in way of recreation / As pleasure steals corruption into youth" (I.i.265-266).

More than indulging in nostalgic memories of wrongs he once committed, the Knight is continually laying the groundwork for more in the future. Alerted by his concerned pawn, "Sir, your plot's discovered" (III.i.126), an unconcerned Black Knight dismissively inquires "Which of the twenty thousand and nine hundred, / Four score and five, canst tell?" (III.i.125-126). Were his skull opened, he posits, his brain would resemble a country-filled globe, "with lines drawn some tropical, some oblique / . . . / . . . some master politician / That has sharp state-eyes will go near to pick out / The plots, and every climate where they fastened; / 'Twill puzzle'em too. / . . . / They'd need to use spectacles" (III.i.133-142). Furthermore, his gleeful listing of but a few of the small conquests he has achieved against the White House that were perpetrated through misdirection and feigned friendship are similar to those of which Gondomar himself was accused:

Was it not I procured a gallant fleet
 From the White Kingdom to secure our coasts
 'Gainst the infidel pirate, under pretext

Of more neccessitous expedition?
 Who made the jails fly open, without miracle,
 And let the locusts out, those dangerous flies
 Whose property is to burn corn without touching?

 Whose policy was't to put a silenced muzzle
 On all the barking tongue-men of the time,
 Made pictures that were dumb enough before
 Poor sufferers in that politic restraint?
 My light spleen skips and shakes my ribs to think on't.
 Whilst our drifts walked uncensored but in thought,
 A whistle or whisper would be questioned
 In the most fortunate angle of the world.
 The court has held the city by the horns
 Whilst I have milked her. (III.i.85-109)

Time and time again in this soliloquy, the Black Knight has achieved these small victories and minor conquests through “discovery”: hiding his intentions in the shadows while luring his victims in until he can show his true colours without fear of reprisal.

The examples of the ships and the freed prisoners in particular were drawn directly from the history of Gondomar’s achievements. In 1620, as part of a show of official friendship towards Spain, James had lent Gondomar the services of a British fleet so as to combat Algerian pirates, who were both interfering with Spain’s communications within their empire and causing harm to England’s cloth industry exports (Redworth 17). His theatrical caricature, watched by an audience already hostile towards the flesh-and-blood Gondomar, mocks the country that gave him the resources to “secure our coasts” without realising that

his talk of “necessitious expedition” was mere “pretext”. More than this, the freeing of some 80 imprisoned Catholic priests (part of James’ gift to his departing friend Gondomar in 1618) was even more destructive, for the “locusts” and “dangerous flies”, with no “touching” or direct effort, have the potential to turn any country spiritually barren. This in itself is a call-back to Sir Ignatius Loyola wondering why the Catholic “grasshoppers” had not yet “covered the earth’s face and made dark the land”.

Neither can the righteous speak against such evils: they have been ‘bewitched’ and seduced to the point of oppressing their own citizens, directly echoing the suppression of Hispanophobic propaganda in England, in light of the friendship that James was attempting to forge between the two countries. Day by day, masked connivance by the Black Knight has led to his hosts giving him both access to the halls of power and the authority to attempt shaping public opinion, to the point where the merest ‘whisper or whistle’ against the Black House is censored by his hosts, while members of the Black Kingdom are free to scheme and plan both further abuse and pure destruction. The friendship enjoyed by the Black Knight due to his deceit has given him an opportunity to plan not only seduction, but an actual tactical assault for when the time is right:

Pray what use

Put I my summer recreation to ?
 But more to inform my knowledge of the state
 And strength of the White Kingdom! No fortification,
 Haven, creek, landing-place ’bout the White coast
 But I got draught and platform, learned the depth
 Of all their channels, knowledge of all sands,
 Shelves, rocks, and rivers for invasion properest;
 A catalogue of all the navy royal,

The burden of the ships, the brassy murderers,
 The number of the men, to what cape bound;
 Again for the discovery of the islands,
 Never a shire but the state better known
 To me than to her breast inhabitants,
 What power of men and horse, gentry's revenues,
 Who well affected to our side, who ill,
 Who neither well nor ill, all the neutrality.
 Thirty-eight thousand souls have been seduced, Pawn,
 Since the jails vomited with the pill I gave'em. (IV.ii.57-75)

The efforts of the Black Knight towards seducing the enemies of the Black House have been leading to this purpose. He not only understands the geography of every potentially critical area (the ports, the landing-areas, possible entry points for an invasion), he knows the strength that the White Kingdom is capable of, who will remain loyal to the cause of the White House and who will fight on his side. The release of the priests from jail as a favour to the Black Knight has resulted in them going forth to spread Catholic propaganda and seduce those not formally Catholic to conversion, resulting in near forty thousand members of the White Kingdom who will attack the state from within. The Black Knight's skill at dishonesty and fermenting destruction is thrown into relief by recollections and plans such as these: the destruction he caused and will cause in the future, rather than being resisted, was positively welcomed by victims who were unable to see the malevolent intent aiming for their complete destruction that lay behind the pious visage. It is his skill which is required in order to remedy the muddle made by the Black Bishop's Pawn in his attempt to procure the White Queen's Pawn for himself. The Black Knight concocts a new scheme of 'discovery', except that his will come much closer to achieving its goal of conquest.

The Black Knight's intervention into the scheme to ruin the White Queen's Pawn becomes necessary when the Black Bishop's Pawn fails to plan his 'discovery' of the prey perfectly, placing both himself and the Black House in danger. The Black Bishop's Pawn's miscarried attempt to bring the White Queen's Pawn to ruin is designed to both claim her for himself sexually and, as a result of his domination, to present her as a willing subject for Catholicism and the Black House. Through subterfuge and dissemblance, he hopes to misdirect her attention to his claims of piety, while finding the perfect point at which to "discover" both his religious and lustful intentions, which he presents as inextricably linked in the Black House. However, both his offer to the White Queen's Pawn of confession and the tract of Obedience that he presents to her fall flat due to her almost inhuman piety. Indeed, even if her naivety as a woman might, Howard-Hill argues, lead her to "be attracted to the false allurements of Jesuitical shows . . . as an Anglican she needs nothing but her pristine purity to protect her from them" (40). Frustrated by her resistance, the Black Bishop's Pawn loses his temper and unwittingly reveals not only his own deceit, but the depths to which the Black House may be compromised by her testimony:

Lay me down reputation

Before thou stir'st; thy nice virginity

Is recompense too little for my love:

'Tis well if I accept of that for both.

Thy loss is but thine own, there's art to help thee

And fools to pass thee to; in my discovery

The whole Society suffers, and in that

The hope of absolute monarchy eclipsed.

.....

If thou hadst any pity this necessity

Would wring it from thee. I must else destroy thee:

We must not trust the policy of Europe

Upon a woman's tongue. (II.i.119-133)

More than effectively spurning the Black Bishop's Pawn's attempt at sexual conquest, the White Queen's Pawn now has the capacity to inform the White House of her near escape from sexual assault informed by religious hypocrisy, thus depriving the Black House of the conquests "by discovery" that are the stock-in-trade for such rogues. The escape that the White Queen's Pawn then manages to effect, therefore, is one of great concern for the Black House as a whole, not only the Black Bishop's Pawn. He is the assailant to whom she makes her promise that, "I will discover thee, arch-hypocrite, / To all the kindreds of earth" (II.i.147-148), a vow akin to placing him "over a powder-vault / and the match now akindling" (II.i.157-158). Indeed that explosion threatens to take down the entire Black House. It is up to the prodigious skills of the Black Knight to save the situation through deception and hypocrisy aimed at the entire White House for the purpose of entrapping her.

The Black Knight, in tandem with the rest of the Black House, must firstly misdirect the White House's attention to a seemingly pristine Black House and blameless Black Bishop's Pawn. By doing so, the way will be open to discredit the evidence of the White Queen's Pawn and falsely accuse her of perjury. His initial act, therefore, is to hide the evidence. The Black Bishop's Pawn is ordered first to "Cast thirty leagues of earth behind thee suddenly" (II.i.181). Secondly, he must "Leave letters antedated with our House / Ten days at least from this" (II.i.182-183). Thirdly, the Black Bishop's Pawn asks the Black House that they recover his cabinet of 'intelligences' (letters and communications) from his home and ensure that the contents are burnt, with which the Black Queen's Pawn is entrusted. With the offending Pawn disappeared, his imprudent letters illegible and falsely antedated letters in the possession of his superiors, the Black House is now confident of their plan

working. The return of the White Queen's Pawn may prompt the Black Bishop to mutter "Here comes more anger" (II.ii.99), but the Black Knight is unperturbed by any such concerns, since "we come well provided for this storm" (II.ii.100). The ground-work they have laid for their dishonesty will enable them, at this moment at least, to avoid discovery and, in the process, it will give them an opportunity to seduce the White House into allowing the further victimisation of the White Queen's Pawn.

This preparation proves to have been wise, for it irretrievably damages any charges made by the White Queen's Pawn. She may waste no time in cataloguing the iniquities that she was subjected to at the hands of "[t]he absolut'st abuser of true sanctity, / . . . / Who making meek devotion keep the door – / His lips being full of holy zeal at first – / Would have committed a foul rape upon me. (II.ii.112-117), yet she is helpless in the hands of the Black Knight. Having worked the skilful disappearance of the Black Bishop's Pawn, he can present himself as nobly asking only that justice be done, claiming that "the treasure / of my revenge I cannot spend all on thee", yet, "I'll be nobler yet / And put her to her own House" (II.ii.193-194, 198-199). If the White King is horrified at the original statement by the White Queen's Pawn, since even the original fall of Lucifer whose pride "is to be angel-shaped, and imitate / The form from whence he fell" (II.ii.136-137), cannot match the devilish qualities of he who "Takes pride to use that [angel's] shape to be a devil" (II.ii.141), he has little choice but to rule that "[w]here settles the offense, / Let the fault's punishment be derived from thence: / We leave her to your censure" (II.ii.230-232). The Black House now have their prey within their grasp, thanks to "that Galician sponce" of the Black Knight that "can work out wonders" (II.ii.243). They are now free to plan the censure and the conquest of the White Queen's Pawn, much as was originally attempted by the Black Bishop's Pawn, to debase both her spiritual and sexual purity. Working with complete knowledge of and skill in the methods of dissemblance and dishonesty, the fictional embodiment of Gondomar has for the moment

achieved that which he bragged of doing previously: he seduced his opponents into acceding to his demands, thereby giving him and the Black House the “discovery” and thus the opportunity to enforce their control. From a situation that seemed hopeless, he has created the possibility of conquest. Nor is this the only time that he is able to utilise misdirection and dishonesty in order to bring about smaller conquests against the White House by “discovery”, even if the men were already inherently his.

That the Black Knight is able to compensate for the Black House losing the control of the White Queen’s Pawn by choosing this moment to unveil both the White King’s Pawn and the Fat Bishop as traitors to the White House is evidence of the preparation and preliminary groundwork that he has covered in his effort to further manipulate and then surprise his opponents as they see their pieces going voluntarily into the enemy camp. The first inkling of this scheme occurs in the very first scene of the play as the Black Knight and the Black Bishop’s Pawn are conversing on matters of subterfuge when the White King’s Pawn enters for the first time. Despite the Black Bishop’s Pawn’s nervousness, his co-conspirator reassures him that the arriving white pawn is “made our own, man, half *in voto* yours; / His heart’s in the Black House, leave him to me” (I.i.310-311). Indeed, the traitorous Pawn regards his new benefactor as one who “see[s] my outside, but you know my heart, Knight” (I.i.313). The preparation of the White King’s Pawn has obviously taken place before the play commences, whereas the Fat Bishop is swayed from the White House throughout the play, thanks to the Black Knight’s skilful playing on the greed that typifies his character. Previously a member of the Black House who switched to the White House and specifically dissatisfied that his new compatriots have not yet extended him the “preferment [position in the Church] yet that’s suitable / To the greatness of my person and my parts” (II.ii.33-34), the Black Knight’s claim that he has a letter from Cardinal Paulus that offers the Fat Bishop the position that Paulus occupied directly before he rose to Cardinal, is the impetus needed for

greed to take over: “This was the chair of ease I ever aimed at, / I’ll make a bonfire of my books immediately; / All that are left against [the Black House] I’ll sacrifice / . . . / You shall see me one of the Black House shortly” (III.i.46-56). This comes to a head in the same scene when a confrontation between the entirety of each House gives the Black Knight the opportunity to compensate for the White Queen’s Pawn’s escape from their custody.

It is Act 3 Scene 1 when the White House confront their adversaries over what they now recognise as the wrongful imprisonment of the White Queen’s Pawn, upon discovery of the falsity of the antedated letters from the Black Bishop’s Pawn, with the “testimony / Confirmed by good men, how that foul attempter / Got but this morning to the place, from whence / He dated his forged lines for ten days past” (III.i.196-199). Any further attempt to question or doubt the White House’s word is destroyed once the Black Queen’s Pawn (working for her own specific ends) bursts out, “Where is this injured chastity . . . / . . . / This rock of constant and invincible virtue / That made sin’s tempest weary of his fury?” (III.i.208-211). With such evidence provided, the Black House’s accusations against the White Queen’s Pawn have no credibility and she must be released. Even in this circumstance however, the Black Knight is calm for he “know[s] where [his] game stands” (III.i.250), seizing the White King’s Pawn and revealing his concealed black garment. The revelation of the White King’s Pawn as a “dangerous hypocrite . . . made against us” (III.i.262) is particularly concerning because of the weakness that his loss presents in the White House: “Guard the sacred persons; / Look well to the White Bishop, for that pawn / Gave guard to the Queen and him in the third place” (III.i.253-255). In this atmosphere, the Fat Bishop’s defection is even more serious. His self revelation that “I am the man / And turn myself into the Black House freely; / I am of this side now” (III.i.288-290), draws the almost incredulous exclamation from the White Knight that “Monster ne’er matched him! / . . . / A prepared hypocrite” (III.i.290-296). The White House may have regained the White Queen’s Pawn, but

the Black Knight has still managed to hurt them badly. Using their focus upon regaining the wrongly accused pawn to the Black House's advantage, it is precisely at that moment that the "discovery" is made, a testament to the Black Knight's abilities at the subterfuge and dishonesty necessary for these minor victories. He is the standard by which the other characters of the Black House are measured. In particular, the one from his own House who is closest to him in dissemblance and dishonesty is the same Black Bishop's Pawn who tries on three separate occasions to successfully dominate the White Queen's Pawn. Similarly to his superior, he looks to achieve his conquests via Catholic seduction. By comparison, however, his "discoveries" are the most overt and dedicated to sexual dominance, in a House where libidinous excess is the rule rather than the exception.

This is far from uncommon within the Black House. Whether the seduction that members practise is predominantly sexual or religious is immaterial, both are intertwined with the implicitly violent notion of conquest that the Black House aims to achieve over their enemies. The Black Knight's appetite for sexual conquest, has suffered no depletion in the face of his "leaking bottom; / I have been as often tossed on Venus' seas / As trimmer fresher barks, when sounder vessels / Have lain at anchor, that is, kept the door" (II.i.173-176). Nor is the Fat Bishop out of place in his new home. Having been made "the master of the beds" (II.ii.36), a reference to his flesh-and-blood counterpart Marc Antonio De Dominis (a bishop who left Spain for England, only to turn back to Spain once again in 1622) and his appointment to mastership of the Hospital of Savoy (Howard-Hill 106), the Bishop is somewhat aggrieved that "There was a time I had more such drabs [strumpets] than beds, / Now I've more beds than drabs" (II.ii.40-41). For his own part, the Black King desires the White Queen especially, instructing the Black Bishop's Pawn in a sealed note that his next task must be to "make some attempt upon the White Queen's person, whose fall or prostitution our lust most violently rages for" (II.i.22-24). Conflating sexual and religious

ravishment, the Black King requires the Pawn to do this “by the burning affection I bear to the rape of devotion” (II.i.21). That Queen, he later expresses, “would I fain finger” (III.i.244), to the point where the Fat Bishop takes it upon himself to explain to her, as he attempts her capture, that his King’s blood “burns for thy prostitution / And nothing but the spring of thy chaste virtue / Can cool his inflammation; instantly / He dies upon a pleurisy of luxury / If he deflower thee not” (IV.v.16-20). Within this ethos, if the Black Bishop’s Pawn is the somewhat lesser embodiment of the skill-set exploited with such aplomb by the Black Knight, he is the most direct example of Catholicism as a malevolent force for dissemblance, as well as an expert conflation of religious and sexual dominance in the manner by which he attempts the conquest of the White Queen’s Pawn.

The Black Bishop’s Pawn has carefully prepared the ground against her before his entrance, sending the Black Queen’s Pawn out to surreptitiously prepare her innocent counterpart for conversion, sorrowful and pained “at next thought to give her lost eternally, / In not being ours but the daughter of heresy, / my soul bleeds at mine eyes” (I.i.4-6). When the Black Bishop’s Pawn makes his appearance and engages his fellow follower in an aside to inquire, “Dost find her supple?”, the Black Queen’s Pawn informs him, “There’s a little passage made” (I.i.68-69), for both religious and sexual dominance. Indeed, his suggestion that she take confession, however piously expressed, cannot help but reveal in an aside his vicious purpose and further feed into the audience’s suspicion of Catholic rituals and practices:

[*Aside*] Now to the work indeed, which is to catch
 Her inclination; that’s the special use
 We make of all our practice in all kingdoms,
 For by disclosing their most secret frailties,
 Things, which once ours, they must not hide from us,

(That's the first article in the creed we teach 'em)

Finding to what point their own blood most inclines,

Know best to apt them to our own design. (I.i.108-115)

The connections between seduction and the political ramifications of religious conquest were already clear in the minds of an English populace that viewed the Spanish match as Spain and Gondomar's attempt to woo Prince Charles to the evils of Catholicism through the fleshy delights of the Infanta. For the Black Bishop's Pawn (and the English audience), the Catholic practice of confession is a sly move that is perfect for those who live their lives and gain their victories from falsehood. Inducing the White Queen's Pawn to reveal the lustful desires contained within her 'blood' will thus allow her Confessor to use these secret desires to manipulate her into further submission. The White Queen's Pawn's submission to the Black Bishop's Pawn would indicate his physical and religious conquest of her, to be expressed both by her succumbing to the sexual advances of her confessor, as well as by her conversion to Catholicism ("our own design") and to then assist in the Black House's quest for a "universal monarchy", the ultimate conquest. A trick revealed as common amongst all Catholics for "catch[ing the] inclination", 'auricular confession' is how they achieve their nefarious ends "in all kingdoms".

Nor do the Black Bishop's Pawn's tools for dishonesty end there. After failing with confession and admitting that he "never was so taken, beset doubly / now with her judgement; What a strength it puts forth! / . . . / A second siege must not fall off so tamely" (I.i.174-185), he deduces that "[m]y old means I must fly to, yes, 'tis it. / [*Gives a book*] Please you peruse this small tract of obedience / 'Twill help you forward well" (I.i.189-191). In doing so, he reveals further to the audience the implicit sexual violence at the heart of his attempts at the White Queen's pawn's spiritual virtue, revealing both as indisputably connected within his game-plan. Even when he fails the first time and must flee the game for fear of "discovery",

he will return to attempt his victory once again, except that on this occasion, he is purely about sexual domination.

The Black Bishop's Pawn, in a plot undertaken again with the help of the Black Queen's Pawn, will disguise himself in an attempt to trick the White Queen's Pawn into believing him to be her predestined husband, thereby trapping her both sexually and religiously. The Black Queen's Pawn is invaluable to this purpose, using her new-found friendship with her counterpart upon vouching for her reputation in the confrontation between the houses in Act 3 Scene 1 to manipulate her. The Black Queen's Pawn is adamant that "[m]y pity [for you] flamed with zeal, especially / When I foresaw your marriage; then it mounted" (III.i.316-317), further divulging rhapsodically on her future husband's qualities, "An absolute handsome gentleman, a complete one; / You'll say so when you see him, heir to three red [cardinal's] hats" (III.i.322-323). In "[a] magical glass I bought of a Egyptian" (III.i.330), she may view him. The mirror then plays host, according to the stage directions, to the entrance of the Black Bishop's Pawn "*in rich attire, like an apparition presents himself before the glass; then exit*" (143). From this point, the disguised Black Bishop's Pawn is able to re-enter as a flesh-and-blood character, this time even more devoted to avoiding his previous lapses in deception, improving his sense of game-play so as to properly complete the misdirection with which he hopes to achieve his end.

With the assistance of the Black Queen's Pawn, the disguised Pawn is able to enact the role that he has carved for himself, the anonymous pious gentleman who has encountered his future bride by pure chance, with more discipline than his previous role. In accordance with the belief by the White Queen's Pawn that both she and her 'future husband', whilst supposedly following predetermined routes towards each other, are unacquainted, her 'future husband' determines when she is close, "Yonder's my game, which, like a politic chess-master, / I must not seem to see" (IV.i.34-35). His seeming ignorance of her allows the Black

Queen's Pawn to act as match-maker to two besotted participants, to mock the White Queen's Pawn's apprehension with, "Yes, die a bashful death, do, / And let the remedy pass by unused still" (IV.i.63-64), and to initiate contact with the supposedly unaware gentleman to inform of the match that must take place. By such help, the Black Bishop's Pawn may concentrate on presenting a picture of moral uprightness, amazed at "the wonders of this secret" (IV.i.78), then receiving the 'knowledge' that they should be married with faithful delight: "The mystery extends, or else creation / Has set that admirable piece before us / To choose our chaste delights by" (IV.i.88-90). Indeed, the White Queen's Pawn cannot hide "a traitor / Leaped from my heart into my cheek already / That will betray all to his powerful eye" (IV.i.53-55). She has indeed been "caught", now leaving it to her to be urged by her erstwhile friend into the arms of her disguised would-be defiler. While he may be inferior in the depth of his planning and plotting to the near-genius of the Black Knight, the Black Bishop's Pawn's attempts to 'take' the White Queen's Pawn are redolent of the same planning and mindset that guides the Black Knight's schemes. The plots of the Black Knight aim to misdirect the opposition with the apparent harmlessness or righteousness of the original object, only to remove that surface comfort to reveal the sharpened knife of conquest ready to cut the opposition down. Despite their difference in status, both the Black Knight and the Black Bishop's Pawn are the play's two most ardent proponents of the check and conquest "by discovery" that was rumoured to represent Spain and Catholicism. Such devotion, ironically, also spells their eventual doom.

If A Game at Chess portrays the Black House at the Machiavellian height of their dissembling glory, then it also portrays the downside of obsessing about such. In spite of their efforts, neither the Black Bishop's Pawn nor the Black Knight succeed in breaking the White Queen's Pawn. If the Black Knight does indeed succeed in turning the White King's Pawn and the Fat Bishop against the White House, as shall be seen, those gains are soon

squandered for personal reasons. Those who would represent depraved values lack the inherent masculinity to defeat those who stand for truth and justice. The righteousness of the White House carries with it the moral strength and skill to represent proper society and, by implication, proper masculinity which translates to the use of gamesmanship for the skilful attainment of conquest. The victories that the White House gains over individual black pieces are not only permanent, they are in large part indirectly supported by members of the Black House, especially the Black Queen's Pawn and the Black Knight, whose devotion to gamesmanship first and foremost denies the Black House victory. It is drawn from their base of depravity, meaning that their abilities in regards to the proper masculinity required for aggressive conquest are diminished, manifesting itself in dissension amongst the members of the House.

Endgame

The attempts made by the Black House to achieve victory are ultimately doomed to failure because of their devotion to the game itself, as opposed to maintaining a focus upon achieving conquest over their opponents. To achieve such conquest would require that the Black House be proficient in the masculinity that would allow for the attainment of honourable conquest. To be proficient in this type of masculinity would depend upon the Black House being capable of honour and righteousness, those factors that they are adamantly opposed to. The few conquests that they achieve are insignificant in the overall scheme of things, overshadowed by the iniquities engaged in before and after the process. Primarily, however, the lack of both true masculinity and conquestorial ability on the part of the Black House is brought home by the dissension and infighting continually occurring within their ranks. In this play, one side's talent for dishonesty extends beyond their opponents and is aimed towards each other. The Black Queen's Pawn is the sole reason that

the Black Bishop's Pawn never achieves his aim of deflowering the White Queen's Pawn, setting him up to be taken, as a matter of retribution. Likewise, the Black Knight takes pride in setting up his fellow members to be taken. Partially, he does so to settle personal scores with those who have supposedly wronged him in the past. However, the main reason that he does so is because of his own nature as an incorrigible gamester, consciously choosing to pass up opportunities for victory so the game will be extended. By this dissension and treachery, the Black House proves itself as the vanguard of the impermanent values of Catholicism, and thus also as the opponents to the concept of true and proper manliness that can only come with obedience to the gender roles and morality that make for the truly permanent society of White House. This is proven when they use the Black Knight's obsession to both capture the Fat Bishop in the process of seeking the White Queen and to end the game in victory via checkmate "by discovery". Even in the Induction, it could be foreshadowed that the Black House's skills at conquest will be hampered by their conflict with one another.

Sir Ignatius Loyola's one appearance in the Induction is the inauguration of an overwhelming desire to answer what he classes as slights toward him with retribution as well as little to no regard for that policy that would assist his cohorts. Insulted both by the fact that it has taken until 1622 for his canonisation by the Pope (he died in 1566) and that, when introduced into the calendar, "I fall by chance / Into the nine and twentieth day of February. / There were no room for me else" (Ind. 29-31), Loyola's fascination with the game is equalled by his sneer at the "poor spirits, and slight preferments" embodied by his Jesuitical 'children' as pawns. The annoyance to him is great enough that he begins to imagine himself as one of those Pawns, revealing his ambition to be so overwhelming that, "I would have cut / That Bishop's throat but I'd have his place, / And told the Queen a love-tale in her ear / Would make her best pulse dance" (Ind. 64-67). Alerted by Error that to "have 'em play against

themselves . . . / [Is] quite against the rules of the game” (Ind. 69-70) makes no difference, since “I would rule myself, not observe rule” (Ind. 71). This is a direct look at an individual for whom the desire for personal ambition overwhelms all reason, including the reasoning that such grasping selfishness would most likely lead to the destruction of House he supports. Loyola may be aggrieved at the thought that the universal monarchy has not yet been established, yet his incessantly treacherous mind lacks the masculine focus to keep that goal in sight, instead indulging in a fantasy of gaining petty revenge. From his inauguration of the concept of personal scores overshadowing the main objective, both the Black Queen’s Pawn and the Black Knight willingly lose focus on the game in order for other matters of their own to take precedence. The Black Queen’s Pawn’s work against the Black Bishop’s Pawn, drawn from personal issues, takes precedence over victory. Similarly to Ignatius, that her machinations result in a defeat for her is beside the point.

The assistance that Black Queen’s Pawn supposedly provides her fellow Jesuit in his attempts to seduce the White Queen’s Pawn is revealed, in time, to be a ruse to disguise the fact that she is working for her own agenda, one that she does not reveal until very near the end of the play. The Black Bishop’s Pawn’s sexual coercion of his prey (on the threat of rape) has ended when a noise gives the White Queen’s Pawn an opportunity to escape, promising before she leaves that his immoral behaviour will become common knowledge, which would be the undoing of a man dedicated to the fraudulent appearance of piety. The Black Queen’s Pawn then enters, seemingly horrified at the Jesuit for his impatience and his recklessness, informing him that “I spied a pawn of the White House walk near us / And made that noise o’ purpose to give warning” (II.i.154-155). Directly after that, however, she adds in an aside to the audience that she really made that noise “[f]or mine own turn, which end is all I work for” (II.i.156). She then becomes, once again, the loyal member of the Black House, assisting in hiding away the Black Bishop’s Pawn until the furore dies down, suggesting that “[t]here lies

a secret vault” (II.i.188), where the perpetrator could be stowed away for the time being. Even her outburst in Act 3 Scene 1 that releases the White Queen’s Pawn from the unjust custody of the Black House is defended to the furious Black Knight as a means to “her ruin in my pity, A new trap / For her more sure confusion” (III.i.239-240). Her role in the Black Bishop’s Pawn’s next attempt at seducing his prey, however, drives both herself and the Bishop’s Pawn to destruction, defining herself as beholden to her own motives. Irrespective of the game of chess being played around her, the Black Queen’s Pawn plans and executes a conquest “by discovery” against her fellow Pawn.

The Black Queen’s Pawn, seeking an opportunity for personal revenge on the Black Bishop’s Pawn for past adultery, uses his new plot aimed at obtaining the White Queen’s Pawn to gain retribution at the expense of herself and the victory of her own House. Even while she marvels that the White Queen’s Pawn’s fascination and desire for the image of her future husband, has left her “caught, and which is strange, by her most wronger” (III.iii.71), her true aim becomes more transparent once she has convinced the White Queen’s Pawn to enter into a marriage contract with the one who has now captured her heart and soul. Secretly she plots to “enjoy the sport and cozen you both; / My blood’s game is the wages I have worked for” (IV.i.147-148). Act 4 Scene 3 sees the Black Queen’s Pawn finally satisfy her “blood” when she conspires at a bed-trick, staged as a ‘Dumb show’. The stage directions are clear and unambiguous: she shows the White Queen’s Pawn “*to a chamber; then fetching in the Black Bishop’s Pawn, the Jesuit conveys him to another, puts out the light and she follows*” (IV.iii). The Black Queen’s Pawn substitutes herself for the White Queen’s Pawn, without the knowledge or suspicion of either party. Her subsequent revelation is designed for both maximum shock to both participants and the “discovery” of the Black Bishop’s Pawn.

Her first contribution to the scene occurs while she remains hidden ‘*within*’ the Tiring-House. Her fellow Jesuit, sans disguise, confronts the White Queen’s Pawn, revealing

that “I am the marrier and the man” (V.ii.59), further crowing that he is “quit with you now for my discovery, / Your outcries and your cunning” (V.ii.66-67). His subsequent confusion as she gives thanks to “that power that hath preserved me from this devil” (V.ii.71) is compounded by the interjections of the concealed Black Queen’s Pawn. Questions from the confused would-be seducer about whether or not he did in fact “lie with you” (V.ii.80) and assertions that “you made a promise to me / After the contract” (V.ii.83-84), bring answers from the mystery voice until he can take it no longer, exclaiming, “Slid, ’tis a bawdy pawn; I’ll slit the throat on’t” (V.ii.87). To answer such a threat, the Black Queen’s Pawn finally comes onstage to mockingly beseech her unwitting lover: “What? Offer violence to your bedfellow? / To one that works so kindly, without rape?” (V.ii.88-89). Her resulting explanation leads her to wonder “Can five years stamp [brand] a bawd?” (V.ii.95), for it was only five years since “I was probationer [a novice in a religious house] at Brussels” (V.ii.91) and the Black Bishop’s Pawn was “the chief agent for the transportation / Of ladies’ daughters, if you be remembered” (V.ii.97-98) from whom he confiscated lands and monies: “Some of their portions I could name; who pursed ’em too. / They were soon dispossessed of worldly cares / That came into your fingers” (V.ii.99-101). Even as the Black Bishop’s Pawn wonders “Shall I hear her?” (V.ii.101), she is only just beginning to reveal his main iniquity, after which he leaves himself open to being taken:

BLACK BISHOP’S PAWN: Shall I hear her?

BLACK QUEEN’S PAWN: Holy derision, yes, till thy ear swell

With thy own venom, thy profane life’s vomit!

Whose niece was she you poisoned with child, twice,

Then gave her out possessed with a foul spirit

When ’twas indeed your bastard?

Enter WHITE BISHOP'S PAWN *with* WHITE QUEEN

BLACK BISHOP'S PAWN: I am taken

In mine own toils.

WHITE BISHOP'S PAWN: Yes, and 'tis just you should be.

WHITE QUEEN: And thou, lewd pawn, the shame of womanhood.

BLACK BISHOP'S PAWN: I'm lost of all hands.

BLACK QUEEN'S PAWN: And I cannot feel

The weight of my perdition now he's taken;

'T'as not the burden of a grasshopper. (V.ii.102-111)

The Black Queen's Pawn's revenge towards the Black Bishop's Pawn, who twice 'poisoned' her with child, is that he should be thwarted and captured within his own scheme for sexual depravity. Not only has he been exposed for his past indiscretions, he was set up to be conquered by discovery, as he only "discovered" the members of the White House when it was too late to defend himself. On the contrary, the revenge achieved by the Black Queen's Pawn satisfies her. While the Black Bishop's Pawn is crushed utterly by his defeat ("lost of all hands"), she considers her capture to not even equal "the burden of a grasshopper". Her desire for revenge has overwhelmed any focus upon conquest in the game of chess. However, the player who most continually loses focus, often for the pettiest of reasons, is ironically he who is at the forefront of attempting to deceive the White House, the Black Knight. His inherent focus upon game-play is at the expense of a focus upon victory.

The Black Knight's overall desire is for deception, making game-play an irreducible part of him. If, as the White Knight asserts as he puts his foe in the bag, "Room for the mightiest Machiavel-politician / That e'er the devil hatched of a nun's egg" (V.iii.204-205), it is a Machiavellian personality that the Black Knight not only feels obliged to engage and

placate at nearly every turn, but one that he takes great pleasure in fulfilling with dishonesty. The very thought that his schemes could cause the White Kingdom to censor the opinions against the Black House from their own citizens strikes him as so amusing that “My light spleen skips and shakes my ribs to think on’t” (III.i.104). Even as the wrongs that he commits pile up, “I feel no tempest, not a leaf-wind stirring / To shake a fault; my conscience is becalmed rather” (IV.ii.38-39). Further indulgence in his memories of victorious stratagem leads him to conclude his memories with the self-revelation that “I should not live / But for this *mel aerium*, this mirth manna” (III.i.112-113). Most often, his continual thirst for deception can be satiated with actions directed towards the White House, but neither is the Black House necessarily safe from such moves on his part either. Members from the Black House, particularly the two recent converts who committed treason against the White House to gain entry, the White King’s Pawn and the Fat Bishop, find themselves betrayed by the Black Knight, as he both settles scores and indulges himself. Furthermore, however, the Black Knight finds a compulsive need within himself to continue with the game and the deception at the expense of victory. In light of the essential amusement and life-blood he gains from the use of his Catholic wiles in battles for conquest, he finds himself neither able nor willing to stop. Deception is his nature and he will pursue it no matter the cost to his own House. The first recipient of such treatment is the White King’s Pawn.

The Black Knight’s relationship with the traitorous White King’s Pawn echoes his own inherent desire to dissemble and play out the same conquest by discovery that he has been successful with so many times before: a superficial appreciation of the Pawn who will assist in the attainment of the Universal Monarchy masks his actual contempt, only to be brought to the surface once the time is right to strike. Act 1 Scene 1 sees the Black Knight praising his new acquisition with superficial claims of “Excellent estimation, thou art valued / Above the fleet of gold, that came short home” (I.i.324-325), only to switch upon the Pawn’s

exit to contempt and ridicule for the “[p]oor Jesuit-ridden soul, how art thou fooled / Out of thy faith, from thy allegiance drawn; / Which path soe’er thou tak’st thou’rt a lost pawn” (I.i.326-328). The Black Knight’s promise in an aside to his covert operative “[t]here’s an infallible staff and a red hat / Reserved for you . . . A staff / That will not easily break, you may trust to it” (II.ii.220-222), just before the perfidy is revealed, is quickly followed by an aside to the audience that it will be “such a one had your corruption need of; / There’s a state-fig for you now” (II.ii.223-224). When left to the Black Knight after the “discovery” has taken place, the White King’s Pawn quickly discovers how deep the dissemblance of the Black Knight runs as he is given the dubious honour of being the first piece ‘bagged’:

WHITE KING’S PAWN: I rest upon you, Knight, for my advancement.

BLACK KNIGHT: O, for the staff, the strong staff that will hold,

And for the red hat fit for the guilty mazard.

Into the empty bag know thy first way;

Pawns that are lost are ever out of play.

WHITE KING’S PAWN: How’s this?

BLACK KNIGHT: No replications, you know me;

No doubt ere long you’ll have more company . . . (III.i.304-310)

In one sense, the White King’s Pawn represents a ‘lost Pawn’: “He is lost in both senses of the word – as a chessman and as a Christian who had rejected his faith” (Limon 111).

However, the Black Knight’s treachery against the King’s Pawn appears an opportunity to further indulge himself in deception and dissemblance, as much as any perverse attempt to visit consequences upon those who reject the teachings of Christ. He is clearly enjoying himself when he makes witty asides, claiming that, along with the cardinalistic “staff” and “red hat”, he will present a “state-fig” to his new supposed friend and gleefully assigning the traitorous pawn to the “empty bag”. He gleefully reminds the King’s Pawn that, due to his

“loss”, he is now “ever out of play”, despite the work that it took to obtain him. Above all else, the Black Knight has succeeded in keeping the game alive through weakening his own “side”.

The objective that the Black Knight prizes overall is the continuation of the game. He initially appears to desire a victory for the Black House, but cannot hide the enjoyment he gets from gaming for its own sake. While in Act 1 the Black Knight is eager to achieve the “business of the universal monarchy”, Act 2 is where he reveals his own ambiguity about the victory. Squaring off over the accusation made by the White Queen’s Pawn about the Black Bishop’s Pawn’s criminal conduct, the Black Knight is caught between a desire for “no impeachment / To my honour or the game” (II.ii.160-161) and a fervent wish that, for the sake of his own enjoyment, “would they’d play faster” (II.ii.161). By Act 3, he is wishing surreptitiously for the continuation of the game, even if it means his own destruction. The desire of the Black King to “finger” the Queen is dismissed by his subordinate as “too hot, sir; / If she were took, the game would be ours quickly” (III.i.244-245). Despite his surface assurances that while the Black House entraps the White Knight and Duke, the Fat Bishop will procure the White Queen, in actuality he places the Fat Bishop into a position where he will almost assuredly be taken, thereby ridding himself of a personal enemy and enabling the game to continue. Any suggestion that such deception would effectively destroy the collective endeavour of the Black House would strike the Black Knight as irrelevant to the main purpose behind his game-play. His Machiavellian stratagems serve not his monarch’s desire for the universal Catholic monarchy, but his own love of the game. Consequently, the Black Knight inadvertently offers the White House the opportunity it needs to route the Black House completely and claim victory. Those who previously dissembled and seduced to conquer have the tables turned on them as the White House end the game with that “noble” move of checkmate “by discovery”.

While the White House may have successfully capitalised upon the Black Queen's Pawn's revenge of the Black Bishop's Pawn to scoop both up, the capture of the Fat Bishop is a direct example of them gaining an important victory through the same concept of "discovery" that has so consumed the Black House. From the Fat Bishop's vantage point, the Queen appears to be unprotected, making her easy pickings for the Fat Bishop and the sexual debauchery at the hands of the Black King which would undoubtedly follow her capture. Thus he falls into the trap of advancing, unaware that the White Bishop is watching and ready to step in at the right moment. If taking the Queen would have all but guaranteed a victory for the Black House, the steadfastness and skill of the White Bishop is the final word of the matter:

Enter WHITE BISHOP

WHITE QUEEN: O strait of misery!

WHITE BISHOP: And is your holiness his divine procurer?

FAT BISHOP: The devil's in't, I'm taken by a ring-dove!

Where stood this Bishop that I saw him not?

WHITE BISHOP: You were so ambitious you looked over me.

You aimed at no less person than the Queen,

The glory of the game; if she were won

The way were open to the master check

Which, look you, he or his lives to give you;

Honour and virtue guide him in his station. (IV.v.20-29)

The Fat Bishop's exclamation that not only was he taken by a 'ring-dove', but wondering where the Bishop stood, is a testament to the effectiveness of the "discovery" perpetuated by the White House in this instant. The ring-dove, according to the OED is an obsolete term for a common wood-pigeon, extended by Howard-Hill to something "common and unobtrusive"

(164). In his haste to gain the glory of the White Queen, the White Bishop implies, the Fat Bishop literally looked “over” him, seeing as Bishops are traditionally located both next to the Queen and a mere two spaces away. Thus, the White Bishop effectively misdirected the Fat Bishop into believing that he had a clear run, leaving his flank unguarded and so finding himself taken by the “discovery” of the White Bishop. In this circumstance, “honour and virtue” has triumphed, since the glory of this moment belongs to the White House who used the Fat Bishop’s over-weening ambition against him to effect an important victory, additionally setting up how the White Knight and the White Duke will use dissemblance themselves in service of “honesty and virtue”. Regardless of their momentary dishonesty, they will use this to not only complete the game-ending “checkmate by discovery” but, in the process, they will “discover” and expose the inherent dishonesty that the Black House adheres to as a matter of course.

Even before the Black Knight begins the planned seduction of the White Knight, the Knight and Duke both suspect the Black House to be a location of universal falsehood. The White Duke himself, in the wake of the Black Knight accusing the White House of using false testimony to discredit the Black Bishop’s Pawn, remarked in surprise that “I’ll undertake / That Knight shall teach the devil how to lie” (III.i.202-203). In the wake of this incident, the Knight is adamant that the only way that the Black House will be conquered is if he and the Duke can “prevent their rank insinuation / With truth of cause and courage, meet their plots / With confident goodness that shall strike ’em grovelling” (IV.iv.2-4). The Duke agrees, given that the game is of the utmost importance for those opposed to evil: “Sir, all the gins, traps and alluring snares / The devil has been at work since ’88 on / Are laid for the great hope of this game only” (IV.iv.5-7). The decision has thus been made. While it will be morally painful “for truth to feign a little” (IV.iv.17), the White Knight reasons, “the more noble will truth’s triumph be” (IV.iv.8), especially given that they are dealing with the

duplicitous Black Knight, “the glitteringest serpent that e’er falsehood fashioned” (IV.iv.10). Indeed, in attempting to lure the White Knight and Duke into the Black House, the Black Knight inadvertently reveals too much, as he tries to claim his goodwill towards the White House by declaring, “How often have I changed for your delight / The royal presentation of my place / . . . / I will change / To any shape to please you, and my aim, / Has been to win your love in all this game” (IV.iv.28-44). The changing of form has been associated with evil intentions on the part of the changer since the serpent in Genesis, much as the White Knight earlier characterised the Black Knight not just as a serpent, but the “glitteringest serpent that e’er falsehood fashioned”. Having fully prepared themselves for the dishonesty and fraudulence of the Black House, the White Knight and the White Duke cannot be fooled by the appearance of piety and honour. On the contrary, they expertly use their pretence to draw the Black House’s perfidy into the open, thereby setting them up for defeat.

The White Knight and the White Duke are now engaged with luring the Black House into the revelation of their intrinsic deception, through ostensibly “revealing” a destitute morality that those dedicated to purity could never countenance. Taken in by these falsehoods, the Black House set about seducing the Knight and Duke over to their side through reassurance that they do not simply accept such moral flaws, they welcome and indulge them. The Black King is clear to his guests that, rather than extravagance, “We set you only welcome; surfeit is / A thing we seldom hear of in these parts” (V.iii.3-4), yet he is nevertheless quick to quell any anxiety over joining the Black House, assuring a seemingly concerned White Knight that “You that are wound up to the height of feeding / By clime and custom are dispensed withal / . . . / Eat, and eat every day, twice if you please” (V.iii.64-67). While the reassurance of the Black Knight has left the White Knight “for the food, . . . happily resolved” (V.iii.71), he must ‘reveal’ that the rapacity of his appetite does not stop with mere food, sharing, “The first mess / Is hot ambition!” (V.iii.77-78). That matter is

simple, the Black Knight reveals, as long as, “Your ambition, sir, / Can fetch no farther compass than the world?” (V.iii.80-81). Such an ambition is no real stretch, he explains, for “We’re [the Black Kingdom] about that already” (V.iii.82). They miss only the White House at present time to make such a ‘meal’ complete, for “in the large feast of our vast ambition / We count but the White Kingdom whence you came from / The garden for our cook to pick his salads” (V.iii.83-85). Covetousness is in fact, as the Black Knight reveals, such good policy that it has been built into Catholicism, where “did you but view the vaults within our monasteries, / You’d say then Plutus, which the fiction calles / The lord of riches, were entombed within’em” (V.iii.114-116). Not even the White Duke’s claim that he is subject to lasciviousness, or as he calls it, “infirmity of blood, flesh-frailty” (V.iii.122), concerns the Black Knight who both dismisses that sin as “the trifle of all vices, the mere innocent” (V.iii.124) and reveals that abortions are so common in the Black House that, “at the ruins of a nunnery once / Six thousand infants’ heads found in a fishpond” (V.iii.129-130). The Black House has, under the illusion that the White Knight and White Duke will join with them, revealed nearly everything needed to defeat them. There just remains the “discovery” of their ultimate sin, “dissemblance”, to give the White House the victory.

By inducing the Black House to reveal their inherent dishonesty and falsehood, the White Knight and the White Duke bring about the destruction of their enemies. Despite the acceptance (and indeed skilful practice) of gluttony, coveting and lust in the Black House, the White Knight must inform his hosts that his as yet unrevealed main sin “will divide us, questionless; / ’Tis ten times worse than the forerunners” (V.iii.139-140). Pressed for detail, the White Knight confesses finally that, “This of all others bears the hidden’st venom, / The secret’st poison: I’m an arch-dissembler, sir” (V.iii.144-145). His “nature’s brand” (V.iii.146), he further ‘warns’ his hosts to “turn from me, sir. / The time is yet to come that e’er I spoke / What my heart meant” (V.iii.146-148). Such an admission produces nothing but absolute joy

from the Black Knight, taking it as a sign that he is truly one of them. The seduced Black Knight (and, by implication, the seduced Black House who do not think to stop him in such speech) thus provides the White Knight and the White Duke with the evidence they need to end the game in victory:

BLACK KNIGHT: And call you that a vice?
 Avoid all profanation, I beseech you:
 The only prime state-virtue upon earth,
 The policy of empires! O take heed, sir,
 For fear it take displeasure and forsake you.
 It is a jewel of that precious value
 Whose worth's not known but to the skilful lapidary,
 The instrument that picks ope princes' hearts,
 And locks up ours from them with the same motion;
 You never yet came near our souls till now.
 Now you're a brother to us; what we have done
 Has been dissemblance ever.

WHITE KNIGHT: There you lie then
 And the game's ours – we give thee checkmate by
 Discovery, King, the noblest mate of all!

[A great shout and flourish]

BLACK KING: I'm lost, I'm taken!

WHITE KNIGHT: Ambitious, covetous, luxurious falsehood!

WHITE DUKE: Dissembler includes all. (V.iii.148-164)

This “checkmate by discovery” achieves its nobility both in the tradition of chess play as “the noblest mate of all”, and as the fitting ending for a game in which the bastions of truth battled

those whose pious appearance hid their inherent dishonesty. The Black House, particularly the Black Knight, regard dissemblance as the “only prime state-virtue upon earth” and, furthermore, “the policy of empires”, according to the Black Knight. Used at the highest levels of government, it not only “picks ope princes” hearts, but “locks up ours from them”, much like what the Black House has been attempting upon the White Knight and Duke. Likewise, therefore, their temporary dishonesty accomplishes the same purpose, hiding their own desires while allowing them to peer into the hearts of their enemies. The White Knight and the White Duke have thus conquered the threat of a Catholic monarchy, including the ambition, coveting and luxury that have resulted, as the Black Knight reveals, from the evils of dissemblance. The use of the same tricks as their enemies, rather than sully their victory, confirms their brilliance. They have saved themselves and the world from the ignominious fate of becoming vassals to Catholicism, leaving it now to the White King to consign the Black House to the ‘chess-bag’ (where the defeated pieces normally went), confident that the honour of deciding that penalty matches the honour of the victory itself:

Obscurity is now the fittest favour

Falsehood can sue for; it well suits perdition.

’Tis their best course that so have lost their fame

To put their heads in the bag of shame

[The bag open, the Black side in it.]

And there behold: the bag, like hell-mouth, opens

To take her due . . . (V.iii.175-180).

Once the pieces are in the bag, the White King is dominant and imperial, proclaiming the bag a fitting type of ‘hell’ for such sin: “So, now let the bag close, the fittest womb / For treachery, pride and malice” (V.iii.216-217). Conversely the White House, he pledges, “winner-like, / Destroying, through heaven’s power, what would destroy” will “welcome our

White Knight with loud peals of joy” (217-219). The members of the Black House are reduced to residing in the ‘womb’ of the chess bag, an especially fitting punishment given the effeminacy that they have embodied in this play. The intended double-meaning of both birth and death that accompanies this use of womb signals that the chess bag is a location where those guilty of incorrigible dissemblance will meet with well-deserved “obscurity”. The White House, by comparison, have saved the world from the evils of the “universal Catholic monarchy”. They have, through their faith, achieved the destruction of those who “would destroy”. In this game of chess, the fate of the world has been settled, with superior gamesmanship designating that those who stood for the ‘truth’ of Protestant values were victorious against those whose personal iniquities matched those of their religion. It is a victory that will now be extended to the real world, as the White Queen’s Pawn remarks in the Epilogue. She has appeared again to “bow thus low to all of worth / That are true friends of the White House and cause” (Epi. 2-3), and trust that anybody who harbours maliciousness against such goodness, such as Catholics, “by envy’s mark denoted, / To those night glow-worms in the bag devoted / Where’er they sit, stand, or in private lurk, / They’ll soon be known by their depraving work” (Epi. 5-8). Those who would represent depraved values will lose to those who stand for truth and justice. Even the use of dissemblance by the White Knight and the White Duke is shown as justified by their final move, the absolute “nobility” of checkmate by discovery. By comparison, the dismantling of the Black House’s power is evidence of how the obsessive falsehood and disunity that they became involved in has been achieved at the expense of those masculine values that they required for victory.

It is the Black House’s devotion to gamesmanship over victory that denies them conquest. It is drawn from their base of depravity, meaning that their abilities in regards to the proper masculinity required for aggressive conquest is diminished, to be manifested in dissension amongst themselves. In particular, the Black Knight and the Black Queen’s Pawn

can be held as the individuals who are directly responsible for the losses of the Black House. The Black Queen's Pawn's sole target is the Black Bishop's Pawn, to gain revenge for the indignities and wrongs that he committed against her in the past. That her success in exposing him for capture destroys her in the process is irrelevant in her quest for vengeance. The Black Knight, by comparison, is drawn more by the overt desire for game-play than vengeance, planning the destruction of team members like the Fat Bishop as much because he wishes for the game to continue at all costs as for any specific serious or trivial wrong done to him by those he betrays. For all his experience and subtlety in games and gaming strategy, his own inherent dishonesty and infatuation with dissemblance leads him to prioritise the practice of gaming over attaining a victorious end, even to the point of counselling his own monarch against quick victory, to the eventual detriment of the House. In contrast to this, the White House are focused upon the single task of winning against their opposition. Even if the White Knight and the White Duke engage in dissemblance themselves, the moral strength that they embody allows them to avoid the debasement of the Black House. In winning in such spectacular fashion, the White House prove themselves the exemplars of ideal masculinity, focused and disciplined enough to represent proper society and, by implication, the use of gamesmanship for the skilful attainment of conquest. If the Black House's loss suggests that they lack the masculine control and the discipline to overcome their own effeminising lust for dishonesty, the victory of the White House excuses their own moments of dissemblance as occasional tactics that serve to expose the falsehoods of their opponents to the condemnation of the world. Not only does their domination prove the depth of their masculine purpose, it serves to solidify the inherent rightness in their Protestantism. In both the world of the play and in the public consciousness of English society, Catholicism's potential for dystopia knew no bounds.

In using the failed Spanish match as a base from which to construct a play in which a human game of chess between nations is being contested, Middleton presents the metaphorical battle in his play as one in which chess is the perfect game to decide a matter of such consequence and import. Pursuing victory against the forces of evil at the game of chess will not only require the pinnacle in masculine prowess, the inalienable legitimacy of Protestant England will raise their prowess, making their defeat of iniquity inevitable. The overtly Catholic Black House act much as the Catholics in Spain were feared to do, as especially represented by the theatrical caricature of the Machiavellian Count Gondomar, the Black Knight. Subtle machinations and dissemblance were used to undermine nations in order that such countries could then be converted to the Universal Catholic Monarchy, as only through such absolute falsehood could any sentient being fail to see the inherently dystopian core of the Papists. In light of the popular narrative of the time, that Charles and Buckingham visited Spain to expose the dissemblance of the Spanish government in using the prospect of marriage to the Infanta to seduce the young Charles into conversion, Middleton uses A Game at Chess to highlight the skill of such a decision. The dystopian visions that the Black House hide behind the soft words of spoken piety and supposedly peaceful intentions merely become amplified in latent violence, serving to emphasise that the only conclusive way for the forces of good to defeat foes of this stripe is to expose them for the dissemblers they are, through a metaphorical application of “checkmate by discovery”, so as to “discover” the true motives of the Black House. The White House is able to reign victorious at the final hurdle because their greater masculinity has conquered their enemies. Conversely the same dissemblance and dishonesty that makes the Black House so dangerous becomes their undoing, as represented predominantly by the Black Knight. He is addicted to the dissemblance he practises and the game-play he engages in, to the point where he would rather lie to his fellow House members than the opposition for the sole purpose of playing the

game. Conquest becomes something of an afterthought for him and consequently helps to bring about the downfall of the Black House. It is not enough to play the game well; one must strive for victory.

Conclusion

In their all-encompassing sweep, the words of the White Queen's Pawn in the Epilogue of A Game at Chess link the appeal of gaming for the fate of the world back to the more modest concerns of Women Beware Women's the Ward. According to the White Queen's Pawn, her Queen "bade me bow thus low to all of worth, / That are true friends of the White House and cause, / Which she hopes most of this assembly draws" (2-4). The fulfilment of this game is a victory not only for the members of the White House who actively won, it has been a victory for all "true friends of the White House and cause" i.e. loyal Protestant Englishmen whose capacity for masculinity will serve to further oppose the machinations of Catholic Spain. Furthermore, even more than using this single game of chess as a blow to the forces of iniquity, the game itself will be their best weapon against such enemies for the future, for the White Queen is "assured what they'd commit to bane, / Her White friends' loves will build up fair again" (9-10). It is in the game of chess that those of the White House and their equally patriotic friends can be accurately defined and encompassed, emphasising not simply their abilities at honourable conquest, but the extent to which this defines their "fair" character. Similarly, the Ward's gaming serves as self-revelation, albeit on a more personal level than that of the contest between the White and Black House, serving to emphasise flaws rather than virtues. His devotion to achieving a "fair end" is overwhelming enough to regard with equanimity the prospect of potentially incestuous conquest upon his "mother's eyes in my way", highlighting above all else an innately excessive desire. It is this lack of masculine control that keeps him from achieving the fruits, whether sexual or material, of genuine masculine conquest, thus destroying him. If the White House will prove their inherent masculinity through their domination of their adversaries at the game of chess, the Ward proves through his game of "tip-cat" that his own sense of gender identity is insufficient to either consolidate a successful marriage or take

revenge on those who have injured him. In each case, the capacity of the Renaissance man to achieve at masculine endeavour, from the battle for personal acquisition to the fates of empire, is measured through his capacity for conquestorial gaming.

The use of conquest in this less openly aggressive set of pastimes as an analogy for the necessity for the early modern male to dominate has been argued in this thesis as continual within the plays presented, where both private affairs and matters of state business depend upon the masculine ability to dominate. Used as a surrogate for the declining opportunities of warfare present in an age of increased political stability and limited expansion, competitive gaming in the Renaissance acted as a means by which men could engage in performative masculinity in a newly urbanised culture that still demanded at least the appearance of manly aggression as a means by which the structure of the state could be maintained. The establishment of humanism and capitalism as the new cultural forces gave rise to the “new man” whose manly status, enhanced through his skills in acquiring wealth, was determined through his ability to reign as the head of a household, effectively serving as the ruler of his own small kingdom. Alongside this desire for rule came the requirement to be sexually dominant through a focus upon conquest, to engage in conjugal relations but to parallel that with an innate masculine strength and control to avoid succumbing to the deleterious effeminacy of lust. Only via this norm of violent and aggressive masculine sexuality could a man both procreate legitimately while maintaining the masculinity necessary to protect the hierarchy within which he lived, to be recognisable as a genuine male in this period. In the absence of masculine qualities of such critical importance in the face of such a potentially degrading activity, a man may lose any semblance of himself as a man. Such an effeminate specimen may very well have found himself incapable of the masculine control required to solidify the patriarchal hierarchy in his own home, putting at risk not only his own well-being but, as a member of a patriarchal culture that depended upon the

performance of its own strength to crush dissent, the well-being of the society in which he lived. In the plays that have been examined, he who hesitates to openly display masculine prowess through conquest in games or in life may lose not only himself, but the country in which he operates.

Whether the stakes being contested in these plays are monetary, sexual or related to power and influence, the use of gaming as an analogy for the means by which these conflicts are staged connects the participants/players in a uniform conflict over masculine status. Arden of Faversham's back-gammon game allows Mosby to plan and execute the titular character's murder so as to come to his estate upon his marriage to Arden's widow and therefore to move upwards in status as a man in this new age of increased social mobility, fashioning himself as a powerful conqueror through the violent domination of those he wishes to replace. Women Beware Women may display the Ward as a character whose immaturity and excessive fury at tip-cat mark him as more a "shadow" of a man than the genuine article, but he is merely the worst of a group of players whose own tendencies towards sexual immorality are their seemingly deserved downfall. Even the superbly conceived and sexually charged chess-game is tainted through the immoderate desire of its architects, leaving both Livia and the Duke to die in the throes of the same passions that marred their lives and will leave the lineage of the state barren. By comparison, while The Changeling's De Flores may have nothing but excessive lust for Beatrice-Joanna on the mind in his embodiment of barley-break's illicit coupling, in the world of the play his success at the human game being played out bespeaks the cunning and masculine strength which elevate him above his enemies and leave a kingdom blasted. Both Love's Labour's Lost and Antony and Cleopatra display men who are unable to conquer their female adversaries at fast-and-loose, with Love's Labour's Lost providing a comic resolution that provides the men an opportunity to redeem their earlier weakness and maintain a kingdom, while Antony and

Cleopatra displays a defeat of Egypt as a result of an ignoble Antony suffering for his iniquities and a Cleopatra who, much as a beloved contemporary queen was believed to have done, manages one last slight at the man who will replace her as ruler. Finally A Game at Chess carries this through to a game of critical importance that, as a patriotic imagining of the real-life conflict between England and Spain, not only ends with a victory for the virtuous stage representation of England that is the White House, but a victory of such excellent style that there can be no doubt either that the good have triumphed over evil through a deployment of their manly skill or that they will do the same in the future if need be.

Rarely are the games used in these plays merely a disembodied structure by which conquest is to ideally be obtained: the particular game referenced is often just as critical to determining both how victory is to be obtained and what such an outcome would signify. Just as much as the backgammon board in Arden of Faversham is representative of a battleground in which modern wars over social position are to be waged, the combination of luck and skill makes Arden's death, in the same manner as a game of tables, as much a result of fate as of the painstaking scheming of Mosby. The resultant loss by curious quirk of fate is unexpected by no-one, least of all Mosby himself whose last wish is that he be taken away for his punishment, for "I have lived too long". Women Beware Women's use of chess metaphor may be short-lived and soon to be betrayed with characters who once stood for cold logic casting that aside for over-whelming anger and sexual lust, but it offers a prime example of the rationality and potency that individuals such as the Duke compromise to fulfil the effeminate desires that will end in their own death in the same manner. The Changeling, by comparison, uses barley-break as a structure by which both the main plot is carried through, with De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna coupling and seeking to avoid capture from any claimant to Beatrice's hand and an illicit mirror of the sub-plot, where the infiltrators of Alibius' mental asylum seek a similar subterfuge with Isabella. It is thus the members of the main plot

who, via either their iniquity or effeminacy, will thus end up in “hell” as a symbol of their downfall. Both Love’s Labour’s Lost and Antony and Cleopatra present their characters as so entrenched in human games of fast-and-loose that the winners and losers can be defined by who is kept ‘fast’ and who is able to remain ‘loose’. Antony and Cleopatra in particular exploits not only the structure of the game, but its supposed origins, showing Antony as being held fast not just as the loser of the game, but as the defeated result of Egyptian influence, with the end result of both a defeated man and a conquered kingdom. Finally, A Game at Chess explicitly presents the battle between Protestant England and Catholic Spain as a human chess game, with characters such as Knights and Pawns representing their own Houses (either Black or White), where the play can end only with one side proclaiming victory on the other via a check-mate. Furthermore, the use of chess as a metaphor for a conflict of such international importance, rather than a frivolity or a liberty, is adamantly praised as the most appropriate, coherent and indeed the “noblest game of all”. Driven home with the White Queen’s Pawn’s ending statement/flattery that she knows that those “true friends of the White House” will, if need be, “build up fair again” as a force at chess once more, not only do the play and the characters within it thoroughly embody a game of chess, such an embodiment and allegiance to this particular game is openly argued as an ideal to which others should aspire.

By examining such supposedly frivolous pastimes, this thesis has aimed both to provide a new perspective on the meaning of gaming in the culture of early modern England and to contribute new readings of the plays examined. Games and gaming of Elizabethan and Jacobean England are vital to understanding Renaissance drama in early modern terms, especially their role in establishing the importance of violent conquest for a society that believed a capacity for masculine dominance to be crucial for the continuation of the societal hierarchy. Whether hungering for military conflict, shrewdly ascertaining how to succeed via

early capitalism, or attempting to overcome lust so as to successfully procreate, competitive gaming was not only a means by which aggressive conquest could be nurtured and fed, it was an approved location where that masculinity could be openly performed for the benefit of the wider public. If the effeminising of a single household could become the plague that, if unchecked, could potentially affect the kingdom itself, then conversely the reassertion of masculine dominance through competitive games and gaming was an effective remedy for King and subject alike. Much as the White Queen's Pawn states, through the "noble" practice of chess, the threat of destruction will be averted by the friends of the White House, who will "build up fair again".

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