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Re-reading Rape in *The Changeling*

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ABSTRACT

Some critics have argued that Middleton and Rowley's play The Changeling depicts a rape. This article engages that argument by re-reading the play, first in relation to Janet Halley's proposal that we "take a break" from the feminist project of "carrying a brief for" the feminine; and second in relation to recent historical research that deepens our understanding of the available ways of describing and assessing sexual coercion in seventeenth-century England. Placing particular emphasis on Beatrice-Joanna's strategic, even exploitative, self-assertions, this article argues that the play does not depict rape as defined by statutes. Yet, as this article shows, the play participates in the history of sexual coercion and consent nonetheless. This is a history that motivates feminism. It is also a history from which we cannot take a break, however much we might wish to do so. We can, however, take a break from trying to reach a verdict on Beatrice-Joanna's culpability in order to see how complexly the play depicts her agency.



In Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622), Beatrice-Joanna's father insists that she marry Alonzo di Piracquo. Her servant De Flores demands her virginity in payment for eliminating Piracquo so that she may instead marry Alsemero, predicting, loathsomely but correctly, that "Thou'lt love anon / What thou so fears't and faint'st to venture on" (3.4.173–74).¹ Alsemero, despite his apparent lack of sexual experience, travels prepared with a test to ensure that his wife, should he happen to acquire one on his journey, is a virgin. When Beatrice-Joanna is discovered to have had sex with De Flores and to have colluded in Piracquo's murder, her father, husband, and lover all turn on her. Alsemero even locks her into a closet with De Flores, commanding a repeat performance of her adultery: "I'll be your pander now; rehearse again / Your scene of lust, that you may be perfect" (5.3.114–15).

In response to this trafficking in Beatrice-Joanna, *The Changeling* has sometimes been read as a play about rape. In a provocative and influential essay challenging a long tradition of demonizing Beatrice-Joanna, Deborah Burks argues that the play not only presents De Flores's "defloration" of Beatrice-Joanna as a rape but also, in accord with obsolete but not superceded statute definitions of rape, as a "crime targeted at propertied men, through a piece of their property, women. The violation of the woman in this play is shown clearly and horribly to be an assault on a man," by whom she means first Piracquo but then Beatrice-Joanna's husband, Alsemero, and her father, Vermandero (762–63). (As this string of possible stakeholders suggests, one of the interesting things about the play is that it is hard to determine in 3.4 precisely who owns Beatrice-Joanna and is thus the victim of this theft.)² Christina Malcolmson calls what happens between Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores "a form of rape" (156); Molly Smith describes their "relationship" as "rooted in rape" (112, 90). Building on the assumption that what happens between De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna is a rape, Judith Haber reads the play as insisting "on the coincidence of fear and desire, of virgin and whore, of marriage and rape" (80). Although Kim Solga points out that Beatrice-Joanna's "status as a victim of sexual violence (indeed, of any violence at all) is wholly uncertain" (146), and therefore up to the audience to determine, she also consistently assumes that De Flores rapes Beatrice-Joanna, who might best be described, therefore, as a victim. Finally, Karen Bamford labels *The Changeling* a "late Jacobean rape play" (151).

This essay argues that *The Changeling* depicts coercion and consent in socially and morally complex ways that describing it as a "rape play" flattens. I am particularly interested in the ways in which Beatrice-Joanna is herself sometimes coercive or at least strategic in her schemes to have her will. Yet I also want to challenge a division in criticism of *The Changeling* between those critics who argue that the play depicts a rape and those who simply ignore the possibility and the criticism that posits it. Although questioning the usefulness of rape as a verdict is a riskier strategy than ignoring it, keeping the possibility of rape active allows us to scrutinize the interplay of coercion and consent, of victimization and strategy, not only in the play but also more broadly in theoretical and historical discussions of rape. I propose to re-read the play in light of both Janet Halley's critique of "carrying a brief for" the feminine, or in this case, a female character, and recent work on the available ways of describing and assessing sexual coercion in seventeenth-century England. Is it possible to re-read the negotiations between Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores in *The Changeling* as

something other than rape, as statutes defined it, while still suggesting that the play participates in a history of debating rape's meaning? Is it possible to take a break from either defending or prosecuting Beatrice-Joanna?

Taking a Break from Advocacy

In her bracingly polemical *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism*, Halley confesses that she is tired of "thinking in terms of male and female (masculine and feminine, etc.), noticing instances of male power and female subordination, and working on behalf of subordinated female interests" (8). In Halley's view, various flavors of feminism, despite their other differences, share the mission of working on behalf of subordinated female interests or what she describes as "carrying a brief for f" (28). Arguing that male and female do not always relate to one another in terms of dominance and subordination and that even when they do men do not necessarily subordinate women, Halley wonders why so many feminists would insist on seeing themselves, and women in general, as "utterly without power" (14). Halley is particularly invested in arguing that even women who endure rape might still retain the capacity to exercise power and that rape does not subsequently define its survivors.

Halley claims that "Oddly, representing women as end points of pain, imagining them as lacking the agency to cause harm to others and particularly to harm men, feminists refuse also to see women—even injured ones—as powerful actors" (346). Yet some feminist scholars of the early modern period have emphasized women's power and its occasional result, "injury to men by women" (33).³ As a consequence, they might not concur that we will *only* be able to acknowledge women's strategic suffering, women's power, or men's injury by taking a break from feminism. Many feminist early modernists balance attention to the practical and ideological constraints on women, on the one hand, with attention to the myriad ways in which women worked within and around and outside them, on the other.

Still, the thought-experiment Halley proposes can be revealing. Acutely aware that she is not talking about real people but rather the ways in which they are represented in legal documents, Halley playfully reads and re-reads a given case to expose the assumptions guiding how legal personnel interpret the protagonists' histories and identities. Halley's strategy of re-reading against the grain of those assumptions can easily be adapted to the business of literary criticism. Re-reading a seventeenth-century play seems a low-stakes version of Halley's experiment: *The Changeling* is not itself and does not represent a

legal proceeding. What would happen if we took a break from describing what happens in *The Changeling* as rape? Only then can we assess the complex distributions and abuses of power between De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna and in the play more generally.

If we can reclassify a character from rape victim to powerful agent, Beatrice-Joanna would be a likely candidate. She hires a killer to bump off her fiancé, has sex with the assassin to reward and silence him, hires her maidservant Diaphanta as her proxy virgin, and then cooks up the scheme of murdering Diaphanta as well. Furthermore, the play itself is so cruelly judgmental that perhaps we can evade having to make black-and-white judgments as readers. We do not have to decide between one plaintiff and another. The play's conclusion announces that De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna are both guilty; both die.

Nevertheless, renaming what has been called "rape" might seem an unsettling suggestion especially because so much of the feminist work on rape has involved helping women to recognize date rape, for instance, as rape. To reverse this direction, to recategorize something once called rape, might seem offensive. But reading a play can be liberating in this regard. After all, Beatrice-Joanna never was a living person. Furthermore, there are also risks in continuing to call *The Changeling* a rape play. Halley raises the possibility that an emphasis on women's suffering and subordination might help "to authorize and enable women as sufferers." She asks whether feminism might be "contributing to, rather than resisting, the alienation of women from their own agency in narratives and events of sexual violence" (345–46). The question hinges on what constitutes agency in narratives and events of sexual violence, the conditions under which that agency is possible, and its costs. The answers to these questions are historically contingent. Tracing the association of women with injury back to the seventeenth century, one can see that this was never the only available way of imagining and describing women. The insistence on female powerlessness and injury Halley still finds at the center of some versions of feminism evolved in response to particular legal and cultural imperatives under particular circumstances. But it is so compelling, so useful in some ways, that, as Halley shows, it still structures narratives of gender relations, narratives with material consequences for plaintiffs and defendants. If the proposal that we take a break from feminism inevitably raises the question of which feminism or whose feminism, it also raises the question of whether one can take a break from history and, if so, which history or whose history.

Expanding the History of Rape

According to those critics who see rape in *The Changeling*, one can only see it if one understands what rape meant in the early modern period. Abduction and forced sexual intercourse were not clearly distinguished as separate capital crimes until the sixteenth century.⁴ Before that, rape was defined as a property crime—not as an abrogation of the victim's consent, or even as a crime against the victim's person. After that, the shift in the definition of rape from a property crime to a crime against the person happened only gradually. In William Lambard's guide for justices of the peace, *Eirenarcha* (1599), he explains that the idea of seizure or theft is built into the etymology of rape: "all ravishment is accompanied with force and therewith agreeth the Etymologie of the word Ravishment it selfe, which is derived from the Latine *Rapere*, that is, to take, catch, or snatch, by force or violence" (253).⁵ The persistent association of rape with theft and abduction is evident in Michael Dalton's discussion of rape in *The Countrey Justice*, his popular guide for rural justices of the peace. The 1618 edition explains that "to take any maid, widow, or wife *having lands or goods, or being heire apparant to her ancestor* against her will unlawfully, is felony" (emphasis added); "to take away a mans wife with the goods of her husband, whether it bee against her will, or against her husband's will, seemeth to be felony" (248), although a wife choosing to run off with her husband's goods is not.⁶

Linking women and goods does not erase female self-possession or accountability, however. Dalton consistently makes an issue of consent from his first definition of rape—"to ravish a woman, where she doth neither consent before nor after: or to ravish any woman with force, though she do consent after, it is felony" (247–48)—to his contention that "if a man ravish a woman, who consenteth for feare of death or dures, yet this is a ravishment against her will, for that consent ought to be voluntarie and free." He claims that it is a felony "to ravish a harlot against her will" or "unlawfully and carnally to know and abuse any woman child under the age of ten years . . . although such child consents before" (248).⁷ Dalton assumes that one can be simultaneously compelled and consenting, although the consent of the fearful or underage is consent of a lesser order. The elastic time frame for consent, which might be yielded before or after, depicts rape not as one violent act—a contained event—but as, potentially, an ongoing process of negotiation and interpretation.

To the extent that a shift occurred in the legal definition of rape from a property crime to a crime against a person, from a theft from a male owner to an assault on a self-possessed female person, that shift had mixed consequences.

Subsequent research confirms Burks's claim that changes in rape law did not necessarily benefit women. According to Miranda Chaytor, for instance, "For so long as rape was perceived as a theft, the woman herself was not called into account . . . But once the law began to turn on consent, what was at stake was not property, but sexuality, morality, not the criminal's act but the victim's resistance, her innocence, her will, her desires" (396; cf. Rudolph 179). The gaze turned toward women was suspicious, even hostile. Defining rape as a crime against a woman's person meant that rape was a charge a woman brought against a man; a man might hang based on a woman's word. As a consequence, this legal change provoked not only greater scrutiny of women's will and desire, but greater reluctance to trust women's words. As Sir Matthew Hale notoriously commented, "it must be remembered, that it is an accusation easily to be made and hard to be proved, and harder to be defended by the party accused, tho never so innocent" (635).⁸ Women were often treated as questionable witnesses in a range of venues and causes. A woman who claimed to have been raped was especially compromised.

One way of managing this unease about women's testimony was privileging the evidence of women's bodies over their words. The assumption that conception proved consent—"for a woman cannot conceive with child, except she do consent"—and thus disproved rape conscripted women's bodies to testify against them (and on behalf of their assailants) (Dalton 248; cf. Lambarde 253). This assumption was based, as Burks points out, on already-obsolete science. Yet it persisted into the nineteenth century (McLaren 27). Legal proceedings also emphasized injuries as proofs of force, again privileging the body over the word. Yet, at the same time, the body was acknowledged to be a flawed witness. According to Laura Gowing, "Physical damage was not enough: a woman had to have cried out, run for help, and shown the torn and bloodied evidence of her clothes and her body. Thus the question of consent was perpetually shifted away from the question of actual penetration and towards more readily visible proofs" (92). Long after rape was redefined as a crime against the person, then, women's accusatory narratives, as mediated by clerks, continued to depict it in terms of damaged or stolen property.

Many historians argue that the story of rape was almost impossible for women to tell without compromising themselves. From casual insults to legal formulas, sex was often described in terms of male action upon women: occupying, having to do with, having carnal knowledge of, or working his pleasure upon. Pointing to these formulations, Gowing describes seventeenth-

century England as “a culture which equated men’s love and desire with coercion and violence, and which systematically undermined women’s sexual agency” (99). As a consequence, “it was positively virtuous not to be able to describe sex” (Gowing 83); female sexual knowledge was impossible to depict positively; and “a graphic description of penetrative sex implied the very consent that should have been lacking in an account of rape” (Walker, “Rereading” 6). Even as a woman’s body arguably became more central to rape prosecutions, “rape stories suppressed the act of sex and the trauma of the sexual body” (Gowing 99). This is one source of a persistent construction of “sex as something that is *done to, not by, women*” (Franke 199). According to Garthine Walker, it was also difficult for women to describe violent resistance or self-defense in positive terms that did not mark them as disorderly; since it was more effective for them to emphasize male violence, stories of rape tend to be stories of violent male agency and female weakness.⁹ Women’s agency might then be most manifest in their strategic occlusion of that agency from the narratives they told. Perhaps the male clerks who solicited and recorded these stories sometimes coached women in how to present themselves as victims, or edited the stories they told to highlight their victimization. In sum, in their work on court records, Chaytor, Gowing, and Walker construct what could be taken as a genealogy of why “carrying a brief for f” might entail looking for female injury and male violence: those were once the only terms in which narratives and events of sexual violence were legible in a way that did not compromise and condemn the female survivor.

The history of rape thus appears to be what Judith Bennett calls a history of “change without transformation” (79). Redefining rape from a property crime to a crime against the person had such mixed, indeed negative, consequences for women that the stories of rape offered in court seem to have reversed this shift; depositions attributed to women continued to present rape as a kind of property crime, erasing the body and its experience just as the law was beginning to present them as newly important. Defending against a new understanding of rape (and of evidence), women and the legal clerks with whom they collaborated put a property crime or a violent assault “in sexuality’s place” (Chaytor 395). Some feminist legal theorists argue that the legal definition and redress of rape are still haunted by its history as a property crime.¹⁰

But we can complicate this picture if we expand our focus on rape as statutes defined it and assize courts prosecuted it to include sexual acts that women describe as unwanted but that neither they nor the law named rape. Early modern women seem to have had a more nuanced vocabulary for

describing sexual coercion and consent when they stood before church or civil courts charged with fornication, bastardy, or whoredom, or before assize courts charged with infanticide, rather than in assize courts bringing charges of rape. Under these circumstances, some women, mostly unmarried domestic servants like Diaphanta, told stories of unwanted sex to explain and justify themselves. In the narratives on which they collaborated with legal clerks, they are depicted as using sex as one bargaining chip in a limited arsenal. Such women may have used storytelling to reframe events over which they had little control. Gowing and Cristine Varholy argue that some women who stood charged with sexual misconduct told stories about having been sexually assaulted in order to position themselves as victims rather than criminals and to project responsibility for their sexual activity onto others. In such narratives, women admit having had sex but they decline responsibility for it. Claiming to have consented to a sexual act that was forced on them could be another way of recouping agency, albeit a problematic one. When women testify against men charged with fornication or adultery, the depositions assigned to them sometimes record elaborate stories in which sex never took place despite their assailant's violence. Perhaps, in the lower stakes arena of a church court (fornication was not a felony), women could talk in more detail about sexual violence if they did not call it rape, if it did not carry the penalty of rape, and if they did not admit to having been overcome or penetrated.¹¹ Women who fought off their attackers might have been more willing to describe their struggles at length. But it is also possible, as Gowing suggests, that women might have left out the part of the story that could compromise them, in order to present themselves in the best possible light, even as they testified against men. Or perhaps the clerks who interviewed the women and recorded their testimony in the third person made choices about what to include and what to exclude (Dolan, "Readers"). Whatever the process, the depositions Gowing and Varholy study tell a different story about sexual violence than statutes do.

Scholars who excavate and assess such depositions help to counter the privileged status of more familiar fictions such as the rape and suicide of Lucrece as well as historical narratives based on statutes, legal commentary, and assize court prosecutions of felonious rape. What if we include in a history of rape the women who tell stories rather than kill themselves, who use stories to repel rape, survive rape, rewrite rape (Sale 957) or "un-rape" (Daileader 86)? What if we include collaborations between female deponents and male legal personnel to craft and record such stories? Whereas a deposition that depicts a woman as

wholly innocent, as a rape victim, must disown sexual knowledge or vigorous self-defense, as Gowing and Walker contend, those ascribed to women who are already on trial as fornicators, whores, bastard bearers, or child killers can simultaneously recoup agency and attempt to exonerate them.

To insist on calling what has happened to such women “rape,” when the depositions through which we have access to these stories do not do so, might be to re-rape. Burks presents *The Changeling* itself as a kind of “second rape” of Beatrice-Joanna in that it shows De Flores to be correct when he says she will come to love him, come to love sex with him.¹² But when Beatrice-Joanna says that she has, indeed, come to love De Flores, might we see her as cannily finding a way to reframe and revalue the sex she has had with De Flores? As social historians such as Chaytor, Gowing, and Walker reveal, rape was and remains a debate, a definitional contest, a much greyer area than either statute law or the most familiar narratives, such as the rape of Lucrece, might suggest. *The Changeling* makes that debate its subject. While the ending of *The Changeling* links the play to the robust tradition of blaming and eliminating the sexually compromised woman, as we will see, for the most part the play dramatizes a more complicated story. In her negotiations with De Flores, Beatrice-Joanna resembles the women historians find not in rape trials but in investigations of sexual misconduct that falls outside of the statute definition of rape. In the crucial scenes between Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores, *The Changeling* casts forced sex not as a definitive, victimizing event but as an episode in a relationship, subject to negotiation and re-interpretation.

Re-reading *The Changeling*

As many critics have observed, in the first scene of *The Changeling*, De Flores, Beatrice-Joanna, and Vermandero embark on a battle of the wills. Vermandero asserts that Alonzo de Piracquo will be “bound to” him by his marriage to Beatrice-Joanna—“I’ll want / My will else”—to which Beatrice-Joanna responds, in one of her characteristic asides, “I shall want mine if you do it” (1.1.223–24). A few lines later, De Flores explains that, despite the fact that Beatrice-Joanna hates him, he loves her and he will “haunt her still; / Though I get nothing else, I’ll have my will” (1.1.240–41). While the word “will” had meanings specific to the early modern period—including an explicit association with “carnal desire or appetite” (def. 2) it seems to have lost in the seventeenth century—it remains a key term in discussions of rape. For instance, Susan Brownmiller’s classic study of rape is called *Against Our Will*. The association of rape with the abrogation

of female will is, as we have seen, somewhat anachronistic for the early modern period. It can also skew our vision of *The Changeling* by suggesting that, if we are locating the play in a history of rape, then we must ask whether Beatrice-Joanna wills sex with De Flores or not. The virtuous, clearly victimized woman would be unwilling. But the play's depiction of Beatrice-Joanna's willfulness is more complicated than this. Vermandero, Piracquo, Alsemero, and De Flores all count on recruiting her consent to their schemes. When she first meets Alsemero, Beatrice-Joanna declares, "sure my eyes were mistaken: this was the man was meant me" (1.1.84–85), suggesting that, however much her father pushed her toward Piracquo, she thinks of herself as having eyes and choosing him. But she then chooses Alsemero and, one might argue, De Flores. Her willed consent, while sometimes transgressive, is also required in order to secure male alliances and perpetuate blood lines, just as Isabella's willful chastity preserves her marriage and redeems her husband. The virtuous woman, like the villainous one, is willing—it is just that her will advances rather than undermines marriage and patrilineage.¹³ Beatrice-Joanna's willfulness can seem to mark her as a kind of heroine for some modern critics, even as it renders her suspect to others. However one evaluates Beatrice-Joanna's will, it is inarguably central to the play's depiction of her, to its plot, and to critical assessments of her character.

For the purposes of my argument here, the question is not whether Beatrice-Joanna wills but what she wills, especially with regard to De Flores in scenes 2.2 and 3.4. How we name these scenes shapes how we evaluate them. Is what happens in 2.2 a hire, a contract, a bargain, a temptation or seduction? Is what follows in 3.4 a negotiation over compensation or a rape?

In 2.2, the first scene in which we see Beatrice-Joanna alone with Alsemero, she turns away from him and toward De Flores. Alsemero first suggests that murdering her betrothed, Piracquo, would eliminate the only real obstacle between them, and depicts this murder as a form of service: "One good service / Would strike off both your fears" (2.2.21–22). Beatrice-Joanna rejects Alsemero's offer to challenge Piracquo to a duel because his own life would be "ventured in the action" (2.2.31). In another of her characteristic asides, Beatrice-Joanna begins to devise a more covert strategy that will make use of De Flores's eagerness to please her. Beatrice-Joanna's asides disrupt this scene of union and devotion. The murder she conceives to enable her relationship with Alsemero now distracts Beatrice-Joanna from him—"Lady, you hear not me" (2.2.48). After Alsemero leaves, Beatrice-Joanna immediately approaches De Flores about murdering Piracquo.

From the beginning of the play, her aversion to De Flores has been as passionate as his attraction to her; she has acted to draw him to her. In this scene, she closes the physical distance between herself and De Flores, touching him (“Her fingers touched me!”), assuring him she has grown used to his “hard face,” and offering to make him a cleansing balm (“With your own hands, lady?”). For De Flores, this conversation is itself “half an act of pleasure” (2.2.86). By “serv[ing] her turn upon him” (2.2.69), Beatrice-Joanna seeks to eliminate two obstacles to her happiness, assuming that, after he kills Piracquo, De Flores will flee. He brushes the suggestion aside; there will be no getting rid of him. Despite the significant gap between what motivates De Flores and what Beatrice-Joanna seems to think motivates him in this negotiation, the exchange is much more intimate than the one that has just preceded it between Beatrice-Joanna and Alsemero. Beatrice-Joanna does not hesitate to hire someone to kill. But she is sufficiently inexperienced as an employer that she does not question the enthusiasm with which De Flores takes on the job. As he later asks her, “Did you not mark? I wrought myself into’t, / Nay, sued and kneeled for’t: why was all that pains took?” (3.4.112–13).

When Beatrice-Joanna proposes to hire De Flores, how is the audience to assess her intentions? Many critics argue that she does not know what she is getting into. Christopher Ricks diagnoses a “tragic failure to see puns” (302). Burks assigns De Flores the agency even here: “When De Flores presents himself to her at the right moment, she leaps at the opportunity to allow him to kill her fiancé for her” (“I’ll Want” 774). But Beatrice-Joanna thinks of him before he “presents himself,” and it is she who offers him an opportunity at which he leaps. Burks claims she is “both amoral and ‘simple’” (774); “she has not the faintest inkling of the kind of obligation she incurs with De Flores through her bargain with him” (775). Is this innocence or privilege? Is it that Beatrice-Joanna cannot imagine that men are ever motivated by sexual desire—that a man might exact payment in sex—or that she does not imagine that De Flores would presume to demand sexual payment *from her*? We cannot prove this either way, of course, since we are speculating about a character’s unspoken failure of imagination. But what makes Beatrice-Joanna an interesting case is that, in relation to De Flores, she is privileged in some registers and disadvantaged in others

Margot Heinemann, for instance, argues that Beatrice-Joanna’s misapprehension of the bargain she has struck is rooted in her sense of social superiority and invulnerability: she regards De Flores “as so inferior socially that she can insult him as she pleases, and does not even notice that this repulsive-looking

retainer nurses a deadly serious passion for her. It does not occur to her, spoiled and sheltered child of a noble family, that money may not be enough to pay him for killing Piracquo, or that he could aspire to seduce herself." While Heinemann judges Beatrice-Joanna rather harshly, and her use of the word "seduce" romanticizes the combination of threat and demand De Flores employs, she acutely assesses the root of Beatrice-Joanna's misapprehension of the bargain she has struck with De Flores. "Murder, to Beatrice, is a commodity, like anything else one buys: one pays someone to undergo not only the risk and the unpleasantness . . . , but the guilt and conscience-pangs as well" (175).¹⁴ Heinemann's Beatrice-Joanna is far less sympathetic than Burks's Beatrice-Joanna; in fact, some feminist criticism of *The Changeling* challenges Heinemann's reading (published in 1980) as part of a long tradition of seeing Beatrice-Joanna as getting pretty much what she deserves, or certainly as being largely responsible for her own tragedy.¹⁵ The most nuanced and persuasive assessment of Beatrice-Joanna might lie somewhere in between the legal verdicts of victim or perpetrator, between sympathy for her as the victim of sexual exploitation and contempt for her as an exploiter of the lower classes—since the play depicts her as both.

Heather Hirschfeld, too, views this scene as one in which Beatrice-Joanna hires De Flores; she calls him "the hireling" (104) and "the hired hit man" (rather than the rapist) (109). Hirschfeld wants us to see this scene as one example among many of "asymmetrical" conversations in the play in which the same word bears different meanings and "people who think or pretend they know exactly what the other is saying" (107) actually do not. Hirschfeld brilliantly links the play's exploration of such asymmetry to Middleton and Rowley's symmetrical and productive collaboration. If heterosexual relationships were often construed as asymmetrical in the early modern period, then asymmetrical conversation bedevils the ideal of companionate marriage. Even today, widely available educational materials on date rape depict it as a consequence of gendered language use that is so "asymmetrical" that it is not equally clear to both men and women that "no means no."¹⁶ Although Hirschfeld does not relate her argument to the question of whether or not De Flores rapes Beatrice-Joanna, assuming he did not, her illuminating focus on asymmetrical conversation between men and women opens up a fresh way of thinking about the play's relationship to the history of rape and the disturbing interrelationship of the histories of rape and of marriage.

The play shows us that Beatrice-Joanna does not understand the deal she is making, even as it leaves the reasons for her misapprehension open to

interpretation: she thinks she will be able to offer De Flores a monetary payment we know he will reject; she thinks he will flee and we know he will stay. Because he tells us so, we know that De Flores will not be satisfied with what Beatrice-Joanna hopes to pay him. But in his forthright self-exposition, De Flores also explains that what he wants is not just Beatrice-Joanna's virginity or even her compliance but her desire. Later in the scene, after he agrees to kill Piracquo, De Flores contemplates the possibility that Beatrice-Joanna could come to desire him: "Methinks I feel her in mine arms already, / Her wanton fingers combing out this beard / And, being pleased, praising this bad face" (2.2.149–51). De Flores's expectation that Beatrice-Joanna might prove an "odd feeder" (3.2.155) suggests that he wants more than her virginity, more than her submission. His threat lies in his erotic and affective *ambition*.

While Beatrice-Joanna willfully or ignorantly does not understand De Flores in this transaction, they do agree that she has hired him to do a job and that he expects payment for that job. As Lisa Jardine points out, "De Flores is quite clear, from the instant the compact is made between himself and Beatrice-Joanna, that the request by a desirable woman that he provide her with 'service' will yield carnal intercourse as its reward (he is also clear that such a contract serves the blatant self-interest of the participants)," of whom, she suggests, Beatrice-Joanna is one (125). The contract, as imagined in classical liberalism, describes "self-interest and an exchange of some sort—of services or labor" between "theoretically equal and free agents" (Haag 41, 38). Claiming that women and men are never truly equal, Catherine MacKinnon deplores "the contract fiction" that fantasizes that they can ever be equal parties in sexual negotiations. MacKinnon offers a structural vision of gender—the feminine is a subordinated position in a structure not an essence—but she does not address the registers in which men might also be subordinated (174, 178–79). In *The Changeling*, competing subordinations are at issue. One might argue that Beatrice-Joanna's status and beauty level the playing field between her and De Flores. For instance, in addition to the virginity that he demands, Beatrice-Joanna claims that she can obtain three thousand golden florins (3.4) with which she can pay off De Flores.

We cannot really explore the implications of Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores's contract, or of seeing it as such, until we examine their negotiations over the form payment takes. Before De Flores demands payment, the play does not depict Beatrice-Joanna as suffering any reservations about the murder. She eagerly awaits the news that the eye "that offends me" has been "darkened": "I wait but that eclipse" (3.4.14–15), she says. When De Flores reports that he

has murdered her fiancé, Piracquo, she appears delighted until De Flores gives her the “token” of his success—the ring Piracquo was wearing, which was also, for Beatrice-Joanna, a memento of an earlier coercion, “the first token my father made me send him” (3.4.35)—still attached to Piracquo’s severed finger. De Flores forces Beatrice-Joanna to share in the guilt for the murder she contracted him to commit: “Why, are not you as guilty, in, I’m sure, / As deep as I?” (3.4.86–87).¹⁷ He scorns taking a “salary” for murder, claiming that he did not “destroy things for wages” despite the fact that he wants gold “piteously”; he never surrenders his claims to the gold, promising that eventually he “will come unto’ and make use ont’” (115–16), even as he demands the precious “recompense” (118) of “pleasure” (121) first.

As soon as Beatrice-Joanna is drawn into listening to and bargaining with De Flores, she finds her status changed utterly. De Flores forces Beatrice-Joanna to see herself in a new way, as like him. It is not just that De Flores advises Beatrice-Joanna that she is morally and legally “in . . . as deep” as he. He moves from their new equality as felons to an equality he depicts as companionable, intimate. Since their collusion in murder has joined them, they should not be put asunder: “Nor is it fit we two engaged so jointly / Should part and live asunder,” De Flores announces (3.4.91–92).

Whereas she insists that there is a fundamental difference between them, De Flores disagrees in a justly famous exchange, insisting that in her conscience she will find that he is her “equal” because “the act” of murder has “made you one with me”; “you’re the deed’s creature” (3.4.128f), he says. Beatrice-Joanna claims that she would have preferred bondage to Piracquo to the yoking De Flores offers her instead, a yoking she presents as an impossible conjunction of social unlikes, a strange mixture. In response, De Flores teaches Beatrice-Joanna an important, even radical lesson, about identity as a matter more of acts than of birth (Dollimore 178). But, as Christina Malcolmson points out, “at this, the play’s most radical moment about the class hierarchy, it is also most traditional about the sexual hierarchy: the rising of the servant against his master is put in terms of the subordination of an upstart woman by her superior male counterpart. Beatrice-Joanna begins the scene by commanding, but ends by kneeling to her new master” (156). How do we think gender and class in relation to one another here?

De Flores attempts to manage these contradictions through the language of marriage, which was so often used to finesse relationships across hierarchized difference. Hirschfeld points out that “mutual guilt, as well as mutual blood lust,

... binds them as marital and moral equals" (113, 112). Michael Neill reads this scene as "Middleton's equivalent for the temptation scene in *Othello*. Like that scene it establishes a bond of unholy wedlock" (187).¹⁸ Both critics agree, then, that what De Flores is trying to do here is transact a marriage between himself and his mistress, a marriage that he insists is grounded in a kind of equality. This scenario reverses the dynamics of *The Duchess of Malfi* in which it is the Duchess who enjoins her steward Antonio to believe himself equal enough to wed her. Neill points out that De Flores's coercive invitation—"come, rise, and shroud your blushes in my bosom" (3.4.167–69)—"disturbingly echo[es]" the Duchess of Malfi's "reassurances to Antonio": "let me shroud my blushes in your bosom" (1.1.503). This echo links this scene to a courtship or seduction. Although De Flores, like the Duchess, pulls his prospective spouse up from a kneeling position, he casts her down into supplication first. De Flores confronts Beatrice-Joanna with the view that in hiring him to kill she has not preserved herself above the guilt for that act but, rather, has lowered herself to De Flores's moral station. As the fact that he ultimately kills her proves, they are not symmetrical "twins of mischief." Despite her beauty, despite her privilege, her gender and her guilt combine to subject her to him. And yet, as we will see, she persists in viewing him as serving her. If they are companions or spouses, they are also competitors.

In the early modern period, it was possible to imagine that consent after a rape "unraped;" some female characters in Jacobean drama marry their rapists, yielding viable marriages and supposedly happy endings (Gossett). As a consequence, to say that De Flores understands himself as married to Beatrice-Joanna is not to say that he does not force or coerce her (or she him). De Flores uses marriage to describe himself and Beatrice-Joanna as equals, in accord with one available marital ideal, and as inextricably bound together. For Beatrice-Joanna, of course, equality with him is a comedown. Demanding sex in part as a recognition and consummation of their equality and their bond, De Flores imagines the sex he demands not as a single event—one decisive act like the murder for which it is recompense—but as a committed relationship with duration—that is, as a marriage.

At the end of this scene, it is clear that Beatrice-Joanna feels she has no choice but to have sex with De Flores and that she will do so. But what does it mean to say that she has no choice? Beatrice-Joanna's options are restricted not just by a cultural obsession with female chastity but also by the fact that she has suborned murder—and that she desires life and her new husband. We might

say that she decides to pay De Flores the price he asks because doing so will enable her to preserve her life, her reputation, and her ability to marry Alsemero. As Halley comments, “Why so many feminisms want women to experience themselves as completely devoid of choice when they bargain their way past a knife by having sex they really, really don’t want, I don’t know” (355). Even the legendary Lucrece “consents” to Tarquin under the threat that, if she does not, he will kill her and a slave, and then arrange their bodies in a compromising position so that she is dishonored in death and no longer able to speak in her own defense. Lucrece bargains the knife from Tarquin’s hand into her own by having sex she really, really does not want. In making a strategic decision, she is both heroic and compromised, as generations of scholars have remarked.

When we next see Beatrice-Joanna, she laments that “this fellow has undone me endlessly” (4.1.1). The term “undone,” often placed in the mouths of literary rape survivors, suggests that she is ruined in terms of her marriage prospects, dishonored, and permanently redefined in others’ eyes. Her addition of the adverb “endlessly” confirms that De Flores’s demands on Beatrice-Joanna are ongoing. He wants more than a one-time payment, and her need to keep silent about their transaction entangles her in “endless” negotiations. Having acknowledged this, Beatrice-Joanna then proceeds to re-do herself. Her efforts at this point in the play demonstrate not only that she retains the cunning that enabled her to put a contract on her fiancé, but also that she takes an active role in shaping the meaning of what happened between her and De Flores, her options, and her status (as marriageable virgin). She may be re-created by her participation in murder, as De Flores insists, but she does not yet view the outcome of her story as given. Her project to re-make the meaning of what has happened between her and De Flores, even as a payment stretches “endlessly” into a relationship, is a less-familiar story than Lucrece’s, one that falls outside of rape statutes but corresponds to the uncategorizable, protracted sexual negotiations described in some kinds of court records.

When she pays De Flores in the coin of her virginity, Beatrice-Joanna discovers that, if virginity is a form of male property—and MacKinnon argues that it still is—then it is also a renewable resource in which women themselves might trade. One can give it away or lose it and still have it (for all practical purposes). When De Flores boasts that he has “drunk up all, left none behind” (5.3.169–71), this is, as Sara Eaton points out, “wishful thinking” (280). For all of Beatrice-Joanna’s obsession with virginity as the marker of innocence and social worth—far more important than avoiding the taint of murder—she quickly

learns how to manage it as currency. Confronted with the possibility that Alsemero will test her virginity with his handy portable chemistry set, she immediately determines to test the test itself on her maid Diaphanta and then mimic its results. Numerous critics have pointed out that trials of virginity, whether the jury of midwives searching Frances Howard as part of the Essex divorce trial or the home virginity test in *The Changeling*, raise more doubts than they allay because these trials prompt women to perform virginity, fraudulently but persuasively.¹⁹ Like the shift of emphasis in rape law to the woman's charge and the woman's word, these trials engender suspicion of women's words, especially with regard to sex. Yet they also demonstrate that a woman's body cannot be trusted any more than her word can because it, too, is a deceptive and unstable witness.²⁰ Alsemero's virginity test proves only Beatrice-Joanna's ability to outwit it. The test grants him a false sense of confidence.

We do not see Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores together again until act 5, scene 1. In that scene, Beatrice-Joanna describes herself as loving De Flores but also as "forc'd" to do so (although more by circumstance than by him): "I'm forc'd to love thee now, / 'Cause thou provid'st so carefully for my honor." De Flores replies that he preserves their secret, and thereby her honor, out of self-interest: "'Slid, it concerns the safety of us both, / Our pleasure and continuance" (5.1.49–52). Although Beatrice-Joanna presents herself as constrained and dependent, and De Flores admits that he guards her honor only so that their relationship can continue, Beatrice-Joanna describes him as serving rather than exploiting or coercing her. Beatrice-Joanna first confesses that De Flores is lovable after he proposes his plan to set a fire to smoke the lingering Diaphanta out of Alsemero's bed and then to shoot her: "How heartily he serves me! His face loathes one, / But look upon his care, who would not love him?" (5.1.72–73). In her view, De Flores is "a man worth loving" because, like a good servant, he serves and cares for her (5.1.78). The mark of his caring service, is, once again, his willingness to murder.

Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores have achieved a partnership in which each views the other as subordinate. It is also a partnership in which each seems to take satisfaction, just as both seemed drawn to their earlier dynamic in which Beatrice-Joanna performed her distaste for him and he "pleas'd [him]self with sight / Of her . . . If but to spite her anger" (1.1.103–05). As Halley points out, "Once we really do admit masochism into our vocabulary of sexual pleasure, we make it hard to know that any particular social outcome involving sexuality broadly conceived is a cost or a benefit, a good or a bad" (363). Beatrice-Joanna

still loathes De Flores's face (or, more specifically, confides that his face loathes her), and she views him as motivated by serving and caring for her; he insists that he is self-interested, holds her reputation and life in his hands, and will ultimately kill her. Still, she thinks it is love and he finds it a pleasure. The duration of the relationship, what De Flores calls their "pleasure and continuance," connects it to other sexual negotiations in which consent is not simply a matter of a moment. As we have seen, Dalton locates rape in an extended time scheme in which its meaning remains negotiable, a time scheme very like a dramatic plot. In her readings of depositions, Gowing often finds negotiated consent: "consent is given, but only unwillingly, after offers of money or marriage"—it is what women offer importunate men in a "fair exchange," sometimes after "endless" bargaining (87). It is more likely to end in marriage than murder.

Even after her shocked confrontation with the corporeal reality of murder, after her "consent is given, but only unwillingly" to De Flores, Beatrice-Joanna remains the instigator of plot developments until the very end. On her own initiative, she employs Diaphanta, first as her proxy in the virginity test and then as her substitute on her wedding night. Several critics point out that Beatrice-Joanna's treatment of Diaphanta proves that she still views servants as instruments (Heinemann 177; Huebert 147). In addition, it proves that she still thinks that sex can be used as a form of payment. In this case, she offers Diaphanta sex with Alsemero as part of her compensation package. In a more economically just world, Diaphanta could have a generous marriage portion without trading in her virginity. But she describes herself as making a clever deal: she gets sex now, "the bride's place" (4.2.128), with a man she has admired as a "complete gentleman" (2.1.3), and the prospect of an upwardly mobile marriage later. With the thousand ducats Beatrice-Joanna promises to pay her as a marriage portion, Diaphanta plans to secure "a justice" as her husband (4.2.128–30). One assumes that this would be the "sweet . . . bargain" on which Diaphanta congratulates herself—"I never made / So sweet a bargain" (5.1.80–81)—if she did not enjoy it so much that she loses track of time, a grave error for a hireling. She actually does the same thing that De Flores does: "serves her own ends" (5.1.2) and thereby "makes havoc of [Beatrice-Joanna's] right" (5.1.5).

My point about this hiring of Diaphanta is that it must be taken into account in any evaluation of the transaction between Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores. Having learned that virginity has a price, Beatrice-Joanna buys Diaphanta's maidenhead from her and pays Alsemero what she views as the just price of his wedding night—a virgin bride—even as she protects her own interests in

the bargain. This is agency with a vengeance. She also ruthlessly decides to have Diaphanta killed since she can no longer trust her.

Beatrice-Joanna's story exceeds the contours of the most familiar narratives about rape and female virtue, as I have been arguing. Nonetheless, the play's conclusion compels us back into those restrictive conventions. As we all know too well, Lucrece must kill herself not because she is morally culpable for her rape, exactly, but because she has been defiled and must "clear this spot by death." Similarly, Titus stabs his daughter Lavinia, enjoining her "Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee."²¹ The idea that one cannot recover from rape, that it is "a fate worse than death," ameliorable only by means of death, is one of the legacies Halley hopes to undo. As I have argued, to see *The Changeling* as a rape play is to obscure the fact that it depicts part of the history of rape not found in statute law or Lucrece stories—rape as protracted negotiation. But at the end the play returns us to a notion of sexual coercion as un-rewritable, as definitive. It is in its final scene that it most resembles "a rape play."

Whatever Beatrice-Joanna's agency in her sexual relationship with De Flores, ultimately all of the men in the play, including De Flores, treat her as if she has been contaminated by having sex with him—even more than by her complicity in murder. As a result, the play depicts her death as cleansing (Paster 88–89). She urges her father not to touch her—"O come not near me, sir, I shall defile you"—and to view her as blood purged for his health and poured down "the common sewer" (5.3.149–53). Her association with contamination is so great that she can present her bedtrick to Alsemero as a boon because it means he has not been defiled by her touch: "Alsemero, I am a stranger to your bed; / Your bed was cozened on the nuptial night, / For which your false-bride died" (5.3.159–61). What makes Beatrice-Joanna so loathsome and polluting, so like De Flores, who, according to Tomazo, "would poison any weapon / That should draw blood on him," is that she acts, chooses, and consents in ways that Lucrece and Lavinia do not. Although she, like them, is purified through blood-letting, she is reviled rather than praised. Yet her dead body performs the same function as that of Lucrece: it binds men together.²²

Beatrice-Joanna defers that ending as long as she can. Mark Thornton Burnett argues that, by the end of the play, Beatrice "is robbed of any sense of an individuated identity" and "functions as no more than an echo of, or cipher for, the servant who is her master" (306). I disagree. After De Flores returns from his arson and murder errand, carrying Diaphanta's corpse, Beatrice-Joanna draws attention to the fact that De Flores "spied" and "took such pains in" the

fire, urging her father and husband to reward De Flores for this “double goodness”: “‘Twere well he were rewarded” (5.2.124–26), she urges. After the three of them exit, De Flores comments on her audacity: “Precious, here’s a trick beyond me! / I see in all bouts, both of sport and wit, / Always a woman strives for the last hit” (5.1.128–30). As he acknowledges, she gets the last hit and bests him in extracting the most that is possible out of this situation—escaping detection and getting additional reward. But she bests him, too, by insisting on giving him the salary he refused and disdained for his last murder, thus positioning him as a servant after all.

Beatrice-Joanna’s sport and wit serve her best in her dealings with her social subordinates. Her class privilege fails her when she confronts the disapprobation of her husband and father and finds herself with no bargaining power at all—in large part because her beauty has been blasted “to deformity” (5.3.32) not by her deeds but by being called a whore. She also has no one to take her part. When Alsemero confronts her, she continues to outface his threats and to redeem the situation until the moment he thrusts her into the closet to await his further judgment. She attempts to include him in the guilt for the murders, pointing out that “your love has made me / A cruel murd’ress” (5.3.64–65). Indeed, Alsemero had been the first to suggest that Piracquo’s death was the way to secure their marriage, and he never seems to have wondered at the fact that Piracquo disappeared so rapidly and conveniently thereafter. But he does not respond to this version of the argument that De Flores used with Beatrice-Joanna.²³ The idea that Beatrice-Joanna “caused” De Flores to murder Piracquo, “having no / Better means than that worst, to assure / Yourself to me” (5.3.70–72), makes him feel horror not guilt. Where De Flores uses Beatrice-Joanna’s complicity to pull her closer to him, Alsemero refuses the claim of complicity and distances himself from Beatrice-Joanna. Only after he has shut her in with De Flores, and she is wounded and dying, does she accept her death: “‘Tis time to die when ‘tis a shame to live” (5.3.179). Until this moment, she has strategized to preserve the appearance of honor on which her life depended.

Halley’s injunction to “take a break” from a particular version of feminism can help us put pressure on the gender assumptions underpinning some readings of *The Changeling*. In turn, *The Changeling*, and the history of rape in seventeenth-century England, broadly conceived, can place pressure on Halley’s arguments by reminding us of the history behind the particular feminisms from which Halley wants us to take a break. In the early modern period, the assumption that women were driven by “the agency, the will, the malice—even

simply the capacity—to cause harm to others” (Halley 320) was so powerful that women sometimes had to cast themselves as helpless so as to counteract it. *The Changeling* presents Beatrice-Joanna as both agent and victim, consenting and forced, exploitative and exploited, willful and acted upon. In short, when one evaluates her agency one must come to a split decision, but a split decision that might remain feminist precisely in its attention to a range of possibilities. In its troubling representation of female coercion and consent, the play participates in a history of rape in messier ways than have yet been recognized, in part because we are continually expanding and revising our understanding of what rape is and thus what its history might include. Approaching the play by means of that history does not render the relationship between Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores any more legible; if anything, it complicates our understanding of what happens between them, whether one focuses on gender, rank, rape or, as I am emphasizing here, on all three.

NOTES

I would like to thank Emily Detmer-Goebel, Margie Ferguson, and Tara Pedersen, as well as the editors and anonymous readers of *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, for their helpful comments on this essay.

1. I cite the version of the play in the Taylor and Lavagnino edition of Middleton's complete works. But I have also consulted the Daalder edition. While I focus on the “main” plot, I do not attempt to parse the play by author. Most critics now agree that the two plots are closely interconnected. On the play's collaborative authorship, see Hirschfeld 89–117.

2. Burks's influential essay has been reprinted in Simkin and in expanded form in her book *Horrid Spectacle*. The formulations with which I engage here are the same in both article and chapter versions; all of the parenthetical citations to the essay are from the version published in *ELH*. By enabling us to think about what happens between Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores as a rape, and by tracing the intimate but vexed connections between statutes and the drama, Burks lays the foundation for the inquiry I am undertaking here.

3. To argue that men who suffer harm are “feminized,” which remains a commonplace in literary criticism, is to reinforce the idea that women suffer injury and men are immune. On women's power to injure see, for example, Dolan, *Marriage*; Rackin; Wall; and Walker, *Crime*. Shepard describes in early modern England “a complex multi-dimensional map of power relations which by no means privileged all men or subordinated all women” (2–3). On the critical impasse between emphases on victims and on agents, see Callaghan, who calls for a “new paradigm that moves away from the adversarial politics of blame and from feminism as advocacy, but also away from the revisionist dilution of feminist politics” (13).

4. For the process in the thirteenth century by which the Statutes of Westminster “turned the law of rape into a law of elopement and abduction,” see Post 150, 160. See also Bashar.

5. On this etymology, see also Detmer-Goebel, “Need for Lavinia's Voice.”

6. Hale contests Dalton's claim that it is a felony to abduct a man's wife and goods, calling it a trespass instead (637–39).

7. Hale questions Sir Edward Coke's addition of the words "either with her will or against her will" with regard to a child under ten "because the age of consent of a female is not ten but twelve" (630–31).

8. On Hale's enduring influence, see Geis. On the increasing skepticism about women's testimony in rape cases in the eighteenth century, see Dayton, 231–84; and Frances Ferguson. According to Dayton, after 1700, New England imported suspicion of women's rape charges along with English legal treatises and evidentiary standards.

9. Depositions tended to describe sexual penetration and bodily injury only in the case of girls under ten, when their consent was not at issue. Such cases also yielded the majority of formal charges and guilty verdicts (Walker, *Crime* 56). On women's emphasis on their own passivity, see Walker, "Rereading Rape," 8–9 and Foyster 91.

10. MacKinnon argues that the conflation of rape with theft and abduction forged in the thirteenth century continues to haunt definitions of rape (172, 175); Franke argues that attending to history is a crucial antidote to a version of feminist legal theory, including MacKinnon, that "at times gives way to an impulse to dehistoricize sexuality when we suture women's bodies to . . . the inevitability of violence" (202).

11. Varholý examines the testimony of women who came before the civil court held at Bridewell Royal Hospital. Gowing looks at depositions taken by Westminster church courts; see esp. 99.

12. For the idea of the aftermath of a rape as a "second rape," see Madigan and Gamble. On the play as a kind of punishment of Beatrice-Joanna, see Malcolmson 157; and Hopkins.

13. As Jardine argues, "Isabella is no less wilful [sic]. . . than Beatrice-Joanna" (128). On the suspicion of and dependence on women's wills in the early modern period, see Schwarz, "My intents are fixed" and "Will in Overplus."

14. See also Burnett 302. Critics who emphasize Beatrice-Joanna's class privilege and exploitation of her servants also tend to judge her harshly as "exploitative and thoughtless" (Harris 54.)

15. For an example of an interpretation that blames Beatrice-Joanna unequivocally, see Daalder's introduction to his edition of the play, in which he describes her as insane, abnormal, and a strumpet (xxix and passim).

16. "No means no" is a widely used slogan in anti-date rape education materials. More generally, Deborah Tannen has argued that heterosexual conversation is asymmetrical conversation. See, for instance, *You Just Don't Understand*, which spent four years on *The New York Times* Bestseller List.

17. Michael Dalton confirms that being the "author" of and accessory to a felony is itself a felony (sig. Y5; sig. Y5v).

18. Hirschfeld's and Neill's arguments build on a long tradition of seeing Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores as achieving a kind of marriage. According to T. S. Eliot, Beatrice-Joanna becomes "more *his* partner, *his* mate, than the mate and partner of the man for the love of whom she consented to the crime. Her lover [Alsemero] disappears not only from the scene but from her imagination" (143). According to Ribner, "She belongs to him entirely, his equal and his mate" (133).

19. See Amster; Bromham and Bruzzi 18–36; Bovilsky 135–58; Burks 778–79; Garber; Hopkins 150–51; Lindley; and Luttfriing, who argues that virginity is both a performance and a narrative. Some critics view Beatrice-Joanna's incursion into Alsemero's closet as a "violation" (Hopkins 156) or "penetration" (Boehrer 351); see also Solga 156–59.

20. On the heated debate regarding the hymen and what it could prove through its absence or its presence, see Margaret Ferguson; and Loughlin. On virginity as "a speech act that

masquerades as a bodily state," see Schwarz, "Wrong Question" 15.

21. "Rape of Lucrece" l. 1053; and *Titus Andronicus* (5.3.45), both in the *Norton Shakespeare*. On these conventions, see Donaldson; Jed; Daileader; Detmer-Goebel, "What More Could Woman Do?"; and Nicol.

22. See Burks 782; Eaton 279 and 284; Hopkins 159; and Whigham 342. Of course, as Burks points out, this perfect family is also a barren one. Luttfriing argues that Alsemero admits some nostalgia for Beatrice-Joanna's performance of chastity.

23. See Eaton 278. On Alsemero as a zombie, see Morrison.

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