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UNFIXED VIRGINITY:
METAPHOR AND DEFLORATION IN EARLY MODERN
DRAMA

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A thesis submitted for the examination of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

2021

Declaration

I hereby declare that all the material presented in this thesis is my own work. The Introduction of this thesis incorporates a very small amount of material submitted as part of a dissertation required for the degree of MPhil in Renaissance Literature at the University of Cambridge in 2017. This material has since been altered and augmented for inclusion in the present thesis. No part of this thesis has otherwise been submitted for examination at any other institution.

Signed:

UNFIXED VIRGINITY: METAPHOR AND DEFLORATION IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA

Thesis summary

This project examines how virginity was conceptualized through metaphor and used as a metaphor in early modern drama. It posits that the relationship between virginity and metaphor was destabilising and that virginity functioned as a primarily imaginative idea. Writers, especially playwrights, were aware of and capitalized on this instability.

Modern editors and scholars have foreclosed discussions of virginity by reducing virginity to a simpler construction, often ignoring or flattening paradoxical or contradictory moments in plays. This thesis constitutes a project of ‘unfixing virginity’: it challenges editorial amendments, instead prioritising uncertainty (unfixing in the sense of undoing changes) to reveal an early modern sense of virginity which is unfixed (fluid, transient, and intangible). The embodied nature of performance and the limits of representation on the stage make drama a rich area in which to examine virginity. This thesis explores the implications for virginity when moments of defloration are unstaged, enabling a reassessment of the bedtrick and other ‘representational lacunae’ such as unstaged wedding nights in early modern plays.

This thesis further contests the assumption that early modern virginity should be specifically associated with the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, as emphasis on their exceptional nature obscures investigation into virginity on its own terms. My approach of ‘unfixed virginity’ reflects how virginity was circulating at a much broader imaginative level across culture, a metaphorical concept produced within a patriarchal social context.

The thesis is divided into three chapters which each theorize a different yet cumulative sense of ‘unfixed virginity’. This is applied to a structural and close reading analysis of early modern plays. Chapter 1 focuses on ‘fractured virginity’ in *All’s Well that Ends Well* and *The Changeling*. Chapter 2 focuses on ‘recycled virginity’ in *Romeo and Juliet*. Chapter 3 focuses on ‘perspectival virginity’ in *Henry V*.

UNFIXED VIRGINITY: METAPHOR AND DEFLORATION IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA

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Note on the Text

Unless stated otherwise, all quotations to Shakespeare's plays and poems are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Jean E. Howard, Katherine Eisaman Maus and Gordon McMullan, 3rd edn (New York: Norton, 2016). Line numbers are included parenthetically.

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Quotations from early modern sources retain original spellings and punctuation, except for the long medial 's' which is regularized and contractions which have been silently expanded.

INTRODUCTION

i. *Virginity and Metaphor*

This thesis explores the complex relationship between virginity and metaphor in Shakespearean drama. Virginity is often expressed using unusual imagery, such as when Bertram in *All's Well That Ends Well* is described as 'a whale to virginity' who 'devours up all the fry it finds' (4.3.212-13). In this image virginity is metaphorically understood as a shoal of tiny fish sustaining a voracious sexual appetite. Conversely, virginity is often used as a metaphor, such as when Viola in *Twelfth Night* tells Olivia 'What I am, and what I would, are as secret as maidenhead. To your ears, divinity; to any other, profanation' (1.5.199-201). Viola uses virginity to express ideas of the mysterious and profound. Both examples demonstrate the complexity and variety of Shakespeare's virginity metaphors. Virginity's dependence on language is commented on overtly in *King John*, when Falconbridge the Bastard observes how maids have 'no external thing to lose | But the word "maid"' (2.1.571-72). Falconbridge implies that virginity is precarious because sexual honesty is susceptible to slander and gossip, but his comment also speaks to virginity's reliance on figurative language. Even in arguing that virginity is nothing but a word, this metaphor paradoxically invokes the materiality of virginity, which is an 'external thing' belonging to the virgin, and which is easily lost.

The instability generated by the dynamic relationship between virginity and metaphor is demonstrated in an extended example from *Pericles*. The brothel scenes in which Marina is forced to defend herself against pimps and prospective clients feature an extreme concentration of contradictory metaphors for virginity as applied to the figure of the virgin. These scenes demonstrate how conflicting, overlapping, and

rapidly shifting virginity metaphors were employed in drama specifically when depicting a virginal character, and how virginity is unfixed during this process. Marina's virginity is first destabilized when her pimps use the same metaphor to signify in oppositional ways. In 4.2 Marina's virginity is commodified as a desirable object, with Bawd asserting that 'Such a maidenhead were no cheap thing' and she instructs Bolt to advertize her 'with warrant of her virginity' promising that 'He that will give most shall have her first' (4.2.53-56). However, this metaphor is later reversed when Bolt claims Marina's virginity 'is not worth a breakfast in the cheapest country' (4.6.111-12). The metaphor's adaptation economically debases Marina's virginity. This inconsistency within one type of metaphor is also found in the commonplace image of the virgin as a rose. Bawd presents Marina to Lysimachus, the governor of Mytilene, as one who 'grows to the stalk; never plucked yet, I can assure you' (4.6.36-37).¹ Yet this image of the virgin as an unplucked rose is contradicted by Bolt's obscene comment that Marina 'were a rose indeed, if she had but –' (4.6.31), which suggests that she needs to be penetrated by a "thorn" to be a full rose. Representing the virgin and non-virgin as a rose and a non-rose continues the complicated paradoxical strategy set up by the financial imagery. These two examples demonstrate how individual and seemingly simple metaphors for virginity are in fact multiple and mutable in early modern plays.

These financial and floral metaphors do not exist in isolation but relate dynamically to each other. Likewise, the beginning of 4.6 presents a chaotic series of virginity metaphors which all work in opposition to each other. The passivity of the rose image contrasts starkly with three other metaphors which conversely position

¹ The flower of virginity metaphor is discussed at length in chapters 2 and 3. I discuss the related term 'defloration' below.

Marina's virginity as defensive. Firstly, Bawd complains that Marina's chastity is so resilient 'she's able to freeze the god Priapus and undo a whole generation' (4.6.3-4), so that Marina's virginity is understood as supernaturally strong enough to overpower the most virile god.² Next, in an aside to Marina, Bawd implores her to 'use [Lysimachus] kindly' and 'without any more virginal fencing' (4.6.49-50). This 'virginal fencing' suggests that Marina protects her virginity by erecting an obstructive barrier, but also that she combatively defends it with a sword.³ Bawd then uses the language of horse training in a third metaphor to suggest Lysimachus will have to "break-in" Marina sexually, claiming 'she's not paced yet' and that Lysimachus 'must take some pains to work her to [his] manage' (4.6.53-54), again implying Marina's unruly virginity will require forceful taming.⁴ These various metaphors position Marina's virginity as simultaneously passive and rebellious, idealized and repulsive. In a trend repeated throughout the scene, virginity is presented in oxymoronic terms. These competing and conflicting metaphors for Marina's virginity, and the process of its loss, create an absurd paradox: to deflower Marina, Lysimachus must concurrently pluck a rose, overcome a series of fences, and break in an untamed horse. Virginity becomes more and more destabilized with each new metaphor.

Another series of rapidly transforming metaphors for Marina's virginity and its loss appears later in the scene, further destabilising virginity. Drawing on the traditional pun on maidenhead and beheading, Bolt says 'I must have your maidenhead taken off, or the common hangman shall execute it' (4.6.116-17), a metaphor which frames his or

² Priapus was a minor Greek fertility god, usually depicted with a comically and constantly erect penis, see 'Priapus', in David Leeming, *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 325.

³ See *OED*, 'fencing, *n.*', 1.a. for the sport, 2 and 3.a. for the construction of an obstructive barrier.

⁴ For the context of horse taming and wife taming in Shakespeare, see Joan Hartwig, 'Horses and Women in *The Taming of the Shrew*', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 45.4 (1982), 285-94.

a customer's rape of Marina as an execution by decapitation.⁵ This violent imagery for rape and Marina's deflowering is continued in Bawd's metaphor of a smashed vessel: 'Crack the glass of her virginity, and make the rest malleable' (4.6.129-30). This is followed swiftly by Bolt's metaphor of a ploughed field: 'An if she were a thornier piece of ground than she is, she shall be plowed' (4.6.131-32). This escalation of violent metaphors for deflorative rape continues when Bawd calls Marina her 'dish of chastity with rosemary and bays' (4.6.137). Bawd's image is sinister and degrading, implying that Marina is nothing but food to be feasted upon, digested, and excreted. Finally, in answer to Marina's direct question, 'Whither wilt thou have me?' Bolt replies 'To take from you the jewel you hold so dear' (4.6.140). He figures Marina's virginity as a jewel not because he still values it, but because Marina does. This rapid ream of images is produce by the pimps' anger at losing a wealthy and powerful patron. The protean transformations of Marina's virginity through these metaphors, from a body to be decapitated, a glass to be broken, a field to be ploughed, a dish to be eaten, and finally a jewel to be stolen, reveals the escalating danger facing Marina and her chastity. The metaphors are complex as they imply both object (virginity) and process (loss of virginity). The active verbs – executing, breaking, ploughing, eating, stealing – render Marina's body as passive and something to be worked upon. Throughout the Mytilene brothel scenes Marina's virginity is both empowered and disempowered through complex figurative language. Her virginity is commodified and threatened, but is also a protective force. The numerous competing and changing metaphors for virginity over the course of Act Four therefore demonstrate how highly charged the concept was, but also reveal a limit in the ability to represent it or make it tangible.

⁵ I discuss virginity, rape and decapitation in Chapter 3.

This reading of *Pericles* demonstrates the mutability of virginity metaphors in early modern drama and how contradictory images and shifting language destabilizes any notion of virginity as fixed. While previous critics have also argued that virginity is unstable, scholarship has focused on the ambiguity of physical signs of virginity, and the consequent difficulty in locating virginity, often via examinations. This work has focused on the hymen, with Marie H. Loughlin and Kathleen Coyne Kelly demonstrating how in the medieval and early modern periods the hymen – as anatomical feature and cultural symbol – was unreliable.⁶ The names of these studies – Loughlin’s monograph is entitled *Hymenutics* and Kelly’s first chapter is entitled ‘hymenologies’ – indicate the importance of the hymen to these approaches. Loughlin notes that the hymen was the object of ‘anxious scrutiny and intense debate’ amongst Renaissance anatomists and physicians, with some staunchly advocating for the hymen’s existence, some adamant they had never seen it, and some ambivalent.⁷ The fact that ‘the position, composition and indeed the very existence of the hymen’ was debated demonstrates, according to Loughlin, that the hymen was not ‘an unequivocal sign of physical virginity’ but instead ‘a site of pure ambiguity, a membrane whose material existence is both constantly called into question and vociferously insisted

⁶ Marie H. Loughlin, *Hymenutics: Interpreting Virginity on the Early Modern Stage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997); Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2000). The turn of the century saw a boom in scholarship on medieval and early modern virginity. See also Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001) and Theodora A. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). Several edited collections were also published around this time, see *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999); *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Cindy L. Carlson and Angela Jane Weisl (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); *Medieval Virginites*, ed. by Anke Bernau, Ruth Evans and Sarah Salih (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

⁷ Loughlin claims that Helkiah Crooke and James Guillemeau were adamant about the hymen’s existence, Andreas Vesalius, Gabriel Fallopius and Nicholas Culpepper ambivalent, and Ambrose Paré and Andreas Laurentius believed it to be a myth. See pp. 30-52 for in-depth discussion.

upon'.⁸ This balance between the hymen's unreliability but also its centrality to the virgin identity is mirrored in literary scholarship. For William Carroll, the hymen's equivocal nature means that it can only be represented through metaphor, as a 'maidenhead', 'treasure', 'flower', 'lock', and most importantly 'knot', and he argues that the virgin 'is metonymically defined by the names given to her hymen'.⁹ However, by understanding these metaphors as a stand-in specifically for the hymen, Carroll still understands virginity in primarily physical terms.

Rather than viewing the 'maidenhead' or 'knot' as metonyms for the hymen, as Carroll does, Kelly sees another layer to the representational process, with the hymen itself understood as an 'anatomical metonym' (represented metonymically as 'maidenhead' or 'knot').¹⁰ Kathryn Schwarz challenges this notion even further, arguing that 'Virginal bodies are not sufficiently synechdochized in unpenetrated genitalia; they do not refer directly to a knowable physical state'.¹¹ She suggests that 'Rather than seeing chastity as an abstraction grounded, however remotely, in bodily virginity, we might understand the virginal body itself as a figment of an urgent social imagination'.¹² Again in contrast to Carroll, Anke Bernau argues that 'Virginity always stands for something other or more than itself – it is a metaphor par excellence' and that this is 'partly because it can be defined only through other terms'.¹³ Bernau notes that 'virginity is perceived to symbolize stability in Christian thought' but that contradictorily 'few tropes are actually so glitteringly multivalent: fountain, flower,

⁸ Loughlin, p. 29. See Kelly, pp. 17-39, for a discussion of classical and medieval discourses on the hymen.

⁹ William C. Carroll, 'The Virgin Not: Language and Sexuality in Shakespeare', in *Shakespeare and Gender: A History*, ed. by Deborah Barker and Ivo Kamps (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 283–301 (p. 287).

¹⁰ Kelly, pp. 7-8.

¹¹ Kathryn Schwarz, 'The Wrong Question: Thinking Through Virginity', *Differences*, 13.2 (2002), 1-34 (p. 15).

¹² Schwarz, p. 15.

¹³ Anke Bernau, "'Saint, Witch, Man, Maid or Whore?": Joan of Arc and Writing History', in *Medieval Virginites*, pp. 214-33 (p. 220).

treasure, garden, closed door, star ... virginity is likened to them all, yet circumscribed by none'.¹⁴

My approach to early modern virginity in drama uncouples virginity metaphors from the hymen, considering the hymen as important but not central or fundamental to representing virginity. Many previous studies of virginity, whilst arguing for a sceptical view of the hymen, nevertheless see it as synonymous with virginity. This thesis posits that the hymen's unreliability is reflective of a much wider issue with how virginity is understood and represented in the early modern period and especially on the stage. The impossibility of staging defloration, which I discuss at length in Chapter 1, and drama's performative nature means that the hymen is necessarily at a remove from the plays' concerns. The analysis of *Pericles* with which I began this thesis demonstrates (to use Bernau's phrasing) the multivalence of virginity and how virginity resists circumscription. My research takes this further to analyse the interaction between these multiple and conflicting metaphors and their internal contradictions. Furthermore, with a debt to Schwarz's claim that the virginal body is 'itself as a figment of an urgent social imagination' and Bernau's remark that virginity is 'a metaphor par excellence', I explore why and how virginity is both constructed through metaphor and used as a metaphor in early modern drama. For instance, the overabundance of metaphors for virginity in *Pericles* is indicative of how it is elusive and multiple in early modern drama: Marina's virginity becomes so overdetermined that it is impossible to say exactly what or where it is.

¹⁴ Bernau, "Saint, Witch, Man, Maid or Whore?", p. 220.

ii. *Locating virginity*

Locating virginity was a major preoccupation for early moderns. The prevalence of virginity tests, and especially their cultural representation, suggests that virginity was understood as something which could be proved or verified. Kelly argues that the proliferation of virginity tests in medical and imaginative literature is indicative of the hymen's instability, and the desire to find evidence a response to the difficulty in obtaining it.¹⁵ Two figures closely associated with virginity testing are Joan of Arc and Frances Howard: both women underwent physical examination during their respective trials (one in 1431, the other in 1613) to verify their virginity, with Joan of Arc found 'woman and virgin and *pucelle*' and Frances Howard '*virgo intacta*'.¹⁶ In Joan's case accusations of unchastity were part of the attempt to discredit her, and although examiners vouched for her virginity she was found guilty of witchcraft and burned.¹⁷ Frances Howard's examination took place during her annulment trial, an intact hymen understood as proof that her husband, the Earl of Essex, was unable to consummate the marriage. Although it was Essex's impotence in question, it was Howard's body which underwent scrutiny. As Howard reportedly wore a veil for modesty during the exam rumours circulated that she arranged for a surrogate to take her place.¹⁸ These notorious

¹⁵ Kelly, p. 18.

¹⁶ The claim about Joan is taken from testimony from her confessor, as cited in the trial records replicated in François Meltzer, *For Fear of the Fire: Joan of Arc and the Limits of Subjectivity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 93. Joan was examined twice, first before meeting the Dauphin at Chinon, and again during her trial during which she was found guilty of heresy and witchcraft, see Stephen Spiess, 'Puzzling Embodiment: Proclamation, La Pucelle, and *The first Part of Henry VI*', in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. by Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 93-111 (pp. 96-97). Howard's verdict is recorded in *The Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed. by T.B. Howell, Vol. 2 (London: T.C. Hansard, 1816), as cited in David Lindley, *The Trials of Frances Howard: Fact and Fiction at the Court of King James* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 82. Lindley's book offers an excellent overview of the annulment trial.

¹⁷ Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 13-14. Warner quotes a witness account which details in horrifying detail Joan's death by fire and how her execution was made a grotesque spectacle.

¹⁸ Lindley notes how 'by going into her physical examination veiled, Frances Howard invoked the literary plot-motif of the bed-trick' and that contemporary commentators 'were only too delighted to read it as such', p. 115. The bedtrick is discussed at length in Chapter 1.

cases demonstrate the aura of mystery and suspicion surrounding virginity and the (in)ability to verify it. The legacy of the virginity test continues in the way many scholars approach depictions of virginity and defloration in early modern drama as locatable. Indeed, that Joan of Arc and Frances Howard feature disproportionately in scholarship on virginity attests to the way scholars are wedded to the idea of virginity as locatable, even whilst ostensibly criticising the practice as misogynistic and archaic.

Two compelling recent assessments of Howard's annulment trial by Mara Amster and Sara D. Luttfiring have explored the 'legibility' of the virgin body.¹⁹ Both critics focus on the anxieties of locating virginity, the threat of substitution, and the limits to ascertaining 'proof'. They each link Howard's trial to Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's play *The Changeling* (1622) which features a virginity test.²⁰ In the play, Beatrice-Joanna discovers two potions in her new husband's closet, one which tests for pregnancy, one virginity. She reads that the virginity potion makes a true virgin 'incontinently gape, then fall into a sudden sneezing, last into a violent laughing' (4.1.47-48), and decides to test it on her waiting woman, Diaphanta, who subsequently performs these actions.²¹ Beatrice-Joanna, who fears her husband will know she is not

¹⁹ Mara Amster, 'Frances Howard and Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*: Trials, Tests and the Legibility of the Virgin Body', in *The Single Woman in Medieval and Early Modern England: Her Life and Representation*, ed. by Laurel Amtower and Dorothea Kehler (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003), pp. 211-32; Sara D. Luttfiring, 'Bodily Narratives and the Politics of Virginity in *The Changeling* and the Essex Divorce', *Renaissance Drama*, 39 (2011), 97-128.

²⁰ It is a critical commonplace to link Frances Howard and *The Changeling*. An early critic to make the connection was Margot Heinemann, see *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 178-79; for an extended exploration of references in *The Changeling* to Frances, see A.A. Bromham and Zara Bruzzi, 'A Contemporary Changeling: Frances Howard', in *The Changeling and the Years of Crisis, 1619-1624: A Hieroglyph of Britain* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), pp. 18-36; for an in-depth discussion of virginity tests in relation to Frances Howard and *The Changeling*, see Dale B. J. Randall, 'Some Observations on the Theme of Chastity in *The Changeling*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 14.3 (1984), 347-66. I discuss *The Changeling* at length in Chapter 1, where I return to the issue of Beatrice-Joanna's virginity.

²¹ Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, 'The Changeling', in *Women Beware Women and Other Plays*, ed. by Richard Dutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 165-235. Subsequent references to *The Changeling* are to this edition and appear parenthetically.

a virgin, then repeats the performance in front of Alsemero and successfully convinces him. Diaphanta's question, 'She will not search me, will she, | Like the forewoman of a female jury?' (4.1.97-98) has been understood as a direct reference to Frances Howard.²² Beatrice-Joanna's fear that her 'fault' will 'appear | Like malefactor's crimes before tribunals' (4.1.7-8) likewise recalls Howard two trials.²³ For Amster, Howard's annulment trial and *The Changeling* prompt the question: 'How, might one ask, could the virgin's un-written-upon body be accurately read by those surrounding her, including potential suitors and protective fathers?'²⁴ She notes that conduct books instructed how to detect virginity through external signs of chastity, and warned that unchaste behaviour would compromise a chaste reputation, regardless of sexual activity.²⁵ Amster therefore suggests that, if behaviour can make a chaste woman seem unchaste, the reverse may also be true. She asks 'Can virginity be assumed, worn as if a mask composed of specific movements and speeches?'²⁶ She argues that in early modern culture it is more important to "seem" virginal than "be" virginal. Lutftring uses the term 'bodily narrative' to develop this reliance on verbal and physical performance, rather than physical proof, to ascertain virginity.²⁷ She argues that the cases of Frances Howard and the fictional Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling* grapple 'with the possibility that a woman might feign her own virginity, even when put to a physical test, and bring sexual and political disorder to patriarchal society'.²⁸ She

²² Dutton, ed., 'The Changeling', 4.1.97-98n.; Amster, p. 227.

²³ In 1616 Frances pleaded guilty to murdering Thomas Overbury and was imprisoned in the Tower of London for six years. For more on Frances' second trial, see Anne Somerset, *Unnatural Murder: Poison at the Court of James I* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997).

²⁴ Amster, p. 217.

²⁵ Amster, pp. 223-26. Amster engages with one of the period's most widely read conduct manuals for young women, Juan Luis Vives' *Instruction of a Christen Woman*. The book was written for his patron Catherine of Aragon in 1523, published in English in 1529 and then repeatedly throughout the sixteenth century.

²⁶ Amster, p. 226.

²⁷ Lutftring, p. 98.

²⁸ Lutftring, p. 106.

suggests that both interrogate ‘the relationship between virginity and sexual experience’ and that this ‘suggests that the two states are not merely intertwined but frequently indistinguishable to anyone but the woman in question’.²⁹ It is ‘the circle of deferral between words and bodies’ which ‘allows women to create bodily narratives that strategically deploy the intertwined nature of these two states to further their own agendas’.³⁰ These theories of the legibility of virginity and bodily narratives which perform virginity therefore build on the work of earlier critics in suggesting that virginity is unstable. Whereas the focus previously was on the hymen’s ambiguous physical presence, Amster and Luttfiring argue that it is the possibility of performance which destabilizes virginity. Yet these arguments, like those of earlier critics, are nevertheless still rooted in the assumption that virginity and non-virginity are physical categories.

The early modern practice of virginity testing and hymeneal examinations is replicated by scholars who treat defloration as a locatable experience in drama. Often critics mine the text looking for evidence of when and where defloration – usually in the context of marital consummation – takes place. Scholarship on three Shakespearean plays especially concerned with chastity – *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Cymbeline* – is illustrative, as each play features a newly married bride whose wedding night is delayed or disrupted. Critics have been concerned with the ambiguity of these three brides – Desdemona, Lavinia, and Imogen – and have subsequently sought to resolve the uncertainty surrounding their sexual status. For instance, critics writing on *Othello* conventionally assume the delayed wedding night takes place upon the couple’s reunion in Cyprus, when Othello says to Desdemona ‘The purchase made, the fruits are

²⁹ Luttfiring, p. 106.

³⁰ Luttfiring, p. 106.

to ensue: | That profit's yet to come tween me and you' (2.3.8-10).³¹ In her essay on the symbolism of the strawberry-spotted handkerchief, which she argues represents the bloodied wedding-sheets and Desdemona's defloration, Lynda E. Boose claims that the handkerchief only appears after the marriage is consummated at 2.3.³² However Graham Bradshaw points out that, as the couple are disturbed in 2.3, 'it is not clear whether the consummation happens before or after the riot, or not at all'.³³ More assertive attempts to prove or disprove Desdemona's virginity have also been made, including the argument made by T. G. A. Nelson and Charles Haines that Othello's unfulfilled sexual appetite contributes to his jealousy, and that therefore Desdemona dies a virgin.³⁴ An attempt at a rebuttal to this argument was made by Norman Nathan, who claims that the marriage is consummated.³⁵ However, as Michael Neill notes, Nathan's approach 'entrap[s]' the author 'in the very speculation he wishes to cut short'.³⁶ Neill stresses the importance of the unseen in *Othello*, arguing that the wedding night is unstaged 'to make [the audience] ask the question' and introduce doubt, and that the play 'persistently goads the audience into speculation about what is happening behind the scenes'.³⁷ However, he nevertheless dismisses the idea that the marriage is unconsummated, and hence also makes a judgement based on ambiguous evidence in the text, replicating Nathan's approach which he criticises. Whilst there are compelling arguments on both sides, what is missing from these discussions is the question of why

³¹ See, for instance, William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by E. A. J. Honigmann, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Nelson, 1997; repr. Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 42.

³² Lynda E. Boose, 'Othello's Handkerchief: "The Recognizance and Pledge of Love"', *English Literary Renaissance*, 5 (1975), 360-74.

³³ Graham Bradshaw, *Misrepresentations: Shakespeare and the Materialists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 151.

³⁴ See T. G. A. Nelson and Charles Haines, 'Othello's Unconsummated Marriage', *Essays in Criticism*, 33 (1983), 1-18. For a similar argument, see Pierre Janton, 'Othello's Weak Function', *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 7 (1975), 43-50.

³⁵ Norman Nathan, 'Othello's Marriage is Consummated', *Cahiers Élisabéthains*, 34 (1988), 79-82.

³⁶ Michael Neill, 'Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40.4 (1989), 383-412 (p. 396).

³⁷ Neill, p. 396.

there is ambiguity about Desdemona's virginity specifically, rather than her potential infidelity or unchastity more generally. When compared with other plays, however, a pattern begins to emerge of virginity and defloration as elusive in drama.

While the timescale is truncated in *Titus Andronicus* there is a similar ambiguity surrounding the consummation of Lavinia's marriage to Bassianus, which is swiftly followed by her brutal rape by Chiron and Demetrius the following morning. Critics have focused on Saturninus' claims that the bell has been rung 'Somewhat too early for new-married ladies' (2.2.15) and Lavinia's reply 'I have been broad awake two hours and more' (2.2.17): Atsuhiko Hirota suggests that her claim to being 'broad awake' can 'imply a lack of consummation', presumably understanding Lavinia to mean 'out of bed', whereas Emma Depledge argues that Lavinia 'boasts' of sexual activity by being in bed but not asleep.³⁸ Critics have also suggested that Lavinia is 'sexually knowing' and 'sexually aware' because she alludes to Tamora and Aaron's sexual relationship during the encounter in the forest, 'something a 'spotless virgin' would be unlikely to insinuate'.³⁹ However, these claims are speculative, a response to a text which remains ambivalent about Lavinia's sexual status. Confusion persists partly because Lavinia's

³⁸ Atsuhiko Hirota, 'The Partner of Empire: Literacy and Imperialism in *Titus Andronicus*', in *The Shakespearean International Yearbook, Vol. 6, Shakespeare and Montaigne Revisited*, ed. by Graham Bradshaw, Tom Bishop and Peter Holbrook (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 311-28 (p. 328, n. 32); Emma Depledge, *Shakespeare's Rise to Cultural Prominence: Politics, Print and Alteration, 1642-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 116. Cynthia Marshall likewise argues that Lavinia answers 'forthrightly' to Saturninus, suggesting sexual confidence, see "'I can interpret all her martyr'd signs": *Titus Andronicus*, Feminism, and the Limits of Interpretation', in *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Carole Levin and Karen Robertson (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), pp. 193-214 (p. 201).

³⁹ Lavinia says, referring to Aaron the Moor, 'let us hence, | And let her joy her raven-colored love' (2.3.82-83). See Barbara Antonucci, 'Romans Versus Barbarians: Speaking the Language of the Empire in *Titus Andronicus*', in *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, ed. by Maria Del Sapio Gerbero (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 119-30 (p. 126); Marshall suggests that Lavinia has consummated her marriage when attacked by Chiron and Demetrius, but that she is figured as an emblematic virgin, pp. 200-01. Depledge contrasts Shakespeare's Lavinia with the Lavinia of Edward Ravenscroft's Restoration version of the play (performed in 1686). She suggests that Ravenscroft's changes 'seem designed to emphasize Lavinia's innocence and also her virginity' (p. 116) such as replacing the hunting scene with a wedding party scene 'which makes clear Lavinia's virginity at the time of her rape' (p. 209).

rape is described as a defloration three times: Tamora instructs her sons to ‘this trull deflower’ (2.3.191); upon discovery of his niece, Marcus says ‘But sure some Tereus hath deflowered thee’ (2.4.26); and Titus describes his daughter as ‘enforced, stained, and deflowered’ (5.3.38). Critics argue that the term ‘defloration’ contradicts Lavinia’s married status. Hirota views it as inaccurate, arguing that ‘Although the term “deflower” is shocking, strictly speaking it is not applicable to Lavinia, wife of Bassianus’.⁴⁰ He claims that ‘Titus speaks as if Lavinia had never been married, as if she had been his virgin daughter until “deflowered”’ and that Titus uses the term forgetting ‘the fact that Lavinia has married’.⁴¹ Similarly, Barbara Antonucci argues that Lavinia is positioned onstage as ‘the ruined and deflowered virgin’ but this is despite the fact that ‘she was married and had apparently lost her virginity’.⁴² One explanation is that ‘deflower’ was sometimes synonymous with ‘rape’ in this period.⁴³ But this overlap itself speaks to a less fixed idea of virginity circulating in early modern culture. The way Lavinia’s defloration puzzles these critics is reflective of a prescriptive scholarly approach to virginity in the play which understands the maid-wife transition in straightforward terms, and allows for no ambiguity. *Titus Andronicus*, however, offers no certainty about virginity.

Imogen’s virginity in *Cymbeline* is perhaps the most hotly contested among Shakespearean scholars, and more than any other play, it is specifically Imogen’s hymen which is under scrutiny. As with Desdemona and Othello, who part as soon as

⁴⁰ Hirota, pp. 321-22.

⁴¹ Hirota, p. 323.

⁴² Antonucci, p. 126.

⁴³ The discomfiting relationship between defloration and rape is discussed in Chapter 3, but for succinct overviews, see Jocelyn Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women in Early Modern England: Unbridled Speech* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 12 and Theodora A. Jankowski, ‘Hymeneal Blood, Interchangeable Women, and the Early Modern Marriage Economy in *Measure for Measure* and *All’s Well That Ends Well*’, in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works, Volume IV: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 89-105 (p. 94).

the marriage is exposed – Othello is told ‘You must away tonight’ (1.3.275) – we are informed that Cymbeline ‘Hath charged [Imogen and Posthumus] should not speak together’ (1.1.83) and Posthumus leaves for Rome immediately. Anne Barton’s examination of Imogen’s sexual status within the context of clandestine marriage laws highlights the legal uncertainties which make the marriage puzzling, and she suggests that the relationship is more compelling if the union is unconsummated and Posthumus believes Giacomo takes Imogen’s virginity.⁴⁴ Karen Bamford places Imogen in a category of ‘unravished bride, wedded but not bedded’, suggesting that ‘the play directs us to view her as both wife and virgin’.⁴⁵ Similarly, Marie Loughlin asserts confidently that ‘there has clearly been no time for the lawful consummation’, characterising Imogen as ‘that social and anatomical anomaly, the virginal wife’.⁴⁶ These critics tend to emphasize Posthumus’s description of Imogen’s untouched chastity and restraint:

Me of my lawful pleasure she restrained,
And prayed me oft forbearance; did it with
A pudency so rosy [...] that I thought her
As chaste as unsunned snow.

2.5.9-13

However, other critics have questioned Imogen’s virginity, with the debate focusing on Posthumus’s remark that Iachimo ‘found no opposition | But what he looked for should oppose and she | Should from encounter guard’ (2.5.17-19). Where Barton argues that ‘opposition’ refers specifically to the hymen, Roger Warren disagrees: he claims that

⁴⁴ Anne Barton, *Essays Mainly Shakespearean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 3-30. See also Carol Gesner, *Shakespeare and the Greek Romance* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), p. 102.

⁴⁵ Karen Bamford, ‘Imogen’s Wounded Chastity’, *Essays in Theatre*, 12 (1993), 51-61 (pp. 51-52).

⁴⁶ Loughlin, p. 63. In her recent essay on proof and the ‘bloody cloth’ in *Cymbeline* Patricia Parker includes a lengthy footnote with further examples of scholars who have debated whether the marriage is unconsummated, see ‘Simular Proof, Tragicomic Turns, and *Cymbeline*’s Bloody Cloth’, in *Blood Matters: Studies in European Literature and Thought, 1400-1700*, ed. by Bonnie Lander Johnson and Eleanor Decamp (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), pp. 198-207, 293-97 (pp. 294-95).

no supporting evidence can clinch it ‘unequivocally’.⁴⁷ In a reading also endorsed by Valerie Wayne, Warren instead suggests that Posthumus’ imagined view of Imogen’s ‘opposition’ refers to ‘the behaviour of a professional “tease”’.⁴⁸ Martin Butler similarly argues that ‘the passage does seem to presume that the two have a prehistory of sexual relations within marriage (‘my *lawful* pleasure’)’ and notes that ‘oft’ is not ‘total’.⁴⁹ There is no critical consensus, but the scholarly debate surrounding Imogen’s potential defloration demonstrates clearly how critics are inclined to treat virginity in plays as something which can and should be verifiable.

There is a sense in these critical debates of the need to know when there is no possibility of knowing. This is despite the insightful claim by Wayne that ‘Women’s vaginal space was unlocatable on any body in the play’s early, all-male productions, and it is equally unlocatable for Posthumus through the stage properties that represent it in performance’.⁵⁰ Rather than focusing on the unlocatable ‘vaginal space’ (namely, the hymen) I suggest that it is important instead to acknowledge that virginity itself was unlocatable and abstract. The only conclusion critics can draw from *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Cymbeline* is that the virginity and/or defloration of Desdemona, Lavinia, and Imogen is unrepresented and unknowable. The important question is not whether a character is a virgin, but *why* virginity resists representation in this way. Furthermore, defloration’s unknowability is not a marginal or unusual feature in Shakespeare. As this thesis will demonstrate, it is at the heart of many of Shakespeare’s

⁴⁷ William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. by Roger Warren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 32-33.

⁴⁸ Warren, ed. *Cymbeline*, p. 33; Valerie Wayne, ‘The Woman’s Parts of *Cymbeline*’, in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. by Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 288-315 (p. 312). See also William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. by Valerie Wayne, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 81-86.

⁴⁹ William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. by Martin Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 33.

⁵⁰ Wayne, ‘The Woman’s Parts’, p. 297.

plays and concerns numerous ‘virginal’ characters. It will show that Heather James’ brief yet perceptive comment that ‘Arguments that assess the status of a Shakespearean marital contract by consummation run up against Shakespeare’s delight in having his heroines both ways: Desdemona, Imogen, and Lavinia “are and are not” virgins’, can be expanded and further explored.⁵¹ Instead of agonising over a definitive answer of whether marriages in the plays are consummated, I argue that we should instead embrace this uncertainty. Part of how virginity functions as an ideological tool is its unprovability, and it is important to ask why virginity was valued so highly by early moderns despite its instability.

This critique of the scholarly desire to locate virginity in drama links back to Joan of Arc and Frances Howard. Shakespeare’s *I Henry VI* features a version of Joan, ‘Joan de Pucelle’, whose virginity is ambiguous. Throughout the play Joan is referred to as ‘A holy maid’ (1.2.51) and her maiden identity is repeatedly stressed by the French and herself (1.2.64; 4.7.38). Yet it is also undermined by the English, as when Talbot remarks sarcastically ‘A maid, they say’ (2.1.21). At the end of the play Joan is ‘condemned to burn’ (5.5.1) for sorcery, yet the scene is preoccupied with her virginity. Joan herself gives conflicting accounts, first claiming:

Joan of Aire hath been
A virgin from her tender infancy,
Chaste and immaculate in very thought
5.5.49-51

Then, when her execution is imminent, she claims ‘I am with child’ (5.5.62). She names Alençon and then the King of Naples as potential fathers: evidence, according to Warwick, that ‘she hath been liberal and free’ (5.5.82). Joan is escorted off stage to her death, and whether she dies a virgin is unresolved. Although Theodora A. Jankowski

⁵¹ Heather James, *Shakespeare’s Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 254.

writes that ‘Shakespeare’s Pucelle may not be the virgin of historical record’, the play does not give any clarity about the truth of Joan’s virginity, just as the original trial records are not definitive.⁵² Indeed, Joan’s name is often rendered by editors as ‘Puzel’ – incorporating the ideas of chastity (‘pucelle’), sexual immorality (as ‘puzel’ could mean ‘whore’ in English), and masculinity (as ‘pizzle’ was an Elizabethan term for ‘penis’) – and ultimately Joan’s virginity is a puzzle which resists a definitive answer.⁵³

The virginity test in *The Changeling* likewise has at its centre an unanswerable puzzle. Whilst most critics focus on Beatrice-Joanna and her performance of virginity, Diaphanta’s virginity is assumed, despite no evidence in the play. For instance, Dale Randall views the test as ‘a serious, explicable, and congruous element in the play’, Amster notes that ‘the test may be medically accurate as demonstrated by Diaphanta’s reaction’, and Arthur Little writes that ‘Diaphanta [...] takes the virginity test and actually experiences the convulsive behaviour that Beatrice will only mimic’.⁵⁴ By assuming Diaphanta’s reactions are genuine and ‘actually experience[d]’, unlike her mistress’s, these critics assume that virginity can be verifiable, even if this process of verification can be falsified. However, in staging Beatrice-Joanna’s discovery of the test, her plot to outmanoeuvre Alsemero, and her performance of the signs of virginity, the play also leaves open the possibility that Diaphanta is also performing. Sylvia Mieszkowski writes that ‘Although the play never draws the servant’s virginity into question, the possibility that Diaphanta, off-stage, might have come across Alsemero’s cabinet, and drawn the same conclusions as her mistress, cannot be excluded’.⁵⁵

⁵² Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, p. 6.

⁵³ Warner, *Joan of Arc*, pp. 21-22. See also William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI, Part I*, ed. by Edward Burns, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), pp. 25-27.

⁵⁴ Randall, p. 366; Amster, p. 231; Arthur L. Little, Jr., ““Transshaped” Women: Virginity and Hysteria in *The Changeling*”, in *Madness in Drama*, ed. by James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 19-42 (p. 20).

⁵⁵ Sylvia Mieszkowski, ‘Unauthorized Intercourse: Early Modern Bed Tricks and their Under-Lying Ideologies’, *ZAA*, 61.4 (2013), 319-40 (p. 327).

However, in leaving open this possibility the play does indeed draw Diaphanta's virginity into question and, rather than proving that the test is genuine, her involvement demonstrates how early modern plays refuse to offer up certainty when it comes to virginity.

As this thesis will go on to demonstrate in more detailed discussions of *The Changeling*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Henry V*, critics frequently make assumptions about the status of a character's virginity or the verifiability of virginity, especially when it comes to an unresolved textual crux or moment of ambiguous, paradoxical virginity. In the case of greensickness, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, critics have also perpetuated the desire to diagnose dramatic subjects or fictional characters with the 'virgin's disease' based on assumptions about virginity status. My approach moves on from contradictory accounts by critics such as Loughlin, who asserts the hymen to be an unreliable sign whilst positively determining Imogen an 'anatomical' virgin. By understanding virginity as removed from the hymen debate, a more nuanced approach is possible. This thesis posits that in drama the unreliability of virginity is reflected in a text's inability to verify virginity, and that only in exploring how defloration is (un)represented can we understand the full significance of virginity, and why it requires imaginative expression in metaphor. This thesis is therefore a project in 'unfixing' virginity: firstly, by understanding virginity as multiple and mobile, as unstable and unfixed, and secondly by challenging scholarly tendencies to correct or modify virginity in early modern plays, especially during the process of textual editing.

Each chapter of this thesis explores a different way of understanding virginity as 'unfixed'. I begin in Chapter 1 with a discussion of 'fractured virginity' in *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Changeling*, arguing that both plays represent virginity not as

a unified idea but as inherently split. This is achieved through a strategy of personification, so that both Helen's and Beatrice-Joanna's virginity is personified as an embodied companion in the form of Diana and Diaphanta, respectively. I argue that central to reading virginity in *All's Well* and *The Changeling* is the fact that moments of defloration in both plays are unstaged, leaving 'representational lacunae'. This gap in staged action is also central to my reading of *Romeo and Juliet* in Chapter 2, in which I argue for a reading of 'recycled virginity' based on Juliet's unstaged wedding night and the repeated dawn structure. In this play virginity is not represented as a stable state nor defloration as a stable transition, but instead as renewable and cyclical. I argue that this understanding of virginity challenges previous scholarly attempts to diagnose Juliet as greensick, and that the disease should be understood primarily as a patriarchal fantasy of control. In Chapter 3 I suggest a way of reading 'perspectival virginity' in *Henry V* which understands the play's central reciprocal metaphor of the virgin as city and the city as virgin as paradoxical. I argue that the play represents defloration and rape as paradoxically enacted and deferred. This paradox overlaps with the ideology informing greensickness, as demonstrated in Burgundy's allegorical speeches in the play's final scene.

iii. Terminology and Scope

In early modern contexts and critical discussions there is considerable confusion between the concepts of chastity and virginity. In the simplest sense, chastity can be understood as an umbrella term meaning sexual and moral purity or continence, with virginity as the more specific idea of sexual inexperience (and celibacy as the perpetual state of sexual inexperience or abstinence). Hence, a virgin is *de facto* chaste, but it is possible to be chaste and sexually initiated. However, a binary distinction which frames

virginity in strictly physiological terms is misleading. In a recent monograph-length study on chastity, Bonnie Lander Johnson argues that:

Importantly, chastity was not the same as virginity. Virginity was an anatomical state that preceded sexual activity; chastity was a state, both spiritual and physiological, of sexual integrity that could be observed through all stages of a person's adult life.⁵⁶

Although this definition of chastity is nuanced, the reduction of virginity to an 'anatomical state' misses its ambiguity and reliance on language. When considering virginity in an early modern context it is important to be aware of the medieval traditions out of which it developed, which understood virginity as a spiritual condition. Writing on the poetics of virginity, R. Howard Bloch demonstrates the patristic logic underpinning virginity: that to desire and be desired compromised virginity, and that 'the mere thought of losing it is sufficient to its loss'.⁵⁷ Bloch traces how, for the early Christian fathers (and Tertullian in particular), spiritual or mental purity was as important as physical purity: hence, for a virgin to be looked at or thought of by a man or even by herself was defiling, and ultimately, and 'syllogistically [...] the only real virgin – that is, the only true virgin – is a dead virgin'.⁵⁸ Accordingly, my approach throughout this thesis views the idea of virginity as referring to an absence of sexual experience, but uncouples this from any assumptions about its verifiability or stability. Therefore, I sometimes use chastity as a way of allowing for virginity's ambiguity. For instance, during the section on Diana in Chapter 1, I refer to Imogen's chastity rather than virginity because the latter is not specified in the text, as outlined above.

Throughout this thesis I use 'defloration' to talk about what is commonly referred to as loss of virginity. The language used to talk about virginity is highly

⁵⁶ Bonnie Lander Johnson, *Chastity in Early Stuart Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 2.

⁵⁷ R. Howard Bloch, 'The Poetics of Virginity', in *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 93–112 (p. 108).

⁵⁸ Bloch, p. 108.

charged and contested, embedded as it is in patriarchal and moralistic standards. The term ‘defloration’ is overtly metaphorical, referring to the idea that virginity or the virgin is a flower to be “plucked” and has historically been used to sexualize and oppress women. However, the ostensibly less metaphorical ‘loss of virginity’ still conceptualizes virginity as a *thing* to be given, taken, lost or stolen. Nor do more clinical terms such as the early modern ‘devirgination’⁵⁹ or modern medical ‘coitarche’⁶⁰ foreclose misogynistic standards: if anything they reinforce the kind of diagnostic scrutiny which this thesis challenges. I have therefore embraced the term ‘defloration’ and its metaphorical possibilities, with an awareness that it is grounded in misogynistic ideals. My usage does not endorse the patriarchal or misogynistic connotations of the term ‘defloration’, but I find that using the language used by early modern writers helps rather than hinders critical analysis of their work as it evokes a particularly early modern idea. Reflecting on how the study of early modern witchcraft has traditionally been a ‘present-centred’ exercise, Malcom Gaskill argues that the topic ‘would benefit from a more self-consciously past-centred approach which seeks to insert the speech and action contained in recorded accusations back into the fluid structure of mentalities which shaped them’.⁶¹ This is an approach I find useful for thinking about early modern virginity. In a similar vein to ‘defloration’, the terms ‘honesty’ and ‘modesty’ were more colloquial alternatives to ‘chastity’ and functioned in similar ways. ‘Honesty’ was especially associated with public behaviour and reputation, as feminist historians have noted. Whereas men’s ‘honesty’ encompassed all aspects of personal and professional

⁵⁹ Most notably used by the physician and anatomist Helkiah Crooke, see *Mikrokosmographia: A description of the Body of Man* (London: 1615), sig. X4r. This is explored further in Chapter 3.

⁶⁰ The term is modelled on the term ‘menarche’ and is sometimes used in medical and sociological literature, see *Oxford Handbook of Women’s Health Nursing*, ed. by Sunanda Gupta, Debra Holloway, and Ali Kubba, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), p. 60.

⁶¹ Malcolm Gaskill, ‘Witchcraft and Power in Early Modern England: The Case of Maragret Moore’, in *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*, ed. by Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 125-45 (p. 127). Kermode and Walker endorse this wider application in their Introduction, p. 4.

life, women's honesty was 'imagined almost entirely through the language of sexual honesty'.⁶² Whilst I primarily use 'chastity' for clarity, these alternative terms are useful in thinking about how a woman's sexual reputation was understood in the early modern period.⁶³ The difficulty in finding the "correct" vocabulary and the impossibility of precision is not a limitation but rather an example of the argument I make throughout this thesis, that virginity is unfixed, ambivalent and elusive. Therefore, most uses of 'chastity' or 'chaste' in this thesis are used to avoid the kind of diagnostic model of virginity I seek to challenge, and to acknowledge virginity's ambiguity.

The dividing line between virginity and chastity is often marriage. Defloration is usually synonymous with 'consummation' because defloration typically happens in the context of marriage in the plays. Hence, defloration can be understood as a patriarchal concept facilitating marriage and therefore a woman's deflowering is her first experience of penetrative sex by a man. I wish to avoid euphemisms such as 'sleep with' and 'in bed with' so often used by scholars writing on this topic: virginity and defloration were valued, regulated and contested in drama because they relate to (potentially) procreative sex which legitimises marriage. As Valerie Traub argues, 'the discourse of chastity figured the threat of phallic penetration as the only socially intelligible form of erotic congress – as the only erotic practice that *mattered*'.⁶⁴ However, as Traub demonstrates, a consequence of this discourse is that 'a range of other erotic behaviours, technically chaste, might be pursued by adolescents and adult

⁶² Kermode and Walker, 'Introduction', in *Women, Crime and the Courts*, pp. 1-25 (p. 13). Another essay of particular interest in this volume is: Laura Gowing, 'Language, Power and the Law: Women's Slander Litigation in Early Modern London', pp. 26-47. See also Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁶³ This thesis is not primarily concerned with married chastity (and the related ideas of cuckoldry and adultery) unless specifically in relation to virginity or the process of defloration. Although I challenge her definition of virginity above, Bonnie Lander Johnson's study is an excellent exploration of how chastity, especially in the context of marriage, functioned as a pervasive standard in Stuart-era literature and culture.

⁶⁴ Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 52.

women’.⁶⁵ Hence, a narrow definition of virginity does not reflect early modern sexual practices. Furthermore, the obsession and anxiety surrounding the regulation of this particular sex act, and proving that it has occurred, is partly due to the fact that the penetrative act was obscure and obscured. Indeed, this instability is why virginity and defloration cause anxiety in the plays, and amongst critics, as demonstrated above.

The absence of the staged sex act has been explored by queer theorists whose work is helpful in challenging prescriptive ideas of what constitutes sex, and hence, virginity and defloration. Medhavi Menon and Christine Varnado have both identified the “morning after” scene in *Romeo and Juliet* as a moment of ‘metaleptic’ or ‘invisible’ sex.⁶⁶ Both critics argue that the unrepresented act of consummation between Romeo and Juliet is played out in the erotically charged conversation at dawn at 3.5 – about whether the couple can hear the nightingale or lark, whether it is night or morning, whether Romeo should stay or flee – and that the unstaged nature of Romeo and Juliet’s consummation is significant. I discuss this scene in detail in Chapter 2, where I argue that this is only one of four metaphorical dawn deflorations throughout the play which compensate for the ‘representational lacuna’ of Juliet’s defloration, and which creates Juliet’s ‘recycled virginity’. However, the scene is worth discussing here, too, because it is central to how these critics think through new ways of understanding sex in early modern plays.

Menon explores the consequence of the ‘absent sex scene’ for genre, making a comparison with metaleptic sex in *All’s Well* (uncoincidentally, another play I discuss

⁶⁵ Traub, *Renaissance of Lesbianism*, p. 52.

⁶⁶ Madhavi Menon, *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 68-93; Christine Varnado, ““Invisible Sex!”: What Looks Like the Act in Early Modern Drama?”, in *Sex Before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England*, ed. by James M. Bromley and Will Stockton (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), pp. 25-52. Note that Varnado uses the term ‘invisible sex’ and ““Invisible Secks!!!”” interchangeably, the latter a reference to the LOLCats meme she uses to theoretically frame her question of ‘what do we think *looks like sex*, and why?’. I will use the term ‘invisible sex’ unless directly quoting.

in this thesis).⁶⁷ Varnado uses the moment of ‘invisible sex’ in *Romeo and Juliet* to posit an overtly queer approach to reading sex in drama. She argues that although ‘The entire history of performance, reading, and reception of this scene has, virtually speaking, captioned this stage moment “Invisible Secks!!!” of the legally significant, penis-in-vagina variety’, it is important to ask:

Exactly *what sex acts* are figured here if we don’t assume that we already know? Can a queer reading perceive other possibilities – other possible acts and nonacts and partial acts – in place of the penetrative, goal-directed heterosexual intercourse with which it has been culturally captioned?⁶⁸

The argument that ‘*nothing* would have to be different in the text of the play to imagine the invisible sex act before this dialogue as something else’ is significant not just for challenging heterosexual, patriarchal and phallocentric assumptions about sex, as Varnado argues, but also supports my argument of ‘unfixed virginity’ as essentially disruptive.⁶⁹ The unstaged nature of sex in early modern drama, and especially unstaged defloration, is a challenge to the patriarchal need to control and contain, for sex to be strictly reserved for the solemnizing of marriage and the production of offspring.

It is important to acknowledge that the assumption of heterosexual penetrative sex is what’s at stake when it comes to the way virginity, defloration, marital consummation and rape are represented in the plays I discuss throughout this thesis. It is what regulates and structures the relationships between Juliet and Romeo, as well as other groupings of Helen, Bertram and Diana; Beatrice-Joanna, Alsemero and Diaphanta; and Katherine and Henry. However, the idea of ‘invisible sex’ in early modern plays, which for Varnado opens the potential for queer readings, is also what

⁶⁷ Menon, p. 77.

⁶⁸ Varnado, pp. 31-32.

⁶⁹ Varnado, p. 32.

destabilises virginity and the security demanded by patriarchy of regulated, marital, procreative sex. In this way ‘unfixed virginity’ can be read as a queer reading of virginity in that it allows for alternative possibilities of what has or has not taken place. Varnado’s argument that ‘sex’s epistemological slipperiness and textual invisibility can therefore illuminate queer valences to what is always read as “straight” sex’, also has implications, I argue, for how we read what is often assumed to be “straight” virginity and defloration, especially what we might term ‘invisible defloration’.⁷⁰ The focus throughout this thesis on unstaged moments of defloration therefore builds on the work of queer theorists who have argued for a more complex, ambiguous approach to sex in early modern drama. In their introduction to *Sex Before Sex* (the volume which includes Varnado’s essay), editors James M. Bromley and Will Stockton suggest that, rather than thinking of sex as ‘measurable’ what is significant is the ‘epistemological recalcitrance of sex and the complexities of sexual signification’.⁷¹ The editors echo Valerie Traub who argues that ‘sex, as a category of human thought, volition, behaviour, and representation, is opaque, inaccessible, and resistant to understanding’.⁷² It is the obscurity of sex which resists the ability to locate or prove defloration.

When introducing this scene in *Romeo and Juliet* Varnado makes the point to describe the couple as ‘Romeo (a boy) and Juliet (a girl played by a boy actor)’.⁷³ That female characters would have been played by boy actors on the early modern commercial stage adds another layer to the way virginity is unfixed in early modern

⁷⁰ Varnado, p. 35.

⁷¹ Will Stockton and James M. Bromley, ‘Introduction: Figuring Early Modern Sex’, in *Sex Before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England*, ed. by James M. Bromley and Will Stockton (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), pp. 1-24 (pp. 3-4).

⁷² Valerie Traub, ‘Making Sexual Knowledge’, *Early Modern Women*, 5 (2010), 251-59 (p. 253).

⁷³ Varnado, p. 31.

drama.⁷⁴ The figure of the boy actor extends the idea of virginity as obscured by theatrical conditions. Terms such as ‘physiological virginity’, ‘anatomical virginity’, and ‘biological virginity’, often used by scholars, are consciously avoided in this thesis because they imply that virginity is a fixed state or locatable thing. The terms make little sense when used in relation to female characters performed by boys on the stage. As Peter Stallybrass has explored, audiences were aware of the fiction of the female character played by the boy actor, and often speculated on the body of the boy actor beneath the feminine costume/female presentation.⁷⁵ Furthermore, recent work by Simone Chess nuances the way we approach the figure of the boy actor and the gender binary. Her study on boy actors’ adult careers makes the case for understanding certain figures as non-binary, and she argues that, for these performers, ‘their on-and off-stage personas informed the queer performances they staged throughout their careers’.⁷⁶ Therefore, the theatrical context for the plays discussed in this thesis, in particular that

⁷⁴ For an early overview of the all-male stage, see Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare’s England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Laura Levine has demonstrated how anti-theatricality was coupled with a fear of effeminization, of both the male actors and the audience, see *Men in Women’s Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization 1579-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For a summary of three decades of critical work on the all-male stage, and a reassessment of the boy actor and embodiment, see Evelyn Tribble, ‘Pretty and Apt: Boy Actors, Skill, and Embodiment’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment*, pp. 628-40. For recent work which qualifies the critical paradigm of the all-male stage, see Clare McManus, ‘Women and English Renaissance Drama: Making and Unmaking ‘The All-Male Stage’’, *Literature Compass*, 4.3 (2007), 784-96. While acknowledging the significance of the male player, McManus argues that ‘prior to 1660 the all-male playhouse stages were islands of single-sex performance in a sea of mixed sex theatricals and entertainments’, p. 785. Scholars have also demonstrated how, even if women were not performing on the commercial stage, these spaces were far from exclusively male, as women contributed work ‘behind the scenes’. See Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, eds., *Women Players in England, 1500-1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) and Natasha Korda, *Labors Lost: Women’s Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). For more on this, see the special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin* on early modern women’s performance, especially the introduction: Clare McManus and Lucy Munro, ‘Renaissance Women’s Performance and the Dramatic Canon: Theatre History, Evidence, and Narratives’, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 33.1 (2015), 1-7.

⁷⁵ Peter Stallybrass, ‘Transvestism and the “Body Beneath”: Speculating on the Boy Actor’, in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. by Susan Zimmerman (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 64-83.

⁷⁶ Simone Chess, ‘Queer Residue: Boy Actors’ Adult Careers in Early Modern England’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 19.4 (2019), 242-264 (p. 242).

boy actors would have performed the roles of Helen, Diana, Beatrice-Joanna, Diaphanta, Juliet, and Katherine, is significant for thinking about virginity as ‘unfixed’.

The general focus in this thesis is on female characters and their virginity, mainly due to the disproportionate emphasis on controlling women’s sexuality through marriage and sexual violence in the plays. Research by Bruce Smith suggests how sexual initiation was less regulated and commodified for men than for women in the early modern period.⁷⁷ There has been important work done on men and virginity, especially in the medieval period and often in the context of religious celibacy, married celibacy, and kingship.⁷⁸ These studies often incorporate a queer reading, especially regarding Edward the Confessor and Richard II, neither of whom produced heirs. Relatedly, other scholars view virgin status for women as occupying a queer space. The medievalist Sarah Salih questions whether virgins are included in the category of ‘women’ or whether virginity can be conceptualized as a separate gendered identity.⁷⁹ Jankowski has argued that female virgins, especially perpetual virgins like the historical Joan of Arc or dramatic figures like Isabella in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* should be understood as queer because they live outside the patriarchal sexual

⁷⁷ In his study on early modern male homosexuality, Bruce R. Smith makes the point that men would have married ten to fifteen years after reaching sexual maturity, and would have had ‘limited access to women of [their] own age and social class because of the high premium placed on female virginity’ (p. 84), inviting the reader to deduce what young men’s sex lives might have looked like, see Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare’s England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). To a certain extent this separation of the sexes is class-specific: see Chapter 2 for a discussion of premarital sex between men and women which offers a slight challenge to this idea of men’s limited access to women. Nevertheless, Smith’s point that men would most likely have been sexually active for a significant time before marriage is pertinent.

⁷⁸ For a comprehensive overview, see Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), especially the section on the figure of the virgin king, pp. 113-31. Critics have explored the figures of Edward the Confessor and Richard II (and Richard’s relationship with Edward, whose purported virginity led to his canonization): Katherine J. Lewis, ‘Becoming a Virgin King: Richard II and Edward the Confessor’, in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. by Samantha Riches and Sarah Salih (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 86-100, and Joanna Huntington, ‘Edward the Celibate, Edward the Saint: Virginity in the Construction of Edward the Confessor’, in *Medieval Virginites*, pp. 119-39. In the same volume, see also John H. Arnold, ‘The Labour of Continence: Masculinity and Clerical Virginity’, *Medieval Virginites*, pp. 102-18. Kelly also dedicates a chapter to male virgins in hagiography and romance texts in *Performing Virginity*, pp. 91-118.

⁷⁹ Salih, *Versions of Virginity*, pp. 16-40.

economy.⁸⁰ This thesis challenges Jankowski's framework, arguing that the dividing line between 'maid' and 'wife' was ambiguous, and that rather than operating outside the patriarchal sex/gender system, virginity was integral to marriage and functioned in many ways as a heterosexist construct. Furthermore, the shifting religious context throughout the sixteenth century means that there was a greater distance between how virginity was understood for men and women, as the closing of religious houses during the English Reformation meant that male celibacy ceased to hold social or moral significance while virginity maintained cultural value for women beyond the religious sphere. Therefore, owing to the complexity surrounding early modern concepts of virginity, and how it relates in different ways to specific groups, this thesis narrows the field of enquiry to focus on the virginity of heterosexual female characters, as a blanket approach would not be appropriate.

However, despite my focus on female characters in this thesis, they and the plays are shaped by a queer performance context, and that the unfixity of virginity echoes this gender fluidity. There is a tension between, on the one hand, external, patriarchal, and institutional forces, which necessitate a strict gender binary and the regulation of female reproductive capacity, and, on the other hand, the more subversive, ephemeral and fluid nature of sex and the theatre, as discussed above through the idea of 'invisible sex' or indeed, 'invisible defloration', which challenges this binary. Virginity's ambivalence in the plays and its reliance on metaphor means that virginity is much less secure than a narrow physiological definition would allow. Its relationship to physiological features such as the hymen and its debate within anatomical literature are relevant to how virginity has been conceptualized, but any definition on this basis would be reductive. As long-standing scholarly interest in the 'one-sex' and 'two-sex'

⁸⁰ Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, pp. 170-93.

models for understanding sexual difference demonstrates, how early moderns conceptualised the body is a continued area of debate.⁸¹ In relation to virginity specifically, it has been argued that the hymen upsets the ‘one-sex’ framework: Amster observes how, although this model understands women as inverted men, with corresponding male and female genital organs (ovaries and testes, uterus and scrotum, and so on) ‘the complete absence of the corresponding male equivalent for the female hymen’ is ‘telling’, as ‘It is the one part of the sexualized body which does not invertedly mirror the male body model’.⁸² Amster’s question – ‘Why [...] is the one difference in the otherwise perfectly corresponding bodies related to the proof and diagnosis of virginity?’ – is important as the inequality is demonstrated in the case of Frances Howard, whose husband’s sexual inexperience was measured on her body.

My approach to virginity which decentres the hymen, or rather refocuses on the way virginity functioned as a fluid, destabilized imaginative concept which was used as a tool of patriarchy, complicates this further. Recent work in the area of trans and gender studies likewise seeks to nuance these debates. In the introduction to their special issue of the *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* focusing on early modern trans studies, Simone Chess, Colby Gordon, and Will Fisher note a resistance from trans scholars and activists to ‘the medicalized models of trans identity’.⁸³ They highlight different approaches to early modern medical thinking about gender and the

⁸¹ See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1990), who argues that the eighteenth century saw a shift from a one-sex to a two-sex model. For a counter argument to Laqueur, see Janet Adelman, ‘Making Defect Perfection: Shakespeare and the One-Sex Model’, in *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage*, ed. by Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), pp. 23-52. For a more recent engagement with this debate which calls for an understanding of the two models as coexisting over a much wider period, see Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

⁸² Amster, p. 219.

⁸³ Simone Chess, Colby Gordon, and Will Fisher, ‘Introduction: Early Modern Trans Studies’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 19.4 (2019), 1-25 (p. 20). For an extended discussion on this topic, see also Jess R. Pfeffer, ‘Trans Materiality: Crooke’s *Mikrokosmographia*, Sexual Dimorphism, and the Embodiment of Identity’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 19.4 (2019), 227-40.

body, some of which are less engaged with ideas of identity expression. Also included in this special issue is an interview between early modern scholar, Andy Kesson, and theatre practitioner Emma Frankland on how to stage John Lyly's *Galatea* in a way which brings out 'the play's queer potential'. As Kesson and Frankland note, in the play 'Characters dispute over their various identities as "virgins" [...] [and] "maids" (as well as numerous other identities) and they argue that 'the play works hard to show you how characters negotiate transitions from one gendered category to another'.⁸⁴ This work is therefore useful in contextualising my theory of 'unfixed virginity' especially within a performance context.

Two figures who feature prominently in discussions of early modern virginity are Elizabeth I, the so-called Virgin Queen, and the Virgin Mary. Both are touchstones for virginity and maternity.⁸⁵ Elizabethan Protestant virginity is often understood as a replacement for Marian Catholic virginity, although work by Helen Hackett has nuanced this considerably.⁸⁶ Unlike the virginity of Frances Howard, so rooted in the body and the prurient virginity test to which she was subjected, the virginity of Mary and Elizabeth is fantastical and iconographic.⁸⁷ Although speculation surrounding Elizabeth's sexual history persists, it is understood primarily as a political strategy and symbolic persona. By deferring a discussion of Elizabeth and Mary, I consciously

⁸⁴ Emma Frankland and Andy Kesson, "'Perhaps John Lyly was a trans woman?': An Interview about performing *Galatea's* Queer, Transgender Stories', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 19.4 (2019), 284-98 (pp. 294-95). I discuss *Galatea* briefly in Chapter 1.

⁸⁵ For studies on Mary, see Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976) and Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (London: Penguin, 2010).

⁸⁶ Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995). Citing influential scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt and Lisa Jardine, Hackett explains that this claim is now 'an assumption in Renaissance studies', p. 7.

⁸⁷ The work of art historian Roy Strong demonstrates the significance of Elizabeth's portraits in contributing to her virgin image, see *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Pimlico, 1999). For a different view, which challenges the idea that the portraits are 'Marian' and claims Elizabeth is represented more as Protestant ruler than virgin queen, see Susan Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I', in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 171-99.

choose to decentre them from my approach to early modern virginity in drama, not because they are unimportant, but to redress an imbalance in criticism. Virginity is often thought of as important for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama because it was written and performed in the context of the Virgin Queen (and her shadow, Mary), and references to virginity in drama are often understood through an Elizabethan lens.⁸⁸ I do not so much argue against these readings – allusions to both figures are often made – as suggest an alternative view, that the virginity of Mary and Elizabeth is symptomatic of a much wider cultural conceptualisation of virginity in early modern England.

Helen Hackett's arguments that caution against drawing an overly-strong connection between Elizabeth and Mary are helpful in thinking about virginity as separate from both figures. For instance, she notes how previous scholars argue for understanding Elizabeth's virginity as Marian because they were both associated with the rose, star, moon, phoenix, ermine and pearl, but claims that this is based on a faulty assumption, as these were not 'exclusively Marian images, but had wider associations with femininity and virginity as general qualities'.⁸⁹ Just as I resist reducing all images of virginity back to the hymen, I also resist bringing all references to virginity back to Elizabeth or Mary. Their virginity is characteristic of how virginity functions paradoxically and brief exploration of how virginity is signified in depictions of Mary and Elizabeth reveals a common method of representing virginity as unstable and unfixed.

The way virginity metaphors work in combination to each other, as demonstrated in the passage from *Pericles*, is also found in Elizabethan portraiture.

⁸⁸ This is illustrated by several of the studies I engage with throughout this thesis which understand the play's representation of virginity in relation to Elizabeth. See, for instance, Kaara L. Peterson, 'The Ring's the Thing: Elizabeth I's Virgin Knot and *All's Well That Ends Well*', *Studies in Philology*, 113.1 (2016), 101-31; Claire McEachern, 'Henry V and the Paradox of the Body Politic', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45.1 (1994), 33-56.

⁸⁹ Hackett, p. 9.

Two paintings which incorporate a complex combination of visual virginity metaphors are *The Ditchley Portrait* (c. 1592) by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger and *The Rainbow Portrait* (c.1600-02) by an unknown artist. In *The Ditchley Portrait* (Fig. 1) Elizabeth stands upon a globe, the hem of her skirt perfectly in line with the coastlines of her kingdom. The image powerfully aligns her virgin persona with her unconquered realm. Peter Stallybrass argues that in this portrait Elizabeth is ‘the imperial virgin, symbolizing, at the same time as she is symbolized by, the *hortus conclusus* of the state’.⁹⁰ The two-way metaphor, which already destabilizes virginity, is further complicated by the inclusion of other virginity metaphors, such as the rose brooch and the numerous pearls, including the carefully positioned pearl necklace which falls below her waist. Gloves had erotic connotations in early modern culture, as they could be used to symbolize sexual intercourse, and therefore the unworn gloves held in Elizabeth’s right hand are another symbol of virginity.⁹¹ Likewise *The Rainbow Portrait* (Fig. 2) includes numerous virginity metaphors: in addition to the flowers on her bodice and the long pearl necklace (reminiscent of *The Ditchley Portrait*), virginity is signified by Elizabeth’s long flowing hair and the crescent moon in her headdress which alludes to Diana, goddess of virginity.⁹² Especially striking are the eyes, ears and open mouths which array her gown. As Susan Frye notes, these disembodied features

⁹⁰ Peter Stallybrass, ‘Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed’, in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 123–42 (p. 129).

⁹¹ Two notable examples are found in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Changeling*. Gazing up at Juliet in the Capulet orchard, Romeo wishes ‘Oh, that I were a glove upon that hand’ (2.1.66); more sinisterly, Deflores says in response to a disdainful Beatrice-Joanna who has thrown her gloves at him, ‘She had rather wear my pelt tanned in a pair | Of dancing pumps, than I should thrust my fingers | Into her sockets here’ (1.1.228-30). René Weis comments on the ‘erotic potential’ of Romeo’s lines and Richard Dutton notes Deflores’ ‘intensely sexually suggestive’ imagery, see William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by René Weis, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 2.2.24n., and Dutton, ed., ‘The Changeling’, 1.1.229-30n.

⁹² I discuss Diana in Chapter 1. On uncovered, free-flowing hair as generic symbol of virginity, see Molly Myerowitz Levine, ‘The Gendered Grammar of Ancient and Mediterranean Hair’ in *Off With Her Head!: The Denial of Women’s Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, ed. by Howard Eilberg-Schwarz and Wendy Doniger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 76-130 (pp. 95-96).

‘form a disquieting suggestion of vaginal openings combined with a sense of governmental surveillance’.⁹³ Like the gloves, virginity is paradoxically symbolized through overtly sexual imagery. The multitude of virginity metaphors in depictions of Elizabeth therefore exemplify the way metaphor and virginity work cumulatively across early modern culture.

Marian iconography also demonstrates the complex relationship between virginity and metaphor, especially depictions of The Annunciation, the moment when Gabriel visits Mary and informs her of her role in God’s incarnation.⁹⁴ The Annunciation is a moment of paradoxical defloration: Gabriel’s words enact Jesus’ conception, so that in this moment Mary both transitions and remains constant, she becomes pregnant yet is virginal. Depictions of this moment of transitional and non-transitional virginity in medieval painting rely on visual metaphors. For instance, two medieval versions, *The Annunciation* (c.1307-11) by Duccio and *The Annunciation* (c.1430–40) by the Master of the Judgement of Paris achieve this through architectural symbolism. Duccio (Fig. 3) features a juxtaposition of traditional rounded Romanesque arches and newer pointed Gothic arches, the combined styles signifying the moment of conception as everything is in flux. The newer, pointed arches are found exclusively on the entrances, suggesting transition, but the presence of the older, rounded arches suggest continuity.⁹⁵ A similar architectural metonymy is found in the version by the Master of the Judgement of Paris (Fig. 2). Alasdair Flint observes how Gabriel’s hand does not pass through into Mary’s loggia, ‘as if brought to a halt by an invisible barrier’,

⁹³ Susan Frye, *The Competition for Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 102-03.

⁹⁴ Luke 1:26-38.

⁹⁵ Alasdair Flint, ‘Duccio, The Annunciation’, *Building the Picture: Architecture in Italian Renaissance Painting*, The National Gallery, London (2014)
<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/exhibition-catalogues/building-the-picture/entering-the-picture/duccio-annunciation> [accessed 28 February 2018].

so that the loggia, representing Mary, is viewed as ‘protected’ and ‘inviolable’.⁹⁶ However, the loggia is also open and Mary is not separated by any physical boundary. In both paintings the Holy Spirit in the form of the dove seems to pass through into the loggia, but the oblique angle makes this ambivalent. The dove is both *inside* and *outside*, depending on perspective, creating a visual paradox which represents Mary’s bodily paradox of being at once virginal and pregnant. The loggia/dove metonym demonstrates one way virginity resists stable representation in Annunciation imagery, and anticipates later paradoxical architectural representations of ambiguous defloration in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry V*. As this thesis will demonstrate, virginity functions as unfixed in early modern drama, an instability which is also reflected in the virginity of Elizabeth and Mary.

⁹⁶ Alasdair Flint, ‘Master of the Judgement of Paris, The Annunciation’, in *Building the Picture: Architecture in Italian Renaissance Painting*, The National Gallery, London (2014)
<<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/research/exhibition-catalogues/building-the-picture/place-making/master-judgement-of-paris-annunciation>> [accessed 28 February 2018].



Fig. 1: Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Queen Elizabeth I ('The Ditchley Portrait')*, c. 1592, oil on canvas, 24.13 x 15.24 cm, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Fig. 2: *The Rainbow Portrait*, c. 1600-02, oil on canvas, 127 x 99.1 cm, Hatfield House, Hatfield.





Fig. 3: Duccio, *The Annunciation*, c. 1307-11, egg tempera on wood, 44.5 x 45.8 cm, The National Gallery, London.

Fig. 4: Master of the Judgement of Paris, *The Annunciation*, c. 1430-40, tempera on panel, 54.2 x 37.6 cm, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London.



1.

FRACTURED VIRGINITY:
PERSONIFICATION AND UNSTAGED BEDTRICKS
IN *ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL* AND *THE CHANGELING*

INTRODUCTION

When Beatrice-Joanna is told by her father that she ‘must be a bride within this sevennight’ (1.1.186) in Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s *The Changeling* (1622) she replies with an extended metaphor likening her virginity to a companion. She tells her father:

I cannot render satisfaction
Unto the dear companion of my soul,
Virginity, whom I thus long have lived with,
And part with it so rude and suddenly;
Can such friends divide, never to meet again,
Without a solemn farewell?

1.1.187-93

By personifying her virginity as ‘the dear companion of my soul’ she has ‘lived with’ all her life, Beatrice-Joanna presents virginity in terms of a relationship: the virgin and her virginity are ‘friends’. In this construction, virginity is a separate person coexisting alongside the virgin. Hence, defloration becomes an act which will ‘divide’ the friends and resembles banishment or death – perhaps even an execution – as the two figures will ‘never meet again’. This metaphor of virginity as a virgin’s companion also appears in an earlier Jacobean play, Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well* (c.1604-07). Remarking on the futility of virginity, Paroles tells Helen that her virginity is ‘too cold a companion: away with’t!’ (1.1.126). As in *The Changeling*, virginity is personified as a companion and defloration allegorized as the severing of a friendship.

These metaphors indicate the importance of virginity in both plays. Yet they also highlight a problem at the heart of critical approaches to the topic: the assumption that virginity is characterized by unity. Scholars writing on Beatrice-Joanna's metaphor argue that her language of parting and division implies that at this point in the text her virginity is whole and unbroken. Arthur Little writes that 'the terms 'part' and 'divide' [...] connote what will literally happen to Beatrice's hymen' and that her father 'evinces his confidence, his unshaken assurance in the inviolate and inviolable constitution of his daughter's virginity'.¹ Sara Luttfriing claims that Beatrice-Joanna's 'language of "parting" and "dividing"' is a 'discreet yet forceful reminder of her physical intactness'.² Most recently, Gregory Schnitzspahn, in unnecessarily graphic language which echoes Little, reads this passage as alluding to 'the impending rupture of her genital tissues once she submits to vaginal penetration'.³ These critics understand virginity and the virgin body as intact and defloration as a process of division or 'rupture'. However, although these personification metaphors do represent defloration as a parting, they also contradictorily represent virginity as fractured prior to defloration, as the companion exists alongside the virgin.

This chapter explores how personified virginity upsets traditional understandings of "intact" virginity. It offers an alternative to critical preoccupation with the hymen as site of defloration by suggesting that virginity circulates as a primarily metaphorical, imaginative construct in early modern drama. Key to this fractured sense of virginity is the issue of what is and is not staged in the plays. Both *All's Well* and *The Changeling* feature deflorative bedtricks, but importantly these are not part of the staged action. I therefore first address the unstaged nature of the bedtrick,

¹ Little, pp. 28-29.

² Luttfriing, p. 108.

³ Gregory M. Schnitzspahn, "'What the Act Has Made You': Approving Virginity in *The Changeling*", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 31 (2018), 78-107 (p. 86).

arguing that moments of defloration occupy ‘representational lacunae’ in many early modern plays, including *All’s Well* and *The Changeling*. I suggest that these lacunae are inherently destabilising, and that the absence of representation for moments of defloration consequently results in a compensatory abundance of virginity metaphors. I then take the ‘virginity dialogue’ (1.1.106-53) between Helen and Paroles in *All’s Well* as a starting point for demonstrating how virginity metaphors compete and coexist and how personification is used to present virginity as plural. This leads to a discussion of personification in the early modern rhetorical tradition and on the stage. I trace the specific personification of the goddess Diana to support my interpretation of Shakespeare’s Diana as embodying virginity in *All’s Well*. In the final section I build on this argument to explore how virginity and virgins are represented in *The Changeling*, suggesting that a sense of ‘fractured virginity’ is central to the play.

This chapter also argues for the importance of ‘unfixing virginity’ in early modern plays, demonstrating the critical potential of a nuanced approach to virginity, particularly in the context of editorial decisions. The shared image of virginity as a virgin’s companion in *All’s Well* and *The Changeling* is particularly striking because recent critics have argued for a connection between *All’s Well* and Middleton, with some arguing that the ‘virginity dialogue’ in 1.1 is a later addition by Middleton.⁴ Gary

⁴ In 2012 Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith proposed a Middleton authorship, a claim contested by Brian Vickers and Marcus Dahl. The scholars exchanged a series of rebuttals in the *Times Literary Supplement*: Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith, ‘Many Hands: A New Shakespeare Collaboration?’, *Times Literary Supplement*, April 20, 5690 (2012), 13-15; Brian Vickers and Marcus Dahl, ‘What is infirm... *All’s Well that Ends Well*: An Attribution Rejected’, *Times Literary Supplement*, May 11, 5693 (2012), 14-15; Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith, ‘*All’s Well That Ends Well*’, *Times Literary Supplement*, June 8, 5697 (2012), 6; Brian Vickers ‘*All’s Well That Ends Well*’, *Times Literary Supplement*, June 15, 5698 (2012), 6. For overview of the debate see William Shakespeare, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, ed. by Suzanne Gossett and Helen Wilcox, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 359-68; Rory Loughnane, ‘The Virginity Dialogue in *All’s Well That Ends Well*: Feminism, Editing, and Adaptation’, in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Dymphna Callaghan, 2nd edn (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), pp. 411-27 (pp. 411-12). Gary Taylor argues the Folio text is a ‘layered composition’, see ‘*All’s Well that Ends Well*: Text, Date, and Adaptation’, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, ed. by Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 337-65 (p. 343).

Taylor, among others, argues that the passage is ‘dispensable’, suggesting that if it was not written by Shakespeare it is not integral to the play.⁵ This chimes with established views of the ‘virginity dialogue’ from critics and directors.⁶ I argue, in contrast, that the dialogue is indispensable, as the personification of virginity as a virgin’s companion is a central structural image. This chapter demonstrates how an approach centred on language and metaphor is important for understanding how virginity works in early modern drama, in text and performance. The editing issue with this passage is one that I return to specifically in the conclusion.

This chapter also challenges the view that the dialogue between Helen and Paroles is un-Shakespearean because of its preoccupation with virginity, a view put forth by several critics. For instance, Taylor argues that ‘the sexuality of this prose is entirely characteristic of Middleton, and that similar aesthetic and moral judgements have often been made about Middleton’s work’.⁷ Likewise, Rory Loughnane suggests the passage is anomalous in the way it discusses virginity as ‘over the space of fifty-two lines, the words “virgin,” “virgins,” and “virginity” occur twenty-two times (I.i.109-61)’ and that ‘nowhere else in the Shakespearean canon is there such a concentrated discussion of this subject’.⁸ The implication is that virginity is not an important or prominent figure in Shakespearean drama. Whilst it is true that there is no analogous debate between two characters about virginity in the canon, it is not the case that there is no other passage which is as concentrated on virginity. For instance, although the words ‘virgin’, ‘virgins’, and ‘virginity’ are not used as frequently in the brothel scenes in *Pericles*, virginity is its central theme, and it is likewise conceptualized through numerous fluid, oppositional metaphors. Similarly, in the final

⁵ Taylor, ‘Text, Date, and Adaptation’, p. 362.

⁶ Gossett and Wilcox, eds., *All’s Well*, pp. 367-68; Loughnane, p. 411.

⁷ Taylor, ‘Text, Date, and Adaptation’, p. 355.

⁸ Loughnane, p. 415.

scene of *Henry V* (discussed in Chapter 3) there are again numerous competing and coexisting metaphorical depictions of virginity which engage with early modern attitudes. The concentration of the words ‘virgin’ and ‘virginity’ are not the only measure of whether virginity is under discussion, and to make a judgement on this basis is to fundamentally misunderstand how virginity was represented and functions in early modern drama. Therefore, rather than using this passage as a measure of authorship, in this chapter I argue that the similarity between Shakespeare’s and Middleton’s depiction of virginity is indicative of a wider literary trend of representing virginity as a ubiquitous and unstable figure.

This chapter therefore argues that the doubling of virgins in *All’s Well* and *The Changeling*, who are mistaken for and represent the other at the moment of defloration, can be read as extending the personification presented in the opening scenes of both plays, with the two pairs – Helen/Diana and Beatrice-Joanna/Diaphanta – embodying the virgin/companion construct. These personifications are suggestive of how both plays represent virginity, before and after the unstaged deflorations, as fractured, doubled and dis(as)sembled. This chapter introduces a methodology for reading virginity metaphors as structural devices in drama, laying the groundwork for later chapters on *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry V*, and demonstrates how my understanding of ‘unfixed virginity’ is at work on the early modern stage.

1. *Unstaged Bedtricks and Unperformed Sex*

The instability of virginity in drama is partly due to the difficulty in dramatizing defloration on the stage. This is related to the wider observation that sex in general is never performed in early modern plays. Taylor, for instance, claims that there was a ‘prohibition on performing live sex acts in the theatre’ which Middleton ‘repeatedly inventively circumvents’.⁹ Taylor gives the following examples:

In *A Mad World, My Masters* we hear a couple copulating just offstage; in *The Roaring Girl*, a woman character places a musical instrument between her legs and fingers it, in a manner that clearly mimics masturbation; in *No Wit, No Help like a Woman’s*, a woman character disguised as a man exits to consummate her newly solemnized marriage with another woman character, in a manner that clearly encourages an audience to imagine lesbian sex taking place just offstage during the intermission between the acts.¹⁰

Taylor claims that ‘Such moments invite our fantasies to paint the explicit visual image that his stage could not’.¹ Yet whilst these strategies are certainly inventive, whether the prohibition on performing sex is successfully circumvented is debatable. In these examples the sex is arguably still unstaged: it is deferred or metonymic. Middleton cannot ‘circumvent’ the restriction fully, thus the sex can only be represented imaginatively. Rather than just a consequence of early modern moral or ethical prohibitions, then, this points to something about the nature of drama and sex which resists dramatization. This is especially and most interestingly the case for virginity and defloration. Furthermore, despite Taylor’s claims, these strategies are not exclusive to Middleton but, as this thesis will go on to demonstrate, occur across a range of early modern plays.

Indeed, the moments of defloration that occur in both *The Changeling* and *All’s Well* are all unstaged, occurring either between scenes or offstage.¹¹ Both plays feature

⁹ Gary Taylor, *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 28.

¹⁰ Taylor, *Castration*, p. 28.

¹¹ The idea of ‘between scenes’ can be problematic in the context of early modern drama, as the ordering is sometimes contested, editors often disagree on scene breaks, and extant early printed texts

pairs of virgins who substitute each other on wedding nights and in marital beds via a bedtrick: in *The Changeling*, Beatrice-Joanna arranges for her serving woman, Diaphanta, to take her place in her new husband Alsemero's bed; in *All's Well*, Helen arranges to take the place of Diana who Helen's reluctant husband, Bertram, intends to seduce.¹² Both bedtricks therefore enact defloration and consummation. In *The Changeling* there is an additional moment of defloration prior to the bedtrick in Act Five, involving Beatrice-Joanna and Deflores. Like the bedtrick, this encounter is not witnessed by the audience, who instead see Deflores carrying Beatrice-Joanna off stage at the end of Act Three, promising her 'Thy peace is wrought for ever in this yielding' (3.4.168), and then see her re-enter at the start of Act Four, soliloquizing that 'This fellow has undone me endlessly' (4.1.1). The 'undoing' between the sheets takes place between acts, and from the audience's perspective there is a gap where the transformative event should take place. The significance of Deflores' name – which translates as 'deflowerer' – is important. The play simultaneously obscures the act of defloration by not staging it, yet the embodiment of defloration (Deflores) carries the virgin off-stage, a representational tension which will be further explored below.

As Kim Solga notes, modern productions of *The Changeling* conventionally hold the interval between acts 3 and 4 so that 'The act (of sex? Violence?) vacates the

are never completely reliable accounts of the plays as acted. For further discussion, see Alan C. Dessen, 'Divided Shakespeare: Configuring Acts and Scenes', in *Shakespeare and Textual Studies*, ed. by Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 332-41. Furthermore, as Claire M. L. Bourne notes, 'Neither the presence of scene divisions in editions of plays associated with London's commercial theaters nor their consistent use to account for the cleared stage was at all prevalent before the 1630s', and she has found that in the 1590s, only 'about 13 percent of first editions of plays, most of them from the commercial theater, were published with numbered scene divisions', see *Typographies of Performance in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 138. Nevertheless, for the purposes of my argument, whether by accident or design, a sense of a lacuna is created with the absence of staged action, and the idea of 'between scenes' is useful.

¹² Scholars use the terms 'bedtrick', 'bed-trick' and 'bed trick' interchangeably. For consistency, I use 'bedtrick' throughout this thesis. Likewise, Beatrice-Joanna, Deflores and Helen are sometimes called by variant names (Beatrice Joanna, De Flores and Helena). I follow the names used in my source texts and only use these variants when quoting another critic directly.

playing space'.¹³ Yet even if the scenes are staged concurrently without an interval the encounter between Beatrice-Joanna and Deflores takes place in a 'non-space [...] an elsewhere beyond the reach of performance', disappearing into 'a hole at the centre of the text and its performance'.¹⁴ Whereas Solga identifies two more recurrences of this 'non-space into which Beatrice Joanna and De Flores disappear' in the play's final act, she overlooks the implications of this non-space for reading the play's bedtrick, which takes place offstage during 5.1.¹⁵ Beatrice-Joanna's comment 'One struck, and yet she lies by't [...] Another clock strikes two' (5.1.1; 11) creates a sense of time passing, so that rather than witness the bedtrick directly the audience must wait with Beatrice-Joanna. The obscurity of bedtricks is also an important feature of *All's Well*. It is unclear when and where the bedtrick takes place, happening either between 4.2 and 4.3, or concurrently at the start of 4.3 when it is reported that 'this night [Bertram] fleshes his will in the spoil of [Diana's] honor' (4.3.15-16). Wherever and whenever the bedtrick takes place, it does not form part of the play's staged action. Defloration therefore occupies a representational lacuna in both plays – it is an unstaged event which challenges audience knowledge of what has taken place and hence destabilizes virginity and defloration.

In *The Changeling* the unstaged encounter between Beatrice-Joanna and Deflores creates an ambiguity about whether the encounter is consensual sex or rape. This uncertainty relies on an early modern ambivalence towards sexual consent, which obscured the boundaries between sex and violence by coding them identically through

¹³ Kim Solga, *Violence Against Women in Early Modern Performance: Invisible Acts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 149.

¹⁴ Solga, p. 149.

¹⁵ Solga argues that 'Jasperino's invisible prospect from the garden' and the space 'behind Alsemero's closet door as Beatrice Joanna dies' (p. 150) are two more instances of the non-space.

the idea of ‘ravishment’.¹⁶ Hence, Deflores can be understood as both rapist and seducer, Beatrice-Joanna as both victimized and complicit.¹⁷ As Marjorie Garber writes in her provocative reading of Beatrice-Joanna’s performance of orgasm during the virginity test, ‘it is never finally clear whether for Beatrice-Joanna there is any real difference between danger, trembling, loathing, and desire’.¹⁸ The ambiguity of rape and its relationship to virginity and defloration, including further discussion of Beatrice-Joanna, is explored at length in Chapter 3. The ambiguity of representation and sexual consent are interrelated, but for the purposes of this chapter I am initially interested in the representational relationship of virginity to this ‘non-space’ or textual ‘hole’. A key question of this chapter is why the moment of defloration is elided in these texts, and what the implications of this representational lacuna are for thinking about virginity and metaphor.

The unstaged nature of the bedtrick has been overlooked by previous scholars. The bedtrick was a relatively common feature of early modern drama – at least forty-four extant Jacobean plays which feature bedtricks have been identified – and the bedtrick has accordingly received a considerable amount of critical attention.¹⁹ Earlier scholarship focuses on the categorisation of types of bedtrick, its narrative function,

¹⁶ Solga, p. 149. See also Deborah G. Burks, “‘I’ll Want My Will Else’: *The Changeling* and Women’s Complicity with Their Rapists’, *ELH*, 62.4 (1995), 759-90; Frances Dolan, ‘Re-reading Rape in *The Changeling*’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 11.1 (2011), 4-29. Dolan’s article summarizes various critical positions on rape in *The Changeling* and she challenges its categorisation as a “rape play”, arguing that the term ‘flattens’ the way the play ‘depicts coercion and consent in socially and morally complex ways’, (p. 5).

¹⁷ Some critics characterize Beatrice-Joanna as complicit and seduced, equating immorality (the murder of Alonso) with promiscuity (extra-marital, class-transgressing sex). This argument problematically leads to the conclusion that sexual victimisation only happens to “good” women, therefore replicating early modern attitudes towards chastity. For an example of this approach, see J. L. Simmons, ‘Diabolical Realism in Middleton and Rowley’s *The Changeling*’, *Renaissance Drama*, 11 (1980), 135-70.

¹⁸ Marjorie Garber, ‘The Insincerity of Women’, in *Desire in the Renaissance: Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. by Valeria Finucci and Regina Schwartz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 19-37 (p. 28).

¹⁹ Marliiss C. Desens, *The Bed-Trick in English Renaissance Drama: Explorations in Gender, Sexuality, and Power* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), p. 11.

and moral ambivalences.²⁰ The monograph-length study by Marliiss C. Desens improves and expands upon this systematisation, whilst also exploring how the bedtrick intersects with representations of gender, sexuality and power.²¹ Wendy Doniger's book, *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade*, offers a complementary trans-historical and cross-cultural study of bedtricks in myth, literature and film.²² However, some of the dynamics of the bedtrick in early modern drama are obscured in these studies through imprecise language and a privileging of narrative over staging. For instance, readers of Desens' book might assume the bedtrick forms part of a play's action from comments that 'any uneasiness that we might feel *in witnessing the bed-trick on stage* [...] is worth exploring' and '*in staging this bed-trick*, Shakespeare chooses to stress just how limited Helena's power really is' [italics mine].²³ An imprecision towards descriptions of staging is also found in Doniger's study, in which she makes a distinction between Shakespeare's 'implicit' and 'explicit' bedtricks. She explains that plays such as *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night* and even *A Midsummer Night's Dream* include examples of 'implicit' bedtricks which can be 'made explicit' in modern productions (for instance by having Sebastian stagger, half dressed, from Olivia's house), whereas in *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure* 'explicit' bedtricks are 'depicted'.²⁴ However, as neither bedtrick in *All's Well* or *Measure* is staged, they too are only implied and are not 'depicted' in any literal sense. Likewise, in her article on bedtricks in pre- and post-Restoration drama, Sylvia Mieszkowski writes that in Aphra Behn's *The Lucky Chance* 'we neither see sex on

²⁰ For example, see William R. Bowden, 'The Bed Trick, 1603-1642: Its Mechanics, Ethics, and Effects', *Shakespeare Studies*, 5 (1969), 112-23, and Julia Briggs, 'Shakespeare's Bed Tricks', *Essays in Criticism*, 44.4 (1994), 293-314.

²¹ See Desens, pp. 11-14, for a summary of earlier critical approaches to the bedtrick.

²² Wendy Doniger, *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000).

²³ Desens, pp. 14; 64.

²⁴ Doniger, p. xv.

stage, nor are we unambiguously told that it has actually taken place' but later writes of 'both bed tricks [*The Lucky Chance*] stages'.²⁵ Despite this observation about Behn's play, Mieszkowski does not comment on whether or not the audience sees sex on stage in *The Changeling*. The language used by these critics therefore lacks clarity, and consequently important features of the unstaged bedtrick and the implications for representing virginity are foreclosed.²⁶

The issue of witnessing and having sure knowledge is at the heart of early modern anxieties about virginity and defloration, paternity and cuckoldry, adultery and fornication.²⁷ These anxieties were amplified in the theatre by the conscious act of spectatorship. Lena Cowen Orlin argues that early modern society encouraged 'communal surveillance' and that 'Social regulation of this sort militated against privacy'.²⁸ The theatre, she claims, satisfied the desires 'to see through walls, to discover the intimate secrets of conjugal relationships'.²⁹ However, if there was a desire to witness these secrets of community life depicted in plays, the theatre nevertheless replicates some of the restrictions to accessing knowledge which frustrated communal surveillance. If the bedtrick is unstaged, along with the acts of fornication, defloration,

²⁵ Mieszkowski, pp. 333; 336.

²⁶ The unstaged nature of the bedtrick is also overlooked in Peterson's essay on the topic, which argues for a reading of the bedtrick as a cure for early modern virgin diseases. I discuss these diseases, especially greensickness, in Chapter 2, and argue against Peterson's approach partly on the basis that the unstaged bedtrick undermines the idea (central to constructions of greensickness) of curative defloration. See Kaara L. Peterson, 'Medical Discourses of Virginity and the Bed-Trick in Shakespearean Drama', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Early Modern Literature and Science*, ed. by Howard Marchitello and Evelyn Tribble (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 377-399.

²⁷ Feminist historians' work on women's experiences in the ecclesiastical courts, which oversaw marriage disputes and cases of sexual slander, and the emphasis on witness testimonies and contesting narratives is useful in this context. See Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). In the case of marriages, Subha Mukherji argues that 'Confusions were inevitable, and it was at times fiendishly difficult to ascertain the validity of marriages and indeed spousals, from the assemblage of reports and evidences cited and refuted', see *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 10.

²⁸ Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 7.

²⁹ Orlin, p. 8.

consummation, and even rape, this reflects limitations to the legal process. It also replicates traditional marriage rituals: although the marriage bed was central to wedding celebrations, sometimes with the wedding guests spending time in the bed-chamber whilst the couple sat together in bed, the consummation itself was obscured.³⁰ Sasha Roberts writes that ‘the bedding ceremony was, apart from its final consummation, *publicly* witnessed’.³¹ That there was still a limit on what was publicly witnessed is significant. Hence, as this chapter seeks to show, a more nuanced way of talking about the bedtrick’s (un)staging is crucial.

A preoccupation with the bedtrick’s implausibility has also hindered critics from asking questions about the consequences for virginity.³² As summarized by Kaara Peterson:

Consensus does seem to converge at the assertion that the bed-trick is overly contrived, a wholly artificial, non-mimetic plot expedient driven by nothing remotely resembling the complexities of real-life circumstances in otherwise reasonably realistically drawn plots and modes of characterization. The bed-trick is simply not seen as a reflection of a play’s realism but rather of its comedy genre and inherent theatricality, like Bohemian seacoasts or exits pursued by bears.³³

However, when thinking about virginity – the difficulty in locating it and the moment of its loss – I suggest that what seems “unrealistic” in fact exposes important truths about representation. The overt implausibility of the bedtrick is only a magnification of the difficulties and obscurities surrounding defloration. In contrast to those critics who dismiss the bedtrick as implausible, others have painstakingly interrogated the

³⁰ Sasha Roberts, “‘Let me the curtains draw’: The Dramatic and Symbolic Properties of the Bed in Shakespearean Tragedy”, in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. by Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 153-74 (p. 156).

³¹ Roberts, p. 156.

³² This has perturbed commentators on *The Changeling* and Frances Howard. Heinemann writes of the bedtrick’s ‘inherent implausibility’ and argues that playwrights use it ‘with no attempt to handle it as anything more than a useful plot convention’, p. 176. Lindley likewise writes that ‘the very plausibility of substitution both demeans the individuality of the women and unsettles the certainty of the men who ‘know’ them’, p. 115.

³³ Peterson, ‘Medical Discourses of Virginity’, pp. 377-78.

plausibility of the substitution. Theodora A. Jankowski's essay on the bedtrick and hymeneal blood as symbol of defloration is possibly the most extreme form of this argument, as she asks and attempts to answer the question, 'how are these deceptions *supposed* to work?'³⁴ Where Doniger understands Shakespeare's bedtricks to be 'implicit' or 'explicit', Jankowski divides them into the 'actual and symbolic': she contrasts the 'actual' bedtricks of *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well* to the 'symbolic' tricks relying on 'ocular proof' in *Othello* and *Cymbeline*.³⁵ Interestingly, for these latter plays Jankowski notes how sex is 'unrepresentable' and, in a similar vein to Gary Taylor (quoted above), writes that 'Cassio cannot be shown on stage penetrating (the male actor playing) Desdemona' and that therefore 'the presumed penetration is replaced by an acceptable representation' in the form of the strawberry-spotted handkerchief or Imogen's bracelet.³⁶ However, for Jankowski this unrepresentability is not a consequence of the problems with sex and representation, but is due to the fact that Desdemona and Imogen 'are never inappropriately/illegally penetrated by anything but a man's words', because 'such an act never occurs'.³⁷ She suggests that in *Othello* and *Cymbeline* the tricks work precisely because 'sexual activity never occurred'.³⁸ Yet this argument, whilst compelling in relation to how slander and sexual reputation works in *Othello* and *Cymbeline*, relies on the assumption that in plays with 'actual' bedtricks the sexual activity *does* occur.

Jankowski spends a considerable amount of time imagining how each bedtrick plays out in *Measure* and *All's Well*, informed by the clues in the text, such as Diana's

³⁴ Jankowski, 'Hymeneal Blood', p. 97.

³⁵ Jankowski, 'Hymeneal Blood', p. 97. Jankowski quotes Othello's famous lines to Iago: 'Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore; | Be sure of it! Give me the ocular proof' (3.3.356-57).

³⁶ Jankowski, 'Hymeneal Blood', pp. 96-97. Both objects, she notes, work metonymically to represent either bloodied bridal sheets or the 'O' of the vagina. See Boose for more on the handkerchief.

³⁷ Jankowski, 'Hymeneal Blood', pp. 96-97.

³⁸ Jankowski, 'Hymeneal Blood', p. 97.

instruction to Bertram to ‘Remain there but an hour’ (4.2.58) or Isabella’s to Mariana to speak ‘soft and low’ (4.1.68). However, Jankowski does not ask why the encounters are imaginary rather than staged. In a remarkable passage, she ponders the difficulty of Bertram and Angelo proving their bedfellow is a virgin:

The virgins Mariana and Helen bleed on the sheets to prove their unpenetrated condition to Angelo and Bertram. Yet if this encounter happened in a room so dark the women’s faces or bodies were invisible, how did the men know that the sheets were, indeed, bloodied without lighting a candle or lamp? Obviously such a lighting would render the bed trick ineffectual, but, beyond the feel of a tight vagina, neither man would know he had penetrated a virgin without *some* indication of blood. If ocular proof is unavailable or impossible, smell, taste, and perhaps touch are all that remain. Thus Bertram and Angelo, to assure that they are getting what they bargained for, need to become *very* intimate with their partners’ vaginal blood, perhaps even more intimate than they were with the women themselves.³⁹

While Jankowski acknowledges the unreliability of the hymen and hymeneal blood as a sign of defloration, her approach nevertheless assumes that virginity is stable, a state that is lost through penile penetration and which can be felt by the male partner. The approach taken in her essay is curious because, although necessitated by the fact that the bedtricks are unstaged, the issue of representation is not addressed and the deflorations are taken for granted. Yet, as detailed as the imagined scenarios are, they are speculation. The point is that the plays elide defloration: there are no sheets on which to bleed, no vaginas whose ‘tightness’ can be felt, no blood with which to ‘become *very* intimate’. While the plays encourage imagination – in audience and characters alike – they also problematize it.

Imprecision in writing about staging bedtricks is not universal. In summarising the vogue for bedtricks in early modern drama, Daniel Vitkus comments ‘This act takes place, of course, not on stage, but in the mind’s eye of the playgoer, invoked by the

³⁹ Jankowski, ‘Hymeneal Blood’, p. 100.

verbal descriptions delivered by the actors’.⁴⁰ Scholars writing specifically on *All’s Well* have observed that the bedtrick is not staged. For instance, Katherine Eisaman Maus, in her Norton introduction, describes the bedtrick as ‘unstageable’.⁴¹ Several critics, Maus included, view the drum trick played on Parolles at 4.3 as an alternate scene for the bedtrick, so that ‘a noisy mask’ is substituted ‘for the promised silence of the sexual encounter’.⁴² Susan Snyder argues that ‘The bed scene itself, of course, can’t be shown onstage’ and ‘must be displaced’ through the ‘replacement action’ which ‘gives news of what’s absent, allows it to speak obliquely through what’s present’.⁴³ The report of Helen’s death, which is also made during 4.3, has been interpreted as ‘a rich metaphor expressing [Helen’s] loss of virginity’ – a pun on the idea of orgasm as the ‘little death’ – so that the distinction is blurred between ‘literal and metaphoric dying’.⁴⁴ However, these critics undermine the allusive, ambiguous approach to virginity when they assert, like Jankowski, that the audience ‘know’ what is really happening.⁴⁵ It is because there is no certain knowledge of the unwitnessed event that virginity functions metaphorically. David McCandless, who notes how ‘In performance the bed-trick is further removed from sexual experience precisely because it is undramatized, not part of the play’s visceral theatrical life’, advocates for staging the

⁴⁰ Daniel Vitkus, ‘Turning Tricks: Erotic Commodification, Cross-cultural Conversion, and the Bed-trick on the English Stage, 1580-1630’, in *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 236-57 (pp. 241-42).

⁴¹ Katherine Eisaman Maus, ‘Introduction to *All’s Well that Ends Well*’, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, pp. 2635-41 (p. 2640).

⁴² Maus, p. 2640; Barbara Hodgdon, ‘The Making of Virgins and Mothers: Sexual Signs, Substitute Scenes and Doubled Presences in *All’s Well That Ends Well*’, *Philological Quarterly*, 66.1 (1987), 47-71 (p. 59).

⁴³ Susan Snyder, ‘“The King’s not here”: Displacement and Deferral in *All’s Well that Ends Well*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 43.1 (1992), 20-32 (p. 27).

⁴⁴ Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare’s Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 73; Hodgdon, ‘Making of Virgins and Mothers’, p. 60. See Chapter 2 of this thesis for more on the metaphorical relationship between sex and death.

⁴⁵ Hodgdon, ‘Making of Virgins and Mothers’, p. 60.

bedtrick in performance.⁴⁶ He argues that Helen's metaphorical death is 'The only means of invoking her sexual pleasure' and proposes that staging the bedtrick would enable the 'dramatization of female desire'.⁴⁷ However, in staging the bedtrick, other important ways of reading female sexual experience would be flattened and historical significance lost: the absence of certainty, the representational lacuna, is crucial for understanding early modern virginity.

The bedtrick's unstaged nature and the unknowability of defloration means that virginity is destabilized in the plays. In a discussion of the contested consummation between Desdemona and Othello (discussed in the Introduction) Michael Neill argues that the wedding night is unstaged 'to make [the audience] ask the question' and introduce doubt and that the play 'persistently goads the audience into speculation about what is happening behind the scenes'.⁴⁸ However, Neill goes on to claim that:

This preoccupation with offstage action is unique in Shakespeare. Elsewhere, whenever offstage action is of any importance, it is almost always carefully described, usually by an eyewitness whose account is not open to question, so that nothing of critical importance is left to the audience's imagination.⁴⁹

Whilst Neill's insights into how suspicion and paranoia operate in *Othello* are illuminating, his wider claims about unstaged action in Shakespeare are patently incorrect, as this chapter and thesis will go on to demonstrate. Virginity, which is of vital 'critical importance', is always 'left to the audience's imagination', and the significance of what is unstaged is central to virginity's destabilisation in the plays.

⁴⁶ David McCandless, 'Helena's Bed-trick: Gender and Performance in *All's Well that Ends Well*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45.4 (1994), 449-68 (p. 450).

⁴⁷ McCandless, p. 462.

⁴⁸ Neill, p. 396.

⁴⁹ Neill, p. 396.

2. Personified Virginity

At the start of *All's Well That Ends Well*, Paroles asks Helen 'Are you meditating on virginity?' (1.1.106) before the two launch into a combative discussion about Helen's virginity. The crux of Paroles' argument is that 'It is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity' (1.1.120-21) and that a perpetual state of abstinence or virginity kept into adulthood is 'against the rule of nature' (1.1.128-29), framing women's reproductive capacity as foundational to a strong state and in the interests of the 'commonwealth'. His attitude exemplifies the changing value of virginity and marriage in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, which understood virginity as temporary and as a mechanism for facilitating legitimate offspring.⁵⁰ This was part of a wider societal shift in post-Reformation England to make the household 'the primary unit of social control'.⁵¹ As Orlin explains, the householder was 'responsible for the maintenance of moral order in his immediate sphere but to macrocosmic benefit', an organisational model which 'reinforced the preexistent [*sic*] patriarchal hierarchy'.⁵² Whilst the conversation between Helen and Paroles demonstrates how virginity was valued in early modern society and why virginity is an important theme of *All's Well*, it also demonstrates how early moderns conceptualized virginity itself. Critics have tended to privilege the ideas expressed by Helen and Paroles over their language, but the plethora of virginity metaphors employed by both is highly revealing. Like the brothel scenes in *Pericles*, this dialogue features shifting metaphors which position

⁵⁰ Jankowski includes a comprehensive outline of these shifting views of virginity in *Pure Resistance*, pp. 75-110. She demonstrates how these shifts are broadly aligned with Protestantism, but also cautions against an over emphasis on a Catholic/Protestant distinction. For instance, she analyses a colloquy by Erasmus, *Proci et puellae*, which includes many of the same points made by Paroles, see pp. 87-90; 130-31; 238. Several critics argue that this colloquy is a direct source for the virginity dialogue in Shakespeare's play, see William Shakespeare, *All's Well That Ends Well*, ed. by Susan Snyder (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. 6-8.

⁵¹ Orlin, p. 3.

⁵² Orlin, p. 3.

virginity as a contested idea: in addition to numerous personifications, virginity is also commodified as money, food, and a besieged citadel.

The financial metaphors exemplify one of the most common ways of conceptualising virginity in early modern culture. As a bride's virginity was understood as part of her dowry, the metaphorical relationship between virginity and money was commonplace. In the prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen* it is observed that there was 'much money gi'en' for a 'maidenhead' (Prologue, 1-2). In *Pericles* Bawd says 'Such a maidenhead were no cheap thing' (4.2.54-55) when auctioning Marina's virginity to her clients. In *The Changeling* the metaphorical equivalence between money and virginity causes confusion for Beatrice-Joanna, who promises Deflores money to 'encourage' him to murder her fiancé Alonzo and claims 'Thy reward shall be precious' (2.2.128-30). Deflores retorts cryptically that 'the thought ravishes' (2.2.132), anticipating his intention to be paid with her virginity, so that the two are talking at cross-purposes through overlapping financial imagery. Upon realising the misunderstanding Beatrice-Joanna continues the trope, saying 'Let me go poor unto my bed with honour', to which Deflores replies 'The wealth of all Valencia shall not buy | My pleasure from me' (3.4.156-60). This virginity discourse is twofold in nature: Beatrice-Joanna is speaking of real money, whereas Deflores is speaking figuratively of her virginity as payment, so that the same image conveys opposing ideas depending on the speaker and his or her agenda.

Jaecheol Kim argues that whereas virginity often 'shapes the thematic motif in male narratives', Middleton's 'illustration of virginity is [...] peculiar in that he explores the *price* of virginity'.⁵³ However, this kind of construction was not exclusive

⁵³ Jaecheol Kim, 'The Price of Virginity in the Early Modern Theatre: Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*', *Women's Studies*, (2021), 1-18 (p. 1).

or particular to Middleton: in *All's Well* Paroles relies on this image of virginity as financial capital when he attempts to persuade Helen to lose her virginity. He argues 'That you were made of is mettle to make virgins' (1.1.123-24), the 'mettle' referring to the womb but also implying coinage – with a pun on 'metal' – and the idea that by "selling" virginity more virginities may be "bought" in the form of children (a sort of repopulation of virgins). Paroles further views loss of virginity as an investment or 'rational increase' (1.1.122) as 'Virginity, by being once lost, may be ten times found; by being ever kept, it is ever lost' (1.1.124-25). He repeatedly tells Helen to 'Keep it not' and 'Out with't' meaning put it out at interest, for 'within t'one year it will make itself two, which is a goodly increase, and the principal itself not much the worse' (1.1.137-40). There is also the suggestion that it is necessary to capitalize on virginity now, for "'Tis a commodity will lose the gloss with lying; the longer kept, the less worth. Off with't while 'tis vendible; answer the time of request' (1.1.143-45). His metaphors suggest the virgin herself has something to gain by "vending" her virginity, and whilst this is potentially true in the sense of securing a marriage and domestic stability, his is a strategy of commodification in the interest of patriarchy.

A second set of metaphors which figure virginity as food reinforce Paroles' attitude that virginity is something to be used and enjoyed by men. The sense of decreasing value expressed through the language of investment is repeated in his images of virginity as rotting food, but also suggest how withheld virginity is contaminating. To Paroles 'Virginity breeds mites much like a cheese, consumes itself to the very paring, and so dies with feeding his own stomach' (1.1.133-35). He later tells Helen:

Your date is better in your pie and your porridge than in your cheek, and your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French withered pears: it looks ill, it eats dryly—marry, 'tis a withered pear [...] 'tis a withered pear'.

1.1.148-52

Through a pun on ‘date’ (referring to the fruit and age) Paroles explains that sexual desirability should be enjoyed now. The cheese which will eventually consume itself is the epitome of selfishness, and the pear which tastes worse the more it rots, wastefulness. That neither food stuff is eaten nor enjoyed also implies a resentment in this lost opportunity of consumption and sexual pleasure, recalling Bawd’s sinister image of the resisting Marina as ‘my dish of chastity with rosemary and bays’ (4.6.137). The images of rotting or withering virginity adds to the sense of devaluation developed in the financial images, with both sets of intersecting metaphors implying that perpetual virginity is dangerous for the state and the individual. In addition, virginity is also metaphorically represented as a city under siege, with defloration figured as conquest.⁵⁴ This is the strand of imagery with which Helen engages, claiming that man is ‘enemy to virginity’ and asking how virgins can ‘barricado’ it with ‘warlike resistance’ (1.1.1108-12). Paroles tells Helen that men are like an army ‘setting down before you’ ready to ‘undermine you and blow you up’ (1.1.113-14), and that when the ‘breach’ is made ‘you lose your city’ (1.1.119-20). Where the money and food metaphors imply male dominance and possession, this metaphor of the virgin body as a besieged city makes it explicit.

Paroles and Helen repeatedly personify virginity, so that their battle of words becomes a battle of competing personified forms. Related to the city metaphor, Helen personifies virginity as a soldier, or indeed a battalion of soldiers, ‘valiant in the defense’ but ‘weak’ (1.1.111-12). In response, Paroles conjures up a miscellaneous collection of personifications reflecting his anti-virginity position. As discussed in the Introduction to this Chapter, Paroles argues that virginity is ‘too cold a companion’

⁵⁴ The metaphorical relationship between war and sex, virgins and cities, is explored at length in Chapter 3.

(1.1.126). He then personifies virginity as suicidal, saying ‘Virginity murders itself and should be buried in highways out of all sanctified limit, as a desperate offendress against nature’ (1.1.131-33). As keeping virginity results in the absence of new virgins, Paroles argues that delayed defloration is a sin. These two personifications exist on a spectrum of misogynistic stereotypes: the nagging, unattractive lady’s maid, and the diabolical, hysterical murderess. Paroles later describes virginity as ‘an old courtier’ who ‘wears her cap out of fashion’ (1.1.145-46), meaning virginity is inappropriate and embarrassing. He also attributes various negative personality traits to virginity: ‘virginity is peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love’ (1.1.135-36).

The way this passage employs numerous images for virginity demonstrates, as in *Pericles*, how virginity was destabilized through competing and contradictory metaphors. However, specific to this dialogue in *All’s Well* are the numerous personifications. Paroles’ images of virginity as a companion, an old courtier and a murderess creates a sense of metamorphosis, with virginity embodying many distinct guises concurrently. Helen’s image of the soldier adds to this crowd of virginities, and strengthens the notion of virginity as fractured or split from the virgin. The transforming and multiplying personifications create a sense of chaotic crowding, even claustrophobia, and therefore the crowd of personifications, all of which embody the same concept, work collectively to destabilize the idea of virginity. The battle of personifications demonstrates virginity’s unstable and pluralistic nature, and reinforces the notion that virginity resists unity.

The multiple personifications of virginity reflect early modern poetic theory. George Puttenham describes metaphor as ‘an inuersion of sence by transport’ in *The*

Art of English Poesie (1589).⁵⁵ Personification could therefore be described as an inversion of sense by ambulation, with meaning expressed through embodiment. Throughout *English Poesie* Puttenham employs personification by giving English names for Greek and Latin rhetorical figures, so that *hyperbaton* becomes ‘the Trespasser’ (T4v), *hendiadys* becomes ‘the Figure of Twinnes’ (V4r), *meiosis* ‘the Disabler’ (X3v), and so on. The use of pronouns, for instance when Puttenham writes of *hypozeuxis* that ‘we call him the substitute after his originall’ (T3v), enhances the personification. Editors of *English Poesie*, Frank Whigham and Wayne Rebhorn, argue that this method ‘transforms tropes and schemes into *characters*’ and relies on a pun on ‘figure’ meaning both ‘figure of speech’ and ‘visual appearance’.⁵⁶ They write that ‘Puttenham’s use of personified renamings [...] connects language and behaviour in the social world’ and that these personifications ‘essentially turn life into a continual allegory’.⁵⁷ Unsurprisingly, Puttenham gives ‘pride of place’ to the figure of allegory: *Allegoria* is ‘the chief ringleader and captaine of all other figures’ (X4r) and is personified as a courtier.⁵⁸ The image of allegory as ‘the Courtly Figure’ (X4r) anticipates Paroles’ personification of virginity as ‘an old courtier’ (1.1.145). Central to Puttenham’s courtly figure is the ability to dissemble – allegory is also called ‘the Figure of false semblant’ (X4r) – and, hiding amongst the crowd of personifications, this is precisely what Paroles’ courtier-virginity does. These overlapping personifications in *English Poesie* and *All’s Well* therefore suggest how virginity was an unstable, dissembling construct and that personification was a particularly useful

⁵⁵ George Puttenham, *The arte of english poesie. Contruiued into three Bookes* (London, 1589), sig. S2v. Subsequent page signatures appear parenthetically.

⁵⁶ Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn, eds., *The Art of English Poesy by George Puttenham: A Critical Edition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 59.

⁵⁷ Whigham and Rebhorn, eds., p. 59.

⁵⁸ Whigham and Rebhorn, eds., p. 59. See also Jacqueline T. Miller, ‘The Courtly Figure: Spenser’s Anatomy of Allegory’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 31.1 (1991), 51-68.

device through which to represent this. However, the way personification is employed by Helen and Paroles also reveals something unusual in that the crowd of personifications all embody the same concept, unlike in Puttenham, where the numerous personifications all embody different rhetorical figures. In his essay on the related figure of *prosopopoeia*, Gavin Alexander gives an example of a sonnet by Philip Sidney which is ‘crowded with simulated presences’ embodying ‘dread, force, sight, sense, reason’.⁵⁹ Like in Puttenham, this ‘host of personifications’ is comprised of many discrete ideas.⁶⁰ Contrastingly, in *All’s Well* the soldier, companion, murderess, and courtier are all embodiments of the same idea: virginity. Virginity is therefore represented as multiple, rather than unified. The personification of virginity as a companion, which presents virginity as fractured rather than whole, is therefore situated within a wider collection of personifications and metaphors which destabilize virginity.

How personification is employed within the play is also significant. In *The Poetics of Personification* James Paxson delineates between two types of personification:

The first is for the most part self-contained in a phrase or line. The second is an extension of the first into a complete narrative world. According to a strong critical tradition, incidentally, personification projected into a narrative dimension has been understood as a constitutive component feature of “allegory”.⁶¹

On the surface the personifications conjured up in Helen and Paroles’ argument, and Beatrice-Joanna’s vivid description of her soul’s virgin companion, may appear to be examples of the former, ‘self-contained in a phrase or line’. However, it is also possible to view these companion images as ‘moving beyond [their] phrase or line’ and

⁵⁹ Gavin Alexander, ‘Prosopopoeia: The Speaking Figure’, in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. by Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 97-114 (pp. 108-09).

⁶⁰ Alexander, p. 109.

⁶¹ James J. Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 35-36.

metamorphosing into an embodied allegorical construct in the persons of Diaphanta and Diana. Frederick Kiefer argues that ‘the fullest dependence upon visual expression in the Renaissance theatre is to be found in the literal abstractions we encounter on the stage’.⁶² From medieval morality plays onwards, personifications were employed as characters, and although by the 1590s they appeared with less frequency, they were by no means absent from the stage. As Kiefer argues, ‘Lacking naturalistic status, these walking, talking personifications dwell in the realm of the symbolic’, and it is their symbolic interpretation and the significance to the plays in which they appear which is his primary focus.⁶³ Before turning to more obvious or self-conscious ‘walking, talking’ personifications, he suggests that Elizabethan and Jacobean drama was suffused with a cultural awareness of emblematic reference, and that this allusive system of representation meant that many characters could become blurred with emblematic figures. Discussing *King Lear*, he gives the example of Kent in the stocks as recalling the traditional representation of ‘Virtue’, adding a further layer of meaning to Kent’s predicament.⁶⁴ Later in the play, he argues, we see this again when Gloucester resembles ‘Old Lechery’: in 3.4 the Fool quips ‘Now a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher’s heart: a small spark, all the rest in body cold. Look, here comes walking fire’ (3.4.98-100), and Gloucester enters carrying a torch.⁶⁵ For both Kent and Gloucester, the characterisation has been enhanced via a second layer of symbolic reference. In a vivid turn of phrase, Kiefer describes these moments as ‘the spectre of an individual merging with a type’ as ‘what we hear combines with what we see and, for a moment, the character verges on becoming an abstraction’.⁶⁶ In the next section I

⁶² Frederick Kiefer, *Shakespeare’s Visual Theatre: Staging the Personified Characters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 13.

⁶³ Kiefer, p. 13.

⁶⁴ Kiefer, p. 12.

⁶⁵ Kiefer, p. 12.

⁶⁶ Kiefer, p. 12.

trace the figure of Diana, goddess of virginity, on the early modern stage in order to argue that we should understand the Florentine Diana in *All's Well* as embodying the virgin-companion, moving beyond her 'phrase or line' to become a 'walking, talking' personification on the stage.

3. *Diana on the Early Modern Stage*

In early modern drama Diana is a touchstone for virginity. In Shakespeare's plays she is alluded to frequently to underscore a character's virginity, such as when Rosaline, in *Romeo and Juliet*, is described as having 'Dian's wit' and living 'in strong proof of chastity well-armed' (1.2.204-05). The association can also apply to male celibate behaviour, as when Celia remarks in *As You Like It*, somewhat hyperbolically, that Orlando has 'bought a pair of cast lips of Diana [...] the very ice of chastity is in them' (3.4.14-16). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Diana's perpetual virginity is used as a threat by Theseus, who tells Hermia to prepare to marry Demetrius or die, or else 'on Diana's altar to protest | For aye austerity and single life' (1.1.89-90). Conversely, these allusions to Diana can be employed ironically to stress unchastity. In *Titus Andronicus*, Bassianus encounters Tamora in the woods and mockingly asks 'is it Dian' (2.3.61). Referring to Acteon, who was transformed into a stag by Diana when he saw her bathing naked, Lavinia then says "'Tis thought you had a goodly gift in horning' to paint the queen of the Goths as a cuckold (2.3.67). The full irony of these allusions is swiftly revealed when Tamora orders her sons to kill Bassianus and rape Lavinia and her 'nice-preservèd honesty' (2.3.135). In *Cymbeline* Shakespeare presents Imogen's contested chastity through ambivalent allusions to Diana. Posthumus reportedly spoke of Imogen 'as Dian had hot dreams | And she alone were cold' (5.5.180-81) to suggest his wife was more chaste than the goddess of virginity, and similarly, in attempting to

seduce her, Giacomo contrasts an existence ‘like Diana’s priest betwixt cold sheets’ to ‘vaulting variable ramps’ (1.6.132-33). Added to this is Giacomo’s ekphrastic description of Imogen’s bedchamber, which features ‘Chaste Dian bathing’ (2.4.82) on the chimneypiece, an allusion which subverts an image of violation to be used as evidence of Imogen’s complicit adultery. Likewise, Cloten’s description of Imogen’s women as ‘Diana’s rangers’ who ‘false themselves’ (2.3.65) and Posthumus’s paranoid soliloquy that ‘my mother seemed | The Dian of that time; so doth my wife | The nonpareil of this’ (2.5.6-8) both distance Imogen from her chaste reputation through reference to Diana. In addition to these classical allusions, some plays feature Diana as a figure of worship. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen* Emilia prays to the goddess, asking:

What sins have I committed, chaste Diana,
That my unspotted youth must now be soiled
With blood of princes, and my chastity
Be made an altar where the lives of lovers
[...] must be the sacrifice
To my unhappy beauty?
4.2.58-64

Here, the physical altar of Diana becomes the metaphorical altar of Emilia’s virginity, the ‘blood of princes’ becoming both sacrificial offering and a symbolic defloration for the woman whose ‘virgin’s faith has fled me’ (4.2.47). It is within this rich context of allusion that Shakespeare introduces the character of the Florentine Diana in *All’s Well*.

The significance of Diana’s name would have resonated powerfully to audiences familiar with allusions to the goddess.⁶⁷ The Florentine Diana’s name is an

⁶⁷ Critics have noted the inconsistencies in the Folio version of *All’s Well*, including the name of the Florentine maid called ‘Violenta’ in the initial stage direction (sig. X1v). However, this is an anomaly, as she is referred to exclusively as ‘Diana’ throughout the text and all subsequent stage directions. ‘Violenta’ was most likely a printer’s error, the name originally intended for Diana, or the only textual remnant of a different daughter who does not appear in the staged action. See William Shakespeare, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, ed. by Russell Fraser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.5.0SDn.; Gary Waller, ‘From “the Unfortunate Comedy” to “this Infinitely Fascinating Play”’: The Critical and Theatrical Emergence of *All’s Well that Ends Well*’, in *All’s Well that Ends Well: New Critical Essays*, ed. by Gary Waller (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1-56 (p. 3); Laurie Maguire, *Shakespeare’s Names* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 201.

innovation, as the character is unnamed in both source texts, Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1349-51) and William Painter's English translation in the first volume of *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566).⁶⁸ Despite Diana's prominence in literature in this period, a character named 'Diana' who is *not* the goddess is practically anomalous on the stage: although characters named Diana appear in *The Weakest Goeth To the Wall* (1600) and *The antipodes* (1640) there seems to be little symbolic import in either case.⁶⁹ In *All's Well*, however, the association is made overt through Bertram momentarily misidentifying Diana as 'Fontibel' and, upon learning her name, calling her 'Titled goddess' (4.2.1-3). Laurie Maguire suggests that 'Fontibel', meaning 'beautiful fountain' is a 'repetition' rather than a 'correction' of Diana, as 'fountains are invariably associated with chaste women, [and] with the goddess Diana', suggesting 'Fontibel' could be Diana's nickname.⁷⁰

Diana's name is usually discussed in relation to Helen and her classical namesake, as Shakespeare also changed her name from Boccaccio's 'Giletta'.⁷¹ Snyder argues that the predominant association with the name Helen is unavoidably Helen of Troy, 'the archetypal desired object in [Shakespeare's] culture's myth of origins'.⁷² She notes a parallel with Shakespeare's other Helen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and suggests that these Helens ironically contradict the prototype which 'underlines their peculiar situation as subject, the locus of active desire, rather than the usual "woman's

⁶⁸ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. by Guido Waldman, ed. by Jonathan Usher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 231-40; William Painter, 'Giletta of Narbona', in *The Palace of Pleasure* (London, 1566), sigs. Aa3r-Bb4v.

⁶⁹ *The weakest goeth to the Wall* (London, 1600); Richard Brome, *The antipodes: a comedy* (London, 1640). Another contemporary play features a character called Cynthia whose chastity is tested by her doubting husband, and therefore the choice of name seems more symbolic here, see George Chapman, *The Widdowes Teares A Comedie* (London, 1612).

⁷⁰ Maguire, *Shakespeare's Names*, pp. 105-06.

⁷¹ Madhavi Menon makes an elegant and thought-provoking link between the names of Giletta/Helen, Diana Capilet, and Juliet Capulet in relation to missing consummation scenes. See *Wanton Words*, p. 88.

⁷² Susan Snyder, 'All's Well That Ends Well and Shakespeare's Helens: Text and Subtext, Subject and Object', *English Literary Renaissance*, 18.1 (1988), 66-77 (p. 71).

part” as pursued object’.⁷³ Neely also connects her with Helen of Troy, but suggests it is Helen’s status as ‘whore’ rather than desired object which is implied, in contrast to Diana ‘the chaste virgin’.⁷⁴ She argues that the women begin in positions which contradict their namesakes (Helen as solitary virgin, Diana as tempting seductress) but that ‘soon the two switch places to move into roles more consonant with their names’.⁷⁵ Neely claims that the bedtrick’s success is contingent on this opposition between virgin and whore, but that this traditional polarization is also problematized: ‘the play, through the women’s names, their role reversals, the substitution, and their identification with each other, controverts the fragmented views of the men’.⁷⁶ Maguire also argues that the play sets up a sexual binary between Helen and Diana only to undermine it, with Helen’s bedtrick scheme ‘showing that someone named Helen can be sexual without being wanton, can be desiring and chaste – can, in fact, incorporate elements of both the Helen and Diana paradigms’.⁷⁷ My argument departs from these by viewing Diana less as Helen’s opposite but instead as her personified virginity.

The argument that Diana functions as a personification of virginity in *All’s Well* is supported by the ubiquity of depictions of the goddess Diana on the early modern stage, as audience familiarity with the deity in plays would have enhanced associations between Shakespeare’s character and her namesake. Whilst characters called Diana were rare, the goddess Diana was a popular and frequently recurring theophany in early modern drama. Between 1575 and 1649 Diana appears seventeen times in plays and masques, and the goddess Cynthia, an alternative name for Diana, appears four times.⁷⁸

⁷³ Snyder, ‘Shakespeare’s Helens’, pp. 71-72.

⁷⁴ Neely, *Broken Nuptials*, p. 73.

⁷⁵ Neely, *Broken Nuptials*, p. 74.

⁷⁶ Neely, *Broken Nuptials*, p. 73.

⁷⁷ Maguire, *Shakespeare’s Names*, p. 107.

⁷⁸ See Thomas L. Berger, William C. Bradford, and Sidney L. Sondergard, *An Index of Characters in Early Modern English Drama: Printed Plays, 1500-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also George Gascoigne, ‘The princely pleasures at Kenelworth Castle’, in *The pleasauntest workes of George Gascoigne Esquyre* (London, 1587), sigs. A[a]1r-C[c]8v, (performed 1575), for a

Kiefer includes theophanies in his study of personification in early modern drama, arguing that as the identity of specific gods ‘varies from play to play depending on the requirements of the plot’, and as deities ‘embody forces, values, or institutions necessary to advance dramatic action’, they ‘objectify abstractions’.⁷⁹ Diana had been linked with Elizabeth I since she ascended the throne in 1558, and the association grew steadily throughout her reign, peaking in the 1590s.⁸⁰ Sir Walter Raleigh’s politically motivated cultivation of Elizabeth’s identification with Cynthia in the late 1580s, through personal emblems and his Cynthia-poems, demonstrates how her Virgin Goddess identity was a potent cultural and courtly image.⁸¹ The Dianas who figure prominently in drama of the 1580s were closely aligned with Elizabeth, and appeared in plays performed at court, especially ‘in comedies where the virgin deity exercises hegemony’.⁸²

George Peele’s *Araygnement of Paris*, published in 1584, is perhaps the most famous example as it incorporates Elizabeth into its narrative and action. Peele subverts the traditional myth of the Judgement of Paris, so that Diana, positioned as an impartial authority or ‘iudge indifferent’, is called upon to arraign Paris for his offence against chastity, and to give the final judgement of who among Juno, Athene, and Venus is deserving of the apple.⁸³ For Louis Montrose, the ‘most significant innovation in

further example of an Elizabethan era Diana in courtly entertainments. For a mid-Elizabethan example of the goddess Cynthia appearing on stage, see John Lyly, *Endimion, The Man in the Moone* (London, 1591), for a late-Elizabethan Cynthia see Ben Jonson, *The foyntaine of self-love. Or cynthias revels* (London, 1601), and for a Jacobean Cynthia, see John Stephens, *Cinthias revenge: or mænanders extasie* (London, 1613). Diana also appears in Jacobean and Caroline masques, see Samuel Daniel, *The vision of the 12. Goddesses, presented in a Maske the 8. Of Ianuary, at Hampton Court* (London, 1604), Ben Jonson, *Time vindicated to himselfe, and to his honors* (London, 1623), and Aurelian Townshend, *Albions trivmph. Personated in a Maske at Court* (London, 1632).

⁷⁹ Kiefer, pp. 148-49. For an overview of the Goddess Diana’s appearance on the early modern stage, including costume conventions, see pp. 199-206.

⁸⁰ Hackett, p. 174.

⁸¹ Hackett, p. 175. See pp. 184-86 for more on Raleigh’s Cynthia cult.

⁸² Kiefer, p. 200.

⁸³ George Peele, *The Araygnement of Paris a pastorall* (London, 1584), sig. E2r. Subsequent signatures appear parenthetically.

Peele's treatment of the myth is to encompass Diana and the virtue of militant virginity'.⁸⁴ The privileging of virginity over other virtues is reinforced by Diana's actions, because rather than choosing between the three goddesses, Diana selects 'a gracious Nymph, | That honour Dian for her chastity', and is 'As chaste as Dian in her chaste desires' (E3r-E3v). This nymph, named 'Eliza' and governor of 'Elizium' is further likened to Diana when the goddess explains Elizium 'may well compare with mine' and that she wears a 'vayle of white, as best befits a mayde' (E3r). The actor playing Diana would have reached out and given the apple to Elizabeth who was probably sitting on stage, delivering 'the ball of golde into the Queenes owne hands' (E4v). Peele's play therefore demonstrates the prominence of Diana on the early modern stage, but more than this, the metatheatrical elements of the play's denouement problematizes the unity of virginity. As Montrose observes, multiple identities are 'infolded' into the figure of Eliza: she has the 'power in armes' of Juno, the 'vertues of the minde' of Minerva, is as 'fayre and lovely' as Venus, and is as 'chaste as Dian in her chaste desires' (E3v).⁸⁵ However, this infolding from four to one is then inverted by the fact that Eliza is also pluralistic, partly a fictional or mythical figure, and simultaneously representative of the real queen. As Hackett argues, during the moment of recognition between Diana and Eliza:

not two, but three images are present: first, the actor playing the Queen-persona of, say, Cynthia or Diana; secondly the physical presence of the Queen in the audience; and thirdly, the conception of the Queen as perfect, radiant and divine which is constructed in the speech of the actor, and which invests her real presence with value.⁸⁶

This splitting of Elizabeth into three component parts, with Diana embodying her virgin identity yet physically alienated from the real queen, and only a performed version of

⁸⁴ Louis Montrose, 'Gifts and Reasons: The Contexts of Peele's *Araygnement of Paris*', *ELH*, 47.3 (1980), 433-61 (p. 436).

⁸⁵ Montrose, p. 436.

⁸⁶ Hackett, pp. 188-89.

the goddess, resonates with the personification of virginity in *All's Well* and *The Changeling*. Although virginity was often conceptualized as a single, unified idea, this interplay of personified Diana on the stage interacting with, and representing the Queen, demonstrates the contradiction and fracturing inherent in any attempts of representation.

John Lyly's *Gallathea*, performed before Elizabeth in 1588, features an imperious Diana who advocates for perpetual virginity.⁸⁷ At the beginning of the play we learn that every five years 'the fairest and chastest virgine in all the Countrey' is sacrificed as a peace offering to Neptune.⁸⁸ Cupid attempts to humiliate Diana by striking her nymphs with his bow to make them 'weake and wanton' (C2v) and they fall in love with Gallathea and Phillida, both disguised as boys to avoid the impending virgin sacrifice. However, Diana successfully captures Cupid, declaring herself 'Conqueror of [his] loose and vntamed appetites' (E3v). Later she negotiates with Neptune who vows 'I will for euer release the sacrifice of Virgins' (G3v). The ending of the play, which sees Gallathea and Phillida about to marry, with one then transforming into a man, has been described as Lyly's 'only unproblematic romantic conclusion' as 'His plays regularly end in failed courtship'.⁸⁹ However, this 'romantic conclusion' is not enacted, and the play ends before the wedding ceremony, transformation, and presumed consummation can be staged. Neptune's threat that 'my Temple shall bee died with Maydens blood' (G2v) is thwarted by Diana, reinforcing the sense that defloration (and the spilling of 'Maydens blood') is avoided. These two Elizabethan playwrights, Peele and Lyly, present Diana as a commanding and

⁸⁷ John Lyly, *Gallathea*, ed. by Leah Scragg (Oxford: Oxford University Press for The Malone Society, 1998), p. ix.

⁸⁸ John Lyly, *Gallathea* (London, 1592), sig. B1v. Subsequent signatures appear parenthetically.

⁸⁹ Andy Kesson, *John Lyly and Early Modern Authorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 215.

impressive figure who endorses the idea of perpetual virginity, a message which resonates with Shakespeare's Diana in *All's Well*.

Writing over twenty years later, Thomas Heywood's *The Golden Age* (1611) depicts a different kind of Diana.⁹⁰ Rather than the commanding deity presented by Peele and Lyly, Heywood challenges Diana's authority. In the play, Calisto claims 'Dian, I am now a seruant of thy traine' to which Jupiter, who wishes to seduce her, replies 'Her order is meere heresie'.⁹¹ Jupiter echoes Paroles in making many of the common arguments against withheld virginity. He claims that 'Men were got to get' (D3r) and therefore that loss of virginity is natural and destined; that beauty is transitory and perpetual virginity corrupting when he says, 'This flower will wither, not being cropt in time' (D3r); and that she should 'Leave to the world your like for face and stature' (D3v). Calisto nevertheless joins Diana's train, and Jupiter disguises himself as 'A manly Lasse, a stout Virago' (E1r) to become Calisto's bed fellow. Jupiter mocks the vows her followers must make by subverting the intended meaning. For instance, in response to Atlanta's demand to 'swear no man shall haue your maiden-head' he promises that 'If ere I loos't, a woman shall haue mine' (E1v), so although he appears to swear to a chaste life, he is in fact explicitly expressing his desire to seduce Calisto. This undermining of the vow negates its value, and hence Diana, easily duped by the disguised Jupiter, appears foolish. Jupiter eventually overpowers Calisto, 'carries her away in his armes' (E3r) at the end of Act Two, and the audience are informed by Homer at the start of Act Three that 'Deflowr'd *Calisto*' 'grows great' in pregnancy (E3r-v). Heywood's depiction of Diana, although less positive than the Elizabethan

⁹⁰ Heywood's series of *Ages* plays – *The Golden Age* (1611), *The Silver Age* (1613), *The Brazen Age* (1613), and 1 and 2 *The Iron Age* (1632) – are adapted from his prose work, *Troia Britannica* (1609). See Barbara J. Baines, *Thomas Heywood* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), pp. 139-55.

⁹¹ Thomas Heywood, *The golden age. Or The liues of Jupiter and Saturne, with the defining of the Heathen Gods* (London, 1611), sig. D3r. Subsequent signatures appear parenthetically.

Dianas, nevertheless demonstrates her continued prominence on the stage. There was evidently comic potential in subverting audience's expectations of the goddess of virginity.

Although there is a noticeable shift from Peele's and Lyly's Diana to Heywood's, there is not a clear-cut mode of virginity in Jacobean texts. The Diana encountered throughout *Pericles* is of a different order: it is Diana of Ephesus who is omnipresent, guiding the fates of Pericles and his family. Suzanne Gossett describes Diana as 'the presiding deity of *Pericles*' who seems to oversee all action – a conscious change from the source texts by Gower and Twine.⁹² Across the first four acts of the play, Diana appears as an allusion or a figure of supplication. When Pericles encounters Thaisa, her virginity is attested to by associating her with Diana. Her father proclaims that 'One twelve moons more she'll wear Diana's livery' and that 'by the eye of Cynthia hath she vowed, | And on her virgin honor will not break it' (2.5.10-12). Pericles later seeks Diana's aid in protecting Marina's virginity, swearing 'By bright Diana whom we honor' that 'Till she be married [...] | Unscissored shall this hair of mine remain' (3.3.28-30). Thaisa's first words on waking and finding herself on shore are 'O dear Diana, | Where am I?' (3.2.102-03) and when she believes she will never see her husband again she vows 'A vestal livery will I take me to' (3.4.9) and joins Diana's temple as a chaste priestess. Gower later tells the audience that Marina 'would with rich and constant pen, | Vail to her mistress Dian' (4.0.28-9), implying faithful service and returned protection. In peril at the brothel, Marina vows 'If fires be hot, knives sharp, or waters deep, | Untried I still my virgin knot will keep' and begs the virgin goddess

⁹² William Shakespeare and George Wilkins, *Pericles*, ed. by Suzanne Gossett, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 115-17. Caroline Bicks notes that both Gower and Twine mention Diana twice, compared to Shakespeare's numerous references, so that the 'addition of Diana is a persistent feature of *Pericles*', see 'Backsliding at Ephesus: Shakespeare's Diana and the Churching of Women', in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. by David Skeele (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 205-27 (p. 205).

to help her, crying ‘Diana, aid my purpose!’ (4.2.134-36). In contrast to Marina, and to underscore the unchastity of the brothel, Bawd distances herself from Diana by asking ‘What have we to do with Diana?’ (4.2.137). In Act Five the audience finally witnesses Diana on stage, when she appears to Pericles in a dream and instructs him to go to her temple at Ephesus. It is likely that the original staging at The Globe would have had Diana descend from the Heavens in a throne accompanied by ‘heavenly music’, a borrowing from the more elaborate Jacobean masque tradition.⁹³ The staged spectacle of her appearance in 5.1 would have impressed as ‘an icon of great dramaturgical power that Shakespeare knew would be recognizable to his audiences’.⁹⁴

The late appearance of Diana on stage in *Pericles* is similar to the delayed appearance of the Florentine Diana. In the first two acts of *All’s Well* the goddess Diana features as an allusion three times. Rinaldo reports overhearing Helen claim that ‘Dian [was] no queen of virgins, that would suffer her poor knight surprised without rescue in the first assault or ransom afterward’ (1.3.100-02).⁹⁵ When her secret love for Bertram is discovered by the Countess, Helen asks her imploringly if she:

Did ever, in so true a flame of liking,
Wish chastely and love dearly, that your Dian
Was both herself and love—

1.3.194-98

Just as she is about to pick Bertram as her husband, Helen invokes Diana for a third time, declaring ‘Now, Dian, from thy altar do I fly’ (2.3.72). Once Helen is in Florence, however, her allusions to Diana cease, and instead a character named Diana materializes on stage to assist her. Wilcox and Gossett note that *Pericles* was written

⁹³ Gossett, ed., *Pericles*, p. 81.

⁹⁴ F. Elizabeth Hart, “‘Great is Diana’ of Shakespeare’s Ephesus”, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 43.2 (2003), 347-374 (p. 350).

⁹⁵ The words ‘Dian no’ are missing from F1, which must be a printing error as this follows two parallel constructions with Fortune and Love, and does not make grammatical sense without it, see sig. V3r. Editors routinely make this insertion to make sense of the speech, see for instance Gossett and Wilcox, eds., *All’s Well*, 1.3.112n.

only a few years after *All's Well*, and draw a parallel between the roles of Diana in *Pericles* and Diana in *All's Well*:

Just as the goddess Diana sends Pericles to her temple in Ephesus to restore his family, this [Florentine] Diana accompanies Helen to Rousillon to enable her to 'perfect her intents' and close the circle of her family.⁹⁶

Kiefer's observation of 'the spectre of an individual merging with a type' on stage is at work here, with the Florentine Diana embodying the emblematic figure of the goddess whilst also retaining her more naturalistic persona. This is epitomized when Bertram praises Diana 'Titled goddess, | And worth it with addition!' (4.2.2-3). In one sense this is simply a joke, a hyperbolic compliment which masks Bertram's desire to make Diana very much *unlike* her namesake. Yet in another sense, the audience can see Diana as 'merging' with much wider iconographic associations of Diana, foreshadowing her role in the bedtrick.

Viewing the Florentine Diana as an allegorical version of the goddess Diana strengthens other readings of her as a personification of virginity. In the later part of the play Diana embodies Helen's and Paroles's earlier personifications of virginity as a soldier and companion. In 3.5 Diana discusses her resistance to Bertram's suit and the defence of her virginity with her mother and friends. Mariana stresses the importance of securing virginity, for 'the honor of a maid is her name, and no legacy is so rich as honesty' (3.5.11-12). In response to Mariana's 'Beware' (3.5.16) Diana assures her that 'You shall not need to fear me' (3.5.26) suggesting that her virginity is safe from men. The Widow characterizes Bertram's advances towards Diana as dangerous, saying that he 'brokes with all that can in such a suit | Corrupt the tender honour of a maid', but she also implies that Diana's virginity, just like her namesake, is reliable as 'she is armed for him and keeps her guard | In honestest defense' (3.5.69-

⁹⁶ Gossett and Wilcox, eds., *All's Well*, p. 44.

72). Whereas Helen earlier despaired that ‘our virginity, though valiant in the defense, yet is weak’ (1.1.111-12), this manifestation of her warrior virginity in the form of the Florentine Diana is confidently armed and guarded.

The Florentine Diana also embodies the personification of virginity as a companion. The Widow suggests that ‘This young maid might do [Helen] | A shrewd turn if she pleased’ (3.5.65-66). The Norton editor glosses ‘shrewd turn’ as a ‘nasty trick’, and the Arden editors as ‘mischievous’ or ‘an act of ill will, an injury’, suggesting that Diana could selfishly take Helen’s place in Bertram’s bed.⁹⁷ However, this line can also be read in a more favourable way as friendly: in the sixteenth century ‘shrewd’ could also mean ‘artful’, ‘clever’, ‘acute’ and ‘characterized by penetration or practical sagacity’, and hence ‘shrewd turn’ can position Diana as Helen’s aide rather than rival.⁹⁸ Furthermore, ‘shrewd’ could also be defined as ‘Given to railing or scolding; shrewish’ and linked to the misogynistic stereotype of the ‘shrew’, most famously realized in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*.⁹⁹ Hortensio uses the term in his first mention of Katherina to Petruchio, when he says ‘Petruchio, shall I then come roundly to thee | And wish thee to a shrewd, ill-favoured wife?’ (1.2.57-58). This suggestion of stubborn, female resistance to male desires aligns with Paroles’ characterisation of the companion-virginity as ‘too cold’ and ‘peevish’ (1.1.126; 36). This accusation of obstinacy also recalls Bolt’s complaint of the resistant Marina’s ‘peevish chastity’ (4.6.111). Diana further resembles the personification of virginity as ‘too cold a companion’ in Bertram’s description of Diana as ‘wondrous cold’ (3.6.104) and his complaint that she is ‘cold and stern’ (4.2.8). In embodying these various

⁹⁷ Gossett and Wilcox, eds., *All’s Well*, 3.5.67n. The *OED* includes the phrase ‘shrewd turn’ in the entry for ‘shrewd’, defining it as ‘A mischievous or malicious act’, see *OED*, ‘shrewd, *adj.*’, 5a.

⁹⁸ *OED*, ‘shrewd, *adj.*’, 13.a-b.

⁹⁹ *OED*, ‘shrewd, *adj.*’, 12.a; see also *OED*, ‘shrew, *n.*2’, 3.a.: ‘A person, *esp.* (now only) a woman given to railing or scolding or other perverse or malignant behaviour; frequently a scolding or turbulent wife’.

personifications, therefore, Diana comes to signify the virginity which Helen wishes to lose ‘to her own liking’ (1.1.141) and that Paroles has instructed ‘Away with’t’ (1.1.140). Diana’s ability to embody various distinct personifications is suggestive of how virginity, far from a unified figure, is presented as multiple. This idea of dissembling virginity, which can take on the guise of another, is epitomized in the bedtrick, whereby Helen and Diana exchange places. But although it is possible to interpret Diana as embodying Helen’s personified virginity, importantly her existence does not terminate upon the moment of defloration. Instead, she is a persistent presence on stage in the play’s final act, accompanying Helen to the King’s court and onto Roussillon.

The companionship and interdependence between Helen and Diana continues after the successful bedtrick. Helen apologizes for asking another favour of Diana, but Diana willingly obliges:

HELEN	You, Diana, Under my poor instructions yet must suffer Something in my behalf
DIANA	Let death and honesty Go with your impositions, I am yours, Upon your will to suffer.

4.4.26-29

This exchange of service and gratitude is a reiteration of the previous discussion between Helen and the Widow:

WIDOW	Gentle madam, You never had a servant to whose trust Your business was more welcome.
HELEN	Nor you, mistress, Ever a friend whose thoughts more truly labor To recompense your love.

4.4.14-18

These two chiasmic exchanges reinforce a sense of interdependent companionship, as does the form of the dialogue, as they both follow the same speech pattern and share

the central line. Helen's final speech to the women, that 'We must away. | Our wagon is prepared, and time revives us' (4.4.33-34), uses plural pronouns three times to group the women, who must travel together to seek justice. Rather than defloration splitting Helen from virginity, Helen is bound ever closer. Diana's continuance demonstrates how viewing defloration as the fracturing moment is inaccurate, but that virginity is an unstable and destabilising figure both before and after defloration.

In *All's Well* there is no definitive resolution to the bedtrick plot, or the issue of defloration. At the play's denouement Helen and Diana offer conflicting narratives of *who* was in bed with Bertram, with Diana famously equivocating that Bertram 'knows I am no maid and he'll swear to't; | I'll swear I am a maid and he knows not' (5.3.284-85). Bertram and the King indicate that they accept these claims of Helen's defloration and Diana's virginity only conditionally, with Bertram saying 'If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly, | I'll love her dearly' (5.3.309-10) and the King telling Diana 'If thou beest yet a fresh uncropped flower' (5.3.320). Although an audience is likely to sympathize with the women and expect a comic ending, this is notoriously elusive in the play.¹⁰⁰ Those 'ifs' reflect the unknowability of defloration epitomized by the performance of pregnancy.

In an important sense Helen's pregnancy will always be artificial: on the early modern stage Helen would have been played by a boy actor, and in modern productions it would make no sense for a visibly pregnant actress to perform the role (especially over a long run) as Helen only appears pregnant in the final scene. It is therefore a theatrical performance which offers no sure proof, especially for the audience. Yet even within the world of the play, pregnancy is unreliable. Whereas in Boccaccio Helen

¹⁰⁰ The ambiguous ending leads many critics to reclassify *All's Well* (alongside *Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and various other plays) as a 'problem play', see Lawrence Danson, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Genres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 13-14.

presents Bertram with twin boys who resemble him – a response to the commonly held anxieties about paternity, that a son should be a ‘copy’ of the father – in Shakespeare’s play Helen is only pregnant, with no proof of paternity.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, as Kathryn Moncrief observes, ‘the play provides no concrete details about [Helen’s] physical state or exactly how much time has passed since her sexual encounter with Bertram’.¹⁰² In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries pregnancy was confirmed during the ‘quickening’ (when the baby began to kick) or during labour.¹⁰³ Moncrief therefore argues that ‘the play is uncertain about the nature of the evidence [Helen] presents to prove her success’ and that 5.3 ‘rehearses the same anxieties about how to read the pregnant body that are prevalent in popular [medical and midwifery] guides’.¹⁰⁴ Moncrief’s claim that ‘Despite what Helena knows, or believes, there is a gap between her knowledge and Bertram’s and what he can be forced to accept on sight and report alone’ resonates with the idea of the representational lacuna at the moment of defloration (and here, conception).¹⁰⁵ It recalls the language Solga uses for the unstaged sex (or rape) in *The Changeling*, of the ‘hole at the centre of the text and its performance’.¹⁰⁶ I suggest that the difficulty in proving defloration, consummation,

¹⁰¹ See Kathryn M. Moncrief, ‘Show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to’: Pregnancy, Paternity and the Problem of Evidence in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, in *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, ed. by Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 29-43 (pp. 39-40). For Moncrief’s illuminating experiments with how Helen’s pregnancy can be performed on stage, see Kathryn M. Moncrief, ‘“And are by child with me”: Original Practices and the Performance of Pregnancy in Shakespeare’s *All’s Well that Ends Well*’, in *Shaping Shakespeare for Performance: The Bear Stage*, ed. by Catherine Loomis and Sid Ray (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016), pp. 153-62.

¹⁰² Moncrief, ‘Pregnancy, Paternity’, p. 37.

¹⁰³ Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale, 2003), pp. 121-22. Gowing gives numerous accounts of women (often in the context of accusations of infanticide) who reframe pregnancy and miscarriage/abortion as other ailments, see pp. 121, 138-48.

¹⁰⁴ Moncrief, ‘Pregnancy, Paternity’, p. 37. Moncrief’s essay offers a useful overview of early modern attitudes towards pregnancy.

¹⁰⁵ Moncrief, ‘Pregnancy, Paternity’, p. 40.

¹⁰⁶ Solga, p. 149.

conception, or indeed virginity at the end of *All's Well* is due to the fact that the bedtrick is unstaged, with one insecurity resulting in another.

Helen gives two proofs to Bertram, her pregnancy and his ring. In her study of the traffic of rings in Shakespearean drama and wider Elizabethan culture Kaara L. Peterson argues that the ring can signify multiple meanings, as 'a virgin's vexing possession of a hymeneal ring may readily become an emblem of connubial chastity' and hence she interprets Helen's ring as 'a dual material sign of female virginity and chastity'.¹⁰⁷ Peterson observes how, in *All's Well*, 'the viewer has the sense that rings are, in fact, fast multiplying onstage, although there are actually only two objects at stake in the plot'.¹⁰⁸ The effect of this multiplication is that 'upon the play's close, these apparently freecirculating [*sic*] rings are revealed really to be signs not only of Helen's lost virginity but also of her marital chastity and Diana's yet intact virginity in one compact, over-lapping iconic emblem'.¹⁰⁹ However, Peterson's approach to virginity, which focuses on 'cultural constructions of the physicality of virginity' means that her analysis is restricted to the ambiguity of the hymen.¹¹⁰ Yet her observation of the 'fast multiplying' and 'freecirculating' metaphors are useful for thinking about how virginity is personified in the play. Rather than reducing all virginity metaphors to symbols for the hymen – or as hymen metonyms – the dizzying range of metaphors indicates something more interesting about the relationship between virginity and metaphor. For instance, although Peterson also gestures towards the metaphor of the virgin knot, she does not interrogate the paradoxical relationship *between* these images.¹¹¹ But it is only by viewing these images in relation to one another, and exploring how the same circular

¹⁰⁷ Peterson, 'The Ring's the Thing', p. 103.

¹⁰⁸ Peterson, 'The Ring's the Thing', p. 113.

¹⁰⁹ Peterson, 'The Ring's the Thing', p. 114.

¹¹⁰ Peterson's 'The Ring's the Thing', p. 102.

¹¹¹ Peterson, 'The Ring's the Thing', p. 106.

patterns are replicated in numerous different symbolic ways on stage simultaneously, that we can reach closer to a sense of early modern virginity as fractured. An irony of the play's rings is that rather than signifying unity (whether hymeneal or matrimonial) they reveal how virginity is characterized by disunity.

4. *Fractured virginity in The Changeling*

Themes of exchange and doubling are dominant in *The Changeling*, and it is no surprise that the play has been understood in terms of changeability.¹¹² The idea, evoked powerfully in the play's title, occurs again and again throughout the play, with the words 'change' or 'changed' occurring nineteen times. As N. W. Bawcutt asserts, these repetitions help to 'reinforce the idea that we are witnessing a vital turning point in the character's lives', as well as create a wider sense of mutability.¹¹³ The play's title, both highly evocative and curiously ambiguous, epitomizes the theme of instability.¹¹⁴ Richard Dutton explains how the term 'changeling' is equivocal and multiple, citing five meanings listed in the *OED*:

(1) 'One given to change; a fickle or inconstant person'; (2) 'A Person or thing (surreptitiously) put in exchange for another'; (3) 'A child secretly substituted for another in infancy; *esp.* a child (usually stupid or ugly) supposed to have been left by fairies or stolen'; (4) 'A half-witted person, idiot, imbecile'; (5) 'The rhetorical figure *Hypallage*'.¹¹⁵

The final definition in this list comes from Puttenham's *English Poesie*. He personifies *hypallage* – the figure of speech interchanging two elements of a proposition which

¹¹² See, for instance, Randall. In the introduction to his edition of *The Changeling* Dutton suggests that 'The essential attribute of 'the changeling' is not that of changing, but that of revealing its true nature', p. xxix.

¹¹³ Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*, ed. by N. W. Bawcutt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 5.

¹¹⁴ Critics have long debated the identity of the play's changeling, see for instance, Dutton, ed., *The Changeling*, p. xxviii; Bawcutt, ed., *The Changeling*, pp. 16, 32; Randall, pp. 348-50. Antonio is described as the changeling in the list of *Dramatis Personae*, but the changeling identity could plausibly apply to a wide range of characters, including Beatrice-Joanna, Diaphanta, and Deflores.

¹¹⁵ Dutton, ed., *The Changeling*, p. xxviii.

reverse natural relations – as ‘the Changeling’ (V2r) alongside other personified figures discussed above.¹¹⁶ Interestingly, Puttenham also uses the term ‘changeling’ earlier in *English Poesie* during his description of a bride following her wedding night, recounting how she must appear before her family to show ‘whether she were the same woman or a changeling’ (H1v).¹¹⁷ That the ambiguously deflowered bride could therefore be understood through a slippage in *English Poesie* as an embodiment of the rhetorical figure *hypallage* is indicative of how virginity is dependent upon metaphor and language. This is compounded further by Patricia Parker’s observation that the metaphorical element in metaphor construction can be viewed as a ‘changeling’.¹¹⁸

Given the play’s obsession with diabolic female sexuality and Puttenham’s paranoid description of the ambiguously deflowered bride, predictably critics have added ‘a woman who has had sexual intercourse’ to the list of definitions of ‘changeling’.¹¹⁹ Randall first noted the Puttenham connection, writing that ‘In other words, “changeling” could be used to refer not merely to a woman who had changed the object of her affections, but to a woman who had had sexual intercourse’, and suggests that Beatrice-Joanna can be understood as a changeling because ‘Most harshly put, [Beatrice-Joanna’s] change is from maid to whore’.¹²⁰ This echoes Alsemero’s words at the end of the play to describe Beatrice-Joanna, ‘Here’s beauty changed | To ugly whoredom’ (5.3.197-98). Emphasis on Beatrice-Joanna’s changeability goes hand-in-hand with claims of her duality. Critics have noted her father’s vague comment that she had a ‘fellow’ who died, speculating that this could refer to a sister, or even a

¹¹⁶ *OED*, ‘hypallage, *n.*’; Dutton reads the union of the ‘striking beauty’ of Beatrice-Joanna and the ‘repulsive appearance’ of Deflores as the kind of inversion understood as *hypallage*, *The Changeling*, p. xxix.

¹¹⁷ This passage in *English Poesie* describing epithalamia is discussed at length in Chapters 2 and 3.

¹¹⁸ Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 38.

¹¹⁹ Bromham and Bruzzi, p. 19.

¹²⁰ Randall, pp. 349-50.

twin.¹²¹ Her two names are also significant: the audience initially know her as only ‘Joanna’ until late in the third act, when she is called ‘Beatrice-Joanna’ for the first time (3.3.245), and by the final act her father confusingly cries ‘Joanna! Beatrice! Joanna!’ (5.3.148), so that she appears to have two distinct names. Critics have stressed her ‘doubleness’ and ‘double identity’, suggesting that she takes on ‘the identity of “her fellow”’.¹²² However, this gradual splintering of Beatrice-Joanna’s name, which begins before her encounter with Deflores and the bedtrick, suggests how it is possible to read *The Changeling* as a play characterized not so much by change, but by fracture.

Judith Haber argues that the changeling-bride in *English Poesie* seems ‘to suggest the possibility of some sort of bed-trick or substitution’ like that between Diaphanta and her mistress.¹²³ Haber divides along the virgin/whore dichotomy when she argues that ‘the “perfect” virgin is the twin, the double, or – in the language of *The Changeling* – the “fellow” of the “undone” whore’.¹²⁴ This is a similar approach to critics of *All’s Well* who understand Diana and Helen as embodying the virgin and whore respectively, as discussed above. For these critics, the fracturing moment is sexual experience.¹²⁵ Haber argues that reading the Puttenham passage as a reference to a bedtrick would:

imply that sexual experience (precisely because it is associated with a movement away from closure and stasis) creates an extreme alteration in the bride, potentially destroying her or “substituting” for her ideal virginal self a radically discontinuous personality (which, nevertheless, inhabits a body that appears identical).¹²⁶

¹²¹ Dutton, ed., *The Changeling*, p. xxix.

¹²² Dutton, ed., *The Changeling*, p. xxix.

¹²³ Judith Haber, *Desire and Dramatic Form in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 92.

¹²⁴ Haber, *Desire and Dramatic Form*, p. 92.

¹²⁵ The Fall was sometimes discussed as a moment of fracture, an idea mirrored in drama by fracturing losses of innocence after the introduction of sexuality. For example, Phebe Jensen reads Polixenes’s speech in *The Winter’s Tale* as tracking the break from ‘mirrored replication’ to ‘representation that does not replicate, but instead introduces discrepancy between, a model and its copy’ so that ‘Becoming fallen – embracing “Hereditary” (1.2.75) guilt – means not only achieving sexual knowledge, but entering a new representational economy’, see *Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare’s Festive World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 212-13.

¹²⁶ Haber, *Desire and Dramatic Form*, p. 92.

My position, as already demonstrated in my reading of *All's Well*, departs from this virgin/whore dichotomy by suggesting that the division is present prior to sexual experience, that virginity itself is fractured and multiple, and that defloration is an ambiguous moment of transformation. In this section, therefore, I explore the dynamic between Beatrice-Joanna and Diaphanta to argue that there is no 'closure and stasis' to virginity in *The Changeling*.

Beatrice-Joanna's personified image of the virgin companion can be mapped onto her waiting woman, who is described by Alsemero as 'the counsel of your bosom' (5.3.55-6). Beatrice-Joanna uses Diaphanta twice, first to test the virginity test potion, and then during the bedtrick. Both times, Diaphanta is acting as the embodiment or representation of Beatrice-Joanna's virginity. Her position as a servant enhances this sense of Diaphanta working as Beatrice-Joanna's virgin-emissary. Marjorie Garber, referring to Diaphanta's position of servitude, reads her as a changeling for Beatrice-Joanna because it was understood that the secretly substituted person was 'of inferior worth or value'.¹²⁷ The issue of the changeling's inferior worth becomes particularly interesting in terms of the dynamics of virginity, as its construction was economically relative. The virginity of a noblewoman like Beatrice-Joanna was more highly valued than that of a serving-woman like Diaphanta. Furthermore, a wealthy woman like Beatrice-Joanna would have the power to send a substitute, yet if the scenario were reversed, a servant like Diaphanta could not. The personification of virginity as a 'dear companion' is therefore one which should be considered with an awareness of class inequalities, and over the course of the play eventually reveals the constructed nature of virginity in terms of its relative significance depending on status.

¹²⁷ Garber, pp. 351-52. See also *OED*, 'changeling, *n.*', A.I.2.

The unknowability of virginity, and Diaphanta's embodiment of Beatrice-Joanna's ambiguous virginity, is epitomized in her many-layered name. Taken directly from Rowley and Middleton's source text, John Reynolds's *The Triumphs of Gods Revenge* (1621), the name 'Diaphanta' is unique on the early modern stage.¹²⁸ The first syllable of Diaphanta's name aligns itself with the Roman goddess of virginity, Diana, before deviating away from this association. The name has a 'diaphanous' quality, suggesting something 'transparent' or 'pellucid'.¹²⁹ This meaning extends in conjunction with the idea of the 'phantasm', understood since the medieval period as 'a thing or being which apparently exists but is not real; a hallucination or vision; a figment of the imagination; an illusion'.¹³⁰ In the same year as *The Changeling's* publication a new meaning of 'phantasm' as 'a person who is not what he or she appears or claims to be; an impostor' was first used, again reminiscent of the notion of a 'changeling'.¹³¹ The concept of the 'phantasm' was evolving in this period, as another definition recorded in 1638 (which again has resonances for the idea of 'the changeling') was 'an illusory likeness of an abstract concept; a counterfeit; a sham; an inferior or false copy or semblance'.¹³² Although this meaning post-dates the composition of *The Changeling* by sixteen years, the connotations of dissemblance are useful for thinking about how Diaphanta embodies Beatrice-Joanna's ambiguous virginity which is at once knowable and deceptive. These suggestions of the diaphanous and phantasmal draw out the uncanny elements of virginity, particularly appropriate for

¹²⁸ John Reynolds, *The triumphs of gods revenge, against the crying, and execreble Sinne of Murther* (London, 1621).

¹²⁹ *OED*, 'diaphanous, *adj.*' The earliest citation is from 1614.

¹³⁰ *OED*, 'phantasm, *n.*', A.1.b.

¹³¹ *OED*, 'phantasm, *n.*', A.1.c.

¹³² *OED*, 'phantasm, *n.*', A.1.d. Whereas an *EEBO* key word search helps to locate earliest recorded uses – as with 'diaphanous' above – it is less straight-forward when seeking varying and evolving definitions. I have relied on the *OED's* earliest recorded use for these different definitions of 'phantasm' although it is likely that meanings were current before being written down. Furthermore, any conjectures on developing definitions are based on extant texts.

tragedy, but by no means confined to this genre. Nicolas Royle defines the uncanny as ‘a crisis of the proper [...] a crisis of the natural [...] a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar’.¹³³ This language recalls Thomas Wilson’s *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553) in which metaphor was described as ‘an alternation of a worde, from the proper and naturall meaning, to that which is not proper, and yet agreeth thereunto by some likenesse’.¹³⁴ Anke Bernau cites Wilson in her analysis of the case of Joan of Arc and concludes that ‘virginity is an example of the uncanny’.¹³⁵ Therefore, Diaphanta’s name can symbolize Beatrice-Joanna’s ambiguous sexuality, enhancing her embodiment of her mistress’s virginity.

This reading of Diaphanta as Beatrice-Joanna’s virginity is modelled on the reading of Diana as Helen’s virginity in *All’s Well*, and central to this construction is the unstaged moment of defloration. One critic responding to Beatrice-Joanna’s companion metaphor writes that ‘De Flores’s rape snuffs out this “dear companion” and displaces Beatrice from her culture’s field of language and abstractions’.¹³⁶ The idea that defloration is an act of execution is suggested by Vermandero, who talks of a ‘motion [...] to reprieve | A maidenhead three days longer’ (2.1.113-14), as well as Beatrice-Joanna herself, who tells Deflores that he is wicked ‘To make [Alonzo’s] death the murderer of my honour’ (3.4.121). However, if we understand Diaphanta as embodying Beatrice-Joanna’s virginity, far from being ‘snuffed out’ at the end of Act Three, Diaphanta continues to occupy an important space on the stage throughout the play until her death in Act Five. Both Beatrice-Joanna’s earlier statement that she cannot part with her companion virginity ‘so rude and suddenly’ (1.1.191) and her

¹³³ Nicolas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 1.

¹³⁴ Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique, for the use of all suche as are studious of Eloquence* (London, 1553), sig. Z3v.

¹³⁵ Bernau, ““Saint, Witch, Man, Maid or Whore?””, p. 227.

¹³⁶ Schnitzspahn, p. 86.

question ‘Can such friends divide, never to meet again, | Without a solemn farewell’ (1.1.192-93) are ironically subverted when she herself becomes Diaphanta’s murderer. Her words are proved disingenuous following Diaphanta’s fulfilment of the role as substitute virginity. Immediately on departing Alsemero’s chamber, Diaphanta is encouraged towards her own chamber by her mistress, and dies in the fire kindled there by Deflores. Beatrice-Joanna instructs her ‘Hie quickly to your chamber’, and then feigns concern to Alsemero (5.1.79):

My heart will find no quiet till I hear
How Diaphanta, my poor woman, fares;
It is her chamber, sir, her lodging chamber.
5.1.96-98

Even after ordering Diaphanta’s death, Beatrice-Joanna still uses the language of companionship to strengthen the sense that she has ordered the execution of her virginity, which represents a deferred defloration.

The aftermath of the bedtrick is an allegorical deconstruction of virginity, split between Beatrice-Joanna (the virgin) and her two servants: Diaphanta (virginity) and Deflores (defloration). Like Diaphanta, Deflores can also be viewed in an allegorical dimension, as the literality of his name (‘de-flowerer’) positions him as semi-allegorical from the outset. His unstaged and ambiguous deflowering of Beatrice-Joanna between acts 3 and 4 is reiterated allegorically in his interaction with Diaphanta at the end of the play. After Beatrice-Joanna’s insincere cry of concern for Diaphanta’s life, Deflores enters carrying Diaphanta’s burnt body, and announces her death by declaring ‘Oh poor virginity! | Thou hast paid dearly for’t’ (5.1.104-5). Beatrice-Joanna’s earlier metaphor appears deceitful when contrasted with her exclamations of faux-horror at the sight of Diaphanta’s body: ‘My woman, oh, my woman [...] Oh my presaging soul [...] Were it my sister, now she gets no more’ (5.1.107-11). This vignette allegorizes what has happened to Beatrice-Joanna throughout the play: the deflowerer presents annihilated

virginity to her, symbolising her self-alienation. In Deflores' speech Diaphanta and virginity have become synonymous, layering the play's symbolic and narrative action. Therefore, if Diaphanta is the embodiment of Beatrice-Joanna's virginity, Deflores is the embodiment of her defloration. Not only is her virginity split from her person, but the concept itself splits again, with one figure representing virginity, and another defloration. That this must be represented allegorically is due to the inability to stage defloration.

CONCLUSION

Virginity has been described as a ‘sexuality manqué’ by the medievalist Kim Phillips, and conceptualising virginity as a ‘lack’ resonates powerfully with the limits of representing defloration in the theatre.¹³⁷ For Phillips, virginity is inherently conceptualized as a ‘lack’, suggesting that the virgin is missing something. The employment of personification in *All’s Well* and *The Changeling* is an attempt to provide an alternative to this ‘lack’. The abstract ‘virginity’ is embodied through personification, and indeed, rather than an absence of representation, there is an abundance, as personified forms compete against each other, and merge with the fully formed characters on stage. The lack is nevertheless still an absent presence in these plays through the unstaged bedtricks and moments of defloration. The combination of unstaged defloration and personified virginity reveals how both concepts are disunited, destabilized, and fractured. The tendency for virginity metaphors to multiply, so that there are two versions of the same image, but harnessed in different and oppositional ways, opens up space for a more nuanced understanding of how virginity functions in the plays.

The idea of virginity as a lack brings us back to the ‘virginity dialogue’ in *All’s Well*, which some critics attribute to Middleton. The main objection to the dialogue is the ‘notorious textual disruption’ at the end of the dialogue, when Helen reverts back to expressing interior, melancholic feelings in poetry after her bantering exchange with Paroles in prose.¹³⁸ Critics have struggled to make sense of Helen’s lines, ‘Not my virginity yet — | There shall your master have a thousand loves’ (1.1.153-54), and some try to make sense of the ellipsis by understanding the dialogue as a later insertion.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Kim M. Phillips, ‘Four Virgins’ Tales: Sex and Power in Medieval Law’, in *Medieval Virginites*, pp. 80-101 (p. 80).

¹³⁸ Gossett and Wilcox, eds., *All’s Well*, pp. 367-68; Taylor, ‘Text, Date, and Adaptation’, p. 363.

¹³⁹ Taylor, ‘Text, Date, and Adaptation’, p. 363.

As Loughnane puts it, ‘it is not Helen who breaks off mid-speech (though she does), but rather Middleton who breaks off, after having added new material’.¹⁴⁰ Yet whilst the argument that Middleton inserted the dialogue later is a plausible explanation for this strange textual ellipsis, a more metaphoric approach to virginity as plural opens up alternative possibilities. McCandless has argued for an Irigarayan reading of Helen’s line, claiming that:

Perhaps “at the court” has seemed the best candidate for Helena’s imagined “there” because virginity – or rather the unpenetrated female territory it predicates – has been perceived, within a phallogentric register of meaning, not as a “there” but as a “nowhere,” a “nothing-to-be-seen,” in Luce Irigaray’s striking phrase.¹⁴¹

Yet, rather than a ‘nothing’, Helen’s ‘there’ can instead be understood as an ‘everything’. In fact, it is possible to argue that, yes, Helen is speaking of the court in this passage – as Taylor and Loughnane hypothesize – but that there is a wider metaphor at play, that of her virginity *as* a court, her sexuality and the location of her desired lover blending together. This is supported by the language before the dialogue. Paroles interrupts her first soliloquy, and asks if she is ‘meditating on virginity’ to which Helen replies ‘Ay’ (1.1.106-07). This is true: before Paroles enters Helen was soliloquizing on her unrequited love for Bertram, and specifically her wish to consummate this desire. She admits ‘My imagination | Carries no favor in’t but Bertram’s’ (1.1.78-79) and hints three times at her desire to lose her virginity to him. She describes Bertram as ‘a bright particular star’ that she should ‘think to wed’ (1.1.82-83), despairs at the pain inflicted by ‘Th’ambition in my love’ (1.1.86), and resigns that ‘The hind that would be mated by the lion | Must die for love’ (1.1.87-88). It follows, therefore, that in reverting back to poetry she is elaborating on her meditations on her virginity and Bertram. Her ‘yet’

¹⁴⁰ Loughnane, pp. 420-21.

¹⁴¹ McCandless, p. 452; Luce Irigaray, “Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry,” in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 50.

implies that she will not do anything with her virginity unless with Bertram, introducing her reflections on the experience of losing her virginity with him, contained in the ‘there’. Rather than an awkward textual hurdle, the elliptical nature of the end of Helen and Paroles’ dialogue fits with the way *All’s Well* presents virginity as both presence and absence, as multiplied and fractured rather than unified and intact.

In attempting to carve up the play into “authentic Shakespeare” and “additional Middleton”, critics have been too hasty to ascribe all problematic elements of the text to awkward chopping and stitching, rather than seeking other explanations for textual cruxes, especially puzzling moments of virginity. The critical desire to fix (correct) the play, and the desire to fix (stabilize) virginity may usefully be resisted. This is explored further in *Romeo and Juliet* in the next chapter.

2.

RECYCLED VIRGINITY:

AURORA, GREENSICKNESS, AND *ROMEO AND JULIET*

INTRODUCTION

The prologue to William Shakespeare and John Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen* opens with the assertion that:

New plays, and maidenheads are near akin:
Much followed both, for both much money gi'en,
If they stand sound and well. And a good play—
Whose modest scenes blush on his marriage day
And shake to lose his honour — is like her
That after holy tie and first night's stir
Yet still is modesty, and still retains
More of the maid to sight than husband's pains;
We pray our play may be so.

Prologue, 1-9

The playwrights personify their 'modest scenes' which 'shake' and 'blush on his marriage day' in an extended conceit which likens a marriage day to a play's first performance. They hope their play will appear new and virginal, like a bride does to her husband on their wedding night. Prologues and epilogues can be considered as 'remnants' — to use Tiffany Stern's phrase — of the play in its 'first-time' form, reminding us of the transition from page to stage, from text to embodied performance.¹ *The Two Noble Kinsmen* does exactly this by aligning the 'first-time' form of the play with a virgin's 'first-time' with her bridegroom. However, the *Two Noble Kinsmen* prologue exposes the anxiety that it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to discern between a virgin bride and a "bedded wife". As Shakespeare and Fletcher observe, even after 'first night's stir' and 'husband's pains', a bride 'still is modesty' and a 'maid to

¹ Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 83.

sight'. This metaphor is partly employed to persuade the audience that successive stagings of a play are as good as the first performance, inviting the audience to be in on the joke.² The ease of this wedding night simile suggests that playwrights and audiences were attuned to the performative nature of virginity: it implies an awareness of a societal conflict between the value of virginity to female honour and its precarious – and therefore disruptive – potential.

The Two Noble Kinsmen was first performed in 1613, and the earliest printed record dates from 1634.³ The prologue was therefore written at least about twenty (and, as we have no earlier printed record to compare, up to forty) years after Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1596).⁴ Nevertheless, the idea explored in the prologue – that defloration is a performative, unstable event, and that virginity could be recycled – offers a useful framework for discussing the earlier play and its representation of virginity and marriage. This Chapter explores how *Romeo and Juliet* challenges notions of fixed virginity and defloration by not staging the wedding night. This follows a similar approach to that taken in the previous Chapter's analysis of how unstaged bedtricks destabilize virginity and defloration in *All's Well* and *The Changeling*. I will argue that the repeated dawns of *Romeo and Juliet* create a cycle of allegorical deflorations which compensate for the unstaged wedding night, and that these dawns align Juliet with the goddess Aurora, who was depicted as a perpetual bride in early

² Playwrights were incentivized to encourage audiences to accept a play beyond its opening performance, as they would be given part of the revenue from the third 'benefit' performance as 'part-payment', Stern, p. 81.

³ John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (London, 1634). The relationship between the prologue's opening image and the broken epithalamium of 1.1 (discussed below) is evidence that the prologue was part of the first performance rather than a later addition. For the context of the play's 1634 printing and a provocative reading of the relationship between Palamon and Arcite and the prologue's maidenheads, see Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 49-62.

⁴ Estimates for the date of composition for *Romeo and Juliet* range from 1594 to 1597. Weis makes a convincing case for a tighter composition window of late summer to early autumn 1596, see *Romeo and Juliet*, pp. 33-43. This dating aligns with my argument (below) that Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and Spenser's *Epithalamion* influenced *Romeo and Juliet*.

modern culture. Juliet's destabilized virginity which is repeatedly recycled throughout the play and resists death in turn challenges ideas about greensickness, the so-called 'virgin's disease', which was predicated on a notion of fixed virginity and defloration as a reliable transition. In *Romeo and Juliet*, rather than a physiological condition virginity functions imaginatively and allegorically.

In *Romeo and Juliet* the 'first night's stir' is not staged. Audiences and scholars often assume that it takes place just before the lovers part at dawn on Tuesday (3.5), but it is not witnessed.⁵ Here, Shakespeare's version differs from his source material, as both Brooke and Painter include the consummation of Romeo and Juliet's marriage in their narratives, placing the reader or listener in the room with the couple.⁶ Brooke uses a martial metaphor to convey Juliet's loss of virginity, describing how:

now the virgins fort
hath warlike Romeus got,
In which as yet no breache was made
by force of cannon shot.
And now in ease he doth
possess the hoped place.⁷

Likewise, in Painter the couple are described as 'being then between the shéetes in priuy bed' when 'Rhomeo vnloosing the holy lines of virginity, tooke possession of the place, which was not yet besieged'.⁸ Both stress that Juliet's virginity has been conquered by Romeo and that this consummates the marriage: to Brooke, 'The marriage thus made vp' (D2v); to Painter, 'Their marriage thus consummate' (LL13v).⁹ Importantly, in both

⁵ As discussed in the Introduction, two noted exceptions are Medhavi Menon and Christine Varnado, who have both written on the unstaged nature of Romeo and Juliet's wedding night. See Menon, *Wanton Words*, and Varnado, "'Invisible Sex'".

⁶ The versions in English of the Romeo and Juliet story which predate Shakespeare are Arthur Brooke, *The tragicall historye of Romeus and Iuliet* (London, 1562) and William Painter, 'Rhomeo and Julietta', in *The second tome of the Palace of pleasure* (London, 1567), sigs. Iii2v-QQq3r. Both were based on the Italian version by Matteo Bandello (1554).

⁷ Brooke, *Romeus and Iuliet*, sig. D2v.

⁸ Painter, 'Rhomeo and Julietta', sig. LL13v.

⁹ The overlapping language of virginity and conquest (including these examples from Brooke and Painter) is explored in Chapter 3.

texts the dawn is what parts the couple, as Brooke describes how they feel ‘The nigh approche of dayes retoorne’ (D2v), and Painter describes Romeo as ‘perceiuing the morning make hastie approach’ (LL13v). Shakespeare retains the temporal structure of dawn but there is an omission where Juliet’s defloration is usually represented.

Shakespeare’s departure from his sources is partly a question of form: there are practical limits to what can be depicted on stage which do not apply to poetry and prose. But, as I discussed at length in the previous chapter, when it comes to moments of defloration in drama what is unstaged is significant. In contrast to modern productions and film adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* which often show the couple in bed, Elizabethan play-texts do not indicate a staged wedding night.¹⁰ Although Sasha Roberts suggests that the modern practice of staging a bedroom scene emphasizes the intimacy and passion between Romeo and Juliet and that this ‘heightens audience sympathy for their plight’, I argue that not staging the wedding night is essential for understanding how virginity functions in the play.¹¹ The unstaged wedding night in *Romeo and Juliet* is akin to the bedtrick in *The Changeling*, in that it presumably takes place during the staged time of the play but offstage. The audience must imagine, during the arrangements of Juliet’s marriage to Paris at 3.4, that beyond the scope of the stage the newlyweds are together as 3.5 opens *in medias res* with Romeo about to descend from Juliet’s chamber as dawn breaks. The absence of a staged wedding night is therefore another instance of a ‘representational lacuna’ as Juliet’s defloration is elided. This is an innovation specific to Shakespeare’s dramatized version of Romeo and Juliet’s story which hence destabilizes the relationship between performance and

¹⁰ The most famous twentieth-century adaptations both include bedroom scenes, see *Romeo and Juliet*, dir. by Franco Zeffirelli (Paramount, 1968); *Romeo + Juliet*, dir. by Baz Luhrmann (20th Century Fox, 1996). See Varnado, p. 34, for discussion of the Zeffirelli scene and how it is nevertheless still limited in what it can show of the wedding night.

¹¹ Roberts, p. 163

virginity, and suggests virginity is something dependent on sight or witnessing. It partly explains why to her parents at 3.5, Juliet ‘still retains | More of the maid to sight than husband’s pains’ as ‘to sight’ no transitional moment has been witnessed by the audience.

As this chapter will show, the implications for the unstaged wedding night in *Romeo and Juliet* has been overlooked by previous scholars, an oversight which has consequently limited understanding of how the play represents virginity and engages with early modern discourses of marriage. One of the ways the play explores ideas of marriage and female sexuality is through reference to greensickness, the condition also known as ‘the disease of virgins’ as it was supposedly caused by prolonging the virgin state and cured by sexual activity within marriage. In Act Three Juliet is diagnosed as greensick by her father following her refusal to marry Paris, yet critical readings of how the play represents greensickness – and what this means for Juliet – have not considered the unstaged nature of the wedding night, assuming that it takes place. The lack of critical engagement with this issue of representation has resulted in a limited analysis of virginity in *Romeo and Juliet*. Yet the unwitnessed, unstaged consummation of marriage between Romeo and Juliet is crucial to understanding how the play reveals greensickness to be not so much a medical condition suffered by Juliet, but a patriarchal fantasy of control. The lack of certainty surrounding Juliet’s virginity (and her loss of virginity) upsets any attempts at diagnosis – by her father or by critics – and exposes a problem with the overdependence on defloration for securing early modern marriages. Taking this critical oversight of the wedding night’s unstaged nature as a starting point, this chapter presents a theory of ‘recycled virginity’ which enables a reassessment of Juliet’s greensickness and offers a new reading of *Romeo and Juliet* which

demonstrates how Juliet's virginity disrupts early modern narratives of marriage and consummation.

In this Chapter I use the phrase 'recycled virginity' because it evokes the unfixity of virginity in several important ways. Firstly, it suggests a perpetual process of renewal or regeneration, but unlike those synonyms 'recycled' suggests the cyclical motion of the rising and setting sun. The circadian structure of epithalamia and *Romeo and Juliet* is crucial to the idea that defloration is a temporary event, which 'renewed' and even 'cyclical' does not quite achieve. However, I also use 'recycled virginity' to evoke its more specific meaning 'to reuse (material) in an industrial process; to return (material) to a previous stage of a cyclic process'.¹² Although this is a twentieth-century coinage, it is not anachronistic to apply a theory of recycling to the early modern period. As Donald Woodward has demonstrated, 'the recycling of materials was of crucial significance in the pre-industrial economy'.¹³ He argues that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

Few goods were lightly abandoned; fewer still were left to rot by the roadside. Nearly all items discarded by one person could be used by another in an unaltered form, in a repaired or partially reconstructed state, or in a totally new guise via the process of recycling.¹⁴

Therefore, in addition to the looser, figurative sense of virginity 'returned to a previous stage of cyclic process' I am also experimenting with the more literal meaning, of reusing materials or restoring waste to a useable condition. As demonstrated throughout this thesis (and in the discussions of greensickness in this chapter) early modern culture often constructed virginity as a disposable, "single-use" object, something which once gone could not be restored and, like waste, was potentially contaminating. Part of my

¹² *OED*, 'recycle, v.', I.1.a.

¹³ Donald Woodward, "'Swords into Ploughshares': Recycling in Pre-Industrial England", *The Economic History Review*, 38.2 (1985), 175-91 (p. 176).

¹⁴ Woodward, p. 176. Woodward's article covers recycling of clothing, buildings, metals, paper, and other miscellaneous materials.

argument throughout this chapter is that the metaphorical structure of *Romeo and Juliet* challenges this sense of virginity, and therefore the more practical meaning of recycling materials is productive.

PART ONE

i. *Greensick Juliet?*

From the mid-sixteenth century onwards a condition known as greensickness was diagnosed in unmarried young women. According to physicians, greensickness was a disease of suppressed menses cured through sexual penetration, conception, gestation and childbirth, all of which would supposedly enlarge the veins of the womb and unclog the body.¹⁵ As the alternative name ‘the disease of virgins’ suggests, it was diagnosed in sexually inexperienced post-menarcheal women. The foundational text for early modern greensickness was a letter, written in 1554, from the physician Johannes Lange to the father of a girl named Anna.¹⁶ His letter opens by acknowledging that Anna ‘who is now of marriageable age, is desired in marriage by many suitors’, and that the father is ‘forced to refuse them’ due to Anna’s ‘infirmity’ (46). The father has requested Lange’s ‘opinion on [Anna’s] disease, and reliable advice on her marriage’ (46). These two issues – Anna’s health and her marriage – are treated as interdependent, two parts of one problem. Lange informs Anna’s father that ‘this disease often attacks virgins when, already ripe for a man, they have left behind their youth’ (47), and, referencing Hippocrates, he orders ‘virgins suffering from this disease to live with men as soon as possible, and have intercourse. If they conceive, they recover’ (48). He concludes his letter by encouraging Anna to be married, and cheerfully invites himself to the ceremony: ‘So therefore, take courage, betroth your daughter: I myself will gladly be present at the wedding’ (48). Helen King notes the two related concerns of Anna’s

¹⁵ The most in-depth study of greensickness is Helen King’s *The Disease of Virgins: Green Sickness, Chlorosis, and the Problems of Puberty* (London: Routledge, 2004). For other accounts which apply the medical theory behind the disease to literary texts, see Lesel Dawson, “‘A Thirsty Womb’: Lovesickness, Greensickness, Hysteria and Uterine Fury”, in *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 46-90, and Amy Kenny, ‘The Green Womb’, in *Humoral Wombs on the Shakespearean Stage* (London: Palgrave, 2019), pp. 27-56.

¹⁶ Anna’s exact age is unspecified. Throughout, I quote from King’s translation of the Latin, pp. 46-48 (see pp. 142-43 for original transcription).

father – her health and her marriage prospects – are both solved by Lange’s prescribed cure of marriage. She states that ‘Within the humoral body, the use of marriage as a treatment is a physiological recommendation rather than some sort of acknowledgement of psychological need’.¹⁷ She argues against an interpretation of Lange’s cure as a response to a psychosomatic or neurotic condition in Anna, but that ‘On the contrary, marriage is simply the only socially acceptable situation in which the virgin’s body can be put under proper male control, opened, entered and seeded’.¹⁸ Crucial to understanding greensickness, as King observes, is male control.

Romeo and Juliet includes two explicit references to greensickness, and hence has featured prominently in critical discussions of the disease. Romeo warns of the ‘sick and green’ (2.1.50) moon and Capulet diagnoses his daughter as ‘green-sickness carrion’ (3.5.156) when she refuses to marry Paris.¹⁹ Editors of *Romeo and Juliet* tend to gloss these references as unproblematic, presenting greensickness in medical terms. Brian Gibbons defines greensickness as ‘a disease incident to maids’²⁰ and René Weis as ‘a form of anaemia affecting teenage girls at puberty’.²¹ Likewise, Jill Levenson defines greensickness as ‘the anaemic disease which affects young women at puberty’²² and G. Blakemore Evans as ‘a kind of anaemia, producing a greenish skin tone, to which girls of marriageable age were supposed to be subject’.²³ These editors note that the condition is age and sex specific, with some even gesturing towards the significance of marriage, yet there is a strangely ambivalent attitude towards the relationship

¹⁷ King, p. 67.

¹⁸ King, pp. 67-68.

¹⁹ I follow the Norton editor’s scene divisions throughout this chapter, although editors often designate the “balcony scene” as 2.2.

²⁰ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Brian Gibbons, The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series (London: Thomson Learning, 2004), 2.2.8n.

²¹ Weis, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.8n.

²² William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Jill L. Levenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.5.155n.

²³ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans, updated edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.2.8n.

between the disease and virginity. The most recent Norton (2016) and Oxford Shakespeare (2016) editions make more overt reference to sexuality: in a gloss to Romeo's description of the 'green and sick' moon, Gordon McMullan notes that 'Unfulfilled sexual desire was thought to cause green sickness (anemia) in adolescent girls'²⁴ and Francis Conner glosses it as 'referring to green-sickness, or anaemia, thought to afflict adolescent girls because they needed sexual intercourse'.²⁵ Yet both glosses problematically position greensick girls as sexually repressed and perpetuate the anaemia association. Indeed, there is an odd feedback loop in medical and literary references to greensickness, as Capulet's lines from *Romeo and Juliet* have been repeatedly and uncritically quoted in medical literature which endorse greensickness as an early form of anaemia. For example, in a 1990 article, medical doctors Patrick Farley and Jaime Foland open their discussion of iron deficiency anaemia with Capulet's description of Juliet as 'greensickness carrion' and state that 'for centuries, chlorosis, or green sickness, was attributed to unrequited passion'.²⁶ Bizarrely, more recent medical literature still refers to greensickness in relation to iron deficiency anaemia: in a 2000 encyclopaedia of sports medicine, endorsed by the International Olympic Committee, E. Randy Eichner confidently reproduces the claims made by Farley and Foland.²⁷ This feedback loop is an indication of the problem of reading literature as a

²⁴ William Shakespeare, 'Romeo and Juliet', ed. by Gordon McMullan with an introduction by Stephen Greenblatt, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, pp. 967-1035, 2.1.50n.

²⁵ William Shakespeare, 'Romeo and Juliet', ed. by Francis X. Conner, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works. Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 997-1077, 8.50n.. The later reference is glossed as 'anaemic. Implies 'immature'', 17.156n. Conner glosses 'baggage' as categorising 'Juliet's supposed obstinate virginity as physical corruption' (17.156n.) but this is not used to contextualize the dynamics of Capulet's greensickness diagnosis.

²⁶ Patrick Farley and Jaime Foland, 'Iron Deficiency Anemia: How to Diagnose and Correct', *Postgraduate Medicine*, 87 (1990), 89-101 (p. 89).

²⁷ E. Randy Eichner, 'Minerals: Iron', in *Nutrition in Sport*, ed. by Ronald J. Maughan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 326.

reflection of a scientific real world, and the danger of taking a disease like greensickness at face value.

The dangers of such an approach are seen most clearly in a 2009 paper investigating whether greensickness is a ‘form fruste’ of anorexia nervosa. The paper – co-written by two psychologists, Roger Bartrop and Stephen W. Touyz, and the literary scholar and early modernist, Ursula Potter – investigates the relationship between puberty and the onset of greensickness and/or anorexia nervosa, finding ‘a striking resemblance’ between the conditions.²⁸ Yet in arguing for a clinical overlap, the authors overlook how the relative economic value of virginity was a significant factor contributing to the development of greensickness as a cultural condition. As Fletcher and Shakespeare wryly observe in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, there was ‘much money gi’en’ (Prologue, 2) for a maidenhead. The writers of the 2009 paper attribute greensickness ‘to the effects of an idle but well-nourished lifestyle on the virginal body at puberty’ and one of the main parallels drawn between the two conditions is the high socio-economic status of those affected, identifying ‘an affluent lifestyle’ as one of the ‘risk factors’ for greensickness.²⁹ They note that ‘Members of the working classes who might display similar symptoms could never be diagnosed with melancholy or greensickness simply because they did not share the same causal conditions’.³⁰ Although sexual honour was a concern for women at all levels of society, there was a specific investment in elite women’s virginity because their marriages facilitated the exchange of significant financial capital. Furthermore, the assurance of a potential bride’s virginity was desirable to ensure the production of legitimate heirs, and the importance

²⁸ Ursula Potter, Roger Bartrop and Stephen W. Touyz, ‘Pubertal Process and Green-sickness in Renaissance Drama: A Form Fruste of Anorexia Nervosa?’, *Australian Psychiatry*, 17.5 (2009), 380-84.

²⁹ Potter and others, ‘Pubertal Process’, p. 381.

³⁰ Potter and others, ‘Pubertal Process’, p. 381.

of a bride's virginity hence correlated with the value of the inheritance at stake. Without this context, virginity is presented throughout the paper as merely biological fact. The authors observe that 'No social stigma seems to have been attached to [greensickness], if anything the contrary, given that it provided evidence of affluence in families and of biological virginity in daughters'.³¹ But by assuming that greensickness was a physiological condition, the authors miss the implications of their claim: if a diagnosis of greensickness provided evidence of affluence and a young woman's virginity, there was a motivation for families to ascribe greensickness to girls regardless of their health. Greensickness was not a disease of virginity, but rather virginity could be emphasized – even “proven” – if the girl was labelled as greensick. Rather than an affluent lifestyle causing greensickness, a greensickness diagnosis (not the same as having the disease) was a consequence of the economic investment in female virginity. In taking the disease at face value, these scholars overlook a motivation behind a diagnosis of greensickness: the expedience of a marriage. The authors state that 'Juliet becomes difficult and confrontational with her parents, who realize that she has the greensickness'.³² However, in claiming that Juliet is greensick – that she is anaemic or even anorexic – they, like previous editors of the play, obscure the misogynistic dynamics of a disease which positioned the female body as unhealthy if unpenetrated, and young women in need of marriage.

Recently literary critics have pointed to the relationship between the impetus to control female sexuality through marriage and the diagnosis of greensickness, yet they do so whilst maintaining a pathological basis of the disease. Lesel Dawson argues that 'green sickness emphasizes the dangers of virginity, intersecting with the *carpe diem*

³¹ Potter and others, 'Pubertal Process', p. 381.

³² Potter and others, 'Pubertal Process', p. 382.

tradition’ and that this and other uterine disorders ‘offer a rationale with which to coerce women into taking up roles as wives and mothers, indirectly implying that young women who are not married are in danger of becoming sick’.³³ Bonnie Lander Johnson also acknowledges that ‘While the commencement of sexual activity was thought to offer a functional solution to the problem of blockages in the womb, such “medicine” also indicates how the disease emerged out of broader social imperatives surrounding the regulation of female desire’.³⁴ Amy Kenny similarly understands greensickness as ‘a form of social regulation’ and asserts that ‘early modern medical texts characterize virginity as perilous for young women’s bodies as a way of perpetuating social conduct rules encouraging marriage’.³⁵ As Dawson, Lander Johnson and Kenny all gesture towards here, the emergence of greensickness in the sixteenth century coincides with a shifting religious context in which marriage was becoming more central to societal organisation.

Referencing Elizabethan political discourses of virginity, King observes ‘the paradox that, while virginity, as physical integrity, may express autonomy and power, it is highly dangerous to maintain it beyond its proper season’.³⁶ Hence, greensickness is another manifestation of the attitude towards virginity as a corrupting force (as discussed in the previous chapter in the dialogue between Helena and Paroles). An early literary reference to greensickness appears in Robert Greene’s prose work *Mamillia* (1583) and it is quoted by King, Dawson and others to evidence this fear of overripe virginity:

In the meane time *Gonzaga* perceiuing his daughter to be mariageable, knowing by skill and experience, that the grasse being ready for the sieth, would wither if it were not cut; and the apples beeing ripe, for want of plucking woulde rotte on the tree; that

³³ Dawson, pp. 47-8.

³⁴ Bonnie Lander Johnson, ‘Blood, Milk, Poison: *Romeo and Juliet*’s Tragedy of “Green” Desire and Corrupted Blood’, in *Blood Matters*, pp. 134-48, 282-84 (p. 137).

³⁵ Kenny, pp. 29-30.

³⁶ King, pp. 68-69.

his daughter beeing at the age of twentie yeeres, would either fall into the greene sicknes for want of a husband, or els if she scaped that disease, incurre a farther inconuenience: so that lyke a wise father he thought to foresee such daungers.³⁷

Gonzaga's fear that Mamillia's virginity 'for want of plucking woulde rotte on the tree' recalls Lange's description of Anna as 'ripe for a man'. King positions this paradox within a Reformation context, observing that 'Protestant and Catholic authors, having different approaches to lifelong virginity, could hold somewhat different positions on the disease'.³⁸ She argues 'that the disease of virgins only became possible during the sixteenth-century, with the rise of Protestantism favouring marriage even more as the goal for a faithful Christian girl'.³⁹ For these critics, therefore, greensickness is understood as an ideologically inflected medical condition.

The implications for the study on greensickness and anorexia discussed above are highly significant, given that one of its authors, Ursula Potter, has also written arguably the most influential interpretation of greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*. In her chapter in *The Premodern Teenager* (2002) Potter characterizes Capulet as a 'well-meaning father' concerned that his daughter is greensick.⁴⁰ She views Capulet's attitude towards Juliet like that of the father of Lange's original patient and the fictional Gonzaga, as benevolent and stemming from a genuine fear that virginity could corrupt the body.⁴¹ Helen King's claim – that Capulet's desire 'to arrange with all haste' Juliet's marriage is 'because he was concerned that she had green sickness' – relies on Ursula

³⁷ Robert Greene, *Mamillia: A Mirrour or looking-glasse for the Ladies of Englande* (London, 1583), sig. C3r.

³⁸ King, p. 4.

³⁹ King, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Ursula Potter, 'Greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*: Considerations on a Sixteenth-Century Disease of Virgins', in *The Premodern Teenager: Youth in Society, 1150-1650*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002), pp. 271-91. A version of this argument appears in Potter's recent monograph, see '*Romeo and Juliet* (ca. 1594-1595)', in *The Unruly Womb in Early Modern English Drama: Plotting Women's Biology on the Stage* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2019), pp. 89-106. As the 2019 chapter is largely a reproduction of the 2002 chapter I have primarily engaged with the earlier version, as it forms the basis of readings of *Romeo and Juliet* by other critics, notably King.

⁴¹ Potter, 'Greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*', p. 272.

Potter's argument that 'As [Capulet] sees it, he is taking measures to save Juliet's life'.⁴² Potter repeatedly stresses the idea that Capulet fears 'his daughter is showing symptoms of a disease', interpreting Juliet's rejection of marriage to Paris 'as evidence of an irrational state of mind, a familiar symptom of greensickness'.⁴³ In reading Capulet as 'a careful and caring father' Potter assumes that his fears are selfless, rather than selfish.⁴⁴ She overlooks how, by associating Juliet with greensickness, Capulet ensures the marriage he is anxious to facilitate. Potter argues that Capulet's desire to marry Juliet to Paris stems from worries about her health, but his wedding arrangements (3.4) precede his diagnosis (3.5). In fact, marriage is not a cure for Juliet's greensickness, but rather, the diagnosis of greensickness ensures the marriage to Paris will go ahead despite Juliet's resistance: greensickness diagnosis is the method through which Juliet is put under male control. Potter's assertion that Capulet's diagnosis is sincere, honourable, and medically grounded replicates and perpetuates the underlying sexism inherent to greensickness. Assuming a medical motive to his greensickness diagnosis obscures his patriarchal investment in his daughter's virginity, and belies the social construction of the disease. I argue that characterising Capulet as well-meaning is overly generous, and misses the important point that his diagnosis will force Juliet to marry against her will. Reading Capulet's diagnosis this way highlights the usefulness of greensickness for the purposes of establishing marriage.

Editors who gloss 'greensickness carrion' as indicating Juliet's anaemia, and scholars who argue that Capulet recognizes symptoms in Juliet, are all working with the assumption that it is possible to diagnose literary figures with greensickness, and that diagnosis (within or without literature) is unproblematic. It is an assumption

⁴² King, p. 68; Potter, 'Greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*', p. 274.

⁴³ Potter, 'Greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*', pp. 271-72.

⁴⁴ Potter, 'Greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*', p. 279.

epitomized by Potter's comment that 'Shakespeare's characterisation of this thirteen-year-old allows the possibility that Juliet is indeed showing symptoms of greensickness',⁴⁵ and replicated, for instance, by Jessica C. Murphy who claims that Spenser's Knight of Chastity, Britomart, 'suffers from greensickness'.⁴⁶ In her essay on greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*, Lander Johnson is 'less concerned with the play's specific references to the disease [...] and more concerned with the figurative reverberations of green as newness, perverted appetites, corrupted blood, and fertile earth'.⁴⁷ However, although this wider metaphorical reading is suggestive, she nevertheless maintains the view that greensickness was a diagnosable disease, and that fictional characters can in theory be diagnosed with it by critics. She deplores the difficulty of 'Diagnosing greensickness in fictional characters', which is 'hindered by insufficient clues to their symptoms' and 'the fact that descriptions of the disease in early modern medical guidebooks are far from consistent'.⁴⁸ She does not question this insufficiency or inconsistency, however, which is an indication of the less than reliable nature of greensickness itself rather than a fault of the literary and medical texts in question. This scholarly tendency towards diagnosis re-enacts what is happening in the play, and is seen in criticism on other plays such as *All's Well* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.⁴⁹ A more sceptical approach which considers the broad, unreliable diagnostic

⁴⁵ Potter, 'Greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*', p. 285.

⁴⁶ Jessica C. Murphy, "'Of the sicke virgin": Britomart, Greensickness, and the Man in the Mirror', *Spenser Studies*, 25 (2010), 109-27 (p. 109).

⁴⁷ Lander Johnson, 'Blood, Milk, Poison', p. 137.

⁴⁸ Lander Johnson, 'Blood, Milk, Poison', p. 135.

⁴⁹ Critics' diagnosis of greensickness is prevalent in Shakespearean scholarship, including plays discussed in this thesis: *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *All's Well*. It is a critical commonplace to diagnose the Jailer's Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* as greensick, as noted in a recent guide to Shakespeare marketed to a non-academic audience: *Shakespeare: A Playgoer's and Reader's Guide*, ed. by Michael Dobson, Stanley Wells and Georgina Lucas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 322. For example, Lesel Dawson argues that the Jailer's Daughter's illness 'draws on the stereotypical features of both green sickness and uterine fury', p. 79, and Amy Kenny describes the Jailer's daughter as illustrating 'genuine symptoms of greensickness', p. 34. See also Douglas Bruster, 'The Jailer's Daughter and the Politics of Madwomen's Language', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 46.3 (1995), 277-300, and Carol Thomas Neely, 'Diagnosing Women's Melancholy: Case Histories and the Jailer's Daughter's Cure in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*', in *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in*

criteria (which include many symptoms of female puberty) reveals greensickness diagnosis to be a patriarchal fantasy of control.⁵⁰

This is most evident in Capulet's abrupt shift from protecting Juliet from marriage to enforcing her marriage by means of a greensickness diagnosis. During the early modern period, the cultural importance placed on ensuring pre-marital virginity and facilitating loss of virginity within marriage was somewhat at odds with the reality of sexual practices amongst unmarried young people. The later average age for marriage – 27 or 28 for men and 25 or 26 for women – combined with ambiguity surrounding marriage contracts meant that premarital sex was a relatively common occurrence.⁵¹ David Cressy finds that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 20 to 30 per cent of brides were pregnant at marriage, and estimates that no more than half of couples 'were still virgins before their wedding night'.⁵² Peter Laslett attributes the misconception that child marriage was common in the sixteenth century to Shakespeare's Juliet, arguing that marriage at fourteen would have been 'rare' even for elite women.⁵³ Indeed, Greene's Mamillia is 'the age of twentie yeeres' when her father determines her ready for marriage and at risk of greensickness.⁵⁴ Laslett suggests that Juliet's youthful marriage would have been understood as precocious, whilst other scholars argue that the play voices 'contemporary concern about the dangers (physical,

Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 69-98. For an example of a critic diagnosing Helen as greensick, see Barbara Howard Traister, "'Doctor She': Healing and Sex in *All's Well That Ends Well*", in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume IV: The Poems, Problem Plays, Late Plays*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 333-47.

⁵⁰ As the diagnostic criteria for greensickness includes many symptoms of female puberty, the diagnosis of the disease can have the effect of pathologising adolescent girls unnecessarily.

⁵¹ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 285.

⁵² Cressy, pp. 277-78.

⁵³ Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost: Further Explored* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2015), p. 83.

⁵⁴ Shakespeare reduces Juliet's age to 13. She is between 15-17 in his sources, and still described as too young to marry. In Brooke, Juliet's father describes her as 'Scarce saw she yet full .xvi. yerres: | too yong to be a bryde', sig. G4v; in Painter, Juliet's father states that 'she is not attained to the age of .xviii. yeares', sig. NNn2r.

emotional, and social) of early marriage' in line with popular manuals of health which 'led Elizabethans to believe that early marriage and its consummation permanently damaged a young woman's health'.⁵⁵

The idea that early marriage was dangerous for women seems to contradict the discourse surrounding greensickness, that withheld virginity was corrupting. However, if we view greensickness less as a diagnosis to protect women's health, and more as a mechanism to control female sexuality, the conflict is less troublesome. Capulet's abrupt change of mind regarding Juliet's marriage exemplifies both positions, as he first defers marriage until she is physically more mature, only to then enforce it through his diagnosis of greensickness. In Act One he says he will 'Let two more summers wither in their pride | Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride' (1.2.10-11), but condemns Juliet as 'A whining mammet' when she refuses marriage for the reasons he previously supported, cruelly mocking her: "'I'll not wed [...] I am too young'" (3.5.185-87). Any fear Capulet may have for Juliet's wellbeing is replaced by anger at her defiance. Whereas he previously saw marriage as dangerous, it now becomes a cure. Helen King explores the idea that the rise in greensickness 'could correspond with the idea of 'adolescence' as a distinct life crisis centred on biological puberty' and identifies – following Kim Philips – 'the tension between sexual maturity and sexual inexperience' of maidenhood.⁵⁶

These recent studies of greensickness, whilst attuned to how the disease has historically been examined uncritically, prioritize a medical exploration (with allowances for a cultural influence) which accepts virginity as a physiological state. As

⁵⁵ Laslett, p. 86; Bruce W. Young, 'Haste, Consent, and Age at Marriage: Some Implications of Social History for *Romeo and Juliet*', *Iowa State Journal of Research*, 62.3 (1988), 459-74; J. Karl Franson, "'Too soon marr'd': Juliet's Age as Symbol in *Romeo and Juliet*", *Papers on Language & Literature*, 32.3 (1996), 244-62 (p. 246).

⁵⁶ King, pp. 83-88.

I argue throughout this thesis, in early modern culture virginity functions as a primarily imaginative, metaphorical concept which is inherently unstable. Defloration was likewise a destabilized, elusive moment, and an awareness of this among writers and physicians created considerable anxiety. Therefore, references to greensickness in a play like *Romeo and Juliet* must be considered within an imaginative understanding of virginity, the historical context of ambiguous sexual status amongst unmarried people during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and patriarchal fears of female sexual maturity uncontained by marriage.

Previous studies of greensickness have understood initial sexual penetration as a means of curing suppressed menses, and hence as a necessary and curative process. Some critics have highlighted how diagnosis could be a coercive method of facilitating marriage, but have taken Juliet's defloration for granted. For instance, King writes that the label the 'disease of virgins' is notable for 'including in the name of the disease its cure: ending the virgin state. If it is only virgins who can suffer in this way, then loss of virginity becomes a treatment'.⁵⁷ She later writes, 'the cure of the disease of virgins was to cease to be a virgin'.⁵⁸ Her breakdown of the logic behind greensickness diagnosis is correct, but by presenting defloration as a simple case of 'ceasing to be a virgin' important dynamics of greensickness and virginity are elided. I therefore offer a reassessment of greensickness and its cure by contextualising the way defloration was represented and understood as an unfixed, ambiguous transition in *Romeo and Juliet* and Shakespearean drama more broadly. Crucial to this is the unstaged nature of the wedding night, as the following section will explore.

⁵⁷ King, p. 4.

⁵⁸ King, p. 68.

ii. *Wedding Night(s): The Problems with “Epithalamic Defloration”*

Whereas earlier editors understand Juliet as displaying greensickness symptoms, more recently scholars suggest that Capulet’s diagnosis is in fact a misdiagnosis. As these critics understand Juliet to be no longer a virgin following a wedding night consummation, they argue that Juliet cannot be greensick because she is a “bedded wife”. Ursula Potter writes that:

The irony is, as the audience knows, but not Capulet, that Juliet is no longer a virgin, indeed she has just risen from a bed of passion. To the audience therefore, Capulet’s behaviour is comically naive, but also poignantly real.⁵⁹

Potter argues that Capulet’s diagnosis is ‘naive’ because, if Juliet is no longer a virgin, she cannot *really* be suffering from greensickness. Sara Read follows Potter, arguing that the audience might view Capulet as a foolish figure because ‘Juliet could not have greensickness as she was no longer a virgin, so the father is shown to have misunderstood his daughter’s symptoms’.⁶⁰ Read argues that, as Shakespeare portrays how ‘Juliet falls in passionate love with Romeo and has a sexual relationship with him’, there is a play ‘between a father who believes his daughter ill from greensickness and the audience’s knowledge of the real cases of her ‘sickness’’, as ‘her passion for Romeo entirely fits the stereotype of a lustful, newly menstruant young woman’.⁶¹ Like Potter, Read’s argument that Capulet misdiagnoses Juliet is reliant on an assumption that the audience is privy to Juliet’s sexual experiences, and takes her loss of virginity as a certainty. Similarly, Lander Johnson argues that Capulet’s diagnosis ‘is in any case unreliable since he doesn’t know all the facts of her sexual and marital situation’.⁶²

However, in assuming a certainty regarding Juliet’s virginity and the consummation of

⁵⁹ Potter, ‘Greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*’, p. 285. The nuance is missing in Potter’s co-written 2009 paper in which Juliet’s parents ‘realize that she has the greensickness’, p. 382.

⁶⁰ Sara Read, *Menstruation and the Female Body in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), p. 69.

⁶¹ Read, p. 69.

⁶² Lander Johnson, ‘Blood, Milk, Poison’, p. 137.

her relationship with Romeo – that there are ‘facts of her sexual and marital situation’ and that the audience ‘knows’ Juliet is ‘no longer a virgin’ – critics misinterpret the representation of virginity within the play. They also endorse the sexist idea that greensickness was a diagnosable malady (and sex a reliable cure). The claim that ‘Juliet could not have greensickness as she was no longer a virgin’ implies that *if* Juliet was a virgin, she could have greensickness. Juliet’s unstaged wedding night and destabilized virgin status, however, establishes that greensickness is likewise unreliable as an indicator of virginity.

In her study on bedtricks and virgin diseases Kaara L. Peterson diagnoses several Shakespearean characters, including the Jailer’s Daughter from *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and Helen from *All’s Well*, as greensick. She reads the bedtrick as a cure for greensick virgins, arguing that ‘the virgin’s bed-trick device is a solution to a real, early modern medical condition caused by or aggravated by other social realities/incommensurabilities’.⁶³ However, as I argued in relation to *All’s Well* and *The Changeling*, the representative lacunae which the bedtricks occupy destabilizes virginity and defloration in the plays. Hence, any sense of defloration as a cure for greensickness is also upset by the fact that the bedtricks are unstaged. This is likewise seen in *Romeo and Juliet* as the wedding night is unstaged. Far from presenting Juliet’s virginity in a factual, knowable way, the play is purposely obscure. I am not arguing that Romeo and Juliet *do not* consummate their relationship, but that the unstaged, unknowable nature of the consummation is significant and reflects the impossibility of locating virginity.

⁶³ Peterson, ‘Medical Discourses of Virginity and the Bed-Trick’, p. 380. See also Peterson, ‘The Ring’s the Thing’, pp. 109-10.

The representational lacuna where Juliet's defloration should appear (following Brooke and Painter) is arguably the central moment around which *Romeo and Juliet* is structured. As Brian Gibbons has argued, 'the plays' scenes are composed in a temporal rhythm of which the movements conclude at dawn'.⁶⁴ The play can be divided thus: Romeo and Juliet meet at the Capulet ball on Sunday evening (1.4), confess their love before the sun has risen the following morning (2.1 – end of first movement), and marry on Monday afternoon (2.5). They spend one night together before parting at dawn on Tuesday (3.5 – end of second movement). On Tuesday night, Juliet drinks a potion (4.3) and is found in a death-like sleep at dawn on Wednesday (4.4 – end of third movement). Romeo, believing his new wife is dead, returns to her tomb on Wednesday night and kills himself, moments before Juliet wakes. She in turn kills herself, and the two are discovered at dawn on Thursday (5.3 – end of fourth movement).⁶⁵ Critics speak of the play's 'telescoped' chronology, as Shakespeare collapses Brooke's nine months into a span of a few days, and Stephen Greenblatt argues that this is done 'in the interests of theatrical compression and intensification'.⁶⁶ Whilst this is undoubtedly one of the effects, I argue that this telescoped temporality, which emphasizes the recurring dawn, is also structurally significant to the play's representation of virginity.

⁶⁴ Gibbons, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, p. 54.

⁶⁵ Debate on the timeframe of *Romeo and Juliet* focuses on the length of Juliet's coma. Friar Laurence tells Juliet the potion's effects last 'two-and-forty hours' (4.1.105) but if she drinks at 3 a.m. on Wednesday morning this is too long for her to wake at dawn on Thursday, and too short for dawn on Friday. Some editors suggest a metathetic error by the playwright or printer (substituting 'two-and-forty' for the more regular 'four-and twenty') whilst some attribute the error to Friar Laurence reflecting how events are beyond his control, see Weis, p. 31; Levenson, 4.1.105n., p. 307. Steve Sohmer makes a case for six days (ending at dawn on Friday) and cites Levenson as concurring with the six-day timeframe, although Levenson herself is more circumspect. Sohmer's claim that Escalus' comments indicate that the play ends on Friday morning is therefore unsubstantiated and it seems he is keen to fit the ending of the play into his wider – and at times, convincing – argument about the Gregorian calendar and dating in *Romeo and Juliet*, see 'Shakespeare's Time-Riddles in *Romeo and Juliet* Solved', *English Literary Renaissance*, 35.3 (2005), 407-28.

⁶⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, 'Introduction to *Romeo and Juliet*', in *The Norton Shakespeare*, pp. 957-63 (p. 958).

Since each dawn can stand for another, the structure of the play's successive dawns facilitates an imaginative layering of the same temporal moment.⁶⁷ Hence, the unstaged wedding night in *Romeo and Juliet* is displaced through a cyclical pattern of metaphorical wedding nights across the five acts of the play: as I will demonstrate, the couple's encounter in the Capulet orchard, the discovery of Juliet's death-like body, and her eventual suicide can all be interpreted as allegorical deflorations which come before and after the representational lacuna (where the consummation must be imagined to take place) in Act Three. William C. Carroll has emphasized the 'line of images: from garden through bedroom to tomb, from courtship through sexual consummation to death' in *Romeo and Juliet*, but rather than a linear progression, these scenes can be viewed as cyclical repetitions of the same moment of defloration.⁶⁸ This pattern relies on a recurrent cycle of virgin bride to "bedded wife" to virgin bride.

*

This repeating cycle of defloration and reflation in *Romeo and Juliet* engages in – and potentially disrupts – Elizabethan aesthetics of marriage, consummation, virginity and defloration. *Romeo and Juliet* must be situated within a late-sixteenth-century and early-seventeenth-century literary and visual discourse in which virginity is unfixed and cyclical. Although not unique to Elizabeth, recognisable examples can be found in the Queen's iconography, and in two symbols in particular – the divine circle and the phoenix. Elizabeth is depicted as *regina universi*, her lower body replaced with a series of concentric circles representing the Ptolemaic system of the universe in

⁶⁷ Raymond Chapman, 'Double Time in *Romeo and Juliet*', *The Modern Language Review*, 44.3 (1949), 372-74. Chapman argues that, like *Othello*, Shakespeare employs 'double time' in *Romeo and Juliet*. Most significantly he claims that Romeo has been in Mantua for longer, and that 'suggestions of a more prolonged action modify the breathless pace of events and make them more credible', p. 374. This 'double time' structure to the play enhances the metaphoric nature of the repeated dawns, and if the action of the play is less compressed the rigid hour-by-hour structure can be understood as a purely metaphorical framework.

⁶⁸ William C. Carroll, "'We were born to die': *Romeo and Juliet*", *Comparative Drama* 15.1 (1981), 54-71 (p. 59).

the frontispiece of John Case's *Sphaera civitatis* (1588) (Fig. 5). Just like the pearl necklaces in the *Ditchley* and *Rainbow* portraits (Figs. 1-2), a potent symbol of virginity is placed suggestively below the waist. Bawdy jokes about women's vaginas as circles or rings were commonplace in sixteenth-century culture, but in this image, the association is elevated to the celestial.⁶⁹ Like the pearl the circle is also a symbol of perfection and purity, yet the concentric spheres suggest not just eternity, but perpetual renewal. Christiane Hille notes that Elizabeth presides over the outer sky, 'the outermost moveable sphere, the *primum mobile*, which, according to the medieval notion of the universe, enclosed the unity of all things, and is moved by a single prime mover, the *primus motor*'.⁷⁰ As Elizabeth is positioned as the prime mover she 'can cause movement without itself being in motion'.⁷¹ This paradoxical combination of stasis and movement, of layered circles of time and action, resonates with the dawn movements of *Romeo and Juliet*, and Juliet's repeated deflorations and refluorations.

Elizabeth's life and death – she was born and died on the Marian feast of the Annunciation – closed up 'a miraculous Mayden circle' according to Thomas Dekker in *The Wonderfull Yeare*.⁷² Helen Hackett argues this closed 'Mayden circle' was not only 'analogous to her perfectly enclosed virgin body' but a figuration of posthumous iconography for Elizabeth.⁷³ For instance, in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII*, Cranmer's closing speech anticipates Elizabeth's blessed reign, stressing that 'she must die [...] yet a virgin' (5.4.59-61). And whilst this speech invokes Elizabethan virginal circularity, it also draws on another image of renewal: 'the maiden phoenix' (5.4.40).

⁶⁹ See Alison Findlay, *Women in Shakespeare: A Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 76, 348-52.

⁷⁰ Christiane Hille, *Visions of the Courtly Body: The Patronage of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, and the Triumph of Painting at the Stuart Court* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012), p. 12.

⁷¹ Hille, p. 12.

⁷² Thomas Dekker, *The Wonderfull Yeare. 1603. Wherein is shewed the picture of London, lying sicke of the Plague* (London, 1603), sig. B4r.

⁷³ Hackett, pp. 224-229.

The mythical bird, of which there was only ever one in existence, dying in flames only to be reborn from its own ashes, was ‘one of the best-known and most favored symbolic motifs of [Elizabeth’s] reign’.⁷⁴ The so-called ‘Phoenix Jewel’ (Figs. 6-7) demonstrates how Elizabeth emblemized herself as virginally regenerative. The queen appears in silhouette on the obverse, while on the reverse a phoenix in flames, under the royal monogram, crown, and heavenly rays appear in relief. An enamelled wreath of red and white Tudor roses encompass the pendant, the circle again combined with the phoenix. It was most likely produced c. 1570-80, possibly modelled on a Nicholas Hilliard miniature from 1572. This potent image of parthenogenesis was later employed by poets in the 1590s during the succession crisis. For instance, in Michael Drayton’s *Idea The Shepherds Garland*, published in 1593, the phoenix is used to celebrate Elizabeth’s uniqueness and maternal power over her nation. In the third eclogue, a pastoral eulogy in the style of Spenser, Drayton writes, ‘*Beta alone the Phenix is, of all thy watery brood, | The Queene of Uirgins onely she*’.⁷⁵ Drayton’s phoenix offers a positive take on Elizabeth’s unmarried, heirless status. The parthenogenesis – from the Greek meaning ‘virgin origin’ – of the phoenix disrupts early modern notions of virginity as something corrupting and stale.⁷⁶ Although this imagery was used consciously to address criticism of Elizabeth’s failure to produce an heir, the phoenix works more broadly as a model to undermine the importance of correct and timely defloration, endorsed by moralists writing about marriage and physicians writing about greensickness.

⁷⁴ Alan R. Young, ‘The Phoenix Reborn: The Jacobean Appropriation of an Elizabethan Symbol’, in *Resurrecting Elizabeth I in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. by Elizabeth Hageman and Katherine Conway (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), pp. 68-81 (p. 68).

⁷⁵ Michael Drayton, *Idea the shepherds garland, Fashioned in nine Eglogs* (London, 1593), sig. C4r.

⁷⁶ *OED*, ‘parthenogenesis, *n.*’



Fig. 5: Frontispiece from John Case, *Sphæra civitatis* (Oxford, 1588), woodcut, STC 4761 copy 2 title page verso, © Folger Shakespeare Library.



Figs. 6-7: The Phoenix Jewel, obverse and reverse c. 1570-80, gold and enamel, 6 x 4.4 cm, The British Museum, London, © The Trustees of the British Museum

The phoenix imagery continued, fittingly, even after Elizabeth's death. Elizabeth Stuart has been referred to as 'Queen Elizabeth *rediviva*' and a 'second phoenix' by critics, who argue that the princess was 'hailed as a promising heir to the fame and glory of her Tudor namesake' and as 'a procreative extension of the old queen'.⁷⁷ Princess Elizabeth was named after her godmother Queen Elizabeth, a connection endorsed by poets: Amelia Lanyer, for instance, wrote that the princess recalled the late Queen, 'The *Phænix* of her age'.⁷⁸ This continuation of Elizabeth's phoenix imagery into the Stuart era suggests that virginity is reincarnational: the loss of a virgin, Queen Elizabeth, has resulted in a new virgin, Princess Elizabeth. Although this later phoenix imagery post-dates *Romeo and Juliet*, the symbol is indicative of how virginity functions as a renewable, paradoxical force throughout the Elizabethan period and beyond. Elizabeth's cyclical virginity was the most visually prominent of the period, and served a political purpose, but it was not exceptional, however much the phoenix might represent uniqueness. Her iconographers were engaging with much wider literary discourses. In another frontispiece from the late 1580s, in Puttenham's *English Poesie*, Elizabeth appears with crown and sceptre, surrounded by the words *A colei Che se stessa rassomiglia e non altrui*, meaning 'To her who resembles herself and no one else' (AB2v).⁷⁹ Yet whilst the inimitability of the Virgin Queen is

⁷⁷ Christof Ginzl, *Poetry, Politics and Promises of Empire: Prophetic Rhetoric in the English and Neo-Latin Epithalamia on the occasion of the Palatine Marriage in 1613* (Gottigen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2009), p. 42; Georgianna Ziegler, 'A Second Phoenix: The Rebirth of Elizabeth I in Elizabeth Stuart', in *Resurrecting Elizabeth*, pp. 111-31 (p. 111). Ziegler's essay gives countless examples of how religious and secular writers collapsed the two Elizabeths together.

⁷⁸ Æmilia Lanyer, *Salve devs rex iudæorvm* (London, 1611), sig. B2r. See also Thomas Rosa, who wrote in 1608 that 'whatever was excellent or lofty in Queen Elizabeth, is all compressed in the tender age of this virgin princess', *Idæa, sive de iacobi magnæ britanniæ, Galliæ et Hybernæ* (London, 1608), sig. Y2r.

⁷⁹ Whilst the work is dedicated to Elizabeth's privy councillor William Cecil, the dedicatory letter is preceded by the full-page engraving of the queen. Unlike Cecil, Elizabeth appears throughout the work as 'a constant locus of adulation, mentioned and addressed dozens of times', Whigham and Rebhorn, eds., p. 50. These editors note that the engraving appears after the letter (on sig. AB4v) but on the version I am consulting via EEBO the engraving precedes it.

foregrounded, as is appropriate in a dedication, this influential work on poetics instead demonstrates how the regenerative power of virginity was embedded in early modern culture, and particularly, songs to celebrate marriages: epithalamia.⁸⁰

Epithalamia were commemorative and ritualistic in function: conventionally epithalamia were ‘constructed around the events of the wedding day itself – the religious rites, the banqueting, the bedding of bride and bridegroom (itself a ritual), and the sexual consummation’, yet they simultaneously formed part of the wedding ritual, becoming ‘a literal part of the entertainment accompanying the ceremony, comparable to the music, singing, dancing, and masques which the greatest weddings required’.⁸¹ There are therefore two overlapping timelines to an epithalamium: the narrative timeline, and the performed timeline. Epithalamia narratives conventionally start at dawn and track the bride’s journey throughout the day from church to bridal chamber. The performance takes place in stages: ‘there was a song for the wedding procession, a song for the bedding of the couple, the morning song for their reawakening the next day’.⁸²

The focus of epithalamia is the sexual aspect of the marital ritual, suggested in its derivation from *thamos*, meaning ‘bed-chamber’. Both its narrative and practical functions are centred on the importance of successful consummation, and the need to confirm it. Hence, epithalamia enact the desire to locate virginity and prove defloration seen in the case of Frances Howard, as well as scholarly attitudes to greensickness.

⁸⁰ Epithalamia were most well-known to late Elizabethan writers through rhetorical treatises which contributed to the genre’s ‘increased status’ by the end of the sixteenth century, most notably Scaliger’s *Poetices* (1561) and Puttenham’s *English Poesie*. The earliest epithalamia can be traced back as far as Sappho; notable classical epithalamia include Theocritus’ eighteenth eclogue and Catullus’ nuptial poems. Renaissance writers such as Erasmus, Pontano and Ariosto experimented with the form. Although Spenser’s *Epithalamion* was revolutionary in terms of the English epithalamium, earlier examples can also be found by Lydgate and Dunbar, and in Sidney’s *Arcadia*. See Thomas M. Greene, ‘Spenser and the Epithalamic Convention’, *Comparative Literature*, 9.3 (1957), 215-28 (pp. 215-218), for an overview.

⁸¹ Greene, ‘Epithalamic Convention’, p. 219.

⁸² Greene, ‘Epithalamic Convention’, p. 219.

However, the form paradoxically demonstrates how this desire to locate virginity was futile. Puttenham's account in *English Poesie* (H1r-H2r) is preoccupied with the sexual subject matter, and he prefers to call epithalamia 'ballades at the bedding of the bride' (H1r). His focus could therefore more specifically be described as the bride's defloration. Puttenham explains that epithalamia were sung by the wedding party as a whole:

to the intent there might be no noise to be hard out of the bed chamber by the skreeking and outcry of the young damosell feeling the first forces of her stiffe and rigorous young man, she being as all virgins tender and weake, and vnexpert in those maner of affaires.

(H1r)

In this visceral description defloration is presented as a violent breaking in. Editors have observed 'the upsurge of something like sadism' in Puttenham's 'detailed and hand-rubbing account of the rituals of the epithalamium'.⁸³ The account is voyeuristic and lengthy, as Puttenham instructs his reader to divide the poem into three breaches which repeatedly re-enact the bride's defloration.

The first breach is sung during 'the onset and first encounters of that amorous battaile' (H1r), and the second is sung later that same night to encourage a second 'encounter' as 'the first embracementes never bred barnes' (H1v). The third breach sung the following morning dwells obsessively on the bride's defloration:

In the morning when it was faire broad day, and that by likelyhood all tournes were sufficiently serued, the last actes of the enterlude being ended, and that the bride must within few hours arise and apparrell her selfe, no more as a virgine, but as a wife, and about dinner time must by order come forth *Sicut sponsa de thalamo*, very demurely and stately to be sene and acknowledged of her parents and kinfolkes whether she were the same woman or a changeling, or dead or aliue, or maimed by any accident nocturnall. The same Musicians came againe with this last part, and greeted them both with a Psalme of new applausions, for that they had either of them so well behaued them selues that night, the husband to rob his spouse of her maidenhead and save her life.

(H1v)

⁸³ Whigham and Rebhorn, eds., p. 51.

The oscillation between certainty and doubt throughout this passage displays an anxiety about the transformation from virgin to bedded bride. Puttenham speaks of celebrating the husband's theft of his wife's maidenhead, and suggests that the bride has undergone a transformation, exiting her bed-chamber 'no more as a virgine but as a wife'. Yet Puttenham cannot be sure, admitting the qualifier 'by all likelihood'. His use of the term 'apparrell' suggests that the bride must signify her 'bedded' status through external signs, perhaps through dress or cosmetics. The inspection by her parents and kinfolk to check if she is 'the same woman or a changeling' recalls the ambiguous defloration of Beatrice-Joanna and Diaphanta in *The Changeling*. The extreme focus on the marriage's sexual consummation suggests an overcompensation, and the internal conflict of this passage betrays an awareness of the challenge in distinguishing between virgin and bedded bride which Shakespeare exploits in *Romeo and Juliet*.

By including the epithalamium in *English Poesie* Puttenham situates virginity and defloration in literary discourse and practice, and in doing so emphasizes the difficulty of defloration narratives. This difficulty can be seen in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, albeit in a less ominous, more sardonic way. Puttenham's description of the wife *Sicut sponsa de thalamo*, 'as a bride from the marriage bed' and the emphasis on her 'demure' appearance finds echoes in Shakespeare and Fletcher's prologue, in which, despite 'Husbands paines' – a phrase which recalls Puttenham's 'shreeking' – the bride emerges still as 'modesty' and 'More of the maid to sight'. Yet whereas Puttenham expresses a desperation to prove or locate defloration, Shakespeare and Fletcher embrace the ambiguity with a knowing wink to the audience. Following the prologue's ambiguous wedding night, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* opens with Hymen, god of marriage appearing on stage. He is led by a boy strewing flowers, preparing for the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. The opening song about 'Roses, their sharp spines

being gone' and 'Maiden pinks, of odor faint' (1.1.1-4) enhance this association with defloration. However, both 'holy tie and first night's stir' (Prologue, 6) are postponed when the marriage is interrupted by the arrival of the queens, with one critic asking 'Is the epithalamium broken off?' at this point in the play.⁸⁴ This disrupted epithalamium and deferred wedding night in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* works with the imagery of the preceding prologue to undermine the epithalamic project – and the notion of regulated defloration – established in *English Poesie*.

The floral symbolism and the banishing of ominous birds in the opening song of *Two Noble Kinsmen* recalls Spenser's *Epithalamion*, published in 1595 to celebrate his own marriage to Elizabeth Boyle the previous year.⁸⁵ Spenser avoids mention of the morning following the wedding night, perhaps aware of the difficulty it poses to consummation narratives, expressed so anxiously by Puttenham. Critics have argued that Spenser's twenty-four stanzas represent the twenty-four hours of the day.⁸⁶ The poem starts in the pre-dawn and it ends somewhere around midnight. Spenser makes specific reference to the bride waking at dawn on her wedding day, writing in the fifth stanza 'Wake now my loue, awake, for it is time, | The Rosy Morne long since left Tithones bed'.⁸⁷ However, we do not witness Spenser's bride rising as a bedded wife the following morning. In depriving his readers of this moment Spenser avoids Puttenham's ambiguity. However, Spenser cannot completely foreclose the anxiety of unreliable defloration, as dawn is inevitable. The linear narrative which epithalamists

⁸⁴ Walker argues that the epithalamium 'seems unfinished' and that the interruption feels 'natural', see William Sidney Walker, *A Critical Examination Of The Text Of Shakespeare*, vol. 3 (London: John Russell Smith, 1860), p. 340.

⁸⁵ Germaine Warkentin, 'Amoretti, Epithalamium', in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. by A. C. Hamilton (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 30-38 (p. 31).

⁸⁶ See A. Kent Hiatt, *Short Time's Endless Monument: The Symbolism of the Numbers in Edmund Spenser's 'Epithalamion'* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Max A. Wickert, 'Structure and Ceremony in Spenser's Epithalamion', *ELH*, 35.2 (1968), 135-57; Warkentin, pp. 36-8.

⁸⁷ Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti and Epithalamion* (London, 1595), sig. G6r.

strive for is undermined by the cyclical nature of the day. It is this model of cyclical time, rather than linear time, which structures *Romeo and Juliet*.

Spenser's reference to the goddess of the dawn, Aurora, is notable because in early modern culture she epitomizes the ambiguity of defloration. I argue that the Aurora of early modern poetry, prose and drama is depicted as a perpetual bride with a cyclical virginity, who spends each night in her marital bed and rises each day like a virgin. Early moderns would have been familiar with the story of Aurora's marriage to Tithones, who was given immortality but not perpetual youth. In these narratives Aurora remains constant whilst Tithones ages until he eventually becomes a grasshopper.⁸⁸ Poets and dramatists contrast 'the beauteous *Aurora*' with 'her loathsome age-wearied louver *Tython*'.⁸⁹ The couple's disparity in age and appearance accentuates Aurora's timelessness: whilst her husband grows old she rises each day exactly as she did when they first married. One poet in the anthology *Englands Parnassus* describes Aurora 'like a stately bride', and her bridal identification is also stressed by Abraham Fraunce, who writes that Aurora is 'ruddie like roses, she hath yellow hayre, golden roabes, and sitteth on a golden throne'.⁹⁰ Several books of Homer's *Odyssey* begin with the arrival of the dawn and Aurora, and translator Emily Wilson argues that the formulaic construction of dawn shows 'that things have an eternal, infinitely repeatable presence. Different things will happen every day, but

⁸⁸ For early modern accounts of the myth, see Abraham Fraunce, *The Third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch* (London, 1592), sig. I3v; Thomas Heywood, *Troia Britanica: Or, Great Britaines Troy. A Poem* (London, 1609), sig. Gg5r; George Chapman, trans., *The iliads of homer Prince of Poets* (London, 1611), sig. T7r.

⁸⁹ *The heroicall aduentvres of the knight of the sea* (London, 1600), sig. U4r. For further examples, see Edmund Spenser, *Colin clovts Come home againe* (London, 1595), sig. H1r; Robert Allott, *Englands Parnassus: Or the choysest Flowers of our Moderne Poets, with their Poeticall comparisons* (London, 1600), sigs. Y4r-Y5v; Ben Jonson, 'The vision of delight presented at covrt in christmas 1617', in *The workes of Benjamin Jonson. The second Volume* (London, 1640), sigs. C[Cc]4v-D[Dd]3r (sig. D[Dd]3r); Heywood, *Troia Britanica*, sig. Ff4v.

⁹⁰ Allott, sigs. Y4r-Y5v; Fraunce, sig. I3v.

Dawn always appears, always with rosy fingers, always early'.⁹¹ This idea of dawn as an 'infinitely repeatable presence' embodied in the figure of the virginal and bridal Aurora upsets epithalamic narratives: whether poets include or exclude the post-consummation dawn from their narratives, there is always ambiguity. Aurora therefore informs the representation of virginity in *Romeo and Juliet* and the cyclical virginity of the play's repeated dawns. There is also a slippage between the goddess of the dawn and Juliet throughout the play, strengthening the sense of Juliet's defloration as a recurrent and transitory event, like each new dawn. As I will demonstrate, this cyclical structure challenges epithalamic temporality by staging repeated wedding days and wedding nights. The play uses epithalamic tradition allusively in the second and third movements and structurally throughout to demonstrate the instability of marriage of which Romeo and Juliet are part.⁹² Moving chronologically through the play, I will now demonstrate how this regenerative, cyclical virginity is at work in *Romeo and Juliet*'s repeated dawns.

⁹¹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by Emily Wilson (New York: Norton, 2018), pp. 5-6.

⁹² For the argument that Juliet's soliloquy at 3.2 is an epithalamium, see Gary M. McCown, "'Runawayes Eyes' and Juliet's Epithalamium", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 27.2 (1975), 150-170.

PART TWO

Multiple Dawns: Juliet's Recycled Virginity

The significance of *Romeo and Juliet*'s dawns has previously been explained as part of the play's *chiaroscuro* motif, 'a convenient device for juxtaposing light and darkness' in the wider plot.⁹³ Dawn has also been interpreted as creating an out-of-time setting for the couple, so that 'Juliet's appearance at a window is the dawn in a rival world from which the moon is banished', or as emphasising 'the isolation of the lovers'.⁹⁴ The off-set temporality is further destabilized by the play's manipulation of sight and vision. Derrida uses *Romeo and Juliet* as an example through which to explore aphorism, and like Shakespearean scholars, also observes the importance of the dawn. He stresses that 'Everything that happens at night, for Romeo and Juliet, is decided rather in the penumbra, between night and day'.⁹⁵ Derrida argues that this penumbra plays with the idea of visibility:

Theatre, we say, is visibility, the stage [*la scène*]. This drama belongs to the night because it stages what is not seen, the name; it stages what one calls because one cannot see or because one is not certain of seeing what one calls.⁹⁶

This uncertainty surrounding what the audience knows, or feels it knows, is created through the numerous dawn settings, and the penumbra is itself a metaphor for ambiguity.

Derrida's stage is conspicuously modern. Many plays in early modern London were performed in open air theatres in the afternoon, usually starting at 2 p.m.⁹⁷ Therefore, the night scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* were performed in daylight and it was

⁹³ G. Thomas Tanselle, 'Time in Romeo and Juliet', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15.4 (1964), 349-61 (p. 353).

⁹⁴ Gibbons, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, p. 55; Carroll, "'We were born to die'", p. 59.

⁹⁵ Jacques Derrida, 'Aphorism Countertime', trans. by Nicholas Royle, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 414-33 (p. 425).

⁹⁶ Derrida, p. 425.

⁹⁷ Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 32.

necessary to communicate to the audience that it was night within the play. They would need to imagine darkness. This links to the wider debate on how audiences engaged with the theatre visually. Michael Hattaway argues that ‘Renaissance playhouses had no mechanism for illusion’ but rather, ‘dramatists encouraged their audiences to join in a collaborative endeavour of imaginative play’.⁹⁸ Evelyn Tribble challenges the idea that there was no mechanism for illusion, arguing that there were many effects related to sight which theatre makers employed, and suggests that audiences would have found these convincing even if they were aware of the illusions.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, imaginative scene-setting through words was necessary to situate the play’s timeframe, as Andrew Gurr remarks on the staging of *Hamlet*:

To begin a play by telling the audience that it is past midnight and bitter cold, and to expect that piece of scene-painting to be delivered to a gathering at the Globe standing in a crowded yard in mid-afternoon probably on a hot summer’s day, strongly suggests that most writers confidently expected the whole audience to participate in piecing out the player’s imperfections with imaginative thoughts.¹⁰⁰

This imaginative scene-setting works with Derrida’s theory of the uncertainty of seeing, which is found in both Juliet’s and Romeo’s constant descriptions of the night as bright as day. Stuart Clark theorizes that there was a preoccupation in early modern England ‘with whether vision was indeed veridical’, suggesting that ‘vision was anything but objectively established’ and that the relationship between sight and ‘external fact’ was not secure’.¹⁰¹ Clark’s argument about the questionable veridicality of vision, and

⁹⁸ Michael Hattaway, ‘Playhouses and the Role of Drama’, in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. by Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 133-47 (p. 136).

⁹⁹ Evelyn Tribble, ‘Sight and Spectacle’, in *Shakespeare’s Theatre and the Effects of Performance*, ed. by Farah Karim Cooper and Tiffany Stern (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 237-52.

¹⁰⁰ Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 108.

¹⁰¹ Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1. See Tribble, ‘Sight and Spectacle’, for more on the reliability of sight. Alan C. Dessen articulates the difference between the ‘imaginative participation’ of the early modern stage and our modern stage: ‘For us, one figure fails to see another *because* the stage is dark; for them, one figure fails to see another and *therefore* the stage was *assumed* to be dark’, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 75.

Derrida's theory of the penumbra, offer a context and theoretical framework for considering the unreliability of representation in *Romeo and Juliet*. My approach adds to these by demonstrating a metaphoric theory for what we do and do not see when staging *Romeo and Juliet*, and the significance of the play's dawns for virginity. The following analysis of the play's four movements interprets each as an allegorical defloration, and demonstrates why ambiguity is central to this allegorical cycle and the play's representation of Juliet's recycled virginity.

i. *First Movement*

1.1-2.1

(Sunday to dawn on Monday)

The first movement begins on Sunday and concludes at dawn on Monday. Although Capulet initially describes Juliet as a 'child' who 'hath not seen the change of fourteen years' (1.2.8-9) and is too young to marry, Capulet's wife soon begins to prepare Juliet for marriage. She asks her daughter 'How stands your dispositions to be married?' before telling her 'Well, think of marriage now [...] I was your mother much upon these years | That you are now a maid' (1.3.67; 71-75). It is as if the two years stipulated by Capulet have taken place over two short scenes. This accelerated progression from virgin to bride continues later in the Capulet orchard. Romeo positions Juliet as a vestal virgin to Diana, but pleads with her to 'Be not her maid' (2.1.49), meaning both follower and a virgin. Referring to the moon's 'vestal livery' he implores Juliet to 'Cast it off' (2.1.51), signifying a renunciation of her virginity. Romeo diagnoses the moon/Diana as greensick, describing the 'envious moon' as 'sick and pale with grief' and wearing 'sick and green' livery (2.1.46-50). He suggests that she is jealous of Juliet, 'her maid', who is 'far more fair than she' (2.1.48). Diagnosing the goddess of virginity with greensickness and envious of marriage is disempowering, pushing against the

fierce virginity Diana usually represents. It is a warning to Juliet that she will become one of the moon's 'fools' (2.1.51) and develop greensickness if she remains a virgin. By introducing greensickness here, Juliet's lover initiates the coercive dynamic at play later with her father: both men frame Juliet's virginity as potentially dangerous because they are invested in its loss. Romeo's speech arrogantly assumes that Juliet is to become a bride but also, in threatening the dangers of greensickness, expedites Juliet's metaphorical defloration.

Hence, as Sunday moves into Monday, Juliet becomes less and less like a maid, and more and more like a bride. Juliet voices her uncertain status when she says to Romeo 'Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face, | Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek' (2.1.127-28). Juliet's language of masks and painting points to the constructed nature of the 'maiden blush' and its potential disconnection from states of virginity.¹⁰² The double use of metaphor, the night 'masking' her 'bepainted' cheek, only emphasizes the ambiguity, as does the conditional 'Else would': the maiden blush is and is not there. Romeo tells Juliet he will have 'satisfaction' from 'Th'exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine' but Juliet tells him 'I gave thee mine before thou didst request it, | And yet I would it were to give again' (2.1.168-71). This private exchange of vows reflects contemporary late-sixteenth-century marriage practices in which private spaces could be 'made a church' for spousal *per verba de praesenti* contracts. The private nature of these contracts caused considerable difficulty in later marriage disputes in court.¹⁰³ The dawn setting of 2.1 also contributes to the clandestine nature of Romeo and Juliet's meeting. Weddings were conventionally held during canonical hours, and therefore, even if performed by a minister, 'late night or pre-dawn weddings

¹⁰² For the culture of early modern cosmetics, see Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

¹⁰³ Mukherji, p. 10, 19; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 143.

were notoriously presumed to be clandestine'.¹⁰⁴ Records of marriages performed 'before sun rising... in the morning a little before day ... about four in the morning', especially one marriage from 1602 which took place 'in the pre-dawn darkness [...] without the priest knowing whether the bride's father gave consent', are evocative of the couple's declarations of love at 2.1.¹⁰⁵ Juliet tells Romeo, 'If that thy bent of love be honourable, | Thy purpose marriage' he must send her word 'Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite' (2.1.185-88). Although the marriage must be solemnized, in exchanging vows Juliet has transitioned from girlhood through maidenhood to become a bride by dawn on Monday.

Juliet's rapid progression from child to bride is represented (and partly facilitated) through the temporal and spatial settings of 2.1. Juliet's marriage is metaphorically consummated as the orchard location combines with the dawn setting to create a mystical allegorical defloration. Rosalie L. Colie identifies 2.1 as an example of 'unmetaphoring' – the 'trick of making a verbal convention part of the scene, the action, or the psychology of the play itself' – specifically an 'unmetaphoring' of the *hortus conclusus*, the ancient metaphor for the virgin body as an enclosed garden.¹⁰⁶ The *hortus conclusus* is invoked in the Song of Songs in which the bride is figured as 'a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up' (4.12). The *hortus conclusus* was often employed in depictions of the Annunciation, and was also utilized by Elizabeth, (see Figs. 1 and 4).¹⁰⁷ *The Hunt of the Unicorn Annunciation* (Fig. 8) is an early sixteenth-century example of how the *hortus conclusus* was used to signify virginity. The image depicts a version of the Annunciation but in a medieval setting: Mary is dressed as a

¹⁰⁴ Cressy, pp. 318-19.

¹⁰⁵ Cressy, p. 319.

¹⁰⁶ Rosalie L. Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 145

¹⁰⁷ For a study on Elizabethan emblematic gardens and the *hortus conclusus* tradition, see Mark Jones, 'Some Versions of the *Hortus Conclusus* in Elizabethan Landscape and Literature', *Literature Compass*, 6.2 (2009), 349-61.

Romance heroine in her enclosed garden. The unicorn was traditionally understood to be tamed by the scent and purity of a virgin, an idea which was later used as an allegory for the incarnation known as ‘The Mystic Hunt of the Unicorn’.¹⁰⁸ This illustration demonstrates how the *hortus conclusus* metaphor interacted with wider virginity symbolism.



Fig. 8: *Hunt of the Unicorn Annunciation* from a Netherlandish Book of Hours, c. 1500, ©Joseph Zahavi/Morgan Library.

¹⁰⁸ Adolfo Salvatore Cavallo, *The Unicorn Tapestries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), pp 22-24. See pp. 45-51 for more on ‘The Mystic Hunt of the Unicorn’.

The metaphor of an enclosed garden was a common feature of medieval romances, most significantly in the allegorical dream poem *Le Roman de la Rose*.¹⁰⁹ In Chaucer's translation (c.1360), the rose, symbolising the beloved, is inside a 'gardyn':

Ful long and brood, and everydell
Enclosed was, and walled well
With highe walles enbatailled.¹¹⁰

In *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (a version of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*) the early modern dramatists rely on the *hortus conclusus* imagery to enhance Emilia's virginal desirability to Palamon and Arcite when they discover her in the garden. Echoing the French Romance, in the play Emilia reflexively declares the rose is 'the very emblem of a maid' (2.2.137) so that in both texts the virgin is paradoxically symbolized by both rose and rose garden. Gayle Whittier argues that Rosaline, Romeo's first beloved, bears a name which 'resonates' with this tradition.¹¹¹ A rich allegorical legacy therefore informs the Capulet orchard into which Romeo has leapt, and permeates the interactions between the two lovers. Whilst Whittier argues that 'the garden 'potentiates (but does not fulfill) the physical consummation of marriage',¹¹² the absence of a staged consummation in *Romeo and Juliet* means that the play is asking questions of the concept of 'fulfilment'. Within the play 'fulfilment' is metaphoric, plural, and transitory, and the first of these 'fulfilments' is the meeting in the Capulet orchard. Whereas Colie writes that this example of unmetaphoring places Juliet in the place 'where pure love naturally dwells' I suggest that this unmetaphoring does much more,

¹⁰⁹ The original *Le Roman de la Rose*, written in Old French, was composed in two stages; it was started by Guillaume de Lorris and completed Jean De Meun, between c.1230-75. See Guillaume de Lorris and Jean De Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Frances Horgen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹¹⁰ Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Romaunt of the Rose', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 685-767 (p. 688, ll. 136-39).

¹¹¹ Gayle Whittier, 'The Sonnet's Body and the Body Sonnetized in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40.1 (1989), 27-41 (p. 29).

¹¹² Whittier, p. 36.

and should instead be understood as structurally central to the play's experiment with representing Juliet's virginity and compensating for the representational lacuna which the wedding night occupies.¹¹³

If the 'the virgin is, and is in, a walled garden'¹¹⁴ and the Capulet orchard represents the virgin body, by entering the *hortus conclusus*, Romeo has symbolically entered Juliet and fulfilled the consummation. Entering an orchard was a common metaphor for penetration and defloration in early modern literature. In Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, composed in the early 1590s, the narrator describes how 'Leander now like Theban Hercules, | Enterd the orchard of Th'esperides'.¹¹⁵ In his 1613 *Epithalamium*, Christopher Brooke also employs this metaphor in his description of the timid bride arriving in her marital chamber: 'So shrinkes a Mayde when her Herculean Mate, | Must plucke the fruit in her Hesperides', echoing Shakespeare and Marlowe.¹¹⁶ Colie describes Romeo as 'breaching' the orchard's walls, but whereas breaching implies destruction, Romeo's entry creates no damage nor leaves any trace. He tells Juliet 'With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls, | For stony limits cannot hold love out' (2.1.108-09). That he can jump back and forth enhances the ideas of Juliet's temporary defloration and recyclable virginity from this point onwards. Indeed, this idea of unfixed virginity is also present when the metaphor is employed in *Hero and Leander*. Critics have debated whether this is "the moment" of penetration, and there is no scholarly consensus on the original line order of this passage: sometimes this

¹¹³ Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art*, p. 145.

¹¹⁴ Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art*, p. 145.

¹¹⁵ Christopher Marlowe, *Hero and leander* (London, 1598), sig. E3r. This edition, printed by Edward Blunt, should be distinguished from the version printed later the same year by Felix Kingston which included George Chapman's additions, see *Hero and leander: Begun by Christopher Marlowe; and finished by George Chapman* (London, 1598).

¹¹⁶ Christopher Brooke, 'An Epithalamium; or a Nuptiall Song, applied to the Ceremonies of Marriage', in *Englands helicon. Or The muses harmony* (London, 1614), sigs. R1v-R3r (sig. R2v).

metaphor appears slightly earlier, sometimes slightly later.¹¹⁷ The moment of Leander's entrance is therefore textually (and sexually) unfixed. This destabilized moment of possession and defloration is therefore at play in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hero and Leander*, in which a virgin's virginity is both present and absent, and the lover has entered and not entered the orchard/virgin body, a paradox which anticipates the 'perspectival virginity' in *Henry V* discussed in Chapter 3. Emphasising the enigmatic nature of the *hortus conclusus* image, Mark Jones argues that 'Time in the *hortus conclusus* is something of a paradox'.¹¹⁸ Whilst its organic nature represents mutability, its incarnational connotations represent perpetuity: 'In the enclosed garden, we are invited to see the world from both perspectives. Its evocative power rests in the idea that it is a space poised precisely between here and eternity'.¹¹⁹ The way 2.1 combines the metaphorical associations of location (the garden/orchard) and time (dawn) to create an allegorical defloration initiates a destabilisation of virginity which is repeated throughout the play.

The defloration is not only 'fulfilled' through its metaphorical structure, but also through erotic expression, puns and bawdry. The dialogue between Romeo and Juliet is erotically charged throughout, suggesting that the scene's action, in conjunction with the setting, allegorizes sexual experience. The potential innuendo of Juliet's repeated 'I come' (2.1.191-93) suggests a sexual climax as dawn approaches. The sense of 'to

¹¹⁷ Nineteenth and early twentieth-century editors rearranged the order of lines 763-84. Whereas the orchard metaphor appears at l.769-70 in the first edition (Blunt, 1598) it appears at l.771-73 in Samuel W. Singer's edition (1821), and l.781-83 in Tucker Brooke's edition (1910). Brooke's order is now the established version. See Vincenzo Pasquarella, 'The Implications of Tucker Brooke's Transposition in *Hero and Leander* by Christopher Marlowe', *Studies in Philology* 105.4 (2008), 520-532, for a survey of the debate, including analysis of Brooke's reasoning and the 'acritical' approach to the Singer and Brooke emendations. For the debate on the "moment" of consummation, see John Leonard, 'Marlowe's Doric Music: Lust and Aggression in *Hero and Leander*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 30.1 (2000), 55-76; Haber, *Desire and Dramatic Form*, pp. 39-49; Gordon Braden, 'Hero and Leander in Bed (and the Morning After)', *English Literary Renaissance*, 45.2 (2015), 205-230.

¹¹⁸ Jones, p. 355.

¹¹⁹ Jones, p. 355.

orgasm' in the verb 'to come' was evolving around the turn of the seventeenth century, with explicit usages found in two early Jacobean plays, Dekker and Middleton's *The Honest Whore* (1604) and Marston and Barksted's *The Insatiate Countess* (1613).¹²⁰ Gordon Williams and the *OED* cite these plays as examples and whilst both caution against finding innuendo in 'come' I suggest that Juliet's repeated use throughout 2.1 (and 3.2, as I discuss below) is an important early example of this pun.¹²¹ Whereas the examples from *The Honest Whore* and *The Insatiate Countess* (as their titles might imply) are bawdily directed at women, Juliet's usage more positively articulates her own desire. This sense of sexual pleasure is enhanced by Juliet's repeated stress on the 'O' sounds in her speech to Romeo: 'Hist, Romeo, hist! Oh' [...] Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies | And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine | With repetition of my "Romeo"' (2.1.200-05), with the final 'O' sounds of Romeo's name creating an orgasmic effect in combination with her repeated 'I come'. The conventional pun of 'O' as a woman's genitals recalls Mercutio's lewd joke about medlars and pears earlier in the scene, when he teases the absent Romeo: '-O Romeo, that she were-oh, that she were- | An open-arse, thou a poperin pear!' (2.1.37-38), his repeated 'O' sounds a parodic anticipation of Juliet's. The exchange between Romeo and Friar Laurence at the beginning of 2.2 continues this innuendo, when in response to the observation that 'Our Romeo hath not been in bed tonight' Romeo hints that he has had 'sweeter rest' (2.2.42-43). The flow of imagery and innuendo throughout the beginning of Act Two presents defloration as a collaborative act, its many voices echoing one another. This multivocality demonstrates, indeed contributes towards a

¹²⁰ Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, *The Honest Whore, With, The Humours of the Patient Man, and the Longing Wife* (London, 1604), sig. A4r; John Marston and William Barkstead, *The insatiate Countesse. A Tragedie* (London, 1613), sig. D1r.

¹²¹ *OED*, 'come, v.', II.22; Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature, Volume I, A-F* (London: The Athlone Press, 2001), p. 277.

sense of fragmented defloration which echoes throughout the following movements. These reverberations continue throughout Act Three, and therefore this first dawn (2.1) anticipates, and in some ways enacts, Monday's unstaged wedding night.

ii. *Second Movement*

2.2-3.5.64

(Dawn on Monday to Dawn on Tuesday)

Romeo's language about his and Juliet's marriage is ambivalent when he speaks with Friar Laurence later on Monday morning. He equivocates that he and Juliet are 'all combined, save what thou must combine | By holy marriage' (2.2.60-61). Although ostensibly speaking of their marriage, 'combine' could mean material as well as non-material or ideal union, and therefore carries a sexual overtone.¹²² Romeo prevaricates, reporting that the lovers have already 'wooed, and made exchange of vow' but then begs the priest to 'consent to marry us today' (2.2.62-64). His latter request repositions Juliet as a bride-to-be, and by the afternoon Friar Laurence leads them off to perform their marriage, so that 'holy church incorporate two in one' (2.5.37). Like the ensuing wedding night, the wedding ceremony is not staged. This adds to its clandestine nature, and enhances the sense that previous staged events must stand for what is left unstaged. In Juliet's soliloquy at 3.2.1-31, she instructs an imagined Romeo, now her husband, to 'Leap to these arms, untalked of and unseen' (3.2.7). Her phrase is apt, for throughout the second movement, the audience must interpret what is *untalked of* by what is talked of, and what is *unseen* by what is seen. Furthermore, it is not only what, but how things are talked of which is important. Although it is not staged, the wedding night is implied through Shakespeare's use of two poetic forms: the epithalmium (3.2.1-31) and the alba

¹²² *OED*, 'combine, v.', I.1.a-b.

(3.5.1-36).¹²³ As discussed above, epithalamia were songs sung to celebrate a marriage. Albas were poems about lovers parting at daybreak, and were traditionally sung between lovers or by a lover to his beloved. Ovid's *Amores* 1.13 'Ad Aurorem ne properet' is one of the most enduring and influential versions of this genre, and has been suggested as a source for Romeo and Juliet's dawn song.¹²⁴ Through the transition in Act 3 from a song (the epithalamium) about the anticipation of the wedding night to a song (the alba) lamenting the end of a wedding night, the audience must infer what has not been staged. The 'talked of' and the mode of talking informs the audience of what remains 'unseen'. It is the juxtaposition of these two poetic traditions which help fill in the gap for the audience, and represent Juliet's second defloration and the play's second 'fulfilment'.

As discussed above, *Romeo and Juliet* engages with the epithalamic form on a structural level, disrupting the linearity of the progress from virgin bride to bedded wife. The inclusion of an epithalamium within the play not only alerts audiences to the form, but indicates Shakespeare's interest in challenging its conventions, as Juliet's version is subversive. Most significantly, and unusually, the epithalamium at 3.2 is voiced by the bride herself, and rather than the disturbing 'skreeking' described by Puttenham, Juliet's epithalamium expresses a desire for mutual sexual pleasure. The disruptive

¹²³ The terms alba and aubade are used interchangeably. I use alba, following Jonathan Saville, who argues that the basic alba plot sees two lovers interrupted at dawn, the lovers' protest, especially the lady, denial that day has arrived, a promise to meet again, and a parting. The aubade is a sub-genre of the alba, usually taking the form of a waking song addressed to the beloved. See Jonathan Saville, *The Medieval Erotic Alba: Structure as Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 1-2, 269. See also Lindsay Ann Reid, *Shakespeare's Ovid and the Spectre of the Medieval* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), p. 120.

¹²⁴ Editors note this connection and suggest Marlowe's translation as a particular influence. See Blakemore Evans, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.5.1-36n.; Levenson, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.5.1-36n.; Weis, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.5.1-36n. For a masterful reading of *Romeo and Juliet*'s 'mythologically allusive alba' which draws on Ovid's *Amores* 1.13, *Heroides* 18 and *Metamorphosis* 7, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*, see Reid, pp. 119-162.

epithalamium of 3.2 echoes the structural disruption of epithalamic temporality through the play's dawn movements.

Juliet's epithalamic speech anticipates her defloration. Although she has 'bought the mansion of a love' she has 'not possessed it' and although she is 'sold, | Not yet enjoyed' (3.2.26-28). By placing herself in a position of ownership, Juliet asserts her agency whilst subverting early modern marriage conventions. Her desire to 'possess' Romeo is another inversion which challenges the idea of 'fulfilment'. Juliet is explicit in voicing her desires, longing for 'love-performing night' so that she and Romeo can perform 'their amorous rites' (3.2.5-8). She repeats the imperative 'come' six times (3.2.10; 17; 20), creating a sense of urgency, but also recalling the innuendo of the previous dawn. The sexual desire expressed by Juliet in this speech is absent from the couple's alba, which focuses exclusively on their parting rather than what has just occurred. It is the shared imagery and contextual traditions of the two poems which reinforces the idea that the two passages are in relationship. In Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Amores* 1.13, a disgruntled lover address Aurora, begging her to 'hold in thy rosy horses' so that he can continue to 'sweetly bide' in his beloved's 'tender armes'.¹²⁵ This image inverts Juliet's soliloquy, which opens with her instruction to 'Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds, | Towards Pheobus' lodging' (3.2.1-2). The desire to manipulate and extend time, for 'fiery-footed steeds' to hasten night and 'rosy horses' to delay the dawn, is even more powerful because the 'love-performing' wedding night is not staged or performed. Juliet's comment to Romeo, that the bird song she hears at dawn on Tuesday is 'Hunting thee hence with hunt's-up to the day' (3.5.34), complements the epithalamium of 3.2, as a hunts-up was a song 'to serenade the new

¹²⁵ Christopher Marlowe, *Ovids Elegies: Three Bookes* (London, 1603), sig. B4v-B5v.

bride the morning after a wedding night'.¹²⁶ Furthermore, that it was 'originally a song played to rouse huntsmen at dawn' extends the image of horses bringing in night and day. After Romeo's final line, 'One kiss, and I'll descend' (3.5.42), there is a stage direction '*He goeth down*' and Romeo returns to the Capulet orchard and over the wall, replicating the trajectory of the previous dawn, descending as the sun ascends. The second movement ends like the first, with Romeo exiting the garden, leaving behind the metaphorically deflowered Juliet.

Romeo's to-ing and fro-ing, climbing up to Juliet's chamber and then climbing down, imitates the to-ing and fro-ing of Juliet's virginity. Defloration leads to reflation *ad infinitum*. Although 2.1 enacts an allegorical defloration at dawn on Monday, later that morning (3.2) Juliet transforms back to a virgin bride, 'not yet enjoyed'. The cycle repeats on Monday evening, the transition from epithalamium to alba implying the 'first nights stir' has taken place by daybreak on Tuesday (3.5), and that Juliet has experienced another dawn defloration. However, that the event is implied rather than witnessed means that as the new day starts Juliet's virginity is once more recycled.

iii. *Third Movement*

3.5.64-4.4.86

(Dawn on Tuesday to Dawn on Wednesday)

As the third movement begins, a cyclical pattern therefore emerges, as each penumbra defloration is followed by the restoration of Juliet's virginity. Juliet rapidly transforms once again from bedded wife to virgin with the departure of her husband and arrival of her parents in her bedchamber. The fluidity of the stage's imaginative space has been noted by scholars, as the external location of Juliet's balcony transforms into the interior

¹²⁶ Weis, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.5.34n.

of her bedchamber.¹²⁷ This fluidity is occasioned by the exit of Juliet's husband and entrance of her parents, and hence there is also fluidity in terms of Juliet's relational status, from Romeo to the Capulets, from wife to daughter. Oblivious to Juliet's covert wedding night, by morning her parents have happily arranged for her to become a bride. At 3.4 Capulet announces that Juliet 'shall be married to this noble earl', Paris, and instructs his wife to 'Prepare her [...] against this wedding day' (3.4.21; 32). At 3.5 Juliet's mother tells her that on Thursday morning 'The County Paris, at Saint Peter's church | Shall happily make thee there a joyful bride!' (3.5.114-15), and the wedding is subsequently brought forward to Wednesday morning. At this point in the play Juliet embodies the bride from *The Two Noble Kinsmen*:

That after holy tie and first nights stir
Yet still is modesty, and still retains
More of the maid to sight than husband's pains.

Prologue, 6-8

In a subversion of *English Poesie*, Juliet's oblivious parents arrive the morning after her wedding night, but rather than finding her a deflowered bride, position her as a virginal bride-to-be.

Juliet's symbolically renewed virginity therefore helps us to understand the significance of Capulet's greensickness diagnosis during 3.5. By the third act, and third movement, rather than there being 'facts of her sexual and marital situation' Juliet's situation is completely destabilized by the developing cyclical pattern.¹²⁸ Audiences cannot 'know' that Juliet is 'no longer a virgin' and the play instead represents her virginity as renewable. In diagnosing Juliet as 'green-sickness carrion' (3.5.156) he echoes Romeo's diagnosis of the moon/Diana as 'sick and green' (2.1.50). Whereas

¹²⁷ On the staging of 3.5 and the transition from the window to inside Juliet's bedchamber, see Richard Hosley, 'The Use of the Upper Stage in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 5.4 (1954), 371-79.

¹²⁸ Lander Johnson, 'Blood, Milk, Poison', p. 137.

Romeo invoked greensickness as a persuasion against perpetual virginity (with the obvious motive of desiring Juliet himself), Capulet diagnoses Juliet as greensick in order to expedite her marriage to Paris and strengthen his social position through a dynastically advantageous union. In response to Juliet's refusal to marry, Capulet tells his daughter that he will 'drag' Juliet on a 'hurdle' (a type of sled upon which traitors were carried to execution) to the church, before ordering her 'Out, you green-sickness carrion!' (3.5.155-56).¹²⁹ Juliet, 'More of the maid to sight' following her wedding night, is diagnosed with greensickness by her father, a diagnosis which consequently renews her virgin status. This is an inversion of the logic of physician Johannes Lange's letter, which argues that as Anna is a virgin, and Anna is sick, she must be suffering from the virgin's disease, or greensickness. For Capulet, Juliet is greensick and as only virgins can have this disease Juliet "must" be a virgin. Juliet's virginity is recycled and temporarily renewed, and hence we can see how the play exploits greensickness as a rhetorical tool. From these repeated metaphorical deflorations Juliet's virginity takes on a fluidity which undermines any claims to the 'facts' of her sexuality. The way greensickness functions at this point in the play is caused by this fluidity. The diagnosis is not wrong or a misdiagnosis, but rather produced by Juliet's destabilized virginity. Indeed, this moment illustrates how greensickness diagnoses in plays are products of the narrative.

The pattern established by the third movement beginning at dawn on Tuesday continues throughout the fourth act, as Juliet becomes caught in the virgin-bride cycle. The laws and conventions governing marriage have become destabilized as Juliet draws nearer her unwanted and bigamous second marriage. Whereas Juliet's bridal status was previously covert, it is now overt, and what was private between Romeo in the second

¹²⁹ *OED*, 'hurdle, *n.*', 1.c.

movement plays out publicly with Paris in the third. Juliet meets her new bridegroom in Friar Laurence's cell, the same location that she secretly met and married Romeo the day before. The exchange between Juliet and Paris is equivocal, with him speaking as though she will become his wife, she speaking as Romeo's:

PARIS	Happily met, my lady and my wife.
JULIET	That may be, sir, when I may be a wife.
PARIS	That "may be" must be, love, on Thursday next.
JULIET	What must be shall be.

4.1.18-21

Later at 4.3 Juliet makes another speech from her bedchamber, echoing her epithalamium at 3.2, but instead of expressing her desires for her wedding night she drinks a potion to prevent another one. Her epithalamic excitement is now replaced with a foreboding soliloquy on the horrors of the tomb awaiting her: the anticipation of possessing the 'mansion of love' is supplanted with dread of the deathly crypt. She fearfully asks, if the 'mixture' supplied by Friar Laurence does not work, 'Shall I be married, then, tomorrow morning?' (4.3.22-23). The ambiguous temporalities of her dialogue with Paris, the uncertain subjunctives of Juliet's 'may be', 'when I may' and 'what must be shall be', are indicative of her recycled virginity. At this point Juliet occupies several positions at once, and her return to her virgin bride persona reflects the increasing destabilization of virginity in the play. Likewise, her questions about whether she must marry again suggest that she is trapped in this repeating cycle, again recalling the simile in *The Two Noble Kinsmen's* prologue, that 'New plays and maidenheads are near akin': by the third movement Juliet's virginity has become a performance which, like a play, can be staged again and again.

Dawn on Wednesday, Juliet's second wedding day, begins with Friar Laurence and the Nurse both calling Juliet 'bride' (4.4.30; 60) but she is soon discovered 'Like death when he shuts up the day of life' (4.1.101). Whittier identifies the Nurse's lines

at 4.4 as conventionally epithalamic, ‘appropriate to the waking of the bride’ before ‘the form aborts into a cacophonous lament’.¹³⁰ The second overt allusion to epithalamia reinforces how the play experiments with the form, and its abortive quality at 4.4 echoes the unconventionality of Juliet’s epithalamium at 3.2. Unlike the euphoric allegorical defloration of 2.1, this dawn represents a funereal version. Friar Laurence implies a deflowering when describing of the potion’s effects: ‘The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade | To wanny ashes’ (4.1.99-100). He also sexualizes Juliet’s “death”, imagining that ‘when the bridegroom in the morning comes | To rouse thee from thy bed, there art thou dead’ (4.1.107-08). The potion seems to enact the fear that Juliet expresses when she learns that Romeo has killed Tybalt, that ‘I, a maid, die maiden-widowèd [...] I’ll to my wedding bed | And death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead’ (3.2.135-37). This deflowering by death is another, more unsettling, example of ‘unmetaphoring’ in *Romeo and Juliet*, this time of the common double entendre of the period of sexual climax as ‘the little death’.¹³¹ An example of how writers punned on this double meaning appears in a song in Fletcher and Beaumont’s *The Maides Tragedy* (written c. 1608-11), when masquers sing of ‘weake denials vowes and often dyings’ during a bride’s wedding night’.¹³² I suggest that this song is inspired by the epithalamium and alba of *Romeo and Juliet*, as it opens with the requests to ‘Hold back thy houres old night till we haue done, | The day will come too soon’ and the speaker later implores ‘gentle night’ to ‘stay [...] and with thy darknesse couer | the kisses of her louer’.¹³³ That the potion is not lethal but creates the allusion of death enhances the idea that Juliet’s numerous deflorations are performative, and the

¹³⁰ Whittier, p. 38.

¹³¹ See ‘death’, in particular section ‘2. orgasm’, in Williams, *Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery*, pp. 371-74.

¹³² Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Maides Tragedy* (London, 1619), sig. C3r.

¹³³ Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Maids Tragedie*, sigs. C2v-C3r.

audience's awareness that the potion's effects are temporary indicates a future revival, and with it, another reflation.

Capulet, who assumes Juliet died a virgin, continues the conceit of Death as a lover, articulating Juliet's loss of life as a loss of virginity. Capulet figures Juliet's lifeless body as a flower: 'Death lies on her like an untimely frost | Upon the sweetest flower of all the field' (4.4.55-56). Punning disturbingly on the idea of death 'lying' on Juliet, Capulet continues this deathly deflowering imagery, telling Paris:

–O son, the night before thy wedding day
Hath Death lain with thy wife. There she lies,
Flower as she was, deflowered by him.
Death is my son-in-law; Death is my heir;
My daughter he hath wedded.

4.4.62-66

It is as if Capulet is re-enacting his greensickness fantasy in this speech. By positioning Juliet as deflowered by Death rather than by Paris he has nevertheless neutralized Juliet's sexuality through a marriage. The emphasis on Capulet's control through repeated possessive pronouns and his prominent role on this 'wedding day' – 'my son-in-law', 'my heir', 'my daughter' – demonstrates how his diagnosis of greensickness is centred on his need to control, rather than a desire to protect Juliet. Capulet's speech is also ironic. He grieves that his daughter 'hath wedded' someone other than his choice, but whereas for him this is a metaphor for death, it is unconsciously reflective of Juliet's rebellious clandestine marriage. Capulet's language echoes what the audience is encouraged to believe about Juliet: that she is and is not a virgin, is and is not a bride, is and is not dead. The 'little death' unmetaphoring is therefore especially apt, as it is not a real death, but a simulation.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Neely, *Broken Nuptials*, p. 73, makes a similar observation about unmetaphoring and death in relation to Helen's bedtrick in *All's Well*.

iv. *Fourth Movement*

4.4.86-5.3

(Dawn on Wednesday to Dawn on Thursday)

The refflorative cycle begins again as the morning progresses, when Juliet is once again repositioned as a virgin. Despite his claim to Paris that death has ‘lain with thy wife’ (4.4.63), Capulet’s image of Juliet quickly regresses to that of 1.2, and he repeatedly infantilizes her, crying ‘O child, O child [...] my child is dead, | And with my child my joys are burièd’ (4.4.89-91). Friar Laurence emphatically calls her ‘this fair maid’ and ‘the maid’ (4.4.94-95). As Juliet lies ‘like death’ (4.1.101) Romeo’s language reinforces the idea that Juliet is once again a virgin, awaiting another wedding night. He soliloquizes ‘Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight’ (5.1.34), and finding Juliet in the vault, he asks if ‘death is amorous’ and ‘keeps | Thee here in dark to be his paramour?’ (5.3.102-05) in a repetition of Capulet’s personification. The return of Juliet’s blush, ‘beauty’s ensign [...] crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks’ suggests that Juliet is ‘not conquered’ and that ‘death’s pale flag is not advanced there’ (5.3.94-96), temporarily restoring Juliet to the position of virgin bride.

Romeo cannot believe the evidence before his eyes, and dies by poisoning himself. Juliet subsequently discovers Romeo’s dead body and fatally stabs herself. Through the act of suicide ‘sexual union in marriage and union in death’ are ‘completely, and finally, indistinguishable’.¹³⁵ Eric Langley reads the couple’s shared death as ‘sympathetic suicide’ as, by inverting ‘the typical sequential connection of sex-as-death’ the lovers ‘achieve an eroticized conclusion’.¹³⁶ In the First Quarto (1597),

¹³⁵ Patricia L. Carlin, *Shakespeare’s Mortal Men: Overcoming Death in History, Comedy, and Tragedy* (New York: P. Lang, 1993), p. 192.

¹³⁶ Eric Langley, *Narcissism and Suicide in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 135.

Juliet's final words are 'O happy dagger thou shalt end my feare, | Rest in my bosome, thus I come to thee', whereas in the Second Quarto (1599) she says 'O happy dagger | This is thy sheath, there rust and let me die'.¹³⁷ Both versions carry sexual overtones: her final 'I come to thee' recalls the potentially orgasmic 'I come' of the orchard scene (2.1) and her epithalamium (3.2). That Juliet's language is forceful and desiring (even if not allusively orgasmic) is highly suggestive. Her description of her breast as 'thy sheath' enhances the dagger's provocatively phallic symbolism, as an emerging medical term at this time was 'vagina', meaning 'sheath' in Latin.¹³⁸ This image also alludes to legendary female suicides, most significantly Lucrece.¹³⁹ Marlena Tronick understands Juliet's 'happy dagger' as an indication of Juliet's desire to die which 'bolsters a reading of her suicide as substitute for the sexual act [...] the eagerness with which she awaits the dagger resembles her anticipation of the wedding night'.¹⁴⁰ The sheath metaphor is reiterated by Friar Laurence, who observes to Juliet that 'Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead' (5.3.155) and Capulet, when he describes the sight of his daughter's dead body:

O Heavens! O wife, look how our daughter bleeds!
 This dagger hath mista'en, for lo, his house
 Is empty on the back of Montague,
 And is mis-sheathèd in my daughter's bosom.

5.3.202-05

¹³⁷ William Shakespeare, *An excellent conceited Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet* (London, 1597), sig. K2v; William Shakespeare, *The most excellent and lamentable Tragedie, of Romeo and Iuliet. Newly corrected, augmented, and amended* (London, 1599), sig. L4r. For more on the competing versions and Juliet's dagger, see Katherine Duncan-Jones, "'O happy dagger": The Autonomy of Shakespeare's Juliet', *Notes & Queries*, 45 (1998), 314-15.

¹³⁸ The *OED* cites as the earliest use of the term 'vagina' Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-birth, or the happy deliverie of women* (London, 1612), sig. P4v, a translation from the French version. See *OED*, 'vagina, n.', 1.a., and its note on etymology.

¹³⁹ Lucrece was a Roman noblewoman who was raped by Tarquin and killed herself with a dagger. The story, recounted by Ovid and Livy among others, became a foundation myth for the Roman Republic. See Findlay, pp. 235-37. Shakespeare published a poetic version of the story around the time of writing *Romeo and Juliet*, see *Lucrece* (London, 1594).

¹⁴⁰ Marlena Tronick, *Shakespeare's Suicides: Dead Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 44.

Considering his obsessive attitude towards Juliet's sexuality – demonstrated through his enforced marriage, greensickness diagnosis, and disturbing language of defloration at the previous dawn – the sexual undertones to Capulet's observation of the 'mis-sheathing' cannot be ignored: 'mis-sheathing' could be understood as a theme for the conflict between father and daughter in this play. That Juliet dies by the sword, rather than poison, is therefore highly significant. Juliet's husband and his sword are both 'sheathed' in Juliet, as they 'die and lie' (5.3.290) together. Juliet's suicide therefore represents another allegorical defloration at dawn. The play's fourth movement is another iteration of the previous cycles and her suicide can be interpreted as another allegorical wedding night, the next in a sequence which has moved from the ecstatic (2.1) to the escapist (4.4) to the destructive (5.3). That she dies attempting to pursue her own desires and resist the control of her father is defiantly represented through her death which enacts a consummation of her clandestine marriage.

Juliet's recycled virginity therefore overlaps with her recycled death. In the final scene, Juliet 'Who here hath lain this two days burièd' is found 'bleeding, warm, and newly dead' (5.3.175-76). The trajectory of 'Juliet–dead before– | Warm, and new killed' (5.3.196-97) echoes the trajectory of Juliet, deflowered, virgin and deflowered again. Clayton MacKenzie argues that by Act Five 'Juliet has defied both time and motion' and 'her form is a work of artifice, even a work of art [...] her single being comes to stand for both a cadaver in the eyes of Romeo and an illusion in the eyes of the audience'.¹⁴¹ He likens Juliet's body to the perspectival skull in Holbein's *The Ambassadors*: 'we, too, are deceived – not by the factual issue of whether her present being is physically dead or alive but by the anamorphic puzzle of what she

¹⁴¹ Clayton G. MacKenzie, 'Love, Sex and Death in *Romeo and Juliet*', *English Studies*, 88.1 (2007), 37-38.

represents'.¹⁴² Juliet's anamorphosis repeats the beguiling effect of her previous death when the audience views her as virgin/deflowered, alive/dead. This anamorphosis, which depends upon the pattern of rejuvenation established throughout the play, suggests an uncanny quality to Juliet dead on the stage. It recalls the anamorphosis of Elizabeth's Phoenix Jewel (Figs. 6-7). The optical illusion created by the relief of the phoenix within the silhouette of Elizabeth requires the viewer to alternate their focus to see either the bird or the queen. The difficulty in seeing both simultaneously creates an impression that they are one and the same, inseparable, and as with Juliet in this final vignette, suggests perpetual regeneration. Montague's promise that 'Juliet and her Romeo' will be memorialized in a 'statue in pure gold' (5.3.299) seems final, yet in another sense it extends the performance beyond the final act, continuing the anamorphosis associated with Juliet's body and her renewable virginity. The claim that 'There shall no figure at such a rate be set | As that of true and faithful Juliet' (5.3.301-02) hints at a lifelike, eternal quality, and Montague's phrasing in the First Folio, 'I will raise her' (Gg3r) carries a sense of phoenix-like resurrection.¹⁴³ Likewise, the Prince's instructions to 'Go hence to have more talk of these sad things-' (5.3.307) 'resist closure' according to Richard Meek, who argues that this narrative deferral requires an audience to imagine a 'sense of coherence' which cannot 'actually be presented to us'.¹⁴⁴ The play's recursive dawn structure, then, which might otherwise have been foreclosed by the deaths at its denouement, continues through the Prince's open-ended allusion to 'more talk'.

¹⁴² MacKenzie, p. 38. I discuss the relationship between anamorphosis and virginity at length in Chapter 3.

¹⁴³ This line appears 'I will erect' in Q1 and 'I will raie' in Q2, but 'raise' in Q4, 5. Whilst 'raise' is usually used and glossed as 'cause to be set up' (Blakemore Evans, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, 5.3.299n.) or 'cause to be made' (Gibbons, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, 5.3.298n.), others opt for 'ray' and gloss this as 'array (i.e., gild), following Hosley (Levenson, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, 5.3.299n.; McMullan, ed., *Romeo and Juliet*, 5.3.299n.).

¹⁴⁴ Richard Meek, *Narrating the Visual in Shakespeare* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 186-87.

As the fourth dawn of the play shows, a sense of the in-between, the intangible and the transitional is central to how dawn structures *Romeo and Juliet* and its representation of virginity. The play's cyclical pattern of recurring dawns (which extends beyond the final scene) creates a renewable virginity which resists the assumption – necessary for endorsing a diagnosis of greensickness – that loss of virginity is a reliably one-way transition. Juliet's virginity is constantly shifting throughout the play, so that, like each day, it is recycled again and again.

PART THREE

Juliet as Aurora

But, soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the East, and Juliet is the sun.

2.1.44-45

Perhaps the most famous image in *Romeo and Juliet* is the metaphor of Juliet at her bedroom window as the sun rising in the east. However, despite the familiarity of Romeo's lines, and the critical attention it has received, scholars have overlooked one of the implications of this metaphor for the representation of virginity in the play.¹⁴⁵ Most significant in terms of how this metaphor relates to Juliet's virginity is Ursula Potter's misreading of this image during her discussion of greensickness in *Romeo and Juliet*. She argues that here 'Romeo himself invests her with a masculine virility' as 'the sun was an unequivocally masculine image'.¹⁴⁶ To characterize this image as 'unequivocally masculine' is to read this line out of the context of the celestial imagery of the play and to overlook its gendered complexity.¹⁴⁷ It also simplifies the equivocal nature of early modern representations of sunrise and the multiplicity of emblematic

¹⁴⁵ Whittier reads this passage as Romeo surpassing Petrarchan hyperbole: 'If tradition calls the lady's eyes celestial bodies, then Romeo removes the very sun from the sky. [...] The effect is to remove the celestial point of comparison by a kind of poetic imperialism that substitutes the lady for it. Though the verbal shape of a comparison remains, Romeo's is less an exercise in metaphor than a displacement of heaven by Juliet. In his poetic vision she is the body of the cosmos', p. 35. Weis argues that this metaphor explains the moon's/Diana's jealousy (as she must borrow her light from the sun/Juliet) and that Juliet's association with the dawn 'grounds her later terror of the dark as she anticipates waking in the sombre Capulet vault', *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.3-4n. Matthew Spelling understands the transition from the literal question ('What light through yonder window breaks?') to the metaphorical answer ('Juliet is the sun') as the 'moment language is born, as if to say, I see Juliet; now I may imagine; and through imagining, speak', 'Feeling Dreams in *Romeo and Juliet*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 43.1 (2013), 62-83 (p. 77). Stephen Greenblatt reads this in terms of the play's manipulation of visibility: 'A bare, daylight stage (as it would have been in the Elizabethan playhouse) becomes a dark garden above which Juliet appears like a sun. Visibility is canceled and then restored, by means of metaphor, to the "white upturned wond'ring eyes / Of mortals" (2.1.71-72)', 'Romeo and Juliet', p. 959. For this metaphor as a convention of early modern theatre, capitalizing on the heaven symbolism of the upper gallery, see Leslie Thomson, 'Window Scenes in Renaissance Plays: A Survey and Some Conclusions', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 5 (1991), 234-35.

¹⁴⁶ Potter, *Unruly Wombs*, pp. 100-01.

¹⁴⁷ As evidence of the sun's unequivocal masculinity Potter cites Robert Turner, trans., *De Morbis Fæmineis, The Womans Counsellour: Or, The Feminine Physitian* (London, 1657), which claims that 'by the Sun I mean the Man, and by the Moon the Woman', sig. B6r. However, this single quote from a text printed 60 years after *Romeo and Juliet* does not substantiate the claim.

figures, as Aurora often appears in relation to figures such as Night, Cynthia, Pheobus, Hesperus, and the order in which they appear is never fixed. Therefore, rather than just the sun or light, I suggest that in Romeo's metaphor Juliet embodies the dawn as she brings the first light of day, and that this is just one of numerous instances throughout the play of Juliet appearing like Aurora. By rising each day from her marital bed as a virgin bride Aurora, like Juliet, defies 'both time and motion' (to borrow McKenzie's phrase once more), and therefore the slippage between the two figures creates another 'anamorphic puzzle' which further complicates the temporal and metaphorical structure of the play outlined above.

The first dawn referenced in the play is the dawn on Sunday described by Benvolio and Montague. Lovesick for Rosaline, Romeo mopes alone amongst 'the grove of sycamore' (a pun on love-sickness) 'an hour before the worshipped sun | Peered forth the golden window of the East' (1.1.113-16). His father describes how as 'soon as the all-cheering sun':

Should in the farthest East begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
Away from light steals home my heavy son
And private in his chamber pens himself,
Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
And makes himself an artificial night.

1.1.129-35

Before Aurora can rise from her bed and bring the first light, Romeo has shut out the possibility of witnessing it. He wishes to prolong night and deter dawn: until he encounters the perpetually coruscating Juliet. It is important that the first dawn of the play occurs before Romeo meets Juliet, as his changing attitude towards it mirrors his shift from an unrequited infatuation with Rosaline to a mutual love with Juliet. Romeo's description of Juliet as the sunlight breaking through her window therefore recalls

Benvolio's description of dawn, and whereas before Romeo made himself 'an artificial night' he now desires a dawn that defies the darkness.

The early evocative reference to 'Aurora's bed' establishes a significant parallel between Juliet and the goddess of dawn. The marital bed of Aurora and Tithones featured prominently in poetic constructions of daybreak. Poets in *Englands Parnassus* refer to 'Fayre *Aurora*' rising 'from her dewy bed' and describe how 'The purple morning left her crimson bed'.¹⁴⁸ Juliet's bed is arguably the most important location of the play: it is the site we must imagine the wedding night to take place, where we witness Juliet take her sleeping draught, and where she is found in a death-like coma. Moreover, the same stage property is likely used for Juliet's bridal bed and tomb.¹⁴⁹ Paris laments 'O, woe, thy canopy is dust and stones-' (5.3.13) before strewing her tomb with flowers, recalling Capulet's lament that 'bridal flowers serve for a buried corpse' (4.4.116). As Aurora's famous 'rosie fingered' epithet suggests, she is emblemized by roses, and poets exploited the homophones of rose (noun) and rose (verb) to position Aurora as a blooming flower connoting the flower of virginity. Chapman encompasses the idea of both a marriage bed and a flower bed when he describes how 'the rosie fingerd morne, | Rose from the hils'.¹⁵⁰ The dual image of Aurora rising from her bed and a rose in its bed evokes defloration and the metaphor of the virgin as a rose to be plucked. Yet Aurora's ability to rise and bloom each day contradicts the notion that defloration is a unique event, instead demonstrating how Aurora resists permanent defloration. Juliet is aligned to Aurora's perpetual virginity through her repeated associations with her bed and bedchamber at key moments of the play: the window/balcony from which she speaks to Romeo at 2.1 is the threshold of

¹⁴⁸ Allot, sigs. Y4r-Y5v. For other examples of Aurora's bed, see Heywood, *Troia Britanica*, sigs. V5v, Ff4v; Chapman, *iliads*, sig. N5v; George Chapman, trans., *Homer's Odysses* (London, 1615), sig. G6r.

¹⁴⁹ Roberts, p. 160.

¹⁵⁰ Chapman, *iliads*, sig. B6r.

her bedroom; she delivers her epithalamium from her bed at 3.2; she bids Romeo farewell from her room's window/balcony at 3.5; she drinks her potion on her bed at 4.2 and is discovered there at 4.4; and finally she kills herself on her bed/tomb at 5.3.¹⁵¹ Like Aurora the bed is central to Juliet's repeated deflorations and refluorations.

Juliet's cyclical virginity, her shifting status between virgin bride and bedded wife, can also be traced throughout the play through her ambiguous blush. Early modern conduct writers considered blushing correct decorum for virgins. In his influential *Instruction of a Christen Woman* (1529), Vives writes that maids should 'do no more but wepe and blusshe without speakyng of wordes' during marriage negotiations as it was 'nat comely for a mayde to desire maryage'.¹⁵² A century later Nicolas Coeffeteau writes that 'honest bashfulness' is most 'commendable' in 'Virgins, and Women' as 'to blush for words, for motions, and for the least licentious actions, is a signe of an exact modesty'.¹⁵³ The archetypal resisting virgin, Daphne, embodies Vives' chaste ideal: in Golding's *Metamorphoses* she hates 'as a haynous crime the bonde of bridely bed' and begs her father to let her keep her 'maidenhead' by 'Demurely casting downe hir eyes, and blushing somewhat red'.¹⁵⁴ Likewise, Elizabeth Dutton, who died before the consummation of her marriage, and hence 'Though wedded, but vnbedded til she dide', is remembered in her funeral elegy through her 'faire blush [...] Which Modestie (not Bashfulness) doth owe'.¹⁵⁵ However, Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* stages a famous example of how the virgin

¹⁵¹ Critics debate whether Juliet is speaking from a balcony or window, the confusion mirroring the liminality of the stage space itself. See Emma Whipday, *Shakespeare's Domestic Tragedies: Violence in the Early Modern Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 120-22.

¹⁵² Juan Luis Vives, *A very frutefull and pleasant booke called the Instruction of a Christen Woman*, trans. by Rycharde Hyrd (London, 1529), sig. R4r.

¹⁵³ Nicolas Coeffeteau, *A Table of Humane Passions. With their Causes and Effects*, trans. by Edward Grimeston (London, 1621), sig. Y11r.

¹⁵⁴ Arthur Golding, *The. xv. Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis* (London, 1567), sigs. B8v-C1r.

¹⁵⁵ John Davies, *The muses Sacrifice* (London, 1612), sigs. P7r, Q2r.

blush could be misconstrued, when Claudio falsely accuses his bride of fornication, and gives a speech centred on the conceit that Hero's blush is evidentiary proof of her guilt. He observes how 'like a maid she blushes here!' and argues that rather than 'modest evidence | To witness simple virtue' her blush is in fact a 'show of truth' which covers her 'cunning sin' (4.1.33-37). His question to his wedding guests – 'Would you not swear, | All you that see her, that she were a maid | By these exterior shows?' (4.1.37-39) – relies on the assumption that the blush is usually a sign of chastity, yet the ease with which he successfully convinces the wedding guests that 'Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty' (4.1.41) demonstrates how it was an unstable signifier of virginity. Blushing is ambiguous partly because shame is an ambivalent emotion, it can signify chastity if in response to someone else's bad conduct, but guilt if in response to one's own. The blush was therefore an equivocal signifier in early modern culture, and proof of chastity could paradoxically be proof of dishonour.¹⁵⁶

Aurora's blush is a frequent metaphor for the first rays of sunlight, the pink sky likened to the goddess's rosy cheeks. However, the ways writers chose to personify Aurora – variously as a timid bride, scandalized maiden, embarrassed lover, guilty wife – demonstrate how the blush was an ambivalent signifier of virginity. Sometimes the blushing Aurora embodies the chaste ideal of Vives and Coeffeteau, such as when 'The Morne scarce out of bed, did blush [...] She scarce had blusht, when she began to hide | Her rosie cheeks, like to a tender Bride'.¹⁵⁷ Likewise, following a violent rape scene in *The Cruel Brother* (1630) the rapist flees as 'The modest Morne doth blush I'th' East, as if | Asham'd to see so fowle a Rauisher'.¹⁵⁸ Sometimes Aurora's blush connotes sexual experience rather than inexperience, as when '*Aurora* looketh red, | (Blushing

¹⁵⁶ For more on blushing and 'legible virginity' see Amster and Luttftring.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Bellings, *A sixth booke to the countesse of pembrokes arcadia* (Dublin, 1624), sigs. O4v-P1r.

¹⁵⁸ William D'Avenant, *The crvell brother A Tragedy* (London, 1630), sig. G2r.

to thinke on her *Tithonus* bed’.¹⁵⁹ In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser explicitly links Aurora’s blush with her sexuality. In Book I, daybreak is described thus: ‘faire *Aurora* from her dewy bed | Of aged *Tithone* gan her selfe to reare, | With rosy cheekes, for shame as blushing red’.¹⁶⁰ Later, in Book III, Britomart ‘the doubtfull Mayd [...] Was all abasht’ as ‘her pure yuory | Into a cleare Carnation suddeine dyde’.¹⁶¹ Her shameful blush is likened to ‘faire *Aurora* rying hastily’ who ‘Doth by her blushing tell, that she did lye | All night in old *Tithonus* frozen bed, | Whereof she seems ashamed inwardly’.¹⁶² These contradictory personifications demonstrate how Aurora’s blush enables her to occupy the positions of maid, bride and wife simultaneously, resisting limitation.

The cultural context for blushing, and particularly Aurora’s equivocal complexion, inform Juliet’s fluctuating blush and its interpretation throughout *Romeo and Juliet*. In the play’s first movement Juliet’s blush is repeatedly described by Romeo to emphasize her perfection and chaste desirability. Upon seeing Juliet for the first time, Romeo says ‘Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright’ (1.4.155) and later in the orchard, Romeo envisions how light radiates from Juliet’s blushing cheeks: ‘The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars | As daylight doth a lamp’ (2.1.61-62). Romeo is speaking in romantic hyperbole, but by associating her with the bringer of daybreak, the significance of the temporal setting is emphasized. Juliet equivocates with her comment that ‘the mask of night’ hides her ‘maiden blush’ but nevertheless she endorses the slippage between herself and Aurora, as eventually Aurora’s/Juliet’s rosy complexion will displace the darkness. Whilst ostensibly a conventional sign of

¹⁵⁹ John Abbot, *Iesus praefigured, or, A poëme of the holy name of Iesus in five bookes* (Antwerp, 1623), sig. M3r.

¹⁶⁰ Edmund Spenser, *The faerie queene. Disposed into twelue books, Fashioning XII. Morall vertues* (London, 1590), sig. L6r.

¹⁶¹ Spenser, *faerie queene*, sig. Ee1r.

¹⁶² Spenser, *faerie queene*, sig. Ee1r.

her virginity, then, Juliet's blush in the first movement can be understood as working in relation to her first allegorical defloration.

Throughout the play's second movement Juliet appears, like Aurora, as an ambiguous virgin bride, with an oblique blush. Following his murder of Tybalt, Romeo positions Juliet as the modest virgin he disparaged when under her window the night before. He is jealous of the 'carrion flies' who can 'steal immortal blessing from her lips, | Who even in pure and vestal modesty | Still blush' (3.3.35-39). Earlier however, when the Nurse tells Juliet to 'hie you hence to Friar Laurence' cell; | There stays a husband to make you a wife' (2.4.67-68) she observes Juliet's flushed complexion: 'Now comes the wanton blood up in your cheeks; | They'll be in scarlet straight at any news' (2.4.69-70). Like Aurora, Juliet blushes, yet her blush is a sign of desire as much as modesty, experience as much as inexperience. Her instruction to 'civil night' to 'Hood my unmanned blood, bating in my cheeks' (3.2.10; 14) implies virginity ('unmanned') as well as impatient desire ('bating'). Likewise her invocation to the night to 'learn me how to lose a winning match, | Played for a pair of stainless maidenhoods' (3.2.12-13) implies no sexual knowledge ('stainless maidenhoods') but is articulated with the sexual confidence of an experienced woman beyond Juliet's thirteen years. The 'stainless maidenhoods' anticipate the archetypal symbol of loss of virginity – the wedding sheets stained with blood – as well as recalling the equivocal bepainted 'maiden blush' of the night before, the connotations of cosmetics enhancing the sense of performativity. Shakespeare successfully conveys Juliet's fluid virgin status through her own articulation of her ambiguous blush.

Juliet's fluctuating blush persists through the play's third and fourth movements, following the cycle of repeated deflorations and refluorations. Yet Juliet's complexion on the third day is less rosy. Her father, in spite and anger, calls her 'tallow-

face!’ (3.5.157) anticipating the effects of the Friar’s potion, which will make her appear not like Aurora, but death: ‘The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade | To wanny ashes’ (4.1.99-100). However, Romeo returns to the tomb to find, once again, a luminous Juliet: ‘For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes | This vault a feasting presence full of light’ (5.3.85-86). As Juliet is only in a death-like coma, and due to wake, it is unsurprising that Romeo remarks on her ‘light’ning’ and the ‘crimson in [her] lips and in [her] cheeks’ (5.3.90, 95).¹⁶³ The first line following Juliet’s death is the Page’s comment that ‘This is the place—there, where the torch doth burn’ (5.3.171), tragically echoing Romeo’s words when first encountering Juliet that ‘she doth teach the torches to burn bright!’ (1.4.155). These burning torches do, however, compensate for the ‘glooming peace’ at the end of the play, hinting at further renewal.

In addition to allusions to Aurora’s bed and blush, Juliet is associated with the dawn through alignment with the play’s temporal and meteorological forces. Romeo’s description of the radiant Juliet at 2.1 is recalled at the beginning of 2.2, when Friar Laurence remarks on the arrival of dawn, and the figure of ‘The gray-eyed morn’ who ‘smiles on the frowning night, | Check’ring the eastern clouds with streaks of light’ (2.2.1-2). This personified ‘gray-eyed morn’ resembles Romeo’s idealized Juliet, whose ‘eye in heaven | Would through the airy region stream so bright | That birds would sing and think it were not night’ (2.1.63-64). Likewise, these lines build on the conflict between the sunny Juliet and the moon, ‘pale with grief’ (2.1.47). Gazing up at Juliet, lit by the lamp from her bedroom window, Romeo says ‘Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon’ (2.1.46), and at the end of the scene the dawn has indeed displaced the night. Descriptions of Juliet therefore anticipate the play’s meteorology.

¹⁶³ A ‘lightening before death’ is ‘a sudden display of vitality, cheerfulness, etc., occurring just before death’, see *OED*, ‘lightening, *n.*1.’

This blurring between descriptions of Juliet and the dawn continues into the second movement and dawn on Tuesday. Whereas at 2.1 Romeo claimed Juliet's radiance would bewilder the birds, this time it is the dawn which causes confusion between the lovers. Juliet pretends 'It is not yet near day. | It was the nightingale, and not the lark' (3.5.1-2) which Romeo heard, and that 'Yond light is not daylight' but rather 'some meteor that the sun exhales' (3.5.12-13). Romeo claims 'It was the lark, the herald of the morn' (3.5.6) and, in similar language to the previous dawn, points to the 'envious streaks' which 'lace the severing clouds in yonder East' (3.5.7-8) as a sign that day has broken. He personifies dawn again, describing how 'jocund day | Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops' (3.5.9-10). At Juliet's insistence, Romeo finally offers a faux-resignation that it is still night, and the 'envious streaks' he ascribed to sunrise are, again like at 2.1, reattributed to the moon: 'I'll say yon gray is not the morning's eye— | 'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow—' (3.5.19-20). This quarrel over whether it is dawn or not is a subversion of Shakespeare's source, Ovid's *Amores* 1.13. In Ovid, the speaker claims Aurora 'early mountest thy hatefull carriage' leaving the bed of 'her old Loue' Tithones 'because he's faine through age'.¹⁶⁴ However, in this version, the Aurora-like Juliet has a youthful husband, whom she wants to keep in bed, and therefore it makes sense that she pretends 'It is not yet near day' as she does not want Romeo to leave and her morning duties to begin. She resembles the Aurora of Montague's imagination, who must be woken by the sun. During her epithalamic soliloquy Juliet demands 'love-performing night' to 'Spread thy close curtain' (3.2.5) so that, like the 'shady curtains' of 'Aurora's bed' (1.1.131) darkness becomes the bed hangings.¹⁶⁵ Admitting that the darkness has lifted means acknowledging that the lovers

¹⁶⁴ Marlowe, *Ovids Elegies*, sigs. B4v-B5v.

¹⁶⁵ Weis argues that in early performances the curtains remained open after Juliet poisons herself so that her death-like body is visible to the audience until the Nurse shuts them near the end of Act Four, see *Romeo and Juliet*, 4.3.58n.

must part. Shakespeare's inversion of the conventional myth – in which the sun wakes Aurora, rather than the more traditional order, with Aurora acting as harbinger of the sun – anticipates Juliet's later reluctance, strengthening the slippage between the two figures. The dawn is destabilized because Juliet (as Aurora) resists starting another cycle. Nevertheless, Juliet, like Aurora, cannot avoid the inevitable daily cycle. Eventually Juliet entreats Romeo 'Oh, now be gone! More light and light it grows' (3.5.35) and Romeo continues the subversion with the ominous comment 'More light and light, more dark and dark our woes' (3.5.36).

The third dawn of the play, on which Juliet's deathlike body is discovered, marks a shift in the meteorological cycle: from Wednesday onwards, the dawn light starts to go off-kilter, in correspondence with the breakdown of social and domestic order within the play. The Nurse's reaction to Juliet's death is a series of agitated outbursts 'Oh, lamentable day! [...] Oh, heavy day! [...] She's dead, deceased; she's dead, alack the day! [...] Oh, lamentable day!' (4.4.44-45; 50; 57). She then launches into a speech:

Oh, woe! Oh, woeful, woeful, woeful day!
Most lamentable day! Most woeful day
That ever, ever I did yet behold!
Oh, day! Oh, day! Oh, day! Oh hateful day!
Never was seen so black a day as this.
Oh, woeful day! Oh, woeful day!

4.4.76-81

The fourteen 'days' which are 'lamentable', 'woeful', 'hateful', 'heavy', and importantly, 'black', create an impression of a faulty dawn. Paris's comment that 'Have I thought, love, to see this morning's face, | And doth it give me such a sight as this?' (4.4.68-69) refers to his anticipated wedding day, yet 'this morning's face' could also describe Juliet herself. The Friar's harangue of the Capulets is also provoking. Notably referring to Juliet twice as the 'fair maid' he says 'Heaven and yourself | Had part in

this fair maid; now heaven hath all [...] weep ye now, seeing she is advanced | Above the clouds, as high as heaven itself?’ (4.4.93-94; 100-01). Juliet’s counterfeit death is mirrored in the temporary death of Aurora. In the play’s closing lines the Prince says ‘A glooming peace this morning with it brings; | The sun for sorrow will not show his head’ (5.3.305-06). Thursday dawns as Wednesday did, with another dead Juliet, and a broken day-break. The cyclical dawn structure of the play, which enacts repeated allegorical deflorations and refluorations, is therefore supported by the slippage between Juliet and Aurora. These overlapping identities reinforce the way Juliet’s virginity is recycled throughout the play, destabilising any notion of fixed virginity and consequently undermining attempts to associate Juliet with greensickness.

CONCLUSION

Patriarchal early modern society required a mechanism to position young women as 'ripe for a man' in order to ensure state-sanctioned marriage, and 'the disease of virgins' provided both a pathologising justification as well as a practical solution. *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrates the logic informing greensickness as it manifested in the late sixteenth century, and the limitations of this logic. Ostensibly, greensickness appears to present virginity as a knowable, physiological fact, a cause of illness, and hence loss of virginity as a cure. Yet greensickness relies on virginity's evasive, unstable nature to be diagnosed. Greensickness is therefore a symptom of the unreliable nature of virginity and consummation, and an inadequate attempt at a remedy. It is a product of patriarchy's fearful awareness of this unreliability, and its need to nevertheless maintain the fiction. Its logic is wafer thin, as it enables marriage but can also demonstrate how fragile this foundation is: in this regard, it functions like the early modern fantasy of the hymen.

Critics assert that Juliet cannot really be greensick because she is no longer a virgin. However, as her wedding night is unstaged, definitive knowledge or proof of her defloration is elusive. Juliet's sexual experience is not a technicality with which to prove or disprove a diagnosis of greensickness, and critical attempts to locate her virginity within the text and diagnose Juliet with greensickness should therefore be resisted. Indeed, the representational lacuna at the centre of *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrates how sexual experience is irrelevant to theories of greensickness. Diagnoses of the disease were invested in controlling female sexuality rather than protecting and promoting health (although it must be acknowledged that, within a sixteenth-century patriarchal context, protection may have been understood as control, and vice versa).

In *Romeo and Juliet* it is the process of diagnosis of the virgin's disease which conveniently "confirms" Juliet's virginity in the eyes of her father and wider society. It is not necessary (or possible) to ascertain the veracity of this diagnosis: the diagnosis is self-fulfilling. Capulet accelerates Juliet's marriage by pathologising her sexuality, and his plans are thwarted not because the diagnosis is proved to be incorrect, but because Juliet kills herself: the play leaves us to speculate that, had Juliet not died (twice), she would have been married bigamously to Paris and assumed to be a virgin during their wedding night. Hence, the play demonstrates how greensickness could be an effective method of control.

Yet it also demonstrates how this control was limited. The play's representation of virginity as unfixed, metaphorical and regenerative through the repeated allegorical wedding nights reveals the performativity of virginity, and hence greensickness. Juliet's rebellious relationship with Romeo and her ability to occupy and reoccupy the positions of virgin and bride throughout the play expose greensickness as a fiction. Juliet's cycle of metaphorical defloration and reflation undermines the idea central to diagnoses of greensickness, that ending the virgin state was a simple process which would correct the woman physically and spiritually. The structure of the play therefore undermines the notion that greensickness is a stable diagnosable condition. The slippage between Juliet and Aurora and the multiple, layered dawns of the play complicate and problematize the idea of loss of virginity during the wedding night as a transitional, contractual moment, and exposes the limitations of epithalamic narratives of verifiable consummation and defloration. *Romeo and Juliet's* destabilized and recursive wedding night is therefore symptomatic of contradictory anxieties surrounding marriage: that marriage was imperative and a social good, that early marriage was dangerous, and that postponed loss of virginity was corrupting. It is also

a response to the uncontrollable figure of the sexually mature but unmarried woman in early modern culture.

The mechanisms employed to control Juliet – greensickness and marriage – are inadequate and end in tragedy. Yet even this tragic ending, like Capulet’s attempt to control Juliet, is inadequate. The play reveals many problems but gives no solutions: there is no restorative power, no catharsis. The catharsis at the centre of greensickness – the need to purge the virginal female body of suppressed menses – is not achieved through Juliet, who eludes the diagnosis and hence, patriarchal control of her body. Likewise, the expected catharsis at the end of the tragedy is unsatisfactory. The failure of tragic catharsis in *Romeo and Juliet* therefore represents the failure of greensickness demonstrated throughout the play.

At the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*, two Capulets exchange crude jokes about their own virility at the expense of the virgins of the house of Montague:

SAMSON	I will be civil with the maids—I will cut off their heads.
GREGORY	The heads of the maids?
SAMSON	Ay, the heads of the maids—or their maidenheads; take it in what sense thou wilt.

1.1.20-24

These jokes about maidenheads may appear as mere bawdy banter, however the final vignette of three dead bodies on a stage strewn with flowers and swords challenges the audience to reconsider the connection between death and virginity, and the overlapping imagery. At the play’s denouement the imagery of defloration and death is brought full circle. Samson invites Gregory (and therefore, the audience) to ‘take in what sense thou wilt’ the ‘heads of the maids, or their maidenheads’. One sense in which to take this is by observing the plural nature of these maidenheads. Attention to the figure of Aurora, and the multiple dawns which structure *Romeo and Juliet* reveals that virginity is a plural, renewable force in the play. Juliet is metaphorically deflowered numerous times,

yet, like Aurora, remains a perpetual virgin bride. She performs multiple roles simultaneously. Juliet embodies what society most desires and most fears: her virginity is uncontainable and uncontrollable. Her expression of love for Romeo is therefore also applicable to her virginity, which the play represents as ‘boundless as the sea’ for ‘the more I give to thee, | The more I have, for both are infinite’ (2.1.175-77).

The violence inherent in the Capulet’s banter about maidenheads gestures towards the disturbing relationship between the language of virginity and defloration and narratives of war and rape. In the following Chapter I explore this in depth, whilst also building on the destabilized and paradoxical notion of ‘recycled virginity’ demonstrated in *Romeo and Juliet* through the idea of anamorphic or ‘perspectival virginity’.

3.

PERSPECTIVAL VIRGINITY: CITIES AND MAIDS IN *HENRY V*

INTRODUCTION

The first complete printed version of Shakespeare's *Henry V* in the 1623 First Folio contains an exchange between Henry and the French King:

KING.	It is so: and you may, some of you, thanke Loue for my blindnesse, who cannot see many a faire French Citie for one faire French Maid that stands in my way.
FRENCH KING.	Yes my Lord, you see them perspectiuely: the Cities turn'd into a Maid; for they are all gyrdled with Maiden Walls, that Warre hath entred. ¹

This exchange appears at the very end of the play, following Henry's "wooing" of Princess Katherine and the arrangement of their marriage that will unite England and France. Whilst Henry seems to make a flippant remark about valuing Katherine more than territorial gains – a claim undermined by his bellicose campaigning throughout the play – the response from Katherine's father is equivocal and strange. He identifies a way of seeing 'perspectiuely', drawing on the idea of anamorphosis. Anamorphosis (also called 'curious perspective') was the art of optical illusion or visual paradox which represented images in bizarre or unfamiliar ways, or required the viewer to look through devices or from oblique angles to see the true image.² The King therefore uses this visual media as a metaphor to offer two images, one transformational ('Cities turn'd into a Maid') and one paradoxical (cities 'gyrdled with Maiden Walls, that Warre hath entered'). The first perspective image suggests how cities metamorphose into maids and maids into cities in the manner of an optical illusion throughout the play. The

¹ William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London, 1623), sig. K1v.

² Anamorphosis is discussed at length below.

second is yet more subversive, undermining any sense of virginity as a stable category, as the cities are simultaneously girdled and entered, maiden and deflowered.

It is also a virginity image which invokes rape: these cities are potentially conquered, war has potentially entered them.³ In *Henry V* unstable defloration and/or consummation is complicated by an equivocal discourse of rape. The ‘perspectival virginity’ in the French king’s metaphor operates in a similar way to the ‘fractured virginity’ in *All’s Well* and *The Changeling* and to the ‘recycled virginity’ in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Romeo and Juliet*, revealing virginity as a destabilized concept and defloration as an unreliable, volatile transition. The way rape is presented in *Henry V* in relation to virginity and defloration is a key focus of this chapter, and develops on from previous discussions of legal verification of virginity via hymeneal examinations and the medical commodification of virginity in diagnoses of greensickness. Indeed, a significant claim of this chapter is that greensickness is exploited as a political as well as patriarchal tool in *Henry V* when both France and Princess Katherine are coded as greensick.

The French King’s perspectival image is especially notable because it has been systematically “corrected” by editors, who render the line ‘that war hath *never* entered’. Whereas subsequent seventeenth-century Folio printings (1632, 1664, and 1684) retained the French King’s curious paradoxical image of virgin yet entered cities, two influential eighteenth-century editors completely inverted the French King’s image.⁴ In

³ In Renaissance warfare rape was often tacitly permitted as a reward for soldiers after a successful siege. As Cissie C. Fairchild writes, ‘In theory most armies forbade the raping of civilian women, not to protect the women but because it was bad for discipline. But, in practice, these rules were usually ignored. Not only was rape an integral part of the scorched earth policy, it was deemed a soldier’s reward for risking his life’, *Women in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), p. 303.

⁴ William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London, 1632), sig. [2]L3v; William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London, 1664), sig. Nn3v; William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London, 1684), sig. L12r. In all quarto versions – 1600, 1602, and 1619 (falsely dated 1608)

Nicholas Rowe's edition (1709) the line is amended to read 'girdled with Maiden Walls, that War hath *never* entred' [my italics].⁵ Similarly, Edward Capell's edition (1768) changes the phrasing to 'that war hath *not* enter'd' [my italics].⁶ It has subsequently become a standard editorial choice to "correct" this line, with most editors following Rowe's 'never'.⁷ Consequently the paradoxical metaphor is resolved and virginity stabilized. Whereas post-Rowe editors have understood the Folio paradox as an error in need of correction, my approach questions this, arguing instead that the image of the city which is both breached *and* maiden is significant for understanding the way virginity and rape is represented in *Henry V*. The reference to curious perspectives or anamorphosis has been overlooked by editors and scholars, but it is essential for understanding virginity as unfixed and mobile. Contradiction is not necessarily a mistake.

– this section is entirely missing. See, for instance, William Shakespeare, *The cronicle History of Henry the fift, With his battell fought at Agin Court in France* (London, 1600).

⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespeare*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, vol. 3 (London, 1709), p. 1374.

⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by Edward Capell, vol. 5 (London, 1768), sig. G8v (p. 108).

⁷ For editions since 1900 that I have been able to consult, and which have followed Rowe in negating the French King's image, see William Shakespeare, *King Henry the Fifth*, ed. by William Aldis Wright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), 5.2.317-18; William Shakespeare, *King Henry the Fifth*, ed. by Herbert Arthur Evans, *The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series* (London: Methuen, 1917), 5.2.339-42; William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. by John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 5.2.320-21; William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. by John Russell Brown (New York: The New American Library, 1965), 5.2.335; William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. by A. R. Humphreys (London: Penguin Books, 1968; repr. 1996), 5.2.317; William Shakespeare, 'Henry V', ed. by Alfred Harbage, in *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. by Alfred Harbage (New York: The Viking Press, 1969; repr. 1977), 5.2.307-09; William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. by Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 5.2.308-10; William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. by Andrew Gurr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5.2.286-88; William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. by T. W. Craik, *The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), 5.2.316-18; William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. by Cedric Watts (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 5.312-14; William Shakespeare, 'The Life of Henry the Fifth', in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by John Jowett and others, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 595-625 (5.2.317-19, p. 624); William Shakespeare, 'The Life of Henry the Fifth', in *The RSC Shakespeare: Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1026-97 (5.2.253-54); William Shakespeare, 'Henry V', ed. by Howard Marchitello, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others, 3rd edn (New York: Norton, 2016), pp. 1533-1611 (5.2.292-94, p. 1610); William Shakespeare, 'Henry V', ed. by Rory Loughnane, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works. Modern Critical Edition*, ed. by Gary Taylor and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1529-1606 (5.2.278-80).

That Rowe's emendation has become conventional suggests a disconnection between pre- and post-1700 conceptualisations of virginity. Whilst the paradoxical metaphor has confused later editors, its appearance in seventeenth-century versions indicates that early modern printers, compilers, readers and audiences were more comfortable with unstable virginity. As already demonstrated throughout this thesis, playwrights were aware of virginity's instability and often capitalized on this. Locating virginity was a preoccupation of the early modern period despite and partially due to an anxious awareness of the impossibility of ascertaining reliable proof of virginity. Whilst the desire to "fix" (to correct and to make stable) the French King's virginity metaphor has been perpetuated by critics since Rowe, the parallel awareness (or acceptance) of the creative potential of unstable virginity has been regrettably lost.

An approach informed by research on early modern texts and textual instability helps to uncover the significance of virginity's instability. In her essay on Rowe's editorial legacy, Barbara Mowat describes how 'Rowe laid a heavy early-eighteenth-century hand on the way Shakespeare is still perceived on the page' and cautions editors of how difficult it is 'even today, to shake off that hand and consider afresh what the Folio and quarto editors, compilers, and compositors left us'.⁸ Likewise, Andrew Murphy argues that 'Rowe's edition seeks to systemize the text, reducing its pluralistic codes to uniformity'.⁹ The heavy editorial hand is also invoked by Leah Marcus, who

⁸ Barbara A. Mowat, 'Nicholas Rowe and the Twentieth-Century Shakespeare Text', in *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions*, ed. by Tetsuo Kishi, Roger Pringle and Stanley Wells (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), pp. 314-22 (p. 320). For a general account of pre-Rowe editing of Shakespeare, see Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). See also Patricia Parker, 'Altering the Letter of *Twelfth Night*: "Some are born great" and the Missing Signature', *Shakespeare Survey*, 59 (2006), 49-62 (p. 51). Parker's insights into editing *Twelfth Night* have been helpful in developing my approach in this chapter, as has Laurie Maguire's chapter on feminist editing of early modern texts, see 'Feminist Editing and the Body of the Text', in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Dymnna Callaghan, 2nd edn (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), pp. 77-97.

⁹ Andrew Murphy, 'Texts and Textualities: A Shakespearean History', in *The Renaissance Text: Theory, Editing, Textuality*, ed. by Andrew Murphy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 191-210 (p. 199); see also Parker, 'Altering the Letter', p. 51.

warns of the ‘constricting hermeneutic knot by which the shaping hand of the editor is mistaken for the intent of the author, or for some lost, “perfect” version of the author’s creation’.¹⁰ Punning on Marcus’s phrase, the “hermeneutic (k)not” epitomizes the issue, as editors allow assumptions about virginity (or ‘the virgin knot’) to foreclose critical inquiry and potential interpretations. Capell’s version – ‘maiden walls, that war hath *not* enter’d’ – is particularly provocative, his ‘not’ restoring the virgin knots of the cities whilst constricting the hermeneutic possibilities. Therefore, with these two warnings in mind – that we should not overlook what the early compilers and composers left us, and that any attempt at restoring a perfect, original text is futile – I propose that even if the result of a printing error the Folio’s ‘perspectival virginity’ is significant. This chapter does not so much argue that the Folio version of the French King’s image is *the* correct version, but rather that the edited, negated and simplified Rowe version is not based on a nuanced approach to how early moderns conceptualized virginity. My theory of virginity as unstable enables a productive reading of this paradoxical Folio line, which in turn opens up a way of reading virginity in *Henry V*. As Patricia Parker writes: ‘only when we foreground such often-forgotten early texts – and approach them in a way that does not immediately assume that they need correction – can such a discussion even begin’.¹¹

The editorial decision to simplify the French King’s image is indicative of a lack of critical engagement with the concept of virginity, and likewise scholars writing on *Henry V* have overlooked its full significance. There have been two important and interrelated strands of criticism concerning the gender politics of *Henry V*: the first concerns the play’s representation of rape and war and focuses on the figure of

¹⁰ Leah Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe and Milton* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 3.

¹¹ Parker, ‘Altering the Letter’, p. 55.

Katherine and her marriage; the second concerns the play's preoccupation with legitimacy and succession and focuses on the idea of Salic Law. Yet whilst virginity is crucial to understanding these themes, it is somewhat marginalized in discussions. Critics who identify the importance of the country-as-female symbol overlook the way this female body is coded as virginal. In these discussions virginity is understood as merely a metaphor for the unconquered or a commodity to be traded, and its disruptive nature is not explored. Similarly, virginity is usually understood as a necessary facilitator to succession but its unstable nature is not considered. Virginity is a product of two impulses of patriarchy: the need to exploit female reproductive labour to perpetuate patrilineal inheritance, and the need to regulate these women's sexual experience to secure paternity. The tension between this simultaneous dependence on virginity and its uncontrollability is crucial to understanding how *Henry V* explores succession, and can be understood more fully through the idea of 'perspectival virginity'. The editorial propensity to simplify virginity and reduce the paradox in the text is therefore related to, and has potentially even facilitated, the critical tendency to minimize the importance of virginity in analysis of the play.

In this Chapter I argue that the idea of paradoxical or 'perspectival virginity' is key to understanding how *Henry V* engages with the themes of war, conquest, rape, defloration, succession and marriage, and particularly how we should "see" the figure of Princess Katherine. Although the marriage between Katherine and Henry has been described as 'marginalised' and inconsequential in terms of the themes and structure of *Henry V*, this Chapter argues that their marriage is central to understanding the play's representation of virginity.¹² Furthermore, the ambivalent nature of virginity as both

¹² Lisa Hopkins, *The Shakespearean Marriage: Merry Wives and Heavy Husbands* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 85.

present and absent is related to the ambivalent way rape is represented in the play as both enacted and avoided, rape and “not-rape”. This perspectival discourse of defloration and rape which challenges the usual distinction between the material and the symbolic works in tandem with greensickness ideology. The disease is invoked by the Duke of Burgundy in the play’s final scene when he allegorizes France as a sick garden in need of ‘husbandry’. An approach of ‘perspectival virginity’ therefore strengthens the more metaphorical, imaginative approach to greensickness and virginity developed in the previous chapter.

Part One traces in detail critical and editorial approaches to *Henry V*, particularly the way the play represents war, rape, and dynastic marriage. It focuses on the French King’s perspective image and why it is key to understanding virginity as an unstable figure which structures the play. This section begins with an interpretation of legal and cultural attitudes to rape in early modern England which argues that as an ambiguous discursive concept rape functions in a similar way to virginity as ‘perspectival’. Part One ends with a discussion of how the reciprocal virgin/city metaphor functioned across early modern poetic, medical and historical writing which contextualizes how we understand *Henry V*.

These scholarly and early modern contexts help to position my reading of virginity and rape in *Henry V* in Part Two. I argue that Henry’s siege of Harfleur resembles a wedding night and that, through the reciprocal metaphor of the virgin as city, city as virgin, Harfleur is paradoxically maiden and deflowered. Additionally, the early modern conflation of rape and ravishment means that the siege enacts both a marital consummation and a rape. These paradoxes are continued through the slippage between Harfleur and Katherine, so that both come to embody the French King’s metaphor of cities ‘gyrdled with Maiden Walls, that Warre hath entred’. This reading

of *Henry V* concludes with a reading of the greensickness discourse in 5.2, arguing that Burgundy replicates the diagnostic model demonstrated by Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, but applies it to a dynastic level. By allegorising France as greensick he reframes conquest in terms of marriage. Throughout this analysis I demonstrate how the figure of ‘perspectival virginity’ permits the play to develop a complex metaphorical discourse around war, conquest, dynasty and rape. I argue that virginity is destabilized through the reciprocal metaphorical relationship with the city so that in *Henry V* it is not possible to make a distinction between what happens on a narrative level and a symbolic level. This develops into an ambiguity about virginity as present/absent and defloration/rape as enacted and avoided. I conclude that the equivocal representation of marriage as not a modulation but an endorsement of rape is encapsulated in the ideology informing greensickness. Hence, *Henry V*, demonstrates the extent to which the disease was functioning as a fantasy in early modern culture and why a theory of virginity as a primarily metaphorical, unfixed concept is crucial to understanding the period’s drama.

PART ONE

i. *Rape and Ambiguity*

In early modern England rape was an ambiguous legal and social category in several different ways. Firstly, rape was understood as both a property crime and a crime against the person.¹³ The origin of the word rape is the Latin *rapare*, meaning ‘to take or seize something by force’, and in medieval law was understood as a theft from the woman’s father or husband and applied to the abduction of a woman (not necessarily including sexual assault).¹⁴ This definition was still current in the early modern period, but so too was the sense of a sexual violation. Hence, ‘The coexistence of these two definitions of the word accounts for much of the complexity surrounding the issue of rape’.¹⁵ Secondly, there was ‘a disparity between the text of the law and legal practice, that is to say, between the severity of the laws and the will to apply them’.¹⁶ Historians have applied Catherine MacKinnon’s observation that rape ‘is formally illegal but seldom found to be against the law’ in an early modern context.¹⁷ This contradiction between legal theory and legal practice – rape as ‘de jure illegal but de facto permitted’¹⁸ – raises a third ambivalence surrounding rape, as the distinction between rape and sex was obscured by the language used to talk about both. As Garthine Walker writes, ‘The popular language for describing male sexual misbehaviour was that of ordinary, male, heterosexual activity’.¹⁹ Walker also quotes MacKinnon, who claims that ‘rape is a sex crime that is not [legally] regarded as a crime when it looks like

¹³ Barbara J. Baines, *Representing Rape in the English Early Modern Period* (New York: The Edward Mellen Press, 2003), p. 62.

¹⁴ *OED*, ‘rape, v.2’, 1.a.

¹⁵ Catty, p. 12.

¹⁶ Baines, *Representing Rape*, p. 2.

¹⁷ Catherine A. MacKinnon, ‘Reflections on Sex Equality Under the Law’, in *American Feminist Thought at Century’s End: A Reader*, ed. by Linda S. Kauffman (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 367-424 (p. 381); Baines, *Representing Rape*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁸ MacKinnon, ‘Reflections’, p. 381.

¹⁹ Garthine Walker, ‘Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England’, *Gender & History*, 10.1 (1998), 1-25 (p.5).

sex'.²⁰ Terms like 'ravishment' blurred the boundary between rape and seduction, as did those used in a legal context such as 'obtaining carnal knowledge', and consequently rape could be prosecuted as fornication.²¹ Hence, the fourth and most central ambiguity to conceptualising rape is the issue of consent. Legal treatises such as Michael Dalton's *The County Justice* claimed that 'to rauish a woman, where she doth neither consent before nor after: or to rauish any woman with force, though she do consent after, it is felony'.²² Yet women's consent was almost impossible to articulate because 'the language which signified sexual intercourse was itself one of female complicity'.²³ The disconnection between Dalton's advice that lack of consent constituted the felony of rape, and women's difficulty in proving non-consent, is due to the fact that 'The law of rape presents consent as free exercise of sexual choice under conditions of equality of power without exposing the underlying structure of constraint and disparity'.²⁴ These various ambiguities overlapped, so that the confusion of whether rape was a property crime or sexual crime impacted the significance and (in)credibility of consent: Barbara Baines writes that 'As rape became defined as a crime against the rape victim, her testimony of her denial of consent became increasingly important but, in legal practice, increasingly suspect'.²⁵ That women were understood as 'both property or passive object and a person invested in agency' under the law reveals 'a crisis in the early modern construction of women's subjectivity'.²⁶ These changes in legal thought and societal attitudes towards rape throughout the sixteenth century

²⁰ Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 172.

²¹ Catty, p. 94; See Gowing, *Common Bodies*, pp. 93-94, for an account of a rape victim who was examined in court for fornication.

²² Michael Dalton, *The covntrey Ivstice, conteyning the practise of the Ivstices of the Peace out of their Sessions* (London, 1618), sigs. Y4r-Y4v.

²³ Walker, 'Rereading Rape', p. 6.

²⁴ MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory*, p. 175.

²⁵ Baines, *Representing Rape*, p. 9.

²⁶ Baines, *Representing Rape*, p. 63.

heightened the ambiguity of an already unstable concept. It is with an awareness of the discursive nature of rape, its ambiguous legal position and the way female sexual behaviour and victimisation was confined within a misogynistic framework that I approach *Henry V*.

The difficulty in prosecuting rape, and indeed even defining or identifying what rape is, is analogous to the difficulty of locating and fixing virginity. With both there is a gap between theory and practice. One reason rape is hard to prosecute is because it is usually only witnessed by the perpetrator and victim, and hence dependent on competing narratives. Laura Gowing notes how in the early modern courtroom ‘Women’s testimonies typically underplayed or erased the actual act of sexual penetration that defined rape legally’.²⁷ She quotes testimony from a woman who describes many details of her assault, such as the location and how her clothes were torn, yet ‘the act of rape has no physical description at all’.²⁸ Walker argues that ‘the absence of detailed accounts of sex in so many rape narratives’ is explained by the ambiguous language conflating rape and sex.²⁹ There is therefore a similarity between the lacunae in rape accounts of the moment of penetration and the lacunae in staged action at moments of defloration and consummation in plays: both show how there are limits to what can be represented.

Critics writing on *Henry V* have examined how the play utilizes the symbol of nation-as-female, rape as a feature of war, and Katherine as representative of her conquered country.³⁰ These studies pose the controversial question: is Katherine a rape

²⁷ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 93.

²⁸ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 93.

²⁹ Walker, ‘Rereading Rape’, p. 6.

³⁰ Key studies include Marilyn L. Williamson, ‘The Courtship of Katherine and the Second Tetralogy’, *Criticism*, 17.4 (1975), 326-334; Lance Wilcox, ‘Katherine of France as Victim and Bride’, *Shakespeare Studies*, 17 (1985), 61-76; Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 95-108; Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare’s English Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997), especially pp. 186-215; Corrine S. Abate, “‘Once more unto the breach’”:

victim? My contention is that this question is fundamentally unanswerable. An acceptance of the ambivalent discursive nature of rape and defloration helps to explain critics' frustrated attempts to give a definitive yes or no to this question, and reveals how the linguistic ambiguity of both rape and defloration exerted a misogynistic hold on early modern women.

Some critical approaches have been more patriarchal, some more feminist, yet all are limited because they have not considered the way rape and virginity are functioning as equivocal concepts. Lance Wilcox's influential 1985 article – a touchstone for subsequent studies because it was one of the first to highlight the intersection of rape and war imagery in relation to Katherine – argues that the marriage in Act Five partly 'redeems' Henry's identification as 'king of rapists' as his relationship with Katherine metamorphoses 'from one of predator and prey to that between two mutually romantic partners'.³¹ For Wilcox, marriage modulates the threat of rape: 'When is a rapist not a rapist? When he's a husband'.³² Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore read this statement as 'evident reference to the current state of the law in many countries' (referring to the law's failure to recognize marital rape) but this reading is too generous.³³ Wilcox's comment is about seduction. He cites the Dauphin's fear that:

Our madams mock at us and plainly say
Our mettle is bred out, and they will give
Their bodies to the lust of English youth,
To new-store France with bastard warriors.

3.6.28-31

Katherine's Victory in *Henry V*, *Early Theatre*, 4 (2001), 73-85; Jordi Coral, "'Maiden Walls That War Hath Never Entered': Rape and Post-Chivalric Military Culture in Shakespeare's *Henry V*", *College Literature*, 44.3 (2017), 404-35.

³¹ Wilcox, p. 73.

³² Wilcox, p. 66.

³³ Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore, 'History and Ideology, Masculinity and Miscegenation: The Instance of *Henry V*', in Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 109-42 (p. 139).

For Wilcox, instead of the ‘sordid sexual aggression’ expressed by Henry when threatening Harfleur’s virgins with rape, this sounds more like ‘mutual attraction, or even outright seduction by the women’.³⁴ He argues that ‘If the erstwhile victims of the sexual assault were to become the willing partners of the aggressors, there could hardly be said to have been any aggression in the first place’, and uses this as a model for Katherine.³⁵ His argument is founded on the idea that female sexual desire can circumvent rape, hence Katherine is ‘collaborating in [Henry’s] conquest of her’.³⁶ However the French anxiety that the English will seduce their women must be understood in the context of a later expressed fear that their women will be raped. During the battle of Agincourt, the Duke of Bourbon invokes the image of the soldier returned home only to:

Like a base pandar hold the chamber door
 Whilst by a slave no gentler than my dog
 His fairest daughter is contaminated.

4.5.15-17

The French fear of the seduction or rape of their women exemplifies the difficulty in discursively distinguishing between the two, as the French understand them as identical: both are as bad, and as likely to occur, as the other. Although Wilcox’s reading relies on the ambiguity between rape and seduction, his argument does not challenge or critically examine it but rather replicates early modern attitudes invested in failing to distinguish between the lustful giving of bodies and sexual contamination. Despite an ostensible critique of the relationship between rape and war in the play, and some unease at his own rape-apologist approach, Wilcox’s patriarchal (and at times

³⁴ Wilcox, p. 66.

³⁵ Wilcox, p. 66.

³⁶ Wilcox, p. 66.

misogynistic) attitude should alert us to the fact that there are consequently issues with his reading of rape in *Henry V*, and its influence on subsequent readings.³⁷

For example, Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin argue that Katherine ‘has all the traditional attributes of a rape victim’, that the courtship scene ‘comes as close as it can to enacting the predicted rape’ articulated by Henry outside Harfleur, and interpret his final kiss as ‘a symbolic rape’.³⁸ Yet they also argue that ‘it is important to emphasize that the marriage is not a rape’, so that there is a tension in their analysis between what is symbolized and what is enacted.³⁹ In a recent historicist account of rape in post-chivalric military culture, Jordi Coral reinforces this symbolic distinction between marriage and rape, writing that, ‘In the context of this essentially political marriage, rape has of course become unthinkable. But this does not mean that the integrity of the princess as a human being has been spared’.⁴⁰ There is clearly critical anxiety about the representation of rape and marriage in the play. *Henry V*’s representation of Katherine and its engagement with the discourse of rape therefore benefits from a reassessment through the lens of ‘perspectival virginity’ which necessitates ambiguity. Key to this reassessment is understanding the consequences of symbolic acts and the distinction between the metaphorical and the enacted, deflorative rape and deflorative consummation in *Henry V*. The political incentive behind this move to re-establishing France’s virginity is for Henry not to see his marriage and conquest – still celebrated in 1599 – as violation or rape.

³⁷ Examples include the titillated reading of Katherine as a ‘bubbly, girlish Parisienne’ whose ‘appeal is entirely and simplistically aesthetic’ (pp. 61-62) and the naturalisation of female submissiveness when he writes that ‘Katherine moves instinctively into the subservient role’ (p. 69). Most troublesome is Wilcox’s assumption that the reader of *Henry V* will experience ‘two contradictory impulses [...] one, aggressive lust; and two, a sort of protective, even parental, anxiety’ and that the reader will have ‘vicariously enjoyed Henry’s conquests’ and be satisfied ‘at the promise of Katherine’s gracing the monarch’s bed’ (pp. 73-74). Wilcox’s approach is not feminist, nor does he write with any awareness of how female audiences and readers might experience the play.

³⁸ Howard and Rackin, pp. 214-15.

³⁹ Howard and Rackin, p. 214.

⁴⁰ Coral, p. 431.

If virginity is a destabilized, ambiguous force in *Henry V*, this has implications for the play's wider themes of legitimacy and succession, and its engagement with Salic Law. Canterbury tells the King in the opening act, '*In terram Salicam mulieres ne succedant*' – | "No woman shall succeed in Salic land" (1.2.38-9). Critics observe the contradictions of this idea – which Canterbury uses to undermine the French claim and simultaneously bolster Henry's – and suggest that the play attempts to enact a similar elision of the female which is likewise unsuccessful.⁴¹ As Dollimore and Sinfield argue, whilst men in history plays 'define themselves against other men' they do this 'through constant reference to ideas of the feminine and the female'.⁴² The problem surrounding Salic Law is the familiar one, of women as reproductively essential to patriarchy but fundamentally distrusted and subordinated. This is the central irony of how Salic Law features in the play: the French use it as the 'bar' to Henry's claim, whilst he bases his claim upon the female line via his great-grandmother, Isabella. Furthermore, the French themselves assert legitimacy to the throne through the female line, and Henry's claim will be strengthened through marriage to the French Princess.⁴³ Rebecca Ann Bach reads the play in terms of 'testicular masculinity', meaning an obsession with breeding expressed through combat and which excludes the female role in reproduction.⁴⁴ Judith Haber summarizes these various critical readings as ones of 'paternal parthenogenesis' or even 'filial parthenogenesis' as the focus is on legitimacy and succession, that is

⁴¹ Key studies focused on this issue (but which also explore the play's representation of rape) include Dollimore and Sinfield; Claire McEachern, '*Henry V* and the Paradox of the Body Politic', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45.1 (1994), 33-56; Katherine Eggert, 'Nostalgia and the Not Yet Late Queen: Refusing Female Rule in *Henry V*', *ELH*, 61.3 (1994) 523-550; Rebecca Ann Bach, 'Tennis Balls: *Henry V* and Testicular Masculinity, or, According to the *OED* Shakespeare Doesn't Have Any Balls', *Renaissance Drama*, 30 (1999-2000), 3-23.

⁴² Dollimore and Sinfield, p. 128.

⁴³ Dollimore and Sinfield, p. 129; Eggert argues this confusion must be understood in a late Elizabethan context, the slippage in Canterbury's speech 'equivalent to a shift between first upholding Elizabeth's reign (via defending a woman's place in royal lineage), and then abandoning this loyalty to look forward, by looking back, to a restored male line', p. 527.

⁴⁴ Bach, p. 5.

grandfathers and sons, which ‘elides the presence of the problematic woman’, or tries to.⁴⁵ Yet in attempting to theorize how the play excludes the female, these critics themselves exclude a crucial factor in ensuring succession and legitimacy: virginity. If virginity is mentioned, it is often in relation to Elizabeth.⁴⁶ Virginity serves patriarchy by (theoretically) ensuring paternity: if a man is a woman’s first sexual partner, he can guarantee any offspring are his. This is evidenced through the correlation of the value of virginity and the dynastic significance of a marriage. By subsuming virginity within the broader category of the female and/or the feminine, its unstable nature and the implications of this for succession and legitimacy are missed.

This impossibility of obscuring the female is bound up with the play’s engagement with rape as a weapon of war. As Karen Newman argues, in *Henry V* ‘the expansionist aims of the nation state are worked out on and through the woman’s body’, and Howard and Rackin likewise claim that ‘the sexualized bodies of women become a crucial terrain’ where the battle between the English and French is played out.⁴⁷ These arguments are true, but it would be more accurate to say that there is ‘constant reference’ to ideas of female virginity, and that it is a specifically virgin female body which is the play’s ‘crucial terrain’ and which is subjected to (symbolic) rape. This may seem like a technicality, but the distinction is significant. Virginity is working as more than just a symbol of conquerable space or an object of traffic between men.⁴⁸ A more complex understanding of virginity as ‘perspectival’ can nuance these arguments of

⁴⁵ Judith Haber, “‘I cannot tell wat is like me’: Simile, Paternity, and Identity in *Henry V*”, *Shakespeare Studies*, 41 (2013), 127-47.

⁴⁶ For instance, see McEachern, pp. 52-54.

⁴⁷ Newman, p. 101; Howard and Rackin, p. 5.

⁴⁸ For the former, see Howard and Rackin, who note that the women threatened with rape are virgins, ‘women not yet married whose virginity is the guarantee of their worth’, p. 5. For the latter, see Newman, who argues Henry threatens to rape the virgins of Harfleur because he is speaking to the men ‘by means of transactions in women’, p. 101.

why *Henry V* is invested in eliding female reproductive power but unable to achieve this elision.

ii. 'You see them perspectively': *Anamorphosis in Henry V*

Returning to the French king's paradoxical image and editorial attitudes to virginity helps to contextualize critical approaches and demonstrates how thinking about virginity and rape in *Henry V* has been limited. It is commonplace for editors to follow Rowe's emendation of 'girdled with Maiden Walls, that War hath *never* entred' without comment or to confine the collation note to the 'band of terror' at the bottom of the page (or even the end of the play-text) which obscures the textual crux and deflects potential enquiry.⁴⁹ Only two editions since 1900 have retained the Folio version, and this is due to a conscious attempt to make the editorial process transparent.⁵⁰ The most detailed account supporting the simplification of this paradoxical virginity image is found in Gary Taylor's 1982 Clarendon Press edition. Taylor glosses the additional 'never' with the comment that:

Without Rowe's addition F would have to refer to (once-*maiden*) cities which Henry has already conquered (*entered*), but which he is giving back or giving up in exchange for Catherine; whereas in fact they are negotiating over his possession of cities he has not yet entered, but threatens to, and which are therefore still 'maidens' (as Catherine is).⁵¹

⁴⁹ The most recent complete Norton and Oxford works do not note the variation from the Folio. Despite the claim to present the texts 'with as much fidelity to [Shakespeare's] intentions as the circumstances in which they have been preserved will allow', the Oxford original spelling edition includes a 'neuer' which therefore presents this non-paradoxical version as authentic. See William Shakespeare, 'Henry V', in *The Complete Works: Original-Spelling Edition*, ed. by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 637-71, 1.3177-9n., and 'General Introduction', pp. xiii-xxxviii (pp. xiii, xxxv). On the many imaginative metaphors for collation notes, and a critique of this convention, see Marcus, p. 72.

⁵⁰ See William Shakespeare, *The Life of King Henry V*, ed. by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library; Simon and Schuster, 2015), 5.2.332-5; William Shakespeare, 'The Life of Henry the Fifth', in *Shakespeare's Complete Works: Pembroke Edition*, ed. by Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke, vol. 5 (London: George G. Harrap, 1903), 5.2.327-30; For further information about the pioneering female editorial team of Porter and Clarke, see Jeanne Addison Roberts, 'Women Edit Shakespeare', *Shakespeare Survey*, 59 (2006), 136-46.

⁵¹ Taylor, ed., *Henry V*, 5.2.310n.

Taylor's explanation is ostensibly rational, however when virginity is considered in a more metaphorical, relational, and paradoxical way, it is less convincing. He suggests that without the 'never' there would be confusion as to which cities are being referred to, whether they have been entered, and how this relates to Katherine. That he confidently asserts Katherine is a maid is an indication that virginity is being thought about as a fixed, locatable status. Other editors have dismissed the Folio version as illogical, with John Dover Wilson claiming that 'some such word is needed' and Andrew Gurr stating more frankly that 'Rowe's insertion makes sense of F's nonsense'.⁵² But is the Folio version 'nonsense'? Whilst Gurr's word choice suggests that there is no possible interpretation to support the Folio reading, the text itself supports perplexity, not rationalisation. Marcus's observation that 'over the "band of terror," the text has a seeming serenity and permanence' is relevant, as the Rowe edit presents the French King's virginity image as coherent and static when the Folio version suggests disruption and fluidity. It is an editorial illusion which flattens the text's metaphoric illusion.⁵³

The claim that the paradoxical virginity image is 'nonsense' is contradicted by the French King's reference to seeing 'perspectively'. The term 'perspectively' is usually understood as referring to anamorphosis – pictures or devices which created paradoxical optical illusions.⁵⁴ Anamorphosis was 'widely practiced and discussed' in

⁵² Dover Wilson, ed., *Henry V*, 5.2.320-21n.; Gurr, ed., *Henry V*, 5.2.288n.

⁵³ Marcus, p. 72.

⁵⁴ Anamorphosis developed out of the earlier innovation of the painter's *perspectiva artificialis*, the creation of the illusion of depth, the principles of which were first outlined by Italian humanist Leon Battista Alberti in his 1435 work *De Pictura*. For a succinct overview of the development of linear or pictorial perspective in the Renaissance, and how anamorphosis developed out of this, see Lyle Massey, 'Framing and Mirroring the World', in *The Renaissance World*, ed. by John Jeffries Martin (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 51-68. See also Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of the Pictorial Style*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Ernest B. Gilman, 'The Albertian Perspective and the Curious Perspective', in *The Curious Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 16-49. The use of 'perspective' in this chapter refers to anamorphosis and should be understood as distinct yet related to *perspectiva artificialis*.

England from the sixteenth century onwards, and Shakespeare's audiences would have been familiar with a 'plentitude of "perspectives"'.⁵⁵ The category of 'curious perspectives' – a term coined by Jean François Nicéron in his 1638 work *La Perspective Curieuse* and later adopted by Ernest B. Gilman – included a vast array of media:

distorted, "anamorphic" images, sometimes hidden within regular images, that resolve themselves when seen from unusual points of view or in refracting lenses or mirrors of varying shapes (flat, cylindrical, conical); landscapes which, turned on their side, became faces; reversible portraits; and, more broadly, the *trompe l'oeil* illusionism of *camerae obscurae*, and the other marvels made possible by the new optics.⁵⁶

Anamorphosis was also known as 'curious, magic, or secret perspective' and, as this association with the supernatural or occult suggests, could have a bewildering effect on the viewer.⁵⁷ David R. Castillo emphasizes:

the impact that such an act of perceptual oscillation may have on the spectator. Faced with unstable and changing images, the spectator is invited to distance himself or herself from fixed interpretations, and to reflect on the uncertainty and artificial or constructed nature of meaning.⁵⁸

The sense of disorientation inherent in anamorphosis is reiterated in a recent study: 'The perceptual doubling of anamorphosis produces a rupture in the viewer's gaze and disrupts the stability of the object under view'.⁵⁹ That anamorphosis created a disorienting visual experience is important for understanding the impact of this paradoxical virginity metaphor within a dramatic context and the effect on the audience.

The reference to anamorphosis therefore supports the retention of the Folio paradox. However, in keeping with the glossing over of the complexity of the virginity

⁵⁵ Clark, p. 90; Allan Shickman 'The "Perspective Glass" in Shakespeare's *Richard II*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 18.2 (1978), 217-28 (p. 217). Shickman's article includes a survey of anamorphic devices possibly familiar to Shakespeare, some of which I will refer to below.

⁵⁶ Ernest B. Gilman, 'Richard II and the Perspectives of History', *Renaissance Drama*, 7 (1976), 85-115 (pp. 85-86).

⁵⁷ David R. Castillo, *(A)wry Views: Anamorphosis, Cervantes, and the Early Picaresque* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001), p. 1.

⁵⁸ Castillo, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁹ Jen. E. Boyle, *Anamorphosis in Early Modern Literature: Mediation and Affect* (Farnham: Routledge, 2017), p. 1.

metaphor, editors have not made the connection. Accompanying notes to the term ‘perspectively’ are often inconsistent, random, and isolated. Sometimes ‘perspectively’ is glossed ‘as if through an optical glass which produces illusory and distorted images’.⁶⁰ Other times it is glossed as an anamorphic picture or device ‘which showed different images when viewed from different angles’.⁶¹ Editors sometimes note both types, and often include other Shakespearean allusions to perspective.⁶² A historical context is hinted at but in a cursory way which fails to illuminate the passage’s meaning. Interpretations of the French King’s image are rare and resemble Dover Wilson’s limited explanation that ‘the cities, viewed in a perspective-picture or through a perspective-glass, appear like a maid’ or Craik’s claim that we should understand ‘perspectively’ ‘symbolically’ to mean ‘in another form than their natural one’.⁶³ Scholars who have written extensively on perspectives in early modern literature have also overlooked this instance in *Henry V*. Gilman cites the Rowe version of the line and describes ‘France’s bantering with Henry V’ as turning on ‘a joke about hidden landscapes’, but does not elaborate.⁶⁴ Norman Rabkin famously used gestalt imagery to argue that *Henry V* ‘points in two opposite directions, virtually daring us to choose one of the two opposed interpretations it requires of us’, but makes no reference to anamorphosis.⁶⁵ There is a missed opportunity to explore the full meaning of this

⁶⁰ Loughnane, ed., ‘Henry V’, 5.2.278-80n. For similar glosses see: Harbage, ed., ‘Henry V’, 5.2.307-09n.; Gurr, ed., *Henry V*, 5.2.286-88n.; Marchitello, ed., ‘Henry V’, 5.2.292-94n.

⁶¹ Taylor, ed., *Henry V*, 5.2.308-10n. For similar glosses see: Humphreys, ed., *Henry V*, 5.2.317n.; Watts, ed., *Henry V*, 5.312-14n.

⁶² See Evans, ed., *Henry the Fifth*, 5.2.339-42n.; Craik, ed., *Henry V*, 5.2.316-18n.; Bate and Rasmussen, eds., ‘Henry the Fifth’, 5.2.253-4n. Other Shakespeare references are discussed below.

⁶³ Dover Wilson, ed., *Henry V*, 5.2.320-21n.; Craik, ed., *Henry V*, 5.2.316-18n.

⁶⁴ Gilman, *Curious Perspective*, p. 90. Despite considering many other Shakespearean allusions to anamorphic images, Alison Thorne does not quote or examine the line in *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare: Looking Through Language* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000). Her passing reference to ‘*Henry V* (V.2.20-23)’ (p. 55) may be a typographical error, as these lines do not refer to perspective.

⁶⁵ Norman Rabkin, ‘Rabbits, Ducks, and Henry V’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 28.3 (1977), 279-96 (p. 279). Imtiaz Habib makes a similar argument to Rabkin. Whilst he uses ‘curious perspectives’ to explain his concept of ‘dramatic anamorphism’ there is no analysis of the French King’s perspective image and he quotes the Rowe version in *Shakespeare’s Pluralistic Concepts of Character: A Study in Dramatic Anamorphism* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1993), pp. 17, 34.

passage, and this is partly due to viewing the allusion to perspective within the context of the simplified Rowe version of the line. Once the paradox of the virgin yet entered city is removed, the ‘perspective’ allusion is diluted.

However, the Folio line invites Henry (and the audience) to see ‘perspectively’, to see optical delusions and illusions or distorted, displaced and broken images. The play then presents a fluid, confusing image of paradoxical virginity. One reason critics like Rabkin have missed the significance of the perspective reference is due to a characterological approach which uses the idea of optical illusions as a critical metaphoric lens through which to read figures like Henry V. Whilst I agree that the play requires the audience to consider multiple oppositional ideas at once, my interest is in the metaphorical and structural scheme of the play. My approach therefore differs from Rabkin’s and others’ by unpacking how anamorphosis is used as a metaphor within the play, and why. I argue that it is important to explore how the perspective metaphor ‘disrupts the stability of the object under view’ (to repeat Boyle’s phrasing) when the object is virginity, an already destabilized concept in early modern culture.

Editors tend to interpret the French King’s reference as being to one type of perspective (although there is no consensus on which) or occasionally offer alternative options, suggesting the reference is to a painting or a glass. But the French King’s ‘perspectively’ need not be limited to one type. Whilst other Shakespearean allusions to anamorphosis indicate specific devices, the *Henry V* reference relies on just one word: ‘perspectively’.⁶⁶ His image is not a description of an anamorphosis, but rather

⁶⁶ Cleopatra describes Antony as a *tabula scalata* to express her conflicting feelings towards him: ‘Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon, | The other way’s a Mars’, 2.5.117-18. In *All’s Well* Bertram uses a metaphor of a distorting glass to express his feelings towards Maudlin, explaining that ‘Contempt his scornful perspective did lend me’ so that ‘the line of every other favour’ was ‘warped’ and ‘Extended or contracted all proportions | To a most hideous object’, 5.3.48-52. Bushy’s extended conceit in *Richard II* (2.2.14-20) is the most frequently quoted and puzzled over, as critics debate whether a cut glass or anamorphic picture is suggested. For the debate, see William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. by Charles R. Forker, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Methuen, 2002), p. 490; Shickman, pp. 227-28; Gilman, *Curious Perspective*, pp. 93-95.

works as a verbal anamorphosis and describes a way of looking. Although the *Henry V* example is concisely contained in one word, its potential referents are multiple, and the non-specific nature of the allusion means that we can understand the metaphor on multiple levels by thinking with (or looking through) different devices. This approach helps us to imagine how early moderns saw ‘perspectively’.

The King’s perspective metaphor (without Rowe’s ‘never’) works on various levels which intersect, overlap, and complicate one another. There are two parts to the metaphor, the first part (‘the Cities turn’d into a Maid’) and the second part (‘for they are all girdled with Maiden Walls, that Warre hath entred’). Careful unpacking reveals how the play presents virginity as ‘perspectival’. The first part is perspectival in three ways: transformational, directional, and quantitative, and each invoke different anamorphic media. Firstly, and most obviously, the cities metamorphose into a maid. This is different to the image presented by Henry in the preceding line, when he says that he ‘cannot see many a faire French Citie for one faire French Maid that stands in my way’. Whereas for Henry the cities are occluded by one maid (Katherine), for the French King the cities *become* a maid. This process of transformation is essential. This first sense of perspective is akin, in terms of subject and illusion-type, to the *pareidolia*, the landscape which metamorphoses into a face.⁶⁷ Secondly, and relatedly, there is a reciprocal or dual-directional aspect to this perspective: if cities can become a maid, it follows that a maid can become cities. This reciprocal movement is found in the ‘hidden face’ painting as the viewer must switch between seeing each image by focusing on different features, creating an oscillating visual effect. A more tangible example of how movement generates different reciprocal images include ‘reversible portraits’, which

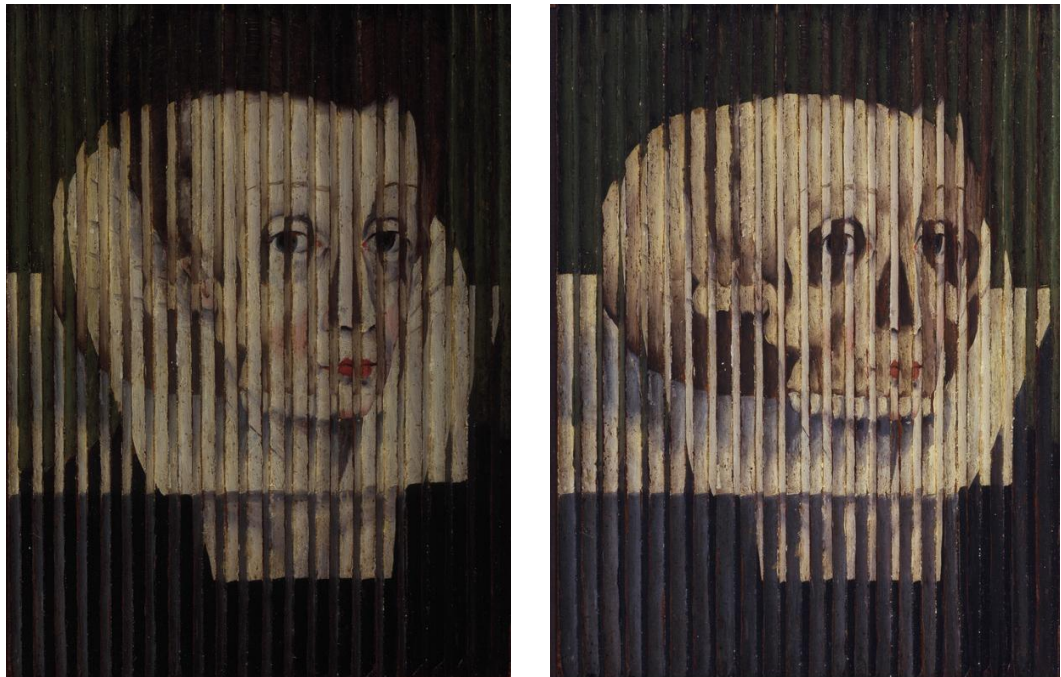
⁶⁷ For example, see Gilman, *Curious Perspective*, pp. 41-42.

require the image to be rotated.⁶⁸ Most notably, the *tabula scalata* or ‘turning picture’ – a device comprised of two pictures painted on two sides of a corrugated panel – required ambulation from its viewer to create the illusion, so that different images were seen as the viewer moved from left and right, from right to left, and appear to overlap, blur and distort when viewed directly. The most famous example of the period dates from the 1580s, in which a woman’s face appears to become a skull (Figs. 9-10).⁶⁹ Thirdly, there is a transformation not just of state, but also of quantity. The plural ‘Cities’ become the singular ‘Maid’. This subtle shift is jarring and disrupts what might otherwise be a neat reciprocity. It is this third sense which recalls perspective glasses, rather than paintings, in which images could proliferate or condense depending on the device in question. In her discussion of faceted lenses Frances Terpak gives examples of both: multiplying spectacles which turned one image into many, and the polyoptric telescope which turned many images into one.⁷⁰ This seemingly simple clause, ‘the Cities turn’d into a Maid’ can therefore be understood as ‘perspectival’ in three different ways and invoking myriad perspective devices and techniques simultaneously.

⁶⁸ See Gilman, *Curious Perspective*, p. 113 for a striking seventeenth-century example from *Il Faut Mourir* which appears to depict two men or two skulls depending on the orientation.

⁶⁹ The skull is a common subject of anamorphic images, see also Holbein’s *The Ambassadors* and the woodcut from *Il Faut Mourir*.

⁷⁰ Frances Terpak, ‘Faceted Lenses’, in *Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*, ed. by Barbara Maria Stafford and Frances Terpak (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2001), pp. 184-91. Terpak reproduces examples of both types, Figs. 41-43. The example of the polyoptric telescope comes from Jean François Nicéron’s *La Perspective Curieuse* (Paris, 1638) in which twelve Ottoman rulers become the singular King Louis XIII when viewed through the telescope. Shickman argues this type of device ‘may well have been known in Shakespeare’s day’, p. 221. See also Gilman, *Curious Perspective*, pp. 47-49; Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 211-17. Whilst it is impossible to ascertain when precisely this telescope was created and whether Shickman’s assumptions about Shakespeare’s familiarity with the device are correct, it serves as a useful model in the wider context of the early modern fascination with perspective glasses.



Figs. 9-10: *Anamorphosis, called Mary, Queen of Scots, 1542-1587. Reign 1542-1567, 1580, oil on panel, 33 x 24.80 cm, © Antonia Reeve/Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.*

The second part of the French King's metaphor works in relation to the first, complicating and undermining the already confused ideas through the paradox of the 'entered' yet 'gyrdled' city (and hence also the 'entered' yet 'gyrdled' virgin). Paradox is a fundamental to 'curious perspectives' which physically cause the viewer to see incredible things. They embody the impossibility of being unable to see everything 'correctly' from the same point. As Clark argues, anamorphosis 'was paradoxical both in terms of images and in terms of meanings' as it relied on the laws of perspective to challenge rules of vision.⁷¹ For Gilman, 'It has a mystery at its heart that is not open to rational comprehension, a complexity that can only be apprehended – touched and wondered at but not grasped'.⁷² Alison Thorne observes the repeating 'epistemological

⁷¹ Clark, p. 95. Clark builds on Rosalie L. Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemia: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

⁷² Gilman, *Curious Perspective*, p. 34.

conundrum – paradoxical, tautological and self-negating’ of that which ‘is, and is not’ in Shakespeare’s allusions to perspective: in *Twelfth Night*, when Orsino expresses his confusion upon seeing twins Viola-as-Cesario and Sebastian together as ‘One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons– | A natural perspective, that is and is not’ (5.1.206-07); in *Richard II*, when Bushy says the Queen’s grief ‘looked on as it is, is naught but shadows | Of what it is not’ (2.2.23-24); and Troilus’s claim that through ‘Bifold authority [...] This is and is not Cressid’ (5.2.144-46).⁷³ The French King’s image is another example of a metaphorical perspective picture which presents two alternative yet simultaneous possibilities, so that the city ‘is, and is not’ entered, and hence the maid is and is not deflowered, is and is not raped.

Most critical studies engaged in themes of rape and succession quote the French King’s line about cities and maids to support the idea that France is symbolized as female, but without exception these studies use the negated Rowe version, and hence ignore the sense of paradoxical rape and ‘perspectival virginity’.⁷⁴ This critical view is epitomized by Wilcox, who writes that:

The symbolic equivalence of war and rape is established definitively by the king of France when he refers to “maiden cities,” so called because “they are girdled with maiden walls that war hath never entered” (V.i.308-09). The corollary, of course, is that cities such as Harfleur that have had their walls breached in battle are no longer “maidens”: The invasion constitutes a sort of military deflowering.⁷⁵

The problem with this ‘definitive’ argument is that it depends upon the “fixed” image of the maiden city which has *not* been entered. The consequence for reading the non-

⁷³ Thorne, p. 135.

⁷⁴ Dollimore and Sinfield argue that this image signifies that cities and maids ‘are the same’, p. 139; Rackin and Howard claim that it shows how ‘the entire French kingdom is represented as a woman to be conquered by the masculine force of the English army’, pp. 213-14. Note that Howard and Rackin quote the ‘never’ in square brackets but do not challenge the Rowe emendation. McEachern understands that the ‘fair French city’ and ‘fair French maid’ are ‘identical’ and that Katherine’s ‘image through a perspectival illusion is double, complicit’ as she is ‘simultaneously an object of affection and of political interest’, p. 55. Coral reads the line (which he also uses in his title) as the French King agreeing to ‘a trade-off between the military virginity of the French cities and the sexual virginity of the French princess’, p. 431.

⁷⁵ Wilcox, p. 65.

paradoxical line is seen in Wilcox's 'corollary' claim that Harfleur is deflowered, when the way the virgin/city metaphor functions means that this is much more equivocal. Without Rowe's 'never' the line is not a simple repetition of the idea that cities and maids (and war and rape) are interchangeable or analogous, but is instead indicative of a more complicated representation throughout *Henry V* of virginity and rape as both present *and* absent, enacted *and* avoided: the medium of drama enables a dissolution of the distinction between the symbolic and the material, with implications for how early modern society conceptualized and weaponized virginity.

The paradox of the maiden *yet* entered city is central to how we read the play and understand how virginity and rape were represented. The following section explores how narratives of defloration were allegorized as a city sieges, and city sieges as wedding nights across early modern culture. This reciprocal dynamic of the virgin/city metaphor depends upon the ambiguous rape/ravishment slippage. A starting point is a central imaginative space of *Henry V*: the breach.

iii. *Virgin/City*

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,
Or close the wall up with our English dead.

3.1.1-2

Henry's rallying cry outside the walls of Harfleur are the play's most recognisable lines, possibly some of the most famous in all early modern drama. In her study of historical trauma, fittingly titled *Unto the Breach*, Patricia Cahill argues that the meaning of 'breach' to signify the military location of 'the gap engendered in fortified walls from the blast of artillery during a siege' came about during the Elizabethan period.⁷⁶ She notes that 'more than fifteen Elizabethan plays conjure up this space' and therefore argues that 'the spaces that mattered to the new military science were also central to the Elizabethan theatrical imaginary'.⁷⁷ Writing in 2009, Cahill gives 1579 as the earliest usage of this definition of 'breach', locating it in a military treatise, an occurrence which pre-dates the *OED*'s earliest recorded usage by two decades.⁷⁸ However, an even earlier instance of this specific meaning is found in Arthur Brooke's 1562 poem, *Romeus and Juliet*, which demonstrates that there was a semantic overlap between a military breach and defloration. During the description of the couple's marriage consummation Brooke uses the metaphor of 'the gap engendered in fortified walls from the blast of artillery during a siege' to depict Juliet's defloration:

now the virgins fort
hath warlike Romeus got,
In which as yet no breache was made
by force of cannon shot.

⁷⁶ Patricia Cahill, *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 4.

⁷⁷ Cahill, *Unto the Breach*, p. 4. Cahill includes the list of pre-1603 plays.

⁷⁸ Cahill notes that the *OED*'s citation of *Henry IV, part 2* and the date of 1597 as the first usage of this definition is erroneous, instead identifying Thomas Churchyard's *A general rehearsall of warres, called Churchyardes choise* (London, 1579) as the earliest use. She also identifies several other military science texts and numerous plays predating 1597 which use this meaning of 'breach', see *Unto the Breach*, p. 4. As of December 2021 the *OED* cites Robert Barret, *The theorike and practike of moderne warres* (London, 1598) as the earliest citation for this definition of 'breach'. I argue here that this entry should be amended to Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet* (1562). See *OED*, 'breach, n.', II.7.c.

And now in ease he doth
possess the hoped place.⁷⁹

The sense of defloration as a siege is also found in Painter's 1567 version of the story, when '*Rhomeo* vnloosing the holy lines of virginity, tooke possession of the place, which was not yet besieged'.⁸⁰ Brooke's earlier usage of 'breach' is significant, as it demonstrates that the metaphoric potential of this new military language was present very early on, and that a military breach and a sexual breach were symbolically connected from the outset.

Within the context of this developing metaphoric vocabulary another definition of 'breach' was coined in the late Elizabethan period. In *English Poesie* Puttenham uses the term 'breach' to mean a poetic interval in epithalamia.⁸¹ In his passage on 'the ballades at the bedding of the bride' Puttenham writes that 'This *Epithalamie* was deuided by breaches into three partes to serue for three seuerall fits or times to be song' (H1r). Although Puttenham's word choice can merely suggest a general break or interruption, I argue that it also incorporates the specific military meaning identified by Cahill, and its deflorative application as found in *Romeus and Juliet*. In the previous chapter I argued that Puttenham's section on epithalamia expressed anxiety about the unreliability of defloration and the uncertain transformation of the bride from the prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, who can appear 'More of the maid to sight than husband's pains' (Prologue, 8) the morning after the wedding night. This ambiguity surrounding defloration is expressed through the three breaches which signify repeated assaults on the bride, whose wedding night is described in terms of a military operation. The first breach is sung during 'the onset and first encounters of that amorous battaile'

⁷⁹ Brooke, *Romeus and Juliet*, sig. D2v.

⁸⁰ Painter, 'Rhomeo and Julietta', sig. LL13v.

⁸¹ *OED*, 'breach, *n.*', II.10.

(H1r), and the second breach during ‘the second assaultes’ (H1v), so that in Puttenham’s account marital consummation metaphorically becomes martial combat. Underscoring the violence of these night-time battles and assaults, the third breach, sung the following morning, describes how the bride must emerge to prove to her parents whether she were ‘dead or aliue, or maimed by any accident nocturnall’ (H1v). The husband’s ultimate goal was ‘to rob his spouse of her maidenhead’ (H1v) whereas the bride needed to ‘scape with so litle daunger of her person’ (H1v). The account therefore presents the bride’s defloration as a city’s despoliation. In the previous Chapter I discussed how this passage from *English Poesie* demonstrates the covert paranoia surrounding female virginity and a husband’s and community’s inability to contain or reliably regulate it, and how this was epitomized by the ambiguous appearance of the bride who is ‘More of the maid to sight’. In this Chapter I argue that this paranoia is also made overt through the image of the military breach which works rhetorically and structurally throughout the passage. The multiple iterations of defloration imply an overcompensation for a bridegroom’s insecurity which manifests in extreme violence against the besieged bride. The etymological developments of ‘breach’ in the latter half of the sixteenth century, particularly in a pedagogic and widely circulated text like Puttenham’s, therefore demonstrate how virginity and defloration was constructed through the imagery of a city siege.

This overlapping imagery is found across a broad range of texts, from medicalized accounts, to drama, to historical chronicles. Helkiah Crooke’s *Mikrocosmographia* (1615) contains detailed sections on female anatomy and reproduction which, like Puttenham’s passage on epithalamia, present defloration in violent, militaristic terms. The female body is conceptualized as a series of boundaries which must be navigated and breached. Crooke’s expansive textbook was ‘a

compendium of leading anatomical knowledge' which surveyed classical and contemporary medical discourse rather than advancing new knowledge, and instead of settling on fixed terminology he offers multiple terms gathered from various writers.⁸² A consequence of this – and indeed a symptom of the general confusion about female anatomy at this time – is the repetition of similar terms for different parts. For instance, Crooke designates the '*Ceruix*' as 'the gate of the wombe' (X3v), describes the '*Vulua*' as 'like Flood gates or leafe-doores' (X5r), and refers to the '*Hymen*' as 'the leafe-gate or locke of virginity' (X5r, Z2r). This terminology creates the impression of a series of gates (vulva, hymen, cervix) behind which the womb – and the mysterious virginity – is kept. Virginity is something locked away within a woman's body which must be 'robbed' during an 'amorous battaile' (to borrow Puttenham's phrasing). As with Puttenham, this narrative of defloration – or to use Crooke's preferred term, 'devirgination' (X4r) – is simultaneously one of marital consummation with emphasis on the bridegroom's role. Crooke writes that during 'the first society of mayds with men [...] blood issueth sometimes in great aboundance' because veins are 'broken by the husband' (X4r). In *Mikrokosmographia* defloration is violent, painful, and bloody. There is an obsessive focus on 'maydens payne in deuirgination or losse of their maiden-head' or '*The sharpe coition*' (X4r), language which recalls Puttenham's detail of the singers drowning out the 'skreeking' (H1r) of the bride. Combined with the metaphorical terminology of gates and locks, these descriptions of the process of defloration resemble the breaching of a city's fortifications. Crooke's description of the 'devirginated' body resembles a breached city. Beforehand the virgin's body is shut up, the genitalia 'tyed together, because there is no vse of a large entrance before coition'

⁸² Lauren Kassell, 'Medical Understandings of the Body, c.1500-1750', in *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body: 1500 to the present*, ed. by Sarah Toulalan and Kate Fisher (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 57-74 (p. 58).

(X4r). But after a woman's first experience of intercourse 'the neck of the wombe, [is] nowe made much wider then in the time of virginity' (X4v), indeed it is 'so fretted and streatched, that a man would beleue they were neuer ioyned' (X4r). This imagery suggests that a significant gap is made in post-virginal women through this 'breaking' (X4r), positioning the husband as a battering ram. The overall impression from Crooke's account is that defloration is a destructive process which results in 'a large entrance' or breach, but paradoxically that the virgin body is like a fortress which must be repeatedly besieged, recalling Puttenham's repeated breaches.

All's Well includes an exchange which illustrates how the metaphorical overlap present in *English Poesie* and texts like *Mikrokosmographia* also appears in contemporary drama. In the 'virginity dialogue' (discussed in Chapter 1) Helen asks how women can 'barricado' virginity against its 'enemy' (man) and complains that 'he assails, and our virginity, though valiant in the defense, yet is weak' (1.1.111-12). Paroles explains that sexual conquest is inevitable through the image of an army making camp before besieging a town: 'Man setting down before you will undermine you and blow you up' (1.1.113-14). There is a double pun on 'blowing up', suggesting both a forceful 'devirgination' and the subsequent rounded belly of pregnancy. Paroles draws a comparison between the breaching of a city's walls, its occupation, and a virgin's defloration: 'in blowing him down again, with the breach yourselves made you lose your city' (1.1.119-20).⁸³ Therefore, building on Cahill's insight that the breach was 'central to the Elizabethan theatrical imaginary', and with epithalamic and 'devirgination' narratives as context, I argue that these militaristic images and spaces

⁸³ See 'blow up (or down)', in Williams, *Dictionary of Sexual Language*, p. 118. See also entries for 'the Blow', 'Blown up', and 'Blow up' in James T. Henke, *Courtesans and Cuckolds: A Glossary of Renaissance Dramatic Bawdy* (London: Routledge, 1979; 2017), pp. 21-22.

necessarily connoted ideas of defloration, and that virginity was therefore also a foundational, structuring concept on the early modern stage.

These examples from Brooke, Puttenham, Crooke and Shakespeare demonstrate how a military siege and the breach could represent defloration, but there were two sides to this discourse, so reciprocally defloration could also represent a military siege. Alongside these literary examples sit converse contemporary accounts from the historical record in which cities under attack are personified as virgins. For example, Raphael Holinshed recounts how the provost of the French city of Tournai parallels the city's integrity and a maiden's virginity during the 1513 siege by English forces. In *The Third volume of Chronicles* (1586) he writes that the English army, 'lieng affront before Tornaie', did 'daillie beat the gates, towers and wals, which made a great batterie'.⁸⁴ The provost of the town is recorded as saying 'written on the gates grauen in stone' are the words '*Iammes ton ne a perdu ton pucelage*, that is to saie; Thou hast neuer lost thy maidenhed'.⁸⁵ He imagines Tournai as a defensive virgin, whose maidenhead is imperilled, lamenting that 'if this perilous siege continue, or else if our enemies assault vs, we be not able to defend vs'.⁸⁶ A personified virgin was also used as a symbol for the German city of Magdeburg. As the city's name can translate as 'virgin city' ('Magd' is German for 'maid'), Magdeburg was emblemized by a virgin standing above the city gates and holding a wreath from at least the thirteenth century onwards.⁸⁷ A wooden statue of the virgin with a wreath was placed over the chief gate of the city bearing the statement 'Who will take it?' in an echo of the legend above the gates to Tournai.⁸⁸ By the sixteenth century the symbol of the virgin appeared not just

⁸⁴ Holinshed, Raphael, *The Third volume of Chronicles* (London, 1586), sig. Kkkk2v.

⁸⁵ Holinshed, sig. Kkkk2v.

⁸⁶ Holinshed, sig. Kkkk2v.

⁸⁷ C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (London: Penguin Books, 1938), p. 214.

⁸⁸ Wedgwood, p. 214. See also Julia Gaspar, *The Dragon and the Dove: The Plays of Thomas Dekker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 159.

on the city's official seals but also such everyday transactional objects as coins (Fig. 11). The emblem is ambivalent: the virgin dominates the top of the image, whereas the city walls dominate the bottom, so that the two seem to merge or blend as the city is turned into a maid, and vice versa. Yet the image is also contradictory and undermines itself: the virgin and her wreath symbolize resistance and integrity, the open gates below her skirts (a suggestive placement) denote entry, and the half-raised portcullis could be half-open or half-closed, depending on the perspective of the viewer.



Fig. 11: 1 Thaler, Magdeburg, Germany, 1638, silver, 2 x 4.4 cm, National Museum of American History, ©Paul A. Straub/Smithsonian Museum
<https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_1272819>

The personification of Magdeburg as a virgin meant writers could easily represent the sack of the city in 1631 as a metaphorical wedding night. The siege – one of the deadliest conflicts of the Thirty Years War – was metaphorically represented as a form of courtship, marriage, defloration and consummation at the time and in subsequent accounts. In the days before the city was besieged broadsheets were disseminated exhorting ‘Magdeburg to stand firm, abjuring the maiden city to deny access to the elderly wooer who pressed her so hard’.⁸⁹ The town and besieging army were conceptualized as a coy beloved and wooing lover, but the reality of this ‘courtship’ is far from romantic; the scale of the slaughter was unprecedented, and the proliferation of newspapers, pamphlets and illustrated broadsheets reporting the ‘annihilation’ of Magdeburg sent shockwaves across Europe.⁹⁰ In these and later accounts, the rape and torture of Magdeburg’s women ‘were graphically emphasized to illustrate the greater victimization of Protestant Germany by Catholic tyranny’.⁹¹ That this siege, which had huge political and religious ramifications, was conceptualized through the language of defloration is indicative of virginity’s significance for politics and succession. Following the capture of the city, the term *Magdeburgisieren* (‘Magdeburgization’) was used colloquially to describe acts of pillage, rape and ‘the complete obliteration of a city’, a term all the more sinister for its perversion of the meaning of ‘maid/Magd’, as what should mean ‘to-become-the-virgin-city’ was corrupted to mean ‘to-be-destroyed’.⁹² Anecdotal reports of the statue of the Virgin of

⁸⁹ Wedgwood, p. 253.

⁹⁰ Geoffrey Parker, ed., *The Thirty Years War*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 112.

⁹¹ Kevin Cramer, *The Thirty Years’ War and German Memory in the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), p. 142.

⁹² Alan Moss, ‘Comparing Ruins: National Trauma in Dutch Travel Accounts of the Seventeenth Century’, in *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600-1815*, ed. by Lotte Jensen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 217-32 (p. 221).

Magdeburg's fate epitomizes how breaching the city walls was conceptualized as marital consummation:

The wooden statue of the maiden that had crowned the gate for so long had been found after the fire, charred and broken, in a ditch. She had been wooed and won at last, and for years to come men remembered the 'marriage of Madgdeburg'.⁹³

Puttenham's phrasing is again disturbingly resonate here: Magdeburg had indeed been 'maimed' by an 'accident nocturnall' and the besieging army had succeeded in the aim of 'rob[bing] his spouse of her maidenhead' (H1v).⁹⁴ The ambiguous language in these accounts recalls how rape was indistinguishable from ravishment in the early modern legal imagination. Puttenham's 'amorous battaile' and 'frendly conflicts' (H1v) and the framing of Magdeburg's destruction as both a wooing and a rape demonstrate how the ambivalent language of rape was linked to the reciprocal dynamic between the virgin/city and defloration/siege. The word 'spoil' encompasses all three ideas, as a besieged city, a raped woman, and a seduced woman could all be 'despoiled'.⁹⁵ The *OED*'s definition of the two latter meanings, 'to ravish or violate (a woman)', demonstrates how intertwined and indistinguishable these concepts were.

As these various examples show, there was a dynamic relational connection at play with this metaphor: a virgin body could be figured as a walled city, and likewise a walled city could be figured as a virgin body; a military breach could symbolize defloration, and defloration a military breach. Furthermore, this reciprocal image perpetuated and relied upon the slippage between rape and ravishment, lawful

⁹³ Wedgwood, p. 257.

⁹⁴ Early twentieth century historians have perpetuated this language, such as in Wedgwood's description of the town being 'wooed and won' (p. 257), and Samuel Rawson Gardiner's description of 'the great city, the virgin fortress which had resisted Charles V and Wallenstein', *The Thirty Years War: 1618-1648* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1919), pp. 133-34.

⁹⁵ The earliest usage of 'spoil' meant to strip or despoil a dead or helpless person, especially to strip an enemy of armour. The related sense of pillaging and plundering a city developed slightly later. The *OED* gives 1678 as the earliest usage meaning 'to ravish or violate (a woman)' but this meaning was evidently in currency much earlier. See *OED*, 'spoil, v.1', I.1.a; 3.a; III.11.c.

consummation and non-consensual defloration. Yet these examples each demonstrate one of the two metaphorical directions – so for instance Juliet’s virginity is symbolized as a city under siege, whereas the besieged Tournai is symbolized as a virgin – and whilst evocative, these metaphors are confined to specific moments in the narrative. In *Henry V*, however, both directions of the virgin/city symbol are simultaneously employed and work on a structural level throughout the play: the virgin/city image acts reciprocally as an organising metaphor. Within the same text the city of Harfleur is metaphorically represented as a virgin, whilst the virginal French princess Katherine is metaphorically represented as a city. In the play cities and virgins continually act as each other’s symbolic referent so that the distinction between the two is blurred. Furthermore, the interaction between these metaphors disorients the audience from fixed knowledge of whether defloration (and often rape) has taken place or not. Cities are and are not conquered, Katherine is and is not deflowered, so that both come to embody the French King’s perspective image of cities ‘gyrdled with Maiden Walls, that Warre hath entred’.

Part Two of this Chapter offers a reading of the virgin/city metaphor and ‘perspectival virginity’ in *Henry V*. In section one, ‘Deflowering France’, I analyse the English campaign in France and the siege of Harfleur, arguing that Henry’s attack on the city can be read as a metaphorical wedding night in which consummation is constantly deferred (in a similar manner to Puttenham’s epithalamia passage). Section two, ‘The “half-achieved Harfleur”’, examines how both sides of the virgin/city metaphor are exploited in Henry’s speech outside the walls of Harfleur and argues that this fundamentally blurs the distinction between symbolic and enacted action, positioning Harfleur as both virginal and deflowered. This section ends with a reading of the city’s yielding to Henry in the context of ambivalent rape discourse, arguing that

Harfleur is metaphorically both raped and ravished. Section three, 'Enter the town/Enter Katherine', explores the figure of Katherine in the language lesson scene and the wooing scene through her relationship to and identification with the 'half-achieved Harfleur' to demonstrate how, by the end of the play, Katherine embodies her father's image of paradoxical virginity. The final section, "'The world's best garden': National Greensickness' argues that the play reveals the full political significance of 'perspectival virginity' in two speeches by Burgundy in 5.2 which invoke greensickness. Burgundy's allegory of France (and Katherine) as an unhusbanded garden and Katherine (and France) as a blind fly enable him to reposition both as disordered and in need of marriage (to England/Henry) and therefore the play recodes rape/conquest as curative defloration and consummation.

PART TWO

i. *Deflowering France*

At the beginning of *Henry V* the Archbishop of Canterbury gives a speech in which he allegorizes a kingdom as a colony of honey-bees. Alongside the ‘king and officers’, ‘magistrates’, and ‘merchants’ he describes how the bees:

like soldiers, armèd in their stings,
Make boot upon the summer’s velvet buds,
Which pillage they with merry march bring home.
1.2.190-95

Canterbury takes the innocent, idyllic image of a honey-bee collecting nectar from summer flowers and returning to the hive, and reframes it as a project of violent defloration which in turn represents a city siege and the spoils of war. The meaning is unsubtly phallic: the bees are ‘armèd in their stings’ to pillage ‘the summer’s velvet buds’.⁹⁶ Defloration is here a vehicle for expressing the objective of conquest (and, disturbingly, its attendant pleasures: the soldier-bees are ‘merry’, after all). This metaphor is suggestive of how the English view warfare and pillage in terms of defloration, as it is sexual violence and virginity which provides the connecting imagery between bees and soldiers. Canterbury’s language anticipates the tenor of the ensuing English campaign in France, and in particular the siege of Harfleur in Act Three.

The city of Harfleur is first imagined as a metaphorical virgin in the Chorus’s speech at the beginning of the third act. The Chorus instructs the audience to:

⁹⁶ At the time of *Henry V*’s composition it was assumed that the colony was majority male, but in 1609 Charles Butler popularized the notion of a majority female colony: he writes that previous philosophers, uncertain of the governing bee’s sex, were ‘willing in this vncertainty to grace so worthy a creature with the worthier title [...] *Rex*’ but that he translates it ‘*Queene*, sith the males heer heare no sway at al, this being an *Amazonian or feminine kingdome*’, see *The feminine monarchie Or a treatise concerning bees; and the dve ordering of them* (Oxford, 1609), sig. A3v. Canterbury’s metaphor is unintentionally ironic given *Henry V*’s preoccupation with Salic law and the exclusion of the female line.

Work, work your thoughts, and therein see a siege.
Behold the ordnance on their carriages,
With fatal mouths gaping on girded Harfleur.

3.0.25-27

The image of ‘girded Harfleur’ recalls the Chorus’s earlier direction to the audience to ‘Suppose within the girdle of these walls | Are now confined two mighty monarchies’ (Prologue 19-20) and Henry’s description of the Scots, ‘pouring like the tide into a breach [...] Girding with grievous siege castles and towns’ (1.2.149-52). It also anticipates the French King’s cities ‘all girdled with maiden walls’ (5.2.293-94). These images rely on the metaphor of the girdle: the cities in question are personified, with the wall, like a belt, encircling the town within. Although a girdle could be worn by both men and women, the bridal girdle – a thick, embellished belt – was a common cultural symbol associated with the ritual of marital consummation.⁹⁷ References to the bridal girdle can be found across a range of early modern texts, including dictionaries, epithalamia, and poetic treatises. For instance, in his 1538 lexicon Thomas Elyot includes entries for a ‘gyrdell, whiche a bryde or newe wedded wyfe weareth’, and ‘a gyrdell or corse, whiche the husbände dydde putte aboute his wyfe, whan he was married, and at nyght dydde plucke it of’.⁹⁸ A 1613 nuptial song written by Henry Peacham for the marriage of Elizabeth Stuart features the ritual of the bridal girdle as part of the wedding night:

⁹⁷ The bridal girdle must be distinguished from the notorious ‘chastity belt’ or ‘girdle of chastity’, a horrific contraption made of metal worn around the waist and genitals and fastened with a lock. The idea of a device which would prevent a wife from pursuing adultery during her husband’s absence in such a literal, restrictive and dangerous way has unsurprisingly become a powerful cultural symbol. However, its existence has been thoroughly debunked. Albrecht Classen has demonstrated there is no evidence of a widespread use of such a device during the medieval and early modern periods, and that references to such devices from the literature of this time are either satirical or figurative, and any artefacts claimed to date from this period are anachronisms. See Albrecht Classen, *The Medieval Chastity Belt: A Myth-Making Process* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁹⁸ Thomas Elyot, *The dictionary of syr Thomas Eliot knyght* (London, 1538), sigs. D1v, C1v.

Come Bride-maide *Venus* and vndoe
Th' Herculean knot with fingers two,
And take the girdle from her wast,
That Virgins must for goe at last.⁹⁹

In a marginal note Peacham expands on Elyot's definitions, explaining that 'This girdle was dedicated to *Diana* [...] and knit with a kinde of knot which they called *Herculean*, in signe of fruit fulnes, which Virgins ware, and neuer was taken away vntill the first night of their Marriage'.¹⁰⁰ The metaphorical power of the bridal girdle is epitomized in Puttenham's *English Poesie*, when an entry on synecdoche is illustrated with the example of the loosening of a girdle to signify defloration: 'In the olde time, whosoever was allowed to vndoe his Ladies girdle, he might lie with her all night: wherefore, the taking of a womans maidenhead away, was said to vndoe her girdle' (Y4r). Puttenham's section on synecdoche is linked to the earlier passage on epithalamia which conceptualized the wedding night as a military campaign. The example which precedes the undoing of the bridal girdle for defloration is the sacking of a town: 'if one would say, the towne of Andwerpe were famished, it is not so to be taken, but of the people of the towne of Andwerp' (Y4r). As girdles were therefore specifically associated with brides, and the untying or breaking of the bridal girdle symbolized the moment of defloration, it is possible to understand the girdled cities repeatedly invoked in *Henry V* as personified virgins. That the image of the girdled city recurs throughout the play is an indication of how this metaphor is used as a symbolic structural device and why 'perspectival virginity' is integral to understanding discourses of war, rape and marriage in the play. Furthermore, the image from the prologue, of armies and cities 'within the girdle of these walls' means that the theatre within which the cities are

⁹⁹ Henry Peacham, *The period of Mourning. Disposed into sixe Visions* (London, 1613), sig. F2v.

¹⁰⁰ Peacham, sig. F2v.

depicted is also understood in these terms, reinforcing the performativity of virginity in a way similar to the prologue of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

The figurative sense of ‘gird’ to mean ‘preparing for action or bracing oneself’ developed in the late medieval period, but the *OED* suggests that around 1550 a new meaning of ‘encircling a town with an armed force’ arose.¹⁰¹ The Chorus’ image of ‘girded Harfleur’ suggests it is both protected from and vulnerable to attack: it is girded (braced for defence) and girded (surrounded by an army). The mid-sixteenth-century etymological development of ‘gird’ – which applied the metaphor of the bridal girdle overtly to a military siege – arose concomitantly with the new threefold meaning of ‘breach’ as a military gap in city walls, a metaphor for defloration, and a structuring device in epithalamia. These developments strengthen the sense of shared and interdependent martial and marital imagery. Henry’s rallying cry ‘Once more unto the breach’ immediately follows on from the Chorus’s introduction of Harfleur as a personified virgin bride. The context of the girdle metaphor and the symbolic significance of undoing a girdle in early modern England therefore necessitates a reimagining of these lines, as the siege of Harfleur can be understood as a metaphorical wedding night.

The personification of Harfleur as a virginal bride is enhanced by anthropomorphic cannons, their ‘gaping mouths’ encroaching on the city, ready to kiss (or devour) the city. The city’s name reinforces these virginal associations, the French ‘fleur’ evoking the English ‘flower’ and hence flower of virginity.¹⁰² Furthermore, Harfleur is juxtaposed with a particular virgin: Katherine of France. As part of the

¹⁰¹ *OED*, ‘gird, v.1’, 1.b and 5.b.

¹⁰² The ‘fleur’ suffix does not translate to ‘flower’ but derives from the Old English or Old Norse meaning ‘estuary’ – compare the common English suffix ‘-fleet’ in English place names. The potential floral imagery of Harfleur’s ‘fleur’ is noted in Gurr, ed., *Henry V*, 3.4.14n.

Chorus's imaginative scene-setting the political context of the French peace negotiations is introduced. The audience is told to:

Suppose th'ambassador from the French comes back,
Tells Harry that the King doth offer him
Katherine his daughter, and with her, to dowry,
Some petty and unprofitable dukedoms.
The offer likes not; and the nimble gunner
With linstock now the devilish cannon touches
And down goes all before them.

3.0.28-34

A reciprocal symbolic relationship is created between the city and the princess by inserting this reference to Katherine between vivid descriptions of the unfolding siege. Significantly, despite her importance for Henry's claim to the French throne, this is the play's first mention of Katherine. Her inclusion here therefore heightens the sense of the siege of Harfleur as a metaphoric wedding night, as Henry chooses to besiege the city rather than accept Katherine as his wife. This initial juxtaposition sets up the development later in Act Three of the identification between Katherine and Harfleur.

The slippage between weapons and soldiers, armed battery and defloration is continued in 3.1 when Henry gives his famous rallying speech. The personified 'carriages' with gaping mouths metamorphose into the soldiers themselves as Henry encourages his men to embody phallic cannons. He instructs them to 'Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood [...] lend the eye a terrible aspect; | Let it pry through the portage of the head | Like the brass cannon', and to 'Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit | To his full height' (3.1.7; 9-11; 16-17). The references to conjuring, eyes and spirits are common features of early modern bawdry, and the emphasis on stiffening, hardening, raising up and prying through are all overtly phallic and penetrative.¹⁰³ Many critics have observed the sexual potency of these lines, among

¹⁰³ 'To conjure' was a common copulation metaphor, often working with the idea of a 'spirit', meaning 'semen' and/or 'penis'; 'blood' was an alternative to 'spirit' and could also refer to semen. Although

them Coppélia Kahn who writes: 'The analogies between besieging a walled city and rape are brought to the surface when Henry urges each man to make himself, in effect, a battering ram or erect phallus'.¹⁰⁴ Despite the bawdry the effect is menacing rather than comic as the distinction between cannons, soldiers, and erect penises is obscured. These images resonate with Brooke's description of the 'warlike Romeus' and his 'force of cannon shot' (D2v). Likewise, the stiffened sinews of the soldiers replicate the unsettling image from *English Poesie* of the 'first forces' of the bride's 'stiffe and rigorous young man' which makes her shriek in 'outcry' (H1r).

The sexual aggression is emphasized through Henry's taunt to his men to prove their legitimacy, or rather to disprove the suggestion that they are the result of cuckoldry. The soldiers are instructed:

Dishonour not your mothers; now attest
That those whom you called fathers did beget you.
Be copy now to men of grosser blood
And teach them how to war.

3.1.22-25

The siege is an opportunity for the soldiers to replicate their own conceptions, the implication being sexual dominance will translate to victory. Once again the siege is figured as a consummation. The anxious need to control virginity is the consequence of a fear of cuckoldry, and through Henry's obsession with legitimate paternity, the virginity of each soldier's mother on her wedding night is transposed onto Harfleur. This speech is also the realisation of Canterbury's bee metaphor, as each soldier arms himself with his 'sting', and 'makes boot' upon the floral city. This imagery is uncomfortably circular: the notion that the city is representative of their own mother's

'eye' commonly referred to the vagina, it also frequently indicated the hole in the end of the penis. See Williams, *Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery*, pp. 113-4, 292, 454, 1286-88.

¹⁰⁴ Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 81.

‘velvet buds’ is an indication of how the play is grappling with an anxiety of how to control and contain virginity to ensure legitimacy. From the outset the attack on Harfleur can be read in terms of virginity, marriage and succession. The personification of the besieging army and the besieged city initiates the way ‘perspectival virginity’ is employed in *Henry V*, so that the first sense of the city ‘turn’d into a Maid’ is realized in the bridal Harfleur.

*

However, throughout these battle scenes the second sense of ‘perspectival virginity’ is also at play, as the city’s metaphorical defloration is ambiguous. The representation of the breach is fundamental to this uncertainty, as although it is evoked repeatedly and the army are continually moving towards it, they never seem to get there. Henry’s command ‘Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more’ (3.1.1) is echoed parodically by Bardolph crying ‘On, on, on, on, on! To the breach, to the breach!’ (3.2.1), with Fluellen later ordering ‘Up to the breach, you dogs!’ (3.2.19), and finally Macmorris stating that ‘The town is besieged, and the trumpet calls us to the breach’ (3.3.48-49). In the Folio’s rendering of Macmorris’ Irish, his ‘beseech’d’ (H5v) (meaning ‘besieged’) emphasizes aurally the overlap between wooing and battery present in Puttenham and resonates with Paroles’ banter with Helena and accounts of the Siege of Magdeburg. Whilst the continuation of the imperative mood from the Chorus’s speech (‘Work, work your thoughts’) through Henry’s rally’s cry (‘Once more [...] once more’) and their reprises (‘On, on, on, on, on’, ‘Up to the breach’) draws the audience into the action and compels urgent movement towards the breach, it is a stilted, halting progression, ultimately creating a sense of recursive, delayed action through repetition. The breach is hard to locate in the play: under the Chorus’s instruction the audience imagines the siege underway, and then suddenly the action

starts *in medias res* and the breach has already been made. The Chorus's image of an intact, 'girded' city and encroaching 'gaping' chasms of the cannons has been inverted by the start of 3.1, so that the gap is already there yet the phallic, cannon-like soldiers have yet to reach it. Most importantly, the breach is never part of the theatrical space, remaining an imagined off-stage location. This unseen breach therefore occupies another representational lacuna and is another example of the observation made throughout this thesis that virginity is unlocatable, moments of defloration are unstageable and therefore destabilized, and that this instability shapes onstage action.

These repeated assaults recall the multiple breaches of Puttenham's epithalamium, which create a sense of an ongoing siege. For instance, during the poem's second breach singers 'refresh the faint and weried bodies and spirits' (H1v). The couple's 'desire one to vanquish the other by such frendly conflicts' (H1v) finds echoes in the desire of the English army to revive and 'vanquish' Harfleur. Henry's 'once more' suggests, like Puttenham's account, that several 'assaultes' are necessary to achieve conquest and 'rob [the] spouse of her maidenhead' (H1v) and that even then, virginity may not have been achieved as the bride can still appear like an ambiguous maiden come morning. His later threat to 'begin the batt'ry once again' (3.4.7) calls back to his 'Once more [...] once more' (3.1.1), reinforcing this idea of an interminable campaign. These reiterations also reflect and anticipate anatomists' accounts of 'devirgination'. Crooke's text presents the virgin body as a fortress with numerous gates (vulva, hymen, cervix) which must be repeatedly besieged, and in *Henry V* there is a movement from the 'girded' walls, then to the breach, and then to the city's gates. As in Puttenham Crooke's account of defloration is unreliable – he includes a detailed section on the problems with proving loss of virginity – as well as a totally destructive

process which results in ‘a large entrance’.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, in *Henry V* the breach is an equivocal space which does and does not signify Harfleur’s defloration. The breach of Harfleur is the first evocation of this ambivalent entry: it signifies the penetration of the city, and yet does not result in its full possession. In his speech at 3.4 Henry describes the city as ‘half-achieved Harfleur’ (3.4.8) and demands further entry via the gates (either battered down or opened up). The implication is that to completely deflower the city an inner boundary must be broken through. The symbolic quality of the city’s name – Harfleur or ‘Half-flower’ – is therefore even more resonant, emphasized through the repeated ‘half/Harfl’ sounds, as mid-way through the siege she is a ‘half-flower’. Act Three thus introduce the idea of ‘perspectival virginity’ in two ways: the personification of Harfleur as a bride and the siege as a wedding night means the city is ‘turn’d into a Maid’. Yet this defloration is and is not enacted: Harfleur is ‘gyrdled with maiden walls that war hath entered’.

ii. *The ‘half-achieved Harfleur’*

This sense of perspectival virginity continues throughout Henry’s infamous speech outside the gates of Harfleur.¹⁰⁶ Over the course of forty-three lines the metaphorical virgin/city relationship shifts back and forth creating an alternating relational signification between the personified virgin city and its emblematic virgins. Initially, Henry reiterates the personification of the city as a virgin, drawing on the previous imagery of soldiers like phallic battering rams and the town as a girdled bride. He first identifies himself with the troops who he previously encouraged to ‘stiffen’ when he

¹⁰⁵ In *Mikrokosmographia*, sigs. X4r-v, Crooke describes how age and a woman’s menstrual cycle affect the experience of intercourse and certain “signs” of defloration such as bleeding, but quickly turns from a medical consideration to blaming the mothers and female friends of brides for not warning the bridegrooms (who have accused their new wives of unchastity).

¹⁰⁶ For the ethics of Henry’s speech, see Paola Pugliatti, ‘The Just War of *Henry V*’, in *Shakespeare and the Just War Tradition* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 197-228.

declares ‘as I am a soldier, | A name that in my thoughts becomes me best’ (3.4.5-6).

In language anticipating the fate of the burnt and abandoned statue of the Magdeburg virgin, Henry threatens:

If I begin the batt’ry once again,
I will not leave the half-achieved Harfleur,
Till in her ashes she lie buried.

3.4.7-9¹⁰⁷

To Henry the town is female – he specifically talks of reducing ‘her’ to ruins – and he seeks to destroy her completely. This destruction is understood not just as death, but deflorative rape. Henry makes it clear that his objective is to possess the feminized, maiden town. He then methodically sets out what this will entail.

At this point in the speech the metaphor’s relational dynamic switches, moving from city-as-virgin to virgin(s)-as-city. Significantly, this inversion is expressed through a gate metaphor (itself a symbol of transition) as rather than describing how the city gates will open, Henry refers to the shutting up of ‘The gates of mercy’ (3.4.10). That the gate image appears in an unexpected form (metaphorical rather than literal, shut instead of open) is appropriate for this metaphor of ‘perspectival’ virginity, especially as these shut metaphorical gates will enable the battering-down of the city’s physical gates. Henry then explains in graphic terms how, once inside the city – once Harfleur is ‘achieved’ – the same process will be enacted on the bodies of the city’s virgins. Although numerous acts of violence are threatened in this speech – elderly men’s ‘most reverend heads dashed to the walls’ and ‘naked infants spitted upon pikes’ (3.4.37-38) – the rape of virgins is predominant and reiterated three times: Henry

¹⁰⁷ The historian Kevin Cramer suggests a link between later accounts of the Siege of Magdeburg, which personify the city as a virgin undergoing violent assault, and early modern drama. He notes how later eighteenth-century accounts from Walter Harte and Georg Galletti – which record the decapitation of thirty-five women in the Katherinenkirche, the murder of pregnant women, and the rape and impaling of women on pikes – recall the speech outside Harfleur in *Henry V*. He argues that ‘there can be little doubt that Harte would be familiar with Shakespeare’s famous paean to the cruelty of war in act 3’, pp. 149-50.

describes his soldiers ‘mowing like grass | Your fresh fair virgins’ (3.4.13-14), mockingly threatens the ‘hot and forcing violation’ of ‘your pure maidens’ (3.4.20-21), and relishes how his men will ‘Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters’ (3.4.35). The loss of the town’s integrity is writ small on these individual virgin bodies, so that they become emblematic of Harfleur: to reduce the city to ashes is to mow, violate and defile its virgins.

After the final threat, Henry asks ‘What say you? Will you yield and thus avoid? | Or, guilty in defense, be thus destroyed?’ (3.4.42-43). The repeated pronoun ‘you’ could be directed to the singular Governor, the city herself, or the plural virgins, and therefore these questions blur the distinction between the virgin city and the city’s virgins. However, by referencing back to the image at the beginning of the speech, of Harfleur lying destroyed in her own ashes, Henry ends the speech with another relational switch back to the city-as-virgin. Henry’s demand to ‘Open your gates’ (3.4.51) furthermore returns to his earlier imagery describing the battery of the city’s boundaries and the shutting up of the gates of mercy. Although these shifts are subtle, the effect is to dislocate a fixed sense of what is and is not symbolic: there is no clear distinction between the city and the virgins.

The targeted victims – ‘fresh fair virgins’, ‘pure maidens’ and ‘daughters’ – are defined by their sexual status. Henry’s specific threat to rape virgins is ideological, particularly in a play which concludes with the arrangement of a dynastic marriage. The threat of sexual violence in Henry’s speech has not gone unnoticed by critics, yet the metaphorical nature of these threats remains under-examined. Whilst the sexual violence of these images is overt, it is expressed in figurative language. This echoes historians’ observations that accounts of rape often relied on metaphorical language and

avoided explicit mention of the moment of penetration.¹⁰⁸ Henry evokes common early modern virginity metaphors of flowers/defloration, maidenheads/decapitation, and locks/unlocking to articulate the warning that, if his army enters the town by force, its virgins will be subjected to rape. This metaphorical language helps to establish the dynamic, reciprocal nature of the virgin/city metaphor, as there are symbolic parallels between what will happen to Harfleur's virgins and the city of Harfleur.

The first threat of the soldiers 'mowing like grass | Your fresh fair virgins' (3.4.13-14) builds on the idea of loss of virginity as a deflowering already established in Canterbury's bee simile and the flower/fleur resonance. This imagery was prevalent in Elizabethan texts: for instance, Robert Greene describes the "greensick" Mamillia's virginity in these terms when he writes that her father 'knows [...] that the grasse being ready for the sieth, would wither if it were not cut', and elsewhere in a pamphlet on 'cony catching' describes a 'spoyled' woman and the man who 'cropt the flower of [her] virginity'.¹⁰⁹ That the deflowered woman from Greene's pamphlet is 'spolyed' recalls the term's ambiguity, as it could describe rape, ravishment and siege.¹¹⁰ Henry perpetuates this imagery when he describes 'th'enragèd soldiers in their spoil' and threatens 'heady murder, spoil, and villainy' (3.4.25, 32). The metaphor of defloration was so ubiquitous in this period that anatomists naturalized it in their medical texts. In *Mikrokosmographia* Crooke refers to the 'flower of virginity' (X4r), and at other points describes various parts of the female genitalia as 'like the berries of the Mirtle', as making 'the forme of the cup of a little rose' and 'likened to the great Cloue Gilly-flower' (X4r). This floral imagery continues in one of his many descriptions of

¹⁰⁸ Walker, 'Rereading Rape', p. 5-8; Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 90-101.

¹⁰⁹ Greene, *Mamillia*, sig. C3r; Robert Greene, *A disputation, Betweene a Hee Conny-catcher, and a Shee Conny-catcher, whether a Theefe or a Whoore, is most hurtfull in Cousonage, to the Common-wealth* (London, 1592), sig. D4v.

¹¹⁰ *OED*, 'spoil, v.1', I.1.a; 3.a; III.11.c.

‘devirgination’: ‘when the yarde entreth into the necke of the wombe, then the fleshy membranes which are among the caruncles, are torn vp even to their rootes’ (X4r). In Crooke defloration reads more like a deracination. Henry’s speech therefore utilizes the violence inherent in this floral imagery, distorting it to the most extreme and indiscriminate level: reaping signifies mass raping.¹¹¹

Henry’s threat to ‘mow’ the virgins of Harfleur also implies beheading, an image which evokes another common image of a virgin’s loss of maidenhead, combining rape with decapitation. The intersection of the flower of virginity and maidenhead metaphors can be traced back to the twelfth-century *Hali Meithhad* (‘Holy Maidenhead’), a sermon in praise of virginity directed at anchoresses. It states that ‘meithhad is the blostme thet, beo ha fulliche eanes forcorven, ne spruteth ha eft neaver’ [‘Maidenhead is the blossom which, if once fully cut off, will never sprout again’].¹¹² The slippage from maidenhead to blossom is repeated in Henry’s speech, whereby the ‘fresh, fair virgins’ (3.4.14) will be scythed by the ‘bloody hand’ (3.4.12) of the ranging soldier, literally and metaphorically beheaded. This overlapping imagery therefore presents the rape of virgins as murder, a repetition of the earlier image of the ‘half-achieved’ Harfleur reduced to ashes.

Slippages between different metaphors for virginity were ubiquitous in medieval and early modern texts, as already discussed in *Pericles* and *All’s Well*. In the

¹¹¹ The *OED* includes a definition of ‘reap’ as ‘to take away by force’ (echoing medieval law which defined rape as ‘abduction’), see *OED*, ‘reap, v.1’, 4.c. The earliest citation offered is from a travel account by Thomas Herbert from 1634 in which he writes about ‘Virgin honour’ being reaped. Therefore the *OED* definition is too euphemistic, and this definition should indicate a specifically sexually violent meaning and that it could indicate rape. The earliest usage of ‘reap’ with this meaning I have found appears in John Ford, *‘Tis Pity Shee’s a Whore* (London, 1633), first performed c.1629–30. Giovanni, speaking about his sister Annabella, says ‘Shee is still one to mee, and euery kisse | As sweet and as delicious as the first | I reap’t; when yet the priuilege of youth | Intitled her a *Virgine*’, sig. I2r.

¹¹² ‘Hali Meithhad’, in *The Katherine Group MS Bodley 34*, ed. by Emily Rebekah Huber and Elizabeth Robertson, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2016), 8.6, fol. 56r. The translation is my own.

same passage from *Hali Meithhad* the maidenhead which becomes a blossom is also a ‘tresor’, ‘steorre’, and ‘yeove’ [‘treasure’, ‘star’, and ‘gift’], and this unstable, Protean virginity is also found in early modern anatomies.¹¹³ In *Mikrokosmographia* we see a slippage similar to that of the earlier anchorite text, when Crooke describes the hymen as ‘the entrance, the piller, or locke, or flower of virginity’ (X4r). There is also a slippage within Henry’s speech, from the flower of virginity and maidenhead to the ‘lock of virginity’. The final threat that the soldiers will ‘defile’ – or, following the Folio, ‘desire’ (H6r) – the ‘locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters’ (3.4.35) has been understood as referring to hair, with one editor glossing this line as ‘by dragging them by the hair’.¹¹⁴ As long flowing hair was a sign of virginity this reading is plausible.¹¹⁵ However, it becomes a more disturbing image for deflorative rape when read as a reference to the ‘lock of virginity’, with ‘defiling’ a reference to tools.¹¹⁶ Indeed, this metaphor was commonly used in testimonies of rape.¹¹⁷ The image of the metaphorically (de)filed locks of Harfleur’s virgins resonates with Henry’s final demand that Harfleur ‘Open your gates’ (3.4.51). Again, the threats against the city’s virgins are replicated on the city herself. The opening threat to deflower (or “defleur”) Harfleur, and the demand for her to open her gates at the end of the speech prefigure and echo the threats against the virgins within the city, strengthening the sense that the virgin/city image is destabilized and working reciprocally.

The language and grammar of Henry’s speech is a further instance of ambivalent defloration – and rape – which manipulates how the audience experiences

¹¹³ *Hali Meithhad* 8.6-8, fol. 56r. This passage also describes virginity as ‘bute bruche ant cleane’ [‘without breach and clean’] (8.12, fol. 56v). It is possible to track the development of this image, from this simpler sense of a break or rupture to the military sense found in *Romeus and Juliet* and *Henry V*.

¹¹⁴ Craik, ed., *Henry V*, 3.3.35n.

¹¹⁵ Myerowitz Levine, pp. 95-96.

¹¹⁶ Editors note the ‘filing’ pun, see Taylor, ed., *Henry V*, 3.3.115n.; Gurr, *Henry V*, 3.4.35n.

¹¹⁷ See Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 93, for lock/key imagery in accounts of rape.

the siege of Harfleur. Henry's language is so vivid, and the violence so detailed, that in the audience's imagination (nurtured and encouraged by the Chorus since the prologue and subsequent speeches at 2.0 and 3.0) the rape of the virgins feels more than just hypothetical. Henry uses *enargeia* – the rhetorical technique of creating intensely visual images – to terrorize the town into submission. Through this *enargeia* and the three rape threats there is a visceral sense, for the audience, that these rapes have been enacted. This is partly effected by the recurring imagery of the soldier's 'bloody hand', 'the hand | Of hot and forcing violation' and the 'foul hand' (3.4.12; 20-21; 34) and consistent emphasis on the purity of the 'virgins', 'maidens' and 'daughters' (3.4.14; 20; 35). The triptych of rape threats is in fact another reiteration of the three breaches in Puttenham and the three gates in Crooke, creating the sense that one deflowering is not enough.

However, Henry's use of the future conditional tense is crucial here: 'The gates of mercy *shall* be all shut up' (3.4.10) and hence 'the fleshed soldier [...] *shall* range' (3.4.11-12) within the gates of Harfleur [my italics]. Henry is saying this is what *will* happen, *if* certain demands are not met. By closing metaphorical gates on compassion, conversely the soldiers will breach the city's physical gates. The conditional sense of entry is enhanced through the inverted metaphor and the multiplicity of viewpoints, of figurative and physical gates. It is at once a guarantee, and yet contingent. The breach of Harfleur and its virgins is therefore enacted rhetorically, but not physically. The soldiers enter the city, but only in the imagination. The rhetorical manipulation of the audience's imagination (in which the threatened, hypothetical rapes have taken place) is part of Henry's unstable rape discourse. Like the siege scenes, Henry's speech is paradoxical in its representation of defloration, as the virgin body 'once again' (3.4.7) is and is not entered.

Thus far the discussion has focused on the content of Henry's speech and the vividly violent threats he makes to force Harfleur to concede. But significantly his project is successful: the scene ends with Harfleur's Governor admitting defeat and Henry's command to his army to 'enter Harfleur' (3.4.52). Henry's entry to the town therefore continues the equivocal rape discourse of his speech, as he offers to exchange one kind of entry with another in his question: 'Will you yield and this avoid? | Or, guilty in defense, be thus destroyed?' (3.3.42-43). This formulation proposes a trade-off between the virginity of Harfleur's daughters and the integrity of the city. For Henry, entry to the city will prevent the 'entry' of the city's virgins, he will exchange one kind of defloration for another. In the wake of Henry's successful siege the French King describes how 'Harry England [...] sweeps through our land | With pennons painted in the blood of Harfleur' (3.6.48-49). This image works synecdochically (Harfleur representing its fallen army) but also as an extension of Harfleur's virginal personification, as the blood represents the consequences of violent combat and/or a metaphorical defloration of the city, the 'pennons painted in the blood of Harfleur' evoking bloody bridal sheets publicized to prove successful consummation. Yet the 'perspectival virginity' established throughout the siege scenes undermines Henry's dichotomy: as entry to the personified virgin city must be understood in sexual terms, the metaphoric virgin city cannot easily be separated from the virgin bodies it contains (and protects). In entering Harfleur, the English army commit a symbolic defloration on the city (and by extension its virgins) which nevertheless prevents the physical rape and defloration of these virgins. The fundamental interdependence of the virgin/city metaphor to *Henry V*'s representation of warfare means that what happens on the symbolic level is in some sense enacted narratively, and simultaneously deferred.

*

There is a second, more disturbing instance of ‘perspectival virginity’ at the end of Henry’s speech: does the entry to Harfleur constitute not just a symbolic defloration but a rape? The ambiguity starts with Henry’s question ‘Will you yield and this avoid? | Or, guilty in defense, be thus destroyed?’ (3.4.42-43) and continues with the Governor of Harfleur’s admission that Harfleur is ‘yet not ready | To raise so great a siege’ (3.4.46-47) and therefore:

We yield our town and lives to thy soft mercy.
Enter our gates, dispose of us and ours,
For we no longer are defensible.

3.4.48-50

Henry then instructs the Governor to ‘Open your Gates’ and tells Exeter and his army ‘Go you and enter Harfleur’ before concluding ‘Tonight in Harfleur will we be your guest’ (3.3.51-52; 57). The chiasmic slippage from Henry’s ‘Will you yield’ (3.4.42) to the Governor’s ‘We yield’ (3.4.48), to the Governor’s ‘Enter our gates’ (3.4.49), then to Henry’s ‘enter Harfleur’ (3.4.52) reflects how in the play to yield is to be entered. The ambiguity lies in the word ‘yield’. In Henry’s speech the meaning is ‘To surrender, give way, submit’, especially in the material sense ‘of surrendering a military position or forces to an enemy’.¹¹⁸ Therefore as ‘to yield’ paradoxically implies both agreement and duress, submission and coercion. It is disconcertingly vague. The *OED* does not specifically refer to a sexual ‘yielding’ nor does it include the figurative application of a military yielding to a sexual context, but nevertheless a deflorative sense was certainly in circulation in the early modern period and its use was morally ambivalent.

A case study for the idea of deflorative yielding and useful correlative for Henry’s speech outside Harfleur, is *Measure for Measure* (c. 1604). In Shakespeare’s play and the source text, George Whetstones’ *Promos and Cassandra* (1578), the idea

¹¹⁸ *OED*, ‘yield, v.’, III.14.a.(a).

of a sexual yielding is equivocal. In Whetstone's play, the unmarried and pregnant Polina uses the term to describe consensual sex with Andrugio when she asks the rhetorical question 'Who (wonne by loue) has yeeld the spoyle of thy virginity?': Polina freely gave (yielded) her virginity to her lover.¹¹⁹ In Shakespeare Claudio stresses his and Juliet's 'most mutual entertainment' (1.2.142), claiming that 'upon a true contract | I got possession of Julietta's bed' (1.2.133-34). Juliet later states that she loves Claudio and that their 'most offenseful act' (in the words of the Duke) was committed 'mutually' (2.3.26-27). Yet in contrast to this loving, enthusiastic sexual yielding is the idea of forced or coerced yielding. In Whetstone Promos tells Cassandra to 'Yeelede to my will' (D1r) when he demands her virginity in exchange for her brother's life, and later Cassandra describes how Promos, 'To saue my brothers lyfe, would make me yeeled to much, | He crau'd this raunsome, to haue my virginitie' (K1v). The ambiguity of Whetstone's 'yield' which suggests both consent and coercion continues in Shakespeare's *Measure*, demonstrating how Shakespeare likewise collapses the two concepts together. Of the seven uses of 'yield' in *Measure* four directly and one indirectly refer to Isabella's virginity. Both Isabella and Angelo frame the bargain in terms of yielding: knowing that Angelo wants her virginity, Isabella states defiantly that she would undergo torture 'ere I'd yield | My body up to shame' (2.4.100-01), but Angelo responds with the order 'Redeem thy brother | By yielding up thy body to my will' (2.4.160-61). Once alone Isabella reiterates the idea of sexual yielding through decapitation imagery, positioning her brother's execution as a form of defloration (in an echo of the mowing imagery in Henry's speech). She says, 'I'll to my brother':

Though he hath fallen by prompture of the blood,
Yet hath he in him such a mind of honor,
That had he twenty heads to tender down

¹¹⁹ George Whetstone, *The right excellent and famous Historye, of Promos and Cassandra* (London, 1578), sig. F2r.

On twenty bloody blocks, he'd yield them up
 Before his sister should her body stoop
 To such abhorred pollution.
 Then, Isabel, live chaste, and brother, die;
 More than our brother is our chastity.

2.4.174-82

Through this sinister punning on heads and maidenheads, decapitation and defloration (anticipating the play's later bed/head tricks) Isabella asserts that her brother must 'yield' his head to preserve her maidenhead, the invocation of the 'bloody blocks' recalling the image of bloody sheets.¹²⁰ Isabella plainly states the bargain to Claudio in terms of yielding: 'Dost thou think, Claudio, | If I would yield him my virginity | Thou mightst be freed?' (3.1.96-98). In the final scene Isabella announces Angelo's crime in the same language, declaring that he demanded the 'gift of my chaste body | To his concupiscible intemperate lust' and due to 'sisterly remorse [...] I did yield to him' (5.1.103-07). Therefore, in *Promos and Cassandra* and *Measure*, to yield sexually suggests both consent and non-consent.

Critics of *Measure* often refer to Angelo as a would-be rapist, and the power imbalance between the Duke's deputy and a young novice nun certainly support this framing.¹²¹ If Isabella were to 'yield' it would be under extreme pressure and against

¹²⁰ For more on the play's head trick, see Carol Chillington Rutter, 'Talking Heads', in *Shakespeare and the Making of Theatre*, ed. by Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Bridget Escolme (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 102-27 (pp. 122-25).

¹²¹ Isabella avoids having to 'yield' to Angelo by arranging the bedtrick. There is a related debate among scholars as to whether the bedtrick constitutes a rape on the male trickee. Desens argues that 'Because a bed-trick always involves sexual contact to which at least one partner does not have informed consent, it involves a form of rape for the deceived partner, who may have agreed to a sexual encounter but who did not agree to have it with the person with whom he or she sleeps', p. 137. For thoughtful yet divergent readings of the bedtrick and rape in *Measure*, see Karen Bamford, *Sexual Violence on the Jacobean Stage* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 125-32, and Pascale Aebischer, 'Silence, Rape and Politics in "Measure for Measure": Close Readings in Theatre History', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 26.4 (2008), 1-23. Bamford, who does not identify Angelo as a victim of rape, argues that Angelo 'enacts a rape' but 'does not effect one' because 'The bedtrick simultaneously satisfies the requirements for lawful intercourse and transforms the victim [Mariana] into the loving wife necessary for the villain's redemption' p. 125. Aebischer explores how the bed-trick works as a 'reversal of the generally accepted gender roles of male rapist-female rape victim' (p. 10) and argues that the play presents women as more sexually culpable. Neither Bamford or Aebischer engage with the ambiguity of 'yielding'.

her will, but nevertheless active agreement would be compromising. I argue that Angelo's demand that Isabella 'yield' to him is especially threatening because it requires Isabella's consent: in yielding, there is a technical resemblance between Isabella (and Cassandra) and Juliet (and Polina), and this partly explains Isabella's terror at sacrificing her virginity.

Furthermore, the ambiguity of consent in early modern legal theory about rape has implications for the idea of coercion or duress. Dalton's guide for Justices of the Peace claims that 'If a man rauish a woman, who conseneth for feare of death or dures, yet this is a rauishment against her will, for that consent ought to be voluntarie and free'.¹²² However, as seduction and rape were indistinguishable, so too were seduction and duress. As Gowing explains, 'The erasure of female consent was supported by a culture which equated men's love and desire with coercion and violence, and which systematically undermined women's sexual agency'.¹²³ The way 'yield' functions ambivalently throughout *Promos and Cassandra* and *Measure for Measure* resonates with Walker's analysis of the language used to describe women's experience of sex in early modern legal contexts:

Women's sexual activity was described in passive terms even when the woman concerned was thought to have actively sought it. Women 'submit' to and 'suffer' men to have intercourse with them, they have children 'begotten upon' them, are 'used', 'occupied', 'known'. Consensual sex for women is figured as a response to male drives, something to which they consent. Describing sexual intercourse necessarily depicted a woman's submission, her succumbing or being persuaded to a man's will. This had a particular resonance in speech about rape. An assertion of rape – that penile penetration had occurred without the woman's consent – implied that she had been forced to submit to the rapist. But sexual submission indicated consent.¹²⁴

¹²² Dalton, sig. Y4v.

¹²³ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 99.

¹²⁴ Walker, 'Rereading Rape', p. 6.

Another play depicting bargained virginity is *The Changeling*, and whereas Isabella avoids yielding, Beatrice-Joanna cannot. De Flores describes her defloration in familiarly ambiguous terms as he carries her off stage:

Thy peace is wrought for ever in this yielding.
 'Las, how the turtle pants! Thou'lt love anon
 What thou so fear'st and faint'st to venture on.
3.4.168-70

Paradoxically, Beatrice-Joanna's 'pants' may be interpreted by the audience as fearful and by De Flores as desirous. His assertion that she will 'love anon' anticipates how her 'yielding' will be construed as consensual, and indeed, the later depiction of Beatrice-Joanna as sexually immoral by continuing her relationship with De Flores is the embodiment of this patriarchal fantasy.¹²⁵ *Promos and Cassandra*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Changeling* therefore reflect how there was no distinction between the language for consensual sex, seduction, coerced consent and rape in the early modern legal and cultural imagination, and therefore that rape was necessarily ambivalent, it could be simultaneously enacted and avoided.

Henry's demand that Harfleur 'yield' to his army to prevent the virgins' "be(maiden)heading" therefore parallels Angelo/Promos's demand that Isabella/Cassandra 'yield' her virginity to save her brother's beheading. In both plays there is a moral ambiguity about whether, in yielding, a rape is transformed to consensual sex. Henry's question – 'Will you yield and this avoid? | Or, guilty in

¹²⁵ Judith Haber demonstrates how critics writing on *The Changeling* replicate the ambiguity of 'ravishment', sometimes describing Beatrice-Joanna as raped, sometimes as seduced. In *Desire and Dramatic Form*, pp. 87-102, she explores *The Changeling*'s representation of rape, seduction and marriage in relation to the Howard/Essex divorce, Jonson's *Hymenaei*, and the epithalamic tradition. She observes that Beatrice-Joanna's dual identity as virgin/whore is possible because 'the fears of sexuality (both real and pretended) that are necessary to the construction of her as a perfect virgin, the perfectly desirable erotic object (note that De Flores declares that he would not wish to ravish her if her "virginity" were not "perfect" in her [3.4.117]), that these very fears and faintings are themselves taken as the other side of unbridled desire', p. 90. See also Solga, pp. 141-75, for how this ambiguity is staged in modern productions and audience responses, and Dolan, p. 4-29, for a compelling reading of Beatrice-Joanna's ambiguous position 'as both agent and victim, consenting and forced, exploitative and exploited, willful and acted upon' (p. 24).

defense, be thus destroyed?’ (3.4.42-43) – suggests that within his moral framework, entering the town without physical force does not constitute a rape but rather a consensual consummation. This follows contemporary and modern conceptualisations of rape and consent as contingent not on the rape victim’s experience of violation but on the rapist’s experience of whether consent was obtained. The insidious belief that a woman could say ‘no’ but mean ‘yes’ – or in the words of Shakespeare’s Duke of Buckingham in *Richard III*, ‘Play the maid’s part: say no, but take it’ (3.5.45) – put the emphasis on male interpretation rather than female consent. In *Pericles* this performativity of consent is taken to ludicrous heights when Bawd instructs the nonconsenting Marina ‘you must seem to do that fearfully which you commit willingly’ (4.2.106-07). Marina is told to perform a lack of consent to the brothel’s customers who have bought her virginity. That these men are in on the performance, that this performance is part of their arousal, demonstrates how female consent was superseded by male intent and desire. Carole Pateman’s comments are salient here although she is writing in a twentieth-century context:

At present it is widely believed that a woman’s “no” does *not* constitute a refusal, that it *is* reasonable for men to put a lesser or greater degree of pressure on unwilling women in sexual matters, and that it *is* “reasonable” for consent to be inferred from enforced submission. In short, unless accompanied by visible signs of severe physical violence, rape is not actually seen as a serious crime – or even a crime at all – despite its formal legal status.¹²⁶

In other words, a rape is a rape only if the rapist *believes* it to be a rape.

Henry’s alternatives – yield or be destroyed – echoes this dynamic. For Henry, as the town eventually yields, it cannot be rape. As Walker writes, in early modern England ‘Men redefined rape as a sexual act, thereby shifting the emphasis back onto female behaviour and repositioning culpability accordingly’.¹²⁷ This discomfiting

¹²⁶ Carole Pateman, ‘Women and Consent’, *Political Theory* 8.2 (1980), 149-68 (p. 161).

¹²⁷ Walker, ‘Rereading Rape’, pp. 5-6.

discourse of rape and consent therefore remains unresolved and is indicative of how rape functioned as inherently ambivalent. It is therefore impossible to answer whether Harfleur is raped or “just” deflowered. There is no certainty: rape and virginity can only be understood as ‘perspectival’. These ambiguities of yielding and entry, defloration and rape resurface at 5.2. However, they are also exploited at this point in the play – in the transition from Henry’s speech outside Harfleur (3.4) to Katherine’s language lesson (3.5) – through a shift in focus onto Katherine’s virginity as ‘half-achieved’.

iii. *Enter the Town/Enter Katherine*

The city/virgin reciprocal dynamic established throughout the siege of Harfleur is reinforced through the transition from Henry’s speech outside the city gates (3.4) to Katherine’s English lesson in her bedchamber (3.5). This structural juxtaposition builds on the equivocal sense of yielding and entry. We do not see Henry or his army inside Harfleur (as with the breach, this is another instance of an unstaged entrance) but instead the stage transforms from an exterior location to an interior location. The identity of the young women on stage is unclear to the audience, as her name Katherine is not given. Contextual clues suggest she is a high-ranking French woman (she has a waiting woman who calls her ‘madame’, she is idly occupied, she wants to learn English) and as Katherine has been introduced as an alternate to Harfleur in the Chorus’s Act Three speech, the audience may accurately recognize her as the French princess. But the absence of a definitive identification means that she functions emblematically, a French everywoman.

The Folio features an anomalous stage direction (Fig. 12) at this transition from the Harfleur speech to the language lesson.¹²⁸ Whilst the end of nearly every scene in the play is marked by '*Exeunt*' or '*Exit*', at the end of Henry's speech outside the gates of Harfleur he and his army do not exit but rather '*enter the Towne*' (H6r).¹²⁹ The following stage direction appears: '*Enter Katherine and an old Gentlewoman*' (H6r). Instead of the conventional Exit/Enter formula, we have Enter/Enter.

¹²⁸ Most critics denote the scenes as 3.3 and 3.4 but I follow the Norton scene divisions. Critics writing about Katherine and the play's representation of women usually comment on this transition but do not comment on this stage direction anomaly, see Wilcox, p. 66; Newman, p. 101; Dollimore and Sinfield, p. 137; McEachern, p. 55; Eggert, pp. 531-2; Coral, pp. 406-7. Howard and Rackin offer an excellent feminist reading of the juxtaposition through two twentieth-century film versions, see pp. 3-10.

¹²⁹ There is an exception at the end of 3.1 which is signified by the sound of cannon fire when '*Chambers goe off*', but as the action is continuous 3.1 and 3.2 are arguably the same scene. At the ends of 2.1 and 2.2 (as the action moves between Eastcheap and Southampton) no exits are marked, although there is a '*Flourish*' at the end of 2.2.

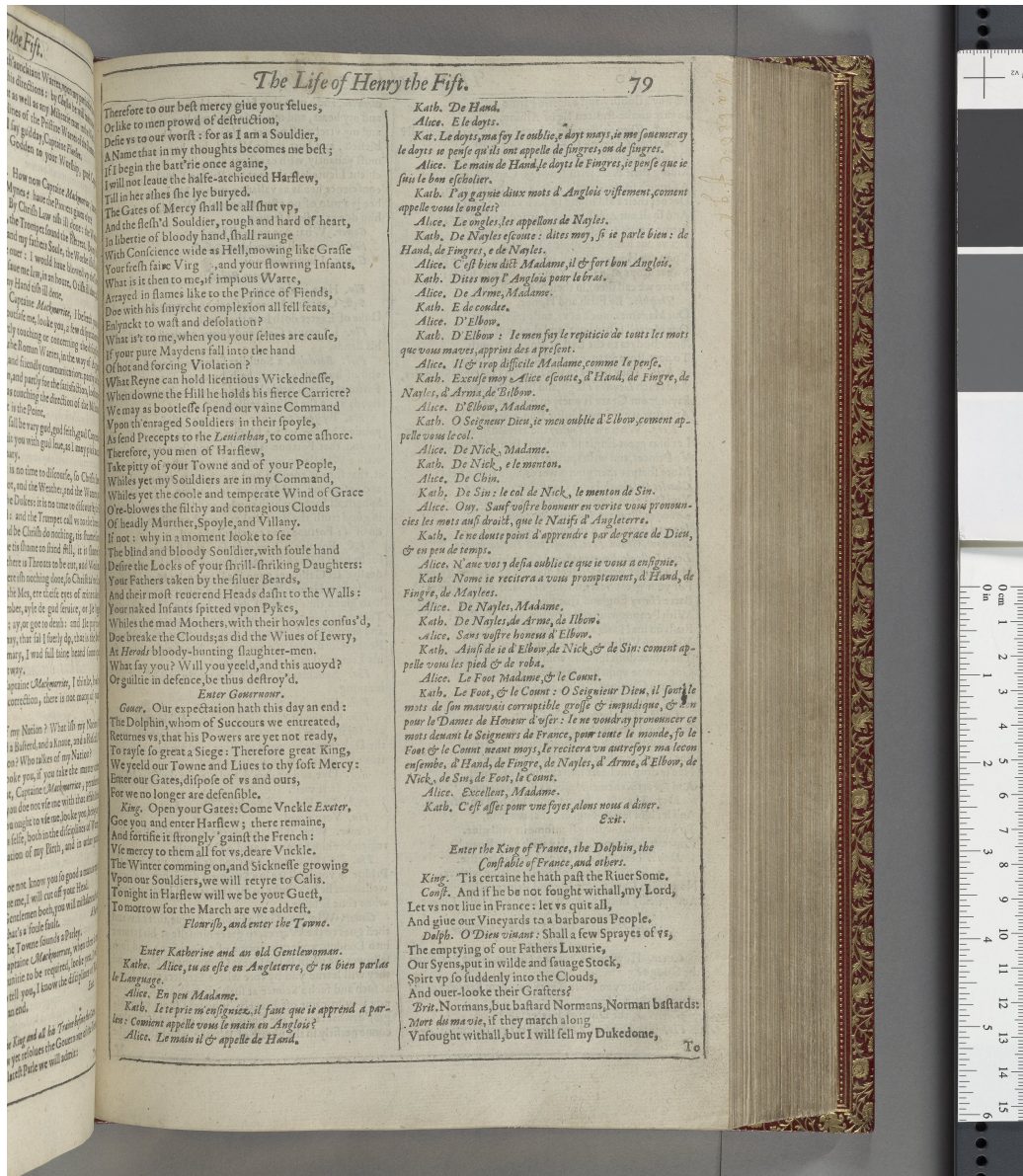


Fig. 12: Image of leaf H6r, from *William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London, 1623), STC 22273 Fo.1 no.33, © Folger Shakespeare Library.

As Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson have shown, ‘enter’ was ‘by far the most widely used’ stage direction in early modern drama.¹³⁰ According to David Bradley:

It is not an exaggeration to say that the action of an Elizabethan play *consists* of entrances. They are the means by which the story is told; the controllers of the illusion of time and space; the sign-posts for the understanding of the plot.¹³¹

The anomalous Enter/Enter therefore acts as a disruption to this illusion, an anamorphic construction which creates the impression that by ‘entering’ Harfleur the English army are ‘entering’ Katherine. The ubiquitous and ‘codified’ (to quote Linda McJannet) nature of ‘enter’ as a stage direction to early modern dramatists suggests an interaction between the play’s dramaturgical vocabulary and its figurative language.¹³² This double ‘enter’ anticipates the paradoxical metaphor at the play’s conclusion, of cities ‘gyrdled with maiden walls, that war hath *entered*’ [my italics]. Dessen and Thomson assume that most stage directions are ‘authorial in origin’, as does Tim Fitzpatrick who argues that playwrights may have employed an ‘architectural’ conceptual frame when using stage directions, particularly in terms of entering and exiting the stage.¹³³ Considering Fitzpatrick’s argument that an architectural awareness of the stage impacted how playwrights conceptualized the theatrical space, I suggest that the repeated use of ‘enter’ as a metaphor for rape or defloration/consummation in *Henry V* – as seen throughout the Harfleur speech and in the French King’s perspective image – cannot be uncoupled from the way actors moved about the stage and from scene to scene. Due to the absence of a clear scene break between the Harfleur speech and the language lesson, the double entry enhances the slippage from Henry entering the ‘yielded’

¹³⁰ Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 84-85.

¹³¹ David Bradley, *From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the play for the stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 23.

¹³² Linda McJannet, *The Voice of Elizabethan Stage Directions: The Evolution of a Theatrical Code* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), p. 140.

¹³³ Dessen and Thomson, p. ix; Tim Fitzpatrick, *Playwright, Space and Place in Early Modern Performance: Shakespeare and Company* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 197-99.

Harfleur to metaphorically ‘entering Katherine’ who embodies both the virgin city and the city’s virgins.

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The dialogue between Katherine and her waiting woman Alice continues the ongoing sense of ‘perspectival virginity’ as their conversation deconstructs and re-enacts Henry’s threats of deflorative rape. The scene is almost entirely in French, the only English words are the various vocabulary terms for parts of the body spoken by Alice and repeated by Katherine: ‘d’hand, de fingres, de nails, d’arm, d’elbow, de nick, de sin, de foot, de coun’ (3.5.52-53). To English-speaking audiences the dismembered body parts would stand out distinctly amongst the potentially unintelligible French. There are clear resonances between these body parts and the rapes described by Henry, most notably the first word Katherine learns: the hand. The hand accompanies and even perpetuates, synecdochically, each threat of rape against the virgins of Harfleur:

the fleshed soldier, rough and hard of heart,
In liberty of *bloody hand* shall range
With conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass
Your fresh fair virgins
[...]
What is’t to me, when you yourselves are cause,
If your pure maidens fall into *the hand*
Of hot and forcing violation?
[...]
The blind and bloody soldier *with foul hand*
Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters
3.4.11-14, 19-21, 34-35, [my italics]

The proximity of this rhetorical, English hand, encroaching upon Katherine the emblematic virgin, is therefore highly suggestive, especially as other vocabulary repeated by Katherine – ‘neck’ and ‘chin’ – recalls the decapitation implied by the ‘mowing’ threat against the ‘fresh, fair virgins’. Katherine’s mispronunciations such as ‘de bilbow’ and ‘de ilbow’ (3.5.26, 42), an echo of the English word meaning ‘sword’ and a bawdy reference to a dildo, adds to the lesson’s sexually violent connotations.

Katherine's final words, 'De foot, *et de coun*' (3.4.47) (the latter meaning 'gown') are the most explicit puns, working in both French and English as 'foutre'/'fuck' and 'coun'/'cunt'.¹³⁴ Juliet Fleming argues that 'Although even a word-conscious Elizabethan audience may not have caught every pun, it would certainly have been aware that the French lady's English lesson was actually a lesson in talking dirty'.¹³⁵ But more than 'dirty talk', for audience members unfamiliar with French the gestures of the actor playing Katherine towards the various body parts would evoke the violence of Henry's speech. The final 'foot' and 'coun' shock Katherine, who labels the words 'mauvais, corruptible, gros, et impudique [evil, corrupting, gross and immodest]' (3.5.48), but she nevertheless ends with a final recitation of the body parts. Newman reads this scene as a subversion of the poetic *blazon*, in that 'Katherine is dispersed or fragmented [...] through an o/aural wordplay that dismembers her', and Farah Karim-Cooper understands it as a dissection.¹³⁶ That this deconstruction of Henry's speech is reimagined and mapped onto Katherine's body challenges Henry's claim that Harfleur can 'avoid' (3.4.42) rape, particularly following the ambiguous yielding and suggestive 'Enter/Enter' construction.

The language lesson therefore functions not just as a re-enactment of the siege of Harfleur but as an allegorical defloration of Katherine herself. Critics characterize

¹³⁴ *OED*, 'dildo, *n.*1', B.n.1.I.1.a. This word was in circulation during the 1590s, most notoriously used by Thomas Nashe in *The choise of valentines* (written c.1592), so much so that this poem was later labelled 'Nashe's Dildo', see Andrew Hadfield, *Spenser: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 246. Williams argues it could refer to the penis or its substitute, see *Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery*, pp. 387-90. Juliet Fleming also notes this dildo pun and argues that 'neck' and 'nick' were synonyms for 'vulva', 'sin' a euphemism for 'fornication', 'pied' for 'one who commits buggery' and 'robe' as 'female prostitute', and that 'excellent' and 'assez' both had 'lewd connotations', 'The French Garden: An Introduction to Women's French', *ELH*, 56.1 (1989), 19-51 (p. 45). Carroll characterizes these innuendos as comic, but this seems to read the reference out of context, 'The Virgin Not', p. 284. Other scholars have offered their own interpretations of these puns and their resonances throughout the play, see for instance Newman, p. 102; Eggert, p. 532.

¹³⁵ Fleming, p. 45.

¹³⁶ Newman, p. 102; Farah Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage: Gesture, Touch and the Spectacle of Dismemberment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 15.

3.5 as ‘proleptic’, anticipating the play’s denouement when Katherine must put her English into practice: Eggert argues that Katherine’s ‘bobblings of the language’ are ‘directed toward her upcoming part in Henry’s project of conquest’ and Coral writes that ‘Kate’s attempts to learn English during the course of the war are obviously meant to suggest an eventual defeat of the French’.¹³⁷ However, the language lesson at the centre of the play does more than anticipate Henry’s courtship at the end. In a linguistic and metaphorical sense Katherine is deflowered at 3.5, so that by 5.2 her virginity is already destabilized and she is ‘half-achieved’ (3.4.8). Juliet Fleming’s reading of Peter Erondell’s *The French Garden* (1605) offers an interesting context for female language learning in this period. Fleming notes how Erondell’s book ‘offers its male readers (and writer) an erotic scrutiny of female domestic privacy’ and argues that Erondell’s idealisation of English gentlewomen’s ‘pregnant spirits’ and his desire to ‘breake the yce first’ in his preface suggests a wish to seduce his female reader.¹³⁸ Fleming writes:

If the woman who studies French is in danger of getting pregnant, then the French lesson can be understood as an act of sexual intercourse with Erondell himself, and his insistence of being first would represent a wish to deflower his spacious subject (to break the ice, as it were).¹³⁹

In addition to the structural and linguistic parallels between 3.4 and 3.5, the context of the language lesson itself connotes defloration and unchastity.

The image of the hand also has implications for Katherine. As she learns English she repeats the words again and again, so that the image of a body begins to slowly materialize. The ‘hand’ is the scene’s defining image, it is the term Katherine learns first and repeats most frequently. Through repetition, in French and then more emphatically in English – ‘*la main*’, ‘*La main*’, ‘de hand’, ‘De hand’, ‘*La main*, de hand’, ‘de hand’, ‘d’hand’, ‘d’hand’, ‘d’hand’ (3.5.5-7, 11, 15-16, 25, 39, 52) – the

¹³⁷ Eggert, p. 532; Coral, p. 408.

¹³⁸ Fleming, p. 19.

¹³⁹ Fleming, p. 23.

image of the hand becomes tangible. The additional words ‘fingers’ and ‘nails’ add detail and dexterity whilst the ‘arm’ and ‘elbow’ increase strength and power.¹⁴⁰ This materialising rhetorical hand becomes that of the ‘blind and bloody’ (3.4.34) rapist, but it also embodies the ‘armèd hand’ which ‘doth fight abroad’ (1.2.178) described at the start of the play. The theory of the king’s two bodies understands the monarch to have a ‘body natural’ (his corporeal body) and a ‘body politic’ (a metaphor for the state) which ‘form one unit indivisible, each being fully contained within the other’.¹⁴¹ Exeter’s image imagines England’s army as the hand of the body politic and the government as ‘Th’adviseèd head’ which ‘defends itself at home’ (1.2.179).¹⁴² This ‘armèd hand’ of Henry’s body politic is a synecdoche for the army, as is the ‘bloody hand’ (3.4.12) invoked outside Harfleur. Via the theory of the king’s two bodies which conflates the physical with the metaphorical these ‘armèd’ and ‘bloody’ hands are also ‘indivisible’ from Henry’s physical hand. The spectre of the rhetorical English hand which emerges through Katherine’s speech therefore signifies in a third way as Henry’s metaphorical hand in marriage, a metaphor Henry will later use when he tells Katherine ‘take me by the hand and say, “Harry of England, I am thine”’ (5.2.219-20).¹⁴³ Henry’s rejection of Katherine as his wife before the siege of Harfleur – at the start of Act Three the Chorus informs the audience that the French King ‘doth offer [Henry] | Katherine his daughter’ but that ‘the offer likes not’ (3.0.29-32) – is subverted through the image of the rapist soldier’s ‘bloody hand’. Its re-emergence during the language lesson where it also embodies Henry’s hand in marriage reinforces the way that Katherine is both

¹⁴⁰ As Eggert notes, these words ‘serve to give an image of that hand its full shape and extension’, p. 532.

¹⁴¹ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 9.

¹⁴² Karim-Cooper, *The Hand*, p. 205.

¹⁴³ The meaning of ‘hand’ as ‘a sign or symbol of a promise of marriage; (hence) pledge of marriage’ dates from the late medieval period. See *OED*, ‘hand, *n.*’, I.5.b.

metaphorically conquered/raped and her marriage is metaphorically consummated through a symbolic defloration. More than just looking backwards and forwards, the rhetorical hand which grips Katherine reinforces the sense that she is already caught by both war and marriage, and that for Henry the two are identical. The language lesson therefore destabilizes Katherine's virginity and conflates her individual identity as 'fair Katherine' with her emblematic identity as 'fair France' (5.2.98, 104, 324). It positions her as both virgin and deflowered.

The resonances between the siege of Harfleur and the wooing of Katherine are heard in Henry's first words to the princess when he asks:

Will you vouchsafe to teach a soldier terms
Such as will *enter* at a lady's ear
And plead his love-suit to her gentle heart?
5.2.99-101 [my italics]

This initial request for entry is akin to Henry's question outside the gates of Harfleur, and again he obscures the coercion. Henry has just demanded that Katherine remain with him whilst the English and French nobles retire to negotiate, as 'She is our capital demand, comprised | Within the fore-rank of our articles' (5.2.96-97). Henry frames the interaction with Katherine as another language lesson, but although he positions himself as student and Katherine as teacher, he controls the conversation. This dominance reinforces the sense of occupation and defloration evoked during 3.5, particularly as Henry wishes to hear Katherine confess her love to him 'brokenly with [her] English tongue' (5.2.105-06). Henry's opening identification as a soldier continues when he wishes he could 'win a lady [...] by vaulting into my saddle with my armor on my back' (5.2.133-34). He tells Katherine 'I speak to thee plain soldier' (5.2.144) and 'take me, take a soldier; take a soldier, take a king' (5.2.159). But although he adopts this persona to appear humbler it reveals his material power, such as when he exposes that whilst he has 'no strength in measure' at dancing he has 'yet a reasonable measure in strength'

(5.2.131-32). His opening question therefore creates the impression that Katherine's ear is another city wall through which he will 'enter'.¹⁴⁴

Henry's identification with the soldier becomes more menacing still when 'the fleshed soldier, rough and hard of heart, | In liberty of bloody hand' and 'The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand' (3.4.11-12; 34) are recalled. His claim that 'I could lay on like a butcher' (5.2.136-37) and his language of 'vaulting' likewise appears more malicious. Henry references to hands three times over the course of his "wooing" in a pattern which repeats the triple rape threats in the Harfleur speech and the way Puttenham and Croke describe traversing three breaches or gates during defloration. Henry first asks Katherine 'Give me your answer, i'faith do, and so clap hands and a bargain', then instructs her to 'take me by the hand', then finally acts himself, saying 'Upon that I kiss your hand, and I call you my queen' (5.2.125-27, 219-20, 232). This intent to kiss Katherine's hand comes when, in response to Henry's question 'wilt thou have me?' she says 'Dat is as it shall please *le roi mon père*' (5.2.-228-29). She has agreed to the marriage but only through an act of self-marginalisation. Henry undermines Katherine's physical boundaries by ignoring her requests to wait until marriage, and instead of kissing her hand kisses her lips. He symbolically colonizes France through the replacement of French 'manners' (5.2.250) with his English desires. In another breach image, Henry says 'Dear Kate, you and I cannot be confined within the weak list of a country's fashion' (5.2.248-50), so that his kiss, like the 'fatal mouths gaping on girded Harfleur' (3.0.27), enacts another symbolic defloration on Katherine. His final words before kissing her (words which silence Katherine for the rest of the play) are 'Therefore, patiently, and yielding' (5.2.253-54). Through this repeated

¹⁴⁴ Some theologians argued that Mary conceived Jesus *per aurem* when Gabriel spoke the words of God, and therefore the ear became a metonymic site of defloration. See Matthew G. Shoaf, *Monumental Sounds: Art and Listening Before Dante* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 84; Rubin, pp. 37, 342.

language of entry and yielding, and the equivocal meaning of yielding as rape and ravishment, the image of the hand, and the structural balancing of Harfleur and the princess throughout the play, Katherine embodies her father's image of the cities 'all gyrdled with Maiden Walls, that Warre hath entred'. This unstable 'perspectival virginity' of Katherine/France prompts the greensickness discourse in the final scene.

iv. *'The world's best garden': National Greensickness*

At the end of *Henry V* the Duke of Burgundy oversees peace negotiations between England and France. Despite victory in battle, only marriage to Katherine can solidify Henry's legitimate claim to the French and English crowns and bring peace. Before the offstage negotiations and onstage "wooing" Burgundy gives a speech which personifies both Peace and France as women. This extended allegorical account of the "unhusbanded", overgrown France, abandoned by Peace, provides an important context for the arrangement of this royal marriage and the play's depiction of 'perspectival virginity' and equivocal rape discourse. Karen Newman notes how Burgundy's speech frames the 'sexual exchange' later in the scene, arguing that the 'feminized' France is a 'fitting figure for the following courtship scene resulting in the marriage of "England and fair France"'.¹⁴⁵ She makes a case for the retention of the Folio capitalisation of 'Peace' in Henry's response that 'you must buy that peace | With full accord to all our just demands' (5.2.70-71).¹⁴⁶ However, rather than just a suggestively 'fitting figure', Burgundy's personifications engage with the play's representation of virginity, the ongoing anamorphosis between Katherine and the French territories, and the relationship between marriage and rape, peace and war. Most importantly Burgundy's

¹⁴⁵ Newman, p. 103.

¹⁴⁶ Newman, p. 103.

allegory diagnoses the personified France, and hence Katherine, as greensick, employing the patriarchal model on a political and national level.

Burgundy's speech begins by personifying Peace as a woman before shifting the focus to the personified France through a slippage in pronouns. He says 'Alas, she hath from France too long been chased, | And all her husbandry doth lie on heaps, | Corrupting in it own fertility' (5.2.38-40).¹⁴⁷ Whilst the 'she' refers to Peace, the 'her' denotes France. This representation of France as a feminized garden invokes the symbolism of the *hortus conclusus* and works alongside the metaphors of the flower of virginity and loss of virginity as a defloration, so that France is personified specifically as a virgin. Canterbury's bee metaphor is applicable here, as the English 'armed in their stings' have now 'ma[de] boot upon the summer's velvet buds' of France (1.2.193-94). But rather than a beautiful garden with perfect 'velvet buds', France has become overgrown and wild, and is in need of husbandry.¹⁴⁸ The husbandry pun – meaning both marriage and horticultural maintenance – is a perversion of the more common pun referring to a child as a husband's husbandry, such as in *Measure for Measure*, when Lucio describes how Juliet's 'plenteous womb | Expresseth [Claudio's] full tilth and husbandry' (1.4.43-44).¹⁴⁹ The dual identity of husband and gardener also further perpetuates the common misogynistic ideology (parallel to greensickness) that a husband could 'tame' a wife, as demonstrated most notoriously by Petrucio in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Petrucio tells Katharina 'For I am he am born

¹⁴⁷ Newman also notes this slippage in pronouns, p. 103.

¹⁴⁸ The word 'husband' meaning 'head of a household' has roots in Old English, and the meanings 'the male partner in a marriage' and 'a man who tills and cultivates the soil' developed around the end of the thirteenth century, see *OED*, 'husband, n.', I.1., 2.a., and II.4(a). The related term 'husbandry' meaning 'The business or occupation of a husbandman or farmer; agriculture, cultivation; (deployment of) farming methods and techniques' and 'Land under cultivation; an agricultural holding' developed c. 1398, see *OED* 'husbandry, n.', 3.a. and 4.a. Some critics have noted the potential pun on 'husbandry', see Barbara Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 202-3; Eggert, p. 539; Howard and Rackin, p. 214.

¹⁴⁹ See also Shakespeare's Sonnet 3, 'For where is she so fair whose unear'd womb | Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?' (1.5-6).

to tame you’ and that he will bring her ‘from a wild Kate to a Kate | Comfortable as other household Kates’ (2.1.273-75). The ‘wild Kate’ resembles Burgundy’s wild and overgrown France’ and her transition to a ‘household Kate’ demonstrates how she will become a housewife through his husbandry. The similarity of Katherine and Katharina’s names, and the presumptuous nickname ‘Kate’ given to them by their respective “wooers” enhances this resonance.¹⁵⁰ In *Henry V*, this unhusbanded yet dangerously fertile France must be understood as specifically virginal and greensick. In the previous chapter I argued that greensickness discourse, which understood “over-ripe” virginity as corrupting and defloration as curative, was a product of patriarchal anxiety about controlling virginity, and that therefore greensickness should be understood in imaginative and metaphorical, rather than medical, terms. My reading of greensickness, virginity and domestic marriage in *Romeo and Juliet* provides a model here for thinking about dynastic marriage and its significance in *Henry V*.

Burgundy invokes several greensickness tropes to present the feminized France as a virgin requiring a husband. Firstly, as a supposed cure for greensickness was pregnancy within marriage Burgundy positions France as corrupted for want of a child. Burgundy implies that a cause of France’s wildness, her greensickness, is the absence of a pregnancy because Peace, the ‘Dear nurse of [...] joyful births’ (5.2.35), is absent. The political significance is Henry’s desire to ‘compound a boy, half French, half English’ (5.2.194). The cure of pregnancy was justified on the basis that it would regulate disruptive female fertility (such as suppressed menses) and hence Burgundy’s

¹⁵⁰ Laurie Maguire argues that the ‘husband-wife scenes’ in Shakespeare’s *Shrew*, *I Henry IV* and *Henry V* ‘contain so many verbal and structural parallels, as well as links in attitudes, that the name Kate assumes an almost generic quality and becomes a synecdoche for ‘woman’ and that each play demonstrates ‘a deliberate attempt by the males to re-create Katherines as Kates: in other words, to tame them by (re)naming them’, ‘Household Kates’: Chez Petruchio, Percy and Plantagenet’, in *Gloriana’s Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, ed. by Marion Wynne-Davies and S. P. Cerasano (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), pp. 129-166 (pp. 130-31).

feminized France is not barren but has a dangerous and unrestrained fecundity – she is ‘Corrupting in it own fertility’ (5.2.40) – in need of husbandry. When Burgundy talks of how France ‘Conceives by idleness’ (5.2.51) he reinforces the fear of unregulated fertility, yet he also taps into a second trope: that greensickness was caused by laziness or inertia. As the disease was associated with affluent women (because their virginity was more valuable and vendible) their more sedentary lifestyle was presented as a factor. John Fletcher’s *The Elder Brother* (c.1625) exemplifies this ideology when Lewis urges his daughter Angellina to be active so that she does not ‘Fall into the greene sicknesse’.¹⁵¹ For Lewis, Angellina’s ‘idle foolish state’ (B1r) is dangerous, as ‘Virgins of wealthy families’ are inclined to ‘waste their youth’ and ‘From this idlenesse | Diseases both in body and minde | Grow strong’ (B1v). Angellina’s lady’s maid then tells Lewis she could ‘Prescribe a remedy’ of ‘A noble Husband’ because ‘a gamesome Bedfellow’ is ‘the sure Physician’ (B1v). This idea that idleness caused greensickness is repeated in Hannah Woolley’s *The Gentlewomans Companion* (1673) when she calls greensickness the ‘slothful disease’ and claims that ‘Laziness and love are the usual causes of these obstructions in young women’.¹⁵² Greensickness ideology presented virginity as time-limited in terms of attraction and function, for, as Lewis tells his daughter, lack of exercise and the risk of greensickness ‘takes from your beauties, | And sloth dries up your sweetnesse’ (B1r). Burgundy employs this third trope when he describes how flowers France ‘erst brought sweetly forth’ grow ‘rank’ (5.2.48-50) and claims that France is ‘Losing both beauty and utility’ (5.2.53). France is described as looking ‘Like prisoners wildly overgrown with hair’ (5.2.43) and this dishevelled appearance suggests disordered virginity because chastity was conventionally signified

¹⁵¹ John Fletcher, *The elder brother a comedie* (London, 1637), sig. B1v. Subsequent references appear parenthetically.

¹⁵² Hannah Woolley, *The Gentlewomans Companion; Or, a guide to the female sex* (London, 1673), sig. M8v.

by beautiful flowing hair. Additionally the numerous adjectives describing France suggest a pathologising attitude familiar in its misogyny: France is ‘Corrupting’, ‘disordered’, ‘uncorrected’, ‘hateful’, and ‘Defective’ (5.2.40, 44, 50, 52, 55). France is therefore personified as greensick through the deployment of numerous tropes: requiring pregnancy, expressing a dangerous fertility, growing more greensick through idleness, and rapidly losing utility and beauty. That the conquered France can be repositioned as unpossessed reflects how virginity functioned cyclically. Whilst France’s virginity has been restored in this allegory, this recycled virginity necessitates another defloration.

The extended metaphor of the overgrown garden therefore reads as a frustrated defloration narrative. The excessive fecundity of weeds suggests over-ripe virginity, so that the flower of virginity, usually idealized as a rose, is overwhelmed by grosser and more unruly plants. With a reference to France’s unhusbanded (unmarried) and uncultivated (heirless) nature, Burgundy describes how her ‘fallow leas | The darnel, hemlock, and rank fumitory | Doth root upon’ (5.2.44-46) and how ‘The even mead, that erst brought sweetly forth | The freckled cowslip, burnet, and green clover’ now ‘teems’ with ‘hateful docks, rough thistles, kecksies, burrs’ (5.2.48-52). This vegetation is also specifically uncut: France’s verdure is ‘wildly overgrown’ (5.2.43), her ‘vineyards, fallows, meads and hedges [...] grow to wildness’ (5.2.54-55), and the vine ‘unpruned dies’ (5.2.42), imagery suggestive of the warning in greensickness discourse that defloration prevented death. This wild undergrowth symbolizes France’s corrupted virginity, the need for pruning that its loss is imperative, as married women conventionally wear their hair up or covered.¹⁵³ This process of husbandry is presented in violently graphic deflorative terms: ‘the coulter rusts | That should deracinate such

¹⁵³ Myerowitz Levine, p. 102.

savagery' (5.2.46-47) and the overgrowth is 'Wanting the scythe' (5.2.50). The coulter – an iron blade fixed in front of a ploughshare – and the scythe recall the image of mowing from Henry's Harfleur speech and anticipates Crooke's disturbing deracination image of 'the fleshy membranes' in 'neck of the womb [...] torn vp even to their roots' (X4r). It also echoes an early literary account of greensickness in *Mamillia*, when Gonzago, who fears his daughter would 'fall into the greene sicknes for want of a husband', articulates his anxiety through the metaphoric axiom that 'the grasse being ready for the sieth, would wither if it were not cut'.¹⁵⁴ These instances present defloration as excessively violent (as I argued above in relation to the virgins of Harfleur) but also demonstrate how embedded ideas of greensickness are in early modern discourses of virginity, and how greensickness was created through metaphor.

This passage has been read as one of uncontrolled reproduction, with Eggert arguing how, without 'the masculine scythe or coulter' France has grown 'grotesquely fertile [...] left to her own devices, the result is a kind of female parthenogenesis, where nature's prickly products grow in the absence of men's tools'.¹⁵⁵ Yet whereas Eggert reads this as an image of grotesque fertility resisting the idea of the female as a 'passive vessel of reproduction', I challenge this idea of parthenogenesis. Rather than the overgrowth and weeds symbolising progeny it can be understood as the flower of virginity *in extremis*. This France is dangerously fertile but not reproductively so (with an emphasis on *productivity*), hence why it must, like a greensick girl, be husbanded and impregnated. By figuring France as an overgrown, unweeded garden and simultaneously a greensick virgin in need of a proper husband (gardener and spouse), Burgundy therefore endorses the necessity of the dynastic marriage. The double

¹⁵⁴ Greene, *Mamillia*, sig. C3r.

¹⁵⁵ Eggert, p. 539.

meaning of ‘cropping’ – pruning and sowing – is a fitting metaphor for the cure of ‘the virgin’s disease’: cropping (through deflorative consummation) corruptible virginity will result in the cropping (conception) of an heir. The suggestion of greensickness therefore disempowers Katherine, who is conflated and subsumed by her emblematic function as ‘fair France’, as her marriage and Henry’s conquest of her virginity will restore Peace.

The allegory of the greensick, overgrown and overripe France colours the dialogue between Henry and Katherine. Punning on the image of France’s absent husband, Henry likens himself to a farmer – an agricultural husband – when he tells Katherine ‘thou wouldst find me such a plain king that thou wouldst think I had sold my farm to buy my crown’ (5.2.121-23). In similar *carpe diem* terms to Romeo – who also alludes to greensickness when he tells Juliet ‘be not [the moon’s] maid’ 2.1.49) – Henry urges Katherine to abandon her virginity, to ‘Put off your maiden blushes’ (5.2.218). The spectre of the hand reappears when Henry tells Katherine ‘take me by the hand’ (5.2.220). In Burgundy’s greensickness allegory France will be cured through pregnancy, and Henry continues this idea when “wooing” Katherine. In his favoured persona of the soldier he makes multiple sexual puns: ‘If I could win a lady at leapfrog, or by vaulting into my saddle with my armor on my back [...] I should quickly leap into a wife’ (5.2.132-35). Obtaining a wife is synonymous with her forceful penetration. However much Henry ostensibly attempts to woo Katherine with claims of love and devotion, through his extended speeches (which Katherine, given her elementary English, cannot fully understand) the French princess emerges as little more than a conduit for Henry’s legitimate rule: for Henry, Katherine ‘must therefore needs prove a good soldier-breeder’ (5.2.192-93). Her reproductive capacity is presented in nationalistic terms in his fantasy that ‘Shall not thou and I, between Saint Denis and

Saint George, compound a boy, half French, half English' (5.2.193-94), and Katherine embodies France as she must 'promise' to 'endeavour for [her] French part of such a boy' (5.2.199-200). Echoing Henry, her father says 'Take her, fair son, and from her blood raise up | Issue to me, that the contending kingdoms | Of France and England [...] May cease their hatred' (5.2.317-21). The way both kings elide Katherine's individuality by conflating her with France strengthens her identification with the feminized and greensick French garden. This is epitomized in Henry's epithet for Katherine as the 'fair flower-de-luce' (5.2.196). That Katherine is Henry's 'capital demand' (5.2.96) means that the marriage is inevitable, but the greensickness discourse further positions the marriage – and Katherine's ensuing pregnancy – as imperative for France's future.

The greensickness allegory of France as an unhusbanded garden cured through pregnancy must be understood through the commonly-held early modern belief that conception was only possible if the woman consented and felt pleasure, in other words, that conception disproved rape.¹⁵⁶ This belief, which is rooted in medieval medical theory, first appeared in print in William Staunford's *Les Pleees Del Coron* in 1557.¹⁵⁷ Dalton later claims that 'If the woman at the time of the supposed rape, doe conceiue with child, by the rauishor, this is no rape, for a woman cannot conceiue with child, except she do consent'.¹⁵⁸ Baines argues that this 'simple equation between conception, sexual pleasure, and consent [...] neatly effaces, as far as the law is concerned, the

¹⁵⁶ See Baines, *Representing Rape*, pp. 63-79. This belief is still current today, the most recent notorious example is from Republican politician Todd Akin who said in 2012 in the context of the debate surrounding women's access to abortion: 'If it is a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try and shut that whole thing down', see Matt Williams, "'Legitimate rape' rarely leads to pregnancy, claims US Senate candidate', *The Guardian*, 19th August 2012 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/19/republican-todd-akin-rape-pregnancy>>.

¹⁵⁷ William Staunford, *Les pleees del coron: diuisees in plusiours titles & common lieux* (London, 1557). The passage appears in Latin and translates as 'If at the time of rape supposed, the woman conceive with child, there is no rape, for none can conceive without consent', sig. C8r. See Baines, *Representing Rape*, pp. 70, 72-73, 83.

¹⁵⁸ Dalton, sig. Y4v.

reality of rape'.¹⁵⁹ If conception and pregnancy disproved rape, and conception and pregnancy cured greensickness, it follows that diagnosing greensickness permitted rape. In otherwise excellent accounts of early modern rape and consent there is an oversight when thinking about greensickness. Gowing, for instance, asserts that 'If conception depended on orgasm, pregnancy disproved rape', yet earlier in the chapter uncritically writes 'Sexual activity was the recommended remedy for diseases such as green-sickness' when arguing that 'this was not a culture which denied women sexual expression'.¹⁶⁰ Gowing understands greensickness as a primarily medical condition cured by sex and within the context of medical discourse which encouraged mutually pleasurable sex. She writes that:

The medical literature presents women's desire less problematically: the fundamental conviction that conception depended on female pleasure, and the orientation of popular medical guides towards helping healthy reproduction, meant many authors spent some time outlining the best means to ensure pleasurable intercourse for both women and men.¹⁶¹

But whilst it is possible that some medical theories did prioritize female orgasm, considered in conjunction with greensickness – understood as an imaginative tool of patriarchal control rather than a medical condition – and the legal belief that conception signified consent, it must be accepted that the idea of 'female pleasure' could be exploited and weaponized to disempower and silence women. We should be wary of taking medical accounts of prioritized female pleasure as proof that women really were experiencing pleasurable sex. Instead, the idea of the 'female orgasm' could function as a rhetorical tool to reframe rape as ravishment. For greensickness, this means that the cure – pregnancy – becomes the proof that the diagnosis and prescription – sex – was not rape, and therefore greensickness collaborates in the endorsement and

¹⁵⁹ Baines, *Representing Rape*, pp. 73-74.

¹⁶⁰ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, pp. 9; 82.

¹⁶¹ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p. 85.

perpetuation of rape culture. As this curative, reproductive sex had to take place within marriage, it further demonstrates the way marriage was complicit in rape culture and explains why Puttenham's epithalamic account is structured like a military campaign and Henry's siege of Harfleur resembles a wedding night.

The dialogue between Henry and Burgundy which follows the "wooing" demonstrates how these two ideologies – that conception cured virgins of corruptible virginity, and that 'conception negates rape because conception means consent' – worked together to trap women into marriage.¹⁶² Henry and Burgundy's conversation is explicitly sexual and increasingly objectifying to Katherine. Although Katherine's enthusiasm is not required for this royal marriage, Henry expresses frustration that he 'cannot so conjure up the spirit of love in her that he will appear in his true likeness' (5.2.266-67). Burgundy takes the opportunity to expound bawdily on the imagery of conjuring, circles, and blindness:

If you would conjure in her, you must make a circle; if conjure up love in her in his true likeness, he must appear naked and blind. Can you blame her then, being a maid yet rosed over with the virgin crimson of modesty, if she deny the appearance of a naked blind boy in her naked seeing self? It were, my lord, a hard condition for a maid to consign to.

5.2.269-74

Burgundy relies on several innuendos: the conjurer's magic circle is a vagina, and the naked and blindfolded god of love (Cupid) is the penis, blind when inside the vagina. Katherine will find it 'hard' (Burgundy is not being sympathetic, this is a crude erection joke) to consign to 'a naked blind boy in her naked seeing self' (5.2.273), meaning sexual intercourse. Burgundy suggests that Katherine's virginity is the obstacle to Henry's pleasure and political victory, although, as Puttenham's breaches and Crooke's gates demonstrate, in defloration narratives obstacles are not necessarily a hindrance to

¹⁶² Baines, *Representing Rape*, p. 64.

male sexual pleasure. These remarks recall the sexual language permeating the warfare scenes in Act Three. Henry's order to his men outside Harfleur to 'Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood [...] Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit | To his full height' (3.1.7, 16-17) is evoked by Burgundy's image of an erect penis. Yet more sinisterly, the description of the 'naked blind boy' (5.2.273) echoes 'The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand' who will 'Defile the locks' (3.4.34-35) of the Harfleur virgins. Henry's response to Burgundy, that 'Yet they do wink and yield, as love is blind and enforces' (5.2.275) is a version of his question at the end of the Harfleur speech: 'Will you yield and this avoid? | Or, guilty in defense, be thus destroyed?' (3.3.42-43). Henry prepares to repeat his sack of Harfleur, which yielded to him under force, on Katherine. Just as the juxtaposition between the Harfleur speech (3.4) and the English lesson (3.5) blurs the distinction between military and sexual conquest, the resonate language at the end of 5.2 re-enacts the city siege as marital consummation.

Henry's conquest of Katherine is made possible through the discourse of greensickness. Burgundy's garden speech allegorizes feminine France as an overgrown, unhusbanded garden in order to position Katherine as in need of marriage. Here Burgundy employs a cruder metaphor explaining how Henry can enforce his will. He says, 'For maids well summered and warm kept are like flies at Bartholomew-tide, blind, though they have their eyes; and then they will endure handling, which before would not abide looking on' (5.2.281-84). The maids' resemblance to passive, manipulable flies reflects Burgundy's obscene misogyny. Burgundy's flies are 'warm kept', implying they are comfortably affluent like the typical greensick virgin, and as 'well summered' as highly-maintained livestock, ready for market.¹⁶³ Just as a greensickness diagnosis frames sexual intercourse as a cure, these fly-like maids will

¹⁶³ *OED*, 'warm, adj.', A.8; 'summer, v.', 1.b.

‘endure handling’ now they have been blinded and stupefied. This language of blinding and enduring again recalls how submission was integral to female sexual experience in narratives of both rape and consensual sex.

The fly metaphor is used by Wilcox as evidence of Katherine’s ‘sexual potential’ and ‘advance in sexual maturity’ because ‘she has become, evidently, the sort of woman about whom one says these sorts of things’.¹⁶⁴ However, this interpretation that the fly metaphor ‘is the ultimate guarantee of Katherine’s readiness for Henry’s bed’ replicates greensickness rhetoric. Wilcox claims that Katherine is both ready for and enthusiastic about marriage, yet what he identifies is not inner confidence, maturity or empowerment, but objectification.¹⁶⁵ Henry appreciates Burgundy’s metaphor, claiming that ‘This moral ties me over to time and a hot summer; and so I shall catch the fly, your cousin, in the latter end, and she must be blind too’ (5.2.285-87). Katherine, dehumanized as a drowsy blind fly, will be caught literally ‘in the latter end’ of her body by Henry. Her virginity which previously proved an obstacle has become, via Burgundy’s fly metaphor, the condition enabling Henry’s conquest. If being caught in the latter end leads Katherine to ‘compound a boy’ (5.2.194) she must have consented according to early modern rape logic. Henry’s comment has been read by some critics as referring to non-procreative sex, as they argue ‘latter end’ means ‘anus’. Jonathan Goldberg writes that ‘the sexual fantasy is sodomitical, since, either way, nonprocreative sex is involved’ and that the joke is ‘on marriage and legitimate patriarchal exchange’.¹⁶⁶ Haber calls it an ‘anally inflected joke’ which ‘is clearly not focused on the reproductive issue [Henry] had hoped to secure’.¹⁶⁷ Yet whilst the

¹⁶⁴ Wilcox, pp. 71-72.

¹⁶⁵ Wilcox, p. 72.

¹⁶⁶ Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 158.

¹⁶⁷ Haber, “‘I cannot tell what is like me’”, p. 138.

ambiguity of 'latter end' does not foreclose such a reading, the context of greensickness challenges these claims about reproductive sex and securing an heir. Whilst Henry is frustrated at Katherine's reticence he will nevertheless 'catch' her when she is 'blind', by which he means powerless against ideological pressure to marry and produce an heir. His claim that he will 'enforce' and Katherine 'yield' (5.2.275) again echoes the language of early modern rape testimonies which blur the line between rape and ravishment.

Burgundy's framing of Katherine as in need of 'catching' reassures the English King that he can achieve her virginity (and thus bolster his own claim to the French crown) in the same manner that he achieved Harfleur. It is only the knowledge that Katherine's hand brings with it French territories that he can then facetiously claim that 'you may some of you thank love for my blindness, who cannot see many a fair French city for one fair French maid that stands in my way' (5.2.289-91). It is at this point the French King makes his enigmatic comment that Henry sees the cities and maids 'perspectively'. Rather than respond directly to this, Henry asks 'Shall Kate be my wife?' and, when her father agrees, declares that 'I am content, so the maiden cities you talk of may wait on her: so the maid that stood in the way for my wish shall show me the way to my will' (5.2.295-99). Although Henry does not acknowledge the French king's reference to perspectival ways of seeing, Henry demonstrates his conflation between two kinds of conquest, martial and marital, in his speech. Yet the image of the cities, 'all gyrdled with Maiden Walls, that Warre hath entred', lingers on throughout the scene's conclusion.

What Henry ignores, but critics should not, is the ambiguous virginity in the French King's image. It epitomizes the way rape and defloration function throughout the play as both present and absent, enacted and deferred. Sometimes this is a tension

between whether virginity has been taken or defended, other times this is a tension between whether an act of defloration is rape or marital consummation. These two ambiguous positions recur throughout *Henry V*: the threats of rape against the virgins of Harfleur remain hypothetical, yet their virginities are contingent on a type of entry (to the city) nonetheless; Harfleur is breached and entered, yet its eventual yielding complicates this image. Most significantly, Katherine's virginity is symbolically perspectival: in the English lesson she is linguistically deflowered by the language of the conquering army, the unacted rapes which the Harfleur virgins avoid are semantically enacted on her body instead so that she is 'half-achieved'. Yet later in Act Five Katherine is represented as the "unhusbanded" France whose virginity is both dangerous and unconquered. There is a constant displacement of virgin identities already destabilized by the reciprocal city/virgin construction. This perspectival tension is epitomized in Burgundy's garden allegory. He personifies both Peace and France as female, yet whereas Peace is raped and deflowered, France is dangerously greensick and virginal. The relationship between these two personified women allegorizes the ambivalent 'is/is not there' dynamic of virginity and rape in *Henry V*. The feminized and brutalized Peace and the feminized and pathologized conquered France also demonstrate how the rhetoric of virginity and the rhetoric of war align in the play, and how a discourse of defloration is crucial for the logic of military and political conquest.

Hortus conclusus imagery is not only used to develop France as a virgin, but is also essential to how we interpret the feminized Peace. Burgundy personifies Peace as a 'naked, poor, and mangled' (5.2.34) woman who has been 'chased' (5.2.38) from 'this best garden of the world, | Our fertile France' (5.2.36-37). This opening image is therefore an inverted *hortus conclusus*: if traditionally the woman within the garden represents virginity, flight from the garden signifies deflorative rape. Conflict – the

disruptor of peace – is expressed through the personification of a violated and deflowered woman. Hence, Burgundy's feminized Peace symbolically embodies the violent rapes threatened against the Harfleur virgins. Although their physical defloration may remain hypothetical, the arrival of war and conquest of their town and country is nevertheless represented allegorically as a loss of virginity. This likewise speaks to Katherine's ambiguous status: if she symbolizes her nation, the arrival of war in France constitutes a violation (as represented by the symbolic defloration of the English language lesson). Yet in this emblematic role Katherine's virginity is also essential to ensuring the end of war, and hence, Burgundy shifts from a personified Peace to a personified France: the raped virgin is replaced (or displaced) with a greensick virgin. Through this substitution instead of a conquest Katherine's marriage becomes a cure for the nation. In one reading, that Katherine's union with Henry will restore Peace to the garden suggests how her marriage will undo the rape suffered by Peace, another example of the play's equivocation between rape as present/absent.

However, the way greensickness ideology overlaps with rape discourses on the issue of conception means that the dynastic marriage is also unavoidably a rape (which cannot be called a rape). This reading presents a discomfoting view of marriage.

Howard and Rackin argue that:

although Henry describes his courtship in the language of rape and warfare, it is important to emphasize that the marriage is not a rape. Burgundy's description of France in the final scene as an unhusbanded garden that can be saved only by union with England implies a necessary ideological distinction between the benevolent rule of a husband and the destructive conquest of a rapist: both Katherine and France, he implies, need to be husbanded by Henry.¹⁶⁸

They follow Barbara Hodgdon, who argues that 'By husbanding Katherine, Henry possesses the unhusbanded garden of France: it is she who transforms, and so

¹⁶⁸ Howard and Rackin, p. 214.

naturalizes, Agincourt's comedy of male bonding to turn it toward the generative social ideal associated with romantic comedy'.¹⁶⁹ Yet this distinction between husband and rapist is elided through 'greensickness ideology' which positions the husband as physician and marital sex as curative through the pathologisation – and therefore disempowerment – of the virgin herself. The concurrent ideas that conception was curative and that conception mitigated rape are both at play here and demonstrate how marriage operated as part of a rape culture. Rather than a 'necessary ideological distinction' the ideology of greensickness and Burgundy's garden and fly allegories collapse the two figures together. Hodgdon's observation that Katherine-as-garden transforms the play towards 'the generative social ideal' is correct, but requires Katherine's objectification. It is part of an ideology which viewed women's reproductive function as a tool of the state and which, when exploited, undermined their agency. The play's 'perspectival virginity' endorses this uncomfortable overlap between husband and rapist which these critics resist, as both cities and virgins are entered and unentered, rape is and is not enacted. Howard and Rackin make another distinction between how the play represents rape and symbolic rape, for although they argue that 'the marriage is not a rape' they also claim that Katherine is 'subjected to a symbolic rape when Henry forces her to endure his kiss'.¹⁷⁰ I argue that through the idea of 'perspective virginity' the play undermines the distinction between the enacted and the symbolic, so that we cannot say that Katherine is "only" raped symbolically: the symbol is an extension of the way dynastic marriage exploits women.

Following Henry's enforced kiss Katherine does not speak again. Abate argues that this silence is empowering, writing that Katherine resists subjugation and that this

¹⁶⁹ Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All*, pp. 202-3.

¹⁷⁰ Howard and Rackin, pp. 214-15.

acknowledges ‘the indispensable role performed by women to maintain a sex/gender system that was, ultimately, restricting for and demanding from both men and women alike’.¹⁷¹ Yet her claim that Katherine’s ‘independent centre of power is sought but never violated’ completely ignores the overwhelming imagery, built into the structure of the play, that positions Katherine within a system of extreme sexual violence.¹⁷² Far from empowering, Katherine’s presence on stage rather entails a non-presence. It marks the beginning of her erasure following her coerced consent to the marriage, an erasure echoing her earlier anonymity in the language lesson (3.5). The French Queen’s closing speech has an epithalamic quality which reinforces Henry’s successful suit:

God, best maker of all marriages,
Combine your hearts in one, your realms in one!
As man and wife, being two, are one in love,
So be there twixt your kingdoms such a spousal
That never may ill office or fell jealousy,
Which troubles oft the bed of blessed marriage,
Thrust in between the paction of these kingdoms
To make divorce of their incorporate league
5.2.328-35

This speech celebrates two marriages, between man and wife, and between the realms of England and France, yet, like in the French King’s speech, the emphasis is on the national ‘spousal’. Katherine’s name vanishes from the text, to be replaced by the image of ‘the bed of blessed marriage’. The epilogue focuses on the male lineage, Henry the fifth to Henry the sixth, yet although Katherine’s reproductive labour is essential, she is absent. Instead, we hear that:

Fortune made his sword,
By which the world’s best garden he achieved,
And of it left his son imperial lord.
Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned King.
Epilogue, 6-9

¹⁷¹ Abate, p. 82.

¹⁷² Abate, p. 82.

Where Katherine should appear, there is only 'the world's best garden'. As Katherine fades into the background, the Chorus brings to centre stage the image of the feminized, fertile France, achieved by Henry's 'sword'.

CONCLUSION

Previous critics have written about how *Henry V* uses rape as a metaphor for conquest, employs the symbol of nation-as-female, and unsuccessfully attempts to elide the female. However, the instability of virginity has been missing from these arguments. Consideration through the lens of ‘perspectival virginity’ complicates how we understand the play and its themes of rape, war, legitimacy and succession. The French King’s paradoxical image of ‘Cities turn’d into a Maid; for they are all gyrdled with Maiden Walls, that Warre hath entred’ has been amended, negated and simplified by editors since the early eighteenth-century, but there is value in retaining the line as it appears in the Folio. It speaks to how *Henry V* represents virginity as unstable and requires the audience to view the play as presenting oppositional and simultaneous ideas about defloration and rape. In this Chapter I have built on previous readings by probing the relational dynamic of the virgin/city metaphor and its destabilising effect, understood within a wider context of early modern writing which understood war in terms of defloration, and defloration in terms of war. Work by feminist theorists and historians has revealed how there was no discernible distinction between rape and ravishment in early modern legal and cultural thought, and that language used to describe both consensual and non-consensual sex was equivocal, vague, metaphoric, and coded women as always consenting. This work, in conjunction with the ideas of the perspectival and the French King’s paradoxical virginity image, offers a way of reading rape and defloration in *Henry V* beyond a symbolic/narrative binary.

Central to this new reading of *Henry V* is the play’s engagement with greensickness. Burgundy’s long allegory of France as an ‘unhusbanded’ garden and his shorter metaphor of Katherine as a ‘well summered’ fly both endorse the underlying ideas of greensickness, that virginity is corrupting and marriage a cure. As argued in

the previous chapter, greensickness is a symptom of the unreliable nature of virginity and consummation, and an inadequate attempt at a remedy. It is a product of patriarchy's fearful awareness of this unreliability, and its need to nevertheless maintain the fiction. These dynamics are amplified in *Henry V*, so that whereas in *Romeo and Juliet* greensickness is confined to the domestic sphere, in the history play the context shifts to the dynastic and national sphere. In *Henry V* the dynamic reciprocal relationship between maids and cities means that virginity is destabilized in a similar way to the cyclical virginity in *Romeo and Juliet*, so that both plays challenge ideas of fixed, conquerable virginity which greensickness both relies on and undermines. The way the play represents virginity as metaphorical and performative requires a critical approach to the misogynistic images of conquest that it also celebrates.

Burgundy's greensickness allegory subsumes the individual Katherine into the personification of France, so that her marriage is presented as imperative, her defloration the way to achieve peace. In this allegory Katherine is conflated with the feminized France. Following the "wooing" and Henry's breach of her chastity with his kiss Burgundy's fly metaphor reiterates the greensickness logic of the garden allegory, but in more debased and personalized terms. This time Katherine is named, and her sexual submission is not so much about ensuring national harmony as fulfilling Henry's lust. In *Henry V* women must fulfil both their symbolic and physical functions. The two greensickness metaphors bookending 5.2 demonstrate the centrality of this ideology to the play's representation of dynastic marriage and exploitation of 'perspectival virginity'.

Throughout *Henry V* there is a tension in the way rape is and is not present, consistently threatened yet neutralized through marriage. What is ostensibly non-consensual defloration becomes authorized consummation. The idea behind

greensickness – that uncontrolled or ‘unhusbanded’ virginity is dangerous, that defloration is curative – perpetuates a culture of rape, as pregnancy would “heal” the woman whilst disproving rape. The greensick garden allegory positions France in need of a curative pregnancy which is then mapped onto Katherine who will provide an heir for Henry and hence ensure peace. Yet the way this greensick France replaces the raped Peace is indicative of the way greensickness ideology (pregnancy as curative) blended with legal ideology (pregnancy as proof against rape) so that by becoming pregnant, Katherine can be understood as both raped and not raped at the same time. Whilst the language of warfare and military conquest is inseparable from that of sexual violence, narratives of marriage and lawful consummation are employed to make this violence more palatable and to legitimize an invasion that is of questionable legitimacy. As argued in Chapter 2, greensickness was much more a fantasy of patriarchal control than a medical condition. *Henry V* demonstrates just how metaphorical greensickness was in the early modern imagination, and how this metaphorical concept was so well developed that it shapes the logic of war and conquest in the play and the way political history is imagined and interpreted.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the representation of virginity and defloration in early modern drama and has argued for a new approach which understands virginity as a primarily symbolic, imaginative concept rather than a stable physical state. Whereas previous scholars have understood virginity as unstable because the hymen was thought to be an unreliable sign, I have argued that it is virginity's dependence on metaphor and the coexistence of multiple and contradictory metaphors in drama which destabilizes virginity. Moreover, as virginity is commonly used as a metaphor in addition to being constructed through metaphor, this thesis argues that this reciprocity of virginity metaphors leads to further instability. This is especially the case when both sides of the metaphor – as with the virgin/city image – are employed concurrently. In-depth analysis of four early modern plays – *All's Well That Ends Well*, *The Changeling*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Henry V* – has demonstrated how virginity metaphors functioned on micro- and macrocosmic levels within plays, so that small, seemingly self-contained virginity metaphors simultaneously work in structural and thematic ways.

This approach to virginity necessitates a new understanding of how defloration is represented in drama. This thesis has illustrated how scholars often assume that defloration has taken place or overlook the reasons why defloration is obscured in plays, which contributes to a limited understanding of virginity. Instead, I have shown that the unstaged nature of defloration in plays is highly significant, especially in the case of the bedtrick. Related to this issue of staging is the scholarly attempt to diagnose virginity in characters, whereby evidence of defloration in the plays is sought where none exists, a paradox replicating the futile early modern practice of hymeneal examinations. This thesis has argued that 'representational lacunae' – moments where

defloration might be expected to take place in the plays but which are absent – are significant and reflect the elusive intangibility of defloration and virginity. This approach builds on the idea of ‘invisible sex’ developed by early modernist queer theorist Christine Varnado, which highlights the way the early modern theatre resists heteronormative models of sexuality.¹ Therefore, a central claim of this thesis is that virginity on the early modern stage should be understood as ‘unfixed’ in two senses: firstly, as destabilized, mobile, and pluralistic, and secondly as resisting scholarly or editorial correction or simplification. Only when we approach early modern plays with an understanding of virginity as ambiguous and unstable, and defloration as ambivalent and elusive can we fully appreciate how and why virginity was an urgent and ubiquitous feature of drama, and how it functioned in early modern culture more broadly.

This ‘unfixed’ approach to virginity has been explored through three different paradigms: ‘fractured virginity’, ‘recycled virginity’, and ‘perspectival virginity’. Chapter 1 argued that, contrary to traditional understandings of virginity as symbolising unity, in *All’s Well That Ends Well* and *The Changeling* virginity is represented as fractured prior to defloration. Both plays employ personification to represent virginity, so that Diana and Diaphanta embody the virginity of Helen and Beatrice-Joanna, respectively. This fracturing and doubling is a compensatory response to the impossibility of staging moments of defloration. Likewise, that both plays use the trope of the bedtrick but do not stage these deflorative substitutions reflects early modern anxieties about the difficulty in proving or locating virginity.

These anxieties are the foundation for the cultural construction of greensickness, the disease thought to be caused by ‘over-ripe’ virginity and cured by defloration within marriage. Chapter 2 argued against readings of greensickness in

¹ Varnado, pp. 31-35.

drama which treat the condition as a diagnosable disease, and instead argued for understanding greensickness as a patriarchal tool of control. Chapter 2's reading of the circadian structure of *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrates how defloration was not a one-way transition, and that virginity was recyclable. The multiple allegorical deflorations at dawn compensate for the representational lacuna where Romeo and Juliet's wedding night should be, and the way the play destabilizes defloration demonstrates why any diagnosis of Juliet as greensick misunderstands the way virginity is represented in the play.

The paradoxical nature of virginity touched upon in Chapters 1 and 2 is fully explored in Chapter 3 through a reading of the reciprocal virgin/city metaphor in *Henry V*. By arguing that previous editors and scholars have overlooked the perspectival image of the cities, 'gyrdled with Maiden Walls, that Warre hath entred', this Chapter demonstrates how a destabilized notion of virginity could be weaponized in sexually violent ways. By presenting defloration and/or rape as both enacted and deferred, the virgin as maiden and deflowered, the play reveals how discourses of marriage overlapped with the rhetoric of war. The final reading of Burgundy's allegory of France as an unhusbanded garden, which draws on a greensickness trope, demonstrates how the idea of the disease was pervasive in early modern culture. Burgundy's allegory shows how greensickness could be employed on a dynastic as well as domestic level, and as a metaphor for martial expansion as well as a mode of enforcing marriage.

In-depth readings of the comedy *All's Well*, the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, and the history play *Henry V* demonstrate that 'unfixed virginity' is not confined to one genre. Likewise, supporting readings of plays such as *Pericles*, *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Cymbeline*, *1 Henry VI*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *Measure for Measure* show that this 'unfixed' approach to virginity can be applied across the

Shakespearean corpus, spanning the early 1590s to the early 1610s, from the late Elizabethan to the mid Jacobean periods. Although this thesis has prioritized Shakespeare, it has also worked to demonstrate how his plays sit within a larger dramatic context. The reading of Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* goes some way to suggesting further avenues of discussion. By arguing that Shakespeare as well as other early modern writers exploited the instability of virginity and its reliance on metaphor, I hope to provide a foundation for further research into virginity in early modern literature and culture. Possibilities for future work include an exploration of the perspectival virginity in other plays about war. To use a key example, the first part of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590) uses the reciprocal virgin/city metaphor during the final act, when the virgins of Damascus are murdered during the city siege. The four virgins are killed offstage and it is reported how the executioners 'on *Damascus* wals | Haue hoisted vp their slaughtered carcasses'.² Critics have emphasized the significance of the vulnerability of the city walls throughout the play, and the murder of the virgins has been seen as 'Tamburlaine's most heinous crime'.³ Therefore a reading of *Tamburlaine* through the lens of 'perspectival virginity' would be fruitful, especially given that the play is considered a source for *Henry V*.⁴ Likewise, an understanding of greensickness' reliance on a notion of destabilized virginity and unreliable defloration, and the problems with diagnosis, opens up new ways of understanding greensickness in numerous early modern plays. One such play is *A Cure for a Cuckold* (c. 1624-25) by William Rowley and John Webster, which includes two

² Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (London, 1590), sig. E3v.

³ Sara Munson Deats, *Sex, Gender and Desire in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), p. 133. For the significance of walls in *Tamburlaine*, see Patricia Cahill, 'Marlowe, Death-Worlds, and Warfare', in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, ed. by Emily C. Bartels and Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 169-81 (pp. 172-73).

⁴ Jerry Brotton notes that Henry's Harfleur speech 'is reminiscent of Tamburlaine's massacre of the virgins of Damascus', see *This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World* (London: Penguin, 2017), p. 217.

overt references to greensickness: in the opening scene the Justice of the Peace, Woodruff, boasts of making ‘the pale Green-sicknes Girls | Blush like the Rubie’ and diagnoses Clare (suffering from unrequited love) as ‘Sick of the *Maid*’.⁵ The play’s representation of marriage and male power can be illuminated through a reassessment of how greensickness functions in early modern drama.

I wish to bring this thesis to a close with a brief discussion of a potential avenue for further work on metaphor and ‘unfixed virginity’. The image of the ‘maiden sword’, which uses defloration as a metaphor for the initiation in battle, collapses gender binaries and is indicative of how expansive the topic of early modern virginity is. Whilst this thesis has primarily focused on the virginity of female figures in drama, there is scope for looking beyond these examples to consider more gender non-conforming virginity metaphors. The ‘maiden sword’ metaphor, which simultaneously deflowers and is deflowered upon first use in battle, is one more example of the paradox of early modern virginity.

The image appears across a range of early modern texts spanning the 1580s to the 1630s. An early example is found in a work by pioneering writer Margaret Tyler, who translated the romance *The Mirrour of Princely deedes and Knighthood* (1578) from Spanish. At one point in the narrative a young man is described as being ‘so young and tender and in the maydenhead of [his] strength [...] neuer before tasted vpon an enemye’.⁶ This idea of the maidenhead of strength or military potential is displaced onto the soldier’s weapon in an English translation of Seneca published three years later, which proclaims: ‘It merits prayse a mayden sword vndipt in goare to beare’.⁷ A

⁵ William Rowley and John Webster, *A cure for a cuckold. A pleasant comedy* (London, 1661), sig. B2v.

⁶ Margaret Tyler, trans., *The Mirrour of Princely deedes and Knighthood* (London, 1578), sig. F6v-F7r.

⁷ John Studley, trans., ‘The tenth tragedy of L. Annae Seneca, entituled Hercvles Oetaevs’, in *Seneca his tenne tragedies, translated into Englysh* (London, 1581), sig. E5v.

similar meaning of an unused sword as virginal is found in the 1596 translation of Alexander Sylvian's *The Orator*, where to be 'only knights in name' is 'commonly said' to be 'dubbed but with a Virgin sword'.⁸ In these examples the sword is a synecdoche for the soldier, with the implication that shedding blood in battle is a form of military defloration.

This image occurs in drama, too. In *I Henry IV* (first published 1598) Prince Hal congratulates his younger brother's initiation into battle by saying 'Come, brother John. Full bravely hast thou fleshed | Thy maiden sword' (5.4.126-27). In Henry Porter's *The Pleasant History of the Two Angry Women of Abington* (1599) the metaphor articulates promises of service, with Dick Coomes offering a gentleman 'the maidenhead of my new sword'.⁹ Likewise, in John Fletcher and Francis Beaumont's *The Humorous Lieutenant* (c.1619) Demetrius expresses his desire to go to battle and deflower his sword, telling his father 'to my maiden sword, tye fast your fortune'.¹⁰ He extends this identification to bridal virginity when he claims his desire for war exceeds that felt by virgins for their wedding night, as 'Never faire virgin long'd so'.¹¹ The enduring power of this particular metaphor is evidenced by its appearance in a later play from the Caroline period, Lodowick Carlell's *The Fool Would be a Favourit: Or, the Discreet Lover* (c. 1637) in which Agenor challenges Philanthus to a duel, saying that he is not afraid despite 'my maiden-sword, | Never unsheathed till now'.¹² The metaphor of the 'maiden sword' therefore appears in plays across the period.

⁸ Alexander Siluayn, *The Orator: Handling a hundred seuerall Discourses, in forme of Declamations*, trans. by Lazarus Pyott (London, 1596), sig. M2r.

⁹ Henry Porter, *The pleasant history of the two angry women of Abington* (London, 1599), sig. B3r.

¹⁰ Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, 'The Humorous Lieutenant', in *Comedies and Tragedies* (London, 1647), sigs. Qqq1r-Ttt2r (sig. Qqq2r).

¹¹ Beaumont and Fletcher, 'The Humorous Lieutenant', sig. Qqq2r.

¹² Lodowick Carlell, *The Fool Would be a Favourit: Or, the Discreet Lover. A Trage-Comedy* (London, 1657), sig. F3r.

As is common with virginity, the metaphor is contradictory. That the sword is ‘maiden’ implies that the weapon is ‘unused’ but with the insinuation of potential use. If the sword’s first use constitutes a defloration, the sword (and by extension, the soldier) is coded female. However, the phallic shape of the sword and the fact that it is the penetrative agent paradoxically codes it as male. That the ‘maiden sword’ is ‘never unsheathed’ in Carlell’s play demonstrates the inherent subversion in this image, as it contradicts the idea (current in this period, as discussed in Chapter 2) of the vagina as a sheath, following the meaning of the Latin translation. The sword is ‘never unsheathed’ and therefore unused, but sheathing can nevertheless be a metaphor for penetration. The metaphor puzzlingly suggests both action and non-action, virginity and defloration. The complexity of this image is demonstrated in an example from *The Virgin Martyr* (licensed for performance 1620) by Thomas Dekker and Phillip Massinger. The play is overtly invested in the virginity of its central female character, as it dramatizes the life and death of the virgin martyr Dorothea of Caesarea. However, at the start of the play defloration is used as a metaphor for success in battle, when Harpax recounts how the hero Antoninus ‘hath fleshd his maiden sword, and died | His snowy plumes so deepe in enemies blood’.¹³ Although it is the sword which is maiden, it is simultaneously the penetrative agent which causes bloodshed, the ‘snowy plumes’ dyed in ‘enemies blood’ recalling the wedding night sheets stained with blood. A similarly paradoxical example is found in Shakespeare’s *King John*, although virginity is ascribed here to the hand that wields the sword, rather than the weapon itself. Hubert, a servant of the king, informs John that despite his instruction to kill Prince Arthur, ‘This hand of mine | Is yet a maiden and an innocent hand, | Not painted with the crimson spots of blood’ (4.2.251-53). Once again we see the reflexivity of this

¹³ Thomas Dekker and Phillip Massinger, *The virgin martir, a tragedie* (London, 1622), sig. B2v.

metaphor, so that the man wielding the sword is both deflowered and deflowerer, as feminine and masculine. Hubert's hand remains 'maiden' because he has not killed Arthur, yet if he had, his guilt would have been evidenced on his hand by the boy's spilled blood, an image again recalling bridal sheets. Hence, Hubert's hand is paradoxically maidenly but a potential deflowering agent. Both his innocence and guilt is understood through the lens of virginity, yet whereas his innocence is understood as feminine and virginal, his guilt would transform him into the masculine deflowerer.

In these plays, virginity is weaponized discursively to disrupt the passive/active binary, demonstrating how virginity was destabilizing and destabilized through metaphor. On one level, the 'maiden sword' metaphor connotes initiation, yet the phallic and penetrative symbolism of the sword complicates the feminized image of virginity. The virgin is deflowered by male penetration, yet in this construction the 'virgin sword' is the penetrative agent. These examples suggest military initiation as an analogy for men's sexual initiation, which is almost exclusively described in feminine terms. For instance, Antonius's initiation into battle and hence his transition into heroic manhood is understood in terms female defloration. Further research could explore whether this imagery reflects the respective value of sexual inexperience for men and women in early modern culture, how the transition from adolescence to adulthood was particularly gendered and understood in sexual terms, the fluidity of gendered language and imagery, and the impact of this language on the context of the 'all-male' commercial stage and how we interpret the figure of the boy actor.

Although the focus of this thesis has been depictions of virginity in female characters in drama, my 'unfixed' approach to virginity metaphors therefore potentially illuminates constructions of masculinity as well as femininity. As with the 'maiden sword' image, which positions a first kill and military initiation as a metaphorical

defloration, the examples discussed in this thesis demonstrate the complex ways virginity functions as a pervasive and paradoxical imaginative idea in early modern drama and literary culture.

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