Prodigal Daughter, Usurer's Son: Sexual, Rhetorical, and Monetary Economies in Robert Chamberlain's *The Swaggering Damsel* (1640)¹

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Cet article examine la pièce de théâtre The Swaggering Damsel de Robert Chamberlain (1640) du point de vue de son discours au sujet de l'économie mercantile de l'Angleterre de cette époque, et de ses effets sur le marché du mariage. Cette comédie reflète en effet les angoisses provoquées par les possibilités de transformation inhérente à la convergence des institutions de l'argent et du mariage. Plus particulièrement, The Swaggering Damsel attire l'attention sur des changements d'autorité et de pouvoir au sein des relations entre sexes, résultant de forces économiques. La pièce retrace les notions de crédit, de crédibilité et de possession, en combinant les registres linguistiques financiers et sexuels.

Cross-dressing, sexual shenanigans, uppity servants, and witty women: Robert Chamberlain's 1640 *The Swaggering Damsel* contains all of these elements typical of early- to mid-seventeenth-century English comedy. A play that draws upon the conventions of Jacobean city and Caroline town comedies, and their clear place within a specific historio-cultural context, it reveals the tensions and ambiguities regarding gender, economics, and authority that permeated England just before the Civil War. *The Swaggering Damsel* demonstrates the extent to which categories of identity were perceived as provisional and performative. The comedy's characters resist an easy incorporation back into cultural norms or ideals, which indicates the increasing acceptability of such categorical flexibility.

The Swaggering Damsel was published in 1640 by Andrew Crooke, who published many first editions of Caroline drama, including plays by James Shirley.² Gerald Eades Bentley suggests that, while there is no external evidence, Chamberlain's work likely was presented at the Cockpit theater, also known as the Phoenix.³ The Cockpit, a private theater like Blackfriars, had a reputation for serving sophisticated audiences, though apparently it also tried to capture middle-class audiences during the long summer months when the gentry migrated out of London.⁴ In 1637 a new troupe, Beeston's Boys, patronized by the king and queen, began performing there and continued to do so until the closing of the

theaters.⁵ The Beeston's Boys' 1639 repertoire included plays by Beaumont and Fletcher, Shirley, Ford, Massinger, and Davenport.⁶ If Chamberlain's drama was indeed enacted at the Cockpit by Beeston's Boys, Chamberlain kept company with the major dramatists of his time.

It is in any case surprising that *The Swaggering Damsel* has not provoked more sustained critical attention.⁷ The play has obvious resonances with other contemporary theatrical works that have since attracted much study. Like many Jacobean and Caroline city comedies, *The Swaggering Damsel* references contemporary social and political issues.⁸ The play mixes heterogeneous groups—including the gentry, citizen merchants, and servants—and reveals the economic and social conflicts that arise as a result. Chamberlain's comedy foregrounds wit as an effective mode of action and reaction. Finally, the play considers issues of gender and performance, especially within the contexts of courtship and marriage.⁹

However, the text's unusual traits, and the way it combines more traditional elements, make it worthy of an examination that achieves more than mere classification as a genre or type. For instance, while some early modern English comedies emphasized the centrality of a female protagonist—most notably Shakespeare's (e.g. *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *The Taming of the Shrew*)—many, many more focused upon male characters. Even Shirley's *The Witty Fair One* (performed 1628 and printed 1632) and Thomas Nabbes's *The Bride* (performed 1638 and printed 1640), plays that present themselves as focusing on the wit of women, are mostly concerned with male homosocial economies and conflicts. *The Swaggering Damsel*, however, makes a female character its emotional centre.

Moreover, although many seventeenth-century plays feature cross-dressed characters, it is unusual for characters of both genders to cross-dress within a single play, as occurs in *The Swaggering Damsel*. The few contemporary plays that do feature double cross-dressing are unlike *The Swaggering Damsel* in their use of it. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Love's Cure* (revised by Massinger after 1625), for instance, a brother and a sister are forced into transvestism by their parents for political reasons, and the play's resolution depends upon the characters' returning to their appropriate gender roles. In William Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money* (1598), a usurer's daughter disguises herself as her tutor in order to meet her lover, and a prodigal Englishman dresses in female garb to gain access to another of the usurer's daughters. Shirley's *Bird in a Cage* (1633) also features a cross-dressed suitor who tries to gain access to a beloved, and includes two women who dress as male characters in a dramatic interlude meant to entertain their mistress. *The Swaggering Damsel* differs from these three plays in that the two disguised characters are a couple,

and their disguises are not merely plot devices but reflect persistent personality traits and hierarchical positions within their relationship.

Felix Emmanuel Schelling has described *The Swaggering Damsel* as “a *capital* picture of the relations of the family of a needy knight to that of a rich moneyed man,”¹⁰ a depiction that contains a delightful pun, considering that the play examines the nexus of various economies: financial, rhetorical, and sexual. These economies—by which I mean ideological systems dedicated to the control and organization of resources to ensure order and productivity, and which are therefore intimately bound up in issues of authority and power—are interdependent and inseparable. During the Caroline period, the transition to an increasingly mercantile economy provided access to social positions based upon the acquisition of material wealth, rather than upon birth status.¹¹ These changes in how social relationships were constituted economically were reflected in how such relationships were constituted rhetorically. Lorna Hutson has traced the extent to which the rhetorical form of persuasive fiction replaced traditional systems of “credit” such as gift exchange in the formulation of social bonds during the sixteenth century. This new emphasis on “the practical efficacy of persuasive rhetoric” decentred and destabilized other modes of exchange that provided greater certainty.¹² As Hutson argues, such a shift had profound consequences for the representation of women, who became the markers of this phenomenon because of their involvement within the gift-exchange system of marriage.¹³ The combination of financial, rhetorical, and sexual economies offered the potential for transformed power relations. This potential is reflected in *The Swaggering Damsel*’s overt concern with the intersection of a mercantile economy and the marriage market, and with the rhetoric that negotiates their conjunction.

As a comedy, *The Swaggering Damsel* participates in the tug-of-war between conservative and progressive sentiments regarding its socio-historical context. Henri Bergson has observed that laughter is a “social gesture.”¹⁴ As such, it can serve the purpose of social critique, and where and how laughter is directed determines its political bent.¹⁵ We laugh to rebuke, but also to embrace. Sometimes laughter achieves both simultaneously, which seems to be the case in Chamberlain’s play. The characters’ transgressions are both ridiculous and marvelous, and what seems to validate or invalidate them is their efficacy. This ethos of efficacy, however, is circumscribed by a Ciceronian notion of the common good.¹⁶ Those activities that contribute to social reintegration through marriage—the goal of comedy as traditionally defined—are deemed valuable even when they transgress other norms, such as gendered hierarchies.¹⁷ These transgressions, of gender and language, are made necessary by the destabilizing effects of a mercantile economy on marriage.

The Swaggering Damsel therefore rather conservatively upholds the value of marriage as an ordering institution in society, but what an individual marriage actually looks like and what is acceptable within it varies from couple to couple. The play's discourse thus both critiques and accepts the blurring of categories that traditionally defined gendered authority and power.

Because *The Swaggering Damsel* has received so little scholarly attention, a brief summary will be useful. The main plot focuses on a pair of lovers, Valentine Crambagge and Sabina Testy. Valentine professes his love for Sabina, but she refuses to reciprocate; he immediately becomes despondent. Valentine's father, Sir Plenteous, approaches Sabina's father, Sir Timothy, with the proposal that Valentine should marry Sabina. Initially the fathers agree, but subsequently Sir Plenteous rejects the match when he learns Sabina will have no dowry, and in the process he offends Sir Timothy. When (and because) Sabina learns that her father disapproves of the match, she becomes enamoured of Valentine. She invites Valentine to an illicit meeting at her house after her father has gone to sleep: Valentine proposes marriage, and Sabina accepts. Although she states she will not consummate the relationship until after the wedding ceremony, she leaves the door to her bedroom open and encourages Valentine to disregard her words. Valentine follows and the predictable occurs.

After taking her virginity, Valentine discovers that he does not want Sabina after all, since she has proven herself wanton. When Sir Timothy finds out about the encounter, he contacts a lawyer and attempts to have Valentine arrested for trespass. Fearing arrest, Valentine disguises himself as a woman until he can leave town. Sabina learns of this ruse from Valentine's friend and relative, Fairefaith, and she elects to perpetrate a ruse of her own. She dresses as a man and pretends to be her own kinsman, out to avenge her "kinswoman's" dishonour. In this guise, she "woos" the cross-dressed Valentine. Valentine, believing he is dealing with a man, agrees to get "married"—partially to distract the kinsman from his revenge, and partially for the economic benefit of it—though he of course assumes the marriage will not be valid because the two parties are men. After the wedding ceremony, Sabina, at the point of her sword and still in male garb, forces Valentine, still in a dress, to bed to consummate the marriage. He discovers that he has been married in truth, but he does not know to whom; he fears he has married a common prostitute looking to heighten her social station. Valentine then regrets his broken engagement to Sabina. The play ends with a typical comedic resolution, with Sabina revealing her true identity and all parties satisfied with the resultant marriage.

Chamberlain mirrors Valentine and Sabina's courtship and marriage in two other romances in the play, which serve to create a continuum of gendered and

economic relations according to which this primary relationship can be judged. The first, and idealized, relationship occurs between Fairefaith and Mirabell. Their names immediately signal their characters: Fairefaith is loyal, while Mirabell is a wondrous beauty, inside and out. Fairefaith and Mirabell conform to nearly every postulation in contemporary domestic conduct manuals describing marriage.¹⁸ They are well matched in terms of status, temperament, and virtue.

Fairefaith and Mirabell's romance and marriage may at first seem disengaged from economic considerations: there is no negotiation regarding a dowry, for instance, and no consideration of material support once the wedding has occurred. However, even in this most idealized romantic relationship, a concern with economics appears in both the sexual and linguistic registers. Because the market economy transformed systems of credit and created a sense of contractual rhetoric as provisional, these two characters must test each other to confirm that their reputations of sexual "credit" conform to actual virtue.¹⁹

Mirabell offers her test first, after Fairefaith has made a conventional courtly love salvo, declaring that he wishes "Onely to be / One of the number that doe still attend / Your pleasures becke, and so be stil'd your servant."²⁰ At first Mirabell refuses, declaring that she has never wanted a servant of such "consequence" (I.B3v), thereby appropriately remaining subordinate to Fairefaith's status as a gentleman (both as a man and as gentry). When Fairefaith insists, Mirabell engages in a rhetorical game meant to discover to what extent Fairefaith's promise derives from a desire to fulfill a role (in a theatrical sense) versus a desire for her specifically. Mirabell asks Fairefaith if in "tendring [his] vow" he is willing to perform any act she asks of him, including becoming a messenger "betwixt a friend and me" (I.B3v). Fairefaith balks, insisting that he could not possibly serve as a go-between; he has agreed to serve her, but not a rival. His reaction confirms his feelings for her, so Mirabell reveals the equivocation of her signification: the "friend" she wishes him to serve is himself. "This discourse / Has beene a true prospective glasse, whereby / To peepe into your minde" (I.B4r) she tells Fairefaith. Such discourse is necessary because persuasive language, with its status as potentially debased currency within an economy—whether of love or of finances—may obscure true intention. Mirabell alludes to this ambiguity with her use of the verb "tendering" in reference to Fairefaith's vow, a word that works on multiple registers. To tender means to make tender or sensitive, to offer or proffer, or, in a legal context, to exchange money for products or services.²¹ What Fairefaith offers, his vow of servitude, is abstract rather than concrete because it takes linguistic form, and it will remain so until he proves his words with actions. Moreover, what he wants precisely as a return on his investment is unclear until he

takes offence at the possibility of a rival, indicating his desire for a monogamous relationship as opposed to a merely sexual one. Paradoxically, the very property of language Mirabell fears—the uncertainty of its referent—is what she exploits in order to force Fairefaith's language to reveal its "truth." Her deployment of linguistic ambiguity serves the purpose of ensuring a chaste relationship leading to marriage, and therefore conforms to the play's ethics of efficacy.

Fairefaith also tests Mirabell. Until she has passed his test, he must "checke these passions fearing that shee is / Too like her sister" (I.B2r) Sabina, whose sexual reputation is in question. Fairefaith sees a woman's virtue as tied solely to her chastity.²² After Fairefaith's successful negotiation of Mirabell's rhetorical trick, she declares "I doe embrace your love" (I.B4r). Apparently, her speech is accompanied by an attempt to embrace him physically, matching word to action, for Fairefaith immediately warns her, "Be not too prodigall of thy goodnesse sweet, / Consider what a scarciti's of it now / Ith' world" (I.B4r). His dialogue casts her virginity, or "goodness," in economic terms: it is valuable precisely because it is a scarce commodity, fit only for one consumer, a husband. He cautions her not to become "prodigal," a word denoting the squandering of wealth or property. In fact, he wants to ensure that she still holds this property before he will marry her, and hence he devises a test for her. He proposes that they take "a gentle taste of loves delicious sweets" (III.E2v) before their wedding. Fairefaith's metaphor employs the common early modern trope of sexuality as a mode of consumption, one that operates on both the physical/sensual level (as an act of eating) and the economic level (obtaining and using a product for the pleasure of the consumer).²³

Mirabell resists his importuning, declaring "Sir, ye have uttr'd words / Doe breath an aire wud kill a Basiliske" (III.E3r). This is a far cry from her earlier assertion that if he "Breath but a syllable, and it straight commands / The mind or person to serve / Your pleasures" (III.E2v). Her willingness to serve him ends abruptly at the point where he requires her to behave unchastely. Mirabell's choice of the basilisk as centre of her own metaphor is an interesting one. She claims that Fairefaith's words have the power to kill a monster whose breath—or metonymically speaking, its language—was fatal. Perhaps even more significant, another contemporary term interchangeable for "basilisk," "cockatrice," also referred to a prostitute. If this meaning obtains, then we again have the spectre of money and sexual markets converging. In such an interpretation, Fairefaith's request would offend even a prostitute, someone who regularly receives wages for sexual labour; in this way, Mirabell both distinguishes herself from such a woman and implicitly acknowledges Fairefaith's fear that she could become part of such an economic exchange.

Fairefaith's test, while efficacious in proving Mirabell's chastity, casts doubt upon his own virtue. Therefore, Fairefaith must reassure Mirabell:

'Twas not to please a wanton appetite,
Or spot thy shrine of Virgine puritie
That I have spoke;
No it was onely but to trie the strength
Of thy resolves in goodnesse (III.E3r)

Mirabell must question Fairefaith's "faith" even after this revelation for two reasons: first, although Fairefaith indicates that his attempts at seduction were verbal, or "spoken," the dialogue points to an attempt to compel Mirabell physically to comply with his sexual demands. Several times he commands that she "come," and the last time he uses this directive he states "Come, come, I must needs satisfie my flames. / Therefore no more excuse" (III.E3r). Second, Fairefaith's linguistic deception has a character different from Mirabell's earlier rhetorical ruse. Fairefaith lies outright, whereas Mirabell merely exploits the ambiguity of a signifier (the "friend" who is really Fairefaith himself). In this sense she has been more honest than he. Therefore a declaration of motivation is not sufficient; Fairefaith must prove that the signified is accurately represented in the signifiers of "love" and "admiration" through action; that is, through a plan to restore Mirabell's family's honour and reputation after the sexual transgression of her sister, Sabina. He succeeds, and the "transaction" of marriage can then occur since both parties' promises are proven sound.

The impact of economics on gendered relationships becomes more obvious in the representation of another couple who form the opposing extreme of the marriage continuum: the shoemaker/landlord Welt and his wife. Chamberlain casts Welt and his wife's marriage predominantly in financial terms. The standard gender hierarchy has been reversed within their marriage, and this reversal is both fostered through and reflected in their participation in the mercantile economy. Although a shoemaker, Welt has expanded into the secondary trade of lodging. Valentine has been staying with the Welts while in hiding from the authorities, and he owes them rent. Welt's request for the funds is best described as timid: "There is a little money due to me from him, I wish he wud take the payment of it into consideration, I have ex-extraordinary occasion to use the money, if he please to let me have but some of it, it will doe mee a courtesie, he shall finde me reasonable" (v.H4r). Welt stutters as he attempts to provide a justification; he places the transaction in the realm of "courtesy" and "consideration" rather than relying on the legal contract implied by the exchange of money for goods and/or services. However, Welt's wife, who remains unnamed in the play and is thereby marked as a stock character, has

no such compunctions. It becomes clear that Welt's name refers to the beatings—certainly verbal, and possibly physical—that he suffers at the hands/tongue of his wife. After criticizing her husband for talking “idely” and “foolishly” (v.H4r), she demands in no uncertain terms payment in full. Welt's wife firmly reverses the traditional dictum that women remain silent, especially in the presence of their husbands' greater authority; she says to her husband, “if ye can talke no wiselier before folkes, pray ye hold your peace and let your wife speake” (v.H4r). Moreover, she characterizes the household, not as her husband's nor as their mutual property (as was common in marriage theory of the time), but as her own personal property.²⁴ She enumerates the possessions for which Valentine should remunerate her: “Eate *my* meate, drinke *my* drinke, burne *my* wood, foule *my* roomes, weare *my* sheets, make use of *my* servants” (v.H4r, my emphasis). The gender reversal is so pronounced that Rowland, Valentine's servant, remarks “sure I doe not thinke but this Shoomaker's a witch, he wud never a contracted himselfe to the devill else” (v.IIr). Rowland thus not only critiques the Welts' marriage as a perversion of a spiritual institution by placing it within the realm of the occult; he also condemns their marriage as doubly perverse since his figuration reverses the common paradigm of the female witch who contracts with or “marries” the male devil.²⁵

Although Welt's wife is far from ideal according to the cultural norms that dominated religious and civic ideologies of early modern English marriage, it turns out that she is necessary in a mercantile economy where courtesy and language no longer suffice to ensure equitable economic treatment. Welt's wife has taken the extraordinary precaution of locking up all of Valentine's clothing until he pays his bills. She suspects the truth that the audience already knows: Valentine, after discovering his fake marriage is in fact real, plans to abscond without making good his debts. Welt's wife's action prevents Valentine's financial and moral lapse, and protects the Welts' household economy; for not only would they have lost their labour as landlords, they would also have been responsible for Valentine's debts to other merchants—the cobbler for boots, shoes, and slippers; the Chandler for candles and spices; the vintner for wine—incurred while he lodged in their house. It is not Welt's wife who is the “theefe” (v.H4v), but Valentine; indeed, as she says of her action, “Ile justifie it” (v.H4v), which she can easily do with reference to the account book. In fact, Welt's wife doesn't need the book, as the character Trash acknowledges: metonymically she *becomes* the account book; she knows every expenditure and every balance. This is important because the account book itself cannot ensure or compel payment; the rhetorical agreement represented by the numbers must be matched by the intentions and agencies of the parties involved.

This kind of rhetorical and monetary economic shift away from a gift-exchange system is mirrored in the transformation of gender roles within the merchant's marriage. Welt's wife makes this connection herself and criticizes it even though it has provided her with a certain kind of agency. She complains to her husband, "you must stand by forsooth like *Iohn a Noakes*, and see every Servingman runne upon me in this manner; remember this when ye come to bed" (v.H4r-v). She accuses him of passivity—he would rather trust the legal process than assert himself—and will hold his meekness against him in the connubial bed.²⁶ While Welt's wife's actions and language are certainly economically efficacious, they come at the social cost of harmony within her marriage. The audience is clearly supposed to laugh *at* her in the spirit of critique rather than *with* her in the spirit of acceptance or delight. Financial concerns are finally too far embedded in the Welts' marriage for the marriage to serve as an appropriate model of response to changing economies.

Between these two extremes of marriage represented by Fairefaith/Mirabell and Welt/Wife—extremes as it turns out not of type but of degree—lies the relationship of Valentine and Sabina, the most complicated and intriguing of the play. It is to these two characters that the title of this article alludes, in a self-conscious reversal of Lorna Hutson's title, "Usurers' Daughters and Prodigal Sons," for her discussion of how sixteenth-century authors used economic tropes in order to gender authorship. While I am not here considering the concept of authorship *per se*, issues of performative, persuasive, and productive discourse certainly make their appearance in Chamberlain's play, and Hutson's observations regarding the gendering of these tropes are useful, not least because in this play these tropes seem to be reversed.

Hutson comments that "the story of the prodigal son is irreversibly gendered."²⁷ Indeed, the prodigal son model was popular in seventeenth-century drama, appearing in Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1605) and *The Roaring Girl* (1611), *The London Prodigal* (1604), Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625), and Johnson's *The Staple of News* (1626).²⁸ Yet, as we've already seen in Fairefaith's speech to Mirabell, in Chamberlain's play the prodigals—potential and actual—are the Testy *daughters*. The property they could (and Sabina does) squander is both sexual and linguistic in nature: virginity and sexual reputation. In Hutson's formulation the prodigal son is paired with the usurer's daughter, whose sexual infidelity becomes a representation of the "crisis of usury[, which] becomes moral and semantic as well as material, involving questions about how to signify good faith, and how to assure the fulfillment of promises without evacuating the practical and emotional bonds of trust."²⁹ The usurer's daughter becomes a confirmation of the economic

debasement of language, and simultaneously a vehicle for displacing the anxiety about male relationships that is caused by such a debasement. *The Swaggering Damsel* alters these gendered terms: we find the usurer's son in the character of Valentine Crambagge. What this shift signals is not necessarily a change in the anxieties produced by a mercantile economy and the infusion of humanistic discourse, but rather a re-conceptualization of gender in response to such anxieties. Chamberlain's comedy is thereby related to the "whore plays" Jean Howard has studied, in which commerce has "percolated through the domestic realm, leading to an impossible confusion of the terms through which both men and women are defined within the traditional gender system."³⁰

The play insists as early as Act I on the economic aspects of Valentine and Sabina's relationship. When Valentine's passion is revealed to his father, Sir Plenteous responds with financial considerations, which accords with his characterization as a usurer (indicated by his last name, Crambagge). Sir Plenteous says of Valentine's beloved, "I hope / 'Tis with one that hath a good portion, if not youth by / Gold and silver, you and I shall not be friends" (I.C1V). In fact, this is the only criterion he will accept for a suitable marriage; he claims he himself has never been in love. When Fairefaith inquires whether Sir Plenteous had loved his wife, Sir Plenteous responds with a profound confusion between love and money:

Fairefaith: Were ye not in love with your Lady before ye married her?

Sir Plenteous: Tis true, I had a great deale of money with her. (I.C1V)

Sir Plenteous's sentiments may have echoed, in crass fashion, a growing trend to value marriage in monetary terms. Money had of course always been a fundamental concern of any marriage match, but in the Caroline period "Rich merchants were now in a position to buy estates forfeited by the nobility; young nobles, in turn, were forced to marry 'down' in order to keep those estates."³¹

Sir Plenteous's desire for an economically propitious match blinds him to any other concerns. He repeats that "I must have money, I cannot purchase land / With education not I, neither with all your Philosophy, I tell you, I must have Mony, and I will have mony" (I.C1V). Money translates into land, which in turn translates into more money, and therefore into stability. As a landlord who mortgages land and forecloses when the bonds are forfeited, Sir Plenteous has a clear connection to Welt's wife. Like her, Sir Plenteous insists on the value of the concrete over the abstract; both characters replace an ethos of courtesy with one of economic efficacy. Yet his privileging of the monetary, like hers, potentially obstructs the social order constructed through marriage, and so the play marks him out for scorn. When Sir Plenteous discovers the identity of Valentine's amour, his objection to her extends

beyond the fact that she is a “wild slut,” to the even more important consideration, to him, that “her father [is] a decai'd gentleman, and one that with riot and excesse has cut so many collops out of his estate, that sometimes he is glad to keepe his chamber, and gently begin a course of physicke two or three yeares together” (1.C2r). According to Sir Plenteous, Sir Timothy's illnesses reflect an estate that has been carved up and consumed without regard to appropriate management. Later, Sir Plenteous reveals his inability to look beyond the merely monetary in another moment of linguistic confusion; in his negotiations with Sir Timothy, he mistakes Sir Timothy's use of the word “blessings” as a synonym for “pounds.” When Sir Timothy says he will bestow a “thousand blessings” on the couple, Sir Plenteous declares it a “faire portion” (11.C3r). It is only when he asks for confirmation that the “marriage money” (11.C3r) will be provided on the wedding day that Sir Timothy clarifies that no money will be forthcoming; the blessings would be entirely spiritual in nature.

Valentine, however, strongly objects to the characterization of his love in economic terms. He declares:

Tis not this transitory pelfe,
Nor all the trumperie the world cries up
That I respect; no, I esteeme a soule
Sweetned with education;
Let dung admirers idolize their bagges;
Tis not for man,
In whom there dwells an immortality:
...

Sir, know that I
Scorne to dishonor my good starres so farre,
As to besmeare my soule with trash,
Or to prophane Loves sacred rites for wealth. (1.C1v)

In this speech, Valentine identifies wealth and property with earthy images of dung and trash. The term “pelfe” refers to money or lucre as a corrupting influence, to stolen goods, or to junk.³² The word stands in stark contrast to the ethereal and spiritual imagery Valentine associates with his love: immortality, stars, and sacred rites.

Here, Valentine fulfills—as his name suggests he should—the quintessential role of lover. However, the degree to which his words and actions are precisely that, a *role* that he performs rather than a reflection of a true self, soon becomes obvious. He offers Sabina a conventional, if mediocre, Petrarchan blazon, comparing her bosom to milk, her lips to nectar, her hair to gold (1.B2v).³³ Sabina rebukes him for this overflow of courtly rhetoric. She says, “Pray yee speake on sir, when ye have emptied

your pockets youle be quiet ... these are but pocket complements, run 'em over once, and then perhaps I shall talke with yee" (1.B2v). In these lines, Sabina characterizes Valentine's language as standardized, applicable to any object, since it derives from somewhere other than his heart. The fact that the origin of the compliments is a "pocket" is significant: a "pocket" could refer to financial resources or a stock of cash; moreover, "pocket" could refer to a "pocket book," a small edition of a book that could fit into a pocket.³⁴ This would certainly point both to the compliments' unoriginal nature and to a very concrete kind of rhetorical economy: the book trade in which words could be had for money. These words then become the medium of exchange for sex, thereby serving as a mediator between money and (for) sex.

Valentine's relationship to this set of signifiers—courteous love language—is conventional and therefore arbitrary. It turns out that his relationship to signifiers connoting gender is also merely conventional. If Valentine's rhetoric proves that love discourses can be performative, his cross-dressing confirms that gender too has performative aspects. Sabina's invitation to consummate their relationship comes in the form of a challenge to his masculinity: "Are ye a man?" (11.D4v) she demands. Valentine responds "Ile leave you such an earnest, if I can / Prevaile, that you shall sweare I am a man" (11.D4v). Even the proof of his masculinity, grounded in the physical form of his body and its ability to participate in sexual relations, is figured in economic terms here: according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an "earnest" is an installment paid to secure a legal or economic contract. Valentine's masculinity is vulnerable to transformation because it becomes part of a transaction, or bargain, whose terms can change depending upon the circumstances that encompass it. Despite Valentine's physical phallus, his cross-dressing merely confirms for the audience our initial understanding of his character as feminized. He has consistently occupied the subordinate position vis-à-vis Sabina, and his disguise is motivated by a rather un-manly fear of being arrested for his indiscretion. And if Welt's wife's account books are any indication, he has an inordinate love for shoes (he has ordered boots, shoes, slippers *and* galoshes, all on credit).³⁵

Moreover, Valentine treats marriage as an economic matter, both in a social sense and, as it turns out, in a strictly financial sense—as his father does. Ironically, it is finally his attempt to manipulate the monetary aspects of marriage that compensates for his "stealing" of Sabina's social credit, that is, her sexual reputation. He follows his friend Sportlove's suggestion, after a cross-dressed Sabina has produced a jewel and given it to Valentine: Sportlove tells Valentine, "it matters not who 'tis, take you his gifts—and be sure to yeeld what hee would have yee doe, and wee shall want neither gold nor jewels" (1v.F4r). Sportlove's advice sounds like that of a

pimp to a prostitute, and it places Valentine in exactly the position to which he has relegated Sabina by taking her virginity and refusing to marry her.

Valentine's ultimate fulfillment of the marriage contract is in large part due to the rhetorical skill Sabina evinces and applies with an agency that surpasses what cultural ideals allowed for women. Sabina, the protagonist and the "swaggering damsel" of the play's title, successfully negotiates the various economies at work, even though and precisely *because* she is a decidedly "prodigal" woman. In her sexual excesses, she squanders the valuable property of her virginity. Valentine condemns her for being "... too prodigall of that, which once lost, the whole world cannot recover" (III.E1r) even though he is complicit in the loss. This loss seems all the more predictable because of her prior transgressions of her gendered role: a disobedient daughter, she insists that she will never consider her father's wishes in any marriage she may contract (I.B3r). Her family's own servant, Hilts, acknowledges "she is a Blade, a Sparke, a Teare-coate; and he that carries her away, must mumble her, jumble her, rumble her, and tumble her, swagger, roare, and teare like a mad man" (I.B1v–B2r). The term "Blade" usually referred to men in its meaning of "gallant" or "free and easy fellow." "Spark" could refer to either gender, as a compliment for an elegant, beautiful, or witty woman or as denigration for a foppish young man. "Tear-Coat" implies Sabina's destructive and rebellious potential.³⁶ In all these descriptions, Sabina takes on a decidedly masculine character. According to Hilts, Sabina must be tamed, much like Katherine in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, if she is to become a socially acceptable wife. Sabina has a reputation for sexual permissiveness; Valentine's father considers her a "wild slut," and Fairefaith also accuses her of having "wanton humours" (I.B2r). In point of fact, it is she who invites Valentine to consummate their relationship after their engagement. Sabina's prodigality can be seen as her assertion of agency beyond her gendered role: she is not obedient, she is not chaste, and as we shall see, she is not silent. Yet it is precisely her speech that allows her to remain an agent who simultaneously transgresses and conforms to cultural standards. She breaks down cultural categories in ways both potentially disturbing and triumphant.

We first witness Sabina's mastery in the allied sexual and rhetorical economies in her witty deflations of Valentine's stilted Petrarchan discourse. Sabina punctures Valentine's lofty yet highly conventional praises. When Valentine proclaims "Welcome I say, toth' armes of him that flies, / All joyes but those that in thy bosome lies" (I.B2v), he employs synecdoche to represent her heart and therefore her love. Sabina, however, transforms his words so that their referent becomes her body. "My bosome? what dee finde there pray sir; you have a minde perhappes to my Jewell, if

you will not hurt it, ye shall have it a while to play with, tis a pretty bright thing sir" (I.B2v). The dialogue indicates that Sabina wears a literal jewel between her breasts, perhaps in the form of a necklace or broach. The word "bosom" then becomes not Sabina's heart, but her ample breasts (just a few lines later, Valentine states that "there's not a little in that lovely place" [I.B2v]).³⁷ Of course, Sabina's use of the word "jewel" not only denotes a gem, but metaphorically connotes her virginity and acknowledges its status as property.³⁸ She understands Valentine's true objective—the satisfaction of lust. However, she does not either passively accept or actively reject Valentine's advances. Instead, Sabina flirts. She engages with Valentine on a sexual level, but at this point she also imposes limits: he may only "play" with the jewel of her chastity, and only if he will "not hurt it."

Significantly, Sabina does not provide Valentine access to the "property" of her virginity until after their engagement, so her prior assertion of sexual agency has only extended so far, and still within the limits of social expectations; she is no strumpet. In fact, legally speaking, because of their betrothal Sabina and Valentine are married the moment they consummate their relationship.

In early modern England, a valid marriage merely required the consent of both parties. If the vows spoken involved the present tense (*verba de praesenti*), then the marriage was enacted at that moment. If the vows spoken utilized the future tense (*verba de futuro*), the parties could dissolve the marriage contract in specific circumstances.³⁹ In his proposal, Valentine declares to Sabina "you onely must be she, / Or none; in whose blest union I shall joy, / And satisfie my kindreds expectation / Of issue." Sabina replies: "My Faith takes all for truth, and in exchange / Of your deare selfe delivers up my selfe / as freely" (II.D4r). Sabina uses the present tense form "delivers," whereas Valentine uses the future tense "shall." Yet Sabina reveals her understanding that the marriage contract involves *verba de futuro* when she states "Forbid ye chast directors of my soule, / Desire shuld be so forward ere the Ceremonies / Confirme it lawfull" (II.D4r). It is Valentine who argues that "since our vows are past we neede not / Have scruple" (II.D4v), which suggests the marriage contract occurred *verba de praesenti*. In any case, upon consummation of the relationship, the marriage became legally valid. This legal status obtains even if Valentine's intention was seduction rather than matrimony.⁴⁰

Although Sabina is talented enough at rhetorical interpretation to see Valentine's courting for what it is, she does not initially recognize Valentine's promise to marry her as a parallel rhetorical exercise. Sabina becomes a figure for the difficulty associated with interpretation of marital rhetoric during this period, and her situation resonates with that described by Henry Swinburne in his work *Spousals* (1686). The

difficulty lies in the potential separation between words and intentions. Swinburne comments, " ... the parties shall be adjudged ... to have contracted Matrimony, although (before God) they be not Man and Wife, for he which is the searcher of the heart doth well know their deceit and defect of Mutual Consent ... But mortal Man cannot otherwise judge of Mens meanings, than by their sayings for the Tongue is the Messenger of the heart; and although it sometimes deliver a false message, yet doth the Law accept it for true, when as the Contrary doth not lawfully appear (84–85)." ⁴¹ Sabina's first indication of Valentine's betrayal and her own misjudgment is her father's accusation that she is a "whore," "queane," and "baggage" (III.E4V). Sir Timothy's slurs reflect the change in Sabina's status; these insults characterize Sabina as participating in a sexual economy linked to monetary exchange and indicate her sexuality's status as alienable property. In this case, the "money" used to procure Sabina's sexual favours was the promise of marriage, the "smooth words [that] wrought upon her gentle nature" (III.E4R). Although the engagement followed by the consummation would have been legally binding, the sequence of events does not constitute a valid marriage *socially*.⁴² Mirabell comments that Sabina is "wedded already ... Yes to misery, shame, and infamy" (III.E3V), rather than to Valentine. Sabina has been prodigal in the classic sense: she has perpetuated "an abuse, by anticipation, of the reciprocal flow of gifts and credit from benefactor to recipient and back."⁴³ The gift of her chastity anticipates the reciprocal gift of a marriage ceremony that will confer upon her the social credit of a wife. Sabina repents her prodigality and seeks to rectify it by equalizing the terms of the exchange and re-ordering her relationship to the property of her sexuality through a wedding.

Sir Timothy, Sabina's father, also wishes to intervene in the "property transfer" that has occurred between Sabina and Valentine. Sir Timothy approaches a lawyer, Muchcraft, in the hopes of pressing a suit against Valentine for trespass. Such a charge would have commonly been made in a case in which a daughter had been seduced or debauched. The father could make the legal argument that he had lost the economic resources accruing from arranging his daughter's marriage. If the court determined that such a loss occurred, the father could recoup damages for the economic and emotional pain and suffering caused by the dishonour.⁴⁴ But this scene, as we shall see, not only reflects a reality of the early modern English legal system, but also provides a critique of it. When Sabina's sexuality becomes alienable property, it is at the mercy of market forces. As Catherine Belsey notes, "possessions can be expropriated and property-owners dispossessed."⁴⁵ In *The Swaggering Damsel*, whoever can pay the most gets to determine the legitimacy of Sabina's sexual behavior. Sir Timothy first sends his servant, Hiltz, to discuss

the matter with Muchcraft, who refuses to listen because Hiltz has not provided him with a retainer. Ironically, when Sir Timothy himself arrives on the scene and provides the necessary fee, Muchcraft intently listens to the same words that Hiltz had used just moments before (III.F2v–F3r). After agreeing that Valentine's actions egregiously violate the law, Muchcraft reveals the extent to which justice is compromised by its involvement in financial exchange, for he switches sides when Valentine's father offers him a larger sum (IV.G1v). Therefore, the legal disposition of Sabina's sexuality no longer belongs to her father, but rather to the Crambagge family, who can pay for that privilege.

However, Chamberlain contends in *The Swaggering Damsel* that Sabina's sexuality is her own property—she gives it away too easily, perhaps, but she also reasserts her ownership of it and regains her sexual credit. It turns out that the rhetorical skill Sabina displayed in the courting scenes, in which she wittily turned Valentine's abstractions to concrete and physical realities, serves her well in re-establishing her sexual credit. Through a manipulation of rhetoric and signifiers of gender, she manages to make Valentine's empty promises of marriage real. And she does so much more successfully than her father.

Since society demands that Sabina must rely upon a man to act on her behalf in a homosocial sexual economy, she "becomes" the man by donning a man's clothing. Much as in Valentine's case, the cross-dressing confirms her relative position within the sexual relationship. Her performance of masculinity encompasses not only her clothing, but also an entire symbolic complex involving actions and speech. She can deploy the conventional imagery of a Petrarchan lover, rife with allusions, just as well as Valentine can; she claims "I see betwixt those breasts / Is *Adons* garden, and *Elisiums* love, / And from these lippes procedes an ayre transcends / *Sabeian* spices, or the *Phoenix* nest" (IV.F4r) when "wooing" the cross-dressed Valentine. In fact, her praise is wittier than Valentine's because it incorporates a pun on her own name, and metaphorically points toward a reincarnation of their love with the image of the phoenix.⁴⁶ Sabina also understands the overtly financial aspects of courtship and love, and her lover's attachment to them. She proffers him a jewel to wear, perhaps even the very jewel she wore during the initial courtship scene in Act I. As we've seen, the jewel has symbolic resonances with her virginity, which she has already given to Valentine. But this jewel, as a literal gem, does what her virginity could not: Valentine becomes willing to "marry" for the possibility of financial reward. He plans to manipulate the rhetorical situation for his own gain. His economic, linguistic, and sexual dishonesty is precisely why he is vulnerable to

Sabina's deception. Ironically, the very behaviour that cast Sabina into the untenable position of unmarried strumpet neatly casts Valentine into the role of husband.

Sabina's impersonation does not end after the wedding ceremony. She coerces Valentine into bed, which she achieves through a variety of ploys, both rhetorical and physical. Sabina's dialogue sounds as if Chamberlain lifted it directly from contemporary domestic manuals: she insists on the marital hierarchy that places husbands in authority over wives, and when Valentine prevaricates she asks:

Am I a man? a married man? or what?
 Am I a husband? must a husband then
 Entreate his wife?
 Is Nature growne so old she has forgot
 To teach her children what belongs unto
 Their different places?
 Although before I was content to bend
 My spirits to your foote, yet know, that now
 The will of Fate has destin'd me to be
 Next under it the sole, commander of
 Your minde and person, therefore now I must,
 Nay, I will be obey'd. (IV.G4r)

Here Sabina relies on the contemporary understanding of the gender hierarchy as natural and fated. Of course, such discourse becomes complicated when we try to reconcile the speaker with the language. What she presents as a rhetorical question—"Am I a man?"—is in fact not rhetorical at all, and is moreover highly ironic considering that she asked the same question ("Are ye a man?") of Valentine when inviting him to bed.⁴⁷ What seems to be a confirmation of traditional ideology turns out to be an inversion of it. And this inversion extends beyond language, because Sabina threatens to beat Valentine into submission if that is what it takes (IV.G4v); hence she "swaggers" as well as speaks. At this moment the play reaches its comedic high point. As suggested earlier, the comedy serves both as critique—specifically of Valentine's effeminacy, of Sabina's sexual prodigality, and of inversions of gendered hierarchies because of involvement within economic realities—and as acceptance. Sabina's antics are both enjoyable to witness and the ethically efficacious response to the context.

The play's final response to the transformations and violations of social categories because of economic forces is ambiguous. Indeed, though the appropriate sex is re-assigned to the characters after the point at which physical realities can no longer be denied—marital consummation—the play does not necessarily realign sex and gender roles.⁴⁸ While Sabina is now a wife, she maintains authority and

power, which even Sir Plenteous acknowledges. After the revelation of her identity, he declares:

This night my house shall give thee entertainment,
Whereof thy selfe shall be sole governesse,
And when the icie hand of death shall drive
My soule out of this clod,
It shall be his and thine. (v.13v)

Sabina and Valentine will share the household and property, but in Sir Plenteous's lifetime she will be the only "governess."

As we've seen, even the idealized marriage, represented by Fairefaith and Mirabell, is structured by economic concerns and paradigms. Yet the fundamental value of marriage as a social institution is never questioned; it is the required result for a happy ending. The social categories of "unmarried" and "married" are not blurred, though others certainly are in process of moving from one state to the other. How we are to judge the Testy-Crambagge union is uncertain. Sabina and Valentine's marriage looks a lot more like that of the unfortunate Welt and his wife than of Fairefaith and Mirabell when we consider the profound inversion of gendered power and overt involvement in economic matters.

But the drama also seeks the audience's approval for Sabina and her rebellious assertion of agency that transforms the relations of authority. Like other London comedies, *The Swaggering Damsel* puts "pressure on the idea that sexual status determines female worth and, with seeming perversity, celebrat[es] women's financial acumen or cultural sophistication over her chastity."⁴⁹ Indeed, Chamberlain's play celebrates Sabina's intellectual and economic acuity—her ability to implement an efficacious response to changing credit relations (both financial and sexual).

Fairefaith's final speech directly addresses the spectators. Commenting on Sabina's dismay after the happy ending of the confirmed marriage, Fairefaith attributes the cause as follows:

'tis for feare
Your censures on her faults be too severe;
She has given satisfaction where 'twas due,
Her Father's pleas'd, and so we hope are you:
To you she is referr'd, who now are set,
Ready to give your sentences; but yet
Be pleas'd to speake your doome with gentle breath,
Cause you're the Judges of her Life and Death. (v.14r)

These lines serve as a conventional epilogue that likely was spoken only during the first performance, since audience reaction at the premiere dictated whether a play would have a second showing.⁵⁰ What seems less conventional, however, is the epilogue's conflation of the play with a single character. In a provisional survey of 22 printed plays by Cockpit playwrights that contain epilogues, only three make this rhetorical move: Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Humorous Lieutenant*, and John Ford's two plays *The Fancies Chaste and Noble* and *The Witch of Edmonton*.⁵¹ Faïre-faith sets the audience members up as the final arbiters of both Sabina's value and the play itself; the judgment of one (the play) is contingent upon the judgment of the other (the character). The "satisfaction" Sabina has provided works on multiple levels: she has satisfied her father and social expectations by marrying and thereby completing the arguably economic exchange of virginity for wedding vows; she has satisfied Valentine sexually; and she has satisfied the spectators. This last mode of satisfaction is an emotional, possibly a sexual, and certainly an economical one—a performance in exchange for the price of admission. At this point, the audience becomes complicit in the economic negotiations that have permeated the play; as Jo Miller has remarked about Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*, the play "reveals the exchange of women as commodities operating at all levels of social 'intercourse,' including the level at which we as an audience come to the play with certain expectations and desires."⁵² Yet it is precisely the infusion of economic concerns into arenas that were conceptually (but not practically) distinct from them that allows for flexibility within social categories. There can be no mistaking that while Faïre-faith's final speech casts the audience in the role of judge, there is an expected response: applause. Such applause acknowledges and validates the performance(s), of the play by the actors but also of the characters within the play. *The Swaggering Damsel* may not suggest that categorical confusions of gender are *per se* a good thing, but it certainly embraces and even celebrates the exploitation of those confusions on behalf of the social order in an evolving economic context that calls for them.

Notes

1. I thank *Renaissance and Reformation's* two anonymous reviewers for their suggestions, which improved this article.
2. Crooke worked with a partner, William Cooke. In addition to the eleven Shirley playtexts they produced as a pair, they published John Fletcher's *Wit Without Money* (1639). Cooke independently published eight other Shirley plays. Crooke issued Chamberlain's play, as well as plays by Henry Killigrew and Thomas Killigrew, independently of Cooke.

3. Bentley makes this assertion because Chamberlain associated with Thomas Nabbes, whose work was staged there, and because *The Swaggering Damsel* was licensed with Thomas Killigrew's *The Prisoners*, written for the Cockpit. See Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, Vol. III: Plays and Playwrights (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 153. Alfred Harbage also considers this a possibility, in Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama 975–1700: An Analytical Record of All Plays, Extant or Lost, Chronologically Arranged and Indexed by Authors, Titles, Dramatic Companies, &c* (London: Methuen & Co, LTD, 1964), p. 141. Chadwyck-Healey's 1996 electronic edition of the play indicates the play may have been performed as early as 1625, though the editors mark this information as uncertain and do not provide any justification for the date range they provide (Chadwyck-Healy English Prose Drama Full Text Database, 1996).
4. Bentley cites this sentiment regarding the Phoenix's audiences in the preface of the 1623 Shakespeare folio, in a 1624/5 letter by James Howell, and in the 1657 play *The Obstinate Lady*, in Bentley, Vol. VI, p. 61. He points to Nabbes's play *The Bride* as an example of a summertime production calculated to appeal to the middle classes, in Vol. VI, pp. 69–70.
5. Bentley, Vol. VI, p. 66 and Vol. I, p. 326. Harbage suggests that Beeston's Boys may have performed Chamberlain's play, in Harbage, p. 141.
6. Bentley, Vol. I, pp. 330–31.
7. References to the play most often appear in surveys of Caroline drama or in dictionaries of Renaissance stage directions rather than in sustained critical analysis. Rachel P. Fordyce edited the play in her dissertation, *A Diplomatic Edition of Robert Chamberlaine's Comedy The Swaggering Damsell 1640: The Man and the Play* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh 1973). Material on Chamberlain's other works—his books of jests and poems—is also scant: see Lucy Munro, "Richard Brome and *The Book of Bulls*: Situating *The New Academy*; or *the New Exchange*," *Ben Johnson Journal* 13 (2006), pp. 125–38; Jay A. Gertzman, "Robert Chamberlain and Robert Herrick," *Notes and Queries* n.s. 20 (1973), pp. 182–84; and Judith May Curlee, "*'Tis a Merry Age*": *Comic Discourses of Marriage in Early Modern England* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, 1996).
8. This definition of city comedy is drawn from Viviana Comensoli, *"Household Business": Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 7. Julie Sanders argues that the "engagement with social, political and indeed theatrical realities" was a characteristic of Caroline drama as well, in Julie Sanders, *Caroline Drama: The Plays of Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers Ltd, 1999), p. 4.
9. Sanders indicates that this "was a topic of high cultural currency" reflected in Caroline drama, p. 41.
10. Felix Emmanuel Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama, 1558–1642: A History of the Drama in England from the Accession of Queen Elizabeth to the Closing of the Theaters, to which*

- is Prefixed a *Résumé of the Earlier Drama from its Beginnings*, Vol. 2 (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1908), p. 303, my emphasis.
11. James Bulman, "Caroline Drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A.R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 345.
 12. Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 4. Hutson also notes the surge in legal cases involving credit, debt, payment, and bankruptcy in the 1560s and 1570s, with a concomitant emphasis on "the difficulty of assuring the performance of verbal promises" in prose and poetry of the period (pp. 141–42).
 13. Hutson, p. 8.
 14. Henri Bergson, "Laughter," in *Comedy*, ed. and trans. Wylie Sypher (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 73 and 117.
 15. Bergson, for instance, theorizes that laughter is meant to rebuke "absent-mindedness" or a certain mechanical response (p. 63). Mikhail Bakhtin, on the other hand, sees laughter as fundamentally radical. He states, "only laughter never underwent sublimation of any sort—neither religious, mystical nor philosophical. It never took on an official character, and even in literature the comic genres were the most free, the least regimented [laughter expressed in the word has] that special force and capability to strip, as it were, the object of the false verbal and ideological husk that encloses it." M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 236–37.
 16. In *De Officiis*, Cicero argues that concern for the common good must always outrank personal gain when considering issues of expediency. Robert Whittinton's English translation appeared in 1534: *The thre bookes of Tullyes offyces both in latyn tonge in englysshe*.
 17. Theodore Leinwand notes that "Comic reconciliations are often ethically charged adjustments made in the face of socio-economic disorientation." Theodore Leinwand, *Theater, Finance and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 42.
 18. See, for instance, Robert Cleaver and John Dod, *A Godlie Forme of Hovseholde Government: For the Ordering of Private Families, According to the Direction of Gods Word* (London: Felix Kingston for Thomas Man, 1598); the second treatise of William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises* (London, 1634); Edmund Tilney, *A Brief and Pleasant Discourse of Duties in Marriage, called the Flower of Friendshippe* (London, 1571); and Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman and English Gentlewoman, Both In one Volume couched, The 3rd Edition, revised, corrected & enlarged* (London: John Dawson, 1641).
 19. This kind of romantic test appears in other Caroline drama as well, such as Shirley's *Hyde Park* and Massinger's *The Picture*. What is less usual in Chamberlain's play is

- that a woman undertakes to test a man, though such a dynamic occurs in Shirley's *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635; published 1637).
20. Richard Chamberlain, *The Swaggering Damsell: A Comedy* (London: Thomas Cotes for Andrew Croke, 1640), Act 1, fol. B3v. Because no modern edition of the play exists with scene or line numbers, all quotations from the work are hereafter cited in the text with act and folio numbers. I have modernized the spelling of Chamberlain's title in the article for the ease of the reader.
 21. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Tender."
 22. Fairefaith's sentiment echoes that of conduct manual authors Dod and Cleaver and their predecessor, the educator Juan Luis Vives. Cleaver and Dod note, "Finally, no man wil looke for any other thing of a woman, but her Honestie," a quotation lifted directly from Juan Luis Vives's 1529 *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, ed. Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman, and Margaret Mikesell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002).
 23. See its deployment in works such as Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Troilus and Cressida*.
 24. William Gouge's *Of Domestical Duties* (1622) characterized the household as the sole property of the husband, while Xenophon's treatise *Oeconomicus*, translated into English as *Xenophons Treatise of House Holde* in 1532 and appearing in six editions in the sixteenth century, propounded the common property model. According to early modern English law, a wife's property was vested in her husband during the time of their marriage under the doctrine of *feme covert*; the exception to this involved trusts or uses that designated the wife as the beneficiary. As Sokol and Sokol point out, such legal maneuvers were usually expensive and meant to serve the interests of the wife's family rather than her own interests. B.J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 7–8. Welt's wife's status makes it highly unlikely that her language refers to such a trust or use.
 25. This characterization may also point to Welt's wife's involvement in the mercantile economy since in several plays of the period, usurers were associated with the devil: Mill's *Night Search* (1640), Jordan's *Money is an Ass* (c. 1635), Davenport's *A New Trick to Cheat the Devil* (before 1639). However, Rowland's denigration of her in this economic sense must be seen from the perspective of a character who is knowingly participating in Valentine's theft—she is not a usurer in the typical sense of demanding interest on a loan, but a "usurer" because she is demanding payment from a client who cannot pay.
 26. "John a Noakes" was a fictitious name for a party in a legal action (usually coupled with John-a-Stiles as the other) according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
 27. Hutson, p. 122.
 28. Sanders comments on this structuring principle's popularity, pp. 58–9.
 29. Hutson, p. 135.

30. Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598–1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. 138.
31. Bulman, p. 345. Alison Finlay has argued that “During the civil war years the need for families of consequence to secure good settlements became even more acute as income from property grew increasingly unpredictable. Rents were often slow in coming in, while higher taxes and payments to the military to prevent pillaging strained resources, increasing the pressure to make matches which would ensure a good income.” See Alison Findlay, “Playing the ‘Scene Self’: Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley’s *The Concealed Fancies*,” in *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage*, ed. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 157. While a 1640 audience would not have had to worry about military pillaging, certainly the economic instability of the nation had become increasingly clear. During his Personal Rule, King Charles I came to depend upon extraordinary taxes to support his government, and this caused discontent as demonstrated by the Ship Money debates in the late 1630’s. According to Susan Dwyer Amussen, inflation had increased dramatically in England during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Cost of living increases between 1500 and 1620 were double wage increases. Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 8.
32. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Pelfe.”
33. Patricia Parker, expanding upon Nancy Vickers’s work, discusses the relationship between the literary form of blazon and inventories in a context that “triangulates its [the blazon’s] relation to the economic, or merchandising, through a particular form of rhetoric, itself described as a form of displaying merchandise or purposing to sell.” Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 128.
34. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the first more general definition as in circulation in John Ford’s 1633 comedy *Tis a Pity shees a Whore*; the second regarding book size is found in a 1640 text, but of course small printed editions appeared earlier than this in the seventeenth century: John Weever’s *An Agnus Dei* (1601) and John Taylor’s *Verbum Sempiternum* (1614) are examples.
35. Phillip Stubbes criticized the contemporary trend of men’s wearing slippers outdoors as foppish in his *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583). Women’s delight in ornate shoes was attacked in *Pleasant Quippes for Upstart Newfangled Gentlewomen, Or a Glass to View the Pride of Vainglorious Women* (1695) (London: Printed by T. Richards, 1841), p. 10:

These worsted stockes of bravest die,
 and silken garters fring’d with gold;
 These corked shooes to bear them hie
 makes them trip it on the molde:
 They mince it with a pace so strange,
 Like untam’d heifers when they range. (10)

One nineteenth-century discussion of Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline footwear elaborates: "In King James's days, or in the early years of Charles's reign, before political troubles and civil war drove dandyism out of sight, and almost out of existence for many years, a fop delighted to exhibit his white silk stockings, embroidered with elaborate 'clocks' in a variety of colours, above shoes with heels cut away at each corner and of portentous height. About this time, the ladies, too, got upon their stilts and took to chopines, for the eccentric John Bulwer, writing towards the middle of the century, denounces their adoption of this fashion, which, he says, is a monstrous affectation, imitated from the Venetian and Persian ladies." "Some Fashions in Heels," *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature: Science and Arts* 14 Mar. 1891, p. 176.

36. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition, s.v.v. "Blade," "Spark," "Tear-coat."
37. Sabina's rhetorical strategy here seems to provide an early example of Margaret Homans' psychoanalytical theory regarding women's relationship to language. See Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986). Homans argues that because a daughter does not proceed through the oedipal conflict in the same way as a son, she "speaks two languages at once. Along with symbolic language, she retains the literal or presymbolic language that the son represses at the time of his renunciation of his mother," p. 13. Homans sees evidence of this duality in the literalization of figurative language, pp. 29–30.
38. Sabina's figuration of her virginity as a jewel is of course a common trope in early modern discussions of female chastity.
39. Sokol and Sokol, p. 21; J. H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 3rd ed. (London: Butterworths, 1990), pp. 546–47.
40. Amussen has remarked upon the difficulty of interpreting marriage law in early modern England, evidenced by the number of legal cases regarding marriage contracts. She points out the discrepancy between popular and legal understandings of marriage: while an engagement meant that legally the parties could not contract to marry any other, it did not sanction intercourse. However, the popular notion indicated, as one early modern woman put it, "that after a couple have talked of matrimony, it is lawful for them to have carnal copulation" (Amussen, p. 110). Lawrence Stone has compared baptism dates of first children to the marriage dates of their parents and found a premarital conception rate of slightly less than 20%, which he characterizes as "low," especially in comparison to the dramatic increase in the rate in the eighteenth century to over 40%. The actual percentage of premarital copulation is likely higher since these numbers only account for those couples who conceived before marriage, married, and bore live children whose baptisms were recorded. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977), pp. 608–10.
41. Quoted in Subha Mukherji, *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 30–31. Mukherji has an excellent analysis of how the gap between language and intent depicted by

Swinburne is represented in *The Merchant of Venice*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *Cymbeline*.

42. This distinction between socially and legally valid marriage remains significant throughout the play. Sabina creates a scenario in which marriage vows will once again be exchanged, but this time in the context of a church wedding—the solemnization that provided not only legality but also legitimacy to a marriage contract. She then ensures physical consummation. Ironically, this second “marriage” would not have been legally valid for two reasons: first, Valentine does not know the true identity of the person he marries since he does not recognize Sabina in her disguise. Second, Valentine enters the union in the spirit of a jest or trick, rather than with a sincere intention of marriage (see Sokol and Sokol, p. 26). Nonetheless, after his discovery of his “spouse’s” true gender, Valentine’s reaction reveals he believes the marriage valid because it conforms to *social* expectations and conventions.
43. Hutson, p. 118.
44. Baker, pp. 518–19. A father would use the same legal action against his daughter’s seducer as he would against another master who enticed a servant away from the household, *per quod servitium amisit*. Sir Timothy obviously intends to bring the charge of trespass *quare clausum fregit*, since the seduction occurred on his own property. Valentine’s action of “theft” negated any implied consent regarding his presence on Sir Timothy’s property.
45. Catherine Belsey, “Tarquin Dispossessed: Expropriation and Consent in *The Rape of Lucrece*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52.3 (Fall 2001), p. 315.
46. This allusion is cleverer still if the play was indeed performed at The Phoenix (Cockpit) theater in Drury Lane. One can picture the actor gesturing to the surroundings during this speech.
47. This irony is heightened even further since, as the audience would have been fully aware, the role of Sabina would have been performed by a male actor. As in the cases of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, the play becomes in a sense self-referential since it contains a man pretending to be a woman pretending to be a man.
48. *The Bachelor’s Banquet* (1603) comments that respective positions of dominance and submission within marriage determines what the spouses are figuratively “wearing,” whether their clothing literally conformed to their position or not: “Is not he, think you, finely dressed that is in much subjection? The honestest woman and the most modest of that sex, if she wear the breeches, is so out of reason in taunting and controlling her husband ... If then a wise and honest woman’s superiority be unseemly and breed great inconvenience, how is he dressed, think you, if he light on a fond, wanton and malicious dame?” *The Bachelor’s Banquet*, ed. Faith Gildenhuis, Publications of the Barnabe Society, Vol. 2 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1993), pp. 120–21. *The Swaggering Damsel* differs from *Bachelor’s Banquet* because it celebrates Sabina’s ability to “wear the breeches” both before and after marriage. This celebration also distinguishes *The Swaggering Damsel* from other Jacobean city comedies, in which, as Theodore Leinwand states, women “don the

- breeches (*but do so temporarily*) to gain recognition for themselves, to remind their spouses and lovers of valid claims on men's affections." Theodore B. . Leinwand, "This gulph of marriage': Jacobean City Wives and Jacobean City Comedy," *Women's Studies* 10 (1984), p. 247, my emphasis.
49. Howard, p. 114.
 50. Tiffany Stern, " 'A small-beer health to his second day': Playwrights, Prologues, and First Performances in the Early Modern Theater," *Studies in Philology* 101.2 (2004), pp. 172–99.
 51. Other epilogues that do not equate a particular character with the overall success or failure of the play, even when the epilogue is spoken by a character from the play, include Beaumont and Fletcher's *Beggar's Bush*, *The Mad Lover*, *The Loyal Subject*, *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, *The False One*, *The Little French Lawyer*, *Love's Cure*; James Shirley's *Love Tricks*, *The Brothers*, *The Wedding*, *Love in a Maze*; Thomas Nabbes's *Covent-Garden*, *Hanniball and Scipio*; Henry Glapthorne's *Wit in a Constable*; John Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*, *The Lady's Trial*; Philip Massinger's *The Guardian*, *Believe as You List*. Thomas Nabbes's *Totenham-Court* aligns the playwright with the character of the hostess, but not the play itself. A much more comprehensive look at epilogues from the period would be necessary before a broad generalization can be made.
 52. Jo Miller, "Women and the Market in *The Roaring Girl*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 26.1 (1990), p. 14.