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RESCRIPTING COYNESS FROM SHAKESPEARE TO CAVENDISH

A Dissertation in

English

by

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ABSTRACT

Any study of Renaissance coyness starts in the shadow of famous mistresses. Mistresses from John Donne's reticent lover in "To His Mistress Going to Bed" to Andrew Marvell's blushing paramour in "To His Coy Mistress" model a feminine coyness of inaccessibility, enticement, and manipulation that has long been accepted in studies of Renaissance literature. Participating in a long-standing interest in such depictions of flirtatious but resistant women, my project challenges the limiting assumption that such figures were the only version of coyness that early modern writers employed in their writing. Taking advantage of the increasingly searchability of databases like Early English Books Online (EEBO), I demonstrate that the uses of the word coy diverged sharply from the narrowness of the coy mistress to encompass everything from the alluring and enticing seduction of a wooer to the modesty and chasteness of a virgin to the reticent pride of a sinner to the soothing and coaxing mannerisms of falconers towards their falcons.

Renaissance writers, I argue, conceived of the conception coyness more broadly as a term that marked a deliberate, sometimes gendered performance of reticence, enticement, or engagement. This wider concept of the term made it useful in a variety of contexts—sermons, husbandry manuals, translations, speeches, and letters, in addition to literary works. Also, my study illustrates that early modern writers did not sequester meanings of the word in one discourse or another. Rather, they borrowed freely between disparate meanings to enhance the complexity of their depictions of social interactions and gender dynamics. Such an extensive reconsideration of the meaning of coyness fosters a fuller appreciation of its importance in certain veins of early modern literature, as the remainder of my dissertation shows.

Not only does this exploration broaden our appreciation of the range of the concept of coyness for the speakers of early modern English, it also exposes how patterns of usage in everyday discourse influenced the appearance of gender and authorship in early modern literary texts. In Chapter 3, I look at how Shakespeare redeploys the term's function in hawking manuals to enliven his exploration of wooing practices in *The Taming of the Shrew*. In Chapter 4, I reexamine the concept of coy virginity in John Milton's *A Maske at Ludlow Castle* and Thomas Middleton's *Revenger's Tragedy*, where female characters repurpose the simple moral scripts of female behavior to create more dynamic and agential depictions of virginal characters. In Chapter 5, I contend that lyric collections assembled by poetry enthusiasts preserve some of the richest repositories of the diversity of coyness, found especially in the productiveness of female-voiced responses and lyrics by women writers. Finally, I investigate how Margaret Cavendish, to evade conventional restraints on women writing, bridled the potential of coyness as a literary tool for women writers especially.

In the end, my study returns us to the idea of female coyness, but that idea is changed. Throughout their diverse portrayals of coyness, I conclude, Renaissance authors confronted the limits of women's and men's roles, but coyness' multiplying references and contradictions inspired women writers in particular to discard old narratives of composition and re-script new ones. Ultimately, such writers embrace a greater creative vision for the functions of coyness in early modern English, as should scholars.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

How did early modern authors use the concept of coyness, and how did early modern readers interpret the word “coy”? These questions are important to scholars of early modern literature because the trope of the scornful, flirtatious mistress is so foundational and vital to early modern amatory lyrics. Indeed, any study of Renaissance coyness starts in the shadow of famous mistresses. Thomas Carew’s shy Celia, Shakespeare’s coquettish Venus, John Donne’s ever-clothed beloved, Andrew Marvell’s blushing paramour, and others like them exemplify scholars’ standard understanding of female coyness in early modern England. Together, they model a feminine coyness of inaccessibility and manipulation, a coyness seemingly meant to increase women’s attractiveness to men.¹ As the arch or shy recipient of a lover’s coaxing sophistry, the idea of coy mistresses inspired “one of the great traditional commonplaces of European literature,” as T. S. Eliot writes.² In Renaissance England, that tradition of female reticence grew, in part, from Ovid and other classical sources. For instance, many writers of the late 1590s drew on Ovidian iconography (including Daphne’s panicked flight, Scylla’s unfortunate end, and Helen’s seductive beauty) to fuel the visions of elusive mistresses found in epyllia and sonnet sequences. Likewise, the continental romance tradition likely moved Renaissance English writers to pen images of proud women indebted to Crisyde’s changeable pride and to Dante’s aloof Beatrice. The tradition of the coy mistress found in Marvell and Donne was also formed by the conventions of Petrarchan love poetry as Sir Thomas Wyatt, Henry Howard, and their contemporaries translated them. The fiery passion and icy despair that Wyatt favored in his

¹ Scholars from the mid-twentieth century often point to Marvell’s mistress as exemplary when they wish to emphasize a poem’s motifs of coyness, as Lynn Sadler does in her reading of Thomas Carew’s “A Rapture.” Lynn Sadler, *Thomas Carew* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), 35.

² T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays: New Edition*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1950), 253. For more on the classical origins of the coy mistress and Renaissance love lyrics, see also R. H. Richmond, *School of Love: The Evolution of the Stuart Love Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); Heather Dubrow, *A Happier Eden: The Politics of Marriage in the Stuart Epithalamium* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

sonnets are akin to the persistent refusals of a beautiful, ineffable muse found in later sonnet sequences. The sonnet sequences of the 1590s carry on that tradition, as in Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* where the silent, beautiful Stella serves as fodder and inspiration for Astrophil's poetic genius.

But the idea of the coy mistress is not only defined by the elusive maidens of Petrarch, Dante, and Ovid. The Renaissance vision of the coy mistress as the reluctant and resistant beloved developed as well from the Renaissance idea that a woman's worth is directly related to her virtue. In this equation, a woman's reluctance might testify to her moral character, thereby increasing her value as a pawn in the marriage market. William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden notably sketch it thus: "By her elusiveness, by the precise degree of her coyness . . . a woman [and society] measures her worth."³ Kerrigan and Braden's statement articulates long-standing literary and cultural connections between a woman's coy refusals and a man's interest. In his depictions of frightened virgins and eager gods, Ovid dramatizes those associations. Daphne's abject terror in the face of Apollo's desire heightens his interest rather than quenching it, and in *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid's mockingly advises a man to make the first advances: "'tis for him to begin, for him to entreat her; and in his supplications, she will incline her ear. Ask and thou shalt receive."⁴ Ovid notes that even Jove himself never had a woman come "of her accord to entreat him." Thus, the coy mannerisms of Marvell's mistress are a "crime" but may lead to fulfillment. Moreover, according to Kerrigan and Braden, her shows of refusal enhance her attractiveness in the speaker's eyes because her coy elusiveness augments her worth. In Renaissance England,

³ William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden, "Milton's Coy Eve: *Paradise Lost* and Renaissance Love Poetry," *ELH* 53.1 (1986): 27-51, 45. Some recent scholars have balked at such an interpretation. For Mandy Green, to see a woman (Eve) yield "'with coy submission' . . . may bring an otherwise submerged and ill-defined feeling of uneasiness [regarding her relationship with Adam] nearer the surface." Mandy Green, *Milton's Ovidian Eve* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 66.

⁴ Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, ed. Roy K Gibson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

then, many influences helped produce the standard trope of the coy mistress. She personified loveliness, silence, and temptation, but she also was assailable and would eventually to male conquest. As a modern commonplace, the idea of the coy mistress ultimately offers an image so compelling and seductive (a seemingly reluctant woman who may yet be interested in a male suitor) that the image seems to have eclipsed the abundance of other definitions of coyness active in early modern England. My opening queries also seem absurdly simple: in early modern English, the word “coy” must refer to a woman who is the arch or shy recipient of her lover’s coaxing sophistry. In a description of a coy mistress that is a typical articulation of the scholarly perspective on coyness, Joseph J. Moldenhauer sketches Andrew Marvell’s famous mistress thus: she is “both fair and cruel. Proud of her beauty, she not only relishes but *expects* her lover’s praise. Her coyness, her reluctance to yield to his advances, has about it an air of deliberate display.”⁵ As Moldenhauer’s description exemplifies, the displays of reluctance, disdain, fear, and scorn that characterize traditional addressees like John Donne’s reluctant, withdrawn beloved from “To His Mistress Going to Bed,” Thomas Carew’s aloof A. L. in “To A. L., Persuasions to Love,” Robert Herrick’s care-free virgins in “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,” Thomas Randolph’s beautiful mistress from “A Devoted Lover,” and Andrew Marvell’s blushing paramour from “To his Coy Mistress” have created a perception of the stereotypical coy mistress as a calculating, worldly woman who connives and schemes in order to manipulate and entice the emotions of her suitors.⁶ In such characterizations of the mistress, her shows of bashfulness and reticence captivate and ensnare the men around her, associating the conception of coyness with a vivid figure of manipulation and control.

⁵ Joseph J. Moldenhauer, “Voices of Seduction in ‘To His Coy Mistress’: A Rhetorical Analysis,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 10.2 (1968): 189–206, at 195. Italics are authorial.

⁶ Scholars from the mid-twentieth century often point to Marvell’s mistress as exemplary when they wish to emphasize a poem’s motifs of coyness, as Lynn Sadler does in her reading of Thomas Carew’s “A Rapture.” Lynn Sadler, *Thomas Carew* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), 35.

However, by associating coyness exclusively with a woman's manipulative, seductive reluctance, early scholars' narrow application of this trope has grossly precluded a wider appreciation of the conception of coyness more generally, leading to several erroneous assumptions. For example, scholars assume that the word "coy" only refers to the coquettish behavior of a woman *affecting* virginal behavior—a persona akin to what Marvell's discontented speaker seems to complain of. The perhaps affected delay of Marvell's mistress, as the reticence of other mistresses does, seems to frustrate and attract the speaker, as if by her "refusal," she means only to inspire his "vegetable love [to grow]" all the greater. At first glance, the coy virgin seems a familiar, well-trodden lane in the literary landscape. Yet in many cases, she is so familiar as to be unremarkable and so simple as to be unquestioned. She is both analog and mirror for the deepest contradictions of the coy mistress, whose reluctant feigning is both lure and limit for her suitors. Representations of coy virginity radically reframe the idea of coyness for women. Furthermore, given the predominant focus on coy *women* in amatory lyrics, many scholars assume that the language of coyness referred only to female behavior, as when a female character like Carew's A. L. is described as "proud," "deem[ing] all men unworthy [of her] esteem." Additionally, some scholars may assume that the word "coy" referred *only* to a *reluctance* to share sexual favors, as when Donne's mistress refuses to get into bed with the speaker.

Yet, if the word "coy" referred only to a woman's affectation of chastity, why did translations of Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies* (1521) describe actual virgins and not just those imitating virginity as "coy"? And why did translators of Ovid depict the fearful Daphne running away from Apollo as "coy"? If early modern writers only understood coy conduct as an attribute of women, why did John Dennys depict a courtly *male* wooer using "coy phrases" to

court his mistress's fan, and why did George Herbert describe himself as "coy" towards God in his "Unkindness"? Finally, if the word only portrayed an action of refusal or reticence, why did George Turberville use the word "coy" to signal a hunter soothing a bird in his hunting manuals or to describe Paris seducing Helen in his classical translations? And why did preachers like John Preston employ it to emphasize a loving God's care for sinful men?⁷

The answers to my opening questions, then, are not nearly as simple as they appear at first. For the early reader, encountering the word "coy" tapped into a host of meanings and associations that extend far beyond the trope of the coy mistress. Moreover, while the manipulation and disdain associated with the mistress would have shaped their understanding of the word, authors like Turberville appreciated many different connotations of the word "coy"—as shy or disdainful *and* soothing or stroking, etc.—and often employed the word "coy" in ways that account for its many meanings. More broadly, a reader's understanding of the word would be further informed by a text's genre and literary context, by the gender of the figure that the word described, as well as by readers' familiarity with contemporary conventions of coyness. When reading Arthur Golding's Englished translations of *Metamorphoses*, an early modern reader probably understood the image of Europa "coying," or stroking, the bovine Jove as a description of physical contact and also appreciated the subtle suggestion that, in appearing as a gentle, white bull, Jove is able to seduce and "soothe" the shy, modest Europa. Likewise, when he transcribed Carew's poem about A. L. into his miscellany, a member of the Inns at Court likely interpreted her "being coy" as shy and virginal conduct *but* also as libidinous affectation.

⁷ These uses exemplify some of the most common meanings of "coy" found in contemporary definitions: "Of a person. Displaying modest backwardness or shyness. . . not responding readily to familiar advances"; "to render quiet"; "to stroke or touch soothingly, pat caress"; "to blandish, coax, gain over by caresses or coaxing"; "To instigate or stir up to action." *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "coy," accessed: July 8 2015, <http://www.oed.com.exaccess.libraries.psu.edu>.

The wide range of coyness, then, kindled many intersecting connections of motivation, type of action, and personal intent that across generic boundaries. Similarly, for scholars, a narrow or broad understanding of coyness matters because that perspective encourages fuller interpretations of coyness in canonical texts and bolsters new interconnections between texts of different genres and topics. Because I understand the term in its broader usage, I show that poems depicting a coy mistress may employ that vocabulary to evoke a variety of motivations in their addressees and that other canonical works employ “coy” figures in surprising ways. In *Much Ado about Nothing*, I have found that, when Hero associates Beatrice’s disdain with the “coy haggards of the rock,” Shakespeare invokes the skittishness of frightened falcons to contrast with Beatrice’s controlled and rhetorically-sophisticated self-representation. Likewise, a wider view of coy conceits shows that, when an early modern writer employed the word “coy,” he or she exploited an assortment of resonances (historical, classical, literary, religious, or social). John Milton, for instance, invokes this range when he talks of Eve yielding with “coy submission, modest pride, / And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay” (4.410–11). He may have forecasted Eve’s fall, suggesting that she was affecting submission; contrariwise, he may have meant to invoke the coyly chaste models of Lucrece and Penelope. Alternatively, he might have appreciated her “amorous delay” as an attitude that invites Adam to action.

At its core, then, the purpose of my dissertation is two-fold. First, I seek to correct the gross generalizations and assumptions that scholars have previously brought to their interpretations of coyness in early modern English literature. The persistent focus on the figure of the coy mistress has blinded us to the other intensely contradictory and deeply productive discourses of coyness active in early modern England. Second, I aim to recover the richness of meaning and diversity of thought that early modern readers would have brought to their

interpretations of the figures and discourses of coyness. Reassessing how early modern readers recognized the discourses of coyness promotes more incisive interpretations of literary figures and more effective appreciations of what early modern writers mean when they said that someone was “being coy.”

I. Early Modern Vocabularies of Coyness

A preliminary keyword search in EEBO suggests that, in its collection of surviving works from 1500–1670, the word “coy” appears over 2,500 times.⁸ Comparable words like “shy” or “disdain” appear less or more frequently; “shy” appears less than 1,000 times in the same time frame, but “disdain” appears well over 5,000 times. Though these numbers are hardly precise, they still give a ballpark sense of the popularity of the word “coy” in the consciousness of early modern English speakers. Though the term was not as common as some words, it was hardly a rare word, if these numbers are to be believed. The concept of coyness was something that readers and writers would have been familiar with. But what did this concept mean to them, and how can I recreate those connotations? First, I consider the linguistic origins of the term in many different genres. Second, I recognize that the word “coy” signaled many different meanings and exemplified a number of behaviors (from the virginal to the lascivious), moods (from the manipulative to the bashful), and personae (from the resisting to the coaxing).

To begin, the origin of the word “coy” is rooted in a sense of quietness. The *OED* states that the English word “coy” can be traced to the French *coi* and hence is closely tied to the Latin *quietus* or *quietus*, meaning “at rest or still.”⁹ In Middle and Early Modern English, the term also

⁸ Of course, these numbers are not exhaustive, as they do not account for misspellings, missing words, or computer error. However, these numbers give us a preliminary sense of the relative popularity of the term “coy.”

⁹ For more on the Latin origins of the term “coy,” see René Hoven, *Lexique de la Prose de la Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 457.

was related to the action of “rendering something quiet.” The originary senses of “coy” as both “an act of soothing” and “the state of being quiet,” then, show why early modern readers conceived of the word as both a verb and as an adjective. A state of “quietness” is gender-neutral, not necessarily related to sex and courtship, and emphasizes stillness and silence over display and flirtation. While the word “coy” incorporates a range of behaviors and moods starting with quietness, the concept could also include a blending of calmness, reticence, and reluctance.

That the term originates from an idea of “quietness” reshapes interpretations of early modern English usage of the word “coy” in a variety of contexts—but the conception of coyness far exceeds the limits of quietness. For example, the word could describe the tense, verbal silence of a court scene, as accounts of diplomatic negotiations suggest, even as the term could describe the arch silence of a disdainful mistress. In such cases, the conception of coyness encompasses more than mere stillness; instead, the term might emphasize the edgy, cunning silence of a courtier or might signal the affected, calculated nature of a woman’s verbal snub. In texts interested in hunting and falconry, to “coy” a falcon was to “quiet” the bird’s bodily restlessness but was also to direct a falcon’s actions, to render it obedient to the hunter’s aims. Hence, the coaxing of a hunter was a logical outgrowth of its original meaning—but a significant deviation from the idea of quietness. Likewise, the word “coy” could signal the shy and tentative actions of a reserved soul, as Herbert’s writing often suggests. Such reserve seems to evoke the “quiet” stillness of a soul—a peaceful image rather than one of tension or activity—but also reinforces that sinful pride often motivates such spiritual coyness. Even the sort of coyness associated with the disdainful, Petrarchan mistress takes on a different significance as a behavior associated with quietness. Because the word “coy” emphasizes the actions of a shy mistress (her silence and her

coldness), early modern readers probably saw her as an active figure, someone who deliberately assumed the persona of a reticent, silent woman in order to inspire further devotion and attention from her admirers.

While the term itself activates many different overtones of edgy silence and affected reserve, writers often implied the themes of coyness without explicitly employing the word “coy.” Frequently, I have found that descriptions of silence or reserved conduct as well as accounts of disdainful or seductive behavior can hint at deeper connections to coyness that may be in play in a text. For example, as critics have picked up on, texts that dwell on the actions and silence of a reticent female beloved frequently evoke the idea of coyness without using the term. Images of a woman with a contemptuous bearing or a mistress with a smirking, blushing mien trigger associations with coyness. In amatory poetry, a scornful and disdainful mistress is often implied by her refusal to speak and to acknowledge the disaffected speaker’s suit. Sermons or moral treatises directed at young women, such as Haly Heron’s *A New Discourse of Morall Philosophy* (1575), also draw on these connotation to elucidate improper behavior in young women.

An essayist and euphuist, in *A New Discourse*, Heron writes an exposition complaining of young women’s idleness and flirtation, and his screed vilifies those who imitate virginal conduct. One passage in particular exemplifies how the language of coyness can disparage the “slight practices of young women” who intrigue suitors through silences. They “feed . . . wyth looks . . . with loue; . . . with sporte and . . . with spite; . . . with fauoure, some with disdeyne.”¹⁰ In this description, the feigned reluctance and “disdeyne” of these “slight practices” operate like a sort trap; the women’s “looks” and “disdeyne” “feed,” captivate, and eventually entrap

¹⁰ Haly Heron, *A New Discourse of Morall Philosophy, entitled The Kayes of Counsaile* (London, 1575), 78–79. For more on Heron’s career as an essayist, see Virgil B. Heltzel, “Haley Heron: Elizabethan Essayist and Euphuist,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 16.1 (1952): 1–21.

potential suitors. With the image of these women “feed[ing]” their potential lovers with flirtatious reticence, Heron may even invoke the idea of the coy-duck, or the decoy. To “feed” is both to nourish and to “strengthen” or “build up”: like a coy-duck that promises safety and food to water, such women encourage their suitors’ attention, feeding them with false promises. These silent activities of disdain are related to coyness, even when the word does not appear, because they anticipate the readers’ familiarity with the broad vocabulary of coyness. In their descriptions of a woman’s cold, calculated silence and of her physical stillness, Heron and other writers describe figures of coyness that intrigue rather than rebuff. When early modern readers saw descriptions such as these, they almost certainly would have thought of one or more types of coyness.

Just as accounts of a mistress’s premeditated silence signal a type of seductive coyness, descriptions of bashful modesty, respectful silence, and quiet stillness often invoke the figure a virginal, coy woman. For example, Juan Luis Vives’s *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* (translated 1524) urges young women to not speak to outsiders and to affect an air of silence and caution when they venture outside the house—all so that they may not be taken in by the “decoy of love.”¹¹ In the same vein, a 1521 translation of Pizan’s *City of Ladies* praises shy, bashful conduct in young women. Pizan, through Ansley, advises her readers that “vyrgynes in the state of maydenhode” should be “clene, simple, coy, and without ydelnesse.”¹² In their encouragement

¹¹ Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, trans. Virginia Walcott Beauchamp (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002). As the translator of this volume notes, Vives’s volume was reprinted frequently throughout the sixteenth century. Its use of coy vocabulary to describe a virgin’s actions is echoed by other conduct manuals of the period, including Robert Cleaver’s *A Godly Form of Householde Governement* (1598) and Richard Brathwait’s *The English Gentlewoman* (1631).

¹² Christine de Pizan, *City of Ladies*, trans. Brian Ansley (London, 1521). For more on the idea of virginity in *City of Ladies*, see Angela Jane Weisl, “The Widow as Virgin: Desexualized Narrative in Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la Cité des Dames*,” in *Constructions of Widowhood and Virginity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Cindy L. Carlson and Angela Jane Weisl (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 49–62. For more on Pizan’s influence on the early modern English canon, see Kevin Brownlee, “Christine de Pizan: Gender and the New Vernacular Canon,” in *Strong Voices, Weak Histories: Early Modern Women Writers and the Canons of England, France, and Italy*, ed. Pamela Joseph

of modesty, downcast eyes, and clean simple life, these descriptions of a young virgin's bashful conduct draw on the quiet behavior associated with coyness. But unlike the intriguing silence of a mistress, these images aim to instruct their readers in a type of coyness that protects and insulates.

Just as writers who praise virgins see coy conduct as an attitude that can protect, authors interested in non-amorous courtship of various kinds also employ the language of coyness to characterize the calculating and manipulative actions of courtiers. In early modern English, "courting" is only loosely tied to the wooing of a woman—in contrast to our strong association of courtship with romantic relationships. The term "courtship" calls to mind, first, courtiers' skills in discretion and diplomacy—skills that a courtier deployed in service of his or her best interests.¹³ The affected postures of courteousness and subtle tact described in courtesy manuals of the day exemplify a key concept of coyness: the act of paying suit—of approaching and courting someone, either a man or a woman—was meant to impress and manipulate an addressee into favoring the suitor. A coy courtier, like a canny virgin or an arch mistress, will not always say what he or she thinks, but will speak to persuade, to sway, and to entice.

My broad examination of coyness ultimately comes back to the roles of wooers and mistresses in order to analyze anew how early modern writers construct their depictions of love and courtship.¹⁴ In literature, writers describe the performative and self-conscious flattery of

Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 99–120. The tradition of such advice was preserved in protestant texts like Philip Stubbes's *Cristal Glass for Christian Women* (London, 1591) and Girolamo Fracastoro's *The Maiden's Blush: Or Joseph's Mirror of Modesty* (London, 1620).

¹³ As Michael C. Schoenfeldt has noted, early modern poets, like George Herbert, were often versed in the language of refusal and delay. Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Power and Prayer: George Herbert and Renaissance Courtship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 219–220. For more on the role of flattery in early modern courtship theory, see Frank Whigham's *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 98–100.

¹⁴ Some scholars have explored romantic courtship in the early modern period, for example, through the lens of platonic relationships or the carefully orchestrated interactions of courtly love. For more on the courtly love tradition, which is admittedly a modern construct, see Roger Boase, *The Origins and Meaning of Courtly Love: A*

woosers using the same vocabularies that they apply to the alluring, resistant behaviors of mistresses. Both wooers and mistresses feign and flatter in order to achieve their goals of sexual gratification, devotion, or isolation. I will look at some of these coy tropes in more detail in Chapter 2, but for now, the point is that words other than “coy,” and descriptions of actions that do not explicitly contain the word “coy,” would nonetheless have invoked the conception of coyness with their references to disdainful conduct, manipulative or affected goals, and feigning or deceptive conduct. With these varieties of coy vocabularies, early modern authors represent the mistress as a woman who exerts control *through* her feigned attitude of disdainful scorn. They also depict figures like the virgin using the language of coyness to denote that her behavior could be an assumed performance of manipulation and dissimulation.

II. Gender, Women, and Desire in Conceptions of Early Modern Coyness

Given that my study of coyness investigates a key language of gender, courtship, and desire for early modern English speakers, I build upon other feminist studies that challenge earlier, narrower views of women’s limited roles in Renaissance literature. Understanding how writers use coy vocabularies to describe women in the social situation of wooing is one of the key contributions of my analysis.¹⁵ My study overturns a sense of coyness as *only* a restrictive vocabulary used by male speakers to belittle unwilling or uninterested Petrarchan mistresses. My close attention to the uses and significance of coy conceits also exposes early modern writers’ more generous interpretations of the gendered boundaries of men and women’s behavior in

Critical Study of European Scholarship (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977). For a more recent and critical assessment of the courtly love traditions, see James A. Schultz, *Courtly Love: The Love of Courtliness and the History of Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). In her discussion of the problems of the courtly love tradition, Joan Kelly-Gadol calls “spiritual love [platonic or courtly]” that idealizes a mistress “a double standard.” Joan Kelly-Gadol, “Did Women Have a Renaissance?,” in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 137–64, 140.

¹⁵ My study is indebted feminist theorists like Judith Butler, Simone de Beauvoir, and Julia Kristeva.

courtship—these boundaries are far more pliable and flexible than the stereotypes of the disdainful mistress or the desolate Petrarchan wooer allow. In this section, then, I situate my study of coyness amidst wider trends of scholarly inquiry and articulate the general method of my research.

Theorizing Gender and Desire in Early Modern Coyness

My study draws inspiration from scholarly conversations about depictions of female desire and about Renaissance expressions of sexual desire more broadly. Previously, scholars interested in the idea of coyness typically assumed clear boundaries between the actions of a reluctant, scornful mistress and those of a devoted, but rejected wooer. In this vein, scholars like Gordon Braden and William Kerrigan helpfully contextualized the standard ideas of coyness (as only the purview of the coy mistress). With Braden, Kerrigan identifies coyness as an offshoot of Petrarchan influence and Ovidian discourses. Tracing how Freudian resonances and studies of flirtation might impact the scholarly reception of the early modern coy mistress, Braden and Kerrigan defines coy conduct as “the behavior of a courted woman who will accept the suit [of a man] but delays this revelation until the courtship has met certain standards, [it] becomes itself a completed act.”¹⁶ Importantly, Kerrigan and Braden ground coyness in the Renaissance history of ideas, in the tradition of courtly love poetry, and its twin pursuits of women and fame, but they still only look for the coy mistress as they have already understood her. My own work picks up several threads of Kerrigan and Braden’s aim, but their works operates under the assumption that coyness only marks women’s responses to “to the potential fragility of male love.” I propose

¹⁶ William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden, “Milton’s Coy Eve: *Paradise Lost* and Renaissance Love Poetry,” *ELH* 53.1 (1986), 27–51, at 30. See also William Kerrigan, “A Theory of Female Coyness,” *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 38.2 (1996): 209–222; Joshua Scodel, “The Pleasures of Restraint: The Mean of Coyness in Cavalier Poetry,” *Criticism* 3.2 (1996): 239–79; and Joshua Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and the Politics of Anti-Court Love Lyrics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 36–39.

that coyness should be looked at not as a universally gendered response to “male love,” but as a performative category of control in its own right.

Joshua Scodel examines coyness in the Platonic love lyrics of the Stuart courts and in the marital politics of Milton’s epic, and though his interest in coyness as a relevant subsidiary to his book-length analysis of the “conflict between erotic extremism and traditional social norms,” his essay on the Cavalier poets still relies on the basic markers of the mistress (147).¹⁷ For Scodel, coyness is an early marker of the eroticized, noble mean—the vibrancy of delayed desire, the space between fruition and denial (as Suckling would have it) becomes an end goal for these poets. Though Scodel’s argument introduces a particularly useful model for considering coyness for this study, for he in that it blends a serious treatment of gender relations with a recognition that erotic poetry, for seventeenth-century audiences, was frequently a lens for non-romantic concerns. But this assumption still relies on ideas of coyness as a metaphor of the silent woman responding to a male lover. Alternatively, I suggest that gendered coyness served as a flexible model of postponement and interaction that early modern authors and readers employed variously.¹⁸ Readings like Kerrigan’s, Braden’s, and Scodel’s understand coyness only through the behavior of female characters, and their definitions of coyness are explicitly gendered female, thereby obscuring the wider applications of early modern coyness as a vocabulary for imagining female and male conduct in wooing relationships, diplomatic suits, and non-amorous courtships.

¹⁷ Joshua Scodel, “The Pleasures of Restraint: The Mean of Coyness in Cavalier Poetry,” *Criticism* 3.2 (1996): 239–79. Joshua Scodel, “*Paradise Lost* and the Classical Ideals of Pleasurable Restraint,” *Comparative Literature* 48.3 (1996): 189–236. In his illuminating study on the influence of Aristotelian ideas on early modern erotics and poetics, see Joshua Scodel, *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002), see especially Chapter 5 and 6.

¹⁸ William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden, “Milton’s Coy Eve: *Paradise Lost* and Renaissance Love Poetry,” *ELH* 53.1 (1986), 27–51, at 30. See also William Kerrigan, “A Theory of Female Coyness,” *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 38.2 (1996): 209–222; Joshua Scodel, “The Pleasures of Restraint: The Mean of Coyness in Cavalier Poetry,” *Criticism* 3.2 (1996): 239–79; and Joshua Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and the Politics of Anti-Court Love Lyrics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 36–39.

More recently, Joshua Eckhardt charts how private compilers embraced the vocabulary of coyness to lampoon kings and adulterers, and his reading introduces the most capacious definition of coyness to date.¹⁹ For Eckhardt, coy conceits were just some of the many vocabularies that early modern compilers employed throughout surviving miscellanies. Though his argument relies on the idea that many literary narratives (including that of the coy mistress) could be bent to non-canonical purposes, Eckhardt does not question what that means for the idea of coyness in Renaissance literature. Though with Eckhardt I recognize the value of considering coyness as a useful tool in political commentary, I argue that the abundance of coy motifs in miscellanies often allows poets to play the ideas of coyness themselves in a way independent of the immediate political climate.

Throughout my study, I turn scholars' attention to coyness as a rhetorical approach and emphasize that authors depicted coy conduct as a balancing act, in particular in the dialogue between the author as the seducer and the audience as the recipient of rhetorical appeals. These prototypical coy mistresses, then, cast a long but subtle shadow over Renaissance literature. Forbidden, beautiful fruit, she enticed the proverbial male writer and male reader because she resisted wooing, captivated them because she displayed herself to them, and disturbed them because she concealed herself from them. But the coy mistress also enticed the female writer because the mistress controlled herself and her environment. She also disturbed them because she was exposed to men's gazes and men's interpretations. In many ways, the wooed mistress and coyness itself were defined by paradox, by inconsistencies in definitions and by contradictions in performance. But those paradoxes, ironically, are what make coyness an attractive scholarly subject, as they extend not just to the mistress but to the concept itself. In this

¹⁹ Joshua Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and the Politics of Anti-Court Love Lyrics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); see especially Chapters 1 and 4.

study, I hope to reopen those paradoxes. I also hope to recapture the range and richness that she symbolized for early modern writers and readers. Surprisingly, the coy mistress of literature may sometimes be decidedly uncoy—her secrets open to perusal, her significance to female writers clear. At other times, it is the murkiness of coyness that is the point. Throughout their portrayals of courtship and romance, Renaissance authors often confronted the reality that both mistress and coyness itself might be beyond full comprehension. It is time that Renaissance scholars did the same.

Other scholars interested in Renaissance perspectives on female sexual desire and women's sexual agency have since offered fuller accounts of the nuances and subtleties of women's and men's behavior in courtship settings. For example, contrary to the vision of feminine passivity idealized in marriage manuals, Margaret Ezell and her contemporaries have shown that women had a great deal of agency in arranging marriages and in romantic assignations.²⁰ Similarly, Valerie Traub and others have seen depictions of same-sex attraction (as in Shakespeare's comedic heroines) articulating a vocabulary of subjectivity and desire for women.²¹ In the field of poetry, scholars like Heather Dubrow, Dorothy Stephens, and Ilona Bell have demonstrated that early modern poets do not offer a one-note vision of male-female desire in the Petrarchan mode, but rather render complex, even contradictory, impressions of desire that often overturn the tropes of the passive, aloof woman and the active, pursuing man.²² Wendy

²⁰ Margaret Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987). Similarly, Karen Newman analyzes women's responses to the dehumanizing rhetoric of anatomy books. Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 4–12.

²¹ Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 18–21. See also, Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Penny Gay, *As She Likes it: Shakespeare's Unruly Women* (New York: Routledge, 2002); and, Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²² Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Dorothy Stephens, *Limits of Eroticism in Post-Petrarchan Narrative: Conditional Pleasure*

Wall's *Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (1993) provides a critical framework for considering gender and authorship in early modern literature, particularly for female-voiced writing. Wall's brilliant analysis of the different gendered positions that male and female writers took up in print presages the work that my dissertation will do. In particular, her careful handling of authorship as a contentious, particularly gendered position parallels the idea that coyness was not only seduction but facilitation, a script of response and control between authors and readers. Following Wall's lead, Edith Snook's *Women, Beauty, and Power: A Feminist Literary History* (2007) Patricia Pender (on women's use of the modesty topos), Lynette McGrath (on female subjectivities) and many have extended this discussion. As these scholars show, Renaissance expressions of romantic and sexual desire were nuanced in their goals and varied in their appearances.

Following in the footsteps of Ezell, Bell, Dubrow, and others, I explore how the full range of coy vocabularies disrupts any scholarly fixation on the coy mistress. In fact, authors used the diversity of coy conceits to explore the immense variety of purposes that could define such conduct: a depicted woman might act coyly towards a wooer because she desires him, because she fears him, because she has a genuine lack interest in him, or because she wants autonomy from men generally. Through the vocabularies of coyness, in fact, writers often portray women as more than simple objects of desire but as subjects who desire and achieve their own goals. Such a foundational shift suggests new readings of certain types of characters like the aloof mistress, the shrew, and the virgin, but also reestablishes the nuance of emotion and motivation that contemporary audiences brought to their readings of these seemingly stereotyped female figures. The contradictions inherent to coy conceits, for example, accentuate that early

from Spenser to Marvell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Ilona Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

modern readers may have relished reminders of a female beloved's underlying humanity and emotional complexity. Moreover, I demonstrate how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors often use coy conceits to strengthen their depictions of female characters like Milton's Eve and Thomas Middleton's Castiza. When authors describe certain female actions (not talking, turning away, blushing, or cajoling) as "coy," they accentuate not a woman's passivity but her potential for autonomous self-control and self-awareness.

My approach—attending to the language and vocabularies of coyness which early writers employed to depict women and men—also follows that of scholars like Edith Snook and Kathryn Schwarz. Both look in detail at specific conceits in early modern literature, tropes of female beauty or depictions of submissive women, to reevaluate how early modern writers would have interpreted them. Snook and Schwarz show how female characters maintain some sense of agency and autonomy *within* the strictures of early modern patriarchal culture. For example, Snook's study of beauty culture in the early modern period looks at how women writers appropriated traditional standards of beauty to empower their female characters.²³ In her astute analysis of writers such as Cavendish and Wroth, she shows them imaginatively manipulating tropes of female beauty into a symbol of power for female characters. For example, Snook charts how Cavendish took a commodified, troped form of beauty—long, flowing hair—and made it a sign of the authority of the virginal, cross-dressing heroine of "Assaulted and Pursued Chastity." In a similar way, my dissertation explores how Cavendish and other writers took the concretized trope of the coy mistress and turned it into a conceit that allowed them to speak on their own. Cavendish's corpus (especially her plays and autobiographical writing) exhibits a sophisticated and nuanced engagement with the traditional and unconventional aspects of coyness. Similarly,

²³ Edith Snook, *Women, Beauty, and Power in Early Modern England: A Feminist Literary History* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011), 21–35. For a similar consideration of cosmetic culture and agency, see Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

Schwarz's analysis of female characters in early modern drama demonstrates how women's acceptance of conventional moral commands, as when a young virginal character like Hero submits to her elders' choice of a husband, gave them an agency that unsettled conventional gender dynamics.²⁴

My study expands the efforts of Snook and Schwarz to restore a vocabulary by which early modern writers described, interpreted, and questioned the role of the female voice. For characters who are virgins, for example, the language of coyness can bolster the sense of their self-control. Take, for example, the Lady in Milton's *Comus*. In the masque, as I will explore in Chapter 4, Milton employs vocabulary related to coyness to establish the Lady's consistent and persistent resistance as intentional. Similarly, a broader awareness of coyness exposes a sense of certain female characters' manipulation of wooing practices. Consider the figure of Venus in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*—a work which I examine more fully in Chapter 2. Venus is generally thought of as an aggressive, even masculine, character, one opposed to the effeminate and virginal Adonis. But Shakespeare uses the language of coyness to show her careful shifts between different types of soothing and calming behavior: she is hardly one-dimensionally aggressive. Rather, Venus is canny, manipulative, and thoughtful in her wooing of Adonis. Authors like Milton and Shakespeare employed the language of coyness to express women's potential independence and self-control in amatory relationships.

While I am deeply interested in analyzing the multi-layered connections between early modern conceptions of coyness and depictions of certain types of female characters, my study also reinterprets male behavior in the social setting of wooing. Scholars like Catherine Bates and

²⁴ Kathryn Schwarz, *What you Will: Gender, Contract, and Shakespearean Social Space* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 23–51. Other studies that revise our understanding of similar tropes in early modern literature include: Theodora A. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in the Early Modern English Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) and Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Pamela S. Hammon have looked at the figure of the male wooer in unconventional and helpful ways. For them, the male wooer is not in a position of patriarchal power; rather, his actions place him in an abject position or dehumanize him.²⁵ These readings complicate the position of male wooers by showing that they could be neither domineering aggressors nor subjected victims in courting settings. Building on Bates and Hammon, my analysis of coy vocabularies shows that authors often describe coying wooers to create equanimity between the parties in a wooing relationship. When described by coy vocabularies, a wooer's feigned postures of enticement can be thought of as behaviors meant to soothe a mistress into accepting his affections. In their depictions of coaxing and soothing wooers, contemporary writers recognize, perhaps even value, the potential benefits of a model of courtship that allows both sides to manipulate and to cajole. Similarly, suitors who employ coy wooing practices, such as Petruchio at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*, circumnavigate the resistance and fears of their beloveds. Such a practice invites a sense of equity and potential companionship between traditionally hostile parties like Katherine and Petruchio.

Overall, my dissertation participates in a larger feminist attempt to push the boundaries of women's possible roles in courtships and to reassess the way men and women interacted with each other in wooing relationships. One of the exciting surprises I have found in examining coyness in a wide range of texts is how the great diversity of the term unsettles what constitutes idealized "feminine" behavior (submissive, obedient, and chaste) in the period. As I will examine in Chapter 4, female characters described as "coy" can be interpreted as passive and feminine,

²⁵ Catherine Bates, *Masculinity, Gender, and Identity in the English Renaissance Lyric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 55–60; Pamela S. Hammon, *Gender, Sexuality, and Material Objects in English Renaissance Verse* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 42–50. See also Wendy Wall, *Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) and Melissa E. Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

but they often seem to act coyly to exert greater control over their relationships (amatory or otherwise), to pursue their goals more forcefully (private and public), and to redraw the boundaries of acceptable female behavior to include enticement, seduction, and resistance.

Finding Examples of Coyness

But how do we understand specific authors' methods of deploying the nuances of coyness? What should happen when we encounter coyness in a text? To answer these questions, I undertake a series of steps, drawing first on the many definitions of the word, then on specific literary contexts of genre and form, and then on the thematic resonances in a given text. While these steps may vary slightly from text to text based on a work's complexity and its use of coy vocabularies, the basic principle remains largely consistent.

First, I have identified characters and situations that can be read as coy or through the lens of coyness. A shy and retiring maiden's persistent refusals of a man, for instance, may suggest the possibility of coy themes, but so does the feigning dissimulation of a canny courtier. Sometimes, too, authors embed the idea of coyness into the very environment of their text. In Book 4 of the *Faerie Queene*, for example, Edmund Spenser uses the word "coy" and related vocabularies to signal the sort of hostile environment that Scudamour encounters on his quest to win Amoret. The isle itself is alluring and seductive but it conceals great temptation: Scudamour observes that there is no "sense of man so coy and curious nice, / But that mote find to please itself with all" and that "no hart could wish for any quaint device" but it appears and "did fraile sense entice" (4.10.22). By embedding the words "coy," "curious," and "entice" into his description, Spenser intensifies the contrast between the sporting wooers of the Elysion fields

and the true souls who “on chaste virtue grounded their desire” (4.10.26).²⁶ Spenser’s focus of coyness in this short description exemplifies the sorts of scenarios wherein I find significant examples of coyness as a façade or illusion. In most case, recognizing the themes of a scene—a focus on feigning, manipulation, or wooing, perhaps—helps to ground my reading of coyness.

Next, I determine what the primary sense of the word is in the given situation. If the word “coy” appears, I consider what its principal meaning might be. Sometimes, if the context is clear and the word is used incidentally, identifying a principal meaning of the word is relatively easy. In other cases, as in the excerpt from Spenser in the previous paragraph, I look for other words associated with coyness (“scorn,” “Art,” and “sport”) to recognize the primary use. For texts where the term “coy” does not appear, I might look for words that trigger an association with coyness. A concentration of words like “disdain,” “feign” and “scorn,” for instance, might trigger images of the aloof, contemptuous mistress, while a series of words like “bashful,” “shy,” and “timid” might signal associations with a chaste, nervous virgin. If the word “coy” appears in the context of a falconry manual, the term likely refers to the fearful actions of a falcon or the soothing reactions of a hunter; context makes the meaning clear. If the word appears in a description of Daphne, the author likely means to describe her timidity and reserve but may also refer to Apollo. The larger literary context and the generic connotations, then, are essential for figuring out the primary meaning of the term “coy.”

After defining the most likely primary meaning of the term, I consider how other connotations of coyness can affect my reading of the text. Often, by appealing to the various vocabularies of coyness, writers introduce ambiguity and complexity into a text. For example, a

²⁶ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (New York: Pearson, 2001). For more on the conception of coyness in *Faerie Queene*, see Sheila Cavanagh, *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in The Faerie Queene* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). For more on the poetry of courtship (both courtly and romantic), see Catherine Bates, *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

falconry manual often explicitly describes a haggard as “coy” and then embellishes that description with terminology more frequently associated with a disdainful mistress. In a similar vein, a sermonizer might compare a proud, sinful, “coy” Christian to a withdrawn and arch maiden—a comparison that accentuates the sin of withdrawing from God. In each case, there is both a literal primary meaning of the word “coy” and other connotations that can shape the particular conception of coyness in a text. Writers often juxtaposed different meanings of coyness to heighten the complexity of their texts: perhaps invoking references to lasciviousness and shyness, for example, to enrich a representation of a comedic heroine or to bolster the effectiveness of religious rhetoric. By considering such complexities, I restore the nuance of tone and the richness of meaning that contemporary writers like Shakespeare and Milton brought to their representations of many types of characters, from lusty women to chaste men.

A brief example will help illustrate what sorts of interpretations this method yields. Take Milton’s coy Eve. Scholars see her initial reticence as evidence either of a coquettish, sinful disposition or as testimony of her unsullied state. Her posture, of course,

. . . impli’d
 Subjection, but requir’d with gentle sway
 And by her yielded, by him best receivd,
 Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
 And sweet reluctant amorous delay.
 (4.307–311)²⁷

Scholars of feminism, theology, and literary history have extensively parsed the meaning of this passage as a whole—particularly the reference to her “reluctant” affections. Noting that this line is a close translation of a couplet from *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid’s manual on love, Mandy Green notes that the blending of reluctance and delay gives a sense of foreboding to these lines.²⁸ In their

²⁷ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

²⁸ Mandy Green, *Milton’s Ovidian Eve* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 66–67. Countering the obvious eroticism of this passage, by contrast, Wolfgang E. H. Rudat sees these lines describing Augustinian submission; Wolfgang E.

analysis of Eve's coyness, Kerrigan and Braden question the profusion of accented words in the last line, noticing how the modifying adjectives give the "word 'delay' . . . considerable libidinous power."²⁹ As Kerrigan's and Braden's reading suggests, scholars frequently dwell on the sexualizing undertones of this passage. The language of coyness and delay emphasize Eve's attractiveness and future downfall.

Grounded as they are in Milton's social and religious views, these readings make a great deal of sense—but this passage draws on many connotations of coyness that alter its significance. Of course, the primary meaning of the word "coy" in this passage is probably "reluctance" and "shyness." In the narrative, Eve's actions testify to her innocence and bashfulness. For an early modern reader, however, Milton's inclusion of words like "submission," "delay," "reluctance," and "amorous" would have suggested that Eve's shyness and modesty are meant to inspire Adam. The way that early modern readers interpreted Eve's coyness may have changed given the images of "yield[ing]" and "receiv[ing]." In "yielding," for instance, Eve is not acting reluctant and resistant towards Adam, in the tradition of the disdainful, aloof mistress. When she yields, she takes the part of the accepting woman. The word "yield" suggests that Adam may soothe her or that she accepts Adam's embrace. Milton's simultaneous use of overtly sexualized and intensely chaste imagery charges this scene with still other incongruous resonances. Even as the libidinous bent of these lines may forecast her eventual fall from grace, her "sweet reluctan[ce]" tries to present her as virtuous and innocent. Reluctance, as I have shown, is associated with coy virgins, who are virtuous and not sinful.

H. Rudat, "Ovid's *Art of Love* and the Augustinian Theology of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 21.2 (1987): 62–65. Joseph Anderson Wittreich considers this passage as evidence of her independence in *Feminist Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 87–88.

²⁹ Kerrigan and Braden, "Milton's Coy Eve," 42.

Together, the profusion of coy imagery in these lines enables Milton to achieve a greater complexity in his representation of Eve, one very much in keeping with his theological project: to show how humanity is “Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall” (3.99). His theological perspective encourages him to make Eve neither wholly virtuous nor entirely depraved, but rather defined by her potential to sin and repent. Her capacity for virtue or sin facilitates Milton’s portrayal of Eve as a humanized character who can receive divine grace or reject it. The language of “yielding” and of “sway[ing]” also draws attention to the nature of Eve’s and Adam’s relationship together. When read through the connotations of coyness, Eve’s “sweet reluctance” becomes an assumed posture, one that prompts a similarly coaxing and soothing reaction from Adam. Her actions of coy restraint, Milton suggests, are agential—a way of expressing herself that hints at her theological significance in the text.

As the above example shows, my study’s debt to the scholarly conversations about female agency can be seen throughout my dissertation. In Chapters 3 and 5, especially, these ideas come to fruition. In Chapter 3, I look at how the types of coyness that appear in husbandry manuals influenced early modern perspectives on the proper practices of wooing—as evidenced in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*. In Chapter 5, I discuss how early modern lyric poets employ the discourses of coyness to heighten the effectiveness of their depictions of male and female desire. Rather than offering a monotone presentation of an aloof woman rejecting the Petrarchan male wooer, these lyrics frequently repurpose the discourses of coyness to achieve new configurations of the typical wooing relationship. Throughout their diverse portrayals of coyness, I conclude, Renaissance authors confronted the limits and possibilities of women’s and men’s roles in courtship of many kinds. Using the language of coyness, Shakespeare and others

embraced a greater creative vision for early modern England's impressions of gender roles for women and for literature's representations of early modern courtship and wooing.

* * *

My dissertation comprises six chapters. Chapter 2 explores in further detail the most popular genres and literary contexts of early modern coyness. My close examination of the literary background of the conception of coyness provides a necessary framework for future chapters, creating a toolbox for further explorations of coy conceits. Looking at four different sites central to our understanding of the discourses of coyness—depictions of coying wooers; religious texts; courtly literature; and hunting manuals—I show what varieties of coyness are commonplace in seventeenth-century English and how those varieties of meaning and circumstance are intricately connected to one another. My extended exploration establishes a solid foundation for considering coyness's flexibility as a vocabulary of gendered behavior and sexual desire.

Building on the tools and definitions that are provided in the second chapter, Chapter 3 incisively considers how a specific discourse of coyness—that found in hunting manuals—can restructure our understanding of *Taming of the Shrew*. By attending to how Shakespeare incorporates the language of coy falconry—in the play's movement verbs; in Petruchio's use of falconry metaphors; and in the couple's invocation of soothing language—I radically change the understanding of Petruchio as a good hunter. This close reading demonstrates unequivocally Shakespeare's awareness, use, and modification of coy motifs. My analysis also shows how contemporary writers employed the discourses of coyness as a source of sustained thematic metaphors.

Similar to the close attention to hunting metaphors in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 confronts head-on a dissonant vocabulary of coyness: the seemingly oxymoronic figure of the coy virgin. In this chapter, I reexamine the vocabularies of coyness used to describe the Lady in Milton's *A Masque at Ludlow Castle* and Castiza in Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*. These vocabularies of feigning, blushing, and scorning subtly and systematically alter the portrayal of virginal characters. Through those discourses, Milton and Middleton foster a persona of self-control and agency in their young female characters. Likewise, the complexity of coy conceits rejects the simple moral scripts of female behavior produced in early modern conduct manuals and calls into question the role of coy conduct as a measure of a woman's virtue. This chapter's case studies emphasize how each writer uses the language of coyness and virginity to create more dynamic and autonomous characters—exemplifying the artistic potential that the flexibility of coy vocabularies allowed.

While the third and fourth chapters provide close studies of the effects of coy conceits in specific works, Chapters 5 and 6 take a broader view, focusing on early modern readers and early modern authors, respectively. In Chapter 5, I investigate how early modern readers engaged with a variety of discourses of coyness in concert, as they collected manuscript verse. I demonstrate that, in manuscript miscellanies, early modern readers record many types of coy vocabulary, placing those different narratives in conversation with one another. Though the image of the reluctant disdainful mistress underpins many of these lyrics, the interplay of coy vocabularies exposes poets' witty ambivalence towards coy conceits. Sometimes female-voiced poetry, for example, questions the justness of accusations of coyness or turns a similar accusation back on a male speaker. Early modern lyric poets use coy discourses to describe acts of feigning in men

and women, to define wooers' attempts to influence beloveds, to characterize lovers' secret rendezvous, and to criticize the culture of coyness itself.

From the emphasis on early modern readers in Chapter 5, I turn in Chapter 6 to how a woman writer—Margaret Cavendish—employs the vocabularies of coyness to conceptualize her own authorial persona. At once modest and flashy, Cavendish is not typically associated with coyness in any form. But she was, in fact, a commentator on early modern conceptions of coyness, particularly in her long collection of stories, *Nature's Pictures* (1656, 1671). The scope of Cavendish's writings and her ambitions enabled her to dissect the potential of coyness as a form of control for women. As a female writer, Cavendish embodied a unique blend of coyness—a combination she finds particularly effective in the paratexts of *Poems and Fancies* (1653, 1671) and *Sociable Letters* (1662). As a woman who calculated and flaunted her reticence or brashness to charm and persuade her audiences, Cavendish's authorial presentations were nothing if not deliberate display.

The study of early modern coyness is deeply intertwined with the issues of identity and self-fashioning that are at the heart of so much of early modern literature. My exploration of the diverse meanings and vocabularies associated with coyness shows how Tudor and Stuart push the boundaries of desire and identity, particularly as those representations depict women's expressions of sexual desire. With this common vocabulary, writers from Shakespeare to Cavendish are able to celebrate and challenge how men and women express affection for each other and receive love from one another. The vocabularies of quietness and quieting, engagement and retreat that demarcates the heart of coyness for early modern English speakers provide an essential method for exploring those different perspectives, and my study restores that rich vocabulary to scholarly inquiries.

The fundamental focus of my dissertation is, then, on early modern authors and readers, on how they employed the vocabularies of coyness to rethink gendered behavior in courtship, in writing and reading, and in society. Because the vocabularies of coyness are shaped by different conditions and new mediums, understanding the impulses that motivate expressions of coyness affords a different way of encountering old texts. The human desires to be appreciated, to enjoy affection, to express appreciation, and to maintain relationships with others are eloquently expressed in Renaissance literature. My dissertation restores that vocabulary, a restoration that demands and encourages scholars to return to figures like the coy mistress and meet them anew.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTIONS OF COYNESS BEYOND THE MISTRESS

Previously, I have established how early modern writers applied the vocabularies of coyness to figures other than the aloof, reluctant mistress and given some account of how those broad discourses enabled nuanced portraits of human interaction and sexual desire. In this chapter, I explore more deeply how early modern English writers used the conception of coyness, especially in settings outside of the traditional wooing scenario, to describe actions of dissimulation: from a courtier's disdain towards lesser gentlemen to a wooer's affectation of flattery to a sinner's pride towards God. Writers applied the wider concept of coyness in a variety of circumstances, including in sermons, letters, and husbandry manuals, to name a few. Those contexts shaped the development of the vocabulary of coyness by connecting it with figures other than the coy mistress or the reluctant virgin, and when literary writers use the vocabularies of coyness those discourses are colored by non-literary associations.

In this chapter, I consider four major discourses where writers frequently employed the vocabulary of coyness to characterize acts of feigning and manipulation: 1) wooing narratives where the wooer, rather than the mistress, is shown to "coy" or "court"; 2) devotional literature; 3) accounts of social and diplomatic situations; and 4) husbandry and hawking manuals. Though these types of coyness were clustered around specific discourses, each instance of coy vocabulary was not isolated within one strain of writing: descriptions of flattering wooers are affected by the associations of coyness with angry sinners. For instance, in "When I was young and fair," a manuscript poem attributed to Elizabeth I and likely composed on her separation from the Duke of Anjou, the word "coy" clarifies how Elizabeth balances her personal affections and her public obligations. By concentrating on the interconnectedness of the uses of coyness in

such texts from Elizabeth's manuscript poetry to John Preston's sermons, this chapter demonstrates that early modern writers employed coy conduct ambivalently: sometimes endorsing it as a posture of reserve and sometimes disparaging the effects of persuasive performance.

Establishing how writers utilized these different concepts of coyness is the goal of this chapter; however, my analyses also parse the deeper implications of these concepts, demonstrating how seemingly disparate figures like the coy sinner and the coy virgin can share certain common traits such as pride, restraint, and disdain. Moreover, my study shows how writers intertwine these connotations: the disdain and scorn of the mistress is similar to courtiers' assumed posture of reticence and flattery. My research highlights, for example, how writers equate the soothing and cajoling tones of a coying hunter with the flattery and gentle courtships of a suitor, an association that I consider more fully in *Taming of the Shrew* in Chapter 3. Ultimately, I accentuate how writers used the ideas of coyness to dramatize gendered acts of persuasive performance.

I. The Wooer who Coys and *Venus and Adonis*

In certain early modern genres such as poetry and comedies, writers often used the term coy to describe a counterpart of the mistress—the wooer who coys, who solicits a woman's affections with persuasions. When most critics think about coyness in the context of wooing, they think about a woman who blushes and avoids her wooer as Hero acts towards Claudio in *Much Ado about Nothing*. In fact, this figuration is radically limiting because wooers, frequently men, affect postures of interest and affection in order to pique their mistresses' emotional interest. As the OED records it, to court coyly was to “allure,” “coax,” and “court” another person, to “gain them

over by caresses or coaxing.”¹ In this employment, coyness is not just resistance or refusal on the part of a woman. It is a deliberate strategy on the part of a wooer to win a woman’s affections. Furthermore, because the word “coy” is employed to characterize the act of courtship and the act of resistance, writers likely perceived the actions of a reluctant woman and of a pursuing man as perhaps related. In fact, the difference between them is more ambiguous. The idea of the coying wooer and the coy mistress accentuates how similar their goals might be (to manipulate, to control, or to dissemble).

The Coying Pursuer—Alluring, Seducing, Assuming

Oftentimes, the drama, pageantry, and dissimulation associated with reluctant mistresses are consistent with depictions of coying wooers. Most interestingly, the word “coy” as a verb applies primarily to male wooers who are portrayed as more persuasive and subtle in their courtships and to describe wooers who assume aggrandizing postures of flattery and pride. In essence, the term “coy” can accentuate the allure of a foppish wooer’s boasts or the suave suitor’s placating rhetoric, so as to highlight the relative effectiveness of the described suitor’s pursuing approach.

In John Dennys’s *The Secrets of Angling* (1613), a verse treatise on the best practices in fishing, the description of a coying gallant assumes both an arch mistress and a flirtatious wooer. In a debate contrasting court wooing with fishing, Dennys condemns a lover’s coy flirtation as an inferior activity to fishing. In an “Objection,” a male speaker first contends that the best “pastime for a gentleman” is to be “some youthful gallant” that “with coy phrases court[s] his Mistris fan.”² Another speaker rebuts the previous assertion and claims that the “honest” sport of fishing is much better because it does not lead to cheating at cards or “beguil[ing] another’s wife” (10).

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, Online Edition, s.v. “coy,” accessed January 8, 2015, <http://www.oed.exaccess.libraries.psu.edu>.

² John Dennys, *The Secrets of Angling: The Choisest Tools, Baytes and Seasons* (London, 1613), (1, 2, 8).

This passage, first and foremost, relies on a reader's familiarity with the many meanings of coyness in wooing. The mistress holding the fan is "coy" in her refusal to speak with the gallant; the wooer is coying in his sweet "phrases" that should allure and soften the mistress's denials. Yet Dennys associates coyness with the pursuer in a very negative way: even if a coying gallant succeeds, he likely "beguiles" another man's wife, committing adultery in the process. Moreover, the verb "coy" emphasizes the skewed power dynamic between the mistress and the gallant. He is largely unsuccessful and speaks only to her fan. Dennys characterizes a coying wooer's pursuit as ineffective and worthless, but ironically, he encourages prospective anglers to use a similar skill set. To "coy" a reluctant woman is to "bait" her, to entrap and snare her. Dennys emphasizes these similarities to portray the coying ways of a lover as futile and demeaning and those of an angler as masculine and powerful. He encourages gentlemen to transfer their coying skills to a more rewarding arena where the masculine angler successfully catches his prey in the open stream. Though the role of the coying wooer is associated with powerlessness and deceit, the skills of coying and alluring still retain some usefulness for Dennys, emphasizing how multi-layered the resonances of coy vocabulary are.

Not all writers viewed the coying pursuer so negatively. The role of the coying wooer can even be performed by heroes and gods.³ For example, a 1614 translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* describes Anchises as the hero who "(In woody shades) his sports to proue, / Coy[ed] that powerfull *Queene of Loue*."⁴ This passage is a reference, of course, to how Aeneas's mortal father courted Venus. In this example, the figure of the coying wooer is associated with success and power, but his methods are still those of coaxing, alluring, and manipulating. The word

³ This use of the term echoes several discussions of Ovidian reception in early modern literature, including Leonard Barkan's famous study of *Metamorphoses*. Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 5–6.

⁴ Lucan, *Lucan's Pharsalia*, trans. Arthur Gorges (London, 1614), 409.

“coy” serves to aggrandize Anchises for his bold conquest of the goddess of love herself, but also suggests that his feat results not from subduing her with brute force but from skillful manipulation and “sport[ing]” rhetoric. Unlike Dennys, who dismisses the coying gallant because he is effeminate and foolish, the translator approves of Anchises’s approach because the goddess is more “powerful” than he is—to win her, he must allure and coax her. The feat of seducing “the powerful” Venus herself turns “coying” into a label of sexual prowess and a way to win over an impossible woman.

George Turberville’s *Epigrams* (a 1567 collection of verses) similarly describes a powerful male figure, Jove, who successfully coys his reluctant mistress. In Turberville’s lyric, “To a late acquainted Friend,” a lover laments the futility of his own wooing. To capture his plight, he contrasts his failure with Jove’s many romantic successes, including his pursuit of the enclosed Danaë. Turberville’s speaker marvels that, disguised as a shower of golden sparks, Jove “coyede / the closed Nunne in towre.”⁵ The passage equates the emotional barriers that the speaker faces with his own mistress with the tower that Jove invades. In “coying” the “close” nun, Jove overcomes not only Danaë’s emotional “close[ness]” but the physical barrier of her prison walls. For Turberville’s speaker, Jove’s courtship of Danae is an inspiration, giving him hope that he may coax and coy his own “closed” mistress.

In still other texts, the actions of the coying wooer are presented in a more ambiguous way: for example, in the flattering and coaxing persona of the determined Paris. In his 1567 translation of Ovid’s epistolary addresses between famous lovers, for instance, Turberville describes Paris as the pursuer who coys Helen. Helen herself is associated with the haughty,

⁵ George Turberville, “To a Late Acquainted Friend,” in *Epitaphs, Epigrams, Songs, and Sonnets* (London, 1567), 5.

disinterested mistress, as in John Dickenson's *The Shepherdes' Complaint* (1591).⁶

Turberville's argument opens with "Sir Paris [has] gone to Greece / faire Helena to coy" (1–2).⁷

In other words, Paris is going to Greece to allure, coax, and win Helen over. Early modern writers generally label Helen as coy, which makes Turberville's echo of the term in Paris's actions all the more striking. Transferring the term to Paris emphasizes that he comes to Lacedaemon with one goal—to win the reluctant Helen with the allure of his flattery. Paris's entire courtship is a cunning and calculated attack, one predicated on the idea that the married Helen will not be interested in his suit. In a way, Turberville's application of the coy conceit rehabilitates Helen as a sincerely reluctant, disinterested target of Paris's wooing. Paris's approach to wooing also draws upon the association of coyness with manipulations and deceitfulness. When Turberville describes how Paris woos Helen, his use of coy vocabulary shows the performative nature of Paris's seductive cajoling. While Menelaus is away, he "shewes his secret love / and what good will he beares" towards her (92). He "bragges of [his] stately stock" and "The Lady to allure, / his painted sheath he showed: / And in this wise his Pecoock plumes / The Trojan spred abroad" (93). In this scene, Paris's courtship is a calculated scheme, a series of careful emotional appeals meant to seduce Helen and overwhelm her coy reluctance and resistance. Choosing to show his "secret love" makes him sympathetic to her, soothing her potential objections. His bold "bragges" and his fine "peacock plumes" are impressive and enticing to the married Helen. The language Turberville uses demonstrates that Paris's approach to wooing is a performance, a display of affection meant to allure and coax Helen. His shows, allurements, and brags all demonstrate what the actions of a coying wooer

⁶ John Dickenson, *The Shepherdes Complaint* (London, 1596), 11. Helen along with Amaryllis is described as "coy . . . [with] a gadding humour."

⁷ Ovid, *The Herycall Epistles of the Learned Poet Publius Ovidius Naso*, trans. George Turberville (London, 1567), 83–100. Turberville makes frequent usage of the word "coy" in a variety of his texts, some of which we will address later.

could look like—an overt performance of interest and allurement that engages the coy mistress and overcomes her disinterest.

The point here is threefold. First, these texts demonstrate that the attribution of “coyness” to the pursuer in a wooing narrative is common. Far from assuming that coyness was merely an attribute of the pursued, early modern writers clearly conceive of men attempting to “coy” women into sexual relationships. Second, though some of these writers attach negative and feminine connotations to the verb “coy,” others deploy the word in positive ways and associate it with the amorous successes of traditionally masculine figures like Jove. The underlying assumptions of modern critics about “coyness”—that the term refers to a trait of the pursued female, and that it carries mostly negative connotations—would not necessarily have been made by early modern readers and writers. Third, the relative celebration or condemnation associated with coying was directly related to the power dynamics between the parties in a wooing relationship. To coy unsuccessfully was to be like Dennys’s gallant: to fail to move a disinterested woman, to be boring, unflattering, or not enticing enough. To coy successfully was to overcome great resistance (emotional or physical) and to soothe away a beloved’s disinterest or disdain. He may fawn or flatter in order to attract her attention. This diversity of meaning matters because it informs our reading of wooing narratives like *Venus and Adonis*. In that poem, the term “coy” refers both the youth who evades and the goddess who pursues, but the wider application of coyness establishes Venus’s role as a coying wooer who adapts her strategies of wooing to soften Adonis’s reactions.

Venus Coying Adonis in Venus and Adonis

Venus and Adonis, Shakespeare's 1593 version of the fatal episode from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, uses the concept of coyness (as coy disdain and coying seduction) to articulate Venus's shifting approaches to Adonis. Throughout his oeuvre, Shakespeare is an author who takes full advantage of the diverse meanings and uses of coyness and its associated vocabulary, as I will explore in more detail in Chapter 3. In *Venus and Adonis*, which reverses so many of the tropes of the reluctant virgin and the amorous suitor, he considers how it can be applied both to the pursuer and the pursued. Shakespeare uses the contradicting images of coyness to heighten the effect of his wordplay, to portray Venus as a non-aggressive, flexible wooer, and most importantly, to convey his canny exploration of the struggle for emotional control between Adonis and Venus, between the pursued, disinterested boy and the coaxing, seductive woman.

Critical consensus about Shakespeare's Venus has been hard to come by over the years. Some critics see Venus as only sexually and verbally aggressive.⁸ As Heather Dubrow remarks in her study of the goddess of love, Venus is "self-centered" and much of her linguistic prowess is an attempt to "dominate the conversation just as she dominates in so many other ways."⁹ Other critics describe her as one-note in her rhetorical approaches, trapped by the poem's "lack of closure," as Catherine Belsey calls it.¹⁰ Still other critics see Venus as at least somewhat ineffectual. Despite her status as the goddess of love, she is blind to the possibility of her

⁸ Joseph Wortis goes so far as to categorize *Venus and Adonis* as an early account of sexual harassment. Joseph Wortis, "Venus and Adonis: An Early Account of Sexual Harassment," *Biological Psychiatry* 5 (1994): 293–94.

⁹ Heather Dubrow, *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 95–96.

¹⁰ Belsey reads this lack of closure as the "marking of a specific moment in the cultural history of love" and desire. Catherine Belsey, "Love as Trompe-L'oeil: Taxonomies of Desire in *Venus and Adonis*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46.3 (1995): 257–76, at 260.

failure.¹¹ But I contend that critics have missed the diversity of Venus's coying strategies in this poem and thus have failed to appreciate Venus's self-conscious adjustments to Adonis. In fact, Shakespeare uses the diversity of coy motifs to engender Venus as an adaptive, coying suitor. The character does not stay in one mode of wooing but responds to her audience, adapting her performance of affection to soothe away Adonis's reluctance and disdain. Shakespeare's characterization of Venus as the coying wooer demonstrates how important the linguistic flexibility of coyness was in understanding the power dynamics of early modern literary romantic relationships.

In *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare starts with a conventional narrative associated with coyness, an innocent youth being chased by a sexually experienced wooer. Frustrated that her initial "bold-faced" wooing fails to move the youth, Venus exclaims, "flint-hearted boy! / 'Tis but a kiss I beg—why art thou coy?"¹² Her cry is easily recognizable as a transposition of an unhappy male lover who protests a female beloved's supposed unkindness. Shakespeare's phrasing draws on audiences' prior understanding of the functions of coyness found in wooing narratives and casts the goddess as a wooer inspired by Petrarchan ideals. Her exclamation suggests that Adonis only feigns his "flint-hearted[ness]," that like an arch mistress, he dissembles his disinterest. Shakespeare's appeal to Adonis's "flint-heartedness" may make Venus into a "comic seducer," as S. Clark Hulse calls her, because she is taking on a male role. The phrase "I beg" could also turn Venus into a misogynistic mockery of a wanton older woman.¹³ Venus's exclamation marks a shift in her rhetoric: calling Adonis "coy" signals to

¹¹ More recently, for example, Lauren Shohet has declared that Venus is an inflexible figure and that her "linguistic faculty leaves little room for alternatives." Lauren Shohet, "Shakespeare's Eager Adonis," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 42.1 (2002): 85–102, at 87.

¹² William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, in *The Poems*, ed. John Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹³ S. Clark Hulse, "Shakespeare's Myth of Venus and Adonis," *PMLA* 93 (1978): 95–105, 95.

readers that ideas of feigning and seduction are at work and that Venus herself may adjust to soothe away the flintiness of the cold-hearted Adonis.

After her cry “why art thou coy?” Shakespeare draws another popular figure of coyness, the knowingly sexual mistress, into his poem, as if to further drive home that Venus is an adaptable wooer. The goddess describes herself as a mistress who was earlier “full of coy disdain,” with Mars as the pursuer and Venus as the pursued (105). The poem thus uses the word “coy” to describe the enticing innocence of Adonis and the knowing sexiness of Venus, though both of these uses are a part of the coy mistress stereotype.

By telling the story of her own coy conduct, Venus changes her rhetorical strategy from overt seduction to more canny tactics. Previously, her attempts to soften his disdain have been aggressive not conciliatory. For instance, when he complains that she is “immodest,” she tries to overcome his disgust by “murdering [it] with a kiss”—in “murdering” his disdain with a kiss, Venus initially seeks to overwhelm his objections with metaphorical violence. Likewise, she vowed “never to remove” her hand from his body until he “take truce with her contending tears.” His resistance, however, triggers a change in her approach, causing her to coax and cajole. In her description of her coyness towards Mars, she tries to arouse Adonis’s interest not through direct confrontation but through reconciliation. With comments like “I have been wooed as I entreat thee now” (97–98), Venus attempts to inspire sympathy and empathy in Adonis. By describing how Mars softened her “scorn” by courting and “begg[ing],” she suggests that Adonis should similarly “sport and dance” with her. Mars, she remembers:

. . . for my sake hath learn’d to sport and dance,
To toy, to wanton, to dally, smile, and jest,
Scorning his churlish drum and ensign red,
Making my arms his field, his tent my bed.
(105–108)

In these images of “toy[ing]” and “dally[ing],” Venus exposes how she has enticed Mars with dissimulating scorn. She tries to entice Adonis by giving him an example of one who “jests” and “sports” with her: all to coax him into “toy[ing] and . . . smil[ing] with her.” In this shift in her strategy, Shakespeare dramatizes her awareness of the power dynamics between pursuer and pursued, and shows her cannily adjusting her wooing strategy to one of coaxing rather than outright conquest. Her script seems to cede romantic authority to the youth, but Venus still maintains control over the narrative of their courtship because she dictates the manner of it.

In his portrayal of Venus’s coaxing flattery, Shakespeare accentuates how she modulates her postures of attraction to stimulate and intrigue, turning the sexually-knowing refusals of the coy mistress into a posture meant to incite Adonis’s sexual interest. Critics like Belsey believe that Venus is “reduced to the role of suitor, overpowered by another’s beauty and subject . . . to indifference and disdain.”¹⁴ They see her attempts as ultimately a failure, but, for Shakespeare, Venus’s different strategies of wooing are canny. By reintroducing the image of the reluctant wooed woman, as she does in her story of Mars’ affection for her, Venus creates a space to restore “properly” gendered lines of seduction. As if recognizing that her aggressive stance has been discomfiting, she adjusts the narrative parameters of this wooing scene and encourages Adonis to take the masculine role in their wooing. Like Jove who overcomes the barriers protecting Danaë, Venus changes her conduct and her self-presentation to seem less threatening and more soothing. This posture makes her simultaneously powerfully masculine and cannily feminine, in that she woos aggressively by acting passive. Venus does not comically co-opt the place of the male wooer, as Hulse imagines. Rather, Shakespeare shows the goddess of love embodying both the role of a coying lover and a coy mistress in order to soothe and coax the disinterested youth.

¹⁴ Belsey, “Love as Trompe-L’oeil,” 262.

The clearest representation of Venus's affectation of powerlessness (in order to seduce) and the canniness of that strategy is made clear in her description of a kiss. She tells the youth,

Touch but my lips with those fair lips of thine,
 Though mine be not so fair, yet are they red—
 The kiss shall be thine own as well as mine.”
 (115–17)

Here, Venus imagines them as equal sharers in affection. The language of these lines blurs the distinction between the pursuer and the pursued by inviting Adonis to take the lead in the kiss, to pursue her. Shakespeare's internal rhyming of “thine and mine” across three lines obscures whose lips first touch whose, as if to overwhelm Adonis's objections with obfuscation. The shifting possessive pronouns—from Adonis's lips to Venus's and back again—blend the wooer and wooed together, giving the illusion that Venus and Adonis are equals in this relationship. But it is only an illusion. While Venus is offering Adonis the impression that she is more passive and they are equals, she retains the power of a coying wooer to refigure their relationship. Venus's experience as a knowing coy mistress and her familiarity with the patterns of coy wooing allow her to craft a different persona of seductive, submissive womanhood—a persona that may be more likely to coax and win over the reluctant Adonis while allowing Venus to retain control over him.

In these few lines, Shakespeare uses the idea of the coying wooer to show Venus as a coying wooer that aims to coax and cajole Adonis's affections rather than to force his attention. Instead of dismissing Venus's attempts as failures, my reading shows how Shakespeare categorizes Venus's postures of wooing as potentially alluring and enticing, giving her more agency and canniness than has been previously allowed. In the spirit of Turberville's image of Paris, who is bold in his flattery, eager to impress and win the disinterested Helen, Shakespeare's depiction of Venus praises her adaptability and willingness to use all the tools at her disposal

(from railing and remonstrating to coaxing and alluring) in order to create an environment that wins over Adonis. Though she ultimately fails to win over the youth, Shakespeare's presentation of Venus in these lines highlights her flexibility and canniness, as if to show how a female lover can employ the same abilities of enticement and seduction as a male wooer.

As Shakespeare's telling of the myth of Venus and Adonis shows, writers intertwine images of the lover who coaxes and the beloved who refuses to accentuate the feigned nature of such courtships. Early modern writers who depict a lover winning over his reluctant beloved likely appreciated the possibility that the positions and postures of suitors and mistresses are not as dissimilar as they might first appear. Rather, both wooers and wooed could assume affected postures of libidinous or disinterested intent: after all, just as a wooer's soothing tones and flattering disposition are meant to attract, a mistress's attitudes of disdainful scorn are meant to entice and seduce her suitors. In the language of coaxing and seducing, then, writers express how the actions of both mistresses and suitors can be feigned and how postures help them to connect with their addressees.

II: Coyness and Religious Devotion in George Herbert's "Unkindness"

Perhaps one of the more unusual discourses where the concept of coyness appears is in popular sermons and devotional literature. However, the vocabulary of coyness was widely accepted and useful in these texts. It appeared in sermons by writers from the 1570s onward, pamphlets by Puritan and other religious groups from the 1590s into the 1660s, and speeches and writings by both Royalist and Parliamentary authors in the turmoil of the 1630s and 1640s. Sometimes these writers employed the concept to address the sexual conduct of their women readers, but more often it described a Christian believer's pride or humility, or the posture of God towards a

believer. Writers of religious discourses predominantly used the term to conceptualize the contradictory impulses of Christian sacrifice and human depravity. In this section, I establish first the usefulness of the concept of coyness in devotional literature and then turn to the “Unkindness,” a poem from Herbert’s *The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*. That poem builds on the contradictions inherent in the term “coy” and its related religious associations to create a stirring exploration of the tension between selfishness and selflessness at the heart of Christian devotion.

This transposition of coyness from the court and courtship to the church should not be entirely surprising for modern scholars. As Marion White Singleton notes, in devotional literature, the Divine was often positioned as a ruler or wooer, and the believer as a vassal or wooed party.¹⁵ Just as a coying wooer seeks out his coy lady, so God pursues the Christian. In his sermon on the new life of a Christian’s soul, for example, Isaac Ambrose—a clergyman who was eventually ejected from the Church of England—uses the word “coy” to encourage introspection in his readers, in a metaphor that draws on romantic imagery but also moves beyond it. Meditating on the challenge of humility, he counsels readers to “be not coy and squeamish, the Lord may have better than you.”¹⁶ Ambrose warns his readers away from a reluctant and prideful attitude towards God. His use of the vocabulary of coyness stresses the potential intimacy of the relationship between God and believer. The phrase imagines how profound the relationship between God and the beloved might be—if the Christian believer would stop being “squeamish.” But the same image of coyness that promises intimacy also

¹⁵ Marion White Singleton, *God’s Courtier: Configuring a Different Grace in George Herbert’s Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 20–22. See also, Schoenfeldt, *Power and Praise*, 15–16. Of course, these works are hardly alone in its consideration of Herbert’s devotional literature. More recently, for example, Esther Gilman Richey has concluded that Herbert’s depictions of a “dying god” in his poetry invoke the “intimacy of lovers involved in an extraordinary exchange.” Esther Gilman Richey, “The Property of God: Luther, Calvin, and Herbert’s Sacrifice Sequence” *English Literary Renaissance* 78.2 (2011): 287–314, at 289.

¹⁶ Isaac Ambrose, *Doctrine and Directions but most especially the practice and behavior of a man in the act of the new birth* (London, 1650).

threatens. The phrase God “may have better than you” implies that God may see a coy Christian, proud and unwilling to be corrected, as unworthy of his time. It warns the reader (as wooers in love lyrics often do) that another Christian may serve God just as well. One of the sermons of John Preston, former chaplain of Queens’s College at Cambridge and an influential thinker for “godly” believers, makes a similar point. Preston reinforces the connection between a prideful Christian and an unhappy God by likening “a proud Christian [that] set[s] himselfe at an high rate, [to] a virgin that is coy and curious, thinking no man good enough for her” (13). Like Ambrose, Preston characterizes a Christian believer’s feeling of superiority and his unwillingness to be humble as a sin which separates him from the divine.

In devotional literature, then, coyness could characterize a sinner as proud and reluctant. Yet sometimes, an attitude of coy reticence could be a more positive trait. In the redeemed Christian who becomes inured to all temptation, the vocabulary of coyness underscores an intimate union with the divine. In *The Character of a Weaned Christian* (1675), for example, Samuel Smith writes that

A truly-weaned Frame, though it arise from Faith in Christ, working Self-emptiness and Self-Abasement, yet it grows up to a Holy-stateliness of Spirit, whereby the renewed Soul grows coy to all Temptations which study to defile its Virgin-Chastity. This is that *Spouse-like Girdle*, whereby the Christian is kept cleaving to the Lord's Alsufficiency for him, to constitute the Essence of true happiness.¹⁷

This use of the motifs of coyness, in the context of a metaphor of marriage to God, is the exact opposite of Preston’s and Ambrose’s. A coy attitude towards “temptation” is a key to intimacy with God, the “spouse-like girdle” which “constitutes the Essence of true happiness.” This passage associates the idea of coyness with Christian discipline and integrity rather than pride or sinfulness. Like Preston and Ambrose, Smith employs the image of the coy virgin—but for him,

¹⁷ Samuel Smith, *The Character of a Weaned Christian, The Evangelical Art of Self-Denial* (London, 1675), 85.

this coyness arises from true innocence and not from perversity. This sort of coyness increases the sense of intimacy between a believer and God.

In the “Unkindness,” a poem from his devotional collection *The Temple*, George Herbert meditates on the paradoxical impulses of Christian pride and Christian humility. Using the language of coyness, he focuses especially on the difference between the debt one owes to God and the obligation one has to friends. Herbert had a reputation for repurposing the motifs of the courtier and the suitor in his meditations on faith, as Singleton and others have established, which makes it easy to understand the appearance of the language of coyness in “Unkindness.” The title of the poem even brings to mind the common motif of an unkind coy mistress, but Herbert exploits the paradox of coy motifs in religious contexts to dramatize his own hesitancy and uncertainty. By setting up a sustained contrast between his feeling towards his friends and his God, Herbert makes the concept of coyness in religious contexts more than a warning against resisting the divine or a sign of his own humility. The poem and the use of the term become a symbol for the subtle tensions between one’s worldly and heavenly obligations.

The dramatization of the Christian struggle through the language of coyness begins in the poem’s first line. Herbert opens the poem by saying: “Lord, make me coy and tender to offend” (1).¹⁸ Most modern editions gloss “coy” as “reserved,” but the remainder of the poem exposes the potential breadth and ambiguity of the term. Herbert’s poem draws on one usage of coyness that can be paraphrased “reserved” or “cautious,” but he also invites the reader to consider other meanings of the word: the pride of a sinner, the feigned disinterest and scorn of the mistress, and even (as it relates to God) the pursuit and coaxing of the soul. At various times in the poem,

¹⁸ George Herbert, “Unkindness,” in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 338–39.

coyness could be a caution that leads to a grateful heart or a self-centered reserve that refuses to trust God. Herbert himself does not settle on a single meaning, and therein lies the poem's force.

Herbert's meditation explores his neglect of God, and the nuanced use of coyness accentuates the speaker's turmoil. As the full excerpt of the lyric shows, the poem is a direct address, even a prayer, to God, and its focus and meter show the subject's sense of unworthiness.

Lord, make me coy and tender to offend:
In friendship, first I think, if that agree,
Which I intend,
Unto my friends intent and end.
I would not use a friend, as I use Thee.

If any touch my friend, or his good name;
It is honour and my love to free
His blasted fame
From the least spot or thought of blame.
I could not use a friend, as I use Thee.

My friend may spit upon my curious floore:
Would he have gold? I lend it instantly;
But let the poore,
And thou within them starve at doore.
I cannot use a friend, as I use Thee.

When that my friend pretendeth to a place,
I quit my interest, and leave it free:
But when thy grace
Sues for my heart, I thee displace,
Nor would I use a friend, as I use Thee.

Yet can a friend what thou hast done fulfill?
O write in brasse, *My God upon a tree*
His blood did spill
Only to purchase my good-will:
Yet use I not my foes, as I use Thee.

At first glance, these lines could support modern editors' readings of the word "coy," as a hesitancy to sin. Herbert may want to be reserved with God, to hesitate and "think" first of God's "intent and end." But the word calls to mind the negative image of the coy sinner, too proud to

follow God. Immediately after he asks the Lord to make him coy, Herbert reflects that “In friendship first I think . . . unto my friend’s intent and end” (2), suggesting that he is not coy to them. By contrast, he laments that “I would not use a friend as I use Thee [God]” (5), implying that he acts reserved and proud towards God and should not. The diversity of coy vocabulary allows us to consider these different interpretations. Immediately, there is a tension between what Herbert desires and how he acts—a tension that is encapsulated in the multiple meanings of “coy.”

Because he uses “coy” in the first line, Herbert invites readers to see the following stanzas in light of the varying tropes of coyness, tropes that heighten his distance towards God. For example, in the lines “When that my friend pretendeth to a place / I . . . leave it free” (16–17), the speaker acts passive towards his friends. In other words, he feigns disinterest in a position to keep it open for his friends. By contrast, he is perfectly willing to ignore the Father: “when thy grace / Sues for my heart, I thee displace” (18–19). The “place” metaphor in these lines elaborates on the metaphor of the “wooing” relationship as it relates to God and a Christian believer. The speaker describes his willingness to cede a church or court position to his friend.¹⁹ In stark contrast, he ignores God’s suit. On this level, the metaphor employs the conventional meaning of “coy” as reserved—Herbert wants to be coyer towards God. But the metaphor operates on another level entirely. The mere act of comparing the friend to God places God in a less superior position, in which the Almighty seems to wait on Herbert’s magnanimity. That the speaker would dare to employ such a metaphor shows an awareness of his pride and perhaps a hope for God’s forgiveness.

¹⁹ For more on the politics of friendship, see Reginald Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship: The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994); John S. Garrison, *Friendship and Queer Theory in the Renaissance: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

The final stanza of “Unkindness” picks up on the image of God as suitor, applying the motif of coying to the very actions that secure Herbert’s salvation. In the final stanza, the speaker characterizes the crucifixion as an overture of love and selflessness:

Yet can a friend what thou has done fulfil?
 Oh write in brass, *My God upon a tree*
His blood did spill
Only to purchase my good-will.
 Yet use I not my foes as I use Thee.
 (21–25)

Another meaning of the word “coy” is mirrored in Christ’s sacrifice. Herbert casts the crucifixion as an attempt by God to “purchase” the speaker’s “good-will” in an echo of a lover’s coaxing attempts to win the good-will of his mistress. This connection reveals an underlying theme of the poem. Despite his pride, the speaker wants to be more intimate with God than with his companions. In fact, his last act is to remind himself, by “writ[ing] in brass,” that God so desires him that he subjected himself to torture and death to win Herbert’s soul. This final image of coyness is the very act by which Herbert’s struggle between reserve and pride is resolved, turning the last line of the poem into a promise from Herbert. Herbert ends by contrasting his “foes” with God, a contrast that can be read as meaning that he will not resist God’s suit anymore. God is no longer an oppositional force that he will struggle against, and thus Herbert has finally become coy and intimate with the Godhead. Read in light of coyness’s many connotations, the image of God spilling “His blood” redeems not only Herbert—but the concept of coyness itself.

In the “Unkindness,” the concept of coyness becomes that which connects the believer and his God. Recognizing the multiple meanings of coyness helps us to better understand the richness of Herbert’s meditation in this poem. In seventeenth-century religious discourses, as Herbert shows in bravura fashion, the concept of coyness could serve as an insightful way of

exploring the deepest of theological questions. The vocabulary of coyness expresses the contradictions of Christian living, even as it describes the act on which Christian belief is founded.

III: Coy Feigning in the Court and in “When I was Fair and young”

While the relationship between a mistress and suitor is a typically thought of as a two-person exchange, a mistress’s rejection of a suitor frequently occurs in a public setting with witnesses. The mistress’s show of scorn can be a public performance of disinterest meant for individuals other than the rejected suitor. In fact, many poems like Donne’s “To his Mistress Going to Bed” imply that a coy mistress’s disdain is prompted by a desire for discretion and a fear of public recrimination: hence, Donne’s quip that her clothing is a “spangled breastplate” that stops the “eyes of busy fools.”²⁰ Building on the idea of a mistress’s assumed postures of scorn, writers interested in the court exploit the public resonances of the mistress’s disdainful rejection in their descriptions of the coy courtier’s feigned disinterest and reserve. When courtiers act coyly, they hide their private emotions and opinions behind a facade of confidence or standoffishness, concealing their true selves from public view. Writers who describe courtiers’ conduct of contempt and pride as “coy” accentuate their manipulation of their public persona or political gain.

Such public performances of feigning and dissembling were associated with a variety of behaviors (from shrewd politicking to dishonest flattery) and with a range of figures (from the high-court gentlemen to those who are lower on the social ladder but connected to political and courtly areas). For example, a foppish gallant’s assumed posture of derision and pride can serve

²⁰ John Donne, “To His Mistress Going to Bed,” in *The Complete English Poems of John Donne*, ed. A. J. Smith (New York: Penguin, 1996), 84, lines 7–8.

to aggrandize his own court position. By contrast, a diplomat's assumed silence might buy time in a delicate, political situation. In still other contexts, a person connected to the court might employ a posture of canny reticence and sly submission to manipulate a superior. In these and other cases, writers use the term "coy" to accentuate the feigning and dissembling qualities associated with savvy members of the court or those connected with the court and public scene. The implications of an intentional, politically-motivated coy persona become clear in "When I was Fair and young," a love lament attributed to Elizabeth; while her use of the coy mistress trope, of course, exemplifies how Queen Elizabeth negotiates between public and private life, her poem's wider invocation of coy vocabularies changes how we read her potential intentions.

Coyness as Public Affection and Social Posturing in Courtiers

When writers link the language of coyness to courtiers or those in public positions, they frequently depict postures of pride and aggrandizement that oppose the postures of feigned modesty and ease favored in Castiglione's impression of *sprezzatura*. For example, *The Scholemaster* (1570), a popular conduct manual written by the queen's former tutor, Roger Ascham, offers a complex take on a courtier's coyness that at once sees the value of a prideful persona but questions its usefulness.²¹ While he extols the man who, like Castiglione's courtier, may "be sometimes séen, but seldom taulked with all" (14), Ascham admits that many courtiers want to seem "skilfull in euery thyng, to acknowledge no ignorance at all. To do thus in Court, is counted of some, the chief and greatest grace of all" (15). Such a courtier may "to the meaner

²¹ Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster, Or the Plaine and Perfect way of Teaching Children* (London, 1570). Similar examples appear in other instructional texts of the period. For more on Ascham's role in Elizabeth's education, see Elizabeth Mazzola, "Schooling Shrews and Grooming Queens in the Tudor Classroom," *Critical Survey* 22.1 (2010): 1–25. For more on the relationship of the court to Renaissance styles of education, see Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, and Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2012), 15–25.

man, or vnknowne in the Court, . . . séeme somewhat solume, coye, big, and dangerous of look” (15). This passage contrasts courtiers’ desire for fame works against the “studied carelessness” and ease which Castiglione praises. While Ascham argues for a sort of *sprezzatura* that is not showy or self-promoting, he suggests that many courtiers believe that prideful postures of disdain and derision are the “chief and greatest grace,” the most important attribute of a courtier. Such attributes seem to lend a courtier an air of authority and an impression of one’s favored political or social position—such a sense of high social position is also an enticing part of the coy mistress’s skills. Just as a mistress’s scorn seems to inspire awe at her beauty, an ability to act prideful and scornful seems even to confirm one’s place in court or public hierarchies.

Though individuals of all classes may put on a show of ease, the actions of coyness were uniquely associated with court and public life. In *England’s Helicon* (1600), a collection of popular pastoral poems, John Bodenham’s “The Woods-man’s Walk” uses motifs of coyness to describe the deceptiveness and standoffishness of court life itself as less appealing than country life. The lyric’s speaker—a woodsman—dismisses life at court as artificial and feigned compared to the naturalness of the wood:

Yet found I that the Courtly sport
did maske in slie disguise.
For falshood sate in fairest lookes,
and friend to friend was *coy*.”
(Aa3v).²²

Though the coy aloofness that occurs between these friends at court is similar to that between a mistress and her wooer, such acts of coy disregard and manipulation seem particularly molded by the public setting of the court. The poem emphasizes that the very political and public nature of the court itself inspires friends to speak with “falsehood . . . in fairest looks.” The line “friend to friend was coy” even conveys a sense that the court is an environment of coyness, in which all

²² John Bodenham, “The Wood-mans Walk,” *England’s Helicon*, (London, 1600), 95–96.

act aloof towards each other, even friendly intimates. The woodsman's point is that the very nature of the court itself inspires a culture of dissimulation and deception.²³

Examples of courtly coy conduct appear not only in descriptions from literature but in the recorded actions of historical courtiers. When I move from theoretical or descriptive to historical accounts, I see that, in the court, coy conduct not only conceals private emotions from public view or serves to establish a courtier's relative public position, but can also be used to send a political message, buy time, or avoid giving direct offense. An incident between the Spanish and English Ambassadors in 1570 or 1571, recounted in letters between William Cecil, Elizabeth I's Secretary of State, to Sir Francis Walshingham, the English ambassador,²⁴ exemplifies how pointed and savvy such conduct could be. The incident is prompted by the queen's dismay at rumors that Spain may be sheltering Irish rebels, especially Thomas Stuckley, the Catholic recusant who led a rebellion in Ireland and then fled to Spain in 1570.²⁵ The Spanish envoy frustratingly refuses to answer Walshingham's inquiries about the refugees. Instead, he coyly replies "in the Spanish tongue, which [he, Walshingham] understood not," and pointedly ignores Walshingham's queries in other languages (45).²⁶ Irritated by this rebuff, Walshingham complains to Cecil: "This, Sir, was in effect what I could guess proceeded between us; never spake I with a prouder man, or with one more disdainful in countenance, and in speech" (46). In reply, Cecil comments that "the Q. Majestie marvelleth that he [the Spanish Ambassador] should

²³ For more on *England's Helicon* as complaint and escapist literature, see Miri Tashma-Baum, "England's Helicon: Epideixis, Complaint, and Escapism," *Ben Jonson Journal* 9 (2002): 129–45.

²⁴ These letters are dated 25 February 1571 and 5 March 1570 (likely a scribal error). This period of Elizabeth's reign was rather fraught with anxiety about the political power of her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, about Spanish interests in Ireland, and about war in the Low Countries. In his recent biography of William Cecil, Stephen Alford notes that "In early March [of 1570], Cecil was occupied by great matters of state." Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 162.

²⁵ The issue under discussion likely stems from Elizabeth's letter to Walshingham included in the same volume. For more information on Stuckley, Juan E. Tazón, *The Life and Times of Thomas Stukeley (c. 1525–1578)* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

²⁶ Sir Dudley Digges, *The Complete Ambassador, or Two Treatises of the Intended Marriage of Qu. Elizabeth of glorious memory* (London, 1655). The volume is an extensive collection of letters between Elizabethan statesmen.

be so *coy* with you considering the reports of his former curtesies” (54, my emphasis). In the final letter on the subject, dated some weeks later, the Spanish embassy and Walshingham have achieved a sort of accord—at the very least, Spain is speaking English again.

This episode gives a precise example of the usefulness of postures of aloofness in the diplomatic and social relations of the court. The Spanish ambassador’s conduct reportedly changes dramatically from “courtesies” to “disdainful[ness] in countenance and speech.” Faced with such a sticky political situation, the ambassador uses an attitude of coy reticence and silence to avoid answering Walshingham directly, thereby avoiding immediate offense. By lapsing into a mono-lingualism, the ambassador buys time, perhaps to think, perhaps to consult with others. By using the word “disdain” to describe Spain’s actions, Walshingham may have meant to express the tense political situation to Cecil or to reinforce the canny nature of the ambassador’s incomprehension. However, what is fascinating about this exchange is not the Spanish ambassador’s conduct but how Cecil and Walshingham respond to his coyness—they are annoyed but not angry. In fact, they seem to recognize his posture of coy condescension as an unpleasant but conventional part of the diplomatic process that they choose not to challenge directly. The posture of coyness protects the ambassador from the demands of politeness and from the imperative to communicate prematurely. Moreover, Walshingham’s measured and skeptical response also grows from his ability to *interpret* the ambassador’s feigned posture—here, the language of coyness helps Walshingham to understand what the Spanish ambassador communicates in his silence, possibly preventing a political incident. For diplomats like Walshingham and Cecil, the conception of coyness helped them to characterize the machinations of the court and gave them the tools for responding to the affected postures of canny courtiers.

Just as acting reserved and cautious was sometimes helpful for a courtier, as the Spanish ambassador and Walshingham understood, failing to act in a restrained or measured way could lead to political consequences; the conception of coyness as an attitude of reticence, self-control, and feigning helped to articulate the consequences of such political situations. Richard Stanihurst, a contributor to the Irish volume of Holinshed's great chronicle of England, employs the vocabulary of coyness to express his political failure in a public apology to his patron, Sir Henry Sidney.²⁷ While Stanihurst was not himself a member of the court, his public apology is still an action in the politically-charged setting of print culture. In the second edition of the *Chronicle on Ireland*, Stanihurst writes a letter to excuse the unpopularity of the first edition, which portrayed Henry VIII's interventions in Ireland in an unfavorable light. So great was the furor over his writing that Stanihurst was called before the Star Chamber. This letter was meant to smooth over the previous brouhaha.²⁸ In the letter, Stanihurst claims that he released his part of the first edition "early" because he did not wish to "bear himself coy" by refusing requests to share his unfinished work with others (5).²⁹ As the chronicler elaborates, "I knew that my worke was plumed with downe, and at that time was not sufficientlie feathered to flie" (5). He uses the

²⁷ Stanihurst contributed a significant portion to Holinshed's *Chronicle. The Second Volume of the Chronicle: Containing the description, conquest, inhabitation, and troublesome estate of Ireland*, 2nd. ed. (London, 1586). This dedication is an addition to the second edition of the text, and therefore likely refers to the political incident that affected the first volume.

²⁸ The most recent account of this incident is found in Hiram Morgan, *Great Deeds in Ireland: Richard Stanihurst's De Rubis in Hibernia Gestis* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2013), 5–7. See also accounts of the history and impact of Holinshed's magnum opus, such as Igor Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation: Ideals, Memory and Practical Policy in the Chronicles* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010) and Annabel M. Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

²⁹ This usage picks up on a similar pattern found in particular in several other well-known translations of the period. A similar sentiment is also found in Abraham Flemming and Robert Ascham's well-known translation of *The Panoplie of Verses*, in a proverb that values friendship as an important source of comfort and council: "But this benefite of friendship, I hold in such value and estimation, that I am fully persuaded, No man is able to liue eyther in sower aduersitie or in swete prosperitie, if good men be coy of their counsell, and friendes sparing of their comfort."²⁹ Marcus Tuillius Cicero, *The familiar epistles of M.T. Cicero Englished and conferred with the French Italian and other translations*, Trans. J. Webb (London, 1620), 37.

fear of “bearing himself coy” (i.e., a concern that he might appear aloof and reserved towards his friends) as an excuse to explain his writing’s poor quality and his poor politicking.

Throughout his letters, Stanihurst explains his error of seeming “coy” towards one’s friends in a private setting to excuse his actions to his patron, the Privy Council, and the reading public. However, the connotations of coyness in a public setting also affects this apology, suggesting that Stanihurst’s actual mistake was a failure to be coy and control his public identity. He neglected to edit his work to its best political advantage, thereby failing to “bear himself coy,” and ignoring the politically-sound reserve and reticence that might have allowed him to save face. If he had been “coy” or reserved out of political expediency, he may never have written such an ill-conceived screed against Henry VIII’s conquest of Ireland in the first place. Though Stanihurst seems to see coyness as a fault, such an attitude of reserve could have saved him from the criticism and political animosity he experienced.

In theoretical, literary, and historical descriptions of coy behavior in a public setting, writers like Ascham, Bodenham, and Stanihurst question the necessary fictions of coy affectation but recognize the value of “slie disguises” in the complex social setting of the court. The vocabulary of coyness characterized the behavior of diplomats who navigated intricate diplomatic situations, as the Spanish Ambassador did. Such examples also show that the utility of such conduct was appreciated by politicians and easily interpreted by them. My attention to how the vocabularies of coyness were used to describe courtiers’ public shows of disdain, disinterest, or reticence emphasizes not only the self-fashioning so common in early modern literature; it gives a better sense of the underlying motivations behind women’s acts of coyness in public spaces. Just as affecting disdainful or reluctant postures in non-romantic settings was an

expected and useful attribute of a courtier or other public personage, so too might a mistress or woman find this idea of public reserve a useful tool.

Private Desires and Public Good in “When I was fair and young”

Understanding the public resonances of the word “coy” in a courtly setting suggests a new layer to “When I was fair and young.”³⁰ In this poem, Elizabeth mourns the failed marriage negotiations between herself and the Duke of Anjou in 1579–1581. Elizabeth ultimately ended the courtship in 1581, and the Duke died in 1584. The courtship may have sparked passion in the two wooers but certainly inspired doubt and dismay in Elizabeth’s courtiers.³¹ Her advisors’ concerns about the courtship were prompted by Anjou’s Catholic faith and extremely close connections to the French throne and were intensified by the prospect of a foreign ruler taking the English throne. Despite the highly charged political context of the poem, critics tend to read it as a private expression of regret—a wooing lyric meant to describe her affection for Anjou. As Peter C. Herman puts it, Elizabeth pens “a counternarrative of herself as a desiring woman . . . [and] justifies the Anjou match not on the grounds of geopolitical expediency, but of desire.”³² I agree with Herman that Elizabeth expresses private regret—but not as a justification for the Anjou match. Instead, I contend that the poem’s use of coy motifs positions her expression of personal desires as an act of public feigning. Scholars often see Elizabeth rejecting private desires in favor of geopolitical expediency, and the language of coyness helps to show how Elizabeth (or other early modern readers) might have articulated such a rejection.

³⁰ I will be using the transcription provided in *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Leah Marcus, Janet Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 302–305. Where relevant, I will also cite manuscript variations transcribed from the following manuscripts: Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poetical 85, p. 308 and British Library, MS Harley 7392, fol. 21.

³¹ For a fuller account of the political ramifications of Elizabeth’s courtship and her courtship history, see Susan Duran’s *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

³² Peter C. Herman, *Royal Poetry: Monarchic Verse and the Political Imaginary of Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 123.

Early modern collectors of miscellaneous verse likely read the lyric in the context of its political meanings as well as its romantic meanings. According Leah Marcus, Janet Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, the lyric has survived in six extant texts. Several of these texts attribute the verses to “Elizabeth I, Queen of England,” though Folger V.a. 89 seems to favor the Earl of Oxford as a possible writer.³³ John Finet’s manuscript (Rawlinson Poet. 85) expands on the poem’s association with Elizabeth, saying the verses were “made by the Queen, when she was supposed to be in love with Montsire [Monsieur],” though this identification is crossed out (F.1). Whether the compiler excised it out of doubt, as Bradner claims, or out of discretion, as Marcus, Mueller, and Rose argue, the attribution in the Finet manuscript demonstrates that early modern readers read this poem in both a political and a romantic way.³⁴ Though we are not sure that Elizabeth wrote the poem, some contemporary readers clearly thought so, and they would have kept in mind the association of coyness with political self-effacement when reading the lyric. The speaker of “When I was fair and young” laments her past scorning of many lovers. At first glance, the lyric follows the standard beats of a female-voiced complaint.

When I was fair and young then favour graced me;
 Of many was I sought their mistress for to be.
 But I did scorn them all, and answered them therefore,
 Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
 Importune me no more.

How many weeping eyes I made to pine in woe;
 How many sighing hearts I have no skill to show;
 Yet I the prouder grew, and answered them therefore,
 Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
 Importune me no more.

³³ For further documentation of the sources of this lyric, see Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 303–305.

³⁴ Elizabeth’s authorship of this poem relies on authorial ascriptions found in miscellany copies of it, but one manuscript attributes the poem to the Earl of Oxford. This mixed attribution leads Leicester Bradner, for one, to question the poem’s authenticity. Leicester Bradner, *Poems of Elizabeth I* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1964). More recently, Marcus, Muller, and Rose have traced two different lines of attribution to Elizabeth and concluded that Elizabeth likely wrote the poem. Moreover, they note that this verse “offer[s] evidence . . . of Elizabeth’s poetic reign.” Marcus, Muller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 303.

Then spake fair Venus' son, that proud victorious boy,
 And said, you dainty dame, since that you be so coy,
 I will so pluck your plumes that you shall say no more
 Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
 Importune me no more.

When he had spake these words such change grew in my breast,
 That neither night nor day I could take any rest.
 Then, lo! I did repent, that I had said before
 Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
 Importune me no more.

In the conceit of this poem, the speaker means to evoke associations with the coy mistress. The speaker is looking back over her past acts of “scorn” with regret. By this reading, the speaker’s main emotions are entirely personal. However, by fixating on the feigned “scorn” in these first lines, the speaker emphasizes the assumed nature of her coy refusals, making these acts public and private. The wider connotations of coyness (of feigning emotion and of soothing) provide a method for understanding how the speaker sees her own conduct: the speech act of the poem is itself a feigned posture of regret, meant to soothe potential listeners.

Though the first two stanzas seem to be about prideful rejection, they also emphasize the feigned nature of her scornfulness. In the extended descriptions of “weeping eyes” and “sighing hearts,” the speaker articulates the effect her “proud” answers have on her suitors. On one level, this description shows a woman refusing suitors for political reasons. As her readers would have known, Elizabeth actually did this, refusing all suits of marriage throughout her career even as she played the coquettish, alluring mistress. If anything, these first stanzas serve to highlight the performative nature of those refusals. By describing a time when the speaker presented a politically expedient fiction of indifference, the speaker’s current affliction likewise takes on an assumed quality. She “repents,” perhaps in private and perhaps in public; she can “take no rest,” as if suggesting that she is visibly affected by the “change in her breast.” Yet the speaker is not

only figuring herself as a Petrarchan mistress. Rather, perhaps motivated by political expediency, the speaker adopts the persona of the soothing, grieving wooer in order to dramatize her grief and soothe the anger of her public audience. Elizabeth was historically famous for such sacrifices and such acts of coyness. In a lyric reply to Sir Walter Raleigh, for example, “Ah Silly Pug,” Elizabeth remonstrates the famous courtier because he accuses her of acting coyly. She teases him for being “dismayed” by her standoffishness and for fearing that her “heart [may] think thee any ill” (4).³⁵ While one may see Elizabeth mocking Raleigh because he complains, the lyric also reminds him that Elizabeth’s courtly disdain did not always convey the feelings of her heart. A similar sentiment operates in “When I was fair and young,” where the speaker’s actions, past and present, are both acts of assumed and affected emotion meant to send a message to a public audience.

The second half of the poem elaborates in the idea of coyness but reframes the typical imagery of coy reluctance into the female speaker’s attempt to perform indifference. Normally, the image of Cupid shooting a proud woman is an amatory image of a physician curing a woman of sexual pride. Here, Cupid bolsters the supposed sincerity of the speaker’s change of heart: the dramatic picture is itself a part of the conceit of the repentant coy mistress. Cupid’s threat that the speaker will be unable to say “go, go, etc.” to perform an act of coyness is a scary possibility, in that the speaker may no longer be able to control her own persona. Cupid’s interjection implies that the speaker does, in fact, experience romantic love; however, the speaker’s extended attention to her own affectation of coyness in the first two stanzas suggests that even this claim assists in the speaker’s manipulative representation of her own grief.

While the third stanza suggests that the speaker will forgo more coy disdain, the fourth stanza’s description of her highly performative grief emphasizes that her goal is as much to make

³⁵ Marcus Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I*, 365.

others aware of her grief as to hide her sorrow. The intriguing thing about Stanza IV is that, though Cupid threatens that “you shall say no more / Go, go, seek some otherwhere,” the speaker does not suddenly express desire. The speaker does not seem to stop saying “go, go, go, etc.,” but only dramatizes how she has repented by appropriating these very lines in a new refrain. The phrasing of the lines suggests how the speaker, perhaps, develops her new persona as a repentant mistress. Elizabeth did of course say “go, go, go” to Anjou, did perform the act of rejecting a wooer. As the poem’s use of coy vocabularies throughout the lyric shows, the point of this poem is not only to articulate the political necessity of Elizabeth’s coy posturing but to depict how such a posture of grief and sorrow can be expressed and assumed in a similarly affected way.

Given the complex dynamics of coyness in it, the entire poem can almost be read as a coy posturing. The admission that her love for Anjou left her anguished and restless could be a calculated act of vulnerability on Elizabeth’s part. By casting her rejection of past wooers as acts of “coy[ness],” the queen reminds her readers of her past fidelity to the crown and reasserts her place as an authority figure who can coy or soothe her subjects’ uncertainties. Moreover, such postures extend into her interactions with Anjou. In her wooing of Anjou, Elizabeth at times acted enticing to him in front of the court. This lyric depicts her rejection of Anjou as an extension of her public performance of wooing him. In this poem, Elizabeth uses the word “coy” to signal that the postures of disaffected love can likewise be feigned for political purposes.

In her expressions of regret at her previous scornful conduct, the poem’s speaker shows the astute calculation behind the canny persona of a female courtier. In the transposition of the scorn and derision associated with the mistress to non-romantic and public settings like the court, early modern writers draw out the different effects and consequences that a culture of dissimulation would have. Sometimes such posture can be used for personal gain or to attain a

political advantage. Such an understanding of coyness, too, encourages a broader understanding of the coy mistress trope: because she is often depicted as a member of the court, early modern readers likely understood the mistress's postures of disdain as part of a larger cultural tendency to feign and dissemble in public spaces. When the concept of coyness appears in poems related to the court or even in poems about the coy mistress, the public valences of coyness, as well as the private ones, would have been in place, affecting how early modern readers interpreted the courtiers' postures of disdain and pride.

IV: Coyness in Hunting and Husbandry Manuals

In early modern England, husbandry manuals grew in popularity after the publication of Thomas Blundeville's *Four Chiefest Offices Belonging to Horsemanship* (1566). These manuals were directed at elite male audiences—falconry was, as George Turberville describes it, “of all other gentlemanly sportes and practises, the most pleasant and commendable.”³⁶ These texts frequently employ the language of coyness to describe how a falconer soothes a falcon and to characterize the skittishness of a wild bird. This particular use of such vocabularies would have built on elite male audiences' familiarity with the literary depictions of the wooer's coaxing ways and the mistress's acts of resistance. The tone associated with coyness in falconry is surprisingly positive: the coying postures of the falconer are encouraged because they calm and soothe the falcon without breaking her will or desire to fly. As a constructive vocabulary of soothing and manipulating, the type of coyness seen in husbandry manuals fundamentally alters how readers would have understood literary comparisons between coy falcons and coy mistresses. In fact, the relationship between the falcon and the falconer sheds any negativity associated with acting

³⁶ George Turberville, *The Booke of Falconrie* (London, 1575), Air. Turberville's volume had additional editions published in 1611.

coyly and portrays a falconer's postures of coyness as tools to establish and maintain necessary bonds of affection and trust with his falcon—bonds that encourage her to submit to his commands.

The Coyness of the Falcon and the Coying Falconer

In husbandry manuals, the word “coy” often describes a wild or untrained hawk's natural tendency to shy away from humans, but rather than complaining of such behavior, falconry manuals employ the phrase to teach others how to interpret the actions a falcon. In a passage from one of the most popular hunting manuals of the period, for example, Simon Latham writes, “the *Hawke* . . . doth for the most part reward and requite her keepers vnkindnesse, with strange behaiour, and disdainfull coynesse.”³⁷ Notice, here, that the hawk is not disparaged for her “disdainful coyness,” as the arch or disdainful mistress might be in early modern amatory lyrics. Coyness is not equated with badness—wild hawks tend to be shy by nature. The hawk is not being perverse or peevish but is expressing an undomesticated animal's fear of aggressive handling. By characterizing the falcon's wild and frightened behavior as “coy,” falconry manuals emphasize that hunters can train a falcon to act differently, manipulating the birds' environment and experience just as a coying wooer hopes to soothe and coax a beloved into accepting his suit. As if to accentuate the necessity of coying conduct in falconers, writers like Edmund Bert reinforce that a falcon's coyness is a natural response to “violence and churlish vsage” by falconers, one that can be prevented by “lesurely & gentl[e]” handling.³⁸ In a striking shift from its negative associations with the figure of the coy mistress, any negativity in this context is

³⁷ Simon Latham, *Lathams Falconry, Or the Falcons Lure* (London, 1614), 14. Five revised and expanded editions of Latham's treatise were published from 1615 to 1662. Interestingly, Latham uses the words “coy” or coyness six times in the first edition and fifteen times in subsequent versions.

³⁸ Edmund Bert, *An Approved Treatise of Hawkes and Hawking* (London, 1619), 17–18.

associated with the hunter. A falcon's sustained skittishness or unsettledness evidences her falconer's ineptitude and mishandling—his failure to master his bird results from his neglect of the calming techniques associated with a coying falconer. A rough man would not win his lady hawk—as I will explore in further detail in Chapter 3.³⁹

The association of coyness with falcons exposes a few new ideas about how early modern writers thought of coy conceits. First, the coy restraint or fear of the pursued falcon or woman can be the result of mistreatment on the part of the pursuer. This is a significant difference from the “coy mistress” model, in which the pursued's coyness is a result of pride or sexual nicety. Though the falcon's coy fear is a stark contrast to a mistress's affectation of disdain, this use of coyness likely affected readers' interpretations of women's reserved, aloof conduct. A description of the frightened Daphne as coy, for example, may inspire sympathy as much as the unsettling aggressiveness of Apollo's pursuit may trigger dismay. Second, a politically-aware courtier may act coyly because he fears reprisals from social superiors. In contrast to the courtier and the mistress, a hawk cannot help its reactions to a falconer's hostile actions. Yet the coyness of the hawk opens up possibilities for female agency because a mistress could choose to be coy in the face of unwelcome advances. When applied to a mistress, coyness of this kind could signify an intentional means of expressing a legitimate fear and dislike of an abusive wooer.

Encouraging, soothing, or consoling actions were not restricted to those who handle hawks—such actions were encouraged in the care of other animals. In *The Four Chiefest Offices Belonging to Horsemanship*, Blundeville demonstrates the benefits of “coying” for both animal and owner. He writes: “But if you would cherish youre horse or coy him for doing wel, then your voyce must be most milde of al. As when you saye, hola, hola, or so boye so, or vse such like

³⁹For more on the gendering of hunting manuals, see Catherine Bates, *Masculinity and the Hunt: Wyatt to Spenser* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25–26. I engage more fully with these concepts in Chapter 3.

coying words.”⁴⁰ The horse receives praise for his good behavior in the form of “coying words” or gestures. Hunters are advised to soothe, pat, and cajole their animals to prevent bad habits and to reward good ones. Though the coying seducer coaxes the mistress to get what he wants, the coying hunter soothes because he is getting what he wants from his domesticated animal. The relationship of the coying hunter and the coy hawk provides us with a more positive and mutually reciprocal model than that of the conventional coying wooer and the coy mistress.

Not only was the vocabulary of coyness used to describe a falcon’s fearfulness, writers also employ such language to describe the actions of a falconer calming his bird. This meaning of “coying” is akin to the courting of a lover, in that soothing words and coaxing language appear, but the term specifically denotes a physical act of stroking or calming a skittish beast. In *The Gentleman’s Recreation* (1674), Nicholas Cox explains the importance of gentle handling explicitly in the language of courting. He describes a goshawk as “the most Shie and Coy both towards the Men and Dogs, requiring more the Courtship of a Mistress, than the Authority of a Master, being apt to remember any unkind and rough usage; but being gently handled, will become very tractable, and kind to her Keeper.”⁴¹ In Cox’s description, the falconer’s response to his goshawk was important because a falcon must be tractable in order to fly. For early modern readers, the idea of courting a hawk like a mistress (rewarding it, coaxing it) rather than commanding it like a servant (punishing bad behavior, shouting at it) would be a familiar and helpful simile that characterized effective handling.⁴²

⁴⁰ Thomas Blundeville, *The Fower Chiefest Offices Belonging to Horsemanshippe* (London, 1566), 8. The description of coying a horse is common to several other volumes on horsemanship, such as Nicholas Morgan’s *The Perfection of Horse-manship, Drawn from Nature* (London, 1609).

⁴¹ Nicholas Cox, *The Gentleman’s Recreation in Four Parts* (London, 1674), 49. For earlier examples of this usage, see Bert’s *Approved Treatise* and Latham’s *The Falcons Lure*.

⁴² Catherine Bates, “George Turberville and the Painful Art of Falconry,” *English Literary Renaissance* 41.3 (2011): 403–28, at 403, 414.

The point, here, is that the depictions of coyness in hawking and husbandry manuals offer a different way of thinking about coyness, a way that emphasizes its utility in building productive social relationships and its effectiveness in manipulating another person or animal into compliance. Unlike the disdain of the courtier or the sexual disinterest of the mistress, the coyness of the hawk enables the falconer to accomplish a very specific goal: getting his falcon to fly on command and return with her prey. Like the coaxing and manipulation of the pursuer who soothes his mistress's fears in order to win over her affections, the falconer must establish a relationship with his falcon in order to achieve success in the hunt. Both falcon and falconer need each other, and the practice of coy soothing is that which builds the bond between them. In the postures of coyness found in falconry manuals, unruffled feathers were encouraged for all.

Metaphors of Falconry and Coyness in "In Libia lande"

In the short lyric, "In Libia lande," (found in Bodleian, MS Rawlinson Poetical 85 and transcribed in the appendix at the back) an anonymous poet exploits the complex intersections between falconry and romance to portray a mutually satisfying sexual union between a naive young woman and an experienced falconer. While this poem exploits the titillating bawdiness of woman tamed, bond, and controlled by wooer, the he poet's extensive dependence on hawking and hunting metaphors describes the growing love and sexual desire between the romantic protagonists—a vestal maiden and a skilled falconer.⁴³ Throughout the poem, the lady is compared to a skittish falcon, and like the bird, she is gentled by the falconer and benefits from his taming. The give-and-take between man and woman mirrors the give-and-take between falconer and falcon, and the metaphors of hawking and coyness create an equanimity of

⁴³ For the full version of this poem, see the appendix. Interestingly this manuscript also contains one of the extant copies of Elizabeth's "When I was faire and young"—the lyric that starts off the miscellany.

satisfaction between the two lovers. In particular, the association between hawking and wooing enables the female speaker to articulate her sexual desire during their wooing and tryst.

The first lines of this poem establish a focus on falconry and coyness, employing the discourse of falconry to dramatize a woman's initiation into sexual experience. The young woman is "disdainful" towards the very thought of love, uninterested in affections. Like an untrained falcon, she is wild and untamed, a coy, scornful mistress in all but name—but one whose coyness seems to signal inexperience rather than sexual awareness. Not only does she crave to be "a vestal mayde" or "closed nunn in a tower" (7), a reference noticeably similar to Danaë's enclosure in Turberville's lyric, she "disdaynefully denyes to yield [to] sweet loues desire" (5).⁴⁴ Yet the language of coyness always emphasizes her rejection not of one lover or a single man but *all* sexual affection. Her disinterest is like the disinterest of a wild hawk who has no attraction to any hunter's lure. By establishing that her disdain is a result of innocence and inexperience, the poem ties her disinterest to freedom: she is disdainful so that "her lyfe should still be stayed deuoyde of Paramoure / As thus she past her youthfull yeers in freedom still." She is "free" to do as she wishes, and the poem does not condemn that impulse, but uses the motifs of coyness to make the connection between the wild falcon and the untamed girl more intricate and elaborate.

The falconer's act of taming in the rest of the poem can be read in two ways. On one level, the falconer's gentling and training of the woman is disturbingly dehumanizing. He treats her like a falcon: soothing and coaxing her but insisting that she be "ruled" by him. In his seduction of her, he entices and "lures" her, making her promise to yield to him, just as a falconer trains his falcon to submit to his will. Even when it comes to their sexual encounter, he physically restrains her, like a falconer might restrain his falcon with a hood and jesses in order

⁴⁴ Bodleian, Rawlingson Poetical 85, Ff. 4v–5r.

to control her behavior. In these ways, the images of falcon-taming in this poem serve to dramatize an unsavory element of the links between falconry and courtship: if a wooer treats his lady like a falcon, he is still manipulating and controlling her, still restricting her movements in a way that is profoundly dehumanizing.

Strikingly, however, the poem also develops the maiden's agency and autonomy through the language of coyness, even if to use that agency to titillate the reader. It is not the falconer who first seeks out the lady but the lady herself who chooses the falconer. Stumbling upon him, she marvels at the meekness and freedom of his bird, for the falconer "makes the fowls to quake"—with a sexual pun on quake (15). The falconer's ability to "mak[e] the fowls quake" attracts the Lady, yet she recognizes that the falcon's freedom depends on the falconer's control over his hawk's "trounc[ing] and bounc[ing]" (13). The context of hawking in this poem calls attention to what the lady learns about the falconer through his interactions with his birds. Their obedience and calmness testify to the falconer's qualifications as a "coying" falconer and perhaps a coying lover. That testimony, proof of the falconer's abilities, is why the Lady immediately decides that "A hauke she wishte her selfe to be to proue suche pretye sporte / Then woulde she withe this faulckoner fly and to his lure resort" (15–16). The woman's desires are again central to the syntax of these lines. She "wishes" to be "lured" and coyed; she "would" fly; she would "resort" to him. This focus reverses the conventional relationship of hawks and hunters. Not the falconer's, but the lady's desires and agency drive this relationship. The parallels between hawking and courting enable the speaker to focus on the lady's growing sexual desire and thus on her desire to be "Free" in a relationship.

The emphasis on the lady's desires persists even later in the poem—as the falconer's responds to her request. Conspicuously, the falconer is remarkably like a gentleman. At line 25,

he is even called “courteous,” a phrase that emphasizes his ability to feign gentility. When she does approach him, he supports her desires, saying “if suche be your desire [to be a hawk] / Be rulde by me and you shall be ryghte as you do requyre” (25–26). While the phrase “be ruled by me” suggests the lady is losing her freedom, in fact the opposite might be implied. The falconer maintains the Lady’s sexual independence through phrases like “if such be your desire” and “as you do requyre.” Such a yielding on the falconer’s part is the very act of a canny, coying hunter, perhaps even of a soothing lover. He yields to her to tame her, just as a soothing falconer would, yet also to teach her how to “fly with courage braue” (29).

Throughout the poem, the metaphors of hawking are a euphemism for sexual acts and physical desire, which accentuates the tension in the poem between the falconer’s mastery of his falcon and the wooer’s control over his lady. Such equivocation is incredibly titillating but also deeply disturbing because the falconer must “tame” the lady through sex. Even her initiation into sex is cast in terms of hawking. When he spreads her arms and “he layes aparte her feete,” the images are overtly sexual and even slightly disconcerting because the lady protests “in faythe you are to blame” (36, 38). We can read this incident as rape, but the actions of a coying hunter allow a slightly more positive interpretation. In this vein, his actions parallel those of the hunter using “coying words,” as Blundeville advises, to calm a frightened horse. When the falconer urges that the lady “Be still sweet guirllle,” he encourages her to trust him—just as a falconer calms his bird (39). The rest of the poem emphasizes both the lady’s pleasure and the man’s gratification. Even as he trims her and sends her upward in ecstatic flight, he also “fynd[s in] her an inwarde hauke most ioyfull is his cheere” (42). The image of the Lady with an “inward hawk” offers a counterimage to the violence of bondage: in taming her, he may calm her and teach her about sexual fulfillment—thereby gaining his own pleasure. The falconer achieves pleasure and

“cheer” from watching her realize her sexual bliss and from enjoying his own physical release. Such mutuality is emphasized in the poem’s conflation of wooing and hawking.

The last lines of the poem restore the equanimity between the lovers’ desires. She is not damaged by his attentions. Indeed, she wants to try again. She turns to him with “smirks and smyling” and commands him “if you loue me come trim my trayne again” (49–50). These lines also invoke another type of coyness. The sexually innocent coy maiden has literally become the sexually experienced coy woman. The moment of her “taming” is one of subjection, and we may see it as a disturbing portrayal of a woman who comes to love her rapist. But the poem’s extended focus on the lady’s coy flirtations highlights her own autonomous choices. In fact, the lady’s brazen request is almost more important than the desires of the falconer. He is the tool, the instructor who teaches her how to desire and how to “fly,” as it were. Understanding the language of coyness turns a potentially dehumanizing poem where a woman is clipped and ruled by a man into a meditation on the possibilities of shared desire.

The images of courting and hawking in this poem ultimately play out in remarkably unexpected ways. The poet makes disturbing connections between falconry and courtship, turning the relationship between the woman and the man into one of mastery and manipulation. At the beginning of the poem, the woman is sexually innocent—coy in her disdain of men and her disinterest in sex. In the middle of the poem, the woman is coy as a hawk is wild, and it is the falconer who must coy her. Finally, the woman becomes a coy mistress, experienced, demanding, and able to control her desire. The writer uses the concept of coyness to portray love and sex as a give-and-take.

* * *

As I have shown in the preceding chapter, the uses of coyness in early modern English are abundant, rich, and productive. As such, they widen ideas of coyness to include not only romantic contexts but theological, courtly, and falconine. Such a revision is particularly important because early modern writers invoked a dizzying variety of vocabularies in innumerable contexts. In describing separately the various contexts in which coyness is used, I am not advocating for strict categorization—the meanings can and do blend into each other. One can, for instance, read Herbert’s God as acting something like a falconer taming a falcon. Likewise, Shakespeare was a writer who delighted in taking advantage of the multiple meanings of coyness. I turn now to his comedy, *Taming of the Shrew*, where the nuances of coy motifs in wooing and hawking take center stage.

CHAPTER 3: LEARNING TO COY: HAWKING AND COURTING IN *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*

Scholars often interpret Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* as a play where Petruchio tries to improve Katherine's disposition and character from shrewish to submissive.¹ Though they may either decry the violence of his methods or praise the educative nature of his instructions, many scholars assume that Petruchio's effect on her is the point of the play.² For example, Lynda E. Boose pursues a feminist reading and condemns Petruchio for suppressing Katherine's free will and spirit.³ Sean Benson similarly finds that a tamed and hooded Katherine fulfills "Petruchio's patriarchal fantasy."⁴ By contrast, Elizabeth Hutchinson sees Petruchio's instruction of Katherine more positively as a form of "humanist training."⁵ The possibility of seeing Katherine's and Petruchio's relationship in terms of education is an attractive one as a way to acknowledge the violence of the play without viewing that violence solely through twenty-first-century ideas of spousal abuse. Instead of an abuser-abused relationship, critics settle for a more acceptable teacher-student one. However, such readings are restricted by the patriarchal model

¹ That is not to say that critics have not argued for other interpretations of Petruchio. In her analysis of the play's satirizing of "male attitudes towards women," Coppélia Kahn goes so far as to call Petruchio's behavior "infantile." Coppélia Kahn, "The Taming of the Shrew: Shakespeare's Mirror for Marriage," *Modern Language Studies* 5.1 (1975): 88–102, at 88–89.

² Alternatively, Unhae Park Langis argues that the play ends with Katherine "on top," as it were, as she elevates Petruchio "into a man of true virtue." *Passion, Prudence, and Virtue in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Continuum, 2011), 31.

³ Lynda E. Boose, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.2 (1991): 171–213, at 181. For a reading of the play along similar anti-feminist lines, see Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 28–31. For a counter argument, see G.B. Shand "Romancing *The Shrew*: Recuperating a Comedy of Love," in *Shakespeare's Comedies of Love: Essays in Honor of Alexander Leggatt*, ed. Karen Bamford and Ric Knowles (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 228–45, at 229.

⁴ Sean Benson, "'If I do prove her haggard': Shakespeare's Application of Hawking Tropes to Marriage," *Studies in Philology* 103.2 (2006): 186–207, at 187.

⁵ Elizabeth Hutchinson, "From Shrew to Subject: Petruchio's Humanist Education of Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew*," *Comparative Drama* 45.4 (2011): 315–40, esp. 317. Lynn Enterline provides an analogous interpretation of the educative models in the play. Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 98–99.

prescribed by the title itself. The tamer subdues the shrew; the master instructs the pupil; the hunter curbs the hawk; the husband improves the wife.⁶

These schools of thought, then, miss the possibility that Petruchio must develop and grow: that he, like Katherine, has much to learn. While scholars have argued that the great prevalence of hawking metaphors in the play proves Petruchio's complete mastery of Katherine, these images in fact invite a reconsideration of what Petruchio needs to master.⁷ Through a reexamination of the play through the interconnections between coyness and hawking, I find a very different interpretation of Petruchio's interactions with his wife. In the hunting manuals of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, the idealized hunter to whom Petruchio compares himself earns the trust of his falcon through coying behavior: soothing talk, gentle handling, and tender ministrations. In stark contrast, Petruchio coerces his wife: he starves her, yells at her, and compels her to follow him.⁸ If a hunter followed such a plan, the manuals' instructors seem to imply, he would find himself with a coy falcon: wild, frightened, and wary. Such a bird is useless: it will not fly on command, retrieve game, or respond to its keeper. And so, by Act 4, Petruchio finds himself with such a wife: like unto W. B. Yeats' unresponsive falcon, turning and turning in the widening gyre, Katherine is unwilling and unable to respond to his call.

The praise of coying hunters that pervades early modern hawking manuals, then, provides a new way of reading Shakespeare's representation of Petruchio—not as an educator or master of Katherine but as a hunter-in-training. To win his wife's obedience, Petruchio must master the actions of a coying hunter, actions closely akin to a coying wooer's conduct. He must learn to

⁶ Jennifer Panek, an exception to this trend, argues that *Taming of the Shrew* dramatizes a counter-narrative of prodigal husbands who must learn their economic obligations to a newly espoused wife. Jennifer Panek "Community, Credit, and the Prodigal Husband on the Early Modern Stage," *ELH* 80.1 (2013): 61–92.

⁷ Margaret Loftus Ranald, *Shakespeare and his Social Context* (New York: AMS Press, 1987), 117–134.

⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Ann Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). All references are to this edition.

respond to Katherine's needs and to manipulate her desires to align with his goals. Rather than a top-down, dictatorial relationship such as that between an instructor and a student, Petruchio's associations with Katherine develop towards a more companionate, equitable arrangement, as he discovers new ways to ameliorate her anger.

Shakespeare shows the development of Katherine and Petruchio's relationship through changes in their speech patterns. Over the course of the play, Petruchio shifts his pronouns from "you" and "I" to "we," alters his directed-motion verbal commands to invitations, and increases his direct addresses to Katherine. The adjustments in his language are Shakespeare's linguistic representations of an early modern hunter learning to coy. Just as Petruchio talks to Katherine with increasing gentleness, a falconer talks softly to a frightened falcon, strokes it, and tends it carefully. Shakespeare provides examples of these good hunting practices in the lord's pranking of Sly in the Induction and in Petruchio's initial courting of Katherine, emphasizing the effectiveness of solicitous and conciliatory behavior in establishing mutual affection between individuals.⁹ Looking at the play through the lens of a falconer's soothing speech and quieting hands helps to explain Petruchio's shifting behavior—he moves from aggressively accosting Katherine to manipulating her with kinder words and gentler ministrations. To understand Shakespeare's perspective on the shrew-taming narrative that he imitates, I develop a way of reading *Taming of the Shrew* that accounts for the falconry metaphors not as an endorsement of spousal abuse but as a remedy for Petruchio's manhandling ways.

In the following sections, I will first explore noteworthy aspects of early modern falconry manuals that exemplify the volumes' emphasis on coying discourse. A fuller understanding of

⁹ Of course, Lucentio and Bianca represent yet another version of coying conceits—the conventional coying wooer and the coquettish coy maiden. As Patricia Parker argues, we can easily see in Bianca a figure who uses the coy behavior of the coquette to her advantage. "Constructing Gender: Mastering Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*," in *The Impact of Feminism in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Dymphna Callaghan (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007), 193–209.

how falconers talk to, tame, and calm their birds offers a richer vocabulary for considering the links between falconry and *Taming of the Shrew*. Next, I will consider how Shakespeare employs such language in his characterization of Petruchio. Shakespeare creates many resonances between Petruchio and falconers in order to enrich his portrait of the tamer-as-husband.

I. Coyness and Hawking Manuals: Education, Manning, and Movement

The art of hawking was a popular subject for publication in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, as I have discussed, and its use of wooing language has previously been noted by scholars like Catherine Bates.¹⁰ As Benson has noted, the hunt's rituals and customs provided Shakespeare with a rich backdrop for considering the social dynamics and gender interactions between Katherine and Petruchio.¹¹ However, Shakespeare's deft inclusion of the discourses of coyness, so essential to early modern falconry handbooks, has been underappreciated. Scholars instead tend to read Petruchio's taming of Katherine in light of only the harshest aspects of falconry. In fact, hawking manuals do not depict the relationship between the hunter and falcon as an abusive one; rather, the hunter and the hawk are portrayed as partners. I show these manuals' focus on the mutuality of the hunter-hawk relationship through four rhetorical strategies: they 1) portray falconry as a difficult craft that must be carefully learned and taught; 2) make clear that the process of training a falcon is gradual; 3) place paramount importance on the satisfaction of the falcon; and 4) emphasize the necessity of giving the falcon freedom of movement. Looking at these strategies helps to explain why Shakespeare finds falconry a useful source of inspiration and an effective tool in his presentation of marital union. Each of these areas emphasizes the

¹⁰ In her study of early modern falconry and literature, though she does not discuss *Taming of the Shrew* extensively, Bates elucidates numerous connections between wooing practices and early modern falconry. Bates, *Masculinity and the Hunt*, 10–13.

¹¹ Benson, "'If I do prove her haggard'," 187.

importance of a falconer's responsiveness to the falcon's needs—a theme that is at the heart of the coying mutuality between falconer and falcon.

When scholars consider the tropes of hawking found in *Taming of the Shrew*, they typically approach those tropes in one of two ways: as a motif that accentuates the violence of Petruchio's wooing or as a metaphor that allays any discomfort with his conduct.¹² Benson and Edward Berry both interpret these tropes as evidence of the play's negative portrayal of Petruchio. While Benson notes that a key metaphor in the falconry process is love, he emphasizes the deprivation used in the manning and luring process, casting Petruchio's violent taming as a crude but accurate tableau of such practices.¹³ For Berry, the violence of falcon-taming mirrors the violence that Petruchio offers Katherine; moreover, the obedience that falconers demand is especially troubling when applied to a woman, as it strips a vibrant character like Katherine of human characteristics.¹⁴ While I concur that violence and violation are an uncomfortable facet of early modern falconry manuals, I argue that Shakespeare invokes the violent, disciplinary language of falconry manuals but contrasts it with the conciliatory and companionate language that he also draws from such texts. Far from glorifying violence, Shakespeare has Petruchio move away from the callous taming strategies that Berry and Benson discuss and towards the coying methods of successful falconers.

Some scholars, like Margaret Loftus Ranald, recognize that the hawking metaphors do not necessarily heighten Petruchio's violence. Ranald argues that Petruchio treats Katherine in a measured, humane way because he has already mastered the art of falconry from the very

¹² Alexander Leggatt, for instance, posits that falconry metaphors excuse Petruchio's violence because they turn the "taming of Katherine into a . . . test of skill and a source of pleasure." Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedies of Love* (London: Methuen, 1973), 56. More recently, J. A. Shea and Paul Yachnin explore the animal/human interplay more broadly in *Taming of the Shrew*. J.A. Shea and Paul Yachnin, "The Well-Hung Shrew," in *Eco-Critical Shakespeare*, ed. Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), 105–122.

¹³ Benson, "'If I do prove her haggard'," 194.

¹⁴ Edward Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt: A Cultural and Social Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. Ch. 4.

beginning of their marriage; for Ranald, he “instinctively” excels in the role of the hunter.¹⁵ But reading Petruchio as a master hunter ignores his growth and movement away from violent taming strategies. Early modern falconry manuals such as those by Simon Latham and George Turberville imply repeatedly that the art of falconry is not instinctual but mastered with effort and discipline—a falconer’s attitude of welcoming solicitude needs to be cultivated. My renewed attention to the discourses of coyness in falconry manuals recasts the purpose of Petruchio’s taming strategies. Instead of showing him as entirely successful, as Ranald suggests, Shakespeare portrays him as an amateur falconer who must learn his craft. To understand these subtleties, however, we must take a closer look at the gradual, educational process of mastering the art of falconry.

One common rhetorical strategy we can find across many hawking manuals is their insistence that falconry is a difficult skill that must be learned and fostered. Each volume on falconry is deeply invested in the education and development of its readers. As if to confirm their abilities as falcon tamers, the writers of these volumes take pains to establish their own authority. Turberville creates his authority by citing many different sources, claiming that his volume records the collected wisdom of falconers from around Europe. In his *New and Second Book of Falconrie*, by contrast, Latham provides detailed, pedagogical examples to establish his expertise. He explains to his readers, for instance, how to properly hood a falcon or how to make her comfortable around hunting dogs.¹⁶ In one mini-lesson, Latham explains that, to inure a falcon to dogs, a handler should intentionally and deliberately calm her. “During her [a hawk’s]

¹⁵ Ranald, *Shakespeare and his Social Context*, 118. Similarly, Patricia B. Phillippy sees his actions as inspired by the romantic resonances of taming narratives. Patricia B. Phillippy, “‘Loitering in Love’: Ovid’s *Heroides*, Hospitality, and Humanist Education in *The Taming of the Shrew*,” *Criticism* 40.1 (1998): 27–53.

¹⁶ Simon Latham published two volumes on falconry. The first, *The Falcon’s Lure and Cure*, provides a general overview of the care and tending of hawks. According to the ESTC, it saw five editions published from 1614 to 1658. The second volume, quoted above, concerns the training of hawks that are more difficult like haggards and ger-falcons. Two editions of his second book were published in 1618 and 1633.

luring and trayning,” a few spaniels should always be present, and the hunter must be “both cool and gentle” to his bird, so that she is “well entred and also acquainted with them.”¹⁷ If a hunter does this faithfully, Latham opines, a hawk will never fear hounds if she “had beene so kindly used and nuzled amongst” them (109). Otherwise, she will “never abide [dogs] . . . being a Hawke so coy and apt unto it” (110). Descriptions such as these emphasize the calculated nature of the falconer’s craft. Faced with the challenges of a falcon that is “apt” to be shy and frightened, a falconer must simulate “kindly use” and must take the time to “well. . . acquaint” a falcon with her surroundings. In these details, Turberville and Latham position themselves as experts who understand many details of the taming process.

Throughout his volume, Latham clearly focuses on educating his readers, as though he must satisfy them like a falconer must appease a falcon.¹⁸ Latham’s diction emphasizes that he wants to teach and train his readers, not just their avian subjects. He calls on his readers to “take notice,” and he presents numerous counterexamples, proving the soundness of his methods by explaining what does not work. For example, he cautions that a hunter should “at all times . . . set your Hawke on her pearch hooded, that she may not have understanding or perfect knowledge where it standeth; for if shee have, shee will alwayes have an unquiet longing to be there [outside]”—in other words, never neglect to hood your hawk, or she will grow restive (25). Likewise, he warns that “many men, that when they doe assay to put on their hood, doe eyther quite misse them, or otherwise put it halfway or loosely on, which greatly offendeth the Hawke” (28). By providing specifics about the physical challenges of this process (in words like “quite misse,” “halfway,” and “loosely,”) Latham demonstrates the dexterity and precision necessary in taming a falcon. These passages also pinpoint a common rhetorical strategy in his manual.

¹⁷ Latham, *New and Second Book of Falconrie*, 109.

¹⁸ As Bates points out, such language was highly gendered and fraught with interpretive potential, *Masculinity and the Hunt*, 151.

Latham's many cautions and warnings illustrate that the hunter and not just the falcon needs to be trained—it is not an intuitive process for either participant.

Besides stressing the hunter's need to learn, falconry handbooks also make clear that developing a relationship with a hawk is a *gradual* process requiring no small degree of toil. Turberville, in his *Booke of Falconrie*, adopts a sequential approach to instruction, elaborating in detail on each stage of the taming process. Both manning (acclimating a bird to human company) and luring (training it to fly on command) are essential steps in preparing a wild falcon to participate in the hunt. These steps are further subdivided into separate stages. To man a falcon, a trainer must “abate her meals, giving her lesse meate, and feede her betimes in the morning when she hath endewed.”¹⁹ During the night, a falconer should “set your Hawke neare to your beddes head upon some trestle or stoole, that you may wake her often. . . . she should always be unhooded, that shee may see people”: of course, these tactics of food and sleep deprivation are similar to those that Petruchio employs in *Taming of the Shrew* (92). The specificity of these instructions, down to the reasoning that a falcon should be “unhood[ed], that shee may see people,” reinforces the idea that the process must be learned and that the acclimation of the bird is gradual. Over time, the delicate balance between certain amounts of food, certain amounts of sleep, and constant attention from the falconer will yield, one hopes, a positive result—a tractable bird.

Moreover, the sequential nature of these presentations highlights that the falconer must exert himself mentally and physically in the process of reclaiming a bird—just as a wooer may have to exert himself to court his lady. In one report on “How to lure a Falcon lately manned,” for instance, Turberville explicitly separates the process of reclaiming a falcon from the wild and luring a hawk into hunting prey: “Before you can shew the lure to a Falcon newly reclaimed, you

¹⁹ Turberville, *Booke of Falconrie*, 91–92.

must consider three things: First, that she be well assured, and bolded in Company . . . Second, that shee be sharpe set and eager [according to the hour of the day]. . . . Third, . . . that shee bee cleane within [hungry]" (106). Again, the writer emphasizes that a falconer must be conscientious about the environment around his bird. She needs to be well-adjusted to company; it must be the right time of day; and she must be just hungry enough. In other words, "shew[ing] the lure to a falcon" should only come after a hunter has "considered" and evaluated his falcon's readiness. To make this judgment, a falconer must spend many hours with his falcon, observing the minutest changes in her behavior: how much she eats, how much she casts up in the morning, and how she responds to company. Indeed, in the opinion of Jean de Frauchiers, a falconer whom Turberville cites, the practice of manning a falcon takes "fortie days or thereabouts" of constant attention—a significant time commitment. Even after the manning process, a keeper must bathe, feed, and tend his falcon every day and "give her casting every night" (80). As Turberville contends, the taming process requires dedication and energy on the falconer's part, but if the falconer exerts himself, his efforts will be rewarded. In a passage on training a falcon to catch herons, for example, Turberville writes that even if she be of a "hard and dull capacity . . . in the end they prove good, if the Falconer take such *paines* with them as he ought to do" (82, my emphasis).

Latham, likewise, values a falconer who is dedicated: one who is "no sluggard" (8). Falcons, he advises, will respond to "diligent paines and [to] the prescribed order of your practice" (10). Even the construction of his sentences conveys this sentiment: he addresses the reader as "you" and interjects comments about how to elicit a tractable reaction from a falcon. The training methods he outlines make a hawk, even one of the "very worst and stubbornest nature," "tractable and loving" (11). Latham's repeated emphasis on conscientious handling, on

proper feeding, on careful hooding, and on meticulously clean surroundings crystallizes the amount of time and skill necessary for a falconer and the amount of environment manipulation that goes into the taming process. A falconer cannot force his bird to comply; instead, he has to create a physical environment where obedience is the most palatable option. Yet Latham also promises rewards for the dedicated falconer: “whosoever hee bee that can flie his hawk every daie, shall have every day a good and perfect hawke. And contrarywise, he that covets to flie his hawke upon rest, shall seldome have a perfect or staid hawk” (7). As Latham makes clear, the falconer cannot expect instant results: it is the time that he spends on his falcon that makes the difference.

Both of these rhetorical strategies of falconry manuals—accentuating the difficulty of falconry and the gradualness of the process—are aimed at teaching aspiring falconers what sorts of steps they need to cultivate obedience in their hawks. To the same end, the manuals employ a further rhetorical strategy: constantly reminding readers that they must place the bird’s serenity and domestication at the heart of the falconer-falcon relationship. Latham and Turberville place a great deal of emphasis on cultivating the trust of a falcon through winning words and soothing ways, on how a falconer *creates* intimacy with his bird through an assumed air of serenity. A falconer needs to manipulate his falcon into a quiet, calm state in order to earn her compliance. Latham repeatedly reminds his readers, like a wise coach, “remember to use your voice” in order to calm a falcon (13). Latham’s comments always come back to not “offend[ing] the Hawke,” as though to reinforce the paramount importance of this concept. By Latham’s underlying logic, if readers master this basic concept, not offending the hawk, they have mastered the central tenet of falcon keeping.

Turberville, too, dwells especially on the need to soothe a falcon, most clearly in his descriptions of luring. Reporting the opinion of an Italian falconer, Turberville suggests that “if [a falcon] come to [the lure] roundly, then feede her and rewarde her bountifully. And whiles your Hawke is upon the lure, go about her fayre and softly, luring and crying, who, ho, ho, as Falconers use” (130). Here, Turberville repeatedly calls attention to what the bird receives from the falconer, not on what she must do. The falconer must “feede her and rewarde her bountifully” and “go about her fayre and softly, luring and crying” in a soft voice—a stark contrast to Petruchio’s raucous “brawl[ing]” and “railing” (4.1.198). Not only that, because the falconer is “crying, who, ho, ho” as he lures the bird, she comes to associate her handler’s gentle language and “luring” words with the prize that allured her. The end goal, as always, is to ensure that the falcon is calmed by the falconer’s presence.

Turberville also uses luring as a metaphor for the falconer’s relationship with the falcon. He equates the falconer’s lure, meat tied to a string and swung round the head of the trainer, with the falconer’s “luring voice.” Of course, luring a hawk invokes the intimacy and wooing practices associated with coying wooers.²⁰ When he instructs readers on how to hood a rampage falcon, a bird that is particularly wild, Turberville tells his readers: “if your hawk doe stoope to the lure, and seaze the pullet, suffer her to plume her, coying her, and still luring her with your voyce” (146). Just as Petruchio vows that his wife must come to the lure, Turberville equates the “lure” of meat and leather, with the “luring” of the falconer, as if the hunter’s gentle tones should be as attractive as the scent of blood. For a falcon to be truly tamed, the falconer must become an appealing and welcoming companion. Though luring has a literal meaning, it also resonates with

²⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, Online Edition, s.v. “lure,” accessed 13 July 2015, <http://www.oed.com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/>.

being alluring, with attracting the wild falcon to the hunter's call. The falconer, Turberville seems to suggest, must feed the bird not just with meat but with his own seductive voice.

One further rhetorical strategy these experts use to convey the importance of coying the hawk is to portray the movement of the falconer as subordinate to the flight of the falcon. The end goal of falconry is the free but directed flight of the falcon; to achieve this balance, a falconer must himself adjust to the falcon's movements. Latham, in particular, places great value on the mutual movement of falconer and falcon. He equates the falconer's movement with a bird's flight: "He must be up early and downe late or else hee shall never see how his hawke rejoiceth: neither must he be tempted or drawne away from other mutabilities, or wandring affections, but remain and continue constant" (8). Significantly, the reward for the falconer's "constant" affection, which is a movement with and alongside his bird, is to "see how his hawke rejoiceth." By characterizing the falcon's flight as ecstatic joy, Latham clearly does *not* describe a falconer commanding a falcon to fly. Instead, this is a falconer moving towards a falcon and gaining satisfaction from the falcon's own joyous flight. Like a lover resisting "wandring affections," a falconer reaps the best reward if he is faithful to his falcon.

The previous description of a falcon's exuberant soaring heightens our sensitivity to a paradox of falcon taming. A falconer must direct his bird's flight, but he must do it without depriving the bird of freedom. After all, a bird must cut her own airy way in the world of delight. Hence, the manuals constantly repeat the need to nurture a falcon's controlled freedom through a falconer's coying behavior. Latham repeatedly advises his readers to coax a falcon rather than to command her. All of a falconer's efforts, even his own movement, "to be up early and down late," try to elicit a controlled but willing flight. In his description of luring, for example, Latham accentuates the importance of cultivating a falcon's *willingness* to come on command: "for the

preventing of which coyness and fugitive desire in your Hawke . . . draw her gently to you with your lure and cryance, not suddenly or rashly, but by degrees” (16). In this narrative, the onus is on the falconer to draw a falcon “gently,” to make it “please[d] and content” (16). A bird’s movement must be encouraged by the falconer’s gentle “drawing” of the lure towards him. If a falconer controls his own movement, pacifying his falcon with his own stillness and quietness, a hawk will eventually come of her own accord: “at first she did not dragge [game] so fast from you, but now she will bring it with as much speed towards you; yea she wil meet you with it” (16). Over and over again, Latham repeats this pattern. A falconer encourages and guides his hawk’s approach, coaxing her movement, and soon a falcon will come eagerly with “much speed” to “meet” her handler.

As Latham’s discourse implies, controlling a falcon’s flight was the goal of a falconer’s training. A falcon must learn to come on command, yet, paradoxically, she cannot be *forced* to fly. In fact, as Bates points out, “the ideal scenario of mutual ‘courtesy,’ . . . is all too often *not* achieved,” if a falconer does not coy his falcon. The positive scenes of a successful flight in these manuals are juxtaposed with ones where a bird flies away or refuses to soar because a falconer has tamed her ill.²¹ Hence, a falconer must resort to coaxing and cajoling. He must woo because he needs a falcon’s affections. As conceived by early modern writers, the relationship between falconer and falcon necessitated mutuality and freedom of movement to exist at all. The coying, coaxing approach that Latham and Turberville advocate provides a key frame for Shakespeare’s play—one that Shakespeare may have invoked by creating so many connections in tone and metaphor between the falconry manuals and his play.

Though perhaps not picking up on all the subtleties of tone and metaphor, Shakespeare’s early modern audiences would have been sensitized to the links between falcon-taming and

²¹ Bates, *Masculinity and the Hunt*, 156.

marriage-creating, especially as both could be perceived as relationships of coyness. For Latham, Turberville, and their audiences, the relationship between falcon and falconer is always at risk. As Latham writes, a hunter must be “constant” and not “tempted” away from his bird. Just as a falconer must be solicitous of his falcon in order to earn her obedience, a spouse should be considerate of his or her partner to earn his or her trust. Of course, early modern audiences would not see every romantic relationship in terms of hawking metaphors. However, *Taming of the Shrew* explicitly invites its audiences to think in those terms. The play’s title would have put audiences in mind of shrew-taming, but the word “taming” would likely have put them in mind of falcon-taming as well. From the outset, then, attentive viewers would have been prepared to see the relationship between Katherine and Petruchio in light of falconry.

To make the significance of falconry metaphors to the play even clearer, Shakespeare includes them in the Induction.²² Here, the lord begins his brief appearance by clearly invoking the tenets of good husbandry. He commands his servants to care well for his beasts, just as Latham would have advised:

Huntsman, I charge thee, tender well my hounds:
 Brach Merriman, the poor cur is emboss’d;
 And couple Clowder with the deep-mouth’d brach.
 Saw’st thou not, boy, how Silver made it good
 At the hedge-corner, in the coldest fault?
 I would not lose the dog for twenty pound.
 (1.12–17)

In these instructions, the lord adopts two tenets of falconry manuals: gentle treatment in his feeding his hounds, and soothing words in his praise of Silver.²³ The lord encourages the

²² Calling the scenes with Christopher Sly the “Induction” is a modern intervention. Though it was not printed in the Folio version of the play, it does appear in Q1, and thus, I think, was central to Shakespeare’s use of falconry motifs. For more on the editorial history of the play, see Leah S. Marcus, “The Shrew as Editor/Editing Shrews,” in *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives, 1500–1700*, ed. David Wootton and Graham Holderness (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010), 84–100, at 88–90.

²³ For more on the meaning of these terms, see Everett G. Neasmann, ““Silver made it good in the Hedge-Corner”: Hunting Dogs in *Taming of the Shrew*,” *Notes and Queries* 60.3 (2013): 405–07.

stroking or “coying” of his hounds, as Turberville encourages his readers to do. Likewise, his positive commendation of how “Silver made it good / At the hedge-corner” calls to mind Latham’s advice that falconers praise their “tractable” birds. The huntsman adopts a similar method. He comments to his lord, “Belman is as good as [Silver] / . . . / twice to-day [he] pick’d out the dullest scent” (1.18–20). The lord and the hunter reinforce for each other the importance of tending a hound gently—contextualizing their experience on the hunt in the language of reward and support. Their exchange is a primer for a hunter’s kindness towards his animals: he is aware of their needs, positive towards them, and anxious that they will be “as good” the next time he hunts them. Of course, they do more than stress to each other good taming practices; their conversation also serves as a reminder to the audience of such methods.

Even as the lord’s first speech is a recitation of proper animal husbandry, the lord’s pranking of Christopher Sly is portrayed, by him and by Shakespeare, as another practical experience in luring a wild (i.e., undomesticated) man. Upon finding the drunkard asleep, the lord quips “O monstrous beast! How like a swine he lies / Grim death how foul and loathsome is thine image!” (1.30–31). These lines categorize Sly as a “beast,” “monstrous,” “foul,” and “loathsome.” He is a “swine,” a dumb farm animal, quite unlike the well-trained hounds praised earlier in the scene—but perhaps a wild beast that can, like a falcon, be tamed. The lord’s language constantly reinforces a connection between a contented Sly and a measured, placating approach—like the ones that Latham and Turberville encourage. He tells his servants, even as they chuckle over the drunken Sly, to “manage well the jest,” as though he knows that Sly will need a moderate response to convince him (1.41). He ends his instructions with similar thoughts, urging them “this do, and do it kindly, gentle sirs / It will be pastime passing excellent / If it be husbanded with modesty” (1.62–64). For the lord, “modesty,” or discipline, and “kindness,” or

coying conduct, are the key to undertaking this far-from-modest joke. In particular, the word “kind” resonates with the language of hunting: “kind” could mean “naturally”—i.e., use Sly according to the natural run of his experience; it could also mean a “category or race”—i.e., use Sly as an animal, tame him, train him, and manipulate him. The very details that the lord includes in his plans are likewise meant to manipulate the environment that Sly encounters upon waking. As the lord asks his servants (and us), “What do you think: if he were conveyed to bed/ Wrapped in sweet clothes, rings upon his fingers, / A most delicious banquet by his bed,” then “wouldst not the beggar then forget himself?” (Induction 1.36). The details of his plan suggest forethought but also prudence and seductiveness. He even hopes “my presence may abate the over-merry spleen [of his servants] / Which otherwise would grow into extremes” (1.132–34). These details are an attempt at seduction that is meant to soothe Sly’s confusion. The lord seems to replicate the actions of the hunter who solicitously calms his falcon.

After seeing the Induction, an audience might be prepared to recognize Shakespeare’s subtle deployment of falconry metaphors in Katherine’s and Petruchio’s courtship. The Induction establishes the significance of the hunter’s coying behaviors (soothing, talking, and manipulating) to the play’s representation of intimate relationships. Early modern falconry manuals place great stock in encouraging aspiring falconers to manipulate the environment of their falcons: soothing their birds will yield obedience faster than striking them. These texts emphasize again and again that a falconer must value his bird, that he must devote time and energy to her care, that he must cultivate her affection, and, above all, that he must allow her some freedom of movement and flight. In the works of Latham, Turberville, and their fellow writers, the contours of the relationship between falcon and falconer are portrayed as a work in progress, as a relationship that demands as much effort from the falconer as it does results from

the falcon. In the play proper, Shakespeare implies that these actions of soothing, manipulating, and calming are not merely those of a falconer training a falconer; they should be the actions of Petruchio, who must learn how to read his Turberville better.

II. Petruchio, Falconry, and the Language of Coyness

The traits of a coying hunter that I have identified above contrast sharply with Petruchio's conduct throughout much of *Taming of the Shrew*. In his analysis of the play, Berry explores the unsettling ramifications of equating Katherine, a woman, with a falcon, yet he finds some consolation in the playful mockery of masculine hunt culture in the Induction.²⁴ However, Shakespeare's portrayal of falconry tropes is more subtle than Berry allows. By associating Petruchio's character with the modes and syntax of the falconry manuals, Shakespeare creates a sharp divide between the ideal hunter and Petruchio. Petruchio is more like the amateur hunter, who, as Bates writes, was an all-too-common fixture in falconry manuals.²⁵ Yet, I propose that the practices associated with falcon-taming also represent a remedy for Petruchio's unkindness in the text. Shakespeare, I argue, uses the tropes of hawking to facilitate the development of Petruchio from an amateur hunter to an able one, from a self-centered husband to a potentially more successful companion.

Falconry Metaphors in Act 4

In a speech in Act 4, Petruchio most clearly articulates his perspective on the process of training a falcon. A brief look at this will suggest some of the separation between Petruchio's actions and those of Turberville's ideal hunter. As he says about his starved, sleep-deprived wife:

²⁴ Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt*, 164.

²⁵ Bates, *Masculinity and the Hunt*, 159–60.

My falcon now is sharp and passing empty
 And, till she stoop, she must not be full-gorged,
 For then she never looks upon her lure.
 Another way I have to man my haggard,
 To make her come and know her keeper's call.
 That is, to watch her, as we watch these kites
 That bate and beat and will not be obedient.
 She ate no meat today, nor none shall eat.
 Last night she slept not, nor tonight she shall not.
 (4.1.190–98)

Here, Petruchio describes the typical process for training falcons to be obedient. He wants to “man [his] haggard,” or acclimate her to him, and he hopes to teach his wife to “look upon her lure,” just as Turberville describes. Thus, Petruchio mimics the training structure that early modern falconry manuals outline.

In this speech, Shakespeare also draws on specific techniques described in falconry handbooks. As Latham and Turberville recommend, Petruchio comments on the importance of a hungry falcon: his “falcon,” Katherine, “must not be full-gorged,” and “ate no meat today.” As Turberville suggests, he keeps his wife awake—“last night she slept not.” In these ways, as Ranald argues, Petruchio tries to accustom his wife to her new role.²⁶ By “fling[ing] the bolster . . . sheets . . . [and] coverlet,” he acquaints her with himself.²⁷ Even as he keeps her awake, he lectures her on a “sermon of constancy” and claims “all is done in reverend care of her”—on some level, he uses his voice to remind her of his presence (4.1.201–202, 4.1.183, 4.1.204). Petruchio’s “care” of Katherine is, in some ways, entirely as he describes it, an attempt to train his wife into pleasant behavior using techniques inspired by falconry.

But though it adheres to the letter of Turberville’s law, Petruchio’s reported conduct differs from the spirit of falconry manuals considerably. Though Latham and others emphasize the importance of a gradual training, Petruchio’s speech seems to rush each step all at once and

²⁶ Ranald, *Shakespeare and his Social Context*, 127–28.

²⁷ Phillippy, “‘Loitering in Love’,” 28.

elide the drawn-out nature of the process: “My falcon now is sharp and passing empty / And, till she stoop, she must not be full-gorged, / For then she never looks upon her lure.” While Turberville advises that a falcon should be “cleane,” or hungry, while she is trained, he sees the process of manning and luring as many stages. As Nicholas Cox writes in a later falconry manual: “unhood her gently, giving her two or three bites; and putting on her hood again, you must give her as much more.”²⁸ In Petruchio’s estimation, Katherine’s submission should happen “now” or “never.” She must “stoop,” before she is given food to eat or his affection. Such a plan overlooks the development of a relationship between falcon and falconer that Turberville, Latham, and others value. As Cox states when describing the manning process, “her food must be good and warm twice or thrice a day, until she be full-gorg’d . . . and the reason is that you must break her by degrees off from her accustomed feeding” (24). Instead of changing her conduct “by degrees” or “rewarding [her] well at the beginning,” Petruchio improvises a shock-and-awe style of taming, where Katherine is immediately and disruptively forced from her accustomed haunts and left “sharp and passing empty” (29).

Shakespeare also reinforces Petruchio’s misinterpretation or misunderstanding of falconry techniques in his over-attention to what Katherine must do and a commensurate inattention to what he himself should do. Petruchio says that his wife shall be “sharp and empty” until she “stoop” to the lure, yet he offers none of the enticements that the manuals advise. Instead, he sets up his treatment of Katherine as a punishment that she must overcome. By attending to how Katherine must change her conduct, Petruchio utterly neglects the importance of a falconer’s coying behavior in fostering such a change in attitude. Whereas Katherine must “stoop,” “come,” and “know,” Petruchio enjoys all the gains, or hopes to, without exerting

²⁸ Cox, *Gentleman’s Recreation*, 24. Like Latham’s volume of falconry, Cox’s edition was incredibly popular, going through several editions from 1674 to 1696.

himself. He does not “reward her bountifully” as Latham advises, but starves her immediately. He does not call her “fayre and softly, luring and crying” her with his voice, but shouts, “brawls,” “flings,” and makes a mess (4.1.172, 177). In short, he does not follow Latham’s advice to think always of the hawk. As Shakespeare portrays it, Petruchio clearly does not understand the most important tenet of good falconry.

Unlike falconry manuals where falcon and falconer are close companions, Shakespeare maintains a clear separation between Petruchio and Katherine in this speech. Cox, for example, plays up a physical connection between the bird and the keeper. Particularly during the manning process, falcon and falconer are joined by bodily contact, not just physical proximity. “You must bear her continually on your fist till she be thoroughly Manned,” he says, and, in company, he advises, “unhood her and give her some meat, holding her just against your face and eyes, which will make her less afraid” (23–24). Turberville, likewise, suggests that falconers use “a little round stick” to “oftentymes stroke and handle your Falcon. For the more she is handled, the better she will be manned” (100). By contrast, Petruchio seems physically distant from his bride. He recalls no moments when they touch each other, and he is, during the speech, separated from her, on stage while she is off. As Berry notes, the best that can be said for Petruchio is that he never strikes Katherine, as he does his servants.²⁹ By eliminating any sense of closeness or touch between Katherine and Petruchio, Shakespeare underscores their physical distance from each other, in contrast to the proximity and closeness valued by early modern falconry manuals.

What we can see from this speech, then, is that, contrary to Ranald’s claims, Petruchio is hardly a master hunter. Rather, he seems a beginner at his craft. In particular, Petruchio’s taming cleaves to the rules prescribed by Turberville and others without understanding the importance of

²⁹ Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt*, 145.

a falconer's coying conduct. In Shakespeare's characterization of him, Petruchio seems only to have absorbed the violence and control of falconry manuals.

Falconry Motifs in Acts 1 and 2

Though the speech in Act 4 is the play's longest engagement with falconry motifs, references to birdsmanship can be found throughout the play. Like Petruchio's speech, many of the earlier invocations of falconine imagery reveal his ineptitude. In stark contrast to the lord's conciliatory and measured example in the Induction, Petruchio's early speeches are pointedly self-centered, particularly in his I-rich discourse and in his obsession with his own free locomotion. Such a perspective frequently prevents him from courting Katherine with the same refined solicitude that the manuals encourage, though his "Kate" name-game in Act 2 is a sort of soothing.

Though not as explicitly as in the speech from Act 4, Shakespeare integrates the discourses of coy falconry into *Taming of the Shrew* from the beginning—particularly in the figure of Katherine herself. Tellingly, the early descriptions of Katherine draw on the language of coyness, particularly as associated with the falcon. She is "shrewd and forward beyond all measure," reports Hortensio (1.2.87), as if Katherine is as "forward" and wild as a falcon. In the same vein, at their first audience, Petruchio even reports to Katherine that "'Twas told me you were rough and coy and sullen" (2.1.233). These connections are further accentuated when Petruchio tries to woo Katherine with flattery. He declares "now I find the report [that she was coy] a very liar / For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous"—as if Katherine is a "game," or willing, partner in his sport (2.1.234–35). When Katherine is associated with a "rough," "coy" woman, audiences would of course think of the coy mistress. But they might be put in mind of other kinds of coyness—especially those found in falconry manuals, given the

play's title and the hunting imagery in the Induction. In these descriptions of Katherine, Shakespeare interweaves descriptions of the aloof and angry mistress with the wild and untamed falcon, providing further evidence that Petruchio's conduct can also be interpreted through the lens of falconry manuals.

In Petruchio's first speech, Shakespeare stresses Petruchio's sense of self-importance. Admittedly, this show of individualism is not surprising as Petruchio is portrayed as young and wealthy, a combination which was powerful in the social hierarchy of early modern England.³⁰ His ambitions to marry well accentuate how important freedom is to Petruchio. Explaining his plans to Hortensio, Petruchio emphasizes the speed of his actions: "I have thrust myself into this maze, / Happily to wive and thrive as best I may" (1.2.53–54). "I have thrust myself" seems an odd way to declare one's readiness for marriage, but in the context, the phrasing produces a sense of Petruchio's self-focused idea of marriage. In Petruchio's plan for marriage, he ignores his potential mate. A woman's role is implied only in his verb "thrust," which has obvious double-entendre potential, and in his intention to "wive."³¹ Yet, a woman's volition or participation in this relationship is absent. Such an omission directly counters the focus of falconry manuals on the relationship between the falconer and the hawk. Just as he assumes that Katherine should "stoop" for him, he portrays himself as able to freely move himself without regard for her needs.

When Hortensio introduces the possibility of a "shrewd, ill-favoured [but rich] wife," Petruchio's language retains a focus on himself. He elaborates on what a woman can offer him—money—not on the love and affection that might exist between spouses.

³⁰ Stephanie Chamberlain makes this point in her analysis of Petruchio as an newly-inheriting man in "Domestic Economies in *The Taming of the Shrew*: Amassing Cultural Credit," *Upstart Crow* 28 (2008): 50–70.

³¹ As Boose writes, Petruchio repeats the conventional imagery of marriage manuals to make his points. Boose, "Scolding Bridles," 182–83.

If thou know
 One rich enough to be Petruchio's wife –
 As wealthy is burden of my wooing dance –
 Be she as foul as was Florentius' love,
 As old as Sibyl, and as curst and shrewd
 As Socrates' Xanthippe or a worse
 She moves me not, or not removes at least
 Affection's edge in me, were she as rough
 As are the swelling Adriatic seas.
 I come to wive it wealthily in Padua;
 If wealthily, then happily in Padua.
 (1.2.63–73)

This speech values the material status a wife can bring to Petruchio not what he can offer a wife—companionship, perhaps, soft words, or a safe environment. As Latham writes, a falconer must exert himself for his bird and should try not to “offend” (8). Perhaps, to paraphrase Latham, a better attitude towards a potential wife would be to offer “full assurance of her content and welcome when she come unto you” (15).

The speech's emphasis on movement also illuminates the gap between Petruchio's view of marriage and falconry manuals' views of the keeper-falcon relationship. Petruchio literalizes his marriage as a movement when he says: “she moves me not, or not removes me.” Whilst a falconer's movement is restrained by the necessities of the taming process, Petruchio anticipates that *he* will sail freely over his wife, though she is “as rough as the Adriatic seas.” Such language is the exact opposite of that found in hunting manuals where the falconer has to move, “up early and down late,” drawing the falcon “close to his face,” in order to placate the bird. As Shakespeare portrays him in this scene, Petruchio approaches marriage as an arena where his movement is under his own control—not as a mutual relationship that requires both parties to react and adjust. As such, Shakespeare sets him up as an arrogant amateur, likely to fail in taming his falcon.

If, in these early scenes, Shakespeare compares Petruchio's selfishness with the physical exertions and mental deprivations a master falconer faces, then his first encounter with Katherine reinforces Petruchio's inept execution of wooing. Even before their first conference, Shakespeare forecasts a clash between coying words and violent ones. Before he enters, Petruchio promises to "woo her with some spirit":

Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain
 She sings as sweetly as a nightingale
 Say that she frown, I'll say she look as clear
 As morning roses newly washed with dew."
 (2.1.165–69)

He will overwhelm her with compliments and "sweet" language, correct her frowns with an image of beauty, "roses newly washed with dew," and "commend her volubility" if she acts mute (2.1.170–71). Such an approach seems to mimic the seductive solicitousness of the coying wooer as he courts a mistress or of a hunter as he mans his bird. Yet, just as he promises to woo gently, Petruchio also vows to "board her though she chide as loud / As thunder" (1.2.91–92). Even as he invokes them, Petruchio devalues the cautious methods of engagement that falconers appreciate. If Katherine resists him, Petruchio seems to imply, he will react violently and "board," or woo, her aggressively, overruling her objections.

Petruchio's first addresses to Katherine seem to indicate that they could get along, as he imitates the soothing language of falconry.³² He encourages himself, "now, Petruchio, speak," just as Latham does his reader. When he meets Katherine, he spouts off a rolling series of names for her, a nonsensical praise of her name and her status:

you are called plain Kate,

³² Their banter seems mutual, as Langis characterizes it, or co-creative, as Suzanne M. Tartamella finds. Langis, *Passion, Prudence, and Virtue*, 59; Suzanne M. Tartamella, "Reinventing the Poet and the Dark Lady: Theatricality and Artistic Control in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*," *English Literary Renaissance* 43.3 (2013): 446–77.

And bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the curse.
 But Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom
 Kate of Kate-Hall, my super-dainty Kate –
 For dainties are all Kates –and therefore, Kate,
 Take this of me, Kate of my consolation.
 (2.1.181–186)

The lack of end stops and sentence breaks turns this speech into a soothing monotone that overwhelms its hearer. Thus, we might interpret, as Ralald does, that Petruchio has succeeded in “woo[ing] her with some spirit,” that he aims to flatter and appease her humors (2.1.165). Like a coying wooer, he tries to cajole her into believing his intentions through overt flattery. He compliments her excessively: she is “pleasant . . . passing courteous,” “slow in speech, yet sweet as springtime flower,” and “canst not frown, . . . canst not look askance,” as “angry wenches do” (2.1.237–39). Such language creates a calming environment meant to placate Katherine. Even as he praises her, he hints that she should “entertain’st [her] wooers [Petruchio]” with “mildness,” like a coying hunter who gently nudges his falcon along a desired path (2.1.40).

In Katherine’s responses to Petruchio, Shakespeare suggests how effective Petruchio’s playful wooing might be, were it sincerely meant.³³ Replying to his word games, she offers her own witty barbs. When he teases her that he “will not burden thee / . . . knowing thee to be but young and light,” with the obvious sexual pun on burden, she retorts: “Too light for such a swain as you to catch, /and yet as heavy as my weight should be” (2.1.198–201). This pun-filled exchange (light—light of frame or promiscuous; swain—wooer or bumpkin) illustrates a key tool in Shakespeare’s box—the linguistic exchanges between Katherine and Petruchio parallel the flight of the falcon with the falconer.³⁴ Just as the movement of the falcon must be preserved and cultivated, Petruchio must solicit and welcome Katherine’s verbal assays. When given a

³³ For more on the patriarchal implications of this playfulness, see Marianne L. Novy, “Patriarchy and Play in *The Taming of the Shrew*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 9.2 (1979): 264–80.

³⁴ In her essay that casts Petruchio as a poet, Tartamella argues that Katherine and Petruchio’s word play suggests that Petruchio must learn to appreciate her as a fellow creator. Tartamella, “Reinventing the Poet,” 447–48.

partner able to move with her, Katherine is “light,” capable, witty, and responsive. Like a well-trained falcon who answers her keeper’s call, she picks up on her partner’s jests and returns them back, joke for joke. The equality of Petruchio’s and Katherine’s exchanges establishes a subtle relationship between a falcon’s flight and a woman’s words—both must be allowed to flourish.

Though Petruchio sometimes modulates his language and behavior to coy Katherine, he also shows his inexperience and tactlessness. Throughout the scene he is too blunt. At the end of the first speech, for example, Petruchio reverts to overusing the first person. As if moved by her beauty, he tells Katherine: “Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife” (2.1.190). This phrasing, though complimentary, reechoes his previous description of marriage as a one-person enterprise: “I thrust myself into the maze” of marriage. (1.2.9–70). Both of these lines place Petruchio’s desires over Katherine’s. They show him “moving” himself but leave her out of any progression towards marriage. Likewise, when Petruchio desires her to walk, he commands and does not invite her: “Why does the world report that Kate doth limp?” “O let me see thee walk. Thou dost not halt” (2.1.242, 47). Though Shakespeare does not explicitly invoke the mutual movement of falcon and falconer, such language accentuates the relative positions of Katherine and Petruchio on stage. His “let me see thee walk” establishes a physical and emotional distance between them: Petruchio wants to observe Katherine walk, as though he may simply stand and watch her efforts. He positions himself as a buyer of livestock: “let me see it walk” might be a command for a horse-trader or livestock-breeder.³⁵ In these instances, Petruchio’s speeches gesture to the language of falconry, in that he does not use it effectively.

In addition to these moments of self-centeredness, Petruchio’s blunt proposal calls attention to the patriarchal assumptions that structure this scene (a shrew must be abused, a

³⁵ As Berry notes, Petruchio’s use of horse-trading metaphors recalls the convention in shrew-taming narratives to equate the training of a horse with the taming of a shrews; Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt*, 90. In his emphasis on falconry metaphors, Shakespeare is an exception.

woman must be wed at her father's consent and not her own, a man may woo as he will), which scholars like Carol Thomas Neely and Boose decry.³⁶ Instead of persuading and teasing Katherine to marry him, he "board[s]" her "despite her chiding." In this speech, Petruchio presents their marriage as a *fait accompli*:

Thus in plain terms: your father hath consented
That you will be my wife, your dowry 'greed on,
And will you, nill you, I will marry you."
(2.1.259–61)

Here, Petruchio fails to create an environment that encourages Katherine's obedience. Rather than soothing her or continuing to manipulate her feelings with love games, he "plain[ly]" tells her what will happen. In Petruchio's "will you, nill you," Shakespeare emphasizes Petruchio's failure to cultivate her affections and exposes the inadequacies of his inept attempts to soothe her rancor. The later lines in this speech even tie his declarations to falconry, providing a context for interpreting Petruchio's claims. He tells Katherine: "I am he am born to tame you, Kate, / And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate / Conformable as other household Kates" (2.1.265–67). To contrast with Petruchio's blatant claims that he will "tame . . . Kate" and "bring [her]," Shakespeare recalls the lord's solicitous, cunning seduction of Sly in the Induction. Unlike the lord who subtly maneuvers Sly's experiences to manipulate him, Petruchio bluntly claims his influence over Katherine. The lack of delicacy in his declaration of marriage accentuates Petruchio's early ineptness.

One might imagine that, in performance, a shrewish Katherine might attempt to object to Petruchio's declaration of marriage, but she never speaks. In fact, Petruchio even deprives her of that outlet. When she does protest to Baptista, her new fiancé dismisses her alarm as a facade: it is a bargain "b'twist us twain, being alone, / That she shall still be curst in company" (2.1.292–

³⁶ Neely, *Broken Marriages*, 34–35. Boose, "Scolding Brides," 185–86.

95). By denying Katherine the ability to speak her mind, Petruchio refuses her the verbal equivalent of a falcon's flight. His final speech in their private exchange also prevents her from speaking: "Never make denial - / I must and will have Katherine to my wife" (2.1.268–69). Will she, nil she, Petruchio will "wive" it with Katherine. By coupling Petruchio's marriage proposal with a silencing of Katherine, Shakespeare anticipates Petruchio's later inept attempts at falcon-taming and also exposes a possible remedy—the solicitous behavior of the falconer that nurtures the falcon's freedom.

Both later and earlier descriptions of Katherine and Petruchio's courtship evoke the motifs of falconry. My consideration of these exchanges in the context of falconry manuals, as the play encourages, provides a way of reconciling Petruchio's competing impulses in the early portions of the play. On the one hand, he seems to have some modest sense of gentle courtship. On the other hand, he is about as blunt as a hippopotamus. Like an amateur hunter trying to browbeat his falcon into flight, Petruchio neglects a critical component of falconry: that a falconer must cultivate a relationship with his falcon that is at least partially mutual, considerate, and solicitous. As the Induction and the early scenes invite us to recognize, Petruchio's attempts to tame his shrew are a pale imitation of the dedication, time, and attention required for successful falcon-taming.

III. Petruchio Becoming a Successful Tamer in Acts 4 and 5

In the latter half of the play, Shakespeare's use of hawking tropes clarifies how Petruchio develops more effective ways of interacting with Katherine. Petruchio's domination of his wife is hard to reconcile with the intimacy and solicitousness advised by falconry manuals. His abuse of her has real consequences that Shakespeare does not shy away from presenting. In fact, he

makes her reactions a central focus of the second half of the play. Katherine's distressed state is meant to inspire sympathy, just as she seems to inspire such feelings in Petruchio. While the example of a falconer taming his falcon does not efface the inherent problems of this play (women are, after all, not meant to be trained as hawks, even the right way), Shakespeare's depiction of Petruchio's growth envisions their marriage as one increasingly defined by mutual consideration of each other. In his use of the language of coyness and falconry in Acts 4 and 5, Shakespeare dramatizes Petruchio gradually mastering the skills of falcon taming. In learning to pay attention to the needs of his wife and to move with her—just as a master falconer will create a calming, soothing, and manipulative environment for his hawk—Petruchio finds a way to tame his wife that maintains some of her freedom.

The Effects of Petruchio's Taming in Act 4

In the third scene of Act 4, Shakespeare puts the effects of Petruchio's ill-advised falcon-taming on display. The audience has already been prepared for her transformed state in Grumio's previous description of her. As he reports, when Petruchio rails at her, she is utterly befuddled and silenced: she "(poor soul) / Knows not which way to stand, to look, to speak / And sits as one new risen from a dream" (4.1.84–86). Rather, the description of her state emphasizes how shell-shocked and confused she has become. When she actually appears, her speech is changed, reflecting her physical and mental deprivation. She is "starved for meat, giddy for lack of sleep / With oaths kept waking, and with brawling fed" (4.3.9–10). In some fashion, Katherine embodies the state of a falcon mid-taming. She is "starved" and "giddy"—yet unlike a falcon manned by a caring falconer, she is kept awake by "oaths" and fed "by brawls." To the astute

early modern ear, such a description of taming might immediately serve as a criticism of Petruchio's methods.

Early modern falconry manuals might have predicted a similar reaction because Petruchio rushed his taming and neglected her needs. Rather than going "by degrees," as Cox would advise, Petruchio harries and hurries his haggard-wife—offering her no coying words or soothing touches. Instead, he "brawls" and "throws" the bolsters—actions that might appall Turberville's ideal, patient keeper.³⁷ These images suggest that Petruchio's attempts at taming are a failure; certainly Katherine does not seem properly manned, merely broken. Her conversation with Grumio is even dispirited and confused, markedly less energetic and active than in previous scenes. Rather than being declarative or decisive, her speech is passive and questioning. She wonders "what, did he marry me to famish me?", as though she is trying to make sense of Petruchio's actions (4.1.3). When Grumio refuses her initial request for food, she begs him "I prithee let me have it" and changes her requests at his whim from "tripe finely broiled" to "beef and mustard" to "beef, and let the mustard rest" (4.1.20, 23). Just as Petruchio denies her food, Grumio refuses to help, even after teasing her with meat. These methods are a far cry from what a wise falconer would attempt in taming a recalcitrant bird.

When next Petruchio sees Katherine, he seems to recognize the magnitude of his failure—his behavior towards her markedly changes. Immediately after her complaint, he enters with food and asks "How fares my Kate? What, sweeting, all ammort?" (4.1.36). Many critics see this moment as Petruchio testing his training or as Katherine's first opportunity to show her growth. However, the initial encounter can be read in another way. His greeting may be a genuine inquiry of "how [she] fares," particularly because his next comment, "What, sweeting,

³⁷ As Berry comments, it is unfortunate to lift up a falconer's behavior as admirable over a husband's treatment of a wife. Of course, the marriage manuals of the day, the more extreme ones, sometimes advocated for "taming" a wife through violent means. Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt*, 99–100.

all amort,” implies that he has evaluated the situation and recognized that she is “amort,” depressed and listless. One imagines the dismay an actor might show when he enters to see a weary woman who has not rested and who has not eaten for some time. Such an image might cause him to ask himself, perhaps with regret, what is “all amort?” Though an actor may play these lines differently, perhaps sounding sarcastic, jovial, or over-solicitous, the importance of tone in these lines accentuates that this is a turning point in Petruchio’s treatment of Katherine. After this query, Petruchio’s actions change—he offers her food and tends to her—which may support the idea that he is attempting to cultivate a more soothing environment for his new wife. By so clearly criticizing Petruchio’s early application of falconry techniques, Shakespeare may want us to see this moment as one of revelation—where Petruchio objectively evaluates the results of his violent taming and finds them lacking.

Petruchio’s possible revelation has an immediate effect. Whereas, in previous acts, he did not allow her to speak, here, he invites her to enter into conversation with him. In reply to his complaint that “the poorest service is repaid with thanks, / And so shall mine,” Kate says “I thank you, sir” (4.3.45–46, 47). His comment is a gentler type of instruction than his previous railing. His invitation to offer “thanks” is a moment where he executes a type of falcon-taming—he engages her. His request for thanks, like a hunter showing the lure, is a movement on his part as well. He shifts from yelling to asking, inviting interaction where he previously shut it down. Her reply signals a commensurate adjustment of her speech. She no longer rails against him but acquiesces and accepts correction, as a cowed hawk accepts the treatment of her hunter.

Petruchio’s next speeches further accentuate his disquiet and his increased concern for Katherine. He now bids Katherine: “Much good do it unto thy gentle heart. / Kate, eat apace,” and informs her that they “return unto thy father’s house” (4.3.51–52, 53). Such language marks

a verbal shift from an oppositional “you” and “I” to a companionate, mutual “we” in “we return” and “we revel.” Also, Petruchio pairs an act of feeding with soothing discourse and kind endearments like “gentle heart,” connecting food to the sound of his voice. Shakespeare uses this small exchange to illustrate a moment of growth in Petruchio as a sort of tamer. By altering his behavior, Petruchio also deliberately and effectively manipulates Katherine’s possible reactions to him; his shows of kindness are meant to cultivate a softening in her anger. He also restores some measure of autonomy to Katherine. By asking “hast thou dined?” and telling her “the tailor stays thy leisure / To deck thy body with his ruffling treasure,” Petruchio controls his wife’s actions—encouraging her to eat and suggesting that she visit the tailor (4.3.59–60). Yet by phrasing them as questions or indirect requests, Petruchio allows her some freedom of movement and of choice—just as a falconer controls his bird’s flight but still must allow her to fly. He also offers some measure of mutual movement. They will go together to her father’s house. The tailor waits for her movement and her approval—just as a falconer might wait for his falcon’s response. By encouraging Katherine to move, rather than forcing her, Petruchio starts to create an environment that will pacify and soothe her.

Though this exchange between them marks progress on Petruchio’s part, he has not yet fully learned to coy Katherine. He continues to tease and push her, manipulating her reactions and misinterpreting her comments. As scholars like Boose have noted, such an approach is in keeping with his previous attempts to silence her voice and in keeping with wider cultural aims to silence shrewish women.³⁸ When the haberdasher presents his wares, for example, Petruchio rejects the cap as a “velvet dish . . . lewd and filthy” (4.3.65). Instead of accepting his opinion, Katherine defends the milliner’s wares as “fit[ting] the time” and what “gentlewomen wear”

³⁸ For an extended description of the punishments for gossips and scolds, see Boose, “Scolding Brides,” 186–88.

(4.3.67). As Anne Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass show, audiences would easily have contextualized this exchange as a debate over Katherine's identity—is she gentle or is she lewd?³⁹ In their different interpretations of the “velvet dish,” Petruchio and Katherine are really staking a claim about what her identity should be: “gentle” and chaste.⁴⁰ When Katherine refuses to agree with him, he tears the dress and claims that they do not need any new clothes—as though her lack of agreement is still a rebellion to be punished.

After portraying Petruchio as persisting in violent discourse, Shakespeare gives Katherine a speech that challenges Petruchio's assumptions about falcon-taming and marriage. Following her articulation of her own identity as a “gentlewomen,” Katherine emphasizes her own freedom. Her remarks, channeling the positive falconry motifs that the lord in the Induction embraces, demand that Petruchio acknowledge her physical and emotional needs. In response to Petruchio's gibe that, “when she is gentle,” she will wear a cap, Katherine says:

Why, sir, I trust I may have leave to speak
 And speak I will.
 /... /
 My tongue will tell the anger of my heart
 Or else my heart concealing it will break
 And, rather than it shall, I will be free
 Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words.
 (4.1.73–80)

This speech, of course, is often read as a statement of her own autonomy rather than a protest over differences in haberdashery.⁴¹ While this speech does make a bid for personal sovereignty, one which Petruchio ignores, her response is also a striking partner to Petruchio's own use of

³⁹ This controversy over clothing reflects the value early modern English society placed on clothing and identity. *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 89–104.

⁴⁰ For more on the significance of clothing in the play, see Amanda Bailey, *Flaunting: Style and the Subversive Male Body in Renaissance England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), esp. Ch. 3.

⁴¹ For example, Melinda Spencer Kingbury, tying this speech to Galenic humoral theory, asserts that Katherine claims control over her bodily economies. “Kate's Froward Humor: Historicizing Affect in *The Taming of the Shrew*,” *South Atlantic Review* 69.1 (2004): 61–84.

falconry metaphors. Katherine translates a falcon's freedom of flight into a freedom of language. She asserts, for instance, the necessity of expressing her own desires: "my tongue will tell the anger of my heart," as if translating the dissatisfaction of a poorly-trained falcon into human terms. In a call back to their free exchange of barbs in Act 2, Shakespeare even ties her freedom to language: "I will be free / Even to the uttermost end, as I please, in words." For Katherine, and Shakespeare, the ability to speak and to express emotion (significant because Petruchio has previously ignored her talk) becomes synonymous with health and wellbeing. Though Katherine cannot know what Petruchio intends, the echoes of the coy language of falconry manuals underscore what Petruchio must do to tame his wife: allow her freedom of speech and body.

As if to heighten that Katherine's speech is a pivotal moment of change for Petruchio, Shakespeare even invokes the ultimate outcomes of falconry: a broken falcon or a free one. Katherine posits an either-or outcome in her relationship with Petruchio. If she does not speak, her heart "will break," or, if she does, she will "be free . . . in words." Both brokenness and freedom refer to the paradoxical state of the tamed falcon—broken to her hunter's call yet free to fly. However, such images refer to a danger in falcon-taming. An ill-tended falcon might be "broken" or ruined, as Turberville writes, and therefore useless to the hunter. Alternatively, if a falcon is too "free," she becomes wild, unwilling to answer the falconer's call. Katherine's language admits both of these possibilities. Both of these outcomes, however, depend on the falconer's actions. Katherine assumes that she "has leave" to speak, but she still recognizes the authority of Petruchio. She will be broken or be free in response to his reactions. Likewise, a poorly trained falcon, as we have seen, is the result of a poor falconer's unsolicitous, harsh training. Shakespeare likely makes the connection between a wild falcon and an angry or broken wife. In this way, Shakespeare ties the fate of Katherine and Petruchio's successful marriage to

the relative successfulness of Petruchio's coying of Katherine, and he reminds his audience that Petruchio's development in this play is just as important as Katherine's.

Katherine's declaration has an almost immediate impact. Both Petruchio and Katherine speak differently to each other after this speech. Katherine's diction here is simple and direct. She makes a clear connection between her speaking and her emotions: "my tongue will tell the anger of my heart." This declaration is an act of intimacy—the first assay across the verbal divide that they have created. Petruchio responds in kind, saying simply "Why, thou say'st true" (4.1.81). Though he turns the exchange into a joke, the moment achieves some of the mutuality and consideration recommended by falconry manuals. Even as he continues to tease and pester her, he offers conciliatory comments.

Petruchio continues to ameliorate his language, becoming more solicitous as the scene progresses. When he says, "O no, good Kate; neither art thou the worse / for this poor furniture and mean array. / If thou account'st it shame, lay it on me," Petruchio tries to forestall any "shame" she may feel (4.3.172–75). The image of his taking up her "shame" is one of spouses supporting each other. In other words, Petruchio's speech builds up their relationship instead of destroying it. His actions are more welcoming and kind than they have previously been. When they buy no clothes, he even compliments her: "is the jay more precious than the lark / Because his feathers are more beautiful," as though implying that she is beautiful for herself, not because of her garments (4.3.169–70). Likewise, he recognizes "'tis the mind that makes the body rich," a shift that appreciates Katherine's mental capacities, not her dowry (4.3.166). In these lines, Petruchio learns to value her potential as a companion rather than as a source of wealth.

Of course, this scene does not end in a triumphant renewal of Katherine's and Petruchio's union. He peremptorily commands that "let us straight" to your father's house, and Katherine

points out that they will be later than he says. He complains: “Look what I speak, or do, or think to do, / You are still crossing it” (4.3.185–86). However, in this scene, Katherine and Petruchio have progressed as a couple, and Petruchio has progressed as a trainer. He has fed her, rewarded her, and cajoled her. A focus on Kate only might encourage a reading of this scene as a step in her plot; Hutchinson, for example, sees her developing a humanist rhetorical style. By focusing on Petruchio, as well as on Katherine, Shakespeare shows how the tamer relents from his previous neglect and abuse. Perhaps repenting from his plan to “tame a shrew” with violence, he is learning to “lure” his wife’s obedience with shows of consideration and displays of coaxing.

Petruchio and Katherine’s Mutual Taming

In the two final scenes in the play, Katherine and Petruchio build on the progress that they have made in Act 4. Here, Petruchio’s speech patterns implement the mutuality, exertion, and solicitousness that early modern falconry manuals value. Moreover, he starts to lure Katherine in more effective ways. In the sun/moon scene, famous as Petruchio’s crowning success, Shakespeare shows off Petruchio’s development along with Katherine’s. Petruchio’s language has changed in three key ways: he is moving with Katherine, he is guiding her, and he is responding to her—strategies of the coying hunter praised by Turberville, Latham, and Cox. The shift in their relationship is evident in the different pronouns that Petruchio employs. In contrast to his previous self-interested focus, he speaks of Katherine and himself as a unit: “Come on . . . Once more toward our fathers” (4.5.1). This speech invites Katherine to move with him, rather than calling her to him. As well, Petruchio’s claiming of Baptista as “our father” connects him to her linguistically and physically. Katherine’s family is his family; he has moved. Rather than seeing himself as moving on his own, Petruchio now positions himself alongside

Katherine. Likewise, when he ironically comments, “how bright and goodly shines the moon,” he invites Katherine to observe with him, to look where he looks, rather than commanding her to look where he bids.

Even in their following exchange, wherein she corrects him, saying the sun shines so bright and good, and he insists that they must depart again, Petruchio’s reactions show that he has grown as a falcon-tamer and as a husband. Rather than railing or brawling, he merely comments, “Evermore crossed and crossed, nothing but crossed” (4.5.10). Such a protest offers Katherine a clue about how he might want her to react, just as a hunter might repeatedly and patiently coax his falcon to change her conduct. Moreover, the word “crossed” does imply a certain type of intersection. They are responding to each other: though Petruchio and Katherine may disagree, their language connects them through its playful imagery and liveliness.

As in Act 1, Shakespeare makes the issue of Katherine’s and Petruchio’s movement relative to each other of paramount importance. Benson reads this scene as a disturbing culmination of brutal taming, wherein Petruchio literally changes his wife’s perspective on night and day, as a hunter might train his falcon to a different sleep schedule.⁴² With an understanding of falconry as a practice rooted in the gradual cultivation of a falcon’s goodwill, however, this scene depicts Petruchio trying his wife—just as a falconer must free his bird to fly. By pretending to go home or wanting to leave, Petruchio gives Katherine a chance to take the lead, to respond to him as a bird might come to a falconer’s call. He provides her the space to speak and the motivation to initiate. She responds by inviting him to join her: “Forward, I pray, since we have come so far. / And be it moon or sun or what you please” (4.5.12–13). Though her willingness to believe what pleases Petruchio is key to this scene, her invitation to go “forward, I pray” is equally important. In the world of the play, she is inviting him to join her, and she is

⁴² Benson, “If I do prove her haggard,” 200–201.

acknowledging both the physical and emotional distance that they have traveled together: they have “come so far.” And Petruchio responds, after testing her, by accepting her invitation: “Well, forward, forward! Thus the bowl should run / And not unluckily against the bias” (4.5.24–25). In echoing Katherine’s “forward, forward,” Petruchio accepts her invitation, closing the movement circle, and, like a falconer letting a falcon fly ahead, restoring locomotional equity between them.

By making movement a central concern of this scene, Shakespeare advances Petruchio’s companionate relationship with his wife. He no longer commands and no longer teases without Katherine’s cooperation. Thus, as he says, he has made the “bowl . . . run” right and no longer “against the bias.” In this metaphor from lawn bowling, where the bowlers manipulate the weight and bias of the ball to score, Petruchio encapsulates both his growth and Katherine’s. He has learned how to “run” the bowl, to guide it, and make them move in sync. Katherine has also learned to run with “the bias” and not against it. Their renewed understanding is further confirmed in his request for a kiss. When he states “kiss me, Kate, and we will” go in, he facilitates them coming nearer to each other. Rather than a test of obedience, as Benson claims, the kiss recalls the physical closeness of falcon and falconer.⁴³ Asking Katherine for a kiss is a reframing of their physical space and unites them bodily. In Katherine’s “Nay I will give thee a kiss / Now pray thee, love, stay” Shakespeare shows that she has accepted his invitation to stand with him (5.1.122–23). Faced with this question of a couple moving nearer or farther apart, early modern audiences would likely have recognized both the meaning of “stay,” to remain in this place, and stay, and to pause, and linger. By the end of this scene, Shakespeare has brought the imagery of falconry and the ultimate goal of falcon-taming—coordinated, productive movement—full circle. Katherine and Petruchio are moving together, guiding each other, and responding to each other.

⁴³ Benson, “Shakespeare’s Application,” 197.

Ultimately, the final scene bears out that transformation. In these passages, Petruchio turns away from an oppositional relationship to achieve a closer accord with her. The same statement that places Katherine in the pantheon of animals, his wager on her, is also a show of faith in her. “Twenty Crowns! / I’ll venture so much of my hawk or hound, / But twenty times so much upon my wife,” wagers Petruchio memorably (5.2.72–74). Moreover, his command via Grumio, “Say I command her to come to me,” is the ultimate test of the falconer—calling a bird to the lure from distance and concealment (5.2.100). Katherine’s acceptance of that summons may be read as submission, but the language of falconry makes it more mutual. She chooses to “come,” just as she chose to kiss. Finally, Petruchio’s description of their future reinforces that he has changed. Instead of wealth and dominion, he now praises the importance of mutuality and companionship. When Katherine arrives at his call, he describes their future as “peace it bodes, and love, and quiet life . . . / And, to be short, what not that’s sweet and happy” (5.2.109–110). The image is as much about what he has learned to value (care, consideration, and attention) as it is about Katherine’s obedience. The “sweet and happy” life he sees before him is a far cry from the disrupted image of home life that Shakespeare previously shown. But the “peace, love, and quiet life” seem to mirror the quiet and easy companionship of the well-kept falcon and her keeper. Throughout the last scene, even as Katherine seems tamed, Shakespeare repeatedly calls attention to the development of Petruchio as a falconer as well.

In making this case, I do not mean that this play is entirely without its problematic moments. Recognizing the importance of solicitousness to the falcon-falconer relationship does not dismiss altogether the violence of Petruchio’s courtship. However, my reading does unify certain disparate aspects of the play. Accepting both the violence and the solicitousness as aspects of falconry manuals helps to reconcile Petruchio’s successful moments of wooing with

his unsuccessful ones. They are all a part of falcon-taming—either successful or unsuccessful examples of it. Even the ultimate outcome of the play—where Katherine too suddenly capitulates to Petruchio—makes sense in this context; by creating an environment that encourages her obedience, Katherine seems more willing to respond. While *Taming of the Shrew* is the story of how a clever man tames his wife, it is also a play about how a man can become a better spouse. In one of his earliest comedies, Shakespeare offers a portrait of increasing intimacy and connection between two different and strong-willed characters. Witnessing Katherine's conversion, her father marvels that she is "A new Kate." And, so too, is Petruchio made new—a better falconer and perhaps, Shakespeare suggests, a better husband.

* * *

In *Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare invests a great deal of time developing the motifs of falconry that appear throughout the text. Such an inclusion can be read in many ways, including as a possible endorsement of coying a wife, as I have shown. While such a reading does perpetuate the subtle misogyny that a husband's gentleness should result in a tamed wife and that a woman's heart can be won as easily as a falcon's, Shakespeare's employment of falconry metaphors amends the typical narrative of shrew-taming to show a more moderate form of taming that allows Katherine to retain some agency. In the last acts of the play, particularly, Petruchio has learned to balance the principles of hunting and wooing in a way that offers Katherine a measure of freedom, or at least the illusion of it. As a result, he and Katherine seem to achieve a rapprochement that offers the possibility a better future.

To fully appreciate the intersections of Shakespearean romance and falconry manuals, as I have demonstrated, we must approach these texts with an awareness of motifs of coyness. Shakespeare does not end his consideration of coyness and falconry with this play. He repeatedly

includes motifs of early modern falconry in his later writing to comment on the vagaries of male-female interactions. For example, a reading of the falconry metaphors in *Much Ado about Nothing* could yield positive results. Likewise, an interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* through this lens could generate to a new understanding of their star-crossed courtship. I do not have the space here to provide in-depth analyses of coying motifs in these plays, but I hope that my examination of *Taming of the Shrew* provides some new ways of considering other works in Shakespeare's corpus. For Shakespeare, this vocabulary seems to be a potent way to reframe, reorganize, and destabilize potentially conventional depictions of romance and marriage.

As any extended survey of Elizabethan and Jacobean comedies would show, Shakespeare is hardly alone in his exploitation of falconry tropes. Many of these writers, as Shakespeare does, explore how such discourses illuminate the similarities between men and women in liaisons of love. As Thomas Dekker writes in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, gentlemen may "boast, that [their] tricks [they] hath brought, / Such and such women to his amorous lure," yet gentlewomen may be "coy, as many women be" feeding men with "sunne-shine smiles, and wanton looks" (4.1.55–60).⁴⁴ As the intersecting discourses of falconry and coyness in this quote imply, both parties may act the part of wooer and wooed. Such exchanges make up the "heady witchcraft" that is love. We too, then, must consider the fullest extent of falconry metaphors in this play and in others of its kind, so that we can fully relish, with Florizel in the *The Winter's Tale*, how he did "bless the time / When my good falcon made her flight across / Thy father's ground" (5.1.67–69).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, Ed. R. L. Smallwood and Stanley W. Wells (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979).

⁴⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, Ed. Susan Snyder and Deborah T. Curren-Aquino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

CHAPTER 4: THE TROPE OF THE COY VIRGIN IN MILTON'S *MASKE* AND MIDDLETON'S *REVENGER'S TRAGEDY*

As critics Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie accurately report, Renaissance writers have produced a “tremendous variety of literary virgins.”¹ Authors depict virgins who fit into several tropes ranging from obedient, wholly passive daughters like Hero to warrior maids like Britomart.² Shakespeare's Hero is the picture of a truly “good” maiden: innocent in her attitude, demure in her actions, and submissive in her reactions.³ Other virginal characters, while palpably chaste, are hardly obedient “good women”; as Theodora A. Jankowski writes, these queer virgins instead threaten gender norms by refusing the accepted roles for women (to be a wife and mother) found in conduct manuals like Vives's *Instruction of a Christian Woman*.⁴ In post-Reformation England, virginity became a transitional state that a good maiden left behind for her husband's home and bed. Characters like Isabella from *Measure for Measure* or Moll Cutpurse from *The Roaring Girl* try to contravene the accepted trajectory of a virgin, pursuing

¹ See Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie, “The Epistemology of Virginity,” in *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 15–25, at 16.

² Since the rise of feminist theory in the 1980s, many critics have particularly decried depictions that were laced with moralistic, even misogynistic, impulses. As Katherine U. Henderson and Barbara F. McManus describe it, even so-called “feminist” defenders of women in the Renaissance valued sexual purity and a lack of sexual agency as an essential trait of a “good woman.” Katherine U. Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts on the Controversy about Women in England* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 49. Ann Rosalind Jones, “Nets and Bridles’: Early Modern English Conduct Books and Sixteenth-Century Women's Lyrics,” in *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (New York: Methuen, 1987), 39–72. Some of the most illuminating studies of virginity in England include Ruth Kelso's surveys of advice literature for women, *The Doctrine of the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Barbara J. Harris's examination of women's involvement in social movements and family life, *English Aristocratic Women From 1450–1550: Marriage, Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), particularly Chapter 2; and Philippa Berry's analysis of Elizabeth's chastity, *Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the Unmarried Queen* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

³ Of course, the term “virgin” in Renaissance England included women who never married and those who merely were not-yet-married. I use it to describe women who are “physically intact” or “have not experienced coitus” and those who are defined by the term's associated meanings (Kelly and Leslie, “Epistemology,” 16–17).

⁴ Theodora A. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in the Early Modern English Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 15–25. Jankowski argues that, in early modern England, insisting on remaining a virgin could be seen as transgressive and unnatural, and that women who eschewed marriage, like Joan of Arc and Elizabeth I, violated sexual norms and were seen as “queer.”

independence from marriage *and* from male influence. Such narratives rarely allow women to remain chaste without consequences. Rather, some, like Isabella, may be forced into marriages, and others, like Moll Cutpurse, may have no clear place in the community.

However helpful and insightful, these models of virgins—either submissive or queer—do not offer a complete picture of how diversely early modern writers imagined figures of virginity.⁵ As the work of scholars like Kathryn Schwarz and Kelly have suggested, virginal behavior was more of a spectrum with the actions of the rebellious warrior and the obedient daughter at the poles with many other figures of virginity in between.⁶ Some virginal traits do not map onto some characters as well as they do onto Hero, Isabella, and Moll, but they still help to categorize other virginal characters. For example, characters such as Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*, the Lady in *A Maske*, Castiza in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and Una in *Faerie Queene* fit neither model. Such women are maidenly—yet they are independent and outspoken, in ways that someone like Hero is not. Authors portray these characters as independent but definitely accepted by their societies, in ways that Moll is not accepted in Thomas Middleton's city comedy. Authors often depict such characters as beset by moral strictures, but working within the limits of acceptable behavior in order to gain their ends. In the language used to describe them, authors show how such women could control their fates through feigning or expressing virginity.

What happens, then when these virginal characters are neither overtly transgressive resisters nor completely patriarchal pawns? In such cases, another trope—the coy virgin—helps to explain some of these types of characters. In these coy virgins, early modern writers use the

⁵ Of course, the actual reality of life for single women was more complicated, presented less as an extreme and more as subtle and nuanced. Amy M. Froide, *Never Married: Single Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 20–22.

⁶ Schwarz, *What you Will*, 25–30. Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 68–72.

ideas of a virgin acting quietly to portray a midway between the extreme figures of the shy maiden and the militant one: the canny, manipulative virgin who speaks her mind and seems to perform chaste actions to maintain some control over her circumstances. In this chapter, I explore how the language of coy virginity shapes these familiar virginal characters who seem to embody a shrewder middle way. While these characters are not as transgressive as Moll or Isabella, nonetheless they seem to gain power through their active acceptance of the behaviors associated with the virgin identity. Yet these characters also exhibit the behaviors of arch experience and self-possession often associated with the disdainful, aloof mistress. These characters are depicted as canny and as virgins: that is, they understand how to interact cunningly with men seeking their favor while keeping themselves free from the bond of the heterosexual relationships.

I have chosen in this chapter to focus on the Lady and Castiza because their characters are frequently associated with coy conduct: in their modesty, their pride, and their standoffishness. At first glance, Milton and Middleton seem awkward companions. Milton wrote his ethereal and highly stylized masque for a noble audience.⁷ Middleton wrote his caustic, political drama for a public one. But these texts share many striking similarities that make them provocative and useful case studies for investigating the coy virgin. Though of different genres and periods, both texts highlight the virginal status of their central female characters—the Lady in *Comus* and Castiza in *Revenger's Tragedy*. Both of these women are unequivocally virginal *throughout* their narrative. Unlike Helena, who marries the unenthusiastic Bertram midway through her play, and Una, who is betrothed to Redcrosse at Book I's end, the Lady and Castiza remain unwed and presumably still virgins at the end of their stories: they are not married, killed,

⁷ For more on complexities of genre in the *Maske*, see Heather Dubrow, "The Masquing of Genre in *Comus*," *Milton Studies* 44 (2005): 66–88.

or exiled, unlike many such virgin characters. Though I believe that the trope of the coy virgin can be applied to women who are not explicitly called coy, the language of coyness in Milton and Middleton portray these virgins as not merely submissive or rebellious but cautious and canny.

I. Interpreting Virginitly and Coyness in Milton's *Maske*

Milton's *Maske* is commonly thought of as a trial of chastity, where feminine virtue is tested. Yet scholars have puzzled over Milton's purpose in casting a fifteen-year-old gentlewoman as the hero of such a test. Though some critics offer theological or nationalistic interpretations of her, critics interested in gender often interpret the Lady alternately as a dutiful virgin, a masculinized victor, or a victim of rape.⁸ Though she argues for a feminist interpretation of the masque, Kathryn Schwarz maintains that the Lady achieves a certain masculinity that isolates her from conventional, feminine virginitly.⁹ Along with other critics, Will Stockton focuses on the inherent violence of the masque, ultimately explaining the Lady's failure to free herself as evidence of the her attraction to Comus in a kind of "fantasy of rape."¹⁰ In his book-length study of the Lady as early modern "subject," William Shullenberger stresses her transformation from a submissive, passive, innocent girl into "an articulate, temperate, sexually mature . . . woman."¹¹ Though all of these readings enrich our understanding of the Lady in key ways, none of them consider the

⁸ For an example of a theological reading, see Blair Hoxby, "The Wisdom in their Feet: Meaningful Dance in Milton and the Stuart Masque," *English Literary Renaissance* 37.1 (2007): 74–99. For an example of a nationalistic reading, see Kat Lackey, "Naturalization in the *Mirror* and the *Mask*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 54.1 (2014): 124–42.

⁹ Kathryn Schwarz, "Chastity, Militant and Married: Cavendish's Romance and Milton's Masque" *PMLA* 118.2 (2003): 270–85, at 272.

¹⁰ Will Stockton, "The Seduction of Milton's Lady: Rape, Psychoanalysis, and the Erotics of Consumption," in *Sex Before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England*, ed. Will Stockton and James M. Bromley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 233–62, at 235.

¹¹ William Shullenberger, *Lady in the Labyrinth: Milton's Comus as Initiation* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 15–16.

Lady's use of vocabularies and mannerisms associated with coyness. Shullenberger insightfully sees the masque as an "initiation" from innocence to experience, but he misses that Milton emphasizes the Lady's caniness from the beginning. In fact, I believe that Milton sees his *Maske* not as a story of a young woman's initiation into adulthood but as a story of an already mature young woman's growing ownership of her sexual choices. The *Maske* portrays the Lady's virginity as a series of intentional actions that signal her ability to discern, adapt, and respond to the threats of the outside world, showing her chastity through overt, coy reticence. For Milton, the test of virtue is a test of knowledge and initiative. In the story of the Lady and Comus, particularly in their similar tendencies towards coy conduct and in their debate over chastity, Milton offers the Lady's trial as an example of virginity well-expressed and *already* well-taught.

I will look at the two main ways that Milton employs the motifs of coyness in his drama. First, though critics have generally characterized Comus and the Lady as utter opposites, my analysis will show that, while their goals conflict, both act coyly. Comus takes on the role of a wooer who coaxes, soothes, and persuades, and the Lady performs the part of a virgin who resists, frowns, and demurs. Recognizing these similarities show that the Lady is canny in her dealings with Comus—she is not submissive; she chooses how to act. Second, in their debate, Comus and the Lady each employ the figures of coyness to persuade the other. In this passage, Milton reifies virginal behavior as a practical and effective choice on the part of the Lady as a reasonable defense against encroachment.¹²

¹² Paul Cefalu argues for a similar practical morality in *Paradise Lost*. Paul Cefalu, *Moral Identity in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 165–66.

Similarities of Action and Persona between Comus and the Lady

Much of the criticism on the *Maske* develops from the basic premise that Comus and the Lady are irreconcilably opposed.¹³ As Shullenberger puts it, Comus *cannot* understand the Lady's sustained resistance to him because "his world view essentially excludes the possibility" that she might refuse him.¹⁴ Even when critics explore the effect Comus has on the Lady and vice versa, they portray these characters in oppositional ways. William Kerrigan argues that the Lady is sullied by Comus, as though her very encounter with him makes her less chaste.¹⁵ Alternatively, Beth Bradurn sees the Lady's pure innocence as unchanged and unchangeable by Comus's aggressive lecherous rhetoric.¹⁶ Though I acknowledge that Comus and the Lady certainly have diametrically-opposed goals, I argue that they share similar methods of pursuing those goals. Both use postures and strategies associated with coy allurements to entice or evade. Recognizing this connection shows that the Lady is not simply opposed to Comus, she is like him in her adaptive self-presentation and in her canny awareness of the patterns of interaction between men and women in amatory settings.

Of course, in her prolonged chaste refusals, the Lady embodies a figure of virtuous reluctance, but the early portions of the *Maske* depict the Lady as performing virginity. Like Comus, who assumes different personas at will, the Lady chooses a persona of reluctance and austerity throughout the drama. Her brothers' discussion of their sister gives a clear example of the type of behaviors the Lady uses to project her mask of virginity. When the brothers characterize the "hidden strength" of her chastity (415), for instance, they compare their sister's

¹³ For instance, Maggie Kilgour reads the Lady and Comus as generic and political opposites through whom Milton creates a "Protestant [anti-monarchical] poetics." Maggie Kilgour, *Milton and the Metamorphosis of Ovid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 155.

¹⁴ Shullenberger, *Lady in the Labyrinth*, 232.

¹⁵ William Kerrigan, "The Politically Correct 'Comus': A Reply to John Leonard," *Milton Quarterly* 25.4 (1991): 148–55.

¹⁶ Beth Bradurn, "Bodily Metaphor and Moral Agency in *A Masque*: A Cognitive Approach," *Milton Studies* 43 (2004): 19–35.

virtuous mien to Diana's and Minerva's chill conduct, thus portraying the Lady's chastity as a series of actions.¹⁷ Diana did "set at nought / The frivolous bolt of Cupid, gods and men / Fear'd her stern frown, and she was queen oth' Wood" (444–46), and Minerva is the "unconquer'd Virgin," who with "rigid looks of Chast austerity / And noble grace . . . dash't brute violence" (450–51). The brothers, here, emphasize the goddesses' "rigid looks" and "stern frown[s]" as the reason why they are able to "dash" the "brute violence" of male aggressors. Though Diana and Minerva are inherently chaste, their performances of virginal disdain have such a powerful affect because, like a reticence virgin, they assume such postures. So too, Milton implies, will the Lady assume the "rigid looks" of the reluctant virgin praised by Christine de Pizan and thereby succeed in her self-defense.¹⁸

Even Comus's recognition of the Lady as a virgin portrays her posture of chastity as an intentional choice. At her approach, he sends his nymphs away. By sending his nymphs away, Comus signals that he intends to change himself and his surroundings to please and seduce her. Shullenberger sees this plan as evidence of Comus's belief that "a woman, especially an inexperienced one, will either concede passively . . . or will consent to the prospect of 'mutual and partak'n bliss'."¹⁹ But the language of the rest of the passage suggests something more about the Lady. Comus recognizes, for instance, that "some Virgin sure / (For so I can distinguish by my Art) / [is] Benighted in these Woods" (148–50). The word "sure" could simply mean "surely" but it could also have other connotations. Perhaps despite himself, Comus accurately discerns that the lady is a virgin, but he misses the key information his art provides—she is also "sure." Comus's magical evaluation emphasizes that the Lady, though "benighted in the woods," is not

¹⁷ All quotations are taken from *John Milton: Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. Stella P. Revard (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

¹⁸ For example, Anslay's translation of Pizan's *City of Ladies* counsels readers that "doughters [ought to] be more coye and holde theym more nyghe" (Pizan, *City of Ladies*, Sii).

¹⁹ Shullenberger, *Lady in the Labyrinth*, 234.

confused about her chastity. Rather, she is *sure*, mentally certain, steadfast, even “safe from harm” because she has determined her own virtue.²⁰ Through these terms, Milton distinguishes the Lady’s chaste mien as a physical state and as a bearing of coy reserve. Her mental devotion to chastity and her self-awareness mark her as a virgin who is reluctant for a reason. Thus, these lines anticipate her canny, coy reserve in her behavior towards Comus.

Like the Lady, Comus adopts coy conduct of his own: that of the wooer who coys—a figure that I describe in detail in Chapter 2. His initial plan resembles that of Venus, who aims to calm and temper the unwilling Adonis by her arts in *Venus and Adonis*. Comus states:

Thus I hurl
My dazzling Spells into the spongy ayr,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the Damsel to suspicious flight
Which must not be, for that is against my course:
I under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well plac’t words of glozing courtesie / . . . /
Wind me into the easie-hearted man.
(153–64)

Every image of these lines emphasizes that Comus aims to coax and soothe the Lady. Comus understands the effect he may have on her if he appears as a raucous, sexualized nymph, that “his quaint habits [might] breed astonishment / And put the Damsel to suspicious flight” (157–58). Thus, he plans to dazzle with “well plac’t words” and to give off “false presentments” of “friendly ends”—all actions that seem designed to win over the Lady. Even Comus’s disguise as “som harmless Villager” (166) is an act of courtly seduction, meant to “wind” its way into her “suspicious” heart. Ironically, though he dresses like a shepherd, he takes the path of “courtesie,” of the courtier, to allure and calm her. Like the Lady, he chooses a fitting persona to achieve his

²⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, Online Edition, s.v. “sure,” March 10 2015, <http://www.oed.exaccess.libraries.psu.edu>.

goals—he plans to coy the Lady as a flattering wooer soothes and manipulates a reluctant woman.

Comus's need to employ stratagems suggests that the Lady is not the naive maiden that Shullenberger identifies at this point of the masque. Her first speech supports a reading of the Lady as a knowledgeable virgin, coy in her assumed persona of chastity. Though a virgin, she seems aware of the danger she may face as a young woman left alone in the woods. A "misled and lonely Travailer" (200), the Lady is beset by "A thousand fantasies" that "Begin to throng into my memory / Of calling shapes and beckning shadows dire" (205–07). What Milton means by such "fantasies" is unclear, but the circumstances of the drama itself (the brothers' fears of brigands attacking their sister and the actual threat of Comus) accentuate that the Lady's concerns denote some knowledge of court "fantasies." She fears murder and rapine but also seductive shadows that "beckn" and "call." She almost seems to anticipate that Comus will threaten her not only with physical assault but with coaxing words. She is aware that the courtier is just as dangerous as the brigand.

In these lines, Milton shows the Lady controlling herself and dramatizes how a "virtuous mind" can comprehend and resist the danger represented by sexual temptations. If the Lady were merely an innocent virgin in the tradition of Hero, Milton might portray her as deeply horrified or paralyzed by her "fantasies," but instead, the Lady steels herself to resist them by picking apart the false facade that those images offer. The Lady's ability to see through temptation allows her to pick through Comus's attempts to coy and soothe her later in the masque. After the fantasies creep in, she calms herself: "these thoughts may well startle, but not astound / The vertuous mind" (210–11). Milton shows her responding to the "startl[ing]" possibilities of flattering wooers but then resisting them: the prospect of flattery does not "astound" or confuse

her. She then promises herself that the “Supreme good . . . / would send a glistening Guardian if need were / To keep my life and honour unassail’d” (217–20). Such an image does not necessarily mean the Lady believes angels are flanking her. Rather, her speech is meant to inspire and galvanize her to stand firm in her chaste posture. This awareness and canniness inform the Lady’s next actions. Protected by the “glistening Guardian” (219) Chastity, the Lady is heartened enough to make “such noise as I can,” breaking into a song to “Sweet Echo,” which calls on the faded nymph to share her plight (227). Some critics see her song as a failure, or as even expressing a latent desire to attract such “calling shapes.”²¹ But I read her “noise” as a choice, a performance of disinterest meant to shore her up. Frightened and alone, her song is a self-conscious presentation of close virginity, as the song’s focus on the plight of the “love-lorn *Nightingale*” hints (234). Her choice to sing is braggadocio, a bravura attempt to perform virtuous indifference.

Comus’s reaction when he overhears the song allows Milton to highlight the Lady’s own ability to coy and soothe. The nymph is swept away by her song. He marvels, “Can any mortal mixture of Earths mould / Breath such Divine enchanting ravishment” (244–45). He goes on to compare her singing to the powerful sirens who calm Scylla and Charybdis, soothing them with a quieting song. Comus compares her song to “ravishment,” but rather than ravishing, the Lady soothes. As Katherine R. Larson demonstrates, the Lady’s song is not a failure but “a rhetorically potent, yet paradoxically chaste, musical intervention.”²² Though Comus may not recognize it properly, Milton accentuates the Lady’s ability to coy others with her virtue. Though the Lady acts indifferent to encourage herself, her song and her performance also soothe Comus. He wants not only to win her (i.e., have sex with her) but to “speak to her” and make her “[his] Queen”

²¹ Stockton, “Seduction of Milton’s Lady,” 237.

²² Katherine R. Larson, “‘Blest Pair of Sirens . . . Voice and Verse’: Milton’s Rhetoric of Song,” *Milton Studies* 54 (2013): 81–106, 102.

(265). When he does address her, likewise, he calls her “forren wonder,” as if she it is who is magical and not he (265). In the enticing and seductive bent of her song, Milton articulates the effectiveness of the Lady’s persona of coyness: her music is a performance that attracts Comus and, just as a coy mistress’s resistance entices her wooers still more, the Lady’s performance affects his opinion of her in a way that makes him vulnerable to her perspective on virginity.

Comus’s greeting of the Lady as a “forren wonder” may reflect his private admiration of her, but his performance still aims to seduce her with soothing words. Their first exchange highlights the similarity of their rhetorical performances. Comus opens by praising her:

Haile forren wonder
whome certain these rough shades did never breed
vnless the goddess that in rurall shrine
dwell’st here.
(265–68)

In this description, Comus seeks to manipulate the Lady by elevating her above her surroundings: she is “forren” to the wood, a “wonder” to behold, and “never [bred]” of these “rough shades.” Through these lines, Milton shows Comus attempting to flatter the Lady to create an environment that makes her amiable to his advances. The Lady parries Comus’s flattery with a demure refusal to claim “any boast of skill” (273)—a canny stance that also manipulates her image and counters Comus’s pleasing words.

Nay gentle Shepheard, ill is lost that praise
that is addrest to unattending eares
Nor any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regayne my severd Companye
Compeld me to awake the Curteus Echo.
(271–75)

With these lines, the Lady resists Comus’s praise of her in an act of coy resistance on her part. Milton demonstrates the Lady’s resistance through her devaluation of his praise: a wooer’s flatteries cannot manipulate if they are “addrest to vnattending eares.” Moreover, her statement

that she hopes to “regain [her] sever’d company” and awake “courteous Echo” is a calculated attempt to frame herself as a maiden in distress (274, 275). By implication, the Lady suggests that Comus may be a replacement for her “company” and should treat her with “courteous[ness]”—though the association of “courteous[ness]” with manipulation and adulation further reinforces that Comus’s words and not only his actions are a danger here. He, in turn, tries to emphasize her “unguarded” and vulnerable state, as if to heighten her interest in him (283). The remainder of the exchange, a rapid series of one-liners in the style of Greek stichomythia, effectively becomes a contest to define their positions relative to each other. While the Lady hopes to inspire Comus, who she thinks is a “good shepherd,” to find her brothers, Comus hopes to make her abandon her brothers and go with him to his “low / But loyal cottage” (319–20). In their conversation of canny maneuvering, Milton portrays them as similar in their rhetorical presentations and verbal dissembling, even though Comus wins out in the end.

In the above conversation, Milton renders a rhetorically-sophisticated, verbally-manipulative exchange between two able contestants, thereby emphasizing that the Lady and Comus are both capable of coaxing and coying to manipulate circumstances to their benefit. To see the Lady as like Comus in her rhetorical and manipulative strategies is to appreciate her full capacities as a rhetor and as a coy virgin. By making the Lady more like Comus, Milton shows her capacity to adapt and portrays her virginity as a series of choices. Though many critics, including Shullenberger, see Comus as “educating” the Lady about sexuality by negative example, Milton demonstrates that she already understands the risks associated with sex and with her isolation. Through the resemblances between Comus’s and the Lady’s self-representations, Milton suggests that the Lady is Comus’s counterpart, not only in her coyness but in the effectiveness of her performance.

Showing Coyness in the Lady's Defense of Chastity

If the early portions of *A Maske* play up the similarities in action between the nymph and the maiden, their major debate over chastity suggests why the Lady's coyness is important for Milton. The jockeying between nymph and maiden continues into the next scene, but Milton shifts his presentation and his purpose. Rather than the staccato-like speed of their previous exchange, which *shows* the similarity of their conduct, Milton uses the elaborate extension of their debate to develop the Lady's shows of dedicated chastity in contrast to Comus's coying illusions. Some critics like Schwarz argue that Milton shows that the Lady's belief in chastity's protective powers, in turn, protects her.²³ However, I argue that in the Lady, Milton provides a model of chastity that is not extremely submissive or very queer but relatable and worthy of emulation. By continually offering alternative interpretations of the Lady (that she is like Daphne, that she is a prude, that she is a coy mistress), Comus accentuates how the Lady's postures of chastity and her crafty self-awareness are a result of her understanding of coy sanctity and coy temptation. Through the Lady's insights into Comus's flatteries and through her own persona of vocal modesty, Milton dramatizes a protection against the tests of virginity: that coy mannerisms like modesty and reticence can maintain a woman's privacy and isolation, while retaining some measure of control to her.

In this scene's first lines, Milton immediately sets up a contrast between the Lady and Daphne so that he can show how different the Lady's circumstances are from the "root-bound" Dryad and thus how much autonomy the Lady has. When Comus points out that her

nervs are all chain'd up in Alabaster
And you a statue; or as *Daphne* was

²³ Schwarz, "Chaste, Militant, Married," 275.

Root-bound, that fled *Apollo*,
(660–62)

he exaggerates the Lady's situation, perhaps expecting her to respond like a "statue"—with silence, stillness, and submission. By comparing her to Daphne, Comus aims to deny the Lady any autonomy—to make her "root-bound" and "chained." However, Milton calls up the image of the beleaguered Daphne to emphasize the differences between dryad and maiden in their responses to a sexual threat. Unlike Daphne, the Lady does not choose to be "root-bound"—she has been captured. Being a "statue" is not her choice—her choice is, in fact, the opposite of statuesque silence. Comus's speech, then, attempts to deceive her perceptions and to soothe away her reluctance. The appeal to Daphne anticipates the remainder of the scene's exploration of the Lady's choices and creates a foil against which to read the heroine.

In the Lady's response, Milton shows that, unlike Daphne against Apollo, she is still struggling against Comus—her awareness of a coying courtier's manipulative flatteries gives her a way to resist him. Strikingly, the Lady is quite aggressive in her retort—a rather risky choice given her current imprisoned state. She says:

Foole, doe not boast
thou canst not touch the freedome of my mynde
with all thy charmes, although this corporall rind
thou hast immanacl'd, while heav'n sees good.
(663–65)

The Lady's speech exposes the illusion and feigning of Comus's claims. She immediately dismisses his claim that she is like a "statue," saying "Fool do not boast"—as if to imply that she can see through his "charmes" (643). She further claims: "Thou canst not touch the freedome of my minde / With all thy charmes, although this corporall rind / Thou hast immanacl'd." In some ways, this statement by the Lady is a false front. She *is* "immanacl'd" and in danger from Comus's magic, if not his "charms." But, by dismissing him as a "fool" and his words as a

“boast,” the Lady successfully resists his attempt to define her as a Daphne-like victim. As well, her recognition that he uses “charmes” enables Milton to expose the feigned nature of this exchange. The Lady, like Comus, is manipulating her perception of their surroundings, and thereby allowing Milton to demonstrate the effectiveness of her persona of coy virginity.

The Lady’s stress on her mind’s freedom is especially important because Milton sees that mental liberty as a source of strength—a way of maintaining her distrust in Comus’s “charmes.” By depicting a virgin who claims her chastity because of the “freedom of [her] mynde,” Milton offers a very different image of virginity than many other thinkers of the time. In contrast to shy, obedient ladies like Hero, the Lady understands her chastity but *also* recognizes the dangers posed by coying suitors. Consider *The Temple of Love*, a contemporary masque by Inigo Jones and performed by the queen and her ladies in 1634. Its last speech praises “a maydenhead of the mind. / So virginal, so coy, and so demure that they retreat at kissing and but name / Hymen, or Love, they blush for shame!”²⁴ Unlike these maidens that “blush” and “retreat” at the slightest hint of sex (they are coy in their performance of bashfulness), the Lady’s behavior is more experienced and savvy. She does not “retreat” from Comus but confronts him, dismissing his feigned illusions. Like Milton’s wise reader in *Areopagitica*, the Lady is not a “fugitive and cloister’d virtue,” nor is she a “youngling in the contemplation of evill.”²⁵ In the Lady’s intentional assumption of a disdainful mien, Milton portrays an alternative to the submissive virgin who “blushes for shame” at the name of love. Rather, the Lady resists the “chains” and charms of Comus, dramatizing how coy reticence can be an aggressive, defensive posture.

Because the Lady’s virtue is of a sterner quality than that of Jones’s frightened maidens, she is able even to resist Comus physically with a show of disdain. Immediately after she refuses

²⁴ Inigo Jones, *The Temple of Love* (London, 1634), 7.

²⁵ John Milton, *Areopagitica*, *John Milton: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 247–248.

him, for example, the Lady frowns—a bodily expression of her chastity and a choice that Milton emphasizes. One of the few identified behaviors of the actors in the text, the Lady’s frowns are emphasized to show that in some way Comus does not have total control over her “corporeal rind.” Rather, her knowledge of temptation enables her to subvert his imprisonment with a sustained display of resistance. The Lady’s claims of mental freedom and her aggressive response to Comus’s boast dramatizes how Milton’s vision of chastity differs radically from that of his contemporaries.

Having failed to define the Lady as a Daphne, Comus attempts another re-definition: he frames the Lady as a prude. Contra to his previous boasting self-congratulations, his next speech questions her actions and shows frustration: “Why are you vext Lady? Why do you frown?” (666). His questions seem to extend his previous attempts to soothe her. He now effaces the nature of the Lady’s imprisonment, suggesting that her frowns are an impertinent response to an agreeable outing. His poetry emphasizes the beauty of their surroundings:

heere dwell noe frownes, nor anger, from these gates
 sorrowe flies farr, see heere be all the pleasures
 that fansie can beget on youthfull thoughts
 briske as the Aprill budds in primrose season.
 . . .
 poore ladie thou hast neede of some refreshing
 that hast been tired aldaye without repast
 a timely rest hast wanted, heere fayre Virgin
 this will restore all soone.
 (667–690)

In this speech, Comus aims to manipulate the Lady’s sense of her surroundings. By emphasizing what is absent (“sorrow” and “anger”) and what is present (“fansie” and “youthfull thoughts”), Milton establishes a disconnect between Comus’s soothing and coaxing rhetoric and the Lady’s imprisoned state: Comus’s very descriptions are an act of coy enticement, in that he aims to soothe her “sorrow” and “anger.” He implies that she cannot appreciate the things of Nature (the

“April buds in Primrose-season” and the “cordial Julep . . . / That flames, and dances in his crystal bounds”), suggesting that she is blind to the calming images of natural beauty. But, in fact, his verbal illusion tries to deceive and tame her dismay, just as a soothing hunter manipulates his falcon with coying words. Through this dissembling description of their surroundings, Comus tries to affect the Lady’s perception and reactions, and Milton exposes the illegitimacy of the nymph’s dissimulating flatteries.

The Lady’s reply again shows that she sees through Comus’s rhetorical ploy, allowing Milton to extend his incisive dissection of the coying flatteries that the nymph’s words represent. After he cajoles her to enjoy the natural loveliness around her, she points out that his words will “not restore the truth and honesty / That [he] hast banish’t” with his lies (691–92). She redefines his beauties as “brew’d enchantments” and “oughly-headed Monsters” (695, 696). The Lady’s verbal manipulation of the scene at once exposes Comus’s own fancies and bolsters her own use of rhetorical conceits. The Lady defies his attempt to define virginity as a rejection of good things. In fact, she asserts that her devotion to chastity allows her to discern the “good things” in life. As the Lady proclaims, to “good men,” false things, or “that which is not good, is not delicious / To a wel-govern’d and wise appetite” (704–705). Because the Lady has cultivated a “wel-govern’d and wise appetite,” she has the knowledge to appreciate and discern the “good things,” which “good men” enjoy. For Milton, the chaste woman is not someone who does not eat all together but who enjoys food—and sex—at the right time, with a “wel-govern’d . . . appetite.”

In the characters’ final speeches, Milton clarifies his Lady’s exemplary function as a figure who shows the virtue so that his audience may follow her example. In his final assay, Comus attempts to categorize the Lady as a coy mistress. He warns:

List Lady be not coy, and be not cosen'd
 With that same vaunted name Virginity,
 Beauty is nature's coyn, must not be hoorded
 But must be currant and the good thereof
 Consists in mutual and partak'n bliss,
 Unsavoury in th' enjoyment of it self [.]
 (737–42)

Again, he attempts to cajole the Lady from her “coy” frigidity—this time by emphasizing that her repeated refusals are merely an attempt to lure him. Employing the same appeal as Marvell and his contemporaries, Comus urges the Lady to enjoy her beauty and not “hoord” it.²⁶ Comus tries to make sharing her beauty the moral choice and suggests that “hoord[ing]” is an act of selfishness. In contrast to his previous argument, here, virginity is figured not as self-denial but as self-indulgence or self-delusion—another illusion meant to soothe away the Lady’s resistance, this time with guilt. Comus stresses the Lady’s part in their hoped-for “mutual and partak’n bliss” and casts any enjoyment alone as “unsavoury.” The implication is that giving in to his sexual advances is the “self[less]” and generous act. But that appeal, too, is a coy illusion created to cozen the Lady from her ill-humor, as a wooer cajoles a mistress.

The Lady’s last speech is not merely a rebuttal of Comus’ arguments, though she does rebut him. Rather, she shows that chastity is generous, in its own way, a “good cateress” who “provision[s] onely to the good” (764–65). If all were chaste, she claims, “Natures full blessings would be well dispenc’t / In unsuperfluous eeven proportion” (771–772). Now, the Lady moves beyond Comus’s arguments. Instead of expressing what chastity *is not* (chastity is not selfishness), she dwells on what chastity *is* for her (self-awareness, an attitude of disdain, and good discernment). The Lady’s subsequent meditation on chastity is stunning, even luxurious, in its imagery. Comus “hast no eare, nore Soul to apprehend” the “Sun-clad power of chastity,” and

²⁶ For more on the similarities between Marvell’s speaker and Comus’s seductive language, see Shullenberger, *Lady in the Labyrinth*, 230–35.

on some level, neither do Milton's human readers (782, 784). Chastity is "The sublime notion, and high mystery / That must be utter'd to unfold the sage / And serious doctrine of Virginitie" (785–87). These images show why Milton invokes the idea of coy virginity in the figure of the Lady: she allows him to "utter" the "sage and serious doctrine" of chastity through his writing. The "Sun-clad power of Chastity" is, as she declaims, beyond the ability of Comus to understand. In the Lady's shows of virtue and chastity, then, Milton encourages his readers to see the "sun-clad" power of chastity in the Lady's aggressive rhetoric. Her overtly coy displays "utter" the benefits of coy virginity: as a defense against wooers' soothing illusions.

The Lady's defense articulates Milton's incrimination of a wooer's coying deceptions and his endorsement of a virgin's coy mannerisms. As the figure of the coy virgin, the Lady is the signifier for Milton's view of an active chastity. Just as Spenser depicts the warrior maiden Britomart as his ideal of chastity, for Milton, the Lady is the image that stands in for the reader to see the heart of chastity. Her deliberate acts of virginity, her performance of coyness, and her canny defense of virtue all are meant to inspire Christian viewers to more readily embrace the "serious doctrine of virginity." The Lady's defense of chastity echoes Milton's self-conscious poetic representation of her. His poetic vision of an overtly chaste woman becomes the means of "unfolding" the mystery of chastity. In effect, his choices to make the Lady overtly chaste and explicitly reluctant make visible the type of chastity that Milton may have hoped to inspire in his readers.

Though she never speaks again, the last words of the Lady continue to resonate with the reader throughout the play's ending. Though the Lady must be rescued by her brothers and Sabrina from the "venom'd seat / Smear'd with gums of glutenous heat," she has silenced the nymph with her rhetoric (916–17). Even Sabrina's rescue, with the laying on of "chaste" hands,

accentuates the power of a chaste performance. Finally, at the play's end, the Lady and her brothers are restored to their family, older, wiser, and still chaste. Thus, our final image of the Lady is her *performing* her virtue before a public court, an action which confirms her devotion to chastity yet again. Without question, our final image of chastity in the masque is virtue victorious and lively, energetic and dynamic in its response to vice.

Ultimately, Milton's *Maske* may be an initiation of the Lady, as Shullenberger argues. But it is, in part, an initiation of the reader into Milton's idea of a credulous but canny version of chastity. Throughout the course of the masque, the Lady grows in her expression of virtue—from quiet song to staunch defense—and learns how to act more coyly—from reacting fearfully to the forest's threat to boldly and cannily describing chastity in the language of coyness. In the *Maske*, the Lady is coy, but that does not mean she has been sullied or corrupted, as Kerrigan would argue. She is canny, shrewd, *and* still devoted to virginity. Milton's genius, here, is that he employs the vocabularies of coyness to dramatize the actions of a canny virgin who knows evil and actively rejects it. He makes her neither submissive nor foolish but wise and "sober" in judgment to challenge his readers to the same level of sobriety, even in the face of a nymph's magical temptations.

II: The Problem of Coy Virginity in Middleton's *Revenger's Tragedy*

In *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the revenger's sister presents a significant critical problem for scholars. Interpretations of her diverge widely. For some critics, Castiza is a traditional passive virgin corrupted by the court's moral decay because she initially resists Lussurioso's advances and then appears to succumb to them.²⁷ Others see her as "unequivocally . . . chaste," as Eileen

²⁷ Peter Stallybrass, "Reading the Body: *The Revenger's Tragedy* and the Jacobean Theatre of Consumption," *Renaissance Drama* 18 (1987): 121–48.

Allman calls her, because her rhetoric at the play's beginning certainly suggests a staunch devotion to virginal ideals.²⁸ Scholarly interpretations attempt to reconcile Castiza's self-proclaimed devotion to virginity with her imitation of a courtesan. In this section, I offer a different way of reading Castiza—one that interprets her as neither a corrupted woman nor as an idealized maiden but as something more—a coy courtier, whose skill at dissimulation enables her to control her sexual experiences in the court of the Duke. I argue that Middleton deliberately portrays Castiza's actions as contradictory to emphasize how *coy* her actions might be. For Middleton, Castiza's potential coyness is what makes her a useful part of the play because her coy actions connect her to the play's larger themes of manipulation and deceit.

Considering Castiza through the vocabulary and motifs associated with coyness clarifies her place in the larger narrative of the play and her thematic significance. Rather than see her as a naive innocent abused by the court, Middleton employs the language of coyness to characterize how she is actually a functional member participating in the court. Her performance of virginity is both expedient and successful, as she adjusts her public presentation of virginity to fit a given social situation from the first scene onwards. I read Castiza as a courtier, well-versed in the tactics of manipulation and feigning that are decried by writers like Roger Ascham but accepted in court circles. Middleton uses the idea of Castiza as a manipulative and canny courtier to dramatize the unreliability of the narrative of familial honor on which Vindice bases his revenge and his identity. Through her coy behavior, Castiza frustrates Vindice's attempts to define her sexual narrative and her place in the family. Seen in the light of Castiza's enigmatic status, Vindice's obsession with his sister's virginity (and hence with his family's future) is made a sham, a hoax, and the act of a foolish man.

²⁸ Eileen Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and the Politics of Virtue* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 18.

Castiza as a Coy Courtier

As I have previously suggested, interpretations of Castiza align her with clearly-delineated archetypes: as either the Madonna, pure and untouched, or the Magdalene, sullied and fallen. And each of these readings draw inspiration from Middleton's representation of her. Early in the play, Castiza dramatically and definitively declares her allegiance to the Christian ideals of chastity. Yet she also agrees to sleep with Lussurioso, a clear if momentary departure from her previous devotion. Such readings dwell only on Castiza's naiveté and gullibility. By defining Castiza by these opposites, however, scholars have lost a key way of reading her—as a member of the court society, whose shows of virginity enable her to resist the machinations and manipulations of the other courtiers that populate the Duke's city. She is "coy" not out of pride but perhaps out of expediency and for her own protection. Her self-aware sense of court life, her ostentatious posture of virginity, and her verbal dexterity mark her as fully capable of executing an effective performance of virginity, worthy of the Duke's most backstabbing courtier.

The deceptive environment of the play's court is a quagmire of false public performances, and recognizing that pattern helps contextualize Castiza's persona of virginity as a possible affectation. Called "royal lecher" and "grey-haired adultery" by Vindice, the Duke pretends to have great affection for his family but does not hesitate to condemn his sons to death (1.1.1).²⁹ His wife feigns deep love for the Duke but swears "high" vengeance against her husband and his eldest son, Lussurioso, who, in turn, seeks to have his father deposed (1.1.1; 1.2.56). Lussurioso even values the "secret" and "subtle" skills of Piato (Vindice in disguise as a pimp). As Hippolito reports, the court is clothed "in silk and silver," its facade of charming lechery hiding nothing but backstabbery, attempted fratricide, and eventually regicide. Though

²⁹ All quotes take from *The Revenger's Tragedy*, in *Thomas Middleton, The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Castiza's performance of virtue seems very different from these exaggerated caricatures, her posture of virginity is still a front put on for personal gain.

Middleton even introduces Castiza as a player in one of these vice-ridden games. As Lussurioso complains to Piato/Vindice, Castiza, "foolish-chaste" as he calls her, has repeatedly rejected his advances, but she is "not far from court" and is wise enough to have "sent back, the messengers / Receiving frowns for answers" (1.3.125–27). Castiza's relative distance from the court is an important point because it reminds audiences that she, Gratiana, and Hippolito likely lived at court during Vindice's absence. Castiza grew up in this atmosphere and may be well-versed in the "frowns" and refusals expected of a coy maiden of the court. Certainly, Lussurioso has seen her enough to be "past [his] depth in lust . . . [to] swim or drown" (1.3.120). In this introduction of her, Middleton outlines how most characters see Castiza: as submissive and mouse-like, the typical figuration of the chaste virgin found in early conduct manuals.

In fact, Middleton's introduction of Castiza suggests that she may be necessarily skilled in the ability to stave off unwelcome "lust[s]" with "frowns for answers." Such a reply is the action of a virgin, but it is also the recognizable attitude of a canny, crafty mistress or courtier. Castiza's first soliloquy eloquently expresses her vulnerable position as a friendless, penniless maiden in the Italian court:

How hardly shall that maiden be beset
 Whose only fortunes are her constant thoughts,
 That has no other child's part but her honour
 That keeps her low and empty in estate.
 Maids and their honours are like poor beginners
 Were not sin rich, there would be fewer sinners.
 Why had not virtue a revèue? Well,
 I know the cause.
 (2.1.1–7)

As Karen Robertson notes, this speech emphasizes her vulnerable court position: Castiza has no economic resources but “her honour” (2.1.107), and losing her virginity in a respectable marriage or alliance is a potential source of “revenue” for her and her family. By contrast, Lussurioso offers to shower her with jewels if she gives him her favor.³⁰ These lines also show that Castiza is aware of her isolated status and conscious that she needs to protect herself.³¹ Pace Robertson, who claims Castiza is unaware of the more serious implications of her position, I see Castiza’s wry “Well, / I know the cause” as a world-weary recognition of her place in the games of the court (2.1.8). Poor and beautiful, she is vulnerable to the advances of lusty aristocratic men. It is not entirely surprising, then, that she embraces the part of the socially adept and publicly distant courtier to evade such advances. Like a diplomat in a delicate political situation, Castiza has previously stymied Lussurioso’s messengers with her commitment to virginity. In Allman’s interpretation, Castiza is neither “silent nor obedient”—but she is canny, wise to the flow of court politics around her and to the potential tools available to her.³² By portraying Castiza as conscious of her position in court, Middleton forecasts how Castiza will manipulate others’ expectations of her—through her self-conscious shows of virginity.

The implications that Castiza is cannier than she appears play out in her first interaction with Dondolo, her family’s bawdy servant. With her sly playfulness of speech, Castiza is foreshadowing the quick-talking Moll Cutpurse, the cross-dressing heroine of *Roaring Girl*, and Moll Yellowhammer, the young clever maid of *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. When he announces the presence of Vindice/Piato, Dondolo, whose name is Italian for gull or foolish servant, does so with a series of silly double entendres. He proclaims that “a thing of flesh and

³⁰ Karen Robertson, “Chastity and Justice in *The Revenger’s Tragedy*,” in *Sexuality and Politics in Renaissance Drama*, ed. Carole Levin and Karen Robertson (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 215–36, 220.

³¹ For analysis of this passage’s mimicry of conduct books, see Stallybrass, “Reading the Body,” 122–24.

³² Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy*, 19–20.

blood . . . would very desirously mouth to mouth with you” (2.1.10–12) and rejoins that he would “show his teeth in your [Castiza’s] company” (2.1.14). Castiza’s responses of “what’s that?” and “I understand thee not” could be interpreted in a variety of ways: as feigned naiveté, where Castiza is aware of Dondolo’s entendres and ignoring them; as a game of verbal dexterity, where Castiza enjoys the bawdy humor; or as sincere innocence, where Castiza is blind to those inferences (2.1.13, 15). The ambiguity of this exchange is a minor thing in the larger scope of this play, but it suggests how slippery and coy Castiza’s language is. Middleton endows Castiza with a linguistic slipperiness that enables him to weave different interpretations into her short lines.

In the rest of the scene, Castiza puts on a “show” of chastity, one that may be inspired by the feigned reserve and disdain of the manipulative courtier and one that is markedly different from the conventional retreat of a virgin. When Vindice asks her to accept Lussurioso’s suit, she slaps him. She justifies the violence by saying, “I swore I’d put anger in my hand / And pass the virgin limits of myself” (2.1.32–35). In these lines, Castiza demonstrates that she will exceed the socially acceptable “virgin limits” to protect herself. The slap is an act of extraordinary chastity, a remarkably showy and ostentatious one. Allman might applaud Castiza’s pronounced devotion to chaste ideals, and Jankowski might detect the impulse of transgressive rebellion in Castiza’s surpassing of virginal limits.³³ However, Middleton emphasizes Castiza’s control and craftiness through her language. Castiza has planned her strike to portray her “virgin[al] limits.” She has “swor[n]” to hit the next messenger, as though she clearly anticipated that her “frowns” would not have enough of an impact. Not only that, she seems to describe her anger as a tool. She is not overwhelmed by rage but in control enough to “put anger in [her] hand.” In Castiza’s striking of

³³ Allman, *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy*, 19. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, 149

Vindice, Middleton reinforces a sense that she “put[s]” on a front of virtue, a show meant to convey without question her disinterest and disdain in Lussurioso and his ilk.

However clearly the slap expresses Castiza’s disdain, her following actions are meant to be more enigmatic, enabling Middleton to reinforce her facility with the feigning of virginity. Castiza’s penchant for sarcasm or double-meaning is exploited in her reactions to Gratiana’s coaxing. When her mother questions her rejection of Lussurioso, Castiza teases her and avoids giving her a direct answer—just as she does with Dondolo. When Castiza realizes that her mother approves of Lussurioso’s proposal, she asks: “Did you see my mother? Which way went she?” (2.1.157). Gratiana exclaims, “Are you as proud to me as coy to him? Do you not know me now?,” (2.1.158–59). Castiza witheringly replies: “Why are you she?” (2.1.160). Castiza’s comments are deliberately obscure and hard to interpret. As Gratiana’s complaint pinpoints, Castiza uses “pride” to seem “as coy” as she needs to.³⁴ In fact, Castiza’s pride resembles another more obscure definition of coyness—the recessed architecture of a building. Used to describe receded rooms and hidden passages, coyness in a building suggests an inability to see within a structure and a shielding from view. Like a stalwart building, Castiza’s shows of her “virgin limits” protect her reputation: she could be pretending chastity, or could be sincere, perhaps to protect her value on the marriage market.

Middleton’s depiction of Castiza as a courtier who feigns and cheats to accomplish her goals lends her more autonomy and initiative than simply calling her a virgin. In the contradictory interpretations of her mother and brother, Middleton dramatizes the effectiveness of her enigmatic self-representation. Each family member reacts to Castiza in the way that they

³⁴ Jennifer Panek suggests alternatively that Gratiana’s inability to perform her role as marriage broker for her daughter dramatizes to early modern writers’ concern over a mother’s role as the moral center of the home and the marriage negotiations. Jennifer Panek, “Mother as Bawd in *The Revenger’s Tragedy* and *A Mad World My Masters*,” *Studies in English Literature: 1500–1900* 43.2 (2003): 415–37, 415–17.

want to or *expect* to see her: as a virgin or as a whore. On the one hand, Vindice rejoices in his sister's chaste actions because he wants her to be virginal. When she violently refuses his offer, he calls her slap the "sweetest box that e'er my nose came nigh" and rejoices that his "most constant sister / . . . has right honourable shown" (2.1.41, 45–46). Vindice's praise casts his sister's actions as evidence of her virtue. Vindice assumes that he can interpret his sister's conduct. In fact, his speech emphasizes how much control Castiza's performance of honesty gives her. By embracing the ambiguous conduct associated with coy virgins, Castiza presents a facade which at once fulfills social expectations *and* maintains her own sense of self. On the other hand, Gratiana desperately wants Castiza to be lascivious. Though Gratiana criticizes Castiza's rejection of Lussurioso's suit, calling Castiza "Peevish, coy, false," (2.1.158–59), such phrases establish her hopes for her daughter. She even hints to Pisto that she can "sway" her daughter to accept Lussurioso's amorous suit (2.1.240, 242). Castiza's coy performance enables her to evade even her mother. The face of virginal refusal that Castiza employs becomes a tool for maintaining her own autonomy and for delaying those who might seek to influence her.

The key here is that thinking of Castiza as a coy virgin helps illuminate her role in the play: while other characters see her as a victim of circumstance, Middleton dramatizes her attempts to control her circumstances through coy mannerism. By embracing the attitudes and actions of virginity, Castiza shows herself to be another manipulative figure in the court. Castiza's association with the manipulation and sophistry of coyness shows that her persona may be neither corrupted nor idealized but expedient. Coy conduct helps Castiza to achieve autonomy and to participate in the machinations of the Italian court. She is not, as Stallybrass argues, only something to be written on; in fact, Middleton shows her writing her own script for her performance of virginity. By depicting her as a character that controls her performance of virtue

and is not naively going through the motions of chastity, Middleton gives her the ability to set her own “limits,” enabling him to question the reliability of such shows.

Narratives of Chastity and Honor in Revenger's Tragedy

My argument restores Castiza's role in the larger play; by describing her with the language of coy feigning, Middleton establishes Castiza's shows as a counterpoint to her brother's revenge schemes. Though, as Judith Haber argues, Middleton portrays Castiza and Vindice as similar in their expressions of sexuality; he does so to disparage the values that they represent.³⁵ While Haber sees a masculine sexual aesthetic in both Castiza and Vindice, I demonstrate that Middleton emphasizes the feminine aspects of Castiza's sexuality to expose an underlying problem with Vindice's ambitions. Vindice, of course, is profoundly concerned with the sexual purity of the women in his family. In his test of Castiza, in particular, he aims to confirm the bodily narratives that he wants her to embody—he wants verifiable proof of her virtue. Yet her ability to assume different facades of coy refusal, I argue, undermines Vindice's sense of his own morality but, more importantly, the narrow way that he defines and values family honor—through the virtuous body of a woman. Through Castiza's shifting persona of reticence and pride, Middleton maps out how such assurances are impossible, how facades of honor can fail, and how the revenger's goals of preserving his familial narrative and their moral characters were impossible from the beginning.

Throughout the play, Vindice's focus on his sister's chastity renders visible the violence and violation inherent in interpreting a woman's performance of honor. It is that interpretability

³⁵ Judith Haber, *Desire and Dramatic Form in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 61–70.

and its implications that Middleton questions.³⁶ Vindice (post-test) exalts in his sister's fixed state as a virgin: "Most constant sister / . . . / Thou art approved for ever in my thoughts. / It is not in the power of words to taint thee" (1.5.167–69). He also reports to Lussurioso that Castiza is "close and good" (2.1.45, 2.1.47–48). Juxtaposed against Vindice's promise to seduce his sister, Antonio interprets his unnamed wife's raped body as a weak fortress; he bids the attendant lords to "be sad witnesses / Of a fair comely building newly fall'n, / Being falsely undermined," as if a rape utterly destroyed the foundation of a woman's being (1.4.3; 1.4.1–3).³⁷ When these speakers describe women as structures that can be entered or not, they want to explain how a female can be violated in order to figure out whether such weaknesses are fixable. For Vindice, the stakes of feminine virtue and understanding lie not just in patriarchy or inheritance but in the idea that a woman's self-presentation embodies her convictions—he wants to know that someone can say something and mean it.

Vindice's obsession with the sexual morality of his female family members echoes a common trope in other Jacobean dramas, including Middleton's own *Changeling*, but has particular ramifications for him. Jacobean English society was interested in a woman's virtue, as Kelly and Leslie, among others note, because a maiden's reputation reflected her family's moral status and maintained the security of patrilineal inheritances.³⁸ Given the importance of a woman's virtue, medical texts prescribe specific remedies or tests, such as the one performed by Alsemero in *Changeling*, for verifying a woman's virtue, as Sara Luffring describes. But such tests are still dependent upon a woman's sense of her own virtue, on her "bodily narratives," as

³⁶ Marie H. Loughlin, *Hymeneutics: Interpreting Virginity on the Early Modern Stage* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997), 12–15. Haber, *Desire and Dramatic Form*, 89–90.

³⁷ Interestingly, one might also read the line as condemning Antonio's wife. For more on this association, see Christine M. Gottlieb, "Middleton's Traffic in Dead Women: Chaste Corpses as Property in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Lady's Tragedy*," *English Literary Renaissance* 45.2 (2015): 255–74.

³⁸ Kelly and Leslie, *Menacing Virgins*, 15.

Luffring terms them. Indeed, women acted out shows of virtue in a self-created and subjective form of identity formation in public courts and private places.³⁹ In Middleton's *Changeling*, for example, Alsemero tests his new wife's (Beatrice-Johanna, the titular changeling) virtue, but she evades his test by switching with her maid on her wedding night.⁴⁰ By disguising himself as Piato, Vindice attempts a similar, though discursive, test with Castiza—Castiza resists him with coy affectations.

In scene 4.4, Vindice's obsession with the virtue of his family is taken to violent extremes. The sons reveal the previous testing of their mother and roundly condemn her "base mettle," calling her "quick [to] tune" (4.4.32, 35) herself to another's whim. Vindice and Hippolito threaten her with daggers, and she fears that her sons may "murder me" (4.4.2). Vindice goes so far as to wonder "is't possible . . . / That women dissemble when they die?" as if suggesting that his mother's dissembling ways may end only when she has breathed her last (4.4.16–17). Stallybrass insightfully points out that Vindice seems only able to trust his dead female relatives (like Gloriana) and that he seems willing to coldly kill his living relatives if they fall short of his standards.⁴¹ Cannily, Gratiana humbly begs their forgiveness, assuming a posture meant to soothe her sons. Her sons accept her repentance as sincere, but her sons' violent threats suggest that Gratiana repents to save her own life. The violence of this scene raises the stakes for Gratiana's proper attitude and demonstrates the necessity of Castiza's performance of chastity. If he would threaten his mother with death for something she *said*, what would Vindice have done to Castiza if she had consented to Lussurioso? In this clash between Gratiana and Vindice,

³⁹ Sara Luffring, "Bodily Narratives and the Politics of Virginity in *The Changeling* and the Essex Divorce," *Renaissance Drama* 39 (2011): 97–128, at 100–103.

⁴⁰ Luffring, "Bodily Narratives," 112.

⁴¹ Stallybrass, "Reading the Body," 125–27

Middleton demonstrates unquestionably that Castiza's performance is a learned but essential skill for surviving the deceptive court and her violent family.

With Vindice's threats ringing in our ears, Castiza performs her own test, and the comparison between mother and daughter is immediately apparent and critically important: through their comparison, Middleton emphasizes that Castiza's shows of libidinous intent are also assumed. Castiza enters, willing "To prostitute my breast to the Duke's son" (4.4.103)—a shocking reversal from her previous vows. Newly repentant, Gratiana protests her plan and threatens that "when women are young courtiers / They are sure to be old beggars" (4.4.442–43). Later, Castiza backtracks, claiming that she "did but this to try" her mother (4.4.148). Gratiana's performance of repentance shows that Castiza's performance of lasciviousness may be similarly suspect.⁴² Likewise, audiences might be unsure of Castiza's true motivations because the character's actions contradict her previous statements. Castiza's claim that she is only testing her mother could be a facade, and her acceptance of "advancement, treasure, the duke's son" a politic response to her previously tenuous situation (4.4.135). Middleton juxtaposes these two scenes of instant repentance to accentuate the flexible narratives of female identity each employs—to show that Castiza's shows of virtue are coying and soothing. Both Gratiana and Castiza respond to the negative reactions of those around them. They evaluate and choose the type of self-narrative most likely to achieve a positive reaction in their relatives, just as coying courtiers modulate their behavior to achieve the best social position

In 4.4, especially, Middleton accentuates the manipulative purpose of Castiza's assumed shows of chastity. Her speeches never explicitly state a change of heart or give a reason for her actions, but the language Middleton uses to describe her seems to show her actions as a canny

⁴² Panek sees Gratiana's repentance as a necessary fiction, an example of a mother's authority brought back under patriarchal control. Panek, "Mother as Bawd," 420.

and cautious bid for self-control.⁴³ But that is the point. In her speech's questions and broken phrases, Middleton conveys a sense of Castiza's undeterminable motivation.⁴⁴ For example, she comments "Do not deceive yourself / I am as you e'en out of marble wrought," and she reiterates that her mother has "wrought" this change. In this setting, the repeated word "wrought" could have multiple meanings (4.4.99–100, 104–105). The phrase could be a rebuke, referencing her mother's hardheartedness, a hint of Castiza's own "marble" chastity, or even an admission that her mother has actually "wrought" a change in her desires (4.4.108). Middleton even emphasizes Castiza's indeterminate self-presentation when Castiza declares that Gratiana "shall not wish me to be more lascivious / Than I intend to be" (4.4.110). That cryptic phrase threatens one type of coyness, "lascivious[ness]," even as it refuses to explain what Castiza actually "intends." Middleton deliberately introduces obfuscation and uncertainty into this scene to show Castiza's canny rhetorical performance. If Castiza acts more "lascivious than [*she*] wishes to be," and by her own admission, she is not lascivious at all, Middleton dramatizes a female character choosing to act in a way that differs from her own sexual desires. Just as Beatrice-Johanna uses her virginal handmaiden to rewrite her bodily narrative in *The Changeling*, Castiza's language narrates her sexuality in a way that intentionally breaks from the expectations of others.

In Castiza's test, Middleton creates a character whose language controls her bodily narrative, despite other men's attempts to edit it. As Castiza says,

Indeed, I did not, for no tongue has force
 To alter me from honest.
 If maidens would, men's words could have no power.
 A virgin honour is a crystal tower,
 Which being weak is guarded with good spirits:
 Until she basely yields no ill inherits.

⁴³ Adrian Streete, *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 152.

⁴⁴ In this sense, Castiza follows tragic convention of a woman's tragic silences. See Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*, 22–23.

(4.4.147–52)

In striking ways, Castiza's last speech emphasizes how she has achieved control over her body *and* how little control Vindice has. Her denial that someone else has the "force to alter me from honest" condemns anyone else's attempts to change her own story. At the same time, she admits that a woman could choose to "alter herself from honest," or could choose to be dishonest, for her own reasons. In this passage, Castiza claims linguistic authority for herself: "if maidens would, men's words could have no power." Castiza's assertion that women's will has more power than "men's words" directly challenges Vindice's and Antonio's assertion that a woman's virtue is a vulnerable edifice that must be protected by men.

Ultimately, for Middleton, Castiza's claim that a woman is the proper guardian of her own honor calls into question Vindice's fitness as a guardian of her virtue. Castiza's guile and cunning make her perfectly capable of protecting herself. By contrast, Vindice is utterly unable to protect his sister.⁴⁵ In his obsession with her virtue, Vindice hopes to stabilize his family's honor. As "Piato," for the sake of his vengeance, however, Vindice nearly destroys his sister. He promises "to foul my sister!" so that he can "disheir" the duke, and he nearly murders his mother when she sides with Lussurioso (1.4.172; 1.4.174). Even as himself, all he can do is speak words that Castiza shows have "no power," as he imagines her as "The Duke's son's great concubine, / A drab of state, a cloth o' silver slut!" (4.4.71–72). The play bears out Castiza's claim that a woman's cunning defense of her own honor is better than a man's words. And Vindice's own ineptness emphasizes Castiza's wisdom all the more.

⁴⁵ As Jaime P. Bondar argues, for Vindice, Castiza's chastity is bound up in issues of patrimony and patrilineal inheritance. Jaime P. Bondar, "Protecting the Ancestral Signified: Chastity and Meaning in *The Revenger's Tragedy*," in *Lacanian Interpretations of Shakespeare*, ed. Douglas A. Brooks and Shirley Sharon-Zisser (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 441–62, at 460. See also Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., "Tragic Subjectivities," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, ed. Garrett A. Sullivan and Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 73–85.

The supposed sanctity of Castiza provides Vindice with consolation at the end of the play but reinforces Middleton's point. After his act of fatal self-congratulation where he boasts "Twas we two who murdered him," he bolsters his brother's courage by recounting their family history: "We're well, our mother turned, our sister true; / We die after a nest of dukes" (5.3.98, 5.3.124–25). Vindice's idea of his family's honor consoles him in the face of death. Because his mother and sister are honest, their goodness must cover him. Likewise, he extends the family title to the duke's entire family—they are the "nest of *dukes*" (emphasis mine). In this description, Vindice imagines a familial feud between the avengers and the dukes. Castiza's continued chastity confirms that his line has won—or so he thinks. But the audience, privy to her coy demeanor, may hear these words as signal that Vindice's family is anything but "well managed"—rather, it is fractured by feigning as the rest of the court. He cannot know that his sister is "true" because she is not honest with him. In the end, Vindice's final consolation is a sham wrought by his own dishonesty and his sister's coyness.

In the falsity of Vindice's last comfort, the playwright clearly attempts to leave the audience unsatisfied, without dramatic resolution. Vindice thinks he has satisfaction in his trust of Castiza and Gratiana. But, through the language of coyness, Middleton deliberately shows that Vindice's satisfaction is predicated on false principles: on women's simplicity. The absence of Castiza and Gratiana in the final act of the play helps the audiences to appreciate that their performances throughout are possibly "coy" and feigning. By the end of the play, Vindice has foolishly cast away his life for an uncertain future, and thus Middleton calls into question the pattern of defining an individual through the family and a woman's honor through her male relatives.

By portraying Castiza as a coy virgin, astute and attuned to the social expectations of the Italian court, Middleton establishes her place in *Revenger's Tragedy*—as the counterpoint to her brother and an exposé of the limits of dutiful virginity. In Castiza, Middleton shows the serious moral laxity of the Duke's court *and* the moral ambiguity of the revenger himself. Her postures associated with coy reserve integrate Castiza into the larger narrative of the play—as a full courtier able to adapt her actions to best influence her intended audience. Her coy persona also gives her autonomy and a purpose. Through her, Middleton uses Castiza to challenge the belief that women should be vulnerable and passive. Ultimately, Middleton shows that Castiza's coy conduct rescripts the purpose of her virginity. If Antonio's wife is described as a “building newly fall'n,” penetrable by the audience and the male gaze, Castiza is portrayed as a virgin, made “inaccessible” because her coy ways preserve and protect her private self from view.

* * *

In Milton's and Middleton's dramas of chastity, we see the rich narrative potential that the language of coy virginity lent to its users. More importantly, in the *Lady and Castiza*, Milton and Middleton render two very different images of female coyness. The trope of coy virginity allowed dramatists like Milton to craft some autonomy and agency into a sterile narrative of female vulnerability. Alternatively, the trope helps Middleton to dramatize not only a dismissal of the revenger's tropes but a reconstruction of the discourses surrounding female virtue. Fully considering and appreciating the range of meanings that coyness had for these writers increases the complexity of these texts and characters.

As Spenser does with Una and Britomart, Milton and Middleton overturn conventional understandings of virginity with the vocabularies of coyness. Milton, Middleton, and others avail themselves to the complexities of these vocabularies to articulate alternative motivations for

women's postures of virginity. In these characters, and others, authors use overt shows of virtue to portray subtle aspects of female desire: sometimes the shows seem sincere; sometimes, self-defensive and manipulative of those around them; and sometimes, as agential and self-aware. As I mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Shakespeare's Helena is another such example. Like Castiza, Helena is certainly virtuous but also decidedly capable of courtly deception and of adjusting her persona of virtue to achieve her goals. Her canny bed-trick, which allows her to sleep with her husband and earn his love, is the very type of coy virtue which I hope my study will point to. Una is another such example. Like the Lady, she employs an overt performance of her virtue to maintain her own autonomy. I do not have space here to fully explore the ways that these characters embody coy virginity, but I hope to call renewed attention to the similarities of such figures and to inspire renewed engagement with them.

CHAPTER 5: CONVERSING WITH THE MISTRESS: TROPES OF COYNESS IN EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPTS

Up to this point, I have shown the many ways that early modern writers employed the language of coyness and its attendant vocabularies in drama and masques, but I have not done full justice to the predominance of those discourses in the incredibly fashionable love lyrics of the early seventeenth century.¹ Without question, the love lyric traditions so popular in the court and university circles provide some of the most recognizable figurations of conventional disdainful mistresses.² When scholars think of coyness, they generally have derived their sense of the term from the alluring, scornful mistress that Donne, Carew, and others so vividly describe. This is especially the case in scholarship on lyric poetry. In his attempts to coherently explain the early modern fascination with coyness, for example, William Kerrigan attends mainly to the delaying flirtations of figures like Marvell's mistress, whose resistance, he argues, symbolizes a woman's sexualized status in patriarchal society.³ Joshua Scodel similarly focuses exclusively on the figure of the mistress to argue that Caroline writers predominantly employ coy conceits as a metaphor for delayed gratification.⁴ Though productive and informative, Kerrigan's and Scodel's interpretations exemplify an oversight in studies of Stuart lyrics: they assume that the only

¹ As Arthur F. Marotti records, "love poems are found in great numbers in most manuscript collections," and, in particular, sexually explicit love poetry was more popular in miscellanies than in print. Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 75.

² Many scholars have interpreted these figurations metaphorically. For example, Marotti argues that John Donne's numerous meditations on the middle-class coy mistress served as a metaphor for his own political ambitions. Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 53–55. In his study of the political resonances of coterie culture, Eckhardt sees the coy mistress motif functioning as a metaphor for political scandal. Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors*, 19–20.

³ Kerrigan, "A Theory of Female Coyness," 213. About Marvell's mistress, Kerrigan also writes that the "libertine tradition attacked female honor as a false idol, an invention of jealous men, an institution denying sexual gratification in both men and women." As Lynn Sadler does in her reading of "A Rapture," scholars often point to Marvell's lyric as exemplary when they wish to emphasize a poem's motifs of coyness. Lynn Sadler, *Thomas Carew* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), 35. Sadler remarks that Carew's "Rapture" is "in tune" with Marvell's lyric.

⁴ Scodel, "The Pleasures of Restraint," 245.

definition of coyness active in these lyrics was based on the disdainful, delaying flirtation of a cruel woman.

The many varieties of coyness that Stuart lyric poets used become glaringly evident in manuscript contexts. I look at these varieties of coy vocabularies in miscellanies to restore a vital sense of how early modern readers understood these conceits of reserve, enticement, and resistance in conjunction. While the coyness associated with the flirtatious and coquettish mistress remains predominant, poets incorporate other vocabularies of coyness, from the virginal to the libidinous, in order to more effectively depict different types of wooing. Likewise, early modern collectors (such as those found at court, at the universities, and at the Inns of Court) gathered together sets of lyrics that employ a variety of images of coy conduct, from the private virgin to the coying wooer.⁵ Because manuscript collectors compiled their collections by trading and exchanging with each other, their collections frequently place these different images of coyness next to one other. In Suckling's "Out on it, I have loved," for example, the speaker excuses his feigned affections by declaring that he has been faithful for "three days together"; a replying poem dismisses his "coyness" as feigned dissembling. Similarly, the affectations of reticence and reluctance associated with the arch mistress are similar to the feigning deceptions of courting couples, trying to keep their relationship secret. By paying attention to these moments of connection, my study explores how the many vocabularies of coyness work in concert or against one another in early modern miscellanies.

Importantly, my attention to collections of Stuart poetry draws on how collectors accessed and compiled lyrics from heterogeneous sources, restoring the diverse and nuanced contexts in which early modern readers encountered poems about coy mistresses and their

⁵ For more on the popularity of miscellanies in the Inns of Court and at university, see Marotti, *Manuscript, Print*, 31–40.

fellows. Considering these poems only in the context of a single author's *oeuvre*, as modern, single-author editions have encouraged, de-contextualizes such writings from the poly-vocal, multi-author settings in which early seventeenth-century readers first encountered them.⁶ In early seventeenth-century miscellanies, poetry by Carew, Herrick, Randolph, Donne, Raleigh, and other lyricists appear together, and sometimes these lyrics are quite different from the anthologized versions with which we are most familiar.⁷ Such collections reemphasize that early modern writers did not write in a vacuum; they composed in a community, connected to one another by the coterie culture in which they participated.⁸ For example, Carew's "The Rapture," a poem that I will discuss in detail later, was incredibly popular, in part because it revises the very fashionable theme of witty persuasion and because it plays with many coy conceits from the reluctant wooed to the private courting couple found in other lyrics.⁹ I expand my exploration of coy conceits to manuscript collections to restore the creative and productive interactions of tone, from angry to seductive, theme, from complaint to commendation, and image, from the arch mistress to the blushing bride, that early modern readers would have seen and relished in their miscellany collections.

⁶ As Harold Love has shown, early modern lyric poets likely viewed the wide-spread dissemination and collection of their work as a form of "scribal publication"—and many of them, were not even involved in the publication of their own work. Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 5–6.

⁷ As Philip West's new volume on James Shirley's poetry emphasizes, the importance of variation in form and in different manuscript chains is becoming increasingly important to the study of Caroline poetry. Philip West, "Editing James Shirley's Poems," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 52.1 (2012): 101–17. Tom Cain and Ruth Connolly have recently put together an edition of Robert Herrick's poetry for Oxford that includes an extensive analysis of different Herrick witnesses. Robert Herrick, *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. Tom Cain and Ruth Connolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁸ As Marotti has shown, themes and motifs may have dictated certain lyrics' popularity (along with collections' different organizations) just as much as the possible identity of their authors. In fact, as Marotti and others have demonstrated, attributions were inexact or irrelevant, as collectors added or altered received witnesses. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print*, 169–70.

⁹ A very fashionable lyric, "The Rapture" first appeared in over thirty manuscripts dating back to the 1630s, though the lyric was not printed until the 1640 edition of Carew's poems. But "The Rapture," according to Beal, was not circulated only in the context of other Carew poems; sometimes, it appears attributed in some cases with other Carew poems and in others anonymously.

In this chapter, then, my goal is to recover the broader use of coy motifs found in amatory lyrics and to map out the startlingly productive junctures where different images of coyness come up against one another. Many of these lyric poems do assume an aloof, reluctant mistress—"A Rapture" is, at its heart, in the coy mistress tradition. Yet they also invoke other connotations of coyness—Carew draws on the imagery of the aloof mistress into "A Rapture." To better represent this variety I will look at and categorize the contents of three commonplace books: Folger Shakespeare Library, V.a.103, Harvard Library, Ms Eng. 626, and Rosenbach Museum & Library, MS 239/23. Early modern conceptions of coyness, as these manuscripts show, were not one-note or monotone. Manuscript compilations preserve those moments of interconnectedness and conjunction—a preservation particularly relevant for a study, such as mine, that aims to enlarge previously one-dimensional understandings of coyness.

My approach consists of two steps: first, I will consider these manuscripts to show how their contents place a variety of coy motifs alongside each other. Second, I will return to a more fashionable lyric, Carew's "A Rapture," to consider how a new understanding of early modern coyness will change readings of that poem. Though I do not have the space either to cover all of the different poets who employ discourses of coyness or all the manuscripts in which they appear, my goal is to establish a *method* for exploring the diversity and variation of such images, one that can be applied to any early modern collection. Seen as a unit, such early modern compilations provide insights into how early modern readers developed a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of coyness. Ultimately, coyness is a broad catalogue of behaviors and mannerisms, of which the actions of a mistress were only one performance among many.

I. Varieties of Coyness in Folger V.a.103, Harvard MS 626, and Rosenbach MS 239/23

Apart from the coy mistress, what new images and interpretations of coyness emerge from a close study of manuscript verses that are not clustered by author and only loosely organized by theme? In fact, the manuscripts that I have chosen (Folger V.a.103, Harvard MS 626, and Rosenbach MS 239/23) are not ordered by author or strictly by subject. As in other early modern manuscripts, anonymous lyrics appear alongside poems by famous lyric poets, putting these poems in conversation with each other. For example, in the Harvard manuscript, Herrick's "Seest thou the jewels that she wears," in which a disgruntled wooer complains of an unfeeling mistress, appears near an anonymous lyric that voices a woman's complaint over a man's infidelity, "Send back againe." One cannot look at these collections and imagine that, for Stuart readers and their poets, uniformity was attractive. I demonstrate, rather, that Stuart lyric poets used the congeries of coy conceits found in these lyrics to describe a great variety of actions (including pursuing, resisting, flirting, etc.) and motivations (physical infatuation, romantic attraction, and personal distrust, etc.) that can make up a romantic experience in a literary culture of feigned affectation.

In addition to conventional instances of the coy mistress, found most often in male-voiced complaints or *carpe diem* lyrics, the range of coy depictions found in these collections may include: 1) lyrics whose female speakers complain of male lovers' inconstancy; 2) poems that praise their female subjects for acting coyly for moral and practical reasons; 3) verses that depict both male and female lovers colluding together in secret, for discretion's sake; and 4) addresses that dramatize the basic cultural problems of feigning and dissembling in wooing. All of these depictions draw on the idea of the coy mistress, perhaps on her dissimulation or on her

desire for discretion, in ways that explain how early modern readers interpreted connections in the broader range of coy conceits.

Before I turn to these categorizations, I want to say a bit about the provenance, material form, and history of the three manuscripts that I will discuss. Possibly the earliest of these manuscripts, Folger V.a.103 (hereafter referred to as F.), is a two-volume set originally owned by the Smith family of Long Aston, and thought to have been compiled by them from the 1620s to the 1650s. The volumes consist of eighty-two and eighty-seven leaves respectively. Written in a variety of hands and divided by various subject headings, F. includes love poetry by Donne, Raleigh, Strode, Carew, and others, as well as satires, libels, and epitaphs in other sections. The subject headings and meticulous organization of the volumes suggest that a certain amount of curation and careful selection went into the creation of these volumes, though that organization is not by author.

In contrast to F.'s subject-oriented structure, Harvard 626 (hereafter referred to as H.) is an eighty-one-leaf folio mishmash of many different kinds of lyrics by many different authors. This miscellaneous compilation of poetry can be dated to around the late 1630s, according to Peter Beal.¹⁰ Written largely in a professional scribal hand with the names "Anthony S^t John / Ann: S^t John" inscribed on the flyleaf, the manuscript may have been owned by Anthony St. John (1618–1673), who attended Christ's College, Cambridge, and his wife (married 1639), Ann née Kensham.¹¹ Including a number of poems attributed elsewhere to Herrick and over twenty attributed to Thomas Randolph, this miscellany has a pronounced focus on the poetry of love in

¹⁰ Peter Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts, II: 1625–1700* (London: Mansell, 1987).

¹¹ Cyrus L. Day posits that St. John copied this book during his years at university and suggests that Randolph's lyrics occupy such a prominent place because his death was still a vivid memory. Cyrus L. Day, "New Poems by Randolph," *Review of English Studies* 8.2 (1932): 29–36.

all its forms.¹² H. is one of several manuscripts partially copied from a shared source, as Crum notes. Therefore, the range of its coy conceits attests to the incredible fashionableness and immense interdependence of such depictions for Caroline collectors.

Like H., Rosenbach MS 239/23 (hereafter referred to as R.) provides us with a diverse range of early seventeenth-century lyrics.¹³ A miscellany of 102 leaves and dated to c. 1630–1635 by Edwin Wolf, this miscellany includes a rich collection of well-known lyrics and less familiar works. Less is known about its provenance. In his edition of the manuscript, Howard H. Thompson speculates that its compiler was a member of the upper classes and, similar to the St. Johns and the Smiths, probably had access to a range of manuscripts and loose-leaf sets of lyrics. Though I have relied on Thompson's transcription, the varied contents of the manuscript still testify to the ubiquity and diversity of coy conceits. As such, I will use it as an additional reference point, though not as a primary source of inquiry. Interestingly, in addition to a marked attention to poems attributed to Thomas Randolph, R. shares a few anonymous lyrics with H.

In their diversity and range of poetry, these manuscripts are representative of early seventeenth-century scribal culture. Because all of these miscellanies seem to be gathered from many sources, their selections testify to the collectors' likely involvement in coterie exchanges.¹⁴ Together, these manuscripts encourage new re-evaluations of the role of coyness in early seventeenth-century culture, as one of broader application in the writers' depictions of wooing relationships. Now, I turn to my first set of poems: female-voiced accusations of male coyness.

¹² As Margaret Crum notes, MSS. Harvard Eng. 626F is a part of a related set of manuscripts. Per Crum, these manuscripts share many sequences of unrelated poems that are represented in similar orders. For example, as Crum writes, the Percy MS shares ninety-seven poems with H. 626. Margaret Crum, "An Unpublished Fragment of Verse by Herrick," *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 11.42 (1960): 186–89. In his examination of the Harvard and Huntington manuscripts, Day notes further that about two-thirds of the poems from the Huntington can be found in the Harvard manuscript, suggesting that they were copied from similar sources. Day, "New Poems," 32.

¹³ For this exploration, I will refer to Howard H. Thompson's edition of this manuscript, written for his doctorate defense. Howard H. Thompson, "An Edition of Two Seventeenth-Century Manuscript Poetical Miscellanies," (PhD diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1959).

¹⁴ For more on H.'s provenance, see Crum, "An Unpublished Fragment," 186–89.

1) Female-Voiced Poems Describing Men's Tactics of Feigning

It is not surprising that female-voiced speakers could complain just as heartily about men's inconstancy as male-voiced speakers could disparage women's fickleness.¹⁵ Though seen by Heather Dubrow as a sort of "counterdiscourse" to Petrarchism, female-voiced complaint poetry's place in the lyric tradition and its participation in discourses of coyness have been understudied by scholars of early seventeenth-century lyrics.¹⁶ In his articulation of seventeenth-century coyness, for example, Scodel addresses how Katherine Phillips transposes the protests of the mistress into a woman-woman relationship, but he does not recognize how this theme represents a significant and telling revision to the images of coyness made popular by Marvell and other male poets.¹⁷ Regardless of their composers' sex, female-voiced retorts and complaints illustrate how Stuart lyric poets and their readers imagined that women could recognize and belittle the gender inequality implied in the spurned-wooer/coy-mistress convention. In fact, women complain about the same things that men do, such as a suitor who feigns his affections or a broken heart. The female-voiced laments over male coyness criticize the feigned actions of male wooers, accentuating male poets' witty self-mockery. The exaggerated speakers in Marvell's and Suckling's lyrics, for example, mock the overdone flirtatiousness of foppish wooers. However, these female-voiced complaints are just as witty as their male-voiced counterparts. Sometimes female-voiced retorts can misread the playfulness of a flattering poem,

¹⁵ As Ilona Bell points out in her analysis of Elizabethan women's role in manuscript poetry, female-voiced poetry provided a key counterpoint to early modern impressions of coyness. Ilona Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Ch. 1.

¹⁶ See Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 80–96.

¹⁷ Scodel, "Pleasures of Restraint," 265–67.

tempering the wit of a wooer's persuasions; by contrast, they can remind readers of the humanity of female addressees, creating more equanimity between the coy mistress and her suitors.

In F., the compiler transcribes two short lyrics, which seem to be unique to this manuscript, but that exemplify the potential wit of a woman's retort. This exchange encourages a reassessment of the implied sincerity of the typical male-voiced condemnation of a coy woman. In one, a brother complains about his disdainful mistress to his "beloved and worthy sister Mrs. A. P." and, in the other, she replies that he knows how to "faine" as well as his lady (34r).¹⁸

TO his beloved and worthy sister Mrs. A. P.

"His complainte."

I loue but am not lov'd again.
I weep for her that laughs at mee;
Thought false because I can not faine
I serve one who'le nere make free:
 Thrice happy hee who never knew
 What 'tis to love not being thought trew.

"Her reply"

That thou dost love not lov'd againe,
And weepe for her that laughs at thee,
'Tis cause thou knowest to well to faine
I make none but trew servants free:
 To call love is a hapless toy
 Thrice happy he who doth enjoy.

Transcribed side by side, these two lyrics were seen as a set by the compiler. They are set off together with squiggly lines and are written in the same hand. Moreover, their imagery matches line by line, and in the juxtaposition of those images, the poet's or poets' witty play with the language of coyness extends into a witty degradation of male feigning. The exchange is surrounded by other witty incriminations of wooers' affected tones, including a dialogue between a country clown and Cupid in which the god of Love boasts of his ability to hunt the hearts of other men.

¹⁸ Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C., V.a.103.

By overt implication, the first speaker is clearly distressed by a reluctant, scornful lady, which prepares the astute reader for the gamesmanship of the poem. His language includes many of the typical markers of such a subject: “I loue but am not lov’d again,” he complains, “I weep for her that laughs at mee.” Tellingly, the speaker protests too much. His love is sincere and genuine, he claims: “I can not faine / I serve one who’s ere make free.” The word “feign” is often employed to condemn a coy mistress; for instance, an earlier poem in F. bitterly calls the speaker’s scornful lady a “Feigned Vestall.”¹⁹ The fact that the speaker associates the word “faine” with himself, even to deny the charge, hints that perhaps he is not as sincere as he seems.

The unattributed poet uses the female speaker’s artful reply, in which she implies that her brother’s “Weeping” and “love” are but feigning, to deflate the wittiness of his previous claim. Through her recrimination, however, the poet wittily mocks the histrionic rhetoric that is a part of persuasion poetry. In her poem, the sister agrees that he is not “loved again” but declares that when he “weepe[s] for her that laughs at thee, / ’Tis cause thou knowest to well to faine.” The line “thou knowest to weel to faine” characterizes her brother’s distress in the same way that a mistress is feigning her disinterest.²⁰ For the poet, these lines allow him to creatively associate the feigning of the wooer with the dissembling of the mistress. In a way, this image of the feigning wooer calls to mind the kind of wooing seen in Paris’s flattering courtship of Helen (see Chapter 2); if the brother’s distress is assumed, the poet implies, he flatters his lady by accentuating the devastating power of her beauty. In this pantomimed distress, as well, the poet undermines the possible emotional consequences between both parties of a wooing relationship: he takes the punch out of the mistress’s coy ways and out of the wooer’s coying flirtations, as if

¹⁹ From Donne’s “Apparition,” 32r.

²⁰ “To feign” was defined in early modern English as both “to put a false appearance upon; to disguise, dissemble, conceal” and “to picture to oneself, imagine (what is unreal).” *Oxford English Dictionary, Online Edition*, s.v. “feign,” accessed July 1, 2015, <http://oed.exaccess.libraries.psu.edu>.

the poet lampoons the histrionic lyrics produced by others. For example, in the poem preceding this exchange, “Good folk for gold or hire” (F., 35v), the speaker’s call that someone return his heart for a gilded reward may strike the ear as a feigning that is amusing rather than distressing. The poet’s exposure of male coyness in this exchange likely invited readers of this miscellany to laugh at the witty persuasions that surround the set.

While this exchange is somewhat humorous in tone, another pair of lyrics that appears in both H. and R. makes a more serious point in male coying. Underlying the witty repartee between the two poems is a clear sense that readers may have appreciated the costs of male coyness to female speakers.²¹ “Send back againe my hart to mee” (H., 7r), wherein a jilted female speaker complains of her broken heart, and “I pray thee sweet be kind” (H., 7v), wherein a male speaker appeals to his mistress for the return of his heart, share a similar language of coyness, but the female speaker’s complaint is strikingly more pointed than her male counterpart’s.

Send back againe my hart to mee
 That thou hast thus affraighted
 I did not thinke I could by thee
 Have bene soe ill requited.
 But now I see, that I must prove
 That men have no compassion,
 When we are wonn, they never love
 Poore women, but for fashion,
 Do recompense my love with hate
 And kill my hart, I’m sure
 Thou’lt one day saie, when ‘tis too late
 Thou never had’st a truer.
 (H., 7r)

Like the exchange in F., this poem seems like a conventional example of a lover’s complaint. In the first line, for instance, the speaker asks the addressee to “send back again my hart” and

²¹ Houghton Library, Harvard University, Ms. Eng. 626. As best I can tell, this lyric is anonymous. It is not ascribed in Beal. It appears in at least three other manuscripts including R. None of these lyrics have an ascription.

complains of being “ill requited.” In the sixth line, however, the speaker’s sex is identified: “I must prove / that men have no compassion,” says the mournful lover. The next lines confirm the surprise: “When *we* are wonn, they never love / *Poore women*, but for fashion, / Do recompense my love with hate” (emphasis mine). In these lines, the poet of this anonymous lyric overturns readers’ expectations that this is a male speaker. The jilted speaker is a woman, associated with the “we” and the “poore women”; her scornful lover, a man, is associated with the “men” and “they.” The poet’s reversal of the speaker’s sex capitalizes on the ubiquitous of the scornful mistress trope to surprise his reader with a female speaker.

More importantly, by leaving the speaker’s sex ambiguous at the beginning of the poem, the poet defines the speaker’s sadness and grief against the unemotional, aloof mistress of other lyrics. Unlike speakers that focus on the coldness and emotionlessness of their mistresses, the poet emphasizes her emotional reaction to rejection: she is “affraighted” and “ill requited.” She mourns deeply that her “love” has been returned with the suitor’s “hate.” By depicting the female speaker’s emotional state in such detail, the poet highlights an aspect of the coy mistress that many lyric poets neglect: her emotional reactions to courtship. Moreover, the speaker’s passionate retort accentuates the absence of the female voice in many examples of persuasion poetry, though the lament tradition provides that trope in some cases. While Herrick’s “Seest thou the jewels,” which appears before “Send back againe” in *H.*, dwells on the detachment of the aloof mistress, the female speaker of this poem is invested in her relationship and profoundly affected by the fickleness of her suitor.

By playing the speaker of “Send back againe” against the trope of the coy mistress, this lyric also incriminates the motivation for male coying. By articulating the speaker’s emotional pain, the poet accentuates the humanity of a disappointed, wooed mistress. The lady’s tone in

“Send back againe” is bitter, angry, and heartbroken. She rebukes her former lover bluntly: she “did not thinke” that she could have been “so ill requited” by him. Rather than flattering him as the speaker of “I praie thee” does, she threatens to tell the world “that men have no compassion.” Instead of having hope that she can find a new love, the speaker bleakly predicts her death as a consequence of this disappointment: her addressee “kill[s] my hart, I’me sure” by his neglect. By the logic of this female-voiced poem, having requited a lover and been rejected, the female speaker has no alternatives: she can only die. In these images of violence and disappointment, the poet of “Send back againe” shows the potential emotional consequences for a woman when a man feigns affections but proves aloof and scornful. Although the speaker’s language could be affected, the poet’s extended focus on her “broken heart” and on her bitter sense that “men have no compassion” highlights the callousness of the male wooer who scorns and disdains her—particularly when contrasted with the poem that follows in H.

In “I praie thee,” the poem which follows “Send back againe,” the male speaker’s complaint to his resistant mistress deliberately invokes the image of a coying wooer’s sophistry. As if to reinforce the negativity and heartbreak of “Send back againe,” the unattributed poet of “I praie thee” focuses on the male speaker’s self-satisfaction.

I praie thee sweet to mee bee kind.
 Delight not soe in scorning.
 I sue for love O lett mee finde
 Some pleasure midd’st my mourning
 What though to you I vassell bee
 Let mee my right inheritt
 Send ~~back~~ backe again my hart to mee
 Since thine it cannot merriitt;
 So shall I to the world declare
 How faire, how sweet, how kind you are.

“I praie thee” shares similar imagery and subject matter with its companion lyric—its male-voiced speaker asks his mistress to return his heart that he may give it to another—but the tone of

the second lyric is quite different. The speaker of “I praie thee” takes a flattering approach. Like a coying falconer, he tries to soothe his scornful addressee by calling her “sweet” and promising to declare how “faire” and “kind” she is. Though he cannily seems to have her best interests in mind, the speaker clearly aims to win his “right inherit[ance].” In this poem, the poet uses the language of coyness to characterize his speaker as a coying, flattering wooer, whose self-assured request for his own “inherit[ance]” contrasts starkly with the heartbroken speaker of “Send back againe.” In fact, the collector of H. may have put these poems together because they contrast so sharply with each other. While the female speaker’s distress may be affected and the male’s sincere, the woman’s application of coy vocabulary to a male wooer incriminates the flighty, light-hearted tone of “I praie thee.”

Moreover, these poems both dramatize how the culture of feigning silences female beloveds, restoring a key narrative element to the predominant image of the silent, arch mistress. In “I praie thee,” the male speaker promises to praise his former mistress, thereby bolstering her reputation. In sharp contrast, the addressee of “Send back againe” seems to get the final word. Unlike the silent beloved of “I praie thee,” the addressee of “Send back againe” even writes the female speaker’s epitaph: “Thou wilt one day saie, when ’tis too late, / Thou never had’st a truer.” In both cases, the male figure of the poem has the final word on the female character’s reputation: she is “true” or “sweet” depending on how he reports on her. While the first addressee’s epitaph may comment on the overarching authority of male wooers in courting scenes, the poet also uses the glib tone of the addressee’s epitaph to create sympathy for the female speaker and her silent compatriot. The female speaker’s anticipation of her death (“when ’tis too late”) even enables her to wrest some control over her own reputation, in that she writes the epitaph that her scornful beloved should speak: “thou never had’st a truer.” In her complaint

and in her final epitaph, the speaker of “Send back againe” inspires sympathy by voicing the emotional consequences that are typically absent from poems that disparage a wooed, distant mistress.

Ultimately, female-voiced retorts fulfill an essential role in manuscript collections, affecting how readers encounter more conventional images of the mistress. Poems that repurpose coy conceits to reveal the mistress’s point of view point out that both men and women can feign, as the exchange in F. exemplifies. Such a poem builds on the wry self-consciousness of Marvell’s and Suckling’s self-aware speakers to show women participating in coterie culture’s witty games of wooing. F.’s lyrics are in a section labeled “Love Sonnets” and are surrounded by poems like Donne’s address to his “Scornfull Mistress,” “Cruel since thou dost not feare curse”—wherein the ghost of the scorned speaker hopes his contemptuous mistress will love where “none of it love thee” back (32r). F.’s exchanges similarly offer a playful counterpoint to Donne’s own self-deprecating wit. By contrast, female-voiced complaints like “Send back againe” restore a sense of sympathy and equanimity of emotion that is lacking in some one-sided impressions of the coy, aloof mistress. In H., for example, “Send back againe” and “I praie thee” are preceded by Herrick’s “See’st thou those Jewells that shee weares” and Carew’s “These curious locks soe aptly twin’d” (7r)—both of which are more conventional male complaints.²² With the emphasis on female love and grief in “Send back againe,” readers may wonder about the emotional reactions of the aloof mistresses depicted in Herrick’s and Carew’s conventional lyrics.

²² In her study of Herrick’s “gift trouble,” Pamela S. Hammon makes a similar point. She further emphasizes the “male anxiety with gift-giving in his lyrics about hetero-erotic courtship.” Pamela S. Hammon, *Gender, Sexuality and Material Objects in English Renaissance Verse* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 42. Carew’s lyric is an excerpt of his persuasion lyric, “Think not, ’cause men flattering say.”

In their sharp incrimination of male-voiced persuasions, these female-voiced lyrics help to balance out the extremes found in lyrics like Herrick's and Donne's. Given the integration of female-voiced complaints into manuscript culture, Stuart readers saw these motifs as a critical revision of *carpe deum*'s self-mocking tones. These female-voiced responses remind readers of the humanity of the women, make the man look ignorant, create equanimity in the emotional consequences of love, and demand that readers hear the voice of the coy mistress, who might not be traditionally coy at all.

2) *Women's Moral and Practical Reasons for Coy Conduct*

Early seventeenth-century readers understood a variety of practical and moral motivations for women who acted coyly. In Scodel's formulation, all moments of coy behavior are an affected performance meant to make a woman more attractive to a man: "all female modesty [is] a strategy for enhancing her worth as an object of male desire."²³ In fact, a certain type of lyric often assigns vastly different motivations to its depictions of women acting coyly. These lyrics incorporate practical and moral reasons that might prompt mistresses to act coyly. Instead of disparaging female coy behavior, these lyrics often celebrate, encourage, or advise such actions. Just as the virgins of *Comus* and *Revenger's Tragedy* exploit the potential of coyness as a defense against male attention, some female characters of Stuart lyrics assume a posture of coyness for unconventional reasons: a devotion to chastity, a desire to catch a husband, or a fear of male attention. Though all of these alternative motivations are molded by patriarchal concerns, they still reform typical figurations of the aloof woman to expose the reasons for her disdain.

²³ Scodel, "Pleasures of Restraint," 240.

In H., Herrick's epithalamium—written in honor of Sir Thomas Southwell's marriage—celebrates and exaggerates an attitude of coyness rather than questioning or disparaging it.²⁴

"Nowe, now's the time so oft by truth" (24r–26r) anticipates the nuptial bed and the bashfulness of the bride in his characterization of her wedding night.²⁵

Nowe, now's the time so oft by truth
 Promis' sho'd come to crowne your youth
 Then, faire one, doe not wronge
 Your ioyes by staying long
 Or let your fires goe out
 By lingering still in doubt
 Love not admitts delaye,
 Then hast, and come awaye,
 Night with all her children stares
 Waite to light you to the warres

Faire virgin enter Cupid's field
 And though you doe resist yet yield
 It is noe shame att all
 For you to take the fall
 When thousand like to you
 Could nere the foile eschewe
 Nore in their strict defence
 Depart unconquered hence
 Then faire maiden nowe advenrer
 Since time and Life bidds enter.

Is it your fault that these so holy
 Bridall rites goe on soe slowly?
 Or is it that you dread
 The losse of Maidenhead?
 Knowe virgin you will most
 Love it when it is lost
 Then it noe longer keepe
 Least issue lie a sleepe;
 Com, come, Hymen, Himen guide
 To the Bedd the bashfull Bride.

²⁴ For Dubrow, who sees the genre of epithalamium as a sign of social harmony, the bride's reluctance "destabilizes" Herrick's images of marriage. Heather Dubrow, *A Happier Eden: The Politics of Marriage in Stuart Epithalamia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 237–39.

²⁵ I will only quote a portion of the lyric: for the full lyric of over 200 lines, see the appendix.

These pretious pearly purling teares
 But spring from ceremonious feares
 And 'tis but native shame
 That hides the loving flame
 Love's fire (faire maide) will wast
 All Bashfullnesse att last
 Then trust that night will cover
 What the rosie cheeks discover.²⁶

Herrick's depiction of the bride subtly invokes an image of the coy, reluctant woman.²⁷ Very much in the mold of Eve's "sweet reluctant amorous delay" (4.111), she is "bashfull" and nervous, "delay[ing]," hardly eager for "Loves sacred misterie." In her bashfulness, especially, Herrick draws on the idea of the affected reluctance of a mistress and the reserved modesty of the virgin: in early modern English, bashfulness could be an assumed coy posture for women of chaste or libidinous intent. By making this connection, Herrick turns the opening lines of this epithalamium into a sort of persuasion poem, where the coy bride must be coaxed into the marriage bed. Though scholars like Heather Dubrow claim that Herrick's lyric devotes most of its attention to the value of marriage, Herrick repeatedly calls attention to the bride's fear in order to accentuate her virtue.²⁸ The speaker advises her not to "let your fires goe out / By lingering still in doubt" and calls on the maiden to "hast" and make no delay, as if calling on her to accept her husband. Even the repeated refrain "Com, come, Hymen, Himen guide / To the Bedd the bashfull Bride" juxtaposes the idea of the marriage bed with the bride's "bashfulness" in order to couple the idea of sexual desire with the bride's reticence.

²⁶ This version of the poem varies considerably from the version found in *Hesperides*. The bride's reluctance seems to be played up. For more on the interplay of Herrick's manuscripts and Herrick's publications, see Robert Herrick, *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. Tom Cain and Ruth Connolly, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.45–53.

²⁷ For Marjorie Swann and David Landrum, Herrick's epithalamium is troubling. Its language of a violent wedding night either supports an "uneasy atmosphere of brutality and violence" or undermines the brutality of patriarchal marriage. Marjorie Swann, "Marriage, Celibacy, and Ritual in Robert Herrick's *Hesperides*," *Philological Quarterly* 76.1 (1997): 19–46; David Landrum, "Robert Herrick and the Ambiguities," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 49.2 (2007): 181–208, at 185.

²⁸ Dubrow, *Happier Eden*, 239.

Unlike other persuasion poems, however, Herrick's speaker does not actually censure the bride for her shy demeanor or seriously try to soothe her reluctance. In fact, the bride's bashfulness is praiseworthy because her reticence testifies to her character: her postures of reticence are a testimony to the depicted bride's virtuousness and shamefastness. The speaker repeatedly and vigorously insists that the lady's affectations are not scornful or unkind: her "pretious pearly purling teares" likely only "spring from ceremonious feares / And 'tis but native shame / That hides the loving flame." The image of "ceremonious feares" emphasizes that the bride's hesitancy is ritualistic, part of the pageantry of the wedding night, just as the "Five boyes with torches Fine" and the "Virgins [who] weepe" are part of the spectacle. Moreover, the poem does not depict the bride's shamefastness as antithetical to affection. In fact, the speaker declares that an appearance of "native shame / . . . hides the loving flame" of the lady for her bridegroom. In this commemoration of marriage, the bride's "ceremonious feares" do not take away from her "loving flame"—they elevate her attractiveness.

For readers of H., Herrick's endorsement of the bride's assumed bashfulness counters the perspectives of surrounding lyrics where male speakers assume that a woman's coy reluctance must be motivated by narrow emotions like disdain, scorn, and pride. For example, the lyric "You have beheld the smiling rose" (also by Herrick and found near "Now, nowe" in H.) addresses a beautiful, aloof mistress. In the lyric, the speaker assumes his addressee is coy and disdainful: he disparages her "hidden pride" and criticizes her desire to "raise greater fires in men" (34v–35v). However, the bashfulness and sensitivity of Herrick's coy bride undermines the assumptions of "You have beheld" and other lyrics. While "You have beheld" assumes that a mistress's coy conduct must result from her pride and sexual coldness, "Now, nowe," reminds readers that a woman might act cooly out of bashfulness or modesty, preserving a critical

complication in the narrative of the coy mistress. Other poems in H., “Ere I go from hence and be no more” (32v) and “Goe and with this parting kisse” (33v–34v), both attributed to Herrick in different manuscripts, also repurpose the motifs associated with the disdainful mistress to complicate the possible reasons that a woman might act coyly. These lyrics employ images of ensnaring hair, bewitching eyes, and stony silence as the tools of chastity, used to preserve a woman’s virtue against men’s aggression.

“Ere I go from hence,” commonly titled “The Dowry,” details a dying father’s wishes for his daughter: that her upright conduct and coy canniness will win her a husband after he is gone. Surprisingly, though this poem predominantly focuses on the daughter’s future marriage, Herrick invokes the broader vocabulary of the mistress, the hunter, and the virgin to characterize her as a coy figure. Such a mixing of language gives her some agential power—in part, “the dowry” that her father gives her is the ability to choose her husband. For example, the father-speaker advises his daughter to use “wordes in gentle aire / That [are] smooth as oile, sweete, soft, and cleane” to stave off unwanted affections. In other words, she should coyly soothe and “smooth” her suitors, just as a coying hunter would soothe and cajole a reluctant falcon with his voice. Herrick’s speaker also advises her to use flirtations, worthy of a mistress, to win a husband:

. . . With hands as smooth as Mercies bringe
 Him for better cherrishing
 That when thou dost his neck insnare
 Or with thy rist or fettering haire
 He may a prisoner there desyre
 Bondage more lov’d than libertie.²⁹

Herrick, here, revises the purpose of the actions associated with the reluctant mistress in order to sensationalize his portrayal of a virginal daughter. Her “smooth hands” will “cherish” a lover;

²⁹ According to Cain and Connolly, this poem does not appear in *Hesperides*, but three witnesses attribute it to Herrick. Stylistic and thematic images suggest that the poem may, in fact, be written by Herrick. Cain and Connolly, *Complete Poetry*, 2.130–35.

her “fettering haire” will “insnare” his neck and make him a “prisoner” of her desire. Most early-seventeenth-century amatory lyrics, including Herrick’s own “Seest thou the jewells,” employ these images to depict the heartlessness of a mistress. Herrick, here, repurposes them to show a woman trying to “insnare” one man, not many. Herrick’s revision to the narrative of the mistress with many suitors suggests another motivation for a coy woman’s entrapping ways: perhaps, such “smoothing” and soothing ways are what allow a woman to cajole and win a husband, restoring a productive sexual interest to the figure of the coy mistress trope. In the daughter’s discernment, Herrick rejects an underlying assumption of many poems—that a coy mistress must refuse a man because she is cold or cruel—to point out that women (and men) do not have to be attracted to every person who finds them fair.

In the final lines of this poem, Herrick reinforces the idea that the daughter’s future coy behavior can be socially productive, even empowering.³⁰ In a list of her attributes, Herrick combines images of virtuous modesty and of urbane dissembling (both of which are in keeping with coy vocabularies). In the daughter, he praises:

Obedience, wise distrust, peace, shy
 Distance and sweet urbanity;
 Safe modesty, lov’d patience, fear
 Of offending, temperance, dear
 Constancy, bashfulness and all
 The virtues less or cardinal,
 Take with my blessing, and go forth
 Enjewelled with thy native worth.

In this passage, Herrick places an equal value on the chastity, the “distrust” and “shy distance” of the modest reluctant virgin, as on the “sweet urbanity” and “fettering hair” of the canny, sophisticated mistress. Rather than representing the delicious or despicable delay of a conventional mistress, the daughter’s hoped-for sweetness and hesitancy are positive attributes

³⁰ Landrum, “Robert Herrick and the Ambiguities of Gender,” 205.

that the speaker encourages. Her “distrust” and “shy distance,” Herrick suggests, must be supplemented by the “urbanity” and worldliness of a canny mistress, suggesting that experience and sexual awareness associated with a coy mistress can complement the more conventional modesty and innocence of the virgin. Herrick’s lyric suggests, a virgin’s persona of coy “modesty” is “safe” because “distrust” creates distance, giving a woman time to judge the quality of her suitor. Just as the bashfulness of the bride testifies to her virtuousness, the coy mannerisms of the daughter have a practical application that further complicates simpler assessments of a mistress’s selfish motivations.

In contrast to “’Ere I goe from hence,” which encourages coy conduct for social gain, Herrick’s “Goe and with this parting kisse” introduces notes of discord and danger to its endorsement of coy conduct—notes similar to those of “Send back againe,” from the previous section. Immediately following the father’s injunction to his daughter, “Goe and with this parting kisse” dramatizes a husband’s parting instructions to his fair wife. This extended address depicts a woman using conduct associated with a coy, disdainful mistress to defend herself against male aggressions.

Goe and with this parting kisse
 Which ioynes twoe soules, remember this,
 Though thou beest young, kind, soft, and faire
 And maist drawe wooers by thy haire,
 Yet lett these glibb temptations bee
 Furies to others, friends to mee
 Looke upon all, and though on fire
 Thou set’st their harts, lett chast desire
 Restore thee to mee, and thinke me gone
 In having all, that thou hast none
 I know a thousand greedie eies
 Will on thy beautie tyrranize
 In my short absence yett behold
 Them like some picture or some mold
 Fashion’d like thee, which though have eares
 And eyes, yett neither sees nor heares

Gifts will be sent, and letters which
 (As Emblems will expresse the itch)
 And salt, which fretts the suitors flye
 Both least thou loose thy libertie;
 For that once lost, thou need'st must fall
 To one, then prostitute to all,
 Nor soe immured would I have
 Thee live, as dead, or in the graue
 But walk abroad yett wisely well
 Keep 'gainst my coming sentinell
 And think each man thou see'st doth doome
 Thy thoughts to saye I backe am come
 Lett them wooe thee, do thou saye
 As that chast queene of Ithaca
 Did to her sutors (This will be done
 Undone, as oft as donne) I'm woonne
 I will urge thee for I know
 Though thou beest young thou can'st sie no
 And No againe, and still deny
 There thy lust burning Incubi
 Lett them call thee wondrous faire
 Crowne of woemen, yett despaire
 That thou art so, Because thou must
 Believe loue speakes it not, but lust,
 And their flatterie doth commend
 Thee cheifely for their pleasure's ende
 I am not ieaulouse of thy faith
 Nor willbee for thee Axiome saith
 Hee that doth suspect, doth hast
 A vertuous mind to bee unchast
 Noe live then to thy selfe, and keepe
 Thy thoughts as cold, as is thy sleepe
 Lett thy dreames bee only feed
 With this, that I am in thy Bedd
 And thou turning in that spheare
 Waking find'st mee sleeping there
 But if Boundlesse lust will scale
 Thy fortresse, and must needs prevail
 'gainst thee and force a passage in,
 Bannishe consent, and tis no sinne
 Of thine, so Lucesse fell, and the
 Chaste Cirracusean Cyone
 So Medullina fell, yet none
 Of those ~~ken~~ knewe imputation
 For the least tresspasse, cause the mind
 Was not with the Act combin'd

The bodie sinns not; this the will
 Creates the action good or ill
 And if thy fall should this waye come
 Glorie in such a matryrdome
 I will not overlong inlarge
 To thee this my religious charge
 Take this last signet, so by this
 Meanes I shall knowe what other kisse
 It mixt with mine, and truly knowe
 Returning if't bee mine or noe
 Keepe I still then, And now my spouse
 For my wish't safetie, paie thy vowes
 And prayers to Venus, if it please
 The great Blewe Ruler of the Seas
 Not many full fac'd Moones shall wane
 Lean-Horn'd before I turne againe
 In my full triumph, when I find
 In thee the height of woeman kind.
 Nor would I have thee think that thou
 Had'st power thy selfe to keep this vowe
 But having scap't temptation shelve
 Knowe vertue taught thee not thy selfe³¹

From the first lines, the speaker casts his wife in the role of a disdainful mistress—as if he fears she will be tempted by the men around her.³² He worries, for example, that because she “beest young, kind, soft, and faire / . . . [she] maist drawe wooers by [her] haire,” just as Herrick, Carew, and Donne imagine their ladies trapping men’s souls in their tresses.³³ He hopes she will be icy to others but close to him: “Furies to others, friends to mee.” Such images reinforce that the dynamic of this poem is one of conditional coy conduct: the husband should enjoy his wife’s affections, but the men around her should find her a “fur[y].”

³¹ Per Cain and Connolly, “Goe and with this parting Kisse” appears in *Hesperides* and eight other MS witnesses. Most versions are quite consistent in sentiment and image. See Cain and Connolly, *Complete Poetry*, 2.149–52.

³² For Swann, such a focus would belie male anxiety about female attractiveness—the anatomization of her body fulfills a fetishistic need to “frustrate eroticism.” See Marjorie Swann, “Cavalier Love: Fetishism and its Discontents,” *Literature and Psychology* 42.3 (1996): 15–36, at 22.

³³ For more on the virginal power associated with women’s hair, see Snook, *Women, Beauty, and Power*, 135–37.

The image of a wife using coy conduct as a defense against male attention complicates the stereotype of the coy mistress as inherently mocking and scornful, as Herrick must have appreciated. Such a shift elaborates on the potential dangers of coy conceits, by asking what happens when men refuse to honor a woman's coy refusal. The speaker warns that, though "Nor soe immured would I have / thee," she should "walk abroad yet wisely well"—a caution that imagines her walking like Vives's virgin: wise, demure, and coy.³⁴ A few lines later, the lyric expands on the threats associated with walking abroad.

Lett them wooe thee, do thou saye
 As that chast queene of Ithaca
 Did to her sutors (This will be done
 Undone, as oft as donne) I'm woonne
 I will urge thee for I know
 Though thou beest young thou can'st sie No
 And No againe, and still deny
 There thy lust burning Incubi
 Lett them call thee wondrous faire
 Crowne of woemen, yett despaire
 That thou art so, Because thou must
 Believe loue speakes it not, but lust,
 And their flatterie doth commend
 Thee cheifely for their pleasure's ende.

In this passage, the speaker employs the language of coyness in multiple ways. He calls upon the lady to act the role of the chaste mistress, to "sie No / And No againe, and still deny." He compares her state to that of Penelope, Odysseus's chaste wife. Like Penelope, his lady should be resistant towards all but himself: "do thou saye /. . . / (This will be done / Undone, as oft as donne) I'm woonne." The changeability and reticence of coy conduct, here, becomes a repeated and persistent language of refusal, one that takes on a sinister tone later in the poem.

³⁴ Vives urges that, when young women must walk abroad, . . . they [should] do so with great modesty: "afore she go forth outadore, let her prepare her mynde and stomake none other wyse, than if she went to fight" and that she must "shew great sobrenes, both in countenance and all the gesture of her body." Vives, *Instruction of a Christian Woman*, 58, 60.

In the lyric, the necessity of the depicted wife's facade of refusal is directly tied to the threatening "flatterie" of her hypothetical wooers, allowing Herrick to expose an underlying theme of coy narratives: the possibility of rape. Just as the female speaker of "Send back againe" complains that men are inconstant, this husband exposes the self-interested motivations of his wife's admirers: though they may call her "wondrous faire / Crowne of woemen," he warns, "love speaks it not, but lust." In other words, their compliments are "cheifely for their pleasure's ende"—a coying facade meant to calm the wife's resistance. The speaker most bluntly exposes the imagined suitor's facade, when he brings up the possibility of rape:

But if Boundlesse lust will scale
Thy fortresse, and must needs prevail
'gainst thee and force a passage in
Bannishe consent, and tis no sinne
Of thine, so Lucesse fell.

Though the speaker opens the poem by encouraging his addressee to act coyly, Herrick seems to suggest here that her coy manners may be in vain if her suitors reject the smooth refusals of the addressee. "Boundlesse lust" might enter "gainst" her will and without her "consent," violating her closeness just as Jove does. Such an image of male lust and feigning justifies the female-voiced complaints of the last section. Just as "Send back againe" imagines the potential emotional experiences of the mistress, Herrick's lyric depicts a possible physical danger for women in the culture of coyness: rape. This lyric bluntly renders the dangers possible when a suitor refuses to accept a woman's "no" as sincere or when a suitor chooses physical aggression rather than coying words. It also resonates with the motivations behind the overblown flattery spoken by wooers, such as Donne's "Would you know what's soft? I dare" (H. 63r), in which the speaker praises his lady's beauty, or an unattributed lyric in F., "Have you seen where the whyte

lillys grow?” (F. 31v), in which the speaker longs to enjoy his mistress’s “white” hands.³⁵ In this threat of rape, “Goe now and with this parting kisse” identifies an essential motivation for female coy resistance: women’s coy postures are sometimes commensurate responses to men’s over-ambitious, self-motivated, violent flattery.

In this poem and others, Herrick uses the broader vocabularies of coyness to dramatize the different reasons why women might act coyly. This lyric, in particular, shapes how readers judge the tone of poems like “Goe and catch a falling star.” In H., Donne’s “Goe and catch a falling star” (34v–35v) immediately follows the husband’s leave-taking that I have just discussed. The bitter tone of Donne’s song, in which finding a woman “true and fair” is as impossible as “catch[ing] a falling star,” resonates anew with the cautionary notes of the preceding lyrics. The husband’s call that his lady be wary and avoid the “lusts” of men might be, for Stuart readers, a sentiment grounded in the impossibility of a “true” woman. But Herrick’s implied reason likely also occurred to them: a woman’s fickleness and coy disdain may result from a fear of rape or from a distrust of male intentions.

In contrast to Scodel’s sense that women act coyly for one reason, then, many Stuart lyrics dramatize different reasons for women’s coy conduct: virtuousness, caution, or fear of rape. Though very much in conversation with the typical images of the unfaithful, scornful beloved, these lyrics are distinct from them in that a coy woman’s reasons for such conduct are examined in detail. Many other early modern lyrics take up similar perspectives on women’s coy behavior as a justified response to flattering and rapacious men: Philip Massinger’s anatomization of a virgin’s character, “Such as doe Trophies striue to raise” (H. 60r–62v, R. 39v)

³⁵ Though not found in these manuscripts, Suckling’s poem, “Upon my Lady Carliles walking in Hampton-Court Garden” similarly criticizes the high-flown rhetoric of Carew and others. For Robert Wilcher, such poems are evidence of Suckling’s eccentricities as a Cavalier poet. Robert Wilcher, *The Discontented Cavalier: The Work of Sir John Suckling in Its Social, Religious, Political, and Literary Contexts* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 129–32.

or the unattributed hymn to the Virgin Mary “Hail Mary Mother of thy Father” (H. 15r–17v) praise virginity, as “Nowe, now” does. Verses like Shirley’s “I have no humour to adore the face” (R. 16v, H. 63v), like “Goe and with this parting kisse,” disparage the flattery of lovers as feigned and foolish. Such lyrics may have prevented readers from accepting simple interpretations for women’s coy conduct. Rather, early modern lyric poets provide numerous practical, moral, and self-interested reasons for why women might act coyly.

3) *Coyness and the Discretion of Lovers*

It is not shocking that amatory verses depict lovers’ private assignations, but the presence of coy discourses in those figurations is highly unexpected and very charged.³⁶ For scholars, the discourses of coyness often have connoted separation and distance between lovers—perhaps, an outgrowth of the early seventeenth-century courts’ idealization of neo-platonic affections.³⁷ For instance, Kerrigan and Braden characterize the “libertine poetry” of the seventeenth century as entirely focused on “self-interest” and on the “defects of union.”³⁸ However, many lyrics use the imagery of coy disdain to depict discretion in secret love affairs; lovers who are not publicly declared might act coyly towards each other in public to maintain the anonymity of their affair. In these lyrics, the language of coyness stems from a desire for privacy on a couple’s part, and extends the often-stated fear of a coy mistress (that she will be observed) into relationships between couples. Depictions of lovers who, *together*, act furtive and secretive *towards* society reshape the vocabulary of coyness as a discourse of intimacy.

³⁶ As William Shullenberger notes, early modern poets often saw love as a “high stakes domestic intrigue,” but he focuses on the observers of these private scenes, not on the lovers’ depicted actions. William Shullenberger, “Love as a Spectator Sport in John Donne’s Poetry,” in *Renaissance Discourses of Desire*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 46–62, at 53–54.

³⁷ For a recent account of Henrietta Maria’s court and its literary interests, see Karen Britland, *Drama at the Court of Queen Henrietta Maria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁸ Kerrigan and Braden, “Milton’s Coy Eve,” 33–34.

Found in H., Carew's "Feare not deare love that I'll reveale" (H. 7v) exemplifies the feigning of couples that coy conceits could imply. In this poem, the speaker employs the discourses of coyness to describe ongoing, requited love rather than an unrequited passion. This poem depicts their wooing itself as hidden, concealed, and obscured.³⁹

Feare not deare love that I'll reveale
 The hidden pleasures wee twoe steale,
 Noe eie shall see, nor yett the Sunn
 Discern what thou and I have done.
 No eare shall heare, but wee
 Silent as the night wilbee.
 The God of love himselfe, whose dart
 Did first wound myne, and then thy hart
 He shall not knowe that wee can tell
 What sweetes in stolne imbraces dwell.
 Onely this meanes may finde it out
 If, when I die, Physitians doubt
 What caus'd my death, and then (so viewe
 Of all their Judgments, which is true)
 Rippe up my hart, O then I feare,
 The world will see thee pictur'd there.

From the first, this poem invokes the discretion of the coy mistress from the first line: her first . The speaker's early promise of discretion (his "feare not deare love that I'll reveale") allays his mistress's shyness and caution. In the rest of the lyric, Carew extends the language of a mistress's coy reluctance to the actions of the couple. The speaker describes their assignations as "hidden pleasures we twoe steale," an image that accentuates the furtive atmosphere of this poetic scene. Likewise, his suggestion that they will feign disinterest in public emphasizes that they will be coy towards each other. For Carew, the speaker's repeated references to "hidden" affections and "stolen imbraces" show that they will be secretive in public, adding a new interpretations of a mistress's scorn in public. For example, the speaker promises that "noe eare

³⁹ This poem, commonly entitled "Secrecie Protested," appears in 52 manuscript witnesses, which speaks to the poem's incredible popularity. Scott Nixon, "The Manuscript Sources of Thomas Carew's Poetry," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 8 (2000): 186–206, at 202–203.

shall heare” and no “eie shall see” “what thou and I have done” or “what sweets in stolen imbraces dwell.” These lines build up a sense of privacy and isolation in the couple’s tryst. The paired “thou and I” and “stolen imbraces” accentuate that the lovers are sharing in their silent and hidden embrace together. Even the conventional appeal to Cupid becomes a testimony to their mutual affections: “The God of Love himself, whose dart / Did first wound myne, and then thy hart / He shall not know that we can tell.” These images of amatory verse typically exemplify separation between lovers, but in this lyric, discourses of secretiveness and concealment provide a connection between the speaker and his lover.⁴⁰ Because they act coyly together in public, Carew implies, they enjoy a sense of camaraderie and affection in private.

Not only do lyric poets like Carew transfer the feigning imagery of coyness to the sneaking games of lovers, they also depict men enjoying the coy conduct of their mistresses. “That we maie still be true” (H. 21r–21v; R. 21–22) explicitly disrupts the conventional idea of a mistress as fisherwoman—bait, lure, and trap together, as found in Donne’s “The Bait.” Instead of condemning a woman’s ensnaring conduct, the speaker of “That we maie still be true” seems to enjoy the spectacle of other rival wooers dying in the fire of his mistress’s beauty. In contrast to Kerrigan’s impression that only women enjoyed the fruits of their “self-display,” “That we maie still be true” employs these motifs to build up and maintain a relationship between the speaker and his beloved through her public rejection of other wooers.

Interweaving images of fishing, luring, trapping, and angling, this poet establishes the lady’s coy conduct as a connection between wooers. The speaker explicitly participates in his lady’s coy ways: she and he together bait, coax, and trap their prey, just as a coy mistress would alone.

⁴⁰ Similarly, in Donne’s elegy “Since she must go and I must mourn come night,” the speaker remembers how he and his lady conducted their affair through “becks, winks, looks” and “varied our language through all dialects” to maintain their affections (F. 37v–38r).

That we maie still be true
 Letts make a league att this our interviewe
 Four our brave wordes as sacramentall are
 As all the vowes and oathes that others sweare

And thus we will agree
 That our inseparable loves shalbee
 As heat to fire, and not contented soe
 We'll hate to thinke the thoughts we will not doe.

It may be 'twill fall out
 That some by Pollicie may goe about
 To undermine our loues, and hope by that
 To make a breach whereby to enter att.

'Gainst which our eies shall wake
 And such as by their witts shall undertake
 New Batteries against our truthes to laye
 To take them in their wiles shallbee our playe.

And since thy Beauties light
 Throwes forth such luster that it dazles sight
 So when Love flyes shall buz about that flame
 Weele smile to see them burnt within the same.

And as poore fishes bite
 Their deathes to feede their hungerie appetite
 Then as they think to steal away the baite
 The hooke deceaves them in their own deceit.

Soe angling love shall plaie
 And whilst he cast's thy lookes (his lines) awaye
 And bates his hookes with Nectar lipps of thine
 Thy eies shall dart him dead, dares sipp that wine

This poem repurposes several of the typical metaphysical images that usually disparage a mistress as coy and unfeeling. The suitors, like “Love flies,” are attracted to the mistress’s “luster” and burn therein, as in Jonson’s “Doe but consider this small dust” (H. 74r) or Carew’s “When this flye livd shee vsed to plaie” (R. 11–12). The rivals, like the fish in Donne’s “Bait,” are caught up by her “sleeve-silk flies [that] / Bewitch poore fishes wand’ring eyes” (H. 68r). They are trapped like the deer in “Leave Cloris leaue the woods, the Chace,” a poem that blends

motifs of hunting with courtship (H. 80r; R. 31–32). But these lines also invoke the coy actions of a mistress: her “eies shall dart” with scorn; her “beauties light” “dazles sight,” due to her beauty but also due to her disdain and disinterest in them. When other suitors “undertake / New Batteries against” her, she will “take them in their wiles.” Such images place the intent and purpose of the coy mistress at the heart of this poem.

In these witty descriptions of the mistress’s coyness, the poet establishes the skillfulness of the mistress and the common intent of the lovers; her displays of disdain are paradoxically a shared experience for them. Her eyes that “dart [the wooers] dead” preserve the “flames” of love between the wooer and his mistress. Her “hook deceaves them in their own deceit,” taking those who tempt her away from her wooer. The actions of the mistress, in this case, bolster her relationship with the speaker rather than destroying it. The poet uses the language of scorn and deceit, of entrapment and enticement to enlarge the possible motivations for a reluctant mistress to include a possible accepted lover. Such a depiction accentuates how “eies” that “dart” and “hookes” that deceive can preserve a woman’s sense of self and her private affections. Rather than watching flies from a distance, as Carew’s speaker does in “When this flye,” the speaker of “That we maie be true” watches by his lady’s side, enjoying her coy mannerisms. He encourages the death of his rivals, taking as much satisfaction from their demise as the most cruel mistress is imagined to do: “since thy Beauties light / throwes forth such a luster . . . / when Loves flies shall buz about that flame / well smile to see them burnt with in the same.” Rather than being a defensive encouragement, the coy conduct being depicted is a game of wit, as if the poet deliberately invokes the sophistry common in courting narratives. For example, the speaker and his addressee will “smile to see them burn in the same,” and “To take them in their wiles

shallbee our playe.” The speaker’s reactions to his lady’s coyness become an entertainment, a “play” of love, where coy discourses are a game between the two characters.

The changing functions of these motifs recur in the poem’s extended meditation on angling; again, the repurposed motifs of coyness are a binder, conveying the common interest between the speaker and his beloved. Her coy conduct preserves their relationship. As in Donne’s “Bait,” the speaker imagines that “as poore fishe bite . . . / Then as they think to steale away the bait,” so will others try to steal away his beloved. The fish-rivals will be caught by a “hook [that] deceaves them in their own deceit.” In short, the lover seems to suggest that the “poore fishe” get what they deserve because they, too, deceive, trying to “steale away the bait” of the lady’s beauty. The “poore fishe” are, instead, outdone at their own game. The image of the mistress as an angling fisherwoman, with Cupid and the speaker as her playmates, gives a communal air to coy behavior: “soe angling love shall plaie / . . . [and] cast’s thy lookes (his lines) away / And bates his hookes with Nectar lipps of thine.” The playful description of “angling love” recalls the conflation of coyness and fishery, but for the lover and his lady, that game unifies them: their shared experience of her coyness, ultimately, is the vehicle that creates “The constant Artick-pole” of their love. For early modern readers, the imagery of coyness could evidently be unifying and connecting.

These lyrics illustrate a competing narrative of coyness, one associated with intimacy and connection, contrary to Kerrigan’s and Braden’s formulation of coyness as lonely and self-interested. Rather than exemplifying the remote unfriendliness of one party, as so many lyrics in these early modern miscellanies do, the strains of entrapment and secrecy common to these vocabularies could typify the communion between lovers. Similar themes appear in poems beyond the scope of this section, such as Carew’s “Ladie what’s your face to mee” (H. 65r),

Raleigh's "Now Serena bee not coy" (F. 30v), and Donne's "Since she must go." In these lyrics, the speakers similarly value the privacy and isolation that feigned behavior encourages.

Together, "That we maie still be true" and "Feare not deare love" show how the language of feigning can create a sense of privacy in wooers, and how the conduct of coyness could be a binder between lovers—actions that unite couples rather than separating them.

4) *Dramatizing the Problems of Feigning in Courtship*

Some early modern amatory lyrics do not celebrate or repurpose coyness, but instead question and critique the culture itself. As Bell has shown, some Elizabethan female-voiced poetry uses conventional motifs to criticize cultural restrictions on women.⁴¹ For Dubrow, some types of lyrics, such as the "Ugly Beauty" tradition, directly counteract the idealizing tendencies of Petrarchan verse.⁴² As their presence in manuscript culture suggests, similar criticisms of feigning behavior coexisted alongside more conventional depictions of coy behavior. Early modern poets did they resist the impulse to wittily question the very functionality and successfulness of coy conduct in wooing. Early seventeenth-century amatory poetics, as a whole, frequently include sophisticated and varied criticisms on the negative effects of coyness.⁴³

Poems where female addressees or female speakers reject the typical coquettish protestations of the coy mistress represent an incredibly fashionable strain of early modern amatory verses and counterbalance the dominance of the icy indifference of an imagined mistress. "Damon my beautie doth adore," called in H. the "Brown Maid's Complaint" (63v), is

⁴¹ Bell, *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship*, 18–22. Though she does not consider manuscript verse collections, Elizabeth D. Harvey makes a similar point in her chapter on how early modern poetry rearticulated Sappho. Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 116–139.

⁴² Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire*, 85–90.

⁴³ That is not to say that early modern scholars have not located such interpretations in early modern lyrics: Sir John Suckling has been seen by Wilcher in this vein. Wilcher, *Discontented Cavalier*, 132–33.

one such rejection. The female speaker playfully skewers the predominant image of an icy mistress, just as many popular airs did.⁴⁴

Damon my beautie doth adore
 Thyrsis disdainfull calles mee Moore
 Thyrsis as deepe in Heresie
 As Damon in Idolatrie
 I neither am so fowle nore faire
 As to bee coye, or to despaire
 My face is such (my Glasse can tell)
 In which is neither Heaven nor Hell
 Not full so bright as Angells bee
 To challenge a divinitie
 Nor yet so darke I thanke my fate
 As to be thought Love's Retrobate
 The louely Browne whoe censures right?
 This swears it blacke, he vowes it white
 Noe Passion hath his eies wee find
 Both loue and hate alike are blind.

At first glance, this poem merely expresses that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” to echo a familiar cliché. To convey this point, the poem sets up a series of extremes, all based on men’s skewed perceptions: the speaker might be from “Heaven [or] Hell,” might appear “fowle [or] faire,” might be “love[d] [or] hate[d],” might act “coy” or “despair[ing].” Such a series of contradictions criticizes the men’s skewed perspectives: their opinions shape how they respond to women. Coyness, as this poem shows, is a behavior created by the beholder, too. As in so many other lyrics, the brown maid’s relative beauty is determined by the “blind” (or ill-perceiving) gaze of the men around her.

Yet, the speaker of this poem, the “Brown Maid,” invokes a counter-tradition to the aloof court mistress: the lusty country maid who feels no need to “feign” disdain but wantonly accepts the sexual overtures of men. The country maid’s rejection of “coyness” and courtly “fairness” plays up her potential willingness to enjoy passion: her lack of interest in coy feigning

⁴⁴ Thomas Campion, *Ayres and Observations, Selected Poems of Thomas Campion*, ed. Joan Hart (Portsmouth: Carcanet Press, 1976), 27.

accentuates the static posture of the coy mistress so common in lyrics that depict courtly interactions. Early modern readers would have understood this tradition as defined against affectations of coyness and would have appreciated the wittiness of a “Brown maid” who rejects the “coy” affectation of the mistress. For example, in Thomas Campion’s *A Booke of Ayres* (1601), a speaker comments that he prefers the “kind Amarillis, the wanton country maide” who “when we court and kisse, / she cries for forsooth, let go! / But when we come where comfort is / She never will say no” to the “coy” mistress of the court. By favoring the woman who “never will say no,” Campion’s air and “Damon, my beautie” exposes the affected nature of the coy mistress. By providing an alternative to the mistress’s coldness, these lyrics offer a counter narrative of lusty bluntness that wittily disparages other lyrics’ focus on insipid, chaste beauties.

By positioning “Damon my beauty” amidst poems depicting beautiful mistresses, H’s collector highlights a contrast between the coy, proud mistress and the course country maid. “Damon my beauty” appears next to poems like Carew’s “Do you know what’s soft I dare” and Raleigh’s “Nature that washt her hands in milk” (63r and 63r–63v, respectively). Both Carew’s and Raleigh’s lyrics describe beautiful women whose whiteness and softness makes them proud and scornful. These poems end with the speakers’ lamenting their mistresses’ coy pride. In contrast, Damon’s brown maid has no such pride and therefore no such coyness. She is thus able to enjoy one man’s adoration rather than rejecting the suits of many wooers. In this contrast between the brown maid’s appreciation and the fair mistress’s silent aloofness, the collector of H. accentuates that the pride of Carew’s and Raleigh’s mistresses is assumed, complicating how his readers might encounter the narratives of coyness that surround “Damon my beautie.”

If “Damon my beautie” rejects a specific assumption of amatory lyrics, other lyrics articulate critical evaluations of the culture of feigning courtship itself. Surrounded as it is by

conventional depictions of women's inconstancy, a female-voiced lyric in H., "Why did you faine both sighes and teares to gaine" (17v–18r), stands out for its explicit criticism of the sophistry and deceit that underpin some courtships. Interestingly, this lyric is likely written by Lady Dorothy (Shirley) Stafford.⁴⁵ Stafford's acrimonious complaint to a scornful lover places the inspiration for his dishonest conduct under sharp relief.

Why did you faine both sighs and teares to gaine
 My hart from mee, and afterwards disdaine
 To thinke vpon the oaths you did protest
 As if mens soules were to bee pawn'd in iest.
 I cannot thinke soe lively any Art
 Could frame a passion so farr from the hart.
 Doth not your hart knowe what your tongue doth say.
 Or doe they both agree for to betraye
 Poore weomen, that belieue that faithlesse you
 Speake what you think, because themselues are true.
 But you like to an Eccho doe I feare
 Repeate the words, which you from others heare
 And here speake that which from your hart proceeds
 Like noble mindes, whose wordes fall short their deeds
 Then lett these lines this favoure from you gaine
 Either to loue, or not at all to faine
 This is noe more, then honour ties you to
 Tis for your owne sake I would have you true
 For if your worth you once with falsehood staine
 When you speake truth, all will believe you faine.

Like several of the female-voiced lyrics that I have previously discussed, the speaker of this poem complains that her lover has not returned her affections. She protests that he "fain[ed] sighes and teares" to "gaine / [her] heart"—an image that calls up the pleading, deliberate performance of the coying wooer. Strikingly, however, this poem disparages the feigning nature of coyness more than the individual speaker's distress. The lyric repeatedly calls attention to her addressee's fake performance: his act of love is a lively "Art . . . [that] could frame a passion so farr from [his] hart." As the words "Art" and "frame" show, the speaker points out the artificial

⁴⁵ Stafford was active in the Aston family's circle of Catholic poets at Tixall in Staffordshire and was the dedicatee of James Shirley's comedy *Changes, or Love in a Maze* (1632).

quality of such actions in order to further question them. Unlike the speaker of “Send back again,” who dwells on her own suffering, the female voice of this poem focuses more on the culture of coyness itself.

Throughout, the tone of this poem expresses an explicit indictment of the cultural practices underpinning coy conduct. For example, in her rejection of coy conceits, the speaker defines her persona against the scornful, reluctant mistress: showing herself reasonable and able to question the “feigning” flattery of her suitor. The speaker emphasizes repeatedly that her lover mimics the language of those around him. In contrast to the “Poore women, that belieue that faithless you / Speak what you think, because themselves are true,” she complains, “you like an eccho doe I feare / Repeate the words, which you from others heare.” With words like “repeate” and “Echo” and “faithless” mimicry, these lines render an image of courtship that is derivative, circular, and hollow. Tellingly, the speaker complains not that her lover is “faithless” but that he is “an echo,” duplicating what “you from others heare.” Wittily or feelingly, these lines cannot help but call attention to the repetitive reverberations of the lyric addresses that surround them.⁴⁶ In exposing that the addressee echoes what he has already heard, words which “fall short of their deeds,” she suggests the likely insincerity of the common sentiments of many amatory lyrics.

On some level, this type of complaint is not isolated to Stafford’s lyric. Herrick’s “Goe periured man” (also found in H. 73r) offers a similar sentiment. In that lyric, a dead mistress rejects her “periured” lover, bidding him to never return. However, Stafford’s lyric further disrupts convention because its female speaker is fully versed in the ways of the court.

Ultimately, the focus of the poem is on reputation and on the effect of the lover’s manipulative behavior on his long-term future. The speaker reiterates this when she asks: “lett these lines this

⁴⁶ As Naomi J. Miller writes on the subject of women speakers in early modern lyrics, such figures often articulate ambivalent perspectives on the culture of wooing. Naomi J. Miller, *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 25–27

favoure from you gaine / Either to loue, or not at all to faine.” Like other spurned lovers of amatory lyrics, she asks that he either be sincere or that he stop paying attention to her at all. The final quatrain of the address confirms the lyric’s underlying focus on the nature of affectation and on the risks of coying behavior. She warns him:

This is noe more, then honour ties you to
Tis for your owne sake I would have you true
For if your worth you once with falsehood staine
When you speake truth, all will believe you faine.

The speaker warns against “fain[ing],” because his reputation and long term prospects will suffer. If he is found to be feigning and dishonest, other women might act scornfully towards him. If the addressee earns a reputation for dishonesty, the poem suggests, women will believe he will “faine” and act coy in kind. Such a comment gives a sense of the sophisticated indictments of coy concepts and their cultural analogs that early modern writers were capable of. In the larger context of coterie culture, this poet offers a resonant counter-voice that emphasizes the long-term risks in coy dissembling.

As the range of poems which I have discussed suggests, early seventeenth-century lyric poets embraced many images of female sexual desire and employed the language of coyness in many contexts. Some speakers may advocate for coyness in their accepted lovers, seeing it as a defense against others’ approaches. For them, coyness is a support for patriarchal restrictions on women’s behavior. Yet other poems often give women some sense of power and autonomy. For still others, the actions of coy conduct are utterly irrelevant to the fulfillment of desire. Throughout, the vocabulary of coyness describes a diversity of relationship statuses from separate to intimate, mannerisms from flirtation to grief, and postures from disinterest to reluctance—a variety that encompasses the full range of romantic experience.

II: Reassessing the Complaints of Coyness in Thomas Carew's "A Rapture"

In the previous section, I have shown how early modern lyric poets engaged with multiple figurations of coyness. Together, these examples considerably revise the predominant impression of coyness as a language only of flirtation and delay. Though the wider motifs of exclusivity and affectation shape new interpretations of many straightforward poems, the complexity and dissonance of the discourses of coyness radically alter interpretations of more intricate poems.

Take Carew's "A Rapture," for example. Standard readings of this poem interpret it as a lyric against coy refusal and in favor of libidinous conduct. As M. L. Donnelly argues, Carew's lyric takes a "skeptical stance" that expresses "dissatisfaction with the received order of things."⁴⁷ Yet scholars frequently struggle to reconcile the contradictory impressions of honor and sex that this poem presents. The different discourses of coyness provide one way of settling this dissonance. Even as Carew's speaker argues cannily for a world where honor is absent, other images of coyness in the lyric show that Carew's speaker seems reluctant to fully embrace a world without coy reticence is one that gives Celia much agency. These moments of dissonance appear particularly in his lavish depictions of the secretive practices of lovers, some of his revisions of Ovidian myths, and his final focus on the implications of honor. Though the speaker of "A Rapture" clearly wants to dispense with the legalistic mores of chastity, his image of an "Elysium"—where there is no shame, no modesty, and no censure—seems to directly conflict with his desire to exclusively and privately enjoy his lady.

Certainly, Carew's elaborate persuasion poem begins with the premise that he is speaking to a reluctant coy mistress. Although she is not "coy" in the title, the way that Carew portrays his mistress is akin to other persuasion poems that are explicitly directed at a reluctant lady. His

⁴⁷ M. L. Donnelly, "The Rack of Fancy and the Trade of Love: Conventions of *Précieux* and *Libertin* in Amatory Lyrics by Suckling and Carew," in Summers and Peabworth, *Renaissance Discourses of Desire*, 107–29, at 126.

addressee is not “bold and wise,” suggesting that she is shy, reticent, and bashful (9).⁴⁸ His opening incrimination of Honour suggests that she is worried about her virtue, like mistresses in other poems. Later in the poem, the speaker describes how Celia might “complain of wrong” when other wooers “dare” to compare their mistresses “eyes or hair” to her own (168–69). In her hesitancy, demurrals, and ultimately in her pride, Carew’s addressee is a woman defined by the tropes and expectations associated with the coy mistress.

Moreover, “A Rapture” is deeply interested in the themes associated with reticent mistresses. Notorious in its graphic descriptions of erotic pleasure, “A Rapture” usually is interpreted as rejecting neo-platonic romantic ideals in favor of physical gratification.⁴⁹ From one angle, this reading makes a great deal of sense: “A Rapture,” after all, is a poem about wanting to have sex. As Scodel succinctly puts it, the lyric’s speaker “mocks the ‘servile rout / Of baser subjects’ who adhere to conventional notions of sexual honor and celebrates the ‘nobler traine / Of valiant lovers’ who dare escape to the ‘riotous seates’ of love.”⁵⁰ The speaker’s rejection of coy mannerisms is commensurate with his rejection of “baser subjects” who refuse to slough off conventional mores. Even in the first lines, he tries to expose the idea of Honour as a poser: Honor is a “masquer” and a “form [that] only frights in show” (10–12). The language of masked and “fright[ened]” shows echoes the standard complaint of “feigning” voiced by male speakers. “Honour” has no purpose, the speaker suggests; likewise, a woman’s coy facade, for chastity’s sake, is mere “show.” By depicting “Honour” as a fake and a “masquer,” Carew’s

⁴⁸ Thomas Carew, “A Rapture,” in *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets*, ed. Hugh Maclean (New York: Norton, 1974), 166–70.

⁴⁹ Though Carew’s “A Rapture” is one of the most famous examples, other lyrics such as “Nay Pish, Nay Pew” similarly eroticize the language of romance. For more the prevalence of obscene imagery in manuscript collections as compared to printed ones, see Marotti, *Manuscript, Print*, 76–82.

⁵⁰ Joshua Scodel, *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 166.

speaker directly challenges the values of coy resistance, voicing a standard complaint of the refused lover: his lady is too disdainful and too chaste to accept him.

Paired with its focus on the illusory nature of Honour, the lyric's intense attention to images of nakedness and openness tries counters the reticence and reserve that would be associated with the mistress. Just as Donne's "Going to bed" calls for his lady to "unlace" herself, Carew's speaker divests his mistress of her imagined garments, leaving her open and exposed to the world. In Carew's seduction scene, virtual though it is, he ably imposes a sense of openness and vulnerability on his subject:

. . . there I'll behold
 Thy bared snow and thy unbraided gold:
 There my enfranchised hand on every side
 Shall o'er thy naked polish'd ivory slide.
 No curtain, there, though of transparent lawn,
 Shall be before thy virgin-treasure drawn:
 But the rich mine, to the enquiring eye
 Expose, shall ready still for mintage lie,
 And, we will coin young Cupids.
 (27–35)

The abundance of bare skin in these lines boldly imagines the speaker's access to his lady: "no curtain" hides her "virgin-treasure"; he will "behold / Thy bared snow and thy unbraided gold"; his hands will over her "naked polish'd ivory slide" (27–31). All of these references to bare skin, loose hair, and exposed body parts explicitly strip the addressee of her clothes; implicitly, they remove her modesty from her. In this description, Carew exposes the underlying artificiality of a woman's affected resistance and silence. Rather, he portrays nakedness and sex as natural: bees are seen "deflow'ring the fresh virgins of the spring," and the speaker himself will "seize the rose-buds in their perfumed bed" (58, 63). Similarly, he implies that refusing to have sex is the immoral choice. In "Elysian grounds / All things are lawful," he promises; the only sin is "when Love's rites are not done" (109–10, 114). Later, he observes that it is not right that she refuses

her natural impulses: Honour “Should [not] fetter your soft sex with chastity / That Nature made unapt for abstinence” (152–53). In the speaker’s endorsement of sexual opening and his dismissal of his addressee’s modesty, Carew firmly locates his speaker in the *carpe diem* tradition of wooing a coy mistress with soothing words.

Though Carew uses the vocabulary of coyness in “A Rapture” to characterize the addressee’s reluctance and disinterest, I find that understanding other forms of coyness, particularly how such feigning behavior can affirm intimacy and exclusivity between lovers, suggests another interpretation that subverts the speaker’s main aim. As I have shown in Carew’s poem “Feare not deare love,” some early modern lyric poets connect the feigning and dissembling mannerisms of courting couples to the language of coyness. Just as the coy mistress’s affectations of reserve and disdain might be motivated by a desire for discretion or a concern for her honor, courting couples might feign disdain or disinterest in public to maintain their privacy. By sharing their “stolen” affections in “hidden” spaces like gardens and alleys, as Carew’s speaker describes, such couples use the mannerisms of coyness (reserve, disdain, and feigning) to maintain exclusivity and discretion with each other. By considering the importance of feigning and discretion, of seduction and enticement to coy conceits, I show how Carew’s poem still endorses some aspects of coy feigning as a tool for maintaining intimacy in a wooing relationship. Moreover, the speaker’s endorsement of feigning behavior also restricts some sense of agential power from the female beloved.

Even as the speaker’s graphic description of sex seems to deny any sense of shame, Carew’s focus on the visual experience of intercourse curiously blends his speaker’s desire for privacy with his longing for a free sexual experience. Much of his language develops the idea of display and flirtation that is associated with coy conceits. For instance, when he talks of her

“virgin treasure” being on display, he still emphasizes that he has the right to “behold” her and that his “enfranchised hand” has license to caress her exposed sides. There is no suggestion that others will be so “enfranchised”—suggesting that her display and his “beholding” are private in their experience mediated by Celia.

More importantly, the language of coyness that Carew uses endows Celia with a great deal of agency. By mixing the language of coy discretion (the lover will “invade” his mistress) with the discourse of coy seduction (she shall be “display’d” for him; she shall “steer and guide” his “willing” body), Carew suggests that the mistress herself has a great deal of control in their imagined sexual congress (83, 88, 92.) Carew incorporates the language of coyness into the suitor’s “inva[sion]” of Celia: by overcoming her modesty, the speaker overcomes her coyness. However, Carew also employs it to describe her control over the “display” of her body: though Celia seems resistant, her act of “display” gives her some control in their union. Moreover, she “guides and “steers” his “barque,” manipulating the speaker’s “willing body”—just as a coying hunter guides and steers his falcon. For a brief moment, in this description of sex, Carew’s use of coy motifs overturns the balance of power in the relationship: Celia’s hands are on his “rudder” and her “circling arms” are “embrac[ing] and clip[ping]” (91). In the juxtaposition of different types of coyness (especially in the wooer’s seduction and in Celia’s self-display), Carew establish Celia’s control over their union.

While Carew’s speaker seems to want Celia to stop being coyly reluctant, Carew’s next lines moderate the previous paragraph’s embracing of a woman coyly seducing a man; instead, the speaker seems to restore the boundaries of privacy and intimacy by encouraging his lady to act coyly in public. After the “barque” has entered its dock, the speaker promises that, in his imagined Paradise, lovers need not worry about discovery because they are alone. Such a speech

deliberately calls to mind the hesitant refusal of a coy mistress and the feigned reserve of secret lovers:

no rude sounds shake us with sudden starts;
 No jealous ears, when we unrip our hearts,
 Suck our discourse in ; no observing spies
 This blush, that glance traduce ; no envious eyes
 Watch our close meetings ; nor are we betray'd
 To rivals by the bribed chambermaid.
 No wedlock bonds unwreath our twisted loves,
 We seek no midnight arbour, no dark groves
 To hide our kisses : there, the hated name
 Of husband, wife, lust, modest, chaste or shame,
 Are vain and empty words, whose very sound
 Was never heard in the Elysian ground.
 (99–111)

The intimacy and conspiratorial tone of these lines challenge Scodel's interpretation of the poem, as one wholly in favor of lugubrious sexual desire. Even as he seems to reject the markers of coy wooers, the speaker seems well-versed in the purpose of such actions. For example, the speaker's understanding of different reasons for coyness—"lust, modest[y], chast[ity], shame"—suggests that there is value in modesty and in shamefastness. Similarly, Carew emphasizes the usefulness of feigning when the speaker is able to imagine the "midnight arbours," and the "dark groves" that coy lovers use to conceal their assignations. Such images pick up the poem's prior interest in exclusivity and privacy. As I have shown in "Feare not deare love," the actions of concealment could be reassuring, even unifying. The discretion of furtive coupling could on some level be testimony to a couple's loyalty to one another, or so Carew's speaker seems to imply in "Feare not deare love." Strikingly, the speaker of "A Rapture" rejects the necessity of "midnight arbours" because he has replaced them with an even more intensive privacy.

At the same time that he rejects the pageantry of private lovers in "midnight arbours," the speaker of "Rapture" replaces those "arbours" with an even more isolated location. On one level,

his reassurance of privacy is meant to give his listener a sense that “no one” shall overhear them. Because they will be in Elysium *alone*, “no rude sounds shall shake them,” “no jealous ears” shall hear them, no “chamber maid” shall betray them, and no “envious eyes” shall watch them. The implicit argument is that his listener need not be coy because no one is there to witness the breakdown of her coy facade. At the same time as he eliminates the need for “dark groves” and “hidden” kisses, the speaker still feels a need for privacy. He does not care if anyone “heares” or sees them because Elysium is a paradise of two—no one else seems to be there. Even as Carew’s speaker hopes for a rapturous place where “shame” will have no place, he still values the intimacy and privacy that such coy affectations can create.

On some level, this passage continues the speaker’s previous rhetorical strategies. However, the rejection of wooers’ coy affectations exemplifies an inherent tension in this poem: having rejected the idea of honor, the speaker is afraid that his mistress will not be coy enough. Just as the woman’s openness means another “enquiring eye” might see her treasures, the loss of “hidden arbors” and “midnight” meetings is, by some token, a loss of the coy pageantry of feigned public disdain that can unify wooers. By declaring that there shall be “no shame” and no name of “husband or wife,” the speaker also eliminates the ideas of intimacy that such words imply. Carew vividly reminds readers of the benefits of furtive love: the lovers will “unrip their hearts” and have “close meetings.” They will risk being “betray’d” or will find “midnight arbors” *together*. Just as the wooers will have no one overhear them in the speaker’s imagined Elysium, they may have less cause to attend to each other, to be loyal to each other. Perhaps unwittingly, the speaker seems to lose something in his grand vision: the “twisted loves” and affections of concealed wooers are also absent when there is no risk of discovery.

As if to further restore the useful elements of coy reluctance (control, privacy, and exclusivity) and to maintain his own sense of agency, the speaker's next lines deliberately describe classical figures of coyness as coy mistresses. Carew's revisions to Lucrece's, Daphne's and Penelope's myths are, in some ways, absolute rejections of the chaste coyness that Carew's speaker decries. His revision utterly destroys their previous fearful, bashful delays. Yet these revisions are also marked by an acceptance of the artificiality and artfulness that can be associated with a supposedly natural lack of coyness. For instance, Lucrece is no longer chaste but knows "how to move / Her pliant body in the act of love," yet those "acts of love" are not natural but "artful postures" that inspire adulation. Her movements are, in fact, a work of art: they are "Carved on the bark of every neighbouring tree / By learned hands" (117–21). Though the speaker's previous statements seem bent on eliminating the artifices of courtship in favor of a more "natural" love, the image of Lucrece's sexuality is not one of naturalness, but of cultivation. Her "pliant body" is taught "artful" poses—full of art, in that they are beautiful, and full of art, in that they are artificially and intentionally crafted. Likewise, Daphne's renewed sexual desire makes her "sing inspired lays / Sweet odes of love, such as deserve the bays" (137–39). Though Lucrece is far from the chaste wife who commits suicide and Daphne is not the nymph who with "swift foot" runs from "angry gods" (131–32), neither are their behaviors entirely natural. The speaker seems to want to have his cake and eat it too: he wants women not to be coy but also desires the artful ministrations associated with seductive women.

Likewise, Penelope's chaste affections are changed to a more communal and coquettish enjoyment of many. She is no longer "fruitless as her work," but she "display[s] / Herself before the youth of Ithaca" (127–128). Here, she has exchanged the private "toil" of personal affections for the displaying and "amorous sports of the gamesome nights"—an image that seems far

removed from the speaker's desires in the first half of the poem (129–30). In his transposition of classical depictions of coy but chaste women like Lucrece and Penelope into depictions of coy, sexually “amorous” women, Carew's speaker plays up their increased “amorous[ness]” to restore some measure of restraint to his vision of open sexual congress. However, the women seem to shed coy chastity for another artificial and spectacular performance of public “amorous[ness].” In their “gamesome[ness],” these images work not to promote the speaker's goal for a private Elysium; rather, they are depictions of desire that are controlled by the ideas of the coy exclusivity of the mistress.

In the final verse paragraph of “A Rapture,” the tensions between an empty Elysium and a public court come to a head. The confusing questions of honor and justice in these lines are best explained through the lenses of coyness. Even as the speaker complains that honor should not “fetter” the addressee with chastity, his complaints shift to a meditation on the public costs of affection:

When yet this false impostor can dispense
 With human justice and with sacred right,
 And, maugre both their laws, command me fight
 With rivals or with emulous loves that dare
 Equal with thine their mistress' eyes or hair.
 If thou complain of wrong, and call my sword
 To carve out thy revenge, upon that word
 He bids me fight and kill.
 (154–161)

This passage seems to shatter the illusion of the Elysian bliss that Carew has previously envisioned. The speaker describes how, despite his protests, he “carve[s] out . . . revenge” against those who praise their own loves’ “eyes or hair” as “equal with [his mistress's].” In a way, this passage seems to confirm the speaker's desire for an Elysian relationship, where neither “lovers” nor “mistresses” will challenge his beloved's beauty. However, this passage

shows why the speaker's vision of Elysium works against itself. In this more "real-world" situation, jealousy is present and his mistress's pride has a purpose: her scorn declares her interest in him. By contrast, in Elysium, there are no "jealous eares" or "envious eyes," and therefore for little need the arch coyness of proud mistresses and the restraint and exclusivity that can come with those affectations.

In the above passage, Carew strongly contrasts the privacy and openness of paradise with the public and spectacular nature of court affections. The speaker's last couplet seems ultimately to favor the necessity and benefits that private and exclusive relationships retain. He writes: "Then tell me why/ This goblin Honour, which the world adores, / Should make men atheists, and not women whores" (164–66). In the couplet's returns to "Honour," the personification of the speaker's objections, we see how the narrative movement of the poem has changed. Though previously, the speaker railed against the masquerading nature of Honor, now he seems to accept its necessity as the construct that "make[s] men atheists" in their killing of rivals. Moreover, the final complaint that women should be "whores" does not line up with the speaker's previous ideas. As Noel Blincoe notes, these lines, in fact, express that "women without honor are bad."⁵¹ Though the speaker may want his beloved to act like a whore rather than a virgin in private, he still does *not* want her to slough off all sense of Honor. Here, the language of coyness (found in the mistress's "complain[t]" of wrong; in her desire for "Revenge"; and in the poet's questioning of why women are not "whores") helps Carew to show the usefulness of coy pride and reserve. The mistress's imagined public shows of "pride" and "jealous[y]" have a purpose because they maintain her relationship with the wooer. Moreover, they serve to show how she desires and engages with him. By contrast, in the Elysium passages, the woman's beauty is "naked"—

⁵¹ Noel Blincoe, "Carew's *A Rapture*: A Paradoxical Encomium to Erotic Love," *John Donne Journal* 22 (2003): 229–247, at 235.

without any control or privacy—and that nakedness gives her too much agency in their wooing. There is no furtiveness, and no secrecy—no sense of exclusivity. For all that the speaker protests, he still seems to want to “enjoy” Celia on his own, covered by the “goblin Honour.” Her “coy” ways restrain her affections and keep them focused on the wooer.

Despite the best attempts of its speaker, “A Rapture” ultimately preserves and values some aspects of coy conduct. Rather than embracing the typical conventions of the coying wooer, the speaker’s repeated insistence on exclusivity, privacy, and artifice suggests that Carew draws on the secrecy and unity that coy conceits could offer. The depiction of Elysium, where there are “ten thousand beauties more,” does not establish the same intimacy and unity that furtive assignations seem to do. Despite his initial claims, the speaker seems to subconsciously realize that a place without honor is also a place without the privacy that he desires.

* * *

Early modern collectors of seventeenth-century love lyrics were deeply invested in the conceits and images of coyness. Although depictions of the coy mistress constitute a central image of these lyrics, early modern poets saw the coy mistress figure complexly. Though interpretation of specific lyrics have argued for revisions to our understandings of lyrics like Marvell’s “To his Coy Mistress” and Donne’s “To his Mistress Going to Bed,” I have shown that the subtleties and intricacies of these lyrics are evidence of a critically important, pervasive, and essential trend in early modern love lyrics.

Revising the motifs of coyness likely constituted a key way that early modern writers interacted with each other. One can image one lyricist receiving a lyric from a friend, revising its imagery of coyness, and then passing it on again. For early modern collectors, too, the different versions of coyness that individual writers produced were of great interest, as evidenced by the

immense and prolonged popularity of early modern amatory lyrics. Restrict this complexity to one image (the mistress), one meaning (sexual desire), and one purpose (political commentary) utterly neglects the inspiration that this vocabulary provided for early modern coterie culture. The range and depth of coy conceits exemplify many facets of human desire and sexuality and revise perspectives on early modern poets' understanding of human sexuality.

CHAPTER 6: COYNESS, REASON, AND MARGARET CAVENDISH'S AUTHORSHIP

Throughout her corpus, Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, portrays herself as at once seeking attention and fearing it.¹ In her autobiography, she claims that she was “bashful and shy” at court, yet, in her preface to *Blazing World*, she vows to “endeavour to be Margaret the First.”² In her first volume of poetry, *Poems and Fancies*, she dismisses her authorial ambitions as “modest” and “private,” yet she boldly declares her desires for authorial acclaim and literary “fame.” Such contradictions have fascinated scholars interested in Cavendish. Some feminist critics have taken Cavendish at her word, claiming her as a pioneering proto-feminist writer, isolated and brilliant. For example, Marilyn L. Williamson and Mary Beth Rose see Cavendish boldly confronting the gender and literary hierarchies of mid-seventeenth-century England.³ Alternatively, some scholars have seen Cavendish's professed shyness as the outgrowth of her eccentricity, as Sharon Cadman Seelig does, or as evidence of her narcissism, as Judith Kegan Gardiner argues.⁴ While useful and enlightening, these arguments still see Cavendish's different personae as separate and distinct. James Fitzmaurice has eloquently questioned this oversight, encouraging scholars to consider what unifies the literary reputation: her desire for fame.⁵

¹ Cavendish's claims to uniqueness have framed much of the research on her biography. See Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: The Extraordinary Life of Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, the First Woman to Live by her Pen* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

² Margaret Cavendish, “A True Account of my Birth and Breeding,” in *Nature's Pictures Drawn from Fancies Pen* (London, 1656), 368–391. Margaret Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World, and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (New York: Penguin, 2004), 124.

³ In the duchess's staunch independence, Williamson finds her rejecting the typical coterie culture. Marilyn L. Williamson, *Raising their Voices: British Women Writers, 1650–1750* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 55–60. In her claiming of male power, Rose contends, Cavendish heroically resists the conventional feminine conduct of her age. Mary Beth Rose, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 56–58.

⁴ Sharon Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature: Reading Women's Lives, 1600–1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 131–35; Judith Kegan Gardiner, ““Singularity of Self”: Cavendish's *True Relation*, Narcissism, and the Gendering of Individualism,” *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700* 21.2 (1997): 52–65.

⁵ James Fitzmaurice, “The Life and Literary Reputation of Margaret Cavendish,” *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 20 (1999): 55–74.

In this chapter, I take a different approach. Rather than addressing Cavendish's authorial personae as distinct impressions of her competing authorial impulses, I propose that these aspects of her authorial self-presentation are all part of a single, unified persona: they are calculated attempts by Cavendish to build herself up as a woman writer, using coy motifs. By turns, Cavendish-the-author is modest and retiring or assertive and alluring, but these attitudes seem to be shaped by her needs at the moment of writing. When she speaks of her desire for privacy, as if to remind readers that she is merely a wife and landowner, Cavendish draws on the discourses of bashfulness and modesty associated with the coy virgin; when she flatters her audiences for their intelligence and good taste, she seems to employ the language of wooing and courtship associated with the coying wooer or courtier; when she ostensibly refuses to share her writing, thereby increasing its appeal, she seems to adopt the mannerisms of attractive reluctance favored by a traditional alluring mistress. When read through the lenses of coy vocabularies, these seemingly contradicting impulses of the duchess can be read as a canny deployment of the persona of coyness, a presentation motivated by her awareness of the social restraints that women writers faced and by her desire to attract readers.

That Cavendish was aware of the problems that women writers in the early modern period faced is standard scholarly commonplace, but Cavendish's mix of vocabularies of resistance and enticement exemplifies one of the many ways that women evaded, sidestepped, and negated potentially negative reactions to their writing. Since Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar talked of the "madwoman" writer in the attic, scholars like Elaine V. Beilin, Elaine Hobby, Jonathan Goldberg, and Marion Wynne-Davies have theorized and categorized a host of ways that early modern women writers represented themselves in print. Ostensibly, women writers faced injunctions against their speaking and writing in public—yet that injunction was

largely ineffective because women wrote frequently in the early modern period.⁶ Women often side-stepped social qualms by writing on acceptable topics (family life or religious conversion), and many female lyric poets circulated their compositions in manuscript.⁷ When considering how women represented their public desires for fame, Goldberg and Patricia Pender articulate two different perspectives. Goldberg argues that women writers like Aemilia Lanyer and Lady Mary Wroth incorporate expressions of desire in their self-presentations, while Pender shows how women writers like Lanyer and Anne Bradstreet deftly weave the language of modesty into their paratexts.⁸

In her authorial representations, Cavendish blends a socially-acceptable female modesty with a more alluring and seductive attempt to calm or stir up potential readers. The vocabularies of coyness help Cavendish to create an indirect and playful approach to the creation of a distinctly female and rather coy authorial identity. By mastering the discourses of coy modesty, attraction, and soothing, Cavendish establishes her own method for creating a form of female authorship, revising the stereotypes of coy women in order to augment her writing's attractive qualities. Given her position as the wife of William Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, and her access to contemporary writing that invokes coy motifs, Cavendish was well-read and

⁶ Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), 2–6. Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 8–10. See also Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Women Writing in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 10–12, and Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 145–50.

⁷ Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English Renaissance: Relative Values* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007), 145–50. Lynette McGrath, *Subjectivity and Women's Poetry in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 125–26.

⁸ Jonathan Goldberg, *Desiring Women Writing: English Renaissance Examples* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 20–25. Patricia Pender, *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2012), 8–11.

remarkably well-placed to merge the coy discourses of seduction and modesty in her authorial persona.⁹

In this chapter, I will largely focus on three of Cavendish's texts. The first, *Nature's Pictures* (1656), is an exemplum of her impressions of coy conceits, though her plays, poems, and romances likewise demonstrate a similar command of such vocabularies. As Hobby has noticed, in *Nature's Pictures*, Cavendish responded to early modern conceptions of coyness to show that women's constancy is sullied by men's indiscretions.¹⁰ While Cavendish depicts men's abuse of female constancy, she also questions the entire culture of coyness, ultimately showing that a woman's response to seduction and wooing should be to control and understand them, not to reject them utterly. The second and third texts (*Poems and Fancies* [1653] and *Sociable Letters* [1664]) exemplify how Cavendish represents herself as an author through the discourses of coyness. In *Poems and Fancies*, for example, her expressions of modesty and resistance heighten the attractiveness of her volume's poetry while making Cavendish herself seem more sophisticated and engaging as a writer. In *Sociable Letters*, her expressions of seductiveness and reticence are coupled with incriminations of the manipulation associated with the court; her ability to depict the conceptions of coyness and to question them enables Cavendish to more effectively and cannily create an authorial persona that manipulates and entices her readers.

My approach in this chapter, then, is two-fold. First, to understand how Cavendish portrayed coyness as a potentially damaging but possibly liberating type of behavior for women, I will explore how Cavendish examines the most damaging consequences of coy conduct, from

⁹ As Emma L. E. Rees notes, Cavendish's writing is unquestionably influenced by her husband's interests in the genres of comedy and romance. *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Genre, Exile* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 2003), 40–42.

¹⁰ Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*. See Ch. 5 especially.

the danger of emotional manipulation to the physical risk of rape. In *Nature's Pictures*, Cavendish contrasts the problems associated with coy conduct, as when a wooer interprets a woman's "no" as an affected form of resistance meant to heighten his desire, with the liberating possibilities of such conduct, as in "The Contract," wherein the well-taught, suspicious heroine, Deletia, employs the persuasive postures of coyness to win a court case. Second, I will look at how Cavendish's depictions of herself as an author are interpretable through the lenses of coyness. Because Cavendish employs these vocabularies to characterize her reservations and desires as a female author, these discourses provide an understanding of how Cavendish accomplishes her goal to achieve authorial "fame." In alluring and calming her readers, she manipulates the vocabularies of coyness as a metaphor for the creativity and control that she demonstrates in her carefully-curated authorial representation.

I: Women Controlling Coy Conduct in *Nature's Pictures*

As the prologue of *Nature's Pictures* admits upfront, Cavendish intends to honor virtue over vice—namely, she favors female virtue over male vice.¹¹ In *Nature's Pictures*, which was written during the middle of her literary career, Cavendish uses coy vocabulary to facilitate her praise of female virtue. In the volume's early verse narratives, for example, Cavendish's speakers admire the faithful death of a devoted wife even as they criticize her widower-husband's subsequent foppishness. Similarly, in the later prose narratives such as "The

¹¹ Margaret Cavendish, *Nature's Pictures, drawn from Fancy's Pencil*, 2nd ed. (London, 1671). As Fitzmaurice describes, *Nature's Pictures* was published first in 1653 and in a revised form in 1671. Her autobiography is included in the first edition but not in the second, and according to Fitzmaurice, the majority of the revisions between the editions improve stylistics and tone. The volume's contents does not change significantly. James Fitzmaurice, "Margaret Cavendish on her Own Writing: Evidence from Revision and Hand-made Corrections," *The Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 85 (1991): 297–311. Gweno Williams argues that Cavendish removed her autobiography from the second edition because its criticism of the English civil wars was "obsolete." "Margaret Cavendish, *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding, and Life*," in *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 165–76, 168.

Anchorite,” Cavendish’s narrator honors the chaste wisdom of educated women while vilifying the flirtatious dissipation of court women. Throughout the volume, Cavendish pointedly disparages feigning and dissimulation while extolling the female figures who resist such tendencies.

Faced with a lengthy, somewhat didactic volume, critics have, by and large, looked at *Nature’s Pictures* in a piecemeal fashion.¹² Scholars analyze specific stories (‘The Contract’ and ‘Assaulted and Pure Chastity’ are the two most popular choices) from the volume, or they mine the included autobiography to understand Cavendish’s personal history.¹³ For instance, Edith Snook has connected Cavendish’s stories to the larger romance tradition in seventeenth-century England.¹⁴ While I agree that portions of *Nature’s Pictures* are very much in keeping with the wider romance genre, Snook’s method discourages an appreciation of the unity of *Nature’s Pictures* as a whole. An analysis of coy motifs gives me one way to look at the whole. Not only is the volume itself is organized and defined by themes of coyness (such as a hostility towards coquettish women, a distrust of flirtatious and foppish wooers, and an emphasis on the dangers of rape, death, and pregnancy that gullible young women might face), the text also rejects the extremes of the shy, chaste virgin and the disdainful, lascivious mistress in favor of a persona of female coyness that is grounded in cautiousness and flexibility. While the early poems of *Nature’s Pictures* focus on the negative consequences of these extremes, in the longer narratives

¹² Scholars often interpret *Nature’s Pictures* in support of larger arguments about Cavendish’s literary project. For example, Tina Skouen explores Cavendish’s use of metaphors of haste in *Nature’s Pictures* and the rest of her corpus. Tina Skouen, “Margaret Cavendish and the Stigma of Haste,” *Studies in Philology* 111.3 (2014): 547–70.

¹³ Nancy Weitz, Kathryn Schwarz and Marina Leslie have analyzed “Assaulted and Pure Chastity,” a traditional tale where a woman in disguise follows her beloved to war. Nancy Weitz, “Romantic Fiction, Moral Anxiety, and Social Capital in Cavendish’s ‘Assaulted and Pure Chastity,’” in *Authorial Conquests: Essays on Genre in the Writing of Margaret Cavendish*, ed. Line Cottegnies and Nancy Weitz (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 145–60. See also Marina Leslie, “Evading Rape and Embracing Empire in Margaret Cavendish’s ‘Assaulted and Pure Chastity,’” in *Menacing Virginity: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), 95–122; and Schwarz, “Chastity, Militant, and Married” 280–85.

¹⁴ Snook, *Women, Beauty, and Power*, 133–43.

Cavendish establishes the usefulness of practices of self-control and self-awareness that enable a female character (and perhaps, a female author) to control the potential misinterpretations that are associated with coy conceits.

Debating the Discourses of Coyness in the “Early Tales” of Nature’s Pictures

Cavendish questions the extremes of the innocent, reticent virgin and the lusty, alluring mistress throughout *Nature’s Pictures*, but her depictions are especially incisive in the “Early Tales” of the volume. In these narratives, however, Cavendish is not content to simply exchange one stereotype—the scornful, selfish woman—for another—the shy, gullible one. Throughout the volume, she dramatizes the lack of sincerity in lusty, flirtatious mistresses but still challenges the inflexibility of modest, retiring maidens. Ultimately, in these depictions, Cavendish seems to reject extreme attitudes of coyness that are assumed without thoughtful consideration of the consequences.

The first two narratives, “Of a Mournful Widow” and a companion tale about a mournful widower, juxtapose extreme versions of the disdainful, fickle mistress and the modest, faithful wife in order to question the usefulness of both stereotypes. In the first narrative, the speaker is on a seemingly futile quest to find a constant woman. He finds a beautiful widow who rejects the “pleasures of the world” and who refuses to let her spirit “wander in the air / hoping to find its loving Partner” (5). In a dramatic speech before her husband’s tomb, she prays that “all fond love away may flye. / But let my heart among his ashes lye” (3). She also discards the fineries and pleasures associated with the refined and arch mistress: “Here I do sacrifice vainer dress / And idle words, which my youth did express” (3). As Cavendish implies, the widow rightly rejects the “vainer dress,” “idle words,” and “self-love” associated with dissembling court ladies, but she

embraces another extreme in its stead: chastity and silence. As if inspired by the idea of the frightened, meek virgin (quite different from the active maidens found in Milton's and Middleton's texts), the widow becomes static, still, and unmovable. Instead of recovering from her grief, she hopes to be like a "carv'd statue," and she is not "moved" when the speaker greets her. Such passivity casts the widow's devotion as almost too persistent, even obstinate.

As the searching traveler and the mournful widow's subsequent debate over her choices shows, the beautiful widow is hamstrung by two extremes but unable to reason her way to a third option: life outside the court, a separation that the overarching themes of *Nature's Pictures* seems to favor. According to the debate between the traveler and the widow, she may either forget her husband to embrace vanity, or she may waste away to accept the extreme silence of the tomb. The narrative obviously rejects what the traveler encourages: that "being young and Fair [and] By Pleasures to the world invited," she should "Bury not your beauty here." But though this is rejected, the text implies her constancy is also nearly a fault. As the traveler perceives, "no Rhetorick could / Perswade her to take comfort, grieve she would" (5), and she "dy'd / [and] her tomb was built close by her husband" (6). Though the traveler admires that "no Rhetorick could Perswade her," the narrative portrays her choice as extreme and questionable: one of grief unabated and uncomfited. While the narrative does challenge assumptions about women's inconstancy, the tale of the "Mournful Widow" does not entirely endorse the fatal constancy of the widow. Rather, the narrative seems to value an ability to bend to reasoned persuasion—a trait that the volume repeatedly honors.

In the companion narrative to the "Mournful Widow," a female speaker criticizes the inconstancy of a widower by describing his feigning ways and belittling his gullible affection for his second, coyly flirtatious wife. If the retiring widow's constancy is too passive, the widower's

coy postures are too flighty and thoughtless. When the widower loses his “young and handsom wife / Whose Virtue was unspotted all her life,” he vows that he will “have no other wife but thee”—Cavendish seems, at first, to be praising their happy marriage (6, 7). However, in contrast to the fatal devotion of the widow, the husband reenters society too soon, eagerly embracing the dissembling ways of the court. The man’s behavior and inconstancy in this passage are portrayed negatively: he hunts game and seduces a second wife. Inspired by his new love, “rich clothes he made . . . / He barb’d, and curl’d and powder’d sweet his hair” (7). These images of him as a coying, vain courtier render him more foppish and less wise than his first wife. He even quickly marries again, after being seduced by a “Maid . . . most fair and young / Who had a ready wit, and a pleasant tongue” (8). Cavendish’s tale also criticizes his new wife’s coy flirtatiousness, as if to accentuate the dissimulation and insincerity of this couple as an extreme. Unlike the sober first wife, whose “discourse was witt’ly applied” and whose “Actions [were] modest,” the second wife’s “ready wit” is too fast, and her coquettish flirtations are too wild (6). By showcasing the effect of women’s constancy or inconstancy on men, Cavendish seems to favor the first wife’s wisdom and sober “wit” instead of the second wife’s coquettish wit. The widower’s first wife is reasonable and “wit[ty]”—her actions are calculated and controlled by moral judgment. By contrast, the widower and his second wife are governed by more foolish motivations like vanity and pride. In these first narratives, then, Cavendish dramatizes the potential problems with extreme devotion to coy chastity or to coy dissembling—without sober reason and sound judgment, she finds, both behaviors can end in sorrow and death.

In the rest of these “Early Tales,” Cavendish’s juxtaposition of coy modesty and coy flirtation continues and becomes more critical. Thus, one female speaker tells a story of a beautiful, innocent maiden who is seduced, impregnated, and abandoned by a fickle lord. The

maiden commits suicide, and the moral of this story suggests that women should not trust flirtatious men. In reply, a bachelor narrates the downfall of a flirtatious young woman who seduces a married man and suffers for it—the lesson of this tale implies that beautiful women are equally inconstant. Throughout, Cavendish is carefully comparing the cultural stereotypes of the innocent and foolish virgin with the lusty, alluring mistress, finding both wanting. Finally, in an ugly tale that recalls the disquieting violence of Busirane’s captivity of Amoret in Book III of *Faerie Queene*, Cavendish describes the aggressive courtship of a lusting lord and the virginal speaker’s attempts to coyly evade him. Told in the first person, this interpolated tale dramatizes an inherent flaw in women’s coy affectations and in their sustained acts of coy resistance—both can be misinterpreted and thus leave a young woman vulnerable to emotional manipulation and physical violence.

In this tale, Cavendish most pointedly dramatizes her criticism of the culture of dissembling and feigning. Without the safeguards of reason and morals, this story implies, the very underpinnings of feigning are very dangerous, especially for women. When he tries to woo her at first, the lusty lord pursues the reluctant speaker with “fresh courtships” and “with his best Rhetorick, for to perswade” her (63). This language of “rhetoric” and “perswa[sion]” is, for Cavendish, the marker of a coying wooer. His “fresh courtships” and “best” speeches are not sincere but calculated and highly artificial. Cavendish’s dismissal of this aspect of coy courtship intensifies when the lord kidnaps the lady and spirits her away to his castle. After he “unto the Castle . . . conveyed” her, the lord bitterly complains that his “best Rhetorick” has no affect. In response, he categorizes the woman as a cruel mistress:

Cruellest of thy Sex, since no remorse
Can soften thy hard heart, I’le use my force;
Unless your heart doth burn with equal fire,
Or condescend to what I shall desire.

(64)

In the aggressiveness of the angry lord's speech, Cavendish effectively and definitively pinpoints the dangers of unreasoned coy conduct for female characters, as she sees it. Though the maiden has been consistent in her refusals, the lord characterizes them as the actions of a coy mistress—her hardened "heart" must be changeable. When the lord calls her "Cruellest of thy Sex" and threatens to "use . . . force," the lord implies that the lady's "hard heart" could be an act. Implicitly, he threatens that her affections must become an act, if she wishes to avoid rape. The starkness of this phrasing allows Cavendish to showcase how a culture of dissimulation, taken to extremes, can undermine the agency of female characters.

In the rest of the interpolated tale, Cavendish further sensationalizes the effects of coy conceits. Particularly in the lady's attempts to evade her captor, Cavendish's depictions show that the extremes of coy affectations cannot always protect female characters. Threatened by the lord's possible use of "force," the speaker has no choice but to pretend to care for him. She says:

I for my own defence, 'gainst this abuse,
 Soft flattering words was forced for to use;
 Gently entreating his Patience, that I
 A time might have my heavy heart to try;
 That by perswasions it might entertain
 Not only Love, but return Love again.
 (64)

Without question, this lady's reactions recall the delaying tactics of the mistress, but they are framed as an act of desperation, a captive's attempts to pacify her captor. Faced with the prospect of rape, she "soft flattering words was *forced* for to use" (emphasis mine). That the lady is "forced" to use "soft flattering words" makes the following lines even more disturbing: "by perswasions [she] might entertain / Not only Love, but return Love again." In their blending of coying vocabulary and violence, these lines indict how the culture of coyness restricts the

options that female characters had in courtship. Moreover, the lady's "soft flattering words" soothe her potential rapist—but only for a time. At first, he is content to leave her in the care of an old woman and with "rules [her] Life to bind / Nothing was free" (64). But six months later, after he "still wooed and still I did delay," the lord grows angry: "and swore that I / Deluded him, and that no longer would / he be denied, but yeeld to him I should" (65). Though the lady staves him off again with "words and countenance that seemed kind" (65), here, Cavendish reinforces the potential flimsiness of coy mannerisms. Because they are an affectation, they can be disbelieved. Threatened with the possibility of rape, the maiden has no choice but to act flirtatious and interested—but the scene shows that such choices are not effective in many cases.

Though we may expect the eventual triumph of platonic love in this narrative, the tragic ending reinforces Cavendish's rejection of the extremes of coy conduct. Though the lady is rescued by a knight who is struck by the speaker's "quick-darting eyes, / [that] Yet moved . . . so as Modesty did guide," the jealous wooer kills them both as "he did resolve . . . / That he would have her, though he sank to Hell" (66–67). In the end, lover, lord, and lady are killed and buried in the same grave. Their deaths cause "fierce Jealousie [to] rage / Throughout the World" (70). By concluding with such negative circumstances, this tale questions all the cultural impulses that are described by coy dissembling. Though the lady herself is chaste and "modest," Cavendish implies that chastity does not save the lady from the violence of the jealous lover, nor do her attempts to coy him stave off her untimely demise. By ending this lyric narrative with the death of the lovers and the birth of jealousy, Cavendish dramatizes an inherent and essential flaw in coy conceits: how easy it is to misinterpret or ignore such subtle signals of rejection. Similarly, Cavendish condemns the persistent persuasions associated with the lord as immoderate and

cruel. In the dramatic extremes of this tale, Cavendish is able to envision what might happen when coy conduct is not tempered by reason and caution.

Early in *Nature's Pictures*, Cavendish often articulates a sustained attack on the themes of coyness so popular in literature. Though other writers that I have discussed have modified, adopted, questioned, and even criticized the ideas of coyness, Cavendish's approach is perhaps the most deeply conflicted, especially in these tales. Here, she focuses on exposing the potentially devastating and destructive extremes embedded in the conception of coyness. Of course, these stories do not necessarily articulate Cavendish's own perspective on coy conceits; they are, after all, an overtly witty display of rhetorical and narrative experimentation. Through her speakers, Cavendish does not hesitate to extend the narratives of coyness to their natural extremes for women: disappointment, death, even suicide. In these narratives of lust and love, Cavendish not only defends the innocent and condemns the unjust, as she promises to do: she also depicts the potential dangers inherent in the extremes of coy conduct.

Reason and Coy Conduct in "The Contract"

In the early tales of *Nature's Pictures*, Cavendish develops a sophisticated criticism of coy conceits in order to dismantle the potential extremes of coy conduct. Later in the volume, Cavendish shows how coy actions, when tempered by cautiousness and reason, can be productive. As my reading of "The Contract" will show, Cavendish integrates the reserve of coy modesty with the flexibility of female flirtatiousness in Deletia. In much the same way as Milton uses the language of coyness to praise the Lady's staunch, canny self-defense, Cavendish values coyness bolstered by reason and education. As the lengthy education of Deletia implies, a woman's reasoned and calculated use of coyness might enable her to challenge the false

dissimulation of the court. As her depiction of Deletia's coyness shows, Cavendish accepts the usefulness of coy personae as a tool of persuasion and control for women but only when such personae are grounded in sound moral judgment and reasoned self-awareness.

"The Contract," a long prose narrative in the late middle of *Nature's Pictures*, depicts the rise of a country gentlewoman in court life. Unlike the retiring widow in the shorter narratives, the heroine of this tale does not shun courtly conduct and coy posturing, but nonetheless maintains a healthy skepticism of both. While Kate Lilley has noticed that, in Deletia, Cavendish articulates a counter-narrative of conjugal affections, most scholars have undervalued how Deletia's actions moderate the extremes of coy female conduct to manage her identity at court.¹⁵ In fact, "The Contract" repeatedly sets the heroine's actions, education, and attitude against the coy tropes that have gone before them. In the lady's education, her cautious distrust of the court's machinations and her disregard for and dislike of coying wooers' persuasions, Cavendish articulates her own remedy for the social failures that she pinpoints in extreme examples of coy behavior.

"The Contract" stages the triumph of a chaste and beautiful maiden over a coquettish mistress.¹⁶ Throughout, the fairy-tale narrative takes pains to contrast the young Deletia's upbringing with the court life her amorous counterpart represents. In the best tradition of fairy tales, Deletia is the orphaned daughter of a loving couple and is brought up by her wise, kind uncle. Educated in all manner of skills natural and gentle, she is beautiful and modest, canny and resolute—and, like Cinderella, she is destined to marry above her station. In her infancy, she is betrothed to a young, brash Duke who wants little to do with his child fiancée. Despite his betrothal, the Duke marries a coquettish widow. The new duchess is everything that Deletia is

¹⁵ Kate Lilley, "Contracting Readers: 'Margaret Newcastle' and the Rhetoric of Conjuality," in *A Princely Brave Woman*, 1–33.

¹⁶ Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, 176–78.

not: coy, calculating, and cunning. In a description of her courtship with the Duke, she is the aggressor: “for being by the death of her Husband left a rich Widow, she claimed a promise from [the Duke] . . . to marry her, which he was loth to do; . . . but [the lady] seeming more coy when she was a widow than in her husband’s time, seeking thereby to draw him to marry her, and being overcome by several ways of subtilty, he married her” (326). By the end of the tale, Deletia’s goodness and beauty has won the affection of the Duke and redeemed him (“had he not been sullied with some Debaucheries, he had been the compleatest Man in that Age” [324]), and has earned her the respect of the court around her. By contrast, like an ugly stepsister, the duchess is dismissed by her former husband, the Duke, and is left with nothing. Deletia’s victory is clearly a triumph of the innocent maiden over the libidinous mistress who, in contrast to the Lady’s “private Countrey-Life,” embodies the “splendid Vanities,” “Pomp and Pride,” “Factions, Envies, and Back-bitings,” “false Hearts,” and “flattering tongues” of arch mistresses and their “deep and dangerous Designs” (385–86).

While the narrative of “The Contract” depicts the triumph of a chaste woman over a coy mistress, Cavendish’s attention to Deletia’s reason and education also dramatizes an effective answer to the “flattering tongues” of the dissembling courtiers. Throughout the tale, Cavendish emphasizes the significance of the educational process that encourages Deletia’s skepticism. In contrast to the flighty Duchess’s coy subtlety, the lady’s uncle takes pains to educate carefully: “she was taught all that her Age was capable of: as, to Sing, and to Dance; for he would have this Artificial Motion become as Natural; and so to grow in Perfection as she grew in years” (324).¹⁷ In her courtly education and in her reading, the uncle aims to cultivate her mind. Deletia’s intelligence and wisdom are evidenced in her command over philosophy and poetry: “she did not

¹⁷ For some scholars, such images of education recall Cavendish’s own upbringing. See James Fitzmaurice, “Fancy and the Family: Self-Characterizations of Margaret Cavendish,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 53.3 (1990): 198–209.

only read, but repeat what she had read every Evening before she went to bed. Besides, he taught her to understand what she read, by explaining that which was hard and obscure” (325). Here, Cavendish shows how “understand[ing]” and “cultivation” enable Deletia to grow into a cultured and canny young woman, not some innocent country lass without training or education. She is well-taught and well-versed in how to reason and think, and therefore is less susceptible to the “factions, envies, and jealousies” of the court. Such a figure of virginity, trained in rhetoric and persuasion, provides a productive response to the limitations of coy conduct—as the rest of “The Contract” shows.

Not only does Cavendish contrast Deletia’s education with the training a woman might receive at court, Cavendish also praises Deletia’s canny exposure of coy conceits to avoid the dangerous flatteries of the court. In her first encounters with the court, for instance, Deletia is not dazzled by the simpering “lords and ladies riding in their brave gilt Coaches, and themselves dress’d in rich Apparel, and the young Gallants riding on praunsing Horses upon embroidered Foot-Clothes” (330). Rather, she succinctly and damningly anatomizes the finery and displays as empty window-dressings: “they pleased her eye for a time; and that Dressings were like bridal houses, garnished and hung by some Ingenious Wit, and their beauties like fine Flowers . . . [but] said she, I know not whether they are vertuously sweet, or no; as I pass by, I please my eye, yet no other ways than as upon senseless Objects; . . . to me they seem but moving-Statues” (331). Here, Cavendish, through Deletia, mocks the fineries of the court as shallow and without merit; their coy mannerisms do not speak to the substance of their characters. Their “rich apparel” pleases the country maid for a time, but her comparison of them to the temporary and beautiful bridal houses suggests that such fineries do not last: bridal homes must give way to the reality of daily life. Moreover, she suggests that their finery is not evidence of good character: “I know not

whether they are virtuously sweet.” Because of her education, Deletia is able to appreciate the beauty of the court but questions its authenticity. By depicting Deletia’s skepticism in such a positive light, Cavendish seems to endorse such cautiousness as a way to control the potential risks for women in court life.

In later scenes, Cavendish shows how Deletia’s innocence, canniness, and education help her to maintain her own sense of agency and autonomy, unlike the poor maiden of the “Early Tales.” In one scene, Deletia mulls over her attendance at a masque ball—a ball where, like Cinderella, she captivates all with her mysterious beauty. Alone, she worries that her “uncle mean[s] to set me out to show.” Her concern potently skewers the trends of deceptiveness and deceit that characterizes coy motifs. She wonders how she can trust those she meets at court: “if I be [in gay clothes] I may be taken notice for my clothes and so be deceived, thinking it was for my person” (335). She also expresses no desire to share in the amatory games of the court mistress: “Their eyes cannot enrich me with knowledge, nor give me the light of truth.” In Cavendish’s use of coy conceits, she suggests that Deletia’s lack of interest in lovers’ flatteries stems from their inability to touch her heart. Cannily, however, she knows the risks and knows her own mind: “I neither desire to make nor catch lovers” (335). Through Deletia’s self-reflection, Cavendish implies that a woman who knows herself and her desires can more ably evade the dangers of coy conduct.

Even in the Duke’s courtship, Cavendish interweaves the potency of Deletia’s skepticism and self-control; even as Deletia begins to be wooed by the Duke, her knowledge and education inform her responses, jolting him out of his foppish mien. When she attends her second ball, this time unmasked, she expresses healthy doubts at the Duke’s heady compliments (at this point in the narrative, he loves her but does not know her for his jilted child bride). After he compliments

her beauty with all the showy flattery of a coying wooer, she expresses wariness: “I know it is the Courtly-Custom for Men to express their Civilities to our Sex in the highest Words” (337). Here, Deletia specifically objects to the coy ways of suitors: she questions the “courtly-customs” of wooers to praise women in the “hightest words.” Through Deletia’s objection, Cavendish emphasizes that her heroine’s awareness (“I know it is the custom”) of the “customs” and games of the court—thus she is able to avoid their snares. For Cavendish, a woman’s comprehension of coy conceits is a necessary defense against the dissembling culture of the Duke’s court.

Repeatedly, Cavendish’s narrative seems to pointedly recall the negative stories that precede “The Contract,” as if to accentuate the usefulness of Deletia’s reasoned perspective in Cavendish’s imagined answer to coy dissembling. Even when Deletia secretly falls for the Duke, she maintains a healthy wariness of his profusion of compliments and protests of undying affection. Thereby, she avoids the deadly love triangle that so many of the “good women” in *Nature’s Pictures* fall prey to. When she receives his secret letter, she dwells more on the possibilities of his deceit than on her own affections. She writes:

....[T]hough you are pleased to cast some thoughts back upon me, yet it is difficult for me to believe, that you that did once scorn me, should humbly come to sue to me; but rather I fear you do this for sport, angling with the Bait of Deceit to catch my innocent youth. But I am not the first of my sex, nor I fear shall not be the last, that has been, and will be deceived by Men, who glory in their treacherous Victories; and if you beset me with Strategems, kill me outright and [do not] lead me prisoner, to set out your Triumph. (357)

In this passage, Cavendish specifically indicts the motifs of coy wooers that she has previously dramatized, and she questions the culture of coyness itself. The images of fishing (in “cast[ing] some thoughts” and “angling with the Bait of Deceit to catch my innocent youth”) call back to Donne’s “Bait,” and the images of women “deceived by Men, who glory in their treacherous Victories” recall the imagery of deceived and dying beauties that populate *Nature’s Pictures*. For

Cavendish, the male wooer's coying ways must be received just as cautiously as a female wooer's coy conduct.

In the final scene, a court case where the fate of Duke, Duchess, and Deletia is decided on the grounds of bigamy, Cavendish drives home that Deletia's best defense is her bluntness and modest persona, not only her chastity. Deletia's own defense is marked by logic, wit, and intelligence. She presents her argument cogently, citing "common-law" and "Canon Law," even as she demands that the Judges "deal out right" with her (380). Cunning in her own right, she lays her fate at the feet of the judges for them to "give . . . to truth her own" (380). By contrast, the Duchess relies on strategies of shaming and accusations of dissembling to make her case. Calling into question Deletia's parentage and honesty, she calls Deletia a "crafty, flattering, dissembling child . . . who no way deserves [the Duke]" (40). In reply, Deletia claims that she "[has] not had time enough to practice much deceit. . . an art, not an inbred nature" (41). As if contrasting herself with the Duchess, Deletia coyly implies that she is unacquainted with the court's "flattering tongues" and their "smiling faces"; rather, she has been brought up to "be thrifty of my Words, to be careful of my Actions, to be modest in my Behavior, to be chaste in my thoughts" (385). By describing deceit as an art that requires training and "much observation," Deletia suggests her innocence, but she shows that she understands coyness and can deploy a posture of coy virginity as necessary. Of course, such a statement also is a performance on Deletia's part: one of modesty and reticence. In this speech, Deletia acts coyly, grounding her actions in sincere belief and reasoned judgment. As this scene shows, Cavendish values an awareness of coyness, and she encourages her readers to act as cautiously and modestly as Deletia.

Ultimately, for Cavendish and for Deletia, it is her understanding of coyness that wins her suit and articulates Cavendish's perspective on the coying ways of court life. Throughout the narrative, Deletia's caninness and her caution are praised, not only her beauty and her chastity. Her wit and intelligence ultimately win her affections and her husband. As the judges admit, "it is happy for us that sit upon the Bench, that your cause is so clear and good; otherwise your Beauty and your Wit might have proved Bribes to our Vote" (387). Deletia may not act arch and flattering, but she does understand coyness, and she uses that awareness to her advantage. For Cavendish, this tale of the virtuous, witty maid's triumph becomes a vehicle for her to suggest that a canny understanding of coyness is the best defense against the tragedies that befall her other female characters in *Nature's Pictures*. Deletia's happy ending proves Cavendish's point that, to evade the potential dangers of coyness, one must knowingly and persistently question them.

Throughout the whole of *Nature's Pictures*, Cavendish places the discourses and behaviors associated with coyness under review and finds them wanting. My analysis of the vocabularies of coyness in this volume exposes the subtle interactions between the descriptions of feigning and dissembling that appear throughout the volume—as a whole, they reject and dismantle the cultural underpinnings of coyness, but they also provide a canny and effective antidote to the predominance of such dangerous affectations. In her short prose romances like "The Contract," Cavendish articulates her clearest alternative to the extremes of coy conduct. In the balance and self-awareness that defines Deletia, Cavendish finds a defense against the vagaries and dangers of feigning courtiers that allows her to maintain and manage a public face. Moreover, Cavendish's emphasis suggests how to read her own authorial presentations: as a

canny, cautious deployment of coy mannerisms that entices readers' interest and soothes their ruffled feelings.

II: Cavendish's Measured Persona of Coy Authorship

Throughout *Nature's Pictures*, Cavendish displays and disrupts many of the conventional narratives of coyness that I have explored. In the character of Deletia, particularly, she dramatizes a woman whose canny awareness of these cultural conventions enables her to resist and reject them. If *Nature's Pictures* can be said to question the particulars of coyness as a vocabulary of female performance, Cavendish's own persona as an author takes it one step further to show a woman's measured use of coy actions to control her public persona.¹⁸ Though scholars like Seelig and Mary Beth Rose emphasize Cavendish's split personae as evidence of her narcissism or of her shyness, Cavendish's persona of coy reserve is actually quite calculated.¹⁹ In fact, in the mix of brazen display and modest recriminations, Cavendish creatively adapts the conventional coy personae typically associated with women to add intensity to her self-presentations. In this section, I show how she blends the pride and modesty, display and retreat associated with coyness into her paratextual apparatuses, particularly those in *Poems and Fancies* and in *Sociable Letters*. As these paratexts show, Cavendish's virtuoso use of coy conceits are a reasoned and calculating series of seducing actions meant to attract her readers with reticence.

Though Cavendish's entire *oeuvre* evidences the trend that I will describe, *Poems and Fancies* and *Sociable Letters* represent some of Cavendish's most self-referential and self-

¹⁸ The question of Cavendish as performer is of much interest to scholars. For a close analysis of Cavendish as an imagined actress, see Sophie Tomlinson, "'My Brain the Stage': Margaret Cavendish and the Fantasy of Female Performance," in *Women, Texts, and Histories, 1570–1760*, ed. Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (New York: Routledge, 1992), 134–163.

¹⁹ Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender*, 132. Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 59–60.

conscious constructions of herself as an author. *Poems and Fancies* is Cavendish's first printed collection of poetry and prose, and as such, it records her most tentative balancing between a performance of confidence and a performance of shy retreat. In *Sociable Letters*, a collection of letters between two gentlewomen, Cavendish also blends both a public authorial persona and a more private persona in her asides to her husband. In these collections, which Fitzmaurice notes are profoundly concerned with Cavendish's self-representation, we also see how Cavendish enriches her perspective on public display with the nuances of coy conceits.²⁰

Cavendish's Authorial Personae in Poems and Fancies

In *Poems and Fancies*, Margaret Cavendish draws on different vocabularies related to coyness to construct her first authorial presentation. Her representation of herself as an author is, at times, modest, quiet, and retiring; at other times, it is aggressive, enticing, and coaxing. Cavendish's use of these vocabularies, especially the connotations of shyness and enticement associated with this vocabulary, conveys both her desire for fame and her claim of private amusement. The underlying connections to coyness give us a sense of how Cavendish employs coy vocabularies to establish herself as a female author: the paratext's blend of arch modesty and shy enticements helps Cavendish to control how readers might receive her writing.

The well-known frontispiece engravings of the author that are included in different versions of *Poems and Fancies* provide a visual representation of the paradox of Cavendish's performances of coy authorship because they depict her as either shy or as brash. The first engraving shows Cavendish as the modest, retiring woman. She sits alone, writing, quill by her side. This image leaves an idea of Cavendish as a writer for her own amusement: as the closing

²⁰ Fitzmaurice, "Fancy and the Family," 200–201.

images of *Poems and Fancies* suggest, Cavendish writes her fancies alone “in her chamber” (213). Another engraving favors Cavendish the public authoress. The engraver clearly presents Cavendish as a public figure and artist. She wears the sash of nobility, as if to remind readers of her social status as a marchioness, and some décolletage is evident, as in many contemporaneous noblewomen’s portraits. In elaborately draped and embroidered robes, she stands in an alcove flanked by two armored figures, Minerva and Apollo.²¹ The pose emphasizes her status as an artist to be admired, even memorialized—“Margaret Cavendish, the extrovert, the woman of ample proportions,” Fitzmaurice calls her.²² Although an engraved frontispiece is hardly unusual, the lavishness of Cavendish’s first publication is remarkable, especially as she is a woman.²³ Even the volume’s material presentation—as an opulent folio with a large typeface throughout—is wholly without any show of modesty.²⁴ Faced with this bold image even before readers encounter a line of her poetry, a reader might sympathize with the interpretation that Cavendish was confident, even presumptuous in her claims to artistic excellence.

The image of Cavendish as the extrovert and the eccentric establishes one of her authorial persona, but the modest air of the accompanying verse modulates her pride with a posture of retirement and shyness. This posture of reticence tries to draw readers into the poetry—just as a quiet hunter’s posture of soothing and calming coaxes a falcon. In the verse, readers are invited to peruse the rest of the volume at will.²⁵

²¹ Hero Chalmers offers further discussion of this engraving’s classical significance, *Royalist Women Writers, 1650–1689* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 52–53.

²² Fitzmaurice also describes in detail the other engravings which Cavendish sometimes includes in other volumes of her work. “Front Matter and the Physical Make-up of *Natures Pictures*,” *Women’s Writing* 4.3 (1997): 353–67.

²³ William Cavendish often commissioned folio editions of his and his wife’s work. For an account of the publication of *Poems and Fancies*, see Whitaker, *Mad Madge*, 154–59.

²⁴ Though she does not address Cavendish’s early work, for more on the use of modesty *topoi* in early modern women’s writing, see Pender, *Early Modern Women’s Writing*, 1–25.

²⁵ Intriguingly, Randall Ingram argues that the idea of an active, perceptive readership is Cavendish’s key aim in *Poems and Fancies*, and I think that my argument helps us to see why she might invite such an active

Here on this Figure Cast a Glance
 But so as if it were by Chance,
 Your eyes not fixt, they must not stay, . . .
 Her Beuty's found beyond the skill
 Of the best Paynter, to Imbrace,
 The lovely Lines within her face.

Remarkably, the verse seems to equate the Lady with her lines. Reading Cavendish's work becomes an act of intimacy on the part of the reader, as her poetry seems to come from her "soul" and is "drawne alone" by her. The speaker even equates the beauty of her "lines" with the "lovely" face of the poet—to read the poetry is to see Cavendish herself, it seems. At the same time, the speaker promises readers an experience of beauty "beyond the skill / of the best Paynter" to capture.²⁶ The attempt to paint her beauty is personal, as the painters are unable to "imbrace" her lines and her face. Together, the verse and engraving combine two ideas of Cavendish: the private woman who writes for personal reasons and the public figure who unwittingly draws the eye with her beauty. If Cavendish only included the described engravings in her presentation copies, as Fitzmaurice and others assert, her choice to be dramatic and artistic demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of her potential audiences at the court and the universities. Yet, the verse's demurrals and enticements exemplify the balancing between modesty and artistic ambition that help Cavendish to manage her authorial persona in the rest of *Poems and Fancies*.

Cavendish's clever balancing between calls for attention and refusal to claim authorial fame helps to bolster the effectiveness of her addresses to her readers in *Poems and Fancies*. For example, her feigned reluctance makes an encounter with her writing seem all the more privileged and exclusive, just as a mistress's shows of reluctance increase her attractiveness to a

participation in her text. Randall Ingram, "First Words and Second Thoughts: Margaret Cavendish, Humphrey Mosley, and the Book," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30.1 (2000): 101–26, at 119.

²⁶ The speaker's jibe at painters is hardly unique to Cavendish. See Judith Dundas, *Pencils Rhetorique: Renaissance Poets and the Art of Painting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 155–70.

potential suitor. Particularly, in her direct addresses to her readers, Cavendish vacillates between a desire to display and praise herself (and her writing) and a hesitancy to fully embrace her longing for fame. This balance, as Pender suggests, likely arises from the negative social reception that women writers like Cavendish potentially faced. In many cases, these concerns are dramatized in the language of coy modesty and reserve. But instead of fearing for her reputation, Cavendish displaces the language of coy shyness onto the public manifestation of her beauty, her writing. In the prefatory address to “All Noble, and Worthy Ladies,” for example, Cavendish claims that her writing, like silken embroidery, will “please the eye” and “please the Readers.”²⁷ Like a coy mistress proud of her beauty, Cavendish desires to “please” the eyes of many with her fanciful verse. At the same time, she fears that her pride will be “censur’d by my owne Sex; and Men will cast a smile of scorne upon my Book” (A3v). In these two images, Cavendish seems to draw on the attractiveness of the mistress’s reserve and diffidence to protect herself by retreating. She wants to “please the eye” and thereby enjoy the approbation of her peers. At the same time, she fears the disdain of her readers: her fear of “censure” and “scorn” specifically recalls the reactions of disaffected wooers and echoes the complaints over a woman’s fair beauty: but Cavendish’s writing is what should attract readers. In her shy dismissal of her writing, Cavendish calls even more attention to its merits.

An even bolder claim articulating Cavendish’s desire for fame follows, as if to drive home the paradox of Cavendish’s authorial desires: for modest isolation and for showy fame. On the one hand, she writes: “For all I desire is Fame, and Fame is nothing but a great noise, and noise lives most in a multitude” (A3v). Even as most typical figurations of the mistress seem to desire the admiration of many over the affection of one, so too does Cavendish desire “fame” and acclaim “in a multitude.” Yet, even that desire for fame is contextualized and constrained by

²⁷ Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (London, 1653), A3r.

images of Cavendish's retirement and modesty. Even as she claims to want fame, she dismisses it as a "great noise," perhaps implying that the reward is not worth the effort. In the same passage, Cavendish also connects her work to modest and chaste pursuits in her reassurances that "honest, Innocent, and harmlesse Fancies" protect women from going abroad (A3v). She protests that "men have no cause to feare [if their ladies are fanciful], that when [the women] go abroad in [their husbands'] absence, they shall receive an injury by their loose carriages [or loose morals]" (A3v). In this figuration, Cavendish's writing is paradoxically both the overt display that may make men and women nervous and also the surety against her, and other women's, "loose carriage." By positioning the morally questionable action of public writing as its own deterrent, Cavendish employs the motifs of coyness to her advantage. She excuses her publication as modest and unassuming, just as writers like Anne Bradstreet do. But Cavendish also claims her own place by describing her book in attractive terms. Even as social concerns might turn the public against her, the beauty and pleasure her book may provide her readers will be her own defense.

As much of her paratextual writing demonstrates, Cavendish mixes timidity and confidence to entice her readers with her reticence. In her address to "Noble ladies," for example, Cavendish's reference to Lady Mary Wroth's infamy proves her profound awareness of women's reputation and men's influence. Cavendish cites Lord Denny's rebuke of Wroth: "Work Lady, Work, let writing Books alone, / For surely wiser Woman nere wrote one" (A3v). For Cavendish, as Rees has contended, Wroth's status as a social pariah may reflect one possible, negative outcome for her writing career.²⁸ If she is too blunt, she may also be told "wiser women nere wrote one [a book]." Thus, Cavendish's persona simulates retreat and approach in a cagey attempt to mold the reputation of women writers for her own ends. By invoking the language of

²⁸ Rees, *Gender, Genre, Exile*, 154–56.

coy detachment, as she does in this passage, Cavendish “gets [the] Honour and reputation” that she craves.

Cavendish’s prefatory material seems to exploit the contradictory impulses of coy vocabularies to manage her reputation as a woman writer. Even as she embraces her own desires for “pyramids” of Fame in one poem, other addresses testify to her modesty:

. . . ‘Tis a part of Honour to aspire towards a Fame. For it cannot be an Effeminacy to seek, or run after Glory, to love Perfection, to desire Praise; and though I want Merit to make me worthy of it, yet I make some satisfaction in desiring it. But had I broken the Chaines of Modesty, or behav’d my selfe in dishonourable and loose carriage, or had run the wayes of Vice, as to Perjure my self, or betray my Freinds, or denyed a Truth, or had lov’d deceit: Then I might have prov’d a Greife to the Family I came from, and a dishonour to the Family I am link’t to, raised Blushes in their cheeks being mentioned, or to turne Pale when I were published.
(A4v)

As this passage and numerous others emphasize, Cavendish’s authorial persona is a careful public performance. Here, Cavendish anticipates any protests over her unchasteness by pointing to her sterling reputation, that she has never “broke the chains of modesty” or “lov’d deceit.” Sometimes she praises the beauty of her art. At other times, she protests that her work is free of the trappings and finery of coy beauties: her fancies are like women at home, with their “Haire’s uncurl’d, the Garments loose and thin / . . . / had they Art, [they] might make a better show” (213). For Cavendish, in *Poems and Fancies*’ prefaces and in the volume itself, the language and tropes of coyness help her to calibrate a careful, controlled performance of a modest but proud female author—one that facilitates her book’s entrance into society by at once refusing the attention of readers, as a shy virgin might, while simultaneously inviting the attention of readers by flattering and coaxing them to attend to her book. This dual posture of retirement and enticement enables Cavendish to claim authorial fame without fully rejecting the expectations of female modesty.

Seducing Readers in Sociable Letters

In *Sociable Letters*, as she does in her romances and in her *Plays* (1662, 1668), Cavendish maintains her performance of the modest but enticing female author that begins in *Poems and Fancies*. In *Sociable Letters*, especially, the protestations combine with passages in the letters themselves to showcase what Cavendish rejects and salvages in her creation of an authorial persona of coy enticement. In *Sociable Letters*, the characterization of Cavendish as a public and appealing author comes to the fore—her brashness is tempered into a more subtle appeal to consider the wholesomeness and attractiveness of her writing. In *Sociable Letters*, as in other later texts, Cavendish’s writing, more than the author herself, engages the reader, allowing Cavendish to modestly fade into the background behind her writing.

In the paratexts of *Sociable Letters*, more limited by far than *Poems and Fancies*’ extensive front matter, Cavendish’s portrayal of herself balances between a longing for privacy and a desire for fame. She is, as her husband describes her, “first” and exceptional. In his dedicatory address, William Cavendish writes that, if all who “write in Latin, English, French, or Greek” read “this Ladie’s Wit,” “They’d Burn their Books, and Throw away their Ink,” because their writing would be “only fit / To stop Mustard pots.”²⁹ In other words, Cavendish’s works are so wonderful that, upon witnessing them, all other writers should stop writing in despair. Such boastfulness in a dedicatory address is hardly unique to Cavendish’s husband; certainly, numerous volumes like Shakespeare’s own Folio include excessive praise for their composers. But, as part of Cavendish’s larger project of authorial-self creation, William Cavendish’s praise of his wife serves to establish her “Wit” by imagining her writing as “first,” alluring in its rarity.

²⁹ Margaret Cavendish, *Sociable Letters*, ed. James Fitzmaurice (New York: Garland, 1997), 3.

This poem may be a ploy that calls for readers' attention, or it may not, but certainly William Cavendish's pride in and praise for his wife participates in Cavendish's larger aim to craft an authorial persona that attracts attention. Though Cavendish may approve of her husband's poem, she herself does not speak the claim, which maintains her role as a modest, retiring female figure.

In Cavendish's own contribution to the paratexts of *Sociable Letters*, she employs the imagery of coy modesty to narrate how hypothetical readers should approach her writing. As if in sharp contradistinction to her husband's lavish praise of her, the author herself overtly and deliberately establishes herself as modest and bashful. In her address to "Noble readers," for example, Cavendish excuses her work as an "Exercise to my fancy" (8), as though her writing is merely a tool for keeping herself mentally fit. Likewise, she readily admits that others have censured her previous writing, though she points out their contradictory claims. About her *Philosophical Opinions* (1663), she reports that "some did say I was too Obscure and not Plain Enough for their Understanding," and about her *Nature's Pictures*, she admits that "as for my *Orations*, I have heard, that some do Censure me for speaking too Freely, and Patronizing Vice too much" (42). Here, Cavendish is able to blend different associations of coyness in order to manipulate how her readers might respond to her work. On the one hand, hypothetical readers complain that she is too "obscure," as if she is retiring and unintelligible like a mute virgin. On the other hand, they argue that she is "speaking too Freely," as if she is not reticent enough, like a voluble, coying wooer. Here, Cavendish seems to suggest, the female subject of these complaints cannot avoid censure no matter her tendencies. Such split reactions in early modern readers, which admittedly we only have by Cavendish's own report, suggest how useful the

retreating and approaching behaviors of coyness were to her: they allow her to modulate different reactions to her work.

Throughout the paratexts of *Sociable Letters*, the vocabulary of coyness influences the contours of Cavendish's authorial presentation, but the paratexts also claim that Cavendish's indictment of coyness makes her volume attractive. By contrasting Cavendish's brashness with the simpering ways of disdainful, flirtatious court ladies, a poem on "Her Excellency the Authoress" helps to define Cavendish's writing as enticing and attractive because it exposes the false, coy fronts of courtiers. After establishing Cavendish as wise and canny ("reason doth command" in Cavendish's "brain" [11]), the writer of the poem delves into what her work exposes. Her writing reveals the falseness of "amorous courtships which they make" and the insincerity of "the Ladies [that] do each Courtship take" with "Their amorous smiles, and Glancing Wanton Eyes" (11). For the writer of this poem, the chief problem with these coy flirtations is that they are "affected" rather than sincere. The "courtly grace / The ceremony and splendor" are merely shows; the "wanton eyes" and "glancing" gaze recalls the "affected" personae of coy, disdainful courtiers. In contrast to the "amorous smiles" and "glancing wanton eyes" of the court ladies and lords, the speaker elevates the reasoned, sincere nature of Cavendish's authorial persona. Because she understands these "amorous smiles" of the courtiers, Cavendish's writing is attractive because it dramatizes the motivations behind coy postures, the "covetousness" and "ambition" that drive the "Antick Postures of the Younger Race" (10–11).

As the above poet claims, the conceit of *Sociable Letters* (that two women are writing gossipy, newsy letters to each other) enables Cavendish to merge her authorial self-presentation as a coy authoress with her indictment of the court's covetousness. In Letter 93, for example, Cavendish's letter-writer offers an interpretation of a woman's life that seems to reconcile

Cavendish's persona of restraint or reticence with her mannerisms of enticement and brashness.

Cavendish, through the letter-writer, states:

Besides, I have observed, that Breeding Women, especially those that have been married some time, and have had No Children, are in their Behaviour like New-married Wives, whose Actions of Behaviour and Speech are so Formal and Constrain'd, and so Different from their Natural way, as it is Ridiculous; for New Married Wives will so Bridle their Behaviour with Constraint, or Hang down their Heads so Simply, not so much out of True modesty, as a Forced Shamefulness; and to their Husbands they are so Coily Amorous, or so Amoriously Fond and so Troublesome Kind, as it would make the Spectators Sick, like Fulsome Meat to the Stomach; and if New-married Men were Wise men, it might make them Ill Husbands, at least to Dislike a Married Life, because they cannot Leave their Fond or Amorous Wives so Readily or Easily as a Mistress; but in Truth that Humour doth not last Long, for after a month or two they are like Surfeited Bodyes.

(102)

Such a statement roundly rejects the hypocrisy and affected nature that seventeenth-century culture frequently associated with young women. As if in a mockery of Herrick's coy bride, these new wives are "bridle[d] in their Behavior" and cunning in their actions. They hesitate, the speaker complains, not out of "True modesty [but] a Forced Shamefulness." Moreover, Cavendish's writer complains that new brides are "coily amorous" towards their husbands, as if to display their hesitancy. The disparagement of these lines is often seen as an extension of Cavendish's professed dislike of other women, but the significance of the coy conceits to the rest of her corpus suggests a deeper resonance. While the writer dismisses the "bridled behavior" of her subject, one sees behind the critique of their coyness a criticism of the social pressures that "bridled" them. Like these depicted new wives that delay sex to heighten their attractiveness, Cavendish is demure in order to charm her readers.

The "Forced" nature of their restraint parallels Cavendish's own assumption of coy personae: she acts modest in order to bolster the effectiveness of her writing. Like a coying wooer who entices and soothes his potentially skittish addressee with flattery and flirtation, she

portrays her writing as enticing and attractive—a work worth reading. Like a retiring chaste wife, she rebuffs suggestions that her writing is for public consumption. Her persistent desire for privacy and quiet would have activated the connotations of coyness for early modern readers and would have soothed the way for her authorial acclaim. Of course, Cavendish is forced by social expectations on women to assume this mixed coy persona of enticement and refusal. She cannot be blatantly proud of her texts but must hide behind dismissals of her work's merit. By displacing the praise of her work onto her husband and other unknown speakers, Cavendish is able in her prefaces to negotiate between the strictures that early modern women writers faced. For Cavendish, the meekness of a virtuous woman and the flash and fire of a mistress together provide a combination that enables her to make her reputation without destroying it.

Finally, Cavendish's intimate address to her husband in *Sociable Letters* seems to reconcile her urge to write, her desire for fame, and her longing for privacy. In the address, Cavendish makes much of her own innocence, but in a way that is quite playful—not amorously coy but playfully alluring nonetheless. To him, she makes fun of herself and of him, saying: “your Lordship never bid me to Work, nor to leave Writing, except when you would perswade me to spare so much time from my Study as to take to the Air for my Health” (4). The idea that her husband never “bid her to work” is contrasted with her intimate knowledge of cookery and housework: “I am not a dunce in all Employments, for I Understand the Keeping of Sheep, and Ordering of a grange . . . although I do not busy myself with all.” Underlying this glimpse of private intimacy and marital accord, Cavendish points at that which she does “busy [herself] with”: her volumes of fancy and poetry. Paired as it is with William Cavendish's own boastings at his wife's grandeur, one sees husband and wife sharing a joke in public. Her coy suggestion that he is a good husband for not “bidding” her to work is also an offering of coy thanks for the

support that he seems to offer her for her work. In this moment and in others in Cavendish's corpus, Cavendish as the public author and Cavendish as the private wife unite. The part of the alluring, seducing public author merges with the role of the private but affectionate woman to show how affectionate and alluring Cavendish can be.

Throughout *Sociable Letters*, particularly in her addresses to her readers and to her husband, Cavendish's rhetorical strategies at once refuse and embrace the sense of engagement and retreat associated with different types of coyness. Other addresses throughout her work extend that language. In a prefatory epistle from the 1662 plays, for example, she comments that her plays are "dull" and "drab"—quite like a skittish virgin—but she also claims that she would not have her plays "constrained." For Cavendish, the difficult challenges of being a female author are not something that she ignores, as some critics have contended. Rather, they inspire her to a canny deployment of brashness and modesty, a strategy that is drawn from the pen of lyric poets and dramatists who sketch out a full range of coy conceits. Like them, Cavendish exploits the flexibility of coy motifs in her own writing, but she also employs the vocabulary of coyness to entice and soothe her readers in a literary performance that shows the great pliability and usefulness of coy reticence for early modern writers and speakers. Cavendish's coy conduct at once protects and aggrandizes her, producing for Cavendish a type of coyness not of courtship or romance but of authorship.

* * *

Throughout her literary career, Margaret Cavendish engages with a variety of tropes and conceits, including the discourses of coyness. By closely analyzing them in concert, I show how familiar Cavendish was with the tropes of female coyness, of the virgin and the mistress. I also demonstrate how ably she reframes and rewrites those images of women's modesty and flirtation

to make her own writing more attractive. And her depictions and question of coyness are not limited to the three works I have discussed. Many of Cavendish's plays, like "Love's Adventures" and "The Convent of Pleasure," similarly depict the impulses of coy maidens and coying wooers as suspect. Likewise, her treatment of women who resist the stereotypes of coyness continues in such figures as the Generaless and her own Empress.

Though a scientific and philosophical writer, Cavendish's career-long engagement with the motifs of coyness also accentuates that she is also a deeply astute literary writer. Her work is steeped in the full range of narratives about coy women, *and* her corpus frequently exhibits elaborate revisions to popular themes and conceits, like those of coyness. Though her status as a woman writer offered Cavendish a way to consider coyness in a unique context of authorship, Cavendish's impulse to revise and question the narratives of coyness are similarly represented in Milton's implicit critique of coy mistresses and in Shakespeare's questioning of falconry metaphors. In any case, Cavendish's engagement with coy conceits integrates her more fully into the literature and culture in which she was publishing. Cavendish may be unique, even first, but she is also fully and deeply interested in the cultural phenomena that are the discourses of coyness. She is "Margaret the First" but also Margaret among many—and is the more fascinating writer because of that parity of interest and theme.

CONCLUSION: THE SCRIPTS OF COYNESS

We men find Nature and Truth very coy and sullen, alas how we vex, persecute, and chase her, who yet outruns us. Some imagine her to be in Whirlpools and Quick-sands, like another *Scylla* or *Charybdis*, and they find Her so now and then, in their shipwreck Credit and Reputation. . . But she willingly shews herself all bare and naked to your Grace; Madam, you are one, if not the only one of your Sex, that owe Nature nothing; for whatever luster or beauty of body and mind, she hath deckt and enriched you withal, your Grace has largely recompensed her.

— *Letters and Poems in Honour of the Incomparable Princess, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle* (London, 1676).

Using an intense concentration of the scripts and conceits of coyness, the master of St. John's College in Cambridge flatters the Duchess of Newcastle in his commendatory address to her on the receipt of her books of poetry and philosophy. In this one short address, he channels the many scripts of coyness to great rhetorical effect: to mock men for their vain pursuit of "coy and sullen" Nature; to invoke the ruinous impact of coy feigning on "shipwreck credit"; to praise Cavendish for taming "bare and naked" Nature in her poetry; and to exalt the duchess for her own "luster or beauty of body and mind" and poetry. The flattering, soothing, and praising nature of these lines all call to mind the broader vocabularies of coyness and illustrate yet again how early modern writers used it to "enrich" their own rhetorical postures of cajoling, sophistry, and praise.

Just as the master of the college is influenced by different sorts of coy connotations, my exploration of coyness has been shaped by many scripts: the scripts of theme and tone that early modern dramatists include in their plays to shape understandings of their characters; the social scripts of courtship that govern how early modern lyric poets figure the actions of pursuers and pursued; the act of scripting itself, writing a series of poems into a manuscript, necessarily brought lyrics by diverse poets into close and productive contact with each other. When they

focus on characterizing social postures of a wooer or wooed, too, poets script many of these concerns into their writing. Moreover, my understanding of the contexts of coyness was re-scripted by the intersecting genres, tones, and behaviors that inform the vocabularies of coyness.

Just as the master of St. John's College appeals to the abundant resonances of coyness to augment the brilliance of his praise, so too does my dissertation restore the copious meanings and connotations of coyness to scholarly conversations about gender and desire in the early modern period. As I have demonstrated throughout my dissertation, such a restoration considerably re-scripts and complements scholars' already-vigorous engagements with many genres (from Shakespearean comedies to Miltonic masques) and many issues (from the possible usefulness of postures of modesty for early modern writers to the purpose of flattery and cajoling in public suits). In my analysis of *Taming of the Shrew*, for example, I have demonstrated how Shakespeare develops a lively interplay between falconine methods of taming and Petruchio's own techniques in order to highlight how the tamer must himself master the methods of soothing. In my consideration of amatory lyrics, as well, I have explored how Stuart lyric poets incorporate different vocabularies of coyness to enliven and deepen the scripts of sexual expression and romantic interests found in early modern courtship narratives.

In its exposition of the broader vocabularies of coyness found in literary contexts, my study opens up many new avenues of critical inquiry into the effects of coy vocabularies across genres. For example, scholars might explore how dramatists from Thomas Kyd to Thomas Middleton to Francis Beaumont develop intricate connections between the coy falcon and the coy mistress. They might ponder how the resonances of those connotations are shaped by the genre, tone, and themes of a play. Such a study might show how early modern dramatists like Shakespeare embrace or question the implications of connecting skittish falcons to reluctant

women. While hardly uniform in their representations or necessarily consistent in their deployment of these tropes, early modern dramatists clearly found the vocabulary of coyness suggestive of a deeper cultural sense of how romantic relationships function and interact.

An appreciation of the wider uses of coy conceits also can inspire new ways of approaching entire literary fields. As I have shown in my chapter on Cavendish, early modern women writers might have been inspired by the strategies and techniques associated with coy enticement as a way of managing their essays into printed texts. Like a knowing mistress, female authors evaluated coyness in their representations of beloveds and manipulated it in their presentations of public and private authorship. For scholars interested in early modern women writers, the wider vocabularies of coyness offer a method to explore more deeply how early modern women writers scripted shifting attitudes of modesty and pride into their own authorial personae. For example, how are Cavendish's and Wroth's fictional personae of authorship (in *Pamphilia* and other figures) suggestive of different perspectives on coy reticence and bashfulness? Do Aemilia Lanyer's deeply self-deprecating prefaces employ coy conceits to signal her enticement of the female readers targeted in her dedications? How do the wider implications of coyness as a vocabulary of flattery and praise inform how early modern women writers approach the reading public in their prefaces? Like their simpering fictional counterparts, women writers likely took advantage of a facade that allows them to control their writing and public perceptions of it.

Of course, at its heart, my study revolves around the figure of the aloof, alluring mistress, whose reticence and arch scorn so captured the hearts and poetic attention of early modern amatory lyric poets, and the interest of many scholars of early modern literature. Indeed, the conventional image of the coy mistress casts a long but subtle shadow over Renaissance

literature. Forbidden, beautiful fruit, she enticed the proverbial male writer and male reader because she resisted wooing, captivated them because she displayed herself to them, and disturbed them because she concealed herself from them. But the coy mistress also enticed the female writer because the mistress used the coyness of reticence and allurements to control herself and her environment. In many ways, as my study has shown, the wooed mistress and the concept of coyness itself are defined by paradox, by inconsistencies in motivation and purpose (does a mistress act coyly silent out of a desire for discretion, out of an interest in sporting with her wooers, or out of a need to control her circumstances?). In this study, I have reopened these paradoxes of motivation and purpose that were readily available to early modern writers. At other times, it is the muddiness of coy vocabulary that is the point (does a writer like Shakespeare include the language of coyness in *Much Ado about Nothing* to accentuate the similarities in Benedict and Beatrice's characters or does he mean to highlight their growth by the play's end?) Throughout their portrayals of coy, reluctant mistresses as figures to be lusted after, characters to be desired or to control, early modern writers embraced the diversity of tone and theme that such variety implied, incorporating that vividness of meaning into their articulations of female desire and female agency.

For Renaissance writers, ultimately, the conception of coyness was not just a woman's self-presentation in the social setting of wooing. Rather, they might have seen coyness as a deliberate, sometimes gendered performance employed variously: through coy postures, authors may take control of a relationship with a reader or to coax a positive reaction from patrons and publishers. With coy language, subordinates may camouflage impolitic opinions from social superiors. Lovers of both sexes might employ the rhetoric of coyness to soothe a resistant companion. For readers and authors alike, coyness had not one definition but many, and that

complexity inspired Renaissance authors' sustained interest in the functions of coyness. In love poetry, drama, and prose, authors and readers grappled with the apparent paradox of coyness as the actions of mistresses *and* suitors, as a form of both soothing and manipulating, as the language of invitation and the language of refusal.

My study, then, restores the diversity of ways that early modern writers employed characterizations of coy conduct and more importantly shows how those representations mirrored a complex relationship between writers, readers, and texts. Like an author penning a lyric and a reader interpreting it, the interplay of a woman performing a coy action and a man interpreting her as coy is a two-way exchange. Both parties are necessary. My study of coyness has encouraged an appreciation of how early modern writers viewed the interdependence of author and audience, lover and beloved. The overt display of the mistress remains a central concern of this project, but other facets of Renaissance models of coyness (the coying mannerisms of a lusty suitor, the coy reluctance of a courtier, and the coying seduction of a hunter) merit further attention. Certainly, the archetypal mistress of Donne and Marvell swayed early modern perception of coyness in other settings—a man acting coy often cannot help but worry over the risk of feminine allurements. But the inverse relationship holds. Just as the coy mistress of seventeenth-century England coaxes modern scholars to her side, so too is she lured, caught, and framed by the many inveigling definitions that early modern writers and readers associated with coyness. My recognition that the coy mistress is one figure among many coy characters restores the complexity she represented in early modern texts, and teaches scholars how to embrace a similarly broad understanding of what it means to “be coy.”

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APPENDIX: FULL TRANSCRIPTIONS OF POEMS

1. "In Libia Land." In Bodleian Library. Oxford University. Rawlinson Poetical 85, 4v–5r.

In Libia lande as storyes tell was bredd and borne
A dame whose bewtye did excell, that loue, gan scorne
Her shape, her limms her looks surpassing fyne
Forste me lyke fishe to bayted hookes to her inclyne
But she disdaynefully denyes to yeeld sweet loues desyre
Regarding noughte their rufull payns, that fry in fancyes fyre
Aye vowenge lyke a vestall mayde or closed nunn in towre
That so her lyfe should still be stayed deuoyde of Paramoure
As thus she past her youthfull yeers in freedom still.
A faulkonor fyne to her appeers of passinge skill
Whose luringe she so well did lyke and loude allso
That when she once his faulcon meeke founde com & go
And how she trounste and bouncst the birdes one lands and eke ^{^one lake^}
And windinge finding how she girds and makes the fowls to quake
A hauke she wishte her selfe to be to proue suche pretye sporte
Then woulde she withe this faulckoner fly and to his lure resort
Loe her the godsbeginn to smille and do agree
That by some fyne deuised wile it so shoulde be.
And to augmente theire pleasure more. Dan Cupid theye
Do strayghtly charge her herte to gore: he dothe obaye.
Inflamed now with straunge desyre she dothe the faulknor tell
How fayne she woulde a fulkon be if so it myghte be well
To whom the courtious faulknor sayes if suche be your desyre
Be rulde by me and you shall be ryghte as you do requyre
Wherwithe the damsell dothe replye how maye it be
That I with wings displayde shoulde fly lyke faulkon free
Haue you no doubtte dere dame sayde he, the arte I haue
shall lerne you bothe to sore and fly w^{ith} courage braue.
She thanks him oft, and vowes her selfe to yeelde vnto his wil
Desyringe him that he woulde dayne one her to showe his skill
Whose sweete requeste withe harte and hande he granteth by & by
A hapye man him selfe he deemes, one her his skill to <t.ye> trye
Conueniente place he dothe procure without delaye.
Where he his birde maye trayne and lure with pleasant praye
What woulde you more his promyse paste he ne woulde forsake
The sacred Nunn he now hathe caste an hauke to make.
And both her armes he bid her clipp for profe of prety thinges
Whiche thoughe at firste she nylde to do yet needes she must haue ^{^winges^}.
Her legges lykwyse he layes aparte her feete he gann to frame,
Wherat she softlye cride (alas) in faythe you are to blame
Be still sweet guirllle and haue no dreade of me your man
With plumage falkons muste be fedd needes now and than

And eke abrode they must be set to prune them fyne
 And bathinge will there fethers set lytle tyme
 A lustye trayne than forthe he throwes to trye her wing a flyghte
 And than withall to man her well he bends his course a ryghte
 And fyndinge her an inwarde hauke most ioyfull is his cheere.
 Not Croesus coyne can buy this buyrde he houldethe her so deere.
 To frame her fyne he spares no tyme by daye nor nyghte
 He tricks her vp agayne, and agayne with great delyghte.
 Herr beake somtym he harde dothe strayne and eke her brayle.
 And for to flushe her flauntinge trayne dothe not faylle
 At laste when she the man weell knowes her beake she boulde dothe bowe
 Where at she smirkes and smylinge sayes, sweet sir what meane you now
 To fylle your webb and set you sharpe I do imploye this paynee.
 Nay than quothe she if you loue me come trimm my trayne agayne
 Finis.

2. "Nowe, now's the time so oft by truth," Houghton Library. Harvard University. Ms. Eng. 626,
 Ff. 24r–26r.

Nowe, now's the time so oft by truth
 Promis' sho'd come to crowne your youth
 Then, faire one, doe not wronge
 Your ioyes by staying long
 Or let your fires goe out
 By lingering still in doubt
 Love not admitts delaye,
 Then hast, and come awaye,
 Night with all her children stares
 Waite to light you to the warres

Faire virgin enter Cupid's field
 And though you doe resist yet yield
 It is noe shame att all
 For you to take the fall
 When thousand like to you
 Could nere the foile eschewe
 Nore in their strict defence
 Depart unconquered hence
 Then faire maiden nowe aduenter
 Since time and Life bids enter.

Is it your fault that these so holy
 Bridall rites goe on soe slowly?
 Or is it that you dread

The losse of Maidenhead?
 Knowe virgin you will most
 Love it when it is lost
 Then it noe longer keepe
 Least issue lie a sleepe;
 Com, come, Hymen, Himen guide
 To the Bedd the bashfull Bride.

These pretious pearly purling teares
 But spring from ceremonious feares
 And 'tis but native shame
 That hides the loving flame
 Love's fire (faire maide) will wast
 All Bashfullnesse att last
 Then trust that night will cover
 What the rosie cheeks discover.

Night now hath wathc't herself halfe blind
 Yett not a maiden head resign'd
 Tis strange yee will not trie
 Loves sacred misterie.
 Might you full Moone the sweetes
 Have promis'd to your sheetes
 Shee soone would leave her spheare
 To bee admitted there
 Then away, fair virgin come,
 Hast least sung take your roome

Behold the Bridegroome in the Porch
 Expects your with his tiny torch
 And Himens taper light
 Tells what is spent of night
 Five Boyes with torches Fine
 That shewe the wombe shall thriue
 Their golden flames aduance
 And tell all prosperous chance
 Still shall crowne the happie life
 OF the good man and wife.

Move forward then your rosie feete
 To make each thing you touch, turne sweete
 And where your shoe you sett
 There springe a violet
 Lett all like balmie Meads
 Smell where your soft foote treads
 Make earth as flourishing

As in the painted spring
 When Zepherus, and warme May
 Pranck the fields in sweet arraye.

Now on devoutly make noe staye
 For Domiduca leads the way,
 And Genius that attends
 The Bedd for luckier ends
 With Juno goe the howres
 And Graces scattering flowers
 While Boyes with soft tunes singe;
 Himen, O Himen bring
 Bring, O hymen, Bring the Bride
 Or the winged Boye will chide.

See the yellowe vaile at last
 Over her fragrant cheeks is cast
 Now seems she to expresse
 A bashfull willingnesse
 And has a will thereto
 Without a mind to doe
 Then softly lead her on
 With wise suspition
 Wise matrons say a measure
 Of it will sweeten pleasure

You, you, that bee her nearest kinne
 Ore the threshold, for her in
 But to avert the worst
 Lett her her fillets first
 Knit to the posts, this point
 Remembering to anoint
 The last, for 'tis a charme
 Strong against future harme
 And poison kill, the which
 There was hidden by the witch

Now quickly Venus lead them to it
 And then instruct them how to doe it,
 First let them meete with kisses
 Then shewe them other blisses
 Fullnesse of pleasure give and ioye
 May comfort never cloye
 Thou Mistress of these gaes
 Double in them their flames
 O bidd tho them undresse

And tell them nakednesse
 Suites thy sports, bidd them venter
 For love, time place bidds enter

Noe fatall owle the bedstead keeps
 With direfull note to fright your sleepes
 Nor furies full of dread
 Make this your Bridall bedd
 Nor with their brands watch
 The Lights away to snatch
 But all good omen here
 Doth att the Bedd appeare
 Juno here aloof doth stand
 Soft sleepe charming with his want

O now behold the longing couch
 That nere' yet felt a virgins touch
 Feeles in it selfe a fire
 And tickled with desire
 Pants with its' downey breast
 As with a hart possesst
 Shrugging as if it mou'd
 With passions as it lou'd.
 Then vndoe your selves and venter
 For the dimpling bedd bidds enter.

Virgins weepe not 'twill come when
 As she, so you'le be ripe for men.
 Then grieve her not with saying
 She must noe more a mayeing
 Or by her dream divine
 Whole bee her valentine
 Or kisse a rose budd over
 And wishe it were her lover
 But kiss her and imbrace her
 And 'twixt the soft sheetes place her.

Now shut the doors, the husband putts
 The eager Boyes to gather nuts
 And now both love and time
 To their full height doe clime
 Give them both Active heate
 With moisture good, and neate
 And organs for increase
 To keepe and to release
 That may the honour'd stemme

Circle with a diadem.

O Venus thou to whome the zone
 Of virgins soe truly knowne
 Cherrishe and blesse this deede
 And with a mellowe speede
 Bring to the Parents ioye
 Their first fruit bee a boye
 So sprightfull that the Earth
 May swell with such a birth
 And her time of reckoning come
 Thou Luine helpe the wombe.

Not a slumber, much more a shunne
 A sleep until the Act bee done
 Nor the least breath expire
 But let it urge desire
 Flye slowly, slowly howers
 Now while their lipps make flowers
 Each kisse in its' warme close
 Smells like a dammask rose
 Or like that pretious gumme
 Doth from Panchia come
 Soules, and breaths, and lips excite
 Sweetes to rouse up appetite.

On your minuts, howers, days, moneths, years
 Dropp the full blessing of the spheares
 What good to man, and wife
 TO build an happie life
 Benignant Heaven allowes
 Followe your prayers and vowes.
 May fortunes Lillie hand
 Open att your command.

O Venus thou to whome is knowne
 The best waye howe to loose the Tone
 Of Virgins: tell the maide
 Shee neede not bee afraid
 And teach the youth to applie
 Close kisses, yf shee crye
 And charge hee not forbears
 Although she wooe with teares
 Then tell them now, they must adven-
 While yet time, and love bidds enter

Maie bounteous Fates your spindell full
Fill, and winde up with whiter wool
Lett them not cut the thread
Of life until you bidd
Lett Death yet come att last
With slowe not desperate hast,
But when you both can saye
Fate, we will now awaye
Bee yee to the Barne, then borne
Twoe, like twoe ripe shocks of corne.

Finis.

VITA
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EDUCATION

Ph.D. English. The Pennsylvania State University. Fall 2015 (Defended: July 2015)

DISSERTATION: “Rescripting Coyness from Shakespeare to Cavendish.”

This project offers the first full-scale reassessment of coyness in early modern English literature, with particular attention to gender, performance, and genre. While scholars have dismissed the coy mistress of Marvell and Donne as a misogynistic stereotype of Cavalier poetry, I unearth the rhetorical uses of coy conceits found in sermons, hunting manuals, courtesy manuals, and romantic narratives in order to reassess the significance of coyness in literary texts. In extended analyses of texts by Shakespeare, Middleton, Milton, and Cavendish, I argue that early modern writers use the conception of coyness to question the ethics of persuasive performance and to dramatize the gendered use of affectation as a means of self-expression.

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M.A. English. The Pennsylvania State University. 2011.

B.A. English. University of Nebraska at Omaha. *Summa Cum Laude*. 2009.

PUBLICATIONS

ARTICLES:

“Art, Authority, and Domesticity in Margaret Cavendish’s *Poems and Fancies*.” *Early Modern Women*. 10, no. 1. (Forthcoming: Winter 2016). (24 ms. pages)

IN PROGRESS:

“Beauty, Persuasive Fashioning, and Aemilia Lanyer.” (28 ms. pages)

AWARDS

The Folger Shakespeare Library. Shakespeare and Language Symposium. Director: Lynne Magnusson. Competitive Grant-In-Aid.

CONFERENCES

“The Problem of the Coy Virgin in Thomas Middleton’s *Revenger’s Tragedy*.” Shakespeare Society of America. 2015.

“Coying Beauty and Virtue in Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judearum*.” Renaissance Society of America. Organizer: Edith Snook. 2014.

“Networks of Domesticity in Margaret Cavendish’s *Poems and Fancies*.” Sixteenth-Century Society Conference. 2012.