Doubles and Falsehoods: *The Changeling*'s Spanish Undertexts

When, in 1727, Lewis Theobald entitled his revised version of Shakespeare and Fletcher's lost play *Cardenio* (c.1613) *Double Falsehood* he was giving prominence to the duplicity and cheating that his Spanish characters perform throughout the play, as they do in Cervantes' original story.[1] Famously, this is the only instance that we know of where Shakespeare drew material directly from Cervantes, and it is regrettable that the only extant version, or rather trace, of this significant textual encounter is the watered down play-text Theobald produced a century later; but Shakespeare was not alone in borrowing from Cervantes and other contemporary Spanish writers, and their presence can be better appreciated in a number of other, extant English plays. *The Changeling* is prominent among them. Although its Spanish elements tend to be glossed in general (and generic) terms as simply providing a (safe) foreign setting, so allowing oblique comment on topics closer to home, there is in this case a tapestry of references and borrowed episodes that resonate throughout, inviting us to understand it as a play that establishes a dialogue with texts, occasions and locations far beyond English frontiers. As Jennifer Panek's essay in this volume demonstrates, modern productions of the play have sometimes evoked the paintings of Goya (or, less anachronistically, Velazquez) in seeking to express its Spanish flavour. There is a deeper truth underlying these artistic decisions. While editors since N.W. Bawcutt in 1958 have identified the two main sources on which Middleton and Rowley drew (John Reynolds' and Gonzalo de Cespedes' prose narratives), the second of these has received conspicuously little attention. Both offer a rich connection between *The Changeling* and contemporary Spanish culture and literature, a link which, it will be proposed, articulates a 'deep structure' of influence in this most Spanish of early modern English plays.[2] This essay argues that what might be termed *The Changeling*'s 'undertexts' insinuated a trope of doubleness and falsehood, especially concerning the honour of women, which had a particular resonance for English audiences following years of tense and uneasy peace between the two countries.

[1] See Brean Hammond, ed., *Double Falsehood*, Arden Shakespeare (London: A. & C. Black, 2010). For a concise summary, see '*Cardenio*', in Stephen Greenblatt et al, eds., *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 3109.

[2] N.W. Bawcutt, ed., *The Changeling* (London: Methuen, 1958), xxxi-xxxviii.

From the outset, deceit is the play's leitmotif. In greeting Alsemero, Beatrice-Joanna laments that 'This was the man was meant me' (1.1.81), and upon the arrival of her father, Vermandero, with his unwelcome, peremptory injunction – 'Thou must be a bride within this sevennight' (1.1.183) – she immediately seeks to put off the wedding day with the now-unwanted Piracquo, hoping to manipulate her father by claiming it is too soon to part with her virginity (which he dismisses as a 'toy' [1.1.190]). Later, in 4.1, following her wedding to Alsemero, Beatrice-Joanna instructs a kind of doppelganger to replace her on her wedding night because her own body is no longer untouched. With the introduction of her servant Diaphanta into her bed, Beatrice-Joanna becomes in effect two, and experiences a ''second de-flowering'' through a surrogate. De Flores' presentation is more complex, initially at least, since it is unclear whether we should pity him for the abuse he receives from Beatrice-Joanna or appreciate his apparent humility and loyalty; but by the end of the first scene we learn that nothing will stop him from getting his 'will' (1.1.230), his docile behaviour being no more than a mask. Indeed, Alsemero is also an ambiguous figure, an acceptable match for Beatrice-Joanna but compromised by his possession of a grotesque virginity text kit. Other doubles, of course, are presented by way of the parallel plots and the mirrored characters – De Flores/Lollio, Beatrice-Joanna/Isabella – sometimes, as in the case of Antonio and Franciscus, being almost interchangeable.[3] But since duplicity and hypocrisy were two of the most recognizable traits of the Spanish stereotype that circulated in England at the time, the doubleness of the play is particularly apposite, as the integration of the source material illustrates.

Reynolds' Spanish doubles

John Reynolds, an active anti-Spanish pamphleteer, is the author of *The Triumphs of Gods Revenge* (1621), acknowledged as the primary source for *The Changeling*. It has been

[3] As scholars have noted, the characters' double names are also suggestive of their doubleness – De Flores as 'of the flowers'/'deflowerer' – and the two names of Beatrice-Joanna stand in contrast to Vermandero, whose honest, single anthroponym clearly derives from 'verdadero', Spanish for 'truthful'. For a discussion of the meaning of the names in *The Changeling*, see William Power, 'Middleton's Way with Names,' *Notes and Queries,* 205 (1960): 26-29; 56-60; 95-98; 136-140; 175-179. See also Ivan Cañadas, 'What is in a Heroine's Name: Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling*,' *Medieval and Early Modern English Studies* 20 (2012): 129-154, and Dale B.J. Randall 'Some Observations on the Theme of Chastity in *The Changeling*', *English Literary Renaissance* 14.3 (Autumn 1984): 351-352.

speculated that Reynolds produced this collection of tales on the violent consequences of unhappy marriages as an acceptable way of promoting support for the Protestant-Puritan faction in England, since his pamphlet *Vox Coeli* (published in 1624 but in circulation earlier) had proved too provocative.[4] Indeed, as it happened, Reynolds would be extradited from France and imprisoned for the offensive material in his tract. *Vox Coeli* is one of the numerous printed documents that focused on the figure of Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Count of Gondomar, as a target of lampoon and criticism. His arrival as an ambassador for Spain at the court of James I (1613), after having been the Corregidor (Mayor) of Valladolid at the time of the English embassy to the city to ratify the peace between Spain and England (1605),[5] proved controversial from the beginning. He refused to strike the banners of his ships as he entered Portsmouth harbour, despite the threat of being sunk if he didn't oblige, which gave him a reputation for arrogance. But beyond that the threat he posed for English protestants had to do with the negotiations he conducted to procure a marriage alliance between the English heir to the throne (first Henry and subsequently Charles) with a Spanish Infanta (first Ana María and later Maria Ana). The image of the Spanish ambassador as a Machiavel capable of manoeuvring England towards a final subjection under Catholic Spain proved a fruitful topic for pamphleteers. Barbara Fuchs argues that the potent stereotype of the Spanish people as plotters owes much to the recurrent characterization of Gondomar in the literature of the time.[6] In his pamphlet Reynolds represents Gondomar as receiving a letter from the ghost of Mary Tudor, praising him for having "tyed to king James his Eare and his Maiestie to your Girdle", and then instructing him on how to act in order to secure the final triumph of Spain over England.[7] This image of a Machiavellian Gondomar as a direct threat to English sovereignty is revisited in the stereotype of the

[4] See Annabel Patterson's introduction to *The Changeling* in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, eds. *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1632-1636.
[5] The significance of this embassy for Anglo-Spanish relations is notable, especially concerning the trading of books. Gustav Ungerer traces a copy of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* in the Bodleian collection as early as 1605 coinciding with the return of the embassy; Gustav Ungerer, 'The Earl of Southampton's Donation to the Bodleian in 1605 and Its Spanish Books,' *Bodleian Library Record* 16 (1997): 17-41. Dudley Carleton also reported to John Chamberlain his investment in books during his trip to Spain as a member of the embassy. See Ungerer, 'The Spanish and English Chronicles in King James's and Sir George Buc's Dossiers on the Anglo-Spanish Peace Negotiations,' *Huntington Library Quarterly* 61.3/4 (1998): 309-324.
[6] Barbara Fuchs, 'Middleton and Spain', Gary Taylor and Trish Thomas Henley, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 404-417.
[7] John Reynolds, *Vox Coeli or Newes from Heaven* (1624), 57.

false and duplicitous Spaniard that is so ubiquitous in *The Changeling*, and not only in the characterization of De Flores.

Valladolid, the seat of the Spanish court when the Anglo-Spanish peace was signed, features in both main sources for *The Changeling*.[8] The more acknowledged source, the fourth tale in *The Triumphs of Gods Revenge*, has a very specific Spanish setting and was probably inspired by Reynolds' experiences during his time as a merchant and traveller. If we accept what he asserts in the preface, he did not take his stories from another written source, or invent them: 'I have illustrated and polished these Histories, yet not framed them according to the model of mine own fancies, but on their passions, who have represented and personated them'.[9] All of them have to do with desire as the driving force of crimes, and all are set outside England, mostly in France, Italy and Spain, 'because it grieves me to report those that are too frequently committed in our Country'.[10] Allowing for a degree of sensationalism, Reynolds is intent on presenting a flavour of the cultures and territories he was familiar with, painting them (in *implied* contrast to England) as sites of deceit and debauchery. Significantly, contemporary records place him in the harbour of Valencia in 1604 and then again in 1605, just at the time of the signing and ratification of the peace treaty.[11]

The tale in the volume entitled "A Spanish History" is set in Alicante, where the Castle of Santa Barbara, the church of Santa María and the country retreat of Briamata stand as the three locations of the story. Whereas the church and the ruins of the castle can still be visited today, the identity and location of Briamata remains a mystery,[12] but Reynolds was especially thorough in giving a recognisable historical and geographical setting to his plot.[13] Don Pedro de Alsemero, the protagonist and *villain* here, travels to the court in

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[8] Further sources or influence would include *Othello* (1604) and *Macbeth* (1606), for example, as editors note; the second of these plays Middleton adapted or revised for the King's Men.
[9] John Reynolds, *The Triumphs of God's Revenge Against the Crying and Execrable Sin of Murther,* (London, 1621), B3.
[10] Reynolds, *The Triumphs*, B3.
[11] For the frequency of Reynolds' trade along the Mediterranean see John D. Sanderson, ed. & trans., *El trueque (1622) de Thomas Middleton y William Rowley: Alicante como escenario del teatro jacobeo*. (Alicante: Instituto Alicantino de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert, 2002). Sanderson has found an entry for a 'maestro Jaques Reynaldo' in the archives of the Kingdom of Valencia, where he is registered as entering the port twice (p. 24).
[12] Briamata is possibly invented; Reynolds places it ten leagues from Alicante, which is exactly the distance to Benidorra (Benidorm), the seat of a small coastal town with a castle in the time of the story.
[13] Dale B.J. Randall presents a detailed study of how Reynolds uses historical and geographical facts based on authentic material and these in turn serve Middleton and Rowley to construct the setting of the play

Valladolid to seek from the Duke of Lerma an appointment as a captain to fight under the Arch-Duke Albertus in the wars in Flanders (which had continued, following the Anglo-Spanish peace), and thus avenge the death of his father, who had lost his life at the battle of Gibraltar (1607). However, a truce with the Dutch ensues, followed by a new peace treaty, and so the career of Alsemero as avenger is frustrated. This allows us to situate the story shortly after 1609, when a peace to end the war in the Flanders was signed in Antwerp.[14] Still intent on soldiering, however, Alsemero travels from Valladolid to Alicante, planning to sail to Malta and fight against the Turks; but once more he is prevented, first by contrary winds and subsequently by spotting a beauty in church whom he decides to court – the very point, of course, where *The Changeling* begins. Reynolds' moralising narrator presents this as follows:

> It is both a grief and a scandal to any true Christians heart, that the Church, ordained for thanksgiving and prayer unto God should be made a stews or at least a place for men to meet and court Ladies; but in all parts of the Christian World, where the Roman religion reigneth, this sinful practice is frequently practiced, especially in *Italy* and *Spain*.[15]

The Beatrice-Joanna in Reynolds is a woman whose descent into crime is gradual, starting with her slight misbehaviour in church by responding to Alsemero's gaze. Subsequently it is driven by a growing desire to outmanoeuvre her male protectors. For a long time she withstands her father's pressure to marry Alonso de Piracquo and only with reluctance does she accept Alsemero's courtship; but during her forced seclusion in Briamata, where she is effectively sequestered, she convinces herself that she is in love with Alsemero and entices one of her father's followers, De Flores, to kill her first suitor, Piracquo, so as to get him out of the way. Her marriage to Alsemero seems to be happy enough until he becomes unreasonably jealous and, as her father did before, decides to seclude her. Her reaction – rebelling and embarking on an adulterous relation with De Flores – seems to be motivated principally by a desire to defy her husband. Predictably, Alsemero discovers

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that is 'more firmly anchored to real earth than we once recognized'. Dale B.J. Randall, 'Some new perspectives on the Spanish setting of *The Changeling* and its source,' *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England,* 3 (1986): 207.

[14] We should bear in mind that 1609 was also the year of the expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain, which in the province of Alicante represented forty per cent of the population. The desolation of the region may be behind this tragic plot even though the story is only concerned with Catholic symbolism.

[15] Reynolds, *The Triumphs,* 114.

the couple in flagrante, and in a passion kills them, only to be later executed himself – for having killed Piracquo's brother in a previous duel. De Flores, in contrast to Alsemero, is a rather uninteresting secondary character, lacking the powerful ugliness of his successor on the stage: "a Gallant young Gentleman of the Garrison of the Castle"[16], he murders Piracquo because he is besotted with Beatrice-Joanna, but he only obtains his reward months after the marriage, once the married couple's relationship has deteriorated. The story presents a society of deceit and repressed passions, where murder is merely a solution to get rid of an inconvenient suitor and female desire seems uncontrollable, subject to and yet opposing the established male dominance. Reynolds' version differs in many ways from *The Changeling*, but one of the most noticeable aspects is the handling of time. In *The Triumphs of God's Revenge* time is extended and this allows for the characters to develop and change. Alsemero spends a long time courting Beatrice-Joanna before she relents, following many conferences, meetings and exchanges of letters. Likewise, once married there is a lapse of three months until he becomes unreasonably jealous of Beatrice-Joanna, motivating her to stop loving her husband: "he watcheth her everywhere and sets spies over her in every corner; yea, his jealousie is become so violent as he deems her unchast with many, yet knows not with whom".[17] Compared to the Beatrice-Joanna of *The Changeling* she manages to handle the situation by herself, until almost the last moment when, discovered by her husband, she faces death together with her lover. More than duplicitous, Beatrice-Joanna is a true "changeling" in this story, adapting to circumstances in efforts to escape male dominance.

Reynolds' story has been criticized for its clumsy construction and the text's 'jerky and episodic technique',[18] but it establishes the main storyline for *The Changeling* and provides a set of characters as well as a geographical and historical setting. What has not been noted, however, is how the recurring trope of female seclusion to which Beatrice-Joanna is subjected and from which she rebels in the Reynolds version is echoed in the secondary plot of *The Changeling* – for which editors have not established a source – where Isabella is kept almost a prisoner by her husband in order to restrain her supposed appetite for other men. Isabella and Beatrice-Joanna represent two distinctive responses to

[16] Reynolds, *The Triumphs,* 127.
[17] Reynolds, *The Triumphs*, 132-133.
[18] N.W. Bawcutt, ed., *The Changeling* by Thomas Middleton & William Rowley. The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958): xxxii.

commitment and courtship, but they both derive, albeit in different ways, from the same, original model. It is tempting at this point to see the double plot structure of the play as originating in a split that divides Spain and England in much the same way as *A Game at Chess* represents the two 'houses' in black and white. In *The Changeling* the castle and the madhouse are not in direct opposition, but they invite comparison by the striking contrasts between them (as some modern productions, as well as criticism, have demonstrated). The apparent solidity of the fortress hides unspeakable corruptions that will finally destroy its inhabitants, whereas the chaos of the madhouse can be contained – and, paradoxically, reveal rather conceal its secrets, in the denouement of 5.3. As has been pointed out (see Patricia Cahill's essay in this volume), since the subplot evokes London's Bedlam (Bethlehem Hospital), the play presents these three scenes as *English* in locale. Significantly, the names, Lollio and Alibius,[19] sound less recognizably Hispanic than Antonio and Franciscus, who are *infiltrados* coming from the castle attempting to seduce Isabella (though Antonio's dual status activates the popular English term for idot, 'Tony'). The stupidity and greed of the madhouse keepers is venal, and overt – city comedy material, as commentators have noted – compared to the dark primal forces that motivate the inhabitants of the Alicante fort. Spanish duplicity can easily be traced in this reduplication of plot structure where the characters of Antonio and Franciscus repeat the same plan and are discovered by the same procedure. Isabella's purity is thus intensified as she has been able to detect the fake fool and the fake madman and remains loyal to her ('albus'/white) husband; it is tempting to think of *A Game at Chess* and its 'checkmate by discovery' (5.3.160-1) at the denouement here.[20]

Representations of the Spanish 'honra'

Like several of the tales in *The Triumphs of God's Revenge*, contemporary Spanish drama was obsessed with the preservation of women's honour, and rape was at the centre of this

[19] The name Alibius, which appears in the next (and last) story in Book I in the Reynolds collection, has been interpreted as referring to 'in some other place', from the Latin adverb *alibi*; see Randall 'Some Observation', 352. But there is also a possible connection with the adjective *albus*, therefore referring to 'whiteness', and thus differentiating him from the dark Spanish inhabitants of the castle. Lollio may derive from the Italian noun *l'olio* (oil), which can also be used to refer to someone who receives bribes.
[20] All references to *A Game at Chess* are to Taylor, ed., *A Game at Chess: A Later Form*, in Taylor and Lavagnino, gen. eds., *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1825-85.

anxiety.[21] Crucially, Middleton and Rowley rather than relying entirely on an Englishman's text of uncertain provenance also dramatize authentically *Spanish* material in their play. As we shall see the Spanish fixation with the concept of honour, *"la honra"*, penetrates *The Changeling* in ways that radically transform the original material in Reynolds. Two of the most famous plays of the period, *El Alcalde de Zalamea* (*The Mayor of Zalamea*, (c.1636) and *Fuenteovejuna* (c.1612-14) deal with the consequences of rape, and in both the rapist, a powerful lord who takes advantage of a peasant girl, is subsequently killed. These plays also share a clear political and legal aspect as they consider the options of rebellion against an oppressor who exerts his power through sexual violence. In Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna* the whole village assumes responsibility for killing the aggressor, a commander of the Order of Calatrava, while in Calderon de la Barca's play it is the father of the victim who, despite his social inferiority, exerts his power as mayor of the village and dictates the execution of the captain of a troop of soldiers. In both plays the Catholic Monarchs and Philip II respectively restore order by understanding that a wrong has been righted and that the rapists deserved their death.[22] But this need for the monarchs to step in as *dei ex machina* is testimony to the controversy over legal responses to rape in early modern Spain. Of course, it is believed that silence for this type of crime was the most common response of most women and their families, a way at least to avoid the shame of dishonour; but in the reported cases of statutory rape (as happens in both these plays) where the victim is a virgin and therefore she and her family are deprived of the most valuable asset for her marriage, the case would be commonly settled by paying financial compensation to the father of the victim. This would provide the family with money for her dowry or with a means to sustain the daughter if she was to remain unmarried. Seldom would the perpetrator marry the victim: although the law stated this as a means to right the wrong, only rarely was it enforced by the court. Sentencing the culprit to

[21] See Frank P. Casa 'El tema de la violación sexual en la comedia,' *El escritor y la escena: Actas del I Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Teatro Español y Novohispano de los Siglos de Oro,* (Juárez: Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, 1993): 203-212.

[22] In these plays the fate of the raped victims is not death, as the Lucrece tradition would have it. Jacinta is not a central character in *Fuenteovejuna* and her gang rape functions as a warning of what can happen to Laurencia, the actual female protagonist. In Calderon's play Isabel, although she initially wishes for death, decides to go to a convent in order to restore her honour with God. These 'solutions' contrast with English plays that feature rape, where the death of the rapist is often mirrored by the death of the victim. See Susan Gossett ''Best Men Are Moulded out of Faults': Marrying the Rapist in Jacobean Drama,' *English Literary Renaissance* 4.3 (1984): 305-327.

death, even though enshrined in the canons of the law, was very rare indeed, so *Fuenteovejuna* and *El alcalde de Zalamea* ought not to be considered as in any way representative of actual practice.[23]

Loss of '*la honra*' was an obsession of early modern Spanish society and more specifically of its aspiring middle classes and lower nobility. Loss of property, or even life, was nothing compared to blemishing the name of a reputed family. As the avenging mayor in *El Alcalde de Zalamea* expresses it:

> I'll give up life and property
> At the King's word. But honour is
> the offspring of the soul of man.
> And the soul, God tells us, is his.[24]

Honour was defined by social class, reputation within that social class, *hombría* or virility for men, and virtue for women. But the woman's virtue spoke for the virility of the men in her family, her husband – if she was married – and her father and her brothers. Women could not lose their honour, because it did not belong to them: instead, it was the responsibility of the male figures around to guard it. Gustavo Correa argues that loss of honour was the annihilation of the male individual, who was thus dispossessed of his value and his virility as well as of his social standing, given that he would no longer be accepted by his community.[25] Loss of honour was expressed in Spanish Golden Age literature variously as an offence, a reason for mockery, or a punishment, but the most recurring metaphor for it was that of a stain that needed to be cleansed and purified, as we see evoked in the closing sequence of *The Changeling*. In this process the stain would be sublimated into a symbolic ritual of purification, acquiring an almost religious significance, violence and bloodshed being essential components of this action. Plays that deal with honour in the theatre of the Spanish *Siglo de Oro* are full of murder and revenge, but also with the symbolic purging of fire, as in the case of Tirso de Molina's *El*

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[23] See Victoria López Cordón y Montserrat Carbonell Esteller eds., *Historia de la Mujer e Historia del Matrimonio* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1997), 99-138.
[24] Pedro Calderón de la Barca, *The Mayor of Zalamea,* trans. Adrian Mitchell (Bristol: Salamander, 1981). 'Al rey la hacienda y la vida / se han de dar, pero el honor / es patrimonio del alma, / y el alma sólo es de Dios' (1.18.869-876).
[25] Gustavo Correa, 'El doble aspecto de la honra en el teatro del siglo XVII,' *Hispanic Review*, 26.2 (1958): 99-107.

celoso prudente (*The Jealous Prudent Husband*, c.1630), where the supposedly cuckolded husband plans to burn the house with his wife inside.

These extremes may seem to be at odds with the more pragmatic practices adopted in cases of rape that have been mentioned above, such as paying or marrying the victim, but of course, in the cases where the rapist belonged to a lower social class, this kind of compensation became impracticable. That the woman was to be held responsible for her loss of honour when she was the victim of rape meant that it was she who was punished because she held the family's *honra*, since it would be transmitted through her line. In an infamous case in 1577 in Lorca, not far from Alicante, it was reported that a priest of no social standing, taking advantage of the acquaintance he had with the powerful Bienvenguds family, committed statutory rape against the Bienvenguds' youngest daughter. According to the records the guilty priest was only sentenced to exile; one of the brothers, however, unable to endure the stain on the family's name, killed his own sister and her child when she was eight months pregnant.[26]

Given the centrality of rape in Spanish Golden Age drama it is not surprising that rape and loss of honour is a recurring theme in Middleton's 'Spanish trilogy'. Notoriously in *A Game at Chess* the plot is constructed around the sexual appetite of black (the Spaniards) over white (the English). Though it is mainly the Black Bishop's Pawn (a Jesuit) who is implicated in the attempted rape of the White Queen's Pawn (a virgin), the whole black house participates in this sin of venery, and so it is confessed by the character of the Black Knight (representing Gondomar) when he tries to seduce the White Knight (taken to represent the Duke of Buckingham, who had accompanied the Prince of Wales on his mission to Spain in 1623) into coming over to his side:

> The trifle of all vices, the mere innocent,
> The very novice of this house of clay. Venery?
> If I but hug thee hard I show the worst on't.
> 'Tis all the fruit we have here after supper;
> Nay, at the ruins of a nunnery once
> Six thousand Infants' heads found in a fishpond. (5.3.125-130)

[26] Juan Hernández Franco & Encarnación Meriñán Soriano 'Notas sobre la sexualidad no permitida y honor en Lorca (1575-1615),' López Cordón y Carbonell Esteller eds. *Historia de la Mujer*, 131-138.

The English white house eventually escapes unscathed, but the threat of castration, rape, and sodomy defines the Spanish side. Moreover, repeated attempts against the virtue of the White Queen's Pawn are all done under the disguise of religious habits, just as Franciscus and Antonio, subversives from the 'Spanish' castle, conceal themselves beneath their Bedlam robes.

In *The Spanish Gipsy* (1623), based on two of the *Novelas Ejemplares* (*Exemplary Novels*, 1613) by Cervantes, Middleton and Rowley (and John Ford and Thomas Dekker) build a very complicated dramatic structure around the rape of a young virgin by Roderigo, the son of the Corregidor (Mayor) of Madrid. Kidnapped while walking home in the company of her parents and taken to the house of the Corregidor, Clara is attacked in a dark room. As she cannot see the face of her rapist the only proof of her ordeal is a crucifix she takes away with her. Her first option, as well as that of her family, is to remain silent, but in order to conceal her lost virginity she must reject a suitor, Luis, who happens to be a friend of her rapist. As in other Spanish and English plays of the period, the woman who is abused by a social superior can only recover her honour through marriage to her attacker, and this was understood to represent a 'happy ending' since this new, higher status would compensate for the woman's past sufferings.[27] Clara is appropriately united with Roderigo at the end of the play, thanks to the intervention of the Corregidor to whom Clara pleads for justice, holding the crucifix, both a symbol of her ordeal and proof that she had been in the Corregidor's palace:

> CLARA [*showing the crucifix to Roderigo*]
> By this crucifix
> You may remember me.
> RODERIGO Ha! Art thou
> That lady wronged?
> CLARA I was, but now am I
> Righted in noble satisfaction. (5.1.46-49)[28]

Clara could have married Luis, who proposes to her earlier in the play, after (unbeknown to him) she has been raped by Roderigo, but she seems to believe that she belongs to her

[27] This is the case with John Fletcher's *The Queen of Corinth* (c.1616-18) and *Los Torneos de Aragón* (*The Tournaments of Aragon*, 1597) by Lope de Vega, to cite but two examples.
[28] Gary Taylor, ed., *The Spanish Gipsy*, in Taylor and Lavagnino, gen eds., *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1723-65; Taylor attributes the authorship of the play to a four-man team: John Ford, Thomas Dekker, Middleton, and Rowley.

aggressor and to no one else. In Cervantes' original novella, *La Fuerza de la Sangre* (*The Force of Blood*, included in the *Novelas Ejemplares*) the victim's suffering is intensified since she bears a child after the rape and has to hide her maternity for seven years, before the supposed 'resolution' of marriage.[29] No one proposes to her during this period. The poignancy of this solution is softened in *The Spanish Gipsy* as the denouement of Clara's story is mixed with other parallel (but comic) plots that come to similar marital conclusions.[30]

Rape in *The Changeling* (chronologically the first in this trilogy) is much more controversial, not least because there is still no critical consensus on whether Beatrice-Joanna is in fact raped by De Flores. Certainly in the not-so-distant past some critics adhered to the view that Beatrice-Joanna was a corrupt, foolish girl who falls into her own trap, and correspondingly rape did not enter the equation.[31] A more psychologically complex interpretation, drawing on Freud, proposed by Joost Daalder, among others, shows her as sexually attracted to De Flores, her initial insults and comments about his physical repulsiveness in fact concealing her desire: 'Beatrice's conscious loathing is in some way a manifestation of unconscious love'.[32] This erotic component complicates our understanding of what happens between De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna in the audience's imagination during the interval between acts three and four. Some critics openly classify it as rape, while others discuss the complexity and ambiguity of the moment and present a range of possible interpretations. In 'Re-reading Rape in *The Changeling*', Frances Dolan

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[29] Suzanne Gossett makes the opposite reading when comparing the play and the original novella in which it is based. For Gossett Cervantes' tale is 'more lighthearted' because 'it does not focus as intently on the characters of rapist and victim' (Gosset 'Best Men', 321), but being less psychologically oriented doesn't detract from the fact that Leocadia has to suffer humiliation after humiliation before her final marriage, which makes the reader reject any possible satisfaction from the apparent solution.

[30] Gary Taylor points out how the location of *The Spanish Gipsy* in Madrid, coinciding with the adventurous journey of Prince Charles to the Spanish capital, as well as the combination of plots around the problematic relations between fathers and sons all suggest a reading of the play as a critique of the political situation in England at the time of the Spanish Match crisis. Gary Taylor, 'Historicism, presentism and time: Middleton's *The Spanish Gypsy* and *A Game at Chess*,' *SEDERI* 18 (2008): 147-170.

[31] Suzanne Gosset does not discuss *The Changeling* in her article on rape in early modern drama, though she goes into a lengthy discussion about *The Spanish Gipsy*. Gosset 'Best Men', 305-327.

[32] Joost Daalder and Anthony Telford Moore, ''There's scarce a thing but is both loved and loathed': *The Changeling* I.i.91-129,' *English Studies* 80.6 (1999): 502. In an earlier essay Daalder had already presented a psychological interpretation of Beatrice-Joanna as unaware of her own desires: see his 'Folly and Madness in *The Changeling*,' *Essays in Criticism* 38.1 (1988): 1-21. On theatre critics' endorsement of a Freudian perspective, see Roberta Barker and David Bicol, 'Does Beatrice Joanna Have a Subtext? The Changeling on the London stage', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 10:1 (May 2004), and the accounts of recent performance in this volume by Jennifer Panek and Sarah Dustagheer.

opts controversially to 'un-rape her', arguing that in contemporary legal cases women who claimed to have been raped had to prove it through their damaged bodies, while women who were charged for their sexual behaviour could relate other forms of sexual relations that gave them some control over the situation:

> What would happen if we took a break from describing what happens in *The Changeling* as rape? Only then can we assess the complex distribution and abuses of power between De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna and in the play more generally.[33]

Similarly, Judith Haber studies the erotization of virginity and the thin line that separates images of rape from the recreations of the nuptial first night in some literary works of the period, pointing out how De Flores's lines at the end of 3.3 echo the epithalamium Ben Jonson wrote for the Howard-Essex marriage in 1606. For Haber, in *The Changeling* rape is conflated with marriage.[34] Adopting another perspective, Deborah Burks argues that the play exploits contemporary male anxieties about the difficulties of ascertaining the facts of women's sexuality because in early modern law virginity, desire and consented intercourse or rape depended only on testimony. On these grounds she reads De Flores' actions as forceful and violent, rather than ambiguous:

> When he forced Beatrice-Joanna to sleep with him, DeFlores murdered her honor; now he finishes his crime with her actual murder. Her body, when DeFlores drags her out onto the stage, bears visible signs of his violation, signs which are a literalization of the violence their sexual union committed on her body and her honor and, by extension, on her family.[35]

Cespedes' Undertext

Reading the episode in the light of the play's Spanish setting and sources may offer an additional and hitherto unexplored perspective. In Reynolds, there is no rape scenario, explicit or otherwise. It is in the second source that we find the material that inspired the

[33] Frances E. Dolan, 'Re-reading Rape in *The Changeling*', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 11. 1 (2011), 759-90; 7.
[34] Judith Haber, "I(t) could not choose but follow': Erotic Logic in *The Changeling*, *Representations* 81:1 (2003), 79-98.
[35] Deborah Burke, ''I'll want my will else': *The Changeling* and Women's Complicity with their Rapists,' *English Literary History* 62. 4 (1995): 781.

characterization of Beatrice-Joanna as the bride to be who finds herself deprived of her honour on her wedding night. *Poema Trágico del Español Gerardo*, by Gonzalo de Céspedes y Meneses, was published in Madrid in 1615 and in translation as *Gerardo the Unfortunate Spaniard* by Leonard Digges in London in 1622.[36] This source for *The Changeling*, although first identified by Bertram Lloyd and then included by Bawcutt as an appendix in his edition,[37] has been mostly passed over by critics of the play, so much so that Barbara Fuchs asserts that 'No Spanish sources have been identified for Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling.*'[38] However, as we shall see, Cespedes provides more than a tangential inspiration for the playwrights, presenting Middleton and Rowley with key traces of characters and situations that are central to the play. If they were not familiar with the original in Spanish then they must have read the voluminous translation in haste to make use of an inserted story told by a pilgrim to Gerardo that serves as a diversion from the main story. One of the curiosities of this is that it is told twice: first by the pilgrim, a naïve husband who recounts his life and marriage, unaware of the falsehoods that were being committed behind his back; and then through a letter of confession written by his wife Isdaura on her deathbed. Roberto, the husband, is a penitent man on his way to Santiago de Compostela to purge his sins, not for having done much wrong, but (not unlike Alsemero in the play) for not having discerned the truth as it was taking place.

Most interestingly, this double story of Roberto and Isdaura adds two key characters not in Reynolds, the man servant who rapes Isdaura before her wedding night, and the maid servant who takes the place of her lady in the nuptial encounter. The first of these characters is an antecedent of Deflores in ways that the original Deflores in Reynolds is not. Moreover, this character seems to come directly (or indirectly) from *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, in the Biscayan who fights with Don Quixote, just after the famous windmill

[36] According to Gary Taylor Thomas Middleton had more than a passable knowledge of Spanish; if this was so it is possible he could have read the original *Gerardo* before the translation was published. Taylor's rationale for Middleton's familiarity with the Spanish language is based on his use of Cervantes' works for the construction of the plots in *The Lady's Tragedy* (1611) and *The Spanish Gipsy* (1623). Furthermore, there is a whole passage in *The Triumphs of Honour and Industry* which is written in Spanish. Unfortunately none of this is conclusive because there were translations of both of Cervantes' stories into French and the passage in *The Triumphs* is written in such an elaborate Spanish that Middleton must have had the help of a native speaker for its composition. See Taylor and Lavagnino, gen. eds. *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to The Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 437.
[37] Bertram Lloyd, 'A New Source of *The Changeling*', *M.L.R.* xix (January 1924), 101-102.
[38] Fuchs, 'Middleton and Spain', 411., Bawcytt, *The Changeling,* 127-129.

episode. Don Quixote stops a carriage that is taking a lady from the Basque country to Seville where she is going to bid farewell to her husband, leaving for the Indies 'with an appointment of high honour'.[39] Don Quixote believes this lady to be a kidnapped princess and halts the group in order to rescue her. The lady's squire, a Biscayan with an unintelligible speech and a strong will, confronts him, but the knight errant refuses to fight with a mere servant. Outraged, the latter exclaims: 'Biscayan on land, hidalgo [gentleman] at sea, hidalgo at the devil, and if thou sayest otherwise thou liest', at which point they begin to fight.[40]

Céspedes, inspired by Cervantes, is surely drawing on this character for his own Biscayan squire. In his story, however, the nobleman who goes to the Indies, leaving his wife and daughter behind, returns with a fortune. This Leonardo Argentino, upon arriving in Spain, decides to marry his daughter Isdaura to Roberto, the narrator of the story and son of his business partner in Peru. Roberto has never met his future wife, but obedient to both fathers' wishes travels to Toledo, where the wedding is unexpectedly postponed by the sudden death of 'their old servant, the trustie *Biscayner*, [...] laid under a blacke Herse strooke thorow with fiue cruell wounds'.[41] The following day the union takes place, but Roberto only partly enjoys the wedding night; shortly after he falls asleep he is awoken by Isdaura with 'sudden affrighten shriekes' announcing that the house is on fire. And in the midst of the 'wringing and wailing' another disaster happens when they find how a 'handsome discreet maid-servant [...] having been earnest to draw water to quench the fire (whether with some fright or sudden accident falling in) in an instant (there being no meanes to save her) was drowned' in the well.[42] Roberto confesses to his listeners on the way to Santiago that, despite all this having taken place long ago, grief is still with him: 'neither can I forget the prophetical boadings of my wretched marriage'.[43] Indeed, the

[39] 'con un muy honroso cargo', Miguel de Cervantes, *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha,* ed. Florencio Sevilla. (Madrid: Lunwerg Editores, 2004), 126.
[40] 'Vizcaino por tierra, hidalgo por mar, hidalgo por el diablo', Miguel de Cervantes *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote,* 129. *The Ingenious Gentleman, Don Quixote of La Mancha.* By Miguel de Cervantes, Saavedra. A Translation, with Introduction and Notes by John Ormsby (Smith, Elder & Co., 1885), 185.
[41] Gonzalo de Céspedes y Meneses, *Gerardo the Unfortunate Spaniard,* trans. Leonard Digges (London: 1922), 95.
[42] Céspedes, *Gerardo,* 96.
[43] Céspedes, Gerardo, 96.

marriage ends tragically years later, with Roberto killing his best friend and provoking the death of Isdaura because of a supposed infidelity between them.

It is from the letter that Isdaura writes before she dies that Roberto and the reader learn what actually happened in the two consecutive nights that doomed their marriage. The night before the wedding the 'trustie Biscayner' had entered Isdaura's room, prepared to take by force what her father had taken from him by marrying her to Roberto:

> Who would have thought of thy Father, that hee should so unthankefully have recompenced the paines, which in thy education, and honest substaining his family in his absence, I have undergone: only because I hoped to reape the benefit in thy amiable desired companie, which uniustly, my *Isdaura*, he deprives mee of.[44]

The Biscayner uses a dagger to coherce his victim; the very dagger that Isdaura uses to kill him once he has fallen asleep. From this point on Isdaura enters into a frenzy of deceit and doubleness. She has to dispose of the corpse and feign grief in front of her parents and her newly arrived fiancé, but she also needs to solve the problem of the wedding night, having lost her virginity.

Mirroring her own deflowering by a servant, she arranges things so that her maid servant can be deflowered by her husband, which Middleton and Rowley rewrite in their reworking of Reynolds. In this case Julia does not undergo a virginity test, but, like Diaphanta, she comes to bed in darkness and stays there longer than she has been instructed, arousing distress and jealousy in her mistress:

> I knew not which in mee was most, my iealousie or feare, and my rage increased the more, when (hearing the Clocke strike three) I saw so little memory in her of my danger. This and the difficulty of waking her without being perceived by you made me undergoe a desperate course, as that of the *Biscayner*.[45]

The parallel in *The Changeling*, and notably the detail of the clock striking three times (5.1.), is clear. Here, however, Isdaura has to act on her own: she sets the house on fire,

[44] Céspedes, *Gerardo,* 103.
[45] Céspedes, *Gerardo,* 106.

urges her husband out of bed, creates confusion in the household and, in the midst of the chaos, pushes Julia into a well.

How much this inspired Middleton and Rowley has not been sufficiently considered. True it is that De Flores is a more sophisticated Machiavel than this garrulous Biscayan, but the common trait they share is that they resent their social status as servants, roles imposed upon them as a result of their declining fortunes. When the Biscayan in Cervantes' episode attacks Don Quixote, he is protecting (as he sees it) his mistress's right to continue with her journey, but also defending his honour as a 'hidalgo'. Basques in early modern Spain had the reputation of being violent and rough, but they were also characterized as proud of the ancient origins of their lineage.[46] The Biscayan Don Quixote encounters is a comic figure but the *Biscayner* in Cespedes shifts register from comic to tragic; after years of being the *de facto* master of the house he is displaced by an unwelcome suitor and he reclaims his position, obtaining by force the most valuable asset of his master, his daughter. De Flores holds a similar undefined position in his lord's household; esteemed and trusted, he has aspirations towards Beatrice-Joanna that are clearly above his station. To obtain his prey De Flores is much more subtle, his outward appearance perhaps a projection of the Biscayner's roughness and psychological domination; unlike the Biscayner, De Flores does not need to use a dagger. However, the dagger is meaningful in another moment in the play when De Flores hides the rapier with the purpose of later killing de Piracquo. This weapon, charged with sexual significance, is subsequently used to cut off the finger with the ring that symbolically unites in murder his fate and Beatrice-Joanna's. De Flores is thus a composite character, more distant from the patient squire in Reynolds that waits for Beatrice-Joanna and closer to the sexual predator servant in *Gerardo*. Like him, he uses coercion to obtain the sexual prize that he desires, and like the Black Knight in *A Game at Chess* he displays all the abilities of a Machiavel to manipulate circumstances to his advantage.

A particularly striking parallel – one, again, that does not appear in Reynolds – is between Isdaura's maid, Julia, and Beatrice-Joanna's Diaphanta. Their bodies are equally

[46] Their characteristic jargon was parodied in plays and prose as an ungrammatical form of Spanish. Manuel Ferrer-Chivite, 'La figura del Vizcaíno en el Teatro del Siglo XVI,' *Foro Hispánico: Revista Hispánica de Flandes y Holanda,* coord. Margot Vesteeg. 19 (2001): 23-39.

objectified, although Diaphanta shows her readiness to lose her virginity while Julia is reluctant to substitute for her mistress in bed, and agrees only out of loyalty to her. Neither sees the risk of being recognized in the dark, their physical body distinctiveness seeming to disappear once their only tangible quality becomes their hymen. Such logic goes unquestioned by all the parties involved – in both a narrative fiction and in this English playhouse 'bed trick'. Roberto does not ask himself how he could not have noticed the difference: 'having to my unspeakable joy [I] reaped from my Bride the sweet fruit, amorously passing the rest of it, at length (our bodies mutually in each others Armes interlaced) we fell asleep. But no longer were our weary limmes laid to soft rest, when my Wife with her hands and sudden affrighting shriekes awoke mee'.[47] At this point the switch has taken place, the hands and cries that awake him are Isdaura's, while Julia is still in bed by his side, as we learn from Isdaura's version: '[hoping] you would take no notice of ought but my cries, embracing you closely and crying Fire, fire: you awoke and frightfully leapt out of your bed and the chamber, leaving me with *Iulia*'.[48] The pleasure both Julia and Diaphanta enjoy is shown by the abandonment with which they fall asleep and needlessly prolong the time in bed, while their ardent passions are symbolically quenched, one by water, the other by fire, thus erasing the trace of their doubled identities. Julia and Diaphanta suffer similar punishments for their impersonation: having saved their mistress's reputation they cannot be pardoned.

Reynolds' salacious tale provided Middleton and Rowley with the scaffold for their main plot, but it is to Céspedes that is owed the material (or undertext/s) that gives the play its Spanish Golden Age flavour (and which lies at the heart of the play's appeal today). Editors acknowledge but relegate this source to a secondary role, yet it is evident that *Gerardo the Unfortunate Spaniard* inspired the three key elements that enabled the playwrights to transform the narrative in Reynolds into an arresting drama: the character of the villain, the rape, and the bed trick. *The Trivmphs of Gods Revenege* has rightly been criticised for its 'clumsy construction and unconvincing motivation', though as N.W. Bawcutt points out, Reynolds was a moralist, not a novelist.[49] For the literary element the playwrights drew on authentically Spanish material that takes us, obliquely, all the way to

[47] Céspedes, *Gerardo,* 95.
[48] Céspedes, *Gerardo,* 106.
[49] Bawcutt, ed., *The Changeling*, xxxii.

Cervantes, via the Biscayner whose social status Middleton and Rowley graft onto the Antonio de Flores taken from Reynolds. It is through its adaptation of Céspedes that *The Changeling* may be regarded more than simply an English portrait of contemporary Spain playing to protestant conceits. If the rape of a lady by a social inferior evokes a cultural anxiety surrounding *la honra* (rather than simply functioning as a topical demonising of Catholic Spain as a society driven by lust), the bed trick is similarly double-facing. The folkloric origins of the bed trick are keyed to its providential function stemming from the Bible.[50] Early modern English drama tended to follow this tradition, the device being used to rectify a wrong and resolve a social crisis, such as we find in *All's Well That Ends Well* (c.1604) and *Measure for Measure* (1604, and revised by Middleton in 1621). As Julia Briggs points out, the bed trick in literature may be regarded as a cultural response to male desire, as a means of accommodating and policing male sexual fantasies:

> In its most basic form – a wife substituted for a mistress in her husband's bed – this plot does not merely enact but embodies sexual fantasy, providing an imaginary freedom and an actual safety, while leaving unresolved questions about the place of such desires within marriage.[51]

The Changeling both follows and departs from this tradition; in this it is not unique, but the debt to Céspedes is significant. Typically the device is used to trick the male, at the instigation of a woman or sometimes (as in *Measure for Measure*, for example) a man (the Duke). Isdaura uses Julia to trick Roberto, and Beatrice similarly employs Diaphanta to fool Alsemero: in each case the wife/mistress substitution is inverted, the trick's providential function converted to conceal a rape that otherwise threatens the nuptial bliss of the bridegroom in order to save – hardly providentially – the bride's honour. Céspedes takes pains to explain the trick, Isdaura's letter, a deathbed confession, recited by Roberto to Gerardo, for the benefit of the reader; Middleton and Rowley adapt this to show Beatrice, onstage, providing a running commentary on the offstage, unseen activity in Alsemero's bed.

[50] See Peggy Muñoz Simonds, 'Overlooked Sources of the Bed Trick', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34:3 (1983), 433-34.
[51] Julia Briggs, 'Shakespeare's Bed Tricks', *Essays in Criticism* 44:4 (1994), 293-314; 296.

Perhaps understandably the play's editors have tended to give most credit to the playwrights. Michael O'Neill, for example, while acknowledging that the Digges translation associates the Biscayner with 'service' and 'will', terms whose doubleness Christopher Ricks has shown to be central to the text's performance of wordplay, nevertheless concludes that '[f]rom such small details, Middleton and Rowley worked up the story of sexual insurrection and domestic betrayal that transformed the crudely moralised sensationalism of Reynolds' narrative'.[52] As this essay has argued, *Gerardo the Unfortunate Spaniard* not only helped facilitate such a transformation of Reynolds, but also imported onto the English stage authentically Spanish material. While *The Changeling* activates anti-Spanish feeling that was intensifying towards the end of the first Stuart reign, ironically it did so, in part, through its appropriation of concerns that were central to Spanish Golden Age literature.

[52] Neill, ed., *The Changeling*, xiii; Christopher Ricks, 'The Moral and Poetic Structure of *The Changeling*', *Essays in Criticism* 10 (1960), 290-306.