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'Bound up and clasped together': Bookbinding as Metaphor for Marriage in Richard Brome's *The Love-Sick Court*

*Analytical studies of book production in dramatic metaphors most commonly make reference to printing technologies and book replication and dissemination. This essay reconsiders the new bibliography by extending its scope to include bookbinding, with especial attention paid to Richard Brome's 1638 play *The Love-Sick Court*. In act 4, Doris the maid rejects Geron's advances: 'We are not yet one volume, both bound up / And clasped together'. I consider this claim in the light of courtship and marriage with particular analysis of the process of bookbinding (from personal practical experience) in relation to the sacrament of marriage. The essay pays additional attention to the close synergies between paper and clothing, and the trope of book/woman.*

Act 4, scene 1 of *The Love-Sick Court* (1638) develops the common early modern trope of book/woman by peppering the pedant Geron's wooing of Doris with pedagogical and bibliographical references.¹ Other literary instances link metaphorically the opening of a book and a woman's legs, perhaps in an attempt to theorize in gendered terms the relatively recent introduction of printing technologies. This example from Richard Brome extends the trope by likening marriage — often referred to in marriage tracts as 'binding' — to the process of bookbinding. Amongst other marital binding metaphors, the Brome example is rare: Sid Ray's study discusses various forms, including glue, knots, grafting, yoking, fetters, and knitting, but not bookbinding.² Thus Brome's usage is doubly important in imaginatively exploring two tropes: marriage/binding and woman/book. With specific examination of *The Love-Sick Court*, I explore figurative use of the book and its significance in relation to gender and marriage through the practical labour of bookbinding, and the implied presentation of women as objects of consumption and products of the male attitude towards ownership in marriage.

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Printing technologies and their outputs have received much analytical attention in recent years, but bookbinding is not always included in the discussion. While several recent studies have focused on the significance of the book on the stage, they have not examined in detail the process of bookbinding or its resonances with early modern concerns regarding women and marriage.³ With the new bibliography emerged a predominant focus on book content and printing over binding, where scholars wrestled with the question of whether bookbinding was significant to the production of the book or a distantly related art form. As Mirjam M. Foot has pointed out, although W.W. Greg described bibliography as ‘the study of books as tangible objects’ he, along with R.B. McKerrow, nevertheless did not include bookbinding in the bibliographer’s realm, in contrast with A.W. Pollard and G.W. Cole.⁴ This essay aims to return bookbinding to the bibliographical fold in its treatment of Brome’s play.

The example from 4.1 forms part of the play’s subplot, in which three different suitors woo two women: Princess Eudina must choose between brothers Philocles and Philargus, and the ambitious politician Stratocles (subject of the play’s subtitle, *The Ambitious Politique*); in parallel, Geron, Tersulus, and Varillus woo Doris, a serving-woman. Both Eudina and Doris engage their evaluative faculties when considering their suitors’ wooing letters: they dismiss two candidates for demonstrating excessive education and ambition, and thus for failing to pitch themselves appropriately. Geron infuses his wooing of Doris with the bookish learning reflective of his position as tutor, and the rest of this study will explore her responses to his suit and its wider significances in relation to the play’s main themes.

‘Come you with me then, Doris’, instructs Geron (4.1.486). Doris’s assertive response to Geron’s authoritarian direction rejects his attempts to control her actions before marriage has been agreed:

We are not yet one volume, both bound up
And clasped together ...
No, I am yet loose paper, and ’twere good
To keep me so, for when I’m bound I must
Obey, be searched, examined and corrected. (487, 489)

This striking passage offers several crucial points for discussion: the conceit of marriage as bookbinding, the woman/book trope, and the married woman as a book to be ‘corrected’, all of which can be expounded using knowledge of the early modern printing and binding processes.

Doris’s metaphor compares the bound book with the binding of man and woman in marriage, where singledom is a single unbound leaf. Wedlock is analogous to bookbinding, and marriage is exemplified *in* and sanctified *by* the bible, or ‘good book’. The bible’s conception of man and woman becoming ‘one flesh’, as if stitched together, neatly figures both the binding of books and the unification of people in matrimony.⁵ The marriage ceremony in the *Book of Common Prayer* makes explicit reference to the uniting of the two parties and enacts this union in the joining together of their hands (sometimes whilst wrapped in a cloth, thus bound with textiles as well as text) as the celebrant declares, ‘Those whom God hath joined, let no man put asunder’. As Charlotte Scott observes, ‘The idea of the book offers an image of two bodies bound by the same conditions’, guided spiritually and practically in their lives together by *the* book, the bible.⁶ The woman must obey the husband as the individual leaf obeys the structural operations enforced externally by the binder and internally by the book’s structure. The woman’s behaviour reflects the marriage and is susceptible to scrutiny.

But how do the technical processes of bookbinding inform this metaphorical presentation of the marriage/bookbinding trope? The primary intention of book construction, known as ‘forwarding’, is to protect leaves of paper during use and against decay; each of the several stages in the forwarding process strengthens the end product.⁷ The bookbinder folds the pressed leaves of paper in sections, stitches them to ‘slips’ of thick string using linen thread penetrating through sawn holes in the section’s flattened spine, beats it down with sticks and hammers, and manipulates the stitched sections in presses. A plough shaves the uneven edges of paper to a uniform edge, and specialist headbands incorporate structurally rigid yet flexible hide, covered with decorative silk; fine mesh is glued to the spine, reinforcing the unified sections of paper. In the final stage, boards are added to which the binder glues coverings of leather. Known as ‘finishing’, blind tooling with heated metal instruments provides additional decoration, which can be augmented with gold leaf.⁸ Thus while literally constructive and protective, the processes of bookbinding are also physically violent, invasive, and transformative for the paper involved, and offer the customer opportunities to (de)claim the book as his possession.⁹

If the binding qualities of book production are protective, they are also restrictive; belonging and ownership are two sides of the same coin. If so, why does Doris choose this metaphor as a way of expressing her opinion of Geron, what does marital union with him mean for her, and what are the

implications? Doris reads Geron's love poem aloud in 2.1, and her analysis of its contents contextualizes her rejection of Geron's suit:

'My Lesbia, my Cynthia, my Lycoris,
 Or (which is best of names) my lovely Doris' — that's I.
 'I still am thine and cannot commutate;
 I am as certain to thee as thy fate.
 'Tis not my study, or my travails can
 Make me to thee appear another man.
 Thou may'st affirm of me (as whilom did
 Xantippe of her husband, whom she chid,
 Grave Socrates, regardless of his worth,
 He still returned the same that he went forth)
 Before I visit thee, thus may'st thou hear on.
 Thine in the tribulation of love — Geron.'
 Ha, ha, ha. Old whilom Geron! Art thou come again?
 Could Delphos not detain nor the sea swallow thee
 But I must be in danger to be punished
 With the porcupine bristles? Fate deliver me. (2.1.155)

Geron begins by ascribing to Doris the names attributed to mistresses of the classical poets Catullus, Propertius and Gallus, but concludes that her name is the best.¹⁰ Plodding iambic pentameter of rhyming couplets makes up the verse with two metrical exceptions in the first couplet and the last: Geron's attempt to squeeze his learning (using trisyllabic classical names) into the poem's opening jars metrically with Doris's disyllabic name, which appears baser by association; in the final couplet Geron searches for a rhyme with his name, pronounced 'Gerōne', and clumsily settles on 'hear ōn'. The second couplet asserts that Geron will not change (in his love for Doris, also a warning that he is set in his ways), that he will 'still' be her love (always and forever). Its mention of her 'fate', moreover, presents a depressing image of eternal union shackled to an old, unchanging pedant. This sense of confinement continues in 4.1 where Geron insists that Doris will be his student, himself her 'only study' (speech 482), also implying that he will be a jealous spouse restrictive of his wife's freedoms. Doris's verdict on the letter here, 'Fate deliver me', echoes her wooer's vocabulary, effectively returning the letter and its distrusted sentiments to the sender, and justifies her later presentation of marriage to Geron as restrictive and limiting.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* offers another way of reading the book metaphor as constituting relations between men and women in matrimony. As Scott observes, Lady Capulet uses a 'rhetorical emblazoning of Paris' to describe his best features to her daughter, Juliet:¹¹

Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,
 And find delight writ there with beauty's pen.
 Examine every married lineament,
 And see how one another lends content;
 And what obscured in this fair volume lies
 Find written in the margin of his eyes.
 This precious book of love, this unbound lover,
 To beautify him only lacks a cover. (1.3.83–90)¹²

Scott comments: 'The book is made up of two entities, the leaves and the cover, which are reflected by two bodies that "beautify" and bind through their union and consummation. Juliet is both the reader and the binding who, in reading Paris, completes the process of perfection, the "precious book of love"'.¹³ The 'unbound' Paris is unmarried and unclaimed, also suggestive of his limitless scope and ability as a lover. In Lady Capulet's metaphor, Paris is the paper and Juliet the cover, but traditionally the man covers his female partner. Lady Capulet's figurative persuasions allocate the reluctant Juliet more than usual power in their coupling.

Lady Capulet refers to 'gold clasps' as a desirable and sexually suggestive feature designed to pique her daughter's interest in Paris. This vision is quite the opposite of Doris's negative conception of being 'clasped together' which invokes her dismissal of eternal union in marriage and revulsion of sexual relations with Geron. In Lady Capulet's example, Juliet is the necessary component for completing Paris's unbound book; as cover, Juliet is the superficial decoration which also brings promise of protection through marriage to Paris's vulnerable, 'unbound' body. As Scott concludes, 'the book specifically supports the conditions and consummation of love, because it provides a dynamic process of physical and cognitive engagement that is both sensual and sensible'.¹⁴ Thus, Juliet's introduction to Paris stands distinctly at odds with Doris's apprehension of Geron. If Geron is 'December', he has neither a young face nor a page written with beauty's pen (4.1.508); his pages are not those with which Doris would like to be bound.

Although Doris lacks the formal education to be impressed by Geron's invocation of classical muses, Brome showcases her quick wit and penchant

for direct talking. In response to Matho's verbose inquiry after the princess's health, Doris first imitates his loquacious mode of speech, then dismisses his pedantry bluntly: 'Sir, you have lost much time: you might have said, / How does the princess?' (2.1.167). Later she chides her other suitors, Tersulus and Varillus, by punning on their occupations as tailor and barber: 'You shall not need to trim up his affection, / Nor you to stitch up his with your forced courtesies' (4.1.478).

Choosing between the two of them, Doris understandably favours the 'supple-handed barber' whose direct questions urge a quick answer (2.1.181). Alone together, joking about their physical relationship, Doris stops short of saying (yet implying) that *she* might be suspected pregnant if she fainted as regularly as the princess. Varillus puns in response: 'They would say the handmaid had been handled' (194). Added to the flirtatious nature of this comment is a performative suggestion that Varillus is 'handling' Doris at that moment, an intimate gesture interrupted by the entrance of his master. In contrast, Geron the scholar expects to win Doris over with learning and has wooed 'By orality, epistles and by gifts' (3.1.296), guided by Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*. He uses a bibliographic, literary scale when evaluating his future wife: 'she shall be / More precious to me than Homer's Iliads' (4.1.484). Varillus warns Doris that if she agrees to become Geron's wife:

he will love you
So by the book, as he will never lie with you
Without an author for't. (4.1.483)

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet is full of wonder that Romeo kisses 'by th' book' (1.5.109).¹⁵ However, Varillus suggests that guidance found between the sheets of a book will condition Geron's sexual activity, rather than the more organic impulsive desire engendered by procreative marital norms which he has to offer.¹⁶

The perceived links between effective wooing, literature, and women evident in contemporary literature support Geron's approach. Sasha Roberts asserts: 'If men are shown to seduce *with* books, women are frequently represented as being seduced *by* books', providing the example of Gullio in *The Returne from Parnassus* (ca 1600) who quotes from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* as part of his plan for seducing a woman.¹⁷ Contemporaries considered reading to be an active (rather than passive) endeavour which might have erotic effects on women. Adrian Johns states, 'Human beings perceived letters on a page through the mediation of their bodies; the passions were the

emotional, physiological, and moral responses of the human body to its surroundings, and played an unavoidable part in the reading process’.¹⁸ Roberts presents a range of evidence in support of women’s private reading material and location, amongst which is a description of the penetration of the female reader by her subject matter. Geron attempts to woo Doris using his words by penetrating her ear and eye, in anticipation of sexual penetration in wedlock. Her concluding reaction to Geron’s poem is dismissive, however, and echoes John Taylor’s response to the ‘oyly Oratories’ penned by men to their whores: ‘Heere’s a sweete deale of scimble scamble stuffe’.¹⁹

Various early modern sources also register fear of the power of the written word to infect a woman’s mind. Richard Brathwaite expressed concerns about women reading inappropriate texts such as *Venus and Adonis*: ‘My Lady here sits and reads, wonders at the ingenuity of the man [the author], (a pregnant youth doubtlesse,) and will make her *pregnant* too, if shee have any moving faculty in her’.²⁰ Brathwaite thus expresses the notion of penetration and conception through reading. In Thomas Middleton’s *A Mad World, My Masters* (1605), Harebrain monitors the books kept by his wife in her chamber which include *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander*, both suspected of heightening women’s sexual desire.²¹ Harebrain’s comical fear belies a more widespread concern about women reading ‘not with their minds but with their bodies’, as Roberts observes.²² Presumably Geron hopes to have a similar effect on Doris as she ingests his poetry, wooed by his words and penetrated by their learning. Coincidentally, both Brathwaite and Doris express suspicion of scholarly types: Brathwaite names the ‘Schoole-master of folly’ as the ‘experienced instructor to lust, harbourer of illimited desires, and consequently harbenger to the Divell’.²³

Thus Doris responds to Geron’s literary and pedagogic passions by fashioning her own metaphorical rejection of his advances. Why she chooses to figure marriage as bookbinding is clear, but what are the implications of presenting herself as ‘loose paper’? In Gordon Williams’s *Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, the entry for ‘book’ begins with the annotation ‘whore, vagina’. Williams notes that the ‘vaginal image is of a woman opening to receive a man, an idea sometimes reinforced by the phallic pen’.²⁴ He provides an example from ‘Mans Yard’: ‘It is a penn with a hole in the toppe, To write betwene her two-leued booke’, a phrase noted as occurring in Marlowe’s *Ovid* 3.13 which refers to the woman as a ‘two-leaved book’.²⁵ This common trope of the woman as

book focuses on opening and ‘inscribing’, but I argue below that knowledge of male and female (under)clothing additionally informs the metaphor.

In the popular trope of a woman’s body as a two-leaved book, men are interested in the opening of the leaves/legs and that which lies between them. Linen frames both these private spaces: in women’s undergarments and linen-derived pages. In *Love’s Cure*, Lucio (a male child brought up as female) connects loose pages and women’s undergarments:

This masculine attire, is most uneasie,
I am bound up in it: I had rather walke
In folio, againe, loose, like a woman. (2.2.18–20)

The *OED* annotates ‘in folio’ as ‘in a full and loose dress’.²⁶ This passage uses ‘folio’ figuratively and genders it as female: the metaphor likens unbound pages of the folio-size book to the loose garments worn by women on the lower half of their bodies. Biblical teaching advocated against women wearing garments divided between the legs. Instead, women wore linen smocks, often calf-length in surviving examples, underneath skirts of linen, wool or silk, but no other underwear.²⁷ The linen layers enfolded within one another appeared very like the layered leaves of paper before pressing and binding.²⁸ These loose layers enabled easy access *for* women, and for men *to* women, too. Men wore a shirt, often to the knee, tucked into the breeches, which were protected from everyday wear and soiling by under-breeches (linen, tight-fitting equivalents of modern men’s jockey shorts). The material of the breeches was bound between the legs and into the waistband, where the female equivalent (skirt) was not.²⁹ Thus Lucio marks the distinction between gendered lower garments in terms of feeling ‘bound’ and ‘loose’.³⁰ Bibliographic frames of reference describe the clothed, recumbent body of a woman both literally and figuratively: in the division of leaves/legs to access hidden ‘knowledge’ and as the layers of linen akin to a book’s pages.

Externally, both book and woman seek protective authority through binding, whereby the structural and decorative aspects ‘clothe’ the book. Outer clothing protects the skin against harm, additionally providing demarcation of status and contributing to the preservation of social order; the book cover functions similarly. Both types of outerwear are intrinsically designed to be attractive and aesthetically pleasing. As Wendy Wall observes, ‘Textual forms and dress were intricately connected ... Both texts and dress were privileged sites of struggle over the meaning of social order and practice in the sixteenth century’.³¹ Flax is the essential constituent component of both

books and clothes: the fibre used in linen (for undergarments, linings, and external status markers, such as ruffs) and in paper production, the former additionally being recycled for manufacturing the latter. Linen thread was used to stitch both linen and paper, temporarily and permanently.

Additionally, deconstruction was often the end point as part of the recycling process common to both texts and textiles. Helen Smith summarizes the activities of the British paper trade: ‘Inherited, given as gifts or sold second-hand, clothes, however, like books, were unpicked, re-cut, and re-shaped to form new garments’.³² As an extension of Doris’s metaphor, nullified marriage resembles the disruptive and destructive tearing of a leaf from a book, the disharmonious deconstruction of the binding, reflected in annulments recorded in the London Consistory Court Depositions. In *Euphues, The Anatomy of Wit* (1579), John Lyly comments: ‘We commonly see the booke that at Christmas lieth bound on the Stationers stall, at Easter to be broken in the Haberdashers shop’.³³ Taylor further suggests book pages were recycled for wrapping ‘Drugs or Spice’, or suffered a worse fate: ‘in Priuy matters vse them’.³⁴ In addition to representing nullification of marriage, ‘book destruction’ might also figure the wife becoming widowed as one of the legitimate ways of unpicking wedlock, and the woman as widow being recycled by society.³⁵ These writers point to the cyclical usage of books and clothing.

Middleton’s *Your Five Gallants* offers a different context in which the book/woman trope operates: Fripp (the broker-gallant) is visited by Primero (the bawd-gallant) who needs to clothe a new ‘pretty fat-eyed wench ... nectar for great dons’ (1.1.168, 170).³⁶ Fripp alludes to the ‘wench’ henceforth as a book, aptly suited to the learned customers: ‘Of what volume is this book, that I may fit a cover to’t?’ (172–3). Thus Middleton’s play employs the book/woman usage explored above, but expands it. Primero uses book sizes as equivalent to body sizes: ‘Faith, neither in folio nor in decimo sexto, but in octavo between both’ (174–5). Here, the book offers a scale of female frame for clothing, where decimo sexto is petite.³⁷ Using this bibliographic scale, Fripp is able to ‘fit’ clothing for his customer without seeing her in person. In this example, the book’s cover is its clothing, an exterior necessary to disguise the contents. Here, the woman is not complementing the man to create a complete unit; her function is to attract his interest enough to hire and ‘use’ her.³⁸ *Your Five Gallants* implies a further significance, since Middleton’s joke is not simply about scaling the frame of female characters; it also refers to the child actors of the Children of Paul’s who were embodying the play’s characters onstage. It is still a joke about size, but one which puns on the

size of the male actor playing the female role, that is, the paper clothed by its boards and decoration.

In addition to its interpretation of book/woman trope in visual terms or size, the phrase 'loose paper' carries its own significations. By speaking in Geron's bibliographic 'element' (4.1.488), Doris subjects herself to his logic: she must either be bound (in marriage) or loose, thus also implicating herself in the word's multiple meanings. Given this play's interest in the power of rhetoric, we should not be surprised that several interpretations of 'loose' are possible, principally as freedom from an unwanted marriage, more than which Doris values her independence. Williams cites an example from Rowland's *Humors Looking Glasse* (1608) which perhaps suggests Doris's fears for marital union with Geron: a woman newly wed to a scholar wishes 'I were transform'd into a Booke / That your affection might vpon me looke' (1.26). Geron figures his future relationship with Doris in similar scholarly terms: he is keen for Doris to become his pupil, warning her away from the 'plebeians' Varillus and Tersulus, 'least their vulgar breeding / Corrupt your education' (4.1.480). He also wishes himself to be her 'only study' (482), reiterating his claustrophobic intentions and giving Doris further cause to avoid matrimony.

The gendered implications of 'loose', however, undercut Doris's desire for freedom. As explored above, the looseness of women's lower garments and access they provided to the body contrasted with men's, and perhaps reinforced the notion of female promiscuity.³⁹ When discussing some 'smock-secret' (a closely-kept secret) with Varillus and Tersulus, Doris reminds her suitors: 'You know how I have laid myself out to you' (511), a statement which bears more than one interpretation. In *A Common Whore* (a sub-section of which is entitled 'A Comparison betwixt a Whore and a Booke'), Taylor explicitly uses the word 'lay' in the context of prostitution for sartorial recompense: 'Her neather part to stake she'le often lay / To keepe her vpper part in fashion, gay'.⁴⁰ He titillates the reader by likening her smock to a curtain:

But aboue all her *Smock* most praise doth win,
 For 'tis the Curtaine next vnto her skin.
 Her loose *Gowne*, for her looser body fit,
 Shall be adored with a flash of wit. (B4r)

This passage explicitly relates the loose gown to the loose female body and its assumed morals.

In parallel with Doris's love-suit, Stratocles's letter petitions Eudina. Her response compares his ambitions with those of Icarus:

Stratocles—
 May thy ambition hoist thee into air;
 And thy loose wings, like thy licentious paper,
 There failing thee, let fall thy vicious body
 To earth, as here thy name lies to be trod on. (2.1.221)

Here is another use of 'loose' in relation to a paper, this time to represent not an unmarried (or unchaste) woman but controlled political ambition likened to wings rather than pages.⁴¹ Eudina figures Stratocles's inscription by the pointed pen as Cupid's darts or arrows, presuming to pierce her flesh and win her heart:

Stratocles
 (The emblem of whose pride lies there in paper)
 Shot from afar indeed; yet, like a Jove
 (A self-conceited one) presumed to strike
 Love by command into me by his letters. (223)

Thus for Eudina, the phallic pen of Stratocles's suit is not concerned with sexual union or procreation, but with political ambition and power. Doris (whom suitors similarly oppress) describes marriage as a bound book with leaves 'clasped together'. In other circumstances this image might engender a sense of safety, intimacy, and sanctity through marriage. But given her dislike of Geron's opacity, Doris's metaphor in this instance reinforces the sense of claustrophobia suggested in his letter. For Doris, living as 'loose paper', that is, unprotected and vulnerable but independent, is preferable to being united eternally with Geron.

Once bound in matrimony, Doris recognizes that she must 'obey, be searched, examined and corrected' (489). The notion of 'correction' suggests an image of the woman as paper leaves containing errors, with sections struck through leaving marks or blots; it holds similarities with the printing house practice of correcting printed proof sheets while the press is working.⁴² James Shirley's *The Cardinal* (1640) elaborates on the woman/book trope in these terms: in 5.2 a lady is described as 'A pretty book of flesh and blood, and well Bound up, in a fair letter too; would I Had her with all the Errata.'⁴³ Here, the woman as book includes a retrospective list of emendations to errors in the printing process. This list suggests female character

defects, errors of judgment, and immoral acts, and the male character implies that he is willing to accept these assumed vices along with the woman's corporal and carnal gift.

Whether likened to a bound book or to printed leaves to be examined and corrected, women are susceptible to being presented and judged. In *The Schoole of Abuse*, Stephen Gosson warns female playgoers that their very presence in a public theatrical environment lays them open to examination by male audience members: 'If you doe but ... ioyne lookes with an amorous Gazer, you haue already made your selues assaultable, & yelded your Cities to be sacked'.⁴⁴ Doris fully acknowledges that, once married, her behaviour will be checked against the ordinances of the church and her husband's expectations (perhaps also by Geron's literary exemplar), and, as his possession, will be subject to manual 'correction'. Uppermost in Doris's thoughts, therefore, is not just the act of binding in matrimony but also the state of being perpetually bound, and the implications of interference which arise for the conjugal life of the woman. Geron sees marriage as an opportunity to imprint education on his wife, while she fears his scrutiny. The staging of Geron and Doris's courtship presents his desire to occupy the role of teacher (with her as pupil), another reinforcement of the gendered power hierarchy.

Thus Doris's metaphor neatly associates her with looseness in relation to clothing and gender by way of the image of woman as a two-leaved book. Extending the gendered imagery of books and clothing demonstrates how feminized 'loose paper' might be receptive to the phallic 'pen'. Further, if Doris figures herself as an unbound book, she is therefore still 'in the shop', to be rif(f)led through by customers before being claimed. In examining the intersections between women, clothing, and books, Smith considers the 'dressing' of women and of texts, which in bibliographical terms refers to presentation by choice of font, in addition to binding or cover.⁴⁵ This analogy begs the questions that if Doris is a 'loose leaf', what is written on *her* paper, how is it presented, and what is the topic?⁴⁶ Or is she a blank leaf, to be inscribed by Geron?⁴⁷ If the latter, does Geron construe Doris as a 'naked' unbound book in the marketplace, which requires his 'coverings' to clothe and present her? If Geron thinks Doris is eagerly waiting to be clothed by her husband, does he imagine her anticipating clothing by his words, her blank leaf inscribed by her husband's text?⁴⁸ Knowledge according to this frame of reference is a form of dress: Doris's naked pages offer an irresistible project to the pedantic would-be educator wishing to enact didactic 'dressing'.⁴⁹

Other narratives of marriage figure the woman as the 'press' which prints out new copies of her husband. Aaron Kitch summarizes the anxiety surrounding conceptions of reproduction as mechanized processes with reference to *The Winter's Tale*: 'By linking the mechanical labor of print with the human labor of childbirth, the play demonstrates a cultural link between the fantasies of authentic paternity and identical printed copies but also stages the defeat of both models by exposing the flaw of print as an authorizing institution'.⁵⁰ Unlike *The Winter's Tale*, *The Love-Sick Court* focuses on binding rather than print technologies; anxiety about reproduction of non-identical copies, however, is also present in *The Love-Sick Court's* denouement, which depends on the legitimacy of the queen's children; paper metaphors also communicate anxieties about marriage and procreation. As Kitch observes, 'The preservation of manly honor and peace of mind is aligned with textual imprints through the image of adulterated white sheets whose original purity is like a piece of paper before it is sullied by ink'.⁵¹ In the context of verifying paternity, Kitch identifies the blank sheet as an 'image of mental and social equilibrium' suggestive of male qualities, in which context the 'orderly impression of color or letters is equated with legitimate paternity, while the amorphous stain, the illegible excess of ink, connotes bastardy'.⁵² In Brome's passage, Doris figures herself either as a blank sheet for Geron's inscriptions with tuition/text or as an independent, unprotected collection of papers, as yet unbound by the constraints and protection of marital binding.

The action of 'imprinting' is graphically evident as an act of procreation in *The Winter's Tale*, a play that employs printing metaphors at several points.⁵³ Paulina strives to convince Leontes of his son's paternity in bibliographical terms:

Behold, my lords,
 Although the print be little, the whole matter
 And copy of the father: eye, nose, lip,
 The trick of's frown, his forehead, nay, the valley,
 The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek, his smiles,
 The very mould and frame of hand, nail, finger. (2.3.98–103)⁵⁴

The printing metaphor resurfaces when Leontes addresses Florizel:

Your mother was most true to wedlock, Prince,
 For she did print your royal father off,
 Conceiving you. (5.1.123–5)

The Love-Sick Court presents a similar crisis of paternity, resolved by a letter from the dead queen recording the decision to hand over her baby son to a cottage dweller in protection from the raging civil war. Thymele, waiting-woman to the queen and Princess Eudina, explains the subsequent events leading to the information's preservation:

And when,
 After Eudina's birth, she felt herself
 At point of death, she strictly did enjoin
 Me and this woman only conscious with her
 By oath of which she had prepared this copy [*She produces*] a paper.
 In her own hand, to keep it silent, till
 Philocles should be able to secure
 Himself from treachery

(5.3.882)

This single piece of evidence in the queen's own hand convinces the king of its integrity, bringing peace to the kingdom of Thessaly in discovery of the heir and consequent double marriage of the prince and princess. Thus, as in Shakespeare's play, the queen authenticates the paternity of her son in *The Love-Sick Court* with her 'copy'.

But the written word rarely offers clarity such as this in Brome's play: Doris's rejection of Geron principally focuses on her inability to understand his meaning.⁵⁵ In response to Thymele's suggestion that Geron loves her, Doris evocatively describes her objection to Geron's advances and his offer to bind her in marriage:

That's more than I e'er knew or read, by all
 He speaks or writes to me. He clothes his words
 In furs and hoods, so that I cannot find
 The naked meaning of his business, madam.

(3.1.330)

For Doris, a waiting-woman, accustomed to physical work and efficiency in plain speaking, Geron's language cloaks his meaning, superficially over-embellishing the gist of his 'suit'. Her sartorial metaphor expresses exasperation, not admiration; the references to expensive clothing (fur and hoods, which both intrinsically possess and communicate wealth) are likely at odds with Doris's practical work-wear. She describes an almost complete coverage of the body; the hood, depending on its style, might even partially obscure the face. For Doris, Geron is guilty of concealing his meaning with superficiality. These comments chime with the play's broader concerns: clarity in

communication is important not only for the matching of couples in wedlock but for the future of the state.

In *The Love-Sick Court*’s opening moments, the dying king, who represents the body politic, delays his election of a successor (and husband for his daughter) thereby causing instability in his court and rioting by the anxious nation. Reinforced by the wooing subplots, the binding responsibility of ‘choice’ emerges as the play’s main theme, as good and bad judgments are placed under the dramatic microscope: delay saps the life out of the king as he endeavours to work out how to trust people’s motivations, while his daughter Eudina is caught in a neo-platonic love triangle of pathetic indecision. In both circumstances, Stratocles stands to gain (a kingdom and a royal wife) as the play examines the political machinations of his (ultimately) unsuccessful campaign. The subplot involving Doris exhibits greatest clarity in sifting of her wooers’ information. Essentially this play concerns itself with those most modern of subjects: public relations, communications, media, and information analysis. Thus Doris’s concern with establishing the truth of Geron’s writing and speech supports the play’s political questioning of fashion, false affection, and equivocation.

The power of communication is of particular focus as a means of swaying decisions, changing minds, and acquiring the desires of individual characters. Brome provides varied exemplars of the written and spoken word in action, the communication tools of linguistic, verbal, and facial signifiers which can enhance or reduce influence in personal or political circumstances. For some characters, spoken words are preferable because countenance is thought to reveal true feeling, also expressed by other contemporary playwrights. In *The Honest Whore, Part Two*, Thomas Dekker evokes the ‘reading’ of faces and their legibility:

I read

Strange Comments in those margins of your looks:

Your cheekes of late are (like bad printed Bookes)

So dimly charactred, I scarce can spell,

One line of loue in them.

(E2r–v)⁵⁶

Likewise, Shakespeare’s *Lady Macbeth* explicitly connects internal truth with printed matter: ‘Your face, my thane, is as a book where men / May read strange matters’ (1.5.61–2).⁵⁷ In *The Love-Sick Court*, Philocles identifies Matho (in his beard disguise) as ‘Unworthy on thy face to bear man’s ensign’ (4.2.549), that is, not a true man; Doris fears Geron’s ‘ill looks’ (3.1.328); and

Placilla's face betrays her curious (incestuous) love for her brother (3.3.401, 404). Stratocles persuades a number of the Rustics of his campaign to name him as successor to the throne, and they petition the king in this vein (1.1.52); events clarify, however, that Stratocles gained votes misleadingly by spreading rumours that the other candidates, Philocles and Philargus, had died on route to visiting the oracle (55–6).

The play also explores potential for duplicity through writing. Pieces of paper instigate, complicate, and resolve the tangled plot of *The Love-Sick Court*: the oracle's riddling message, wooing suitors' letters, fake letters challenging two of Eudina's suitors to a duel, and the drawing of lots to decide her husband. In comparison, the letter delivering news of Eudina's safety, authenticated with the words 'This is / Their true relation' (4.3.662), augments their equivocation and uncertainty. Revelation of Philocles and Philargus's true paternity, confirmed by the dead queen's letter 'in her own hand' (5.3.882), resolves the plot's complications. Female concealment of information nearly augments the tragic element, almost causing death and an incestuous marriage.⁵⁸ Instead, the written record authenticates the spoken word, as the deceased royal mother confirms the living sons' origins. The queen's autographic note provides the proof which results in a happy, peaceful kingdom; stability lies in the authentication of the fruit of the woman's womb, much as it does in *The Winter's Tale*.

Considering the exemplar texts in chronological order makes it possible to identify a progression in the use of bibliographical metaphor: in Shakespeare, books exemplify the 'perfection' of a good marriage where sexual satisfaction complements religious union, but anxiety about paternity also mars procreation, much in the same way as concern about the spread of literary materials raises questions about pleasure and authority. Middleton's play uses books as a scale for clothing, while Brome harnesses several of these themes in one succinct passage, bringing issues of gender, authority, and status into collision with discussions of marriage, women, clothing, and book production. Beside Doris's dislike of Geron lies her distrust of his message and her fear of what his wooing might disguise; far from prudish, she prefers her wooers to be upfront about their intentions. Geron expresses his conviction that Doris will need tutoring, by him and of him, to avoid imperilling her education and her soul. Doris's acknowledgement that the whole court is 'sick' and 'love-struck' (2.1.161) points to the political malady at the heart of the play, suggestive of its passages of paper and messages across the stage which drive the plot to its ultimate conclusion: for Doris and Eudina, this means binding

in marriage. Geron’s attention is diverted from love suits to the organization of the Rustics in a celebratory dance for the court, that is, from the education of one unwilling student to a pliable group, and he remains a single, unbound volume.

Notes

Thanks to Charlotte Scott for convening the ‘Book and the Stage’ seminar at SAA in Bellevue, 2011, which provided an opportunity to develop initial thoughts expressed in my introduction to the online edition of Brome’s play. Jeanne McCarthy, Todd Landon Barnes, Harry Newman, and Richard Allen Cave have generously provided feedback, and I am also grateful to *Early Theatre*’s anonymous readers for guidance.

- 1 Richard Brome, *The Love-Sick Court*, Eleanor Lowe (ed.), *Richard Brome Online*, Richard Allen Cave (gen ed), <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/brome> (Sheffield, 2010), 4.1.487–8. This edition divides plays into act, scene, and speech number (rather than line number).
- 2 Sid Ray, “‘Those Whom God Hath Joined Together’: Bondage Metaphors and Marital Advice in Early Modern England”, in Ray, *Holy Estates: Marriage and Monarchy in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Selinsgrove, 2004), 26–52.
- 3 For examples of book studies, see Charlotte Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book* (Oxford, 2007). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199212101.001.0001>; Douglas A. Brooks, *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2005); and Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, 1993).
- 4 Mirjam M. Foot, *Bookbinders at Work: Their Roles and Methods* (London, 2006), 3–5.
- 5 Genesis 2:24.
- 6 Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book*, 8.
- 7 Forwarding constitutes the first and largest part of the process that results in a recognizable book. The second part, ‘finishing’, involves procedures that contribute to the book’s aesthetic appearance, superficial to the fortifying elements.
- 8 This account stems from personal experience of practising flexible bookbinding. See also Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford, 1972), 146–53; Foot, *Bookbinders at Work*, 33–64. Arthur W. Johnson’s *Thames and Hudson Manual of Bookbinding* (London, 1978) is still the best guide for practitioners.

- 9 For a good selection of tooled bindings that include owners' initials and coats of arms, see Mirjam Foot, *The History of Bookbinding as a Mirror of Society* (London, 1998). The book wears its mark of ownership as a servant wears livery in textile form.
- 10 *Cynthia* is also the title of Richard Barnfield's sonnet sequence (1595).
- 11 Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book*, 7.
- 12 William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (eds), *The Oxford Shakespeare Complete Works* (Oxford, 1986, 2005), 369–400.
- 13 Scott, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book*, 7–8.
- 14 *Ibid*, 8.
- 15 A further echo of *Romeo and Juliet* is noted in 2.1 when Philocles rejects Eudina's label as 'brother': 'A brother! What's a brother? A mere name' (2.1.202), recalling Juliet's 'What's in a name?' (2.1.85), suggesting that Brome is not only critiquing courtly neo-platonism but also directly setting *The Love-Sick Court* up for comparison with other well-known plays concerning love and devotion.
- 16 Another interpretation sees Varillus making a casual reference to Aretino's *Postures*, the sonnets accompanying Giulio Romano's sixteenth-century sexually explicit engravings.
- 17 Sasha Roberts, 'Shakespeare "creeps into the womens closets about bedtime": women reading in a room of their own', Gordon McMullan (ed.), *Renaissance Configurations: Voices/Bodies/Spaces, 1580–1690* (London, 1998), 30–63, 42.
- 18 Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, 1998), 386.
- 19 John Taylor, *A Common Whore* (London, 1622; STC 23742), B5r.
- 20 Richard Brathwaite, *A Survey of History* (London, 1638; STC 3583a), 272. Roberts, 'Women reading in a room of their own', also explores the connections between women's private reading and sexual titillation.
- 21 Thomas Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters*, Peter Saccio (ed.), annotated by Celia R. Daileader, Gary Taylor, and John Lavagnino (general eds), *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford, 2007), 417–51.
- 22 Roberts, 'Women reading in a room of their own', 43.
- 23 Brathwaite, *A Survey of History*, 272.
- 24 Gordon Williams, *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* 3 vols (London, 1994), 1.131.
- 25 Williams's further development of the book/woman trope reveals that copulation 'is described as reading "a Lecture in a two-leau'd book"' (first example from 1633); *ibid*, 131.

- 26 'Folio, n. and adj.' 5b. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.
- 27 For discussion, photographs of surviving male and female linen underwear, and patterns, see Janet Arnold with Jenny Tiramani and Santina M. Levey, *Patterns of Fashion 4: The Cut and Construction of Linen Shirts, Smocks, Neckwear, Headwear and Accessories for Men and Women, ca 1540–1660* (London, 2008).
- 28 Funeral monuments are extremely useful for understanding the visual correlation between female lower body garments and stacks of loose pages, especially those depicting women in a supine position.
- 29 See my discussion in "My cloak's a stranger; he was made but yesterday": Clothing, Language and the Construction of Theatre in Middleton', Gary Taylor and Trish Henley (eds), *The Oxford Handbook to Middleton* (Oxford, 2012), 196–209. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199559886.013.0013>.
- 30 This distinction provides an additional gloss to Lady Capulet's description of Paris as 'unbound', lacking binding male clothing, which potentially feminizes him. Musidorus warns Pyrocles of the amorous suitor's dangerous potential for taking on the feminine characteristics of his pursuit: 'this effeminate love of a woman doth so womanize a man that, if he yield to it, it will not only make him an Amazon, but a launder, a distaff-spinner or whatsoever other vile occupation their idle heads can imagine and their weak hands perform', in Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1590), ed. Maurice Evans (New York, 1984), 133–4. See also Wall, *The Imprint of Gender*, 265–6. There are other ways of reading 'bound' and 'loose' bodies, but my analysis focuses specifically on clothing.
- 31 *Ibid*, 233.
- 32 Helen Smith, "'This one poore blacke gowne lined with white": The Clothing of the Sixteenth-Century English Book', Catherine Richardson (ed.), *Clothing Culture, 1350–1650* (Aldershot, 2004), 195–208.
- 33 John Lyly, *Euphues, The Anatomy of Wit* (London, 1579; STC 17053), A4r.
- 34 Taylor, 'A Comparison betwixt a Whore and a Booke', in *A Common Whore*, B8r.
- 35 In early modern drama, widows are often figured as soiled goods with overabundant desires. For further discussion of widows see Ira Clark, 'The widow hunt on the Tudor-Stuart stage', *Studies in English Literature* 41 (2001): 399–411. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1556195>. See also Loreen L. Giese's discussion of the widow as a wealthy and sexually voracious stereotype in drama of the period, in *Courtships, Marriage Customs and Shakespeare's Comedies* (New York, Basingstoke, 2006).
- 36 Thomas Middleton, *Your Five Gallants*, Ralph Allen Cohen with John Jowett (eds), Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (general eds), *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford, 2007), 594–636.

- 37 Harry Newman also points to Webster's induction to Q3 of Marston's *The Malcontent* (1604) where 'Henry Condell draws attention to the difference in size between the adult body of an actor from the King's men (the onstage Burbage) and the underdeveloped body of a boy actor from the Children of the Queen's Revels by representing them as a "folio" and a "decimo-sexto": "Why not Malevole in folio with us, as Jeronimo in decimo-sexto with them?" (77–9)'; Newman, private correspondence.
- 38 Smith acknowledges the descriptive 'appearance of the physical book that at the same time literalizes that book as an object for consumption'; Smith, 'The Clothing of the Sixteenth-Century English Book', 196.
- 39 Ironically, the opening flap in the breeches, which affords instant access to the penis for urination and sexual activity without the need to undress completely, subverts the 'bound' appearance of men's garments.
- 40 Taylor, *A Common Whore*, A4v.
- 41 In the next scene, Geron more successfully refers to himself as Daedalus taking wing (3.1.302); Daedalus escaped where Icarus did not.
- 42 These sheets are not always discarded, but are sometimes retained and bound alongside corrected sheets. See John Jowett's explanation in *Shakespeare and Text* (Oxford, 2007), 58–61, especially 60.
- 43 Qtd from James Shirley, *The Cardinal* (London, 1652; Wing S3461), E4v.
- 44 Stephen Gosson, *The Schoole of Abuse* (London, 1579; STC 12097.5), F2v.
- 45 See Smith, 'The Clothing of the Sixteenth-Century English Book', 201. As implied by Smith, the prefatory material protects the book's main content by preparing the reader with dedicatory statements of patronage and/or claims of paternity or guardianship.
- 46 Perhaps household management, rules for the conduct of servants, or an inventory of the linen chest?
- 47 The method of inscribing the blank sheet is undoubtedly phallic: either by hand, using the phallic pen to convey ink to paper, or by printing press, in which the damp receptive leaf of paper is 'covered' and impressed by the type; both methods suggest authority and paternity in the bibliographic and marital contexts.
- 48 Scott notes a contrasting comparison between body and book in *The Comedy of Errors*, where Dromio of Ephesus imagines that if his 'skin were parchment', the beatings he receives from Antipholus might be recorded on his body in 'ink' (*Shakespeare and the Idea of the Book*, 6).
- 49 Geron's anticipation of marriage, and unfortunately timed use of the word 'coition' in 3.1.340, further hint at the populating of his household with children, new subjects in need of education.

- 50 Aaron Kitch, 'Bastards and Broad-sides in *The Winter's Tale*', *Renaissance Drama* 30 (1999–2001), 43–71, 45–6. Harry Newman points out that 'The printing/procreation analogy has been commonplace for decades in printed books' prefatory materials' where real printers, patrons and authors are likened to figurative parents, godparents or midwives; Newman, 'The Printer's Tale Retold: Printing Paternal Likeness in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and the Preliminaries of the First Folio', seminar paper, SAA 2011, 5.
- 51 Kitch, 'Bastards and Broad-sides', 50.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 For discussion of examples, see *ibid.*
- 54 William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (eds), *The Oxford Shakespeare Complete Works* (Oxford, 1986, 2005), 1123–52.
- 55 Giese's detailed study of courtship and marriage using the London Consistory Court Depositions enables her to identify the main factors which attract a woman to a man. Most frequently cited is 'worth' which can include a number of different attributes, such as character, wealth, and status. Giese, *Courtships, Marriage Customs and Shakespeare's Comedies*.
- 56 Thomas Dekker, *The Honest Whore, Part Two* (London, 1630; STC 6506).
- 57 William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (eds), *The Oxford Shakespeare Complete Works* (Oxford, 1986, 2005), 969–93.
- 58 The play reveals Philocles to be Eudina's brother, thus preventing an incestuous marriage and enabling his union with Placilla (originally thought his sister).