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"An vnder black dubblett signifying a Spanish hart": Costumes and Politics in Middleton's *A Game at Chess*

Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* has long held a place of particular importance in studies of early modern English theatre history. Performed for a record nine straight performances (a feat not accomplished again until the Restoration), Middleton's production has attracted scholarly interest by virtue of both its unparalleled contemporary success and its overt religious and political messages of anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish propaganda.[1] Performed by the King's Men at the Globe playhouse between 5 and 14 August (except for Sunday) 1624, *A Game at Chess* provides the most conspicuous instance from the period in which the stage addressed issues of immediate political significance. Certainly history plays, such as Shakespeare's series of works chronicling the Wars of the Roses, dealt with English politics, but no play dealt so directly with the politics of the moment. Even more important, the politics of the moment responded. John Woolley, the secretary of the English agent in Brussels, wrote "all the nues I have heard since my comming to towne is of a nue Play. It is called a game at Chess, but it may be a vox populy for by reporte it is 6 tymes worse against the Spanyard."[2] The play's politics struck such a chord and the performance was deemed so scandalous that it was ultimately shut down by King James himself after he received an official complaint from the Spanish Ambassador Extraordinary, Don Carlos Coloma.

Naturally, the religious and political aspects of Middleton's play have drawn scholarly attention in the past. *A Game at Chess* differs markedly from Middleton's previous plays, which are representative of the genres popular at the time. By 1623, he had written a number of city comedies for boy companies, followed by tragicomedies, and then several tragedies that were performed by the King's Men. It is striking that Middleton followed this body of work with a play

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as unique as *A Game at Chess.* No previous play by Middleton, nor by any other playwright of the period for that matter, addressed the politics and religion of the period so brashly, and scholars have devoted considerable attention to explicating the complex dialogue that the play entered into with the London audiences that came to see it. Still, for all of the attention that Middleton's play has received, one area of study has gone largely unconsidered: the play's visual presentation. How did the actors appear when they first performed the play, and how was that visual information received by early modern London audiences? Beyond its overtly partisan dialogue, the initial performances of *A Game at Chess* also skillfully employed costumes to convey meaning and further the play's pro-Protestant, pro-English agenda. When we consider the fact that, throughout the early modern period in England, an acting company's costume stores often cost more than the playhouses themselves, it becomes particularly important to explore how theatrical apparel was employed in production.[3] This essay seeks to establish what costumes were worn by the King's Men for their production of Middleton's play and to demonstrate the religious and political significance apparel had for contemporary audiences.

No inventory list exists for the apparel worn in *A Game at Chess* (or for any other early modern English play). Nevertheless, with this production, there is a great deal of historical evidence from which we can deduce what was worn. In addition to several different texts of the play, together providing considerable insight into its original composition, there is also contemporary commentary that speaks to the particulars of the production.[4] The first thing we learn from extant letters is that the actors playing the English were uniformly dressed in white and those playing the Spanish appeared in black. This color scheme served to establish the characters as pieces in a game of chess as well as to delineate clearly the diametrical moral positions of the two sides as they were presented in the play.

Several correspondences also note that the characters onstage were intended to represent well-known contemporaries from England and Spain—including royalty, which was expressly forbidden. John Holles (c. 1565–1637), then Baron Haughton, later first Earl of Clare, saw the play on 10 August and wrote to Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, about the experience,[5] noting that it provided "a representation of all our spannishe traffike."[6] The Spanish traffic Holles mentions refers to the intense anti-Spanish feelings that were a constant in England since before the defeat of the Armada in 1588 and that grew to a fevered pitch in England in 1624. In October of the preceding year, Prince Charles and the Duke of Buckingham returned from Spain following a failed attempt to draw up a marriage contract between Charles and the Spanish Infanta. Charles's trip had been a source of profound anxiety throughout England; not only did it jeopardize the life of the heir to the throne by placing him in the hands of the Spanish, it also threatened the future of the Protestant nation by allying it through marriage to a powerful and avowedly Catholic country. So great was the fear caused by Charles's trip that his return without a Catholic wife elicited jubilation throughout England. Bonfires were lit, candles burned in windows, churches sang out in praise of the return of the prince, and the long-standing restraints against the expression of anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic viewpoints were relaxed.[7]

It is in light of these events that Holles and the rest of the English audience first saw *A Game at Chess.*[8] The foreign relations between Spain and England inform both the substance of the play and the manner in which it was received; Holles summarizes the play, saying the "descant was built uppon the popular opinion, that the Iesuits mark is to bring all the christian world vnder Rome for the spirituality, & vnder Spayn for the temporalty."[9] Holles's commentary is significant to a study of the production's costumes because it indicates that he saw the apparel worn onstage as serving overwhelmingly to make the wearers distinguishable as particular players in national policy, and not merely as players on a stage. Accordingly, although Holles notes that "the whole play is a chess board, England the whyt hows, Spayn the black," and he refers briefly to black and white pieces, he primarily discusses the characters by using the names of the people they represent. He mentions "Gundomar," Count Gondomar–Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, the Spanish ambassador to England 1613–18 and 1620–2; "Ignatius Loyola," the founder of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, in the sixteenth century; "Bristow," John Digby, Earl of Bristol, who was a longtime ambassador to Spain but was under house arrest at the time of the production under suspicion of supporting the Spanish cause; "Spalato," Marc Antonio de Dominis, Archbishop of Spalatro, who converted to Protestantism and was openly received by James in England but left the country and converted back to Catholicism in 1622.

Other detailed reports of the play are not firsthand but nevertheless provide insight into what was seen onstage. Don Carlos de Coloma, writing to the Conde–Duque Olivares, favorite of the Spanish king, on 20 August 1624, notes that the characters in the play are clearly meant to represent actual individuals. In addition to mentioning Saint Ignatius, the Archbishop of Spalatro, and the Count of Gondomar, he states that "the king of the blacks has easily been taken for our lord the King, because of his youth, dress, and other details" (Item 5, 194–5). Sir Edward Conway, Secretary of State, wrote to the Privy Council on 12 August 1624 that King James received word from the Spanish Ambassador that a comedy was being performed wherein "they [the King's Men] take the boldnes, and presumption in a rude, and dishonorable fashion to represent on the Stage the persons of his Maiestie, the Kinge of Spaine, the Conde de Gondomar, the Bishop of Spalato, &c." (Item 8, 20). Taken together, contemporary reports makes it clear that many of the characters onstage were immediately identifiable by virtue of the costumes they wore. To the list mentioned in the correspondences from the period, we can add the White King, the White Knight, and the White Duke, who, from their roles in the play, would have been easily recognizable as King James, Prince Charles, and the Duke of Buckingham.

But the written responses to *A Game at Chess* do more than just indicate whom the costumes helped the actors impersonate. They also suggest how the apparel they wore worked to fashion the characters they played. Consider Gondomar. Contemporary report makes it clear that the role was clearly identifiable onstage. John Chamberlain notes in his commentary on the play that the actors had gone so far as to purchase one of the ambassador's old suits,

or clothing made to resemble it: "they counterfeited his person to the life, with all his graces and faces, and had gotten (they say) a cast sute of his apparell for the purpose" (Item 20, 204). Beyond observing that Gondomar was readily identifiable, however, several contemporaries note that he appeared on the stage with his well known litter and chair. The litter was one that he frequently used while in London, and the chair was specially designed with a hole in the bottom to accommodate his severe case of anal fistula. In the same sentence in which John Holles mentions Gondomar, he notes the fact that the character appeared onstage in his litter, "his open chayre for the ease of that fistulated part" (Item 7, 198). Don Carlos de Coloma says that Gondomar was "brought on to the stage in his little litter almost to the life, and seated on his chair with a hole in it" (Item 5, 195). Writing to Sir Dudley Carleton, Sir Francis Nethersole only briefly mentions *A Game at Chess* but makes sure to note the chair: "Gondomar brought on the Stage in his chayre." Count Gondomer's particular bodily infirmity, then, was an integral part of his visible personation on the stage. A picture of Gondomar's litter and chair appear on the title page of Thomas Scott's *Vox Populi* (Fig. 1), which was published in 1624 and served as a major source for Middleton's play.[10]

What makes Gondomar's ailment particularly important to the play is the timing with which the litter and chair are introduced—act 5. We can be certain that the actor playing the Black Knight would have been identified as Gondomar long before the fifth act. Gondomar's alleged villainies, Howard–Hill notes, were common gossip in London before *A Game at Chess* was performed.[11] His particular physical malady was equally well known; and to make certain his audience is aware of the Black Knight's defining physical characteristic, Middleton has the Fat Bishop state "Yonder's Black Knight, the fistula of Europe"[12] at 2.2.46, long before the audience would have seen the visible representation of the Black Knight's ailment. The early modern association of physical flaw and moral infirmity, such as we see in Shakespeare's Richard III and Middleton's De Flores from *The Changeling*, informs the manner in which the Black Knight would be understood; the appearance of his specially prepared chair late in the play provides a visually operative comic stab at a character who has shown himself enormously worthy of abuse as a consequence of his admitted "20,985" schemes and machinations.

Even more than contemporary commentary, the most promising place to look for additional information regarding the costumes worn in the original production would appear to be the title page of the First Quarto. Divided into two parts, the title page presents a considerable amount of information. The top half shows a table with the left side labeled "The Black-House" and the right side "The White-House." On the one side we find the Black King, the Black Queen, the Black Duke, and the Fat Bishop. Across from them sit the White King, the White Queen, the White Duke, and the White Bishop. The bottom half of the title page shows three characters: the Black Knight, the White Knight, and, again, the Fat Bishop. Also, there are three miniature characters who appear in a bag in the back, meant to represent the chess bag that holds all of the pieces that are taken in the game (Fig. 2).

THE SECOND PART OF VOX POPVLI,
or
Gondomar appearing in the likenes of
Matchiauell in a Spanish Parliament,
wherein are discouered his treacherous & subtile Practises
To the ruine as well of England, as the Netherlandes.
Faithfully Translated out of the Spanish Coppie by a well-willer
to England and Holland.

Printed at Goricom by Ashuerus Jans.
1624. Stilo nouo.

Figure 1.
Title page of Scott's *Second Part of Vox Populi*. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

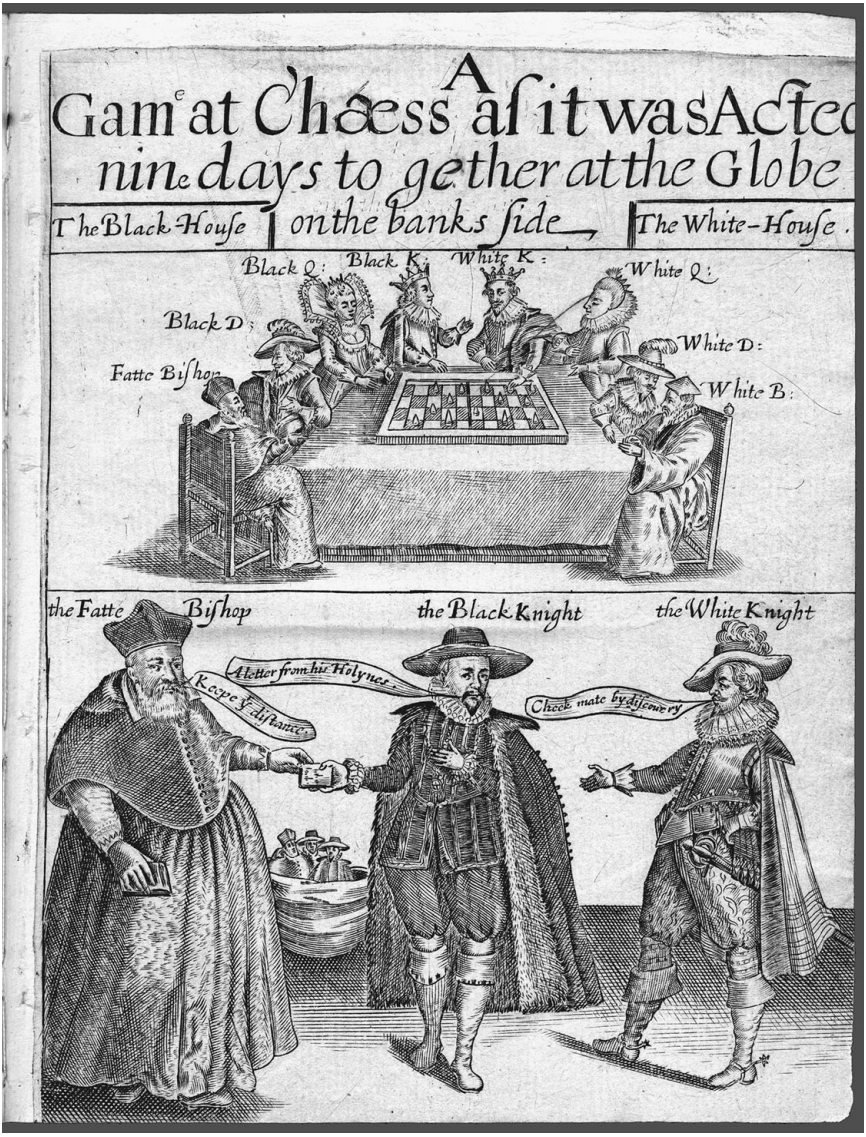

Figure 2.
Title page of *A Game at Chess*, Q1. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Although the costumes presented on the page are clearly drawn and the particular articles of apparel easily distinguishable, this information is potentially misleading, for the pictures are drawn not in the form of the players who performed the roles but in the likeness of the historical figures they were intended to represent. Thus, as John Moore has noted, the White Bishop on the title page looks distinctly like George Abbot, the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Black Duke resembles the Conde–Duque Olivares in the cut of his beard and the heavy outlines of his body; the White Duke has the strikingly triangular beard of George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham; and the White Knight has the "same face, with the delicate profile and the large mournful eyes, which Van Dyke immortalized in portraits of [Prince] Charles."[13] In the case of the Black Knight and the Fat Bishop, scholars have gone beyond identifying the characters as representing Count Gondomar and Marc'Antonio de Dominis and determined the actual portraits of those men that were used by the artist who made the title page.[14]

Although these images may not represent how the actors appeared in production, they signified richly to the early modern reader. For instance, the Black Queen and the White Queen appear in strikingly different apparel. Moore has addressed the appearance of the two queens, writing:

> The middle-aged White Queen, with the high forehead and prominently beaked nose of Anne, wearing the pleated ruff and high-cut bodice of an earlier style of dress, is sharply contrasted with the young Black Queen, with her more delicate features, wearing the fan-shaped ruff and the low square-cut bodice of the new style which had spread from France, the native home of Isabella of Bourbon.[15]

What Moore fails to note is that the style of dress worn by the Black Queen with its ample décolletage was most commonly worn in England by unmarried women.[16] Moreover, since this style was not commonly seen in Spain, it was specifically chosen to represent the Black Queen. Consequently, the Black Queen's apparel on the title page insinuates sexual accessibility in one who should be unavailable, and visibly mirrors her Pawn's sexual forwardness with the Black Bishop's Pawn in 4.3.

More informed conclusions regarding the costumes worn in the original production can be drawn about the clergy of the White House and the Black House. It should be remembered that religious conflict pervaded the early modern period. England had broken from the Catholic Church almost a hundred years before, but had reverted to Catholicism during the reign of Queen Mary I and had feared reversion to Catholicism ever since. The recent near match of Prince Charles with the Spanish Infanta served to heighten this fear. As a result of this anxiety, the presentation of members of the English and Catholic clergy in *A Game at Chess* spoke immediately and significantly to the concerns of the people watching the performance. The play has six characters who are members of the clergy: the Black Bishop, the Black Bishop's Pawn, the White Bishop, the White Bishop's Pawn, Ignatius Loyola, and the Fat Bishop.[17] The costumes they wore in performance can be ascertained from the rigid rules that defined appropriate clerical garb

in Protestant England and Catholic Spain. According to these rules, the White Bishop and his Pawn appeared in academic robes and a square cap, and the Black Bishop and his Pawn wore Catholic vestments (Ignatius Loyola and the Fat Bishop will be dealt with later).[18] It is quite possible that some of the costumes were genuine religious articles worn in the past by the clergy. Stephen Greenblatt notes that when the apparel of Catholicism was renounced in England, the church sold some of its properties to the professional players.[19] The importance of the costuming choices employed for the clergy of the Black and White houses cannot be overestimated, for the clothes worn by Protestants and Catholics served literally to embody the religious ideologies of each.

The vestments worn by the Black Bishop and his Pawn are vital to their roles as members of the Catholic Church, for the religious attire serves to represent visibly a priest's vow of sexual abstinence and separate him from the rest of society. Catholic religious apparel works to identify the clergy as intermediaries between God and man. The costumes worn by the Black Bishop and his Pawn are identified as Catholic vestments in the White Queen's Pawn's exclamation upon first seeing the Black Bishop's Pawn: "By my penitence / a comely presentation, and the habit, to admiration reverend" (1.1.34–5). The Black Knight notes the specific articles that adorn the Black Bishop's Pawn, saying that perhaps he should wear "a three pound smock 'stead of an alb, / An epicene chasuble" (1.1.231–2). The alb and the chasuble are part of the Catholic vestments. The alb is a white linen, shirtlike garment that reaches nearly to the ground and is secured at the waist by a girdle. A chasuble is the principal Mass vestment, worn over the rest. It is a large, circular or square piece of cloth that has a hole in the middle for the head.[20]

Catholic vestments visually asserted the fact that the clergy served a mystical function essential to the salvation of the congregation. Catholics maintained that it was essential to attend church regularly, where they could have their sins forgiven and take part in Holy Communion. The Catholic priest or bishop's apparel consisted of a set of articles that identified and were crucial to his ability to absolve people of their sins, to sanctify water and objects, and to transubstantiate bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ during Mass.

The Protestant clergy's clothing in 1624 similarly identified the wearer's particular role in the lives of their congregations. The religion of the English Church after the Reformation advanced a very different understanding of Christianity from Catholicism, one divested of ritual, and offering a far more limited range of possibilities for the devout individual. Appropriate Protestant Christian living required that one engage the Holy Word directly and seek God's forgiveness on one's own.[21] In this formulation of Christianity, the church was significantly less important, for it did not play any ritual role in the salvation of its adherents. The Latin Mass was replaced with a vernacular liturgy; transubstantiation was replaced by metaphor—the bread and wine now stood for the body and blood of Christ, with the taking of Communion serving merely as a reassertion of one's faith and not a necessary step toward salvation. In the Protestant church, the clergy were allowed to marry and had closer contact with regular society than did their Catholic counterparts. Divested of its mystical

purpose, the English clergy after the Reformation served the function of religious educator. The Protestant minister was a teacher to his congregation, using didactic lectures to explain the Bible and eradicate ignorance and superstition. Accordingly, the attire for such a clergy was the scholar's gown that identified the wearer, both in English society and on the stage, with his role as a religious professor. It should be noted, however, that the politics surrounding the spectacular presentation of religion in England was a hotly contested issue at the time. Puritans had a long tradition of arguing vigorously against the wearing of any distinctive apparel by the clergy. Other, more moderate Protestants, sought to have the English clergy wear at least a surplice while performing the Eucharist. And some, most notably William Laud, who became Bishop of London in 1628 and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, sought to increase the visual spectacle of English religious practice.[22] Middleton's play works to elide the issue by openly addressing the immorality of Catholic vestments while making no comment at all on the English religious apparel worn onstage.

By presenting a contrast between the academic gowns likely worn by the Protestant ministers and the vestments almost certainly worn by the Catholic priests, Middleton established the dramatic territory on which he could visually deconstruct the tenets of Catholicism through the course of his play. The preponderance of this deconstruction takes place in the actions of the Black Bishop's Pawn, which serve to belie systematically the holy functions of the Catholic priest and betray the religious purpose of his holy habit. Middleton makes little effort to proffer the White Bishop or his Pawn as significant voices for the true church. Rather, he focuses his attention on showing the Catholic clergy as mendacious, cruel, lascivious, and ungodly.

Of course, Middleton depicts the Catholic Church as thoroughly corrupt before the Black Bishop's Pawn ever enters upon the stage. At the start of the play, Ignatius Loyola presents himself in no uncertain terms as an evil, power-hungry schemer:

> Hah! Where? What angle of the world is this,
> That I can neither see the politic face
> Nor with my refined nostrils taste the footsteps
> Of any of my disciples, sons and heirs
> As well of my designs as institutions?
> I thought they'd spread over the world by this time,
> Covered the earth's face and made dark the land
> Like the Egyptian grasshoppers.
> Here's too much light appears shot from the eyes
> Of truth and goodness never yet deflowered; (1.1.1–9)

The image of Jesuits that Ignatius presents is an extreme one, but it is not dissimilar to how Catholics were widely depicted in Protestant (not merely Puritan) writing. As historian Roger Lockyer has noted, "the history of England in the seventeenth century is incomprehensible without taking into account the hysterical anti-Catholicism that coloured popular attitudes: to call a man a papist was

to accuse him of the vilest perfidy and treachery."[23] Middleton depicts Ignatius as a caricature of evil, but it was likely the way he was understood by his audience. In England's collective memory, the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, when Catholics led by Guy Fawkes attempted to blow up the houses of Parliament with all the royal family, was still fresh, its foiling the cause for annual celebration (which continues to this day). In 1619, the continent was riddled with conflict as Catholic Spain pursued open war with the Protestants in the German states, most notably Frederick V, Elector of the Palatinate of the Rhine, who was married to the English Princess Elizabeth.[24] The Spanish-born Ignatius embodied the fear and anger the English had toward Spain, the most powerful Catholic country in Europe.

What distinguishes the actions of the Black Bishop's Pawn from the words of Ignatius, however, is that the Pawn primarily pursues the religious functions promised by his apparel. He has political significance as well, but only in the form of metaphor: the perfidious Catholic cleric unsuccessfully attempts to corrupt and seduce the innocent, virginal English maiden (the White Queen's Pawn). The actions that the Black Bishop's Pawn pursues relate specifically to his profession as a representative of the Catholic Church. Significantly, his apparel is frequently mentioned and serves an important function in his designs.

When he has decided to pursue the White Queen's Pawn, the Black Bishop's Pawn's opening thought is to win her through the visible display of his religious power: "Let me contemplate, / With holy wonder season my access, / And by degrees approach the sanctuary / Of unmatched beauty set in grace and goodness" (1.1.70–3). The Catholic vestments were, in and of themselves, an affront to Protestant thought. As Robin Clifton explains, "Catholicism's elaborate cycle of observances, its complex ritual and dramatic ceremonial, drew biting criticism from most Protestant writers. . . . This complex ceremonial resulted in part from the laity's weak preference for a spectacular and visible religion, but equally relevant was the clergy's desire for power."[25] By appealing to his "holy wonder," the Black Bishop's Pawn highlights what the English considered to be the hypocrisy of Catholicism: its reliance on literally spectacular deceit at the expense of true religiosity.

Continuing to pursue his religious function, the Black Bishop's Pawn entices the White Queen's Pawn to become a Catholic. She readily accedes to his wishes, taking his pious figure to represent an equally pious heart. The White Queen's Pawn's first undertaking as a newly converted Catholic is confession. The Black Bishop's Pawn promises that the practice will "make your merit, which through erring ignorance / Appears but spotted righteousness to me, / Far clearer than the innocence of infants" (1.1.87–9). However, in an aside he marks the true purpose of taking confession:

> Now to the work indeed, which is to catch
> Her inclination; that's the special use
> We make of all our practice in all kingdoms,
> For by disclosing their most secret frailties,
> Things, which once ours, they must not hide from us,
> (That's the first article in the creed we teach'em)

> Finding to what point their blood most inclines,
> Know best to apt [adapt] them then to our designs. (1.1.108–15)

The confessional is not a Protestant practice. The implication in *A Game at Chess* is that the Catholic clergy acknowledges the ungodliness of its practices and purposefully uses its holy office to further its impious designs. Accordingly, in the next act, the Black Bishop's Pawn instructs the White Queen's Pawn that obedience is a fundamental principal of Catholicism, and then demands that she have sex with him, reprimanding her for breaking her religious duty when she has the audacity to demur. The White King notes that although the deeds of the Black Bishop's Pawn are vile in and of themselves, they take on a far more pernicious aspect as a result of his religious clothing:

> When we find desperate sins in ill men's companies
> We place a charitable sorrow there,
> But custom and their leprous inclination
> Quits us of wonder, for our expectation
> Is answered in their lives; but to find sin,
> Ay, and a masterpiece of darkness, sheltered
> Under a robe of sanctity, is able
> To draw all wonder to that monster only. (2.2.127–34)

The clear argument in *A Game at Chess* is that the "masterpiece of darkness" is endemic to the "robe of sanctity" worn by the Catholic clergy; the vestments signify darkness where they should signify light.

According to the logic of *A Game at Chess*, the Catholic religion is, itself, little more than a masquerade. Costume serves a function for the clergy who employ it to bewilder people into believing in their holiness and accepting the tenets of their religion, which serve merely to extend the reach of their power. This view of Catholicism is further supported by the Black Bishop's Pawn's willingness to take off his religious vestments and put on a different costume when he believes it will help him more effectively to pursue his designs. In 3.3, the Black Bishop's Pawn appears, according to the text, in "rich attire" or "richly accoutred" as part of the Black Queen's Pawn's plan to snare the White Queen's Pawn and trick her into having sex with the Black Bishop's Pawn. Because priests are bound to a life of poverty,[26] the Black Bishop's Pawn's change of clothing into expensive apparel is a double offense.

The White Queen's Pawn falls for the Black Queen's Pawn's ruse. She believes in the power of the Black Queen's Pawn's magical glass and accepts that the costumed Black Bishop's Pawn is her future husband. However, the White Queen's Pawn's inherent innocence demands that she be married before she go to bed. This request gives the Black Bishop's Pawn pause, for his holy vows will not permit him to take a wife. Swapan Chakravorty has suggested that the Black Bishop's Pawn's last-minute qualms derive from his vow of celibacy,[27] but his earlier attempt to rape the White Bishop's Pawn and the Black Queen's Pawn's accusation that he has fathered bastards suggests that the vow to which he refers

is the public vow of matrimony and serves merely as a last-minute reminder of the private religious hypocrisy in which he is about to take part. He has taken off his clothing and just as easily removed any semblance of morality.

Throughout *A Game at Chess*, Middleton stresses the notion that one's clothes should represent one's identity and that the ability to change apparel demonstrates the vilest deceitfulness. This understanding of clothing has antecedents in morality plays and interludes in which only Vice characters disguised themselves. As Jean MacIntyre and Garrett Epp note, most costume changes in early English drama have negative implications—a visible rendering of the doctrine that, because God is unchanging, changeability is itself a sign of ungodliness.[28] The Black Bishop's Pawn provides an example of this, but not the most pernicious one. The clearest example of the perfidy attached to the changing of one's apparel can be found in the actions of the White King's Pawn, who changes sides onstage through the removing of his white upper garment to show black underneath. Holles mentions it in his letter:

> one of the white pawns, wth an vnder black dubblett, signifying a Spanish hart, betrays his party to their avuantage, auanceth Gundomars propositions, works vnder hand the Princes cumming into Spayn: which pawn so discouered, the whyt King reuyles him, objects his raising him in wealth, in honor, from mean[d]e condition, next classis to a lab[r]ouring man: this by the character is supposed Bristow.[29]

It is likely that the character wore a white jerkin or jacket on top of his black doublet earlier in the play and simply took it off to show his "Spanish hart."

The White King's Pawn presents a special problem. He is identified by Holles as the Earl of Bristol but is understood by most modern critics to represent Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex and Lord Treasurer. Cranfield would have fit the character of the White King's Pawn as well as Bristol in August of 1624: he was impeached by the House of Commons in May 1624, the month before Sir Henry Herbert licensed *A Game at Chess* for performance. Indeed, the White King's Pawn also has some characteristics of Sir Toby Matthew, an English Catholic who was pro-Spanish.[30] Looking at the various historical individuals, A. R. Braunmuller has concluded that "we may never know—reading Holles's letter and other seventeenth- and twentieth-century accounts suggests it is self-defeatingly arbitrary to ask—whether some, or most, of the spectators at the Globe understood the White King's Pawn to represent the Earl of Middlesex or the Earl of Bristol, or some other contemporary figure, or an amalgam of several figures, or none."[31] What is certain is that seemingly loyal English subjects may have inner identities that belie their outward appearance and that true subjects of the crown must be vigilant against those who might change their apparel and reveal a Catholic or Spanish allegiance.

The anxiety surrounding one's ability to change clothes and alter one's loyalty was keen in early modern English society. The nature of this fear comes into focus when we recognize that apparel did not merely work as a

system of signs denoting one's religion and allegiances. Rather, the clothes themselves constituted one's religion and allegiances. As Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass have noted, "the materials we wear work as inscriptions upon us," particularly in pre- or protocapitalist societies.[32] In the decision to put on a set of apparel, one asserted his or her particular place in the body politic. In *Hamlet*, Polonius says "apparel oft proclaims the man" (1.3.72).[33] If Polonius is right, society must work to make sure that people wear the clothes appropriate to their particular gender, class, country, and religion, and do not change their apparel. Numerous cultural forces were in place to guarantee that one could not readily change the type of clothes one wore. The most conspicuous example of this is the numerous sumptuary decrees that were passed during the reign of Queen Elizabeth to keep people from dressing in apparel inappropriate to their social station.[34] The pulpit similarly decried sartorial excess as well as cross-dressing and the practice of wearing foreign fashions.[35] Writers and playwrights also took part in deriding individuals who wore the wrong clothes, asserting the notion that one's apparel must accurately depict one's identity.[36]

The fear that attended the changing of one's clothes influenced how the Fat Bishop was received. Clearly representative of Marc'Antonio de Dominis, the Fat Bishop's actions are based on historical fact. Beginning the play as a member of the White House, the Fat Bishop represents De Dominis after he left his Archbishopric of Spalatro and converted to Protestantism. His conversion in the play to the Black House represents De Dominis's decision in 1622 to leave England and convert back to Catholicism. With a character whose actions mirror historical events this closely, it may seem that the character's costume served no greater purpose than to identify him as the turncoat the audience understood him to be. However, the manner in which the character was dressed likely had a large impact on how he was perceived onstage. Still, it is difficult to determine the specific apparel he wore. We can say with some certainty how he was costumed once he converted to the Black House. When he revealed his new allegiance, the Fat Bishop probably wore the vestments appropriate to his renewed Catholicism. His visible transformation can be noted in the first lines he speaks after changing sides. Shortly after the White King's Pawn reveals his black apparel and shows his loyalty to the Black House, the Fat Bishop enters:

FAT BISHOP: Is there so much amazement spent on him
That's but half black? There might be hope of that man;
But how will this House wonder if I stand forth
And show a whole one, instantly discover
One that's all black where there's no hope at all?
WHITE KING: I'll say thy heart then justifies thy books;
I long for that discovery.
FAT BISHOP: Look no farther then:
Bear witness all the House I am the man
And turn myself into the Black House freely;
I am of this side now. (3.1.281–90)

The Fat Bishop previously wore white to identify himself as a member of the White House, but now chooses to don the black color that demonstrates his new allegiance.

Before he changes sides, however, it is difficult to determine if the Fat Bishop wore the academic robes of the Protestant clergy or white Catholic vestments. To fit with the Protestant ideology that he had ostensibly embraced before the start of the play, the Fat Bishop would have needed an academic gown. And yet, the audience would have known who he was and how he had switched allegiances from Catholicism to Protestantism, and then back to Catholicism only two years before. He was widely known as a turncoat and would have been a target of the audience's derision wearing the clothes of a Catholic while basking in the protection of the White House. This hypocrisy informs the Fat Bishop's first lines, which suggest that despite his membership in the Protestant White House, he wears clothes that identify him with Catholicism:

FAT BISHOP:	Pawn!
FAT BISHOP'S PAWN:	I attend at your great holiness's service.
FAT BISHOP:	For great I grant you, but for greatly holy,
	There the soil alters. Fat cathedral bodies
	Have very often but lean little souls (2.2.1–5)

His "fat cathedral body" would seem to imply that the actor was corpulent and draped in visibly Catholic apparel.[37] Nevertheless, it is possible that the Fat Bishop is merely drawing attention to his former Catholicism so as to make certain the audience recognizes whom he represents underneath Protestant clerical robes.

The Fat Bishop's opening lines convince me that he wore white Catholic vestments when he first entered upon the stage, but the evidence is not definitive. What is certain is that in either configuration, the Fat Bishop is marked for our scorn by his decision to alter his apparel and change sides. The Black Knight drives home the very real danger inherent in the Fat Bishop's proclivity to change apparel when he notes how many in England currently wear English clothes that hide their true loyalty to Spain and their desire to spread Catholicism.

> For venting hallowed oil, beads, medals, pardons,
> Pictures, Veronica's heads in private presses,
> That's done by one i'th'habit of a pedlar;
> Letters conveyed in rolls, tobacco-balls.
> When a restraint comes, by my politic counsel
> Some of our Jesuits turn gentlemen-ushers,
> Some falconers, some park-keepers, and some huntsmen;
> One took the shape of an old lady's crook once
> And despatched two chores in a Sunday morning,
> The altar and the dresser! (4.2.48–57)

This danger is contained in *A Game at Chess* when, at the end of the play, all those who would betray their apparel are safely put away in the bag, the chess

game's symbolic representation of either death or hell. Moreover, the literal turncoats are bested by the White Knight and the White Duke who visit the Black House and suggest that they are willing to negotiate a marriage, yet never take off the white clothes that signify their true, English, Protestant hearts.

Taken in total, costumes and clothing informed the substance, the staging, the politics, the publication, and the reception of Middleton's *A Game at Chess.* Moreover, all evidence suggests that the importance of theatrical apparel to Middleton's play is not exceptional for the period, but representative of typical practices.[38] Costumes provided one of the primary means by which information was transmitted in performance at the time. On the largely bare stage of the Globe, the actors' costumes provided virtually the entire visual experience of the play. As *A Game at Chess* demonstrates, the visual presentation of one's apparel could establish, modify, or transform the wearer's sex, social station, country of origin, and religion. Before an actor spoke a line of dialogue, his costume would have asserted or changed his identity, to a high degree of specificity, for an audience that was attuned to the visual semiotics of the time. It is crucial, therefore, that we consider the complex ways that theatrical apparel signified in the early modern period and, indeed, throughout theatre history.

ENDNOTES

1. Thomas Cogswell estimates that nearly thirty thousand spectators saw the performance, and Thomas Postlewait concludes that more than a tenth of London's population attended the play, with more people turned away. Thomas Cogswell, "Thomas Middleton and the Court, 1624: *A Game at Chess* in Context," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 47 (1984): 273–88, at 273; Thomas Postlewait, "Theater Events and Their Political Contexts: A Problem in the Writing of Theatre History," in *Critical Theory and Performance*, rev. and enl. ed., Janelle Reinelt and Joseph Roach, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 198–222.

2. Thomas Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, ed. T. H. Howard-Hill, Revels Plays edition (New York: Manchester University Press, 1993) [hereafter TM/HH], Appendix 1, Item 2, 192.

3. Jean MacIntyre and Garrett P. J. Epp, "'Cloathes worth all the rest': Costumes and Properties," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 269–85, at 284.

4. T. H. Howard-Hill offers the fullest explanation of the different texts of *A Game at Chess* in the second half of his book *Middleton's "Vulgar Pasquin": Essays on "A Game at Chess"* (Newark: University of Delaware Press [Cranbury, NJ: AUP], 1995). For a summary of the issues, see "Documentary Foundations" in the introduction to his edition of the play (TM/HH, 1–60, at 2–10).

5. A. R. Braunmuller, "'To the Globe I rowed': John Holles Sees *A Game at Chess*," *English Literary Renaissance* 20.2 (1990): 340–56, at 341.

6. Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, Appendix 1, Item 7, 198.

7. T. H. Howard-Hill, "The Occasion of the Play" in his introduction (TM/HH, 16).

8. I do not mean to suggest that all English audience members perceived the events in the same way. However, it must be acknowledged that these events were known by all who attended the production and influenced how it was experienced. For a consideration of the complex relationship between politics and *A Game at Chess*, see Postlewait's essay.

9. TM/HH, Appendix 1, Item 7, 198–9. Subsequent items from this appendix are cited parenthetically in the text.

10. Howard-Hill, "Composition, Sources, and Revision," in his introduction (TM/HH, 29).

11. Ibid. Among his "villainies," Gondomar instigated the proceedings that led to the execution of Raleigh in 1619 and was a major supporter of the marriage match between Charles and the Spanish Infanta.

12. All quotes are from the TM/HH edition.

13. John R. Moore, "The Contemporary Significance of Middleton's *Game at Chesse*," *PMLA* 50 (1935): 761–8, at 763.

14. T. H. Howard-Hill reproduces the pictures in his introduction (TM/HH, 15, 25).

15. Moore, 762.

16. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Faber & Faber), 99.

17. Seven if, as Howard-Hill has suggested, Error is dressed as a Jesuit. He notes that Holles apparently missed his vocative "Error" and calls the character his "disciple" in T. H. Howard Hill, "The Unique Eye-Witness Report of Middleton's *A Game at Chess*," *Review of English Studies* 42.166 (1991): 168–78, at 172.

18. For a study of the development of religious apparel, see Janet Mayo's *A History of Ecclesiastical Dress* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1984), particularly chaps. 5 and 6.

19. Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 162.

20. It is important to note that this is not the apparel in which the Fat Bishop appears on the title page. There, he wears a cassock with a *mozetta*, a short hooded cape worn over the shoulders, and a *biretta*, a stiff three-cornered hat. This was everyday clothing for a Catholic bishop and is the apparel in which the former Archbishop of Spalato appeared in the painting that was copied for the title page.

21. Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tutors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 287.

22. For a thorough discussion of the vestment controversy in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see J. H. Primus, *The Vestments Controversy* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1960), and Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 81–114.

23. Roger Lockyer, *Tudor and Stuart Britain: 1471–1714* (London: Longmans, 1964), 231.

24. In 1618, Frederick misguidedly accepted the throne in Bohemia when it was offered to him by the Protestant Bohemian nobles upon the death of the Emperor Mathias. This went counter to the long custom whereby the Catholic Habsburg emperors were also the kings of Bohemia. The two results were (1) that Frederick became a hero in England for championing the Protestant cause on the continent and (2) open war ensued, which ravaged Europe and left Frederick and Elizabeth exiled in the Netherlands. Lockyer, 236.

25. Robin Clifton, "Fear of Popery," in *The Origins of the English Civil War*, ed. Conrad Russell (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 144–67, at 147.

26. The Black Knight's Pawn notes that "This' a strange habit for a holy father, / A president of poverty especially" (4.1.6–7).

27. Swapan Chakravorty, *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 178.

28. MacIntyre and Epp, 274. T. W. Craik notes that "the pretence of vices to be virtues is a theme almost universal in the interludes, and in allegorical literature in general"; *The Tudor Interlude: Stage, Costume, Acting* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1962), 87.

29. TM/HH, Appendix 1, Item 7, 199.

30. Postlewait.

31. Braunmuller, 353. Jane Sherman suggests that "the White King's Pawn is not so much Cranfield as a composite of Northampton, Carr, Suffolk, Secretary Lake, and Secretary Calvert"; "The Pawns' Allegory in Middleton's *A Game at Chesse*," *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 29.114 (1978): 147–59, at 156.

32. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 184.

33. My edition of Shakespeare is *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2d ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

34. See Frances Elizabeth Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1926). Sumptuary legislation was discontinued by King James in 1604, but its prescriptions were widely known in 1624 and beyond the Interregnum.

35. See Roze Hentschell, "A Question of Nation: Foreign Clothes on the English Subject" in *Clothing Culture, 1350–1650*, ed. Catherine Richardson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 49–62. Also see Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), particularly chap. 2.

36. Hentschell, 50–3.

37. Gillian A. Sanderman argues that William Rowley, who had the reputation of playing fat clown parts, performed the role of the Fat Bishop; "A Critical Study of the Work of William Rowley" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1974).

38. Jean MacIntyre examines how the theatrical companies' accumulation of costumes affected dramatic scripts in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century drama in *Costumes and Scripts in the Elizabethan Theatres* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992).