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**Unauthorized Intercourse:
Early Modern Bed Tricks and their Under-Lying
Ideologies**

Abstract: Putting one character in bed with another, while either one or both are under the impression they are embracing someone else, is referred to as a 'bed trick' in drama studies. This article investigates four bed tricks in three early modern plays. Using the analysis of both Thomas Middleton/William Rowley's Jacobean tragedy *The Changeling* and the historical Essex/Somerset scandal as a backdrop, it compares the bed tricks and their embedded power relations of gender in Thomas Otway's Restoration tragedy *The Orphan* with those in Aphra Behn's Restoration comedy *The Lucky Chance*. My main interest is to demonstrate how the bed tricks in these plays function as projection screens for early modern cultural anxieties and fantasies, which circle specifically around the problematic semiotic representation of female virtue and the question of female agency. While *The Orphan* uses the bed trick to destroy its heroine before idealizing her as a martyr of patriarchy, *The Lucky Chance* employs its two cases of unauthorized intercourse to stage a female fantasy of control and independence.