



## Article

# Horses, Humans, and Domestic Bodily Knowledge in *All's Well That Ends Well*

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**Abstract:** Without visual cues, modern viewers may not discern the ways that *All's Well That Ends Well* brings together the bodies of horses and humans, asking viewers to consider the physical dependence and sometimes overlapping medical conditions the two species share. Helena's success in curing the King's fistula and conceiving Bertram's child have not been linked to the skills involved in working with horses, let alone the blurring of boundaries between the human and the equine. This is particularly striking given that the play associates both the King and Bertram—the two men she must win over to gain happiness—with images of veterinary care and riding as represented in the era's household medical and horsemanship manuals. Early modern recipe books provide a valuable glimpse of how seventeenth century viewers might have pictured the interconnectedness of human and animal bodies, in health and in sickness. These books make clear that some cures for fistulas could be used on humans or on horses. Such medicines take as a given the human body's embeddedness on its surroundings, revealing an essential dependence between humans and horses, often blurring the boundaries assumed to exist between them. The play positions Helena not only as a practitioner of household medicine skilled in caring for humans and animals alike, but also as a subtle and resourceful horsewoman able to coerce others to do her bidding.

**Keywords:** *All's Well That Ends Well*; horses; manuscript; recipe books; domestic medicine; veterinary care



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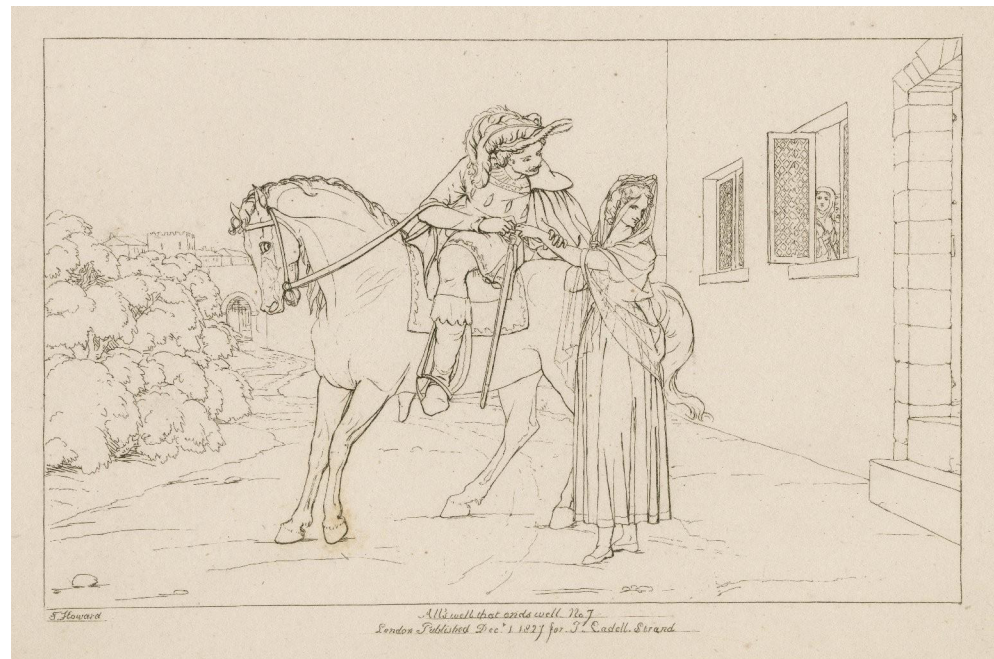


**Figure 1.** Kate Forbes (Helena) in the Theatre for a New Audience's 2006 production of *All's Well That Ends Well*. Photo by Gerry Goodstein; from Krole (2006, p. 115).

The photograph above (Figure 1), from a 2006 Theatre for a New Audience production, is a rare image of a horse's body onstage during *All's Well that Ends Well*. Miniaturized, domesticated, and even infantilized, the pictured toy's suggestion of a horse distills and encapsulates the equine images that propel the play's actions and undergird its characters. The language and action of *All's Well* routinely invoke horses in ways that modern audiences may not recognize but which nonetheless produce a rich current of meaning in both the drama's domestic and martial settings. Positioning the toy between Bertram and the visibly pregnant Helena in the play's final image, the production makes the horse a go-between, a solid common denominator with which both characters can interact. Signaling a glimmer of hope for their union by gesturing toward their future family, the closing's miniature wooden horse underscores ways that the two characters have already exploited blurred divisions between humans and horses to fulfill their own individual ambitions.

Helena's successes in curing the King's fistula and conceiving Bertram's child have not been linked to the skills involved in working with horses, let alone the blurring of boundaries between the human and the equine. This is particularly striking given that the play associates both the King and Bertram—the two men she must win over to gain happiness—with images of veterinary care and riding as represented in the era's household medical and horsemanship manuals. The king's fistula, the bodily ailment that Helena cures to earn royal permission to choose the reluctant Bertram as her husband, establishes the play's relentless blurring of human bodies and those of horses, since both species experienced this affliction. Meanwhile, Bertram actively proclaims himself a horse, one who yearns to earn glory in the field of battle.

Without visual cues like those presented by the Theatre for a New Audience, modern viewers may not discern the ways that *All's Well That Ends Well* brings together the bodies of horses and humans, asking viewers to consider the physical dependence and sometimes overlapping medical conditions the two species share. No doubt this occurs because few readers or spectators have the direct, routine interaction with horses that was common in early modern England.<sup>1</sup> As Karen Raber points out, "Riding a horse is a unique experience for human beings, an experience that is now the domain of a very limited, elite group of people who continue to practice an entirely obsolete art" (Raber 2013, p. 85). While people still use horses in their work today, particularly in agricultural spheres, a relative few theatergoing adults engage with horses regularly in any setting.<sup>2</sup> Many children and young people, however, interact with horses habitually, even if on an imaginary level, as the Theatre for a New Audience's toy suggests. The memory of horses—whether individual or cultural—is a vague one for most current-day theater audiences, but one that the performance nonetheless engages to highlight the childishness of its soldiers and what many have called the play's fairy-tale ethos.<sup>3</sup> This notion that *All's Well*—with its dependence on seemingly miraculous cures and an unlikely bedtrick—unfolds in a sort of enchanted land of princes readily associates the play with horses as well. They proved so vital to the plot for Frank Howard, a nineteenth-century artist and printmaker who sought to capture "the spirit of the play" in his images, that he included horses in three of his ten illustrations of *All's Well*.<sup>4</sup> Howard's horses at first seem like appropriate background for a courtly setting, yet closer inspection reveals his horses straining against their grooms and riders, bursting with power that cannot be completely contained (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Howard, Image 7, described as “Diana, by Helena’s instruction, obtaining the ring from Bertram” (v. 3, vi). Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.25244846> (accessed on 18 September 2022).

Such images suggest not only the horses’ energy, but the effort the still-young Bertram must put forth in his military work with these animals. Despite the play’s enchanted trimmings and youthful lovers, Howard’s drawing shows that the horses that populate *All’s Well* are not playthings, not the hobby-horses incorporated in the era’s comedies.<sup>5</sup> They are powerful living forces working in conjunction with humans to build the world of the play.

*All’s Well*, moreover, muddies the physical distinction between humans and horses—a line that Raber argues every good rider and trainer hopes to smudge. Early modern husbandry and training manuals, not to mention Philip Sidney’s *Defence of Poetry*, celebrate the notion that “when riding rises to the level of high art, the experience is counted as the union of two distinct bodies and intellects” (Raber 2013, p. 85). The ability to coerce a horse into taking the bit and following commands was seen as an exhibition of a masculine will, even if it required the animal’s voluntary action.<sup>6</sup> *All’s Well*’s Helena, meanwhile, illustrates a different mode of treating humans like horses, blending human medicine with veterinary care to secure her marriage to the uncooperative Bertram. In the early modern theater, the play’s talk of horses would remind viewers of the processes involved in training and caring for the animals, exploiting the commonly acknowledged tensions—and overlap—between the human domestic and martial realms to build its plot. In doing so, the play positions Helena not only as a practitioner of household medicine skilled in caring for humans and animals alike, but also as a subtle and resourceful horsemaster able to coerce others to do her bidding.

### 1. The King of France’s Fistula and the Species Divide

*All’s Well That Ends Well* manages to be both forthright and cagy about the King’s illness, which Helena insists she can cure even though other physicians could not. Fewer than forty lines into the play, we learn that he suffers from a fistula, a lingering sore that Lafew suggests is the subject of court gossip. When Bertram reacts to the diagnosis by declaring “I heard not talk of it before”, Lafew responds, “I would it were not notorious” (1.1.34–35), leading many scholars to sexualize the King’s condition.<sup>7</sup> While fistulas can occur anywhere on the body, many assume the King suffers from a *fistula ano*, or anal fistula, based on Lafew’s comments.<sup>8</sup> This conclusion has in turn foregrounded sexualized

readings of Helena's cure, leading scholars to assume that she jeopardizes her reputation in touching intimate parts of the king's body during treatment.<sup>9</sup> Even though Helena is administering a treatment that she learns from her physician father's medical book, her enactment of the cure puts her chastity in danger even as it demonstrates that her knowledge of health care goes beyond that of the typical domestic practitioner.

But early modern medical texts make clear two things regarding fistulas: they are best treated through hands-on care from a skilled professional, and not just humans suffer from these sores; horses commonly do as well. Typically described in the era's medical texts as occurring on fleshy areas of the body like the buttocks, breast, and abdomen, fistulas heal slowly, if at all.<sup>10</sup> These deep, almost pipe-like ulcers were common enough that privately compiled domestic recipe manuscripts—which routinely contained instructions for preparing medicines as well as food—often contained multiple treatments for fistulas, in both humans and horses, for household use, and some treatments were administered to sufferers on both sides of the species divide. These recipe manuscripts—kept and passed down within households, often from mother to daughter—record cures for common complaints and life-threatening diseases alike, providing valuable glimpses of everyday medical care.<sup>11</sup> And this care could be quite sophisticated. Johanna St. John's recipe manuscript helpfully titles a note "To know a Fistula", offering the following brief description: "It hath 2 holes by w[hi]ch it runs very much & the holes are a q[uar]t[e]r of a yard deep usually & the sore eates along by the sinues" (St. John n.d., p. 55v). In his translation of Johann Jacob Wecker's printed healthcare guide, meanwhile, the physician John Banister makes clear that dangerous fistulas can be "creeping, with many turning corners and crooked windings", and must be cured "by the hande" (Banister 1585, p. 499). Talking about fistula in horses, Gervase Markham uses the same vocabulary, describing fistulas as "deepe, hollow, crooked, mattering vlcer[s], and for the most parte commonly a great deale straiter at the mouth then at the bottome, being ingendred in some wound, soare, bruise, or canker not throughly healed" (Markham 1610, pp. 406–7).

This shared suffering of humans and horses, moreover, stemmed from the close, sustained contact that domestication imposed on the two species. In horses, training manuals suggested, a fistula could develop "by meanes of a stripe, which having been so strongly laid on, that it hath bruised the *flesh* to the bone"; other times, "it commeth by a wrench or pinch" from a "bad saddle" (de Gray 1639, p. 197). Harsh training and bad saddlery—in other words, causes linked to human contact—brought about fistulas in horses. Similarly, people could develop fistulas from contact with horses, thanks to the stresses of riding. Catherine Field notes that frequent excursions on horseback could result in anal fistulas, presumably because time in the saddle could lead to hemorrhoids which might not properly heal, even when given the preferred treatment, horse-leeches (Field 2007, p. 196). In fact, in a cruelly ironic twist, fistulas could be caused by "the application of Horse-leeches to the Piles", according to a treatise entitled *An Account of the causes of some particular rebellious distempers*, since these leeches can leave "Venemous Matter behind them, which in time creates a malignant or corrosive Indisposition, that in time makes a Sinus, or Hollowness, becoming, if neglected, Callous . . ." (*An Account of the Causes of Some Particular Rebellious Distempers* 1670, p. 55).<sup>12</sup> A person, then, could suffer a fistula because of his interaction with horses, and horses could develop these sores through contact with humans. Regardless of the species divide, fistulas brought misery to both.

Fistula cures in home recipe manuscripts further highlight the overlap between human and equine patients, revealing that a treatment could be recommended to serve either species. Both human and horse bodies, after all, depended on the delicate balance of the four Galenic humors for their health.<sup>13</sup> And recipe manuscripts hint that home practitioners saw little difference in treatments for human and equine conditions. Richard Perssehouse's recipe manuscript sandwiches his recipe "To cure a fistula or a galled horse backe" between a cure "for a Cold in a Horse" and an herbal powder meant "To Comfort the braine" (Perssehouse 1643, p. 2r). The manuscript page incorporates cures for both human and



horse, suggesting that all unmarked recipes could serve either. Similarly, Bridget Parker transcribes into her manuscript a recipe borrowed from a Miss Mills:

Take a quart of vinegar 2 penyworth of mer[-]  
 cury an ounce of white coperres a litle  
 bay salt and a litle alume sett it on ye  
 fire till the things is melted then put in a  
 quarter of a pound of hony & when it is de[-]  
 solved put it up in a bottle for use  
 It cureth all fistulas washing & siringing  
 them & all foule sors that need drying in man  
 or horses (Parker 1663, 16v)

Serving man or horse, this fistula cure makes clear that domestic practitioners proved capable of bringing relief to either species. The recipe itself, moreover, crosses seemingly uncrossable lines, since it does not require an expensive or highly trained physician like Helena's father to prepare or administer the cure. Instead, both Bridget Parker and Miss Mills—otherwise unknown women with no formal connection to the medical profession—not only possess this seemingly specialized medical knowledge but share it with one another. Furthermore, such privately held and locally circulated recipes were at times touted as more effective than cures offered by supposed professionals. In her manuscript recipe book, Alice Corbett swears that her fistula cure involving neat's foot oil "Cured those who have been given over by ye best Chirurgons In London" (Corbett n.d., p. 51), just as the King had been left for dead by his physicians.

The cross-species suffering of this affliction broadens the possible origins and treatments—as well as implications—of the King's fistula. Audiences are given little to go on when looking for the cause of his condition: the King is never described as a horseman, and nothing else backs up Lafew's implication that the fistula stems from sexual behavior. In fact, as Jeremy Lopez points out, most performances pay little attention to the fistula, moving past it speedily on the way to staging Helena's selection of Bertram as her husband rather than addressing explicitly the origins of the King's affliction (Lopez 2019, p. 25). The fistula simply is, and the ambiguity invites Helena to approach the sore as she would on either a human or a horse. The process of administering the cure occurs offstage, meaning that audiences never see how Helena relieves the King's suffering.<sup>14</sup> The ingredients of her recipe likewise remain mysterious, rendering the source of her power invisible even as its results are public. As Sachini K. Seneviratne notes, the play "both introduces and erases the receipt" (Seneviratne 2020, p. 162); before anyone can wonder whether Helena calls on a recipe for humans or horses, talk of the cure gives way to celebration of its results.

Yet the King's affliction blurs the borders of his body, lending him the aura of both human and horse, and Helena exercises power over the hybrid flesh that results. The King thus calls to mind Julia Reinhard Lupton's use of the centaur as a means of reading Petruchio's animal nature in *Taming of the Shrew*. Describing the centaur as embodying "man's division between the bestial and the rational, often moralized with a view to 'taming' or 'bridling' animality to create a more civilized society", Lupton sees these mythical half-human, half-horse creatures as forging "an uneasy commonwealth between divided principles", balancing, in Machiavellian fashion, reason with the threat of physical violence (Lupton 2011, pp. 42, 44). Thus, as Petruchio combines human and horse to secure dominance at home, the King's hybrid body encapsulates France's domestic and military impulses, not only binding them within one flesh but illustrating the damage that results from their constant chafing against one another.

Just as importantly, the King's recovery puts Helena in control over the royal body, and this is radical whether his flesh is seen as that of a horse, a human, or a centaur. Female control of male bodies is not atypical in recipe books, but Helena's ability to cure the King

where doctors failed marks her as out of the ordinary. Similarly, veterinary care typically fell to men, even if women kept recipes for the treatment of animals.<sup>15</sup> Helena's insistence that she is not the source, but only the vehicle, for the King's cure cleverly evades the troubling notion that his body had been tamed by a woman's force.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, the King's sudden ability to dance reinforces such perceptions of Helena's power over the royal body. As Raber notes, scholars like Elizabeth LeGuin have compared training a horse to the education of pupils in music or dance. This high level of cooperation certainly complicates Helena's modest assertions. Though not required to take place on stage, the dance materializes as a "jig" in the Theatre for A New Audience production (Isherwood 2006, E1), offering visual proof of the King's response to Helena's ministrations. Even if the King is "able to lead [Helena in] a coranto" (2.3.42), she is the one who has made his body capable of such a display. He makes visible his health and physical prowess; she demonstrates her healing abilities by highlighting his bodily vigor. No wonder scholars have made so much of the cure's potential damage to her chastity.<sup>17</sup>

Associated with medical recipes and their treatments of fistulas on both sides of the species divide, Helena has access to knowledge that applies to bodies of humans and animals. In this sense, she resembles Chiron, the civilized centaur of Greek mythology, who Karen Raber describes as "a paradigm of humane learning, skilled in music, astrology, and medicine" (Raber 2013, p. 69). Embodying at the moment of treatment her own expert blend of human and horse, Helena need not decide whether to treat the king as a man or animal; she need only use her recipe, which builds in that flexibility. And while the King may not be the typical centaur, his blending of human and horse suggests the potential for productive tension in biformed bodies. Even when made healthy, the King's body, to borrow from Lupton, underscores that humans' supposed dominion over the natural world "not only places humans above animals, but also necessarily submerges them in the metabolisms, drives, and pleasures of the beasts on whose flesh, hides, milk and labor their lives have come to depend" (Lupton 2011, p. 42). This is especially so considering the origins of ingredients—animal, vegetable, and mineral—likely involved in the recipe that cured him.<sup>18</sup> And, most importantly, the blending of horse and human underscores that seemingly distinct fleshly bodies—even ones classified as belonging to different species—can respond in similar ways, suggesting overlapping identities and bodily confusion.

## 2. Bertram's Equine Ambitions

From the moment he arrives in Paris, Bertram speaks of himself as a horse, specifically as a horse yearning to prove himself on the field of battle. Though he is initially left behind at court, dismissed as "too young" (2.1.28), he nevertheless insists that he remains essentially equine, and uncontainable at that. "I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock", he laments, "Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry, /Till honor be bought up . . ." (31–33). Feeling the insult of being a "forehorse", he nonetheless sees himself leading the women—or "smocks"—who make up the team. While the King's body holds in tension the horse and the human to achieve a balance of reason and creaturely force, Bertram aims for a less domesticated state. Rallying behind Paroles's assertion that "France is a stable; we that dwell in it are jades", Bertram declares himself unfit for the court as well as Helena's bed (2.3.282). He bolts from the pasture for the battlefields of Florence, where he evidently makes good on his urge to take to horse and thrive in the fight. The Duke of Florence, after all, almost immediately makes him "general of our horse" (3.3.1).<sup>19</sup> He yearns to be, and is initially successful in being, a less domestic if not domesticated horse, showing that he is trained for the battlefield rather than for the splendor of court.

These centaur dreams, moreover, prove central to Bertram's humiliation when Helena chooses him for her husband, in a scene that resembles a livestock fair and that foregrounds the language of horse training. Helena, exercising her royally-granted power to choose a husband, evaluates the lords brought before her, assessing their fitness in a way that Lafew immediately links to selecting a horse not just to buy but to train and mount.<sup>20</sup>

Watching from out of earshot, Lafew proclaims, “I’d give bay curtal and his furniture, [if] /My mouth no more were broken than these boys’” (2.3.58–59). Lafew wishes he could be among the candidates, and would give his bay horse to be so, but his age disqualifies him as a contender for Helena’s bridle. Lamenting his “broken” mouth, Lafew’s words also label the young lords as untrained horses, unable to take the bit and follow their rider’s commands. The king, however, stresses the candidates’ bloodlines as he presents them for Helena’s inspection, proclaiming “Not one of those but had a noble father” (61). And it is on these grounds that Bertram rebels when Helena settles on him for her husband. “She had her breeding at my father’s charge”, he exclaims as he fights to avoid the emasculating position of being chosen, rather than choosing, his marriage partner (113). This valuation of breeding weaves together the human and the horse in the scene. In fact, the King answers Bertram’s objection with the assertion that Helena’s qualities “breed honor” (132). Denying Helena’s reputation, the King cautions, threatens to illustrate a lack of breeding on Bertram’s part, making him a traitor to his own “sire” (134).

While the playtext requires no animals whatsoever on stage, Helena speaks directly of herself as an active rider, even in her post-bed-trick pregnant state. The play’s road-weary and likely saddle-sore women make a vivid appearance in 5.1, where Helena, Diana, and the widow arrive in Marseilles after a more than three-hundred-mile trip from Florence, only to discover that Bertram is in Rosillion. Earlier, readying to leave Florence, Helena had told the women that “our wagon is prepared” (4.4.34), but her language on arrival in Marseilles suggests that they made the trip on horseback. Helena tells us they have endured “exceeding post day and night” (5.1.1)—and while the OED says that “posting” only came to mean “To rise and fall in the saddle, usually when riding at the trot” in the nineteenth century ([Post](#), v.2. [OED Online 2022](#)), the scene’s end suggests their wagon-less state. “We must to horse again”, Helena proclaims, readying her posse for their unexpected additional fifty-mile journey. Moving “to horse” eliminates any image of a wagon from the scene, instead conjuring the image of Helena riding in accordance with the OED definition. In addition, her phrasing carries the implication of a mare breeding—and successfully conceiving—with a stallion ([Horse](#), n. [OED Online 2022](#)). While viewers may not know at this time of Helena’s pregnancy, this certainly reminds them of the bed-trick’s goal, and Bertram’s marriage challenge.

Bertram’s harmony with horses not only lets him succeed on the battlefield; his training also leaves him primed to respond to Helena’s orchestrated bed-trick. He accepts Diana’s instructions with little hesitation, even though the plan involves losing the ring that certifies his breeding. From Helena’s brief report following the bed-trick that “lust doth play /With what it loathes for that which is away” (4.4.24–25), audiences can rest assured that all went according to plan.<sup>21</sup> Whether his participation constitutes consent is a muddy question, one that resonates with the perceived need to carefully articulate the relationships between horse trainers and the mounts they instruct. Lupton concisely summarizes two contemporary responses to the bed-trick: Bertram’s lack of informed consent leads some to label it rape, but from Helena’s point of view the bed-trick can be seen as a medical procedure, one that allows her to take control of her body, using Bertram’s to conceive a child ([Lupton 2011](#), p. 127). Framing the bed-trick in this light blends Helena’s resemblance to Chiron, the medical centaur, while invoking explanations of early modern horse training. As Raber puts it, to early modern thinkers, the “oneness” of horse and rider may be “the product of severe and punitive techniques” but nonetheless “requires the willing cooperation of a creature that Renaissance texts repeatedly assert has its own agenda, its own sensations, and its own character”. Such training, she concludes, amounts to “gentle methods for coercion” ([Raber 2013](#), pp. 85–86). Lupton tellingly concludes that readers too may “feel coerced” by the language of rape and medical procedures, and instead argues that the play “invites us to essay its own elasticity, to see how far it can stretch before it snaps back to its comfort zone” ([Lupton 2011](#), p. 125). Helena, in other words, leads Bertram through the paces; in the process, the bed-trick challenges audience members to adopt uneasy stances of their own.

The Theatre for the New Audience production denies its viewers any such “comfort zone”, though its concentration on the toy horse at play’s end refocuses audiences in a way that could signal a “snap back”. Helena, after all, is in an ambiguous position—she has cured the King and conceived a child by acting as a horse trainer, taking up what is usually considered a male role to achieve pregnancy. Her power over the bodies of both humans and horses is clear, and at the drama’s conclusion she risks looking more like a monster than the horse-men she has interacted with. Her power must be made small, reined in to fit once more into the world of comedy. The miniature horse comes to encapsulate this sudden reeling in of her now-obvious powers, ones that emanate from her ability to first heal the King and then approach, coerce, train, and potentially even domesticate Bertram’s equine impulses. The pregnancy that results of those interactions, moreover, illustrates Helena’s ability to control her own body to conceive under mysterious circumstances, ones that suggest a power not only over Bertram’s body but her own. She has the recipe not only to cure a fistula, but to conceive.

Reentering after the final scene, the Theatre for a New Audience’s Helena places the toy on a low wall and sets it rocking; Bertram sits on the wall’s opposite end. Sharing the stage alone for the first time, Thomas Pendleton reports, “There are no words between them, no kiss, no touching of any kind, not even an exchange of soul-searching looks” (Pendleton 2005, p. 72). But Bertram reaches out to touch the toy, setting it rocking once again. For Robert Kole, this moment before the stage goes dark “seemed symbolic of their new role as parents, and that now—his fate inescapable—[Bertram] accepted his marriage, and together, they would try to make it work” (Kole 2006, p. 116). Embodying their child-to-be, the miniature horse draws Bertram in, offering a nursery-friendly version of the warhorse he had yearned to be. His willingness to reach for that—to touch the horse rather than to destroy it, or bolt like a bridle-shy stallion—offers a glimmer of acceptance. He can see himself in the toy, just as Helena can see herself caring for the baby and marriage it represents. Condensing the play’s charged invocation of the bonds between humans and horses into a miniature rocking horse, the Theatre for a New Audience’s production suggests that, though both Helena and Bertram may have “snapped back” to more conventional roles, they nonetheless recognize their mutual equine sensibility, now presented in a domesticated, but powerfully concentrated, form.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Edwards reports that “By Continental standards horse ownership was widespread in England and the number of people who rode on horseback was one of the features noted by foreign observers” (see Edwards 1988, p. 6).
- <sup>2</sup> According to the American Horse Council, more than half a million of the United States’ 7.2 million horses were classified as “working” animals in 1997, and those animals presumably have adult handlers. <https://horsecouncil.org/resources/economics/> (accessed on 18 September 2022). See also <https://horsesonly.com/horse-industry/> (accessed on 18 September 2022).
- <sup>3</sup> See for one example Buccola (2007).
- <sup>4</sup> Howard explains his purpose in the Preface to his five-volume collection *The Spirit of the Plays of Shakespeare* on page vi, <https://archive.org/details/spiritplaysshak01howagoog/page/n14/mode/2up> (accessed on 18 September 2022). The plates for *All’s Well* are in volume 3, at <https://archive.org/details/spiritplaysshak03shakgoog/page/n4/mode/2up> (accessed on 18 September 2022).
- <sup>5</sup> For an in-depth study of hobby-horses on the early modern stage (see Pikli 2021).
- <sup>6</sup> De Ornellas suggests that riding and training manuals “forge an all-male world”, utterly ignoring women as riders, even though women clearly were skilled in this area (see De Ornellas 2013).
- <sup>7</sup> All citations to *All’s Well That Ends Well* refer to the text as printed in Orgel, *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare* (Shakespeare 2002).



- 8 For discussion of this tradition of reading the King's affliction as *fistula ano* (see Lopez 2019, pp. 21–24; Field 2007, p. 195). Lopez and Harris both remark that the story's source in Boccaccio places the King's tumor in the breast; Lopez argues that performance suggests Shakespeare intended audiences to imagine an anal fistula anyway (see Harris 2006, p. 169).
- 9 For a recent recap of these discussions see (Seneviratne 2020).
- 10 While many readers today might think of vaginal fistulas occurring during childbirth, no such use of the term *fistula* appeared in my search of EEBO-TCP database; dental fistulas are not mentioned in the database either. The OED does not list such meanings before the nineteenth century (Fistula, n. OED Online 2022).
- 11 Over the past decade, a growing list of scholarship has worked to examine and contextualize early modern domestic recipe manuscripts. For foundational interpretations (see DiMeo and Pennell 2013; Leong 2018). Treatments that consider *All's Well* in light of these manuscripts include Wall (2016, pp. 168–83), which examines the recipe in *All's Well* as an act of preservation. Floyd-Wilson (2013), meanwhile, analyzes the overlap between these recipes as presented in the play and the occult in *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage*.
- 12 To add another later of irony: *horse leech* is another term for veterinarian; if a horse specialist tried to cure a human's hemorrhoids in this manner, it would suggest an even greater overlap between the human and the animal realms.
- 13 See MacInnes (2011), for a detailed account of horses and their sharing of humoral systems with the humans surrounding them.
- 14 Howard, curiously enough, depicts Helena administering a potion to the King while members of his court look on, in an image described as "Helena giving the medicine to the king" (see Howard 1833, p. v). Some stagings of *All's Well* have presented Helena's treatment of the King in front of the audience, as in Scott Wentworth's 2022 production at the Tom Patterson Theater in Stratford Ontario.
- 15 Curth asserts that, even though "women carried out the medical care for humans and small animals", there is "little evidence to suggest that this would have been the case for larger animals" such as horses (see Curth 2011, p. 230).
- 16 For more on Helena as an unlicensed practitioner (see Traister 2003, p. 336).
- 17 For a reading that connects women's loss of chastity to the public performance of medical care see (Lehnhof 2007).
- 18 Raber examines instances where products of horse—specifically dung and urine—are used to make medicine for humans and vice versa, but she does not address recipes that can be used on either species (Raber 2013, pp. 106–9).
- 19 Other performances have nodded toward the significance of horses in play's military action—for example, Russell Jackson describes Bertram appearing in 3.3 "with an armored horse's head in front of him, as if he were on horseback" in a 2003 RSC production (Jackson 2004, p. 194).
- 20 Edwards points out that Smithfield had a substantial horse market at the turn of the seventeenth century; he reprints a selection of Thomas Dekker's 1608 *Lanthorne and Candle-Light, Or the Bell-Man's Second Nights Walke* to illustrate the skills of buyers who can "redily reckon up all the Aches, Cramps, Crickets, and whatsoever disease else lyes in [a horse's] bones" (Edwards 1988, pp. 98–99, 160–61).
- 21 While the bed-trick need not be visually represented onstage, productions sometimes allow viewers hints of the offstage action. A photo from a Washington University production (2004), for example, shows Helena straddling a blindfolded Bertram, thus hinting at her riderly control, if not horse training (see Buccola 2007, p. 76).

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