True and Home-Born:
Domestic Tragedy on the Early Modern English Stage

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Abstract

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"True and Home-Born" intervenes in critical debates about early modern domestic tragedy, arguing that—far from being a form concerned exclusively with moral admonition or the domestic sphere—it is a centrally important site for dramatic experimentation and theorization at a key moment in England's evolving theatrical culture. Encompassing texts such as *Arden of Faversham* (1592), *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599), and *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1607), the term groups plays that share an interest in "ordinary," nonaristocratic life, dramatize domestic events of a sensational and violent nature, and stage detailed and accurate representations of household settings and domestic ideology. While domestic tragedy has a significant forty-year theatrical history—comparable to the early modern revenge tragedy—and is associated with prominent dramatists such as Thomas Heywood, John Ford, and William Shakespeare, these plays continue to be regarded as marginal dramatic texts, mainly of interest as archives of early modern domestic ideology and experience. I argue, in contrast, that domestic tragedies represent a key strand in the development of English tragic drama. Their heightened reflexivity about their dramatic and tragic form suggests a deep and abiding interest in dramatic and theatrical matters: in how drama creates verisimilitude, how it represents "truth," and how it imagines and participates in a new, native, and national theatrical culture.

The first half of "True and Home-Born" focuses on a number of plays traditionally identified as domestic tragedies, showing that their interests are not confined to the household, but extend to the dramatic and theatrical implications of faithfully recreating the reality of domestic experience on stage. Heywood and Shakespeare, I suggest, are particularly attuned to these implications, and develop and

critique a form of theatrical verisimilitude in their respective engagements with the form. In the second half, I suggest that the subgenre's boundaries are more permeable than previous criticism has allowed. By considering both the revenge tragedy and history play subgenres in terms of the domestic, I show the extent to which domestic tragedy was fully imbricated in the period's dramatic traditions and theatrical culture. The revenge tragedies of Thomas Kyd and Shakespeare, I argue, turn to the household as a site in which to imagine a new form of revenge drama that differs from its classical forebears and is thus suited to the English stage. Finally, I contend that in a group of historical dramas that I call the "British history plays," focused on historical events set in ancient Britain, the domestic sphere becomes central to the staging of history, offering early modern historical dramatists a means of bridging the gap between ancient past and early modern present.

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To Emily

To my parents

To my sister

TRUE AND HOME-BORN: DOMESTIC TRAGEDY ON THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH STAGE

Arden of Faversham (1592),[1] perhaps the best-known early modern domestic tragedy, ends with a dramaturgical apology:

> Gentlemen, we hope you'll pardon this naked tragedy
> Wherein no filèd points are foisted in
> To make it gracious to the ear or eye;
> For simple truth is gracious enough
> And needs no other points of glozing stuff.
>
> (Epilogue 14–18)[2]

This epilogue is no meek apology, but rather a bold statement about the true nature of tragedy, which makes a case for *Arden* as something new, something different. Franklin, friend of the murdered Arden, here entreats the audience to excuse the simplicity of the play just ended, this unconventional "naked tragedy" that lacks the usual rhetorical ornament to make it "gracious to the ear or eye." Initially deferential, by the end he confidently asserts that the more profound grace of "simple truth" should compensate for this lack of ornament, implicitly distancing this new form of tragedy from traditional understandings of the genre, which associated it with the highly wrought rhetoric of the Roman dramatist Seneca and other classical influences. The passage's double registers of meaning emphasize the superficiality of rhetorical ornament: the "filèd points" not only refer to polished or elaborated rhetoric,

[1] *Arden* was entered into the Stationers' Register on 3 April 1592, and printed later that year. Since the main source for the plot is the 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, the play is usually dated 1587–91. Here and throughout the dissertation, parenthetical dates refer to the first printing, unless otherwise specified. Where printings have been shown to occur much later, an estimated date of performance or composition (preceded by 'c.') will be given.

[2] *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, ed. M. L. Wine (London: Methuen, 1973). All references are to this edition, unless otherwise noted.

but to fine lace, while "glozing stuff" is both specious or flattering rhetoric and gaudy or gleaming fabric.[3] *Arden*, in other words, wears homely (plain *and* English) attire rather than needlessly decorative, foreign garb.

Arden might lack those qualities that make it appealing to the senses, or "gracious to the ear or eye." But in the repetition of "gracious" on the very next line, the graciousness of rhetoric is outweighed by the grace of truth: "For simple truth is gracious enough." Simplicity, like nakedness, plays on a sense of being unadorned or without ornament. *Arden*'s truth is free of rhetorical ornament because the play itself is. Simplicity also calls to mind straightforwardness, and a "simple truth" is thus not just a truth free of ornament, but a truth easily apprehended, easily digested, easily recalled.[4] *Arden* is a "naked tragedy" on several levels: potentially deficient or inadequate, as Franklin (disingenuously) suggests; devoid of rhetorical ornament or frills; and—through the association of rhetoric with fabric and embroidery—uncovered or undressed, revealed in its bare essence.[5] Requiring no specious or fancy additions, "no other points of glozing stuff," truth on its own is "gracious enough" to constitute a tragic play. Tragedy is defined not by how it looks—or rather, sounds—but by what it does: it stages "truth."

Arden, then, is presented not just as a different kind of tragedy, but a truer form of tragedy, a tragedy that reveals the essence of its own form. This claim is especially audacious given the details of the play's plot and setting. Far from the rarefied heights and ancient past of classical tragedy, the play

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[3] *OED*, s.vv. "filed": "polished, smooth, neatly finished off or elaborated; fine"; "point": "a subject or matter in dispute or under discussion; a proposition, argument, or idea," and also "thread lace made wholly with a needle"; "gloze": "to talk smoothly and speciously; to use fair words or flattering language; to fawn," and also "to shine brightly, to blaze; also, to gleam"; "stuff": "material for making garments; woven material of any kind."

[4] In the earliest cited usage (still current in the early modern period), "simple" means "free from duplicity, dissimulation, or guile; innocent and harmless; undesigning, honest, open, straightforward." Ibid., s.v. "simple."

[5] During the early modern period and as late as 1817, "naked" could mean specifically "lacking or defective in some quality, skill, etc.; esp. lacking in rhetorical art." Ibid., s.v. "naked."

dramatizes the 1551 murder of Thomas Arden, a controversial landowner in the Kentish market town of Faversham. A notorious story with its own particular place in English history—Raphael Holinshed saw fit to devote a considerable amount of text to this apparently "private matter" in the 1587 edition of his *Chronicles* (the play's main source)—it appeared in numerous retellings throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.[6] It is nevertheless a striking choice for a tragic narrative, concerning as it does "the lives of ordinary people [. . .] presented with an immediacy foreign to both the elevation of tragedy and the ridicule of comedy, an immediacy that [makes] those other forms seem foreign," in the words of Richard Helgerson, whose work has usefully shown just how unique the "ordinariness" of *Arden* and other domestic texts is in artistic and literary terms.[7] In its sensational and salacious nature, in the ordinariness of its nonaristocratic protagonists, and in its lack of a clearly identified tragic hero or an obvious tragic arc, *Arden of Faversham* undoubtedly represents, and presents itself as, a break with established concepts of tragic decorum.[8]

Early modern England was no stranger to tragedy as a form of literary and cultural expression.[9] A rich tradition of *de casibus* tragic literature existed in the period, as exemplified by the 1559

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[6] Holinshed dedicates some 5,000 words in total, more space than any other "private" crime is given. Other versions of the story include the first brief mention in the 1551 *Breviat Chronicle*, the account in the Faversham Wardmote Book, accounts by John Stow and other historians, a mention in Thomas Heywood's poem *Troia Britannica* (1609), and the "Complaint and Lamentation of Mistress Arden" (1633), a ballad. At least a dozen different retellings appeared between 1551 and 1643.

[7] *Adulterous Alliances: House, State, and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 2.

[8] The kind of decorum articulated by (for instance) Sir Philip Sidney, modelled on Aristotelian precepts and classical precursors that idealized the nobility of the tragic protagonist and a highly developed rhetorical style. Which is not to say that the play necessarily *is* a break with decorum, but that the epilogue positions it as such. For an overview of the "idea" of tragedy in the early modern period, see David Scott Kastan, "'A rarity most beloved': Shakespeare and the Idea of Tragedy," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Tragedies*, eds. Richard Dutton & Jean E. Howard (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 4–22: 4.

[9] For an overview of the development of this "mongrel genre," see Rebecca Bushnell, "The Fall of Princes: The Classical and Medieval Roots of English Renaissance Tragedy," in *A Companion to Tragedy*, ed. R. Bushnell (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 289–306.

publication of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, a collection of tragic poems advertised as a continuation of the *Fall of Princes*, John Lydgate's fifteenth-century reworking of Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*. The mid-sixteenth century also saw the rediscovery of classical tragic theory and drama, and particularly the works of Seneca, who would come to have a tremendous influence on the development of English tragedy. There was a clear sense, then, of what constituted tragedy in the period: very much classical and learned, it recounted the falls of noble and highborn figures in classical and English history in highly wrought rhetorical forms. Against this background, *The Lamentable and True Tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham in Kent* (as the 1592 edition is titled) stands out as something new and different.[10] The choice of material such as the Arden story or incidents described in murder pamphlets as the basis for a tragedy is also a claim about the nature of tragedy and tragic protagonists, that they need not be noble or princely, a claim reiterated in the choices of plot-material in successive domestic tragedies. Tragedy is not confined by social standing, and its "simple truth" can also be found in a nonaristocratic home in Kent, or in the streets of London, or in a Yorkshire household. At a time when the English theatre is seeking to establish itself both culturally and commercially, and to build on and differentiate itself from classical and continental dramatic traditions, *Arden* and the domestic tragedies that follow it have a unique claim to be exemplars of not simply a new, "naked" kind of tragedy, but also a specifically English one, a native innovation within a long-established and esteemed genre.

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[10] *The Lamentable and True Tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham in Kent* (London: for Edward White, 1592).

"True and Home-Born: Domestic Tragedy on the Early Modern English Stage" began as an attempt to account for a curious fact about the so-called "domestic tragedies" of early modern England,[11] including *Arden of Faversham*. This grouping of plays—with their shared interest in "ordinary," nonaristocratic life, their dramatization of recent historical events of a sensational and violent nature, and their detailed representations of early modern household settings and domestic ideology— remain marginal in critical accounts of the period's tragic drama. Critics continue to regard domestic tragedy as an interesting yet minor strand of the early modern dramatic tradition. As I will show, however, these plays—with their explicit investment in exploring the nature and work of tragedy, and in developing particular dramaturgical techniques and modes of theatrical representation—not only offer a valuable insight into the theatrical culture that produced them, but were in fact of much greater importance to that culture than has previously been acknowledged.

A brief consideration of the subgenre's theatrical history suggests that it occupied a significant place on the period's stages, beginning in the late 1580s with *Arden* and ending in the late 1620s with Thomas Heywood's *The English Traveller*.[12] In between these dates lie at least nine extant plays generally included in the domestic tragedy canon: *Arden*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, *1* and *2 Edward IV*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, *The Witch of*

[11] The term "domestic tragedy" has long been considered problematic, to the extent that various critics have either subsumed the category within the larger grouping of "murder plays," or renamed it. Sandra Clark, for instance, building on a suggestion by Keith Sturgess, recategorizes the plays as "journalistic," because of their similarities to "modern news reporting." *Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 63. See also the introduction to *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies*, ed. Keith Sturgess (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

[12] Heywood's play, published in 1633, was most likely written and performed some years earlier in 1626–7.

Edmonton, and *The English Traveller*. This canon increases to twenty-two if educated guesses about lost plays listed in Philip Henslowe's diary and elsewhere are included.[13] Several major playwrights of the period wrote domestic tragedies—Heywood, Ben Jonson, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, William Rowley, and John Webster.[14] Shakespeare, too, is associated with the genre, with *Othello* still discussed as being his "nearest approach to the form."[15] In spite of this suggestive evidence of the subgenre's substantial presence in early modern theatrical culture, critics continue to position domestic tragedies as a group on the margins of early modern English tragic drama, regarding them as an inferior kind of tragedy, merely "an Elizabethan minigenre."[16]

The reasons for this disparity, broadly speaking, are twofold. On the one hand, domestic tragedies with their non-aristocratic protagonists easily fall victim to 'great man' theories of tragedy and their insistence that tragedy proper concerns itself with "persons of 'high degree'; often with kings and princes, if not with leaders in the state [. . .]; members of great houses," as A. C. Bradley put it in his *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904).[17] The combination of their focus on the lower social orders and on the home and household (often dismissed by critics as women's matters) has not exactly been amenable to the elitism and misogyny of certain schools of tragic criticism. While Bradleyan understandings of tragedy have been greatly nuanced (if not undermined) over the last century, the "persistent criticism of

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[13] On this canon, see Lena Cowen Orlin, "Domestic Tragedy: Private Life on the Public Stage," *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. A. F. Kinney (Malden: Blackwell, 2002), 367–83: 370–1.

[14] Dekker, Ford, and Rowley co-wrote *The Witch of Edmonton* (1623), one of the later domestic tragedies, while Jonson and Webster are linked to two lost plays, *The Page of Plymouth* (1599) and *The Late Murder of the Son Upon the Mother* (1624?). See Appendix A, "Lost Domestic Tragedies," in Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy 1575 to 1642* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

[15] Orlin, "Domestic Tragedy," 371.

[16] Philip Holbrook, *Literature and Degree in Renaissance England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 86.

[17] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Penguin, 1991), 26.

the domestic play" as "an aesthetically 'inferior' genre" shows how much certain preconceptions have been hard to shake.[18] Thus, in what was for many years the definitive work on domestic tragedy, Henry Hitch Adams admits from the beginning that "individual domestic tragedies are often inferior as dramas," and reads them primarily as pieces of moral didacticism that for him serve mostly as precursors to the later dramatic achievements of Ibsen and O'Neill.[19]

More recently, the reputation of these plays has been somewhat restored by the work of historicist literary critics and social historians seeking to recover the complexities of the domestic sphere and its central importance to early modern English culture. In particular, the influential work of Lena Cowen Orlin, Viviana Comensoli, and Frances E. Dolan on domestic ideologies and relationships, ideas about privacy, householdry, and domestic crime has shown these texts to be a rich store of "oeconomic discourse," alongside household manuals, conduct books, sermons, court records, and popular forms such as pamphlets and ballads.[20] In these readings, the plays are assimilated to this larger archive of domesticity as "evidence of the processes of cultural formation and transformation in which they participated."[21] Specifically, the domestic tragedy form is seen as more than simply moralizing, because it "brings into relief the instability of the early modern household, together with the passions, rivalries, and ambivalence attending early modern theories of order."[22] Indeed, to critics interested in early modern domesticity, domestic tragedies are particularly valuable because they offer an alternative

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[18] Viviana Comensoli, *'Household Business': Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 15.

[19] Adams, vii.

[20] Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). On "oeconomic discourse," see Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 8–11.

[21] Dolan, 2–3.

[22] Comensoli, 16.

dramatic representation of "ordinary life" to the subgenre usually associated with such representation, the city or citizen comedy, as they focus on the household itself, rather than taking "the city [. . .] as its fulcrum" and subsuming "domestic themes [. . .] within the depiction of city life."[23] As such, the domestic tragedy represents for these critics a unique opportunity for engaging with early modern domestic and household culture.

In "True and Home-Born," in contrast, I consider these plays not only as domestic texts, but as a set of highly self-reflexive theatrical works, as plays invested in exploring their own dramatic form. Domestic tragedies, I argue, are neither a marginal subgenre of English theatre nor are they primarily indices of domestic culture in early modern England. One of my underlying assertions is that historicist work on these plays in the last two decades has focused on their domestic content at the expense of considering their dramatic form, dedicating (as Michael Neill writes) "more space to the identification and description of discursive contexts than to the detailed analysis of texts themselves."[24] These are dramatic texts of importance to the period's theatrical culture, experiments in dramatic writing and theatrical representation. Franklin's compressed theory of "naked tragedy" in *Arden of Faversham*, the sparring between the allegorical figures of History, Comedy and Tragedy in *A Warning for Fair Women*, the theatrically reflexive diction of the frame scenes in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* where the characters of Homicide and Avarice declare their intent to "make a two-folde Tragedie": all highlight the extent to which domestic tragedies are invested in exploring the possibilities of dramatic, and specifically tragic, form. This theatrical reflexivity is one of the fundamental hallmarks of these plays,

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[23] Ibid., 7.

[24] Michael Neill, "'This Gentle Gentleman': Social Change and the Language of Status in *Arden of Faversham*," *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 49–72: 49.

showing one of their primary concerns to be the dramatic, and not just the domestic. My interest in the "domestic" and "domesticity" lies not primarily in their social and cultural dimensions, but in how both are represented on stage, and in how dramatists evolved a particular representational style, set of dramaturgical strategies, and performance practices in order to represent them on stage. Reading these plays in terms of their dramatic and theatrical concerns, as I do here, inserts them into the wider context of early modern English theatrical culture, and allows us to recover a lost strand in our understanding of the development of tragedy—and English drama in general—in the period.

THE DOMESTIC TRAGEDY IN CRITICISM

In order to more fully explain my take on domestic tragedy and differentiate my approach to these texts from other critics, I turn to a closer consideration of the three major critical turns in the study of the subgenre. Each of these turns, as I will show, recognizes particular features or highlights specific, important aspects of these plays, which I gather together and build on here. It was nineteenth-century critics such as John Payne Collier and John Addington Symonds who were the first to consider these plays as a group and recognize their importance not just as early modern dramatic texts, but as part of the larger history of European theatre since the medieval period. In his 1831 *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, as part of his survey of early modern drama, Collier writes of a "species of dramatic representation, different from any other of which we have yet spoken, and which may be said to form a class by itself," a class that (he continues), "may be called domestic tragedy," identifying many of the plays—and many of their characteristics—still considered canonically (and problematically) domestic today.[25] He borrowed the term itself from Denis Diderot's idea of a "*tragédie domestique et bourgeoise*,"

[25] *The History of English Dramatic Poetry to the Time of Shakespeare and Annals of the Stage to the Restoration*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1851), 49. In terms of extant domestic tragedies, Collier's canon differs somewhat from the one detailed above, comprising *Arden*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, *Two Tragedies in One* (now known as *Two Lamentable*

a new type of French tragedy that "explored modern problems in middle class hearts, replaced universal *caractères* with social types, and by appealing to emotion as much as reason, left audiences the better for their vicarious experience,"[26] in much the same way as the "bürgerliches Trauerspiel" of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, theorized and staged (like its French equivalent) from the 1750s onwards. Diderot explicitly roots these continental domestic traditions in England somewhat earlier in the century, in the works of the playwrights George Lillo and Edward Moore. The former's *London Merchant* (1731) and *Fatal Curiosity* (1736), along with the latter's *The Gamester* (1753), were extremely popular in their time, and Lillo even adapted *Arden of Faversham* for the eighteenth-century stage in a version first performed in 1759.

In using a term with such a specific (and relatively recent) critical history, Collier seeks to reclaim the genre of domestic tragedy for England wholesale, turning Lillo and Moore into the most recent proponents of a tradition that he sees stretching back to the 1570s. He transforms the genre from an Enlightenment to a Renaissance phenomenon, and thus secures the plays a significant place in dramatic history. But as his dismissive description of their composition suggests, he does not hold them in high regard as artistic works: "it seems to have been the constant practice of dramatists of that day, to avail themselves (like the ballad-makers) of any circumstances of the kind, which attracted attention, in order to construct them into a play, often treating the subject merely as a dramatic narrative of a known

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Tragedies), *The Fair Maid of Bristol*, *The Yorkshire Tragedy* and *Murderous Michael*—none of Heywood's plays are thus included. He also refers to lost plays in Henslowe's diary as likely candidates: *The Tragedy of Thomas Merry*, *The Stepmother's Tragedy*, *The Tragedy of John Cox of Collumpton*, *The Lamentable Tragedy of Page of Plymouth*, and *Black Bateman of the North*.

[26] David Coward, *A History of French Literature: From* Chanson de Geste *to Cinema* (London: Blackwell, 2003), 170–1. See also James A. Sharpe, "Social Control in Early Modern England: The Need for a Broad Perspective," in *Social Control in Europe: 1500–1800*, ed. H. Roodenburg & P. Spierenburg (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), 37–54: 46. For a succinct overview of the afterlife of domestic tragedy that traces an arc right up until the works of Eugene O'Neill and Caryl Churchill, see Comensoli, 147–51.

occurrence, without embellishing, or aiding it with the ornaments of invention."[27] The very virtue identified by Franklin at the end of *Arden*, that of truth expressed in simplicity, is here turned against domestic tragedies. For Collier, tragedy without its "filèd points" is clearly inferior, "merely" a "dramatic narrative," and certainly not elevated tragic drama. In the end, however, the historical importance of the subgenre is clear, as evidenced by his handling of Shakespeare's potential authorship of these plays. "Shakespeare," he writes rather carefully, "is supposed to have been concerned, at least, in one production of this description, *The Yorkshire Tragedy*." Rather than distance Shakespeare from the domestic tragedy, he cites external evidence for his authorship (the tragedy "was played at the Globe theatre, and printed with [his] name in 1608") and goes so far as to claim that the "internal evidence" is even "stronger than the external, and there are some speeches which could scarcely have proceeded from any other pen." He then goes on to note that Shakespeare might have written *Arden* as well, a play that even he concedes "contains some characters strongly drawn, and some passages of no mean rank in the scale of poetry."[28]

From the beginning, then, domestic tragedy was established as an important, if artistically lacking, part of English drama. A half-century after Collier, John Addington Symonds is more comfortable with Shakespeare's purported engagement with this "peculiar species, which may be best described as Domestic Tragedies,"[29] and is also attuned to the importance of the form to the early modern theatre. Noting that Shakespeare was linked to *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, and to *Arden* at least as

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[27] Collier, 49–50.

[28] Ibid., 50–4.

[29] *Shakespere's Predecessors in the English Drama* (London: Smith, Elder, & Company, 1884), 329. Symonds dedicates some sixty pages to the domestic tragedies in his study.

far back as 1770,[30] he cautions against hastily "rejecting a tradition which ascribes to Shakespere [*sic*] one of these homely plays," especially given the fact that so many prominent playwrights—including Dekker, Jonson, Webster, and Ford—neither "disdained the species" nor shied away from devoting their "great talents to the task" of writing one.[31] There is something usefully different about this kind of play for Symonds, as it shows "great artists," who have "laid aside their pall of tragic state, descending to a simple style, befitting the grim realism of their subject."[32] He recognizes that these plays represent a break with earlier tragic and dramatic traditions. In particular, he associates them with a kind of realism, linking them, in other words, to a specific mode of theatrical representation and implicitly identifying them as theatrical experiments within that mode.

It is this "realistic" mode of theatrical representation that is especially important to a consideration of domestic tragedies. In recognizing the wealth of domestic tragedy rather than its deficiencies, in placing them in the midst of their theatrical culture, and in viewing them as important theatrical texts in terms of their experiments in representational practices, Symonds anticipates my own view of these plays as works of "exceptional importance" that strikingly show "the command of dramatic effect which marked our theatre in its earliest as in its latest development."[33] While his readings of these plays tend to focus on plot recapitulation and character, he emphasizes their unique mode of representation throughout; for him the "characteristic feature of domestic tragedy [. . .] is realism." He sees them as "studies from contemporary life, unidealised, unvarnished with poetry or

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[30] The latter attribution made by Edward Jacob in his *Arden* reprint of that year.

[31] Symonds even expands on Collier's original canon, adding Heywood's *A Woman Killed* and Dekker, Ford, and Rowley's *Witch of Edmonton*.

[32] Symonds, 331.

[33] Ibid., 386.

fancy [. . .] in a truer sense than any playwork of the period." Furthermore, he presents this realism as deliberate on the part of the dramatists, not simply as a by-product of their historical sources, relying on an extended metaphor of visual art to make his point about how "this realism which gives the ground tone to their art is varied." *A Warning* "might be compared to a photograph from the nude model," *A Yorkshire Tragedy* is "a rough sketch by a swift fierce master's hand, defining form and character with brusque chiaroscuro," while *Arden* "adds colour and composition" to an "artist's reading of a tragic episode in human life," and *A Woman Killed* is "a picture, realistic in its *mise en scène* and details, realistic in its character-drawing, but tinctured with a touch of special pleading."[34] What is key here is the sense of deliberate artistic experimentation that Symonds evokes, the sense that these writers are engaged in attempting to represent reality on the stage in a wide variety of ways. As I will develop further below, it is as dramatic experiments in "realism" and "reality effects" on stage that these plays are of particular importance in the English dramatic tradition.[35]

"DOMESTIC, OR HOMILETIC TRAGEDY"

Much as Symonds recognized the dramatic importance of these plays, they practically disappear from view for several decades, without little critical attention paid to them until Henry Hitch Adams' *English Domestic, or Homiletic Tragedy* (1943).[36] This book-length study comes to define the critical approach to domestic tragedy for some fifty years. For Adams, the overarching aim of these plays lies

[34] Ibid., 337.

[35] I use the term "realism" advisedly here and throughout the dissertation, designating thereby simply the attempts to depict things accurately or truthfully on stage, and to generate a representation or an atmosphere of the 'real world.' "Reality effects," then, are the particular textual details, dramaturgical components, and theatrical techniques that contribute to this sense of "reality."

[36] Edward Ayers Taylor's unpublished "Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1925) is the only full-length study of the genre before Adams. He adds several lost plays to the canon and fills in the historical background to the murders depicted on stage, highlighting the connection between the plays and various murder pamphlets, a connection elaborated on more recently by Peter Lake and Sandra Clark in their respective work on pamphlet culture.

in—as his title suggests—the teaching of moral lessons, and as such, they exist apart from other tragedies of the period, both in terms of that moralizing aim and in their violation of tragic conventions. Where Symonds regards them as a "species" of tragedy, Adams sees them as "a distinct dramatic *genre*, marked by a few clearly defined characteristics" (my emphasis) that is less sophisticated than "contemporary orthodox tragedies":

> The authors of domestic tragedy had been taught clear and obvious solutions to the problems of man's relation to God and wrote their plays to teach the doctrines which they knew were altogether true and righteous. The writers of orthodox tragedies, on the other hand, found many of these problems a mystery, a fact which gave a larger reach to their speculations and to the meaning of their plots.[37]

I cite at length here to emphasize the degree to which a wedge is being inserted between the domestic and "orthodox" tragedy—the latter clearly defined in a manner resonant with A. C. Bradley's view of the genre.[38]

Much as Adams can be credited with reigniting a certain interest in these plays, deeming them worthy of serious critical attention, I suggest that such interest comes at a cost. The terms of his evaluation are quite clear from the outset. While "orthodox" tragedy as developed by the Greeks and refined by certain Renaissance dramatists "justly occupies one of the highest pinnacles in the literary range" as "the first dramatic type to reach complete artistic development," domestic tragedy is almost a desecration: "it is indeed remarkable that tragedy was ever able to descend from its Olympian heights to the lowly vale of common man."[39] For Adams, the commonness or "humble station" of the hero is the

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[37] Adams, 184.

[38] The quotation also demonstrates the extent to which Adams' argument builds on a certain wilful ignorance about the period's theatrical culture. His separation of "domestic" and "orthodox" tragedians is (as both Symonds and Collier showed) simply does not hold, given the aforementioned roster of "orthodox" writers who also wrote domestic tragedies.

[39] Ibid., 4.

defining characteristic of the subgenre, "the only one not occasionally violated."[40] The major problem with his definition, however, lies in his insistence on the "common" status of domestic tragedy protagonists. While he is right to note that the plays break with tragic conventions, his definition of the subgenre is overly simple: "All domestic tragedies, of course, present commoners as their heroes instead of men of royal or high estate. But they are alike in a still more important feature. They are all homiletic plays, expressing in their own popular melodramatic fashion the official theology of the day."[41] As Orlin has pointed out, the supposed "lowly social station" of the domestic protagonist is "an exaggeration,"[42] as shown by the description of Arden as a "gentleman of blood" (1.36) in his eponymous play. While the characters are "admittedly not royal and clearly not noble [. . .] neither are they lowly,"[43] as closer attention to the plays, particularly in terms of their historical and social contexts, reveals.

In addition to his over-emphasis of the "commonness" of domestic tragedies, Adams' characterization of these plays as above all homiletic and moralizing, as "the dramatic equivalent of the homiletic tract and the broadside ballad" seeking "to teach the people by means of examples couched in terms of their own experiences,"[44] is also problematic. As I argue in my first chapter, the relationship between the dramatic texts and moral discourses is more complex than Adams allows, and the domestic tragedies in fact critique the kind of moralizing discourse found in tracts and pamphlets rather than simply dramatize it. While critics have nuanced Adams' understanding of the relationship between the

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[40] Based on this revised definition, Adams includes in his canon "every play of the period which in some way partakes of the attributes of the genre." Ibid., viii. While his addition of Heywood's *Edward IV* plays and *The English Traveller* are warranted, later critics find his "inclusiveness unwieldy and misleading," dropping plays such as Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* from consideration. Orlin, "Domestic Tragedy," 371.

[41] Adams, 184.

[42] Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 9.

[43] Ibid., 10.

[44] Adams, 184.

plays and other forms of moralizing discourse, it continues to influence how these texts are regarded; while interesting as a certain kind of cultural text, they remain largely uninteresting as dramatic texts.[45] However, like Symonds, Adams does acknowledge the prevalence of realism in these plays, a mode that he in fact links to their moralizing impulse. To his mind, the plays aim for verisimilitude in order to encourage moral reflection, since "setting the action of their plays in a domestic milieu" would "appeal to a sense of self-recognition in the members of their audience." Rather than exploring the dramatic and theatrical particularities of this domestic realism, or even note its experimental nature as Symonds does, he notes it simply as a stylistic property that derives from their moralizing purpose, arguing that the dramatists wrote "in a deliberately realistic manner [. . .] to increase the cogency of the moral lesson by making the action seem like a page torn from the lives of the auditors."[46]

"PRIVATE MATTERS" AND "HOUSEHOLD BUSINESS"

The extent to which an early modern audience would have seen their lives mirrored on stage has become vividly clear in the last two decades of work on the domestic tragedy subgenre, which represent the next major critical intervention in its study.[47] Thanks to the aforementioned historical and historicist studies of Orlin, Dolan, and others, it has become clear just how much these plays captured and presented on stage a verisimilar world through their staging of household settings, of the realities of

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[45] Peter Lake, for instance, describes the plays as "in effect murder pamphlets turned into theatrical dialogue and action." *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 26.

[46] Adams, 186.

[47] In the intervening period, a small number of studies appeared that read the plays in terms of the early modern family, but they had little influence until Orlin recognized how they rendered "the domestic tragedies more susceptible to appropriation for a cultural history of the private." *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 247. Andrew Clark, *Domestic Drama: A Survey of the Origins, Antecedents, and Nature of the Domestic Play in England, 1500–1640* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1975); Peter Ure, "Marriage and the Domestic Drama in Heywood and Ford," *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1974), 145–65; Michel Grivelet, *Thomas Heywood et le drame domestique Elizabéthain* (Paris: Didier, 1957).

domestic and local life, and of the nature of quotidian experience that defined early modern "ordinary" life. For these critics, domestic tragedies become a means of gaining insight into the domestic details of early modern life, particularly in terms of "understanding the private matters of its period" and revealing "the instability of the early modern household."[48] For my purposes, the most valuable overarching insight of this criticism lies in its presentation of the early modern household as a locus for ideological exploration and contestation. As Dolan has shown, the household is always a "locus of conflict," a nexus of competing identities and relationships.[49] Furthermore, that space was also densely populated with not just subjects but objects, as Natasha Korda has shown, building on Orlin's suggestive inventories of early modern households.[50]

In other words, in these plays the early modern household also existed as a conceptual site, a space in which ideas and ideologies could be represented, developed, and critiqued. Wendy Wall has shown how plays functioned as sites in which various "cultural fantasies" of domesticity were staged,[51] an evocative term that informs my own understanding of how household on stage functioned for dramatists in the period. As the representation of a space in which objects already existed symbolically as markers of social status and in which relationships played out both on personal and on larger, symbolic political and theological levels, the household *on stage* existed as an overdetermined representational space. I suggest that it was explicitly understood as such in the period as well, and was

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[48] Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 10; Comensoli, 16.

[49] Dolan, 1.

[50] As Korda writes, "the early modern conception of what constituted a household was [. . .] defined as much by objects as it was by subjects." *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 1–2. See also Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), esp. 64–103; Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 253–69.

[51] Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11.

as a space in which to engage not just domestic but also dramatic and theatrical matters. This was all the more the case as a result of what Korda terms the "material economies" of the early modern theatre, and the close, mutually dependent relationship "between household and playhouse," spaces between which not only "household stuff" but household members and housewives themselves circulated as both spectators and labourers.[52]

For these critics, drama serves to make this richness, this complexity, visible, whether in terms of domestic ideology, domestic economy, domestic fantasy, or domestic subjectivity. The space of the early modern theatre functioned, in Jean-Christophe Agnew's memorable description, as "a laboratory of representational possibilities for a society perplexed by the cultural consequences of nascent capitalism."[53] The idea of such a "laboratory" is particularly apt in reference to the staged representations of households of early modern England. In showing the domestic tragedies and other dramatic representations of domesticity to be worthy of serious critical attention, the work on the early modern household of the last two decades has also revealed just how richly complex that space was in an abstract sense, as a locus for social relations and conflict, as a signifier of social status, and as a nexus between ideology and lived experience. The space of the household was thus itself semantically saturated, a field in which relationships were imagined, intersected, and came into conflict, where subjects inhabited and resisted proscribed roles, where objects acquired value and meaning as household commodities, and in turn imparted meaning to that household and its inhabitants, and where domestic ideologies constantly came up against domestic life.

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[52] Korda, 9. On women's labour in the early modern theatre, see also Korda's more recent book, *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

[53] Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theatre in Anglo-American Thought*, 1550–1750 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 54.

In a study that most closely echoes my own investment in studying these plays as dramatic texts, Catherine Richardson—focusing on the representations of domestic interiors—has sought to reconstruct "contemporary [i.e. early modern] perceptions of the household" in order to see "how they might affect the way in which the domestic tragedies [. . .] were watched" in the period.[54] Acknowledging, as I do, that these plays sought to constitute theatrical experiences as much as reflect domestic matters, she recognizes the realism of these plays to be particularly important, positing the existence of a "uniquely developed domestic mimesis," a mode of representation specifically concerned with recreating the household on stage.[55] But while she does explicitly predicate her work on the dramatic form and theatricality of these texts, she also positions her work as expanding on Adams' idea of the moralizing function of domestic tragedies, an attempt to "unpick" *how* their realism would affect early modern audiences.[56] That is to say, her ultimate interests lie outside of early modern theatrical culture, leaving the early modern domestic tragedy contained within and defined by its domesticity, even if its particular formal nature is duly acknowledged and explored. In "True and Home-Born," in contrast, my interest lies in the period's theatre, and how it turned to representations of the household as a means through which to develop and experiment with a particular kind of mimetic theatrical representation, both in domestic tragedies themselves, and in relationship to other major dramatic subgenres such as the revenge tragedy and history play.

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[54] Richardson, *Domestic Life*, 4.

[55] Ibid., 20.

[56] Ibid., 193.

As this overview suggests, the fundamental problems of domestic tragedy criticism are (1) the continuing denial of the dramatic and literary merit of these plays based on preconceived or inherited ideas about what constitutes 'proper' tragedy, (2) the assumption that domestic tragedies are concerned with domestic and household matters, which ignores the explicit investment of these plays in their status as dramatic and theatrical texts, and (3) a narrow and rigid definition of the subgenre that precludes a fuller understanding of the plays' place in early modern theatrical culture. Collier's original canon is essentially still intact, with only a few changes having been made. And while Adams goes too far in his inclusiveness, I follow his impulse to widen our understanding of what constitutes the early modern domestic tragedy subgenre. The abovementioned characteristics—an interest in "ordinary," nonaristocratic life; an English, localized setting; the staging of household scenes, relationships, and settings; the dramatization of recent historical events of a criminal or murderous nature; a certain unadorned tone and style—do link these plays, but remain problematic when applied as definitional criteria. *Arden* and *A Woman Killed*, for instance—often regarded as the most representative domestic tragedies—are actually imperfect fits: the former advertises an unadorned style and yet is given to rhetorical flights and moments of stylistic beauty, while the latter neither dramatizes a murder nor is based on true events.

"True and Home-Born" seeks to address such problems by redefining our understanding the domestic tragedy canon. The critical approach to the revenge tragedy subgenre is, I think, instructive in this regard. The theatrical history of this dramatic subgenre is strikingly similar to that of the domestic tragedy: where the latter runs from the late 1580s to the early 1630s, the former was on the stage from about 1587 (Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*) until 1641 (James Shirley's *The Cardinal*). Furthermore, the revenge tragedy canon encompasses some twelve extant plays (to the domestic

tragedy's eight) and a similar roster of well-known dramatists.[57] Unlike its domestic sibling, the revenge tragedy has been duly acknowledged to be central to the early modern English theatrical and tragic traditions, its influence traced throughout the period. Critics also conceive of the subgenre differently. It is quite certain that early modern dramatists had an idea that *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *The Revenger's Tragedy* (to name a few) constituted a grouping of plays that shared certain characteristics, and responded to and experimented on other plays that shared their dramatic form. Whether that grouping was contemporaneously referred to as "revenge tragedy" or not does not change our belief that it existed. When we read for the influence of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* on Shakespeare's revenge tragedies, we trace it through the copying or evolution of various hallmarks and characteristics—Hamlet's play-within-the-play, for instance, as a response to Hieronimo's in *The Spanish Tragedy*. The differences between those metatheatrical moments—in terms of position in the larger play, the fact that *The Mousetrap* features a troupe of players rather than the main characters of the play, etc.—are not taken to mean that the revenge tragedy subgenre does not exist, just that Shakespeare is innovating within it. Furthermore, there is no critical discomfort with speaking of plays that contain "revenge elements" even if they are not regarded as revenge tragedies proper (Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* would be an example). The revenge tragedy subgenre is inherently far more flexibly used than its domestic sibling.

Partly, this flexibility results from the relative simplicity of the defining characteristic of "revenge" as compared to "the domestic." The former is less difficult to read for in plays, it is clear whether or not it is present in some form or other, and—importantly—it does not feature significantly in a particularly large number of texts. The desire to limit the domestic tragedy canon and retain a

[57] See, for example, the chronological overview in the introduction to *Four Revenge Tragedies*, ed. K. E. Maus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), xxxvi–xxxvii. But as Maus notes, "it is hard to define clearly the limits of the genre" (xxxvi).

certain rigidity in its definition is to some extent understandable. After all, "the domestic" quickly becomes unwieldy and thus ultimately meaningless as a defining characteristic, given that households and domestic spheres are, to say the least, rather common on the early modern stage. In "True and Home-Born," I propose an understanding of the domestic tragedy subgenre that is more similar to the way in which critics work with the subgenre of revenge tragedy. Rather than focusing on "necessary elements" for defining a genre, I follow the lead of Alastair Fowler (and others) in building on Wittgenstein's theory of "family resemblance," in which members of a genre can be "regarded as making up a family whose septs and individual members are related in various ways, without necessarily having a single feature shared in common by all."[58] This understanding of genre opens domestic tragedy from a rigid canon to a broader network of plays that are not cut off from but rather enmeshed in early modern theatrical culture, acknowledging the importance of the staged household not just to the subgenre but to the period's drama as a whole. Domestic tragedies then become texts against which other plays can be productively read in terms of the various characteristics most visible in such tragedies. I regard plays such as *Arden*, *A Woman Killed*, and the other plays traditionally identified as domestic tragedies to be at the core of the subgenre. These central, representative texts are thus what genre-theorists refer to as "prototypes" or the "most typical category members" of the domestic tragedy grouping,[59] texts that exhibit a large number of the defining characteristics or hallmarks.

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[58] Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 41. See also ibid., 39–44. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), sections 65–77.

[59] John Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 52. On "prototypicality," see ibid., 49–52. He cites a useful definition: "There are privileged properties, manifest in most or even all exemplars of the category; these could even be necessary properties. Even so, these privileged properties are insufficient for picking out all and only the class members, and hence a family resemblance description is still required. Prototypical members have all or most privileged properties of the categories. Marginal members have only one or a few. Possession of a privileged property from another category [. . .] or failure to exhibit a privileged property [. . .] may also

Specifically, there are a number of characteristics that I privilege in my definition of domestic tragedy: (1) a focus on representing the household and engaging with domestic matters; (2) an investment in representing ordinary, nonaristocratic life; (3) a localized English setting—i.e. a setting that situates the play in a potentially recognizable locale; (4) plots of domestic violent crime and/or transgression such as adultery, petty treason and tyranny, failed householdry; (5) recognizable domestic character-types, and recognizable domestic narratives, i.e. stories that are both particular historical events and archetypal domestic narratives; (6) a particular vocabulary, tone, and diction—call it ordinary, homely, and/or quotidian; (7) a particular representational style (of which more below) that focuses on faithful recreation, one-to-one mimetic representation, accuracy, and realism—often seen in the deployment of seemingly extraneous or superfluous details about household spaces, domestic objects, and local geographies; (8) a 'domestic theatrical praxis': a set of playwriting, dramaturgical, and theatrical techniques and practices that includes stage properties, deictic language, verbal description, and stage business; and (9) a sense of theatrical reflexivity about that style and that praxis, expressed in terms of anxiety, or innovation, or consciousness of a larger (national) theatrical culture.

The first six characteristics are concerned with *what* is being represented, the final three with *how*. The former are part of what I term the early modern English "domestic mythos,"[60] the complex sense—feel, even—of "domesticity," of a "household world," that is evoked and invoked by these plays. Orlin writes of the "domestic arena" that is "conjured up for us" in a play like *A Woman Killed*,[61] a conjuring that Richardson attributes to the "domestic mimesis" of these texts, but there is more to this

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relegate some members to the periphery." Sharon Lee Armstrong, Lila R. Gleitman, and Henry Gleitman, "What some concepts might not be," *Cognition* 13 (1983): 263–308.

[60] *OED*, s.v. "mythos": "A body of interconnected myths or stories, esp. those belonging to a particular religious or cultural tradition. More generally: an ideology, a set of beliefs (personal or collective)."

[61] *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 146.

evocation of the domestic than the accurate representation of household settings on stage. In my usage, the domestic mythos is a catchall term for the recognizable domestic totality that is both conjured up and called upon by these plays: the set of interconnected stories and ideas about the domestic realm and household sphere, of archetypal domestic plots (adultery, parricide, infanticide, disloyal servants, etc.), of domestic and household vocabulary, of domestic and household references, markers, and objects that circulated in the period. It is both represented on stage *and* part of what Richardson refers as that which "the audience might bring with them to the theatre,"[62] the 'cultural baggage' of domesticity, as it were. The domestic mythos is evoked in a number of ways in these texts and on stage: through the use of stage properties, through the use of verbal description or identification of household spaces, the staging of domestic relationships, and so on; in other words, what Richardson terms "a grammar of specifically domestic representations which stretches from the most subtle of [. . .] spatialisations to the most concrete of stage properties."[63]

In treating these plays primarily as theatrical texts, "True and Home-Born" thus takes a different approach to other strands of criticism on domestic tragedy. When Franklin, the one fictional major character in *Arden*, steps out from the inner world of the play and into the world of the audience to share his metatheatrical commentary, he embodies the fact that *Arden* is a work of theatre. His fictional status and his epilogue remind us that *Arden*, in addition to being a reworking of English history and a representation of early modern domestic ideology, is first and foremost a dramatic tragedy. It's my contention that these plays are as much about thinking through and exploring the realms of 'tragedy' and 'the theatrical' as that of the 'domestic.' While the critical re-evaluations of these texts in

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[62] Richardson, *Domestic Life*, 17.

[63] Ibid., 20.

the last two decades have done much to recover their importance as texts about early modern domesticity, I show that they are important theatrical texts in the period as well by looking at those moments where they exhibit self-consciousness about their status as tragic dramatic works, and particularly as examples of a native, homely kind of English drama.

DOMESTIC TRAGEDY AS NATIVE AND NATIONAL DRAMA

Domestic tragedy is important not only for the way in which it recreates a domestic mythos but for how it connects that mythos to a nation-forming project. These plays insist on their status as specifically *English* tragedies, i.e. as plays that are explicitly positioned as innovations within a burgeoning native theatrical tradition that is seeking to distinguish itself from its classical forebears and continental competitors. With its staging of an infamous piece of domestic English history, its intimate local knowledge of the English landscape and towns in which it takes place, and its deep understanding of local laws, socio-political spheres and hierarchies of power, *Arden* insists on its own Englishness throughout. Along with plays such as *A Warning for Fair Women* and *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, *Arden* goes to great lengths to emphasize its English setting. When Arden journeys to London and back, his travels are accurately mapped over the course of the play, as is the case when one of the murderers in *A Warning* escapes to his "cousin Browne" in "Rochester"; the third play, we are told meanwhile, is set in "in famous London late, / Within that streete whose side the River Thames / Doth strive to wash" and precisely locates the various places in the city (e.g. "by Paris-garden ditch") where the dismembered victims' bodies are disposed of. This specificity in the reproduction of local geography functions as a means of constantly reaffirming the status of these plays as native and specifically English tragedies.

This sense of Englishness is further reinforced by subtle acknowledgements of larger national contexts in these plays. *A Warning*, for instance, features a conversation about the English Pale, the part of Ireland under England's control at the time, and implies that one of its murderers is himself Irish. And at the very beginning of *Arden*, Franklin reminds his friend that he has been awarded "[b]y letters patent from his majesty / All the lands of the Abbey of Faversham" (4–5), evoking the social and historical contexts and tensions arising from the dissolution of religious land holdings in the wake of the Reformation.[64] Such self-consciousness about the nation on stage has usually been discussed in the context of the early modern history play,[65] but I would suggest that the early modern domestic tradition, as inaugurated by *Arden*, represents another important and less studied locus for such discussion as an alternative tradition of national imagining. As Helgerson argues, these art forms "emerged as a by-product of early modern state formation and defined themselves by their *difference* from the newly invented or newly revived genres of state: history painting, tragedy, historical drama, and history itself" (emphasis mine). As such, these "more homely" genres represent the nation in a different way from the so-called "genres of state."[66]

This alternative form of national expression offers a compelling reason to re-evaluate the importance of domestic tragedy in the period. Not only does it link the attempts to articulate a new form of tragedy to early modern nationalist thinking, but it also reveals the extent to which these plays

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[64] Sir Thomas Cheyne was granted "the site of y^{e} monastery of ffaversham" by Henry VIII in 1540, and then transferred them. See the note to l. 2–5, *Arden of Faversham*, 4.

[65] See Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997); Willy Maley, *Nation, State, and Empire in English Renaissance Literature: Shakespeare to Milton* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[66] *Adulterous Alliances*, 6.

engage "the domestic" in both the small- and the large-scale senses.[67] Like Helgerson, I look beyond the household interests of these plays and their representations of the early modern domestic sphere. Just as he contends that the "private nonaristocratic home, as a focus for serious artistic attention, was [. . .] brought into being not so much for itself as in response to a new organization of public power,"[68] I suggest that that home is not brought onto the stage just "for itself"—i.e. as a reflection of domestic ideology and concerns—but in response to the changing English theatrical culture of the late sixteenth century. Staging the households that form the settings of these domestic narratives, I argue, offers not just a means of political response and resistance (as Helgerson argues), but a site for theatrical reflection and experimentation for early modern dramatists. Furthermore, at a time when English cultural production was very much focused on the creation, development, and articulation of national literary and theatrical traditions, the 'doubled domesticity' offered a particularly rich site for such cultural work.

DOMESTIC TRAGEDY AND THEATRICAL EXPERIMENTATION

Besides contributing to a project of nation-forming, domestic tragedy, I argue, also stands out as a site of extraordinary theatrical experimentation and self-conscious reflection on the ends and nature of tragic theatre as it represents English domestic life. The subgenre was thus, like the early modern theatre as a whole, a "laboratory of representational possibilities" (to use Agnew's phrase) for English dramatists, theatrical producers, and even theatrical audiences of the period. The dramatists of early modern domestic tragedy developed a particular representational style based on one-to-one mimetic representation and accuracy that experimented with a variety of dramaturgical and theatrical

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[67] The sense of the "domestic" as meaning "pertaining to one's own country or nation; not foreign, internal, inland, 'home'" arises in the middle of the sixteenth century. *OED*, s.v. "domestic."

[68] *Adulterous Alliances*, 6.

techniques and practices, including stage properties, deictic language, verbal description, and stage business. These writers and their plays, then, were part of the theatrical transition in the period from what Henry S. Turner, drawing on Glynne Wickham's survey of English theatrical culture, neatly calls "a fundamental shift from an 'emblematic' to a 'realist' mode of mimesis."[69] Robert Weimann has written of the transition as part of a larger moment when "the art of poetry was integrated in unique ways with a new sense of the world of empirical reality," a moment that coincided with a "departure from morality traditions of allegory," which "had provided an altogether different mode of relating the idea (*Wesen*) and the appearance (*Erscheinung*) of reality." In this new form of theatre, "new standards of realism" were operative, seen in the rise of a "realistic mode of characterization" that was "particularly well-suited to represent the movement (the relations and the struggle) between the world and the ego, environment and character."[70] Turner emphasizes the transitional nature of this early modern moment in terms of the development of a "a referential, empirical, or 'realist' mode of iconic representation that [theatrical performance] shares with modern scientific inquiry," and thus that dramatic texts are sites in which early modern experiments with dramatic and theatrical realism are staged.[71]

In this theatrical culture experimenting with more realistic forms of theatrical representation, domestic tragedies (as Richardson argues) are a special case, as "the portrayal of the domestic environment and the pull of local and contemporary narratives seem particularly intended to invite

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[69] Henry S. Turner, *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and the Practical Spatial Arts 1580–1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 163; Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300–1660*, 3 vols. in 4 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959–81).

[70] Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 200–2. See also 196–207.

[71] Turner, 164, 163–5.

comparison with experience outside the theatre."[72] In addition, that environment offers a particular kind of theatrical opportunity for early modern dramatists experimenting with realistic representation. Much has been made of the way early modern drama bridges representational distances—turning the "wooden O" of the stage into "the vasty fields of France," to quote *Henry V*—even if our sense of the "emptiness" of the stage has been greatly nuanced by recent work on stage properties and costumes.[73] It has nevertheless, as Turner puts it, "become a commonplace to observe that the early-modern open stage was not illusionistic: that it did not strive to represent with perfect fidelity the realistic details of locations [. . .] but instead relied on language, props, and stage elements to signify locations in an emblematic way." Like Turner, I acknowledge the importance of this "symbolic aspect" of theatrical signifiers but also want to call attention to those moments in which that aspect becomes less important, in which for example "the physical features of a location are designated as descriptively or flatly as possible and the connotative charge recedes relative to the signifier's denotative aspect."[74]

In terms of the representational style that defines the domestic tragedies, their one-to-one mimesis, this descriptive or 'flat' mode is fundamental to the 'realism' produced by the 'grammar' of domestic theatrical praxis. In staging the household, early modern dramatists were not faced with the usual problem of representational distance discussed in relation to early modern theatrical representation: depicting France or the Bohemian coast on an English stage, or having a lowly actor play the part of a king, or a boy play the part of a woman. In these latter examples, the audience is asked (to

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[72] Richardson, 10.

[73] See, for example, *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, eds. Jonathan Gil Harris & Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); on costumes and clothing, see Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. 173–268.

[74] Turner, 165. He also notes that "this mode is particularly common in genres that tend towards realism, such as comedy, satire, farce, domestic tragedy, and revenge tragedy, where the physical features of location are designated with a relatively neutral semiotic value and the scene becomes crowded with spatial detail."

some extent) to bridge or ignore the large distance between signifier and signified. But the "voider" (or tray),[75] the "wooden knife," the "table-cloth and napkins," and the "carpet" that are carried out at the beginning of a scene in Heywood's *A Woman Killed* are the things themselves.[76] In domestic tragedy, the signifier is very often the signified thing itself. Thus (in addition to the obvious ones), there is a significant difference in terms of theatrical representation between the banquet scene in the third act of *Macbeth* and the scene in *A Woman Killed* where the characters play cards after their supper. Both scenes could have been staged around the same table, but where that table would likely have been a recognizably "ordinary" table, one similar to what audience members themselves might (desire to) own.[77] Similarly, what Orlin terms the "range of theatrical languages" deployed by these plays—including deictic language that identifies various parts of the household, the visual language of stage props, and the language of movement and gesture—all add to this domestic mimesis.[78] The frame of the household is established through deixis and verbal identification, and then recognizable domestic roles, objects, and actions populate that frame, representing themselves on stage. The household space as it appears on stage, then, demarcates a specific representational/theatrical space in addition to a domestic one.

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[75] "A tray, basket, or other vessel in which dirty dishes or utensils, fragments of broken food, etc., are placed in clearing the table or during a meal." *OED*, s.v. "voider."

[76] "*Enter* THREE *or* FOUR SERVINGMEN*, one with a voider and a wooden knife to take away all, another the salt and bread, another the table-cloth and napkins, another the carpet*" (8.0 sd).

[77] See Richardson's argument about the table and other domestic properties in the latter scene, "Properties of domestic life: the table in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," in *Staged Properties*, 129–53. See also in the same volume, Orlin, "Things with little social life (Henslowe's theatrical properties and Elizabethan household fittings)," 99–128.

[78] *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 145–6. Orlin is writing specifically about Heywood's play, but these languages are found throughout the domestic tragedies. See my first chapter for an in-depth consideration of theatrical verisimilitude in the plays.

In the following chapters, unlike Richardson, I do not seek to reconstruct the early modern "audience experience" of this domestic mimesis by paying attention to the material conditions of its production,[79] but rather to have the importance of domestic tragedies as theatrical texts fully acknowledged. Their realistic theatrical representation, I argue, is not just an incidental product of the staging of household settings. As Franklin's epilogue to *Arden*, Heywood's prologue to *A Woman Killed*, and the juxtaposition of realistic domestic scenes with allegorical drama in plays such as *A Warning* or *Two Lamentable Tragedies* show, the domestic tragedies have from the outset been theatrically reflexive about their own form—it is, in fact, one of their defining hallmarks. In always attending to their domestic rather than their tragic and theatrical nature, critics are ignoring a significant aspect of these texts—one that enriches our reading of domestic drama, and adds another dimension to our study of both the plays themselves, and of the development of theatrical representational modes, techniques, and practices. Each of my chapters is concerned not with the domestic or domesticity per se, but with their representations on stage, and with the theatrical representational praxis of the domestic tragedies, texts which I read throughout as primarily dramatic texts.

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"True and Home-Born" falls into two halves. In the first half, I focus on plays that have traditionally been included in the domestic tragedy canon (and one usually situated uneasily on the periphery), reading them in terms of their dramatic and theatrical reflexivity. I aim to both broaden our understanding of what the domestic tragedy does, and of what it is. In my first chapter, I read three

[79] Richardson, 17.

early English domestic tragedies—*Arden of Faversham*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, and *Two Lamentable Tragedies*—in terms of their explorations of tragedy as a theatrical form and their self-consciousness about their own genre. The domestic plots, non-elite protagonists, and household settings of these plays offer rich opportunities for early modern dramatists to reflect on the nature of tragedy, challenging inherited ideas about the form's social status, aesthetic decorum, and rhetorical affect. Rather than define tragedy in terms of static hallmarks or conventions, subverting traditional tragic conventions and replacing them with new ones, these writers define the genre in terms of the work it performs. That work is the discovery, articulation, and representation of a particular and unique kind of "tragic truth," one arrived at through emotional recognition and identification—a process enabled by the reality effects of domestic tragedy delineated in the introduction, such as the use of recognizable stage props and other details of quotidian life, the attention to accurate geographical and urban mapping, the deployment of familiar landmarks, cultural references, and vocabulary.

My second chapter turns to two later plays that are deeply invested in the staging of domestic and household matters: Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and Shakespeare's *Othello*, both written and performed around 1602–3. Expanding on my earlier contention that both of these plays are domestic tragedies, I show how both Heywood and Shakespeare look back and reflect on the form of domestic tragedy, and in particular on its supposed status as a means of articulating the truth. Each play engages with the concept of truth and truthfulness in different ways and on different levels in order to investigate how their historically based forerunners create a sense of truthfulness and lifelikeness. But by using fictional plots, they demonstrate the extent to which the verisimilitude of domestic tragedy is not primarily a result of their historical veracity but instead a product of their dramatic form and theatrical praxis. In deploying the various representational strategies and conventions associated with the form—accurate and detailed verbal description of settings, a

recognizable domestic mythos, the mimetic use of stage properties—each dramatist posits that the domestic tragedy form actually *produces* rather than simply repeats, represents, or articulates "the truth"; that the genre is fundamentally concerned not with veracity but with verisimilitude.

In the second half, I show that the boundary between domestic tragedies and other early modern plays is more porous than has previously been thought. As a result, while the domestic tragedies considered in the second chapter do follow on from those in the first, both the third and fourth chapters return to earlier moments in the period's theatrical history to consider the development of the relationships between domestic tragedy and other dramatic subgenres. By tracing the varied figurations of the domestic in other plays through the lens of domestic tragic praxis, I reveal how centrally important the staging of the domestic is as a locus for the development of early modern English theatre.

In the third chapter, I consider perhaps the best known of early modern dramatic subgenres, the revenge tragedy, in order to show that from its beginnings it was deeply intertwined with its domestic sibling. I offer a new way of reading early modern revenge tragedy in terms of its representations of the domestic and of the theatrical reflexivity it shares with the domestic tragedies, recognizing that the revenge and domestic traditions are intertwined from their beginnings on the early modern stage. In particular, I show that the early revenge tragedies of Kyd and Shakespeare not only adapt the Senecan revenge drama for the English stage, but manifest and reflect on that process of translation and adaptation, of making a foreign classical theatrical tradition into a native English one. Furthermore, I argue that it is through their representations of household settings and relations that these plays both reflect on and enact that adaptation, creating an English revenge drama that is defined by its engagement with the domestic in its multiple senses. Where the domestic tragedies use English households and settings to explore the concept of making native tragedy, the revenge tragedies place English households in foreign and classical settings to make tragedy native.

Finally, in the fourth chapter I turn to what I call the "British" (as opposed to English) history play," historical dramas focused on the ancient past that I show to be imbricated with various senses of the domestic. I argue that the British history play mobilizes the same recurrent tropes, conventions, and representational practices as domestic tragedies in order to explore their historiographical potential for English historical drama. I begin with Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc* as the first history play to be set in ancient Britain. Next, I turn to *The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine*, a Queen's Men play from the late 1580s, and their 1594 *King Leir* to explore their juxtapositions of a highly rhetorical, neoclassical style with a homely and plain one akin to that found in contemporaneous domestic tragedies. Finally, I turn to Shakespeare's *Lear*, reading the play as an explicit engagement with a theatrical historiographical tradition extending back through the Queen's Men to *Gorboduc*, which maps ancient Britain on to early modern England through the tropes, conventions, and representational practices associated with the domestic tragedy tradition.

Lear forms an apt conclusion to "True and Home-Born." When Nahum Tate makes his infamous revision of the play's ending in 1681—saving the lives of Lear and Cordelia, and neatly joining Cordelia in marriage with Edgar to unite the two principal households—we should perhaps credit him with recognizing something about the play that was subsequently lost. His particular solution for Shakespeare's unbearable ending—somehow poignant in the context of the Restoration—is to restore and strengthen the households that were nearly destroyed over the course of the play, and thus turn domestic tragedy into domestic tragicomedy. He thus sees the play as fundamentally structured around households. In its dual status as both an intimate domestic tragedy centred on the destruction of a household and as one of the most exalted tragedies of the early modern period, "again and again described as Shakespeare's greatest work, the best of his plays, the tragedy in which he exhibits most

fully his multitudinous powers," as A. C. Bradley put it,[80] *King Lear* not only bridges the supposed gulf between domestic tragedy and tragedy proper, but also shows that domestic tragedy exists not on the margins of early modern tragedy, but right at its centre.

[80] *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 225.

"THUS HAVE YOU SEEN THE TRUTH": TRAGEDY AND TRUTH ON THE EARLY MODERN STAGE

In my first chapter, I read three early English domestic tragedies—*Arden of Faversham*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, and *Two Lamentable Tragedies*—in terms of their theatrical reflexivity, considering in particular their explorations of tragedy as a theatrical form. Rather than considering these plays as primarily concerned with domestic matters, I contend that their primary focus lies in theorizing tragedy through their self-consciousness about their own genre. In recognizing this focus, I show that the domestic tragedies represent significant sites of tragic theorization in the period, sites that have hitherto been critically neglected. As I outline in my introduction, the domestic plots, non-elite protagonists, and household settings of these plays offer rich opportunities for early modern dramatists to reflect on the nature of tragedy, challenging inherited ideas about the genre's social status, aesthetic decorum, and rhetorical affect. Rather than define tragedy in terms of static hallmarks or conventions, subverting traditional tragic conventions and replacing them with new ones, these writers define the genre in terms of the work it performs. That work is the discovery, articulation, and representation of a particular and unique kind of "tragic truth," one arrived at through emotional recognition and identification—a process enabled by the reality effects of domestic tragedy, such as the use of recognizable domestic properties as stage properties and other details of quotidian life, the attention to accurate geographical and urban mapping, the deployment of familiar landmarks, cultural references, and vocabulary.

As dramatic texts that draw on historical and moralizing accounts of recent domestic crimes, and as theatrical works whose representational strategies centre on reality effects, the domestic tragedies form a nexus of historical, moral, and representational truth, formally coupling the concepts of veracity

and morality with that of verisimilitude. In addition, as I show, "truth" is figured in a variety of ways within the plays themselves: in abstract form as an allegorical character; in the form of explanatory allegorical dramas; in the representation or manifestation of various kinds of truth, juridical, confessional, empirical, and supernatural; as sententious maxims woven into the play's discourse; in the form of expositions that frame the main action of the play. As a result, the domestic tragedies are uniquely suited not only to articulating a theory of tragedy in terms of its relationship to truth, but also to describing what exactly constitutes tragic truth, and how it differs from historical and moral truth. I demonstrate how the plays contribute in various ways not only to a theory of early modern tragedy, but also to an understanding of tragic truth as being grounded in the theatrical experience of watching, recognizing, and responding to the events performed on stage. *Arden of Faversham* is the first domestic tragedy to identify the representation of truth as the work of tragedy and as essential to the genre, while simultaneously demonstrating just how complex the truth that it purports to describe is. In *A Warning for Fair Women*, the figure of Tragedie herself serves as tragic theorist and expositor of truth, focusing in particular on the emotional power of her genre, and on the power of theatrical recognition, in her extensive exploration of the various forms of truth that are juxtaposed in the play. Finally, in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, Truth itself is figured on stage, as an allegorical character who mediates between two plots—one factual, one fictional. Demonstrating the superiority of the representational strategies associated with the domestic tragedy form, the play explores the possibilities and limits of representational truth, of verisimilitude, ultimately gesturing towards the possibility of producing truth in fiction.

Each of these plays draws on historical sources: *Arden* turns to Holinshed's account of the murder in his *Chronicles*, while both *A Warning* and *Two Lamentable Tragedies* take their plots from so-called murder pamphlets, lurid accounts of recent violent crimes that are by turns moralizing and

sensationalist.[1] As texts 'based on a true story,' then, the plays immediately raise the issue of truthfulness, of how their plots accord with the accounts in their sources, and ultimately with the historical events themselves. But there is another kind of truth at stake here as well, as a closer inspection of the sources reveals, for these events are never set down simply as historical records, but for distinct purposes. One purpose is to capitalize on the sensational and the violent—both pamphlets were published mere months after each murder had occurred, while the plays to some extent relish the shock- and entertainment-value of these violent and bloody deeds as stage spectacles. But these particular details were also seen to imbue the events, and thus ordinary life itself, with "extraordinary significance," as Richard Helgerson puts it.[2] They show quotidian lived experience to be both noteworthy, and worth considering in moral terms.

Building on this notoriety and sensationalism, the purported main purpose of the historical sources lies in the didactic value of the events they describe. Holinshed notes the particular (and thus instructive) "horribleness" of the crime, which compels the inclusion of this "private matter" despite its seeming "impertinent" to a public historical chronicle.[3] The pamphlet-source of the play, like other crime and murder pamphlets, tells its reader to "use the example to the amendment of thy life."[4] The writers of these documents aimed "to inform, to instruct in the ways of God, to admonish, to warn of the paths of sin," a "moral effect [. . .] paradoxically accomplished through a licit thrill and an attention

[1] For an exhaustive study of early modern murder pamphlets, see "Protestants, Puritans, and Cheap Print" in Peter Lake, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, 1–184. On pamphlet culture, see Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets, 1580–1640* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983). On cheap print in popular culture, see Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[2] Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances*, 15.

[3] Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, vol. 2 (1587), cited in *Arden of Faversham*, 148.

[4] Arthur Golding, *A briefe discourse of the late murther of master George Saunders, a worshipfull Citizen of London* (London: Henry Bunneman, 1573), reprinted as Appendix D in *A Warning for Fair Women*, 216–30: 216.

to gory detail."[5] In each source-text, then, there is a moral to the (true) story, a sense that the historical events being recorded are exemplary in some regard, and an interpretation of what their significance is. The notion of a higher truth is thus raised alongside the issue of historical factuality—these are texts that express historical *and* moral truth.

These forms of truth are carried over into the plays themselves. As I describe at length below, all three plays identify themselves as 'true,' as being based on true historical events. And all three speak of delivering lessons in their final moments, didactically commanding their audiences to 'behold,' or 'see here,' or 'note' particular aspects of the play. I argue, however, that these forms of truth exist in a different way in the plays, as a result of their theatrical reflexivity. In his study of the relationships between domestic tragedies and murder pamphlets, Peter Lake refers to the "so-called domestic tragedies" that are "in effect murder pamphlets turned into theatrical dialogue and action."[6] As I note in the introduction, one of the underlying aims of this dissertation is to resist this tendency to view these plays as mere direct translations from page to stage. The shift to the stage, coupled with the self-consciousness about genre and theatrical representation that marks these plays, has implications for the staging of these events.

Specifically, I argue that these plays—by virtue of being texts that already engage the problem of truth in terms of the relationship between reality and representation—not only repeat (or revise, or resist) the particular historical and moral truths of the events they stage, but reflect on the ideas of historical and moral truth themselves, on truth and truthfulness in the abstract sense, and on the process of articulating truth itself. Hence, the literal embodiment of truth in *Two Lamentable*

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[5] Raymond, 118.

[6] Lake, 26.

Tragedies, the constant mobilization of various forms, orders, discourses, and types of truth in *A Warning* and in *Arden*, and their concomitant preoccupation with the concealment, discovery, and revelation of truth in its various forms. Because these plays stage true-life (often recent) events, because they have a close and complex relationship with morality texts, because they attempt to map social, economic and geographic realities, because they blur the line between truth and fiction, they are constantly exploring the relationship between tragedy and truth. The domestic tragedies are therefore of particular importance to the development of early modern tragedy for what they might reveal about the period's understanding of what tragedy does, and how it functions as a truth-producing discourse, an important site for such consideration, alongside those usually studied by critics, such as Shakespeare's tragic oeuvre, the influence of Renaissance and neo-classical rhetorical and tragic theory, or the theories of tragedy articulated by Ben Jonson and other dramatists.[7]

The concept of "truth" was of course a subject of intense debate in the early modern period, the result of a confluence of intellectual, cultural and philosophical movements in sixteenth-century England. Following Polydore Vergil's dismissal of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Geoffrey of Monmouth's history of ancient Britain, as mythical rather than historical, a historiographical revolution in which antiquarians and writers of fact-based historical narratives interrogated what had passed for history, and established new standards for historical truth, grounded in historical fact.[8] The

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[7] For an account of the classical origins and neoclassical development of an idea of "tragic reality," see Timothy J. Reiss, *Tragedy and Truth: Studies in the Development of a Renaissance and Neoclassical Discourse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

[8] On the changes in historical thought, see D. R. Woolf, "From Hystories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500–1700," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68.1–2 (2005), 33–70; *Reading History in Early Modem England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology and 'The Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). See also Ivo Kamps, "The Writing of History in Shakespeare's England," *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Histories*, eds. Richard Dutton & Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 4–25.

new forms of empiricism that accompanied the evolution of scientific thinking in the wake of Vesalius, Copernicus, and others, brought with them the idea of empirical truth and of accuracy,[9] and with them fundamental changes in the arts of measurement and surveying that resulted in an explosion of cartography and chorography,[10] alongside the new historiography. In the aftermath of the Reformation, and decades of denominational and doctrinal uncertainty, the issue of truth was also of fundamental importance in religious terms in early modern England, with Protestant religious writers espousing a new model of supposedly simple or plain religious and doctrinal truth.[11]

Literature and drama were of course also imbricated in discussions about the nature of truth. Aristotle's *Poetics* was published for the first time in Latin translation in 1498, and became a central part of discussions around the idea of dramatic "truth" and verisimilitude, as seen in the works of Renaissance theorists such as Scaliger and Maggi.[12] In his *Defence of Poesy*, Sir Philip Sidney aimed to advance the cause of poetry ahead of history, morality, and natural philosophy, and to counter longstanding Platonic claims about the fundamental falsity of poetry, as they were being rehearsed in

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[9] On the so-called scientific revolution, see Peter Dear, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and Its Ambitions, 1500–1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), and Steven Schapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For an overview of the changes in epistemology, standards of truth, and scientific thinking see Stephen Gaukroger, "Knowledge, evidence, and method," and Dennis des Chene, "From natural philosophy to natural science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. D. Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 39–66; 67–94.

[10] For an overview of the arts of measurement in relationship to early modern literature and theatre, see Turner, *The English Renaissance Stage*, esp. 41–152; on early modern cartography and surveying arts, see David Woodward, "Cartography and the Renaissance: Continuity and Change" and Turner, "Literature and Mapping in Early Modern England, 1520–1688," in *The History of Cartography, Volume 3: Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. D. Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3–24; 412–26. On early modern chorography, see Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, 105–48.

[11] For a succinct overview, see Patrick Collinson, "Truth, Lies, and Fiction in Sixteenth Century Protestant Historiography," *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500–1800*, eds. D. R. Kelley & D. H. Sacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 37–68.

[12] See Weimann's overview of the shifting and complex humanist discussions around the notion of theatrical truth in his section on "Renaissance Poetics and Elizabethan Realism," 196–207.

attacks against poetry and drama such as Stephen Gosson's *Schoole of Abuse* (1579).[13] Noting that there is "no art delivered to mankind that hath not the works of nature for his principal object," he neatly links the discourses of these various disciplines together through a shared principle of factuality or veracity, i.e. on accurately recording "what nature will have set forth." The astronomers and mathematicians "set down what order nature hath taken therein," the natural philosopher seeks to know nature, the moral philosopher "standeth upon the natural virtues, vices, or passions of man," the historian records "what men have done." The new standard for truth in these intellectual endeavours, according to Sidney, lies in being subject to nature, in faithfully representing things as they are. Against these truth-discourses, he places the superior truth of poetry: "[o]nly the poet [. . .] doth grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature." In its ability to "make the too-much-loved earth more lovely" can show the world in ideal forms, revealing a higher truth—making a "golden world" out of nature's "brazen" one, showing the world as it should or could be, not as it is.[14] Herein lies the particular appeal and utility of poetic and theatrical representation for Sidney, in their articulation of a form of poetic higher truth.

Like Sidney comparing "the poet with the historian and the moral philosopher," and finding that he does indeed "go beyond them both,"[15] so the domestic tragedies find tragedy superior to history or moral discourse. But the world of domestic tragedy is, it's safe to say, definitely on the brazen side of

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[13] Stephen Gosson, *The School of Abuse* (1579), in *Shakespeare's Theatre: A Sourcebook*, ed. Tanya Pollard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 19–33. For early modern anxieties about theatrical representation, see Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), 22–46.

[14] *The Defence of Poesy*, in *Sidney's 'The Defence of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. G. Alexander (London: Penguin, 2004), 1–54: 8–9.

[15] Ibid., 15.

the spectrum. In their commitment to representing the world just as it is—which is the basis for their self-proclaimed superiority not just as a form of truth-discourse but as a form of tragedy—the domestic tragedies can be seen to resist the notion that the virtue of poetic (or tragic) truth lies in idealization rather than 'realization,' even as they share the notion that poetic (or dramatic) truth stands above other 'truthful arts.' Like other playwrights in the period, the writers of domestic tragedy, "[a]lthough adhering to many humanist attitudes toward poetics, rhetoric, and logic, [. . .] also adopted perspectives that severely challenged the classical notions of decorum, dramatic illusion, and the implicit inclusion and exclusion of social types in particular genres."[16] In particular, these plays explore notions of truthfulness by combining mimesis with poesis in their representational strategies. In so doing while at the same time thematizing truth and truthfulness, they feel their way forward to an idea of tragic truth, recognizing that the decision to make a tragedy out of a historical event is to acknowledge that the event embodies a tragic truth, just as it is seen to have historical significance, or exemplify a moral lesson. The exact nature of that tragic truth is not something that these plays are explicit about—indeed, that is one of the fundamental questions that they try to answer. The plays express the certainty that the tragic form offers a particular and superior form of truth-telling, not the certainty of what that truth is or how it functions.

In tracing these attempts to articulate not just a theory of tragedy but a theory of tragic truth, I first return to *Arden of Faversham*, and in particular to the tension between its self-described "simple truth" and the actual complexity not just of the truth it purports to express, but of the very concept of truth in the play as a whole. I argue that the play reflects on its own status as a representation of various kinds of truth, including historical and moral truth. Next, in the main section of my argument, I

[16] Weimann, 198.

consider the anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women* (printed 1599, but likely from the early 1590s), which combines a relatively straightforward dramatization of domestic crime with a framing device that uses allegory in order to, amongst other things, articulate a case for tragedy as the superior dramatic genre. The contrast between the lifelikeness of the main play and the stylized, metatheatrical, and theatrically self-conscious frame offers a rich opportunity to shift from a consideration of the relationship between tragedy and the staging of true events to that between tragedy and the articulation of truth. The final section of the chapter focuses on a play that introduces the idea of the fictional into its exploration of the relationship between tragedy and truth. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (1601) shifts, as its title suggests, between two tragic plots, one based on historical events, the other fictional, both contained within an allegorical frame of interpretation that links them to each other. By running them in parallel, and positioning the allegorical figure of Truth as mediating between the two, the play sets up a comparison not only between fact and fiction, but between veracity and verisimilitude, as means of arriving at and articulating tragic truth. If *Arden* links tragedy to the articulation of a superior kind of tragic truth, and *A Warning* not only theorizes tragedy in terms of articulating truth but also tries to explicate the exact nature of tragic truth as compared to other forms of truth, then *Two Lamentable Tragedies* explores the relationship between tragic and historical truth, asking in particular what the value of the historically true is in terms of arriving at tragic truth.

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"SIMPLE TRUTH IS GRACIOUS ENOUGH": ARDEN OF FAVERSHAM

As I discuss in the introduction, when Franklin asks forgiveness for the "naked tragedy" (14) of which he is a part, he insists that *Arden of Faversham* is a tragedy nonetheless, because it has presented the

truth, and "simple truth is gracious enough" (17) to make up for any apparent deficiencies, and sufficient to make the play tragic. "Thus have you seen the truth of Arden's death" (1) declares the first line of the epilogue, and thus, according to Franklin, you have seen a tragedy. But what exactly does this "simple truth" of the tragedy consist of? For that matter, what is an audience to make of a declaration of truthfulness in a play supposedly based on historical events, when that declaration is made by the play's only fictional character? On that point, the epilogue is less explicit, and the audience is instead left to ponder the exact nature of *Arden*'s truth—knowing after watching the play that the straightforwardness of Franklin's opening line belies just how complex the "truth of Arden's death" is.

Certainly Arden's violent death has been performed on the stage—we have seen his murder represented on stage—but what does it mean to have seen the *truth* of it? The play, which describes itself as both "lamentable and *true*," is marked throughout by an attention, a devotion even, to what Sidney terms the "particular truth of things,"[17] both in historical and representational terms. Ostensibly, *Arden* presents historical truth, narrating a historical event, detailing the historical actions of the various protagonists, describing the locations of various events. We learn of the events leading up to the murder, of the various accomplices and motives, of Arden's rivalry with Mosby, of the latter's affair with the former's wife, of how Arden comes to be in possession of his land, and of how he mismanages it, as described in Holinshed's account. There is an attempt at truthfulness in the play's aforementioned reality effects as well: the accurate geographical mapping of this "earliest English play whose action can be closely followed on a map,"[18] the staging of a recognizable domestic setting through the use of stage properties and household-related references, the evocation of a recognizably post-

[17] *Defence of Poesy*, 16.

[18] Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances*, 14.

Reformation, sixteenth-century social, historical, and political world on stage through scattered references to Arden's land-grant "by letters patents from His Majesty" (1.4), to the various levels of the social hierarchy from servants to the Duke of Somerset, to the various political and civil powers, from the Mayor to Lord Cheyne to Arden himself.

In the scenes immediately prior to the epilogue, Arden is murdered at his own table, that murder is unsuccessfully covered up, and the guilty parties—Arden's wife Alice, her lover Mosby, the disloyal servants, and other conspirators—are apprehended and sentenced. And the epilogue itself matter-of-factly describes how the hired assassins Shakebag and Black Will meet their deaths soon after they fled. But this simple wrap-up is immediately complicated when Franklin insists that of all these historical facts, "this above the rest is to be noted":

> Arden lay murdered in that plot of ground
> Which he by force and violence held from Reede,
> And in the grass his body's print was seen
> Two years and more after the deed was done.
>
> (10–13)

What is most important to remember about the murder just witnessed, and thus the main lesson that the audience will take away, is this account of the fate not of Arden or his murderers, but of the land, the "plot of ground," on which his corpse was placed during the attempted cover-up. Here, the "truth of Arden's death"—the violent deed that constitutes his murder—is overshadowed by another truth: his withholding "by force and violence" of land from the Dick Reede the sailor. The "truth" of his death, then, "refers not only to the homicidal machinations that lead up to the murder of Arden, but also to a certain relationship between the killing and the land."[19] That his corpse should end up in this spot—that the land itself commemorates his death through an almost supernatural phenomenon—shows

[19] As Garrett A. Sullivan argues in his study of land and property issues in the play. "'Arden Lay Murdered in That Plot of Ground': Surveying, Land, and Arden of Faversham," *ELH* 61:2 (1994), 231–52.

there to be some kind of justice at work, particularly coming moments after the meting out of justice to the conspirators. The truth of Arden's death, then, circles back to Arden himself: while there is a long list of agents responsible for his death, the ultimate cause is his unjust actions as a landowner, and the ultimate responsibility thus lies with him. In Franklin's language here, the identification of one lesson "above all," shows that in addition to its investment in "particular truth," the play also thinks in terms of "the general reason of things."[20]

But this ultimate truth contrasts with the promise expressed on the title-page of *The Lamentable and True Tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham in Kent* that the text will show "the great malice and discimulation of a wicked woman, the unsatiable desire of filthie lust and the shamefull end of all murderers." And there are multiple opportunities to observe all three of these object lessons over the course of the play, and particularly the first—as Catherine Belsey has shown, as one of several "attempts at redefinition" of the crime, the play participates in the cultural construction of Alice Arden as a figure for the wicked, transgressive woman who represents a threat to the institution of marriage.[21] Indeed, early modern culture clearly found something "to be noted" in the Arden story, which was "cited, presented, and re-presented, problematized and reproblematized during a period of at least eighty years."[22] In its various incarnations, the story was told in order to determine its significance, to derive lessons from it—whether those lessons were about the wickedness of women, or the importance of being a vigilant householder, or of being a fair and generous landowner. Certainly (as Frances Dolan has shown), the play chooses to frame the Arden story as a "narrative of petty treason," where a

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[20] Sidney, 16.

[21] Catherine Belsey, "Alice Arden's Crime," in *Staging the Renaissance*, eds. David Scott Kastan & Peter Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991), 133–50: 134.

[22] Ibid., 133.

householder is betrayed by the subservient members of his household, and thus can be seen as an object lesson in patriarchal domestic orthodoxy and, thanks to the troubling "presence of the wife" Alice, in the wickedness of women.[23] And yet, the emphasis on the importance of Arden's "body's print" in the grass at the end of the play, and on his own responsibility for his death, substantially interferes with—if not undermines—that lesson. What is advertised as a domestic morality tale ends ambiguously, and with no clear moral lesson. Belsey argues that this ambiguity is a feature of all the various versions of the Arden story that seek a "definitive meaning" for the crime, for that meaning "remains elusive, in the sense that each text contains elements not accounted for in its over-all project."[24]

The historical events and circumstances that surround the murder of Arden actively resist and even break through the conventions of morality tales or exempla, undermining the possibility for a straightforward lesson, or for that matter a straightforward idea of what constitutes the truth. In her archival recovery of the historical facts about Thomas Ardern (as the name is originally spelled) and his murder, Lena Orlin has shown just how complex that history is, and thus the extent to which various cultural representations of the crime have manipulated, obscured, or omitted historical facts and details in order to arrive at their various articulations of the "truth."[25] The play, for her, is no exception, as it ignores Ardern's apparently controversial historical public existence, and chooses to focus on the tragic "disastrous [. . .] misrule" of his household, presenting the crime in private, domestic terms by ridding the story of "its extradomestic elements."[26]

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[23] Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, 20–58: 73.

[24] Belsey, "Alice Arden's Crime," 138.

[25] Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 15–84.

[26] Ibid., 64.

While it is true that *Arden* deals selectively with its historical sources, and to some extent smoothes out the historical complexity of the crime, Orlin's account, and Belsey's before it, tend to smooth out the theatrical complexity of the play, particularly in regards to ignoring the play's reflexivity about its own representational practice and its relationship to truth. As Michael Neill notes in his survey of historicist work on the play, remaining "indifferent to the play's literary and theatrical dimensions" in this manner has the effect of "reducing the tragedy to a two-dimensional fable of patriarchal orthodoxy,"[27] while also rendering it as simply another version of a historical story. By paying attention to those dimensions, I suggest that the play is both aware of and also explicitly problematizing its own status as a theatrical representation of a morally significant historical event. I argue that the play is different from other representations of the Arden story in that the ambiguity that arises at the end is deliberate, a way to make explicit the problem of truthful representation that the play is preoccupied with.

The fictional Franklin's extolling of the virtues of "simple truth," then, is ironic, a direct comment on the lack of such truth to be gleaned from the play. By juxtaposing the justice meted out to or met by the guilty parties with the justice implied by the print of Arden's body, the epilogue denies the possibility for such truth to be drawn from the historical story of Thomas Ardern. In particular, as part of its engagement with truth and truthfulness, the play articulates the incompatibility between historical factuality and definitive moral meaning, two forms of truth that are represented as being at odds with each other in the play. These other discourses of truth—history and morality—are thus interrogated in the play, compared to the holistic truth presented by the tragedy itself, and found wanting. A play that might have been a straightforward domestic morality tale about the dangers of lust

[27] Neill, "Social Change and the Language of Status," 51.

and the wickedness of women or a straightforward leaves as its final lesson an ambiguous and even polysemous anecdote about the memory of land and its relationship to those that inhabit it. Traced in the grass over the figures of Alice Arden, the wicked woman, of Mosby, the household rival, of Michael the unfaithful servant, is the figure of Arden, the husband, householder, and master. By calling attention to this palimpsest of truths contained within the tragic form of the play, Franklin—and *Arden of Faversham* as a whole—offer in the epilogue a glimpse into the particular possibilities of tragic truth, a form of truth that is not simply historical, moral, or representationally mimetic, but rather a kind of interference pattern formed by mobilizing all three simultaneously. That is the form of truth identified as the essence of tragedy, a way of articulating truth that draws on the virtues of recognizable theatrical representation, setting the complexity of factual truth against the problematic simplicity of moral higher truth in order to generate a form of higher truth that is complex and allows for ambiguity.

THE "OFFICE" OF TRAGEDY IN A WARNING FOR FAIR WOMEN

The opening to *A Warning for Fair Women* articulates two motivations behind its staging. The first—as we learn from the extended exchange between the allegorical figures of Tragedie, Comedie, and Hystorie—is to defend tragedy from charges of obsolescence, irrelevance, and unpopularity as a staid and antiquated theatrical genre, "scornèd of the multitude" (76), that "find[s] few that will attend her here" (38) on the stages of London.[28] Tragedie's remedy is almost immediate: the "Scene" of her play will be "London, native and your owne," its "subject too well known" (95–6) to the audience. As is soon revealed, the play dramatizes a notorious event in recent local history—the "most Tragicall and Lamentable" murder of George Sanders, a London merchant. "Tragicall" events still occur, and occur in

[28] *A Warning for Fair Women*, ed. Charles. D. Cannon (The Hague: Mouton, 1975). All references, unless otherwise noted, are to this edition.

London—tragedy can be local and depict a time that lies within recent memory, thus it remains contemporary and relevant for the stage. But I want to suggest that Tragedie does not stop there, and goes beyond simply pandering to her early modern English audience. The second, and major, motivation of the play is to examine, theorize, and demonstrate what she calls her "office" (49), her function—the work of tragedy. *A Warning* will not only show the superficial relevance of its genre by dramatizing a local, contemporaneous story, it aims to show that tragedy remains vital, functional, and necessary. The play presents itself as a corrective, as deepening the audience's understanding of what tragedy actually is. The parody given by Comedie and Hystorie, considered at length in the introduction, with its stage "hung in black" (82), its "filthie whining" ghosts (54) and "damnd" tyrants (50), serves to ventriloquize the kind of shallow understanding of tragedy, defined only through conventional (and as we shall see, incorrect) hallmarks of the genre, that Tragedie seeks to correct. In watching the play, we will learn what actually constitutes tragedy: "Yet what I am, I will not let you know / Untill my next ensuing sceane shal show" (99–100), as she says in her final couplet of the opening scene.

Like the "naked tragedy" described in the epilogue to *Arden*, *A Warning* promises to lay bare the essence of tragedy. From the outset, the play is presented not just as a tragedy, but as an exemplary one. This exemplarity lies in two particular aspects: the notion that the play represents a certain way of articulating truth; and the way it demonstrates the fundamental function of the tragic genre. As Tragedie herself describes it,

> I must have passions that must move the soule,
> Make the heart heave, and throb within the bosome,
> Extorting teares out of the strictest eyes,
> To racke a thought and straine it to his forme,
> Untill I rap the sences from their course,
> This is my office.
>
> (44–9)

The "office" of tragedy, not just her function, but her duty even according to a contemporary sense of the word,[29] is thus twofold: to deeply affect the audience by moving their souls and stirring their emotions, moving even the unwilling to tears, and to take thought to the limit, until the senses are transported and enraptured. This is emotive, affective theatre, with deep emotional and intellectual resonance. Tragedy is not distinguished merely by traditional symbols and trappings, but rather by its ability to affect an audience in a particularly profound and emotional manner—heart-throbbing and bosom-heaving that outweigh what she calls the mere "tickle" of comedies. The essence of tragedy revealed by *A Warning* and other domestic tragedies of the late sixteenth century, I argue, lies here at the nexus of truth-telling, deeply felt emotional experience, and theatrical reflexivity. Where *Arden* implicitly claims that the truth of tragedy is somehow different from historical and moral truth, *A Warning* aims to make explicit how it differs, and what it actually consists of.

When Franklin apologizes for the straightforwardness of *Arden of Faversham*, he is not alone in expressing anxiety about his play fulfilling the genre expectations for tragedy or in invoking the truth of the events just dramatized in order to defend any perceived weaknesses. In the epilogue to *A Warning for Fair Women*, Tragedie herself addresses potential dissatisfaction with the play's conclusion—"Perhaps it may seeme strange unto you al, / That one hath not revengde anothers death" (2723–4)—by emphasizing the truth of the dramatized events. There's a very good reason for not providing the dramatic closure by staging a final act of vengeance:

> The reason is, that now of truth I sing,
> And should I adde, or else diminish aught,
> Many of these spectators then could say,
> I have committed error in my play.
>
> (2725–8)

[29] *OED*, s.v. "office": "That which is done, or is intended or expected to be done, by a particular thing; that which anything is fitted to perform, or performs customarily; the function of anything."

Like Franklin's defence of *Arden*, the defence here rests on the historical veracity of the play. And while Tragedie could end the play according to form (end in revenge, that is), truth comes out trumps. The play remains a tragedy in spite of not adhering to generic expectations. What the audience thought they knew about tragedy is wrong: tragedy is not first and foremost defined in formal terms, but rather in relationship to truth. While a play such as *Warning* might sacrifice dramatic effect, it makes up for this by staying true to staging truth. If the epilogue to *Arden* rejects rhetorical artifice, then this epilogue rejects dramatic artifice, in the form of changing events simply to suit expectations for a (revenge) tragedy. Of course, having Tragedie herself come on stage to defend her own genre, and to defend *A Warning* as an exemplary tragedy in spite of its apparent failings, is itself a significant piece of dramatic artifice. Having the allegorical figure of Tragedie deliver a statement about singing "of truth" is as bold a move as having the fictional character of Franklin speak of "simple truth." The effect is to underline the difference between tragic truth—that which is being represented on stage—and historical truth—that which is being told on stage, even as the play ostensibly rejects dramatic form.

As is to be expected, the course of events in the play remains unchanged from that found in the play's main source, Arthur Golding's *A briefe discourse of the late murther of master George Saunders* (1573),[30] published only a few months after the event itself occurred. Anne Sanders, neglected by her husband George, manipulated and seduced by the charming George Browne with the assistance of mistress Anne Drury, commits adultery, reluctantly conspires in her husband's murder, confesses her crime, and is sentenced to death along with the other conspirators. What does shift significantly is the

[30] Arthur Golding, *A briefe discourse of the late murther of master George Saunders, a worshipfull Citizen of London: and of the apprehension, arreignement, and execution of the principall and accessaries of the same* (London: Henry Bunneman, 1573), reprinted in *A Warning for Fair Women*, 216–30. Cannon gives a detailed overview of Golding's text and its relationship to the play in his introduction, 64ff.

framing of the story. While the play frames the story metatheatrically, Golding opens his account in different terms:

> Forasmuch as the late murther of Master Saunders, Citizen and Merchant taylor of this citie, ministreth great occasion of talk among al sorts of men, not onelie here in the Towne, but also farre abrode in the Countrie, and generally through the whole Realme: and the sequeles and accidents ensewing thereupon, breede much diversitie of reports and opinions, while some do justly detest the horriblenesse of the ungratious facte, some lamente the grievous losse of their deare friends, some rejoice at the commendable execution of upright justice, the godlye bewayle the unmeasurable inclination of humane nature to extreame wickednesse and therewith magnifie Gods infinite mercie in revoking of forlorne sinners to finall repentance, many to heare and tell newes, without respect of the certentie of the truth, or regarde of dewe humanitie, every man debating of the matter as occasion or affection leades him.[31]

"Many to heare and tell the newes, without respect of the certaintie of truth" is the key phrase here—there have been too many people involved in the dissemination of the story, and hence there are too many stories. The text aims first to offer a necessary historical corrective, to make one true story out of many differing accounts: "It is thought convenient (gentle reader) to give thee a playne declaration of the whole matter, according as the same is come to light by open trial of Justice, and voluntarie confession of the parties, that thou mayst knowe the truth to the satisfying of thy mind."[32]

It's telling that in listing the varied responses to the murder the most room is given to the reaction of the "godlye," who "bewayle the unmeasurable inclination of humane nature to extreame wickednesse and therewith magnifie Gods infinite mercie in revoking of forlorne sinners to finall repentance." Through his tacit approval here, Golding foreshadows the second—and deeper—purpose of his pamphlet, to provide the opportunity for moral reflection. For all the talk about the crime, he laments how few people have followed this example of the correct behaviour: only a "few folke" are

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[31] *A briefe discourse*, 216.

[32] Ibid.

"turning to the advised consideration of God's open judgements, to the speedie reformation of their owne secrete faults." Having corrected the historical record, the pamphlet will reveal the higher moral truth of the Sanders murder. That moral truth should serve as the basis for the moral improvement of the reader, so that she can avoid "miscredite, and also use the example to the amendment of thy life."[33] Moral reflection is clearly Golding's priority, ahead of his desire to set the record straight: "thou shalt not look for a full discoverie of every particular bymatter [*sic*] pendant to the presente case" he informs his reader, since such details "might serve to feede the fond humor of such curious appetites as are more inquisitive of other folks offences than hastie to redresse their owne."[34] That is to say, committing fully to a detailed historical account will stand in the way of moral reformation.

That reformation will occur through reflection and recognition, in seeing ourselves in the terrible story to be related, and in so doing amend our lives and reform morally according to the moral truths we find in interpreting it, or having it interpreted for us:

> Were those whom we saw justly executed in Smithfield greater sinners than al other English people? Were they greater sinners than all Londoners? Were they greater sinners than all that looked upon them? No verily: but except their example leade us to repentance, we shall all of us come to as sore punishment in this worlde, or else to sorer in the worlde to come.[35]

These are people like the readers themselves, as Golding stresses by referring to local landmarks such as Smithfield, and to the "English people" and "all Londoners," and thus the story could as easily happen to them, as we are all sinners. "[T]he terrour of the outward sight of the example" should make us consider our own lives, should "drive us to the inward consideration of ourselves."[36] We are to

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 216–7.

[35] Ibid., 227.

[36] Ibid., 226.

recognize our own faults in the faults of others, and the ultimate purpose of the *Briefe Discourse* is to represent the sinners and the sin accurately so as to enable us to do so: "so heare and reade this present example, as the same may turne to the bettering of thy state."[37] Golding uses the imperative to compel his readers to recognize the moral truth of the Sanders murder—a truth that depends on recognition in order to be understood.

Some two decades after Golding published his pamphlet, the writer of *A Warning for Fair Women* went one better, not only hearing and reading the "present example" of the *Briefe Discourse*, but staging it—recognizing it not only as ripe fodder for teaching moral lessons through the staging of historical events, but also for creating a domestic tragedy in the vein of *Arden of Faversham*. Ripe fodder, too, for staging what the play's epilogue terms a "true and home-borne Tragedie"—a local tragedy based on local events that nevertheless works towards articulating a more universal truth, based on a source that emphasizes the local nature of the events. In fact, the dramatist could be seen as following Golding's cue—when describing the special significance of such events in terms of their revelatory nature, he writes of how "God bringeth such matters upon the stage, unto the open face of the world," and of how the sinners' "faults came into the open Theater" to be revealed.[38] Not only evocative, the chosen metaphor actually foreshadows the ways in which the theatre might offer a particularly useful medium for revelation. Once the faults are in the "open" theatre, Golding writes, they seem "the greater to our eyes,"[39] magnified through theatrical framing. More importantly, God's

[37] Ibid., 228.

[38] Ibid., 226.

[39] Ibid., 227.

stage is linked directly to moral reformation, for "the inward consideration of ourselves" comes directly from seeing "such matters upon the stage."

Both play and source thus consider the theatrical as a (possible) means of accessing or revealing a higher truth. But while Golding's use of theatre remains metaphorical, a way of writing about the purposeful 'making-public' of an event, *A Warning* actually seeks to demonstrate the power of the tragic stage, of "true and home-borne" tragedy. *A Briefe Discourse* concerns itself with two sorts of truth and their relationship—historical veracity and higher moral truth—but *A Warning* is very clearly also concerned with a third truth, that of tragedy. Like moral truth, it builds on the factuality of historical truth (the sense that these events have *actually* happened) in order to derive a deeper significance, a providential pattern that can be turned into a lesson (the sense that these events could happen *again*) for the reader or audience to learn (the sense that these events could have happened or happen to *you*). But because it is expressed in the form of theatre, tragic truth offers particular advantages—it can actually use the stage, where Golding can only use it metaphorically, and the audience does not just hear about George and Anne Sanders, they see them and share their experiences.

Like its source (and like *Arden*), the play manifests its investment in historical truth both by accurately portraying the course of events as portrayed in its sources, and by being particularly faithful in reproducing the local geography of those events. In fact, geographical specificity is emphasized even more on stage than in the original text—as in the dramatization of the Arden story, accurate reportage about time and place becomes a means for establishing the accuracy and veracity of the portrayal of events. Thus, Sanders' murder is located in Shooter's Hill on the title-page already, the Sanders

residence is accurately located "Against *Saint Dunstones* church" (302),[40] Sanders dines at a friend's house in "Lumberd streete" (933) and makes plans to meet "on the Exchange" the next day (919), he has business to discuss with Master Barnes concerning "the matter at *Saint Marie Cray*" (978), is followed by the servant Roger to "Cornhill," to "the Burse," to "Lion key" and "Greenewitch" (1123–37), is eventually murdered on the way "backe to Wolwich" (1357), after which Browne flees to his cousin in Rochester (1832), where he is caught and returned to London for trial and execution. Like *Arden*, *A Warning* is thus quite clearly also a play "whose action can be closely followed on a map." This geographical specificity, I argue, is not only a means of articulating the Englishness of the tragedy, linking it to other attempts to establish a native theatrical tradition, but also a means through which the dramatist of *A Warning* realizes Golding's idea of theatrical recognition. In this map (and the map of *Arden*), the audience would recognize not only local English or London geography but also potentially their own personal geographies—journeys they have made, streets they regularly walk, churches they pass, landmarks spotted. The audience's local familiarity transforms the scene into exactly what Tragedie promises in the Induction, one "native and your owne." Through this accurate evocation of recognizable local geography, *A Warning* enables the audience to see themselves in the characters on stage, the first step towards "inward consideration."

This evocation of the world outside of the play is in stark contrast to the frame, which is so heavily metatheatrical. *A Warning* would be a fairly straightforward dramatization and moralization of adultery and murder, were it not for the prefacing of those scenes taken from the historical accounts by the encounter between the three dramatic genres, and the interruption of the plot by three strange

[40] And I mean accurately: in an example of the increased emphasis on geography, Anne Drury tells Browne that the house is against Saint Dunstone's Church, to which he responds "*Saint Dunstones* in Fleetestreete?," only to be corrected by her: "No, neere Billingsgate, / *Saint Dunstones* in the East, thats in the West" (302–5).

dumb-shows that take place at crucial moments in the action. At each of these three points, the unfolding of events pauses, Tragedie re-enters, and we return to the outer world of the play's frame, the world of the opening scene—or at least to a hybrid world located between the frame and the world of the play, since the 'inner' characters take part in each dumb show as well. These characters are joined on stage by an array of figured abstractions, including Lust, Chastitie, Justice and Mercy who both interact with and directly manipulate them, resulting in odd life-sized puppetry, helpfully narrated and interpreted by Tragedie. Browne's seduction of Anne Sanders, her reluctant agreement to the murder of her husband, and the arrest of the co-conspirators (with the exception of Browne) are all staged in this manner. During the first two shows, Anne is caught between the figures of Chastitie and Lust in varying configurations, in the last one, Chastitie pleads her case to Mercie and Justice, leading to Anne's apprehension and the eventual arrest of Browne with the assistance of the figure of Diligence. It is in the dumb shows, then, that the "warning" for all those "fair women" of the play's title is enacted, turning the murder of George Sanders into a warning about the dangers of lust and the treachery of women. And it is here, I suggest, that the play represents the transformation of historical event into moral truth.

The staging of moral truth through the use of dramatized abstractions in this manner is of course not new in English theatrical history. *A Warning*, with its "several allegorical figures," as Adams already noted, "preserves some of the framework of a morality play" and insists on "Christian morality and careful illustration of the manner in which interventions of Divine Providence punish sin."[41] As I discuss in the introduction, for Adams and the critics who followed him, the domestic tragedy genre as a whole is a development of the moralizing impulse of the late medieval/early Tudor morality play. *A*

[41] Adams, 114.

Warning and *Two Lamentable Tragedies,* with their allegorical characters, are simply direct indications of that ancestry, with the central Mankind or Everyman character replaced by characters taken from historical accounts, and "realism [. . .] used mainly because of its power to emphasize the moral lesson."[42] Both plays, however, reveal a more complex relationship to the morality drama, and to their more recent ancestor, the Tudor hybrid play.[43] In *A Warning*, the dumb shows that feature allegorical figures neither offer simple moral lessons, nor are they simply concerned with moral didacticism. Nor is moralizing the apparent end-goal, as in Golding's pamphlet, where the reader is clearly expected to move through the historical narrative, to the scenes of trial, confession and execution, and ultimately to the higher moral truth he wishes to impart. Given the play's explicit metatheatrical framework, the confinement of moralizing and the theatrical morality/hybrid play tradition to these interludes, the constant switching back and forth between historical and moral planes, and the added complication of including historical characters on that moral plane result in a complex representation of the older drama within the play, a suggest that the lessons it articulates are more than simple moral ones.

Each interlude is carefully framed and interpreted for the audience. The interpreter figure of *A Warning* is also its most important personification, Tragedie—it is the representation of a dramatic genre that comes on stage during each moral lesson to interpret and deliver that lesson to the audience. A reading of the play's didacticism must take into account that it is not confined to morality, but extends to drama as well, and that having the figure of Tragedie stand as the interpreter of moral lessons represents a substantial claim about the work that tragedy does as a genre. By self-consciously staging an

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[42] Ibid., 125.

[43] Examples include such Tudor plays as Preston's *Cambyses* (1570), R. B.'s *Appius & Virginia* (1575) and George Whetstone's *Promos & Cassandra* (1578), which are all "hybrid plays that mixed chronicle or classical myth or history with morality." Bushnell, "The Fall of Princes," 296.

older genre in this manner, positioning it deliberately within the frame of a theoretical discussion of contemporary dramatic genre, *A Warning* positions its own genre as the inheritor of the morality tradition, as the means by which profound moral lessons can be learned and understood even from day-to-day events. In this conception, tragedy becomes a means of recognizing, accessing and interpreting moral truth, and—in the case of the kind of tragedy that *A Warning* and related plays represent—a means of accessing this truth from representations of everyday life. The play also rejects the notion of "simple truth" by insistently presenting Tragedie as the figure of interpretation in the allegorical morality interludes. The play rejects the simplicity of moral truth by creating a tension between the presentation of that truth in allegorical form and Tragedie's interpretation of that presentation. The mediation of the tragic form serves to complicate the kind of "playne" moral truth of Golding's pamphlet, and serves to illustrate another advantage of tragic truth, the possibility for a higher truth that also allows for complexity and nuance, that takes into account that people stand at its centre, as the 'real' characters of the play stand within the locus of the morality dumb-shows of the play.

At the beginning of the first and most extended dumb show, after the main action of the play has been set into motion and its major characters have been introduced, Tragedie enters "*with a bowle of bloud in her hand* ," signalling the end point of the transition from the "fatal entrance to our bloudie sceane" to the "maine streame of our tragedie" (772–5). Now "we come unto the dismall act" itself,[44] Browne's seduction of Anne Sanders, the single act that foreshadows the death of her husband and the tragic fall of the conspirators. That act will not only be introduced and interpreted by Tragedie, but will also be framed within the material trappings of the genre she represents: "And in these sable curtains shut we up, / The Comicke entrance to our direful play" (778–9). This turn towards what will form the

[44] "Dismal" in the period denoting not only sombre or gloomy, but specifically "[b]oding or bringing misfortune and disaster." *OED*, s.v. "dismal."

first portion of the play's moral lesson strikingly recalls the Induction and its discussion of theatrical paraphernalia, and particularly the stage "hung with blacke" that so amuses Hystorie.[45] The turn towards moral truth is here represented as a turn from comedy to tragedy, a turn that is imagined materially, as the confinement of the play's "Comicke entrance" in the "sable curtains" of tragedy.

As the stage is set for the "deadly banquet" at which the seduction will take place, Tragedie continues to build the tragic atmosphere, reclaiming the hallmarks used against her in the opening and building on them, smothering the potential for comedy in a literal and metaphorical "inky cloak":

> This deadly banquet is prepared at hand,
> Where Ebon tapers are brought up from hel,
> To leade blacke murther to this damned deed.
> The ugly Screechowle, and the night Raven,
> With flaggy wings and hideous croking noise,
> Do beate the casements of this fatal house,
> Whilst I do bring my dreadful Furies forth,
> To spread the table to this bloudy feast.
>
> (780–9)

The table is then set with "pale mazors made of dead mens sculles" filled with "lustfull" wine with which our protagonists will "carowse to their destruction," and we hear the strains of the "gastly fearefull chimes of night" which "fill the roofe with sounds of tragedie" (793–801). This, melodramatic though it may be, is certainly effective theatrical spectacle, rhetorical, visual and aural.

Then the show itself plays out like a "*soft daunce to the solemne musicke*," as the Furies meet the participants at the door, then re-enter, followed by "*Lust before* Browne*, leading mistris* Sanders *covered with a blacke vaile: Chastitie all in white, pulling her backe softly by the arme: then* Drewry*, thrusting*

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[45] Chambers, writing about the use of stage hangings in the early modern theatre, includes this reference and Hystorie's earlier mention of black curtains in an extensive list of quotations that seem to establish this particular trapping as a generic convention: "We can go further, and point to several passages which attest a well-defined practice, clearly going back to the sixteenth century, of using black hangings for the special purpose of providing an appropriate setting for a tragedy." *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 reprint), 3:79.

away Chastitie, Roger *following: they march about, and then sit to the table: the Furies fill wine. Lust drinckes to* Browne*, he to Mistris* Sanders*, she pledgeth him: Lust imbraceth her, she thrusteth Chastity from her. Chastity wringes her hands, and departs:* Drury *and* Roger *imbrace one an other: the Furies leape and imbrace one another"* (803–15). Already at this point we have a layering of truths: the meal at which Browne seduces Anne is revealed to be an interaction between Lust and Chastitie, and under the control of the Furies. Doubling each character from the main action with a personification— Browne with Lust, Anne with Chastitie, Drury and Roger with the Furies—emphasizes this layering. The audience sees both the interaction between the characters, and an interpretation of that interaction, where it is seen to reflect a higher order of events in which the vulnerability of female chastity to the onslaught of lust is revealed.

When Tragedie then interprets the action, adding yet again to the layering, she does not hold forth in terms of morality directly, but rather resorts to the language of theatre once more: "Here is the Maske unto this damned murther" (817), she declares, describing the event as a masque, as a specifically theatrical prologue to the murder of Sanders, echoing the subsumption of both the morality play tradition but also the larger work of revelation and dissemination of moral truth with which the dumb show begins. Tragedie's interpretation of the show reveals the specific nature of her genre's work in relation to moral truth: not only to display it as in the morality play tradition, not only to reveal it even in the quotidian, but also to synthesize higher and lower orders of truth, historical truth with moral truth, to generate a tragic truth that is complicated and contradictory, ambivalent rather than simple. This truth is strikingly different to that conveyed by the show itself, which simply portrays Anne Sanders, under the influence of Lust's embrace, as she "*thrusteth Chastity from her*." In Tragedie's interpretation, in contrast,

lawless Lust conducteth cruell Browne,

> He doth seduce this poore deluded soule,
> Attended by unspotted Innocence,
> As yet unguiltie of her husbands death.
>
> (819–22)

Anne's culpability is here reduced, and she—the "poore deluded soule"—is shown to be the victim of Browne's lust. Even his culpability is slightly undermined, since while he is "cruell" he is also clearly described as operating under the influence of Lust. Part of the achievement of Tragedie's truth, then, consists of a redistribution of blame, and an acknowledgement of the complications inherent in any attempt to read a real-life situation in clear moral terms.

A large portion of the blame, in Tragedie's interpretation, is reserved for Browne's accomplices, "that instrument of hell / That wicked Drurie, the accursed fiend" and her servant Roger, a "villaine expert in all trecherie" and "base broker in this murderous act" (823–9). Neither of these villains are described as being under the control of any personification, and their guilt is thus entirely internalized and their own. This apportioning of blame is later realized in the final part of the show, where Tragedie lays a "charming rod upon their eyes, / To make them sleepe in their securitie" (843–4) and then washes each of their hands in her bowl of blood according to their guilt. Browne's hands "shal both be touch'd for they alone / Are the foule actors of this impious deed," and the same goes for both Drury—"for thou didst lay the plot"—and Roger—"And thou didst worke this damned witch devise" (854–9). Anne, however, only dips "a finger in the same" (861). Tragedie reveals a carefully nuanced morality to be at work in the tragic frame, one distanced from the absolute morality of the dumb show, in which the adulterous wife is not the guiltiest party in spite of her abandonment of chastity, and where relative degrees of guilt can be acknowledged.

This tragic morality is nuanced particularly (and particularly nuanced) in terms of domestic ideology, for the apportioning of blame reveals a complex understanding of the early modern household

to be at work in Tragedie's moral evaluation. In fact, it understands Anne's adultery and the subsequent murder of her husband as not simply marital crimes but rather as domestic crimes, as crimes occurring at the nexus of an array of social relationships rather than simply within the context of the marriage relationship. While Anne certainly represents a domestic type—the reluctantly adulterous wife—Browne, Drury and Roger each represent domestic types that generate social anxiety as well, as emphasized by the lengthy "fatal entrance" to the actual murder which precedes the first dumb show, during which much care is taken to map out the social positions of and relationships between the characters of the play. Browne represents the male outsider, Drury the marginal widow/witch figure, and Roger the scheming servant. Each of these figures threatens household stability, and each represents a bigger threat to the marital relationship than the potentially unfaithful wife. Tragedie assigns relative guilt only after having identified each conspirator in terms of their social role—the morality she espouses is necessarily nuanced by the domestic ideology she espouses, one which is not primarily misogynist towards the figure of the wife, though of course the same cannot be said for its attitude towards the widow figure. In this first articulation of the kind of qualified higher moral truth that the play offers, we see a distinct difference from that finally articulated in Golding's pamphlet, which ended with a far simpler admonition to keep one's "vessel in honestie and cleannesse" and focused its moral attention on the two spouses and the "knot betwene man and wife." The interlude, however, positions the wife as victim, and the three outsiders as the truly problematic figures, thus suggesting that the play really does seek to function as a warning *for* rather than *about* fair women.

Both the second and third interludes follow the same pattern: Tragedie enters and sets the scene, the various conspirators and the appropriate allegorical figures act out the dumb-show, and Tragedie offers her interpretation. The second occurs just after Sanders has twice "By accidents strange and miraculous, / Escap't the arrow aymed at his hart" (1247–8) and is on his way to St Mary Cray by

way of Woolwich, on which journey, as we are told in the interlude's opening, Browne will finally murder him, spurred on by "*Lust*, *Gaine*, and *Murther*" (1254). Just before the first-named personification enters, leading the characters on stage, Tragedie declares the purpose of the dumb-show: "Now of his death the generall intent, / Thus *Tragedie* doth to your eyes present" (1261–2). Browne and Roger enter on one side, Anne and Drury on the other, but just as they are about to meet, "*suddenly riseth up a great tree betweene them*" (1266). Lust brings Anne an axe, and bids her chop down the tree, which she refuses to do even though Drury offers to assist. Lust then crosses to give the axe to Browne who has no such qualms, and "*roughlie and suddenly hewes downe the tree*" after which he and Anne "*run togither and embrace*" (1270–3). Chastitie—"*with her haire dishevelled*"—rushes in and, taking Anne by the hand, shows her a portrait of her husband and "*seemes to tell her, that that is the tree so rashly cut downe*" (1273–7). At which point there is a wringing of hands and a departing in tears, although whether this refers to Anne or Chastitie is unclear. Browne, Drury, Roger and "Lust, whispering" are left standing in a group, as Browne draws his sword, and exits followed by Roger (1279–81).

Tragedie's interpretation here runs quite closely to the dumb-show, unlike in the first interlude where a space opened between the events as they were played out and as they were interpreted. Again, however, it is Anne's relative culpability that is in focus here—while she does eventually succumb to Lust in embracing Browne, she refuses to cut down the symbolic tree, "But though by them seduced to consent, / And had a finger in her husbands bloud: / [She] Could not be woone to murther him her selfe" (1292–4). Once Chastitie makes clear the symbolic connection to Anne's "guiltie conscience," Tragedie emphasizes that she is the one to wring her hands "repenting of the fact, / Touch't with remorse," that she has already made steps towards repentance. Anne's part in the sin is placed behind her, and she is absolved of further blame, although she is of course already damned for her adultery. But

while Golding stressed that adultery was the ultimate sin, quickly describing the murder at the beginning and having his account culminate in an admonition against adultery, the writer of *A Warning* at the very least stresses both sins equally. Crucially, the play also makes a distinction between passive and active sin, between being led and being willing to follow into sinfulness. To that end, having reduced Anne's culpability even further by describing her remorse, Tragedie focuses on one single sinner at the end of her interpretation:

> Whats here exprest, in act is to be done,
> The sword is drawne, the murtherer forth doth run,
> Lust leades him on, he followes him with speede,
> The onely actor in this damned deed.
>
> (1304–7)

While lust is what Golding termed "the verie originall cause, and first grounde" of Sanders' murder, and while Anne consented to it, it is Browne who wields the axe without hesitation, who draws his sword, who runs after the figure of Lust, "followes him with speede." Most importantly, he is the "*onely* actor in this damned deed"—a line that must, given the "open Theater" in which the moral drama of *A briefe discourse* plays out, be read theatrically as well. While Golding's stage featured multiple sinners and the publication of "their faults," and the dumb-show ends with a tableau of the conspirators, Tragedie's interpretation leaves only "that vile murtherer Browne" on stage. Here, the mediation of the tragic form not only complicates moral truth and redistributes blame, but actually works to absolve Anne to a great degree, not of adultery but of the murder.

In the third and final interlude, Tragedie introduces a dumb-show that apparently will allegorize the characters' recognition of their sins. "Prevailing Sinne," having led them to the execution of their misdeeds, now "unvailes their sight, and lets them see / The horror of their foul immanitie," turning "rest" to "Unrest," "Delight" to "danger" and "confidence" to "dispaire" (1783–97). Sinne, however, does not take part in the show, despite the degree to which she has been personified. Instead,

Justice and Mercy enter, take their seats on stage, and the former promptly falls asleep—immediately undermining the possibility that this will be an allegory of resolution through justice. Next, "*wronged* Chastitie" enters, "*in dumbe action uttring her grief to* Mercie" who dismisses her, after which she "*wakens* Justice*, who listning her attentively, starts up, commanding his Officers to attend her*" (1798–1804). The officers "*fetch forth masters* Sanders *body, mistris* Sanders*,* Drury*, and* Roger," all three of whom "*seeme very sorrowful*" on being shown the corpse, and are led away (1804–7). But Browne is strikingly absent—something Tragedie did not warn us about. His absence as prime sinner is the overarching problem of a show that on some level was to deal with the recognition of and retribution for sin. As Chastitie "*shewes that the chiefe offender is not as yet taken*," Justice dispatches "*his servant* Diligence *to make further enquirie*" as the dumb-show comes to an end (1807–10), in an unsatisfying fashion given the expectations of allegorical resolution set up by the morality convention.

Browne's absence transforms a potential scene of delivered justice into a scene of incomplete justice, which is all the more striking given that this is the final moral interlude of the play. The critique of simple moral truth in the play thus shifts to become a critique of moralizing as a means of discovering or achieving truth. The problem of moral truth is felt as a lack of resolution, of incompletion. This play will not be resolved through moral allegory, there will be no denouement featuring the chief offender's confrontation with Justice. Again, the play dramatizes a failure or lack in the morality drama, and it is Tragedie who not only interprets the scene, but provides a conclusion. She begins in full moral-didactic mode—"Thus lawless actions and prodigious crimes / Drinke not the bloud alone of them they hate"—before straightforwardly narrating the allegory of "the wronged Chastity / Prostrate before the sacred throne of Justice" making her case known (1811–23). Then, however, the allegory fades away as the Sanders' body is "brought for instance forth," leading to "inquisition and search" and the discovery of (three of) the offenders. We hear nothing of the servant Diligence who at the end of the dumb-show

was charged with these tasks. Instead we remember a scene just before the interlude, where "*three Lords, Maister James, and two Messengers*," were joined by a "*fourth Lord with a Water man and a Page*," and armed with eyewitness testimony from both victim and waterman, were conducting an exhaustive search for the murderer (1671–1716).[46] Human diligence will bring this play to a close, and its final scene of justice will also be human, and not allegorical: "Then triall now remaines as shall conclude, / Measure for measure, and lost bloud for bloud" (1828–9).

That "triall," however, will not ultimately take place on the allegorical moral plane, but will be resolutely located in the historical dramatization. The play stages the inadequacy of the morality drama by reversing the textual structure of Golding's pamphlet. In that text, as I showed earlier, the trials and executions, while a necessary and central part of the account, are still only a means to a moralizing end—the reader is led from the recounting of the murder, through the trials, confessions, and executions, to the final revelation of moral truth. We move from historical truth in the account of the murder, through the addition of evidential and personal truth during the trial and confession, through the legal truth of guilt seen in the execution, to a telos of higher moral truth. In *A Warning*, however, the final moral interlude occurs almost a thousand lines before the end of the play: the staging of moral justice fails, coming to an end without resolution. Instead, as Tragedie suggests at the end of her interpretation, it is in moving away from the moral plane that resolution will come, through an "inquisition" and a "search" and a "triall" on the human plane. Browne will face justice in the real world, and not a sleeping figure on an allegorical throne. And it is here that the possibilities of tragedy as a

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[46] It is the thoroughness of this search that is so striking: "What did he wear?" one of the lords asks the waterman, to which he replies in detail, "A doublet of white satten, / And a large paire of breeches of blew silke." At which point, the third lord suggests that they compare the waterman's report with that of the wounded John Beane, which the first lord does, and concludes: "The man that did the deede, / Was fair and fat, his doublet of white silke, / His hose of blew, I am sorie for *George Browne*"—the identity of the murderer confirmed through effective detective work.

means of accessing higher truth become apparent, in a sense by taking Golding at his theatrical word. If the revelation of higher moral truths is best understood as a staging in an "open Theatre," then why, the play seems to ask, should that truth be mediated through written moral discussion and representation?

The remainder of the play, in fact, turns away from the idea of moral truth as it is represented in the play—there are no more dumb-shows and the world of the frame returns only in the play's epilogue. Resolution is not found in the derivation of simple moral lessons, and instead the intervening scenes extensively explore the revelation of truth through human means, as they follow the course of the missing murderer's apprehension, trial, and execution. Browne is in hiding with a relative in Rochester, but he cannot hide for long. Within moments, the town's mayor enters with one of the London searchers, "master James," and a "purservant" or warrant officer, and arrests Browne on suspicion of murder, his guilt confirmed by the testimony of the wounded John Beane and his freshly bleeding wounds: "Yea, this is he that murdred me and Master *Sanders*" (1945–2002). The officers return Browne to Woolwich to face the "*Lords at the Court*," and as his trial is underway, notice is sent from the Sheriffs of London that Anne's involvement has been confirmed (2050–2130). From there, Browne is told to "Expect no life, but meditate of death, / And for the safeguard of thy sinful soule" as he is "safe conveyed / To the Justices of the Bench at Westminster" (2142–50). After the lengthy staging of the trial—which echoes the failed dumb-show by having officers "*prepare the judgement seat to the Lord Maior, Lo. Justice, and the foure Lords*"—during which each of the conspirators is brought in to answer charges and hear judgement, we then move to the gallows at Newgate for the executions. Civic authority—through an exhaustive process of inquisition, searching, collecting evidence and testimony, apprehension, trial and execution—has delivered justice and discovered the truth of Sanders' murder.

But that process, while delivering a sense of completion in a way that moral truth is represented as not being able to accomplish, is also an unwieldy one. *A Warning*, in having its audience experience

the detailed and exhaustive ins-and-outs of the juridical process, also makes them experience its unwieldiness by dedicating so much of the play to a representation of that process. Here, the simplicity of moral declaration becomes a desirable quality, even as the simplicity of moral truth is a problem. Neither road to the discovery of the truth about the murder is presented as entirely satisfactory. But the play offers an alternative means of discovering and articulating truth. At the exact midpoint of the juridical process, between Browne's apprehension and his trial, there is an exchange between the Mayor of Rochester, Master James, and Master Barnes about the testimony of the dying John Beane, who has just confirmed the identity of the murdered. Amazed that "the poore creature, not speaking for two dayes, yet now should speak to accuse this man" just before he dies (2011–14), each man tells a similar story about the inevitability that murder will come to light. The Mayor remembers the exhumation of a man who died twenty years prior, whose death was revealed as a murder "By finding of a naile knockt in the scalpe" (2024), while Barnes recalls the case of a traveller whose murderer was revealed through "a sprigge of fearne" (2032). Master James tells a story that resonates with the play as a whole:

> A woman that had made away her husband,
> And sitting to behold a tragedy
> At Linne a town in Norffolke,
> Acted by Players travelling that way,
> Wherein a woman that had murtherd hers
> Was ever haunted with her husbands ghost:
> The passion written by a feeling pen,
> And acted by a good Tragedian,
> She was so moved with the sight thereof,
> As she cryed out, the Play was made by her,
> And openly confesst her husbands murder.
>
> (2037–48)

This vignette about the effect of watching a tragedy, which circulates in various versions and with various emendations throughout the period,[47] is doubly significant in the context of *A Warning* as a whole, given its metatheatrical investments. While staged "At Linne a town in Norffolke," by a group of travelling players, much like morality plays were thought to be, this is decidedly not a morality, but rather a contemporary tragedy. Additionally, it's clear that the play is not just a tragedy, but a domestic tragedy like the play in which is being described. The morality drama is nowhere to be seen, and it is the possibility for direct correlation, for a recognition of the self in the staging of events, that produces truth rather than the moral puppet-show so problematized in the interludes.

The bodily nature of truth production, the observation that the tragedy was written with "passion" and "by a feeling pen," the woman's cry: all recall Tragedie's description of her "office" and effects in the Induction: "I must have passions that move the soule, / Make the heart heave, and throb within the bosome, / Extorting teares out of the strictest eyes" (44–7). The play articulates here an understanding of the effect of theatre that was particularly tenacious in the early modern period, as Ellen MacKay has shown at length.[48] This same anecdote is one that Thomas Heywood turns to in his 1612 defence of the theatre, *An Apology for Actors*, when he turns away from classical evidence, deciding (as Mackay writes) "to abandon 'all farre-fetched instances' and prove his case by 'domestike' and 'home-borne truth[s],' 'which within these few yeares happened.'"[49] But rather than resurrect this

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[47] Most famously, perhaps, in Sidney's *Defence* and Heywood's *Apology for Actors* (1612). In the former, Sidney tells of a tyrant moved to "an abundance of tears" by a tragedy (*Defence*, 28), while Heywood tells the same story as Master James, of the Norfolk "townes-woman (till then of good estimation and report)" who confesses to murdering her husband (*Apology*, sig. G1v). I write more on this anecdote as it appears in *Hamlet* in the third chapter.

[48] Ellen MacKay, *Persecution, Plague, and Fire: Fugitive Histories of the Stage in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), esp. 24–78.

[49] Ibid., 27. The similarities are so apparent that the appearance of this story in the play is often cited as evidence for Heywood's authorship.

chestnut in the play's opening, it is here presented both after the failure of the morality tradition and during the drawn-out, tedious process of civic justice—the discovery of truth and affirmation of guilt taking a mere eleven lines, where the civic authorities take eleven hundred. In this context, the brief story told by Master James not only exemplifies the kind of tragedy promoted by *A Warning*, but also demonstrates the benefits of tragedy as a means of revealing the truth. Rather than declaring truth from on high, or arriving at the truth through a painstaking and lengthy process, tragedy elicits truth by building on a representation of quotidian and historical reality in order to lead spectators to a point of emotional recognition.

The emotional impact, combined with swiftness of action, suggest a kind of violence to the action of tragedy, much like that suggested in the opening images of the genre's emotional impact. Indeed, that is just what Tragedie evokes when she returns at play's end to deliver the epilogue: "Here are the launces that have sluic'd forth sinne, / And ript the venom'd ulcer of foul lust" (2718–9). We have seen each of the guilty parties apprehended, tried, convicted and led to execution—and yet the final scene, importantly, is not of an execution itself, not of the final delivery of justice. We have seen Browne leap off the scaffold, "Trusty Roger" led out "with holberds" (2695), but what we see at the very end is Anne Sanders' tearful reunion with her children. The "launces" to which Tragedie refers, then, have direct referents in the form of these final moments. "I am unworthy of the name of Mother" she declares (2661), as she once more expresses her repentance: "But could my husband and your father heare me, / Thus humbly at his feete would I fal downe, / And plentifull in teares bewayle my fault" (2672–4). She exhorts her children to "learne, learne by your mothers fall / To follow virtue, and beware of sinne" (2686–7). And then at last, before kissing them, she ends with a devastating iambic line, "Farewel, farewel, farewel, farewel, farewel" (2711).

Tragedie offers no moral of her own, no final moral to the story for her audience. What moral advice we do have was given indirectly, by a mother to her children, Golding's final moral admonitions thus transformed into something we observe and experience emotionally rather than are simply told. Instead, the epilogue focuses on theatrical matters, much like *Arden*'s did—mounting a defence of the play in terms of its truthfulness that in fact, as discussed above, constitutes an artistic statement about a new kind of tragedy, "true and home-borne" (2729), to once more use Tragedie's formulation. On this actual stage, as distinct from Golding's metaphorical morality theatre, moral truths are not stated, but experienced emotionally. Insisting on historical veracity, on not making the dramatized events conform to tragic expectations, not only shields Tragedie from accusations of having "commited error in [her] play" (2728), but forms the means through which she achieves the production of higher truth.

As the story from Norfolk demonstrates, that production functions through the possibility of recognition, of seeing oneself in what one sees on stage. The earlier morality tradition is represented as functioning in a similar fashion—spectators see themselves in the representative mankind figure being manipulated by larger allegorized forces—and Golding also recognizes that there is at least a place for theatrical within the larger production of moral truth. However, in *A Warning* the moral frame is abandoned long before the finale, both because its tendency to abstract and therefore simplify and because there is no need for it: it is the theatrical—it is tragedy—that is key to the production of a more complex, and therefore superior, truth. By play's end, it is clear that *A Warning for Fair Women* seeks to promote tragedy not just ahead of the other dramatic genres, but also ahead of other genres that articulate and disseminate truth. Tragedy's superiority as truth-discourse results from the intersection of its ability to stir up emotion and generate deep emotional recognition—to "move the soule" and "make the heart heave"—with its ability to not just recount but actually stage its lessons in such a way as

to resist abstraction into the moral plane by constantly invoking its commitment to historical veracity and quotidian accuracy.

"FOR TRUTH DOTH TELL THE TALE": TWO LAMENTABLE TRAGEDIES

A Warning for Fair Women is not the only domestic tragedy to return the morality tradition to the stage: Robert Yarington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (1601) opens with a scene between the figures of Homicide, Avarice and Truth, and uses a similar framing structure, interspersing real-life scenes with allegorical interpretative interludes.[50] But only one of the two lamentable tragedies features a historical plot set in England based on real-life events; the other plot is set in Italy, and is by all accounts entirely fictional. The role of *A Warning*'s Tragedie as interpreter and mediator is in this play taken by Truth—who is thus literally placed between two forms of tragedy. While her function is ostensibly to join the two tragic plots together as revealing one central truth, the structure of the play in fact suggests that a comparison between the two is part of the function of the play as a whole. By having these plots run in parallel, with no connections between them other than their shared framing device, the play sets up a comparison between a home-grown English tragedy and a more traditional Continental one on the basis of their perceived tragic qualities. As both plots are presented as embodying the same central truth, this comparison serves to make the play an exploration of the impact that historical veracity has on the impact of the tragic truth, a consideration of the means through which tragedy articulates its truth and of the importance of the factual in its articulation.

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[50] Robert Yarington, *Two Tragedies in One* (London, 1601), in *A Collection of Old English Plays in Four Volumes*, vol. 4, ed. A. H. Bullen (London, 1889; reissued, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964). All references will be to this edition, unless otherwise noted. However, given the absence of line numbers, and the purely conjectural act and scene divisions, page numbers will be used. No secure date of composition exists for the text, but the murder of Thomas Beech by Thomas Merry dramatized in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* occurred in 1594, giving at least a *terminus a quo*.

If *A Warning* is alive to the possibilities of the new kind of tragedy it represents, a tragedy grounded in scrupulous reproduction of historical, local and social realities, then Yarington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, in which two different tragic plots unfold in parallel, seeks to compare and perhaps even to test this new form, not just against other truth discourses or dramatic genres, but against another tragedy. Yarington also restages the morality play genre, using it not just as the frame of the play, but also as the link between the two plots. In fact, as the play's opening shows, his restaging is almost a more recognizable evocation of the older tradition. "Yet can I not finde out a minde, a heart / For blood and causelesse death to harbour in" (7), complains the figure of Homicide, bemoaning the lack of murderous people to be found in the streets of the "happie towne" through which he wanders, where there is not a personification of a dramatic genre in sight. The explanation for this lack lies in the general industriousness of the town's inhabitants, who are all

> bent with virtuous gainefull trade,
> To get their needmentes for this mortall life,
> And will not soile their well-addicted harts
> With rape, extortion, murther, or the death
> Of friend or foe, to gaine an Empery.
>
> (7)

No idle hands here, and thus no devil's work. But when the play addresses the cost of such moral rectitude it does do in implicitly theatrical terms, for there is no violent spectacle for the audience to enjoy either, as Homicide makes clear: "I cannot glut my blood-delighted eye / With mangled bodies which do gaspe and grone, / [. . .] / Nor bath my greedie hands in reeking blood / of fathers by their children murthered." From its first lines, then, the play presents itself as both obviously moral—introducing an allegorical figure drawn from the vice characters of the morality tradition, acknowledging the virtue to be found in honest labour—and as potentially spectacular as a piece of theatre.

The spectacle described here is not as explicitly theatrical as those mocked during the allegorical discussion which opens *A Warning*, with its filthy whining ghosts, its poisoning tyrants, and its stabbing drovers. And yet, Homicide's evident delight in violence, and the spectacular way in which he describes it here at the outset, indicate that the play seeks not only to moralize, but also to entertain. In his next lines, Homicide makes this investment explicit, by invoking a familiar genre:

> When all men else do weepe, lament and waile,
> The sad exploites of fearefull tragedies,
> It glads me so, that it delightes my heart,
> To ad new tormentes to their bleeding smartes.
>
> (8)

Suffering and violence are given a theatrical frame of reference. At this point, Avarice (another stock morality figure) enters, and—also invoking the theatrical—offers to help in the quest for a "hart wide open to receive, / A plot of horred desolation" (8). He suggests two candidates "Whose lookes [. . .] / Would seeme to beare the markes of honestie," but who in fact have hearts "relentlesse" and "mercilesse," and for good measure, even throws in a moral lesson: "snakes finde harbour mongst the fairest flowers / Then never credit outward semblances." Homicide asks his accomplice to "allure / Their hungrie harts with hope of recompence" and convince them of the necessity for a "deed of murther [to] farther it," in order for the play to successfully climax in a "bloodie feastivall" (9). Their final opening exchange once more emphasizes the theatrical nature of their endeavour: Avarice declares that "The plots are laide,"[51] Homicide replies that they will "go make a two-folde Tragedie," and both exit.

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[51] The *OED* lists 1613 as the earliest use of "plot" in the theatrical sense—"[t]he plan or scheme of a literary or dramatic work"—but it seems quite clear that there is at least an overtone of this sense of the word at work in this opening scene. *OED* s.v. "plot."

Such deliberately theatrical language shows that the play's engagement with the morality tradition is no less complex than *A Warning*'s. While the frame scenes are less extensive than those in the earlier play, Homicide and Avarice make clear through their diction that they are not just part of a simple staged affirmation of moral truth through historical example. What begins as a simple morality becomes, within only a few lines, a validation of the theatre, and particularly tragedy, as the means to access truth. While the play's interest in theorizing about its own genre appears muted when compared to the extended dissection of tragedy which opens *A Warning*, the next figure to appear on stage clearly demonstrates that these two plays share a central theoretical issue at the intersection of the moral and the theatrical. "Goe you disturbers of a quiet soule," declares the personification of Truth herself, before turning to the audience and preparing them for the work ahead:

> Gentles, prepare your teare-bedecked eyes,
> To see two shewes of lamentation,
> Besprinckled every where with guiltless blood,
> Of harmless youth, and pretie innocents.
> Our Stage doth weare habilliments of woe.
>
> (9)

The similarities to the manner in which Tragedie addresses her audience in *A Warning* are quite apparent—there too, the theatrical experience was said to elicit a physically manifest emotional reaction as the audience succumbed to "sad teares." Both stages are dressed in the same way, with the conventional black curtains of tragedy. And as if to underline the link between the two figures—to align truth with tragedy—Truth begins her speech just as Avarice utters the word "Tragedie." If Tragedie speaks the truth in the earlier play, then here we see Truth speaking for herself, it is "Truth [who] rues to tell the truth of these laments." Her presence as an allegorical figure in the frame of the play identifies the allegorical plane explicitly as the plane of interpretation, as it was in the earlier play, and suggests that what links these two plots is the higher truth that they tell.

Rather than making the dramatization of a single historical event the focus of its exploration of theatrical truth, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*—as its title suggests—contains two plots: one set in London, based on the true events surrounding the murder of the candle-maker Thomas Beech by the tavern owner Thomas Merry; and one set in Padua, about the murder of the orphaned Pertillo by Fallerio, his uncle. Apart from the murders and their shared avaricious motivations in each, the plots are distinct from one another, set in different cities, different countries, and different social spheres. Most importantly, the dramatization of the plots reveal very different relationships to truthfulness. The London plot—like that of other domestic tragedies—is quite clearly invested in historical veracity and in representational accuracy. As Truth declares, "The most here present, know this to be true," supporting the factuality by referring to specific details, giving not just the names of the murderer Merry and his primary victim Beech, and that of the murdered servant boy "poore *Thomas Winchester*," but also accurately locating the events "in famous London late, / Within that streete whose side the River Thames / Doth strive to wash from all impuritie," on Thames Street in Greenwich. The play uses similar rhetorical markers to those discussed earlier in order to mark its veracity, not only relying on a density of detail about the event itself, but also dedicating itself to a faithful recreation of local geography and the peculiarities of its urban setting.

The Italian plot, in contrast, not only is fictional but feels fictional. While Truth does not label the murder a fiction, she does present it in such a manner as to call into question its historical veracity when compared to the Beech murder, locating it only approximately "neere *Padua*," and naming no protagonists, only a "false Uncle" and his victim, "his brothers sonne" (10). The complete lack of specificity about urban geography or minutiae, the absence of rhetorical marks of veracity, renders Padua a very different kind of urban space to London, different not only because it is Italian rather than English, but also in terms of the representational practices used to evoke it. So different, in fact, that

critical studies of the play, particularly when interested in it as a domestic tragedy, tend to dismiss or almost ignore the Italian plot, preferring to focus on the English plot, which fits the domestic tragedy bill so much better.[52] Here, I consider the play as a theatrical text, and thus give equal weight to the importance of both plots.

The differences between the 'feel' of the two plots are hardly accidental, or worth thinking about as such, and are of importance in reading a play that so clearly displays its own investment in metatheatre. These differences suggest that in addition to comparing one type of tragedy to another, we are also to compare the fictional with the nonfictional, specifically in terms of their potential to manifest truth, the allegorical figure of which is the central link between the two plots. The two disparate are stitched together through the scenes with the allegorical figures. "I know two men," says Avarice, whose greed will lead them to commit murder: one, as Truth then informs the audience, in London and one in Italy. That Avarice paves the way for Homicide—that greed can lead to murder—is thus understood as a universal truth, as a truth that can be transferred between London and Italy. The murders can be staged in parallel because their motivation is the same. More important in terms of genre concerns, however, is the subtle transfer in truthfulness that occurs in the actual description of the tragedies, whereby the rhetorically created veracity of the historical murder transfers, to some extent, to the fictional murder. It's worth emphasizing that this transfer occurs from London to Padua—that the higher tragic truth is established in the true plot, and transferred to the fictional one.

In addition to the opening and closing frame-scenes, four interlude scenes punctuate the unfolding of the two plots, returning each time briefly to the allegorical world of the frame. Two of the scenes feature the gleeful Avarice and Homicide, two the lamenting figure of Truth. Just as the main

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[52] Orlin, for example, refers to Beech's murder as the "main plot" of the play. *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 106.

action alternates between the two plots, so the interludes alternate, and the three allegories do not appear together again until the epilogue. The scenes between the two vice figures are what one might expect: they spur the murderers to "runne headlong to destruction" (28) as their plots are set into action and satisfy "hungrie thoughts with blood and crueltie" (58) as they come to fruition. Throughout, they maintain an awareness of the theatrical nature of their endeavour: Avarice assures Homicide of success if his "confounding plots but goe before" (29), and later Homicide declares that full satisfaction will only be achieved when he can "brings the purple actors forth / And cause them quaffe a bowle of bitternesse" (59). They are also aware of just how entertaining they are, how their teaching of moral lessons depends on the production of entertainment and theatrical spectacle, again differentiating them from Lust, the silent vice-figure in *A Warning*—in this play, the moral interludes, rather than being undermined through the mediation of a theatrical figure, undermine themselves through an emphasis on their own theatricality.

At the same time, much as the vices delight in gore and spectacle, their banter and lurid description can hardly hope to match the gore and spectacle present in the rest of the play, especially in the London plot, where both the murders of Beech and Winchester, and the subsequent disposal of body parts form a focus of lurid action. The shortcomings of the morality tradition are here made apparent by comparison. Like *A Warning*, the play argues that it is the theatre that offers the best means of articulating truth, underscoring this by having the figure of Truth enter in the midst of the dismemberment scene, just as "Merry *begins to cut the body, and bindes the armes behinde his backe with* Beeches *garters*" (46). Stucturally, the two Truth interludes follow scenes from the London plot, while the vice scenes follow scenes from Padua, a suggestive placement that links truth to the true English plot rather than to either the fictional plot or the morality tradition as embodied by the vice figures. The moments at which Truth enters are the points at which the source material is most clearly emphasizing

its historical and geographical accuracy. The audience could follow Merry as he transports Beech's trunk "Beyond the water in a Ferryboate" in order to "throw it into *Paris-garden* ditch" (45); likewise, they could recognize the operation of civic justice in the persons of the "*Constable"* and "*three watchmen with halberdes*" (83) who perform the arrests. Truth arrives, then, in embodied form, at the height of the English plot's lifelikeness and historical accuracy.

What becomes clear over the course of the play is that while both tragic plots can lay claim to articulating tragic truth, and thus that the articulation of such truth does not depend on the fictional status of a plot, there is something to be gained from the kind of tragedy that finds its basis in the nonfictional. The English tragedy is superior not because of its Englishness per se, but because its Englishness allows it to underline its factual nature through the use of local and quotidian specificity recognizable to an English audience. Thus it is in the sensational, lurid high point of the London plot, the dismemberment scene, that Truth not only enters but also recognizes in "the sad spectators of this Acte"—in her audience—the unequivocal signs of tragic truth already described in *A Warning*: "I see your sorrowes flowe up to the brim, / And overflowe your cheeks with brinish teares" (46). It is right here that the full affective power of tragedy is demonstrated. The echoes of the earlier play are so clear as to make Truth almost indistinguishable from Tragedie at this point, and by the time the play's epilogue is reached the superimposition is almost complete. "Here are the launces that have sluic'd forth sinne" Tragedie declared in her epilogue; "See here the end of lucre and desire / Of riches" (95) is how Truth opens hers. Both spokespersons advocate the revelatory power of their chosen genre. Indeed, when Truth kicks the "Stigmaticks" Avarice and Homicide off the stage, she warns them against future attempts to incite "execrable butcheries," reminding them of the work the stage enables her to perform: "My selfe will bring your close designes to light, / And overthrow your vilde conspiracies" (96). The triumph of truth here described is linked directly to the final moments of the English plot. While both

that plot and the Italian one offer a means of accessing tragic truth—a revelation and emotional recognition of sin at work in the world—the power that the former derives from its historical veracity and representational accuracy, not to mention from the impact of seeing sin at work in a recognizably local setting, is undeniable. It is the English story that animates the play, it is from that story that Truth derives her lessons, it is through this story that the office of tragedy is performed.

* * *

But *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also raises a question. In terms of most effectively articulating the play's fundamental truth about "the end of lucre and desire / Of riches," of performing tragedy's office by inciting intense emotional responses in its audience, the true plot is seen to triumph over the fictional one. A historical event, Merry's murder of Beech serves—like the Sanders murder and other crimes described in pamphlets and other historical records—as an event marked by the kind of "horribleness" that both Holinshed and Golding identify as significant and as didactically useful. The historicity of the event is key for its moral lesson. For the moral truths of a murder pamphlet to hit home, the audience for that lesson must in some sense recognize themselves in the sinners, and the historical veracity—this crime happened right here, not long ago, in London, committed by someone of similar social standing to you, gentle reader—serves that purpose. In the case of the woman in Norfolk, or the ancient tyrant moved to tears—anecdotes about the power of tragedy to reveal truth—however, that recognition is not linked to veracity. The widow does not confess her sins because the tragedy she sees is historically true, but because she recognizes herself in the character on stage. Recognition on the part of the reader and audience is key in both pamphlet and play, the difference lies in the way that recognition is generated. What the translation of the historical events from page to stage reveals is the extent to which

the pamphlets themselves rely on reality effects, in their case generated through the rhetorical marking of the events as historically true.

Tragedy has its own set of reality effects—including the marking of events as true, but also the evocation of a lifelike setting through the use of geographical accuracy, quotidian detail, etc.—and herein lies the question raised by *Two Lamentable Tragedies*: is the key to the tragic success of the English plot its veracity or its verisimilitude? This question is raised by the two earlier plays as well, but more implicitly. As I argued, *Arden*—while its main plot appears to support that the historical truth of the murder was petty treason—also allows other ways of telling the story to come into view, notably in its final image of Arden's body, which suggests an alternative historical truth for the crime. And in *A Warning*, the very mention of the story of tragic recognition in Norfolk raises the issue, given that it—as aforementioned—does not present historical truth as a factor in the revelation of truth, but rather lifelikeness, a murderous wife in real life recognizing a murderous wife like her on stage.

The comparison between the two plots set up in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also serves to highlight the difference in representational style between the two, as it is impossible to escape the vast amount of historical, local, and geographical accuracies that are crammed into the English plot, and simply not present (even if they wouldn't necessarily be recognizable to an English audience) in the Italian one. In a speech that precedes the scenes of punishment and execution, Truth makes explicit what exists as an implicit suspicion of varying degrees in this play and the others. Detailing the fates of all the criminals—that Merry will "hang till he be dead," as will Rachel, that Fallerio will be doomed to die by the Duke—Truth momentarily turns to the audience: "Gentles," she asks, "help out with this suppose I pray / And think it truth, for Truth doth tell the tale" (87). We are to "think" rather than know it true, and not because necessarily because it *is* true, but because it is Truth who "doth tell the tale." The truth of the tale lies in the telling. Having theorized tragedy as a way of accessing or revealing

truth, the plays implicitly gesture towards their own truth about tragedy, that it is in fact a way of producing truth. In the next chapter I take up this implication more fully, reading Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and Shakespeare's *Othello* as domestic tragedies that reflect on the production of truth in tragic form.

VERACITY AND VERISIMILITUDE IN *A WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS* AND *OTHELLO*

In the last chapter, I argued that the subject of "truth" is the central issue around which early modern domestic tragedies theorize tragedy, positing the articulation of truth as the fundamental work of the form as a way to justify their own formal impertinence and to promote a new, contemporary form of tragedy unique to the English stage. I now turn to two somewhat later plays that are often mentioned in connection to both the domestic tragedy as a form, and more broadly, to the staging of domestic and household matters: Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and Shakespeare's *Othello*, both written/performed around 1602–3.[1] As I note in my discussion of the genre boundaries of domestic tragedy in the introduction, both of these texts represent limit-cases for the form. Heywood's play is held up not just as an exemplary domestic tragedy (alongside *Arden of Faversham*), but as perhaps the best; while Shakespeare's play, on the other hand, is often presented as his closest approach to the form without being an actual domestic tragedy.

In this chapter, expanding on my earlier contention that both of these plays are actual domestic tragedies, I show how both Heywood and Shakespeare look back and reflect on the form of domestic tragedy, and in particular on its supposed status as a means of articulating the truth. Each of their plays engages with the concept of truth and truthfulness in different ways and on different levels in order to

[1] *A Woman Killed* is printed in 1607, but Henslowe records a payment of £6 to Heywood for the play in February–March 1603. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 3:341–2. *Othello* is printed in 1622 and again in 1623, but the publication of a key source in 1601 and the record of a 1604 court performance mean that the play "must have been written at some time between 1601 and 1604," with 1602 as "the probable year of the play's first performance." *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Arden, 1997), 344–50. All references below are to this edition, unless otherwise noted.

investigate how their historically based forerunners create a sense of truthfulness and lifelikeness. But by using fictional plots, they demonstrate the extent to which their verisimilitude is not primarily a result of their historical veracity but instead a product of their theatrical praxis and the tropes and conventions associated with it. In so doing, they not only show that the genre of domestic tragedy was to some extent seen as such in the early modern period, but also articulate a form of early modern 'realist' theatrical representation that draws on these plays, their praxis, and on the complex ways that various senses of the domestic figure in them.

I argue that these plays critique the idea that domestic tragedies simply speak "the truth." In deploying the various representational strategies and conventions associated with the form—accurate and detailed verbal description of settings, the deployment of a recognizable, early modern, English domestic mythos, the mimetic use of stage properties—each dramatist posits that the domestic tragedy form actually *produces* rather than simply repeats, represents, articulates "the truth"; that the genre is fundamentally concerned not with veracity but with verisimilitude. Reading the plays in this light not only reveals the complex ways in which they engage their own identity as domestic tragedies, but also shows the necessity of reassessing the ways in which both they and the genre as a whole have been understood by critics, who have usually seen the "truth" of domestic tragedies to lie in their translation of domestic ideology onto the stage. Heywood and Shakespeare's engagement with the form highlights that domestic tragedy actually works against (or at least complicates and reflects upon) domestic ideology and in particular the practice of representing women as paradigmatic exemplars in moralizing discourse—it does not simply translate those things onto the stage, but is critical of them and questions their efficacy at producing truth (and its own capacity to reveal truth).

* * *

Both *A Woman Killed* and *Othello* are—from a critical perspective—problem plays insofar as they are to be considered part of the domestic tragedy genre,[2] even if the former is always and the latter almost never accorded membership therein. Neither play is based on a true historical events, both sourcing their plots from fictional stories drawn from Italian sources.[3] Heywood's play does not feature a violent murder at its centre, nor is it resolved through the operations of official institutional justice; Shakespeare sets his play in the Mediterranean rather than in England. However, both plays are indelibly domestic in terms of their plot, subject matter, character-types, and household settings—and in ways that an early modern English audience would recognize. Both plays strive, as I will lay out in more detail below, to evoke on stage a realistic, recognizable domestic world. Heywood creates perhaps the most detailed spatial and relational evocation of a household on the early modern stage, while Shakespeare explicitly marks the space of the household through its absence, making the lack of a home one of the central problems in his play. Herein lies, as argued earlier, the identity of these plays as domestic tragedies.

I want to suggest that while it may appear that the dramatists choose to set their plays in very different places, with one choosing England and the other not, both Shakespeare and Heywood set their domestic drama at a distance. Rather than reading Shakespeare as simply being faithful to his narrative sources (not a kind of fidelity usually associated with him), I suggest we read him as *choosing* not to move the action of his Italian story to England in the way that Heywood does in his play. In staying in Cyprus, he emphasizes the degree to which this play occurs within an isolated world, one in

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[2] Of course, as I note in my introduction, the domestic tragedy genre seems to be populated almost exclusively by problem plays.

[3] *Othello*'s main source is a tale from Cinthio's *Gli Heccatomithi* (1565), while Heywood's main plot is derived from William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566), a collection of mostly Italian stories, and his subplot from a fifteenth-century Italian novella.

which the explicit connections to the everyday so prevalent in earlier domestic tragedies are severed, even as the world itself remains one with a recognizably early modern English domesticity. Heywood's choice of Yorkshire must also be problematized, and not simply understood as being England in the broad sense. First, as Richard Rowland notes in a recent study, "the decision to locate *A Woman Killed* in England at all is an odd one," given the play's Italian ancestry and originally urban setting.[4] Second, Heywood could have followed the examples of *Arden* and *A Warning for Fair Women* and set his play in London, or in neighbouring areas such as Kent, but he does not. Rowland gives an overview of the "theatrical implications" of this choice to locate the play in a region "perceived as both topographically and culturally foreign," showing the range of significations that Yorkshire would have had for an early modern audience, significations that all share in some way a sense of it being (like Cyprus) both a different and an isolated place.[5]

It is the implication of this combined distancing and isolation that I believe is particularly significant in the context of the domestic tragedy form. Each dramatist, in his way, cuts his play off from the kinds of connections of local significance described in the last chapter that marked earlier plays, while retaining the sense of a recognizable domestic world being evoked on stage. Where *Arden* or *A Warning* are thus plays whose actions *can* be followed on a map, the two plays I am considering here are plays whose actions *could* be followed on a map, if it weren't for the fact that their dramatists deliberately and explicitly place them on a different map. In this way, I suggest, they render the plays as isolated in a theatrical sense too—uncoupled from earlier examples in significant ways, each play becomes a space of theatrical inquiry and experimentation. As I show in the first section to follow,

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[4] Richard Rowland, *Thomas Heywood's Theatre, 1599–1639: Locations, Translations, and Conflict* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 102.

[5] Ibid., 99, 102–9.

Heywood's particular experiment is to take a narrative derived from foreign sources, and to render it unmistakeably English, creating on stage a thoroughgoing and accurate household space and domestic sphere. Within this faithful recreation of a domestic world, Heywood tells an admonitory tale about domestic transgression, whose protagonists become paradigmatic domestic figures of the wronged husband, the adulterous wife, the opportunistic guest/friend, etc. But by advertising the fictional nature of his play from the very outset, he explores the implications of cutting these domestic paradigms off from historical truth. In the second section, I show how Shakespeare's *Othello* is a kind of doubled domestic tragedy. Within the domestically saturated world of *Othello*, I argue, he has Iago stage his own domestic tragedy, one that reveals a truth to Othello that the offstage audience knows to be false. Rather than having the capacity to reveal the truth, domestic tragedy is shown to have the capacity to produce whatever truth its dramatist desires, through the manipulation of theatrical verisimilitude.

PRODUCING TRUTH IN A WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS

By the time Heywood writes *A Woman Killed*, the new English tragedy represented by *Arden*, *A Warning*, and *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is no longer a novelty, and is an established genre on the early modern stage. Gone are the earlier decade's anxieties about staging a kind of "naked tragedy," set in lower social spheres and taking decidedly domestic concerns as its subject. "Look for no glorious state," Heywood's prologue declares, "our muse is bent / Upon a barren subject, a bare scene,"[6] before acknowledging the limits of theatrical representation and the plainness of what is to follow:

> We could afford this twig a timber tree.
> Whose strength might boldly on your favours build;
> Our russet, tissue; drone, a honey-bee;
> Our barren plot, a large and spacious field;

[6] *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, ed. B. Scobie (London: New Mermaids, 1985). All references to this edition unless otherwise noted.

Our coarse fare, banquets; our thin water, wine;
Our brook, a sea; our bat's eyes, eagle's sight;
Our poet's dull and earthy muse, divine;
Our ravens, doves; our crow's black feathers, white.

(Prologue 3–12)

For Catherine Richardson, the prologue makes an "apology for the domestic nature of its tragedy as prosaic fare" and "suggests a wish for the ordinary russet and coarse fare to be socially transformed into the splendours of tissue and banquet."[7] Yet the simple, declarative tone of the speech undermines such a reading: this is acknowledgement, not apology. The play that follows may be plain, but through the repetition of the possessive "our," the prologue clearly expresses an ownership of that plainness, of those markers of lower social status, of the poet's "dull and earthy muse," an apt figure of inspiration for the writers of English domestic tragedies. And neither does the play's epilogue apologize for what has gone before: likening the play to wine, which depending on the drinker can be "new, old, flat, sharp, sweet, and sour," it argues that quality is as much a matter of audience perception as anything else, and that any innate quality cannot be judged simply by an audience's reaction: "Unto this wine we do allude our play, / Which some will judge too trivial, some too grave" (Epilogue 9–14).

Heywood's prologue reveals that the play from the beginning is interested in questions of theatrical representation, and particularly about the gap between the representation and the represented. "I come but like a harbinger, being sent / To tell you what these preparations mean" (Prologue 1–2) is how the play opens, aligning the metaphorical setting of the scene with the actual scene-setting occurring on stage. By putting emphasis on the representational gap in this extended fashion, the play is focusing the audience's attention on its own theatrical praxis. Rather than setting the scene for us, the prologue tells us to attend to the ways and means through which that scene is set.

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[7] Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy*, 151.

At the same time it also alludes to the power inherent in theatre as it unfolds: while at the beginning, coarse "russet" fabric is passing for rich "tissue,"[8] by the end, "black" is passing for "white." The play advertises its fictional status, showing the audience from the outset just how it makes its theatrical representations. This framing is very different to those seen in the last chapter, which consistently emphasized the historical truth of what was being staged, and to close the gap between representation and the represented. Here, the preface makes no such attempt, and thus serves to place the story of John and Anne Frankford's marriage—recognizable as it might be as a tale of domestic admonition—into the realm of the fictional. Like both *Arden* and *A Warning*, the plot hinges on the intrusion of another man into the space of a household and ultimately into a marital relationship, and on the apparent inevitability with which female chastity gives way to adultery. What Heywood does, in effect, is to demarcate the domestic tragedy as a dramatic form in its own right by staging a recognizably domestic plot that is also flagged as fictional, highlighting that by the time he is writing there exists some conception of that form which enables him to write without expressing genre-anxiety apparent in earlier plays.

The play's fictional status raises certain questions in the context of this chapter, the first being that if these plays promote tragedy as a vehicle for truth, what happens when the events depicted are not in fact true ones? My reading of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* in the previous chapter showed how that play also broached this question in its contrast between true English and fictional Italian plots, aligning itself ultimately with the true plot as a superior means of revealing tragic truth, on account of its historical veracity, its geographical specificity, and its lifelikeness. It is this last quality that Heywood focuses on in his play, as his play is neither true, nor set anywhere more specific than in the vicinity of

[8] *OED*, s.v. "russet": A coarse woollen cloth of a reddish-brown or subdued colour, formerly used for clothing esp. by country people and the poor"; s.v. "tissue": "A rich kind of cloth, often interwoven with gold or silver."

York. He trades on verisimilitude—while the lamentable tragedy set in Italy clearly identified itself as fictional, Heywood's is a particular type of fiction, a scrupulous attempt to recreate a fully realized and recognizably domestic setting within which to stage stories of domestic transgression. And in this he succeeds, to such an extent that for Lena Orlin the play exemplifies the notion that "fictions can form an archive," a text whose "synthetic sweep" makes it a "documentary record" of domestic culture in the period.[9] Instead of geographic or local specificity, we get a domestic particularity that results from his decision to locate most of the play indoors, in a set of richly imagined household interiors, with the local lands and area appearing only incidentally as part of the subplot. There is no following of the action on a map here, but instead a faithful and total mapping of the household, both in physical terms and in terms of the relationship networks that exist within it.

Orlin's account of the "range of theatrical languages" that "articulates [the] domestic context" shows just how thoroughgoing and multilayered this representation of the household is, and gives an excellent overview of the complex representational strategies that are specific to the domestic tragedy form. She identifies a total of six of these languages: first, the "seemingly incidental verbal identification of spaces" when characters identify or point to household spaces; second, the description of or request for "stage business" when members of the household call for various domestic duties or tasks to be performed—"as when Frankford and Anne command their servant Jenkin and when Jenkin himself requests of his fellows, 'More lights in the hall there'; cries 'Hark, within there, my master calls to lay more billets on the fire'; orders 'One spread the carpet in the parlour and stand ready to snuff the lights'; summons 'A pair of cards, Nich'las, and a carpet to cover the table. Where's Sisly with her counters and her box? Candles and candlesticks there'; or directs 'the butler to give us out salt and

[9] *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 137–8.

trenchers' (8.10–15, 117–19; 11.13–19)." Third is "direct address of the audience"—for instance when Jenkin informs the spectators that while "it be afternoon with you, 'tis but early days with us, for we have not din'd yet" and that he is going to "help to bear up the first course" and then return to them (4.106–10). Fourth, the "extraverbal language [. . .] of gesture," such as when Frankford enters "*as it were brushing the crumbs from his clothes with a napkin*" showing that he is "*newly risen from supper*" (8.22 sd). The fifth "visual language" is that of stage props: "contemporary stage directions variously call for a table, stools, carpet, tablecloth, napkins, salt, bread, trenchers, voider, wooden knife, cards, candles, candlesticks, 'and other necessaries.'" Finally there is the language of the cast, who in their various identities, especially the multiple, individually named servants, they form "a household commonwealth."[10]

Unlike Orlin, I am not interested in using this extraordinary, 'multilingual' articulation of the domestic context to argue for the play as a catch-all of the socio-cultural domestic realities of the early modern period. Instead, I wish to consider what the implications of this intense verisimilitude are from a theatrical perspective, particularly because Heywood is clearly picking up on a representational strategy used in earlier plays. The density of named objects is one index of this mode of representation—*Arden* has its backgammon table, dining table, porringer, and bloody towel; in *A Warning*, Anne Sanders wishes to buy linen, gloves and a purse; in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, both murders result from a desire to possess material goods—food, coals, jewels, and household stuff.[11] I used the term 'mapping' earlier, and I believe this is key to understanding what is going on here, particularly

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[10] Ibid., 145–6. See also Richardson's account of the play's itemization of the "trappings of an emerging bourgeois culture," which serves as a multilayered signifier of social status that an early modern audience would have been sensitive to. "Properties of domestic life: the table in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, 129–52: 135.

[11] Orlin has an exhaustive catalogue of the material fixations of these plays and other domestic tragedies. Ibid., 259–61.

when we recall the prologue to *A Woman Killed*, and its emphasis on the potential for the theatrical transformation of plainness into splendour, of the "dull and earthy" into the "divine." What is striking about the vast majority of the objects used to create the domestic verisimilitude in these plays is precisely the fact that they do not require this kind of transformation: the tables at which Arden and Frankford dine, the stools on which they sit, the tablecloths, trenchers, knives, and napkins with which their tables are set, the counters and cards with which they play their postprandial games, all these properties are recognizable to the audience as domestic objects and all map one-to-one to the objects they represent in the play. The theatrical effect is one of fidelity, a one-to-one mapping of a household recognizable as such to the audience. We are no longer just in the realm of accurate representation, here we have reality representing itself. If the work of tragedy, the production of tragic truth, is based on self-recognition, then here is perhaps the ultimate basis for such recognition: the audience can imagine itself in the world of the play, even more so than with the other types of mapping to be found in these plays.

It is in this detailed reproduction of everyday reality that Heywood sets his fictional story of John Frankford's betrayal. The play opens with the Frankfords' wedding feast, during the course of which Wendoll is invited into the Frankford household and ominously told to treat it as his home: "I will allow you, sir, / Your man, your gelding, and your table, / All at my own charge" (4.70–2). Asked in essence to take Frankford's place, Wendoll is driven to seduce his wife Anne and begin an adulterous relationship with her, a relationship ultimately discovered by her husband, prompted by the suspicions of his servant Nick. Rather than kill the lovers—something that Anne's own brother admits he would have done ("Had it been my case / Their souls at once had from their breasts been freed" [17.20–1])—Frankford offers her the "mild sentence" (13.172) of banishment from their family and marital home. Anne, tormented by grief and guilt, starves herself to death, while Wendoll flees to the Continent. On her deathbed, Anne is forgiven by her husband—"My wife, the mother to my pretty babes, / Both those

lost names I do restore thee back, / And with this kiss I wed thee once again" (17.115–7)." And finally, Frankford declares his intent to inscribe a "funeral epitaph" on his wife's "marble tomb": "In golden letters shall these words be filled / Here lies she whom her husband's kindness killed" (139–40). On this final couplet, the final scene of the play ends.

On some level, the audience might assume this to be the lesson of the play—presented in the form of a rhymed couplet, placed at the very end of the scene, identified as something worthy of epitaphic inscription, in "golden letters" no less. And yet, the play immediately complicates this domestically didactic ending—for while the plot comes to a close here, the play does not. Immediately after the couplet, the epilogue jarringly shifts tone (and subject) from the solemn to the jovial, from the image of Anne's deathbed and future tomb to the story of "[a]n honest crew, disposed to be merry" who "[c]ame to a tavern by and called for wine" (Epilogue 1–2). I touched on this epilogic story earlier, on how unapologetic it is about the the play just ended, suggesting that the audience's taste (or lack thereof) is as likely a cause for dissatisfaction as the play's inherent quality (or lack thereof). What I want to focus on here is how the light-hearted, almost irreverent tone of the epilogue undermines the seeming gravity of the Frankford story. At the end of *Arden*, we also see a confusion in terms of overarching lesson, here that confusion is specifically between whether the play teaches a domestic moral lesson or a theatrical one. Furthermore, by shifting back into the theatrical reflexivity of the prologue, this reintroduction of the frame almost has the effect of pulling the rug out from under the play and undermining the notion that it offers what Michael McClintock calls "a strict moral lesson."[12] What was potentially a straightforward domestic morality tale is revealed to be a piece of theatrical artifice, and its final truth called into question.

[12] "Grief, Theatre, and Society in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," in *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton*, eds. M. Swiss and D. A. Kent (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002), 98–119: 117.

And not just called into question—the explicit point of the epilogue's story is that the quality of the play, like the quality of wine, is entirely dependent on the subjective taste of the audience member or wine drinker:

> Thus, gentlemen, you see how in one hour
> The wine was new, old, flat, sharp, sweet, and sour
>
> Unto this wine we do allude our play,
> Which some will judge too trivial, some too grave.
>
> (11–14)

Taste is in the mouth of the taster—the epilogue leaves the individual audience members to judge the play, and make of it what they will. This sentiment is a long way from the determination with which Franklin tells the audience to note one truth "above all" in *Arden*, and the definitive deictic pronouncements from the figures of Tragedie in *A Warning* and Truth in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* in their respective epilogues: "Here are the lances that have sluiced forth sin" and "See here the end of lucre and desire." There is no equivalent figure in Heywood's play, and no form of definitive articulation of a lesson or a truth to be learned from the play. Instead, what we are left with is the switch from the domestic realism of the bulk of the play back into its metatheatrical framework, a shift that immediately reminds the audience that they have been watching a play that has used particular kinds of theatrical representation to recreate on stage a lifelike, verisimilar domestic world, that has—to a large extent—fooled its audience into believing.

But this irreverence and the absence of a truth-telling figure to deliver a lesson at play's end do not necessarily represent a complete undermining of the idea that this domestic tragedy might articulate some kind of truth. It is after all a search for truth—Frankford seeking to reveal the adulterous affair—that drives much of the play. It is simply that the play is structured in such a way as to introduce further complexity into the idea of tragic truth than even the earlier domestic tragedies

did. Where those plays suggested that tragic truth was a means of articulating a higher truth based on historical events that allowed for more complexity than moralizing discourses did, Heywood critiques the earlier plays for the same reason, calling into question their attempted imposition of singular truths on their narratives. In which case, what truths are being presented here? How is truth arrived at or produced? This last question is particularly relevant to a play that has as its centrepiece neither the adulterous sin itself, nor the punishment for it, but rather the extended process of discovery by which the truth of the adultery is revealed to Frankford, beginning at the end of the seventh scene, with Nick's suspicions about the lovers, and ending in the thirteenth, with Frankford finding the sleeping lovers in bed.

The fact of the betrayal is the central "truth" of *A Woman Killed*, important not only to the plot, but also as a figure for the idea of "truth" as a whole. In the play, the truth is revealed to Frankford in a three-stage process: beginning with Nick telling his master that Wendoll "enjoys my mistress and dishonours you" (7.58) and ending at the moment Frankford breaks into his own house to find the lovers "lying / Close in each other's arms, and fast asleep" (13.43–4), moving from suspicion to confirmation. The middle stage of this process is the point at which Frankford is convinced of the truth, the point at which he decides not to discover but specifically to confirm the truth he feels he already knows. Strangely, that moment—placed nearly in the centre of the play—involves an extended game of cards between the main protagonists in the love triangle. As Rowland notes, the "centrality" of card-playing in this supposedly model and socially elevated household would have been noted as unusual by "the majority of spectators in a London playhouse" who, while "familiar with the accoutrements of this popular pastime," would nonetheless mark this as a scene of special significance.[13]

[13] Rowland, 119–122.

In addition, the underlying game being played involves the exchange of a series of indecorous double entendres: Wendoll alludes to cuckoldry when he suggests Frankford "play[s] best at Noddy" (8.141); Nick suggests that Wendoll is best at "Knave Out of Doors" (149); in response to Anne's suggestion that they play "Saint," Frankford whispers "My saint's turned devil" (151–2); there is the obligatory bawdy reference to the game of "New Cut"; and when the lovers pick cards, Wendoll declares "I am a knave" (169), while Anne picks "a queen" (171), or "quean" (172),[14] as her husband would have it. Frankford finally declares that "You have served me a bad trick, Master Wendoll" (180).

What might have been simply a darkly humorous and tense set-piece becomes the chief means through which Frankford is finally convinced of the truth of Nick's accusations—"Thou robb'st me of my soul, of her chaste love; / In thy false dealing, thou hast robbed my heart" (186–7), as he says in an aside directed at Wendoll. Frankford is quite certain in his knowledge—he knows that Wendoll robs him, he doesn't think it. And yet, until he discovers the lovers in bed, there is no actual evidence. That is to say, the "truth" revealed during the card game is only coincidental with the truth of the adultery, and there is not an actual link between them, as the audience is well aware. Staging this revelation as a card-game, a game that depends to some degree on an element of chance in terms of which cards are dealt where, emphasizes the sense of the coincidental, and also the problematic nature of Frankford's way of arriving at the truth. The audience could certainly appreciate the dramatic irony of the game, the problem is that Frankford and Nick do so too—but the audience has knowledge that the characters do not. A game of cards in which appropriate hands are dealt does not constitute evidence, and is an extremely flimsy confirmation of truth. In portraying a betrayed husband who becomes convinced of the truth of his betrayal without actual evidence, *A Woman Killed* here echoes what will become the

[14] *OED*, s.v. "quean": "a bold or impudent woman; a hussy; [. . .] a prostitute."

central problem in *Othello*—the way in which suspicions turn into what only appears to be certain truth.

The play displays explicit unease about this means of apprehending the truth. It's telling, for instance, how one-sided this supposed discovery of the truth is, that confession is not a means to truth at this point, especially as one could easily imagine a threefold revelation that proceeded from report, to discovery of the lovers in bed, to a confrontation and confession. While the audience knows that the transgression has occurred, while we have actual evidence, Frankford is convinced by his own act of interpretation, taking randomly drawn or dealt cards and assigning significance to them on the basis of his suspicions, before he obtains actual evidence of the truth. And *A Woman Killed* is uneasy about its truths throughout: while there are potential domestic morals and lessons to be learned, the very fact of their being staged seems to complicate them. The three major lessons in the play from a domestic standpoint are all commonplaces about the vulnerability of female chastity, about the dangers of companionate friendship, about the problems in ceding or sharing one's position as head of a household.[15] But when they are staged simultaneously, complexities emerge. Who is to blame? Frankford invited Wendoll into his household, told him to share his place. He told Anne to "Use him with all thy loving'st courtesy" (4.80). And yet to blame Frankford entirely seems entirely wrong as well. The theatrical complicates truths in other ways as well. Wendoll's moving and melancholy soliloquies—"I will forget her; I will arm myself / Not to entertain a thought of love to her" (6.12–13)—put paid to any notion that the sin is committed simply out of lust. Anne's attitude to the adultery is also not presented in the lustful terms we might expect—she is certainly no Alice Arden, and "yield[s] in fear" (11.113) and obligation rather than desire.

[15] In her reading of the play, Orlin gives an extensive overview of the domestic texts and ideologies reflected within it. *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 137–81. See also Comensoli, 69–83.

The card game is significant in terms of these complex characterizations as well, and forms part of the play's overarching theatrical reflexivity. Again, the audience is privy to a certain totality of truth, armed with all the information, observing all asides and soliloquies—and while that is what makes the game of double-meanings function, it also serves to open a certain distance between the characters and the roles they play in the card-game theatre. Yes, Wendoll plays the knave, but that is not all he is. Yes, Anne plays a queen/quean, but she is neither bold nor impudent, and her sin is committed ambivalently. These roles are defined beforehand, and then handed out—those playing the parts are fitted to them, rather than the other way round. As we will see in *Othello*, pre-existing roles and stories make their own truth, they do not necessarily reveal the actual truth.

This is particularly the case in regard to Anne, who is so ambivalent about her sin, and for whose sin the play gives Frankford a large part of the blame as a result of his magnanimity toward Wendoll in asking him to "be a present Frankford in his absence" (6.79). Her suicide by starvation, far from being seen as a righteous punishment, is a deeply troubling extended scene, with the distress of her servants Jenkin and Sisly—"O my mistress, my mistress, my poor mistress!" (17.23)—echoing through the final scene. Moreover, as much as Frankford might refer to himself as kind, as the husband who kills his wife with kindness, the final moments of the play highlight just how unkind he is. Not only does he drive his wife to suicide—a mortal sin—but the particular staging of the scene, with him standing priest-like to offer his wife forgiveness, would have resonated as troublingly Catholic for a Protestant audience, for whom "Frankford's entire course of action and the language with which he justifies it condemn themselves."[16] It is thus not only in juxtaposition with the irreverent epilogue that Frankford's final couplet about his wife whom his "kindness killed" is troubled—the final scene of the

[16] Rowland, 143.

play makes clear that Heywood wishes to leave no simple, edifying truth at the end of his play, instead leaving the spectacle of a woman killed with her husband's kindness, for a sin originally caused by her husband's kindness to another man. The play leaves us with no clear truth, "no answers at all,"[17] not a reflection of the period's domestic ideology, but a refraction that diffuses, deflects, and interferes with any lines of sight through to that ideology or to any kind of higher domestic moral truth. By highlighting how its own form does not so much reveal or articulate truth as produce or make its own truth on stage, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* sheds a light on the ways in which the domestic stories it is based on are themselves already a form of producing rather than revealing truth—a form that Iago will turn to in engineering the downfall of Othello and the death of Desdemona.

OTHELLO AS DOUBLED DOMESTIC TRAGEDY

In *Othello*, Shakespeare critiques the domestic tragedy form not by framing the play as a whole—as Heywood does—as a fictive theatrical work whose truths are shown to be potentially fictive as well, but by embedding a domestic tragedy within the world of the play itself. Of Shakespeare's plays, *Othello* is certainly one of the most theatrically reflexive, staging as it does several set-pieces that feature an onstage audience and that thus constitute mini-performances within the play. Discussions of the theatrical in the play inevitably revolve around the figure of Iago. William Hazlitt's description of him as a kind of tragic puppet master, "an amateur of tragedy in real life" who rather than "exercising his ingenuity on imaginary characters [. . .] takes the bolder and more desperate course of getting up his plot at home, casts the principal parts among his nearest friends and connections, and rehearses it in downright earnest, with steady nerves and unabated resolution,"[18] remains an accurate and compelling

[17] Ibid., 154.

[18] William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*, 2nd edition (London: C. H. Reynell for R. Hunter, 1817), 42.

portrayal of the play's villain. Throughout the play, he displays an extraordinary ability to frame situations, making others believe or interpret situations in particular ways. The plot hinges on his staging of the non-existent affair between Desdemona and Cassio, with Othello as his rapt audience. As is often noted, the "ocular proof" of infidelity so fatefully demanded by the tragic protagonist takes the form not only of the infamous handkerchief, but also of a play conceived and produced by Iago.

Considering Shakespeare's play in light of the domestic tragedy paradigm reveals not only *Othello*'s indebtedness to the form but also offers a necessary corrective to the way in which its villainous dramatist is usually read. For a start, while Coleridge may have irrevocably associated the character with a "motiveless malignity,"[19] Iago does in fact make his motives in staging the affair clear, and does so in explicitly domestic terms. He is a disgruntled servant who resents Othello for promoting an undeserving Cassio ahead of him—"Preferment goes by letter and affection, / And not by old gradation, where each second / Stood heir to th' first" (1.1.35–7)—and a jealous husband who hates Othello because he suspects him of sleeping with his wife—"it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets / He has done my office" (1.3.368–70), foreshadowing the very suspicion that leads to Desdemona's death. By insisting on the play's genre, then, we can actually comprehend these motives, rather than dismiss them—as Frances Dolan points out, "Iago's malignity seems more motivated and comprehensible in the context of other representations of scheming subordinates, which similarly criminalize subordinates' ambition."[20] Thinking about Iago simply as the motiveless villain of the play is symptomatic of a critical practice that does not take seriously those issues represented by the motives presented in the play, all ultimately concerned with the domestic. The dismissal of the purported

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[19] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare*, 2 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1849), 1:262.

[20] *Dangerous Familiars*, 112.

adultery as a motive is particularly problematic—if *Othello* as a play shows anything, surely it is that it is not the truth but rather the appearance of infidelity that ultimately matters.

Iago's 'motivelessness' is, I suggest, part of a larger critical unwillingness to see the play as a domestic tragedy proper or discomfort with associating Shakespeare with this particular subgenre, which I consider at length in my introduction. As Orlin notes, "both those writing on the kind and those specializing in Shakespeare display a lingering discomfort with the categorization" of *Othello* as domestic tragedy.[21] Critics often seem almost relieved that the play is not set in England, as it allows for a swift dismissal of the possibility that the play is a domestic tragedy. The critical relationship to the subgenre as it is articulated in discussion of *Othello*'s genre is a peculiar one—as Sean Benson writes in a recent book on the play's relationship to domestic tragedy, "One of the curious features about Othello criticism is that even those scholars who find no connection between Shakespeare's play and the domestic tragedies nonetheless feel compelled to deny the association."[22] But as I argue above, the Englishness of the genre is not confined to its setting, but to the larger domestic mythos which the plays evoke, a mythos that is recognizably English even if the settings are not. Thus, I would suggest that *Othello*, in its articulation of domestic ideology, language, and imagery, has more in common—in spite of its Mediterranean setting—with the English than the Italian plot of *The Two Lamentable Tragedies*, and that an early modern audience would make the same differentiation, recognizing the English domesticity of Shakespeare's play. Indeed, even as the play is only "sometimes described as a domestic tragedy,"[23] critics appear to have made this differentiation implicitly as well, given the important work

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[21] *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 247–8.

[22] Sean Benson, *Shakespeare,* Othello *and Domestic Tragedy* (London: Continuum, 2012), 75.

[23] *Othello*, 73. A. C. Bradley was wonderfully circumspect about the play's genre, describing the play as "less unlike a story of private life than any other of the great tragedies." *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 180.

that has been done on the play's domestic aspects in relationship to early modern English domestic culture.[24]

And *Othello* is suffused with this domesticity. Its plot centres on the marriage of Desdemona and Othello. Iago and Emilia's marriage is another key relationship in the play, while Cassio and Bianca maintain a form of domestic relationship as well. There are domestic familial relationships too—the play's opening tension between paternal and spousal relationships results from Desdemona's "divided duty" (1.1.181) to both husband and father. And this is only one example of divided duty in the play: Emilia, too, is caught between duty to her husband and duty to her mistress when she retrieves the infamous handkerchief. Othello is both "unhousèd" (1.2.26) soldier and newly-made husband, he is caught between homosocial and heterosexual duties when he chooses between Iago and Desdemona's honesty. Throughout the play, objects of domesticity—a bed, a candle, wedding sheets, a handkerchief chief among them—accrue at such a rate that by play's end the Cypriot "castle" (2.1.201) or "citadel" (208) has become a "house" (5.2.365), albeit one whose domesticity is dominated, or more accurately undermined, by an "object" that "poisons sight": the bed with its "tragic loading" of dead bodies (363–4). The bedchamber in the citadel is only one of the domestic spaces in the play, a catalogue of deeply problematized household settings that includes Brabantio's home, the inn at the Sagittary, Bianca's house, and even Iago and Emilia's unseen residence. Brabantio's household has been violated by the removal of his daughter, and seemingly contains no mother figure; neither of the bedchambers that

[24] See Orlin's chapter on the play for a detailed consideration of the multiple ways in which *Othello* engages early modern domestic culture. *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 191–245. See also Karen Newman, "'And wash the Ethiop white': Femininity and the Monstrous in *Othello*," in *Essaying Shakespeare* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 38–58; and Natasha Korda's chapter "The Tragedy of the Handkerchief: Female Paraphernalia and the Properties of Jealousy in *Othello*" on material objects and the play's domestic economy in *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies*, 111–58. Dolan briefly but usefully resituates the play in relation to early modern domestic marriage and service discourses. *Dangerous Familiars*, 109–15.

Desdemona and Othello occupy exist within an actual household, but are instead makeshift spaces whose temporary nature threatens their tenuous domesticity; Iago and Emilia's household never even appears on stage; while Bianca is unmarried, and thus her household is also characterized by domestic lack, her association with the female labour of needlework outweighed by her implicit association with the female labour of prostitution.

The language of the play is also saturated with references to and images of domesticity. More various than the domestic relationships and spaces, more numerous than the domestic objects, are the array of domestic commonplaces, *sententiae*, stereotypes, admonitions and prejudices, which play out particularly in regard to representations of women. Iago rouses Brabantio with intertwined fears about sexualized women and miscegenation; Brabantio in turn voices commonplaces about daughters and their chastity as property to be protected and defended; Desdemona herself offers a textbook account of her "divided duty" to husband and father; Desdemona and Iago engage in a spirited (and foreboding) game of naming commonplaces about women; Iago being, of course, a veritable fount of misogynist invective throughout, invective which infects the jealous Othello to the point of complete obsession; Cassio voices the idealizing imagery of romantic love in relation to Desdemona, and the bawdy imagery of sexual lust in relation to Bianca; at one point or another, women are 'whores,' 'saints,' 'angels,' and 'devils,' governed by 'lust' and governed by 'virtue.'

When Othello confronts his wife over her supposed infidelity and describes her as a book "[m]ade to write 'whore' upon" (4.2.71–2), he also voices one of the chief representational strategies of the play as whole, in particular with regards to its representations of women—presenting them as objects upon which are inscribed the texts of a heterogeneous domestic ideology. And women are not the only objects (or victims) of this strategy: Othello himself, as Venetian 'Other,' suffers the same treatment; each of the domestic spaces in the play is created by the overlayering of domesticity onto

manifestly non-domestic spaces; Iago's various defamations of character function in a similar fashion; and of course, there is Desdemona's handkerchief, the "snowballing signifier,"[25] perhaps the supreme example of such a layered object in the play. Not only does *Othello* deploy a language of domesticity, then, it also layers that language onto characters, spaces, objects and relationships.

In watching this play that so clearly evokes an English domestic ethos, an audience would not only recognize that Iago's motives are domestically justified, but also see him as part of a theatrical tradition of representing the domestic in tragic form that, by the time Shakespeare writes *Othello,* is well established on the English stage. Furthermore, they would also recognize something particular about the play that Iago produces for Othello. It follows a familiar narrative: an initially happy marriage is undone by a wife's adulterous liaisons with a man close to her husband, a man who is initially welcomed and favoured by the husband, who insinuates himself into the husband's position with his permission. The wife is thus made to embody all the fears concerning women's stereotypical lustfulness and deceit, and the husband to embody fears surrounding the failure of husbandry and the homosocial pressures on heterosexual marital relationships. That is, in fact, the plot of Heywood's play, and countless domestic morality tales—as Benson suggests in passing, this plot is staged "so effectively, in fact, that Iago almost seems to have attended a performance of *Arden of Faversham* or *A Woman Killed with Kindness*."[26]

This recognition on the part of the audience is key; as Dolan argues, "By seeing how Iago deploys the fiction of the traitorous wife, and remembering how pervasive that fiction was, we gain one more perspective on the endlessly interesting question of why Othello so readily distrusts

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[25] Newman, 56.

[26] Benson, 78.

Desdemona."[27] Here, I want to argue that Shakespeare calls attention not only to Iago's use of the "fiction of the traitorous wife," but to the particular theatrical form that that use takes. Like the play as a whole, it is a domestic tragedy, one staged for the credulous eyes of the tragic protagonist, and the incredulous eyes of the offstage audience. We are gaining not only an additional perspective, but an actual insight into the mechanism through which the fictitious proofs of Desdemona's treachery, and thus Othello's distrust, are created through Shakespeare's construction of his play as a kind of doubled domestic tragedy. Like other domestic tragedies, the play constantly puts pressure on the truth-value of the domestic ideologies articulated within it; however, it also puts pressure on its own form as a means of articulating truth. The theatrical nature of Iago's fiction is key: the rift between Othello and Desdemona depends upon the staging of a domestic tragedy, and not just on the circulation of rumour, innuendo and stereotypes, which is such a common reading of the play.[28]

The play itself insists on this distinction, for while Iago might have advanced his plans simply by means of report and innuendo, and by activating the relevant stereotypes and social anxieties about women and the other, it is clear that he would not have succeeded should that have been how he proceeded. His first attempt at sundering Othello and Desdemona, right at the beginning of the play, fails in spite of his activation of all the relevant misogynist and racist stereotypes. In the first act, he and Roderigo strike fear into Brabantio: "Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags" (1.1.79), "Even now [. . .] an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe" (87–8), playing on domestic anxieties about maintaining one's household, on the lustfulness of women, and the bestiality of the other, and

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[27] Dolan, 114.

[28] Orlin cites and expands on T. McAlindon's description of the play as "the tragedy of the tongue and its terrible potency" in her reading of the ways in which Iago governs the domestic mythology of *Othello* through his multiple associations with the figure of the tongue, with rumour and slander. *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 201.

Brabantio is quick to voice these same anxieties: "Fathers, from this time hence trust not your daughters' minds / By what you see them act" he warns (1.1.168–9). Later, he accuses Othello of enchanting his daughter to "Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom / Of such a thing as [him]" (1.2.71–2). And yet, before the change of scene to Cyprus, the marriage remains intact. It is when Iago decides to put on a play for Othello using his knowledge of domestic tragedy that the relationship between husband and wife unravels. Iago's association with these plays, then, renders them problematic, and by presenting the villain as the character most fluent in domestic ideology and its female stereotypes, the play signals its ethical investment from the outset. If Heywood's *A Woman Killed* was interested in the production of truth through theatrical verisimilitude rather than its articulation through historical veracity, then *Othello* fundamentally problematizes that process by considering the ethical dimensions of that process, of how the domestic tragedy form can produce—through its evocation of a recognizable domestic mythos and the use of the verisimilar representational practices associated with the form—"truth" from fiction, with no basis in fact.

The character around whom that process is problematized is Desdemona, who over the course of the play is turned from wife to whore in Othello's eyes. The gap between how Othello sees her at the beginning of the play and at its end is readily apparent in his final soliloquy before murdering her, where she is rendered as a cold, already-lifeless statue: "Yet I'll not shed her blood," he declares, deciding to smother her instead, "Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow, / And smooth as monumental alabaster" (5.2.3–6). This objectification, his denial of Desdemona's subjectivity, stands in sharp contrast to just how much she exists for him as a speaking subject four acts earlier, when he refuses even to contain her within a description, preferring to let her speak when called to answer her father's charges. "I do beseech you," he says, "[s]end for the lady to the Sagittary, / And let her speak of me before her father" (1.3.114–5), placing his own representation into her hands. He stakes his career, his

reputation, and his very life on his belief in Desdemona's ability to speak the truth about herself, to control her own representation, and to exonerate him in the process. Whereas his speech in the first act is about letting Desdemona speak, that in the fifth has no room for her to speak at all. Indeed, once she wakes, he will not listen to her, will not acknowledge her as a speaking subject who can tell the truth about herself, or who can control her own representation. No longer a wife whose word is worth her husband's life, Desdemona in Othello's eyes has become a whore whose word is worth nothing, while all the while that audience is helplessly aware of how wrong he is and have seen how Iago has produced this new "truth."

There are two key aspects to the representation of Desdemona's trajectory in the play. First, Othello's eulogy not only objectifies his wife, but seeks to turn her into an object-lesson. He presents the murder not as an act of retribution, but of justice: "Yet she must die," he says, not because she has betrayed him, but because "else she'll betray more men" (5.2.6), rationalising his crime as a necessary defence of justice, of the honour of all men. She is thus also being rendered as paradigmatic, rather than individual, a point emphasized when she is praised as the "cunning'st pattern of excelling nature" (11). Second, it is crucial to the play's exploration of patriarchal domestic ideology that this transformation from wife to whore is entirely and explicitly only representational and not actual, that it occur—and is seen to occur—only in Othello's eyes. Thus her constancy is emphasized at every turn to the point of one-dimensionality: as an audience, we know without a doubt that she is innocent, we know that she is constant, and yet we know that she has changed from innocent to guilty, from truth-teller to liar, from wife to whore as well. Reading *Othello* as a domestic tragedy highlights the extent to which these aspects are markers of the genre, which so often centres on the figure of the paradigmatic woman, and on the problems inherent in attempts to translate the individual story into a paradigmatic one. Such a reading allows for an understanding of the disparity between Desdemona's real and apparent nature as not just

an element of plot or a manifestation of tragic irony, but as a significant genre innovation. Whereas female protagonists like Alice Arden, Anne Sanders, and Anne Frankford are guilty of the crimes they are accused of, and thus in some sense align with the stereotypes they are seen to represent, Shakespeare's Desdemona wholly resists such assimilation to the paradigmatic.

As I showed in the previous chapter, such resistance is not necessarily unique to Shakespeare's play as made much more explicit in it. In order to see the ways in which he is innovating within the domestic tragedy genre in his writing of Desdemona, I will briefly consider how other domestic tragedies approach the problem of the female paradigm, and thus how they simultaneously stage and problematize domestic ideology. Thus, in juxtaposing the "wicked woman" figure of Alice with the figure of Arden's body traced in the grass, *Arden of Faversham* troubles the notion that it simply participates in what Orlin calls the "interpretive intervention" that "memorialized the story as [. . .] 'Alice Arden's crime.'"[29] The erasure of Alice from the play's epilogue fundamentally undermines any attempt to read the play as a simple cautionary tale, as a manipulation of a historical story into a paradigmatic one about wicked women. *A Warning for Fair Women* similarly problematizes the paradigmatic, the play as a whole being predicated on contrasting the complex truth of tragedy with the simplifying truth of morality discourse. In the allegorical dumb-shows, Tragedie is seen to dramatically reduce rather than stress Anne Sanders' culpability in the murder, contradicting even her own understanding of her transgression as one of "wicked lust / And wilful sinne" (2621–2). The play resists even its central protagonist's own attempts to transform herself into a paradigm.

As I argue above, Heywood also undermines any attempt to see his female protagonist as domestically paradigmatic in *A Woman Killed*, a play that is a particularly significant comparison point

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[29] *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 18.

for *Othello* given their similar dates of composition and performance, and the fact that they are both what can be termed retrospective domestic tragedies.[30] Indeed, the play's treatment of the adulterous wife in terms of domestic paradigms is particularly illuminating with regards to Shakespeare's play. Anne Frankford's trajectory over the course of the play is one that moves her away from the paradigmatic. "You have a wife / So qualified," Sir Charles Mountford tells Frankford during the opening nuptial celebrations, "and with such ornaments / Both of the mind and body," a woman whose "birth / Is noble," and who is, in short, "beauty and perfection's eldest daughter" (1.13–24). Anne's brother calls her "A perfect wife already, meek and patient" (37), and Frankford himself praises her for having "to her dower her mother's modesty" (54). Anne does betray her husband, and yet her fall into adultery is agonized rather than carefree and lustful. Her seduction plays more like a tender courtship—"I love you—start not, speak not, answer not. / I love you—nay, let me speak the rest" (6.106–7)—than a wilful betrayal, and when Wendoll declares his love, she replies with an air of anguish, "My soul is wandering, and hath lost her way" (149–50). While Anne begins the play as paradigmatically good she is never paradigmatically bad.

Like Desdemona will be, Anne is presented as a woman caught up in an ideology of marriage and domestic relations, and ultimately as a woman caught out by it. While the decision to commit adultery ultimately rests with her, it is her husband who has given full run of his household over to her lover, as I discuss above, and the play presents her capitulation almost as though she has no choice but to accept his proposition as one of her husband's domestic possessions. While she could have been portrayed as a lustful and treacherous wife like Alice Arden, she is instead represented as a good woman who paradoxically both chooses and is forced to commit sin. Such a characterization inevitably

[30] For an overview of the parallels, similarities, and echoes in the two plays, see Peter L. Rudnytsky, "*A Woman Killed with Kindness* as Subtext for *Othello*," *Renaissance Drama* 14 (1983): 103–24.

complicates any attempt to render her story as a kind of exemplum. Anne's response to being discovered by her husband and the manner in which she presents herself demonstrate just that:

> O me, base strumpet,
> That having such a husband, such sweet children,
> Must enjoy neither. O to redeem my honour
> I would have this hand cut off, these my breasts seared,
> Be racked, strappadoed, put to any torment.
> Nay, to whip but this scandal out, I would hazard
> The rich and dear redemption of my soul.
> He cannot be so base as to forgive me,
> Nor I so shameless to accept his pardon.
> O women, women, you that have yet kept
> Your holy matrimonial vow unstained,
> Make me your instance: when you tread awry,
> Your sins like mine will on your conscience lie.
>
> (8.133–45)

"Make me your instance" Anne pleads, asking (like Anne Sanders) that she be transmuted into a exemplum, that her narrative be read as paradigmatic, aligning her actual sins with the potential sins of all women.

The horrific violence of the imagery here elicits a kind of horrified resistance to her request. Having her identify herself as a mother, and then having her enact the abandonment of that role on her own body through the imagined searing of her breasts represents a translation of Othello's image of the page "made to write whore upon"—Anne imagines the inscription of domestic ideology on her body in an awful, literal way at the same time that she asks to be made into an "instance." The corporeal is used as a means of rendering this desired transformation into the paradigmatic deeply problematic, for it embodies the violence inherent in such a transformation. By having the play culminate not in the dissolution of the marriage but in Anne's successful bid to turn against her own body, refusing to feed it to the point of death—systematically wasting herself away, erasing herself—highlights the erasure of the individual that accompanies that violence. On her deathbed, she asks her husband if he will "take a

spotted strumpet by the hand" (17.78), at which point he restores to her "[b]oth those lost names" of wife and mother (115–6). But the cost of this reinstatement is death. By foreshadowing her corporeal dissolution with those extreme images of self harm, the play leaves open the question of whether this cost is justified, an ambiguity echoed in the aforementioned ambiguous quality of Frankford's epitaph for Anne as the play's final message. To the very end, then, *A Woman Killed* refuses to render its central female protagonist as a paradigm.

In *Othello*, this more implicit resistance to the paradigmatic transformation of women's stories found in other domestic tragedies becomes a central focus. Heywood's insight that a domestic tragedy depends more on verisimilitude than on veracity is here taken to its ethical limit, when a fictional domestic tragedy is superimposed on to the real world of the play with tragic consequences. Maintaining Desdemona's innocence throughout opens a critical distance between what the audience knows to be true and what it sees presented as truth, exposing the mechanism through which she is transformed from wife to whore, without any regard—or need—for truth. The play's rejection of the paradigmatic lies not primarily (as it does in *Arden* or *A Woman Killed*) in the incongruity between paradigm and reality, but rather in the recognition that paradigms, the stereotypes of a domestic ideology, do not derive from reality, but are imposed upon it. When Othello delivers his premature eulogy, we not only reject his fatally mistaken perception of his wife, but also his attempt to render her story paradigmatically. In a sense, then, *Othello* anticipates the critical work of Belsey's and Orlin's reading of Alice Arden's story, in that it seeks to demonstrate how a pernicious domestic ideology creates its own truths through the circulation and inscription of stereotypes. By making visible the distance between the women on stage and the roles that they are assigned—and the names they are called—by other characters on stage, *Othello* exposes the fundamentally slanderous nature of domestic ideology.

The play's domestic saturation makes this circulation and inscription particularly visible. In the case of Desdemona, for instance, the two roles she is assigned—wife and whore—are literally written all over the play, which is replete with repeated attempts to name, define, and slander her. Confronted by Emilia immediately after the murder, Othello marks the endpoint of Desdemona's trajectory with just such a naming, justifying his act as fitting punishment for her sin: "She turned to folly, and she was a whore" (5.2.141). But the word 'whore' also echoes throughout the final two acts of the play, and is heard over and over. It appears more often in *Othello* than any other Shakespeare play,[31] but its distribution within the tragedy is by no means even, appearing only in the third act, with over half the occurrences in the accusation scene in 4.2. Desdemona's shift from wife to whore, then, is quite clearly marked by a linguistic shift in the play, with the insistent repetition of 'whore' interfering with and eventually replacing the use of 'wife.'[32] In fact, while 4.2 contains the most uses of 'whore,' 'wife' is used only in one line, and it is used by Desdemona as she attempts to reassert her spousal identity when Othello asks her "Why, what art thou?"—"Your wife, my lord, your true and loyal wife" (35–6)—as she attempts to use a paradigmatic position defensively to counter her husband's accusation.

The pivotal moment in this shift is marked by the first use of 'whore' in the play, in 3.3. Iago has raised his spurious suspicions to his superior, and Othello takes him by the throat and fatefully threatens him: "Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore. / Be sure of it. Give me the ocular proof"

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[31] Of the forty-five occurrences in the plays, *Othello* contains ten. *Troilus & Cressida*, unsurprisingly, also figures highly on the list, and also favours literal, nominative uses of the term, i.e. as names and descriptions for women. As Kay Stanton notes, "The singular noun *whore* appears forty-five times in the Shakespeare canon, plural *whores* eight times, singular possessive *whore's* twice, adjective *whorish* once. Gerund *whoring* once, verb forms *whored* once, and *bewhored* once, for a total of fifty-nine. [. . .] A form of *whore* appears in a total of fifty-one instances by twenty-one male characters and in a total of eight instances by five female characters." "'Made to write 'whore' upon?': Male and Female Use of the Word 'Whore' in Shakespeare's Canon," in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Dympna Callaghan (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 84. *Othello* also contains by far the most uses of 'strumpet' in the canon: some ten of twenty-seven occur in the play.

[32] While *Othello* is not at the very top of the list in terms of "wife" occurrences, it contains thirty-one, comparable to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (38), *The Taming of the Shrew* (28), and *All's Well That Ends Well* (30).

(3.3.364–5). "Be sure thou prove my love a whore"—thus Othello sets in motion his wife's final downfall, for by the end of the play he will indeed be convinced that, as he says here, "the probation" of his wife's adultery has "no hinge nor loop / To hang a doubt on" (370–1). Immediately before he is thus threatened by Othello, Iago has received the infamous handkerchief from Emilia, the most obvious constituent of the "ocular proof." Two scenes later, we see how this trifle "light as air" (326) actually functions not just as the proof of Desdemona's infidelity, but as the actual means through which the shift from wife to whore is enacted. Iago stages a conversation between himself and Cassio in such a way that Othello believes them to be bantering about Desdemona, after which Bianca returns the handkerchief to Cassio as Othello looks on. It is this exchange to which Iago points when he speaks to Othello once more:

> IAGO And did you see the handkerchief?
> OTHELLO Was that mine?
> IAGO Yours, by this hand. And to see how he prizes the foolish woman your wife. She gave it him, and he hath given it his whore.
>
> (4.1.166–70)

Here, in a few lines, we see the shift from 'wife' to 'whore,' as Iago shifts Desdemona's identity by means of the handkerchief which enacts a transfer from 'your wife' to 'his whore.' While ostensibly speaking about both Desdemona and Bianca, the absence of names and the profusion of pronouns ensure that the two female roles are the words that stand out, blurring the line between Desdemona and Bianca, one the loyal wife, the other a lustful whore. Here the two roles meet, one taking over from the other.

But it is not the handkerchief in and of itself that constitutes the "ocular proof " of the supposed infidelity, but rather the narrative which ultimately generates around it, that Desdemona has given this precious token from her husband to Cassio. Importantly, the handkerchief begins to signify, to attract stories, only after Desdemona has dropped it and it comes into Iago's hands. Before then, it exists as a trifle on stage—her carelessness becomes significant only in retrospect. As a staged object, the

handkerchief's "charmer" is not an exotic Egyptian but a villainous Venetian who conjures with one phrase: "Trifles light as air / Are to the jealous confirmations strong / As proofs of holy writ" (3.3.326–8). With this charm, Iago seems to open up the signifying potential of the handkerchief; from this point on the multiple stories and narratives are generated around it, a process that culminates in its becoming the "ocular proof" demanded by Othello only moments after Emilia has handed over the object.[33] But this ultimately tragic narrative differs in two important respects to Othello's tales of woven magic, or the reports of Desdemona's love for it. First, Iago's narrative is verifiably and undeniably false. Second, this narrative is not just a straightforward story delivered by its teller—Iago does not simply tell Othello about the journey of the love-token, but rather relies on questions, hints, and speculations. But what he relies on above all is a staged narrative, wherein the handkerchief becomes not just a signifier but a stage property. Iago's staging of the handkerchief allows him to turn it into the demanded "ocular proof," and to turn Desdemona from wife to whore in the moment when it is transferred from Bianca to Cassio, in the exchange witnessed by Othello. In the transfer of this object layered with narrative, Desdemona becomes a layered subject within a pernicious domestic ideology espoused by Iago.[34]

The terms of that ideology, and a resistance to it, are most obviously expressed when Iago first arrives in Cyprus. While in Venice, his slurs against women fell on the ears of Roderigo and Brabantio, men all too willing to believe in and live by them; here, however, the first audience for his repertoire of

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[33] See Newman's and Korda's aforementioned readings of the handkerchief as a "snowballing signifier." See also Paul Yachnin, "Wonder-effects: Othello's Handkerchief," in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, 316–34.

[34] For an overview of Iago's relationship to that ideology, see "'The Savage Yoke': Cuckoldry and Marriage," in Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 119–50. See also "Marital discourse: husbands and wives" in Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Othello: A Contextual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 71–92.

commonplaces consists of Desdemona and Emilia, who become both audience to and object of his slanders:

> IAGO Come on, come on! You are pictures out of doors,
> Bells in your parlours, wild-cats in your kitchens,
> Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,
> Players in your housewifery, and housewives in your beds.
> DESDEMONA O, fie upon thee, slanderer!
>
> (2.1.109–13)

Iago's catalogue neatly illustrates the way that domestic ideology seeks to contain women representationally—in every domestic space (parlour, kitchen, and bed), women are always already constituted according to female stereotypes, indeed this is true even outside of the household, even in the more abstract realms of injury and offence. Women are permitted a range of identities within this ideology, but they are all predetermined, and as Desdemona rightly points out, they are all slanderous. As Wendy Wall writes, Iago's domestic ideology represents a "familiar brand of Renaissance misogyny," which plays on "the double meaning of 'housewife': a thrifty, economical manager and a loose, disorderly wanton" in order to suggest that "housewifery is really only wayward sexuality."[35] The slippage— linguistic and definitional—between housewife, huswife, and hussy foreshadows the ease with which Iago will enact Desdemona's fall from wife to whore—it is, in fact, what allows for that fall, since in the terms of this ideology, women are always already both housewife and hussy.

The domestic ideology articulated by Iago is thus exposed as a trap for women, and Desdemona's question—"What wouldst thou write of me?"—takes on an ominous tone, given that we have already seen the terms in which Iago would express himself, and what the implications of such a representational act would be. While the exchange remains witty and light-hearted here, and Iago is encouraged to continue with his slanderous banter, these "old fond paradoxes to make fools laugh i' th'

[35] *Staging Domesticity*, 17.

alehouse" (138–9) will soon have a far more serious effect, and leave both Desdemona and Emilia dead. This short scene represents the clearest and most concise articulation of the wide array of operative female stereotypes in the domestic ideology embodied and promoted by Iago. However, it's important to note that this ideology does not stand unchallenged here. The presence of Desdemona—already established by her speech and actions in the first act as someone who understands the domestic ideology within which she lives, and here presented as a woman of wit more than capable of holding her own against Iago—juxtaposes, in a way that recurs throughout the play, feminine stereotypes with the person to whom they are applied and thus act as a means to unsettle, if not undermine, them.

When asked how he would praise a "deserving woman," one so virtuous that "did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself" (147–9), Iago's lengthy answer sets up a direct comparison between the ideal woman he describes and the ideal woman we will come to know in the person of Desdemona:

> IAGO She that was ever fair and never proud,
> Had tongue at will and yet was never loud,
> Never lacked gold and yet went never gay,
> Fled from her wish, and yet said 'Now I may';
> She that, being angered, her revenge being nigh,
> Bade her wrong stay and her displeasure fly;
> She that in wisdom never was so frail
> To change the cod's head for the salmon's tail;
> She that could think and ne'er disclose her mind,
> See suitors following, and not look behind—
> She was a wight, if ever such wights were—
> DESDEMONA To do what?
> IAGO To suckle fools, and chronicle small beer.
> DESDEMONA O most lame and impotent conclusion!
>
> (2.1.150–62)

The terms of Desdemona's dismissal of Iago reveal her to be a threat to the masculinist ideology he represents but so, importantly, does her presence as a character. As the play progresses (although little doubt exists even in the opening act) it becomes more and more evident that Desdemona is just the woman Iago describes, but far from such an ideal woman being dull—made only "to suckle fools, and

chronicle small beer"—she is in fact, as seen in this exchange, and in the first act, an extraordinarily witty and engaging person. As such, she is a threat to the domestic system which Iago advocates, and her elimination is necessary, and not simply a symptom of his "motiveless malignity."

The implicit contrast between Desdemona as ideal woman and Iago's ideal anticipates the direct contrast or parallel between the audience's Desdemona and Othello's, which is the most extreme and obvious example of this kind of juxtaposition. That the play posits a direct relationship between these two juxtapositions is made clear in the confrontation scene between Othello and Desdemona that follows the successful conclusion of Iago's deception. If the earlier scene represents a summation of Iago's domestic ideology, then the confrontation scene shows Othello's acceptance of that ideology. "Why, what are thou?" Othello asks, and it is Desdemona who must answer "Your wife, my lord, your true and loyal wife" (4.2.35–6). At this moment, Desdemona has lost her identity in her husband's eyes, to such an extent that he cannot even call her his wife, but must have her do it. If she no longer is a wife, if indeed she is "false as hell" (41), then she must be a whore, as that is the alternative he voices, labelling her "whore," "commoner" and "strumpet" in close succession. Having asked her "what" she is, he next asks perhaps the most revealing question in the entire play from the point of view of understanding its engagement with the representation of women in domestic ideology: "Was this fair paper, this most goodly book, / Made to write 'whore' upon?" (73–4). This image is worth dwelling on again, for there is no more devastating metaphor for how entirely Desdemona has changed in Othello's eyes than these blank sheets of paper, her character, her individuality thinned out, flattened, erased to be replaced by paradigms, by female stereotypes. Othello believes that he has stripped away the disguise of housewife to reveal the hussy within, and thus reveals himself to be in thrall to Iago's domestic ideology. "Are not you a strumpet?" he asks (84), and again, "What, not a whore?" (89). Desdemona's transformation from wife to whore is here made fatally complete in a callous two-line description of their love, a love which

at play's beginning had required whole speeches: "I took you for that cunning whore of Venice / That married with Othello" (93–4).

It is Emilia who best expresses the devastating nature of this accusation just after Othello exits: "Alas, Iago, my lord hath so bewhored her, / Thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her, / That true hearts cannot bear it" (118–20). "He called her whore" she says incredulously, something which not even a "beggar in his drink" would call his "callet" (124–5). "Hath she forsook so many noble matches, / Her father and her country and her friends," she continues, "To be called whore?" (129–31). The audience cannot but agree with Emilia's incredulity, knowing Desdemona to be innocent—in her own words, "I know I am none such" (127). And yet the audience also witnesses Othello's certainty, and will witness that certainty taken to its extreme when Desdemona is murdered. Finally, the audience has observed the mechanism by which Desdemona has been, in Emilia's word, "bewhored," the juxtaposition emphasized by having Iago, the mechanism's master, enter moments after Othello exits. Ironically, it is to him that Desdemona expresses her dismay and Emilia her outrage.

Importantly, a fissure is made visible in the exchange between Iago and Emilia, when the latter, knowing her mistress to be innocent, says that there must be an agent at work undermining her reputation:

> I will be hanged if some eternal villain,
> Some busy and insinuating rogue,
> Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,
> Have not devised this slander. I will be hanged else.
>
> (4.2.134–7)

Emilia's claim—a claim that is undeniably true and one that the play as a whole makes—suggests that the 'bewhoring' or slander of a woman is a mechanism that operates independently of that woman's actual state, and thus independently of truth. Othello's image of the "fair paper [. . .] Made to write 'whore' upon" is shown to be entirely apt: slander is an act of inscription, rather than of revelation.

Slander does not depend on truth, but rather on the prevalence and activation of stereotypes, and the cunning use of perspective and framing. It also, ultimately, depends on men as willing believers in and agents of a domestic ideology in which women exist as stereotypes.

Iago's response to his wife touching so uncomfortably close to the truth is necessarily immediate: "Fie, there is no such man. It is impossible" (138). For his plan to succeed, even the existence of such an agent cannot be contemplated or acknowledged, since it depends upon maintaining the illusion of a direct correlation between female nature and assigned (inscribed) female names and roles. Iago's remark that "there is no such man" is of course an (extraordinarily) obvious denial and attempted cover-up, but from the perspective of an audience who knows his true identity as the "eternal villain," it also represents an extreme fracture of his domestic ideology, with its main proponent forced to deny his own existence. Iago recognizes the danger posed by Emilia as a speaker of truth, and does his best to not only quiet her, commanding her to "Speak within door" (148) but also to undermine her authority by identifying her someone simple, telling her "You are a fool" (152). This both anticipates the final scene—where he with increasing desperation and anger attempts to quiet his wife as she reveals the truth—and also recalls Iago's catalogue of female stereotypes from earlier, but in such a way as to indicate the precarious nature of the ideology which they represent. "You are pictures out of door, / Bells in your parlours" (2.1.112–13) he declared to Desdemona and Emilia, describing women as silent and well-behaved when outside the house, but as noisy and disruptive within its doors, and yet here he demands silence in terms that imply a demand for conformity to what he articulated earlier—"Speak within door"—when confronted with a woman (and his wife at that) who obviously does not conform to being a picture "out of door." Just as the audience knows that Desdemona is not a whore, so they know Emilia, as the character who comes closest to understanding and articulating the truth, is anything but a fool. Iago's list of stereotypes and his attempt to impose them here are revealed as a

control mechanism which imposes roles on women regardless of their true nature, and indeed at this point, in opposition to the larger truth.

Desdemona's parallel representations as wife in Shakespeare's play and whore in Iago's are central to the play's exposure of the workings of domestic ideology. But as this scene indicates in its presentation of Emilia, Desdemona is not the only victim of slander, nor the only character used to trouble the certainties about women which Iago and others who espouse the same ideology (Roderigo, Brabantio, and eventually Othello) articulate. All the women in the play are at one point or another "bewhored": Desdemona by her husband; Emilia is called a whore and a strumpet by both Othello and Iago; and Bianca is bewhored to such an extent that she is assumed to be a whore (by other characters in the play, and by readers and critics),[36] even though the play does not conclusively present her as such.[37] As I suggest above, these accusations, slanders, and identifying labels do not stand untroubled or unproblematically in the play. Desdemona is demonstrably not a whore, in spite of the number of times she is called both "whore" and "strumpet." Emilia is called a "simple bawd" and a "subtle whore" by Othello moments before he confronts his wife (4.2.21–2), and a "Villainous whore" by Iago in the final scene as she reveals the truth about the handkerchief (5.2.237). The first accusation is directly coupled to her supposed role in Desdemona's nonexistent infidelities, and thus untrue, and the second is also undeniably false, as Emilia has simply revealed the truth already known by the audience. Both

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[36] Thus, for example, according to Eamon Grennan, "[a]s a prostitute she intensifies our sense of the predominantly sexual nature of this world." "The Women's Voices in *Othello*: Speech, Song, Silence," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38.3 (1987): 275–92, 282. For more examples, see Nina Rulon-Miller's bibliographical survey of critical references to Bianca's supposed identity as whore. "*Othello*'s Bianca: Climbing Out of the Bed of Patriarchy," *Upstart Crow* 15 (1995): 99–104.

[37] It is the list of characters at the end of the First Folio (likely the work of an editor or compositor) that identifies her as "a Curtezan." See Edward Pechter, "Why Should We Call Her Whore? Bianca in *Othello*," in *Shakespeare in the Twentieth Century: The Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress, Los Angeles, 1996*, eds. J. Bate, J. Levenson, & D. Mehl (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 364–77; *Othello and Interpretive Traditions* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 133–9.

Desdemona and Emilia thus expose the mechanisms through which 'bewhoring' and slander more generally operate, and highlight the degree to which slander exists as a necessary function of an anti-feminist, controlling domestic ideology. Labelling a woman as whore is a mechanism of control, as shown here by its being tied directly to a desire to have Emilia confined within the household, just as we saw above: just after she declares that she will "speak as liberal as the north," and a few lines prior to insulting her, Iago warns "Be wise and get you home" (5.2.229), echoing and reinforcing his earlier command to "Speak within door."

In Bianca's case, however, the role of whore is troubled in a different manner. If the two other women function to undermine their categorization as whores by contrasting the accusations against them with the truth known about them, the presence of Bianca within the play serves to undermine the category of whore itself. While she is often assumed to be a prostitute her characterization within the play is not so direct or simple.[38] She first appears at the end of the third act, soon after Othello has demanded the handkerchief and described its full significance. Cassio, who has been left on stage after Desdemona has affirmed her desire to help him regain her husband's favour, is approached by Bianca and the two engage in what seems to be a lovers' exchange:

> CASSIO How is't with you, my most fair Bianca?
> I'faith, sweet love, I was coming to your house.
> BIANCA And I was going to your lodging, Cassio.
> What, keep a week away? Seven days and nights,
> Eightscore-eight hours, and lovers' absent hours
> More tedious than the dial eightscore times!
> O weary reckoning!
>
> (3.4.165–71)

[38] As Carol Thomas Neely's nuanced reading of the female roles in the play shows. See her chapter "Women and Men in *Othello*," in *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 105–35.

While some impropriety might be read into the fact that both speak about visiting each other's lodging or house, that would take some stretching—this first exchange simply does not seem particularly indicative of Bianca's status as courtesan. She is however almost immediately presented in such a way as to indicate another role, a recognizably domestic one, when Cassio asks her to copy the embroidery on the handkerchief: "Sweet Bianca / Take me this work out" (175). She is thus identified as a woman skilled in the important household task of sewing.[39] She is also, at the outset of the conversation, identified as a woman with a house, unlike either Desdemona or Emilia.[40] Bianca is here represented as a housewife, or at least as a lover with the potential to be a housewife.

It is only the end of their brief conversation that indicate she may be something else as well. "I pray you bring me on the way a little, / And say if I shall see you soon at night" she asks Cassio by way of farewell (3.4.192–3). Receiving a gentleman caller into one's house after dark does seem to call her status into question, and perhaps justify the various names she is given. Iago calls her a "hussy that by selling her desires / Buys herself bread and cloth" (4.1.92–3), Cassio calls her a "customer" (116) or courtesan and even a "monkey" (124) moments later,[41] and finally, in the opening of the last act both Iago and Emilia call her a "strumpet" in the wake of the attack on Cassio (5.1.79, 123). And yet, by virtue of that first exchange which shows Bianca to be in love with Cassio, and the confirmation of those feelings by

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[39] On the work of sewing and needlework as it relates to the representation of women, see Dympna Callaghan, "Looking well to linens: women and cultural production in *Othello* and Shakespeare's England," in *Marxist Shakespeares*, ed. J. E. Howard & S. C. Shershow (London: Routledge, 2001), 53–81.

[40] The lack of a proper domestic space within which to situate their marriage is part of the tragic problem for Desdemona and Othello, foreshadowed as early as the end of the first act, with Desdemona caught between the domestic spaces of her father's household and her potential marriage household, which never materializes, in spite of her husband's demand for "fit disposition for my wife, / Due reference of place and exhibition, / With such accommodation and besort / As levels with her breeding" (1.3.234–7). On the problem of their unhoused marriage, see Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 215–28.

[41] 'Monkey' was in use as a term for "a lecherous person, esp. a lecherous woman" from the turn of the 17th until the early 19th century. *OED*, s.v. "monkey."

their object, the play allows for the possibility of agreeing with Bianca when she counters Emilia's accusation: "I am no strumpet, but of life as honest / As you that thus abuse me" (124–25). She runs a household, she is skilled in household work, she shows love for Cassio and concern for his well-being, and she does not engage in improprieties with other men. Bianca represents a staging of the housewife/hussy commonplace, as discussed earlier.[42] The effect of such a staging is to destabilize the stereotype—once Bianca enters the play, it becomes all the more apparent how problematic and simplistic the dichotomy between housewife and hussy, between wife and whore, truly is.

Bianca's characterization, marked by the inextricability of the roles of hussy and housewife, shows that the play's wider interest lies in female social roles other than that of whore. Or rather, it shows that a sustained focus on the role of whore inevitably must widen into a more general investigation of female roles: the divisions between whore–hussy–housewife–wife are porous, both linguistically and ideologically. There can be no certainty that a woman identified as a whore is one, either because the mechanism by which such identification occurs is shown to occur independently of fact or truth, or because the category of whore itself is always already unstable by virtue of its etymology. The very fact that housewife/huswife/hussy are semantically linked is as much a 'paradox' as those "old fond" ones rattled off by Iago as he banters with Desdemona. Within a domestic ideology whose central female role is that of housewife, a woman cannot help but be a hussy simultaneously. Both that ideology and the play share the conviction that a wife is always potentially a whore, but *Othello* reveals the degree to which that ideology operates independently of the women caught within it.

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[42] In both folio and quarto texts this is even clearer, for there Iago describes her as a "huswife" rather than a "hussy" that sells her desires for "bread and cloth." The Arden edition substitutes 'housewife' for 'huswife' at both points, suggesting somewhat mildly that perhaps "we should read hussy" (260). The Norton edition unfortunately emends 'huswife' to 'hussy' without even a note of explanation, both here and in Iago's earlier "Players in your housewifery, and hussies in your beds." The Pelican edition preserves the original ambiguous terms in both places, noting that 'huswife' is "not only 'hussy' or 'prostitute' but also 'a woman who manages her household with skill and thrift, a domestic economist'" (125).

Thus, when Desdemona speaks of Iago's "old fond paradoxes" as she banters with him, she reveals one of the chief strategies by which domestic ideology is successively called into question in the play, the staging of the paradoxes inherent in the roles assigned to women. It is quite clear that women are not the problem at the heart of *Othello*: we know that Desdemona is blameless, and we can understand that Emilia is inextricably caught between her loyalties. And it is not only the women—I would argue that the play doesn't straightforwardly locate the cause of the tragedy in any of the characters, either in Othello's jealousy or in Iago's villainy, the two causes usually discussed in terms of the play. The domestic ideology itself is consistently problematized, and ultimately also presented as a cause of the tragedy—if Emilia's betrayal of Desdemona represents the pivot point in terms of the plot, it also neatly represents the incoherence of a domestic ideology that would lead to the death of two women living within the proscriptions of that ideology. The domesticity of the play, therefore, goes beyond staging domestic ideology, i.e. beyond just reproducing elements of early modern domestic culture on stage. It does not include domestic themes simply because its plot focuses on a marriage: its domesticity is central to the forward movement of that plot. It is Iago's awareness of and facility with the tenets of a repressive domestic ideology that allow him to manipulate Othello in such a way as to precipitate the tragic action; it is Emilia's entrapment between conflicting domestic roles and loyalties that provides the opportunity for her husband to fulfil his plans. That the audience remains aware throughout the play that Desdemona remains innocent unto death not only creates the sense of tragedy, but also functions as the central means of critique of the domestic ideology that leads to her death—the domestic aspects of the play do not exist simply as the trappings of tragedy, they constitute the tragedy itself.

As a result, all the female roles within the play are under pressure, and none of them is staged in a simple, straightforward manner. Wife, housewife, whore, maidservant, daughter, mother each come

under varying degrees of scrutiny in the play, as a result ultimately of Iago's staging of the domestic tragedy that slanders Desdemona. Here, the resistance to the paradigmatic seen in earlier domestic tragedies, and in Heywood's *A Woman Killed* to a greater extent, takes centre stage. In the case of all three female characters, it is the fact of their staging as both characters and as stereotyped female roles that opens the space for critique and which accounts for a portion of the theatrical energy of the play—for an audience, moments such as Emilia's betrayal, Othello's accusation, and Desdemona's murder all work as devices on account of the space opened up between role and character. In that space, we see not only the fatal effects of a pernicious domestic ideology that always already presumes the fallen status of women, but also the grim potential of a domestic tragedy staged in—superimposed on—real life that derives its truth not from that reality, but from the stereotypes it mobilizes as its plot unfolds. *Othello* builds on the resistance to domestic female stereotypes expressed in various ways in the other domestic tragedies, making it a central thematic and narrative element of the play as a whole.

Because the "truth" of Iago's embedded domestic tragedy—that Desdemona is unfaithful—is from the outset known to be false, then, this doubling of play within play undermines the notion that domestic tragedy as a whole offers a means of accessing truth by showing how such truth as it produces is entirely dependent on the whim and skill of the dramatist. When the truth of Iago's theatrical machinations are revealed to Othello, he comes to understood just how credulous a spectator of domestic tragedy he has been—"O fool! fool! fool!" (5.2.323). The truth of the domestic tragedy he has watched is revealed to be no such thing, is revealed—in fact—to be just a piece of theatre.

And that revelation has consequences for the larger domestic tragedy of *Othello* as well—as the desperate desire and demands for truth expressed by Othello, Gratiano, Lodovico, and other characters shows. Not only is there no figure of Truth or Tragedie here, no Franklin to deliver an epilogue that

expresses a higher truth—we have instead a malignant figure who explicitly refuses to deliver any kind of final truth:

> OTHELLO Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
> Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?
> IAGO Demand me nothing; what you know, you know:
> From this time forth I never will speak word.
>
> (5.2.298–301)

"What you know, you know," then, is the closest we get—and this seems to be true in the final act as a whole, where the only truth revealed seems to be in the form of narrative. The plot is revealed, letters are discovered as proof, the villain's villainy is revealed—the play has produced some kind of truth, but it is deeply unsatisfying. Hence the desire to have Iago speak by any means, even torture. Hence the fact that the final image of the bodies of Desdemona, Emilia, and Othello, the "tragic loading of this bed" as Lodovico puts it, is something that "poisons sight" (363–5) rather than serving as some kind of domestic monument emblematic of a higher truth similar to that which Frankford attempts to create at the end of *A Woman Killed*. Hence the unfulfilled emptiness of Lodovico's final couplet—"Myself will straight aboard, and to the state / This heavy act with heavy heart relate" (5.2.368–9)— which sounds so potentially sententious, so weighty, with its rhymes, its grave repetition of "heavy," and yet contains no deeper (or higher) truth, only a narrative one.

* * *

Like Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, then, Shakespeare's *Othello* undermines the "simple truth" of the domestic tragedy form, much like earlier plays undermined the simplicity of the moral truths derived from the historical events they dramatized. Each play, in its way, uncouples veracity from verisimilitude, showing how the domestic tragedy form in fact produces the appearance of truth rather than actual truth. Looking back on earlier domestic tragedies and seeing the work they do in terms of

complicating the notion of "truth" and possibilities for accessing it through literary or dramatic means, Heywood and Shakespeare turn the form on itself, as it were, questioning its purported superiority as a truth-discourse and as a means of accessing and disseminating truth, and in the process showing that the form is in fact a means of producing or even manipulating truth. In so doing, they also resist the very domestic ideology that informs them, critiquing its so-called truths by showing them to be imposed on rather than derived from lived experience.

"STRANGE PLOTS OF DIRE REVENGE": 'DOMESTICATING' REVENGE FOR THE ENGLISH STAGE

In the first half of this dissertation, I aimed to extend the purview of the category of "domestic tragedy," arguing that these plays are neither to be considered marginal to early modern theatrical culture nor to be read exclusively as texts that register and engage with the social and cultural aspects and senses of 'the domestic' in the period. *Arden of Faversham*, *A Warning for Fair Women,* and *Two Lamentable Tragedies* display a heightened theatrical reflexivity about their own status as dramatic texts, a reflexivity that leads them to explore a linked set of concerns at the heart of early modern theatrical culture: about the relationship between theatrical representation and that which it represents; about what constitutes theatrical truth; about what the essence of tragedy is; about writing and staging tragedy; about writing and staging specifically English tragedy. In the second half, I argue that the boundary between domestic tragedies and other early modern plays is more porous than has previously been thought. By tracing the varied figurations of the domestic in other plays through the lens of the representational strategies associated with domestic tragedy, I reveal how centrally important the domestic is as a locus for the development of early modern English theatre. In this chapter, I turn to perhaps the best known of early modern dramatic subgenres, the revenge tragedy, in order to show that from its beginnings on the early modern stage, it was deeply intertwined with its domestic sibling.

* * *

The Witch of Edmonton (1621), one of the later extant plays included in the domestic tragedy canon, opens with a rhyming couplet that details the "whole argument" of the play:

> Forced marriage, murder; murder blood requires.
> Reproach, revenge; revenge hell's help desires.
>
> (1–2)[1]

Some three decades earlier in the opening scene of *A Warning for Fair Women* (c. 1594), Comedie's parodic catalogue of early modern tragic protagonists features "a filthie whining ghost" who enters "screaming like a pigge halfe stickt" and

> cries *Vindicta*, revenge, revenge:
> With that a little Rosen flasheth forth,
> Like smoke out of a Tabacco pipe, or a boyes squib:
> Then comes in two or three like to drovers,
> With taylers bodkins, stabbing one another.
>
> (54–62)

Both the couplet and the catalogue suggest a close relationship between domestic matters and matters of revenge—indeed, suggest an almost causal back-and-forth relationship between them. "Forced marriage" leads inevitably to revenge, while the vindictive calls of a "whining ghost" bring in not a noble avenger armed with a sword, but a gang of "drovers" (livestock dealers) armed with tailors' "bodkins" (awls)—homely protagonists of domestic tragedy armed with workmen's weapons. Domestic plots are linked to revenge plots, the two intertwined through the blood and violence central to both. At both ends of the three-decade stage history of the plays identified as domestic tragedies, we see domestic and revenge tragedy not just linked intimately to each other, but rendered almost indistinguishable.

The writers of English revenge drama understood and acknowledged this close relationship between the domestic and the vengeful too. Thomas Kyd, originator of the early modern English

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[1] William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton*, ed. P. Corbin & D. Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999). The play was only printed in 1658, but there are two performances recorded in 1621.

revenge drama in *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592),[2] took an interest in the oeconomic and domestic spheres—translating Torquato Tasso's *Il padre di famiglia* (1580) as *The Householder's Philosophy* (1588) and incorporating elements from it into his dramatic work.[3] His revenge play was also printed in the same year and for the same bookseller as the first early modern domestic tragedy, *Arden of Faversham*—a bookseller who had licenses for an array of pamphlets on domestic crimes and admonition, and would also come to sell Shakespeare's early revenge tragedy *Titus Andronicus*.[4] Turning to the revenge plays themselves, we find multiple domestic and householding references as well: *The Spanish Tragedy*'s avenging Hieronimo is identified as "Knight Marshal" (1.1.25), an English title for the Marshal of the King's House,[5] while in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1594), Titus—dressed as a cook—stages his bloody revenge within the confines of his own house. Looking forward to later revenge tragedies, both

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[2] Published in 1592, the play is usually dated to 1586/7, on the basis of the absence of any reference to the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, which would be an odd omission for an English play set in Spain, especially one that briefly celebrates English military victories. For an overview of the evidence and various claims, see Lukas Erne, *Beyond* The Spanish Tragedy*: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 55–9.

[3] *The housholders philosophie, wherein is perfectly and profitably described the true oeconomia and forme of housekeeping* (London: John Charlewood for Thomas Hacket, 1588). For *The Spanish Tragedy* as reflective of Kyd's oeconomic interests, see Christopher Crosbie, "*Oeconomia* and the Vegetative Soul: Rethinking Revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy*," *ELR* 38.1 (2008): 3–33.

[4] Edward White "at the lyttle North dore of Paules Church at the signe of the Gun" is linked in the Stationers' Register to such texts as *A warning or fairing to curst wives*, *An example to all lewd housewives* (both 1586), and *The truth of the most wicked and secret murdering of John Brewen* (1592). See Nadia Bishai, "'At the Signe of the Gunne': *Titus Andronicus*, the London Book Trade and the Literature of Crime 1590–1615," in *Titus Out of Joint: Reading the Fragmented* Titus Andronicus, ed. L. Stavanage & P. Hehmeyer (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 7–48. Kyd has also been a candidate for *Arden*'s authorship for at least a century, alongside Shakespeare. For E. K. Chambers, the case for Kyd's authorship was "[m]ore plausible" than that for Shakespeare's (*Elizabethan Stage*, 4), while T. S. Eliot described Kyd as "that extraordinary dramatic (if not poetic) genius who was in all probability the author of two plays so dissimilar as the *Spanish Tragedy* and *Arden of Feversham*" ("Hamlet and his Problems," *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* [London: Methuen, 1920]). More recently, the case for Kyd has been made by Brian Vickers ("Thomas Kyd, Secret Sharer," *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 April 2008, 13–15) and that for Shakespeare by Arthur F. Kinney ("Authoring *Arden of Faversham*," in *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*, ed. H. Craig & A. F. Kinney [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 78–99) and MacDonald P. Jackson ("Parallels and Poetry: Shakespeare, Kyd, and *Arden of Faversham*," in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 23, ed. S. P. Cerasano [Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010], 17–33).

[5] *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), note for 1.1.25. All references are to this edition, unless otherwise noted.

Shakespeare's Hamlet and Middleton's Vindice obsess about the violation of the sanctity of their household bounds: Hamlet sees his uncle as a usurper of his father's proper place in a way that emphasizes his petty treason over his political treason; while in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the avenger sees himself as taking his father's place in testing and maintaining the honour of the family household. In his engagement with the revenge tragedy genre, *The Duchess of Malfi*, Webster not only places the Duchess' household steward Antonio at the centre of the action, but stages a marriage between him and his mistress, an act that inspires her brothers to seek revenge on her and her new family.

I argue that these various links reflect a different relationship between the domestic and revenge tragedies than that described or assumed by studies of early modern English tragedy. In contrast to the marginalization that has defined the critical history of domestic tragedy as a theatrical genre, revenge tragedy has received very different critical treatment, having been positioned and enshrined as central to our understanding of tragedy in the period. By recognizing that the revenge and domestic traditions are intertwined from their beginnings on the early modern stage, I offer a new way of reading early modern revenge tragedy in terms of its representations of the domestic and of the theatrical reflexivity it shares with the domestic tragedies. In particular, I show that the early revenge tragedies of Kyd and Shakespeare not only adapt the Senecan revenge drama for the English stage, but manifest and reflect on that process of translation/adaptation, of making a foreign classical theatrical tradition into a native English one. Furthermore, I argue that it is through their representations of household settings and relations that these plays both reflect on and enact that adaptation, creating an English revenge drama that is defined by its engagement with the domestic in its multiple senses. Where the domestic tragedies use English households and settings to explore the concept of making native tragedy, the revenge tragedies place English households in foreign and classical settings to make tragedy native.

Critical considerations of revenge tragedy have, for the most part, been historicist in nature, situating it in the context of early modern cultural understandings of revenge, crime, and retributive justice, and/or reading in terms of gender, economics, and religion.[6] A standard critical trope has been to position the plays as responding in some way to the cultural phenomenon of vengeance, placing them in philosophical orbit around Francis Bacon's famous description of revenge as "a kind of wild justice."[7] However, as Chris McMahon has recently argued, even though these plays have "a lot to say about families and households," the intersections between revenge tragedy and the domestic have been virtually ignored, and critics have "so far been blind to what early modern revenge drama has to say about such topics as the structure of the family, the proper relation between the families that

[6] As Linda Woodbridge has put it, the critical approach sees the "runaway popularity of Renaissance revenge tales" as being "overdetermined by a constellation of cultural forces." *English Revenge Drama: Money, Resistance, Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 21. Fredson Bowers, in his influential early study of the genre, stressed the "importance of aligning the revenge tragedies with Elizabethan ethical thought and practice." *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587–1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), vii. Ronald Broude historicizes the concept of revenge itself, reading the plays "as a form of response to the basic questions of crime and punishment" circulating in the period. "Revenge and Revenge Tragedy in Renaissance England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 28.1 (1975): 38–58, 39. For Catherine Belsey, the revenge drama explores "the obligations and responsibilities of the subject in the implementation of divine and human justice" (*The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* [London: Routledge, 1985], 115), while Wendy Griswold argues that its "topical appeal derived from its representation of a popular ideological configuration of Protestantism and nationalism" (*Renaissance Revivals: City Comedy and Revenge Tragedy in the London Theater, 1576–1980* [Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986], 56). Both Michael Neill and Thomas Rist read the plays as responding to shifting religious structures in the aftermath of the Reformation. Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); Rist, *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). More recently, Woodbridge has situated the plays in the context of early modern thinking about economic unfairness, positing societal inequality as the impetus behind the flourishing of the drama.

[7] Bacon, "Of Revenge," *The essayes or counsels, civill and morall, of Francis Lo. Verulam, Viscount St. Alban* (London: John Haviland, 1625), 19–21. In Christopher Crosbie's words, "Open a book on revenge tragedy and, invariably, Francis Bacon rises to the first page." "Philosophies of Retribution: Kyd, Shakespeare, Webster and the Revenge Tragedy Genre" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2007), 190. Bowers cites Bacon within the first paragraph of his study, ascribing it to his "usual acumen" (Bowers, 3), while Elaine Prosser cites the essay's opening *in toto*, arguing that it in fact represents "an unequivocal condemnation of private revenge under any circumstances." *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 20. More recently, both Griswold and Woodbridge use Bacon as evidence for "a Renaissance ambivalence" about revenge (Griswold 97–8; Woodbridge 22).

supposedly compose civil society and the constitution of the state and government that tries to regulate their conduct vis-à-vis each other and the state itself."[8]

Theatrical studies of the genre also tend towards the historicist, by which I mean that readings of early modern revenge tragedies in terms of their dramatic and theatrical conventions—ghosts, sensational violence, passionate diction, plays-within-the-play, etc.—usually aim to situate them in various theatrical contexts, traditions, or histories. Thus, readings consider the influence of *The Spanish Tragedy* on subsequent revenge plays in the period such as *Hamlet* or *The Revenger's Tragedy,* or its impact on other early modern genres, such as the city comedy. The early modern revenge tragedy is also studied in light of its relationship and indebtedness to classical revenge drama—thus, critics consider Seneca's influence on Kyd or on the period's revenge drama more broadly. As in the rest of the dissertation, my focus in this chapter lies not on retrieving the specific cultural contexts and conditions of theatrical writing, production, and performance, but on the ways that the plays themselves reflect on their status as theatrical and dramatic texts. These revenge plays display a particular concern with their status as the inheritors of a longstanding revenge drama tradition that they are translating from ancient, classical contexts to early modern, English ones. Two issues in particular are raised by this awareness: How suitable is classical revenge drama for the articulation of pressing contemporary concerns? How can the new English revenge drama set itself apart from its classical ancestry?

These texts do not simply use the theatre as a framework for thinking through this pressing societal problem, they simultaneously reflect on that framework itself, on its suitability as a means of thinking through these issues, on its complicated theatrical and literary inheritances, and on the problem of using an ancient form to think through contemporary and localized issues. I argue that the

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[8] McMahon, *Family and the State in Early Modern Revenge Drama: Economies of Vengeance* (London: Routledge, 2012), 1.

writers of revenge tragedy, like the writers of early modern English tragedy in general, are alive to this problem of fit, to the problem of participating in a longstanding theatrical tradition while making that tradition their own, both artistically and nationally. This awareness is particularly visible in the early English revenge plays, not only because the form is so indebted to Seneca (who is in turn indebted to the ancient Greeks), but because they also actively engage the idea of a classical inheritance. And I use this broad term deliberately, because my aim is not to identify the specific aspects of that classical inheritance, or to trace the specific ways in which classical writers, texts, or theories influence these plays, or how dramatists respond to and innovate with them—as I have suggested, this is work that has been and continues to be done.[9] Instead, my interest lies in what I contend exists alongside various specific and identifiable classical influences in these plays, a representation of the idea of a classical inheritance. The richly imagined classical cosmos that frames *The Spanish Tragedy* and the classical references that saturate *Titus Andronicus*—even Hamlet's delivery of "the rugged Pyrrhus" speech—these not only refer to specific influences, they also evoke and figure the idea of the classical inheritance as a whole. I focus on how dramatists figure that inheritance in their plays, and represent just how they respond to, innovate with, and resist it as they attempt to create and shape an English tradition alongside, out of, and against it.

As I suggest in my introduction, and develop in the first chapter, the domesticity of these texts resonates not only in the smaller, household sense, but in the larger, national one too. When they

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[9] See Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Bruce Smith, *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage, 1500–1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger's Privilege* (New Haven: Yale, 1985); R. A. Brower, *Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971). For a transhistorical study of revenge tragedy that encompasses the classical and early modern traditions, see John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). For a recent consideration of the influence of Greek tragedy on early modern revenge (and other) tragedies, see Tanya Pollard, "What's Hecuba to Shakespeare?," *Renaissance Quarterly* 65.4 (2012), 1060–93. Studies that relate to classical influences on individual plays will be noted below.

invoke the early modern domestic mythos, early modern dramatists write not only in terms of the household but in terms of the native Englishness that marks that mythos. Like domestic tragedies, revenge tragedies are invested in articulating a new, vernacular, and native form of tragedy. The domestic and revenge tragedies are intertwined subgenres concerned with exploring what it means to write specifically English tragedy for the commercial theatre towards the end of the sixteenth century. In those plays identified as revenge tragedies, the particular way in which this question is considered is in relationship to their classical inheritance.

It is in these terms that the domestic comes into particular focus in the revenge plays. Classical revenge dramas also stage revenge in household spaces and show the effects that revenge can have on domestic relationships, as the various plays about the house of Atreus—such as Seneca's *Thyestes* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*—show in their discussion of revenge and blood justice within and between households. In those plays, however, the transgressions of revenge are represented as violations of cosmic or divine justice rather than of the household. Hence Orestes, having avenged his father's death by killing his mother at the end of *The Libation Bearers*, is pursued by the Furies, agents of cosmic justice, into *The Eumenides*. Kyd and other early modern revenge dramatists build on the ways in which the household figures in the classical dramas, recognizing its implicit centrality to revenge tragedy, and its possibilities as a representational framework for revenge on the early modern stage. While these dramatists set their plays in foreign lands or different time periods, they incorporate representations of the household formed out of a distinctly sixteenth-century English domestic mythos—as, for instance, Shakespeare does in *Othello*. That mythos is brought in as a new way to think about and represent the problem of vengeance, an alternative to the classical framework imported from Seneca and other classical influences. As I will demonstrate, these plays are replete with households, figured as actual spaces, as familial/domestic groupings, or as networks of domestic relations, and it is they that form the

framework within which revenge is represented and explored on the early modern stage. And finally it is they, as a result of their inherent Englishness, that form the means through which revenge drama is made into a native dramatic form.

In what follows, I begin with Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, the play that serves as the primal and archetypal English revenge drama, and that reflects its author's interest in domestic and household matters. I argue that the play articulates not one but two understandings of revenge, one evoking the cosmos of classical revenge drama, the other using the early modern household as the locus of revenge action and retribution, that it sets against each other. Rather than valorising classical revenge and importing it wholesale onto the English stage, the play critiques it, and suggests that vengeance must take a new form. Next, I turn to *Titus Andronicus*—Shakespeare's response to Kyd and another key early revenge drama—as a play that not only critiques but completely undermines the classical form of revenge by having its avenger reject it and turn to a different form of vengeance, situated in the household. Finally, I read Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a play that seeks not just to articulate an English form of revenge tragedy, but to redefine it. It looks back on and distances itself from the domestic revenge tragedies of the 1580s and 90s, turning to their contemporary brethren, the domestic tragedies, in order to reinvent English revenge tragedy.

REVENGE AND THE "HOMELY HOME" IN THE SPANISH TRAGEDY

Don Andrea and Knight Marshal Hieronimo, the two chief avengers of *The Spanish Tragedy*, are bound together in vengeance, seeking the deaths of those who transgressed against them—with the latter becoming the agent of the former's revenge by fulfilling his own vengeful desires. They are however separated by the structure of the play, the deceased Andrea having—he tells us—passed into the classical cosmos that constitutes the play's frame, while Hieronimo remains in the Spanish world of

the main plot. Over the course of the play, this structural separation is revealed to be not just a matter of life and death or of frame and framed—Hieronimo and Andrea exist not in different parts of the world, but in different worlds altogether, one Spanish and early modern, the other classical and ancient. While each act of the main plot is bookended by a return to the frame, where Andrea and Revenge comment on and react to unfolding events, those links that do exist are tenuous at best. The frame, as presented in Andrea's lengthy opening monologue, is an ordered and just classical cosmos, an afterlife where the geography itself reflects order, with lovers conveyed to "fields of love" (42) and soldiers sent to "martial fields" (46), and each soul has its place and mode of existence determined by their virtues or their crimes. In contrast, the Spanish realm of the main plot is disordered, unjust, and cosmically empty—appeals for justice go unheeded and cries to the heavens go unanswered. Where Andrea can descend through the various courts of justice in the underworld and speak directly to the gods, Hieronimo is left ineffectively digging at the ground with his dagger, in a pathetic attempt to "go marshal up the fiends in hell / To be avengèd on you all for this" (3.12.77–8). This separation, I want to suggest, structurally represents the fundamental difference between the two revenge-actions of the play, a difference that in turn embodies the incommensurability of the classical and early modern forms of representing and understanding revenge.

As the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Thomas Kyd is usually credited with bringing Senecan revenge drama to the early modern stage, adapting and updating its conventions in order to move it from the classical closet to the English commercial stage. The welter of references to classical figures, stories, and literary works in the play supports at least part of this portrait, showing him to be steeped in

the classical inheritance and invested in its dramatic recycling,[10] even if a relatively scant historical record and misleading assumptions about the relationship between print and theatrical culture may have led to an overestimation or misrepresentation of his actual influence on the period's theatre.[11] Kyd's engagement with literary and theatrical inheritance of classical drama is most often discussed in terms of translation and adaptation; his innovations are highlighted, but they are often presented in terms of continuity and growth rather than disruption. Thus, for Lukas Erne, although *The Spanish Tragedy* is "a highly original and innovative play, it nevertheless grows out of a rich and multifaceted ancestry" that represents a "fusion, reconciliation, and transcendence of classical and native traditions."[12] According to this model, *The Spanish Tragedy* becomes a play that does homage to its theatrical and classical forebears, and particularly to Seneca.[13] The play's structure, which encloses a plot set in contemporaneous Spain in a classical frame that evokes the cosmology of Virgil's *Aeneid*, is seen as marrying or even unifying contemporary and classical. As a result, *The Spanish Tragedy* becomes a play that articulates a transhistorical vision and philosophy of tragedy through which it meditates on the twinned problems of justice and vengeance.[14]

And yet, the marked differences between classical frame and early modern body and the separation between Andrea and Hieronimo suggest that, rather than articulating a single conception of

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[10] For an exhaustive overview of these references, see Erne's chapter on the origins of the play in *Beyond* The Spanish Tragedy, 79–94.

[11] As Holger Syme notes, "the print success of *The Spanish Tragedy*, which sold well enough to be reprinted three times in seven years during the 1590s, does not correspond to a similar level of theatrical popularity." "The Meaning of Success: Stories of 1594 and its Aftermath," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61.4 (2010): 490–525, 520.

[12] *Beyond* The Spanish Tragedy, 79.

[13] For Seneca and Kyd, see Braden's overview in *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*, 200–16. For Virgil, see Eugene D. Hill, "Senecan and Vergilian Perspectives in *The Spanish Tragedy*," *ELR* 15.2 (1985): 143–65.

[14] As Bevington writes, the frame is an "intermediate, timeless, eternal realm" that shows us that "the pagan gods are eternally present, and that human life is continually being measured in the context of that ethical system." *The Spanish Tragedy*, 5.

revenge, *The Spanish Tragedy* in fact articulates two, linking each one to an avenger and thus coding each as either classical or contemporaneous. Each man represents revenge and the injury that necessitates it differently. Andrea speaks in terms of personal honour, implying that his death in combat at the hands of Balthazar was a violation of that honour: "For in the late conflict with Portingale / My valour drew me into danger's mouth, / Till life to death made passage through my wounds" (1.1.15–17). Revenge's promise to show him "the author of thy death, / Don Balthazar [. . .] / Deprived of life" (87–9) articulates the kind of eye-for-an-eye philosophy that dovetails perfectly with an honour-based conception of vengeance. In contrast, Hieronimo, woken by a noise in the middle of the night, stumbling into his secluded garden, presents the violation as an intrusion into the space of the household, a violation of its bounds: "A man hanged up and all the murderers gone, / And in my bower, to lay the guilt on me?" (2.5.11–12). The untimely death of Horatio is clearly situated within the locus of the household, specifically in the "bower" of Hieronimo's garden, a word that in the period could refer to either a part of a garden or to an inner chamber or bedroom of a house,[15] an intimate space within the already private space of the household. As steward of both his own household and of the king's in his capacity as Knight Marshal, Hieronimo is represented as someone acutely aware of the importance of defending the integrity of the household space. As such, he is the ideal avenger for redressing an injustice figured in terms of a disturbance of the intimacy of the household—revenge becomes a kind of household management.

This focus on the violation of domestic space is central to the alternative way of representing revenge articulated in *The Spanish Tragedy*, which—I argue—use the household as a conceptual framework for that representation, instead of the classical cosmos in which Andrea's death and his

[15] *OED*, s.v. "bower": "An inner apartment, esp. as distinguished from the 'hall,' or large public room, in ancient mansions; hence, a chamber, a bed-room."

revenge are figured. Horatio's death is not a violation of the cosmic order in the way that Andrea's is, but a violation of domestic order, a violation of both familial relationships and of household space. Horatio's death is an interruption to the natural order, the son dying before the father, and as such it interrupts the familial relationship between them: "Alas, it is Horatio, my sweet son!" his father declares on first recognising his clothing, but immediately corrects himself, recognising that the family relationship has been fundamentally affected: "O no, but he that whilom *was* my son" (14–15).[16] In a later scene, where his wife Isabella enters and complains to her maidservant of the ills she suffers from her son's death and eventually runs lunatic with grief, the contrast is emphasized once more. In her attempts to calm her mistress, the maid evokes the classical cosmos, reminding her of the existence of a larger order in which the dead receive justice: "Good madam, affright not thus yourself / With outrage for your son Horatio, / He sleeps in quiet in the Elysian fields" (3.8.7–9). Isabella is not reassured, and counters with a very different understanding of the operations of justice, and particularly of revenge: "Why, did I not give you gowns and goodly things, / Bought you a whistle and a whipstalk too, / To be revengèd on their villainies?" (10–12). Isabella reminds her servant that she is part of her household, that she has been rewarded with material goods from that household, and that she should as a result seek to redress the injustice committed against it through an act of vengeance. Here, revenge is not understood to arise because it is divinely ordained, but rather from a sense of household duty.

In addition to being coded and conceptualized differently, there is another key difference between how the two types of revenge are represented, one that would be particularly apparent in a

[16] The additions from the 1602 edition makes this interruption of the familial relationship even more painfully clear, as Hieronimo refuses to acknowledge the body as his son's: "I wonder how this fellow got his clothes" (first addition, 15) he asks, before sending a servant to "bid my son Horatio to come home" (18). Not only Isabella but also the servant Pedro try to convince Hieronimo of the body's identity—the loss of Horatio is thus poignantly figured not just in familial but domestic terms.

staged work. The frame is static, part of a stable, ordered, and unchanging classical cosmos, where the only action—Andrea's journey through the underworld—is described in retrospect. When the spirit of Revenge tells Andrea that he has come to where he will see Balthazar "[d]eprived of life" he uses a theatrical metaphor to describe what will unfold: "Here sit we down to see the mystery, / And serve for Chorus in this tragedy" (1.1.86–91). This metaphor emphasizes the sense of inaction by identifying them as audience and chorus rather than actors, and in addition implies a certain passivity or even inability to act. While Andrea's desire for vengeance is ultimately fulfilled, his revenge is not actually carried out by him. Hieronimo's revenge, in contrast, is an entirely active one: while Andrea must remain a spectator and passively watch as revenge is played out before him, Hieronimo can (and must) take action, carefully plotting, assembling, and (literally) staging his revenge. In a play, this contrast between action and inaction is not only particularly noticeable, but also constitutes a value judgement in terms of the comparison being made between classical and early modern revenge drama: the drama is in the action, in the main plot of the play, in Hieronimo's revenge. That the culminating act of revenge is a play-within-the-play that consists almost entirely of action only serves to emphasize this point, as do Andrea's frustration at just being a spectator and his constant demands for Revenge's intervention over the course of the play.

The Spanish Tragedy also stages this contrast between the two types of revenge within the main action of the play itself. Rather than have Hieronimo speed single-mindedly through the play to his ultimate revenge, he is instead caught between the two types of vengeance, which has a visible effect on the forward motion of both his own plot and the plot of the play. In the immediate aftermath of the discovery of Horatio's corpse, the intimate bower of the household expands into a whole cosmos: Horatio's "bloody corpse" has been left "amidst these dark and doleful shades," leaving Hieronimo to cry "an ocean [. . .] of tears" and rail against both "heavens" and "earth" (22–7). These terms, especially

the pun on "shades" as both shadows and the deceased, cannot help but recall Andrea's opening description of the underworld. In this expansion of the bower into the classical cosmos, we see the replacement of the household as frame of reference, what was initially figured as a violation of household intimacy is recast as a cosmic transgression. The default framework is the classical one, which at first seems appropriate, given the structural framing of the world of the play by the classical frame.

That default, however, comes with a price: the same passivity and lack of action already established in the static frame. At the same time that he turns from household to cosmos, Hieronimo is rendered paralyzed in incomprehension, asking question after question rather than looking for answers: "who hath slain my son? / What savage monster [. . .] / Hath here been glutted with thy harmless blood? / [. . .] / O heavens, why made you night to cover sin? / [. . .] / O earth, why didst thou not in time devour / The vile profaner of this sacred bower?" (2.5.18–31). When Isabella joins her husband, they lament together:

> HIERONIMO Here, Isabella, help me to lament;
> For sighs are stopp'd, and all my tears are spent.
> ISABELLA What world of grief!—my son Horatio!
> O, where's the author of this endless woe?
> HIERONIMO To know the author were some ease of grief,
> For in revenge my heart would find relief.
> ISABELLA Then is he gone? and is my son gone too?
> O gush out, tears, fountains and floods of tears,
> Blow, sighs, and raise an everlasting storm:
> For outrage fits our cursed wretchedness.
> HIERONIMO Sweet, lovely rose, ill-pluck'd before thy time,
> Fair, worthy son, not conquer'd, but betray'd:
> I'll kiss thee now, for words with tears are stay'd.
> ISABELLA And I'll close up the glasses of his sight,
> For once these eyes were only my delight.
>
> (36–50)

The heightened affect and melodramatic nature of these lines express their Senecan nature, as does the use of (di-)stichomythia. But the abundance of rhymed couplets, most of which are in perfect iambic

pentameter also express a certain stasis—the grieving parents are caught in their grief, trapped into repetitive couplets that do not go anywhere.

It takes the sight of a material object—the handkerchief stained with blood—to move Hieronimo out of this static exchange. That the turn should occur as a result of a stage prop, and one of an intimate, domestic nature, is key—the desire for revenge that he expresses in his classical lament ("For in revenge my heart would find relief") is not enabled by that lament, but by a prop. Moving beyond the hyperbole and metaphorizing that marks the lament, he declares his vengeful purpose, holding the handkerchief aloft:

> Seest thou this handkercher besmeared with blood?
> It shall not from me till I take revenge.
> Seest thou those wounds that yet are bleeding fresh?
> I'll not entomb them till I have revenged.
> Then will I joy amidst my discontent;
> Till then my sorrow never shall be spent.
>
> (51–6)

His determination is emphasized by the insistent repetition of "till I take revenge"/"till I have revenged," a near-perfect rhyme that contrasts strikingly with the earlier couplets. His son's wounds are simply described as wounds that bleed. While his wife remains within a classically ordered framework, in which "The heavens are just, murder cannot be hid" and "Time will bring this treachery to light" (57–9), he insists they seek out truth themselves—"So shall we sooner find the practice out, / And learn by whom all this was brought about" (62–3).

As the play continues, we see Hieronimo shift between these two modes of revenge. Each time, the return to the classical mode brings with it inaction, and it becomes clear that his plot, and that of the play, advances only when he is not in its grips. The pathetic image of his futile scratching at the earth with his dagger to "go marshal up the fiends in hell / To be avengèd on you all for this" (3.12.77–8) when he receives no justice from the court is the epitome of his dilemma. In the scene that follows

immediately after his failed attempt to obtain justice, the man scrabbling with his dagger is replaced by the figure of the marshal: organized, circumspect, rational. While he does intersperse various Latin quotations into his speech, his vengeance is envisioned in deliberate, rational terms:

> And to conclude, I will revenge his death!
> But how? Not as the vulgar wits of men,
> With open, but inevitable ills,
> As by a secret, yet a certain mean,
> Which under kindship will be cloakèd best.
> Wise men will take their opportunity,
> Closely and safely fitting things to time;
> But in extremes advantage hath no time,
> And therefore all times fit not for revenge.
>
> (3.13.20–8)

A successful and well-executed revenge demands patience and guile, requires a calm approach—one marked by patience rather than passivity: "No, no, Hieronimo, thou must enjoin / [. . .] / Thy heart to patience, and thy hands to rest, / Thy cap to courtesy, and thy knee to bow, / Till to revenge thou know, when, where, and how" (39–44). More importantly, this soliloquy marks a reconciliation between a sense of cosmic justice and a personal one. While he acknowledges that "heaven will be reveng'd of every ill" (2), he also concludes that he can be the agent of that vengeance. In reconciling him to this, he gains agency again—against the vision of a just universe where time brings wrongs and "treachery to light," Hieronimo offers a vision—a motto—for how vengeance functions as redress in household terms: "Strike, *and strike home*, where wrong is offer'd thee" (7, my emphasis).

Having articulated his domestic revenge plot, Hieronimo confronts the classical mode one more time, in the second half of the scene, when three citizens and an old man enter to petition for justice. He is clearly represented as the agent of justice in the world of the play—as the first citizen remarks, "for learning and for law / There's not any advocate in Spain / That can prevail, or will take half the pain / That he will, in pursuit of equity" (51–4)— a representation that reinforces his

assumption of vengeful agency moments prior. Hieronimo agrees to plead the citizens' cases, and takes the relevant paperwork with him. Speaking to the old man, who also has a "murdered son" (78), plunges him back into his melodramatic and ineffectual grief, and his careful revenge plot is forgotten in amidst the hyperbolic imagery of stormy seas and the return, once more, of the cosmology of the frame:

> Though on this earth justice will not be found
> I'll down to hell, and in this passion
> Knock at the dismal gates of Pluto's court,
> Getting by force, as once Alcides did,
> A troop of Furies and tormenting hags
> To torture Don Lorenzo and the rest.
>
> (108–13)

His revenge here figured in completely different terms—it will be executed by supernatural creatures obtained from Pluto's court, rather than by the methodical planning of an aggrieved householder. But we already know—his digging at the earth has shown us--that he cannot actually go "down to hell," and thus his revenge is forestalled once more.

At the peak of his outburst, Hieronimo asks the old man if he is the ghost of Horatio, returned "from the depth / To ask for justice in this upper earth" (133–4), evoking the murder of his son, but in terms of the classical frame rather than the household terms in which he described it earlier. For a moment, both the body and frame of the play contain ghosts in search of justice, the doubling of the old man as imagined ghost with the real ghost of Don Andrea. Refusing to believe the old man when he says he is not Horatio, Hieronimo cannot see beyond his grieving hallucination, and cannot move beyond it either, stuck in dreadful contemplation of what he thinks is a restless revenant. It is only when the old man articulates the simple truth of both their situations in the terms of a domestic familial relationship —"I am a grievèd man, and not a ghost, / That came for justice for my murdered son" (159–60)—that Hieronimo can move beyond his classical grief and resume his vengeful path. "Ay, now I know thee, now thou nam'st thy son" he declares, "Thou art the lively image of my grief; / Within thy face, my

sorrows I may see" (161–3). This recognition calms him, and he turns to show pity and fellow-feeling for the old man: "And all this sorrow riseth for thy son, / And selfsame sorrow feel I for my son" (168–9). The final exit of the scene, tellingly, has Hieronimo lead the old man into the sanctuary of his household: "Come in, old man, thou shalt to Isabel" (170). Once he emerges from that space, he will set his domestic revenge in motion, to "strike home" to redress the wrongs committed against his household.

Hieronimo's final embrace of the domestic is marked in the play as a whole. There is a distinct shift in register from the classical towards the domestic in the run-up to the grand finale. The two royal households of Spain and Portugal are to be joined in matrimony through the marriage of (as the Portuguese viceroy puts it) "thy belovèd niece, / Fair Bel-Imperia, with my Balthazar" (3.14.28–9). Even more revealingly, Hieronimo and Lorenzo are apparently reconciled at the duke of Castile's behest, and the reconciliation sealed in terms that are quite literally homely, as Castile invites Hieronimo into his home as a token of their newfound amity:

> There then pause,
> And for the satisfaction of the world,
> Hieronimo, frequent my homely house,
> The Duke of Castile, Cyprian's ancient seat,
> And when thou wilt, use me, my son, and it;
> But here, before Prince Balthazar and me,
> Embrace each other, and be perfect friends.
>
> (149–155)

The Duke's redundant "homely house" emphasizes the shift into the domestic register, particularly as the "house" of which he speaks, "Cyprian's ancient seat," is surely more of a castle, and thus anything but "homely." Castile's residence is not to be understood as a political space but as a household one, one thus linked to the other key such space in the play, Hieronimo's house and garden. The culminating act of vengeance will take place in a space figured as "house" rather than as "seat of power." With the

invitation extended from one householder to another, the stage is set for Hieronimo to infiltrate the domestic space of those who infiltrated his own, in order for him to "strike home"—redressing injustice in the space where it was committed.

Along with the shift to domestic references, the play becomes even more overtly metatheatrical—Hieronimo's revenge, after all, both takes place in a household setting and consists of a play-within-the-play.[17] In anticipation, there is a turn in the frame as well: Revenge, having already described the main action as a tragedy, proceeds to stage a dumb-show for Andrea within the frame, where two figures, bearing "nuptial torches" are pursued by Hymen, the god of marriage, who instead brings death and "quencheth them in blood" (3.15.29–35). In addition to creating a heightened sense of theatrical reflexivity (we are watching a play in which characters watching a play watch another play just before the characters in the play being watched by the characters watch another play), Revenge's choice of dramatic performance—the dumb-show—evokes a native theatrical tradition,[18] something that Andrea underscores by calling it a "mystery" (29), a word that connotes the mystery play. The theatrical awareness created thus encompasses the full sense of homeliness operative in the period, as referring to both a home or native country,[19] and the idea of an English theatrical tradition is introduced into the play as Kyd subtly signals both a transition from classical to household frame of reference, and from Senecan drama to a type of theatre with links to the native English dramatic tradition.

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[17] For a consideration of the "sophisticated metatheatricality" of the play, see Gregory M. Colón Semenza, "*The Spanish Tragedy* and metatheatre," *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 153–162.

[18] See Dieter Mehl, *The Elizabethan Dumb Show: The History of a Dramatic Convention* (London: Methuen, 1964) for an overview of the dumb-show's origins and forms (3–28) and its use by Kyd (63–71).

[19] *OED*, s.v. "homely": "Of or belonging to a household or home. Also: of or belonging to a person's own country or native land. *rare* after 16th cent."

Thus primed for theatrical awareness, we come upon the dress rehearsal for Hieronimo's show. The tragedy that he has written concerns a "knight of Rhodes," married to "Perseda, one Italian dame," so beautiful that Soliman, the "chiefest guest" at the wedding, decides that he must win her love, and entrusts one of his bashaws with the task of wooing her. Unsuccessful, the bashaw slays the knight of Rhodes "presently by treachery," which leads Perseda to slay Soliman and "stab herself" (4.1.108–26). Hieronimo's tale is both a revenge tragedy, in which the wronged Perseda kills Soliman in revenge, and a domestic tragedy, in which a marriage is undone by the jealousy and lust of a guest invited into the marriage's household space. Furthermore, that domestic revenge tragedy also becomes a representation of the larger tragic tradition as a result of Hieronimo's idiosyncratic decision to have each actor speak in different languages. "Each one of us must act his part / In unknown languages," he declares, dividing up the languages thusly: "As you, my lord [Balthazar], in Latin, I in Greek, / You [Lorenzo] in Italian; and for because I know / That Bel-imperia hath practisèd the French, / In courtly French shall all her phrases be" (172–7). Tellingly, Hieronimo and Kyd choose languages that represent major strands of the tragic tradition that English dramatists sought to emulate and compete with. Latin and Greek represent the classical inheritance, while Italian and French represent the two major contemporary continental tragic strands (Hieronimo speaks admiringly of the "Italian tragedians" who were "so sharp of wit" [164], while Lorenzo recalls his experience "'mongst" the exemplary "French tragedians" [168]). Hieronimo's play becomes a kind of bundled whole that represents the tragic tradition, the same tradition Kyd seeks to be part of as an English writer of tragedy.

The play-within-the-play, then, connects to the play not only in plot terms (Horatio and Bel-imperia's relationship is also destroyed by the desires of men from a higher social station), but also thematically, with both hinging on the invasion of household space, the abuse of household trust, and the subsequent redress of those injuries. At the centre of this representative tragedy there stands a

domestic tragedy plot that turns to vengeance. The fact that Perseda is the aggrieved avenger rather than the knight implies that the revenge in the play is not to be understood in terms of a violation of masculine honour in the mode of Don Andrea, but must instead be seen as the correction of a domestic violation such as the one Hieronimo seeks to make. For all the linguistic confusion, and the exotic, far-removed setting, the plot of the play is eminently comprehensible, in a way that depends not on special knowledge either of foreign customs and cultures, or on being part of the social elite, but through the recognition of tragic domestic mythos.

The performance itself is preceded by two key moments. Castile's "homely house"—the setting for the revenge—becomes a trap, as Hieronimo asks the duke for his keys so that he can—as is revealed later—lock everyone within this space: "Let me entreat your grace / That when the train are passed into the gallery / You would vouchsafe to throw me down the key" (4.3.11–13). In a soliloquy delivered moments before his play commences, Hieronimo motivates his vengeance as redress for the destruction of his familial relationships. His son has been murdered, his wife has "slain herself" (26), and thus it

> Behoves thee then, Hieronimo, to be revenged!
> The plot is laid of dire revenge.
> On then Hieronimo, pursue revenge,
> For nothing wants but acting of revenge.
>
> (27–30)

As Hieronimo sets the stage and closes (as it were) his 'house'-trap, in the final moments before the climactic final scene of the play, "revenge" rings out insistently through the household space where he will "strike home" to redress the destruction of his own household.

It has been debated whether or not the "tragedy / of Soliman the Turkish emperor" (4.4.1–2) would have been performed in its "*sundry languages*" or in line with the printed version, which translates it into English "*for the easier understanding to every public reader*" as the accompanying note reads. But I would argue that the audience is intended to hear the play in English while imagining it to

be in its various languages, in that it serves to further the dramatic irony of the scene by having the audience understand in a way that the characters do not. The fictionally nonsensical play-within-the-play is made—in performance and publication to its early modern audience—intelligible through the use of their native tongue. And not only does the English language make sense of this tragedy—a tragedy that as I suggested represents the larger tragic tradition—but is also shown to be the means through which the major classical and contemporary strands of that tradition are united.

This 'Englished' tragedy represents not only the triumph of native tragedy but also—as Hieronimo's epilogue makes clear—a new kind of tragedy in terms of theatrical representation. Once Lorenzo, Balthazar and Bel-imperia lie dead, he informs his audience that the play they have just watched is different from the usual theatrical fare:

> Haply you think, but bootless are your thoughts,
> That this is fabulously counterfeit,
> And that we do as all tragedians do:
> To die today, for fashioning our scene,
> The death of Ajax, or some Roman peer,
> And in a minute starting up again
> Revive to please tomorrow's audience.
>
> (76–82)

This play is new and different from the tragedies that have gone before, tragedies identified as classical, concerning the "death of Ajax, or some Roman peer." In a final *coup de théâtre*, when it is revealed that the deaths on the stage turn out to be actual deaths, the distance between representation and the represented collapses. Hieronimo's play becomes the logical extension of precisely the kind of representational practice that lies at the heart of domestic tragedies such as *Arden* or *A Warning*. Revenge tragedy is rendered domestic in three major ways: staged within the space of the household and invoking a domestic mythos; translated into the native tongue from the major strands of the tragic tradition; and intertwined with the representational ethos of early modern domestic tragedies.

Like those tragedies, too, Hieronimo's play is invested in revealing the truth and evoking an emotional response. Having revealed the body of Horatio—"See here my show, look on this spectacle" (89)—he goes on to tell the true story, describing how Lorenzo and Balthazar "sorted leisure / To take advantage in my garden plot / Upon my son, my dear Horatio" (103–5). Rendered in the "vulgar tongue" the truth behind the play comes out. Hieronimo has staged a tragedy of actual revenge, avenging his son's death by orchestrating the deaths of Lorenzo and Balthazar in the midst of Castile's own household space, mirroring the original transgression that took place within the intimate "bower" at the heart of his own household. Absent from his speech is any mention of divine justice, or of the gods, or of a restoration of cosmic order. Justice has been administered domestically, with loss in one household repaid by losses in the others. Hieronimo makes his motivations understood not through recourse to heavenly or divine or cosmic justice, but through making his onstage audience suffer the same domestic and familial violation he himself has undergone. "Speak, Portuguese, whose loss resembles mine" (114) he says to Balthazar's father; "How can you brook our play's catastrophe?" (121) he asks the Duke of Castile now that his son has been murdered—"As dear to me was my Horatio / As yours, or yours, or yours, my lord, to you" (169–70) he declares.

The Spanish Tragedy, then, stages the triumph of a new kind of revenge drama over and against the classical revenge tradition. Kyd traps a contemporary plot within a classical frame not in order to elevate the former to the latter but to highlight the tension between them. Not only do frame and story not fit, but by associating each with a particular way of representing and understanding revenge, he argues that the classical revenge drama is unsuited for the English stage. English tragedy cannot reuse classical models to assert itself as a native tragic form equal or even superior to others, but must develop its own model and set of representational practices, finding (amongst other things) a contemporary, English way of representing and understanding revenge on the stage. For Kyd, the space of the

household offers just such a representational framework—forming a site in which revenge drama can be translated from classical to English by rendering it in domestic terms.

"FOR I'LL PLAY THE COOK": BRINGING REVENGE HOME IN TITUS ANDRONICUS

If *The Spanish Tragedy* questions just how suited the classical revenge tradition is for the contemporary English stage, then *Titus Andronicus* (1594),[20] explodes the very notion of such suitability. Shakespeare sets his story of revenge in a fictionalized Rome so saturated in classical references—literary, historical, mythical and theological—as to be almost more Roman than its historical referent.[21] And that's not all: the play is also laden with Greek mythology and allusions, mediated in part through Seneca's *Thyestes*, which forms one of its main sources. Shakespeare's hyperclassicism in this play has been interpreted in a variety of ways, from being dismissed as the excess of youth, seen simply as an attempt create a "Roman style," or read as a critique of empire.[22] I would like to suggest, however, that it also represents a

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[20] *Titus* is published in 1594, but scholars have argued for a date of composition as early as 1589. In the recent Arden edition, Jonathan Bate argues at length for late 1593 (Introduction, 69–79), while Katherine Eisaman Maus settles on 1592 in the Norton edition, as does Gary Taylor in the Oxford; others (J. C. Maxwell in the previous Arden edition, for instance) have argued for the earlier date on the basis of a reference in the induction to Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). Those who incline towards an earlier date seem particularly invested in making *Titus* as early as possible to explain away its supposed flaws. More important than an exact date for the purposes of my argument is the general critical consensus that the play is clearly a response to Kyd's revival of the revenge tragedy genre.

[21] For more on what Maus succinctly dubs the "Rome effect" ("Titus Andronicus," 400), see Warren Cherniak's recent overview *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For an overview of classical allusions in the play see Niall Rudd, "*Titus Andronicus*: The Classical Presence," *Shakespeare Survey* 55 (2002): 199–208, and Grace Starry West, "Going by the Book: Classical Allusions in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *Studies in Philology* 79.1 (1982): 62–77. See also Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Coppélia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[22] Warren Cherniak writes that in "the play's 'overloading with classical allusion,' the 'sheer amount of learning displayed' in *Titus Andronicus*, it is, as several critics have noted, self-evidently 'the work of a young man' relatively inexperienced in writing for the stage." *Myth of Rome*, 62. Miola notes that "Quotations in Latin appear here along with references to Roman customs, people, political institutions, and historical events. The language reveals a conscious attempt to create a Roman style, exhibiting throughout an unusual predilection for Latinate vocabulary." *Shakespeare's Rome*, 43. Heather James argues that "*Titus Andronicus*' aggressive imitations do nothing less than perform a critique of imperial Rome on the eve of its collapse and, in doing so, glance proleptically at Elizabethan England as an emerging nation." *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 42.

theatrical critique, or rather that it sets the stage for such a critique, locating it within a space that represents the pinnacle of classicism. This is not just exuberance or even hubris, it is as deliberate a strategy as Kyd's decision to render Hieronimo's play in sundry languages: Shakespeare overdetermines the status of *Titus*'s Rome as a classical space in order to gather together the various strands of tradition he uses to represent the idea of the classical inheritance.

The theatre is one of these threads, and one that has been less considered than others. In having his tragedy draw on the work of the classical tragedian who most influenced the early modern period in a hyperclassical Rome, Shakespeare is not simply seeking to outdo his classical and contemporary forebears, but more fundamentally engaging in an inquiry similar to that made in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Where Kyd incorporates a classical frame narrative, Shakespeare sets the action of *Titus* within a space that represents the classical in all its dimensions. Where Kyd highlights the problem of fit between contemporary body and classical frame, Shakespeare instead makes his play as classical as possible, almost as though giving it every chance to succeed on its own classical terms—providing a classical frame for a revenge plot set in as classical a world as possible. And yet, at the end of the play, this intricate, saturated vision of Rome lies in ruins: the emperor and his family are dead, killed by Titus, its greatest soldier and archetypal citizen, who is also dead, while his son has brought the barbarians not just to the gates, but into the very heart of the city. While this vision of destruction fits neatly into the standard reading of revenge plays as commentary on revenge's destructive effect on society, I want to suggest that Shakespeare also makes a theatrical point here. By having Rome lie in ruins, conquered by its enemies, he also enacts a symbolic destruction of the classical inheritance that the city has been made to represent. While *Titus* ends in successful vengeance—and thus succeeds as a revenge tragedy—I argue that that revenge is not Roman or classical in nature, even though the violence and excess of the play's ending is usually understood in terms of Roman decadence. Rather, in the vengeful banquet that

Titus stages in his home, Shakespeare creates a new and different kind of revenge drama for the English stage, one that—like Hieronimo's tragedy—takes the household as its setting and eschews its '*locus classicus*.' Rather than reading the play as his adoption of classical revenge drama, I argue that *Titus Andronicus* represents his rejection of that form and his articulation of a different, domestic form of revenge tragedy for the English stage.

At the pivotal moment of *Titus*, when the plot shifts from the transgressions committed against the Andronici to the revenge of the Andronici upon their transgressors, an equally pivotal moment occurs in terms of the play's exploration of the limits of classical revenge drama. His daughter raped and mutilated, his sons murdered and their severed heads returned to him, his own hand cut off, Titus has gone mad from grief and anger. His calls for justice unanswered, by the authorities, the emperor, by the gods themselves, he has retreated into the heart of the only space that remains for him, his house—locked in "his study, where they say he keeps / To ruminate strange plots of dire revenge" (5.2.5–6).[23] As the plot of this Roman tragedy shifts to revenge, however, there is a conceptual shift as well, marked by locating Titus within the inner sanctum of his house, much as *The Spanish Tragedy* turned to the domestic in the run-up to its climax. It is the household that is explicitly identified as the framework within which revenge is meditated on in the play. That Titus thinks not just about revenge but about "strange plots" of revenge is not only a matter of metrical convenience, for it evokes the theatrical at the same time as the strategic, superimposing on the image of the vengeful architect working on his enemies' demise the image of a vengeful playwright, working on a "strange"—a new and unknown—kind of revenge tragedy. And to the Roman world imagined in the play, this early modern English tragedy is indeed foreign, both geographically and temporally.

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[23] *Titus Andronicus*, ed. Jonathan Bate (London: Arden, 1995). All references are to this edition, unless otherwise noted.

The stage device through which Shakespeare pivots the plot also serves to emphasize the distance between old and new revenge drama. Seeking to lure the apparently mad Titus into bringing his son Lucius, who "leads towards Rome a band of warlike Goths" (113), to a parley with the emperor Saturninus, his queen Tamora and her two sons don disguises and stage an interactive performance. Dressed in a "strange and sad habiliment" (1), she plays the spirit of Revenge, while Chiron and Demetrius play the parts of her "ministers" Rape and Murder (60), as they seek to convince Titus that they have come to aid him "By working wreakful vengeance on [his] foes" (32). This bizarre masque of revenge is deliberately made to look both ridiculous and creakily old-fashioned. As a plan, it is obviously flawed and over-complicated; as a performance, it seems to anticipate the repertory of the rude mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As a piece of drama, it is clearly marked as archaic, as a theatrical relic, through the use of staid formal language and imagery and the invocation of the allegorical drama tradition. It's also, of course, a piece of theatre that fails—Titus sees through the performance almost immediately, and eventually, after toying with its performers ("How like the empress and her sons you are!" [84]), turns it against them as he prepares to stage his new drama of revenge. Shakespeare's treatment of the classical moves from pastiche to downright parody, and thus undermines any sense of gravitas or utility attached to the classical way of representing and understanding revenge, showing it to be an outdated model for the contemporary stage.

In this outdated model, vengeance works in a particular way, and Titus demonstrates his knowledge of these conventions when he tells his three attendant spirits what he desires from them. Turning first to the disguised Demetrius, he tells him to:

> Look round about the wicked streets of Rome,
> And when thou find'st a man that's like thyself,
> Good Murder, stab him: he's a murderer.
> [*to Chiron*]
> Go thou with him, and when it is thy hap

To find another that is like to thee,
Good Rapine, stab him, he is a ravisher.
[*to Tamora*]
Go thou with them, and in the emperor's court,
There is a queen attended by a Moor –
[. . .]
I pray thee, do on them some violent death:
They have been violent to me and mine.

(98–109)

As Tamora replies to Titus, after he demonstrates his understanding of how Roman revenge works, and of how Roman revenge drama plays out, "Well hast thou lessoned us" (110). In Rome, we learn, revenge is carried out in public, in the "wicked streets" or at the wicked "emperor's court." Vengeance is about the public punishment of dishonour and transgression. These are the same streets in which Titus' military successes and the honour of the Andronici were publicly celebrated at the opening of the play, and thus in this overview of Roman vengeance, this model for classical revenge, we also have the outline for a possible ending for *Titus* as a whole, one that would bookend the action of the play between two public scenes, one celebrating honour, the other of punishing dishonour. It is not difficult to imagine Titus and his followers doing exactly what he 'lessons' us here: finding the guilty parties in the public spaces of Rome, and publicly punishing them.

And yet, he—and the play as a whole—reject this model, playing along with Tamora only insofar as it will deliver her sons into his hands, so that he can enact his new and different revenge drama, one that will take place not in public, but in the household. And we can perhaps imagine that the papers Titus clutches as he enters from his study, from the heart of his house, contain his attempts to set down "in bloody lines" (14) this new kind of domestic revenge tragedy that he will soon stage before us within the confines of the "woeful house" (82) into which he welcomes the players. Once Tamora leaves, and her hapless sons are delivered into Titus' hands, all pretence falls away. The spectator has not been fooled, and he swiftly reveals this truth to the performers as the other members

of his household enter to make preparations for their own performance: "Know you these two?" Titus asks his servants, to which his man Publius immediately replies, "The empress' sons I take them: Chiron, Demetrius" (153–4). Like Hieronimo's "vernacular" description of his play, like *Arden* and its "simple truth," and like other early domestic tragedies such as *A Warning for Fair Women*, the domestic is linked to the revelation of truth, and in particular to a revelation of reality: unlike so many other moments where a play asks its audience to suspend its disbelief for the sake of a functioning disguise, here disguise is shown to fail almost immediately once within the household space, as we realize that Titus has known the truth all along. Even the doomed men in question are forced to speak the truth within the frame of the house: "Villains forebear, we are the empress' sons" (162).

Once the villains are bound and gagged, Titus reveals the scope of his "dire plot" in the speech that ends the masque scene. The choices that he makes for his vengeance, and the choices that Shakespeare makes in presenting those choices, mark this speech as the triumph of domestic revenge, its ruthless efficiency and swift effect testament to the superiority of the play in which Titus will "play the cook" (204) as compared to the creaky classical allegory that opened the scene:

> Hark, wretches, how I mean to martyr you:
> This one hand yet is left to cut your throats,
> Whiles that Lavinia 'tween her stumps doth hold
> The basin that receives your guilty blood.
> You know your mother means to feast with me,
> And calls herself Revenge and thinks me mad.
> Hark, villains, I will grind your bones to dust,
> And with your blood and it I'll make a paste,
> And of the paste a coffin I will rear,
> And make two pasties of your shameful heads,
> And bid that strumpet, your unhallowed dam,
> Like to the earth swallow her own increase.
>
> (180–91)

In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hieronimo's vacillation between old and new revenge was marked linguistically and figuratively—here we see the shift into a different kind of drama accompanied by a

shift in diction. While the language here loses none of the violent extremes of earlier moments, it contrasts strikingly with the overwrought language used earlier in the play, by both Titus and his brother Marcus. Gone are the baroque "crimson river of blood" (2.3.22), the "bubbling fountain stirred with wind" (23), the "brinish bowels" of grief (3.1.98), and the teary cheeks "stained like meadows not yet dry" (124). While Lavinia is briefly compared to a "spring [. . .] stained with mud" and a "goodly summer" mixed with an evil winter (170–1), these images are quickly dispensed with. In their place we find a vivid, gritty and graspable literal language and imagery that close the metaphorical distance to the reality of violence that had been opened by the earlier ornate images. Like other domestic plays, this domestic revenge drama strips away ornament and rhetorical flourish—what *Arden* terms "glozing stuff"—working instead towards a representational realism.

In terms of the form the revenge itself takes, there is a definite contrast between the old 'Roman' ways of vengeance to these new household ones. Instead of executing the villains in the streets, he executes them within the intimate space of his home; he enlists the aid not just of his family in the form of Lavinia, but of his servants, thus marking this as a redress for a household rather than simply a familial violation. Instead of offering his victims an honourable military death, he trusses them up in the manner of animals to be slaughtered; rather than display their "shameful heads" on a pole in victory, he will make "two pasties" of them, displaying a good householder's economy in grinding their "bones to dust" and mixing it with their blood to form the "paste" or pastry for his baking. Waste not, want not indeed. "I'll play the cook" (204), Titus declares, choosing to play the part of the thrifty English cook rather than the noble Roman soldier, moving from the classical to the domestic. The use of the homely word "pasties" to describe the main course he will prepare rather than any grand banqueting vocabulary

serves to emphasize just how domestic this revenge is, and just how English.[24] Like Hieronimo's Englishing of his final performance, the 'pasties' and 'pies' served at the end of *Titus Andronicus* and the details about their homely means of preparation, evoke issues of the vernacular and the large-scale domestic.

The way in which classical references are used in this speech also emphasizes this shift away from the Roman and the classical. Up to this point, *Titus* has pretty much revelled in making connections and comparisons to all manner of classical antecedents, most notably perhaps when Lavinia reveals the truth about her rape and mutilation through the use of "Ovid's *Metamorphosis*" (4.1.42). Helped by her father, the daughter leafs through the book until she comes upon "the tragic tale of Philomel" (47), which Titus realizes holds the key to the truth:

> Lavinia, wert thou thus surprised, sweet girl,
> Ravished and wronged as Philomela was,
> Forced in the ruthless, vast and gloomy woods?
> [*Lavinia nods.*]
>
> (51–3)

Here, a direct comparison to a mythical pattern is made: the story of Lavinia's rape and subsequent mutilation at the hands of Chiron and Demetrius is likened to the story of Philomela's rape and mutilation at the hands of her brother-in-law Tereus. Lavinia is linked to Philomela, and the coming revenge is ominously foreshadowed: as we discover, Titus—like Philomela's sister Procne—believes that revenge is a dish best served not just cold, but family-style.

By the end of Titus' speech, however, classical references are used rather differently as he sums up the reasons for his vengeance to his victims—" For worse than Philomel you used my daughter, / And worse than Progne I will be revenged" (5.2.194–5). And turning to another reference from the

[24] "Pasty" and "pasties" have been part of the English vernacular since at least the late thirteenth century, referring first to "a pie of seasoned meat" and later to "a small pastry case folded to enclose a (usually savoury) filling." *OED*, s.v. "pasty."

Metamorphoses, he declares that his "banquet" will be "More stern and bloody than the Centaurs' feast" (203). In each case, and in contrast to the earlier scene that refers to the Philomela myth, Titus does not just make a comparison to a classical pattern or antecedent, but moves beyond them. Lavinia was used "worse than Philomel," and so the myth simply cannot provide a sufficient analogy for the events his family has experienced—the classical past may seem to provide a suitable framework for the understanding of contemporary problems, but it is ultimately insufficient. In describing himself as "worse than Progne" and the upcoming meal as worse than the infamous bloodshed at "the Centaurs' feast," Titus is not doubling down on these classical models so much as he is outdoing them. He declares that the violence of his domestic revenge drama will outdo the mythical violence that has gone before him, while the play declares that the violence of his eponymous play will outdo its classical forerunners, as indeed the plays of Kyd, Shakespeare, and others did by moving violence on to the stage, rather than narrating it as offstage events, thus transforming and outdoing Seneca.

The site in which *Titus* outdoes classical violence is not just the household, but specifically its kitchen. As Wendy Wall has shown, "carnage was a household commonplace" in early modern England, its kitchens represented as violent workplaces where slaughter, butchery, and dismemberment were a regular feature of everyday life.[25] Apart from his choice of meat, the work that Titus is described as doing in his kitchen is exactly that of an early modern housewife as depicted in the cookbooks of the day, "[e]mptying and dismembering bodies when they are almost cold, trafficking in warm blood, and ripping guts from live chickens."[26] Titus, then, describes his gory vengeance in terms of quotidian domestic experience. While we tend to focus on the sheer horror of the violence, the terms in which it is

[25] Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, 192.

[26] Ibid., 193.

described would have been recognizable and routine to an early modern audience, for whom the horror would lie in not in the violence in and of itself, but in the juxtaposition of the quotidian and the violent. This particular kind of domestic horror is displayed by Thomas Merry's sister Rachel in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* some years later, when her brother seeks to use a "chopping knife" to dispose of his victim's body,[27] to "cut him peece-meale, first his head and legs / [. . .] then the mangled rest." Rachel expresses her horrified shoch in the same domestic terms, likening the grave to a hungry mouth and the corpse to a meal: "Oh can you find in hart to cute and carve, / His stone colde fleshe, and rob the greedy grave, Of his dissevered blood besprinckled lims?" This is thus revenge played out on a household stage and represented in household terms, rather than in terms of classical references. Not just opposed to the classical, however, these domestic terms also—as Wall reminds us—always signify in larger ways, as that recognizable domesticity is also recognizably English. Titus' kitchen turns out not only pasties and pies, but also an English domestic revenge.

When the dinner finally takes place, however, it does not necessarily represent the climax of violence in the play, given such extreme moments as the mutilated Lavinia's entrance, the severing of Titus' hand, and of course the slaughter of Tamora's sons. Shakespeare does not attempt to outdo the sheer bloody violence of these prior scenes through ever-increasing violence—although the moment when Titus kills Lavinia certainly could claim a place alongside them. Instead, the scene plays out as a series of theatrical coups: first, a supreme moment of dramatic irony, as we watch Tamora and Saturninus unknowingly feast on the remains of her sons; second, a supreme moment of shock in an already shocking play, as Titus suddenly kills his own daughter; third, a supreme combination of satisfaction and horror, as Titus reveals that Tamora's sons are "both baked in this pie / Whereof their

[27] A knife specifically associated with household butchery in the period: "(a) a cleaver for cutting up, a chopper; (b) a knife with a handle at each end, for mincing meat, suet, etc.." *OED*, s.v. "chopping-knife."

mother daintily hath fed" (59–60). This scene represents a theatrical coup in a larger sense as well: not only does it outdo Procne's revenge in the Philomela myth, but it also retells the mythic story that forms the plot of what is considered Shakespeare's chief Senecan source, *Thyestes*. As its title suggests, this play stages the story of Thyestes, whose sons were cooked and served to him by his vengeful brother Atreus in one of the foundational ancient revenge myths.[28] But as I show above, Shakespeare restages both the myth and Seneca's play in distinctly domestic and English terms: the "pasties" of the previous scene, are now described as a "pie," yet another distinctly vernacular word for a distinctly homely dish.[29] In the play, then, we see first the undermining of the classical revenge template as it is lampooned in Tamora's masque, then a domestic revenge that outdoes its classical antecedents, and finally the appropriation and domestication (in both senses of the word) of two classical revenge myths and of a classical revenge drama based on one of those myths. *Titus Andronicus* stages both the triumph of its eponymous protagonist and the triumph of the new kind of domestic revenge drama he creates.

And herein lies the reason for Rome's destruction at the end of the play. Once Titus has achieved his vengeance through his climactic revelation and subsequent murder of Tamora—once his new form of revenge drama has triumphed, in other words—Rome stands at the threshold of its own destruction. His brother Marcus attempts to make an appeal for unity in similarly homely terms, "O let me teach you how to knit again / This scattered corn into one mutual sheaf" (69–70), but in the words of the Roman lord cited earlier, Rome should instead "be bane unto herself" (71), now that both Titus and Emperor are dead, and the Goths have invaded the very heart of the city. Much as the name "Rome" echoes throughout the final scene, these echoes ring with desperation, for little of Rome

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[28] See Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*, 53–61.

[29] And one with almost as long a 'homely' history as "pasty," with the first recorded usage dated 1301. *OED*, s.v. "pie."

remains: symbolically, its ruling class and its military capabilities have been destroyed. There are no civic institutions left either: Aaron the Moor is not being held by the authorities but "in Titus' house" (122), the "sorrowful" household space taking over as the space in which justice is delivered—showing the triumph of the domestic frame over the classical one yet again. All that remains of Rome at the end of the play are Lucius and its two remaining structures, the house of Titus and the tomb of the Andronici. The survival of the former has required him to reinvent himself as leader of the Goths, a radical reinvention that allows him to cleanse Rome, to "heal Rome's harms and wipe away her woe" (147–8), but does so at the expense of almost everything Roman except perhaps its spirit, as preserved in Lucius. As such, he, as Titus' surviving son, figures his father's other theatrical offspring, the new household revenge drama.

The survival of the two spaces that remain at the end of the play is equally telling. In Titus' house, we see that the space of the household is now not just the space of vengeance, but of justice. It is also the space where a new kind of theatre has been invented, one grounded in the domestic and intimately linked with the revelation of truth and the realization of that justice. In the "household monument" that marks the final defeat of the classical by the domestic: the space which symbolized the pinnacle of military and civic honour at the beginning of the play—the "sweet cell of virtue and nobility" (1.1.96), the burial place for Titus' "valiant sons" (34) who were killed serving as "Rome's readiest champions" (154)—has now transformed into what Lucius calls "our household's monument" (5.3.193), marking it finally not as the ultimate repository of Roman values, but instead as a domestic space above all. Rather than frame the violence committed against the Andronici or their subsequent revenge in classical Roman terms, *Titus* turns to the frame of the household. While Rome has fallen by the end of the play, the household monument still stands—and within it a new English domestic revenge tragedy stands articulated.

Much like Titus and Hieronimo, Hamlet is caught between revenge paradigms. In spite of his forerunners' rejection of classical models of revenge, the classical world maintains a hold on Shakespeare's tragedy. From scattered allusions and comparisons,[30] to the recitation of the speech about Pyrrhus and Hecuba, to the glancing references to Roman actors and plays, to the Senecan ghost that sets events in motion, the classical past echoes—even if at times faintly—throughout *Hamlet*. But alongside these echoes, another register asserts itself over the course of the play, that of the early modern domestic. In this final section, I trace the various ways in which the domestic becomes intertwined with the matter of revenge in the play, suggesting that they are central to Shakespeare's articulation of a new form of English revenge tragedy. Like *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus*, *Hamlet* uses the domestic sphere as a site in which to confront the legacy of classical revenge drama and to reconfigure the form for the early modern stage. But in addition to setting itself apart from the classical revenge drama, the play seeks to differentiate itself from the earlier English revenge plays. It does so by not only turning to the domestic but to the domestic tragedies that were staged as Kyd and Shakespeare first experimented with revenge drama. Where the earlier plays used the household as the setting for revenge, *Hamlet* uses the domestic tragedy to articulate a different form of revenge, set in a different form of revenge tragedy.

Hamlet is notoriously metatheatrical—even for a revenge tragedy—and it is through metatheatre that the play confronts the other models of revenge drama against which it seeks to define

[30] Among them, Hamlet's "Hyperion to a satyr" comparison (1.2.140), his description of "Niobe, all tears" (149), the Ghost's reference to "Lethe wharf" (1.4.33), the Player King's opening couplet in *The Mousetrap*, "Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round / Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbèd ground" (3.2.139–40), and Laertes' reference to "o'ertop[ping] old Pelion, or the skyish head / Of blue Olympus" (5.1.237–8). *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* in *The Norton Shakespeare*. All references, unless otherwise noted, are to this edition.

itself. Its theatrical reflexivity takes a particular focus: contemporary English theatrical culture.[31] In the discussion of theatre occasioned by the arrival of the players at Elsinore, Hamlet and his interlocutors explicitly evoke not just an atmosphere of theatrical reflexivity, but the early modern English theatre scene which the play and its performers are part of. Beginning with Hamlet's allusion to the Globe—the very theatrical space in which the play is being staged—with its "majestical roof fretted with golden fire" (2.2.291–2), and continuing through the exchange about the boys' companies, the "little eyases" who are "now the fashion" (326–8), and the reference to the Globe's sign of "Hercules and his load too" (345), the audience is firmly located in the midst of contemporary theatrical culture. By referring to the Globe in particular, the present moment is contrasted not just with the medieval or classical past. but with the early modern theatrical past, locating *Hamlet* in a new, post-1599 theatrical culture. The play seeks to define itself not only against classical but also late-sixteenth-century revenge drama.

In fact, the framing of the Pyrrhus and Hecuba speech—the most extensive moment of classical reference in the play—suggests that it is the more recent revenge drama that *Hamlet* is evoking, and that the classical drama is thus being evoked in a mediated fashion, through the speech taken from "excellent play [. . .] set down with as much modesty as cunning" (420–2) that Hamlet remembers hearing. While this play takes its plot from the classical realm, it is not framed as a translation of an ancient text, and is therefore an early modern staging of a classical story—albeit by now a dated one. Certainly, the speech functions as a reference point for classical drama as well, especially given the importance of Hecuba as an icon for classical revenge in the period,[32] but by prefacing the speech with

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[31] As Tanya Pollard notes in her recent article on the play's reflections on tragic form, these "metatheatrical reflections have typically been situated in the context of Shakespeare's competition with contemporary playwrights," particularly in terms of his negotiation of the "Senecan legacy" of Kyd and the popularity of the boys' companies, who provided "a particular catalyst for reconceiving the shape and function of tragedy." "What's Hecuba to Shakespeare?," 1060.

[32] Pollard offers an extensive overview of Hecuba's importance to sixteenth-century European drama and culture (1063–74).

such a detailed evocation of early modern English theatrical culture, Shakespeare puts as much emphasis on the dramatic form through which the classical is being mediated, implicitly referring to the classicism of plays such as *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus* as detailed above. In *Hamlet*, Hecuba functions not just as an icon of classical revenge, but of the classicism of early modern revenge drama.

The speech itself demonstrates its implicit references to the drama of the 1580s. Not only is it in blank verse, but at various points, the descriptions of the violence shade into familiar territory. Hamlet has to restart his recitation, having begun by likening "the rugged Pyrrhus" to "th'Hyrcanian beast" (430), he switches to a direct description of his "complexion" (435). In restarting, he distances the speech from the classical realm by a degree, substituting not only a visual description of Pyrrhus covered in blood, but one that evokes the same domestic violence at the heart of *Titus*'s household vengeance:

> Head to foot
> Now is he total gules; horridly tricked
> With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
> Baked and impasted with the parching streets,
> That lend a tyrannous and damnèd light
> To their vile murders. Roasted in wrath and fire,
> And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
> With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
> Old grandsire Priam seeks.
>
> (437–44)

He is "[b]aked and impasted" with blood, similar to the "pasties" that Titus prepares,[33] and "[r]oasted with wrath and fire," like a cut of meat. As in his earlier play, Shakespeare draws on the violent imagery of the kitchen rather than using appropriate classical allusions to bring home the full horror of the sight. The description of Hecuba is not only made domestic by the maternal imagery of her "o'erteemed

[33] Impasting could refer specifically to making something into or enclosing with a crust in the period. *OED*, s.v. impaste: "To enclose in or encrust with or as with a paste"; "To make or form into a paste or crust."

loins" (488) and making "milch the burning eyes of heaven" (497),[34] as she too is shifted towards the domestic sphere of the kitchen—"loin" being also a word for a joint of meat, and "milch" being a word usually associated with domesticated milking animals such as cows.[35] And when she sees Pyrrhus hacking at her husband, he is described as "mincing with his sword her husband's limbs" (494), again a word with culinary implications of household butchery and food preparation.[36]

Such domestic imagery and allusions to the household are woven into the play from the beginning. While Hamlet's first soliloquy is perhaps best remembered for its classical comparisons between Old Hamlet and Claudius—"So excellent a king, that was to this / Hyperion to a satyr" (1.2.139–40)—between Gertrude and "Niobe, all tears" (149), and between himself and "Hercules" (153), it also frames his state of mind in household terms, describing a world in need of stewardship, like "an unweeded garden / That grows to seed" (135–6). Moments later, when Hamlet first reveals his feelings about how little time has passed between his father's funeral and his mother's wedding, he uses an image anchored in the realm of householding: "Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (1.2.179–80). He ironically credits the brevity of the interval to one of a householder's chief virtues, that of "thrift" or oeconomical management. The burial and marriage ceremonies are themselves described indirectly through the food served at each, and the brevity emphasized even more through the sensory domestic metaphor of cooking temperature, as being only as short as the time it takes hot "baked" meats to become cold leftovers. More fleetingly, we have Polonius' advice to his son that "[b]orrowing dulls the edge of husbandry" (1.3.77) which refers

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[34] See Pollard, 1062.

[35] *OED*, s.vv. "loin": "In an animal used for food; chiefly, the joint of meat which includes the vertebrae of the loins"; "milch" as an adjective, "Of an animal, originally and usually a domestic animal. Chiefly in compounds, as milch animal, [etc.]"; "milch" as a verb, "To milk (an animal)."

[36] *OED*, s.v. "mince": "To cut up or grind (food, esp. meat) into very small pieces."

directly to householding. And when the Ghost describes the poison acting on his blood he turns to the image of cheesemaking—"it doth posset / and curd, like eager droppings into milk" (1.5.68–9).

More broadly, the play mobilizes an early modern domestic mythos throughout. While Hamlet's objection to the incestuous marriage of his mother to his uncle is often read purely in terms of the incest taboo and his personal feelings about his mother, to an early modern English audience acquainted with recent Tudor marriage history, the union between Claudius and Gertrude also stands as an unlawful domestic transgression. When Laertes bids farewell to his sister as he departs for France, his admonitions about Hamlet's "unmastered importunity" resonate with contemporary proscriptions about women's chastity, and the dangers of opening one's "chaste treasure" (1.3.10–44). Another side of this ideology is seen in Hamlet's facility with misogynist stereotypes in his conversations with Ophelia, and in his references to bawdy nunneries, women's painted faces, their wantonness he makes as he declares that "we will have no more marriages" (3.1.122–49). Few indoor spaces are specifically identified, but one of them is Gertrude's closet, her private room that stands at the centre of the household. Plots of domestic betrayal and violation abound: Old Hamlet's betrayal and murder by his brother, Claudius' seduction of and potential adultery with his brother's wife, the nearly identical plot of the play-within-the-play, the destruction of Laertes' household through his father's murder and his sister's suicide.

Laertes is a particularly important figure in these domestic terms. That he functions as a foil to Hamlet—as an avenger who can actually achieve his revenge—is such a truism that Hamlet himself punningly identifies their structural relationship in the moments before their duel, "I'll be your foil, Laertes" (5.2.192). If Hecuba and Pyrrhus offer (in a mediated fashion) classical models for vengeance that Hamlet cannot—much as he would like to—adopt, then Laertes offers another model, one that follows in Hieronimo's and Titus' avenging footsteps in seeking revenge for household violations. From

Laertes' perspective, *Hamlet* is precisely a domestic revenge play, with its protagonist immediately turned avenger upon hearing of his father's murder: "I'll be revenged / Most throughly for my father" (4.5.131) as he declares. Laertes constitutes an important point of comparison for Hamlet, not just because he can act on his vengeful desires, but because he represents the domestic avenger of early plays. When he confronts Claudius demanding news of his father, Gertrude urges calm, to which Laertes replies in metaphorical terms that resonate with early modern domestic ideology:

> That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,
> Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot
> Even here between the chaste unsmirchèd brows
> Of my true mother.
>
> (4.5.114–7)

His complete dedication to familial honour echoes his earlier advice to Ophelia, drawing on the same domestic vocabulary. And even more revealingly, when he declares that no-one will stand in the way of his revenge, he presents himself explicitly as a householder-avenger, describing his planning using a word drawn directly from the sphere of household management, "And for my means, I'll husband them so well / They shall go far with little" (135–6)— 'Thrift, thrift, Laertes'![37] As the penultimate act draws to a close it is clear that Laertes holds a mirror up to Hamlet as an icon for the domestic revenge dramas of the 1580s.

Hamlet, of course, is unable to adopt either model, unlike the avengers in the earlier plays, who ultimately make the choice to reject the classical in favour of the domestic. In the soliloquy that follows the Hecuba and Pyrrhus speech, he curses himself for not being able to turn his "motive" for revenge into vengeful action, unlike the player for whom "a fiction" suffices as motivation (2.2.527–48). In the process, he marks the beginning of his turn away from or rejection of the classical model of vengeance.

[37] *OED*, s.v. "husband": "To administer as a good householder or steward; to manage with thrift and prudence; to use, spend, or apply economically; to make the most of; to economize; also, to save, lay by a store of."

Working himself up into a fury reminiscent of Hieronimo's, culminating in a cry of "O, vengeance!" (559), he comes up short and berates himself for not planning his revenge and instead falling "a-cursing like a very drab, / A scullion" (564–5). There is a turn to the household realm here, but Hamlet does not invoke the figure of the householder, identifying himself instead as a lowly servant,[38] thus foreshadowing his inability to take on the role of householder-avenger embodied by Laertes.

Having crossed into the domestic realm, Hamlet instead finds an alternative path to vengeance within it. Having reached his nadir, his thoughts turn in a different direction—"About, my brain" he declares, and then recalls an anecdote about the theatre that leads him to a plan:

> I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play
> Have by the very cunning of the scene
> Been struck so to the soul that presently
> They have proclaimed their malefactions;
> [. . .]
> I'll have these players
> Play something like the murder of my father
> Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks,
> I'll tent him to the quick. If a but blench,
> I know my course.
> [. . .]
> The play's the thing
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.
>
> (566–82)

Some see in Hamlet's anecdote a reference to the story from Plutarch related by Sir Philip Sidney (amongst others),[39] "a notable testimony of the abominable tyrant Alexander Pheraeus, from whose eyes a tragedy well made and represented drew abundance of tears, who without all pity had murdered infinite numbers."[40] While that particular story certainly resonates in *Hamlet*, given that the play-

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[38] *OED*, s.v. "scullion": "A domestic servant of the lowest rank in a household."

[39] The story is one that "critics have routinely linked with Hamlet's play-within-the-play." Pollard, 1073.

[40] *The Defence of Poesy*, 28.

within-the-play is indeed played in front of a king, if not a tyrant, it is not the only nor the main point of reference here.

Instead, Hamlet refers to a commonplace in the early modern period about the power of theatre to elicit confession—one that he, with his intimate knowledge of the early modern theatre, would have been familiar with. One of the most common stories on this theme, which Heywood famously repeats in his *Apology for Actors* (1612),[41] concerns a woman in Norfolk who confesses to the murder of her husband. But as I note in the first chapter, it is also found in *A Warning for Fair Women*, a play whose 1599 title-page links it to Shakespeare's company.[42] In that version, we are told about

> A woman that had made away her husband,
> And sitting to behold a tragedy
> At Linne a town in Norffolke,
> Acted by Players travelling that way,
> Wherein a woman that had murtherd hers
> Was ever haunted with her husbands ghost:
> The passion written by a feeling pen,
> And acted by a good Tragedian,
> She was so moved with the sight thereof,
> As she cryed out, the Play was made by her,
> And openly confesst her husbands murder.
>
> (2037–48)

This story not only reveals the affective and revelatory power of tragedy when well-written "by a feeling pen,"[43] but also links a particular kind of tragedy to this effect, the domestic tragedy. The plot of the

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[41] Heywood writes that the "townes-woman (till then of good estimation and report)" was in the audience for a performance by "the then Earl of Sussex players acting the old History of Fryer Francis." At a particular moment in the play, when "a woman who, insatiately doting on a yong gentleman [. . .] mischievously and secreetly murdered her husband," the townswoman, "finding her conscience (at this presentment) extremely troubled, suddenly skritched and cryd out Oh! my husband, my husband!." *Apology for Actors*, sig. G1v. For more on this phenomenon, see Ellen Mackay's *Persecution, Plague, and Fire*, 24–78.

[42] *A Warning for Fair Women* [. . .] *As it hath beene lately diverse times acted by the right Honorable, the Lord Chamberlaine his Servantes* (London: Valentine Sims for William Aspley, 1599).

[43] In a recent article, Allison K. Deutermann situates the story in the context of *Hamlet*'s preoccupation with ears and hearing, suggesting that it "presents a model of theatrical listening similar to that which Hamlet describes, and on which his

play—which Heywood's account makes even more explicit—is clearly an English domestic tragedy. Not only that, but the version of the story most closely linked to Shakespeare is itself a domestic tragedy, and one that reflects explicitly on how to craft tragedy and English tragedy—whose "Sceane is London, native and your owne" (95)—in particular.

Inspired by this domestic-tragedy-within-a-domestic-tragedy, Hamlet devises his own play-within-the-play that uses the model of domestic tragedy, and relies on the particular affective power of tragedy as articulated in those plays that I explore in my first chapter. While *The Murder of Gonzago* has been identified as a revenge tragedy, on the basis of its links to other plays-within-the-play in revenge drama,[44] the plot revealed in the prefatory dumb-show—the King and Queen demonstrate their love, the King falls asleep and is murdered by a man who then successfully woos the Queen (s.d. 3.2.122)—does not follow a revenge tragedy pattern, as there is no avenger nor any vengeance. Instead, linked as it is to *A Warning for Fair Women* and other domestic tragedies, this plot about a marriage undone through adulterous and ultimately murderous desire is far more domestic in nature. Hamlet's explicit invocation of the effects of English domestic tragedy suggests that in its final form—after his insertion of the mysterious "speech of some dozen or sixteen lines which I would set down" (2.2.517–19)

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plot depends." "'Caviare to the general'?: Taste, Hearing, and Genre in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.2 (2011), 230–55: 246–7.

[44] For Deutermann, "Hamlet has chosen to have the players perform a revenge tragedy, *The Murder of Gonzago*, an identification of genre that is crucial" because of what it reveals about how revenge tragedies were understood to work (247–8). She highlights the ways in which play is different from earlier plays-within-the-play: "Rather than sitting in the audience, Hamlet the revenger should be performing; the play-within-the-play typically serves as a screen for violence, as the revenger bursts out of character to stab his listening enemies with accusations of guilt and thrusts of his sword. Even structurally, Hamlet's inset play is not where it is supposed to be: *The Murder of Gonzago* is staged not in *Hamlet*'s final scenes, as such metatheatrical moments are in other revenge tragedies, but in *Hamlet*'s structural center" (248). I want to suggest that these differences result not only from Shakespeare's innovation, but from the fact that he chooses to inset a domestic rather than a revenge tragedy.

perhaps—the play "to catch the conscience of the King" is in fact domestic in genre and English in origin.

But what does it mean to have a domestic tragedy embedded within a revenge tragedy in this manner? As a play-within-a-play that falls in the middle rather than the end, Hamlet's *Mousetrap* is usually read as a subversion of revenge tragedy conventions—a device that, contrary to expectations, does not serve as a means of achieving revenge in the way that it does in, for instance, *The Spanish Tragedy*. Seen in this regard, it functions instead as a device that advances the plot to the point where Hamlet's vengeful desires are finally consummated, while also developing the play's complex, innovative form of metatheatre. I argue instead that the success of *The Mousetrap*—which was framed as a domestic tragedy and functions entirely according to both plan and anecdote—should be read in terms of Hamlet's search for an alternative form of domestic vengeance. Rather than adopt the criteria for what constitutes a successful outcome for revenge (the spectacular deaths of all parties involved in a deliberately planned fashion) from those models that *Hamlet* defines itself against, we should in fact look to how the play redefines not just revenge tragedy, but revenge itself.

In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the successful outcome of Hieronimo's play resulted in the success of his revenge—what if we say the same about *Hamlet*? In that case, Claudius' response and exit, Hamlet's newfound certainty about "the Ghost's word" (3.2.263), his uncle's confessional soliloquy in the next scene, all of these constitute successful vengeance as it has been redefined by the play. The key effect of the play-within-the-play is to reveal a hidden truth through the affective power of tragedy and the resultant self-recognition it engenders. That truth, crucially, is revealed not only to Hamlet, but to the audience who, much as they might side with the tragic protagonist, do not know the truth about the "brother's murder" (3.3.38) until Claudius—like the woman in Norfolk—is forced by tragic recognition to confess. In his search for an alternative domestic model for revenge, Hamlet goes back not to the

early domestic revenge plays of Kyd and Shakespeare, but to their contemporary domestic tragedies. These plays, as my first chapter argues, theorize the main work of tragedy to be the revelation of tragic truth through a combination of affective power and self-recognition. "Thus have you seen the truth of Arden's death" declares the epilogue to *Arden of Faversham*, a "simple truth" which is "gracious enough" to make for an effective tragedy. At the end of *A Warning for Fair Women*, the figure of Tragedie points to how "the launces" of her "true and home-borne" tragedy have "have sluic'd forth sinne, / And ript the venom'd ulcer of foul lust." Thanks to domestic tragedy, the truth will out.

In the middle of *The Mousetrap*, Ophelia tells Hamlet that he is "as good as a chorus" (3.2.224), a figure with whom he is often aligned, as a result of his ongoing commentary on the action of his own play. I would instead align him with the truth-speakers of 1580s and 1590s domestic tragedy, as someone who uses the theatre to uncover and disseminate the truth in a world of lies. Hamlet's revenge lies not in the death of Claudius, but in revealing the true circumstances of his father's death. While Hieronimo cuts out his own tongue in order to say no more, Hamlet repeatedly entreats Horatio to "tell my story" (5.2.291)—a shift foreshadowed in his earlier planning to "catch the conscience" of Claudius, when he declares that "murder, though it have no tongue, will speak / With most miraculous organ" (2.2.570–5). That "organ"—in the sense of a means, a device, or a medium—takes the form of domestic tragedy, and Hamlet's revenge lies in the revelation of truth, as Horatio will tell it. "Thus have you seen the truth of Hamlet's death," to paraphrase *Arden*'s epilogue. Hamlet, by turning to domestic tragedy, finds not just an alternative way of achieving vengeance, but an alternative way of defining revenge. Shakespeare, by making the same turn, finds a new way of defining English revenge tragedy in domestic terms.

DOMESTIC HISTORIES OF ANCIENT BRITAIN

This final chapter considers what I will call the "British history play," a strand of English historical drama that, as I show, is deeply imbricated with the various senses of the domestic developed over the course of this dissertation. I argue that these plays mobilize the same recurrent tropes, conventions, and representational practices as domestic tragedies, including the staging of domestic plots and settings, the deployment of a "homely" theatrical style featuring quotidian, non-elite diction, and a representational practice grounded in verisimilitude and mimesis. As with revenge tragedy, these commonalities are neither entirely separate, parallel developments nor the result of direct borrowing or influence across subgenres. Rather, they are both manifestations of what I suggest was a shared interest amongst playwrights and acting companies in the theatrical complexities of representing truth, veracity, and verisimilitude on stage, and a shared investment in articulating ideas of a new, native and English theatrical tradition. Rooted in the burgeoning theatrical culture of the 1580s and 1590s (a culture that was both competitive and collaborative), the domestic plots and homely style primarily associated with the domestic tragedy but operative in revenge tragedy and the British history plays as well are not only important experiments in English theatrical praxis and representation, but sites of theatrical self-reflexivity in which we see those experiments presented and treated as such. I argue that the British history plays—taking as one of their subjects their own capacity to make history accessible—explore the specifically *historiographical* potential of the same kinds of formal, stylistic, and theatrical devices that the domestic tragedies use as the basis for the alternative model of tragedy that they articulate.

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THE "BRITISH HISTORY PLAY"

As the term suggests, British history plays feature plots derived from the history of ancient Britain, rather than that of medieval England that forms the basis for the history plays associated primarily with Shakespeare's tetralogies. These plays—a group that includes Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc*, presented at the Inns of Court in 1560–1, the anonymous *The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine* (c. 1587–91), *Nobody and Somebody, with The True Chronicle History of Elydure* (c. 1592), *The True Chronicle History of Leir, King of Britain* (c. 1594), Shakespeare's own *King Lear* (c. 1605), and Thomas Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent* (c. 1615–20)—have often been considered at the periphery of the period's staged history tradition, if they are even read as histories in the first place.[1] (That *Lear* is usually read as tragedy first and history second is indicative of the typical critical treatment of these texts.) In this chapter, however, I follow the lead of recent critical work on early modern theatrical culture that views sixteenth-century historical drama as a field comprised of various experiments in dramatic history writing in which complex lines of development, evolution, and cross-pollination can be traced.[2]

Recently, critics like Brian Walsh, who undertake a repertory approach to the history play by reading play texts not in authorial terms but in the context of the company that owned and staged

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[1] In terms of lost texts, Geoffrey Bullough identifies some "twenty or so relevant plays in Henslowe's list," including John Day and Henry Chettle's two-part *The Conquest of Brute*, Williams Rankins' *Mulmutius Dunwallow*, Michael Drayton and Thomas Dekker's *Conan Prince of Cornwall*, and the anonymous *Brute Greenshield* (all 1598). "Pre-Conquest Historical Themes in Elizabethan Drama," in *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. D. A. Pearsall & R. A. Waldron (London: Athlone Press, 1969), 289–321: 316–20.

[2] Recent criticism has sought to broaden the definition of the genre. Rather than define it as "a play about English dynastic politics of the feudal and immediately post-feudal period" (G. K. Hunter, "Truth and Art in History Plays," *Shakespeare Survey* 42 [1989], 15–24: 15–16), critics include plays on British, Roman, biblical, and ecclesiastical history. For this "more catholic approach to the genre," see the introduction to *English Historical Drama 1500–1660*, eds. T. Grant & B. Ravelhofer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2008), 1–31: 2. See also Paulina Kewes, "The Elizabethan History Play: A True Genre?," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Histories*, 170–93: 172.

them,[3] have argued in particular for the importance of the Queen's Men—the playing company founded in 1583 at the behest of Elizabeth I—as a matrix for innovation and experimentation in dramatic history writing.[4] This recognition is part of a larger re-evaluation of the Queen's Men's influence on the theatrical culture and the "dramatic language" of the time.[5] I want to suggest that the company forms the origin point not only for the more traditionally defined English history play, as Walsh has suggested, but that it also configures the British history play as a particular kind of dramatic experiment.[6] Central to that experiment is a characteristic dramaturgical style, one that Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean describe as based on a "literalism of the theatre" that "assumes that the real language of showmanship is objective and visual," setting it apart from Shakespeare, Marlowe, and

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[3] For a pioneering, full-fledged example of this approach, see Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. xi–xvii.

[4] As Walsh writes, "the repertory of the Queen's Men is a vital site to examine how the form [of the history play], as developed by Shakespeare, took its initial shapes," as it provides "narrative models for six Shakespeare plays, all with claims on the past: *Richard III*, from *The True Tragedy of Richard III*; *King John*, from *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England*; *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV*, and *Henry V*, from *The Famous Victories of Henry V*; and *King Lear* from *King Leir*." *Shakespeare, The Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 30.

[5] As the editors of a recent volume on the company argue, the rich experimentation of the Queen's Men can be traced throughout the later plays of the period: their "dramatic language [. . .] clearly continued to speak in many ways, and in complex ways, to the playwrights and playgoers of late Elizabethan England." *Locating the Queen's Men, 1583–1603: Material Practices and Conditions of Playing*, eds. Andrew Griffin, Helen Ostovich, & Holger Syme (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 23. The bulk of the British history plays written and performed in the 1580s and 1590s that I have listed are associated with the Queen's Men. Some of these associations are more definite than others. *Leir* is explicitly linked to the company thanks to a note by Henslowe. Roslyn Knutson argues persuasively on the basis of internal evidence (particularly the clown scenes) that both *Locrine* (published by Thomas Creede, a printer associated with the Queen's Men) and *Nobody and Somebody* (which names "The Queens Maeisties Seruants" on its title-page) are part of the repertory. Dating these plays is a thorny issue, as Knutson's speculative tone and my approximate dates indicate. *Leir* has a performance date of 1594, but is only printed in 1605. *Locrine* is entered into the Stationer's Register in 1594 and printed in 1595, but likely written and performed in the mid to late 1580s. *Nobody and Somebody* is particularly difficult to date: registered in 1606, the play has been assigned to Queen Anne's Men on account of the title-page reference, but the aforementioned internal evidence appears to suggest an earlier 1590s date. See Knutson, "The Start of Something Big," *Locating the Queen's Men*, 99–108.

[6] Setting my focus, like Walsh's, apart from most critical approaches to the early modern history play, which have with little exception "tended to focus on the genre's topical relevance for Elizabethan and Jacobean questions of national identity, kingly authority, and the interpellation of subjects." Walsh, *Shakespeare, The Queen's Men*, 2.

Kyd.[7] Elements of that dramaturgy include—in addition to the particularly influential (and pioneering) use of a roaming, punning clown and of subplots—a "medley" style where 'high' and 'low' genres and acting styles meet, a plain, homely diction and speaking style. There is thus a good deal of overlap between this dramaturgy and that of the domestic tragedies—especially in terms of the use of theatrical literalism and a thoroughgoing plainness, deriving from a shared investment in representing the same kind of "simple truth" mentioned in the epilogue to *Arden of Faversham*.

I suggest that in the British history plays, the Queen's Men not only actively and self-reflexively experiment with the historiographical potential of this dramaturgy, but also with the potential of household settings and domestic plots as a means of staging history. In so doing, they draw on an older tradition of representing political history in domestic terms and on the theatrical experiments with theatrical realism also happening in contemporary domestic tragedies. Thus (I argue), these plays—relegated by critics to the periphery of the period's tradition of staged history—operate in the late sixteenth century as a full-fledged alternative tradition of history play, one that not only stages history but is explicitly concerned with *how* to stage the quasi-mythic past for contemporary audiences in a way that makes its meanings accessible. Thus, when Shakespeare writes *King Lear*, I assert, he not only draws on the plots of two earlier British history plays (*Leir* and *Gorboduc*) but engages with a whole theatrical historiographical tradition that extends back through the Queen's Men to *Gorboduc*, a tradition which *Lear* very much reflects and reflects on in its dramaturgy, its focus on households and the domestic, and its conception of the temporal distance between historical past and performative present.

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[7] McMillin and MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays*, 128. See 121–54 for a detailed overview of the company's dramaturgy.

These issues of historical representation and interpretation are part of larger sixteenth-century conversations both historiographical and theatrical.[8] As plays about England's historical past, the British history plays participate in the large-scale cultural project of imagining the communities whose histories they stage and to whom they stage these histories,[9] a project rendered necessary by what critics have long described as a widespread sense of the irrevocable loss of the past.[10] In spite of that loss, "history"—as the burgeoning historical culture of the period shows—held a particular fascination for early modern England, and while "Elizabethan playwrights, performers, and playgoers recognized the past as absent," they still "for intellectual stimulation and aesthetic satisfaction [. . .] sought imaginative contact with it anyway."[11] Into this gap came the early modern history play—a dramatic form that capitalized on the desire to reconnect with and be entertained by the past. The Queen's Men understood the particular power of drama to generate what Puttenham called a "lively image of our dear forefathers,"[12] recognizing that (as Walsh puts it), "it is on the stage [. . .] where some version of a 'lively image' of the past can be most strikingly achieved."[13] They recognized too, as I will argue, the deficiencies of the mode of theatrical historiography articulated in a play such as *Gorboduc*, which to

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[8] On the transformations in English historical thought in the period, see the work of D. R. Woolf cited in the first chapter. On early modern historical culture in relationship to historical drama, see Walsh, *Shakespeare, Queen's Men*, esp. 1–47.

[9] See Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*; Howard and Rackin, *Engendering a Nation*; Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1390–1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[10] As Andrew Escobedo writes, historical writing of the period was marked by "a profound sense that the English past was missing and unrecoverable, even as it celebrated English history." *Nationalism and Historical Loss in Renaissance England: Foxe, Dee, Spenser, Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 3. In England, the early modern relationship to the ancient past was thus, as Helgerson has shown, fraught with "intractable doubleness and self-alienation." *Forms of Nationhood*, 22.

[11] Walsh, *Shakespeare, The Queen's Men*, 7.

[12] George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, eds. F. Whigham & W. A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 129.

[13] *Shakespeare, The Queen's Men*, 17–18.

some extent certainly does seek to instruct and entertain by reconnecting with the past, but that remains constrained by its adherence to older dramatic forms.

The company's *Famous Victories of Henry V* is often identified as the first Elizabethan history play,[14] inaugurating a tradition of monarch-centred historical drama (culminating in those Shakespeare plays identified as "Histories" in the First Folio) that centres "in some way on contested kingship and crises of succession; that is, on interruptions and threats to continuity at the level of national leadership and the forms of national community centered on particular ruling figures and houses."[15] But in its early phases, I want to suggest, this historical drama—as a new dramatic form responding to a very particular set of cultural concerns—necessarily consisted of multiple strands, in that it could not simply spring fully formed onto the stage in 1587. By focusing on those plays that directly influence the later history plays—*The Famous Victories*, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, *The Troublesome Reign of John*—aspects of the Queen's Men's innovations in dramatic historiography remain hidden. That is to say, even if the Shakespearean history play forms the telos of a study of the genre, the larger historical oeuvre of the Queen's Men and of the late 1580s and 1590s must be considered part of the matrix that produced them, in particular if the focus lies on *how* the staging of history was approached and on "the dramatic exploration of the *idea* of history" in the period.[16]

Two 'un-Shakespearean' history plays are, I think, illustrative in this regard: *The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine* and *Arden of Faversham*, both (potentially) contemporaneous with *The Famous*

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[14] McMillan and MacLean date the play to "before mid 1587." *The Queen's Men and their Plays*, 89–90.

[15] Walsh, 19.

[16] Ibid., 2.

Victories,[17] both inquiries into dramatic historiography, into how one goes about staging history. As my first chapter suggests, *Arden* (like the later domestic tragedies) can in fact be read as a history play that experiments in particular with the demand for "liveliness" in historical representations, to paraphrase Puttenham. If the historical drama as a form was well-suited to meet the demands for "lively image[s]" of the past, then the various ways in which the dramatists of domestic tragedy created verisimilitude in the worlds they presented on stage represent an especially focused experiment in creating such images—"lively" meant not just energetic or vigorous in the period, but also lifelike.[18] In *Locrine* meanwhile, a historical narrative taken from the very opposite end of the historical record, we see two forms of historical dramatization on stage, one highly rhetorical with lengthy set-speeches, one homely and broadly entertaining with humorous scenes and anachronistic references. In other words, the play revives a *Gorboduc*-like mode of staging history and juxtaposes it against a mode grounded in the Queen's Men's innovative dramaturgy, focused on a roaming clown figure who embodies the deliberate anachronism associated with the company's style,[19] but whose diction and referential lexicon would make him equally at home in a contemporary domestic tragedy. In *Locrine*, in other words, the company's reflections on and innovations in dramatic historiography become particularly visible.

Ancient British history, I want to suggest, forms a particularly valuable site to dramatists to engage the problems of historiography. For these plays—whose plots are rooted in Geoffrey of

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[17] As noted earlier, *Arden* is usually dated between 1587 and 1591, while *Locrine* has been dated as early as the mid-1580s, and as late as 1591.

[18] *OED*, s.v. "lively": (from c. 1330) "Of an image, picture, or description: lifelike. Also: that brings the subject to life; that represents the original faithfully."

[19] As Walsh writes, "[c]lowning with history is a signature move of the Queen's Men." *Shakespeare, The Queen's Men*, 48. For anachronism as a historiographical device and in relationship to clowning, see ibid., 1–73. Phyllis Rackin is the first critic to consider anachronism in early modern history plays as integral to their historiographical dramaturgy. *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), esp. 86–145.

Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), a chronicle of legendary British rulers that traces the founding of Britain to the Trojan Brute, great-grandson of Aeneas—the project of staging national history was particularly fraught, as the factual and historical validity of this work was being called into question during the so-called historical revolution of the sixteenth century,[20] and with it the narrative of an idealized classical past that Geoffrey had described—or, as early modern historians were realizing, imagined and invented.[21] As Jodi Mikalachki has argued, the undermining of Geoffrey's authority in the late sixteenth century sparked a crisis she calls the "intellectual problems of native origins." If the "historiographical recovery of ancient Britain" was an important project, especially to "those concerned with the articulation of national identity" and thus with the origins and antiquity of the English nation, then the destabilizing of the Galfridian chronicle history—which had provided narratives about those origins—also destabilized those ideas of national origin and identity, showing the British past to be troublingly barbaric and uncivilized.[22]

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[20] As Woolf's work has shown, that "revolution" was a complex and slow-moving process. For a nuanced critique of the "historical revolution" narrative, see Andrew Hadfield, "Sceptical History and the Myth of the Historical Revolution," *Renaissance and Reformation* 29.1 (2005): 25–44.

[21] Polydore Vergil was the first to question Geoffrey's validity in the early decades of the century, and while his doubts about Brute and Britain's Trojan origins were initially dismissed, subsequent historical and antiquarian research showed his reservations to be wholly justified. Kamps, 10–11; Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England*, 23–4. However, that process was slow and complex like the historical revolution itself, and Galfridian history thus continued to exist as both fact and fiction for much of the century, its veracity championed by, amongst others, Protestant thinkers attempting to distance England from Rome in all possible ways. See John E. Curran, Jr, *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and the Historical Imagination in England, 1530–1660* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2002).

[22] *The Legacy of Boadicea: Gender and Nation in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1998), 1. Mikalachki argues that rather than simply building a national identity upon the newly revised earliest British history, "early modern English nationalists devoted considerable energy and ingenuity to distancing the modern nation from its native origins" (2). Historiographical works on ancient Britain, and artistic/literary works that represented it—such as the plays I consider in this chapter—are in her view constantly striving to distance themselves from their prehistory, turning instead to the relative stability of Roman Britain "as the only firm ground in the watery abyss of native antiquity" (8). I would suggest that the history plays under consideration in this chapter complicate this narrative of "the rejection of a purely native antiquity" in favour of a Romano-British ideal (10).

Rather than working out a solution to this intellectual problem—or, as Mikalachki claims of *Lear*,[23] showing it to be unsolvable—the British history plays, I suggest, take on a different kind of what Mikalachki calls "national self-articulation"—and do so precisely through their problematic subject matter.[24] Playing on the liminality of the Galfridian stories—positioned as they are between history and myth—they make the question of what to do with history a part of their problematic. They translate this historiographical problem into a theatrical question: about what it means to be writing and staging particularly English drama, about incorporating and reacting against native and foreign theatrical traditions, and thus about the creation of a domestic theatrical culture (self-conscious concerns they share with plays such as *Arden* or *A Warning*). Galfridian history is the ideal subject matter for this historiographical reflexivity, this meditation on what functions history serves, on what it means to stage history, and on how best to do so. In their reflections, they recuperate Galfridian myth precisely as myth, recognizing it as a storeroom of *native* myths that provide English dramatists with their own set of plot archetypes centring (like ancient Greek and Roman myths) on stories of families and households and useful (as their classical counterparts were for Seneca and other classical dramatists) for both political didacticism and effective story-telling.

At the heart of that recognition lies an understanding of the affective power of representations of the household and domesticity on theatrical audiences. If the central historiographical question posed by the British history plays is about how best to stage a historical drama that bridges the gap between past and present to teach and entertain its audience, the answer that the plays give lies in the domestic. Already in *Gorboduc*, we see dramatists emphasizing the domestic aspects of their mythical

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[23] For her, *Lear* is a "tragedy of native origins" that represents pre-Roman Britain and the ancient past as fundamentally irrecoverable and irredeemable, beyond "all the tools of national recovery." Ibid., 69, 4.

[24] Ibid., 10.

narrative, structuring the political in familial terms. When the Queen's Men stage British history, they build on this historiographical insight, not only structuring the political in domestic terms, but turning to a particular stage language designed to elicit audience recognition through its familiarity and immediacy: the tropes, conventions, and concerns perhaps most associated with the period's domestic tragedies (the interest in ordinary life, a plain and homely style and diction, the evocation of a domestic mythos). Like those tragedies, the British history plays recognize the particular theatrical power of domestic representations as a means through which to reach, affect, and teach their audiences. The Queen's Men, in other words, draw from a reservoir of native myths and also stage them in a native style, through tropes, language, archetypal plots and characters that make them familiar and accessible to popular audiences, as demonstrated by the deliberately anachronistic, contemporaneous domestic mythos that their history plays evoke. On both ends, the truth they are after is largely affective—felt, experienced—a truth not of what the past looks like, but what it can do as theatre. The same kind of truth—one that "must move the soule [. . .] Extorting teares out of the strictest eyes"—that Tragedie wishes to articulate in *A Warning for Fair Women* (as I argue in my first chapter).

In what follows, I consider three particular moments in the British history play tradition I have delineated here. I begin with *Gorboduc*, oft-cited for its enduring influence on English history play writing, and a direct source for Shakespeare's *Lear*. I certainly acknowledge its influence, but want to consider it in more particular terms, building on the fact that this important early historical drama is specifically a British history play. I suggest that in writing their play, Sackville and Norton not only set in motion a vogue for staging history but also created a template for a specific kind of historical drama that uses the familial and domestic to structure the political—marking the beginning of a history play tradition that endures in one form or another right until Middleton's *Hengist*. Next, I consider the transition from the Inns of Court to the commercial stage in the late 1580s. In *Locrine*, itself a play that

may have made that same transition, the Queen's Men take the form and develop it, adding signature dramaturgical elements such as a double plot and a punning clown to the Senecan domestic history of *Gorboduc*, using those elements to introduce a different way of staging history that relies on plain diction, a homely style, and anachronistic references to contemporary ordinary life. These additions are not solely made for the purposes of easing the play into the popular theatre—I contend instead that they are part of a self-reflexive experiment in writing history that juxtaposes high classicism and homeliness as part of its historiographical method.

The 'new' style of theatrical historiography that intrudes in *Locrine*'s subplot finds fuller expression, I argue, in the company's *Leir* play, which moves away from a kind of high-classical dramaturgical style altogether, embracing instead the deliberate anachronism and homeliness of the earlier play's subplot to tell its history. Its importance for my argument lies in its style. As the main dramatic source of *King Lear*, the Queen's Men play provides an important link between Shakespeare's play and an alternative tradition of theatrical historiography—showing it to be a British history play (albeit a tragic one) rather than a tragedy removed from the realm of the historical, as has often been argued. Shakespeare draws on the plots of two of these plays—*Gorboduc* and *Leir*—but also on the conventions associated with the form (the punning clown again, the household as locus and frame, deliberate anachronisms, the contrast between high and homely, etc.) to craft a play that reflects on the staging of history. I argue that in *Lear*, Shakespeare turns to the same theatrical conventions and dramaturgical style being experimented with in the earlier British histories as a means through which to bridge the gap between ancient past and early modern present, not just to make the story accessible, but to actually suggest that the past itself is still accessible by mapping the present onto it.

Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc* (1561) is one of the earliest English history plays, famous for "combining domestic history with a Senecan form,"[25] the first (in other words) to adapt the model of Senecan tragedy for the staging of British history.[26] Drawing on the mid-century vogue for Seneca's works in England, Sackville and Norton created a neo-Senecan tragedy around the story of the ancient British king Gorboduc and his two sons Ferrex and Porrex.[27] But the play is not slavishly classical: while Sidney praised the play for "climbing to the height of Seneca's style" and for its "notable morality" in *The Defence of Poesy*, he also complained about it as "very defectuous in the circumstances," as being "faulty both in place and time" and thus failing as a classical tragedy by disregarding the unities.[28] Unlike fellow admirers of Seneca,[29] the playwrights were not interested in simply translating his works but in making something new, something particularly English out of their form. By turning to native theatrical traditions, marrying Senecan elements (such as a five-act structure, lengthy and sententious rhetorical set-pieces, and a fascination with violence and vengeance) to the dumb-show and other elements drawn from morality plays such as *Everyman* and *Mankind* and from civic shows and

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[25] Michael Ullyot, "Seneca and the Early Elizabethan History Play," *English Historical Drama 1500–1660*, eds. T. Grant & B. Ravelhofer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2008), 98.

[26] *Gorboduc* was written for the 1561 Inner Temple Christmas celebrations, performed for Elizabeth I on 18 January 1562, and published in 1565 by William Griffith.

[27] For the English neo-Senecan tradition, see Ullyot, who situates *Gorboduc* and Thomas Legge's Latin play *Richardus Tertius* (1579) in their larger academic and cultural contexts. See also Jessica Winston's important re-evaluation of Seneca's influence on the period, "Seneca in Early Elizabethan England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006): 29–55 and her reading of *Gorboduc* in the context of the Inns of Court, "Reforming the Political Nation: *Gorboduc* at the Inns of Court and Succession Revisited," *Early Theatre* 8.1 (2005): 11–34; see also Howard B. Norland, "Adapting to the Times: Expansion and Interpolation in the Elizabethan Translations of Seneca," *Classical and Modem Literature* 16 (1996), 241–63; and Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*.

[28] *The Defence of Poesy*, 44–5.

[29] Nine of Seneca's ten tragedies were translated by the end of the 1560s, and all ten were anthologized in translation in 1581, but *Gorboduc* was the first original Senecan play. Winston, "Seneca," 30–1.

pageants such as London's recent welcoming triumph for Elizabeth in 1559, Sackville and Norton adapted the Seneca form for the English stage.[30]

Gorboduc thus undoubtedly represents a key milestone in the native English theatrical tradition, a starting point not only for Seneca's enduring influence on early modern drama but also for the elevation of native history to stageworthiness. Along with John Bale's *King Johan* (c. 1540–50), Sackville and Norton's drama is one of the very first English history plays. But while this status is usually acknowledged, the play itself is most often read in political terms, as a text that uses history to teach political lessons: on the one hand about political advice and counsel, and on the other about the succession of political power, an issue that critics often link topically to contemporaneous concerns about Elizabeth's refusal to name a political successor.[31] Such readings are undoubtedly revealing, but tend to obscure or ignore *Gorboduc*'s status as history play, as a play that not only takes history as its subject, but also stages and advocates for a particular kind of theatrical historiography, i.e. a particular way of representing history on stage. I suggest that the play's Senecanism is not just a nod to the contemporary vogue for classical authors, but a part of its historiographical apparatus. The writers turn

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[30] In his important study of the early modern history play—referring to the play as the "first history play entirely free from morality abstractions"—Irving Ribner saw Seneca as in fact bringing form to the English stage and reining in the "accretion of extraneous horseplay" that marked later morality plays: "Senecan models did lend a precision and form to what had become a rambling and often incoherent drama. *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1965), 37–9. As Mike Pincombe notes, while *Gorboduc* is the "first classical English tragedy" it is also "a mixture of neo-classical and vernacular—even popular—elements." "English Renaissance tragedy: theories and antecedents," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, eds. E. Smith & G. A. Sullivan, Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3–16: 8. See also Benjamin Griffin's book-length overview of the development of English historical drama, *Playing the Past: Approaches to English Historical Drama 1385–1600* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001).

[31] See, for instance, Dermot Cavanagh's chapter on "The Language of Counsel in *Gorboduc*" (*Language and Politics in the Sixteenth-Century History Play* [London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004], 36–57) and Andrew Hadfield's discussion in "Tragedy and the nation state" (*Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, 30–43). Classic studies include Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977) and David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

to Seneca because he offers them a particular way of thinking about and staging history, which is one of the issues of interest that they signal from the very beginning of the play.

Like later British histories, *Gorboduc* foregrounds the problems that attend historiographical representation The opening dumb-show of the play offers perhaps its most memorable image: "six wild men clothed in leaves" enter, one carrying a bundle of sticks, "which they all, both severally and together, assayed with all their strengths to break," until realizing that by "plucking out all the other sticks one after another" they can "easily break them, the same being severed" (1.0.1–9).[32] Famously, that image purports to teach the inherent danger that political division poses to the state—"Hereby was signified that a state knit in unity doth continue strong against all force, but being divided, is easily destroyed" (11–13)—an apt lesson with which to begin the Gorboduc story. The structure of the dumb-show also reveals how it and those that follow at the beginning of each act generate meaning. The scene of the wild men is followed by the lesson about political division, which is followed by linking the lesson to the historical events about to be staged: "as befell upon King Gorboduc dividing his land to his two sons, which he before held in monarchy, and upon the dissension of the brethren, to whom it was divided" (13–15). Dumb-show is revealed as allegory, and along with history serves to exemplify a political lesson.

By opening with a dumb-show, the writers immediately raise the problem of representation and interpretation. The miniature performance only generates meaning, after all, in the published text, where description ("*the Order of the Dumb Show*") is coupled to political interpretation ("*the Signification Thereof*") and ultimately to historical events. It is not made clear how this meaning was signalled to the audience during the play's actual performance—the dumb-show, appropriately, does

[32] *Gorboduc, or, Ferrex and Porrex*, ed. I. B. Cauthen Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970). Unless otherwise noted, all references are to this edition.

not speak for itself. The straightforwardness of the description belies the complexity of the underlying problem of deriving and controlling interpretations. This complexity is acknowledged in and dealt with through the use of extensive and exhaustive summations and interpretations by the printed significations, by a chorus at the end of each act, and by various characters (notably, the excessive hundred-line epilogue spoken by the king's secretary Eubulus). *Gorboduc* is a history play, then, that opens by demonstrating the problems inherent in staged performance and couples those problems to its own didactic endeavour which links the historical and the political. From the beginning, a kind of historiographical awareness is thus generated and signalled. In writing a history play that seeks to teach political lessons, Sackville and Norton from the beginning confront the question of how to stage history in order to present the lessons that they seek to teach.

Given the cultural weight of his tragedies at the time, particularly in the academic and intellectual circles around the Inns of Court, Sackville and Norton's choice of Seneca as their dramatic model is appropriate. And for a play that seeks to teach political lessons, that seeks to instruct more than entertain, the sententiousness and morally didactic nature of Seneca's tragedies are also appropriate. As a model for a history play, however, these Latin texts are an odd choice—particularly given the availability of native historical drama models both old (biblical and cycle plays) and new (Bale's *King Johan*). Seneca is not, first and foremost, interested in the historicity of his source material. He quite clearly handles them as mythical stories from which general lessons can be derived—hence, rather than represent Roman history (or even Roman myth), Seneca reworks Greek myths that are already mediated through the plays of dramatists such as Aeschylus (e.g. *Agamemnon*) and Euripides (e.g. *The Trojan Women*).

I suggest that it is in this use of myth that the historiographical appeal of the Senecan model lies. As already noted, Geoffrey's legendary histories were already positioned somewhere between history

and myth in the sixteenth century, providing a partial motivation for treating these British narratives in a mythical dramatic framework. The fact that Sackville and Norton stage the Gorboduc story to derive not general moral lessons in the Senecan fashion but rather specific political ones, suggests precisely that the story serves both as myth (it exists to teach lessons) and as history (it details specific historical events of direct relevance to contemporary political events). One of the first historiographical insights of the play, then, lies in the value of creating connections between the historical and the contemporary, collapsing the temporal distance between past and present. The play uses the instructive power of mythical drama as a vehicle for historically and politically specific lessons. This power derives from the undeniable thematic kinship between classical and British stories. The Gorboduc story lends itself well to the "usual Senecan themes" of "the danger of pride, the impetuosity of youth, the fickleness of fortune, the inexorability of fate, the certainty of death,"[33] while the queen's murder of her own son for killing his older brother brings the central Senecan theme of vengeance into the story as well.

Seneca's plays offer striking parallels to the British histories in the types of plot they feature. The story of Thyestes—caught in a struggle with his own brother, involved in an affair with his sister-in-law, made to eat his own children—or of Agamemnon—killed by his own wife and her lover—these are tales that resonate with the story of Gorboduc—caught between his two sons, one of whom kills the other and is in turn killed by his mother, who in turn is killed along with her husband—or of Leir. These are not strict parallels, but about a resonance between plots that centre on the domestic turmoil of ruling households, and it is this resonance that leads Sackville and Norton to this particular model. In this dramatic model, that turmoil is not presented as incidental to the action of each play but rather as constitutive of it, and of the historical events being portrayed. Each of these stories are told in familial

[33] *Gorboduc*, xvi.

rather than political terms, even though they are of course *both* political and familial. Thyestes and his brother Atreus are represented as being involved in a familial rather than factional rivalry, Agamemnon is not usurped by a rival political alliance that has ruled in his stead, but is killed by Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus for 'domestic' reasons. Historical political events do not determine but are instead themselves determined by household relationships and tensions. Sackville and Norton take the Senecan model and use it to tell a native story, recognizing in that model the theatrical power inherent in familial drama and domestic turmoil and harnessing that power to create a means through which to stage and to understand British history. *Gorboduc* uses the frame of the domestic—the family and the household—as a powerful means of staging political history.

The "Argument of the Tragedy" published at the beginning of the text makes clear that the political will be structured in this fashion. The political consequences of a divided and uncertain succession are clearly laid out: the people rebel, the ensuing civil unrest pits the people against the nobility and ultimately the nobility against themselves—civil unrest leads to civil war leads to civil destruction: "the Land for a long time almost desolate and miserably wasted," as the last part of the argument puts it. But it is the familial that lies behind this destruction, as it is in the very first line of the argument that we find its ultimate cause: "Gorboduc, king of Britain, divided his Realm in his lifetime to his Sons, Ferrex and Porrex." The "division and dissention" that results between the brothers foreshadows the ensuing civil war. When Porrex kills his older brother, he himself is killed by his mother Videna, who had favoured Ferrex. The "cruelty of the fact" of this domestic violation is what leads to the people's rebellion and leaves the country without a monarch or line of succession.

In *Gorboduc*, domestic discord is not only the cause of historical crisis, but actually becomes the framework within which that history is staged. Even though the play is a political lesson about the danger of divided succession, the first scene is not in fact the division of the kingdom, but instead an

exchange between Videna and her favoured son Ferrex, the rightful heir by the laws of primogeniture, and thus the party that stands to lose by Gorboduc's problematic decision. Here the prime causes of civil unrest and destruction are to be found: in Gorboduc's equal treatment of his sons (Porrex has been "raised to equal rule" [1.1.33] as Videna says), in the "jealous mind" (39) of Videna herself, in the denial of Ferrex's "birth, right and heritage" (26). It is only after the establishment of these familial dynamics that Gorboduc and his advisors are seen to engage in their political debate about kingship, succession, and the consequences of dividing the kingdom. When the king's secretary and faithful adviser Eubulus attempts to convince Gorboduc to make Ferrex the sole heir by virtue of primogeniture, he goes right back to the first king Brute and his division of the realm:

> The mighty Brute, first prince of all this land
> Possessed the same and ruled it well in one;
> He, thinking that the compass did suffice
> For his three sons three kingdoms eke to make
> Cut it in three, as you would now in twain.
> But how much British blood hath since been spilt
> To join again the sundered unity!
> What princes slain before their timely hour?
> What waste of towns and people in the land?
> What treasons heaped on murders and on spoils?
>
> (1.2.270–9)

The primal scene of civil discord in British history, then, arises out of familial division—is framed as a scene of Senecan domestic discord. In Eubulus' reading of British history, the primal scene of conflict, the scene that precedes all large-scale historical events and conflicts of political division and reunification, derives from domestic discord. And he fears the same will happen again: the falling out that he imagines between the two brothers is not political in nature, only in outcome, Ferrex may feel that he "doth suffer greater wrong / Than he perchance will bear" (287–8), either brother may "envy in the other's heart enflame" (294). Again, he emphasizes the outward direction, from micro- to macro-domestic: "This fire [of envy] shall waste their love, their lives, their land" (295).

Eubulus returns to this theme in his final speech, which serves as a lengthy epilogue to the play. In describing the "woeful wreck / And utter ruin of this noble realm" (5.2.181–2), he again seizes on the dire consequences of familial division. Not only does it spell the complete extinction of that family ("Lo, here the end of Brutus' royal line" [180]), it also spreads exponentially outward from that initial household's destruction, which is rendered in just one line: "The royal king and eke his sons are slain" (183). The immediate political consequences are described in two lines—"No ruler rests within the regal seat; / The heir, to whom the scepter 'longs, unknown" (184–5)—while the threat of invasion by the "force of foreign princes' power" who will make Britain "[a] present spoil by conquest" (186–194) is given almost ten lines. This continual gathering of destructive momentum culminates in an extraordinary thirty-line visualization of civil collapse. "[C]ivil arms shall rage," "a thousand mischiefs shall unfold," and "[a]ll right and law shall cease" (201–4), Eubulus declares, offering a set of vivid and violent examples:

> The wives shall suffer rape, the maids deflowered;
> And children fatherless shall weep and wail;
> With fire and sword thy native folk shall perish;
> One kinsman shall bereave another's life;
> The father shall unwitting slay the son;
> The son shall slay the sire and know it not.
> Women and maids the cruel soldier's sword
> Shall pierce to death, and silly children, lo,
> That playing in the streets and fields are found,
> By violent hands shall close their latter day.
> Whom shall the fierce and bloody soldier
> Reserve to life? Whom shall he spare from death?
>
> (209–20)

Of the "fruits" that "civil wars will bring" (233), these are the most powerful, removed from political sententiousness into the realm of lived experience. In order to make the case most effectively, Eubulus renders civil dissolution in homely domestic terms, as the destruction of Britain's "native folk": wives and maids will be raped, kinsmen will turn on each other, as will fathers and sons. Soldiers will kill

children "playing in the streets and fields"—a powerful image of the destruction not just of innocence, but of a homely way of life. Domestic discord leads ultimately to domestic destruction.

Surprisingly, given its explicit didacticism, *Gorboduc* does not restage this lesson in the form of a dumb-show. To my mind, this reads as an acknowledgement of the representational problems inherent in the kind of allegorical drama represented by that kind of performance. Better to do as Eubulus does, and teach the lesson in vivid descriptive blank verse that uses potent images of civil and domestic destruction. The opening dumb-show, then, can be read as a failed allegorical staging that precedes a more successful historical staging. The final dumb-show of the play, which opens the fifth act, bears this out, showing the triumph of historical representation over the allegorical: "a company of harquebussiers and of armed men, all in order of battle" enter, discharge their weapons, and depart. "Hereby," we learn, "was signified tumults, rebellions, arms, and civil wars to follow as fell in the realm of Great Britain which, by the space of fifty years and more, continued in civil war between the nobility after the death of King Gorboduc and of his issues, for want of certain limitation in the succession of the crown" (5.0.1–10). In the place of the wild men and their bundle of sticks, we have a stage army that represents an actual army. Allegory is replaced by a different kind of theatrical representation where the visual events on stage represent the historical events literally rather than allegorically.[34] The problem of staging history for the purpose of teaching political lessons implicit in the play's opening is seemingly resolved by its end: rather than represent political events through allegory, Sackville and Norton turn to

[34] The trajectory suggested here is borne out by the intermediate act-opening dumb-shows: while the second offers a lesson about counsel and flattery through an allegory of cups of wine and of poison, the third show abandons allegory, consisting simply of "a company of mourners, all clad in black" depicting the "death and sorrow" resulting from Ferrex's murder (3.0.1–7). The fourth show, meanwhile, attempts a return to the classical roots of the play, signifying "the unnatural murders to follow" by a procession of classical figures who "unnaturally had slain their own children," including Tantalus and Medea (4.0.1–15). Both of these lack the explanatory utility of the first and second shows, and don't actually teach any lessons—they are simply depictions. The fifth show, then, erases the difference between dumb-show and play; it is simply a history play in (extreme) miniature.

the domestic, structuring politics as familial, and relying on the power of homely and domestic images to make their final political point—an approach exemplified by the culminating apostrophe of Eubulus' description:

> Even thou, O wretched mother, half alive,
> Thou shalt behold thy dear and only child
> Slain with the sword while he yet sucks thy breast.
>
> (5.2.221–3)

WAYS OF STAGING HISTORY IN LOCRINE

But the triumph of the "harquebussiers" over the wild men in the last dumb-show of *Gorboduc* does not just represent the failure of allegory. It can also be seen to foreshadow the 'theatrical literalism' that will come to define the history plays of the Queen's Men some two decades later. These plays are known for both their battlefield scenes and for their inclusion of dumb-shows—indeed the former were sometimes rendered as the latter on stage.[35] The influence of *Gorboduc* on the company has not been extensively studied, nor is there any evidence that there was a direct influence on the play—however, the similarities in form at least suggest that they share a template for staging history, one that *Locrine* as a play strains against and innovates within. Certainly, the framing of the main action of the play with both description and dumb-shows is consonant with the "narrative overdetermination" for which the company's dramaturgy is known, whereby plot events are described before and after they actually take place.[36] That influence, however, is not one of simple imitation. 'Senecan' is hardly the word one would use to describe the Queen's Men histories, with their visual spectacles, geographical compass, wandering clowns and medley of genres and diction. The kind of drama foreshadowed in the final dumb-show of

[35] McMillin and MacLean describe the "wordless battle scene in *The Famous Victories* and *The Troublesome Reign of King John*" as one of the "routines of literalist theatre." *Queen's Men and their Plays*, 133.

[36] *Queen's Men and their Plays*, 128–38.

Gorboduc is in important ways opposed to the play's overarching Senecanism, in that it privileges the visual over the narrative. When the company turns to the history of ancient Britain in *The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine*,[37] that opposition and tension is central to the play's structure, which juxtaposes neo-Senecan elements (dumb-shows, classical diction, lengthy narrative descriptions, etc.) with more homely and plain ones (clowns, homely diction, etc.). That juxtaposition forms part of the Queen's Men's own exploration of theatrical historiography and search for a theatrical praxis for historical drama.

I suggest that when the British history plays move from the academic circles of the Inns of Court to the commercial stage in the late 1580s,[38] part of that exploration can be seen in the relationship between these plays and domestic tragedies of the period such as *Arden of Faversham* and *A Warning for Fair Women* in terms of a shared set of theatrical conventions and interests. Primarily, as I suggest above, this relationship derives from a shared, explicit interest in staging 'truth' and thus history, and in doing so by using the domestic and the household as the locus for that staging. As I will show, similar kinds of representational practices are found in both types of play: in particular, there is a commitment to representing spaces, places, and experiences accurately, in such a way as to encourage recognition on the part of the audience. Part of that recognition derives from the use of a certain kind of plainness and homeliness in style, diction and references—all hallmarks of the dramaturgy of the Queen's Men. That plainness bears a distinct resemblance to the kind of "naked" tragedy, free of rhetorical ornament and

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[37] *The Lamentable Tragedy of Locrine: A Critical Edition*, ed. Jane Lytton Gooch (New York: Garland, 1981). Unless otherwise noted, all references are to this edition.

[38] Based on the textual parallels with Robert Greene's *Selimus*, and that both texts were published in 1594 by Thomas Creede, a stationer who seems to have had some form of publication agreement with the Queen's Men, Gooch assigns the play to the company, as does, more recently, Roslyn Knutson. Gooch, *Locrine*, 32–4; Knutson, "The Start of Something Big," 103–4; see also Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage* 4:26–7.

other "glozing stuff" that *Arden* advertises as one its major virtues. In *Locrine*, that 'naked' style of theatre is played against a neo-Senecan high-classicism, constantly irrupting in the form of a subplot that is juxtaposed against the high rhetoric and classical diction of the play proper, confronting the audience with two extremely different ways of staging historical events. The plainness and homeliness of the Queen's Men plays is discussed by critics, it is used mainly as a point of identification or a means of attribution; coupling these features to the 'naked tragedy' of contemporary domestic dramas reveals them to be part of a conscious exploration of theatrical representation. Where *Arden* and *A Warning* can be read—as I do—as experiments in writing tragedy, in using the homely and the domestic as the vehicle and locus for a supposedly 'high' form of drama, so *Locrine* can be read as a similar experiment in the writing of historical drama.

Structurally speaking, the play divides in three. First, there is a framework of choric and dumb-show elements at the beginning of each act and at the end of the play. Second, the main plot: on his deathbed, Brutus, legendary first king of Britain, divides the rule of the kingdom between his sons Locrine, Camber and Albanact, who then must defend that kingdom against a Scythian invasion led by Humber and his son Hubba. Albanact is defeated by Humber and commits suicide, returning as a ghost to torment his enemy and call for vengeance, which in turn is achieved through the utter defeat of the Scythians, the death of Hubba, and the eventual suicide of Humber. Here the plot shifts into its second half, in which Locrine—married to and politically allied with Guendoline, the daughter of Brutus' trusted ally Corineus—falls in love with the captured wife of Humber, Estrild. He pursues an adulterous relationship with her, resulting in a battle between Locrine's and Guendoline's forces. Defeated, Locrine, Estrild, and their illegitimate daughter commit suicide in the final moments of the play. The third structural element is the subplot that centres on the clown-figure of Strumbo the cobbler, who has a number of comic adventures: wooing and marrying his love Dorothy, being press-

ganged into the army to fight the Scythian invaders, losing his house and his wife and nearly his life in the fighting, impregnating and marrying another woman named Margery, and finally being frightened off the stage for good by the ghost of Albanact during an encounter with the defeated Humber.

Both the main plot and the frame are marked by a grave tone, a welter of classical references and allusions, 'high' Latinate diction, and highly ornamented and lengthy rhetorical set-pieces in which various main characters describe their battles, declare their love, or bemoan their fate. Ate—the Greek goddess of ruin and folly and the play's chorus figure—delivers prologues to each act that feature the stories of classical figures such as Perseus, Medea, Hercules, and Andromeda, and that are prefaced with Latin quotations. In the main plot, meanwhile, each of the main characters talks in a similar fashion: Brutus talks of "golden Hebe, daughter to great Jove" covering his "manly cheeks with youthful down" (1.2.85–6); Hubba asks that "she that rules fair Rhamnus' golden gate / Grant us the honour of the victory" (2.2.20–1); Humber celebrates retiring victoriously from "the dreadful shocks of furious Mars" and "Rhamnusia's drum" (2.7.1–2); Locrine wishes he had "the Thracian Orpheus' harp" to awaken the "ugly devils of Erebus" (3.2.5–7); his daughter Sabren bewails her parents' suicides, "What Thracian dog, what barbarous Myrmidon, / Would not relent at such a ruthful case? / What fierce Achilles, what hard stony flint, would not bemoan this mournful tragedy?" (5.4.69–72). As these representative samples show, both Trojans and Scythians are presented in the same fashion—the invaders are not represented as linguistically, rhetorically or culturally different in any significant way: they invoke the same gods and motivations, are partial to similar classical and mythological references, and exhibit the same predilection for exceedingly lengthy, ornamented speeches. It is only the particulars that differ between, say, Humber and Locrine's laments about their fate in the fourth and fifth acts respectively—apart from the factual details, they are almost completely interchangeable. In a play concerned with a foundational moment in British history, written in a period when historical drama is very much

imbricated in the imaginative project of English nationhood, such a lack of differentiation between founder and invader represents a deliberate and pointed demarcation of the un-Britishness of both sides.

The play's frame is very much in the same mode, and adds a note of archaic dramaturgy as well. At the beginning of the play, Ate the chorus-figure enters "all in black," followed by a dumb-show of a "mighty lion['s]" death, which signifies—so she states—the death of "valiant Brute, the terror of the world" (1.1.1–21). As in *Gorboduc*, each act opens in this manner, with a dumb-show and interpretation that links the show to the action of each act, and thus to the historical events being portrayed. The speeches Ate delivers in these appearances are heavily classicized, offering summaries of the action through the use of classical allusion and allegory, in a deliberately archaic vein. After the image of "A mighty lion, ruler of the woods," representing Brutus, who is slain by "the archer Death," the second act begins with Ate recounting the story of Perseus and Andromeda. The third act features another animal allegory, set "by Nilus' boisterous streams," about an "Egyptian crocodile" defeated by the poison of a "subtle adder" (3.1.1–17), while the fourth tells the tale of Hercules' slavish devotion to the Lydian princess Omphale. The fifth act, ominously, invokes the tale of Medea's revenge on Jason and his new wife. In each case, as with the allegory of the dying lion, links can certainly be made between each introduction and the action that follows: Medea's vengeful rage foreshadows the rage of the scorned Guendoline; Hercules' troubling love for Omphale parallels that of Locrine for Estrild. The chorus says as much—after each allegory or allusion, she links it to the events of the play with a comparative "So": "Stout Hercules [. . .] So martial Locrine [. . .]" (4.1); "Medea, seeing Jason [. . .] So Guendoline [. . .]" (5.1).

The action of the play, then, is ostensibly being framed in this ornate and heavily classicized manner as a means of facilitating the audience's apprehension and understanding of the events

unfolding on stage, as Ate's explanatory mode of address suggests. The play can thus be read as an attempt to assimilate British mythical history to the store of classical myths, showing it to be just like these other myths and legends, and using them to explain the events that took place in ancient Britain. However, the particularities of these framing moments resist such a reading. As often as not, the classical stories and allusions stand in the way of such assimilation and understanding. The use of Latin mottos without translation, and of a range of classical allusions, some relatively obscure, seem distinctly obfuscatory rather than clarifying, even to a more classically and allusively fluent Elizabethan audience.[39] And even with a degree of classical knowledge, the allusions or allegories don't always seem to fit usefully. Guendoline's rage in the fifth act might bear some resemblance to Medea's, but the explanatory value in the crocodile/adder allegory at the beginning of the third act, is less clear. It purports to refer to Locrine and Humber, but after a detailed description of the adder poisoning the crocodile, whose "bowels burst" because he "did so much in his own greatness trust" (3.1.12–13), it's not exactly clear who plays the part of the crocodile, and who is the adder, nor does Ate derive a lesson more specific than "all our life is but a tragedy" (17) from the allegory.

Like *Gorboduc*, then, the play problematizes historical representation, calling into question the kind of dramaturgy associated with the classical, allegorical frame (and with a play such as *Gorboduc*) as a means of staging history. Part of the problem, the play suggests, lies in using classical and allegorical models of drama as a means of staging British history. As I argued in the previous chapter, dramatists of the period had a fraught relationship to the classical drama they inherited, in terms of trying to articulate a new and uniquely English kind of theatre. This anxiety becomes all the more explicit in *Locrine*, which takes on the question of Englishness (or Britishness, technically) head-on, staging as it

[39] It is thought that *Locrine* may have roots in academic circles, but the consensus is that it was performed on the commercial stage at some point between 1585 and 1595, and most likely revised for the occasion. See Gooch's introduction to the play.

does a foundational moment of national history, of the origins of the English nation. It is telling, for instance, that Ate is a Greek rather than an English or British figure, such as the medieval chronicler and monk Ranulf Higden in Middleton's *Hengist, King of Kent*, or John Gower in Shakespeare's *Pericles*: she is a historical interpreter that is always already foreign rather than domestic. And while the point of the Brutus legend, given his Trojan lineage, was to make a direct connection between the classical and the British, there is no sense in the main plot that such a connection is made—while the Trojans and Scythians of the main plot are assimilated to the realm of classical myth, they remain unassimilated to British identity.

Mikalachki and others have shown the extent to which early modern writers sought to domesticate, to tame, the savagery of the ancient British past—while in that sense this British history is domesticated, it remains undomesticated, unnaturalized and unhomely, to use a less common sense of the term.[40] The play resolutely does makes neither the founders nor the invaders British, keeping them in the neo-Senecan mode of dramatic representation. Importantly, the play does not shy away from Britishness as such—the title-page of the 1595 edition refers to "the warres of the Britaines and Hunnes" (i.e. the Scythians); Humber, in-between battles, describes Albanact as a brave "yoong Brittain" (2.6.1), while the latter refers to his army as the "Brittains force" (23); Locrine, meanwhile, speaks of himself as the "Brittaine king" (4.2.3) when he returns from defeating the invaders.[41] The play is not, in other words, seeking to remove the Locrine story from British history, but rather to express that history in a particular dramaturgical form, highlighting its insufficiencies and outdatedness.

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[40] The *OED* lists neither sense as far back as the 1580s, but does list both as equally current in the 1630s. s.v. "domesticate."

[41] *The lamentable tragedie of Locrine, the eldest sonne of King Brutus discoursing the warres of the Britaines, and Hunnes, with their discomfiture: the Britaines victorie with their accidents, and the death of Albanact* (London: Richard Creede, 1595).

These deficiencies become especially apparent when compared against the style and tone of the subplot, with its wordplay, physical comedy, and scatological humour contrasting with the mode of the frame and main plot. The humour, wordplay, and agility of the Strumbo sections demonstrate the extent to which the static nature of the main plot is deliberate, a way of representing the stuffiness and potential inaccessibility of history. Strumbo's first entrance marks a refreshing change in diction and gravity:

> Either the four elements, the seven planets and all the particular stars of the pole Antastick, are adversative against me, or else I was begotten and born in the wane of the moon, when everything, as saith Lactantius in his fourth book of Constultations doth say, goeth arseward. Ay, masters, ay, you may laugh, but I must weep; you may joy, but I must sorrow; shedding salt tears from the wat'ry fountains of my most dainty fair eyes, along my comely and smooth cheeks, in as great plenty as the water runneth from the bucking-tubs, or red wine out of the hogsheads. For trust me, gentlemen and my very good friends, and so forth, the little god, nay the desperate god Cuprit, with one of his vengible birdbolts, hath shot me unto the heel; so not only, but also, o fine phrase, I burn, I burn, and I burna, in love, in love, and in love-a. Ah, Strumbo, what hast thou seen? not Dina with the Ass Tom?
>
> (1.3.1–18)

The humorous astrological bastardizations, the mispronunciations ("Antastick" for Antarctic, "adversative"), and the delightfully coarse phrasings ("everything [. . .] goeth arseward") contrast strikingly with Locrine's previous curses at the "damned and accursèd stars" for cutting short his father's life, and the high-minded discussions about his father's fate. It is key that Strumbo also deploys classical allusion, but does so either incorrectly (when he talks about the god "Cuprit") or lewdly (when he alludes to Diana and Acteon as "Dina with the Ass Tom"). What we see in this speech is a progressive undermining of the rhetoric and diction of the previous scene: classical and cosmic allusions are rendered more base or more everyday, and hyperbolic declarations and laments are also brought down to earth, while he "must weep" and "sorrow," "shedding salt tears from the wat'ry fountains," those tears are not compared to some classical stream or river, but to the decidedly lower-class images of "water [that] runneth from the bucking-tubs, or red wine out of the hogsheads."

Here we see the beginnings not just of a critique of, but an alternative to, the type of historical representation seen in the frame and the main plot. In addition to Strumbo's jests and wordplay, the subplot is marked by its use of anachronistic contemporaneous rather than ancient or classical points of reference, glimpsed here in the use of distinctly contemporary words like "hogsheads" or "bucking-tubs,"[42] but extended to include larger contemporaneous lived experiences later in the play. When we next meet Strumbo, along with his friend Trompart and his beloved Dorothy, they enter singing what would likely have been recognized as a late-sixteenth-century drinking song,[43] and are identified as cobblers, the pliers of a recognizable and very much active trade in early modern London. When Strumbo is made to join the British army to repel the invasion, he is pressed into military service much like an early modern Englishman would have been:

> STRUMBO What, will you any old shoes or buskins, or will you have your shoes clouted? I will do them as well as any cobbler in Caithness whatsoever.
> CAPTAIN O, master cobbler, you are far deceived in me, for don't you see this? *Showing him press-money*. I come not to buy any shoes, but to buy yourself; come, Sir, you must be a soldier in the king's cause.
> STRUMBO Why, but hear you, Sir, has your king any commission to take any man against his will? I promise you, I can scant believe it. Or did he give you commission?
> CAPTAIN O, Sir, ye need not care for that. I need no commission. Hold here; I command you, in the name of our king Albanact, to appear tomorrow in the town-house of Caithness. (2.3.42–58)

Apart from the mention of King Albanact and Caithness, this scene of impressment could just as easily be taking place in early modern London.[44]

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[42] These are, respectively, the tubs used for "steeping or boiling yarn, cloth, or clothes in a lye of wood ashes, etc." and "large cask[s], esp. for storing liquids." The former is in use from the late fifteenth century, the latter from the late fourteenth. *OED*, s.vv. "buck"; "hogshead."

[43] See the note to 2.3.1–36 in the critical edition.

[44] See Patricia Cahill's chapter on impressment in her study of early modern military culture, "Spare Men and Great Ones: Musters, Norms, and the Average Man in Shakespeare's *1* and *2 Henry IV*," *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 72–102.

The combination of comedy and anachronism is a signature of the Queen's Men's dramatic historiography. As McMillin and MacLean write, "[t]here is always room for clowning in [their] plays." Furthermore, the actor playing Strumbo would have been recognized by the audience, adding yet another layer of anachronism—if the play dates from the mid to late 1580s, then the role would likely have been taken by the famous Richard Tarlton, "the most famous clown of his day," a man whose picture was "as familiar as the image of Chaplin is today."[45] These particular dramaturgical aspects exemplify the solution that *Locrine* offers to the problem of staging history: to connect through the evocation and marshalling of recognizable, realistic depictions of lived experience, the kinds of depictions that the writers of domestic tragedy are even more explicitly experimenting with in the 1580s and 1590s. These scenes are not historically factual, instead what they offer is a means of understanding Strumbo's historical experience through a framework of shared lived experience, an alternative to the allegories and allusions staged by Ate—history as experience.

The scene that perhaps best encapsulates this new way of staging history occurs after Strumbo and Trompart's first experience of battle, where the latter believes he has found the former's corpse. "Master, master!" exclaims Trompart:

> STRUMBO Let me alone, I tell thee, for I am dead.
> TROMPART Yet one word, good master.
> STRUMBO I will not speak, for I am dead, I tell thee.
> TROMPART And is my master dead?
> O sticks and stones, brickbats and bones,
> And is my master dead?
> O you cockatrices, and you bablatrices,
> That in the woods dwell;
> You briars and brambles, you cooks' shops and shambles,

[45] *The Queen's Men*, 128. Even if the play was performed after Tarlton's death, the company had several well-known comic actors, such as John Adams, Robert Wilson, and John Singer. Walsh argues that the presence of the clown figure served to "make awareness of history as an absence [. . .] a central aspect of their plays and the consciousness of history they promote." *Shakespeare, The Queen's Men*, 4.

Come howl and yell.
With howling and screaking, with wailing and weeping,
Come you to lament.
O colliers of Croydon, and rustics of Roydon,
And fishers of Kent.
For Strumbo the cobbler, the fine merry cobbler
Of Caithness town:
At this same stour, at this very hour
Lies dead on the ground.
O master, thieves, thieves, thieves!

(2.6.94–113)

Here we see all the previously mentioned aspects on display. Humour and parody, of course, are found in Strumbo's pretending to be dead and Trompart's over-the-top lament for his friend's death that echoes and parodies the lamentations in the main plot, and in particular anticipates those that will soon follow over the death of Albanact after his defeat by the Scythians. Particularly interesting is the way in which Trompart substitutes contemporary reference points into his parody of the classical laments in the play, speaking not only of "cooks' shops" and "shambles" (slaughterhouses or meat-markets), "colliers" and "cobblers," but naming a selection of English places in relative proximity to London that the audience would recognize and possibly even have travelled to: Croydon, Roydon, and Kent.

Where the main plot and frame map the historical events on to foreign classical references and allusions, the subplot maps them onto domestic local ones. When the audience hears the place-names and familiar urban landmarks of Trompart's lament, their experience is similar to when they follow Arden's journey from Kent to London in *Arden of Faversham*—all of these events are in the past, and yet they deploy anachronism in the representation of that history, drawing on moments distinctly opposite to major historical events. They evoke the quotidian and the homely through their use of detail, diction, and a particular kind of familiarity. This contrasts to the use of the quotidian and/or homely in English history plays, where such moments are deployed in order to be contained or even silenced—thus, Falstaff is not only scorned by Henry in public, but (unlike John of Gaunt) is not even

allowed to deliver his own deathbed speech. In a play like *Locrine*, the homely, quotidian and 'low' are not deployed in this carnivalesque manner, i.e. deployed in order to be contained. Instead, when these moments irrupt they threaten to take over the larger play.

Over and over, the subplot functions to undermine the events and rhetoric of the main plot. The use of serious classical allusions is contrasted to Strumbo's humorous misuse; the long-winded descriptions of battle by both Trojans and Scythians are contrasted to Strumbo and Trompart's much more real and relatable experience of fighting in the loss of their "mansion-cottage in the suburbs of this city" (2.4.59) and their near death in battle; the apparent nobility and high-mindedness of Locrine's courtship of Guendoline and eventually of Estrild is undercut by Strumbo's courtship of Dorothy (1.3) and Margery's forceful courtship of him (3.4); both Humber and Locrine's lengthy final bewailings of their fate and their suicides (4.5 and 5.6 respectively) contrast to the speech where Strumbo genially accepts his fate and recounts his coming to terms with his shrewish new wife Margery (4.3). The subplot is the vehicle through which a staged representation of quotidian lived experience renders understandable historical events that are distanced from their audience in multiple ways.

The outward pressure of the new form of dramatic historiography articulated by the subplot is actually visible in the final appearances of the frame in the fifth act. Ate's opening comparison between Medea/Jason and Guendoline/Locrine is the most successful and apt in the play as a whole. Moreover, rather than letting the classical allusion stand as explanation, she goes on to explicate the events to follow, mapping them onto the British countryside, rather than on to a set of allusions:

> So Guendoline, seeing herself misused,
> And Humber's paramour possess her place,
> Flies to the dukedom of Cornubia,
> And with her brother, stout Thrasimachus,
> Gathering a power of Cornish soldiers,
> Gives battle to her husband and his host
> Nigh to the river of great Mercia.

The chances of this dismal massacre
That which ensueth shortly will unfold.

(5.1.10–18)

The historical characters are fitted neatly to the allusion, which is used to motivate Guendoline's actions: she flies to Cornubia (Cornwall), gathers an army of "Cornish soldiers" with her brother and sets off to battle her brother in Mercia (the English Midlands). What we see in miniature here is a classical allusion being made domestic—the story of Medea is placed within British bounds, laid out on a British map, made natively British.

By the time the epilogue of the play is reached, the difference from the opening prologue is clear—without a single allusion in sight, Ate instead delivers a speech that resonates not with an archaic, classical model of dramatic history, but with the didactic endings of contemporary domestic tragedies:

Lo! here the end of lawless treachery,
Of usurpation and ambitious pride;
And they that for their private amours dare
Turmoil our land, and set their broils abroach,
Let them be warned by these premises.
And as a woman was the only cause
That civil discord was then stirrèd up,
So let us pray for that renownèd maid,
That eight and thirty years the sceptre swayed
In quiet peace and sweet felicity;
And every wight that seeks her grace's smart,
Would that this sword were piercèd in his heart.

(5.6.195–206)

Not only is there a shift away from the classical register here, there is also no mention of the Scythian invasion nor any political warning about the need to protect the country's borders from outside threats—surely the main event and main political lesson of the play. Instead, like the figure of Tragedie at the end of *A Warning*, and the figure ofTruth at the end of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, Ate here delivers a lesson in domestic morality to her audience. The biggest threat to Britain comes not from

outside but from domestic trouble within. As in *Gorboduc*, "civil discord" is not caused by domestic events in the large-scale sense of the word, but in its small-scale sense: "private amours" result in public "turmoil." The political is structured in domestic terms. Whereas before, the events of the play were mapped on to classical narratives, here, in a final act of explanatory mapping, Ate maps events onto a recognizable narrative of domestic transgression. In the epilogue, then, the plain and homely dramaturgy shared by the Queen's Men and the writers of domestic tragedy infiltrate the historical consciousness of the play, pointing the way towards a better form of dramatic historiography, one founded on anachronism and a mapping of the present onto the past. The last lines of the play underline its ultimate success—whereas before the play emphasized the distance between the world of the frame and the world of the present, here Ate—Greek goddess of ruin and folly, so distant from an early modern English audience for so much of the play—shifts her pronouns emphatically, bridging the divide between audience and play, between past and present, including the spectators in the first person plural: "So let *us* pray for that renownèd maid" (202)—*our* queen—Elizabeth.

HISTORICAL DRAMA IN "OTHER, MEANER HABIT": KING LEIR

In the next British history to be produced by the Queen's Men, *King Leir* (1594),[46] the neo-Senecan, classicized mode of dramatic historiography is nowhere to be found, with the play featuring neither a choric figure like Ate, nor elaborate allegorical dumb-shows to frame or interpret events. In a moment that appears to acknowledge this distancing, the king of France (or Gallia in the play) and his sidekick

[46] Henslowe records performances of a "kinge leare" in April 1594, when the Queen's Men and Sussex's Men were performing together at the Rose; it was entered into the Stationer's Register later that year as *The moste famous Chronicle historye of Leire king of England and his Three Daughters*, but only printed in 1605, as *The true Chronical History of King Leir and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan and Cordella*. *The Queen's Men*, 88; Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage* 4:25.

Mumford are preparing to travel into Britain in disguise. Having dressed in "palmers' weeds" (2.1.42) for the journey,[47] they realize on arriving that they need new names to go with their new clothes:

> MUMFORD My lord, how do you brook this British air?
> GALLIA 'My lord'? I told you of this foolish humour
> And bound you to the contrary, you know.
> MUMFORD Pardon me for once, my lord; I did forget.
> GALLIA 'My lord' again? Then let's have nothing else
> And so be ta'en for spies, and then 'tis well.
> MUMFORD Zounds, I could bite my tongue in two for anger!
> For God's sake, name yourself some proper name.
> GALLIA Call me Tresillus; I'll call thee Denapoll.
> MUMFORD Might I be made the monarch of the world,
> I could not hit upon these names, I swear.
> GALLIA Then call me Will; I'll call thee Jack.
> MUMFORD Well, be it so, for I have well deserv'd to be call'd Jack.
> GALLIA Stand close, for here a British lady cometh.
>
> (2.4.1–14)

This exchange implicitly articulates a fundamental problem of 'neo-Senecan historiography.' The overtly classical names that the king chooses—Denapoll and Tresillus—obviously ring false in "the British air," and Mumford rightfully suggests the need for different names. If the first two names are eminently classical, 'Will' and 'Jack' are about as generically English-sounding as they come. Calling a French king who is entering Britain 'Will' can be read as a sly reference to William the Conqueror's Norman invasion, thus inserting Gallia anachronistically into English history. As for the familiar form of 'John,' 'Jack' is not only English,[48] but also in the period served as a generic proper name in English, transforming Mumford into a representative of the common British people, a transformation by his

[47] *King Leir*, ed. Tiffany Stern (London: Nick Hern, 2002). Unless otherwise noted, all references are to this edition.

[48] And perhaps even uniquely so: while Jack has been "generally assumed to be the same word as French *Jacques*," the name has also "been used in English from its earliest appearance as a by-name of Johan, Jan, John; and a strong case has been made out [. . .] for its actual origination as a pet-form of that word." *OED*, s.v. "Jack."

pun on the new name and his knavish tendencies.[49] In seeking to assimilate to the national domestic identity, the foreigners abandon the classical and embrace the natively English. This exchange of names embodies in miniature the move away from a formal, classicized dramatic historiography that the play as a whole makes, embracing instead the alternative mode that we saw irrupt in the Strumbo subplot of *Locrine*—the native, homely plainness of Will and Jack taking the place of Denapoll and Tresillus.

While *King Leir* is perhaps best known as a Shakespearean source-text, for the plot (along with *Gorboduc*) of *Lear*,[50] of course, but also as an acknowledged influence on other play, from *Richard III* and *Titus*, to *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*,[51] I argue that it also forms an important point of transition between the dramatic historiography and historical consciousness of the Queen's Men and Shakespeare, one usually not regarded as such because the later *Lear* is often not regarded as a history play proper. A line can be traced from *Gorboduc* through *Locrine* to *Leir*, with the middle play itself (as I have shown) forming a transition between the two ways of staging history. *Leir* differs markedly from the earlier British histories. Most noticeably, it abandons any form of obvious interpretive frame or choric structure, and any explicit moral or political didacticism, preferring instead to simply stage the Leir story as a narrative, without any attempts to interpret or to reflect on the staging of history. *Leir* feels different: gone are the sententiousness and grave tone of both *Gorboduc* and of *Locrine*'s main plot,

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[49] From the 1360s and on, "[a] familiar by-form of the name John; hence, a generic proper name for any representative of the common people"; "A man of the common people; a lad, fellow, chap; esp. a low-bred or ill-mannered fellow, a 'knave.'" Ibid.

[50] For an exhaustive consideration of various accounts of *Leir*'s influence on Shakespeare, including a list of "the almost hundred details common to these two plays but found in virtually none of the other sources," see Richard Knowles, "How Shakespeare Knew *King Leir*," *Shakespeare Survey* 55 (2002): 12–35. See also Martin Mueller, "From *Leir* to *Lear*," *Philological Quarterly* 73.2 (1994): 195–217.

[51] According to Mueller, for instance, without *Leir* "we would not have *King Lear* or *As You Like It*, while *Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Hamlet* would be quite different plays." "From *Leir* to *Lear*," 195. See also Meredith Anne Skura, *Shakespeare the Actor and the Purposes of Playing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 285–6. Knowles, in contrast, finds little to no influence on Shakespeare until *Leir* is published in 1605 and he begins work on his own version of the story. "How Shakespeare Knew *King Leir*," 18–27.

along with the latter's high-classical diction and ethos. Instead, the play revels in a kind of narrative freedom, having left behind frames, dumb-shows, and lengthy speechmaking.

In particular, it turns to the same kind of homeliness and anachronism as the Strumbo subplot. Here, the entire play is in a similarly quotidian, contemporaneous tone, while disregarding historical accuracy in its periodization (pre-Christian characters dress as pilgrims, for instance), and filling the play not with points of classical reference, but English ones that are either recognizably contemporaneous or wholly anachronistic. In short, the play maps some version of late-sixteenth-century England and English experience over the ancient British setting of the Leir story. *Leir* builds on the theatrical insights of *Locrine* about the theatrical power of the representation of recognizable lived experience and deliberate anachronism in staging history as means through which to connect the play's past with the audience's present. The encounters between the main protagonists and those of lower social status such as messengers, mariners, and soldiers resemble those points at which Strumbo crosses over into the main action in the earlier play. In each case, the tradesman or servant seems to bring the early modern period in with him, through a combination of diction, and geographical and cultural references.

Thus, when Gonorill first conspires with the messenger whom she engages to kill her father, she demands to see the letters he is carrying. To this demand, the messenger responds "I hope your grace will stand between me and my neck-verse if I be called in question for opening the king's letters" (3.4.50–2), thus evoking an anachronistic scenario that an early modern audience could readily imagine, in which he escapes hanging for treasonously opening royal correspondence by claiming benefit of clergy. Moments later, he declares that he has "as bad a tongue [. . .] as any oysterwife at Billingsgate hath!" (77–8), mapping a contemporary reference (the ward only became known specifically as a fish-market in the sixteenth century) over a place-name with ancient British roots (it was named, at least

according to the Galfridian chronicles, by the ancient king Belinus). The fish-market comes up again towards the end of the play, when Leir exchanges clothes with a mariner in order to pay for his passage to France: "Here's a good strong motley gaberdine, cost me fourteen good shillings at Billingsgate. Give me your gown for it, and your cap for mine, and I'll forgive your passage" (5.3.17–20).This exchange is particularly rich in its evocation of contemporary lived experience, not only through geographical reference, but through an attention to quotidian, contemporary details: the second mariner offers a "sheep's russet sea-gown," Leir's man Perillus offers his "new doublet" to get his master's gown back, the first mariner refuses to give up his bargain, declaring that should he do so, "I might ne'er ear powder'd beef or mustard more" (22–38). As is the case in the domestic tragedies discussed in earlier chapters, what is being evoked here is a version of Helgerson's term 'ordinary life.' Likewise, the banished daughter Cordella, declaring her intention to exchange her "costly robes" for "meaner habit" (2.4.31–2), adopts a legibly contemporaneous persona as a seamstress: "I will betake me to my thread and needle / And earn my living with my fingers' ends" (36–7). As when the king and Mumford dress as pilgrims in "palmers' weeds," the effect is to collapse the distance between ancient past and present experiences through an evocation of the homely and ordinary—Cordella becoming a seamstress, Mumford wishing for a "milkmaid's smock and petticoat" (34), along with the mariners and oysterwives and messengers populates the play with ordinary people, mapping the early modern present onto the Leir story.

As part of this historiography grounded in the evocation of a kind of transhistorical English/British experience, what *Leir* retains is the domestic structuring of the political found in the earlier British histories. Which is to say, like *Gorboduc* and *Locrine*, the play takes historical events that are both family and state matters and represents them in terms that privilege their domestic aspect. This structuring is particularly evident when Leir is reunited with Cordella and her husband the French king

on their return to Britain. The king tells his story to the still-disguised couple but does not frame it in terms of national politics, telling it instead in homely, familial terms:

> Then know this first. I am a Briton born,
> And had three daughters by one loving wife:
> And though I say it, of beauty they were sped;
> Especially the youngest of the three,
> For her perfections hardly match'd could be.
>
> (5.4.146–50)

The remainder of the story is told entirely as a (small-scale) domestic drama, with nary a mention of divided kingdoms or castles: the love-test is staged in order to determine the size of each daughter's dowry (unidentified in this play), and Leir goes off to live in his "eldest daughter's *house*" until he is kicked out, and then—after repairing to his "other daughter for relief"—is almost murdered in "a thicket two miles from the court" (151–86). This reference to "the court" is the only oblique reference to the royal status of the protagonists and thus of the implications of their conflict on a national scale.

The opening lines of Leir's story encapsulate this aspect of the historiographical approach of the play as a whole. The *first* thing that Leir's audience, both onstage and off, must know is simply that he is "a Briton born, / And had three daughters by one loving wife." This large-scale political history is thus framed as a small-scale domestic drama—a noteworthy choice for a playing company known for its visual spectacle and considerable battle-scenes,[52] who could thus have made the choice to emphasize the large-scale ahead of the small-scale in the play as a whole, rather than confining the battle-scenes (such as they are) to the final act of the play.[53] Instead, the showdown between the French forces and those of Cambria and Cornwall is bookended by Leir's telling of the domestic drama, and then its resolution,

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[52] McMillin and MacLean, *The Queen's Men*, 129–30.

[53] There is certainly no equivalent in the play to the scene from *The Famous Victories* cited by McMillin and MacLean, which consists entirely of the stage direction "the Battle enters."

when he confronts his daughters and accuses them of attempted "parricide" (5.10.40–102). The play's historiography is reflected in its plot structure, and thus even bequeaths a historiographical legacy in providing the plot for Shakespeare's retelling a decade later in his own British history play.

THE DOMESTIC HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE OF KING LEAR

In its quarto printing of 1608, Shakespeare's version of the Leir story identifies itself not just as a history play, but as a historiographical conundrum: *M. William Shake-speare, His True Chronicle History of the life and death of King Lear, and his three Daughters*.[54] Like the earlier Queen's Men play, it styles itself a "true chronicle history." And yet, given Lear's death at the end of this new play, a death that does not occur in either its historical or dramatic sources, such a title seem paradoxical. With the Leir story in cultural circulation, and the 1594 *King Leir* printed three years prior in 1605, Shakespeare writes a play clearly in the realm of alternative history despite its claims of truthfulness. *Lear* is thus deliberately presented as both "true" and fictional. The significant rewriting of history that Shakespeare undertakes is usually seen to arise from a desire to 'de-historify' his source narrative in order to remove it from history into the realm of tragedy. *Lear's* shift from "history" in the 1608 Quarto text to "tragedy" in the 1623 Folio text appears to bear this out.[55]

However, I argue that in presenting the play as both true and fictional, it is marked as a kind of historiographical experiment that asks where the bounds of 'true' history lie. The intentional echoes in terms of plot and title of the older *Leir* play, and the similarities to *Gorboduc* in the Gloucester subplot, show that Shakespeare—rather than moving the play *out* of history—explicitly invokes the British

[54] Printed in London (by Nicholas Okes) for Nathaniel Butter.

[55] Thus, John E. Curran Jr. claims that "cutting the story off from its chronicle future precludes a correspondence between the play and any historical reality it might purport to imitate," describing the play as a kind of "non-history," which "makes *King Lear* unique among the extant Galfridian chronicle plays treating the pre-Roman era of British history." "Geoffrey of Monmouth in Renaissance Drama: Imagining Non-History," *Modern Philology* 97.1 (1999): 1–20.

history play in order to establish a framework for his historiographical inquiry that is bound by a different understanding of what constitutes historical truth. By virtue of their Galfridian source material these plays, *Lear* among them, always already represent an alternative conception of historical truth. Their producers embrace this alternative conception, as the use of contemporaneity and anachronism by the Queen's Men shows. I argue that in *King Lear*, Shakespeare builds on the work of the Queen's Men, writing a history play that reflects on what it means to stage history, on what drama can uniquely achieve as a means of experiencing history, and on where the "truth" of historical experience lies for a theatrical audience. Building on the domestic structuring of the political that is so integral to the British histories, he maps historical events onto a domestic schema—rendering Britain as a map composed of household spaces contained within a larger space that is explicitly defined as being outside the household. In so doing, he reveals the complex way in which the British history plays, through the mapping of landscape in terms of contemporaneous points of reference and recognition, allow for the temporal collapse between past and present and the reclamation of ancient British history.

Like *Gorboduc* and *Locrine*, *Lear* places the familial at the centre of historical events, as is clear from the first lines of the play:

> KENT I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.
> GLOUCESTER It did always seem so to us, but now in the division of the kingdoms it appears not which of the Dukes he values most; for equalities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.
> KENT Is not this your son, my lord?
> GLOUCESTER His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am brazed to it.
> KENT I cannot conceive you.
> GLOUCESTER Sir, this young fellow's mother could, whereupon she grew round-wombed and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed.
>
> (1.1–14)[56]

[56] *The History of King Lear* in *The Norton Shakespeare*. All references, unless otherwise noted, to this edition.

What begins as an ostensibly political discussion about regional powers and their relationship to the monarch becomes a discussion about family in mere moments, as Kent switches subjects and asks his interlocutor about Edmund. Furthermore, as quickly becomes apparent, this is not simply a switch to talking about family, but about domestic transgression, as we are informed about Edmund's bastard "breeding." In miniature, then, we see the political swept away by the familial, foreshadowing the way in which the political act of dividing the kingdom will be completely subsumed by the familial act of instigating the love-test—Cornwall and Albany are present but entirely silent throughout the scene, their political gains made not through political action but through their marital connections. As in *Gorboduc* and *Locrine*, civil turmoil comes to Britain through domestic conflict.

The play as a whole is filled with domestic spaces, relationships, and plots. The words "house" and "home" and their cognates circulate throughout the text. Even the famous map scene is not only a scene between members of a household, but is itself a household scene. As John Gillies has argued, cartography is predicated on the "body [being] able to work in relative comfort," and thus (particularly in the early modern period) the "ultimate scene of cartography—the place in which maps are typically read—is a domestic interior."[57] In *Lear*'s opening, then, we behold not only a map-reading scene, but a scene of domestic interiority.[58] The precipitating scene of the plot as a whole is thus framed as a domestic one, a framing that persists in the whole play, in which this 'domestication' of the political continues. Both Cornwall's and Albany's newly acquired lands are metonymically represented by their

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[57] John Gillies, "The Scene of Cartography in *King Lear*," in *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*, eds. A. Gordon & B. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109–137: 121–2. On *Lear* and cartography, see also Valerie Traub, "The Nature of Norms in Early Modern England: Anatomy, Cartography, *King Lear*," *South Central Review* 26.1– 2 (2009): 42–81; Gavin Hollis, "'Give me the map there': *King Lear* and Cartographic Literacy in Early Modern England," *Portolan* 68 (2007): 8–25; Mikalachki, 79–90.

[58] Gillies argues that the "verbal landscape" of Lear's map is "charged with the phenomenological values of interiority."Gillies, 123.

homes; when the action shifts within these sizeable territories, the play shifts between households, not lands. Later, when Gloucester's power is usurped by Regan and Cornwall, the former represents his defeat as a loss of domestic control: "they took from me / The use of mine own house" (10.3–4). Domestic tensions and damage abound: both Lear and Gloucester's families break down, Edmund's adulterous dalliances with Regan and Gonoril [*sic*] threaten the integrity of the Cornwall and Albany households, Gloucester's hospitality is violated by being blinded by his guests, after which the master-servant relationships in the Cornwall household break down as servant denounces and attacks his master for his cruelty.

The use of the domestic is particularly apparent in the central arc of the play, Lear's gradual reduction to a state of abjection, which is figured in domestic terms as a stripping away of the household. When Lear cedes his "sway, revenue, execution" (1.126)—retaining for himself "a reservation of a hundred knights" and planning to his make his "abode" with his daughters "in due turns" (122–4)—he creates a sizeable political and civil problem for the newly crowned rulers in the form of an independent military force that wanders freely through the realm. That problem and its eventual solution, however, are not represented in civil or state-political terms, but in domestic ones. When Gonoril first complains about her father's "insolent retinue" (4.180), she describes them as a household disruption:

> Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,
> Men so disordered, so debauched and bold
> That this our court, infected with their manners,
> Shows like a riotous inn, epicurism
> And lust make more like to a tavern, or brothel,
> Than a great palace.
>
> (4.219–24)

These "hundred knights" are represented as a disturbance to the domestic rather than the political order, a theme that Regan continues when she and her sister conspire to strip their father of his knights

at Gloucester's house. She lacks "provision" for his men (7.357), and wants to persuade him that he need only fifty of them, since after all, "How in a house / Should many people under two commands / Hold amity?" (392–4). Again, the political problem is rendered domestically: "This house is little. The old man and his people / Cannot be well bestowed" (441–2).

The space of the domestic is also central to the way in which the play represents Lear's actions and his tragic trajectory. Indeed, as Gillies writes, "the major spatial idea in *Lear* is built around the bodily opposition of housedness and unhousedness, accommodation and nakedness."[59] During one of their exchanges, the Fool succinctly figures his master's foolhardy division of the kingdom and subsequent abdication:

> FOOL Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?
> LEAR No.
> FOOL Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.
> LEAR Why?
> FOOL Why, to put his head in, not to give it away to his daughter and leave his horns without a case.
> LEAR I will forget my nature.
>
> (5.21–7)

Giving away the kingdom is likened to giving away his house, a house that should not be given away to his daughter. There is an underlying implication here too: that Lear, like the snail, is defined by his house, and that in giving it away he has lost something of himself. "I will forget my nature," he states, foreshadowing his descent into madness and loss of selfhood. And that loss of selfhood is not just foreshadowed but enacted in household terms. As Lear "in due turns" moves (or is symbolically shuttled) between his daughters' households, his retinue—the last vestiges of his household—is entirely stripped away: "What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five, / To follow in a house where twice so many / Have a command to tend you?" (7.413–16) as Gonoril finally puts it.

[59] Ibid.

The storm scene, Lear's nadir, happens in a space clearly defined as being outside of any household, and it is the first time in the play that we see the king in this position. As he foresaw, he will "abjure all roofs, and choose / To be a comrade with the wolf and the owl, / To wage against the enmity of the air / Necessity's sharp pinch" (7.360–3). As he rages against nature, the Fool responds with comforting domestic images, telling his "nuncle" that "court holy water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o' door," that "he that has a house to put his head in has a good headpiece" (9.10, 24–5), and emphasizing just how central the household is to the self. When Kent discovers Lear, his first move is to find him shelter in a "hovel" (61), the word marking the extreme contrast between the king's opening station in life and where he now finds himself. Faced with Edgar, stripped down to "the thing itself" as Mad Tom, Lear articulates his fundamental realization about humanity by making the idea of household, of being housed, central to his definition of the human: "*Unaccommodated* man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art" (90–2, my emphasis).[60] Not only political history but Lear's plight are rendered in domestic terms for the audience.

As the hovel that Lear and his companions take shelter in highlights, the "domestic interiors of *King Lear* cannot be called homey."[61] Indeed, the household spaces of the play are remarkable for just how barren and inhospitable they are, as Kent acknowledges in the storm scenes when he speaks of going to the "hard house— / More hard than is the stone whereof 'tis raised" to demand shelter for Lear (9.63–7). What properties do appear within these spaces are problematized and perverted from their domestic purpose—e.g. the chair used for Gloucester's blinding. Indeed, as Linda Woodbridge argues,

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[60] *OED*, s.v. "accommodate": "To provide lodging for (a person), esp. as a guest; to house; (also) to receive as an inmate." The earliest cited usage in this sense is from 1592.

[61] Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 206.

this is a play that expresses its deep civil turmoil through rendering indoor scenes and household spaces as "antihavens" and "arenas of division" in a way that ultimately "drains all sense of home out of England," by "making the home dispersible, penetrable, unsafe."[62] Thus is the deeply riven nature of the ancient British past brought vividly to life on the early modern stage, through the mobilizing of a recognizable—and recognizably inverted or troubled—domestic signifiers.

Those recognizable domestic spaces serve also to define the world outside these troubled households. The play is actually structured on the division between inside and outside, between being within a house, and without. In fact, it is to a large extent the outside world as described in the play that is recognizable as contemporaneous to an early modern audience. In contrast to the sparse (if not barren and undefined) domestic spaces of the interior scenes, and in contrast to the verdant fantastical realm of Lear's cartographic description of the kingdom, there are early modern points of contact and recognition whenever the exterior landscape is evoked. These include the use of recognizable geographical names for both places (Dover, famously, but also Bedlam) and characters (Cornwall and Kent) that echo throughout the play, through which the ghost of a geographical map of early modern England shimmers into being. More substantially, they include the staged representations of lived experiences of the landscape—in particular those of Lear, Edgar, and Gloucester, the play's chief wanderers along with the Fool. The wanderings of these characters are thus simultaneously in the ancient past and in the early modern present. Over the map of *Lear*'s ancient Britain lies the barely visible contours of the England from that other cartographic play, *Arden*.

When we first encounter the outside world in the play, we move into a realist mode of description, a direct contrast to Lear's own depiction of the kingdom. Fleeing for his life from the

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[62] Ibid., 207–9.

conspiracy engineered by his brother Edmund, Edgar adopts the persona of Mad Tom. Taking this "basest and most poorest shape" to "preserve" himself, he describes how he will then

> [. . .] with presented nakedness out-face
> The winds and persecutions of the sky.
> The country gives me proof and precedent
> Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,
> Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms
> Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
> And with this horrible object, from low farms,
> Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,
> Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
> Enforce their charity.
>
> (7.168–82)

Here we see a very different vision of Britain, one that contrasts starkly with the idyllic vision contained in Lear's description of the map. Instead of the "shady forests and wide skirted meads" (1.56) awarded to Gonoril and Regan, we hear of the "winds and persecutions of the sky," the "low farms," the "poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills"—all of which are recognizable fixtures of the native landscape, and are also contemporaneous rather than being ruins from an ancient past. Edgar offers a realistic description of the landscape (as we will see from Lear's own penurious experiences), one that resounds with contemporaneity. The one place-name on this alternative map is Bedlam, which both serves to offer a point of recognizable geographical specificity in contrast to the earlier idyllic vagueness, and—in naming a place associated with madness and penury—to fully underline just how different the actual lived experience of Britain is.[63]

[63] For a detailed account of Bedlam's history and its position as a point of cultural reference, see Carol Thomas Neely's chapter "Rethinking Confinement in Early Modern England: The Place of Bedlam in History and Drama," in *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 167–212.

That lived experience would have been recognizable to an early modern audience as particular to the lives of vagrants and the homeless, as Woodbridge demonstrates in her reading of the play.[64] The essential condition of the vagrant in the period was one of homelessness, circumstances necessarily always defined in opposition to the household. In other words, the outside world of the play is not simply a representation of an uncaring cosmos, nor is the "plunge into homelessness" experienced by several characters simply an abstract representation of abjection or of the human condition in general. Instead, these are part of a conscious deployment of contemporaneity, produced particularly through references and representations drawn from contemporary ideas about homelessness.[65] As Mad Tom, then, Edgar becomes the figure around which the contemporaneous, realistic landscape of the play coalesces.

In the second half of the play, having supposedly guided his blind father to a cliff-top at Dover, Edgar proceeds to give his well-known description of the view:

> Come on, sir, here's the place. Stand still. How fearful
> And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
> The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
> Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down
> Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
> Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
> The fishermen that walk upon the beach
> Appear like mice, and yon tall anchoring barque
> Diminished to her cock, her cock a buoy
> Almost too small for sight.
>
> (20.11–20)

[64] Edgar's disguise, for instance, "comes right out of the literature of roguery and vagrancy" in the period, a literature in which Mad Tom was a "signature figure." Woodbridge, *Vagrancy*, 221. See also ibid., 205–38.

[65] These descents are "imagined precisely in terms of the discourse of vagrancy," while "the play's language of violence and anger draws on a familiar lexicon from vagrancy texts." Ibid., 205.

While this speech is often read in terms of its spatial and metatheatrical qualities,[66] in describing a scene of ordinary life at Dover with its wildlife, samphire-gatherers, and fishermen within a verbally generated perspectival space, it is also a multi-layered moment of realism, both descriptive and representational. As in his earlier description, Edgar here serves as the chief means through which contemporaneity is brought into the world of the play, collapsing the distance between past and present through the evocation of recognizable aspects of early modern 'ordinary life.'

Indeed, even the 1608 title-page identifies him as the chief source of the contemporaneous and/or anachronistic, as Lear's history is presented alongside "*the vnfortunate life of Edgar, sonne and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his sullen and assumed humor of Tom of Bedlam*," linking Edgar directly with one of the few place-names in the play from the outset. In the centre of the play, as Stephen Greenblatt and others have shown, the contemporaneous becomes the distinctly anachronistic, as Mad Tom invokes the demonology of Samuel Harsnett's 1603 *Declaration of Popish Impostures* in his ramblings (11.97–122; 13.6–20).[67] At the centre of the play, then, anachronism irrupts, with the present mapped directly onto the past, and the temporal distance between them vanishing. Like the wandering clown of the Queen's Men, Edgar serves as what Walsh calls a "present-tense centered presence" within the past being represented on stage, serving to generate an "awareness of history as an absence."[68] In fact, I suggest he is only one of several such characters in the play. The Fool is, by virtue of being the court jester, a natural analogue to the wandering clown, but Gloucester, too, can be regarded in this light—in his imagined leap from the cliff, after all, he offers the play's one and only pratfall. And as Lear

[66] For an overview, see Turner, 166–9. See also Jonathan Goldberg, "Perspectives: Dover Cliff and the Conditions of Representation," in *Shakespeare's Hand* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 132–48.

[67] Greenblatt, "Shakespeare and the Exorcists," in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 94–128.

[68] *Shakespeare, The Queen's Men*, 4.

descends into penury, abjection, and madness he too becomes a kind of wandering clown figure. The British landscape of the play, then, is traversed by wandering clowns, who bring with them the present in their travels, tracing the early modern over the ancient past.

Walsh sees the history-play clowns as figures that "disrupt the historicizing work the plays do" and "shatter the illusion of pastness altogether."[69] Plays such as *King Lear* and the other British histories, however, do not seek to evoke such an illusion in the first place. Instead, as Edgar and his fellow wanderers reveal, they are in fact predicated on a shattering of this illusion, on mapping the present on to the ancient past through recognizably contemporaneous and realistic descriptions of household spaces, domestic disruptions, geographical landmarks, and cultural references drawn from ordinary early modern life. The historical "truth" of Shakespeare's play and the other British histories is one of a theatrical representation of historical experience, which is enabled by audience recognition. This mapping of the present on to the past serves to create a sense of the continuity of the British experience in the abstract. But it also functions in terms of eliciting an emotional recognition. In a soliloquy that appears only in the Quarto text, moments after his final interaction with Lear and his followers in the guise of Mad Tom, Edgar reflects on the experience of seeing himself mirrored in Lear:

> When we our betters see bearing our woes,
> We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
> Who alone suffers, suffers most i'th' mind,
> Leaving free things and happy shows behind.
> But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip
> When grief hath mates, and bearing" fellowship.
> How light and portable my pain seems now.
> When that which makes me bend, makes the King bow.
>
> (13.91–8)

[69] Ibid., 69.

Here, he speaks of the same emotional recognition that the domestic tragedies in particular elicit—that same quality that Sidney recognizes as the particular power of tragedy, that Hamlet seeks in his *Mousetrap*, that Heywood highlights in his *Apology for Actors*. Through a continuity of emotional experience, the gap between ancient Britain and early modern England is closed.

* * *

When *Lear* is transformed from the 1608 *History* of its First Quarto edition to the 1623 *Tragedy* in the First Folio, not only does its genre change but also—as scholars have long had to contend with—its text.[70] While these changes do not alter the overall structure of the play, they have occasioned much critical commentary in terms of which version to prefer, how best to conflate the texts, what the omissions in the Folio version might indicate, and so on.[71] In particular, the later text seems less embedded in a geopolitical context, with references to and scenes from the French invasion significantly reduced, and the major struggle represented more as a civil rebellion than a foreign invasion.[72] While such a change could be, and has been, read in terms of further removing *Lear* from the realm of the historical, by leaving the factual even further behind, I would argue that this is not necessarily the case; that in fact the shift from a foreign to a domestic focus can actually be read as being consonant with the British history play tradition that Shakespeare engages.

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[70] "The textual traces of *King Lear* have probably given scholars more cause for debate than any of Shakespeare's other works [. . .] Q1 contains approximately three hundred lines that do not appear in F; F prints approximately one hundred lines that are not in Q1. There are also hundreds of individual variants, some apparently negligible but others highly significant." *Norton Shakespeare*, 2332. For an extensive overview of textual history, see also *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: Arden, 1997), 110–28.

[71] See the overview in the Arden *Lear*, 128–46.

[72] See Gary Taylor, "The War in *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Survey* 33 (1980): 27–34.

Such a reading is supported by another significant textual shift that has been much remarked upon, the Fool's transformation from Quarto to Folio.[73] In particular, I wish to consider the enigmatic prophecy that the Fool delivers in the later text, just after Kent has directed the company to seek shelter in the hovel. Tarrying a moment alone on stage he declares,

> I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:
> When priests are more in word than matter;
> When brewers mar their malt with water;
> When nobles are their tailors' tutors;
> No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;
> When every case in law is right;
> No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
> When slanders do not live in tongues;
> Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;
> When usurers tell their gold i' the field;
> And bawds and whores do churches build;
> Then shall the realm of Albion
> Come to great confusion.
> Then comes the time, who lives to see't,
> That going shall be used with feet.
> This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time.
>
> (3.2.79–94)[74]

While the meaning of this prophecy is somewhat mysterious, I suggest that the speech should be read as a moment of historiographical reflection, placed strategically near the middle of the play. By leaving the Fool alone on stage to address only the audience, and by making his address semantically opaque, Shakespeare ensures a moment of arrest, a pause in forward temporal momentum. At this point of stillness he then inserts a device that serves not just to "shatter" an illusory past, but to create a complex temporal palimpsest that offers an insight into the particular way in which the British history plays

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[73] For a lengthy consideration of these changes, see John Kerrigan, "Revision, Adaptation, and the Fool in *King Lear*," in *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of "King Lear,"* eds. Gary Taylor & Michael Warren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 195–245.

[74] *The Tragedy of King Lear* in *The Norton Shakespeare*.

approach the experience of historical theatre. The historical reach of this prophecy temporally located in the ancient British past not only looks forward to a central moment of British cultural identity, the Arthurian legends, but also encompasses the present moment of performance (early modern or later), and an as-yet-unattained future.[75] The time of the Lear story is thus linked to the early modern present via the Arthurian moment.

This chaotic and ultimately utopian vision of Britain's future both trades in the ironic use of prophecy in a text set in the past and serves to parody the genre of 'Merlin-esque' prophecy.[76] However, it is perhaps most remarkable for the way its final line transforms it into a prophecy about a future prophecy. The Fool's prophecy becomes Merlin's. This doubling evokes a complex chronology that collapses the temporal distance between four historical moments: the Fool's present (the ancient British past), the audience's present (as the probable referent of the envisioned chaotic future), a point sometime in the future when order will return, and the middle ground of Merlin's Arthurian present, the halfway point between the time of the play and of its early modern audience. More than a neat trick of dramatic irony or successful parody of a literary tradition, this moment is also a compressed and complex reflection on the play's historiographical perspective and method. In layering these moments in time over each other and in explicitly calling attention to his deliberate anachronism ("[. . .] for I live before his time"), the Fool draws a connecting line that stretches through the successive eras of British and English history and joins them all under the name of "Albion" (the oldest known name for the realm).

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[75] With the accession of James in 1603, there was a general resurgence of interest in ancient Britain and its myths of civil division. See Richard Dutton, "*King Lear*, *The Triumphs of Reunited Britain* and 'The Matter of Britain,'" *Literature and History* 12.2 (1986): 139–51.

[76] Specifically, the version that Puttenham includes and wrongly attributes to Chaucer in the *Art of English Poesy* (309–10).

But the continuity as envisioned by the Fool, though, is not primarily one of national identity (this is all *our* history, or all the history of Albion) but rather of lived experience. Certainly, the prophecy looks forward to a time when the social order is upset or even inverted, but substantially, the vision of society remains constant. That is to say, priests may become "more in word than matter" while brewers "mar their malt with water," but they continue to be priests and brewers. The historically continuous realm of Albion is populated by ordinary citizens, citizens that are eminently recognizable to the early modern audience as part of ordinary life: brewers, tailors, burning heretics and wenches, cutpurses and squires, bawds and whores. Historical change is not to be found in great upheavals or the doings of the traditional dominant figures of history, but in the changes in ordinary life. The constant of lived, everyday experience defines Albion, from its ancient past through to its utopian future. And to access that experience, to participate in it even, *Lear* and the other British history plays offer a theatrical experience that functions through the recognition of the contemporaneous and anachronistic, framed most often through realistic staged representations of ordinary early modern domestic life.

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