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**Shakespeare's Domestic Tragedies:  
Disrupted Homes on the Early Modern  
Page, Stage and Street**

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**Abstract**

This thesis offers a significant reappraisal of the relationship between *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and the genre of domestic tragedy. In situating these tragedies in the context of portrayals of disrupted homes in cheap print, I explore social, spatial, ideological, and psychological constructions of the domestic in early modern England. I demonstrate how Shakespeare uses these constructions to stage how societal and familial pressures shape individual agency; how the integrity of the house is associated with the body of the housewife; and how household transgressions render the home permeable.

Chapter One examines how the political analogy of the household with the state is negotiated in three shrew-taming plays, in ways that prefigure Shakespeare's appropriations of domestic tragedy. Chapters Two, Three and Four explore these appropriations: Chapter Two argues that Shakespeare transfigures popular conceptions of adulterous murderesses in creating the figure of Gertrude; Chapter Three traces how *Othello* stages the relationship between domestic enclosure, female chastity, and illicit privacy; and Chapter Four suggests that *Othello* and *Macbeth* borrow dramaturgical tropes from domestic tragedies in staging household murder. Chapter Five compares *Macbeth's* use of popular conceptions of withcraft with the later borrowings of *The Witch of Edmonton*, and argues that Shakespeare and Rowley, Ford, and Dekker use similar sources, to divergent effects.

The innovations of domestic tragedy challenge the distinctions of early modern generic theory, showing how the transgressions of those in subordinate gender and class positions can attain tragic stature and threaten the security of the state. This thesis argues that in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare creates new versions of domestic tragedy, using heightened language, foreign settings, and elite spheres to stage familiar domestic worlds. I thus propose a new way of understanding Shakespeare's tragedies, domestic tragedy, and the significance of the disrupted home in early modern culture.

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## A Note on the Text

Original spellings have been retained in all quotations, with the exception of u/v and i/j, which have been modernised. Titles of early modern plays have been modernised. Anonymous works are cited by title. All quotations from William Shakespeare's works are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New York: Norton, 2008), unless otherwise stated. All references to the Bible are to *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, introduced by Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), unless otherwise stated.

## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used:

Crawford	Crawford Collection, The National Library of Scotland
Douce	Douce Ballads, Bodleian Library
<i>EBBA</i>	<i>Early Broadside Ballad Archive</i> (University of California, 2014), <a href="http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu">http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu</a>
<i>ELR</i>	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
EETS	Early English Text Society
HEHL	Henry E. Huntington Library
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford University Press, 2008), <a href="http://www.oxforddnb.com">www.oxforddnb.com</a>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), <a href="http://www.oed.com">www.oed.com</a>
Pepys	Pepys Collection, Magdalene College Library, University of Cambridge
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publication of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
PRO	Public Record Office
Roxburghe	Roxburghe Collection, British Library
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900</i>
<i>SQ</i>	<i>Shakespeare Quarterly</i>
SP	State Papers

### Introduction: Shakespeare's Domestic Tragedies

On 23 August 1594, a young man named Thomas Merry invited his neighbour, Master Beech, into the upper room of his home, and murdered him by hitting him over the head with a hammer. Merry dismembered the corpse and hid the pieces across London, before forcing his sister, Rachel, to help him conceal his crime by cleaning up the blood. The murder was reported in news pamphlets, and in broadside ballads, which ventriloquised the voice of the deceased victim (*Beche his Ghost*) and that of Rachel, who was executed with her brother for the crime (*The Pitifull Lamentacon of Rachell Merrye*).<sup>1</sup> Six years later, Henslowe's *Diary* records that 'The Tragedy of Thomas Merry' was staged at the Rose, in the same Southwark neighbourhood where the crime took place.<sup>2</sup>

The following year (1601), a play named *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, attributed to a scribe named Robert Yarrington, was printed.<sup>3</sup> *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is unusual in representing two interlocking narratives: one set in Padua in the non-specific past, concerning the murder of a ward by his uncle, and the other, a true crime set in contemporary London – the tragedy of Thomas Merry. The relationship between Henslowe's record and the surviving play-text has been much debated, but whether Yarrington's 'Merry' narrative is some form of memorial reconstruction of Henslowe's play, or a separate play altogether, it would seem that both are based on Merry's crime, and are testimony to the popular attention that the murder attracted.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Thomas Merry' (Beech's Tragedy), *Lost Plays Database* ed. Roslyn L. Knutson and David McInnis (University of Melbourne, 2009), [www.lostplays.org](http://www.lostplays.org) [accessed 4 September 2014]. Entries in *The Stationers' Register* include: 'A booke entytuled *A True Discourse of a Most Cruell and Barbarous Murther Comitted by one Thomas Merrey*' (29 August 1594); 'A ballad entituled *Beche his Ghoste*' (29 August 1594); 'a ballad entituled *A Lamentable Ballad Describing the Wofull Murder of Robert Beeche*' (3 September 1594); 'a ballad intituled, *The Pitifull Lamentacon of Rachell Merrye*' (7 September 1594); 'a ballad entituled *The Lamentable Ende of Thomas Merrye and Rachell His Sister*' (7 September 1594). None of these texts survive today.

<sup>2</sup> See 'Thomas Merry', *Lost Plays Database* ed. Kutson and McInnis. See also MSS 7, 65v, *Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project* (King's College London, 2005), <http://www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk> [accessed 12 August 2014].

<sup>3</sup> See Robert Yarrington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* ed. Chiaki Hanabusa (Manchester: Malone Society Reprints, 2013), Introduction, esp. pp.xxvi-xxix.

*Two Lamentable Tragedies* emphasises the ways in which Merry's home, in its spatial organisation, household hierarchy, and neighbourhood location, is involved in both his crime and its discovery: the extent to which Merry believes that he is private, and thus invulnerable, in the exclusive space of the upper room of his home; the forced complicity of the subordinate members of Merry's household, as cleaning up the traces of the crime becomes subsumed into domestic routines; and the role played in the detection of the crime by the surveillance and interference of Merry and Beech's neighbours. It focuses upon the true and recent nature of the crime portrayed, and the quotidian and recognisable world in which the crime takes place. As such, it belongs to the genre usually termed 'domestic tragedy', which comprises a group of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays that portray disruption, transgression and death in non-elite English households.

Five years or so after this play was printed, Shakespeare wrote a play in which a householder betrays the bonds of hospitality by murdering a guest in a private and exclusive space within his home. The householder's wife hides the murder weapons and assists the householder in cleaning up the victim's blood. However, members of the surrounding community soon come knocking at his gates to discover the murdered body. *Macbeth* was based on a narrative in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, published in a large and expensive book far removed from the street literature that provided the source material for *Two Lamentable Tragedies*.<sup>4</sup> Yet Holinshed's *Chronicles* also contains the narrative of the Elizabethan crime on which the earliest surviving domestic tragedy is based: the murder of Kentish landowner Master Arden by his wife and various accomplices, which forms the subject of *Arden of Faversham* (1592). Thus a single text became a source for numerous history plays, including those of Shakespeare, as well as a popular domestic tragedy.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, *Macbeth* may have been

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<sup>4</sup> Raphael Holinshed, *The Firste Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London, 1577). I borrow the term 'street literature' from Sandra Clark, *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.x.

<sup>5</sup> Editions of *Arden of Faversham* appeared in 1592, 1599 and 1633; this re-printing is often seen as evidence that the play was revived (see Roslyn Knutson, *The Repertory of Shakespeare's Company, 1594-1613* [Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991], p.45, p.68, p.115). The play also formed the subject of a broadside ballad, *The Complaint*

influenced by, or at least share source material with, a broadside ballad: it is usually assumed that Macbeth's bloody downfall is the subject of *The Ballad of Macdobeth*, now lost, which was entered in the *Stationers' Register* in 1596.<sup>6</sup>

Shakespeare's Scottish tragedy of familial ambition, kingship and witchcraft, then, shares some surprising correspondences with a domestic tragedy based on the recent murder of a shopkeeper in Southwark. The plays use similar narrative devices, spatial configurations and dramaturgical tropes, as I will discuss further in Chapter Four, and exhibit connections to Elizabethan 'cheap print' in the form of the broadside ballads that share their subject matter.<sup>7</sup> The relationship between these two plays is not an isolated example of correspondences between a Shakespearean tragedy and a domestic tragedy. Rather, as this thesis will demonstrate, the shared preoccupations of the two plays – the relationship between the ideal home and its inverse; the extent to which household bonds can become criminal (or fatal); the ways in which charged domestic spaces can shape behaviour; and the impact upon the home of the surveillance, interference, and influences of the outside world – are common to many of Shakespeare's plays, as well to domestic tragedies.

This thesis offers a significant reappraisal of the relationship between *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and the genre of domestic tragedy. It suggests that the plays usually classed as domestic tragedies – *Arden of Feversham* (1592), *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599), *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (1601), Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1607), *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608), Thomas Dekker, John Ford, and William Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1623), and Heywood's *The English Traveller* (1630) – interact with Shakespeare's tragedies in significant and previously unconsidered ways. It does not so much place these plays in a conversation with one another, as demonstrate that such a conversation is already taking place.

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*and Lamentation of Mistresse Arden of Feversham in Kent* (London, [n.d.]), Roxburghe 3.156, 3.157.

<sup>6</sup> William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* ed. Nicholas Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), Introduction, p.89.

<sup>7</sup> I borrow this term from Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. p.1.

In creating the tragic domesticity of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare drew on popular conceptions of the disrupted home from cheap print and domestic tragedies alike, and at once appropriated and transformed the genre of domestic tragedy. As this thesis will demonstrate, Shakespeare created new versions of domestic tragedy in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, using heightened language, foreign settings, and elite spheres to stage familiar domestic worlds. This introduction will discuss my approaches to disrupted homes on the early modern stage, page and street; develop a working definition of domestic tragedy; review the existing literature on Shakespeare and domestic tragedy; and demonstrate why an exploration of the affinities between Shakespeare's tragedies and domestic tragedy is both necessary and significant.

## **1. Approaching Disrupted Homes**

This thesis explores textual and theatrical representations of disrupted and violent homes in early modern culture. My approach is principally text-based, and my focus is upon printed texts, whether accessed directly, mediated by the conventions, structures and spaces of the theatre, or conveyed through the body and voice of the ballad-singer. Where I examine manuscripts, I do so either to illustrate the continuities and discontinuities between elite manuscripts and popular printed texts, and to trace the interplay between the conceptions of the home expounded in these manuscripts and the plays under consideration (as I do in Chapter Three), or to illuminate aspects of theatre history that are only accessible through the study of such manuscripts. I am interested in visual culture, but I read images in news pamphlets and broadsides primarily in terms of the texts in which they are embedded. Where I consider paintings, I do so in the context of textual representations of the home.

My approach is feminist. In the words of Jean Howard, I consider literary and cultural history 'from below', in that I juxtapose literary writings with comparatively marginalised popular texts in an attempt to revise literary and cultural history in terms of 'subordinated gender and

class positions'.<sup>8</sup> A study of the representation of domestic violence necessarily entails close attention to the ways in which a patriarchal society affected popular understandings of the construction of household space; the ownership and display of the female body; the significance of female chastity; and the possibilities of female agency.

My approach is also materialist; in order to examine representations of the home, it is necessary to become familiar with the material realities of the Elizabethan and Jacobean house and its contents, at various levels of society. In this, I build upon the work of Lena Cowen Orlin, whose research into both the early modern conception of the home and its material reality, particularly with reference to London, has facilitated so much of our current understanding of the ways in which early modern England 'locates the private in property, both real and moveable'.<sup>9</sup> I use the work of archaeological and social historians such as Orlin in order to explore how the material realities of homes of the period affect the ways in which disrupted and violent homes are represented and staged.

I engage with the work of the theatre historians Tiffany Stern, Andrew Gurr, and Tim Fitzpatrick, in order to comprehend the practices, spatial configurations, and dramaturgies of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres, and the ways in which these interact with the play-texts.<sup>10</sup> Farah Karim-Cooper and Stern, in their introduction to *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance* (2013), observe that whilst 'a lot of important books on theatre history provide and collate data, the *impact* of the material they have gathered together on play-texts, actors or audiences has not been fully addressed'; their essay collection assesses this impact by

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<sup>8</sup> Jean Howard, 'Feminism and the Question of History: Resituating the Debate', *Women's Studies* 19.2 (1991), p.150 (149-157).

<sup>9</sup> Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p.1. See also Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> See Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. ch.3; Stern and Simon Palfrey, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Tim Fitzpatrick, *Playwright, Space and Place in Early Modern Performance: Shakespeare and Company* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011); and *Henslowe's Diary* ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

looking at how performance effects, such as stage blood, cosmetics, sound effects, costume, and the architecture of the theatre itself influenced staging and writing. This thesis likewise explores how theatrical conditions, particularly the architecture of the theatre (in Chapter Three) and offstage sound effects (in Chapter Four), affect theatrical portrayals of tragic domesticity in the surviving play-texts.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout this thesis, I draw on my experience as director of a recent research production of the ‘Merry’ narrative from *Two Lamentable Tragedies*.<sup>12</sup> This project informs not only my discussions of this play, but also my understanding of the nature of domestic tragedy. This research production aimed to discover how our understanding of the play alters when it is brought to life in performance, and to explore the ways in which reconstructing early modern rehearsal and performance practices can illuminate genre, spatial dynamics, and character development. In staging the play, I drew on Stern’s research on rehearsal methods, using actors’ parts, a limited rehearsal period, and a single full group rehearsal.<sup>13</sup> I interviewed the actors about their experiences, and distributed questionnaires to all audience members immediately after the production, in order to gather their responses. The conclusions of this research project concerning the actors’ experiences of early modern rehearsal methods, and the performability of the Merry narrative, are beyond the scope of this thesis, and will be discussed elsewhere; but discoveries in rehearsal and performance concerning character relationships and the use of space inform my discussions of the play in Chapter Two and Chapter Four, and I engage with audience responses to the play’s generic features, both in performance and in the post-performance questionnaires, in developing my working definition of domestic tragedy, below. The insights afforded by my experience of staging ‘The Tragedy of Merry’ are central to the argument of

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<sup>11</sup> See Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London: Routledge, 2004), esp. p.26.

<sup>12</sup> Performed on 21 March 2014, at UCL. The production was supported by generous grants from the Malone Society, the UCL Centre for Early Modern Exchanges, The University of Exeter and the UCL Joint Faculty Institute of Graduate Studies; was produced by Freyja Cox Jensen; and was introduced by Tiffany Stern. See Emma Whipday, *Staging Two Lamentable Tragedies* (2013), [twolamentabletragedies.wordpress.com](http://twolamentabletragedies.wordpress.com) [accessed 4 September 2014].

<sup>13</sup> Stern, *Rehearsal*, ch.3; Stern and Palfrey.

this thesis; I make the case for the validity of practice as research as a way of approaching early modern drama, particularly when, as in this instance, such an approach is integrated into a historicised, literary, and generic reading of early modern play-texts.

Social history informs my exploration of wider representations of the home. My understanding of domestic crime and neighbourhood surveillance is greatly enhanced by the research of Laura Gowing, Amanda Flather, and Bernard Capp in that field.<sup>14</sup> However, it is not my intention to attempt to access the authentic experiences of domestic life as lived. It is customary, in studies of this nature, to regret the gap between popular representations of and prescriptions concerning domestic life, and the realities of the home as experienced by the audiences of these texts, but my interest is more in the representation of popular conceptions of the home than in the lived experience of it: my essential focus is upon the generic, spatial, and ideological implications of representing, and in particular, of staging, the disrupted home.<sup>15</sup>

I borrow new historicist models and terminology in my analysis of domestic tragedies and cheap print, particularly Stephen Greenblatt's model of 'subversion' and 'containment'.<sup>16</sup> However, I read containment less as a stable strategy than as a multiple and various reaction to cultural pressures and anxieties which affects the thematic and formal designs of both literary and non-literary texts. In so doing, I follow Peter Stallybrass and David Scott Kastan's understanding of containment as 'less a fixed state than a

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<sup>14</sup> See Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch, and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Amanda Flather, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007); and Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> See Amanda Flather, 'Gender, Space and Place: The Experience of Service in the Early Modern English Household c.1580-1720', *Home Cultures* 8.2, p.173 (171-188), Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p.7; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, pp.5, 18; Erica Longfellow, 'Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies* 45 (April 2006), p.313; Orlin Private Matters, p.3; and Jane Whittle, 'The House as a Place of Work in Early Modern Rural England', *Home Cultures*, 8:2, p.134.

<sup>16</sup> See Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1988), ch.2 ('Invisible Bullets'), pp.21-65. See also Hugh Grady, 'Containment, Subversion – and Postmodernism' *Textual Practice* 7.1 (Spring 1993), 30-49.

local manoeuvre'.<sup>17</sup> In considering the ways in which writers and actors portray and stage sensational and subversive acts of domestic crime, I follow the model of Peter Lake in *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, which reads containment as an act of 'inversion' through which 'a world of sex, violence and cruelty' is first 'summoned up and relished by both author and reader', then 'controlled and contained' by the legal framework of justice and punishment which the narrative invokes.<sup>18</sup> Of domestic tragedies, Lake argues that 'providentialising and moralising narrative frameworks and conventions could serve to legitimate and enable the depiction, the literal acting out, of the deviant and the destructive'.<sup>19</sup> Thus, I use the model of containment to explore the impact of cultural preoccupations, anxieties, and pressures upon literary, generic, and spatial structures.

Where relevant, I use anthropological theories – particularly those concerning the boundaries of the home and the concept of liminality – to illuminate the anxieties present in my source material, but always return to the approach of this source material, rather than imposing an alien framework.<sup>20</sup> I also invoke psychoanalytic texts when appropriate, particularly Freud's theory of the uncanny (*unheimlich*) in my discussions of witchcraft within the home in Chapter Five, and both Sigmund and Anna Freud's writings on denial in my work on murderous adulteresses in plays and ballads in Chapter Two. Although these texts were not available in the early modern period, they can offer insightful frameworks for retrospective analysis of the impact of the spatial structures of the home, and the ideological pressures pertaining to its political significance, upon the dynamics of household and family. In this way, my approach intersects with

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<sup>17</sup> David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass, eds., *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), Introduction, p.6.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Lake, with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp.xiv.

<sup>19</sup> Lake, p.xx.

<sup>20</sup> See Manuel Aguirre, Roberta Quance and Philip Sutton, *Margins and Thresholds: An Enquiry into the Concept of Liminality in Text Studies* (Madrid: The Gateway Press, 2000); Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* trans. Monika B. Visedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (1969; New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995); and Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

the history of emotions, which, as Lyndal Roper puts it, ‘sets out to describe collective, social states’.<sup>21</sup> In exploring how household dynamics are represented and staged in the period, I examine how these texts share a concern with how familial and societal pressures shape individual psychologies, resulting in collective fantasies and anxieties concerning these pressures, and how individuals might react against them.

As I discuss above, I use street literature – defined by Sandra Clark as ‘broadside ballads and cheap pamphlets available in increasing quantities in this period to a wide audience in streets, markets and public places’ – to illuminate the portrayals of disrupted homes in domestic tragedy and Shakespeare’s tragedies.<sup>22</sup> When I use this term, as opposed to Watt’s ‘cheap print’, I do so in order to emphasise the social and performed nature of this material; as I discuss further in Chapters One and Two, broadside ballads were performed not only by ballad-singers, but also by their purchasers, whilst news pamphlets could be read aloud to illiterate family members or friends. I thus explore conceptions of the home in what could be termed early modern popular culture.

The label ‘popular’ can be contentious. Antonio Gramsci defines popular texts as either ‘composed by the people and for the people’, ‘composed for the people but not by the people’, or ‘written neither by the people nor for the people but which the people adopt because they conform to their way of thinking and feeling’; whilst Michael Bakhtin writes of the subversive and celebratory power of ‘popular-festive forms’ such as carnivals and charivari, in relation to the works of Rabelais.<sup>23</sup> Peter Burke famously defines popular culture as ‘the culture of the non-elite’.<sup>24</sup> These definitions assume that the culture, activities and texts of a particular group (whether ‘the people’ or the ‘non-elite’) can, in terms of composition, audience or preoccupations, be discussed as a separate sub-category of a

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<sup>21</sup> Lyndal Roper, *The Witch in the Western Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), p.88.

<sup>22</sup> Clark, *Women*, p.x.

<sup>23</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings* ed. David Forgacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), p.195; Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). See also Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), esp. ch.1.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (1978; Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2009), p.iv.

wider literary or social culture; and that it is possible to distinguish texts and activities that are adopted by ‘the people’ from those that are not.

However, in early modern England many texts which could be read as pertaining to the culture of the non-elite also attracted an elite audience, from plays performed both at the playhouse and at court, to the homilies and sermons that both categories heard on Sundays, sometimes within the same congregation.<sup>25</sup> Elite readers might hear a ballad sung in a marketplace or tavern; as Patricia Fumerton argues, what ‘viewers or listeners of ballads saw or heard’ depended ‘on just where they happened to be walking or standing – the bookstall, the market place, the alehouse, the scaffold’.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, as Christopher Marsh observes, ballad-singers could be ‘permitted to perform at the mansions of the mighty’, and ballads were occasionally addressed specifically to the gentry, which ‘was to some degree an affectation, designed to flatter the humble, but it also had a more direct and literal purpose, for gentlemen did buy and sing ballads’.<sup>27</sup> Thus whilst I focus upon the culture of the non-elite in my analysis, I acknowledge both the place of the elite in the audiences of these texts, and the role of the elite in shaping and producing them.

Michelle O’Callaghan suggests that popular culture was often ‘produced by the elite in their own interests’, and thus ‘popular is best understood not simply as a descriptive category but also as a strategic term’.<sup>28</sup> Joy Wiltenburg takes this point further:

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<sup>25</sup> See Mary Ellen Lamb, *The Popular Culture of Shakespeare, Spenser and Jonson* (London: Routledge, 2006), ch.1, esp. p.3.

<sup>26</sup> Patricia Fumerton, ‘Remembering by Dis-membering: Databases, Archiving, and the Recollection of Seventeenth-Century Broadside Ballads’ in *Ballads and Broad-sides in Britain, 1500-1800* ed. Fumerton and Anita Guerrini (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p.16 (pp.13-34).

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.257, p.262.

<sup>28</sup> Michelle O’ Callaghan, ‘“Thomas the Scholer” versus “John the Sculler”: Defining Popular Culture in the Early Seventeenth Century’ in *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England* ed. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p.56.

Even if authors of popular literature had a humble readership in view, works produced by, and for the profit of, a more educated class can hardly present a direct expression of the attitudes and concerns of their consumers.<sup>29</sup>

Whilst Wiltenburg's argument would seem to obscure the fact that for any text to become 'popular' with its consumers, it must engage with their concerns, it is nonetheless important not to lose sight of the gap between the aims of a text, and the ways in which it is read. Thus my analysis of popular texts takes into consideration the motivations of the producers of such texts, as well as the ways in which texts may have been received.

*Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture*, edited by Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes, approaches the relationship between Shakespeare's plays and popular culture in terms of 'older forms of popular culture', such as clowning, festive rituals and 'products of oral tradition such as proverbs, ballads and song', arguing that 'Shakespeare's writing itself was created from materials that might genuinely be described as being "of the people"'.<sup>30</sup> It focuses on Elizabethan popular culture, with an emphasis on 'influences that shaped Shakespeare's drama':

These older forms of popular culture still retained considerable power in the sixteenth century and were very much part of the social fabric with which Shakespeare grew up. The media he worked in – the playhouse and the printing house – were of course commercial ventures, and they represent what is perhaps the earliest stage in the transformation of popular culture by the dynamics of the marketplace.<sup>31</sup>

This thesis builds on Gillespie and Rhodes' collection to explore how Shakespeare's plays interact with the forms of popular culture that emerge from these commercial ventures: texts intended for both elite and non-elite audiences, such as plays performed in commercial playhouses; texts, stories and songs that directly address a non-elite audience 'from above', in an attempt to prescribe and regulate behaviour, such as domestic conduct

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<sup>29</sup> Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), p.27.

<sup>30</sup> *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture* ed. Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), Introduction, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> Gillespie and Rhodes, p.3, p.1.

literature, state-sanctioned homilies and news pamphlets using providential frameworks; and texts that directly address non-elite audiences whilst also seeming to engage with their preoccupations and concerns, often in subversive, festive ways, like broadside ballads and chapbooks.

Many of these categories overlap: broadside ballads can be prescriptive as well as subversive, particularly those that aim to ‘warn’ or advise their audiences (as I discuss further in Chapters One and Three); news pamphlets could delight in sex and murder from within their providential frameworks (see Chapter Four); the prologues and epilogues of plays, like ballads, address a range of intended auditors, from gentlemen to masters to murderous women (as I explore in Chapters Two and Four); printed conduct literature could be far too expensive to be categorised as cheap print, whilst still purporting to address a wide and non-elite audience; and both state-sanctioned homilies and the sermons that were often the basis of conduct literature could be very expensive to buy in print, but free to hear from the pulpit. A ballad and standing room at the theatre could both be purchased for a penny, which in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* will buy you either a penny loaf or your morning’s small beer at a tavern. Yet ballads could also be heard for free when sung by a ballad-singer, or read on the wall of a tavern – as Marsh puts it, ‘possession was merely one form of interaction with a ballad’ – and the transport costs of visiting the theatre (by paying either the toll to cross London Bridge or to be ferried by a Waterman) could have been prohibitive for the poorest.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Shakespeare’s plays could themselves be considered ‘popular’, performed for large, mixed audiences in outdoor theatres and a range of audiences on provincial tours, but these same plays were also performed for elite audiences at court, and, later, at the relatively exclusive Blackfriars theatre.<sup>33</sup>

This thesis is alive to these nuances. I use the terms street literature or cheap print where appropriate, but I also use the term ‘popular’ to signify commercial texts and performances that represent or incorporate non-elite households, as well as those that were accessible to, or purported to address,

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<sup>32</sup> Gillespie and Rhodes, p.9; Marsh, p.252; Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, p.7.

<sup>33</sup> Gurr, *Playgoing*, ch.3.

non-elite audiences. In so doing, I explore how popular representations of disrupted homes influence domestic tragedies and Shakespeare's tragedies alike, not through finding isolated examples of allusion or appropriation, but by tracing how these depictions permeate print culture, and how the tragic homes represented on the early modern stage reflect, challenge, and negotiate these constructions of household, home, and neighbourhood.

## 2. Defining Domestic Tragedy

In creating my own working definition of domestic tragedy, I do not provide a literature review of previous definitions of the genre, although I mention these definitions where relevant. Rather, I focus on the inductions, epilogues, and narrator-figures of the plays themselves, showing how the authors of this group of tragedies self-consciously positioned these plays as generically distinct. A common criticism of 'domestic tragedy' is that it is an anachronistic term, first used to describe this group of plays in the late Victorian period.<sup>34</sup> As no label existed to describe this newly emerging genre in the early modern period, some critics suggest that these plays do not constitute a distinct group.<sup>35</sup> In demonstrating that the authors of domestic tragedies were self-consciously aware of the generic innovations of these plays, I explore how domestic tragedy challenges early modern generic theory, by showing how the transgressions of those in subordinate gender and class positions can attain tragic stature and threaten the security of the state.

Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for Actors*, published in 1612, includes extensive discussion of definitions of, and divisions between, genres. Heywood wrote three plays that have since been classed as domestic tragedies: *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, *An English Traveller*, which

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<sup>34</sup> J. P. Collier, *History of English Dramatic Poetry to the Time of Shakespeare*, Vol. 3 (London: John Murray, 1831), p.49. The first use of the term in English appears to be that of George Lillo, who gave *The London Merchant* (London, 1731) the subtitle 'A sentimental domestic tragedy'. Other early uses include Samuel Johnson, who uses it to refer to the 'natural' tragedy of *Timon of Athens* [*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, Preface (London, 1765), p.483], and Denis Diderot, who used the term 'le tragédie domestique et bourgeois' to refer to contemporary prose drama in England [*Œuvres de Theatre* (Brussels, 1761), p.174].

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Korda, p.13.

Martin Wiggins included in his collection of domestic plays, and *Edward IV*, which was discussed by Orlin as a domestic tragedy in *Private Matters*.<sup>36</sup> In *Apology*, Heywood argues that transgressions that take place in a non-elite, domestic sphere can be apt subjects for tragedies.

Heywood cites ‘a learned Gentleman in his Apology for Poesie’, who may be assumed to be Sir Philip Sidney, on the generic division of tragedy and comedy:

Tragedies well handled be a most worthy kinde of Poesie. Comedies make men see and shame at their faults.<sup>37</sup>

Sidney’s *Defence of Poesie*, written in 1579 and published (posthumously) in 1595, praises the genre of comedy because it stages men’s vices in ‘private and domesticall matters’; Sidney suggests that ‘nothing can more open [man’s] eies, then to see his owne actions contemptibly set forth’. In contrast, Sidney praises tragedy because it ‘maketh Kings feare to be Tyrants, and Tyrants manifest their tyrannicall humours’: both genres can have the same exemplary effect by staging bad behaviour in order to warn against it, but they differ in terms of the rank, position and influence of those involved.<sup>38</sup>

William Webbe’s *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (1586) lays out similar prescriptions for generic division, relying upon Aristotle’s prescriptions: tragedies deal with ‘persons’ of ‘Kynges and Queens, and great states’, and ‘expresse most miserable calamities... which increased worse and worse’; comedies travel in the opposite direction, ‘beginning doubtfully... and by some lucky chaunce alwayes ended to the joy and appeasement of all parties’, and do not require characters of such ‘great

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<sup>36</sup> Martin Wiggins, ed., *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Orlin, *Private Matters*, ch.2. See also Richard Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances: Home, State and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), ch.2, and Jean E. Howard, ‘Shakespeare and Genre’, *A Companion to Shakespeare* ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp.303-4.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), F4v.

<sup>38</sup> Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* in *The Major Works* ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.230. All further references are to this edition.

states'.<sup>39</sup> George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) reiterates these points, emphasising that the distinction between tragedy and comedy lies in both the 'degree' of characters and the 'degree' of style: 'Tragedies were written in the high stile: all Comedies... in the meane stile'.<sup>40</sup>

Heywood's argument belongs to the same tradition as Sidney, Webbe and Puttenham: he argues that 'comedy is an imitation of life', and that tragedy is designed to draw the attention of kings to their own tyranny, or to warn them of their tyrannical potential.<sup>41</sup> Yet he does not prescribe that great persons, and high style, belong to tragedy, and 'meaner' persons, and style, to comedy; rather, he argues that tragedy can likewise provide a warning for the common people of the audience:

Plays are writ with this ayme, and carryed with this methode, to teach subjects obedience to their King, to shew the people the untimely ends as have moved tumults, commotions and insurrections... If we present a Tragedy, we include the fatall and abortive ends of such as commit notorious murders, which is aggravated and acted with all the Art that may be, to terrifie men from the like abhorred practices.<sup>42</sup>

Heywood at once argues for the moral reach of tragedy, and suggests a definition of the genre at odds with conventional tragedy: tragedy might present the 'tumults' of ordinary men and women, in a way that is recognisable to its audience. His defence is that the crimes of common people, like those of kings, can threaten the security of the state, and so become tragic; it therefore rests upon the political analogy between household and kingdom, which I will discuss further in Chapter One.

Heywood supports his theory with an account of a woman who watches a performance of a play, *Friar Francis*, in which the protagonist kills her husband in order to marry her lover. The woman stands and cries out that she murdered her husband for the same reasons, and is arrested and executed for her crime. Heywood uses this tale to support his argument about the moral reach of tragedy, and terms it 'a domestick and home-borne

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<sup>39</sup> William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (London, 1586), D2v.

<sup>40</sup> George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* Book I (London, 1589), p.27.

<sup>41</sup> Heywood, *Apology*, F1v.

<sup>42</sup> Heywood, *Apology*, F3v.

truth': it is at once domestic as in English rather than foreign, and literally born of a home.<sup>43</sup> In relating this, Heywood may be borrowing from the anonymous domestic tragedy *A Warning for Fair Women*, in which the same anecdote is told by an incidental character in an illustration of the providential discovery of all murders, as I will discuss further in Chapter Two. It is significant that the anecdote, in showing the potential for a tragedy portraying household murder to have a moral effect upon its audience, intersects both with Heywood's new definition of tragedy, and with the emerging genre of domestic tragedy.

The subject of the anecdote is directly comparable to two extant domestic tragedies – *Arden of Faversham* and *A Warning for Fair Women*, both of which portray the murder of a husband by his adulterous wife, and are based on real, well-publicised, crimes – as well as to two more that have not survived: *Page of Plymouth* (c.1593), the source of which (a news pamphlet) does survive and therefore suggests the likely plot of the play; and *Friar Francis* (c.1592), which appears, from Heywood's summary, to cover the same territory.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, it shares numerous features with the other plays that have been categorised as English tragedies. Like *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and the English narrative of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, it portrays a 'true' domestic murder, and like *Arden*, *A Woman Killed*, and *The English Traveller*, it dramatises the fatal consequences of adultery within a non-elite household. Furthermore, the texts in which the anecdote is situated share the generic or formal anxiety that characterises the paratexts of each of these plays.

*A Warning for Fair Women* opens with three figures battling for control of the stage: Comedie, Hystorie and Tragedie. George K. Hunter claims that these generic personifications 'highlight the arbitrariness' of genre for the play and the audience.<sup>45</sup> Yet I suggest the opposite: it is this grappling over the stage that manifests the centrality of genre for the play that is to follow. The induction reveals that the play is not self-evidently a

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<sup>43</sup> Heywood, *Apology*, G1v.

<sup>44</sup> 'Page of Plymouth', *Lost Plays Database* ed. Knutson and McInnis.

<sup>45</sup> George K. Hunter, 'Elizabethan Theatrical Genres and Literary Theory' in *The Renaissance*, Vol. 3 of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* ed. Glyn P. Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.248-258 (p.250).

tragedy; rather, the induction is necessary to classify it for the audience. The play deals with ‘meane’ characters, like a comedy; ends in death, like a tragedy; and, in its truth, could claim to belong to the newly emerging genre of the history play.<sup>46</sup>

Tragedie ‘wins’ the squabble when Hystorie observes the colour of the hangings that adorn the stage:

The stage is hung with blacke: and I perceive  
The Audience preparede for Tragedie (82-3)

Susan Snyder describes early modern genres as ‘a set of norms... prompting sympathy or detachment’, and argues that the stage hangings would have provided a visual reminder of this, forming audience expectations.<sup>47</sup> Comedie and Hystorie are defeated by the expectations of the audience; they quit the stage, leaving Tragedie to ‘raigne’ (88).

A similar description of the stage decorations is used by the figure of ‘Truth’ in the induction to *Two Lamentable Tragedies*: ‘Our Stage doth weare the habiliments of woe’.<sup>48</sup> In my recent research production of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, I found that the relationship between the narrator-figure ‘Truth’ and the audience’s responses to the staged action highlighted the hybrid genre of the play. Truth’s very name emphasises the character’s role: not only to narrate the action, but to remind the audience that this action took place, locally and recently. Yet Truth’s solemn presence is undercut by the fact that Merry’s is a highly comic tragedy. One of the most significant moments of the narrative, the discovery of the parts of the dismembered body, is given to two comic Watermen, who trip over a bag containing ‘a mans legges, and a head with manie wounds’ (F4v); the remainder of the body is discovered by a remarkably persistent water spaniel.

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<sup>46</sup> See for example Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), esp. ch.2.

<sup>47</sup> Susan Snyder, ‘The Genres of Shakespeare’s Plays’ in *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare* ed. Margreta De Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2001), pp.83-97 (p.83).

<sup>48</sup> Robert Yarington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (London, 1601), A3r. All further references are to this edition, and will be incorporated into the text.

In performance, the audience responded strongly to the comedy, laughing at the goriest and darkest moments; this prompted the question of whether this response was helpful in assessing how early modern audiences might have responded to the play, or whether this was an anachronistic response to the extreme violence that characterises much drama of the period. This is further complicated by the fact that any contemporary performance, if one took place, would have been in close proximity, both spatially and temporally, to the original murder, which may have affected actor choices and audience responses in ways that we were unable to replicate. Yet in the uneasy juxtaposition of the bloody onstage action and the moralising commentary of Truth, an ambivalent audience response seems in many ways to be written into the play itself.

Truth frequently predicts, dictates, and comments on imagined audience responses to the play: when she first enters, she squabbles with the onstage personifications of Homicide and Avarice, and then addresses the audience directly: 'Gentles, bedew your teare bedecked eyes' (A3r). Audience members are instructed as to an appropriate reaction to the ensuing tragedy. Later, as Merry dismembers Beech's corpse, Truth addresses 'the sad spectators of this Acte':

I see your sorrowes flowe up to the brim  
And overflowe your cheekes with brinish teares,  
But though this sight bring surfet to the eye,  
Delight your eares with pleasing harmonie,  
That eares may counterchecke your eyes, and say,  
Why shed you teares, this deede is but a playe (E2v).

Truth's admission creates an aesthetic distance that upsets the straightforward relationship that has been established between the staged action and the tragic 'true crime' that the play dramatises. As Matthew Steggle observes, these lines 'are interestingly uncomfortable in their problematisation of audience weeping, and the question of whether one can take pleasure in weeping'.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, audience members observed that, in performance, this was a moment when the disjunction between Truth's

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<sup>49</sup> Matthew Steggle, *Laughter and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p.96.

commentary and the audience reaction was particularly strong; as they laughed at the dismemberment of the body, Truth suggested that the audience were weeping, and attempted to comfort them.

In the epilogue, Truth again addresses the audience:

What monstrous evils this hath brought to passe,  
Your scarce drie eyes give testimonial (K2v).

In our production, Elspeth North played all Truth's utterances as genuine and sincere, yet the audience responses complicated how this delivery was received, creating a sense of ironic distance. This was further complicated by the fact that the final tableau, in which both Rachel and Merry are hanged, produced no laughter, but rather a hushed silence; whilst I didn't observe any tears, Truth's epilogue seemed to chime with audience experience in a way that framed earlier laughter as inappropriate or perverse. Many of the questionnaire responses suggested that the final tableau was one of the most genuinely tragic moments of the play.

In the post-performance feedback, one audience member commented that the 'excellent' acting 'played on the borderline between comic/ghoulish'. Others noted their 'inappropriate' reactions to the tragedy, and how the comedy 'heightened the shock of the gruesome' elements of the play. 'Laying together of the body', when the neighbours assemble Beech's dismembered corpse, was described by audience members as one of the most amusing moments of the play, but it was also described (in one case by the same audience member) as the most moving: laughter and tragedy were able to co-exist for the audience. These audience responses highlight the interplay of generic features: not only does the play situate a traditionally 'comic', non-elite character in a tragic dramatic structure, aiming to regulate the behaviour of subjects rather than of rulers through his gory example, in what would have been a striking hybridity in terms of early modern generic theory; it also combines an emphasis on 'truth' with aesthetic distancing devices and couples a self-conscious desire to provoke tears through tragedy with comic stage business, features that were recognisable as generically 'mixed' to a modern audience.

*A Woman Killed with Kindness* differs from the plays discussed above; it is not based upon a true and recent domestic murder, but upon a tale from an Italian novella of sexual transgression ending in death. Yet, like *A Warning for Fair Women* and *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, Heywood's tragedy confidently pronounces its distance from 'conventional' tragedy; as Peter Holbrook notes, it presents itself as a 'reduction' of tragedy.<sup>50</sup> The Prologue declares,

Look for no glorious state, our muse is bent  
Upon a barren subject, a bare scene<sup>51</sup>.

The glorious (e)state of more traditional tragedy gives way to a gentle, but not monarchical, household: a 'bare scene' in that it contains only the properties of that household, which, though revealed to be numerous (including tableware, playing cards and a lute), are far from the adornments of a royal palace, and a 'barren subject' in affecting only those characters whose lives are caught up in it, with no repercussions upon the wider nation or the cosmic and natural worlds.<sup>52</sup> Yet it is the style as much as the substance that the Prologue at once apologises for and defends; the 'dull and earthy' poetry requires the imagination of the audience to render it 'divine' (11). This is comparable to the 'naked tragedy' described by Franklin's epilogue in *Arden*, with no 'filed points' or glozing stuff'.<sup>53</sup> The paratexts of both plays show an awareness that not just their subject matter, but their style, differs from the norm; and thus that they are experimenting with dramatic genre in an unprecedented manner.

Although none of these plays uses the label 'domestic tragedy', it is clear that they are concerned with defending the status of tragedies that are,

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<sup>50</sup> Peter Holbrook, *Literature and Degree in Renaissance England: Nashe, Bourgeois Tragedy and Shakespeare* (London: Associated University Presses, 1994), p.86.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* in *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays* ed. Wiggins, Prologue 3-4. All further references are to this edition, and are incorporated into the text.

<sup>52</sup> On the significance of stage properties in the play, see Catherine Richardson, 'Properties of Domestic Life: The Table in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*' in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.129-152.

<sup>53</sup> *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham* in *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays* ed. Wiggins, Epilogue 15, 18. All subsequent references are to this edition, unless otherwise stated, and will be incorporated into the text.

to use Heywood's phrase, 'home-borne and domestick'. These tragedies deal with the fatal household disorder of subjects, not rulers; use a 'naked' style that was usually the province of comedy; stage a familiar world that their audiences might recognise; and aim to provide a moral example for those audiences. Both Heywood and *Warning*'s anonymous author could be read as using the anecdote of the repentant murderess to construct, define, and defend a new sub-genre of tragedy.

As Orlin argues, *Arden of Feversham*, as the earliest domestic tragedy, 'altered the landscape of generic possibility in English drama'.<sup>54</sup> Domestic tragedy is an innovative genre; with its hybrid form and novel subject, it challenges the expectations of the early modern theatre-going public. It is also revolutionary in its project, and this is why Shakespeare's engagement with the genre is significant not only for our understanding of Shakespeare's tragedies, but for our conceptions of both the genre and the entire canon of early modern drama. Domestic tragedy makes a bold claim: it asserts the importance of the private world, and shows that households outside the elite sphere can be performed onstage and taken seriously. It demonstrates that characters from the same world as many in the audience can attain tragic stature, and suggests that their tragedies, like the tragedies of kings, can provoke tears. Domestic tragedy also stages the dangerous, subversive, and powerful potential of transgressions within non-elite homes; it demonstrates how the (insubordinate) behaviour of those in subordinate gender and class positions can affect the fortunes and threaten the safety of the kingdom, and undo the God-given hierarchy of Church and state.

*Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* do not fit this definition of domestic tragedy; the tragic action of these plays unfolds in foreign, elite settings, distanced from the quotidian world of domestic tragedy. Furthermore, whilst domestic tragedies stage the impact of disrupted homes upon household inhabitants and the surrounding neighbourhood, *Hamlet* portrays the impact of criminal transgressions in a royal household upon both that household and Denmark as a whole; *Othello* stages marital murder in a Venetian household in Cyprus, a household crime which affects the leadership of a

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<sup>54</sup> Orlin, *Private Matters*, p.75. See also Wiggins, p.1.

state's wars; and *Macbeth* explores the murder of a king in a household which is also a castle, and the resulting repercussions for an entire kingdom. Yet in staging the disrupted homes of these plays, Shakespeare borrows social, spatial, ideological, and psychological constructions of the home from domestic tragedies. In so doing, he shows that tragic events within familiar and recognisable households can be worthy of the aesthetic scope and heightened language of conventional tragedy.

### 3. Shakespeare and Domestic Tragedy

The familial and domestic aspects of Shakespeare's tragedies have always attracted critical attention.<sup>55</sup> In 1693, Thomas Rymer bathetically titled *Othello* 'The Tragedy of a Handkerchief', complaining that the domestic stage property was inappropriate to the dramatic reach of tragedy; Rymer's concerns remain of interest to modern scholars, and domestic objects in Shakespeare have attracted significant critical attention over the past four decades.<sup>56</sup> However, despite a wealth of excellent scholarship on domesticity in Shakespeare's plays, the relationship between Shakespeare and domestic tragedy has been neglected. Even those studies that discuss both Shakespeare's tragedies and domestic tragedies rarely observe any relationship between the two sets of plays.<sup>57</sup> Traditionally, discussions of domestic tragedy have focused on Shakespearean drama only when *Arden*

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<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (London: Gollancz, 1949); Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (London: Routledge, 1992); and Heather Dubrow, *Shakespeare and Domestic Loss: Forms of Deprivation, Mourning and Recuperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Rymer, *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693) in *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer*, ed. Curt Zimansky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), pp.132-164 (p.160). See also Lynda E. Boose, 'Othello's Handkerchief: The Recognizance and Pledge of Love', *ELR* 5 (1975), 360-374 (p.362); Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Gil Harris and Korda, eds., *Staged Properties*; and Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994); Orlin, *Private Matters*, chs.3 and 4; Catherine Richardson, *Shakespeare and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch.4; Ariane M. Balizet, *Blood and Home in Early Modern Drama: Domestic Identity on the Renaissance Stage* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), chs.1 and 2.

of *Faversham* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* are classed as such; and in such cases, authorship tends to be the only subject under discussion.<sup>58</sup>

The only Shakespearean play to have been read by critics in the light of domestic tragedy is *Othello*, which forms the subject of the sole book-length study of Shakespeare and domestic tragedy. Sean Benson's *Shakespeare, Domestic Tragedy and Othello* (2012) reads *Othello* in terms of the canon of domestic tragedies, and uses recent generic theory, with an emphasis upon generic instability, to argue the case for its inclusion in that canon. Benson addresses a formerly neglected question, but expends much of his attention upon a single quality of the genre: that of the non-aristocratic hero, a generic feature that was originally identified by Henry Hitch Adams in 1943.<sup>59</sup> Thus in exploring the aspects of *Othello* that define it as a domestic tragedy, Benson neglects the domestic itself.<sup>60</sup>

Orlin's *Private Matters* offers the only sustained discussion of *Othello*'s tragic domesticity in relation to domestic tragedy; she explores how, in both *Othello* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, the protagonist initially 'abdicates his domestic responsibilities', only to assert 'his patriarchal rights' through household murder.<sup>61</sup> Orlin uses *Othello* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* as examples of Elizabethan plays that exhibit an interest in domestic evil, and reads these plays alongside a news pamphlet reporting household murder. This thesis moves beyond Orlin's project, in focusing not on isolated correspondences between a Shakespearean tragedy and a domestic tragedy, but on the ways in which Shakespeare borrows tropes, concerns, and concepts from domestic tragedy and cheap print throughout his oeuvre, and particularly in the three plays under consideration.

An earlier exploration of *Othello* as domestic tragedy situated the play in terms of playhouse politics: in 1990, David Farley-Hills read the

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<sup>58</sup> See Macdonald P. Jackson, 'Shakespeare and the Quarrel Scene in *Arden of Faversham*', *SQ* 57.3 (2006), 249-293. See also Mark Dominik, *Shakespeare-Middleton Collaborations* (Box: Alioth Press, 1988), pp.17-39, on the authorship of *A Yorkshire Tragedy*.

<sup>59</sup> Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic or, Homiletic Tragedy, 1575 to 1644* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p.viii.

<sup>60</sup> See also Brian W. Shaffer, 'To Manage Private and Domestic Quarrels', *Iowa State Journal of Research* 62.3 (1988), 443-457, which takes a similar approach. G. W. Knight describes the play as 'domestic tragedy' in *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), but only in reference to the domestic world Desdemona inhabits, and not in terms of the genre itself.

<sup>61</sup> Orlin, *Private Matters*, ch.4 (p.154).

domesticity of *Othello* as a possible ‘Globe reply’ to the production of Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness* at the Rose.<sup>62</sup> Yet despite arguing that *Othello*’s ‘unusually domestic emphasis would suggest a popular audience’, he considers the domestic scope of the play a crowd-pleasing gimmick, far from integral to the ‘affective tragedy’ of the play itself.<sup>63</sup> The approach of Farley-Hills is characteristic of the majority of Shakespeare scholars, who find the scope and ‘universality’ of Shakespeare’s tragedies incompatible with the label ‘domestic’.<sup>64</sup>

Both Viviana Comensoli and Catherine Richardson, in their books on domestic tragedies, make a similar argument from the opposite perspective. Comensoli complains that the ‘New Critical preoccupation with aesthetic quality and with Shakespeare’s “superior” craft’ has informed comparisons of *Othello* with domestic tragedies, which are viewed as an ‘aesthetically inferior genre’.<sup>65</sup> Richardson argues that Shakespeare’s tragedies cannot be discussed in terms of domestic tragedy because they ‘tend to focus on one very intense interior scene – the bedchamber in *Othello*, the closet in *Hamlet*’, whilst the domesticity of domestic tragedies is ‘recognisable to the audience in its level of particularity in a way that is simply not the case in... the plays of Shakespeare’.<sup>66</sup>

I argue the opposite: both Comensoli and Richardson offer nuanced and incisive readings of domestic tragedies, but both insist upon defining domestic tragedies by a certain narrowness of criteria. Comensoli assumes that, if critics read *Othello* as a domestic tragedy of ‘superior craft’, this must reflect the bias of those critics; she does not consider that this may be due to the nature of *Othello*’s appropriation of domestic tragedy. Richardson

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<sup>62</sup> David Farley-Hills, *Shakespeare and the Rival Playwrights, 1600-1606* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.105.

<sup>63</sup> Farley-Hills, p.105.

<sup>64</sup> A. C. Bradley’s *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (London: Macmillan, 1904) is the critical foundation of this assumption. See also E. A. J. Honigmann on the ‘spiritual grandeur’ of Bradley’s ‘Great Man’ tragedies in *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies Revisited: The Dramatist’s Manipulation of Response* (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.viii; and Dieter Mehl, *Shakespeare’s Tragedies: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>65</sup> Viviana Comensoli, *Household Business: Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p.15.

<sup>66</sup> Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp.199-200.

assumes that if domestic tragedies usually manifest their domesticity in numerous domestic locations and a plethora of domestic objects, these must be necessary characteristics of the genre. I suggest that, in manifesting tragic domesticity in charged scenes in single locations, and in presenting domestic tragedy in heightened poetic language, Shakespeare at once uses the genre, and transforms it.

In my readings of Shakespeare's plays alongside existing domestic tragedies, I explore both sets of plays. However, my emphasis is upon Shakespeare's tragedies. This is not because I consider them more worthy of scholarship than plays by other authors; nor is it because I wish to use domestic tragedies, as non-canonical works, to support conclusions about canonical works. Rather, I privilege Shakespeare's plays in my analysis because the significance of the domestic to the tragedy of *Arden of Feversham*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The English Traveller* is widely recognised and has been much discussed, whilst the significance of the domestic to the tragedy of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, is not, and has not.

The domestic preoccupation of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* is not unique; domestic situations are central to a number of Shakespeare's tragedies. *Romeo and Juliet* is essentially the tragedy of two households (indeed, the term domestic tragedy has been used to refer to this play<sup>67</sup>), *King Lear* stages a familial dissolution that divides a kingdom, and *Coriolanus* reduces the politics of war to the dynamics of a family. Yet the scope of these plays extends far beyond the reach of domestic tragedy; and thus these plays are beyond the scope of this thesis. In *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear* and *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare explores how disruption within individual families can influence the fate of their society. *Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy of elite kinship networks that operate in a very different way to the non-elite household structures of domestic tragedy (structures which *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* replicate in a variety of ways). *King Lear* is

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<sup>67</sup> See Lynette Hunter and Peter Lichtenfels, *Negotiating Shakespeare's Language in Romeo and Juliet: Reading Strategies from Criticism, Editing and the Theatre* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp.88-89.

the tragedy of a household that is mapped onto a kingdom; and the tragedy of a man whose errors in the government of his home render him homeless. *Coriolanus* is the tragedy of a disillusioned hero and of a nation; the pressures of his familial relationships may form the crux of the play, but they are not the subjects of the outcome. Each of these plays concentrates upon an extended family (or two extended families), rather than a household: the ‘two households’ of *Romeo and Juliet* rely on familial networks that spread far beyond those households, and neither Lear’s family nor Coriolanus’s family reside in a single abode (exacerbating the tragedy). Furthermore, in each case, family is the source of tragedy, but the play is not a tragedy *of* that family.

In contrast, the tragedies of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* have significant political ramifications, but these ramifications are reflected back into the domestic sphere for the culmination of the tragedy. In this, they resemble domestic tragedies in portraying household disorder that threatens the state; they differ in the sphere in which this disorder is located, yet both sets of plays demonstrate how the vulnerability of the disrupted home makes the communities in which it is located likewise vulnerable. *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, and *Coriolanus* could be read productively in terms of the genre of domestic tragedy; indeed, I briefly discuss *Romeo and Juliet* in my discussion of how staging the female body at the boundaries of the home became a key dramaturgical element of performing seduction in Shakespeare’s tragedies and domestic tragedies in Chapter Three. However, my focus is upon *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* because these plays engage most closely with the generic features of domestic tragedy, as this thesis will demonstrate.

An interest in familial relationships and domestic concerns is not unique to this genre; indeed, it could be argued that throughout history, the majority of tragedies have engaged with such themes, from Ancient Greek and Senecan tragedy, to Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy, Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*, and Ford’s *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*. In *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon*, John Kerrigan argues that revenge has been the subject of both ‘major works of art’ and ‘shoddy and ephemeral writing’ from antiquity to modernity because it enables these texts to

explore how ‘positive’ allegiances, such as ‘family or other social bonds’, can produce destructive impulses.<sup>68</sup> The familial and social bonds that motivate the tragic action of revenge are common features of almost all tragedies; I therefore suggest that, just as Kerrigan charts the use of revenge as a subject, structure, and preoccupation through literary history, so a study of tragic domesticity could fruitfully explore the continuities and discontinuities between the familial and domestic motivations, structures, and preoccupations of tragedies from Ancient Greece to Caroline England. However, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* share a domestic specificity that is directly related to domestic tragedy, and is not common to the plays discussed above.

Each of my chapters takes a different approach to exploring the relationship between Shakespeare’s tragedies and domestic tragedy, in the context of disrupted homes in popular culture. My first chapter examines legal treatises, domestic conduct manuals, homilies, portraits, wall hangings, and architecture, in order to explore how the ubiquitous image of the home as castle becomes shorthand for the ways in which the home becomes a place of safety and private power. Yet this safety and power is dependent upon the maintenance of household order, as rooted in a spatially determined gender hierarchy. I explore the ways in which this hierarchy is at once challenged and reinforced in shrew tamings in street literature and onstage, in Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (c.1592), the anonymous *The Taming of a Shrew* (1594), and Fletcher’s *The Tamer Tamed* (c.1609-10). I argue that Fletcher’s interpretation of Shakespeare’s *Shrew* illuminates how the play situates the potential for tragedy within a comic structure, prefiguring the tragic homes of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*.

Chapter Two explores how Shakespeare draws on the popular traditions of the adulterous murderess, who appeared in ‘true crime’ narratives in street literature and on stage, to create the figure of Gertrude. In domestic tragedies, wives and sisters that become complicit in household murder do so because their allegiance is fatally divided between loyalty to

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<sup>68</sup> John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.vii.

their household and loyalty to the state, and the motives of adulterous wives are frequently represented as opaque, stemming from a misguided allegiance to a second man, who becomes a projected or rival 'husband'. I suggest that Shakespeare engages with these tropes in showing Gertrude as 'torn in twain' between her current husband and her son by her former husband, and transfigures the opacity of motives exhibited by adulteresses and murderesses by calling into question whether Gertrude is either adulterous or murderous.

My third chapter considers how the spatial trajectories of theft and rape associate the home with the bodily and moral integrity of its female inhabitants. It situates representations of elopement and seduction in Shakespeare's tragedies and domestic tragedy in the context of depictions of domestic violation in other genres in Shakespeare's oeuvre: comedy, poetry, and romance. I explore how 'The Great Rebuilding' was shaped by and shaped emerging conceptions of privacy and an increasing emphasis on the enclosure of both goods and female inhabitants within the home. I examine the extent to which conduct literature mapped the boundaries of the home onto the boundaries of the female body, and thus trace the imaginative correlation between enclosed domestic space and female chastity, the corresponding correlation between the adulterous body and 'common ground', and the transgressive potential of female privacy in domestic tragedies, arguing that Shakespeare drew on this discourse in constructing accusations of Desdemona's adultery, and thus the context of her murder, in *Othello*.

Chapter Four examines the extent to which representations of violent homes in early modern news pamphlets situate those homes within a law-abiding neighbourhood whose inhabitants watch, judge, and eventually intervene when the disordered home becomes criminal. It discusses how *Arden of Faversham* stages the ways in which criminal acts render the home permeable, making the private public, and revealing the secrets of the home to the wider community. Exploring the relationship between *Arden*, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, it argues that the latter two plays both borrow spatial and dramaturgical tropes from news pamphlets and domestic tragedies in staging the aftermath of domestic murder.

My fifth chapter explores how cheap print reporting witchcraft constructs the magic of witches as operating across the boundaries of the home, so that perpetrator and victim alike are identified with the household spaces they inhabit. By considering the domestic witchcraft staged in *The Witch of Edmonton* and *Macbeth* in the light of the transgressive mobility, sexuality, and female agency of witches in cheap print, I demonstrate the divergent ways in which these two plays engage with the figure of the witch. I suggest that Shakespeare draws upon these popular constructions of witchcraft in staging the relationship between his undomestic weird sisters, and the vulnerable domesticity of the Macbeths' castle.

In reading these plays in the light of wider representations of domesticity in early modern culture, I argue that Shakespeare's royal and military households in these plays (and other works within his oeuvre) are recognisable as 'home' to the non-elite audiences who attended his performances. This thesis demonstrates that Shakespeare borrows representations of domestic relationships, stagings of domestic space, and literary and dramaturgical tropes, from the innovative genre of domestic tragedy, and shares interests and anxieties concerning tragic domesticity with both this genre, and early modern English popular culture as a whole. Furthermore, I suggest that this familiar domesticity is central to the tragedy of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*: these plays borrow constructions of the domestic from cheap print and domestic tragedy to stage how societal and familial pressures shape individual agency; how the integrity of the house is associated with the body of the housewife; and how household transgressions render the home permeable. It is because these plays are domestic that they become tragic.

## 1. Home: Conceptualising the Domestic

The first and chiefe use of an house is to defend man from the extremity of winde, and weather. And by the receipt of comfortable light and wholesome ayre into the same, to preserve man's body in health. Therefore, whosoever taketh from man so great a commodity as that which preserveth man's health in his castle, or house, doth in a manner as great wrong as if he deseised him altogether [put him out of possession] of his freehold... If one who hath a horrible sicknesse be in my house, and will not depart, an action will lye against him, and yet he taketh not any aire from me, but infecteth that which I hath... And though light and air be common, yet if by any man's own act they may be made private, they may not be taken from him.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1580s, Master Hales of London sued his neighbour, 'J. S.', for building a house that blocked his light and reduced his portion of 'wholesome air'. The case was considered significant enough to be brought to public notice over fifty years later, and the result was the publication of a tract which set forth the arguments of 'foure famous Sages, of the common law' concerning Hales' complaint (p.1). The publication of the pamphlet attests to the continuing public interest throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in the rights and responsibilities of a property-holder, and the extent to which these rights and responsibilities may be contested.

The point of disagreement was whether Hales had the right to restrict the building of another's house in order to safeguard the comforts of his own home. Master Mounson, one of the aforementioned 'sages', defends Hales' position, suggesting that the 'use' of a house is at once to protect its owner from the malignant forces outside, and to ensure that all beneficial elements are able to enter; the boundaries of the home must be selectively permeable. If the building undertaken by J. S. diminishes the use of Hales' house, through either allowing the entry of what is malignant (such as, in

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<sup>1</sup> John Manwood, Robert Mounson, Edward Plowden and Christopher Wray, *A Briefe Declaration for What Manner of Speciall Nusance Concerning Private Dwelling Houses, a Man May Have his Remedy by Assise* (London, 1636), pp.1-2. All further references will be incorporated into the text.

Mounson's illustration, a person with a contagious illness) or obstructing the entry of what is beneficial (in this case, light and air), then the construction of J.S.'s property damages the property of another, and so becomes illegal. Another 'sage', Master Wray, shares this position, arguing that if the construction of a house 'hurts' the freehold of another, then it is a 'nuisance' according to common law (p.11). Wray goes further than Mounson, arguing that light and air are not merely beneficial but 'necessary' to a house; should they be 'taken' from the householder, his house 'remaineth as a dungeon' (p.11).

Both Mounson and Wray draw upon the claims of Francis Bacon in his essay 'Of Building'. Bacon suggests that anyone who 'builds a faire house upon an ill seat committeth himself to prison'. Bacon's definition of an ill seat incorporates 'unwholesome' air, but it is not confined to natural causes; he also considers an ill seat to be one adjoined by 'ill neighbours'.<sup>2</sup> Yet his primary emphasis is upon the role of the house in preserving health, and the dangerous consequences of allowing 'unwholesome' air within a home. This preoccupation is drawn from medical discourses of the period. In 1550, Andrew Boorde expressed similar concerns:

For yf the ayer be fryshe pure and clene a bout the mansion or howse, it doth conserve the lyfe of man... And contraryly evyll and corrupt ayers doth infecte the bloode... and therefore it doth breede many diseases and infirmities through the whiche mannes lyfe is abbrevyated and shortenyd.<sup>3</sup>

Thus a house with clean air can prolong life, and an 'unwholesome' home can shorten it. Building or renting a house without due consideration of its health-giving properties can prove fatal.

Yet whilst the role of the home in preserving health was a prevailing concern, not all commentators agreed that householders were automatically entitled to such health-giving properties. When Master Manwood, another lawyer, defends the position of 'J.S.', he uses this definition of an ill seat to

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Bacon, 'Of Building', *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (London, 1625), pp.257-265 (p.257, p.258).

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Boorde, *The Boke for to Lerne a Man to be Wyse in the Building of his Howse for the Helth of Body* (London, 1550), A4r-A4v.

condemn Hales' actions: he considers light and air to 'be not things of necessity but of pleasure', and he argues that the air is 'not any element local' (p.19). Thus for Manwood, Hales may own his property, but he does not own the light and air which may enter it; nor do light and air constitute the 'use' of a house. Yet Manwood's argument rests upon the same assumptions as those of Mounson and Wray: that the ownership of property entitles a man to certain benefits pertaining to that property. For Manwood, these benefits are neither light nor air, but privacy. Thus he complains:

And if you make your windows into our garden, this is a wrong done unto us, for by this means I cannot talk with my friends in my garden but your servant may see what I do, and so the wrong first began in Master Hales. (pp.21-22)

For Manwood, as for the other sages, ownership of a home involves more than material possession. As Orlin observes, 'early modern England... locates the private in property'; Manwood argues that the ownership of property constitutes a right to such privacy.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, his use of pronouns ('my friends'; 'your servant') implies that property is composed of the human members of the household, as well as the dwelling itself.

Manwood's illustration illuminates the paradox of the 'home' as a concept. It is defined by the *OED* as a 'dwelling place; a person's house or abode; the fixed residence of a family or household; the seat of domestic life and interests' – a definition attached to the word's earliest usage in English.<sup>5</sup> It is thus at once defined by its borders, as a house or building in which people reside, and by its inhabitants, the 'household' with a shared 'domestic life'. Yet the house only becomes a home when inhabited by a 'family' (composed both of blood relatives and of dependants), and that potentially disparate family only becomes a household by residing within a house.<sup>6</sup> For a noble family, this may not be a single house, but various

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<sup>4</sup> Orlin, *Private Matters*, p.2.

<sup>5</sup> 'home', *OED*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> See Peter Laslett, 'Introduction: The History of the Family' in *Household and Family in Past Time: Comparative Studies of the Size and Structure of the Domestic Group over the Last Three Centuries in England* ed. Laslett with Richard Wall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.28.

houses in which the family resides; the defining feature of the 'home' is that the family resides in each house together, as a unit.

Furthermore, as Frances Dolan notes, 'houses', which were perceived as 'related to a familial identity that includes not only offspring but ancestors, family honour, and property,' were 'seen as an extension of the self.'<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the term 'property' was used to refer to 'a characteristic quality of a person or a thing'; 'the quality of being proper or appropriate'; 'a person's goods'; and 'the fact of owning something and being owned'.<sup>8</sup> Shakespeare makes use of these various readings in *Hamlet*, when Hamlet speaks of:

...a king  
Upon whose property and most dear life  
A damned defeat was made. (V.ii.546-8)

The Norton Shakespeare glosses 'property' here as 'rightful sovereignty', yet Shakespeare's pun is more subtle: it refers to Old Hamlet's property as the characteristic of kingship; his physical property, at once the crown and the kingdom; his wife, at once his property and an aspect of himself; and his self. Property, then, refers not only to ownership, but to appropriate or fit ownership which becomes an attribute of the person who owns, and is thus related to 'propriety'; the home is quite literally viewed as an extension of the self, because having cannot be separated from being.<sup>9</sup>

Thus in *A Briefe Declaration*, dwelling and household both become extensions of the householder's self, at once reflecting upon him and existing under his authority. For Manwood, in his image of the garden overlooked by a neighbour, the home is at once property and its inhabitants. The garden and the friends therefore belong to one neighbour, the servant to another, and it is not only that his property may be viewed by an outsider which vexes Manwood, but that this outsider may be the property, and thus the agent, of another. The gaze of the neighbour's servant becomes, by this

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<sup>7</sup> Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p.153.

<sup>8</sup> 'property', *OED* 1a; 2; 3b; 3c; 4.

<sup>9</sup> 'propriety', *OED* 1; 3; 4.

analogy, the gaze of the neighbour himself, a trespassing gaze that penetrates Manwood's private world.

Thus the 'sages' who undertake to argue this case for the public do not confine themselves to points of law. Rather, each imaginatively engages with the contested spaces, using illustrations and analogies that involve placing themselves within the homes under discussion. Consider, for example, the slippage in Manwood's argument, from the perceived wrongs done to 'J.S.' to the imagined wrongs done to himself. He at first places himself beside J.S., as an imagined fellow-sufferer, complaining that windows viewing 'our' garden is a wrong done to 'us'; however, he soon deposes J.S. as owner of the home, imagining his own friends and garden as spied upon by Hales' servant. Likewise, Master Plowden, the fourth of the lawyers, argues that if his neighbour builds 'to the uttermost of mine; [then] by your first building I am bridled and stopped of my building' (p.7): Plowden reimagines an attempt to arrest the building work of J.S. as a hypothetical attempt to stop the expansion of his own property. Indeed, both Plowden and Mounson take the process still further, not only imaginatively inhabiting the homes of Hales and J.S., but inviting the reader into their own homes, as in Mounson's illustration of a sick friend who enters into his home and pollutes his air.

As *A Briefe Declaration* demonstrates, the concept of home in early modern England is at once legally uncertain, ideologically conditioned, and inescapably personal. Questions of property and privacy, ownership and neighbourhood, are sufficiently vexed as to require analogies and illustrations to illuminate points of law, and are sufficiently significant to be of interest, in the case of a single legal quarrel, to the publisher, the printer, and the public, over half a century after the quarrel itself took place. The terms used to describe the home are emotive and personal; they also draw upon a common vocabulary of images and metaphors that recur throughout discourses concerning the home in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus Bacon's prison becomes Wray's dungeon, and Mounson's home becomes his castle.

The structure of this thesis – 'Home', 'Household', 'House', 'Neighbourhood', and 'Outside' – at once borrows and interrogates the

various charged conceptions of home that this pamphlet presents: home as a site of expectations, fantasies and anxieties; home as a household composed of its participant members; home as a house that encloses these members and shapes their activities; home as a place in close proximity to (watching) neighbours; and home as a health-giving environment that is vulnerable to invasion by ‘unwholesome’ influences from the outside world. In this chapter, I trace the figurations of the home, as castle, as miniature commonwealth, and as hell, in early modern English culture. By examining legal treatises, domestic conduct manuals, Biblical commentaries, portraits, wall hangings, and architecture, I explore how the ubiquitous image of the home as castle becomes shorthand for the ways in which the home becomes a place of safety and private power; yet this privacy and power depend upon the maintenance of household order, and adherence to the laws of the state. I demonstrate that these texts construct the safety and order of the state as dependent upon the order of individual households, and the order of these households as rooted in a spatially determined gender hierarchy. I explore the ways in which this ideal of the home is at once challenged and reinforced in three shrew-taming plays: Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* (c.1592); the anonymous *The Taming of a Shrew* (1594); and Fletcher’s *The Tamer Tamed* (c.1609-10).

I read these plays alongside depictions of shrew-taming in street literature, in which domestic violence is celebrated as a strategy to contain household insubordination, yet shrewish wives are constructed as the responsibility of their husbands, who must either contain household disruption to promote the peace of the neighbourhood, or suffer the reprisals of that neighbourhood. I suggest that Shakespeare uses both the main plot and the induction of *Taming* to explore how issues of class and gender render household subordinates, whether servants or wives, vulnerable to exploitation and violence; and to stage the strategies by which household tyranny might be resisted. Furthermore, I argue that Fletcher’s interpretation of Shakespeare’s *Shrew* illuminates how the play situates the potential for tragedy within a comic structure, prefiguring the tragic homes of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*.

## 1. The Ideal: Home as Castle

The fantasy of home as castle is not particular to Master Mounson; indeed, it was so commonplace as to be considered proverbial. Tilley, in his *Dictionary of the Proverbs in England*, dates the earliest surviving use of the proverb ‘a man’s house is his castle’ to Richard Mulcaster’s conduct manual *Positions* (1581).<sup>10</sup> As Orlin observes, the image also appears in William Lambarde’s legal treatise *Eirenarcha*, published the same year:

A man’s house is his castle, which he may defend with force against any private army that shall invade him.<sup>11</sup>

The above examples suggest that this image originated in the mid-Elizabethan period, and soon became commonplace; by 1581, the image is already proverbial, as Lambarde uses it as a passing metaphor.

Lambarde, a gentleman landowner with a keen interest in legal matters, gained a place on the Kent ‘commission of the peace’ at about the time of *Eirenarcha*’s publication; he later became deputy to Lord Burghley as Master of the Alienation Office of Chancery.<sup>12</sup> The fact that Lambarde specifies that the castle may be defended against a ‘private’ army is noteworthy, for this implies that the image of the home as castle only applies as long as the home in question does not threaten the state; a man may defend himself against a private army, but not a public one.

Castles, for the most part, no longer retained their former defensive efficacy; as Orlin argues, the ‘perceived decline of the castle as a functional architectural form released it to the realms of proverb, of metaphor, and even of legal pronouncement’.<sup>13</sup> The castle would not be used again in warfare until the Civil War, but it remained an attribute and symbol of

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<sup>10</sup> Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), M473. See also David Pickering, *Cassell’s Dictionary of Proverbs* (London: Cassell & Co., 2001), p.115.

<sup>11</sup> William Lambarde, *Eirenarcha: Or of the Office of the Justices of Peace in Two Bookes* (London, 1581), L7v. See also Orlin, ‘Man’s House as his Castle in Elizabethan Domestic Tragedy’ (Dissertation: University of North Carolina, 1986), p.45.

<sup>12</sup> J. D. Alsop, ‘Lambarde, William (1536–1601)’, *ODNB*. The Alienation Office dealt ‘with writs and fees arising from the conveyance of land by common recovery’ (‘alienation office’, *OED*, 1).

<sup>13</sup> Orlin, *Private Matters*, p.2. See also Orlin, ‘Man’s House’, pp.57-89.

power, wealth, and rank. Castles continued to be owned by monarchs and nobles, and the image of the castle was a repository for fantasies about lineage and status, recurring in chivalric romances and royal entertainments as well as in legal discourses and conduct literature.

The home as castle also appeared in visual imagery. In a 1583 portrait of Sir Edward Hoby (Fig. 1), a castle is represented in the top right hand corner of the painting, as if through a window, or as a portrait within a portrait. As Tarnya Cooper notes, the image is ‘difficult to interpret’:

The allegorical image... shows a woman in front of a castle with discarded weapons and military trophies covered by a veil in the foreground. She holds a banner with a Latin inscription, which can be translated as ‘laid aside but not blunted’.<sup>14</sup>

Hoby’s own home was not a castle but a manor house: Bisham Abbey in Bisham, Berkshire, which stands upon formerly monastic land, and was acquired by the Hoby family in the early sixteenth century; Sir Philip Hoby and his brother substantially rebuilt the property in 1557-1560, constructing a great dining hall, a tower and a new suite of rooms.<sup>15</sup> It is significant that Edward Hoby chose not to showcase his (improved) family seat in the portrait, but instead used the image of a vague and generalised medieval castle.

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<sup>14</sup> Tarnya Cooper, *A Guide to Tudor and Jacobean Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2008), p.20.

<sup>15</sup> David Nash Ford, ‘Bisham Abbey’, *Royal Berkshire History*, [www.berkshirehistory.com](http://www.berkshirehistory.com) [accessed 12 November 2013].



**Fig. 1. *Sir Edward Hoby*, unknown artist, 1583, National Portrait Gallery, catalogue no.1974. © National Portrait Gallery, London.  
Used with permission.**



**Fig. 2. *The Family of Henry VIII: An Allegory of the Tudor Succession*, attrib. Lucas de Heere, c.1572, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, accession no. NMW A 564. Used with permission.**

The image of the woman standing beside the castle is reminiscent of that of Elizabeth I in Lucas De Heere's *The Family of Henry VIII: An Allegory of the Tudor Succession* (c.1572), in which Elizabeth holds hands with an allegorical representation of peace, who tramples weapons beneath her feet (Fig. 2). The woman standing before the castle in the image of Sir Edward Hoby is wearing a larger ruff, and less of her hair is on display, but there seems to be some correspondence between the two figures. Furthermore, the woman in the Hoby image wears a crown; if not designed to represent Elizabeth, she may be intended as an allegorical representation of England. Cooper notes that the portrait 'may have been designed to indicate [Hoby's] readiness to serve'.<sup>16</sup> The fact that the weapons in this image are not trampled upon, but only laid aside, coupled with the Latin motto, would seem to support this.

Thus the Hoby image suggests that Hoby's home is Elizabeth's castle; that Hoby is aware his private power is constructed upon state power, and is willing to provide his power for the uses of the state, should the state require it. Lambarde's image of the home as castle implies that the home

<sup>16</sup> Cooper, p.20.

will protect and defend its inhabitants as long as it remains subject to the state; the Hoby image seems to imply that the state may likewise depend upon the home as castle in its own defence. Yet the image of the home as castle was not always an image in which war or danger was implied. To imagine the home as defensible is to imagine it as vulnerable; the home as castle was also used as an image of peaceful security.

Castle-homes appear in a tapestry valance (c.1600-10) designed to be hung 'above heavy curtains, around the top of a posted bed, which would have been a household's most valuable piece of furniture' (Fig. 3).<sup>17</sup> The valance portrays men and women hunting, hawking, bear-baiting, playing music, dancing, and flirting, in an idealised pastoral landscape.<sup>18</sup> They are surrounded by trees, hills, and an astonishing number of castles, complete with turrets and, in many cases, a moat and drawbridge. The proliferation of castles in the image suggests that these were not intended to represent real castles, in which a noble family would reside, but rather, the idea of the home as castle, in which an idealised image of the castle stands in for a house.



**Fig. 3. Detail from bed valance, c.1600-10, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, accession no. T.117-1934. Used with permission.**

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Bate and Dora Thornton, *Shakespeare: Staging the World* (London: British Museum Press, 2012), p.63.

<sup>18</sup> Bed valance, Sheldon Tapestry Workshop c. 1600-1610, V & A Museum Collections, T.117-1934. See also Bate and Thornton, pp.63-5.

The valance allows the master or mistress (or indeed, marital couple) lying upon the bed to participate in a fantasy of a world in which an Englishman's home is quite literally his castle, protected and defended from outside dangers by drawbridge and moat, yet the world outside presents no threat, as all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood may meet on what appears to be common land to indulge in communal pastimes. In this pastoral fantasy, security is rendered unnecessary even as it is propagated. The feudal hierarchy implied by the castle, in which the landscape where a castle is situated is peopled by those working for, and under the protection of, that castle, is imaginatively dismissed. Although possessing a tapestry as a bed hanging suggests a family of some means, the representation of the home as castle suggests that the person who originally commissioned the tapestry (or at least, the implied purchaser) was not noble, and possessed no castle, but rather, enjoyed contemplating a representation of rural England in which every man has his castle, but lives in close proximity to his neighbours.

The domestic ideal, then, could decorate the domestic interior. Those with greater resources could go still further, refashioning their entire house to conjure up a domestic fantasy. The Elizabethan period was a time of extensive architectural development, as I discuss further in Chapter Three. Certain aristocratic families, among them the Sidneys, chose to follow the vogue for extending and rebuilding houses, and refashioned their homes, not in line with new continental architectural styles, but in the Gothic style of a medieval castle.

The Sidney family acquired Penshurst Place, in Kent, in 1552, gifted by Edward VI to his steward and tutor, Sir William Sidney. His son, Sir Henry (father of Philip), extended the house in the medieval style, building several apartments and a tower. The improvements at Penshurst 'strictly maintained the traditional Gothic style with its irregular plan, its country stone, its crenellations, and its towers.'<sup>19</sup> This was in keeping with the rest of the house; the Great Hall dated from the fourteenth century, and as the oldest portion of the house, Don Wayne argues it 'could be felt by its

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<sup>19</sup> Don E. Wayne, *Penshurst: The Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History* (London: Methuen, 1984), p.97.

seventeenth-century owners and their tenants as a direct link with a mythified past'.<sup>20</sup> Yet, as Wayne suggests, this is unlikely to be the only motivation for rebuilding in such a consciously archaic style:

Though Gothicism in seventeenth-century architecture was closely associated with medieval castle and church architecture, it was by no means the expression of a sympathy or a desire to return to feudalism and to the Roman Church... the appreciation of Gothic was admired not because it was in the style of the old church, but because it was the only style that was a native one.<sup>21</sup>

In using a style reminiscent of medieval English castles as a model, Sidney created a house that was self-consciously both an Englishman's home and his castle. Thus the image of the home as castle did not only surface in legal treatises, paintings and tapestries; it was also apparent in the domestic architecture of the elite. Although the castles of England were for the most part defunct in terms of military defence, the fashion for the medieval Gothic style left its mark upon certain manor houses in England.

Lambarde's treatise, the image of Sir Edward Hoby, and the building projects of the Sidneys each invoke the power, autonomy and privacy implicit in the image of the castle as defensible property; yet the image also implies the old feudal system, in which such authority and autonomy, like the castle, is only retained as long as the state permits. Catherine Belsey describes marriage in this period as 'the site of a paradoxical struggle to create a private realm and to take control of it in the interests of the public good'; the same could be said of the home within which marriage is situated and experienced.<sup>22</sup> The image of the home as castle implies private power, but this power is borrowed, not bestowed.

Furthermore, the private power implied in this image was not always represented as positive. In Mulcaster's aforementioned treatise on childhood behaviour, health, and education, he argues that the parent who educates his son at home 'is the appointer of his owne circumstance, and his house is his

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<sup>20</sup> Wayne, p.85.

<sup>21</sup> Wayne, p.97.

<sup>22</sup> Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1985), p.130.

castle'.<sup>23</sup> Mulcaster notes that every parent that 'hath his children taught within his doares' may use 'his own liking' to determine his child's education, before discussing the benefits of public schools.<sup>24</sup> As the headmaster of the Merchant Taylors' School, Mulcaster had a vested interest in arguing against home education; yet it is striking that the image of the home as castle here implies private power that is not subject to public regulation. In arguing that the founding of public schools is to be urged by all who 'favour the public weale, whose foundation is laid in these petie infantes', Mulcaster suggests that the risk of home education lies in the autonomy of the home as castle: good education within the home may lay down the foundation of the commonwealth, but this foundation depends upon the (fallible) judgement of the individual householder.<sup>25</sup> If children are the foundation of the commonwealth, then the houses in which they are raised must be at once the potential training grounds of the commonwealth, and the places where it is most vulnerable.

In the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, the image of the home as castle becomes an ironic comment on the fortunes of a knight with neither castle nor home: 'There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his standing-bed, and trucklebed,' declares Falstaff's Host (IV.v.5-6). The comedy here is bathetic, lying in the juxtaposition of Falstaff's noble birth and impoverished position; the Host can speak of Falstaff's 'house' as a castle, but the dwelling in fact belongs to the Host himself, and Falstaff's kingdom is shrunk to a standing-bed and a trucklebed beneath it.<sup>26</sup> His very household is shrunk to his 'own people' (II.ii.48) whom he can no longer trust, and who are soon to betray him through masquerading as fairies in order to pinch and burn him. Falstaff cannot raise a 'private army' to defend himself in his dwelling; he owns no property, can command no followers,

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Mulcaster, *Positions Wherin Those Primitive Circumstances Be Examined, Which Are Necessarie for the Training Up of Children* (London, 1581), p.225.

<sup>24</sup> Mulcaster, p.224.

<sup>25</sup> Mulcaster, pp.225-6.

<sup>26</sup> It has been suggested that the Host's castle is here a reference to Falstaff's original character name, 'Oldcastle'; however, as H. J. Oliver argues, 'There is no need to suspect an allusion to Falstaff's original name, Oldcastle, in *IH4*. A man's home is still his castle.' William Shakespeare, *Merry Wives of Windsor* ed. H. J. Oliver (London: Methuen Co. Ltd., 1973), p.122, n.5.

and is unable even to be private within his own chamber. 'Fie,' cries the Host, 'Privacy? Fie!' (IV.v.18).

Falstaff's home is not his own, and so he loses the right to privacy which became synonymous (in the ideal, at least) with property. Falstaff's predicament offers a sideways glimpse of the situations of the majority of middling householders, who ran their households but did not necessarily own their homes: one of the householder's responsibilities was the payment of rent.<sup>27</sup> The relationship between landlord and tenant was contractual, but could also involve a level of moral responsibility; in Robert Yarrington's 1601 play *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, when shopkeeper Master Beech is murdered, his landlord, Loney, plays a key role in investigating the crime and detecting the murderers, as I discuss further in Chapter Four. There is a sense of this moral responsibility in the relationship between Falstaff and the Host. The Host enters Falstaff's chamber to police his behaviour. This is due to the suspected entry of an (imaginary) old woman, the consequence of Falstaff's transgression in attempting to woo his neighbours' wives. Thus it is only when Falstaff arouses suspicion by visiting the home of another in secret, and then attempting to flee that house and enter his own disguised as an old woman, that the Host attempts to interrupt his privacy.

Dolan, discussing crime in *Dangerous Familiars*, argues,

The home could function as a locus of conflict, an arena in which the most fundamental ideas about social order, identity and intimacy were contested. Although the contests took many forms, they emerged into public scrutiny and intervention most dramatically when they erupted into violence.<sup>28</sup>

The eruptions into violence were significant because they offered demonstrations, through sensational occurrences, of what happened when the home ceased to function as a microcosmic state, instituting order with the borrowed authority of God, Church and queen. Upon the failure of household government on the part of husband, parent, master or mistress, or an act of rebellion by wife, child, apprentice or servant, the house ceased to

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<sup>27</sup> Vanessa Harding, 'Family and Household', *People in Place: Family, Households and Housing in London, 1550-1720* (The Institute of Historical Research, 2008), [www.history.ac.uk](http://www.history.ac.uk) [accessed 16 July 2014].

<sup>28</sup> Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p.1.

be home, castle, and private kingdom, and was instead penetrated by the representatives of neighbourhood and state. Furthermore, when a household governor failed to protect the boundaries of his home and allowed a malign element to enter it, as in the case of Falstaff and the fictional old woman, these violated boundaries laid him open to both well-meaning and malicious interference.

This was particularly noteworthy, when such failure manifested itself in violence; however, disrupted homes that did not ‘erupt into violence’ were equally open to ‘public scrutiny and intervention’. The house only became visibly subject to the laws of Church and state once it had contravened those laws; and then the borders of the home ceased to be selectively permeable, and no longer demarcated a boundary between the public and the private, leaving the home open to any that would enter it. Shakespeare’s ironic comment on Falstaff’s chamber as his ‘castle’ not only refers to the diminished power of the physical castle and the decline of the aristocracy; it also highlights Falstaff’s unwillingness to respect the privacy of other men’s property (in the form of houses, money and wives), which renders his own vulnerable.

The potential vulnerability of the disrupted home led to increasing emphasis, in legal discourses, upon the invulnerability of the law-abiding home. Sir Edward Coke, in a report from the King’s Bench, writes that ‘the house of every one is to him his fortress, as well for defense [*sic*] against injury and violence, as for his repose’.<sup>29</sup> Some twenty years later, he again figures the house in terms of defence: ‘A man’s house is his castle... where shall a man be safe, if not in his house?’<sup>30</sup> The implication is that a man’s house is not only a place where he has a right to safety, but it is also (like a besieged castle) the last place where he may be safe. When a man is no longer safe in his home, whether because he has contravened the laws of the state or because he harbours a threat within his household, he will not be safe anywhere.

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<sup>29</sup> Edward Coke, Report on Semayne’s Case (1605), translated into English in *Reports of Sir Edward Coke* (1658), 3r. See Orlin, *Private Matters*, p.2.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Coke, *Third Part of the Institutes* (London, 1644; completed 1628), sY3v.

## 2. Prescribing the Home: Homilies, Heaven and Household Order

Safety within the home depended not only upon the ability of the walls of the home to defend against malicious outside forces, but also upon the householder's ability to ensure that all within the home remain subject to him. As Martin Ingram puts it, the household was 'the fundamental institution of social order and political authority.'<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, according to the ideals of early modern English society, as propagated by the state, entrenched in law, prescribed in conduct books, and preached in pulpits, it is not the safety of the householder alone that resides in the home, and is threatened by its disruption; rather, it is the safety of the state. *Certain Sermons Appoynted by the Quenes Majesty*, preached in every (legitimate) church in England each Sunday and holy day throughout the year, grants a glimpse not only of how the state wished to fashion the home in the popular imagination, but also of the backdrop against which all portrayals of disrupted homes were constructed.

Ronald Bond argues that Elizabeth's purpose in appropriating the prescribed homilies from the reign of Edward VI was to 'achieve a grass-roots Reformation among humble people essentially indifferent to doctrinal niceties'; the homilies were 'pressed into service by authorities in Church and state intent upon controlling public opinion'.<sup>32</sup> The homilies share a common preoccupation with the necessity of order and hierarchy for the government of the state; 'An Exhortation concernyng Good Ordre and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates' makes this preoccupation explicit:

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<sup>31</sup> Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.125.

<sup>32</sup> Church of England, *Certain Sermons or Homilies (1547) and A Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion (1570): A Critical Edition* ed. Ronald B. Bond (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Preface, p.ix, p.x. See also Ashley Null, 'Official Tudor Homilies', *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* ed. Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.348-365.

Every degre of people, in their vocacion, callyng and office, hath appointed to them their duetie and ordre. Some are in high degree, some in lowe, some kynges and princes, some inferiors and subjectes, priestes and laiman, masters and servauntes, fathers and children, husbands and wives, riche and poore, and every one have need of other.<sup>33</sup>

The legal system, the parish church, the family, and the household are here listed as both components and microcosms of the kingdom, in which divine order is instituted. This homily supports its message with an emphasis on the ‘natural’ origins of order, which stems from Calvinist doctrines concerning ‘the holy lawe of nature’.<sup>34</sup> Thus the above list of relationships within households, parishes, and kingdoms, is likened to parts of the body and patterns of the weather.

This is the Great Chain of Being, which E. M. W. Tillyard described in *The Elizabethan World Picture* (1942). Tillyard’s vision of a stable, hierarchical world order, which provided the background to social reality and was reflected in the literature of the age, attracted vocal criticism in the 1980s from new historicists and cultural materialists; both schools criticised Tillyard for reading the relationship between history and literature in an overly simplistic manner, and argued that the ‘Great Chain of Being’ was in fact ideological prescription rather than social reality.<sup>35</sup> I do not dispute this; rather, I argue that the wide dissemination of such ideological prescription via state-sanctioned homilies, published sermons, and popular conduct literature, is likely to have affected the ways in which the auditors and readers of these texts conceived of the world in which they lived. The model of a hierarchical universe in which the natural world, the social world, and the heavens were divinely ordered may have been lambasted, lampooned or

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<sup>33</sup> *Certain Sermons*, p.161.

<sup>34</sup> *A Commentarie of John Calvine, upon the first booke of Moses called Genesis* trans by Thomas Tymme (London, 1578), p.429. See Richard A. McCabe, *Incest, Drama and Nature’s Law, 1550-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially pp.55-63.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984), Introduction. See also Louis Montrose, ‘Renaissance Literary Studies and the Subject of History’, *ELR* 16.1 (December, 1986), 5-12; and Jean E. Howard, ‘The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies’, *ELR* 16.1 (December, 1986), 13-43.

contradicted – as street literature, plays, and ecclesiastical court records attest – but it could not be altogether ignored, forgotten, or dismissed.

Order is portrayed in these homilies as inherent to both heaven and earth; nature is at once a copy of the divine order and a justification for it. The image of the divine family, in which the parishioners are invited to become participants as children of the Father, is frequently used to suggest the heavenly origins of familial hierarchy. Indeed, the examples given and the metaphors used to support the arguments for order in the homilies depend upon the doubling and mutual reinforcement of images of earthly and divine order, each of which is used to illustrate and justify the other.

Consider these lines from ‘The Thyrd Part of the Sermon Agaynst Adultery’:

Maie a servaunt do what he will in any thing, having a commaundement of his master to the contrary? Is not Christe our master? Are not wee his servaunts? Howe then maie wee neglecte our masters will and pleasure, and folowe oure awne will and phantasie?<sup>36</sup>

The relationship between master and servant in early modern England, one familiar to the homily’s audience of local parishioners, is used to explain the relationship between Christ and those same parishioners. Yet the relationship between Christ and his followers is used in ‘An Exhortation concernyng Good Ordre and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates’ to justify the relationship between masters and servants in Elizabethan households. Likewise, the homilies insistently return to the message that the earthly home is only temporary, and that the divine home is the goal of all Christians:

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<sup>36</sup> *Certain Sermons*, p.175.

Furthermore, it is also ordeyned, that the Churche of God and his kingdome, might by this kynde of lyfe be conserved and enlarged, not only in that god geveth children as his blessing, but also in that they be brought up by the parentes godly, in the knowledge of Gods worde, that this the knowledge of God and true religion, myght be delyvered by succession from one to another, that finally, many myght enjoie that everlasting immortalitie.<sup>37</sup>

Here enlargement of, and good government within, the earthly family is doubled with, and rewarded by, the enlargement of God's 'family' of Christians in heaven. Heavenly rewards are figured in earthly terms, and earthly households are to be modelled on heavenly order. Yet 'An Exhortation concernyng Good Ordre and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates' is emphatic that on earth, neither the household nor any larger form of government is to consider itself self-sufficient. The text explains that earthly hierarchies depend upon 'the goodly order of god, withoute the which, no house, no citie, no common wealth can continue and indure or laste.'<sup>38</sup> Households are not able to be powerful and private, ruled by authority yet autonomous, without the 'order' of God.

This is taken still further in 'An Homily Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion'. This was not contained in the original collection of Elizabethan homilies, but published separately in 1570 in response to the Northern Rising, and went through five editions before it was appended to the official collection in 1571. Its evident aim is not to enable salvation, but to discourage rebellion, and so the focus is upon the earthly home as a unit of divinely sanctioned state government:

[God] not only ordained that in families and households the wife should be obedient unto her husband, the children unto their parents, the servants unto their masters, but also, when mankind increased and spread itself more largely over the world, he by his holy law did constitute and ordain in cities and countries several and special governors and rulers, unto whom the residue of his people should be obedient.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Church of England, 'An Homily of the State of Matrimonie', *The Seconde Tome of Homilies* (London, 1563), III5r.

<sup>38</sup> Church of England, 'An exhortation, concerning good order and obedience, to rulers and Magistrates', *Certaine Sermons Appoynted by the Quenes Majesty* (London, 1563), R3v.

<sup>39</sup> *Certain Sermons*, p.210.

The Northern rebellion was led by Catholics, who were increasingly constructed in Protestant texts as agents of a foreign power; in contrast, the emphasis in the homily upon secular rulers as agents of God was distinctively Protestant. The family and household here play a central role both in God's government upon earth, and the government of the English state. The household, comprised of husband and wife, parents and children, and master/mistress and servants/apprentices, constitutes a unit of government, ordered in a God-given hierarchy. This homily renders submission to divine and earthly authority inseparable, and sets up obedience as the 'prinicipal vertue of al vertues, and in deede the very roote of all vertues', suggesting that 'rebellion' against authority on earth, however fallible, is synonymous with rebellion against God.<sup>40</sup>

This model is not specific to the reign of Elizabeth. In his household conduct book *The English Gentleman* (1630), Richard Braithwaite presents the following analogy:

As every man's house is his castle, so is his Family a private Commonwealth, wherein if due government be not observed, nothing but confusion is to be expected.<sup>41</sup>

The household as castle, and the family as commonwealth, is not merely constructed as a metaphor; rather, it represents a system of government. Likewise, when William Gouge notes in his 1622 conduct book *Of Domesticall Duties* that a family is 'a little Commonwealth', he qualifies this description thus:

So we may say of inferiors that cannot be subject in a family, they can hardly be brought to yield such subjection as they ought in Church or in Commonwealth.<sup>42</sup>

According to Gouge, the state delegates authority to the private householder, that the household may inculcate the values of Church and

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<sup>40</sup> *Certain Sermons*, p.209.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Braithwaite, *The English Gentleman, Containing Sundry Excellent Rules, or Exquisite Observations* (London, 1630), p.115.

<sup>42</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises* (London, 1622), p.17.

commonwealth. The household becomes a subsidiary of the state. Yet, as in the homilies, the authority of the householder depends upon the ‘inferiors’ within the family remaining ‘subject’ to it.<sup>43</sup>

Just as this model of government continued beyond Elizabeth’s reign, so the values that were to produce it were inculcated earlier, as can be observed in the marginal commentary of the Geneva Bible, an accessible English translation which was never prescribed for use in churches by Elizabeth, but became ‘the household Bible of English-speaking Protestants’ and the Bible of choice for writers of prescriptive household literature.<sup>44</sup> As Femke Molekamp notes, it ‘drew a readership that spanned the social hierarchy, as well as the spectrum of Protestant zeal’.<sup>45</sup> The marginal commentary of the Geneva Bible, a product of a continental Protestantism far more radical than that of Elizabethan England, nonetheless shared the preoccupation of the homilies with order, hierarchy, and government within the household.

Consider the following injunction from the letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

Let your women keepe silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speake: but they ought to be subject, as also the Lawe sayth. And if they will learne any thing, let them aske their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speake in the Church. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35)

The household hierarchy advocated by Paul is space-dependent: wives may speak of godly matters, but not in a public space; a woman’s religious edification, when it involves active engagement rather than passive reception, must be confined to her home; and the only person with whom she may share such speech is her husband. As Milton reiterates in *Paradise Lost*, the husband is formed for ‘God only, she for God in him’; a woman

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<sup>43</sup> See Orlin, *Private Matters*, pp.88-89.

<sup>44</sup> See Lori Anne Ferrell, ‘The Preacher’s Bibles’, *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* ed. Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.21-33 (p.27).

<sup>45</sup> Femke Molekamp, “‘Of the Incomparable treasure of the Holy Scriptures’: The Geneva Bible in the Early Modern Household” in *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England* ed. Dimmock and Hadfield, pp.121-135 (p.122).

must be 'subject' within the home, and both silent and reliant upon her husband's interpretation when outside of it.<sup>46</sup>

The marginal gloss on this passage of 1 Corinthians is as follows:

Because this disordre was in the Church, that women usurped that which was peculiar to men, the Apostle here sheweth what is mete to be done, and what is not.

The speech of women in the public (and religious) sphere is described as 'disorder'; their speech should be confined to the home. The ordered home is that in which the wife is not only subject to her husband, but also subject to the boundaries of the home, confined to her fit sphere. For the wife to step outside such boundaries is an act of disorder: it is also an act of usurpation. Thus the commentary within the Bible supports the models of home and household propagated by the English state.

The writers of conduct books and marriage manuals reinforce both this implicit hierarchy, and the spatial manifestation of it. In *A Godly Forme of Household Government* (1612), John Dod and Robert Cleaver advise that 'the dutie of the husband is, to dispatch all things without dore: and of the wife, to oversee and give order for all things within the house'.<sup>47</sup> This image of the ideal wife as contained within the home was popular in poetry as well as in prescriptive conduct literature; Thomas Overbury's poem 'The Wife' argues that 'Domesticke Charge doth best that Sexe befit', whilst Ben Jonson's 'To Penshurst' praises the 'high housewifery' of the 'good lady' who welcomes guests and bears children whilst remaining chaste.<sup>48</sup> Of course, conduct writers and poets alike are guilty not only of oversimplifying the situation, but of wishful thinking. Women occupied, and even occasionally owned, workplaces as diverse as alehouses, shops, printing houses, and market stalls.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, numerous ballads and

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<sup>46</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost* ed. Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1971), IV.299.

<sup>47</sup> John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Godly Forme of Houshold Government for the Ordering of Private Families* (London, 1612), p.168.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Overbury, 'The Wife' in *New and Choise Characters* (London, 1615), B5r; Ben Jonson, 'To Penshurst' in *The Complete Poems* ed. George Parfitt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp.95-98, lines 84-5.

<sup>49</sup> See Alice Clark, *The Working Life of Women in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1919). See also Amy Louise Eriksson, ed., Clark, *The Working Life* (London: Routledge, 1992), Introduction; and Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, esp. pp.7-8, p.22.

pamphlets bemoan the number of women who regularly seek their pleasures outside, drinking, gossiping, riding about in coaches, and visiting friends.<sup>50</sup>

Joseph Swetnam's *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Woman* (1615), the famously misogynist pamphlet which derided women as shrewish, sexually and socially promiscuous spendthrifts, satirises this model of spatial hierarchy; Swetnam argues that woman only helps man in the domestic sphere in the sense that she 'helpeth to spend and consume that which man painfully getteth'.<sup>51</sup> Swetnam's pamphlet prompted numerous angry replies, whose authors wrote under the cover of female pseudonyms along the lines of 'Esther Sowernam' and 'Constantia Munda'; yet his oppositional stance in some ways came closer to social reality than prescriptive literature.<sup>52</sup> As Flather argues, domestic space could be 'theoretically defined' by the writers of homilies, conduct books and sermons, but 'male and female experience of it could not be so ordered'; the idealised segregation of masculine and feminine space formed 'the ideological framework of men's and women's lives', yet 'the way people experienced space and imposed their own meanings upon it' could not be prescribed.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, representations of the home on stage and page challenge this ideal of domestic life; indeed, even the homilies themselves challenge Dod's and Cleaver's simplistic gender-based division of tasks, roles and space.

'An Homily of the State of Holy Matrimony' sets up an idealised vision of the role of the wife, who should 'apply herself' to her husband's will, 'endeavoureth her selfe to seeke his contention [contentment], and to do him pleasure', and 'eschewe all thinges that might offend him'; the reward for such subservient obedience is in both the husband's pleasure and

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Samuel Rowland, *Tis Merry When Gossips Meet* (London, 1602), and the later revised version of the text, *A Whole Kind Crew of Gossips* (London, 1609).

<sup>51</sup> Joseph Swetnam, *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Woman* (London, 1615), p.1.

<sup>52</sup> See Ester Sowernam, *Ester Hath Hanged Haman* (London, 1617); Constantia Munda, *The Worming of Mad Dogge* (London, 1617); and Rachel Speght, *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (London, 1617). See also *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy About Women in England, 1540-1640* ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), esp. chs 1 and 2; and Lisa J. Schnell, 'Muzzling the Competition: Rachel Speght and the Economics of Print', in *Debating Gender in Early Modern English, 1500-1700* ed. Cristina Malcolmson and Mihoko Suzuki (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp.57-78.

<sup>53</sup> Flather, *Gender and Space*, p.1.

the extent to which he inhabits the home, for such behaviour will ensure ‘he shall have a delight and a gladnes, the sooner at all tymes to returne home to her’.<sup>54</sup> Thus whilst the home is represented as the domain of the wife, and the wider world that of the husband, a good wife renders it likely that the husband will spend more time in the home – and that he will remain sexually faithful to her. The ideal home is the domain of both husband and wife; it is the husband’s duty to venture forth, but it is the wife’s duty to entice him back again.

Yet if the wife refuses a subservient role, this homily represents the opposite as true:

But on the contrarye part, when the wyves be stubborne, frowarde, and malapert, theyr husbandes are compelled thereby to abhorre and flee from theyr owne houses, even as they should have battayle with theyr enemies.<sup>55</sup>

When the wife is disobedient, is ‘froward’ (or backwards) in refusing to obey her husband, or is ‘malapert’ in her speech, she renders her home a battleground. The homily follows this statement with direct address to the women of the audience:

Thou needest not to seek further for doing any better works. For, obey thy husband, take regard of his requests, and give heed unto him to perceive what he requireth of thee; and so shalt thou honour God, and live peaceably in thy house.<sup>56</sup>

Virtue in a wife, it is implied, consists of obedience to her husband, however sinful his commands may be. The obedient wife renders the home a ‘peaceable’ haven. Dod and Cleaver take this image still further. They argue that if a wife is not ‘subject to her husband, to let him rule all the household, especially outward affaires’, but will rather ‘seeke to have her own ways’, then ‘things will go backward’ and ‘the house will come to ruine’.<sup>57</sup> The usurping wife is at once disruptive, undoing time itself, and

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<sup>54</sup> *The Second Tome*, JJJ8v.

<sup>55</sup> *The Second Tome*, JJJ8v.

<sup>56</sup> *The Second Tome*, KKK1r.

<sup>57</sup> Dod and Cleaver, pp.87-8.

destructive. The home where a wife will not be subject is a battleground, but it cannot endure for long; wives' battles will end in the ruin of the home.

Dod and Cleaver's conception of this spatial hierarchy, with its attendant responsibility and risk, does not only borrow from the homilies; as Lorna Hutson observes, 'the model of husband as hunter-gatherer, and the wife as saver and keeper... derives from the text entitled *Oeconomicus*, written by the Socratic philosopher Xenophon'.<sup>58</sup> Gentian Hervet's translation of *Oeconomicus*, entitled *Xenophons Treatise of Householde* (1544), proved popular enough to go through three editions, whilst Xenophon's precepts became the basis of numerous conduct manuals, including *A Godlie Forme*.

Yet although the *Oeconomicus* suggests the division of household labour along the lines discussed, Xenophon does not suggest that because the home was the province of the wife, it must also be her responsibility. Rather, he suggests that the education of a wife in household management is the responsibility of her husband:

A shepe, if it do not well, for the moste part we doo blame the shepherde... And a wyfe like wise, if her housebande teache her well, if she do not followe it, she is paraventure to blame. But if he do not teache her, if she be rude, unwomanly, and wytles, is not he to be blamed?<sup>59</sup>

Household management is the art of the husband, who must train or herd his wife as if she were one of his livestock; the wife is required only to be an apt pupil, easily led and willing to follow. Of this passage, Hutson argues:

Exemplarity does not, after all, mean learning by example; it means learning by *teaching* by example. The art of household is exemplary because it involves the man practising his own histrionic exemplarity in the training that will transform a 'rude' and 'wytles' partner into a womanly helpmeet.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.21.

<sup>59</sup> Xenophon, *Xenophon's Treatise of the Householde* trans. Geraint Hervet (London: 1544), B2v.

<sup>60</sup> Hutson, p.34.

Yet the husband must not only teach a wife by example, for he must, according to Xenophon, teach what he cannot show: how to be a teachable, sheep-like, womanly wife.

Thus according to Xenophon, for a husband to be a good householder, he must teach his wife well, or he is responsible for her failings; yet if the wife is well taught, but still chooses to rebel, then she is responsible for the ensuing destruction of the household. The same anxieties recur in the homilies, and in the numerous conduct books that borrow from Xenophon. If a husband is not a good teacher, or a wife refuses to be a good pupil, then the wider commonwealth is rendered vulnerable, and domestic discord has the potential to become domestic tragedy.

This anxiety may explain the popularity of shrew-taming plays upon the public stage: plays in which such anxieties are invoked only to be dispelled by laughter, and disorder is displayed only to be safely contained within the comic structure. In examining Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, the shrew-taming plays in conversation with it, and representations of shrewish wives in street literature, I will chart the ways in which violent and disrupted homes from the non-aristocratic sphere are staged and represented in early modern England, and I will discuss the containing frameworks invoked to render the portrayal of subversive and violent household disruption innocuous. I will explore how Shakespeare responds to the ideal of the ordered household and spatially determined gender hierarchy in a play that portrays the formation of a household in which neither the husband nor the wife fulfils their expected role. I will argue that both comic shrew-tamings in street literature, and versions of and responses to Shakespeare's *Taming*, complicate our understanding of Shakespeare's use of the generic model of comic shrew taming. In so doing, I will suggest that, in locating household disruption within a local sphere of influence, and containing domestic violence within a comic framework, *The Taming of the Shrew* is a significant precursor to Shakespeare's appropriations of domestic tragedy, in which disorder within the home has repercussions for the state, and domestic discord ends in death.

### 3. Tyrannous Husbands and Shrewish Wives in *The Taming of the Shrew*

William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* opens with an angry woman throwing a man out onto the street. The first line of the play is a threat: the man threatens to 'feeze', to drive away or beat, the woman before him (Induction i.1). She retaliates by threatening him with the stocks. The first audience of the play, accustomed to shrew narratives in which wives either mistreat their husbands and are consequently, and violently, tamed, or revenge themselves upon drunken husbands by such shrewishness, may have assumed from the title of the play that this scold, threatening the man before her with the stocks, was the eponymous shrew.<sup>61</sup> Yet the naming of the characters in the opening stage direction as 'Beggar' and 'Hostess' suggests that costume would have immediately delineated the social barrier between the two: the scolding woman runs a business establishment, whilst the threatening man is poor and disreputable. The dialogue that follows soon establishes that it is Christopher Sly, not the Hostess, who is breaking the rules of propriety, and even the law: he has broken glasses and will not pay for them, whilst she is simply ejecting a disruptive customer from her alehouse. Sly, not the Hostess, is the 'shrew' here; indeed, in the early modern period, the term could refer to a man, although it was more usually applied to women.<sup>62</sup>

The induction sets up a frame narrative for what is to come, and thus might be expected to foreshadow the main action. In the surviving text of Shakespeare's play, this frame narrative is never concluded; however, a similar narrative opens and concludes the anonymous *Taming of a Shrew*, as I will discuss further below.<sup>63</sup> In locating the 'taming' of Katherina at the hands of Petruchio as a fiction within a fiction, the induction to Shakespeare's *Shrew* complicates the ways in which the audience is able to read such a taming. The opposition set up in the induction is not one of

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<sup>61</sup> See Pamela Allen Brown, *Better A Shrew Than A Sheep: Women, Drama and the Culture of Jest in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), ch.4.

<sup>62</sup> 'shrew', *OED*, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p.107.

gender, but of class. Furthermore, the behaviour of the Lord in tricking Sly further complicates such an opposition: his trick may be in jest, and we are invited to laugh at it, yet the reaction of Lucentio's father to such a jest in the play proper – fear that Tranio 'hath murdered his master' (V.i.72) – hints at the dangerous potential of such comedy. If a man may cease to be a beggar and become a lord simply by changing his attire and convincing his followers to believe him so, then divinely ordained order may be undone with no more than a change of costume.

It is this anxiety that prompted the severity of Elizabeth's 1574 sumptuary laws, which complain of young men 'seeking by show of apparel to be esteemed as gentlemen, who... do not only consume themselves, their goods, and lands which their parents left unto them, but also run into such debts and shifts as they cannot live out of danger of laws': young men who pretend to a position they cannot afford to maintain will lose their familial property and thus be forced to become criminal.<sup>64</sup> In 1612, William Perkins bemoaned how 'every common man now adaies must bee a gentleman, and it is very hard sometimes for a stranger to discern the master from the servant'.<sup>65</sup> This anxiety likewise prompted the virulence of the anti-theatricalists; Stephen Gosson argues that 'for a mean person to take upon him the title of a Prince, with counterfeit part and train', is not only disrespectful but dangerous.<sup>66</sup> The induction sets up the inversion of the natural order – a beggar becoming a lord – as a matter of jest, an evening's entertainment. Yet by prefiguring the inversions of the play proper, which remain a matter of comedy but hint at much darker possibilities, the induction sets up such inversion as both pleasurable to observe and a risky strategy, and as the responsibility of the more powerful instigator. Sly may (unknowingly) break the sumptuary laws in wearing the attire permitted to the actors who play before him, but not to the confused beggar who

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<sup>64</sup> See *Acts of the Privy Council, Enforcing Statutes of Apparel, Issued at Greenwich, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1574, 16 Elizabeth I*, London PRO SP 12 v.23 fol.19r.

<sup>65</sup> William Perkins, *A Treatise on the Vocations, or Callings of Men* (Cambridge, 1612), p.755.

<sup>66</sup> Stephen Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (London, 1582), E5r. See Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), p.27; and Louis Montrose, *The Purposes of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp.34-37.

observes them; yet the fact that he does so is the responsibility of the Lord who, through his jesting, permits Sly, temporarily, to usurp him. Thus the troubling comedy of a beggar transformed into a lord is contained within a reassuring framework: that of a lord, secure in both his position and his influence over his followers, playing a trick on a beggar.

The hierarchal model of the induction is further complicated by the position of the page Bartholomew, who, at his lord's command, pretends to be Sly's wife:

I know the boy will well usurp the grace  
Voice, gait, and action of a gentlewoman.  
I long to hear him call the drunkard husband (Induction i.127-9)

Bartholomew must usurp the position of Sly's wife. Yet he is commanded to do so in order that he might 'win' the 'love' of his lord (105); he might be providing entertainment in appearing to 'love' Sly in place of his lord, but the the model of subservience and obedience in exchange for love remains intact. Furthermore, Bartholomew's behaviour offers only the appearance of obedience, and not the substance of it; for he in fact refuses Sly's only command – 'Madam, undress you and come now to bed' (Induction ii.113) – with the excuse that the physician will not permit it. The play here draws meta-theatrical attention to the boy player who will later impersonate Kate; the comedy arises from the fact that Bartholomew cannot go to bed with Sly without revealing his true nature and ceasing to be disguised as Sly's wife. In fulfilling Sly's command, he would disobey his lord's command that he 'usurp the grace' of a gentlewoman; yet in directly disobeying Sly, he would disobey his lord's command that he do Sly 'obeisance' (Induction i.105). Thus Bartholomew appeals to the physician's authority and Sly's well-being to excuse his own disobedience. In so doing, he offers (perhaps unwittingly) an example of how a wife might manage a husband, and disobey whilst seeming to obey: the very opposite of the shrew taming which the title of play promises. The induction thus complicates the dichotomy of authority figure and subject, and therefore disturbs the opposition in the play proper between the ruler/husband and the (rebellious) subject/wife.

The shrew taming begins with a 'wench' who is 'wonderful froward' and makes her home hellish (I.i.69); yet she is unmarried, and so her disobedience does not affect her husband's home, but her father's. The 'curstness' of Kate lies not only in her disobedience to her superiors, but in her tyranny over her inferiors, and especially over her younger sister. Bianca professes herself amenable to her older sister's command, 'so well do I know my duty to my elders' (II.i.6), and complains only that Kate makes a 'bondmaid and a slave of her' (2), so that her sisterly obedience is perverted, and the familial hierarchy becomes excuse for oppression. Thus Shakespeare sets up Kate's tyranny over her inferiors and rebellion against her superiors in order to dramatise the means by which Petruchio will bring her to obedience: by refusing her authority over her inferiors (such as Grumio, who will not feed her meat when she requests it, IV.iii.1-30), and enforcing his own authority over her.

Once the two are married, Petruchio's authority over Kate is supported both by law and by Biblical injunction, a fact of which Petruchio is aware. When Kate attempts to remain at her own wedding feast, Petruchio replies:

I will be master of what is mine own.  
She is my goods, my chattels. She is my house,  
My household-stuff, my field, my barn,  
My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything,  
And here she stands, touch her whoever dare. (III.iii.100-104)

Petruchio here borrows directly from one of the Ten Commandments, with which all parishioners would have been familiar, not only from Bible readings and sermons but also because these commandments were frequently painted onto the whitewashed walls of parish churches:

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours house, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbours wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his asse, neither anything that is thy neighbours. (Exodus 20.1-17)

The play's audience would have recognised that Petruchio figures Kate not only as a possession, but as a possession that may be coveted. Petruchio's

borrowing at once suggests that he, unlike the men surrounding Kate, views her as covetable, and reminds Kate of his Biblically supported ownership of her, thus warning her against coveting mastery over herself.

Petruchio borrows from the list of assets in the Biblical passage, and adds goods, chattels, household stuff, horse, field, and barn, thus providing what is presumably an inventory of his property. Petruchio's addition of a horse is particularly significant, considering the state of Petruchio's own horse when he arrives for the wedding. The horse is described as having numerous equine diseases, and, as Peter Heany puts it, 'Petruchio's wretched horse is a symptom of his master's cruel mismanagement'.<sup>67</sup> Just before Petruchio makes the comparison between Kate and a horse, he calls to his servant, 'Grumio, my horse' (77), to which Grumio replies, 'Ay, sir, they be ready. The oats have eaten the horses' (78), suggesting that the horses have over-eaten. Petruchio can no more manage his horses than he can manage his house or his servants, calling into question his management of the wife to whom he compares them.

In making Petruchio's horse a sign of his mismanagement, Shakespeare may be invoking a trope from cheap print: in a 1580 chapbook, *Here Begynneth a Merry Jeste of a Shrewde and Curste Wyfe*, a husband tames his shrewish wife by beating her until she swoons, and then wrapping her in the salted skin of his horse, Morell:

And so he commanded anon,  
To flea old Morell his great Horse:  
And flea him then, the skin from the bone,  
To wrap it about his wives white coarse.<sup>68</sup>

The husband beats Morell to death, then proceeds to beat his wife until she is in nearly the same state: his extreme violence towards his horse prefigures that towards his wife, yet he is repeatedly referred to as a 'good man' (D4r). His behaviour to horse and wife is justified by his ownership of the former, and the 'shrewde and curste' behaviour of the latter.

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<sup>67</sup> Peter F. Heany, 'Petruchio's Horse: Equine and Household Mismanagement in *The Taming of the Shrew*' *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4.1 (May, 1998), 1-12 (p.2).

<sup>68</sup> Joannes Bramis, *Here Begynneth a Merry Jeste of a Shrewde and Curste Wyfe* (London, 1580), E3r.

There are many parallels between this narrative and that of Shakespeare's play. The curst wife of the chapbook begins as a shrewish and unmarriageable daughter with a docile younger sister. However, unlike Kate, this shrewish daughter has an equally shrewish mother, who prefers her to her sister, and has taught her to expect to rule her husband. Her father complains that her mother teaches her to be 'mayster of her husband' (A3r); because the daughter's mother is shrewish and rules over her husband, the daughter expects to create a similar hierarchy in her own marriage. In a comedic inversion of Xenophon's prescriptions, the daughter has shown herself to be teachable and obedient, but because she has been taught insubordination, she aims to rule in her husband's house. When she eventually finds a suitor who is willing to marry her, she is determined to rule him, but he is determined to tame her – and, by beating his horse to death, beating his wife almost to death, and wrapping the latter in the skin of the former, he manages to do so.

The wife's shrewishness is figured in terms of her unwillingness to submit to her husband's rule. Although he bemoans her excessive speech and 'frantick' behaviour (A2r), it is her oft-repeated determination to 'be master' that provokes her husband's retaliation. When he gains mastery over her, he invites her parents and the surrounding neighbourhood to witness his triumph. They, like the narrator, applaud the steps he has taken to restore household order.

The husband's tyrannical behaviour to both horse and wife is excessive; it is the subject of a 'merry jester', not an exemplar. Yet in setting up the husband's violent government of both as laudable, the chapbook suggests that domestic tyranny is preferable to domestic insurrection: as Dolan notes, 'even when pamphlets or ballads represent husbandly excesses as irresponsible and analogous to tyranny, they do not represent this petty tyranny as threatening social order in the same ways that petty treason did' – as I will discuss further in Chapter Two.<sup>69</sup>

In representing Petruchio's ill government of his horse as fallible, Shakespeare draws a rather different moral. Kate's shrewishness is

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<sup>69</sup> Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p.40.

comprised of two qualities: her refusal to obey those to whom she should be 'subject', and her disorderly and violent behaviour towards superiors and inferiors alike. Yet the latter quality is not peculiar to Kate. Petruchio is likewise disruptive in public, from his disorderly behaviour at his own wedding to his game on the road at the expense of Vincentio, and not all of this can be read as a calculated attempt to 'tame' Kate through out-shrewing her. His violence towards his inferiors pre-dates his association with Kate, for on his first entrance, Grumio complains vocally of his beatings, and Petruchio responds by wringing his servant's ears (I.ii.17 s.d.). Similarly, Petruchio's bad management of his horse is a manifestation of his methods of government. Petruchio's claims that he is 'rough' and woos not 'like a babe' are not merely politic (II.1.135): he is in fact signalling his compatibility with his future wife, based upon his comparable disregard for household order. His rule in his own household is as tyrannous and unruly as Kate's subjection in her father's is rebellious and outspoken; rather than privileging tyranny over rebellion, Shakespeare shows how both result in domestic disruption.

Female shrews may have predominated in the realm of plays, songs, and folk tales, but male behaviour could equally be described as 'shrewish'.<sup>70</sup> The *OED* dates the use of 'shrew' to refer to 'a wicked, evil-disposed, or malignant man' to 1250, but no text survives in which the term refers to a woman prior to the epilogue to Chaucer's *The Merchant's Tale* (c.1386), suggesting that shrewishness may have been a male category of behaviour before 'shrew' became a female label.<sup>71</sup> Holly Crocker argues that female shrewishness is represented in *Shrew* is a 'type of domestic insurrection... that actually legitimises masculine authority', but male shrewishness complicates this model, for if a shrewish man cannot rule

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<sup>70</sup> See Holly A. Crocker, 'Engendering Shrews: Medieval to Early Modern' in *Gender and Power in Shrew-Taming Narratives, 1500-1700* ed. David Wootton and Graham Holderness (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.48-69; Brown, p.1; Valerie Wayne, 'Refashioning the Shrew', *Shakespeare Studies* 17 (1985), 159-187; and *Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts* ed. Frances Dolan (Boston: Bedford, 1996), Introduction, pp.8-14.

<sup>71</sup> 'shrew', *OED*, 2.1a; 3a.

himself, how may he follow Xenophon's precepts and rule his household – or his wife?<sup>72</sup>

Thus when Bianca describes Kate and Petruchio as 'madly mated' (III.iii.115), each is represented as equally unruly. This is not to suggest, as so many critics have done, the 'mutuality' of the match, or that the 'taming' of Kate in fact comprises a developing relationship based on sexual attraction and the socialising of each spouse by the other.<sup>73</sup> However, nor do I suggest, as Lynda Boose argues, that *The Taming of the Shrew* is just one example of the misogynist shaming and silencing of early modern women which is endemic in shrew narratives throughout the period.<sup>74</sup> Rather, I argue that both Petruchio's choice of a 'shrew' for a bride, and his own disorderly, disruptive, and 'shrewish' behaviour before and after meeting Kate, render him guilty in early modern eyes.<sup>75</sup> Kate may be curst, but Petruchio is a violent master and husband. Thus Kate's shrewishness is an excuse for Petruchio's violence; he is forced to it in order not to be dominated by Kate. Yet it does not necessarily follow that Petruchio's behaviour, comic though it may be, is endorsed by the play.

Writing on disobedient, unruly or shrewish wives in a published wedding sermon, preacher Henry Smith warns his readers that:

Such furies do haunt some men as though the divell had put a sworde into their handes to kill themselves, therefore choose whom thou maist enjoy, or live alone still, and thou shalt not repent thee of thy bargaine.<sup>76</sup>

Smith, like many early modern Protestant writers, recommends marriage over 'single blessedness', but he nonetheless recommends living alone over the wrong choice of wife: a solitary home is preferable to a dangerous one.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Crocker, 'Engendering Shrews' in *Gender and Power* ed. Holderness and Wootton, p.49.

<sup>73</sup> See Carol Thomas Neely, *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p.218.

<sup>74</sup> See Lynda E. Boose, 'Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member', *SQ* 42.2 (Summer, 1991), 179-213.

<sup>75</sup> See Anna Bayman and George Southcombe, 'Shrews in Pamphlets and Plays' in *Gender and Power* ed. Wootton and Holderness, p.12.

<sup>76</sup> Henry Smith, *Preparative to Marriage* (London, 1591), p.17.

<sup>77</sup> See William Haller and Malleville Haller, 'The Puritan Art of Love', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 5.2 (January, 1942), 235-272. See also Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit*:

A wife who will not subject herself to her husband is a sword that he wields against himself; yet, like a weapon, she is not responsible for her actions. Her husband has made himself vulnerable in marrying a 'fury' and rendering his home unsafe.

Thus, as Xenophon writes in *Oeconomicus*, the disrupted home in which a wife rebels against, or usurps, her husband's position as 'ruling' householder, is the responsibility of both the wife and the husband, who through a bad choice of wife or bad governance, is not able to rule in his 'castle'. As Bernard Capp argues,

[W]hen a husband proved unwilling to compromise his authority or shoulder his responsibilities, or his wife demanded greater autonomy than he was prepared to concede, the stage was set for domestic strife.<sup>78</sup>

Domestic strife is rarely the sole responsibility of either party; the punishment, consisting of a home that is a battleground and a place of suffering, applies to both.

Similar language to that of Smith's wedding sermon is used about Kate after her first appearance on stage. When Hortensio expresses his intention to 'get' a husband for Kate that it might be possible to wed her sister, Gremio substitutes 'husband' for 'devil', and asks if 'any man is so very a fool to be married to hell?' Tranio describes the way that Kate, in her scolding, could 'raise up such a storm that mortal ears could hardly endure the din' (I.i.166-7): her excessive and angry speech is the opposite of domestic behaviour, associated with the violent weather of the world beyond the home. To be married to a woman who is a fit wife for the devil is to invite storms, wild weather, and malign influences into your home.

Petruchio is repeatedly described in similar terms to Kate, by himself as well as by others:

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*Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), ch.1, pp.12-42.

<sup>78</sup> Capp, p.24.

I am as peremptory as she proud-minded,  
And where two raging fires meet together,  
They do consume the thing that feeds their fury.  
Though little fire grows great with little wind,  
Yet extreme gusts will blow out fire and all. (II.i.129-3)

Petruchio here characterises himself as violent weather, an image that Kate plays with in her final speech.

Amidst echoes of the images of the homilies, wedding sermons, and marriage manuals of the period, where Kate styles a 'froward' wife (V.ii.161) as a 'foul contending rebel' and 'graceless traitor' (V.ii.163-4), she also lists the tasks of the husband:

And for thy maintenance; commits his body  
To painful labour both by sea and land,  
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,  
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe. (V.i.152-5)

Many critics who support the 'mutuality' defence of the *Shrew* argue that these lines demonstrate that the entire speech should be read ironically.<sup>79</sup> Petruchio has shown few signs of labour by either sea or land; he has inherited his wealth, amassed still more by 'wiving it wealthily' in Padua, and he only exposes himself to the elements when he rashly decides to ride home on his wedding night – in which instance he likewise causes his wife to suffer exposure to them. Kate, they conclude, cannot be genuine in uttering these lines, which calls the entire speech into question. Yet as David Underdown puts it, the speech 'expresses fairly accurately the ideal of husband-wife relations propounded by countless Elizabethan sermons and conduct books'; it also 'includes the crucial political analogy' upon which the government of the state depends.<sup>80</sup> Whilst the speech deals in hyperbole, it is grounded in the discourses from which it borrows, setting up the safe, enclosed home as the province of the wife, and the outside, whether that comprises labour at sea for the sailor, on land for the farm

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<sup>79</sup> See Barbara Hodgdon, 'Katharina Bound: or, Play(K)ating the Strictures of Everyday Life', *PMLA* 107.3 (May, 1992), 538-553.

<sup>80</sup> D. E. Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England' in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* ed. A. Fletcher and J. Stephenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.116-136 (p.117).

labourer, or watching at night for the night watchman, as the province of her husband.

Furthermore, in describing Petruchio as a watcher of storms, which rage outside the house but cannot disturb its warmth and safety, Kate is at once constructing the marital house as able to withstand Kate's verbal storms which raged in her father's household and in the street alike, and as a home guarded by Petruchio – for 'to watch' is 'to guard' – who presumably, now that his wife is tamed and there is no need to quench her fire with his winds, ensures his own storms of temper remain outside the door. He has proved as disorderly a husband as she was a daughter; her advice, although ostensibly to Bianca and the widow, is equally relevant to her new husband. She sets out the duties of the model wife as obedient subject; the duties of the model husband as household ruler are implied. If Kate is to 'serve, love and obey' (168), it is taken for granted that Petruchio will be her 'loving lord' (164); if she is 'obedient', it will be because his 'will' is 'honest' (162); if she places her foot beneath his foot, he must be her 'keeper' (150), 'care' for her (151), and protect her from 'toil and trouble in the world' (170). Heany argues that this speech demonstrates 'a shrewd perception of husband-management', and thus should be read ironically; yet I would argue the very opposite.<sup>81</sup> It is precisely because the speech demonstrates the necessity of husband-management that it is not ironic, but in earnest. A household in which either is disorderly is hellish for both. A home guarded against the storms outside is warm, safe and secure. Kate sets up a patriarchal household modelled upon the prescriptions of Church and state (and indeed, a model of the state itself), in which one party rules and the other obeys, but the house, at least, is peaceful.

Thus *The Taming of the Shrew* stages the 'taming' of Kate and Petruchio by one another; the former is tamed by domestic tyranny in her marital home that exceeds her own tyranny in her father's house, while the latter is tamed by the shrewd husband-management of Kate's final speech, an event which is prefigured by the playful husband-management of Sly's 'wife' in the induction. The play ends on Hortensio's and Lucentio's

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<sup>81</sup> Heany, p.11.

comments on Petruchio's 'wondrous' taming of a 'curst shrew' (192-3), yet the seemingly pat finish is undermined by the preceding action. Shakespeare has offered an alternative model to the violent shrew-taming in cheap print, by coupling a shrewish wife with an equally unruly husband. Furthermore, there is an alternative ending in existence: another *Shrew* play in which shrewishness is both condemned and celebrated.

#### **4. Other *Shrews*: Shrewishness and Domestic Violence in *The Taming of A Shrew*, *Broadside Ballads* and *The Tamer Tamed***

The only authoritative text of *The Taming of the Shrew* appears in the First Folio. However, in 1594 a London printer, Peter Short, published a quarto edition of another play named *The Taming of a Shrew*, as performed by the Earl of Pembroke's Men. In some respects, the quarto text of *A Shrew* closely resembles the Folio text of *The Shrew*; however, as John Jowett puts it, *A Shrew* 'is so linguistically and structurally different from the Folio that it is generally considered a separate and unShakespearean play'.<sup>82</sup>

*The Taming of a Shrew* contains numerous different character names, and incidents that are entirely absent from *The Shrew*. There are also numerous substantive variants between the two texts; not least in Kate's final speech, which, in *The Shrew*, apes the language of the homilies, as discussed above, but which, in *A Shrew*, focuses entirely upon the events of the Garden of Eden, Eve's creation from Adam's rib and her role in the Fall, thus excusing female subjection because woman is responsible for original sin.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, although both texts open with an induction, the characters presented in the induction disappear entirely from the text of *The Shrew* after the first scene of the play proper, whilst in *A Shrew*, these characters participate in a frame narrative that opens, intersperses, and closes the play.

The relationship between the two *Shrew* texts is too complex, and too uncertain, to merit a lengthy discussion here. The induction of *A Shrew*

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<sup>82</sup> John Jowett, *Shakespeare and Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.75.

<sup>83</sup> See Graham Holderness, "'Darknes was before light": Hierarchy and Duality in *A Shrew*' in *Gender and Power* ed. Wootton and Holderness, pp.169-183.

shows signs of being a memorial reconstruction of the same scene in *The Shrew*, and it is plausible that *A Shrew* is an adaptation by another author of Shakespeare's play, based upon a memorially reconstructed text. Furthermore, it would make sense if the reappearing frame narrative in *A Shrew* were derived from Shakespeare's *The Shrew*, although the scenes are missing from the Folio text. Indeed, many productions of *The Shrew* insert these scenes, so that Sly and his noble 'wife' are observers of, and commentators on, the main action.<sup>84</sup> Barbara Hodgdon, the editor of the 2010 Arden edition of *The Shrew*, viewed the *Shrew* texts as 'mutations' representing 'different stages of an ongoing theatrical "commodity"', which, whilst it does not solve the problem of the two *Shrew* texts, provides a useful paradigm through which to view them.<sup>85</sup> There is certainly some relation between the two frame narratives, so that of *A Shrew* may be read as shedding light upon the text of *The Shrew*.

*The Taming of a Shrew* ends where it began, with Sly and the Tapster. It is a Tapster, not a Hostess, who threatens Sly in the opening scene; the issue of gender is removed from the frame narrative, which is peopled entirely by males, yet the frame nonetheless maintains an emphasis upon the gender dynamics explored by the play proper, by focusing upon Sly's role as husband. The play ends on the mention of Sly's actual wife, who, the Tapster warns, will beat him for drunkenly falling asleep out of doors: 'Ay, marry, but you had best get you home, for your wife will course [thrash] you for dreaming here tonight'.<sup>86</sup> Sly replies that he now knows how to tame a shrew, and will 'tame her, too, an if she anger me' (18). The comedy of this exchange lies in the role reversal – Sly is a husband beaten by his wife – and by the threat implied in Sly's projected taming. The fact that he proposes to tame in anger suggests that he has learnt from the play

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<sup>84</sup> Mel Shapiro added the final Sly scenes from *A Shrew*, and kept Sly as onstage audience throughout, for a 1999 production at the Delacorte Theatre in New York, 1999. See also Dominic Power's 2008 production at the Tobacco Factory, for which he wrote his own version of the Sly epilogue; a version which was widely assumed by theatre critics to belong to the original text (Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory, *The Taming of the Shrew* 2008), [www.sattf.org.uk](http://www.sattf.org.uk) [accessed 24 October 2013].

<sup>85</sup> Hodgdon, p.37.

<sup>86</sup> *The Taming of a Shrew* in *Three Shrew Plays* ed. Barry Gaines and Margaret Maurer (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010), xv.13-14. All further references are to this edition, and are incorporated into the text.

on the most simplistic level, believing that Petruchio's method of denying Kate food, sleep, company, and new clothes has been successful, and is to be copied.

As an onstage observer of the play, Sly has not been a model audience member; he has asked questions about what is going to happen, confused the action of the play with real life, and drunkenly fallen asleep. Thus we may assume that his response to the play is not that of the audience; rather, the audience is invited to judge him, and to laugh at him. Sly may have participated in the communal fantasy of shrew taming, but, as Underdown argues, he must now go home to 'face reality': the reality of the wife who rules his household, who beats him and whom he is unlikely to 'tame'.<sup>87</sup> The taming of Kate is counterpointed by the wish fulfilment of a drunken, impoverished husband who is thrashed by his wife.

Sly's fantasy is further called into question by the lines with which the play proper ends in *A Shrew*:

POLIDOR: I say thou art a shrew.

EMILIA: That's better than a sheep.

POLIDOR: Well, since 'tis done, let it go. Come, let's in. (xi.166-8)

Emilia corresponds to the 'Bianca' character in *The Shrew*; and, like Bianca, she has been discovered to be less obedient and more froward than her supposedly curst sister. Yet here both the accusation and her defence are made explicit. As Brown explores, the existence (and popularity) of the proverb 'better a shrew than a sheep' suggests that 'shrew' was not universally considered the worst title for a woman:

In ballads women use it to criticise wives who let their husbands go whoring; in plays women use it to scoff at the idea of becoming doormats. Outnumbered by misogynist tags geared to men, the proverb offers a tantalising glimpse of an oppositional stance.<sup>88</sup>

Emilia suggests that her sister's taming is not an outcome she would aspire to; in refusing to be cowed by the title of shrew, she does not accept Kate's

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<sup>87</sup> Underdown, p.177. See also Juliet Dusinberre, 'The Taming of the Shrew: Women, Acting and Power', *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 26.1 (1993), 67-84.

<sup>88</sup> Allen Brown, p.2.

argument that female culpability for original sin must render wives servile. Furthermore, in using the image of the sheep as a negative one, Bianca refuses to participate in Xenophon's ideal of wives that may be taught or herded like sheep, to represent the good government of their husbands. The stance of Sly's wife, we may imagine, is likely to be similar.

Thus the representation of shrewish wives is not confined to shrew-taming narratives; for a shrew to be portrayed in a comic mode, it is not necessary for her to be forced into an obedient or submissive role. Husbands dominated by their wives, whether physically or emotionally, are a comic staple of broadside ballads; many of these have much in common with the 'sheep' of Emilia's proverb. Ballads were printed as one-page broadsides, accompanied by the name of the (usually recognizable) tune but often without the name of the author, and were hawked by performing ballad-singers in various public spaces, as well as sold by booksellers or on market stalls. Many ballads cost the same as standing room at the theatre, rendering them affordable to the majority of the London population; they were easily available in public places, and could be consumed communally – heard in a market square, or read on a tavern wall – or privately, read or performed within the home. As Clark comments,

[The ballad] operated on the boundaries between the oral and the written, between commercial transaction and free circulation... The opportunity for such audiences to participate in the performance of the ballad, by joining in the refrain, not only increased its market appeal but also enhanced its potential as a medium for the expression of communal sentiment.<sup>89</sup>

Street literature does not so much provide a glimpse of non-elite life as grant, like the stage, an alternative vision to that propagated in homilies, conduct books, and the Bible. Broadside ballads deal not with the ideal home but with its opposite: the disrupted home in which disorder reigns. Consider, for example, the anonymous ballad entitled *Any Thing for a Quiet*

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<sup>89</sup> Sandra Clark, 'The Economics of Marriage in the Broadside Ballads', *Journal of Popular Culture* 36.1 (2002), 119-133 (p.119).

*Life; Or the Married Mans Bondage to a Curst Wife*.<sup>90</sup> It is a ballad designed to give a ‘warning’, with an implied audience of young men who are advised to be careful in their choice of wife – and to delay marriage for as long as possible. The subject of the ballad, a young man, presumably an apprentice, is forced to obey the commands of his demanding master. He marries in search of ‘liberty’ but finds his new wife just as demanding. She becomes pregnant, and sends him out to buy her expensive gifts; after she has given birth, she gads about with gallants, leaving her husband at home, and ‘frowns’ if he complains.

The subject of the ballad is characterised as a victim, who makes a bad choice and suffers for it. Yet the narrator’s tone is tongue-in-cheek, and the message may be presumed to be ironic. The subject is clearly a disappointment as a servant or apprentice, unable to fulfil his master’s commands; he likewise fails to fulfil his role as a husband. To be ruled by his wife through the strength of her ‘frowns’ is to fail in household government. The moral drawn – that young men should avoid marriage, because it is a miserable condition – is a jest. The ballad sets itself up within the genre of ‘exhortation’ ballads, in which the narrators of ballads recount their own mistakes, or those of another, to ‘warn’ and edify the audience; yet unlike many ballads belonging to the genre, the consequences are not fatal, or even particularly grave, and so the genre is manipulated to comic effect.<sup>91</sup>

The ballad ends with the lines:

the onely hell upon this earth  
to have an angry wife.

Yet the ballad has demonstrated that the easily ruled husband is as responsible as his wife for their household hell. As Patrick Hanay writes in the verse marriage manual *A Happy Husband*, published in 1619,

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<sup>90</sup> *Any Thing for a Quiet Life; Or the Married Mans Bondage to a Curst Wife* (London, [n.d.]), Pepys 1.378-379.

<sup>91</sup> See Natascha Würzbach, *The Rise of the English Street Ballad 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.64-74.

It's unseemly, a[nd] doth both disgrace,  
When either doth usurp the others place.<sup>92</sup>

The husband who becomes a subject is as much to blame as the wife who usurps his position as ruler. The seventeenth-century ballad *A Married Mans Complaint Who Took a Shrow Instead of a Saint*, makes this moral explicit:

He is as much to blame to let her wear,  
The Breeches as she is to domineer.<sup>93</sup>



**Fig. 4. Illustration to R. Burton, *The Married Mans Complaint* (London, [n.d.]), Douce 2, fol.150r. © Bodleian Library. Used with permission.**

<sup>92</sup> Patrick Hannay, *A Happy Husband or, Directions for a Maide to Choose Her Mate* (London, 1619), C3v.

<sup>93</sup> R. Burton, *The Married Mans Complaint* (London, [n.d.]), Douce 2, fol.150r.

The accompanying image (Fig. 4), in which the husband and wife fight over a pair of breeches, reinforces this sense of dual responsibility. The swaddled baby that lies neglected in the background of the image suggests the consequences of domestic discord for others in the household, while the devil lurking in the corner would seem to reinforce Gremio's suggestion that a disordered home is hellish in this world – and to suggest the eventual consequences of such discord in the next.

In Martin Parker's *A Banquet for Sovereigne Husbands*, shrewishness afflicts the husbands of an entire parish: a ram is roasted at St Giles in the Fields, and husbands flock to eat it, swearing they will 'rule and tame' their wives. Yet the ram is roasted:

And scarce a man durst draw his knife  
For feare he should displease his wife.<sup>94</sup>

The final lines of the ballad are addressed to 'scolding wives', who are requested not to buy this ballad, which is intended for 'gentle wives'; but the joke is clearly on the husbands who are too afraid of their wives to eat without their permission. Wiltenburg argues that the final verse of the ballad suggests that 'women are invited to enjoy the idea of female power but to distance themselves from any open rebellion'; yet herein lies the humour of this verse – for if the gentle wives are invited to participate in the fantasy of scolding wives who frighten their husbands, and to view this inversion as a source of humour, then this would seem to imply the possibility of such gentle wives themselves becoming scolds.<sup>95</sup>

Yet although such marital inversions are represented in the comic mode, they could have very real consequences for the marital couple involved. In *A Merry Discourse, Twixt Him and His Joane*, a husband agrees to be ruled by his wife, but warns that this must be kept secret:

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<sup>94</sup> Martin Parker, *A Banquet for Sovereigne Husbands* (London, 1629), Pepys 1.402-403.

<sup>95</sup> Wiltenburg, p.101.

Well, do what thou wilt, I am thine at command,  
But let not my neighbours of this understand;  
For that if thou dost, I know it will be  
A shame to thy selfe, disgrace unto me.<sup>96</sup>

This disgrace could be a physical one. On such occasions, although the wife may have been derided for shrewishness or disobedience, it was the husband who was considered deserving of punishment by the community. A husband beaten by his wife, or whose wife had proven ‘in some other noteworthy way that she wore the breaches’, could be subjected to ridings, in which he or his representative was paraded through his village or town upon a horse or substitute horse, as Martin Ingram describes:

In more elaborate versions a real horse was used, but in many parts of England the mount was more usually represented by a ‘cowstaff’ or ‘stang’ carried on men’s shoulders... Sometimes the victims themselves were forced to ride; during the ordeal they might be pelted with mud and filth and could end up by being ducked in a pond or river.<sup>97</sup>

On such occasions, a wife might be held equally responsible for her shrewishness, but it was the husband who was punished.

Ingram suggests that the imagery of ridings had links to both ‘penal and festive practices’: these rituals remind both participants and audience of legal punishments, in which the exemplary nature of suffering is a key function of the punishment, and of festive celebrations, such as the Christmas Lord of Misrule, where disorder was invoked as an aspect of celebration.<sup>98</sup> Diane Purkiss argues that shaming rituals publicly represented disorder in order to negate its dangerous potential:

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<sup>96</sup> Edward Ford, *A Merry Discourse, Twixt Him and His Joane* (London, [n.d.]), Roxburghe 1.82, 1.83.

<sup>97</sup> Martin Ingram, ‘Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes in Early Modern England’ in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* ed. Barry Reay (Beckenham: Croom Helm Ltd, 1985), pp.166-197 (p.169).

<sup>98</sup> Martin Ingram, ‘Ridings in *Popular Culture* ed. Reay, p.172.

[A] perceived inversion of the social order is both represented and corrected by another, different inversion. The husband riding backwards on a horse and the woman beating or abusing her husband both represent disorder, but the former also represents the latter in a manner which works to neutralise its effect.

She suggests that ballads likewise ‘name and thus define acts of disorder, and their public or published display of that disorder operates to neutralise its threat’.<sup>99</sup> Social shaming rituals allowed the judging community to enjoy the spectacle of disorder even as they condemned the disorder itself.

The communal shaming that a wife’s domination over her husband produces has a festive aspect; although the domination is considered serious enough to necessitate punishment, and of enough interest to the community for that community to carry that punishment out, the ‘riding’ itself is essentially a positive ritual, which apes disorder that it might restore order, and bring about reconciliation. Gary Schneider notes the extent to which Kate’s taming is staged in public, and argues that ‘the processes, actions and manipulations that publicize Kate in Padua and that are designed to tame shrewishness are intertwined with public shame’; Kate’s taming thus becomes a public shaming ritual, that enacts disorder in order to correct it.<sup>100</sup> *The Taming of the Shrew*, like the shaming it represents, ends in concord: order is restored; obedience is pledged by the wife; the marriage is finally consummated; and the community, having witnessed this concord, is at last able to celebrate at the wedding feast which becomes as much Kate’s as it is Bianca’s. If the story ends there, then the play is indeed a comedy, which stages household inversions and disorder for the entertainment of its audience only to contain this domestic disruption within a comic framework of wife-taming (and husband-management) that results in marital concord and obedience. But what if it doesn’t?

John Fletcher’s *The Woman’s Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*, first printed in the Beaumont and Fletcher First Folio of 1647, but usually dated c.1609-10, fashions itself as a sequel to Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the*

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<sup>99</sup> Diane Purkiss, ‘Material Girls’ in *Women, Texts and Histories* ed. Brant and Purkiss, pp.69-101 (p.82).

<sup>100</sup> Gary Schneider, ‘The Public, the Private, and the Shaming of the Shrew’, *SEL* 42.2 (Spring, 2002), 235–258 (p.236).

*Shrew*.<sup>101</sup> It is set in England, for it would appear that Fletcher considered Shakespeare's play, despite its Padua setting, essentially English, and it deals with Petruchio's second marriage, to a maid named Maria. His first marriage, to Kate, has ended with her death – and the implication is that he brought about her death himself, for she was such a 'rebel' that he was 'forced to blow as high as she' in temper.<sup>102</sup> The use of the wind imagery from Shakespeare's *Taming* represents a line of continuity between the two plays, and suggests that Fletcher is implying that the very behaviour that appeared to tame Kate in the former play will become fatal to her when she refuses to yield to her husband's authority.

Thus Shakespeare's many fictionalising and distancing devices, through which he complicated his presentation of a shrew-taming narrative, are all but ignored by Fletcher. Shakespeare's taming takes place abroad, but Fletcher presents it as English; Shakespeare's Petruchio exists only in a play-within-a-play, performed for a confused drunkard who thinks himself a lord, and who, in the *A Shrew* text at least, demonstrates that only the foolish would take the play at face value, but Fletcher simply uses the action of the play proper as the antecedents of his narrative; and Shakespeare's comedic ending presents a fantasy of concord which Fletcher reframes in terms of a larger, tragic narrative which takes domestic discord to its logical conclusion. Fletcher, like many modern readers of the play, isolates the titular shrew taming, and finds in it far darker implications than Shakespeare's comedic structure will allow.

Fletcher's play opens with neighbourhood fears that Petruchio 'will bury' his new wife within a week of marriage (I.i.62), even more quickly than he buried Kate; yet Maria is not so easily defeated, and develops numerous tactics to tame her shrewish husband. She locks herself within her marital home with various 'gossips', and refuses to consummate the marriage until Petruchio is tamed. But this triumphant taming of Petruchio's shrewishness is counterpointed by the fact that, as an early modern reader of Shakespeare's *Taming*, Fletcher understood the domestic violence

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<sup>101</sup> Gaines and Maurer, eds., *Three Shrew Plays*, Introduction, p.xxiii.

<sup>102</sup> John Fletcher, *A Woman's Prize, or the Tamer Tamed* in *Three Shrew Plays* ed. Gaines and Maurer, I.i.27-8. All further references are to this edition.

represented within it as dangerous not only for the order of the state and the peace of the neighbourhood, but also for Kate herself.

Writing of ballads portraying marital disorder, Wiltenburg argues that the ‘violence of English domestic quarrels, especially that exercised by women, is a comic formula out of touch with the possible effects of violence on flesh and bone’.<sup>103</sup> It is true that even the most violent shrew tamings detailed in cheap print retain a comic tone, as in the narrative of a wife wrapped in a horse’s skin, discussed above, or in the ballad *The Married Mans Complaint*, which focuses on the comic potential of the wife’s violence against her husband but ends on the husband’s promise that he will ‘knock her bold face against the wall’.<sup>104</sup> Yet Fletcher’s response suggests that early modern audiences were familiar with, and could well imagine, the effects of marital violence upon flesh and bone, even as they enjoyed the comic spectacle of domestic discord that ends in concord. When marital discord becomes fatal, for either the husband or the wife, then the domestic becomes tragic, and the hellish home becomes a grave.

Thus the ideal of the home as a place of safety, propagated by legal treatises, conduct literature, and prescribed homilies, depends upon both good order within the home and the ideal of selectively permeable protection, which permits health-giving elements to enter the home, but prevents malign influences from crossing its boundaries. Yet when the homes’ inhabitants are themselves dangerous, this protection is undone, and disorder is inevitable; when a husband is tyrannous, or a wife is insubordinate, the threat to the home is already within its walls, as I will explore further in Chapters Two and Three. Furthermore, the political analogy of the home and the state ensures that household disruption destroys the privacy of the home; as in the communal shaming practices discussed above, domestic violence opens up events within the home to the surveillance and interference of the wider community, as I will discuss further in Chapter Four. Shakespeare’s *Taming* explores the ways in which an insubordinate wife and a tyrannous husband can alike disrupt the home, yet it also stages how Kate’s gender makes her doubly vulnerable to her

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<sup>103</sup> Wiltenburg, p.139.

<sup>104</sup> Burton, *Married Mans Complaint*.

husband's household tyranny. Husband-management is thus represented at once as a jest, comparable to the management of Sly by the boy player in the induction, and a matter of necessity – Kate must manage her husband for the peace of her home and her own protection. *A Tamer Tamed* takes these anxieties to their logical conclusion; Fletcher looks beyond the comic structure of *Taming* to suggest the tragic potential of the domestic disruption it portrays. In staging violent homes in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare engages with a genre in which household discord is staged for entertainment, yet is invariably fatal: domestic tragedy.

## 2. Household: Performing Domestic Relationships

[T]he then Earle of Sussex players acting the old History of Fryer Francis, & presenting a woman, who insatiately doting on a yong gentleman, had (the more securely to enjoy his affection) mischieuously and seceretly murdered her husband, whose ghost haunted her... As this was acted, a townes-woman (till then of good estimation and report) finding her conscience (at this presentment) extremely troubled, suddenly skritchd and cryd out Oh my husband, my husband! I see the ghost of my husband fiercely threatning and menacing me. At which shrill and unexpected out-cry, the people about her, moov'd to a strange amazement, inquired the reason of her clamour, when presently un-urged, she told them, that seven yeares ago, she, to be possest of such a Gentleman... had poysoned her husband, whose fearefull image personated it selfe in the shape of that ghost: whereupon the murdresse was apprehended, before the justices further examined, & by her voluntary confession after condemned.<sup>1</sup>

In *An Apology for Actors*, Heywood attests that drama can have a corrective function. As I discuss in the Introduction, Heywood gives an example, a 'domestick and home-borne truth': at a performance of the play *The History of Friar Francis*, which portrays a woman murdering her husband for love of another, a woman in the audience who has murdered her husband for the same reasons sees the ghost of her own husband, and is startled into publicly confessing her guilt.<sup>2</sup> This leads to her apprehension and execution for murder. Thus Heywood represents the performance of a play that portrays a domestic crime as having a moral effect upon its audience, in causing a criminal to feel her own guilt, and a beneficial impact upon the larger society, in initiating a train of events that allow a threat to the order of that society to be eliminated.

The text of *Friar Francis* no longer survives. Henslowe records three performances of the play in January 1594, presumably at the Rose, but refers to it as an 'old' play, suggesting that it had been performed previously. Heywood's reference to the play in 1612 as having being performed 'within these few yeares' by the Earl of Sussex's men at 'Lin in Norfolke' could refer to a performance, recorded in the Norwich records, of

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<sup>1</sup> Heywood, *Apology*, G1v-G2r.

<sup>2</sup> Heywood, *Apology*, G1v.

an unnamed play by ‘the Erle of Sussex players’ at King’s Lynn in 1592/3.<sup>3</sup> If this is the case, then the events described by Heywood may have taken place just a few months after the earliest extant domestic tragedy, *Arden of Feversham*, was printed in quarto.

There is one other surviving account of the sensational events at the performance of *Friar Francis*. In *A Warning for Fair Women*, a 1599 play portraying a wife who becomes an accomplice to the murder of her husband at the hands of her lover, a servant miraculously survives numerous wounds long enough to identify the murderer. The servant then dies, prompting a discussion over his corpse of miraculous instances of the discovery of murderers. One such instance is that of the murderous wife in the audience of *Friar Francis*:

A woman that had made away her husband,  
And sitting to behold a tragedy,  
At Linne a towne 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 mooved with the sight thereof,  
As she cryed out, the Play was made by her,  
And openly confesst her husbands murder. (2036-2048)

The speaker is Master James, an incidental character who drinks with the murderer, George Browne, shortly after the murder, and spots the victim’s blood on Browne’s hose. Browne convinces him that it is a hare’s blood, but later, hearing of the crime, James recognises the significance of the clue, and thus becomes one of the party that hunts for Browne, and hears the testimony of the dying servant. He interprets the servant’s testimony as providential, and presents his anecdote as comparable. This is a reading that his onstage audience accepts, for Master Barnes, the master of the dead servant, answers the tale by praising God.

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<sup>3</sup> MSS 7, 008 verso, *Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project*; Heywood, *Apology*, Glv; ‘Friar Francis’, *Lost Plays Database* ed. Knutson and McInnis. See also Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe’s Diary* (1591-1609) ed. W. W. Greg (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904), p.16.

Yet the implications of the anecdote are quite different, as the original audience of the play may have recognised. It is not through the agency of God that the nameless woman confesses her crime, but through the skill of the actor ('a good Tragedian') and the talent of the writer ('a feeling pen'). Heywood read the anecdote in this light, presenting it as an example of the ability of theatre to cause the spectator to recognise his or her own guilt. The nameless murderess confesses her crime due not to the power of Providence, but to the power of theatre. The imaginative identification of the woman in the audience with the murderess represented onstage by a boy actor was great enough to prompt guilt for her own act of murder.

As I discuss in the Introduction, *A Warning for Fair Women* is a self-consciously theatrical play, which opens with a squabble between generic personifications that draws attention to the play's hybrid genre. Master James's anecdote reminds the audience of the play's antecedents: it is based upon a true crime like that related by the audience member. It thus reminds the audience of the play's purpose, implied by its title: to warn the audience members, particularly those who are female and attractive, of the dire consequences of transgression, whether sexual, murderous, or – as in both the anecdote and the play – a fatal combination of the two, where the former implies the latter. The anonymous author of *Warning*, then, situates an anecdote that could itself form the subject of a domestic tragedy within a play that draws meta-theatrical attention to its own generic origins. The tale of the haunted murderess is thus self-consciously positioned in terms of hybrid genre, 'warning' literature, and the providential potential of theatre.

A year or so after *A Warning for Fair Women* was printed, Shakespeare wrote a play in which a wife watches the staging of her husband's murder, the murderer recognises his crime in the play, and the Ghost of the dead man haunts the living, seeking justice. *Hamlet* is not a domestic tragedy; it is set abroad, in a royal household, and concerns the fate of a kingdom as well as that of a family. Nonetheless, *Hamlet*, *A Warning for Fair Women* and Heywood's tale share a preoccupation with adulterous desire, familial murder, and the power of theatre in catching

consciences: *Hamlet* may not be a domestic tragedy, but it exhibits many of the concerns and tropes of the genre.

In this chapter, I use Heywood's anecdote as a lens to explore how domestic relationships and disrupted household hierarchies are represented and staged in cheap print, domestic tragedies, and *Hamlet*. I examine the legal category of petty treason, which characterises murder as a crime against both the individual and the state, and consider those cases where murderers and accomplices to murder are caught between allegiance to the household and allegiance to the state, or allegiance to two or more 'masters'. I explore how the anecdote of the adulterous, play-going murderess is transfigured in the construction of Gertrude, a character whose adultery and complicity in her husband's murder remain an enigma throughout *Hamlet*. I situate Gertrude in relation to a popular tradition of adulterous and murderous wives, and argue that her narrative trajectory, like theirs, is a tragedy of fatal allegiance, as she is torn 'in twain' between husband and son (III.iv.14). In so doing, I suggest that reading *Hamlet* alongside domestic tragedies can situate the play in relation to an alternative generic model to the much-discussed relationship between *Hamlet* and revenge tragedy, and thus illuminate the ways in which Shakespeare appropriates and transforms the genre.

## 1. The Paradox of the Murderous Wife

Dolan opens the first chapter of *Dangerous Familiars* with a discussion of Heywood's anecdote, in order to explore the legal position of murderous wives. A wife who murdered her husband was guilty not only of murder, but of petty treason, which was, as Leon Radzinowicz describes, 'an aggravated form of murder... consisting in one of the following three acts':

Homicide of a master by a servant; of a husband by a wife; and of an ecclesiastical superior by his inferior.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Leon Radzinowicz, *A History of English Criminal Law* (London: Stevens, 1948), p.628.

According to John Cowell's *The Interpreter: or Booke Containing the Signification of Words* (1607), petty treason is 'treason in a lesser or lower kinde'; 'whereas treason in the highest kinde, is an offence done against the securitie of the common wealth... petit treason is of this nature, though not so expresly as the other'.<sup>5</sup> Thus petty treason does not differ from treason 'in nature', but merely in degree: both acts are offences against the security of the commonwealth, and are punishable as such.

The opposite act – the murder of a wife by her husband, or of a servant by a master – does not have a comparable legal category. Dolan uses the term 'petty tyranny' to describe this act, which may have threatened household order, and the lives of those who belonged to that household, but, unlike petty treason, was not perceived as threatening the security of the commonwealth.<sup>6</sup> Heywood's anecdote, which discusses both a play presenting petty treason and a real-life case, reflects the cultural preoccupation with that particular category of domestic murder. Furthermore, although numerous pamphlets, ballads and plays portraying petty treason show a servant assisting in, or becoming an accomplice to, the murder of his or her master, the servant's role is almost always incidental to the main event – an event which is often, although not invariably, the murder of a husband by a wife. The figure of the murderous wife appears in only two extant domestic tragedies, *Warning* and *Arden of Feversham*, and two plays now lost, *Page of Plymouth* and *Friar Francis*, yet she retained a powerful hold on the public imagination.

As Stuart Kane argues, the murderous wife is 'simultaneously domestic and social, private and public'.<sup>7</sup> She is thus particularly apt for representation upon the stage – an arena in which the domestic could be made public. In Master James's anecdote in *Warning*, the unnamed townswoman is so moved that she cries out that 'the play was made by her'

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<sup>5</sup> John Cowell, *The Interpreter: or Booke Containing the Signification of Words* (London, 1607), Ccc3r.

<sup>6</sup> Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p.89, p.90.

<sup>7</sup> Stuart A. Kane, 'Wives with Knives: Early Modern Murder Ballads and the Transgressive Commodity', *Criticism* 38.2 (Spring, 1996), 219-37 (p.221). See also Betty Travitsky, 'Husband-Murder and Petty Treason in English Renaissance Tragedy,' *Renaissance Drama* 21 (1990), 171- 98; and Susan Sage Heinzelman, 'Women's Petty Treason: Feminism, Narrative, and the Law', *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 20.2 (Spring, 1990), 89-106.

(H2r), and so confesses to her husband's murder. The murderess does not only claim her own agency in the act of murder she has committed; she also imaginatively inhabits the body of the onstage murderess, and so exhibits confused identification with the character performed before her. Herein lies the subversive potential of the staging of husband murder: it allows the audience, whether murderous or innocent, to identify, however briefly, with the position of the murderous wife, before she is assimilated into the legal narrative of discovery, judgement and punishment.

The agency of the murderous wife can be still more intimately experienced and imagined in the genre of the murder ballad, in which audience members are invited not only to read about the murder and its aftermath, but to embody and ventriloquise the (repentant and punished) murderer. As I explored in Chapter One, ballads were not only designed for passive consumption; they invited their auditors and readers to perform and distribute the texts. Ballads were, as Adam Fox puts it, 'intended to be overheard, learned off by heart and carolled aloud', as well as read from the page, both singly and communally, in private and in public spaces.<sup>8</sup> The performance and advertisement of each ballad does not end with the ballad-seller; purchasers of ballads play an equal role in dissemination (and recreation). The text of the murder ballad, then, does not remain the property of the moralistic third person or repentant first person narrator; the audience of the ballad may become moralisers and repentant criminals both.

Clark suggests that ballads, available to non-literate audiences and performed in spaces frequented by both men and women, were particularly open to female audiences, and indeed, often signposted their target audiences as specifically female. However, the gendering of audiences in murder ballads is complicated by the subversive identities assigned to these audiences; for when murder ballads figure their audiences as gendered, they also figure them as criminal. In *A Warning for All Desperate Women*, female auditors are encouraged to imagine themselves capable of murdering their husbands – and then discouraged from carrying out the act. The

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<sup>8</sup> Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.5.

narrator, Alice Davis, has murdered her husband, and is soon to be executed; she warns her (female) audience to learn by her example:

Then hasty hairebraind wives take heed,  
of me a warning take,  
Least like to me in coole of blood  
you burn't be at a stake.<sup>9</sup>

In fashioning her repentant recollection as experienced in 'coole of blood', the speaker implicitly blames her hot-blooded anger for her crime; in suggesting that the members of the audience might likewise be executed in a cool-blooded aftermath to a hot-blooded crime, she suggests that her auditors' potential culpability resides, like hers, in their veins. The potential for murder is located in the female body. Furthermore, the qualities of the criminal narrator are projected onto the audience, so that for the audience to engage with the ballad, they must imagine their own desires as murderous. Likewise, in the ballad *Anne Wallens Lamentation*, in which the narrator, Anne, recounts her murder of her husband, the entirety of womankind is implicated in her act:

Ah me the shame unto all woman kinde,  
To harbour such a thought within my minde.<sup>10</sup>

Thus she suggests that women have a responsibility to behave well not only for themselves, but in order to uphold the reputation of their whole sex; each individual woman is a representative of all women. The narrator further advises wives to 'take heed', to be kind to their husbands, and to tame their unruly tongues, which could lead them on the path to murder, thus fashioning all female misbehaviour as equally dangerous.

In Martin Parker's *A Warning for Wives*, the (presumably male) narrator figure recounts a recent murder of a husband by his drunken, angry wife. The ballad's refrain doesn't imagine the auditors' potential for murder; rather, it fashions them as already murderous:

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<sup>9</sup> *A Warning for All Desperate Women* (London, 1628), Pepys 1.120-121.

<sup>10</sup> T. Platte, *Anne Wallens Lamentation* (London, 1616), Pepys 1.124-125.

Oh women,  
Murderous women.  
Whereon are your minds?<sup>11</sup>

The title, *A Warning for Wives*, suggests the essential paradox of the ballad: that husband murder is represented as unnatural, devilish, and barbarous, and yet it is something of which all ‘good wives’ must ‘a warning take’.

It is notable that in all these ballads, the warnings focus on the consequences of murder for the murderess, rather than upon the murder itself. Thus *A Warning for All Desperate Woman* uses the stake as a threat; *Anne Wallens Lamentation* describes ‘burning flames of fire’; and *A Warning for Wives* likewise warns that husband murderers are ‘burned without pity’. These warnings rest on the assumption that the sinful, treasonous nature of husband murder, although repeatedly expounded, is not enough to deter wives from the act; a focus upon the fatal consequences of the murder for the murderess is considered necessary.

This is evident in the images used to illustrate these ballads. Each has at least two woodcut illustrations, one of which depicts the murder, the other, the murderess being burnt at the stake. The illustrations of the murder are uniformly banal, depicting generalised murders of men by women with little blood, emotion, or drama. The burnings are far more emotive.

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<sup>11</sup> Martin Parker, *A Warning for Wives* (London, 1629), Pepys 1.118-119.



**Fig. 1. Illustration to T. Platt, *Anne Wallens Lamentation*, Part II  
(London, 1616), Pepys 1.124-125.**

**By permission of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.**



**Fig. 2. Illustration to Martin Parker, *A Warning for Wives*, Part II  
(London, 1629), Pepys 1.118-119.**

**By permission of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.**

In the image accompanying *Anne Wallens Lamentation* (Fig. 1), Anne, despite being tied to a burning stake, appears to require a company of armed men to keep her at bay: the illustration indicates both the importance of the punishment of the murderess to narratives of husband murder, and the eerie power and agency the murderess is represented as wielding, even in her moment of ultimate vulnerability. The same image appears again as an illustration to *A Warning for All Desperate Women*; a common printing practice which nonetheless demonstrates the extent to which accounts of husband murder situate themselves in a tradition of such accounts, rendering the murderous wives at once interchangeable and cumulatively powerful, at once dangerous anomalies and a cultural obsession. The image used to illustrate *A Warning for All Wives* is still more eerie, representing a female body writhing in flames, half-consumed but still capable of animated movements, with two blank but open eyes staring out at the viewer (Fig. 2). All identifiable female characteristics of the body are effaced or covered by the flames; she becomes sexless in the moment of execution.

Thus the outwardly didactic, judgemental, and conventional position of each of these ballads masks the subversive potential of the texts. The images of execution that accompany the texts attempt to assimilate the crime into a legal narrative, but in so doing they dramatise the fear that the murderess can inspire in both observers and the state. Nor are such images confined to ballads. The text of the 1592 news pamphlet *The Most Wicked and Secret Murthering of John Brewen* is accompanied by one image only, on its title page: that of Anne Brewen, the murderous wife of John Brewen, being burned at the stake for her crime (Fig. 3).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *The Trueth of the Most Wicked and Secret Murthering of John Brewen* (London, 1592). This pamphlet was attributed to Thomas Kyd by J. P. Collier, but that attribution is debated; see Arthur Freeman and Janet Ing Freeman, *John Payne Collier: Scholarship and Forgery in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp.857-860.



**Fig. 3. Detail from title page of Thomas Kyd, *The Trueth of the Most Wicked and Secret Murthering of John Brewen* (London, 1592), British Library, shelfmark 2326.c.4, title page.**

**© The British Library Board. Used with permission.**

The image would seem to show a repentant, smiling Anne being burned at the stake, praying for forgiveness as she dies. Yet unlike the majority of murderous wives represented in ballads and pamphlets, Anne does not repent within the text. She regrets the murder only because her lover, who persuaded her to perform it, will not marry her, for fear that she will murder him too; she does not speak of her sinfulness of her crime, nor does she pray to God for forgiveness, and, again unlike the majority of murder texts, no scaffold speech is reported. The juxtaposition of image and text leaves an uneasy impression of a hypocritical Anne who may soon suffer such flames for eternity. Furthermore, unlike the sexless image discussed above, this illustration ensures the viewer cannot avoid Anne's sex; her femininity is signalled by the prominence of her nipples, visible through her dress.

Dolan has observed that this image is 'is recycled from Foxe's account of Cicelie Ormes's 1557 martyrdom in numerous editions of *Acts and Monuments*, including that printed in 1570'; the image of a martyr has been converted into that of a traitor.<sup>13</sup> Such recycling of images in pamphlets and broadsides was standard practice, yet images may have accrued resonances that were available to early modern readers.<sup>14</sup> Dolan suggests that the origins of this particular image might 'invite sympathy for the petty traitor, even admiration for her self-assertion and sacrifice, particularly in a married female viewer or the kind of lower status man who so often figures as a petty traitor's lover and co-conspirator'.<sup>15</sup>

The reuse of an image from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* to depict the state execution of a murderous wife situates that wife in a visual tradition of powerful and subversive female agency that is laudable, virtuous, and divinely sanctioned. Yet the text of the pamphlet itself takes an opposite approach to the woman portrayed on its title page. Unlike broadside ballads,

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<sup>13</sup> Frances Dolan, 'Tracking the Petty Traitor across Genres' in *Broadside Ballads in Britain, 1500-1800* ed. Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini with the assistance of Kris McAbee (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp.149-171 (p.152).

<sup>14</sup> See Patricia Fumerton, "'Not Home': Alehouses, Ballads and the Vagrant Husband in Early Modern England', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32.3 (2002), 493-518 (p.501); and Marsh, p.227.

<sup>15</sup> Dolan, 'Tracking' in *Broadside Ballads* ed. Fumerton and Guerrini, p.161. See also Randall Martin, *Women, Murder and Equity* (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2008), p.xv.

news pamphlets are never narrated by their murderous subjects; rather, pamphlets report the crime in the voice of either a third-person narrator or the author himself, who often possesses an official role that grants him first-hand knowledge of the criminal, such as that of confessor.<sup>16</sup> The third-person narrator of *Murthering of John Brewen* subsumes Anne's agency within a narrative of state justice, and the text ends on the triumphant note of execution. This is characteristic of the genre, which focuses more on the discovery of the crime, the apprehension of the criminal, and the subsequent legal proceedings, than on the agency and psychological experience of the criminal. In contrast, in broadside ballads, the emphasis upon personal salvation, and the ability of the speaker to address the audience even after execution, renders the voice of the murdered wife more subversive. Even as each speaker condemns the narrated crime as unnatural, he or she asserts the agency and power of the criminal, and implicitly suggests that the (female) auditors are equally capable of, and even likely to commit, such an unnatural act. The murderess in the audience in Heywood's anecdote was talked of because she was exceptional; but all women in the audience of this ballad are invited to think themselves a murderess.

The first-person female voices of the majority of marital murder ballads invite women not only to consider themselves capable of such a crime, but to imagine themselves in the position of a female murderer. Whether or not the ballads were performed by female ballad-singers, the female narrators allow women within the audience to perform these roles themselves in singing, performing, and disseminating the ballads.<sup>17</sup> These texts allow women not only to imagine, but to speak of, the act of petty treason; a dangerous and subversive act which is contained within the

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<sup>16</sup> Consider, for example, Henry Goodcole, Newgate confessor and pamphleteer, who is known for three crime pamphlets containing accounts and testimonies acquired through his official role: *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch, late of Edmonton* on witchcraft (London, 1621); *The Adultrresses Funeral Day* on husband murder (London, 1635); and *Natures Cruell Step-dames* (London, 1637) on infanticide. See Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p.11; and Susan C. Staub, 'Bloody Relations: Murderous Wives in the Street Literature of Seventeenth Century England', in *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England* ed. Kari Boyd McBride (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2002) pp.124-146 (p.124, p.300).

<sup>17</sup> There is little evidence that women sold ballads in this period, although they certainly did so in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but Marsh suggests that it is likely that both men and women sold ballads for a living in early modern England. See Marsh, pp.238-246.

narrative structure of discovery, judgement, and death, yet nonetheless foregrounded by the speaker, and imaginatively relived in the retelling.

Furthermore, the tunes used to accompany the laments of murderous wives in printed ballads reinforce the positions of these women as tragic heroines, rather than as criminals or sinners. 'Fortune My Foe' was the standard tune for first person accounts of husband murder: it supplements the laments of Alice Arden, Ulalia Page, and Anne Wallens, and is a sweet and plaintive melody.<sup>18</sup> The same tune is used in the ballad *Titus Andronicus Complaint*. The only surviving copy of this text dates from 1624, but Jonathan Bate suggests that it was first published concurrently with early performances of the play, and thus was based upon a tragic, if problematic, Shakespearean hero.<sup>19</sup> The tune 'Fortune My Foe' also accompanies a 1615 ballad entitled *The Araignment of John Flodder and his Wife*, which reports the arson of the Flodders and their accomplice Mrs Bicks.<sup>20</sup> As Dubrow notes, descriptions of fire in this period 'participate in contemporary debates about guilt and sin'; the guilt and sin are in this case entirely projected upon the Flodders and Mrs Bicks, unlike many fire ballads, which conceive of large fires as more generalised punishments for the sins of the inhabitants of the town.<sup>21</sup> *The Araignment of John Flodder and his Wife* portrays the fire as a criminal act, prompted by the devil and carried out by sinners, and the punishment of the perpetrators with death is described as fair 'recompense' for their transgression.

Thus the tune of 'Fortune My Foe' might here be read as linking two different genres of ballad, each of which deals with criminal transgressions. Yet it is not the criminals that voice *The Araignment*; rather, it is a personification of the town itself, which laments the actions of the criminals and its own downfall. Thus the murderous wives are aligned, not with the transgressors, but with the tragic victim. The use of the tune 'Fortune My Foe' to set not only ballads of murderous wives but also ballads narrating a town's destruction and a hero's downfall suggests that in representing the

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<sup>18</sup> Marsh, pp.300-302. See also p.237 for the score of 'Fortune My Foe'.

<sup>19</sup> *Titus Andronicus Complaint* (London, 1624), Pepys 1.86. See also Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* ed. Jonathan Bate (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995), Introduction, p.70.

<sup>20</sup> *The Araignment of John Flodder and his Wife* (London, 1615).

<sup>21</sup> Dubrow, pp.96-7.

murderous wife, ballads, if not plays, may at once have granted her tragic stature, and undercut an element of her agency, in painting her as both a tragic hero and a victim of fortune.

Many scholars argue that the cultural preoccupation with the murderous wife is due to her paradoxical legal position; an early modern female, on her marriage, ceased to be a *femme sole* and became a *femme covert*, her legal identity subsumed within that of her husband. She could not own property and had no independent legal status; the only ways in which she could escape from this coverture was in the case of her husband's death or abandonment of her, or through committing a serious crime. As Catherine Belsey puts it, 'women became capable while and only while they had no husbands, but were always accountable'; yet this accountability only arises through transgression.<sup>22</sup> Thus a murderous wife, who has at once freed herself from the coverture of her husband by destroying her husband, and overcome legal invisibility through becoming legally accountable, has done so only through achieving the impossible: becoming independent of the bonds of marriage, of the merging and submission to her husband's will which the state of marriage was perceived to entail, in order to kill her husband, before such independence has in fact been achieved (through his death and her crime).<sup>23</sup> Thus the legal master narrative of trial and execution cannot fully contain the subversive potential of the narrative of the murderous wife, particularly when the retelling of the narrative reinforces the newly achieved independence of the criminal in allowing her to voice not only her experiences, but her moral commentary upon them, in the public arena of print and performance – albeit in a fictionalised form.

Dolan argues that Heywood's anecdote 'addresses the troublesome possibility of women's identification with petty traitors by sternly resolving the ambiguity', as 'female spectators identify with remorse, not the desire to kill'.<sup>24</sup> Yet the specific female spectator described by Heywood is only able to identify with remorse because she has already experienced murderous

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<sup>22</sup> Belsey, *Subject of Tragedy*, p.153.

<sup>23</sup> See Susan C. Staub, *Nature's Cruel Stepdames: Murderous Women in the Street Literature of Seventeenth Century England* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2005), p.15. See also Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, ch.1; Wiltenburg, pp.15-16; and Kane, 'Wives with Knives'.

<sup>24</sup> Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p.50.

desire. Indeed, the anecdote itself dramatises the murderous wife's transition between the two categories of 'a townes-woman (till then of good estimation and report)' and 'the murderess' who must be apprehended and executed.

Unlike the implied audiences of murder ballads, the other female spectators of the play are not expected to identify with remorse, as they have committed no crime, but rather, to be terrified 'from the like abhorred practices'.<sup>25</sup> Whether they are supposed to be terrified by the murder itself, or only by its consequences (hauntings and execution), is not specified. But Dolan's comment that actual domestic tragedies, in presenting 'multiple subjectivities and voices', 'elicit responses more unpredictable and disruptive' than those imagined by Heywood, does not recognise that Heywood himself suggests that the violent murders portrayed in such plays are 'aggravated and acted with all the Art that may be', in order to elicit not only actual identification resulting in confession, but imaginative identification which produces terror – and therefore, presumably, conformity.

## **2. 'Did Not Nature Oversway My Will': The Tragedy of Fatal Allegiance**

In *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, a tavern-keeper, Master Merry, kills his neighbour, Master Beech, in a fit of avarice and envy. The murder takes place in Merry's own home, upon a stairway; Merry lures Beech into the building under false pretences, and hits him on the head with a hammer until he is dead. Moments later, his sister, Rachel, discovers him standing over the body. From this moment, she is implicated in the crime, and involved in its concealment; unlike the murderous wives discussed above, her involvement in domestic murder stems not from desire, but from loyalty.

Rachel is unmarried, and therefore lives with her brother, and is entirely dependent on him. As a female and subordinate member of his household, she is subject to him, and performs a similar role to that of his

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<sup>25</sup> Heywood, *Apology*, F3v.

male servant, or ‘boy’: running errands, serving customers, and obeying his commands. Furthermore, she is related to him by blood, and so, unlike the servant, whose period of indenture may be assumed to be temporally bounded, she is subject to him until she weds (if she weds), and feels her own interests to be subsumed by his.

Thus when Rachel discovers the body, her instinct is not to raise the alarm, but to assist her brother. This is partly because Merry does not immediately tell the truth of the murder to Rachel. When she cries out ‘Oh brother, brother, what have you done?’, he replies ‘Why murdered one that would have murdered me’. To compel his sister’s sympathy, Merry places the responsibility for his crime onto the murdered man, yet Rachel’s reaction suggests that it is not the excuse of self-defence that persuades her to help him:

Oh my deare brother, what a heape of woe,  
Your rashnesse hath powrd downe vpon your head:  
Where shall we hide this trumpet of your shame,  
This timelesse ougly map of crueltie? (C3r)

The lines shift from Merry’s ‘rashnesse’, and the woe that will be poured down upon *his* head, to the actions they must *both* take to hide it, as Rachel realises that, though she had no part in the murder, Merry’s action implicates them both, because she is subject to him, and her fate is bound up in his.

Richardson dismisses Rachel as a character ‘whose primary dramatic role is to lament [Merry’s] deeds’.<sup>26</sup> Yet she is not merely a choric observer of Merry’s fate; her own fate is embroiled in it. As Clark argues,

As an unmarried woman her only home is his house, and she owes him loyalty both as kinswoman and (through her sex) as his social inferior, and her sense of duty overcomes her moral dismay.<sup>27</sup>

The play explores how Rachel’s sex makes her vulnerable to private authority which contravenes public laws, by presenting the audience with a

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<sup>26</sup> Richardson, *Domestic Life*, p.132.

<sup>27</sup> Sandra Clark, *Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Policy Press, 2007), pp.73-4.

parallel figure: Harry Williams, Merry's manservant, who is likewise aware of the crime, but plays no part in the concealment of the body. He keeps his master's secret until persuaded by a neighbour, Cowley, that he must betray his master in order to save his own life and soul:

If I offended, 'twas my Maisters love,  
That made me hide his great transgressions:  
But I will be directed as you please,  
So save me God, as I am innocent. (H4r)

Williams is able to conceive of himself as innocent, despite having failed to disclose a murder, because his crime was born of his loyalty and duty to his master; his 'Maisters love' is once his master's love for him, which compels his loyalty, and his own love for his master, born of duty. His conscience has been subsumed by his position as household subject, as has his loyalty to the state. Yet Williams decides to betray his master, in order to secure his soul; he sets his loyalty to God above any earthly ties, and admits division between loyalty to his master and loyalty to a higher authority. Although his crime is still such that he risks dying for it, he is able to read, and so can 'crave his book' (I2v), and thus obtain the benefit of the clergy. He is branded for his transgression, but his life is saved.

In contrast, it is not merely the duty of a subject to her master that motivates Rachel. Rather, it is the blood-tie that binds her to her brother:

Ah did not nature oversway my will,  
The world should know this plot of damned ill. (E2v-E3r)

Here, Rachel's 'will', which may be presumed to describe both her autonomous soul, which condemns her brother's act and comprehends his probable damnation, and her possibility for agency, is 'overswayed' by her natural subjection to, and bond with, her brother. A comparable opposition between nature and will is set up when, as Rachel approaches the scaffold to be hanged for concealing her brother's crime, the Officer tells her: 'shrinke not woman, have a cheerefull hart'. Rachel replies:

I, so I do, and yet this sinfull flesh,  
Will be rebellious gainst my willing spirit. (K2r)

That the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak is of course a commonplace, but the opposition here, of natural flesh and willing spirit, is rooted in Rachel's earlier sentiment. She characterises her flesh, which is what links her to Merry, as sinful, and her will, which nature originally overruled, as supporting her spirit. Furthermore, she describes this flesh as rebellious; because she did not rebel against her natural subjection to Merry, her spirit was placed in jeopardy, and now her flesh is become subject to that spirit, even as it aims to rebel against it.

Orlin argues that the 'nature' which overrules Rachel's will refers to 'the prompting of natural law', presumably as outlined by Calvin, who refers to 'the holy lawe of nature', as I discussed in Chapter One; a suggestion which Lake rejects on the grounds that 'there was surely no version of the law of nature available to the sixteenth-century mind that held [that] murder should be concealed and murderers should be helped to evade capture'.<sup>28</sup> Lake claims that nature here refers to 'the nexus of emotional attachment, human sympathy and self-interest that links relatives or subordinates to superiors or kin'.<sup>29</sup>

I suggest that both Orlin's and Lake's readings of Rachel's claim are correct. The 'natural law' at work in Rachel's statement is the law of nature which necessitates the subjection of the weaker female sex to the male; a law which at once dictates household order and is defended by it, as I discussed in Chapter One. Rachel is bound to her brother by a blood-tie composed of emotional attachment, human sympathy, and self-interest; yet still more tellingly, she is, as the marriage service has it, flesh of his flesh, bound to him quite literally by her flesh and blood, all the more so because she is unmarried and therefore bound to no other. Furthermore, she is bound to him in duty, dependent upon him for her livelihood, and subject to him in natural and household order. The extent to which her brother's transgression

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<sup>28</sup> Orlin, *Private Matters*, pp.115-6; *Commentarie of John Calvine*, p.429; Lake, p.82. See McCabe, *Incest, Drama and Nature's Law*, esp. pp.55-63.

<sup>29</sup> Lake, pp.82-3.

dissolves his authority over her, and her loyalty to him, becomes one of the central questions of the play.

Orlin describes Rachel's tragedy as 'the ambiguity that results when patriarchal and moral authorities collide'.<sup>30</sup> Yet the systems in conflict here are not merely household order and Christian morality. Rather, the patriarchal household and the patriarchal justice system, built upon the same ideology, are newly at odds. They do not so much collide as disengage; the one ceases to be subject to the other, rendering Rachel vulnerable to the pressures of dual, and conflicting, allegiances. As Lake puts it,

The good ruler, the Christian prince, has... descended into tyranny and in so doing set the promptings of 'nature' against the dictates of divine, human and natural law.<sup>31</sup>

Yet whilst both natural ties and household subjection influence Rachel's actions, there is also another influence at work. When Rachel makes the decision to protect her brother, she has a short soliloquy:

Let others open what I doe conceale,  
Lo he is my brother, I will cover it,  
And rather dye then haue it spoken rife,  
Lo where she goes, betrai'd her brothers life. (F4r)

Rachel will 'cover' the crime because her brother is her blood relation and household master; but she also does so because she wishes to protect her reputation. Perhaps mistakenly, she believes that her reputation will suffer more if she follows her own conscience and 'will' and betray her brother, than if she remains silent, assists in disposing of the body, and effectively makes possible another murder. The play itself seems to reinforce this assumption; although the allegorical figures of Truth, Avarice, and Homicide, who function as both narrators and choric commentators, bemoan Rachel's 'doom' (I2v), they also praise her loyalty and love.

Avarice approvingly explains that 'faithful' Rachel:

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<sup>30</sup> Orlin, *Private Matters*, p.117.

<sup>31</sup> Lake, p.82.

...doth not wish to overlive,  
The sad remembrance of her brothers sinne (F3r).

She is likewise exonerated for her crime by Merry himself, who repents of his crimes shortly before his execution, and tells her, 'thy conscience is at peace' (K1v). After her death, the Officer who escorted her to her execution hopes that her sad fate will:

teach all other by this spectacle,  
To shunne such dangers as she ran into,  
By her misguided taciturnitie (K2v).

'Misguided' is the worst word that is used of her; and indeed, the Officer's rather pat moral rings hollow after the repeated references to her loving loyalty.

Rachel's actions, then, are painted as a fatal extension of her sisterly duties, as Richardson notes. Just as many critics have read wives poisoning their husbands in terms of 'a perversion of the prescribed wifely duty of providing nourishment', so Richardson reads Rachel's concealment of the murder as an aspect of her household tasks:

Rachel, like Alice Arden and Susan her maid, is given the key task of trying to expunge the physical traces which tie bodies to the location of their murder... The murder becomes subsumed into the routines of the household.<sup>32</sup>

As good housewives, Alice, Rachel, and Susan must guard the boundaries of their homes, and keep its secrets safely within its doors.

In *Arden of Faversham*, Michael, Arden's servant, is persuaded to be an accomplice to the murder in return for Susan's hand in marriage, which he is promised both by his mistress and by Susan's brother, Mosby. When Michael knows that his master's death is plotted, he asks his mistress: 'But shall not Susan know it?' Alice replies: 'Yes, for she'll be as secret as ourselves' (xiv.157-8). Susan's complicity, and her eventual fate, is decided without her knowledge; her secrecy is assumed, for it is implied by her

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<sup>32</sup> Staub, 'Bloody Relations', p.132; Richardson, *Domestic Life*, pp.135-136.

loyalty to her mistress, her blood-tie to her brother, and her love of (and duty to) her future husband. She is never told of the plan to murder Arden; but, after she has witnessed his death, she is ordered to help clean the blood from the floor, and to dispose of the body. When she and Alice prepare to bear away the body, she warns her mistress, 'My brother, you and I shall rue this deed' (326); she recognises that, despite her lack of foreknowledge of the crime, her household obedience will mean her death. The crime of both Susan and Rachel, in the eyes of the law, is simply their silence; because they do not publicly speak the secrets of their household superiors, they are responsible for the crimes they conceal.

Yet whilst the positions of Susan and Rachel are comparable, for both conceal the crimes of those to whom they are subject within the household, those of Rachel and Alice Arden, whom Richardson compares, are vastly different. Alice's act of murder, as discussed above, is a paradox, an act that frees her from her coverture even as it submits her to the state's justice system, and which demonstrates dangerous and subversive agency. In contrast, both Susan and Rachel demonstrate little agency or autonomy; they reinforce household bonds even as they die for them. Rachel's dying regret is that others may think she is the 'author of this crueltie' (K1v); this is the very opposite of the sentiment expressed by the murderess in the anecdote told by Master James in *A Warning for Fair Women*. This nameless murderess cries out, in recognising her own crime in the onstage action, that 'the play was made by her', and so styles herself its author; in freeing herself from her married coverture, she has been able to write her own destiny, even if that destiny necessarily ends in death. In contrast, Rachel is happy to be thought of as assisting her murderous brother, for in so doing she has proved her sisterly affection, but she is anxious to differentiate herself from dangerous women like Alice Arden and Heywood's nameless murderess, who break household bonds as well as breaking the law.

In the 1609 conduct book *Christian Oeconomie*, William Perkins asserts that a family 'is a naturall and simple Societie of certaine persons, having mutuall relation one to another, under the private government of

one'.<sup>33</sup> That 'one', whether husband, father or brother, is head of the household, and is both permitted and required to govern that household. Yet concerning what should happen if a household governor should cease to be subject to the laws of the state, and descend into tyranny, Perkins, like the other authors of household conduct books, is silent.

Perkins makes it explicit that a head of a household should not conceal the transgressions of those belonging to that household, and gives the Biblical precedent of Deutoronomy 13.6, in which a son who has decided to worship other gods attempts to persuade his father to do the same. In such a case, Perkins counsels the householder:

[T]hou shalt not consent unto him, nor heare, neither shal thine eye pitie, nor shew mercie, nor keepe him secret... If the fault be of an inferiour nature, and lesser in comparison; the master of the familie ought to proceed by private censure upon the delinquent partie, sometimes by admonition, otherwhiles by correction, and chastisement, according to the quality of the offence, & the condition & state of the person.<sup>34</sup>

Thus if the transgression is great, such as idolatry (or, indeed, murder), it is the duty of the householder to report the sinning member of his household. The example Perkins gives is a straightforward one; in obeying his son rather than God, the hypothetical father would not only disobey one of the Ten Commandments, he would also invert the household hierarchy, in being guided by one who should be subject to him. Household and moral laws are aligned. However, neither the Biblical verse nor Perkins give guidance as to how the hypothetical son should behave, were the father to make the same suggestion. For Susan, as for Rachel, it is unclear whether the same Biblical injunction against secrecy applies.

The positions of both Susan and Rachel are further complicated by their status as sisters. As Alice's maid and Mosby's sister, Susan is doubly subject to the mistress in whose household she works and resides and the brother to whom she is tied by blood, and who is (we may assume) the head

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<sup>33</sup> William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie* (London, 1609), p.2.

<sup>34</sup> Perkins, pp.168-170.

of the household to which she originally belonged. Susan herself acknowledges her brother's right to dispose of her:

MOSBY: What, sister, is it Clarke must be the man?  
SUSAN: It resteth in your grant. Some words are passed,  
And haply we be grown unto a match  
If you be willing that it shall be so.  
MOSBY: Ah, Master Clarke, it resteth at my grant;  
You see my sister's yet at my dispose. (i.600-605)

The transferable status of Susan as unmarried woman, sister and maidservant, renders her particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Sisters, flesh of their brothers' flesh without the bonds, duties, responsibilities and protection of marriage, and transferable members of their brothers' households without the dynastic impetus that characterises fathers' investments in daughters, are rendered vulnerable to private authority which contravenes public laws; to an honour system that contradicts Christian morality; and to a 'nature' which will overstay them.

Popular attention in the early modern period, like critical interest now, was focused upon the murderous wife, who challenges both household and state authority. Female accomplices to murderers, in contrast, have suffered relative neglect; no surviving ballads speak with the voices of these women, and few critics consider their significance. They may become accomplices to murder, but because they present no challenge to patriarchal authority, but rather adhere too rigidly to the state-sanctioned ordering of the household, they do not prompt the anxiety that surrounds figures like Alice Arden. Their very transgressions dispel anxiety, for these women are loyal to tyrannous masters (and mistresses), even unto death. The tension between household bonds and the legal system proves fatal for Rachel and Susan; the plays at once 'mourn' their deaths and celebrate their loyalty. Obedient household subjects, they become by their deaths equally subject to the state. Their punishment for their silence is to be silenced.

### 3. Cleaving to the New Master in Domestic Tragedy

In domestic tragedies, adulterous and murderous wives rarely demonstrate the subversive agency portrayed in street literature; Alice Arden is the exception, rather than the rule, as I will explore further in Chapter Four. Rather, these women have a surprising amount in common with the female accomplices discussed above. They commit adultery and become complicit in murder, not in order to follow their own desires or to gain freedom from coverture of marriage, but rather, in obedience to men other than their husbands.

In *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, Frankford unwittingly brings about his wife's adultery and death by creating a crisis of authority in doubling the household master. When inviting his impoverished friend, Wendoll, to live with him and use his 'table' and 'purse' (iv.64), Frankford figures Wendoll as his 'companion' (71) and requests his wife to behave towards him with 'loving'st courtesy'; she agrees to do her 'duty' (81), as far as her 'modesty' will permit it (80). Given a servant (Jenkin), a horse, and money by Frankford, Wendoll soon confuses his own position in the household hierarchy; he falls in love with Anne. Seeking her out in order to seduce her, Wendoll asks Jenkin, 'Where's your mistress?' (vi.56). Jenkin enquires whether Wendoll is married, and explains:

Because you are my master, and if I have a mistress, I would be glad like a good servant to do my duty to her. (59-60)

The confusion, and the joke, here arises from the question of Jenkin's allegiances; Wendoll refers to Anne as Jenkin's mistress because he thinks of Frankford as Jenkin's master, and thus of Frankford's wife as Jenkin's mistress, but Jenkin's reply rests on the logic that if Jenkin is (due to Frankford's generosity) Wendoll's servant, then his mistress must be Wendoll's wife. Yet Wendoll's description of Anne as his servant's mistress also betrays his own desires. Furthermore, the very fact that such confused humour is possible suggests that the household order has broken down.

In his treatise *A Care-cloth*, William Whately suggests that the presence of two masters in a household is always the cause of disorder:

The mixing of governors in a household, or subordinating or uniting of two Masters, or two Dames under one roofe, doth fall out most times, to be a matter of much unquietnes to all parties.<sup>35</sup>

In *A Woman Killed*, this mixing of governors leads to a fatal confusion on the part of Anne as to which ‘master’ she should obey. Like Bartholomew in the Induction to *Taming of the Shrew*, who must both obey his lord’s command that he appear obedient to Sly, and refuse Sly’s request that he lie with him (which would reveal his true nature), discussed in Chapter One, Anne is caught in a position where the ostensible ‘duty’ commanded by her temporary master involves a betrayal of her true master. Yet unlike Bartholomew, dutiful Anne is unable to ‘manage’ her new master in order to avoid his request; instead, she succumbs to his seduction, with fatal consequences.

When Jenkin learns that Anne has committed adultery with Wendoll, Jenkin asks him, ‘shall I serve you still or cleave to the old house?’ (xvi.114). The question of which ‘house’ to cleave to, and to which master he owes his allegiance, is for Jenkin a quirk of extraordinary circumstances, but for early modern women, the transfer between households was one of the ordinary processes of life. In domestic tragedies, just as petty tyranny can render loyal sisters and servants accomplices to murder, so confusion over which master to cleave to can prove fatal.

The protagonist of *Friar Francis* and the murderess in the audience both commit an act of petty treason. Yet they share a common motive: the love of another man, to whose marital government they wished to submit themselves. They commit a violent act that destroys their position as household subjects only to make themselves subject to different households. Thus in their misguided loyalty to new husbands these wives, like the wives in domestic tragedies, have more in common with Rachel and Susan than may at first appear: their crimes stem from their fatal allegiance to murderous masters.

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<sup>35</sup> William Whately, *A Care-cloth: Or a Treatise of the Cumbers and Troubles of Marriage* (London, 1624), B2v.

In *A Warning for Fair Women*, Anne Sanders, a faithful wife of good reputation, is persuaded by her friend, Mrs Drury, to succumb to the advances of a gentleman, George Browne, because Mrs Drury claims that George will be Anne's next husband, after her current husband dies. Mrs Drury persuades Anne through palmistry, convincing her first of her husband's death: 'You must be (mistris Anne) a widdow shortly' (679-682). Drury's prediction of impending widowhood is emotionally charged; in threatening Anne's status as wife, she renders vulnerable Anne's home, social and economic position, and identity. The very mention of this possibility prompts huge anxiety in Anne, who answers 'No, God forbid, I hope you do but jest' (683). Drury then uses knowledge she has gained beforehand from Browne: Anne has already encountered Browne, when sitting at her door awaiting her husband's return, and so Drury is able to 'read' that Anne has already met her next husband, and 'had some speech with him in the streete' (730). Anne at first resists Browne's advances, but, after trouble at home and Mrs Drury's prediction, she capitulates, and eventually becomes an unwilling accomplice to her husband's murder. Yet Anne is represented not as a dangerous agent, but as a foolish victim; she demonstrates no agency in the murder, but only a misguided shift of allegiance, in behaving as wife to her projected 'second husband' before her first husband is dead.

The trouble in the Sanders household stems from a confusion of the household hierarchy; George, a merchant, needs all his funds for a business venture, but decides this without telling his wife. When she applies to him for money to pay tradesmen, he sends a servant to deny her, causing her public embarrassment:

I am a woman, and in that respect,  
Am well content my husband shal controule me  
But that my man should over awe me too,  
And in the sight of strangers, Mistris Drurie:  
I tell you true, dos grieve me to the heart. (655-659)

Anne is upset by the public inversion of household order; she complains that she must 'curtsie' to her man (618), for her man has (momentarily) become her master. Dolan writes:

Her humiliation and frustration in this scene make her all the more vulnerable to a fantasy of prestige that disguises her commodity status and the simple transfer of her dependence to another man.<sup>36</sup>

Dolan reads Anne's transfer of dependence as unconscious and her motives as covetousness and ambition; she suggests that when Anne is convinced that Browne is ordained as her next husband, she is 'acting not so much against her husband as against all the limitations of her role as industrious, dependent, and neglected wife'.<sup>37</sup> But it is in fact Anne's certainty that George will be her next husband that leads to her downfall; she believes herself to be ruled by Providence, and considers her obedience and loyalty as due to George:

If it be so, I must submit my selfe  
To that which God and destenie sets downe  
But yet I can assure you mistres Drurie  
I do not find me any way inclined  
To change of new affection... (755-759)

Anne places the responsibility for her shift of allegiance on God and 'destenie' alike, submitting to a higher power rather than to her current husband, and placing her loyalty to God above household subjection. In so doing, she at once denies her own agency and styles Mrs Drury as God's interpreter, relying upon palmistry (a form of 'superstitious divination' usually coupled with witchcraft<sup>38</sup>) rather than her own conscience or the strictures of Bible and Church, and denying her own disinclination towards 'new affection'. It is as if submission to the wills of others and denial of her own desires have become so habitual to Anne that she has forgotten how to

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<sup>36</sup> Dolan, 'Gender, Moral Agency and Dramatic Form in *A Warning for Fair Women*', *SEL* 29, 2 (Spring, 1989), 201-218 (p.209).

<sup>37</sup> Dolan, 'Gender', p.210.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Tuke, *A Discourse Against Painting and Tincturing of Women* (London, 1616), 13r.

question any authority figure that asserts their will over her, whether legitimate or fraudulent.

The language Anne uses above in her submission to Mrs Drury's designs is comparable to that used by Mrs Wincott in Heywood's *The English Traveller* (c.1624). In this play, a young woman, only ever referred to as Mrs Wincott, is married to a far older husband, despite an understanding with her childhood friend, Geraldine. Her husband loves Geraldine as a son, but Mrs Wincott and Geraldine make a pledge, in secret, that they will marry when old Mr Wincott dies. Geraldine's father becomes suspicious that he is having an affair with Mrs Wincott; and so, to assuage his father's suspicions, Geraldine avoids both Mr and Mrs Wincott. Mrs Wincott becomes lonely, and so commits adultery with Geraldine's friend, Dalavill. When she is discovered and confronted by Geraldine, she is distraught, and dies.

Like Frankford in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, Mr Wincott himself provokes a confusion of allegiances through doubling the household master in his affection for Geraldine:

I would have you  
Thinke this your home, free as your fathers house,  
And to command it, as the Master on't.<sup>39</sup>

Geraldine is at once surrogate son and second Master; in giving Geraldine 'command' of the house, Mr Wincott usurps himself. Yet it is Mrs Wincott's previous attachment to Geraldine, and not Mr Wincott's excessive hospitality to him, that eventually brings about her adultery and death. The audience first learns of the former understanding between Geraldine and Mrs Wincott when the two are left alone, at night, and Mrs Wincott speaks for the first time of the circumstances that lead to her marriage:

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas Heywood, *The English Traveller in A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays* ed. Wiggins, I.i.90-92. All further references are to this edition, and are incorporated into the text.

It was once voiced that we two should have matched.  
The world so thought, and many tongues so spake.  
But heaven hath now disposed us otherways,  
And being as it is (a thing in me  
Which, I protest, was never wished nor sought)  
Now done, I not repent it. (II.i.227-32)

There is a striking similarity between the two speeches; both Mrs Wincott and Anne Sanders see themselves, not as agents, but as instruments of God, heaven and destiny. Each discounts her own wishes in accepting a life event – be it marriage to a man not of her choosing despite an understanding with another, or the death of one husband and marriage to another – as providential. Yet in so doing, they fatally misunderstand their own situations, and the significance of their own choices.

Domestic tragedies and street literature are alike preoccupied with the potentially fatal consequences of the enforced marriage of a man or woman already promised to another. Mrs Wincott in *An English Traveller* condemns enforced marriage; when Mr Wincott confesses his hopes of matching his adopted ‘son’, Geraldine, with his wife’s sister, Prudentilla, his wife replies:

But love in these kinds should not be compelled,  
Forced, nor persuaded. (II.i.23-4)

This is the only suggestion audience members receive that the ‘providence’ that ordained her marriage to Wincott may have acted through human force or persuasion – presumably that of her parents.

Marriage enforced by parents is a common motif: one popular example is the murder of Master Page by his wife and her lover, dramatised in Jonson and Dekker’s domestic tragedy *Page of Plymouth* (1599), now lost. Henry Gosson published three ballads on the subject, collectively entitled *The Lamentation of Master Pages wife of Plimmouth*; the first, published on a single broadside, is a lament in the voice of Mistress Page, whilst the second and third, printed on a second broadside, are in the voice of Mistress Page (here styled Ulalia Page) and George Strangwidge, her lover, with whom she had an understanding prior to her marriage. All three ballads are, like Alice Arden’s ballad, to the tune of ‘Fortune My Foe’, and

thus place the perpetrators of the crime in a tradition of murderers who are also tragic victims. In the first ballad, Mistress Page lays the blame for the murder upon her parents, who married her to Master Page for financial advantage; the ballad is directly addressed not only to wives, who are warned not to let their 'hands rebel', but also to 'greedy-minded' parents.<sup>40</sup> Mistress Page lays the blame both on her parents' misguided authority and her own submission to it, and claims that, despite her marriage to Page, 'faith before had made me Strangwidge wife'.

Likewise, in the second ballad, Ulalia Page asks listening maidens to take example by her misfortune, and to marry men they love rather than submitting to their parents' ambitions:

Eternall God forgive my Fathers deed,  
And grant all maidens to take better heed,  
If I had constant beene unto my friend.  
I had not matcht to make so bad an end.<sup>41</sup>

Ulalia displaces the responsibility for her tragedy onto her bad matching and bemoans sacrificing constancy to the man she loved to parental obedience; in the transfer from the parental home to that of the husband, Ulalia switched allegiances too late. She reiterates that (like Mistress Page in the previous ballad) she considers Strangwidge to be her 'husband true'. In this, the ballads reflect the cultural shift from arranged to companionate marriage in the period.<sup>42</sup> Yet in laying some degree of culpability for the murder on the parents, they also demonstrate the extent to which a double pledge to two 'masters', stemming from a misguided submission to authority, is invariably presented as fatal.

When Anne Sanders admits even the possibility of marriage to another man, the moral and material consequences, demonstrated via a dumb show, are unequivocal:

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<sup>40</sup> *The Lamentation of Master Pages Wife of Plimmouth* (London, [n.d., c.1609?].)

<sup>41</sup> 'The sorrowfull complaint of Mistris Page' in *The Lamentation of Master Pages Wife* (London, [n.d.]).

<sup>42</sup> See Haller and Haller, pp. 235-272; see also Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977); and Rose, pp.1-11.

*The Furies fill wine, Lust drinkes to Browne, he to Mistris Sanders, shee pledgeth him: Lust imbraceth her, she thrusteth Chastity from her, Chastity wringeth her hands, and departs: Drury and Roger imbrace one an other: the Furies leap and imbrace one another.*  
(810-815)

Dolan suggests that the anonymous author's decision in *A Warning for Fair Women* to figure both Anne's seduction and her husband's murder in the form of dumb shows is ideologically conditioned:

[T]he vision of the wife as an accountable moral agent corresponds to an almost obsolete mode of representation – the dumb show; while the recognition of her as shaped by gender and class, and thus not as unambiguously accountable, corresponds to an emergent form of representation – the realistic.<sup>43</sup>

Anne is certainly vulnerable to manipulation by Mrs Drury due to her gender and class position; and she herself asserts her lack of accountability for her actions and choices, in submitting herself to the will of God, destiny, and George Browne. Yet the dumb show does not demonstrate agency that is missing from the 'realistic' action that precedes it; rather, the dumb show stages the consequences of Anne's passivity. Anne permits herself to be persuaded to see a transfer of allegiance from one 'husband' to another not only as inevitable, but also as a duty; in opening herself up to the possibility of a second husband while married to her first, she invokes 'lust', lost chastity, and adultery, and is complicit in her husband's murder.

Mrs Wincott's pledge to Geraldine that she will marry him after her husband's death can also be read in this light:

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<sup>43</sup> Dolan, 'Gender', p.201.

GERALDINE: Your husband's old, to whom my soul doth wish  
A Nestor's age, so much he merits from me.  
Yet if (as proof and Nature daily teach  
Men cannot always live, especially  
Such as are old and crazed) he may be called hence,  
Fairly, in full maturity of time,  
As we two be reserved to after life,  
Will you confer your widowhood on me?  
WIFE: You ask the thing I was about to beg.  
Your tongue hath spake my own thoughts.  
GERALDINE: Vow to that.  
WIFE: As I hope mercy. (II.i.252-262)

Modern critics have a tendency to read Mrs Wincott's pledge to Geraldine as innocent and romantic, and her subsequent betrayal of both Mr Wincott and Geraldine with Dalavill as symptomatic either of her own intrinsic doubleness coupled with Dalavill's villainy, or of Geraldine's misguided scrupulousness.<sup>44</sup> The self-restraint of Geraldine and Mrs Wincott in not consummating their love is uniformly praised; Wiggins suggests that Geraldine 'shows a simple candour in disavowing any wish for old Wincott to facilitate this by dying before his time, and readily accepts the corollary of his promise, that he will remain chaste and single in the interim'.<sup>45</sup> Yet the pledge itself could be read as a far more serious transgression than an act of adultery. If we read the play alongside other domestic tragedies, it is not Mrs Wincott's affair with Dalavill that brings about her eventual death, but rather the pledge to Geraldine that precedes her act of adultery – and indeed, her understanding with Geraldine prior to her marriage.

When Geraldine learns of Mrs Wincott's adultery with Dalavill, and confronts her, he tells her, 'Die, and die soon; quit me of my oath' (V.i.171). His oath renders him bound to the adulterous wife of another; he conceives of his vow as akin to a marriage vow, from which he can only be released by her death – which she obligingly grants him. Mrs Wincott dies, not because she has committed adultery (which barely seems to touch her husband, who grants her perfunctory forgiveness after her death before

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<sup>44</sup> See Rowland, pp.203-232; and Wiggins, ed., *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays*, Introduction, pp.xxvii-xxxii.

<sup>45</sup> Wiggins, p.xxxii.

continuing to delight in Geraldine), but because she is pledged to one man while married to another. Wendy Wall argues,

[T]he cuckolded figure in the erotic foursome is a guest, the husband desires his male companion more than his wife, and the wife is punished not as much for adultery as for desiring two guests simultaneously.<sup>46</sup>

Yet it is not simultaneous desire that is punished; rather, it is making vows to one man while married to another that breaks the bonds of the first marriage without leading to the consummation of the second, and so makes her desire for another possible. Furthermore, all of this can be read as stemming from her marriage to Mr Wincott after her initial understanding with, and love for, Geraldine.

In domestic tragedy, then, enforced marriage is likely to lead to adulterous desires, confused allegiances, and death. In plays where it is the husband, rather than the wife, who has a previous contract, this link is rendered explicit; however, unlike the fatal passivity of the wives discussed above, these husbands demonstrate a murderous agency. In Dekker, Rowley, and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* (published in quarto 1658; written c.1621), Frank Thorney has married a fellow servant in secret; however, his father has already planned a bride for him. Hearing a rumour that Frank has married without parental permission, his father threatens to disinherit him. Frank confronts his father, denies the rumour, and agrees to the marriage, hiding his wife, Winifred, away in the country. He then marries his new bride, Susan, but shortly afterwards he stabs her. Bigamy has become the excuse for murder; the former implies the latter. A clandestine marriage, followed by a second wedding, makes the murder not only possible, but necessary.

Bigamy is likewise the cause for murder in *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, a 1608 play based on the true crime of Walter Calvery, who murdered three of his children and attempted the murder of his wife. The audience learns that the 'Husband' of the play is a bigamist in the opening scene, when his

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<sup>46</sup> Wall, *Staging Domesticity*, p.207.

servant, Oliver, learns the truth from Sam, another servant, who brings 'news' from London. Sam tells Oliver that 'hees married to another Long agoe', to which Oliver replies:

Sirrah Sam, I would not for two years wages, my yong mistres knew so much, sheed run upon the lefte hand of her wit, and nere be here owne woman agen.<sup>47</sup>

Oliver's mistress would 'nere be here owne woman agen' because, if her marriage becomes invalid, she loses her husband, her name, her place in society, and her virtue – or rather, when she learns that her marriage is invalid, she learns that each of these things were lost upon her marriage. She thus ceases to be her own woman in ceasing to be her husband's wife.

Sam soon reveals that the earlier marriage was never consummated – 'he never came to her bed' – which may in fact render the first marriage invalid, and the second, valid, but Husband appears unaware of this, calling his 'wife whore as familiarly as one would call Mal or Dol' (presumably recognisable marital nicknames), and referring to his children as bastards (A3r). Whatever the legal situation, Husband conceives of himself as a bigamist, and this becomes of vital importance when he decides to commit murder. Husband obsessively returns to his family's uncertain status, labelling his children as 'bastards, bastards, bastards, begot in tricks, begot in tricks', and addresses his wife as:

...you harlot,  
Whome thou for fashion sake I married. (A4v)

His conversation regularly dissolves into mindless repetition: 'fie, fie, fie, strumpet, and bastards, strumpet and bastards'. This is reminiscent of Othello's bizarre aside 'goats and monkeys' (IV.i.263), which invokes Iago's earlier suggestion that Desdemona and Cassio were 'as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys' (III.iii.400), registering the extent to which Iago's slander has infected his thoughts. Here, the earlier act of bigamy, never again referred to, has bled into Husband's consciousness, so that, even as his

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<sup>47</sup>*A Yorkshire Tragedy* (London, 1608) [attributed to 'W. Shakespeare'], A2v-3r. All further references are to this edition, and are incorporated into the text.

anger appears to stem from want of money, his insults register the true cause of his distress.

Husband attacks his wife, his servant and his children, and thus maims or kills a member of each category of household subordinates, becoming, in Dolan's phrase, a petty tyrant. In opening with the news of prior bigamy, the play is structured so that the trajectory of the murders is rooted in Husband's previous marriage: the play begins with news of his original crime, and ends with news of his execution (D3v). Thus in *The Witch of Edmonton* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* alike, a man who marries more than once becomes a murderer. In domestic tragedies concerned with the culpability of wives, rather than that of husbands, bigamy is not necessary to make murder inevitable; the possibility of allegiance to more than one man is enough to trigger a fatal sequence of events.

This pattern is not exclusive to the genre of domestic tragedy. In Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* (licensed for performance in 1622), Beatrice-Joanna exchanges words of love with Alsemero, despite being promised by her father to another nobleman, Alonzo de Piracquo. Deflores, who loves Beatrice-Joanna and serves her father, overhears their meeting, and soliloquises to the audience:

I have watched this meeting, and do wonder much  
What shall become of t'other; I'm sure both  
Cannot be served unless she transgress. Happily  
Then I'll put in for one; for if a woman  
Fly from one point, from him she makes a husband,  
She spreads and mounts then like arithmetic<sup>48</sup>.

For a woman to love one man while promised (but not yet married) to another is, for Deflores, enough to make her available to anyone; her 'service' to two masters must lead to transgression. Furthermore, when Beatrice-Joanna's father attempts to wed her to a husband of his choice, despite her love for another, the result is adultery and death.

Beatrice-Joanna's desires are clear to the audience throughout the play, even as those desires lead to her downfall. But the motivations of the

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling in Four Plays* ed. William C. Carroll (London: Methuen, 2012), II.ii.57-62.

heroines of domestic tragedy are curiously opaque. Both Mrs Wincott and Anne Sanders would appear to yield to 'destinie' without acknowledging their own desires; thus the audience cannot penetrate the moment of seduction, which is represented in *Warning* through a dumb show, and is not shown at all in *The English Traveller*, in which the audience only learns of the affair in witnessing Dalavill and Mrs Wincott's post-coital farewell. In *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, the only domestic tragedy in which such a seduction is staged, the motives of the heroine are still more unclear.

Wendoll apparently seduces Anne Frankford through conventional protestations that he is willing to die for her. Yet prior to this, in attempting to persuade Wendoll that it is wrong for him to address her so, Anne reminds him,

I am his wife,  
That in your power hath left his whole affairs (vi.121-122).

In so doing, she reminds herself that, through her husband's misguided hospitality, she is in Wendoll's power. As Helen Hackett observes,

The play... poses a question as to how far hospitality extends, and whether in enjoying all the comforts of Frankford's house, Wendoll might not naturally be tempted to enjoy his wife as well. Anne's own feelings in the matter remain somewhat opaque, as befits a piece of property.<sup>49</sup>

Anne Frankford's words of submission are: 'O, master Wendoll, o!' (149). A cry that can be endlessly interpreted, and variously staged, Anne's 'O' reveals nothing of the woman who utters it. Immediately before this submission, Anne utters a private aside to the audience that reveals the confusion that Wendoll's 'power' and persuasiveness has triggered:

What shall I say?  
My soul is wandering, and has lost her way. (148-9)

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<sup>49</sup> Helen Hackett, *A Short History of English Renaissance Drama* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), p.158.

Anne has lost her bearings; her husband has placed her, with his household and his wealth, in another man's power, and now that Wendoll chooses to abuse his power, she finds herself in a moral 'maze' (158) in her own home.

When Anne begins to repent her adultery, she complains to Wendoll, 'You have tempted me to mischief... I have done I know not what' (xi.110-111). These are almost the same words used by Anne Sanders when worked on by Mrs Drury: 'Your words have made me think I know not what' (C4r). The words of both women may be a reference to a phrase often used to indicate bawdiness – 'ye wot what'. In Thomas Tusser's rhyming household manual *Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry*, he warns wives to lie awake listening to the sounds of their households at night, and to 'Take heede to false harlots, and more ye wot what': she is to listen out for any sexual transgressions within her household, as I shall discuss further in Chapter Three.<sup>50</sup> Likewise, in a far earlier text, *A Dialogue Betwene the Comen Secretary and Jelowsy* (1530), 'Jealousy' asks about whether a woman, however saint-like her appearance, can ever refuse a man:

If a man in the darke doo hyr assay  
Hath she any power to holde owte nay / nay

'Secretary' answers,

It[f?] the other thyng come, ye Wott what I mene  
For all her holly lookes she wyll conuey it clene.<sup>51</sup>

If 'ye wot what' (or 'you know what') is a phrase that suggests sexual misbehaviour, then the insistence of the two Annes that they have thought or done 'I know not what' suggests a determined refusal to accept, or even comprehend, their own desires and transgressions.<sup>52</sup>

This determined 'not knowing' is taken still further in the character of Mrs Wincott, who, when confronted by Geraldine with her adultery,

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<sup>50</sup> Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry* (London, 1573), S4v.

<sup>51</sup> Edward Gosynhyll, *A Dialogue Betwene the Comen Secretary and Jelowsy* (London, 1530), A2v.

<sup>52</sup> See Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Religion and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.58-59.

cannot seem to recognise her own act; when first Geraldine accuses her, she replies, 'To whom speaks the man?' (V.i.126); when asked if she cannot hear 'a thousand clamorous tongues' in her conscience, she answers, 'Save from yours / I hear no noise at all' (32-3); and when forced to face her actions, she declares that she is 'lost' (75), 'sinks down', and dies (174sd).

Caught between two masters, subsuming their own desires in order to submit to those of the authority figures that have power over them, these women cannot recognise the fatal consequences of their choices, or even that their choices are their own. When one of these women, in the words of Deflores, 'flies' from 'him she makes a husband', and transfers her allegiance to another, she becomes vulnerable to manipulation, seduction, and tragedy. Unlike Heywood's nameless murderess, the heroines of these domestic tragedies neither recognise nor understand their own actions, even as the consequences thereof are acted upon them: as 'warnings' for women, they warn only that cleft allegiance is fatal. Thus the tale of the murderess who cries out 'the Play was made by her' in *A Warning for Fair Women* is rendered ironic by the play in which it finds itself; the tragedy of Anne Sanders is that she has not made the play, but has been made by it.

#### **4. Hearts in Twain in *Hamlet***

In *Hamlet*, as in the case of the haunted murderess, a woman's first husband is murdered in order to bring about her second marriage; the Ghost of the murdered husband ensures that the murder is publicly known; and the staging of a play that echoes the murder reveals the perpetrator's guilt. Yet unlike *A Warning for Fair Women* (and, we may assume, *Friar Francis*), *Hamlet* does not stage the seduction, adultery, and complicity of the murdered man's wife in his murder; rather, the play begins after the murder has taken place, and the guilt (or innocence) of Gertrude is neither revealed nor denied. Furthermore, Shakespeare makes key alterations to Heywood's tale: the guilty recognition prompted in the perpetrator by the staged action is purposeful, not accidental; the perpetrator in question is not Gertrude, but her new husband, who is the sole 'author' of the crime; and the Ghost haunts, not Gertrude, but his (innocent) son.

Thus the theatrical mousetrap in *Hamlet* does not accidentally reveal a murderer's guilt through prompting imaginative identification in the audience, as in the anecdote of the haunted murderess; rather, it is designed to do so. As Alison Shell argues,

In *Hamlet*, the villain is known and the mousetrap is set for him – with a few teeth left over for Gertrude – and this can only limit the moralistic relevance of both plays.<sup>53</sup>

The mousetrap, unlike domestic tragedies and murder ballads, does not aim to impart a warning to its audience in general; its moral message is more specific. Yet the 'few teeth left over for Gertrude', which Shell mentions, are ambiguous. In staging his uncle's crime in order to catch his uncle's conscience, Hamlet also stages the actions of his mother in burying his father and marrying his uncle: first in a dumb show that precedes the play, and then in the play proper. The dumb show makes clear precisely what Hamlet believes to be the nature of Gertrude's betrayal:

*Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly, the Queen embracing him. She kneels and makes show of protestation unto him.... Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and exits. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The poisoner, with some two or three mates, comes in again, seeming to lament with her... The poisoner woos the Queen with gifts. She seems loath and unwilling a while, but in the end accepts his love. (III.ii.122 s.d.)*

Dolan's argument concerning the representation of Anne Sanders in *Warning* could equally be made of Gertrude; the 'realistic' action of the play presents Gertrude as acted upon by her marital, familial, and social position, without apparent motive or agency, and the only time Gertrude is represented as an active agent is in a dumb show. The 'Player Queen' of the mousetrap, who becomes Gertrude's onstage double, performs her love, her grief, and her eventual capitulation to her seduction by the poisoner.

Of course, 'The Murder of Gonzago' and the dumbshow preceding it are alike composed by Hamlet, and thus can contain only what Hamlet

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<sup>53</sup> Alison Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010), p.152.

already knows or believes. Hamlet's knowledge is derived from the Ghost's account (I.v.59-70). The Ghost gives particulars of the murder itself, including the time (the afternoon), location (his orchard), means (hebanon, poured into his ear) and physiological outcome (curdling of the blood, resulting in death). However, he can give only the stereotypical generalities of Gertrude's seduction: that she has been persuaded through 'wicked wit and gifts' and won to 'shameful lust' (I.iv.44-5).

The climactic moment of the mousetrap, at which Claudius halts the play, calls for lights, and leaves the stage, is the moment of revelation to which the play has been building, but it is also a moment of narrative obstruction. Immediately before Claudius's exit, Hamlet declares:

You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife. (251-252)

Claudius's interruption ensures that Hamlet's promise is never fulfilled. The onstage offstage audiences will never see exactly how the Queen's love is procured; and so will never gain an insight into her motives. The promised but absent scene of the play cannot do more than mirror the Ghost's accusations, enacting bewitching wit, gifts, and lust; yet the absence of the promised action holds out the hope that Gertrude might be rendered explicable.

Thus Gertrude, like the murderous wife at *Friar Francis*, watches a play that enacts the murder of her husband; but unlike the wife in the anecdote, Gertrude does not leap up and declare that the 'play was made by her' – indeed, she hardly seems to understand it. When watching the Player Queen telling her first husband that she will always be loyal to him and never love another, in the knowledge (provided by the dumbshow) that the Player Queen will in fact marry again shortly after his death, Gertrude seems to demonstrate innocence through her ignorance. When Hamlet asks her how she likes the play, Gertrude observes that 'the lady protests too much' (219): an utterance that gives the appearance of innocence, but grants the audience no hint of Gertrude's emotional response to the drama. Shell argues that the reaction of *Warning's* murderess, on finding 'the play was made by her', 'vividly suggests shock at finding the works of one's

conscience externalised'.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, Gertrude gives the impression of having either an unawakened conscience, or no conscience at all. Nor does Gertrude cry out when her husband's ghost appears near her shortly after she has watched the re-enactment of his death; instead, the Ghost remains invisible to her, and can only be seen by her son.

Shakespeare, then, rewrites the trope of the adulterous murderess, and places in question the extent to which the remarried wife of the murdered husband is either adulterous or complicit in murder. Like the questions surrounding the motivation of Anne Frankford in her adultery, or of Anne Sanders in her adultery and complicity, Gertrude's guilt is an enigma at the heart of the play. The difference is, of course, that Anne Frankford and Anne Sanders *do* commit adultery, and Anne Sanders *is* complicit in murder: the audience may be encouraged to ask 'why', but never 'is it so?' Yet in *Hamlet*, both questions stand; and neither is sufficiently answered.<sup>55</sup>

These questions are further complicated by the Ghost's reference to Claudius as 'that incestuous, that adulterous beast' who won 'the will of my most seeming-virtuous queen' (42, 46). This would appear to condemn Gertrude for adultery while married to Old Hamlet, yet Noel Blincoe (amongst others) has argued that 'adulterous' refers to his incestuous union with his deceased brother's wife, which violates Biblical law concerning marriage, and thus Gertrude's marriage vows. Blincoe bases his claim upon Deuteronomy 25.5-6, which commands a man to marry his brother's widow only if her first marriage was childless.<sup>56</sup> As Jason Rosenblatt observes, 'Hamlet's very existence keeps the relationship of Claudius and Gertrude within the scope of the Levitical prohibition'; and thus, according to Blincoe, is adulterous.<sup>57</sup> Yet, as McCabe puts it:

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<sup>54</sup> Shell, p.151.

<sup>55</sup> See Graham Bradshaw, *Shakespeare's Scepticism* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), pp.110-111, p.113, p.116.

<sup>56</sup> See Noel Blincoe, 'Is Gertrude an Adulteress?', *American Notes and Queries* 10.4 (1997), 18-24.

<sup>57</sup> Jason Rosenblatt, 'Aspects of the Incest Problem in *Hamlet*', *SQ* 29 (1978), 349-64 (p.351). See also Bruce Thomas Boehrer, *Monarchy and Incest in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Manuel Aguirre, 'Life, Crown and Queen: Gertrude and the Theme of Sovereignty', *The Review of English Studies* 47.186

The status of her relationship with Claudius remains to the end as 'questionable' as everything else in the play. Protestant theologians would doubtless have declared it unnatural, Catholic theologians would not – and it is from the Catholic afterworld that the Ghost purports to return, like the spectre of England's own spiritual past.<sup>58</sup>

The Ghost's accusation could, therefore, refer to either the marriage of Gertrude and Claudius after his death, which is adulterous because incestuous, or to some separate, prior act of adultery; the nature of Gertrude's betrayal remains unknown.

As Richard Levin argues, Gertrude's motivations are construed and reported by men who have a vested interest in her sexual behaviour: the Ghost, and Hamlet.<sup>59</sup> As such, the varying accounts of Gertrude's motivations provided for the audience are irreconcilable. First, Hamlet claims that his mother 'would hang on' his father 'as if increase of appetite / Had grown by what it fed on' (I.ii.143, 144-5); then, the Ghost tells Hamlet that Gertrude's love for Claudius was a 'falling off' from married 'dignity' and 'virtue' to 'shameful lust' preying on 'garbage' (I.iv.45-57), suggesting that the first marriage, unlike the second, contained dignity and virtue but little passion. Hamlet condemns Gertrude for living:

In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,  
Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love  
Over the nasty sty - (III.iv.82-84)

He argues that she cannot call love the motivation for her actions, for at her age, 'the heyday in the blood is tame' – and so condemns her both for her actions, and for her lack of motive (that he can discern).

As Levin argues,

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(May, 1996), 163-174; and Baldwin Maxwell, 'Hamlet's Mother', *SQ* 15.2 (Spring, 1964), 235-246.

<sup>58</sup> McCabe, p.164.

<sup>59</sup> Richard Levin, 'Gertrude's Elusive Libido and Shakespeare's Unreliable Narrators', *SEL* 48.2 (Spring, 2008), 305-326.

[S]he and her libido are constructed for us by the two men who have grievances against her and so must be considered hostile and therefore unreliable witnesses, while she herself is given no opportunity to testify on her own behalf.<sup>60</sup>

I would take Levin's point still further; Gertrude is not only constructed by men, she is berated by them for their own inability to understand her. Gertrude's apparent opacity is not only due to the fact that her narrative is repeatedly constructed by others; Hamlet and the Ghost are repeatedly driven to construct her precisely because she appears opaque to them. They do not understand her – and thus, neither do we.

It is not that Shakespeare does not grant Gertrude interiority; but rather, that this interiority is consistently hidden from us. Susan Zimmerman comments on Gertrude's 'moral opacity' in the closet scene, but her opacity is of motive as much as of morals: we do not know if she is what she seems to be.<sup>61</sup> Even when we penetrate her closet, we still cannot penetrate her mind, her heart, or her soul. Hamlet's attempts to do so reveal the extent to which Gertrude's motives are opaque, even to herself.

The scene opens with an accusation. Gertrude tells her son: 'Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended' (III.iv.9). Gertrude is referring to Claudius, Hamlet's step-father and uncle, not to Old Hamlet, his father. She is attempting to place her new husband in the role of the old one, to make Claudius father to her son. Her willingness to interchange family labels demonstrates both her attempt to forget Old Hamlet, and her desire to recreate the lost family anew.

Gertrude's statement grants Hamlet the opportunity both to pun and to state the counter-accusation that he will develop throughout the scene. He replies, 'Mother, you have my father much offended' (10). In so doing, Hamlet resists the role given to Claudius by Gertrude – that of father – wrenching it from the living and granting it to the dead. As Dubrow argues,

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<sup>60</sup> Levin, p.323.

<sup>61</sup> Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p.187.

Stepparenthood involves semantic and epistemological threats... Surrogate parents both are and are not the parents they represent... Thus on one level they draw attention to the vulnerability of the individual family members they replace while on another testifying to the longevity of family roles.<sup>62</sup>

Yet it is not only Gertrude who is emotionally invested in granting her marriage the power to reappropriate parenthood, rendering the memory of Old Hamlet vulnerable and transforming Hamlet into Claudius's son. This strategy is likewise practised by Claudius, for very different reasons. When Hamlet, in his 'madness', addresses Claudius as his 'mother', Claudius replies, 'Thy loving father, Hamlet' (IV.iv.50-51). This role is necessary to Claudius, for becoming Hamlet's father in marrying his mother strengthens his claim to succeed the throne prior to Hamlet. As Paul Kottman notes, despite the elective monarchy of Shakespeare's fictional Denmark, 'it is central to the play's dramatic claims that Claudius's acquisition of the kingship appeared adjoined throughout the play to his sexual conquest of Gertrude'.<sup>63</sup> Claudius killed Old Hamlet for 'crown', for 'ambition' and for 'queen' (III.iii.52) – the latter ensures his right to the former. Hamlet answers Claudius with an explanation of his wordplay in naming Claudius his mother:

My mother. Father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh, and so my mother. (IV.iii.53-4)

In so doing, he reminds Claudius that his 'fatherhood' is assumed; and can only be assumed through the body of his mother.

Claudius, then, must at once depend upon Gertrude's initial alliance with Old Hamlet, and dissolve it: she must at once be his former sister and his current wife. In order to defend his actions, to Hamlet and to the state of Denmark alike, Claudius plays with the rhetoric of 'nature'. Criticising Hamlet's heavy mourning two months after his father's death, Claudius suggests that in his own decision to marry his brother's widow so soon, 'discretion' has 'fought with nature' (I.ii.v). In Claudius's argument, nature

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<sup>62</sup> Dubrow, p.165.

<sup>63</sup> Paul A. Kottman, *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare: Disinheriting the Globe* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), p.46.

is the grief, arising from his relationship to Old Hamlet, which would bid him abstain from the marriage. Later in the same scene, Claudius labels Hamlet's persistent mourning as a 'fault to nature' (102). Nature is split: the nature that brings about the death of fathers is set up against the familial bond of nature that prompts excessive grief.

In contrast to the latter reading of nature, Claudius sets up his own 'discretion', that is, his 'remembrance' of himself, his self-interest, that bids him marry the Queen. Thus on Old Hamlet's death, the nexus of emotional attachment, human sympathy and self-interest (to borrow Lake's phrase) which links Claudius to him as subordinate and kin is dissolved; the former two dictate Claudius's 'natural' grief, whilst the latter motivates his marriage. However, the attentive auditor can detect the irony present in Claudius's claim. It is 'natural' law against incest that Claudius is violating in marrying the Queen; he sets up Hamlet's mourning as unnatural in order to distract attention from his own unnatural act.

Thus when Hamlet identifies Gertrude as 'the Queen, your husband's brother's wife... my mother' (III.iv.15-16), he demonstrates his refusal to conform to the new family system in which Gertrude has placed him. Hamlet condemns her marriage and bemoans his enforced relation, through his blood, to her quasi-incestuous marriage bed. In so doing, he attempts to show his mother the extent of her transgression:

HAMLET: Come, come, and sit you down. You shall not  
budge.  
You go not till I set you up a glass  
Where you may see the inmost part of you.  
GERTRUDE: What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder  
me?  
Help, help, ho! (20-22)

Gertrude's fears that Hamlet will murder her stem from a misreading of the 'inmost part' to which Hamlet refers. She is disturbed by what Chris Laoutaris terms 'Hamlet's imagined anatomical penetration of his mother'.<sup>64</sup> Gertrude is thinking of her body, the inmost part of which can only be

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<sup>64</sup> Chris Laoutaris, *Shakespearean Maternities: Crises of Conception in Early Modern England* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p.76.

exposed through murderous dissection. Unable to recognise her own interiority, she confuses the corporeal with the spiritual, the literal with the metaphorical. She does not see that Hamlet is not thinking of her body, but her soul.

Yet when Hamlet ‘mirrors’ Gertrude’s soul, he does so not through constructing a reflection of Gertrude herself, but through two other images:

Look here upon this picture, and on this,  
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers. (52-3)

When Hamlet shows Gertrude her soul, he displays to her images of the two men she has married. Hamlet is registering the extent to which Gertrude is defined in the play as wife and mother. Her own identity is subsumed by her familial role. Whatever part love or lust may have played in her marital choices, upon those choices depend her position in the family, her role in society, and her very identity. It is little wonder that, after Old Hamlet’s death, she remarries in order to reassume her familial and societal position of wife to the King and mother to his heir.

Yet in assuming her former position, Gertrude places Hamlet in an untenable position within the household hierarchy – at once bound to the murdered father he must avenge, and ‘son’ to his murderous uncle. In his popular conduct manual *Of Domesticall Duties*, Gouge refers to the stepfather as ‘father in law’, a phrase in common usage, as the stepfather lawfully inhabits the role of father.<sup>65</sup> As Hamlet’s notorious delay in carrying out the act of revenge attests, the very natural bond ensures that Hamlet’s attempt to revenge himself on his ‘father-uncle’ on behalf of his father is doomed. As Belsey argues,

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<sup>65</sup> Gouge, p.495.

As a filial avenger, ready to act in the familial name of nature, love and duty, Hamlet confronts an objection, which paradoxically reproduces with a difference, which is to say repeats, the very terms of his obligation... Revenge means killing [his mother's] husband, his uncle and his King; it entails a breach of both family values and the authority structure of a patriarchalist Renaissance regime, where the king lays claim to the obedience due precisely to a father... The Ghost confronts Hamlet with an impossible dilemma: nature, love and duty require an act which constitutes the repudiation of nature, love and duty.<sup>66</sup>

For *Hamlet*, then, allegiance is not divided between family and state; rather, family and state are conflated and doubled. In order to avenge his father and king, Hamlet must kill his father and king.

Thus when Hamlet claims to show Gertrude her soul by showing her his former father and his current 'father in law', he is not only reflecting the extent to which she is defined by her relationships with both men; he is also grappling with the extent to which Claudius now inhabits his father's position, and the extent to which his father, who demands a son's loyalty, is displaced by death. As Janet Adelman argues,

Hamlet thus redefines the son's position between two fathers by relocating it in relation to an indiscriminately sexual maternal body that threatens to annihilate the distinction between the fathers and hence problematizes the son's paternal identification.<sup>67</sup>

Hamlet's dilemma is rooted in his mother's body, through which this translation of murdering uncle to father and king has become possible. And thus in the closet scene, Hamlet attempts to separate the bodies of Claudius and Gertrude through undoing imaginatively their consummation of their marriage through abstinence ('go not to my uncle's bed', 150); and by at once uncovering Gertrude's body through his sexualised rhetoric of 'battening', 'melting', 'burning', 'honeying', and 'making love' (66, 75, 77, 83), and attempting to reappropriate it through 'wringing' her 'penetrable' heart (34-5).

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<sup>66</sup> Catherine Belsey, *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden: The Construction of Family Values in Early Modern Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), p.161.

<sup>67</sup> Adelman, p.14.

In this dual visual and (metaphorically) physical attack upon the integrity of his mother's denial of her own (mental, emotional and moral) interiority, Hamlet succeeds in confronting her with an image of her 'inmost part' that is not confined to the physical:

Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,  
And there I see such black and grained spots  
As will not leave their tinct. (79-81)

Gertrude is able, for a moment, to confront the consequences of her actions: she imagines that her quasi-incestuous marriage has left visible stains upon her soul. Her marriage to Claudius, at once doubly natural (in being both familial and marital) and unnatural (because incestuous) has caused her soul to be spotted. Yet this moment of realisation that her spiritual soul is corrupted by her natural bonds is a violent one; Gertrude compares Hamlet's words to the 'daggers' (85) that she feared would expose her inmost parts in murder at the beginning of the scene. Her distress prompts an unexpected development: the Ghost himself appears, to warn Hamlet to cease this anatomical dissection of his mother's soul.

O, step between her and her fighting soul.  
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works. (103-4)

This Ghost's presence, then, is very different from that of the ghost in the anecdote of the *Friar Francis* performance: he does not wish to confront his wife, but rather to protect her. He would intervene before the violent exposure of Gertrude's soul is acted upon her body. She cannot be trusted to survive the revelation of her torn allegiance between current husband, and former husband, as represented by his son. Her weak, female body could be destroyed by it.

The Ghost itself has been the subject of a long tradition of academic discussion, concerning its identity, its corporeality, its motivations, the ways in which it could be staged, and the literary, folkloric, or theological

tradition to which it belongs.<sup>68</sup> I suggest that Gertrude's inability to see or hear the Ghost is comparable to her inability to recognise herself onstage in the mousetrap; it is a determined not knowing, what we might now refer to as a form of denial.<sup>69</sup> Just as Anne Frankford cannot bring herself to 'know' what her sin with Wendoll is, and Mrs Wincott cannot recognise the details of her own transgression, so Gertrude cannot 'know' that her former husband, for whose murder she was a motive and whose murderer she has married, confronts her with the consequences of her actions. Rhodes argues that Hamlet's 'retreat from articulate public utterance, from external to internal speech – private expression – is part of an all-consuming self-protectiveness that for most of the play exhausts the possibility of other action'.<sup>70</sup> Gertrude's self-protectiveness goes still further; in retreating from an encounter with her husband's ghost, she retreats from even the possibility of self-knowledge, just as she retreats from public utterance of her motives and past actions.

Yet the Ghost's appearance to Hamlet serves a purpose for Gertrude, even though she cannot see him. Hamlet attests that the 'nothing' he sees is: 'My father, in his habit as he lived' (126). In insisting to Gertrude that his father is present, Hamlet at once reminds her of his father's existence, and his father's absence. Through Hamlet's certainty that his father is 'there' (125), Gertrude becomes aware that he is not here. As Georgianna Ziegler argues,

From the role of son he has taken on the role of *pater familias*, replacing his father, the Ghost.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Catherine Belsey, 'Shakespeare's Sad Tale for Winter: *Hamlet* and the Tradition of Fireside Ghost Stories', *SQ* 61.1 (2010), 1-27; Zimmerman, pp.172-195.

<sup>69</sup> See Sigmund Freud, 'Formulations Regarding the Two Principles in Mental Functioning' (1911) in *Freud Reader* ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989), pp. 301-308, and 'Negation' (1925), pp.666-670. See also Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* trans. Cecil Baines (London: Karnac Books, 1993), esp. pp.74-80, pp.86-92.

<sup>70</sup> Neil Rhodes, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.35.

<sup>71</sup> Georgianna Ziegler, "'My Lady's Chamber': Female Space, Female Chastity in Shakespeare", *Textual Practice* 4 (1990), 73-90 (p.86).

In returning the name of 'father' to its original recipient, Hamlet reminds Gertrude that he stands in his father's stead. Yet Hamlet cannot replace his father because another has already done so.

The appearance of the Ghost, then, completes the work that was begun in the portraits of Gertrude's two husbands. Unable to see the Ghost of her past husband that haunts her son, Gertrude becomes aware of her torn allegiance between her past and present husbands; the former is dead, and the latter is lawfully wed, and yet the latter is claimed to be the murderer of the former, by her son, to whom she is bound by both nature and affection. Unlike Rachel and Susan, torn between allegiance to their households and allegiance to the state, or Anne Sanders and Anne Frankford, who allow their allegiance to new husbands to overshadow their allegiance to their old husbands and their own consciences, Gertrude is torn between two husbands who represent and rule the state. Both are kings, and both embody the law: one is alive and ruling, and the other is dead, yet one may have broken the law he upholds to kill the other. Therefore Gertrude cries out: 'O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain!' (146). Hamlet has succeeded in wringing Gertrude's heart and dividing her loyalties. The effect this has on Gertrude's action is, like so much that relates to Gertrude, unclear. She obeys Hamlet's request that she mention nothing of their encounter to Claudius, yet this could be due to the fact that she believes Hamlet to be mad; or rather, that she embraces this notion in order to avoid the implications of her painful moment of self-knowledge. Her death is likewise ambiguous: the action of that scene is often staged so that she drinks the poisoned cup to spare her son's life, but this, like the rest of her motivations, is never made explicit in the text.

Thus Gertrude confronts the extent to which her heart is torn in twain through her marital bonds with two men, but this knowledge prompts no (evident) action; like the women in the domestic tragedies discussed earlier, she remains fatally unaware of her own agency, and avoids the significance of her own choices. *Hamlet*, then, like the domestic tragedies discussed in this chapter, stages cultural anxieties concerning the transferability of women; open-ended familial and household systems in which individual family members can be replicated or replaced; household

tyranny and misguided obedience; and the extent to which familial allegiance, through which subjection to the state and to God is constructed, may undermine that subjection.

When Heywood's murderess recognises her crime onstage and admits that 'the play was made by her', she takes responsibility for her crime, even as that responsibility leads to death. Like the murderesses in broadside ballads, she is a dangerous and subversive agent who can recognise her own agency. That is precisely what the women in these plays will not or cannot do. Acted upon by familial and societal systems, and comprehending the machinations of friends and lovers as the working of Providence or destiny, these wives, sisters, and servants are overruled by nature; they lose their own volition, and so become subject to, and the subjects of, tragedy.

### 3. House: Staging Domestic Space

It was committed on the twentieth of February, at high noone... and, for the place, it was a sinne in the common streete, in the house of Sir Jerome Bowes, Knight, neer unto Charing-crosse, opening into the streete... The partie on whom this murther was committed, was a woman servant, called Joane Wilson... a poore sillie harmelesse woman, one that for names sake, and for fellowship sometimes in service with one of them... welcomed both into her Masters house... *Wilson* with a cord presently put about her necke, dragged her downe thorow an entrie, into a lowe Cellar, where they left her lying, till they had gone up to the upper rooms of the house, and acted the second part of the worke they came bout; to wit, with that iron, which served to both turns, made themselves a way through doors and lockes, to the place where they knew some treasure lay.<sup>1</sup>

On 20 February 1606, a maidservant named Joan Wilson was murdered by two men, Robert Tetherton and Edward Wilson, whom she had invited into her house of her master, Sir Jerome Bowes. The motive for the murder was theft: one of the murderers, Wilson, had formerly served Bowes, and knew where his ‘treasure’ was kept. The two men went to the house at noon, when they knew that Bowes and all his men would be absent, and attacked Joan with an iron bar, before dragging her down to the cellar. They then broke through locked doors to reach the treasure, and took it. After seizing the treasure, they went down to the cellar and hit Joan again, killing her.

*A True Report of the Horrible Murther* (1607), an anonymous pamphlet that narrates this crime, details the movement of the two thieves through the house. Yet the pamphlet is not concerned with naming or describing the functions of the rooms through which the thieves pass. Rather, it is concerned with the significance of the spatial sequence for the narrative: the entry into the home which makes the theft possible; the movement away from the ‘common street’ and the rooms that open onto it; the cellar as a service room that is far enough from the street that the maid’s cries cannot be heard; and the upper rooms and locked doors through which the thieves must progress to access the goods they would steal.

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<sup>1</sup> *A True Report of the Horrible Murther, which was Committed in the House of Sir Jerome Bowes* (London, 1607), B1r-B2v.

Anne Myers argues that, for early modern writers, ‘the practices that defined the built environment were narrative; architecture was necessarily positioned in time as well as in space.’<sup>2</sup> In *A True Report of the Horrible Murther*, the spaces of Sir Jerome’s home pattern the narrative of murder, theft, and concealment, and are constructed in terms of degrees of access and privacy. The house is not only the setting of the murder: it constructs the narrative trajectory.

This chapter will show how the spatial trajectory of this account of theft encapsulates the tropes used in both narrative and staged representations of seduction and rape in early modern England, whereby the body, or chastity, of the daughter or housewife within the home is figured as treasure that is stolen. I explore how ‘The Great Rebuilding’ altered the architecture of elite mansions, town houses, and cottages, and thus was shaped by and shaped emerging conceptions of privacy and an increasing emphasis on the enclosure of both goods and (female) inhabitants within the home. I discuss how staging the female body at the boundaries of the home became a key dramaturgical element of performing seduction in Shakespeare’s tragedies and domestic tragedies alike. I examine the extent to which conduct literature mapped the boundaries of the home onto the female body, and explore how this is exploited in two of Shakespeare’s representations of the violation of these boundaries, in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Cymbeline*. I trace the imaginative correlation between enclosed domestic space and female chastity, the corresponding correlation between the adulterous body and ‘common ground’, and the transgressive potential of female privacy, in domestic tragedies and *Othello*.

*A True Report* represents a crime that violates the rules of hospitality, the boundaries within the home, and the laws of the state. The anxieties of the pamphlet are focused upon the ways in which the thieves baffle convention by robbing a house on a public street, in daylight. The pamphleteer complains that the crime, being a ‘worke of darkenes’, should have been committed in ‘the time of darkenes... in some remote place, farre from neighbouring houses, to have avoided the eye, and eare of people’:

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<sup>2</sup> Anne M. Myers, *Literature and Architecture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), p.5, p.11.

[B]ut at midday, when light did compasse them, which might confound them; and in a house next the streete, people continually passing to, and fro, by the doore... to doe so execrable a deede, is an argument of their want of shame.<sup>3</sup>

The pamphleteer styles the visibility of the crime as an outward sign of the inner state of the criminals: their bravado in the face of possible witnesses testifies to their ‘want of shame’. Yet it is not this shamelessness that is a cause of anxiety in the text, but the fact that this shamelessness avoided detection. The text focuses upon the usual circumstances of crime – darkness, night, a remote location – because these circumstances are explicable. The possibility of a daylight crime occurring in a home on a busy street, without immediate detection or intervention, makes the familiar, daylit world a dangerous one.

The association of thievery with darkness, invisibility, and night recurs in Elizabethan and Jacobean conduct literature. In Tusser’s *Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry*, the security of the house at night is of central concern:

Make husbandrie dayly, abroad to provide,  
Make huswifery dayly, at home for to guide.  
Make cofer fast locked, thy treasure to keepe:  
Make house to be sure, the safer to sleepe.<sup>4</sup>

Here, the importance of locked treasure and the security of the household at night are likened to the central tenets of household government (as discussed in Chapter One): that the husband should labour outside the house, whilst the wife should confine herself to the home. Furthermore, the wife is herself identified with the home and its structures; she must guard her ‘treasure’ and her chastity alike. Tusser expands on this theme in his section on ‘Good Huswifery’; the role of the housewife in guarding the home, the significance of keys, and the dangers of the night, are obsessively returned to as themes for household advice:

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<sup>3</sup> *A True Report*, B1r-v.

<sup>4</sup> Tusser, C2v.

The first cocke crowing  
Nowe, dame it is midnight, what rumbling is that.  
The next Cock showeth.  
Take heede to false harlots, and more ye wot what.  
If noyse ye do heare,  
looke all things be cleare.  
Least drabs do noy thee,  
and theeves destroy thee. (S4v)

Tusser links night both to sexual transgression and to the violation of property. The security of the home is constructed as the responsibility of the housewife; she is to listen for noises of disturbance, caused by thieves or by harlots, even as she sleeps. Elsewhere in the text, housewives are advised to 'see dore lockt faste' (U4r); to 'make keyes to be keepers'; and to 'kepe keyes as thy life' (V4r). The keys, as a symbol of patriarchal authority, may be entrusted to a wife who must guard both the house and herself, as aspects of her husband's property.<sup>5</sup> The vulnerability of the house at night is a cause of anxiety, but also makes possible a fantasy of security; if the housewife locks her doors, keeps her keys close, and listens at night for the sounds of intruders amid the crowing of the cocks, the house will be inviolable. The anxiety provoked by a robbery at noon in *A True Report* stems from two facts: that the doors within the home were locked and the keys were safe, but the locks did not deter the intruders, who were able to gain access with their iron bar; and that the thieves did not need to sneak under the cover of dark, for the door was opened to them, and they were welcomed inside.

Joan's hospitality makes possible the entry of her assailants. As Felicity Heal argues,

The gate or door [to the home] was the transitional structure that stood between the general territory of the stranger and the particular environment of the household. To cross it was to undertake the crucial transmutation from stranger (even if known) into guest. To allow total openness would have been to deny the significance of this transition, and hence the integrity of the household and its head.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Flather, *Gender and Space*, esp. pp.46-58.

<sup>6</sup> Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.8.

Thus in being welcomed into Bowes's home by Wilson, the two men become not intruders, but guests: they are invited across the threshold. As I discussed in Chapter One, property was understood in early modern England as an attribute of the property holder; in abusing Sir Jerome's hospitality, the thieves thus undo the integrity of their host.

The anonymous pamphleteer writes:

The partie against whom it was done, was Sir Jerome Bowes; whom, that they might more covertly robbe of his goods, they murdered his servant: a Gentleman that had deserved better at their hands, then thus unthankfully to bee rewarded, with losse of his goods, death of his servant, and disquietnesse of himself... that his dwelling house should be made a slaughter-house, he could not but be grieved.  
(B3v)

Goods, servant, and house belong to Sir Jerome. Joan may die, but the crime is committed against Sir Jerome; his hospitality was enacted by Joan, but its violation is a violation of his home as much as of her (murdered) body. For the pamphleteer, the murder of the servant is of less importance than the violation of boundaries of, and within, the house; the betrayal of the elite traditions of hospitality; and the result that the criminals have 'taken possession' of the house (C1r) as the home becomes a slaughterhouse. I will examine how segregated hospitality, which depends on the demarcation of boundaries within the home, was encoded in 'The Great Rebuilding', in order to explore the ways in which these boundaries, and their violations, are represented and staged.

### **1. "The Best Sort of Strangers": Segregated Hospitality and 'The Great Rebuilding'**

Hospitality in elite households was governed by a strict spatial hierarchy. The Willoughby 'Household Orders' make explicit the spatial, hierarchical, and functional divisions between the Hall, where all but a 'rascall or unseemly person' is welcome, and the more private rooms, open to those of

a higher degree or to personal guests of the master or mistress of the house.<sup>7</sup> This document was drafted by Sir Percival Willoughby to create and inculcate an ideal vision of household service in his principal country seat at Wollaton:

The under-butler is to cover the boards in the hall. He is to suffer no household servant to remain tipling, or to be at all in the buttery; but whosoever is disposed to drink to be served at the hatch, and so to depart. Neither is he to suffer any stranger to come in the buttery, other then such as shall be of worship or good reputation, and they to be brought in either by some of the officers... according to their degrees and credit... But if any stranger of credit in like case come, he is by th'usher or some other discrete servant to be had into the buttery and not to be served in the hall.<sup>8</sup>

'Stranger' could refer to a foreigner or unknown person, but it could also denote 'a guest or visitor, in contradistinction to the members of the household'.<sup>9</sup> Household servants or 'officers' must police the division between the hall, where those of lower degrees may be seated and fed, and the buttery, where guests and strangers of credit may be served. Yet according to Willoughby's instructions, the division is also policed by fellow guests, who can be trusted to know their own degree and level of welcome, and can thus invite strangers of good credit in his stead.

Willoughby's 1572 guidelines for household service memorialise a form and spatial structure of hospitality that was shortly to disappear. In the following decade, Willoughby commissioned a new 'Wollaton Hall' from the architect Robert Smythson, a building that preserved the distinction between the public hospitality of the hall and the more private hospitality of the rooms beyond, whilst multiplying the boundaries and divisions within the home. As Alice Friedman observes, the design of the new Wollaton Hall 'reflects the division between the old and the new': the ground floor, like that of Willoughby's previous home for which the *Orders* were composed, had a porter's lodge controlling the entrance to the household, a screens

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<sup>7</sup> 'The Willoughby Household Orders of 1572', transcribed by Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), Appendix A, pp.185-7 (p.185).

<sup>8</sup> 'Willoughby Household Orders' in Friedman, p.186.

<sup>9</sup> 'stranger', *OED*, 3a.

passage leading guests to the hall, and a hall built for public hospitality; whilst the upper floors had numerous more private, and more lavish, reception rooms, including two great chambers, the best bedchambers, and a 'Prospect Room' that looked out over the grounds.<sup>10</sup> The service rooms were for the most part relegated to the basement. The new house set up new expectations: the hall could still be used for entertainment and dining, but guests of high rank were more likely to receive hospitality in the lavish surroundings of the grand chambers, accessed by a large and public staircase; family members could dine privately (and separately) in the upper rooms; and the movement of servants shifted to the service area of the house. Wollaton Hall was never fully inhabited in Willoughby's lifetime, but the use made of it by the following generations reflected the dynamics introduced by the space itself.<sup>11</sup>

The construction of Wollaton Hall was characteristic of what architectural historians have since termed 'The Great Rebuilding'. In England in the 1570s and '80s, the spatial dynamics of the home altered dramatically. The term 'The Great Rebuilding' refers both to the mass construction of new homes throughout England, and to the considerable alterations and improvements made to existing homes, whether single-room residences, multi-storey townhouses or elite mansions.<sup>12</sup> Although many of the most significant changes in domestic structure took place in the late sixteenth century, W. G. Hoskins argues that 'The Great Rebuilding' continued into the 1630s. The new buildings and alterations shared the following features: a proliferation of household spaces; specialisation in the functionality of rooms; separation between the service areas and the spaces inhabited by the family and their guests; and an increasing emphasis on boundaries, control of access, and privacy (which did not necessarily imply

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<sup>10</sup> Friedman, p.151. See also ch.2.

<sup>11</sup> See Friedman, ch. 5. See also Lady Anne Clifford, *The Diaries of Anne Clifford* ed. D. J. H. Clifford (Far Thrupp, Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1990) p.43, p.45, p.53, p.80, p.82. All further references are to this edition, and will be incorporated into the text.

<sup>12</sup> See W. G. Hoskins, 'The Rebuilding of Rural England 1570-1640', *Past and Present* 4 (November, 1953), 44-59; Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry, 1480-1680* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); and Orlin, *Locating Privacy*.

solitude). Orlin describes this as ‘the *atomization* of the new domestic environments’, whilst Hoskins has characterised it as an act of ‘withdrawal from the common life’.<sup>13</sup>

Gervase Markham’s *The English Husbandman*, a 1613 tract that advises the reader (constructed as ‘the honest plaine English Husbandman’) on all aspects of farming, from the design of a plough to the planting of apple trees, also prescribes the layout of the home in which an English husbandman should reside.<sup>14</sup> Markham thus records the shift occasioned by ‘The Great Rebuilding’ in the design of the home. He provides a ‘modell’ of an ideal house for a husbandman (Fig. 1).<sup>15</sup>

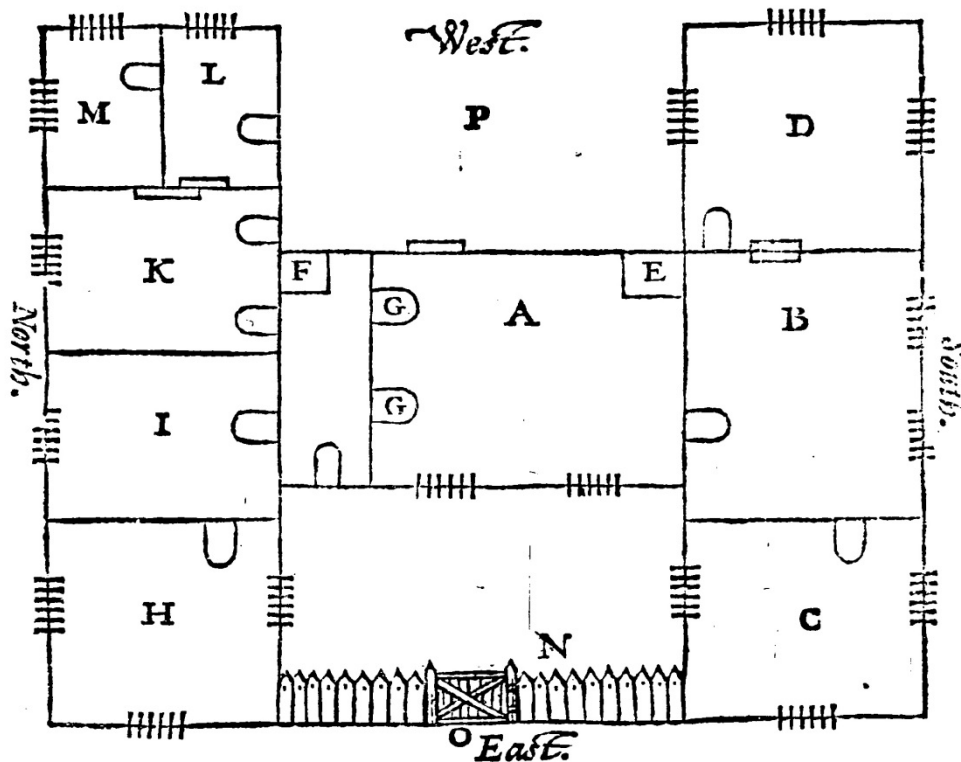


Fig. 1. Illustration to Gervase Markham, *The English Husbandman* (London, 1613), A4v. By permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, call no. 99553.

<sup>13</sup> Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, p.5; Hoskins, p.54.

<sup>14</sup> Gervase Markham, *The English Husbandman* (London, 1613), A1r.

<sup>15</sup> Markham, A4r.

‘A’ refers to the great hall, which is located at the entrance of the house, fronting the yard. ‘B’ signifies the ‘dining Parlor for the entertainment of Strangers’; an invited guest would progress through ‘the great gate to ride in at to the hall dore’ (O), step over the threshold of the door, and walk alongside ‘the screen in the hall’ (G) before entering that hall. If the master or mistress of the house desired to entertain him further, or if he were invited to dine, he would step through another door to the dining parlour.<sup>16</sup> Markham’s design clearly apes that of a country house; with a screens passage (composed of a single screen), a great hall (barely larger than a dining parlour), and a series of rooms with decreasing degrees of access for a stranger, it echoes on a smaller scale the spatial patterning of hospitality that is evident at country seats and at court.<sup>17</sup> Like Wollaton Hall, it retains aspects of the designs for fifteenth-century hall houses – the great hall, the screens passage, the gate – but hospitable spaces proliferate, and service rooms (H, I, K, L, M) are separated from the spaces inhabited by the family of the house and their guests. In Markham’s design, ‘C’ (‘An inward closet within the Parlor for the Mistrisses use, for necessities’) and ‘H’ (‘An inward cellar within the buttery, which may serve for a Larder’) are both specialised storage areas. Furthermore, whilst ‘D’ signifies a ‘stranger’s lodging’ on the ground floor, the rest of the bedchambers are located above the parlour, the kitchens, and the buttery, with staircases ‘E’ and ‘F’ providing access.

Of course, Markham’s model represents an ideal, not a reality. Although he claims that it is a ‘plaine country mans house’, and that therefore it can be built of stude (an upright timber) and plaster as an affordable alternative to lime and stone, it may be imagined that building such a house, upon ‘some pretty hard knole of constant and firme earth... invironed either with some pretty groves... or else with rowers of great timber’, may have been beyond the budget of many a plain countryman.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, as Orlin observes, Markham’s fantasy is an impractical one: the two staircases (E and F) imply a single storey (but double height) great

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<sup>16</sup> Markham, B1r.

<sup>17</sup> For further discussion of the relationship between the control of access to the monarch at Court and the Great Rebuilding, see Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, esp. p.99.

<sup>18</sup> Markham, A4v, A3v-4r.

hall, with upper floors at either side but not in the middle; in a husbandman's home, this would be neither practical nor necessary, as it would be far simpler to divide the great hall into two storeys, and thus have a single upper level, accessible by a single staircase.<sup>19</sup> Markham's design harks back to the great houses where the symbolic value of the single storey great hall was greater than the claims of practical considerations. Yet many of the features that Markham advocates are characteristic of 'The Great Rebuilding': numerous smaller rooms rather than a few larger; a parlour on the ground floor alongside the great hall; and a staircase leading to bedrooms on the first floor.

This architectural shift had social implications. As Flather puts it,

[A] shift in the design of domestic space during the seventeenth century from a hall-based house to specialized rooms reflected and reinforced a redefinition of domestic relations whereby a patriarchal model of inclusivity, in which servants were embraced as part of the family, gave way to a system of spatial organization that fostered social separation and segregation.<sup>20</sup>

The changes in the spatial dynamics of the home were at once affected by and themselves affected the alterations in patterns of service, hospitality, and community. However, Flather also argues that 'fixed social patterns were not inscribed on early modern houses': those who inhabited the early modern home were able to determine themselves the usages of the new spatial structures.<sup>21</sup> In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as the process of transition took place in the architecture of England but not necessarily in the imaginations of those who inhabited it, representations of the home focused not on the functions of rooms, specialisation of domestic space, and the segregation of servants from family and guests, but rather upon the ways in which household hierarchy and codes of hospitality could be negotiated in spatial terms, as this chapter will demonstrate.

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<sup>19</sup> Orlin, Plenary Lecture: 'The Widow's Chamber', Society for Renaissance Studies Biannual Conference (Southampton, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Amanda Flather, 'Gender, Space and Place', p.173. See also M. Johnson, *An Archaeology of Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Flather, 'Gender, Space and Place', p.174.

The new spatial dynamics of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries did not diminish the significance of household boundaries, or the role of servants in policing those boundaries: the number of boundaries, and the hierarchies that ordered those boundaries, simply multiplied. An undated manuscript, 'Description of the duties of household Officers', preserves instructions for household officers in an aristocratic home: like Willoughby's 'Order', it details the prescribed movement of the members of the household through the spaces of the house, and the ways in which they must perform hospitality or interact with guests.<sup>22</sup> The role of the 'Yeoman Usher of the Greate Chamber' is as follows:

[H]is place is to attend at the doore, and if there be great receyt of strangers; or upon greate assemblies players or suchlike, to lett in none, unto the greate chamber; but such as in his discretion shalbe thought meete.<sup>23</sup>

The hospitality of the great chamber, then, is more selective than that of the hall, and dependent upon occasion: it is the role of the yeomen usher to police the boundary and determine entry. The behaviour of household officers within this room is of particular significance because it is a space in which hospitality is performed on a grand scale:

And the eyese of all the best sort of strangers bee there lookers on... And there fore speciall care respect and diligence is to bee had therein for that place, before all others is the cheifest and principallest state in the house, for service there not duly and comly donne: disgraceth all the rest in any place ilse as little worth.<sup>24</sup>

The (relatively) public hospitality of the great chamber is of such significance that it can colour the guest's impression of all other spaces belonging to the house, and thus may make or mar the reputation of the house and its master. Yet this does not negate the significance of the spatial hierarchy that determines access to the more private areas of the house. The

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<sup>22</sup> HEHL MS Ellesmere 1179, cited with owner's permission. See also 'A Breviate touching the order and Governmente of a Nobleman's house....' (1605), a variation on this manuscript, in *Archaeologia* XIII (1800), pp.315-83.

<sup>23</sup> MS Ellesmere 1179.

<sup>24</sup> MS Ellesmere 1179.

gentleman usher is to inform his lord and lady if there are any visiting strangers who are ‘cyvall or better’, and is to ‘knowe his Lo[rd] or La[dy]’s pleasure, when any strangers cumme in where they shalbe lodged, and soe give notice to the yeoman of the Wardrobes’; thus guests can be served, welcomed and allocated according to their rank.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, the servants of great houses knew when to deny access, as well as when to grant it. In Ellesmere 1180, an undated manuscript in which a nobleman (believed to be the Earl of Bridgewater, writing in the 1630s) gives orders for ‘the rights and commandes [that] may be generalie observed and kept as well by ordinarie servants, gentlemen, yeomen and gromes in houshoulde’, the gentlemen ushers are expected to limit access as well as to enable it.<sup>26</sup> The ‘Orders’ state that the gentleman usher serving the great chamber:

[L]ikewise according to his dewtie, must attende dailie, with great respect, to bring into the presence of my selfe or my wife, such strangers as upon occasion are to have accesse causing such doors as are needfull to bee kepe shut carefully so as my selfe nor my wife, be not ovrgreatlie [*sic.*] pestered, especially when we or either of us woulde be private.<sup>27</sup>

The privacy of the master and mistress of the house is to be carefully guarded; access is limited and controlled through shut doors and the judgement of trusted servants.

These patterns of selective hospitality in Jacobean great houses followed the spatial arrangements at Court, which altered dramatically in the late fifteenth century, when Henry VII divided his ‘Chamber’, an enormous room in which he slept, ate, and conducted ‘most of his public business and all his private’, into three separate spaces: the Guard Chamber, the Presence Chamber, and the Privy Chamber, where the King slept and withdrew. These chambers were arranged in terms of increasing privacy and decreasing access. Indeed, David Starkey suggests that “not admitting” was

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<sup>25</sup> MS Ellesmere 1179. This section is absent from the 1605 ‘Breviate’.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher W. Brooks, *Law, Politics and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.361.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Rules general and particular drawn up for the conduct of a great establishment of a peer’, HEHL MS Ellesmere 1180, cited with owner’s permission.

the *raison d'être* of the Privy Chamber with its strictly limited and jealously guarded right of *entrée* or access'.<sup>28</sup>

Starkey suggests that this spatial pattern endured, as 'the Privy Chamber's activities offered a precedent that was still alive at the beginning of the following century', fostering 'a politics of intimacy'.<sup>29</sup> In the reign of James I, the inaccessible space shifted from the Privy Chamber to the Royal Bedchamber, but the trajectory for those that would access the monarch remained the same. By the early seventeenth century, segregated hospitality at once shaped architecture and was shaped by it, enshrined in the behavior prescribed in household orders and conduct books, and expected by householders and guests alike.

The extent to which such prescribed behaviour was expected by guests is borne out by the following diary entry of Lady Anne Clifford, in which she recalls the events of a night in 1603, when she was thirteen:

Yet I went the same night & overtook my Aunt at Tittinhanger, Lady Blunt's House where my Mother came the next day to me at noon – my Aunt being gone before. Then my Mother & I went on a journey to overtake her, & killed three Horses that day with extremities of heat, & came to Wrest, my Lord of Kent's, where we found the Doors shut & none in the House, but one Servant who only had the Keys of the Hall, so that we were forced to lie in the Hall all night till towards morning, at which time came a Man and let us into the Higher Rooms where we slept 3 or 4 hours. (p.23)

Clifford's *Diaries* grant a glimpse into the complexities of hospitality in country houses of the early 1600s; she and her mother are permitted, by right of their rank and their acquaintance with the master of the house, to lie in the 'Higher Rooms'. However, because the master and mistress who control access to these rooms are absent, and the servant who stands high enough in the household hierarchy both to possess the appropriate key, and

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<sup>28</sup> David Starkey, 'Intimacy and Innovation: the rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547' in David Starkey et al, *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London: Longman, 1987), pp.71-118 (p.73, pp.74-75). See College of Arms, Arundel MS XVII.

<sup>29</sup> Starkey, p.118. See also Neil Cuddy, 'The revival of the entourage: the Bedchamber of James I, 1603-1625' in *The English Court*, pp.173-225 (esp. p.173).

to make the decision of entry on his master's behalf, cannot be found, they are required to lie in the relatively public space of the great hall. The hospitality they receive is not concordant with their rank, but with the powers of the servant in residence; this is the inverse of the case of Sir Jerome Bowes, in which the misguided hospitality of the (relatively inferior) maidservant grants the two intruders access which they would not be permitted were Sir Jerome at home and entry to his house controlled by the superior male servants attendant on him.

The fact that Clifford and her mother are disturbed in the early hours of the morning to be moved to more appropriate, more private, chambers, registers the impropriety of being forced to lie in a space that is not suitable to rank and circumstance. The name of the 'man' who can procure them entry to the correct space is not given; he, like the servant who can admit them only to the Hall, is anonymous, a human key, significant only for the degree of access he provides. Thus in Clifford's *Diaries* as in aristocratic household 'orders', members of the household at once police the boundaries within the house and are themselves subject to those boundaries; they are at once agents and property. In Ellesmere 1180, the Porter is ordered not only to control the access of strangers, but to observe (and report) the movements of household servants:

He must take notice of such of his Lords houshold servauntes... as doe use to go forth or to come in at inconvenient or undew times.<sup>30</sup>

In elite houses and those of husbandmen alike, the architectural dynamics of 'The Great Rebuilding' encoded an ideology of segregated hospitality, in which the transformation of strangers into guests was policed by household and housewife alike; yet household and housewife were likewise governed by the system of access, privacy and control which the spaces of the house constructed. Any violation of this system demonstrated the extent to which household order had broken down.

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<sup>30</sup> MS Ellesmere 1180.

## 2. Liminality and Danger: Daughters and Wives at the Threshold of the Home

IAGO: Awake, what ho, Brabantio! thieves, thieves, thieves! Look to your house, your daughter and your bags! Thieves, thieves!

*Brabantio appears above at a window.*

BRABANZIO: What is the reason of this terrible summons? What is the matter there?

RODERIGO: Signor, is all your family within?

IAGO: Are your doors locked? (*Othello*, I.i.81-85)

In the opening scene of *Othello*, Brabantio, a venerable Venetian, is disturbed at night by a cry from the street. Iago's call of 'thieves' invokes the associations between darkness and theft, discussed above. The theft is not immediately revealed to be a human one; Brabantio's house, daughter, and bags are each listed as vulnerable, thus questioning his authority as homeowner, father, and head of household. In asking if Brabantio's doors are locked, Iago echoes the assumptions in Tusser's tract: that locked doors make the home invulnerable. For Brabantio, as in the case of Sir Jerome Bowes, the threat to his home is a member of his household who has rendered the borders of his house permeable.

Brabantio is informed of the loss of his daughter in the presumed security of his home: 'Here is her father's house, I'll call aloud,' declares Roderigo (74). The stage direction reads, 'Brabantio appears above at a window' (81 s.d.); in standing at a window – the onstage location of which we may assume to be the upper stage – Brabantio is placed in a liminal or threshold position. Aguirre, Quance and Sutton argue that liminality 'designates the condition ascribed to those things or persons who occupy or find themselves in the vicinity of the threshold'; visually and spatially positioned between two worlds, Brabantio is in the liminal space between his home and the world beyond.<sup>31</sup> The imagined space of the home is located behind or beyond the stage; in the gallery, or upper stage, Brabantio is physically located inside, but on display to the outside. In staging Brabantio's entry from, and return to, the inner rooms of the house, the play makes Brabantio's home real to the audience.

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<sup>31</sup> Aguirre, Quance and Sutton, pp.6-7.

As Stern observes, the ‘scene’ (or *frons scenae*), which formed the back of the visible stage through which actors made their entrances and exits, straddled ‘a crucial divide’ between ‘the fictional world of the stage’ and ‘the factual backstage world of the tiring house’:

For the structure of the ‘scene’ as a whole contained not just doors of entrance on stage level, but a further entrance above, which was protected with a railing – as a window or balcony might be. Collectively, then, the ‘scene’ resembled, in appearance, the face of a house; it even fronted what was generally called the ‘tiring-house’... Shakespeare seems to have used the fact of this backstage house as a way of layering his fiction.<sup>32</sup>

Stern argues that exits to a fictional room or house via the tiring house would have produced ‘a richly complex form of metadrama’; this meta-theatrical resonance likewise operates when a character appears at a fictional window upon the upper stage.<sup>33</sup>

Fitzpatrick identifies this spatial configuration as ‘exterior, between a building and outside world’; the stage place is ‘specifically contiguous with a nearby inwards location such as a house... just beyond the stage door’.<sup>34</sup> Fitzpatrick argues:

[E]arly modern dramaturgy based itself on a rapid succession of ‘scenes’ located in different fictional places, each of which is established for the audience not by changes of scenery but by verbal indications and at best a rough verbal iconicity (gallery stands for window, stage post for tree, stage door for cave opening etc).<sup>35</sup>

He gives the example of the ‘balcony scene’ in *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Romeo’s ‘But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?’ (II.i.44) at once shifts ‘the audience’s visual attention from downstage to the upstage gallery where Juliet appears’ and ‘establishes by nomination that the gallery now stands for a window in the Capulet house’.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Tiffany Stern, “‘This wide and universal theatre’”: The theatre as prop in Shakespeare’s metadrama’ in *Shakespeare’s Theatres and the Effects of Performance* ed. Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2013), pp.11-32 (pp.25-26).

<sup>33</sup> Stern, ‘This wide and universal theatre’ in *Shakespeare’s Theatres* ed. Karim-Cooper and Stern, p.27.

<sup>34</sup> Fitzpatrick, p.157.

<sup>35</sup> Fitzpatrick, p.38.

<sup>36</sup> Fitzpatrick, p.98.

Yet Fitzpatrick's reading of these spatial dynamics does not acknowledge the three-dimensional nature of the gallery space. Juliet is, according to the 'nomination' of Romeo, at a window, yet the scene is commonly referred to as a 'balcony' scene, because the gallery on which Juliet stands is not a two-dimensional frame, but either an upper stage thrust over the lower, or, as Stern observes, 'a recessed room with a balcony, as is suggested by the drawing of the Swan theatre'.<sup>37</sup> The exterior space is not merely 'contiguous' with a nearby inwards location; either the window as threshold is extended onto the stage, or the stage extends into the fictional 'room' behind the window. In both cases, the boundary between the home and the world beyond ceases to map onto the division between onstage and offstage, as Juliet's father's house becomes part of the stage space. Juliet, however, misunderstands the extent to which her window is a threshold space. Speaking aloud, she presumes her own solitude, for she thinks herself 'inside'; and thus unknowingly advances her intimacy with Romeo, by unconsciously admitting him to her interior world.

When Romeo takes Juliet by surprise, she at first casts him – 'bescreened in night' (94) – in the role of the intruder who takes advantage of the darkness to steal; and invokes the remote location and the watchfulness of violent kinsmen as deterrents against theft. The twin fantasies of an enclosed house and a guarding household as measures preventing crime are not only common to printed conduct books; in Ellesmere 1179, the porter who guards the gates to the home is described as 'the trust of the house by his careful locking and diligent looking to his charge': his 'locking' and his 'looking' are both repeatedly referenced, for he is to 'looke unto the gates continually', and to lock them at dinner, at supper, at prayers, and, particularly, at night.<sup>38</sup> In an elite household, what in Tusser's tract is the role of the housewife – securing and guarding the home – becomes the responsibility of the wider household. Locking and looking together ensure the security of the aristocratic house; they are placed in opposition to the openness and lack of observation that would permit theft.

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<sup>37</sup> Stern, 'This wide and universal theatre' in *Shakespeare's Theatres* ed. Karim-Cooper and Stern, p.27.

<sup>38</sup> MS Ellesmere 1179.

Yet for Juliet, this opposition is inverted – she ‘would not for the world’ that her kinsmen should detect the intruder (116); her own nurse will soon arrange the ladder by which Romeo ‘must climb a bird’s nest soon, when it is dark’ (II.iii.74), and so breach the home’s boundaries; and night will later become the ‘cloak’ (II.i.117) to obscure her wedding night from her own household. Standing at the spatially extended threshold of her home, she becomes a visual representation of the extent to which her desirable body, and her own desires, will render her father’s house vulnerable; as Boose argues, ‘within a world where daughters belong to either their father’s house or their husband’s, there is no neutral space’.<sup>39</sup> This spatial configuration is a version of a scenario typical of Roman New Comedy, in which a young man attempts to penetrate the house of the senex in order to woo the latter’s daughter; yet here, the comic setup has a tragic outcome.<sup>40</sup> What James Black terms the ‘stage picture’ of Juliet speaking to Romeo from above becomes a sign of her disrupted transition from the house of her father to the house of her husband.<sup>41</sup> The same spatial dynamics can be observed in *Othello*.

Confronted by Iago and Roderigo’s claims, Brabantio at first reinforces his fantasy of a locked, secure house, locating the disruption in the streets outside: he orders Roderigo not to ‘haunt about my doors’ to ‘start my quiet’ (96-102), suggesting that Roderigo’s disruptive sound may enter his home, but his doors ensure that Roderigo himself will not. He cannot accept that he has been robbed, and declares, ‘This is Venice. / My house is not a grange’ (106-107). A ‘grange’ denotes in the period: ‘a repository for grain, a granary, a barn’; ‘an establishment where farming is carried on’; ‘an outlying farmhouse with barns’; and ‘a country house’.<sup>42</sup> It is also the dwelling of Mariana in *Measure for Measure*, a place of seclusion and isolation, where Mariana exists in her suspended (and

<sup>39</sup> Lynda E. Boose, ‘The Father’s House and the Daughter in It: The Structures of Western Culture’s Daughter-Father Relationship’ in *Daughters and Fathers* ed. Boose and Betty S. Flowers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p.19-74 (p.23).

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Jennifer Panek, *Widows and Suitors in Early Modern English Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.55-56.

<sup>41</sup> James Black, ‘The Visual Artistry of *Romeo and Juliet*, *SEL* 15.2 (Spring, 1975), 245-256.

<sup>42</sup> ‘grange’, *OED*, 1; 2a; 2b; 3.

implicitly disordered) state between the position of maiden and wife. Brabantio is reminding Roderigo that his house is not isolated and unprotected, but Venetian, and thus subject to the laws and protection of the city.

Yet an example of the use of the word ‘grange’ prior to *Othello* complicates this reading. In John Lyly’s *Euphues and His England*, the word is used in reference to hospitality. A young man, Philautus, sits silent when invited to a simple breakfast in the house of Fidus, and the older man begins to tease him:

I marvel, gentleman, that all this time you have been tongue-tied, either thinking yourself not welcome or disdaining so homely entertainment... though England is no grange, but yieldeth everything, yet it is here as in every place, all for money.<sup>43</sup>

Morris William Croll defines ‘grange’ in this passage as ‘a storehouse or repository for grain, here used in contrast with a *market*, where grain is dispensed’.<sup>44</sup> ‘Grange’ refers to a building that encloses goods rather than making them available: England is not a grange because it not only stores grain, but makes it available to buy. Thus in claiming his house is not a grange, Brabantio is also, albeit unintentionally, registering the reading of grange as a secure storehouse from which goods can only be accessed by the owner of those goods: his house is ‘no grange’ because it has already ‘yield[ed] everything’ – as has, he is soon to fear, his daughter.

When convinced that Desdemona may indeed be missing, Brabantio calls for light and ‘my people’, calling forth illumination and witnesses, the two antidotes to the darkness and seclusion that make theft possible – antidotes whose efficacy was challenged in *A True Report*. Here, too, the servants, torches, and ‘officers, with lights and weapons’ (52 s.d.) that Brabantio calls upon prove ineffective: the ‘thief’ (63) has already ‘stowed’ (63) the ‘jewel’ (I.iii.194). The scene recalls *The Merchant of Venice*, in which another daughter, in another Venice, is both lost, and confused with

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<sup>43</sup> John Lyly, *Euphues and His England* in *Euphues* ed. Morris William Croll and Harry Clemons (London: Routledge, 1916), p.245.

<sup>44</sup> Lyly, *Euphues and his England*, p.245, n.2.

property – ‘My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!’ cries Shylock (reportedly) on the elopement of his daughter Jessica (II.viii.14).

Each father has the integrity of his house, family, property, and identity threatened by the elopement of his daughter. Furthermore, Shylock puts his faith in locked doors to guard his possessions, human and household stuff alike: ‘Lock up my doors’ (II.v.29) he tells Jessica in their final conversation prior to her elopement. In both *Othello* and *Merchant*, doors (and their locks) belong to the father; the house is his, and thus so is the right to control entrance to, and exit from, the home. Yet Shylock, in permitting Jessica to lock the doors on his behalf, is positioning his daughter as an extension of himself and his authority: ‘Jessica my girl, / Look to my house’ (II.v.15-16). Shylock never guesses that in granting Jessica responsibility over locks and keys, she may use her power to steal away both his possessions, and her self.

Jessica’s appearance at her window makes her elopement possible: in allowing herself to be seen from the street, she negates the efficacy of the locked doors of the home. ‘Clamber not you up to the casements then / Nor thrust your head into the public street,’ her father tells her, aware of the dangerous potential of such a position (II.v.31-32). Jessica is similarly aware, for she tells her lover, ‘I am glad ’tis night – you do not look on me’ (II.vi.34); her desire for darkness stems from both her caution and her shame. She is ashamed of her ‘exchange’ (35), at once the exchange of her own clothes for the ‘lovely garnish of a boy’ (45), and the exchange of her daughterly love for her love of Lorenzo. ‘Exchange’ also invokes the status of women who allow themselves to be seen in windows and doorways; Jessica is aware that making herself visible to the outside world can be read as a seductive act.

In Middleton’s *Women Beware Women*, the unknown Bianca is ‘spied from the widow’s window’ by the Duke, and her presence there, coupled with her decision to stand rather than sit, thus making herself more visible, brings about her seduction.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, in *Volpone*, Celia’s visibility

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas Middleton, *Women Beware Women* in *Thomas Middleton Four Plays* ed. William C. Carroll (London: Methuen Drama, 2012), II.iii.2.

at her window, and her (wordless) interaction with the disguised Volpone in the street below, incite both Volpone's lust and her husband's anger:

No windows on the whole Piazza, here,  
To make your properties, but mine, but mine?<sup>46</sup>

Corvino laments that the mountebank, in publicly addressing his wife, makes Corvino's house his 'scene' (3), and thus the windows of his property are become stage properties; a playful reference by Jonson to the fact the house is indeed the 'scene', and the 'window' Celia inhabits is the upper stage, which frames her for the gaze of both Volpone and the audience, and makes her house (and thus, her self) susceptible to the influence of the outside world. Like Bianca, Celia stands in the window to gaze rather than to be gazed upon – the former wishes to view the Duke, the latter, the mountebank – but her gaze makes possible her visibility, and thus her downfall.

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, the very fact of a maid having spoken with a man at night from a window is enough to confirm her loss of chastity, as Claudio and Don Pedro mistakenly believe of Hero:

What man was he talk'd with you yesternight,  
Out of your window betwixt twelve and one? (IV.i.84-85)

The 'ruffian' later (falsely) confesses that he has slept with Hero, in order to further Don John's plot, yet it is not this confession that is dwelt upon. Her supposed presence at the window is enough to condemn her.

In *Merchant*, the sexual potential of Jessica's spatial positioning is reinforced by her focus upon the 'ducats' that she steals from her father; her sexual value remains the subtext of the scene, as she 'gilds' herself with ducats (49). Yet as Jessica exits 'above' (50 s.d.), leaving the threshold space of the staged window on the upper stage to enter the outside world of the stage proper 'below' (57 s.d.), she commits her final act as the daughter of her father's household: to 'make fast the doors' (50). The irony of

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<sup>46</sup> Ben Jonson, *Volpone* ed. Robert N. Watson (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2003), II.iii.5-6. All further references at to this edition, and will be incorporated into the text.

securing the home even as she steals away the ducats (and herself) is not registered by Jessica, who inhabits both roles: that of the night-time thief, and that of the daughter who ensures the security of the home through locking it.

Thus when Iago, following Roderigo's enquiry as to whether Brabantio's family is within, asks if the doors are locked, he is at once questioning whether Desdemona as possession is locked safe within, and whether Desdemona as a member of Brabantio's household has betrayed his trust – a trust we know of from the 'house affairs' (I.iii.147) that drew her from Othello's tale – by unlocking the doors herself. As Gouge argues in his idealised vision of parental authority, 'children are the goods of their parent'; Desdemona, like Jessica, is at once the obedient locker of the doors, and the object that must be kept locked within.<sup>47</sup>

Shylock and Brabantio are both betrayed in having their daughters stolen from them, and in their daughters exerting their own wills to leave them. But in *Othello*, the audience is not privy to the act. The first we see is the father at the window, the house already plundered, the authority of homeowner undone. Brabantio's appearance at his window, although he knows it not, signifies that the boundaries of his home have become permeable. His presence at the threshold of his home echoes his daughter's unseen exit.

Boose argues that the daughter's presence in the house by 'definition constitutes a threat to its maintenance of closed boundaries'; the daughter is the only member of the familial household who is expected eventually to abandon both household and family, leaving the physical home and losing the family name on marriage; 'the daughter – the liminal or 'threshold' person in family space – symbolically stands at the boundary/door, blocked from departure by the figure of the father'.<sup>48</sup> In *Othello*, by presenting the father rather than the daughter in a liminal position at the threshold of the home, Shakespeare recasts the elopement from the point of view of the abandoned father.

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<sup>47</sup> Gouge, p.442.

<sup>48</sup> Boose, p.31, p.33. See also 'threshold people' in Turner, pp.95-96.

The image of a maiden at the threshold of her house, then, is an image of openness. The threshold position echoes the temporal threshold between the house of the father and the house of the husband, invoking the transition between maiden and wife, and, more specifically, to use Arnold Van Gennep's categories, the dangerous vulnerability of the liminal states between 'adolescence and betrothal' (a transition made by Juliet over the course of the balcony scene) and between 'betrothal and marriage'.<sup>49</sup> The thresholds here at once symbolise and enable the transitions to new states; yet in eloping, Juliet, Desdemona, and Jessica disrupt their incorporation into the married state, with potentially tragic consequences.

The threshold is also a vulnerable position for a wife. As Diane Wolfthal argues, 'windows and doorways, which occupied liminal spaces at the boundary between public and private, became erotically charged sites'.<sup>50</sup> The potency of the image of a married woman occupying the liminal spaces of her home may be glimpsed on the frontispiece of the 1608 pamphlet *The Araigement & Burning of Margaret Ferne-seede* (Fig. 2). The pamphlet gives a 'true' account of the murder of Anthony Fernseede by his wife, who, unbeknownst to him, was a prostitute before their marriage, and a bawd and brothel-keeper afterwards. Her husband, overhearing the noise of two men lodged in the adjoining room, discovers her trade; Margaret then attempts to poison his broth, and, this failing, slits his throat. The frontispiece is illustrated accordingly: with a woman, surrounded by companions, stirring a bowl of broth; with a man asleep; and with a collection of observers who may be assumed to be the audience to her trial. The largest image is that of a woman standing in a doorway, which would seem to portray Margaret's trade.

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<sup>49</sup> Van Gennep, p.11.

<sup>50</sup> Diane Wolfthal, *In and Out of the Marital Bed: Seeing Sex in Renaissance Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p.75.



**Fig. 2. Detail from title page of *The Araignment & Burning of Margaret Ferne-seede* (London, 1608), British Library, shelfmark C.21.b.5., title page. © The British Library Board. Used with permission.**

Thus the image of a prostitute and bawd, of sexual availability and carnal exchange, is simply a woman standing in the doorway of her home, the door open, looking out to the streets and houses beyond. The permeability of the home becomes representative of the permeability of the female body. The trigger for the tragic outcome of the account in the pamphlet reinforces the implication of the frontispiece image; by allowing strangers within her home, as within her body, Margaret destroys the integrity of her household, and thus loses her position as wife in murdering her husband.

In *A Warning for Fair Women*, Anne Sanders likewise finds that positioning herself at the threshold of her home results in her own adultery, the death of her husband, and the execution of herself and her lover. She first encounters George Browne at a social gathering with her husband.

However, it is only when she decides to 'sit at her doore' (321-322) that he is able to speak to her alone.

Sitting upon the doorstep of their homes was a common pastime for city wives. As Gowing observes of ecclesiastical court records,

The evidence of neighbourhood disputes over personal or family territory gives the impression that women's sense of their own space, if not centred entirely on the house, was focused on a fairly circumscribed area: the street, yard or alley, the water pump or well, the shop or doorstep.<sup>51</sup>

The doorstep was situated at the threshold of the home, but it was also an acceptable female social space. Yet Gowing argues that, whilst female mobility in cities was common, the 'mobility of urban women was specifically identified with sexual immorality: only enclosure could keep women private and chaste'.<sup>52</sup> Seated at the edge of enclosure, Anne is situated upon the boundary between the private and the public, chastity and erotic display.

Browne attempts to use Anne's position to construe her as open to his advances:

God save ye mistress *Sanders*, al alone?  
Sit ye to take the view of passengers? (354-355)

This is ambiguous; it could suggest either that she wants to watch the passers-by, or that she would display herself to them. It is comparable to Bianca's desired pastime, after she has been corrupted by her encounter with the Duke:

'Tis a sweet recreation for a gentlewoman,  
To stand in a bay-window and see gallants. (III.i.130-131)

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<sup>51</sup> Laura Gowing, "'The freedom of the streets': women and social space, 1560 – 1640" in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* ed. Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp.130-151 (p.137).

<sup>52</sup> Gowing, 'Freedom of the streets', p.139.

Browne reads Anne's solitude as evidence that she is unprotected and as suggesting her desire for company; rather than focusing upon her position as one of her display, he reads her public presence as a gaze, and potentially, a desiring one. But Anne will not be drawn into a flirtation:

No in good sooth sir, I give small regard  
Who comes, or goes, my husband I attend... (356-357)

In the speech that follows, she suggests that Browne's presence means he would speak to her husband, 'Because ye make a staie / Here at his doore' (363-364). The house and the wife who sits at its threshold, she implies, both belong to Sanders; he can no more seduce the one than he can enter the other without her husband's permission. When he will not leave, she threatens to absent herself, to which he replies:

Nay gentle mistris, let not my accesse  
Be meanes to drive you from your doore so soone (374-375)

Browne's 'accesse' to her depends upon her threshold position; to deny it, she must remove herself from the boundaries of the house, and be driven within. The staging of the scene reinforces this – unlike Juliet or Jessica, Anne is not positioned on the upper stage, at once displayed but out of reach. Rather, her doorstep is part of the 'outside' world of the stage, and is set upon the street; although symbolically at the threshold of her home, she is not under its protection, and is proximate to Browne. To escape him, she must either withdraw 'inside', and so exit the stage, or persuade him to leave her and exit himself – an effort in which, eventually, she succeeds.

Left alone, in a rare soliloquy to the audience, she complains:

These arrand-making Gallants are good men,  
That cannot passe and see a woman sit  
Of any sort, alone at any doore,  
But they will find a scuse to stand and prate,  
Fooles that they are to bite at every baite. (394-398)

Anne suggests that it is the gallants, and not the women who sit alone at their doors, who are at fault. Yet her final line implies a shared

responsibility; in styling herself, and other women on doorsteps, as ‘baite’, she acknowledges that her presence at her doorway displays her body to the street beyond.

Anne’s threshold position makes her vulnerable to Browne’s seduction: as I discussed in Chapter Two, Mrs Drury is able to ‘read’ in Anne’s palm that she has encountered her future husband in her doorway, and so convinces her to succumb to Browne’s advances. Furthermore, the necessity for Browne’s seduction to take place at the threshold of her home has been set up in an earlier scene; when Browne first inquires of Mistress Drury how he might make Anne’s acquaintance, he suggests ‘at her house’, to which Drury replies ‘There you may not enter’ (288); he is only able to encounter Anne if she appears at the border he may not cross.

Thus the presence onstage of a daughter or wife at the threshold of her home signals that the boundaries of that home are about to be breached. When Brabantio is summoned to his window, his presence there signifies that his daughter has already crossed the threshold. In Shakespeare’s tragedies and domestic tragedies alike, the liminal spaces of the house provoke anxiety which the policing and guarding of the boundaries of the house is designed to counter, but which the daughter or wife’s own agency can undo. In narratives of rape or violation, these anxieties are provoked by the opposite trajectory: when the rapist crosses the threshold, the boundaries of the home have failed in their protective function, and the integrity of the home has been undone.

### **3. “Chastity’s Keeper”: Penetrating the Home, Penetrating the Body**

Elizabethan conduct literature forges a link between the home and female chastity, and, more explicitly, between the penetration of the home and the penetration of the female body. In the domestic conduct book *A Preparative to Marriage* (1591), Henry Smith advises wives to position themselves within their homes, and to avoid both the borders of the home and the world beyond, in order to protect their chastity:

We call the wife housewife, that is, house wife... to show that a good wife keeps her house. And therefore Paul biddeth Titus to exhort women that they be chaste, and keeping at home... as though home were chastity's keeper... So a wife should teach her feet, go not beyond the door.<sup>53</sup>

These commonplace prescriptions are idealised, based more upon an imaginative correlation between the body of the housewife and the integrity of her house than upon social practices; yet the Biblical image of the home as 'chastity's keeper' pervades early modern culture. As Gowing observes,

Sixteenth-century prescriptive authors related it to the distinction between 'outside' and 'inside': the walls of the orderly household were to ensure the regulation of women's speech, their chastity and their subordination to their husbands. But the household thus created was not a private one. The very construction of this image of domestic relations was predicated on the public, political implications of domestic life and conjugal relations.<sup>54</sup>

Thus the domestic enclosure of the wife is of public significance.

This perceived correlation between the body of the wife and the boundaries of the home extends to the goods that the walls of the home enclose. Ziegler observes that this association can be found in emblems as well as in conduct literature: Emblem XVIII from Guillaume de la Perriere's 1614 moral emblem book, *The Theater of Fine Devices*, shows a virtuous wife situated within her home, with the threshold and the world beyond visible but separate, a curtain drawn between the two spheres (Fig. 3).

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<sup>53</sup> Henry Smith, *A Preparative to Marriage* (London, 1591), E7v-E8r.

<sup>54</sup> Gowing, 'Freedom of the streets', p.134.



Fig. 3. Emblem XVIII from Guillaume de la Perriere, *The Theater of Fine Devices* (London, 1614). By permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, call no. 62125.

The wife holds a large key in front of the threshold, as is explained in the accompanying verse:

The key doth note, she must have care to guide  
The goods her husband doth with pain provide.<sup>55</sup>

As Ziegler notes, ‘she herself is the greatest of his goods, responsible for guarding that which makes her most valuable, her chastity, represented here by the drapery that modestly covers her’.<sup>56</sup> She is associated both with the home she inhabits, and with the goods that the locked doors of and within the home enclose. However, I would complicate Ziegler’s reading by suggesting that the ‘drapery’ that here covers the wife is not modest; her foot, calf and shoulders are exposed, and she must hold it with one hand to prevent it from slipping lower, below her breasts. As such, the drapery

<sup>55</sup> Guillaume de la Perriere, *The Theater of Fine Devices Containing An Hundred Morall Emblems* (London, 1614), Emblem XVIII.

<sup>56</sup> Ziegler, p.76.

appears designed to suggest undressing, not modesty; this is not an outfit that the wife could wear in the outside world, but is perfectly apt to be worn before her husband on the marriage bed. This image reminds the reader that Protestant married chastity does not involve abstinence, but exclusivity.

The keeping of locked goods, the enclosure of the wife within the home, and wifely chastity, are here paralleled in both image and verse. The tortoise on which the wife rests her foot exemplifies this; it carries its own home everywhere in the form of its shell, and so can guard itself within its 'walls' whenever necessary. The wife's chaste exclusivity, then, is represented in terms of her ability to guard her person by remaining (like the tortoise) within her home, to keep the keys to her husband's goods, and to present herself as desirable to her husband, and her husband alone. For her to exhibit this desirability to another man, it is implied, is equivalent to presenting herself to the world outside the home – or granting the keys to her husband's goods to another.

In the pamphlet reporting the murder of Joan Wilson, the thieves make their way from the threshold of the home, insufficiently guarded by Joan, through doors and locks, to Sir Jerome Bowes's hidden 'treasure'. This treasure is made vulnerable by the knowledge of a former servant, who knows 'the place where... some treasure lay', and is able to force his way through locked doors to reach it.<sup>57</sup> Public knowledge of the existence and location of treasure within the home renders the home, members of the household, and the treasure itself, vulnerable. There may be a sexual undertone to Joan's murder, but it is never rendered explicit; as servant rather than mistress, her body is never fully identified with the house she inhabits. Yet narratives of rape frequently figure the act as the theft of a 'treasure': female chastity, which the home guards and encloses as the property of her husband. Furthermore, as in the robbery of Bowes's house, it is outside knowledge of the value of this treasure that incites the act of theft: the wife's chaste exclusivity is imperilled by her husband.

Shakespeare first explores how public knowledge of a wife's chastity may render it vulnerable in his 1594 poem *The Rape of Lucrece*. In

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<sup>57</sup> *A True Report*, B1r.

the prose 'Argument' preceding the poem, Shakespeare describes the incident which sets the events of the poem in motion: the 'principal men' of the Roman army have met for supper in Tarquin's tent, and there 'every one commended the virtues of his own wife; among whom Collatinus extolled the incomparable chastity of his wife Lucretia'. As Nancy Vickers notes, Collatine's boast of Lucrece's chastity directly, and inevitably, causes the rape of Lucrece:

[Collatine] opens up Lucrece for display *in order* to inspire jealousy; and jealousy, once inspired, may be carried to its logical conclusion – theft.<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, Shakespeare makes this point explicit within the poem:

Or why is Collatine the publisher  
Of that rich jewel he should keep unknown  
From thievish ears, because it is his own. (33-35)

Lucrece's chastity is her husband's 'treasure', which he has 'unlocked' in the telling of it (16); in publishing the place where his treasure lies, Collatine imperils the very chastity he boasts. Tarquin, as the king's son, cannot bear that Collatine owns a possession beyond his reach, and so steals it. As Vickers puts it, 'rape is the price Lucrece pays for being described.'<sup>59</sup>

Tarquin is 'welcomed' (51) as a guest, and his violent desires are further incited by Lucrece's hospitable behaviour. As Tarquin prepares to penetrate Lucrece's bedchamber, Shakespeare parallels his actions with those of a thief: he acts under the cover of 'sable night' (117), when only 'thieves', 'cares', and 'troubled minds' remain awake (126). Tarquin carries a torch, more commonly associated with safeguarding than with theft, yet Shakespeare draws attention to the paradox of light being used, not to reveal the criminal, but to illuminate the crime: Tarquin debates with himself,

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<sup>58</sup> Nancy Vickers, "'The Blazon of Sweet Beauty's Best': Shakespeare's Lucrece," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), pp.95-115 (p.102). See also Celia R. Daileader, "Writing Rape, Raping Rites": Shakespeare's and Middleton's Lucrece Poems' in *Violence, Politics and Gender in Early Modern England* ed. Joseph P. Ward (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) pp.67-90.

<sup>59</sup> Vickers, 'Blazon', p.102.

requesting the 'fair torch' not to 'lend' its light in order to 'darken her whose light excelleth thine' (190-191). Lucrece will later rail at 'the unseen secrecy of night' (763) that makes possible the opportunity for rape.

As Dubrow argues, Tarquin's rape is figured as burglary, yet 'this narrative, like other contemporary writings on burglary, is also concerned with the violation and contamination of a dwelling place'.<sup>60</sup> Tarquin violates Lucrece's home by undoing the power of its interior boundaries. To reach Lucrece's chamber, Tarquin must make his way through a series of locked doors and 'little vents and crannies' (310), forcing 'the locks between her chamber and his will' (303-304): as Mary Douglas puts it, 'the homely experience of going through a door is able to express so many kinds of entrance', and here, Tarquin's forced entry through the doors of Lucrece's home at once represent and make possible his rape of her body and his violation of her privacy.<sup>61</sup> At last, he opens the 'yielding latch' that bars him from Lucrece, parts the curtains that surround her bed, and wakes Lucrece by placing his hand on her bare breast.<sup>62</sup>

At this moment of assault, Lucrece's body is figured as a house: the 'blue veins' of her breast disappear, 'must'ring to the quiet cabinet' – glossed in the Norton edition as Lucrece's heart – where 'their dear governess and lady lies' (441-444). This imagery at once aligns Tarquin's penetration of Lucrece's chamber with that of her body, and suggests that there is a space that Tarquin cannot penetrate: the 'quiet cabinet' of her self. There is an opposition here between the sexualised inner space that, like Lucrece's bedchamber, Tarquin can enter, and her mental space, which he cannot; this paradox is symptomatic of representations of female interiority and feminine private space. The 'quiet cabinet' of Lucrece's mind remains safe from violation, as Lucrece herself later asserts: 'Immaculate and spotless is my mind' (1656). Yet here Lucrece's metaphor shifts; she bewails the fact that her 'pure' mind must 'endure' within the 'poisoned closet' of her body (1658-1659). What is originally an image of freedom

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<sup>60</sup> Dubrow, p.48.

<sup>61</sup> Douglas, p.115.

<sup>62</sup> On the agency of the 'yielding latch', see Melissa E. Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.98.

and autonomy – the cabinet in which her self can be hidden, safe from the violence that is visited upon her body – becomes an image of entrapment, as Lucrece’s ‘immaculate’ self cannot escape her violated body. The poisoned closet can only be opened in death.

This tension plays on the associations of the closet and the cabinet. The closet was an extension of the medieval cabinet, a product of the ‘early modern accumulation of goods’, designed to enclose and lock away those goods, and could thus be a figure for female chastity.<sup>63</sup> Yet, as Orlin observes from the evidence of testamentary inventories, the closet could also be a multivarious space: for sleeping, for caring for the sick, for study, and for spiritual devotions.<sup>64</sup> For Lucrece, the ‘closet’ of her body in which the cabinet of her mind endures is poisoned by the correlation between closet or cabinet as a space in which goods of the home are locked and enclosed, and the sexualised inner spaces of her body, as her husband’s exclusive proprietary rights to that body have been destroyed.

Mind and chastity, then, are here placed in opposition. Lucrece knows her self to be inviolable, but her chastity, the poem asserts, has been stolen:

Pure chastity is rifled of her store,  
And lust, the thief, far poorer than before. (692-693)

Furthermore, Tarquin’s ravishing of Lucrece is accompanied by an assault on her reputation for chastity: he is able to rape her by threatening to imperil her good name, and thus, that of her husband. Should she not ‘yield’, he claims that he will be still more brutal (‘rudely tear thee’), and follow the act by slaying her, and laying her body with that of a servant, that her husband might think she has committed adultery (666-672). The poem here draws on a paradox of early modern culture – that chastity is at once something possessed by the body, which can be taken from it by force, and a matter of reputation, which exists in the minds of those that contemplate it and the words of those that speak of it.

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<sup>63</sup> Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, p.301, p.309.

<sup>64</sup> Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, ch.8. See also H. L. Meakin, *The Painted Closet of Lady Anne Bacon Drury* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), esp. p.107.

Dod and Cleaver write of ‘how precious a jewel Chastitie is’, figuring it as a possession, yet they also construct it as dependent upon reputation:

Take from a maid her beautie, take from her kindred, riches, comelinesse, eloquence, sharpenes of wit, cunning in her craft, and give her *Chastitie*, and you have given her all things. And on the other side, give her all these things, & justly call her a whore, or noughtie packe: with that one word you have taken all from her, and left her bare and foule.<sup>65</sup>

According to Dod and Cleaver, if a woman is defamed, she loses her chastity (or rather, has it taken from her). This defamation must be accurate – ‘*justly* call her a whore’ – and yet it is the accusation that renders her culpable, and violates her chastity, not the unchaste act which the accusation condemns. In *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, when Nicholas tells Frankford of Anne’s adultery, her husband does not at first mourn that her act has destroyed her chastity, but that the ‘word’ of Nicholas has ‘touched... her reputation’ (viii.60-61). It is not the private act alone that is significant, but the public knowledge thereof. Similar language is used in Thomas Overbury’s ‘A Wife’, which describes both the model behaviour of wives, and the difficulties they face:

To keepe their name, when ’tis in others hands,  
Discretion askes; their credit is by farre  
More fraile than they: on likelihoods it stands,  
And hard to be disprov’d, lusts slanders are.<sup>66</sup>

The good ‘name’ of wives is in the hands (and mouths) of others; words can imperil the reputation for chastity. Thus through boasting of Lucrece’s chastity, Collatine not only renders vulnerable her reputation itself, but imperils her privacy, her ‘chastity’, and her life.

*Cymbeline*, first performed in 1611, likewise portrays a situation in which a husband imperils his wife’s privacy, chastity, and life, through boasting of her virtue. Tarquin’s visit to Lucrece’s home, and his subsequent abuse of her hospitality, takes place without her husband’s knowledge or

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<sup>65</sup> Dod and Cleaver, p.351.

<sup>66</sup> Overbury, ‘A Wife’, B6v.

permission; in contrast, in *Cymbeline*, exiled Posthumous invites Giacomo to visit his wife Innogen and test her chastity, through a bet. The wager is a battle for ownership of Innogen's body: Posthumous would prove his proprietary claim to it, whilst Giacomo attempts to demonstrate that he can 'get ground' of it:

With five times as much conversation, I should get ground of your fair mistress, make her go back even to yielding, had I admittance and opportunity to friend. (I.iv.90-92)

Giacomo's claim operates at various levels; his 'make her go back' is a sexualized pun, like those used by the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, whilst the whole register is appropriate to that of a duel, or a fencing match, in which to 'get ground' of an opponent is to 'get the advantage of' him.<sup>67</sup> Yet in desiring to 'get ground' of Innogen, Giacomo transforms her into territory: if he is to conquer her, it will render void the prior claim of Posthumous.

Giacomo thus deprives Innogen of agency or autonomy, a process in which her husband assists. As Evelyn Gajowski argues, Posthumous's social and marital insecurity, engendered by his disrupted marriage and subsequent exile, makes him vulnerable to Giacomo's machinations, and careless of his role of 'guardian' to his wife's chastity.<sup>68</sup> Posthumous's inability to reside with his wife or enter the country she inhabits causes him to attempt to reinforce his claim to her through proving her chastity and loyalty to him; he thus makes it possible for Giacomo to deceive him. As Ziegler argues,

To Collatine and Posthumous, allowing their wives to be put on public view substantiates the value of these women for them, but it also raises the possibility that at the same time the women will be devalued *because* they have been on display.<sup>69</sup>

Just as, in Wilson's theft of Sir Jerome's treasure, his knowledge of its location makes it possible for him to force locked doors in order to steal it,

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<sup>67</sup> *Cymbeline*, p.2983, n.8.

<sup>68</sup> Evelyn Gajowski, 'Sleeping Beauty, or "What's the Matter?": Female Sexual Autonomy, Voyeurism, and Misogyny in *Cymbeline*' in *Re-visions of Shakespeare: Essays in Honour of Robert Ornstein* ed. Gajowski (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 2004), pp.89-107 (p.93).

<sup>69</sup> Ziegler, p.79.

so in *Cymbeline*, Giacomo's transgressive knowledge of Innogen, granted him by Posthumous, enables him to penetrate the room in which 'treasure' lies: Innogen's bedchamber.

In a startlingly private moment, the audience watches Innogen prepare for bed. Helen, Innogen's maid, leaves the taper burning, and is instructed when to wake and call for her mistress. She then departs, and her mistress commends herself to the protection of the 'gods', and sleeps. Innogen, then, has invoked the common safeguards against theft: light, a servant guarding the threshold, and divine surveillance. Yet these precautions prove inefficacious, because Giacomo has already crossed the threshold to her chamber, and is hidden in a trunk within it. The voyeurism of the audience is here coupled with that of Giacomo; it is because Giacomo is already sequestered within the trunk in the bedchamber that we are likewise able to view it.

The scene is prefaced by Giacomo's request to Innogen that she take 'in protection' her husband's supposed presents for the Emperor, and keep them 'in safe stowage' (I.vi.194-195). As a good housewife, Innogen replies that she will keep them in her bedchamber, the boundaries of which she believes to be inviolable. But her husband's bet and Giacomo's deception ensure that the very quality Posthumous praises – Innogen's ability to keep precious things safe and 'hold her virtue' (I.iv.55) – will be her downfall. Innogen has misread the threat contained in the trunk: it is not the fictional treasure that is vulnerable, but the 'treasure' of her chastity.

Giacomo chronicles the particulars of Innogen's chamber, to prove his entry to it. Yet he cannot be sure he will 'gain ground' of Innogen, and thus of Posthumous, until he views something 'secret', that a guest or servant could not view – a mole on her left breast:

This secret  
Will force him to think I have picked the lock and ta'en  
The treasure of her honour. (II.ii.40-42)

The language of theft is used to describe Giacomo's violation; although he has not in fact taken 'the treasure of her honour', he has stolen her reputation for chastity. Through sequestering himself within the cabinet that

he pretended contained her husband's 'treasure', Giacomo has penetrated her chamber, and can use his transgressive knowledge to claim that he has also penetrated her body.

Posthumous and Collatine alike render their wives vulnerable to acts of sexual violence through failing to guard the boundaries of their property. Each invites another man to assail the chastity of his wife, the first through a bet, the second through a boast: thus women's bodies are represented as strikingly vulnerable to the power of language. As Dubrow argues, *Cymbeline* 'enacts the crucial cultural tension between representing dwellings as shelters from harm and sources of danger'.<sup>70</sup> Innogen's chamber transforms from a space of safety and privacy into a space of violation. It is also, like Innogen's body, represented as both the place from which Posthumous's sense of value springs, and the place he is most vulnerable. Yet because the play is a tragicomic romance, rather than a tragedy, it is possible for Innogen to escape both her enclosed chamber and Giacomo's violation of it: she can don the disguise of a boy, reunite with her husband, and have her chastity publicly vindicated. In tragedy, the susceptibility of the female body and the feminine chamber to penetration, and the extent to which husbands believe the (chaste) bodies of their wives to be their most valuable and most vulnerable possessions, prove fatal.

In *Lucrece* and *Cymbeline* alike, the chamber of a virtuous woman is penetrated by a man who would assail her chastity, in the absence of her husband. In *Lucrece*, the reader is allied with the rapist in his journey through the doors, locks, and curtains that lead to Lucrece's sleeping body; in *Cymbeline*, the audience, like Giacomo, is located within the chamber to gaze on Innogen's sleeping body. Both Lucrece and Innogen are virtuous, and entirely lacking in agency in these scenes – they are the treasure to be stolen. Culpability and agency rest both with their assailants and with their absent husbands. In *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, this trajectory is inverted, as the audience is placed outside the bedchamber, with the absent husband. Furthermore, here the responsibility for loss of chastity lies not only with the men involved, but with the wife.

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<sup>70</sup> Dubrow, pp.121-122.

When Frankford learns of Anne's adultery, he must steal, thief-like, into his own house with copied keys in order to surprise his wife in the act of adultery. Here, the bedchamber is not only allied with the female body: it is also Frankford's marital bedchamber. As Subha Mukherji argues,

[Frankford's] position is one of peculiar alienation, for the contents of his locked cabinet are his wife and her lover, not what he has pleasurably hoarded but a store that has been emptied out... The key becomes at once a token of proprietorial access and of exclusion.<sup>71</sup>

Frankford's position as husband is undermined by his use of false keys. Yet Frankford, like Collatine and Posthumous, is represented as partially responsible for his wife's loss of chastity; not because he has boasted of her, but because he has invited another man to be 'master' in his house, and so he has made it possible for Wendoll to take his place in the marital bedchamber, as discussed in Chapter Two. Frankford must follow the trajectory of a thief in order to discover what has already been stolen from him:

This is the key that opes my outward gate,  
This is the hall door, this my withdrawing chamber.  
But this, that door that's bawd unto my shame,  
Fountain and spring of all my bleeding thoughts,  
Where the most hallowed order and true knot  
Of nuptial sanctity hath been profaned.  
It leads to my polluted bedchamber (xiii.8-14)

Frankford lists the spaces of his home as properties owned by him: his gate, his withdrawing chamber, and finally, his bedchamber. Yet the doors to each of these spaces are not referred to by possessive pronouns in this litany of property: whilst Frankford owns the gates, the boundaries between his home and the outer world, he does not perceive himself as owning the thresholds between the spaces within it. This is in part due to the fact that the doors, as in *Lucrece*, are granted agency; yet here, it is not agency to hinder, but to help – thus the door to Frankford's bedchamber

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<sup>71</sup> Subha Mukherji, *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.76.

becomes, not an unwilling victim forced to yield, but a ‘bawd’ that makes possible the betrayal. Lucrece’s home becomes a representation of her body, resistant yet overcome; the door to the marital bedchamber, like Anne’s body, is made complicit in her crime. Thresholds are now beyond Frankford’s control – Anne has destroyed Frankford’s proprietary right to the boundaries within his home. Frankford himself invited Wendoll within the home, and so permitted him to enter within his gates, but it is Anne who made possible Wendoll’s further penetration of household boundaries.

In his seduction of Anne, Wendoll invokes the two necessary circumstances for both theft and rape – darkness and secrecy. He claims he will be ‘secret, lady, close as night’ about the ‘act of night’ he desires (vi.145, 148). Tellingly, Wendoll figures Anne’s body as a house he will penetrate:

The path of pleasure and the gate to bliss,  
Which on your lips I knock at with a kiss. (160-161)

Anne, who loses all right to her home when she is seduced, is, as mentioned in Chapter Two, spatially disoriented – she is ‘lost’ in a ‘maze’, a ‘labyrinth of sin’ (148, 158, 159). Yet her husband’s discovery of their adultery is only made possible because Wendoll insists on being admitted to her ‘private chamber’: the marital bedchamber (xi.92). Wendoll accompanies his possession of her body, figured as a house, with entry to the most private chamber of her home, thus spatially representing their adultery for her husband. Furthermore, in granting Wendoll entry to the private, secluded, and intimate space of her bedchamber, Anne transforms the association of ‘chaste’ female seclusion to make possible transgression. Her locked bedchamber does not represent her chastity, but her adultery.

#### 4. Under Lock and Key: The Perils of Female Privacy

Female privacy and enclosure can protect the housewife's chastity, but it can also render that chastity vulnerable, and thus threaten the home itself. In *Private Matters*, Orlin recounts an anecdote from John Ponet's *A Short Treatise of Politic Power* (1556). In a discussion of the 'secret subtiltie' a prince may use when dealing with a traitor, Ponet gives an example of a German king, Cakanus, who laid siege to an Italian city.<sup>72</sup> He killed the Duke in battle, but could not penetrate the city's defences. The Duke's wife, Romilda, looked over the city's walls to view her husband's murderer:

Whan she sawe he was a goodly a[n]d faire persone, she was by and by in love with him. She whisheth, that she mighte fele him entere in her owne holde... she promiseth to geve him citie, countrey, jeweles, goodes, and what so ever she could polle of her subjectes, and make for him, so that he wolde marie her.<sup>73</sup>

In figuring Romilda's 'love' for the conquering king as a desire that 'she mighte fele him entere in her owne holde', Ponet at once figures Romilda's body in terms of the spaces of the besieged city in which she dwells, and represents her sexual desire as a desire for invasion – the king's desire to penetrate the city becomes Romilda's desire that both the city, and her body, be penetrated. This slippage is symptomatic of the extent to which Romilda's body is identified with the city. She offers her potential husband jewels, goods, and whatever she can 'polle' of her subjects; to 'polle' is to plunder by excessive taxation, and so Romilda, like a bad housewife, depletes her own city's resources that she might offer them to a stranger. She also offers Cakanus herself.<sup>74</sup> Through her lust (and her outward gaze), Romilda, sequestered within, becomes the place the city is most vulnerable.

The king accepts Romilda's offer; it is safer to marry her than to take the city by force. Yet his forceful consummation of their marriage is represented in terms more appropriate to an act of warfare than an act of love: he 'one nyght toke paynes to shake up her lecherous rotten ribbes'.

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<sup>72</sup> John Ponet, *A Shorte Treatise of Politike Power* (Strasbourg, 1556), H8v.

<sup>73</sup> Ponet, I2v.

<sup>74</sup> 'poll', *OED*, 5a.

Having displaced the planned violent invasion of the city onto the body of his new wife, he proceeds to mete out a punishment he considers appropriate to the betrayal she committed in marrying him:

In the next morning he leaveth his chamber, and her gates open free to every man: and... he gave every man libertie that wolde, to offre his devocion in to her corporese [body]. So at length when he thought her tired, and her insatiable lust somewhat staunched (for belike it would never have been fully glutted), he caused her to be thrust on a stake naked, that all men might see those ugly parts, which to satisfy she was content to betray her natural country.<sup>75</sup>

Now that Cacanús has entered the city, and, through marrying, conquered both the city itself and the wider ‘countrey’, Romilda’s body is no longer identified with the city to be invaded, but with the dwelling in which she resides. In opening up her dwelling to the streets beyond, Cacanús leaves her body open to any that would violate it. The trajectory that Romilda’s rapists take – from outer gates to inner chamber – parallels both the trajectory of exclusive hospitality, and that of theft. Although Cacanús now owns her body, her house, and her goods alike, as Ponet makes clear in designating the bedroom where she lies ‘his chamber’, the gates to the dwelling are referred to as ‘her gates’, again making possible the slippage between the gates of Romilda’s home and the gates of her body. Thus Cacanús perceives an act of justice in forcing open her home and ordering her rape; she betrayed her people in permitting him to enter the city and her body, and therefore he opens up both her body and her dwelling.

Yet Cacanús has conflated Romilda’s public and private acts. Her love for him, and her decision to marry him, may be a betrayal against her husband whom he killed – comparable to that of Lady Anne in *Richard III*, or that of Gertrude, as discussed in Chapter Two – but it is a betrayal against a man who is dead. She betrays her city in making its enemy its ruler, and in giving the jewels and goods of her city to that enemy; the consummation of her marriage is not itself the act of a traitor, it is only a private betrayal. It is

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<sup>75</sup> Ponet, I2v.

through a violent identification of Romilda's body with the city that Cakanus – and Ponet – see justice in her rape.

Ponet draws a moral from his tale: that 'those can never be faithfull to straungers that be false to their pare[n]t, their countrey'.<sup>76</sup> As Orlin observes, Ponet's tale, 'in its demonstration of the way in which political and domestic betrayals are similarly constructed', foreshadows the ways in which later conduct books parallel domestic and state government.<sup>77</sup> In Chapter One, I discussed Braithwaite's 1630 analogy of the family as a private commonwealth; Ponet's moral makes the same analogy, in the opposite direction.<sup>78</sup> The country is like to a 'parent'; household and familial bonds are used to suggest a charged bond of loyalty and affection between ruler and country. Yet as Ponet describes Cakanus's 'secret subtiltie' in marrying and then destroying Romilda to gain entrance to the city, he also highlights Romilda's fatal error – permitting a dangerous 'straunger' to enter city, home, and bed, and to gain mastery over each.

As Orlin observes, Romilda is compared in the treatise to Alice Arden: the men behave to Romilda 'as some, God give them grace to repent in time, did to the wicked woman of Feversham in Kent, that not long since killed her husband'.<sup>79</sup> Orlin suggests that the justification for Alice's rape, as represented by Ponet, rests in precisely this analogy of the home with the state; just as Romilda's private sexual betrayal is understood as an act of public treason, so the body of Alice Arden, as Arden's wife, is understood in terms of property law:

Because Alyce Arden violated the exclusive rights of the man who had title to her, she made herself, by further analogy to property law, common ground. And as common ground she was correspondingly treated, of 'liberty' to every man 'that would'... Each trespass against the boundaries of Alyce Arden's body ultimately served to reaffirm and to celebrate the notion of men's proprietary rights in women.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ponet, I2v-I3r.

<sup>77</sup> Orlin, *Private Matters*, p.80.

<sup>78</sup> Braithwaite, *English Gentleman*, p.115.

<sup>79</sup> Ponet, I2v.

<sup>80</sup> Orlin, *Private Matters*, pp.82-3.

In Ponet's anecdote, Alice's adultery and petty treason dissolve her right to guard the boundaries of her body, as it is held in common by any men that would penetrate it. In the tale of Romilda, the home is at once the keeper of Romilda's chastity, and synonymous with it: opening the gates of the home and the doors of the chamber at once permits rape, and represents it.

Ponet's casual comparison, assuming that his passing mention will already be known and understood by his readers, suggests that the image of Alice Arden's punitive rapes may have lingered in the minds of the play's first audiences. Thus the fact that, as Orlin argues, Alice's act of adultery rendered her body 'common ground', sheds light on the ways in which Alice's body and the boundaries of her home become identified with one another in the play. Alice violates the boundaries of her house just as, in her act of adultery, she violates the bonds of marriage. Her lover, Mosby, frequently usurps the position of her husband in the household:

Now, Alice, let's in and see what cheer you keep.  
I hope now Master Arden is from home,  
You'll give me leave to play your husband's part. (i.635-637)

Mosby perverts the hospitality he receives in fashioning himself as husband; Alice, in naming Mosby 'master of the house' (640), reinforces this usurpation. Furthermore, she permits Mosby access to the most private spaces of her home:

Remember when I locked thee in my closet,  
What were thy words and mine? Did we not both  
Decree to murder Arden in the night? (191-193)

In permitting Mosby access to her closet, Alice at once emblematises and enables a far greater violation: in sequestering herself in an enclosed space with her lover, Alice is able to plot her husband's murder.

Mosby is not the only man Alice invites to cross domestic boundaries. When a hired killer, Black Will, invites himself to join a planned supper at Arden's house, she not only admits him, but hides him within Arden's counting-house, a private chamber or closet used for

correspondence and accounts, where Arden's money is stored.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, she provides him with the key: 'thou'st keep the key thyself' (xiv.106-107). Her actions are pragmatic – from within the locked counting-house, Black Will is able to leap out and kill Arden. Yet they are also symbolic: Alice commits the ultimate betrayal of the housewife's role in giving away the key to the 'treasure' of the household – her husband's private accounts and, presumably, money – to a ruffian, thief, and murderer. As a 'masterless man', Black Will provokes anxiety through his placelessness: he is not integrated into a household, spatially, hierarchically, or emotionally, and is therefore available to be hired to commit a crime, like the hired murderers in *Macbeth*, as I will discuss further in Chapter Five. Masterless men were associated in the popular imagination with, as Margaret Healy puts it, 'crime and violence, as well as with physical and moral disease'.<sup>82</sup> In receiving and sequestering Black Will, Alice invites each of these malign influences into her home. Furthermore, Alice's transgressive hospitality renders her home 'common ground', for when the Mayor and numerous neighbours enter to search the house without her permission, they give as their excuse the suspected presence of Black Will (xiv.367-368). Through granting strangers access to her house, closet, and counting-house, Alice makes vulnerable her home, her goods, and herself.

The closet and counting-house could be synonymous; in *Arden*, the distinction is not based on use, but on ownership: the closet belongs to Alice, the counting-house, to Arden. In permitting a 'stranger' to enter either space, Alice is committing a transgression, but the transgressions differ in nature. In permitting Mosby entry to her own closet, Alice parallels her adultery; in allowing Black Will to enter, and hold the keys to, the counting house, she demonstrates the extent to which she is willing to deprive her home of the efficacy of its boundaries, and invert household order, in order to deprive it of its head.

The closet was not only associated with storage; it could also be associated with secrecy. Angel Day writes in *The English Secretary* (1599):

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<sup>81</sup> See *OED*, 'counting-house', 1a.

<sup>82</sup> Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.92.

We do call the moste secrete place in the house, appropriate unto our owne private studies, and wherein wee repose and deliberate by deepe consideration of all our weightiest affaires, a Closet... in this place we do solitarie and alone shut up our selves, of this we keepe the key our selves.<sup>83</sup>

Day terms the closet a 'reposement of secrets', and defines it by three things pertaining to it: 'a doore, a locke, and a key'. The possibility of locking both closet and counting-house makes possible the sequestering of men within them without Arden's knowledge; for Alice, these spaces fulfil their functions as repositories of (illicit) secrets.

Thus in early modern culture, female privacy is represented as a paradox. The enclosed chamber guards and represents female chastity. However, if it can be penetrated, whether through husbandly carelessness or cruelty, as in *Lucrece*, *Cymbeline*, and the tale of Romilda, or through adultery and transgression, as in the cases of Alice Arden and Anne Frankford, it becomes the place where that chastity is most under threat. Even as conduct literature advocates enclosure, it warns against the perils of female privacy. In *The English Gentlewoman*, Braithwaite admonishes:

Be you in your Chambers or private Closets; be you retired from the eyes of men; thinke how the eyes of God are on you. Doe not say, the walls encompass mee; darknesse o're-shadowes mee, the Curtaine of night secures me: These be the words of an Adulteresse: Therefore doe nothing *privately*, which you would not do publikely.<sup>84</sup>

In Braithwaite's warning, privacy is dangerous because it implies a space without surveillance, in which illicit actions could take place without public knowledge. Braithwaite invokes the watching eye of an omniscient God in an attempt to counter the transgressive potential of an unseen action. Night, darkness, and enclosure paradoxically provide the opportunity, not for theft, rape, or masculine penetration, but for female agency, a woman's theft of herself as her husband's property.

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<sup>83</sup> Angel Day, *The English Secretary* (London, 1599), p.103.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Braithwaite, *The English Gentlewoman* (London, 1631), p.49.

Braithwaite's comment suggests that the closet is not the only space in which female privacy may be sought.<sup>85</sup> A chamber, which seems likely to imply the bedchamber, could be used for similar purposes; indeed, it could be the more private of the two. Clifford's *Diaries* record, without rancour, that when her husband showed friends around the house on 25 October 1619, he 'showed them the house and the chambers and my closet' (p.85). As Orlin notes, 'Clifford does not herself exhibit the space that was titularly hers'; nor does her statement register any suggestion that this would have been expected.<sup>86</sup> In contrast, her bedchamber is the site of autonomous, and potentially transgressive, withdrawal; after a 'great falling out' with her husband on 15 December 1619, she shows her displeasure by sequestering herself within her chamber:

My Lord came & supped with me in my Chamber, which he had not done since his coming from London, for I determined to keep to my Chamber & did not so much as go over the Threshold of the Door (p.87).

The doorway to Clifford's chamber has become a key threshold in the couple's marital power play; in refusing to cross her own threshold, she forces her husband to enter. Her chamber is a space that she defines as her own through making it a necessary condition of her company. Clifford follows the prescriptions of conduct literature regarding the virtue of feminine enclosure; in so doing, she defines the space of enclosure as a space of female autonomy, an autonomy that threatens her husband's authority over her.<sup>87</sup> Thus whilst female seclusion can demonstrate male proprietary rights and authority, it can also provide opportunities for female agency.

For Braithwaite, such agency implies adulterous sexuality: privacy becomes a form of adultery, even when no man is present. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the bonds of coverture render female agency outside that of her husband either adulterous – under the control of another man who has

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<sup>85</sup> See Longfellow, pp.313-34.

<sup>86</sup> Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, p.315.

<sup>87</sup> See Sharon Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature: Reading Women's Lives, 1600-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.55.

stolen her – or murderous, the only way in law that a wife becomes an accountable agent. Thus privacy within a closet or chamber does not only create the opportunity for secret acts; the desire for privacy also suggests an autonomy that can become adulterous.

In *Othello*, Desdemona falls foul of the masculine suspicion of feminine privacy. Sequestered in her bedchamber, waiting for her (murderous) husband to visit her, she uses her privacy to do the very thing that Braithwaite warns against: to meditate on the act of adultery. Yet it is Othello's defamation of her chastity that causes her to do so – Desdemona is attempting to imagine the act of which she stands accused:

DESDEMONA: Dost thou in conscience think – tell me, Emilia –  
That there be women do abuse their husbands  
In such gross kind?  
EMILIA: There be some such, no question.  
DESDEMONA: Would'st thou do such a deed for all the world?  
EMILIA: Why, would not you?  
DESDEMONA: No, by this heavenly light.  
EMILIA: Nor I neither, by this heavenly light. I might do't as  
well i'th'dark. (IV.iii.59-65)

Here, as elsewhere, darkness is associated with misdeeds. Furthermore, Emilia would seem to justify Braithwaite's warning against private chambers and private acts – she would only commit adultery if she could not be seen to do it.

Othello's compelling image of Desdemona as a 'closet lock and key of villainous secrets' (IV.ii.24) draws on the idea of the closet as both a repository of secrets and a site of illicit activity: here, Desdemona's enclosure does not imply chastity, but secrecy. This is the logical conclusion of Brabantio's construction of Desdemona as a 'jewel' that has been stolen from him, as discussed above. His (chaste) daughter is a treasure that has at once been stolen and lost its value as gift – he can no longer bestow her on another man, and so gives her up, at the Duke's request. Yet Desdemona's value to Othello as a 'jewel' is not under her own control – it depends on what is said of her by others:

IAGO: Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls. (III.iii.160-161)

In 'stealing' Desdemona's good name, Iago suggests that it is she who has stolen herself from Othello, just as she stole herself from her father. Othello's image of Desdemona as a closet does not imply that she is guarding her own chastity from him, but rather that she is hiding her lack of chastity. Othello asks, 'What sense had I of her stol'n hours of lust?', and argues that he that is robbed and does not know it 'is not robbed at all' (III.iii.343-348). He extrapolates from a single act of adultery with Cassio to 'the general camp':

I had been happy if the general camp,  
Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,  
So I had nothing known. (350-352)

Othello thus reads Desdemona's body as 'common ground': like Alice Arden, she has destroyed her husband's proprietary right to her, and so her (supposed) act of infidelity with one man is indistinguishable from mass adultery. Othello terms Desdemona a 'public commoner' (IV.ii.75) because he believes that, in stealing from him, she now holds herself in common. His image is comparable to that in Sonnet 137:

Why should my heart think that a several plot  
Which my heart knows the wide world's common place? (9-10)

The narrator of the sonnet likewise fears that his love holds herself in common; he thus figures her in terms of (non-exclusive) territory.

Thus it is the very fact that private acts are unknowable that imperils Desdemona. No public acts have threatened her chastity; it is the possibility of divergence between the public and the private that permits Iago to tarnish her reputation. Chastity is an invisible virtue which, when revealed to the public gaze, is threatened in the very act of exposure, as Shakespeare explores in *Lucrece* and *Cymbeline*. Iago plays upon this ambiguity to convince Othello, in the absence of proof, of his wife's adultery:

Her honour is an essence that's not seen.  
They have it very oft, that have it not.  
But for the handkerchief. (IV.i.15-17)

Iago posits that 'honour' exists only in the appearance of it, and that even this appearance is fallible. He directs Othello's attention from domestic ideal to domestic object, from Desdemona's chastity to the trivial item that becomes representative of it: the handkerchief.

Iago plants this symbolic connection in Othello's consciousness by suggesting that when a woman is given a handkerchief, it is hers, and she may therefore 'bestow't on any man' (12). This prompts Othello to forge the link himself:

She is protectress of her honour too  
May she give that? (13-14)

The handkerchief ceases, in Othello's eyes, to be the symbolic representation of Desdemona's chastity, and becomes instead the mimetic embodiment of it.

As Boose argues, the symbolism the handkerchief attains in the play is not purely circumstantial. Rather, the signifier of Desdemona's chastity is embroidered upon the very fabric of the 'napkin', in the blood-red strawberries that mimic the spots of virgin blood upon Desdemona's 'wedding sheets'.<sup>88</sup> Much has been made of the exotic and maternal origins of the handkerchief in Othello's tale, but according to the symbolic logic of the play itself, it is still more significant that the handkerchief visually represents the virginity of Desdemona as bride, and thus becomes the symbolic representation of the chastity (or otherwise) of Desdemona as wife.<sup>89</sup>

Yet this alone does not account for the significance of the handkerchief as stage property and symbol. As Karen Newman puts it, the

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<sup>88</sup> Lynda E. Boose, 'Othello's Handkerchief: 'The Recognizance and Pledge of Love', *ELR* 5 (1975), 360-374 (p.362).

<sup>89</sup> See Adelman, pp.62-69. See also Peter Stallybrass, 'Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed' in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourse of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 123-142.

handkerchief is 'what we might term a snowballing signifier... it acquires myriad associations and meanings'.<sup>90</sup> In his famous condemnation of the play, the seventeenth-century critic Thomas Rymer complains that the 'moral' of *Othello* is a 'warning to all good Wives, that they look well to their Linnen'. Rymer's claim is a rhetorical strategy to belittle the play, akin to his suggestion that the play be given a new title:

So much ado, so much stress, so much passion and repetition about an handkerchief! Why was not this call'd *The Tragedy of the Handkerchief*?<sup>91</sup>

Yet Rymer's bathetic humour in fact observes a key facet of the role of the handkerchief in the play. Whether or not a wife can look well to her linen is of great significance in a society in which chastity is associated with enclosure, locked chambers and cabinets, and 'keeping'. In 'losing' the handkerchief, Desdemona unknowingly suggests that she cannot keep domestic objects guarded and enclosed. Furthermore, the handkerchief, once lost, is circulated amongst those who would copy or possess it: Cassio orders Bianca to 'take out' the work, that he also might own it.<sup>92</sup> In permitting a domestic object to be distributed and potentially copied, Desdemona raises the possibility that her body has likewise circulated.

Othello views the handkerchief as both symbol and proof of the extent to which Desdemona's body has been held in common. He is therefore able to misread Desdemona's 'private chamber' as a site, not of chastity, but of adultery. He views Emilia as a bawd, and so addresses her:

Some of your function, mistress.  
Leave procreants alone, and shut the door,  
Cough or cry 'Hem' if anybody come. (IV.ii.29-31)

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<sup>90</sup> Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.91; see pp.82-92.

<sup>91</sup> Rymer, p.160.

<sup>92</sup> See Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p.177. See also Lawrence J. Ross, 'The Meaning of Strawberries in Shakespeare,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 7 (1960), 225-40; and Paul Yachnin, 'Wonder Effects: Othello's Handkerchief' in *Staged Properties*, ed. Gil Harris and Korda, pp.316-324 (p.317).

Othello invokes the stereotypes of adultery: the enclosed space, with a shut door, where solitude is possible. The figure of the guarding servant is inverted; he suggests that Emilia, like the chamber, does not guard the chastity of her mistress, but rather makes unchastity possible:

You, mistress,  
That have the office opposite to Saint Peter  
And keeps the gate of hell, you, you, ay, you,  
We ha' done our course. There's money for your pains.  
I pray you, turn the key and keep our counsel. (IV.ii.94-98)

The key that is an essential feature of a closet or private chamber is here used to suggest not safety, but secrecy.

When Othello enters to kill Desdemona as punishment for her supposed adultery, he carries with him a torch: like the locked chamber and the guarding servant, the torch can at once be a barrier to theft, rape, or adultery, and make it possible. 'Sable night' is represented as partially responsible for Lucrece's rape, yet Tarquin carries a torch in order to enter her chamber. The audience, then, would have recognised the dual associations of Othello's torch. As Frances Teague observes, 'the audience has been trained to link the appearance of a light property with discussions of Desdemona's character' – more specifically, with discussions of Desdemona's 'light' behaviour. Yet there is a 'second, more ominous association': 'in this play, lights appear when violence occurs'.<sup>93</sup> Teague suggests that these associations are specific to the play; yet, as I have shown, Shakespeare is in fact invoking numerous representations of theft, seduction, and rape, in order to bring about the narrative climax.

'The Great Rebuilding' at once reflected and shaped the early modern preoccupation with the home as a place of enclosure and privacy, in which a proliferation of spaces and boundaries patterned degrees of access, withdrawal, and control. I have demonstrated how early modern narratives of theft, seduction, and rape play on the ways in which the home can be protected from penetration and violation – secured boundaries, locked doors

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<sup>93</sup> Frances Teague, 'Objects in *Othello*' in *Othello: New Perspectives* ed. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Kent Cartwright (London: Associated University Presses, 1991), pp.177-188 (p.180).

and chambers, guarding servants, and vigilant housewives and daughters – to express anxieties about what happens when these protections fail, or conversely, render the home (and the bodies of its inhabitants) still more vulnerable. In the murder of Sir Jerome Bowes, thieves are able to access the ‘treasure’ of the house, despite locked doors, daylight, and the guarding servant. In *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *A Warning for Fair Women*, the vulnerability of the liminal spaces of the home makes possible the seduction of wives and daughters, because those daughters and wives themselves inhabit those spaces, and, through their agency, undo the integrity of the household. *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Cymbeline* both demonstrate how male violence and subterfuge can cross boundaries within the home; but they also interrogate the paradox of female chastity, which is at once a bodily treasure to be stolen, a state dependent upon female will, and a ‘reputation’ that depends upon the power of language and can be threatened by the speech of the husband who is supposed to protect it. *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, *Arden of Faversham*, and *Othello* each disrupt the perceived correlation between enclosure and chastity, staging the ways in which female promiscuity may be associated with ‘common ground’ and openness, yet female privacy in locked chambers can make possible adultery.

Thus *Othello* invokes the tropes associated with the illicit privacy that promotes adultery; yet the secret act that takes place within Desdemona’s locked bedchamber is not sex, but murder. Shakespeare demonstrates that the greatest threat within their marital home is not Desdemona’s autonomous privacy, but Othello’s murderous suspicion, and thus challenges the concerns about illicit female privacy that permeated early modern culture. Othello undoes the efficacy of the locked and darkened chamber in hiding secrets – he makes possible the penetration of the judging community of neighbours and kin, to bear witness to his crime and see justice done. The perils of female privacy may be of public importance, but violence alone can shatter the boundaries of the home, so that private acts have public consequences, as the following chapter will explore.

#### 4. Neighbourhood: Constructing Domestic Surveillance

A woman here lieth dedde on grounde,  
God knoweth here I dead have her found,  
Drawe nere and see her deadly wounde,  
Whiche grevous is to me:  
Beholde he saied, and cried faste,  
She is out of a windowe caste,  
The people then in all the haste,  
Drewe nere that facte to see.<sup>1</sup>

The 1573 pamphlet *A True Reporte* opens with the narrator asleep in his bed on a windy night. He is woken by a cry from outside; his neighbour has discovered a woman lying dead in the street, thrown from the window of a nearby house. The assembled crowd decides that the wounds inflicted upon the body must be the work of the woman's husband, with whom she was seen earlier that evening. Our narrator calls for the husband, but, receiving no answer, bangs upon his door until he comes forth. Being confronted with the body of his wife, and then taken to the sheriff, and finally to jail, the husband, John Kynnestar, confesses to the crimes. Kynnestar is then judged guilty of the murder, and executed.

*A True Reporte* defines itself as a 'news' text, conveying details of a true, recent, and disturbing murder to the reading public. The veracity of the text is asserted not only by the reported experience of the narrator, but also by a list of local witnesses who agree that 'this is true'.<sup>2</sup> Yet despite being presented within the paratexts of a news pamphlet, the text itself is closer in form to a broadside ballad; it is written in verse, and has a unnamed narrator who is a participant within the action rather than a mere observer of it. However, *A True Reporte* maintains the conventions of news pamphlets reporting murder in focusing on the 'true' and recent nature of the crime, and in recounting a bloody and disturbing murder within a narrative framework of detection, judgement, and punishment; a framework which

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<sup>1</sup> D. S., *A True Reporte or Description of an Horrible, Wofull, and Moste Lamentable Murther* (London, 1573), A2r.

<sup>2</sup> D. S., A1v.

relies upon the surveillance, witnessing, and shared responsibility of the surrounding neighbourhood.

In *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, Lake explores the extent to which murder pamphlets at once induce disorder through describing titillating acts of sex and violence, and use narrative strategies to 'control and contain' these disorderly elements, in representing the trial, confession, and punishment of the criminal.<sup>3</sup> He argues that the pamphlets derive their popularity from both their sensationalised accounts of disruptive behaviour, which enact communal fantasies of subversion and disobedience, and their containment of this behaviour within conventional narratives of state justice. The texts at once allow the reader to collude with forbidden behaviour, and to judge such behaviour from a safe distance.

This chapter explores the ways in which accounts of domestic murder are contained within a narrative framework of detection and judgement, a framework that depends upon the early modern concept of neighbourhood. This was defined, as now, as a community living in close physical proximity; yet it could also be used as a mass noun describing neighbours (a sense now obsolete), or as an abstract noun with an implied value judgement (as in 'neighbourly behaviour').<sup>4</sup> With the qualifiers 'good', 'bad', or 'ill', it referred not merely to the physical conditions and mood of the area surrounding a home, but to an abstract quality describing behaviour between neighbours.<sup>5</sup> Neighbourhood implied a claim, if not for affection, then at least for loyalty. Thus a 1583 pamphlet detailing the murder of one neighbour by another refers to the crime not as unlawful, but as unnatural, and compares it to the unnatural act of husband murder:

Shall I not say, the husband hath abridged the lyfe of his espoused Wife and mate, and she likewise committed the like unnaturall acte on her Husband? Hath not one brother murdered the other, one neighbour killed the other, one frend been false to the other?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lake, p.xiv.

<sup>4</sup> 'neighbourhood', *OED*, 1a/2a; 4a; 6a.

<sup>5</sup> 'neighbourhood', *OED*, 6b. See also *A Briefe Discourse of Two Most Cruell and Bloudie Murthers* (London, 1583): 'the crueltie of his unneighbourlike deede', B1r.

<sup>6</sup> *Two Most Cruell and Bloudie Murthers*, A3r.

Early modern neighbourhood, then, involved a level of moral responsibility by each head of household for the behaviour of his or her neighbours; once a crime had taken place, this moral responsibility became a legal responsibility to witness. This chapter examines the containment of the disruptive elements of domestic murder within a narrative framework underpinned by this concept of neighbourhood: first, as a surveilling neighbourhood spying upon the borders of the home in domestic murder accounts; then, as a detecting neighbourhood watching entrances and exits in the earliest surviving domestic tragedy; and finally, as a judging neighbourhood in the staging of household murder, portrayed as invading the home to witness the consequences of crime. In so doing, it explores how *Macbeth* and *Othello* borrow spatial and dramaturgical tropes from cheap print and domestic tragedies in staging the aftermath of domestic murder.

### **1. Neighbourhood Surveillance and Providential Detection in News Pamphlets**

*A True Reporte* depends upon a narrator neighbour who detects domestic crime and brings the criminal to judgement. As a newsworthy murder account, it relies upon a witnessing neighbourhood as a signifier of truth. Yet the narrative also depends upon the significance of neighbourhood for the criminal himself.

John Kynnestar murders his (unnamed) wife upon their bed, before casting her body from the window. He does so not in order to dispose of it, but rather, ‘cause people should her see’: the surrounding neighbourhood should view the body.<sup>7</sup> He wishes to call the neighbours to the scene of the murder, but there is not enough light for his wife’s corpse to be seen, and so he casts the corpse from the window, in the hope that his neighbours will view it by the light of the street. This suggests that it was dawn, or shortly after, when the body was defenestrated, as whilst candles and oil lamps could be used to light night-time journeys, there was no fixed street lighting

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<sup>7</sup> D. S., B1r.

in Elizabethan England.<sup>8</sup> Thus Kynnestar's murder is carried out in darkness, within his bedchamber, but his revelatory defenestration displays the body in the day-lit, open world of the street.

Kynnestar is therefore aware that his murder must have consequences, but he does not situate his act within the parameters of the legal system; it is the narrator, not the subject, of the text who forges a relationship, begun in the jail and ended at the gallows, between the criminal and the state. Rather, Kynnestar assumes that as the crime has taken place within his home, it must be of concern to the surrounding community. As it is too dark to invite the community within his home to witness the evidence of his crime, to which the body of his wife has been reduced, he casts the evidence from his home, out into the public street. In so doing, he implicitly asserts that violent disruption in the home is the property of his neighbourhood; an assertion justified by the knocking upon his door that soon follows.

Indeed, the behaviour of the supporting cast of D.S.'s text, as well as that of the narrator himself, reinforces and supports the assumptions of Kynnestar. The cry that wakes the narrator is that of a neighbour on viewing the body; the cry is designed to wake him, for it is designed to alert the whole neighbourhood as to what has occurred. The narrator's neighbours guess at the identity of the murderer, and all support the decision of the narrator to apprehend the murderer and gain his confession. Thus, whilst the trial and execution are the ultimate instruments of justice in the text, the discovery of the crime is represented as the province of the criminal's neighbours.

As Orlin argues, there was little privacy in an early modern home: the community provided a public moral system to complement private conscience, and neighbourly curiosity often ended in the ecclesiastical courts. This 'public policing' ensured that the home remained subject to the state: neighbourhood curiosity 'was authorised – indeed, mandated, as a

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<sup>8</sup> The first public street lamps in England were installed in London in the 1680s. See Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.126.

condition of order'.<sup>9</sup> The household only retained its private authority as long as it remained subject to public laws. Thus windows and doorways did not only facilitate traffic between the public and private spheres; they also laid private actions open to public view. Elizabeth Mazzola and Corrine Abate term early modern homes 'arenas of surveillance', both because those within the home could view those outside from within, and because those without could scrutinise the comings and goings of those within.<sup>10</sup>

The author of *A True Reporte*, D.S., may be the ballad writer 'D. Sterrie', who also wrote *A Briefe Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles*. This ballad describes a fire in Beckles (now 'Beccles', a town in Suffolk), and is narrated by the personified voice of the town. The auditors are referred to throughout as the town's 'neighbours', and are requested to listen to the lament for this reason. The concept of neighbourhood here is a spiritual one, as is registered both in the use of the word 'neighbour' in the Geneva Bible, and in the many references to 'neighbours' in the sermons of the period.<sup>11</sup> The resonance of the spiritual application of this term is drawn from an appreciation of its concrete value; a sense that a neighbour, who lives in the neighbourhood of one's own home, is as connected morally as spatially with the occurrences within that home. The balladeer of Beckles attempts to draw his listeners into an imaginative community of neighbourhood precisely because physical neighbourhood is imbued with such significance.

Whilst the outcomes of neighbourhood surveillance in cheap print reporting domestic murder are invariably represented as positive, the motivations for this surveillance are not. In the news pamphlet *The Horrible Murther of a Young Boy of Three Yeres of Age* (1606), an old Widow and her son attempt to murder two children – a little boy of less than

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<sup>9</sup> Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, p.10. See also Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), esp. p.96.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Mazzola and Corine S. Abate, eds., *Privacy, Domesticity and Women in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), Introduction, p.4.

<sup>11</sup> See for example Luke 10.29-36 ('Which nowe of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the theeues?') and Mark 12.31 ('Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy selfe'). The term 'neighbour' is likewise used in these verses in the Tyndale Bible (1526) and the Bishop's Bible (1568). See also George Abbot, *An Exposition Upon the Prophet Jonah* (Oxford, 1600), p.126.

three years of age, and his sister, of no more than four. The boy is drowned in a ditch, with a piece of wood tied to his back. The girl is forced to watch this, after which her tongue is cut out, and she is left up a tree to perish. However, she is discovered by a passer-by, and alerts the neighbourhood to the crimes of the widow, known locally as 'Mother Dell', and her son.

The pamphlet opens by recording that the two children, in company with a pedlar and unknown woman, were seen to enter the house of Mother Dell by a tailor and 'divers' others, but were not seen to leave it.<sup>12</sup> The first reference to this is not one of concern for the children, but one of anxiety about sexual disreputability: the 'Children were led into the said house by a wandring Pedler & his wife (or Puncke.)' 'Puncke' or 'punck' denoted a prostitute.<sup>13</sup> The narrator would seem to suggest that it is the potential relationship between the pedlar and the unknown woman that causes the observers to pause; they are anxious about the chastity and sexual status of the woman, not about the children accompanying her.

The use of 'puncke' is similar to that of Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*, believed to have been written shortly before the publication of this pamphlet: 'she may be a punk, for many of them are neither maid, widow, nor wife' (V.i.178). It suggests a social anxiety, as well as a moral anxiety; a woman who cannot be defined in terms of her marital status (due to her presumed unchastity) must be defined as a prostitute, and thus as an outsider. The bystanders here are, as Gowing puts it, 'maintaining and surveilling neighbourhood honesty'; for women, honesty constituted 'sexual honesty'.<sup>14</sup> The tailor is the only one of those watching who takes note of the children, yet he is interested not in their welfare, but in their location: he wants to know where they are, so that he can be certain to find them again, as they are wearing fashionable clothes, and he wishes to copy the patterns for his trade.

The neighbours, then, are represented as being motivated by both self-interest and a prurient curiosity; they are concerned with gaining knowledge and passing judgement for their own sakes, not for the wellbeing

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<sup>12</sup> *The Horrible Murther of a Young Boy of Three Yeres of Age* (London, 1606), p.1. Further references will be incorporated into the text.

<sup>13</sup> 'punk', *OED*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Gowing, *Common Bodies*, p.103, p.52.

of those they observe. Yet this does not prevent them from being instruments of good within the text. Indeed, they are portrayed as the instruments of a providential God, who stage-manages the discovery of the murderers and miraculously grants speech to the tongueless child, that she might condemn her attackers. The motives behind neighbourly curiosity are neither interrogated nor judged; the curiosity itself is represented as a sufficient strategy of legal and moral surveillance.

It is the tailor who first links his observations of the house with wrongdoing. Having seen the children enter, but only the pedlar and his 'puncke' exit, he goes to Mother Dell, the owner of the house, and questions her as to the whereabouts of the children. Whilst this does not itself lead to discovery of the murderer, it is the first instance within the text of the house itself representing (and therefore revealing) the crimes of the murderers. First the entrances and exits of the pedlar and 'puncke' cause the tailor to confront Mother Dell on her own doorstep; next the injured child herself recognises the house, and cries out, a cry which 'drewe people about her' (p.5). Then Mother Dell and her son appear at the door, and the child cries still louder, alerting the neighbours to wrongdoing. 'Some of the Neighbours' then enter the house, without permission, leading the child with them (p.6).

The local Justice is convinced of the guilt of the murderers. However, they refuse to confess, and as the tongueless girl cannot speak her accusation, he is unable to bring them to trial. He imprisons them until the next assizes, hoping that 'God would in time make it yet more plaine then it was' (p.7). Soon after, God grants miraculous speech to the girl, and she is able to testify at the trial. Before the jury withdraw, they look inside the girl's mouth, but cannot see 'so as much as the stumpe of a tongue therein' (p.9). Having witnessed proof of the God's providential interference, they find the murderers guilty.

This miraculous occurrence might seem out of place in a news pamphlet that purports to present a 'true relation' of the crime (p.1). Yet such occurrences are characteristic of the genre. The majority of murder pamphlets represent neighbourhood detection and legal judgement as enabled through a Protestant, providential master-narrative in which an

omniscient God interferes with the legal and local processes, providing clues, confessions, and the whereabouts of criminals.

In this way, news pamphlets reporting domestic murder resemble the genre of medieval saints' lives; these texts were largely suppressed by the Reformation, but generic motifs surfaced in a wide range of secular narratives.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Chaucer's 'Prioress's Tale', which would have been familiar to early modern readers, incorporates many features of the genre; the tale narrates the murder of a young Christian boy, whose corpse sings the *Alma Redemptoris*, allowing his mother to locate his body:

Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright,  
He *Alma redemptoris* gan to synge  
So loude that al the place gan to rynge.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the fact that his throat has been cut, the boy is able to sing; his singing attracts not only his mother, but all the Christians in the town, who come to wonder at the miracle, and carry the child in a procession to the abbey. The song indicates both God's hand in the miracle, and that the boy's murder is religious in nature, and thus the miracle intersects with the close ties and ritual behaviours of the Christian community, to bring about, not justice, but public and acknowledged martyrdom. Likewise, in *The Horrible Murther of a Young Boy*, the miraculous speech of the tongueless child does not take place in isolation; rather, the providential device of tongueless speech intersects with neighbourhood surveillance and the child's cry on seeing the murderers' house, to bring about the apprehension and execution of the murderers.

It is significant that it is the sight of the house, not the criminals, that first causes the child to cry out in accusation; she identifies her attackers with the house that contains them. This identification is reinforced by the logic of the narrative; the child's wordless accusations are confirmed by the objects within the house, as the home gives up its secrets. The home is both

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<sup>15</sup> See for example, Helen Hackett, 'Suffering saints or ladies errant? Women who travel for love in Renaissance prose fiction', *Yearbook of English Studies* 41.1 (January, 2011), 126-140.

<sup>16</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Prioress's Tale', *The Canterbury Tales* in *The Riverside Chaucer* ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, M.A: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), lines 1801-1803.

a representation of the criminals, and the revelatory scene of the crime. The crime in its entirety does not occur in the house; much of it takes place in the surrounding woods and fields. Yet the home is so much identified with its owners that it becomes the revelatory site of their secrets, whether or not it has witnessed them.

Neighbourhood surveillance, then, is represented as legitimated by suspicion of misconduct, sexual or otherwise. However, neighbourhood interference requires not only suspicion, but evidence. When the tailor and ‘divers’ others suspect a link between the house and sexual immorality, it licenses them to knock upon the door and question the owners, but not to enter. When the child provides a link between her wound and the house, the neighbours are able to enter. Transgression dissolves both the boundaries to private property, and the occupier’s rights to protect those boundaries; furthermore, the home is portrayed as legitimately betraying its inhabitants by giving up its secrets to those from outside its walls.

The reactions of the neighbourhood to crimes within that neighbourhood in *The Horrible Murther of a Young Boy* are represented as legitimate, lawful, and sanctioned by God. A similar construction of neighbourhood response to crime can be seen in *The Murthering of John Brewen* (1592), discussed in Chapter Two. Anne Brewen murders her husband at the behest of her lover, John Parker. She pledges herself initially to both men, and only marries Brewen after he has her arrested for refusing to return jewels he had gifted her on the understanding that they would marry. When she agrees to marry him, he drops all charges. However, Parker persuades her to refuse to share her husband’s bed until he buys her a better house, and Anne moves to lodgings some distance away, in order to be close to Parker. She then murders her husband.

The crime is discovered two years later, when Anne is overheard arguing about it with her lover: ‘These speeches thus spoken betweene them in vehemencie of spirite, was over heard of some that revealed it to the majestrates.’<sup>17</sup> Anne is at this point pregnant with Parker’s child, and attempts to persuade him to marry her. She strives to hide the pregnancy

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<sup>17</sup> *Murthering of John Brewen*, p.6.

from her neighbours until the marriage has taken place; indeed, she is so anxious to save her credit that she will not ‘goe forth of her doores for feare her neighbours should perceave her great bellie’.<sup>18</sup> Thus her neighbours overhear the above speeches when she is within her home; it is an ‘arena of surveillance’, where private speech may be overheard by those outside its walls. Furthermore, Anne’s anxieties about hiding her pregnancy suggest that the motives for the neighbours’ eavesdropping may be related to concern about her sexual status, rather than her potential for criminality.

The eavesdropping is here justified by what is overheard; the criminality of the speech allows the neighbours to report it to the magistrates. It is further justified by the moral the author draws from it; that ‘the Lorde will bring it out, for bloud is an unceassant crier in the eares of the Lord and he will not leave so vilde a thing unpunished’.<sup>19</sup> The act of eavesdropping is rendered providential, enabled by God and carried out through the curiosity of his instruments.

A similar act of overhearing takes place in *The Arraignment of Margaret Fern-seede*, in which, as discussed in Chapter Three, Margaret Fernseede kills her husband when he discovers that she is a bawd. Here, the act of eavesdropping precipitates one crime in revealing another: Anthony Fernseede overhears strange men speaking and coughing in the next room, and so confronts his wife, and is murdered by her. Both accounts testify to the permeability of the early modern home; walls were thin – in timber-framed houses, they were usually constructed from wattle and daub (interwoven twigs plastered with clay or mud<sup>20</sup>) – and whilst private spaces may have existed within the home, private conversations could not be guaranteed.<sup>21</sup> Yet they also suggest the limits of neighbourly curiosity.

In both texts, as in *The Horrible Murther of a Young Boy*, neighbourly curiosity is able to discover the crime, but it is unable to prevent it. Anne Brewen poisons her husband over several days, without the suspicion of her neighbours, despite the fact that she has not lodged with

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<sup>18</sup> *Murthering of John Brewen*, p.5.

<sup>19</sup> *Murthering of John Brewen*, p.6.

<sup>20</sup> ‘wattle and daub’, *OED*, 1b.

<sup>21</sup> See Trudy West, *The Timber-Frame House in England* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971), esp. pp.119-20.

him since their wedding night, and is regularly visited by the man who was formerly her suitor. There is also an essential misreading of the situation on the part of the neighbours, who believe that Anne is an 'honest woman', although 'through her youth, she knew not as then how to behave herself to her husband so kindly as she ought, which they imputed to her ignorance, rather than to any mallice conceived against her husband'.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, two neighbours speak to Margaret Fernseede after the discovery of her husband's body, and infer from her callous reaction that she may have been responsible for his murder. However, despite the fact that Anthony Fernseede is 'amongst his neighbours, reputed to be both sober and of verie good conversation', whilst Margaret commits acts of 'publique and inrespective unchastitie', no neighbour informs Anthony of Margaret's scandalous behaviour prior to his demise; and his own discovery of it is what causes his murder.<sup>23</sup> Thus there are limits to the potency of neighbourhood surveillance; it is a force for detection, not for prevention, and is motivated by curiosity, not by concern. It is only wholly a force for good when rendered providential by God.

In *The Manner of the Cruell Outragious Murther of William Storre* (1603), a parish priest, William Storre, is stabbed in the street by Francis Cartwright, the son of a local lord. He later dies of his injuries. A passing maidservant witnesses the attack and cries out, causing Cartwright to flee. This brings 'many of the neighbors' to the scene of the crime.<sup>24</sup> But they are so disturbed to see their minister bleeding heavily that they run into the town, all variously yelling and crying 'murder', so that those who hear them do not understand what has occurred, and toll the town bells, thinking there may have been a fire. It takes some time to alert the proper authorities, by which time the murderer has fled, and is hiding in his father's house. Thus concerned neighbours are represented as obstructing the course of justice, rather than assisting it; furthermore, their actions reinforce the authority of the private householder, who is able to protect his murderous son within his home, despite the nature of his crime.

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<sup>22</sup> *Murthering of John Brewen*, p.5.

<sup>23</sup> *Araignment & Burning*, A3v.

<sup>24</sup> *The Manner of the Cruell Outrageous Murder of William Storre* (Oxford, 1603), A3r.

The neighbours here do not demonstrate ‘good neighbourhood’; rather, they are symptomatic of the dangers of living in close proximity to those who, unlike members of the household, have no vested interest in the success of the larger unit. The obstruction of justice by bystanders is possible because the crime scene is spatially unbounded; the public nature of the crime, which cannot be contained within a single building or identified as the responsibility of a single householder, produces the confused response amongst those who discover it. A similar reaction is evident in *A True Reporte*, prior to the moment when the home of the murdered woman (and thus the murderer) is identified. By occurring in a public space that is ruled by no single, local authority, but only by the wider state, the stabbing of William Storre lessens the power of the neighbours to intervene.

Yet *The Manner of the Cruell Outragious Murther* is unusual, in that it not only portrays the reaction of a community to murder: it is also itself a communal response to the murder, and a neighbourhood attempt to bring the murderer to justice. Rather than encasing the narrative of the murder within a textual framework of discovery, trial, and retribution, the text enacts the condemnation of the murderer by the community, and aims to influence public justice and thus bring about execution. It is at once news and petition. The necessity for this stems from the position of the murderer; due to his father’s wealth and influence, and a perceived lack of evidence (which the pamphlet argues can be contradicted by the testimony of witnesses), the justice system refused the case. Thus four signed testimonies are affixed to the pamphlet, attesting to the truth of the account and the character of the murdered man, and each is accompanied by names of those of similar position and walks of life: one signed by parishioners, one by preachers, one by knights and esquires, and one by bachelors and doctors of divinity from Oxford. The various neighbourhoods of which the murdered priest was part – physical, educational, and spiritual communities – attempt to enact the process of justice on his behalf. As in so many murder pamphlets, the testimonies are not signed by eyewitnesses to the murder or auditors of the murderer’s confession; the ‘witnesses’ have heard the accounts of others and drawn their own conclusions.

*The Manner of the Cruell Outragious Murther*, therefore, is able to represent foolish neighbourhood responses to crime precisely because it fashions itself in opposition to the communal behaviour it narrates. Storre's murder does not occur within a private residence, but it does occur within an identifiable neighbourhood. The murder of the priest is geographically situated within his own parish, and thus becomes the responsibility of his parishioners, who set themselves up as judges, independent of legal responsibility or authority bestowed by the state. In signing these testimonies, the representatives of Storre's communities do not themselves attest that they have seen the crime, or the evidence of it; not even the narrator can claim this, and the discovery of the body in this case belongs to the nameless maid who adds neither her testimony nor her signature.

The pamphlet is keen to emphasise that whilst the murder took place outside, the death of the priest occurred days later, in the private, enclosed space of his bedchamber. His injuries, received on the street, took many days to kill him, and thus his dying words were spoken upon his deathbed. The narrator, invited into the bedchamber of the dying man, imaginatively extends this invitation to the geographical and spiritual communities of the victim, through representing both space and words in his account. The reader of the pamphlet, given access to the same narrative, and to the names and testimonies of the men who support its (reported) truth, is invited to do the same, and thus to participate, like the 'neighbours' in Sterrie's ballad, in a fictional community of readers and auditors, who may themselves judge the 'truth' the text conveys.

Thus the representation of neighbourhood in news pamphlets relating domestic murders is at once a shared fantasy of a world in which crimes, through providence, law and neighbourhood, are made manifest and known, and a pragmatic acceptance of the limits of neighbourly suspicion and interference. In a world in which conduct books, law treatises and state-sanctioned homilies propagate the ideal of the home as both an Englishman's castle and a self-contained system of government, neighbours can witness and judge, but cannot always intervene. Cheap print emphasises its proximity to the workings of the legal system, to the witnesses who give their names and testimonies, and to the crime itself, but cannot fully contain

the disruptive potential of domestic murder. Yet in fashioning an imaginative community of omniscient readers and auditors, able to access clues, confessions, and the crime itself independently of the apparatus of law, these news texts allow their audiences to participate in the illusion of security created by a God-driven, legally sanctioned narrative of detection, punishment, and neighbourhood judgement. When the detecting neighbourhood is staged, this imaginative community is transferred from a geographically diverse group of readers to a theatrical neighbourhood: that of the audience.

## 2. Neighbourhood Watch in *Arden of Faversham*

As an early domestic tragedy, *Arden of Faversham* offers its audience unprecedented access to the staged private spaces of an early modern home; and, in so doing, it figures the audience as the surrounding neighbourhood. In the opening scene, Alice complains of the gossip of ‘marrow prying neighbours’; neighbours whose prying and penetrative gaze pierces Alice to her very marrow, and who prevent Alice’s assignations by making her an object of surveillance:

I know he loves me well, but dares not come,  
Because my husband is so jelious:  
And these my marrow prying neighbours blab,  
Hinder our meetings when we would conferre.<sup>25</sup>

Thanks to ‘common table-talk’ in the homes of ‘all the knights and gentlemen of Kent’, Arden is already aware of ‘privy meetings’ between Mosby and Alice in the town, and so Alice decides to ‘remove’ the ‘block’ to her assignations – by murdering her husband (i.137-141).<sup>26</sup> Yet in her willingness to arouse the community’s suspicion whilst skirting her husband’s disapproval, Alice Arden fatally misconstrues the potential of neighbourhood surveillance.

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<sup>25</sup> *The Lamentable and True Tragedie of M. Arden of Faversham in Kent* (London, 1592), A3v. The 1592 edition is quoted here for reasons discussed below.

<sup>26</sup> See Julie R. Schutzman, ‘Alice Arden’s freedom and the suspended moment of Arden of Faversham’, *SEL* 36.2 (Spring 1996), 289-314 (pp.302-3).

Moments after Alice has murdered her husband, neighbours knock at the door. Her accomplices flee, and Alice attempts to clean the tell-tale blood from the floor, yet the evidence cannot be concealed from the ‘marrow prying’ gaze of the neighbourhood. The visitors spot the bloodstains and recognise the domestic objects turned murder weapons found with Arden’s corpse as belonging to his home. Furthermore, the Mayor of Faversham, at once the most illustrious of those neighbours and a representative of the state, notices the final entrance of Arden, shortly before his death: ‘I saw him come into your house an hour ago’ (xiv.363), he tells Alice. The Mayor’s observation appears in none of the chronicle sources; in including this detail, the playwright dramatises how the transgressions of the Arden household open up the house to the prying gaze of the surrounding neighbourhood, so that the spaces of the home, the threshold to it, and the domestic objects that belong to it, bear witness to the crime.

Alice’s memorable phrase, ‘marrow prying neighbours’, appears only in the first quarto of the text. Later quartos, published in 1599 and 1633, alter ‘marrow’ to ‘narrow’, a variant which modern editors usually preserve.<sup>27</sup> The phrase ‘narrow prying’ also occurs in *The Taming of the Shrew*: Tranio plans to assist Lucentio in over-reaching Bianca’s ‘narrow-prying father Minola’ (III.3.19). Bianca’s father and suitors alike watch her narrowly; Minola, in order to ‘keep’ his daughter, and the suitors, in order to ‘steal’ her (11-15). Yet Minola’s narrow surveillance proves ineffective; he fails to penetrate the disguises donned by Bianca’s suitors, and does not notice that his daughter has fallen in love with the man who poses as her tutor. The irony of Minola’s narrow prying is that it proves too narrow to observe the creative schemes that are being practised upon him.

In contrast, the neighbourhood surveillance of Alice and Mosby in *Arden* springs not from current or projected possession, but from suspicion of transgression; Alice’s sexual misbehaviour prompts the prying of the neighbourhood. In staging Arden’s home, the play creates a theatrical representation of communal surveillance: the audience are invited, like the

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<sup>27</sup> In *Collaborative Plays*, editors Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen alter the phrase to “narrow, prying neighbours”, so that “narrow” refers to the neighbours, and not to their prying. See *Arden of Faversham* in William Shakespeare and others, *Collaborative Plays* ed. Jonathan Bate, Eric Rasmussen et al (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), i.135.

neighbours, to observe Alice's behaviour within the private spaces of her home, in order to discover her affair with Mosby. This 'marrow prying', far from being constrained by too narrow a focus upon its object, is able to look beyond Alice's adultery to her act of murder.

Wiggins, in his edition of *Arden* in *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays*, preserves the reading of 'marrow prying' in line with his editorial approach to the volume as a whole; he edits the texts from the earliest surviving copies, as 'textual witnesses' to the experiences of the original playgoers. Wiggins glosses 'marrow prying' as 'deeply inquisitive, as if prying with X-ray eyes into the very marrow of her bones'.<sup>28</sup> The 'X-ray' prying is as concerned with Alice's interior motivations as with her exterior actions. Furthermore, the phrase exemplifies the extent to which the neighbours' curiosity is focused upon the interior of Alice's body.

Although *Arden* editors Wine and White prefer Q2 'narrow' over the Q1 'marrow', they observe that the latter is also apt; it appears in *Venus and Adonis* in the phrase 'marrow-eating sickness' (741) referring to 'the early modern belief that bone marrow is sexually provocative'.<sup>29</sup> Thus the curiosity of Alice's marrow prying neighbours can be read as curiosity concerning Alice's sexual (mis)behaviour. In the 1587 play *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, written and played before the Queen by students at Gray's Inn, and published the same year as *Certaine Devises and Shewes*, 'marrow' is mentioned in reference to sexual love by Guinevere, an adulteress with murderous desires. An affair with Mordred has caused her marrow to be 'burnt'; the impact of Guinevere's love on her marrow is physical and violent, and it compels her to contemplate violent acts, first against her husband, then against herself.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, in Barnabe Barnes' sonnet and song collection *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593), the sight of the sonneteer's love, Parthenophe, 'strikes marrow-melting fier' into his eyes (Sonnet 24); later in the sequence, he complains that his marrow is 'perc'd'

<sup>28</sup> *Arden of Faversham* in *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays* ed. Wiggins, n.135, p.291.

<sup>29</sup> See *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham* ed. M. L. Wine (London: The Revels Plays, Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1973), n.135 on 'narrow-prying', 13. See also *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham* ed. Martin White (London: A & C Black, 1982), n.135, p.8.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Hughes, *Certaine Devises and Shewes presented to her Majestie by the Gentlemen of Grayes-Inne* (London, 1587), A3r.

and pricked by love (Sonnet 40, Madrigall 19).<sup>31</sup> His love for the unattainable Parthenophe has a violent effect upon his marrow and itself prompts violence: the text culminates in a rape fantasy, as Parthenophil dreams that ‘loves marrow-flame’ (Sestine 5) encourages him to consummate his passion by force.<sup>32</sup> The neighbours’ prying of Alice’s marrow, then, does not merely constitute watching her closely. Rather, in attempting to see if her marrow has been altered by adulterous desire, they are trying to discover her sexual status, and her potential for future violence.

Yet the neighbours are not only concerned with the state of Alice’s marrow; they are equally concerned with that of her lover. None of the *Arden* editors has observed that a reference to marrow also appears, in all three quartos, in Mosby’s monologue:

Disturbed thoughts drives me from company  
And dries my marrow with their watchfulness. (viii.1-2)

Here, watchfulness could refer either to his disturbed thoughts or to the company he flees; if it is the latter, then their marrow drying watchfulness is the inverse of the marrow prying curiosity of Alice’s neighbours. Mosby’s sexual appetite is reduced by his awareness of the observation of others; Alice’s sexual appetites are the object of those who observe her. The neighbours watch both Alice and her lover with a prurient curiosity – perhaps not unlike the original audience, or the purchasers of the 1592 quarto, which promised on its title page to ‘shew’ a ‘wanton’ woman and her ‘filthie lust’.

Alice is displayed on the stage as an object of surveillance, at once an adulteress pierced by the voyeuristic observation of her neighbours, and a future murderess whose fate is already known to the audience that gazes upon her. Indeed, the ‘marrow prying’ of the neighbours prefigures Alice’s gruesome fate: to be burnt at the stake for petty treason.<sup>33</sup> In life, Alice’s body is metaphorically opened up to the penetrative gaze of her neighbours; in death, her body is revealed to, and consumed before, those who watch her

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<sup>31</sup> Barnabe Barnes, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (London, 1593), p.16, p.26, p.69.

<sup>32</sup> Barnes, p.146.

<sup>33</sup> See Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, ch.1.

execution. The stage space of the theatre and the Faversham neighbourhood Alice inhabits become imaginatively aligned, as neighbours and audience alike observe as Alice's desires are enacted upon the body of her husband.

The neighbourhood surveillance that Alice attempts to evade, then, is focused upon her sexualised (and violent) desires as imprinted upon the interior of her imagined body. Yet this surveillance ends in discovering her murder through the remains of her husband's uncomfortably real corpse: a corpse that is quickly removed from the stage, but which contaminates Arden's home through the spilled blood that stains a knife, a cloth, and the rushes that cover the floor. In surveilling the borders of her home, and eventually being invited within it, Alice's neighbours use the spatial proximity and moral responsibility implicit in the early modern understanding of neighbourhood to police Arden's home and discover the behaviour of the adulterous couple.<sup>34</sup>

As I discussed in Chapter Three, Alice's adulterous and murderous desires manifest themselves in transgressive hospitality: first to her lover, Mosby, and then to the hired killers Black Will and Shakebag. Heal suggests that the symbolic resonance of the doorway to the home as a transitional structure was necessary because allowing total openness 'would have been to deny the significance of this transition, and hence the integrity of the household and its head'.<sup>35</sup> Alice gradually divests the threshold of its significance, and thus undoes Arden's household authority. Through permitting these men entry to her house, she renders its walls permeable: the audience is able to watch Alice Arden's downfall because her transgressions make the private spaces of her home visible, and thus, stageable.

Yet Alice is not the only member of the Arden household to betray Arden by opening up private spaces to dangerous strangers. When Arden stays in Franklin's London residence, his servant Michael, who has been corrupted by Alice's offer that he can marry Mosby's sister Susan if he assists in the murder, makes that house likewise vulnerable to Arden's murderers. When Michael encounters Black Will, Shakebag, and Greene on

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<sup>34</sup> On the relationship between staged action and audience experience in *Arden*, see Gina Bloom, "'My Feet See Better Than My Eyes': Spatial Mastery and the Game of Masculinity in *Arden of Faversham's* Amphitheatre', *Theatre Survey* 53.1 (2012), 5-28.

<sup>35</sup> Heal, p.8.

a London street, he grants imaginative access to the interior of Franklin's home, by giving a detailed description of its layout:

No sooner shall ye enter through the latch,  
Over the threshold to the inner court,  
But on your left hand shall you see the stairs  
That leads directly to my master's chamber. (iii.174-178)

Richardson observes that Michael's description is itself a form of trespass, for 'he offers them familiarity with the unseen private space of the chamber', as 'imagination becomes a form of entry'.<sup>36</sup> Michael's role, like that of Alice, is to guard the boundaries of the home, and, like Alice, he is entrusted with the keys. In unlocking the door to murderers, he at once undoes the power of locks to protect the home, and betrays his role as servant. Yet Michael regrets his decision; awaiting the arrival of the murderers, he becomes afraid and cries out, waking his master and Franklin, so that Arden locks the doors. The stage door that, we may assume, represented the street door, thus becomes the focus of attention: first when Michael imagines Black Will's arrival through it; then, when Arden tries, and locks, the doors; and finally, when the stage space is reversed, and the audience is positioned with the murderers, attempting, and failing, to enter.

As *Arden* builds to its bloody denouement, the significance of doors and locks becomes ever more charged; the murder scene is preoccupied with the selective locking and unlocking of the street door. Arden, Alice, and Mosby drink together in an exclusive reception room, removed from the street; Michael must exit to 'lock the street door' (xiv.167), and later, to open the door to the waiting guests. The attention drawn to these thresholds emphasises the exclusivity of the imagined room into which the stage space is transformed. However, once the crime has been committed, the neighbours render the locks and thresholds inefficacious in preventing the penetration of the home by outsiders. First, the door must be opened for the disposal of the body, and the entry of the invited guests; then, the knocking at the doors signals that the Mayor has come to search the house, and the home is about to give up its secrets.

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<sup>36</sup> Richardson, *Domestic Life*, p.119.

In Holinshed's chronicle, numerous clues tell the story of Arden's murder: footprints in the snow, a bloody knife and cloth, and even a piece of his heart. In the play-text, there is one further clue. Alice attempts to cover the blood upon the floor with rushes; however, the blood of the murdered man 'cleaveth' miraculously to the floor (252); it cannot be removed by scrubbing, and so becomes evidence of his murder. This is a variation on cruentation, 'the belief that the corpse of a murdered person would bleed anew in the presence of its murderer'.<sup>37</sup> In James VI's 1597 *Daemonologie*, he claims that a corpse touched by the perpetrator 'wil gush out of bloud, as if the blud were crying to the heaven for revenge to of the murtherer', a 'secret super-naturall signe' appointed by God.<sup>38</sup> This trope frequently appears in news pamphlets: as Malcolm Gaskill notes, cruentation not only 'added dramatic tension to popular pamphlets', but also 'actually featured in trials'.<sup>39</sup> In *Arden*, the idea of cruentation is transfigured, as the house itself becomes allied with both murderer and victim, bearing witness to the guilt of the latter and the wounds of the former.

Yet the blood alone does not prove the identity of Arden's murderer; rather, it is the fact that Alice attempts to cover this blood with rushes. One of these rushes falls into Arden's shoe, and is found with the body, 'which argueth he was murdered in this room' (400). Rushes, as Gurr observes, were used not only as floor coverings in houses, but also to cover the stage in the playhouse.<sup>40</sup> Thus the innovation of rushes as a murder clue draws the audience's attention not merely to Arden's home, but to the stage where the action is played. The actors indicate the realities of the playhouse even as the narrative highlights the specificities of the home. Furthermore, the emphasis on surveillance in *Arden* increasingly accentuates the role of the audience as observers, at once guests, interlopers, and neighbourhood judges within Arden's home.

In the epilogue, Arden's neighbour and friend, Franklin, addresses the audience as 'gentlemen' for whom 'the truth of Arden's death' has been

<sup>37</sup> Erika T. Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.143.

<sup>38</sup> James VI, *Daemonologie in Form of a Dialogue* (Edinburgh, 1597), p.80.

<sup>39</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.227.

<sup>40</sup> Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, p.123.

staged (Epilogue 14, 1). In contrast to the majority of the action of the play proper, the epilogue presents Arden as responsible for his own tragedy, through his forcible acquisition of formerly monastic land, and thus presents his fate as a warning to the landed ‘gentlemen’ of the audience:

Arden lay murdered in that plot of ground  
Which he by force and violence held from Reed;  
And in the grass his body’s print was seen  
Two years and more after the deed was done. (10-14)

The play’s use of the image is borrowed from Holinshed’s account of the murder, which ends with this quasi-miraculous incident; Holinshed explains the miracle as stemming from Arden’s own crime against the widow from whom he originally seized the land where his body was laid. In borrowing this detail, the play becomes a spatial morality tale, for just as Alice’s murder of her husband within her own home leads to the discovery of her guilt within (and because of) that home, so Arden’s crime of seizing land leads both to the presence of his corpse upon that land, and to the imprint of his body bearing witness to his crime, just as his home bears witness to his murder.<sup>41</sup>

Alice’s agency in the murder is thus occluded, and the potential agency of watching female audience members is likewise diminished; Franklin’s address to the ‘gentlemen’ in the audience is the inverse of the strategy used in broadside ballads addressed to women, where the female murderer warns the (female) audience by her example, as I discussed in Chapter Two. Throughout the play, Alice demonstrates a subversive agency unmatched by the adulterous murderesses of other domestic tragedies; she does not murder one husband merely to unite herself to another, but rather, declares that ‘Love is a god, and marriage is but words’ (i.101), questioning the bedrock of household hierarchy, so that even her lover mistrusts her:

You have supplanted Arden for my sake,  
And will extirpen me to plant another. (viii.40-41)

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<sup>41</sup> See Orlin, ‘Man’s House’; and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., *The Drama of Landscape: Land, Property, and Social Relations on the Early Modern Stage* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), ch.1.

Unlike Anne Sanders, Anne Frankford, and Mrs Wincott, Alice freely owns her desire for 'Sweet Mosby' (i.98). The surveillance of the marrow prying neighbours becomes a strategy to contain this dangerous female agency that cannot be fully subsumed by a relationship with a man; likewise, Franklin's epilogue undercuts this agency by diminishing Alice's role in Arden's tragedy, and refusing to acknowledge the watching (and potentially desirous or murderous) women of the audience.

In *Arden of Faversham*, the audience members witness household disruption, disorder, and dissolution; but they also witness the inability of the house to hide transgressions from the gaze of the wider community. *Arden* stages the consequences of Arden's greed and Alice's adultery, dangerous hospitality, and murder; in so doing, it legitimises the sexualised curiosity of its audience members, and allows them to become complicit in sensational crime, only to be invited to judge that crime and witness its consequences. Alice Arden's murder transforms the sexually inflected spectatorship of neighbourhood and audience into a moral act that is justified by what it observes; communal curiosity becomes policing of the community, as the gaze and judgement of the neighbourhood enables the processes of the justice system.

### **3. Drawing the Curtain in *Othello*; Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth***

*Macbeth* and *Othello* both stage the aftermath of a household murder. Although the former depicts regicide, and the latter, the murder of a Venetian wife by her 'Moorish' husband in Cyprus, both borrow dramaturgical and spatial tropes from domestic tragedies based on 'true' and recent English crimes. Shakespeare uses theatrical architecture and offstage sound effects to play on the motif of the detecting neighbourhood, and in so doing, draws on portrayals of neighbourhood surveillance from news pamphlets and domestic tragedies alike to interrogate the extent to which violent domestic transgressions can be contained by the surrounding community.

In murdering Duncan, Macbeth violates the codes of hospitality, kinship, and fealty. When Macbeth first contemplates the crime, he complains:

He's here in double trust.  
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
Not bear the knife myself. (I.vii.12-16)

As Naomi Conn Liebler puts it, 'Macbeth casts regicide in the language of inhospitable behaviour'.<sup>42</sup> Macbeth's image of shutting the door against the murderer is more than a metaphor; in the immediate aftermath of the crime, Lady Macbeth boasts:

The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms  
Do mock their charge with snores. I have drugged their possets  
That death and nature do contend about them  
Whether they live or die. (II.ii5-8)

Lady Macbeth opens the door to Duncan's murderer: her husband. At night, the housewife's duty, as discussed in Chapter Three, involves two tasks: as Tusser advises, she must watch; and she must lock (S4v, U4r). Just as Arden's servant Michael betrays his role as servant in failing to lock Franklin's door against the would-be murderers, and in watching to guide their secret arrival rather than to prevent their entrance, so Lady Macbeth, in opening Duncan's door and incapacitating his servants, betrays her role as housewife and hostess. She opens the doors that should be locked, and drugs the servants that should be looking. Yet in opening up Duncan's chamber to their malign influences, and making both his body and the bodies of his servants vulnerable to their acts of violence, the Macbeths undo the efficacy of the walls and doors of their home in protecting them. Their castle, in becoming a site of violation, is opened up to the scrutinising gaze of the outside world.

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<sup>42</sup> Naomi Conn Liebler, *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy: The Ritual Foundations of Genre* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.206.

Shortly after Macbeth has committed the murder, and before Lady Macbeth has had time to smear the grooms with blood to indicate their guilt, there is a knock at the castle gates. Macbeth hears it, but does not recognise it:

Whence is that knocking? –  
How is't with me when every noise appals me?  
What hands are here! Ha, they pluck out mine eyes. (II.ii.55-56).

His thoughts shift from the sound of the knocking to his bloody hands: although he does not consciously recognise the knock as belonging to visitors to the castle who may discover the crime, he unconsciously forges the link between the knock and the blood of his hands, blood that he cannot bear to look at, because it proves his guilt.

Lady Macbeth re-enters, her hands equally stained, and another knock is heard. She quickly makes sense of the location of the knocking, and of its necessary consequences:

*Knock [within]*  
LADY MACBETH: I hear a knocking  
At the south entry. Retire we to our chamber.  
A little water clears us of this deed.  
How easy is it then! Your constancy  
Hath left you unattended.  
*Knock [within]*  
Hark, more knocking.  
Get your nightgown, lest occasion call us,  
And show us to be watchers. Be not lost  
So poorly in your thoughts.  
MACBETH: To know my deed 'twere best not know myself.  
*Knock [within]*  
Wake Duncan with thy knocking. I would thou couldst. (63-72)

Lady Macbeth makes an explicit link between the knock and the potential for discovery, suggesting both that the blood must be cleared, and that they must establish their alibi – that of sleep. On this occasion, being shown to be a ‘watcher’ would be read not as a sign of wifely duty, but of guilt; it would appear as if the Macbeths had failed to prevent Duncan’s murder, and thus, their wakefulness would become suggestive of criminality rather than vigilance. Yet, as Sarah Wintle and René Weis observe, ‘her repeated

insistences to her husband that he wash himself are telling assertions of the fact of intimacy and domestic relation itself': Lady Macbeth's wifely instructions may relate to the specificities of concealing a recent murder, but they are rooted in the quotidian familiarity of a wife's instructions that her husband wash himself and change into his nightgown.<sup>43</sup>

As I discussed in Chapter Two, the aftermath of murder in domestic tragedies is frequently contained within the daily life of the household. Men may commit violent murder, but women clean up the blood. Even where one of the murderers is female, as in the case of Alice Arden, another woman – the maidservant, Susan – is required to perform the housewifely role of returning the home to its former clean and ordered state, thus disposing of the evidence. Yet here, Lady Macbeth's housewifely injunctions to Macbeth are coupled with her housewifely violations, in making possible the murder of a guest and concealing the crime.

Indeed, the entirety of this scene becomes almost a parody of the vigilance required of householders and their wives. As Rebecca Totaro argues, Duncan is vulnerable to the machinations of the Macbeths because he is asleep.<sup>44</sup> When Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to murder, she asks,

What cannot you and I perform upon  
Th'unguarded Duncan? (I.vii.69-70)

He is unguarded both because the Macbeths have drugged his guards, and because Duncan has, in sleeping, granted the responsibility of guarding him to his hosts, and they have failed in it. Yet their vigilance in effecting their own ends – murder – leads to a hyper-vigilance that leaves them unable to distinguish and judge, and ultimately undermines their success.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Tusser advises that, at each crowing of the cock, the housewife listen for noise:

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<sup>43</sup> Sarah Wintle and René Weis, 'Macbeth and the Barren Sceptre', *Essays in Criticism* 41.2 (April, 1991), 128-146 (p.144).

<sup>44</sup> Rebecca Totaro, 'Securing Sleep in *Hamlet*', *SEL* 50.2 (Spring, 2010), 407-426 (pp.409-410).

If noyse ye do heare,  
looke all things be cleare  
Least drabs do noy thee,  
and theeves destroy thee. (S4v)

In the immediate aftermath of the murder, both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth exhibit an excessive sensitivity to the night-time noises of the household. After he has done the deed, Macbeth cries out ‘Who’s there? What ho?’ (II.ii.8). Lady Macbeth, waiting below, fears that his cry suggests that the guards have awakened, and the crime has not been committed. The fact that the Macbeths cannot see one another, and Lady Macbeth’s inability to discern if Macbeth has spoken as he ‘descended’ (15), suggest that this part of the scene is staged on two levels, which reinforces the sense of aural confusion; Duncan’s bedchamber is located offstage above, whilst Lady Macbeth waits below. Each is unable to see the other, and thus to ascertain the source of any speech, whilst the audience, secure in viewing both, is able to comprehend the speech of both; thus when Macbeth descends and joins Lady Macbeth, each must question the other about what they have heard:

MACBETH: I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?  
LADY MACBETH: I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
Did you not speak?  
MACBETH: When?  
LADY MACBETH: Now.  
MACBETH: As I descended?  
LADY MACBETH: Ay. (14-19)

The repeated questions and clarifications of both are emblematic of the divisive effect of the murder. The Macbeths, as husband and wife, have worked together to bring about Duncan’s death; but immediately after the deed, they are visually, spatially, and aurally separated, unable to see, hear, or comprehend one another, in a way that prefigures the gradual disintegration of their marriage.

Even after Macbeth has descended, they inhabit different mental spaces; every noise ‘appals’ Macbeth, who is experiencing auditory hallucinations, the sonic counterpoint to his illusory dagger:

Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more,  
Macbeth doth murder sleep'... (33-34)

This proclamation suggests that Macbeth's perverted use of a householder's prescribed watchfulness – to murder, rather than to protect, his guest – brings an appropriate punishment: the inability to cease watching, and thus the inability to sleep. Furthermore, the very fact that he hears an inexplicable voice suggests that his disruptive act has disrupted his own ability to listen to the night-time noises of his home in order to comprehend and locate any danger; he cannot place the knock he hears, and he listens to voices that are not there.

In contrast, Lady Macbeth has maintained her ability to 'watch' and listen successfully – she hears and identifies the owl, the crickets, her husband's voice, and the knocking at the south entry. Yet Lady Macbeth's heightened watchfulness, although seemingly successful in preventing the detection of murder, will, taken to its logical extreme, become her downfall. As Totaro notes, 'Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking is another form of extreme watch'.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, Lady Macbeth's imagined hand-washing is the extreme form of the coupled cleanliness and disposal of evidence that characterises careful housewives and female servants in murder narratives.

The audience hears the knocking at the gates along with the Macbeths; the offstage noise at once reinforces the correspondences between the Macbeths' castle and theatrical architecture, as it conjures up the offstage spaces of the castle and the world beyond, and disrupts it, reminding the audience of the offstage places in which the sound effect is produced. Fitzpatrick suggests that knocking is often on the back of one of the stage doors, which stands for a door that leads either from an onstage room to an offstage room, or from an onstage room to the street. He observes that, in *Macbeth*, both sound effects occur, and could have been used to demonstrate the spatial transition between scenes II.ii and II.iii:

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<sup>45</sup> Totaro, p.413.

The Porter's possible hand property, the key to which he refers... establishes that we are now somewhere else in the castle, and the audience will infer the more precisely we are at 'the south entry' previously referred to by Lady Macbeth. The stage door has thus come to stand for an external entrance into the castle, and the knocking will logically now be localised and focused on the back of the stage door until it is opened to admit Macduff and Lennox.<sup>46</sup>

As Fitzpatrick notes, the transition of the sound effect from distant and general to local and particular 'is a major signifier of the spatial shift that has occurred'.<sup>47</sup> The spatial trajectory of the stage space has reversed: the stage door no longer leads further into the castle, but to the world beyond its walls.

The Porter's 'possible hand property', the key, might at first suggest that, although the Macbeths themselves have violated their home, their household still perform their proper functions; the castle cannot be protected from the disruption that stems from its master and mistress, but it is guarded from penetration from without. Yet the Porter's first lines undo this impression:

*Enter a PORTER. Knocking within.*

PORTER: Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate he should have old [plenty of] turning the key.

*Knock [within]*

Knock, knock, knock. Who's there, i'th' name of Beelzebub?  
(II.iii.1-3)

The Porter, drunken, late to answer the knock, and fantasising that the gate to the castle is a gate to hell, is a signal of Macbeth's disordered household; as John Harcourt puts it, 'the symbolic Castle has been invaded by treachery, by moral and social anarchy'. The ideals encoded in the analogy of the Englishman's home as castle, discussed in Chapter One, have been undermined by the breakdown of order and loyalty in the castle of the Macbeths, and this is reinforced by the Porter's imaginative displacement.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Fitzpatrick, p.68.

<sup>47</sup> Fitzpatrick, p.68.

<sup>48</sup> John B. Harcourt, 'I Pray You, Remember the Porter', *SQ* 12.4 (Autumn, 1961), 393-402 (p.400).

Frederic Tromly argues that the ‘Porter scene’ is a ‘truncated subplot that reflects the concerns of the main action’, as ‘this shift from bloody usurpation to the quotidian world of the hired help... reminds us of the startling proximity of the criminal and the comic’.<sup>49</sup> The Porter scene represents a shift from a gruesome crime to the daily life of the household; it at once stages the anxieties of the play, and foreshadows their solution. The spatial configurations of the two scenes, and the sound effect that facilitates the transition between the two, demonstrate the extent to which the Macbeths have compromised the integrity of their own home. Furthermore, their frightened response to the knocking suggests that they have mistakenly imagined that their castle is a separate and invulnerable space, and misunderstood the extent to which it is situated within both the community of Scottish noblemen, and Scotland itself.

Kurt Schreyer suggests that the scene recalls and invokes the ‘Harrowing of Hell’ scene from the mystery plays, when a ‘great din’ was heard before Christ knocked down the gates and entered to rescue hell’s prisoners:

Cued by the sound of the knocking, the Porter performs a bit of the old ‘devil-porter’ behaviour from the mysteries.<sup>50</sup>

I suggest that the scene draws on the ‘Harrowing of Hell’ sequence, but reconfigures it in terms of the genre of domestic tragedy, so that the rescuer is not Christ, but a representative of the wider community, and the rescuer’s role is not to set the prisoners of hell free, but rather, to imprison (or eliminate) the hellish criminals. As De Quincey puts it in his famous essay ‘On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*’ (1823), ‘the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish’.<sup>51</sup> The knocking also suggests that the law-abiding are about to detect the crime, and thus to begin the slow

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<sup>49</sup> Frederic B. Tromly, ‘Macbeth and His Porter’, *SQ* 26. 2 (Spring, 1975), 151-156 (p.151, p.156).

<sup>50</sup> Kurt Schreyer, “‘Here’s a Knocking Indeed!’: *Macbeth* and the *Harrowing of Hell*” *The Upstart Crow* 29 (2010), 26-43 (p.31).

<sup>51</sup> Thomas de Quincey, ‘On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*’, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol.2 ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), p.462.

process of apprehending and executing the criminal. When Macduff and Lennox enter, and Macbeth tells them, 'This is the door' (47), the spatial pattern has come full circle; the entry of Macduff and Lennox at the south gate was feared by the Macbeths because of what lay behind the door to Duncan's bedchamber, and now they have reached that door. The audience is about to understand what the knocking at the gate prefigured; Macduff will exit to Duncan's bedchamber, and so discover the murder.

In domestic tragedies, murder that takes place in an interior, domestic space is frequently detected by neighbours, who knock on the door to announce their presence before detecting the crime or apprehending the criminal. Indeed, the use of the 'knocking' sound effect to create tension and foreshadow criminal apprehension in the aftermath of murder is characteristic of the genre. In *Arden of Faversham*, Alice's murder of her husband is detected because her invited guests arrive shortly after the murder has taken place:

SUSAN: Mistress, the guests are at the doors.  
Hearken, they knock. What, shall I let them in? (xiv.248-9)

There are numerous correspondences between the representation of the aftermath of murder in *Arden* and *Macbeth*.<sup>52</sup> Just before the neighbours enter Alice's home, Mosby asks Alice if she is well, and Alice replies, 'Ay, well, if Arden were alive again' (258). Her words are comparable to those of Macbeth, who wishes Duncan could be waked with knocking. In both cases, the possibility of discovery of the murder makes the protagonists wish the crime undone. Alice's response, like that of Lady Macbeth, is to attempt to clean away the evidence; she orders Susan to wash the floor, and when Susan cannot remove the blood, Alice attempts to do so herself:

ALICE: But with my nails I'll scrape away the blood.  
The more I strive, the more the blood appears!

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<sup>52</sup> On *Arden* 'foreshadowing' *Macbeth*, see Robert P. Fleissner, "The Secret'st Man of Blood": Foreshadowings of *Macbeth* in *Arden of Faversham*, *University of Dayton Review* 14 (1979-80), 7-13, and MacDonald P. Jackson, 'Shakespearean Features of the Poetic Style of *Arden of Faversham*', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 258 (1993), 279-304, esp. p.288 n.17.

SUSAN: What's the reason, Mistress, can you tell?

ALICE: Because I blush not at my husband's death. (253-6)

This cruentation, discussed above, is transfigured in *Macbeth* from a literal miracle to an imaginative state, so that first Macbeth and later Lady Macbeth believe themselves unable to clean the blood from their hands. Shakespeare's transformation of this motif is emblematic of the ways in which he appropriates and moves beyond the genre of domestic tragedy; *Macbeth* is less interested in the gradual accumulation of the evidence than in the dramatic and destructive effect the murder has on the minds and marriage of the Macbeths. For Alice, the unyielding blood becomes evidence that will condemn her; for the Macbeths, the indelible memory of the blood becomes a matter of conscience that will destroy them.

Just as Alice realises the indelible nature of the stain, her neighbours enter. Alice gives herself away through her flustered fear even before the bloodstain is spotted. When the townspeople return to apprehend her, she receives warning from her servant:

MICHAEL: Oh mistress, the mayor and all the watch  
Are coming towards our house with glaives and bills.

ALICE: Make the door fast; let them not come in. (337-8)

Alice attempts to secure her home by locking the door and barring her neighbours' entry, as if her house is still a space that she can control, and the boundaries of that home can still protect her. As Richardson observes,

Alice and her co-conspirators implicitly oppose inside and outside in their organisation of the murder, but the connection between such spatial opposites and the moral distinctions of protection and vulnerability becomes confused.<sup>53</sup>

Alice's hopeful activity, in helping the criminals escape and sending her servants to dispose of the body, rests on the false assumption that the house, the site of the murder, can become a legible symbol of her innocence:

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<sup>53</sup> Richardson, *Domestic Life*, p.125.

Now let the judge and juries do their worst;  
My house is clear and now I fear them not. (352-353)

Alice is mistaken: blood still lies beneath her husband's seat; her husband's entry was spied; and both the misplaced rushes from the floor and the murder weapon link Arden's corpse to their home. Her house will not clear her, but condemn her, and the next entry of her neighbours will prove fatal. 'Hark, hark, they knock!' cries Alice (558), and bids them enter and 'search' her home (568), not comprehending that their search will lead to her apprehension. She has failed, like Macbeth, to recognise the fatal implications of the knock.

Many critics have observed that *Arden* foreshadows *Macbeth*, yet critical attention has primarily focused on linguistic echoes, in relation to the question of *Arden*'s authorship. In "'The Secret'st Man of Blood': Foreshadowings of *Macbeth* in *Arden of Faversham*", Robert Fleissner suggests that, 'aside from the domestic murder plot', *Arden* is 'politically intriguing' because it 'refers to the decay of feudalism and its inherent greed and lust for power', and thus 'has some thematic bearing on *Macbeth*'.<sup>54</sup> I argue that it is precisely because of the domestic murder plot that the play has thematic and indeed generic bearing on *Macbeth*: both plays stage the antecedents and aftermath of a treasonous household murder.

In Fleissner's article, as in the majority of work on the subject, there is a reluctance to discuss *Arden* as an influence or literary model; the word 'foreshadowing' frequently occurs, avoiding the question of agency and implying that Shakespeare's artistic achievement in *Macbeth* somehow reaches back in time, illuminating earlier plays. The emphasis on the possibility that Shakespeare may have co-authored *Arden* reinforces this implication; *Arden* becomes a forerunner of *Macbeth*, in which early glimmers can be seen of the preoccupations and linguistic characteristics of Shakespeare's mature style. I suggest otherwise. In staging the immediate aftermath of a domestic murder, and in using knocking upon the door to prefigure the discovery of murder, *Macbeth* appropriates, expands, and transforms many of *Arden*'s narrative features. Furthermore, similarities of

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<sup>54</sup> Fleissner, p.8.

circumstance and stagecraft are not unique to *Arden* and *Macbeth*, but rather, are generic characteristics that can be seen in another domestic tragedy: the 'Merry' plot of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*.

When Merry has killed Master Beech, he decides that his first murder necessitates a second. Just as Macbeth's murder of Duncan requires him to kill Banquo, the only other witness to the witches' prophecy that he should become king, so Merry decides that he must kill Thomas Winchester, Beech's young servant, who saw Merry persuade Beech to accompany him back to his house. 'He must be slaine to, else hele utter all', declares Merry, to which his sister replies 'Harke brother, harke, me thinks I here on[e] call' (C3v) – someone has entered the shop below, and called for them. Merry orders her down, and, as her absence grows longer, cries out, 'Why how now Rachell? who did call below?' The visitor is bathetically revealed to be 'a maide that came to have a pennie loafe' (C3v): not the constable, but merely a customer.

Here, Yarrington disrupts the convention of knocking in the immediate aftermath of the crime; the offstage character requesting entry is unimportant, unnamed, never seen onstage, and in no way related to the murder. Yet the timing of the maid's cry plays on audience expectations about the possible consequences of the knock, expectations that will, in later scenes, be fulfilled. The scene, like the murder scene in *Macbeth*, is staged on two levels; indeed, the upper stage is a site of murder and secrecy throughout the play. Merry is able to murder Beech in secret because he lures him to his upstairs room, claiming that his friends seek him there, only to hit Beech repeatedly over the head with a hammer, until he is dead:

Goe up those staires, your friends do stay above,  
Here is that friend shall shake you by the head,  
And make you stagger ere he speake to you.  
*Then being in the upper Ro[o]me Merry strickes him in the head  
fifteen times.* (B4r)

Merry, now stained with blood, looks through Beech's purse, as his sister Rachel and manservant Harry Williams enter below. Both have seen an unknown man go up the stairs with Merry, and Williams suggests that

Rachel carry up a light for her brother and his guest. Rachel's stage direction reads '*Exit up*'; she joins her brother on the upper stage, sees the blood stains, and understands that a murder has taken place. Williams, waiting below, hears Rachel cry out; when she joins him below, he questions her, then calls up to Merry, above, to question him as to what has taken place.

The split staging, then, exemplifies the ways in which the close-knit household has been divided by Merry's crime, and demonstrates both Rachel's torn loyalties, and the division between Williams and his master that will result in Williams's betrayal. It also demonstrates the extent to which Merry believes the 'upper room' of his home to be a space where he will escape detection; he underestimates the extent to which the other members in his household are at once spatially proximate, and bound up in his actions. The attentive behaviour of his sister and manservant renders them unwitting detectives. As I discussed in Chapter Two, his blood-tie with his sister, and his position as householder, ensure that she will transform her sisterly duties – obedience and keeping the house – in order to assist her brother in hiding the murder and cleaning up the blood. Yet Merry fails to anticipate that his manservant's attentive loyalty will become loyalty to the state, and he is unprepared for the extent to which his home will become vulnerable to the curiosity and suspicion of his neighbours.

Merry, like Alice Arden, mistakenly believes that the walls of his home will protect him from the curiosity – and thus, from the detection – of the outside world. As Richardson argues,

The façade of the house mediates between the domestic and the communal... Merry considers physical distance from the street to be synonymous with social invisibility and productive of an inviolable space which can remain unseen. The play's moral project is quite explicitly a refutation of this interpretation.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, the play renders this refutation literal; in a direct reversal, the stage space becomes the street outside Merry's house, and the stage door where Rachel, we may assume, greeted the maid that came to have a penny loaf,

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<sup>55</sup> Richardson, *Domestic Life*, p.137.

becomes the door that leads to Merry's house – it is the same door, but we are on the other side:

THIRD NEIGHBOUR: Whose house is this?

LONEY: An honest civill mans, cald Master Merry,  
Who I dare be sworne, would never do so great a murther.  
But you may aske here to for fashion sake.

*Rachel sits in shop.*

THIRD NEIGHBOUR: How now faire maide, dwels any here but you?

Thou has too true a face for such a deed.

RACHEL: No gentle sir, my brother keepes no more. (G3r-v)

This reversal is comparable to that in *Arden*, when the audience moves from the inside of Franklin's house, where Michael unlocks the door for the murderers but Arden locks it again, and the audience then finds itself on the other side of that door, with the frustrated murderers; a spatial shift in the same direction, but with the opposite implication. In *Arden*, we leave the law-abiding home (which hides a traitor) to join the murderers that attempt to penetrate it; in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, we leave the home that hides the murderer to join the neighbours that seek him.

On this occasion, the neighbours are unsuccessful: the Salter fails to recognise Rachel as the maid who bought the bag in which the body was hidden. However, Merry has not escaped justice. His manservant, Williams, is uneasy in his conscience, and is shortly to betray him to a friend. When this takes place, Merry and Rachel are apprehended by a constable. Yet unlike the examples discussed above, the audience does not join the criminals as they await the knock that signals their apprehension. Rather, the audience waits on the other side of the door, as the stage door becomes the front door to Merry's home, and we observe the constable that knocks upon it. As I discuss above, Fitzpatrick notes that when knocking is at the stage door, that door usually leads from an onstage room to either an offstage room, or to the offstage street. I suggest another category of 'knock': here, the knocking calls forth those offstage, and the street is staged. The fact that characters are called forth from offstage by the onstage knocking grants solidity to the imagined domestic spaces offstage:

CONSTABLE: This is the house, come let us knocke at dore,  
I see a light they are not all in bed:  
*Knockes, Rachell comes down.*  
How now faire maide, is your brother up.  
RACHEL: He's not within sir, would you speake with him?  
CONSTABLE: You doe but jest, I know he is within,  
And I must needes go uppe and speake with him. (I1v).

The Constable asks Rachel where her brother lies, and she replies: 'Here in his bed, me thinks he's not a sleepe' (I2r). Merry enters in his night cap, with a stage direction that reads: '*Throwes his night cap away.*' This may refer either to Merry, throwing away his own cap in recognition that he will sleep no more tonight, or to an act of minor humiliation performed by the Constable, who throws Merry's night cap away to make it clear he is now under arrest, and powerless. It would appear that Merry joins the Constable below, rather than the Constable visiting him on or via the upper stage, yet the use of the night cap as stage property ensures that Merry's bedchamber is conjured in the minds of the audience: he has violated the private spaces of his home through murdering his guest within such a space, and now his most private space – that where he sleeps – is visually, if not literally, invaded by representatives of both the law and the neighbourhood: the Constable and two Watermen.

*Two Lamentable Tragedies* stages a nightmare of Elizabethan society; one neighbour secretly murders another in the private spaces of his home, and his household becomes complicit in concealing the crime. Yet it also represents the inverse of this: a fantasy of a society in which the neighbourhood wittingly and unwittingly works together to solve the crime. Cowley, a friend of Harry Williams, becomes aware of the neighbourhood concerns thanks to the neighbourhood detectives, led by Loney, and thus is able to probe Harry, discover his secret, and prompt his confession. Yet this is an ironic fantasy, due to the limitations of the neighbours' knowledge compared with that of the audience. The curiosity of the neighbourhood discovers the crime but not the criminal; however, both the staging of the crime and the direct address of Merry to the audience ensure that the audience's knowledge always surpasses that of the neighbourhood. It is only when the strength of neighbourhood ties, coupled with Harry's uneasy

conscience, is able to overcome private household loyalty, that the murderer can be apprehended and executed. The neighbours' many failed attempts to find the criminal involve calling at doors and meeting neighbours and visitors in outdoor neighbourhood spaces; but the final apprehension is signalled with a knock.

Whilst the use of the 'knocking' device to signal the discovery of crimes and the apprehension of criminals is a generic feature of domestic tragedy, knocking on the door of an interior space to signal the discovery of illicit activity occurs in plays that do not belong to that genre. As Richard Madelaine observes, this convention is used in *The Atheist's Tragedy*, when the wronged husband Belforest, accompanied by the Watch, discovers his wife, Levidulcia, in a 'little matted chamber' (a chamber carpeted with rushes) with her lover.<sup>56</sup> Levidulcia's servant, Fresco, has just arrived to warn her of her husband's presence, when her husband's knock is heard:

*Enter FRESCO running*

FRESCO: Somebody's doing has undone us, and we are like pay dearly for't.

SEBASTIAN: Pay dear? For what?

FRESCO: Will't not be a chargeable reckoning, think you, when here are half a dozen fellows coming to call us to account, with ev'ry man a several bill in his hand that we are not able to discharge?

*Knock at door.*

CATAPLASMA: Passion o' me, what bouncing's that? Madam, withdraw yourself.<sup>57</sup>

The 'bouncing' of the door prefigures a violent entry. The scene ends, not in justice, but in murder and suicide; Levidulcia's lover Sebastian and Belforest kill one another, and Levidulcia then kills herself. The knocking prompts discovery, which in turn prompts crime – just as, in *The Arraignement of Margaret Ferne-seede*, a husband's discovery of his wife's role as bawd leads to his murder. Knocking becomes at once a device to

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<sup>56</sup> Richard Madelaine, "'The dark and vicious place': The Location of Sexual Transgression and its Punishment on the Early Modern English Stage", *Parergon* 22.1 (January, 2005), 159-183 (pp.167-8).

<sup>57</sup> Cyril Tourneur, *The Atheist's Tragedy, or, The Honest Man's Revenge in Four Revenge Tragedies* ed. Katharine Eisaman Maus (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), IV.v.6, 37-42.

raise tension, and shorthand for the impending revelation of secrets and their (deadly) consequences.

In *Othello*, a call at the door, rather than a knock, is not only the precursor to the detection of murder, but interrupts the very act of murder:

*He smothers her.*

DESDEMONA: Oh Lord, Lord, Lord.

*Emilia at the door.*

EMILIA (*within*): My lord, my lord, what ho, my lord, my lord!

OTHELLO: What noise is this? Not dead? Not yet quite dead?

I that am cruel am yet merciful.

I would not have thee linger in thy pain.

So, so.

EMILIA (*within*): What ho, my lord, my lord!

OTHELLO: Who's there?

EMILIA: (*within*) O, good my lord, I would speak a word with you.  
(V.ii.93-99)

There is aural confusion between Desdemona's dying cries to God, and Emilia's calling to Othello. His 'What noise is this?' could refer to the commotion at his door, as Emilia attempts to enter to tell him of the attack on Cassio, but is revealed to refer to his wife's cries, that show her still to be living. It is only after her death that Othello can request the identity of the person at the door. As Erin Minear puts it,

This interruption generates yet another collision between the duet of the lovers and the noises in the night, a collision that reverses our senses of how we are to understand them. Emilia's noise eventually sets at least some semblance of justice in motion.<sup>58</sup>

Earlier in the play, the violent noise of the bell, signalling danger, called Othello from his marital bedchamber (and the possible consummation of his marriage), to witness a 'private and domestic quarrel' (II.iii.198). Here, a private and domestic quarrel has escalated into murder, and the din of Emilia's interruption is coupled with the cries within – but Emilia's (noisy) interruption represents order and justice, highlighting the extent to which what has just occurred in Othello's marital bedchamber is no longer a private matter.

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<sup>58</sup> Erin Minear, 'Music and the Crisis of Meaning in *Othello*', *SEL* 49.2 (Spring 2009), 355-370 (p.359).

Othello quickly makes the link between his crime, the noise that suggests a desire for entry, and the possibility of discovery, and focuses upon the problem of his wife's corpse. He asks himself, 'Shall she come in? Were't good?'; he has not planned for the consequences of the crime, and, like John Kynnestar in *A True Reporte*, would seem to consider for a moment the possibility of displaying the body and revealing his crime. Emilia interrupts again:

EMILIA (*within*): I do beseech you  
That I may speak with you. O, good my lord!  
OTHELLO: I had forgot thee – O, come in, Emilia. –  
Soft, by and by. Let me the curtains draw. (V.ii.110-113)

Othello decides that he will hide his crime; drawing the curtains, he thinks that he has circumvented the problem of the body. But Emilia hears Desdemona's dying cries, discovers the murder, and calls for help:

I care not for thy sword, I'll make thee known  
Though I had lost twenty lives. Help, help, ho! Help!  
The Moor hath killed my mistress. Murder, murder! (172-174)

Emilia's call brings forth members of the military community and representatives of the Venetian community and the state; yet, in discovering the murder, they precipitate a further murder, that of Emilia by her husband, and a suicide. Othello is ordered that he must 'forsake this room' and rest a 'close prisoner' (339, 344), yet he resists the authority of the state to remove him from the bedchamber that has ceased to be private, and instead, performs his own execution, in the place of his crime. Both husband and wife die upon their marriage bed, in what might seem a visual representation of the tragic outcome of their love.

Before Iago is led away to 'the time, the place, the torture' (379), Lodovico bids him:

Look on the tragic loading of this bed.  
This is thy work. The object poisons sight.  
Let it be hid.  
[*They close the bed-curtains*] (373-375)

The ‘tragic loading’ of the bed could refer not only to the tragically appropriate bodies of Othello and Desdemona, but to another body that may lie there. As Emilia is brutally murdered by Iago for disobeying and betraying him, she requests that her body be laid by that of her mistress, but, as Boose argues, ‘we have no idea whether it is ever honoured or whether her body lies ignored on the floor and the men simply step over it as the scene continues’:

Even when the Venetian authorities indict Iago, the murder of his wife is apparently an act not deemed criminal enough to warrant inclusion and it thus goes unmentioned, despite the fact that it is Iago’s one crime which all of the men on stage actually witnessed.<sup>59</sup>

The murder of Emilia, which occurs in the newly public space of Othello and Desdemona’s violated bedchamber, is observed, but not prevented, by the many men who have entered the bedchamber to see justice done. Graziano berates Iago – ‘Fie, your sword upon a woman? (231) – but does not intervene. Iago’s commands to his wife – that she hold her peace (224) and ‘be wise’ and return home (229) – are disobeyed by Emilia, but those commands are silently affirmed by the refusal of the watching men to protect her.

This failure of the (male) community to intervene in marital murder echoes their earlier failure to protect Desdemona from her publicly violent husband:

DESDEMONA: Why, sweet Othello!  
OTHELLO: Devil!  
[*He strikes her*]  
DESDEMONA: I have not deserved this.  
LODOVIO: My lord, this would not be believed in Venice,  
Though I should swear I saw’t. ’Tis very much.  
Make her amends, she weeps. (IV.i.234-9)

Lodivico takes steps to reform Othello’s public behaviour, attempting (unsuccessfully) to persuade him to make amends to his wife; like the

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<sup>59</sup> Lynda E. Boose, “‘Let it be Hid’: The Pornographic Aesthetic of Shakespeare’s *Othello*” in *New Casebooks: Othello* ed. Orlin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.42.

shaming rituals discussed in Chapter One, his request aims to restore the public order upset by the performance of private disorder before the communal gaze. Yet the disorder in question – non-murderous violence by a husband against a wife – appears, unlike adultery and murder, not to be sufficient to justify surveillance of, and interference in, the household of another. Lodovico is disturbed by what he has seen. ‘What, strike his wife!’ he says to Iago (269), who responds:

Faith, that was not so well. Yet would I knew  
That stroke would prove the worst. (270-271)

Yet Iago’s malicious but accurate suggestion that Othello’s behaviour may become still more violent towards Desdemona fails to prompt any action by the ‘proper man’ Lodovico. ‘I am sorry that I am deceived in him’ (279), he complains, regretting his misapprehension of Othello’s nature, but failing to comment on the probable (private) consequences of Othello’s public violence. As in the murder pamphlets discussed above, Lodovico, as a representative of Desdemona’s (deceased) father’s neighbourhood, can discover her murder, and judge it, but cannot intervene to prevent it. The displacement of the Venetian ‘neighbourhood’ to Cyprus, revealed to be a precarious displacement throughout the play, finally breaks down.

The two marital murders in *Othello* are both instances of what Dolan terms ‘petty tyranny’ rather than ‘petty treason’: threats to members of their household, but not to the commonwealth, as their crimes are contained within their household, and do not threaten household hierarchy. As Dolan puts it,

In contrast to the petty traitor, who overturns the hierarchy that is supposed to govern domestic relations, the domestic tyrant grotesquely caricatures his role, expanding the parameters of the patriarch’s authority rather than openly challenging domestic hierarchy.<sup>60</sup>

The failure of Lodivico to intervene in either the domestic violence or its fatal consequences may stem from the difficulty in ascertaining when

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<sup>60</sup> Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, p.91.

private household disruption that affirms the household hierarchy becomes of public concern: as in the violent shrew tamings discussed in Chapter One, the legality of wife beating complicates the communal response to dangerous marital violence.

As Lodivico orders that the curtain be drawn on the violated marriage bed that holds three murdered bodies, he hides the community's failure from that community. Furthermore, he purges the community of a disruptive outsider, and obscures the evidence of this disruptiveness. The private disorder of Othello and Desdemona's marriage required the communal gaze when it resulted in murder. Now that the only surviving perpetrator has been apprehended, it can again be tidied away, concealed from view. Othello's chamber, home, and position are to be inherited by Graziano, and thus this violent and violated home will be re-integrated into Venetian society.

In contrast, Macbeth's political position, and the lack of a surviving witness linking the murderers to the crime, ensure that his role as perpetrator of Duncan's murder cannot be detected by the community of Scottish noblemen, but only suspected. The knocking at the gates leads not to the apprehension of the murderer, but only to the discovery of the body. As in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, the discovery of the body is only the first step in the gradual detection of the crime; in *Macbeth*, the criminal is eventually apprehended, and then executed, in his home, not by a constable, but by an invading army.

Thus *Othello* and *Macbeth* both borrow and transform staging configurations and offstage sound effects from domestic tragedy, in order to stage how domestic murder renders the walls of the home inefficacious, and its inhabitants subject to the surveillance and intervention of the surrounding community. Yet in these plays, Shakespeare also stages the limits of the neighbourhood intervention that restores order in domestic tragedies. Communal surveillance can identify the murderers, but it cannot apprehend them: Othello dies at his own hand; Iago's confession cannot be obtained; Lady Macbeth's guilty conscience becomes her executioner; and brute force, rather than legal process, will punish Macbeth for his crimes.

The admission of Macduff and Lennox to the castle, moments after Duncan's murder, signals the gradual disintegration of its protective powers that is the result of the Macbeths' crimes; soon, a ghost will enter to sit at Macbeth's table, and the protective battlements will bring about Lady Macbeth's death. Finally, Macbeth's enemies are able to bridge his castle's walls: the castle has been 'gently rendered', and Siward may tell Malcolm, 'Enter, sir, the castle' (V.ix.1, 6). The castle of the Macbeths is not the only home undermined by their actions; Macduff's home, abandoned by its head of household, fails to protect his wife and children. Yet in the disrupted Scotland of the play, there is one habitation that maintains its boundaries. When Macbeth visits the witches' cavern, he is unable to enter without the permission of the Second Witch:

By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes.  
[*Knock within*]  
Open locks, whoever knocks. (IV.i.61-3)

The Second Witch's detection of Macbeth's identity, and her (seemingly magical) control over the locks that guard the boundaries of her habitation, are the opposite of Macbeth's fearful and uncomprehending reaction to the knocking of Macduff and Lennox, and his inability to secure the castle against the revelatory potential of their entrance. The witches' power over their own locks is coupled with their ability to influence what occurs within the dwellings of others. As they secure the borders of their own environment, they gradually undermine the protective capabilities of the Macbeths' castle. Through their equivocal prophecies, the witches penetrate to the heart of the Macbeths' home, and prompt its undoing.

## 5. Outside: Crossing Domestic Boundaries

As the actes and enterprises of these wicked persons are darke and divellish: so in the perseverance of this fellowes perplexitie, hee being in his distraction both of bodie and minde, yet in bed and awake, espied Mary Sutton, (the daughter) in a Mooneshine night come in at a window in her accustomed and personal habite, and shape, with her knitting worke in her hands, and sitting downe at his beds feete, sometimes working, and knitting with her needles, and sometimes gazing and staring him in the face, as his grieffe was thereby redoubled and increased. Not long after she drewe neerer unto him, and sate by his bedde side (yet all this while he had neyther power to stirre or speake) and told him if hee would consent she should come to bedde to him, hee should be restored to his former health and prosperitie.<sup>1</sup>

In 1613, two women, a mother and daughter, were hanged for witchcraft. ‘Mother Sutton’ was a poor widow and hog herd ‘of declining years’ who lived in Milton, near Bedford, with her daughter, Mary. The news pamphlet *Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed*, published in the same year, narrates the activities of the two ‘witches’, the mounting suspicion of the townspeople, and finally, the arrest, trial, and deaths of the two women.

Mary Sutton is an unmarried mother with three children, and she and her children reside with her mother. As is typical in news pamphlets reporting accounts of witchcraft, the two women live without male supervision: their household has no master, only a mistress. The Suttons’ household authority is threatened when Mary’s eldest son, Henry, repeatedly throws dirt into the water that drives the local mill. An unnamed servant of Master Enger’s catches him in the act and strikes him, prompting Mother Sutton to vow revenge.

When Master Enger’s servants drive their master’s corn to Bedford to sell it at market, Mother Sutton causes the appearance of a spinning black sow, which drives the horse into a frenzy. The servants, suspicious, watch where the sow goes when it leaves them, and see it enter the house of Mother Sutton. The nameless servant who struck Henry recounts this tale, and renders explicit the link between the sow that causes the mischief, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed* (London, 1613), B3r-v.

Mother Sutton and her daughter. This prompts Mother Sutton's second act of revenge. As the anonymous servant speaks, a beetle strikes him on the breast. Shortly afterwards, he falls into a trance while guiding his plough. He cannot be woken from this state, and the beholders fear that he is 'cleane hopelesse of recoverie'.<sup>2</sup>

Lying in bed in his trance, the nameless servant is visited by Mary Sutton, who flies in at his window, sits and knits at his feet, and propositions him. She uses her sinister knitting to strengthen her magic over him, then, in offering herself to him sexually, proposes to release him from that magic. However, Sutton's proposition prompts divine intervention. God grants the servant the power of speech and movement, that he might resist her:

[H]ee that before had neither power to move, or speake, had then presently by divine assistance free power and libertie to give repulse to her assault, and denial to her filthie and detested motion: and to upbraide her of her abhominable life and behaviour, having before had three bastards and never married.<sup>3</sup>

Mary Sutton's sexual history is represented as an important precursor to her acts of enchantment and seduction. At the text's first mention of Henry Sutton, Mary's status as an unmarried mother is given in a narrative aside: 'for it is to bee noted, that although she was never married, yet she had three bastards'.<sup>4</sup> Illicit female sexuality suggests the potential for witchcraft.

The servant recounts the tale to his master, and his master visits Mary Sutton at her home, in order to interrogate her. He meets her outside her house:

There Master Enger speaking to her, she was a verie good huswife, and that shee followed her worke night and day: No sir, said she, My huswifery is very slender, neyther am I so good a follower of my worke as you perswade mee: with that, he told her that she was, and that she had beene working at his house the night before.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Witches Apprehended*, B2v.

<sup>3</sup> *Witches Apprehended*, B4r.

<sup>4</sup> *Witches Apprehended*, B1r.

<sup>5</sup> *Witches Apprehended*, B4v.

Master Enger's punning here is comparable to that of Iago when he tells Desdemona and Emilia: 'You rise to play, and go to bed to work' (II.i.115). Enger is referring to the sexual 'work' of propositioning the entranced servant; yet he is also referring to Mary's knitting spell as a form of huswifery, albeit a perverted one. As Purkiss observes of witchcraft depositions, the witch was often an 'antihousewife':

Housewifely authority involves the ability to transform 'natural' items into cultural items: wool is transformed into thread and milk into cream and whey... Instead, witchcraft characteristically produces a shaming effect of utter disorder, dirt and pollution.<sup>6</sup>

Mary Sutton, however, does not disorder the process of transforming a natural household product into a cultural item; rather, in knitting, she transforms household work into *maleficium*, rendering 'good' feminine activity malign.

Emma Wilby observes that a handful of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century European images of witches, such as Albrecht Dürer's *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat*, depict the witch as carrying a distaff and spindle (Fig. 1). She suggests that 'the distaff and spindle found in early witch-images functioned – at least in part – in their classic role as emblems of fate'.<sup>7</sup> Enger's knitting could here carry similar connotations of the Fates' power over the forces of life and death; or it could simply demonstrate Enger's ability to pervert feminine household practices. Rather than creating a garment, her knitting creates a spell, reinforcing the magical illness from which the servant suffers. Enger, in accusing Mary of night-time huswifery, accuses her of inverting her function as housewife, in performing a daytime activity at night; making a licit activity sexual; and using household work, intended to promote the life of the household, to harm.

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<sup>6</sup> Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996), ch.4 (esp. p.97).

<sup>7</sup> Emma Wilby, *The Visions of Isobel Gowdie: Magic, Witchcraft and Dark Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Scotland* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), p.360. See also Charles Zika, *Exorcising our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern England* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003), p.310.



**Fig. 1. *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat*, Albrecht Dürer, c.1500,  
British Museum, museum no. 1868,0822.188.**

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Enger requests that Mary accompany him to his home in order to be examined further; when she refuses, he and a ‘company of men’ force her onto the back of a horse and bring her to the bedside of the bewitched servant. Enger then draws blood from her, and the servant revives. However, Mary is able to touch the servant on the neck with her finger, and he relapses.

The narrative escalates further: Mother Sutton and Mary vow revenge for Enger’s treatment of her, and bewitch his young child, using their two ‘Spirits’, which suck upon ‘two Teats which they had on their thighes (found out afterwards by enquirie, and search of women)’.<sup>8</sup> In return, Enger persuades Henry Sutton to testify against his mother and grandmother. The two women are ducked as witches, found to float, condemned and executed.

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<sup>8</sup> *Witches Apprehended*, C1v.

The Sutton narrative exhibits many tropes common to cheap print reporting witchcraft. The witches represented in *Witches Apprehended* have power over livestock and ‘familiar’: a hog, a beetle, and two teat-sucking ‘spirits’. Bewitchment is tied to the female body, as blood can undo magic, and touch can strengthen it. The female body thus betrays the nature of the witch, in visible marks or teats, and in the ability of witches to float. Witchcraft, in this text, is linked to the feminine: it is associated both with illicit female sexuality and with gendered household work. It is also linked to pollution: Henry Sutton’s corruption of the mill water is paralleled with the powers of his grandmother and mother to infect livestock, a child and a man. Furthermore, this witchcraft narrative exhibits a significant identification of the witch with her home.

Mother Sutton’s witchcraft is revealed when the magical hog is seen to enter her home; the relationship between the home and the witch is read as evidence. Purkiss argues that it ‘is the association of female identity with maintaining the boundaries of and order in the house which makes the witch a fearful fantasy of what can happen when those bounds are transgressed’.<sup>9</sup> Yet in *Witches Apprehended*, both male and female bodies are allied with the homes they inhabit. There is therefore a significant difference between the cheap print, conduct literature, poetry, and plays discussed in previous chapters, and those texts under discussion here: in cheap print reporting witchcraft, the relationship between the integrity of the home and the integrity of the body is not exclusively female.

Mother and Mary Sutton’s magic is able to penetrate the walls of Enger’s home and threaten his household order, and thus his integrity as householder. First, Mother Sutton disrupts Master Enger’s household through his produce and livestock; then she enters Master Enger’s home by proxy through the body of his servant, and she infects that servant through the bite of a beetle. Finally her daughter, Mary Sutton, enters his home, with the moonlight, through a window. In so doing, she has undone the purpose of the walls of his home, which have failed to offer the selectively permeable protection that I discussed in Chapter One. The Suttons are

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<sup>9</sup> Purkiss, *Witch*, p.99.

disturbingly mobile, able to enter the homes of others; they are also, in an inversion of early modern norms, penetrative agents, able to penetrate and act upon the private spaces and bodies of men.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which witchcraft narratives construct the magic of witches as operating through and across the boundaries of the home, so that perpetrator and victim alike are identified with the household spaces they inhabit. I consider the domestic witchcraft staged in Rowley, Dekker, and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) and Shakespeare's weird sisters in *Macbeth* in light of the transgressive mobility, sexuality, and female agency of witches in cheap print. In so doing, I demonstrate the divergent ways in which these two plays engage with the popular figure of the witch, and argue that Shakespeare draws upon popular constructions of witchcraft in staging the relationship between his undomestic weird sisters and the vulnerable domesticity of the Macbeths' castle.

## 1. Bewitching the Home, Locating the Witch

In his 1584 treatise *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Reginald Scot discusses the arraignment of Margaret Simmons for witchcraft at the 1581 assizes in Rochester. Her crime is linked to the behaviour of a domestic animal: the son of the local vicar walks by her house, and her dog barks at him as he passes,

Which thing the boie taking in evill part, drewe his knife, & pursued him therewith even to hir doore: whom she rebuked with some such words as the boie disdained, & yet neverthelesse would not be persuaded to depart in a long time. At the last he returned to his maisters house, and within five or sixe daies fell sicke.<sup>10</sup>

Scot condemns her arraignment as 'ridiculous'. He observes that the vicar lost his voice at about this time, and that he attributed his illness to Simmons's witchcraft. However, 'divers of our neighbors in this parish, not

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<sup>10</sup> Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft, Wherein the Lewde Dealing of Witches and Witchmongers is Notablie Detected* (London, 1584), pp.5-6.

long since, doubted that he had the French pox', and the vicar was forced to produce a certificate from physicians in London, stating that his hoarseness came from a disease in his lungs, which 'he published in church, in the presence of the whole congregation: and by this means hee was cured, or rather excused the shame of his disease'.<sup>11</sup> The vicar constructs first a magical, and then a medical, narrative in order to obscure the possibility of sexual contagion; likewise, the vicar's son constructs a narrative of magical revenge to screen his own wrongdoing and render his sickness explicable.

Simmons is acquitted at the assizes. However, Scot's narrative, in its focus on anxieties associated with crossing the thresholds of the home, parallels the narratives of condemned witches reported in news pamphlets. The vicar's son chases Margaret Simmons's dog 'even to hir doore', and refuses to leave the space when requested to do so. In so doing, he stands on the point of invading her home against her will: on the threshold, he is in a liminal space, at once inside and outside, as I discussed in relation to staged thresholds in Chapter Three. According to the narrative constructed by the vicar's son, his transgression compels the witch's revenge; furthermore, it would seem that this proximity to the witch's home grants her magic the opportunity to follow him home to his master's house, and bring about his disease. The threshold becomes a site of danger, a place of infection and of threat. To threaten the borders of a witch's home is dangerous. Furthermore, once infected by a witch's magic, it is equally dangerous to cross the threshold of a home where that magic might follow you. As in the tale of Mary Sutton, the entry of an enchanted person into his or her own home makes possible the entry of the enchanting witch, by proxy.

Scot discounts the narrative told by the vicar's son: the witch was acquitted, and therefore the tale has no validity. Yet in constructing his experiences at the threshold of Simmon's home as magical, the vicar's son is drawing upon popular witchcraft beliefs concerning the significance of the threshold. Van Gennep suggests that in rituals concerning thresholds, the door to the home 'is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds', and thus 'to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new

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<sup>11</sup> Scot, p.6.

world'.<sup>12</sup> In cheap print reporting English witchcraft, the threshold to the home is the place where its inhabitants are most vulnerable to the witch's ritualised magic: if they become susceptible to the 'foreign' magical influences of the outside world, they may, in crossing the threshold, incorporate these influences into their own home. Scot complains that a superstitious person 'that receiveth a mischance, will consider whether he met not a cat, or a hare, when he went first out of hir [*sic.*] doores in the morning; or stumbled not at the threshold at his going out'; in the popular imagination, the boundary between the house and the outside world is a place of vulnerability and danger.<sup>13</sup>

Laoutaris observes that recent archaeologists have discovered objects as diverse as shoes, nails, knives, dolls, cooking implements, written charms, animal parts, and human skulls sequestered in boundary spaces of Elizabethan and Jacobean homes:

Archaeologists have made many such discoveries around the thresholds of Britain's Renaissance houses; above fire-places, beneath doors, and near windows, or on sites where these thresholds are known once to have stood. Used as methods of counter-magic to ward off evil spirits and malevolent witchcraft, or *maleficium*, these objects and their locations tell us something about the way in which ritual and superstition operated within the environs of the domestic sphere.<sup>14</sup>

The threshold was an efficacious location for counter-magic because it was also the place where the home was most vulnerable to magical penetration. The Deliberately Concealed Garments Project, run by Dinah Eastop, documents and analyses textiles found sequestered in the boundary spaces of early modern homes.<sup>15</sup> Eastop suggests that one explanation for this undocumented practice is that garments concealed in the home were believed to have 'a protective function':

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<sup>12</sup> Van Gennep, p.20.

<sup>13</sup> Scot, p.203.

<sup>14</sup> Laoutaris, p.154. Many of the magical artifacts discussed above can be found at the Museum of London (L21/1-9).

<sup>15</sup> See 'Lawshall Caches', Dinah Eastop, *The Deliberately Concealed Garments Project* (The Textile Conservation Centre, 2002), [www.concealedgarments.org](http://www.concealedgarments.org) [accessed 21 March 2014]. I am grateful to Chris Laoutaris for drawing this project to my attention.

Evidence collected to date suggests that concealments were made at the juncture of old and new parts of a building, in voids, and at points of entry or access (doorways, windows and chimneys)... [which] could be an access route for malevolent forces.<sup>16</sup>

Garments, like bewitched objects, were hidden in these threshold spaces, where the home was most susceptible to the entry of outside forces. Whether intended as specific acts of counter-magic, or merely as protection against general ‘malevolent forces’, these objects may have functioned, as Eastop puts it, ‘as material metaphors’, ‘clothing’ or protecting the home and thus the bodies of its inhabitants.<sup>17</sup>

Counter-magic was not limited to the household spaces of the victim; it could also be enacted upon the home of the witch. In Henry Goodcole’s *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch, Late of Edmonton* (1621), upon which Rowley, Dekker, and Ford’s play, performed in the same year, was based, Sawyer’s neighbours assume a magical correlation between the body of the witch and the material attributes of her home. It is assumed that if the thatch from the roof of Sawyer’s house is plucked and burned, she will hurry to the site of the burning, an assumption which Goodcole derides:

And to finde out who should bee the author of this mischief, an old ridiculous custome was used, which was to pluck the Thatch of her house, and to burne it, and it being so burnd, the author of such mischief should presently then come.<sup>18</sup>

Although Goodcole complains that this ‘trial’ of witchcraft is ‘slight and ridiculous’, he observes its positive effects: ‘it settled a resolution in those whom it concerned, to find out by all meanes they could endeavor, her long, and close carried Witchery’.<sup>19</sup> He may not agree with the diagnostic potential of thatch-burning, but he considers it useful in encouraging neighbours to keep a close watch on a potential witch; in convincing observers of the guilt of the suspect, the perceived correlation between the

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<sup>16</sup> Dinah Eastop, ‘Outside In: Making Sense of the Deliberate Concealment of Garments within Buildings’ *Textile* 4.3 (2006), 238–255 (p.245; pp.246-7).

<sup>17</sup> Eastop, p.248.

<sup>18</sup> Goodcole, *Wonderfull Discoverie*, A4v.

<sup>19</sup> Goodcole, *Wondefull Discoverie*, A4v.

body of the witch and the boundaries of her home ensures that further proof of her guilt will be found.

Scot bemoans the extent to which popular ideas about witches overlap with the behaviour of the poor and the dispossessed. Witchcraft beliefs suggest that witches might position themselves at the threshold of their neighbours' homes in order to practise witchcraft; yet beggars in search of sustenance would do likewise in order to request charity, rendering their behaviour vulnerable to misinterpretation. Scot suggests that these superstitions may even convince the beggars themselves that they possess magical powers:

These miserable wretches are so odious unto all their neighbors, and so feared, as few dare offend them, or denie them anie thing they aske... These go from house to house, and from doore to doore for a pot full of milke, yest, drinke, pottage, or some such releefe; without the which they could hardlie live.<sup>20</sup>

In Alan Macfarlane's works on witchcraft, the model of the beggar who is refused sustenance and commits revenge through witchcraft is common to the majority of village-level witchcraft trials. The witch's anger becomes the motive for *maleficium*, and 'the reason for the anger was almost always an unneighbourly action on the part of her future victim'.<sup>21</sup> Macfarlane links this pattern to wider issues in early modern society, related to increasing material inequality, economic pressures on parish assistance, and the problems of vagrancy. Like the masterless men discussed in Chapter Three, the witch and the beggar became associated figures, both excluded from, and represented as threats to, the ideal of household order. As Linda Woodbridge argues,

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<sup>20</sup> Scot, p.7.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Macfarlane, 'A Tudor Anthropologist: George Gifford's Discourse and Dialogue' in *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* ed. Sydney Anglo (London, Routledge, 1977), pp.140-155 (p.147).

One thing feared about witches that allies them again with beggars was their mobility – a supernatural mobility, in this case, that allowed them to fly, go out of their bodies invisibly, and travel anywhere, another crime against the ideology of homekeeping.<sup>22</sup>

Mary Sutton's ability to fly is comparable to her mother's ability, as an impoverished hog herd, to move freely amongst the livestock of her neighbours; both are disconcertingly mobile. Mother Sutton's position permits her to unsettle and infect the animals and servants of the neighbourhood, and thus to create disorder in the households of neighbours. Yet the Suttons are not vagrants: although they threaten the homes of neighbours, they are dependent upon the kindness of the neighbourhood for their own home. The association between the two women and the house they inhabit renders them vulnerable to the observation and condemnation of the neighbourhood.

Deborah Willis suggests that witchcraft quarrels 'often grew out of struggles to control household boundaries, feeding, child care, and other matters typically assigned to women's sphere'.<sup>23</sup> Yet in cheap print reporting witchcraft, neighbourhood quarrels that escalate into magical revenge are not between women, but between a woman or a family of women, and the men who defame them. Struggles to control household boundaries are likewise not confined to 'women's sphere': although numerous pamphlets detail malign magic that disrupts female household work and penetrates household boundaries policed by women, the penetration of those boundaries is also represented as affecting male inhabitants and householders. The revenge of witches is frequently represented as targeted against an entire household, rather than against individual (female) members of it.

Consider the broadside ballad *Damnable Practises of Three Lincolneshire Witches* (1619), sung to the tune of 'Ladies Fall', a tune often used to set ballads reporting the crimes of murderous wives or stepmothers,

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<sup>22</sup> Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness and English Renaissance Literature* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p.175.

<sup>23</sup> Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.13.

or monstrous births and strange events.<sup>24</sup> The ballad records the magical crimes and eventual execution of Joane Flower and her two daughters, Margaret and Phillip Flower. The three women are employed at Belvoir Castle, the seat of the Earl of Rutland. One daughter, Margaret, is invited to dwell at the castle; however, she betrays the trust invested in her by purloining small items ‘to her mother’s home’, and ‘unlawfully’ coming and going at night, in order to visit her family.<sup>25</sup> When the Earl and the Countess discover this, they discharge her.

Joane Flower decides to punish the Earl for turning ‘her daughter out of dores’. Assisted by both Margaret and her other daughter, Phillip, a ‘strumpet’, Joane aims:

To blast the branches of that house  
And undermine the roote.

‘House’ here implies both the architectural structure and the dynasty. The revenge against the Earl is acted upon his household: first the Earl and the Countess fall sick, and then their three children also become ill. Margaret has stolen the glove of the eldest son, Henry; when the three women bewitch the glove, he grows worse, and dies. However, Margaret confesses her guilt before the magistrates, and so the women are condemned and executed.

The three women use witchcraft to punish a household for the expulsion of one of their number from that household. The perpetrators are all female, but this is not a quarrel between women. The Countess and the Earl are both implicated in Margaret’s dismissal, yet the magical illnesses of the married couple and their three children are represented as primarily crimes against the Earl, whose household and succession are undermined: the witches decide to ‘practice and proceed’ against ‘the children of this Earle’. The household is punished for the mistake of its master and mistress.

Margaret’s transgressive movement between the household of her master and the household of her family, is represented as a precursor to her

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, *A Warning for All Desperate Women* (London, 1628), Pepys 1.120-121; *The Lady Isabella’s Tragedy; or, The Step-Mothers Cruelty*, Crawford 1135; and *The Lamenting Lady* (c.1620), Pepys 1.44-45.

<sup>25</sup> *Damnable Practises of three Lincolneshire Witches* (London, 1619), Pepys 1.132-133.

acts of witchcraft; her disobedient mobility and her theft of small objects become the basis of her spells. Her sister Phillip's transgressive sexuality is likewise linked to her witchcraft. Willis argues that accused women were not 'regularly associated with erotic power or sexual offences in England'.<sup>26</sup> Yet in this ballad, the magic of the Flowers women is explicitly linked to Phillip Flowers's status as a 'strumpet' – an unchaste woman<sup>27</sup> – who entices her lover to stay with her:

And that her Sister Phillip was  
well knowne a Strumpet lewd,  
And how she had a young mans love,  
bewitched and subdued,  
Which made the young man often say,  
he had no power to leave  
Her curst inticing company,  
that did him so deceive.

Her lover is thus spatially and emotionally confined, while she may move freely, in an inversion of gender roles. Phillip's relationship with the young man is condemned for its lewdness, its power relations, and its magical potential. Her bewitchment of her lover may be metaphorical or literal, but it is represented as related to her status as a witch.

The witchcraft, arraignment, and execution of the Flowers family is recounted in a news pamphlet, published in the same year as the broadside ballad, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* (1619). The ballad and the pamphlet share plot points and characterisation; however, the pamphlet also reproduces the testimonies of both perpetrators and witnesses, which focus upon the mechanics of the magic, such as familiars, curses, and bodily fluids of birds and animals. The pamphlet is still more explicit concerning the link between Phillip's witchcraft and her unbridled sexuality:

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<sup>26</sup> Willis, p.9.

<sup>27</sup> 'strumpet', *OED*, 1a.

Concerning *Phillip*, that she was lewdly transported with the love of one Th: Simpson, who presumed to say, that shee had bewitched him: for hee had no power to leave her, and was as he supposed marvellously altered both in minde and body... these complaints began many yeares before either their conviction, or publique apprehension.<sup>28</sup>

The image on the title page of the pamphlet would seem to reinforce Thomas Simpson's claim that Phillip's seduction of him is a form of bewitchment, depicting the three witches as stereotypically aged and unattractive, and surrounded by the familiars that facilitate their magic (Fig. 2). Although the pamphlet does not forge an explicit link between Phillip's sexual behaviour and her magic, Thomas's alteration through their love affair is represented as a precursor to Phillip's acts of witchcraft.



**Fig. 2. Detail from title page of *The Wonderfull Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* (London, 1619), British Library, shelfmark C.27.b.25, title page.**

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<sup>28</sup> *The Wonderfull Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flower* (London, 1619), C3v-4r.

Mary Sutton's sexuality is likewise directly conflated with her spell casting; after the unnamed servant has been released from his enchantment, he upbraids her, not for attacking him with a magical illness, but for her sexual advances. These narratives are not isolated examples of a connection between witchcraft and unbridled female sexuality. In a 1582 account of numerous witches arraigned and executed at St Oses, Essex, the daughter of a witch named Elizabeth Eustace is upbraided by her master 'for some lewde dealynges'; this prompts an act of magical revenge by her mother, as the discovery of sexual misbehaviour becomes the motive for witchcraft.<sup>29</sup> This link is made still more explicit in a 1612 description of the witch Mary Barbar, who first 'gave way to all the passionate, and earthly faculties of the flesh', before eventually 'bewitching a man to death'.<sup>30</sup>

On the continent, promiscuous sexuality was regularly associated with witches; sexual intercourse with demons was represented as a common feature of witchcraft in continental treatises, many of which would have been familiar to elite English readers, and also occurred in Scottish witchcraft accounts, which followed the continental model. Copulation with demons was likewise discussed in the more learned English witchcraft treatises, including Scot's *Discoverie*, but was not a feature of English witch trials, with the exception of the period 1644 to 1647, when amid the chaos of the Civil War, the 'Witch-Finder General' Mathew Hopkins made numerous accusations of demonic copulation.<sup>31</sup> The contact between witches and demons depicted in English news pamphlets and trial accounts in the period prior to 1644 is limited to the quasi-maternal relationship between witch and familiar, yet it is nonetheless sexually inflected, as I will discuss further below.

Witchcraft, then, is frequently coupled with anxieties about sexual contagion, domestic infection, the porousness of women's bodies, and subversive female agency. In Scot's narrative of the suspected witch Mother Simkins, the vicar uses first magical and then medical narratives to dispel suspicion that he has contracted a sexually transmitted disease. Infectious

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<sup>29</sup> W. W., *A True and Just Recorde*, (London, 1582), C6r.

<sup>30</sup> *The Witches of Northamptonshire* (London, 1612), D2v-D3r.

<sup>31</sup> Walter Stephens, *Demonic Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p.102, p.103.

diseases, illicit sexuality, and witchcraft are figured in terms of similar anxieties concerning the threshold of the home and the threshold of the body. The mobile and penetrative witch shares the contagious potential of lewd women, masterless men and vagrants. Magic, like sickness and sin, is something that the walls of the home cannot always repel.

## **2. The Making of a Witch: Curses and Contagion in *The Witch of Edmonton***

When the titular ‘witch’ of Edmonton, Elizabeth Sawyer, first enters the stage, she is gathering sticks for her fire on another man’s land: a sign both of her poverty, and of the societal effects of the enclosure of common land, which, as Thomas argues, caused a ‘deterioration in the position of the dependent and elderly’, and ‘broke up many of the old cooperative village communities’.<sup>32</sup> She is mobile and transgressive in trespassing and crossing the boundaries of property, but these are not functions of her magical power; rather, they are effects of her poverty, disenfranchisement, and isolation from the surrounding community. When Sawyer enters the stage, ‘witch’ is not yet her identity; rather, it is a label wrongly forced upon her by that community:

’Cause I am poor, deformed and ignorant,  
And like a bow buckled and bent together  
By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,  
Must I for that be made a common sink  
For all the filth and rubbish of men’s tongues  
To fall into? Some call me witch...<sup>33</sup>

Sawyer thus exhibits many of the stereotypical characteristics of a witch: she is poor, uneducated, disabled, and named as a witch by her neighbours before any witchcraft or magical behaviour has been observed. The play is unique in representing Sawyer as a recognisable ‘witch’ who has not yet committed an act of witchcraft. As the pamphlets discussed earlier in this

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<sup>32</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971; London: Penguin, 1991), p.671.

<sup>33</sup> William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton* ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), II.i.3-8. All further references are to this edition, and will be incorporated into the text.

chapter demonstrate, condemned witches are frequently identified by their neighbours before they are known to have used magic – indeed, magic is often represented as a retaliation for being named as a witch. However, the pamphleteers and the bewitched neighbours alike make the assumption that the woman in question is already a practising witch; the public naming of a witch provokes a magical retaliation which exposes witchcraft, but it does not cause it. In pinpointing the moment a poor, isolated, and angry woman transforms into a witch, *The Witch of Edmonton* calls into question the relationship between individual sin, neighbourhood culpability, and societal pressures, in the making of witches.

News pamphlets and trial accounts are self-consciously aware of the social and economic status of the majority of witches. This is interpreted not in terms of social causation, but rather as evidence of an intrinsic link between birth, circumstances, and moral status, so that those born poor, to families excluded by society, are born with dispositions that justify their poverty and exclusion. This is a fundamentally Calvinist attitude, and its propagation in these pamphlets intersects in many ways with the representation of providential influence in the detection of murder, in the news pamphlets discussed in Chapter Four. As Lake observes of the writers of murder pamphlets, ‘some authors... actually used the language of predestination; others subscribed to a providentialism so severe as almost to demand a predestinarian reading of the event’: news pamphlets reporting witchcraft likewise demonstrate what Lake terms ‘puritan-inspired, penny Calvinism’.<sup>34</sup> This predestinarianism and providentialism is also closely intertwined with social determinism.

The 1612 pamphlet *Witches of Northamptonshire* conforms to this pattern: condemned witch Agnes Browne is described as ‘of poore parentage and poorer education, one that as shee was borne to no good, was for want of grace never in the way to receive any’, and ‘is long suspected in the Towne where she dwelt of that crime, which afterwards proved true’.<sup>35</sup> The suspicion of her neighbours that she has committed the crime of

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<sup>34</sup> Lake, p.178, p.330. See also Mary Hampson Patterson, *Domesticating the Reformation: Protestant Best Sellers, Private Devotion and the Revolution of English Piety* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2007), esp. pp.310-316.

<sup>35</sup> *Witches of Northamptonshire* (London, 1612), B2r.

witchcraft is represented as justified by the eventual discovery of her crime; the fear in which those neighbours hold her is therefore vindicated by her witchcraft, and is depicted as a consequence of her ill nature, rather than a potential cause of it. Agnes has a daughter named Joane, ‘a maide (or at least unmarried) as gracious as the mother, and both of them as farre from grace as Heaven from hell’.<sup>36</sup> Joane’s outsider status is illustrated by her exclusion from the social institution of marriage: she is described wryly as ‘a maide (or at least unmarried)’, so that her social status calls her sexual status into question. Thus the parentage and the moral status of Joane are represented as identical; the one begets the other. The link is made still more explicit in the case of Mary Barber, of whom the pamphleteer writes: ‘As shee was of meane Parents, so was she monstrous and hideous, both in her life, and actions’.<sup>37</sup> Again, education, parentage, and nature are inextricably intertwined; and the judgement of Mary’s nature by her neighbours is justified by her eventual acts of witchcraft.

In Goodcole’s account, Elizabeth Sawyer is known to be a witch long before her witchcraft is discovered; however, Goodcole does not question that her status as a witch precedes her reputation as one. Alongside the ‘ridiculous’ trial of thatch-burning, Sawyer’s neighbours could detect her criminal status by various other signs: her face was ‘most pale & ghoast-like’; ‘her countenance was still dejected to the ground’; ‘her body was crooked and deformed’; and her tongue was ‘cursing, swearing, blaspheming, and imprecating’. The latter, Goodcole observes, ‘as afterward she co[n]fessed, was the occasional cause, of the Divels accesse unto her’.<sup>38</sup> Women’s public speech, especially if coupled with anger, is frequently interpreted as disorderly, as I discussed in Chapter One. Yet Sawyer’s cursing, like her disability, poverty, and unhappiness, are read as signs of criminality before they are (retrospectively) proven to be so, for Sawyer has long been suspected of witchcraft: ‘a great, and long suspition was held of this person to be a witch... by the information of her neighbours that dwelt

<sup>36</sup> *Witches of Northamptonshire*, B2r.

<sup>37</sup> *Witches of Northamptonshire*, C1v; D3r.

<sup>38</sup> Goodcole, *Wonderfull Discoverie*, A4v-B1r.

about her'.<sup>39</sup> The woodcut image on the title page of *Wonderfull Discoverie* reinforces the assumptions of the pamphlet: Sawyer is depicted as an elderly woman, with a bent back, leaning on a stick (Fig. 3). She is framed by neither home nor neighbours, but by a tree, a cloud, and the sky: open to the elements, her isolation, helplessness, and implied poverty all reinforce her status as stereotypical witch. Furthermore, the image highlights Sawyer's subversive mobility: she appears 'unhoused', and thus, like the witches in *Macbeth*, is subject neither to the government nor the spatial confinement of the home, as I will discuss further later in this chapter.



**Fig. 3. Detail from the title page of Henry Goodcole's *A Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer* (London, 1621), British Library, shelfmark C.27.b.38, title page.**

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<sup>39</sup> Goodcole, *Wonderfull Discoverie*, A4v.

In *The Witch of Edmonton*, Rowley, Dekker, and Ford complicate the claims of the play's source text by representing Sawyer's reputation amongst her neighbours as shaping her conception of herself:

This they enforce upon me, and in part  
Make me to credit it. (II.i.14-15)

Her neighbours do not only use words to enforce the description of 'witch'; they also use violence. Sawyer is struck with impunity by her social superiors, despite the fact that she has not yet put herself beyond the protection of the law through witchcraft. Her only criminal behaviour is trespass, for which Old Banks attacks her, confident that his physical, social, and economic strength will protect him from any complaint she could make against him:

OLD BANKS: What makest thou upon my ground?  
ELIZABETH SAWYER: Gather a few rotten sticks to warm me.  
OLD BANKS: Down with them when I bid thee, quickly. I'll make  
thy bones rattle in thy skin else. (19-22)

Old Banks is able to threaten her because his ownership of the land they stand upon reinforces his physical power over her. Sawyer answers him with a curse, wishing her sticks were 'stuck 'cross thy throat, thy bowels, thy maw, thy midriff' (24-25). His threat is carried out upon her body, and so the power of his words is diminished in the enacting of them. Unperformed, her curse retains its sinister potential.

Old Banks's violence is later echoed by the threatened violence of Sawyer's neighbours, who call 'Out witch! Beat her, kick her, set fire on her' (IV.i.33), and are only prevented from enacting their threatened violence by the timely arrival of the local Justice. Extreme violence, like defamation, is a characteristic feature of witch narratives. In *Damnable Driftes*, Mother Staunton complains to her neighbour, Thomas Prat, 'that a knave had beaten her: saying she was a Witche', yet she is 'none in deede, although I can tell what belongeth to that practise.' Prat reports her to the local Justice. Next time she visits Prat's home, 'after certaine woordes of

anger betweene hym and her, he raced her face with a Nedle'.<sup>40</sup> This attack precedes any act of witchcraft; Staunton's only crime at this point is a claimed knowledge of the practice of witchcraft, and angry words. Prat's motives are never explained, but in drawing Staunton's blood, he would appear to be attempting some form of counter-magic. As a guest of Prat, Staunton is vulnerable to his violence; as a reported witch who has already been beaten for the crime, she is powerless to seek legal recourse.

*Witches of Northamptonshire* reports an incident of similar violence against a supposed witch. Joane Vaughan (the daughter of Agnes Browne), in company with 'one Mistris Belcher, a virtuous and godly Gentlewoman', 'committed something either in spiech, or gesture, so unfitting, and unseeming the nature of woman-hood', that it 'touched the modesty of this Gentle woman, who was so much moved with her bold, and impudent demeanor, that shee could not containe her selfe, but sodainely rose up and stroke her'.<sup>41</sup> As the act of a gentlewoman of virtuous reputation, Mistris Belcher's violence is not condemned, but exonerated, despite the fact that Joane's provocation is unknown to the pamphleteer. As the poor and ill-educated daughter of a supposed witch, Joane, in being publicly struck, is presumed to be in the wrong.

In each of these cases, a woman is violently attacked by a social superior; the woman in question is supposed to be a witch, but is not yet known to have committed an act of witchcraft. In staging Old Banks's unprovoked attack on Sawyer, and in representing this attack as provoking Sawyer's first act of witchcraft, the play calls attention to the roles of defamation, violence, and social isolation in creating witches. David Nicol argues that the play 'attempts to define the boundary between social and demonic causation', highlighting 'not only the power of devils, but also the power of social coercion to attract those devils'.<sup>42</sup>

The devil 'Dog' is a very real presence in *Witch of Edmonton*; he is instrumental in granting Sawyer the power to perform magic, and thus in

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<sup>40</sup> *A Detection of Damnable Driftes, Practized by Three Witches* (London, 1579), A7r.

<sup>41</sup> *Witches of Northamptonshire* (1612), B2v.

<sup>42</sup> David Nicol, 'Interrogating the Devil: Social and Demonic Pressure in *The Witch of Edmonton*', *Comparative Drama* 38.4 (Winter 2004-05), 425-445 (p.425; p.442).

facilitating her execution and damnation, as well as in bringing about madness, bigamy, and murder. But this devil is only able to appear before Sawyer because she has issued a clear invitation to him, prompted by the abuse she has suffered:

Abuse me! Beat me! Call me hag and witch!  
What is the name? Where and by what art learned?  
What spells, what charms or invocations  
May the thing called Familiar be purchased? (II.i-33-36)

Just as Mother Staunton only claims to know something of witchcraft after she has been struck for being supposed a witch, so Sawyer's desire to commit the crime of which she has so often been accused is provoked by the brutality she receives at the hands of Old Banks. After further abuse by a group of Morris dancers, Sawyer curses further, and her question is finally answered, through the appearance of a black dog:

DOG: Ho! Have I found thee cursing? Now thou art mine own.  
(127)

This devil has appeared in the form of a household pet or 'familiar', as I will discuss further below. This is a domestic re-imagining of the appearance of Mephistopheles in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, who tells Faustus that his conjuring raised him '*per accidens*': in his spells, Faustus 'rack[ed] the name of God', and blaspheming is 'the shortest cut for conjuring'.<sup>43</sup> The devil comes at Sawyer's invitation, but it is her cursing that compels him to appear; as Eric Byville puts it, 'the witch's profane oath (cursing) both precipitates and reinforces the heretical oath (ritual swearing) that contracts her, body and soul, to infernal powers'.<sup>44</sup> It is in Sawyer's angry speech that her power, and her danger, lie. In this way, the play carries a didactic message, warning the women of the audience of the dangerous (and supernatural) consequences of women's angry speech.

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<sup>43</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* ed. Roma Gill (London: A & C Black, 1989), iii.47-55. All further references are to this edition, and will be incorporated into the text.

<sup>44</sup> Eric Byville, 'How to Do Witchcraft Tragedy with Speech Acts', *Comparative Drama* 45.2 (Summer, 2011), 1-34 (p.21).

Sawyer's cursing is a response both to Old Banks's violence and to his miserly behaviour: his refusal to grant her the charity of a few sticks for her fire. Refusal of charity is a characteristic motive for magical retaliation in witchcraft accounts; as Thomas observes, 'the most common situation of all was that in which the victim... had been guilty of a breach of charity of neighbourliness, by turning away an old woman who had come to the door to beg or borrow some food or drink'.<sup>45</sup> Thus the devil appears to Sawyer due to her cursing; and her cursing stems from the social causes of isolation, poverty, and lack of charity or neighbourliness. The narrative of Elizabeth Sawyer conforms to what is often referred to as the Macfarlane/Thomas model of witchcraft.

Gaskill acknowledges this model, but argues that the reality of witchcraft accusations in the period is far more complex than this:

Witches were frequently integrated and productive men and women in the community with households to support and to be supportive, but they were also in competition and this lead to conflict with others... witches were people whose conduct breached customary rules about neighbourliness – a breach which men as much as women were liable to commit.<sup>46</sup>

Yet whilst judicial records bear witness to the fact that, as Gaskill argues, accusations of witchcraft stemmed as often from neighbourhood rivalry as from poverty and isolation, it is notable how often (surviving) news pamphlets and printed trial accounts fit the Macfarlane/Thomas model; there is a disjunction between the realities of witchcraft accusations, and the figure of the witch in the popular imagination. Cheap print focuses on the poor and the dispossessed: frequently female, often unmarried or widowed, dependent upon charity or the parish, the witch is a powerless figure who gains power through a reciprocal relationship with a powerful but parasitic creature – the witch's familiar (see Fig. 4).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas, pp.660-661.

<sup>46</sup> Gaskill, p.78.

<sup>47</sup> On familiars, see Greg Warburton, 'Gender, Supernatural Power, Agency and the Metamorphoses of the Familiar in Early Modern Pamphlet Accounts of English Witchcraft', *Parergon* 20.2 (July, 2003), 95-118; J. A Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England* (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education, 2001), pp.62-64; Ryan Curtis Friesen, *Supernatural Fiction in Early Modern Drama and Culture* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic

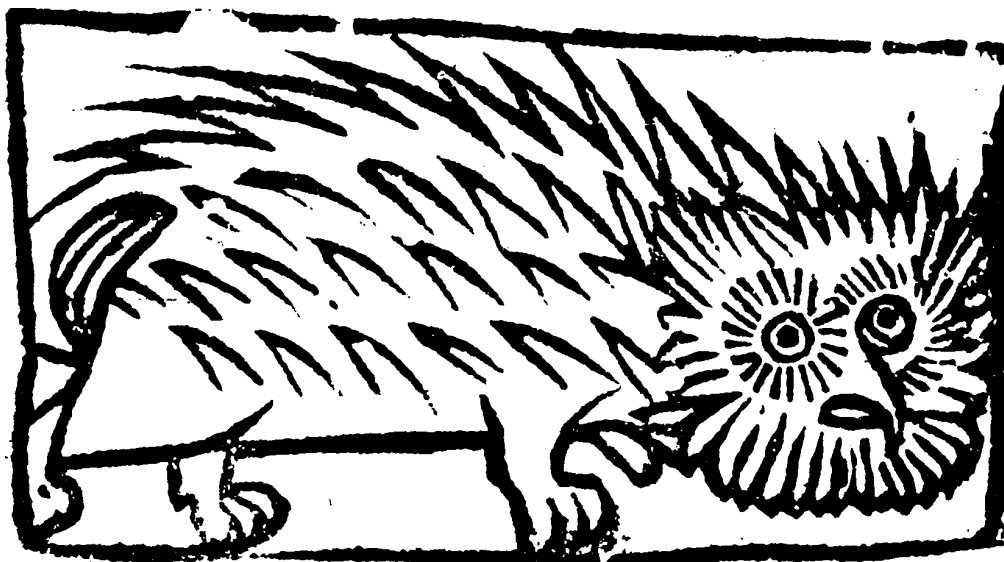


Fig. 4. Detail from the title page of *A Detection of Damnable Driftes* (London, 1579), British Library, shelfmark C.27.a.8, title page.

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In a 1582 account of the St Oses witches, a young boy, Thomas Rabbet, testifies against his mother. He reports that she:

...hath foure severall spirites, the one called Tyffin, the other Titty, the third Pigine, & the fourth Jacket & being asked of what colours they were, saith, that Tytley is like a little grey Cat, Tyffin is like a white Lambe, Pygine is black like a Toad, and Jacke [*sic.*] is black like a Cat... And hee saith, hee hath seen his mother at times to give them beere to drinke, and of a white Lofe or Cake to eate, and saith that in the night-time the said spirites will come to his mother, and sucke blood of her upon her armes and other places of her body.<sup>48</sup>

As Erica Fudge argues, anxieties about witches and their familiars were linked to discourses criticising the relationships between elite women and their lapdogs; in both cases, there is a ‘sexualisation of the relationship with the pet’, as ‘animals are represented as substitute humans’.<sup>49</sup> Fudge observes that William Lambarde defines the status of a non-working animal that inhabits the house as being ‘for pleasure onely’, and thus argues that ‘to take

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Press, 2010), pp.71-73; Thomas, esp. pp.530-531; Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2002), pp.133-6 and Purkiss, *Witch*, esp. ch.5.

<sup>48</sup> W.W., *A True and Just Recorde, of the Information, Examination and Confession of all the Witches, taken at S. Oses* (London, 1582), A3v.

<sup>49</sup> Fudge, p.134.

dogges of any kind, apes, parrats, singing birds or such like (though they be in the house) is no *Felonie*'.<sup>50</sup> Lambarde's parenthesis suggests a further concern; that animals, which belong outside, might be incorporated into the household. He is anxious to establish that when (certain) animals are kept for pleasure and not for work, they may be brought inside the house without violating the boundaries of the home, yet the concerns about erotic bonds between ladies and their lapdogs and witches and their familiars alike represent the logical conclusion of this 'pleasure' that Lambarde uses as a defence. Furthermore, concerns that the witches' care-giving becomes a form of 'mothering' would seem to bear out Fudge's suggestion that these animals are represented as substitute humans; in suckling their demonic familiars, these women could render them substitute children.

The extent to which the relationship between witch and familiar is represented as an (erotic) perversion of the maternal relationship has been much discussed by critics. As Willis puts it, witches were 'mothers "gone bad," women past childbearing years who used their mothering powers against neighbours who had enraged them', by feeding and caring for 'demonic imps as if they were children'.<sup>51</sup> Purkiss suggests that this perversion is rooted in the maternal body:

The witch gives blood instead of milk; the purified blood that is milk, and hence the narrative of the female body as a source of nourishment rather than poison, does not exist as far as she is concerned.<sup>52</sup>

Yet in Thomas Rabbet's narrative of his mother's familiars, it is notable that the suckling of spirits with blood is coupled with the more ordinary nourishment of bread, cake, and beer. In sucking blood from his mother's arms and 'other places', these supernatural beings are demonic, parasitic creatures that grant malign power in return for blood; in appearing in the forms of cats, a lamb, and a toad, and being fed upon household produce, the familiars appear determinedly mundane.

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<sup>50</sup> Lambarde, p.268; cited by Fudge, p.133.

<sup>51</sup> Willis, p.ix.

<sup>52</sup> Purkiss, *Witch*, p.134.

Willis suggests that, in ‘village-level discourse’, the witch’s familiar was not Satanic, but rather ‘part of the “third world” of the medieval cosmos, an intermediate realm between heaven and hell, populated also by mischief-making fairies, ghosts, spirits of “bad luck,” and other supernatural denizens of the byways, forests, wild spaces, bogs, and fens of rural England’ – not unlike Puck, with his milk-skimming and alewife-toppling activities.<sup>53</sup> In eating bread and cake and drinking ale, Rabbet’s mother’s familiars might seem to belong to the folkloric world; yet they are also constructed as the outward and visible signs of a pact with the Devil that has granted her demonic powers. Likewise, in the pamphlets discussed above, familiars in the shape of hares, hogs, and cats act in eerie ways that cause mischief rather than death and destruction, but are associated retrospectively with a witch’s more malign acts, even if they are not explicitly linked to those acts. Thus in witch pamphlets, the folkloric familiar of the ‘third world’ is present, but is incorporated into an explicit Christianised narrative of demonic pacts and damnation. Familiars may retain characteristics of Puck and his companions, but they belong to the Devil.

In Goodcole’s narrative, and Rowley, Dekker, and Ford’s adaptation of it, Sawyer’s relationship with her familiar, the Dog, is rendered explicit: the Dog is a devil, and in suckling him, she sells her soul. The Dog promises to ‘do any mischief unto man or beast’, if Sawyer will ‘make a deed and gift’ of her ‘soul and body’: she must ‘seal it’ with her blood (II.i.137-141, 143). The audience is permitted to view this intimate transaction: the stage direction reads ‘*Sucks her arm; thunder and lighting*’. Sawyer is not controlling the weather here; rather, the natural world recognises the supernatural quality of her act. She has become a witch, and her body and soul are forfeit.

Goodcole focuses upon the physical processes of this transaction, and the ‘evidence’ these processes provide: a teat at which the familiar feeds. Goodcole records that ‘women’ fetched to ‘search the body’ found ‘a little above the fundament of Elizabeth Sawyer... a thing like a Teate the bignesse of a little finger... which was branched at the top like a teate, and

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<sup>53</sup> Willis, p.91. See also Lamb, ch.5.

seemed as though one had suckt it'.<sup>54</sup> As Purkiss notes, 'most "teats" or "witchmarks" were located on the genitals or near the anus'; Roper likewise observes that, 'in English witch fantasies, teats appear not confined to the breast, but all over the body as the Devil's mark; they are often to be found near the anus or vagina, as if the bodily orifices have become interchangeable'.<sup>55</sup> Mother and Mary Sutton suckle their familiars using 'two Teats which they had on their thighs'.<sup>56</sup> The parts of the body involved in the familiar's transactions are thus, as Gail Kern Paster suggests, 'those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world... the body's thresholds and its sites of pleasure'.<sup>57</sup> The boundaries of Sawyer's own body are penetrated by her familiar, in close proximity to the sexualised liminal sites of that body, and thus she has the power to affect the bodies (and households) of others.

In the pamphlet, then, the Dog is decidedly demonic, and Sawyer's physical relationship with him is evidence of her evil nature. However, in *The Witch of Edmonton*, the devil Dog is shown to differ according to the master or mistress he serves. When working for the foolish Young Banks, the Dog requires only mundane sustenance, and accepts the 'jowls and livers' and 'crusts and bone' offered him by Young Banks (III.ii.134-135). Young Banks treats the Dog 'ever as a dog, not as a devil', as he later tells the Dog when he learns Sawyer is to be hanged (V.i.117). In granting the Dog treats appropriate to the form he has taken, and in involving him in mischief and Morris dancing, Young Banks would seem to be responding to the Dog's folkloric associations, rather than to his demonic nature: the two versions of the witch's familiar are split. Thus Young Banks escapes both execution and damnation, whilst Sawyer can avoid neither.

The Dog is a direct cause of the deaths of two more characters in the play, although neither is aware of it. The first is Anne Radcliffe, who is

<sup>54</sup> Goodcole, *Wonderfull Discoverie*, B3r-v.

<sup>55</sup> Purkiss, *Witch*, p.134; Roper, *Oedipus*, p.25.

<sup>56</sup> *Witches Apprehended*, C1v.

<sup>57</sup> Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.14. See also Bakhtin, p.26.

bewitched by Sawyer, and for whose death Sawyer is executed. Their quarrel originates in a breakdown of neighbourly relations; Radcliffe strikes Sawyer's sow when it eats a little of her soap, and lames it. In return, Sawyer bewitches Radcliffe, so that she runs mad, and eventually dies. This escalation is characteristic of witchcraft episodes, in which sickness and death are the consequences of trivial domestic quarrels, suggesting the extent to which seemingly small incidents could attain great significance on a domestic scale.

Radcliffe's madness manifests itself in various ways: she runs through the town, singing, dancing, and talking to herself, as she hallucinates that her ribs are made of a 'paned hose' (breeches made in panes or stripes), and that there is a 'Lancashire hornpipe' (a wind instrument, with sexual connotations) in her throat (IV.i.204-205). Her madness is public: as she imagines that she dances with sergeants and the Devil, her husband and many men of the town chase after her. Old Banks instructs her husband, Old Radcliffe, to 'Catch her fast, and have her into some close chamber, do, for she's as many wives are, stark mad' (210-211). It is telling that Sawyer's enchantment manifests itself in openness, whilst Old Banks advocates (misogynist) confinement: Anne runs freely about the town, and imagines the borders of her body dissolving, as her ribs break and her voice becomes a pipe. She likewise threatens the boundaries of Sawyer's body; she threatens to scratch her face (198). Anne also becomes vocal, condemning social injustice: 'All the golden meal runs into the rich knaves purses, and the poor have nothing but bran' (193-195).

In each of these qualities, Anne resembles Sawyer herself. Old Banks's attempted confinement of Anne as a mad wife aims to restore her to the early modern norm, discussed in Chapter Three: a woman contained within, protected by, and aligned with, a 'close' chamber. Anne's act of violent self-slaughter, reported by Old Banks, ensures that she remains outside this norm:

We were in her hands as reeds in a mighty tempest. Spite of our strengths away she brake, and nothing in her mouth being heard but 'the devil, the witch, the witch, the devil', she beat out her own brains, and so died. (221-226)

Radcliffe, then, has become like the shrewish wives discussed in Chapter One; just as Shakespeare's Kate could 'raise up such a storm that mortal ears could hardly endure the din' (I.i.166-7), so Radcliffe's verbal and physical violence is like a 'mighty tempest'. Bewitched, she becomes an active agent rather than an obedient wife, a vocal, opinionated, and violent woman who refuses the enclosure of her home and chamber, and parades her freedom and agency before the town. But Radcliffe's agency is not her own. The Dog's touch invokes both Radcliffe's madness and her suicide, and the Dog touches her at Sawyer's command: just as the Dog's suckling of Sawyer's blood seals their supernatural bargain, so the Dog's touch permits Sawyer's magic to permeate Radcliffe's body. As Radcliffe cries out on her deathbed – 'the devil, the witch, the witch, the devil' – the devil and the witch are equally responsible for her death.

Yet there is an anomalous element to Radcliffe's death. When Sawyer bids the Dog murder Old Banks – 'Go kill the slave' (II.i.162) – the Dog admits that he cannot do so, because men who 'love goodness' are 'without the compass of our reach' (168-170). Sawyer is able to infect Old Banks's corn and livestock, and even to undo his household authority and neighbourhood reputation, by enchanting him so that he must kiss his cow's behind repeatedly (IV.i.61-76); but she cannot kill him. This calls into question how the Dog's touch is able to drive Radcliffe to her death. Does the 'goodness' clause apply only to men? Or does the disorderly, vocal, and violent behaviour Radcliffe exhibits when mad stem from a prior tendency in Anne herself, just as Sawyer speaks curses long before her curses are efficacious? The play never provides a satisfactory answer, and the paradox could perhaps be due to the multi-authoring of the play: scholars have suggested that Dekker 'had the main responsibility' for the Sawyer plot, 'Ford's hand is most apparent in the Frank Thorney plot and Rowley's main contribution lies in the Cuddy Banks scenes', an approach which created a multi-faceted devil-Dog, but could also have produced inconsistencies.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ford, Dekker and Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton* ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), Introduction, p.6. See also Gerald Eades

However, in providing this puzzle, *The Witch of Edmonton* raises pertinent questions concerning the vulnerability of women in particular to encounters with the supernatural; the balance of human culpability and demonic agency in acts prompted by devils; and the contagious potential of magic.

The second woman whose death is directly caused by the touch of the Dog is Susan Thorney, née Carter. Frank Thorney's bigamous marriage necessitates Susan's murder, as discussed in Chapter Two. Frank's dual marital promises, like Sawyer's curses, are an invitation to the Devil, and make it possible for the Dog to touch him, and so precipitate the murder. The act is traced back to Sawyer, whom the townsfolk believe to be responsible:

OLD CARTER: Did you not bewitch Frank to kill his wife? He could never have done't without the devil. (V.iii.26-27)

Indeed, Sawyer's status as witch renders her a scapegoat for all mishaps and transgressions in the community, particularly those of women:

FIRST COUNTRYMAN: I took my wife and a servingman in our town of Edmonton thrashing in my barn together such corn as country wenches carry to market. And examining my polecat why she did so, she swore in her conscience she was bewitched, and what witch have we about us but Mother Sawyer?

SECOND COUNTRYMAN: Rid the town of her, else all our wives will do nothing else but dance about other country maypoles.

THIRD COUNTRYMAN: Our cattle fall, our wives fall, our daughters fall and maidservants fall; and we ourselves shall not be able to stand if this beast be suffered to graze amongst us. (IV.i.1-18)

The illicit sexual behaviour that is often an element of witches' misdeeds is observed in the surrounding community. Just as cattle and corn are destroyed through disease, so wives and daughters 'fall' through adultery. Yet the comedy lies here in First Countryman's credulity. Like the syphilitic minister who blamed his symptoms on witchcraft, discussed above, First Countryman's wife uses witchcraft as an excuse for sexual misbehaviour. Her excuse rests upon the assumption that the dangers of proximity to

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Bently, *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), ch.8.

witchcraft, of suffering a witch to ‘graze amongst’ the community, will be accepted by her husband; an assumption he shares in complaining of her adultery to his neighbours, without the shame of a cuckold – he holds Sawyer responsible, and not his wife.

The anonymous author of the 1579 pamphlet *A Detection of Damnable Driftes* warns of the contagious potential of witchcraft:

Some with much adoe ca[n] be awaked out of their drowsie dreames, though thei bee told that their neighbours house is on fire. But when their owne walles are invaded with like flames, thei shall finde that it had bin better to have come an hower too soone, to quenche those forrein fires, then to have risen one minute too late to extinguishe the same, creeping into their owne chambers. If therefore thou be assured that thy neighbour, either in bodie, familie or goodnes is impaired by damnable witchcrafte... prevente or stop the mischief by all possible meanes.<sup>59</sup>

In using the metaphor of fire, the risk of which was a highly destructive consequence of living in close proximity to careless neighbours, the anonymous pamphleteer suggests that householders have a personal, familial, and moral responsibility to find and prevent any witchcraft within the community. As Dubrow observes, the destructive potential of fire within the home rendered it a potent metaphor for threats to the home and household within the period.<sup>60</sup>

The witch’s potential to impair the bodies, families, and ‘goodnes’ of her neighbours – and thus their lives, their households and their souls – renders her still more dangerous than fire, which can destroy a house and a household, but cannot touch a soul. Witches, like the devil Dog, are dangerous because they do not only use their magic to harm victims – they also use it to lead them astray. Magic is figured as penetrative; the ‘forrein’ fire can ‘creep’ into chambers, spreading from home to home like sickness. Magic is also contagious, and the best counter-magic is surveillance and prevention: naming and condemning the witch before she has committed an act of witchcraft, just as Sawyer’s neighbours do. Yet, as the play and numerous pamphlets demonstrate, this strategy is itself risky, in that it can

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<sup>59</sup> *Detection of Damnable Driftes*, A3r-v.

<sup>60</sup> Dubrow, ch.3, esp. p.165.

provoke magic: whilst it may avoid accidental conflagration, naming and striking the witch can bring about arson.

It is notable that in *The Witch of Edmonton*, this contagious potential is invoked in direct reference to sexuality; the countrymen are concerned about the effect of witchcraft on their corn and livestock, but their primary anxiety is focused upon the sexual behaviour of their wives and daughters. Sawyer is believed to provoke illicit sexuality, despite the fact that she demonstrates no signs of this herself. Her dangerous existence outside a familial household is believed to threaten the subjection of women in the households of others.

The familial household is set up as the opposite of witchcraft; Sawyer is never seen in the context of a home within the play. In the Goodcole narrative, Sawyer is married; Rowley, Dekker, and Ford remove this detail, so that she is without a husband or familial support. The stage spaces she inhabits are all outside: Old Banks's land and the public spaces of the town. Even her intimate encounters with the Dog take place in outside spaces, so that she can view the consequences of her magic upon the town's inhabitants. Her witchcraft is mobile and penetrative, able to cross the boundaries of property, but is not associated with domestic spaces.

The one exception to this is the thatch-burning episode. The playwrights preserve this detail from Goodcole; here, the countrymen, with Old Banks, believe it will be effective, whilst the elites, in the form of Sir Arthur and the Justice, represent Goodcole's scepticism. Yet the play itself endorses the former position:

HAMLUC: A handful of thatch plucked off a hovel of hers; and they say, when 'tis burning, if she be a witch she'll come running in.

OLD BANKS: Fire it, fire it! I'll stand between thee and home for any danger.

*As that burns, enter the Witch*

ELIZABETH SAWYER: Diseases, plagues, the curse of an old woman follow and fall upon you! (IV.i.21-7)

Sawyer, then, is associated magically with her home. She feels the burning of her home's thatch as a transgression against herself, as is made clear by the curses the burning prompts. Yet although Sawyer's magic increases the

association of her body with her home, it decreases her reliance on it: as an audience, we never enter it, and as a witch, she is not confined by it. She suckles her familiar and casts her spells beyond its walls. Furthermore, like Anne Radcliffe in her madness, Sawyer as a witch is able to be a vocal participant in the public life of the town, albeit a reviled one. Whilst magic and counter-magic are intimately associated with the correlative relationship between the home and the body, the transgressive mobility of witches permits them to go beyond the home. Their magic penetrates homes, but is associated with the outside. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, Sawyer's home is irrelevant to her magic, but she cannot sever her tie to it. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, however, the witches belong outside: they do not only cast their magic in the wilderness, they also inhabit it.

### **3. Shakespeare's 'Weyward' Witches: Contagious Air and Linguistic Infection in *Macbeth***

*Macbeth* opens with the entrance of three witches. It has been observed by numerous critics that these women do not refer to themselves by this title; they call themselves the Weird Sisters, an attribution that Macbeth and Banquo borrow, and which Shakespeare himself borrows from Holinshed. In Holinshed's *The Historie of Scotland*, the three women who greet Macbeth with intimations of a royal future are not witches, but their status is certainly magical:

It fortun'd as Macbeth & Banquo journeyed towarde Fores, where the king as then lay, they went sporting by the way together without other companie, save only themselves, passing through the woodes and fields, when soddenly in the middes of a launde, there met them .iii. women in straunge & ferly apparel, resembling creatures of an elder worlde, whom when they attentively behelde, wondering much at the sight, The first of them spake & sayde: All hayle Makbeth Thane of Glammis (for he had lately entred into that dignitie and office by the death of his father Synd). The .ii. of them said: hayle Macbeth Thane of Cawder: but the third sayde: All hayle Macbeth that hereafter shall be king of Scotland.<sup>61</sup>

The three women are dressed in a way that is not only strange, but ‘ferly’: a word that could mean unexpected; dreadful; strange; or wondrous.<sup>62</sup> Their appearance provokes both wonder and attention in Macbeth and Banquo; it also marks them out as temporally displaced, as they appear to inhabit an older world than that in which they appear to Macbeth. The sisters appear suddenly, in the middle of a ‘launde’ or forest glade: a space that is untilled, open, and not owned or bounded. When their prophecies have ended, they vanish.

As Macbeth plots, first to murder Duncan, then to kill Banquo in an attempt to ensure Banquo’s son will not succeed to the throne, the words of the three women recur in his imagination:

The words of the three weird sisters also (of whome before ye have heard) greatly encouraged him hereunto, but specially his wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she that was very ambitious burning in unquenchable desire to beare the name of a Queene.<sup>63</sup>

The women are here referred to as ‘three weird sisters’. Their ‘weirdness’ can be read as referring to their fantastical appearance; as marking them out as supernatural; or as registering their status as ‘fates’, able to control the destiny of men and women. A suspected ‘weird-sister’ features as a figure of destiny in the Scots manuscript *Trojan War* (c.1400), and ‘weird sisters’ appear as fates in Gavin Douglas’ 1513 Scots translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, entitled *Eneados*; the term ‘weird sisters’ is also used to describe the women

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<sup>61</sup> Holinshed, *The Historie of Scotland in Chronicles* (1577), p.243.

<sup>62</sup> ‘ferly’, *OED*, 1; 2; 3a.

<sup>63</sup> Holinshed, *Historie of Scotland*, p.244.

Macbeth encounters in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* (1420).<sup>64</sup> It would seem that in choosing this particular appellation, Holinshed is drawing on a vernacular tradition, which reimagined the classical Fates in Scottish terms. Holinshed here couples the weird sisters with Lady Macbeth as instigators of the crime, 'encouraging' Macbeth as if they are human agents rather than supernatural in nature. Yet later, as Macbeth plans Banquo's death, Holinshed grants responsibility for the ensuing murder to the weird sisters alone:

The words also of the three weird sisters, wold not out of his mind, which as they promised him the kingdome, so lykewise did they promise it at the same time, unto the posteritie of Banquo.<sup>65</sup>

The three weird sisters may not be described as witches, but it would seem that their words have some sort of power; whilst Lady Macbeth's human agency is required to persuade Macbeth to murder Duncan, the remembered words of the weird sisters alone are enough to convince him to kill Banquo. The (single) appearance of the three weird sisters in the 'launde' echoes throughout the remainder of the episode: the words of the women 'wold not out' of either Macbeth's mind or Holinshed's narrative.

Macbeth's encounter with the weird sisters is not only described in the text of the chronicles; it also appears in an accompanying illustration (Fig. 5). Yet despite the fact that the image was commissioned to illustrate the chronicle, there is a significant disjunction between image and text. As James Knapp puts it,

Far from wondrous and strange, the appearance of the sisters in the woodcut illustration would have been in no way unfamiliar to contemporary readers, as the 'sisters' appear in elaborate Elizabethan dress.<sup>66</sup>

However, costume historian Maria Hayward suggests that, while some elements of the women's costume would have been associated with

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<sup>64</sup> 'weird', *OED*, 3, 2a, 1. See also Laura Shamas, "*We Three*": *The Mythology of Shakespeare's Weird Sisters* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), pp.14-15.

<sup>65</sup> Holinshed, *Historie of Scotland*, p.246.

<sup>66</sup> James A. Knapp, 'Illustrations in the 1577 edition' in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles* ed. Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer and Felicity Heal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.111-132 (p.112).

Elizabethan dress, others, such as ‘the conical shape of the skirt, indicative of a Spanish-style farthingale’, were less fashionable by the 1580s; furthermore, the headdresses, the necklines of the bodices, and the ways that the bodices overlap with the skirt, extending to the hips or mid-thigh, are all highly ‘unusual’, and the decorative features are ‘suggestive of the exotic rather than the fashionable’.<sup>67</sup> I would therefore suggest that there is something ‘ferly’ about this costume: the women ape Elizabethan dress but with an otherworldly effect, belonging to an earlier time, an exotic place, an elsewhere. Furthermore, in representing the unexpected appearance of three finely dressed quasi-Elizabethan women in the wilderness, rather than representing wildly dressed women who seem to inhabit that wilderness, the illustrator preserves the sense of strangeness in the encounter. The location of static women in elaborate costumes is disconcerting. Their presence amidst uncultivated land, with no dwelling in sight, no suggested mode of transport, and no visible protection from the elements, gives the impression that the women have, like Banquo’s ‘bubbles’, simply appeared from nowhere: just as, at the encounter’s end, they will vanish.



**Fig. 5. Illustration from Raphael Holinshed, *The Firste Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London, 1577), vol.1, p.243, British Library, shelfmark G.6006-7.**

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<sup>67</sup> Maria Hayward, private correspondence with the author, 2014.

The relationship between Shakespeare's weird sisters and those in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, then, is comparable to that between the text of the *Chronicles* and the illustration. Shakespeare's weird sisters have much in common with those of Holinshed: they are strange in their attire; they inhabit an outside space; they can vanish at will; their influence over Macbeth is somehow related to that of Lady Macbeth; and their words at once haunt Macbeth and precipitate his murderous actions. Yet Shakespeare refigures Holinshed's weird women, altering not their costume but their nature, while still preserving the sense of the wonder that they evoke. The Folio spelling of 'weyward' / 'weyard' suggests that the sisters are not only weird but wayward; as Margreta de Grazia and Stallybrass put it, this vowel shift transposes the sisters 'from the world of witchcraft and prophecy... to one of perversion and vagrancy'.<sup>68</sup> Shakespeare re-imagines the 'ferly' nature of his weird sisters in terms of popular English witch narratives about the magical potential of wayward women.

The status of the three women whose presence opens the play is never in doubt. They may, as weird sisters, embody a Scottish translation of the classical Fates, but the few lines spoken at their first appearance also mark them out as witches. They are associated with the outside; they encounter adverse weather conditions and meet upon 'the heath' (I.i.2, 7), defined as 'open uncultivated ground; an extensive tract of wasteland', a space beyond the walls of the home or the surveillance of neighbours.<sup>69</sup> Their meeting place is characterised by its lack of boundaries or proprietary rights: moving freely on borderless lands, open to the sky, the witches embody a wayward lack of containment, exemplified by their magical mobility as they 'hover' through the air (11). Furthermore, they plan to meet 'ere the set of sun' (5): like Mary Sutton, who flies with the moonlight, or Margaret Flower, who sneaks from her master's house under cover of darkness, their disturbing mobility does not only involve movement in the wrong ways to the wrong places, but movement at the wrong times.

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<sup>68</sup> Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, 'The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text', *SQ* 44.3 (Autumn 1993), 255-283 (p.263).

<sup>69</sup> 'heath', *OED*, 1a.

Yet the witches' disconcerting powers and wild locations are counterbalanced by the mundane names of their familiars. 'Grimalkin' was a common name for a cat, whilst 'Paddock' could denote a frog or toad (7, 8).<sup>70</sup> The evocation of these familiars as offstage, waiting presences in the witches' first scene ensures two things: firstly, that the audience recognises these women as witches whose magic, although it would seem to inhabit the 'fog and filthy air' (10), in fact has its roots in transactions with the familiars whose call the witches must answer; and secondly, that although these women may appear strange and 'wild in their attire' (38), as Banquo later describes them, they call their demonic servants by familiar names.

In 'The Uncanny', Freud suggests that what is uncanny (*unheimlich*) 'is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar'; *heimlich* is that which is familiar, native, or pertains to the home, yet it can also suggest concealment, secrecy, or even danger, and thus *heimlich* can be related to its opposite, so that *unheimlich* becomes 'a sub-species of *heimlich*'.<sup>71</sup> These names are what lend Shakespeare's witches a sense of the uncanny: they can predict the future, vanish at will, and hover through the air, and yet the names of their familiars are associated with disenfranchised village witches; with domestic animals; with the home.

This domestic context for decidedly undomestic witches is reiterated at their second appearance, when they supply further information as to the nature of their witchcraft. The first witch asks the second where she has been, to which the second replies, 'Killing swine' (I.iii.2). This is shorthand for the activities of witches as recorded in news pamphlets and trial accounts; infection of livestock is a frequent charge against 'witches' in neighbourhood witch trials. The First Witch then reinforces this context by narrating her own village quarrel:

A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,  
And munched, and munched, and munched. 'Give me', quoth I;  
'Aroynt thee, witch', the rump-fed ronyon cries. (3-5)

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<sup>70</sup> 'paddock', *OED*, 1.1a and 1.1b. See also William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* ed. Nicholas Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), I.i.8-9, n.8 and n.9.

<sup>71</sup> Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919) in *Collected Papers* trans. Alix Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1959), pp.368-407 (p.368, p.375).

The First Witch's anecdote creates a narrative of refused charity and the naming of a witch in just three lines, in what Christopher Clausen terms 'a radical foreshortening of the complex contexts of village witchcraft accusations'.<sup>72</sup> 'Aroynt thee, witch' is strikingly similar to the cry, 'avant, witch', which a man named Richard Burt uses to accuse a witch in the pamphlet *A Most Wicked Work of a Wretched Witch* (1592), and may be assumed to have the same meaning – the 'ronyon', like Burt, is at once establishing her opponent's identity as witch, and attempting to banish her, both physically and by ostracising her from the community. It situates the weird sisters within a wider cultural narrative of neighbourhood naming, shaming, and exclusion of 'witches', and the excluded woman's retaliation.

The First Witch's planned retaliation marks where her narrative diverges from the usual pattern of village witchcraft quarrels:

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master of th' *Tiger*;  
But in a sieve I'll thither sail,  
And like a rat without a tail,  
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.  
SECOND WITCH: I'll give thee a wind.  
FIRST WITCH: Thou'rt kind.  
THIRD WITCH: And I another.  
FIRST WITCH: I myself have all the other,  
And the very ports they blow,  
All the quarter that they know  
I' th' shipman's card.  
I will train him dry as hay;  
Sleep shall neither night nor day  
Hang upon his penthouse lid;  
He shall live a man forbid.  
Though his bark cannot be lost,  
Yet it shall be tempest-tossed. (6-25)

Rather than invading her opponent's home or body, or attacking her livestock, crops, or members of her immediate household, First Witch plans to attack the one absent member of the household: the ronyon's sailor husband. It is notable that First Witch's encounter with the 'rump-fed ronyon' does not involve the borders or boundaries of her own home (if, indeed, First Witch has any conventional habitation). Unlike the witch

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<sup>72</sup> Clausen, p.45.

narratives discussed above, there is no association of First Witch with the spaces of her home or the thatch of her roof; the cave in which Macbeth later encounters her is hardly a conventional dwelling. Thus she does not seek to cross the boundaries of her opponent's home, or perhaps is unable to do so; rather, she attacks the one person belonging to that home who is far from the protection of its walls. The husband's occupation renders him vulnerable; at sea, he is more than usually subject to the elements – elements that the witches seem able to control.

Purkiss suggests that, whilst 'the Third Witch's speech is thus inscribed in terms of popular witch-stories', it also transforms the concerns of these narratives:

The witch does not strike directly at the female domains of body, household and children, but indirectly through the husband. Her power over him is sexualized, as numerous feminist critics have pointed out; it is the power to drain the moisture from his body, exhausting his vital essence. This notion of witchcraft does not figure in women's stories, but is crucial to the fantasies of demonologists. In *Macbeth*, women's stories are put to work as part of the more grandiose male narrative of the play; the Third Witch's tale foregrounds metaphors of rebellion, threats to patriarchy, disorder in nature.<sup>73</sup>

Purkiss argues that, in his portrayal of the witches, Shakespeare converts village-level narratives into elite narratives, and in so doing, turns female anxieties into male concerns. Yet although this is broadly true in *Macbeth* – a play in which, famously, women must be excluded in order to negotiate a successful narrative ending<sup>74</sup> – I would argue that the particular instances that Purkiss discusses here exclude neither women's stories nor the popular texts in which those stories are depicted.

As I have demonstrated, popular witch narratives are not exclusively concerned with the female sphere; when witches revenge themselves upon a neighbour, they frequently act against the entire household, implicating not

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<sup>73</sup> Purkiss, 'Macbeth and the All-singing, All-dancing Plays of the Jacobean Witch-vogue', in *Shakespeare, Feminism and Gender* ed. Kate Chedgzoy (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp.216-234 (p.224).

<sup>74</sup> See Adelman, ch.6. See also Wintle and Weis on how the play engages at with ideas of manhood, familial succession and failed domesticity.

only the mistress and her domestic activities, but servants, children, and the master of the house, whose very identity as householder is threatened by such an act. I discuss above, in relation to the Flowers witches, the fact that threats to the integrity of the house, and to the children who embody the household's lineage, are threats to both master and mistress. In revenging herself upon the sailor's wife by attacking the body of the sailor, First Witch may strike against a ship rather than against the domestic sphere, yet she still threatens the household the sailor leaves behind him. Although First Witch is unable to destroy the ship and so cause his death, any disruption of the sailor's bodily health is dangerous to the household he supports. The 'indirect' attack upon the husband is of direct concern to his wife. Furthermore, the sexual nature of First Witch's attack does not necessarily distinguish her narrative as elite rather than popular; like Mary Sutton or Phillip Flowers, her (sexualised) power over the bodies of others is just one feature of her transgressive, boundary-crossing witchcraft.

The First Witch's narrative, then, may not be as far removed from 'popular' witch stories as Purkiss suggests; the 'male' concerns that Purkiss identifies can equally be read in terms of female anxieties, and the 'elite' characteristics also occur in popular narratives. Thus *Macbeth's* narratives of rebellion, threats to patriarchy, and disorder in nature are not necessarily alien to the domestic 'women's stories' that Purkiss describes. As this thesis demonstrates, the private and domestic sphere is of direct significance to the public and political sphere, as disordered homes have wide and public repercussions. In *Macbeth*, the widespread political disorder and the dramatic reflection of this in the natural world that are the results of Duncan's murder stem from disorder in a single household. Macbeth's murder of Duncan may be caught up in wider cultural and political narratives, and the murder itself may be a political act, but it is also a private act, the murder of a guest by a householder, on the advice of that householder's wife. *Macbeth's* concerns may belong to the 'male' political sphere, but their roots are in the domestic sphere and the words and desires of women: the ambition of Lady Macbeth, and the unforgettable words of the three weird sisters.

Shakespeare, then, engages with popular texts in order to stage wider anxieties about the contagious potential of witchcraft; the vulnerability of sinful bodies to magical infection; how the home may fail to protect its inhabitants; and the possibility of a household disrupting the state. *Macbeth* exhibits similar anxieties to those explored in trial accounts and news pamphlets, and staged in *The Witch of Edmonton* in the following decade: the power of unruly women and their curses to effect changes in men's bodies and households; the mobile and penetrative nature of both witches and their magic; and the potential for neighbourhood quarrels, housewifely behaviour (whether knitting or the keeping of pets), and demonic intervention, to intersect to create malign magic. However, *The Witch of Edmonton* stages these concerns in ways that are characteristic of a domestic tragedy; the neighbourhood disruption caused by Sawyer's spells, and the murder in Frank Thorney's household provoked by Sawyer's devil Dog, are alike shown to cause disorder within, and invite reprisal by, the local community. In contrast, *Macbeth* transfigures the concerns of domestic tragedy, exemplified in *The Witch of Edmonton*'s later treatment of witches and devils, staging a world in which witch-inspired household and community disruption affects a king, a state, and nature itself, causing dark skies in the day, owls that can kill falcons, and cannibalistic horses (II.iv.1-19).

In constructing the far-reaching consequences of his undomestic witches, Shakespeare may be drawing on the 1592 pamphlet *Newes from Scotland*, printed in London for an English readership, which narrates the trial of numerous Scottish witches for conspiring to kill King James VI. The pamphlet opens with an account of witchcraft that bears striking similarity to the popular English witch narratives discussed above. A maid is absent from her master's house at night, and her temporal and spatial transgression is linked to acts of witchcraft:

[A] maide servant called Geillis Duncane, who used secretly to be absent and to lye foorth of her Maisters house every other night... took in hand to help all such as were troubled or greeved with any kinde of sicknes or infirmitie: and in short space did perfourme manye matters most miraculous... by meanes wherof the saide David Seaton had his maide in some great suspition, that she did not those things by naturall and lawfull wayes.<sup>75</sup>

Geillis Duncane's miraculous healing, when viewed alongside her household disobedience and secrecy, becomes suggestive of witchcraft. Her master, along with others from the community, interrogates and tortures her. Unable to extract a confession, 'they suspecting that she had beene marked by the Divell (as commonly witches are) made dilligent search about her, and found the enemies marke to be in her fore crag or foreparte of her throate: which being found, she confessed' (B1r). Soon, other women, who are similarly tortured, are found to have witchmarks, and likewise confess that they are witches.

The narrative departs from conventional English witch narratives, and conforms to an elite, continental model: the women admit that they have been visited by the Devil, 'attending their comming in the habit or likenes of a man', who 'enioyned' them to 'kisse his Buttockes, in signe of duetye to him' (B4r). They interact with a demonic familiar, in the form of a cat, but they also deal directly (and physically) with the Devil himself, and swear allegiance to him: 'when the Divell did receiue them for his servants, and that they had vowed themselves unto him, then he would carnallye use them' (C1v). With the power he grants them, they are able to sail the sea 'in their riddles or Cives', and to cause storms (C1r). The witches threaten King James's life, using a 'contrary winde' to attempt to sink his boat as it sails from Denmark with his new wife, Anne. In so doing, the witches aim to disrupt royal procreation, with both domestic and political implications.

Thus the narrative of *Newes* shifts from a conventional witch narrative of disobedient female servants and witch-marks to a continentally inflected account of torture, sexual encounters with the Devil, magical tempests, and attempted regicide. It is essentially a narrative of misguided

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<sup>75</sup> *Newes from Scotland* (London, 1592), A4v-B1r. All further references are incorporated into the text.

allegiance: the witches rebel against their hierarchical relationships with their masters and their king, but they do so at the behest of a different (male) master: the Devil – a figure strikingly absent from *Macbeth*. Yet the conditions of their service – copulating with the Devil, and kissing his behind – are a parody of an ordered relationship between master and servant. Their rebellion does not only mimic the order of household and state; it mocks and thus undoes it. Yet their magic does not operate by attacking a household; rather, they attack a ship by working the weather.

The powers of Shakespeare's witches are likewise elemental: each witch has at least one wind in her gift, and the power to sail stormy seas in a leaky vessel; they can hover through fog, and toss a ship with a tempest. In this sense, they are the opposite of domestic, *unheimlich* in that they cannot be contained by, or situated within, the home. When Macbeth, on entering the witches' cave, lists their magical abilities, his focus is upon their influence over the weather:

Though you untie the winds and let them fight  
Against the churches, though the yeasty waves  
Confound and swallow navigation up,  
Through bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down,  
Though castles topple on their warders heads,  
Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
Their heads to their foundations, though the treasure  
Of nature's germens tumble all together  
Even till destruction sicken, answer me  
To what I ask you. (IV.i.68-77)

The witches, in Macbeth's estimation, can destroy religious property; ships; plants that are human produce and that grow in the wild; habitations of noblemen, monarchs and the dead; and the 'seeds' of nature itself.<sup>76</sup> Yet unlike popular English witches, who threaten local homes and produce through magical sickness, Macbeth's witches threaten elite habitations and symbols of political power through their command of the weather.

In *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Scot complains of the prevalence of the belief that witches can influence the weather:

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<sup>76</sup>*Macbeth*, IV.i.75, n.6.

[I]f all the old women in the world were witches; and all the priests, conjurers: we should not have a drop of raine, nor a blast of wind the more or the lesse for them. For the Lord hath bound the waters in the clouds... it is God that raiseth the winds and stilleth them... But the world is now so bewitched and over-run with this fond error.<sup>77</sup>

George Gifford likewise complains that many are convinced that storms and tempests stem from the Devil, rather than from God:

And herein he hath greatly bewitched the blind worlde, for it is a common opinion, when there are any mighty windes and thunders with terrible lightnings, that the Devill is abroad and doth it.<sup>78</sup>

There is confusion here between providential and magical agency; these writers fear that the vengeful acts of providence are misread as the work of the Devil, and thus that the Devil's power in the natural world is believed to be greater than it is, rendering those that share this belief susceptible to his influence.

Adelman argues that this interplay between providence and magic causes the power of the witches to weaken throughout the play, as 'the more Macbeth claims for them, the less their actual power seems'.<sup>79</sup> Yet this interplay is open to another interpretation. Following his involvement in the trials recounted in *Newes in Scotland*, James VI discussed the ability of witches to control the weather in his witchcraft treatise *Daemonologie*:

They can rayse stormes and tempestes in the aire, either upon Sea or land, though not universally, but in such a particular place and prescribed boundes, as God will permitte them... it is likewise verie possible to their master to do, he having such affinitie with the aire... For in the Scripture, that stile of the Prince of the aire is given unto him.<sup>80</sup>

According to James, God is able to prescribe the bounds within which witches operate, yet in so doing, he permits the Devil, within those bounds, to control disorder in one element in particular: the air. As De Grazia and

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<sup>77</sup> Scot, pp.3-4.

<sup>78</sup> George Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practises of Devilles by Witches and Sorcerers* (London, 1587), D3v.

<sup>79</sup> Adelman, p.136.

<sup>80</sup> James VI, pp.46-47.

Stallybrass note, air, ‘the element into which the three sisters and their apparitions vanish’, is a term ‘repeated more often in this play than in any other of Shakespeare’s works’.<sup>81</sup> De Grazia and Stallybrass focus upon the linguistic possibilities of the dynamic between air and heir, in the light of the play’s obsession with lineage; the associations of ‘air’ itself in early modern England render this dynamic particularly charged.

The complex and unresolved relationship between the weather created by the witches, and the providential weather-systems that respond supernaturally to the upheaval in the natural world prompted by Duncan’s unlawful death, is further complicated by Macbeth’s curse. When he learns that Banquo’s issue are to reign in Scotland for generations to come, he cries, ‘Infected be the air on which they ride’ (IV.i.154). Like the witches’ own equivocations, Macbeth’s utterance is at once a curse and an observation; the witches’ influence over Macbeth can be read as a form of infection, and early modern writers frequently associated the element of air, not only with the Devil, but also with sickness.

Mary Floyd-Wilson suggests that the early modern body was considered susceptible to the influence of the elements: ‘some environmental forces – such as cold or corrupted air – could make it more difficult for a person to exercise his or her will in the management or redirection of external influences’.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Floyd-Wilson argues that Scotland is ‘an environment saturated with demonic spirits’. Macbeth is susceptible to the influence of fog, filthy air, and the words of witches; Lady Macbeth is likewise portrayed as vulnerable to supernatural influences that she herself invites. The contagious promise of the weird sisters, which Lady Macbeth receives from Macbeth by letter, prompts her to call on spirits to enter her body and alter it (I.v.38-52). Lady Macbeth invites direct supernatural intervention in her bodily functions, opening her body up the elements: ‘thick’ night and the ‘smoke of hell’ both suggest foul and malign air. Her desire that ‘no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose’ is the inverse of Rachel’s complaint that nature has overruled

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<sup>81</sup> De Grazia and Stallybrass, p.264.

<sup>82</sup> Mary Floyd-Wilson, ‘English Epicures and Scottish Witches’, *SQ* 57.2 (Summer, 2006), 131-161 (p.134).

her will in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, as discussed in Chapter Two; Lady Macbeth uses supernatural agency to ensure that her will overpowers nature.

In the medical treatise *The Methode of Phisicke*, Philip Barrough discusses the impact that actions of the will can have upon the body. He writes that those careless of their bodily health are like those who, ‘when God hath bestowed their bodies upon them as gorgeous pallaces or mansion houses... do first by their evill demeanour shake, and discrease them, and then being altogether careless of repairing them, do suffer them to run to destruction.’<sup>83</sup> Just as lack of repair will cause a house to fall, so, Barrough posits, will an evil demeanour and lack of attention bring out bodily decay and destruction: evil conduct can be as great a factor as physical carelessness in bringing about disease.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the two are related; the former can make the body more susceptible to the latter. Evil behaviour can increase the vulnerability of the body to sickness or infection, and thus to outside influences. Macbeth evinces such susceptibility from the very opening of the play, whilst Lady Macbeth uses supernatural invitation to bring about a vulnerability of body and mind that will eventually lead to her death.

Macbeth’s image of the witches as destroyers of castles and palaces focuses on their ability to mete out destruction through violent storms: these elite and royal homes are blown down, and thus fail to protect their inhabitants against the vicious elements. Macbeth’s own castle remains intact, yet is equally unable to protect Macbeth, his wife, his household, and his guests from the malign influences, evil spirits, and ghosts. In asking malign influences to penetrate her body, Lady Macbeth invites them into her home. Thus, fifteen years or so before Ford, Dekker, and Rowley stage the effects of diabolical witchcraft upon a neighbourhood, Shakespeare stages how the entry of diabolic forces renders the home unsafe.

Early modern writers frequently focus their anxieties concerning bodily health and the possibility of infection upon the boundaries of the home. If bodily health was susceptible to environmental factors as well as to

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<sup>83</sup> Philip Barrough, *The Methode of Phisicke Conteyning the Causes, Signes, and Cures of Inward Diseases* (London, 1583), ‘Preface’, A6v.

<sup>84</sup> ‘demeanor’, *OED*, 1a.

moral uprightness, particularly to humoral influences and human contagion, then the walls of the home could protect against influence and contagion – provided the household protect themselves against sickness, sin, and unwelcome guests. In Chapter One, I discussed Master Mounson’s argument in *A Briefe Declaration*, a 1636 pamphlet detailing an earlier legal quarrel about the boundaries of the home. Mounson likens building structures that will deprive a neighbour’s home of light and air, to infecting the home of that neighbour: ‘[I]f one who hath a horrible sicknesse be in my house, and will not depart, an action will lye against him, and yet he taketh not any aire from me, but infecteth that which I hath’.<sup>85</sup> Lack of ‘wholesome’ air is coupled with contagion as a means of infecting the home, and threatening the health of its inhabitants; likewise, Bacon argues that a house with ‘unwholesome’ air is like to a prison, and Boorde suggests that ‘evyll and corrupt ayers doth infecte the bloode and doth ingendre many corrupte humoures... and therefore it doth breede many diseases and infirmities through the whiche mannes lyfe is abbrevyated and shortenyd’.<sup>86</sup> Barrough similarly suggests that his readers avoid ‘a moist house, that is either situated in lowe vallyes, or in fennes, or frequented with corrupted waters’.<sup>87</sup>

Thus the presence of ‘fog and filthy’ air on the witches’ heath is not merely suggestive of sickness and sin; it is directly associated with both. Through the contagious power of the witches’ prophecy, the foul air and supernatural agency of the heath penetrates the walls of Macbeth’s castle. Yet when King Duncan arrives at the Macbeth’s home, he receives the opposite impression:

This castle hath a pleasant seat. The air  
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses. (I.vi.1-3)

Banquo, who has likewise breathed the filthy air of the witches, appears to agree with Duncan, suggesting that the presence of the ‘martlet’ (or martin, a bird) means that ‘the air is delicate’ (4, 9). It is significant that Banquo’s

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<sup>85</sup> Manwood, Mounson, Plowden and Wray, p.1.

<sup>86</sup> Bacon, p.257; Boorde, A4r-v.

<sup>87</sup> Barrough, p.259.

carefully qualified answer avoids a direct agreement; like Polonius, who claims to see each animal that Hamlet pretends to see in the patterns of clouds in order to avoid contradicting his ruler (*Hamlet* III.ii), Banquo plays the polite courtier. Yet he is more politic than Polonius, and states only that a bird that prefers delicate air is present, not that the air itself is delicate.

In ‘Sunshine in *Macbeth*’, Pamela Mason argues that the common associations of the play with darkness are based on misreadings that fail to take into account the effect on the audience of the staging of the play in an open-air playhouse. She suggests that Duncan’s statement is ironic, but that, ‘in a theatre open to the elements, the King’s words would be more likely to ring true’:

The invocation 23 lines earlier, ‘Come, thick night/And pall thee in the dunest smoke of Hell’ has not worked. The King’s description makes it absolutely clear that the natural world resists such attempts at manipulation. Dark deeds are not the product of the environment...<sup>88</sup>

Yet I suggest the very opposite: that a sunlit theatre need not work against the conditions invoked onstage. Therein lies the power of Shakespeare’s language; or rather, the interaction between Shakespeare’s language, the conventions of the bare stage, and the minds of the audience. In the opening scene of *Hamlet*, the darkness and cold suggested by the few lines spoken by the soldiers need not be dispersed by a sunny day at the theatre; the appearance of the Ghost may still invoke shivers, despite the fact that the darkness he inhabits is imaginary. Furthermore, Mason does not take into account the fact that performances of *Macbeth* at court would have been candle-lit, creating quite another atmosphere.

In *Macbeth*, dark deeds *are* the product of the environment; or rather, the interaction between the natural environment, the supernatural agents that inhabit and influence it, and the (sinful) bodies of those that enact those deeds. Lady Macbeth’s invocation may not have an immediate, supernatural consequence – for, although she calls on supernatural powers,

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<sup>88</sup> Pamela Mason, ‘Sunshine in *Macbeth*’ in *Macbeth: New Critical Essays* ed. Nick Moschovakis (London: Routledge, 2008), pp.335-349 (p.336).

she gains no powers herself, and is not a witch – but darkness, as discussed in Chapter Three, becomes a prerequisite for the murder itself. Duncan's misreading of the air surrounding the castle is comparable to his misplaced trust in the treacherous Thane of Cawdor – and, of course, in Macbeth. He fails to detect the fact that the influence of the fog and filthy air of the witches has already penetrated the castle's walls.

The contagious words of the witches are not the only dangerous element to enter the home of the Macbeths. When Macbeth, after his second encounter with the witches, decides that Banquo must die, he hires two masterless men, named only by their function of 'murderers' in the playscript, to perform the deed for him. As he agrees to do so, Second Murderer declares:

I am one, my liege,  
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world  
Hath so incens'd that I am reckless what  
I do to spite the world. (III.i.107-110)

He, like the witches, is transgressively mobile; furthermore, through his storm-like image he is associated with the 'buffets' of the unruly weather. The two murderers belong to no household, and have no secure place in society. Yet as the scene unfolds, the murderers cease to be masterless wanderers who belong nowhere: when Macbeth offers them 'love', they gain a new master, and thus a position (albeit a secret one) in relation to his society. Lois Feuer observes that in Macbeth's employment of these murderers, 'a desperate man alienated by want from his society is perversely reintegrating into that society, regaining a master by performing his murders for him; rejoining the community by violating its most fundamental prohibition'.<sup>89</sup> Macbeth sets up a perverse master-servant relationship that requires its own violation: the murder of these servants is necessary to ensure the security of the master. Yet, like Alice Arden's employment of Black Will and Shakebag in *Arden*, Macbeth's perversion of the structures of his household will bring about its dissolution.

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<sup>89</sup> Lois Feuer, 'Hired for mischief: The masterless man in *Macbeth*' in *Macbeth: New Critical Essays* ed. Moschovakis, pp.151-162 (p.157).

The breakdown of order and hospitality renders the walls of the home insufficient, and the influences of the heath are able to enter the home of the Macbeths. Infected by the words and ‘filthy air’ of the witches, penetrated by outside forces at Lady Macbeth’s invitation, opened up to the watching world by Macbeth’s murder of Duncan, and disordered by the presence of masterless men as obediently murderous servants, the boundaries of Macbeth’s house and the members of his household are powerless to protect Macbeth’s home, which has become *unheimlich*: thus Lady Macbeth may no longer sleep soundly, and an invited ghost may sit at Macbeth’s table. Undone from within, and open to malign outside forces, Macbeth’s castle ceases to be a home at all.

### Conclusion: The Limits of Domestic Tragedy

*Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* do not fit the genre of domestic tragedy. Set abroad, in the distant past, and in royal or military households, the domestic relationships, spaces, and communities that these plays represent are far removed from the experiences of their audiences. Yet in staging suspected adultery, domestic violence, and household murder, these plays draw on the concerns and anxieties of early modern popular culture, ensuring that the disrupted homes they present are familiar ones.

Like *The Taming of the Shrew*, which locates recognisable female rebellion, community disapproval, and marital discord in Padua, these plays are better able to interrogate religious and political household prescriptions, and to push domestic disruption to its logical (catastrophic) conclusion, because they preserve, through foreign settings and heightened language, a sense of aesthetic distance. The majority of critics who discuss distancing devices in *Taming* refer to the Sly frame narrative. As Marjorie Garber argues,

The frame performs the important task of distancing the later action and of ensuring a lightness of tone – significant contributions in view of the real abuse to which Kate is subjected by Petruchio.<sup>1</sup>

Yet this frame also suggests a possible relationship between Kate's Padua and the quotidian world that Sly and the Hostess inhabit. It is the setting of the play, and not the frame, that removes the action from the audience's experience, and the frame provides a way of suggesting correspondences between the fictional taming and the realities of marital discord and neighbourhood interference in early modern England. The final line of *A Shrew* also reinforces this possibility; Sly may comprehend the play on the simplest possible level, but in believing that he has learnt to tame his own wife, he nonetheless sees the marital discord located in Padua as relevant to his marriage. Furthermore, as I discussed in Chapter One, Fletcher's sequel

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie B. Garber, *Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p.28. See also Jeanne Addison Roberts, 'Horses and Hermaphrodites: Metamorphoses in *The Taming of the Shrew*' in *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays* ed. Dana E. Aspinall (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.58-70 (p.60).

to Shakespeare's *Taming* suggests that the play's original audience members may have responded in a similar manner to Sly, recognising Kate (and the abuse she suffers) as belonging to a local and contemporary household. This thesis argues that the households in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* would likewise have been read as local and familiar, despite being located within a framework of the elite, the foreign, and the strange.

I have argued that in creating the familiar domesticity of these plays, Shakespeare draws on the genre of domestic tragedy. The tragedy of each is rooted in a single household: Hamlet's and Macbeth's castles, and Othello and Desdemona's marital home. The bonds that motivate the protagonists' murderous acts are not just familial; they are household bonds, rooted in the model of the home as castle and 'private commonwealth', a system of private government and hierarchical authority, which when abused becomes petty tyranny, and when challenged becomes petty treason.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the action of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* is not limited to a single household; rather, as is characteristic of Shakespearean tragedies, these plays span multiple locations. The same is true of domestic tragedies: the action of *Arden of Faversham* takes place in Arden's home, Franklin's London residence, London streets, and country roads; *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is set in both Frankford's home and the numerous habitations of Charles and Susan Mountford after their downfall; the Merry narrative of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* dramatises not only Merry's home but also the outside of Beech's house, the neighbourhood streets, and the waterside; *A Yorkshire Tragedy* is set in the Husband's House, the Knight's House, and a road nearby; *The Witch of Edmonton* stages Old Carter's home but is mainly set in outdoor spaces; and the main plot of *The English Traveller* is set in the homes of Old Geraldine and Mr Wincott. Yet the tragic domesticity of each of these plays is situated in terms of household dynamics within a single abode.

The murder of Desdemona, the attempted murder of *A Yorkshire Tragedy*'s Wife and the successful murder of her children, the adultery of Anne Sanders, Alice Arden's adultery and murder of her husband, and both

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<sup>2</sup> Braithwaite, *English Gentleman*, p.115. See Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, chs 1-3.

the adulteries and the deaths of Anne Frankford and Mrs Wincott, take place in their marital homes; the confrontations and deaths that result from the death of Old Hamlet take place, like the murder, within his house; and both the murders of Master Beech and King Duncan and the apprehension of their murderers occur in the homes of their murderer-hosts. *The Witch of Edmonton* is the single exception. As I discussed in Chapter Five, this play locates witchcraft in the spaces outside the home, and thus the marital murder, like Anne Radcliffe's madness, the witch, and the devil Dog, is located outside; yet even this play situates the revelation of marital murder within the victim's home. Both sets of plays locate tragedy within a single domestic realm; the genre of domestic tragedy thus shaped Shakespeare's tragedies.

As I discussed in Chapter One, the ubiquitous analogy of the household as a 'little commonwealth' suggests that when a member of a household ceases to be subject to that household, he or she rebels against, and thus threatens, the state. As Gouge puts it,

So we may say of inferiors that cannot be subject in a family, they can hardly be brought to yield such subjection as they ought in Church or in Commonwealth.<sup>3</sup>

In every domestic tragedy, then, discord within the home implicitly threatens the state. Neighbourhood interference, as I discussed in Chapter Four, is necessary not only to restore the order of that particular household, but to restore order in general: the position of those neighbours as orderly subjects is threatened by the disrupted home in their midst.

When Heywood suggests that tragedy may shape the behaviour of subjects as well as of kings by demonstrating the fatal consequences of transgressions, he implies that the behaviour of subjects, like that of kings, can threaten the state, and thus private transgressions can become tragic. Domestic tragedy rivals conventional tragedy in its implications, if not in its dramatic scope: the restoration of order at the end of each play, via law, providence, or conscience (as in the case of Anne Frankford's self-starvation), demonstrates that the nation has been protected, and the threat

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<sup>3</sup> Gouge, p.17.

within eliminated. The genre is thus revolutionary in its project, challenging the social assumptions of generic theory to stage the significance and subversive potential of protagonists from the non-elite sphere, and drawing attention to the tragic stature of these protagonists and their transgressions.

Domestic tragedies were not always confident in this project, as the uneasy comedy of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, the squabbling generic personifications of *A Warning for Fair Women*, and the apologetic paratexts of *Arden of Faversham* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, attest. Nor do the plays celebrate the insubordinate behaviour they portray. Rather, various dramaturgical, spatial, and psychological strategies are used to contain the subversive potential of this behaviour. As I discussed in the Introduction, Lake argues that ‘providentialising and moralising narrative frameworks and conventions could serve to legitimate and enable the depiction, the literal acting out, of the deviant and the destructive’; this deviant and destructive behaviour is contained within reassuring narrative frameworks.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the determined ‘not knowing’ and denial of their own desires that the adulterous wives I discussed in Chapter Two exhibit, and the misguided loyalty that motivates accomplices and murderesses alike, dispels the anxiety provoked by the dangerous agency of murderous wives. The fatal ends of Alice Arden, Anne Sanders, and Anne Frankford suggest the catastrophic consequences of female control over access to domestic space, as I explored in Chapter Three. Alice’s and Anne Sanders’s visible presence in their doorways, Alice’s invitations to Mosby and Black Will, and Anne Frankford’s admission of Wendoll to her bedchamber, each demonstrate an illicit authority over household boundaries that will be undone by the discovery of their acts of adultery. Furthermore, in staging the intervention of the surveilling neighbourhood, as discussed in Chapter Four, domestic tragedies contain the disruptive potential of household murder within a reassuring narrative framework of neighbourhood detection and legal judgement. *The Witch of Edmonton* similarly situates insubordinate female anger, speech, and power within a framework of (male) demonic agency and legal intervention.

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<sup>4</sup> Lake, p.xx.

Domestic tragedies at once stage the transgressions of those in subordinate gender and class positions, and locate these transgressions within a reassuring neighbourhood, kingdom, and world, where crimes are more likely to be motivated by misplaced allegiance to authority than by rebellion; disordered households are visible and punishable; and providentially-inspired neighbourhood detection ensures that murder (and adultery) will out. Yet these plays do not fully undercut the subversive potential of their own material: in staging the extent to which subordinate members of the household can threaten the integrity of the house, and the extent to which tyrannous householders can command household loyalty even when transgressing against the state, they suggest that the individual households on which the state depends are also the places where it is most vulnerable.

In this thesis, I have sought to discover how Shakespeare's conceptions of disrupted homes reflect and negotiate the domestic fantasies and anxieties staged in domestic tragedies. I have read both sets of plays in the light of depictions of domestic violence and household murder in cheap print, thus placing literary texts alongside non-literary texts in order to illuminate the assumptions, strategies, generic expectations, and implied audience of each. Furthermore, I have situated these 'popular' representations in terms of discourses about the home in homilies, Biblical commentaries, conduct literature, and legal and medical treatises, and have thus examined the significance of the disrupted home to early modern culture as a whole. In so doing, I have explored the ways in which Shakespeare draws on early modern constructions of tragic domesticity: the perceived invulnerability of the law-abiding home; how household bonds act upon individual agency; how loyalty to the home and to the state can become conflicted; the correlation between the borders of the home and the chastity of its female inhabitants; the relationship between the integrity of the house and the integrity (and authority) of the householder; the extent to which the aftermath of murder is subsumed within the domestic routines of the household; and the selective permeability of the walls of the home, which can be dissolved by transgression, admitting the surveillance and intervention of the neighbourhood, and making the private home stageable.

*Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* stage the disruptive consequences of household murder. Yet these tragedies are not reassuring in their narrative structure; they do not end in the intervention of the neighbourhood, the state, and the legal system, because these households have themselves become the seats of the state, or – in the case of *Othello* – a foreign outpost thereof. Forces that are in some sense ‘outside’ the domestic world of the play must intervene to restore order; in setting his domestic tragedies in elite spheres, Shakespeare removes the narrative frameworks that would contain the disorder he portrays. Furthermore, Shakespeare uses the aesthetic distancing devices of heightened language and foreign settings to disrupt and question early modern assumptions about female agency and sexuality, social and familial bonds, and the reach of providentially-inspired legal intervention.

In Chapter One, I examined Shakespeare’s use of the frame narrative of *Taming* to unsettle the class and gender relations in the play proper, and argued that Fletcher’s interpretation of the play suggests that Shakespeare’s comic treatment at once implies and occludes the possibility of a violent outcome. Chapter Two demonstrated how, in creating the figure of Gertrude, Shakespeare stages the action of societal and familial pressures upon individual psychology, and challenges the trope of the adulterous murderess through raising unanswered questions about Gertrude’s adultery and complicity. Chapter Three argued that Shakespeare engages with the perceived correlation between domestic enclosure and chastity, the corresponding correlation between common ground and adultery, and the paradoxical suspicion of female privacy, in constructing Othello’s motives for murdering Desdemona; and thus shows that male suspicion can be more dangerous than female privacy. Chapter Four discussed how Shakespeare borrows dramaturgical tropes from domestic tragedy in staging the aftermath of household murder, in order to explore the limits of neighbourhood intervention. Chapter Five suggested that, in creating the undomestic witches of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare draws on conceptions of popular witchcraft, using similar sources to domestic tragedy even as he diverges from the developments of the genre; thus whilst *The Witch of Edmonton* later stages witchcraft as the culmination of female anger, social

causation, and demonic agency, Shakespeare uses his witches to explore how transgression makes the home vulnerable to outside influences.

In short, it is because they are domestic that these plays are tragic. In creating the tragic domesticity of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare borrows literary and dramaturgical tropes from domestic tragedy in order to explore the structure, vulnerability, and significance of the home in early modern England. He thus creates a different kind of domestic tragedy: Shakespeare does not present these plays as belonging to a new genre, but rather demonstrates that private and domestic matters are worthy of the form and reach of conventional tragedy. *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* make the private world matter. Therein lies their significance and their power.

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