Crime, Community, and Audience Engagement in Late Medieval and Early Modern Theater

by

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Dedication

For my family, who always expected me to grow up and find the Ark of the Covenant: this

will have to do.

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rule" when talking about books in 2005 was also probably one of my best early preparations for graduate school.

Finally, my deepest thanks to my friends, colleagues and 'academic coven,' Lauren Eriks-Cline, Joey Gamble, Maia Farrar, Laura Strout, Anne Charlotte Mecklenberg, and Amanda Greene. They are my fiercest advocates, emotional lifelines, and personal heroes. This dissertation would not have been written without their support, patience, and amused tolerance of my tendency towards weird and spiraling metaphor. I love you all.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Abstract

Crime, Community and Audience Engagement in Late Medieval and Early Modern Theater addresses forms of audience engagement that are revealed especially by early English dramatic performance of narratives of crime. Spanning late fifteenth-century biblical drama to early seventeenth-century playhouse prologues, this project focuses on onstage communities that react to the threat or presence of crime by working to surveil, solve, redefine, or avoid it. These crimes require the renegotiation of community structure and norms, a process that is often explored through audience engagement. These plays therefore often represent or reimagine crime in contemporary terms, creating a sense of asynchrony that heightens the stakes of engagement by removing historical, allegorical, or geographical difference. As audiences are called to be participants in, proxies for, or mirrors to these onstage communities, their response is imbued with a sense of ethical or social responsibility.

Each chapter focuses on a form of engagement— beholding, witnessing, voyeurism, investment— and its corresponding affect in performances of different genres. Chapter 1 tracks minor characters in the York Corpus Christi plays who offer modes of quiet resistance to tyrants such as Herod and Pilate. While the York audience is beckoned into playful defiance of these tyrants, these minor characters offer opportunities for the audience to behold their distress with empathy. Both comic subversion and compassionate beholding cast theatrical engagement as a form of resistance against tyranny. Chapter 2 examines *Nice Wanton, The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*, *Like Will to Like*, and *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, moral interludes that replace an omniscient God with neighborhood surveillance. Using

the surveillance pedagogy of American Neighborhood Watches as a conceptual lens, this chapter argues that these plays teach their audiences prospective witnessing as a way to police and persecute suspicious bodies. Chapter 3 draws on contemporary debates about the ethical work of true-crime entertainment to argue that the domestic tragedy *Two Lamentable Tragedies* confronts its local audience as complicit in the creation and dissemination of the crime narrative that it dramatizes. Chapter 4 addresses playhouse prologues as negotiations of audience investment, reading laterally across plays by William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, Thomas Heywood, and others. While antitheatrical tracts allied theater with the transgressive economies of usury and prostitution, casting them as practices of contagion and predation, prologues attempted to negotiate the affective economies of audience investment in their own terms.

Crime, Community and Audience Engagement thus offers crime narratives and their onstage communities as a new forum for exploring the structures and stakes of theatrical engagement in medieval and early modern theater. Attending both to the cues of desired response within playtexts and the knowledge, power or experience that audiences might have wielded to accept or resist those cues, it develops a new approach to early theater audiences at the intersection of scholarship focusing on the representational and rhetorical strategies of the plays and studies of audience demography. The asynchrony these plays produce prompts another key aspect of this project's method: reaching outside of the historical parameters of its primary texts, *Crime Community and Audience Engagement* uses modern forms of unofficial community policing and investigation as comparative lenses for reconsidering how early drama employs narratives of crime to think more broadly about the nature of audience engagement.

Introduction

Of the various early English depictions, retellings, and performances of Cain's murder of his brother Abel in Genesis 4, the Towneley *Mactacio Abel* (c.1450-1500) is one of the first to consider the physical challenges of hiding a body.[1] This play more or less follows the narrative arc of Genesis; Cain's meager offering of wheat to God is rejected, while his brother Abel's more generous offer of cattle is accepted. In anger and jealousy, Cain murders his brother in a field and is confronted directly by God, who punishes him with the curse or mark of Cain, preventing any other man from killing him as he wanders the world. However, after the Towneley Cain receives this divine curse, he immediately turns his attention to his brother's corpse in an open field, and the anxiety that this highly visible evidence provokes:

> Bot this corse I wold were hid
> For some man might com at ungainly
> 'Fle, false shrew!' Would he bid
> And wen I had my brother slain (378-391).[2]

Despite the fact that Cain's crime has been recognized and marked by the highest authority, he still fears that "some man" might stumble across the corpse and intuit that Cain has killed him. Cain's performed "'Fle, false shrew!" imagines a process of reading Abel's body in a way that

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[1] The dating and organization of the plays within Towneley MS HM1 remains an active realm of debate. The manuscript was previously considered as a comprehensive biblical cycle in the style of the York Corpus Christi plays. However, later criticism disrupted these assumptions about both the dating of the play and its performative structure. Barbara Palmer has argued that the craft and guild-related marginalia of the manuscript had been forged, and Malcolm Parkes has used handwriting analysis to argue that the manuscript could date to the mid-sixteenth century; see Barbara D. Palmer, "Recycling 'The Wakefield Cycle,'" *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 41 (2002) 81-130.

[2] All citations are taken from "The Killing of Abel" in *Medieval Drama*, ed. David Bevington (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975).

immediately translates to social exclusion, framing Cain through communal knowledge rather than divine command as a malignant, villainous or rascally person.[3] Cain then appeals to his young servant Pikehearns to help him bury Abel's body, or "ryn away with the bayn" (397) altogether; both fear the wrath of bailiffs, invoked here as an extension of this communal knowledge. Indeed, Cain's final moments of the play are spent translating his divine curse into a sovereign pardon, imagining his mark as an exemption from social persecution.

Cain's concern about his neighbors finding Abel's body is particularly ironic given that the Genesis narrative of Cain and Abel takes place in the sparsely-populated world of the Old Testament, where the two are the only sons of Adam and Eve. However, the Towneley *Mactacio Abel* imagines the brothers within a "highly organized medieval community," one made contemporary to its audience through "outstanding anachronism."[4] This anachronistic reframing translates Cain's murder of Abel from biblical lore to a recognizable local tragedy; the brothers are struggling agrarians rather than archetypes, and Cain's refusal to sacrifice his best sheaves of wheat is spurred by economic logic as much as spiritual decay. Cain's crime and Abel's body are thus translated from questions of individual spiritual conduct (thou shall not kill) to questions of communal reaction (how will my neighbors react to this body? How can I protect myself from social consequences?). I particularly want to draw attention to how this turn transforms the position of the audience of the *Mactacio Abel*. They move from narratively and historically removed onlookers to engaged stand-ins for Abel's peripheral neighbors; they are enveloped into the conceit of Abel's crime as a contemporaneous local phenomenon.

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[3] While the term 'shrew' was later used almost exclusively for vexing women, fourteenth-century usage of "shrew" varied more broadly around a concept of villainy or devilishness. See Middle English Dictionary, "shreue (n.)" https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED40106/track?counter=15&search_id=978772.
[4] V.A. Kolve, *A Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 105.

Many decades later, in an Elizabethan playhouse, another man and his servant confront an inconvenient corpse. Halfway through the London true-crime play *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (c.1601), an unnamed Gentleman stumbles over a severed human torso while walking his cocker spaniel. His reaction is not to hail the authorities, or run away in horror— instead, he engages his servant to help carry the torso several blocks over to where local chandler Robert Beech has gone missing. After Beech's neighbors identify the body, the Gentleman decides to stay and join an amateur investigative effort— not out of concern for the deceased or out of a sense of justice, but rather sheer curiosity. "What say you?" he asks his retinue excitedly. "Perhaps the murder thus may come to light" (G2^v-G3^r, 14.117-118).[5] This Gentleman's morbid enthusiasm is perhaps made less comic by the fact that he is portraying the same London public that made up the much of the audience of *Two Lamentable Tragedies,* performed only years after Beech's real-life murder in 1594, a crime event voraciously consumed and distributed by Londoners with the same enthusiasm as the Gentleman hoists a bloody torso. Like Cain, the Gentleman exists in an asynchronous present; however, instead of collapsing the biblical past into contemporary local drama, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* mashes together a recent, lived local past with its narrative afterlives.

Crime, Community, and Audience Engagement in Late Medieval and Early Modern Theater explores narratives of crime in performance as places where audience negotiation and response are made particularly visible and significant. I turn to onstage civilian groups like the ones that Cain fears and the Gentleman joins: communities that react to the threat or presence of crime by working to surveil, solve, mitigate, or avoid it. My project does not center on the

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[5] In all quotations of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* I cite both folio designations from the BL C.34.e.23 manuscript provided in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* ed. Chiaki Hanabusa (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) and the scene and line numbers assigned to the play in "A Critical Old-Spelling Edition of Robert Yarington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies*" ed. Anne Weston Patenaude Ph.D. diss, University of Michigan, 1978).

performance of criminal acts themselves, but rather on the rupture in community that these crimes produce. Though Cain's neighbors never materialize onstage, he narrates their imagined process of reading a dead body in their midst, just as the Gentleman narrates his investigative project of dragging the ditch after his spaniel goes mad. In other chapters, I read characters who experience very different orientations towards criminal narratives: those who surveil their community spaces for 'bad seeds,' those who seek to avoid tyrannical persecution by using 'quiet' tactics of resistance, or metatheatrical prologue speakers who seek to redefine or mitigate the transgressive power of theater itself. These minor characters engage in questions of communal identity, acceptance, and transgression. These processes, I argue, challenge audiences to reflect on their own participation within the theater: the negotiations of consent, surveillance, complicity, or risk that govern theatrical engagement.

To return to Cain, the Gentleman, and their problematic corpses, how would we go about exploring how an early audience would have responded to these two scenes? We might look for cues within the text, particular to how Cain and the Gentleman explicitly ally the audience with or against their own actions and desires. When Pikehearns turns to the audience early in the pageant with the comment that "some of you are [Cain's] men" (20) who does he mean to call out, and for what reasons? When Cain turns to the audience after murdering his brother, he challenges them to object to his actions: "And if any of you thynk I did amys, /I shal it amend wars then it is" (333-334). Is this an opportunity for the audience to jeer and resist Cain, or a moment that highlights their silent complicity?[6] We might also consider how these characters

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[6] Indeed, as Robert Sturges notes, Cain later calls on the audience as guarantors of his fake sovereign pardon; they are thus "invited to go beyond merely sympathizing with Cain's attempts to exert agency; they are directly implicated, or invited to implicate themselves, in those very attempts": *The Circulation of Power in Medieval Biblical Drama: Theaters of Authority* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 116.

function as generic types with cultural memory; Cain and Pikehearns' Punch-and-Judy style violence, for example, echoes many comic master and servant duos in medieval biblical drama. Is this bloodless farcical violence made less comic by the presence of an actual body? We might also, as I have above, consider local historical conditions of performance and audience demography: the modes in which particular audience members like Beech's real-life neighbors may have encountered the Gentleman of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* with more complicated feelings of recognition, horror or pride than a theatergoer encountering the play simply as grisly melodrama. Finally, we might consider, as modern readers or audience members, our own moments of joy, horror, curiosity, or guilt inspired by consuming contemporary narratives of crime, and the ways that these affective structures might orient and enrich our own engagement with premodern texts.

Minding the Gap in Audience Engagement and Response

Accounts of audience experiences in English medieval and early modern theater are few and far between; accounts of pleasure or displeasure are often recorded either in antitheatrical tracts or prevaricating author notes in the printed version of a playtext, as with Webster in his introduction to *The White Devil*:

> only since it was acted in so dull a time of winter, presented in so open and black a theatre, that it wanted (that which is the only grace and setting-out of a tragedy) a full and understanding auditory; and that since that time I have noted, most of the people that come to that playhouse resemble those ignorant asses.[7]

Webster's dismissal of the bulk of his audience as "ignorant asses" frames their response as critically uninteresting, set opposite the appreciation that an "understanding auditory" would

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[7] John Webster, *The White Devil*, ed. Benedict Robinson, Arden Early Modern Drama (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 90.

have brought to his performance. Yet Webster also addresses two key components of audiences: their physical, sensory experiences, here affected by the cold winter climate and a dark theater and their critical response, unrecorded but clearly set opposite from Webster's expectations or intentions. In Chapter 4, I consider more broadly the wariness towards playhouse audiences that are shared in both authorial notes and antitheatrical texts; while antitheatrical writers like John Northbrooke, Anthony Munday, and Philip Stubbs framed audiences as too passive, porous vehicles ripe for mass contamination, frustrated playwrights often railed against audiences as too fractious, too hardened and confident in their own critical tastes. Yet despite the fact that audiences are a frequent subject of early modern writings, the archive produces few opportunities for theatergoers to speak for themselves. Audiences are often directly addressed onstage, represented through fictional avatars, and materially described in various archives, but they are impossible to wholly recreate or make visible for any given historical performance. For literary scholars who focus on medieval and early modern theatergoers, studying audience engagement and response often seems like a process of traversing over a large gap, experimenting with the ways to responsibly navigate through an archival absence. What John McGavin and Greg Walker have termed the "spectatorial turn" of recent years has also brought focus to methodological approaches and investments in imagining the early English theatergoer as a cultural construct.[8]

Much of the foundational work on early modern audiences focuses primarily on the demographics, spaces, and material mechanics of theatre. For medieval drama, this often occurs on the regional or city level. For example, the York *Records of Early English Drama* presents an invaluable selection of York town archives during the many decades that the city's guilds and

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[8] McGavin and Walker also consider the "cognitive turn" and "performative turn" as integral parts of this larger shift, supplementing earlier work on the material or affective structures of playgoing; *Imagining Spectatorship: From the Mysteries to the Shakespearean Stage*, Oxford Textual Perspectives, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1-8.

municipal government produced its annual *Corpus Christi* play.[9] In early modern amphitheater drama, studies of particular commercial playhouses as well as general demographic trends tends to focus on Shakespearean theater,[10] though more recent studies push outwards toward earlier Tudor theater and less canonical texts.[11] Studies of audience demography has also pushed against critical assumptions about the racial homogeneity of premodern English theatergoers,[12] or considered the particular experiences or cultural constructs of female theatergoers.[13] Indeed, much of this demographic scholarship questions notions of a unifying or harmonizing vision of the audience, one whose reactions, investments, and desires might be broadly conceived.[14]

A second body of scholarship focuses on audience response over audience demographics, asking not "who were all of the people at this performance?" but "how did a particular play envision or direct its audience?" Jeremy Lopez's *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* addresses this divergence in methodology, arguing that this "hard science" approach to anatomizing an audience "gives on the surface the impression of more rigidly segregated audience and more easily dichotomized audience tastes than the evidence

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[9] Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, eds., *Records of Early English Drama :York*, vol. 1, 2 vols., Records of Early English Drama (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1979). These records have been edited and published for a number of English cities, including Staffordshire, Berkshire, Cheshire, Oxford, and many others.

[10] See Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941); Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981); Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[11] The *Before Shakespeare* project is an excellent example of this for both their archival and contemporary-performance-based scholarship online and the printed scholarship that has resulted from it; *Before Shakespeare: The Beginnings of London Commercial Theatre, 1565-1595* https://beforeshakespeare.com/. See also Andy Kesson, "Playhouses, Plays, and Theater History: Rethinking the 1580s," *Shakespeare Studies* 45 (2017): 19-40.

[12] For example, Kyle Grady uses the archives of interracial children in England as well as contemporary framings of interracialism in order to question how sensational and novel racial mixing really was to audiences in plays like *Titus Andronicus*; "Moors, Mulattos, and Post-Racial Problems: Rethinking Racialization in Early Modern England" (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2017), 154-194.

[13] Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994), 76-80.

[14] Claire Sponsler tracks this dual tendency in medieval dramatic criticism to envision a harmonized versus divided and disassociated audience in "The Culture of the Spectator" *Theatre Journal* 44, no.1 (March 1992): 15-29.

actually yields up."[15] Lopez instead turns to the playtexts themselves as the most accurate mirror of who audiences were and how they conceived of their experience as theatergoers. Lopez's focus has been labeled "prefiguration," the focus on how the stage imagined or desired its audiences and their response.[16] Working from the stage outward and imagining a dialectical engagement between audience and play (albeit one where we usually only have one side of the script) has produced a number of works focusing on acting practices, avatars of audiences onstage, and more disciplinary methods of theatrical crowd control.[17]

Scholars also explore the terminology for the sensorial experiences of early audience engagement: how do we describe the embodied process of engaging with drama, and what tools do we have for buttressing those gaps in the archive? Barbara Freedman's *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* provides an early example of using psychoanalysis to theorize the visual engagement of early audiences,[18] while other works focus on historicized structures of affect in early modern England to frame audience engagement and response.[19] Studies on smell and sound in early theater also supplement the visual as the de facto

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[15] Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 16.

[16] Though they do not mention Lopez by name, McGavin and Walker frame audience prefiguration as attempts to "constrain" its audience, envisioning "the potential recalcitrance which they could envision colouring the spectator response": *Imagining the Audience*, 69. Amy Rodgers argues that Lopez's focus on prefiguration "unwittingly . . . resurrects the idea of the passive spectator, an entity that becomes imprinted with whatever message the play . . . wants to send": Amy Rodgers, *A Monster with a Thousand Hands: The Discursive Spectator in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 12.

[17] In addition to Lopez, Heather Hill-Vásquez takes a similar approach to medieval drama, though she is particularly interested in the shift in shaping audience response in the movement between Catholic to Protestant Drama; Heather Hill-Vásquez, *Sacred Players: The Politics of Response in the Middle English Religious Drama* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007). See also Paul Menzer, "Crowd Control" in *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642* ed. Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 19-36.

[18] Barbara Freedman, *Staging the Gaze : Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[19] See Allison P. Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare*, (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

mode of imagining audience engagement.[20] The "cognitive turn" within early theater studies draws on contemporary neurological research to examine how medieval and early modern theater might draw on processes of mirroring or other cognitive processes in order to shape affective or religious audience experiences.[21] These examinations of embodied spectatorship have also produced discussions of the terminology of audience engagement: from spectators to auditors, from witnessing to beholding. Most recently, Amy Rodgers offers the "discursive spectator" as an early modern cultural construct: neither an archival restoration nor the projection of playwrights, but instead a practice of reading that focuses on theories of entertainment spectatorship over attempts to resuscitate the 'real' feelings or responses of early English audiences.[22]

My object of inquiry allows me to find an intersection between these approaches. If attention to the demography of an audience and the specific historical conditions of performance produces a "mosaic," and reading the stage's pre-figuration offers a "panorama," then I argue that narrowing focus to moments of parsing community and crime onstage offers a compromise between the two.[23] Over the course of my project, I move between depictions of onstage communities and the way that these communities work as intermediaries for the audience, cuing their engagement and inviting them to join in communal practices, like surveillance or resistance.

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[20] See Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume : Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011). Bruce Smith advocated for attending to "brain-to-tongue-to-air-to-ear-to-brain" interactions in theater as well as other spaces in *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England : Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 18. For sonic studies of early modern theater see also Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion : Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

[21] See Jill Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture: Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* Cognitive Studies in Literature and Performance (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Lawrence Johnson, John Sutton, and Evelyn B. Tribble, *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare's Theatre : The Early Modern Body-Mind* (New York: Routledge, 2014). McGavin and Walker track this broader "cognitive turn" in *Imagining Spectatorship*, 5-8.

[22] Rodgers, *A Monster with a Thousand Hands*, 8-15.

[23] Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Reponse*, 17.

The communities that I trace onstage are sometimes visible local spaces, with neighbor figures who speak on behalf of a shared domestic identity. In others, they are characters who appear in performance separately but share some crucial identity or action, like prologue speakers across theatrical genres or the marginal and extrabiblical characters of various pageants of the York Corpus Christi plays. In certain cases, I examine how these communities expand outward into a broader public that may include members of the audience. I do not seek to claim that audiences are essentially communities, nor that the crime-adjacent onstage communities I've described above serve as a perfect mirror for audience behavior and belief. Instead, I explore the various negotiations between these onstage communities and their audiences: the moments of admonition, solicitation or confrontation that attempt to induct or expel the audience within matrices of affiliation or citizenship, with the stage and with each other.

In tracing this engagement between a variety of audiences and plays, I focus on both the knowledge or power that an audience brings to a performance, and the control that the stage in turn attempts to exert over its audience in the kind of cueing or figuration that Lopez studies. In the absence of archival evidence, performance acts as an important indication of who the audience was at least figured to be, and how they were cued to respond. For example, when the narrator Truth speaks directly to the audience in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, noting that "your eyes shal witnesse of their shaded tips/ Which many here did see perform'd indeed," (I3^v, 25.19-20) he addresses the expertise that some audience members already hold over this narrative and the position of power that it grants them as critics of this performance. In contrast, many playhouse prologues use mercantilist terminology to place the stage as a realm of economic negotiation in which audiences must abide by the standards and practices of the theater. For example, in *Bartholomew Fair* a scrivener reads a satirical contract to the audience in place of a

prologue, noting that they have "agreed to remain in the places, their money or friends have put them in, with patience, for the space of two houres and a halfe, and somewhat more" (1.1.73-80).[24] These two moments demonstrate endpoints on a spectrum where an audience is invited to bring their own authority to a performance, or pushed to recognize the play's authority.

In choosing "engagement" as my umbrella term, I gesture to these different modes of solicitation and compulsion between the audience and stage. Each chapter focuses on a mode of engagement— beholding, witnessing, voyeurism, investment— and its resulting audience affect for a particular plays or genres of performance. In Chapter 1, I consider beholding, the practice of compassionate gazing, and the resistance it might encourage from the audience of the York Corpus Christi plays. In Chapter 2, I examine witnessing and the power of omniscient surveillance that audiences are given in a series of Tudor moral interludes; in these plays, character bodies are held in suspicion rather than compassion. In Chapter 3, I examine voyeurism and the complicity that it engenders in audiences of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*. Finally, in Chapter 4, I frame playhouse prologues as places of audience negotiation and investment. While "spectatorship" certainly reigns in early modern theater studies, especially with Rodgers' nuanced argument for what spectatorship meant as a multisensory cultural term, its situatedness in the rise of sixteenth century commercial theater limits considerations of earlier audiences and cultures of performance.[25] Since much of my project does indeed focus on prefiguration and theater's attempts to provoke, cue, or shape audience response, "engage" captures both the

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[24] Ben Jonson, "Bartholomew Fair," *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology* ed. David Bevington et. al. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).

[25] Indeed, Rodgers traces these origins of spectatorship from Philip Sidney's 1586 use onwards; *A Monster with a Thousand Hands,* 28-35. Andrew Gurr also argues for a numeral and sensory difference between 'audience' and 'spectator'; the audience is a "collective term for a group of listeners," while a spectator is a solitary playgoer that engages visually; *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 1. Across this project, I refer to an audience, audiences or audience members as playgoers who engaged both visually and aurally.

negotiated dialectic that I seek to trace, and the sense of a contractual bond, one that sometimes held serious affective stakes or risks.

Many of the modes of engagement that I track in this project are also allied with the audience's orientation to time. In many of the plays that I read in this project, crime narratives are represented or understood contemporaneously, as when the *Mactacio Abel* references Cain's offstage neighbors or when *Nice Wanton* suddenly moves from general allegory to a realist representation of judicial procedure. This drive to reimagine crime in contemporary terms helps figure the audience as a proxy community but also removes a sense of biblical, historical or allegorical distance. It creates a sense of asynchrony, forcing the audience to engage with different narratives of crime as if they were happening now and in their own proverbial backyards.

This calculated asynchrony is also part of my own critical methodology, as I reach outside of the historical parameters of my primary texts to bring in contemporary practices and concepts as comparative lenses. In Chapter 2, I examine the surveillance tactics of the twentieth and twenty-first century American Neighborhood Watch program, placing their pedagogy of prospective witnessing in conversation with the socially predetermined narratives of Tudor moral interludes. In Chapter 3, I turn to the ethically fraught behavior of contemporary "true crime publics," discursive groups that form around the desire to inhabit and pursue particular viral true crime narratives like the 2014 podcast *Serial*. In the absence of archival evidence of early audience engagement and response, these contemporary lenses offer productive cues to reading the negotiation of resistance, surveillance or complicity in early performance.

"An unclean generation:" Early Theater and Theatrical Narratives of Crime

My work is indebted to literary critics and historians such as Lorna Hutson, Malcolm

Gaskill, and Cynthia Herrup, who have examined the relationship between crime and theater in

early England, especially the rise in the popular understanding of criminal law and forensic

thinking.[26] While their work focuses on the social and historical understandings of crime, this

project frames onstage crime narratives as a nexus for audience engagement. Because my focus

is on the affective orientations produced in the context of performance, this project also does not

address legal and judicial institutions and practices outside the context of performance. Where a

historicist approach to the same thematic concerns might investigate the complicated system of

jurisdictions in medieval and early modern cities, the development of the role of the jury, or

practices and discourses of citizenship as they changed over the period covered by this project, I

am not concerned here with the ways that plays reflect or reorient contemporary cultural

systems. Rather, my project is concerned with "affective economies" at the level where they are

not tied, or limited, to historically particular institutions, a level the plays also seek to address

through the transhistorical communities they form.[27]

In other words, rather than using theatrical engagement to extrapolate how early English

people felt about various issues of crime, domestic security and surveillance, I want to use

theatrical crime narratives as a space for exploring how audiences experienced certain

orientations toward theater, like risk, complicity, or resistance. By narrowing my focus to

audiences who gathered around both crime narratives and particular performance-specific

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[26] See, for example, Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Cynthia Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For medieval drama see Emma Lipton, "Space and the Culture of Witnessing in the York Entry into Jerusalem," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 49, no. 2 (May 1, 2019): 295–317.

[27] As I address later in this introduction, my interpretation of the circulation of affect in theatrical crime narratives derives heavily from Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22. 2 (2004): 117-139.

circumstances, I also seek to avoid flattening or homogenizing the audience while still thinking

of them as a community. Indeed, the communities portrayed onstage share both strong common

identities and profound disharmonies; crime becomes a forum for recognizing and negotiating

those disharmonies without necessarily solving them.

Given this focus on crime narratives as a dramaturgical forum, my definition of what

constitutes 'crime' in late medieval and early modern drama is, by design, broad and flexible.[28]

Rather than drawing on legal or political archives to inform perceptions of crime in late medieval

and early modern England, I focus on how crime is portrayed within theatrical narratives. In

some of the plays that my project examines, crime is legally explicit, historically anchored, and

central to the plot; for example, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* dramatizes Thomas Merry's real-life

murder of two men, for which he was prosecuted and executed in 1594 London. In others, crime

is itself confusingly defined within the world of the play, as when Herod's ballooning definitions

of treason in the York Corpus Christi plays imbues many quotidian actions with criminal

potential. When Herod enters in the *Christ Before Herod* pageant, he uses the threat of treason

accusations and execution as a mode of audience crowd control: "Youre tounges fro tretyng of

triffillis be trased/ Or Þis brande Þat is bright schall breste in youre brayne" (31.3-4).[29] As mortal

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[28] Indeed, this dispersed and varied theatrical portrayal of crime follows the capaciousness of the term itself within premodern England. Crime and its variants appear in print and in early modern dictionaries within a wide lexical spectrum, embracing everything from felonious behavior to sin to savagery; See "criminal, adj. and n." OED Online. January 2018. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44425 (accessed March 08, 2018). The term "criminous" addressed a wide variety of behaviors, from the specifically illegal to the merely sinful. The term "criminatour" or "criminator" specifically addressed those who sought to accuse (falsely or otherwise) someone else of a crime; the term entangles the accuser and the accused within a relationship where guilt is unclearly distributed. In certain circumstances, bearing false witness is referred to as being a "false criminatour," though in other circumstances the term "criminatour" seems to contain the accusation of falseness within it; see "criminator, n." OED Online. January 2018. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44439?redirectedFrom=criminatour (accessed March 08, 2018); "criminatour, n." Middle English Dictionary (accessed March 8th, 2017). http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED10326.

[29] All citations of the York Corpus Christi plays are taken from Richard. Beadle, ed., *The York Plays: A Critical Edition of the York Corpus Christi Play as Recorded in British Library Additional MS 35290*, 2 vols. (Oxford; New

offenses spread to activities like speaking of "triffillis" or walking around, there is very little for

characters and audience to do that is not treasonous.

Still in others, crime serves as a nebulous social category rather than a series of concrete

actions; in many Protestant morality plays, vices may boast of several criminal pastimes like

forgery or theft, but this serves less to portray criminality in terms of specific practices than as a

shadowy social contagion— one that is spiritually calculated in terms of salvation or damnation,

as well as legal, earthly consequences. For example, George Wapull's *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*

(1576) opens by imagining communities as easily corruptible material entities, consigned to

disaster by a single inhabitant.

> As the worme which in the timber is bred
> The selfe same timber doeth consume and eate
> And as the moth which is commonly fed
> In the cloth with her bred and the same doth frete
> So many persons are a damage great
> To their own countrey, which hath them relieved
> And by them their own countrey ofte times is greeved (A2^r).[30]

Though the prologue pitches the potential parasitical damage of these social worms or moths as

nationwide, a "damage . . . to their own countrey," moral interludes tend to show this process on

a more local level. The stakes and solutions of this damage vary; some towns, as the one

portrayed in *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, are subsumed by a divine plague. Others take more

stringent earthly measures, advocating a kind of willfully prescient governing that contains and

punishes 'bad seeds' before they can do any damage.

When it comes to early modern theatrical discourse, audiences were frequently imagined

to be little more than loitering criminals; In *Virtue's Commonweath* (1603), the Puritan writer

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York: Published for the Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 2009). All quotations from the pageant will be cited parenthetically with both pageant and line number.

[30] George Wapull, *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, ed. Peter Happe, Malone Society Reprints (Manchester University Press, 2012). All quotations will include parenthetical manuscript designations.

Henry Crosse wrote of the "common haunters" of theater as "the leaudest persons in the land, apt for pilferie, perjeurie, forgerie, or any rogories, the very scum, rascalitie, and baggage of the people, theives, cut-purses, shidters, cousoners; briefly an unclean generation" (Q1ʳ).[31] Even antitheatrical writers who stayed away from wholesale condemnation of audiences framed theater as a kind of invasive, contagious process of sensorial intercourse. While audiences might be passive victims rather than active criminals, theater itself was a space of "unclean generation" condemned with the same rhetoric as prostitution and usury. With this more fluid understanding of crime onstage, I seek to shift away from the legal parameters of crime and towards an exploration of what kinds of theatrical narratives use the occurrence of crime, the potential for crime, or the fear of crime as a tool of audience engagement.

In this way, I track criminal narratives as catalysts for certain kinds of structures of feeling, what I have termed above as the "affective economies" of the theater. We can see crime narratives as fascinating venues for affective economies even in prose texts. For example, In *A World of Wonders, A Masse of Murders, A Coiue of Cosonages* (1595), Thomas Johnson offered a sampling of these kinds of audience affects in his array of crime-adjacent spectacular local news and gossip. Johnson folds together reports of ancient 'wonders' with local lore and recent crimes, often blurring the boundaries between these categories. His opening advertises the many-splendored delights offered in the book while carefully framing pious and neighborly admonition over salacious curiosity as his chief authorial aim:

> Who list of *Wonders* tell, and straunge euents to knowe,
> Or heare of *Murthers* fell: this Booke a *Masse* dooth
> Who would the wily slights, of *Cousnage* gladly heare,
> Heerin for his delights: a *Couie* dooth appeare.
> Muse at the first, feare at the next, the third doth cry beware

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[31] Henry Crosse, "Virtue's Commonwealth (1603)," in *Shakespeare's Theater*, ed. Tanya Pollard (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 188–97.

So maist thou shun a world of woes which herein named ere.[32]

Johnson's promises of narrative scale and richness— a "world," a "masse" a "covie" — are also forms of communal organization. The book does not just *have* a mass of murder narratives, it *does* a mass; the reader is beckoned into a ceremonial gathering reigned by curiosity or urban anxiety rather than the Eucharist. The text likewise offers a "covey" a family, brood, or company.[33] The pedagogical benefit of the text, Johnson argues, is to shun a different "world" than the one offered, one that the figures within these narratives were not able to avoid.

Within these communal narrative spaces, Johnson then assigns a series of reactions to his readers: they will "muse" at wonders, "fear" murders, and "beware" cozenage (fraud), despite the fact that lines before, Johnson hinted that the reader might be driven more by curiosity or "delight" than utility. Throughout Johnson's introduction, he is aware of comparative ethics of consuming crime as entertainment versus consuming it as practical and ethical guidance, claiming that his book is not meant to delight "vaine heads" but instead acts as a mirror for the just deserts of improper behavior and a manual for self-protection in uncertain times. Johnson thus works within a matrix of affective reactions and their comparative ethical orientations with the text; the difference between "delight" and "cry beware" is a difference between voyeurism and Christian charity.

However, beyond producing affective cues or guidelines, Johnson has no insight into or power over individual readers' private reactions to his text. In medieval and early modern theater, audiences may have followed or broken from these affective cues, among others, and their reactions are also part of the performance. The affiliations scripted by certain audience

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[32] Thomas Johnson, *A World of Wonders* (London, 1595), sig. A1ʳ.
[33] "Covey, n.1," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed May 23, 2019, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/43399.

affects and an audience member's resulting engagement either inducted them into, or expelled them from, communities formed onstage and with each other. Throughout this project, I rely on Sara Ahmed's conceptualization of affect as a circulating social force that "align[s] individuals with communities" by both adhering figures or individuals together and "surfacing" or cohering a collective.[34] Just as Johnson imagines affective response as creating a collective, by fashioning enclaves of self-righteous readers who are both menaced and intrigued by an external "world of woes," theatrical narratives of crime make this adhesion and cohesion an immersive social process. Ahmed's theorization of the drag or disruption caused by "affect aliens,"[35] the affective estrangement produced by marking strangers as "bodies out of place" in neighborhood surveillance,[36] and—more broadly—the negotiation by which affective economies operate[37] all inform my readings in the following chapters.

Chapter Outlines

Crime, Community and Audience Engagement is organized into four chapters. My first three chapters each address a text within a different genre within late medieval and early modern theater: biblical drama, moral interludes, and domestic tragedies. These three genres inhabit vastly different performance environments, from civic spaces, to private houses, to commercial playhouses.[38]

In my first chapter, "Quiet Resistance: Beholding the Margins of the York Corpus Christi Plays," I decentralize the Passion sequence in the York Corpus Christi plays to instead focus on a

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[34] Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 22. 2 (2004), 118-119.
[35] Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 65.
[36] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), 27-31
[37] Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 117-139.
[38] Indeed, my focus on the different organization and spatial affordances of audience engagement in these spaces works as an alternative means of marking difference between these genres than an attention to periodicity, since my project moves between texts that are coded as medieval or early modern.

series of minor, often unnamed characters who appear on the margins of this performance of divine history: Joseph, the mothers of Herod's infant victims, unnamed landowners and messengers. When faced with tragedy, stress, loss, and violence, these characters react in distinctly non-Christological ways: they are exhausted or frustrated, and their laments are deemed inappropriate or inconvenient. I argue that these characters model forms of quiet resistance that center their precarity so that the audiences of York might behold their distress with compassion. The ranting tyrants of York like Herod or Pilate directly confront the audience, accusing them of treason for a variety of minor actions and threatening them with violence; I read these moments as opportunities for the audience to playfully subvert these tyrants, mocking or laughing at them. In contrast, these minor characters are directly menaced by regimes of violence or injustice in their respective pageants. Beholding their pain, exhaustion, or distress provides the audience with another way to resist Herod and Pilate. Both comic subversion and compassionate beholding cast theatrical engagement as a form of resistance against tyranny.

My second chapter "'And for his sake to help his neighbor': Neighborhood Surveillance in Tudor Moral Interludes," examines the emergence of neighborhood surveillance in Tudor morality plays as the partial replacement for an onstage God. The five plays that I examine in this chapter— *Nice Wanton*, *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*, *Enough is As Good as a Feast*, *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, and *Like Will to Like* — all contain earthly communities that are affected by the moral arc of their central characters. While each of these plays explicitly points to its titular aphorism as its central moral lesson, these interludes also advocate for lateral surveillance as a way of preventing communal collapse. I read the rhetoric and images of twentieth- and twenty-first century American Neighborhood Watches as a comparative lens for interpreting the rhetoric of this lateral surveillance that casts persecution as

a form of communal love or care. The Neighborhood Watch program encouraged a model of surveillance dependent not just on observing, but on imagining the future criminal possibility of bodies and actions—a mode of looking that is extremely vulnerable to subjective interpretation of which bodies or actions already suggest criminality. This prospective witnessing collapses the time between criminal potential and actuality, a kind of leap central to the structure of moral interludes, which often skip over middle processes of conversion or corruption like a narrative ellipsis. Reading these moral interludes with the surveillance pedagogy of Neighborhood Watches demonstrates that this dramatic structure doesn't just shape salvation— it teaches its audiences prospective witnessing as a tool of claiming control over narrative futurity, awarding them a kind of earthly providence while simultaneously restricting or foreclosing avenues of engagement and interpretation.

My third chapter, "Crowdsourcing Justice: *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and True Crime Publics in Early Modern Domestic Tragedy," turns from onstage communities attempting to prevent crime to true crime publics comprised of civilians that are fascinated in solving, discussing, and reliving past infamous crime narratives. I examine the narrative ecology of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, a play that reenacts the 1594 murder of Robert Beech by Thomas Merry and the participation of a band of civilian Londoners who attempt to solve Beech's murder. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* builds from a web of ballads, broadsides, pamphlets, legal documents, and gossip that surrounded this murder. This narrative ecology involved its own band of Londoners that contributed to, disseminated, and discussed Thomas Merry's criminal narrative. This true crime public would likely comprise a significant portion of the audience of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*; indeed, the play constantly addresses its audience as experts or eyewitnesses to the details of the story. I argue that *Two Lamentable Tragedies* holds its audience as complicit in

whatever unethical behavior or miscarriages of justice resulted from the public fascination in

Thomas Merry and his crimes. I read a similar process of public fascination and ethical

reckoning in *Serial*, the 2014 podcast that birthed an enormous true crime public; millions of

listeners debated, researched and tried to solve the criminal case that the podcast addressed, often

through deeply unethical methods. I argue that *Two Lamentable Tragedies* cues a similar turn

outward to reckon with the crowdsourced work of its narrative origins. Domestic tragedy

audiences are often framed as voyeuristic, driven by the desire to peer into the private spaces of

others. However, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* stares back at its audience; it holds them

accountable as bystanders rather than hidden voyeurs.

My fourth chapter, "Bann(ed) Economies: Framing Audience Negotiation in Early

Modern Playhouse Prologues," focuses on a convention rather than a genre of early English

theater: the playhouse prologue or induction, a site of explicit negotiation with or disciplining of

the audience. While in previous chapters I focused on onstage communities within disparate

plays, in this chapter I read prologues laterally to consider prologue speakers as a theatrical

community unto themselves, each responding to others and building on the idea of the prologue

as a cultural space. These prologues act as moments of metatheatrical experimentation, directly

addressing the diverse tastes, attentions, and apprehensions of a commercial audience. Beyond

their admission fee, these audiences engaged in performance through attention, gesture and

verbal response, an affective economy of playgoing that responded to derogations of theater as a

site of predation or contagion. Sixteenth-century antitheatrical writing framed theater as a site of

explosive and transgressive generation, borrowing rhetoric from similar denunciations of usury

and prostitution, two other transgressive economies of contagion. I argue that playhouse

prologues sought to represent the creative power and transformative effect of the theater on their

own terms, either by turning away from this language of transgressive generation or embracing it for themselves.

This project offers theatrical narratives of crime as an object of inquiry that allows us to bring together information about historical audiences, representations of audiences and their responses in early modern plays, and the affective orientations these representations indicate in order to bridge and advance recent approaches in the "spectatorial turn" of medieval and early modern studies. My opening pairing between Cain from the *Mactacio Abel* with the Gentleman of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also helps demonstrate the potential critical interventions of this project. The transformation of Cain from a biblical forefather to a contemporary neighbor and the Gentleman's confrontation of the audience illustrate my framing of crime as a tool of making contemporary, collapsing temporal, geographical or cultural distance in order to heighten the stakes of audience engagement, imbuing audience response with a sense of ethical or social responsibility. The creative collisions of time and space that I track in many of these plays also mirror my own practices of reading laterally: this project not only productively puts into conversations plays or genres not usually combined, but also offers contemporary discourses of crime as comparative lenses for exploring diverse negotiations of audience engagement.

Chapter 1 : Quiet Resistance: Beholding the Margins of the York Corpus Christi Plays

In the penultimate pageant of the passion sequence of the York Corpus Christi plays,

Crucifixio Christi, Christ spends much of the pageant a silent presence, as four soldiers work to

affix him to the cross and carry it up the "hill" of Calvary.[39] As Christ is elevated into gruesome

view, he directly addresses the audience to confront them with the work of the Crucifixion:

> Al men Þat walkis by weye or strete,
> Takes tente ȝe schalle no travayle tyne.
> Byholdes Myn heede, Myn handis, and My feete,
> And fully feele nowe, or ȝe fyne (35.253-255).[40]

This monologue remains, for both early spectators and modern critics, a lightning-rod of a

theatrical moment, full of affective charge and sacramental possibility.[41] This confrontation also

dramatizes what would be a common moment of private prayer, uniting for many of the audience

members devotional practice and public performance.[42] Scholarship that focuses on audience

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[39] In imagining the staging of the elevation of Christ in the York *Crucifixio Christi*, I take cue from Martin Walsh, who proposes that the soldiers affix Christ to the cross while it is lying on the street of York, and then carry it up onto the affixed mortise on the pageant wagon top; Martin W. Walsh, "High Places and Travelling Scenes: Some Observations on the Staging of the York Cycle," *Early Theatre* 3 (2000): 137–54. David Klausner also agrees with this staging in "Staging the Unstageable: Performing the Crucifixion in Late Medieval and Early Modern England," *Medieval English Theatre* 30 (2008), 66-69. Philip Butterworth's 1992 production of the Crucifixion instead placed all five actors at waist-height on the pageant wagon for the duration of the action. For considerations of this staging, see Philip Butterworth, 'The York Crucifixion: Actor/Audience Relationship', *Medieval English Theatre* 14 (1992), 67-76; Margaret Rogerson, "Raging in the Streets of Medieval York," *Early Theatre* 3 (2000): 105–25.

[40] For citations of the York Corpus Christi plays, see note 29. All citations of Beadle's editorial or introductory notes will include volume, page and note number where necessary.

[41] This is especially true in considerations of the York Cycle as sacramental theater, in which Jesus' crucified body also acts as "a grotesque enactment and revision of the act of elevation," to which the audience "must bear a terrible witness": Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Cycle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 65-70; Pamela King likewise considers this moment in conversation with devotional practices surrounding the elevation of the Host and questions whether this moment in the Crucifixion pageant would inspire a "creeping to the cross": *The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City* (Woodbridge, UK; Rochester, N.Y.: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 19-20, 149-151.

[42] King tracks how Christ's speech draws on the Good Friday service from Lamentations 1:12 as well as Passion Lyric in order to frame the play as devotional aid: *The York Mystery Cycle*, 145-50.

engagement and response in the York Corpus Christi plays often centers this confrontation, theorizing how audience members could "fully feele" in this moment, or how their position relative to the moving pageant might affect their immersion in or distance from Christ's exhortation. Heather Hill-Vásquez marks Christ's injunction to "take tente" and not to waste "travayle" as a "merger of mundane and sacred labor," in which the audience is invoked as complicit workers in their own right, "enabling the significance and power of the Crucifixion to span a time and space that includes their own streets, homes and storefronts,"[43] Jill Stevenson likewise focuses on how the staging of the Crucifixion created a "witness blend" between local lived experience and enactment but argues that this staging created a "safe, sympathetic distance" for spectators, limiting "the extent of responses to Christ's suffering."[44] John McGavin and Greg Walker turn to the spatial positioning of audiences around York, imagining how spectators stationed in different spaces throughout York might encounter the elevation of Christ.[45] All of these approaches consider not only the physical or semiotic positioning of Christ's body but also how this moment underwrites engagement more broadly, the affective and kinesthetic systems through which York's audience encountered this play. While she does not focus on audience engagement in York specifically, Sarah McNamer argues that accounts of the Passion helped teach compassion to readers and audiences alike— that "beholding" the crucified Jesus in performance or text was to practice a new type of sensory and affective engagement.[46] When Jesus commands his York audience to "byholdes myn heede, myn handis, and my feete,"

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[43] Hill-Vásquez, *Sacred Players*, 1-2.
[44] Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory and Devotional Culture*, 145-147.
[45] McGavin and Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship*, 9-16. In their consideration of the spatial positioning of audiences during the Crucifixion, McGavin and Walker also rely on past scholarship that uses contemporary performances of the York Corpus Christi plays to suggest possible original performance practice. See, for example, Klausner, "Staging the Unstageable"; Butterworth, "The York Crucifixion"; Rogerson, "Raging in the Streets."
[46] Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 134-135.

he is challenging them to literally hold his body with their eyes, to engage in a process of feminized, compassionate gazing in which "the destruction of flesh and sinew is all the more pitiable because the body itself has been lovingly held."[47]

While I agree that Christ's address from the cross is a pivotal and rich moment, I argue in this chapter that there are marginal moments in the York Corpus Christi plays that also offer the audience the opportunity to "fully feele," albeit in different modes. In other words, while the Passion remains the most startling and confrontational moment of "beholding," Jesus didn't hold a monopoly on the practice. In this chapter, I decentralize the Passion sequence to instead focus on a series of minor, often unnamed characters who appear on the margins of this performance of divine history: Joseph, the mothers of Herod's infant victims, landowners, soldiers, and messengers. When faced with tragedy, stress, loss, and violence, these characters react in distinctly non-Christological ways: they are exhausted or frustrated, and their laments are deemed inappropriate or inconvenient. Often, they are defeated, or they run away. Though they do not possess the same sensational violence or sacramental potential as the Crucifixion, these moments address the fear and resistance within those who have no desire for or access to martyrdom; their bodies are not broken, but they are exhausted, scared, angry, or deeply sad. I argue that the York pageants offer minor ways in which the bodies of these minor figures might also be temporarily beheld— not just in compassion or charity, but also in empathetic recognition. While the audiences of York playfully engage in direct subversion of tyrants like Herod or Pilate, beholding these minor characters also serves as a form of audience engagement that works as resistance against tyrannical regimes.

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[47] Ibid, 137.

The first section of this chapter will explore to the concept of 'quiet resistance' expressed by the minor characters of Corpus Christi play, considering how the discourse of treason created by the York tyrants creates a unique space where even the subtlest acts of dissent might be amplified into criminal acts. These moments of quiet resistance may have especially resonated with performances of the cycle under Tudor rule, as York faced turbulence both within city governance and in its relationship with its new monarchs. I will then move into a reading of other York pageants, with particular attention to *Joseph's Trouble about Mary*, *The Slaughter of the Innocents*, *The Remorse of Judas*, and *Christ Before Pilate 2: The Judgement*, tracking minor characters who demonstrate quiet methods of resistance to different regimes of earthly or divine power. The final section of my chapter briefly returns to the Crucifixion, demonstrating how Christ's address is supplemented by the minor characters who surround the Passion. Within the preordained narrative of divine history, the methods of affective resistance modeled by these minor characters might seem superfluous. They dilate time or divert attention, but they cannot change the large-scale plot of divine history— Christ will always be crucified, and Herod will always murder children. Yet, these quiet models of rebellion cast resistance as a mode of interior survival, a quotidian practice rather than a large-scale insurrection.

"There was more than one lobster present at the birth of Jesus?": Minor Characters and Quiet Resistance

In framing the characters who model quiet resistance as 'minor,' I include both characters who are extrabiblical additions and those who are defined by their marginality or structural or

typological functionality.[48] Alex Woloch's definition of "character-space" seeks to parse

narrative maneuvering between the 'one' and the 'many,' marking "the intersection of an implied

human personality . . . with the definitely circumscribed form of narrative."[49] Of course, defining

characters as 'minor' is difficult in a performance of multiple pageants that distribute a single

character across many bodies; the York Corpus Christi plays literally performs 'the one' of

Christ's body as 'the many,' the dozens of actors who would perform him.[50] However, many

biblical pageants like those in the York Corpus Christi plays are organized around codified

moments in divine history as specific and circumscribed narrative frameworks, like *The

Annunciation* or *The Slaughter of the Innocents*. The distribution of "character space" in these

performances is somewhat directed by the content of their biblical narratives, though many

medieval plays disrupt this balance. For example, the Towneley *Second Shepherd's Play*

minimizes and marginalizes its central biblical event: three shepherds receive an injunction from

an angel to visit the newly-born Christ in Bethlehem. In a structural reimagining akin to Tom

Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, the shepherds spend most of the play

engaged with their own plots and troubles, encountering the young Christ in his manger only in

the final moments of the play. Instead of nameless figures serving as human framing devices for

the Nativity, the shepherds Gil, Coll, and Daw become recognizably contemporary laborers with

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[48] My subheading title derives from a moment in the film *Love, Actually* (2003) where Emma Thompson's character is confused at the news that her daughter has been cast as "First Lobster" in her school's densely populated Nativity Play.

[49] Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 13.

[50] In her reading of the York pageants as epic acting, Sharon Aronson-Lehavi explores this distributed performance of characters, arguing that seeing several actors step into the same role conceives of a "mold that can be filled and re-filled by different human agents," which implies that "each and every member of the audience can be, and in fact already is, a reflection of the original sinners." This idea is reinforced by the fact that these actors are recognizable as guild members; Sharon Aronson-Lehavi, *Street Scenes: Late Medieval Acting and Performance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 95-96.

pressing socioeconomic concerns of their own.[51] While the Nativity and its beckoning angel is a

transformative experience for the shepherds, turning them from "revolutionary social critics" to

"apolitical dreamers," this final swerve towards the divine does not erase their physical

sufferings and complaints; an encounter with the infant Christ might provide spiritual

sustenance, but not actual food.[52]

The pageants of the York Corpus Christi plays do not offer quite such a drastic

reimagining of character-space as the Towneley *Second Shepherd's Play*, but they do offer

smaller shifts, moments where minor characters are given both affective depth and contemporary

resonance. These moments remind the audience of the layered and asynchronous time of the

York Corpus Christi plays that collided divine history with the local present, often through a

"verbal contemporaneity" that many of these minor characters help establish.[53] York's

performance environment also serves as a force for disrupting the spatial or temporal

centeredness of characters. If Woloch's novel-centric concept of "character-space" is a

circumscribed zero-sum game, offering attention to some characters at the space of others, then

drama, particularly recursive and immersive drama like the York Corpus Christi plays, offers

unlimited access to all of the characters in its pageants. Not only could audience members choose

to focus their attention on the action of a minor character in the performance of a particular

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[51] As Ruth Nisse demonstrates, the shepherds are actually agricultural laborers who have been "forced out of the work by the oppression of the local gentry": Ruth Nisse, *Defining Acts: Drama and the Politics of Interpretation in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 80-81. For the contemporary socio-economic critique of the Towneley shepherds, see also Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), 144-5.

[52] Susan Nakley, "On the Unruly Power of Pain in Middle English Drama," *Literature and Medicine* 33, no. 2 (2015): 305. As Nakley notes, the play's ending "divorces itself from the work's subversive concerns with temporal suffering, conforming at the eleventh hour to medieval conventions of spiritual salvation yet appearing anomalous in relation to the rest of the play": "On the Unruly Power of Pain," 305.

[53] V.A. Kolve, *A Play Called Corpus Christi*, 107. See also Beckwith, *Signifying God*, xvi, 38-39. This asynchrony was also produced by the temporal complexity of processional staging, in which pageants could visually or aurally blend together: See Pamela King, "Seeing and Hearing; Looking and Listening," *Early Theatre* 3 (2000): 156-159. Alexandra Johnston has also traced this overlap in contemporary performance of the York Corpus Christi plays in "The York Cycle: 1977." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1978): 8.

pageant, but they could also follow that pageant through recursive performances at playing

stations throughout its mobile procession through York.[54] Moreover, minor characters who

disappear from the scripts of pageants do not disappear "offstage" but instead remain visible in

the playing space, perhaps reacting silently to the central action or melting into the nearby

audience. I argue that this asynchrony and fluid character-space of the York Corpus Christi plays

act as an important cue for audience engagement; and invitation for the audience to orient their

affective responses not only in relation to Christ but also to these minor characters.

I'm particularly interested in moments when these minor characters briefly appear in the

central scripted dialogue or action in a pageant, often for specific functional purposes. For

example, in *The Slaughter of the Innocents*, a messenger boy Nuncius appears to deliver news to

Herod that the Magi have deceived him; Nuncius refuses to capitulate to the tyrant's repeated

demands that he alter his report to something more pleasing. In the same pageant, two unnamed

mothers resist Herod's soldiers, grappling with them and naming their crimes as the soldiers

murder their children. These characters engage in work— reporting, fighting, lamenting— that

resist Herod's regime.[55] Though none of this work is technically criminal, they risk punitive

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[54] For the different playing spaces of York, see Meg Twycross, "'Places to Hear the Play': Pageant Stations at York, 1398–1572," *REED Newsletter* 2 (1978): 10–33; Eileen White, "Places for Hearing the Corpus Christi Play in York," *Medieval English Theatre* 9, no. 1 (1987): 23–63.

[55] My focus on work is somewhat separate from that on the labor or 'skill' that undergird the artisanal ideology of the York Corpus Christi plays: what Beckwith has framed as the "emergent structure of feeling" in the pageants that emphasizes "manufacture as central" against mercantile power: *Signifying God*, 265. Some of the characters that I focus on, like Joseph and the mothers of *Slaughter of the Innocents*, certainly demonstrate this material production and focus on manufacture. The types of 'resistance work' I track— complaint, irreverence, sabotage— have no material output; they are based in social or political skill rather than artisanal skill, and are focused at confronting sovereign rather than mercantile power, though there may have been some conflation between these spheres of power. For artisanal ideology in York, see Beckwith, *Signifying God*, 42–55; Nicole R. Rice and Margaret Aziza Pappano, *The Civic Cycles: Artisan Drama and Identity in Premodern England* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015). Jonathan Gil Harris also provides a helpful overview of work that focuses on the relationship of particular guilds to the modes of manufacture and onstage objects in "Properties of Skill: Product Placement in Early English Artisanal Drama," in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* eds. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35–66. Given my particular focus on resistance, I also draw on Claire Sponsler's *Drama and Resistance*, which conceives of resistance in the York play as in dialogue with this artisanal ideology; Sponsler argues that the broken body in York signifies nonwork, "shatters the myth of mutually productive labor that underpinned the urban economy as

damage by an unstable sovereign regime: Herod accuses the messenger of treason and threatens him with death, while Herod's soldiers kill the infants of Bethlehem and threaten their mothers. However, the work of the messenger and the mothers also briefly centers them within the pageant, dilating their time and concerns within a narrative structure that does not register their pain or existence as central. In other words, these minor characters resist with both action and feeling, even against the very pageant that they are in.

What might it mean for these characters to resist with feeling within the spaces of their pageants?' Sara Ahmed has explored the figure of the "affect alien" in contemporary culture, focusing on figures like the "feminist killjoy" or the "angry black woman," bodies that are accused of ruining or spoiling the flow of the "thick sociality of everyday spaces."[56] The affect alien is imagined structurally as a "blockage point," a halt to communication and thus a smooth sense of community:

> You can be affectively alien because you are affected in the wrong way by the right things. Or you can be affectively alien because you affect others in the wrong way: your proximity gets in the way of other people's enjoyment of the right things, functioning as an unwanted reminder of histories that are disturbing, that disturb an atmosphere.[57]

The disturbing force of the affect alien does not even require willful disruption; sometimes their very "proximity" might set this sense of communal serenity askew. For example, Joseph's exhaustion and anxiety drags down the otherwise serene transcendence of Mary's pregnancy and birth; his focus on material concerns and earthly dangers over the miracle of his divine election alienates him within his own pageants, until divine intervention 'cures' him of his unhappiness.

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controlled by merchants": *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 153-4.

In my focus on quiet resistance, I also focus on characters that are, broadly defined, unproductive. However, their bodies are specifically not broken; indeed, the tactics of quiet resistance are designed to prevent that kind of bodied violence.

[56] Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 65.
[57] Ibid, 68, 75.

In a different way, the lament of the mothers of Bethlehem frames them as affect aliens; their unhappiness is coded as confusing, irritating and inconvenient by Herod's soldiers and insignificant by Herod's court. Yet, while audiences likely felt sympathy toward the Bethlehem mothers and laughed at Joseph, these characters all "get in the way" of the social spaces of their own pageants. Despite this dominant script, the representation of these characters as affect aliens suggests broader possibilities for audience engagement: that feeling with them might also serve as a form of engaged resistance.

These methods of resistant feeling are sometimes paired with physical tactics of quiet resistance that minor characters deploy as a mode of survival. James Scott has charted methods of "everyday resistance," micro-gestures that stop well short of "collective outright defiance" yet register the frustration and discontent between an oppressed population and the forces that extract materials or time from them.[58] While Scott's study focuses on the micro-politics of a Malaysian rice-growing village in Kedah, his broader theorization of subaltern politics argues that attention towards organized, documented rebellions has distorted our understanding of resistance in oppressed political groups. When the consequences of open rebellion are locally catastrophic, populations with few resources and little recourse to action resorted to quiet and oblique forms of resistance. Unlike the epic stage of peasant rebellions, these methods of quiet resistance "require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help, and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms."[59] Within this highly individuated system, resistance is cast as a matter of intent rather than a matter of scale; a practice of individual survival rather than organized rebellion. Where

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[58] James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
[59] Ibid, 29.

one person might rely on sabotage or collusion, others take up "ordinary weapons" like "foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, or feigned ignorance."[60] While Scott focuses on resistance praxis within a specific political economy and Ahmed traces alienation as a consequence of a cultural affective economy, both offer models of accidental or willful disruption or drag. Scott's everyday resistance literalizes the kind of "blockage" that Ahmed traces as the byproduct of being an affect alien.

Within the York Corpus Christi plays, these minor characters also block, complicate or slow down various "flows": sometimes the social spaces organized by tyrannical regimes and sometimes the narrative "flow" of divine history itself.[61] As I track in the following sections, sometimes this disruption is overtly comic, as when the above-mentioned messenger delays and frustrates Herod, sending him into greater tantrums. Sometimes this disruption is tragic, as when the mothers of Bethlehem resist Herod's soldiers. Likewise, sometimes these blockages or complications are presented as overt tactics, while others are unconscious consequences. However, in their various methods of disruption, all of these characters carve out time for themselves, briefly drawing the audience's attention to their own precarity. While the York Corpus Christi plays certainly offered the audience modes of engaging with performance through resistance to its villainous tyrants, I argue that these characters offered smaller moments of beholding that also framed compassionate gazing as a form of resistance.

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[60] Ibid, xvi.

[61] As Ryan McDermott argues, "individual agents do not step into the stream of salvation history so much as they are swept up in it," envisioning this flow towards Doomsday as bringing "protestant skepticism" to ideas of good works; *Tropologies: Ethics and Invention in England, c. 1350-1600* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2016), 291. McDermott seeks to read the York pageants through tropology, theorizing how lay audiences translated its Christian doctrine into everyday practice, which parallels my interest in framing the *Corpus Christi Play* as a repository for models of quiet resistance. However, I'm interested in moments where this "stream" is momentarily halted so individual works can indeed be beheld.

Quiet Resistance and Raging Treason in the York Corpus Christi Plays

My focus on quiet resistance and its relationship with treason in the York Corpus Christi plays particularly intersects with the plays' recursive performance in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, in the turbulent first decades of Tudor rule.[62] I briefly want to visit the execution of Roger Layton as an especially fascinating moment where resistance, staged in both quiet and overt forms, is placed in relation to the performance of the Corpus Christi plays. In July of 1487, Henry VII's visited York as part of an "itinerary circuit of justice" in the north of England after Henry had suppressed a regional rebellion in the same year.[63] As part of the ceremonial visit, the city of York presented a performance of the plays of the Corpus Christi cycle, despite the fact that the cycle was usually exclusively performed annually on the feast of Corpus Christi.[64] After this performance, a citizen of York named Roger Layton was publicly executed on the Pavement for "certayne pointes of treason" against the king.[65] Layton appears numerous times in York records, either for representing the commons in popular protests against Richard II or assaulting York civic representatives; his varied political resume helps position him less as an anti-Tudor martyr and more as one of many citizens within a community imbricated in complicated networks of resistance with multiple spheres of authority.[66] His execution on the

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[62] My focus on these later performances of the York plays aligns with Richard Beadle's dating of the British Library Additional MS 35290 as likely originating in 1476-7, only ten or so years before Henry VI's visit to York. *The York Plays* vol. 1, xi-xiii.

[63] Francis Bacon, *History of the Reign of King Henry VII* ed. J. Rawson Lumby (Cambridge University Press, 1902): 35-6. In addition to Bacon's lively account of Henry VII's circuit through the north after the Battle of Stoke, the visit is chronicled in York's Municipal Records. Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, eds., *Records of Early English Drama: York*, vol. 1, 2 vols., Records of Early English Drama (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1979),153-155. For a general overview of York's relationship with Tudor monarchs and its economic decline in the late fifteenth century, see David Palliser, *Tudor York* (Oxford University Press, 1979); P. M. Tillott, *A History of Yorkshire: The City of York*, Victoria History of the Counties of England (London: Published for the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press, 1961).

[64] Johnston and Rogerson, *Records of Early English Drama: York*, 153.

[65] Ibid, *Records of Early English Drama: York*, 155.

[66] For Layton's various appearances in York records, see Lorraine Christine Attreed, ed., *The York House Books, 1461-1490*, 2 v. (Phoenix Mill, U.K. ; Wolfeboro Falls, NH: A. Sutton for Richard III & Yorkist History Trust, 1991), 340-341, 398.

Pavement, which served as an important playing-space within the performance of the York Corpus Christi Plays, imbricates the audience of Layton's execution and the audience of the plays; what would it mean to behold the *Crucifixio Christi* and a real beheading in the same location in such quick succession?

Layton is by no means a representative example of York's relationship with Henry VII; resistance to Tudor rule in York likely resembled Scott's "everyday resistance" much more than Layton's treason charge and execution. Indeed, York records provide hints of this everyday resistance. In the first few years of Henry's reign, York continued to put off dating its town minutes by the new regnal calendar.[67] In January of 1486, the earl of Northumberland's bailiff was attacked, and charges of "seditious language" became much more frequent in the York House Records.[68] Henry VII had to make a special proclamation of protection in December of 1485 because his appointed recorder, Miles Metcalf, was being intensely verbally harassed.[69] However, Layton's execution demonstrates the far pole that everyday resistance attempts to avoid.

The overlapping audience of this sovereign-mandated Corpus Christi performance and Layton's execution also brings to the forefront discourses of treason in both the York Corpus Christi plays and late fifteenth-century England. As Megan Leitch has demonstrated, English citizens, especially those near key areas of conflict like York, lived in a kind of "continuous present" in which "many people ventured to call the actions of others treason, and feared both that they might be the victims of treason and that their own doings or accusations might be called

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[67] Palliser, 249
[68] Attreed, *The York House Books,* 395, 400-409.
[69] Ibid, 386-387.

treasonous." [70] The legal definition of treason remained fairly stable throughout the mid-to-late

fifteenth century, adhering to the 1352 statue of Edward III:

> When a man doth compass or imagine the Death of our Lord the King. . . Or if a Man do violate the King's companion . . . Or if a Man do levy War against our Lord the King in his Realm, or be adherent to the King's Enemies in his Realm, giving to them Aid and Comfort in the Realm, or elsewhere, and thereof be attentinted of open Deed by the People of their Condition: And if a Man counterfeit to the Money of England . . .to merchandise or make Payment in Deciet of our said Lord the King and of his People; and if a Man sled the Chancellor, Treasurer of the King's Justices of the one Bent of the other.[71]

This excerpted definition only covers high treason; other levels of 'petty treason' include the

murder of a master by a subordinate, whether that be a wife's murder of her husband or a

servant's murder of his master.[72] While these different examples of treason (rebellion,

assassination, forgery) are clearly delineated, the Wars of the Roses upset the stable referents of

these laws. This "continual present" of unstable referents for treason in late fifteenth-century

York might bring audiences into a new relationship with the asynchronous time of the Corpus

Christi plays.

The York Corpus Christi plays provide a surprisingly radical resource for their audiences,

insofar as they encourage affective identification with a range of behaviors identified as treason.

Jesus, in addition to being called a heretic, is repeatedly hailed as a traitor; Pilate, Caiaphas,

Anna, and the soldiers enacting the crucifixion explicitly call Jesus a "traitoure strange" (35.32),

a "traitoure . . . teynted of treasoune" (35.77), a figure of "treasoune untrewe" (36.54), and the

crucifixion itself an event framed by "treasoune" (36.60). Theresa Tinkle has framed the York

Jesus as "god-king," a figure who is "possessed of the power to correct injustice and yet

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[70] Megan Leitch, *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the War of the Roses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 20.
[71] Ibid, 20.
[72] Edward III, Statute 5 (1352) in *Statutes of the Realm* ed. A. Luders (London, Record Commission, 1810-28) I, 319-20, cited in Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, 21.

intentionally subject to unjust rulers."[73] Jesus is hailed throughout the infancy pageants as both savior and "lorde in lande," praised for his chivalric military prowess and wise governance; this sovereignty divorced from earthly power serves to make "divine power comprehensible" while simultaneously creating "an image of the deity that serves as a model for earthly kings."[74] Jesus' dual legitimacy as both earthly king and divine savior is not undercut by accusations of treason; instead, as Tinkle argues, Jesus' designation as traitor attainted "troubles the ideology of state power" that Herod, Caiaphas, and Anna represent, providing a redemptive power for traitors.[75]

This redemptive power for traitors is especially important when the audience themselves are accused of treason by these same figures of unstable state power. The pageant entrances of various York tyrants (Herod, Pilate, Pharaoh) contain a kind of built-in crowd control that directly addresses the audience as unruly bodies within their own regime. Herod's opening blustering in the *The Slaughter of the Innocents* pageant demonstrates this:

> Stente of youre steuenes stoute,
> And stille as stone ȝe stande,
> And my carping recorde.
> Ȝe aught to dare and doute,
> And lere you lowe to lowte
> To me, youre louely lord (19.3-8).

Herod's assumption of the audience's "steuens stoute" and his (likely unsuccessful) attempts to turn them into a submissive audience that is "still as stone" hints that his embodiment in multiple York pageants was an object of enthusiastic scorn. Herod proliferated in the medieval and early modern imagination as a bombastic, overblown tyrant who was a crowd favorite of cycle pageants, even a "leading light. . . of the medieval English theatrical world as a whole."[76]

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[73] Theresa Tinkle, "York's Jesus: Crowned King and Traitor Attainted," *Speculum* 94, no. 1 (January 2019): 99.
[74] Ibid, 116.
[75] Ibid, 97-98.
[76] Rogerson, "Raging in the Streets of Medieval York," 111.

Certainly Herod's legacy in medieval literature suggests a comic, overacted figure; Absolon, the vain and scheming clerk of *The Miller's Tale*, played him "upon a scaffold hye" (3384) and Hamlet famously derided his acting style, criticizing warning visiting Players not to "tear passion to tatters, to very rags . . . it out-Herods Herod" (3.2.8-9,12).[77] Though Herod is certainly one of the most well-known figures in medieval dramatic tradition, he is only one of the bragging tyrants in the York Corpus Christi plays; nine pageants begin with various men of earthly power who attempt to assert authority over the audience by threatening them with charges or treason and bodily violence[78] As Herod, Caiaphas and Pilate increasingly try to exert their sovereign powers on their audiences, they also build an increasingly capacious and illogical definition of "treason" that implicates the audience as a resisting body. Yet, while the audiences of York might revel in their interactive treason, Herod's threats have much more serious consequences for the minor characters more inflexibly inhabiting the world of the Corpus Christi plays.

In *Christ Before Herod*, Herod enters wielding treason charges as a weapon of crowd control: "Traveylis noȝt as traytours Þat tristis in trayne/Or by Þe bloode that Mahounde bledde, with Þis blad schal ye blede" (31.8-9). The actions that have prompted this accusation of treason are, apparently, acting like an audience: Herod threatens the crowds' "tounges fro tretyng of triffillis" (31.3). The definition of treason in these later plays becomes the definition of being an audience member: standing, talking, watching. In *Christ Before Pilate 2: The Judgement,* Pilate describes traitors as tellers of "tales," those "carpand and calland," those who "gyrnes or gales," or anyone who is "unsoftely. . . in Þer sales" (33.18,22-24). Very little is left for the audience to

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[77] William Shakespeare, "Hamlet" in *The Norton Shakespeare* ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Gordon McMullan. Third edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016); Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Miller's Tale," *The Riverside Chaucer* ed. Larry Dean Benson. 3rd ed (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[78] The opening of *Moses and Pharaoh*, *Herod/The Magi*, *The Slaughter of the Innocents*, *The Conspiracy*, *Christ Before Annas and Caiaphas*, *Christ Before Pilate 1: The Dream of Pilate's Wife*, *Christ Before Pilate 2: The Judgement*, and *Christ Before Herod* all contain some variation of the bragging tyrant in the first 100 lines.

do, at this point, which is not treasonous. These later definitions of treason thus define watching the Corpus Christi plays as an act of rebellion, and thus turn spectatorship into a mode of everyday resistance; the audience is engaged in activities that they would perform anyway, but those actions are imbued with new meaning. The tyrants' illogically broad definition of treasonous activity turns the quietest and most passive forms of resistance into treason.[79]

Above any other command, the York tyrants demand that the audience bow to them: Pilate will make this demand multiple times: "For sone his liffe shall he lose/ or left be for lame/ Þat lowtes noȝt to me lowly/ nor liste noȝt to leere" (26. 21-2). So does Herod: "Plextis for no plasis, but platte you to Þis playne" (31.5). Caiaphas likewise cites his chokehold of the legal system as a reason why the audience should "lowtis unto me" (29.15). These demands increase in frequency moving toward the Crucifixion, providing the audience with repeating and recursive opportunities to resist the demands to bow. If the audience did not bow to Herod (and I'm assuming that most didn't), they anticipate Jesus, who later refuses to bow during his trial and passion sequences.[80] Not bowing becomes a form of resistance that the audience can safely perform within the space of the plays. It requires no outward declaration of rebellious intent; doing nothing becomes an act of resistance.

Of course, the audience might have done far more than just 'not bow'; the tyrants' lines seem to anticipate an audience used to mocking or laughing at these figures. But all of these options both provide the audience space to mock a sovereign and frame quotidian spectator practices as potential avenues of resistance; they also rebel who stand and watch. As Tinkle

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[79] In a timely contemporary parallel, President of the United States Donald Trump accused audience members who did not clap for his 2018 State of the Union Address of acting treasonously. See Mark Landler, "Trump Accuses Democrats of Treason Amid Market Rout" *The New York Times* February 5th, 2018 https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/05/us/politics/trump-accuses-democrats-treason-market-rout.html.

[80] As Tinkle argues, bowing is an extremely important marker of sovereignty throughout the York plays. Mary and the Magi bow to Jesus in his infancy in worship, and in later pageants minor civic characters like the Burgesses of Jerusalem and Pilate's beadle bow to Jesus without being asked; "York's Jesus," 116-118.

notes, these acts of rebellion act as a game within the pageants, allowing the audience to feel the "thrill of insubordination" within a safe space.[81] Yet, the ridiculous fragility of these tyrants and the ludic nature of this "treason" also draws attention to the difference between the audience, who interact with but exist apart from Herod's sovereign power, and the characters who must actually contend with the sweeping threats and programs of violence. While the distribution of treason to "almost any behavior that the tyrants don't like" is profoundly comic, it allows the audience to see lament or exhaustion as actions that are raised more visibly to the level of resistance. In other words, these broad and unsubstantiated accusations of treason allow for quiet resistance to be temporarily read as loud.

Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Joseph and Exhausted Resistance

The Joseph of Biblical drama provides a different model of resistance and another potential object for the audience's compassionate "beholding." Labeling Joseph as a minor character within medieval drama is an unorthodox choice; unlike most of the other figures described in this chapter, Joseph is a named, fleshed-out and well-debated figure within biblical drama and exegesis. Yet, attention to Joseph within late medieval culture often focused on his marginality, derogation, or superfluity.[82] The York *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* and *Flight Towards Bethlehem* presents the aging Joseph within his late medieval legacy as a kind of New

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[81] Ibid, 118.

[82] As Ruth Mellinkoff notes, "uncertainties about Joseph's exact place in salvation history mingled with popular irreverent views of Joseph as a pious but not very bright fellow— or worse, as a decrepit foolish cuckold or a comic dolt— to produce some belittling portrayals": *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 22. See also Mary Dzon, "Joseph and the Amazing Christ-Child," in *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 135–58; Louise Vasvari, "Joseph on the Margin: The Mérode Tryptic and Medieval Spectacle," *Mediaevalia* 18 (1992): 163-189; Tom Flanigan, "Everyman or Saint? Doubting Joseph in the Corpus Christi Cycles," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 8 (1996): 19-48.

Testament Eeyore. Compared to the transcendent grace and poise of Mary, Joseph is mired in concerns over his material life and the safety of his family. In the face of divine election, he laments his aching bones; when visited by an angel, he complains that his attempts at a nap are ruined; he acts as an affect alien, his proximity disturbing the serene progression towards the birth of Christ. This profound concern and exhaustion are both alienating and relatable, and thus Joseph was equally revered and reviled in different points of medieval history. York's portrayal of Joseph exacerbates this portrayal of "invited irreverent familiarity" and centralizes his exhaustion, not just as a comedic sidebar but as an encompassing character trait.[83] Joseph feels tired, as he reports many times over his appearance in the two pageants, but his exhaustion also becomes a reigning affect of these plays, effecting more than just his singular character. Joseph's exhaustion dilates and slows the tempo of the pageants, forcing the audience to reckon with the precarity and vulnerability of his body even as they laugh at him. Reading Joseph's surprising pathos along with his comedy, I argue that Joseph's heel-dragging, his stubborn refusal of transcendent joy, is itself a form of quiet resistance, providing Joseph a mode of protesting his own divine election without being heretical or issuing a direct refusal.

Joseph's appearance in the Gospels are limited— while he appears marginally in accounts of the Nativity, the Purification of Mary in the Temple, the Flight into Egypt and the Finding of Jesus in the Temple, Joseph's initial ethical struggle about Mary's pregnancy is really the only time we are given insight into his character. In Matthew 1:18, Joseph is confronted with Mary's mysterious pregnancy before his angelic visitation. Joseph is portrayed as just, since he plans to put Mary away secretly rather than exposing her to death, and apparently pious, since he immediately acquiesces to his dream angelic vision.[84] English biblical drama significantly

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[83] Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 22.
[84] Matthew 1:18-25.

expands this moment of ethical wrangling and confrontation, re-imagining Joseph's doubt and

confusion into the kind of domestic comedy popular in medieval fabliaux. Specifically, these

plays reference the comic trope of the mal mariée, the young woman who marries and older man

and inevitably cheats on him.[85] The most famous of these mal mariée fabliaux in English,

Chaucer's "Merchant's Tale," chronicles a May-December marriage between the aptly-named

Januarie and May, which ultimately results in arboreal adultery between May and Januarie's

young page Damian. Joseph and Mary pageants are both source texts and remixes of these

fabliaux: Joseph, an old and impotent man, learns that his young fiancée Mary is pregnant and

laments that he has been deceived. The added twist, of course, is that Mary is the recipient of the

Incarnation rather than an adulteress; in the words of Rosemary Woolf, "the fabliau world exists

only in Joseph's imagination, while Mary still lives in the spotless and serene world of the

Annunciation." [86] In the N-Town pageant, Joseph's long diatribe at Mary's pregnant stomach

provides a comedic dilation of this misunderstanding: "thy wombe is gret; it gynnyth to ryse!/

Than has thu begownne a synful gyse!"(30-31).[87] This version of Joseph is eager to use the law

to his own ends, threatening Mary that "to the busshop, I wole it telle/That he, the law, may here

do,/ With stonys her to qwelle!" (95-97).

In contrast, the York Joseph in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* is still comically obtuse and

often misogynistic, but is also anxious and scared.[88] After recounting the tale of his forced

marriage Joseph is wary of the equally dangerous choice he must make between outing Mary as

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[85] For Joseph as fabliau character, see Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 170-174; Vasvari, 163-169.

[86] Woolf, 173.

[87] "Joseph's Doubt," *The N- Town Plays* ed. Douglas Sugano (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publication, 2007).

[88] Indeed, Joseph's blend of self-delusional comedy and wretchedness lives on best in Shakespeare's Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, whose comically obtuse ridiculousness is complicated by the very real mental and physical anguish that he endures.

an adulteress, or claiming responsibility for her pre-wedlock child. In his opening monologue, Joseph worries that "the lawe standis harde agayns me/ To dede I mon be broght" (13.49-50), a stark contrast to the N-Town Joseph, who feels confident that the law is on his side and instead considers submitting Mary to stoning. When he coaxes Mary to tell him the truth, the York Joseph confides in her that "I drede the law als wele as thou," (13.200) and internally considers leaving town in case "my liff . . . I shuld tyne" (13.58).

In addition to this specific legal fear, Joseph is more generally beset by the exhaustion of old age:

Nowe, Lorde, how lange sall I lede this liff?
My banes er hevy als lede
And may noght stande in stede
Als kende it is full ryfe.
Now, Lorde, thou me wisse and rede,
Or sone me dryve to dede,
Thou may best stynte this striffe (13.15-20).

Joseph's catalog of senior ailments brings realistic and empathetic detail to his situation; rather than using his frailty as physical comedy, the York Joseph draws attention to the physicality of his own role. Both Joseph the character and the actor playing him has daunting physical challenges ahead of them; Joseph spends much of his time in the early pageants riding or leading an ass, packing, or collecting wood, and the actors performing the role labored for many hours while traveling across the cityscape. This initial reminder of Joseph's physical limitations might also bring pathos to the physical comedy of Joseph's cranky infirmity.

Joseph's extended laments about his decrepitude were largely based on verse complaints in the voices of old men current at the time, verses that emphasized the bleak comedies as well as quiet tragedies of old age.[89] One fourteenth-century complaint from MS Harley 913 notes:

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[89] George C. Taylor, "The Relation of the English Corpus Christi Play to the Middle English Religious Lyric" *Modern Philology* 5, No. 1 (July 1907):1-38.

min hed is hoare and all-for-fare
I-hewid as a grei mare
 mi body wexit lewe
When I bihold on mi scheenen
Min dimmin al for-dwynen
Mi frendis waxeth fewe.[90]

While the same complaint revels in comically alliterative lists of decrepitude— "Now I pirtle, I poste, I poute/I snurpe, I snobbe, I sneipe on snoute" — it also asks it audience to "biholde" the speaker's' body along with him, to imagine and empathize with the waxing of both strength and living companions.[91] So while Joseph's infirmity is often framed as a metaphor for the postlapsarian status of man, his laments likely also aroused empathy by those who also felt their bones were "hevy als lede."[92] When the speaker of the complaint "bihold[s]" his body, this process of beholding that is likewise solicited from the readers, or from a York audience in Joseph's pageants, is different from the command from a crucified Christ to "Byholdes Myn heede, Myn handis, and My feete."

As a further reminder of the exhaustive toll of his work, Joseph constantly attempts to rest throughout *Joseph's Trouble about Mary*. Wandering outdoors, Joseph seeks to "slepid my fille/Myn hert so hevy is," and when visited by an angel immediately responds "A, i am ful werie, lefe, late me slepe" (13.248). Joseph's sleep in Matthew 1:18 is driven by the narrative— the angel who counsels him on Mary's pregnancy comes to him in a dream. All other English cycle drama adheres to this Biblical detail; Joseph sleeps while receiving his angelic visitor. However, the York Joseph receives his angel while awake; indeed, the angel is preventing him from sleeping, rather than waiting for him to fall asleep. Joseph's sleepiness, then, isn't a narrative vehicle: it simply emphasizes his physical precarity and the burden of his work in the

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[90] MS Harley 913 fol. 54 v.O, cited in Taylor, "The Relation of the English Corpus Christi Play," 23.
[91] Ibid, 23.
[92] For Joseph as post-lapsarian man, see Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 80.

pageants depicting the gestation and birth of Christ. "Now es þis a farly fare," he snaps at Gabriel, "For to be chached bathe here and þare/ and nowhere may have rest" (13.253-254).

The idea of a grumbling Joseph is not unique to the York Corpus Christi plays. The pageant builds on a long tradition in biblical art to portray Joseph as human accessory or awkward fourth wheel to the trinitarian family of Mary, Jesus and God.[93] Ruth Mellinkoff has demonstrated the "rich diversity of opinion" in Joseph's depiction of western late medieval art demonstrates, noting that images of Nativity and the visitation of the Magi often show Joseph hovering with ambivalence in the margin or in a "back seat" location.[94] In depictions of the Nativity, Joseph is shown sitting in the corner or looking away from the manger, wither sleeping, drinking, or making anxious gestures.[95] In depictions of the visitation of the Magi, Joseph is often sweeping or tending the animals as Mary converses with the Magi, relegated to little more than the domestic help of the Nativity.[96] All of these portrayals mark Joseph as apart from Mary and Jesus, unable to share Mary's transcendent joy in the birth of Christ. This elision demonstrates Joseph's association with the anti-Semitic tropes of the 'Old Law'— his turning away from the Nativity aligns him with Synagoga, the manifestation of the bypassed Jewish Church, which is often depicted blindfolded or backwards-facing.[97] Joseph "rejects and is rejected" in turn; his exclusion from the center of the Nativity denotes his difference from Mary and Christ, both manifestations of the New Law.[98] Woolf's insight about Joseph and Mary living in different genres or imaginative "worlds" here seems literal; Mary and Joseph, in this

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[93] Dzon, "Joseph and the Amazing Christ-Child," 155
[94] Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 79.
[95] See Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art* (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), 87.
[96] Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 223-4. Vasvari likewise reads the Mérode Tryptic (c.1425-28), in which Joseph is portrayed marginally making mousetraps, as an image actively in conversation with medieval drama; "Joseph on the Margin,"163-189.
[97] Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, 222.
[98] Ibid. 227.

interpretation, live in a parallel plot, but Joseph's affective alienation exiles him into a different Testament. Indeed, Joseph's elision with anti-Semitic tropes might limit the extent to which audiences of biblical drama could or would feel empathy for him.

However, which acknowledging the misogynistic and anti-Semitic legacy behind Joseph's character, I argue for a slightly more optimistic reading of him in the York Corpus Christi Plays Joseph's exhaustion and anxiety in his pageants work to center him rather than marginalize him; by disrupting the flow towards the Nativity, Joseph carves time for himself.[99] Joseph demonstrates and complains about the work of being the earthly patriarch of the Holy Family, complaint that is partially aimed at earthly antagonists like Herod who threaten his life, but also at the divine authority that has presented him with this role without his consent. Much like the dilation of the *Second Shepherds Play* that gives more stage time to the socio-economic plight of the shepherds, *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* dilates the time that Joseph remains in the dark about Mary's pregnancy, stretching out and meditating on his anguish and despair in a way that allows for his anguish to become pathetic in addition to funny.

Indeed, Beadle notes that the "painful length" of Joseph's lament and depression might puncture the comedic possibility of the pageant; his repeated cries of "I am beguiled" create a rhythm of mourning that extends Joseph's sorrow.[100] Joseph demands to know the father of the child no less than eleven times, and Mary's calm equivocation seems calculated to keep Joseph

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[99] This centering might be part of the general warming toward Joseph in the fifteenth century, an embrace of his human fallibility as relatable rather than contemptible. In addition to the feast day gifted to him by the efforts of Jean Gerson at the Council of Constance, Joseph was gifted another feast day on May 1, titled "Joseph The Worker." This "gallant but clumsy" title is fitting— Joseph is honored for both his role in the holy family and his literal work. Interestingly, Joseph's rise in popularity included a physical makeover during the counter-reformation; Joannus Molanus argued that all references to Joseph's age were extrabiblical, and so began to portray Joseph as a young and virile worker; Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex : The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, (New York: Knopf, 1976), 188-189. When arguing for his feast day, Jean Gerson made a similar argument, noting that Joseph must have been young and beautiful in order to be a more fitting partner for Mary; Dzon, "Joseph and the Amazing Christ Child," 156; Vasvari, 169.
[100] Beadle, *The York Plays* vol.2, 91.

in bewildered grief for the maximum amount of time possible.[101] There are 64 lines between

Joseph's first question, "Whose is the childe thou arte withall?" (13.154) and Mary's first details

about her divine pregnancy; Mary speaks only 14 of those lines. Between her cryptic answers to

Joseph's repeated questions— "Sir, it is youres and Goddis will" (13.168) she says once, and

"None but youreselfe" (13.178) — Joseph journeys on confused and wildly gesturing

monologues. He comes back again and again to the work his body has and has not performed.

"Thou wate als wele as I, "he says to Mary, "That we two same flesshly/Wroght never swilk

werkis with ill" (13.171-174). Drawing the audience attention to the distance in age between

himself and Mary, Joseph later argues that even if he wanted to, he would not be able to do the

conjugal "werkis" necessary to impregnate her: "Thase games fra me are gane" (13.195-196).

Joseph's repeated insistence on his inability to perform "flesshly" work only draws attention to

the physical, emotional and verbal work that the actor must perform within the pageant, set as

frenetic and overwrought against a serene Mary who remains "still as stane" for most the

pageant. Indeed, the confrontation between the two underscores Mary's serene immunity from

the burdens of work (literally, of course, in the Nativity, when she feels no pain during labor) and

Joseph's sharply felt, exhaustive sense of work.

In the *Flight Into Egypt*, Joseph reveals to Mary his knowledge about Herod's plot to kill

Jesus while simultaneously complaining about his duties of packing and carrying all of their

household goods: "But God it wote I muste care for all,/For bed and bak/And alle the pakke/That

nedis unto us" (18.164-167). The figurative burden of the knowledge of danger and persecution,

and the literal burden of "bed and bak," combine together to demonstrate Joseph's exhaustion

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[101] Flannigan labels this sequence as a "brutal interrogation" as part of his characterization of the York Joseph as particularly obsessive, but I argue that Joseph's frustration is far more pathetic and desolate than "obsessive" or "sadistic." "Everyman or Saint?" 33.

and exasperation as a tactic to make visible the systems of work necessary to ensure Jesus'

survival, work that is both vitally important and extremely quotidian. As King points out, the

aural overlap between playing spaces in York meant that audiences could likely hear Herod's

raging and the mother's cries from the subsequent *The Slaughter of the Innocents*, coloring

Joseph's complaint as both comically petty and undergirded by serious fear and anxiety.[102] It

isn't until the very end of the *Flight Into Egypt* that Joseph is suddenly and miraculously 'cured';

he arises with sudden vigor, nothing that "Are was I wayke, nowe am I wight/ My lymes to

welde ay at my wille" and bursts into divine praise (18.219-220). This sudden and extrabiblical

physical invigoration might serve certain dramaturgical needs (i.e. Joseph and Mary need to

continue on faster) but this final coda also silences Joseph's complaint, rewarding his loyalty and

work with sudden energy; he becomes a serene divine servant, no longer an affect alien within

the pageants of the Corpus Christi plays. While this final 'cure' frames Joseph's physical and

mental struggles with his work as test he has passed, Joseph's intractable despondency and

exhaustion still reign over most of his pageants as a governing affect.

Thus, while Joseph is not a marginal character in the York Corpus Christi plays or

medieval drama in general, he does share a key trait with most of the other marginal characters in

this chapter: his physical or mental suffering is assumed to be inconsequential or an object of

humor to the plot as a whole. By tracing Joseph's more balanced persona and his sustained

exhaustion in the York *Joseph's Troubles about Mary* and *The Flight Into Egypt*, this chapter

imagines what it might be like to instead imagine Joseph as an object of the audience's

compassion and recognition, a body temporarily worthy of being "beheld," if in a very different

way than a suffering Christ. While Joseph is alienated from a large portion of his pageants, often

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[102] King, "Seeing and Hearing," 157.

by his alliance to anti-Semitic stereotypes or fabliaux fools, his exhausted labor and persecution by Herod might also serve to ally him to the audience, their empathy for him also functioning as a form of resistance against Herod.

The Slaughter of the Innocents **and Disruptive Lament**

Joseph's mode of resistance in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary* and *The Flight Into Egypt* is not merely bathetic; his tiredness and lack of transcendent joy frame exhaustion as a critical act, his status as an affect alien bringing visibility to his quotidian or undervalued work. In contrast, the two mothers who attempt to save their sons against Herod's soldiers in *The Slaughter of the Innocent*s actively disrupt the narrative flow of their pageant; not only do they force the soldiers to confront the products of their violence, but they introduce a fractured sense of time to the pageant, one that suspends the death of their children. While their mourning allies them with Mary, who will mourn her own son at the foot of the cross, these mothers of Bethlehem also frame their mourning as singular rather than collective grief, as their dead children serve no transcendental purpose. Beholding these mothers and their infants allows the audiences of York to resist Herod and his violent regime in a different way: by engaging in the performance with empathy rather than derision.

Slaughter of the Innocents pageants within English biblical drama often center the conflict between the mothers of Jerusalem and soldiers of Herod, and the mothers' defense and lament ranges between poignant tragedy and dark comedy. Indeed, the zealous defense mounted by these mothers becomes an important cultural touchstone.[103] In *Henry V,* Henry threatens the residents of Harfleur by conjuring images of slaughtered children, vowing to make "mad mothers

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[103] Rosemary Woolf provides an overview of the differences and consistencies between these performances in *The English Mystery Plays*, 205-209.

with their howls confus'd/do break the clouds, as did the wives of Jewry/at Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen" (3.4.39-41).[104] The Digby, Chester, Coventry and Towneley pageants all feature a ludic battle between soldiers and mothers, in which the mothers wield pot-ladles or distaffs, and the two sides exchange explicit insults and jokes. These unruly mothers have been critically framed as misogynist stereotypes,[105] victims of class-based violence,[106] or impressive heroes.[107] However, the York *Slaughter of the Innocents* eschews what Nicole Nolan Sidhu labels as obscene comedy in favor of "pathos," or at least a more subdued confrontation.[108] The soldiers are not gleeful sadists, but grimly horrifying inversions of English knights, "curtayse and hende" (19.163). These soldiers approach their task with efficiency rather than amusement.

The York mothers disrupt that efficiency; while they are unable to prevent the slaughter of their children, they struggle to restrain the soldiers and confront them with their actions as they attempt to leave. While the Bethlehem-centered action of the pageant is fairly straightforward— the soldiers arrive, kill the children, engage with the mothers and leave— mapping the plot through dialogue alone is difficult. The temporal illogic of this scene derives from the statements of Mothers 1 and 2, whose recognition of their dead or dying children fractures the action into snapshots of grief and denial that don't map onto the chronological

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[104] William Shakespeare, "Henry V" in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third edition. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016). Cited in Woolf, 208.

[105] Jane Tolmie, "Spinning Women and Manly Soldiers: Grief and Game in the English Massacre Plays," in *Laments for the Lost in Medieval Literature*, ed. Jane Tolmie and M.J. Toswell (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 283–98.

[106] Nicole Nolan Sidhu, *Indecent Exposure: Gender, Politics, and Obscene Comedy in Middle English Literature* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 219-221. Sidhu reads the darkly comic violence of these pageants along class in addition to gender lines; she argues that the play offers a critique of upper-class violence on vulnerable bodies, while simultaneously offering the "intoxicating spectacle of middle-rank people beating feudal authorities": *Indecent Exposure*, 200.

[107] Denise Ryan, "Womanly Weaponry: Language and Power in the Chester 'Slaughter of the Innocents,'" *Studies in Philology* 98, no. 1 (2001): 76–92. Ryan argues that the Chester women "repeatedly exploit their female identity through their linguistic choices and their application of the discourse of slander, playing for effect on culturally recognized codes prescribes appropriate male behavior towards women": "Womanly Weaponry," 77.

[108] Sidhu, n.98

action onstage. Mother 1 first cries "Owte on yow theves, I crye!/ Ye slee my semely sone,"

seemingly naming the action as it happens (19.194-195). However, several lines later she then

claims "To dye I have no drede /I do thee wele to witte /To save my sone so dere" (19.204-206).

At this point, the mother's child is already dead, so her declaration that she would be willing to

die to protect him projects a future action that has no object. The struggle between the mothers

and the soldiers contains laments and epithets that vary wildly in tenses: the children are dead,

then they are about to die, then they have been dead all along.

This style of narration might be partially motivated by what King has termed the "tell-

and-show" performance style of the York Corpus Christi plays.[109] This format of speaking an

event before it might be physically acted onstage helps the plays "enact the kind of relationship

between language and realization which is fundamental to Christian doctrine," but also

telegraphs action that might not be wholly visible to the audience.[110] Using *The Fall of the*

Angels as a key example, King explains how "tell-and-show action" might serve as both a

practical dramaturgical move and a tool of audience engagement:

> the spoken word would not only lead the action, but the primacy of telling over showing
> could be used to conscious theatrical effect. The implication is that the audience is given
> time to absorb what has happened to the fallen angel intellectually, drawing on referents
> in their own experience and knowledge which can then be reinforced by the shock
> appearance of the disfigured devil, giving double impact to a single event.[111]

The Slaughter of the Innocents likewise stages a shocking event, a series of murders rather than a

fall, that gives time for the audience to behold both the bodies of the dead infants and the anguish

of their mothers. While the audience is "given time to absorb" the horrifying violence, these

disjointed lines, likely emerging between unscripted scenes of physical conflict, also multiply the

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[109] King, "Seeing and Hearing," 155-6.
[110] Ibid, 156.
[111] Ibid, 256.

moments of impact. The audience might see the children speared in one moment and hear their death announced in another; while only two infants exist onstage, this sense of disjointedness gestures towards the hundreds of infants that this scene represents.

The mothers of Bethlehem also dilate and fracture the linearity of the pageant by seemingly stepping outside of their own historical time. In her final speaking line, Mother 2 turns directly to address the audience: "And certis, ther nott is noght/ The same that thei have soughte /Schall thei nevere come till" (19.231-233). The work of these soldiers, their "nott," is in vain, for Jesus, the child that have "soughte," is already out of their grasp. In this final line, Mother 2 turns from active participant in the scene to a kind of omniscient narrator, someone who both knows who Jesus is, where he is (out of Bethlehem), and why the soldiers are looking for him. There is no logical explanation for Mother 1's knowledge, since the soldiers hardly announce Herod's motives mid-slaughter, nor are these women marked as personal friends or allies of Mary and Joseph. Yet, Mother 2's ability to step outside of the linearity of her own narrative brings forward the polysemous time of the York pageants to tragic affect; as Tolmie notes, "the soldiers of Herod killed the innocents in the biblical past; in the medieval performative present they kill them freshly/again in front of the believing audience of a particular town; that audience knows that the play will be performed again in the future."[112] The momentarily omniscient narration of Mother 2 figures her as one who has had to relive this moment myriad times, a "mold that can be filled and re-filled by different human agents."[113]

The admission of Mother 2 that "ther nott is noght" (19.321) also underscores the total senselessness of these mothers' loss; their children died for no discernible reason, to advance no agenda or change. Yet, the mothers continue to resist the soldiers after their children have

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[112] Tolmie, "Spinning Women and Manly Soldiers," 285.
[113] Aronson-Lehavi, *Street Scenes*, 95.

already been killed. Herod's soldiers refer to their desire for speed and efficiency; Soldier 2 orders one mother to "lay fro thee faste" and give up her child quickly, while Solder 1 later calls to "wende we us hense in hye," attempting to beat a hasty exit (19.198, 225). The mothers foil these desires for haste, continuing to physically confront the soldiers after the death of their children. Indeed, the soldier's commands for the women to cease their fighting or die, and their characterization of them as "woode" and "wroth," is marked by astonishment and discomfort (19.221,223). While the mothers occasionally insult the soldiers, their attempts to block their retreat are paired with more generalized lament of their position as women and mothers. "Was nevere so wofull a wyffe/Ne halffe so wille of wone," says Mother 1, while Mother 2 grieves that "we wer wroughte/In worlde women to be" (19.216-217, 226-227). While the soldiers no longer respond directly to the mothers, they are nonetheless still in the same space, possibly still physically grappling with them until Soldier 1's final command to "go we to the king" (19.234). The mother's physical resistance, it seems, is framed less as an overt attack on the soldiers and more as a means of holding them there, forcing them to listen to their sorrow and sense of grief. While their complaint is far more tragic and less petty than Joseph's, these mothers also find themselves to be affect aliens within Bethlehem, surrounded only by male enforcers who see their grief as hysterical, the "wrast and wrang" of overwrought women (19.240).[114]

The lament of the Bethlehem mothers for their "semely son[s]" unites them across pageants with Mary, while she holds Jesus in *The Flight to Egypt* but also while she later laments the death of her son on the cross: "Allas, that I schulde see this sight/Of my Sone so semely to see/Allas, that this blossome so bright/Untrewly is tugged to this tree (36.135-138). Mary's

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[114] The image of female protest as the "wraste and wrying" of hands frames this type of resistance as aggressive (the women struggle or "wrast" with the soldiers) but also pointless or empty. For a brief overview of wringing of hands in medieval drama, see Clifford Davidson, "Gesture in Medieval British Drama" *Gesture in Medieval Drama and Art* ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Press, 2001), 82.

repeated "allas" in this lament acts as a kind of metronomic refrain, the metaphor of her son as a "blossome so bright" and the cross as a "tree" moving away from the brutal physical reality of the performed crucifixion. While the lament of the mothers in *The Slaughter of the Innocents* is fragmented and disjointed, both in time and among multiple speakers, Mary is able to behold her son, giving lyrical expression to her feelings, and be beheld in turn by the audience.

But just as the mothers of Bethlehem are rebuked by Herod's soldiers, who frame their grief as insanity, Mary's lament is minimized by her own son. "Do wey thy wepyng," Jesus instructs his mother from the cross, "for me may thou nothing amende" (36.144-145). Jesus and Mary trade these expressions of disconsolation and comfort, as Mary refuses to "steed or stere" or stabilize and control her voice (36.170). McNamer has framed this kind of Marian lament as part of a "dissenting vernacular ethic," in which expressions maternal grief are not simply "nostalgic recollections," but a form of anti-war protest, presenting death "as the violent undoing of maternal labor."[115] Mary and the mothers of Bethlehem wield their disconsolation as protest, despite attempts to silence or marginalize that work.

However, while Jesus attempts to silence Mary's mourning, he does so by explaining the significance of the Crucifixion. "For mankind my body I bende," he argues, drawing the audience into beholding his dying body: "Thus, man, all thi misse for te mende/ on me for to looke lette thou nought" (36.147,184-5). In contrast, the dead bodies of the Bethlehem infants are tossed aside as "nott" by Herod himself (36.268). As a result, the Bethlehem mothers must find other avenues of centering their loss. Claire Sponsler argues that the brutalization and control of children's bodies in Slaughter pageants also speak to a concern over control of commodities: children were also "agents of economic well-being."[116] The York mothers' accusations of theft in

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[115] McNamer, 162.
[116] Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, 144.

addition to murder— Mother 1 refers to the soldiers as "theves"(19.194)— might serve as a "clever tactical move" to underscore the seriousness of their crimes, given that crimes against property were dealt with much more harshly than crimes against people.[117] While I don't totally agree with Sponsler, the sense of deprivation that these mothers express might work as a method of claiming and protecting their own grief. These children stand as replacements for an infant Jesus, and the maternal grief that they provoke foreshadows Mary's grief at the Crucifixion. Given the narrative omniscience of Mother 2, her lament that "I hadde but hym allone" (19.214) may serve as a method of marking her son as proper to her; instead of cueing a collective grief that looks forward to Christ, these mothers of Bethlehem claim a singular, personal grief.

Thus, both Mary and the mothers of Bethlehem are united in a maternal grief that is cast as unproductive, either in method or in object. Mary's grief is minimized by her son, but her maternal compassion also helps frame the transcendent sacrifice of the Crucifixion while acting as a form of resistance against Herod. The mothers of Bethlehem refuse to mourn their sons as proxies for Christ, instead asking the audience to behold their singular grief that has no transcendent sacrifice behind it. The physical and verbal resistance that these mothers offer Herod's soldiers helps briefly center their experiences, drawing attention to their precarity and loss. However, in beholding their bodies, and the bodies of their children, the audiences of York can join these mothers in their resistance against Herod and his regime. While the audience's own physical and verbal abuse of Herod and his avatars might be comic, even joyous, their empathetic beholding in this pageant serves as a different form of engaged resistance.

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[117] Ibid, 144.

Treason and Will in *The Remorse of Judas*, *The Slaughter of the Innocents*, and *Christ Before Pilate 2: The Judgement*

The mothers' categorization of their sons' murders as 'theft' — underscored perhaps by the theatrical portrayal of their children as material objects— also demonstrates the purpose of many of these minor characters in religious theater: they are here to provide various materials necessary to tell the story of divine history. The donkey that Jesus rode into Bethlehem didn't appear from the ether; his disciples had to borrow it in *The Entry into Jerusalem*, which serves as an opportunity for them to interact with a gatekeeper who represents the civic government of 'Jerusalem,' here cast as contemporary York.[118] And while the negotiation between this gatekeeper and Philip "provides an occasion for the ideal community to demonstrate its mechanism for sound rule by negotiation," the episode between Pilate, Caiaphas, Anna, and the freeman who owns Calvary demonstrates a less ideal community, one rife with systemic abuse.[119] Pilate, Caiaphas and Anna cheat this freeman out of his land, buying property that he only meant to mortgage. These two minor characters, introduced through their possession of essential biblical material, highlight the difference between the civic harmony and tyranny.[120] However, the freeman also models quiet resistance by accusing the three of treason against him, his despondency offering a different mode through which to perceive Pilate's abuse of power.

As Margaret Aziza Pappano notes, given the York Corpus Christi play's investment in artisanal production, there are surprisingly few scenes of selling or buying; those that occur are rooted in economic conflict, such as Judas' selling of Jesus and his subsequent attempts to buy

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[118] Ruth Nisse reads this scene as presenting an ideal civic government in "Staged Interpretations: Civic Rhetoric and Lollard Politics in the York Plays," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28, no.2 (1998): 437-439.
[119] Ibid, 438.
[120] This is where my argument most clearly intersects with the "artisanal ideology" of the York play; while scholars have focused on the material objects and actions of manufacture that serve as crucial props of divine history, I'm more interested in the marginal characters required to make these objects appear.

him back in the *The Remorse of Judas*.[121] Directly after Judas' failed attempts, the pageant stages

another scene of sale, one that is likewise framed as mired in conflict and predation. Pilate

proposes to use the money that Judas returns out of guilt to buy a plot of land in which to bury

pilgrims, palmers, and executed men, "otere false felons that we forfare" (32.337). This plot of

land, Calvary, will become, in Pilate's terms, the "Field of Blood" and the place where Christ is

crucified. Yet while in other biblical drama, Calvary is fairly bought, in the York *Remorse of*

Judas the high priests scam the freeman out of land that he only wishes to mortgage.[122] This man

is dubbed "Arminger" in the script, which may denote that he is a man-at-arms or squire. He

repeats twice that "I wolle it wedde sette, but not for to selle you,"(32.347,352) and asks for

thirty pennies, the exact amount that Pilate, Caiaphas and Anna are trying to offload from their

payment to Judas. When the three reveal to the Arminger that they have no intention of

returning the title of the land to him, the Arminger lashes out at this misuse of their power:

> Now sorowe on such socoure as I have soght,
> For all my tresoure thurgh tresoune I tyne.
> I tyne it untrewly by tresoune,
> Therfore nowe my way will I wende,
> For ye do me no right nor no resoune
> I betake you all to the fende (32.362-367).

The Arminger's characterization of his property as "tresoure" underscores the close ties between

land ownership and personal wealth in fifteenth-century England, but his laments of precarity

must have struck a particular cord in economically depressed late fifteenth-century York. The

number of proclamations concerning vagrants in the York House Books grew exponentially

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[121] Margaret Aziza Pappano, "Judas in York: Masters and Servants in Late Medieval Cycle Drama" *Exemplaria* 14, no.2 (2002): 319.

[122] The sale of Calvary also occurs in the Cornish Ordinalia, but it is a straightforward sale, not a dishonest one in which he is cheated; Beadle, *The York Plays* vol.2, n.347.

between 1480 and 1490. During the periods of civil unrest at the beginning of his rule, Henry moved to criminalize homelessness, conflating it with potential political subversiveness. In 1488, he ordered a search for "suspicious persons" in York, ordering that vagabonds, "idel people," beggars and other vaguely "suspect persons" be arrested and tried in local courts.[123] While the Arminger is not explicitly homeless, he has lost both his land and whatever much larger value he might have acquired by selling it in a legitimate transaction.

The Arminger's sense of helplessness— "My way I will wende" is one of the more genuinely pitiful stage exits in the cycle— and his final curse on Pilate demonstrate the lack of official recourse available to him. However, he does explicitly level the change of treason at Pilate and Caiaphas twice. Throughout the cycle, the charge of treason is most frequently wielded by Pilate and his fellow tyrants— this is the only instance in which they themselves are accused of treason. As I addressed earlier in the chapter, Pilate, Herod, and their avatars accuse nearly every other living being in the York Corpus Christi plays of treason, which certainly dilutes the term's confrontational power. However, the Arminger is the only character within the York plays who clearly accuses those in institutional power of treasonous actions. Nothing is made from this treason accusation; Pilate, Caiaphas, and Anna don't respond to the Arminger in their haste to plot the crucifixion, and the Arminger doesn't announce his intention to bring these charges to any sort of alternate legal or moral authority. The charge of treason encompassed a number of offenses, though none included a sense of reciprocity; in other words, a king or religious leader could not be accused of committing treason in dereliction of duty to their subordinates. The only legible definition of 'treason' that the Arminger could be using is 'treason'

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[123] Attreed, *The York House Books*, 394.

as forgery, or "Payment in Deceit of our said Lord the King and of his People."[124] The coins that Pilate, Caiaphas, and Anna are so eager to get rid of are those used in the betrayal of Christ. In the opening of the pageant, Judas and the three men throw the bag of coins around like a game of hot potato; in his remorse, Judas refuses to keep the money, while Pilate, Caiaphas, and Anna insist that Judas keep it, as they claim they paid Judas fairly for his betrayal. When Judas leaves, Pilate admits that he considers the money as "attainted" as Judas himself, and doesn't want it in his treasury: "Sir, it schall nought combre us, nor come in oure corbonan"(32.326). The purchase of Calvary both provides Pilate with his "field of blood" but also passes off pennies that are, by a flexible definition, 'bad currency'; they will "combre" or encumber Pilate's possession, destroying rather than enriching him. While the Arminger seems more concerned about the loss of his property than the currency itself, he may also be demonstrating the same legal tactics as the mothers who mourn their children's murder as theft: framing crimes through a more legally-efficient lens. More broadly, the Arminger's accusation, which has little legal precedent and no real support, provides a fruitless but poignant mode of calling out institutional abuse.

Earlier in this chapter, I traced how audiences might playfully subvert Herod during his bombastic raging; both the Arminger and Nuncius, Herod's young and impudent messenger, serve to demonstrate the gap between the audience's freedom from embodied consequences and their own precarity. Within the *Slaughter of the Innocents* pageant, Herod confronts a young messenger tasked with delivering news about the Magi visiting Jesus. This young messenger, called "boy" by Herod and "Nuncius" in the playtext, appears twice in the arc that begins with *Herod* /*The Magi* and ends with the *Slaughter of the Innocents*. Within these pageants, Nuncius acts as an interlocutor with Herod, bringing news of events that the audience has witnessed

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[124] Edward III, Statute 5 (1352) in *Statutes of the Realm* ed. A. Luders (London, Record Commission, 1810-28), 319-20, cited in Leitch, 21.

firsthand. As Herod is flattered by his counselors and levies orders on his soldiers, this messenger is the sole character that undercuts Herod in his own court by consistently reaffirming the truth of unpleasant news in the face of abuse, threats, and accusations of treason. While Nuncius is not as explicitly rebellious as similar youthful servants in biblical drama, his refusal to alter his statements or revere Herod is elevated to treasonous behavior by the king's tyrannical petulance. His irreverent impudence does not mark him as particularly scared, but his position across from Bethlehem's grieving mothers reminds the audience of the stakes of resisting Herod.

Nuncius' youth and his casual irreverence place him with a certain character type in biblical drama— the impertinent young servant of a heretical or abusive master, one whose disdain of decorum is condoned or even celebrated because of the iniquity of the master. Scott also traces this type in Malaysian culture through "mouse deer" tales, where the wily mouse serves as "a stereotypical trickster . . . a small and weak but agile creature who survives and triumphs over far more powerful beasts by his wits, his deceit and his cunning."[125] This type can be seen in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, in which a heathen priest in Marseilles promises to whip his mischievous young servant "till thy ars shall belle," while the young boy invites his master to "kiss my grene"(1178-1180)[126] Likewise, the Towneley *Mactacio Abel*, Cain is saddled with an extrabiblical and impudent servant, Pikehearns. When Cain strikes Pikehearns, saying "That shall bi thi fals chekys," Pikehearns immediately strikes him back, reasoning that "Yai, with the same mesure and weght/ That I boro will I qwite."[127] These young servants rebel comically and within acceptable venues— their masters, 'heathens' or divinely cursed murderers, deserve this subversion of social order. If the rebellious servant or 'trickster' figure serves as "a popular

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[125] Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 300.
[126] "Mary Magdalene" in David M. Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975).
[127] "The Killing of Abel" in David M. Bevington, *Medieval Drama*.

metaphor for the survival skills of the peasantry," then these wily servants tactically undercut their masters by performing their labor badly or shirking their duty, all while escaping any serious consequences of their masters' rage.[128]

A version of Nuncius first appears in the *Herod/The Magi* pageant, interrupting Herod's meeting with his advisors to share news of the coming of the Magi.[129] Herod immediately responds angrily, threatening Nuncius with violence: "What, false harlott, liste Þee flight? /Go betis yone boy and dyngis hym downe" (16.132-3). Nuncius is only saved by the intervention of one of the soldiers, who cautions his king about shooting the messenger: "Lorde, messengeres shulde no man wyte" (16.134). The bloodless, Punch-and-Judy-style violence that usually occurs around 'mischievous servant' figures shifts in this pageant, changed by Herod's sovereign power. Herod does not attempt to smack Nuncius; instead, he calls for his soldiers to beat him or threatens him with execution. Perhaps because of this changed dynamic, Nuncius is certainly less raucous or overtly rebellious than his generic avatars; he makes no bawdy double-entendres, nor does he ever seek to strike Herod in return. Instead, his unswerving firsthand testimony and his lack of reverence for the king is enough to send Herod into a repeated towering rage. In *The Slaughter of the Innocents,* Herod eagerly awaits Nuncius' news about the Magi, and is taken aback when Nuncius immediately subverts his expectations, reporting that the Magi have returned to their own countries after reverencing Christ. Indeed, Herod seems to assume that he is dealing with a more mischievous servant— he warns Nuncius that "Þou burdis to brode,"

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[128] Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 300.
[129] Beadle organizes the two copies of this pageant as facing-page editions. The Masons and the Goldsmiths shared responsibility for the pageant from 1432 onwards, but submitted separate originals. *The York Plays* vol.1, 107-125.

assuming that Nuncius' news is an invented "bourde" or jest, a deliberate tactic to subvert him (19.89).[130]

In this way, Nuncius and Herod's dynamic resembles Mary and Joseph's in *Joseph's Trouble About Mary*; while Herod reaches for possible explanations or alternatives in long-winding monologues, Nuncius repeatedly shuts him down in a single phrase: "Sir, Þere may no botment be," (19.90) or "Nay, lorde, Þat daunce is done" (19.96). Of course, Herod is not anguished or confused like Joseph, but rather enraged: a rage he then turns on Nuncius. When Nuncius refuses to recant his story, Herod threatens to sentence him to death for treason:

> Thou lyes! false traytoure strange,
> Loke nevere thÞou negh me nere.
> Uppon liffe and lymme
> May I Þat faitour fange,
> Full high I schall gar hym hange,
> Both Þee, harlott, and hym (19.125-30).

Designating Nuncius "false," a "trayroure" and "strange" provides a superfluity of treasonous epithets that only calls attention to the uncertainty of what Nuncius has done that constitutes treason. Nuncius does escape, like most 'mischievous servants,' but also creates a precedent for enraging the York Tyrants simply by refusing to alter his statement. Interestingly, Herod groups Jesus and Nuncius together in his threats of execution; Jesus, the "faitour" or imposter, is both judicially and syntactically linked with Nuncius, the rhyming "traytoure." However, unlike Jesus, Nuncius has no interest in martyrdom, and so runs away. In his final moment onstage, Nuncius explicitly turns to the audience to reject these accusations and leave: "I am nott worthy to wyte/Bot fareswele, all the heppe" (19.131-2). This address to the audience certainly allies Nuncis with the audience against Herod: it also marks him, in a way, as an affect alien. Nuncius

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[130] "Bourde (n.) - Middle English Compendium," accessed June 12, 2019, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED5729/track?counter=14&search_id=1123864.

has no interest in the Christological affect or sacrificial logic of the Passion pageants; he is focused on survival, rather than sacrifice.

While Nuncius might not be considered explicitly subversive in the playtext, Roland Reed has described how, in performance, the Messenger's pithy lines and "sassy" attitude might further cast him as a figure of resistance with contemporary resonance.[131] Drawing on his 1999 staging of *The Slaughter of the Innocents* at the University of Toronto festival, Reed recounts how his Nuncius arrived with all the nerve, risky behavior, and water-bottle . . . of a bicycle messenger in city traffic."[132] As Herod moves through overwrought stages of emotion— fear, petulance, anxiety, rage— Nuncius' casual and pithy answers demonstrates his command over the scene, his lack of reverence or perceived exemption from Herod's wrath. In his parting escape, Reed's Nuncius mooned Herod before running back through the audience, with considerable applause at every station. However, Reed is quick to argue that this (quite literal) "cheekiness" is more than "mere low comedy"; it serves as "another act of defiance in the face of illegitimate worldly power."[133]

Even more importantly, Nuncius' interaction with the audience and his contemporary garb cast him as an "anachronistic figure who broke the illusion that there is a safe historical distance separating the spectators from the violent events on stage."[134] While Reed's reading of Nuncius' rebelliousness adheres to his own directorial vision, Nuncius' engagement with the audience does break the wall between the audience, who can safely and playfully jeer at Herod, and those enclosed within the world of the pageant, who suffer the real stakes of his wrath. While Nuncius does not display any sense of fear or pain, his defiance and escape frame him as a

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[131] Reed, "Slaughter of the Innocents," 223-226
[132] Ibid, 225.
[133] Ibid, 225.
[134] Ibid, 225.

minor character threatened by Herod; his precarity might also be beheld by the audience as an alternative form of resistance against Herod.

The final onstage figures who attract accusations of treason and summary execution without intending to are the soldiers who stand at Jesus' trial in *Christ Before Pilate 2: The Judgement*, who drop the banner in seeming deference to Christ even as he is being sentenced as a traitor. While one might argue that this is a quiet loud act of resistance, and an explicit subversion of Pilate's authority, it enters the matrix of quiet resistance in York because the soldiers swear that the banner is dropping on its own accord. Caiaphas and Anna first draw attention to this drooping banner, insisting that Pilate witness and punish these men; "A, ser, saugh ye noght this sight, how that ther schaftes schuke," Caiaphas says, "And thez baneres to this brothell thai bowde all on brede?" (33.168-9). Having confirmed that both Caiaphas and Anna saw this happen, Pilate immediately condemns the soldiers as traitors, saying that "the deuyll mote you draw" (33.175), or that they should properly be drawn and quartered for honoring a "lurdan so lawe" (33.178). The soldiers immediately protest, all testifying to the fact that the banner dropped on its own; as one soldier puts it, "this werke that we haue wrought, it was not oure will" (33.183). These soldiers frame themselves as unwilling accomplices to a resistance object, a banner that recognizes Christ and moves all on its own. When newer, stronger soldiers are brought in to test the banners, the same occurs, though they are likewise threatened with "Perpetuell pyne" and death by drawing (33.243, 256). While the play doesn't script the fate of these two sets of soldiers, the failure of both begins the charges against Jesus as a sorcerer, in addition to a traitor.

As Robert Sturges notes, at no point does Jesus (or anyone else) assign divine power to the banners— they act on their own agency as "mediators that enable a new social

assemblage."[135] The banners mark and demarcate the "hostile onstage audience" from the York audience, separating the crowd that condemns Jesus from the one that celebrates him.[136] However, in performance the bodies of these soldiers cannot be fully assigned with either community— their will and work is much more opaque. Though the bowing of the banner is not included in the stage directions, Caiaphas and Anna spend several lines of dialogue pointing out and framing the failure of the soldiers. "Stand may I nought, so I stare," remarks Caiaphas, turning to Pilate to show him that "silke a sight suld be sene" (33.160,165). When Pilate doesn't see this event, Caiaphas description constantly underscores the visual spectacle of the event: "A, ser, saw ȝe nouȝt Þis sight, how Þat Þer schaftes schuke/ And the baneres to this brotherll Þai bowde all on brede? . . . Ourselfe we it sawe" (33.167-8, 173).

Caiaphas' insistence on the importance of witnessing the bowing of the banner frames the onstage action as particularly important, a theatrical spectacle that Richard Beadle notes would have taken extensive blocking.[137] The three actors playing the soldiers must lower the banner, while acting as if the banner is moving against their own wishes, invisibly struggling to right it— which is exactly what Pilate initially assumes is happening. This episode, which delays Jesus' trial for several hundred lines, focuses far more on the bodies of these two sets of soldiers who must 'test' the banner, than on the banner itself. While Caiaphas and Anna seem immediately preoccupied with the possibility that Jesus is wielding divine power against them, Pilate seems far more concerned that his soldiers are pretending: that they are displacing their own rebellious agency into an inanimate object. Framing resistance as accidental or unwilling serves as a key example of Scott's "everyday resistance," where intention is purposefully hidden or reattributed:

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[135] Robert Stuart Sturges, *The Circulation of Power in Medieval Biblical Drama : Theaters of Authority* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). 40.
[136] Ibid, 40.
[137] Beadle, *The York Plays* vol.2, 297.

"their safety may depend on silence . . . the kind of resistance itself may depend for its effectiveness on the appearance of conformity."[138]

Pilate's perturbation seems to stem from knowledge of these tactics: that the soldiers' intent means far more than their action. While the soldiers vociferously swear their allegiance, the comedy of their plight draws attention to the break between their unwilling action and alienation from the 'good' audience of York and their willing performative action and unification with their fellow citizens. We might contrast these soldiers to those who later work to enact the Crucifixion, drawing the audience into their cruel game of violence while Jesus pleads that "what thai wirke wotte thai nouȝt" (35.261). These soldiers, too, know not what they do, but their unintentional resistance towards Pilate and reverence of Jesus frames the bodies of Pilate's enforcers as figures of recognition and empathy in a much less condemnatory way.

Nuncius, the Arminger, and Pilate's soldiers thus model starkly contemporary tactics of resistance while interacting directly with tyrannical sovereign regimes of the York Corpus Christi plays. While Joseph and the mothers of Bethlehem were either menaced from afar or encountered secondary agents of these regimes, these other minor characters must negotiate their own survival within sovereign spaces that extend treason accusations to the quietest of dissenting actions. As such, characters who don't mean to rebel end up as traitors; Nuncius' general cheekiness and the soldiers' unfortunate encounter with a divine banner frame them as treasonous actors. The Arminger who is cheated out of his own land is the only character of the play to counter with a treason accusation of his own, a kind of legal Hail Mary that more generally registers Pilate's deception as sovereign malfeasance. Within the wildly vacillating framework of treason in these pageants, these minor characters seek to survive while registering

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[138] Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 301.

their own precarity and sense of injustice. While they do not have the same disruptive force as

Joseph or the same pathos as the mothers of Bethlehem, I argue that they too might serve as

bodies to beheld. These characters quietly resist the same tyrants that the audience subverts, and

beholding their minor forms of loss or distress can also serve as a form of audience resistance

against Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas and Anna.

As I've noted previously, this chapter has intentionally read around the Passion sequence,

focusing instead on the marginal characters that serve as stepping stones to Calvary. However, I

want to return briefly to the confrontation between Christ and the audience that I quoted in the

introduction to this chapter.

> Al men Þat walkis by weye or strete,
> Takes tente ȝe schalle no travayle tyne.
> Byholdes Myn heede, Myn handis, and My feete,
> And fully feele nowe, or ȝe fyne (35.253-255).

The work of beholding that Christ commands his audiences to perform is important spiritual

work, one that makes Christ's pain and the physical exertion of Crucifixion worthwhile. Yet, as

Nakley has argued, Christ's interpretation of the crucifixion is challenged by the soldiers who

crucify him, who dismiss their work and his pain as "this unthrifty thing," difficult and painful

"travayle" that they have indeed wasted (35.90). While Christ insists on the "spiritual unity" of

beholding the Crucifixion, the soldiers provide an opposing viewpoint: "what we see is all we

get: temporal suffering with no spiritual truth of salvation, only the obvious pain and

destruction."[139] Their rhetoric resembles that of Herod and his soldiers in the *Slaughter of the*

Innocents, who dismiss thousands of dead infants as "nott" (19.231). These soldiers and their

dismissal imagine Christ as just another body, unworthy of the work and coordination it takes to

enact a crucifixion. While these soldiers are clearly unreliable narrators, they provide a point of

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[139] Nakley, "On the Unruly Power of Pain," 290-1.

view through which Christ *is* a marginal character, whose suffering and death has no greater social or theological significance of any other man they have crucified. As this chapter has sought to show, the Crucifixion also speaks to the moments of quiet pain, fear and anxiety that are dismissed as unproductive within the pageant, just as Christ's torturers dismiss his death as insignificant, wasted work. If the audience's beholding of Christ works against these dismissals of the soldiers, so too can their beholding of these minor characters recognize and empathize with their pain as meaningful, even as they are dismissed.

While theorizing how Christ's crucified body structures audience engagement, we might also consider how Christ's injunction to behold also points backward in the Corpus Christi plays to the other bodies that audiences might have beheld. Rather than foreshadowing or serving as stepping-stools to the Passion, these precarious bodies might serve as alternatives to Christ, figures that do not evoke charity or devotion but instead forms of recognition and empathy. Unlike Christ, these bodies are indeed suspended in their temporal suffering, at least for the recursive performance of their pageants. In the space this opens, the tactics through which these characters deal with their suffering offer affective blueprints of quiet resistance to the various forms of earthly power that threaten them with violence. Some, like Joseph or the mothers of Bethlehem, use their status as affect aliens in their own pageants to carve out time for themselves, using complaint, lament, or physical action to block the linear flow of their narratives. Others, like Arminger and Nuncius, resist by identifying and calling out state abuse of power, or refusing to follow capricious sovereign commands. Still others might resist accidentally or unintentionally, like Pilate's soldiers who are cast into a performance of resistance against their will. If Scott envisions everyday resistance within subaltern populations as discretely operating entities creating an enormous community like "millions of anthozoan

polyps creat[ing], willy-nilly, a coral reef," so too do the minor characters of York create a community while operating in their own pageants, a barrier reef of quiet resistance that lies in and around the playscape of York.[140] If the audiences of York reveled in their subversion and mocking of Herod, as his wild accusations cast them a community of traitors, then these marginal characters serve as opportunities to behold those who are threatened under this same volatile wrath. These minor characters beckon the audience into a community of resistance within the performance of the York Corpus Christi plays, a cross-temporal space of bodies joyfully or quietly working to confront sovereign power.

Considering the audience of York as allied with these minor characters also productively unites two forms of audience engagement in the York Corpus Christi plays; their ludic defiance of York's tyrants and their compassionate beholding of figures like Joseph, the mothers of Bethlehem, the Arminger or Nuncius. Rebelliously holding Herod or Pilate in contempt is crucially linked to this compassionate beholding and the recognition it might have enabled of more quotidian forms of distress alongside of Christ's pain. Theatrical engagement with the York Corpus Christi plays thus becomes resistance in both active subversion and quiet, empathetic feeling.

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[140] Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, xvii.

Chapter 2 : "And for his sake to helpe his neighbor": Tudor Moral Interludes and Neighborhood Surveillance

Halfway through the Towneley *Mactacio Abel,* God warns Cain to cease lashing out at his brother for his failed offering, counseling him that "if thou tend right, thou getts thye mede" (294).[141] Cain is less than impressed. "Why, who is that hob over the wall?" he asks Abel in response to God's pronouncement. "We! Who was he that piped so small?" (297-8). The term 'hob' is a "familiar or rustic variation of the Christian name Robert or Robin," used interchangeably with "hodge" as a catch-all for any rustic or agricultural laborer, a kind of rural Tom, Dick or Harry.[142] Cain imagines God as a rustic peering over a wall at him, "piping" out weedy aphorisms rather than divine commands. Cain's transgressive humor is doubly funny because he's partially right. In the pageant, God would be played by some man, likely delivering his lines from a platform, ladder, or indeed a wall. Depictions of the killing of Abel in medieval art pose the same problem of visually representing omniscient surveillance; God is often shown to be resting on a cloud, or peering through a

Figure 1: Cain Killing Abel With a Scythe (c.1403). Bible historiale. British Library, MS Harley 4381,f.10r

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[141] All citations of "Mactacio Abel" are taken from *Medieval Drama* ed. David Bevington (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975). For the dating of the Towneley Plays, see n.1.

[142] "Hob(be) n." *Middle English Dictionary* http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED20919. Bevington glosses this use of "hob" as a "fairy or sprite," referring to the use of the term as an early version of "hobgoblin," but I argue that this more rural use makes more sense within the densely populated human community that the *Mactacio Abel* imagines. Thomas Preston's *Cambises* (c.1560) also contains two comic rustics named Hob and Lob who are each other's neighbors.

tear in the earthly firmament (see figure 1). Cain's metatheatrical joke is one of many demonstrating the difficulty of representing God in embodied performance, but particularly captures the difficulty of staging divine surveillance in a way that doesn't resemble human nosiness.

This theatrical model of the omnipresent, surveilling God parallels the morality tradition; God descends or calls out at some point to provide judgement. In *The Castle of Perseverance*, God sits on the eastern scaffold, possibly present throughout the play but actively involved in the plot only in the final moments, when he is acknowledged as "Pater, Sedens in judicio: Sicut scintilla in medio maris" or "Father Sitting in judgement, like a spark in the midst of a sea" (3598).[143] In *Everyman*, God appears only in the opening moments to lament the degradation of man that he "perceyve[s] here in my majestye" (22).[144] The monologue, which returns again and again to the phrase "I se," establishes the scope of divine vision over human action and intention. In both of these plays, God serves as a kind of one-sided frame narrative: reminding the audience that he will be there, or that he has always been there, that his presence within the linear narrative of the play is compounded by his existence outside the totality of time.

Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* describes this eternal divine gaze on perpetual time. Since God is "eternal and omnipresent," his judgement is made "in the simplicity of a continual present, which embraces all vistas of the future and the past."[145] This position of knowing all things at once is not like human pre-vision or foreknowledge but rather providence, a divine state that derives from existing outside of linear time.[146] In the aforecited depiction of Cain's slaying

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[143] *The Castle of Perseverance* ed. David N. Klausner (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008).
[144] Clifford Davidson, Martin W. Walsh, and Ton J. Broos, eds., *Everyman and Its Dutch Original, Elckerlijc* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007).
[145] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. David R. Slavitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 170-171.
[146] Ibid, 170-171.

of Abel in MS Harley 4381, God indeed hovering over the scene in his own bordered circle at the top of the picture, a kind of visual wormhole into divine perspective. However, God is not looking directly at Cain's crime, but instead gazing at the *globus cruciger* in his hand. He engages with the scene differently than human viewers of the painting, who look directly at the brothers; instead, he sees Cain's murder as an infinitesimal part of a providential dominion over the world. God's physical presence in these morality plays thus complicates his theatrical role. He is present in 'real time,' watching the fall and rehabilitation of man, but also represents a nonlinear and total perspective that differs greatly from that of the surrounding human audience.[147] When God intervenes to warn Cain in the *Mactacio Abel,* he should do so seeing Cain's abortive sacrifice and his murder of Abel all at once. This theatrical anthropomorphizing of God thus puts in tension two forms of surveillance— the totalizing, providential gaze of divine surveillance, and the fallible lateral surveillance of the "hob."

The comedy of God as a "hob" in the Towneley *Mactacio Abel* thus foresees a theatrical difficulty in Protestant morality plays, when God was no longer allowed onstage and so cannot provide a legitimate and narratively omniscient source of surveillance. In this chapter, I examine the emergence of neighborhood surveillance in Tudor moral interludes as the partial replacement for an onstage God. The five plays that I examine in this chapter— *Nice Wanton* (c.1560), *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* (1559-68), *Enough is As Good as a Feast* (c.1570), *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* (1576), and *Like Will to Like* (1587) — all engage with questions of witnessing, parsing and judging human criminality without the aid of direct divine intervention.

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[147] Charles Taylor has described these two axes of premodern time as the horizontal and vertical dimensions, with human "secular" time upon the horizontal axis and divine time or "god's eternity" on the vertical. The dual interplay between these two axes allowed for the warping, gathering or foreshortening of time, so that human/earthly/secular time was not "homogenous or mutually interchangeable" but instead "coloured by the placement in relation to higher time": *A Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007), 56-58.

These interludes are religious in nature, present characters who are "part allegorical abstraction, part social type," and contain explicit social agendas, functioning as a form of theatrical propaganda.[148] While these plays occasionally differ in theme and performance practice, I want to focus on their common interest in the fate of the human communities that form the backdrop of their action. These interludes place the fall of their flawed central characters within a human community that is profoundly affected by their sinful action; almost as if, as John McGavin describes, "*Mankind* had been re-written from the perspective of the society which suffered from Mankind's sins."[149] While each of these plays explicitly points to its titular aphorism as its central pedagogical lesson, they also teach the dangers of a lax community; neighbors who act reactively rather than preemptively to communal threats find themselves too late, and must resort to tactics of pyrrhic victory like summoning a divine plague.

Without the aid of divine providence, these human communities demonstrate models of lateral surveillance that only succeed in containing criminal threats when enforced preemptively. This mode of positioning imbues onstage communities with a sort of earthly providence, allowing them to live in a version of Boethius' "continual present" that justifies preemptive action. I read the rhetoric and images of twentieth and twenty-first century American Neighborhood Watches as a comparative model that speaks to the surveillance pedagogy of these interludes. The Neighborhood Watch program encouraged a model of surveillance dependent not just on observing, but on imagining the future criminal possibility of bodies and actions: a mode of looking that is extremely vulnerable to subjective interpretation of which bodies or actions

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[148] Paul Whitfield White, "Interludes, Economics, and The Elizabethan Stage," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 555.
[149] John McGavin, "Nice Wanton," *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama* ed. Thomas Bettridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 246-260. This dramatic shift has also been catalogued by Bevington as the movement from "a struggle for the soul of a universal man to a series of contrasts between those who are unquestionably saved and those who are irreparably damned": *From Mankind to Marlowe*, 155.

already suggest criminality. This "prospective witnessing" collapses the time between criminal potential and actuality, an elision central to the structure of moral interludes, which often skip over middle processes of conversion or corruption through a narrative ellipsis. Reading these moral interludes with the surveillance pedagogy of Neighborhood Watches demonstrates that this dramatic structure doesn't just shape theories of salvation: it also teaches its audiences prospective witnessing as a new mode of engaging with drama that awards them a position of surveilling power while simultaneously foreclosing their options as an interpretive community. Heather Hill-Vásquez has tracked the "reformation in response" in early English drama, arguing that while Catholic biblical drama used figures embedded within the play like the messenger Nuntios to provoke "a communal participatory experience," Protestant drama turned to expositors who privileged "clear and immediate understanding."[150] While these interludes do often have prologues of moments of explicit preaching or didacticism, their use of prospective witnessing acts as a subtler and more somatic tool of manipulating audience engagement. Their audiences are indeed invited to participate communally, but only if they ally themselves to the forms of surveillance modeled within the interlude.

In my previous chapter "Quiet Resistance: Beholding the Margins of the York Corpus Christi Plays," I examined marginal or extra-biblical characters in the pageants of the York Corpus Christi plays that individually modeled forms of quiet resistance. In turning to moral interludes, I remain focused on marginal characters who operate on the sidelines of the spiritual arc of the plot while concerned with the earthly conditions of their own survival. In York, these figures are often isolated by pageant, whereas in moral interludes, they form a more tangible community, a contemporary *mise-en-scene* for the struggle between the damnation and salvation

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[150] Hill-Vásquez, *Sacred Players,* 25.

of the central character(s) of the play. My focus also shifts from beholding to witnessing as primary modes of audience engagement modeled by these minor characters. If 'beholding' conditioned empathy and cued resistance for early audiences, 'witnessing' sought to shape an audience's ability to furnish evidence. Characters onstage are not 'held' in a compassionate gaze, but 'held' in evidence, suspicion, or other forms of disciplinary enclosure.

Nice Wanton and Communal Surveillance

Nice Wanton is an intensely melodramatic moral interlude warning of the dangers of lax parenting that would put even the most lurid public service announcements to shame. It was first anonymously printed in 1560 by John King, titled *A Pretty Interlude Called Nice Wanton*.[151] Critics diverge on exactly where and when *Nice Wanton* was played; David Bevington claims that it was played by Paul's Boys before Queen Elizabeth in 1560, while Michael Shapiro argues that it was more likely to be performed by more provincial schoolchildren.[152] Pamela King posits for an earlier date to correspond with Edward's rule, with a performance revival for Elizabeth.[153] However, all agree that this play was performed by a boy's troupe, likely for court or another semi-elite audience. Although *Nice Wanton* speaks directly to parents, warning them that sparing the rod will spoil the child, the play also demonstrates that parenting decisions are the community's business; the "branches of an ill tree," or the offspring of a bad parent, become a

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[151] Glynne Wickham, *English Moral Interludes* (London: Dent, 1976), 143-162. All quotations of *Nice Wanton* are taken from this edition, and line numbers are cited parenthetically.

[152] Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*, 31; Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 152.

[153] The most convincing piece of evidence for *Nice Wanton*'s earlier performance date is an amendment of a final couplet that hastily amends a rhyme between "things" and "kings" to "things" and "queens": see H.N. Hillebrand, *The Child Actors: An Elizabethan Stage History* (University of Illinois Press: Urbana, Illinois, 1926), 126. While Hillebrand suggested that the play could have been revived for Marian rule, King has convincingly demonstrated that the Calvinist outlook of the play would make that very unlikely, and that an Edwardian performance revived for Elizabeth is much more feasible; "Minority Plays: Two Interludes for Edward VI" *Medieval English Theatre* 15 (1993): 87-102, 101.

societal concern. I argue that the moral of parental discipline ultimately falls away from focus in favor of community surveillance— the town's ability to recognize, track and prosecute the central criminal Ismael becomes the implicit focus of *Nice Wanton*.

The plot of *Nice Wanton* can be summarized as follows: Xantippe, an overly permissive mother, allows her two children Ismael and Dalilah to fall into the (literal) arms of Iniquity, while her inexplicably pious third child Barnabas stands sideline and attempts to caution his family against their inevitable fall and ruin. The play is divided into two main parts, divided by a chronological jump into adulthood for the former children, revealing Ismael and Dalilah's respective fates as a convicted felon and syphilitic prostitute. This second half begins with Ismael's trial and subsequent execution for murder. Iniquity shows up again, disguised as a bailiff, and unsuccessfully attempts to bribe the judge before being implicated by Ismael as a fellow criminal and then arrested. Barnabas the good son finds his now-adult sister Dalilah dying from syphilis, and he lectures her on the importance of repentance before leading her offstage to die. Xanthippe, the mother, is grieving at the news of her son's death when the second Vice of the play, Worldly Shame, comes upon her and tries to convince her to commit suicide. Barnabas reaches her just in time to dissuade her and give a second lecture on repentance. The play is bookended by a messenger who delivers and then reiterates the synopsis and central moral of the play, warning his audience to live "an honest quiet life, correspondent alway/ To God's law and the kings" (7-8).

Critical attention to *Nice Wanton* tends to focus on the uneasy relationship between the play's earthly pedagogy (parental discipline is important) and its predetermined assignments of moral value (characters are marked 'good' or 'bad' from the start, down to predictive biblical

names like Dalilah and Barnabas).[154] This tango between earnest pedagogy and spiritual rigidity could, for example, reflect the mythography of Edward's reign, or evolving interpretations of English education.[155] *Nice Wanton* could also, as several have asserted, just not be a very good play.[156] Most recently, John McGavin has demonstrated how the play exploits its own uneasiness, using "affective coercion" to target parental anxiety in the audience by setting up clear 'desirable' goals— raising children properly, following the Bible, making a good impression on community— while also leaving much of what describes or constitutes those goals unmeasurable.[157] Within the doctrinal diversity of *Nice Wanton*'s audience, "no one . . . could be totally confident they were getting it right," and the performance of Xantippe's spectacular failure and its "ghastly consequences" establish the anxiety necessary for coercion.[158] McGavin's description of *Nice Wanton*'s persuasion tactics demonstrates that the apparent contradictions of the play might, within a certain affective regime, have been smoothed in performance. McGavin, among many others, focuses on the thematic content of *Nice Wanton*: the pedagogy of parenting, and the spectators as potential parents. I instead want to shift attention to *Nice Wanton*'s interest in community surveillance and policing. The "ghastly consequences" of Xantippe's parenting are successfully enforced by her surrounding community, which evades the apocalyptic fate of the communities in later moral interludes. I argue that *Nice*

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[154] In addition to McGavin see King, "Minority Plays," David Mills, "Education, Education, Education!': *Nice Wanton* and the Allegorical Tradition" *European Medieval Drama* 5 (2001):191-203; Lois Potter, "The Reformation and Moral Play," in *The Revels History of Drama in English, 1500-1576* ed. Norma Sanders et. al. (Methuen, London and New York, 1980): 194-195.

[155] King has argued that the tension between "naughtiness" as innate or taught "invites a parallel with the issue of the theoretical and real extent of contemporary royal power." By trifurcating the protagonist into three different characters, *Nice Wanton* "sidesteps" its own pedagogical paradox and presents Barnabas as an "idealized model" for Edward: "Minority Plays," 94-5.

[156] Mills notes that it the play is "little more than a heavily-programmed curiosity; it is difficult to share . . . [the] view that is 'well-written'": "Education," 194. McGavin admits that "No one would call *Nice Wanton* a masterpiece": "Nice Wanton," 246.

[157] McGavin, "Nice Wanton," 250-251.

[158] Ibid, 251.

Wanton's moral lesson is located less in the transgression of its central characters, and more in the modes of witnessing that it models and then pushes on its audience. Its coercion is not limited to managing parental anxiety; *Nice Wanton's* structure of narrative ellipsis seeks to coerce its audience into a specific mode of engaging with the plays.

In the opening half of the play, Xantippe's children Ismael and Dalilah engage in the kind of transgressive youthful shenanigans that mark them as 'bad seeds,' while also providing the audience with the musical entertainment and comic relief of the play. The two children skip school, Dalilah noting that they are tired of being beaten by their teachers. They gamble and dance at the local pub, and Dalilah exchanges several lines of sexual banter with Iniquity, here cast as a fellow youth leading them down the wrong path. Yet, while we do get glimpses of their misbehavior, it is the observations of the community around Xantippe's family that explicitly frame these actions as symptoms of future criminality. Xantippe's neighbor Eulalia appears to complain of Dalilah and Ismael's bad behavior, and situate herself as a font of communal knowledge. "A neighborhood of mine hath children nearby," Eulalia notes by way of introduction, "Idle, disobedient, proud, wanton, and nice/As they come by, they do me shrewd turns daily" (89-91). However, when Eulalia's personal complaints to Xantippe go unheeded, she escalates the scale of her critique:

> your son is suspect light-fingered to be
> your daughter hath nice tricks three or four
> See to it in time, lest worse you do see
> He that swarth the rod, hateth the child, truly (116-119).

Eulalia's use of the passive voice in the first line, that Ismael is "suspected to be" light fingered, erases the observing subject of the sentence; she is speaking on behalf of someone besides herself. Her final line "he that swath the rod, hateth the child, truly," echoes word for word the moral spoken in the prologue, allying her with the critical frame of the play. Eulalia is thus both

a character living in the 'real time' of the play, and connected to the critical abstraction of the drama, the aphorism that has already been theatrically foreordained.

We don't hear from Eulalia again for the rest of the play. Indeed, we progress quickly into the second half of the interlude where Daniel, an assize judge, presides over a local jury as they announce the verdict on Ismael's crimes. This trial changes the atmosphere of *Nice Wanton*, which has thus far existed in a kind of generalized Everytown. Instead, as William Dean has shown, *Nice Wanton* stages a condensed but informed and meticulously detailed depiction of a biannual assize trial with a petty jury.[159] While only the "quest," or lead juror, delivers the pronouncement, all twelve jurors are seated onstage. These extra cast members were either additional choirboys or, as McGavin proposes, the children already present as spectators.[160] The resulting sentence upon Ismael stages the interplay between Daniel's formalized state power and his dependence on pre-existing local knowledge and judgement. Daniel is a model of jurisprudential virtue; when Iniquity, disguised as a bailiff, attempts to bribe him into sparing Ismael a death sentence, Daniel publicly rejects his [seeming] bailiff: "Bribes (saith Salmon) blind the wise man's sight /[So] that he cannot see to give judgment right/ Should I be a briber? Nay! He shall have the law /As I owe to God and the king obedience and awe" (360-63). While Daniel affirms that his sight is unencumbered by bribes, he also draws attention to the sight of the social judgments that precede and empower Daniel's legal pronouncement; he arrives simply to give the floor to the jury. This is hardly the Last Judgement; the audience has already seen how easily the court might be infiltrated by Iniquity.

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[159] William Dean, "Some Aspects of the Law of Criminal Procedure in the Trial of Ismael in *Nice Wanton*," *Medieval English Theatre* 13, no.1-2 (January 1991): 27-38. Dean stresses that *Nice Wanton* is the first to stage such an accurate depiction of English criminal law onstage, and underscores that this theatrical choice would have been "revolutionary" (36).

[160] McGavin, "Nice Wanton," 251.

After this Iniquity is led off in chains, a second vice, Worldly Shame arrives with the goal

of goading Xanthippe into suicide. Indeed, he reveals this plan to the audience in an extended

aside, only breaking off when Eulalia approaches, admonishing the audience to keep quiet about

this admission: "Peace, Peace, here she cometh hearby/ I spoke no word of her, no not I" (457-

8).[161] Worldly Shame's speech to Xantippe, in the guise of a concerned neighbor, echoes both

Eulalia and the moralizing introduction of the play:

> O Mistress Xantippe, I can tell you news:
> The fair wreck, your dear daughter Dalilah,
> Is dead of the pox taken at the stews;
> And thy son Ismael, that pretty boy
> Whom, I dare say, you loved very well
> Is hanged in chains, every man can tell
> Every man said that thy daughter was a strong whore
> And thy son a strong thief and murderer too
> It must needs grieve you wondrous sore
> That they died so shamefully both two
> Men will taught you and mock you, for they say now
> The cause of your death was ever very you (459-470).

Worldly Shame's rhetoric is certainly less aphoristic and crueler, but the message is the same:

that Xantippe, through her parental neglect, is responsible for the resulting deaths of her children.

In his repetition of "every man," World Shame weaponizes the weight of local judgement; this

"every man" slips back and forth between a summary of the community and literally "every

man" of the jury who just unanimously affirmed Ismael's sentence. Yet, this moment also drives

home the moral uncertainty of this judgement, without divine representation to back it up. Like

the court system, this form of social surveillance and judgement can be hijacked by Vice. By

cluing the audience into his identity, Worldly Shame eliminates potential audience confusion that

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[161] Though the number of characters in *Nice Wanton* intimates that doubling was not necessary, Wickham makes a case for Worldly Shame to be doubled by the same actor who played Iniquity, arguing that Worldly Shame's opening line "Ha ha! Though I come in rudely, be not aghast" (432) anticipates audience surprise at seeing him again after Iniquity has been led off in chains. However, given the overlap between their characters, Worldly Shame could also have been easily doubled by the actor who played Eulalia; Wickham, "Nice Wanton," n.431.

he really is a concerned neighbor and highlights the difference between their perspective and Xantippe's. The audience can discount the harmful components of Worldly Shame's social judgement as an abuse of the system of neighborhood surveillance, rather than a feature.

Neighborhood Watch and Prospective Witnessing

Ismael's postmortem status as an executed corpse hanged in chains serves as an (offstage) visual reminder of Xantippe's shame but also of the community's perceived triumph. From surveilling neighbors, to attentive juries, to an unbribable assize judge, *Nice Wanton* is supposed to demonstrate a success in community policing: an organized and legal excision that prevents the corrective scourges of later interludes. Pamela King's focus on the three youths of the play as a "composite protagonist" frames Ismael and Dalilah's deaths as comic actions that purge the hero of "corrupt elements."[162] Yet, the inclusion of Eulalia and the specificity of Ismael's trial frame the purge of *Nice Wanton* as communal rather than specific to the three children— Barnabas' adult role as a shopkeeper even frames his own purity as a productive mercantile contribution to the community. The concluding song and dance of *Nice Wanton* discusses what gives true merriment— and of course one of the stated activities is a vaguely stated 'neighborliness': "What is the practice of a conscience pure? / To love and fear God, and each other allure/ and for his sake to help his neighbor/then may he will be merry" (Ep.,13-16). The focus on "helping" rather than "loving" their neighbors frames the kind of local surveillance and judgement displayed in *Nice Wanton* as both community service and divinely appointed work.

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[162] King, "Minority Plays," 94-5.

In order to explore this ideology of local surveillance as virtuous service, I turn now to a familiar form of ethically fraught local surveillance, the American Neighborhood Watch. As Sara Ahmed argues, Neighborhood Watch relies on a social imaginary of the neighborhood as an "organic and pure space" that is figured only through "the social perception of the danger posed by outsiders to moral and social health and well-being."[163] Much like the moral interludes that this chapter reads, Neighborhood Watch relies on the definition of community as a site of crisis in which the social boundaries that define its space must be constantly re-established and re-enforced in order to avoid failure.[164] In the absence of archival record of audience interaction with these interludes, whether at court or in popular performance, the violent and persecutorial legacy of the Neighborhood Watch provides a comparative model for the potential impact of a pedagogy of looking that cast its engaged volunteers as both morally and temporally above the subjects of their surveillance, operating (as Eulalia does) with one eye on a foreordained narrative arc of containment and prosecution.

The National Neighborhood Watch was established in 1972 by the National Sheriffs Association in order to foster cooperation between private citizens, sheriffs, and law enforcement. Founded on the belief that "efforts to encourage citizen surveillance and reporting could have potentially significant impact on crime," the program trained suburban citizens to recognize suspicious activity and report it to law enforcement.[165] Tracking the history of American civilian surveillance, Joshua Reeves describes how the program trains its volunteers in the "aural and visual semiotics of crime," which seems to largely boil down to individual

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[163] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 27.
[164] Ibid, 27.
[165] Joshua Reeves, *Citizen Spies: The Long Rise of America's Surveillance Society* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2017), 78.

perceptions of suspiciousness.[166] Reading a 2010 training manual, Reeves notes the vacillation between clear-cut red flags like "someone peering into multiple cars" and more vague descriptions of activities like "multiple persons who appear to be working in unison and

Figure 2: Neighborhood Watch Sign 1

exhibiting suspicious behavior" and "persons arriving or leaving from businesses or homes at unusual hours."[167] The training also stresses the importance of looking suspiciously at activities that might not seem suspicious: "burglars may case the area posing as joggers or someone looking for a friend." As Reeve notes, the "binary epistemology of suspicious/unsuspicious phenomena" rests largely on individual subjective interpretations of what or who seems suspicious to you.[168] Indeed, as Ahmed argues, the term 'suspicious' works precisely because it is empty: "the failure to provide us with techniques for telling the difference is itself a technique of knowledge."[169] The emptiness of 'suspicious' invests in the idea of the Neighborhood Watch volunteer's innate knowledge or common sense: what is constructed as normal by the common against the threat of some Other.[170] As Ahmed argues, Neighborhood Watch constructs a "heroic we" that legitimates social exclusion, ensuring that "certain lives become valued over other lives."[171]

The dangerous flexibility or contingency of what passes for suspicious is, in an odd coincidence or telling symptom, demonstrated by two Neighborhood Watch signs, which

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[166] Ibid, 78.

[167] Ibid, 92-93.

[168] Ibid, 92. This language of suspiciousness derives directly from the legal dictations of police intervention from the Supreme Court Ruling in *Terry v. Ohio* (1968), in which police officers were required to have a "reasonable, articulable suspicion" of criminality before stopping citizens; Lisa Bloom, *Suspicion Nation: The Inside Story of the Trayvon Martin Injustice and Why We Continue to Repeat It* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2014), 241-242.

[169] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 29.

[170] Ibid, 29.

[171] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 30.

themselves evade stable meaning. The first is a disembodied eye on a blue background, with the words "we look out for each other" written below (see figure 2).[172] The second is a cartoon of a mysterious-looking figure (probably a man) in a fedora and overcoat, his only distinguishing features two eyes emerging from under the brim of his hat (see figure 3). This figure is officially

Figure 3: Neighborhood Watch Sign 2

titled "Boris the Burglar" by the National Neighborhood Watch. Its unofficial backstory is that the man was supposed to appeal to anti-Russian sentiment, even though Neighborhood Watch was instituted to prevent break-ins or petty theft and had no involvement with domestic espionage.[173] In an official guide to Neighborhood Watch sign copyright, the National Sheriffs Association insists that Boris remains an abstraction: "Boris the Burglar® represents

the threat of burglaries, vandalism, and other neighborhood crimes . . . the message of saying NO to Boris encourages people to help themselves and others in their neighborhoods by engaging in target hardening and other crime prevention measures."[174] It's not clear how Boris is supposed to represent criminality, though in the context of this study we may note that he resembles the vague and shadowy criminality of a vice from a moral interlude. Indeed, I know many people who grew up thinking that the figure actually depicted a monster, the hat turning into a head and the sliver of white between collar and face the opening mouth. In a design article dedicated to

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[172] Both images are taken from the National Neighborhood Watch website. While updated versions of the signs contain more personalized information (such as the name of the town or modified captions), these signs are labeled as "Legacy Neighborhood Watch Signs." "Our History: National Neighborhood Watch," National Neighborhood Watch: A Division of the National Sheriffs' Association, 2019, https://www.nnw.org/our-history.

[173] The figure also bears a strong resemblance to the character Boris Badenov in *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, a satirical vaguely-Russian villain who also ran around in a black trenchcoat and hat.

[174] National Neighborhood Watch Program, "Street Signs and Community Products Catalog" (National Sheriff's Association, 2018), http://www.sheriffs.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/nwcatalog_resize.pdf.

this sign, several commenters noted that their children thought this was a cat, rather than a potential cat burglar.[175] The uncertain relation between the act of being surveilled and the act of surveilling is exemplified by the disembodied interplay between the sets of eyes on each sign— one totally open and unyielding, the other trying to elude its gaze. The phrase "we look out for each other" on the eye sign is likewise double-edged: is the act of 'looking out for' a protective gaze or a suspicious one? Reading a similar rhetoric in British systems of Neighborhood Watch, Ahmed argues that both are true: Neighborhood Watch constructs a system of persecution that is cloaked under a rhetoric of care.[176] The abstraction of the symbols of "suspicious" individuals and the reliance on personalized expertise allows for an easy metonymic slide between the uncommon, the suspicious, and the criminal.[177] Much like the phrase "we look out for each other," the term "suspicious" also doubles; a suspicious person can be one who is surveilling others, "caring" for their community by looking out, and a person who attracts suspicion, someone who does not want to be seen or has not been seen before.

The surveillance pedagogy of Neighborhood Watch has come under intense critical scrutiny in recent years, especially after the 2012 murder of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed African-American teenager, by George Zimmerman, who was then serving as a volunteer of his local Neighborhood Watch. Defenders of Neighborhood Watch protested that Zimmerman could not serve as a representation for the program, as he violated the central tenet of nonviolence and non-confrontation. Writing in defense of Neighborhood Watch, journalist Michael Thompson argued that the program always stressed the importance of neighborhood watchers as potential witnesses rather than vigilantes: "they taught us what to look for as a potential witness in

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[175] Rob Walker, "Boris, Subverted," *Design Observer*, March 12, 2014, https://designobserver.com/feature/boris-subverted/38295.
[176] Ibid, 29.
[177] Ibid, 29-31.

court."[178] Indeed, much of Neighborhood Watch training was learning in advance how to be a good witness: volunteers were recommended to "practice looking at pictures of people to know how to describe them."[179] Discussions of Zimmerman's behavior stressed the way that his active pursuit of Martin contrasted from the legislated passivity of Neighborhood Watch: he was "hunting," one Neighborhood Watch administrator noted on National Public Radio, while a good participant would simply act as "eyes and ears."[180]

Yet, the practice of surveilling bodies can't be totally divorced from the way that those surveilling then act or call others to act on them. Surveilling someone with your future role as a witness in mind creates a mode of looking that then lives in that futurity, collapsing the time between your suspicion of the potential criminality of their actions and the future where that suspicion is confirmed by state authorities. It is a deliberate and embodied example of confirmation bias, where future expectation is not just influencing judgment or sensory perception, but projecting the looker into the future that they create. When weighing in on the unique position of the Neighborhood Watch participant, Neighborhood Watch administrators and criminologists often speak in terms of institutional power: the watcher is elevated to a peer of the police rather than a peer of their neighbors.[181] One might be reminded of Eulalia's unique position in *Nice Wanton*, her ability to echo the platitudes of the introduction as if she were formally allied with the omniscient spokesman of the play than with Xantippe and her family.

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[178] Reeves, *Citizen Spies*, 78. For further examinations of Neighborhood Watch in the wake of the Trayvon Martin shooting, see Daniel Luzer, "Volunteer Security and the Rise of Neighborhood Watch" *Pacific Standard Magazine* July 23rd, 2013.

[179] Ibid, 93

[180] This administrator, Curtis Sliwa, also went to great lengths to distance Zimmerman from the communal structure of Neighborhood Watch, calling him a "loner" and comparing him to the character Travis Bickle in the film *Taxi Driver*; Neal Conan, Dennis Rosenbaum, and Curtis Sliwa, "What Makes Neighborhood Watches Work," Talk of the Nation *NPR* April 9th, 2012 https://www.npr.org/2012/04/09/150294474/what-makes-neighborhood-watches-work.

[181] Conan, Rosenbaum, and Sliwa, "What Makes Neighborhood Watches Work."

Yet, this change in power also comes with a change in orientation to time; much as Eulalia speaks with providential foresight, those trained to be the "eyes and ears" of Neighborhood Watch engage with a present that is shaped by a premade future, one that dangerously legitimates their presence and social vision over those who must be surveilled.

Nice Wanton and Prospective Witnessing

It is this mode of looking, prospective witnessing, that I'm arguing *Nice Wanton* and several other Tudor interludes attempt to teach to their audiences. I want now to return to the second half of *Nice Wanton*, which opens with the trial of Ismael. More specifically, we jump forward in time to Ishmael's sentencing, once the trial has already taken place. Daniel the judge prompts the Quest to deliver a verdict, succinctly summarizing the events and conditions that lead to this moment of the jury decision:

> Where Ismael was indicted by twelve men
> Of felony, burglary and murder
> As the indictment declareth how, where and when—
> You heard it read to you lately, in order—
> You, with the rest— I trust all true men—
> Be charged upon your oaths to give verdict directly
> Whether Ismael thereof be guilty or not guilty (373-9).

This string of dependent clauses gestures at activities that the audience hasn't seen, succinctly bringing us to the final punctuation of Ismael's criminal career. The audience has heard all "lately," the men have already taken their oaths, and have already discussed the case. Dean's assessment of the trial assumes that the playwright condensed much of this sequence for theatrical economy— the audience is given "sufficient legal coloring" without spending too much time on "technical detail and procedure."[182] While these time and content constraints might

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[182] Dean, "Some Aspects," 36.

make sense for an interlude-length performance, the truncation also allows Daniel (and, by extension, the jury) to remain a pillar of legal virtue without checking any of his work. The audience, even those who might be standing in as members of the jury, don't know who Ismael murdered or stole from, nor do they need to; his guilt is the only thing that matters to the plot. The audience act as witnesses, not to the narrative of Ismael's crime, but to the predictive success of community surveillance.

This sudden arrival at the end of the trial without any hint of the narrative we've leapt over mirrors the structure of many moral interludes. The journey of spiritual corruption, if not the process of spiritual rehabilitation, is usually performed through an ellipsis. Characters make a choice, they fall in with a crowd, and in the change of a scene the audience is transported into a future where their suspicions of the consequences of that choice are immediately affirmed. In earlier morality plays this ellipsis tends to cover much shorter spaces of time, and thus much less drastic change. For example, in *Mankind* Mankind exits twice during Titivilius' monologues, returning each time with his spiritual conviction weakened. He returns first to throw away his spade and rosary and then returns after a second absence to forswear "laboure and preyer" altogether (585).[183] In *Nice Wanton*, the ellipsis of time and its consequences are much more striking— Dalilah exits as a lively child and enters as a disfigured prostitute.[184]

This structure, as critics have argued, has implications for theories of salvation. Much of the critical conversation around *Nice Wanton* addresses the unclear and often contradictory question of salvation that it offers; despite focusing on bad parenting as a key factor in

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[183] *Mankind* ed. Kathleen M. Ashley and Gerard NeCastro (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), 585.

[184] The surprise of Dalilah's 'reveal' echoes the fall of Anima in *Wisdom*, which likewise demonstrates her spiritual degradation by reappearing "in the most horrybull wyse, foulere than a fende.": "Se howe ye have dysvyguryde your soule," Wisdom commands to Minde, as Anima enters in a disgrace. "Beholde yourselff; loke veryly in mynde!" (900-901). Cited in McGavin, "Nice Wanton," 255.

damnation or salvation, it takes a distinctly Calvinist approach towards innate good or evil, and repentance is shuttled offstage, represented only through testimony that questions its centrality or efficacy.[185] In her initial romp with Iniquity and Ismael, Dalilah briefly uses a Latin phrase that she "learned at school," only to be immediately mocked by Iniquity and Ismael. "Speak ye Latin, poor fool?" Iniquity mocks, while Ismael responds "Yea! Sister, you went to school till ye were past grace" (166,168). This brief flash of aptitude from Dalilah might serve as a glancing chance at character depth, reminding parents that female education serves as both as compassionate and commercially shrewd move.[186] However, Ismael's assertion that Dalilah is "past grace" is immediately returned to him by his sister, who rejoins "Yea, so didst thou, by thy knave's face!" (169). Ismael's assertion and Dalilah's agreement that they are both "past grace" contradicts the structure of the interlude: the three are only halfway through their initial 'temptation' scene. The entire timetable of Ismael and Dalilah's spiritual fall or conversion is extremely muddled in the first half of the play. While Eulalia and Iniquity both allude to Delilah and Ismael's reputation for potential criminality, Dalilah and Ismael's parting lines frame their romp with Iniquity as the starting point of their criminal careers. After being cheated out of his money by Iniquity, Ismael storms off, saying "By God, I will rob the next I meet/ Yea, and it be my father!" (230-1). Likewise, Dalilah's rejection of Iniquity after he attempts to hit her motivates her to announce other potential amorous connections: "Ye think I have no friends? Yes, I have in store/ A good fellow or two, perchance more. Yea, and by the mass, they shall box you for this gear" (250-252).

These actions are framed in the future tense; Ismael "will rob" some man and presumably set out on a life of violent crime, and Dalilah has "in store" a collection of potential customers.

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[185] See McGavin, "Nice Wanton," 248-249; Miller, "Education,"198-199.
[186] McGavin, "Nice Wanton," 254.

Iniquity concludes the first half of the play after gambling and carousing with Ismael and Dalilah by succinctly predicting the futures of these siblings: "Thief, brother: sister, whore/ Two grafts of an ill tree! / I will tarry no longer here /Farewell! God be with thee!" (257-260). Dalilah and Ismael move through *Nice Wanton* with no clear spiritual point of no return— their damnation is both already passed and not yet confirmed until the moment of their deaths. *Nice Wanton* certainly represents an overall shift in the focus of Tudor moralities from repentance and salvation to a more intractable spiritual system.[187] Yet this formal structure's entanglement with an earthly system of criminal justice in *Nice Wanton* teaches its audience how to become prospective witnesses, and frames this skill as a necessary tool of communal survival.

This mode of spectatorship is dependent on more than just audience foreknowledge. Providing the audience with the entire arc of a play's plot in banns or an introduction was used across genres in medieval and early modern English theatre, in everything from the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* to *Romeo and Juliet*. However, prospective witnessing is activated differently when the audience is called upon as witnesses to events that have not yet occurred. Meg Pearson has described the role of audience "witnessing" as an intentional activation by the stage— turning passive recipients of a narrative into judicial eyes who are then granted a certain spectatorial freedom, able to parse out contradictions or form individual judgements.[188] *Nice Wanton* certainly positions and invites its audience to judge the events of the play, but it also explicitly endeavors to limit the form of their judgement, to teach them what kind of witnessing is necessary for the narrative of communal triumph to be upheld— to witness not just in 'real time' but with their future role as convicting jury members and juridical spectators in mind.

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[187] See Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*, 155-156.
[188] Meg Pearson, "Audience as Witness in *Edward II*" in *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642* ed. Jennifer Low and Nova Myhill (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 93-111.

Indeed, *Nice Wanton* conceptualizes a future on the model of a community that is sustained by active enforcement of prospective witnessing.

"You may heer see of them the finall end": Prospective Witnessing and Futurity

  Nice Wanton offers a particularly interesting example of prospective witnessing because of the alliance between its structure and onstage community representatives; Eulalia, the jurors, and their offstage community provide cues for the audience for how to engage with Delilah and Ismael's narratives. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to move outward to several other Tudor moral interludes that also focus on the health of an earthly community as the central concern of the play, in which 'bad seeds' must be identified, tracked, and either rehabilitated or expunged. Like *Nice Wanton*, these interludes—*Enough is as Good as a Feast, The Tide Tarrieth No Man, The Longer Thou Lives the More Fool Thou Art,* and *Like Will to Like*— address both youth pedagogy and local governance, centering the urban community as the nuclear social structure of the play.[189] Established as Protestant propaganda in the first decades of Elizabeth's rule, these interludes were part of a campaign to outlaw usury, rent-racking and other forms of financial malfeasance.[190] As Paul Whitfield White has shown, while these interludes and their surrounding texts framed themselves as heroic protests of corrupt systems of power in England, they were driven more by xenophobia and anti-mercantilist sentiment than genuine understanding of how inflation or unemployment worked.[191] As a result, the communities portrayed in these interludes are doubly vulnerable, endangered by both the 'bad

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[189] I don't seek to make an argument of direct influence here—that *Nice Wanton* provided an early model of prospective witnessing that caused these later interludes. While I do agree with Pamela King that *Nice Wanton* predates these other interludes in writing if not in performance, I instead argue that *Nice Wanton* and these other interludes demonstrate how the turn to center earthly community as the focus of moral interludes causes two (if not three) thematic types of moral interlude to make similar moves of shaping audience engagement.

[190] White, "Interludes, Economics, and The Elizabethan Stage," 555–70.

[191] Ibid, 556-558.

seeds' within their own citizenry and the vice characters that might aid in their corruption, who were often portrayed as immigrants or broadly anti-Semitic stereotypes.[192] *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* opens with this sense of communal vulnerability:

> As the worme which in the timber is bred
> The selfe same timber doeth consume and eate
> And as the moth which is commonly fed
> In the cloth with her bred and the same doth frete
> So many persons are a damage great
> To their own countrey, which hath them relieved
> And by them thier own countrey ofte times is greeved (A2ʳ).[193]

This materialization of communities— they are a fabric, or a piece of wood, a residue— frames the expulsion of "inhabitantes ill" not just as a choice, but a mandate of survival. This speech specifically highlights that these social parasites are all the more damaging for being born and raised within the community that they will destroy: the worm will consume the "self same timber" that it was bred in, as will the moth and its cloth.

I argue that reading these plays in conjunction with *Nice Wanton* allows us to focus on the pedagogy of prospective witnessing taught to audiences through both onstage communal figures and the temporal structures of these interludes. While *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* simply uses the image of social consumption as an introductory threat, both *Enough is as Good as a Feast* and *The Longer Thou Lives the More Fool thou Art* show this collective failure in practice. In both plays, community spokesmen appear as reactive rather than prospective: unlike Eulalia, they appear to narrate their findings and express concern only when the problem is unsolvable by community intervention. Since they are not able to pre-emptively see the way that the audience

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[192] For example, in *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* the vice 'No Good Neighborhood' is portrayed as a predatory immigrant landlord.
[193] All citations are taken from George Wapull, *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, ed. Peter Happe, Malone Society Reprints (Manchester University Press, 2012). *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* was entered into the Stationer's Company and printed by Hugh Jackson in 1576; as Happe notes, given the lack of knowledge about Wapull, the play could have been written and/or performed several years before its printing date (viii-xi).

can, the elliptical 'flash forward' structure of these pageants turns to a future where reactive neighbor action is too late to save the community as a whole, and they must revert to an all-consuming plague as a tool of social correction. This plague concludes these plays as a sort of local apocalypse— a tool of retribution from the commons that still collapses any possible communal future within the play. If *Nice Wanton* uses prospective witnessing to prompt audience into a judgement that aligns with the communal triumph of the play, then William Wager's *Enough is as Good as a Feast* and *The Longer Thou Livest, the More Fool thou Art* demonstrate the consequences of failing to prospectively witness communal events.

In *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*, a single character named "People" emerges to represent the entirety of the community where the central sinner character Moros lives. In the first half of the play, Moros is a youth who spurns intervention by the onstage Virtues and falls in with a crowd of Vices instead. By the end of the play, Moros has grown so powerful and so ruled by his Vices that by the time that People comes forward, Moros' iniquity has spread to all pillars of the community. People gives a literal ABC's of community leaders who have been converted to various degrees of evil by Moros, reciting a kind of criminalized village people:

> Syr Anthony Arrogant Auditour,
> Bartilmew brybor, Bayly,
> Clement Catchpole, Cofferer,
> Diuision double faced dauie,
> Edmund enuiouse chiefe of the Eawery,
> Fabian falshode his head farmer,
> Gregory gorbely the goutie,
> Gouerneth the grayne in the garner,
> Haunce Haserder the horsekeper is,
> Iames the iust is the cheife Iudge,
> Leonard Lecherous is man of law, I wisse,
> Kenolme the knaue is in cokery no drudge,
> Martin the murtherer maister of musicke,
> Nicoll neuer thrift, the Notary,

Owen ouerwhart, Master in Phisicke,
Quintine the quaffer, for nothing necessary,
Rafe Ruffian, the rude raylour,
Steuen sturdy Master Suruayer,
Thomas the theefe, his cheefe tailour,
William witlesse, the great warriour (1715-1734).[194]

These names include both a profession (notary, tailor, chief justice) and an alliterative last name
that denotes their behavior, which runs from deadly sin (arrogance, envy, falsehood) to tangible
earthly crime (murder, theft, bribery). These men are not sorted by their status in the community,
nor by the severity of their actions; instead, they are alphabetically lumped together as a
transgressive mass, proof in bulk that the town has been thoroughly contaminated. Indeed, the
lack of local recourse available to People is demonstrated by the inclusion of names like
"Bartilmew brybor, Bayly," and "Iames the iust is the cheife Iudge," figures who are supposed to
represent community security but instead are tainted by bribery.[195]

Stripped of these communal avenues of justice, People instead calls upon God to punish
their community via plague, saying that earthly remedy cannot solve this "calamitie":

Unto God only wee referre our cause
Humbly we commit all to his iudgment
Wee haue offended him and his holy lawes
Therfore are wee worthy of this punishment (1669-1672).

The use of "we" in these lines makes unclear People's logic of retributive plagues: by reading
the list of 'infected' citizens, People seems to separate themselves from this mass. However, the
use of 'we' signals that People represents a community inextricable from Moros and this list—
that the "punishment" of the plague they summoned also falls upon them.

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[194] All citations from *The Longer Thou Livest The More Fool Thou Art* and *Enough is As Good As A Feast* are taken from W. Wager, *The Longer Thou Livest and Enough Is As Good As A Feast* ed. R. Mark Benbow (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1967).
[195] Given the gist of the list as a whole, I'm assuming that the "just" in "James the Just is chief Judge" is meant to be ironic.

The same process occurs in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, which, true to its title,

focuses on the evils of greed. Here the central antihero is Worldly Man, a cruel landlord who

exploits his servants and evicts his neediest tenants in order to build newer and larger buildings

on their property. The sense of tangible earthly community in the interlude is underscored by a

focus on local real estate; the moral disintegration of Worldly Man's domain can be tracked with

the eviction of his 'local' tenants and conversion of their homes. Rather than a single embodied

'People,' *Enough is as Good as a Feast* features three separate citizens named Hireling, Tenant

and Servant, who each represent modes of financial precarity caused by Worldly Man's greed.

As these men convene to share their grievances, Tenant's lament for his pending eviction

particularly frames Wordly Man's actions as injuries to a sense of community health and history.

Speaking in a designated "Cotswolde speech," Tenant rails against the "shameful zorte" of

strangers that "are placed now in England, and that in every porte/ That we, our wives and

children, no houses can get/Wherein we may live, such a price on them is zet" (981-988).[196] The

"shameful zorte" of strangers that Tenant gestures to were likely the thousands of Flemish

immigrants that arrived in England during the Reformation; the marked 'Englishness' of

Tenant's speech and his xenophobia cast Worldly Man as both a native-born scourge and a

means through which foreign bodies are able to infiltrate the community.[197] While Worldly

Man's decision to raise rent prices and evict tenants in favor of wealthier newcomers is not

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[196] While Benbow notes that Tenant uses the Gloucestershire dialect for "comic rusticity," Tenant's accent also frames Tenant's lament as a local vs. international conflict, the country rustic against global economy. This replacement of f's with v's is now called "Mummerset" or "cod-rustic"- see the characters Hob and Lob in *Cambises* or the cast of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. Janette Dillon, *Language and Stage in Medieval and Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 138-9.
[197] Dillon, *Language and Stage*, 138-9.

criminal, his rapacity is framed as a kind of local betrayal that privileges his individual wealth over a homogenous and continuous sense of communal identity or heath.[198]

In a parallel conclusion to *The Longer Thou Livest, The More Fool Thou Art*, *Enough is as Good as a Feast* frames a divine plague as the only weapon left to defeat a corrupting force like Worldly Man. Hireling, Tenant and Servant, faced with no earthly recourse and dismissed by Worldly Man's steward Covetousness, call for a plague to punish Worldly Man and halt his actions. Their repeated calls frame the plague as an embodied champion or moral test for the village; Hireling wishes "that the plague cut the throte of him for me," while later imagining the plague as divine excision that "root the posteritie" of the unrighteous (933,1062-3). However, when God's Plague actually appears onstage, he details a process of havoc and death that seems more like an apocalypse than an excision: "I go through all townes and Cittyes strongly walled/ Striking to death and that without all mercy" (1156-7). While the Hireling, Tenant and Servant do not implicate themselves as possible victims of this plague in the same way as People does in *The Longer Thou Livest*, they also never reappear to comment on the efficacy of God's Plague as a tool of social correction.

Instead, Satan appears to sermonize gleefully over Worldly Man as a "sink of sin," while corresponding Virtues seem to agree with Satan's pronouncement. "He that touch pitch shall be defiled with the same," sermonizes Contentation, framing the worldly community depicted onstage as a kind of claustrophobic space where proximity alone could lead to damnation (1472). This open-ended interpretation of the plague certainly resonates with public uncertainty and fear over the mode of dissemination of the many different outbreaks of plague in Tudor England.

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[198] Worldly Man's choice to deal with foreign bodies and trade also prefigures him as the sort of plague-catching mercantilist figure that Jonathan Gil Harris tracks in later Elizabethan plays like *Volpone*, in which "the border between economics and pathology" was made porous; *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 109-110.

God's Plague in *The Longer Thou Livest* and *Enough is as Good as a Feast* carry swords, striking down their vice-ridden foes with invisible blows that begin a drawn-out process of infirm death. This image of the plague as the intentional blow of an invisible, divine weapon was echoed in many Tudor plague tracks, but these accounts grappled at the same time with the language of venom and material contagion.[199] *Enough is As Good as a Feast* stages these conflicting paradigms by performing the plague as an embodied revenger while simultaneously glossing Worldly Man and his followers as "sinks of sin," "corrupt consciousness" that imagine a more porous and communal consideration of spiritual value and decay. The disappearance of Hireling, Tenant, Servant and People leaves uncertain if the weapon of God's Plague is a single sword or a more communicable tool.

The communities in both *The Longer Thou Livest* and *Enough is As Good as Feast* thus serve to demonstrate the futility of human intervention on the other side of the narrative ellipsis. Both Moros and Worldly Man jump forward in time over the course of their pageant, leaving and returning with a growing beard or more ostentatious clothing to show their progression into adulthood and their exponential spiritual corruption. The onstage interventions of People, Hireling, Tenant and Servant are reactive rather than proactive; the only future for their community is the pyrrhic victory of a divine plague. Unlike Eulalia in *Nice Wanton*, the neighbors of *The Longer Thou Livest* and *Enough is As Good as Feast* are not connected to the overarching critical narrative of the play— they cannot speak or act prospectively. As Heather Hirschfield has argued, the doctrinal lessons of *Enough is as Good as a Feast* emphasize human inefficiency; the characters onstage cannot do the elusive 'enough' either for their own salvation

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[199] Gil Harris tracks the dichotomy between the understanding of the plague as the punitive strike of God's will and its medical understanding as a "thing in motion" in the early seventeenth century. *Sick Economies*, 110-114.

or for the correction of others.[200] By the time that Moros and Worldly Man unequivocally demonstrate their powers for chaos, their neighbors can only end their communities, rather than redeem them. The audience are thus sent on a unique time-travelling journey, not just to the death of the antagonist and the end of the community, but to the end of earthly time. As I've noted above, both plays end without any of their human communities visible on stage; instead, the play can only turn to heavenly or devilish spokespeople to whisk the audience into abstract discussion of good and evil.

In contrast, Ulpian Fullwell's *Like Will to Like* demonstrates how prospective witnessing may obviate that apocalyptic future. The opening of *Like Will to Like* advertises this providential mode of encountering the play:

Heerin as it were in a glasse see you may:
the aduauncement of vertue and of vice the decay,
To what ruin ruffins and roisters are brought,
You may heer see of them the finall end:
Begging is the best though that end be naught.
But hanging is woorse if they doo not amend (B2^v-B2^r).[201]

Without disclosing the specific details of the plot, the prologue solicits the audience with its own ending. This collapse of the narrative arc of performance offers a narrative "in a glasse": either the premonitory glass of a magic mirror, or the promise of optical science. The term "glasse" was used in the mid-sixteenth century to signify a wide variety tools for sharpening vision, from glass for spectacles, to mirrors, to magic items like crystal balls.[202] The use of "glasse" as a tool of providential correction is also used throughout Calvin's *Institutes*, usually in direct reference to 1

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[200] Hirschfield, *The End of Satisfaction: Drama and Repentance in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 104-5.

[201] Ulpian Fulwell and John Stephen Farmer, *The Dramatic Writings of Ulpian Fulwell, Comprising Like Will to like, Note-Book and Word-List* (Guildford, Eng.: C.W. Traylen, 1966). All quotations contain manuscript designations that are cited parenthetically. *Like Will to Like* was printed in 1568 in London by Edward Alde.

[202] "glass, n.1". OED Online. June 2018. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/78752 (accessed June 5th, 2018).

Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."[203]

While the biblical passage imagines a defective looking glass as an apt metaphor for the limitation of human sight on earth, *Like Will to Like* repurposes this glass as a usable tool for the earthly realm, a kind of modified and diluted imitation of divine providence.[204] This prologue offers itself as a narrative adaptation of the divine providential gaze— the ability to not only see into the future, but to move in 'real time' with the judicious weight of that foreknowledge. This foreknowledge is not touted with the goal of repentance, but with containment and prosecution. The "ruin" that the audience witnesses may take two paths, though one is already foreclosed; begging is dismissed in the same line that it is introduced, since "that end be naught." The conditional phrasing of the final line, that "hanging is worse if they do not amend," gives the illusion of a general aphorism while actually functioning as the predictive conclusion of the play, made obvious by the foreclosure of begging.

The remainder of *Like Will to Like* is organized as a kind of criminal pageant, with 'Nicholas Newfangle,' the devil's apprentice, acting as comic moderator for a parade of rogues, thieves, and other communal threats. *Like Will to Like* brings the list of criminalized citizens from *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* to the stage, and the audience can revel in their comedy while standing assured of their ultimate dispatch. It's surprising how little the play

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[203] Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. Henry Beveridge (Hendrickson Publishers, 2008). In Book 3, Chapter 2, Section 20, Calvin cites Corinthians 13:12, noting that Paul intimates "how very minute a portion of divine wisdom is given to us in the present life": *Institutes*, 368.

[204] The correctional "glass" or "mirror of folly" was also used in several late sixteenth century Puritan broadsides and pamphlets among them Stephen Batman's *A christall glasse of christian reformation wherein the godly maye beholde the coloured abuses vsed in this our present tyme (*1569), who included abstracted woodcuts of vice like Wrath and Sloth that he guided the viewer through. These written mirrors showed "by means of invented example, the concrete relevance of one or more sins," though I argue that they lacked the ability to somatically direct audience attention to the extent of these moral interludes; Herbert Grabes, *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-Imagery in Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 56-57.

is concerned with the criminal antics of its main chorus, even as it bears witness to the crimes being inflicted on its offstage community. Indeed, the audience is often made to stand in for this community. On their first entrance, Cuthbert Cutpurse and Pierce Pickpurse announce that they have spent the previous scene robbing the audience.

> By Gogs wounds it dooth me good to the hart:
> to see how clenly I plaid this parte.
> While they stood thrusting togither in the throng:
> I began to goe them among.
> And with this knife which heere you doo see:
> I cut away his purse clenly (C3ʳ).

The audience may be set up as marks, a "thrusting . . . throng" that are convenient to rob, but their position as prospective witnesses positions this bustling criminality as funny rather than threatening. Over the course of the play, Nicholas Newfangle lies, cheats and deceives these criminals to execution while posing as their neighbor, functioning as a hybrid of vices like Iniquity and Worldly Shame and 'virtuous' characters like Eulalia. When the judge, Severity, appears onstage, he greets Nicholas a source of news: "Now freend it appeereth vnto me," he begins: "That you haue been a trauailer of the Cuntrie /And such as doo trauaile doo heare of things doon . . . How say you my freend can you tel any newes?" (D2ᵛ). Much like the upright Daniel in *Nice Wanton*, Severity appears as a deliverance system of earthly justice, introducing himself with speech about the importance of upright judges "appointed . . . to suppress evil-doers,/not for hatred nor yet for malice/but to advance virtue and suppress vice" (Dᵛ-D2ᶠ) .

While Daniel manages to recognize the disguised Vice in his midst and Severity doesn't, both serve as a representative of state power who appear briefly to translate the work performed by locals into official channels of law and judgement. While Nicholas is leading Severity to the two criminals, he notes, "Lo noble Seueritie these be they without doubt/On whom this rumor of the thievery is gon about" (Eᵛ). Nicholas' intimation that Cuthbert Cutpurse and Pierce

Pickpurse are the subject of local rumor echoes Worldly Shame's taunt to Eulalia in *Nice Wanton* that "Every man said that thy daughter was a strong whore /And thy son a strong thief and murderer too." While those who "rumour" about Cuthber Cutpurse or Pierce Pickpurse do not appear onstage, Nicholas wields their social judgement as a weapon.

Like Ismael and Dalilah, Cuthbert and Pierce's arrests are a least partially based on communal consensus. Yet, given the foreordained end of these criminals, the play celebrates rather than muses over the clearly corrupt means through which Nicholas gets them to the gallows. While delivering his gallows speech, Cuthbert Cutperse diverts to a moralizing plea that could have been delivered by Ismael in *Nice Wanton*:

> For I to you all a mirrour may be.
> I haue been daintily and delicately bred,
> But nothing at all in vertues lore . . .
> Note well the end of me therfore.
> And you that fathers and Mothers be:
> Bring not vp your Children in to much libertie (E^r).

Cuthbert's plea to act as a "mirror" hearkens back to the prologue, to the mirror or "glasse" of the prologue that the audience has already been shown. While Cuthbert attempts to make his death a pedagogical moment, his execution also reminds the audience that they have foreknowledge that he doesn't— that his death is created by the conditions of the prologue rather than the conditions of his childhood. *Like Will to Like* thus provides a different mode of portraying the bitter fruits of criminality, a revelry in the comic chaos that also places the audience beyond the linear narrative of the play. The audience's ability to be prospective witnesses allows the play to end with the gallows instead of the plague.

These interludes—*Nice Wanton*, *Like Will to Like*, *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, and *Tide Tarrieth No Man*—demonstrate a shifting audience relationship with time: a desire to identify the work of spectatorship as providential. In my previous chapter, I explored how the

temporal complexity of the York Corpus Christi plays, in which divine and earthly time are productively comingled, brings a diverse range of minor biblical characters into the orbit of the audience and whose quiet resistance thus offered them opportunities for recognition and empathy. By offering their audiences a providential viewpoint, these Tudor interludes instead collapse or flatten time, using narrative ellipses to offer their audiences the simplicity of a divine "continual present" on earth. This flattening might stem from a broader cultural desire to homogenize the Catholic vision of richly "warped" or "gathered" time, where secular life could be "coloured by the placement in relation to higher time."[205] Protestants, and especially Calvinists, sought to homogenize time, so that the sacred was moved out of specific dates or places and into internal belief.[206] However, prospective witnessing also offers a new form of controlling audience engagement; these interludes *show* rather than *tell* the mode of engagement necessary to understand, celebrate, or save its onstage community. This mode of prospective witnessing casts theatrical engagement as literally world-making, endowing its audience with the ability to see and judge the end of a crime narrative at its beginning. However, this ability also forecloses the interpretive possibilities of the audience; they are locked into the narrative arc the interlude presents.

When activated within the racism of the contemporary American suburb, the world-making of prospective witnessing can have terrible consequences. Kim L. Anderson has traced the connection between vigilance and vigilantism in contemporary Neighborhood Watch programs, arguing that the program centers on activating "narcissistic altruism," a state where the desire to care for or help the community is distorted by prejudice and self-deception: what

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[205] Taylor, 55. For the reformation of time in England, see also John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford, 1992).

[206] Sommerville, 8; Allison Chapman has also charted the rise of alternate modes of organizing time with astrology in "Making Time: Astrology, Almanacs and English Protestantism" *Renaissance Quarterly* 60:4 (2007), 1257-1290.

Ahmed has identified as the belief in the "heroic we" that values particular lives over others.[207]

George Zimmerman defended his murder of Trayvon Martin through a warped lens of heroism, imagining himself as the valiant defender of his white female neighbors as well as of his community as a whole, which was being besieged by vandalism and "suspicious persons."[208] That warped lens was at least partially created by prospective witnessing: the centering of individual "suspiciousness" that becomes the organizing principle of perceiving reality while surveilling. Zimmerman's actions were unquestionably driven by his own virulent racism; however, the pedagogy of Neighborhood Watch offers channels through which the social prejudices of its members are translated into expressions of protective heroism. Much like *Nice Wanton*'s conclusive celebration of "help[ing]" neighbors as "the practice of a conscience pure," surveillance is cast as a form of care or love. To borrow from the Townley *Mactacio Abel*, prospective witnessing, whether activated on the Tudor stage or American suburb, offers a morally troubling model of what it might look like to indeed be our brother's keepers.

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[207] Kim L. Anderson, "No Heroes Here: Neighborhood Watchfulness and the Role of Narcissistic Altruism in the Killing of Trayvon Martin," in *Trayvon Martin, Race, and American Justice: Writing Wrong*, ed. Kenneth J Fasching-Varner et al. (Rotterdam, Netherlands; Boston: Sense Publishers, 2014), 20. Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 20.
[208] Anderson, "No Heroes Here," 21.

Chapter 3 : Crowdsourcing Justice: *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and True Crime Publics in Early Modern Domestic Tragedy

Reading the early critical history of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (c.1601) is a fairly entertaining journey through creative editorial insults. R.A. Law labeled the play as "crude and gruesome beyond redemption," while W. W. Greg condemned it as an "extraordinarily wooden bombast of grotesque commonplace." [209] Perhaps because of this early disparagement, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* remains one of the least-read early modern domestic tragedies, or plays that dramatize popular contemporary events within a non-aristocratic household.[210] *Two Lamentable Tragedies* resembles many early modern domestic tragedies like *Arden of Faversham* (c.1592), *A Warning for Faire Women* (1599), or *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608) in that it stages a dramatic adaptation of a true-crime narrative or other notorious domestic news story circulating within the public sphere.[211] The play depicts the 1594 murder of chandler Robert Beech by his neighbor Thomas Merry. After killing Beech in his own home, Thomas Merry is driven by paranoia into further acts of onstage violence; he kills Beech's apprentice Winchester

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[209] Robert Adger Law, "Yarington's Two Lamentable Tragedies," *Modern Language Review* 5 (1910): 168; W. W. Greg, "pt II Commentary" *Henslowe's Diary* (London: A.H. Bullen, 1904), 209. Ronald Bayne also described the Thomas Merry portions of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* as "bald and pedestrian" drama that takes "out of prose pamphlets all that is trivial and brutal with unintelligent accuracy": *The Cambridge History of English Literature* vol 5 ed. A.W. Ward et al (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 363.

[210] While there has been an influx of critical work on *Two Lamentable Tragedies* in the last ten years, the play still has no published critical edition, and has not been anthologized since its facsimile appearance in A.H. Bullen's *Old English Plays*. An excerpted version, "The Tragedy of Thomas Merry" was staged in modern performance for the first time in 2014 at the University College London. Freyja Cox Jensen and Emma Whipday have described their experiences working with two different casts on the play in "'Original Practices,' Lost Plays and Historical Imagination: Staging 'The Tragedy of Thomas Merry,'" *Shakespeare Bulletin* 35:2 (Summer 2017): 289-307.

[211] As Lena Cowen Orlin notes, domestic tragedy varies in the socioeconomic status of its characters, but cohere "in locating their protagonists in the centers of their own authority and responsibility, their households": "Domestic Tragedy: Private Life on the Public Stage," in *A New Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Thomas Warren Hopper (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2017), 391.

to silence him and then dismembers Beech's corpse, scattering the parts around London. Thomas' sister Rachel struggles with her role as an unwilling accomplice, and Thomas' servant Harry Williams ultimately rebels against his master, confessing to the authorities and condemning Thomas and Rachel to a final on-stage execution. While these events are narrated by the allegorical figures of Truth, Avarice, and Homicide, the play also contains a near-Dickensian cast of peripheral Londoners who investigate Beech's disappearance: Beech's near-deaf landlord Loney, a pair of wisecracking watermen, three neighbors who take on the part of amateur detectives, a gentleman, and a particularly intelligent spaniel.[212]

Greg and Law's denunciation of both the content and form of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* partially echoes criticism of early modern crime writing and theater in general that denounced the lure of the "grotesque commonplace," as well as writers' defenses against possible accusations that their works were both morally and aesthetically distasteful. When adding the story of Alice Arden's murder of her husband to his *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587), Holinshed, for example, notes that the "horribleness" of Arden's murder overrides the impulse that "otherwise may seem to be but a private matter, and therefore, as it were, impertinent to this history."[213] Lena Cowen Orlin has focused on Holinshed's gestures toward upholding "the traditional hierarchical distinction between the public and domestic sphere," a distinction that domestic tragedy 'impertinently' transgressed in the late sixteenth century.[214] Authors disseminating true crime narratives also sought to defend themselves against claims that

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[212] As per the title, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* contains a second interwoven plot, an Italian melodrama featuring an evil uncle Fallerio conspiring to kill his nephews. For the sake of brevity this chapter only focuses on the 'Thomas Merry' plot, especially since it's likely that this narrative was originally performed on its own.
[213] Raphael Holinshed, *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, 6 vols. (London, 1587), 1062. Reprinted in Martin White and Tom Lockwood, eds., *Arden of Faversham* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), 113.
[214] Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 15.

consumers sought out their texts out of voyeurism or titillation. For example, Thomas Johnson's compendium of recent English crimes, bombastically titled *A World of Wonders, A Masse of Murders, a Coiue of Cosonages* (1595), attempted to ward off any accusations of sensationalism on the title page: the pamphlet is specifically not "imagined . . . to delight vaine heads *ciese,* nor practised *trans mare* to breed trueth *cum ambiguitate,* but committed even at home *revera,* and may be proved *cum honestat.*" [215] Johnson's creativeuse of adverbial latin and his protestations of local utility sought to frame his book as a highbrow endeavor meant for guidance or religious instruction rather than titillation. The text, as he argued somewhat unconvincingly in his introduction, is "a pretious glass to see the frailties of man," rather than a salacious handbook of local lore and crime.[216] Arthur Golding's pamphlet on the murder of George Saunders most explicitly addresses the dangers of using true-crime narratives as entertainment:

> Moreouer, when God bringeth such matters vpon the stage, vnto [the] open face of the world: It is not to the intent that men should gaze and wonder at the persons, as byrdes do at an Owle, not that they should delight them selues & others with the fond & peradventure sinister reporting of them.[217]

Golding's diatribe on the dangers of delighting in "fond" and "sinister" reporting seemingly absolves his own crime writing, ignoring the thin line between his pamphlet's purported goal of the "satisfying of the mind" and his denunciation of those "curious appetites as are more inquisitiue of other folkes offences than hastie to redresse their owne."[218] Golding and Johnson's explicit statements of their lofty intentions also serve to exculpate them by pointing to the extent

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[215] Thomas Johnson, *A World of Wonders,* sig. A1ʳ.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Arthur Golding, *A Briefe Discourse of the Late Murther of Master George Saunders, a Worshipfull Citizen of London and of the Apprehension, Arreignement, and Execution of the Principall and Accessaries of the Same,* (London, 1573).
[218] Ibid.

to which the motivations of readers were largely out of pamphlet writers' hands; their writing

might be "not imagined . . . to delight," but it might have delighted anyway.

In performance, domestic tragedies often acknowledged this ethical tightrope in the

prologue or induction by drawing attention to the truth of their narrative while simultaneously

framing this 'truth' as a kind of collective mourning rather than a public dissection. For example,

A *Warning for Faire Women* opens with the allegorical narrator Tragedy noting to the audience

that:

> My Scene is London, native and your own,
> I sigh to think my subject too well known,
> I am not feigned: many now in this round,
> Once to behold me in sad tears were drowned (1.87-90).[219]

This rhetoric of overwhelming tears and lamentation is echoed in *The Yorkshire Tragedy*, which

advertises itself as "not so new as Lamentable and true," and most rigorously in *Two Lamentable*

Tragedies, where Truth, Homicide and Avarice struggle for control over the stage. Truth

banishes Homicide and Avarice as "sad, greedie, gaping, hungrie Canibals/ That joy to practice

other's miseries," turning to solicit the audience to "prepare your teare bedecked eyes . . . Truth

rues to tell the truth of these laments" (A^3, 1.64-5, 66, 71).[220] The hyperbolic lament of Truth

presents tears as the counterbalance to the uncomfortable possibility that members of the

audience, too, are the "sad, greedie, gaping, hungrie Canibals" that flock to the theater to see the

misery of others.

This chapter argues that despite its formal shortcomings, or perhaps because of them,

Two Lamentable Tragedies offers a new mode of framing audience engagement in domestic

tragedy. Over the course of the play, Beech's murder is solved, and his hidden corpse retrieved,

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[219] All citations of *A Warning for Fair Women* are taken from Charles Cannon, *A Warning for Fair Women: A Critical Edition* (Paris: Moulton, 1975)
[220] For quotation and citation of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* see n.5.

by concerned neighbors and galvanized London citizens rather than official members of law enforcement. This communal participation in a staged criminal investigation certainly stands parallel to a historical rise of participatory justice in early modern England.[221] However, the civilian work in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also reminds its audience of their own role in the textual (if not physical) reassembling of this narrative. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* actively confronts its audience as a living component of the narrative ecology of this murder narrative; they have consumed, edited, circulated and performed the criminal narrative of Beech's murder even before it was adapted for the stage, in the form of ballads, broadsides, and gossip. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* acknowledges that work and holds the audience accountable for it. While the charming detection of the civilians onstage is framed as bumbling but heroic, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also stages the consequences of public participation and interpretation in Thomas Merry's case.

I thus seek to add to and extend current critical assessments of domestic tragedy audiences as voyeuristic. *Arden of Faversham* stands as the central text of this characterization, with its "marrow prying neighbours" as avatars for the voyeuristic desires of the audience (1.135).[222] Voyeurism frames spectatorship as a one-way street, the audience perched on the

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[221] Lorna Hutson has examined traces of a communal justice system in early modern drama, pushing back against the assumption of Foucauldian models of discipline in *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 64-103. The English jury system, Hutson argues, produced an entirely different juridical epistemology than the inquisitorial system the Foucault imagines; juries, rather than being passive recipients of unquestionable evidence, exercised judgment in evaluating witness testimony, and questioned "felonious intent," even to the point of disagreeing with the ruling judge. This more democratic spread of civil responsibility, Hutson posits, leads to a rise in amateur detectives onstage; "we could perhaps say, out of the forensic structure of the Renaissance detective plot emerges not Sherlock Holmes, but Hamlet": *The Invention of Suspicion,* 103. See also Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Cynthia Herrup, *The Common Peace : Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[222] Cowen Orlin argues that Arden stages "a house yielding its secrets up to observers," a plot in which the audience are positioned as the 'fourth wall' of the drama; *Private Matters and Public Culture,* 9-10. Emma Whipday amends this placement of the audience, arguing that they do not represent the "fourth wall," but instead peer *over* the fourth wall, their prying curiosity and allyship with Alice Arden's neighbors justified by the criminal activities within;

fourth wall and implicated or confronted in performance only through elective association with onstage figures; it is, as Cowen Orlin has demonstrated, the spectatorial desire to "see through walls, to discover the intimate secrets of conjugal relationships. . . to participate in the communal restoration of the preferred order of domestic things."[223] However, the audience of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is implicated as complicit not only for their present curiosity or desire, but also for their past work; they "participate" in a "communal restoration" of order through their spectatorship within the theater, but they are also reminded of their past participation. If *Two Lamentable Tragedies* allows audiences to see into Thomas Merry's house, it also confronts them with depictions of their own public life and actions. In my last chapter on surveillance in Tudor moral interludes, I examined structures of "prospective witnessing" taught to audiences through onstage neighbors, communities interested in tracking and predicting future threats to their neighborhood. In domestic tragedies, the chorus portrayed onstage are responsive rather than predictive— their interests are less in surveillance and more in detection, in accruing knowledge about a criminal narrative that is currently unfolding or has already occurred.

This chapter first turns to contemporary true crime narratives and the discursive audiences that they create as a comparative model. I specifically examine *Serial*, a 2014 true-crime podcast that ignited a nationwide debate about the ethical behavior of true crime publics, or discursive groups that sought to master or solve a particular crime narrative through crowdsourced work. This chapter then turns to the textual origins of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, a narrative ecology of ballads, broadsides, and gossip about Thomas Merry's criminal narrative

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"'Marrow Prying Neighbours': Staging Domestic Space and Neighbourhood Surveillance in *Arden of Faversham*," *Cahiers Élisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 88, no.1 (2015): 95-110. The tendency to characterize Arden's audience as voyeuristic has extended to contemporary performance as well: see Niamh J. O'Leary, "True Crime Voyeurs: 'Arden of Faversham' at the RSC," *Early Modern Studies Journal* 6, no. 1 (August 2014): n.p.
[223] Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture*, 8.

that was dependent on public circulation and consumption. The process of gathering together

these narratives is literalized onstage in the civilians of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* that attempt

to piece Beech's dismembered body back together— an act of heroic stewardship that yet

reminds the audience of their own work with Beech's media "corpus." If Beech's body stands as

a site of public consumption or dispersal, then Rachel's body stands as both a condemnation of

public misinterpretation and a litmus test of guilt for the audience, a case study of passive

complicity that is ultimately damning within the fluid and contagious system of guilt that *Two*

Lamentable Tragedies envisions. In the final part of this chapter, I demonstrate how *Two*

Lamentable Tragedies helps us see these structures of complicity in other domestic tragedies.

These performances of true-crime narratives justified their stories and methods by making visible

the public work that helped create them— reminding audiences that they were just as liable to be

"sad, greedie, gaping, hungrie Canibals."

Serial and True Crime Publics

These concerns of early modern true crime narratives— that their work was frivolous,

grotesque, and ethically problematic— are echoed in contemporary debates surrounding the early

21st-century true crime boom. While the flexible genre of 'true crime' has existed across British

and American journalism and literature, from the Newgate *Calendar* to Truman Capote's *In Cold*

Blood, the 21st century saw an explosion in multimedia true crime narratives that were both

popular and newly highbrow. The expansion into multimedia genres like podcasts or Netflix

documentaries and the rise of social media sites like Facebook, Reddit, Twitter, and Tumblr

ushered new possibilities for public participation in and response to true crime narratives. In a

2016 denunciation of true crime "addicts," Michelle Dean addressed a growing population of

reporters, published writers, and anonymous civilians who are united in their dedication to reading, investigating or discussing criminal cases.[224] The problem with these "internet sleuths," Dean argues, is that their investigations are selfishly driven rituals of re-inscription, privileging personal curiosity and titillation over ethical questions of privacy and trauma. Dean's denunciation of these groups is one of many recent commentaries on the popularity of true crime as a genre, and its resulting tendency to promote crowdsourced forms of extrajudicial justice.[225] The terminology for this body of people who consume, respond, debate or otherwise contribute to the corpus of true crime has a wide and varied nomenclature, as shown above: they are "fans," "addicts," "vigilantes" or "internet sleuths." I argue that these groups should be framed as "true crime publics," discursive groups centered around a particular criminal case or narrative that display the following traits:

1. They are centered in a founding community of 'experts' or particularly immersed members but seek to inscribe more and more participants over time, forming a broader public. Participation is grounded in a widely accessible and affordable form of media, and so levels of passive or active participation vary widely.[226]

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[224] Michelle Dean, "'True Crime Addict' and the Serious Problem of Internet Sleuths" *The New Yorker* June 23d 2016. http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/true-crime-addict-and-the-problem-of-internet-sleuths.

[225] Other examples of suspicious readings of true crime and audience participation include Kathryn Shulz's examination the Netflix documentary *Making of a Murderer* and the resulting groundswell of public support for Stephen Avery, the defendant in a seemingly botched murder investigation. Shultz questions the journalistic ethics of the documentary makers, as well as the new vision of true crime as a highbrow genre that is "too intellectually serious to be thoughtless, too morally worthy to be cruel": "Dead Certainty: How *Making of a Murderer* Goes Wrong," *The New Yorker,* January 17th 2016, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/01/25/dead-certainty.

[226] My figuration of the move from communities to publics as a process of inscription outward is taken from Marlene Eberhart, Paul Yachnin and Amy Scott, "Introduction," in *Forms of Association: Making Publics in Early Modern Europe* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015): 2-3. I also rely on Stephen Wittek's exploration of a "proto-public sphere" in Early Modern London. Given that early modern true crime was at least partially enveloped within news culture, Wittek's framing of the news as creating a "meaningful present" is especially relevant. Wittek argues that the news created a sense of "continuous actuality" "a grand, ongoing conversation among an untold number of otherwise disconnected strangers." This sense of the 'discursive now' also drove true crime publics as they sought new information and revised old versions of information; Stephen Wittek, *The Media Players Shakespeare, Middleton, Jonson, and the Idea of News* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 11-12.

2. The work of true crime publics is defended as advocacy or other forms of extrajudicial ethical work, but participation is more often driven by curiosity, entertainment, and a sense of 'addictiveness.'[227]

3. The types of cases chosen by true crime publics are framed as narratively 'interesting' or 'complex.' They rarely focus on quotidian crimes like domestic abuse or structural violence against minority populations but instead center the 'intrusion' of crime into culturally or socioeconomically privileged spaces.[228]

4. As such, participation is less about justice and more about transparency or narrative mastery: fitting all pieces of existing evidence into a complete and seamless story. This often calls for iterative adaptations or revisions, as participants reinterpret and rewrite the crime narrative around gaps in knowledge into 'better' or 'more accurate' versions to suit new evidence or changing public opinion.

Of course, true crime publics, whether contemporary or early modern, serve as subsections of a broader public sphere; it is a "cluster . . . of relatively greater density of communication" that overlaps with many other publics.[229] In early modern London, the "cluster of communication" that developed around interest in Thomas Merry was also initially organized around the geographic space of London, just as contemporary true crime publics "cluster" around particular crime narratives but also virtual platforms like Reddit or podcasts.

One of the most salient contemporary examples of the work of true crime publics centers on *Serial*, the wildly successful American podcast created by WBEZ reporter Sarah Koenig as a spin-off of *This American Life*. In 1999, a Baltimore teenager named Hae Min Lee was murdered and her body dumped in Lincoln Park; after a short investigation, her ex-boyfriend Adnan Syed was tried and convicted for her murder, and currently still serves his life sentence in a Maryland

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[227] Alice Bolin has addressed this tension between 'addictiveness' and advocacy in "The Ethical Dilemma of Highbrow True Crime," *Vulture*, August 1, 2018, https://www.vulture.com/2018/08/true-crime-ethics.html.

[228] While early modern domestic tragedy obviously features domestic crime, the majority of them center crime that upsets the patriarchal order (i.e. wives killing husbands or servants killing masters). Frances Dolan terms this "the subordinate's plot": *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700* (Cornell University Press, 1994). While *The Yorkshire Tragedy* does feature a man killing his wife and children, the elevation of the narrative to drama stems more from the main's claims that he was possessed by demons.

[229] Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 37-8. Cited in Wittek, 14.

Correctional Facility. Koenig's podcast *Serial* returned to Hae Min Lee's case to explore whether

Syed had truly committed the crime. *Serial* was released weekly between October and December

of 2014 in 45-minute episodes. During these episodes, Koenig integrated tapes of her hours of

phone conversations with Syed from prison with interviews with friends, family and teachers,

documentary searches and her own introspective narration. By December 2014, near the end of

the first season, over 39 million people had listened to the podcast.[230] Of those 39 million, tens of

thousands debated with the narrative of Serial (and each other) on the Serial subreddit

/r/serialpodcast, an online community that hosts web conversations within the website Reddit.[231]

Posts begin threads of conversation, which can be upvoted or downvoted by users to receive

attention, and users can filter threads by their focus on a particular episode, or key term. As of

December 2014, over 33,000 reddit users subscribed to /r/serialpodcast, and over the course of

Koenig's 12-episode arc, thousands of posts recapped episodes, posted theories, and attempted to

move beyond the scope of Koenig's narration.[232] This online community also created an

enormous archive; users often attached trial documents, old newspaper stories, or user-made

graphs or maps of the facts of the case with their posts through Google Docs or WorldCloud.

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[230] Amy Roberts, "The 'Serial' Podcast by the Numbers." *CNN* December 23, 2014,
http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/18/showbiz/feat-serial-podcast-btn/. While those numbers reflect Serial's popularity during its initial episodes, as of November 2018, the first season has been downloaded over 240 million times. It remains one of the most downloaded podcasts in history.
[231] "/rserial: A Place to Discuss Serial, the Podcast" *Reddit* https://www.reddit.com/r/serialpodcast/.
The Encyclopedia of Social Media and Politics provides the following comprehensive introduction to the website Reddit: "Reddit is a social news and bookmarking site that allows users to submit links to stories, pictures, videos, or any other Web content, and have other users either vote them up or down. The structure of Reddit allows for the crowdsourcing of news and information by having users, not an editorial board, decide what will be the leading stories for readers . . . Like other social news and bookmarking sites, niche audiences tend to congregate around particular topics. While a great deal of Reddit's content is made up of funny images and memes, robust conversation (via comments) can happen on particular "subreddits" or topic threads related to an individual topic." Shayne Pepper, "Reddit," *Encyclopedia of Social Media and Politics*, ed. Kerric Harvey (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014):1064.
[232] For example, a sample post, "A 'Jen and Jay Did It' Theory" by the user "justforserial" lays out one possible narrative timeline, meticulously tracking all of the major pieces of evidence in the assumption that Adnan Syed was innocent and that two of Hae Min Lee's other acquaintances, Jay and Jen, murdered her together. Under the initial post, there are over 103 comments that agree or argue with the original poster.
https://www.reddit.com/r/serialpodcast/comments/2ljaud/a_jenn_jay_did_it_theory/.

This virtual space of the subreddit established a central community of dedicated *Serial* listeners and their interactions with the podcast, but the discussions on this website were constantly broadcast outward to a larger public base; those who weren't versed in Reddit discussions could often access the "best hits" of user theories and discussions, published by outside media sources.[233] While Serial is a podcast, and not a play, its narrative strength rested in its somatic power— by "giving voice" to the real defendants and witnesses in Syed's case, by mapping and re-tracing the steps of each of the people in the case, and by its framing as a 'live' and recursive narrative, one constantly shifting and updating based on new evidence. This live, somatic power has been lauded as part of its advocacy— that victims were allowed to speak for themselves against errors in the justice system.[234] However, this format also forged an audience who envisioned their participation as a bodily phenomenon. In this sense, the true crime public of *Serial* was created by re-performing the text of *Serial* in endless iterations, filling in gaps with explanations, motives, even imagined dialogue. Some who posted theories or explanations claimed to be old high school friends of the main defendant of *Serial*; while those identities were very rarely verified, these users placed themselves even more explicitly within the text, imagining themselves as offstage "characters" within the original case narrative.[235]

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[233] These articles were often formatted as 'listicles,' quoting wholesale comments or theories from Reddit and ranking or assessing them. See, for example, Pamela Engell, "Redditors are Trying to Solve a Murder that's At the Center of the Wildly Popular 'Serial' Podcast" *Business Insider* November 12th 2014 http://www.businessinsider.com/the-best-theories-about-the-serial-podcast-2014-11; Nate Jones, "Every 'Serial' Theory in Order of Plausibility," *Vulture* December 17th, 2014 http://www.vulture.com/2014/12/every-serial-theory-in-order-of-plausibility.html.

[234] For defenses of Serial as a project of extrajudicial justice, see LG McMurtry, "'I'm Not a Real Detective, I Just Play One on the Radio:' *Serial* as the Future of Audio Drama," *Journal of Popular Culture* 49:2 (2016): 306-324.

[235] For example, one post by user "sashabacha" titled "ADNAN IS A PSYCHOPATH" began with the claim "As one of Adnan's friends from many years ago, I (and some other good friends) have to say that I wasn't surprised that he was convicted." The post goes on to create a behind-the-scenes narrative of Adnan's psychopathic behavior. There are over 500 comments on this post, of different users either criticizing the anonymity of the poster and calling into question the veracity of this testimony, or encouraging the user to bring their story to Sarah Koenig, for it to be incorporated into the formal "canon" of S*erial*. reddit, accessed June 15, 2019, https://www.reddit.com/r/serialpodcast/comments/2k529r/adnan_is_a_psychopath_close_friends/.

As *Serial* ended, and the subreddit continued, this expanding public disturbed the boundaries of text and paratext, disrupting the limits that Koenig had placed on the archive of Serial's criminal narrative.[236] The motivations of this public became a topic of speculation in both public and academic discourses; attention shifted away from questioning the ethics of *Serial* the podcast and towards questioning the desires and work of *Serial* fans.[237] An *Atlantic* article titled "Is it Wrong to be Hooked on Serial?" tentatively offered the possibility that *Serial*'s entrancing but "disorienting" power had less to do with its producers and more to do with its heady community of listeners and the public that they had helped create.[238] This turn— from "is *Serial* bad?" to "is the way that we participate in the discourse surrounding *Serial* bad?" did not center the desires of the participants— their voyeuristic drive to peek inside the lives of 90's Baltimore teenagers and their traumas— but rather on their physical participation: listening, sharing, debating, sleuthing.

In a comment on a particularly popular Reddit post on /r/serialpodcast, user"fuchsialt" summed up what seemed to be the attitude of these thousands of international contributors:

> it's sort of freaking me out. but it's like a train wreck - I just can't look away. I don't know how to feel about it all . . . It's just . . . sad. For everyone. To have this play out, right here on this subreddit? sigh, I keep asking myself if I should feel guilty for refreshing this page as many times as I did but I think there's something valuable in here. Maybe?"[239]

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[236] In one instance, an ex-boyfriend of Hae's that Koenig had simply referred to as "Don" was widely held by a subsection of the *Serial* subreddit community to be the potential murderer. Subsequently, his personal details, including his full name, were leaked on Reddit, a process widely known as "doxxing." Doxxing is usually used as a form of online harassment, but the subreddit instead viewed this violation of privacy as a necessary move in the name of finding the truth about Adnan Syed. The Subreddit /r/serial subsequently enforced a strict "no doxing" rule, after the outrage over the release of Don's public information.

[237] For examples of academic study of Serial's audience, see Keri S. Boling and Kevin Hull, "*Undisclosed* Information—*Serial* Is *My Favorite Murder:* Examining Motivations in the True Crime Podcast Audience," *Journal of Radio and Audio Media* 25, no. 1 (2018): 92-108; Elizabeth Yardley, David Wilson and Morag Kennedy, "To Me It's Real Life: Secondary Victims of Homicide in Newer Media" *Victims & Offenders* 12 (2017): 467-496.

[238] Adrienne LaFrance, "Is It Wrong to Be Hooked on Serial?," *The Atlantic*, November 8, 2014, http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/11/is-it-wrong-to-be-hooked-on-serial/382500/.

[239] Fuschsialt, comment on thread "r/Serialpodcast - 'ADNAN IS A PSYCHOPATH' - Close Friends," reddit, accessed June 15, 2019, https://www.reddit.com/r/serialpodcast/comments/2k529r/adnan_is_a_psychopath_close_friends/cli5erf.

Fuchsialt's expression of guilty fascination first positions themselves as a witness to a terrible but fascinating event, but then turns to identify their own complicity; even the seemingly-passive act of "refreshing" the conversation threads acts as a consensual re-inscription into the work. Their vacillation between anxiety, guilt, and optimism demonstrates a kind of cyclical and driving mindset of true crime publics— that, amidst an invasive and ethically questionable process, there exists a fundamental truth and public good just out of reach.

The Narrative Ecology of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, Or The Problem of Beech's Body

The written "sigh" of Fuchsialt's comment elides with the opening of *A Warning for Faire Women*, as History notes to the audience that "my scene is London, native and your own/ I sigh to thinke, my subject is too well known"(1.1.87-88). The play's self-presentation as almost *too* soon and *too* painful resonates with the same paradoxical creative attraction and ethical revulsion surrounding contemporary true crime.[240] These two written "sighs" demonstrates this doubled moment of performative apprehension; both attempt to displace their complicity in this system of sensationalism, whilst simultaneously drawing attention to its presence. In turning to the public work that led to the creation of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, I seek to trace the same processes of interactive public inscription, dispersal, and consumption that I have defined as constitutive of true crime publics in my discussion of Serial. If previous readings of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* have centered on the claustrophobic and transactional organization of domestic spaces in the play,[241] or on the metropolitan fantasy of urban security provided by a

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[240] This paradox is best captured in a recent article concerning S-Town, a true-crime podcast produced by many of the same creators of Serial. "S-Town is a stunning podcast," Aja Romero writes, in a 5-star review: "it probably shouldn't have been made": "S-Town is a Stunning Podcast. It Probably Shouldn't Have Been Made," *Vox* April 1st, 2017, https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/3/30/15084224/s-town-review-controversial-podcast-privacy.
[241] Catherine Richardson examines the insular domestic spaces of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, specifically Thomas and Rachel Merry's house, arguing that the play seeks to refute Merry's certainty in the invisibility and inviolability of his own home; it instead demonstrates a "neighborhood theatre" that displays both facade and interior; Catherine

self-securing London landscape,[242] then my *Serial*-influenced reading centers the narrative

ecology of Thomas Merry's case, and its impact on audience engagement in *Two Lamentable*

Tragedies.[243] This web of ballads, broadsides, crime pamphlets, letters, and playtexts that

address Thomas Merry's murders offers an incomplete and uneven portrait of public engagement

with the crime narrative that became *Two Lamentable Tragedies*. Contemporary true crime like

Serial acts as a supplementary framework for theorizing the transhistorical discursive specificity

and ethical stakes of participating in a true crime public, traits that I've identified above.

This narrative ecology of Thomas Merry's murders is best begun with the

aforementioned crime compendium *A World of Wonders, A Masse of Murders, a Coiue of*

Cosonages (1595), Thomas Johnson's collection of recent 'true' crime reports that was published

only months after the murder of Robert Beech. These reports of crime and wonder varied in

length and specificity, from vague lines of hearsay to multi-page transcriptions of criminal

statements, and ranged in content from pickpocketing to serial murder. Johnson refers to the

murder of Beech in the final page of his text, detached from the neatly organized and sorted

criminal narratives:

> It shall be needlesse to reporte unto you the most hainous murther committed upon the
> Chaundlar neere broken Wharff in London, the matter beeing so fresh in memorie, the

Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England : The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester, GB: Manchester University Press, 2006), 129-138.

[242] Marissa Greenberg examines *Two Lamentable Tragedies* through an overarching study of metropolitan tragedy, the burgeoning conflict of urban London as a petri dish for new generic developments for drama and lyric alike. Greenberg argues that the play portrays a near-sentient cityscape that refuses to "aid and abet" offenses, providing the "fantasy of a secure metropolis" that comforts Londoners in a time of growing crime and uncertainty; Marissa Greenberg, *Metropolitan Tragedy: Genre, Justice, and the City in Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 37.

[243] I borrow the term "narrative ecology" from Emily O'Brien, who uses the term "print ecology" to envision the non-linear web of print and performance narratives published about the murder of Alice Arden's husband that included the domestic tragedy; *Arden of Faversham*. "*The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, True Crime, and the Literary Marketplace of the 1580's" *Shakespeare Studies* 45 (2017): 113–20.

male actor still hanging as a notable example to our eyes, a grief to the godly, a terrour to the wicked and reprobate"[244]

This final postscript stands out in both tone and style from Johnson's other meticulously detailed entries. In his turn to the second person, Johnson yields the floor to his reader, whose memory of and physical encounters with the narrative of this particular murder supersedes any additional research Johnson could provide. This moment of confrontation — "it shall be needless to report unto *you*"— turns into an invitation; both Johnson and his audience can gaze on the murderer's still-hanging body as "a notable example to *our* eyes." Johnson's assumption of knowledge (the reader knows all about this latest, famous murder) and locality (the reader lives in London) gestures to a local community of experts, particularly immersed London citizens who have likely attended Thomas and Rachel Merry's execution or lived through the local tumult of the murders.

Johnson's final passage also demonstrates the difficulty of tracking and categorizing the information spread from this immersed community to a broader true crime public, inscribed as it was on lived knowledge, oral transmission, and decomposable material. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is the only surviving narrative account within the web of ballads, broadsides, legal reports, prose accounts, and playtexts dedicated to chronicling the murder of Robert Beech. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* was first published in 1601 under the name of Rob Yarington, but Henslowe's diary records another dramatization of Beech's murder, written by playwrights John Day and William Haughton. The Admiral's Men performed this play, *The Tragedy of Thomas Merry (or, Beech's Tragedy)* in late 1599 or early 1600.[245] In addition to these playtexts, the

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[244] Thomas Johnson, *A World of Wonders*, sig. Gʳ. While Johnson doesn't mention Beech and Merry by name, the designation of Beech's profession and address and the specification of the *male* actor hanging in chains (Rachel, as a woman, would not have her corpse displayed in the same way) makes the identification unmistakable.

[245] Henslowe's diary records a payment to the same playwrights called *The Orphan's Tragedy*, and made two payments to Henry Chettle for a play called *The Italian Tragedy*, one in November 1599, and another in September 1601. Initially *Two Lamentable Tragedies* was framed as a compilation of *The Tragedy of Thomas Merry*, *The Italian Tragedy*, or *The Orphan's Tragedy*, with Robert Yarrington acting as the fictitious pseudonym under which Chettle pieced different elements of all three plays together. However, more recent criticism has debunked portions

transcript of the Stationers Registry in London records six texts published about the Merry

murders. The first two are noted on August 29th, 1594, only six days after the murder itself was

committed. The first is entitled "A true discourse of a most cruel and barbarous murther

committed by one THOMAS MERRY on the persons of ROBERT BEECHE and THOMAS

WINCHESTER his servant on ffridaie night the 23rd of August. Being Bartholemue Eve 1594.

Together with the order of his array[g]nement and execution." The second text strays more into

narrative fancy: "a ballad entitled BEECHE his ghost. complayninge on ye woeful murder

committed on him and THOMAS WINCHESTER his servant." These two texts, authored by the

same three men, provide an example of "flooding" a ballad market with differently-tiered

narratives of the same story: the ballad provided sensationalist hypotheses, while the pamphlet

would provide a more thorough, curated report of the legal proceedings surrounding the crime.[246]

In addition to these texts, three ballads were published featuring Rachel and Thomas Merry's

"lamentable end" featuring their last words at their execution at Smithfield on the 6th of

September, 1594.

      The publication of these ballads and broadsides, and their marketing to a London public,

profoundly alter the mindset of future audiences in terms of their ownership of and attitude

towards Merry's criminal narrative. When Johnson assumes that his readers already know all

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of this theory; not only are the two threads of the plot clearly written by the same person, but it's likely that *Two Lamentable Tragedies* was written very soon after the actual murder of Robert Beech; Pattenaude offers 1594-5 as the most likely writing dates, especially given the allusion within the play to the hangman Bull, which makes a post-1598 transcription improbable. It's is much more likely that Chettle and Day took the script of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and broke it up into two or more different plays to be performed by the Admiral's Men in 1599. For a comprehensive overview of the debate over *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and the lost *Beech's Tragedy,* see Hanabusa, xxiv-xxix.

[246] These three men, Thomas Gosson, Thomas Millington, and Thomas Dawson, would later divide to write the other texts on the Beech murder separately. Thomas Millington, who owned a bookshop under Saint Peter's Church in Cornhill, had previously collaborated on the *Jew of Malta*. As Robert Logan has noted in his exploration of Millington's business practices, Millington would often publish a more expensive pamphlet in tandem with a cheap ballad, ensuring market saturation at all levels of literacy and economic station; Robert Logan, "The Jew of Malta as Print Commodity" in *The Jew of Malta: A Critical Reader* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2013):135-6.

about Beech's murder, this assumed knowledge could come from dozens of different channels and could include various modes of consumption and work. Locals of Broken Wharf likely had memories of the murder and arrest itself, or witnessed the execution of Thomas and Rachel Merry on September 6th; many more spread information by word of mouth or written correspondence. Philip Gawdy was one such Londoner, writing to his brother of the swirling public narrative surrounding the case on August 29th, 1594, six days after the murder had been committed:

> Ther was a very fowle murder lately donne in London by an alehouse keepter, the tapster, his syster, his mayde, and a waterman consentinge all unto it. Ther was a chandler and his boye murdred. They are all apprehended and have confessed. The waterman shold have had iiij for carrying the dead body over the water, and left the one half behind.[247]

Gawdy demonstrates a basic knowledge of all parties involved, but errs in his assignation of blame: the watermen he mentions were not "consentinge" accomplices, but bystanders who retrieved the body after it had been dumped. Moreover, Rachel (the sister) and Harry Williams (the "mayde" or servant) did not participate in the murders themselves; indeed, Harry was never executed. If Thomas Johnson's later mention of Thomas Merry's murders in *A World of Wonders* addressed an immersed readership that had followed the shifting public narrative through Thomas and Rachel Merry's executions, then Philip Gawdy represents a more casual or passive consumer. Perhaps Gawdy heard overheard a ballad-singer, or received the news from friends or neighbors; he never returns to the subject, content to pass on the salacious urban news to his brother. The two gesture at varying levels of participation in spreading knowledge of or pulling others into a true crime public.

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[247] Philip Gawdy, *Letters of Philip Gawdy of West Harling, Norfolk, and of London to Various Members of His Family, 1579-1616 ed.* Isaac Herbert Jeayes and Francis Bridges Bickley (London: J. B. Nichols and Sons, 1906), 90. Cowen Orlin briefly discusses this letter in *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England*, 106-107.

This multi-textual corpus that birthed *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, dispersed and consumed among different strata of the London public, serves as an intriguing parallel to Beech's actual corpse. The last half of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is focused on hiding, dismembering, discarding, finding and reconfiguring Beech's mutilated corpse. After committing the murder, Merry drags Beech's body into his basement and hides it under a pile of wood, then dismembers the body onstage. He throws the torso and arms, bagged, into the Thames, and deposits the head and legs near Baynard's Castle (see figure 4). The head and legs are eventually found by a pair of strolling watermen, and the torso and arms found

Robert Beech's House (Thames Street/Broken Wharf)

Location of Beech's torso and legs (Paris Garden ditch)

Location of Beech's head and arms (the steps of Baynard Castle)

Location of The Rose playhouse
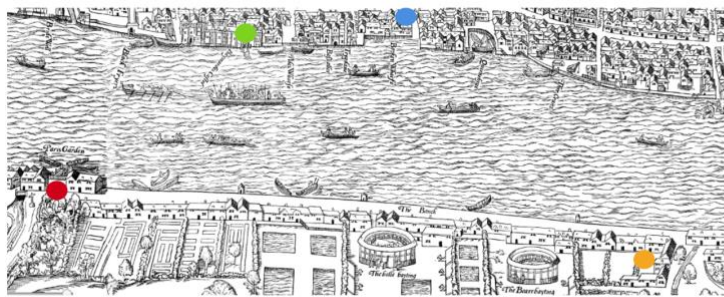
Civitas Londinvm (1562?) 2012. The Agas Map. The Map of Early Modern London. Jenstad, Janelle, ed. (MoEML, 2012), map.

Figure 4: Map of Beech's Body

by an inquisitive spaniel and his harassed gentleman owner; the various body parts are assembled in Frankenstein-ian fashion by Beech's neighbors in Scene 19. "Lay them together," Beech's neighbor Loney instructs: "see if they can make/Among them all a sound and solid man" (G2[r], 19.73-4). The play could easily be renamed, in the words of Catherine Richardson, "the problem of Beech's body."[248] During the first meeting of this group of neighbors, one notes that the news of the apprentice's murder and Beech's disappearance is "bruted all about the towne" (D3[r], 11.1) This verb "bruted," from the Middle English "britten," can mean "to dispense or disperse," yet it is more widely defined as "cutting in pieces," especially in relation to bodies, both animal and human.[249] Though these neighbors do not yet know that Beech is dead, this use of "bruted"

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[248] Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy*, 134.
[249] "Bruting (n.)" Oxford English Dictionary http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/24024. This mutation of the term is designated as a version of "britten (v.)" Oxford English Dictionary http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/23472#eid13480082.

briefly unites the epistemological and corpsical spread of Merry's victim, and unites the work of the onstage and offstage London citizens. Re-assembling Beech's corpse thus becomes a metaphor for the creation of the play itself: a process of gathering back together fragments of a body that relies heavily on the knowledge and complicity of the diverse local citizenry. Marissa Greenberg draws attention to the enormous cast of secondary characters who are involved in the discovery and re-piecing of Beech's body, arguing that the near-misses and hijinks involved in the final meeting of all of these characters demonstrate the ineptitude of London citizens in the face of crime, only rescued by the topography of the city itself.[250] My focus on these diverse minor characters as representations of a true crime public interprets their collisions and interdependencies as productive. These characters are indeed comically inept, but their heterogeneous gathering demonstrates a collective social engagement with the murders.

My focus on the onstage true crime public of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also builds on Catherine Richardson's concept of the play as "neighborhood theatre," a local community seeking out "uncivil" behavior in a series of street-side revelations.[251] The core of this neighborhood theatre is Beech's neighbor Loney, who finds the body of Beech's apprentice, along with a group of three unnamed neighbors. Together they act as amateur detectives, questioning and searching the space of their neighborhood for traces of blood that might give away clues toward the murderer's identity. Yet, in addition to Loney and his neighborly sidekicks, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* includes a number of London citizens outside this local nucleus who are inducted into the investigating public of the play. These outsiders are brought into the group through the scattered fragments of Beech's body, which must be returned back to his Broken Wharf neighbors (see figure 3). For example, two unnamed watermen, while walking

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[250] Greenberg, *Metropolitan Tragedy,* 39-41.
[251] Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy*, 141.

to the Baynard Castle stairs where their boat is lodged, stumble on a sack that contains Beech's

severed head and legs. Waterman 2 immediately assumes that these body parts are the discarded

remains of a state execution:

> *Waterman 2*: I tell you I am indifferent, but to be plaine with you, I am greeved to stumble at the hangman's budget
> *Waterman 1*: At the hangman's budget? Why, this is a sack.
> *Waterman 2*: And to speak indifferently, it is the hangman's budget, and because he thought too much of his labour to set this head upon the bridge, and the legs upon the gates, he flings them in the streete for men to stumble at. But if I get him in my boate, Ile so belabour hum in a stretcher, that he had better be stretched in one of his owne halfpenny halters: if this be a good conceit, why so, if not, why so.
> *Waterman 1*: Thou art decieved, this head hath many woundes, and hose and shoes remaining on the legs, Bull always strips all quartered traitors quite (G^v-G^r, 18.29-41).

Waterman 1's correction that a hangman would strip the clothes of a convicted traitor after

drawing and quartering him allows the two to realize that these parts are indeed evidence of a

murder, rather than the castoffs of a lazy hangman. His identification of a specific hangman,

Bull, has also been held up as a key clue for dating the play; Bull was a fairly famous London

hangman.[252] However, this watermen scene also demonstrates the level of familiarity that

everyday citizens have with the figures of London's criminal narratives. The watermen not only

know the name of their current hangman but also comically argue about the procedure of

executing and disposing of a traitorous corpse. It is this knowledge, likely gained by both

spectatorship and participation in the written and oral market of crime ballads and broadsides,

which allow these watermen to identify the circumstances surrounding their unusual findings.

 The entanglement that Waterman 2 imagines between the severed legs of traitors and the

stumbling legs of citizens underscores the permeability between the realms of criminal narrative

and urban life, an entanglement constructed as a kind of participatory fantasy of *Two Lamentable*

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[252] Bull is identified in a number of contemporary documents, among them Holinshed's 1538 records, "Tarlton's Jest," and a speech recorded by the Earl of Northampton at the trial of Garnet; Alfred Marks, *Tyburn Tree: Its History and Annals* (London: Brown, Langham & Company, 1908), 45.

Tragedies. This criminal fluency is what allows the Watermen to identify and return Beech's head and legs to Beech's neighbors. In showing their findings to Loney, Waterman 1 commands onlookers to "behold this head, these legs, these hose and shoes/ And see if they were Beech's, yea or no" (G1ᵛ, 19.32-33). As Richardson notes, communal knowledge is pivotal to solving this crime; Loney can recognize and identify Beech's limbs and clothes.[253] However, the citizen investigation of Beech's death also requires a constant pulling in of previous outsiders, to collaborate, contribute, and become members of a larger investigatory public. This focus in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* on inducting and pulling in new members is what demonstrates its growth from a community of neighbor detectives to a true crime public; much like the growing and dispersing web of media about Merry's crimes, the onstage citizens of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* are constantly beckoning outward, seeking to expand their circle, "oriented towards the future" and "seeking to expand their inclusiveness."[254] The Gentleman whose spaniel finds Beech's torso and arms brings them (with a company of Porters) to Loney for verification. After a positive identification, the Gentleman decides that he and his retinue will stay and join the group of citizen-detectives: "how say you Gentleman?" he asks, "perhaps the murther thus may come to light" (G3ᵛ, 14.117-118). Unlike Loney and his neighbors, the Gentleman's participatory zeal stems more from curiosity and titillation than concern for Beech or anger at 'uncivil' behavior within his neighborhood. The incorporation of the Gentleman into this true crime public mirrors the solicitation and incorporation of the audience of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*; the audience, like the Gentleman, possesses valuable insight into Thomas Merry's criminal narrative.

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[253] Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy*, 134.
[254] Eberhart, Yachnin and Scott, "Introduction," 2.

Yet, in recognizing and inducting the audience into the true crime public of the play, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also constantly reminds them that their motives and participation are, like the Gentleman's, ethically fraught. In the numerous asides "to the people," characters are not just letting the audience "in" on their deliberations or intentions, but also reminding them that they already know, that they themselves are contributors to and fact-checkers of this performance. The narrator Truth makes the audience stand as the assurance of the play's veracity: "the most here present, know this to be true:/ Would truth were false, so this were but a tale" (A3^r, 79-80). Before the final execution of Rachel and Merry, Truth again reminds the audience that "your eyes shal witnesse of their shaded tips/ Which many here did see perform'd indeed" (I3^v, 25.19-20). For certain members of the audience, this play offers itself as a reconstructed flashback, the "here" a collapse of the theatrical and judicial performance of Thomas and Rachel Merry's execution. However, Truth also signposts that not all audiences have this knowledge, and thus makes visible a division of methods of engagement; some are watching the play as play, and others are watching the play as manifestations of their own memory and local knowledge. This also, crucially, provides the "unknowing" section of the audience with a lens through which to view the play, watching other audience members watch the events onstage. Opportunities for surveillance, then, do not go in one direction; Truth gazes back at the audience and encourages them to look around as well as forward.

In the final moments of the play, as Thomas and Rachel Merry speak their final words before their on-stage executions, both characters explicitly condemn and correct the media surrounding their own criminal celebrity. When Rachel parts with her brother for the last time, her deepest regret is "that it hath beene said/ I was the author of this crueltie/ And did produce you to this wicked deede" (K2^v, 27.17-9). Rachel does not specify that this rumor comes

specifically from broadside or ballad reporting, but her renunciation of textual power— she balks at the idea of being a criminal "author" who "produced" her brother to a crime— underscores Rachel's precarious and vacillating status as a narrative creation of others. In the moments before his execution, Thomas Merry speaks explicitly to the audience: "Cease publishing that I have been a man/ Train'd up in murther, or in crueltie/ For fore this time— this time is all too soone— / I never slue or did consent to kill" (K2ʳ, 27.32-5). These erroneous press assumptions have been visibly corrected in the play itself; Rachel is clearly portrayed as an unwilling accomplice to her brother's murder, and Thomas is depicted as an (initially) honest and trustworthy man. These gestures to the initial mistakes of the public and press elevate *Two Lamentable Tragedies* as the definitive edition of this criminal narrative, the later and more reliable enactment that has purged earlier errors. Yet, this metatheatrical inclusion of the play's own narrative sources confronts the audience with the consequences of their public work; these errors have, in Rachel's case, fatal consequences. Even the Philip Gawdys of the audience— individuals who casually disseminated early and erroneous fragments of knowledge without serious investment or intent— might feel confronted the stakes of their own work.

Two Lamentable Tragedies **and Fluid Guilt, Or The Problem of Rachel's Body**

Rachel's initial representation in the public sphere as the "author" to Beech's crime, who "produced" him to murder like a bourgeois Lady Macbeth, demonstrates the erroneous and likely misogynistic public zeal in searching for a criminal motive. However, the initial errors that *Two Lamentable Tragedies* 'corrects' also demonstrates the insatiable drive to find *some* reason why Thomas Merry would suddenly kill his neighbor and friend; a question that *Two Lamentable Tragedies* has not answered. Even as the Constabulary are approaching Thomas Merry's house to

arrest him, they express their amazement of Thomas' guilt: "Who would have thought of all the men alive," notes the Constable, "That Thomas Merry would have done this deede/So full of ruthe and monsterous wickednesse" (I2ᵛ, 24.1-3). Since Rachel has been narratively exonerated as the evil influence on her brother, what or who did drive him to murder? Indeed, public fascination in these murders is less centered in who committed them and instead focused on why Thomas Merry would consider killing his friend and neighbor in such a gruesome and intimate way.

In order to provide a partial response to these questions, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* provides two Vices, Homicide and Avarice, who act as invisible narrators and parasites within the play. These allegorical narrators and mediators have been categorized as one of *Two Lamentable Tragedies'* symptoms of dramaturgical amateurism, papering over the jolting jumps in the narrative— Lena Cowen Orlin labeled these figures as awkward mediators of the two plots, "bombastic choral figures" that ultimately contribute to her acknowledgment that "for what may seem to be obvious reasons, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* has not been a critical success."[255] While I agree with Cowen Orlin that the morality figures of Avarice, Homicide and Truth are sometimes awkward or intensely jarring with the "human" narrative, I argue that this creates a vital affect of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*. Rather than filling in the shortcomings of the author's theatrical talent, these allegorical narrators fill in the gaps of communal knowledge about Thomas Merry's crimes. However, these parasitical Vices also create a system of guilt in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* that is based on contamination, where guilt is figured through metaphors of fluidity; characters use blood, tears, and water to create a slippery and porous map of complicity. Within this system, Rachel becomes a kind of litmus test of complicity for the

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[255] Cowen Orlin, "Domestic Tragedy: Private Life on the Public Stage," 396.

audience— if her execution is partially caused by public participation and misinterpretation, she is presented in the play as a case study of guilt by exposure. Rachel's execution reminds the audience that they, too are at risk of being contaminated; they are, as Thomas Merry confesses, "knee deepe, ile wade up to the wast" in the fluid complicity of the play (C4^v, 8.37).

Much like the moral interludes of my previous chapter, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* contains allegorical vices and virtues without their corresponding divine or satanic authorities; we have Homicide but no Devil, and Truth but no God. The vices Homicide and Avarice might act as if they were sent from Hell to London, but they embody the human judgment of Thomas Merry's actions. They resemble prosecutorial attorneys, demonstrating the clear presence of vice in their human hosts. Though Avarice assures the audience that Thomas Merry was driven by greed, his claims often clash with the action onstage. Beech, while comfortably off, is not wealthy, and Merry's confessed fantasies about attaining Beech's wealth are not about riches as much as financial stability: "I would I had a shop so stored with wares/And forty pounds to buy a bargaine with/ When as occasion should be offered me" (B^v, 1.2.85-7). The difference between the financially stable Beech and the poorer Merry is cast more in terms of time than money; Beech has the resources to wait for better opportunities, while Merry lives on a precipice and worries that "Beech hath a score of pounds to lend his neede/ and I may starve ere he will lend it to me" (B3^r,1.4.1-2). Indeed, Merry repeats the word "neede" constantly in the scenes up until Beech's murder.

If Merry is indeed supposed to be convincingly overtaken by avarice, then his pecuniary desires aren't reflected in the planning of his murder. While Merry confides in the audience that with Beech's murder he plans to "give my selfe a farthing from your chest" (B4^r, 4.62), he makes no concrete plans on how to extract that money. Rather than killing Beech in his own house or

place of work, Merry lures Beech to his own attic and then takes what little money Beech has in his purse, saying 'Masse, ten groates, here's something for my paine/ but I must be rewarded better yet" (B4^r, 4.75-76). However, Merry's plans for a greater reward are halted for the rest of the play by his concern in hiding and disposing of Beech's body, and likewise killing Beech's servant to keep him quiet, a crime motivated by desperation and fear rather than greed. When revealing to the audience that he has no choice but to kill Beech's servant, Merry does gesture to a hope "to end my harte of fear and to attaine/ The hoped end of my intention" (C4^v, 7.37-38). It seems, then, that Merry's only monetary reward for his murder were these ten groates. Yet Homicide continues to posit Avarice as the "root of ill/ For but for thee, Beech had lived still" (C3^r, 6.18-19).

Merry's vague phrase "hoped end of my intention" demonstrates the opacity of his motivations for his London killing spree. Merry's final speech before his onstage execution is likely paraphrased from the ballad lyricizing Merry's final words; yet, in his explanations for his crime, Merry sounds more like a morality figure than the terse and stressed plotter that we have seen for the rest of the play:

> I never hated Beech in all my life
> Only desire of money which he had
> And the inciting of that foe of man
> That greedie gulf, the great Leviathan
> Did halle me on to these calamities (K2^r, 27.43-47).

These allegorical vices, here personified as invisible co-conspirators that "halle[d]" Merry on, thus act as a kind of theatrical caulk, covering over and sealing the problems and loose ends left in the case of Thomas Merry. Yet, the visible presence of this narrative caulking also makes visible for the audience the limitations of community knowledge in criminal narratives. Despite the claims of Homicide and Avarice of total human psychological knowledge, *Two Lamentable*

Tragedies constantly telegraphs the narrative limitations of true crime and marks itself as a product of crowdsourced knowledge, rather than divine or satanic omniscience.

Merry's personification of Avarice as "that foe of man" that actively "halle[d] him" on to murder in his final speech also casts himself as infected, driven to his crimes by an evil parasite that only the audience can see. If the allegorical narrators of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* quell questions about Thomas Merry's motive for murder by claiming to possess and pollute him, they also cast him as the origin of a spreading contamination, a polluting system of guilt and moral befallenness. Truth's opening monologue positions Merry's crimes in the same system of contamination; the upcoming crime performed:

> was done in famous London late
> Within that street whose side the river Thames
> Does strive to wash from all impuritie
> And yet that silver streame can never wash
> The sad remembrance of that cursed deede." (A3^r, 1.73-6).

In this reference to the Thames, Truth creates a knowable geographical marker for the crime (Beech lived on Thames Street) and gestures towards the river Thames as a key geographic marker for the plot of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*; Merry disposes of Beech's fragmentary corpse in two locations on the Thames, partially in hopes of giving them a "waterie grave" (see figure 4). However, Truth's introduction also imagines the crime and its aftermath as a kind of ethical oil spill, a spreading contamination of guilt. The "sad remembrance" of Merry's crimes refers to the play itself, but also addresses the audience's own memories, once again conscripting them into the play's project of commemorating local history.

The figures of Avarice and Homicide open *Two Lamentable Tragedies* with similar models of invisible contamination. Homicide describes his march through the "stately street[s]" of London as a search for "a mind, a heart/ for blood and causeless death to harbor in," a "hart"

129

to "soil" with "rape, extortion, or murder" (A2^r, 1.1,4-5,9). Given their role as parasites or spreaders of moral contamination in the play, it comes as no surprise that the vices (and virtues) are deeply concerned with fluids. Truth immediately addresses the audience to "prepare your tears-bedecked eyes/to see two shows of lamentation" (A2^r, 1.66-7). Indeed, throughout the entire play, Truth's addresses to the audience assume that they are already crying. When Merry begins to dismember Beech's dead body onstage, Truth intervenes in the scene, cutting off or simply accompanying a scene of grotesque violence:

> All you sad spectators of this Acte
> Whose harts do taste a feeling pensivenesse
> Of this unheard of, savage Massacre
> Oh be farre off, to harbour such at thought
> As this audacious murtherer put in ure
> I see your sorrowes flowe up to the brim
> And overfloew 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 deed is but a playe (E2^v, 13.29-39)

Truth's sensorial cues command the audience's ears, eyes, hearts, minds, and even tongues; the tangling and synesthetic expectations provides the audience with an impossible response, and demonstrates the difficult division of engagement within the audience, and indeed within a single spectator. Truth's initial address to "all you sad spectators" whose "harts do taste a feelings pensiveness" isolates and challenges those who do not taste and see. Truth also imagines sensorial response as a kind of checks and balances system, where the delight of the ears might "countercheck" the sorrow of the eyes; yet this casts each audience member's response as a possible cornucopia of valued and tallied reactions. In his examination of the reformation of emotions in early modern English culture, Steven Mullaney addresses a similar instance, where

John Foxe synesthetically challenges the "ears of all true-hearted Christians" who will read a particularly harrowing anecdote from *Actes and Monuments*.[256]

Such moments are "diagnostic trials of affective resonance," both for a modern reader, who will never be what Foxe thinks of as a "true hearted Christian," and for Foxe's contemporary audience, who must choose to either embrace Foxe's affective citizenship or confront the difference in their own response.[257] This same process happens in Truth's command to the "sad spectators" of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, in order to be ethical consumers of this performance, they must cry. These tears that Truth demands of the audience are tangible evidence of their overflowing "sorrowes," the mark of "feeling pensiveness" that absolves them as beholders of such a gruesome play. Yet, as Mullaney imagines with Foxe's similar command, what happens if members of the audience don't cry? This moment of gratuitous dismemberment of an already-dead corpse might instead bring surprise, entertainment, even laughter.

If tears are the physical manifestation of a "moral" response to *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, blood seeps across the stage as morally damning contamination. As he leaves to murder Beech, Merry' describes his act as a "bloody feast" (4.34, B4ᵛ). Indeed, the two Tarantino-esque murders ensure that the entire stage will, as Homicide promises, be "besprinkled" with blood, a "bloody festival" (1.53, A3ᵛ). This makes the neighbor's search for blood throughout the neighborhood somewhat ironic, considering, at this point, blood is everywhere. Yet, instead of searching for a murder weapon or other condemnatory evidence, Loney and his band of amateur detectives search for any and all blood:

> Then let commandment everywhere be given
> That sinks and gutters, privies, crevises
> And every place where blood may be conceal'd

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[256] Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 12-13.
[257] Ibid, 13.

> Be thoroughly searched, swept and nearly sought
> To see if we can find the muther out" (G2^r, 11.11-15).

Oddly, the list of places here, "sinks and gutters, privies, crevises" are exactly where you might expect to find innocuous blood in an early modern home; this assumption that blood signals criminal intent represents the attitude of the play toward blood as unequivocal moral contamination. Yet though blood is considered a damning presence, it does not speak or provide redemptive modes of achieving justice. In other domestic tragedies, cruentation, when wounds bleed afresh in the presence of a murderer, is a key element of the unveiling of the killer. In a *Warning for Faire Women*, when Browne encounters the freshly-bleeding corpse of a man he killed, he laments that "fifteen mouths that do accuse me/ In every wound there is a bloody tongue/Which will all speak, although he hold his peace" (4.4.139-141). Likewise, in *Arden of Faversham*, Arden's corpse begins bleeding anew when Alice is confronted with it: "the blood condemns me, and in gushing forth/ Speaks as it falls" (16.5-6). Yet this redemptive, speaking blood is absent from *Two Lamentable Tragedies*; blood is an unequivocally unclean sign of guilt.

This focus on blood and tears as charged spiritual fluids underscores what in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* becomes a kind of hydraulics of complicity, spreading, spilling or buffering guilt in an uncontrollably liquid system. Rachel stands as a curious litmus test of contaminating guilt in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*. She cleans and is covered in the blood that her neighbors so desperately seek; yet, she continuously cries throughout the play, up to the moment of her execution. Rachel also conceives of her brother's guilt in fluid terms: she berates him for the woe his rashness has "poured down upon his head," and while Merry confidently reports that he and Rachel will successfully hide their crimes and "overblowe this stormie day," Rachel instead envisions them being swallowed by the storm. She begs him not to "adde new streames of sorrow to your griefe/ Which like a sprint tide over-swels the bankes / Least you do

make an inundation/ And so be borne away with swiftest tides/ Of ungle feare and strong dispairing thoughts" (D2ʳ-D3ᵛ, 10.12-17). Rachel speaks of grief in a Galenic fashion, a humoral imbalance that might "over-swell" Merry's internal system, but this metaphor of a river overflowing its banks also underscores the fluid system of moral contamination in the play. Mery's guilt "over-swels" not only his own spirit, but his entire household.

Earlier in this chapter I referenced Rachel's final moments before her execution, in which she repudiates reports that cast her as the instigator of her brothers' crimes: "it hath beene said" she recounts to Merry, "I was the author of this crueltie/And did produce you to this wicked deede" (K2ᵛ, 27.17-9) *Two Lamentable Tragedies* seeks to amend this account; rather than instigating her brother's deeds, Rachel contracts his guilt by exposure or association. Rachel's culpability is wound up in inaction rather than action; she does not challenge or question her brother's often ludicrous excuses around his murders, nor does she report his behavior to authorities, as Merry's servant finally does. After initially claiming to Rachel that he killed Beech in self-defense, Merry disappears to kill Beech's apprentice Thomas Winchester and returns hastily into his own home, the hue and cry by his neighbors raised behind him. Rachel, meeting him at the door, asks "What, have you kil'd Beech's boy?" and Merry replies "No, no, not I, yet another hath" (Dᵛ, 8.5-7). This interchange, set within Merry's desperate rush to barricade himself indoors, is nearly comedic. Rachel remains silent for the rest of the scene, so there are no further indicators of her reaction to her brother's excuse, but she does not challenge her brothers' patently false claim. Peter Lake has focused on Rachel's passivity as an archetype of the "loyal and virtuous familiar" who is pulled into a "force-field of contradicting connection, sympathies and moral obligations" when her brother, and head of households, descends into

murder.[258] Rachel, Lake argues, demonstrates a kind of passive resistance championed under

Stuart political orthodoxy, that maintained that Christians might refuse to obey their sovereigns

when their orders contradicted the laws of God, not by actively resisting, but by passively

accepting the penalty of not obeying the law.[259]

However, counting Rachel only as a byproduct within Merry's patriarchal "force field"

flattens what I see as a much broader and more fluid system of guilt within the play. Rachel's

moral crisis as an "innocent bystander" or "passive resister" extends, if less explicitly, to the

entire bystanding public of the "Merry Plot." The cast is largely bystanders, whose reactions are

weighed and rewarded or punished accordingly; the inhabitants of London who stumble over

dead bodies or investigate their neighbor's death are heroized, while Rachel is executed. Indeed,

the entirety of the "Merry Plot" demonstrates that there is no such thing as an innocent bystander

in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*. And, as Truth underscores in her constant observations and

affective commends of the audience, to be an audience member in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is

to be a bystander.

The epilogue of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* stands as a culmination of the play's

continuous addresses or asides to the audience, reminders of their entanglement with the criminal

narrative of the play: as a living archive, as fans, and as bystanders to the criminal narrative

onstage. After Rachel and Thomas Merry are executed, Truth turns to the audience for a final

plea:

> Now it remains to have your good advice
> Unto a motion of some consequence
> There is a Barke that newly rigd for sea
> Unman'd, unfurnished with munition
> She must encounter with a greater foe

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[258] Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 82-83.
[259] Lake and Questier, *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat*, 85.

Then great Alcydes slue in Lerna Lake
Would you be plead to man this willing barke
With good conceits of her intention
To store her with the thundering furniture
Of smoothest smiles and pleasing plaudits
She shall be able to ensure the shock
Of snarling Zoylus and his cursed true
That seeks to sink her in reproaches waves
And may perchance obtain a victory
Gainst curious capes, and fawning Parasites
But if you suffer her for want of aide
To be overwhelmed by her insulting foes
Oh then she sinkes, that meant to parse the flood
With stronger force to do her country good:
It restesth thus, whether she live or dye
She is your Beades-man everlastingly (K3^r-K4^v, 28.40-60)

This epilogue follows the path of many early modern plays and texts in pleading the audience for approval and applause, the "thundering furniture/of smoothest smiles and pleasing plaudits." However, while the message of the epilogue might seem fairly standard for commercial theater (the play relies on the audience's support and applause in order to survive) this tradition of reminding the audience of their contractual responsibility as theatrical consumers instead becomes a final reminder of the audience's complicity and entanglement in the play. The extended metaphor of the play as a boat on dangerous waters, and the audience as a recruited crew to "man" the "willing barke" envisions a more symbiotic relationship than that of a judicial (or even voyeuristic) audience. The success of the play, Truth warns the audience, and the success of the criminal narrative of Thomas Merry, has the potential to "do her country good," but only if the audience defend the play's narrative origins against "insulting foes"— a form of advocacy that also, the play has intimated, acts as self-defense of the work of dissemination and consumption that the audience has performed in the past. The final designation of the play as a "beads-man," an almsman who prays for the souls of his benefactor, underscores that the

audience's souls, their moral complicity, is at stake in this production. If Beech's civil blood acts as a stain across London, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* demands that the audience watch, cry, and applaud in an attempt to clean their eyes and hands.

As the opening editorial assessments of my chapter demonstrate, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is formally an ugly duckling of domestic tragedy, lacking the characterological nuance or elevated verse of its generic counterparts. However, perhaps because of the play's frenetic, blunt style and its attention to a painfully recent, incredibly local crime, it makes explicit what is often overlooked in other domestic tragedies— that these performances sought to envelop their audiences as complicit bodies in the production of a morally ambiguous genre. For example, at the end of *A Warning for Faire Women*, Anne Saunders sits in Newgate prison for allegedly manipulating her lover to murder her husband. As she waits for her coming execution, she witnesses a conversation through her window grate between two carpenters in the street. These carpenters, Will Crow and Tom Peart, appear to be generalized everymen who both know about the Saunders case and are contributing to its continuation in a surprising way:

> TOM: Faith I have been up ever since three o'clock.
> WILL: About what man?
> TOM: Why to make work for the hangman: I and another have been setting up a
>   gallows.
> WILL: O for Mistress Drury, must she die today?
> TOM: Nay I know not that, but when she does I am
>   sure there is a gallows big enough to hold them both.
> Will: Both, whom? Her man and her.
> TOM: Her man and her, and Mistress Sanders too, 'tis a swinger i'faith. But come
> I'll give thee a pot this morning for I promise thee I am passing dry
> after my work.
> WILL: Content Tom, and I have another for thee and afterward I'll go see the
>   execution.
> TOM: Do as thou wilt for that.
> WILL: But dost thou think it will be today?
> TOM: I cannot tell, Smithfield is full of people and the Sheriff's man that set us
>   a work told us it would be today. But come, shall we have this beer?

WILL: With a good will; lead the way (5.4.1-22)

In their quotidian interaction, Tom and Will demonstrate an easy familiarity with the names of the condemned in the case, and frame the case as an item of public fascination and speculation— Smithfield "is full of people" that likewise want to see who will be executed at the newly-erected scaffold. However, while Will demonstrates a kind of morbid curiosity, Tom instead identifies his involvement in the case as part of his *work* as a carpenter, a word that he uses three times over the course of the passage. In doing so, Tom identifies other men within the matrix of work that this execution provides— the "work for the hangman," the Sheriff's men who "set us a work," and Tom's offstage fellow carpenters, who are helping him construct the gallows. Together, Tom and Will demonstrate different modes of participation within Anne Saunders' true crime public— those like Will, who seek and exchange new information about her case, and those like Tom, whose daily labor happens to intersect with Anne's narrative. Much like the Watermen of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, Tom and Will demonstrate the circulation and induction necessary to a true crime public. This snapshot of the true crime public at work, which is witnessed by Anne, references the performance of *A Warning for Faire Women* as the end-products of these members of the true crime public, while also reminding their audience of their possible participation in its original circulation.

Likewise, *Arden of Faversham* more obliquely points to its own narrative construction in performance. As Emily O'Brien has recently shown, *Arden of Faversham* adds to the existing true crime narrative surrounding Thomas Arden's multiple attempted murders by adding a scene in which the would-be assassin Black Will is deterred from murdering Arden in the bustling market of St. Paul's Walk when a bookseller's assistant accidentally lets down a window on

Black Will's head.[260] Much like *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, *Arden of Faversham* is based from a broad archive of chronicle histories, pamphlets, ballads, and oral transmissions— a "broader and more tangled culture of literature and reporting" that the play seeks to represent in its staging of St. Paul's literary market, the place where many of its origin texts were sold. [261] O'Brien paints a convincing picture of the booksellers "stall" or large wooden counter as an eye-catching stage property, both a tangible part of the comic action of the scene and a symbol of the literary marketplace through which the true crime narrative of *Arden of Faversham* was forged.[262] Arden is saved by the serendipitous closing of this stall, but also by the "press," the market crowd that block Will loses him in after suffering this blow. This "throng" or "babbling paltry fray" represents a literary public that temporarily saves Arden's life onstage, but also a group that will circulate his postmortem narrative. O'Brien suggests that this scene demonstrates cooperation and discourse in the literary culture of the 1580's— a "broad continuous ecology" of printed and performed texts. I would agree, and further argue that the onstage representation of this multi-generic true crime ecology implicates the audience as part of this "press."

      With these two examples, I seek to demonstrate how reading the true crime public of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also aids us in seeing the broader commitment in domestic tragedy to forging a mode of knowingly-complicit voyeurism: moments where the audience is reminded of their participation in the true crime publics that led to the creation of these theatrical performances. Contemporary consumers of true crime are confronting these same structures of complicity, structures that *Serial* is partially responsible for creating, but also has helped make visible. The critical success of *Serial*— it is still the most downloaded podcast of all time—

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[260] O'Brien, "*The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, True Crime, and the Literary Marketplace of the 1580's" 113–116.
[261] Ibid, 114.
[262] Ibid, 115-116.

began a wave of further 'prestige' or 'high-brow' true crime. These podcasts or streaming sought to capitalize on *Serial*'s reinvention of the genre, using both elevated production style and its own shorthand, "a language to tell its audience they're consuming something thoughtful, college-educated, public-radio influenced."[263] Unlike the 'trashier' *Dateline* or tabloid true crime coverage, prestige true crime like *Serial*, *Making of a Murderer,* or *The Jinx* wanted its audience to feel good about consuming it, to be able to talk about their interest and intrigue as a culturally elevated pastime rather than a guilty pleasure: it was ""too intellectually serious to be thoughtless, too morally worthy to be cruel."[264] We can see this struggle between 'trashy' and 'prestige' in the contemporary performance of domestic tragedies like *Arden of Faversham*. When the 2014 Royal Shakespeare Company production set the play in present day, critics responded to the move as an attack on the play's status as prestige true crime; this modern *Arden* catered "to the same guilty pleasures" as lurid television specials,[265] or dragged the play into a "tabloid tawdriness of a world too obviously our own."[266] If *Serial*'s production format and narration acted as a kind of respectability politics, elevating prestige true crime above the "reek of documentary realism,"[267] then the historical distance of early modern domestic tragedies has retroactively elevated them as well.

Of course, as I traced earlier in this chapter, *Serial*'s mammoth success also created an enormous and unwieldy true crime public whose spiraling work to 'solve' Adnan Syed's case created both endless offshoots — in addition to its online community, two books, innumerable podcasts, a full-length documentary— and significant harm to several parties involved. As a

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[263] Alice Bolin, "The Ethical Dilemma of Highbrow True Crime."
[264] Shulz, "How Making of a Murderer Went Wrong."
[265] Niamh J. O'Leary, "True Crime Voyeurs: *Arden of Faversham* at the RSC" *The Early Modern Studies Journal* 6 (2014), 268.
[266] Terri Borous, "*Arden of Faversham* by Royal Shakespeare Company" *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 33, no.4 (Winter 2015): 694.
[267] Billington, "*Arden of Faversham* Review."

result, the subjects of Serial's true crime public became objects of inquiry; attention turned inward from the products of their work to the ethics of their work. Truth's accusation in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* that Homicide and Avarice are "hungrie Canibals" (A^3, 1.64) frames their hunger for human misery and violence an attack on their own species, an insult of predation that is often leveled at true crime publics. Yet, the turn in contemporary true crime to confront the work of its publics might also be framed as a different kind of self-attack, a turning inward or reckoning of the genre's own voraciousness. The arc of *Serial'*s true crime public helps us read the same turn in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*: the play offers the pleasures of voyeurism only to turn its predatory gaze back on its own audience.

Chapter 4 : Bann(ed) Economies: Framing Audience Negotiation in Early Modern Playhouse Prologues

In the induction of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), a scrivener appears to reiterate the details of a preexisting fictional contract between the audience and the author: a deeply recognizable moment of forgetting to read the terms and conditions. The audience, he reads, have "agreed to remain in the places their money or friends have put them in, with patience, for the space of two houres and a halfe, and somewhat more" (Ind.78-80).[268] In addition to this basic tenet, the scrivener details the other stipulations of this contract, which include the limit-case on the amount of judgment that each audience member can publicly exert based on how much they have paid for their tickets:

> It is further agreed that every person here have his or their free-will of censure, to like or dislike at their own charge the author having now departed with his right: it shall be lawful for any man to judge his six pen'orth, his twelve pen'orth, so to his eighteen pence, two shillings, half a crown, to the value of his places . . . He shall put in for censures here as they do for lots at a lottery; maryy, if he drop but sixpence at the door, and censure a crown's worth, it is thought that there is no conscience or justice in that (Ind.85-96).

The scrivener lists further attempts at audience control, including the inability of the audience to "censure by contagion," or immediately adopt the critical consensus of those around them (Ind.98-9). This satirical contract struggles to create a stable exchange rate between the currency economy of the theater and the multiple affective economies of the stage and the surrounding playhouse. Exactly how much critical power does each audience member buy? What is the

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[268] All citations are taken from William Shakespeare, "Bartholomew Fair," *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology* ed. David Bevington et. al. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).

difference between the critical power of a "six pen'orth" ticket and a "twelve pen'orth" ticket? Is the audience really beholden to clap as an exchange on their ticket purchase? While Jonson's scrivener is clearly playing for laughs, he also makes comically explicit the maneuverings of early modern playhouse prologues, in which metatheatrical spokesmen warn, plead, solicit or otherwise negotiate with the audience more implicitly.

Over the last two chapters of this project, I have drawn attention to moments of explicit audience confrontation or negotiation in early English drama. While I have read these moments as part of their plays as a whole, they often occur in the framing text of inductions, prologues, and epilogues. In *Two Lamentable Tragedies,* the extended metaphor of the play as a struggling boat and the audience as "beadsmen" in the epilogue served as a final reminder of the audience's own involvement in the dissemination and creation of Thomas Merry's criminal narrative. The aphoristic prologue of *Nice Wanton* sets forth the spiritual 'fall' of its protagonists in a way that invites its audience to be omniscient witnesses. These moments crystalize the relationship that the performance is trying to cultivate with its audience over the course of the play: ethical complicity in *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, or narrative providence in *Nice Wanton*. Instead of tracking the narrative course of a single play, in this chapter I will move over a large number of late fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century London playhouse performances, restricting my attention for the most part only to their prologues. These prologues act as moments of metatheatrical experimentation, directly addressing the diverse tastes, attentions, and apprehensions of a commercial audience. Beyond their admission fee, these audiences engaged in performance through attention, gesture and verbal response, an affective economy of playgoing that the scrivener in *Bartholomew Fair* attempts to standardize and control. In previous chapters, I have explored how onstage narratives of crime intensify the stakes of

142

audience engagement; by turning to prologues, I argue that theater's own transgressive

reputation cast the prologue as a space of navigating and negotiating the intensity of audience

engagement.

As Sara Ahmed notes, affective economies "align individuals with communities—or

bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments."[269] These

circulating systems of affect can "surface" both individual or collective bodies, a figure common

to both antitheatrical discourses that imagined circulating systems of contagion that threatened a

theatergoing collective, and to playhouse prologues that sought to broadly address that same

theatergoing collective.[270] This chapter examines how prologues forged these alternate affective

economies with their audiences, creating spaces where different and intersecting forms of

value— applause, money, attention, laughter—were wielded in order to frame audience

engagement and power in the theater's own terms. Turning away from the dramatic

representation of crime, this chapter instead explores how prologues used metaphors of

criminality to understand audience engagement.

This chapter will first explore the prologue as a theatrical convention that can be used to

produce a liminal time that combined exposition, solicitation, negotiation and crowd control.[271]

While prologues often served utilitarian purposes, they were also experimental moments of

visible theatrical liveness, where audiences were made aware of their own critical power as

spectators and auditors. These moments of audience power also framed the prologue as a time of

theatrical risk for the theater— a gauntlet where creators gambled with their economic

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[269] Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text,* 79, 22:2 (Summer 2004), 119.
[270] Ahmed, 117.
[271] For the purposes of this chapter, I am grouping together the subfamilies of prologues and inductions. While the traditional early modern prologue features a single speaker delivering a soliloquy, the induction often includes multiple characters presenting a dramatic action, sometimes offering onlookers as a frame to the play; see Thelma Greenfield, *The Induction in Elizabethan Drama* (Eugene OR: Oregon University Press, 2001), 1-5.

livelihoods and public prestige. Borrowing from criticism that has traced the relationship between the theater and economic models of exchange, I explore the prologue as a site of negotiating the affective economies of each performance— what the scrivener in *Bartholomew Fair* sees as the exchange rate of critical judgment or positive engagement. What is each play prepared to give its audience? What is required or requested in return? I will then move to antithetical tracts by writers like Stephen Gosson, Anthony Munday, and Philip Stubbs, who sought to disparage theater by allying it with an array of other criminal practices, ranging from the socially transgressive to the clearly criminal. These writers focused both on the social space of the theater as a gateway to other vices and on the process of beholding theater as dangerous exposure. Theater's *de*generacy was explicitly linked to its *re*generacy, much as usury and prostitution were represented as systems of invasive contagion that caused unnatural production or growth. Returning to play prologues, I will then demonstrate how different prologues responded to these charges, either by leaning away from these metaphors of contagion or embracing them. These latter prologues reframed the contractual negotiation between audience and stage and a series of affective and imaginative debts, casting debt as both a condition of enslavement and a position of pleasure. While prologues tended to emphasize the debt of the playwright and company, identifying the play as a precarious economic venture or fragile new creative offering, audiences could also experience their own precarity— in their affective investment in the play, but also in the potentially radical internal transformation that theater might work upon them.

This chapter thus brings together two bodies of criticism in early modern theater: works that examine the play prologue as a formal device of theatrical self-reflection,[272] and works that

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[272] These include Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004); Brian Schnieder, *The Framing Text in*

have studied theater's imbrication with the social and economic systems of usury, prostitution, and debt in early modern London.[273] These latter studies tend to focus on particular subgenres of plays and their relationship with urban systems: "courtesan plays" like *Northward Ho*, *The Honest Whore*, and *The Dutch Courtesan* and prostitution,[274] "debt plays" or "counter plays" like *The Merchant of Venice* or *Michaelmas Term*, and sites of economic exchange and incarceration like The Royal Exchange or debtors prisons.[275] This chapter borrows many of the dialectic frameworks that these scholars use, such as Jean Howard's "economy of gazes" or Amanda Bailey's "theater of debt," while seeking to consider these systems more broadly across playhouse prologues of all genres. In other words, I'm less interested in the thematic content of these plays, and more in the ways that their prologues functioned as spaces for exploring the affective stakes of theatergoing.

As such, this chapter reads prologues laterally, considering how they speak to each other as an emerging mini-genre of their own. In previous chapters, I examined marginal characters within playtexts, communities or publics that shared a particularly special relationship with the audience: the minor or extrabiblical characters of the York Corpus Christi plays, the surveilling neighbors of Tudor moral interludes, the "true crime public" of domestic tragedies like *Two Lamentable Tragedies*. By reading laterally across commercial playhouse prologues, I also want

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Early Modern English Drama: 'Whining' Prologues and 'Armed' Epilogues (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011); Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[273] These include Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994); Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006);Amanda Bailey, *Of Bondage: Debt, Property, and Personhood in Early Modern England* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); David Hawkes, *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Stephen Andrew Spiess, "Shakespeare's Whore: Language, Prostitution, and Knowledge in Early Modern England" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2013).

[274] Howard, *Theater of a City*, 114-161.

[275] Howard tracks 'Counter' plays and narratives of debt, arguing that some "offer performative logic as an alternative to marketplace calculations of work": *The Stage and Social Struggle,* 71. Bailey draw focus away from early modern usury to instead read plays that center debt bondage, where the body of the debtor became a "vehicle of promise": *Of Bondage*, 7.

to consider the speakers of prologues and inductions as a community. Within their own plays, prologue speakers or characters were often separated from the main action, acting as islands of metatheatrical discourse or crowd control. However, as the prologue as a device and the prologue-speaker as a character flourished as a cultural and theatrical touchstone between 1580-1615, prologues echoed or directly responded to each other, as when *A Warning for Fair Women* presents its barren stage and unstately muse against the "muse of fire" of *Henry V*. These cross-play dialogues frame the prologue as a space for the theater to express different paradigms of audience engagement and response, systems of interaction that responded to anti-theatrical derogations of playgoing while also attempting to negotiate with increasingly savvy and willful theatergoers.

Banns and Prologues on the Early Modern Stage

While the 1998 film *Shakespeare in Love* is not usually hailed for its historical accuracy, its depiction of a fictional opening performance of *Romeo and Juliet* captures some of the ways in which theatrical prologues served as creative gauntlets. In the film, the reluctant actor Wabash (Mark Williams) is tasked with delivering the prologue, despite the fact that he stutters when nervous. Shoved onstage to appease a restless audience, Wabash struggles to begin amid several seconds of tense silence while a young Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes) looks on backstage, waiting in agony to see if his new play will fail before it even begins. While *Shakespeare in Love* envisions the prologue as the first trial of performance because of the charming quirks of its motley company, early modern prologues were indeed often the opening gambit for a new play, a moment that set forth the themes, goals, affects, or operating systems of the performance. The character of the prologue speaker balanced authority and vulnerability— as a representative of

146

the playwright, he embodied the theater, and yet was often deliberately written as terrified and deeply nervous, preemptively bracing against a volatile crowd in a scripted version of Wabash's anxiety.[276] This performed vulnerability often went hand in hand with more aggressive negotiation with the audience: attempts to confront and shape an increasingly theatrically savvy group of theatergoers who possessed enormous critical power over the success of a play.

The theatrical prologue by no means began with the rise of English commercial theaters; biblical drama, morality plays, and civic pageantry all contained introductory fragments. The Digby *Burial of Christ* (c.1430-1450) is arguably the earliest extant piece of English drama to designate an opening speech as a prologue, and early fifteenth-century drama performed in court or at venues like St. Stephens sometimes featured 'messengers' 'prolocutors' or other figures that framed, summarized, and contextualized the play. [277] The Chester Late Banns serve as a fascinating bridge between these introductions and the playhouse prologues, both because they occurred separately from the plays as a dramatic sequence and because they were revised for performances after the Henrician reforms, right around the same time that playhouses were emerging. Theatrical banns were public notices of upcoming performances read by a representative or town crier that summarized the contents of each play, with particular attention to moments or stage properties that might be particular crowd-pleasers. Plays that had attached

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[276] For example, *The Four Prentices of London* (c.1593-1600) features a Prologue speaker who self-identifies through his own visible apprehension: "Do I not looke pale, as fearing to bee out in my speech?" In Shirley's *Coronation* (1640), the female prologue speaker compares her appearance to former "starch'd face[s]" of plays past. For the standardization of the Prologue speaker as an "across play character" often marked by anxiety, see Tiffany Stern, "'A Small Beer Health to his Second Day': Playwrights, Prologues and First Performances in Early Modern Theater" *Studies in Philology* 101:2 (Spring 2004), 179-181.

[277] For example, John Rastell's *The Nature of Four Elements* (c.1517-1518), The *Godley Queen Hester* (c.1525), John Bale's Chief *Promises of God* (1538), *The Three Laws* (1538) and *The Temptation of Christ* (1539) all featured prologues. Schneider, *The Framing Text*, Appendix I, 160-161. Hill-Vásquez examines the rise of these prolocutors in *Sacred Players*, 23-29.

banns might be designed for touring, like the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* or the N-Town

biblical plays, or they might simply attempt to drum up excitement in a single venue.

Despite the contemporary usage of "ban" as a prohibition, theatrical banns actually

designated an official approval of a production, and the crying of the banns was often attached

to financial records that the players had been paid.[278] The Chester Late (or "Protestant") Banns

(c.1548-1572) were written after Corpus Christi celebrations were suppressed in 1548, as a

revision of the Early (or "Catholic") Banns written to accompany Chester's collection of biblical

plays.[279] As Kurt Schreyer has demonstrated, the Late Banns provide an alternative narrative of

the relationship between pre-and post-Reformation theater, correcting the paradigm used by both

champions and critics of commercial theater that the early modern stage had "disclaimed a dark

ages of Catholic drama in order to recuperate respectable pagan values."[280] Instead, the Chester

Late Banns walked a rhetorical tightrope between dismissal and recuperation through a mixture

of revisionist history and audience manipulation. As Schreyer argues, the Chester Late Banns

provide an important model of the relationship between late medieval and early modern theater,

one that made "synchronic contact" while still demonstrating the arc of diachronic historical

change.[281] I argue that these Late Banns also provide an early blueprint of the commercial

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[278] Kurt Schreyer, *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft: Remnants of the Mysteries on the London Stage* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 48. In 1467, the town of Lydd in Kent noted that 20d was paid "in exspences of oure bane cryars of oure play," and later in 1470, 3s. 4d was paid "to the pleyars of Stone, crying the banes here": Richard Ashton Cross, *Documents in the Fifth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission* (London, 1876), 524, 525.
[279] The editions of the Late Banns in four different manuscripts show a continuing process of revision after their original alteration in the 1550's; Lawrence Clopper argues that the stanzaic shifts in manuscripts demonstrate that each variation represents a shift over time, a shift that Schreyer casts as more boldly innovative with each revision; "The History and Development of the Chester Cycle," *Modern Philology* 75, no. 3 (February 1978): 219–46; Schreyer, *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft*, 64. This dating and progressive 'boldness' aligns with my claim that the Late Bann's interest in more explicit audience shaping and negotiation occurred in conjunction with the emergence of commercial theater.
[280] Schreyer, *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft*, 46.
[281] Ibid, 47.

playhouse prologue, the contractual negotiation necessary to establish a shared responsibility of engagement with a divided audience.

The Chester Late Banns preserved many parts of the Early Banns' structure, especially the chronological announcement of the different plays and the guilds who would produce them. However, while the Early Banns simply advertise the coming plays as an ongoing community tradition, the Late Banns present the same origin story through a proto-Protestant lens, framing the legendary writer, monk Ranulf Higden, as a "moncke not moncklyke" who sought "to make open show" of the Testaments "in common englishe tonge" long before vernacular publication(23-25).[282] The Late Banns also make several gestures towards a unique humility topos; the plays are cast back as ancient texts, "groosse wordes" which "Importe at this daye smale sence or vunderstanginfe," despite the fact that most of the pageants had been written and/or revised quite recently (50-1).[283] All of these gestures distance the Banns speaker from the plays themselves, casting him as a critical gloss rather than an extension of the performance. These narrative reframings of the Chester plays act as protective maneuvers, reframing the plays as community relics that are too far removed and rustic to seriously offend contemporary mores and laws.

I'm particularly interested in the ways that these maneuvers eventually extend towards an explicit negotiation with the audience, not only providing a historical and aesthetic framework for plays but also legislating how they should sensorially engage with the drama when performed. In order to avoid accusations of idolatry, the Banns speaker addresses the embodied role of God onstage, who would be (per original pre-Reformation tradition) wearing a gilt mask:

Of one thing warn you now I shall

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[282] Ibid, 50-51. All quotes from the Late Banns are taken from *The Chester Mystery Cycle* ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills (London; New York: Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1974).
[283] Ibid., 50-51.

That not possible it is these matters to be contryued
In such sort and cunninge & by suche player of price
As at this saye good players & fine witntes could deuise
Ffor then shoulde all those persones that as godes do playe
In Clowdes comes down with voyce and not be seene
Ffor no man can propoition that godhead I saye
To the shape of man face, nose, and eyene
But sethence the face gilte doth disfigure that man that deme
A Clowdye covering of the man, a Voyce only to heare
And not god in shapre or person to appeare (196-202).

The Banns speaker charges the audience with their own imaginative work: rather than participate in a heretical performance, they should choose to see the actor playing God as "a clowdye covering of the man, a Voyce only to heare." The gilt mask aids in that effort since it "disfigure[s]" the face of the actor, but the majority of the work lies with the audience. As Schreyer notes, this is an interesting prelude to the famous prologue of *Henry V*, which asks its audience to "furnish" stage properties to a more impressive scale.[284] Rather than asking audiences to magnify or add properties that aren't there, the Chester Banns is asking them to disappear elements that are not just narratively inconvenient, but potentially heretical. Those who choose to see God as an embodied actor, the Banns argue, are simply engaging with the representation of the play in the wrong way.

The speaker also explicitly positions the Chester plays apart from the skills or tricks of professional theater; the actors are not "player[s] of price," but rather "crafts men and meane men," performing scripts originally meant for "commons and Country men accostomable" (198, 203-204). Ironically, the speaker uses this 'amateurism' to maneuver the audience in a way that would be embraced by commercial playhouses:

If better men and finer heads now comme what can be said
But of common and country playeres take you the story
And if any disdain then open is the doore
That let him in to hearre, pack away at his pleasure

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[284] Ibid, 50-51.

Our playing is not to get fame or treasure (205-209).

The Banns speaker imagines dissent and dissatisfaction with the plays as a matter of elevated theatrical taste rather than doctrinal or political alarm; the "better men and finer heads" who are accustomed to a better caliber of theater. The move to quite literally show dissenting audience members the door— which may have been a metaphorical door or may have referred to the door of Pentice, Chester's Town Hall— creates a sense of enclosed theatrical space and a visible theatrical community of those who stay and those who leave.[285] Audiences who show up for the resulting plays have already consented to the style and material of the play; much like the induction of *Bartholomew Fair*, they are being read the terms and conditions of their theatrical engagement.

The Late Bann's temporal and critical distance from its plays also provides an important model for later playhouse prologues, which had a much more tenuous relationship with their own main texts than previously thought. While famous prologues like the opening of *Henry V* or *Romeo and Juliet* are considered deeply imbricated and permanent components of the script, many prologues were either only performed during the first performance of a play or were added by another playwright onto a text for performance, like a prefabricated porch. As Tiffany Stern has shown, prologues lived in a "hinterland of attachment and non-attachment,"[286] sometimes read and not preserved in manuscripts, sometimes added to extant playscripts by new writers, and sometimes added on after an initial performance as an attempt to edit the play for better success in revamped performances.[287] In this way, prologues developed a lateral discourse with

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[285] Lawrence Clopper argues that this reference to a door might suggest that the Banns were read to the mayor and aldermen; "The History and Development of the Chester Cycle," 238-40.
[286] Stern, "'A Small Beer Health to his Second Day,'"178.
[287] An illustrative example is John Marston's *The Malcontent* (1604), which was performed for the first time at Blackfriars before being revised for performance at the Globe, with a new induction written by Jon Webster.

each other that moved beyond each individual prologue's relationship with its main text. One

example of this lateral discourse was the visual shorthand of the prologue speaker as a character:

a black cloak, garland, and nervous demeanor.[288] Thomas Heywood's *The Four Prentices of*

London (c.1592) played on this custom by sending out three different prologue speakers, all of

whom assume they are the authorized representative. "Do you not know that I am the Prologue?"

the first exclaims to the other two nervously. "Do you not see this long blacke velvet cloke upon

my backe? Haue you not sounded thrice? Do I not looke pale, as fearing to bee out in my

speech? Nay, have I not all the signes of a Prologue about me?" (Pro.2-5)[289]

The prologue as theatrical convention also enjoyed a volatile critical reputation in the

first few decades of London playhouse theater. As Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann have

tracked, about 40% of all playhouse dramas contained a prologue, but those numbers shift

between decades; while plays from 1580-1589 feature a high of 64%, the years 1590-1599

shrank to 31%, before rising consistently upwards in the seventeenth century.[290] Many of the

prologues written in the 1590s feature commentary on this sudden unpopularity, as when a

Stagekeeper attempts to run a prologue speaker offstage in *Return to Parnassus Part One* (1600),

yelling that "you play no prologue here . . . we'll spend no flattering on this carping crowd."[291]

Despite his continued use of inductions and prologues, Ben Jonson included a critical voice in

the induction of *Every Man Out of His Humor* (1599); a man called Cordatus exclaims, "I would

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[288] Stern, "'A Small Beer Health to his Second Day,'" 180-181. Stern also identifies a parallel trend of aggressive or martial Prologues, worn by speakers who "expected the worst of a critical audience" in plays like *Jonson's Poetaster* (1602) where the prologue wears a "forc'd defense" or Henry Glapthrone's *Wit is a Constable* (1636-38), where the constable doubles as the prologue speaker, already in full regalia: "'A Small Beer Health to his Second Day,'" 181.
[289] Thomas Heywood, *Thomas Heywood's The Four Prentices of London : A Critical Old-Spelling Edition*, ed. Mary Ann Weber Gasior (New York: Garland Pub., 1980), 4. All subsequent quotations are taken from this addition.
[290] Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre*, 3-7. Given this trajectory of popularity, most of the plays that I examine here are performed between 1580-1615, the years where the prologue was in cultural flux. As Bruster and Weimann note, after 1630 the prologue was both ubiquitous and standardized.
[291] Ibid, 4.

they would begin once; this protraction is able to sour the best settled patience in the theatre." By

1606, the prose prologue of Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Woman Hater* begins by noting that

"Gentleman, Inductions are out of date, and the prologue in verse is as stale as a black velvet

cloak and a bay garland."[292] Playwrights had mixed attitudes about prologues; some considered

them a form of needless supplicaiton. For example, Thomas Dekker sneered at prologues that

explicitly sought to bolster audience appreciation as "cogging" or deceitful fawning; "if that

which he presents vpon the Stage of the world be *Good,* why should he basely cry out . . . *Iouis*

summi causa clarè plaudite, beg a *Plaudite* for God-sake!"[293] However, other playwrights

recognized the importance of the prologue as a crucial framing of the action. John Fletcher, in his

note to the reader prefacing *The Faithful Shepherdess* (c.1608), admits that he is now setting up

what he "wished had been the prologue" to his stage play, and recounts his mistake in presenting

the play unframed:

> The people seeing it when it was play'd, having ever had a singular gift in defining,
> concluded to be a play of country-hired shepherds in gray cloaks, with curtail'd digs in
> strings, sometimes laughing and sometimes killing one another: and, missing Whitsun-
> ales, cream, wassail, and morris-dances, began to be angry" (4-8).[294]

If the prologue, in Fletcher's eyes, had no artistic value in itself, then it was at least a shrewd

business move in dealing with an exacting audience. Fletcher's wry description of the audience's

"singular gift in defining" frames early seventeenth-century audiences as increasingly (perhaps

alarmingly) confident in their theatrical literacy, capable of forming their own horizon of

expectations in genres and conventions. By 1630, Richard Braithwaite would write with alarm of

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[292] The prologue would however make a second rise in popularity, and by the 1630s it would be a universal and mandatory convention. See Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theater*, 7-8.

[293] Thomas Dekker, *The Wonderful Yea*r *and Selected Writings* ed. E.D. Pendry (London, Edward Arnold, 1967), 28. Philip Massinger later opened *The Emperor of the East* (1632) at Blackfriars by noting that he was only including a prologue because "imperious custom warrants it/ Our author with much willingness would omit/ the preface to his new work."

[294] John Fletcher, "The Faithful Shepherdess," in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Cyrus Hoy, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 497.

the audience members who had grown too confident in their gifts of defining: "as I approve of the *moderate* use and recourse which our *Gentlemen* make to *Playes*; so I wholly condemne the daily frequenting of them: as some there be (especially in this Citie) who, for want of better imployment, make it their Vocation."[295] Braithwaite's division between moderate and professional audience members also gestures at class lines— while Gentleman may visit the theater sparsely, those who attend every day are likely doing so because they are unemployed.[296] This framing of audiences as idle or unemployed echoes much earlier antitheatrical tracts that framed theater as a place for vagrants or idle "masterless men."[297] Yet Braithwaite is not derogating theater as an institution— his distaste for "vocational audiences" stems less from their transgressive or criminal power and more for their terrible opinions about theater. While Fletcher is not quite as explicit in the diagnosis of his audience's displeasure, his disdain of the desired "whitsun-ales, cream, wassail, and morris-dances" frames his audience's tastes as simple or sophomoric.

Fletcher's wariness about a fractious audience that is confident in their tastes echoes Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), a play that stages its prologue as a failed moment of negotiation that leads the audience to overthrow of the 'planned' play. The speaker of the prologue barely gets three lines in before an angry citizen storms the stage:

> PROLOGUE: From all that's near the court, from all that's great

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[295] Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman Containing Sundry Excellent Rules or Exquisite Observations, Tending to Direction of Every Gentleman, of Selecter Ranke and Qualitie; How to Demeane or Accommodate Himselfe in the Manage of Publike or Private Affaires. By Richard Brathwait Esq.* (London: John Haviland, 1630), 103.

[296] Of course, playwrights' disdain for their unappreciative audiences were not always drawn along class lines; factional politics drove critical furor as well. When presenting *The East Emperor* at court after its critical failure at Blackfriars, the prologue-averse Philip Massinger would blame "the rage/and envy of some Catos on the stage," a reference to the quarrel between The King's Men and court poets like Thomas Carew and William Davenant; See Barbara Wooding, *John Lowin and the English Theatre, 1603–1647: Acting and Cultural Politics on the Jacobean and Carolingian Stage*, Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013),120-122.

[297] See Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle*, 26-30.

> Within the compass of the city walls
> We now have brought our scene—
> CITIZEN: Hold your peace, goodman boy!
> PROLOGUE: What do you meane, sir?
> CITIZEN: That you have no good meaning. These seven years there have been
> plays at this house, I have observed it, you have still girds at citizens, and now
> you call your play *The London Merchant*. Down with your title, boy, down with
> your title (1.1.1-8).[298]

The arrival (possibly from amongst the actual audience) of this disgruntled 'audience member' permanently halts the 'original' play, apparently titled *The London Merchant*. This citizen, who claims seven years of observation at the playhouse, is clearly drawn on the lines of Braithwaite's 'vocational' audience members.[299] Rather than an aloof representation of the playwright's work, the prologue speaker becomes a harassed and sarcastic negotiator with the Citizen and his retinue, finally huffily offering them the stage to forge their own play. Not only does Beaumont's scripted overthrow of the stage identify the prologue as a liminal time of interruption and change, it also marks the prologue as a standardized or easily read premonition of what's to come; savvy audience members could tell what they were in for after only three lines.

John Day's *Isle of Gulls* (1606) stages an interrupted prologue by a different category of raucous audience member; the play begins with three Gentlemen who linger onstage and heckle the Prologue speaker. They ask questions about the upcoming play, each requesting that *Isle of Gulls* contain their individual favorite themes and plots in theater, from "vice anatomized" to

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[298] "The Knight of the Burning Pestle," *English Renaissance Drama: An Anthology* ed. David Bevington (W.W. Norton, 2002).

[299] Andrew Gurr has discussed this prologue as indicative of the split of audience composition between amphitheater (citizens) and hall (courtiers and law students) playhouses; since *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* was performed at Blackfriars, it sought to mock the citizen audience of its rival playhouses. However, the fact that *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* was a critical failure may indicate that there were enough citizens present in the audience to be unhappy about the satire; *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 85-88.

"jest an el deep and a fathom broad" to "stately penned history" (A2ᵛ).[300] The Prologue finally

explodes in frustration:

> Alas! Gentleman, how is't possible to content you? You will have railing and invectives, which our authors neither dares nor affects; you, bawdy and scurril jests, which neither becomes his modesty to write, nor the ear of a generous auditory to hear; you, must have swelling comparisons and bombast epithets . . . yet all these we must have, and all in one play, or 'tis already condemned to the hell of eternal disgrace (A2ᵛ-A3ʳ).

While these Gentleman may not be the 'vocational' audience members that *The Knight of the*

Burning Pestle satirizes, they are comically inflexible in their desires, and careless in their

wielding of critical power, the opposite of the "generous auditory" that the Prologue imagines.

When Gentleman 1 plans to leave halfway through the play because he's hungry, the Prologue

speaker rebukes him again:

> PROLOGUE: Either see it all or none; for 'tis grown into a custom at plays, in any one rise (especially of the fashionable sort) about what serious business soever, the rest thinking it dislike of the play, cry mew! by Jesus! vile! and leave the heartless children to speak their epilogue to the empty seats.
> GENTLEMAN 3: Why, does thy audience like a flock of sheep, that one cannot leap over a hedge, but all the rest will follow? They have more reason in them than so (A3ʳ).

While these Gentleman of the "fashionable sort" might not literally overthrow the prologue to

create their own play, their disengagement from the performance might sabotage the production

to the same effect. The Prologue of *Isle of Gulls* must educate the Gentleman on their theatrical

code of conduct (which has no scrivener to enforce it). In addition to their money, their physical

presence is the minimum that these men owe the play, lest others "censure by contagion."

The frustration of both prologue speakers reveals the interrupting audience members to

be both profoundly opinionated in terms of theatrical content and profoundly illiterate in the

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[300] John Day, *The Ile of Guls. As It Hath Been Often Playd in the Blacke Fryars, by the Children of the Reuels.* Early English Books, 1475-1640 / 2164:07 (London,1606). *The Isle of Gulls* was also performed at the Blackfriars, by the same boy troupe that performed *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* a year later. All quotations include a parenthetical manuscript designation.

implicit social codes and transactions of theatergoing. The Prologue represents an authorial

abstraction, but he also embodies these codes of conduct: the transactions of currency, attention,

and physical response that I've termed affective economies. While Gentleman 3 defends the

individualism of each member of the audience, perhaps thinking of the demographic differences

between them in addition to their independent "reason," the Prologue thinks only in the systemic

movement or engagement of the audience body. [301] The epilogue of playhouse theater is often

presented as a moment of judgment, where audience members could grant the 'death' or 'life' of

the play with a variety of sounds, the prologue is even more fragile; however, these interrupted

interludes imagine an audience who cannot enter into a contractual relationship with a

production long enough to judge it, leaving the child actors to "speak their epilogue to empty

seats."[302] The Chester Late Banns negotiated with their audience to avoid accusations of heresy

rather than reap profit and critical acclaim; while their 'amateur' status means that they can show

their audiences the door, *Isle of Gulls* and most other playhouse dramas need to keep them in

their seats.

"Wooly Breeders": Antitheatrical Writers and the Audience Body

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[301] In this way, the Prologue's dual (and sometimes contradictory) work of establishing a theatrical consensus while also addressing the diversity of tastes in the audience demonstrates Steven Mullaney's argument that "early modern amphitheater drama was not only a drama of crisis but also a drama of critical attention, dialectical in relation to its audience": "'Do You See This?' The Politics of Attention in Shakespearean Tragedy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 153. The prologue to Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* features a personified figure of Attention, who sets "wide ope her gates" at the beginning of the play in curiosity over a plot featuring local celebrity (Pro.14). In conceiving of the various tastes and expectations of their audience, Middleton and Dekker provide an interestingly reparative view of audience investment and desire; give that Moll Cutpurse is a public figure, each theatergoer might "bring a play in's head with him," what contemporary fan culture would call a 'headcanon' (Pro.4). Audience investment is cast as a complicating factor of reception, but not necessarily a suffocating or distressingly uneducated factor.
[302] For epilogues as a time of judgment, particularly through the rhetorical tropes of a play's life or death, see Stern, "'A Small Beer Health to his Second Day,'" 175-176.

In the aforementioned *Isle of Gulls*, one of the demanding onstage Gentlemen requests some "good baudry," including dirty jokes and scenes of cuckolding. "Chaste ears would never endure it, sir," the Prologue replies patiently. The Gentleman responds, "Chaste ears! Now, deafness light upon them, what should chaste ears do at a play?" (A2ᵛ). The Gentleman's joke pokes fun at the aesthetic desires of the Blackfriars audience but also echoes the rhetoric of antitheatrical writers who anatomized the bodies of theatergoers, focusing on vulnerable orifices like "chaste ears" that theater might exploit. Writers like Stephen Gosson, Anthony Munday, and Philip Stubbs focused on the affective transactions of theater as a kind of sensorial intercourse, an act that put audiences at risk of contagion. Following the example of Amy Rodgers, Jeremy Lopez, and Jean Howard, I read these antitheatrical tracts as flawed but useful lenses into "ensemble of cultural and social changes" offered by theater "disturbing enough to warrant various forms of management."[303] While playtexts often gestured to the diversity of their audiences, their competing desires and conduct, these antitheatrical texts tended towards homogenization, imagining one emblematic audience body as a collective representative of vulnerable orifices and corruptible organs.[304] This body could then be invaded, infected, or drained, representing the risk of theater in terms of "passing through"; danger was not just located in the actors, nor the props, nor their words, but in an invisible circulation caused by mere engagement.[305]

These antitheatrical tracts used the same rhetoric of invasion, contagion, and circulation as condemnations of usury and prostitution, sometimes from the same authors. While I'm not arguing that the three practices were elided socially, denunciations of all three focused on the

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[303] Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle*, 23. See also Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response*, 19-34; Rodgers, *A Monster with a Thousand Hands*, 35-46.
[304] Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response,* 22.
[305] Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 123-125.

representative body of its victims as under attack by an invasive growth. For example, Anthony

Munday, while admitting that he was once himself a playwright, compared playwrights to the

trades of cooking and painting, respectable professions that also dealt in sensory engagement.

However, he stresses that unlike the respectable trades of cooking or painting, theater deals in a

much more invasive sensorial process:

> There set they abroach strange consorts of melody to tickle the ear, costly apparel to flatter the sight, effeminate gesture to ravish the sense, and wanton speech to whet desire to inordinate lust. Therefore of both barrels I judge cooks and painters the better hearing, for the one extendeth his art no farther than the toungue, palate and nose, the other to the eye, and both are ended in outward sense . . . But these by the privy entries of the ear slip down to the heart, and with gun-shot of affection gall the mind, where reason and virtue should rule the roost. [306]

Munday's depiction of beholding theater creates a string of increasingly internalized affects: the

audience members are first "tickled" and "flattered," then "ravished," their lusts "whet." Unlike

the topical pleasures of food and painting, theater acts like an invisible parasite, one that can

creep through the "privy entries of the ear" and stage a kind of coup d'état of the body, wresting

control of reason and virtue with "gun-shot." Stephen Gosson echoes Munday in *Plays Confuted*

in Five Actions (1582), explaining why the eyes and ears pose particular problems for the

internal sovereignty of the audience member:

> yf we be carefull that no pollution of idoles enter by the mouth into our bodies, how dilligent, how circumspect, how wary ought we to be, that no corruption of idols, enter by the passage of our eyes & eares into the soule? we knowe that whatsoe|uer goeth into the mouth defileth not but passeth away by course of nature; but that which entreth into vs by the eyes and eares, muste bee digested by the spirite, which is chiefly reserued to honor God (B8ᵛ).[307]

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[306] Anthony Munday, "A Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Plays and Theaters" (1580)," in *Shakespeare's Theater*, ed. Tanya Pollard (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 62–83.
[307] Stephen Gosson, "Plays Confuted in Five Actions (1582)," in *Shakespeare's Theater*, ed. Tanya Pollard (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 84–114.

Gosson compares the avoidance of theater to the avoidance of meat during days of religious reflection; while the reader cannot be defiled by the isolated tract of the stomach, which "passeth away by course of nature," the ears and eyes cannot excrete corrupted material, but instead sends it to the soul to "be digested." This topography of pollution imagines the sights and sounds of theater as able to move from the concrete portals of the body into the unmappable regions of the "spirite," where they will presumably act as corrupting agents that cannot be expelled. Importantly, both Munday and Gosson anchor their descriptions of theatrical contagion in the language of movement. While they both briefly denounce the objects of the theater—the music, the costumes, the body of the actor—most of their warning is wrapped in the language of movement, what Ahmed describes as the evocation of fear through a threat that is "passing through."[308] The circulations that Munday and Gosson imagine are a unidirectional invasion that works to form a collective audience body overwhelmed by the contagious growth of theater's invisible influence.

Antitheatrical writers focused particularly on eyesight as a portal through which the circulating power of theater enters in a kind of visual intercourse. Munday describes the process of playgoing as an inexplicable physical pull or drag on the populace via the eyes: "The temple is despised, to run vnto Theaters; the Church is emptied, the yeard is filled; wee leaue the sacrament, to feede our adulterous eies with the impure, & whorish sight of most filthie pastime."[309] Munday's emphasis on the language of prostitution, his "adulterous" eyes and "whorish" sight, is echoed by many other antithetical pamphlets.[310] While these same writers

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[308] Ahmed, "Affective Economies," 124-125.
[309] Munday, "A Second and Third Blast."
[310] Phillip Stubbs, for example, speaks of the theater as a place of "suche winckinge and glancinge of wanton eyes." For more antitheatrical framing of theater as a form of visual prostitution, see Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle*, 25-26.

shared concerns about the theater as a space encouraging or adjacent to the literal act of prostitution, here prostitution serves only as a framework to describe the immorally dilated visual flexibility and capability of the early modern theatergoer. A play isn't just a topical commodity, but inherently invasive and transformative. In the words of Munday, the audience is invested in the theatrical project, and that investment implicates and imbricates them in the process: "for while they saie nought, but gladlie looke on, they al by sight and assent be actors."

The condemnation of theater's unnatural visual wantonness echoes condemnations of usury, a practice framed in anti-Semitic rhetoric as invasive or parasitic. Anti-Semitic tracts in sixteenth and seventeenth century England assigned all manner of contagion-based criminality to Jews, from host desecration to poisoning wells.[311] Yet, even as usury laws shifted the terms of moneylending in sixteenth century England, Jews were still associated with exploitative lending, enabling "the English to imagine a vicious moneylender whose fictional excesses overshadowed their own very real acts of exploitation."[312] While writing about the contagion of theater, Philip Stubbs also framed usury as a kind of economic vampirism. While a garden-variety murder might rid a man "out of his paines at once," a usurer "is long in butchering his pacient suffering him by little & little to languish, and sucking out his hart blood, neuer leaueth him so long as he féeleth any vitall blood . . . comming foorth of him."[313] In his *Pilgrimage* (1617) English cleric Samuel Purchas constructs an anti-Semitic history of Jewish occupation of Italy, noting that throughout the sixteenth century, "the beastly trade of courtesans and the cruel trade of Jews"

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[311] James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 89-112. Emphasis mine.
[312] Ibid, 99.
[313] Stubbs, "Anatomy of Abuses" (1582).This unfavorable comparison of usury to murder parallels Munday's denunciation of theater: "For some sins, though most heinous, may well and honestly both be named and blamed too, as murder, theft, adultery, sacrilege, and such like; only the filthiness of theaters are such as may not honestly be no not so much as blamed": "A Second and Third Blast," 2.

prey and "suck" on the lowest classes.[314] This rhetoric of parasitic sucking and draining imagined victim's bodies as passive and porous, the drain of their metaphorical "hart blood" united money and bodily fluids as an alternative form of contagion expressed in circulatory terms, an evacuation or unwilling drag of material out of the body.

While usury was cast as culturally "illicit and *un*productive" and prostitution was cast as *non*-reproductive, then their 'gains' were cast as transgressively *over*productive.[315] If the victims of usury were portrayed as tragically emptied vessels, then the profit that usurers gained from them was described as whored money, unnaturally compounding on itself. In his essay "On Fortune," Francis Bacon framed this cultural rhetoric as the condemnation of money begetting money against nature.[316] In *The Arraignment and Conviction of Usury* (1595), churchman Miles Mosse argues that "Aristotle sayith that Vsurs and Bawds may well goe together: for they gain by filthie means all they get." While Mosse doesn't explicitly link these "filthie" gains to the theater, the idea of profit through unnatural *copia* (sex, interest, sensorial intercourse) unites the three activities as spaces of contagious and unnatural growth. Interestingly, Stubbs also characterizes scriveners as guilty as usurers themselves; he notes that they are "the instrument whereby the devil worketh the frame of his wicked woorke of usury, hee being rewarded with the good fleece for his labour," an intermediary or pimp between creditor and debtor.[317] This might frame the scrivener of *Bartholomew Fair* in a new light, as he attempts to control the imaginary contract between stage and audience. [318]

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[314] Cited in Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 99
[315] Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 100.
[316] Francis Bacon, *Bacon* (London: A. L. Humphreys, 1900), 191.
[317] Stubbs, "Anatomie of Abuses" (1582)
[318] Hawkes traces the scrivener as a figure of usury in *The Culture of Usury in Renaissance England*, 31-33.

Stubbs' reference to the "good fleece" as the reward of the scrivener references the biblical episode of Laban's sheep, an anecdote most famously used in *The Merchant of Venice* in a debate between Antonio and Shylock over the moral status of usury. Shylock uses Laban as a biblical precedent for profiting through interest:

> . . . mark what Jacob did.
> When Laban and himself were compromised
> That all the eanlings which were streak'd and pied
> Should fall as Jacob's hire, the ewes, being rank,
> In the end of autumn turned to the rams,
> And, when the work of generation was
> Between these woolly breeders in the act,
> The skilful shepherd peel'd me certain wands,
> And, in the doing of the deed of kind,
> He stuck them up before the fulsome ewes,
> Who then conceiving did in eaning time
> Fall parti-colour'd lambs, and those were Jacob's.
> This was a way to thrive, and he was blest (1.3.71-83).[319]

Shylock represents interest as a kind of procreation hack, with economic profit "bred" between gold and silver, rather than rams and ewes. This configuration of usury takes agency away from the bodies that do the procreative work, and resembles the invasive and sexualized rhetoric of Stubbs, Munday, and Gosson; the sheep's bodies are porous resources, "wooly breeders" to be pimped and then shorn. By interfering in the "deed of kind," Jacob has also heretically usurped God's dibs on divine creation; Antonio posits to Shylock this is "a thing not in [Jacob's] power to bring to pass/but swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven" (1.3.87-8). Antonio's criticism mimics antitheatrical rhetoric that frames theater as hedging in on the creative or representational power of the church, but could also more generally be extended to usury and prostitution as artificial human systems that interfere with the 'natural' processes of sex and profit.[320] These

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[319] All citations from *The Merchant of Venice* are taken from William Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third edition. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016).

[320] Rodgers gives an extended reading of this competition between the divine procreative power of church and stage; she specifically examines the power of theater (and church) to resurrect the dead, examining Thomas Nashe's

metaphors of theater and usury as illicit procreation pose audience bodies as particularly porous and vulnerable, not unlike Laban's sheep; they are passive victims, whether to nefarious usurers or nefarious players.

This porosity and vulnerability are underscored by the use of visual manipulation in Shylock's parable. Jacob achieves his sheepy profit by manipulating the gaze of ewes during sex: sticks, stripped of bark, have a surprising contribution to the birth of these spotted lambs. Many medieval and early modern medical or philosophical texts considered "the maternal imagination" or "maternal impression" as a serious factor in pregnancy; what the women looks at during or after the act of conception could, theoretically, have consequences in the final physical makeup of the child.[321] In Peter Chamberlen's *Midwives Practice* (1665), he recounts both the tale of Jacob and two other infamous anecdotes of maternal impression. In one, Galen advises an Ethiopian couple to gaze at a portrait of a white man while having sex in order to conceive a white baby. In the other, an expectant mother gazed upon a portrait of John the Baptist in camel skin, and subsequently "brought forth a female Child full of hair, like the hair of a camel."[322] These anecdotes identify female desire and gaze as troubling, and, for Protestant England, troublingly papist.[323] This paradigm of female bodies as porous and vulnerable to manipulation through the gaze echoes antitheatrical writing that imagines the invisible and contagious power of theater as taking root within its victim's bodies. Shylock's paradigm of usury is thus tied to

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celebration of the revivification of Talbot onstage, alongside Christian traditions of performing the resurrection in pageants of the *Vistatio Sepulchri*; *A Monster With a Thousand Hands*, 35-40.

[321] Mary Fissel provides an overview of maternal impression and perceptions of race in early modern England in *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 206-208. Though Chamberlen's text was not published until the mid seventeenth centuries, many of these anecdotes far predate him: Siobhain Bly Calkin discusses the medieval origins of these medical texts in the context of miscegenation in the medieval romance *King of Tars* in "Marking Religion on the Body: Saracens, Categorization, and 'The King of Tars'" *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 104:2 (2005): 219-238.

[322] Peter Chamberlen, *Midwives Practice* (1665), 95, cited in Fissel, *Vernacular Bodies*, 207.

[323] Fissel, *Vernacular Bodies*, 208.

the visual as a mode of interior penetration, redirecting the "work of generation" into profitable

channels. This model of the gaze as a physical intake that helps constitute the subject then poses

watching drama as an activity that might have real consequences, if not for the birth of a child,

then for the conception of a theatrical fiction. Thus, while early modern playhouse prologues

may have conceived of the risk of theater to be entirely on their own end— the volatile

navigation of economic precarity and public opinion— antitheatrical tracts presented playgoing

as a risk to not only spiritual health, but also bodily autonomy. While Gentleman 3 of *Isle of*

Gulls protests at the idea of the audience as "a flock of sheep," (A3ʳ) arguing that audiences did

not make decisions based on a contagion of opinion or herd mentality, antitheatrical texts

imagined contagion as a matter of bodily corruption rather than of critical reception.

"That light commodity of words": Exchange and Taste in Mercantile Prologues

In allying theater with prostitution and usury, antitheatrical tracts sought to identify

theater as inherently contagious, capable of physically and mentally invading and transforming

their audiences. In this section, I trace playhouse prologues that, in contrast and perhaps in

response to those allegations, define theater as an entertaining commodity, capable of only

superficially impacting its audience members. These prologues followed the logic of what

Douglas Bruster has termed the "representational market" of early English theater, an "enabling

and conditioning system operating on a horizon of consumer expectations, which considered

representing as a craft, and representations as commodities."[324] This logic often paired the

theater and the newly established Royal Exchange, a place that also addressed a rise of

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[324] Douglas Bruster, "'The Representation Market in Early Modern England,'" *Renaissance Drama* 41 (2013): 3. Bruster's concept of the representation market draws heavily from Pierre Bordeiu's "symbolic capital," which separated fetishistic or ludic "art" from "symbolic goods" or "cultural production," or works that are subsumed within power and class relations; "The Representation Market," 4-5.

cosmopolitan consumer tastes and demands.[325] Many descriptions of this exchange model come

from the complaints of playwrights who resented the mercantilization of theater as labor or trade

rather than art. Thomas Dekker gave a satirically grim snapshot of this Exchange model in his

satire *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609):

> The theatre is your poets' Royal Exchange, upon which their muses, that are now turned
> to merchants, meeting, barter away that light commodity of words for a lighter ware than
> words; *plaudites*, and, the breath of the great beast which, like the threatnings of two
> cowards, vanish all into air. Players and their factors, who put away the stuff, and make
> the best of it they possibly can, and indeed 'tis their parts so to do. Your gallant, your
> courtier, your captain had won't to be the soundest paymasters, and I think are still the
> surest chapmen: and these, by means that their heads are well-stocked, deal upon this
> comical freight by the gross; when your groundling or gallery-commoner buys his sport
> by the penny, and, like a haggler, is glad to utter it again by retailing.[326]

Dekker's economic logic, while clearly hyperbolized and distorted for satire, imagines an

economic system in which actors and playwrights exchange "that light commodity of words" for

applause and laughter, the "breath of the great beast." Theatergoers may retell or retail the

material of the stage, but the drama depreciates upon moving from the stage to the mouths of

spectators. As Bruster notes, though Dekker is essentially describing an economic orgy, it's one

that is surprisingly banal, pessimistically material rather than seductive or transformational.[327]

Performances, here pictured as "comic freight," bring diminishing returns. Ben Jonson would

later disparage the commercial and audience-driven tastes of playhouse theater in his second

"Ode to Himself,"(c.1629) in which he announces his intention to "leave the loathed stage," a

place where his theatrical wares are constantly snubbed: "Say that thou pour'st 'em wheat/ And

they would acorns eat/'Twere simple fury, still thyself to waste/On such as have no taste/To offer

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[325] Howard, *Theater of a City*, 28-67.
[326] Thomas Dekker, *The Guls Horn-Booke* (London, 1609), 27-28. Cited in Bruster, "The Representation Market,"
14-15.
[327] Bruster, "The Representation Market," 14.

them a surfeit of pure bread/Whose appetites are dead"(1, 11-16).[328] Jonson frames his theatrical

failures as a matter of mismatched taste; he is offering the elevated nourishment of "wheat" or

"pure bread," to those whose "dead" appetites have been ruined by the early modern equivalent

of junk food. Jonson swears to leave the work that he describes as "prostitute," (41) his epithet

ironically eliding with the antitheatrical accusations of theater as a space of sensorial prostitution.

However, Jonson inverts the accusations of predation leveled by antitheatrical writers; instead,

he is the abused figure, bled dry by the demands of the theatergoing public.

This 'representation market' model of viewing theater surely offended some playwrights

who preferred to consider their work as elevated art rather than a variation of trade labor.[329]

However, a number of playhouse prologues earnestly embrace this model, choosing to adopt the

language of trade, exchange and theatrical commodity in a way that allowed them to both

negotiate with the diverse tastes of the audience and place the representation power of the stage

in the audience's eye, rather than in the stage's seductive or predatory power. These mercantilist

prologues sought to imagine theater within the nexus of the commodity industry in order to

minimize risk. We can see this kind of dynamic in *Three Ladies of London* (1581), where the

prologue-speaker presents the performance by first setting it opposite the work of "husbandmen"

and "gardeners":

> You marvel, then, what stuff we have to furnish out our show.
> Your patience we crave a while, till we have trimmed our stall
> the young and old to come behold our wares and buy them all
> Then, if our wares seem well-woven to you, good and fine
> We hope we shall see your custom another time (Pro.15-18).[330]

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[328] Ben Jonson, *The Complete Poems* (Yale University Press, 1982), 282-284.

[329] As Paul Yachnin has argued, early modern English playwrights like Shakespeare, Jonson and Middleton struggled to establish theater as a socially prestigious institution. Jonson's bitter dismissal of early seventeenth-century playwrights as "stage-wrights" demonstrates this productive tension between public theater as art and as labor. *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson and Middleton and the Meaning of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

[330] Robert Wilson, *The Three Ladies of London*, ed. Lloyd Edwards Kermode, *Three Renaissance Usury Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

To "behold" this play is to purchase the "wares" of the stage, to test out whether the script is

"well-woven" as one might handle or inspect the weave of a piece of fabric. As Stern notes, the

play seems to predicate future performances on success— in order to see further "custom," *Three*

Ladies of London must impress their first-night audiences. Likewise, despite Jonson's later

vitriol towards mercantilist rhetoric later in his career, the prologue to *Volpone* (c.1605) promises

the audience that the playwright has contracted the performance "accounting to the palates of the

season," (Pro.3): the play is a consumable that will have a positive if superficial effect on the

spectator body. The prologue speaker notes that the playwright has drained "all gall and

copperas from his ink, leaving only a little salt,"(Pro.33-34), presenting the play as a topical

pleasure "wherewith he'll rub your cheeks, till red, with laughter/They shall look fresh a week

after"(Pro.35-36).[331] These prologues buy into Dekker's consideration of the audience, as well as

the players, as driven by commerce in addition to entertainment. *Volpone* is able to make contact

with the audience body, but only in a superficial way: to tickle palates or rosy cheeks.

These prologues that imagined the effects of theater as topical might also, like the

Chester Banns, entreat its audience to selectively interact with the visual and aural offerings of

the play. Jean Howard has studied the "economy of gazes" in early modern playhouses, the

visual exchanges between patrons that contained its own political power, particularly for female

theatergoers.[332] These prologues take this economy of gazes seriously as manipulatable currency;

they are not just competing for the visual attention of their audience, but also specifying and

shaping the mode of gaze that will be most profitable for them. *Cupid's Whirligig* (1607)

reminds its audience that if they find offense in the comedy of the play, "He onlely findes the

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[331] Ben Jonson, "Volpone," in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington et al.
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[332] Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle*, 76-80.

words, you the fence/ Wherefore if ought into your ears taste tart/ Thank but your selves, which good to ill convert" (A2ʳ).[333] This interesting bit of synesthesia imagines the audience's ears as barometers of "taste," that can convert "tart" or offensive material to something more palatable. This process of conversion stands as the opposite of Gosson and Munday's model of sensorial intake. Instead of imagining theatrical material sneaking into the eyes and ears of the audience and transforming their brain or soul, the prologue of *Cupid's Whirligig* assumes that audiences can transform material onstage, converting it to their will.

Likewise, one of the three bickering prologue speakers in *The Four Prentices of London* (c.1601-1607) asks that:

> if these cleere-sighted Gentlemen, with the eyes of their iudgements, looking exactly into vs, finde any imperfections which are hid from our selues, our request is, you would rather looke ouer them, then through them, not with a troubled eye, that makes one obiect to seeme two, but with a fauourable eye, which hath power in it selfe to make many to seeme none at all (Pro.37-42)

The audience of *Four Prentices* can be taught how to properly behold the performance, even on a level of willful optometry. While the Chester Banns specified the character that needed visual rehabilitation, here *The Four Prentices* counsels the theatergoers to generally interact with its performance with a "favorable" rather than "troubled" eye, a mode of vision that collapses rather than expands. Rather than asking in the mode of *Henry V* for the audience to imagine hundreds of men where one stands, or make "one object to seem two," this prologue recommends a corrective vision that erases error by moving over undesired things or people. In this conceit, audience eyesight rather than theater is inherently transformative; the audience's vision can anatomize or smooth the inconsistencies of the play depending on their chosen mode of engagement.

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[333] *Cupid's Whirligig, As it hath bene sundry times Acted by the Children of the Kings Majesties Reuels* (London, 1607).

Theatrical Ciphers: Affective Usury and Audience Debt

If some prologues responded to antitheatrical criticism by representing their performances as a bounded consumable, with the audience as masterful consumers, then others embraced the terms of this criticism. I'm particularly interested in a series of prologues that imagine a system of affective usury: borrowing the eyes, ears and minds of the audience and giving them back with interest, positioning theater as a source of affective transformation and enrichment. Shakespeare briefly offers a more exploitative model of affective usury onstage in *Richard III*, when the titular villain negotiates with Queen Elizabeth for the hand of her daughter: "the liquid drops of tears that you have shed/shall come again, transform'd to orient pearl/Advantaging their loan with interest/of ten times double gain of happiness" (4.4.321-324). Of course, Richard wants neither Elizabeth's tears nor her sadness; he wants her daughter, so the system of affective usury here is simply a veiled pretense that further allies Richard with predatory practices. In contrast, the prologue of *Henry V* offers affective usury as a mutually beneficial rather than predatory process, one that stokes and manages the imaginative rather than critical power of its audience.

Over the course of this chapter, I've referenced *Henry V* as the center of critical consideration of theatrical prologues, especially in its solicitation of the audience to behold its performance in a way that explodes its visual effects, rather than diminishing them (as in the Chester Banns) or flattening them (as in *Four Prentices*). The prologue of *Henry V* is striking, both for its vision of the theatrical project and its sometimes-jarring dissonance with its own play; its "eloquent speaker . . . achieves a fair degree of independence, even liberty," but also

cherry-picks and even "misreads" the text of the play.[334] The opening begins with the call for a

"muse of fire," a summons that belies the prologue's dual focus on the physical shortcomings of

the playhouse and the bombastic heights of its storytelling. The distance between theatrical

fantasy and reality, the "kingdom for a stage" and the "wooden O," can only be crossed by the

loan of audience imaginaries:

> Since a crooked figure may
> Attest in a little place a million
> And let us, ciphers to this great account
> On your imaginary forces work
> Suppose within the girdle of these walls
> Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
> Whose high upreared and abutting fronts
> The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder
> Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts
> Into a thousand parts divide one man" (Pro. 15-24).[335]

What the Chorus solicits from the audience with their "supposes" is the fertilization of formerly

barren material: from one man into a thousand, from a wall into a kingdom. It is a promise that

the audience will receive back what they lend, with interest. Both "crooked figure" and "ciphers"

refer to both stage materials and zeroes; in early modern mathematical terms, the cipher was "an

arithmetical symbol or character (0) of no value by itself, but which increases or decreases the

value of other figures according to its position."[336]

The theatrical enterprise that *Henry V* proposes is inherently economic; it is the loan of

audience engagement that turns these zeros into innumerable thousands. The "imaginary

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[334] Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theater*, 113-116.

[335] All quotations are taken from William Shakespeare, "Henry V," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., Third edition. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016).

[336] "Cipher" (n.) *Oxford English Dictionary* In addition to *Henry V*, Shakespeare associates the term "cipher" with interpersonal debt in Polixenes' line in *The Winter's Tale*: "Go hence in debt: and therefore, like a cipher/Yet standing in rich place, I multiply/ With one 'We thank you' many thousands more/That go before it" (1.2.6-9).

puissance" that the Chorus solicits from the audience acts as a kind of germinating force, working to both literally furnish the prowess of depicted armies and kings, and more generally to expand and explode all stage properties into mammoth proportions. The Chorus continually returns to ideas of exponential change in scale, speaking of "cram[ming]" the "casques" of Agincourt into the playing space, or framing the playhouse as a "girdle" that contains "two mighty monarchies." This explosion of scale is offered as both reliant on audience engagement and a reward for this same engagement: only through participation in the play's scheme will audiences experience the gargantuan dramaturgical windfalls. Indeed, the audience in *Henry V* are figured as respected investors; the visual intercourse that the play promises will enrich these "imaginary forces" of the audience, providing fruitful returns. In this way, *Henry V* promises a kind of utopian affective economy, the system of usury turned into a collaborative victory rather than a form of predation or vampirism.

A Woman Killed with Kindness (1603) begins with a prologue that positions it as the explicit opposite of *Henry V*. *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is loosely categorized as a domestic tragedy; it portrays the seduction of Anne Frankfort by her husband's guest, and her choice to starve herself to death rather than live a life of social ostracism. The prologue speaker enters to prepare audiences for the exact opposite of a muse of fire:

> I come but like a harbinger, being sent
> To tell you what these preparations mean.
> Look for no glorious state; our Muse is bent
> Upon a barren subject, a bare scene.
> We could afford this twig a timber-tree
> Whose strength might boldly on your favours build;
> Our russet, tissue; drone, a honey-bee;
> Our barren plot, a large and spacious field;
> Our coarse fare, banquets; our thin water, wine;
> Our brook, a sea; our bat's eyes, eagle's sight
> Our poet's dull and earthy Muse, divine;

Our ravens, doves; our crow's black feathers, white.
But gentle thoughts, when they may give the foil,
Save them that yield, and spare where they may spoil (Pro., 1-14).[337]

The barrenness of the stage in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is twofold— it is barren in the comparatively minimalist nature of early modern theatrical representation (the same way that the prologue advertises the stage of *Henry V* as an "unworthy scaffold") but it is also bare because this play is not trying to create Agincourt, but rather an unspectacular contemporary domestic scene. Indeed, in reality the performance of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* was probably not drastically less furnished then that of *Henry V*: the play's repeated insistence on its own barrenness, dullness or coarseness thus serves more as an opening gambit in audience negotiation. This prologue teases the ability of the audience's affective investment to magnify, evolve, and enrich stage material "whose strength might boldly on your favors build"— you *could* turn russet into tissue, or ravens into doves, if we asked you to. Instead, this audience investment is held in trust, or in tension, as a kind of weaponized, overhanging potential to underscore the role of deprivation in the coming play: Anne Frankfort's ostracism and slow, brutal starvation. Indeed, while the prologue advertises the stage's poverty, the meagre material representation that they can "afford," they then announce their intention to make the audience suffer along with them.

A Woman Killed with Kindness negotiates its modes of audience engagement largely because of the themes of its plot; however, it also serves as an example of a prologue that is explicitly withholding, coercing its audience to suspend their imaginative powers in order to experience a story of tragic deprivation. *Henry V* frames audience investment as a win-win

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[337] All citations are taken from Thomas Heywood, *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie (London; New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

narrative, promising a satisfying process of mutual enrichment; within this system, the audience are cast as the loaners who will make an exorbitant amount of interest on their imaginative loan, and the "ciphers" of the players are happy to be in debt. Amanda Bailey has identified early modern playhouse theater as a "theater of debt," both for its economic structures and for the inherent interpersonal debts involved in performance.[338] Bailey is particularly interested in the intersection between theater and bondage debt, or debt where the body of the debtor could stand in for the original loan. Because this debt was a "bodily event at the center of complex political and philosophical issues raised by contract law, the theater was uniquely positioned to stage the emerging story of the possessive individual,"[339] Bailey reads across a range of 'debt plays,' broadly conceived, but also considers the indebtedness of early modern players, both literally and as a matter of dramatic form. The word "perform," she argues, doubles a commitment to both the "institution of law and dramatic practice"; to "perform" a contract would mean to fulfil its terms, while to perform a play meant fulfilling the promises of satisfaction that it had offered its audience.[340] Of course, as this chapter has shown above, the prologue stands as a particularly explicit moment of this indebtedness; prologue speakers set the terms of the audience's satisfaction, offering actions or sensorial delights that might come with one genre or another. However, flipping the focus of Bailey's argument, I'm also interested in moments where the audience is in debt: where their bodies or imaginations are held in contract, much as in *A Warning for Fair Women*.

That contract is made most explicit in the induction of *Bartholomew Fair*. As mentioned earlier, the scrivener was held as a supplemental figure of predatory lending in early modern

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[338] Bailey, *Of Bondage*.
[339] Ibid, 3.
[340] Ibid,14.

England, an economic pimp that "facilitated and profited from the intercourse between creditor and debtor."[341] The scrivener of the induction seeks to enforce the terms of a "covenant" or contract between Jonson and the audience, one that restricts both the physical movement and judgement of the audience during the space of the performance and afterwards. Playgoers must be "fixed and settled in [their] censure," (Pro.100-101) rather than changing their minds about what they like or dislike; the contract follows them out of the playhouse. Furthermore, if an audience member seeks to over-interpret the contemporary political meaning of the play, to pick out "a concealed statesman by the seller of mousetraps," then they are left "to the mercy of the author, as forfeiture to the stage and your laughter" (Pro.142-145). The contract envisions a mode of omniscient surveillance that dictates not only audience behavior but audience judgement, placing their bodies in "forfeiture" if they breach their obligations. As the scrivener continues to list these different modes of control, he repeats the phrase "It is agreed," or "it is further agreed," concluding with the reminder that this contract has already been signed by the audience: "In witness whereof, as you have preposterously put to your seals already (which is your money), you will now add the other part of suffrage, your hands" (Pro. 151-153). The contract imagines the audience's admission price as their "seal," both mocking them for the economic custom of theater as a pay-before entertainment and framing their purchase as a wholesale consent to be coerced and controlled.[342] Even if the audiences does exercise their limited scope of judgement, it will be "inconsequential . . . divorced from the play's literal entertainment value."[343] The scrivener finally calls for the audience to add "the other part of

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[341] Hawkes, *The Culture of Usury*, 24.

[342] Donald Hedrick has traced the carceral aspects of this prologue, noting that Jonson allies himself with the water-poet John Taylor, who compared theater and prostitution as pay-before entertainments: "Hope and Desire of that which is to come is a better paymaster, than grudging remembrance of fruition of that which is past": "Real Entertainment: Sportification, Coercion, and Carceral Theater," in *Thunder at a Playhouse: Essaying Shakespeare and the Early Modern Stage,* ed. Peter Kanelos and Matt Kozusko (Susquehanna University Press, 2010), 53-54.

[343] Hedrick, "Real Entertainment," 54.

suffrage, your hands," signals that the audience must now clap as a 'vote' of approval. Yet, the sliding meaning of 'suffrage' offers many possibilities. Suffrage also signified intercessory prayers, which would also play on the use of the audience's hands; the scrivener could be demanding some sort of mass petition for the play's success.[344] Finally, suffrage could also suggest the audience's contractual obligation to stay for the rest of play, their requirement to 'suffer through' whatever Jonson has decided to write for them. The scrivener's call for the audience's hands could double as a call for applause and a mass arrest. Jonson reverses the trope of the nervous Prologue, instead calling attention to the audience's precarity, beholden to a performance that already has claimed their money, attention, and physical autonomy.

This carceral covenant that Jonson designs between the stage and the audience is a "fantasy," a document that "has no equal in the drama of the period."[345] Indeed, Ben Jonson is often held in a class of his own when it comes to aggressive intervention in audience engagement.[346] However, while I have referenced both Jonson's plays and print writing throughout this chapter, by reading prologues laterally I also want to argue that Jonson's coercive attempts are particularly barbed or explicit examples of a larger trend, rather than the isolated desires of a grumpy killjoy. Other play prologues variously figure audiences as beholden in their beholding, or experiencing some sort of gamble. If *Bartholomew Fair* laughs at the inherent economic risk of buying a theater ticket, the "preposterous" system of paying before sampling the quality of the play, then other prologues gesture towards other kinds of affective

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[344] "Suffrage, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed June 14, 2019, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/193582.

[345] David Bergeron, "Charismatic Audience: A 1559 Pageant," in *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558-1642*, ed. Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 135.

[346] See, for example: George E. Rowe, "Ben Jonson's Quarrel with Audience and Its Renaissance Context," *Studies in Philology*, no. 4 (1984); "Cooking for the Anthropophagi: Jonson and His Audience," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, no. 2 (1977); Alvin B. Kernana, "Shakespeare's and Jonson's View of Public Theatre Audiences," in *Jonson and Shakespeare*, ed. Ian Dolnaldson (London; Basingstroke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1983), 74–88.

risks in theatergoing, ones that allow an audience to experience the thrill or freedom of wagering their affective investment as well as their money.

For example, Stern explores several prologues that figure their new plays as virgin women, offering their audiences a form of theatrical hymen.[347] *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (c.1613) opens with the Prologue speaker offering an extended metaphor on how new plays and maidenheads are alike:

> Much followed both, and for both good money gi'en
> If they stand sound and well. And a good play—
> Whose modest scenes blush on his marriage day
> And shake to lose his honor— is like her
> That after holy tie and first night's stir
> Yet still is modesty, and still retains
> More of a maid to sight than husband's pains (Pro. 2-8).[348]

While this prologue certainly uses its sexual metaphor to emphasize "the freshness, youth, and novelty of the play they are presenting," as Stern argues, it also imagines audience engagement as a form of intercourse. While the play "shakes to lose his honor," playing on the trope of anxious Prologue as well as a nervous virgin, the audience is cast as the hazarding lover who seeks to uncover its "modest scenes."[349] Moreover, the audience is not only figured as sexual partners but also as the spouses of the performance; their engagement and judgment are likened to the "husband's pains," or exertions of intercourse after the "holy tie" of matrimony. In exchanging "good money" for the play, they have not simply paid for sex, but seemingly paid a dowry. *Two Noble Kinsmen* thus presents their play as cementing a form of union, where the audience is inextricably bound to the stage. While antitheatrical texts focused on the stage as a

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[347] Stern, "'A Small Beer Health to his Second Day,'" 177.
[348] William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, "The Two Noble Kinsmen" in *The Norton Shakespeare* ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Gordon McMullan. Third edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016)
[349] Stern, "'A Small Beer Health to his Second Day,'" 177.

space of visual whoring, the prologue of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* offers the delights of theatrical intercourse, but only through the bonds of matrimony.

The framing prologues in which plays defined themselves against attacks of immorality and criminality are, I have shown, a key resource for understanding how early modern theater imagined the transformative potential and risk of audience engagement. The playhouse prologues that I have read laterally offer several potential models: some suggest audience engagement as a kind of sensorial intercourse or a process of imaginative mutual enrichment, a collaborative and generous alternative to capitalism. Others insist that the theater doesn't do *anything* to theatergoers, but instead theatergoers take the active role in shaping onstage action to their individual desires. Others imagine a more coercive, even carceral approach.

I have shown that, through all these various models, playhouse prologues sought to rehabilitate the very associations by which drama were derogated: the antitheatrical conceptions of theater as a space of invasion, predation, and contagion. If *Bartholomew Fair* and *Henry V* offer opposite models of affective economies—one a utopia of audience enrichment and the other a fantasy of audience control—both seize on the elided condemnation of usury and theater to imagine new ways of extracting attention and engagement from their audiences. Likewise, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* offers a model through which sensory intercourse with a performance is framed as a thrilling marriage of minds, rather than "whored eyes." If mercantile prologues sought to award audiences various types of sensory power, then these prologues, which readily admit theater's transformational or even invasive capacity, experiment with depriving its audience of power, even suggesting that theater does claim some sort of debt on its audience. In previous chapters, I have considered how narratives of crime sought to cue or even bind audiences in systems of complicity, surveillance, and resistance. This chapter has shown that

178

theater's own adjacency to 'banned economies' and criminality, as imagined and decried in antitheatrical discourses, was a vital catalyst for theater's self-conscious negotiation with its audiences, as they more creatively sought to frame playgoing as a risky business.

Conclusion

In 2014, after completing my first year of graduate school, I attended a production of *Titus Andronicus* at the Globe Theater, crowding in with hundreds of other standing "groundlings" in the June heat. Lucy Bailey's directorial revival of her 2006 *Titus* had already made headlines for causing an unprecedented number of audience members to faint because of its graphic and incredibly bloody staging of Lavinia's rape and dismemberment. Bailey had commented that these visceral audience reactions were, for her, a desired rather than accidental outcome; she noted that "I used to get disappointed when only two or three people passed out."[350] News coverage kept a toll of the "body count" of *Titus*, which of course led to even higher attendance records.[351] As I reunited with friends around London, they drew my attention to student writing that had criticized the contrast between the public fascination in the graphic performance of Lavinia's assault in *Titus* and the dismissal and lack of public interest in sexual assault cases in London universities. The fainting and other inadvertent bodily responses to the Bailey's *Titus* was alternately championed as a sign of the power of theater to challenge its audience and derogated as a dangerous shock tactic.[352]

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[350] Nick Clark, "Globe Theatre Takes out 100 Audience Members with Its Gory *Titus Andronicus*," *The Independent*, 22 July 2014.

[351] In addition to Clark, see Hannah Furness, "Globe Audience Faints at 'Grotesquely Violent' *Titus Andronicus*," *The Telegraph* April 30, 2014; Patrick Begley, "'Grotesquely Violent' *Titus Andronicus* Causes 100 People to Faint or Leave," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 24, 2014. The theater reviewer for *The Independent*, Holly Williams, confessed in her review that she herself had fainted, praising the show as both "exceptional" and "unwatchable": "*Titus Andronicus,* Shakespeare's Globe, Theatre Review" *The Independent* May 2, 2014.

[352] See Marina Warner, "There's Method in Theatre's Blood and Gore," *The Guardian*, May 12, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/12/theatre-blood-gore-titus-andronicus; Alice Vincent, "Torture, Blood-Spatters, and Nurses on Standby: a History of People Fainting at the Theatre" *The Telegraph* January 23, 2019.

My own experience as an audience member at the Bailey's *Titus* was shaped by a self-awareness that I, along with other audience members, was attending the show in spite of (or even because of) the possibility that I or those around me would become "droppers," in the official Globe terminology. Framing attendance as a challenge of physical and affective endurance or a literal spectator sport made the audience objects of spectatorship while simultaneously questioning the ethical stakes of their engagement as theatrical subjects. While I was discomforted by my experiences with the play, I was also intrigued by the collision of factors—intentional performance decision, public reception, contemporaneous events, bodily response—that created that sense of discomfort. The gore onstage was harrowing, but I was also unnerved by the chaotic press of the standing audience as characters rushed back and forth from the stage on wheeled scaffolds; at one point a struggling Aaron nearly kicked me in the face. Reading over to the Globe's official show reports years later, I found a fascinating array of audience responses, recorded when theatergoers had contacted stewards, left the theater, or required first aid.[353] Some were intensely nauseated by the smell from a barbeque stand located near a stage door, their minds perhaps juxtaposing the smell of burning meat with the evisceration of human flesh onstage.[354] Others were felled by the heat or air, the dry ice and incense setting off asthmatic reactions.[355] One man who fainted hit his head so badly that he got short-term amnesia, awakening with no recollection of the play or how he ended up at the Globe.[356] Another confronted the front of the house after emerging from the play splattered in stage blood.[357]

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[353] William Shakespeare and the Globe Theater, *Front of House Show Reports for Titus Andronicus (2014)*. GB 3316 SGT/THTR/SR/2014/[[Titus]]/[[Andronicus]]. Shakespeare's Globe Library & Archives, 25 Apr - 13 Jul 2014. [Accessed July 22, 2019]. In further citations, I will refer to this document as *Front of House Show Reports*.
[354] *Front of House Show Reports*, 10,15.
[355] Ibid, 13,18, 21, 22.
[356] Ibid, 32. Several other audience members experienced head trauma serious enough to go into shock or be transported to the emergency room.
[357] Ibid, 26.

These accounts present the various ways that the audience of this *Titus* found themselves at risk, from the material spray of stage blood to the possibility of a medical emergency. When I attended, those in the standing area of the Globe were braced beforehand, many stewards and fellow theatergoers checking that those particularly close to the stage knew 'what they were getting in for.' The discourse around Bailey's *Titus* made visible the tension between theater as a space meant to move its audience with its liveness and material presence and the danger of that movement going too far. Writing on a later production of *Julius Caesar* at the Bridge Theater that likewise engulfed a portion of its audience within a chaotic staging of Roman warfare, Andy Kesson warned against the assumption that a "difficult" performance is synonymous with a good one: "it's wonderful to actively engage your audience, but measuring the success of that engagement by how unsafe you make them feel is simply abusive."[358] Battling through this performance of *Titus* ignited my interest in the push and pull of power at play in audience engagement, the relationship between audience and stage that can shift between collaboration and abuse.

In this conclusion, I want to explore the critical stakes of my project by also revisiting how my project centers the stakes of theatergoing for early English audiences. In the preceding chapters, I have offered a series of orientations toward performance, the negotiated dynamic between audience and play that I've termed "affective economies" in my final chapter. Each of these orientations or modes of engagement— beholding, witnessing, voyeurism, investment— carry particular consequences for audience members. In Chapter 1, I sought to bring the minor characters of the York Corpus Christi plays to the foreground as bodies for audiences to behold in empathetic recognition, creating a community of quiet resistance against the performance of

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[358] Andy Kesson, "'I Do Fear the People': Theatre and the Problem with Audiences," *Before Shakespeare* (blog), February 16, 2018, https://beforeshakespeare.com/2018/02/16/julius-caesar-and-the-politics-of-having-an-audience/.

political tyranny. In Chapter 2, I argued that the Tudor moral interludes *Nice Wanton*, *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*, *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, and *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* use the structure of a narrative ellipsis to constrain the interpretive ability of their audiences, teaching them prospective witnessing as a way to make legible its moral of community security. In Chapter 3, I reframed the implications of a 'voyeuristic' audience for domestic tragedies such as *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, arguing that this play forced its audience to acknowledge their complicity in the public creation and circulation of its true-crime narrative. In Chapter 4, I used a lateral reading of playhouse prologues to highlight the different tactics of cueing and negotiating audience investment that occurs in the liminal spaces of performance. I argue that these prologues responded to antitheatrical texts that condemned theatergoing as an invasive and contagious practice. In some of these readings, I cast the stakes of audience engagement as restraining or disciplinary: the audience is cued or forced into a mode of looking that seeks to shape their experience or understanding of the play in a particular interpretive direction. In others, I cast the stakes of engagement as intentionally provocative or expressive: the audience is offered one or many pathways through which to forge their own relationship with the events onstage. In this conclusion, I'd like to consider how both of these models offer avenues for considering audience risk as an experience that might in itself be productive or pleasurable.

Lucy Bailey's 2014 *Titus* offers an extreme case of this productive or pleasurable risk; critics and audience members alike embraced the possibility of losing their own bodily autonomy as a sign of the performance's potency. Yet, as Kesson argues, this pleasurable riskiness can only be ethically conducted under certain conditions that allow audiences to consent to it; for *Titus*, the production's public notoriety worked in conjunction with formal notifications from the Globe

like traveling stewards or "foyer warnings" to ensure that audiences were aware of the conditions of their own participation.[359] In Chapter 4 of this project, I frame the theatrical prologue as a space where this risk is often explicitly negotiated, itself a kind of foyer into the play. If the prologue was broadly conceived as a space for a playwright to discuss the risks of a theatrical venture— the stakes of economic precarity or public judgement— then it also acknowledged that the audience might also be risking both their money and forms of affective investment. In my reading of *Bartholomew Fair*, I read the scrivener's induction to the audience as a partially-satiric exploration of such pleasurable risk, a negotiation of the audience's multivalent "suffrage" of the play.

Use of the word 'risk' morphed over the course of the seventeenth century, reflecting a change in epistemology with the rise of probabilistic calculation: as Emily Nacol writes, risk was "no longer a realm of fate, fortune, or providence, the future was conceived as a terrain of calculable risk."[360] While risk often carried negative connotations, in the sense of a "threat to security," it also signified "an opportunity to be exploited for profit and gain," and therefore an experience framed as "exhilarating or pleasurable, an opportunity to exercise freedom.[361] Nicholas Helms is one of the first scholars to consider "audience risk" as a phenomenon within early modern theater, rather than a postmodern theatrical development.[362] Helms imagines early modern audiences' investment as a collaborative process, akin to assisting in a birth: spectators can act as a midwife, ushering and aiding the play along. This participation, activated through processes of "perceptions, empathic simulations, and sociohistorical knowledge," creates a

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[359] In the week after I attended, the Globe put up new signs around the theater doors "warning patrons about the blood and gore content of the show": *Front of House Reports*, 12.

[360] Emily C. Nacol, *An Age of Risk: Politics and Economy in Early Modern Britain* (Princeton University Press, 2016), 2.

[361] Ibid, 7.

[362] Nicholas Helms, "Upon Such Sacrifices: An Ethic of Spectator Risk" *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 27, no.1 (Fall 2012): 91-107.

system where the audience can wager their emotions and identities on the performance.[363] I seek

to add to Helms' theories of early modern theatrical risk while offering different paradigms of

engagement that frame collaboration between audience and play as both collaborative and

possibly contentious. In Chapter 4, I consider the audience as speculators or investors rather than

laboring helpers, which would frame their participation as a less normatively procreative

process; we could consider risk itself as a sought-after state of audience pleasure, rather than a

means through which to attain a collaborative birth. The structures of theatrical consent within

early modern drama thus become an unexpected space of affective negotiation, where "suffrage"

of a play carries its own potential pleasures.

  While Chapter 4 offers the most explicit discussion of audience risk and models of

procreation and collaboration, my previous chapters also offer new ways of considering the

relationship between play and audience in terms of risk. In Chapter 1, I argue that audience

engagement in the York Corpus Christi plays becomes a form of celebratory resistance that

crucially *avoids* risk. The bombastic aggression of the York tyrants and their ballooning

definitions of treason casts everyday audience behavior as a form of treason that can be passively

or actively enacted by spectators without any threat of punishment. I also trace several minor

characters throughout the York pageants that enact forms of quiet resistance against multiple

modes of authority within the play, like Joseph and his exhausted protests against his own divine

election and earthly persecution or the servant Nuncius and his comic subversion of his master

Herod. These characters might be beheld in the same manner as the crucified Christ, their bodies

in sympathetic relation to those looking at them, as the audience recognizes and empathizes with

their more quotidian suffering. Beholding these minor characters allies the audience with their

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[363] Helms, "Upon Such Sacrifices," 93.

quiet resistance, while underscoring their difference from these characters, who must navigate the risks of tyrannical violence or treason accusations from which the audience is free.

In Chapter 2, the audience of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is positioned as complicit voyeurs within a narrative that casts guilt as a fluid force of contamination. I trace the narrative ecology of Thomas Merry's 1594 murders, arguing that the ballads, broadsides, letters, and oral transmission addressing the case created a true crime public that would include many of the audience members of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*. The work of this true crime public is mirrored onstage by the work of curious neighbors and civilians who seek to piece together the dismembered and distributed body of Merry's murder victim Robert Beech. At the same time, allegorical narrators directly address the audience's memory and past participation in the events unfolding onstage, soliciting their expertise as part of their theatrical engagement while also holding them accountable for the tragic errors of past public opinion. While *Two Lamentable Tragedies* serves as the most explicit example of this beckoning and reckoning, I argue that domestic tragedy more broadly sought to remind their audiences of the crowdsourced roots of their narratives, the public circulation and speculation that preserved and prepared these criminal cases for dramatization. The risk of engaging with these crime narratives as news or entertainment was ethical complicity in miscarriages of justice that their notoriety might produce. The theater becomes the space where the dramatization of these crime narratives to a communal audience can make that complicity visible.

In Chapter 3, I show that the audiences of *Nice Wanton*, *The Tide Tarrieth No Man*, *Enough is as Good as a Feast, The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art*, and *Like Will to Like* are cast as witnesses to the success or failure of community surveillance. These moral interludes stage spiritual fall through a narrative ellipsis; a human character makes a choice and

186

the narrative of the play immediately jumps forward to the future consequences of that choice. While these interludes seek to teach a specific lesson, such as *Nice Wanton*'s "spare the rod, spoil the child" moral, I argue that they also shape their audience's engagement through their construction of time. Without the aid of divine providence, these human communities demonstrate models of lateral surveillance that only succeed in containing criminal threats when acted on preemptively. This mode of positioning imbues onstage communities with a sort of earthly providence that justifies preemptive action. Those communities that do not act preemptively risk total annihilation, flashing forward to the destructive power of its unchecked transgressors who bring divine plagues upon their communities. The audiences of these interludes are asked to bear witness to the success of this predictive policing, a form of engagement that offers audiences a kind of omniscient spectatorship while forcibly foreclosing their interpretive options.

Returning to the Globe's *Titus Andronicus*, my experience navigating my own discomfort and sense of risk in the performance was in part related to the play's imbrication in discourses of contemporary sexual assault and trauma. At the same time as critics hailed Bailey's *Titus* in its attempts to force audiences to confront the horror of its patriarchal violence, universities were grappling with both student sexual assault cases and pushback against the use of trigger warnings when teaching *Titus Andronicus* in the classroom.[364] What kinds of ethical work is the audience really being asked to do when they look— or faint— at Bailey's Lavinia? For whom is that work

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[364] See Jennifer Medina, "Warning: The Literary Canon Could Make Students Squirm" *The New York Times,* May 17th, 2014; David Perry, "Opinion: Should Shakespeare Come with a Warning Label?," *CNN*, May 20th, 2014, https://www.cnn.com/2014/05/20/opinion/perry-trigger-warning-label-for-shakespeare/index.html. In a continuation of this debate in 2017, David Crilly, artistic director at the Cambridge Shakespeare Festival, argued that if "a student of English literature doesn't know that *Titus Andronicus* contains scenes of violence, they shouldn't be on the course": Alia Shoaib, "Cambridge University Issues Trigger Warnings for Shakespeare Lecture," *The Guardian*, October 19, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/19/cambridge-university-issues-trigger-warnings-for-shakespeare-lecture.

cathartic or affectively productive, and for whom is that traumatic? While the Globe was legally obligated to offer verbal and written warnings of the content of its production, how does the necessity of such warnings clash with the perceived 'overindulgence' of trigger warnings for students? What does navigating these systems of warning reveal about our contemporary understanding of theatrical engagement, consent and trauma?

Just as this performance of Lavinia came to be framed in conversation with contemporary sexual assault, many of the plays that I read in this project represent or understand narratives of crime through contemporary concerns. The biblical drama of the York Corpus Christi plays is set within a recognizably contemporary York that casts its tyrants as unfit sovereigns. The town in which *Nice Wanton* is set moves from vague allegorical abstraction to precise judicial specificity for Ismael's trail. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* dramatizes a recent local event. This 'making contemporary' helps figure the audience as a proxy community at the same time that it removes a sense of biblical, historical or allegorical distance. In my introduction, I argue that this produces a kind of temporal asynchrony, forcing the audience to engage with different narratives of crime as if they were happening now and in their own proverbial backyards. This asynchrony is echoed in my own critical practice of using contemporary crime discourses as comparative lenses for exploring the negotiation of audience engagement. This use of the contemporary also works to situate my contemporary readers. Just as these early English performances use the contemporary to heighten the stakes of engagement for their own audiences, my project seeks to frame my exploration of forms of engagement like voyeurism or surveillance within the tangible stakes of their use in discourses of crime today.

In my introduction, I present my readings of theatrical crime narratives as a contribution to the methodological problem of reading across the archival gap of early English audience

accounts. Where previous methods of audience demography or theatrical figuration tend to focus on a unidirectional force—with either the play, when staged, shaping the audience or the audience, driven by their demographic concerns, shaping the reception of a play—my focus on the negotiations made visible in these crime narratives offer a more dialectical reading of audience engagement. In exploring the risk entailed in specific modes of engagement, this conclusion also demonstrates the questions and challenges that my project offers to broader discussions about the relationship between scholarship on and contemporary performance of premodern drama. How might we bring readings of early audience engagement to bear on performance praxis, especially when it comes to immersing and challenging contemporary audiences? More specifically, how can the theater's history of disciplinary or contentious relationships with their audiences shape contemporary performance decisions and discourses? What can the intentional temporal asynchrony of early English drama tell us about our navigation of asynchrony in performance and criticism today? While the archival gap of medieval and earthly modern audience accounts is sometimes framed as a barrier, this project concludes with questions and provocations to instead consider this gap a space for fruitful collision and speculation.

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