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*"I Would Thy Husband Were Dead":
The Merry Wives of Windsor
as Mock Domestic Tragedy*

Fond woman which would'st have thy husband die,
And yet complain'st of his great jealousy;
If swolne with poyson, hee lay in 'his last bed,
His body with a sere-barke covered,
.
Thou would'st not weepe, but jolly, 'and frolicke bee,
As a slave, which to morrow should be free

WHEN John Donne wrote these lines in his "Elegie: Jealousie" in the mid-1590s, he was invoking a crime that loomed large in the popular imagination of his time.¹ Petty treason—the murder of a husband by his wife, or of a household master by a servant or apprentice—was never more topical a device for dramatists and poets. Whether they were writing ballads and pamphlets decrying the perils of adultery or urbane elegies celebrating sexual intrigue, early modern writers depicted petty treason out of proportion to its actual rate of occurrence.² By suggesting that one lusty wife induces "loathsome vomiting" in her spouse (l. 7) so that she may "frolicke" with her paramour, Donne

1. Donne, "Elegie: Jealousie," *The Complete Poetry of John Donne* ed. John T. Shawcross (New York, 1967), pp. 51–52, ll. 1–12. On the dating of the poem, see p. 412.

2. Domestic homicide represented only one-quarter of all murder cases, and wives outnumbered husbands as victims by a ratio of two to one. See J. A. Sharpe, "Domestic Homicide in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal* 24 (1981), 37–38. On the vogue for domestic tragedy and popular perceptions of violent crime, see Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca, 1994), pp. 20–58; Leанore Lieblein, "The Context of Murder in English Domestic Plays, 1590–1610," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 23 (1983), 181–96; Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic Or, Homiletic Tragedy, 1575–1642* (New York, 1943); and Andrew Clark, *Domestic Drama: A Survey of the Origins, Antecedents and Nature of the Domestic Play in England, 1500–1640*, 2 vols. (Salzburg, 1975).

recalls details of crimes featured in widely circulated literary ephemera. One murder pamphlet recounts how goldsmith John Brewen was poisoned by his wife, “vomet[ing] exceedingly, with such straines as if his lungs would burst in peeces,” while she escaped with another man. A second describes how the discovery of the tailor Anthony Ferneseede’s decomposed body prompted the arrest of his wife who was known for “threatening his life and contriving plots for his destruction” such as by placing poison in his broth.³ Long considered the adulteress’ weapon of choice, poison had become such an obsession with Donne’s contemporaries that the husband in one comic ballad complains,

My wife is such a beastly slut,
 Unlesse it be an egge or a nut,
 I in the house dare nothing eat,
 For feare there’s poyson in the meate.⁴

As early as the mid-1590s, features of petty treason cases had become the basic ingredients of the emergent genre of domestic tragedy: an unhappily married wife, an unwitting husband, and an opportunistic seducer; murderous plots concealed using household activities; the enlistment of household servants as accomplices; repeated attacks that culminate in grisly murder; false demonstrations of grief followed by a hasty remarriage; the miraculous discovery of the crime; and the trials, confessions, and executions of the perpetrators. As Frances E. Dolan points out, because of the analogy of the household as a microcosm of the state, husband-murder was considered treasonous; it was the slaying of a symbolic monarch, and was punishable by burning at the stake (pp. 21–31). Thus in Donne’s poem the household becomes the husband’s “realme, his castle, and his diocesse”—a political unit governed using “household policies,” but vulnerable as such to “seely plots, and pensionary spies” (ll. 26–32). In 1352, English statutes classified this crime as petty treason, and throughout the following centuries “[it] was regarded as particularly

3. Thomas Kyd, *The trueth of the most wicked & secret murthering of John Brewen, Goldsmith of London* (1592) in *Illustrations of Early English Popular Literature*, ed. J. Payne Collier (1863; rpt. New York, 1966), I, 9–12. *The Arraignment and burning of Margaret Ferneseede for the Murder of her late Husband Anthony Ferneseede* (1608) in *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540–1640*, eds. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (Urbana, 1985), pp. 354–55.

4. Martin Parker, *Man’s Felicity and Misery* in *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. W. Chappell (1872–74; rpt. New York, 1966), II, 183–88, ll. 67–70. On poison, see Martin Wiggins, *Journeyman in Murder: The Assassin in English Renaissance Drama* (Oxford, 1991), p. 13; and Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*, pp. 29–30.

heinous by all ranks of society.”⁵ But by Shakespeare’s age it had become a peculiarly middle-class nightmare, a kind of urban legend confirmed by periodic trials that induced suspicion in even the most happily married husbands.

One case loomed especially large in the popular imagination of the day. In February 1590/1591, an unhappy housewife from Tavistock engineered a sensational crime that transformed its victim, Page of Plymouth, into a household name. The events have been preserved in one extant pamphlet and in three broadside ballads.⁶ Eulalia Glandfield had originally been betrothed to, and was still deeply in love with, a young man named George Strangwidge when her father forced her to marry a wealthy widower many years her senior instead. During the Pages’ brief and unhappy marriage, Eulalia suffered two miscarriages and tried on several occasions to poison her hated but resilient husband; according to the pamphlet, her poison only caused him to “vomit blood and much corruption” (sig. B2v). Impatient, Eulalia conspired with her lover to engage a household servant, Robert Priddis, and a hired thug, Tom Stone, to do away with old Page once and for all. At around 10 p.m. on February 11, the two men crept into Page’s bed chamber and set to work: “Priddis leapt vpon his maister being in his bed, who roused himself and got out vpon his feete . . . [then] Stone flew vpon him being naked, and suddenlye tripped him, so that he fell to the ground: whervpon both of them fell vpon him, and tooke the kercher from his head, and knitting the same about his neck, they immediatly stifled him” (sig. B3). For good measure, the assailants broke Page’s neck against the bedside and arranged him beneath the bedclothes as if he had died in his sleep. Initially, his death was attributed to natural causes; however, during a vigil over the body, Page’s sister noticed, hidden beneath the kerchief-turned-shroud,

5. John Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages* (London and Toronto, 1973), p. 55.

6. The ballads—Thomas Deloney’s *The Lamentation of Master Page’s Wife of Plimmouth*, and the anonymous *The Lamentation of George Strangwidge and The Sorrowful Complaint of Mistris Page*—are reprinted in *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. W. Chappell (1869–1871; rpt. New York, 1966), I, 553–58. The prose account of Page’s murder, “A true discourse of a cruel and inhumaine murder, committed vpon M. Padge of Plymouth, the 11. day of February last, 1591, by the consent of his owne wife, and sundry other,” is included in the anonymous collection of *Sundrye strange and inhumaine Murthers, Lately Committed* (1591). I am using the UMI microfilm of the copy preserved in the Lambeth Palace Library. The account is transcribed by J. P. Collier in *The Shakespeare Society’s Papers* (1845), II, 79–85; and by Joseph H. Marshburn and Alan R. Velie in *Blood and Knavery: A Collection of English Renaissance Pamphlets and Ballads of Crime and Sin* (Rutherford, 1973), pp. 58–64. Anne Barton states that the *Shakespeare Society* version “is almost certainly a Collier Forgery” (*Ben Jonson, Dramatist* [Cambridge, 1984], p. 11), but Collier accurately transcribes the 1591 pamphlet (which Barton appears not to have seen) whose authenticity remains unquestioned by historians and critics.

bloody scratch marks indicating a struggle. One accomplice confessed the crime, and its four perpetrators were promptly tried by Sir Francis Drake and executed. Mistress Page was burned at the stake.⁷

Now, what does a play whose 1602 title-page promises a *Most pleasant and excellent conceited Comedie . . . Entermixed with sundrie variable and pleasing humors* have to do with a crime featured in a 1591 collection of *Sundrye strange and inhumaine Murthers, lately committed*? Although the Quarto's title-page mentions Hugh, Shallow, Slender, Pistol and Nym by name, it fails to inform readers of the *Comedie, of Syr Iohn Falstaffe, and the merrie Wiues of Windsor* of the names of two central characters: the imperilled husbands. Audiences were also no doubt surprised, therefore, when one of these turned out to be a certain Master George Page. This conflation of two names from recent events—those of murderer George Strangewidge and cuckolded victim Master Page—seems more than simply a coincidence. There are innumerable *pages* (male servants) in early modern drama, but only two *Mr. Pages*.⁸ One is Shakespeare's. The other is the protagonist of a lost collaboration by Ben Jonson and Thomas Dekker, *Page of Plymouth*, commissioned by the Admiral's Company and performed in the fall of 1599. That Page's story was expected to guarantee a hit is suggested by the "unusually high price" of £8 paid to Jonson and Dekker, and by the £10 lavished on the heroine's costumes. Page's murder resonated for English audiences long after his death; and what has usually been taken to be a play depicting Shakespeare's happiest marriage, that of Margaret and George Page, may actually be a parody of one of England's unhappiest.⁹

In what follows, I shall argue that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* parodies the genre of domestic tragedy and the accompanying cultural paranoia concerning petty treason. Domestic tragedy emerged in the early 1590s

7. There is some confusion about the precise date of these events. Francis Oscar Mann cites evidence from Barnstaple parish registers that "George Strongewithe" and "Vlalia Paige" were buried on "March 20th, 1589-90" (sic). However, such details are less germane than the event's impact on the popular imagination: "The forced marriage of young girls to rich and elderly men is a common subject of reprobation among contemporary writers . . . and such murders as that of Page were [considered] the natural outcome of such unnatural unions." See *The Works of Thomas Deloney*, ed. Mann (Oxford, 1912), p. 599 and sources cited there.

8. Thomas L. Berger and William C. Bradford, Jr., *An Index of Characters in English Printed Drama to the Restoration* (Englewood, Col., 1975), p. 161.

9. Adams, *English Domestic Or, Homiletic Tragedy, 1575-1642*, p. 197. Clark maintains that Page's murder was a "talking-point of the time" (*Domestic Drama*, p. 63); and in "Scaffolds Unto Prints: Executing the Insubordinate Wife in the Ballad Trade of Early Modern England," *Journal of Popular Culture* 3 (1997), Kirilka Stavreva asserts that ballads kept the memory of Eulalia Page's crime alive "for nearly two centuries" (p. 182).

and all but disappeared by 1610, and it is most often associated with two well-known plays that bracket its brief history: the anonymous *Arden of Faversham* (1592) and Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed With Kindness* (1607). However, I will examine Shakespeare's comedy in light of two lesser-known plays which contributed to the genre's vogue, *Page of Plymouth* and the anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women*.¹⁰ Rather than serving as direct sources for *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the background of the lost play and the dramatic features of the extant tragedy represent cultural and generic phenomena that Shakespeare incorporates and parodies in his comedy. To mix such seemingly irreconcilable forms as homiletic tragedy and sex comedy is not unprecedented. Donne's "Elegie," for example, simultaneously evokes in miniature petty treason and bedroom farce, as the jealous husband, stuffed with soporifics, snorts "cag'd in his basket chaire" while upstairs the lovers "usurpe his owne bed" (ll. 21–24). Shakespeare inverts this basic situation by imprisoning the would-be seducer, Falstaff, in Mistress Ford's buck-basket while her jealous husband ransacks the upstairs bedrooms, shouting "Buck, buck, buck!"¹¹ By drawing on motifs reminiscent of the story of *Page of Plymouth*, Shakespeare creates two unforgettable husbands: one who is determined *not* to fall victim to petty treason when he discovers that his wife is plotting against him, and another who seems destined to become a victim through sheer dumb complacency. "Page is an ass, a secure ass," declares Ford. "He will trust his wife, he will not be jealous" (2.2.283–84). Ford's suspicion reflects that of a country gripped with the irrational fear that trusting husbands are prime targets for petty treason. Donne's poet-speaker invokes petty treason to ridicule a husband and seduce his wife; Shakespeare turns the tables on the seducer and redeems his would-be victims. Donne's wife may be merry, but Shakespeare's *Wives* are honest too.

II

Most discussions of the topical aspects of Shakespeare's play concern themselves with associations available to the "upper-class coterie" who

10. Although it was printed in 1599, Charles Dale Cannon observes that the anonymous play could have been written as early as the mid-1580s (see introduction to *A Warning for Fair Women: A Critical Edition* [The Hague, 1975], pp. 43–48). Catherine Belsey dates it circa 1590 in *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London, 1985), p. 136. Frances E. Dolan dates it as 1592 in "Gender, Moral Agency, and Dramatic Form in *A Warning For Fair Women*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 29 (1989), 201.

11. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. T. W. Craik, *The Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1994), 3.3.149. Unless otherwise stated, references to the play are taken from this edition, based largely on the Folio, and will be cited parenthetically in my text.

would have attended its purported Garter Ceremony premiere on April 23, 1597.¹² Elite audiences may have enjoyed the similarities between Ford's alias (Brook), the subplot chicanery involving "cozen-Germans," and the "dozen white louses" on Shallow's coat-of-arms, with gossip about such topical figures as William Brooke, Duke Frederick of Württemberg, and Sir Thomas Lucy. The Quarto title-page boasts that the play was "diuers times" acted "before her Maiestie, and elsewhere"—a fact which, when combined with Mistress Quickly's compliment to the Knights of the Garter in the 1623 Folio version's final scene (5.5.54–75), has sent generations of scholars hunting for aristocratic keys to this *drame-à-clef*.¹³ However, the occasionalist approach to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* has come under increasing fire of late. In a re-examination of the play's "free-floating topicality," Barbara Freedman points out that no one can pinpoint the play's date of composition (proposals range from 1592 to 1602), but that 1597 seems especially improbable: "Garter ceremonial feasts, installations and investitures would be inappropriate occasions for full-length bedroom farces with jokes about urinals, codpieces and turds."¹⁴ Furthermore, there were playgoers who enjoyed performances elsewhere, in public venues. How did *The Merry Wives of Windsor* speak to their interests? Two decades have passed since Jeanne Addison Roberts exhorted critics to set aside the search for Latin and Italian sources for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and instead "focus attention more clearly on its English antecedents and analogues," yet those who do still tend largely to repeat the sleuthing begun by Leslie Hotson and William Green, scholars who saw in Shakespeare's homespun characters satirical portraits of England's power elite.¹⁵ Leah S. Marcus is

12. David Crane, introduction to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* (Cambridge, Eng., 1997), p. 4. Supporters of the 1597 Garter Installation theory include Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare versus Shallow* (Boston, 1931), pp. 111–22; William Greene, *Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor* (Princeton, 1962); Jeanne Addison Roberts, *Shakespeare's English Comedy: The Merry Wives of Windsor In Context* (Lincoln, Neb., 1979), pp. 26–50; T. W. Craik, introduction to *The Merry Wives*, Oxford edition, pp. 1–13; and H. J. Oliver, introduction to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Arden Shakespeare* (London, 1971), pp. xlv–lii. For refined interpretations of the Garter events, see Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare's Garter Plays: Edward III to Merry Wives of Windsor* (Newark and London, 1994), pp. 92–112; and Peter Erickson, "The Order of the Garter, the Cult of Elizabeth, and Class-Gender Tension in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," in *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor (New York, 1987), pp. 116–40.

13. References to the Quarto edition are taken from *Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor 1602*, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford, 1910), title-page [sig. A1]. Subsequent references to this version will employ the Quarto's signature pagination and be cited parenthetically in my text.

14. Barbara Freedman, "Shakespearean Chronology, Ideological Complicity, and Floating Texts: Something is Rotten in Windsor," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994), 191, 197.

15. Roberts, *Shakespeare's English Comedy*, pp. 56–59. Elite topical readings include W. L. Godshalk, "Sir Thomas Posthumous Hoby and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," *Notes and Queries* 31

a notable exception, having recently “unedited” the play in order to revive the maligned Quarto—a version which she persuasively argues is more representative of greater London’s “middling sort” than the “court-centred” Folio version set in rural Windsor.¹⁶

Rather than discuss *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as two separate plays—one bourgeois, satirical and urban (1602), the other aristocratic, sentimental, and rural (1597/1623)—I suggest that both versions form a kind of palimpsest documenting cultural preoccupations of the late 1590s and early 1600s.¹⁷ According to Marcus, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* appealed both to playgoers of the middling sort (who could enjoy watching their social betters misbehave) and to members of the aristocracy (who could “savor a rough and ‘uncouth’ glimpse of everyday town and village life”); to Fredson Bowers, it is a play in which “the proverbial purity of the countryside” defeats the dangerous immortality of “the city slicker.”¹⁸ It is my contention, however, that when middle-class Londoners watched *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, they saw an unsentimental portrait of themselves, their social attitudes, and their literary tastes. Ronald Huebert argues that the play represents “a pastiche of quotations from and allusions to literary forms and fashions that had become *démodé* by the end of the sixteenth century” (such as the bombast of Marlowe and Kyd); and Camille Wells Slight argues that the punishment of Falstaff parodies pastoral motifs found in Sidney’s *Arcadia*.¹⁹ But is it not at least as likely that Shakespeare was also parodying domestic tragedies, especially since these were produced in great numbers by his theatrical rivals? Andrew Clark lists numerous lost plays performed by the Admiral’s Men with

(1984), 197–99; Charles Vere, “Sir Philip Sidney Satirized in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*,” *Elizabethan Review* 2.2 (1994), 3–10; and G. R. Hibbard, introduction to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *New Penguin Shakespeare* (London, 1973), pp. 38–42. On Shakespeare’s indebtedness to popular stories and plays, see Oliver, introduction to *The Merry Wives*, Arden edition, pp. lviii–lxxv; Hibbard, introduction to *The Merry Wives*, pp. 17–26; Stephen Foley, “Falstaff in Love and Other Stories,” *Exemplaria* 1 (1989), 227–46; Melchiori, *Shakespeare’s Garter Plays*, pp. 77–91; and of course Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London, 1958), II, 19–58.

16. Leah S. Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* (London, 1996), pp. 68–100. Not everyone is as enthusiastic as Marcus about populist aspects of the play. To Oliver, the Quarto text “was designed for an audience not aristocratic and not primarily intellectual, whereas the full Folio text has much that would appeal only to the more sophisticated” (introduction to *The Merry Wives*, p. xxx).

17. The process may have begun as early as Shakespeare’s company’s lost 1593 play, *The Jealous Comedy*. See Oliver, introduction to *The Merry Wives*, p. lx.

18. Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance*, p. 98; Fredson Bowers, introduction to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, in *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore, 1970), p. 337.

19. Ronald Huebert, “Levels of Parody in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*,” *English Studies in Canada* 3 (1977), 137; Camille Wells Slight, *Shakespeare’s Comic Commonwealth* (Toronto, 1993), pp. 161–64.

suggestive titles like *Black Joan* (c. 1597), *A Woman's Tragedy* (c. 1598), *The Stepmother's Tragedy* (c. 1599) and of course *Page of Plymouth*—all roughly contemporary with the Chamberlain's Men's own contribution to the genre, *A Warning for Fair Women*.²⁰ Huebert's methodology involves tracing direct verbal echoes from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* back to extant plays, but this rather narrow application of the concept of parody risks overlooking intertextualities and generic affinities between lost plays, "non-literary" aspects of popular culture, and Shakespeare's comedy.

In her 1993 study, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*, Margaret A. Rose distinguishes parody from other comic forms such as pastiche, burlesque, and satire by the way it permeates the structure and form of a work. Parody transcends mere verbal echo and topical allusion because, in an almost symbiotic or parasitic manner, "parody makes the 'victim,' or object, of its attack a part of its own structure." Parody absorbs the form or content or style of a target work (specific parody) or genre (general parody) and "refunctions" it in a comic manner.²¹ In recent years critics have highlighted the violent subtexts of Shakespeare's comedy: the ritualistic punishments of Falstaff, the quarrels of the Windsor locals, and the unhappy marriage of Alice and Frank Ford.²² Linda Anderson observes that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* appears singularly "obsessed" with revenge; and G. R. Hibbard goes so far as to call it a kind of revenge tragedy, comically inverted by being "[p]laced in a bourgeois setting, inspired by trivial motives, and seen from a middle-class point of view."²³ According to these last two critics, generic features (not direct verbal echoes) of revenge tragedy permeate Shakespeare's play, producing incongruities when situations usually associated with Italianate malcontent revengers involve middle-class housewives and their small-town neighbors instead.

20. Andrew Clark, "An Annotated List of Lost Domestic Plays, 1578–1624," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 18 (1975), 29–44. See also plays listed for these years in Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700*, rev. S. Schoenbaum (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 54–79. Barbara Freedman proposes that another lost Admiral's Men play, *Friar Fox and Gillian of Brentford*, may have influenced Shakespeare's portrayal (and audiences' reception) of Falstaff's transvestite disguise during the years 1599–1604 ("Shakespearean Chronology, Ideological Complicity, and Floating Texts," p. 207). Harbage confirms that this comedy was performed in 1599 (*Annals of English Drama, 975–1700*, pp. 70–71).

21. Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 79–83.

22. Barbara Freedman, "Falstaff's Punishment: Buffoonery as Defensive Posture in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," *Shakespeare Studies* 14 (1981), 163–74; Rosemary Kegl, "'The Adoption of Abominable Terms': The Insults that Shape Windsor's Middle Class," *ELH* 61 (1994), 253–78; Anne Parten, "Falstaff's Horns: Masculine Inadequacy and Feminine Mirth in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," *Studies in Philology* 82 (1985), 184–99.

23. Linda Anderson, *A Kind of Wild Justice: Revenge in Shakespeare's Comedies* (Newark and London, 1987), p. 68; Hibbard, introduction to *The Merry Wives*, p. 26.

In a similar manner, I believe that the play is permeated with features of domestic tragedies and real-life petty treason cases, ones which had become so pervasive in the theaters that the Induction of *A Warning for Fair Women* apologizes for further saturating the market: "My Sceane is London, native and your owne, / I sigh to thinke, my subject too well knowne."²⁴ According to Clark, there was an enormous demand for "lurid accounts of murder and retribution," and dramatists scoured the popular press for ready-made plots featuring sexual intrigue, domestic violence, and supernatural occurrences, while justifying their sensationalism with the morally-redeeming "providential" pattern of sin-discovery-repentance-retribution.²⁵

The critical study of early modern petty treason has enjoyed a resurgence of late, culminating in the publication of two excellent book-length studies.²⁶ Similarly, the appearance of Dolan's richly annotated teaching edition of *The Taming of the Shrew* attests to a growing interest in popular contexts for Shakespeare's plays.²⁷ In recovering forgotten contexts, we may also uncover levels of parody which operated through situational ironies, analogous plot features, and topical allusions that were recognizable in Shakespeare's age but have gone unnoticed in our own. For example, while rushing home to interrupt the first ill-fated tryst between his wife and Falstaff, Ford bumps into Margaret Page, who is also on her way to see Mistress Ford. Ford complains, "I think if your husbands were dead you two would marry" to which Mistress Page replies, "Be sure of that—two other husbands" (3.2.10–15). On one level, her quip merely denies that the two women would marry one another; but on another, it conjures up images of such real-life women as Eulalia Page and Anne Brewen, who contrived to hasten their husbands' demise in order to wed "two other husbands," George Strangwidge and John Parker. Mistress Page's reply evokes specters of froward wives, imperilled husbands, and hastily remarrying widows—thereby increasing, rather

24. *A Warning for Fair Women: A Critical Edition*, ed. Charles Dale Cannon (The Hague, 1975), ll. 95–96. Subsequent references to the play are taken from this edition, and I will cite the editor's through lineation parenthetically in my text.

25. See Clark, *Domestic Drama*, pp. 48, 68; Adams, *English Domestic Or, Homiletic Tragedy*, pp. 100–25 and *passim*; and especially Peter Lake, "Deeds Against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth-Century England," *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford, 1993), pp. 257–83.

26. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars*; Viviana Comensoli, "Household Business": *Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto, 1996). See also Betty S. Travitsky, "Husband-Murder and Petty Treason in English Renaissance Tragedy," *Renaissance Drama* n.s. 21 (1990), 171–98.

27. Dolan, *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts* (Boston, 1996).

than lessening, Ford's anxiety. Shortly after this exchange, we see Mistress Ford squirming in Falstaff's embrace, as the latter boldly declares, "Now I shall sin in my wish: I would thy husband were dead. I'll speak it before the best lord, I would make thee my lady" (3.3.45–47). Found almost verbatim in the Quarto (sig. D4v), Falstaff's proposal sounds remarkably like conspiracy to commit petty treason. For instance, John Parker importuned Anne Brewen until, pregnant with his child, "she consented, by his direction, to poyson Brewen; after which deede done, Parker promised to marrie her so soone as possibly he could."²⁸ The fact that Falstaff likely has no intention of keeping his promise does not diminish its criminal undertones. Broken promises are part and parcel of husband-murder literature: Strangwidge got cold feet and tried to back out of the conspiracy against Page of Plymouth; and Parker refused to wed Anne Brewen after the murder, subjecting her to two years of financial and sexual exploitation instead. In the version of George Sanders' murder dramatized in *A Warning for Fair Women*, Anne Sanders is gradually tempted to commit petty treason by promises of social advancement. Her palm reader, Mistress Drury, predicts:

A gentleman (my girle) must be the next [husband],
 A gallant fellow, one that is belov'd
 Of great estates, tis playnely figurd here,
 And this is calld the Ladder of Promotion. (ll. 696–99)

Such is Falstaff's temptation of Mistress Ford to become an "absolute courtier," the envy of "the court of France" (3.3.50–60). Beneath the scene's joking, groping, and dramatic irony (Ford is fast approaching the house!), her skeptical reply, "Do not betray me, sir" (3.3.71), is a tacit acknowledgment that betrayal and death await the perpetrators of petty treason, as well as its victims.

Shakespeare's play exhibits key features of domestic tragedy—features also found in the literature describing the Plymouth murder. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is set in a realistic, local, *English* setting, not in France or some faraway Italian city-state. As in the 1591 Plymouth pamphlet, supernatural occurrences signal illicit goings-on to the local inhabitants. After the murder in Plymouth, we are told that a disabled ship in the harbor turned itself from stem to stern, and a giant crow hanged itself from the mast with a rope-yarn. Even stranger, for several nights following the crime, a fiery-eyed bear was seen lurking in the woods around

28. Kyd, *The trueth of the most wicked & secret murthering of Iohn Brewen*, p. 8.

Plymouth with a linen cloth "representing the instruement wherewith the saide M. Padge was murdered" (sig. [B4v]). In the play Ford repeatedly refers to strange dreams and "visions" that warn him of danger (e.g., 3.5.127–28, to be discussed below), and before the play closes we see the Witch of Brentford, Herne the Hunter, a Hobgoblin, and a troop of fairies in the midnight masque. Shakespeare's play also features protagonists in the middle ranks of society: in particular, Page is concerned that his daughter not wed the aristocratic Fenton because "he . . . is of too high a region" (3.2.66). In the pamphlet Page appears as a wealthy widower selected by Eulalia's father not because of any intrinsic suitability but because her true love, Strangwidge, planned to whisk her off to London. Father's security in retirement comes before daughter's happiness in marriage; in one ballad account of her loveless marriage, Eulalia complains:

In blooming yeares my Father's greedy minde,
Against my will, a match for me did finde:
Great wealth there was, yea, gold and siluer store,
But yet my heart had chosen one before.²⁹

This denunciation of parental tyranny is echoed in Fenton's defense of Anne's disobedience on the grounds that "a thousand irreligious cursèd hours / . . . forcèd marriage would have brought upon her" (5.5.221–22). According to the pamphlet's summary of her trial, Eulalia testified that "she had rather dye with Strangwidge, then to liue with Padge" (sig. [B4]), a sentiment that is comically echoed in Anne's refusal to wed her mother's preferred suitor, Dr. Caius: "Alas, I had rather be set quick i' th' earth, / And bowled to death with turnips" (3.4.85–86). As with petty treason, the enforcement of marriage was a rare social occurrence that nonetheless captured the popular imagination.³⁰

Both petty treason literature and Shakespeare's play evoke conspiracies originating from without and within the family home. After failing to poison her husband, Eulalia Page enlisted his servant, Robert Priddis, to prepare what the pamphlet calls "the secret snares & practises of present death" (sig. B2v). In Shakespeare's *Windsor*, Mistress Ford enlists household servants to assist in her assignations with Falstaff, and to facilitate two cover-ups upon her husband's discovery of these meetings. When dis-

29. Deloney, *The Lamentation of Master Page's Wife of Plimmouth*, ll. 9–12.

30. David Atkinson, "Marriage Under Compulsion in English Renaissance Drama," *English Studies* 67 (1986), 483–504. On serious and satiric treatments of moneygrubbing parents arranging inappropriate matches for their children, see Glenn H. Blayney, "Enforcement of Marriage in English Drama (1600–1650)," *Philological Quarterly* 38 (1959), 459–72.

guised as Brook, Ford learns that his reputation and physical safety may be imperilled by Falstaff, who boasts: "Hang him, mechanical salt-butter rogue! I will stare him out of his wits. I will awe him with my cudgel; it shall hang like a meteor o'er the cuckold's horns" (2.2.263-65). Turning the convention of the unwitting victim on its head, Shakespeare thus allows Ford to discover that "there's a knot, a gang, a pack, a conspiracy against me" (4.2.107-08). Page, on the other hand, is blissfully unaware that his newest servant, Robin, has sold out to Mistress Page for a new doublet and hose. "Thou'rt a good boy," she says. "This secrecy of thine shall be a tailor to thee" (3.3.29-30). If Falstaff successfully awes Ford with his cudgel and enjoys his wife, then Page may well be his next victim. In petty treason literature husbands are routinely cuckolded and cudged, and these crimes revealed through supernatural portents and divine intervention—all of which are described in the Plymouth pamphlet which concludes that "the iudgement of God . . . continually followeth wilfull murderers" (sig. B4v). In T. W. Craik's gloss of Falstaff's blustering, the meteoric cudgel represents a "portentous sign"; and Ford thanks divinity that this plot against him has been uncovered ("God be praised for my jealousy," he exclaims [2.2.291]).

Now it may be objected that many of the play's violent threats are empty boasts or are spoken in jest. To H. J. Oliver, serious interpretations of this charming comedy "risk breaking the butterfly upon the wheel" (pp. lxvi-lxvii). Surely, no one in Shakespeare's "merry" Windsor intends to commit petty treason? But that is precisely my point: audiences familiar with the fate of Page of Plymouth must have relished this very irony. Instead of plotting adultery and murder, Shakespeare's Mistress Page seeks to consolidate two marriages and arrange a third; she's admired for her virtue and civility; she's an excellent cook, not a poisoner; and she never misses saying her prayers. More ironies abound. Instead of strangling a husband with linen, Falstaff is himself victimized using linen—once he is tossed into a basket of dirty laundry, and later beaten for wearing a handkerchief on his head. Instead of a mysterious apparition haunting the woods around Plymouth, we get the ridiculous Falstaff wearing horns and a chain in Windsor Forest. Instead of legal proceedings against petty traitors, we get the extra-legal scapegoating of Falstaff by local villagers. Instead of an adulteress being burned at the stake, we get Falstaff's fingertips being singed by children dressed as fairies. Instead of a miserable marriage between Anne Page and one of her parents' chosen suitors, we get Anne's ingenious deception of Caius and Slender and her resultant

happy union with Fenton. And instead of a ship turning in Plymouth's harbor, Shakespeare's wives refuse to be "boarded" by Falstaff; as Mistress Page vows, "If he come under my hatches, I'll never to sea again" (2.1.85-86).

Many of Margaret and Anne Page's lines must therefore have seemed ironic to audiences familiar with the real-life "Mistress Page." Inspired by A. R. Humphrey's discovery of contemporary "Falstaff jokes," I propose that the following samples would have been particularly entertaining Mistress Page jokes.³¹ When Nim plans to inform Page of his wife's invitation to Falstaff, Nim declares, "I will incense Page to deal with poison" (1.3.93-94), inverting real-life Eulalia's numerous attempts to poison her husband. Windsor Page's overconfidence in the face of evidence that Falstaff has propositioned Margaret would also seem ironic: "I would turn her loose to him; and what he gets more of her than sharp words, let it lie on my head" (2.1.167-69). Page's real-life namesake suffered more than the attachment of cuckold's horns; in the pamphlet's account of the discovery of his murder, "they moued his head, and found his neck broken" (sig. B3v). Complacency could get a husband killed, such that when Anne Page asks her persistent suitor Slender "What is your will?" the latter assumes she anticipates his imminent death: "My Will? 'Od's heartling, that's a pretty jest indeed! I ne'er made my will yet" (3.4.55-57). With Ford on the doorstep threatening to discover Falstaff with Alice, audiences may have appreciated the irony of Mistress Page's loud warning, "you are utterly shamed, and he's but a dead man . . . away with him! Better shame than murder" (4.2.37-39). As Falstaff (disguised as Mother Pratt) is beaten by Ford, Mistress Page eggs on the combatants with a kind of sadistic glee: "Heaven guide him to thy husband's cudgel"—a cudgel she proposes to have "hallowed and hung o'er the altar" (4.2.79, 189-90). Time and again it is the supposedly quieter and more virtuous housewife who invents or intensifies the merry wives' punitive pranks. Insulted by Falstaff's proposition, it is Mistress Page who declares, "Hang him, dishonest rascal!" (3.3.173). It is Mistress Page who invents Ford's gang armed with "pistols" to kill the intruder: "If you go out in your own semblance, you die, Sir John" (4.2.45, 58-59). And it is Mistress Page who devises the "dishorning" of Falstaff in the forest masque (4.4.25-35, 44-58) while plotting the deception of her husband. The supreme ironies of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are that Mistress Page,

31. A. R. Humphreys, introduction to *The First Part of King Henry IV*, The Arden Shakespeare (London, 1978), p. xii.

more so than Mistress Ford, is the one who “plots,” “ruminates,” and “devises” (2.2.288–89), and that so few modern critics seem to have noticed this.

One of the most enduring features of criticism of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is a tendency to contrast the two married couples: the Fords are a dysfunctional family in crisis, whereas the Pages represent the ideal of companionate marriage. Richard Horwich treats the play as a kind of marriage debate, pitting companionate versus patriarchal models. He extols the “enormous and unprecedented personal freedom” Page accords his wife, while criticizing Ford for imprisoning his out of a conviction that women are “weak and prone to sin.”³² R. S. White agrees that the couples are presented “in radically opposing lights”: the Pages’ marriage is “serenely exemplary. . . based on firm companionship and trust” whereas “marriage for Mistress Ford is little more than a trap.”³³ And Freedman lavishes praise on the “confident relationship of the Pages,” whose marriage represents the “ideal mean.”³⁴ But if the two wives are really, as Horwich contends, “for all purposes interchangeable” (p. 36), why is Frank so anxious about Alice’s marital fidelity whereas George seems so nonchalant about Margaret’s?

In the context of Falstaff’s adulterous propositions and the wives’ apparent reciprocations, Ford’s jealousy seems more plausible than ridiculous. He initially shows great restraint when confronted with the prospect of being mocked “like Sir Actæon” (2.1.110). Ford proceeds methodically in his investigation, first desiring to “seek out Falstaff,” and then to learn the truth (2.1.129). Ford confides in Page: “I do not misdoubt my wife, but I would be loath to turn them together. A man may be too confident” (2.1.170–71). Disguised as Brook, Ford discovers that Falstaff has indeed propositioned Alice and “shall be with her . . . by her own appointment” (2.2.247–48). Ford’s ensuing jealousy is not fueled by pre-conceptions or misogyny, but by an apparent betrayal of trust by the woman he loves: “My heart is ready to crack with impatience. Who says this is improvident jealousy? My wife hath sent to him, the hour is fixed, the match is made. *Would any man have thought this?*” (2.2.271–75, emphasis added). Prompted perhaps by Mistress Quickly’s portrait of him as “a very jealousy man” (2.2.85–86), countless critics have described Ford

32. Horwich, “*The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the Conventions of Companionate Marriage,” *Shakespeare Yearbook* 3 (1992), 35–37.

33. White, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Boston, 1991), p. 33.

34. Freedman, “Falstaff’s Punishment,” p. 172.

as a die-hard misogynist—even though his lines suggest that cuckoldry is not the inevitable result of marriage, but an unexpected twist. He even likens Alice's "reputation, her marriage-vow, and a thousand other her defences" to a kind of fortress of chastity (2.2.234–37).

Unlike other jealous Shakespearean men, Ford declares that he will be "revenged" on the would-be seducer, not on the unfaithful partner whom he plans to rescue instead: "I will prevent this. . . . better three hours too soon than a minute too late" (2.2.292–94). Despite his escalating frenzy during his interruptions of the lovers' apparent assignations, Ford never physically threatens Alice. Quite the opposite: he comes to appreciate her more. His disguise as Brook allows him secretly to articulate deep feelings about her. Instead of merely pretending to lust after Mistress Ford, Brook declares that his motives are more pure: "I have long loved her, and, I protest to you, bestowed much on her, followed her with a dotting observance" (2.2.184–86). This high praise is superfluous in light of Falstaff's crude proposal to seduce her, ransack the family coffers, and pass the "leftovers" on to Brook. Nevertheless, Ford confesses before his would-be cuckold what he quite possibly has never said to his wife: "she dwells so securely on the excellency of her honour that the folly of my soul dares not present itself. She is too bright to be looked against" (2.2.229–32). Thus in Shakespeare's comic refunctioning of the petty treason motif, it is the husband, not the interloper, who displays the passionate devotion expressed by the Plymouth ballad's lover Strangewidge—whose last words on the scaffold were "Ulalia faire, more bright than Summer's Sunne, / Whose beauty had my love for ever won."³⁵ Falstaff, on the other hand, is anything but romantic, greedily invoking jewels, pudenda and aphrodisiacs instead: "[come,] my doe with the black scut! let the sky rain potatoes" (3.3.40, 5.5.18–19).

Shakespeare's Master Page, rather like his 1591 namesake, does not realize the extent of the external threat to his household; if anything, his lack of jealousy stems not from trust, but from a kind of callous indifference toward Margaret. From the first scene of the play he spends more time hunting with his companions and currying favor with the local power elite than with his wife. When Shallow inquires, "How doth good Mistress Page?" Page does not answer but rather gets caught up in a discussion of greyhounds (1.1.76–89). A typical interaction between the Pages involves his ordering a meal for his hunting cronies: "Wife, bid

35. Anon., *The Lamentation of George Strangewidge*, ll. 17–18.

these gentlemen welcome. Come, we have a hot venison pasty to dinner" (1.1.177–78). Otherwise, Page tends to ignore her. When he is informed of Falstaff's proposition to his wife, Page ignores the threat and exits with his companions (187–212). Later, in spite of mounting evidence that Falstaff lusts after his wife, Page is preoccupied with planning a "birding" expedition at which he can show a new hawk (3.3.217–20). The only scene of extended interaction between the Pages involves the planning of Falstaff's punishment; but the appearance of spousal harmony here conceals the double deception they plan for each other. Mistress Page disobeys her husband with impunity, telling Caius, "My husband . . . will chafe at the Doctor's marrying my daughter. But 'tis no matter" (5.3.7–9). Later, thinking he has successfully married Anne to Slender, Page invites Falstaff home to "laugh at my wife that now laughs at thee" (5.5.170–71). The Quarto version likewise ends on a sour note, as the parents reconcile themselves to Anne and Fenton's marriage only because it effectively thwarts the other spouse's plan (sig. G4v).

Regarding these abortive maneuvers to "dispose" of Anne Page (3.4.68), Horwich observes: "The Pages, who have constructed a loving and companionate marriage for themselves, seem not at all interested in securing a similar blessing for Anne" (p. 40). I suggest that the Pages' is a marriage in name only, and no blessing at all. They have drifted apart in a manner that resembles Slender's description of marital decay: "if there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it upon better acquaintance" (1.1.225–27). That there was no great love in the beginning is suggested by Mistress Page's wistful reaction to Falstaff's note: "What, have I 'scaped love-letters in the holiday time of my beauty, and am I now a subject for them?" (2.1.1–3). In one Plymouth ballad, Eulalia Page states that her husband merely "possest [her] outward part," whereas Strangwidge "was lodged in [her] heart":

I wedded was, and wrapped all in woe;
Great discontents within my heart did grow;
I loath'd to live, yet liv'd in deadly strife,
Because perforce I was made Page's wife.³⁶

Even when she was young and beautiful, her husband treated courtship as a financial transaction—hence the Mistress Page joke about remarrying if he were dead. Furthermore, as with despised husbands, absentee husbands are easily replaced. In the play Mistress Quickly underscores the

36. Deloney, *The Lamentation of Master Page's Wife*, ll. 23–28.

strain Page's outings may place on his marriage when she relays Mistress Page's ironic invitation to Falstaff: "she bade me tell your worship that her husband is seldom from home, but she hopes there will come a time" (2.2.96-98). Windsor locals would recognize this as the exact reverse of the truth, that Page is very often away from home. Falstaff, an outsider, does not. In the Quarto, following the first revelation of his wife's innocence, Ford is genuinely repentant ("pardo[n] me wife, I am sorie" [sig. E2]), and after the pranks are disclosed to him, he makes a moving declaration of love: "vpon my soule I loue thee dearer than I do my life, and ioy I h[a]ue so true and constant wife" (sig. F3). In this same scene the Quarto Page instead blames his wife ("in this knauerie my wife was the chiefe" [sig. F3]), while the Folio Page condemns his neighbor's uxorious apology (4.4.9-10). In the Quarto version Mistress Ford is referred to as her husband's "doue" (sig. B3); significantly, there is no pet name for Mistress Page.

III

Shakespeare's familiarity with *A Warning for Fair Women* has already been established by Naseeb Shaheen, who outlines numerous verbal parallels between it and such plays as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Richard III*. Shaheen concludes that this "unusual amount of borrowing" indicates that Shakespeare "certainly knew" the anonymous tragedy and "may have acted [in it] several times."³⁷ As is the case with Huebert, however, Shaheen relies on direct verbal parallels—preventing him from recognizing the degree to which Shakespeare parodies generic features of this tragedy in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In his discussion of domestic drama, Clark lists a number of essential characteristics of the genre; in what follows, I will identify these in their purest form in *A Warning for Fair Women* and in comically refunctioned forms in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.³⁸

The action of *A Warning for Fair Women* is "domestic" inasmuch as it is based on historical events of recent memory, namely, the 1573 murder of George Sanders, Merchant Taylor of London, and an innocent bystander, John Beane of Woolwich, on Shooter's Hill in Kent. Their attacker was a gentleman named George Browne who had become infatuated with

37. Shaheen, "Echoes of *A Warning for Fair Women* in Shakespeare's Plays," *Philological Quarterly* 62 (1983), 521-25.

38. The features are discussed in Clark, *Domestic Drama*, pp. 1-26, especially pp. 19-20.

Sanders' wife, Anne, and had been encouraged to pursue her by a fortune teller named Anne Drury and her servant, "Trusty" Roger Clement.³⁹ This event achieved immediate notoriety; as Arthur Golding observes in his pamphlet account, "the late murder of Master Sanders . . . minis-treth great occasion of talk among al sorts of men, not onelie here in the Towne, but also farre abrode in the countrie."⁴⁰ One fact in particular likely contributed to the tale's homiletic appeal: the two Sanders appeared to be a model couple—he an upstanding local businessman, she a virtuous and modest wife—and yet his frequent absences from London left her vulnerable to Browne's adulterous advances. Likewise, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is often described as a quintessentially middle-class and "English" comedy, most strikingly in Bowers' introductory praise of its "patriotism" and of the "self-respecting air of virtue according to eternal bourgeois standards [which] permeates the play" (p. 337). In domestic drama the interlopers are commonly viewed as outsiders: Browne visits London from Dublin, and Falstaff arrives in Windsor from the taverns of Eastcheap. Another of Clark's listed characteristics, that the setting be realistic and ordinary, is fulfilled by *A Warning for Fair Women* in its depictions of the Sanders' family home, the husband's business trips to Woolwich (including details about the tides and amounts paid to watermen along the Thames), and his grisly murder on Shooter's Hill. Similarly, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* includes references to Frogmore, a scene in Windsor Park, and an account of Falstaff's dunking in the Thames at Datchet Mead; Craik's edition even provides a scale "sketch-map," attesting to the realism with which Shakespeare evokes the local setting (p. 2).

As for Clark's third characteristic, the humble station of the hero and supporting characters, both plays fulfill this in their depictions of local merchants and businessmen, their wives and children, and servants with names like Trusty Roger, John Bean, Robin, and Simple. Above all, the name *Page* is marked by connotations of utter *ordinariness*. To Oliver, Page is "little more than an average decent citizen," a kind of Elizabethan Everyman (p. lxxi). In addition to its well-known usages denoting chivalric attendant or household errand-boy, the *Oxford English Dictionary* records an unflattering sixteenth-century usage of *page*: "A male person of the 'lower orders' or of low conditions or manners . . . cf. KNAVE." This

39. Three accounts of the crime are reprinted in the appendices of Cannon's edition of *A Warning for Fair Women*, pp. 216–36.

40. Arthur Golding, *A Brief Discourse of the Late Murder of Master George Sanders* (1573) in Cannon's edition of *A Warning for Fair Women*, p. 216.

sort of class prejudice is behind the expression, "to make a page of your own age," which means "to do something beneath one's station."⁴¹ *Page* has decidedly unaristocratic associations, and early audiences may have enjoyed watching an aspiring Windsor local stuck with such a "downwardly mobile" name. *Ford* also has mundane connotations as something one might walk over, or in the case of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, walk all over. One contemporary proverb, "It is easy to wade the stream where the ford is at lowest," is synonymous with the more suggestive expression, "where the hedge is lowest, men may soon over," implying that property (whether one's land or one's wife) needs to be secured against trespassers. Two related expressions, "Ruse the ford as you find it" and "A river running into many brooks becomes shallow," demonstrate how Shakespeare needed only look to that most homespun element of popular culture, the proverb, for suggestive names for his characters.⁴² In one possible verbal parallel overlooked by Shaheen, Mistress Drury offers to procure Mistress Sanders for Browne by promising "to breake the ice that you may passe the foorde" (ll. 284–85). *Passing fords* thus becomes a kind of cultural shorthand for cuckolding husbands, or worse.

Clark also points out that domestic drama shows a thematic concern with the dynamics of everyday life in the English household, depicting marital relations in a realistic manner with didactic intent. *A Warning for Fair Women* exposes a marriage strained from within by financial quarrels and the husband's frequent absences, and from without by a persistent suitor and a palm-reading charlatan. Interspersed between lurid dumb shows and the petty treason plot are endearing scenes of utter normalcy, particularly those in which the Sanders' son begs for a new cap, steals fruit from the kitchen, and plays at "crosse and pile" with a chum after school (ll. 322–41, 1583–96). Likewise, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is Shakespeare's most sustained treatment of middle-aged marital relations, and features such homey activities as sorting laundry, inviting neighbors to lunch, and querying children about lessons at school. To Adams, realistic touches furthered the plays' homiletic impact on citizen playgoers "by offering them examples drawn from the lives and customs of their own kind of people"; *A Warning for Fair Women*, in particular, presents a

41. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition (London, 1987), sb. 2; M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, 1950), P-11.

42. The proverbs are listed in Tilley's *Dictionary of the Proverbs in England*, F-587, S-926, R-139. On wives as proprietary spaces to be guarded by husbands, see Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," *Rewriting the Renaissance*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson et al. (Chicago, 1986), 123–42.

sentimentalized version of the Sanders' household in order to "blacken the sin of the culprits" (pp. viii, 116). Shakespeare's farce also verges on this homiletic seriousness (as in the shaming of Falstaff for his lechery), and it even evokes the Plymouth ballads' meter and moralizing when Mistress Page concludes one scene with the couplet: "Against such lewdsters and their lechery, / Those that betray them do no treachery" (5.3.21–22).

In addition to these general features, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* shares a number of more specific characteristics with *A Warning for Fair Women*. In both plays a would-be sexual interloper mistakes innocent cordialities for amorous encouragement. Browne accosts Anne Sanders at the gate of her home, prompting her to complain:

These arrand-making Gallants are good men,
That cannot passe and see a woman sit
Of any sort, alone at any doore,
But they will find a scuse to stand and prate,
Fooles that they are to bite at every baite. (ll. 394–98)

Likewise, Falstaff propositions Mistress Page after misinterpreting her cordial greeting: "[she] examined my parts with most judicious oeil-lades," he says (1.3.54–56). However, she is unlikely to reciprocate, at least in light of Mistress Quickly's account of her resistance to a bevy of gallant suitors "when the court lay at Windsor" years before (2.2.59–74). In fact, the wives in both plays are reputed to be paragons of virtue, such as in the following accounts by their neighbors. Mistress Drury sings Mistress Sanders' praises, "Shees even as curteous a gentlewoman sir, / As kind a peate, as London can afford," especially for her assistance of a poor waterman's wife who had surfeited on "windy meate" (i.e., beans [ll. 208–18]). Mistress Quickly likewise extols Mistress Page in one of Shakespeare's most unforgettable malapropisms: "she's as fartuous a civil modest wife . . . as any is in Windsor" (2.2.93–95). Both would-be adulterers find themselves in financial difficulties: Falstaff "cashiers" his gang early in his play (1.3.6), and Browne says "povertie partes company, farewell" to his accomplices following Sanders' murder (l. 1772). Indeed, much of the lechery in both plays is financially motivated. Falstaff pursues Ford's wife as "the key of the cuckoldy rogue's coffer . . . my harvest-home" (2.2.258–60), and is assisted by Mistress Quickly in exchange for money. Likewise, Browne is assisted in his pursuit of Mistress Sanders by Mistress Drury, who is eager to fleece the Irishman in order to augment

her own daughter's dowry: "if they injoy their pleasure, / My sweete shalbe to feede upon their treasure" (ll. 463–68). Both Falstaff and Browne are given to fantastic boasting—the former in his threat to awe Ford with his meteoric cudgel and offer to marry Alice; and the latter in his vow to kill Sanders, "were his life ten thousand lives," and offer to wed "Sweete *Nan*" (ll. 1311–15). Both men enlard their lusty phrases with mythological allusions, such as Browne's complaint that, like Mars caught in Vulcan's net, he has been "take prisoner at this frolicke feast, / Intangled in a net of golden wiar" (ll. 158–59). Similarly, during his last assignation, Falstaff dons horns like "a Windsor stag, and the fattest, I think, i'th' forest," creating a grotesque visual allusion to Actaeon (5.5.2–15).⁴³ Both men request supernatural assistance for their nocturnal crimes: Falstaff invokes Jove and other "hot-blooded gods" to give him sexual stamina (5.5.1–3), and Browne calls on "sable night" to conceal him during an early murder attempt (ll. 910–15). Finally, both men are afraid of being subjected to Elizabethan justice: Falstaff cannot abide the "reek of a lime-kiln" near London's Counter prison (3.3.73–75), and Browne begs his captors not to hang him in chains following his execution (a wish granted but then revoked as his body is "convaide to Shooters hill" for display [ll. 2232–35, 2482–84]). This may be the fate Pistol has in mind when he curses his former master: "Let vultures gripe thy guts!" (1.3.81). An oft-ignored aspect of Falstaff's disguise as Herne the Hunter is a rattling "chain" reminiscent of those used to transport criminals, or to display the bodies of executed petty traitors (5.1.5).

One other role in *A Warning for Fair Women* is particularly relevant to Shakespeare's comedy. Mistress Drury's fortune-telling and her willingness to procure local wives for visiting gentlemen recall the specter that Ford tries to expel from Windsor: the village witch. When Ford discovers Falstaff disguised as the Old Woman of Brentford in his second-storey bedroom, his outrage is laced with sexual innuendo: "A witch, a quean, an old cozening quean! Have I not forbid her my house? She comes of errands, does she? We are simple men; we do not know what's brought to pass under the profession of fortune-telling. She works by charms, by spells" (4.2.157–61). This is precisely Mistress Drury's function in her play, where she boasts of telling a "hundred fortunes in a yeere," including bogus predictions that promote (or justify) extramarital sex: "What

43. See John M. Steadman, "Falstaff as Actaeon: A Dramatic Emblem," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 14 (1963), 231–44; and Leonard Barkan, "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis," *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980), 351–52.

makes my house so haunted as it is, / With merchants wives, bachlers and yong maides, / But for my matchlesse skil in palmestrie?" (ll. 689–93). When Shakespeare's bachelor Slender learns that the Witch of Brentford appears to be staying at the Host's inn, he sends Simple to pay a visit in order to discover "if it were my master's fortune to have [Anne Page] or no" (4.5.44–45)—a harmless activity, to be sure. But as Deborah Willis points out, James I would soon become as concerned with the *treasonous* threat witchcraft posed to the state as merchant-husbands had been with the potential of witches to encourage *petty treason* in their homes and villages.⁴⁴ Viewed in these contexts, Ford's response to disguised Falstaff ("Hang her, witch!" [4.2.177]) is less farcical madness than a plausible reaction prompted by the witch-craze of early modern England. In her much-publicized confession of 1573, the real-life Mistress Drury stated "that she had poysoned her late husbände Master Drewrie, and dealt with witchcraft and sorcerie, and also appeached divers merchante mens wives of dissolute and unchast living."⁴⁵ William Carroll argues (ignoring local history) that the name *Brainford* "obviously suggests the witch's origin in Ford's brain," and that it "symbolize[s] the extremity of Ford's delusion."⁴⁶ Yet by rendering harmless the figure of the village witch, Shakespeare comically refunctions this staple of petty treason literature, exposing the all-too-common "delusion" of his contemporaries.

Another important element of domestic tragedy is the supernatural, especially dreams and portents warning of murder, or miraculous events that lead to its discovery after the fact. In *A Warning for Fair Women* there are a number of such instances, including a series of dreams interpreted by John Beane and his parents Old John and Joane (ll. 1023–52), the "bewitched" behavior of their horses, and Joane's vision following the attack on her son: "as I was washing my hands my nose bled three drops, [and] then I thought of John Bean" (ll. 1432, 1440–43). In *Windsor*, Ford persuades a posse of neighbors to interrupt his wife's tryst by promising: "you shall have sport: I will show you a monster" (3.2.71–73). When they arrive, Ford claims to have discovered Falstaff's intention to seduce

44. Willis, *Malevolent Nurture: Witch-Hunting and Maternal Power in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, 1995), pp. 117–58. On sexual fears related to witchcraft, see Nancy Cotton, "Castrating (W)itches: Impotence and Magic in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38 (1987), 320–26.

45. Golding, *A Briefe Discourse*, p. 224.

46. William Carroll, "'A Received Belief': Imagination in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," *Studies in Philology* 74 (1977), 193–94. Craik's Oxford edition opts for "Brentford" over the Folio's "Brainford"; on the interchangeability of these names, see Oliver, introduction to *The Merry Wives*, Arden edition, p. lxii.

Alice in a dream: "Gentlemen, I have dreamed tonight. I'll tell you my dream" (3.3.151-52). That Ford promises monsters and expounds dreams in order to conceal the true source of his foreknowledge (confidences exchanged with Falstaff while disguised as Brook) suggests a conscious decision to enlist those conventions of petty treason literature most likely to generate an alarmed response in his neighbors. Audiences enjoy Ford's frenzied searches, but it seems shortsighted to dismiss them as mere farcical confusion, or as evidence of an "unhealthy predisposition" to paranoid delusions, especially since Falstaff *is* in the house with Alice on both occasions.⁴⁷

Portents seen by witnesses are also featured in both plays. Mysterious yellow spots appear on Mistress Sanders' fingers during her initial temptation by Mistress Drury; and during Mistress Sanders' trial, a white rose changes color, thus contradicting her testimony that she is innocent of Sanders' death. Likewise, Browne's guilt of double murder is revealed when Beane survives just long enough for his fifteen wounds to bleed afresh before his assailant, who then confesses: "I gave him fiteene wounds, / Which now be fiteene mouthes that doe accuse me" (ll. 1995-96). The use of physiological responses as evidence of criminal wrongdoing is comically refunctioned in the Windsor masque in which the Queen of the Fairies leads her train in testing Falstaff:

With trial-fire touch me his finger-end
If he be chaste, the flame will back descend
And turn him to no pain; but if he start,
It is the flesh of a corrupted heart. (5.5.83-86)

The flame does not "descend," and Falstaff's response to the magic test—"O, O, O!" (5.5.88)—indicates that he has been caught red-handed, so to speak.

The precept "no delay, no play" is true in both plays, as Falstaff and Browne are foiled in their attempted crimes twice before the climactic third assay which seals their fates. Falstaff's first assignation ends with his inglorious escape from Ford in the buck-basket, and his second concludes with his nearly being "set . . . i'th' common stocks, for a witch" (4.5.112-13). His determination contributes to the crescendo up to the comic finale in *Windsor Forest*: "This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd numbers . . . They say there is divinity in odd numbers, either

47. Carroll, "'A Received Belief,'" pp. 191-92.

in nativity, chance, or death" (5.1.1–4). Likewise, Browne is foiled in two early attempts to stab Sanders, once when the intended victim "by miracle" encounters a torch-bearing friend coming home from dinner (ll. 925–48), and a second time when Anne Sanders and John Beane spoil Browne's "standing" (hunting position) by greeting Sanders as he disembarks from a Thames barge (ll. 1163, 1995–221). Browne is frustrated, but Trusty Roger reminds him of "the old proverbe . . . / The third time payes for all," and he recovers his resolve to commit the murder (ll. 1230–31). Just as Falstaff is surprised when not one but two wives arrive at his midnight tryst, Browne is caught off guard by Sanders' arrival with Beane in the murder scene. Even so, they quickly adapt to their situations: Falstaff offers himself to both ladies, "Divide me like a bribed buck, each a haunch" (5.5.23); and Browne stabs both men (lines 1373–402).

Shakespeare's play also parodies domestic tragedy in its fanciful treatment of the justice meted out to the would-be home wrecker in the final scene. Following Falstaff's "trial-by-fire," he is subjected to a "scornful rhyme" sung by the children of Windsor:

Fie on sinful fantasy!
 Fie on lust and luxury!
 Lust is but a bloody fire,
 Kindled with unchaste desire (5.5.92–95)

In the providential scheme of crime pamphlets and ballads, no evil deed goes undiscovered or unpunished; for example, back in Plymouth, despite the genuine repentance recorded in the ballad account of Strangewidge's lament ("O Lord! forgive this cruell deede of mine; / Upon soule let beames of mercy shine"), the perpetrator was executed without mercy.⁴⁸ In Windsor, once Ford's disguise as Brook is revealed and all other "proofs are extant," Falstaff confesses "the guiltiness of [his] mind" and repents for his sins: "I am dejected . . . Use me as you will" (5.5.121–24, 161–63). But instead of being harshly punished, he is invited home to dinner—after Ford gives thanks to providence for exposing the crime and assisting the newlyweds: "In love the heavens themselves do guide the state" (5.5.224). Browne is not so fortunate. Like Falstaff, he is chastised for his lechery ("fie that wanton lust should overthrow / Such gallant parts in any Gentleman" [ll. 2137–38]), and is paraded around like a "monster" before a public also comprised of local children:

48. Anon., *The Lamentation of George Strangewidge*, ll. 45–46.

The peoples eies have fed them with my sight,
 The little babies in the mothers armes,
 Have wept for those poore babies seeing me,
 That I by my murther have left fatherlesse,
 And shreekt and started when I came along (ll. 2387–92)

But whereas Falstaff merely acknowledges that he is an “ass” and is forgiven (5.5.118), Browne performs on his scaffold a lengthy and moving aria of self-loathing (“Vile world, how like a monster come I soyld from thee” [ll. 2458–79]), before he “leapes off” according to one of early English drama’s more dangerous stage directions.

IV

Andrew Gurr writes “Besides *Arden* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, domestic dramas which have survived include *A Warning for Fair Women*, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, *How a Man May Choose a Good Wife from a Bad*, *The Witch of Edmonton*, *The English Traveller*, *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage*, and of course *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.”⁴⁹ What is striking about this list is Gurr’s matter-of-fact “of course,” as he places Shakespeare’s comedy alongside well-known domestic plays. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is more often placed among the emerging “citizen comedies” of the late 1590s, although Alexander Leggatt argues that it is “fundamentally serious” in its treatment of adultery, and that it exhibits the “firm” moral structure of a Jonsonian comedy.⁵⁰ *The Merry Wives of Windsor* has been called “[part] topical satire, part citizen comedy, part city comedy, part humors comedy and part court comedy”—just about everything *but* part domestic tragedy.⁵¹ To my knowledge, no sustained comparison of the play to this last genre or to the Page of Plymouth literature has been undertaken, perhaps because of the narrative condensations and displacements required to disperse a straightforward husband-murder plot among one adulterous suitor, two married couples, and three generations of Windsorites in love.⁵² Shakespeare’s comic situations must have seemed ironic to the mass of Londoners who knew more about crime ballads and pamphlets

49. Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Eng., 1996), p. 278.

50. Alexander Leggatt, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto, 1973), pp. 146–49.

51. Freedman, “Shakespearean Chronology, Ideological Complicity, and Floating Texts,” p. 191.

52. Richard Levin recently criticized the topical approach (including applications to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*) in the pages of this journal; “Another ‘Source’ for *The Alchemist* and Another Look at Source Studies,” *English Literary Renaissance* 28 (1998), 210–30.

than about court gossip and Garter ceremonies. As late as 1621, John Taylor the Water Poet wrote that "*Arden of Feuersham, and Page of Plim-mouth*, both their Murders are fresh in memory, and the fearfull ends of their Wiues and their Ayders in those bloody actions will neuer be forgotten."⁵³ Yet as Marcus demonstrates, popular references in the Quarto were suppressed or rendered more 'literary' in the Folio—obscuring the degree to which Shakespeare's play was a product of local history and non-elite literary forms (pp. 68–100). Whether or not the play was composed for an aristocratic audience, it seems clear that the playwright was parodying an emergent genre, popular with the middling sort as well. But what shall we call this parodic form? The play lacks the adulterous-wastrel husbands and patient-Griselda wives characteristic of what Alfred Harbage refers to as "homiletic comedy"; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is not even mentioned in Comensoli's recent survey of developments in "domestic comedy."⁵⁴ For want of a better term, I suggest we call the play not a mock heroic, but a mock domestic tragedy.

In performing *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the Chamberlain's Men parodied a genre that was proving lucrative for their theatrical rivals, the Admiral's Men. It has been suggested that Jonson collaborated on a lost play, *Richard Crookback* (1602), which "would have run in conscious competition" with Shakespeare's successful *Richard III*; and that likewise the Admiral's Men's production of *Sir John Oldcastle* was a "counterblast" to Shakespeare's *1 Henry IV*. As many as ten of Jonson's extant comedies satirize elements of his rival's plays, further evidence of what James Shapiro refers to as "Jonson's obsession with Shakespeare."⁵⁵ Perhaps the obsession was reciprocal, and Shakespeare, seeing (or anticipating) an Admiral's Men hit based on the Page of Plymouth story, cobbled together a topical parody that inverted generic conventions he had learned through participation in his own company's production of *A Warning for Fair Women*. In a careful comparison of the two dramatists' oeuvres Russ McDonald discounts the notion "that Shakespeare and Jonson were leaders of warring camps who attacked each other from across the Thames."

53. *The Vnnaturall Father: Or, The cruell Murther committed by one John Rouse . . . vpon two of his owne Children* (1621) in *All the Workes of Iohn Taylor the Water-Poet* (1630; facsimile, Menston, 1973), sigs. 2M4–2N1v, quotation on sig. [2M6v].

54. Comensoli, 'Household Business,' pp. 132–46. Alfred Harbage's term is taken from *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (New York, 1952), p. 235 and is cited by Comensoli in 'Household Business,' p. 132.

55. Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist*, p. 9; E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, (1923; rpt. Oxford, 1974), II, 172; Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare* (New York, 1991), p. 143.

At times their dealings were quite productive, such as when Shakespeare played a starring role in Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1598).⁵⁶ However, given the mercurial nature of their relationship (colleagues one season, rivals the next), such a collaboration does not preclude the possibility that Shakespeare borrowed, parodied, or even "scooped" Jonson's (and Dekker's) pandering to popular tastes in *Page of Plymouth* the following year.

As an intertextual parody, Shakespeare's comedy becomes darker in tone, especially in its many references to beatings, hangings, prisons, and burning pyres. The elements my reading exposes may also account for the persistent legal imagery that Oliver finds "not so easily explicable," as well as nautical metaphors that seem out-of-place in land-locked Windsor but that would be right at home in the port-town of Plymouth (pp. lxxviii–lxxix). Topical analogies complicate the play's marriage debate, underscore the seriousness of its enforced-marriage subplot, and enable us to recover lost sources of humor. Also, a slightly more disturbing Falstaff emerges: as a petty criminal who nearly becomes a petty traitor, his burning and pinching subtly evoke the fates of Eulalia Page and George Strangwidge. And the play's lighthearted conclusion, with its descriptions of the botched weddings of Caius and Slender to "lubberly boys," may recall the fact that the day after Page's murder was discovered, one assailant (Priddis) got married, "and being in the midst of his iollety, suddenly he was attached and committed to prison" (sig. [B4]). The richness of this "subplot" detail seems too good to be true for Anne Barton, who views it as a dramatic fabrication. Playwrights no doubt were not alone in their propensity to "quicken" a good story with unlikely coincidences, poetic justice, and comic bad-timing (p. 11).

Finally, these topical analogies may allow us to lay to rest the legend that Shakespeare composed *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the behest of Elizabeth I, who desired to see Falstaff in love. Indeed, Shakespeare did anything but. Falstaff's motives are mercenary, not romantic; and his methods more strongly resemble those of scheming petty traitors than those of mooning comic suitors. Instead of a complimentary garter ceremony, Shakespeare produced a clever parody of domestic crimes, both

56. Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare and Jonson / Jonson and Shakespeare* (Brighton, Eng., 1988), p. 4. McDonald devotes a chapter of his book to thematic affinities between Jonson's comedy and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, but he only mentions *Page of Plymouth* in passing (p. 194) and not in connection with Shakespeare's comedy.

theatrical and real. No mere sentimental portrait of an English town, the play premises much of its humor on audience awareness of a notorious murder case, a decidedly “unpleasant side of Elizabethan social life.”⁵⁷ In fact, Elizabeth Schafer points out that the town of Windsor was as “strongly associated with adultery and runaway marriages” as with unspoiled country virtues.⁵⁸ The play’s parodic affinities with *A Warning for Fair Women*, combined with the production of Jonson and Dekker’s *Page of Plymouth*, suggest 1599 as a likely date, if not for the initial composition of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, then at least for its substantial revision for public theater—goers eager to see the latest homiletic melodrama or the sumptuous “wemen gownes” worn by the Admiral’s Men’s version of Mrs. Page.⁵⁹ When Mistress Ford playfully feigns jealousy at her first mock assignation and taunts Falstaff, “Do not betray me . . . I fear you love Mistress Page,” his reply highlights the dangers associated with the name: “Thou mightst as well say I love to walk by the Counter gate” (3.3.71–75). This is the most delicious Mistress Page joke of all—that few who loved housewives of this name escaped humiliation, punishment, or worse fates. Gurr cites an incident in which a frustrated Lord Treasurer told the Star Chamber in 1596 that he would like to see the case before him performed as a comedy on-stage, “act[ed] . . . with those names,” and Gurr observes that “he was presumably acknowledging a well known practise” as versions of current court cases were being dramatized by Chapman, Dekker, Heywood and Jonson.⁶⁰ I would add Shakespeare to the list. His play opens with Shallow’s vow to “make a Star Chamber matter” of Falstaff’s invasion of his property:

57. Oliver, introduction to *The Merry Wives*, p. lxvi; Mann’s edition of *The Works of Thomas Deloney*, p. 599. The apocryphal versions of the play’s origin were first recorded by John Dennis (1702) and Nicholas Rowe (1709) and are cited in Oliver’s introduction to *The Merry Wives*, pp. xlv–xlvi.

58. Elizabeth Schafer, “The Date of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*,” *Notes and Queries* 38 (1991), 58.

59. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* does not appear on Frances Meres’s October 1598 list of Shakespeare’s “most excellent” comedies—a significant omission in that, given Meres’s apparent quotation of Falstaff in commending Michael Drayton’s “vertuous disposition” in a time where “there is nothing but rogerie in villanous man,” Meres would likely have listed a comedy containing Falstaff had one existed. See Meres, *Palladis Tamia; Wits Treasury* (1598), facsimile, ed. Arthur Freeman (New York, 1973), p. 282; A. R. Humphreys, introduction to *The First Part of King Henry IV*, Arden edition, pp. xii–xiii and 2.4.121–22n. According to Humphreys, the comedy post-dates both parts of *Henry IV* (p. xiii), and it is worth noting that no written record of the comedy’s performance exists before November 2, 1604 (Oliver, introduction to *The Merry Wives*, p. x and sources cited there).

60. Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*, p. 148 and sources cited there.

Shallow. Knight, you have beaten my men, killed my deer,
and broke open my lodge.

Falstaff. But not kissed your keeper's daughter?

Shallow. Tut, a pin! This shall be answered. (1.1.1-3, 102-05)

As Adams points out in his concluding remarks on *A Warning for Fair Women*, domestic tragedies sought to illustrate the popular notion of the "chain of vice," namely that if a person committed a small sin and believed he or she had fallen from grace, then the ensuing separation from God made succeeding moral lapses easier to commit: "From petty misdemeanors, the road to cardinal sins was easy—indeed, almost inevitable" (pp. 118-19). Granted, it is a long way from poaching deer and stealing kisses to killing husbands and stealing wives, but Shakespeare's *Merry Wives and their Windsor neighbors* set out to halt Falstaff's descent down this slippery moral slope. C. J. Sisson begins his survey of lost plays of the period with the comment, "What would we not give to have Ben Jonson's handling of a murder melodrama in *Page of Plymouth?*"⁶¹ I believe that if we read *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as a mock domestic tragedy, in a sense we do.

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61. C. J. Sisson, *Lost Plays of Shakespeare's Age* (London, 1936), p. 1. The sentiment is echoed in Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*, p. 137.