BEFORE GENRE:
TRAGEDY IN PATCHES IN THE EARLY ENGLISH PLAYHOUSES

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores early forms of tragedy in the professional English playhouses. Tragedy was predominantly a non-dramatic genre in England and in English for most of the sixteenth century. By the 1590s, popular dramatic tragedy was widespread. This thesis is interested in the period of tragedy's transition to the stage. It takes as its premise the notion that tragedy was a new and exciting theatrical phenomenon, rather than an established and self-evident dramatic genre, in the context of the 1580s and 1590s playhouses. Tragedy's routes to the stage were various: classical tragic drama, *de casibus* poems, and prose and verse tragical tales all influenced the forms of tragedy that emerged in the popular theatres. As recent criticism has demonstrated, dramatic genres in the early period of professional English drama were more mutable and indeterminate than either twentieth-century scholarship or the later output of the playhouses themselves registers. This thesis considers the variety and fluidity of early English dramatic tragedy against this generically flexible backdrop.

To consider tragedy in the early years of professional English drama as something other than a fully-fledged dramatic genre, this thesis takes up the concept of the "play patch". Recent theatre history has demonstrated that early modern plays were textual patchworks, written in and preserved as pieces: whole acts and scenes of plays could be written out of order and by different playwrights, and prologues, epilogues and songs often existed only on separate sheets of paper, instead of being copied into consolidated scripts. While the play-patch has been theorised as a primarily material phenomenon in early modern scholarship, this thesis contends that plays of the period were patchworks conceptually and imaginatively as well. Specifically, it argues that tragedy emerged onto the professional English stage in and as patches. It demonstrates that "tragedy", in early modern theatrical parlance, could refer to a part of a play only, as well as to a play in its entirety, and it shows that this notion of tragedy as a piece or part was also manifested structurally in plays themselves.

By focusing its analysis on four different types of play patch, this thesis highlights the simultaneous prominence and formlessness of tragedy in the 1580s and early 1590s playhouses. Examining episodic *de casibus*-style tragedies, tragic inset plays, and metadramatic framing texts, it shows the extent to which plays of the period advertised and foregrounded their experiments in bringing tragedy to the English stage. At the same time, it demonstrates that these were, precisely, experiments. Episodic and inset tragedies which flaunt their tragic identities also reveal the uncertainty of the relationship between "tragedy" and "play", while the interventions of that indispensable comic play patch – the clown – in tragic drama show that tragedy's position in English theatrical culture was far from established in the period.

In scholarship, and especially early modern scholarship, tragedy's status as dramatic genre is often approached as a transhistorical given. This thesis offers an understanding of tragedy in the early English playhouses which unlearns this basic assumption.

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When quoting from old-spelling texts, I have silently adapted u/v and i/j for clarity. All other spellings are retained. Quotations are referenced in full in the first instance of each chapter. Subsequent references are given as the author's surname (where known), a shortened title of the text, and the page or signature numbers.

CUP	Cambridge University Press
ELR	*English Literary Renaissance*
NQ	*Notes and Queries*
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
OUP	Oxford University Press
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*
RSC	Royal Shakespeare Company
SQ	*Shakespeare Quarterly*

> Nowadays 'tragedy' is one of those words that everyone thinks everyone else knows about and has always known. That is to say, it is commonly thought that the term conjures up a fairly uniform idea, an idea that has been relatively constant throughout the ages.[1]
>
> Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy: From Aristotle to the Middle Ages* (1993)

Why is it not possible to watch "tragedies" on Netflix? The platform sorts its films and television series into over fifteen generic groupings, including several with names – "romance", "comedies" – that would at least have sounded familiar to early modern audiences as well. "Tragedy", though, is not a useful or relevant label for new content in the twenty-first century. Scriptwriters, producers and directors do not typically set out to create "tragedies", and viewers do not sit down to watch them. That is not to say, as George Steiner (almost) does in his seminal work on the subject, that "tragedy is dead" as a dramatic artform today.[2] Numerous contemporary playwrights – Edward Albee, Tony Kushner, Caryl Churchill – have written consciously in a dramatic tragic tradition, and their works are frequently discussed by critics in such terms.[3] There are films and television series of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, too, which evoke that same sense of an unjust and unfathomably punishing universe that Steiner so admires in the "'high tragedy"' of fifth-century Athens. David Fincher's *Se7en* (1995); the first series of Hans Rosenfeldt's Danish-Swedish drama *The Bridge* (2011); more recently, Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* (2019): these are just a few dramas which, like the works of the

[1] Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy: From Aristotle to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), p. 218.
[2] George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (1961), rev. ed. (New York, NY: Open Road Integrated Media Inc., 1980), p. 10.
[3] Subtitled "Notes Toward a Definition of Tragedy", Albee's *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?* (2000) is written as a modern Aristotelian tragedy. Its title even gestures to the etymological origins of the word "tragedy" – the Ancient Greek *tragoedia*, meaning "goat song". See J. Ellen Gainer, "Albee's *The Goat*", in *The Cambridge Companion to Edward Albee*, ed. Stephen Bottoms (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 199-216, p. 204; David Kornhaber, "Kushner at Colonus: Tragedy, Politics, and Citizenship", *PMLA*, vol. 129, no. 4 (October 2014), pp. 727-741; Elin Diamond, "Churchill's Tragic Materialism; or, Imagining a Postman Tragedy", *PMLA*, vol. 129, no. 4 (October 2014), pp. 751-760.

ancient Greek tragedians, "assert that the forces which shape or destroy our lives lie outside the governance of reason or justice".[4] These and other cinematic offerings are sometimes described as "tragedies" by reviewers, who aptly use the word to suggest inexorably looming catastrophe and cruelty beyond desert or comprehension. Such films and series are unlikely, however, to be marketed as "tragedy". The word is deployed in the context of modern cinema and television as a literary-critical term, a means of describing a particular mood or mode of storytelling; but it is no longer used as a label for grouping similar works together in order to generate certain narrative and tonal expectations. Tragedy is not, in other words, a contemporary, popular genre.

This thesis is not about the presence or absence of tragedy in twenty-first-century popular culture. It is about tragedy as a new and exciting phenomenon in the playhouses of late-sixteenth-century England. I begin with a question about tragedy on Netflix because it demonstrates as false that same assumption – articulated in the quote above – which Kelly challenges in *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy*. In 1601, it was not merely possible, but usual to go to playhouses where one of the main kinds of new drama on offer was tragedy. In 2021, new tragedy, categorised and marketed as such, is a rarity. As Kelly demonstrates in his monograph, it is not only the form and meaning but also, more fundamentally, the status and prominence of tragedy that changes over time. Tragedy has not always been the revered object of historic cultural prestige that it is today and, conversely, tragedy has served as a locus for literary creation and experiment in the past in ways it no longer does. Far from being "relatively constant throughout the ages", the position of tragedy in the cultural consciousness has shifted dramatically even in the last five hundred years, which represent only a fraction of the genre's history. The idea of tragedy can hardly be constant when its status so manifestly is not.

Yet tragedy has often been approached as a transhistorical concept, a universal given, as Kelly observes. Critics assume that particular conceptions of tragedy would have been self-

[4] Steiner, *Death of Tragedy*, p. 18; *Se7en*, directed by David Fincher (1995; Burbank, CA: New Line Cinema); *The Bridge*, created by Hans Rosenfeldt (2011-18; SVT1/DR1); *Parasite* directed by Bong Joon-ho (2019; Seoul: CJ Entertainment).

evident to producers and consumers of drama from periods without access to the relevant literary theories. The most notorious examples of this kind of scholarly anachronism are, admittedly, early; A. C. Bradley's pseudo-Aristotelian quest for the "tragic flaw" in four of Shakespeare's protagonists has long since been recognised as methodologically unsound.[5] But still scholarship persists in assuming that tragedy is and has always been an idea that exists outside of literature: that it is an ideal, an essence which art throughout the ages has striven to capture with varying degrees of success. This is the premise of Steiner's aforementioned study. Though his argument is, in some respects, rooted in history – for Steiner, tragedy cannot survive the modern, rational era – it also considers tragedy in its true form as transcendent. Steiner conceives of tragedy as a grave epiphany first realised in Ancient Greece and re-expressed by select authors from various countries (though always in the Western world), across over two millennia. In a jarringly exclusive turn of phrase, he assumes from the outset of his monograph that a shared understanding of tragedy has been tacitly pre-agreed: "[w]hen we say 'tragic drama' we know what we are talking about", he writes in his opening chapter, "not exactly, but enough to recognise the real thing".[6]

In more historically localised ways, early modern drama scholarship has often assumed, similarly, that the tragic ideal is a constant. Pre-Shakespearean tragedies are frequently judged against their Shakespearean counterparts by critics who believe, due to centuries of intervening scholarship and performance, that the latter represent the epitome of tragedy on stage. Thus, Norman Rabkin asserts that "the tragic theatre of Shakespeare and his contemporaries climb[ed]…with lightning rapidity out of the unpromising slime of the mid-sixteenth century", while Clifford Leech argues that there was no "fully developed" tragedy "outside Marlowe…for more than a dozen years after *Tamburlaine*".[7] These and other similar teleological narratives of

[5] A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on* Hamlet*,* Othello*,* King Lear*,* Macbeth (London: Macmillan, 1904).
[6] Steiner, *Death of Tragedy*, p. 20.
[7] Norman Rabkin, "Stumbling Toward Tragedy", in *Shakespeare's "Rough Magic": Renaissance Essays in Honor of C. L. Barber*, ed. Peter Erickson and Coppélia Kahn (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1985), pp. 28-49, p. 29; Clifford Leech, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet for the Stage*, ed. Anne Lancashire (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1986), p. 67.

tragedy's development effectively assume that English dramatic tragedy was aiming at a generic apotheosis represented by Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1600) over a decade before *Hamlet* was written, and over three centuries before it became the genre's most lauded instantiation in literature. In a recent article, Andy Kesson draws attention to this tendency of early modern scholarship to back-project later generic categories, definitions and assumptions onto an earlier era of drama; "the early period of London's new commercial playhouses", writes Kesson, "lacked traditional generic models as scholars have come to understand them".[8] Both Kesson and Kelly seek to unlearn generic assumptions in their studies, to understand literary works' relationships to genre in the contexts in which they were originally produced and received. Kelly explains in his preface that his "enterprise differs radically" from that of critics who aim to identify literary works which "live up to their notion of 'the tragic spirit'"; his purpose is, instead, "to see what authors of the past meant by the word [i.e. tragedy] as a literary or dramatic term".[9] While this narrow authorial intentionalism feels unrepresentative of meaning-making in early modern drama, with so many agents involved in the processes of writing, performing, printing, marketing, watching and reading early modern plays, I nevertheless take Kelly's prefatory statement of purpose as a prompt for my own. My aim is not to develop a theory of tragedy – even a historically circumscribed one – with reference to particular works in which that theory is exemplified. I am interested, rather, in what "tragedy" meant to and for commercial English drama in its infancy.

There is widespread scholarly acknowledgement that the 1580s and 1590s were years of genesis and development for popular dramatic tragedy in England, though not all critics are as scathing in their assessment of English tragedy's theatrical emergence as Rabkin and Leech. The first original tragedy written in English was, famously, Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Tragedie of Gorboduc* (1561), penned for performance at the Inns of Court and printed a few years later, in 1565. But although dramatic tragedy was being both performed and read in certain

[8] Andy Kesson, "Was Comedy a Genre in English Early Modern Drama?", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 54, no. 2 (April 2014), pp. 213-225, p. 216.
[9] Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy*, p. xiv.

contexts throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, it remained a predominantly non-dramatic genre in popular culture for much of this time. Helen Cooper and Mike Pincombe both suggest that, even into the late 1580s, the word "tragedy" would have conjured non-drama for most Elizabethans; the archetypal tragic text was, they argue, *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), the theatrical influence of which I explore in chapter one of this thesis.[10] Peter Berek's statistical study of occurrences of the word "tragedy" and its cognates on early modern title pages identifies a similar moment of transition from non-dramatic to dramatic predominance, with 60 per cent of uses appearing on dramatic title pages after 1590, as opposed to 33 per cent before.[11] The earliest tragedies known to have been written for and performed at the commercial playhouses are Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine Part One*, both usually dated to 1587. The sparsity of records of commercial drama prior to this date makes it difficult to establish when tragedy made its playhouse debut. References to the genre in texts such as Stephen Gosson's antitheatrical pamphlet *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (1582) imply that tragedies were already being staged prior to this date, though the extent to which Gosson, in particular, can be trusted as a witness to the theatrical scene of 1570s and 1580s London is questionable; his neat division of contemporary drama into "Comedies" and "Tragedies" is certainly not representative of the generic medley of the period, and would appear to be based more on classical precedents than on the drama of the sixteenth century.[12] Though we cannot know precisely when popular tragic plays began to appear, however, we can be confident that tragedy was a relative theatrical novelty in 1580s England. There existed a tradition of vernacular non-dramatic tragedy stretching back almost two centuries, to Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* (*c.* 1387-1400), whereas tragedy in the popular theatres can have been little over a decade old at most.

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[10] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Inaugural Lecture Delivered 29 April 2005* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), p. 25; Mike Pincombe, "English Renaissance Tragedy: Theories and Antecedents", in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, ed. Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan Jr (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 3-16, pp. 3-6.
[11] Peter Berek, "Tragedy and Title Pages: Nationalism, Protestantism, and Print", *Modern Philology*, vol. 106, no. 1 (August 2009), pp. 1-24, p. 2.
[12] Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (London, 1582), sig. C5r-C5v. For a brief summary of classical influences on Gosson's antitheatrical writings, see also Héloïse Sénéchal, "The Antitheatrical Criticism of Stephen Gosson", *Literature Compass* vol. 1 (2004), pp. 1-4.

Yet although early modern scholarship has consistently acknowledged the end of the sixteenth century as the period of dramatic tragedy's popular invention in England, it has rarely paused to consider the more radical implications of tragedy's newness. What is dramatic tragedy without tradition or expectation? What does it mean for tragedy to be unfamiliar and surprising, even experimental, not taken for granted as a self-evident dramatic kind? These questions form the starting point of my enquiry into tragedy in the commercial playhouses of 1580s and 1590s England. My thesis approaches tragedy not as an established dramatic genre – a clear and familiar category of play – but as a theatrical phenomenon. Across four chapters, I explore tragedy's emergence onto the popular stage from different perspectives. In chapter one, I consider tragedy's shift from non-drama to drama, with a focus on the theatrical influence of the seminal tragic work *A Mirror for Magistrates*. In chapter two, I highlight some of the formal and structural implications of tragedy's dramatic novelty, demonstrating that tragedies were often showcased as vignettes within plays rather than as plays in their entirety. Chapter three continues to explore manifestations of tragedy's novelty, examining prologues, choruses and other performed paratexts which advertise and celebrate tragedy as a dramatic offering. The final chapter returns to the question of tragedy's shift to the stage with an analysis of generically experimental approaches to that playhouse staple, the clown, in tragedy. My aim throughout is to demonstrate that there existed a variety of meanings, understandings and applications of tragedy in a dramatic context in the late-sixteenth century: that tragedy was, because of its novelty, at once indeterminate and enormously exciting, the subject of much metadramatic experiment and display. I propose that we should consider tragedy in the 1580s and 1590s playhouses as device, affordance, opportunity, marketing tool.

This is not to say that tragedy in my period of interest should never be discussed as a dramatic genre. My title, "Before Genre", is inspired by that of the *Before Shakespeare* project currently being run by researchers at the University of Roehampton and King's College London, in collaboration with theatres, journals and other organisations. *Before Shakespeare* celebrates the

mid-sixteenth-century beginnings of commercial English theatre so often overlooked in favour of the dramatic shibboleths of later years. It works consciously against the critical reflex that considers these early decades of drama only in comparison with, and as a shaky trial run for, the output of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean playhouses.[13] Because of the limitations imposed by the extant corpus of popular sixteenth-century tragedy, my period of focus begins and ends slightly later than that of the *Before Shakespeare* project, but like that project, I aim to pay attention to lesser-studied plays, to approach them as important dramatic events in their own right, rather than simply as staging posts on the journey to *Hamlet* or *King Lear* (1605-6). Covering commercial English drama between 1565 and 1595, *Before Shakespeare* does actually include some Shakespeare, and the project's title wryly acknowledges the shadow of the bard even as it sets out to decentre him. "Before Genre" is intended similarly. There were, of course, dramatic genres in my period of interest, and tragedy was one of them. But genre did not operate according to the categories, definitions and divisions made famous by the 1623 First Folio, and it is these familiar assumptions, both about the labels that existed and their relative importance, that my project seeks to unpick. Kesson describes an "initial state of instability or generic freedom in the early years of commercial theatre" that "developed into a much more self-conscious use of generic identity in the middle years of the playhouses".[14] My thesis considers tragedy, hailed by G. K. Hunter as "the most clear-cut of dramatic genres", in the context of these years of instability and freedom.[15]

The rest of this introduction is concerned with setting the scene and establishing the parameters and approach of my enquiry. I begin with an overview of tragedy in England as it stood in around 1580, providing a brief history of dramatic tragedy's re-emergence in the sixteenth century, and summarising the various kinds of dramatic and non-dramatic tragedy that

[13] See "About", *Before Shakespeare. The Beginnings of London Commercial Theatre, 1565-1595*, https://beforeshakespeare.com/about/, accessed 10 Sep. 2021.
[14] Kesson, "Was Comedy a Genre?", p. 215.
[15] G. K. Hunter, *English Drama 1586–1642: The Age of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 97.

existed at the start of my period of interest. I then outline the scope of my thesis, explaining my choice of date-span and my approach to potential organising principles such as playing company and author. After setting out these parameters, I turn to a discussion of the scholarship which shapes and underlies my thesis. Though I summarise important work on tragedy here, it should be clear already that this project does not draw its primary inspiration from criticism which assesses the tragic craft of individual playwrights, such as C. L. Barber's *Creating Elizabethan Tragedy: The Theater of Marlowe and Kyd* (1988), from studies of tragic subgenres, like Catherine Richardson's *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England* (2006), or from works which read tragedy as a manifestation of or response to early modern political ideology, like Jonathan Dollimore's *Radical Tragedy* (1984).[16] I outline the vital contributions of these and other studies in some more detail below; but my thesis primarily draws its methodology from recent developments in theatre and performance history, and in particular from the work of Tiffany Stern. One of the most significant contributions to early modern drama scholarship in the twenty-first century has been Stern's reconceptualisation of the play as a composition of textual scraps and fragments. Stern contends that "a play can be, throughout, a series of patches of definable kinds", adopting the term "patch" from early modern references to dramatists as "play-patchers".[17] For Stern, the "patch" is a textual phenomenon, describing the literal pieces of paper which come together in different combinations to make up a play; but I propose to build on her work by demonstrating that the "patch" also has imaginative and conceptual purchase when it comes to understanding the early modern play. My thesis contends that tragedy emerged onto the English stage in and as patches: a tragedy could be a "patch" or piece of a larger play, while entire plays advertised as tragedies can be thought of as patchworks, stitched together out of

[16] C. L. Barber, *Creating Elizabethan Tragedy: The Theater of Marlowe and Kyd* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984).
[17] Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1-7, p. 256.

different dramatic pieces including generically self-reflexive prologues and incongruous clowning scenes. The play-patch also serves as the organising principle of this thesis: as I explain in more detail below, each chapter takes up the concept of the patch in a different way as it explores tragedy's transition to the popular stage.

Before Genre: Tragedy in England *circa* **1580**

Most scholarship about tragedy is about drama. Tragedy originated as performance in Ancient Greece, and most critics still consider the play to be tragedy's proper incarnation. Periods of great tragedy are, by default, periods of great dramatic tragedy. Yet for most of the sixteenth century, tragedy was not self-evidently a performed genre in England. Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* had famously introduced the term into English literature at the end of the fourteenth century, to describe "a certeyn storie,|…Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee| And is yfallen out of heigh degree| Into myserie, and endeth wreccchedly".[18] The Monk's tragedies are sad poems of the falls of great personages, in the style of Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (1355-1374). Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* is, of course, a performance of sorts – all of *The Canterbury Tales* are imagined as stories performed for the entertainment of a listening audience – but it does not turn out to be a very good one. Seventeen tragedies in, the Monk is interrupted by the Knight, who cannot bear to listen to any more of his dreary moralising. The Host enthusiastically agrees, begging the Monk to desist and declaring that "swich talking is nat worth a boterflye,| For therinne is ther no desport ne game"; there is nothing pleasurable or fun about these tragedies, he complains, making them a poor choice of entertainment.[19] Despite their less than warm reception by the Canterbury pilgrims, however, these kinds of *de casibus* tragedies were to become popular reading material in England. In the fifteenth century, the monk and writer John Lydgate produced an English translation of Boccaccio's work, via a French translation by Laurent de

[18] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Monk's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 240-252, p. 241, l. 1973-1977.
[19] Chaucer, *Prologue of the Nun's Priest's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 252, l. 3957, l. 3980-3981.

Premierfait.[20] The popularity of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (*c.* 1438) is attested by the numerous manuscript copies which survive from the fifteenth century, and by the various print editions of the poem.[21] It was first printed in 1494 by Richard Pynson, who reprinted the work in 1527. Two separate editions appeared in 1554, one published by John Wayland, the other by Richard Tottel. The former appears to have been conceived as part of a larger expansion project; John Wayland compiled and probably masterminded the first edition of *A Mirror for Magistrates*, which was intended for publication in 1555, though the work was suppressed and not printed until four years later by a different printer, Thomas Marsh.[22] Where Lydgate, following Boccaccio, concerned himself with the tragedies of ancient historical and mythological figures, the early editions of *A Mirror for Magistrates* covered recent English history. The work was immensely popular in the second half of the sixteenth century, as mentioned above, and I set out its popularity in more detail in my opening chapter.

By the mid-sixteenth century, tragedy had firmly established itself as an English literary genre, a form of moral poetic biography to be written and read. It was not that classical tragic drama was unheard of – even in his fifteenth-century *de casibus* poem, Lydgate acknowledges that tragedies had once been dramas – but the vernacular tradition was not theatrical.[23] English tragedies were not, and never had been, plays. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the range of tragic reading material on offer expanded with the arrival of the so-called "tragical tale". As Jonathan Gibson outlines, this rather capacious term describes a variety of kinds of narrative drawn mainly from the tradition of the Italian *novella*.[24] These were sensational stories, usually

[20] On the development of *de casibus* tragedy from Boccaccio to Lydgate, see Henry Ansgar Kelly, "Lydgate's Fallen Princes", in *Chaucerian Tragedy* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 176-214.
[21] On the popularity of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see A. S. G. Edwards, "The Influence of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes c.* 1440-1559: A Survey", *Mediaeval Studies*, vol. 39 (1997), pp. 424-439.
[22] See Paul Budra, "Printing the *Mirror*", in A Mirror for Magistrates *and the* de casibus *Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 3-13.
[23] On Lydgate's knowledge of Seneca, see Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy*, p. 153. In his 1538 *Dictionary*, Sir Thomas Eliot, likewise, acknowledges tragedy as a form of drama or "enterlude": the full definition reads, "Tragoedia, a tragedye, whiche is an enterlude, wherin the personages do represent somme hystorie or fable lamentable, for the crueltie and myserye therin expressed". Thomas Eliot, *The Dictionary of Syr Thomas Eliot Knyght* (London, 1538), sig. Ddr.
[24] Jonathan Gibson, "Tragical Histories, Tragical Tales", in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: OUP, 2009), pp. 521-536.

involving murder and often sexual violence. Doomed lovers were a popular choice of subject; Arthur Brooke's 1562 poem *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet*, based on the prose work by the Italian friar Matteo Bandello, is one of the most famous examples of Elizabethan tragical tale today, as it became the source for Shakespeare's mid-1590s play of almost the same name.[25] The works of Bandello were particularly popular as inspiration for writers in England. Where Brooke composed and published his adaptation as a standalone poem, some authors of English tragical tales wrote in prose, and published their stories as collections, sometimes mixing tragic pieces in with other kinds of narrative. The two volumes of William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-7) bring together tales from classical authors such as Livy and Plutarch with medieval works by the likes of Boccaccio and the sixteenth-century stories of Bandello and other European writers (for instance, Pierre Boiastuau and Francois Belleforest). Described across the two volumes' title pages as "goodly histories", "excellent novelles" and "tragicall matters", these prose tales are not all tragic; while many tell of people – particularly women – meeting unfortunately violent ends, others tell of lucky escapes, of lessons learned and of rewards for good deeds.[26] Unlike in *de casibus* collections, in which one tragic fall is related after another, here tragedy is interspersed with other kinds of material. Even collections which advertise only tragic content on their title pages, such as Geoffrey Fenton's *Certaine Tragicall Discourses* (1567), offer a surprising range of narrative arcs; not all tragical tales, as Gibson notes, end badly, or at least not badly for everyone.[27] We might attribute this to the fact that these tales are "tragical", not "tragedies"; the adjectival form, perhaps, describes certain kinds of sad, shocking or perilous content, and implies a particular tone, but does not prescribe a fatal denouement. On the other hand, at around the same time that Bandello was writing, the Italian playwright Giovanni Battista Giraldi, nicknamed

[25] For a discussion of the origins of the Romeo and Juliet story, and the relationship between Matteo Bandello's version in his *Novelle* (1554), Arthur Brooke's *Tragicall Historye*, and Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* (*c.* 1595), see Jill Levenson ed., *Romeo and Juliet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-15.
[26] William Painter, *The Palace of Pleasure, Beautified, Adorned and Well Furnished with Pleasant Histories and Excellent Novelles* (London, 1566), t.p.; William Painter, *The Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure Conteyning Store of Goodly Histories, Tragicall Matters, and Other Morall Argument* (London, 1567), t.p.
[27] Gibson, "Tragical Histories, Tragical Tales", p. 523.

Cinthio, was experimenting with his *tragedia mista* or *tragedia di lieto fin* – that is, "mixed" or "happy-ending" tragedy.[28] In Europe in the mid-sixteenth century, a sad conclusion was not an absolute prerequisite for the label "tragedy". Instead of ascribing too much significance to a writer's choice of "tragical" over "tragedy", or vice versa, we should recognise these narrative differences as evidence of the great diversity of tragic writing that existed in the mid-sixteenth century.

It is clear by now that the 1560s was a prolific decade for tragedy in England. We have seen already that these years witnessed the publication of Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet*, two volumes of Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, and Fenton's *Tragicall Discourses*. In addition, there appeared in this decade a translation of *The Amorous and Tragicall Tales of Plutarch* (1567) by James Sanford, an English verse rendering of Ovid's *Tragicall and Lamentable Historie of Two Faythfull Mates: Ceyx Kynge of Thrachine, and Alcione His Wife* (1569), a poem by Bernard Garter entitled *The Tragicall and True Historie Which Happened Betwene Two English Lovers* (1565) and a second, expanded edition of *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1563). Non-dramatic tragedies of the period were many and varied, as Gibson explores at some length. Tragedy comprised fact and fiction, romance and politics, exotic settings and familiar ones, sins and suffering, kings and ordinary people.

The 1560s was also the decade in which English dramatic tragedy began, gradually, to materialise. I have mentioned already that the earliest recorded vernacular tragedy, Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*, was performed and published in this decade, and the 1560s also witnessed the publication of a large number of English translations of Senecan tragedies, which promoted tragedy as dramatic form, if not necessarily as performance.[29] However, tragedy's emergence as

[28] Giovanni Battista Giraldi "Cinthio", "On the Composition of Comedies and Tragedies", trans. Allan H. Gilbert, in *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1962), pp. 252-262. For a discussion of the impact of Cinthio's theories of genre on early modern English drama, see Sarah Dewar-Watson, *Shakespeare's Poetics: Aristotle and Anglo-Italian Renaissance Genres* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 39-41.
[29] Between 1559 and 1569, there were six different Senecan tragedies printed in translation: *The Sixt Tragedie of the Most Grave and Prudent Authour, Lucius, Anneus, Seneca, entitled Troas*, trans. Jasper Heywood (London, 1559); *The Second Tragedie of Seneca entituled Thyestes*, trans. Jasper Heywood (London, 1560); *The Lamentable Tragedie of Oedipus the Sonne of Laius Kyng of Thebes*, trans. Alexander Neville (London, 1563); *Lucii Annei Senecæ Tragedia Prima Quæ Inscribitur Hercules Furens*, trans. Jasper Heywood (London,1561); *The Eyght Tragedie of Seneca. Entituled Agamemnon*, trans. John Studley (London, 1566); *The Seventh Tragedie of Seneca, entituled Medea,* trans. John Studley (London, 1566).

dramatic literature in England had been slow, compared not only to the rapid flourishing of non-dramatic versions of the genre, but also to the growth of its classical counterpart, dramatic comedy. Classical plays are known to have been a feature of English court entertainment as early as 1519, when a "goodly comedy of Plautus" was performed in the Great Chamber at Greenwich.[30] In the late 1520s, Cardinal Wolsey organised performances of both Plautus's *Menaechmi* and Terence's *Phormio*; again, both of these plays are comedies.[31] So, too, as Janette Dillon notes, were "the earliest English plays imitating classical form": *Thersites* (1537), *Ralph Roister Doister* (*c.* 1547-8), *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (*c.* 1551-4) and *Jack Juggler* (*c.* 1553-8).[32] Comedy was thriving as a type of performance in England and in English many decades before tragedy of any kind, language or origin. Even Senecan tragedy is not known to have been performed prior to the 1540s; a production of *Hippolytus* prepared by Alexander Nowell at Westminster School in this decade constitutes the earliest recorded performance of a classical tragedy in England.[33] A few other Latin tragedies were also composed in this decade – Thomas Watson's original Latin play *Absalom* (1540), and George Buchanan's translations of Euripides (for instance, *Medea* in 1541 and *Alcestis* in 1543) – but these have not been confidently linked to performances in England.[34] As for performances in Eng*lish*, *Gorboduc* post-dates the first vernacular comedy by around twenty-five years. Comedy, it seems, was naturally, even effortlessly theatrical, so much so that the word "comedy" appears to have been a sixteenth-century synonym for "play" in general, as well as a label for a particular kind of merry, intricately plotted drama with classical

[30] Quoted by Janette Dillon, *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), p. 148. See also Robert Hornback, *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 3-4.
[31] See Dillon, *Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre*, p. 148.
[32] Dillon, *Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre*, p. 148.
[33] Dillon, *Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre*, p. 149.
[34] Martin Wiggins, "*Absalom* (85)", in *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue, Vol. 1, 1533-1566*, ed. Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson (Oxford: OUP, 2012; Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2020), 10.1093/actrade/9780199265718.book.1; Wiggins, "*Medea* (103)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 1*; Wiggins, "*Alcestis* (122)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 1*.

roots.[35] Chaucer's Host, it would seem, had a point; performance was best suited to "desport" and "game", not "hevynesse".

More records of tragedy as performance in England begin to appear from the 1560s onwards, though many of these plays were in Latin rather than in English. Such performances were often given at Oxford and Cambridge colleges during royal visits. For example, a tragic play called *Dido*, written in Latin by Edward Halliwell, was performed at King's College Chapel during Queen Elizabeth I's state visit to Cambridge in August 1564, and *Procne*, also written in Latin by James Calfhill, was performed before the Queen at Christ Church College, Oxford, in September 1566.[36] The Inns of Court were another locus of tragic composition and performance. *Gorboduc* was first performed at the Inner Temple, and then at Whitehall before the Queen.[37] Another original English tragedy of the 1560s, *Gismond of Salern* (1568), was also performed by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple, probably at Greenwich Palace.[38] In the 1570s, children's companies began performing tragedies, although these survive only as records and fragments. *The Tragedy of Panthea*, of which only a song now remains, has been connected with a performance by Richard Farrant's Children of Windsor at Hampton Court in December 1575.[39] Farrant's boy companies have also been linked to a play called the *Tragedy of Gismond* in this

[35] There are various title pages from the sixteenth century which use the phrase "comedy or enterlude" as though the two are synonymous (see, for instance, John Bale's *A Brefe Comedy or Enterlude Concernynge the Temptacyon of our Lord and Saver Jesus Christ, by Sathan in the Desart* (Wesel, 1547)). There are others which apply the label "comedy" to material which is the antithesis of comedy in its modern sense – for instance, Nathaniel Woodes's *An Excellent New Commedie Intituled, The Conflict of Conscience Contayning a Most Lamentable Example of the Dolefull Desperation of a Miserable Worldlinge, Termed by the Name Philologus, Who Forsooke the Trueth of Gods Gospel for Feare of the Losse of Lyfe & Worldly Goodes* (London, 1581). Both uses imply that "comedy" had a broader, more general dramatic meaning: that it could suggest simply "play", as well as designating a play of a particular kind. Definitions in Eliot's *Dictionary* also imply a broader understanding of the term: he defines "Comoedia" as "an enterlude, wherin the common vices of men and womenne are apparently declared in personages", and also describes a "Comoedus" as a "player in enterludes". Eliot, *Dictionary*, sig. D4r.

[36] Wiggins, "*Dido* (383)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 1*; Wiggins, "*Procne* (431)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 1*.

[37] The play was performed at the Inner Temple on 6 January 1562, and at Whitehall on 18 January 1562. See Wiggins, "*Gorboduc* (351)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 1*.

[38] Like a number of Inns of Court plays, *Gismond of Salern* was a collaboration between multiple authors, each of whom was responsible for one act. The five authors, in act order, are Roderick Stafford, Henry Noel, the mysterious "G. Al.", Christopher Hatton, and Robert Wilmot; "G. Al." has not been successfully linked to any known member of the Inner Temple. See Wiggins, "*Gismond of Salern* (467)", in *British Drama 1533-1567: A Catalogue, Vol. 2, 1567-1589*, ed. Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson (Oxford: OUP, 2012; Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2020), 10.1093/actrade/9780199265725.book.1.

[39] Wiggins, "*Tragedy of Panthea* (586)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 2*.

decade; Wiggins dates this as slightly later than *Panthea*, attributing it to the Children of the Chapel Royal and proposing it as the untitled performance recorded at Hampton Court in December 1577.[40] From the late 1570s onwards, plays associated with either of the two major children's companies, the Children of the Chapel Royal and the Children of Paul's, may well have been performed before paying audiences at permanent London playhouses, as well as at court. Sebastian Westcote established a permanent playing space at St. Paul's for his company in 1575, and the first Blackfriars theatre was created by Richard Farrant for his Chapel Children a year later.[41] Members of the public could pay to watch plays being rehearsed for performance at court in these playhouses. Thus, the children's company tragedies of the late 1570s may represent some of the earliest publicly performed tragedies in England, though sadly the records are not definitive. The surviving argument for the Children of Paul's play *Meleager* (*c.* 1576) is, as Wiggins puts it, "conceived for a space equipped with an acting area above the stage", which suggests that it was written with the Paul's playhouse in mind.[42] However, there is no evidence that this argument for *Meleager* was even turned into a full playscript, let alone that any resulting play was ever performed.

The earliest extant play with links – albeit tenuous ones – to popular performance is Thomas Preston's now much derided *Lamentable Tragedy…of Cambises King of Percia* (*c.* 1569). Critics for many years assumed that this play was synonymous with a performance entitled "Huff, Suff, and Ruff" which took place at Whitehall Palace during the Christmas season of 1560-1, but Wiggins points out that Huff and Ruff, who feature in only one scene of *Cambises*,

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[40] Farrant was Master of the Children of Windsor from 1564. He took over as *de facto* Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal in 1576, maintaining his Windsor post mainly via a deputy. He did combine the two companies for at least one performance in 1577, but the distance between the two locations posed a major logistical challenge, and thereafter he seems to have presented plays at court only with the Children of the Chapel Royal. See Wiggins, "*Tragedy of Gismond* (622)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 2*; Roger Bowers, "Farrant, Richard (*c.* 1528-1580), musician and theatrical producer", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004; accessed 10 Sep. 2021, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/9186.

[41] Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 13-14.

[42] Wiggins, "*Meleager* (593)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 2*; see also Arthur Freeman, "The Argument of *Meleager*", *ELR*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1971), pp. 122-131.

along with Snuff (not "Suff") the clown are very unlikely to have been listed as the title characters of the play.[43] Janette Dillon proposes, instead, that the play was "probably written for touring", though her argument is based largely on a doubling chart printed at the front of the quarto, which Wiggins finds to be unworkable.[44] As Tamara Atkin has recently argued, the doubling chart is significant in marking *Cambises* as dramatic literature; it may have been less functional than symbolic, she suggests, printed in the quarto not to facilitate performance, but rather to package the text as, distinctively, a play.[45] It does not rule out touring, but it cannot be used as proof of it either. What we do know is that *Cambises* was enduringly popular. It was entered in the Stationers' Register to John Allde in 1569, and first printed shortly afterwards. It was printed again in the second half of the 1580s, this time by Edward Allde, although almost nothing survives of this print run; a third quarto edition appeared in the 1590s, at some point after 1593.[46] As well as enjoying print success in the second half of the sixteenth century, *Cambises* is famously referenced in Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part One* (*c.* 1597) by Falstaff, who announces his intention to imitate Hal's father, King Henry IV, "in a passion…in King Cambises' vein".[47] How far the ensuing speech actually imitates Preston's play is a matter of debate, but it is nonetheless telling that *Cambises* is invoked because of a memorable performance style, a passionate mode of delivery. Falstaff even requests sack (not itself an unusual occurrence) to make his eyes red, so that it looks as though he has been weeping. The playgoers are being asked to remember or to imagine a body performing an emotion, not just a bombastic literary style. Falstaff's reference to *Cambises*, in other words, implies that Preston's play was familiar to audiences as a performance. Whatever the circumstances of its debut, it seems appropriate to consider *Cambises* a popular tragedy.

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[43] Wiggins, "*Cambyses, King of Persia* (480)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 2*.
[44] Dillon, *Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre*, p. 150; Wiggins, "*Cambyses, King of Persia* (480)".
[45] Tamara Atkin, *Reading Drama in Tudor England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018). See especially chapter two, "Front Matter in Early Printed Playbooks", pp. 69-100.
[46] Wiggins, "*Cambyses, King of Persia* (480)".
[47] William Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part One*, ed. Anna Pruitt, in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: OUP; Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2016), II.v.316.

If theatrical records and a handful of extant plays seem to gesture to a larger, lost tragic corpus from the 1560s and 1570s, then the mostly disparaging remarks of mid-sixteenth-century commentators also point to the existence of more pre-1580s tragedy than survives today. For Martin Wiggins, Stephen Gosson's work of antitheatrical polemic, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions*, "bear[s] witness to the generic diversity the theatre had achieved by the time he left it in 1579" through its comments on comedy and tragedy.[48] The extent to which his "comments" describe contemporary theatre is unclear, however. Gosson names and describes tragedy and comedy as though, between them, they cover all that theatre has to offer:

> The argume[n]t of Tragedies is wrath, crueltie, incest, injurie, murther eyther violent by sworde, or voluntary by poison. The persons, Gods, Goddesses, furies, fiends, kings, Quenes, and mightie men. The ground worke of Commedies is love, cosenedge, flatterie, bawderie, slye conveighance of whordome. The perso[n]s cookes, queanes, knaves, baudes, parasites, courtezannes, lecherouse olde men, amorous young men.[49]

These sound like classical definitions; Gosson could be describing the plays of Seneca, Plautus and Terence without any reference to contemporary performance. When, a few pages later, he summarises what appears to be a play he has witnessed, it bears little resemblance to either category. The "adventures of the amorous knight, passing from countrie to countrie for the love of his lady, encou[n]tring many a terrible monster made of broune paper" is neither comedy nor tragedy, according to Gosson's own definitions, yet the detail about the "broune paper" prop suggests that it was very much performed. All of this is to say that Gosson's *Playes Confuted* does not necessarily provide an accurate record of the prevalence or content of dramatic tragedy in 1570s London.

Philip Sidney, writing at about the same time, also alludes to a burgeoning early corpus of plays called tragedies in his *Defence of Poesie* (*c.* 1582). Unlike Gosson, Sidney is an advocate for drama, but he still compares contemporary tragedy largely unfavourably with its classical counterpart. His complaints about the lack of "right Comedie in that Comicall part of our

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[48] Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of His Time* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 9.
[49] Gosson, *Playes Confuted*, sig. C5r-C5v.

Tragidie" are well known; Sidney's issue, it should be noted, is not with generic mixing in principle, but with the jarring collocation of clowning and tragedy, presumably of the kind seen in *Cambises* (though Sidney does not specifically name this play).[50] His other major criticism of contemporary tragedy concerns its failure to adhere to the Aristotelian unities. Even *Gorboduc*, which Sidney singles out for praise because of its "stately speeches…clyming to the height of *Seneca*" and its "notable morallitie, which it dooth most delightfully teach", falls short in respect of its "circumstaunces", covering too much time and representing too many places on stage.[51] The comparisons Sidney draws with classical drama offer a clearer insight into the nature of 1570s English tragedy than Gosson's check-box lists. In a fascinating and less frequently cited excerpt from the *Defence* than the discussion of "mongrell Tragicomedy", Sidney compares the hypothetical approach of a sixteenth-century tragedian with Euripides's handling of the same subject matter. Euripides's tragedy *Hecuba* (*c.* 424 BCE) is catalysed by the murder of Priam and Hecuba's son Polydorus, by his supposed protector Polymestor.[52] Whereas Euripides begins his play with Polydorus already dead, narrating these events as a ghostly prologue, "one of our Tragedie writers", complains Sidney, would "begin…with the deliverie of the Childe" – that is, with Polydorus's placement in Polymestor's care, many years before his death.[53] Contemporary tragedies, as Sidney describes them, are expansive: they may share themes and even subject matter with classical works in the genre, but they approach their content much like the play of the wandering, amorous knight referenced by Gosson, covering long distances and wide gaps of time. This is a fair description of *Gorboduc* and *Cambises* which, though strikingly different from one another in structure and dramaturgy, both concern kingship, betrayal and murder, and unfold over multiple years and locations. But it is an even better description of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587), which post-dates Sidney's *Defence* by around five years.

[50] Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London, 1595), sig. I1v.
[51] Sidney, *Defence of Poesie*, sig. H4r.
[52] Euripides, *Hecuba*, in *The Trojan Women and Other Plays*, trans. James Morwood (Oxford: OUP, 2001), pp. 1-37.
[53] Sidney, *Defence of Poesie*, sig. I1r.

Tamburlaine has been given many generic labels since its debut – it was called "commicall" in the Stationers' Register, and has been written about as a romance by some critics – but it is most often referred to as a tragedy, and an innovative one.[54] Partly because of its bombastic prologue, which reads as a claim to novelty, *Tamburlaine* has been viewed as the first playhouse tragedy, the inaugural work in the genre.[55] Yet it in many ways resembles Sidney's characterisation of the sprawling, vernacular tragedy that apparently existed around a decade earlier; indeed, according to its printer Richard Jones, *Tamburlaine* once even contained clowning scenes of the kind Sidney so abhors.[56] The lost, popular tragedies of the 1570s alluded to by Sidney and Gosson may not have looked so different from some of the playhouse offerings that survive from the later 1580s. "[P]erhaps", as Mike Pincombe suggests, the celebrated tragic drama of Shakespeare and Marlowe "did *not* emerge so suddenly".[57]

On the contrary, between around 1560 and 1580, dramatic tragedy in England went from being almost unheard of to being performed not only as a relic from the classical era, but also as a living, vernacular genre. Beginning in the Inns of Court and at the universities, tragedies also entered the repertories of children's companies in these decades, perhaps appearing at the public playhouses at Blackfriars and St Paul's towards the end of the 1570s. The English tragedy *Cambises* offers us a possible glimpse of a broader, popular tragic scene, though the specific circumstances of its performance are unknown. The comments of Sidney and Gosson also

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[54] See, for instance, Brian Gibbons, "Romance and the Heroic Play", in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), pp. 197-227, p. 218; Edward Arber, *A Transcript of the Register of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640 A. D*, 5 vols, (London: privately published, 1875-1877), II, p. 558.

[55] *The First Part of Tamburlaine* typically vies for this title with Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. C. L. Barber's study *Creating Elizabethan Tragedy*, for instance, focuses specifically on "The Theater of Marlowe and Kyd"; on the groundbreaking impact of *Tamburlaine* and *The Spanish Tragedy,* Barber writes, "[i]t was in *Tamburlaine*, together with Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, that heroic poetry was first brought into vital relation to stage action. The effect was like magnesium thrown into water". C. L. Barber, *Creating Elizabethan Tragedy*, p. 33. On the influence of *Tamburlaine*'s prologue on scholarship's perception of the play as a "break with theatrical fashion", see Lukas Erne, "Biography, Mythography, and Criticism: The Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe", *Modern Philology*, vol. 103, no. 1 (August 2005), pp. 28-50, pp. 38-39.

[56] Jones writes in a preface to the printed play that he has "left out some fond and frivolous Jestures" from it. These "Jestures", as I discuss in chapter four, are likely to have been scenes of clowning. Richard Jones, "To the Gentlemen Readers", in *Tamburlaine the Great*, by Christopher Marlowe (London, 1590), sig. A2.

[57] Pincombe, "English Renaissance Tragedy: Theories and Antecedents", p. 13.

indicate that popular dramatic tragedy existed in England prior to the 1580s, though almost nothing of it survives before this decade. The little tragic drama that remains to us from the 1560s and 1570s attests to a huge variety of meanings and manifestations of tragedy in performance. The very earliest tragedies staged in England were revivals of Seneca, and the original Latin tragedies of the universities (plays like *Dido* and *Procne*) continued a trend for tragedies with classical themes. Structurally, the early Inns of Court tragedies like *Gorboduc* and *Gismond of Salern* also imitated Seneca with their choruses, lengthy speeches and division into five acts. However, they drew their tragic subjects from a range of sources. Gorboduc is an ancient British king first written about in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*; the *Gorboduc* playwrights lifted the narrative from the writings of sixteenth-century chronicler John Hardyng.[58] *Gismond of Salern*, meanwhile, is based on the "Tale of Ghismonda and Guiscardo" from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1348-1353), a work which was also mined for inspiration by the writers of prose and verse "tragical tales".[59] In plays like Richard Farrant's now mostly lost *Tragedy of Panthea*, as well as in *Cambises*, we see the emergence of a fashion for tragedies about ancient Asian monarchs and conquerors that would continue into the 1590s with plays like *Selimus* (1591), the lost *Tamar Cham* plays (1591-2), and, of course, *Tamburlaine*; the story of Panthea may also have been taken, partly, from Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*.[60]

As well as drawing on a range of kinds of source material, early dramatic tragedies also varied in structure and tone. While many academic and Inns of Court tragedies did follow Seneca in including a chorus, some, including Edward Halliwell's *Dido*, did not.[61] *Cambises* also lacks a

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[58] John Hardyng, *The Chronicle of Jhon Hardyng in Metre, Fro[m] the First Begynning of Engla[n]de, unto [th]e Reign of Edward [th]e Fourth Where He Made an End of His Chronicle* (London, 1543). See Wiggins, "*Gorboduc* (351)".
[59] A modern transcription of the Hargrave MS version of the play was recently printed by the Malone Society, in *Collections XVIII: Two Plays from the* Decameron, ed. Siobhan Keenan (Manchester: Malone Society Reprints, 2020). See also Wiggins, "*Gismond of Salern* (467)".
[60] *Selimus* has been attributed to Robert Greene, although the attribution is difficult to conclusively prove, as the play's editor Daniel J. Vitkus outlines. Thomas Lodge has also been proposed as co-author. See Daniel J. Vitkus, "Introduction", in *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England:* Selimus*,* A Christian Turned Turk*, and* The Renegado, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 1-54, esp. pp. 16-17; Donna Murphy, "*Locrine*, *Selimus*, Robert Greene, and Thomas Lodge", *NQ*, vol. 56, no. 4 (December 2009), pp. 559-563. On the sources of Farrant's lost *Tragedy of Panthea*, see Wiggins, "*Tragedy of Panthea* (586)".
[61] Wiggins, "*Dido* (383)".

chorus, and is notorious for its self-proclaimed mixing of "lamentable Tragedie" with "plesant mirth".[62] The presence of clowning scenes in tragedy was a commonplace of 1580s and 1590s commercial playhouse drama, as I explore in chapter four. Of the extant pre-1580s tragedies, none except *Cambises* contains a clown, though Sidney's famous comments on the subject imply that *Cambises* was not a one-off. The story which these sparse and scattered records tell of dramatic tragedy's emergence in England is, in short, far from linear. We can distinguish no fixed model, no single origin point. Original tragedies and classical revivals, in Latin and in English, with choruses and without, appeared and continued to appear in tandem, with tragedy developing at the universities and the Inns of Court, in children's company repertories and, presumably, among the adult playing companies as well. Just as there existed a great variety of kinds and meanings of tragedy in a non-dramatic context in the 1560s and 1570s, so dramatic tragedy in these decades also bespoke plurality, indeterminacy, an absence of precedent or definition.

One feature which many of the tragic plays of this era do have in common is an emphasis on the spectacular. Whether they survive as full scripts or only as records of performance, plays from James Calfhill's *Procne*, performed at Christ Church, Oxford, to the Children of Paul's *Meleager*, to Thomas Preston's *Cambises*, all had specific and elaborate staging requirements. An account of the royal visit to Oxford in September 1566 by John Bereblock describes Diomedes ascending from beneath the stage at the start of the play *Procne* with flames (presumably costume ones) covering his head and arms; Bereblock also details the use of sound effects (a "subterranean noise, enclosed and fearful"), as well as several props including, gruesomely, Itys' severed head.[63] Although *Gorboduc* is, in the style of Senecan drama, largely dialogic, each act is preceded by a visually arresting dumbshow: wild men covered in leaves;

[62] The play advertises both kinds of material on its title page. See Thomas Preston, *A Lamentable Tragedie, Mixed Full of Plesant Mirth, Containing the Life of Cambises King of Percia* (London, 1570), t.p.
[63] See Wiggins, "*Procne* (431)".

blood-sprinkled Furies ascending from Hell; a stylised scene of battle.[64] The Children of Paul's *Meleager* calls for a "flaming Alter", and also stages a hunt which culminates in the presentation of a "Bores head".[65] The stage effects in *Cambises*, meanwhile, are many and notoriously grisly; the printed playtext explains in technical detail the use of a "*false skin*" to stage the flaying of Sisamnes, and the "*little bladder of Vineger prikt*" to make it seem as though Smirdis has been stabbed and is bleeding to death.[66] The play also presents characters killed with arrows and hearts cut out; Cambises makes his final entrance with "*a sword thrust up into his side bleeding*".[67] These plays provide just a few, particularly striking examples of spectacular tragic staging in the 1560s and 1570s, across four of the major producers in the period (universities, Inns of Court, children's companies and adult companies).[68] There are many more records of expensive props and stage sets, of elaborate costumes and spectacular entrances, often from under the stage.

These are decades in which English tragedy was still dominated by a long and varied non-dramatic tradition. Extant dramatic tragedies from these years are few, though the number of plays which have been lost without record makes it difficult to establish exactly how prominent tragedy was among the romances, moralities and uncategorisable interludes that were popular performance kinds at the time. What we do know is that early dramatic tragedies for which records survive exploited the spectacular possibilities of performance. Whether through special effects, visually striking dumb shows, or dynamic uses of stage space, they capitalised on the newly discovered potential of tragedy as theatre. My thesis explores the continued engagement with this question of how tragedy could work as performance in the slightly later, extant drama of the 1580s and 90s.

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[64] Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, *The Tragedie of Gorboduc* (London, 1565), sig. A2v, sig. C5r, sig. D4r.
[65] Freeman, "The Argument of *Meleager*", pp. 126-128.
[66] Preston, *Cambises King of Persia*, sig. C2v, sig. D3r.
[67] Preston, *Cambises King of Persia*, sig. C4r, sig. F2r.
[68] Other producers of drama in the period include the royal court, as well as civic and amateur groups.

Scene-Setting: Dates, Companies, Authors

The temporal scope of my thesis should by now be fairly evident. I am interested in early forms of popular dramatic tragedy, and the loss of almost everything from the first two decades or so of the commercial playhouses (that is, from the mid-1560s to the mid-1580s) means that, in order to study the workings of drama, my research focuses on plays from the late 1580s and the early to mid-1590s. Most of the plays I discuss can be dated to between 1587 and 1594, a period often discussed as a distinct phase in the development of English theatre. For many critics, 1594 represents a major epoch shift: it has been claimed, for instance, as the year the Admiral's and the Chamberlain's Men established a so-called "duopoly", and the year the English play-printing industry began to thrive.[69] However, Roslyn Knutson, Holger Schott Syme and others have more recently questioned the extent to which 1594 really was a watershed year, challenging, in particular, the theory of the "duopoly", and demonstrating that there was as much continuity as change on either side of scholarship's dividing line.[70] Where relevant to my enquiry, therefore, I also consider some plays written after this date. The latest work I discuss is the anonymous Lord Chamberlain's Men's play *A Warning for Fair Women* (*c.* 1597). Beginning with a metatheatrical induction in which personifications of Tragedy, Comedy and History compete for control of the playhouse, this play is not only highly pertinent to questions of tragedy's manifestation on stage in the period, but also suggests a clarity of generic division not seen around a decade earlier. With the dates of so many early modern plays uncertain, and with development and innovation a constant feature of London's late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century theatrical scene, any firm cut-off point feels inevitably arbitrary. But *A Warning*'s induction, at least, represents a clear generic moment, a snapshot of the state and status of early modern dramatic kinds at a particular point in time.

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[69] On the establishment of the "duopoly", see Andrew Gurr, "Three Reluctant Patrons and Early Shakespeare", *SQ*, vol 44, no. 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 159-174. On play-printing and the "boomlet" of 1594, see Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, "The Popularity of Playbooks Revisited", *SQ*, vol. 56, no. 1 (Spring, 2005), pp. 1-32, esp. pp. 9-10.
[70] Roslyn Knutson, "What's So Special About 1594?", *SQ*, vol. 61, no. 4 (Winter 2010), pp. 449-467; Holger Schott Syme, "The Meaning of Success: Stories of 1594 and Its Aftermath", *SQ*, vol. 61, no. 4 (Winter 2010), pp. 490-425.

Just as the date span of my thesis is not circumscribed by the building of particular playhouses or the establishment of certain companies, so its focus is not limited or organised by theatrical troupe or venue. Some of the most important contributions to scholarship on early modern drama over the last thirty years or so have concentrated on particular groups of players and their playing locations. Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean's hugely significant *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (1998) shed valuable light on the style, repertoire and influence of a troupe which, though famous and popular in its day, had been overlooked by scholarship since. This book also demonstrated the potential new insights and conclusions made available by foregrounding a specific playing company rather than, for instance, a specific playwright, paving the way for other similar studies: MacLean and Lawrence's Manley's *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays* (2014), for example, and Andrew Gurr's *Shakespeare's Opposites* (2009), which focuses on the Admiral's Men. Adjacent to this research into particular theatre troupes has been scholarship seeking to understand early modern drama in relation to specific performance venues. Surviving archaeological and archival traces have allowed theatre historians to study the operations of some early modern playing spaces in extensive detail, as Carol Chillington Rutter's *Documents of the Rose Playhouse* (1984) amply demonstrates. Thanks to excavation work, as well as to documents like *Henslowe's Diary*, we know everything from the size of the Rose's stage to the names of the plays performed there each day for months at a time in the 1590s.[71] This kind of venue-specific detail has encouraged early modern drama scholars to consider how plays might have worked in, and even been designed for, certain performance spaces; although less is known about either playhouse than about the Rose, Sarah Dustagheer's recent study, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses* (2017), considers how the King's Men's plays of the early seventeenth century worked across two contrasting venues, the outdoor Globe theatre and the indoor Blackfriars playhouse.

[71] Stretches of the repertories of Lord Strange's Men, Sussex's Men, the Queen's Men and Sussex's Men, the Admiral's Men, the Admiral's Men and the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and the Admiral's Men and Pembroke's Men, between 1592 and 1597, are preserved in *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 16-37, pp. 47-48, pp. 54-60. For a summary of archival and archaeological findings relating to the size and shape of the Rose Theatre, see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp. 152-162.

Such work has been vital in encouraging critics to pay more attention to aspects of early modern theatregoing that were self-evidently important in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It has foregrounded early modern plays not only as performed, but as performed in one of a few famous venues, by one of a few well-known playing companies. These distinctions were undoubtedly meaningful for early modern playgoers, and I aim to acknowledge their significance where possible.

Particularly in my period of interest, however, plays moved venues and changed hands between companies, which also moved, merged and disbanded. To take the example of an especially itinerant play whose travels are well-documented, within the same year, 1594, Peele and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (*c.* 1589) was performed by Sussex's Men at the Rose, and by the Admiral's and Lord Chamberlain's Men at Newington Butts; the play is also thought to have been staged earlier in the 1590s by Pembroke's Men and Lord Strange's Men (or Derby's Men), both of whom are named on the title page of the 1594 quarto.[72] Neither was *Titus* entirely exceptional. *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) passed from Lord Strange's Men to the Admiral's Men in the mid-1590s.[73] *Henry VI Part 1* debuted with Lord Strange's Men at the Rose in 1592, but appears to have been performed by the Chamberlain's Men at the Theatre later that decade.[74] Often, moreover, a play's original playhouse and company are undocumented, so we cannot group dramatic works by the troupes or venues for which they were first intended. It may limit our understanding to do so, moreover, when dramatic influence (as well as plays themselves) so clearly spread between companies; the Admiral's Men were not the only troupe, after all, to

[72] *Henslowe's Diary* records performances of *Titus* by Sussex's Men at the Rose on 23 January, 28 January, and 6 February 1594, and by the Admiral's Men and Lord Chamberlain's Men at Newington Butts on 5 June and 12 June 1594. *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 20-21. See also Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion*, ed. Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: OUP, 2017), pp. 490-493.
[73] The play was performed seventeen times between February 1592 and January 1593 by Lord Strange's Men at the Rose, and thirteen times between January 1597 and October 1597 by the Admiral's Men at the Rose, once in conjunction with Pembroke's Men. *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 16-19, pp. 55-60.
[74] Taylor and Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", pp. 515-517.

perform plays in the style of *Tamburlaine*.[75] Although I attend to details of playing company and venue wherever possible, therefore, I have chosen not to organise my discussion of 1580s and 1590s dramatic tragedy around either of these potential foci.

The scope of my thesis is limited by troupe only insofar as I have decided to concentrate entirely on adult company drama. There were marked differences in the commercial playing conditions of adult and children's company theatre in my period of interest, with adult companies performing in open-air amphitheatres, and children's companies in indoor venues.[76] Children's companies appear to have largely disappeared during the 1590s, as a result of the suppression of the Children of Paul's following their implication in the Marprelate controversy.[77] In addition, relatively little extant tragic drama has been associated with the children's acting troupes of the late sixteenth century; some exceptions to this include *The Wars of Cyrus* (1588) and Marlowe and Thomas Nashe's *Dido Queen of Carthage* (1588). Among known lost plays, boy company tragedy is well attested; this thesis has cited a number of such plays already, including *The Tragedy of Panthea* and *Meleager*. Recent scholarship by Lucy Munro, Andy Kesson and others has sought to foreground early modern children's companies as dramatically and commercially important, influential producers and innovators of theatre in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.[78] There is undoubtedly much to be written about the role of early modern

[75] Peter Berek's survey of those late 1580s and 1590s plays which "imitate" *Tamburlaine* most substantially includes other Admiral's Men plays, like Thomas Lodge's *The Wounds of Civil War* (1588), along with Queen's Men's plays like Robert Greene's *Alphonsus King of Aragon* (1587) and *Selimus*. See Peter Berek, "*Tamburlaine*'s Weak Sons: Imitation as Interpretation Before 1593", *Renaissance Drama*, vol. 13 (1982), pp. 55-82.

[76] For a summary of the amphitheatre and hall playhouses of late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-century London, see Gurr's chapter on "The Playhouses" in *The Shakespearean Stage*, pp. 139-208.

[77] The Children of the Chapel "largely disappear from the records" after 1584. The Children of Paul's continued to perform at court and at the playhouse at St. Paul's Cathedral until 1590, at which point they were suppressed due to their involvement – via their playwright John Lyly – in the Martin Marprelate religious controversies. Children's company performances in London and at court do not appear to have resumed until the late 1590s; a new company of Paul's Boys were definitely playing at their own theatre by 1599, and Michael Shapiro posits that performances may have restarted slightly earlier than this. Shapiro, *Children of the Revels*, pp. 17-18. See also Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, p. 46, p. 66.

[78] In a recent article on children's company drama of the 1580s, Lucy Munro argues that the children's companies were "pioneers…of tragic form and emotional expression" in the period. Kesson's monograph on John Lyly recentres Lyly and the boy companies he wrote for as "the first generation of playwrights, actors and theatregoers who helped to define the commercial theatres". Lucy Munro, "Children's Companies and the Long 1580s", *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 45 (2017), pp. 97-105. Andy Kesson, *John Lyly and Early Modern Authorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 22.

children's theatre in the development of forms of English tragedy on stage; John Lyly's plays, alone, are fascinating for their generically evasive prologues, their blending of dramatic kinds, and their fluid labels in print.[79] This additional enquiry is beyond the scope of my thesis, however. Adult company drama of the 1580s and 1590s provides a logical, coherent, and bounded corpus of material of which to ask questions about tragedy in the early English theatres.

When it comes to organising or circumscribing a research project about early modern drama, of course, the playwright remains the default. Indeed, the early modern dramatic author has been experiencing something of a renaissance in twenty-first century scholarship. Publications like Lukas Erne's *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (2003) and Andy Kesson's *John Lyly and Early Modern Authorship* (2014) have sought to demonstrate the literary reputations that writers enjoyed in their own eras, foregrounding the dramatic author as an important early modern category. Kesson's monograph is, moreover, one of several recent studies emphasising the significance of an overlooked playwright from the period; another of these is Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes's edited collection *Writing Robert Greene: New Essays on England's First Notorious Professional Writer* (2008). There has also been a flurry of activity in attribution studies in recent years, propelled by the creation of the *New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* (2017). The editors of the new *Complete Works* have painstakingly reviewed and compiled existing scholarship and newly available data to provide the most detailed and definitive accounts of the authorship of the Shakespearean canon available. Where possible, they attribute specific acts or scenes to Shakespeare and his collaborators, distinguishing between contemporary co-writing and revision. It is a remarkable feat of scholarship which to some extent decentres Shakespeare through its foregrounding of collaboration, though it simultaneously expands his recognised corpus with plays like *Arden of Faversham* (*c.* 1588).[80] Certainly, it paints a far more accurate picture of the actual processes of early modern play-making than editions of the Complete

[79] For a discussion of Lyly's habit of denying generic labels in his prologues, and thwarting comic resolution in his endings, see Kesson, "Was Comedy a Genre?", pp. 215-221.
[80] Taylor and Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", pp. 487-490.

Works which present all thirty-seven plays as the product of a solitary genius. At the same time, however, its obsession with determining authorship at the level of the scene privileges the writer as the locus of creation in a way that feels decidedly pre-Barthesian. Without ever quite stating as much, the *New Oxford Shakespeare* argues that authorship really matters.[81]

So many anonymous plays are dated to my period of interest that authorship was almost inevitably deprioritised in my research from the outset; to organise my chapters by playwright would lead either to the omission of large quantities of material, or to its inclusion in a random, catch-all "anonymous" chapter. It is not just necessity, however, that has led me to downplay the role of the dramatist in my thesis. Early modern drama, as it survives in print today, was generated collaboratively by playing companies and theatre managers, by printers, publishers, readers and audiences, as well by playwrights. Book history scholarship has been attentive to this; a work such as Marta Straznicky's edited collection *Shakespeare's Stationers* (2013) highlights the influence of printers and publishers in the construction of early modern drama as literature. Bart van Es's *Shakespeare in Company* (2013) is another important contribution to the field that considers collaboration beyond the traditional model of authors working with authors, exploring the influence of company dynamics and individual actors on Shakespeare's plays.

My research has highlighted numerous specific examples demonstrating that playwrights alone were not responsible for developments in the perception and prominence of dramatic tragedy in 1580s and 1590s England. The publisher Richard Jones, notorious for claiming to have cut some "fond and frivolous jestures" from his edition of both parts of *Tamburlaine*, frequently altered the generic designations printed on the title pages of plays (at least as far as a comparison with those entered in the Stationers' Register would indicate).[82] It was presumably

[81] This is particularly true when compared with the companion text for the 1987 *Oxford Shakespeare*, which was entitled *A Textual Companion*. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, William Montgomery, *The Oxford Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: OUP, 1987).

[82] For example, the "tragecall comodye of Damonde and Pethyas" was entered by Jones in the Stationers' Register in 1567, but when Jones printed the play in 1571, he titled it *The Excellent Comedie of the Two Most Faithfullest Freends, Damon and Pithias*. Jones also registered "a Tragedy of Apius and Virgine" in 1567, printing that play as *A New*

Jones who changed the *Tamburlaine* plays' label, printing them as two "tragicall", instead of two "commicall" discourses.[83] His editorial interventions not only made a statement about what a tragic play should look like, but also shaped the only versions of the two *Tamburlaine* plays available to us today. *Tamburlaine*'s relationship to tragedy as a genre is the product not only of Marlowe's authorship, but also of a printer's textual curation.

It is clear from the surviving accounts of the playhouse financier Philip Henslowe that he, too, had an interest in – and potentially even some influence over – dramatic genre. The records of his dealings with playwrights indicate that it was common for Henslowe to lend money for a play knowing only that it was a "tragedie". He lends money, for instance, to be paid to George Chapman for "ij ectes of A tragedie of bengemens plotte", and twice leaves space to fill in the full name of a "tragedie" that he has been promised by Henry Chettle; Henslowe never returns to complete this title, and was apparently lending money on the basis of a genre label only.[84] The extent of Henslowe's artistic interest in the plays he funded has been much debated, but it makes sense that he would have wanted to commission only those plays that would prove commercially viable.[85] On at least four occasions recorded in the *Diary*, a play's status as

Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia in 1575. While we can only speculate as to the particular reasons for these and other similar changes, Jones's literary-critical interest in and shaping of the texts he printed has been recognised by multiple critics. Laurie Maguire writes that "Jones was something of a literary critic, judging by the contents of the prefatory epistles to…works he published". Kirk Melnikoff goes further, suggesting that Jones engaged in "intrepid editorial practices" and consistently "underscor[ed] his own critical agency as publisher"; specifically, Melnikoff argues that Jones shaped his edition of the *Tamburlaine* plays in line with his "interest and involvement in the market for chivalric literature in the 1580s and 1590s". Richard Jones, "To the Gentlemen Readers", in *Tamburlaine the Great*, sig. A2r; Arber, *Transcript of the Register of the Company of Stationers*, vol. 1, p. 354, p. 357; Laurie Maguire, "Marlovian Texts and Authorship", in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe,* ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), pp. 41-54, p. 43; Kirk Melnikoff, "Jones's Pen and Marlowe's Socks: Richard Jones, Print Culture, and the Beginnings of English Dramatic Literature", *Studies in Philology*, vol. 102, no. 2 (Spring 2005), pp. 184-209, p. 193, p. 194, p. 188.

[83] As Maguire writes, "Richard Jones's Stationers' Register entry registers the play as 'Two comical discourses of Tamburlaine'. The printed title page, however, advertises 'two Tragical discourses'. The metamorphosis of comedy into tragedy is explained by Jones in his epistle to the reader, which prefaces the printed edition…Jones claims to have turned aesthetic judgement into editorial action". Maguire, "Marlovian Texts and Authorship", p. 42.

[84] Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 100, p. 214, p. 216.

[85] Henslowe was derided as "ignorant" and "illiterate" by nineteenth-century critics, though subsequent scholarship has been more measured; W. W. Greg writes, for instance, that "[o]f Henslowe's knowledge of ignorance of stagecraft we have absolutely no means of judging", and Neil Carson observes that, while there is little in Henslowe's account books or early biography that explicitly "suggest[s] a literary bent", the transactions recorded in the *Diary* show him dealing fairly, patiently and respectfully with the players and dramatists with whom he worked. J. Payne Collier, *The Diary of Philip Henslowe from 1591 to 1609* (London: Printed for the Shakespeare Society, 1845), p.

"tragedie" appears to have been enough to persuade Henslowe to invest in it.[86] It is feasible, then, that a theatrical businessman such as Henslowe could have exerted some sway over the generic repertory of a company; if he considered tragedies to be commercially successful at a particular point in time, he may have been particularly keen to fund more of them. At the very least, Henslowe collaborated in the making of early modern tragedy insofar as he helped to fund it. Playwrights alone did not make plays.

These brief, incipient case studies highlight some of the ways in which individuals other than dramatists had a stake in developing forms of stage tragedy in the early modern period. This is not to say that genre was never considered a product of authorship. In his *Palladis Tamia* or *Wits Treasury* (1598), Francis Meres groups English and classical writers by genre, listing, for instance, "our best for Tragedie" and "the best for Comedy amongst us": the former list includes Marlowe, George Peele, Thomas Watson, Kyd, and Shakespeare; the latter mentions Lyly, George Gascoigne, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, and Shakespeare once again.[87] For Meres, genre is the province of the author: authors specialise in genres, and it is their contributions alone that generate the "best" comedy and tragedy of the day. Our understanding of the operations of the early modern playhouses, however, tells us that this was not the case. In taking a more holistic approach to my study of early dramatic tragedy in England, I do not seek to elide the author altogether. Rather, I aim to consider authorship alongside factors such as playing company, venue, date, publication, and the condition of the extant playtext, as one of many influences over dramatic forms of tragedy in the period.

While I do not organise my material by author, there is one arguably glaring authorial omission: beyond a few references, I do not discuss the plays of Christopher Marlowe. Or, to

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xv; F. G. Fleay, *A Chronicle History of the London Stage* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1890), p. 117; W. W. Greg, ed., *Henslowe's Diary*, vol. 2 (London: A. H. Bullen, 1908), p. 112n; Neil Carson, *A Companion to Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), p. 14, pp. 5-7.

[86] In addition to the examples listed above, Henslowe lent money to John Day for his "etalyan tragedie of […]", never returning to fill in the blank, and also lent money to George Chapman for a play only identified as "A tragedie". Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 129, p. 103.

[87] Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury, being the Second part of Wits Commonwealth* (London, 1598), sig. Oo3r-Oo3v.

put it more accurately, I do not discuss *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus* (*c.* 1588) and *The Jew of Malta* (*c.* 1589) as the only "fully developed" tragedies to precede Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (*c.* 1601).[88] Studies of pre-Shakespearean drama, and especially pre-Shakespearean tragedy, are typically dominated by Marlowe. Marlowe is traditionally considered to have set the standard which only Shakespeare would surpass. The elevation of Marlowe – almost as much as that of Shakespeare – from the sphere of his playwriting contemporaries has distorted perceptions of both the dramatist and the field. A narrative of 1580s and 1590s tragedy starring only Marlowe's most famous plays will conclude that early English dramatic tragedies were plays about the falls of egregious men. It may downplay Marlowe's humour and variety, or else blame these aberrations on his revisers, in order to preserve a proper sense of Marlovian tragic form.[89] If we consider Marlowe in the melee of the late-sixteenth-century playhouses, we see that his extensive use of comedy and structural experimentation were features common to the tragedy of the period.[90] We also see that there were far more women, lovers, and domestic settings, far more plays without a clear protagonist, in tragedies beyond the standard Marlovian corpus. The *Tamburlaine* plays and *Doctor Faustus*, in particular, are vastly overrepresented in scholarship on early English dramatic tragedy and, as such, I have chosen not to discuss them in my thesis. Neither do I foreground Marlowe as a playwright, or Marlovian tragedy as a distinctive incarnation of the genre. My discussion in chapter one centres on the plays now commonly referred to as *Henry VI Parts 2* (1590) and *3* (1590), which means that I do consider some Marlovian drama during the course of my thesis; these plays have been recently attributed, in part, to Christopher Marlowe.[91] I seek neither to

[88] Leech, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet for the Stage*, p. 67.
[89] There are instances of critics seeking to attribute comic or slapstick material in Marlowe's plays to collaborators on very little evidence. David Bevington, for instance, hypothesises that the "frivolous jestures" cut from *Tamburlaine* by Richard Jones were "[c]onceivably…the work of a collaborator rather than of Marlowe", and that "Marlowe…might well have encouraged Richard Jones's plan to excise the coarse and 'popular' comic routines of some other dramatist". However, Clifford Leech points out that there is "grotesque comedy" in almost all of Marlowe's plays, and that comedy, in itself, is not evidence of collaboration. David Bevington, *From* Mankind *to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 200-201; Leech, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet for the Stage*, pp. 16-17.
[90] That the first part of *Tamburlaine* does not end with its protagonist's death is certainly experimental, for instance, if we consider the play to be a tragedy.
[91] Taylor and Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", pp. 493-499.

exclude nor to emphasise Marlowe, then. My aim is to provide a broader and more varied perspective on early forms of English dramatic tragedy than has been made available by author-focused studies previously.

Patchwork Plays: Developments in Theatre History

Having identified the various methods of dividing up my thesis that would not be fit for purpose, the challenge was determining a structure and an approach that would support my proposed enquiry into tragedy as an early playhouse phenomenon. The solution presented itself in the form of a recent development in early modern theatre history. Though my thesis is about dramatic tragedy, it does not draw its primary inspiration from the tradition of important, historically grounded, ideological studies of the genre in the period – works like Dollimore's *Radical Tragedy*, which reads late Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy as a subversive interrogation of prevailing power structures and systems of belief, or Michael Neill's *Issues of Death* (1997), which considers dramatic tragedy as an instrument through which early moderns imagined and negotiated their relationship to mortality. Neither does my project belong to the wave of twenty-first century scholarship that has seen increased attention paid to subgenres of early modern dramatic tragedy, and particularly, thanks to feminist and materialist criticism, to domestic tragedy. Works such as Richardson's *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy* and, more recently, Emma Whipday's *Shakespeare's Domestic Tragedies* (2019) have distinguished domestic tragedy as innovative and influential, demonstrating its much-overlooked significance as a dramatic tragic kind. Revenge tragedy has been another subgenre of focus thanks to works such as John Kerrigan's *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (1997) and, more recently, George Oppitz-Trotman's *The Origins of English Revenge Tragedy* (2019). Daniel Cadman, Andrew Duxfield and Lisa Hopkins's 2019 collection *The Genres of Renaissance Tragedy*, meanwhile, breaks down tragedy into a range of kinds, determined variously by content, tone, and style of performance: there are chapters on "biblical" and "roman" tragedy, as well as on "satiric", "grotesque", "closet" and

"Caroline" forms. Where these subgenre studies have informed my research is in their foregrounding of the "astonishing diversity" of plays advertised as tragedies in the period: "early modern dramatists saw tragedy not as a fixed template to be followed", write Cadman, Duxfield and Hopkins, "but as a framework in which to undertake bold and dynamic experiments".[92] My thesis, likewise, seeks to demonstrate the fluidity of dramatic tragedy in the early years of the playhouses, to highlight the absence of fixed rules about the relationship between "tragedy" and "play". In order to do this, I draw on one of theatre history's most important contributions to our understanding of early modern drama in the twenty-first century: the concept of the "play-patch".

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that early modern plays were textual patchworks. In their seminal study of the actor's written "part", *Shakespeare in Parts* (2007), Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern take as their central premise the notion that an early modern play in performance was "an accumulation, or a meeting, of numerous separate parts", proposing that we should consider plays of the period not as "finished books", but rather as "loose-leaf sheets, commissioned or swapped or shuffled with facile aplomb".[93] Stern develops this thesis in her 2009 monograph *Documents of Performance*, in which she demonstrates the extent to which early modern plays "were from the start written patchily". She notes that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dramatists were sometimes referred to as "play-patchers" because of the "common perception that a play was pieced together out of a collection of odds and ends", and she takes up this idea of the "play patch" in order to conceptualise both the process by which a play was created and its material, textual existence.[94] Early modern plays were written in pieces. A detailed "plot" or scene-by-scene summary allowed different acts to be parcelled out to different playwrights, while prologues and epilogues were often commissioned separately. Playtexts'

[92] Daniel Cadman, Andrew Duxfield and Lisa Hopkins, "Introduction", in *The Genres of Renaissance Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 1-10, p. 1.
[93] Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 6-7.
[94] Stern, *Documents of Performance,* pp. 1-3.

material forms were inherently fragmentary. Even when the main dialogue was consolidated in a playhouse prompt copy, texts such as songs, letters, prologues and epilogues often remained on separate sheets of paper; stage directions concerning entrances, exits, stage furniture, sound effects and so on may only ever have existed on the backstage plot, the chart which governed the play in performance; and the completed script was always "resolved on receipt into a collection of fragments", namely, the actors individual parts.[95]

We have already seen instances of this textual patchworking in operation in the tragedies of the 1560s and 1570s. The five acts of *Gorboduc* were divided up between its two playwrights, Sackville and Norton, with the first three attributed in the printed text to Norton, and the last two to Sackville.[96] The 1570s children's company tragedies of *Gismond* and *Panthea*, meanwhile, survive only as song fragments, which were, presumably, either written and kept separately from the rest of the play, or extracted from the playtext for preservation after performance.[97] There is extensive evidence of these kinds of play-patching in my decades of focus, too, and I touch upon some of this in the course of my thesis. But my interest is not, primarily, in the textual patches that made up plays. I am interested, rather, in the notion that the material patchwork of the early modern play was mirrored or manifested at the creative level: that the plays of the early commercial theatres were imaginative and generic patchworks as well as textual ones.

The idea of early modern plays as creative patchworks has some precedent in criticism. Over a decade before Stern's theorisation of textual play-patches, Linda Woodbridge alighted upon the "patchwork" as one of several productive metaphors for the way in which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dramatists approached their narrative sources. Woodbridge writes that "[t]he Renaissance broke borrowed tales into tiny units before reaggregating them", suggesting that the habit of switching rapidly between plots – for instance, in a play such as *The Tempest* (*c.*

[95] Stern takes up a different kind of "patch" in each of her chapters: chapter one examines "plot-scenarios", for instance, chapter four looks at "prologues, epilogues [and] interim entertainments", and chapter five focuses on "songs and masques". Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 3, pp. 8-35, pp. 81-119, pp. 120-173.
[96] Norton and Sackville, *The Tragedie of Gorboduc*, t.p.
[97] Wiggins, "*Tragedy of Gismond* (622)"; Wiggins, "*Tragedy of Panthea* (586)".

1611) – is analogous to "a patchwork quilt".[98] In Stern and Palfrey's *Shakespeare in Parts*, meanwhile, the material fragment is not so much a metaphor, as a catalyst for creativity. Their study sets out to explore the possibility that "there was some kind of virtue, some serendipitous potential" in the writing out of each player's speeches and cues onto separate scrolls of paper. They suggest that the "primitive technology" of the part was somehow imaginatively generative, creatively as well as practically essential to the process of putting on a play.[99] My thesis proposes, similarly, that the "play-patch" was a unit of invention in early modern drama, not simply a material necessity or a textual scrap. Early modern plays were, I contend, conceived, constructed and enjoyed in patches – prologues, dumb shows, choruses, clown scenes, monologues, spectacular set-pieces – and my thesis sets out to approach them in this way.

This notion of the early modern play as a conceptual amalgamation of pieces or episodes is not a twentieth- or twenty-first-century one. Early modern commentators frequently wrote about the drama of the period as a jumble, a confused medley, often in specifically generic terms. I have mentioned already Sidney's reference to "mongrell tragicomedy", which employs a largely derogatory term for animals of mixed breeding to characterise contemporary plays as generically muddled, composed of parts that do not belong together.[100] In the prologue to his drama *Midas* (1590), John Lyly uses a culinary metaphor to convey the same idea, apologising that the different genres which were once "served in several dishes for a feaste" are now "minced in a charger for a Gallimaufrey" – a kind of stew – in his play, to cater to the diverse tastes of modern dramatic audiences.[101] Janette Dillon uses a similar conceit in her discussion of genre in the period, though her stance on the topic is, unsurprisingly, more neutral. In the sixteenth century, and even "until well into the seventeenth", Dillon writes, "the notion that different

[98] Linda Woodbridge, "Patchwork: Piecing the Early Modern Mind in England's First Century of Print Culture", *ELR*, vol. 23, no. 1 (1993), pp. 4-45, p. 19.
[99] Palfrey and Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts*, p. 2.
[100] Sidney, *Defence of Poesie*, sig. I1v. See also "mongrel (*n.* and *adj.*)", *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/121222?rskey=TaG3dE&result=1&isAdvanced=false, accessed 10 Sep. 2021.
[101] John Lyly, *Midas* (London, 1592), sig. A2v.

kinds of engagement belonged in different kinds of plays was alien…. Tragedy and comedy were ingredients, not definitions, and the experience of a play was one of plenitude rather than unity".[102] Like my notion of the imaginative patchwork, these metaphors for generic mixing all conceive of early modern plays as created out of combinations of different kinds of material. But the mixing they imply is a blurring or blending of parts which, once combined together, cannot be easily distinguished or disentangled from the resulting whole. In a patchwork, by contrast, the seams remain – or, at least, can remain – visible. Patches are distinctive, isolatable, movable; a patch can be added or taken away.

In this sense, the conception of the early modern play which underlies my thesis has more in common with Louise George Clubb's notion of the "theatergram". In her monograph *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (1989), Clubb coined the term "theatergram" to refer to the different "units, figures, relationships, actions, *topoi*, and framing patterns" that make up plays. Clubb's "theatergram" is, crucially, a vehicle for both imitation and change.[103] A theatergram can be copied from play to play, while the putting together of theatergrams in different combinations is what leads to the development of new dramatic kinds. A relatively straightforward example of the phenomenon given by Clubb is the character-based theatergram of the "balia", the confidante and helper of the young female lover, who originated with the plots of Italian New Comedy but was later imitated in plays of other genres – for instance, in the figure of the Nurse in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (*c.* 1595).[104] The theatergram is, in many ways, a theoretical precedent for and analogue to my notion of the "play-patch" as an imaginative unit of play-making. Like Clubb, I am arguing that early modern plays were constructed out of and around combinations of creative building blocks. By referring to these building blocks as "patches", however, I aim to keep in mind the material realities of early modern popular theatre, the physical processes of writing and putting on a play. Plays were both textual and imaginative

[102] Dillon, *Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre*, p. 157.
[103] Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare Time* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 6.
[104] Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time*, p. 11.

patchworks, I am arguing, and the two are interlinked. Clubb's theatergrams, moreover, appear to exist only through the processes of transmission; if a "unit" or "figure" is not copied from play to play enough times for it to carry particular generic connotations, then it does not function as a theatergram. A play-patch, by contrast, exists in a single instantiation. A lengthy narrative monologue detached from the surrounding dramatic action – such as that of Thomas Stukeley in Peele's *Battle of Alcazar* (*c.* 1588), which I discuss in chapter two – constitutes a "patch" within a play regardless of whether it imitates or is imitated.[105] The different metaphors and theories devised over the centuries to characterise the early modern play all have in common a sense that popular plays from this period were something other than coherent wholes. Playwrights of the era and critics today concur that plays were medleys and mixtures of different, sometimes disparate pieces: that they were deliberately, even ostentatiously so. In my thesis, I conceive of this mixture or medley as a patchwork in order to relate the experience of watching or reading an early modern play more closely to the circumstances of its composition. Early modern plays were created in patches, and so it is in patches that tragedy emerged onto the popular English stage.

Tragedy in Patches: Chapter Outlines

My thesis is divided into four chapters, each of which takes up the concept of play-patching in a different way in order to examine tragedy's emergence as a form of popular drama in England from previously unexamined perspectives.

In chapter one, I explore the impact of popular non-dramatic tragedy on the structure and staging of early tragic plays. In particular, I consider the theatrical influence of one of the most commercially successful tragic works of the sixteenth century, *A Mirror for Magistrates*. Despite its unrivalled popularity in the period, the *Mirror* has been mostly overlooked by early

[105] George Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar Fought in Barbarie, Betweene Sebastian King of Portugall, and Abdelmelec King of Marocco. With the Death of Captaine Stukeley* (London, 1594), sig. F3v-sig. F3r.

modern scholarship as a source of inspiration for late-sixteenth-century theatre. This chapter seeks to foreground the *Mirror*'s dramatic significance, arguing that its *de casibus* monologues blur the distinction between non-drama and performance, and proposing that these quasi-dramatic poems served as a model for early forms of playhouse tragedy. My discussion focuses on the *Mirror* as a largely unacknowledged source for two plays in which its influence is particularly marked: *Henry VI Parts Two* and *Three*, also known as the *Contention* plays. Like the *Mirror*, the *Contention* plays are tragic anthologies. They comprise a series of tragedies staged one after another: a patchwork, I suggest, of *de casibus* falls. But the *Mirror*'s impact on the *Contention* is not simply structural. Crucially, I argue that these plays showcase the *Mirror*'s tragic dramaturgy, echoing its slow-motion, close-up approach to gruesome scenes of death. The *Mirror* narrator is discussed as a kind of "theatergram", a unit of performance replicated multiple times across the *Contention* plays. In this respect, the chapter contributes to a growing body of early modern drama scholarship that considers non-dramatic texts as sources not only for content, but also for staging and storytelling techniques.

Whereas the plays I discuss in chapter one are made up of multiple tragedies, the second chapter of my thesis explores the idea that a tragedy was sometimes a single, isolatable, and detachable "patch" within a larger play. It begins by examining textual patches, of the kind identified by Stern, which also constitute self-contained tragedies: *The Spanish Tragedy*'s inset play, "Solimon and Perseda", and the titular tragedies of Robert Yarington's composite drama, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (*c.* 1595). I trace the journeys of these textual tragic patches, showing how each enjoyed a theatrical life independent of the play in which it features. In the second half of the chapter, I consider tragic patches without a material correlative: self-professed tragedies within plays which appear detached and detachable from the surrounding action, but were not, as far as we know, written separately or otherwise textually distinct. This discussion centres on the death scene of Thomas Stukeley in George Peele's *Battle of Alcazar*; I argue that Stukeley is effectively performing his own one-man inset tragedy, and I consider his theatrical and textual

afterlives as equivalent to those of the material play-patches I examine in the first part of the chapter. The chapter concludes by reviewing records indicating that individual actors were sometimes hired to deliver star turns as characters at private events. Such a practice positions the character as a play-patch, extracted and circulated. Early modern scholarship has long since recognised that clowns and other comic entertainments functioned independently in this way, often existing at a remove from the plays in which they featured and flourishing beyond them; the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that tragedies were candidates for the same kind of showcase.

My third chapter considers another form of tragic showcase: the performed paratext, the prologue, induction, or chorus. Although such paratexts would have opened a play in performance, they were, as Stern demonstrates, detachable, often occasional, and usually written after a play itself, and it is for this reason that I delay my discussion of these apparent beginnings until chapter three. I suggest that the preponderance of these framing texts in tragic plays, specifically, in the late sixteenth century was a product of the genre's novelty and popularity in the period. I begin with a survey of late-sixteenth-century tragic paratexts, arguing that the elaborate choruses and inductions of plays like *Soliman and Perseda* (*c.* 1588) and *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (*c.* 1589) are generically self-reflexive, concerned more with advertising and announcing tragedy than with introducing the content of a particular play. Part of the purpose of these paratexts, I contend, is to situate plays of the 1580s and 1590s in a longer tradition of dramatic tragedy; they function as refracted markers of a classical heritage, and this, too, contributes to their framing and advertising of tragedy as a genre. Following this opening survey of tragic choruses, prologues, and inductions from the late sixteenth century, the chapter focuses in turn on two details of paratextual generic framing specific to the period: choric personifications of tragedy; and the black curtains frequently referenced as symbols of the genre in prologues and inductions. Both framing devices – personifications of tragedy and black tragic stage hangings – appear to convey a certain fixity or clarity of genre, but my discussion

complicates this assumption, demonstrating that there were competing personifications of the genre in the period, and that the relationship between black curtains and tragedy was less than categorical. In the final section of the chapter, I also identify two possible references to the custom of hanging black curtains in the playhouses that have not been documented in major critical studies of the practice.

In my final chapter, I continue to explore the generic fluidity of late-sixteenth-century popular drama, while also returning to the question of tragedy's transition from page to stage with which I opened in chapter one. Chapter four focuses on the stage clown, a play-patch which substantially pre-dates dramatic tragedy in England. The tragic clown was a contentious figure for literary commentators, and the chapter begins by reviewing sixteenth-century invectives against the presence of the clown in tragedy. Clowns were notoriously popular with audiences, however, and theatre companies had their resident comic actors; when tragedy emerged onto the popular stage, the clown was guaranteed to feature. This chapter is interested in how plays of the period negotiate the resulting generic clash. Having considered the publisher Richard Jones's alleged omission of the clown from *Tamburlaine*, I examine the surviving clown parts in three so-called "Sons of *Tamburlaine*" plays: *The Wounds of Civil War* (*c.* 1588), *Selimus*, and *Locrine* (*c.* 1591).[106] The substantial differences between the scripted clowns in each of these playtexts indicate that there was no fixed rule or model for tragic clowning in the period. Company style and personnel certainly shaped clowning to an extent, but even taking these factors into account, it is clear that the three plays represent varying responses to the problem of the tragic clown. Whether they incorporate the clown into their narratives, or emphasise his absurd incongruity, these plays were produced, I contend, by a theatrical scene that was highly alert to the comments of clowning's detractors. In this closing chapter, then, I propose that the playhouses of the 1580s and 1590s were actively engaged in the genre theory of the day, and that

[106] Berek, "*Tamburlaine*'s Weak Sons", p. 58.

the tragic clowns I discuss should be understood as metatheatrical interventions in a contemporary debate about how tragedy worked on the popular stage.

CHAPTER ONE

"Full of piteous tragedyes":
The *Contention* Plays, *A Mirror for Magistrates*, and the Dramaturgy of Tragedy

Of the thirty-two occurrences of the word "tragedy" and its cognates in Shakespeare's poems and plays, all but seven feature in texts thought to have been written before 1600; twenty-one can be dated to 1596 or earlier; and twelve – that is, over one third of the total number – are concentrated in the plays now commonly grouped as the "First Tetralogy".[107] What kinds of conclusions might we hope to draw from such a survey? Critics have tended to dismiss uses of the word "tragedy" in Shakespeare's plays and poems as simplistic and colloquial, unrelated to his later tragic practice and thus of limited scholarly interest. Cataloguing occurrences of the term, A. P. Rossiter identifies only one which bears some "hint of the wider, more philosophical implications" he considers necessary to any conception of Shakespearean tragedy proper; the rest, he finds, are mainly synonyms for "calamity" or "violence", or else references to tragic plays-within-plays, as in *Hamlet* (*c.* 1601) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*c.* 1596). Based on this, Rossiter hypothesises that "by *c.* 1599 Shakespeare was aware that he was writing something different from what had *been* 'tragedy' at the time when he most used the word", and that "[a]ccordingly, he avoided the word in his Tragedies".[108] Ronald Knowles comments, similarly, that "[a]s Shakespeare's tragic sense grew more complex, the less he used the word".[109]

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[107] By "tragedy' and its cognates", I refer to uses of the words "tragedy", "tragic", "tragical" and "tragedian", as well as compound formations like "tragical-historical" and "tragical-comical-historical-pastoral". The "First Tetralogy" refers to *Henry VI Parts 1* (*c.* 1592), *2* (*c.* 1590) and *3* (*c.* 1590), and *Richard III* (*c.* 1592).

[108] The one use of "tragedy" within Shakespearean drama which Rossiter considers to be approaching a more "philosophical" conception of the term takes the form of a brief interrogation of the problem of evil in a theistic universe; in *Titus Andronicus* (*c.* 1589), Marcus Andronicus asks, of the woods in which Lavinia was raped, "O, why should nature build so foul a den,| Unless the gods delight in tragedies?" (IV.i.58-59). All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The New Oxford Shakespeare* modern critical editions, and given as act, scene, and line numbers in the text, unless otherwise indicated. A. P. Rossiter, "Shakespearian Tragedy", in *Angels with Horns and Other Shakespeare Lectures* (London: Longmans, 1961), pp. 253-73, esp. pp. 253-54; *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2475/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199591152.book.1/actrade-9780199591152-book-1.

[109] Ronald Knowles, *King Henry VI Part II* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1999), p. 267, III.ii.194n.

Shakespeare's uses of "tragedy" and its cognates are deemed unsophisticated and early – unsophisticated, in part, *because* early – and are thus considered to have little to contribute to our understanding of early modern dramatic tragedy.

I propose that there is more to be gleaned from this early cluster of "tragedies", "tragicals" and "tragics" in Shakespeare's writing than either Knowles or Rossiter allows; indeed, the very fact of its earliness may, in itself, be telling. In the preface to his *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy from Aristotle to the Middle Ages* (1993), Henry Ansgar Kelly distinguishes between two broad approaches to the literary study of tragedy. One, he suggests, is concerned with comprehending "'the tragic spirit'" in works of literature as an essential, ahistorical truth, a concept or an experience which transcends writing though sometimes finds expression in it. The other approach, meanwhile, involves seeking to understand "what authors of the past meant by the word [tragedy] as a literary or dramatic term"; in this model, favoured by Kelly, the critic is interested in how past writers have defined the word, and in the works – their own and others' – to which they have attached it.[110] While a survey of Shakespeare's uses of "tragedy" may have little to offer the first of these critical pursuits, it in fact tells us much about what authors of the past could mean by it "as a literary or dramatic term". In at least half of the examples from the Shakespearean corpus, "tragedy" and its cognates are, explicitly, "literary" or "dramatic" terms, by which I mean that they refer to texts or performances, rather than, more nebulously, to sad or calamitous events. Those occurrences in *Hamlet* (*c.* 1601) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*c.* 1596) that Rossiter dismisses as "merely descriptive" or "in jest" concern tragic plays-within-plays. Northumberland's description of Morton's "brow, like to a title-leaf,| Foretell[ing] the nature of a tragic volume" in the opening scene of *Henry IV Part 2* (*c.* 1598, I.i.60-61), Titus's identification of "the tragic tale of Philomel" (*Titus Andronicus*, IV.i.47), and Henry VI's anguish at his own "tragic history" (*Henry VI Part 3*, V.vi.28) all associate the "tragic" with the literary,

[110] Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy from Aristotle to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xiv.

the written or recited story. Sometimes, the notion of tragedy as dramatic performance is employed metaphorically, as in Lucrece's denunciation of night as a "black stage for tragedies" (*Lucrece*, *c.* 1594, line 766), or the Archbishop of Canterbury's mention of "Edward the Black Prince,| Who on the French ground played a tragedy" – that is, conquered France – in *Henry V* (1599, I.ii.105-106). Elsewhere, the metaphor becomes self-reflexive, a metatheatrical reference to the play being performed; this is particularly a feature of the plays of the first tetralogy, from Warwick's "Why stand we like soft-hearted women here|…And look upon, as if the tragedy| Were play'd in jest by counterfeiting actors?" in *Henry VI Part 3* (II.iii.25-28), to Buckingham's "Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian" in *Richard III* (III.v.5).

Both Rossiter and Kelly are, in different ways, deeply preoccupied with authorial intentionality in relation to the meaning of tragedy. Rossiter, as we have seen, is seeking to access a peculiarly Shakespearean philosophy and practice of the genre, and Kelly, too, radically and explicitly restricts his enquiry to authorial uses of the term: "[f[or the purposes of this study", he declares, "the name of tragedy is both a necessary and sufficient condition for tragedy. That is, every work considered by its author to be a tragedy is a tragedy; and only those works considered by their authors to be tragedies are tragedies".[111] Although I have begun by examining occurrences of the term in a conveniently circumscribed authorial corpus, however, I am not interested in these uses of "tragedy" as especially Shakespearean. Several of the plays in which the word features are, of course, now widely acknowledged as collaborations – but again, the question of whether a particular "tragical" belongs to Shakespeare, or Marlowe, or Peele seems to miss the point. What is striking about the uses of "tragedy" and its cognates detailed above is how far they are representative of the status of tragedy as a literary and dramatic phenomenon at a particular moment in time. Between them, they gesture to the currency of tragedy as a literary form and endeavour in the decade or so in question, serving as a kind of survey or overview of

[111] Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy*, p. xv.

the types of tragic writing that were recognised in the 1590s. They remind us that tragedy was not exclusively the remit of performance. Tragedies written in verse and prose were printed and read, as well as played on the stage; lurid "tale[s]" of violence, scandal and murder not unlike that of "Philomel", as well as the "histor[ies]" of ill-fated kings and nobles, were marketed as tragic to a reading public.[112] Indeed, Peter Berek finds in his survey of uses of the word "tragedy" on sixteenth-century title pages, as well as in half titles, running titles and contents pages, that the majority of texts marketed using the term and its cognates prior to 1590 were non-dramatic: "before 1590", he writes, "plays comprise only twenty-nine of the eighty-nine volumes that use the word in the ways I have described – about 33 per cent", compared to "about 60 per cent" after 1590.[113] This finding is consistent with the arguments of Helen Cooper and Mike Pincombe, that tragedy was predominantly a non-dramatic genre for much of the sixteenth century.[114] Considered in the context of this moment of transition – as tragedy shifted from being a mainly non-dramatic to a mainly dramatic literary mode – the clustering of uses of the word and its cognates in Shakespeare's plays prior to 1600 takes on new significance. The "tragedies", "tragics" and "tragicals" of his 1590s writings are early not so much in the development of an individual playwright's tragic practice, as in the introduction of a popular and

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[112] Examples of the former include George Turbeville's *Tragicall Tales translated by Turbevile in his time of troubles out of sundrie Italians, with the argyment and lenvoye to eche tale* (London, 1587), Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall History of Romeus and Juliet* (London, 1562), and William Painter's *The Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure, conteyning store of goodly Histories, Tragicall Matters and other Morall Argument, very requisite for delighte and profit* (London, 1567). Examples of the latter include John Lydgate's *A Treatise Excellent and Compe[n]dious, shewing and declaring, in maner of tragedye, the falls of sondry most notable princes and princesses with other nobles, through [th]e mutability and change of unstedfast fortune together with their most detestable [and] wicked vices* (London, 1554) and David Lindsay's *The Tragical Death of David Beato[n] Bishoppe of saincte Andrewes in Scotland* (London, 1548). For a full survey and discussion of the use of "tragedy" and its cognates on English title pages prior to 1600, see Peter Berek, "Tragedy and Title Pages: Nationalism, Protestantism, and Print", *Modern Philology*, Vol. 106, No. 1 (August 2008), pp. 1-24.

[113] There was, of course, a substantial increase in play-printing in general from the 1590s onwards, the relative significance of which has been much debated, but Berek's point that dramatic uses of "tragedy" came to outweigh non-dramatic uses of "tragedy" still holds. Peter Berek, "Tragedy and Title Pages", p. 2; Peter W. M. Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks", in *A New History Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 383-422; Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, "The Popularity of Playbooks Revisited", *SQ*, vol. 56, no. 1 (Spring, 2005), pp. 1-32; Peter W. M. Blayney, "The Alleged Popularity of Playbooks", *SQ*, vol. 56, no. 1 (Spring, 2005), pp. 33-50).

[114] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Inaugural Lecture Delivered 29 April 2005* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 25; Mike Pincombe, "English Renaissance Tragedy: Theories and Antecedents", in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, ed. Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 3-16, esp. pp 3-6.

established literary form into the playhouse. These are years in which tragedy does not inevitably belong in or to the theatres, in which its arrival on stage is innovative, exciting, worthy of announcement. Metadramatic deployments of the word, in particular, are in some ways analogous to the uses on dramatic title pages surveyed by Berek: tragedy is being advertised as a dramatic phenomenon in these moments, nowhere more overtly than in those references to tragic inset dramas in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Hamlet*, which foreground and showcase – even as they also satirise – tragedy as theatrical performance.

I will explore the metatheatrical framing and advertising of tragedy as new arrival on the English stage in greater depth in chapter three, where I discuss the preponderance of tragic prologues, choruses and inductions in the drama of late 1580s and 1590s. This chapter, however, takes as its starting point a different trend in the distribution of "tragedy" and related terms throughout Shakespeare's corpus: the concentration of uses in the plays of the first tetralogy. As noted above, these four plays between them contain over one third of the uses of the words "tragedy", "tragical", "tragedian" and "tragic" to feature in his poetry and drama. This may partly be attributed to their composition in the early 1590s. Even excluding these four plays, we have seen that Shakespearean uses of "tragedy" and related terms are predominantly clustered in this decade, with only seven of 32 occurrences appearing after 1600 (five of these are in *Hamlet*), and none at all after 1605. The multiple occurrences in the first tetralogy are thus to some extent in keeping with the broader chronological trend. Still, the concentration of uses in these four plays is disproportionate. The fact that the first tetralogy makes up less than one ninth of the Shakespearean dramatic corpus, and yet contains more than one third of its uses of "tragedy", seems to require further explanation. My contention, in this chapter, is that the high incidence of "tragedies" and "tragicals" in these plays is a product of their negotiation of and response to a preeminent, even paradigmatic tragic text of the second half of the sixteenth century: *A Mirror for Magistrates*.

A Mirror for Magistrates was a collection of tragic *de casibus* poems in the style of Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* (*c.* 1387-1400) or John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (*c.* 1431-39), published in various iterations and editions between 1559 and 1610. In their discussions of the predominance of non-dramatic tragedy before around 1590, both Cooper and Pincombe point to this work as not just important, but representative. Pincombe contends that the *Mirror* "probably defined 'tragedy' as a literary form for most English readers" in the first three decades of Elizabeth I's reign, and Cooper posits, similarly, that "[i]f in 1580 an Elizabethan had been asked what tragedies he knew, the answer would probably have been, *The Mirror for Magistrates*". By 1590, she adds, "he might well have named plays", though Pincombe contends that as late as 1587, "our Elizabethan would probably still have pointed to the *Mirror*", which was published in its longest edition in that year.[115] *A Mirror for Magistrates* appears to have been originally masterminded by the printer John Wayland, to be published alongside his 1554 edition of John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* as a continuation of that text's tragedies "Since the Tyme of King Richarde the Seconde".[116] Wayland commissioned printer's assistant and humanist William Baldwin to compile the new volume, and Baldwin in turn assembled a group of writers, who between them composed the tragic poems that formed the first edition of *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559). This edition presented the falls of kings and nobles from the reign of Richard II to the death of Edward IV, while an expanded version, published in 1563, covered the period up to the death of Richard III. In its earliest editions, then, the *Mirror* dealt with many of the episodes of English history that were later dramatised by Shakespeare, including in the plays of the first tetralogy. It is not the *Mirror*'s

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[115] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages*, p. 25; Mike Pincombe, "English Renaissance tragedy: theories and antecedents", p. 5.

[116] Harriet Archer and Andrew Hadfield, "Introduction", in '*A Mirror for Magistrates' in Context: Literature, History and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Harriet Archer and Andrew Hadfield (Cambridge: CUP, 2016), pp. 1-16, pp. 2-3; Elizabethan Evenden, "Wayland, John (*c.* 1508-1571), Printer and Scrivener", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-57739. The text subsequently printed as *A Mirror for Magistrates* was originally to be published under the title *Memorial of Suche Princes as Since the Tyme of King Richard the Second, have been Unfortunate in the Realme of England*, but this first edition was suppressed by the Lord Chancellor, Bishop Stephen Gardiner, during the reign of Mary I; it was eventually published by the printer Thomas Marshe in 1559, as *A Myrroure for Magistrates, Wherein may be seen by example of other, how grievous plages vices are punished: and howe frayle and unstable worldly prosperitie is found, even of those whom fortune seemeth most highly to favour*, ed. William Baldwin (London, 1559).

possible mediation of Shakespeare's understanding of English history that interests me, however, but rather its impact on the staging of tragedy. In the next section of this chapter, I will examine the texts of the *Mirror* in more detail, asking: if *A Mirror for Magistrates* represented the tragic paradigm in around 1580, what exactly did that paradigm look like? Having identified some of the key features of the *Mirror*'s version of tragedy, the chapter will then turn once again to the plays of the first tetralogy, and in particular to the *Contention* plays (also known as *Henry VI Parts 2* and *3*), considering them – with their frequent "tragics" and "tragedies" – as exercises in staging the paradigm.

A Mirror for Magistrates as Tragic Paradigm

A Mirror for Magistrates has an unusually complex publication history, and that complexity is in part a testament to the work's extraordinary popularity in the sixteenth century. Following its initial publication in 1559, and the expanded version of 1563, there was another edition published in 1571, as well as further altered and expanded versions in 1574, 1575 and 1578, which featured the updated title *The Last Part of the Mirror for Magistrates*.[117] Yet another edition appeared in 1587 – the largest yet, "with the addition of divers Tragedies enlarged".[118] There were also a number of spin-offs which sought to capitalise on the *Mirror*'s success, including John Higgins's 1574 *First Part of the Mirror for Magistrates* and Thomas Blenerhasset's 1578 *Second Part of the Mirror for Magistrates*, both of which covered periods of Britain's ancient past.[119] A final edition by Richard Niccols appeared in 1610, bringing together over half a century's worth of tragedies in a kind of comprehensive anthology.[120] As this brief sketch of its publication history

[117] Archer and Hadfield, "Introduction", p. 3.
[118] *The Mirour for Magistrates, wherein may bee seene, by examples passed in this Realme, with how greevous plagues vices are punished in great Princes and Magistrates, and how frail and unstable worldly prosperity is found, where Fortune seemeth most highly to favour* (London: Printed by Henry Marshe, 1587), t.p.
[119] John Higgins's edition used Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittaniae* (*c.* 1136) as well as the chronicles of Richard Grafton and John Stow to cover the period from Brutus's foundation of Britain, while Thomas Blenerhasset's contained twelve tragedies from the time of Caesar's conquest of Britain to the Norman Conquest. See Archer and Hadfield, "Introduction", p. 3.
[120] Archer and Hadland, "Introduction", p. 4.

begins to suggest, the *Mirror* can be thought of as a series of textual patchworks in some ways analogous to the early modern playtext as described by Tiffany Stern, its different parts composed by different authors, put together in different configurations over time.[121] In its earliest iteration as a chronological sequence of nineteen poems by nine writers stitched together in a fictional frame, the 1559 *Mirror* already has holes.[122] Although they appear in the contents page, the tragedies of the "Good duke Humfrey" and "Elianor Cobham" are missing from the text itself; it seems they were suppressed after the contents page had been printed, and an alternative section of the framing text inserted to excuse their absence.[123] Neither are they reinstated in the 1563 edition, which supplements the original *Mirror* with eight further tragedies and Sackville's famous Induction. These new poems are printed at the end of the complete 1559 text, embedded in an extended version of the frame. While most of them belong to a later period of history (the reign of Richard III), the "Tragedie of Edmund, duke of Somerset" from the "tyme of Henrye the Sixte" appears as the penultimate poem, although the frame acknowledges that it should properly "be placed in the fyrst parte".[124] It was duly moved to its correct position in the sequence by Thomas Marshe in his 1571 edition, while the tragedies of Duke Humphrey and Eleanor were eventually added, in their proper chronological place, in 1578.[125] The vast edition of 1587 yoked the tragedies of ancient Britain composed by Higgins and Blenerhasset to the fourteenth-century tragedies of the original *Mirror* with no attempt at seamlessness, and for the final edition of 1610 Niccols omitted the framing texts, creating a more straightforward

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[121] See Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Camrbridge: CUP, 2009).
[122] See Paul Budra, "A miserable time full of piteous tragedyes", in A Mirror for Magistrates *in Context*, ed. Archer and Hadfield, pp. 35-52, p. 46.
[123] See *A Myrroure for* Magistrates (1559), sig. G3v; Paul Budra, A Mirror for Magistrates *and the* De Casibus *Tradition* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto; London, 2000), p. 11.
[124] *A Myrrour for Magistrates. Wherein maye be seen by example of other, with howe grevous plages vices are punished: and howe frayle and unstable worldly prosperity is found, even of those whom Fortune seemeth most highly to favour* (London, 1563), sig. Aa1r-Aa7v.
[125] See *A Myrrour for Magistrates. Wherein may be seene by examples passed in this realme, with how greveous plagues, vyces are punished in great princes and magistrates, and how frayle and unstable worldly prosperity is founde, where Fortune seemeth moste highly to favour* (London, 1571), sig. G6r-H4r; *The Last Part of the Mirour for Magistrates, wherein may be seene by examples passed in this Realme, with how grievous plagues, vyces are punished in great Princes & Magistrates, and how frayle and unstable worldly prosperity is founde, where Fortune seemeth most highly to favour* (London, 1578), sig. G1v-H8r.

miscellany of tragic poems.[126] I outline these features of the *Mirror*'s textual history here not in an attempt to imply any kind of direct causal link between the patchiness of the *Mirror* and the patchiness of plays, but rather because it is a parallel which exists because of the structure and composition of the original *Mirror*. The fact that the *Mirror* comprises a series of self-contained tragedies allows for the swapping, omission, expansion and addition that has resulted in these textual patchworks. This structure, I will argue later, we do see manifested in the *Contention* plays, which are similarly organised around self-contained and isolatable set-pieces.

The immense popularity implied by the *Mirror*'s publication history is further attested by numerous references to the work by writers of the period. Robert Allott attributes approximately three thousand words of poetry to the *Mirror* – abbreviated to "M. of Magist." or "M. of M." – in his anthology *Englands Parnassus* (1600), while Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) lists "maister *Edward Ferris*, the Authour of the *Mirrour for Magistrates*" as among "our best for Tragedie".[127] Modern critical assertions that the *Mirror* was "something of a hit from the moment of its appearance", or that it was "one of the most popular books of the first thirty years of the reign of Elizabeth" do not overstate the work's significance; *A Mirror for Magistrates* was a success both commercially and with contemporary literary commentators, even the often exacting Philip Sidney, who in his *Defence of Poesy* (*c.* 1582) writes that he "accounts the Mirrour of Magistrates, meetly furnished of bewtiful partes".[128]

Given the work's evident popularity, it is hardly surprising that the *Mirror* exerted some influence on the drama of the period, and early modern scholarship has duly acknowledged its status as a probable source of inspiration for numerous plays of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. The *Mirror* is included in Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic*

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[126] See *A Mirour for Magistrates: Being a True Chronicle Historie of the Untimely Falles of Such Unfortunate Princes and Men of Note as Have Happened Since the First Entrance of Brute into This Island, until This Our Latter Age*, ed. Richard Niccols (London, 1610); Archer, *Unperfect Histories*, p. 31.

[127] On Allott's attribution of verse to the *Mirror* in *England's Parnassus*, see Harriet Archer, *Unperfect Histories: The Mirror for Magistrates, 1559-1610* (Oxford: OUP, 2017), p. 7. Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury, being the Second part of Wits Commonwealth* (London, 1598), sig. Oo3r.

[128] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages,* p. 25; Mike Pincombe, "English Renaissance Tragedy", p. 5; Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London, 1595), sig. H3v.

Sources of Shakespeare, although the relative scarcity of direct verbal echoes means that it is often relegated to the status of "Analogue" or "Possible Source", while Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke* (1548) and Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577) receive top billing.[129] More recently, critics have begun to trace the *Mirror*'s influence on drama in other ways, modifying and expanding our conception of what might count as a source.[130] Philip Schwyzer, for instance, argues that the deliberate "temporal confusion", the "tangled shape of time" in plays such as *Henry IV Part 2* and *Richard III* is a product of the *Mirror*'s influence, which of all Shakespeare's historical source texts is, he argues, the most interested in "problems of chronological order".[131] Bart van Es reads the looking-glass in the deposition scene of *Richard II* (*c.* 1595) as an overt intertextual reference, bringing the *Mirror*'s explicitly damning account of Richard's "evil" reign "into play" in a "powerful testimony to the impact of the *Mirror for Magistrates* not only on the reading public but also on the audience that attended plays".[132] Richard Danson Brown, meanwhile, explores the influence of Thomas Churchyard's "Shore's Wife", included in the 1563 *Mirror*, on later dramatisations of the narrative.[133]

Between them, these and other such studies begin to piece together a sense of the *Mirror*'s influence on late-sixteenth-century drama as both more pervasive and more conceptual

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[129] Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare,* Vol. III (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 150-54; pp. 211-17; pp. 415-422.

[130] Since Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, there have been some attempts to both broaden and refine what we might mean when we refer to a "source", though the topic remains largely under-theorised. In *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca*, Robert Miola attributed the critical "misapprehension" of Seneca's influence on Shakespeare in part to the fact that "[w]e have yet come to no clear understanding, let alone agreement, concerning what constitutes a source and how one functions" (Oxford: OUP, 1992), pp. 6-7. In the introduction to *Shakespearean Intertextuality: Studies in Selected Sources and Plays*, Stephen Lynch succinctly articulates the dizzying "expansion" which the "concept of the literary source has undergone" in the wake of post-structuralism – "[t]he old notion of particular and distinct sources", he writes, "has given way to new notions of boundless and heterogeneous intertextuality" – although his monograph restricts its inquiry to texts already recognised as sources of Shakespeare's plays (Westport, CT; London: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 1. Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith directly address the issue of the source's ill-defined status in their recent article, "What is a source? Or how Shakespeare read his Marlowe", proposing a new model of source-study theoretically grounded in the discourses of trauma studies and hauntology, in order to describe "the unconscious or unbidden irruption of past texts into the present", *Shakespeare Survey*, vol. 68 (2015), 15-31, esp. p. 24.

[131] Philip Schwyzer, "'Most out of order': preposterous time in the *Mirror for Magistrates* and Shakespeare's histories", in A Mirror for Magistrates *in Context*, ed. Archer and Hadfield, pp. 231-245, p. 240, p. 243.

[132] Bart van Es, "'They do it with mirrors': Spenser, Shakespeare, Baldwin's *Mirror*, and Elizabethan literature's political vanishing act", in The Mirror for Magistrates *in Context*, ed. Archer and Hadfield, pp. 216-230, pp. 226-28.

[133] Richard Danson Brown, "'A talkatiue wench (whose words a world hath delighted in)': Mistress Shore and Elizabethan Complaint", in *Review of English Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 196 (1998), pp. 395-415.

than traditional source study would allow. Lengthy passages of the *Mirror* may be paraphrased only infrequently in plays, but if we widen the scope of our enquiry and allow for a more flexible understanding of what a source might be, we begin to see its influence everywhere: in the theatrical mediation of history, the bringing of the past into view. Where critics have started to draw attention to the *Mirror*'s impact on the staging of history, however, its influence on dramatic conceptions of tragedy has gone, so far, relatively unexplored. Pincombe and others acknowledge it as the text that "'defined' tragedy" for much of the reign of Elizabeth I, until it was superseded by drama, but the question of how – indeed, if – its particular version of tragedy was manifested on stage remains unanswered, because unasked.[134] This is in part because the *Mirror* is most obviously a source for and influence on the plays later categorised as "Histories" in the 1623 First Folio; but it is also, more broadly, a product of the way in which scholarship has tended to keep separate "drama" and "non-drama", and to see the latter as, at most, a repository to be mined for plot inspiration. Rarely does scholarship consider the possible influence of so-called non-dramatic works on dramatic form – on *how* plays tell their stories, as well as on simply what those stories are. The essays by Schwyzer, van Es and Danson Brown cited above are exceptions to this trend, and the twenty-first century has also witnessed other, larger critical endeavours which seek to redress the hierarchy by placing prose and verse texts, as it were, centre stage. Notable among these is the collection *Staging Early Modern Romance: Prose Fiction, Dramatic Romance, and Shakespeare* (2009), edited by Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne: the essays in this book push back against the tendency to pair plays with their prose counterparts "neatly side-by-side in a small, hedged garden plot", and seek to situate early modern drama, instead, in the "'forests of romance'" in which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century audiences experienced it.[135] Rather than seeking out specific source texts, in other words, this collection

[134] Pincombe, "English Renaissance Tragedy", p. 5.
[135] Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne, "Introduction: Into the Forest", in *Staging Early Modern Romance: Prose Fiction, Dramatic Romance, and Shakespeare*, ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1-20, p. 1-2. The phrase "forests of romance" is taken from a quote by Diana Henderson and James Siemon.

considers the influence of prose romance in general on early modern drama, and vice versa, and also begins to blur or collapse binary distinctions between the two. It is this same way of thinking about the interplay of drama and non-drama that I want to bring to an exploration of the relationship between *A Mirror for Magistrates* and late-sixteenth-century forms of tragedy on stage.

I begin by asking what, exactly, tragedy was according to the *Mirror*: if this work was the paradigm, what did the paradigm look like? It is worth noting that some critics have rejected the notion of the *Mirror* as, first and foremost, a work of tragedy; Paul Budra, in one of relatively few monographs dedicated solely to the text, argues that while the *Mirror* existed in the tradition of *de casibus* literature, this tradition was not based, as is commonly assumed, on "ideas or forms of tragedy", but was rather "a form of history writing".[136] This is not to say that Budra denies the association of the *Mirror* with tragedy altogether, but he does seek to downplay its status as the Elizabethan "proto-tragedy"; rather, he suggests that its tragic connotations were an inevitable by-product of its identity as a work of Tudor historiography, observing that "history was tragic, and tragedy recounted history", in Renaissance conceptions of the past.[137] It is true that Boccaccio's original *De casibus virorum illustrium* (*c.* 1355-1360) did not describe or conceive of its prose accounts of the falls of famous historical, biblical and mythical figures as "tragedies". When Geoffrey Chaucer came to imitate the work in his *Monk's Tale*, however, he had his speaker introduce the poems as "tragedies", and offered the now much-quoted definition: "Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,| As olde bookes maken us memorie,| Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,| And is yfallen out of heigh degree| Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly".[138]

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[136] Paul Budra, A Mirror for Magistrates *and the* De Casibus *Tradition*, p. xii.
[137] Budra, A Mirror for Magistrates *and the* De Casibus *Tradition*, p. xiii. In a later essay for the collection A Mirror for Magistrates *in Context*, Budra appears partly to amend his position on the extent to which the *Mirror* represents an exercise in writing tragedies, exploring how far the poems are intended to provoke tragic pity; however, he maintains that "only readers of the later editions of the *Mirror* would have been predisposed to think of the *Mirror* as a book that generates sympathy", and that "the authors of the first collection seem not to have considered many of their tales tragic". See Budra, "A miserable time full of piteous tragedyes", pp. 35-53, esp. p. 42.
[138] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Monk's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Oxford: OUP, 2008), pp. 240-252, p. 241, l. 1973-1977.

This association of *de casibus* writing with the label "tragedy" persisted, such that when John Lydgate composed his *Fall of Princes* – based on Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* via a French translation by Laurent de Premierfait – he too introduced and referred to his poems as "tragedies". Though the term does not appear on the title pages of its 1494 and 1527 editions, printed by Richard Pynson, Richard Tottel's 1554 printing declares it *A Treatise Excellent and Compe[n]dious, shewing and declaring, in maner of Tragedye, the falls of sondry most notable Princes and Princesses with Other Nobles*, while John Wayland, in the same year, entitled it *The Tragedies, gathered by Jhon Bochas, of all such princes as fell from their estates throughe the mutability of fortune*.[139] For Budra, the *Mirror*'s 1559 title page – which not only lacks any mention of "tragedy", but also omits the word "fall" – constitutes a deliberate distancing of the work from the *de casibus* tradition's established tragic connotations, "directing the reader", instead, "towards the book's didactic potential".[140] But although the word is consistently absent from the *Mirror*'s title page until it appears in relatively small print on the front of Henry Marshe's 1587 edition, it is prominent, as Peter Berek notes, on the 1559 contents page, which catalogues the "Tragedies beginning" by page number.[141] Indeed, Berek argues that this "makes the term more conspicuous than it was in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*", despite its omission from the title page. Given that the title page is the first thing a prospective purchaser sees, this claim seems something of a stretch; but the word's presence on the contents page does turn "tragedy" into a formal organising principle for the work. The framing text, too, repeatedly refers either to the poem to come or the poem just completed as a "tragedye". The *Mirror* is history divided up into units of tragedy: tragedy is its mode of storytelling, the literary form being showcased. As the aforementioned inclusion of "the author of *The Mirour for Magistrates*", Edward Ferrers, in Francis Meres's list of "our best for

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[139] The frontispieces of these earlier editions instead bear the titular announcement, *Here begynneth the boke of Iohan Bochas, discryuing the all of pri[n]ces, princesses, and other nobles: translated into Englysshe by John Lydgate monke of Bury, begynnyng at Adam and Eve, and ending with Kyng Johan of Fraunce, Taken Prisoner at Poyters by Prince Edwarde* (London, 1494, 1527), t.p.

[140] Budra, The Mirror for Magistrates *and the* De Casibus *Tradition*, p. 24.

[141] Henry Marshe's 1587 title page advertises the new edition as being "Newly imprinted, and with the addition of divers Tragedies enlarged" (*Mirour for Magistrates*, 1587, t.p.); see also Berek, "Tragedy and Title Pages", p. 7.

Tragedie" makes clear, the *Mirror* was recognised in late-sixteenth-century England as an exemplary exercise in writing tragedies.[142]

Discussions of the *Mirror* and tragedy have typically revolved around its particular brand of *de casibus* philosophy: are the *Mirror* narrators' falls punishments for their own wickedness, or are these tragic protagonists merely subject to the vagaries of fortune?[143] In fact, the title pages of the various *Mirror* editions try to cover all bases, advertising the *Mirror* as a work "wherein may be seene by examples passed in this realme, with how grevous plages vices are punished: and howe frayle and unstable worldly prosperity is founde, even of those whom fortune seemeth most highly to favour".[144] That Henry IV and Henry V are consciously omitted from the series of tragedies goes some way towards indicating the *Mirror*'s tragic ethos. Following the conclusion of the "wofull…tragedy" of Richard II, Baldwin's 1559 framing text acknowledges that Henry IV was "a man more ware & prosperous in hys doynges although not untroubled with warres both of outforth and inward enemies".[145] The implication is that Henry IV has avoided tragic status through his own "doynges" – in particular, through his "ware", which suggests prudence and caution, and perhaps also a lack of hubris, a cognisance that one's fortune can alter at any moment. Thus, although the title page promises that the *Mirror* will show "howe frayle and unstable worldly prosperitie is founde", its tragic protagonists tend, at least to some extent, to have deserved their falls, with the good kings of history notably absent from the roll call. The *Mirror*'s *de casibus* model is thus broadly retributive: much more so, Budra suggests, than either Boccaccio's or Lydgate's, in whose texts the irrational whims of Fortune dominate. Yet although it is "almost inevitably the wicked who suffer" in the *Mirror*, Fortune features prominently in the

[142] Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, sig. Oo3r.
[143] See, for example, Lily B. Campbell, *Tudor Conceptions of History and Tragedy in 'A Mirror for Magistrates'* (University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, 1936); Budra, "Tragedy and Fortune", in A Mirror for Magistrates *and the* De Casibus *Tradition*, pp. 39-59.
[144] This phrase appears, with some small variations, on the title pages of the 1559, 1563, 1571, 1574, 1578 and 1587 editions.
[145] William Baldwin, *A Myrroure for Magistrates* (1559), sig. E4v.

text, regularly though not consistently invoked by the speakers themselves.[146] Richard II acknowledges throughout his tragedy that his own vices have brought about his fall – "Thus lawles life, to lawles deth ey drawes", he concludes – but a speaker such as Henry Percy, who was, according to his poem's title, "for his covetous and trayterous attempt [on the crown] put to death", obstinately denies any culpability for his fate, casting himself instead as the victim "wrongfully" shamed by the "bluddy tyrant" Henry IV, and offering only the bland platitude that "neyther kinsfolke, ryches, strength, or favour| Are free from Fortune, but are ay decaying".[147] There is often, in short, a contradiction between how the *Mirror* authors frame the tragedies – both in their intervening discussions and in the poems' titles – and how the tragic speakers conceive of and construct their own narratives. Inherent to this contradiction is perhaps the *Mirror*'s single-most important innovation in the development of *de casibus* tragedy: its tragedies are all performances.

Whereas Chaucer and Lydgate recounted their tragedies in the third person, the *Mirror* was the first work in this tradition which allowed the fallen kings and nobles to speak for themselves. Not really, of course: for his 1559 edition, Baldwin constructed an elaborate performance frame, in which the assembled group of writers take it in turns to read out their first-person poems. Each one is, as both Mike Pincombe and Jennifer Richards have suggested, an act of "prosopopoiea".[148] In the opening section of the framing text printed in 1559, the writer Edward Ferrers declares that he will now "take upon [him] the miserable person of syr Robert Tresilian, chiefe Justice of Englande": he will, essentially, act.[149] Critics have documented the dramatic credentials of several of the writers who collaborated on the *Mirror*. William Baldwin himself wrote plays for the 1552-53 Christmas season at court; Edward Ferrers was

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[146] Paul Budra, "*The Mirror for Magistrates* and the Shape of *De Casibus* Tragedy", *English Studies*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (1988), pp. 303-312, pp. 308-309.
[147] Baldwin, *A Myrroure for Magistrates* (1559), sig. E2v-E4v, sig. G3r-H1v.
[148] Mike Pincombe, "Tragic and untragic bodies in the *Mirror for Magistrates*", in A Mirror for Magistrates *in Context*, ed. Archer and Hadland, pp. 53-70, p. 61; Jennifer Richards, "Reading and listening to William Baldwin", in A Mirror for Magistrates *in Context*, ed. Archer and Hadland, pp. 71-88.
[149] *Myrroure for Magistrates* (1559), sig. A2r. The phrases "take upon me the person" and "take upon me the personage" recur throughout the 1559 framing text.

Lord of Misrule for both Henry VIII and Edward VI; and Thomas Sackville, who composed the famous "Induction" printed in the 1563 *Mirror*, was one of the authors of *Gorboduc*, often considered the earliest dramatic tragedy to have been written English.[150] Also frequently remarked upon are the *Mirror*'s theatrical metaphors.[151] Thomas Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, offers the curious analogy for being raised on Fortune's wheel of feeling like "one on a stage attending a playe,| [who] Seeth not on whiche syde the scaffolde doth reele,| Tyll tymber and poales, and all flee awaye"; he is not the performer, but rather an onstage spectator, brought down when the façade of royal favour collapses.[152] More simply, Edward IV begins the final stanza of his tragedy by declaring "I have playd my pageant, now am I past".[153] In "The Complaynt of Henrye duke of Buckingham", composed by Sackville and added in 1563, Buckingham employs a *theatrum mundi* metaphor as he reflects on inheriting the Buckingham title from his grandfather:

> In place of whom, as it befell my lot,
> Like on a stage, so stept I in strayt waye,
> Enjoying there but wofully god wot,
> As he that had a slender part to playe:
> To teach thereby, in earth no state may stay,
> But as our partes abridge or length our age
> So passe we all while others fyll the stage.[154]

Harriet Archer in fact registers an increase in the use of theatrical imagery in later editions of the *Mirror*, which she links to the "expansion of London commercial theatre". She observes that the 1587 edition "saw revisions and additions which foreground theatrical performance", including small verbal alterations from "thinke" to "looke" that emphasise the fictive performance context of the poems, as well as further invocations of the *theatrum mundi* trope.[155]

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[150] See Budra, "'A miserable time full of piteous tragedies'", p. 41; Budra, A Mirror for Magistrates *and the* De Casibus *Tradition*, p. 73-4; Jennifer Richards, "Reading and listening", p. 73.
[151] See, for instance, Budra, "A miserable time full of piteous tragedyes", p. 41; Archer, *Unperfect Histories*, p. 20, p. 32.
[152] *Myrroure for Magistrates* (1559), sig. C4r.
[153] *Myrroure for Magistrates* (1559) sig. G2v.
[154] *Myrrour for Magistrates* (1563), sig. S1v.
[155] Archer, *Unperfect Histories,* p. 32.

Theatrical metaphors, as Archer notes, were not uncommon to non-dramatic writing in the late sixteenth century, and she offers some examples of other, contemporaneous works of "imaginative history" which employ similar imagery.[156] As the above discussion begins to make clear, though, *A Mirror for Magistrates* is not, straightforwardly, a non-dramatic text. It is a series of monologues imagined, at least in its early editions, to have been composed at a kind of performance workshop, with the gathered writers – several of whom had known links with the dramatic culture of the day – taking it in turns to act out the soliloquies of the text's fallen princes.[157] Its metaphors of playing parts and stepping onto stages have a particular, self-reflexive resonance: this is perhaps less pronounced than when similar lines and phrases appear in plays written for the theatres, but it still has the subversive potential to foreground the fact that the *Mirror*'s "Tragedies" are performances, pretend. If anything, the dream frame introduced in John Higgins' *First Part of the Mirror* and partially retained through to 1587 diminishes the *Mirror*'s theatricality; in these versions of the text, the poems are voiced by ghostly apparitions, not by writers adopting and showcasing historical personae. Thus, as the *Mirror* became more theatrically engaged in some respects, with its increasing use of dramatic metaphors, it became less so in others, although the basic, inherently dramatic premise of the work – a series of first-person monologues addressed to a listener or listeners – persisted. Some of the poems, as Budra observes, even describe a "specific scene…so we have an idea of a setting, a stage" upon which to imagine the performance unfolding. Richard II, for instance, is to be pictured "lying pale and

[156] Richard Danson Brown notes a further dramatic addition to the 1587 *Mirror*, in the tragedy of "Shore's Wife"; though first printed in the 1563 *Mirror*, it was not until 1587 that Mistress Shore "provide[d] her own self-conscious introduction", announcing her intention to 'step on the stage in my shrowding sheete as I was buried' and relate her story. Archer, *Unperfect Histories*, p. 32; Richard Danson Brown, "Mistress Shore and Elizabethan Complaint", p. 401; *The Mirour for Magistrates* (1587), sig. Ll3r.

[157] Monika Fludernik has commented on the striking presence of demarcated soliloquies in Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynd* (1590), observing that they are a feature – though not always so clearly labelled – of "[m]uch early fiction" from the sixteenth century. As they do not exist in fifteenth-century prose romance, Fludernik suggests that "[i]t could therefore be argued that the rise of the soliloquy in Elizabethan fiction…is due to dramatic influence". I am interested in the mutual influence, the interplay between page and stage in the period: the *Mirror*'s soliloquies may be the product of its writers' dramatic backgrounds, but they exerted an influence, in turn, on writing for the theatres. See Monika Fludernik, "Narrative and Drama", in *Theorizing Narrativity*, ed. John Pier and José Angel Garcia Landa (Berlin; New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2008), pp. 355-383, pp. 373-74.

wanne al naked upon the cold stones in Paules church, the people standing round him"; Owen Glendower is envisioned "cumming out of the wilde mountaynes like the Image of death in all poyntes" to "lament his folly after thys maner"; and Higgins, in his 1574 frame, first witnesses Humber, King of the Huns, as a "wight wet dropping from the waters shore| In Princely weede, but like a warlike man".[158] Enter Humber, wet.

From its very earliest edition, then, the tragic precedent set by the *Mirror* is a theatrical one: tragedies, according to the *Mirror*'s model, are performed. In the "Authours Induction" to his 1574 extension of the work, Higgins summarises his reading of Baldwin's *Mirror* in precisely these terms:

> For some of these were kinges of high estate:
> And some were Dukes, and came of Regall race:
> Some Princes, Lordes and Judges great that sate
> In councell still, decreing every case:
> Some other Knightes, that vices did imbrace:
> Some Gentlemen, some poore that looked hie
> Yet every one had *playde his tragoedie.*[159]

Related to its construction as a series of dramatic monologues is the *Mirror*'s foregrounding of the performing body. Consistent across its various editions is the notion that the poems' protagonists speak their soliloquies frozen in the moment of their deaths: their falls are embodied in their still "mangled" forms. In Higgins' dream frame, the ghosts rear up one by one as gruesome spectacles: "bloud…freshly trickle[s]" from Albanact's "wounde" as he appears to tell his story; Locrinus, similarly, bears a "shafte" from a "bleeding wounde" in his chest; while Madan, mauled to death by wolves, approaches Higgins with "bloud from all his members torn amaine".[160] The impossibility of these bloody visions is in-keeping with the inherent surrealness of a dream frame; but in Baldwin's performance workshop conceit, a radical feat of imagination is required on the part of the reader or listener. The reciting authors sometimes introduce their

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[158] Budra, A Mirror for Magistrates *and the* De Casibus *Tradition*, p. 75; *Myrroure for Magistrates* (1559), sig. E2r, sig F1r; John Higgins, *The First Parte of the Mirour for Magistrates, Containing the Falles of the First Infortunate Prince of this Lande: From the Comming of Brute to the Incarnation of Our Saviour and Redeemer Jesu Christ* (London, 1574), sig. B7r.
[159] John Higgins, *First Parte of the Mirour* (1574), sig. A1v, my emphasis.
[160] Higgins, *Last Parte of the Mirour* (1574), sig. A3v, sig. C1v, sig. D8r.

poems by enjoining Baldwin, and thereby the reader, to envisage the wounded, talking corpse as they perform: we are to "imagine" that we "see" Richard II "al to be ma*n*gled, with blew woundes, lying pale and wanne" on his bier as he "mak[es] his mone", and to "suppose" that we "see" the headless "Clifford all armed save his head, with his brest plate all gore bloud running from his throte, wherin an hedles arrow sticketh, thrugh which wound" he speaks.[161] Such descriptions are disturbingly gruesome, and also, as Mike Pincombe observes, more than faintly absurd.[162] If we try too hard to picture Richard, supine and declaiming from the "cold stones in Paules church", or the headless Clifford, his words wheezing and spluttering from a wound in his neck, the monologues take on an improbably comic quality, in tension with their supposedly serious subject matter. This is more pronounced in some soliloquies than in others, and is especially a feature of Baldwin's prose frame, although even Higgins's dream inductions occasionally register the corporeal absurdity of the work's premise.[163] Both its graphic corporeal horror and its occasional slippage into absurdist humour are features of the *Mirror*'s theatricality which, I will argue, were later manifested in the plays of the first tetralogy.

If *A Mirror for Magistrates* defined tragedy for much of the second half of the sixteenth century, then we can draw several conclusions about what the term meant, and how the form worked, for readers in 1580s England. Tragedies were tales of calamitous, usually deserved falls. They came in series, and often in groups within those series. Baldwin's frame, in particular, often seals off the tragedies into sets, drawing links between certain stories; though each is a first-person narrative, the poems are not, as we might assume, entirely self-contained, but speak to

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[161] *Myrroure for Magistrates* (1559), sig. E2r, sig. Aa4r. On the potential influence of the invocations in these framing texts on the Chorus of *Henry V* (1599) (which also repeatedly calls upon its audience to imagine things not pictured), see Brian Vickers, "'Suppose you see': The Chorus in *Henry V* and *The Mirror for Magistrates*", in *Shakespearean Continuities: Essays in Honor of E. A. J. Honigmann*, ed. John Batchelor, T. G. S. Cain and Claire Lamont (London: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 74-90.

[162] Mike Pincombe, "Tragic and untragic bodies in the *Mirror for Magistrates*", A Mirror for Magistrates *in Context*, ed. Archer and Hadfield, pp. 53-70.

[163] When the decapitated Irenglass approaches to relay his tragedy, for instance, Higgins observes that "speach of headlesse men, doth passe my skill", in a possible comment on Baldwin's headless protagonists. Morpheus grants Irenglass a head, but inexpertly, and several stanzas are then dedicated to a grotesque description of Irenglass attempting to regain control of his eyes and mouth. Higgins, *Last Parte of the Mirour* (1574), sig. K4v.

one another, offering different perspectives on the same historical moment.[164] Tragedies, therefore, are subjective, individual accounts rather than authoritative overviews. And they are, crucially, performed: soliloquies bodied forth by grotesquely mangled corpses. My interest, in the remainder of this chapter, is in how – and how far – the *Mirror*'s tragic model influenced the staging of tragedy in the popular theatres of late sixteenth century England.

Two references in plays by Christopher Marlowe gesture towards the *Mirror*'s theatrical reach, its impact on and relevance to dramatic conceptions of tragedy in the 1580s and 90s. The first features in the famously bombastic prologue to *Tamburlaine Part 1* (Admiral's Men, 1587), which concludes by inviting the audience to "View" the protagonist's "picture in this tragicke glasse,| And then applaud his fortunes as you please".[165] Not least because *Tamburlaine* debuted in 1587 – the year that *The Mirror for Magistrates* appeared in its fifth and longest edition – this description of the ensuing play as a "tragicke glasse", combined with the reference to Tamburlaine's "fortunes", must surely have prompted some members of early audiences at the Rose Theatre to think of the *Mirror*. Yet even as the prologue's parting words align *Tamburlaine* with the "tragicke" poems of the *Mirror*, they also set the play apart, as a new approach to tragedy. Whereas the *Mirror*, on its title page, in its prefaces and through its framing text, provides extensive signposting about what we are to witness in and learn from the poems – even if this paratextual guidance is sometimes in conflict with the poems themselves – the prologue to *Tamburlaine* provocatively invites us to draw any conclusions "as [we] please".[166] The *Mirror* as tragic precedent is thus both invoked and subverted, its didactic method explicitly rejected. The

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[164] For example, Richard Plantagenet, in the 1559 *Mirror*, refers to "Henry Bolenbrooke,| Of whom duke Mowbray told thee now of late"; Mowbray's tragedy appears some eight poems earlier. *Myrroure for Magistrates* (1559), sig. Aa1v.

[165] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great. Who, from a Scythian Shephearde, by his Rare and Woonderfull Conquests, Became a Most Puissant and Mightye Monarque. And (for his Tyrrany and Terrour in Warre) was Tearmed, the Scourge of God* (London, 1590), sig. A3r.

[166] See Clifford Leech, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet for the Stage*, ed. Anne Lancashire (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1986), p. 44. Leech describes "[t]he firm stand on authorial neutrality at the end of the prologue to Part 1": "[t]he 'glass', or 'mirror,' that the play holds up will be 'tragic' – that is, in the common sixteenth-century sense of the term it will display great men falling – but the spectator is to be left to make up his own mind on the implications of what he sees."

second Marlovian reference to the *Mirror*, meanwhile, features not in a prologue, but instead in the closing chorus of *Doctor Faustus* (1592). As Richard Danson Brown notes, the opening line of this chorus – "Cut is the branch that might have growne full straight" – is a paraphrase of Mistress Shore's complaint, in the 1563 *Mirror*, that her manipulative friends have "bent the wand that might have growen ful streigt".[167] In echoing this line, Danson Brown suggests, Marlowe draws a connection between his Faustus and another "profoundly ambivalent character whose fall is at certain moments made to seem more exemplary than others".[168] Here, the purpose of the *Mirror* is not to establish the play's tragic credentials at the outset, but rather to frame a culminating reflection on the protagonist's story: "regard his hellish fall", the chorus continues, in language reminiscent of the *Mirror*, "Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise,| Only to wonder at unlawful things".[169] That these Marlovian allusions to the *Mirror* both bookend plays is indicative of the way in which the *Mirror*'s influence is more conceptual than narrative; it provides not a source of plot content, but a model for thinking about what the play is, and how audiences should respond to it. Unlike *Tamburlaine* and *Doctor Faustus*, the plays I discuss in more detail in this chapter do share narrative content with the *Mirror*, but I am less interested in how closely they adhere to its version of history than in how they adapt its tragic method for the stage, and indeed, in chapter two, I continue to register the *Mirror*'s influence on drama with no overlap in subject matter. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I consider the two *Contention* plays as popular dramatisations of the tragic paradigm represented by the *Mirror*, arguing that such a study can, in turn, productively expand and modify our understanding of what "tragedy" could mean in the 1590s theatres.

[167] *Myrrour for Magistrates* (1563), sig. Z4r; Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragicall History of D. Faustus* (London,1604), sig. F3r.
[168] Danson Brown, "Mistress Shore and Elizabethan Verse Complaint", p. 403.
[169] Marlowe, *Tragicall History of D. Faustus*, sig. F3r.

The *Contention* Plays: "Sundry Falls and Overthrowes"[170]

In an essay entitled "The Death of John Talbot", Alexander Leggatt observes that "[t]he plays the Folio presents as the *Henry VI* trilogy function also as a collection of individual tragedies in the manner of *The Monk's Tale* and *The Mirror for Magistrates*", and he points to the 1590s title pages of *Henry VI Parts 2* and *3* – or *The First Part of the Contention* (1594) and *The True Tragedy* (1595) – as indicative of this.[171] The early quarto title page of the play later printed in the Folio as *Henry VI Part 2*, in particular, emphasises this structural resemblance to the *Mirror*. Described in full as "The First part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, with the death of the good Duke Humphrey: And the banishment and death of the Duke of Suffolke, and the Tragicall end of the proud Cardinall of Winchester, with the notable Rebellion of Jacke Cade: And the Duke of Yorkes first claim unto the Crowne", the play was marketed to a 1590s readership as a series of exciting set-pieces, almost all of which centre around a character's fall or death.[172] The title page of the 1595 octavo of *Henry VI Part 3* is less breathlessly replete with plot detail than that of the earlier play, but again, what it particularly advertises are the death scenes. The play was originally printed as "The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt, with the whole contention between the two Houses Lancaster and Yorke"; the "whole contention", a phrase which seems to capture the content of this play in its totality, phrased as an addition, while deaths staged within the opening and closing moments of the drama are foregrounded.[173]

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170 This phrase is taken from the framing text which prefaces the tragedy of Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester, in the 1578 edition of *The Last Parte of the Mirour for Magistrates*; following a brief excursion into Scottish history, one of the assembled writers encourages a "returne…to the rest of [th]e Tragical troubles and broyles which hapned in this realme during the minority of king Henry the vi & the sundry falls and overthrowes of great princes & other noble perso*n*s happening therby". See *Last Parte of the Mirrour* (1578), sig. G1v.

171 Alexander Leggatt, "The Death of John Talbot", in *Shakespeare's Histories: A Quest for Form and Genre*, ed. John W. Velz (Binghampton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1996), pp. 11-30, p. 11.

172 *The First Part of the Contention Betwixt the Two Famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, with the Death of the Good Duke Humphrey: And the Banishment and Death of the Duke of Suffolke, and the Tragicall End of the Proud Cardinall of Winchester, with the Notable Rebellion of Jacke Cade: And the Duke of Yorkes First Claime Unto the Crowne* (London, 1594), t.p.

173 *The True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of Yorke, and the Death of Good King Henrie the Sixt, with the Whole Contention Betweene the Two Houses Lancaster and Yorke* (London, 1595), t.p. Compare, for instance, *A Most Pleasant Comedie of Mucedorus, the Kings Sonne of Valentia and Amadine the Kings Daughter of Arragon, with the Merie Conceites of Mouse* (London, 1598) and *A*

I refer to these two plays as the *Contention* plays, and not as *Henry VI Parts Two* and *Three*, to emphasise their original status as two halves of one story, rather than as the latter instalments of a dramatic trilogy.[174] That the plays included in the Folio as the second and third parts of *Henry VI* were originally conceived of as a pair is suggested by various pieces of evidence. Sequels and two-part plays were in vogue in the 1580s and 1590s, and the striking continuity of action between the end of the *First Part of the Contention* and the beginning of *The True Tragedy* indicates that the pair were invited to be experienced consecutively, perhaps staged on adjacent days, as the two parts of *Tamburlaine*, *Hercules* and *Tamar Cham* so often were according to *Henslowe's Diary*.[175] The 1590s Q and O texts of the *Contention* plays were published by the same stationer, Thomas Millington, though only the *First Part* was recorded in the Stationers' Register.[176] Millington reprinted both plays in Quarto format in 1600 and, as late as 1619, just four years before they appeared as part of the Folio's *Henry VI* trilogy, the pair were published in a combined edition by Thomas Pavier, marketed as two halves of one complete story: this edition was entitled "The Whole Contention between the two Famous Houses, Lancaster and Yorke. With the Tragicall ends of the good Duke Humfrey, Richard Duke of Yorke, and King Henrie the sixt. Divided into two Parts".[177] The rights had been transferred to Pavier in 1602, who entered the plays as "the firste and second parte of Henry the vjt"; the play printed in the

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Most Pleasant and Merie New Comedie, Intituled, A Knacke to Knowe a Knave. Newlie Set foorth, as it hath sundrie tymes bene played by Ed. Allen and his Companie. With Kemps applauded Merrimentes of the men of Goteham, in reciuing the King into Goteham (London, 1594).

[174] Barbara Hodgdon writes that the title of the 1594 Quarto of *Henry VI Part 2* is "probably closer to that by which the play was known to its contemporaries" than the Folio title. See Barbara Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 60

[175] See *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 16-35. Samuel Johnson wrote, of *Henry VI Part 3*, "[t]he play is only divided from the former for the convenience of exhibition; for the series of action is continued without interruption, nor are any two scenes of any play more closely connected than the first scene of this play and the last of the former". Barbara Hodgdon observes, similarly, that "the closural Prologue – or terminal opening – of *3 Henry VI* seems an undeniable sign of a closer temporal connection between the two than that between *1* and *2 Henry VI*". See Samuel Johnson, *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur F. Sherbo (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 597; Hodgon, *The End Crowns All*, p. 68. See also Tara Lyons, "Serials, Spinoffs, and Histories: Selling 'Shakespeare' in Collection before the Folio", *Philological Quarterly*, vol. 91, no. 2 (Spring 2012), pp. 185-220; Nicholas Grene, *Shakespeare's Serial History Plays* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 9-11.

[176] See John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen, "Introduction", *King Henry VI Part 3*, ed. John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), pp. 1-176, pp. 150-51.

[177] *The Whole Contention Betweene the Two Famous Houses, Lancaster and Yorke. With the Tragicall Ends of the Good Duke Humfrey, Richard Duke of Yorke, and King Henrie the Sixt* (London, 1619), t.p.

Folio as *The First Part of Henry the Sixt*, meanwhile, was originally entered by Edward Blount and Isaac Jaggard in 1623 as the "thirde parte", because the first and second parts had already been registered.[178] These numbers reflect, not the chronology of the plays' content, but the chronology of their composition. The two *Contention* plays were written first – the editors of the *New Oxford Shakespeare* date them to 1590 – while *Henry VI Part 1* was later composed as a stand-alone prequel, probably in 1592.[179] It was only when the First Folio was printed that the *Contention* plays were re-packaged as the second and third instalments in a trilogy.

While they are structurally and verbally similar to the texts of the plays as printed in the First Folio, the 1590s Q and O *Contention* texts differ in some significant ways – most notably, in the fact that they are both substantially shorter than their Folio counterparts.[180] The Folio versions are unanimously preferred by editors as copytexts for modern editions of the plays, with Q and O generally regarded as in some way deficient and inferior. Various explanations have been proposed for this deficiency, and no satisfactory consensus reached, though the suggestions that Q and O represent versions of the plays shortened for touring, and/or that they are memorial reconstructions, have both been effectively refuted.[181] The *New Oxford Shakespeare* recently proposed that the two plays were revised after the formation of the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1594, and that the Folio texts represent these later, revised versions.[182] The series' more thorough discussion of the relationship of Q and O to the Folio is forthcoming, in their *Complete Alternative Versions* volume, due to be published in 2022.[183] In this chapter, I follow the consensus

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[178] See Ronald Knowles, "Introduction", *King Henry VI Part 2* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1999), pp. 1-141, p. 119.
[179] See Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion*, ed. Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 417-602, p. 516,
[180] See Knowles, "Introduction", p. 107; Cox and Rasmussen, "Introduction", p. 148-49. On the broader implications of the length of an early modern printed play for its relationship to performance, see Lukas Erne, "Why size matters: "the two hours' traffic of our stage" and the length of Shakespeare's plays", in *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp. 155-197.
[181] See Knowles, "Introduction", p. 125; Cox and Rasmussen, "Introduction", p. 163; Laurie E. Maguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts: the "Bad" Quartos and Their Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 237-38, pp. 319-320.
[182] The *New Oxford Shakespeare* dates the revisions of both plays to the mid-to-late 1590s. See Taylor and Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", p. 493, p. 496.
[183] Taylor and Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", p. 494.

of modern editors by approaching the versions in F as the most authoritative texts of these plays, and quoting from the *New Oxford Shakespeare* editions, based on F, unless otherwise indicated. However, I make frequent comparisons with Q and O, particularly in terms of staging, approaching these texts as records of earlier versions of the two plays, rather than simply as corrupt and inferior renderings of F.

The textual content of Q and O may be variable in quality, but their title pages, quoted above, are undoubtedly accurate in conveying the *Contention* plays' episodic structures and consequently diffracted foci. Critics and directors alike have grappled with the fact that neither play possesses a single climactic moment, central character or grand narrative arc.[184] Rather, both comprise – as their title pages imply – a series of related but self-contained stories, which unfold across and are resolved within varying numbers of scenes: the fall of the Gloucesters, for instance, takes up much of the first half of the *First Part of the Contention*; Cade's rebellion breaks out and is suppressed within the fourth act of the play; while the death of Richard, Duke of York, trailed on the title page of the second *Contention* play, has happened within four scenes of the drama beginning. For Leggatt, this is where any understanding of the *Henry VI* plays as exercises in dramatic tragedy encounters an obstacle: for although these plays demonstrate that "Shakespeare evidently found himself thinking of history, in part, as a series of tragedies", this was, Leggatt continues, "[o]nly in part of course. The fact that it is a series, not the story of one hero, marks a break with the usual dramatic form of tragedy".[185]

Leggatt's notion of the "usual dramatic form of tragedy" is ahistorical: as this thesis has demonstrated already, there was no established theatrical precedent for tragedy in England at the start of the 1590s. Yet other critics have made similar assumptions about the distinction between

[184] Barbara Hodgdon, for instance, describes the *Henry VI* plays as "plays that 'run on,' like an uncontrolled sentence, beyond signs of tragic (or comic) enclosure", while director Terry Hands attempted to conceptualise the trilogy as a series of "inner plays" situated within a "superplay". See Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All*, p. 44; Terry Hands, quoted in Homer D. Swander, "The Rediscovery of *Henry VI*", *SQ*, vol. 29, no. 2 (Spring 1978), pp. 146-163, p. 149. On the structure of the *Henry VI* plays and other plays categorised as "Histories", see also David Scott Kastan, "The Shape of Time: Form and Value in the Shakespearean History Play", *Comparative Drama*, vol. 7, no. 4 (Winter 1973-74), pp. 259-277.

[185] Leggatt, "Death of John Talbot", p. 12.

tragedy and history in the period. In his *Perspective in Shakespeare's English Histories*, Larry S. Champion differentiates dramatic history from dramatic tragedy along the same lines as Leggatt, arguing that Shakespeare, "from the beginning of his career…perceived a basic distinction" between the two. In his history plays, contends Champion, Shakespeare "studiously avoids the dominance of a single figure": "[n]o character is on stage for a significant portion of the action", he continues, and "no figure is of predominant interest to the audience". It is this "fragment[ed]…focus" which, according to Champion, distinguishes the *Henry VI* plays from Shakespeare's "early tragic pieces" – plays such as *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* (*c.* 1595), which track the narrative arcs of one or two central characters.[186] For both Leggatt and Champion, then, the distinction is, specifically, a formal one. As the foregoing discussion of *A Mirror for Magistrates* amply demonstrates, the conceptual overlap between history and tragedy in the sixteenth century was substantial. It is something of a critical commonplace to observe that several of the plays later included as "Histories" in the 1623 First Folio were originally printed and categorized as tragedies (in his 1598 *Palladis Tamia*, Meres lists "*Richard the 2.*", "*Richard the 3.*" "*Henry the 4*" and "*King John*" as among Shakespeare's "best for…Tragedy"), and Champion himself discusses *Richard II* and *Richard III* as examples of "History as Tragedy" – plays based on narratives from English chronicle history, but approaching "tragic form".[187]

Such a discussion is predicated upon the notion that there existed already, in 1590s England, an established understanding of how tragedy was meant to work in the popular theatres: specifically, it assumes that one dramatic tragedy was widely understood to be equal in size and scope to one complete play. Thus, *Richard II* and *Richard III* approach "tragic form" in Champion's view because they track, from beginning to end, the fall – or rise and fall – of a single historical figure. By contrast, any discussion of, for instance, *Henry VI Part 2* in relation to the staging of tragedy is immediately circumscribed by the fact that it contains more than one;

[186] Larry S. Champion, *Perspective in Shakespeare's English Histories* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1980).
[187] Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, sig. Oo2r; Champion, pp. 54-91.

the play is not *a* tragedy, and thus its relevance to the study of tragedy as a 1590s theatrical phenomenon is deemed to be marginal at best. As I argue throughout this thesis, however, in the dramatic lexicon of the period the word "tragedy" was sometimes used to refer to a piece or episode of a play, as well as the whole. We have witnessed this, for instance, on the octavo title page of *Henry VI Part 3*. Describing the play as the "True Tragedie of Richarde Duke of Yorke, *and* the death of good King Henrie the sixt: *With* the whole contention between the two Houses, Lancaster and Yorke", this title page advertises the presence of two tragic protagonists, whose individual "Tragedie[s]", even between them, do not constitute the entire play.[188] Moreover, we have seen that "tragic form" as established by that shibboleth of sixteenth-century tragedy, *A Mirror for Magistrates*, comprised series of *de casibus* performances: tragedies were not isolated literary events according to the *Mirror*'s model, but came in groups, collections. Instead of discounting the *Contention* plays from any discussion of tragedy proper based on a particular conception of the term, then, I propose to approach them as exercises in translating a prominent early modern version of tragedy to the stage.

There are, in total, eight character falls across the two *Contention* plays which correspond directly with a tragedy somewhere in an edition of the *Mirror*: in order, the penance of Eleanor Cobham, and the deaths of Gloucester, Suffolk, Jack Cade, York, Young Clifford, Warwick, and Henry VI. There are, of course, other character deaths in these plays, in addition to those listed here, and many of them are presented using similar techniques of staging; as I suggest above, the *Mirror*'s influence is more stylistic than historical or narrative, and thus my discussion is not limited to those characters with an analogue in the *Mirror*. Rather than attempt to discuss each one of these deaths in turn, I will focus on a few exemplary episodes which demonstrate particular features of the plays' tragic dramaturgy, drawing links from these to moments elsewhere in the dramas. In particular, I am interested in the way in which the death scenes I

[188] Emphasis mine.

discuss are often framed as self-contained and self-conscious performances. Dead and dying bodies in these plays are spectacular and spectated, the fleeting stars of their own inset tragedies.

Tragic Tableaux: The Falls of the Gloucesters

The first half of the *First Part of the Contention* is dominated by the build-up to the demise of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and his wife Eleanor Cobham, plotted by Suffolk, Somerset, Cardinal Winchester and Queen Margaret, and catalysed by Dame Eleanor's own ambitious dealings with the occult. The play's opening acts present a number of parodic and pre-emptive echoes to the couple's tragedy: King Henry's comment about Gloucester's falcon – "And what a pitch she flew above the rest!" (II.i.6) – and Simpcox the beggar's story of his injury ("my wife desired some damsons,| And made me climb, with danger of my life" (II.i.98-99) function as allegories for the impending demise of Gloucester, brought down by his wife's overreaching.[189] When the much-anticipated falls of these characters are eventually staged, they possess the visually striking qualities of tableaux. Both set-piece scenes are organised around the central tragic body, which is framed as visibly distinct from the other characters on stage.

Just as it preceded her husband's when the pair first appeared in the 1578 edition of the *Mirror*, so Eleanor Cobham's demise precedes the Duke of Gloucester's in the play. In the *Mirror*'s framing text, the assembled authors discuss this as a complicated point of ordering: "for albeit the sayde Dukes death happened before the decease of the Duches", they observe, "yet was her fall first, which fynally was cause of overthrow to both".[190] Ordinarily, the person who died first would feature first, but the fact that Dame Eleanor's fall caused Gloucester's death renders this an exceptional case. The play both registers and reinforces the unusual chronology of the two tragedies by staging Dame Eleanor's penance as though she is already dead. Gloucester and his servants await her arrival in "*mourning cloaks*" (II.iv.0 SD), witnesses to a pre-

[189] For a discussion of these as "images of…ambition", see Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Political Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 11.
[190] *The Last Parte of the Mirour* (1578), sig. G2v.

emptive funeral. Wrapped in a "*white sheet*" (II.iv.17 SD) with "*verses…pinned*" to her, meanwhile, Dame Eleanor herself is at once corpse and coffin: the white sheet is suggestive of a shroud or winding sheet, while there are records of verses being pinned to coffins during early modern funeral processions.[191] She is visually and verbally framed as a spectacle. Gloucester's speech prior to her entry is dominated by almost tautological references to looking – he worries about how Eleanor will respond to "[t]he abject people *gazing* on [her] face| With envious *looks*" (II.iv.12-13), he "prepare[s]| [His] tear-stained *eyes*, to *see* her miseries" (II.iv.16-17) – and when she does enter, her "*white*" sheet stands out in vivid contrast to the "*mourning*" black of Gloucester and his men.[192] Dame Eleanor thus becomes first of many spectacular tragic bodies in the *Contention* plays. Surrounded, observed and remarked upon by an onstage crowd, dead and dying characters including Gloucester himself and, later, Richard, Duke of York are likewise offered up to the playhouse audience's gaze in scenes of metatheatrical display. Dame Eleanor, however, is the only character whose punishment is, specifically, to be looked at. She is not taunted, tortured, or killed on stage: her objectification *is* her demise, a feature of her tragedy which seems inextricable from the fact that she is the only female character whose fall is staged across the two plays.

A few verbal resemblances in this scene indicate that the dramatist or dramatists were working from the *Mirror*'s "Dame Elianor Cobham" poem directly. Ronald Knowles points out, for instance, that Eleanor describes her penance as "open shame" in both the *Mirror* and the play, and the lines in which the *Contention*'s Eleanor imagines what she will "[s]ometime…say" echo a moment from the *Mirror* in sentiment if not in exact phrasing.[193] Just as the *Mirror*'s Dame

[191] The mention of the "*verses…pinned*" to Dame Eleanor is given only in the Q stage directions: see *First Part of the Contention*, sig. D2r. For evidence of the funerary practice, see Andrea Brady, *English Funerary Elegy in the Seventeenth Century: Laws in Mourning* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 65-68. Notably, there is no chronicle source for the pinning of verses to Dame Eleanor's sheet, neither was this a typical feature of public penance (more common, according to Knowles, was the wearing of a mock paper crown). The pinned papers therefore appear to be the invention of the dramatist, drawn from and referencing funeral custom. See Knowles, *King Henry VI Part 2*, p. 226, II.iv.31n.

[192] Emphasis mine.

[193] Knowles, *King Henry VI Part 2*, p. 225, II.iv.19n.

Elianor describes the ignominy, as "a Princesse next the Quene,| Wyfe to a Prince, and none so great as hee| A Kinges uncle, Protector of his countrey", of being made to "passe the open streate.| Barelegd, and barefoote, to al the worldes wonder", so Eleanor in the play anticipates,[194]

> Sometime I'll say, 'I am Duke Humphrey's wife,
> And he a prince and ruler of the land;
> Yet so he ruled, and such a prince he was,
> As he stood by whilst I, his forlorn duchess,
> Was made a wonder and a pointing-stock
> To every idle rascal follower.' (II.iv.43-48)

These lines, at once, look forward and back, projecting a *Mirror*-esque performance into Eleanor's future, while at the same time remembering an already extant moment from the earlier text. In general, however, it is the staging more than the language of Eleanor's penance which is reminiscent of the *Mirror*'s theatrical tragic method. Lamenting her misfortunes before an assembled audience, her body symbolically suspended between life and death, Dame Eleanor is effectively a *Mirror* narrator. Indeed, not only does the funereal adornment of her body reflect the *Mirror* Elianor's reference to being "shrouded in a sheete" during her penance, it also realises the described performance of another *Mirror* speaker, Mistress Shore, who "step[s]…on the stage in [her] shrowdeing sheete as [she] was buried" to deliver her posthumous soliloquy.[195]

Dame Eleanor is only the first of several such still-living corpses to make long, scene-dominating speeches across the *Contention* plays. In the second part of the *Contention*, or the *True Tragedy*, Young Clifford holds forth for a staggering thirty lines "*with an arrow in his neck*"; this stage direction, which features only in O, appears to draw on the gory image conjured by Clifford's preface in the *Mirror*, which invites us to "suppose [we] see this lord Clifford all armed save his head, with his brest plate all gore bloud running from his throte, wherin an hedles arrow sticketh thrugh which wound" he speaks.[196] His dying speech in the play bears no verbal resemblance to his poem in the *Mirror*; but the scene nevertheless takes the improbable image,

[194] *The Last Parte of the Mirour* (1578), sig. G4v.
[195] *The Last Parte of the Mirour* (1578), sig. G4v; *The Mirour for Magistrates* (1587), sig. Ll3r.
[196] *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York*, sig. C3v; *A Myrrour for Magistrates* (1559), sig. Aa4v.

which the *Mirror* can only ask us to "suppose [that] we see", and recreates it on stage before a playhouse audience's eyes. The *Contention* plays are notoriously gruesome, full of severed heads rendered disturbingly animate: Suffolk's head, lovingly cradled by Margaret (*Henry VI Part 2*, IV.iv.1-17); Somerset's head, mockingly commanded to "speak…and tell them what I did" (*Henry VI Part 3*, I.i.16) by his murderer Richard. This theatrical gore, these liminal dead yet lively corpses, are all reminiscent of tragedy as embodied in the *Mirror*. Dame Eleanor and Young Clifford are the closest the *Contention* plays come to staging *Mirror* narrators, however: spectacular bodies pushing (almost) posthumous performance to its credible limits.

Duke Humphrey becomes another of the plays' tragic spectacles, but his corpse forms a silent tableau, displayed to the audience, as well as to Henry and a group assembled of nobles, on the bed in which he has been strangled. His death is explicitly framed as a "tragedy". Accusing Gloucester's enemies of his murder, the Earl of Warwick declares, of the discovery of the body,

> Who finds the partridge in the puttock's nest
> But may imagine how the bird was dead,
> Although the kite soar with unbloodied beak?
> Even so suspicious is this tragedy. (III.iii.177-180)

For Knowles, this is "tragedy in the simple sense of lamentable death"; but I propose that this gloss overlooks the extent to which Gloucester's death has been constructed metadramatically as a performance within the performance.[197] In his final living appearance in the play, Gloucester, anticipating his imminent demise, describes himself as a "prologue" to his enemies' "play":

> I know their complot is to have my life,
> And if my death might make this island happy
> And prove the period of their tyranny,
> I would expend it with all willingness.
> But mine is made the prologue to their play;
> For thousands more that yet suspect no peril
> Will not conclude their plotted tragedy. (III.i.147-153)

Through this theatrical metaphor, Gloucester characterises his death as both a pattern and a premonition of the destruction that is to follow. The role of the prologue is to introduce, to

[197] Knowles, *King Henry VI Part 2*, p. 267, III.ii.194n.

foretell, and in this instance Gloucester will foretell by example: like the dumb show that precedes "the Murder of Gonzago" in *Hamlet*, his will be a demise rehearsed and repeated. Gloucester thus pitches himself and his fall as a different kind of dramatic episode, a play-patch, distinct and self-contained. He is prologue, moreover, to a "plotted tragedy"; this is the first of several references in the *Contention* plays to the events of the drama as "tragedy" in an explicitly theatrical sense. The term is elastic in scope, here referring to an interminable series of falls that will comprise the overarching tragic narrative. If a tragedy could be shorter than one whole play in the period, it could also be longer too; the rise and fall of Tamburlaine, for instance, takes place across ten acts.

By contrast, Warwick's use of the word "tragedy" in the accusatory speech quoted above is particular, referring to the circumscribed event of Gloucester's death. Indeed, I propose, further, that Warwick's "tragedy" gestures specifically to Gloucester's dead body, displayed on the bed in which he has been murdered. The staging of the bed differs substantially between the Quarto and Folio texts. In light of the *New Oxford Shakespeare*'s revision theory, I want to consider these as two distinct versions of the same event in the play – an isolatable unit of action which exists in two interchangeable iterations. A stage direction in Q1 specifies that the murder is performed on stage: "*Then the Curtaines being drawn*, *Duke* Humphrey *is discovered in his bed, and two men lying on his brest and smothering him in his bed*".[198] Following the murder, the curtains are closed, and then opened again by Warwick in order to examine the body. In F, by contrast, the murder takes place offstage, with a conversation between the Duke of Suffolk and "*two or three* [murderers] *running over the stage from the murther*" confirming that it has been carried out. There is no mention of curtains in the Folio stage directions; instead a "*Bed*" is "*put forth*" in order to display the body.[199] In Q1, the implication is that the bed remains static, in a playing space

[198] *First Part of the Contention*, sig. E2r, sig. E3r.
[199] *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (London: printed by Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, 1623), sig.N3r, sig. N3v.

concealed behind a curtain, which is therefore easy to reveal or cover; in F, by contrast, the bed is pushed out onto the stage in order to be displayed to the audience.[200]

The two versions, of course, produce different effects: in Q1, the audience experiences the shock of the violent act, while in F the idea of Gloucester's murdered corpse haunts the scene long before the body itself is revealed. But despite the considerable differences in staging, the pair of scenes in both texts of the play are broadly analogous: in the first, the audience finds out that Gloucester has been murdered; and in the second, his dead body is displayed to the King and nobles, and the cause of his death debated. Whether the altered use of the bed results from artistic or practical considerations, this is just one manifestation of Tiffany Stern's hypothesis that plays from the period can be thought of "throughout, [as] a series of patches of definable kinds".[201] The same basic narrative checkpoints are reached in each text – of the kind, we might speculate, that exist on some imaginary *ur*-plot – but the entire episode of Gloucester's death has been revised with a different method of staging in mind. Central to this thesis is the notion that the textual and conceptual "patchiness" of early modern plays goes hand in hand: that a unit which is imaginatively or narratively discrete can, like a song or prologue on a different sheet of paper, be thought of as a kind of "play patch". Textual and imaginative unit need not overlap, but the isolatable episode of Gloucester's death neatly exemplifies the point; framed as a self-contained tragedy within the narrative of the play, the entire sequence exists in two distinct textual versions, mappable onto one another.

Sasha Roberts, in her study of beds in Shakespearean tragedy, argues that "the stage property of the bed becomes like a stage-within-a-stage", and this is true in both the Q1 and F

[200] In his study of the staging of Q1, William Montgomery notes that "[t]here is some reason to believe that the stage had a discovery space", used for both the Gloucester bed scenes and Cardinal Beaufort's death, but that this is not necessary; given limited evidence for the existence of a specific discovery space in the early modern playhouse, he posits the use of one of the entryways to the stage, curtained and the bed placed behind this curtain" for the scenes. See William Montgomery, "The Original Staging of *The First Part of the Contention* (1594)", *Shakespeare Survey* 41 (1989), pp. 13-22, p. 15.
[201] Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 256.

versions of Gloucester's death.[202] The bed serves as a self-contained performance space to which the assembled characters become onstage spectators. Indeed, Warwick adopts a kind of presenter function, urging the King to "view" (III.iii.135) the body and, in Q1, "*draw*[ing] *the curtain and show*[ing] *Duke Humphrey in his bed*", controlling the moment of the reveal.[203] He also offers a gruesome description of the marks of strangulation on Gloucester's corpse (the nastier details – the "face…black and full of blood", the "eyeballs further out than when he lived" (III.iii.154-155) – appear only in the Folio), thus rendering the body a macabre spectacle. Editors of the play including Knowles and Rory Loughnane propose that the curtains should be shut shortly after the end of this speech, once Warwick has finished itemising and interpreting the "signs" of Gloucester's murder.[204] For Knowles, "[t]he actor of the dead Gloucester, as described by Warwick, could not sustain that expression for long", and so needs to be quickly concealed from view.[205] It seems unlikely, however, that an actor could have mimicked the details of the strangled Gloucester's appearance for any length of time; some, such as the bruised and blood-filled face, could have been created using stage cosmetics, while others – the protruding eyeballs, the "nostrils stretched with struggling" (III.iii.157) – must largely have been realised through Warwick's description.[206] Given the lack of any reference to the closure of the curtains in Q1, or to the removal of the bed in F, I propose that the body was still visible at the point at which Warwick delivered his "tragedy" speech, quoted above. The speech begins with two animal analogies: the "heifer dead and bleeding", and the dead "partridge in the puttock's

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[202] Sasha Roberts, "'Let me the curtains draw': the Dramatic and Symbolic Properties of the Bed in Shakespearean Tragedy", in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 153-167, p. 153.
[203] *First Part of the Contention*, sig. E3r.
[204] In Loughnane's edition for the *New Oxford Shakespeare, "the bed is withdrawn*" at III.iii.171.1, after Warwick's lines to Cardinal Beaufort, "Tis like you would not feast him as a friend; | And 'tis well seen he found an enemy" (III.iii.170-171). In Knowles's edition, Warwick "*closes the curtains*" several lines earlier, at the end of his description of the corpse (after the line, "The least of all these signs were probable" (III.ii.178)). Knowles, *King Henry VI Part 2*, p. 267, III.ii.178.
[205] Knowles, *King Henry VI Part 2*, p. 267, III.ii.178n.
[206] On early modern stage make-up, see Andrea Stevens, "Cosmetic Transformations", in *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, ed. Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare: London, 2014), pp. 94-117.

nest". These are analogies, specifically, for Gloucester's curiously marked corpse. When Warwick declares, with a deictic "this", that "[e]ven so suspicious is *this* tragedy", he is not only referring to Gloucester's death as an event, but is also, at the same time, gesturing to the strangled body still visible in the bed.[207]

Staged in this way, it is the still image – the narrated and spectated body framed by the bed – which constitutes the "tragedy". Claire Saunders describes the displaying of Gloucester's corpse as a "tableau", one of several deaths in the plays of the first tetralogy that are "deliberately isolated" so as to "engrave themselves on [the audience's] imagination because of a particular style in their scenic representation".[208] Leggatt, too, observes that many of the death scenes of the *Henry VI* plays are united by the partial repetition of a stage picture, though in his argument the "reverberating" image is that of the father-son *pieta* first realised in the deaths of the Talbots in *Henry VI Part 1*.[209] The death of Gloucester bears little resemblance to a *pieta*, but it does exemplify many of the features of tragic dramaturgy that recur in different combinations throughout the *Contention* plays. The image "reverberates" most completely, to borrow Leggatt's term, in the death of Cardinal Beaufort, who also dies in bed only a few scenes later, and it is, more broadly, similar in staging to several of the character demises mentioned above. Like the penance of Eleanor Cobham before it, like the deaths of York and Clifford in the later play, it is organised around a central, vulnerable or suffering body, at which we are encouraged – even forced – to gaze for a protracted length of time. There is a particular emphasis on the gruesomeness of the image of Gloucester's corpse; again, we might compare the bloody death of Clifford, and also the displaying of the "*head and body*" (IV.i.144.3) of the murdered Suffolk, which an unnamed Gentleman describes as a "barbarous and bloody spectacle" (IV.i.147).

[207] Emphasis mine.
[208] Claire Saunders, "'Dead in His Bed': Shakespeare's Staging of the Death of the Duke of Gloucester in *2 Henry VI*", *The Review of English Studies*, February 1985, vol. 36, no. 141, pp. 19-34, p. 29, p. 26.
[209] Leggatt, "The Death of John Talbot", p. 21-22, p. 28-29.

In its explicit framing as a "tragedy", meanwhile, the death of Gloucester is similar to a number of moments throughout the *Contention* plays in which the matter of the drama is self-reflexively identified as tragic; to return to the observation with which I began this chapter, this is largely why the plays of the first tetralogy contain so many uses of the word. We have discussed already Gloucester's reference to the "plotted tragedy" of his enemies, which imagines the impending devastation of civil war as an interminable tragic superstructure, a drama which – like the *First Part of the Contention* itself – drives inexorably on past the proper point of conclusion. There is also, in the first *Contention* play, the Lieutenant's description of the "tragic melancholy night" (IV.i.4) which serves as ominous backdrop to the death of Suffolk. Perhaps the most boldly metatheatrical reference, meanwhile, comes in the second act of *The True Tragedy*. Having withdrawn from the battlefield, Warwick condemns his own cowardly retreat in the lines, "Why stand we like soft-hearted women here,| Wailing our losses whiles the foe doth rage,| And look upon, as if the tragedy,| Were played in jest by counterfeiting actors?" (II.iii.25-28). In a scene of bombastically angry pledges of valour and vengeance – Warwick declares that he will "kill [his] horse, because [he] will not fly" (II.iii.24) – this is a tonally daring moment, potentially inviting ironic laughter from the audience as it emphasises the fictionality of the very events at which Warwick rages so passionately. The *Contention* plays' final instance of tragic self-reference comes in the penultimate scene of *The True Tragedy*, as Henry, facing death, reflects on the murder of his son as a "tragic history" (V.vi.28) – not a drama, but a narrative of *de casibus*-style demise. Indeed, he even imagines his son as "Icarus" (V.vi.21), the archetypal faller.

Still, of all of the uses outlined here, Warwick's framing of Gloucester's death as a "tragedy" is the closest in sense to "tragedy" as it was established by *A Mirror for Magistrates*. Gloucester's fall – presented across three acts, embodied in his gruesomely strangled corpse – is a tragedy, according to a prominent literary conception of the term, which makes up only part of a play. Barbara Hodgdon refers to the death of Gloucester as an "internal close", the moment "where power is transferred from Protector to King", signalling a conclusion in the middle of

the drama.[210] The *Contention* plays are, as Hodgdon argues, structured around such mid-play conclusions. Their narrative strategy is characterised by what she describes as "chronicle closure", "selectively adopt[ing] or adapt[ing] the sign systems associated with tragedy or comedy" to bring to an end one historic episode before embarking on another; to take another example from the *First Part of the Contention*, the episode of Cade's rebellion is concluded with the death of Cade at the end of Act Four before York's conquest begins in earnest, announced by York's entrance with an "*army of Irish, with Drum and Colours*" at the opening of Act Five.[211] Hodgdon links the "closural practice" of the plays, specifically, to the episodic structure of Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and Yorke*. For Hodgdon, it is Hall's process of pausing and "rebeginning" after each historical unit that underlies the *Contention* plays' continuous roll of narrative arcs.[212] It is the set-piece of Gloucester's staged "tragedy", however, that both marks the point of closure and echoes across the play's second half; if the broad narrative structure can be attributed to Hall, the method of its theatrical execution is definitively the *Mirror*'s. In the next section, I examine another moment of "internal close", this time in the second of the *Contention* plays. The death of York – the titular "True Tragedie" of the Octavo text – is staged within just four scenes of the play beginning. I consider it as another of the plays' tragic tableaux, a discrete, circumscribed episode within the larger drama which both shares and develops dramaturgical features of the tragedies staged in *The First Part of the Contention*.

Richard, Duke of York: A Tragedy in Two Acts

Julius Caesar (1599) has often been singled out as unusual among Shakespeare's tragedies for the fact that its eponymous protagonist is dead within three acts of the play. The eighteenth-century critic Charles Gildon declared with some irritation that the play "ought rather to be called *Marcus Brutus*", or else "to have ended at [Caesar's] death", while E. K. Chambers observes, in more

[210] Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All*, p. 60.
[211] Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All*, p. 52.
[212] Hodgdon, *The End Crowns All*, pp. 47-48.

measured critical terms, that "[w]hile Shakespeare's later tragedies move in a single curve to a catastrophe in the death of the title-character, the action of *Julius Caesar* has two peaks, one in the Capitol and the other at Philippi".[213] Far less has been made, however, of the fact that the tragic character named on the octavo title page of the play later published as *Henry VI Part 3* is dead within just four scenes of the action beginning. The play was originally entitled *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of York, and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt, with the whole contention between the two Houses Lancaster and Yorke*; Richard, Duke of York is given at least equal billing with the king after whom the play is now known, and on the title page of the 1600 Quarto reprint of the text, Richard's "True Tragedie" is advertised in substantially larger font than anything else, as though the main title of the play.[214] York is foremost on the title page, of course, not because his "Tragedie" is the central focus of the drama, but because it is its first major climactic event: the play opens with him occupying the throne, physically and metaphorically on the ascent; four scenes later, he is defeated in battle, mockingly crowned on a "molehill" (I.iv.67), and then killed.[215]

Like Duke Humphrey in *The First Part of the Contention*, York becomes a tragic spectacle. Whereas Gloucester makes his final appearance on stage after he has been murdered, York enters alone, alive but entirely resigned to his fate: "here my life must end" (I.iv.26), he declares in both the O and F texts of the play, adding in F that he is "faint and cannot fly their fury" (I.IV.23), already physically weakened and declining.[216] Defeated in combat by Clifford, Northumberland, and Queen Margaret, and made to stand upon the "molehill", York becomes

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[213] Charles Gildon, "An Essay on the Remarks on the Plays of Shakespeare", in *William Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Brian Vickers, 6 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974-1981), vol. 11, p. 256; E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), vol. 1, p. 399.
[214] *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York* (1595), t.p.; *The True Tragedie of Richarde Duke of Yorke and the Death of Good King Henrie the Sixt: with the Whole Contention Betweene the Two Houses, Lancaster and Yorke* (London, 1600), t.p.
[215] A stage direction in the Folio text of *Henry VI Part 3* indicates that York and some of his supporters "*go up*" (I.i.32.1) to the throne, suggesting that the throne is raised on a platform above the main level of the stage. Janette Dillon suggests that the "molehill" may have been staged using the same platform, amplifying the cruel irony of the mock coronation through visual repetition. Janette Dillon, *Shakespeare and the Staging of English History* (Oxford: OUP, 2021), p. 42.
[216] *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York* (1595), sig. A8v; *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies,* sig. 08r.

another tableau of the kind Claire Saunders identifies throughout the plays of the first tetralogy; he is isolated and elevated on a separate performance platform, surrounded by spectators to his anguish. This tableau is held in near stasis for an extended period of time. Both Margaret and York deliver speeches of around 40 lines, and while Margaret is clearly moving during hers (she first gives York the "napkin" (I.iv.79) stained with Rutland's blood, and then crowns him with the paper crown), York is apparently motionless; indeed, Margaret is frustrated that he does not "[s]tamp, rave and fret" (I.iv.91).

The effect of this is to prolong the time we have to look at the weakened and humiliated York. Particularly when he begins speaking, his stillness – in contrast to the implied restlessness of Queen Margaret as she circles her prey – commands attention. Janette Dillon identifies a dramaturgical technique in Shakespeare's English history plays, which she characterises as the theatrical equivalent of the "close-up": "[i]n theatre", she observes, "the bigger picture never disappears…Yet there are moments when stagecraft forcefully scripts an intensity of engagement between actor and audience which has similarities to the close-up".[217] Dillon focuses, in particular, on the soliloquy as a device for producing this effect; but although York's speech is addressed to onstage listeners, rather than the playhouse audience alone, its venom, its anguish and its sheer length mean that York nevertheless comes to dominate the scene in the manner Dillon describes. Mostly bitter invective against Queen Margaret – "she-wolf" (I.iv.111), "Amazonian trull" (I.iv.114), "tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide" (I.iv137) – the speech turns to pathos in its closing lines, as York directs our gaze towards the tears he sheds for his son ("These tears are my sweet Rutland's obsequies" (I.iv.147)). The emotive power of the speech is exemplified by Northumberland's response. Despite being a supporter of the Lancastrian cause and ally to Queen Margaret, Northumberland is so "move[d]" by York's "passions" that he "hardly can…check [his] eyes from tears" (I.iv.150-151); these lines, possibly

[217] Dillon, *Shakespeare and the Staging of English History*, p. 82.

delivered as an aside, position Northumberland as a spectator to the tragedy playing out on stage, modelling a possible audience reaction to the scene.[218] The use of onstage audiences to frame such moments of and as tragedy is a dramaturgical technique also present in the earlier *Contention* play – Gloucester and his men mourn Dame Eleanor's penance; Warwick displays Gloucester's corpse to an assembled crowd – but its most potent examples are found in *The True Tragedy*, in Northumberland's weeping and, later, in Henry's lament over the "piteous spectacle" (II.v.74) of the father who has killed his son, and the son who has killed his father.

Spectacular, lamented, York's last moments thus have much in common with other death scenes or final appearances throughout the *Contention* plays. In a further, shorter speech, York again laments and condemns the brutal murder of his son, and this time he also begins to imagine himself as a sorrowful tale:

> Keep thou the napkin and go boast of this,
> And if thou tell'st the heavy story right,
> Upon my soul the hearers will shed tears.
> Yea, even my foes will shed fast-falling tears
> And say 'Alas, it was a piteous deed!' (I.iv.159-163)

The napkin stained with his tears and his son's blood becomes a synecdochic prop standing in for their suffering bodies, as York constructs their lives and deaths as a story to be wept at by future audiences. We might compare the retrospective designation of Gloucester's fall by Warwick as a "tragedy"; York's life is re-packaged as a contained and performable narrative at the point of ending. While Northumberland stands and weeps, Queen Margaret and Clifford between them dispatch York; and thus, we might assume, ends his brief titular "True Tragedie", four scenes into the play originally published under that name.

Except that the spectre of York's fall continues to haunt, not the whole play, but several more scenes. In the scene immediately following his death, the entire episode is re-lived in the

[218] Editors John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen suggest that Northumberland's lines might be spoken as asides, as no one on stage reacts to them. On onstage spectators as models of audience response, see Martin Meisel's discussion of "audience surrogates". John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen, ed., *Henry VI Part 3* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), p. 219, p. 220, I.iv.150-151n, I.iv.169-171n; Martin Meisel, *How Plays Work: Reading and Performance* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), pp. 110-112.

words of a messenger, who brings news of York's demise to his sons; already, York has become the "piteous" story he imagined himself as, albeit lamented by his sons rather than his enemies. The messenger also references the desecration of York's body after his death. Queen Margaret has commanded that his head be cut off and "set…on York gates" (I.iv.179), and the messenger describes this as "the saddest spectacle that e'er I viewed" (II.i.67). This sad spectacle is, in the next scene, apparently realised onstage. The location is York, as Queen Margaret announces:

> Welcome, my lord [i.e., King Henry], to this brave town of York.
> Yonder's the head of that arch-enemy
> That sought to be encompassed with your crown.
> Doth not the object cheer your heart, my lord? (II.ii.1-4)

While the reference to "[y]onder…head" could gesture towards something offstage, Margaret's question about "the object", along with Henry's reply – "To see *this* sight it irks my very soul" (II.ii.6) – indicates that the gruesome image is visible to the audience, perhaps "mounted", as Cox and Rasmussen propose, "in the upper acting area".[219] Some lines later, Henry appears to address the head directly ("Ah, cousin York… | How it doth grieve me that thy head is here" (II.ii.54-55)), again suggesting that the severed head is displayed somewhere onstage. Though silent, York thus remains a potent, embodied presence in the scene, looming over the conflict that escalates in the wake of his death, as the dispute over the succession continues and fighting breaks out once again.

It is not clear whether the head remains in place for the ensuing battle. It would be powerfully visually symbolic for the original contender to the throne to look down over the violence precipitated by his attempt, but there is an implied shift in location for the battle scenes, which may have meant that the head was taken down.[220] It is referenced again, however, after the bloody death of Clifford. Following his gruesome final entrance and lengthy dying speech, Clifford collapses, and a group of Yorkist soldiers led by Edward, Richard and Warwick enter

[219] Cox and Rasmussen, *Henry VI Part 3*, II.ii.2n.
[220] The battle in question is the Battle of Towton, fought near York in 1461. See Cox and Rasmussen, *Henry VI Part 3*, p. 245, II.iiin.

and mock his corpse. Yet another brutalised body taking centre stage, Clifford hovers between life and death for an indeterminate period of time; the Yorkist nobles continue to taunt him even after his death, addressing his body as though he can hear them and respond, while simultaneously acknowledging that he is dead, and thus cannot. During this prolonged mocking of the corpse, Warwick twice suggests:

> From off the gates of York fetch down the head,
> Your father's head, which Clifford placed there;
> Instead whereof let this supply the room. (II.vi.51-53)

Whether visible onstage or not, York's severed head is invoked in this moment of Yorkist victory. His death, Warwick implies, has been avenged through the defeat of Clifford, and as "[m]easure for measure must be answered" (II.vi.54), so the swapping of York's head for Clifford's will complete the carefully calibrated retribution.

There is no indication in either O or F that the head-swap is performed, but the reference to it nevertheless brings this phase of the play to a close. No longer does York's death loom over the action, whether physically asserted by the silent presence of the severed head, or invoked by characters driven to grief, guilt, or vengeance by his fate. With the taking down of his head, and the raising up of his murderer Clifford's, Fortune's wheel has turned its circle: the "True Tragedie of Richarde, Duke of Yorke" is complete, and the *Whole Contention* continues with Edward IV now on the throne. Again, the *Mirror*-esque emphasis on the dead body is structurally pivotal. While York's severed head is foregrounded, whether visually or simply in the dialogue, his tragedy is ongoing; it is only once another tragic body takes centre stage that the play reaches Hodgdon's moment of "internal close". There are numerous other tragedies across the *Contention* plays which showcase the same strategies of storytelling and staging identified in this chapter: the rise and fall of Jack Cade, which forms a self-contained episode in the *First Part of the Contention*; the bloody demise of Warwick who, like Clifford, dies "*wounded*" (V.ii.0n) on stage after a lengthy final speech; the murder of Henry VI himself, which unfolds in slow-motion, and even still does not conclude the *True Tragedy*'s narrative. I have highlighted only a

handful of such moments in this chapter; but the *Mirror*'s conception of tragedy underlies them all. The *Contention* plays bring to the popular stage the version of tragedy that was, for most of the sixteenth century, definitive. They realise the *Mirror*'s full theatrical potential, showcasing its tragic bodies not in isolation, but as a *de casibus* series. As such, they represent an important exercise in translating English tragedy from the page to the playhouse.

Henry VI Part 1: Mirroring the *Contention*

Although the three plays were printed in the First Folio as a trilogy, *Henry VI Part 1* exists at a remove from the *Contention* plays. Whereas the *First Part of the Contention* and the *True Tragedy* were both published several times prior to 1623, including in Pavier's combined edition, *1 Henry VI* did not appear in print until the Folio. If critics are correct in associating *1 Henry VI* with the play listed as "harey the vj" in *Henslowe's Diary*, then it premiered in 1592, a couple of years later than the *Contention* plays, and was staged as a standalone drama, rather than as one instalment of a multi-play narrative.[221] The links between the plays are much debated. While Leggatt argues that the image of the father-son *pietà* lends an iconographical unity to the trilogy, others, including Ronald Knowles, point to major narrative discontinuities – in particular, the absence of any mention of John Talbot in the *Contention* plays – to argue that *1 Henry VI* was conceived of separately and subsequently, as a prequel.[222] This, as the *New Oxford Shakespeare* editors summarise, is the current critical orthodoxy.[223] Certainly, the influence of the *Mirror* is less pronounced in *1 Henry VI* than it is in the *Contention* plays. Not only is there far less overlap in historical content, but the play is not structurally indebted to the *Mirror* in the same way; it is not made up of a series of tragic episodes, each organised around a suffering body, which follow one another in sequence. There are, however, a few clear dramaturgical echoes, and I conclude this

[221] Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p. 16; Edward Burns, *King Henry VI Part 1* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2000), pp. 1-9.
[222] Leggatt, "The Death of John Talbot", pp. 21-28.
[223] Taylor and Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", p. 494. Knowles, *King Henry VI Part 2,* pp. 111-116.

chapter by drawing attention to them. The gory, slow-motion death of Salisbury, in particular, demonstrates that the *Mirror*'s tragic method had reach beyond the *Contention* plays, and may also represent an attempt to align the later play stylistically with the two earlier works.

In the order in which the three plays appear in the Folio, the earliest onstage death of the *Henry VI* trilogy occurs in the opening act of *1 Henry VI*. Talbot and Salisbury are discussing strategy on the turrets of Orleans when a shot suddenly knocks Salisbury to the ground. Following the shock of the stage gunfire and the dying cries of the fallen men, Talbot delivers a gradually dawning eulogy, as he begins to register the extent of his friend's injury:

> TALBOT
>
> What chance is this that suddenly hath crossed us?
> Speak, Salisbury; at least, if thou canst, speak.
> How far'st thou, mirror of all martial men?
> One of thy eyes and thy cheek's side struck off?
> Accursed tower, accursed fatal hand,
> That hath contrived this woeful tragedy.
> In thirteen battles Salisbury o'ercame:
> Henry the Fifth he first trained to the wars.
> Whilst any trump did sound or drum struck up,
> His sword did ne'er leave striking in the field.
> Yet liv'st thou, Salisbury? Though thy speech doth fail,
> One eye thou hast to look to heaven for grace. (I.vi.50-61)

This is another of Janette Dillon's "close-up" moments. The action is already, probably, happening "above", in a contained space higher than stage level to which the spectator's eye is inevitably drawn.[224] Talbot's description takes us closer still, zooming in on the gruesome detail of Salisbury's mangled visage. As it focuses the audience's attention on a particular point in space, moreover, another effect of the eulogy is temporarily to pause or slow the passage of time. Talbot's speech is bookended by two moments of pyrotechnic surprise: the first is the shot and the second, some 28 lines later, is an alarum accompanied by thunder and lightning. These bursts of clamour foreground the imminent danger of the present, but between them time is curiously

[224] Editor Edward Burns suggests that "*on the turrets*" probably referred to the gallery at the back of the stage, or even to "a trumpeter's 'turret' in the roof", but he also notes that Salisbury's verbal identification of their location "on this turret top" means that the scene could have been performed at normal stage level. Burns, *King Henry VI Part 1*, p. 150, I.iv.21.1n.

suspended. Having narrowed the visual focus of the scene to Salisbury's wounded face, Talbot spirits us away from Orleans altogether, in an encomiastic reflection on the dying man's military past. Briefly returned to the present by Salisbury's failing speech, Talbot then casts his and our gaze up towards the heavens. His words strive to imbue the awful moment with a kind of grace, as he imagines that he sees Salisbury "beckon" and "smile" (I.vi.70) at him. As in the *Mirror*, however, solemnity teeters on the brink of morbid humour when the body is foregrounded. This beatific description would, in performance, stand in stark contrast to the bloodied Salisbury's death throes, while Talbot's reference to the fact that Salisbury has only "[o]ne eye…to look for heaven for grace" undercuts the redemptive sentiment of the speech through its insensitive literalness. By the time the thunder and lightning finally interrupt him, Talbot has launched into a complicated digression in which he projects himself both forwards and back in time, pledging that he will avenge Salisbury's death on France "like…Nero,| Play[ing] on the lute, beholding the towns burn" (I.vi.73-74). It is as though the death of Salisbury has rendered time and space elastic: Talbot's speech stretches the moment further and further from the turrets of Orleans until, with the sudden noise of alarums and thunder, it recoils to the present.

As with several of the deaths in the *Contention* plays, the *Mirror*'s influence on this moment in *Henry VI Part 1* can be evidenced with relative ease. The details of Salisbury's gruesome death are, admittedly, common to all of the play's major sources: Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and Yorke* (1548) and Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577), as well as the poem in the *Mirror*, recount the blasting away of his eye and cheek as he surveyed the city of Orleans through a tower grate.[225] As Dominique Goy-Blanquet points out, however, it is the *Mirror*'s version of Salisbury's death, alone, that mentions that Salisbury was killed while conversing with a friend.[226] There is some language in the scene,

[225] Edward Hall, *Union of the Two Noble and Illustrate Families of Lancaster and Yorke* (London, 1548), sig. R5r; Raphael Holinshed, *The First Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London, 1577), pp. 1239-1240; *A Myrroure for* Magistrates (1559), sig. K1r.
[226] Dominique Goy-Blanquet, *Shakespeare's Early History Plays: From Chronicle to Stage* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), p. 30.

moreover, which specifically echoes his death as described in the *Mirror*: for instance, Talbot's denunciation of the fatal turret as an "[a]ccursed tower" (I.vi.54), which is a phrase also used by Salisbury in his *Mirror* soliloquy.[227] Talbot refers to Salisbury as a "mirror of all martial men" (I.vi.52), and while "mirror" here means model or exemplar, the word functions also as a reminder of the *Mirror for Magistrates*'s famous rendition of the story – not least because, three lines later, Talbot describes Salisbury's fatal injury as "this woeful tragedy" (I.vi.55), framing it (like the death of Gloucester) in the terms popularised by the *Mirror*.

Salisbury's is the only death in *1 Henry VI* for which there is a corresponding poem in *A Mirror for Magistrates*, but it exemplifies, with particular clarity, the techniques of tragic dramaturgy that I have identified recurring throughout both parts of the *Contention*. It is as though the pattern that repeats across the earlier pair of plays has been extended into the opening act of the later one. *Henry VI Part 1* opens with a tragedy reminiscent of those of Gloucester, or Clifford, or York. It is not until the fourth act deaths of Talbot and his son that this kind of set-piece recurs in the play. The idea of Talbot's death as a "freeze-frame", a "tableau", is explored at length by both Leggatt and Saunders, and I will not attempt to supplement their comprehensive analyses here.[228] Instead I turn, by way of conclusion, to a contemporary commentator's famous account of the play in performance. In his *Piers Pennilesse* (1592), Thomas Nashe – often cited as one of the authors of *1 Henry VI* – writes of Talbot's final moments:[229]

> How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French), to think that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and have his bones newe embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators (at least), (at severall times) who in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.[230]

In Nashe's terms, the stage Talbot is a *Mirror* narrator, resurrected to re-enact the tragedy of his final moments, viscerally re-embodied at the point of death by the imaginations of a rapt and

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[227] In his *Mirror* monologue, Salisbury exclaims, "Ah cursed tower that didst my dayes abridge". *A Myrroure for* Magistrates (1559), sig. K1r.
[228] Leggatt, "The Death of John Talbot", pp. 14-21; Saunders, "'Dead in His Bed'", p. 26.
[229] See Taylor and Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", pp. 513-517.
[230] Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Pennilesse His Supplication to the Divell* (London, 1593), sig. F3r.

weeping audience. Nashe conceives of the scene as a tragedy (he refers to the actor as a "Tragedian") in the image of *A Mirror for Magistrates*. The *Mirror* monologue is the reference point, the model: a tragic theatergram repeatedly reproduced on the late-sixteenth-century stage. This chapter has demonstrated that the *Contention* plays can be understood as comprehensive showcases of this *de casibus* tragic model. Though typically considered tragic only in subject matter, and not in form, these plays are, I have argued, clear exercises in translating a literary archetype of tragedy into a text that works on the stage. In chapter two, I continue to register the *Mirror*'s wide-reaching influence on the tragic dramaturgy of the 1580s and 1590s playhouses, examining *Mirror*-esque dying monologues alongside plays-within-plays as different kinds of inset tragedy. Whereas this chapter has focused on serialised tragedy – on plays comprising one tragic set-piece after another – in the next chapter I explore the idea that a tragedy was sometimes a discrete, isolated episode within a larger dramatic work, illuminating textual and conceptual examples of tragedy as play-patch.

CHAPTER TWO

"With the tragedie of…":
Inset Plays, Monologues, and Tragic Patches

On 17 July 1599, the document now known as *Henslowe's Diary* records a payment of 40 shillings made by Philip Henslowe to the playwright George Chapman "in earnest of A pastrall tragedie".[231] A fragment of the *Diary* found in British Museum MS. Add. 30262 contains a corresponding receipt for this payment written in Chapman's hand:

> Receaued by me George Chapman for a Pastorall
> Ending in a Tragedye in part of payment the
> Sum of fortye shillings, this xvjth of July
> Anno 1599
>
> By me George Chapman[232]

This brief authorial summary offers a rare glimpse of how an early modern playwright conceived of his own work's construction. Whereas Henslowe's "pastrall tragedie" suggests that the promised play is a tragedy in the pastoral mode – that is, perhaps, with a pastoral setting and character types – Chapman's "Pastoral ending in a Tragedye" indicates a rather different configuration, and perhaps hierarchy, of generic parts. Instead of being blended together in a seamless generic fusion, the "Pastorall" and the "Tragedye" are discrete, isolatable pieces of the larger play. The syntax of the receipt is somewhat ambiguous: Chapman intends either a "Pastorall Ending" in his "Tragedye", or – as seems more likely from the phrasing – a "Pastorall" play "Ending in a Tragedye". In neither reading does "Tragedye" describe the generic identity of the play as a whole.[233]

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[231] Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p. 122.
[232] George Chapman, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 266.
[233] Based on the wording of similar records elsewhere in *Henslowe's Diary*, Roslyn Knutson suggests that partial payments like this one may have been made in exchange for physical sections of plays. On 4 April 1600, Samuel Rowley requests the same sum, 40 shillings, for "fyve shetes" of his play *The Conquest of the Indies* and instructs Henslowe to "take the papers Into yo^{r} one hands". This process of writing and selling a play a few pages at a time reinforces the patchy, piecemeal nature of dramatic composition in the period and demonstrates the commercial value of the part; a few pages of a play appear to have had financial worth in their own right, and not just in the context of the finished play. Roslyn L. Knutson, "The Commercial Significance of the Payments for Playtexts in

In chapter one, I explored how plays traditionally categorised as "Histories" showcase the tragic dramaturgy of *A Mirror for Magistrates*, arguing that the first and second parts of the *Contention* are organised around a series of tragedies, according to a prominent sixteenth-century understanding of tragedy as a literary form. I also observed that critics have been reluctant to discuss the *Contention* plays as exercises in the staging of tragedy because these works do not conform to perhaps the most fundamental and persistent of critical assumptions about tragedy in a dramatic context: that one tragedy is equal in size and scope to one complete play. We can, of course, add various modifying adjectives to the label (a play might be a revenge, domestic or biblical tragedy) and we can, like Polonius, create generic compounds to describe a jumbled whole: "pastoral-comical", "tragical-historical", or perhaps Philip Sidney's famous "mongrell Tragicomedie".[234] But such labels nevertheless imply, even *impose*, a generic unity. The play as a whole is deemed to possess a consistent generic identity, albeit an identity which represents a jarring or unusual mixture of kinds. It is not too much of a critical stretch, either, for us to conceive of a play as belonging to two generic categories simultaneously. A play such as *Richard II* (*c.* 1595) for instance, might be thought of as both a history and a tragedy; but this is still the language of generic wholes. We would be unlikely to describe it, to paraphrase Chapman's receipt, as a history "Ending in a Tragedye".

In whatever combination or hierarchy the labels appear, the affinity of history and tragedy as dramatic categories is at least widely acknowledged in early modern scholarship. The Chapman receipt describes a far less familiar configuration of generic parts. It appears to promise a pastoral – a dramatic genre contiguous with comedy (and later tragicomedy) – with "a Tragedye", complete and singular, tacked onto the end of it. This is a construction which has no precedent in the long, familiar *de casibus* tradition which dominated tragic writing in England for

'Henslowe's Diary, 1597-1603", *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, Vol. 5 (1991), pp. 117-163, p. 126; Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 294.

[234] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), p. 241, II.ii.395-96 (F); Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London, 1595), sig. I1v.

most of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This is tragedy not as a repeating pattern within a play, but as an isolated piece. Chapman's receipt thus represents an even more significant departure from the modern critical understanding of what tragedy is in a dramatic context than the series of *Mirror*-esque tragedies which constitute the *Contention* plays. Indeed, it is telling that where critics have discussed this otherwise lost and untitled play, they have tended to refer to it using Henslowe's designation rather than Chapman's own speculative synopsis, despite the theatrical entrepreneur's notoriously limited knowledge of the plays he helped to fund.[235] In a genre-based survey of the repertory of the Admiral's Men, for instance, Roslyn Knutson automatically considers Chapman's play "in the category of tragedy", despite elsewhere acknowledging the blurriness of early modern generic boundaries ("particularly", she notes, "for tragical histories or historical tragedies").[236] Instead of smoothing over the strangeness of Chapman's miniature plot summary by preferring Henslowe's label, however, my intention in this chapter is to demonstrate that the receipt exemplifies an early modern usage and understanding of tragedy in a dramatic context that is, today, largely overlooked. This chapter explores tragedy as a singular, self-contained, even detachable event within a play: in other words, tragedy as play-patch.

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[235] Nineteenth-century critics were especially savage in their assessments of Henslowe, characterising the theatrical entrepreneur as "ignorant" and "illiterate", a greedy businessman with no respect for the playing companies he funded, and little knowledge or understanding "of stage management and dramatic literature". More recently, critics such as Neil Carson and G. E. Bentley have sought to rehabilitate Henslowe, emphasising his careful bookkeeping and fair treatment of the playwrights with whom he worked; but Carson maintains that there is little in those surviving accounts of Henslowe's life to "suggest a literary bent", and Bentley points to records such as that of "a boocke wher in is a p*ar*te of a weallche man written" to show that the financier's knowledge of the plays he paid for was often partial or vague. See J. Payne Collier, *The Diary of Philip Henslowe from 1591 to 1609* (London: printed for the Shakespeare Society, 1845), p. xv; F. G. Fleay, *A Chronicle History of the London Stage* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1890), p. 117; Neil Carson, *A Companion to Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 14; Gerald Eades Bentley, *Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 48, p. 76. For the entry referencing the "p*ar*te of a weallche man", see Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 88.

[236] Jonathan Bate refers to Chapman's play in passing as "A Pastoral Tragedy" in his recent book *How the Classics Made Shakespeare*, and in Martin Wiggins's *British Drama: A Catalogue*, it is generically categorised as a "pastoral tragedy", with Chapman's description quoted as a contemporary alternative. Roslyn L. Knutson, "Influence of the Repertory System on the Revival and Revision of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Dr. Faustus*", *ELR*, March (1988), vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 257-274; Jonathan Bate, *How the Classics Made Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Martin Wiggins, "A Pastoral Tragedy (1197)", *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue. Vol. 4, 1598-1602* (Oxford: OUP, Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2020), 10.1093/actrade/9780199265749.book.1, accessed 30 March 2021.

The play to which the Chapman receipt refers no longer survives – according to Knutson, it may never have been completed – but we can find a precedent for its unusual generic formulation in at least one non-dramatic work of the period.[237] Robert Greene's prose fiction *Pandosto* (1588), best-known as the main narrative source of *The Winter's Tale* (*c.* 1610), ends with a generically self-reflexive passage concerning the happy wedding of Dorastus and Fawnia and its aftermath:

> accompanied with *Dorastus*, *Fawnia*, and the Sicilian Embassadours, [Pandosto] sailed towards Sicilia, where he was most princelie entertained by Egistus: who hearing this comicall event, rejoyced greatly at his sonnes good happe, and without delay (to the perpetuall joy of the two yong Lovers) celebrated the marriage: which was no sooner ended, but *Pandosto* (calling to mind how first he betraied his friend *Egistus*, how his jealousie was the cause of *Bellarias* death, that contrarie to the law of nature hee had lusted after his owne Daughter) moved with these desperate thoughts, he fell in a melancholie fit, and to close up the Comedie with a Tragicall strategeme, hee slewe himselfe[238]

In a parenthetic comment on his own generic practice, the narrator announces a radical shift from comedy to tragedy in the final moments of his text, "clos[ing] up the Comedie with a Tragicall strategeme". In line with late-sixteenth-century usage, "strategeme" may here suggest a violent or bloody act, as well as, more familiarly, a device or scheme.[239] It is clear from Pandosto's sinister recollections that a "Tragicall" strain has been present throughout the text, but its culmination is nevertheless framed as a tragic vignette attached to the end of the celebratory "Comedie". In Greene's *Pandosto*, then, we have what might be described as a "Pastorall" – as in Shakespeare's subsequent dramatisation of the tale, Fawnia is raised in the countryside by a shepherd – "Ending in a Tragedye". Neither was *Pandosto* unique among prose works of the period in its self-reflexively piecemeal approach to comedy and tragedy. Thomas Nashe in his *Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), for instance, identifies several events in his meandering narrative as "tragedie[s]" or "tragicall tale[s]", and Greene announces episodes of comedy,

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[237] See also "Pastoral Tragedy, A", *Lost Plays Database*, https://lostplays.folger.edu/Pastoral_Tragedy,_A, accessed 30 May 2022.
[238] Robert Greene, *Pandosto. The Triumph of Time* (London, 1588), sig. G4r.
[239] "stratagem (*n.*), 3", *OED Online*, OUP, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/191298?redirectedFrom=stratagem#eid, accessed 10 Sep. 2021.

tragedy, or a rapid switching between the two in multiple other prose texts as well.[240] In the prominent and popular non-dramatic tradition, a tragedy was frequently an episode in a sequence, a piece of the whole, and this understanding of what tragedy could be crossed over into the drama of the period as well.

More than simply being a product of non-dramatic influence, however, it is a central contention of this thesis that the notion of tragedy as a piece or part of a play is entirely congruent with what we now understand about how plays were conceived of and constructed in the early modern period. Twenty-first century theatre history has reconceptualised the early modern play as a composition of textual fragments and scraps. In their study of the actor's "part", Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern argue that the early modern play in performance was "an accumulation, or a meeting, of numerous separate parts", proposing that we should think of plays of the period as collections of "loose-leaf sheets, commissioned or swapped or shuffled with facile aplomb".[241] In her later monograph *Documents of Performance*, Stern demonstrates the extent to which early modern plays "were from the start written patchily", observing that playwrights of the period were sometimes referred to as "play-patchers" because of the "common perception that a play was pieced together out of a collection of odds and ends: it was not a single whole entity".[242] Although references to dramatists as "patchers" were usually pejorative, implying that they merely pieced together their mediocre plays from mismatched, stolen scraps, Stern finds the notion of the "patch" heuristic for conceptualizing both the

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[240] Nashe's narrator parcels off the "tale" of the killing of Leiden and his followers as a "tragedie" and a "tragicall catastrophe", and later describes the rape and suicide of Heraclide – that "sad spectacle" witnessed through a hole in the wall – as a "tragicall tale". Greene's prose works in general make frequent use of the words "tragedy", "comedy" and their cognates, often in a theatrical context: the lovesick Gwydonius, in a story of the same name, is described as "play[ing] his part" in a "tragicall Comedie"; separated from her family, Mariana, in one of the tales of *Perimedes* (*c.* 1588), refers to herself as an "actor" in a "doleful tragedie". Greene again demonstrates his penchant for announcing rapid and radical shifts of genre in his *Farewell to Folly* (*c.* 1591); in this text, the newly crowned Selides is "haled" on by revenge "to seale up his comicall success with tragicall sorrow". In these examples as in many others, generic labels are attached to particular episodes of a larger narrative. Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller. Or, The Life of Jack Wilton* (London, 1594), sig. E2v, sig. K4v, sig. L2r; Robert Greene, *Perimedes, The Blacke-Smith* (London,1588), sig. C1v; Robert Greene, *Gwydonius. The Carde of Fancie* (London, 1584), sig. K1v; Robert Greene, *Greenes Farewell to Folly Sent to Courtiers and Schollers as a President to Warne Them From the Vaine Delights That Drawes Youth on to Repentance* (London, 1591).

[241] Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), pp. 6-7.

[242] Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009) p. 2.

process by which a play was created, and its material, textual existence. Early modern plays were written in pieces. A detailed "plot" or scene-by-scene summary allowed different acts to be parcelled out to different playwrights. Prologues and epilogues were often commissioned separately, and dramatists were also sometimes paid to write additional new scenes for older scripts. Having been composed in and of patches, a playtext's material form remained inherently fragmentary. Even when the main dialogue was consolidated in a playhouse prompt copy, texts such as songs, letters, prologues and epilogues were often kept on separate, free-floating sheets of paper; stage directions concerning entrances, exits, stage furniture, sound effects and so on may only ever have existed on the backstage plot, the chart which summarised and governed the play in performance; and the completed script was always "resolved on receipt into a collection of fragments", namely, the actors' individual parts.[243]

The early modern play as Stern describes it is thus un-Aristotelian by its very conception. Discussing the "unity" of the perfect tragic "plot", Aristotle writes that the story, "since it is the representation of an action, should concern an action that is single and entire, with its several incidents structured so that the displacement or removal of any one of them would disturb and dislocate the whole"; for "[i]f the presence or absence of something makes no discernible difference", he continues, "then it is no part of the whole".[244] Stern calls into question the notion of "whole[ness]" in relation to early modern drama. According to her thesis, the play is always made up of – and always preserved as – pieces, any of which may be swapped, lost, or purposely omitted: "displace[ment]", "remov[al]" and "disturb[ance]" are inevitable, even integral to the process of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century playmaking. Having examined, chapter by chapter, each type of textual fragment she identifies in turn, Stern concludes that "a play can be, throughout, a series of patches of definable kinds, each of which might be 'liminal' and/or 'essential' depending on reader and circumstance". The early modern play is, she suggests, "at its

[243] Stern, *Documents of Performance*, pp. 1-3
[244] Aristotle, *Poetics*, translated by Anthony Kenny (Oxford: OUP, 2013), pp. 27-28.

root fragmentary", and she poses a number of questions upon which scholarship needs to reflect anew in light of this understanding: what should play editors use as the copytext, for instance, and what is the relationship between the play printed and the play performed?[245]

I am interested in the implications of early modern plays' inherent fragmentariness for how we think about dramatic genre and, in particular, about tragedy in the period. Building on Stern's work and conclusions, it is my contention that the patchiness of plays' construction and materialisation was manifested, too, in how early modern plays were understood conceptually, as creative, narrative entities. I propose that the "patch" has imaginative as well as textual purchase, usefully describing discrete episodes in the creative or narrative unfolding of a drama analogous to the documentary "patches" Stern discusses. In this respect, my project takes its cue from the earlier *Shakespeare in Parts*, which is interested not just in the textual mechanics of how actors' parts worked, but in the prospect that "there was some kind of virtue, some serendipitous potential, in this rather primitive technology", that the part was an imaginatively generative unit, creatively as well as practically essential to the process of writing and putting on a play.[246] Although my project takes as its inspiration a broader category of early modern dramatic unit – not the clearly delineated actor's "part", but the messy and indeterminate "play-patch" – my contention is, similarly, that material and creative process are intertwined. The textual patchwork of the early modern play, I suggest, both informs and complements an imaginative patchwork, a lively medley of different kinds of dramatic action, with scenes of clowning boldly adjacent to scenes of battle, and entire self-contained tragedies embedded within larger plays.

The suggestion that early modern plays were generic mixtures is not, in itself, novel. It was an issue that greatly exercised literary commentators of the period, for whom popular English plays were "mongrel[s]", "hodgepodge[s]" and "gallimaufr[ies]", crude and

[245] Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 256.
[246] Palfrey and Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts*, p. 2.

indiscriminate mixtures of kinds which did not belong together.[247] The "patchwork" is not merely a textile analogue for these culinary and animal metaphors, however. It functions as a more precise and productive critical term for several reasons. Where "gallimaufry" and "hodgepodge" suggest a confused, essentially random mingling resulting in an amorphous mess, the patchwork is deliberate, crafted. The association with Stern's notion of the documentary "patch" is suggestive, moreover, and I explore some examples later in this chapter in which material and generic fragment overlap. "Patches" as theorised by Stern are not just discrete and isolatable pieces joined together to form a play: they are also, crucially, mobile. Many of the patches Stern discusses, including songs, masques, prologues and epilogues, are both detachable and re-attachable; they bud off from their plays of origin and take root elsewhere, assuming new shapes and significances in sometimes radically different dramas.[248] The same is true of many of the tragic patches I discuss later in this chapter: framed as distinct within the plays in which they first appear, they are reshaped and reprised as part of later dramas.

Those early modern commentators who complained that contemporary English drama was a generic mishmash – people like Philip Sidney and George Whetstone – were almost exclusively concerned about the inappropriate addition of comic episodes to otherwise tragic

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[247] "Hodge-podge" and "gallimaufry" are both words for a kind of stew with lots of different ingredients thrown in together; metaphorically, they describe a mismatched jumble or agglomeration. Sidney, *Defence*, sig. I1v; John Lyly, *Midas* (London,1592), sig. A2v; "hodge-podge (*n.*), 1, 2 and 3a", *OED Online*, OUP, https://oed.com/view/Entry/87541?rskey=y1sts0&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid, accessed 10 Sep 2021; "gallimaufry (*n.*), 1 and 2", *OED Online*, OUP, https://oed.com/view/Entry/76303?rskey=oUlH5q&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid, accessed 10 Sep 2021.

[248] A famous and striking example of a "patch" cropping up in multiple plays is the song that concludes *Twelfth Night* (*c.* 1601), which also appears, in altered and shortened form, in the middle of *King Lear* (*c.* 1606) (see *Twelfth Night*, V.i.367-86 and *King Lear*, III.ii.70-73). Stern also explores other, less well-known examples of songs which recur across plays in her chapter on "Songs and Masques", explaining that "[p]laywrights putting texts together at speed sometimes took whatever song was to hand, playing with its earlier meanings on some occasions, hoping to subsume them with new meanings on others". Other notable examples of travelling play-patches include the section of Ben Jonson's *Masque of Oberon* that "seems to work its way" into Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* (*c.* 1610), and the prologues to John Lyly's *Midas* and *Sapho and Phao* (*c.* 1584), which, as Andy Kesson observes, are recycled as prefatory material for the 1635 edition of Francis Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (*c.* 1607). All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The New Oxford Shakespeare* modern critical editions, and given as act, scene, and line numbers in the text, unless otherwise indicated. See *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2475/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199591152.book.1/actrade-9780199591152-book-1; Stern, *Documents*, pp. 133-4, p. 150; Andy Kesson, "Was Comedy a Genre in English Early Modern Drama?", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 54, no. 2 (April 2014), pp. 213-225, p. 220-21.

plays: the "Clown" made "companion with a King", or else "thrust in…by the head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters with neither decency nor discretion".[249] I discuss the presence and play of such comic patches in chapter four, which considers the clown as an inevitable feature of tragedy's transition to the popular English stage. In this chapter, however, I am interested in the far more alien phenomenon of the tragic patch: the tragedy which is additional to or detachable from the rest of the play. Sidney and Whetstone may have balked at the prospect, but today we are relatively comfortable with the idea that comic material might serve as an extraneous subplot or interlude tacked onto or interspersed throughout an early modern tragedy. Scholarship has long since privileged tragedy as the pre-eminent dramatic genre, and thus we more readily accept comedy as subsidiary, an add-on.[250] The idea that a tragedy might be a separate or even separable extra presents a much greater challenge to our generic sensibilities.

Yet the Chapman receipt, with its promise of a "Pastorall Ending in a Tragedye", is not an anomaly, a hurried and mistaken scribble outlining an implausible dramatic structure never realised in a play. There are multiple title pages from the 1590s which advertise a tragedy in similarly isolated terms, as part of a play only: take, for instance, *The Warres of Cyrus King of Persia Against Antiochus King of Assyria, with the Tragicall Ende of Panthea* (1588), or *The Troublesome Raigne and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second, King of England, with the Tragicall Fall of Proud Mortimer* (1592) or else, even more strikingly, *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe. With the Tragedie of*

[249] George Whetstone, *The Right Excellent and famous Historye, of Promos and Cassandra* (London, 1578), sig. A2v; Sidney, *Defence*, sig. I1v.

[250] We are, for instance, used to the idea that Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622) contains a comic subplot, and to the notion that the porter in *Macbeth* functions as a kind of comic interlude. Critics have often assumed that any comic scenes in Marlowe's plays were written by collaborators rather than by Marlowe himself; the implication is that tragedy was the point and purpose of the drama, with comedy tacked on as an extra (Charles Nicholl, for instance, describes the comedy in *Doctor Faustus* (1592) as "entirely untypical of Marlowe"; David Bevington suggests that the comic scenes omitted from *Tamburlaine* (1587) were "[c]onceivably…the work of a collaborator"). Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 96; David Bevington, *From* Mankind *to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 200-201.

Absalon (1590).[251] In none of these examples is the singled-out "Tragedie" or "Tragicall" death of a character tonally inconsistent with the play with which it is advertised; we expect multiple character deaths, after all, from plays about "Warres" and "Troublesome Raigne[s]". It is curious, then, that these individual tragedies should be mentioned separately, marketed to prospective purchasers as added extras in a position on the title page elsewhere reserved for the clown or comic subplot – for instance, in *A Most Pleasant and Merie New Comedie, Intituled a Knacke to Knowe a Knave…With KEMPS Applauded Merriments* (1592), and *A Most Pleasant Comedie of Mucedorus the Kings Sonne of Valentia and Amadine the Kings Daughter of Arragon, with the Merie Conceits of Mouse* (1591).[252] The tragedies are being pitched, I suggest, as a particular kind of set-piece or dramatic turn analogous to a clowning interlude; they are a distinct and notable attraction of the play in question.

It goes almost without saying that a sixteenth-century dramatic title page does not necessarily reflect the content of a play in any reliable way. The authorship of title pages, and their relationship to the plays they front, is far from clear. On the basis that they may have been modelled on the playbills posted around London to advertise upcoming playhouse performances, Stern posits that title pages could have been written by playing companies and even by dramatists themselves, but errors and anomalies in title-page descriptions of plays indicate that this cannot always have been the case.[253] Regardless of the origins or accuracy of the

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[251] Anon., *The Warres of Cyrus King of Persia, Against Antiochus King of Assyria, With the Tragicall Ende of Panthea* (London, 1594), t.p.; Christopher Marlowe, *The Troublesome Raigne and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second, King of England, With the Tragicall Fall of Proud Mortimer* (London, 1594), t.p.; George Peele, *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe. With the Tragedie of Absalon* (London, 1599), t.p.

[252] Anon., *A Most Pleasant and Merie New Comedie, Intituled, A Knacke to Knowe a Knave* (London, 1594); Anon., *A Most Pleasant Comedie of Mucedorus the Kings Sonne of Valentia and Amadine the Kings Daughter of Arragon, with the Merie Conceits of Mouse* (London, 1598).

[253] The 1600 quarto title page of *The Merchant of Venice* (*c.* 1596) for instance refers to "the obtayning of Portia by the choose of three chests", whereas they are almost always described as "caskets" in the play. The title page of the 1602 quarto of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (*c.* 1600) calls Sir Hugh Evans a "Welch knight", but Sir Hugh, in the play, is a parson. Stern, "Chapter 2: Playbills and Title Pages", in *Documents of Performance*, pp. 36-62; William Shakespeare, *The Most Excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice. With the Extreame Crueltie of Shylocke the Jewe Towards the Sand Merchant, in Cutting a Just Pound of His Flesh: and the Obtayning of Portia by the Choyse of Three Chests* (London, 1600), t.p.; William Shakespeare, *A Most Pleasaunt and Excellent Conceited Comedie, of Syr John Falstaff, and the Merrie Wives of Windsor. Entermixed with Sundrie Variable and Pleasing Humors, of Syr Hugh the Welch Knight, Justice Shallow, and His Wise Cousin M. Slender. With the Swaggering Vaine of Auncient Pistoll, and Corporal Nym* (London, 1602), t.p.

specific title pages quoted above, however, we are beginning to build up a sense of an early modern dramatic vocabulary which readily referred to – even celebrated – tragedies as happenings *within* plays, as pieces rather than wholes. In chapter one, we saw that the *Contention* plays' title pages break the two dramas down into individual characters' tragedies. The examples cited so far in this chapter demonstrate that this formulation was not unique to the title pages of plays based on *de casibus*-inspired English chronicle history. As I demonstrate below, moreover, the singled-out tragic set-piece is not just a feature of title pages in the period. It also translates into dramatic action. There are plays in which an individual character's death is framed as an isolated inset tragedy within the wider drama. One such play, *The Battel of Alcazar, Fought in Barbarie, betweene Sebastian King of Portugall, and Abdelmelec King of Marocco. With the Death of Captaine Stukeley* (*c.* 1589), identifies this structure in its 1594 printed title, advertising the death of Stukeley – as I will argue it is in the play – as a tragic patch.[254]

This chapter is interested in tragic patches as both textual and conceptual issues. The next section examines patching as a process of playmaking, considering how the textual patches from which plays are constructed are sometimes generically determined; generic and material fragment, in other words, sometimes overlap. In this part of the chapter, I also trace the journeys of tragic patches on the move, examining two different case studies of tragedies composed and developed out of pieces of other plays: Robert Yarington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (*c.* 1595), and Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (*c.* 1588). Having explored this more familiar notion of the textual tragic patch, in the second part of the chapter I consider the idea that a tragic patch within a play might be imaginative or conceptual only, without a material cognate to explain or justify its detachment from the rest of the drama. I argue that plays of the late 1580s and 1590s sometimes contained discrete, isolated tragedies centred around the death of a particular character, which formed only part – and existed at a remove from the remainder – of the action.

[254] George Peele, *The Battel of Alcazar, Fought in Barbarie, betweene Sebastian King of Portugall, and Abdelmelec King of Marocco. With the Death of Captaine Stukeley* (London, 1594).

These individual character deaths, of the kind singled out on the title pages quoted above, do not necessarily have separate textual origins from the plays in which they appear: they were not written at different times or by different people, but they are conceptually distinct, patches by design rather than by material circumstance. With a particular focus on the extraordinarily long death speech of Captain Thomas Stukeley in *The Battle of Alcazar*, I go on to suggest that these individual character tragedies are not only imaginatively extraneous, but also mobile: like Stern's textual patches, they can detach, duplicate and reappear within other plays and even, perhaps, as standalone performances outside the world of the drama.

Patching Tragedies: *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and *Soliman and Perseda*

The similarity between textual and conceptual patches in early modern drama, which forms one of the central propositions of this thesis, is most evident where textual and conceptual patch overlap. Stern provides an example of this in her chapter on plot-scenarios, in relation to the manuscript play *The Faithful Friends* (*c.* 1614). The scribe responsible for the manuscript evidently lacked act four scene five at the time he originally made the copy, because he left a gap in the manuscript to be filled in upon receipt of the scene. At some point, however, he gave up on acquiring the missing extract, instead plugging the hole with the contents of the plot scenario. The missing scene – later interleaved on a loose sheet of paper – is, in Stern's terms, "comic and largely irrelevant".[255] Whether the scene was parcelled out to a different playwright, or simply left until last by the writer responsible for the rest of the play, aesthetic incongruence and textual patchiness go hand in hand: generic and material fragment are one and the same, with the former determining the latter. There are other, similar examples where missing or defective scenes in playtexts appear to correspond with a particular tone or type of content distinct from the majority of the play: the substantially abridged scene of "Kemps applauded Merrimentes of the

[255] Stern, *Documents of Performance*, pp. 21-22.

men of Goteham" in *A Knacke to Knowe a Knave*, for instance, or the "fond and frivolous Jestures" allegedly excised from the text of *Tamburlaine* (1587) by its publisher Richard Jones, which I take as my starting point in chapter four.[256] In *Documents of the Rose Playhouse*, Carol Chillington Rutter describes a model of collaboration which allowed the work of playwriting to be divided up according to authors' specialities, "permitting each playwright to do the job he liked best – kings or clowns, plotting or poetry or prose – in the play".[257] The division of labour between collaborating playwrights might be dictated by generic differences in the dramatic material required for the finished product. In the manuscript play *Sir Thomas More* (*c.* 1592), for instance, "Hand B" – mainly responsible for adding a part for a "Clown" – is typically identified as Thomas Heywood, who appears to have had a penchant for penning such episodes.[258] A working document which, through its autographs and watermarks, tells the story of its own composition, *The Book of Sir Thomas More* thus offers yet another example of a textual patch not simply overlapping with a generic patch, but being generically determined.

All of the generic and textual patches I have mentioned so far concern comic material; and indeed, it is striking that, of the examples Stern gives of playwriting being referred to as "patching" in the period, almost all of them concern the writing of comedy in particular. From George Wither's dismissal of those who "patch up a bald witlesse *Comedy*" out of "rotten-old-worme-eaten stuffe", to Thomas Randolph's condemnation of the poet who crafts a "Comedy" out of "patches of his ragged wit", to George Whetstone's more neutral description of a group of "Comedians…patch[ing] a Comedie together", there appears to exist a particular association – often, a negative one – between comedy as a genre and "patching" as a process of

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[256] Anon., *A Knacke to Knowe a Knave*, t.p., sig. Richard Jones, "To the Gentlemen Readers", in *Tamburlaine the Great*, by Christopher Marlowe (London, 1590), sig. E4v-F1v.

[257] Discussing her and Emma Smith's current research project on early modern collaborative playwriting, Laurie Maguire termed this form of collaboration "Composition by Speciality". Carol Chillington Rutter, *Documents of the Rose Playhouse* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 28; Laurie Maguire, EPIC Presentation on Collaborative Authorship (seminar, University of Oxford, 1 March 2021).

[258] Having examined the additions, Scott McMillin concludes, "it seems likely that…Hand B was concerned to provide a new role for the Clown", noting, "I sometimes think that Heywood would not have written plays if he could not have written Clown scenes, and Heywood is usually taken as Hand B". Scott McMillin, *The Elizabethan Theatre and 'The Book of Sir Thomas More'* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 44, p. 80.

playmaking.[259] Certainly, none of Stern's examples mentions tragedy. There is an obvious semantic association between comedy and patches, in that "patch" was an alternative term for a clown or fool in the period. The Mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*c.* 1596), for instance, are described by Puck as a "crew of patches" (scene 5, line 9), and in the same play Bottom declares man to be a "patched fool" (scene 5, line 661) as he attempts to come to terms with his time in the forest.[260] Clowns and fools traditionally wore "motleys", multicoloured garments made up of multiple different fabrics or threads, and thus there is a sense in which metaphors of plays pieced together from various patches of material are peculiarly appropriate to comic works.[261] The more scathing references to "patched" comedies may also be reflective of the same kind of generic elitism that Sidney displays in his denigration of clowning in tragedy; less sophisticated than its serious counterpart, comedy can be cobbled together by inferior playwrights recycling scraps of old verse and drama.

Yet tragedy was subject to the same patchwork playwriting processes, as numerous examples from *Henslowe's Diary* attest. On 25 September 1601, and again on 22 June 1602, Henslowe records payments to Ben Jonson for "adicians" and "new adicyons" to "geronymo" – that is, *The Spanish Tragedy* – and on 23 October 1598, he lends £3 to George Chapman for his "playe book", as well as for "ij ectes of A tragedie of bengemens plotte".[262] The first two entries quoted here chart the progressive expansion, through the addition of new pieces, of one of the most popular and influential tragedies of the period. The third records the use of one "play-patch", the plot, to enable an unnamed "tragedie" to be divided up between different

[259] Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 1.
[260] Other Shakespearean examples of "patch" being used as a synonym for "fool" include Dromio of Syracuse's angry outburst, in which he refers to Dromio of Ephesus as "Mome, malt-horse, capon, coxcomb, idiot, patch!" (*Comedy of Errors* (1594), III.i.32), and Shylock's description of Lancelet as a "patch" in *The Merchant of Venice* (II.v.45).
[261] The term appears to derive from the nickname of the earlier sixteenth-century fool Thomas Sexton, employed by Cardinal Wolsey and then by Henry VIII. It is speculated that the nickname "Patch" referred to Sexton's patched or "motley" clothes, but the Oxford English Dictionary suggests that the Italian *pazzo*, meaning "fool", is a more likely origin for the term. "patch (*n.*), 2", *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/138686?rskey=GKtCru&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid, accessed 10 Sep 2021.
[262] Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 182, p. 203, p. 100.

playwrights. In these examples and many others like them – Bird and Rowley's additions to *Doctor Faustus* (*c.* 1588); Middleton's scenes in *Macbeth* (1606); Peele's and Shakespeare's collaborative contributions to *Titus Andronicus* (*c.* 1589) – dramatic tragedies are written, amended and expanded in pieces; but my interest in this chapter is not simply in dramatic tragedy as patched.[263] It is also in dramatic tragedy as discernible, material patch: in the notion that an entire tragedy might constitute a detachable piece of the larger theatrical whole. In this section of the chapter, I examine two case studies, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and *Soliman and Perseda*, both of which offer examples of tragedies existing as distinct textual patches of a drama.

As well as evidencing the patchwork processes of tragic composition mentioned above, *Henslowe's Diary* offers tantalising glimpses of the pieces of a more complex textual puzzle. Printed in 1601 and attributed to one Robert Yarington, the play *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is, precisely as its running title declares, "Two Tragedies in One": scenes relaying the story of a recent London murder alternate with scenes depicting the killing of an orphaned boy by his uncle in Italy.[264] The two tragedies are held together by a metatheatrical framing conversation between Homicide, Avarice and Truth. Both parts of the play concern the murder of an innocent which is motivated by a desire for money, but there is little else to link them. The two tragedies of this play are independent of one another. As Catherine Richardson writes:

> [t]he two plots are connected by the allegorical affinity between Homicide and Avarice and very little else: whilst they use similar imagery to explore related themes, both the pragmatics of their situations and their modes of representation are totally different.[265]

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[263] On 22 November 1602, Henslowe advanced the Admiral's Men £4 to pay William Bird and Samuel Rowley for their "adicyones in docter fostes". The *New Oxford Shakespeare* editors date Middleton's scenes in *Macbeth* to around 1616. Middleton is also, of course, believed to have written a scene for *Titus Andronicus* – act three, scene two, typically referred to as the "fly scene" – while Peele has been identified as the author of scene one, and possibly scene two, with the rest of the play currently attributed to Shakespeare. Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 206; Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion*, ed. Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: OUP, 2017), pp. 490-493, pp. 564-568.
[264] Robert Yarington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (London, 1601), sig. A2r.
[265] Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 130.

Two Lamentable Tragedies is a critical enigma. For over a century, scholars have puzzled not only over its apparently random conjunction of two unrelated tragedies, but also over its stage history – or lack of one – and over the mysterious Yarington, who is otherwise unheard-of as an early modern dramatist.[266]

While some critics, including the play's most recent editor Chiaki Hanabusa, accept Yarington as the playwright in the absence of any sufficiently convincing alternatives, others – most notably Greg, Gurr, and Bernard M. Wagner – argue that Yarington was instead the scribe of the manuscript from which the printed play was set, and that this is how his name became attached to the play.[267] There was, indeed, a Robert Yarington registered to the Scriveners' Company at the time the play would have been prepared for print; Yarington's signature printed at the end of the play, moreover, resembles those of other dramatic scribes in the period.[268] Rejecting Yarington as dramatist for these reasons, as well as because of a belief that "it is evident that the two plots are the work of different writers", Greg and Wagner turn to *Henslowe's Diary* for answers to the authorship question.[269] For although no reference is made to a play called *Two Lamentable Tragedies* in the records of Henslowe's dealings with playwrights, there are several possible mentions of its component parts. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* comprises, as its title page details, the story of "the murther of Maister Beech…by Thomas Merry", and the story of

[266] There is no evidence that *Two Lamentable Tragedies* was ever performed. Its editor, Chiaki Hanabusa, suggests that its staging requirements are awkward, bearing the tell-tale signs of an inexperienced dramatist; "the play may never have reached the stage", he notes, proposing that "[t]he text, full of scandalous and tragic plots skilfully woven into a single story, might have been seen as better for a reading public than a theatrical audience". However, a recent original practice performance study conducted by Emma Whipday and Freyja Cox Jensen found that the excerpted "Tragedy of Merry", at least, was eminently stageable. I consider the play's engagement with some early modern performance conventions in chapter three, in my discussion of choruses and curtains. Chiaki Hanabusa, ed., *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. xv; Emma Whipday and Frejya Cox Jensen, "'Original Practices', Lost Plays, and Historical Imagination: Staging 'The Tragedy of Merry'", *Shakespeare Bulletin*, vol. 35, no. 2 (summer 2017), pp. 289-307.

[267] W. W. Greg, *Henslowe's Diary*, 2 vols (London: A. H. Bullen 1904-1908), II, pp. 208-209; Andrew Gurr, "The Work of Elizabethan Plotters, and *2 The Seven Deadly Sins*", *Early Theatre*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2007), pp. 67-87, pp. 74-75; Bernard M. Wagner, "Robert Yarrington", *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 45, no. 3 (March 1930), pp. 147-148.

[268] Bernard Wagner was the first critic to note the existence of a Robert Yarington registered to the Scriveners' Company, and to observe the likeness to other scribal signatures; he compares Yarington's printed name at the end of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, specifically, to the scribal signature of "P. Massam" in the manuscript of Robert Daborne's play, *The Poore Mans Comfort*. Wagner, "Robert Yarrington", p. 147.

[269] Greg, *Henslowe's Diary*, II, p. 208.

"a young childe murthered in a Wood…with the consent of his Unckle".[270] There are separate records which plausibly correspond to both of these tragedies in *Henslowe's Diary*. On 21 November 1599, Henslowe made a payment to William Haughton for a "boocke called merie".[271] Six days later, on 27 November, he made a further payment to Haughton and John Day for "A tragedie called Mereie", and on the same day, he also made a payment to Henry Chettle "in earnest of a Boocke called the tragedie of orphenes"; there are corresponding receipts for the 27 November payments in the hands of Haughton, Day, and Chettle elsewhere in the pages of the *Diary*, and further payments to Haughton and Day for the "tragedie of merie" on the 5 and 6 of December of the same year.[272]

Do these entries chart the original composition of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, or its dissolution into two full-length, standalone, now lost plays? Greg believed that the two parts of the play had originally been separate, with the "Tragedy of Merry" composed by Haughton and Day, and "The Orphan's Tragedy" composed by Henry Chettle: these two plays, he proposed, had been amalgamated into one by Chettle in 1601 (there is a further payment to Chettle for "the orfenes tragedie" in September 1601), and then Yarington had prepared the manuscript from which the play was printed.[273] Robert Adger Law was the first to suggest an alternative chronology. Yarington, he argued, wrote *Two Lamentable Tragedies* in its extant form, as one play made up of two distinct tragic plots, as early as 1594. The manuscript of this play fell into Henslowe's hands at some point before 1599, and Henslowe, responding to a current demand for domestic tragedies and true crime plays, paid Chettle, Haughton and Day to recycle the plots from the old text and turn one play into two.[274] Roslyn Knutson suggests that the year 1599-1600

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[270] Yarington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, t.p.
[271] Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 127.
[272] Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary* pp. 127-128, p. 62.
[273] Greg proposed that Yarington also added his own idiosyncratic touches to the playtext as he copied it, by way of explaining some of its more unusual features – for instance, stage directions indicating that certain lines are spoken "*To the people*". Greg, *Henslowe's Diary*, II, pp. 208-209.
[274] Chiaki Hanabusa notes the popularity of domestic tragedies at the end of the 1590s, and argues that Adger's is the most likely explanation of the relationship between the printed play, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, and the related entries in *Henslowe's Diary*. Robert Adger Law, "Yarington's 'Two Lamentable Tragedies'", *The Modern Language Review*, April 1910, vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 167-177; Hanabusa, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

saw a substantial increase in demand for new plays in general (the Admiral's Men made payments on thirty-six new play projects, up from around twenty-five in the preceding years). She attributes this to increased competition in the playing industry.[275] A manuscript which formed the basis of two new plays was a valuable commodity upon which Henslowe would have been keen to capitalise. The proximity of the entries in the *Diary* relating to "The Tragedy of Merry" and "The Orphan's Tragedy" is certainly suggestive: the plays first feature in almost consecutive entries in Henslowe's hand, while the receipts of payment signed by the respective playwrights were written on the same day, on the same leaf of the *Diary*. This detail does not itself confirm or disprove either theory; but it does imply that the two plays were being thought of in conjunction, whether because a single work (Yarington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies*) was being split into its component parts, or because an amalgamation was envisaged from the moment the tragedies were commissioned. In other words, the entries in the *Diary* seem very likely to be related to *Two Lamentable Tragedies* in particular, rather than simply referring to plays written on similar subjects to the two plots of that drama entirely by coincidence.

I read the records of these plays in *Henslowe's Diary* as a narrative of dispersal. When they first appeared in November 1599, the tragedies of Merry and the Orphan were listed together. By 6 December 1599, Haughton and Day had been paid "in full" for "the tragedie of merie", and in mid-January 1600, "A Boocke called Beches tragedie" (almost certainly an alternative title for the same play, Beech being the name of Merry's victim) was licensed for performance by the Master of the Revels.[276] Chettle's "Orphan's Tragedy", by contrast, disappears from the *Diary* for over a year – unless we count the payment not to Chettle, but to Day, for his "etalyan tragedie" on the 10 January 1600 as another reference to the second of the *Two Lamentable Tragedies*.[277] A "Boocke called the orfenes tragedy" crops up again in September 1601, once more in connection

[275] Knutson, "The Commercial Significance of Payments for Playtexts", pp. 126-128.
[276] Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 128, p.130.
[277] Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 129.

with Chettle, but there is no further mention of a tragedy of Merry or Beech.[278] As evidence of the workings of the early modern theatrical world, of course, *Henslowe's Diary* is frustratingly inconsistent and incomplete. The fact that Henslowe elsewhere specifies that certain payments are for parts of plays only does not mean that the "Tragedy of Merry" and the "Orphan's Tragedy" were definitively standalone dramas; his method of recording and accounting is far from systematic. It may be more telling that between 21 November and 6 December 1599, according to his records, Henslowe paid Haughton and Day a total of £5 for the "Tragedy of Merry" alone, a large sum for only half a play.[279] Given the payment data and the increasing gap between the titles in Henslowe's records, it seems to me more likely that *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, in the combined form in which it survives today, pre-dates the entries in *Henslowe's Diary*, and that the "Tragedy of Merry" and "The Orphan's Tragedy" were both based on it.[280] This is what editor Hanabusa also concludes.[281] The two tragedies, woven together in an allegorical frame in their original iteration, were later detached and developed into two independent plays.

Whether Hanabusa's and my instincts about the relationship between *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and the entries in *Henslowe's Diary* are correct, or whether Greg's or another explanation entirely is closer to the truth, what is certain is that *Two Lamentable Tragedies* challenges our conception of what a play is. It packages as a single play two entirely separate stories, not only

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[278] Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 182.

[279] Henslowe paid 10s to Haughton on 21 November 1599, 20s to Haughton and Day on 27 November 1599, 20s to Haughton and Day on 5 December 1599, 10s. to Day on 6 December 1599, and a final 40s. to Haughton and Day in "full payment" on 6 December 1599. This amounts to 100s., or £5, in total. E. K. Chambers calculated that "the prices paid by the Admiral's and Lord Worcester's men between 1597 and 1603 ranged from £4 to £10 10s.; a fee of £6," he continues, "may be taken as about normal". He adds that, "if the diary fails to record payments to the amount of at least £5 for a new play, there is *prima facie* evidence that that play never got itself finished". Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 127-128; E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), II, p. 164.

[280] The earlier date for *Two Lamentable Tragedies* may be further suggested by the style of its induction. As I discuss in chapter three, inductions showcasing allegorical personifications are particularly a feature of the 1580s and early 1590s, appearing in plays like *The True Tragedie of Richard III* (*c.* 1589) and *Soliman and Perseda*. Such inductions were being lampooned by the end of the decade (for instance, in *A Warning for Fair Women*). *Two Lamentable Tragedies*'s induction also contains a reference to the presence of black curtains in the theatre. As I demonstrate in chapter three, the practice of hanging black fabrics in the playhouses during performances of tragedies was likewise associated with the earlier part of the 1590s and was being treated more satirically by the turn of the century. Although this does not definitively prove that the text of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* as it survives today was written earlier in the 1590s than the corresponding entries in *Henslowe's Diary*, it further supports the arguments for this order of composition.

[281] Hanabusa, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, p. xxvii.

with different characters and settings, but also, as Richardson's chapter on the drama amply demonstrates, with different textures and modes of storytelling; the Merry story, for instance, is far more concerned with specifying physical locations, and with the materiality of bodies and objects, and unlike the Orphan's tragedy it makes use of the upper stage space.[282] The specific chronology of the play that survives and the plays recorded in *Henslowe's Diary* makes little difference to this larger point: *Two Lamentable Tragedies* is a patchwork of tragedies, each of them smaller than a whole play, but with the potential to become one.

This amalgamated structure was far more common in early modern theatrical practice than is often recognised today. There are numerous lost plays recorded under such titles as *Three Plays in One* (*c.* 1585) and *Five Plays in One* (*c.* 1585). The earliest examples date from the mid-1580s, and were performances at court recorded in the Revels Account.[283] However, the trend for what Martin Wiggins terms "anthology" plays crossed over into the popular theatres of the 1590s as well, with records in *Henslowe's Diary* of *Four Plays in One* – performed only once by Lord Strange's Men at the Rose in 1592, and thus seemingly "at the end of its repertory life" – and *Five Plays in One*, which debuted at the Rose in April 1597 and was performed a further nine times by the Admiral's Men.[284] In addition, the surviving backstage plot of *The Second Part of the Seven Deadly Sins* (*c.* 1597) – apparently a Lord Chamberlain's Men play – indicates that this drama is another example of "Three Plays in One"; famed for his *de casibus* tales, John Lydgate acts as presenter in this play, illustrating three of the seven deadly sins to Henry VI through the tragedies of Ferrex and Porrex (envy), Sardanapalus (sloth), and Philomel and Tereus (lechery).[285] Although they are little known about, such plays were still being written and performed into the

[282] Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy*, pp. 130-149.
[283] Martin Wiggins, "*Three Plays in One* (763)", in *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue, Vol. 2, 1567-1589*, ed. Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson (Oxford: OUP, 2012; Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2020), 10.1093/actrade/9780199265718.book.1; Wiggins, "*Five Plays in One* (763)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 2*.
[284] Wiggins, "*Four Plays in One* (879)", in *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue, Vol. 3, 1590-1597*; Wiggins, "*Five Plays in One* (1063)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 3*; Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 16, p. 57.
[285] Wiggins, "*2 The Seven Deadly Sins* (1065)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 3*; see also W. W. Greg, *Dramatic Documents From the Elizabethan Playhouses: Stage Plots: Actors' Parts: Prompt Books*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), I, pp. 105-122.

Jacobean era. Published in the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher folio, Fletcher and Field's *Four Plays, or Moral Representations, in One* (*c.* 1613) comprises four separate stories presenting the triumphs of honour, love, death, and time.[286] In 1608, meanwhile, a play called *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (*c.* 1605) was printed with the half-title, "Alls One, or, One of the foure Plaies in one".[287] Of this last example, Wiggins notes Stanley Wells's private suggestion that the other three plays "may never have existed, other than as a fraudulent fiction concocted to explain the brevity of *A Yorkshire Tragedy*"; but taking the evidence "at face value", Wiggins proposes that the surviving work was indeed part of another anthology written quickly by multiple authors to plug a gap in the repertory, pointing out that its "relatively full complement of actors suggests that they would also have played parts in the other plays".[288] If we are to believe its half title, *A Yorkshire Tragedy* is thus a printed tragic patch, separated out from the stories with which it originally shared the stage to enjoy an independent life in print.[289]

Wells' suggestion that *A Yorkshire Tragedy*'s half-title contains a "fraudulent" claim is a later version of several scholarly theories which have the effect, however unintentionally, of denying or reducing the number of anthology plays which are acknowledged to have existed. Fleay's attempts to align *2 Seven Deadly Sins* with both the Queen's Men's *Three Plays in One* and Lord Strange's Men's *Four Plays in One* – via some mathematical acrobatics and the borrowing of an Induction from the old Queen's Men's *Five Plays in One* – condense the records of four

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[286] Wiggins, "*Four Plays, or Moral Representations, in One* (1706)", in *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue, Vol. 6, 1609-1616*; John Fletcher and Nathan Field, *Four Plays, or Moral Representations, in One*, in *Comedies and Tragedies Written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher* (London, 1647), sig. 8D2r-sig. 8F4v.

[287] Thomas Middleton [?], *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (London, 1608), sig. A2r.

[288] In his edition of the play for the Oxford *Thomas Middleton: Collected Works*, Wells considers the possibility that *A Yorkshire Tragedy* was once "performed with three other plays of equal length", though he offers no definitive arguments either for or against this. Wiggins, "*Four Plays in One* (1484)", in *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue, Vol. 5, 1603-1608*; Stanley Wells, ed., *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, in *Thomas Middleton, Vol. 1: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor, John Lavagnino, Macdonald P. Jackson, John Jowett, Valeria Wayne, and Adrian Weiss (Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp. 452-455.

[289] Critics typically concur that the opening scene of *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, as it was printed in 1608, has been amended especially for print in order to provide, as editors A. C. Cawley and Barry Gaines put it, some "setting and exposition, which the other plays in the series of 'foure Plaies in one' may once have given"; Cawley and Gaines add that "[w]hen *A Yorkshire Tragedy* was published as a separate play, someone must have thought fit to provide it, however ineptly, with an introductory scene". A. C. Cawley and Barry Gaines, ed., *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 15.

anthology plays into two mix-and-match works.[290] Greg's suggestion that the two parts of the *Seven Deadly Sins* plays were revivals of the Queen's Men's *Five Plays in One* and *Three Plays in One* is similarly reductive, and both theories have since been effectively refuted by Scott McMillin.[291] If, instead of attempting to collapse these records into each other, we take each one as a separate play, we see that *Two Lamentable Tragedies* existed within a relatively minor, but nevertheless established and long-running tradition of anthology drama, in which self-contained tragedies only ever made up part of the day's theatrical offering. *Henslowe's Diary* allows us to see the pieces of this particular anthology play in motion, to glimpse the process of the tragedies being stitched together or, as I think more likely, pulled apart, developing from tragic patches into independent dramas.

Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (*c.* 1588) follows a similar trajectory, from playlet to standalone play. As the climactic inset drama of *The Spanish Tragedy* (*c.* 1587), "Soliman and Perseda" is overt in performing its own material separateness, its status as textual patch. This "tragedie" has its own origin story within the fiction of the play – Hieronimo claims to have penned it many years ago, while studying in Toledo – and one or more paper iterations of it appear on the stage. When introducing his play to Balthazar and Lorenzo, Hieronimo "*shewes them a book*"; this is presumably meant to be an authorial copy, a complete version of the playscript. He then hands out "severall abstracts", "*giv[ing] a paper*" each to Balthazar, Lorenzo, and Bel Imperia (potentially from within that same "*book*") from which the players are to "note

[290] Fleay was ultimately attempting to align a lost 1580s play by Richard Tarlton called "The Seven Deadly Sins", with the extant, 1590s backstage plot of *2 The Seven Deadly Sins*. He proposed that Tarlton's had originally been a two part play, and that the second part – preserved as *2 The Seven Deadly Sins* – was synonymous with the Queen's Men's *Three Plays in One*, performed at court in the mid-1580s. He then argued that this Queen's Men's play, *Three Plays in One*, had become the Lord Strange's Men's 1592 play *Four Plays in One*, via the addition of an induction, and that *Four Plays in One* and *2 The Seven Deadly Sins* were one and the same. F. G. Fleay, *Chronicle History of the London Stage: 1559-1642* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1890), p. 83; Scott McMillin, "Building Stories: Greg, Fleay, and the Plot of 2 'Seven Deadly Sins'", *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 4 (1989), pp. 53-62, pp. 58-59.

[291] Greg's theory about *2 The Seven Deadly Sins* was based on Fleay's. Greg rejected the link Fleay had made between the Queen's Men's *Three Plays in One* and Lord Strange's Men's *Four Plays in One*, but retained the general suggestion that a Tarlton play of the 1580s lay behind the two-part play of the 1590s. He maintained that the Queen's Men's *Five Plays in One* and *Three Plays in One* led behind the two *Seven Deadly Sins* plays of the 1590s, of which part two survives as a backstage plot. Greg, *Dramatic Documents*, I, pp. 111-113; McMillin, "Building Stories", pp. 59-60.

[their] partes".[292] Whether these "abstracts" constitute "parts" in Stern and Palfrey's conception of the term – the combined speeches and cue words for a specific character, to be memorised by heart – is unclear.[293] Hieronimo's curious instruction that "[e]ach one of us must act his parte,| In unknowne languages" may indicate that these "*paper*[*s*]" are not scripts to be recited verbatim; he may be circulating summaries from which the actors are to improvise, or he may be handing round foreign language scripts.[294]

The physical text of "Soliman and Perseda" continues to circulate between the characters of *The Spanish Tragedy* as the performance approaches. As he prepares the stage for his tragedy, Hieronimo requests that the King be given "the coppie of the plaie", adding that "[t]his is the argument of what we shew".[295] Although there is no stage direction confirming it, Hieronimo presumably hands over his "*book*" of the play at this point to the Duke of Castile, to be delivered to the King, for when the King enters moments later he is in possession of a "*booke*", which he in turn gives to his brother to act as "booke-keeper". Like Hieronimo, the King appears to refer to this "*booke*" as an "argument".[296] Stern explains that while the "argument" was sometimes a separate summary document handed out to audiences before dramatic performances, it could also exist as a preliminary overview within the book of the play itself.[297] This seems to be the kind of "argument" referred to in *The Spanish Tragedy*; indeed, Hieronimo may even read it aloud to his prospective actors directly from his "*book*" when asked by Balthazar to "let us know the argument" of the play he wants to stage.[298]

Like many of the documentary play-patches Stern discusses in her monograph, "Soliman and Perseda" is a mobile and mutable text on the stage of *The Spanish Tragedy*, passing from hand

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[292] Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie, Containing the Lamentable End of Don Horatio, and Bel-Imperia: with the Pittiful Death of Olde Hieronimo* (London, 1592), sig. I4r, sig K1r.
[293] In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for instance, Peter Quince says to the Mechanicals "masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night" (scene 2, line 77-78). See also Palfrey and Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts*, pp. 1-2.
[294] Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. K1v.
[295] Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. K2v.
[296] Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. K3r.
[297] Stern, "Chapter 3: Arguments in Playhouse and Book", in *Documents of Performance*, pp. 63-80.
[298] Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. I4v.

to hand, parcelled out as separate "*paper*[*s*]" to the actors performing the inset drama. As Stern explains, certain kinds of dramatic document – in particular, letters and scrolls – were "[r]egularly extracted from the play and given an additional, separate life on a piece of paper".[299] Often demarcated within the printed playbook, these staged "scrolls" become, she writes, "'internalised' props, retained fossilised inside the playbook itself…published in reading order (for the most part), but still isolated by treatment".[300] The 1592 quarto of *The Spanish Tragedy* contains an example of such an "'internalised' prop" in the form of Bel Imperia's letter to Hieronimo, which, a marginal note indicates, was to be written out on a separate piece of paper in "*red incke*", as though in Bel Imperia's blood.[301] Retained from the manuscript that served as copytext, this instruction to the playhouse scribe allows us to glimpse the blood-red textual fragment staged in performance through the consolidated black-and-white of the play in print. The tragedy of "Soliman and Perseda" is similarly demarcated in the quarto, as a text with a material life separate from the surrounding dialogue. Following a stage direction in which the King "*giveth…a booke*" (the book of the play) to his brother, there appears an editorial note to the "*Gentlemen*" readers: "*Gentlemen, this play of* Hieronimo *in sundrie Languages, was thought good to be set downe in English more largely, for the easier understanding to every publique Reader*".[302] The tragedy-within-the-tragedy has, the note claims, been removed from the text, translated into English and expanded, and then reinserted in between the spectators' presumably unchanged comments (the play's onstage audience members occasionally comment on the performance unfolding before their eyes). Critics have approached the note with varying degrees of scepticism, with some doubting that "Soliman and Perseda" would ever have been performed to a popular audience in

[299] Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 200.
[300] Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 200.
[301] Stern offers this as one of her examples of "internalised" props. Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. E2r; Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 183.
[302] Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. K3r.

"*sundrie Languages*".[303] Others, including S. F. Johnson and Robert Barrie, dismiss this as an underestimation of the audience's capacity, arguing that Kyd provides enough explanatory scaffolding to ensure monolingual audience members would have understood the events of the playlet, and that the Babylonian confusion suggested by the polyglot performance is thematically integral to the drama.[304] However plausible its specific claim, the note has the effect of "'internalis[ing]'" the "*booke*" which represents the text of "Soliman and Perseda" on stage as a distinct textual object within the printed play. Like Bel Imperia's letter, the inset tragedy is marked out as a materially separate and detachable play-patch.

Of course, "Soliman and Perseda" could not be permanently detached or excised from *The Spanish Tragedy*. Hieronimo's "Tragedie" is integral to the action of Kyd's: for it is through the performance of "Soliman and Perseda" that Hieronimo takes his revenge, swapping stage daggers for real ones in order to kill the murderers of his son. Three characters from *The Spanish Tragedy* – Lorenzo, Balthazar and Bel-Imperia – meet their ends in "Soliman and Perseda". In this sense, the playlet is less patch than palimpsest, the vendettas and violence of *The Spanish Tragedy* clearly visible beneath its fictive overlay. Still, like many of the songs, masques and prologues identified by Stern, like the tragedies of "Merry" and the "Orphan" discussed above, "Soliman and Perseda" also enjoyed a stage life independent of *The Spanish Tragedy*. On 20 November 1592, a play named *Soliman and Perseda* was entered on the Stationers' Register, around six weeks after "a booke whiche…is called the Spanishe tragedie of Don Horatio and Bellmipeia [*sic*] &c" appeared, registered to Abell Jeffes.[305] This *Soliman and Perseda* is a full-length

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[303] Editor Philip Edwards, for instance, argues that the playlet may have been mimed or performed in English, rather than in foreign languages. M. C. Bradbrook, in her *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (1935), suggests that the "groundlings" may have been "interested to hear the sound of a strange language", but falls short of arguing that "Soliman and Perseda" was definitively multilingual. Philip Edwards, ed., *The Spanish Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1959), pp. xxxiv-xxxix; M. C. Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy*, 2nd. ed (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), p. 77.

[304] S. F. Johnson, "*The Spanish Tragedy*, or Babylon Revisited", in *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama. In Honour of Hardin Craig*, ed. Richard Hosley (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 23-36; Robert Barrie, "'Unknown Languages' and Subversive Play in *The Spanish Tragedy*", *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Dec. 1995), pp. 63-80.

[305] Edward Arber, *A Transcript of the Register of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640 A. D*, 5 vols, (London: privately published, 1875-1877), II, p. 621, p. 622.

play on the same subject as Hieronimo's playlet, which likewise uses Henry Wotton's *A Courtlie Controversie of Cupids Cautels* (1578) as its chief source.[306] For reasons of linguistic and structural similarity, as well as because of the proximity of the texts in the Stationers' Register and their publication by the same printer (Edward White, for Edward Allde), critics typically believe that *Soliman and Perseda* is the work of the same playwright as *The Spanish Tragedy*, and Thomas Kyd is the most popular candidate.[307] Emma Smith has commented on the topsy-turvy way in which Kyd's authorship of *Soliman and Perseda* is essentially constructed by Hieronimo's: "[t]he evidence for Kyd's authorship", she observes, "is based heavily on the plot parallel with Hieronimo's play", such that the full-length, independent play, *Soliman and Perseda*, is curiously authorised by a fictional playwright from another drama.[308] From the perspective of early modern scholarship, *Soliman and Perseda* the play is rooted in "Soliman and Perseda" the playlet. The critical consensus is, indeed, that *Soliman and Perseda* was written after *The Spanish Tragedy*, possibly in "an attempt to capitalize on" the earlier play's "success".[309] If this chronology is correct, then what began as a play-within-a-play detached from its origin text to become a standalone work. Material (and, potentially, linguistic) patch in performances of *The Spanish Tragedy*, textual patch in print, "Soliman and Perseda" is also a patch conceptually: the idea and outline for a tragedy which became a separate dramatic entity.

"Tragedy" is not a category of play-patch explored in Stern's *Documents of Performance*; but these two examples demonstrate that it could have been. *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and "Soliman and Perseda" model different kinds of textual tragic patch: whole tragedies that comprise materially distinct parts of larger plays, with theatrical lives detached from their dramas of origin.

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[306] Ladan Niayesh, *Three Romances of Eastern Conquest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p. 24.
[307] Lukas Erne writes that, since Kyd's authorship of *Soliman and Perseda* was first suggested in the eighteenth century, "the most important but by no means the only argument for Kyd's authorship has been the great dramaturgical similarities with *The Spanish Tragedy*". Lukas Erne, *Beyond* The Spanish Tragedy: *A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 161. On the history of authorship studies of *Soliman and Perseda*, see also Niayesh, *Three Romances of Eastern Conquest*, pp. 23-26.
[308] Emma Smith, "Author v. Character in Early Modern Dramatic Authorship: the Example of Thomas Kyd and *The Spanish Tragedy*", *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 11 (1999), pp. 129-142, pp. 137-138.
[309] Niayesh, *Three Romances of Eastern Conquest*, p. 26.

It is my contention throughout this thesis that the patch is as much a structural and imaginative feature of the early modern play as it is a physical condition of its composition and existence. An early modern play could be a conceptual patchwork – a medley of distinct episodes and theatrical kinds – without necessarily being a textual patchwork as well. I began by examining the textually grounded examples of *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and "Soliman and Perseda" to demonstrate the potential for a tragedy to exist and function as a play-patch in the familiar, material terms established by Stern's scholarship. In the second part of this chapter, I expand on these ideas to explore how a tragedy could also be a distinct, separable, and self-contained patch of the whole without a material analogue or explanation. With a particular focus on the death of Captain Stukeley in *The Battle of Alcazar*, I show that such imaginative tragic play-patches are as distinct and mobile – and, indeed, as omittable – as the songs, prologues, and other material patches discussed in Stern's monograph.

Moving Monologues: Stukeley and Co.

At the end of Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (*c.* 1607) the Citizen and his Wife demand that their apprentice Rafe receive a proper death scene:

> *Cit*: I do not like this, peace boies, here me one of you, every bodies part is come to an end but *Raphes*, and hee's left out.
>
> *Boy*: 'Tis long of your selfe sir, wee have nothing to doe with his part.
>
> *Cit*: *Raph* come away, make on him as you have done of the rest, boies come.
>
> *Wife*: Now good husband let him come out and die.
>
> *Cit*: He shall, *Nel*, *Raph* come away quickely and die boy.
>
> *Boy*: 'Twill be very unfit he should die sir, upon no occasion, and in a Comedy too.
>
> *Cit*: Take you no care of that sir boy, is not his part at an end, thinke you, when he's dead? Come away *Raph*.[310]

[310] Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (London, 1613), sig. K2v-K3r.

This is the culmination of the Citizens' genre-blind interference in "The London Merchant", the play that was intended for performance, so the metadramatic conceit goes, before Nell and George began their meddling. As the rest of the performers press ahead with the city comedy, the Citizens insist that their apprentice Rafe be given the entirely incongruous role of knight errant, demanding chivalric adventures for him in the midst of the mercantile drama. The argument over Rafe's final appearance on stage quoted above turns on the word and the concept of the "part". George is outraged that everyone else's "part" – that is, both their role in the play and their portion of the dialogue – has come to an end, while Rafe has been left out of the drama's conclusion; but the boy maintains that the rest of the players have "nothing to doe" with Rafe's "part" – that it is both redundant and separate from theirs. This back-and-forth over "part[s]" foregrounds the compartmentalisation of storylines that is the great joke of *Pestle*. Rafe is performing in an entirely different play from the actors of "The London Merchant", although he shares their stage.

Rafe's death scene – for he does, indeed, "come out and die" – is funny both because it is generically and tonally incongruous with "The London Merchant", and because it serves as a brilliantly bathetic parody of the heroic monologues of earlier tragic and historical drama. Michael Hattaway observes particular parallels with the "ghost scenes" of several plays, including Henry VI's speech in *Richard III* and Don Andrea's prologue to *The Spanish Tragedy*, both of which open, like Rafe's speech, with a reflection on the speaker's former mortality.[311] But although there are clear verbal and structural similarities with these examples, the positioning of Rafe's death scene near the end of *Pestle*, and his entrance to perform it "*with a forked arrow through his head*", suggest a more proximal target for the satire: not the ghost monologue, but the dying

[311] Hattaway compares Rafe's "When I was mortal, this my costive corpse| Did lap up figs and raisins in the Strand", with Henry VI's "When I was mortal, my anointed body| By thee was punched full of deadly holes" (V.iv.104-105) and Don Andrea's "When this eternall substance of my soule| Did live imprisond in my wanton flesh,| Each in their function serving others need,| I was a courtier in the Spanish court". Michael Hattaway, ed., *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (London: Benn, 1969), p. 111; Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, sig. K3r; Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. A2r.

speech.[312] In the popular drama of the late 1580s and 1590s, the protracted death speech was a form of star turn. We saw some examples of these in the previous chapter. Indeed, Rafe's final, sensational moments function, in many ways, as a parody of the *Mirror*-inspired "theatergram" I identify as a recurring feature of the *Contention* plays. Visibly, fatally wounded, but still able to deliver his monologue, he especially resembles Clifford in *The True Tragedy*, who enters to die, much like Rafe, "*with an arrow in his necke*".[313]

Inserted into the closing moments of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* with comic incongruity, as though copied and pasted from a different kind of play, Rafe's death speech particularly satirises the way in which the long, over-the-top dying monologues of late-sixteenth-century drama often stand curiously apart from the plays in which they feature, metatheatrically sealed off as miniature, self-contained performances. There are few, if any, death speeches of which this is truer than that of Thomas Stukeley in George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*. In its lengthy relation of his life story – his youth in London and his military peregrinations – Rafe's parodic dying monologue has much in common with Stukeley's. Like Rafe, Stukeley delivers his monologue after receiving his mortal wound, suspended in a liminal performance space between life and death. Evidently, the *Mirror*'s dramaturgical influence was in no way restricted to plays with which it shared subject matter; Tom Stukeley's final speech in *Alcazar* is strikingly reminiscent, both visually and in terms of content, of the first-person tragedies presented across multiple editions of the *Mirror*. A monologic account of one man's rise and fall on Fortune's wheel, delivered in the moment of his death, Stukeley's last speech in *Alcazar* is a self-contained performance distinct in temporality and mode of address from the rest of the play's closing act. It is, I will argue, a tragic patch, an impressive but omittable set piece which is ultimately forgotten by the play itself.

[312] Beaumont, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, sig. K3r.
[313] *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York,* sig. C3v.

Let us examine Stukeley's last appearance in the play in detail. It is the fifth act, and the titular battle has begun, with "*Alarums*" and "*chambers…discharged*" announcing the commencement of the conflict.[314] As is typical of late 1580s and 1590s warfare, the battle's commotion is conveyed through a series of rapid entrances and exits, punctuated with brief dialogic exchanges which often describe some unstageable event.[315] Each new offensive is preceded by an "*Alarum*", as individuals and groups of characters take it in turns to "*Enter to the battaile*" and to "*flye*", and the 1594 quarto also calls for two "*skirmish*[es]" (periods of unscripted stage-fighting among multiple actors). The action is rapid, frenetic: within just over one hundred lines, Abdelmelec has died of sickness in his chair following an initial Moorish retreat; the Duke of Avero has been "*slaine*" and mourned by King Sebastian; and Muly Mahamet has fled, his repeated cries of "a horse!" pre-empting Richard III's by several years on the London stage.[316]

It is after these significant events, and onto an empty stage, that Stukeley makes his final entrance of the play "*with two* Italians".[317] Although this entrance is, like all others in the fifth act until this point, preceded by an "*Alarum*", it inaugurates a change in the dynamics of the battle, from clamorous, busy, full of bodies in fast motion, to wearied, slow. Stukeley is already wounded when he enters (the Moors' "weapons", he says, "have made passage for [his] soule") and is perhaps visibly bleeding; the extant 1602 backstage plot for *The Battle of Alcazar* suggests that the play did not spare on visceral details in performance, calling for "3 violls of blood & a sheeps gather" for the act three dumb show, as well as for more blood and bloodied clothes elsewhere, along with numerous severed heads.[318] That the Italians who enter "*with*" Stukeley call on him to "stand" may suggest that the three do not enter in combat; the injured Stukeley, perhaps, makes a laboured, staggering entrance and the Italians pursue. A more tenacious

[314] Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar*, sig. F1r.
[315] For a recent discussion of battle scene conventions in the early modern theatres, see Claire Bourne, *Typographies of Performance in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), pp. 147-158.
[316] Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar*, sig. F1v-sig. F3r.
[317] Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar*, sig. F3r.
[318] Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar*, sig. F3v; the plot is reproduced in Greg, *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses*, vol. 2.

Stukeley could enter fighting defensively, with the Italians' call to "stand" meaning to stop retreating, or to attack more aggressively. In either reading, Stukeley is outnumbered and overpowered even before he enters to his death. The Italians accuse Stukeley of betraying them by leaving the Pope's campaign in Ireland to fight a "heathen foe", and although he proudly rejects these charges, there is no indication in the text that he defends himself physically. Rather, he appears to submit to death, declaring that his stars "bode this tragicke end", and inciting his Italian accusers to "strike downe this body to the earth". The Italians "*stab him*" and leave him to die, their bloody parting shot ("bleed on, thy blood in chanels run") again perhaps gesturing to the use of gruesome stage technologies of the kind noted in the 1602 *Alcazar* plot.[319]

Left to die alone on stage, Stukeley proclaims his own imminent end: "Thus Stukley, slaine with many a deadly stab,| Dyes in these desart fields of Affrica".[320] The shift to third person lends the words an epitaphic quality – "Here Lies Tom Stukeley" – as though Stukeley is, in the moment of his death, observing himself from the outside, an audience to his own demise. The lines are, indeed, faintly metadramatic, with the deictic "thus" gesturing to the body performing Stukeley's death, even as that same body narrates the death in the third person, as though happening to someone else. This kind of metadramatic awareness at the approach of death is common in plays of the period; Macbeth's weary epiphany that "Life's but…a poor player" (*Macbeth* (1606), V.v.23) is only the most famous of numerous examples.[321] Like Stukeley, characters often articulate a sudden cognisance of themselves as tragic figures, even as tragic performers, as they confront their own demises. We saw in chapter one that uses of the words "tragedy", "tragical" and "tragic" within plays cluster in death scenes. Whereas the deaths of

[319] The 1570 quarto of *Cambyses* hints at how such visceral effects may have been achieved, calling for "*a little bladder of Vineger prikt*" to simulate someone being stabbed and bleeding on stage. Peele, *Battell of Alcazar*, sig. F3v; Thomas Preston, *A Lamentable Tragedy Mixed Ful of Pleasant Mirth, Conteyning the Life of Cambises King of Percia from the Beginning of his Kingdome unto his Death* (London, 1570), sig. D3r.
[320] Peele, *Battell of Alcazar*, sig. F3v.
[321] In the anonymous play *Locrine* (1591), for example, moments before her suicide, the character Estrild declares, "O fickle fortune, O unstable world,| What else are all things that this globe contains,| But a confused chaos of mishaps?| Wherein as in a glass we plainly see,| That all our life is but a tragedie?". Anon., *The Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine* (London, 1595), sig. K2r.

Gloucester in *The First Part of the Contention* and Salisbury in *1 Henry VI* are declared "tragedies" by fellow characters, others – Sacrapant in *Orlando Furioso* (*c.* 1590), Sabren in *Locrine* (*c.* 1591), Stukeley, whose "stars bode…this tragic end" – announce their own tragedies in dying speeches.[322] These self-identifications of tragedy help to frame such moments as hyper-theatrical vignettes. Though not strictly inset dramas in the style of "Soliman and Perseda", these death scenes are nevertheless acutely conscious of themselves as performed.

Like Stukeley in the epitaphic lines quoted above, moreover, early modern dramatic characters frequently announce their deaths in the present tense. Most famous among final lines of this kind is perhaps Romeo's "Thus with a kiss I die" (*Romeo and Juliet* (*c.* 1595), V.iii.120), but there are other examples too – for instance, Emilia's "So speaking as I think, alas, I die" (*Othello* (*c.* 1604), V.ii.248) – and the death narrated in present tense was a familiar enough trope by 1596 to be parodied in Bottom's "Thus die I, thus, thus, thus" in the Mechanicals' performance of "Pyramus and Thisbe" (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, scene 7, line 285). Each "thus" in Bottom's speech is presumably to be accompanied by a thrust of the sword, as his Pyramus butchers both himself and the convention. The parodic humour here functions through excess and over-literalisation: one "thus" and one blow is assured, commanding; four is absurdly incompetent. Neither does Bottom finish with his fourth "thus", but instead ploughs on into another line and another tense. No longer does he "die": "Now", he tells the audience, "I am dead" (scene 7, line 286). The line is funny because it is impossible. Dramatic characters do not – indeed, need not, *cannot* say "I am dead": "I die" is the final word.

But not, it would seem, for Tom Stukeley. Having proclaimed his end – "Thus Stukeley… | Dies" – he keeps going. Across no fewer than 45 lines, he recounts the entire course of his life: his "golden dayes" in London "when [he] touch the height of Fortunes wheele"; the "discontented humor" that drove him from England to Ireland and then to Spain; his

[322] Robert Greene, *The Historie of Orlando Furioso, One of the Twelve Pieres of France* (London,1594), sig. G4v; anon., *Locrine*, sig. K2v.

banishment to Rome, return to Ireland, and voyage to Lisbon at a "fatall houre"; and lastly, the irrepressible martial instinct that doomed him to fight a battle that could not be won. How are we to imagine this almost fifty-line speech performed? The already wounded Stukeley has incited his Italian aggressors to "strike downe [his] body to the earth". Are we to assume that Stukeley delivers his entire monologue weak and bleeding on the floor? It is an intensely dynamic speech, full of verbs of motion. Stukeley recounts a life spent crossing seas and borders, endlessly "driven" to "spred" sails, "ride" horses and "march" to war on his restless "pilgrimage". He recounts a life of opulence and fame, "glitter[ing]" and "shining" with accolades bestowed by popes and kings. He recounts a life perpetually on the ascent. Before the Italians struck their fatal blow, Stukeley proudly asserted that he had a "mounting minde [which] stoopes to no feeble stroke", and his life's narrative does, indeed, continue to strive for new heights even as its end approaches. Although he claims to have "toucht the height of Fortunes wheele" in his youth, this peak is followed not by the inevitable fall, but instead by a kind of plateau. Stukeley is "carried long aloft", as though on an upcurrent of air, and when he eventually moves from this elevated position, it is not down but forwards, "dr[iven]" to Ireland and then to Spain, borne along on the wind. In Spain, he rises again: "glitter[ing] all in gold" and "mounted" upon his white horse, Stukeley recalls himself "as Phoebus", sun god, shining down on all from a great height. It is a lively, lofty, triumphant soliloquy: are we to imagine it performed by a collapsed and ailing body?

Elsewhere, George Peele has characters remain prostrate for unusually long periods of time while speaking – in *David and Bethsabe*, and potentially also in *Titus Andronicus* – and perhaps the same happens in *Alcazar*, with Stukeley delivering the entirety of his bombastic parting speech from a bathetic posture of supine stillness.[323] He launches into his life story, however,

[323] A total of 24 lines are spoken by characters "l[ying] down" in *David and Bethsabe*, though only up to seven by one character. Editors disagree over how many lines Titus speaks from the ground; he "*lieth down*" at 3.1.11.1, and New Oxford Shakespeare editors Gary Taylor, Terri Bourus, Rory Loughnane, Anna Pruit, and Francis X. Connor note that "it is not clear when he rises". Jonathan Bate, in his edition of the play, has Titus "*rising*" at 3.1.51.1. Even if

with an exclamatory "Harke, freindes", which suggests a sudden resurgence of energy; if Stukeley has collapsed following his "Thus Stukley… | Dyes", he presumably rears up at least partially with this invocation to listen. Indeed, beyond indicating a change in the character's energy and posture, this "Harke" signals a wholesale shift in address, in mode of storytelling and temporality. As he turns to the audience, acknowledging them directly as "friends", Stukeley moves from the *locus* to the *platea*: that is, from the fictional scenario represented in the play to the literal platform of the stage.[324] The actor is still speaking as Tom Stukeley, but this is no longer Tom Stukeley immersed in a battle in the "desert fields of Africa". He was dying; depending on how the scene is performed, an audience may even briefly assume that he has died. Yet suddenly he is able to relate his entire life story in extensive and energetic detail. Only once before the end of his monologue does Stukeley verbally allude to his failing strength; around two thirds of the way through, he declares "Short be my tale, because my life is short", though this could simply be a convenient cover for one of the more politically controversial moments of his biography.[325] Otherwise, there is nothing in the speech to suggest that it is delivered in pain. Indeed, even if the actor playing Stukeley remains on the ground throughout, it seems implausible that he should perform the entire 45-line monologue as though still in the act of dying, gasping and writhing and clutching at his wounds like Olivier's Richard III. Time is not passing as it has done throughout act five thus far; it is as though Stukeley's death, the battle – even the play itself – have been paused for the performance of his monologue. Visibly

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Titus does remain on the ground for this long, he only speaks a total of 31 lines, and only up to 16 lines in one go, from the floor. Stukeley's monologue of 45 lines is far more demanding. George Peele, *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe*, sig. E4r; Jonathan Bate, ed., *Titus Andronicus* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1995), pp. 191-193. For a discussion of the dramaturgy of prostration in the two plays, see Kate Welch, "Chapter 1: '[D]owne and all the rest after him': Prostration and Mourning in *David and Bethsabe* and *Titus Andronicus*", in "Expressions of Grief on the Early Modern Stage", DPhil Thesis (University of Oxford, 2014), pp. 39-97.

[324] On the concept of the "*locus*" and the "*platea*", see, for instance, Robert Weimann, "Space (In)dividible: *Locus* and *Platea* Revisited", in *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*, pp. 180-215.

[325] This expression of physical weakness comes, conveniently, at the point at which Stukeley – a Catholic recusant who rebelled against Queen Elizabeth I – began plotting to invade Ireland and oust Elizabeth's control there. As David Bradley puts it, this "sinister intention" is elided in the speech, though it is arguably made notable by its absence. David Bradley, *From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p. 135.

suspended in the moment of his death, wounded and bleeding, yet holding forth with unerring stamina, Stukeley becomes the protagonist and speaker of his own *Mirror for Magistrates*-style tragedy, a tragedy distinct from *The Battle of Alcazar*.

We saw earlier that the death of Stukeley was advertised on the play's 1594 title page in precisely these terms. In its quarto edition, the play was entitled *The Battell of Alcazar, fought in Barbarie, between Sebastian king of Portugal, and Abdelmelec king of Marocco. With the death of Captaine Stukeley*. Stukeley's death is singled out as both highlight and adjunct, an episode of particular note separated with a period from the rest of the title. Indeed, Thomas Stukeley seems to exist in *Alcazar* primarily to die: his significance to the play is weighted heavily towards his final appearance on stage. Stukeley has 116 lines in the printed play, of which 60 are spoken following his last entrance onto the stage. 49 of those lines are in his final speech. His part is thus disproportionately concentrated in this valedictory monologue. This may, to some extent, be due to cutting. Although the exact nature of the abridgement is much debated, early modern scholars concur that surviving text of *Alcazar* bears signs of omission and revision.[326] In his famous study *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements*, Greg argued that the 1594 quarto represents a version of the play shortened for touring, though subsequent work by David Bradley and others has cast doubt both on how far the text's evident excisions can be considered the result of systematic and careful abridgement, and on whether early modern plays were shortened for touring in the first place.[327] *Alcazar* is not, in fact, substantially shorter than average for the period, but there are

[326] See, for instance, W. W. Greg, *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements: The Battle of Alcazar & Orlando Furioso* (Oxford: OUP, 1922); Bradley, *From Text to Performance*, pp. 127-129; Charles Edelman, *The Stukeley Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 20-21; Laurie Maguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts: the "Bad" Quartos and their Contexts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), pp. 80-81.

[327] Edelman questions the idea that the cuts to *Alcazar* were methodical or skilful, stating that "[t]he majority of…excisions" in the text "bear no resemblance to any systematic editing". Questioning Greg's touring hypothesis, Bradley suggests that the belief that "the major London companies were reduced in personnel when travelling in the provinces is probably an unshakeable myth of theatrical history", even though there is "no convincing evidence for the belief…and much that/ points in the opposite direction". Greg, *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements*, p. 15; Edelman, *The Stukeley Plays*, p. 21; Bradley, *From Text to Performance*, p. 58.

clearly lines missing, including some of Stukeley's.[328] His first speech to King Sebastian in act two, scene four, for instance, reads:

> Couragious king, the wonder of my thoughts
> And yet my lord, with pardon understand,
> My selfe and these, whom weather hath inforst,
> To lie at roade upon thy gracious coast,
> Did bend our course, and made amaine for Ireland.[329]

Some text has clearly been omitted after the opening line, which leaves Stukeley's encomiastic address to the king incomplete. Depending on how many of Stukeley's lines have been lost to such excisions – which, Bradley argues, seem to be "the accidental omissions of a careless compositor" – his last speech may not have been so disproportionately long in performance as it appears in the surviving text.[330] At the same time, there are also signs of more deliberate abridgement in the text: "the unusual number of mute characters", for instance, which Edelman interprets as evidence that "this play, as first performed, must have been longer than the published version".[331] That the play as a whole has been subject to more or less methodical forms of cutting, and yet Stukeley's dying speech has been retained, protracted and apparently intact, suggests that this set piece was particularly prized – a suggestion reinforced, of course, by its mention on the title page. In this respect, the monologue does constitute a kind of textual patch, in the sense that it is a section of the play which has been replicated more completely and coherently than much of what surrounds it.

Cuts alone, moreover, do not seem to account for the slender nature of Stukeley's part elsewhere in the play. David Bradley directly states that "Greg's feeling that the play once had much more to do with Stukeley stands on very frail ground".[332] Stukeley is not mentioned by name in any of the five Presenter speeches that precede each act of *Alcazar* and, according to

[328] Bradley calculates that the average length of plays printed between the opening of the Theatre and 1594 was 1,623 lines – only around 30 lines longer than *Alcazar*. Bradley, *From Text to Performance*, p. 129.
[329] Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar*, sig. E4v.
[330] Bradley, *From Text to Performance*, p. 167.
[331] Edelman, *The Stukeley Plays*, p. 21.
[332] Bradley, *From Text to Performance,* pp. 151-2.

Bradley's extensive study, there is "no evidence that he originally appeared in any of the dumb shows where the Plotter has introduced him".[333] The Presenter speeches and dumb shows typically summarise the key events of the preceding act, anticipate those of the following, and bridge any narrative gaps between the two. They serve a key storytelling function, and thus Stukeley's absence from them is striking; the implication is that he is not integral to the central action of the play. Equally striking is the lack of any mention of Stukeley in the play's final scene. Following Stukeley's death, Muly Mahamet Seth enters with a "*traine*" and "D*rums and Trumpets*", in triumph. He addresses Abdelmelec's body, still in its chair ("Now hast thou sit as in a trance and seene"), which means either that the body has been revealed or carried in, or that it has been visible throughout; Muly Mahamet Seth and Zareo had earlier planned to prop him up, as though still living, in his "tent", which might imply the use of some discovery space for his body, keeping him visible onstage while containing him from the main action of the battle.[334] Muly Mahamet Seth makes no reference to the dead Stukeley, however, which implies that his body is no longer on the stage. *The Battle of Alcazar*'s closing moments are organised around the disposal of three royal bodies: Abdelmelec, Sebastian, and Muly Mahamet. The body of Muly Mahamet is to be desecrated, flayed and put on show as a deterrent to other potential rebels, while in the play's final line the assembled characters depart "to performe the princes' funeralls" – that is, the funerals of Abdelmelec and Sebastian.[335] Stukeley receives no burial and no eulogy, other than the one he provided for himself. As Bradley puts it, "[o]nce Stukeley is dead, no further mention is made of him", and despite the quarto's omissions he argues that "we cannot suppose that he ever had a more prominent part in the finale".[336]

Stukeley is not embedded in the fabric of *Alcazar*. He is performing in his own separate one-man play, with which *The Battle of Alcazar* occasionally crosses paths. Even before his final *de*

[333] Bradley, *From Text to Performance*, p. 152.
[334] Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar*, sig.F4r-sig. F4v.
[335] Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar*, sig. G1v.
[336] Bradley, *From Text to Performance,* p. 152.

casibus monologue, he speaks a significant number of his lines in soliloquy, alone on stage (this happens, for instance, at the end of act two scene four).[337] It is characteristic of the egotist Stukeley to posture as tragic protagonist despite his relative insignificance; but the disproportionate concentration of his lines in a single speech, and the absence of any mention of him in the play's frame or conclusion, is more than a matter of characterisation. His trajectory, his tragedy, is separate from though adjacent to *The Battle of Alcazar*. My claim here is not about composition: I am not seeking to argue that Stukeley was added to the play after it was first written, or that his part was penned by a separate playwright. Rather, it is my contention that a play could contain a tragic extra of this kind, in much the same way that it could contain a largely separate plot for a clown; it could be imaginatively patchy without being correspondingly textually so.

Robert Greene's *Orlando Furioso* (*c.* 1591) contains a comparable, if far less bombastic example of a character's tragedy playing out from the side-lines of a drama. Merely another chivalrous knight in Ariosto's poem of the same name (*c.* 1532),[338] the character Sacrapant becomes a weak Marlovian villain in Greene's play: he talks as though he thinks that he is Tamburlaine, but he emphatically is not.[339] *Orlando Furioso* has been described as an early example of tragicomedy – for instance, by Jane Hwang Degenhardt, who argues that the play "rewrites romance into tragicomedy" – and it is Sacrapant who provides the tragic impulse, falsely convincing Orlando of Angelica's infidelity as part of his plot to win Angelica and the crown, thus triggering in Orlando the violent frenzy of the play's title.[340] Sacrapant's actions permit us to

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[337] Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar*, sig. D1v.
[338] In his study of the play Tetsumaro Hayashi argues that Greene probably worked directly from Ariosto's Italian version of the poem, rather than from John Harington's early 1590s English translation. Tetsumaro Hayashi, *A Textual Study of Robert Greene's* Orlando Furioso *with an Elizabethan Text* (Muncie, IN: Ball State University, 1973), pp. 3-7.
[339] Berek argues that "Robert Greene's comedy *Orlando Furioso* could make serious use of Marlowe's ideas, but Greene chooses not to do so"; of the character Sacrapant, he writes that "Marlovian rhetoric is an added gimmick for dramatizing a braggart villain whose greatest debt is to the *miles gloriosus*". Peter Berek, "Tamburlaine's Weak Sons: Imitation as Interpretation Before 1593", *Renaissance Drama*, 1982, vol 13, pp. 55-82, p. 60.
[340] Jane Hwang Degenhardt, *Islamic Conversion and Christian Resistance on the Early Modern Stage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 220.

glimpse the "tragick chance" which might have unfolded had Orlando's madness not been cured.[341] While in the grip of his delusion, Orlando brutally dismembers Sacrapant's servant, whom he mistakes for his love rival Medor, and threatens to inflict similar violence on Angelica.[342] In the end, though, it is only Sacrapant who follows a tragic trajectory. He achieves the crown with a Tamburlaine-like declaration of omnipotence, undermined somewhat by his weak wordplay around the almost-homophones "heave" and "have": "*crowned*", he threatens Marsillus and Mandrecard, "Viceroyes you are dead,| For Sacrepant already crownd a king,| *Heaves* up his sword to *have* your diadems".[343] But he is immediately challenged by the disguised Orlando to a fight in which he is fatally wounded, his tragic fall hot on the heels of his ascent. Though he does not soliloquise for as long as Stukeley, Sacrapant is likewise left alone on stage to deliver his dying speech, in which – like so many early modern dramatic characters at the point of death – he speaks of himself as a tragic performer:

> Now holdeth the fatall murderers of men,
> The sharpned knife readie to cut my threed,
> Ending the scene of all my tragedie.
> This daie, this houre, this minute ends the daies
> Of him that livde worthie olde Nestors age.
> Phoebus put on thy sable suted wreath,
> Cladde all thy spheres in darke and mourning weedes.
> […] Mars come thundering downe,
> And never sheath thy swift revenging swoorde,
> Till like the deluge in Dewcalions daies,
> The higgest mountains swimme in streames of bloud.
> Heaven, earth, men, beasts, & everie living thing
> Consume and end with countie Sacrepant.
> *he dyes.*[344]

Fleetingly the audience's sole focus, Sacrapant extravagantly invokes the apocalypse to accompany his own demise; but far from bringing about the end of all light and life on earth, Sacrapant's death does not even herald the end of the play. No fewer than fifteen characters – "*Marsillus, Mandrecard, and twelve peeres with Angelica*" – crowd onto the stage to join his lifeless

[341] Greene, *Orlando Furioso*, sig. D2r.
[342] Greene, *Orlando Furioso*, sig. D4v, sig. E4v-sig. F2r.
[343] Greene, *Orlando Furioso*, sig. G2v-G3r. Emphasis mine.
[344] Greene, *Orlando Furioso*, sig. G4r.

body; Mandrecard's "See where hee lies slaughtered without the campe" confirms that Sacrapant is still visible, all but trampled by the large group that enters only moments after his death.[345] There are, moreover, major conflicts still to be resolved within the play – most significantly, the question of Angelica's fidelity, which results in yet another fight before the drama can reach its happy conclusion via a reconciliation and a betrothal. Though he desperately attempts to claim it as such, this play is not Sacrapant's tragedy. Like Stukeley, he is effectively forgotten after his dying speech. The contrast between Sacrapant's apocalyptic monologue and the busy entrance of fifteen characters onto the stage is bathetic to the point of parody; unlike Stukeley, Sacrapant lacks the bombast and charisma ever to dominate the drama, even when left alone on stage. Still, his is another example of a one-man, *de casibus*-style tragedy existing within a play which has an altogether different agenda. He is permitted, like Rafe in *Pestle*, to "come out and die", with a set-piece death speech typical of plays of the period.

Stukeley's Afterlives

Despite his relative marginality to *Alcazar* itself, Stukeley seems to have become a famous stage name following his appearance in the play. He is one of four icons of the early modern playhouses named in George Peele's 1589 *A Farewell Entituled to the Famous and Fortunate Generalls of our English Forces: Sir John Norris and Syr Frauncis Drake*, which exhorts those generals to:

> Bid Theaters, and proude Tragaedians,
> Bid Mahomets Po[ll], and Mightie Tamburlaine,
> King Charlemaine, Tom Stukeley, and the rest
> Adiewe: To Armes, to Armes, to glorious armes.[346]

Stukeley's inclusion in this short list of theatrical highlights has been interpreted as a piece of self-promotion by Peele, who is taking the opportunity to advertise his own dramatic creation in the company of Tamburlaine; but still, it is Stukeley, not Abdelmelec or Muly Mahamet, who

[345] Greene, *Orlando Furioso*, sig. G4v.
[346] George Peele, *A Farewell Entituled to the Famous and Fortunate Generalls of our English Forces: Sir John Norris & Syr Frauncis Drake* (London, 1589), sig. A1r.

stands out and apart from *The Battle of Alcazar*.[347] His theatrical life beyond *Alcazar* continued into the 1590s. In the middle of this decade, Stukeley became the eponymous protagonist of a play about his life, which opens with his betrothal and marriage in London, and follows him on his military adventures to Ireland and Spain, and finally to El-Ksar El-Kebir, Morocco, where, as in *Alcazar*, he meets his "valiant end". Like the playlet "Soliman and Perseda", Thomas Stukeley and his life story went from play-patch to play proper. The play in question, *The Famous Historye of the Life and Death of Captaine Thomas Stukeley*, was printed in 1605 without any mention of an author or playing company, but it is typically associated with a series of performances by the Lord Admiral's Men recorded in *Henslowe's Diary* between late 1596 and early 1597.[348] The Admiral's Men are also the company named on the 1594 title page of *The Battle of Alcazar*. Their subsequent staging of a play called *Stukeley* (or "Stewtley") implies that they had registered this character's appeal and sought to capitalise on his popularity. With £3 laid out on the 8 December 1596 specifically for "stewtleyes hosse", the company was clearly willing to invest in this leading man.[349]

How far the extant text of *Stukeley* resembles the play listed as "Stewtley" by Henslowe is, as Edelman puts it, "a matter of great controversy", owing to the messy and confused state of

[347] There is no evidence of another drama featuring Stukeley preceding this date, so it is generally assumed that the Stukeley referenced in this poem is the Stukeley of *Alcazar*; the publication of the poem thus provides a *terminus ad quem* for the composition and first performance of *Alcazar*. For a fuller discussion of the dating of *Alcazar*, see Edelman, *The Stukeley Plays*, pp. 16-19.

[348] Henslowe records ten performances of a play called "Stewtley" by the Admiral's Men between 11 December 1596 and 27 June 1597. Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 55-59.

[349] Costumes were a major theatrical expense, as *Henslowe's Diary* demonstrates. The sum of £3 spent on Stukeley's hose was by no means the most expensive outlay, either for a single garment or for a single play; Henslowe lent over £7 for new clothes for a revival of *The Massacre at Paris* in 160, and on 30 January 1599 spent £9 on taffeta for "ij womones gownes for the ij angrey wemen of abengton". Still, these hose, purchased to be worn by a specified character, constituted a relatively significant investment; by comparison, "A Robe to playe hercolas" in both parts of the *Hercules* play cost only 40 shillings or £2, while "a grey gowne for gryssell" in *Patient Grissell* cost only 20 shillings. Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary,* p. 50, pp. 183-185, p. 104, p. 93, p. 130. On costume costs, see S. P. Cerasano, "'Borrowed Robes,' Costume Prices, and the Drawing of 'Titus Andronicus'", *Shakespeare Studies*, Vol. 22 (January 1994), pp. 45-57; Roslyn L. Knutson, "*Henslowe's Diary* and the Economics of Play Revision for Revival, 1592-1603", *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 10, no. 1 (Spring 1985), pp. 1-18; Peter Stallybrass, "Properties in Clothes: the Materials of the Renaissance Theatre", in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 177-207.

the printed quarto.[350] The text is a masterclass in early modern play-patching: it contains, for example, two different versions of the same scene (scene seven) one after the other; it appears to be missing an entire section of the play, set in Rome; and the scenes of act five are apparently "in the wrong order", as Stukeley's final entrance occurs after he has already been reported dead.[351] For many years, following Richard Simpson's suggestion in the late nineteenth century, critics believed Q to be an amalgamation of parts of the Admiral's Men's "Stewtley" with one or two other, now lost plays.[352] More recently, Martin Wiggins has demonstrated this to be an unnecessarily convoluted explanation.[353] Clearly, the printed text of *Stukeley* has been set from some kind of working document; the duplicated scene is easily explicable as an interleaved revision which the compositor has not understood as such, and the absent scene as a section of the play perhaps parcelled out to another playwright, as in the example from *The Faithful Friends* manuscript mentioned above. Though he uses it in support of his textual amalgamation theory, Simpson draws a helpful parallel with the messiness of the manuscript of *Sir Thomas More*, observing that "[i]f the MS. from which *Stucley* [sic.] was printed was anything like this, the confusion…is not at all to be wondered at".[354] There is no need, in summary, to devise a complex theory of dramatic conflation to explain away the many anomalies of the 1605 *Stukeley* quarto. Its omissions and duplications are all easily explicable as the consequences of setting the play from a messy copytext, a working manuscript of the Admiral's Men's "Stewtley".

Textual issues aside, *Stukeley* is a generic patchwork. It starts out in the manner of a city comedy, with Stukeley wooing Nell Curtis, his future wife, for what turn out to be mercenary rather than romantic reasons, and then morphs into a heroic romance, with scenes of Stukeley's conquests in Ireland and imprisonment and escape in Spain. As the battle in El-Ksar El-Kebir

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[350] "Stutely" or "Stewtley" was a recognised alternative spelling of "Stukeley" in the era; a 1563 ballad was entitled "A Comendation of the Adventurus viage of the worthy Captain M. Thomas Stutely". Edelman, *The Stukeley Plays*, p. 34; anon, "A Comendation of the Adventurus viage of the worthy Captain M. Thomas Stutely" (London, 1563).
[351] Edelman, *The Stukeley Plays*, pp. 42-48.
[352] Richard Simpson, ed., *The School of Shakspere*, 2 vols (London: Chatto & Windus, 1878), vol. 1, pp. 140-143.
[353] Martin Wiggins, "Things That Go Bump in the Text: *Captain Thomas Stukeley*", *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America,* vol. 98, no. 1 (March 2004), pp. 5-20.
[354] Simpson, *The School of Shakspere*, vol. 1, p. 142.

approaches, a Chorus appears for the first time to designate the play thus far a "Comicke historie".[355] Like "Time" in *The Winter's Tale*, the role of this Chorus is partly to announce and to manage the transition in tone:

> Thus farre upon the steps of high promotion
> His [Stukeley's] happie starres advaunst him. Now at highest,
> As cleerest summer daies have darkest nights
> And everie thing must finish: So in him,
> His state declining draws unto an end.[356]

Yet the Chorus's role in stitching together "Comicke historie" and military tragedy is somewhat redundant. Already, before the Chorus enters, the audience knows that war is approaching; the previous scene, a conversation between King Sebastian and Antonio about their impending involvement in the war in Morocco, ends with Sebastian's ominous couplet, "And now set forward, let our Ensigns fly,| either victorious, or if conquered die". Rather, the Chorus and the dumb show which accompanies it function primarily as an intertextual reference to *The Battle of Alcazar*, as the peregrinating *Captain Thomas Stukeley* at last comes to rest in the same location as this earlier play. The very presence of the Chorus – more than what the Chorus specifically says – is important for signalling a transition to a different dramatic kind. As I explore in chapter three, prologues and choruses were, overwhelmingly, features of plays styling themselves as tragedies in the 1580s and 1590s. The sudden appearance of the Chorus in *Stukeley* at this moment in the play, though condemned by some critics as part of the drama's "confusion", serves as a deliberate generic marker to announce the play's transition into tragedy.[357]

There are other dramaturgical echoes of *Alcazar* – most notably, the stage picture of Muly Mahamet and Calipolis "*Enter*[ing]…*drawn in their chariot*".[358] The verbal echoes are not extensive. Indeed, a further argument against the theory that the printed text of *Stukeley* was cobbled together from pieces of multiple plays is that it does not borrow more from a play on

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[355] Anon. *The Famous Historye of the Life and Death of Captaine Thomas Stukeley* (London, 1605), sig. I4v.
[356] Anon., *The Life and Death of Captaine Thomas Stukeley*, sig. I4r.
[357] Simpson, *The School of Shakspere*, vol. 1, p. 142.
[358] Edelman notes, "The Rose's chariot, used in *Tamburlaine* and in *Alcazar*, is put into action again". Anon., *The Life and Death of Captaine Thomas Stukeley*, sig. K1v; Edelman, *The Stukeley Plays*, p. 212.

the same subject which we know to have existed, and to have belonged to the Admiral's Men; if the playwright responsible for *Stukeley* was running out of steam, why did he not lift the battle of El-Ksar El-Kebir section directly from *The Battle of Alcazar* play? Instead, *Stukeley* presents its own version of the battle while simultaneously engaging with the story as told in *Alcazar*, not least in its staging of Stukeley's death. That this short scene appears out of order in the quarto, after the audience has already been informed that Stukeley is dead, reinforces that it is, itself, a textual patch, self-contained and mobile.

Unlike in *Alcazar*, Stukeley in this play dies side-by-side with his friend Vernon. Wiggins suggests that there is a deliberate, schematic diminution of Stukeley's role throughout the play. Following an inverse trajectory to the Stukeley of *Alcazar*, the eponymous Stukeley becomes less and less central to the action as the story progresses, to the point where he does not receive a solo death scene, or even a lengthy last speech.[359] Yet memories of his garrulity appear to persist. As "*foure or five Italian* soldiers" set upon him, Stukeley calls, "Heare me, you bloudy villaynes"; but instead of being permitted to say what he wants them to hear, a soldier interjects, completing the verse line with the instruction to "Stab him, souldiers", and stopping the speech in its tracks. A skirmish follows in which Vernon is "*slain*" and Stukeley is "*stab*[bed]": "O have you slaine my friend", cries Stukeley, and the same soldier comments, as though in exasperation, "Yet doth he prate".[360] Angry that his intended victim is still not dead, the soldier complains, specifically, about Stukeley's continued and unnecessary talking.[361] It could, of course, be that some of Stukeley's lines in the scene are missing from this unquestionably imperfect text, and that he has been "prat[ing]" for much longer than recorded; but the soldier's exasperation also recalls a verbose Stukeley from elsewhere. The soldier's irritation at Stukeley's continued speaking seems far more pertinent to the earlier *Alcazar* death scene in which, as we have seen, Stukeley speaks at

[359] Wiggins, "Things That Go Bump in the Text", pp. 14-15.
[360] Anon., *The Life and Death of Captaine Thomas Stukeley*, sig. K4v.
[361] "prate (*v.*)", *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149386?rskey=DAD1eX&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid, accessed 10 Sep 2021.

impossible length after he has been fatally stabbed. This is, then, another way in which *The Famous History of the Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stukeley* shows its debt to and engagement with *The Battle of Alcazar*. Stukeley's bombastic monologue is remembered in the later play's death scene even as he is prevented from "prat[ing]" any further, silenced in the middle of a verse line.

Oddly extraneous to the play in which we believe he first appeared, Captain Thomas Stukeley, "proud Tragedian" of Peele's poem, enjoyed a theatrical life beyond *The Battle of Alcazar* much like the more conventional, textual tragic patches I explored in the first part of the chapter. The word "Tragedian" is worth pausing over here, because of the way in which it highlights an early modern association between character and genre. The earliest recorded uses of the word in English refer to writers of tragedies, but in the 1580s another meaning appears, as "tragedian" comes also to describe an actor of a tragic part.[362] A division emerges – though it is far from systematic – in which "tragedian" in ancient and classical contexts continues to refer to writers, while "tragedian" in contemporary contexts increasingly refers to performers. Thus, we have Nashe in *Piers Pennilesse* (1592) writing of the "Tragedian that represents [the] person" of John Talbot on stage; Hieronimo referring to himself and his fellow performers as "Tragedians" after the staging of "Soliman and Perseda"; Greene in his *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) alluding to Marlowe not as a "Tragedian", but as a "famous gracer" of them, one who honours them with his writing.[363] To refer to the player rather than the playwright as the "Tragedian" is to position the player as the origin of the tragedy and, by extension, to make the character its locus. This is another example of the patchwork quality of early modern drama being inherent in its very

[362] The earliest uses of the word recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* date to the late fourteenth century, and refer to writers of tragedies. It is two centuries later that uses of the word meaning "an actor who performs in a tragedy or tragedies, *esp.* one who specializes in tragic roles" begin to appear. "tragedian (*n.*), 1 and 2", *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/204344?redirectedFrom=tragedian#eid, accessed 10 Sep 2021.

[363] Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Pennilesse His Supplication to the Divell* (London, 1592), sig. F3r; Kyd, *The Spanishe Tragedie*, sig. K4r; Robert Greene, *Greenes Groats-Worth of Witte* (London, 1592), sig. E4v.

vocabulary: playwright as "Tragedian" lends a generic coherence to the entire play; player as "Tragedian" is only one part of the whole.

There exists some limited evidence that this individual part – the character – was sometimes extracted from a theatrical context altogether, to appear at gatherings hosted by private citizens. In an article about the seventeenth-century theatre enthusiast Sir Edward Dering, T. N. S. Lennam identifies two entries in Dering's account books as payments to individual actors made while at the playhouse:

> Only two entries bring his bare record to life, namely those following his unaccompanied visits to the theater [sic] on 3 and 6 December 1623. On these occasions he gave the sum of two and sixpence to 'little Thomsone there' and to 'little Borne y^{e} boy there' respectively.[364]

After some oblique speculation about the reason for these payments ("[o]ne wonders what services these boys performed for him, because in each case they received a shilling more than the price Dering paid for his admission"), Lennam identifies "Thomsone" and "Borne" as, probably, John Thompson, a leading boy actor in the King's Men, and Theophilius Bird, also a boy actor, who was otherwise first linked with Queen Henrietta's Men in 1625.[365] More recently, Emma Smith has hypothesised that these payments may record Dering commissioning the players to perform individual dramatic turns at his house, perhaps to entertain guests.[366] The preface to Robert Armin's *History of the Two Maids of More-clacke With the Life and Simple Maner of John in the Hospitall* (*c.* 1609) indicates that such transactions did indeed take place:

> Gentlemen, Cittizens, Rustickes, or *quis non*, I have boldly put into your hands, a Historical discourse, acted by the boyes of the Revels, which perchaunce in part was sometime acted more naturally in the Citty, if not in the hole…I would have inacted *John* my selfe, but *Tempora mutantur in illis,*[367] & I cannot do as I would, I

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[364] T. N. S. Lennam, "Sir Edward Dering's Collection of Playbooks, 1619-1624", *SQ*, vol. 16, no. 2 (Spring 1965), pp. 145-153, p. 147.
[365] Lennam, p. 147.
[366] Emma Smith, "Seventeenth-Century Cumberbitches and Hiddlestoners?" (seminar, University of Exeter, 15 Nov 2017).
[367] A contraction of a Latin adage popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis", meaning "the times change, and we change with them". It appeared, for instance, in William Harrison's *Description of England* (1577) which formed part of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Elizabeth Knowles, "times", in *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2460/view/10.1093/acref/9780198609810.001.0001/acref-9780198609810-e-7136, accessed 10 Sep 2021.

> have therefore thought good to divulge him thus…and being requested both of Court and Citty, to shew him in private, I have therefore printed him in publike, wishing thus much to every one, so delighting, *I* might put life into this picture, and naturally act him to your better contents; but since it may not be, my entreaty is, that you would accept this dumbe show, and be well wishing to the substance.[368]

Armin claims that he has been asked to perform the character of John separately, at private homes, and suggests, moreover, that he would have been willing to do so ("wishing…*I* might put life into this picture, and naturally act him to your better contents"). The Latin adage about changing with the times may imply Armin's retirement from acting; whether because ill health or old age prevents him, or simply because of a change of profession, Armin can no longer perform John in the Hospital and has chosen to showcase him in print instead.[369]

This preface offers only a single and, indeed, hypothetical account of such a practice: the point is that Armin did *not* perform the character of John in private, although he was requested to do so. Clowns may, moreover, have been an exceptional case. Early modern theatrical clowns had their origins in solo entertainment – the court fool – and there are records of clowns performing alone in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; perhaps most famous among these is Will Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600), in which Kemp describes his own Morris dance from London to Norwich, often performed amid crowds of onlookers.[370] What is different and significant about the Armin preface is that he claims to have been asked to provide private entertainment not in his professional capacity as a clown, but in his role as a specific dramatic character. Notably, John in the Hospital is advertised on the title page as an extra, an isolatable addition, using the same phrase – "with the" – that I identified being used for both clowns and tragic figures earlier in this chapter.

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[368] Robert Armin, *The History of the Two Maids of More-clacke with the Life and Simple Maner of John in the Hospitall* (London, 1609), sig. ¶2v.
[369] There are no certain records of Armin performing after around 1610, though he is known to have been a member of the King's Men until this date. Martin Butler, "Robert Armin, (1563-1615), actor and comic writer", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-647, accessed 10 Sep 2021.
[370] William Kemp, *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder Performed in a Daunce from London to Norwich. Containing the Pleasure, Paines and Kind Entertainment of William Kemp betweene London and that Citty in his Late Morrice* (London, 1600).

Although it cannot singlehandedly prove the existence of a widespread custom, there is no reason to assume that Armin's experience of being asked to perform the part of John in the Hospital in people's homes was unique either. The *More-clacke* preface implies that the practice of paying individual actors to "shew" characters "in private" was not unheard of, particularly when taken alongside the Dering records as interpreted by Smith. There is one further piece of evidence I would like to discuss here, which gestures to the existence of a practice of private, partial performance of plays in late-sixteenth-century England. When the visiting players arrive in Elsinore, Shakespeare's Hamlet greets these "tragedians of the city" that he was "wont to take delight in" as "old friend[s]".[371] He is familiar with them, commenting on one player's beard and joking with another, the boy, about whether his voice has "cracked" yet.[372] When he demands a certain "speech straight" in demonstration of the actors' "quality", he makes a curious remark about the particular one he has in mind: "I heard thee speak me a speech once", he replies to the player who has asked him which speech; "but it was never acted, or, if it was, not above once, for the play I remember pleased not the million, 'twas caviare to the general".[373] The exchange is very similar across Q2 and F, while Q1 has, "I heard thee speak a speech once, but it was never acted – or, if it were, never above twice".[374]

How is it that Hamlet can be confused about whether the play in which his favoured speech featured was ever performed? How does he imagine he first encountered the speech if it was "never acted"? He quickly overcomes his confusion, remembering it as an "excellent play, well digested in the scenes", and too sophisticated for the "vulgar" (Q1) to appreciate.[375] But his momentary uncertainty is, for my purposes, telling. "I heard thee speak *me* a speech once", Hamlet says in Q2 and F. His "me", absent in Q1, suggests the speech was performed

[371] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), p. 259, II.ii.291-292, p. 264, II.ii.360.
[372] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 265, II.ii.366.
[373] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 265, II.ii.369-375.
[374] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), p. 248, II.ii.433-434; p. 104, scene 7, lines 328-329.
[375] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 265, II.ii.377; Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, p. 105, scene 7, line 330.

specifically for him – at his request, perhaps, and out of the context of the rest of the play. When he adds that it was "never acted", he distinguishes between two different modes of performance: the "acti[ng]" of the speech before a theatre audience and as part of a larger play; and the "speak[ing]" of it as an extracted solo turn. The reason Hamlet cannot initially remember whether or not the play was performed is, I suggest, because he also heard the speech separately, in the form of a private oratorical performance. Here, it is a particular monologue rather than a particular character which has been extracted and showcased, but the principle is broadly the same: parts of plays could be requested, performed, and enjoyed in private, separately from their dramas of origin.

I will not go so far as to claim that Tom Stukeley and his *Alcazar* monologue were candidates for this kind of private entertainment. Rather, my intention in laying out the evidence for performances of this nature is to situate *The Battle of Alcazar* and the other plays discussed in this chapter in a wider theatrical context, in which parts of plays might be extracted to appear separately, and in which, by extension, the play as a unit becomes a vehicle or placeholder for a range of entertainments and star turns. This is a further extension of Stern's patch argument, in which pieces of a drama circulate and disperse, independent of the material conditions of their composition and existence. As I have suggested throughout this chapter, we are more accustomed to mobility and marginality being features of comic turns in early modern drama; Shakespeare's Falstaff is the obvious example, a character so popular in *Henry IV Parts One* (*c.* 1597) and *Two* (*c.* 1598) that he received a starring role in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, a play only nominally set in the same period as the histories and with no overlap in plot content. This chapter has begun to demonstrate that tragic characters could function similarly, playing out their tragedies in self-contained set-pieces, recurring as star turns in subsequent plays. The long, metatheatrically framed death speech was, I suggest, a staple of the 1580s and 1590s playhouses. It was not necessarily reserved for a play's protagonist, and could be entirely extraneous to the main thrust of the plot, as the dying monologues of both Stukeley and Sacrapant make clear.

Dramas of the late 1580s and 1590s could showcase these monologic tragedies without being dominated or defined by them. In chapter three, I continue to explore forms of metatheatrical tragic showcase in the plays of the late sixteenth century, while focusing on a different kind of play-patch. With tragedy a new and exciting arrival on the popular stage, I examine the use of prologues, choruses, and other dramatic framing texts to advertise it as such.

CHAPTER THREE
"*Enter Tragedie*":
Setting the Tragic Scene

When the anonymous, late-1590s play *A Warning for Fair Women* (*c.* 1597) features in scholarship on early modern drama, it is often because of its metatheatrical induction. A domestic tragedy about a sixteenth-century London murder sensationalised in pamphlets, the play opens with a debate between History, Comedy, and Tragedy personified, about which one of them will preside over the day's entertainment; more than two decades before the publication of *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (1623), *A Warning* staged these same three genres as the definitive kinds of contemporary English theatre. History enters at one door with a "*Drum and Ensigne*", Tragedy at another with "*a whip, [and] in the other hand a knife*", and Comedy "*at the other end*" with a fiddle.[376] The induction presumes the legibility of these prop-bearing figures, demanding a high degree of what Robert Henke terms "dramatic competence" from the audience: though all three genres are eventually named in the dialogue, the success of the conceit relies on History, Comedy and Tragedy being recognised as generic personifications from the outset.[377] The genres spend most of the induction lampooning one another's traits as they jostle for pre-eminence, with Comedy and Tragedy particularly savage in their exchange of insults. Tragedy accuses Comedy of recycling tired and facile jokes – "Some odde ends of old jeasts scrap't up togither" – while Comedy mocks Tragedy for her excessive gore and melodrama, her "howling" choruses, "screaming" ghosts, stabbings, hangings and throat-cuttings.[378]

[376] Mariko Ichikawa proposes a stage with three doors or entrance points: a central door from the tiring house or "discovery space", and two flanking doors. History enters through one of the flanking doors, she proposes, Tragedy through the central opening, and Comedy through a third flanking door. Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women* (London, 1599), sig. A2r; Mariko Ichikawa, "'The Stage is Hung With Blacke': On the Use of Black Curtains for Tragedies in the Early Modern Period", *Theatre Notebook*, vol. 68, no. 3 (2014), pp. 153-188, p. 170.
[377] Henke, discussing the tragicomedies of the 1610s, emphasises the superior "dramatic competence" of Blackfriars – as compared to Globe – audiences; but the generic literacy demanded by *A Warning*'s induction indicates that early modern amphitheatre audiences were also well versed in the tropes and conventions of contemporary dramatic genres. Robert Henke, *Pastoral Transformations: Italian Tragicomedy and Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), pp. 60-61.
[378] Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women*, sig. A2v.

Tragedy dominates, of course. *A Warning for Fair Women* is a tragic play; and not only does Tragedy inevitably win the debate between the genres, but most of the dialogue even preceding her victory concerns the tropes and traits of tragic drama in particular. Indeed, Andrew Gurr has argued that the induction to *A Warning* effectively constitutes the Lord Chamberlain's Men's manifesto for their new brand of dramatic tragedy. Through Tragedy's triumph over History, Comedy and their stereotyping of her, Gurr suggests, the company were signalling the arrival of an "innovative…new kind of domestic tragedy", intended to "displace other plays that were standard to the repertory" – that is, "[c]omedies about romantic lovers and history plays full of battles with flags and drums…along with the old kind of revenge tragedies".[379] Certainly, some of the features of tragedy that Comedy lampoons – bloodthirsty conquerors; ghosts that scream for "revenge" – are characteristic of the kinds of tragic plays that were popular earlier in the past ten years: revenge tragedies like *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) and *Titus Andronicus* (*c.* 1589); tyrant dramas like *Tamburlaine* (1587) and *Selimus* (*c.* 1591). With its familiar London setting, its middle-class characters and its basis in real events, *A Warning* differs in some significant ways from these plays. But there is also overlap between the content of *A Warning* and much of what Comedy and History mock about tragedy as a genre, not least in the presence of a "howling" chorus and the staging of graphic violence.[380] Neither was *A Warning*, as Gurr concedes, the first domestic tragedy to be staged in the English theatres.[381] If Comedy and History's satire is partly designed to emphasise the novelty of *A Warning* as compared to earlier examples of dramatic tragedy, it is also, more broadly, engaged in the process of building

[379] Andrew Gurr, "'The stage is hung with black': Genre and the Trappings of Stagecraft in Shakespearean Tragedy", in *Shakespeare and Genre: From Early Modern Inheritances to Postmodern Legacies*, ed. Anthony R. Guneratne (New York: Palgrave Macmillian 2011), pp. 67-82, pp. 67-69.
[380] Tragedy serves as macabre, inter-act chorus to the play, presenting a series of bloody and ominous dumb shows; at one point, she daubs the characters' hands with blood. The attack on George Sanders and his friend John Bean is violent and drawn out. Anon. *A Warning for Fair Woman*, sig. D1v; sig. F1r-v.
[381] *Arden of Faversham* (*c.* 1590), another play based on a true story, about a man who was murdered on the orders of his wife, is typically dated to the start of the decade. Although it was not printed until 1601, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* – another example of a tragedy based on real, recent and (at least in part) local events – is dated to 1595 by its most recent editor, Chiaki Hanabusa. Chiaki Hanabusa, ed., *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. xvii.

anticipation for a tragic play. Comedy's derisive parody and Tragedy's self-aggrandisement ("I must have passions that must move the soul") are both means of showcasing facets of the genre – its gore, its bombast – whetting the audience's appetite for the tragic melodrama to follow.

For the audience has known the outcome of the generic debate from the beginning. Whether or not they entered the playhouse having already seen "The most tragicall and lamentable murther of Master George Sanders" advertised on a playbill, the playgoers have apparently been alerted to the tragic nature of the play by a piece of stage decoration.[382] Comedy is only persuaded to abandon her gleeful defiance of Tragedy when History suddenly remarks on the colour of the curtains in the playhouse:

> Hyst: Looke *Comedie*, I markt it not till now,
> The stage is hung with blacke: and I perceive
> The Auditors preparde for *Tragedie*.[383]

Upon having her attention drawn to these black stage hangings, Comedy immediately admits defeat, and she and History surrender the playhouse to Tragedy's "raigne", albeit only for the day. The tragic play *A Warning for Fair Women* has thus been doubly framed: with a genre-focused induction that primes the audience for Tragedy's display of murder and melodrama; and with sombre black curtains that literally set her scene.

In this chapter, I am interested in the way in which prologues and inductions from the 1580s and 1590s present tragedy. That is, I am interested both in the use of performed paratexts to introduce plays as tragedies, and in how tragedy is represented, personified or described in those paratexts. In chapters one and two, I considered the implications of tragedy's theatrical novelty in terms of dramatic form and structure. I demonstrated how, in the absence of a single, clear precedent for dramatic tragedy, plays could contain and showcase one or multiple tragedies, linking this both to the example set by non-dramatic forms of tragedy, and to the textual and conceptual patchwork of early modern plays. Instead of continuing to examine the formal variety

[382] This is the phrase used on the 1599 title page of the play. Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women*, t.p.
[383] Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women*, sig. A3r.

attendant upon tragedy's newness, in this chapter I shift my focus, to explore how the novelty and excitement of tragedy was manifested in framing texts which ostentatiously stage, announce and negotiate the genre. I move away from thinking about tragic patches within plays, to consider another kind of play-patch as identified by Stern: the prologue, induction or chorus.[384] In some ways, as we shall see, these tragic framing texts work against the patchwork tendencies I have identified in earlier chapters, seeking to impose generic unity by packaging entire plays, definitively and emphatically, as tragedies. But there are also a number of ways in which frames from the period register and even dramatise generic instability. Often, I will suggest, those framing devices which appear most definitive – generically-determined black curtains; personifications of Tragedy – belie an uncertainty of identity, a sense that tragedy as a dramatic genre was still indeterminate, ill-defined.

A Warning for Fair Women dates from near the end of my period of interest. Its genre-focused induction exists in an established tradition of choruses and other framing pieces that stage personifications either of the dramatic kinds themselves, or of abstractions (Truth, Poetry, Death) which debate their relevance to the forthcoming play in terms of genre. As such, it exemplifies – even parodies – many of the features of the 1580s and 1590s framing texts that I identify and explore in this chapter, and this is why I have chosen to open with it above. In the first part of the chapter, I offer an overview of genre-focused framing texts from the 1580s and 1590s, with a particular emphasis on how, and how often, those framing texts are concerned with advertising tragedy. I then consider representations and personifications of Tragedy within framing texts, tracing the competing traditions which present either the Muse Melpomene or the Fury Megaera as the governing force of tragedy. In the final part of the chapter, I return to the question of the black tragic stage hangings referenced above in relation to *A Warning*. Alluded to almost exclusively in prologues, inductions or opening scenes, these curtains appear to serve as

[384] Tiffany Stern, "Chapter 4: Prologues, Epilogues, Interim Entertainments", in *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp. 81-119.

another kind of generic frame, a material declaration of a play's tragic credentials. Tragedy is, notably, the only early modern dramatic genre to have been associated with a piece of stage decoration in this way. My discussion of the practice seeks to probe the assumption, often drawn from readings of *A Warning*'s induction, that the relationship between black curtains and dramatic tragedy was consistent and categorical. I suggest that the black hangings were associated more with tone, atmosphere and scene-setting than with generic pigeonholing; although a custom clearly did exist, it was not as universal or as absolute as *A Warning* – I will suggest, playfully – implies. In addition, in this section of the chapter I identify some further references to the hangings which have not been discussed or documented in major critical studies of the practice.

Many of the framing devices I discuss in this chapter are concerned with distinguishing and elevating tragedy, with establishing it as more solemn and cerebral, and at the same time more emotive, than the other dramatic kinds with which it shares the stage. They often represent, I will argue, a curiously refracted classicising impulse. For the most part, the framing texts of early modern tragedy bear little resemblance to the choruses of Greek and Roman theatre, but they frequently reference or even stage classical figures (the Muses, the Furies), and as Helen Cooper has suggested, even to label such texts as "prologues", "epilogues" and "choruses" is to claim a classical inheritance whether or not one exists.[385] Again, *A Warning*'s opening is attuned to these tendencies: Tragedy is obsessed with her own gravity, holding forth hyperbolically on the "passions" she commands – passions that "make the heart heavie" and "rap the sences from their course" – and emphatically invoking her classical credentials ("In great *Apollos* name and all the *Muses*,| By vertue of whose Godhead I am sent…").[386] I attend to

[385] Cooper writes that the "terminology" used for these framing texts "makes it look as if the practice were adopted from the Classics", although "that actually happened comparatively rarely"; "[p]*rologue*, *epilogue* and *chorus*, like *theatre*, *tragedy* and *comedy*, are derived from Greek by way of Latin, but their use in English theatrical contexts long postdates the practices they came to designate". Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010), p. 74.
[386] Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women*, sig. A2v-A3r.

the faux classicism of early modern choruses particularly in the first section of the chapter, where I identify two forms of framing text that seek to associate plays with a classical tragic heritage: the two-person dialogic induction, and the chorus-plus-dumbshow. Neither kind of frame, as I discuss below, arrived on the early modern stage directly from Greek or Roman tragedy, but both were used to invoke a connection with a dramatic tragic tradition.

One of the most significant differences between classical choruses and early modern ones is how separate the latter typically are from the plays in which they feature. The choruses of Ancient Greek comedy and tragedy were usually characters within the world of the drama – for instance, the elders or women of the relevant city – and they interacted with the named characters of the play. Brian W. Schneider suggests that choruses became increasingly marginal and separate as classical drama developed. He traces their diminution from Aeschylus, to Sophocles, to Euripides, to Seneca, and observes that this exclusion of the chorus from the action itself persisted in the early modern period.[387] When early modern choral figures engage with the plot of a play, they do so from a position of detached omniscience, narrating, foreshadowing and filling in gaps.[388] The framing texts I consider in this chapter are sometimes even further removed, more interested in exploring questions of genre than in discussing the specific plays they open. As Brian W. Schneider puts it, prologues, epilogues, choruses and other frames from the early modern period frequently "concern themselves with major elements of the discussions about the nature of drama", and can "appear to be feeding off each other", rather

[387] Brian W. Schneider, *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama: 'Whining' Prologues and 'Armed' Epilogues* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 49.

[388] There are some notable exceptions to this rule, particularly in the case of epilogues. The earliest epilogue performed by a dramatic character concludes John Lyly's *Gallathea* (1588), in which the epilogue is spoken by the titular character. There are numerous later examples of this practice: Rosalind in *As You Like It* (*c.* 1600); Prospero in *The Tempest* (*c.* 1611); Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*c.* 1595); Franklin in *Arden of Faversham*; Elizabeth in *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (*c.* 1589). The relationship of these epilogue speakers to the characters they performed in their respective plays is often ambiguous; in both *Gallathea* and *As You Like It*, the epilogue is elusive on the matter of its speaker's identity, particularly in terms of gender, and Laurie Maguire has recently highlighted the separateness of Franklin in *Arden*, demonstrating his role as storyteller throughout the play. Still, these epilogues are more proximal to the fictional play world than unnamed prologues and choruses who never interact with other characters, and remain separate throughout. For a discussion of the ambiguity of Rosalind's epilogue, see Juliet Dusinberre, ed., *As You Like It* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), pp. 9-27; Laurie Maguire, "Early Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Narrative Theory: *Arden of Faversham* and (the) Franklin's Tale", in *Early Shakespeare, 1588-1594*, ed. Rory Loughnane (Cambridge: CUP, 2020), pp. 121-146.

than off the plays they surround.[389] Tiffany Stern's important work on the occasional, detachable and mobile nature of these particular play-patches is well known. Although her theory that prologues were only performed on a play's opening night has been challenged by subsequent scholarship, it is clear that framing texts were not permanent features of plays in print or in performance, and it is for this reason that I have delayed my discussion of these apparent beginnings until the second half of my thesis.[390] Prologues and inductions were only sometimes the first part of a play that an early modern playgoer encountered. They offer, as Schneider's quote implies, an immensely valuable insight into how drama was imagined and spoken about in a given period, but they are always, in some sense, extraneous, extratextual. I read the prologues, inductions and choruses I discuss in this chapter, therefore, largely independently; where relevant, I consider them in relation to their respective plays, but I am mainly interested in them, as in the black curtains, as manifestations of the tragic zeitgeist.

Present, Absent: The Framing Text in Tragic Drama

Until this point, I have been using the terms "prologue", "induction" and "chorus", if not quite interchangeably, then without attempting to define or draw any clear distinctions between the three. This is, in part, because early modern terminology and practices were both slippery. Inductions segued into prologues; prologues became choruses; and all of these paratexts were liable to total or partial omission from different editions of plays, and probably from performances too. The famous prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* (*c.* 1595) is an exemplary case. Labelled "*Prologue*" in Q1 and Q2, it is also attributed to a "*Corus*" in Q2, who delivers another, far less famous choric speech (again, a sonnet) at the end of act two.[391] We might expect a chorus

[389] Schneider, *The Framing Text*, p. 10.
[390] Schneider argues that "many framing texts are too relevant to the plays they describe to have been applicable only to a first performance", and challenges the idea that appeals for applause are always indicative of first night or benefit performances. Stern, *Documents of Performance*, pp. 81-82; Schneider, *The Framing Text*, pp. 143-147.
[391] William Shakespeare, *An Excellent Conceited Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet* (London, 1597), sig. A3r; William Shakespeare, *The Most Excellent, and Lamentable Tragedie, of Romeo and Juliet* (London, 1599), sig. A2r, sig. D1r.

of this kind to reappear between each act, like the choruses of *Pericles* (*c.* 1608) and *Henry V* (*c.* 1599), but the chorus of *Romeo and Juliet* never appears again. More curiously still, the prologue only features in Q1 and Q2; the 1623 Folio text retains the second chorus, but the prologue itself is absent.[392] This one example begins to give a sense of the difficulty of establishing clear, fixed definitions and distinctions between different kinds of framing text in the period: in *Romeo and Juliet*, we have a prologue which is also sometimes labelled a chorus, and which, to complicate matters, is absent from an early text of the play that nevertheless retains the chorus at the start of the second act. These dramatic paratexts are fluid in terms of both their identity and their very presence within a play. When discussing such unfixed, changeable texts, it seems unnecessary to worry overly about the precision of our critical labels.[393] In general, I use "prologue" to refer to an introductory speech delivered by a single speaker (the speaker, too, could be called the prologue); I use "induction" to describe a metatheatrical opening interaction between two or more speakers, often though not always preceding a prologue; and I use "chorus" to designate a speaker or speakers who appear between acts, whether or not they do so consistently in the surviving text of a play.

Some of the most important scholarship on early modern framing texts and on paratexts in general has theorised prologues, inductions, and other similar parts of plays as "thresholds". Drawing on the vocabulary and concepts established in Gérard Genette's important work

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[392] We might compare the speech delivered by Time at the start of act four in *The Winter's Tale* (*c.* 1610). Time's line, "remember well| I mentioned a son o'th' King's" (IV.i.21-22) appears to refer to a choric speech delivered earlier in the play; but this is Time's only appearance in the surviving Folio text. As with *Romeo and Juliet*, it appears that the play once had a more complete framing chorus, of which only one speech remains. All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The New Oxford Shakespeare* modern critical editions, and given as act, scene, and line numbers in the text, unless otherwise indicated. See *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2475/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199591152.book.1/actrade-9780199591152-book-1; *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (London, 1623), sig. Ee5v.

[393] Commenting on the interpretive challenges posed by early modern stage directions, in particular, Alan Dessen writes, "the signals that *are* provided are often uninformative or confusing or inconsistent", adding that "[s]uch murkiness is characteristic not only of printed texts…but also of those texts and manuscripts that actually may have been used as the basis for performance". Alan Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), p. 20.

Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation (1987), Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann conceive of the prologue, in particular, as a "go-between":

> In ushering between stage and audience the prologue inhabited and defined a *threshold*, a liminal space between the actual and the potential that characterized the 'playing holidays'…of dramatic fiction in the early modern playhouse. At the outset of dramatic performances, the prologue ushered its early modern audience over an imaginary threshold – a threshold both of and for the imagination as well as one both of and for the specifically dramatic, theatrical uses of the 'wooden O'.[394]

This notion of the prologue as a "liminal" figure, occupying a space between the world of the audience and the world of the play, and managing the imaginative transition from the former to the latter, is particularly compelling in relation to a prologue such as that which opens *Henry V* (*c.* 1599). This prologue explicitly and elaborately engages in the work of conjuring the playgoers' imaginations so as to transport them from a "wooden O" (prologue, line 13) in 1590s London to the heroic age of a former king; indeed, it is no coincidence that Bruster and Weimann allude to this specific prologue in the definition quoted above. There are myriad examples – many of them discussed at length in Bruster and Weimann's monograph – of opening speeches which occupy such interim spaces, and which perform the act of ushering or ferrying the audience across them. When they acknowledge the impending play as a fiction; when they summon the playgoers' imaginations to participate in that fiction's creation; when they entreat the audience to be patient, generous and forgiving; when they describe the plot, setting and characters of the story to follow; prologues are announcing and managing a transition into the world of the drama. They exist on the boundary, communing between players and audience, fiction and reality. Openings are, inevitably and obviously, moments of transition. Bruster and Weimann evocatively describe "a series of transitional moments", some physical, some imaginative or experiential, through which early modern playgoers progressively left behind their "working-day lives", entered the

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[394] In his influential work, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1987), the French literary theorist Gérard Genette argued that, "[m]ore than a boundary or a sealed border, the pretext is rather a *threshold*…a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back". Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp. 1-2; Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 32.

playhouse, and became immersed in the performance of a play.[395] The first entrance and utterance of a play, whether or not they are made by a prologue, naturally constitute important thresholds in this journey.

Not all of the texts at this threshold, though, are explicitly engaged in the process of managing the transition, of gradually inaugurating the playgoers into the world of the drama. Many of the introductory texts I discuss in this chapter are, indeed, deliberately defamiliarizing. *A Warning for Fair Women* is a domestic tragedy which stages events that really unfolded in London under three decades before the play was performed; the gap to be bridged between the world of the audience and the world of the drama is, if anything, unnervingly slender. In opening with a bombastic debate between the instrument-wielding personifications of three dramatic genres, *A Warning* estranges itself. Its first act is not to usher the audience across, but to remind them of the threshold. Only after this ostentatiously metatheatrical display does Tragedy "*Turn*", as the stage directions specifically state, "*to the people*" in order to introduce the play: "My Sceane is London", she announces, "native and your owne".[396] This is, as I have suggested already, a deliberately exaggerative and parodic dramatic opening. It is, moreover, an induction rather than a prologue, and it is the latter kind of opening text with which Bruster and Weimann's monograph is specifically concerned. Still, this seems an important modification of or corrective to the notion of play openings as thresholds. Though they are always situated at the temporal boundary of a play, marking its beginning, some prologues and inductions function more effectively and deliberately as thresholds than others. It is for this reason that I prefer to consider the texts I discuss in this chapter as frames rather than thresholds. Frames still have the potential to invite, to welcome, to guide and modify a response, but they can also clash and distract; they can be more ornate than their contents; and they can, of course, be absent. The frame is also a more accommodating metaphor for the prologue or induction that is retained as an inter-act

[395] Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre*, p. 39.
[396] Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women*, sig. A3r.

chorus; a threshold is crossed only to enter and to leave, whereas some choric commentators of the period maintain their peripheral commentary throughout.

The notion of the frame I consider in conjunction with Stern's work on prologues, epilogues and "interim entertainments" or choruses as play-patches.[397] Her most radical proposal, that the majority of prologues and epilogues were only ever intended for first performances, applies specifically "from after around 1600".[398] Although she suggests that it may also have been the case earlier than this, I think it unlikely that many of the frames I discuss were one-offs; where a prologue recurs as a chorus, or where an induction is concerned more with debating the theatrical questions of the day than with appealing to the audience for approval, there seems no reason to assume that it was only ever intended for the opening performance.[399] It is undoubtedly both heuristic and accurate, however, to conceive of these framing texts as play-patches. Stern has demonstrated that prologues, epilogues and choruses were very often composed at different times, by different authors and on different pieces of paper from other parts of the patchwork of early modern plays.[400] Whether or not they were intended for performance at more than just the premiere of a play, we have seen already that they were liable to total or partial omission in some print and performance contexts. Stern even suggests that in some cases, "prologues, epilogues and choruses…constituted a collection of linked scrolls, so that they were created as a group or lost as a group". Such a practice is "indicated", she writes "by the habit of writing plays first and epilogues and choruses, as a group, second". The proposed choral scrolls become "visible" when, as with *Henry V*, a play is "extant in more than one form", with one text of the play "containing the whole lot", and another text "lacking the whole lot" of chorus speeches.[401]

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[397] Stern uses this term to refer to choruses and other mid-play interludes in her chapter. Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 118.
[398] Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 82.
[399] I concur with Schneider on this point; see Schneider, *The Framing Text*, pp. 143-147.
[400] Stern, "Chapter 4: Prologues, Epilogues, Interim Entertainments", in *Documents of Performance*, pp. 81-119, esp. pp. 109-112.
[401] Stern, *Documents of Performance*, p. 108.

Regardless of their textual incarnations, moreover, the dramatic frames I discuss in this chapter are conceptually distinct. They occupy different spaces and operate within different modes of storytelling from the other parts of plays. Weimann conceives of this difference in terms of the *locus* and the *platea*, the *locus* being the imaginary setting of the play, and the *platea* being the literal space of the stage in the playhouse.[402] With their references to the theatre and their direct addresses to the playgoers, the induction to *A Warning* and the Chorus to *Henry V* can helpfully be understood as occupying the *platea*, although in *A Warning*, as mentioned above, the turn to the audience comes very late. Some of the framing texts I discuss in this chapter, however, unfold in their own fictional spaces, their own *loci*. Robert Greene's *Alphonsus of Aragon* (*c.* 1587) opens with a conversation between Venus and the Muses, in which they determine to "bend [their] steps| Unto the top of high *Pernassus* hill" in order to tell Alphonsus's story; it is not clear from where exactly they are speaking, but it does not appear to be the playhouse.[403] Still, the frame is distinct in setting, character and focus from the other parts of Greene's play: it is, above all, metatheatrical, not simply because it refers to and discusses the ensuing play as drama – "Comedie" – but because, as a conversation between the Muses, it is about the creation of art, the telling of stories.[404] Even when there is no evidence that a dramatic paratext was materially separate; even when a frame engages specifically and extensively with the content of a particular play, the notion of the patch is still useful in describing prologues, choruses and inductions as of a different texture. Not all of the framing texts I discuss were as detachable and free-floating as the prologues and epilogues of Stern's chapter, but as I do throughout my thesis, I adopt her terminology to denote their imaginative separateness.

Their status as both frame and patch makes dramatic paratexts particularly suited to explorations and expositions of genre. Genre is, as theorists including Alastair Fowler and John

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[402] Robert Weimann, "Space (In)dividible: *Locus* and *Platea* Revisited", in *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*, pp. 180-215.
[403] Robert Greene, *The Comicall Historie of Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (London, 1599), sig. A4v.
[404] Greene, *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, sig. A4v.

Frow explain, a framework for interpretation, a guide to responding to a text.[405] If the role of prologues and choruses is partly to manage audience expectation and reaction, then announcing or reiterating a generic affiliation familiar to the playgoers is one way to do this. On the other hand, the separateness of framing texts is what allows them – as we saw with the induction to *A Warning* – to expand on contemporary generic ideas in ways not always directly relevant to the specific play they surround. Dramatic paratexts have indeed served as vehicles for exploring genre, and especially new developments in genre, since long before my period of interest. It was in the prologue to Plautus's *Amphitryon* that "tragicomedy" or "*tragicomedia*" was first named and defined as a mixed generic identity; the speaker of the prologue, Mercury, teasingly offers it as a solution to the fact that the play has a comic plot but incongruously presents "kings and gods…on stage".[406] At the earliest known public performance of a tragedy in Renaissance Europe – Seneca's *Hippolytus*, in Rome in the mid-1480s – a prologue was used "not only to define tragedy but to justify it to [the] audience, to tell them not only what they were about to see but how they should respond to it".[407] In the prologue to his play *Altile* (1543), the Italian playwright Giovanni Battista Giraldi (often referred to by the nickname Cinthio) cites Euripidean precedents for his *tragedia mista* (mixed tragedy) or *tragedia di lieto fin*, and invites the audience to think of the play as a "tragicomedy" if they prefer.[408] Playwrights and performers have consistently "t[aken] advantage", in Brian Schneider's words, "of the extra-theatrical dimension that these framing texts afford…to enunciate their diverse ideas on referentiality, theatricality,

[405] In his seminal work of genre theory *Kinds of Literature* (1982), Alastair Fowler writes that "[i]n literary communication, genres are functional: they actively form the experience of each work of literature". More recently, John Frow has written that "[g]enre guides interpretation because it is a constraint on semiosis, the production of meaning; it specifies which types of meaning are relevant and appropriate in a particular context, and so makes certain senses of an utterance more probable than others". Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 38; John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 110.

[406] Titus Maccius Plautus, *Amphitryon*, trans. Wolfgang de Melo, in *Plautus*, 5 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 3-133, pp. 16-19.

[407] Bruce Smith, *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage, 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 4.

[408] Giovanni Battista Giraldi "Cinthio", "Prologue to *Altile*", trans. Michael J. Sidnell, in *Sources of Dramatic Theory 1: Plato to Congreve,* ed. Michael J. Sidnell (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), pp. 122-123.

audience participation and expectation… [and] authorial competence", and, although Schneider does not explicitly state it in his list, genre.[409] This use of dramatic framing texts was by no means exclusive to late sixteenth-century England.

Genre was a strikingly popular subject for discussion and display in dramatic paratexts in my period of interest and the decades immediately preceding it. One of the earliest English commentaries on mixed dramatic genre, preceding even Sidney's *Defence*, features in the prologue to Richard Edwards's Children of the Chapel play, *Damon and Pythias* (1564); it imagines the play's author being forced by his Muse to write "against his kinde", shunning comic "toying Playes" to compose, instead, a more serious "Tragicall Commedie", mixing "myrth and care".[410] Edwards expounds on his theory of dramatic comedy at length, drawing heavily on the notion of decorum as set out in Horace's *Ars Poetica* (19 BCE) and even citing Horace in his text.[411] By contrast, he has almost nothing to say about the "Tragicall" element of his play beyond its addition of "care" to "myrth". John Lyly, also writing for children's companies around two decades after Edwards, has a habit of listing generic labels in his prologues only to evade them. His prologue to *Endymion* (1588) declares that the play is "neither Comedie, nor Tragedie, nor storie, nor anie thing, but…a tale of the Man in the Moone".[412] Offering a little more by way of generic definition, his prologue to *Midas* (1590) explains that "[a]t our exercises, Souldiers call for Tragedies, their object is bloud: Courtiers for Commedies, their subject is love: Countriemen for Pastoralles, Shepheards are their Saintes", and apologises that, in trying to please these diverse groups, he may have created a "mingle-mangle" or "Hodge-podge" of a play.[413]

These three examples of generically engaged prologues are from children's company plays. Early modern critics have traditionally argued that indoor, children's company drama was

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[409] Schneider, *The Framing Text*, p. 10.
[410] Richard Edwards, *The Excellent Commedie of the Two Most Faithfullest Friends, Damon and Pithias* (London, 1571), sig. A2r.
[411] Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, trans. D. A. Russell, in *Classical Literary Criticism*, ed. D. A. Russell and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford: OUP, 1972), pp. 98-110.
[412] John Lyly, *Endimion, the Man in the Moone* (London, 1591), sig. A2v.
[413] John Lyly, *Midas* (London, 1592), sig. A2r-A2v.

intended for a more elite and educated audience than its adult company equivalent.[414] However, more recent scholarship has interrogated this assumption; Eoin Price's work has been particularly important in demonstrating that the distinction between "private" indoor and "public" outdoor performance was far less meaningful in the sixteenth century than previously thought.[415] Certainly, the framing texts of 1580s and 1590s adult company plays engage just as frequently with questions of dramatic genre; in this respect, at least, adult companies made similar conceptual demands of playgoers to their children's company counterparts. Indeed, we typically find the most sustained explorations, both of dramatic genre more broadly and of dramatic tragedy in particular, in the inductions and choruses of adult company drama. The latter is partly a consequence of the generic make-up of surviving company repertories. There are fewer extant tragic plays performed by children's companies in the late sixteenth century; *The Wars of Cyrus* (*c.* 1589), a notable exception, opens with a prologue which prepares the audience at some length for its "sad and tragicke tearmes", its "exil[ing]" of "toies" and "needlesse antickes imitations" from the stage.[416]

Perhaps the most sustained paratextual engagement with tragedy as a genre in the period frames *The Wars of Cyrus*'s near-contemporary, the adult company play *Soliman and Perseda* (*c.* 1588). This play is usually attributed to Thomas Kyd, as I discuss in chapter two, and its editor, Ladan Niayesh, suggests that it is likely to have been owned and performed by the Earl of Pembroke's Men in the late 1580s or early 1590s, before it was entered on the Stationers' Register in 1592.[417] It opens with a debate between personifications of Love, Fortune and Death,

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[414] For a summary of early modern playhouse kinds and their audiences, see Andrew Gurr, "Who Went Where", in *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), pp. 69-84.

[415] As Sarah Dustagheer helpfully summarises, "in reality…performance was a product for anyone who could afford it at 'public' and 'private' playhouses alike, and the same audience members attended both". See Eoin Price, *'Public' and 'Private' Playhouses in Renaissance England: The Politics of Publication* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Sarah Dustagheer, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses*, p. 38.

[416] I discuss this prologue as an example of early modern invectives against tragic clowning in chapter four. Anon., *The Warres of Cyrus King of Persia, Against Antiochus King of Assyria, with the Tragicall Ende of Panthea* (London, 1594), sig. C3r.

[417] Ladan Niayesh, *Three Romances of Eastern Conquest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p. 26. See also Lukas Erne, *Beyond* The Spanish Tragedy*: The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 158.

all of whom demand to be sole chorus of the play. In this way, its induction prefigures the generic debate which opens *A Warning*. It may itself have been inspired by the early 1580s play *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* (1582), in which goddesses Venus and Fortuna compete for control of the action; *Soliman and Perseda* is also preceded by Greene's *Alphonsus of Aragon*, the induction of which features another genre-negotiating goddess.[418] In *Soliman and Perseda*, however, the three figures are not simply battling for authority over the particular play being performed. Their debate instead concerns the nature of dramatic tragedy itself. Each of them claims to be the governing force of tragedy: "I commaund you to forbeare this place", proclaims Death to Love and Fortune:

> For heere the mouth of sad *Melpomene*,
> Is wholy bent to tragedies discourse;
> And what are Tragedies but acts of death?

Love and Fortune initially rebut with arguments specific to the ensuing play: "Had I not beene, they had not dyed so soone", Love argues, while Fortune attributes the characters' tragic ends to her own capricious nature ("Did I not change long love to sudden hate?"). But both of them are concerned to emphasise "what interest [they] ha[ve] in Tragedies", plural.[419] Their claim is over a genre, not merely a single play.

Though each of them wants to be chorus, therefore, they decide to make *Soliman and Perseda* their test-case. Fortune determines to "show…by demonstration,| What intrest [she] ha[s] in a Tragedie", and Love, giving the distinct impression that the three choric speakers are being chivvied off stage by the rest of the players, agrees to let the action play out: "Why stay we then, lets give the Actors leave", she says, "And as occasion serves, make our returne".[420] All three speakers recur as a multivocal "*Chorus*" at the end of each act, tallying up their respective victories and often arguing over which of them should take credit for a particular tragic

[418] Erne cites this play as a possible source. Anon., *The Rare Triumphes of Love and Fortune* (London, 1589); Erne, *Beyond* The Spanish Tragedy, p. 163.
[419] Thomas Kyd, *The Tragedye of Solyman and Perseda* (London, 1592), sig. A2r-A2v.
[420] Kyd, *Solyman and Perseda*, sig. A2v.

circumstance.[421] Debating the lost chain that causes Perseda to believe Erastus has been unfaithful to her, for instance, Love concedes that Fortune "made…*Fernando* finde the chaine", but still attempts to claim responsibility for the outcome of its misplacement: for "by *Loves* instruction", she explains, Fernando "was taught,| To make a present of it to his Mistris", and it is seeing her gift to Erastus being worn by another woman that leads Perseda to suspect infidelity.[422] The argument continues in this manner without resolution until the chorus's final appearance, following the siege of Rhodes and the deaths of Erastus, Perseda, Soliman and many others in the play's bloodthirsty last act. Here, at last, Death can emerge emphatically victorious. Though Love and Fortune briefly attempt to claim the day, Death stops them in their tracks with a speech in which he lists his "triumph[s]" ad nauseam:

> Where is *Erastus* now but in my triumph?
> Where are the murtherers but in my triumph?
> Wheres judge and witnesse but in my triumph?
> Wheres falce *Lucina* but in my triumph?
> Wheres faire *Perseda* but in my triumph?
> […]
> And wheres great *Soliman* but in my triumph?
> Their loves and fortunes ended with their lives,
> And they must wait upon the Carre of death:
> Packe *Love* and *Fortune*, play in Commedies,
> For powerfull death best fitteth Tragedies.[423]

The contest is framed, once again, in broad generic terms. Death uses the example of *Soliman and Perseda* to illustrate his dominion over the whole of tragedy, consigning his rivals to its implicitly frivolous opposite; "play" means "perform", but in Death's mouth, contrasted with his own "power", it is also derisive, belittling. Love and Fortune exit, and Death is finally left alone as sole chorus to the play, just in time to deliver its epilogue. *Soliman and Perseda* thus has two resolutions: its climactic final scenes full of stabbings, stranglings and poisonings not only bring the story to a violent close, but also enable the conclusion of the framing debate.

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[421] Stage directions in the 1592 quarto read "*Enter Chorus*" before each of these exchanges. Kyd, *Solyman and Perseda*, sig. C3r, sig. E2r, sig. F2r, sig. G3r, sig. I2r.
[422] Kyd, *Solyman and Perseda*, sig. E2r.
[423] Death uses the phrase "my triumph" a total of nine times in this speech. Kyd, *Solyman and Perseda*, sig. I2r-I2v.

What is the purpose of such a chorus? Like inter-act frames in other plays, the conversations between Love, Fortune and Death in *Soliman and Perseda* partly serve an explicatory function. They summarise and synthesise the events of the preceding act, not only reminding the audience what has happened but also, in focusing their arguments on particular moments or circumstances, highlighting those plot points that will prove most important.[424] At the end of the first act, for example, the chorus enters immediately following the violent deaths of Haleb and Amurath; but almost all of their conversation revolves around the "Carcanet" or necklace, the misplacement of which has fatal consequences only in subsequent acts.[425] The chorus to *Soliman and Perseda* could narrate and summarise, however, without using that summary to serve a debate about genre. As well as functioning as a narrative aid, the frame's purpose is to advertise and reinforce the play's tragic identity.

Such a device may seem largely unnecessary by the end of the first act. True, the play opens with a wedding-day tilt and a mix-up over lovers' tokens; these are romance tropes and, indeed, perhaps the chorus's aforementioned obsession with the necklace is designed to assimilate this generically ambiguous motif into an emphatically tragic play.[426] Within a few scenes of the play starting, however, two characters have already been killed on stage, and over a dozen more follow during the course of the drama. We might compare the opening act of *A Warning for Fair Women*, which is so lacking in violence that Tragedy feels obliged to reiterate her generic promise in the inter-act chorus: "Al we have done, hath only beene in words", she

[424] For a fuller discussion of the devices through which plays periodically recap and synthesise their plots for potentially inattentive audience members, see Callan Davies, "Losing the Plot: Audiences, Scraps of Performance, and Selective Participation", *Before Shakespeare. The Beginnings of London Commercial Theatre, 1565-1595*, https://beforeshakespeare.com/2018/04/06/losing-the-plot-audiences-scraps-of-performance-and-selective-participation/, accessed 30 May 2022.
[425] Kyd, *Solyman and Perseda*, sog. C2v-C3v.
[426] Eleanor Decamp discusses the generic connotations of prop kinds and prop usage in her study of the performance of barbers and surgery on the early modern stage. Where comedies are "clutter[ed]" with objects, she suggests, tragedies hinge on "single, freighted objects…that are fundamental to and absorb the depiction of destruction". In Decamp's conception of genre and props, the "freight[ing]" of the necklace with ominous significance by the chorus of *Soliman and Perseda* transforms it from comic frippery to tragic symbol. Eleanor Decamp, *Civic and Medical Worlds in Early Modern England: Performing Barbery and Surgery* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 102.

admits upon re-entering, "But now we come unto the dismall act,| And in these sable Curtains shut we up,| The Comicke entrance to our direful play".[427] By the end of act one of *Soliman and Perseda*, by contrast, the play's tragic status could hardly be in doubt. The audience to the 1480s revival of Seneca's *Hippolytus* in Rome may have needed a prologue to explain to them what a dramatic tragedy was, but despite the genre's relative novelty on the popular English stage, playgoers watching *Soliman and Perseda* in late-1580s London did not need a chorus to tell them that tragedies were dominated by death; earlier forms of non-dramatic tragedy (in particular, the *de casibus* poems I discuss in chapter one) had made this common knowledge. The content of the framing debate in *Soliman and Perseda* is otiose. We could, perhaps, try to read it as an allegory for the old form of tragedy – *de casibus*, represented by "Fortune" – being overthrown by a new dramatic version, but beyond a couple of references to Fortune's "wheele" little is made of her tragic literary legacy, and the presence of Love in the argument also complicates this interpretation.[428] The frame is ostentatious, self-reflexive. Its purpose is not so much to label and theorise tragedy as to indulge in it, to flaunt the fact that *Soliman and Perseda* belongs to this exciting category of drama.

The extent of *Soliman and Perseda*'s generic focus is exceptional; not until *A Warning for Fair Women* would another play engage so thoroughly and explicitly with questions of dramatic kind in its frame. But there are numerous other plays from the 1580s and 1590s which use framing texts to advertise their tragic status. At least as far as extant frames are concerned, tragedy is announced more often in prologues, inductions and choruses from this period than any other dramatic kind.[429] There are several other plays which are, like *Soliman and Perseda*, framed by conversations between personified abstractions that seek to impose a generic and thematic unity on the whole. In the previous chapter, I discussed the play *Two Lamentable*

[427] Anon., *A Warning for Faire Women*, sig. C4v.
[428] Kyd, *Solyman and Perseda*, sig. A2v, sig. C3v.
[429] In appendix 1, I list a total of 33 plays dated to between *c.* 1580 and *c.* 1595 which have extant framing texts. 17 of these framing texts use genre labels to describe the content of the plays to which they are attached. Of those 17, ten reference "tragedy" or "tragic" content, while only five introduce "comedy". See Appendix 1.

Tragedies, with its patchwork plot stitched together out of two entirely distinct narratives. This play is framed by an induction and choric interludes featuring Homicide, Avarice and Truth, all three of whom are relevant to both stories: both are tales of murder motivated by a desire for money, and both at least purport to be true. Realising in the induction that their sadistic ambitions overlap, Homicide and Avarice declare their intention to unite to "make a two-folde Tragedie", framing the play as a "Tragedie" singular, in contrast to plural of the title.[430] Truth, meanwhile, takes on a presenter role, in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* as in *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (*c.* 1589); in the latter play, she appears on stage with Poetry, pledging to "add bodies" to Poetry's "shadowes" and "present| A Tragedie in England done but late".[431] As well as labelling both plays "tragedies", these inductions are tapping into a contemporary association between tragedy and truth also evident on various dramatic title pages from the period, and in the epilogues to *Arden of Faversham* and *A Warning*. The framing presence of Truth, in other words, further contributes to the construction of these plays as tragedies.[432]

Other 1580s and 1590s framing texts which announce and advertise tragedy include the induction to *The Spanish Tragedy*, which concludes with Revenge inviting Don Andrea to "sit…| And serve for *Chorus* in this tragedie", and the aforementioned epilogue to *Arden of Faversham*, which refers to the play as "this naked Tragedy".[433] The prologues to *The First Part of Tamburlaine the Great* (1587) and *The Wars of Cyrus* (1588) describe the matter of their respective plays as "tragick": a "tragick glass" in *Tamburlaine*; a tale "writ in sad and tragick terms" and performed

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[430] Robert Yarington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (London, 1601), sig. A3r.
[431] Anon., *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third* (London, 1594), sig. A3r-A4r.
[432] Dramatic title pages advertising tragedies as "true" include *The True Tragedie of Richarde Duke of Yorke* (better known as *Henry VI Part 3* (*c.* 1590)), Thomas Lodge's *The Wounds of Civil War, Lively Set Forth in the True Tragedies of Marius and Scilla* (*c.* 1588), *The Lamentable and True Tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham in Kent*, and *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third* itself. Franklin's epilogue, in *Arden of Faversham*, declares of the play's story that "simple truth is gratious enough:| And needes no other points of glosing stuff", while Tragedy's final speech in *A Warning* apologises if anything seems strange or absent from the play, explaining that "the reason is, that now of truth I sing". Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, and anon., *The True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of Yorke, and the Death of Good King Henrie the Sixt, with the Whole Contention Betweene the Two Houses Lancaster and Yorke* (London: 1595), t.p.; Thomas Lodge, *The Wounds of Civil War, Lively Set Forth in the True Tragedies of Marius and Scilla* (London, 1594), t.p.; William Shakespeare, *The Lamentable and True Tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham in Kent* (London, 1592), t.p., sig. K1v; anon., *A Warning for Faire Women*, sig. K3v.
[433] Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie* (London: printed by Edward Allde for Edward White, 1592), sig. A3r; Shakespeare, *Arden of Feversham*, sig. K1v.

on a "Tragicke stage" in *The Wars of Cyrus*.[434] While these examples all attach a generic descriptor to a play in its entirety, there are also frames from the period which identify particular episodes or events – indeed, patches – of plays as tragic. Before the second act of the play *Locrine* (*c.* 1591), its choric speaker Ate announces that "the sequel shall declare,| What tragicke chances fall out in this warre".[435] The presenter of *The Battle of Alcazar* (*c.* 1588) also refers several times to the "tragicke warre" staged in the play, including once, in the second act chorus, to the beginning of "Sebastian's tragedie in this tragicke warre".[436] In chapter two, I considered Stukeley's narrative in this play as a self-contained tragic patch, so it is notable that the play's chorus should itself refer to individual characters' trajectories as "tragedie[s]", conceiving of "tragedy" as a piece rather than a dramatic whole. Whether they are describing episodes within plays or plays in their entirety, part of the function of all of these framing texts is to package the content of their respective dramas as tragedy. The frequent occurrence of the term in prologues, inductions and choruses is in itself telling, demonstrating a kind of collective theatrical keenness to highlight this generic affiliation.

Tragedy is advertised by dramatic frames through more than just labelling, however. I have suggested already that extant framing texts from the 1580s and 1590s announce tragedy more often than any other dramatic kind; but it is also the case that there are simply more tragic plays surviving from these decades which feature framing texts (and, in particular, choruses) in the first place.[437] With so many plays lost from the period, and so many dramatic paratexts potentially omitted even from plays that survive, I am wary of attributing too much significance to the relative proportions of plays of different genres that include some kind of framing text. Rather, I am interested, in the rest of this section of the chapter, in how particular forms of

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[434] Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great. Who, from a Scythian Shephearde, by his Rare and Woonderfull Conquests, Became a Most Puissant and Mightye Monarque. And (for his Tyrrany and Terrour in Warre) was Tearmed, the Scourge of God* (London, 1590), sig. A3r; anon., *The Warres of Cyrus,* sig. C3r.
[435] Anon., *The Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine* (London, 1595), sig. C2r.
[436] George Peele, *The Battel of Alcazar, Fought in Barbarie, betweene Sebastian King of Portugall, and Abdelmelec King of Marocco. With the Death of Captaine Stukeley* (London, 1594*),* sig. A3r, sig. B3v.
[437] Of the plays listed in appendix 1, 15 are generally considered to be tragedies or tragic plays. Of the nine plays with choruses, seven are tragedies. See Appendix 1.

framing text were deployed in tragedies in the 1580s and 1590s to signal a classical tragic lineage. I will consider two approaches to the chorus which appear across multiple tragic plays from the period, demonstrating how each represents a refracted, Renaissance version of this classical dramatic feature. The term "chorus", as Helen Cooper has observed, "appears in English only with the first translations from Seneca in the 1560s".[438] Simply to have a frame that was or could be called a "chorus" was to gesture to a classical dramatic heritage. The deliberate foregrounding of that heritage in the examples I discuss below is, I propose, a further means by which these choruses frame and advertise their plays' tragic statuses.

The first form of chorus which performs a debt to classical tragedy is dialogic, and may broadly be described as Senecan. By far the most famous example of such a chorus features in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*: this play's opening exchange between the wronged Ghost of Andrea and the figure of Revenge is frequently compared to Seneca's *Thyestes*, which begins with a conversation between the Ghost of Tantalus and a Fury.[439] In fact, *Thyestes* is the only one of Seneca's plays to begin in this manner; his *Agamemnon* starts somewhat similarly, with a vengeful speech from the Ghost of Thyestes, but this Ghost interacts only with the multi-person chorus, and not with a single, wrathful Fury or equivalent speaker.[440] The extent of the association between the two-person, dialogic induction and Senecan drama by the end of the sixteenth century, however, is indicated by an adaptation of his *Hippolytus* that was produced by William Gager for performance at Christ Church, Oxford, in 1592. Gager penned a spectacular addition to *Hippolytus*'s opening in which, following a prologue, the god Cupid and the Fury Megaera rise from beneath the stage, Megaera to announce her dreadful plan to make Phaedra fall in love with her own stepson, and Cupid to express his horror at this plot.[441] This new induction to the play,

[438] Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World,* p. 74.
[439] Lucius Anneus Seneca, *Thyestes*, trans. John G. Fitch, in *Tragedies*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), II, pp. 217-325, pp. 230-239.
[440] Lucius Anneus Seneca, *Agamemnon*, trans. John G. Fitch, in *Tragedies*, II, pp. 115-216, pp. 126-134.
[441] Notably, Gager entitled his adaptation of Seneca's play *Panniculus Hippolyto Senecae Tragoediae Assutus*, or "Little Patch Sewn on to Seneca's *Hippolytus*"; "*panniculus*" means little garment, or scrap of fabric. Thus,Gager writes about

in Bruce Smith's words, arrives "fast on the coattails of Tantalus's ghost in the first scene of Seneca's *Thyestes*".[442] Gager is, as it were, seeking to out-Seneca Seneca, though Smith also notes the similarity of this "cosmic 'overplot'" to those which featured in earlier, vernacular plays, specifically *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*.[443] The dialogic chorus was, in other words, a feature of Renaissance Senecanism, and could thus be used to advertise a connection between the work being staged and the plays of the Roman tragedian.

While *The Spanish Tragedy* represents the most famous manifestation of this neo-Senecan framing device on the popular stage, other plays seek to display his influence too. I have mentioned already that *The True Tragedy of Richard III* is prefaced by a conversation between personifications of Truth and Poetry. Beyond being a scene-setting dialogue between two figures who are detached from the main action, the framing conversation itself is not especially Senecan; but before Truth and Poetry begin their exchange, the Ghost of George, Duke of Clarence enters to cry out in Latin for "*vendicta*", revenge.[444] His exhortation is, as Irving Ribner puts it, "typically Senecan"; like the opening speech of the Ghost of Tantalus in *Thyestes*, Clarence's bloodthirsty cry serves as a narrative catalyst for the tragic events of the play.[445] It also encourages us to view the dialogue that follows in a Senecan context: entering after a vengeful Latin ghost, Truth and Poetry are more obviously reminiscent of a neo-Senecan dialogic frame. The labelling of a play about Richard III as "a Tragedie" would not have surprised audiences in late-1580s England. His rise to power, reign and death were covered in the poems of the first and second editions of *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559, 1563) which, as we saw in chapter one, represented the archetype of literary tragedy in England for much of the sixteenth century. The

his own craft in terms of play-patching. William Gager, *Hippolytus*, trans. Dana F. Sutton, in *William Gager: The Complete Works*, 4 vols (New York: Garland, 1994), I, pp. 195-197; see also Elizabeth Sandis, "Palimpsestuous Phaedra: William Gager's Additions to Seneca's Tragedy for His 1592 Production at Christ Church, Oxford", in *The Reinvention of Theatre in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Traditions, Texts and Performance*, ed. T. F. Earle and Catarina Fouto (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 141-160.

[442] Smith, *Ancient Scripts*, p. 213

[443] Smith, *Ancient Scripts*, p. 213.

[444] Anon., *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, sig. A3r.

[445] Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1957), p. 83.

gestures to Seneca in *The True Tragedy*'s induction, however, situate the play in a tradition of classical dramatic tragedy distinct from the *de casibus* form of the genre with which its content naturally aligns it. Part of the frame's work in advertising the play as a "Tragedie" is to invoke a legitimising theatrical heritage for it.

Other forms of framing text invoke this legitimising heritage in different ways. Somewhat more common than the dialogic induction is the single choric presenter who mediates between each act by way of a symbolic dumbshow; this type of chorus features in George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, the anonymous *Locrine*, and also, following its multivocal induction, in *A Warning for Fair Women*. The classical origins of this kind of framing text are yet more convoluted, but the form is nevertheless used to gesture to a tragic theatrical past. This kind of frame originates with Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's Inns of Court play *Gorboduc* (*c.* 1561), which is recognised as the earliest dramatic tragedy originally written in English. Sackville and Norton, in Cooper's terms, "made some effort to follow Senecan principles" by incorporating a multivocal chorus of "four ancient and sage men of Britain" into their play, which delivers "a generalizing or moralizing speech that close[s]" each act of the play.[446] This chorus never engages with anyone else onstage, which is often though not always the case with Seneca's choruses as well.[447] The inter-act dumbshow, however, is a sixteenth-century addition. The action in Seneca's plays is, famously, narrated rather than shown, and Cooper argues persuasively that this decidedly non-verbal feature of *Gorboduc* was medieval in influence, a product of the spectacular, often allegorical nature of theatre in England in the Middle Ages.[448] The dumbshow was incorporated, however, into Renaissance neo-classicism. Five years after the staging of *Gorboduc*, George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe added dumbshows to their English version of the tragedy *Jocasta* (1566), which was based on Euripides's *Phoenissae* (probably via an Italian

[446] Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, p. 74.
[447] Brian Schneider argues that the "connection" of the chorus "with the action is virtually eliminated" in Seneca's plays, although as we saw above, some of his choruses – including the chorus of *Agamemnon* – interact with others on stage. Schneider, *The Framing Text*, p. 49.
[448] Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, pp. 126-129.

translation by Lodovico Dolce).[449] Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe's *Jocasta* was performed at Gray's Inn. A year or two after that, another Inns of Court tragedy, *Gismond of Salern* (*c.* 1568), also included dumbshows to separate each act. Like *Gorboduc*, this play was originally written in English, and it took its subject matter from Boccaccio's *Decameron*.[450] However, the story was, as Curtis Perry argues, "reframe[d]…as a play" through the adoption of "a number of large and small elements from Italian neoclassical drama and the tragedies of Seneca" – a polyvocal chorus; long, static dialogues – such that it is "appropriate to see *Gismond of Salern*…as part of a revival of Senecan drama in the 1560s".[451] Staged around two decades after *Gismond*, the Gray's Inn tragedy *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (*c.* 1587) has typically been read as a later contribution to this Senecan revival, complete as it is with a chorus, a vengeful ghost, and lengthy monologues and dialogues in place of much of the potential stage action.[452] Like *Gorboduc*, *Jocasta* and *Gismond* before it, *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, too, contains elaborate dumbshows before each of its acts. The dumbshow had become a feature of Renaissance Senecanism at the Inns of Court.

Although they were not themselves classical, therefore, framing dumbshows connected the tragedies of the popular stage to a tradition that was. The Inns of Court examples discussed above retain the multivocal choruses of Senecan tragedy; in plays written for the commercial theatres of the 1580s and 1590s, the group chorus which speaks its interludes mostly in unison is replaced by a single choric speaker who more closely resembles, as both Schneider and Cooper

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[449] Smith writes of these dumb shows, "following a precedent first set in England by Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* at the Inner Temple five years earlier, Gascoigne and Kinwelmershe quite literally frame each of the five acts of their version of Euripides with a spectacular dumb show at the beginning and a choral homily at the end"; he adds that each dumb show functions as a "dramatic emblem". Martin Wiggins, "*Jocasta* (438)", in *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue, Vol. 1, 1533-1566*, ed. Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson (Oxford: OUP, 2012; Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2020), 10.1093/actrade/9780199265718.book.1; Smith, *Ancient Scripts*, pp. 222-223.

[450] Wiggins, "*Gismond of Salern* (467)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 2, 1567-1589*.

[451] Curtis Perry, "*Gismond of Salern* and the Elizabethan Politics of Senecan Drama", in *Gender Matters: Discourses of Violence in Early Modern Literature and the Arts*, ed. Mara R. Wade, (Amsterdam: Brill Academic Publishers, 2014), pp. 279-293, p. 280.

[452] *The Misfortunes of Arthur* was printed in 1588 under the title *Certaine Devices and Shows Presented to her Majestie*. Since at least the early twentieth century, it has been recognised as highly imitative of Seneca's tragedies; A. P. Rossiter rather scathingly declared that the play takes "Seneca-pillagings to a final excess". Wiggins, "*Misfortunes of Arthur* (797)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 2, 1567*-1589; Thomas Hughes, Nicholas Trotte, Francis Flower, Christopher Yelverton, Francis Bacon, John Lancaster, et. al., *Certaine Devices and Shewes Presented to her Majesite by the Gentlemen of Grayes-Inn* (London, 1588); A. P. Rossiter, *English Drama From Early Times to the Elizabethans: Its Backgrounds, Origins and Developments* (London: Hutchinson, 1950), p. 135.

have argued, the Doctor, Nuntio or Expositor of medieval English drama.[453] In *Locrine*, *The Battle of Alcazar* and *A Warning for Fair Women*, this Expositor figure provides an explanation of the symbolism of each dumbshow, of the kind supplied in the "Order of the Dumb Show" passages printed in Inns of Court plays.[454] There is a difference in format, therefore, between the framing dumbshows of Senecan Inns of Court drama, and the framing dumbshows of the popular stage; but there are also significant similarities, particularly in the content of the dumbshows, and they frequently exaggerate their convoluted (neo)classical origins. Ate, Greek goddess of folly and ruin, serves as chorus to the play *Locrine*. Before each act she presents a dumbshow, and the subjects of three of these five dumbshows are taken from ancient Greek and Roman literature: Perseus and Andromeda; Hercules and Omphale; and Jason and Medea.[455] These tales of thwarted love are offered as (sometimes clumsy) allegories for the plot of *Locrine*; Medea, as the archetypal spurned woman, may effectively represent Locrine's vengeful, abandoned wife Gwendoline, but the parallel drawn between Phineus's armed attempt to win back Andromeda from Perseus on their wedding day, and the Scythian invasion that shortly follows Locrine's marriage to Gwendoline, is tenuous.[456] Their function, and the function of Ate herself, is to situate this play about ancient Britain in a classical context. Writers in England had been seeking to establish a connection between these heritages since Geoffrey of Monmouth first espoused the Troy Novant myth in his *Historia Regum Brittaniae* (*c.* 1136): the manoeuvre was far from a novel one by the early 1590s.[457] But what is interesting, for my purposes, is the way in which this classical connection is drawn out particularly in the framing chorus of *Locrine*, itself a feature

[453] Schneider, *The Framing Text*, pp. 55-56; Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, pp. 76-77.
[454] See, for example, Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, *The Tragedie of Gorboduc* (London, 1565), sig. A2v, sig. B3r, sig. C5r, sig. D4r.
[455] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. C2r, sig. G1v, sig. H4v
[456] Ate explains the analogy in terms of disappointment on a wedding day. Just as Perseus "thought he had establish well his Crowne" on the day he married Andromeda, only for Phineus to take his new bride "by force of armes", "So fares it with yoong *Locrine*": "He thinkes his marriage tendeth to his weale,| But this foule day, this foule accursed day,| Is the beginning of his miseries", because of the approaching war. Anon., *Locrine*, sig. C2v.
[457] For a recent discussion of the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth's text in sixteenth-century England, see Kim Gilchrist, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Etiological Erosion", in *Staging Britain's Past: Pre-Roman Britain in Early Modern Drama* (Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare: London, 2021) pp. 35-80.

adopted in modernised and mutated form from ancient Greek and Roman drama. The dumbshows in *A Warning* and *The Battle of Alcazar* do not showcase classical narratives to the same extent, but they do both present the Furies, who also appear, blood-besprinkled, with flames and snakes for hair, in dumbshows in *Gorboduc* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*.[458] Again, as in all four of these examples, the frame is used to suggest a classical influence.

Both the inductive dialogue and the expositor-chorus plus dumbshow work to lend these popular plays a classical gravitas, to situate them in a longer tradition of dramatic tragedy, while at the same time bearing only limited resemblance to the choruses of ancient Greek and Roman drama. Refracted classical allusions are as much a part of the generic framing performed by these choruses, I propose, as are the labels "tragedy" and "tragic". Not all of the plays from this period which style themselves as tragedies feature classically engaged framing texts; but the concentration of classical references in tragic frames specifically suggests a generic association with this heritage, a particular desire to perform tragedy's connection with a classical dramatic past. In the following sections of this chapter, I focus in more detail on some of the other framing devices exclusive to tragedy in the period. In the next section, I explore competing personifications of tragedy on the early modern stage, while in the final part of the chapter, I consider the material frame provided by the black tragic stage curtain as an analogue to the performed paratext. Both are, most obviously, further means by which tragedy is advertised, celebrated and singled out in theatrical frames. However, I also demonstrate in both cases that these features of tragic framing which might seem to suggest a fixity or clarity of generic identity actually offer an insight into the fluidity and variety of tragedy on stage at the time. Beginning with a survey of the different choric figures used to represent the genre, I identify two traditions of tragic personification, one characterised by the Muse Melpomene, the other by the Fury

[458] The Furies feature only in the *c.* 1601 backstage plot of *The Battle of Alcazar*, and not in the dumbshows as described in the 1594 quarto. The backstage plot is reproduced in W. W. Greg, *Dramatic Documents From the Elizabethan Playhouses: Stage Plots: Actors' Parts: Prompt Books*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), II; anon., *A Warning for Faire Women*, sig. D1r; Norton and Sackville, *Gorboduc*, sig. C5r; Hughes et. al, *Certaine Devises*, sig. A1r.

Megaera: between the two, I suggest, we can observe the distinction between tragedy as dramatic genre and tragedy as dramatic event.

Personifying Tragedy: Melpomene versus Megaera

This chapter opened with a discussion of the generically playful induction to *A Warning for Fair Women*. In this induction, tragedy is represented – along with history and comedy – by a character named after the genre. Also referred to, albeit mockingly, as "Madam *Melpomine*", *A Warning*'s "Tragedy" is a version of the Ancient Greek Muse of Tragedy, an embodiment and representative of a dramatic kind.[459] Although we have so far explored numerous other plays framed by personifications, we have yet to encounter another personified genre; we have looked at choruses that stage "Death" and "Avarice", and at multiple choruses depicting "Truth", but we have not yet come across any others which feature "Tragedy" herself. *A Warning for Fair Women* was not the only play of the late sixteenth century to showcase personified genres in its framing text, however. The immensely popular 1590s play, *Mucedorus*, is introduced by a speaker named "*Comedie*". Appearing "*joyfull, with a garland of baies on her head*", this Comedy is presumably inspired by the Ancient Greek Comic Muse, Thalia, who is sometimes represented crowned with leaves.[460] Comedy cheerfully begins to set the scene for a comic play – "*Comedie* play thy part, and please,| Mak merry them that coms to joy with thee" – but just as she is getting into her stride, another figure enters to disturb her happy dominion over the stage. With bloody arms and a "monstrous" appearance, this figure ominously threatens to "interrupt [Comedy's] tale,| And mixe [her] musicke with a tragick end".[461] Around two decades before tragicomedy's Jacobean heyday, *Mucedorus* was already framing its variety and unpredictability in specifically generic terms.

[459] Anon., *A Warning for Faire Women*, sig. A2r.
[460] Anon., *A Most Pleasant Comedie of Mucedorus the Kings Sonne of Valentia and Amadine the Kings Daughter of Arragon, with the Merie Conceits of Mouse* (London, 1598), sig. A2r.
[461] Anon., *Mucedorus*, sig. A2r.

The figure who plans to bring about this "tragick" turn of events, however, is not Tragedy or Melpomene, but rather "*Envie*": whereas the comic element of the play is represented as and by a genre – Comedy – the tragic threat is posed instead by a psychomachic allegory for a destructive human impulse. Envy is one of the Seven Deadly Sins and, as such, was frequently personified throughout the medieval and early modern periods, in visual artwork as well as in dramatic performance.[462] The iconographic traditions were various, and sometimes overlapping: the Latin Invidia was typically depicted as a sickly, venomous woman, often accompanied by snakes; but as in the House of Pride in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the sin Envy was also frequently figured as a man, often with (or, sometimes, partially transformed into) a dog.[463] Represented as a man, Envy in *Mucedorus* draws on the latter of these traditions. Although there is little detail about his physical appearance, Comedy twice calls him "curre"; whether or not this refers to some visible feature, it is evocative of the iconographical association between Envy and dogs.[464]

Comedy triumphs in *Mucedorus*; though there is some bloodshed during the course of the play, it ends with the revelation of Mucedorus's royal lineage, the reunion of the young lovers, and the King's blessing of their betrothal.[465] Tragedy and comedy are not, as it were, equal sharers in the plot, which might explain why the tragic strain in the play is represented not by the genre personified, but rather by a destructive emotional force. *Mucedorus* is a comedy which Envy

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[462] Probably the most famous dramatic representation of the Seven Deadly Sins in the early modern period is found in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1588), when Lucifer and Beelzebub present Faustus with a pageant of the sins for his entertainment. Although little indication is given of Envy's appearance, the line "I am leane with seeing others hate" implies a thin, sickly figure, somewhat like the Latin Invidia (see below). Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (London, 1616), sig. C3r-C4r.

[463] Jacques Callot's 1620 engraving of Invidia depicts an emaciated woman with a snake and a dog. In Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1603), Envy is depicted as a thin woman with a wolf. In the House of Pride in Book I of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590), Envy is described as a monstrous man who rides "upon a ravenous wolf", and chews "a venomous tode" "[b]etweene his cankred teeth". Jacques Callot, *Invidia,* print (London: British Museum, 1619), https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1861-0713-302; Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia: or Moral Emblems* (London: printed by Benjamin Motte, 1709), p. 8; Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. J. C. Smith (Oxford: OUP, 1909; 2013), p. 49, I.iv.xxx.

[464] Anon., *Mucedorus*, sig. A2r-A2v.

[465] There are major differences between the Q1 text of *Mucedorus*, printed in 1598, and the Q3 text, printed in 1610; these include the addition of a new scene at the beginning of the play in which Mucedorus reveals his royal lineage to the audience, and the introduction of a new character, Anselmo, Mucedorus's friend. Given these and other significant changes, it is notable that the induction does not change from edition to edition: it is a consistent feature of the play. See anon., *A Most Pleasant Comedie of Mucedorus* (London, 1610); Wiggins, "*Mucedorus* (884)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol 3, 1590-1597*.

attempts, unsuccessfully, to derail: he represents a tragic threat that intermittently rears its head, but never succeeds in overwhelming the stage. Envy as an emotion catalyses the central crises of the play: it is Segasto's envy that causes him to send a soldier to kill Mucedorus, and to falsify Mucedorus's banishment when the attempt on his life fails. In a suggestive piece of casting proposed by the doubling chart printed at the front of the quarto, Envy doubles as both Tremelio, the captain sent to kill Mucedorus, and Bremo, the wild man who captures Amadine and Mucedorus as they flee the kingdom; these are the only two characters to die in the play, both killed by Mucedorus in self-defence.[466] The body of the actor playing Envy thus treads a lonely tragic trajectory through the drama.

As the personification of a tragic impulse, Envy is specifically pertinent to the narrative of *Mucedorus*; but he is also, I propose, part of a broader dramatic trend which saw tragedy frequently represented by figures other than Melpomene, the tragic Muse, in the late-sixteenth-century playhouses. As the induction to *A Warning for Fair Women* makes clear, Melpomene did have a presence on the early modern stage. However, she vied for dominion over tragedy with another group of classical figures, the Furies, and in particular with the Fury Megaera, whom I have mentioned already in this chapter in relation to William Gager's additions to *Hippolytus*. Though Envy in *Mucedorus* is clearly not a Fury, there are certain features of his staging, I will suggest, which link him to them. I will first offer an overview of depictions of Melpomene in the period; I will then introduce the competing figure of the Fury, with a focus on Megaera, exploring how the Furies are used to threaten tragic chaos without necessarily designating a play a tragedy.

Melpomene's presence in the early modern playhouses was relatively slight, although she did start to be name-checked in texts in relation to tragedy from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. In his 1538 *Dictionary*, Sir Thomas Eliot describes her simply as "one of the nyne

[466] Anon., *Mucedorus* (1598), sig. A1v.

Musis"; but in Jasper Heywood's preface to his 1560 translation of Seneca's *Thyestes*, the sleeping Heywood is presented in a dream with a book of tragedies written by Melpomene herself, as he attempts to summon inspiration for his tragic writing.[467] George Turberville, similarly, invokes the Muse of Tragedy in the preface to his *Tragical Tales* (1587), and she also features in Thomas Nashe's introduction to the 1591 edition of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*: here, Nashe, in an extended theatrical metaphor for the sonnet sequence, describes Melpomene as the "chiefe Actor…whose dusky robes [are] dipt in the inke of teares".[468] When her clothing is mentioned at all, Melpomene is typically depicted in dark robes, though the colour details vary.[469] She is often described wearing the buskins of tragedy, and in engravings from the period she is pictured with a scroll and gemshorn (a musical instrument made from a goat's horn).[470] It was, presumably, some combination of these costume features that identified Melpomene on stage. Her earliest recorded appearance in English drama, to my knowledge, is in the Children of Paul's play *Meleager* (*c.* 1576). This play is anonymous, and survives only as a narrative summary; the play itself has been lost and there is no evidence that it was ever performed, though it seems to have been intended for performance.[471] The extant plot outlines a significant role for Melpomene. Here, she features as a kind of prologue, presiding over a dumb show of the Fates at the start of the play and explaining its meaning to the audience. The plot details her prefatory role at some length, summarising the content of her scene-setting speech, and describing how she appoints a group of lords to "sitt as *Chorus*" before she "departeth" the stage. In *Meleager*, Melpomene's role is very clearly to present and to represent tragedy: introduced in the plot with the epithet "the

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[467] Thomas Eliot, *The Dictionary of Syr Thomas Eliot, Knyght* (London, 1538), sig. N4r; Jasper Heywood, *The Second Tragedie of Seneca Entituled Thyestes* (London, 1560), sig. §4r.
[468] George Turbeville, *Tragicall Tales* (London,1587), sig. A3r; Thomas Nashe, "Somewhat to reade for them that list", in *Sir P. S. His Astrophel and Stella* (London, 1591), sig. A3r-A4v, sig. A3r.
[469] In Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* (1612), she wears a "crimson" robe. Other texts describe her wearing black; in a description of a "Triumph of Peace" performed to celebrate the inauguration of a new mayor in London in 1620, she wears a "black taffaty robe". Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), sig. B1v; John Squire, *Tes Irenes Trophaea, or, The Tryumphs of Peace That Celebrated the Solemnity of the Right Honourable Sir Francis Jones, Knight, at his Inauguration into the Majoralitie of London* (London,1620), sig. A4v.
[470] Crispijn van de Passe, *Melpomene*, engraving (London: Wellcome Collection, 1589-1611), https://wellcomecollection.org/works/bmpktrjy.
[471] Arthur Freeman, "The Argument of *Meleager*", *ELR*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1971), pp. 122-131.

Tragicall Muse", she inaugurates the action of this tragic play because she governs tragedy as a genre.[472]

In Robert Greene's *Alphonsus of Aragon*, by contrast, Melpomene is never explicitly identified as the Muse of Tragedy in the play's chorus of Muses. Like most of Robert Greene's plays, *Alphonsus* is generically ambiguous; Marvin T. Herrick notes, with evocative imprecision, that all of Greene's dramatic writing is "more or less tragicomical".[473] In his study of the origins of English tragicomedy, Frank Ristine describes how *Alphonsus* is "suffused with tragic action, and yet end[s] happily for [its] heroic protagonist": it "present[s] the machinery and spectacular horrors of a popular tragedy of blood", he continues, yet the main characters' "fortunes are brought to a propitious close", with "a marriage and reconciliation".[474] Whereas Envy in *Mucedorus* attempts to stake his tragic claim over the play at the outset, however, Melpomene in *Alphonsus*'s induction makes no generic promises or threats whatsoever. Indeed, she is largely indistinguishable from her sisters in the text, though she would presumably have been identifiable from her costume, wearing the dark robes and buskins of the kind described above. She is also, perhaps significantly, one of only three Muses actually named in the dialogue. The play opens with a prologue spoken by Venus, towards the end of which "*Melpomine, Clio, Errato* [and] *their sisters*" enter, "*playing all* [upon] *sundrie Instruments, Calliope only excepted*".[475] As well as being the first Muse listed in the stage direction, Melpomene is the first Muse noticed and named by Venus: "But what meanes this *Melpomine* her selfe| With all her sisters sound their Instruments,| Onely excepted faire *Calliope*?".[476] Melpomene would appear to lead the group onto the stage, and the phrase "*Melpomine* her selfe" suggests that she is particularly distinguished or noteworthy. The induction makes sure that the playgoers notice Melpomene, but they would

[472] Freeman, "The Argument of *Meleager*", p. 126.
[473] Marvin T. Herrick, *Tragicomedy: Its Origin and Development in Italy, France, and England* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1955), p. 231.
[474] Frank Humphrey Ristine, *English Tragicomedy: Its Origin and History* (New York, NY: Russell & Russell, 1963), p. 79.
[475] Greene, *Alphonsus*, sig. A3v.
[476] Greene, *Alphonsus*, sig. A3v.

have to infer any tragic association for themselves. Nothing in the framing text explicitly identifies her as the Muse of Tragedy, and neither does it make her responsible for any of the play's "tragic action" or "spectacular horrors". Like *A Warning*'s Tragedy around a decade later, *Alphonsus*'s Melpomene is distinctively spiteful in her dialogue with other characters, and Clio makes one reference to the *de casibus* "fall[s]" written about by Melpomene's "Authors".[477] If it is ominous or otherwise significant that the Muse of Tragedy gets the final word in this bloodthirsty but joyfully concluded play, however, it is up to the audience to determine that significance. As Melpomene urges her sisters to "make…haste" and follow Venus to Parnassus Hill, there is no sense that she has been responsible for the play's murderous bent.[478]

Along with *A Warning*, these few examples constitute the only recorded appearances of Melpomene on the late-sixteenth century English stage, though she is referenced in other plays, including in several dramatic frames. In the opening lines of *Soliman and Perseda*, Death announces that "heere the mouth of sad *Melpomene*| Is wholy bent to tragedies discourse", positioning himself as the Muse's natural second-in-command by ordering Love and Fortune to "forbeare" the stage.[479] Although she does not use the name Melpomene, Truth's announcement that she will present *The True Tragedy of Richard III* "Tragedia like" also constitutes a reference to the tragic Muse: in introducing a tragedy, Truth implies, she is taking on Melpomene's role.[480] Melpomene was thus clearly associated with the framing and presentation of tragedy in the period, featuring either in person or by name in a handful of dramatic paratexts from the period. From a place of near obscurity, the Muse of Tragedy had "firmly established herself", as Mike Pincombe puts it in a recent essay on the subject, "by the end of the sixteenth century".[481] As the presence of Envy in *Mucedorus* demonstrates, though, Melpomene did not have a monopoly over

[477] Greene, *Alphonsus*, sig. A4r,
[478] Greene, *Alphonsus*, sig. I3r.
[479] Kyd, *Solyman and Perseda*, sig. A2r.
[480] Anon., *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, sig. A3r.
[481] Mike Pincombe, "Tragic Inspiration in Jasper Heywood's Translation of Seneca's *Thyestes*: Melpomene or Megaera?", in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, ed. Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker (Oxford: OUP, 2012), pp. 531-545, p. 532.

tragic events on the late-sixteenth-century stage. In his essay, Pincombe demonstrates that the Furies – and, in particular, Megaera – were Melpomene's main classical rivals for dominion over the genre.[482] His argument does not extend to the popular stage, but I build on his article here to suggest that the Furies represented a different, more chaotic tragic energy that was powerfully present in the 1580s and 1590s theatres.

The Furies, as Pincombe outlines, had been the classical representatives of tragedy in English literature since long before Melpomene re-emerged in the mid-sixteenth century. In his "litel…tragedye" *Troilus and Criseyde* (*c.* 1380), Geoffrey Chaucer invokes not the Muse of Tragedy, but the Fury Tisiphone to help him to write his "woful vers".[483] Pincombe's essay focuses on Jasper Heywood's preface to his translation of *Thyestes*, which I reference above as an example of Melpomene's nascent sixteenth-century fame. After initially turning to the tragic Muse for inspiration, Heywood summons the Fury Megaera in his preface at the point at which he begins writing his translation. In his dream, Heywood is visited by Seneca, who describes to him the glorious vision of the Muses at Parnassus and presents Heywood with a book of tragedies written by Melpomene in heavenly golden ink, from which Heywood is to translate.[484] But Heywood wakes up before he can begin his translation and, distraught, calls upon Megaera to "enspyre [his] pen,|…with dolefull style to wryght". Megaera's inspiration is visceral, embodied: "[m]y heare stoode up", writes Heywood, "I waxed woode, my synewes all dyd shake".[485] If Melpomene represents tragedy as a cerebral, prestigious artform, Pincombe observes, then Megaera brings forth a kind of violent atavism, the depraved and horrifying human impulses that comprise the matter of tragic stories. "Melpomene presides over tragedy as a quasi-material object of cultural prestige", as Pincombe puts it, while "Megaera presides over

[482] Pincombe, "Melpomene or Megaera?", p. 532.
[483] Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p. 473, l. 7.
[484] Heywood, *Thyestes*, sig. §3r-§8r.
[485] Heywood, *Thyestes*, sig. §8r-§8v.

the actual writing…of tragedy from her dark lair".[486] It is, as I have mentioned already, an unnamed Fury – often assumed to be Megaera – that goads the Ghost of Tantalus to vengeance in Seneca's own induction to the play; there is thus a continuity of tragic inspiration between Heywood's dream preface and the drama itself.

The opposition between Melpomene and Megaera was registered by other writers of the period as well. In Edmund Spenser's "Tears of the Muses", printed in his 1591 collection *Complaints*, Melpomene laments that she can no longer find in the world true "tragick matter", but only "rufull spectacles… | Fit for *Megera* or *Persephone*".[487] As in Heywood's preface, a hierarchy is evident. Here, Melpomene is superior because she rules over tragedy proper, filling the stage with tales of "wretched persons, to misfortunes borne"; Megaera, by contrast, is relegated to the showy and the superficial – the miserable but not truly tragic lives of a senseless modern era.[488] The Fury and the Muse are never pitted directly against one another in this way on the stage, but some of the same distinctions that Heywood and Spenser identify can also be drawn between the figures' portrayals in the drama of the late sixteenth century. The Furies are bloodthirsty, vindictive: their interest is in tragedy not as form, but as destructive event.

The Furies first appear as dramatic framing figures in the Inns of Court drama of the mid-sixteenth century. The prologue to the 1568 Inns of Court play *Gismond of Salern* is spoken by Cupid, who extols the dangerous and destructive force of love; but the play's third act is introduced by Megaera, who "*riseth out of hell*" to wreak revenge for the ghost of Gismond's husband, and it is after this point, and because of Megaera's intervention, that the drama takes a bloody turn.[489] While Megaera is occupying the stage, what the audience does not see is the dreadful moment of discovery, when Tancred witnesses his daughter in bed with Guishard,

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[486] Pincombe, "Melpomene or Megaera?", p. 544.
[487] Editor Ernest De Selincourt notes that "Persephone" is "a mistake for Tisiphone", and that Spenser makes the same error in other poems, including *Virgil's Gnat*. Edmund Spenser, "The Tears of the Muses", in *Complaints, Containing Sundrie Small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie* (London, 1591), sig. E2r-sig. G4v, sig. F1r; Ernest de Selincourt, ed., *Spenser's Minor Poems* (Oxford: OUP, 1909; 2013), p. 158, l. 164n.
[488] Spenser, "The Teares of the Muses", sig. F1r.
[489] Christopher Hatton, Henry Noel, Roderick Stafford, Robert Wilmot, and G. Al.', *The Tragedie of Tancred and Gismund* (London: printed by Thomas Scarlet, 1591), sig. D4r.

violating his command to her that she must now remain a celibate widow. In a sense, then, Megaera stands in for the pivotal, unstageable event: she appears to the audience at precisely the moment that the perceived betrayal occurs. She also inflames both Tancred and Gismond with an "envious wrath", guaranteeing that "[e]ach shall be others plague and overthrow".[490] As a framing figure in *Gismond of Salern*, Megaera enters to take over the action only when bloodshed is imminent: "bequeath the rest to me", she declares as she dismisses her sisters in the B-text, "That yet belongs unto this Tragaedie".[491]

There are several other plays from the period in which Megaera or another Fury features as a framing figure. The Furies are not always associated with tragic interventions mid-play as they are in *Gismond*, but they are always characteristically disruptive, always driven by vengeance or anger to a particular destructive end. In the Children of Paul's *Meleager*, and indeed in *A Warning for Fair Women*, Melpomene acts as a kind of tragic overseer, presenting the audience with a fully formed and pre-existing story. The role of the Furies, by contrast, is not so much to present tragedies as to make them happen. Thus, in two of William Gager's plays – the adapted and expanded version of Seneca's *Hippolytus* mentioned above, and his own play *Meleager* (*c.* 1582) – Megaera enters from the Underworld in the opening moments to declare a campaign of revenge against an offending individual or family.[492] In Gager's induction to *Hippolytus*, Cupid enters first with what appear to be joyful tidings: "At last I, Cupid, am leaving the cave of infernal night", he announces, "making my way to the more pleasant abodes of the celestials".[493] Like Comedy in *Mucedorus*, however, he is interrupted. Megaera appears, determined to punish Theseus for his role in attempting to abduct Proserpina from Dis, and invokes the destructive love of Phaedra for Hippolytus that will bring about the play's tragedy. She does not simply describe or foretell the disaster, as a presenter figure might: she claims to be causing it to happen.

[490] Hatton et. al, *Tancred and Gismund*, sig. D4v.
[491] Hatton et. al, *Tancred and Gismund*, sig. D4v.
[492] Gager, *Meleager*, trans. Dana F. Sutton, in *William Gager: The Complete Works*, I, p. 51.
[493] Gager, *Hippolytus*, trans. Dana F. Sutton, in *William Gager: The Complete Works*, I, p. 195.

At the opening of Gager's *Meleager*, Megaera appears alone. She introduces the context and characters of the play in the manner of a prologue, but she once again claims responsibility for the impending "fall" of the House of Oeneus, declaring that she has "loosened the restraints of Jupiter" against the family. With her parting words, Megaera threatens, "I shall go, overturning everything".[494] The line is effectively a slogan for the Furies: they disturb peace and bring about change for the worse; they do not simply present tragic circumstances as they are.

In the *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, meanwhile, it is not Megaera but the Fury Tisiphone who "*riseth*" from under the stage in the play's opening moments to deliver news of the discord between Venus and Fortuna.[495] Tisiphone introduces herself, as Allyna E. Ward puts it, "in very tragic terms", emphasising all the blood and darkness of her hellish existence in the Underworld.[496] Generally considered a romance, *Rare Triumphs* is, as Ward observes, a play which blends the generic conventions of different kinds of mid-Tudor drama – not only in its mixing of chivalric plot tropes with dramaturgical features of early Inns of Court tragedy, but also in its medley of verse forms (fourteeners, hexameters, prose and occasional blank verse). The ascendance of a Fury from hell in the opening scene, of course, threatens tragedy, resembling as it does the Senecan and neo-Senecan examples cited above. Tisiphone does not appear on stage again, and the play, despite its banishments and bitter rivalries, concludes with "the happy ending required by the construct of romance-comedy".[497] The Fury is invoked, however, in the middle of the play by the hermit Bomelio, as he soliloquises on his desire for revenge against the court that wrongly exiled him: "*Tisiphone*, be swift to plague them all,| That make a pastime of my care and feare", he entreats, before summoning a host of deities and infernal figures to "Send forth a fury that may further well,| the just revenge that I here undertake".[498] Little comes of Bomelio's

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[494] Gager, *Meleager*, trans. Dana F. Sutton, in *William Gager: The Complete Works*, I, p. 51.
[495] Anon., *Rare Triumphes*, sig. A2r.
[496] Tisiphone announces herself as "the daughter of eternall night,| Bred in the bottome of the deepest pit of hell:|Brought up in blod and cherisht with scrauling Snakes". Allyna E. Ward, "*The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, 1582", in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, pp. 447-462, p. 449; anon., *Rare Triumphes*, sig. A2r.
[497] Ward, "*Rare Triumphs*", p. 458.
[498] Anon., *Rare Triumphes*, sig. D2v.

vengeful plotting, but it is notable that Tisiphone shadows this moment of Senecan rhetoric. Having loomed like a tragic omen at the play's outset, her name resounds at the point at which the drama seems poised to take a darker turn.

The Furies were less prominent on the popular stage than in royal entertainments and Inns of Court drama. We have seen already that they featured in dumbshows across both kinds of theatre, appearing in *Gorboduc* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur* as well as in *The Battle of Alcazar* and *A Warning for Fair Women*. But even if they did not appear as named speakers in inductions and choruses, the Furies nevertheless exerted an influence over the framing texts of the commercial playhouses. Critics have long drawn parallels between the figure of Revenge in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and the unnamed Fury (often interpreted as Megaera) in the opening scene of Seneca's *Thyestes*.[499] Ward suggests similarities, too, between the appearance of Tisiphone in *Rare Triumphs* and the opening of Kyd's famous play: "[t]he use in *The Rare Triumphs* of the Fury to introduce a divine dispute and the onstage presence of the deities…is something Kyd adapts", she writes, "when he places the spirit of Revenge onstage throughout the play".[500] It is true that dramaturgical likenesses encourage us to view Kyd's Revenge in a tradition of framing Furies that spanned Senecan, academic, Inns of Court and court drama. He appears from hell at the start of the play to introduce and set in motion its series of tragic events. Revenge, though, is intermittently ineffectual. He says almost nothing in the opening induction, explaining to Don Andrea only where they are and what they are about to witness, though his silent, ominous presence could dominate the stage in performance. Still, it is not until the first act chorus that he begins to speak like a framing Fury, not merely announcing discord but actively pledging to cause it: "Ile turne their friendship into fell despight,| Their love to mortall hate, their day to

[499] The notion that the Ghost of Andrea and Revenge are an "importation" from Seneca's *Thyestes* was a "commonplace" even by the 1930s; F. S. Boas had noted that the choric pairing "is suggested by the opening of Seneca's *Thyestes*" in his 1901 edition of *The Works of Thomas Kyd*. Howard Baker, "Ghosts and Guides: Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and the Medieval Tragedy", *Modern Philology*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1935), pp. 27-35, p. 27; F. S. Boas, ed., *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), p. xxxii.
[500] Ward, "*Rare Triumphs*", p. 448.

night".[501] A few acts later, in a curiously comic moment, he falls asleep on the job.[502] Kyd's Revenge clearly references Seneca's unnamed Fury, but he is far from a faithful copy; he is, at times, a pale imitation, at others a kind of parody of a menacing tragic frame.

If Kyd's Revenge is understood as a popular iteration of Megaera, then Envy in *Mucedorus* should certainly be read in the same tradition. Like Megaera in Gager's addition to *Hippolytus*, he bursts onto a peaceful stage and invokes bloody destruction:

> Hearken, thou shalt hear a noise
> Shall fill the aire with a shrilling sound,
> And thunder musicke to the gods above:
> […]
> In this brave musicke *Envie* takes delight,
> Where I may see them wallow in there [sic] blood[503]

Envy is, indeed, daubed with blood as the Furies so often are. Specifically, the stage directions state that his "*armes*" are "*besmearde with bloud*". The Furies are often described as being "*besprinkled with blood*", a phrase which may indicate a slightly different visual effect (being spattered with blood all over, perhaps), but the bloody symbolism of the tragic framing figure is consistent.[504] A more substantial difference in representation is, perhaps, the fact that Envy is depicted as a man whereas the Furies are female deities. But Revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy*, too, is represented as a male character, and yet the dramaturgical parallels between his framing role and the role of the unnamed Fury in *Thyestes* are widely recognised. *Mucedorus*'s Envy is not a Fury, but he fulfils the same function and channels the same destructive energy as Megaera in *Gismond of Salern* and in Gager's *Meleager* and *Hippolytus*, as Tisiphone in *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, and as the Fury in Seneca's *Thyestes*. As a framing figure, he does not enter to narrate a tragic story already crafted and pre-determined. He bursts onto Comedy's scene in an attempt to make tragedy happen.

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[501] Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. C2r.
[502] Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. I2r.
[503] Anon., *Mucedorus*, sig. A2v.
[504] In *Gorboduc*, for example, the Furies are described as being "clad in blacke garments sprinkled with bloud & flames". Anon., *Mucedorus*, sig. A2r; Norton and Sackville, *Gorboduc*, sig. C5r.

Envy thus corresponds with a patchwork model of dramatic tragedy, in which tragedy is a disaster which might suddenly occur within a drama, a macabre mode into which a comedy might lapse. A tragic presence was frequently and variously embodied in framing texts of the late-sixteenth century, whether by Melpomene or a speaker acting as her proxy, or by Fury-like personifications of destructive human impulses. In general, as we have seen, Melpomene was invoked to present whole plays as tragedies, while the Furies and their allegorical successors stood for tragedy as occurrence, event. The distinction was not categorical: Melpomene is an ambiguous presence in the chorus to Greene's *Alphonsus*, a play which is only episodically tragic, while Revenge in *The Spanish Tragedy* is predominantly responsible for setting the scene and "serv[ing] for *Chorus*" in a play which he designates "a tragedie".[505] Evident across these various examples, though, are the competing conceptions of tragedy in a dramatic context which understand a tragedy either as a play or as something that might happen in one. This distinction has implications for the final part of the chapter. In the discussion of *A Warning for Fair Women*'s induction, above, we saw that the debate between the genres is ultimately resolved by a piece of stage decoration; but the suggestion that black curtains were always hung in the early modern playhouses during performances of tragedies has troubled critics, who argue that such a convention renders the suspense and plot twists of tragicomedy an impossibility. In this closing section, I consider the ways in which these black curtains might be understood as analogous to the paratextual frame. I offer an overview of the evidence for the existence of some form of material convention and outline its potential origins, concluding with a reading of *A Warning*'s induction which proposes that its categorical invocation of a generically codified system of stage decoration should be taken less than seriously.

[505] Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. A3r.

Materially Tragic: Black Curtains in the Playhouse

So far, we have seen tragedy advertised by framing texts announcing or debating the genre; by choruses emphasising their Senecan origins; by Muses, Furies and tragic personifications. According to a handful of references in early modern plays – several of them in prologues or inductions – tragedy as a genre was also advertised through the hanging of black curtains in the playhouses. A striking visual surround to the action from the outset, associating a play with a particular genre, these black curtains seem to function as a material analogue to the performed tragic paratext; it is because of these parallels that I have chosen to examine the custom of black tragic curtains in this chapter of my thesis. The possible existence of a custom of hanging black cloth in the playhouses during performances of tragedies was first registered by Edmond Malone in the late eighteenth century. In his "Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the English Stage", Malone writes that "some passages in our old dramas incline me to think, that when tragedies were performed, the stage was hung with black", citing a number of theatrical references to the practice including the excerpt from *A Warning for Fair Women* with which this chapter began.[506] Since Malone first wrote about the custom, the number of acknowledged references to it has grown, such that it has gradually become a commonplace of early modern drama criticism. The practice is discussed as fact, for example, in Stern's essay in the 2016 *Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, and in Michael Hattaway's *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, although other critics are less keen to acknowledge it; footnoting the phrase "[b]lack stage for tragedies" in *The Rape of Lucrece* in their edition of Shakespeare's *Complete Works*, Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen write that although the line "possibly refers to an Elizabethan practice of draping the stage with black for the performance of a tragedy…the evidence is fairly slight".[507] Despite

[506] Edmund Malone, *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, 16 vols (Dublin: printed by John Exshaw, 1794), II, p. 75-77.
[507] Tiffany Stern, "Early Modern Tragedy and Performance", in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 489-504, pp. 489-490; Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan*

Michael Hattaway's speculation that "the drapes were changed according to the nature of the play being performed", with "other colours used for other plays", there is, as he acknowledges, "no contemporary evidence for this".[508] Tragedy is the only genre to have been definitively associated with a piece of playhouse decoration in the early modern period; like the classicizing chorus, the black cloth appears to have been a staging device for singling out tragedy.

The reluctance of some critics to acknowledge the custom seems to stem from a discomfort with what the black curtains imply about how genre worked in the early modern playhouses. In one of the few dedicated studies of the practice, Andrew Gurr writes, of *A Warning for Fair Women*'s Induction:

> This indication, that the stage was routinely prepared to signal the plays ending in death, I find awesome in its implications. The thought that early modern stages used decorations, hangings, or similar removable features, designed and hung to signal explicitly what an audience should expect from what they paid to witness, is frankly alarming.[509]

Gurr's essay is, fundamentally, an exploration of the practice's existence: he is arguing for the use of black curtains, at least in some tragedies, but he is nevertheless troubled by the dramatic consequences of this, by the custom's apparent denial of generic flexibility, indeterminacy and surprise. For the rest of this chapter, I want to consider the surviving dramatic and non-dramatic references to the custom in more detail, to understand exactly what the evidence reveals about the curtains' signification. We have seen throughout this thesis that "tragedy", at least in the late-sixteenth-century theatres, could describe a far broader range of dramatic phenomena than simply a play ending in death. I propose a similar explanation of the black curtains' function. I will argue that they signified tone more than teleology, advertising and setting the scene for solemnity and bloodshed without necessarily predetermining a genre-specific plot.

Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance (London: Routledge, 1982), p. 24; Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, ed., "The Rape of Lucrece", in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 2420, l. 766n.

[508] Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, p. 24

[509] Gurr, "Genre and the Trappings of Stagecraft", p. 71.

Between around 1560 and 1630, I am aware of fourteen references to the practice of hanging black cloth in the playhouses, some of them fairly definitive, and others more tenuous. Although my discussion will refer to most of these, I have also listed them in chronological order in Appendix Two for clarity. The vast majority of these references are clustered in the 1590s and the first decade of the 1600s. Gurr notes this in his essay, speculating that the custom died out with and because of the advent of Jacobean tragicomedy; for Gurr, the black tragic curtains are impossible to reconcile with tragicomedy because their presence or absence gives away the ending and undermines any potential for surprise.[510] Because I am moving away from a plot-centric understanding of the black curtains, any coincidence of the references' disappearance with the approximate advent of tragicomedy is less pertinent to my argument. References do continue to appear, moreover, at least into the 1620s, making it difficult to establish a firm end-date of *circa* 1610. The chronology of the evidence is of interest, however, for the way in which allusions to the practice move from drama into non-drama. The very earliest references to the presence of black curtains in the theatres feature in plays themselves, whereas the references from 1600 onwards tend to be in non-dramatic texts. This shift indicates that a material custom of some kind did indeed exist. The earlier, dramatic references gesture to the physical presence of the curtains in the playhouse, as in *A Warning*'s induction, and it is only later that the image of the black-hung stage becomes a metaphor (for instance, for a warn-torn England in the 1609 expansion of Samuel Daniel's *Civil Wars Between the Houses of Lancaster and York*), with the figurative usage presumably grounded in and growing out of the real theatrical practice.[511]

The references to the practice in non-dramatic texts are categorical when it comes to the relationship between the black curtains and genre. In "Visions of the Worlds Instabillitie", printed near the end of his *Odes in Imitation of the Seven Penitential Psalms* (1601), Richard Verstegan

[510] Gurr, "Genre and the Trappings of Stagecraft", pp. 74-76.
[511] Daniel writes, "And first begin, with factions to divide| The fairest Land…| Let her be made the sable Stage whereon| Shall first be acted bloodie Tragedies". Samuel Daniel, *The Civile Wars Betweene the Howses of Lancaster and York Corrected and Continued* (London, 1609), sig. M5v.

writes of a dream in which he sees "a spatious *T[*heat*]re*… | All hang'd with black to act some tragedie".[512] In his prose pamphlet *Lanthorne and Candlelight* (1608), the playwright Thomas Dekker describes the debtors of London emerging from their hideouts after sunset using an image of the black-hung playhouse: "But now when the stage of the world was hung in blacke", he writes, "they jetted uppe & downe like proud *Tragedians*".[513] Both Daniel's aforementioned *Civil Wars* and William Browne's *Brittania's Pastorals* (1613) invoke the black stage as a metaphor for the land: a country divided by civil war in Daniel's text; the world "clad in a mourning robe" to grieve for lost love in Browne's poem.[514] In these and other prose and poetic references, the black stage is straightforwardly and definitively associated with tragedy as a generic category: tragedies are performed on black-hung stages, and black-hung stages are made for tragedies.[515]

The number and variety of non-dramatic texts which mention the practice indicates that black curtains really were hung in the early modern playhouses, and that they carried some generic symbolism; but how were the hangings made to signify in plays themselves? In his important work of performance criticism, *The Stage Life of Props*, Andrew Sofer proposes that objects on stage need to be "triggered" by an actor in order to become props, whether by being moved, manipulated, or otherwise drawn attention to in some way.[516] The black curtains are liminal, existing, probably, at the literal boundaries of the stage and at the edge of the imaginative world of the drama; this liminality offers a further parallel between the hangings and the framing text, as both are situated at the borders of a dramatic performance. The black curtains are not quite props, in Sofer's terms, because even when they are not performing a role within the fiction of the play, they still function and signify, unlike the inert "objects" of Sofer's study.[517] But whether the curtains are being pointed out as features of stage decoration or incorporated

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[512] Richard Verstegan, *Odes in Imitation of the Seaven Penitential Psalmes* (Antwerp, 1601), sig. H1r.
[513] Thomas Dekker, *Lanthorne and Candle-Light* (London, 1609), sig. L1v.
[514] Browne's poem describes the grieving world as "a Stage made for a wofull Tragedie". Daniel, *Civile Wars*, sig. M5v; William Browne, *Britannia's Pastorals. The First Booke* (London, 1625), sig. I3r.
[515] See Appendix 1 for further examples.
[516] Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 11.
[517] Sofer, "Introduction: Rematerializing the Prop", in *The Stage Life of Props*, pp. 1-30, esp. pp. 20-21.

into the world of the play, I follow Sofer's example by attending to them at the point at which they are "triggered". Probably visible on stage throughout a performance, the black curtains are at their most potent and significant when the audience is being made to notice them.[518]

Whereas in non-drama, the curtains are frequently mentioned along with the word "tragedy", this kind of generic labelling is uncommon in plays; *A Warning* is relatively unusual in explicitly associating the black hangings with the dramatic category. Instead, references to black stage curtains within plays are very often affective: they are used to suggest the macabre, the lamentable. I have mentioned already that the black stage hangings are often invoked in dramatic frames. As well as being referenced in the metatheatrical debate which opens *A Warning for Fair Women*, they are also alluded to in the induction to *Two Lamentable Tragedies* and in the prologue to John Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (*c.* 1600). In *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, as Truth "prepare[s]" the playgoers for "two shewes of lamentation,| Besprinckled every where with guiltlesse blood", she draws their attention to the fact that the "stage doth weare habilliments of woe": that it is, in other words, dressed in mourning black.[519] This notion that the black cloth helps to "prepare" the audience for what they are about to witness is present in *A Warning* too; here, History observes that "[t[he stage is hung with blacke" and that the "auditors" are, consequently, "preparde for Tragedie".[520] In *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, the black curtains are incorporated even more explicitly into the scene-setting work of the induction: Truth refers to them by way of building expectation and establishing a melancholy atmosphere appropriate to the ensuing play. A somewhat more oblique reference in the prologue to *Antonio's Revenge* functions similarly. This speaker calls for a "sullen tragick Sceane" to "suite the time", and warns those playgoers "[w]ho would not knowe what men must be" to "[h]urrie amain from our black visag'd showes".[521]

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[518] Mariko Ichikawa suggests that the curtains could have been changed or put up during a performance. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, a stage direction indicates that Hieronimo "*knocks up a curtain*", so such a change in stage decoration was possible mid-play. However, there is no evidence that changing the curtains was routine. Ichikawa, "'The Stage is Hung with Blacke'", pp. 179-180; Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. K2v.
[519] Yarington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*, sig. A3r.
[520] Anon., *A Warning for Faire Women*, sig. A3r.
[521] John Marston, *Antonios Revenge* (London, 1602), sig. A2r-A2v.

Although it can easily be understood metaphorically, as a reference to the actors' solemn expressions, "black visag'd" has been interpreted by theatre historians including Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa as a nod to the black-hung stage.[522] Equally suggestive is the prologue's earlier reference to a "sullen tragick Sceane". As well as meaning gloomy or mournful, "sullen" could also mean dull or dark-hued; the phrase, then, can be read as both a tonal introduction to the play's macabre content, and as a description of the physical, visible "scene", the *frons scenae* draped with black cloth.[523]

Critics have proposed different playhouse locations for the black hangings, with some, including Hattaway, positing that they may have been draped around the front of the raised stage platform, hanging into the pit where the groundlings stood, or even laid on the boards of the stage beneath the actors' feet.[524] The most common and most logical suggestion, however, is that the black cloth hung behind the players, covering the front wall of the tiring house.[525] Here, unlike around the front edge of the stage platform or covering the stage boards, the black cloth would have been clearly visible to the playgoers. The one surviving image of a late-sixteenth-century playhouse, Johannes de Witt's drawing of the Swan, shows no curtains at all, but Ichikawa identifies three prints from later in the seventeenth century which depict fabric hangings (not obviously black ones) at the back of the stage, behind the actors.[526] Moreover, there are references to the black curtains within plays which indicate that the front of the tiring house wall was, indeed, where they hung. *A Warning*'s most famous and frequently cited allusion to the practice is History's remark, quoted above; but a further reference to the black curtains in

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[522] Gurr, "Genre and the Trappings of Stagecraft", pp. 74-75; Ichikawa, "The Stage is Hung with Black", pp. 153-154.
[523] "sullen (*adj*), 4", *OED Online*, OUP, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/193784?rskey=ZSuxBm&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid, accessed 10 Sep. 2021.
[524] Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre,* p. 24.
[525] Andrew Gurr, Tiffany Stern, and Mariko Ichikawa all concur that the front wall of the tiring house was the most likely location for the black curtains. Gurr, "Genre and the Trappings of Stagecraft", p. 76; Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 98; Ichikawa, ""The Stage is Hung with Blacke", pp. 153-188, pp. 159-163.
[526] Ichikawa, "The Stage is Hung with Blacke", p. 159.

the play, this time in the first act chorus, hints at their location. Presaging the darker turn of events to follow in the subsequent acts, Tragedy announces: "But now we come unto the dismall act,| And in these sable Curtains shut we up,| The Comicke entrance to our direful play".[527] Early modern playhouses did not have curtains at the front of the stage, so these lines do not refer to drapes being pulled shut to obscure the audience's view. Rather, I propose that they describe the space into which the players have disappeared at the end of the opening act: the "*door*[s]" at the back of the stage, mentioned in *A Warning*'s opening stage directions, which are covered with black fabric hangings.[528] Tragedy's image is of the play's quotidian beginnings being closed off, put away, as into a box: the "sable Curtains" fall shut behind the exiting players, and any hope of a comic outcome is extinguished. Some references in other plays indicate that the black cloth could hang elsewhere as well – from the stage roof, for example – but the back of the stage makes sense as a consistent location.[529] Hanging on the front of the tiring house wall as a backdrop to the stage action, the black curtains would have occupied the same space that was sometimes used for painted cloth scenery. Records of such scenery are mainly found in the Revels Accounts or in documents relating to children's company drama, though critics have speculated that a couple of items in Henslowe's props list ("the sittie of Rome", "the cloth of the Sone & the Mone") might also have referred to painted cloth scenery.[530] There was thus a precedent for decorative fabric to hang behind the players, and this precedent may also offer an additional clue as to how the black curtains should be understood. Occupying the same space as

[527] Anon., *A Warning for Faire Women*, sig. C4v.
[528] Anon., *A Warning for Faire Women*, sig. A2r.
[529] The opening line of Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part One* (1592), "Hung be the heavens with black" (I.i.1), has led some critics to posit that the stage "heavens" – the roof over the stage platform – may sometimes have been draped with black cloth; Arden editor of the play Edward Burns, for instance, suggests that this may have been the case. Edward Burns, ed., *King Henry VI Part 1* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2000), p. 115, I.i.1n.
[530] Records of the preparations for Derby's Men's court performance of *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* in 1582, for instance, list the use of canvas and sarcenet to create a city and a battlement as scenery. The Queen's Men's now lost play *Phyllida and Corin* (*c.* 1584), performed at court in December 1584, required "a great curtain" and "a great cloth of canvas" for scenery. Of the examples of possible painted cloth scenery in *Henslowe's Diary*, Tiffany Stern notes that "the site of Rome" was, "perhaps, a curtain for the back of the stage, the *frons scenae*". Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p. 319; Wiggins, "*The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* (734)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 2, 1567-1589*; Wiggins, "*Phyllida and Corin* (760", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 2, 1567-1589*; Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, p. 97.

scenery, the curtains' purpose was to locate the audience and the action, to serve as a fitting imaginative backdrop to the drama unfolding on stage.

Spatially contiguous with cloths that signified a play's setting, and frequently emphasised in opening metadramatic frames, the black curtains which sometimes adorned the early modern theatres were associated far more with establishing a tragic tone and atmosphere at the beginning of a play than with revealing a tragic ending, despite Gurr's anxiety about the latter. That the black curtains' primary function was one of framing and scene-setting is implied even by those dramatic references to them that do not feature in paratexts; for even when the curtains are gestured to by characters within the world of a play, this still tends to happen in opening scenes. One of the most famous and most contested references to them appears in the very first line of *Henry VI Part 1*. This play begins with the funeral of Henry V. The mourners enter to a "*Dead march*" (I.i.0), bearing the coffin of the former king, and the Duke of Bedford proclaims, "Hung be the heavens with black". Bedford is primarily calling for darkness to fall out of respect for the devastating loss of so great a monarch; the first line of his speech continues, "yield day to night!" (I.i.1). His image, however, draws on early modern funerary custom. Records from the sixteenth century show that churches, the houses of the deceased, and even the streets through which funeral processions passed were typically draped or "hung" with black cloth.[531] This is probably how the theatres sourced their black fabrics, as funeral hangings and mourning clothes were often left to servants and the poor in the wills of the wealthy, and then sold.[532] By calling for the "heavens" to be "hung with black", Bedford is imagining that the customary funeral decorations

[531] The diary of the mid-sixteenth century Merchant Taylor Henry Machyn lists numerous examples of a "howse", "strett" and "chyrche" being "hangyd with blake cloth" for a funeral. See *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant Taylor of London, from A. D. 1550 to A. D. 1563*, ed. John Gough Nichols (London: Printed for the Camden Society, 1848), p. 2, p. 3, p. 68, p. 298, p. 299.

[532] Hester Lees-Jeffries argues that the black cloths used in the playhouses may well have been funereal in origin. Stephen Greenblatt and Peter Stallybrass have written extensively about how the early modern theatres sourced their fabrics and costumes. Hester Lees-Jeffries, "Inky Cloaks: Black Cloth and Black Pages, Performance and Paratext" (lecture, University of Oxford, 21 Nov 2017); Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 112-119; Peter Stallybrass, "Properties in Clothes: the Materials of the Renaissance Theatre", in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), pp. 177-207.

could be extended up to the skies. In the theatres, though, the term "heavens" also referred to a piece of playhouse architecture – the roof above the stage platform. Thus, Bedford's invocation can also be read as a reference to black cloths that are physically present in the playhouse: he is both calling for the skies to darken and stating that the stage heavens have been draped with black cloth.

This apparent reference to black fabric hangings in the playhouse has been much quoted and discussed, though some critics maintain that Bedford's line is figurative only, a characteristically hyperbolic evocation of a world in mourning.[533] There exists, however, a very similar, near-contemporary reference which substantiates *1 Henry VI*'s allusion to the practice and which, to my knowledge, has not been identified in criticism. The opening scene of Peele and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (*c.* 1589) also stages an elaborate funeral. A stage direction in the 1594 quarto reads:

> *Sounds Drums and Trumpets, and then enter two of* Titus *sonnes, and then two men bearing a Coffin covered with black, then two other sonnes, then* Titus Andronicus*, and then* Tamora *the Queene of Gothes and her two sonnes* Chiron *and* Demetrius*, with* Aron *the More, and others as many as can be, then set down the Coffin, and* Titus *speakes.*[534]

Titus's first words in the play, which immediately follow this grand entrance, capture the tonal paradox of the funereal yet triumphant procession: "Haile Rome", he calls, "victorious in thy mourning weeds".[535] The phrase "mourning weeds" refers to the clothes of those on stage; presumably, the mourners in the procession and those gathered to witness it are all dressed in funeral black. But what if Titus's words also describe the decoration of the stage itself? He is, after all, addressing "Rome" – an early modern homophone, indeed, for "room".[536] Titus's first thought, as always, is for his country, not its people, and thus the "Rome, victorious in [its]

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[533] For example, in their *Complete Works* edition Bate and Rasmussen note, of the line, that some scholars believe that the projecting roof or canopy (the heavens) was conventionally draped with black for the performance of a tragedy", but they do not acknowledge the custom themselves. Bate and Rasmussen, ed., *Henry VI Part 1*, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works,* p. 1108, I.i.1n.

[534] George Peele and William Shakespeare, *The Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus* (London, 1594), sig. A4r-A4v.

[535] Peele and Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, sig. A4v.

[536] On Shakespeare's punning on the homophones "Rome" and "room" in *Titus*, see Hester Lees-Jeffries, *Shakespeare and Memory* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), pp. 44-45.

mourning weeds" which he salutes could be, not a metonym for the Roman people, but a description of the place itself, draped in black cloth to await the return of its triumphant military leader and his deceased sons. Titus may be, in other words, gesturing to a black-hung stage.

Both *Titus* and *1 Henry VI* were performed at the Rose playhouse in the early 1590s, and both were associated with Lord Strange's Men at some point during their stage lives. *Henslowe's Diary* records several performances of *harey the vj* by Strange's Men at the Rose in 1592.[537] Two years later, it records a performance of *titus & ondronicus*, also at the Rose, this time by Sussex's Men; but when *Titus* was printed in 1594, three playing companies were named on the title page of the quarto, including the company of the "Earle of *Darbie*", which was an alternative name for Strange's Men.[538] The *New Oxford Shakespeare* editors concur with Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth Maclean that Derby's/Strange's Men were probably the first company of the three to perform *Titus*.[539] As well as having a theatre and a playing company in common, *Titus* and *1 Henry VI*, of course, share an author: Shakespeare. They are both, however, collaborative plays, with critics usually attributing the opening scene of *Titus* to George Peele, and the opening act of *1 Henry VI* to Thomas Nashe.[540] Still, we have two plays with variously overlapping origins, both of which make plausible references to black stage hangings in their funereal first scenes. The presence of similar allusions across the two plays helps to substantiate each one as a reference to an actual feature of staging: that both plays begin with funerals, and both appear to gesture to a black-hung playhouse, suggests that Bedford's "Hung be the heavens with black" is not just metaphorical.

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[537] Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 16-20.
[538] Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, pp. 21-22; Peele and Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, t.p.
[539] Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", *The New Oxford Shakespeare Authorship Companion*, ed. Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 490-493; Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth Maclean, *Lord Strange's Men and Their Plays* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 106-110.
[540] Taylor and Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology", pp. 490-493, pp. 513-517.

The opening scenes of *Titus* and *1 Henry VI* contain the earliest extant references to black fabric hangings in the playhouses in either dramatic or non-dramatic texts.[541] The only piece of evidence I have found which pre-dates these plays constitutes a tantalising note in a record of a production of Sophocles's *Ajax* planned for performance at King's College, Cambridge, in 1564. The description of the preparations for this performance notes that the stage had been "adorned…tragically", but frustratingly tells us nothing about what this might have entailed; the absence of any actual mention of black fabric hangings is presumably why the description is never cited in studies of the practice, although the notion of "tragical" adornment is certainly suggestive.[542] In the earliest surviving references which clearly indicate that black fabrics were hung during theatrical performances, however, these fabrics are explicitly associated not with tragedy, but with funerals. Michael Neill has argued that the entire theatrical custom of black tragic hangings developed from funerary practice: "the very décor of the tragic stage was determined by the conventions of funeral", he writes, adding that "[t]he players decked their stage with black hangings derived from the 'blacks' of funeral custom…to attune the audience's emotions to the ensuing drama of death".[543] Certainly, the practice of adorning buildings with funeral 'blacks' was widespread in early modern England, with numerous references to it both pre- and post-dating any mentions of a playhouse custom.[544] In early modern material culture, funeral was the dominant meaning of a room draped with black fabric. It was from funerals that black hangings derived much of their symbolic and emotional power: a black-hung stage would have prepared playgoers for scenes of death and mourning.

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[541] There is an earlier reference to Hieronimo "*knock*[ing] *up the curtaine*" for the performance of his play in *The Spanish Tragedy*, but the text gives no indication of the colour of this curtain. Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, sig. K2v.
[542] The relevant phrase in Nicholas Robinson's original Latin account of preparations for the performance is "*Scaenam universam tragice ornassent*". His account is reproduced in Alan H. Nelson, *Records of Early English Drama: Cambridge*, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), I, p. 238. For the translation, see Smith, *Ancient Scripts*, p. 216. See also Wiggins, "*Ajax Flagellifer* (384)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 1, 1533-1566*.
[543] Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p. 282.
[544] The references from the *Diary of Henry Machyn* cited above all pre-date the earliest recorded uses of black cloth in a theatrical setting. In his monograph *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, David Cressy offers numerous examples of the funereal custom from the mid-seventeenth century, which post-date the latest playhouses uses. David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), pp. 438-441.

In linking the black tragic hangings to early modern funeral custom, Neill, like Gurr, conceives of their dramatic function teleologically. He relates their presence to the conventional ending of tragedies in funeral marches; the curtains, he suggests, "must have fostered a sense of funeral as the proper and expected end of this kind of drama".[545] Of the plays I cite in this chapter as containing references to black hangings, though, there are several which do not end in funerals or dead marches.[546] Their black curtains did not hang as material harbingers of a generically pre-determined conclusion towards which the action was inexorably drawn. This is not to say that black playhouse hangings never realised their full funereal potential at the culmination of a tragedy; but of the admittedly small number of references to them within plays, none is looking ahead to the drama's narrative ending. Indeed, as we have seen, the earliest evidence of black hangings in early modern drama features in plays that start with funerals, not plays that end with them. The references are too chronologically compressed to argue that black curtains in *Titus* and *1 Henry VI* signalled "funeral" only, and that any association with tragedy as a genre came after – and because of – these early uses. *Titus* is typically dated to around 1589, and *1 Henry VI* to a couple of years later. In 1594, Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* was published containing the line "black stage for tragedies" (l. 766). At the time Shakespeare was writing the poem, in the early 1590s, some form of generic connection must already have existed; a custom of stage decoration, then, was at least beginning to emerge around the time that *Titus* and *1 Henry VI* debuted. What these early funereal references demonstrate, though, is that the black hangings were not concerned with categorising or clear generic distinctions. *1 Henry VI* was printed as a "History" in the 1623 First Folio, but we saw in chapter one that the *Henry VI* plays correspond with the *de casibus* model of tragedy popularised in sixteenth-century England by *A Mirror for*

[545] Neill, *Issues of Death*, p. 283.

[546] *A Warning for Fair Women* ends with Anne Drury bidding her children farewell as she is led to her execution; *Two Lamentable Tragedies* also concludes with an execution scene; the final scene of *Henry VI Part 1* depicts the arrangement of Henry's marriage to Margaret; and *Titus* ends with an explicit rejection of funeral rites ("No mournful bell shall ring her burial" (V.iii.196)), though this presumably applies to Tamora only. With the exception of *1 Henry VI*, the plays do all end in death; but Neill's notion of the black cloths symbolising a funereal ritual to be completed in the playhouse may be overstated.

Magistrates (1559), and Kate Welch observes in the play a series of "attempted" and "abandoned" scenes of mourning.[547] *1 Henry VI* is not *a* tragedy, but black curtains nevertheless provide a fitting backdrop to its action, generating an atmosphere appropriate to a play containing multiple scenes of death.

Where, then, does this leave us with *A Warning*'s induction? The debate between the three genres staged in this play implies that the convention of generically determined stage decoration was codified and categorical: it is the presence of black curtains, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, that causes both History and Comedy immediately to relent and surrender the playhouse to Tragedy's inevitable reign. Or is it? Let us examine the moment again:

> Hyst: Now before God thou'lt make her mad anone,
> Thy jeasts are like a Wispe unto a scould.
>
> Com: Why say I could: what care I *Hystorie*?
> Then we shall have a tragedie indeed:
> Pure purple Buskin, blood and murther right.
>
> Trag: Thus with your loose and idle similes,
> You have abusde me: but Ile whip you hence, *She whips them.*
> Ile scourge and lash you both from off the stage,
> […]
> I charge you to be gone and leave this place.
>
> Hyst: Looke *Comedie*, I markt it not till now,
> The stage is hung with blacke: and I perceive
> The Auditors preparde for *Tragedie*.
>
> Com: Nay then I see she shall be intertain'd,
> These ornaments beseeme not thee and me.[548]

History has been wary of provoking Tragedy's wrath almost from the outset, while Comedy has blithely persisted in her teasing; but when Tragedy's anger erupts into outright violence, both are only too quick to seize upon the opportunity presented by the black curtains, and flee the stage. It is not a deep commitment to generic propriety that causes History and Comedy to capitulate;

[547] Kate Welch, "Expressions of Grief on the Early Modern Stage", DPhil Thesis (University of Oxford, 2014), pp. 155-156.
[548] Anon., *A Warning for Faire Women*, sig. A3r.

it is Tragedy's whip. Conveniently noticed at the point at which they wish to make a speedy exit, the curtains are an amusing excuse. *A Warning*'s induction revels in the caricaturing of generic traits, and the black tragic hangings are subject to the same treatment. Theatre historians have often taken this play's opening at face value, as evidence that all and only tragedies, according to a narrow and specific definition of the term, were performed on black-hung stages in the early modern playhouses.[549] The black cloth is treated almost as the equivalent of the festival setting in Attic drama; in his monograph on *Euripides' Escape-Tragedies*, Matthew Wright explains that an Ancient Greek play was "either a comedy, a tragedy or a satyr-play", and that "the context of the festival would have left the audience in no doubt as to what type of play they were watching".[550] But early modern dramatic genre was not definitive in this way. Genres, as we have seen throughout this thesis, were frequently hybrid, partial, slippery. Black cloths were hung in the theatres, visually striking and ominous, to advertise tragic content; but they did not prescribe a particular plot or prohibit the staging of other kinds of action. Indeed, one of the most frequently invoked images of curtains (though not explicitly black ones) in tragedy is of the clown's face peering through them, gaping and grinning in brazen and unscripted juxtaposition with the serious matter of a play.[551]

From ostentatiously classicising choruses to solemn black curtains, the different kinds of tragic frame I consider in this chapter all work to celebrate and single out tragedy as a special variety of drama. They offer little consensus, though, as to what, exactly, tragedy meant or looked like on stage. There are more prologues and choruses announcing tragic content than any other dramatic genre; but they advertise tragedy both as part and as whole. A tragic presence is

[549] Andrew Gurr, for instance, argues that the practice must have died out with the advent of tragicomedy, because the presence or absence of black curtains would have removed the potential for surprise; but this understanding of the custom as highly generically codified is based largely on a very literal reading of *A Warning*'s induction. Gurr, "Genre and the Trappings of Stagecraft", pp. 74-75.
[550] Matthew Wright, *Euripides Escape-Tragedies: A Study of Helen, Andromeda, and Iphigenia Among the Taurians* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), pp. 11-12.
[551] On the famous "peeping-out routine", in which the clown would peer out from behind the curtains at the back of the stage before making his first proper entrance, see Matthew Steggle, *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 67-70.

frequently embodied in dramatic paratexts; but where we might expect Melpomene to occupy this role consistently, it is in fact dispersed across a range of personifications. The black curtains, too, which in non-dramatic references seem to function as a consistent and definitive marker of genre, are put to a far broader range of uses in plays themselves, appearing in dramas not traditionally associated with tragedy as a generic category. All of these tragic frames encapsulate the dual focus of this thesis, showcasing dramatic tragedy as novel and exciting, while also revealing its indeterminacy. The final chapter of this thesis continues to consider questions of generic fluidity and tragedy's identity on stage via the aforementioned figure of the clown. A liminal, often metatheatrical presence like the prologues and choruses of this chapter, the clown was a play-patch which substantially pre-dated dramatic tragedy in England. Enduringly popular with audiences, the clown was a feature of playhouse performance which early tragedies negotiated in different ways. In examining how plays incorporated this important and incongruous component, I illuminate a theatrical scene that was deeply theoretically engaged in questions of genre. The clown's incongruity in tragedy was emphasised not just by disapproving literary commentators, but by the plays themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR
"Frivolous Jestures":
Clowning on the Tragic Stage

When both parts of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587) were first printed in 1590, their publisher, Richard Jones, claimed to have made a bold editorial intervention.[552] In a preface "To the Gentlemen Readers" he writes that he has

> (purposely) omitted and left out some fond and frivolous Jestures, digressing (and in my poore opinion) far unmeet for the matter, which I thought, might seeme more tedious to the wise, than any way els to be regarded, though (happly) they have been of some vaine conceited fondlings, greatly gaped at, what times they were shewed upon the stage in their graced deformities.[553]

Sometimes interpreted as an erroneous promise that all humour has been banished from the *Tamburlaine* plays, Jones's preface is actually claiming to have "left out" specifically the plays' episodes of clowning.[554] "Jestures" puns on "jester", meaning clown or fool, while also playfully alluding to the slapstick physicality of the early modern stage clown's performance, its reliance on "gestures".[555] The phrase "graced deformities" is a reference to the clown's physical

[552] Jones signs off his preface as "R. J. Printer", but in the context of his editorial claims, it is accurate to think of him as the publisher of the text. The roles of printer and publisher were not nominally distinguished in the period, but critics including Peter Blayney and Zachary Lesser have demonstrated that the functions were separate, and often undertaken by different people. As Blayney puts it, "[t]he *printer* of a play was the person who owned the type and the press, and whose workmen set the text and impressed its inked image onto paper…The person who acquired the text, paid for several hundred copies to be manufactured, and sold them wholesale, was the *publisher*". While it is possible that Jones was both publisher and printer of the *Tamburlaine* plays, it is as a publisher, shaping and marketing the text, that he speaks in his preface. See Peter Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks", in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 389-91; Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 27-28. For a discussion of Jones's publishing career, see also Kirk Melnikoff, "Jones's Pen and Marlowe's Socks: Richard Jones, Print Culture, and the Beginnings of English Dramatic Literature", *Studies in Philology* 102, no. 2 (Spring 2005),pp. 184-209.

[553] Richard Jones, "To the Gentlemen Readers", in *Tamburlaine the Great*, by Christopher Marlowe (London: printed by Richard Jones, 1590), sig. A2r.

[554] Some nineteenth and early twentieth-century critics, including A. H. Bullen, felt that Jones had not cut enough of the play's comic material. Referring, presumably, to some of Mycetes's scenes, or to Tamburlaine's use of Bajazeth as a footstool, Bullen writes, "[i]t would be well if [Jones] had used his pruning-knife with even greater severity and had left no trace of the excrescences of buffoonery". A. H. Bullen, ed., *The Works of Christopher Marlowe*, 3 vols. (London: John C. Nimmo, 1885), I, p. xx.

[555] The pun was not without precedent. In his *Alvearie or Triple Dictionarie* (1574), John Baret proposed an etymological link between "jester" and "gesture": his entry for the former, which he spells "Gester", reads "a Gester, or dizard, faining and counterfeiting all mens gestures". Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann argue that Jones's spelling is intended to emphasise the pun; "[t]here can be little doubt", they write, "that the spelling, 'jestures', asks the reader of Jones's preface to think about the connections between a certain type of theatrical

appearance. Famous Elizabethan clowns like Richard Tarlton and Will Kemp were notorious for their striking and unusual facial features: David Wiles writes that Tarlton, "with his flat nose and squint…was remembered as a swine-faced clown", while Kemp was known for his "ill face".[556] The verb "gape", meanwhile, seems to have been associated with audience reactions to clowning in the period; it also appears in Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* (*c.* 1582) in his question, "what is it to make folkes gape, at a wretched begger, or a beggerly Clowne?".[557] Implying a kind of foolish, open-mouthed laughter, "gape" positions the audience as the clown's mirror; clowns were famed for their grinning, leering and face-pulling and, according to Sidney's and Jones's descriptions, the playgoers grinned, leered and pulled faces back.[558]

Without explicitly naming the clown, Jones's preface makes clear the kind of material "omitted" from his edition of the *Tamburlaine* plays. The clown was a staple of early modern playhouse performance, a popular comic entertainer known for jokes, slapstick humour and playing to the crowd: this is what Jones has chosen to excise all traces of from his text. He also offers a reason for his editorial intervention. Jones has decided to cut the *Tamburlaine* plays' clowning scenes because they are "fond", "frivolous", and "unmeet for the matter"; they are foolish and extraneous, he suggests, and they have no place in this kind of play. His edits are apparently tailored to the preferences of Jones's imagined readership. He addresses "Gentlemen Readers" and "curteous readers", distinguishing the "wise" purchasers of his book from the "vaine conceited fondlings" entertained by clowning in the playhouse. Some critics have doubted the veracity of Jones's editorial claims, arguing that his preface is merely covering for the absence of popular comic material that was never present in his copytext. Fredson Bowers, for example, proposes that Jones was working from an authorial manuscript, and that the allegedly "omitted"

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gestures…and comic *jests*". John Baret, *An Alvearie or Triple Dictionarie, in English, Latin and French* (London, 1574), sig. 2F1r; Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 69.

[556] David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), p. 17, p. 24.

[557] Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesie* (London, 1595), sig. I2v.

[558] Although the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives no definition of "gape" meaning "to laugh", the word is explained in Baret's *Alvearie* as meaning "to drawe the mouth in laughing". Baret, *Alvearie*, sig. 2E5r.

clowning episodes were improvised or otherwise added in the playhouse independently of Marlowe; "hence", Bowers continues, "[Jones's] virtuous defense of the omission of unsuitable scenes may very possibly be an attempt to anticipate criticism that they were not present, though acted".[559] There is good reason to take Jones's preface at face value, however. Firstly, as Laurie Maguire has pointed out, the 1590 octavo of the *Tamburlaine* plays contains several apparently "misnumbered scenes and omitted scene divisions", which "may support Jones's claim to have excised material".[560] In *Tamburlaine, Part One*, for instance, 4.3 is followed immediately by 4.5, with 4.4 perhaps representing an "omitted" clowning scene. A confusingly misnumbered sequence in *The Second Part of Tamburlaine*, however, which runs 3.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.5, 2.1, 4.1, serves as a reminder that misnumbering may be the result of error – whether compositorial or in the manuscript – as well as of cutting.

More compelling as evidence that the cuts took place is the fact that Jones's professed omissions are coherent with his broader generic rebranding of the plays. On 14 August 1590, "the twooe commicall discourses of Tomberlein the Cithian shepparde" were entered to Jones on the Stationers' Register, but by the time the plays reached print, they were instead entitled *Tamburlaine the Great. Who, from a Scythian Shephearde, by his rare and woonderfull Conquests, became a most puissant and mightye Monarque. And (for his tyranny, and terrour in Warre) was tearmed, the Scourge of God. Devided into two Tragicall Discourses.*[561] Jones accompanies this switch from "commicall" to "tragicall" with titular additions that draw out the plays' "tragicall" elements; he invokes the turning of Fortune's wheel, for instance, in referencing Tamburlaine's ascent from "Shephearde" to "Monarque", and also advertises "tyranny" and "Warre" as features of the plays. This is not to say that Jones's edits were alone responsible for turning the *Tamburlaine* plays into "tragic" drama. The prologue to *The First Part of Tamburlaine* describes the play as a "tragick glass", and

[559] Fredson Bowers, ed., *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), II, p. 75.
[560] Laurie Maguire, "Marlovian texts and authorship", in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 43.
[561] Edward Arber, *A Transcript of the Register of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640 A. D*, 5 vols. (London: privately published, 1875-77), II, p. 558; *Tamburlaine the Great*, t.p.

the extensive scenes of violence and bloodshed staged across both parts mean that they cannot have been perceived as entirely "commicall", in the more particular sense of the word.[562] The word "commicall" may simply, of course, refer to the fact that *Tamburlaine the Great* is a dramatic text, as "comedy" was a synonym for "play" in the period. Nonetheless, the discrepancy between the Stationers' Register's "commicall", and the printed title's "tragicall", still indicates that Jones was making considered, literary choices about how to package and market his playtext. As Kirk Melnikoff demonstrates in his detailed study of Jones's publishing career, Richard Jones regularly made what we might regard as editorial interventions in the texts he published, whether by writing printer's prefaces or by making changes to Stationers' Register titles; he probably also compiled some collections of poetry, and appears in general to have taken an aesthetic as well as a commercial interest in the texts he printed.[563] The involvement of early modern stationers in shaping and creating – rather than simply profiting from – works of literature has received increased critical attention in recent years, through publications like Claire M. L. Bourne's *Typographies of Performance in Early Modern England* (2020), Adam G. Hooks's *Selling Shakespeare: Biography, Bibliography, and the Book Trade* (2016) and the essay collection *Shakespeare's Stationers* (2013), edited by Marta Straznicky. If twentieth-century scholarship doubted that Jones could have made cuts to the *Tamburlaine* plays – or, at least, that he could have done so without Marlowe's help – then twenty-first century bibliography has shown that early modern stationers were more than capable of this kind of textual intervention.

The significance of Jones's preface to *Tamburlaine* for early modern drama scholarship can hardly be overstated. Not only does it substantially alter our perception of one of the earliest and most famous tragedies of the popular English theatres, but it has also been taken to signify a watershed moment in the history of play-printing, with Lukas Erne arguing that it "announces a

[562] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, sig. A3r.
[563] Melnikoff argues that Jones's preface and edits to the *Tamburlaine* plays should be read in the context of his interest and involvement in the late-sixteenth-century market for chivalric literature; Jones sought to fashion himself as a publisher of a particular kind of text, Melnikoff proposes, and he shaped his edition of *Tamburlaine* so that it would belong to this corpus of work. See Melnikoff, "Jones's Pen and Marlowe's Socks", pp. 184-209.

first recoding of a playtext as a primarily *literary* text in the print medium".[564] In highlighting the distinction between print and performance – between material suited "to the Gentlemen Readers" and material "shewed upon the stage" – Jones's preface gestures to one of the central concerns of this thesis: the difference between tragedy as non-drama and tragedy as performed. Whereas critics have mainly taken the preface as a prompt for thinking about the untranslatability of clowning to print, I am interested in its implications for the opposite direction of theatrical travel: not from stage to page, but vice versa. In this chapter, I consider the clown as a product of tragedy's transition from print to the playhouse.

Clowns were integral to adult playing company drama in the sixteenth century, and when tragedy emerged as a popular dramatic form in the period, clowning was incorporated despite the tonal mismatch. Jones was by no means the only commentator to take issue with this generic clash, and in the next section of this chapter, I offer a brief overview of the history of stage clowns and contemporary arguments against their presence in tragedy. I then examine the surviving clown parts in three so-called "Sons of *Tamburlaine*" plays (plays written in the wake of *Tamburlaine* and bearing signs of its influence): Thomas Lodge's *Wounds of Civil War* (1588), and the anonymous plays *Selimus* (1591) and *Locrine* (1591).[565] As *Tamburlaine*'s own, controversial clown has been entirely lost to the print shop floor, such plays provide the best surviving insight into the nature of the tragic clowning that so riled commentators like Jones. I am interested in how these plays negotiate the generic mismatch: in how, and how far, they incorporate the stage clown into the narratives of their source texts.

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[564] Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), p. 73.

[565] *Selimus* has been tentatively attributed to Robert Greene, although the evidence is not conclusive. Critics including Donna Murphy have argued that *Selimus* and *Locrine* are likely to have been written at least partly by the same playwright. Both plays are associated with the Queen's Men – *Selimus* definitively, because the playing company is named on its 1594 title page, and *Locrine* because of similarities between the plays. Peter Berek, "*Tamburlaine*'s Weak Sons: Imitation as Interpretation", *Renaissance Drama* 13 (1982), pp. 55-82, esp. p. 58; Daniel J. Vitkus, "Introduction", in *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England:* Selimus*,* A Christian Turned Turk*, and* The Renegado, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 1-54, esp. pp. 16-17; Donna Murphy, "*Locrine*, *Selimus*, Robert Greene, and Thomas Lodge", *NQ*, vol. 56, no. 4 (December 2009), pp. 559-563.

Clowns are, in Richard Preiss's terms, "the most un-booklike thing" about early modern theatre.[566] He is referring specifically to the difficulty of capturing a clown's performance in a playtext, but his phrase also characterises the relationship between clowns and dramatic sources. Clowns are born of performance; they do not typically appear in the verse and prose texts from which plays draw their narrative inspiration. Adam, the clown in Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene's *Looking Glass for London and England* (1589), jokingly acknowledges as much when he is sentenced to hang for breaking Nineveh's penitential fast; "come lets away", he says to the man arresting him, as though he is merely agreeing to a haircut, "and yet let me be put in the Chronicles".[567] The joke, of course, is that clowns do not feature in the history books; Adam is, perhaps, hoping that by doing something as un-clownlike as dying, he might finally earn a mention in the records. Even in a comedy such as Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1599), the clown Touchstone is, as Steve Mentz puts it, a "theatrical addition". Indeed, not only is Touchstone absent from the play's main source, Thomas Lodge's prose romance *Rosalynde* (1590), but Mentz argues that he is actively pitched against it in performance. Touchstone's role in the play, suggests Mentz, is partly to "disarm…the high moral and humanist ambitions of Lodge's source text" by "interrupt[ing]" and "parodying" moments of "intellectual debate".[568] The clown is, in effect, the source text's antagonist.

If there is no clown in the chief source of a play like *As You Like It*, then it is hardly surprising that clowns do not feature in the sources of the military tragedies on which I focus in this chapter. As I demonstrate through comparison with the relevant moments from the plays' source texts, the clowns of *The Wounds of Civil War*, *Selimus* and *Locrine* are, emphatically, the products of bringing these stories to the stage. This means that the clowns in all three plays represent deliberate choices – whether by a playwright, a playing company, or the clown actor

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[566] Richard Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship in the Early Modern Theatre* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), p. 10
[567] Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge, *A Looking Glasse, for London and Englande* (London, 1594), sig. I3v.
[568] Steve Mentz, "'A Note Beyond Your Reach': Prose Romance's Rivalry with Elizabethan Drama", in *Staging Early Modern Romance: Prose Fiction, Dramatic Romance, and Shakespeare*, ed. Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 75-90, p. 83.

himself – about how the clown should work in relation to the tragedy. Although clowns were ubiquitous in adult company drama, specific decisions have been made about how the clowns should function in relation to the narrative content of these three plays. Clowns were known for their improvising, of course, and so a playtext is unlikely to preserve the full extent of a clown's involvement in a dramatic performance; but that notwithstanding, it is clear that the clown's role differs considerably across the three plays I consider. The unnamed clown appears only in a single, isolated scene in the surviving text of *The Wounds of Civil War*; *Selimus*'s clown Bullithrumble, by contrast, makes several exuberant and tonally incongruous intrusions into the grisly drama, while Strumbo the clown takes on something of a starring role in *Locrine*. Just as there was no clear framework or precedent for how tragedy should work on stage in the period, so there was no single model for tragic clowning. As Jones's straightforward "omi[ssion]" of the part from *Tamburlaine* suggests, the clown was a play-patch, a dramatic turn or entertainment which could be "liminal" or "essential" – as Stern writes of textual patches – depending on the play being performed.[569] Indeed, as I observed in chapter two, the clown was explicitly recognised as a "patch" in the period; clowns were called "patches", probably on account of their motleys, and those contemporary commentators who wrote disdainfully of plays being "patched" together were almost always referring to comic dramatic material.

In examining the contrasting ways in which tragic plays integrate this comic play-patch, I illuminate a late-sixteenth-century theatrical scene that was highly attuned to the generic and theoretical discussions of the day. Variations between dramatic clowns can partly be attributed to differences in company style and personnel; the Queen's Men, for instance, were famed for their clowning, and so clown parts in Queen's Men plays are often correspondingly larger.[570] Yet two of the clowns I consider, Bullithrumble and Strumbo, were very probably performed by that same company, and although their parts bear some similarities – both, for instance, are seen

[569] Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (CUP, Cambridge, 2009) p. 256.
[570] Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth Maclean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), p. 85.

eating on stage – they also differ significantly, particularly in terms of the extent of their integration into the tragedy. I therefore propose that the three, very different approaches to tragic clowning I foreground in this chapter were, more broadly, the products of playhouse experimentation. Violent military tragedies were a new, popular phenomenon in the 1580s and 1590s, and playwrights and performers were trialling different approaches to clowning in this kind of play, exploring and exploiting the potential affordances of the inevitable clown. Theatre and theory have long been considered at odds in the early modern period, but recent work by critics like Sarah Dewar-Watson has sought to rehabilitate our perception of popular drama, arguing that the output of the playhouses was actively engaged with ideas and questions about how theatre should work.[571] As a particularly contentious issue in late-sixteenth-century theatrical discourse, the tragic clown provides an effective case study of this kind of engagement in action. The plays I discuss in this chapter do not conform to calls to banish the clown from tragedy; but they are not oblivious to them either.

Clowns and Their Detractors: A Brief History

The clown as performer pre-dates playhouse tragedy by at least several decades. At the courts of the Tudor monarchs, clowns were celebrated solo entertainers, known for their jokes, songs and stories, as well as for physical skills like juggling and acrobatics. Henry VIII's mid-sixteenth-century court jester Will Sommers was something of an early celebrity, famous enough for a posthumous tribute in Thomas Nashe's 1592 play *Summer's Last Will and Testament*. Critics have demonstrated that the early modern stage clown also had roots in the Vice of Medieval drama, and in the "Lord of Misrule" festival figure who presided over Christmas revelries; both traditions, again, substantially pre-date popular tragedy.[572] As professional drama began to emerge in England, clowns became, as Preiss argues, the "first celebrities of the early modern

[571] Sarah Dewar-Watson, *Shakespeare's Poetics: Aristotle and Anglo-Italian Renaissance Genres* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 1-8.
[572] Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, pp. 1-3, pp. 21-23; Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, pp. 66-67.

stage". Preiss points out that "[o]f the twelve sharers drafted into the Queen's Men in 1583" – players selected from other troupes for the entertainment of Elizabeth I – "six…were comedians".[573] Though the Queen's Men were particularly famous for clowning, with Richard Tarlton their star comic performer, all of the adult troupes of the 1580s and 1590s appear to have had resident clowns; the Admiral's Men had John Singer in the 1590s, for instance, while the famous Shakespearean clown Will Kemp belonged to both the Lord Strange's Men and the Lord Chamberlain's Men in that decade.[574] In some plays of the period, entrance directions call for multiple "*clowns*", with comic parts appearing in pairs or even small groups; clowning was not, inevitably, a solo turn in drama, though companies did tend to have one particular comic star.[575] Clowns were immensely popular with audiences, enjoying far more stage time than extant playtexts would suggest. Not only were clowns known for adlibbing, but they also performed their famous jigs at the ends of plays and, as Preiss demonstrates, probably appeared to entertain theatregoers before a play started as well.[576] Considered in this context, the involvement of a clown in sixteenth-century performances of *Tamburlaine* is essentially a given. As Kirk Melnikoff explains:

> Marlowe was a hired playwright, expected to construct plays that spoke to the established repertory and that employed the full acting resources of the company for which he worked. In the late 1580s and early 1590s this repertory and these resources included clowning and clowns. Beginning his playwriting career in relative professional obscurity and in a theatrical world that had yet to bury either Tarlton or the Queen's Men, Marlowe inevitably integrated the clown into his early plays.[577]

The organisation and operation of the sixteenth-century playing companies meant that, when tragedy debuted on the professional English stage, the presence of a clown at some point in

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[573] Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, p. 64.
[574] Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, pp. 34, p. 64.
[575] An entrance direction for all of the Mechanicals in the 1600 quarto of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*c.* 1595), for instance, reads "*Enter Clownes*", although a stage direction and speech prefixes later in the text also refer to Bottom, specifically, as the "*Clowne*". Bottom was played by the Chamberlain's Men's mid-1590s star comic, Will Kemp. William Shakespeare, *A Midsommer Nights Dreame* (London, 1600), sig. D1r, sig. F2v; David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, p. 75.
[576] Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, p. 61.
[577] Kirk Melnikoff, "Professional Drama in the Twilight of the Elizabethan Clown", PhD Thesis (Boston University, 2003), p. 86.

performance was inevitable – although, as I discuss in more detail below, clowns did not necessarily have to be integrated into the drama itself in order to perform. Richard Jones was by no means the only commentator of the period who considered tragic clowning an aesthetic travesty. Philip Sidney's denigration of "mongrell tragicomedy" undoubtedly constitutes the most famous early modern attack on the tragic clown. Sidney condemns the indecent "mingling" of clowns and kings in contemporary drama. His particular complaint, about the clown being "thrust in…by the head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters", may be an allusion to the "peeping-out routine", in which the clown would peer out from behind the hangings on the tiring-house wall before entering, transgressing the limits of the stage while at the same time, at least in tragedy, disturbing the boundaries of the genre.[578] When the black tragic curtains discussed in chapter three were present, the tonal contrast between the clown and the rest of the play must have been emphasised in these moments, as the clown's face appeared amid the funereal fabrics that had come to represent a particular kind of dramatic content.[579] Even earlier than Sidney, the author George Whetstone discussed the problem of incongruous clowning in the dedicatory epistle to his probably unperformed play *Promos and Cassandra* (1578). In this text, Whetstone complains that contemporary English playwrights "[m]anye tymes (to make mirthe)…make a Clowne companion with a Kinge".[580] Whetstone, we should note, included what Wiles has described as "perhaps the earliest role scripted for a 'clown'" in his own play *Promos and Cassandra* (1578).[581] Unlike Sidney, whose comments on "doltishnesse" and "scurrillitie" suggest a distaste for clowning in general, Whetstone's issue was evidently not with all clowns, but with the indecorous presence of clowns were they did not belong.[582] *Promos and Cassandra* was, interestingly, one of several plays that Richard Jones had printed prior to his

[578] Sidney, *Defence of Poesie*, sig. I1v.
[579] For a survey of early-modern accounts of the peeping-out routine, see Matthew Steggle, *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 67-72.
[580] George Whetstone, *The Right Excellent and Famous Historye of Promos and Cassandra* (London, 1578), sig. A2v.
[581] Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, p. 62.
[582] Sidney, *Defence of Poesie*, sig. I1v.

edition of both parts of *Tamburlaine*. It is possible, then, that Whetstone's epistle helped to inform the ideas about clowning that led to Jones's *Tamburlaine* edits.

Although the incongruous clown was causing consternation among some literary commentators as early as the 1570s, the debate surrounding clowns in dramatic tragedy acquired new intensity and specificity in the wake of *Tamburlaine* and plays like it. As the fashion for bombastic plays full of violence and conquest took hold, many writers concurred with Jones that the clown had no place in this kind of drama. A children's company take on tragedy in the style of *Tamburlaine*, the Children of the Chapel Royal's play *The Wars of Cyrus* (1588) opens with a prologue that banishes the clown. Audiences to this play need not worry about being "trouble[d]…with toies| Or needlesse antickes imitations", the prologue reassures them, because "[w]e have exilde them from our Tragicke stage".[583] In fact, *The Wars of Cyrus*'s "exil[ing]" of clowns or "antickes" from the stage is rather less radical than the prologue makes it sound. Children's companies like the Children of the Chapel Royal did not have resident clowns, and so their plays would not have been expected to include parts for them.[584] Instead of announcing a bold *coup de théâtre*, *The Wars of Cyrus*'s prologue was tapping into a contemporary theatrical debate with its promise of a clown-free tragedy. The issue of tragic clowning was clearly prominent in the cultural consciousness of the time.

Neither was the conversation limited to London's theatrical sphere. The clown's presence on the tragic stage is exuberantly lampooned in the satirical poem *Virgidemiarum* (1597),

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583 Anon., *The Warres of Cyrus* (London, 1594), sig. C3r.

584 David Wiles suggests that "[i]n the Elizabethan theatre, 'the clown' was a skilled professional actor", and that "[w]e find no trace of any 'clown', therefore, in the stage directions of plays written for boys or students" (*Shakespeare's Clown*, 63). In fact, one of the most substantial clown roles of the period features in a play which was otherwise dominated by child actors. The adult clown actor playing Will Summers in Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* is thought to have performed in a cast made up predominantly of children. This play was privately staged, however, and it is certainly the case that the clown was not a regular feature of children's theatre in the period; as Richard Preiss comments of the prologue to *The Wars of Cyrus*, "with no clowns in the company…this 'exile' is hardly a choice" . Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, p. 63; Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, p. 6. On the cast of *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, see also Martin Wiggins, "*Summer's Last Will and Testament* (941)", in *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue, Vol. 3, 1590-1597*, ed. Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson (Oxford: OUP, 2012; Oxford Scholarly Editions Online, 2020), 10.1093/actrade/9780199265718.book.1

which was written by Joseph Hall during his residency in Cambridge. With gleeful derision, Hall describes the clown's entrance onto the stage in the middle of a play like "*Tamberlaine*":

> Now, least such frightfull shows of Fortunes fall,
> And bloudy Tyrants rage, should chance appall
> The dead stroke audience, midst the silent rout,
> Comes leaping in a selfe-misformed lout,
> And laughes, and grins, and frames his Mimik face,
> And justles straight into the princes place.
> Then doth the *Theatre Eccho* all aloud,
> With gladsome noyse of that applauding croud.
> A goodly *hoch-poch*; when vile *Russettings*,
> Are match with monarchs, and with mightie kings.
> A goodly grace to sober *Tragick Muse*,
> When each base clowne, his clumbsie fist doth bruise
> And show his teeth in double rotten-row
> For laughter at his selfe-resembled show.[585]

A series of juxtapositions – stillness and movement, silence and noise, rage and laughter, "*Russettings*" and "mightie kings" – emphasise the bizarre and bathetic contrast between the "selfe-misformed lout" and the imposing tragic drama he has just interrupted. Bounding onto the stage, the clown produces a jarring tonal clash, instantly deflating the overblown tragedy that had held the audience captive only moments before. *Virgidemiarum* is a lengthy series of satires across six books, and there are very few topics which evade Halls' scorn; but it is nonetheless telling that his primary attack on the theatres concerns the presence of clowns in plays like *Tamburlaine*. The clown's bounding entrance onto the tragic stage was vividly familiar, eminently mockable, widely derided.

Curiously, the prologue to the *First Part of Tamburlaine* itself appears to dismiss the stage clown. In what Lukas Erne describes as "perhaps the most famous passage" of the play, it declares:[586]

> From jygging vaines of riming mother wits,
> And such conceits as clownage keepes in pay,
> Weele lead you to the stately tent of War
> Where you shall heare the Scythian *Tamburlaine*:
> Threatning the world with high astounding terms

[585] Joseph Hall, *Virgidemiarum* (London, 1597), sig. B4v-5v.
[586] Lukas Erne, "Biography, Mythography, and Criticism: The Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe", *Modern Philology,* vol. 103, no. 1 (August 2005), pp. 28-50, p. 38.

> And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword
> View but his picture in this tragicke glasse,
> And then applaud his fortunes as you please.[587]

This prologue has traditionally been read as the exhilarating announcement of a new, impressive style of martial drama, free from the base comedy and clunky fourteener verse which had (according to this narrative) dominated the English theatres prior to Marlowe's arrival.[588] Such a reading is difficult to reconcile with Jones's prefatory claim; if *Tamburlaine* – or, at least, *The First Part of Tamburlaine* – never contained "clownage", what are the "frivolous Jestures" which Jones claims to have cut? While critics have offered various explanations of this seeming paradox, proposing that the "omitted" clowning was the work of a collaborator, or else that the prologue was penned specifically for print, both Lukas Erne and Richard Preiss have suggested readings of the prologue which seek to modify our retrospective sense of it as the announcement of a radical theatrical overhaul. Instead of proclaiming "Marlowe's break with theatrical fashion", Erne argues that the prologue is – as prologues from the period often do – describing the content of the ensuing play. In his reading, the "riming mother wits" and "conceits that clownage keepes in pay" are being introduced as features of *The First Part of Tamburlaine* along with the protagonist's "high astounding tearms"; the foolish emperor Mycetes, Erne suggests, is "the play's rhyming mother wit", while the "conceits" of "clownage" are precisely those "frivolous Jestures" which have been omitted from Jones's edition.[589]

For Preiss, meanwhile, the prologue's opening "[f]rom" is signalling a transition between different forms of entertainment showcased on the same day in the playhouse; it constitutes a "segue", Preiss argues, between a performance of clowning that took place on stage before the start of *Tamburlaine*, and the beginning of the play.[590] A central premise of Preiss's monograph on

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[587] Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, sig. A3r.
[588] In their edition of the play, for instance, David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen suggest that Marlowe is contrasting his own "high seriousness…with the doggerel style and 'clownage' of much popular theatre of the day". Erne surveys similar readings of *Tamburlaine*'s prologue in his article on the "Biography" and "Mythography" of Marlowe. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, ed., *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays* (Oxford: OUP, 1995), p. 403; Erne, "Biography, Mythography, and Criticism", pp. 38-39.
[589] Erne, "Biography, Mythography, and Criticism", pp. 38-40.
[590] Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, pp. 83-84.

early modern clowning is that a day's theatrical offering comprised far more than is preserved in extant playtexts. According to Preiss, the play was just one event in a medley of entertainments, many of which were dominated by the clown. He describes "face-pulling preludes, slapstick interludes, jig postludes [and] rhyming contests with the crowd", suggesting that "[f]or many playgoers…the play was what interrupted *them*" – that is, the clown's entertainments – and not the other way around. In Preiss's conception, the play itself was a patch, one piece of a larger theatrical whole; his account of the clown's various performance interventions "does not leave much room", as he puts it, "for the play as a coherent aesthetic experience". Preiss's contention that the play was, to some extent, "an afterthought" is difficult to sustain.[591] The constant commissioning of new dramatic material, along with the purchases of expensive, play-specific costumes and props all evidenced in *Henslowe's Diary* would make little sense if playgoers were only paying to see the clown anyway. Preiss's reading of the *First Part of Tamburlaine*'s prologue is compelling, however. It accounts, in ways Erne's interpretation cannot, for the palpable disdain expressed for "clownage" in the prologue's opening lines, its sneering conviction that base buffoonery can have no place near the "stately tent of War". For Preiss, the prologue to *Tamburlaine* is literally sweeping the "riming mother wits" – the preliminary entertainment – from the stage to inaugurate the martial play. This was, perhaps, the beginning of a kind of tug-of-war between scenes of conquest and "frivolous Jestures", as clown and play vied for control of the playhouse.

Opposition to tragic stage clowning in the late sixteenth century was widespread and well-documented. That dramatic prologues were themselves engaging, however playfully, with the issue of the clown's incongruous presence in tragic drama demonstrates that playwrights and playing companies were well aware of the contemporary discourse condemning the generic and tonal clash that resulted when clowns appeared in the middle of tragedies. Yet Preiss's account

[591] Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, p. 9, p. 93.

of early modern stage clowning indicates that clowns did not necessarily need to be given parts in plays in order to perform. The company clown, Preiss demonstrates, still had plenty to do before and after a play, whether or not he appeared as a character within the drama itself. This may help to explain the apparent absence of company clowns from a number of plays of the late sixteenth century. Although it makes sense that troupes would have wanted to make use of all of their regular players in performance, there are a number of plays which survive from the period with neither scripted clown parts nor printers' prefaces claiming to have omitted them. Shakespeare's *Richard II* (1595), for instance, contains no part for the Chamberlain's Men's company clown Will Kemp, which Wiles suggests is "because Shakespeare and his actors saw no way in which a bridge could be made between the delicate political concerns of the play and the sexual concerns of the jig".[592] *The Battle of Alcazar* also lacks a part for a clown, although the Admiral's Men are known to have included parts for clowns elsewhere; even in *Alcazar*'s 1602 backstage plot, which contains some casting information about the production in question, there is nothing to indicate a specified comic role.[593]

It is possible, of course, that clowns did feature in these plays, and that their parts have either been excised from the printed playtexts or were never formally scripted. But it is also possible, as Preiss's study indicates, that when these plays were performed, the clown's role remained entirely extradramatic: that he appeared purely for the "face-pulling preludes" and improvised "rhyming contests", the "themes" and "merriments" that fell outside the remit of the play.[594] This is significant because it indicates that the clown did not always need to be part of the drama itself. Where a play survives with a scripted part for a clown still intact, that scripted part is the product of choice as well as of necessity. Playing companies needed to showcase their clowns, but as Preiss demonstrates, this did not have to mean including clowns in the *dramatis*

[592] Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown,* p. 57.
[593] The plot is reproduced in W. W. Greg, *Dramatic Documents From the Elizabethan Playhouses: Stage Plots: Actors' Parts: Prompt Books*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), II.
[594] Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, p. 9.

personae. Yet in all three of the plays which form the main case studies of this chapter, the clown has a role in the tragedy, interacting in at least partly scripted ways with other characters from the world of the drama. *The Wounds of Civil War*, *Selimus* and *Locrine*, then, all represent deliberate decisions about how clowning should work on the tragic stage. In the next section, I compare the clown parts in *The Wounds of Civil War* and *Selimus* as contrasting examples of how clowns could be incorporated into the tragic stories told by dramatic sources; I attribute their differences partly to variations in company style. I then move on, in the following section, to examine the clown in *Locrine*, arguing that this play's extensive clown part can be read as a metatheatrical exploration of the perils of tragic clowning.

Versions of the Clown: *The Wounds of Civil War* and *Selimus*

To some extent, of course, the question of how clowning should work in any given play is redundant. For commentators from Sidney to Hall, the fundamental issue with tragic clowning is the clown's generic intransigence. As Preiss remarks, "it did not especially matter what genre of play clowns were in": the clown was a stock figure of the early modern theatres whose persona and behaviours were unerringly consistent.[595] Clowns are, almost invariably, country bumpkins, servants, or tradesmen of some variety; they eat and drink and live for the pleasures of the body; they are, at once, foolish and witty; they speak in prose, recite doggerel, sing and dance; they trip, fall, and fight, mostly without hurting themselves.[596] Clowning, indeed, comprises a range of theatergrams – the clown sitting down to eat; the clown being beaten by his wife; the clown in baffling conversation with a noble – put together in different combinations. As the ensuing analysis of clown parts will demonstrate, these theatergrams traverse company boundaries; although styles of clowning do, to some extent, appear to have been company-specific, certain behaviours and set-pieces are common to plays performed by different troupes. The clown

[595] Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, p. 3.
[596] Preiss, *Clowning and Authorship*, p. 2.

always exists, moreover, at some remove from the remainder of the play. This is true irrespective of a play's kind; the clown is distinctively a play-patch in comic plays as well as in tragic ones. A clown might feature in one or two self-contained set-pieces in the drama, as in the Lord Strange's Men's morality *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1592), where the "applauded Merriments" of Will Kemp and the "men of Goteham" advertised on the 1594 title page actually comprise a single clowning interlude, albeit one much longer than the surviving text would suggest.[597] David Wiles likens this isolated clowning scene to the brief appearances made by the clown in act four of Peele and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*; this he describes as an "obvious parallel instance of a short clown episode's being inserted into a play of a very different texture", proposing that the similarity may stem from the fact that both interludes were written for the same clown actor, Will Kemp.[598]

Other clowns, like Mouse in *Mucedorus* (*c.* 1590), have much more extensive and integrated dramatic roles. Mouse (denoted as "*Clo*" in most speech-prefixes) features regularly from the beginning to the end of the play and is involved in various ways with its main narrative.[599] It is undoubtedly more common for clowns to perform sustained characters in this way in plays that tend towards the comic; compare, for instance, Feste, Touchstone and Bottom with the gravediggers in *Hamlet* (*c.* 1601) or the porter in *Macbeth* (1606) . But this trend is by no means universal. Lear's Fool is an obvious exception, as a clown with a significant tragic part, and so is *Locrine*'s clown Strumbo, whom I discuss later on in the chapter. Even when a clown's scripted part is substantial, however, as Mouse's is in *Mucedorus*, the clown still occupies a different kind of dramatic space from the other characters on stage. Clowns were known for engaging with the audience – even in plays where no such interaction is recorded, it is likely to

[597] The clowning interlude reproduced in the text is fewer than 50 lines long; for it to warrant its own mention on the title page, we must assume that it was more impressive and memorable in performance. Anon., *A Most Pleasant and Merie New Comedie, Intituled, A Knacke to Knowe a Knave* (London, 1594), t.p., sig. E4v-F1v.
[598] Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown,* p. 34; William Shakespeare, *The Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus* (London,1594), sig. H1v-H3r.
[599] He is present, for instance, when Mucedorus kills Segasto, and when he confesses to the murder. Anon., *A Most Pleasant Comedie of Mucedorus* (London, 1598), sig. B4v, sig. C2v.

have been improvised in performance – and thus the clown exists at the edge of the fiction. Yet unlike other similarly liminal figures – for instance, prologues and choruses – the clown can typically move between the two worlds, or maintain a foot in each, interacting with the audience and also with at least some of the other characters onstage. Even in Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, in which the clown actor playing Henry VIII's famous fool Will Summers actually takes on the role of chorus, this choric clown is still able to converse with some characters in the play – for instance, Harvest and Bacchus, who also speak in prose and possess some clownish qualities.[600] More than any other figure in the early modern playhouse, the clown blurs Weimann's famous distinction between the "*locus*" and the "*platea*" – that is, between the "symbolic location" represented on stage, and the "nonillusionistic", "undifferentiated" space of performance.[601] Shifting with idiosyncratic ease between the two, addressing playgoers in London and characters in the play-world within a few lines, the clown collapses one kind of dramatic space into the other.

The examples I have briefly surveyed here indicate that the clown's status as play-patch is not genre specific. The clown is always recognisably distinct, and although his role can vary considerably from play to play, the extent of his involvement in the narrative does not appear to be determined by dramatic kind. The surviving clown roles in the plays I discuss in this chapter vary in length and in degree of integration. *Locrine*, which has by far the most extensive clown part, I explore in the following section, as an example of a late-sixteenth-century play offering its own intervention into a contemporary literary-critical debate about tragic clowning. First, I will examine the much shorter clown parts preserved in the texts of *The Wounds of Civil War* and *Selimus*. Written within a few years of each other and of *Tamburlaine*, *The Wounds of Civil War* and *Selimus* represent two markedly different approaches to tragic clowning. This may partly be attributed to differences in company style: *The Wounds of Civil War*, like *Tamburlaine*, is an

[600] Thomas Nashe, *Summers Last Will and Testament* (London, 1600), sig. E4r; sig. F2r-v.
[601] Robert Weimann, "Space (In)dividible: *Locus* and *Platea* Revisited", in *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre*, pp. 180-215.

Admiral's Men play, whereas *Selimus* is associated with the Queen's Men on its 1594 title page.[602] While the former seeks to integrate its clown, the latter's is exuberantly incongruous, laughing and leaping into the midst of one of the late sixteenth century's most shockingly violent plays; the Queen's Men remained a company famous for and dominated by comic actors, accounting, perhaps, for the vibrancy of *Selimus*'s clown.[603]

Thomas Lodge's *Wounds of Civil War* concerns the period of conflict in Roman history between Marius and Scilla. It is a military play performed by the same acting company as the *Tamburlaine* plays and, like *The Second Part of Tamburlaine*, it contains a scene in which the conquering Scilla enters in a chariot drawn by humans. The Admiral's Men were evidently keen to flaunt their expensive, show-stealing prop, incorporating it in dramaturgically similar ways into these contemporaneous plays, and it is possible that the clown was treated similarly.[604] The clown who performed in *The Wounds of Civil War* was presumably the same clown who performed in the *Tamburlaine* plays, at least originally. *The Wounds of Civil War* may therefore offer some insight into the nature of the clowning scenes "left out" by Jones, although, as we will see, the clown in Lodge's play contributes to the plot in such a way that he could not be entirely "omitted".[605]

The 1594 printed text of the play actually contains two short scenes which might be considered episodes of "clownage". In one, two ordinary citizens of Rome or "Burgers" called Poppey and Curtall approach Scilla with a complaint about the actions of one of his soldiers, who has raped Curtall's daughter Dorothy. Both speak in prose which occasionally slips into doggerel, though Poppey is the more clownish of the two; he speaks more rhyme, and he also

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602 Thomas Lodge, *The Wounds of Civill War* (London, 1594), sig. A1r; anon., *The Tragical Reign of Selimus, 1594*, ed. W. Bang, Malone Society Reprints (London, 1908), sig. A2r.
603 Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth Maclean observe that "[t]here is always room for clowning in the plays of the Queen's Men", and that in addition to Tarlton, "the most famous clown of his day", they also had "Adams, Wilson, Singer, Garland [and] Lanham", of whom Wilson, Singer and Lanham "survived into the nineties". McMillin and Maclean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays*, p. 85, pp. 128-29.
604 The chariot also turns up in George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588), another closely contemporary Admiral's Men play. Lodge, *The Wounds of Civill War*, sig. E1v; Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, sig. I7v; George Peele, *The Battell of Alcazar* (London, 1594), sig. B1r.
605 E. K. Chambers notes that John Singer became the company clown in 1594, but is less certain of company personnel before this date. E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), II, p. 149, pp. 135-38.

observes that it is "better [to] be a King than a clowne", with his "clowne", meaning "rustic", also potentially working as a metatheatrical self-reference to his dramatic role. The pair challenge Scilla for allowing his soldiers to pillage their lands and demand some form of recompense or retribution for the soldier's crime, which Poppey recounts in verse: "but marke my dolefull dittie, alas for woe and pittie, a souldier of yours upon a bed of flowers, gave her such a fall, as she lost maidenhead and all".[606] The flippant treatment of this sinister subject in rhyme epitomises the tonal oddity of Poppey and Curtall's appearance in the play. The pair technically represent the devastation wrought by civil war on the everyday lives of a country's inhabitants; but they appear curiously sanguine about their situation, trivialising their sufferings in verse for comic effect. Significantly, Scilla encounters Poppey and Curtall only after he has "resignd" the powers and titles he seized through his successful conquest of Rome; by the time we see him speaking to ordinary citizens in the play, he is trying to become an ordinary citizen himself. Poppey and Curtall thus symbolise both the "private life" Scilla idealises, and his alienation from the realities of that life; as Curtall observes, it is a "base minde, that being in the powles [Paul's?] steeple of honor, hast cast thy selfe into the sinke of simplicitie". The encounter has no impact on Scilla's decision, however. He dismisses Poppey and Curtall as "stales of desteny" sent "to try [his] constancie", and remains determined to "leave" his "courtly traine| To dwel content amidst my country cave" .[607] In terms of narrative progression, Poppey and Curtall could easily be omitted from *The Wounds of Civil War*.

There is another scene of clowning in the play, however, which is narratively integral. This occurs slightly earlier than Scilla's encounter with Poppey and Curtall, while the military conflict is still ongoing. Here, the "clowne" is labelled as such in the speech prefixes and stage directions, and remains otherwise nameless; though the identities of Poppey and Curtall in playing company terms are unspecified, we can be confident that this earlier "clowne" was a

[606] Lodge, *Wounds of Civill War*, sig. K1r
[607] Lodge, *Wounds of Civill War*, sig. K1r.

specialist comic performer for the company. This unnamed "clowne" is the senator Marcus Antonius's "peasant" or servant and he enters, as clowns often do, "*drunke with a pint of wine in his hand*". We might expect him to begin cracking jokes with the audience, to perform a song or jig in his amusingly inebriated state; and perhaps in performance he did. All that the playtext preserves, however, is an exchange between the clown and "*two or three souldiers*" who follow him onto the stage.[608] This exchange proves essential to the plot. Marcus Antonius is an enemy of Marius, and at the point at which this scene takes place he is in hiding. His drunken servant gives away his location to the soldiers, which results in his assassination.

In his role as accidental informant, the clown has a correlative in Lodge's source text. Lodge drew substantially on the version of the wars between Marius and Sylla (or Sulla) in Appian's *Roman History*, which was printed in an English translation in 1578 as *An Auncient Historie and Exquisite Chronicle of the Romanes Warres*. In Appian's text, Antonius is betrayed by a credulous servant and a duplicitous vintner:

> *Marcus Antonius* an orator fledde into a Ferme house, the keeper whereof receyved of him gentlye, and hydde hym, sendyng a Servaunte for Wyne to a Taverne oftner than hee was wonte, the Taverner asked him why hee boughte Wyne so ofte, he tolde him secretely in his eare, then the Vintner sente one straight to *Marius*, and opened the matter, whereof hee was so glad, as he mynded to have gone and killed hym hymselfe, but beeyng stayed of his friendes, a Captayne of a bande was appoynted to it.[609]

The Wounds of Civil War gives us a version of this betrayal. Antonius's servant has evidently been sent to fetch wine, but there is no mention of him revealing Antonius's whereabouts, presumably innocently, to a vintner he believed trustworthy. Instead, he gives away Antonius's location to the enemy soldiers because he is drunk. As one of the soldiers observes, "the weaknes of his braine hath made his tongue walke largely":

> *1 soul*: I pre thee leave these rymes, and tell us where thy master is.
>
> *Clown*: Faith where you shall not bee unles ye goe with mee. But shall I tell them so? O no sir, no, no, no, the man hath manie a foe, as farre as I doo know: you

[608] Lodge, *Wounds of Civill War*, sig. G3r.
[609] Appian, *An Auncient Historie and Exquisite Chronicle of the Romanes Warres, Both Civile and Foren*, trans. W[illiam] B[arker] (London, 1578), sig. G2v.

> doo not flout me I trow. See how this licor fumes, & how my force presumes. You would know where Lord Anthonie is? I perceive you. Shall I say he is in yond farme house? I deceive you. Shall I tell you this wine is for him? The gods forfend, and so I end. Go fellow fighters, theres a bob for ye.
>
> *2 soul*: My maisters, let us follow this clowne, for questionlesse this grave orator is in yonder farme house.[610]

Lodge thus adapts his source to give the clown an important narrative function. Not only does the clown give away his master's location, but the circumstances of the betrayal are re-imagined such that it is a stereotypically clownish behaviour that causes Antonius's discovery and death. Clowns like to drink, and this clown's drunkenness leads to his master's murder. Far from being a "frivolous Jesture", this clown's characteristic nature is instrumental to a tragic action.

By contrast, there is no trace of *Selimus*'s clown in the play's main source, *A Short Treatise Upon the Turk's Chronicles* (1546), written by Paolo Giovo and translated by Peter Ashton.[611] Bullithrumble the shepherd is an unashamedly rustic and English insertion in a play otherwise dominated by the ruthless ambition of a Turkish emperor. *Selimus* – or, to give it its full 1594 printed title, *The First Part of the Tragicall Raigne of Selimus* – is clearly indebted to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. It contains references to Marlowe's protagonist, and it charts an aspiring emperor's bloodthirsty campaign for power. Characters are killed or punished onstage in gruesome ways; in one scene, which also invites comparisons with both *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear* (1606), a character's eyes are put out and his hands cut off within about twenty lines.[612] As in *The First Part of Tamburlaine*, the title character remains undefeated at the conclusion of the play. *Selimus* ends with the promise of a sequel: "If this first part Gentles, do like you well,| The second part, shall

[610] Lodge, *Wounds of Civill War*, sig. G3v.
[611] According to Daniel Vitkus, another important narrative source for the play was Thomas Newton's 1575 translation of Celio Augustino Curione's *A Notable Historie of the Saracens*; this chronicle discusses Selimus's rise to power far more briefly than Giovo's *Short Treatise upon the Turkes*, although it does offer more detail of Selimus's poisoning of his father. Unsurprisingly, Bullithrumble is absent from this text too. Paolo Giovo, *A Shorte Treatise upon the Turkes Chronicles*, trans. Peter Ashton (London, 1546), sig. G3v-I6r; Vitkus, ed., *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England,* p. 18; Celio Augustino Curione, *A Notable Historie of the Saracens*, trans. Thomas Newton (London, 1575), sig. 2Or-2O2v.
[612] On the parallels between this scene and the blinding of Gloucester in *King Lear*, see Clifford J. Ronan, "*Selimus* and the Blinding of Gloster", *NQ*, vol. 33, no. 3 (1986), pp. 360-62.

greater murthers tell".[613] However, whether or not a second part was ever penned, a copy of it does not exist today; Selimus's downfall, unlike Tamburlaine's, has not survived in drama.

The first entrance of *Selimus*'s clown Bullithrumble resembles with almost uncanny accuracy the absurd, "leaping" intrusion of the clown into overblown tragedy evoked in Hall's *Virgidemiarum*. In the moments prior to the clown's entrance, the stage is occupied by three characters: Bajazet, the Turkish emperor supplanted by his son Selimus; Aga, the loyal subject of Bajazet mutilated by Bajazet's son Acomat; and Abraham, a murderer sent by Selimus to poison the two men. Bajazet and Aga enter "*in mourning clokes*" and lament their dreadful misfortunes. Bajazet compares himself with his namesake, who suffered at the hands of Tamburlaine:

> *Baja*. Come *Aga* let us sit and mourne a while,
> For fortune never shew'd her selfe so crosse,
> To any Prince as to poore *Bajazet*.
> That wofull Emperour first of my name,
> Whom the Tartarians locked in cage,
> To be a spectacle to all the world,
> Was ten times happier then I am.
> For *Tamberlaine* the scourge of nations,
> Was he that puld him from his kingdome so.
> But mine owne sonnes expel me from the throne.[614]

Meanwhile, Aga tells of his "Tragedie": the "blazing Comet" that "Portend[ed] miserable chance" upon his birth; his ill-fated rise from "poore estate" to power at the hands of Bajazet; and the "barbarous tyrannie" to which he consequently fell victim, resulting in the loss of his eyes and his hands. As the two suffering men weep and curse, Abraham insinuates himself into their conversation, offering a drink to "calme [their] stormie passions". He drinks from the cup and offers it to the others before revealing that the drink was poisoned. All three characters die within thirty lines of each other, presumably on stage; each delivers a short final speech, which is followed by the stage direction "*He dies*".[615] It is at this intensely macabre moment in the script that the clown bursts in:

> *Aga*: […] *Aga* will follow noble *Bajazet*,

[613] Anon., *Selimus*, sig. K3r.
[614] Anon., *Selimus*, sig. G3v.
[615] Anon., *Selimus*, sig. G4v-H1r.

> And beg a boone of lovely *Proserpine*,
> That he and I may in the mournfull fields,
> Still weepe and waile our strange calamities.
>
> *He dies.*
>
> *Enter* Bullithrumble*, the shepherd running in hast, and laughing to himself.*
>
> *Bulli*: Ha, ha, ha, married quoth you?[616]

This is Bullithrumble's first scripted appearance in the printed playtext. He may have featured earlier in performance, whether as preliminary entertainment or in an unscripted interlude; but a previous appearance would hardly diminish the extreme tonal juxtaposition of this entrance. The audience has just witnessed two men in mourning cloaks – one blind and mutilated – bewail their "Tragedie[s]", before being poisoned on stage and dying along with the poisoner himself. Now, they are confronted with a "*running*", "*laughing*" clown.

It is tempting to imagine that Bullithrumble capers onto a stage littered with corpses and remains oblivious to their presence. Early modern clowns have a habit of tripping over bodies: Mouse literally stumbles over the corpse of the Wildman Bremo in *Mucedorus* as he "*searches*" for the body; the clown in *A Looking Glass for London and England* falls over a dead man killed in a drunken brawl.[617] These collisions function as appropriately clumsy physical metaphors for the clown's complete obliviousness to tragedy: clowns simply do not notice dead bodies, which become, as a result, unlikely comic opportunities. *Selimus*'s stage is probably free from corpses by the time Bullithrumble runs in, however. Although there is no reference to the bodies' removal in the text, a stage direction in a later scene calls for the "courses of *Mustaffa* and *Aga*" to be carried onto the stage; "*Mustaffa*" is presumably the result of an eye-skip, and is meant to read "Bajazet", as the living "*Mustaffa*" also enters, according to the same stage direction, along with the corpses.[618] None of the characters who joins Bullithrumble notices any bodies either, and we must therefore assume that the bodies are no longer on stage; potentially, the three characters died in the discovery space, and could therefore be covered with a curtain, or perhaps they were

616 Anon., *Selimus*, sig. H1r.
617 Greene and Lodge, *A Looking Glasse*, sig. D2r; anon., *Mucedorus*, sig. F1v.
618 Anon., *Selimus*, sig. H3r.

carried out. Bullithrumble does not quite burst directly into the scene of a double murder and suicide; but the playtext nevertheless seeks to amplify his tonal incongruity with the preceding action, signalling his laughter both in a stage direction ("*laughing to himselfe*") and in the scripted exclamation, "Ha, ha, ha". There is no attempt here to insinuate the clown into the world or the narrative: Bullithrumble is a play-patch of an emphatically different texture.

Bullithrumble cracks some jokes with the audience about his wife, sings a song about her "shrew[ish]" nature, then settles down to eat some food: this is all standard clown behaviour. "*While he is eating*", the stage directions tell us, Corcut and his page enter, "*disguised like mourners*"; Corcut is the oldest living son of Bajazet in the play, and the most peaceful. As Bullithrumble enjoys his meal, oblivious, Corcut condemns "damned ambition" which "feedest on the soule of noble men".[619] The juxtaposition of literal and figurative "feeding" emphasises Bullithrumble's separation from the other characters in the play; where eating is a metaphor for corruption in Corcut's dialogue, for Bullithrumble it is a bodily necessity and a source of enjoyment. Corcut describes his daring escape from an assassination attempt and his present hunger, having sheltered in a cave for two days without food. Then, he spots Bullithrumble. Though Bullithrumble is initially wary, he is quickly persuaded to share his food with Corcut and the page, and to take them on as shepherds[620] In *Selimus*'s source, by contrast, we learn only that Corcut (or Corcuthus as he is called in the *Turk's Chronicles*), "beyng sore afrayd at this sodayne change, and commotion of the people, fled awaye privilye with his gallayes in to his province"; when we hear of him again, he has been strangled by his brother.[621] Corcut's role is thus adapted and expanded in *Selimus* to accommodate Bullithrumble's clowning.

The next time Corcut appears, he has been betrayed by his page to Selimus's soldiers: as Bullithrumble and Corcut enter, the page reveals, "[t]hat same is he, that in disguised robes,| Accompanies yon shepheard to the fields". Corcut has apparently adopted some form of

[619] Anon., *Selimus*, sig. H1r-H1v.
[620] Anon., *Selimus*, sig. H2r-H2v.
[621] Giovo, sig. H3v-H4r, sig. I5v.

shepherd's garb, and he has clearly been enjoying his new role, hailing the "sweet content that country life affoords". He is Selimus's brother, however, and he cannot "maske unseen" in "these disguised weeds" indefinitely.[622] The soldiers capture him and lead him to his death. As Corcut's companion, the soldiers attempt to arrest Bullithrumble too:

> *Cali*: Come, you must go with us.
>
> *Bulli*: Who I? Alasse sir, I have a wife and seventeene cradles rocking, two ploughs going, two barnes filling, and a great heard of beasts feeding, and you should utterly undo me to take me to such great a charge.
>
> *Cali*: Well there is no remedie.
>
> *Exeunt all, but* Bullithrumble *stealing from them closely away.*
>
> *Bulli*: The mores the pitie. Go with you quoth he, marrie that had bene the way to preferment, downe *Holburne* up *Tiburne*: well ile keepe my best joint from the strappado as well as I can hereafter, Ile have no more servants.
>
> *Exit running away.*[623]

Bullithrumble alone is exempt from the tyranny of Selimus. There is, apparently, "no remedie", no hope of avoiding death; yet Bullithrumble is simply able to run the other way. His final lines remind us that he occupies a more fluid theatrical space than the rest of the play's characters: "downe *Holburne*, up *Tiburne*" refers to the route through London which prisoners took on their way to the Tyburn gallows. Bullithrumble has briefly coexisted with the political plot unfolding in the Ottoman world of the play, but as soon as his own life is endangered by the tragedy, he slips back into his native London and away from the arresting soldiers.

Clowns, crucially, are not always this invincible. Indeed, the hanging which Bullithrumble escapes is a fairly common outcome for clowns outside of comedy. Hanging was the commoners' death penalty in the period – the axe was reserved for the upper classes – and clowns in *Titus Andronicus*, *A Looking Glass for London and England* and, possibly, Shakespeare's

[622] Anon., *Selimus*, sig. H3v.
[623] Anon., *Selimus*, sig. H4r.

King Lear (1606) all meet this fate.[624] There is no hard and fast rule, then, that protects clowns from all harm. In *Titus*, the play which most closely rivals *Selimus* in terms of graphic stage violence, the clown is susceptible to the brutality of the dramatic world. Unlike Bullithrumble, he cannot simply "*steal…away*". Neither is the clown's vulnerability company specific. *A Looking Glass* has been associated with the Queen's Men, the same troupe that performed *Selimus*, and yet only the latter play's clown is able to evade the hangman's noose. Bullithrumble is, in other words, unusually, exuberantly impervious to tragedy. *Selimus* is a play of aesthetic extremes: its violence is viscerally shocking, and so is the raucous laughter of its clown. Its approach to tragic clowning, in contrast that of *The Wounds of Civil War*, is to revel in the juxtaposition. *Locrine*, which I discuss in the following section, is also typically associated with the Queen's Men, and it contains a similarly exuberant clown. The tonal contrast between clown and play is no more extreme in *Locrine* than in *Selimus* – it is difficult, indeed, to imagine how it could be – but whereas Bullithrumble remains largely detached from the main action of the play, *Locrine* pushes the clown's tragic involvement to its limit. In doing so, it explores those same issues of incongruity complained about by the likes of Hall and Sidney, playfully showcasing the clown as a major threat to tragedy itself.

***Locrine*: The Perils of Clowning**

The anonymous *Locrine* concerns the military contest between the Britons – the descendants of the Trojan Brutus – and the invading Scythians for dominion over the land of Britain. It focuses, in particular, on the narratives of Brutus's sons Locrine and Albanact. Though the Britons defeat

[624] Saturninus orders that the messenger clown in *Titus* be "hang[ed] presently!" (IV.iv.44). The clown in *A Looking Glass* is sentenced to hanging for breaking his fast. When he makes his final entrance of the play with the dead Cordelia in his arms, Lear declares that his "poor fool is hanged" (V.iii.300); though this line is often interpreted as an affectionate reference to the hanged Cordelia, it can also be taken to mean that Lear's actual Fool has been hanged, as well as Cordelia. Lodge and Greene, *A Looking Glasse*, sig. I3r-I3v; Tom Clayton, "'And my poor fool is hanged' (*King Lear* 5.3.311)", *Ben Jonson Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2012, pp. 142-145. All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from *The New Oxford Shakespeare* modern critical editions, and given as act, scene, and line numbers in the text, unless otherwise indicated. See *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, ed. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2475/view/10.1093/actrade/9780199591152.book.1/actrade-9780199591152-book-1.

the Scythians, both Albanact and Locrine die during the play: Albanact commits suicide following an unsuccessful battle, and Locrine also takes his own life after being vanquished by an army commanded by his wife, who has discovered his infidelity. Similarities in construction and language have led critics to theorise that *Locrine* was authored by the same playwright or playwrights responsible for *Selimus*, and that it may also have been performed by the Queen's Men.[625] Its violence pales in comparison to that of *Selimus*, but the play is insistent on its status as tragedy; its chorus Ate repeatedly entreats the audience to prepare themselves for "tragick chances" and "Tragedie", as I mentioned in the previous chapter, and Locrine's illegitimate daughter Sabren also refers to the staged sufferings of her family as a "Tragedie" at the point of her suicide.[626] There are similarities, in terms of both behaviour and prominence in the playscript, between *Selimus*'s and *Locrine*'s clowns. Bullithrumble, as we saw, makes multiple, exuberant appearances in *Selimus* and interacts with significant characters in the narrative; but of all the self-announcing "tragedies" written in the wake of *Tamburlaine*, *Locrine* has by far the most extensive clown part. *Locrine*'s clown Strumbo features regularly from act one to act four of the play, sharing the stage on several occasions with both Albanact and Humber, the leaders of the Briton and Scythian armies respectively. As Strumbo is progressively incorporated into the play's "tragicke" action, moreover, the absurdity of his presence is emphasised. Like Bullithrumble, Strumbo is exempt from the dangers of military tragedy to which the play's other characters are subject, but here the disjunction is even more pronounced. It is not simply that Strumbo is governed by different generic rules but that, in evading the dangers of military tragedy, he poses a metadramatic danger of his own.

Following the first chorus and dumb show, *Locrine* opens with the drawn-out death of Brutus, surrounded by his family and close advisers. This scene culminates in a funeral march, as the adviser Corineus commands:

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[625] Murphy, "*Locrine, Selimus*, Robert Greene, and Thomas Lodge", pp. 559-563; Wiggins, "*Locrine* (885)", in *British Drama: A Catalogue, Vol. 3*.
[626] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. K2v.

> Take up the coarse, and princes hold him dead,
> Who while he liv'd, upheld the *Troyan* state.
> Sound drums and trumpets, march to *Troinovant*,
> There to provide our chieftaines funerall.

The drums and trumpets sound, the body of Brutus is carried out; and then Strumbo enters "*above in a gown, with inke and paper*".[627] This is a curious entrance direction for a clown, and not just because it associates the clown, unusually, with writing. Other metadramatic figures like choruses are sometimes situated in the upper stage space, but clowns do not typically enter "*above*". Although Strumbo's entrance direction renders him spatially distinct and thus visibly different from the characters who have just exited the main stage platform, it also separates him from the audience: the clown "*above*" is at a remove from the playgoers, physically contained and less able to engage in his characteristic repartee. Strumbo does address the audience upon entering, but his spatial separation from them reflects the extent of his integration into the fictional playworld. His first scripted appearance functions as a kind of light-hearted parallel to the play's opening. Whereas the opening scene of the play is dominated by the genuine grief surrounding the great Brutus's death, this one concerns the comical sorrow of Strumbo, who is unlucky in love. Just as Locrine rails against the "damd and accursed stars", blaming them for his father's death, so Strumbo looks to the heavens to discover the cause of his misery:

> Either the foure elements, the seven planets and all the particular stares of the pole Antastick, are adverse against me, or else I was begotten and borne in the wane of the Moone, when everie thing as saith *Lactantius* in his fourth booke of Constultations dooth say, goes asward.[628]

Strumbo's pompous posturing as an unlikely scholar was clearly expected to raise a laugh from the audience: "I maisters I, you may laugh", he declares to the crowd, "but I must weepe…sheading salt teares from the watrie fountaines of my most daintie faire eies". The scene continues in this melodramatic vein. Strumbo declaims at length about the agony of love ("I burne, I burne, I burne…Nay *Strumbo* kill thy selfe, drowne thy selfe, hang thy selfe, sterve thy

[627] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. B4r.
[628] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. B3r, sig. B4r.

selfe") and pens a love-letter complete with *double entendre*; his love has grown to such a "great flame," he writes, that it "will ere it be long consume my poore heart, except you with the pleasant water of your secret fountaine, quench the furious heate". Having finished his letter, he oscillates between exaggerated misery and dismissive matter-of-factness in the lines "Oh wit, Oh pate, O memorie, O hand, O incke, O paper. Well now I will send it away".[629] The bathetic shift in register is funny, but it also draws attention to onstage suffering as an act: to the line, so often straddled by the clown, between fictional character and company performer responsible for speaking the words.

Strumbo's first appearance in the play concludes with his successful wooing of Dorothie, the woman to whom he has written the love-letter. The scene is self-contained, and although Strumbo's expressive, exaggerative sorrow parodies the grief evident in the opening scene, the action is otherwise entirely unrelated to the central, political plot. Yet as we briefly return to Locrine before the second act's chorus, it appears that the clown's own luck in love has proven infectious. Locrine announces his intention to "solemnize [his] roiall marriage" to Guendoline, and promises festive entertainments in celebration of the nuptials:

> Then frolick lordings to fair *Concords* wals,
> Where we will passe the day in knightly sports,
> The night in dauncing and in figured maskes,
> And offer to God *Risus* all our sports.[630]

Risus is the Roman god of laughter. It is as though Locrine has overheard the audience's reaction to Strumbo from the tiring house and wants the merriment to continue. Clowning is not permitted to dominate the play, however; instead, conflict comes for Strumbo. Ate's second act chorus announces the approach of "*Humber* and his *Scithians*", and the next time we see Strumbo, cheerfully "*cobling shooes and singing*" with his new wife Dorothie and his servant Trompart, a captain arrives to interrupt the domestic harmony and impress Strumbo and Trompart for the

[629] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. B4r-C1v.
[630] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. C2r.

war. Strumbo protests at being thrust in by the head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters: "King Nactabell", he cries, "what have we to do with him, or he with us?".[631]

There is no avoiding the war, however. When Strumbo and Trompart enter again, it is into the middle of a conversation between King Albanact and his lords which combines military strategy – they are discussing the location of the Scythian camp – and classical allusion – Thrasimachus compares Humber and Hubba to "*Hector* and *Troialus*, *Priamus* lovely sonnes". Strumbo and Trompart erupt into the middle of this display of erudition, "*crying often:* Wilde fire and pitch, wilde fire and pitch, &c". This is the moment at which the clown's world and the world of the rest of the play fully collide, and the effect is explosive. Strumbo and Trompart drown out the serious military talk with their shouting and laughter, and Strumbo shares devastating news in tripping doggerel: "And that which grieves me most", he declares, "my loving wife, O cruell strife, the wicked flames did roast".[632] The similarities between this encounter and the conversation between Poppey, Curtall and Scilla in *The Wounds of Civil War* are evident; the clown's jarringly cheerful complaint to a king or lord constitutes a clowning theatergram. The conversation between Albanact and his lords never resumes in *Locrine*: Strumbo's "clamors" and "outcries" have drowned it out. Though Albanact determinedly attempts to lend the clowns' appearance a retrospective solemnity – "It greeves me lordings that my subjects goods| Should thus be spoiled by the Scithians" – his words ring somewhat hollow following Strumbo's cheerful request that his new house be built "Neare the Taverne".[633] Albanact may be "greeve[d]" by the Scythians' pillaging, but Strumbo has already rebounded.

Strumbo is, after all, invincible. He fights the Scythians as part of Albanact's army, humorously deflating Albanact's menacing threats with rather less intimidating warnings of his own; when Albanact declares that he will "separate thy bodie from thy head", for instance, Strumbo adds, "Nay with this staffe great *Strumbos* instrument,|Ile crack they cockscome paltry

631 Anon., *Locrine*, sig. C2v, sig. C4v-D2r.
632 Anon., *Locrine*, sig. D2v-D3r.
633 Anon., *Locrine*, sig. D3r.

Scithian".[634] The staging of a battle like the siege of Harfleur in *Henry V* (1599) provides an illuminating point of comparison. In this later play, the comic characters appear in a parallel battle scene. Following Henry's famous, rousing battle cry ("Once more unto the breach" (III.i.1)), Bardolph, Nym and Pistol stagger onto an empty stage, Bardolph bathetically imitating the King's rhetoric ("On, on, on, on, on, to the breach, to the breach!" (III.ii.1)). The integrity of King Henry's speech is retained: its tension, its momentum, are uninterrupted. In *Locrine*, by contrast, Strumbo and Trompart explicitly "*enter…with*" Albanact. In the thick of battle, the tragic protagonist shares his stage with the clowns, and this means that the serious action of the play – the war between the Britons and the Scythians – is in constant and immediate conflict with its comic impulse.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the moments of the Scythians' victory. A stage direction signalling the Britons' impending collapse reads, "*Sound alarme, then let them fight*, Humber *give back*, Hubba *enter at their backs, and kill* Debon, *let* Strumbo *fall downe*, Albanact *run in, and afterwards enter wounded*".[635] As it becomes clear that the Scythians are winning, Albanact, refusing to flee, falls on his own sword. Debon and Albanact, at least, lie "dead", and some additional actors' bodies may also be present on stage to represent the soldiers who "lie sleeping in the fields"; but Strumbo, who has also "*fall*[en] *downe*", is not dead. When Trompart enters calling for him, Strumbo replies, "Let me alone I tell thee, for I am dead".[636] The line functions as a metadramatic joke which strains the edges of the fiction. Because "*fall*[ing] *downe*" signals death in a battle scene, the audience members may have assumed that Strumbo was dead; as the fate of the clown in *Titus* makes clear, clowns were not universally immune to the ravages of tragedy. As well as potentially startling the playgoers, who have just witnessed a massacre, Strumbo's comic insistence upon his own death threatens the illusion of the scene. It draws attention to the fact that the other "dead" characters on stage are simply actors doing a better

[634] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. D4r.
[635] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. E1r.
[636] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. E1v-E2r.

job of being still and silent than Strumbo is. Indeed, much like Falstaff's revival after Hotspur's death in *Henry IV Part 1* (1597), Strumbo's reply to Trompart is, at once, an antidote to and subversion of the grim seriousness of Albanact's suicide in defeat. Of the Briton army, Strumbo alone survives on stage, and this – as the play makes increasingly clear – is because he is governed by a different set of rules from the other characters in *Locrine*.

Having fled the scene of battle, fearing the approach of "theeves" announced by Trompart, Strumbo re-enters a context more suited to a clown. When we next see him, he is being challenged by a father who demands that Strumbo marry his daughter having, as his son puts it, "tumble[d] her upon the haie". When Strumbo refuses, the son begins to fight with him, and the daughter, Margerie, soon enters to take over; this is the kind of slapstick fighting to which the clown is used. By the end of the scene, Strumbo is once again betrothed, though this time not so happily.[637] He is the victim not of an invading army, but of his own uncontrollable appetites. The clown is safely back in his rightful place, his losses, to some extent, restored; we might expect this to be his last appearance as the play accelerates towards its bloody conclusion.

Strumbo makes one final scripted entrance, however, in a scene which tests the limits of the clown's tragic participation. By *Locrine*'s penultimate act, Humber, the leader of the Scythian army, is weak and destitute. His army defeated, his wife taken prisoner, he enters "*alone, his haire hanging over his shoulders, his armes all bloodie, and a dart in one hand*". He is faint with hunger, and curses the "barreinnesse" of the land around him: "what fearefull Furie haunts these cursed groves", he asks, "Where not a roote is left for *Humbers* meate?". Humber speaks no fewer than 20 consecutive lines about his hunger, the last six of which obsessively repeat the word "meat":

> My bowels crie, *Humber* give us some meate,
> But wretched *Humber* can give you no meate,
> These foule accursed groves afford no meat.
> This fruitles soyle, this ground brings forth no meat.
> The gods, hard harted gods, yeeld me no meat.
> Then how can *Humber* give you any meat?

[637] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. F2v-F3r.

It is at this point that Strumbo appears again, rustically apparelled "*with a pitchforke, and a scotch-cap*", and cheerfully addresses the audience: "How do you maisters, how do you? How have you scaped hanging this long time?".[638] Significant time has passed, at least for Strumbo. He speaks of his baby and his newfound marital harmony, before sitting down to eat his breakfast. There are evident similarities between this scene and Bullithrumble's first scripted entrance in *Selimus*; the feasting clown is another common theatergram. Meanwhile, Humber continues to complain of his starvation, initially oblivious to Strumbo's presence:

> *Strumbo*: […] Well masters whats a clocke, it is now breakfast time, you shall see what meat I have here for my breakfast.
>
> *Let him sit downe and pull out his vittailes*.
>
> *Humber*: Was ever land so fruitlesse as this land?
> Was ever grove so graceless as this grove?
> Was ever soyle so barrein as this soyle?[639]

Strumbo and Humber share the same stage, but they exist on different planes, in different environments. It is not simply that Strumbo occupies the *platea*, and Humber the *locus*, though the distinction remains apposite. Strumbo's world – the clown's world – is fertile and fruitful; he enters not only with "meat", but also with news of a new-born child. Humber's world, by contrast, is a world harsh and hostile to the body: Humber is a defeated enemy captain, whose role is to suffer and perish in the land he failed to conquer.

The two collide, however. As he tucks into his breakfast, Strumbo overhears Humber praying to Jupiter for food, and Humber, noticing Strumbo, believes that his prayer has been answered: "O *Jupiter* hast thou sent *Mercury* | In clownish shape to minister some food?". When Strumbo explains that he is not Mercury, Humber threatens him with violence unless he hands over some food, and Strumbo is only too happy to oblige. He swears by "the faith of [his] bodie" that he would "rather give an whole oxen" than have Humber "dash out [his] braines";

[638] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. H1v.
[639] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. H2r.

the clown's concerns, pledges and priorities are, as always, grounded in the corporeal. The stage direction which follows is fascinating:

> *Let him* [Strumbo] *make as though hee would give him* [Humber] *some, and as he putteth out his hand, enter the ghoast of* Albanact, *and strike him on the hand*, *and so* Strumbo *runnes out,* Humber *following him.*[640]

Strumbo is prevented from handing over food, and thereby saving Humber's life, by a kind of sinister version of a *deus ex machina*. The clown's utter obliviousness to the play's political concerns, his uncomplicated survival instinct, threatens to derail the prescribed course of the drama, and it requires the intervention of Albanact's vengeful ghost to ensure that Humber perishes.

This is the last we see of Strumbo, at least as far as the text of the play indicates, and when Humber enters "*alone*" a scene later, it is as though he is replaying his previous appearance again, this time as it should be, without a clownish interruption and the fleeting promise of food (sig. H3v). He describes the extremity of his suffering once more, although this time he does not obsessively repeat the word "meat":

> Long have I lived in his desart cave,
> With eating hawes and miserable rootes,
> Devouring leaves and beastly excrements.
> Caves were my beds, and stones my pillowbeares,
> Feare was my sleep, and horror was my dream.

Instead of endlessly lamenting the misery of his situation, Humber resolves, in this speech, to change it: he begs Jupiter to "Cast down…lightning" and end his "deathlike life", and when the gods fail to respond, he determines to end it himself by "*Fling[ing] himself into the river*".[641] Humber is driven by suffering and starvation to take his own life: this, according to Albanact's ghost, is the end which Humber deserves. After frightening Strumbo away in the earlier scene, the ghost offers an ominous moral: "Loe here the harmes that wait upon all those| That do intrude

[640] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. H2v-H3r.
[641] Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson propose that "river" is a "rare fictional term…for the trapdoor in the main platform of the stage". Anon., *Locrine*, sig. H3v-H4r; Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 182.

themselves in others lands".[642] Following Humber's death, the ghost enters again, this time to rejoice at his enemy's fitting demise.

Humber's suicide is typical of defeated enemy captains in *Tamburlaine*-era plays; take, for instance, Bajazeth in *Tamburlaine, Part One*, who dashes out his own brains on the bars of his cage. In line with the Senecan revenge tradition from which the ghost of Albanact hails, meanwhile, Humber deserves to starve to death because the very land he wrongfully tried to seize refuses to sustain him.[643] The presence of Strumbo in *Locrine* almost prevents this outcome. In the context of a late-sixteenth-century theatrical scene that was experimenting with the potential role of the popular clown in a new and serious kind of drama, against a backdrop of contemporary complaints about tragic clowning, Strumbo is a clear example of Dewar-Watson's concept of "theatre as theory". In the introduction to her recent monograph, *Shakespeare's Poetics: Aristotle and Anglo-Italian Renaissance Genres* (2018), Dewar-Watson sets out her approach: "[w]e need to relinquish", she argues, "the idea that theory is something which we retrospectively apply to…plays and instead consider what kind of theoretical ideas they embody and express".[644] Dewar-Watson is interested, specifically, in the ways in which Shakespeare's plays late plays engage with Aristotle's *Poetics*, as mediated by sixteenth-century Italian authors; but the broader premise of her argument – that writing plays and writing about how plays should work were not entirely separate endeavours in the early modern period – is relevant to the interests of this chapter. Strumbo is, literally, the "embod[iment]" of the generic conflict between the clown and tragedy. He demonstrates, far more thoroughly than either Sidney or Hall, the problems that the clown's presence creates for the genre, the threat the clown poses to the successful execution of a tragic plot. His proximity to the world of the audience means that he is always, very obviously,

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[642] Anon., *Locrine*, sig. H3r.
[643] When the ghost of Albanact first appears to Humber, it cries "Revenge, revenge for blood" and then "*Vindicta, vindicta*". Albanact is a revenge tragedy ghost reminiscent, indeed, of the lost *Hamlet* play's ghost who, Lodge writes, "cried so misera[b?]ly at the Theator like an oisterwife, *Hamlet, revenge*", or else of the "whining ghost" mocked by Comedy in the induction to *A Warning for Fair Women* (1597), which "skream[s]…*Vindicta*, revenge, revenge". Anon., *Locrine*, sig. G1r-G1v; Thomas Lodge, *Wits Miserie, and the Worlds Madnesse* (London, 1596), sig. H4v; *A Warning for Fair Women* (London, 1599), sig. A2v.
[644] Dewar-Watson, *Shakespeare's Poetics,* p. 16.

performing sorrow, always evidently *playing* dead; his presence punctures the illusion, reminding the audience that none of the bodies on stage are really corpses. Strumbo exists, moreover, in a world of food and bodily pleasures, of song and honest labour. Even when he is "thrust" into the sphere of kings and combat, he cannot be killed, and while others starve and suffer in a barren landscape, he sits down cheerfully to eat his breakfast on the very same stage. This last appearance, in particular, makes evident the boundary between Strumbo and *Locrine*'s other characters. Strumbo and Humber share the stage, and are, within the play, geographically proximal, but they occupy different generic spaces. Food in hand, Strumbo attempts to reach across the divide, to give food to a hungry man, not a starving enemy captain; the metadramatic intervention of Albanact's ghost "*strik[ing] him on the hand*" reasserts the boundary, definitively clearing the clown from the "tragicke" stage.

Reflections: The Tragic Clown

Throughout this thesis, I have sought to foreground the early English playhouses as generative, imaginative spaces which engaged with and shaped ideas about the kinds of stories that could be told on stage, and how. With many competing models and influences, but no clear precedent for how commercial drama might work on such a scale, the output of the 1580s and 1590s playhouses was inherently experimental. Conceptions of the play were constantly developing – we see this in the fashion for two-part plays, and for multiple plays in one – and ideas about dramatic genre were correspondingly fluid. This is not a particularly new or radical position to take on the popular theatre of the late sixteenth century in general, but it represents a way of thinking that has rarely been applied to dramatic tragedy in these decades. In his article exploring how the "early period of London's new commercial playhouses lacked traditional generic models as scholars have come to understand them", for instance, Andy Kesson focuses primarily on comedy, noting also that his argument is "perhaps most obviously true with respect to the

history play".[645] This thesis has demonstrated that notions of tragedy, too, were in flux in these years: that the relationship of "tragedy" to "play" was uncertain, with popular non-dramatic forms of the genre influencing its theatrical realisation in various ways. Above all, it has shown that playhouse tragedy developed in patches: that entire, self-contained tragedies shifted from the page to the stage to form only parts of plays; that detachable paratexts were used to package plays as tragedies by situating them in a long dramatic tradition. In focusing on the clown, this final chapter has illuminated the play-patch as a locus for theatrical experiment, a vehicle for the development of drama and of genre in the period. The clown was, in many ways, the archetypal patch, separate and often self-contained in performance, omittable in print, and even designated as such in early modern parlance. Comparing different versions of this play-patch in tragedy highlights the variety, the playfulness, and the invention of the drama of the period. The clown was ostensibly a stock character, a pre-determined type; but the different ways in which plays bring this type into contact with their tragic source materials demonstrates a theatrical scene making creative use of the tools at its disposal to generate new and exciting dramatic experiences.

In my opening chapter, I explored how the prevailing form of tragedy in sixteenth-century England, the monologic *de casibus* poem made famous by *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), transitioned to the popular stage. With a focus on the *Contention* plays, or *Henry VI Parts 2* (1590) and *3* (1590), I demonstrated how set-piece death scenes bearing hallmarks of the *Mirror*'s tragic dramaturgy were showcased in series or as isolated episodes in the drama of the period. Numerous *Mirror* speakers feature in the plays of the *Contention*, and my chapter did not discuss them all. One who went largely without mention is the rebel leader Jack Cade. His rise and fall are staged across the fourth act of the *First Part of the Contention*: in fewer than ten short scenes, we see Cade rally his troops, outline his radical vision for the country, order the callous murders

[645] Andy Kesson, "Was Comedy a Genre in English Early Modern Drama?", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 54, no. 2 (April 2014), pp. 213-225, p. 216.

of lords and literate men, declare himself future king, march on London, lose the support of the fickle multitude, and perish ignominiously in a garden after five days on the run. A reference in the play to Cade "caper[ing] upright like a wild morisco" (III.i.365) or Morris dancer has led critics to speculate that the would-be usurper was originally played by Will Kemp, a clown actor renowned for his dances and jigs.[646] Certainly, Cade is characterised as an unrestrained Lord of Misrule, taking what is usually a symbolic inversion of the social hierarchy only to disturbingly violent extremes. He is a charismatic, disruptive force, his words and actions charged with a kind of vicious comedy; in a moment which jarringly combines the bloodlust of the murderous revolutionary with the ludic entertainment of the clown, Cade orders that the impaled, severed heads of two murdered lords be made to "kiss" (IV.vii.108). This disturbing detail is in fact supplied by two of the play's sources, Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and Yorke* (1548) and the *Mirror*, which cue the casting of a clown actor as Cade in various ways; Hall notes, for instance, his "base byrthe" and band of "rude and rusticall" followers, while in the 1559 edition of the *Mirror*, Cade is the only speaker without any kind of noble heritage.[647] Cade is a commoner in the chronicles, and this, combined with his almost gleeful nihilism, lends his performance by the company clown a twisted logic.

What this means, though, is that the clown in the *First Part of the Contention* becomes the star of his own *de casibus* tragedy; in playing Cade, the clown actor takes on the role of *Mirror* narrator. In this chapter, we have seen clowns perish and thrive in tragedy: we have seen them blithely and exuberantly disregard its rules to the point at which the play itself is threatened. Cade takes the generic paradox of tragic clowning a step further still. In the *First Part of the Contention*, the clown is not merely "companion" with kings and other tragic characters, but is himself a tragedian. In the various sources of the play, Cade's death occurs at the hands of Alexander Iden,

[646] Robert Hornback, *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), p. 135.
[647] [Edward Hall], *Union of the Two Noble and Illustrate Families of Lancaster and Yorke* (London: printed by Richard Grafton, 1548), sig. 2C6v.

a Kentish gentleman, and it is ultimately Iden who vanquishes Cade in the *Contention* as well. The play introduces a particular detail of Cade's demise, however, which does not feature in either the *Mirror*, Hall's *Union*, or Holinshed's *Chronicles*, which are the main sources of the play's narrative content. After being abandoned by his followers during his storming of London, Cade flees, and the next time he appears in the play, he announces that he has been hiding in a forest for five days. Alone on stage, he launches into what appears to be a moralising soliloquy – "Fie on ambition!", he declares – but then Cade changes tack. All he can think about is his hunger: "Fie on myself, that have a sword and yet am ready to famish!", his speech continues; "now am I so hungry that if I might have a lease of my life for a thousand years, I could stay no longer" (IV.x.1-5). Cade has forsaken the safety of his hiding place in desperate search of food; a stage direction in the quarto indicates that he actually "*lies downe*" and begins "*picking of hearbs and eating them*" in what is supposed to be Alexander Iden's garden.[648] When Cade is defeated by Iden in combat later in the scene, he proclaims that he has been "slain" not by his opponent, but by "[f]amine"(IV.x.53): "I…am vanquished by famine, not by valour" (IV.x.66), he reiterates immediately before his death. Cade cannot win fights on an empty stomach.

The parallels between this scene and the encounters between Bullithrumble and Corcut in *Selimus*, and Strumbo and Humber in *Locrine*, are evident. Cade's final appearance in the play is an inversion of the theatergram of the feasting clown. Clowns love to eat and cannot bear to go hungry. In *A Looking Glass for London and England*, the clown cheerfully opts to be hanged rather than to undertake a fast, and in *Locrine*, Strumbo miraculously appears on stage in possession of food despite the supposed barrenness of the surrounding landscape. For the clown who turns tragedian, the consequence is famine. In the *First Part of the Contention*, the clown becomes his opposite: the starving enemy captain. Cade's hunger is a dramatic invention. The historical narrative has been adapted and embellished to exploit a theatrical resource. If, as I argue in

[648] Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, and anon., *The First Part of the Contention Betwixt the Two Famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* (London, 1594), sig. G4r.

chapter one, the *Contention* plays represent an exercise in staging the sixteenth century's preeminent model of tragedy, then the Cade scenes are an experiment in incorporating the clown into that model. Through the different approaches they take to tragic clowning, the plays I have discussed in this chapter all engage with the question at the centre of this thesis, about how tragedy works in the context of playhouse performance. In giving the clown a *de casibus* arc, the *First Part of the Contention* turns the question on its head, exploring how a comic staple of the early English playhouses might work for and as tragedy.

CODA

Shakespeare in Patches

Running parallel to the romance plot of Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard's 1998 movie *Shakespeare in Love* is a saga of genre patching.[649] At the start of the film, Will Shakespeare is making slow progress on his improbably titled new comedy, "Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter". Though it pre-dates Stern's definitive theorisation of early modern play-patching by around a decade, the film captures with surprising fidelity the piecemeal processes of playwriting attested to by documents like *Henslowe's Diary*; in one scene, Will berates his rehearsing players for not anticipating the events of act two in their performances, before conceding that he "has not written it" yet. As circumstances inevitably begin to thwart his love affair with the betrothed Viola De Lesseps, Will's mood changes, and with it, so does his play. Despite having promised – and delivered several acts of – a comedy to the film's Philip Henslowe and his company, Will determines that "it is not a comedy [he's] writing now" and, by a malign twist of fate, the comedy of "Romeo and Ethel" becomes the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*, as it was written by the real William Shakespeare in around 1595.

The film's narrative of the genesis of *Romeo and Juliet* is, of course, entirely fictional. The real play was based on an Italian prose romance, popularised in English by Arthur Brooke's verse retelling, *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562).[650] Shakespeare may have played fast and loose with his sources – in the case of *King Lear* (1606), he radically overhauls the chronicle history's ending to devastating effect – but there is nothing to suggest that his first draft of the famous tale of doomed young lovers involved a pirate king.[651] Yet underlying *Shakespeare in Love*'s entirely implausible story of the writing of *Romeo and Juliet* is an astute and familiar observation about the play itself. *Romeo and Juliet* does, for its first two acts, bear many of the hallmarks of a

[649] *Shakespeare in Love*, directed by John Madden (1998; Los Angeles, CA: Miramax Films).
[650] See Jill Levenson ed., *Romeo and Juliet* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), pp. 1-15.
[651] See R. A. Foakes ed., *King Lear* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997), pp. 92-110.

comedy: young lovers; generational conflict; wordplay; dancing; even a comic *balia*. Were it not for the source texts, which *Shakespeare in Love* chooses to ignore, we might almost imagine that *Romeo and Juliet* began its dramatic life as a comedy before taking a tragic turn during the writing of act three. It is as though the play has been put together from different generic pieces.

This thesis has shown that early modern plays were patchworks imaginatively as well as textually. It has argued that the material and compositional processes highlighted by recent studies in theatre history cannot be separated from the creative work of devising, writing, and putting on a play. In particular, it has sought to demonstrate that concept of the "play-patch" – a primarily textual phenomenon in scholarship – can also be usefully and productively applied to our thinking about genre in 1580s and 1590s drama. Tragedy, I have argued, appeared on stage in and as patches: self-proclaimed *de casibus* tragedies were framed as episodes within larger dramas; choric interludes were used to advertise and emphasise the tragic statuses of plays; and popular scenes of clowning inserted into tragedies functioned as experiments in generic incongruity.

Although I do explore some early, collaborative Shakespearean drama in my opening chapter, my thesis has, for the most part, foregrounded lesser-studied, often anonymous plays. Our understanding of how early modern drama worked has been inevitably and irrevocably shaped by Shakespeare: by his plays themselves, and even more so by the innumerable curations and interpretations of those plays that have accumulated in the centuries that separate them from us. I am conscious that any plays attributed wholly or partly to Shakespeare have been available throughout my research in a digitised, modernised, thoroughly footnoted and easily navigable *Complete Work*s edition; the plays on which I have chosen to focus, by contrast, exist mainly in old-spelling, lightly annotated versions which are much more difficult to access. Shakespeare is an easy and inevitable go-to, an automatic point of reference for all things early modern drama. In bringing this thesis to a close, my question is: what happens if we choose to approach *The Battle of Alcazar*, or *A Warning for Fair Women*, or *Locrine* as the reference point, the standard,

instead? How might Shakespeare's plays look different in the light of some of the observations made during the course of this study? The discussion of *Shakespeare in Love*, above, hints at one of the ways in which we might conceive of one of Shakespeare's plays in terms of generic patches. Can ideas about tragic play-patching be usefully applied to Shakespearean drama in other ways as well?

Much has been made, in criticism and in performance, of the disappearance of the Fool after three acts of *King Lear*. Directors have explained away his sudden absence from the text by including him as a silent figure in the play's final moments or, more sensationally, by having Lear murder the Fool after his last scripted lines. Some critics have offered doubling as a justification, though the theory is difficult to substantiate; Lear's Fool was played by Robert Armin, a specialist comic actor for the King's Men who is unlikely to have doubled other roles (least of all – as is often suggested – the role of Cordelia, who would have been played by a boy actor).[652] Arguments about the Fool being rendered superfluous by Lear's madness, or about the hostile world of the play no longer sustaining a comic character, are more persuasive, and this is where earlier tragic clowns like Bullithrumble and Strumbo might offer an illuminating correlative. Clown parts, as we saw in chapter four, are often fragmentary in play scripts. The extemporary nature of early modern dramatic clowning means that a clown's final appearance in a text does not necessarily equate to his final appearance on the stage. Moreover, the scripted parts of Bullithrumble and Strumbo demonstrate that a clown's involvement in a tragedy could fluctuate over the course of a play; at times, Strumbo fights alongside the military leaders of *Locrine*, while at others, he sings and eats and makes jokes with the audience as though utterly oblivious to the war unfolding around him. Lear's Fool is exceptional among Shakespearean tragic clowns, who tend to appear only in isolated scenes and set-pieces; and because his involvement at the start of *Lear* more closely resembles that of Shakespearean comic clowns like Touchstone and Feste,

[652] Foakes, ed., *King Lear*, pp. 50-59.

who feature consistently throughout their respective plays, his sudden disappearance is perplexing. But considered in the context of a broader dramatic corpus that also encompasses plays like *Selimus* and *Locrine*, both the presence and sudden absence of Lear's Fool become less jarring. He exists in a tradition of comic figures whose patchy interventions push the limits of clowning in tragedy.

A Shakespearean disappearing act which has generated rather less speculation is that of the chorus in *Romeo and Juliet*. The existence of framing sonnets to precede acts one and two of the play indicates that *Romeo and Juliet* was once performed with inter-act choruses throughout. That prologues, epilogues and choruses were peculiarly prone to omission from early modern playtexts is widely acknowledged; it is not surprising, in other words, that some of these choric texts have been lost from the play. But what would it mean for *Romeo and Juliet* to be staged not only with its famous prologue, but with metadramatic commentary passages summarising and pre-empting the story every few scenes? *Romeo and Juliet* is one of Shakespeare's best-known plays, and it has inspired numerous adaptations and modernised reworkings (including, of course, *Shakespeare in Love* itself). It is also, as I observe above, frequently noted for its comic tropes and tendencies; were it not for the prologue, forewarning of the young lovers' deaths, we might naively anticipate a happy outcome at the beginning of the play. And perhaps signalling tragedy is precisely the prologue's function. In chapter three, I demonstrated how late 1580s and 1590s plays used choruses and other framing texts to signal their tragic statuses, to establish themselves as part of a dramatic tragic tradition. Attending to *Romeo and Juliet*'s frequently overlooked second act chorus, and acknowledging the absence of additional choric interludes that were probably once performed as part of the play, may substantially reframe our perception of it. This drama of star-crossed lovers, which feels so familiar, so proximal, so timeless, may emerge more clearly as a tragedy of its particular era, deploying a generic convention designed to leave the audience in little doubt as to the trajectory of the plot.

In chapter one, I observed that the demise of *Julius Caesar*'s (1599) titular protagonist in the play's third act is less structurally radical than critics have sometimes claimed. The specific parallel I drew was with *Henry VI Part 3*, originally titled *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York* (1590) in early quarto editions; Caesar is veritably long-lived compared to York, who dies within four scenes of the start of his eponymous play. The examples given throughout my first two chapters demonstrate that these plays were not anomalies. From the discrete stories of Merry and the orphan in *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (*c.* 1595), to Stukeley's one-man *de casibus* showcase in *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588), a tragedy, framed and labelled as such, frequently took up less than a whole play in the period. Beyond offering a new perspective on the structure of *Julius Caesar*, this potential for a tragedy to be, itself, a play-patch also suggests other new ways of thinking about some of Shakespeare's plays. Might early audiences to *The Merchant of Venice* (*c.* 1596), for instance, really have feared for Antonio's life? Murders and marriages could, after all, coexist within single plays; "pastorals" could end in "tragedies"; and the 1600 quarto title page of the "Excellent Historie" of *The Merchant of Venice* references Shylock's "extreame crueltie…in cutting a just pound" of Antonio's "flesh" without any hint of a reprieve.[653] Perhaps the sparing of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* (*c.* 1610) – typically viewed as an instance of tragicomic innovation – is actually indicative of the more rigid generic rules that had developed by the seventeenth century. Death and comedy were not mutually exclusive in 1580s and early 1590s plays like *Mucedorus* (1590) and *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1587); but the radical juxtaposition of "Comedie" and "tragicall stratageme" in Greene's source text, *Pandosto* (1588), is softened for a 1610 adaptation.

These are questions, not answers: ideas, not conclusions. My research has necessarily concentrated on a circumscribed time period and corpus of plays, and this exploration of its implications for other, slightly later drama is, at present, speculative. Conceptually, the purpose

[653] William Shakespeare, *The Most Excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice. With the Extreame Crueltie of Shylocke the Jewe Towards the Sand Merchant, in Cutting a Just Pound of His Flesh: and the Obtayning of Portia by the Choyse of Three Chests* (London, 1600), t.p

of this thesis has been twofold: firstly, to build on the recent work of theatre historians to expand our understanding of early modern play-patching; and secondly, to demonstrate how much more flexible our generic vocabulary and thinking needs to be in relation to the drama of the sixteenth-century playhouses. The theatre of this period defies the expectations and assumptions attendant not only upon a label such as "tragedy", but even upon the word "genre" itself. My decision to focus on tragedy, in particular, was shaped by a number of factors. Its long, non-dramatic history in England; its connection with apparently unique features of framing and staging; and its position in the cultural consciousness today all make it an especially rich subject for an enquiry into the workings of early modern dramatic genres. In examining tragedy's transition to the stage, this thesis has also offered a glimpse of something larger: the innovative, unpredictable, endlessly exciting world of the early English playhouses, the creative output of which continues to surprise us to this day.

APPENDIX 1: PLAYS WITH EXTANT FRAMING TEXTS, 1580-1595[654]

Date	**Author(s) and title**	**Type(s) of framing text**	**Genre label?**
1581 (printed 1584)	Robert Wilson, *The Three Ladies of London*	Prologue	
1582 (printed 1589)	Anon., *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*	Induction/Chorus of Gods	
1583 (printed 1584)	John Lyly, *Campaspe*	Prologue	
1583 (printed 1585)	Anthony Munday, *Fedele and Fortunio*	Prologue, Epilogue	"This Comoedie"
1584 (printed 1584)	George Peele, *The Arraignment of Paris*	Prologue, Epilogue	
1584 (printed 1584)	John Lyly, *Sappho and Phao*	Prologue, Epilogue	
1584 (printed 1592)	John Lyly, *Gallatea*	Prologue, Epilogue	
1587 (printed 1590)	Christopher Marlowe, *The First Part of Tamburlaine the Great*	Prologue	"This tragick glasse"
1587 (printed 1590)	Christopher Marlowe, *The Second Part of Tamburlaine the Great*	Prologue	
1587 (printed 1599)	Robert Greene, *Alphonsus King of Aragon*	Prologue, Induction	"in the maner of a Comedie"

[654] This survey is based on the *Before Shakespeare* project's list of "Plays of the Period", which details all plays with either definite or possible links to the commercial playhouses that can be confidently or tentatively dated to between 1565 and 1595. In my survey, I focus only on those plays dated 1580 or later. See "Plays of the Period", *Before Shakespeare. The Beginnings of London Commercial Theatre, 1565-1595*, https://beforeshakespeare.com/helpful-materials/plays-of-the-period/, accessed 10 Sep. 2021.

1588 (printed 1591)	John Lyly, *Endymion*	Prologue, Epilogue	"Wee present neither Comedie, nor Tragedie, nor storie, nor anie thing"
1588 (printed 1592)	Thomas Kyd, *Soliman and Perseda*	Induction, Chorus	"heere the mouth of sad *Melpomene*| Is wholy bent to tragedies discourse".
1588 (printed 1604)	Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*	Chorus	
1588 (printed 1594)	George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar*	Chorus	"this tragicke warre"
1588 (printed 1594)	Anon., *The Wars of Cyrus*	Prologue	"it is writ in sad and tragicke tearmes"
1588 (printed 1597)	John Lyly, *The Woman in the Moon*	Prologue	
1588 (printed 1590)	Robert Wilson, *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London*	Prologue	
1589 (printed 1633)	Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*	Prologue spoken by Machiavelli (in addition to later prologues and epilogues)	"The Tragedy of a Jew"
1589 (printed 1592)	John Lyly, *Midas*	Prologue	
1589 (printed 1594)	Anon., *The True Tragedy of Richard III*	Induction, Epilogue	"Tragedia like for to present| A Tragedie in England done but late"
1590 (printed 1592)	William Shakespeare and anon., *Arden of Faversham*	Epilogue	"this naked Tragedy"

1590 (printed 1598)	Robert Greene, *The Scottish History of James IV*	Induction	
1590 (printed 1599)	George Peele, *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe*	Prologue	
1590 (printed 1598)	Anon., *Mucedorus*	Induction, Epilogue	"*Comedie*, play thy part", "Ile…mixe your musicke with a tragick end", "from tragick stuffe to pleasant comedie"
1591 (printed 1595)	Anon., *Locrine*	Chorus	"Marke what ensues and you may easily see| That all our life is but a Tragedie", "the sequel shall declare,| What tragicke chances fall out in this warre"
1591 (printed 1594)	Anon., *The Tragical Reign of Selimus*	Prologue	"No fained toy nor forged Tragedie|…But a most lamentable historie"
1592 (printed 1623)	William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*	Induction	"Your honour's players…| Are come to play a pleasant comedy", "It is a kind of history"
1592 (printed 1600)	Thomas Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*	Prologue, Chorus, Epilogue	
1594 (printed 1594)	Anon., *The Taming of A Shrew*	Induction	"And whats the name of your Comedie?"
1595 (printed 1597, 1599, 1623)	William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*	Prologue, Chorus	

1595 (printed 1600)	William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*	Epilogue	
c. 1595 (printed 1601)	Robert Yarington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*	Induction,	"A two-folde Tragedie"
c. 1597 (printed 1599)	Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women*	Induction	"I perceive the Auditors preparde for Tragedie", "give intertainment unto Tragedie"

Date	Author(s) and title	Reference	Text type
1564	Nicholas Robinson, account of the royal visit to Cambridge (reproduced in Alan H. Nelson, *Records of Early English Drama: Cambridge*, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989)	The masters of the entertainment had "adorned the entire stage tragically" ("*Scaenam universam tragice ornassent*") (I, p. 238).	Account of play
?1589 (printed 1594)	George Peele and William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*	"Hail, Rome, victorious in thy mourning weeds!" (I.1.73)	Play
?1592 (printed 1623)	Thomas Nashe, William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe[?], *Henry VI Part 1*	"Hung be the heavens with black" (I.i.1)	Play
1592-4 (printed 1594)	William Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*	"O comfort-killing night, image of hell,| Dim register and notary of shame,|Black stage for tragedies and murders fell" (lines 763-765)	Poem
?1595 (printed 1601)	Robert Yarington, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*	"Our stage doth wear habiliments of woe" (sig. A3r)	Play
?1597 (printed 1599)	Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women*	"The stage is hung with black, and I perceive| The auditors prepared for Tragedy" (sig. A3r); "In these sable curtains shut we up| The comic entrance to our direful play" (sig. C4v)	Play
?1600 (printed 1602)	John Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*	"O now, me thinks, a sullen tragic scene| Would suit the time" (sig. A2r); "Who would not know what men would be; let such| Hurry amain from our black visag'd shows" (sig. A2v)	Play

1601	Richard Verstegan, *Odes in Imitation of the Seven Penitential Psalms*	"A spatious theatre first methought I saw,| All hang'd with black to act some Tragedie"	Poem
1605 (printed 1607)	Thomas Dekker and John Webster, *Northward Ho!*	"I'm writing a Tragedy, the Tragedy of young Astianax…I will have this Tragedy presented in the French Court…the stage all hung with black velvet" (sig. E2v-E3r)	Play
1608	Thomas Dekker, *Lanthorne and Candlelight*	"But now when the stage of the world was hung in black, they jetted up and down like proud Tragedians" (sig. L1v)	Prose pamphlet
1609	Samuel Daniel, *Civil Wars Between the Houses of Lancaster and York Corrected and Continued*	"And first begin with factions to divide| The fairest land…| Let her be made the sable stage whereon| Shall first be acted bloody tragedies" (sig. M5v)	Poem
?1610 (printed 1613)	John Marston, *The Insatiate Countess*	"The stage of heaven is hung with solemn black,| A time best fitting to act Tragedies" (sig. H1v)	Play
1613	William Browne, *Brittania's Pastorals*	"What time, the world clad in a mourning robe,| A stage made for a woeful Tragedy" (sig. N1r)	Poem
1624	Francis Quarles, *Job Militant: with Meditations Divine and Moral*	"Wouldst thou behold a tragic scene of sorrow,| Whose woeful plot, the author did now borrow,| From sad invention? The sable stage,| The lively actors, with their equipage?" (sig. B2r)	Poem

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