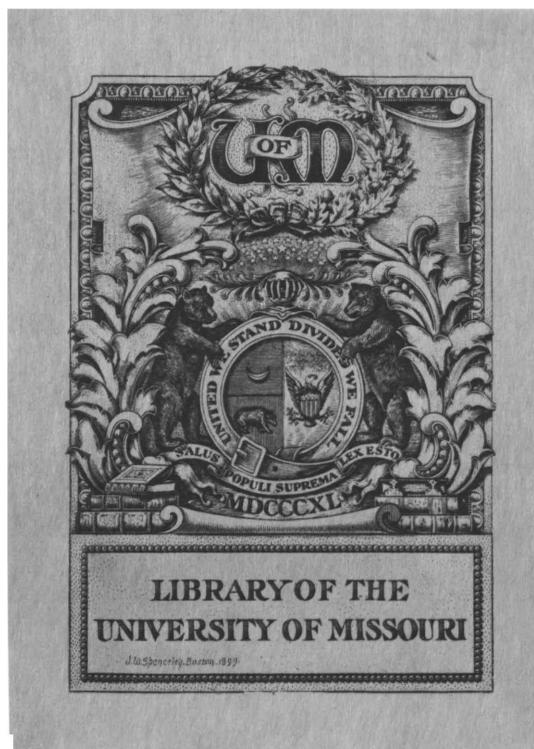


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DOMESTIC TRAGEDY BETWEEN 1590 AND 1642

by

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Domestic Tragedy between 1590 and 1642

Chapter I

History and Definition of the Term Domestic Tragedy

In order to make a satisfactory critical study of any literary type it is necessary first to determine clearly and accurately what constitutes that type, and to formulate a test definition. This preliminary step is especially important when the species in question is a somewhat obscure one concerning which confusion has arisen through a loose application of terms. Domestic tragedy is a type to which these statements apply. This chapter will, therefore, fall into two main parts: (1) an account of the history of the expression 'domestic tragedy', with a statement of the several interpretations of the term; (2) an attempt to restrict the expression 'domestic tragedy' to its logical use.

I

J. P. Collier, whose History of Dramatic Literature was published in 1831, originated the highly ambiguous term 'domestic tragedy'. His statement is as brief as it is uncritical. 'There is a species of dramatic representation,' he says, 'different from any of which we have yet spoken, and which may be said to form a class by itself - it may be called domestic tragedy, and pieces of this kind were founded upon comparatively recent events in our own country. It seems to have been the constant practise of dramatists of that day, to avail themselves

(like the ballad-makers) of any circumstances of the kind which attracted attention, in order to construct a play, treating the subject merely as a dramatic narrative of a known occurrence, without embellishing or aiding it with the ornaments of invention.⁽¹⁾

There is evident ambiguity here in the use of the word 'domestic'. In its original and usual sense 'domestic' refers to the home and family. But Collier uses it in its secondary sense of national, and applies it loosely to those realistic dramatic representations of well known crimes which are more accurately called murder plays. The terms 'murder play' and 'domestic tragedy', as we shall presently see, are not mutually exclusive, but neither are they, as Collier seems to imply, synonymous. On the basis of his very special use of the term, Collier classifies as domestic tragedies: Arden of Feversham, A Warning for Fair Women, Two Tragedies in One, A Yorkshire Tragedy, and Fair Maid of Bristol.

From his definition and list of plays it is evident that Collier classifies as domestic all tragedies which are English in source, criminal in subject, and realistic in style. Most subsequent writers have accepted in an unquestioning way the convenient label which Collier provides. Some, especially English and American scholars, evidently recognizing the inadequacy of his statement, have added some suggestions. They have, however, tried to broaden rather than to restrict the meaning of the term, apparently without realizing that 'domestic' can hard-

(1). History of Dramatic Literature, III, 49.

ly include all the constructions which they put upon it.

The first to follow Collier in the use of the term 'domestic tragedy', so far as I have been able to learn, is Ward. In his History of English Dramatic Literature (1875) he classifies certain plays under that head. But nowhere does he state clearly what he means by the term 'domestic'. There is, however, one sentence from which his interpretation may at least be inferred. 'Happily for his fame', he says, speaking of Heywood, 'a taste had formed, or was forming, itself for the treatment on the stage of incidents of private life - events of which the interest came home to domestic experience, crimes which disturbed the peace of families rather than of nations, sorrows such as their common humanity enables gentle and simple alike to understand.'⁽¹⁾ Evidently Ward is here referring to plays which are characterized by bourgeois realism. He does not, as Collier does, confine the application of the term domestic tragedy to criminal dramas. Elsewhere he says, "In occasional combination with the realistic appeal to the sentiment of terror which gives much direct force to the murder plays, the Elizabethan and early Jacobean domestic drama also occupies itself with other motives, the operation of which powerfully affects the course of human life and is most clearly perceptible when its conditions are least complicated and unusual. The faithful observance of the marriage tie and the shameful neglect of it, parental love and the pangs inflicted by filial ingratitude - such are the themes which frequently

(1) A History of English Dramatic Literature. (Second Edition) II, 586.

recur in the dramatic literature of this period." (1) It is in this statement that the word 'domestic' is, for the first time, given its logical meaning. It is true, however, that Ward regards the representation of family relations as a possible rather than a necessary subject for domestic tragedy. The truth of this statement is made plain by reference to the plays which he calls domestic tragedies. They are: Arden of Feversham, A Warning for Fair Women, A Woman Killed with Kindness, The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, The Fair Maid of Bristol, A Yorkshire Tragedy, The London Prodigal, and Two Tragedies in One. The fact that he includes Two Tragedies in One, a play which has nothing to do with the home or family, shows that he means much the same that Collier does by 'domestic'; that is, domestic as opposed to foreign, and carrying with it the implication of bourgeois realism. It is noteworthy that by including A Woman Killed with Kindness, a play which has no foundation in fact, Ward disregards the requirement, really a superficial one, that the plot must be based upon a real event. Ward's position may be summed up in the statement that domestic tragedy deals in a realistic manner with some phase of the life of the middle class. Pröls, in his *Geschichte des Neueren Dramas* (1882), follows Collier's lead very closely. He translates 'domestic' bürgerlich, and discusses domestic tragedy from that point of view. He says of anonymous plays, like Arden of Feversham and The Yorkshire

(1) The Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 109.

Tragedy, Von diesen Stücken hebe ich zunächst diejenigen hervor, in denen sich zugleich eine ganz neue Gattung des Dramas, das bürgerliche Trauerspiel, von Collier the domestic tragedy genannt, ankündigt, die auf englischen Bühne früher als auf jeder andern erschien, was ein neues Zeugnis für den nationalen, volkstümlichen Geist ablegt, unter dessen Einflüsse sich hier die neue Gattung sich zunächst fast ganz auf dem criminalistischen Gebiete bewegte und durchgehend auf wirklicheⁿ Begebenheiten der Zeit beruhte.⁽¹⁾ In accordance with his definition he classifies as tragedies of this type: The Stepmother's Tragedy, The Fair Maid of Bristol, Two Tragedies in One, A Warning for Fair Women, The London Prodigal, Cox of Collumpton, Page of Plymouth, Arden of Feversham, and A Yorkshire Tragedy. Of these all except three non-extant murder plays, Cox of Collumpton, Page of Plymouth, and The Stepmother's Tragedy, and The London Prodigal (listed by Ward), are included in Collier's list. Evidently Prölss means to classify as domestic tragedies all serious realistic plays based on events in England. He makes The London Prodigal an exception to the usual rule that domestic tragedies are criminal dramas.

The next writer to give attention to domestic tragedy is John Addington Symonds, who devotes to it a chapter of his Shakspeare's Predecessors in the English Drama, (1884). His discussion presents nothing new; for, like others before him, he regards as the distinguishing mark of this type of play the obviously external quality of realistic style. In reference to the source of plot he reiterates Collier's statement, 'The plays of this class were all founded upon recent tragical

(1) Op.Cit. 62

events in real life.⁽¹⁾ Besides a number of non-extant dramas, his list includes the following: Arden of Feversham, A Warning for Fair Women, Two Tragedies in One, The Fair Maid of Bristol, A Woman Killed with Kindness, A Yorkshire Tragedy, and The Witch of Edmonton. In one case, at least, his practice is better than his theory, for he admits to his classification A Woman Killed with Kindness, a play which is not based on any actual event.

Singer (1891), although spoken of by subsequent writers (Schelling and Creizenach) as the best writer on the subject of domestic tragedy, actually deals with a much broader subject in his Das Bürgerliche Trauerspiel in England. 'Bürgerlich' is a word of more extended meaning than 'domestic', and Singer is quite justified in his statement, 'Das Englische bürgerliche Trauerspiel umfasst diejenigen Trauerspiele, welche aus Personen in England vorführen, die nicht eine geschichtliche Bedeutung erlangt haben.'⁽²⁾ This definition is designed by Singer to include all realistic tragedies of common life, of which only a few are genuine domestic tragedies; his list, therefore, throws no light upon our particular question. Although interested primarily in the more general aspects of his subject, Singer recognizes more clearly than any previous writer the importance of those plays which deal with family relations; he remarks that infidelity to the marriage vow is a subject peculiarly fitted for tragedies of common life.⁽³⁾

Creizenach, who writes in 1893, is, like Singer, inter-

(1) Op. Cit. 414.

(2) Op. Cit. 6.

(3) Ib. p.72.

ested in 'bürgerliche Trauerspiel', especially the murder plays, as an early manifestation of dramatic realism. In his Geschichte des Neueren Dramas he says, 'Diese Kriminaldramen blieben für längere Zeit die einzigen Stücke, in denen vor den Zuschauern Menschen von ihrer eignen Art, aus ihrer eignen Sphäre in tragischen Situationen erschienen.'⁽¹⁾ The plays which he classifies as 'bürgerlich' have all been mentioned by previous writers as domestic tragedies. They are: Page of Plymouth, Arden of Feversham, A Warning for Fair Women, Two Tragedies in One, A Yorkshire Tragedy, and A Woman Killed with Kindness.

The next writer to use the term 'domestic tragedy' is Morley, in his English Writers (1895). He says of The Yorkshire Tragedy, 'This brief play is a specimen of what is termed domestic drama,⁽²⁾ which before the days of newspapers dealt with contemporary deeds of homicide in domestic circles.'⁽³⁾ This statement seems clear enough. But when it is tested by the plays in Morley's list, it is difficult to interpret. It is evident that Morley limits domestic tragedy to the murder plays, but it is not evident what he means by 'in domestic circles.' That phrase would seem to be synonymous with 'in family circles;' but when we turn to his list of plays we find that this is not the meaning intended. Of the eighteen plays which Morley mentions, only the following are extant: Two Tragedies in One, A Yorkshire Tragedy, Arden of Feversham,

(1) Op.Cit., IV, 242.

(2) As the context and his list of plays show, Morley is using 'drama' loosely as a synonym for 'tragedy'.

(3) Op.Cit., Xi, 278.

and A Warning for Fair Women. Two Tragedies in One is a murder play which deals with the killing of a chandler called Beech by his landlord, Thomas Merry. The sole motive of the crime is robbery. Obviously, in such a case, 'in domestic circles' can mean nothing more than among middle class Englishmen. Any bourgeois murder play of English origin is, according to Morley, a domestic tragedy. He uses the term in the loose sense that Collier used it, and is, consequently, open to the same charge of ambiguity.

Mézières, in his Prédécesseurs et Contemporains de Shakespeare (1905), make a statement which is almost a direct translation from Collier. He says, 'Une des premières tendances de ce drame national, ce fut de s'attacher à des sujets réels en mettant sur la scène des événements tragiques qui avaient eu du retentissement en Angleterre, et dont le souvenir restait encore dans toutes les mémoires....Je l'appelle bourgeoise, parce qu'elle écartait les grands faits de l'histoire ancienne ou moderne pour s'occuper d'infortunes récentes arrivées à de simples particuliers. Quand un grand crime ou un grand malheur avait longtemps occupé l'attention publique, il lui appartenait de droit; elle s'en emparait comme de son bien.'⁽¹⁾ He is evidently concerned with realistic plays dealing with contemporaneous events. His list of plays is identical with Collier's.⁽²⁾

Schelling discusses the general subject of domestic drama in two places. In his Elizabethan Drama (1908) he

(1) Op.Cit. 93.

(2) See page 3.

devotes a chapter to domestic drama, and in his English Literature during the Lifetime of Shakespeare he has a chapter on vernacular drama. Since he discusses the same plays in both chapters, it is evident that he regards the terms 'domestic drama' and 'vernacular drama' as synonymous. Like his predecessors, Schelling gives no clear statement of what he means by domestic drama. Indeed he seems to have no fixed point of view. Throughout his discussion he wavers between two conceptions of domestic drama: first, as a realistic presentation of common life; and second, as dealing in a realistic manner with the special theme of family relations. This second conception unquestionably influences him strongly, but he has not broken away definitely from the older notion that all realistic plays on English subjects should be classified as domestic. Naturally this confusion of thought results in inconsistent statements. In his Elizabethan Drama he says, 'There can be little doubt that Heywood's strength as a dramatist lies in his powerful realization of scenes of every day life, and in the portrayal of the deeper and more serious emotions which he wrought out of the relations of domestic life.'⁽¹⁾ But he gives a contradictory impression when, in his English Literature during the Lifetime of Shakespeare, he says 'A long and forbidding group of domestic dramas are those most simply denominated the murder plays.'⁽²⁾ Under this group he discusses Two Tragedies in One, in which domestic relations have nothing to do with the tragic outcome. He classifies as domestic tragedies: Arden of Feversham, The Fair Maid of Cliftw (The Vow Breaker), A Woman Killed with Kindness, The Witch of

(1) I, 336. (Italics mine).

(2) p.184. (Italics mine).

Edmonton, The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, Two Murders in One, A Warning for Fair Women, and A Yorkshire Tragedy. To lists previously quoted, The Fair Maid of Clifton is his only addition. Schelling's discussion of domestic drama, especially domestic tragedy, is unsatisfactory because of its vagueness. He quite evidently feels that the treatment of family relations is a subject fitted for domestic tragedy; but he lays greater emphasis on the realistic portrayal of common life.

This completes the history of the term 'domestic tragedy', so far as I have been able to trace it, and, I think, illustrates the necessity for a more critical treatment. There is at present a confusion of terms which needs to be cleared up. Evidently this confusion has arisen from an attempt to make the word 'domestic' carry too many meanings; to apply it, that is, to various dramatic types not really homogeneous. We can, I think, detect at least four distinct senses in which 'domestic' has been used, although some writers combine two, or even three of these.

1. national as opposed to foreign (applied especially to murder plays.)
2. bourgeois as opposed to heroic.
3. realistic as opposed to romantic.
4. family relations as opposed to affaires of state.

II.

It is my purpose to endeavor to show that the conception of domestic tragedy as dealing with family relations is the only one which is unqualifiedly true. But, in saying that this is the only conception that is unqualifiedly true, I do

not mean that domestic tragedy may not be also national, bourgeois, and realistic. The strongest objection to the statements which I have quoted is that they ignore the essential question of the nature of the theme, and have based their tests upon the manner of treatment.

My own definition of domestic tragedy falls naturally into two divisions:

A. THE THEME: Domestic tragedy represents the destruction of family relations, especially the marriage relation. This destruction is inherent in the conditions upon which the union is based, and is not the result of any outside influence. In addition, domestic tragedy is characterized by moral seriousness.

This constitutes the fundamental test.

B. THE MODE OF TREATMENT: Domestic tragedy deals in a realistic way with contemporary events in private life.

The terms of our definition require some explanation. The realism of the plays consists in their convincing representation of the petty details of everyday life. They are realistic in varying degrees, but any one of the domestic tragedies contrasts strongly in this respect with the idealizing tendency which is a recognized characteristic of romantic drama. The source of plot in contemporary events is a frequently mentioned mark of the domestic tragedies. These plays do not turn to heroic deeds done in far countries or in long past ages; they take their subjects usually from experiences in the life of

middle class of Englishmen. It must be noted that they are not all based upon actual events. I do not concur in the general opinion that they deal necessarily with the middle class, because it seems to me that the real point of difference from heroic drama is not to be found in the accident of birth. In heroic tragedy, the results of the protagonist's action are far-reaching: his fate affects not only himself and his own immediate circle, but a whole nation as well. Hamlet and Macbeth are examples in point. In domestic tragedy, the really essential thing is not that the hero is of low social rank, but that his fate has no political or national significance. He is dealt with merely as a private individual whose deeds disturb the peace of families rather than of nations.

It is to be understood, of course, that the characteristics which I have just discussed are more or less variable qualities which domestic tragedy has in common with other dramatic types. These characteristics may confirm, but they can never controvert, the results of the primary test which I have laid down, namely, the serious representation of the destruction of family relations.

In accordance with my conception of the nature of domestic tragedy, I have chosen the following plays for consideration: Arden of Feversham, A Warning for Fair Women, The Witch of Edmonton, The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, The Yorkshire Tragedy, The Fair Maid of Clifton (The Vow Breaker), The Fair Maid of Bristow, The English Traveller, A Woman Killed with Kindness, and Othello.

It will be seen that I have found it necessary to omit the heretofore universally accepted Two Tragedies in One, which,

although it is realistic, bourgeois, and English, is not domestic. I include The Yorkshire Tragedy only on account of its connection with The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, which I shall discuss later. I include The English Traveller and The Fair Maid of Bristow which are usually classed as comedies, but which seem to me to meet the requirements of tragedy in its broader sense.⁽¹⁾ My most important addition is that of Othello. This play has not been classed with domestic tragedies (although its resemblance to them has been mentioned by Brandes, Bradley, and Creizenach) because the plot is not English, because the style is less bare and unornamented than a narrow conception of realism demands, and, above all, because Othello and Desdemona do not belong to the middle class. I nevertheless include it because it fully meets the one fundamental test: it deals seriously with the destruction of family relations.

It is my purpose in the second, third, and fourth chapters to this thesis to isolate domestic tragedy, and to deal with it as a distinct species. It will be necessary first to dispose of certain dramatic types which are apparently akin to it in theme; then to institute a classification among the domestic tragedies themselves in accordance with the variations of the main theme which they present; and, finally, to investigate their differences of inner organization in regard to plot

(1) In the Elizabethan age the current conception of tragedy was a naïve one. It was drawn largely from the example of the religious plays, and was uninfluenced by the Aristotelian idea of Katharsis which dominates modern theories of tragedy. Since plays must be judged by the standards under which they were written, it will be sufficiently accurate for the purpose of this paper to classify as Tragedies all serious portrayals of painful human experiences.

and character. The fifth chapter is devoted to what I may call an orientation of domestic tragedy. Its purpose is to show the relation of domestic tragedy to other dramatic types, as this relation appears through certain secondary characteristics, realism and source in fact.

One explanatory statement remains to be made. I have not attempted to give an historical account of the origin and development of domestic tragedy for two reasons: (a) Because there is not sufficient material for such a study. Any attempt to make one would necessarily be confined to humorous scenes of the miracle plays, and to stray scenes from early comedies. And, in any case, these scenes bear only a formal and superficial resemblance to genuine domestic tragedy. They do not even help to explain the type. (b) Because the type is unique. It appears first in Arden of Feversham (probably about 1590), and no earlier play possesses the distinctive qualities of the species. Like all other Elizabethan drama, domestic tragedy shows in its form the influence of sacred drama. But in essence, in the distinctive qualities which constitute it practically an independent type, it owes nothing to the past. Domestic tragedy is the product of its own age. I have, therefore, confined my discussion of it to the period of its production, namely from 1590 to 1642 (the date of the closing of the theaters).

CHAPTER II

The Test Applied to Plays of Similar Theme

In defining domestic tragedy I have made theme the final test, the unfailing touchstone. This theme, as it will be remembered, is the destruction of family relations. There are, however, certain plays that deal with this theme which I have nevertheless excluded from my classification. It is, therefore, necessary to show briefly why they are not domestic tragedies. The reason for excluding them is not to be found in external characteristics of style; for, as far as style is concerned, they could hardly differ more completely than Othello and A Warning for Fair Women. The fundamental difference lies in the playwright's attitude toward his subject. In true domestic tragedy all interest is concentrated upon a grave domestic problem which is treated with the utmost moral seriousness. The keynote is sound ethical tone. Any deviation from this high standard of ethical seriousness and soundness excludes a play from consideration as a domestic tragedy.

I

Because of their humorous tone, satirical interludes, domestic comedies, and comedies of manners may be eliminated. They must be eliminated in spite of the fact that family discord is their favorite theme. They are not necessarily ethically unsound, but they do not approach the subject on its moral side. They seize upon and stress the unnaturalness of a family divided against itself. They invite the spectator to be amused

at the contrast which such domestic discord presents to the normal condition of family harmony as he experiences it in his own life. These comedies exemplify the spirit which makes people laugh at a bald-headed man, that spirit which regards as funny anything which varies from the norm. They differ from domestic tragedy in suppressing the serious aspects of the situation in order to emphasize its amusing aspects.

II.

There are certain plays of the revenge type which are closely allied in theme to genuine domestic tragedy. They are differentiated from domestic tragedy because interest is not centered upon family relations. Hamlet and The White Devil are typical examples. The vengeance of one who has suffered injury is made the center of dramatic emphasis, and the incident and intrigue involved in the revenge plot completely overshadow the domestic problem. Violated family relations merely afford the avenger an intelligible motive for his action. In Hamlet the queen's incestuous marriage gives rise to Hamlet's problem, but Gertrude's crime is touched upon only to make plain her son's situation. The whole interest of the play centers in Hamlet. In The White Devil the adulterous passion of Vittoria Corombona for the Duke of Brachiano, and its result in the murder of her husband, Camillo, and his wife, Isabella, merely furnishes the background for the revenge sought by Francisco de Medicis. These plays, therefore, and others similar to them, are not to be regarded as domestic tragedies, because in them the violation of family relations is touched upon only as a secondary motif.

III

There are tragicomedies which are not to be classified as domestic tragedies only because they subordinate ethical requirements to sentimental ones. Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale are examples. In them the union between husband and wife is as completely broken down as in the gravest domestic tragedies by the husband's certainty that his wife is unfaithful to him. In accordance, however, with popular preference for a play with a fortunate ending, these plays end in a reconciliation. In them the husband's attempt to punish his supposedly faithless wife is always thwarted. When it is finally revealed that there existed no real ground for suspicion, the mere discovery of the mistake is sufficient to counteract all its wretched consequences. The sundered pair are reunited with no diminution of their mutual love and confidence. That the fortunate reunion may not seem too strained, too impossible an outcome for a situation so big with tragic potentialities, attention is diverted from the actual human tragedy involved, and the fancy is charmed by the fascinating glamor of romance. In Cymbeline, Imogen's romantic meeting with her unknown brothers, in The Winter's Tale, the idyllic love of Perdita and Florizel, serve this purpose. In these plays 'even handed justice' is set at naught. Deeds which would naturally have the most painful outcome are divorced from their logical consequences in order that sentimental satisfaction may be felt. It is only in the happy land of romance that such wounds leave no scars. Schelling is right in saying, 'Nowhere in Shakespeare are the ethical sensibilities of the modern reader so disturbed as in the forgiveness and reconciliation to his steadfast and incom-

parable queen of unreasoning and headstrong Leontes, jealous-mad with the foul images of his own making.⁽¹⁾

IV

There is another class of plays to be reckoned with — those tragedies which belong to the decadence of the romantic impulse. Their plots are usually based upon intolerable domestic situations, but they bear a moral taint which makes it impossible to regard them as domestic tragedies. They show a curiously perverted cleverness in making the worse appear the better part. Two of Ford's plays, Love's Sacrifice and 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, are typical. By laying his scenes amid the inconceivable sensuality and corruption of Italian court life, the dramatist is able to make the ugliness of infidelity and incest appear almost attractive, almost pure in comparison with the vileness with which it is contrasted. The nature of the difference between such plays and genuine domestic tragedy is best illustrated by comparing Love's Sacrifice with A Woman Killed with Kindness. In both plays the plot turns upon a wife's seduction by her husband's most trusted friend. In A Woman Killed with Kindness, although it is completely free from obvious didacticism, one cannot fail to see the sin in its full hideousness and to condemn it unhesitatingly. The only point where one's sympathy goes out to the erring wife is at the moment of her repentant death. In Love's Sacrifice, on the other hand, the fact that the infidelity is one of thought not yet consummated in deed, and the fact that the intrigue is revealed by spys who are actuated by the lowest and vilest of

(1) Elizabethan Drama, II, 201.

personal motives, are made use of to present the lovers in a false sentimental light. They are made to appear martyrs, innocent victims of the husband's causeless ferocity. The whole play is a diabolically clever bit of sophistry - dramatically excellent, ethically rotten. It is this obliquity of moral vision, this warping of the ethical judgment that distinguishes these and others of the later romantic tragedies from the wholesomeness, the moral decency, which, in spite of their occasional coarseness, is inseparable from the domestic tragedies.

SUMMARY

It is evident that there are certain plays which in theme partially meet the requirements of our definition of domestic tragedy. They deal with the destruction of family relations. But they fail to conform to the ethical standard of genuine domestic tragedy in their attitude toward the problem presented.

- (a) Satirical interludes, domestic comedies, and comedies of manners are excluded from our classification because they present only the humorous aspects of a domestic situation.
- (b) Certain of the revenge plays are not domestic tragedies because in them interest is not centered in domestic relations.
- (c) Tragicomedies are not domestic tragedies because they have a sentimental tone which destroys their ethical effect.
- (d) Decadent romantic tragedies, although they are concerned primarily with family relations, are differentiated from domestic tragedy by their perverted attitude toward the moral problem with which they deal.

CHAPTER III

A Classification of Domestic Tragedies According to Theme.

The plays which I have classified as domestic tragedies are what we are accustomed to call 'problem plays'. They recognize certain influences at work in society which undermine the institution of the family, certain conditions which are destructive to the marriage relation. Each of these influences is represented in one or more of the domestic tragedies. I have, therefore, divided the plays into groups in accordance with the particular variation of the main theme which they present. The conditions which are the basis of this classification are: (1) infidelity on the part of one member of the union, (2) marriage due to coercion and not to mutual affection, (3) social disparity (differences of race and rearing).

Since the domestic tragedies are, for the most part, unfamiliar plays, and a knowledge of their plots will be necessary in the next chapter, I have given a somewhat fuller outline of the story of each than is strictly necessary for purposes of classification. When there is a double plot, as is frequently the case,⁽¹⁾ I have considered only the main plot.

I

Infidelity to the marriage vow is the most common of the influences which are destructive to the family. Its extraordinary appeal to popular interest is shown by the fact that it is the theme of six of the nine plays on my list. In

(1) The Fair Maid of Bristow, The English Traveller, A Woman Killed with Kindness, The Witch of Edmonton.



the plays where the infidelity of husband or wife is the source of domestic disaster, we find the guilty one impelled by one of three motives or determining influences: a) wantonness, b) weakness, and c) passion.

(a) The first of these, wantonness, is represented in one play only, The Fair Maid of Bristow. This play deals with the 'patient Griselda' theme, the licentious husband and the unbelievably patient and affectionate wife. The unscrupulous Vallenger conceives a sudden passion for Annabell, his friend Challener's sweetheart, and, by slandering Challener, succeeds in marrying her. No sooner is she won, however, than he tires of her, and turns his fickle affections to Florence, a courtezan. Vallenger appeals to Challener, who has disguised himself as an Italian doctor, for poison to destroy Annabell and Florence's lover, Sentlo. The supposed doctor promises to help in the accomplishment of his purpose. Sentlo's best friend, who has tried in vain to save him from the courtezan's wiles, assumes the disguise of a servant, and wins employment from Florence. She engages him to administer the poison to Sentlo. In the meantime, Vallenger heaps insults upon his wife, and flaunts before her his connection with Florence. All this Annabell endures patiently and with no diminution of affection. Sir Eustace Vallenger is informed of his son's licentious career and of his murder-our plot, and drives him from home. Finding himself without refuge, Vallenger turns confidently to Florence, but she soon shows him that her affection is of a purely mercenary character. Sentlo has already taken the draught

of supposed poison, which is really only a sleeping potion, and seems to be dead. Vallenger is consequently arrested for murder. He is tried before the King, and, in spite of Annabell's efforts to save him, is sentenced to death. At the last moment Sentlo's disguised friend produces the supposed victim alive, and shows that although Vallenger intended crime, he committed none. The play ends with the recreant husband's repentance, and his reunion with Annabell. The final impression of the play is that the security of the marriage is threatened with destruction by the fickle, wanton spirit of Vallenger. Its only possible salvation lies in the possibility of reclaiming him from his wantonness.

- (b) As wantonness of disposition is represented in The Fair Maid of Bristow as causing infidelity on the part of the husband, so weakness of will is represented as a common cause of infidelity on the wife's part. Women, seemingly the most affectionate of wives and best of mothers, fall into the lowest depths of sin, not through any base quality in their own natures, but altogether through inability to resist a temptation strongly urged. Recognizing the evil of infidelity in its full ugliness, they have not moral strength to combat it. There are three plays on my list in which the destruction of the family is due to sheer weakness of will on the part of the wife. They are: A Warning for Fair Women, A Woman Killed with Kindness, and, The English Traveller.

The moral weakness of Mrs. Sanders is the tragic motif of A Warning for Fair Women. Captain Brown, having met Mrs. Sanders in company with her husband, is immediately

fired by a guilty love for her, and is determined to win her at any cost. By promises of liberal reward he enlists the aid of the unscrupulous Mrs. Drury, Anne Sanders' friend. Mrs. Drury proves herself a crafty agent in her employer's cause. Finding Anne momentarily angry with her husband, she seizes the opportunity to drop her first hint. She pretends to read Anne's fortune in her hand, and finds there that George Sanders is about to die, and that his successor will be a gentleman. By clever suggestions she establishes the idea that Brown is the man indicated by fate. Anne's weak credulity is the beginning of her downfall. Convinced that what is prophesied will come to pass, her reply is not merely acquiescent in the decrees of fate, but contains a hint of less pardonable submission:

If it be so, I must submit myself
 To that which God and Destiny sets down,
 But yet I can assure you, Mistress Drury,
 I do not find me any way inclined
 To change off new affection, nor, God willing,
Will I be false to Sanders whilst I live. (1)

With this suggestion of possible family disaster, and an allegorical dumb-show which shows the victory of Lust over Chastity, the author passes on to depict the attempts to murder George Sanders.

Two abortive attempts, both frustrated by the entrance of people at the critical moment, are shown in detail. Twice Sanders, all unsuspecting, escapes imminent death, but the third time, Brown and Trusty Roger, Widow Drury's serving man, fall upon him when he is riding with a servant, John Bean, along a deserted road. Sanders

(1) 11. 694 - 699 (Italics mine).

is killed, and the servant is left for dead by the assassins. He is, however, found still alive by passers-by, and is able to describe his assailant.

Brown sends a handkerchief dipped in his victim's blood as a token to his mistress. He himself takes flight toward London. At sight of her husband's blood, Anne Sanders recovers from her infatuation, and realizes the vileness of her conduct. The partner of her shame becomes as hateful to her as previously he was dear.

Suspicion falls upon Brown through the testimony of a boatman and others who fell in with him on his way to London, and who remembered that he had blood upon his garments. He is captured and identified by John Bean, who lives just long enough to recognize his murderer. He is immediately tried and sentenced to execution. In his last moments Brown redeems himself from utter vileness by his effort to shield Anne Sanders from suspicion. With his dying breath he asserts her innocence, although convinced that by so doing he forfeits his chance of salvation.

Mrs. Sanders, Widow Drury, and Trusty Roger are all arrested and accused of murder. They are converted in prison, confess their complicity in the crime, and are sentenced to a death which they welcome as the expiation of their sins and the passport to paradise. In her farewell to her children Anne Sanders recognizes that only her weakness in yielding to temptation is responsible for the utter destruction of her family.

Another domestic tragedy, which finds its root in the moral weakness of a woman not naturally inclined to evil is A Woman Killed with Kindness. The opening scene shows the merriment attendant upon the wedding of Master Frankford and Sir Francis Acton's sister. Both are represented as of the noblest character, and supremely happy in each other's love. Frankford's nobility of soul proves to be his own undoing. Out of pity for a young friend, Wendoll, who has fallen into poverty, he opens his house to the youth and bids him consider it his home. Wendoll falls in love with Mrs. Frankford. Although tormented by pangs of conscience for so betraying his benefactor, he reveals his passion to Mrs. Frankford. After some slight resistance, she yields to his importunity. Nicholas, Frankford's devoted servant, overhears their conversation, and resolves that his master shall be informed.

When Frankford is first told of Wendoll's treachery, he resents the accusation, and is absolute in his faith in wife and in friend. But Nicholas' blunt honesty and long service carry weight. In spite of himself, the husband is greatly disturbed. He begins to put sinister constructions upon casual conversation, and finds that he must either set his suspicion at rest or verify it. To learn the truth he announces that he must go on a journey. Unexpectedly he returns by night, and enters the house secretly. Before his wife's door he pauses, tremulous, unstrung. He enters with a prayer on his lips - in a moment he returns, his worst fears confirmed. His soul is possessed with an agony of regret and love. Rage against the destroyer of his honor has at first no place in his emotions. Finally

he wakens the guilty pair, and, overcome at last by wrath, attempts to kill Wendoll. A servant intervenes. Frankford recovers himself, and is glad he has not dipped his hands in blood.

His interview with his erring and wholly repentant wife follows. She grovels^o abjectly before him, expecting mutilation at his hands, but there is no ferocity in the man. Her crime is past all pardon, but he asks no revenge. His sole sentence upon her is one of banishment. She shall be sent to live in the country, no physical comfort shall be denied her, but she is to be cut off forever from intercourse with her husband and her children.

After her departure, Frankford ransacks the house for any article that might serve to remind him of her presence. In a corner he finds the neglected lute upon which, in happier days, she had been wont to play. He sends it after her. She receives it, but she has no longer the heart for music, and breaks the useless lute upon the wheel of her coach.

In her penitent grief, she takes oath never to touch food again, and to spend her remaining hours in prayers for Heaven's mercy. When she feels herself about to die, she entreats her husband to come to her. He yields to her appeal, and she dies in his arms, comforted by his forgiveness.

In A Woman Killed with Kindness, Mrs. Frankford's sincere penitence and final expiation of her sin make a strong appeal to our sympathy, but at the same time we cannot fail to realize that in her weak yielding to an

illicit love, she alone is responsible for the destruction of her home.

The same theme occurs in The English Traveller. The situation upon which it is based, although similar to the one just discussed, is made peculiarly complex by the introduction of the honorable lover in addition to the injured husband, the perfidious friend, and the false wife.

Young Geraldine and Mistress Wincott have been friends from childhood, and, although there was no definite agreement, a marriage between them has been considered probable. However, during one of his long absences abroad, she is married to Old Wincott. Despite the difference in their ages, the union proves a very happy one. Geraldine wins great favor in the sight of Old Wincott, who constantly invites him to his house. The younger man is as far from committing evil as the older is from suspecting it, but out of Geraldine's intimacy with Mrs. Wincott grows the understanding that if the two survive her husband, they will marry. Neither entertains a thought of disloyalty to the old man, and neither would seek to hasten the day of their union.

Delavil, Young Geraldine's companion in his travels, reports to Old Geraldine that his son's constant presence in Wincott's house is occasioning much scandalous talk. The father takes alarm and forbids his son to go there again. His command is implicitly obeyed. Finally Wincott, vexed at Geraldine's persistent avoidance, summons him to come secretly to the house at night to explain his conduct. The young man goes, and he explains frankly to Wincott why

he has ceased to come as he formerly did. This confession only serves to raise him in his friend's esteem. Geraldine resolves to have a word with Mrs. Wincott before he leaves the house. He fears that when she learns that he has been there and has not sought her, she may find the neglect unpardonable. As he has always been perfectly free to see her at any time, he now goes to her room. At the door he pauses, and to his horrified amazement, hears two voices in conversation. He recognizes the man's voice as that of his supposed friend, Delavil. His first thought is to take instant vengeance, but fortunately he is unarmed. In an instant his faith in the woman whom he loves and the friend whom he trusts is destroyed. Their deceit makes his home hateful to him, and he determines to resume his travels.

During the course of a farewell party which Wincott insists on giving, Geraldine and Mrs. Wincott are left alone together. Not dreaming that he knows of her twofold treachery, she assumes her old affectionate manner, and entreats him for her sake not to go away. Stung past endurance by her perfidy, he turns upon her with bitter accusations and proof of guilt. She is overwhelmed. His stern denunciation arouses her conscience, and she gives way to the bitterest remorse. While yet the guests are alarmed at her sudden and mysterious illness, she dies, leaving for her husband a note of full confession. When search is made for Delavil, it is found that he has fled. Wincott, almost unmanned by his misfortune, turns to Geraldine for support and comfort. The young man renounces his now unnecessary

journey in order to comfort his friend.

- (c) The power of a passionate love, which may be regarded as at once the most natural and the most irresistible motive for violating the marriage vow, is portrayed in one of the most remarkable of the domestic tragedies. In strong contrast to the plays in which the destruction of the family results from passive acquiescence in ill-doing, is Arden of Feversham in which Alice Arden, impelled by an overwhelming passion for Mosbie, becomes the instigator of her husband's murder, and an active agent in its consummation. In her are concentrated all the determination and strength which are lacking in Mrs. Sanders and in Mrs. Frankford. Alice Arden, the wife of a landed gentleman of Feversham, has conceived a shameful passion for an inferior person called Mosbie, formerly a tailor, but now Lord Clifford's steward. Her husband suspects her of infidelity and longs to take vengeance on the destroyer of his domestic peace, but his blind love for his wife makes him hesitate. On the advice of a friend, he decides to go away for awhile in order to see how she will use her liberty. When he announces his intention to Alice, she laments and begs him to stay with her, but no sooner is his back turned than she reveals herself in her true colors. Not only does she love Mosbie, but she is determined to rid herself of her husband who stands between them. She plots with Michael, the servant who will accompany Arden to London, to kill his master, offering as a reward the hand of Susan, Mosbie's sister. With Mosbie she makes plans to poison Arden. Just before her husband's departure for London,

Alice gives him a cup of poisoned broth, but he detects a peculiar taste and will not eat it, and so escapes death.

No sooner is Arden on his way to London than a neighbor, Greene, comes to demand restitution for a piece of land that Arden has unfairly seized. Alice takes advantage of Greene's enmity to enlist his aid in bringing about her husband's death. This he agrees to do by hiring London cutthroats to murder Arden. Black Will and Shakbag, two notable ruffians, are engaged for the purpose.

Arden seems to live a charmed life, for he repeatedly escapes their carefully planned attempts against him. The first time, while they are lying in wait for him in front of a shop, an apprentice drops a shutter upon Black Will; and, during the quarrel which ensues, Arden passes by unharmed. The second time he escapes on account of the cowardice of his servant. Michael has promised to unlock the doors for the assassins, but fails to keep his promise. Another attempt is made to kill him from ambush on his way back to Feversham. This plan is frustrated by the arrival of Lord Cheiny and his men, who ride with Arden on his way.

During Arden's absence, Alice has been overcome by remorse, and has tried desperately to free herself from Mosbie's influence; but so great is his power over her that the moment he turns against her and seems to scorn her, she is once more on her knees before him. When Arden returns home, she receives him with the old deceitful show of affection, but she is more determined than ever to murder him.

Black Will and Shakbag make a final attempt to kill Arden on his way to dine at Lord Cheiny's house. This time

a heavy fog prevents them from meeting their intended victim. Five attempts have now been made upon Arden's life, but he still remains unscathed. Alice and Mosbie determine to provoke Arden to an attack by making before him an open display of their love. During the fray Black Will can steal in and administer the death blow from behind. This scheme also fails - the enraged Arden routs all his foes and is himself uninjured. Once more Alice's cajoling tongue sets matters right. She convinces her husband, only too anxious to be convinced, that only his jealousy could put a wrong construction on her friendship with Mosbie. Once more the infatuated man is reconciled to his betrayer.

The last resort of the lovers is to overpower Arden in his own house. While he plays a game of cards with Mosbie, Black Will steals up behind him and strangles him with a towel. Alice gluts her hatred by driving a knife into her husband's body. After the consummation of the deed, the conspirators are frightened; only Alice retains her presence of mind. The body is carried out and left in a field nearby. Alice's expectation is that people will think that her husband has been killed by robbers. But all her efforts to dispel suspicion fail; her assistants have been too clumsy. The towel and the bloody knife are found beside the body; footprints in the snow lead from the house to the field and back again; blood is discovered upon the floor.

On being confronted with the bleeding corpse of her husband, the guilty wife breaks down, confesses, and re-

pents. Mosbie and Alice, grown hateful to each other through their partnership in crime, are sentenced to death and executed. The play presents a vivid picture of the destructive power of a perverted love.

II

A second condition which threatens the security of family relations is to be found in those 'marriages of convenience' arranged by parents and guardians, and inspired by considerations of advantage. There are two plays which show the wretchedness of such coerced marriages: The Miseries of Enforced Marriage and The Witch of Edmonton.

The inevitable suffering which results from a loveless union is portrayed in The Miseries of Enforced Marriage. The plot is so closely connected with that of The Yorkshire Tragedy, a play based upon the same actual event, that they must be discussed together. Taken alone, The Yorkshire Tragedy is not a genuine domestic tragedy: it does not deal with the domestic situation which culminates in crime, but with the final mad passion of Walter Calverly. It is a mere fragment, a study of a man devil-ridden. The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, on the other hand, deals in great detail with William Scarborough's (Calverly's) first love, his reluctant marriage with an unloved wife, and his subsequent prodigal career. The last act is far from convincing, because, instead of the final climax of woe which would be the natural result of such an intolerable domestic situation, a badly motivated reconciliation scene is introduced. If it were possible to substitute The Yorkshire Tragedy for the fifth act of The Miseries of Enforced Marriage,

we should have a much better and more consistent tragedy.

As it stands, the story is as follows:

William Scarborough, a young man still under age, becomes engaged to Clare, the daughter^e of Sir John Harcop, and they swear eternal fidelity. On his return to London, Scarborough is commanded by his guardian, Lord Falconbridge, to marry a wife who has been chosen for him. The penalty of his refusal is the destruction of the property which his guardian holds in trust for him. Scarborough's sense of the sacredness of his oath is outweighed by his reluctance to give up his property, and he yields. After his marriage he sends a farewell note to Clare. She receives it with joy as a message from her beloved. On opening it she reads, 'Forgive me, I am married.' Amazed at such falseness, she has no word of reproach for her recreant lover. She sends him a note, 'Forgive me, I am dead,' and takes her own life.

When he learns of her death, he plunges into a wild and dissolute career, squandering his own portion and that of his younger brothers and sister, in licentious living. The announcement of the birth of his children only serves to make him more desperate. Finally^d he realizes that he has ruined himself and all who bear his name, but the realization serves only to embitter him and to increase his hatred of the woman whom he refuses to call wife. The wretched wife and children come to him with the most affectionate petitions, but their appeals do not soften him. His gentlest words for them are 'Harlot and bastards.' He is only prevented from murdering them all by the arrival of a message that Lord Falconbridge,

the cause of this unhallowed union, is dead, and that in recognition of the harm he did, he has left Scarborough all his property. The knowledge that his riotous life has not brought his family to shameful poverty is sufficient to turn Scarborough from his former desperation. He seeks reconciliation with his brethren and has no more hard words for his wife. Thus, what so narrowly escaped being a stupendous tragedy of mismatched lives ends peacefully.

The Witch of Edmonton presents another instance of the same theme. The first line of the introductory distich outlines the domestic plot - 'Forced marriage, murder; murder blood requires.' The story turns on the weakness of one, Frank Thorney, who, being secretly married to one wife, yields to his father's insistence and weds a second. While a servant in the house of Sir Arthur Clarrington, the youth first seduces and then marries Winnifred, a fellow servant. He wishes to keep the union a secret until he can gradually overcome his father's opposition. In the meantime his father has arranged a marriage for him with Susan Carter, the daughter of a wealthy neighbor. On Frank's return home, the father tells him that the only way to retrieve the family from a load of debt is for him to marry Susan. This Frank, too cowardly to face the situation, professes his willingness to do. His father, who has heard rumors of the marriage, overwhelms him with reproaches and accuses him of having already a wife. This Frank vehemently denies, and finally convinces his father that he is mistaken. The wretched boy finds himself in a trap, and sees no way out except through crime.

The new marriage is immediately consummated. Susan shows herself full of affectionate solicitude for Frank's hap-

piness. Her very goodness makes his torment the more unbearable. His only escape is to take his ill won gold and go away, pretending that he is only going on a journey. This expedient he adopts. He accordingly sets forth, accompanied by Winnifred dressed as a boy. Susan, who walks with them a little way, passes the time in exhortations to the supposed boy to look well to his master's comfort, and in loving protestations addressed to Frank. Her reluctance to leave him irritates the already half maddened Thorney. At the crucial moment an impulse from the devil (conveyed by a touch of the witch's dog) prompts him to kill her and so destroy the bond which weighs so heavy upon him. He obeys the murderous impulse, first telling her brutally the facts about his marriage with her. She welcomes death as a refuge from defilement.

It now becomes necessary for Frank to forestall detection. He contrives to bind himself and to inflict wounds upon his body, so that his tale of having been set upon by murderers finds ready credence. While he is being nursed in his father-in-law's house, his bloody knife is accidentally discovered and the whole crime is brought to light. Detection brings with it repentance, and on the eve of his execution Thorney is forgiven by all whom he has wronged.

It may be well to mention The Fair Maid of Clifton (The Vow Breaker) among the plays in which domestic disaster results from a coerced marriage. I am unable to classify it with certainty because I have been unable to get a copy of the play, and must rely on brief accounts of the plot. It seems that a young woman, Anne Boote, influenced partly by her father's persuasion and partly by her own love of gold, breaks

faith with her plighted lover, young Bateman, to marry a rich old man. The deserted lover hangs himself, and his sweetheart is haunted by his reproachful ghost until she too seeks peace in suicide.

III

The third variation of our main theme is the basis of one play. Othello alone among the domestic tragedies shows the disastrous possibilities inherent in a marriage based upon the violation of social customs and conventionalities. With all possible nobility of mind and purity of soul on the part of both husband and wife, a difference in race, with all that it implies of contrasting temperament, hereditary influence, and early environment, sets up an almost insurmountable barrier to that perfect sympathy and understanding upon which the security of marriage depends. When this initial difference is augmented by a considerable disparity in years, tragedy seems inevitable.

Othello is primarily a tragedy of misunderstanding. It is usual to regard it as a tragedy of jealousy, and to lay the responsibility at Iago's door, but Iago would have been powerless to shake the union of Desdemona and Othello, had not that union contained within itself the seeds of destruction. It is the social aspect of such a marriage that is emphasized throughout the play. To Brabantio it appears so monstrous that he thinks it the result of witchcraft. It is through social difference, those of race, environment, education, that Iago is able to gain a hold upon Othello. He knows that the Moor, reared in the hard school of war, a stranger to the refinements and luxuries of life, full of the superstitions

of his race, has little genuine knowledge of the nature of Desdemona, the child of courtly Venice. He knows that Desdemona, however much she loves Othello for his nobility of soul, does not comprehend his impulsive, childlike nature. It is this lack of understanding on her part that causes her to pursue with Othello precisely that line of conduct which does most harm, and which aids Iago so much in his manipulation of the Moor.

It is impossible for such a marriage, based on romantic attachment and without the safeguard of common traditions and ideals, to withstand the test of adverse circumstances.

SUMMARY

The domestic tragedies represent three main causes that result in the destruction of the family. Of these the most common is infidelity caused by (a) wantonness (The Fair Maid of Bristow); (b) weakness (A Warning for Fair Women, A Woman Killed with Kindness, The English Traveller); (c) passion (Arden of Feversham). The second condition which is fatal to domestic union is marriage due to compulsion (The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, The Witch of Edmonton, The Fair Maid of Clifton). Social disparity is a third condition that makes the marriage relation insecure (Othello).

It is noteworthy that the domestic tragedies not only represent the conditions which destroy domestic union, but, as was pointed out in the first chapter, their treatment of the theme is characterized by a strong moral purpose. They reveal with absolute plainness the evil which results from a violation of the social laws which govern marriage. They show that the

transgressor inevitably reaps suffering instead of the happiness he seeks. There is in domestic tragedy no softening of consequences, no sentimental excusing of vice. Alice Arden's crime is not justified by the greatness of her love. Frank Thorney atones for his cowardice with his life. Sometimes the ethical lesson is didactically enforced, as in A Warning for Fair Women, sometimes it is artistically implied, as in Othello; but the principle remains the same. Each of the domestic tragedies shows some danger which threatens domestic security. They are all warnings to the spectator to avoid in his own life the errors whose consequences he sees revealed in the plays.

CHAPTER IV

Differentiae of Inner Organization in Regard to Plot and Character

The most marked distinction within the group of domestic tragedies, apart from the variations of theme which have already been discussed, is one of technique. Among these plays there is a clearly defined gradation in dramatic effectiveness which is due to differences in inner organization. The gradation is a logical one, and violates chronological sequence, for some of the earlier plays are more effectively organized than the later ones.

The two primary elements in tragedy are plot and character. Plot is the outline of action which gives the play its form; character is the portrayal of individuals whose personalities give the plot content. The dramatist's most difficult problem lies in the combination of these elements. If undue emphasis is placed upon the episodes which constitute the action, and this significance as an expression of character is neglected, tragedy declines into melodrama. The play may have the interest of a tale of adventure, but it lacks dramatic effectiveness. On the other hand, if action is subordinated to character, and character as such absorbs all interest, the result is not a tragedy but a psychological study. Action is dramatic not as the arbitrary outcome of chance, but as the necessary result of causes which lie in character. A character is dramatic only when it is translated into deeds which are the unmistakable expression of its distinctive individuality. 'The conjunction of character and action is no chance mechanical mixture;' says Brander Matthews, 'it is rath-

er an intimate chemical union. Character and plot are not set side by side, they are united: each exists for the sake of the other and in combination with the other.'⁽¹⁾

There are among the domestic tragedies four classes or grades which are differentiated by the conception which they represent of the relation of plot to character. The first and crudest group shows only a mechanical relation between plot and character, with the whole emphasis laid upon plot. In the second class, the interest is still in plot, but one character bears a causal relation to events, and thus makes the plot intelligible. The third group shows a distinct artistic advance. In the plays of this group the development of plot is clearly the expression of character, but of a single character only. All minor characters are governed by the requirements of the action. The highest dramatic excellence is reached in the fourth class. In it the perfect correlation of plot and character is realized. All the characters are consistent and every action is clearly motivated.

These general statements on the organization of the four classes of domestic tragedy require further explanation. I shall try to make the distinctions clear by reference to the plays which exemplify the special relations of plot and character which are peculiar to each class.

I

The most natural tendency is to sacrifice consistency of character to effectiveness of episode, to outline characters merely in accordance with the demands of plot, and consequently to give the characters no definite individuality.

(1) A Study of the Drama, 162.

This extreme degree of externalism is illustrated in the group of plays which I shall discuss first. It consists of A Warning for Fair Women, The Witch of Edmonton, The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, and The Fair Maid of Bristow.

In A Warning for Fair Women, the relation of plot to character is thoroughly superficial. Of interesting action there is plenty; but of character delineation there is none. Persons in a given situation pursue lines of conduct which further the action, but their deeds are inconsistent, unmotivated, and do not express any definiteness of personality. Anne Sanders, the faithless wife, and George Brown, her seducer, are mere puppets. . . Although their love is properly the core of the tragedy, its whole course, Anne's yielding to her lover's wooing, and the final agreement to murder Sanders is relegated to an allegorical dumb show, while the main action is reserved for a presentation of the attempts on Sanders' life, his assassination, and the arrest and condemnation of the criminals. The author is interested in the deed, not in the doer; he is not concerned with the consistent representation of character. For this reason, although we see Mrs. Sanders at successive stages of her career an innocent and loyal wife, then Brown's mistress and a passive accomplice in her husband's murder, the causal links which render this change intelligible are not supplied. Brown's acts are equally contradictory. It is hard to reconcile his steadfast determination to seduce Mrs. Sanders, and his conscienceless pursuit of the murderous course which he has mapped out for himself, with his sincere if sudden repentance, and his final chivalrous effort to protect the life and good name of his mistress. It is impossible to get a

vivid, unified impression of any one of the characters in the play; they are not vitally human because they exist merely as props upon which to hang a plot.

Likewise, also, in The Witch of Edmonton, character is subordinated to plot. The protagonist, Frank Thorney, is the victim of events, rather than an active agent in shaping circumstances. The structure of the plot is such as to require him to commit a crime, yet at no time does he manifest any criminal impulse in his own nature.

On parting with Winnifred immediately after their secret marriage, he swears,

Once more, in hearing
Of Heaven and thee, I vow that never henceforth
Disgrace, reproof, lawless affections, threats,
Or what can be suggested against our marriage,
Shall cause me falsify that bridal oath
That binds me thine.(1)

He takes the vow with such evident sincerity that his easy submission to his father's command to marry Susan Carter comes as a shock. Moreover, his motive in breaking his vow is left in doubt. Is it sheer weakness due to cowardice? Is it filial obedience? Is it a necessary desire for Susan's generous marriage portion? Or is Thorney, as he himself seems to feel, the victim of an arbitrary fate? In the moment of his surrender, he exclaims,

On every side I am distracted;
Am waded deeper into mischief
Than virtue can avoid; but on I must:
Fate leads me; I will follow.(2)

The conviction that Thorney's deeds do not spring out of his own character, but are actuated by some malignant power which is acting through him, is augmented by the exceedingly

(1) I. i.
(2) I.ii.

superficial motivation of the murder of Susan. This decisive deed is not the natural result of Frank's feeling toward the woman whom he has wronged, nor is it consistent with a weak, but by no means evil, character. The witch's dog touches him, and he stabs, although the moment before nothing was further from his thoughts. The deed is no part of him. It is the involuntary reaction to an extremely applied stimulus. This shifting of responsibility upon Fate saves Thorney from the imputation of villainy, but it does so only by depriving him of all that makes him human and real - his free volition. The complete subordination of consistency of character to the demands of plot obscures the causal link between will and deed. It has also the effect of making Thorney appear a passive tool in the grasp of capricious chance.

The Miseries of Enforced Marriage is equally external in the relation of plot to character. The plot adopted by the playwright requires that the chief character shall do certain things; these things, accordingly, Scarborough does, although in so doing he appears thoroughly inconsistent. Our first and most vivid impression of him is of the depth of constancy of his love for Clare. Despite his desertion of her, this impression lingers with us until the last scene is reached. It is only the bitterness of this thwarted love that makes intelligible Scarborough's transformation from a frank and generous youth to a wanton and reckless prodigal. Yet at the close, in a family reconciliation which, however morally edifying it may be, is made impossible by all Scarborough's previous action and feeling, he forgets completely his first and only love. It is not in keeping with the character

of the William Scarborough who abuses and curses his unloved wife and children, and deliberately reduces his brothers and sisters to beggary, to be turned to mildness and repentance by the mere announcement that he has inherited a fortune. Remembering his former actions, we should expect the irony of the situation to drive him to greater desperation. Instead, the past, with its wrong and suffering, is erased from his memory, and he looks forward to a future of domestic happiness. This arbitrary turn given to a plot which would naturally end in disaster completely destroys the unity of Scarborough's character. His whole wretched career is rendered meaningless when it is deprived of its logical termination.

A minor inconsistency which adds to the contradictoriness of Scarborough's character is to be found in his attitude toward wealth. His motive in breaking faith with Clare is a mercenary one. But he immediately shows the utmost disregard for the money he has gained at the cost of both honor and happiness. It is his fear of poverty that induces him to marry. But he hurls himself forthwith into a prodigal career which reduces him to abject penury. His final moral regeneration has no spiritual source, but results from his falling heir to a fortune. This inconsistency is due to the fact that Scarborough is not conceived as an individual who does certain things, but is used merely as a puppet to present certain episodes. The emphasis is on plot; character is unimportant.

The Fair Maid of Bristow is another play in which the plot is over-emphasized, and the characters bear only a superficial relation to it. The happy ending does violence to

probability. It rests upon a series of accidents and coincidences, and it has no logical connection with the character of the protagonist. If Vallenger's natural inclination had been allowed to run its course without the highly improbable intervention of Challoner and Harbart, Sentlo's friend, it must have resulted in a double murder and the execution of the criminal. Instead, Vallenger is happily reunited with Annabell. The main characters are merely conventional. They

are sketches in outline and have no genuine individuality. Annabell is the typical patient Griselda, the wifely ideal of the Middle Ages. So colorless is she, and so superficially connected with the plot that there is nothing in her character to distinguish her from Susan Carter or Mrs. Scarborough. Either of them might be substituted for her without doing violence to the character or to the play. Vallenger is the typical prodigal and receives the prodigal's customary reward. His whole wanton and unprincipled career precludes the idea that his repentance will be permanent. So slight, however, is the relation of the plot to character that the ending of the play depends for its effectiveness upon our belief in his steadfastness in virtue, a course thoroughly inconsistent with his nature.

This play is one of the best examples of extreme externalism. The plot exists for its own sake and is in no way expressive of the definite personality of the characters. Consequently, the characters are perfectly lifeless and uninteresting. Their deeds are unmotivated and have not that inner consistency which alone could make them dramatically effective.

II

A distinct advance in organization is to be found in the second class of domestic tragedies. Here, as in the first group, interest is primarily in plot, but the action is better motivated. One character is consistently represented in action.

This stage is exemplified in one play, Arden of Fever-sham. We retain at the end a vivid impression of the personality of Alice Arden. Everything that she does is the direct and consistent manifestation of her own nature. The motive which inspires her every act is her great passion for Mosbie. Because of it she conspires against her husband with Michael, with the painter, with Greene, with the London cut-throats. It is the will-force of her character that binds together the otherwise disconnected incidents of the plot. It is notable that throughout the long, detailed series of attacks on Arden's life, we never lose consciousness of the fact that in them all a great will is striving through various instruments, and in spite of all obstacles, to attain its purpose. Alice Arden is the only person in the domestic tragedies, Othello excepted, to fulfill completely Brander Matthews' description of the tragic character, who 'stands forth the embodiment of will, knowing what he wants and bending all his powers to the accomplishment of his purpose.'⁽¹⁾

Although Alice Arden's deeds are all the expression of her will, she is not the mere abstract embodiment of a single purpose. The development of the plot reveals another phase of her character. In spite of her criminal passion, she shows

(1) Ib. 97

herself wholly conscienceless, not altogether unwomanly, and so maintains a hold upon one's sympathies. The conflict in her soul, her mourning for her lost innocence, and her desperate attempt to free herself from the bond that is dragging her down, is shown in her interview with Mosbie:

Ales - I pray thee, Mosbye, let our springtime
wither,
Our harvest els will yeald but lothsome
weeds,
Forget, I pray thee, what has past betwix
us,
For now I blushe and trouble at the thought

Mosbye. What? are you changde?

Ales. I, to my former happy life againe,
From tytle of an odious strumpet's name
To honest Arden's wife, not Arden's honest
wife.
Ha Mosbye, 'tis thou has rifled me of that
And made me slandrous to all my kin. (1)

Her final repentance, although it is the conventional outcome of a murder play, seems in keeping with her character, because we have previously seen that for all her hypocrisy and plotting, her conscience is still active.

It is only the character of Mrs. Arden that is vital; the other persons are only mechanically related to the plot.

III

In the third group of plays, interest centers in character, in the one character of the protagonist. The plots are interesting in themselves, but their logical organization is plainly dependent upon character. In other words, the hitherto neglected relation between mental causes and material events is emphasized. The plays of this type are: A Woman Killed with Kindness, and The English Traveller.

(1) III. V. 66-75.

In A Woman Killed with Kindness, the solution of the domestic problem is an unusual one, but it contains no element of surprise, so closely is it related to the inner nature of Frankford, the betrayed husband. All our impressions of his character, the remarks made about him by his friends, Nicholas' devotion to him, his generosity to Wendoll, help to make probable his forbearance when he is wronged. A particularly skillful touch in creating this impression is Frankford's frequent use of expressions and illustrations taken from the Bible. His religion is so ingrained in his life that we expect to see him display Christian virtues, and we would be unpleasantly shocked if he were to display the vindictiveness which would seem only natural in a man like Arden. It is thoroughly characteristic of Frankford that when he finds himself deceived and dishonored by wife and friend, his first thought is not of personal resentment but of poignant regret, almost pity:

O God! O God! that it were possible
 To undo things done; to call back yesterday!
 That time could turn up his swift sandy glass,
 To untell the days, and to redeem these hours!
 Or that the sun
 Could, rising from the west, draw his coach backward,
 Take from the account of time so many minutes,
 Till he had all these seasons called again,
 Those minutes and those actions done in them,
 Even from her first offence: that I might take her
 As spotless as an angel in my arms!
 But, oh! I talk of things impossible,
 And cast beyond the moon. (1)

But it is only in the case of the hero that Heywood carries his characterization to perfection. Wendoll and Mrs. Frankford are both unconvincing. The characterization of the

(1) IV. vi. 19-31.

erring wife is especially negative and contradictory. Her act which precipitates tragedy does not result from any base quality of her nature. In yielding to Wendoll's dishonorable suit she is motiveless. One is constrained to accept her own explanation that it is due to 'want of wit.' (1)

'One figure among many remains impressed upon the reader's memory once for all: says Swinburne, 'the play is full of incident, perhaps overfull of actors, excellently well written and passably well composed; but it lives, it survives and overtops its fellows, by grace of the character of its hero.....The other agents in the main plot are little more than sketches - sometimes deplorably out of drawing: Anne is never really alive till on her deathbed, and her paramour is never alive - in his temptation, his transgression, his impenitence - at all. The whole play, as far as we remember or care to remember it, is Frankford: he suffices to make it a noble poem and a memorable play.' (2)

In The English Traveller, the plot is subordinated to character. This subordination is evident in spite of the unusual complexity of the story. The whole situation is apparently arranged to display to the best advantage the virtues of Young Geraldine. He not only dominates the play: he is the play. The other characters are mere sketches which serve as foils for the central character. In contrast to Delavil, Geraldine's loyalty to his friend is the more striking; in contrast to Young Lionel, the scapegrace of the sub-plot, his filial respect and obedience take on new lustre; in contrast

(1) IV. iii.

(2) The Age of Shakespeare, 235.

with Mrs. Wincott, the purity and exaltation of his love is enhanced.

IV

In the fourth, and highest, class of domestic tragedies is realized the harmonious adjustment of plot to character, the complete motivation of every action, and the consistent expression of every character in deeds. This perfection of dramatic organization is found in Othello. From Othello himself down to Roderigo, every character conveys a perfectly clear-cut impression, because each one acts in accordance with the laws of his own being. The plot is complex because it is not merely the expression of one character in action, but it is the expression of the inter-relation, the action and reaction of all the characters. In spite of the prominence of intrigue (Iago's machinations) furthered by accident (Desdemona's loss of the handkerchief, Bianca's interview with Cassio), the final impression is that the outcome is not dependent upon intrigue and accident, but upon the noble simplicity of Othello and the childlike innocence and ignorance of Desdemona. Iago could not have wrought upon Hamlet, nor would Cordelia have made the fatal mistakes which were Desdemona's undoing.

Although to modern judgment the superficial connection between plot and character, which is especially marked in the first two groups of plays, may appear a fatal defect, it is not fair to assume that it was always so regarded, or that it is to be attributed solely to the incompetence of the dramatist. There are, I think, three causes to which this externality of conception may be assigned. These are: 1) the nature of

the audience, 2) literary antecedents, 3) sources of plot.

In the age of Elizabeth, a popular audience took no great interest in psychological subtleties. Their interest in the drama was closely akin to their interest in bear-baiting and cock-fighting. It was sensation they demanded - striking vigorous action which would give even their strong nerves a thrill. They were interested in the drama as a spectacle, and not as a philosophy of life. It is for such a public that the domestic tragedies were written, and these plays conform to the conditions imposed by the preferences of their audience.

A second and equally cogent reason for the externalism which characterizes most of the domestic tragedies, a quality which they have in common with other plays of the period, is to be found in their literary antecedents. Almost untouched by any foreign influence, the domestic tragedies trace their origin quite directly to the miracle plays. In these the epic element is predominant. Miracle plays engage the attention in a detailed presentation of well known events in sacred history. The scarcity of the personages involved prevents the dramatist from taking liberties with them, and characterization must necessarily be almost wholly conventional. Interest centers in what the saints do, what they are may be taken for granted. In domestic drama, the author's attitude toward his subject is much the same; it lacks only the reverence. Men interest him only in what they do; what they are is quite immaterial.

The third reason for weak characterization is the subject matter upon which the plot rests. Of the plays discussed,

A Warning for Fair Women, The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, and Arden of Feversham,⁽¹⁾ are based on actual well known occurrences. The Fair Maid of Bristow is a conventional treatment of a common motif. The dramatist is handicapped by public familiarity with his subject matter, a familiarity which requires the utmost fidelity to the facts of the case, and compels sometimes the introduction of material which is irrelevant to character. The author's attention is concentrated upon the faithful presentation of a series of more or less disconnected episodes. He treats character only incidentally. The characters are not the source of the action, but are dependent upon it. Then they do not act in accordance with the laws of their own being, but in accordance with the requirements of the situation. That the dramatists themselves sometimes felt the limitations imposed upon them by their material is shown in two passages from A Warning for Fair Women:

My scene is London, native and your own,
I sigh to think my subject too well known.
I am not feigned. Many now in this Round (2)
 Once to behold me in sad tears were drowned.

And again:

Perhaps it may seem strange to you al,
 That one hath not revengde another's death
 After the observation of such course.
The reason is that now of truth I sing,
And should I adde, or else diminish aught,
Many of the spectators then could say, (3)
I have committed error in my play.

(1) Possibly also The Witch of Edmonton.

(2) 86 - 88 (Italics mine).

(3) 1697-1707 (Italics mine).

SUMMARY

In the four classes of domestic tragedy which have just been differentiated, there is a distinct increase of dramatic effectiveness from the crude externalism of the first class, through the partial motivation of the second and third classes, to the harmonious blending of elements in the fourth class. This increased dramatic effectiveness is due to a clearer recognition of the logical connection between personality and deed. This logical connection, when embodied in the organization of a play, results in the perfect correlation of plot and character.

The purpose of the domestic tragedies, as it will be remembered, is a moral one. In such plays increased dramatic effectiveness is necessarily coincident with increased ethical effectiveness. This statement is true because calamity has a moral significance only when the victim brings it upon himself. In the plays where the causal relation of character to action is not clearly recognized, the penalty which one pays for a bad deed appears arbitrary, more or less accidental. It is only when a character acts in accordance with the inner consistency of his own nature that he is responsible for his deed. Then only does the penalty which he pays for crime or error appear logical and inevitable. Then only can his downfall have a moral effect upon the beholder. Consequently the mechanically organized domestic tragedies, especially those of the first group, are as inferior to Othello ethically as they are dramatically.

CHAPTER V

Secondary Characteristics of Domestic Tragedy which Indicate
its Literary Affiliations

In the beginning of my discussion I found it necessary, for the sake of clearness, to establish definite limits for domestic tragedy, and to treat it as an independent species. Valuable as such hard and fast distinctions may be for purposes of definition and logical classification, they are, nevertheless, somewhat arbitrary. Their very rigidity makes them misleading. The heterogeneous mass of Elizabethan drama divides itself into a number of fairly distinct types, and of these domestic tragedy is one; but the common origin of the types (sacred drama), their common popularity, and, in many cases, their common authorship, make it inevitable that the various species should react upon one another, and that there should exist among them points of similarity as well as of difference. In my first chapter, I mentioned certain characteristics which domestic tragedy has in common with other dramatic types. It is now my purpose to take up the deferred discussion of these secondary characteristics, realism and basis in fact, and to show that in them is indicated the close relationship of dramatic tragedy with certain other Elizabethan dramatic types.

I

In discussing the affiliations of domestic tragedy on its realistic side it is necessary to differentiate between two varieties of realism - naïve realism and the realism of

conscious art. Naïve realism arises from a lack of historical sense, and characterizes all Elizabethan drama. To it is due the spirit which found nothing incongruous in the conception of Noah and the Patriarchs as British yeomen, which thought of the Roman mob as in no way different from its London prototype, and which was not surprised to find church steeples familiarly referred to in the primitive and pagan age of King Lear. It is this unconscious realism of conception which helps to make Othello, which is based on an Italian novel and centers about a Moor and a Venetian, as immediate in its appeal to Elizabethan interest as Arden of Feversham, which is actually based on a contemporary incident. This naïve realism is not peculiar to literature; it is a characteristic of the age.

The second kind of realism, the realism of conscious art, has in domestic tragedy a two-fold application. It means, in the first place, absolute fidelity to source, a rigid adherence to the details of the original story. This is a characteristic which domestic tragedy has in common with other plays based upon fact. I shall, therefore, defer my discussion of the point until it is necessary to consider the question of sources. In the second place, that deliberate and intentional realism which characterizes domestic tragedy may be called bourgeois realism. By bourgeois realism is meant the effect of an absolutely faithful transcript of ordinary life, one which omits nothing and modifies nothing. It is the impartial realism of a photograph. Its purpose is actuality, and it has in it no trace of the artist's selective and organizing activity. It shows itself in the extreme localization and attention to petty detail so noticeable in the cruder domestic tragedies. For example: in Arden of

Feversham it is made known that Arden when in London dines 'at the Nages head, at the eighteen pence ordinary' (1), the scene of Arden's death is Feversham in Kent; and in A Warning for Fair Women the location of Anne Sander's house is very carefully specified. (2) All the irrevelant minutiae of common experience are brought on the stage. That this portrayal of the immaterial is not due to crudity of technique, but is rather a conscious device on the part of the author in accordance with an implied realistic creed, is shown in the previously quoted passages from A Warning for Fair Women (3), and in the epilogue to Arden of Feversham:

Gentlemen, we hope youle pardon this naked Tragedy,
Wherein no filed points are foisted in
To make it gracious to the eare or eye;
For simple truth is gracious enough,
And needs no other points of glosing stuffe. (4)

It is this attitude toward his work which causes Moorman to call the author of Arden of Feversham 'the first English dramatic realist, and the first who, refused to make nature bend beneath the yoke of art.' (5)

This bourgeois realism is a quality which the murder group of domestic tragedies has in common with two dramatic types otherwise very dissimilar to it, simple vernacular comedy like Heywood's interludes, and the unsatirical Comedy of Manners, as Middleton treated it. These are, as Schelling puts it, 'content to produce a picture too often grossly faithful, of the lives and the doings of the lower middle classes of

(1) II. ii. 137.

(2) I, 273 - 276.

(3) Ch. IV. 25 - 26.

(4) V, v. 14 - 18.

(5) The Cambridge History of English Literature, V, 270.

London.'⁽¹⁾ The dramatic theory which such plays illustrate is expressed in a very literal interpretation of Hamlet's opinion that the purpose of a play is 'to hold as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.' It is noteworthy that the realization of this theory seems almost unattainable in tragedy and comedy alike. In tragedy, as interest rises, trivial incidents are ignored, and only significant events are presented. An idealization of truth takes place. Othello is an example of this idealization. In comedy, on the other hand, absolute faithfulness to an amusing aspect of life almost invariably slips over into satire and caricature.

It is then evident that realism is a characteristic which domestic tragedy has in common with other dramatic types. Naive realism of conception is a characteristic of practically all Elizabethan drama, but it is especially prominent in plays whose scene is not English and whose date is not contemporary - miracles and classical histories. Conscious realism of treatment, on the other hand, is to be found 1) in plays based on actual English events ; 2) in plays which depict the ordinary course of life among the Elizabethan middle and lower classes - vernacular comedies, comedies of manners.

II

Recorded fact is the basis of domestic tragedy in its original form. Although this characteristic does not apply to all domestic tragedies, and therefore cannot be used as a touchstone in the way that Collier, Prölss, Morley, and Symonds used it, it applies certainly to the plays Arden of Feversham, A Warning for Fair Women, The Miseries of Enforced
 (1) Elizabethan Drama, II, 415.

Marriage, and possibly to The Witch of Edmonton, and it serves to indicate the relation of domestic tragedy to the chronicle-histories, and to the murder plays.

The relation of domestic tragedy to the chronicle-histories is immediately suggested by the fact that certain domestic tragedies are based on actual events. Unquestionably domestic tragedy has more points of contact with the English histories than with any other dramatic type. This is the more remarkable because the two species are so nearly identical in date that their similarity is not to be attributed to the influence of one type upon the other. Moreover, they do not owe their most distinguishing common quality to a common origin in an earlier dramatic type - although, like all other Elizabethan drama, they bear a traceable relation to the miracles and moralities.

The most salient characteristic of both is their distinctively English spirit. This spirit is rooted in an impulse which lies outside of literature at this time - the new national self-consciousness. This feeling of national self-consciousness took a two-fold turn which is responsible for the two dramatic types. The chronicle-histories are the expression of that great tide of patriotism which swept over England in the reign of Elizabeth, and which reached its height in the defeat of the Armada. The domestic tragedies owe their being to an allied popular feeling, a sense of the dignity and worth of the middle-class. 'In a period of national history,' says Ward, 'when the middle classes were beginning to assert themselves in the social system of the country....it could hardly be but that room should have been found in the drama

for exposition of the middle class point of view, middle class morality and humanity.' (1) Before the rise of domestic tragedy there were plays which dealt with the life of the middle classes, sometimes even, as in the domestic comedies, with the problems of family life; but the domestic tragedies were the first to treat that phase of life seriously. In them the dramatist no longer looks down upon the class of which he writes, and no longer regards humorously their joys and sorrows. He shares the feeling of the burgher class, and their sorrows have for him a tragic appeal.

The dramatist who appealed to peculiarly English feeling found his material ready to his hand in the chronicles. When he wished to inspire patriotism he recounted events of national importance, as in Richard the Second; when he appealed more especially to the middle class he sought rather to arouse the love of home, which is the final basis of all patriotism, and chose a subject like Arden of Feversham. In either case he found his plot in Holinshed. In either case he adhered to his source with painstaking fidelity. In turning to fact for his dramatic material the dramatist accepted the limitations which his source imposed. These plays, consequently, have a narrative rather than a dramatic interest. They are primarily plays of incident, and the episodes are arranged in accordance with their chronological sequence rather than in accordance with their causal and dramatic relations. This rigid adherence to historic truth is responsible for the superfluity of incident and the looseness of dramatic organization which have already been commented upon in referring to

(1) The Cambridge History of English Literature, VI, 107.

A Warning for Fair Women. (1)

Domestic tragedy and the chronicle history display a similarity of purpose. They do not bring upon the stage stirring events in national history or tragic deeds in private life merely to afford the groundlings an hour's entertainment. They reveal their relation to sacred drama in their didactic purpose, expressed or implied. In the chronicles the public duty of patriotism is inculcated. As Heywood puts it in his Apology for Actors, 'Plays are writ with this aim, and carried with this method, to teach their subjects obedience to their King, to show the people the untimely ends of such as have moved tumults, commotions and insurrections, to present them with the flourishing estate of such as live in obedience, exhorting them to allegiance, dehorting them from all traitorous and felonious stratagems.'⁽²⁾ In domestic drama, on the other hand, the private virtues are taught by showing the punishment of vice. Mezieres says of the writers of domestic tragedy, 'Sous leur plume, le drame resta éminemment moral, c'est-à-dire qu' il aboutit toujours à un dénouement conforme à la justice et que le mechant continua à y être puni, non pas seulement par le remords, mais par un chatiment materiel et visible destiné à servir de leçon aux spectateurs. En meme temps, le mal n' y fut presque jamais présenté sous des couleurs séduisants. Ils le peignirent au naturel, dans toute sa laideur, et ils en exagèrent plutôt qu' ils n'en adoucirent l' expression, afin de ne pas laisser de doute dans l'esprit

(1) Chapter IV. 42

(2) Quoted from Symonds, Shakspeare's Predecessors in the English Drama.

du public sur l'horreur qu'il doit inspirer.' (1)

The similarity between domestic tragedy and the chronicle history extends even to their later development, when the original form of each has been modified by the influence of romantic tragedy. When freed from the shackles of actuality and inspired by an aesthetic rather than a didactic purpose both reach their highest expression - domestic tragedy in Othello, chronicle-history in Macbeth and King Lear.

As we have seen, domestic tragedy resembles chronicle-history in original impulse, source, technique, purpose, and final development. The types differ only, as has been suggested before, in the aspect of English life which they present. Even this apparent difference serves to link them more closely together. Each supplements the other. The histories deal with political and public life; the domestic tragedies with family and private life. Together they present a complete picture of the age.

A remarkable characteristic of the domestic tragedies which are based upon actual record is that they are all criminal dramas. This characteristic, together with the allied qualities of fidelity to source and ethical intent, marks the relation of domestic tragedy to bourgeois murder plays of the type of Yarrington's Two Tragedies. (2) The explanation of their similarity is to be found in the fact that they are all based upon actual events in England. In the annals of a nation, such as the chronicles of Holinshed and Stow, only such striking instances as these crimes afford of upheaval in the

(1) Prédécesseurs et Contemporains de Shakespeare, 9.

(2) A landlord murders his guest in order to possess his gold.

sphere of private life could find a place. Although the bourgeois murder play enjoyed considerable popularity in the last decade of the sixteenth century, it proved an abortive type. It was tragic only as a newspaper account of a crime is tragic, in its vivid portrayal of physical horrors. It commanded only the passing interest accorded to a striking incident which has no general significance. Domestic tragedy, for all its outward correspondence with this ephemeral type, endures because it is tragic in essence. Because it presents the details of a recorded crime, it has the effect of a drama of physical horror, but through the particular details of a special incident it exhibits a typical picture of a family divided against itself. This is a motif of universal human appeal because it is the one tragic possibility that is common to all humanity. Every man is, first of all, a member of a family, and whatever threatens to destroy domestic happiness comes home to the heart of peasant and prince alike.

SUMMARY

Through its secondary characteristics, (1) realism (a) naive (b) conscious, and (2) source in fact, with its implication of episodic style and English spirit, domestic tragedy is related to:

- (1) Miracle plays
- (2) Classical and foreign histories
- (3) Interlude and vernacular comedy
- (4) Comedy of manners
- (5) Chronicle-histories (English)
- (6) Bourgeois murder plays

CONCLUSIONS

A careful study of the nature of domestic tragedy results in the following conclusions:

A. In regard to period and source.

- (1) From 1590 to 1642 is, approximately, the period of domestic tragedy. The earliest extant domestic tragedy was written about 1590, the last, about 1636. The period of greatest popularity is from 1590 to 1610.
- (2) The impulse which gives rise to domestic tragedy is a sense of the worth of the middle class, a feeling which is one phase of the new nationalism of the Elizabethan Age.

B. In regard to theme and organization.

- (1) The distinguishing mark of domestic tragedy is its theme, the destruction of family relations. This theme is invariably treated with the utmost moral seriousness.
- (2) Examination of the plots of the domestic tragedies reveals three variations of the main theme. These variations represent the influences which are destructive to the security of the family. They are: (a) infidelity, (b) marriage due to coercion, and (c) social disparity.
- (3) The effectiveness of the domestic tragedies, ethical as well as dramatic, varies in accordance with the inner organization of the plays in regard to plot and character.

C. In regard to literary affiliations.

- (1) There are certain plays which are akin to domestic tragedy in theme, but they are not domestic tragedies

because they fail to conform to the fundamental requirement of moral purpose. They are excluded because they subordinate the ethical motive to the requirements of humor, intrigue, sentiment, or novelty.

- (2) Through its secondary or stylistic qualities, realism and basis in fact, domestic tragedy is affiliated with: (a) miracle plays, (b) classical or foreign histories, (c) interlude and vernacular comedy, (d) comedy of manners, (e) bourgeois murder plays, (f) chronicle-histories.
- (3) Domestic tragedy is more closely allied to chronicle-history than to any other dramatic type. The two species are similar in original impulse, source, date, technique, purpose, and final development.

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APPENDIX

I

The following are the texts referred to in this thesis: For Arden of Feversham and The Yorkshire Tragedy, I used The Shakespeare Apocrypha, edited by C. F. Tucker Brooke, and printed at the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1908. For A Woman Killed with Kindness and The English Traveller, I used the Mermaid Edition of The Best Plays of Old Dramatists. The volume on Heywood is edited by Verity and Symonds, and published by T. Fisher Umvin, London, and Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1888. For The Witch of Edmonton, I used the volume of Dekker which belongs to the same series. It is edited by Ernest Rhys. For A Warning for Fair Women, I used The School of Shakspeare, II, compiled by Richard Simpson, and published by Chatto and Winders, London, 1878. Dodsley's Old English Plays, IX, edited by Hazlitt, and published by Reeves and Turner, London, 1874, furnishes the text for The Miseries of Enforced Marriage. The Fair Maid of Bristow is found in the Publications of the University of Pennsylvania, VIII, 1. It is edited by Arthur Hobson Quinn, and published at Philadelphia, 1902. For Othello, I used The Oxford Shakespeare, edited by W. J. Craig, and printed at the Clarendon Press. (1)

II

The following is a chronological list of the plays, together with a statement of their sources

(1) There is no reprint of The Fair Maid of Clifton.

1592⁽¹⁾Arden of Feversham.

The play is based upon a crime committed in 1551.

The immediate sources of the plot are:

Holinshed's Chronicle, (for the year 1552)⁽²⁾

Stow's Chronicle.

The Wardmote Book of Feversham.

The Roxburghe Ballads, III, 156.⁽³⁾

1599 A Warning for Fair Women.

The play is the dramatization of a murder committed in London, 1573. The materials of the plot are found in:

Holinshed's Chronicle (1577), Vol.II, 1258

Stow's Chronicle, 674 (edition of 1615)

Scarlet, Sundry Strange and Inhuman Murders

Munday - A View of Sundry Examples, 1581

Golding - A Brief Discourse of the Late Murther of Master G. Sanders, 1573.

1603 A Woman Killed with Kindness.

This play has no known source.

1604 Othello.

The plot is taken from an Italian novel, the Heccatomithi, by Giraldi Cinthio. It is the seventh tale of the third decade. As there was no English translation of the novel before 1604, Shakespeare probably found the story in the French

(1) Possibly as early as 1590.

(2) References to Chronicles and tracts are taken from The Shakespeare Apocrypha, The School of Shakspeare, and Singer's Das Burgerliche Trauerspiel in England.

(3) It is possible that the ballad is based upon the play.

translation of 1584.

1605 The Fair Maid of Bristow.

Quinn finds the source of this play in an earlier drama, How a Man May Choose a Good Wife from a Bad.

The common source of both is Cinthio's Heccatomithi.

1607 The Miseries of Enforced Marriage.

For sources, see The Yorkshire Tragedy.

1608 The Yorkshire Tragedy.

The play is based upon a crime committed in April, 1605.

The crime is recorded in two tracts and a ballad which were issued immediately after the event. They are:

'Two Unnaturall Murthers, the one practised by Master Caverly, a Yorkshire Gent. uppon his wife and happened on his children the 23 of Aprilis 1605.'

'A ballad of Lamentable Murther Done in Yorkshire by a gent. uppon 2 of his owne children sore woundin~~g~~ge his Wife and Nurse.'

The Araignement Condempnacion and Execucon of Master Caverly at Yorke in August 1605.

1623⁽¹⁾ The Witch of Edmonton.

The play was published as 'a known true story', but only the witch plot is certainly based on fact.

1633⁽²⁾ The English Traveller.

The play has no known source, although Heywood states that it is based on a real incident.

(1) This date is not certain. The play was first published in 1658.

(2) 1633 is the date of publication, the date of production is unknown.

1636 The Fair Maid of Clifton.

The play has no known source.

DUE	RETURNED
← Mar 8 '63	MAR 7 1963
← Mar 22 '63	MAY 6 1963
← May 24 '63	MAY 15 1963
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