

Domesticating the Citizen:

Household Authority, the Merchant Class Family, and the Early Modern Stage

Dissertation Abstract

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The family in London of the seventeenth century resided at the intersection of practices heard from the pulpit and of generic forms those listeners might see in the theaters. Upon both of these ideals lie the inevitable valences of authority for the householder. Because the householder's relationship with each member of his family necessitated differing levels of responsibility, the householder likely maintained different expectations for each. Even though I isolate specific plays and relationships within this dissertation, each relationship affects the others, compounding the complex interactions within the home. This complex web of relationships is merely one small part of a much larger social web in the vast city. The treatment of the family as society in small, however, allows for a modern interpretation of the city, or at least a vital part of the city for many of its citizens. Putting the city comedies together with conduct books allows for a range of possible, socially acceptable behaviors that stem from both a concern for reputation outside of the home and a desire for concord within the home. These plays make clear the complexity of living in the city household – and thus the complexity of relationships that made up the real part of the city, the people. While ideals might be preferable, the actual relationships in the home require the flexibility that the plays suggest for new inhabitants of the city.