

Ironic Oppositions and the Articulation of Dissent in Thomas Heywood's *The English Traveller*

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Burying of wives—
As stale as shifting shirts—or for some servants
To flout and gull their masters.
The English Traveller (V.i.220-22)

Thomas Heywood's *The English Traveller* gains a special urgency from the ironic oppositions that puzzle and provoke its audience. They are hinted at in the play's title, inscribed in its language and discursive strategies and, again, in the details of its narrative.¹ They find expression in a variety of ways, including the brutal sarcasm and ironic jibs that minor characters launch against those in power, in the ironic mismatch between what characters make of the situations in which they are embedded and the broader, less parochial view the audience is encouraged to take, and in the destabilizing effects of a narrative that is expected to head in one direction and ends up somewhere else. There is a discomfiting uncertainty about how characters will perform in spite of their confident bluster. Doubts expressed by some characters promote skepticism, even scorn, and distance the audience from what is happening on stage. These carefully crafted ironic devices, whether verbal, dramatic, or sequential, release a storm of ambiguous, competing responses and valuations.

One such device turns on the layering of meanings within a single utterance. A bit of linguistic wizardry brings the utterance into conversation with itself, as if one layer of meaning were conversing with or disputing against another, rippling the surface, as it were, and signifying what might otherwise have been left unsaid. And, repeatedly,

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there is an enveloping buzz or hum of irony to qualify whatever else a particular utterance manages to convey.

It is the aim of this paper to show that irony is the rhetorical mode that refines and extends the play's meanings even as it locates the play within identifiable genre boundaries, in effect, marking the play as satire. Among targets of attack are those domestic and social practices and attitudes that, in the playwright's view, pose a serious threat to the society to which he belongs. The play also takes aim at various dramatic conventions familiar to the theater of the day. The objects of satire are both societal and theatrical. Weapons of attack include mockery and ridicule as employed chiefly by minor characters who are less anxious than others about their social standing and able to voice more freely their amused disdain at the antics of those they serve. Their insistent and sustained commentary must have struck home with at least some members of the Cockpit audience when the play was first performed in what is likely to have been 1624 or soon after.² The audience, too, may have been amused, perhaps even saddened, by what characters in both plot and subplot are willing to undertake in blind pursuit of position and property. The display of callousness and hypocrisy as they close ranks in the final scene cannot have gone unnoticed. The climactic celebration of a same-sex marriage and the imagined succession by parthenogenesis would, perhaps, have had a special appeal to those in the audience with a taste for irony.

In the thematic structure of both plot and subplot, the notion of the house, the private domain, is crucial and informing. The leading issues, at least from the point of view of the house holding gentry, are the protection of the honor and integrity of the house and the orderly transfer of property. The play focuses on three households, the stability of each threatened, in the first instance by an unfaithful wife, in the second by a rebellious son, and in the third, by a jealous and demanding father. Women are implicated and eventually held accountable. The consoling, self-serving notion is advanced that their elimination,

either by death or banishment, restores domestic tranquility and insures the survival of all that is at risk.

Such, then, in broad outline is the progress the play charts, stripped of the tensions and controversies that enlarge its scope. The play is open-ended, so to speak, resistant to summary statement or resolution. Voices and behaviors compete for dominance and control in a space where events are insistently viewed from different perspectives and appealed to in support of different loyalties and allegiances. The resulting dialectic suggests that Heywood is less committed to defending social attitudes and practices than he is to making them accessible to analysis and dissection.

To stress Heywood's role as a social critic is to take exception to what is usually said about the play. And for most of the last century very little was said, the play relatively free from critical scrutiny. The exceptions are early and late. Norman Rabkin broke the silence in 1961. And in 1994, Lena Cowen Orlin devoted a chapter to *The English Traveller* in *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England*. 1994 also saw the publication of Richard Rowland's illuminating essay on the play's historical and theatrical context and on its relationship to Plautine comedy. Each account bears the unmistakable imprint of critical practices and preoccupations favored in the academy at the time of composition; each reflects a prevailing critical temper or period style.

Rabkin focuses on the struggle of an especially benighted, ill-equipped, and untried character to rid himself of his illusions and to deal with things as they are. It is his experience in the world and, in particular, his several encounters with Mistress Wincott who functions in much the way that Spenser's Duessa does in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, though admittedly she does so in the very different environment of a domestic drama. In a series of episodes that recall the trials of the Redcrosse Knight, the hero learns to distinguish what seems to be from what is and thereby completes his "moral education" (Rabkin 3). Rabkin subscribes to a mode of literary study devoted to the elucidation of moral and humanistic values and fairly

representative of how literature was studied and taught in English Departments at least in America in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Against that background, it is not surprising that he should be less concerned with the formal or historical features of the play than with its thematic content and the trials of its leading character in his journey toward enlightenment. It is no less surprising that the essay is silent on issues of class and gender. In pursuit of what amounts to a singleness of purpose, Rabkin seems ready enough to desert the play or at least to limit his response to it. He leaves little doubt about how we are to think about it or about the ideology to which it conforms.³

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the studies by Orlin and Rowland. They focus on the social and historical environment and on issues of class and gender. Within a limited historical register, they explore a variety of interests under the direction of new historicism, feminist criticism, and, in Rowland's case, theater history. They track the work the play does to record and challenge prevailing social attitudes and behavior. Though the conclusions they reach could not be more dissimilar, their efforts must be credited with the re-direction of critical focus and energy, expanding, if not altogether erasing, more traditional boundaries of inquiry and inviting a crowd of new issues and valuations to take the field.

The effort to site a particular text in a social landscape is admirably carried forward in Orlin's *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England*. She is primarily concerned with domestic relations in the period and, in particular, with questions of power and authority in the private sphere. Central to her thesis is the idea that house holding, property and possessions are key indexes to male identity. She contends that domestic life is rigged according to patterns of patriarchal authority and male privilege, that a man's home is his castle, and that women are often viewed as a threat to order and tranquility. *The English Traveller* plays a key role in her study, offering what she regards as unambiguous testimony in support of her thesis.

Orlin has no trouble in finding evidence of gender prejudice and bigotry in the play. There is no denying that the presiding male char-

acters treat women as either disruptive and troublesome or with such casual indifference and neglect that they fade into the background, ceasing to count in life or death. Attitudes expressed by Heywood's men rise to a level of misogyny too blatant to be denied. Orlin goes further: refusing to distance the playwright from his characters, she argues that the play is slanted in favor of male exclusivity and privilege, that it constitutes an uncontested denial of anything approaching gender equality. "The aim of this text," Orlin writes, "is its arduous reclamation of the domestic sphere from the intrusive female," an aim realized at the end of the play in what she describes as "Heywood's gynephobic closing fantasy" (252; 268).

For all their differences, Rabkin and Orlin agree in identifying Heywood as a defender of the status quo, a proponent, according to Rabkin, of traditional moral values, according to Orlin, of patriarchy and male privilege. Rabkin finds that the play comes down on the side of conventional morality. Orlin holds much the same view but argues that the morality in question is the product of a beleaguered, gender-insensitive, repressive society struggling against the forces of social change. Neither critic is prepared to discuss strategies or valuations beyond those that conform to what they regard as the ideological thrust of the play. Rowland, on the other hand, takes a more open, less reductive approach. He refuses to brand Heywood as a defender of the status quo, presenting him instead as a concerned witness to what is loathsome and disabling in his society. Rowland finds the gentry and, by implication, the codes of conduct to which they subscribe to be deeply flawed and deserving of the audience's contempt. He believes that Heywood, while seeking the audience's concurrence in that assessment, is at pains to exempt two characters of a different social class, holding them separate and making of them the comic heroes of the play. The characters in question are Roger, the good natured and companionable servant in the Wincott household, and Reignald, the witty and resourceful servant-protector of the dissolute and extravagant Young Lionel. Their presence leads Rowland to conclude that the comic spirit, though severely strained—particularly in the final

scene—manages somehow to weather the storm and to bring the play into conformity with the conventions of Plautine comedy. Thus he settles the question of genre, even as he concedes that within the comic closure there remain those “pretenders to wit whose sense of comedy [...] is governed by the drive for gain, people who are cultured but complacent or vicious” (Rowland 154).

My purpose is less to argue for or against one reading or another but rather to claim that, while the play may support such focused readings, it is not exhausted by them, that it invites a more complex, multilayered response. At the very least I hope to counter a tendency in recent criticism to downgrade the play as a single-minded defense of patriarchy and male privilege. I hope as well to show that genre properties play a crucial role in directing and qualifying our response.

Two English travelers, Young Geraldine and Old Lionel, returning from abroad, stir up their respective neighborhoods and trigger much of what follows. Old Lionel’s problem is to reclaim his house from a riotous crew who has occupied it during his absence and is now given entirely to drink and sex. Young Geraldine’s arrival poses a different sort of problem. His relationship with his father is severely strained when he becomes a frequent visitor in the house of neighbor Wincott, who embraces him as a prospective son and heir. That he enjoys Wincott’s favor and that of Wincott’s wife causes a rift between father and son. The father fears a scandal and takes steps to protect the family’s reputation. It appears that Young Geraldine’s involvement with the Wincotts will threaten the peace and tranquility of both households. Instead, the role he plays is that of an angry avenger, performing a surgical strike intended to rid the Wincott household of the corruption that lies hidden within. In due course, he regains his father’s approval and, at the same time, takes title as heir to the Wincott estate. The adulterous wife, having been discovered with her lover in the innermost recesses of the house, is brought forth, displayed, and carried away with the alarming and sanctimonious instruction that she seek redemption in death: “Die, and die soon [...] / But prithee, die repentant” (V.i.172-73).

The first scene introduces Young Geraldine and his friend Dalavill bound for the Wincotts where they join members of the family, the master and his young wife. Geraldine, recently returned from abroad, renews his acquaintance with the family and with Mistress Wincott whom he had known before her marriage and who, a servant reports, is now trapped in a January/ May marriage. It had once been assumed that she and Geraldine would marry. His decision to travel abroad put an end to the rumor and was a factor in her decision to marry Wincott. In their first private meeting after his return, Mistress Wincott declares that her marriage was "never wished nor sought" (II.i.231). At the same time she professes her respect for her "dear husband" (II.i.248) and that she does not regret her marriage (II.i.231-32). This is the more surprising because in her response to Geraldine it becomes clear that she would like to resume the intimacy she shared with him before her marriage. Geraldine is understandably nervous and embarrassed at this first meeting, declaring what is perfectly obvious to them both: "We now are left alone" (II.i.200). Mistress Wincott dismisses his concern: "[w]hy, say we be; who should be jealous of us?" and rather paradoxically adds that "[t]his is not first of many hundred nights/ That we two have been private; from the first of our acquaintance [...] We knew each other" (II.i.201-06). In the exchange that follows, she is clearly the more forthcoming, more venturesome, urging Geraldine to take up where he had left off and asking if he does not mean "to stretch it further" (II.i.251). This exercise in gamesmanship has a humorous side; there is Mistress Wincott boldly pressing ahead and Geraldine in demurral and retreat. His refusal to be drawn into what Mistress Wincott is broadly hinting at may spring from his sense of obligation to his host but it also suggests a reluctance to renew a relationship from which he had earlier fled. What happens now is in line with what we know of the earlier break and, at the same time, anticipates a second flight for which Geraldine prepares later in the play. At this juncture, his escape route lies through metaphor. The text he spins casts Mistress Wincott in the role of his exchequer, the keeper of all the treasures of his hopes and love which,

he adds, “were stored in” her and would have continued to be held in reserve were it not for his “unfortunate travel” (II.i.234 and 235). This excursion into a world of trade and commerce is followed by an even more unsettling proposal to refigure and interpret their relationship as that of brother and sister, at least until Wincott die and Mistress Wincott is free to confer her widowhood on him. The ingenuity with which these maneuvers are undertaken fails to obscure the harder truths of Geraldine’s performance. His reluctance to become involved suggests at the very least an abiding fear of intimacy and a failure of erotic energy, aspects of behavior even more pronounced later in the play.

A clue about how we are to regard Geraldine and his circle is inscribed in what they say and in the distinctive tones and rhythms of their speech. There is, for example, the extravagant, sometimes overbearing language of power. We know from the outset that Old Geraldine is disposed to think the worst of Mistress Wincott. Dalavil, Iago-like and for reasons of his own, feeds the fire of suspicion when he confides to Old Geraldine that the wife could hardly be blamed “hugging so weak an old man in her arms,/ To make a new choice of an equal youth/ Being in him so perfect” (III.i.61-63). He hastens to add that, of course, he thinks her honest. Old Geraldine becomes even more suspicious when Wincott and his wife beg him to allow Young Geraldine to return with them after their visit. The father refuses and Young Geraldine, after seeing the guests on their way, rejoins his father and is treated to a heavy dose of fatherly advice. The twin themes are the ruinous consequences of an adulterous relationship and the general untrustworthiness of women.

The speech is remarkably revealing of the habits of mind that identify the character and the ironic misfirings and abuses to which they contribute:

How men are born
 To woo their own disasters. [...]
 This second motion makes it palpable.
 To note a woman’s cunning: make her husband

Bawd to her own lascivious appetite
And to solicit his own shame. [...]
 What will not woman
To accomplish her own ends? (III.i.115-25)

The audience must regard Old Geraldine's lament with some suspicion. It is not only that his condemnation rises to an absurd level of generality. It does but, with reference to the case at hand, that's beside the point. While Mistress Wincott's performance, including her dalliance with Geraldine and her manipulation of her husband to the end that Geraldine is asked to join their party, is not entirely blameless, it does not support the severity or scope of Old Geraldine's indictment. Subsequent events will, of course, complicate matters and, according to Rabkin, confirm the stereotype, the effect of which, retrospectively, might seem to vindicate Old Geraldine's misogyny, if not his logic. The stereotype is first held up to scrutiny, found wanting, and then re-invested with authority. That Mistress Wincott is falsely accused of adultery, then commits it, and finally is condemned for having done so is not the whole story. Stereotypes may be appealed to but at a measurable risk. Those who meet the world instructed by them are likely to be ill-served. In the fictional world a series of ironic disclosures underscores the inadequacy of such attempts to bring the world to order. The play is rich in misogynistic stereotypes and, at the same time, enlists an alternative mechanism or counterweight to throw against them. The scene in question brilliantly illustrates the strategy. Old Geraldine is quick to refer the encounter with Mistress Wincott to a sexual stereotype. The move is less than persuasive for what it fails to reckon with. The speaker's grasp of the situation is hobbled by his reliance on a fixed and unyielding idea. He allows the idea to trump what might otherwise bring him closer to the actuality of things.

A very different concept functions in precisely that way when later in the scene Young Geraldine tries to counter his father's outburst. Old Geraldine has delivered an ultimatum: "For till thou canst acquit thyself of scandal/ And me of my suspicion, here, even here,/ [...] I shall expire my last" (III.i.210-13). Young Geraldine declares that if he

ever be the cause of scandal, he would willingly endure “the greatest implacable mischief/ Adultery can threaten” (III.i.221-22). He continues to speak in his own behalf by providing a catalogue of Mistress Wincott’s virtues. The idealizing portrait is no less stereotypical than was his father’s misogynistic one. The two portraits attempt to present a common subject and that neither comes close to the mark should not go unnoticed:

For that lady,
 As she is beauty’s mirror, so I hold her
 For chastity’s examples: from her tongue
 Never came language that arrived my ear
 That even censorious Cato, lived he now,
 Could misinterpret; never from her lips
 Came unchaste kiss; or from her constant eye
 Look savouring of the least immodesty.
 Further—

(III.i.224-32)⁴

Old Geraldine cries “Enough.” (III.i.232). He refuses to hear more of this wonderfully inflated and artful rehearsal of chastity’s examples. For all the detail, it remains strikingly impersonal, generalized, insubstantial, a fleeting reflection in beauty’s mirror, unrivalled, hyperbolic, absolute, unimpeachable, and as far as any human sitter is concerned, totally unrecognizable. Old Geraldine, unimpressed by the spinning rhetoric, returns to the matter at hand and extracts from his son a promise to have no more dealings with the Wincotts.

Rabkin has alerted us to the deployment of familiar stereotypes, but I cannot agree that the result is simply to reinforce them. The introduction in this scene of opposing sexual stereotypes suggests that there is more at stake than their vindication. What occurs hardly spells victory for one or the other, but rather shows what trouble follows from their uncritical deployment. Throughout the play characters have trouble with stereotypes and categories of thought. The mental world in which they stumble is severely narrowed and constrained.

They also, not surprisingly, have trouble with their vocabulary. Heywood is extraordinarily adept at exploiting the comic vulnerability that erupts from the mismatch between word and idiom on the one

hand and the non-verbal world on the other. Early in the play Dalavil steps out of the frame of the narrative to remark on the absurd distortions and betrayals to which language contributes. His observation is casual enough but its import becomes less so as the metaphors in question work their way through the entire text. His aside is prompted by a rush of sustained wordplay in which Old Geraldine's generosity in "lending" his son is likened to the practice of "moneyed men" who would ordinarily charge interest but for friends charge nothing. Mistress Wincott picks up the figure, saying that such friends incur a debt they cannot pay. Her sister chimes in with the notion that the longer the debt is allowed to run the greater the indebtedness. Old Geraldine is not to be outdone in dueling courtesies. He tells them they are a good risk because the return of principal is reckoned in "such large use of thanks" (III.i.23). This yoking together of commerce and courtesy is too much for Dalavil: "What strange felicity these rich men take/ to talk of borrowing, lending and of use,/ The usurer's language right" (III.i.24-26).

The introduction of the commercial idiom here and elsewhere in the play opens a gap between what characters say and what the audience hears them say. Thus what is presumed to be the intended or literal meaning is set against a context where the words do not fit, where they jar and produce friction. The invasion of financial metaphors into a sphere of discourse where they are not expected, where they remain somehow foreign and unfamiliar, constitutes a violation of decorum and, at the very least, raises the level of critical awareness.⁵ Instances of this linguistic crossing or philandering are too numerous to be ignored.

Old Geraldine falls into a commercial idiom when he enumerates the possible consequences of what he mistakenly understands his son to be proposing: "Forfeit thy reputation here below/ And th'interest that thy soul might claim above/ In yon blest city" (III.ii.198-200). The verb "forfeit" would seem to ring true enough. There is Isabella's example in *Measure for Measure* where she reminds Angelo that "All the souls that were were forfeit once" (II.ii.73). But the notion of ac-

crued interest paid out in the next world invites a more complex response. The suggestion is that Young Geraldine's lease on both reputation and eternal life would expire were he to proceed as his father thinks he will. The conjunction of worldly reputation and eternal life, implying that they are somehow equal and complementary, strikes a discordant note.

Imagery of bookkeeping and banking shows up again when Young Geraldine confronts Mistress Wincott with the goods; proof, that is, of her adultery, what he calls an "ear-witness" account. To her lament "I am undone," Geraldine admonishes her: "But think what thou hast lost/ To forfeit me" (V.i.159-60). It is an extraordinary utterance suggesting among other things that she has made a bad bargain, losing what was "fixed [...] and unalterable" (V.i.161) so as to forfeit him, to give him up, more literally, to venture beyond him. A second meaning suggests that she has paid a price to make a mockery of him, to put him down as trivial, so much small change, and a penalty that might be paid as in a game of forfeits. It offers some measure of Geraldine's character that at this climatic meeting he should dwell on his own grievances to the exclusion of everyone and everything else. His language from here to the end of the play some hundred lines later carries with it this subversive or ironic component. Take, for example, the arraignment of Mistress Wincott that is as hyperbolic and extravagant as was his earlier blazon of praise. He likens her first to a Siren drawing men to their destruction and then takes his ammunition from a biblical and theological registry:

O, thou mankind's seducer.
 [...] thou adulteress,
 That hast more poison in thee than the serpent
 Who was the first that did corrupt thy sex,
 The devil! (V.i.122-27)

The denunciation parades the traditional weapons of a misogynistic attack but collapses of its own weight. The rhetorical overkill cannot pass unnoticed. Geraldine's hostility is boundless; it is as if he were to adapt that long-discredited and politically incorrect adage to proclaim

that the only good woman is a dead woman: "Die, and die soon; acquit me of my oath, / But prithee, die repentant" (V.i.172-73). His outburst is far in excess of what the situation calls for and distressingly self-serving.

The action of the play is set initially at the margin, so to speak, and moves progressively closer to the core or center of the Wincott house through what are identified as its public rooms, then its hallways and corridors, advancing even to the door of the master bedroom. The movement reverses that of the subplot where the inside is turned outside. Here the outside is penetrated and peeled away. Young Geraldine believes that he has reclaimed the site from evil, exorcised the corruption that lay within. For all the commendation he receives in the final scene, the audience is likely to be outraged by his flagrant insensitivity and indifference to the suffering of others. That assessment is not altogether eclipsed by the play's final, festive celebration. The characters gather for what was to have been Geraldine's second leave-taking. What they are treated to, instead, is a homecoming, a wedding feast, and, at least for the male survivors, a ceremony of ritual bonding.

The subplot provides a skillful parody of the main action. In both, the secrets of the house are laid bare. Old Lionel's household is quite literally dismantled, its contents carried to the street and hauled away. Old Lionel is temporarily out of the country. In his absence, Young Lionel, a drunken, fun-loving layabout, together with the courtesan Blanda and assorted hangers-on are in possession of the house. Their activities are reported by Young Geraldine who delights his auditors with a detailed account of what he has seen from the street. The occupants of the house, we are told, having drunk more than they should, are convinced that the house is a ship in the midst of a great storm and about to sink. A lookout

Reports a turbulent sea and tempest towards,
And wills them, if they'll save their ship and lives,
To cast their lading overboard. At this
All fall to work, and hoist into the street,

As to the sea, what next come to their hand:
 Stools, tables, trestles, trenchers, bedsteads,
 cups, pots, plate and glasses. (II.i.146-52)

The house is literally being unpacked, its contents tossed out. A crowd gathers to claim the lucky find. The situation is the more ironic when we consider that even as Young Lionel and his mates are dismantling the house, his father struggles through the world to add to its store:

the one greys

His head with care, endures the parching heat
 And biting cold, the terrors of the lands
 And fears at sea in travel, only to gain
 Some competent estate to leave his son.
 Whiles all that merchandise through gulfs, cross-tides,
 Pirates and storms he brings so far, the other
 Here shipwracks in the harbour. (II.i.93-100)

Predictably the father returns. An all too capable servant Reignald is enlisted to save his young master from discovery. When the father does show up, Reignald dissuades him from entering the house by convincing him that an angry ghost is in residence following the commission of a crime. He, for a time at least, fails to penetrate the crime scene. Both he and the audience are denied access.

Having managed one hurdle, Reignald is called upon to scale another. He must explain the disappearance of some £500 that Young Lionel has borrowed in his father's absence and squandered, on food, drink, and entertainment. The loan plus interest is due. Reignald invents a tale of shrewd dealing. The money was invested in property on which Young Lionel has made a killing. His father is delighted and asks to inspect the property. He is delighted to discover that it is the house of his neighbor Ricott. It then falls to Reignald to inform the neighbor that Old Lionel wishes to visit the house without, of course, revealing to Ricott that Lionel believes the house to be his. A visit is arranged and a hilarious scene follows in which the dialogue moves on parallel tracks, a brilliant exchange in which each speaker is deaf to

the other's meaning. In addition to its display of Reignald's dazzling ingenuity, the scene illustrates a desire on the part of Old Lionel to think well of his son, indeed a willingness to put himself at risk in order to sustain the illusion that his son is blameless and above reproach. It comes as no surprise, then, that Lionel finds it in his heart to forgive his son when the extent of his waywardness is revealed. There is, however, one condition that Young Lionel must meet. His father demands that the woman with whom his son is living be sent packing. It is all too characteristic of the social world depicted in the play that it is a woman whose removal restores domestic order and tranquility. To accommodate his father and, perhaps more to the point, to insure his financial future, Young Lionel conforms. He abandons the woman for whom he had declared "an affection fixed and permanent" (I.ii.200). He dismisses the affair as "mere shadows, toys and dreams, / now hated more than erst I doted on" (IV.vi.263-64). Young Lionel's performance is that of a grubby hypocrite. The implication is that Blanda, homeless and deserted, deserves much better than she gets. Father and son join a final gathering to which they have been invited by Wincott.

Dissenting voices continue to be raised by the servants, more alert to what goes on around them than their masters. As household spies and brief chroniclers, they register their disenchantment, their comments being often condescending and sardonic.⁶ Typically, the servant Bess tries to warn the uncomprehending Geraldine:

You bear the name of landlord, but another
Enjoys the rent; you dote upon the shadow,
But another he bears away the substance. (III.iii.70-72)

Geraldine can only ask her to "be more plain" (III.iii.73). Again, when he comes to the defense of his friend, Bess speaks her wisdom against his empty-headedness: "Come, come, he is what he is, / And that the end will prove" (III.iii.51-52).

The servant Reignald is similarly outspoken when it suits him to be so. He concludes his elaborate intrigue with the proviso that, unless he is assured of his pardon, he will stand:

Like a statue in the forefront of your house
 For ever, like the picture of Dame Fortune
 Before the Fortune playhouse. (IV.vi.296-98)

An appropriate image, certainly, in view of his efforts to direct the lives of others. About his performance, Old Lionel is moved to say "Counselled well;/ Thou teachest me humanity" (IV.i.94-95). That this remark comes in response to prudent business advice that Reignald has seen fit to offer is, to say the least, ironic. That Old Lionel construes the advice to be a lesson in humanity tells us that his pursuit of gain is both all consuming and humorless. The context frames the remark as an ironic joke, the import of which is lost on him. Here again a character is heard to say more than he means. His conduct later in the play shows no sign that he has learned humanity or anything else that would significantly affect his dealings with others.

If this exchange fails to enhance Reignald's role as moral tutor, it does confirm his success as playwright and satirist even as he announces his retirement:

I was the fox,
 But I from henceforth will no more the cox-
 Comb put upon your pate. (IV.vi.327-29)

In the final scene, whatever sympathy gets expressed for Mistress Wincott comes from the servants. When she asks to be carried from the stage, it is Roger who is moved to exclaim "My sweet mistress" (V.i.206), but the best Young Lionel can do is to rationalize her distress by turning to a sexual stereotype in what Richard Rowland so aptly describes as a piece of fatuous misogyny (153):

A woman's qualm,
 Frailties that are inherent to her sex,
 Soon sick, and soon recovered. (V.i.211-13)

And it is Reignald who delivers the final, ironic summing-up. Wincott declares that the loss of his wife would leave him more wretched than were he to forfeit life and estate. Old Geraldine muses that "I the like/

Suffered when I my wife brought unto her grave" (V.i.216-17). Neighbor Ricott, in response to Geraldine, reminds him that such losses "are not new, but common" (V.i.220). The complacency of the observation triggers Reignald's cynical aside. He is clearly abashed by the callous indifference of those around him:

Burying of wives
as stale as shifting shirts—or for some servants
To flout and gull their masters. (V.i.220-22)

The lines suggest that the burying of wives is as "stale" in the sense of being as trite, hackneyed, unremarkable as is the act of changing a piece of clothing that one puts on or takes off at will, or, in a different register, something as predictable as for servants to scoff at and cheat their masters, activities alike in being unexceptional, run-of-the-mill, commonplace. The speech shares in that generalizing impulse encountered elsewhere in the play, particularly in the pronouncements of the Geraldines, father and son. Whereas their utterances sputtered out like unplugged balloons, what Reignald says, though no less encompassing, has more staying power and thrust. The audience is alert to the sarcasm, knows he does not mean what he says, is in control of his discourse where the other speakers are not. The analogies he offers identify the behavior in question as unremarkable, when, of course, it constitutes a monstrous travesty of accepted social practice. The speech gains added authority by virtue of its colloquial and proverbial style. Paradoxically, it claims a universality even as it signals a rootedness in history. Behind the image of shifting shirts lurks a proverb that does, in fact, have a history. Tilley, for example, cites versions beginning in 1596 and continuing well into the next century (600); its meaning is a matter of local usage, acquired over time and native to a particular place and culture.⁷ Its down-home, street-smart domesticity lends credibility to Reignald's attempt to capture a sense of outrage at what is happening.

No sooner has he voiced his concern than a character identified in the cast list only as "the owner of the house supposed to be pos-

essed" breaks in to remind the gathering that Mistress Wincott may still be among the living: "Best to send/ And see how her fit holds her" (V.i.222-23). His auditors, having already resigned themselves to the idea of her death, have moved on to commiserate with each other. It is striking that it should fall to this minor player, an aggrieved victim of a slander perpetrated in Young Lionel's defense, to remind the group of what they have seemingly forgotten. His concern is immediately answered when Prudentilla and Roger enter with word that Mistress Wincott is dead. They are in possession of a letter from her. It is perhaps the more ironic that, having been exiled from this final scene, Mistress Wincott is now represented by proxy. Young Geraldine answers the news of her death with an almost instantaneous cost-benefit analysis. In an aside, he reckons that by dying she gives him "a free release/ Of all the debts I owed her" (V.i.229-30). The audience seems likely to conclude that Mistress Wincott, having so recently been bedded by Dalavill, is now violated a second time. Wincott's concluding lines hardly redress the balance. An initial insult is embedded in his declaration that the sequence of events which the occasion would seem to require will be reversed, the celebratory banquet to come before the funeral rites. No less demeaning is his curiously contrived endorsement of the duplicity with which "gallants" celebrate the deaths of "thrifty fathers":

First feast, and after mourn; we'll, like some gallants
That bury thrifty fathers, think't no sin
To wear blacks without, but other thoughts within. (V.i.261-63)

If, as Fredric Bogel has recently written, "satire works to produce a kind of defamiliarization of the object that is also a recovery of our own capacity for disapproval and rejection," then what transpires here fills the bill, so to speak, jarring the audience and securing its disapproval (51).

The play invites an ironic response, particularly with respect to the exclusivity that prevails in the last scene. What was to have been a matter of leave-taking and farewell turns to marriage:

This meeting that was made
Only to take of you a parting leave
Shall now be made a marriage of our love
Which none save only death shall separate. (V.i.253-56)

Even as the characters gather in celebration, the theater audience is reminded of what has been excluded. Closets have been cleared, private chambers emptied out, possessions distributed in a fury of general housecleaning that creates a space without women, a second, sanitized Eden. The adulterers have been dealt with. Dalavil, like Wendell in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, takes up life as an English traveler and Mistress Wincott is conveniently dispatched. The housecleaning has been more extensive than in the earlier play, generally conceded to have furnished a model for *The English Traveller*. The plays have much in common; both are, of course, dramas of adultery, both feature the death of an errant woman, the escape into exile of her lover, and the necessary adjustment in domestic relationships occasioned by her death. But the differences are even more striking, not surprising in view of some twenty years between their first performances. The earlier play falls within the domain of domestic tragedy; the later play enlists quite different genre conventions.⁸ One can only speculate but it seems likely that, in reshaping the material of the earlier play, Heywood was mindful of the changing tastes of his audience and not altogether supportive of them. While acceding to the popularity of tragicomedy, he seems anxious to draw attention to the moral ambiguities that come to light in the negotiations required to reach a safe harbor and the joy and appeasement of all parties. The careful artfulness by which tragicomedy gains its comic reprieve seems to have sparked Heywood's displeasure, that is, if we reckon with the moral lapses for which the surviving characters in the last scene of *The English Traveller* may still be held accountable. The unchecked complacency with which they divide the spoils is overlaid by an aching awareness of the exclusivity and unfairness of the proceedings. In a word, the scene strikes a note of protest and turns a satirical gaze as much on a fashionable theatrical convention as on codes of

domestic behavior. The convention is observed, parodied, and freighted with an irony that touches theatrical practice even as it skewers male vanity and narrow-mindedness. In that respect, *The English Traveller* approaches what Heywood in *An Apology for Actors* holds to be the purpose of comedy: “to show others their slovenly and unhandsome behavior, that they may reform that simplicity in themselves, which others make their sport ” (F3v-F4f).⁹

The articulation of forms of resistance, including a series of ironic disclosures, transports the audience beyond the misogynistic fog that surrounds the leading characters to a broader vista where they appear as objects of satire, if not as something more sinister. Heywood is not best known as a satirist, but, if his aim is to turn the sweep of irony against the hypocrisies and preconceptions that outfit the domestic world to which the play takes title, then there may be reason to look again at the nature and scope of his achievement.

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NOTES

¹I am indebted to Richard Rowland for the suggestion that the title carries a double meaning: “the title of the play may have suggested another (misleading) clue as to Young Geraldine’s intentions; ‘traveller,’ with a pun on ‘travailer,’ commonly indicates someone engaged in (usually illicit) sexual activity [...]” Rowland remarks that Young Geraldine—the returned traveler—“appears to be singularly unsuitable for the mandatory role of seducer” (141 and 156n13).

²Paul Merchant in his introduction to *Three Marriage Plays* believes that *The English Traveller* and *The Captives* were both written to be performed at the *Cockpit*. The similarities between the two plays and the probable dating of *The Captives* in 1624 suggest that *The English Traveller* was composed before 1624 and performed not long after: “not only are both plots from both plays retold in *Gunaikeion*, both also contain companion plots derived from Plautus” (14). He concludes by saying that more specific evidence of the date of performance would be welcome. Heywood chose to publish the play in 1633. The publication of Heywood’s *Gunaikeion: or Nine Bookes of Various History, Concerning Women*, in 1624 is important for a number of reasons including its link to *The English Traveller*. In so far as it consti-

tutes an impassioned defense of women, it would seem a burden to those who present Heywood as a misogynist.

³Heywood's aim, according to Rabkin, is to show how perilous it is to proceed without benefit of what is tried and true, of what conforms to custom and usage, whether in the theater or beyond. Social conventions and stereotypes are introduced, then fractured, and eventually shown to be, in some respects at least, indispensable. There emerges a caution that resists novelty and innovation and is prepared to defend the familiar and consensual.

⁴See Karen Bamford for a consideration of the changing definitions of virginity and chastity in Protestant England (131-32; 157). Bamford writes that "married chastity rather than 'nunnish virginity' became the ideal state for women" (31).

⁵The best discussion of financial imagery is provided by Rowland (148-49). He comes to the topic by way of an extended and illuminating analysis of *Mostellaria* and Plautine comic structure. He finds that "financial imagery is pervasive in Plautus and so it is in Heywood's adaptation for the subplot; in the main plot it is, and will continue to be obsessive" (148).

⁶Rowland makes a telling point about class difference: "the separation of 'low' comedy from 'high' seriousness has been deliberately overturned. The Aristotelian equation of elevated social rank with moral stature [...] had never had much appeal for Heywood the dramatist; in this play he relinquishes it for good" (154).

⁷Among the versions cited by Tilley (S356) is one drawn from Thomas Lodge, *A Margarite of America* (1595) 69: "Close fits my shirt but closer my skin"; and one from William Camden, *Certaine Prouerbs, Poems, or Poesies, Epigrams, Rythmes, and Epitaphs* from *Remaines of a Greater Worke Concerning Britain* (1614): "Close sitteth my shirt, but closer my skinne" (305). Reignald's "shifting" means to change or replace, as, for example, in *Cymbeline* when a member of the court advises Cloten to "shift a shirt" and Cloten replies: "If my shirt were bloody, then to shift it" (I.ii.1-5).

⁸Heywood's problem in reshaping the material of the earlier play must have been to devise a strategy that would accommodate a tragicomic ending. His solution is an ingenious one. The adultery trio of the earlier play, wife, husband, and lover, is transformed into a quartet. The advantage is that by doubling the role of the lover, one character is expendable and his counterpart can remain on hand to facilitate the happy ending. The audience first sees Young Geraldine in the role of the lover. When the surrogate Dalavil succeeds him, the audience responds accordingly and a quartet begins to form. Mistress Wincott pairs with Dalavil and Young Geraldine with Wincott. The adulterous pair is dismissed and the remaining pair is allowed to celebrate a same-sex marriage at the play's conclusion, thereby effecting a tragicomic resolution to what in the earlier play developed into tragedy.

⁹Qtd. by Rowland 154. When in the *Apology*, Heywood assigns to the clown the task of showing others "their slovenly and unhandsome behavior," it is as if he

were anticipating the job of work performed by Reignald and Roger in *The English Traveller*.

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