

## Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and the Genetics of Genre Formation: A Response to Lisa Hopkins\*

MICHAEL WENTWORTH

One of the most remarkable developments in English Renaissance drama was the appearance over the final quarter of the sixteenth century of what literary historians would later identify as domestic tragedy, a genre which in contrast to the more usual aristocratic and courtly orientation of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy

... deals with the troubled affairs in the private lives of men of less than noble birth—gentlemen, farmers, merchants. It is a small and fairly well-defined class; the action is most frequently a murder, committed for greed or love, the setting is usually English and realistic, the basis for the story is nearly always an actual and fairly recent crime, recorded in a chronicle like Stow's or in ballad, chapbook, or pamphlet.<sup>1</sup>

That Thomas Heywood is most often associated with the genre is hardly surprising since his drama *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is generally acknowledged as the finest domestic tragedy in the language. Heywood is fully conscious of the innovative nature of his enterprise as he forewarns the audience in the "Prologue" to "Look for no glorious state, our Muse is bent / Upon a barren subject, a bare scene."<sup>2</sup> According to Lisa Hopkins's recent essay, "The False Domesticity of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," Heywood, through his artful deviation from the genre markers that typify earlier domestic tragedies, further attempts to "elevate the play to a status grander, more 'literary,' than that of traditional domestic tragedy" (6). To Hopkins's credit, this is a strikingly

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\*Reference: Lisa Hopkins, "The False Domesticity of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Connotations* 4.1-2 (1994/95): 1-7.

original claim and one that provides a fresh perspective on Heywood's play; on the other hand, she fails to measure her claim against other, and equally probable, influences that may have affected Heywood's composition of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and likewise overlooks a number of rather obvious aspects of the play that would have further strengthened her own thesis, which is by no means inadmissible.

To summarize Lisa Hopkins's argument: the most distinctive aspect of Heywood's play is the dramatist's skill in evoking the illusion of an authentic domestic setting which, upon closer investigation, is revealed as a "false," that is, an artistically contrived, "domesticity." As a measure of Heywood's achievement, Hopkins identifies characteristic features of earlier domestic tragedies, the most notable of which is a reliance upon real events, an audience's awareness of which "points directly to one of the chief fascinations of domestic tragedy: the voyeuristic attraction which comes from the sensation that we are witnessing the actual living space of a real family group" (2). Unlike previous domestic tragedies, however, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is based on a story, or fiction, of Heywood's own invention which nonetheless *simulates* an authentic domestic setting and, like "other products of the genre," thereby engages the audience's voyeuristic tendencies. Furthermore, similar to "the inconsequentiality of the plays of the Theatre of the Absurd," domestic tragedies "are full of tiny details which obscure the clarity of the narrative line and resist the thematisation to which literary texts are normally so susceptible," as a result of which domestic tragedies "all partake of something of the incoherence and shapelessness which characterize most people's experience of life" (2). Since, at first glance, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* "retains much of the air of specificity and redundancy of detail which habitually characterizes domestic tragedy and other modes of 'realistic' writing," here again Heywood seems to conform to, rather than transcend, convention; but as it turns out, just the opposite is true, for Heywood's "apparently minor details" are in fact "invested with great thematic, emotional and symbolic significance" (3). For Hopkins, then, the literary artistry of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* derives from Heywood's invention of the main plot and a resulting measure of artistic control far greater than that of the traditional domestic tragedy.

However stimulating, the premises supporting Hopkins' claim for Heywood's artistic achievement invite a number of qualifying remarks and suggestions. For example, though the sources of Heywood's subplot have been specifically identified, the source of the main plot is very much a matter of speculation.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Hopkins, who assigns the main plot to Heywood's own invention, others have traced the main plot to such sources as William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, George Gascoigne's *Adventures of Master F. J.*, and Robert Greene's "The Conversion of an English Courtizan";<sup>4</sup> still others feel the matter too indeterminate to draw any decisive conclusions one way or the other.<sup>5</sup> It would have been far safer to acknowledge that whatever the diversity of opinion regarding the source of the main plot, Heywood, nonetheless, *does* deviate from convention by avoiding the "true-crime" origins of traditional domestic tragedy. Primarily concerned with the originality of Heywood's domestic setting, Hopkins curiously overlooks the derivative nature of the subplot. Such a matter is easily resolved, or at any rate circumvented, in terms of Renaissance poetics, for it is arguable that Heywood would have viewed his creative adaptation of extraneous sources in fashioning his subplot as no less original than his "invention" of the main plot, though such an acknowledgement would necessarily qualify the force of Hopkins' argument.<sup>6</sup> In a related matter, she fails to reconcile the atmosphere and setting of the subplot (both of which are decidedly more artificial than those of the main plot) with the prevailing conventions that, on her own terms, define domestic tragedy.

In corroboration of her second premise—Heywood's artfully deceptive management of seemingly inconsequential details—Hopkins perceptively cites the social and ultimately ironic significance of the playing of "The Shaking of the Sheets" immediately following Anne and Frankford's marriage at the outset of the play and later makes an equally compelling case for the homely realism and symbolic irony of Anne's breaking of her lute after she has been banished from Frankford's household. On the other hand, Hopkins's selection and discussion of other details is less convincing. For example, she finds the play's northern setting, established by Sir Charles Mountford's imprisonment in York Castle, especially significant and revealing since at the time of the play's production the north of England was a stronghold of Roman Catholicism

and rebellion, as manifested in its resistance to "the tenets of the Reformation" (4). Though, as she observes, Catholicism is "never mentioned in the play" (a revealing admission in itself), Hopkins proposes that the implicit association of the play's setting with Catholicism is no less thematically suggestive than other seemingly minor details. Such an implicit association, as she explains, was rendered dramatically explicit in the 1991 Royal Shakespeare Company's staging of the play, a production "liberally sprinkled with crucifixes, genuflections, characters crossing themselves and chanting" (5). Based on these and related embellishments, Hopkins credits director Katie Mitchell's innovative and, one would assume, intentionally provocative reading of the play which situates

Anne's self-starvation firmly in the context of Catholic ideology about the female body and the question of the relative superiority of words and deeds in the process of repentance and redemption, so that unusual attention was directed to an examination of the precise nature of the play's title quality, "kindness," and the ways in which this well-intentioned attitude interacts with a fallible world. (5)

Such an interpretive extrapolation from a passing reference to York Castle is ultimately perplexing since the extrapolation itself is not only insufficiently developed but fails to articulate Heywood's own relative position to such a reading. If, on the one hand, she means to suggest that Heywood's sympathies and intentions are pro-Catholic, such a stance would clearly contradict his self-admitted "Protestant" (i.e., Anglican) affiliation and his life-long interest in and glorification of the Protestant middle class.<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, to read Heywood's treatment of Frankford's kindness, Anne's self-starvation, and related matters as a parody of Catholic beliefs just as clearly devalues the obvious homiletic structure of the play and Heywood's clearly sympathetic treatment of Frankford and Anne.

Equally problematic is Hopkins's comparative analysis of the servants' heated disagreement in choosing among a variety of country dances (scene 2) and what she perceives as a related discord among Frankford, Anne, Wendoll, and Cranwell in deciding among a variety of card games (scene 8) shortly before the "discovery scene." Thus, for Hopkins the

two scenes, relationally considered, assume a mutually reflexive irony as the gentry appear just as contentious as their social inferiors. Yet it would seem more probable that plot rather than class-driven considerations provides the primary motivation for the card scene since Frankford, having recently been informed by Nicholas (a household servant) of his wife's infidelity, conceives of the card game as a means of distraction pending corroboration of Nicholas's allegations and, more significantly (and not unlike Hamlet's device of the "mouse trap"), as a means of testing and possibly entrapping the guilty parties. The resulting irony is not so much a matter of acrimonious contention (as Hopkins seems to suggest), but originates rather in Frankford's self-consciously ironic role in the immediate situation at hand. Moreover, Hopkins seems to miss the striking theatricality of the scene. As Keith Sturges observes,

The card game is a masterpiece of sustained metaphor as the fact and proof of Anne's infidelity are conveyed to Frankford through the unerring choice by each character of the meaningful pun. The pairing of Wendoll and Anne against Frankford is an image of the larger truth; and whether we read the scene in a Freudian way—Anne's guilt dictating her punning—or see it simply as a stylized representation of the real situation, it remains a theatrically brilliant scene.<sup>8</sup>

Heywood's ironic handling of class relations is more aptly revealed through his artful juxtaposition of the main plot, with its emphasis upon the middle-class household of John and Anne Frankford, and the aristocratic orientation of the subplot. That the primary focus of the play ultimately centers on the middle-class world of Frankford and Anne is directly related, according to Richard Levin, to Heywood's unmistakable recommendation of "Frankford's middle-class morality, with its restraint, prudence, and respect for religious and legal sanctions" as against the aristocratic and "artificial code of private honor and vengeance" maintained by Sir Francis Acton and Sir Charles Mountford.<sup>9</sup> As such, Frankford, who is evidently a landowner of substantial means, though he lacks an aristocratic title, reconfirms Chaucer's radical assertion that true "gentillesse" is not a matter of rank, but "gentil deedes." Significantly, Sir Francis Acton had initially been critical of Frankford's leniency:



Heywood's play that would have further strengthened her argument. Compared to the husbands in *Arden of Feversham* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, certainly one of Heywood's most remarkable innovations is the moral authority assigned to Frankford. Crucial in this regard is Frankford's suppression of his violent outrage upon discovering his wife Anne's infidelity and his assumed responsibility for her moral rehabilitation. As such,

Frankford's kindness is manifested not only in his refraining from violence, but also in his provision for and protection of his fallen wife.<sup>13</sup>

Though Frankford's banishment of Anne might strike a modern audience as unduly and self-righteously severe, the motivation for, and intended effect of, such a judgment would have been clear enough to Heywood's original audience who, in view of Frankford's restraint following the discovery scene, would have been reminded of the husband's role

. . . as the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of His Church. The husband's authority derives from his superior reason and from the hierarchical relationship established between Adam and Eve at the time of their judgment in the garden. According to Protestant tradition, the submission of the wife was safeguarded by the loving protection of the husband so that the ideal marriage was a domestic partnership. With Anne's transgression, she loses her identity as wife and thus the right to claim the protection of her husband; at the same time, the authority and responsibility that Frankford bears as the Christian husband is intensified.<sup>14</sup>

Frankford's moral foresight is vindicated at the end of the play when Anne openly acknowledges her guilt and entreats her husband's forgiveness. Witness to his wife's moral recovery, Frankford reverts to his former role of loving husband and reveals a naturalness of affection and generosity of temperament that typified his personal relations prior to Anne's fall:

My wife, the mother to my pretty babes,  
Both those names I do restore thee back,  
And with this kiss I wed thee once again.  
Though thou art wounded in thy honour'd name,  
And with that grief upon thy deathbed liest,  
Honest in heart, upon my soul, thou diest. (17.115-20)<sup>15</sup>

It is finally Frankford's exemplary conduct not only as Christian gentleman but Christian husband that provides Anne with the opportunity for repentance and ultimately ensures her spiritual salvation. Thus, immediately following Anne's death, Sir Francis Acton informs Frankford,

Brother, had you with threats and usage bad  
Punish'd her sin, the grief of her offense  
Had not with such true sorrow touch'd her heart. (17.133-35)

What is true of Frankford is, of course, equally true of Heywood who imagines a non-violent and morally instructive alternative to the more familiar course of revenge. More directly relevant to Hopkins's argument is Sturges's assertion that "the deliberately unbloody and unsensational ending" of Heywood's play represents a radical departure "from the *Arden* type of domestic tragedy." Sturges continues,

No one and nothing in the play condones Anne Frankford's adultery; but her husband, eschewing violence and thus allowing his wife the opportunity for repentance and forgiveness in Heaven's and his eyes, gives evidence of a sensibility which finds revenge brutal and the vindication of personal honour irrelevant. And Heywood clearly recognizes the originality of what he is doing.<sup>16</sup>

A. C. Swinburne aptly summarizes Frankford's exemplary role in the play: "The whole play . . . is Frankford: he suffices to make it a noble poem and a memorable play."<sup>17</sup> Finally, then, anxious as she is to establish the innovative quality of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, it is surprising that Hopkins would have overlooked what many critics feel is the *most* original and innovative aspect of the play.<sup>18</sup>

All things considered, I would generally concur with Hopkins that Heywood expands the possibilities of the genre by writing a new sort of domestic tragedy and, as such, that *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is a signal contribution to, and a formative influence upon, the evolution of domestic tragedy. But I would finally propose that the influences, generic, or otherwise, that contributed to the singularity of Heywood's play are more complex than Hopkins suggests. For example, it could be argued that though *Arden of Faversham* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* are

frequently grouped with *A Woman Killed with Kindness* as the most notable examples of Elizabethan domestic tragedy, Heywood's play is distinctively different from, rather than an improvement upon, the other two plays which might be alternately classified as true-crime dramas or murder dramas.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Hopkins might have drawn more comprehensively upon the tradition of domestic tragedy; as it is, she limits her discussion to *Arden of Faversham*, which, indeed, was printed fifteen years before *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (first published in 1607), and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, which was first printed in 1608. Unfortunately (or fortunately perhaps, considering the pronounced homiletic tenor and lack of artistic control that typify most extant examples of the genre), many domestic tragedies have been lost.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, it might have been revealing to establish various points of contact, and departure, between *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599), the authorship of which is frequently assigned to Heywood, or likewise to examine the relations between *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and Heywood's *The English Traveller* first published twenty-six years later.

Of course, the question of genre formation is especially vexatious in the case of English Renaissance drama and even more specifically so in the case of Heywood, whose extant dramas include chronicle plays, mythology plays, history plays, tragicomedies, domestic tragedies, comedies, and farces, though aside from traditional genres (i.e., comedy and tragedy) such genre labels were largely devised by literary historians anxious to reduce the confusing welter of plays produced during the English Renaissance to some manageable taxonomic order. Indeed, a number of Heywood's plays have, depending upon the criteria applied, been variously classified. *The English Traveller*, for example, has been described as both a domestic tragedy and a tragicomedy, and *The Fair Maid of the West* as a comedy or more specifically still as a romance-adventure drama. Barbara Baines, in explaining her own reductive classification of Heywood's plays, aptly observes,

If ever a writer demonstrated the Renaissance love of the mixed genre, it was Thomas Heywood. His practice would defy the refined classifications of any Polonius. Despite this resistance, I have attempted generic classification for

convenience of discussion and for a clearer understanding of the nature of each play. Various plays, like illegitimate offspring . . . are reluctant to conform to legitimate categories or insist upon belonging to more than one.<sup>21</sup>

Baines's generic categories—history, comedy, tragedy, tragicomedy, mythological drama—are clear enough. More interesting is her more restrictive identification of individual plays; thus, the broad area of comedy includes “adventure-romance dramas” (*The Four Prentices of London* and *The Fair Maid of the West* I/II), “domestic comedies” (*How a Man May Choose a Good Wife from a Bad and Fortune by Land and Sea*), and “comedies of intrigue” (*The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* and *A Maidenhead Well Lost*). Were Heywood, as a matter of fanciful curiosity, to consult Baines's work or, for that matter, Hopkins's essay, he would no doubt concur with the two authors' generic categorization of the relevant dramas under investigation, though during his lifetime it is doubtful that he would have consciously composed a “domestic tragedy” or “comedy of intrigue” to order. Though poetic genres were clearly defined (note, for example, the descriptive genera in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie* or George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy*), the parameters of dramatic genres would seem less fixed, as a result of which it is difficult to determine to what extent, aside from tragedy and comedy, Heywood and his contemporaries were conscious of reshaping popular genres, a number of which were unlabelled as such until much later. On the other hand, it is no doubt true that as a practicing playwright whose livelihood depended upon the commercial success of his work, Heywood was particularly sensitive and responsive to plot situations or, structurally considered, plot types (as opposed to clearly defined genres) in his own work and that of his fellow dramatists and was thus quick to capitalize upon his own success and that of others. It is more than likely, then, that Heywood was influenced by earlier domestic tragedies, though it is just as likely that he was equally influenced not merely by classical tragedy, as Hopkins herself suggests, but even more specifically by the popularity of the Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy. In fact, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* might be instructively viewed as a domestication and social reorientation of the typical revenge tragedy since Frankford, as an exemplary represen-

tative of the middle class, rejects the bloody retribution and calculated revenge of his aristocratic counterparts.<sup>22</sup>

It is further possible that Heywood was influenced by his own earlier work, most notably, the two-part *Edward IV* which recounts the broken marriage of Jane and Matthew Shore as Jane capitulates to the king's amorous intentions and Matthew consequently leaves the country in disgrace, though husband and wife are ultimately reconciled and reunited. The Jane Shore story in *Edward IV* bears a number of instructive parallels to the Frankfords' domestic tragedy in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, and Barbara Baines has more specifically noted that "the temptation, fall, expiation, and death of Jane provide the pattern" for Heywood's later play.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the two plays are significantly different in their domestic emphasis; for compared to the Shores' domestic tragedy, which is one, though to Heywood clearly the most interesting, of a number of multiple plots in *Edward IV*, the primary, rather than competing, narrative status of the Frankfords' marriage further reveals the innovative nature of Heywood's achievement as well as his bent for generic experiment.

In fact, Heywood's interest in domestic relations (tragic or otherwise) as well as his decidedly middle-class sympathies and his optimistic belief in the regenerative power of love and forgiveness recur throughout his work regardless of genre or date of composition. Thus, though undeniably influenced by generic developments, Heywood was simultaneously motivated by his own moral and socio-cultural agendas and perhaps one of his most singular achievements is the fact that he managed to contextualize those agendas within such a variety of formats. Such an estimate in no way diminishes the likelihood that, as Hopkins suggests, Heywood was influenced by earlier domestic tragedies any more than it discredits additional, though not necessarily alternative, influences (revenge tragedy, the English morality tradition, the narrative complaint tradition, Elizabethan faculty psychology, Heywood's own work, or even those personal thematic concerns that typify Heywood's creative personality); rather, such an estimate recognizes, in far more liberal terms than Hopkins seems to allow, the remarkably synthetic and assimilative quality of Heywood's creative imagination which, guided by his own class interests and thematic concerns, drew

discursively upon a wide range of material, including, but by no means restricted to, both established and evolving genres.

The University of North Carolina  
Wilmington

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Madeleine Doran, *Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1964) 143. For a more comprehensive discussion of domestic tragedy, see Doran 142-47; Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic, or Homiletic Tragedy: 1575 to 1642* (New York: Columbia UP, 1943); and Keith Sturgess, "Introduction" to *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies: Arden of Feversham; A Yorkshire Tragedy; A Woman Killed with Kindness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969): 7-47.

<sup>2</sup>Quotations from *A Woman Killed with Kindness* are based on R. W. Van Fossen, ed., *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (London: Methuen, 1961).—Madeleine Doran discerns a similar "apologetic" tone in the prefatory material to other domestic tragedies, including *A Warning for Fair Women* (often attributed to Heywood) and Heywood's *The English Traveller*. See *Endeavors of Art* 143-45.

<sup>3</sup>R. W. Van Fossen provides a thorough and incisive consideration of various alleged sources for the main plot in the "Introduction" to his edition of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (xvii-xxvii), but see also Andrew Clark, comp., "An Annotated List of Sources and Related Material for Elizabethan Domestic Tragedy, 1591-1625," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 17 (1974): 25-33, which lists primary sources, related nondramatic materials, and modern source studies for *A Woman Killed with Kindness* as well as Heywood's *Edward IV*.

<sup>4</sup>A number of scholars have discerned narrative parallels between the main plot and various novellas in *Painter's Palace of Pleasure*. See, for example, E. Koeppel, *Quellen-Studien zu den Dramen Ben Jonson's, John Marston's, und Beaumont und Fletcher's* (Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1895) 136; R. G. Martin, "A New Source for *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Englische Studien* 43 (1911): 229-33; McEvoy Patterson, "The Origin of the Main Plot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *University of Texas Studies in English* 17 (1937): 75-87; Max Bluestone, *From Story to Stage: The Dramatic Adaptation of Prose Fiction in the Period of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 57-59, 77-78, 84-86, 105-09, 180-83, 223-24, 278-79, 280-81; and David Atkinson, "An Approach to the Main Plot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *ES* 70 (1989): 15-27. Waldo F. McNeir identifies Greene's "The Conversion of an English Courtizan," which draws upon a story in George Gascoigne's *The Adventures of Master F. J.*, as the primary source for the main plot; see "Heywood's Sources for the Main Plot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Studies in the English Renaissance Drama*, ed. Josephine W. Bennett, Oscar Cargill, and Vernon Hall, Jr. (New York: New York UP, 1959) 189-211. Other alleged sources include the medieval miracle and morality traditions and the *Gesta Romanorum*.

<sup>5</sup>Thus Van Fossen, following an investigation of alleged sources for the main plot, ultimately concludes, "The verdict must remain 'not proven'" (xxiv). On the other

hand, Van Fossen finds a more likely, if "indefinite," connection between the main plot and "earlier middle-class tragedies" and "the didactic tradition on which they in part rely" (xxiv). Sturgess finds the origin of the main plot equally indeterminate and thus observes that "it seems likely that Heywood put together hints and details from various stories to create his plot"; like Hopkins, Sturgess then concludes that "it is one of Heywood's contributions to the domestic tragedy that he depended on his own moral vision and dramatic skill to gain acceptance for his play rather than on a journalistic interest in the events portrayed"; see Sturgess, "Introduction," *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies* 40-41.

<sup>6</sup>Critics have often been troubled by the relation of the main plot and subplot, a problem which, in her claim for Heywood's literary artistry, Hopkins might have likewise addressed. Other critics have argued for the structural and thematic integration of the two plots. See, for example, Freda L. Townsend, "The Artistry of Thomas Heywood's Double Plots," *PQ* 25 (1946): 97-119; Peter Ure, "Marriage and the Domestic Drama in Heywood and Ford," *ES* 32 (1951): 200-16; A. G. Hooper, "Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *English Studies in Africa* 4 (1961): 54-57; R. W. Van Fossen, "Introduction," *A Woman Killed with Kindness* xxxvi-xli; Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., "The Subplot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *ELN* 2 (1965): 180-85; Richard Levin, "The Unity of Elizabethan Multiple-Plot Drama," *ELH* 34 (1967): 425-46; "The Elizabethan 'Three-Level' Play," *Renaissance Drama*, n.s. 2 (1969): 23-37; *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1971): 93-97; Barbara Baines, *Thomas Heywood*, Twayne's English Authors Series 388 (Boston: Twayne, 1984) 80-89; Diana E. Henderson, "Many Mansions: Reconstructing *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *SEL* 26 (1986): 277-94; and Hopkins 4.

<sup>7</sup>For a discussion of Heywood's Protestant sympathies, see Allan Holaday, "Thomas Heywood and the Puritans," *JEGP* 49 (1950): 192-203 and Baines 7.

<sup>8</sup>Sturgess 45.

<sup>9</sup>See Levin, *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* 95.

<sup>10</sup>Following the discovery scene, Anne herself expects death at the hands of her husband, an expectation, as Van Fossen observes, "substantiated by the tradition of revenge in the drama and in contemporary practice: short shrift was given the unfaithful woman, whose husband had the right to kill her" (xxii). On the other hand, two recent studies situate Anne's adultery and Frankford's response in relation to popular instructional literature of the period. Thus, Laura Bromley relates Frankford's "kindness" to Renaissance conduct books, in the light of which his behavior can be seen as "a consistent, indeed inevitable, part of the whole play"; see "Domestic Conduct in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *SEL* 26 (1986): 259-76. However, Jennifer Panek regards Frankford's "kindness" as inconsistent with the recommended treatment of female adultery in contemporary marriage manuals and thus concludes, "If the play is an exemplum, it is an exemplum of how *not* to treat a repentant adulteress"; see "Punishing Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *SEL* 34 (1994): 357-78.

<sup>11</sup>One of the most innovative aspects of Heywood's achievement in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is his calculated manipulation and reversal of audience expectations. Indeed, the artfully developed suspense of Frankford's soliloquy prior to entering his bedchamber where Anne and Wendoll (her seducer) are sleeping and his rage and murderous intent upon actually discovering the two together would have led the audience, familiar with other domestic crime dramas and already witness to

the violence and retributive "justice" of the subplot, to expect a precipitous and bloody conclusion to Frankford's discovery. But just as he has manipulated his audience's expectations to the sticking point, Heywood remarkably pulls back. Such a reversal not only facilitates Anne's moral recovery, but that of the audience whose own emotional response to Frankford's discovery would originally have been dangerously close to his own.

<sup>12</sup>Sturgess 43. Barbara Baines provides a particularly perceptive and detailed analysis of the thematic, structural, imagistic, and verbal relations between the two plots. See Baines 80-89.

<sup>13</sup>Baines 95.

<sup>14</sup>Baines 95-96. Hardin Craig likewise credits the prudence and moral foresight of Frankford's judgment since matrimony "in the Elizabethan ethical system was . . . fixed by God in His Church and supported by the law as a part of God's plan for governing the universe." See *The Enchanted Glass: The Elizabethan Mind in Literature* (New York: OUP, 1936) 134.

<sup>15</sup>As a number of critics have suggested, Frankford's role as moral preceptor should not obscure the human dimension of his character. See, for example, Baines 96-97 and Van Fossen xlv-xlvi.

<sup>16</sup>Sturgess 41.

<sup>17</sup>See Algernon Charles Swinburne, "The Romantic and Contemporary Plays of Thomas Heywood," *Nineteenth Century* 38 (1895): 397-410.

<sup>18</sup>Though, as Van Fossen observes, Frankford "has for the most part received favorable treatment from the critics" (xlii), some estimates of his character and conduct have been less than favorable, most notably, in regard to his "kindness." See, for example, John Canuteson, "The Theme of Forgiveness in the Plot and Subplot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Renaissance Drama*, n.s. 2 (1969): 123-41; Robert Ornstein, "Bourgeois Morality and Dramatic Convention in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *English Renaissance Drama: Essays in Honor of Madeleine Doran and Marc Eccles*, ed. Standish Henning, Robert Kimbrough, and Richard Knowles (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP; London: Feffer & Simons, 1976) 128-41; Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Representation: Mimesis and Modernity in Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 151-57; and Panek, "Punishing Adultery."

<sup>19</sup>Adams, for example, classifies both *Arden of Feversham* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy* as "murder plays," though he also designates such plays as "a specific kind of domestic tragedy."

<sup>20</sup>For a listing and discussion of lost domestic tragedies, see Adams, *English Domestic, or Homiletic Tragedy*, Appendix A, 193-203.

<sup>21</sup>Baines xii.

<sup>22</sup>Thus Baines observes that, given the "novelty" of Frankford's reaction as injured husband to "an ancient situation," *A Woman Killed with Kindness* represents "a radical departure from, and a significant innovation upon, the Elizabethan revenge play"; see Baines 95. Fredson Bowers likewise views Heywood's play as an innovative modification of the typical revenge tragedy since he substitutes "the punishment which arises from the erring characters' consciousness of their guilt" for the more usual punishment of "an exterior physical revenge"; see *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy: 1587-1642* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1940) 225.

<sup>23</sup>See Baines 79.