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Domestic Conduct in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*

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It is universally agreed that *A Woman Killed with Kindness,* Thomas Heywood's domestic tragedy published in 1608, is a masterpiece, the best of its kind, and that it is a seriously flawed play. But through the years, there has been a change in the nature of the problems which have concerned critics, along with a shift in their approach to these problems. In the 1930s and 1940s, critics of *A Woman* seemed preoccupied with Anne's sudden and unmotivated adultery. Eventually, Hallett Smith,[1] Henry Hitch Adams,[2] and, a little later, Hardin Craig[3] satisfactorily explained her behavior in terms of, respectively, Elizabethan literary conventions, Elizabethan theology, and Elizabethan psychology. In the next two decades, other critics, following the lead of Freda Townsend,[4] turned their attention to resolving the problem of the apparent lack of relationship between the main plot and the subplot, which T. S. Eliot said "is too obviously there merely because an underplot is required to fill out the play."[5] Townsend showed that both plots deal with virtue and honor and that the chaste Susan is contrasted with the unchaste Anne. Patricia Meyer Spacks found that the plots are linked by the contrast between apparent and real honor in the characters,[6] and Herbert Coursen argued that the romantic nature of the subplot emphasizes the realism of the main plot.[7] All of these suggestions are useful and none is at odds with our understanding of other aspects of the play.

Recently, there has been a vaguer but nonetheless pervasive anxiety about the character of Frankford which threatens to jeopardize the appreciation of the play in our own time. What are we to do with a protagonist who attains heroic stature by killing his wife with kindness? Critics find themselves swept onto the horns of a dilemma

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by the currents of contemporary ideology. Either Heywood is a misogynist who espouses reprehensible standards of inequality between the sexes, or Frankford does not speak for Heywood. The usual resolution of this apparent dilemma is the sacrifice of Frankford in order to save Heywood. In recent years, critics have insisted that Frankford is "despicable," a "refined revenger" rather than a Christian gentleman,[8] that his action is the cruelest possible, and that he is an inadequate husband whose lack of passion "impelled Anne into adultery."[9] This line of reasoning culminates in the claim that *A Woman* has been misread in the past, that there is "tragic irony" in its title, and that Frankford is a model not of husbandly virtue, but of hypocrisy.

I believe that these views of Frankford and *A Woman* are wrong, and that the dilemma from which they arise is illusory. Heywood is not a misogynist, as is evident not only in his spirited defense and commendation of women in his contributions to the "woman controversy," *Gunaikeion,* a history of women, and *Exemplary Lives,* but also in *A Woman* itself. Anne Frankford responds to her trials courageously, and Heywood fashions her into an exemplary gentlewoman at the end of the play, as I will show. Nor do we have to distort our sensible assumptions that Frankford is held up as a model husband and gentleman by Heywood. What we need to do is consider Heywood's play and his view of women in the correct context and remind ourselves that Frankford's behavior was not unusual or cruel in his time but was, in fact, kind.

The historical facts about contemporary domestic and marital relations that we need are provided by a body of treatises on conduct addressed to the middle class. I will show that *A Woman* has much in common with contemporary conduct books in both the kinds of behavior Heywood examines and the principles he endorses. My thesis is that Heywood intended to dramatize a code of gentlemanly behavior for an emerging middle-class audience eager for guidance in the business of living. Reading *A Woman* in the light of Renaissance conduct books enables us to accept Frankford's behavior as a consistent, indeed inevitable, part of the whole play, as no recent criticism has done.[10] This frees us to appreciate what has been obvious to many generations of troubled critics: the power and eloquence with which the play speaks to us of perennial human conflicts.

Moreover, looking at *A Woman* as a dramatization reflecting approved and accepted social standards helps us to resolve the structural and dramaturgical problems which have troubled critics.

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Many of the play's apparent inconsistencies disappear. For example, the question of motivation, applied to Anne or other characters, is sometimes irrelevant, as I will explain, because Heywood is not interested in individual psychology. The subplot is related to the main plot in a way other than what has occurred to earlier critics: both plots test a man's honor, his loyalty to an explicit code of behavior. Other puzzling aspects of plot, characterization, and even the setting of the play are illuminated by this approach. We can appreciate *A Woman* not only because it expresses a consistent and reasonable doctrine, but also because of its compelling artistic unity and coherence.

Important work on the background of domestic drama was done early in the century by literary historians whose findings have been largely ignored in recent years (perhaps because their interpretations of individual plays were not very illuminating). Henry Hitch Adams is one such critic. It is true that in his work, *English Domestic and Homiletic Tragedy,* he sees *A Woman* only as a reflection of Elizabethan popular theology, and he reduces the play to a dramatized religious tract.[11] But Adams's main point, which he makes very clear and argues convincingly, is that domestic tragedy was by nature didactic, aimed at a middle-class audience with an interest in moral and theological instruction that was elsewhere satisfied by sermons. Adams's insights into the theological basis of domestic tragedy need to be expanded by a consideration of other forces which shaped contemporary domestic drama and its audience. Some clues about these were provided still earlier in this century by Chilton Powell in his work on English domestic relations,[12] and by Louis Wright in a study of middle-class culture in Elizabethan England.[13] Neither is especially enlightening about domestic tragedy in general or *A Woman* in particular. Powell devotes less than a paragraph to the play, and Wright simply concludes that Anne is an outstanding example of repentance, and Frankford, of Christian forbearance.

Both studies, however, help to establish the context of Heywood's play. Like Adams, Wright sees an important didactic strain in Elizabethan drama, but one that is not exclusively homiletic. He sees Heywood, in all his plays, less as a preacher of Christian virtues than as a spokesman for middle-class values: "The growing class-consciousness and the prejudices and ideals that colored all middle-class thinking find expression in Heywood's plays."[14] Another force which, like contemporary drama, reflected those ideals and also helped to shape them was the Elizabethan conduct book, the history and development of which both Wright and Powell document

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extensively. It seems that the emerging middle class had an enormous appetite not only for moral instruction but for information and guidance on how to conduct their private, domestic lives.

Powell traces the domestic conduct book from its establishment on the Continent through its continuation and development in England during the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries. According to Powell, "the culmination of interest in domestic life took place in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. . . . The last part of Elizabeth's reign has been described as a period when the English nation paused to take stock of itself. The literature of the time certainly exhibits a national awakening, and the more utilitarian writing shows equally the development of an individual self-consciousness." Along with the "household" books, other related types flourished: "the book of manners, the book of moral reflection and allegory, the book of direction and advice to young people . . . [and] others on more specific subjects connected with domesticity and the conduct of life, such as cookery, household medicine, the education of children . . . and so forth."[15]

Of all these types, which, Powell states, were most popular around the beginning of the seventeenth century, he singles out as deserving special attention, because of their number and their neglect by historians, the type which he calls books of honor or nobility. "A typical volume of this class, while reflecting the ideas of the *Cortegiano,* is really nearer in nature to the book of moral philosophy, since it is concerned with the virtues which go to make up a gentleman, such as justice, temperance, friendship, education, etc., rather than with his qualifications as an ornament of the court."[16] Powell uses the existence of such books to argue for a new understanding of the gentleman. "The usual conception of the gentleman of this time has been expressed thus: 'The knight had been transformed into the courtier; and the "vertuous and gentle discipline," deemed requisite for him in his new sphere, was, for the most part, to be found in such regulations for external behavior as are laid down in Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano.*'[17] Such a statement obviously presents but half the case, for beside the transformation of the knight into the courtier, we find in the book of honor a presentation of him as the English gentleman."[18] In the last part of the sixteenth century, the nobility book, with additions and deletions according to the influence of other related types, culminated in the "book of the complete gentleman," which details the virtues and the conduct of life appropriate to a gentleman. Such books, concerned more with "domestic" than with "courtly" conduct, were of great

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interest, as we shall see, to the aspiring or newly made "gentlemen" of the middle class.

The neglect of the "gentleman book" has been remedied in the years since Powell wrote. Courtesy books are examined as a source of the contemporary standards for courtly behavior by scholars like Daniel Javitch[19] and Lawrence Manley[20] and courtly conventions are related to the poetry of Wyatt, Sidney, and especially Spenser.[21] Like Powell, Humphrey Tonkin, who traces the influence of courtesy books on Spenser's definition of courtesy in *The Faerie Queene,* distinguishes treatises aimed at the courtier (like *Il Cortegiano*) from those (like Stefano Guazzo's *Civil Conversatione*, published in 1574) that attempt to define the nature of a gentleman for the middle class.[22] G. K. Hunter connects the plays of Lyly to the dramatized debates, like Heywood's *Pleasant Dialogues & Dramas,* on questions of love and honor raised by both Castiglione and Guazzo.[23]

Courtesy books have also been a source of interest to writers with other concerns. Literary and social historians continue to draw on this material in studies of Renaissance society, relying on the work of Ruth Kelso, whose book *The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century*[24] surveys the whole field and provides an extensive bibliography of treatises published both in England and on the Continent. Conduct books addressed to both male and female audiences have also been used by feminist critics attempting to document the social position of women in the Renaissance.[25]

But the influence of gentleman books on didactic literature written by middle-class writers for a middle-class audience has not been traced. Powell notes, but does not explore, the similarity of ideas and attitudes in conduct books and plays: this is an area still neglected by critics of Jacobean drama and of Heywood in particular.[26] It seems to me that the gentleman books provide the necessary context for *A Woman.* They suggest a way of understanding Frankford's behavior and, therefore, of reading the play as a whole coherently. Many of the seemingly discordant elements in the play make sense when Heywood is thought of as attempting to meet the needs of the growing segment of society which turned to conduct books as guides to proper behavior.

As to the reasons for the middle-class Englishman's sudden strong interest in the gentlemanly conduct of life, the historians again point the way. Powell and Wright explain this by reference to the growing national, class, and individual consciousness of Englishmen at the end of the sixteenth century. More recent historical studies suggest that at this time the growing number of merchants, tradesmen, and

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artisans had not yet constituted itself as a class, with a clearly defined identity and values.[27] Laura Stevenson O'Connell argues in "The Elizabethan Bourgeois Hero-Tale: Aspects of an Adolescent Social Consciousness" that it was not until well into the seventeenth century that the values of the developing middle class, the mercantile values of thrift, industry, and so forth, were established along with distinctive political and religious viewpoints.[28] At the time Heywood was writing, the values offered to these people in search of identity were the aristocratic ones of the gentleman book, and it will be seen that these are the values of *A Woman.* Though it seems inappropriate to proclaim the virtues of benevolence and liberality to men who earned their living and were not responsible for governing vast estates peopled by servants and retainers, this is exactly what happened during this transitional period. O'Connell demonstrates that in a group of works with bourgeois heroes, often apprentices, (including Heywood's *Four Prentices*), the protagonists conform to a chivalric model of heroism, defending their king against great odds, entertaining lavishly, and so forth.

Heywood occupies the same transitional position as his audience. Plays like *The English Traveller* share some common ground with the sophisticated new city comedies like those of Middleton, but Heywood more often looks back to Renaissance ideals. He writes for those who seek guidance in the conduct of everyday affairs: their common concern is how to live like gentlemen in changing times, and Heywood's answers are conservative and conventional. He endorses a code of behavior which would soon seem outdated. One does not outwit his opponent, but forgives him. One does not expect to be cuckolded, and does not submit to it. Though he is concerned with manners as well as morals, Christian virtues and justice prevail in his plays. Honest prigs overcome, instead of being gulled by, charming rascals.

Like other domestic dramas, *A Woman* is concerned not with the noble man but with the common man in his daily life. Frankford is called a gentleman, but, in fact, he is a middle-class hero, as most critics note. He is in charge only of his immediate household, concerned with business affairs and domestic management. Even Sir Francis Acton and Sir Charles Mountford, who are knights and therefore, ostensibly, noblemen, inhabit a middle-class milieu where the getting and keeping of money is of great importance.

In *A Woman,* Heywood treats the same subjects and adopts the same points of view as the gentleman books. Friendship, including the proper choice of friends and the dangers of close friendships, is a

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common subject in these works. This is not surprising when one considers the new fluidity of social relations in the early seventeenth century, the less clear distinctions of rank and its attendant privileges and obligations. Daniel Tuvill devotes a chapter of his *Essays Political and Moral,* a popular conduct book, to "Cautions in Friendship." He quotes "an ancient saying, but very true, 'The good or ill hap in all a man's life, / Is the good or ill choice of a friend or a wife,' " and he provides a commentary on this maxim which bears directly on the situation of the main plot of *A Woman*: "Wherein the clearest and best-discerning judgments may easily be deceived."[29] He writes at length about the dangers of "trencher amity," which is the basis for the sub-plot of *A Woman,* quoting Seneca on the subject:

> Thou wast content to live with me while Fortune was a mother;
> When she a cruel stepdame grew, thou left'st me for another.
> But if so thou a creature vile and thankless hadst not been,
> Thou wouldst not have denied to share the trouble I was in.[30]

Richard Brathwaite's *The English Gentleman*[31] can be taken as a representative "gentleman book." In seven chapters, Brathwaite provides a manual of behavior for every situation likely to be encountered at every stage of life of an English gentleman. He intersperses his advice with precepts and examples culled from the scriptures and ancient as well as modern history. It is remarkable how many of the subjects of Brathwaite's theoretical advice, in chapters entitled *Vocation, Recreation,* and *Acquaintance,* are dramatized in Heywood's play: dancing, card-playing, hawking, challenges and duels, lawsuits, entertaining, treatment of servants, choice of friends and wives. Though the character traits of a gentleman can be inferred from Brathwaite's recommendations about his behavior, only one is dealt with explicitly, and to this one—moderation—Brathwaite devotes an entire chapter. No virtue, he claims, can exist without it. The principle of moderation guides the activities of a gentleman described throughout the book, but in this chapter Brathwaite is concerned with the use of moderation to regulate the emotions, particularly anger, pride, and lust.

The notion of an individual's emotions and personal conduct being prescribed not only by religious but by social authority is so alien to the late twentieth century mind that it must be emphasized. From an historical perspective, the cult of feeling is a very recent

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development. Heywood's audience would have believed not only that one's feelings are an unreliable guide, but that they are the worst possible guide to behavior precisely because they are so likely to be in need of moderation. Moreover, feelings were not openly expressed in the family at this time. As Lawrence Stone explains, domestic relations were based on authority rather than affection.[32] Affection was not considered a prerequisite for marriage, and relationships between husbands and wives and parents and children were characterized by psychological distance and coolness. Wives were encouraged to address their husbands formally and to avoid endearments. The expression of affection to children was regarded as detrimental to their proper upbringing, which required that the individual will be forced into submission to authority.

It is not surprising that the religious and political establishment endorsed the virtue of moderation. The analogy between the public and private advantages of the moderation of feeling is obvious. As moderation guards against excessive behavior in the domestic realm, preserving order and stability within the family, so it protects against anarchy in the public realm. It is an essentially conservative value which tends to restrain the personal and political turbulence that early Stuart society was so anxious to repress. Stone explains that in the sixteenth century ties of kinship and clientage which extended beyond the nuclear family into the community were increasingly weakened. Both church and state fostered this trend because they felt the threat of a competing system of loyalty, but they also encouraged the transfer of a strong patriarchal hierarchy to the nuclear family, for this tended to reinforce the concept of loyalty to the sovereign. At the time Heywood was writing, the patriarchal structure of the nuclear family was very likely at the strongest point it reached in the history of England. It is hard to overemphasize the degree of control a gentleman like Frankford would have exerted over his wife and children, and this not because of a personal obsession with power, but in accordance with religious and social injunctions. The treatment of one's wife was simply not a matter of private conscience or personal feeling at this time, and no consideration of Frankford's behavior which fails to take this into account is likely to be valid.

The temptations to immoderate behavior are many, as Brathwaite, a worldly man, acknowledges. He is forthright about the turbulence and uncertainty of everyday life, and the likelihood of meeting misfortune. Human relationships are risky, and marriage, especially, may tempt one's virtue: "Certainly, whosoever he be that marrieth a wife . . . must not think that he has brought his ship to harbour, but

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rather that he is now putting forth from land, and entering the main ocean, where he is to encounter with many violent blasts, contrary winds, surging waves, ebbs and flows, which will not end till his journey end."[33] But the goal of a gentleman is governance, or the maintenance of control over oneself, one's family and, in some cases, one's country. For example, the title of William Vaughn's gentleman book, published in 1600, is *The Golden Grove, Moralized in Three Books: A Work Very Necessary For All Such as Would Know How to Govern Themselves, Their Houses, or Their Country.*

For Heywood, and for his audience, Frankford's options upon discovering his wife's adultery were limited. This was not a matter on which he could consult his feelings to determine the proper course of action, though this is exactly what some recent critics insist he ought to have done. John Canuteson faults Frankford for "an essential lack of imagination" in dealing with Anne, a failure "to adopt genuinely new solutions."[34] David Cook asserts that "he is unable, because of his inherent limitations . . . to follow his heart far enough" to forgive Anne when he learns what she has done.[35] He claims that Frankford is less of a man than Wendoll in that while he acts properly, he denies his feelings. In fact, it is no more surprising that Frankford does not act on his love of Anne than that he has not dwelt on it up to this point. Frankford and the other characters speak of the positions, the attributes, and the possessions of the parties to the marriage, not their personal feelings—in short, the appropriateness rather than the happiness of the union. Given Heywood's purpose, this is just what we should expect; we do not expect what T. S. Eliot misses, "a scene marking the happiness of the pair up to the moment of Wendoll's declaration."[36]

The need to preserve order had to guide Frankford. It was "virtually impossible" for him to divorce Anne.[37] Nor could he continue to harbor her. Her presence in the house would be detrimental to the children, whom she has already "stain'd . . . with stripe of bastardy."[38] She would be a model of disobedience for them instead of an example of submission. The appearance of children in the play, among other functions, serves to round out the picture of the domain which this gentleman had to maintain and protect. Frankford would shirk his responsibility if he were not to find some way to dispose of Anne and the danger to the social order which she represents. Had Frankford turned to Brathwaite's work for guidance, he would have been advised of his obligation to act to safeguard himself and his children: "Better it is that *one* perish than that unity perish; and in these (sure I am) that maxim is true; He that spareth

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the evil, hurteth the good."[39] Most relevant to Frankford's situation is Brathwaite's injunction: "As every man's house is his castle, so is his family a private common-wealth, wherein if due government be not observed, nothing but confusion is to be expected."[40] Brathwaite would also have approved Frankford's instinct toward restraint, of course. He condemns the extreme reaction which demands revenge: "Likewise in the tolerance of wrongs, we are forced to love him who suffereth them, and having power to revenge, will not out of the nobleness of his spirit, do what he may."[41]

While Frankford's withdrawing into his chamber at the moment of crisis to consider Anne's punishment may seem callously detached to a modern audience, his dispassionate behavior would be the ideal for such a gentleman. He must remain unmoved to judge rationally and fairly. Given the alternatives, Frankford takes the moderate and appropriate course. Canuteson believes that Frankford fails as a Christian to the extent that he is concerned with his honor, with Anne's sin against him rather than her sin against God.[42] On the contrary, however, even if he were to demand Anne's life, he would be acting within his rights as a representative of God in his home by judging her sin and exacting penance. But Frankford takes a more moderate course. He leaves the matter of Anne's soul and her redemption to Anne, and strips her not of her life, but of her roles as wife and mother, for which there could be no doubt that she had proved herself unfit. No one in the play faults him—not Anne, not her brother, and not her servant, Nick. Nick's sympathy for Anne, ours, and, indeed, Frankford's, are simply not relevant to his behavior.

The moderation of emotion does in fact lead to stability and order in both plots of *A Woman.* Anne uses the life that Frankford has spared to repent of her sin, so he can freely restore her, in name, to her place in the family. The sanctity of the institution of marriage is reaffirmed. Frankford forgives Anne using words very close to Tuvill's in his chapter "Of Reconciliation and Peace": "I will therefore pardon that I may be pardoned, and so pardon as I would be pardoned."[43] The reconciliation of the men, Sir Charles and Sir Francis, has resulted in another marriage, that of Susan and Anne's brother, an alliance that has advanced the family's standing through Susan's rank and honor. The threat of illegitimate offspring has been circumvented, and Frankford has attained the goal of order and stability through the triumph of moderation over passion.

The ending of *The English Traveller,* a later domestic tragedy of Heywood, provides an even more striking example of the way in

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which domestic stability serves the more important end of economic security in the patriarchal society. *The English Traveller* is a domestic tragedy with a "happy" ending. Young Geraldine's main concern on discovering the adulterous liaison between his friend Delavil and his friend Wincott's wife, to whom Geraldine is betrothed pending the death of her old husband, is that he be freed to marry another woman. "Die, and die soone, acquit me of my Oath," he tells Wincott's wife, "But prethee die repentant" (p. 91).[44] His wife's death is a blessing to Old Wincott, too, for it reestablishes his loving friendship with Young Geraldine. Since he had no child, and did not expect to have any, he is delighted that Young Geraldine can now become his heir. Though he says of his wife, "I am a man more wretched in her losse, / Than had I forfeited life and estate" (p. 93), by the last lines of the play he and Young Geraldine are "like some Gallants / That bury thrifty Fathers" who "think't no sinne / To weare Blacks without, but other Thoughts within" (p. 95). The subplot has also resolved itself happily in that even though Young Lionel has squandered most of the patrimony of Old Lionel, his last-minute reformation solidifies the relationship between Old Lionel and his heir.

In the subplot as well as the main plot of *A Woman,* it is passion which causes the problem, and the overruling of passion by moderation which solves it. In both plots, moreover, good behavior is ultimately reciprocated, and feelings eventually accord with behavior, so that positive feelings are generated by proper behavior. Both Sir Charles and Sir Francis are temporarily ruled by passion, and fail to behave nobly in Act I. Sir Francis is overly disturbed by the outcome of his hawking match with Sir Charles. (The decorum of such situations, and the need to remain dispassionate, is much discussed by Brathwaite, who advises that a gentleman never stake more than he can lose with equanimity). Sir Charles loses his temper and, overwhelmed by anger, kills Sir Francis's falconer and huntsman. He is instantly sorry, but he suffers the consequence of his crime when he is jailed and forced to spend all his wealth to free himself.

The most important connection between the main and the subplot is that in both a gentleman is tested by the adverse circumstances that, as Brathwaite and others caution us, life inevitably presents. Considering the tendency of both domestic drama and gentleman books to uphold the highest standards of conduct for the middle class, it is not surprising to find Heywood juxtaposing a plot involving a nobleman who remains faithful to his code of honor,

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though greatly afflicted, and a plot about a citizen who behaves with equal honor, who in fact never falls under the sway of passion. After his initial lapse, Sir Charles maintains his restraint and acts moderately and rationally. Each successive betrayal of Sir Charles, by his false friend Shafton and the former friends, tenants, and relations who deny him, is a further test of his commitment to his code of honor. But even in extreme circumstances, he resists the temptation to sell his ancestral home for money, which would be a greater prostitution than offering his chaste sister to Sir Francis:

> I now the last will end and keep this house,
> This virgin title never yet deflower'd
> By any unthrift of the Mountfords' line.
> In brief, I will not sell it for more gold
> Than you could hide or pave the ground withal.
> (vii.22-26)

That Sir Charles forces his sister to conform to his code of honor, that he sees her chastity not as an inviolate, essential part of her, but as a family possession which can be bartered to maintain the family's honor, and that he refuses to be indebted to his enemy makes him admirable to Heywood's audience, a model to be emulated. He would certainly not be faulted, as he is by Canuteson, for reverting to "antiquated codes" when he is "living in an age when chivalric behavior should be dead."[45] The evidence of the gentleman books also disproves Irving Ribner's claim that Sir Charles's "conventional notion of honour and gentility . . . in the rapidly changing England of Heywood's day belonged already to the past."[46] Like Frankford, Sir Charles is aware of his moral dilemma, and suffers at having to choose between two painful alternatives. But, again like Frankford, he chooses rightly according to the value system of the play. His patrimony is what is inviolate, most valuable, and what he must preserve. Susan's chastity contributes to the family's honor; in losing it, of course, she will dishonor them, and this is the reason why she plans to kill herself after yielding to Sir Francis in repayment of her brother's debt. Ribner, and other critics who maintain that Susan and Sir Charles conspire to have her commit suicide before giving herself to Sir Francis miss the point here entirely, for this duplicity would greatly dishonor them both.

Sir Charles's honorable behavior eventually prompts Sir Francis to an equal display of virtue. Sir Francis's sudden decision to marry Susan rather than ruin her has been called unaccountable and unmotivated. But his suddenly honorable conduct is comprehensible

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when it is seen as a response to Sir Charles's honorable behavior. As with so much of the action of this play, we simply cannot account for it in terms of feelings or psychological motivation. But this need not trouble us if we see *A Woman* as a play concerned primarily with illustrating behavior. Adams tells us that Frankford, like other characters in domestic tragedy, is "Everyman." Heywood's main intention is to make us see what we have in common with his characters, not what sets them apart. Individual psychological history accounts for the particular details of our love relationships, but it is the universal need to control the disordering effects of our emotions—love, envy, pride, anger—that is Heywood's subject.

Sir Francis's anger and desire for revenge have been immoderate. Many gentleman books concern themselves, as does Tuvill's, with reconciliation. Tuvill warns that "Hurts are not healed with hurts, nor wounds with wounds."[47] Sir Francis's decision to behave like a gentleman leads to the reestablishment of harmony and the strengthening of economic ties: both Sir Francis's family and Sir Charles's gain through the union of Francis and Susan. Appropriate feelings follow. Susan will "learn to love where I till now did hate" (xiv.148). And why should she not? Most of the marriages at this time in this class were arranged by families for economic reasons, and the assumption was that love would follow.

The question we are left with is why Anne's plight is so much worse than that of Sir Charles or Wendoll, given that they all err in being ruled by passion. In none of these cases does the concept of sin seem most important, as Adams maintains. Heywood is more concerned with the social consequences of crime than the moral consequences of sin, and Anne's crime, as we have seen, is most threatening to the established hierarchy. Sir Charles repents immediately, Wendoll also repents, and Anne ultimately does too. Although the process of Anne's repentance and redemption is important in the play, the focus is on her treatment at Frankford's hands, and he treats her not as a sinner, but as a wayward wife. She has committed an offense against her husband. Anne's behavior is Frankford's legal responsibility, exactly as if she were a minor child. There is a system of civil justice which imposes sanctions on Sir Charles, but Frankford is responsible for punishing Anne. Anne's crime, moreover, unlike that of Charles or Wendoll, is against her master. It constitutes a threat to his honor, to the stability of his family, and to social and economic order. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that to fail to punish Anne adequately is tantamount to condoning regicide.

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Wendoll's offense, as critics have pointed out, is seen to be an offense primarily against Frankford, with whom he is equal in rank, in breeding, in all but wealth, as Heywood takes care to let us know. When Wendoll contemplates seducing Anne, the objection which seems most compelling to him is that he will betray his friend, not that he will ruin his friend's wife. It is rather as if he were considering stealing a valuable possession of Frankford, for, as in the case of Susan Mountford, Anne's virtue is more Frankford's than her own. After Anne falls, her relationship with Wendoll is not developed. Heywood's interest is in the relationship of Wendoll and Frankford, which we see worked out over time and given more consideration by each than either Anne or Wendoll expends on their affair. Given Heywood's purpose of demonstrating gentlemanly conduct, this is what we should expect. When he is betrayed by a friend whom he has treated liberally, Frankford, like Sir Charles, behaves nobly. He does not seek revenge. Frankford is Wendoll's social equal, not his master, and he is not expected to impose judgment on him. Frankford assumes that, as a man and an equal, Wendoll will be tormented by his own conscience:

> When thou record'st my many courtesies
> And shalt compare them with thy treacherous heart,
> Lay them together, weigh them equally,
> 'Twill be revenge enough.
>
> (xiii.72-75)

It turns out that Wendoll is not a gentleman. On the other hand, he is not extraordinarily wicked, but the kind of man who might well mislead an honorable, well-intentioned gentleman like Frankford. He is a man who will not control his passions—he counters all his logical arguments against his villainy with "And yet I must" (vi.51)—and so he is a threat to the social order. His threat is most apparent in the card-playing scene, where his sexual innuendoes reveal not only his cunning and deceit, but his unrestrained pride and desire. Frankford can oppose Wendoll only by being what he is, by defending himself and his family. He cannot stop sin, only sinning. He can only expel Wendoll from his household. Though Wendoll experiences guilt and remorse, he soon rallies, and looks forward to the return of his good fortune. He plans to travel on the Continent for a while:

> And I divine, however now dejected,
> My worth and parts being by some great man prais'd,

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At my return I may in court be rais'd.
(xvi.134-36).

Of course he will thrive in the world, and especially at court. Were wickedness not so likely to be masked by duplicity, were men like Wendoll not so plausible and likely to ingratiate themselves and insinuate themselves into even a well-ordered home, and, certainly into a corrupt court, we would not need the guidance this play provides in how to deal with them.

Anne's death, however distasteful to a modern sense of justice, is the logical, acceptable, indeed inevitable conclusion to her story in her time. The less we like this, perhaps, the more important it is that we not deny or disguise it. In fact, in spite of its title, Heywood's play is really about Frankford, the principal actor, more than Anne, who does little, until the end, other than submit to Wendoll. Heywood demonstrates that Anne, like even the best of women—even the best of Christians—can succumb to temptation. But, having done so, she sees the justice of her punishment. She herself recognizes that her husband cannot, with honor, fail to cast her off. Theirs is not a private affair, but a public matter:

He cannot be so base as to forgive me,
Nor I so shameless to accept his pardon.
(xiii.139-40)

Anne's repentance is genuine, a fact rarely acknowledged by critics of *A Woman.* She never wavers or shows any weakness, as Heywood takes every opportunity to demonstrate. She spurns Wendoll when he offers to comfort her; complies with the spirit as well as the substance of her husband's judgment; and renounces first her part in pleasurable, harmonious living, symbolized by her lute, and, finally, life itself. Anne eventually sustains with dignity, and by choice, the physical suffering and disfigurement which she earlier pleaded to be spared. She no longer cares to go "perfect and undeformed to my tomb" (xiii.100). When she has renounced her sin, she displays the nobility and virtue which all the characters in the play attribute to her. She again exemplifies the complete gentlewoman, a fitting mate for Frankford, as symbolized by the renewal of their marriage vows at the end of the play.

There is a starkness to the denouement of *A Woman,* in the tableaux of Anne with her children and servants and Anne facing Nick, who has followed her with her lute, which sets off Anne to advantage. Because she is composed and resolute in her affliction,

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she is very moving. By the end of the play we must believe that, since she does the right thing, behaves properly according to her conscience and her family, her feelings change accordingly and she attains genuine peace and happiness. Anne's death, unlike that of Wincott's wife in *The English Traveller,* is more than a convenient way of disposing of her. The courage and dignity with which Anne faces her death make her an example for others to follow. Heywood presents us with a woman who engages in a moral struggle, successfully undergoing the process of a Christian's repentance.

Heywood is not a misogynist who needs to be reclaimed for our times. In fact, in the controversy about women in the seventeenth century, which was given new impetus by the publication in 1615 of Joseph Swetnam's *Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women,* Heywood was decidedly pro-woman. His history of women, *Gunaikeion* (1624), a long, wide-ranging compendium, has the avowed purpose of glorifying the sex. In 1640 he wrote *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women of the World,* which gives examples of heroic women through the ages and contributes to the body of literature commending women. *Exemplary Lives* is heavily didactic. It can be seen as a counterpart to *A Woman,* with the difference that it is meant to demonstrate conduct becoming women, just as Richard Brathwaite went on to write a companion volume to his earlier work specifying the virtues appropriate to contemporary women, *The English Gentlewoman* (1631). Eugene M. Waith points out in "Heywood's Women Worthies" that in *Exemplary Lives* Heywood uses the heroic tradition of exemplary lives to uphold aristocratic values for a wide audience, including, as he says in his dedication, the wives of knights and country squires, gentlewomen, and the general reader.[48] This is exactly analogous, as we have seen, to Heywood's use of the heroic tradition, as it evolved into the book of the gentleman, in *A Woman.*

It is possible, then, to appreciate Heywood's achievements without creating contradictions within his play that did not exist for his audience. *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is a compelling play which exerted its influence on later drama and continues to do so. It is true that Heywood does not rise above the accepted morality of his day, but neither does he sanction archaic values and conventions. It seems reasonable to applaud Heywood for what he was, a skillful and effective advocate of the morality not of our society, but of his own.

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NOTES

[1]Hallett Smith, "A Woman Killed with Kindness," *PMLA* 53 (1938):138-47.

[2]Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy, 1575-1642* (1943; rpt. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1965).

[3]Hardin Craig, *The Enchanted Glass: The Elizabethan Mind in Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952).

[4]Freda Townsend, "The Artistry of Thomas Heywood's Double Plots," *PQ* 25 (1946):97-119.

[5]T. S. Eliot, *Essays on Elizabethan Drama* (1932; rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956).

[6]Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Honour and Perception in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *MLQ* 20 (1959):321-32.

[7]Herbert R. Coursen Jr., "The Subplot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *ELN* 2 (1965): 180-85.

[8]John Canuteson, "The Theme of Forgiveness in the Plot and Subplot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *RenD* n.s. 2 (1969):139.

[9]David Cook, "*A Woman Killed with Kindness*: An Unshakespearean Tragedy," *ES* 45 (1964):361.

[10]Many fine articles have dealt with a single aspect of the play, such as its imagery. See, for example, Otto Rauchbauer, "Visual and Rhetorical Imagery in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *ES* 57 (1976):200-10.

[11]Adams's understanding of contemporary concepts of sin and repentance does, however, enable him to make sense of the nature of both Frankford's mercy and Anne's penance.

[12]Chilton Powell, *English Domestic Relations: 1487-1653* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1917).

[13]Louis Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1935).

[14]Wright, p. 638.

[15]Powell, p. 179.

[16]Powell, p. 180.

[17]*The Cambridge History of English Literature,* ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, 14 vols. (New York and London: Putnam, 1907-1917), 3:266.

[18]Powell, p. 181.

[19]Daniel Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978).

[20]Lawrence Manley, *Convention: 1500-1750* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980).

[21]See, for example, Richard C. McCoy, *Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1979), and Raymond Southall, *The Courtly Maker: An Essay on the Poetry of Wyatt and His Contemporaries* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964).

[22]Humphrey Tonkin, *Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of The Faerie Queene* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

[23]G. K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).

[24]Ruth Kelso, *The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1929).

[25]See, for example, Catherine M. Dunn, "The Changing Image of Woman in Renaissance Society and Literature" in *What Manner of Woman: Essays on*

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English and American Life and Literature, ed. Marlene Springer (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 15-38.

[26]Powell believes that domestic and other conduct books and the drama of the times did not directly influence one another, but that both reflected current ideas and attitudes. Since his interest is in using both kinds of works to document these ideas and attitudes, he has no reason to explore the connections further, and simply acknowledges that the same ideas and attitudes are expressed in plays and conduct books. In "Marriage and the Domestic Drama in Heywood and Ford," *ES* 32 (1951):200-16, Peter Ure, following Powell, also mentions similarities of doctrine on the subject of marriage in domestic conduct books. But he makes these connections for the purpose of dismissing them as shared moral platitudes which should not tempt us to judge playwrights as homilists rather than as dramatists.

[27]See, for example, J. H. Hexter, *Reappraisals in History: New Views on History and Society in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

[28]Laura Stevenson O'Connell, "The Elizabethan Bourgeois Hero-Tale: Aspects of an Adolescent Social Consciousness" in *After the Reformation: Essays in Honor of J. H. Hexter,* ed. Barbara C. Malament (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), pp. 267-90.

[29]Daniel Tuvill, *Essays Political and Moral* and *Essays Moral and Theological,* ed. John L. Lievsay (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia for the Folger Shakespeare Library, 1971), p. 47.

[30]Tuvill, p. 49.

[31]Richard Brathwaite, *The English Gentleman,* 1630. S.T.C. No. 4262. Though it was published later than *A Woman,* Powell considers *The English Gentleman* the best example of the type of book with reached the height of its popularity at the end of the sixteenth century.

[32]Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England: 1500-1800,* abridged edn. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

[33]Brathwaite, p. 264.

[34]Canuteson, p. 139.

[35]Cook, p. 360.

[36]Eliot, p. 103.

[37]Stone, p. 127.

[38](xii.125) Quotations are from the Revels edition of *A Woman Killed with Kindness,* ed. R. W. Van Fossen (London: Methuen, 1961).

[39]Brathwaite, p. 151.

[40]Brathwaite, p. 155.

[41]Brathwaite, p. 270.

[42]Canuteson, p. 137.

[43]Tuvill, p. 136.

[44]Quotations from *The English Traveller* are from *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood,* ed. J. Pearson, 6 vols. (1874; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964). Since lines are not numbered, references are to page numbers.

[45]Canuteson, p. 38.

[46]Irving Ribner, *Jacobean Tragedy: The Quest for Moral Order* (London: Methuen, 1962), p. 55.

[47]Tuvill, p. 134.

[48]Eugene M. Waith, "Heywood's Women Worthies" in *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,* ed. Norman T. Burns and Christopher J. Reagan (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1975).

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