1   Introduction: the circular staircase

I

If the title *Love's Labor's Won* does indeed refer to a lost play by Shakespeare, it is but one of many. His dramas repeatedly incorporate traces of different plays he might have written. Fragments of other genres often appear, whether as splinters painfully piercing the surface of the play or as guests convivially welcomed within. Marcade, a messenger not only from the court but also from the domain of tragedy, complicates comedic closure; "Pyramus and Thisbe" famously demonstrates what its host play might have become.[1] Less familiar than such episodes but no less important are the momentary suggestions of lost plots and possibilities, often present only in a few lines of dialogue. France's farewell lines in *King Lear* ("Thy dow'rless daughter, King, thrown to my chance, / Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France" [I.i.256–257]) gesture towards a comedy that could have ended on a declaration very much like his. The Prince's passing flirtation with Beatrice (*Much Ado About Nothing*, II.i.326–330), a moment that deserves more attention than it has received, itself flirts with an alternative narrative. And the intimations of homoerotic plots recently traced by a number of critics suggest that gender, like genre, might have been constructed very differently.

Much as the interrupted sentences that figure prominently in the more literal syntax of so many plays hint at lost words, thoughts, and agendas, so moments like the Prince's approach to Beatrice temporarily break the syntax of the dramas in which they appear, thus enacting the preoccupation with loss in its many forms that is as fundamental to Shakespeare's plays and poems as it is to poststructuralist theory. If his tragedies predictably end on loss, his comedies less predictably may open on it; the initial scenes of *As You Like It* and *All's Well That Ends Well* refer in some detail to the death of a parent. In beginning with the corpse of a king on stage, *1 Henry VI* signals the many types of deprivation, whether of a monarch, an idealized vision, or an era, that structure the plots of Shakespearean history. All of Shakespeare's nondramatic

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poems, including ''A Lover's Complaint'' and ''A Funeral Elegy'' if they
are indeed his, are preoccupied, even obsessed, with the consequences of
loss. Those consequences are staged as well on many levels of form and
style. The rhetorical figure syneciosis, for example, ties together opposites
and thus at once gives and snatches away. Witness one variety of this
trope, an oxymoron like ''Profitless usurer'' (Sonnet 4, line 7); witness
too the *x-less x* version that appears so prominently in *The Rape of
Lucrece*, that narrative of reduplicated losses and recoveries (''helpless
help'' [1056], ''liveless life'' [1374]). And of course theater ends on an
empty stage whose revels are ended. Loss and its fraternal twin lack in
their many forms are, as I will demonstrate, no less pervasive in the
culture than in the style of Shakespeare's plays and poems. He writes in,
to, and for a nation of mourners.

Yet even this brief a survey points to the challenges of studying loss,
whether in general or in Shakespeare's canon. The poststructuralist
paradigms that direct our attention to the subject may also tempt us to
misinterpret it: the discourse that so energetically resists ideologically
driven impulses to categorization itself often oversimplifies loss (and
recovery too, as we will see). Losses differ among themselves far more
than generalizations about that concept, poststructuralist and otherwise,
sometimes acknowledge. Unhappy families are not all alike; the loss of a
kingdom is of course radically different from that of a home, even if the
abode may on one level represent the state. And the contemporary
emphasis on materiality encourages further distinctions based on value in
its several senses, an apt response to a culture where the price of the item
stolen determined whether the crime was capital. One size seldom fits all.

This book engages with the vast subject it addresses by defining loss in
terms of the household and then further delimiting it. *Shakespeare and
Domestic Loss* is specifically about three closely related forms of domestic
upheaval that can in fact fruitfully be studied in conjunction: the loss of
goods via burglary, the loss of the dwelling place itself, both as physical
locale and as haven, and the loss of parents when a child is still relatively
young. I have selected these foci partly because some intriguing passages
in Shakespeare – lines that variously challenge us intellectually, trouble
us ethically, or dazzle us stylistically – involve them. Witness, among
many other examples, two texts to which I turn later, that often neglected
lyric Sonnet 48 and Leontes's expression of jealousy in I.ii.190–198. In
addition, however, these three quotidian domestic events constitute a
coherent unit for studying the epistemological incoherence and instability
they represent. Indeed, one sign of the interdependence of the three types
of loss surveyed in this book is that several texts that I assigned to a
given chapter might instead have been examined within a different one;

Belarius is in a sense a burglar, for example, and *Cymbeline* engages with the absence of parents in addition to that of homes. As my chapter titles suggest, the members of our triad of losses involve interrelated issues about place in both spatial and social senses. All three types are further interconnected through their relationship to gender, an explicit concern at many points in this study and an implicit one on virtually every page. These domestic losses are also linked together by their interactions with events in more public spheres. All three involve intrusive outsiders (the thief, the stepparent, the opposing party in a legal dispute about land, who often literally trespassed on someone's property), and thus are connected to nationalistic fears of foreigners, as well as to concerns about sexuality as invasion.

The potential breadth of my topic has led me to narrow the scope of certain chapters. Chapter 3 refers in passing to many threats to the home, but I concentrate there on destruction by fire and the invasion of outsiders onto one's property in the course of land disputes: these were arguably the threats to the material dwelling place most feared by many members of Shakespeare's audience, and they have received little attention from literary critics. Although the deaths of children and siblings repeatedly shook the early modern home, the discussion in Chapter 4 centers instead on the demise of parents, largely because such events are more central to Shakespeare's canon. In that chapter I further delimit my inquiries by focusing on the loss of mothers and fathers during the period when their children were still young enough to live at home, hence referring only tangentially to the truant from Wittenberg who is surely Shakespeare's most famous bereaved son. For if the loss of a parent in some sense always imperils a home, that threat is likely to differ in both degree and kind when their sons and daughters are still actually dwelling in the domestic environment in question; some particularly significant material consequences of parental loss, notably the effects of the wardship system, are germane only until the children in question reach their majority.[2] I further delimit my topic by devoting somewhat less attention than I might otherwise have done to issues at the core of two forthcoming studies, the types of homelessness studied by Linda Woodbridge and the invasive adulterers analyzed by Richard Helgerson.[3] This book also restricts itself by concentrating in each chapter on two principal texts, generally single plays or poems but in the case of the Henriad a group of dramas. A case could have been made for choosing any number of other plays and poems; but since genre is a primary concern of this study, I have tried to represent a range of literary forms as well as of periods in Shakespeare's career and also to juxtapose texts that implicitly comment on each other.

4   Shakespeare and domestic loss

Although *Shakespeare and Domestic Loss* principally engages with
drama, I also discuss Shakespeare's nondramatic work at some length
and explore the implications of my arguments for several genres of early
modern poetry; I do so because of both my personal interest in poetry
and my professional conviction that students of Shakespeare should look
more closely at the connections between his plays and poems, particularly
in light of an academic climate that privileges the former. And, as the
title of this introductory chapter indicates, I frequently allude to twenti-
eth-century poetry, in part because such references can reveal connec-
tions between early modern and modern versions of loss and in part
because one of my principal concerns, the complex relationship between
language and loss, is central to many twentieth-century lyrics.

In one respect, however, in lieu of constricting its arena this study
embraces capacious definitions. Any discussion of domestic spaces
necessarily encompasses a large and amorphous category, and its bound-
aries are further blurred by raising the question of what constitutes a
home. Though I concentrate mainly on edifices, an analysis of early
modern abodes must acknowledge their intimate and complex relation-
ship to the land on which they are situated, especially when that property
constitutes a sizeable estate; I discuss land law in Chapter 3 because its
disputes necessarily threaten domestic edifices as well. Moreover, as
many critics have acknowledged, sixteenth-century England witnessed
many redefinitions of the imbricated concepts "house" and "home," and
cultural constructions of dwelling places were as varied and shifting in
early modern England as their material styles of constructions.[4] The
increasing emphasis on privacy manifest in architectural decisions,
notably the movement from the two-story central hall to a house whose
second story contains separate chambers, was literally reshaping the
physical dwelling place and in so doing reshaping conceptions of home.[5]
Many observers of domesticity in early modern England have traced
changing definitions of public and private, with the more acute studies
acknowledging as well the imbrication of those categories.[6]

Religion sparked other shifts in the valences of domestic spaces; the
Protestant emphasis on the home as center of moral and religious
instruction reminds one that in Tudor and Stuart England the dwelling
place was, as the marriage manuals emphasize, both a little common-
wealth and a little church. But the spiritual resonances of home were
quite different, though no less culturally specific, for those who, so to
speak, dwelled in Rome while dwelling in England – how did the
politically perilous religious practices followed within their own homes
and condemned by the culture outside affect the very conception of home
among recusants?[7] Moreover, in a period of intensified nationalism, the

connection of home and homeland intensified as well, an issue to which
we will repeatedly return. As these examples suggest, not only is a
dwelling place likely to have different resonances for inhabitants of, say,
sixteenth-century England and twentieth-century Los Angeles, but its
meanings may vary from region to region, period to period, and person
to person within the same culture; for example, certain inhabitants of
Tudor and Stuart England had several dwelling places, which evidently
complicated their definition of home. But because the very relationship
among various conceptions of dwelling place and home is so often
explored in Shakespeare's texts – witness, among a host of other
instances, the connections between literal homes and other havens in
Cymbeline – I finesse the problem of definition by simply relying on the
broadly conceived category of "dwelling place" when considering dom-
estic spaces and referring to "homes" when and if the connotations of
that term are just.

II

If, as I will suggest, domestic loss in Shakespeare is a circular staircase, so
too is my critical practice in studying it. While engaging with such
problems as the ideology of domestic spaces and the politics of trans-
gression in early modern culture, I circle back as well to older questions
about Renaissance literature. This study repeatedly raises issues about
genre and language that were central to Renaissance studies during the
long period when that title was used with neither apology nor self-
consciousness. If this is a book on the styles and forms of loss, it is also a
study of styles and forms in the more customary sense. At the same time,
as my preliminary sketch of my topic suggests, *Shakespeare and Domestic
Loss* participates in, and on occasion attempts to refine, contemporary
critical practices and presuppositions. In focusing on the domestic, like
such scholars as Frances E. Dolan, Richard Helgerson, Lena Cowen
Orlin, and many others, I am attempting to bridge the concerns of first-
generation new historicist and feminist scholarship by demonstrating an
alternative site for many issues sometimes associated merely with more
public arenas, notably fears of invasion.[8] My emphasis on the home also
draws attention to regionalism, challenging, as I have done elsewhere, the
new historicist tendency to emphasize London in general and the court in
particular.[9] If England was a nation of mourners, it is only slightly
hyperbolic to describe it as a nation of migrants, and the domestic spaces
that this book examines were often literally distant from the court and
London. But in privileging the domestic I aim to reinterpret, not repress,
discussions of the nation and its capital by showing that the interactions

between home and state are as complex and dynamic as those between text and state.

If this study signals its participation in the project of exploring the domestic, it also insistently announces certain departures from the work of Dolan's *Dangerous Familiars* in particular. Whereas her important book mainly emphasizes threats from within, I am primarily concerned with invasive outsiders. Yet, as Dolan's occasional references to outsiders would indicate, my perspective is designed to supplement hers (in the many senses of that verb) rather than supersede it. Indeed, not the least of the transgressions of the outsiders catalogued in *Shakespeare and Domestic Loss* is their threat to the very categories "inside" and "outside"; I suggest, for example, that in Shakespeare's culture like ours anxieties about intruders often encode concerns about the boy next door. Redefining uncanniness, Homi K. Bhabha suggests that the "unhomely" results when "the borders between home and world become confused . . . the private and the public become part of each other";[10] the intruders examined in this book, whether they be burglars, stepparents, or fires spreading from alehouses, render home unhomely in just this sense.

Moreover, when Dolan and other critics, Foucauldians implicitly and often explicitly, interpret the domestic sphere, they describe it primarily in terms of outré and extreme events such as witchcraft and murder. Similarly, when another influential study, Katharine Eisaman Maus's *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*, treats crime, it concentrates on witchcraft and treason rather than larceny and burglary.[11] *Shakespeare and Domestic Loss* instead emphasizes the importance of common and in many instances quotidian happenings: the disappearance of a pie or a sheet, a death attributable to illness rather than violence. But this perspective too can supplement investigations of the anxieties associated with more atypical events; for example, I demonstrate connections between descriptions of the so-called "black art" and the rhetoric associated with rogues and vagabonds.

In emphasizing social history and its interaction with cultural history, I attempt variously to nuance and to negate some common critical presuppositions. Seconding Richard Strier's insistence on the importance of "the obvious, the surface, and the literal,"[12] I further contend that sometimes a cigar is mainly, if not necessarily only, a cigar – and that fact, far from precluding sophisticated analyses, may reveal important issues about smoking habits or the tobacco industry. Tarquin's bearing fire into Lucrece's dwelling place invokes not only martyrology and demonology but also house fires. In these and many other instances, an examination of the literal and quotidian levels of meaning is not a pedestrian, even plodding, alternative to the tightrope acrobatics of

cultural critique but rather, as I just observed, a supplement, and this book attempts both forms of locomotion.

This is not to say, however, that this study invariably presumes a mimetic relationship between the material phenomena of domestic loss and Shakespeare's texts. To be sure, sometimes it insists on exactly that; the changeling boy, for example, evokes not only cultural fears of Amazons but also financial and other practices concerning the custody of orphans. But in turning a human child into a fairy child in that episode, Shakespeare also tropes the transformations of the material world that in more extreme forms often characterize his representations of social and cultural history. Domestic loss may be translated into more abstract terms, as when a concern for lost homes becomes a preoccupation with threatened havens in *Cymbeline*, or transformed into figural and other stylistic mannerisms, as when syneciosis embodies the seesaw between absence and recovery or when Sonnet 35 overtly refers to a thief and also stages patterns of stealing linguistically.[13] In instances like these, Seamus Heaney's observation about poetry is applicable to drama too: the text "floats adjacent to, parallel to, the historical moment" – a position that makes its relationship to history by no means less significant but certainly more complex.[14]

The relationship between the quotidian events of social history traced here and national history is equally complicated, and complicated in some similar ways. The model of simple equivalence, though it produced some useful insights into the significance of the family, has been recognized as too bald a representation of either the ideologies of patriarchalism or the workings of a family. Dolan's claim that the culture should be read from the inside out, moving from the family to the state, though a useful corrective, risks merely repeating a mistake of earlier criticism:[15] one danger of positing the centrality of either the political and historical or the familial is the assumption that other levels of meaning merely encode it, so that burglary, for example, would be significant primarily as a xenophobic representation of the intrusion of Others with dark skins and dark religious rituals, or alternatively, such intrusions would be significant mainly as glosses on familial anxiety.

Metaphor, however, not only expresses responses to cultural and social patterns but also can, as it were, represent the relationship between these levels of meaning. Rejecting the so-called substitution and comparison models for the workings of metaphor, Max Black's rightly influential contribution to the debates on figuration recommends instead what he terms an "interaction view."[16] The meanings of both terms of the figure, Black asserts, shift in relation to each other: "The metaphor

selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the principal
subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the
subsidiary subject . . . This involves shifts in meaning of words belonging
to the same family or system as the metaphorical expression.''[17] Black's
statement reveals its era in its emphasis on an orderly relationship of
meanings; I would add that the interaction may destabilize meanings,
thus clearly placing metaphor on a continuum with that prodigal son the
metaphysical conceit. Similarly, his pronouncements assume a largely
stable hierarchy positioning the primary and secondary meanings, while
in fact metaphor may function in part by confusing the relationship
between the two – is ''To His Coy Mistress'' more centrally and more
viscerally involved with love or with death? When we adjust Black's
interactive model in these respects, however, it can aptly gloss the
relationships realized in domestic loss between the quotidian and the
extreme and between social and cultural history. Thus, as we will see, the
surrogacy of stepparents and other guardians relates to that of language
in the dynamic ways Black describes. Adducing the familial parallel
draws attention to the danger of exploitation within language; the
semantic and aural displacements of figurative language comment on the
more material displacements often inflicted on an orphan.

My emphasis on social history also raises methodological questions
about that endangered but still dangerous species the fact.[18] Two
interrelated tenets of poststructuralism, the insistence that all analyses
are colored by the presuppositions of the language system that presents
them and the attack on the disinterestedness and rationality associated
with the Enlightenment, have been deployed in some quarters to make
the very concept of a fact suspect. But Rorty himself, though loosely and
inaccurately associated with the more extreme versions of relativism,
develops a modified version of it that permits of a cautious but significant
recuperation of evidentiary procedures: the position that material reality
is shaped by cultural constructions of it is, he persuasively argues, very
different from the less convincing assumption that no material reality can
exist independent of or prior to those systems.[19] Thus recognizing that
the very concept of crime is a construction that performs important
cultural work and that property was itself a shifting and highly charged
concept does not preclude acknowledging an increase during the 1590s in
the number of people who lost what they considered their property;
recognizing the many different ways the loss of a parent could be
explicated does not prevent us from devoting attention to the phenomena
of mortality crises.

As I noted, both by precept and example this study aims to valorize
the links both between social and cultural history and also between

history itself and modes of criticism too often dismissed as ahistorical,
notably the close examination of language and the study of genre. Texts
sometimes enunciate clearly but often whisper or stutter; the poststruc-
turalist recognition of these and other instabilities in language often has
led to the most rigorous scrutiny of its complexities, yet too often the
association of any close examination of language with New Criticism has
encouraged a cursory glance at texts that aims only to find evidence of
the critic's presuppositions. Texts sing as well as stutter, louder sing for
every tatter loss rends in our mortal dress – hence they urge us to remain
attentive to style. Similarly, far from being inimical to the study of
cultural history, genre is one of the most promising avenues for exploring
it, as I imply in my subtitle and attempt to demonstrate throughout this
book.

But it is, curiously, ophthalmology that provides the best trope for
some central methodological aims of this study.[20] A technique known as
monovision is often used to restore clear vision: one eye is corrected to
see close objects well and the other to perceive distant ones, but the two
eyes function together to produce a clearer image of both near and
distant sights than even the single eye adjusted for each type of vision
could have achieved.[21] Monovision, I maintain, protects against a view
of English culture as monolithic: its dual focus sharpens our perceptions
of the texts and cultures of early modern England. And hence *Shake-
speare and Domestic Loss* practices monovision, in several respects
looking at the near and the distant in conjunction: it examines the
domestic and the national; nuances of texts such as the trope of the
cuckoo in *The Rape of Lucrece* and their implications for much broader
issues in Shakespeare's canon; Tudor and Stuart losses and their
analogues in the stories of Eden and Troy; London and outlying areas;
and the early modern in relation to the modern. This study is also
indebted to monovision in that the eye that looks at what is near
concentrates on events occurring in short and precise time spans, such as
the mortality crisis of 1557–9 or the 1611 changes in coinage that
arguably shape some passages in *Cymbeline;* the other eye gazes at a
whole era.

III

One reason loss is culturally specific, *pace* many psychoanalytic over-
views of mourning, is that different societies offer different narratives
through which subsequent versions of deprivation are read. The contrasts
among these stories crystallize distinctions among the cultures that tell
them; the fabled decline of Arthur's court and the mythologized disap-

pearance of Norman Rockwell's small-town America reveal much about the respective societies that mourn their absence. Not the least reason for the references to Troy that glimmer in two plays I discuss, *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, is that Troy and Eden provided paradigmatic narratives for interpretations of loss in early modern England. If Lucrece visits a representation of Troy when attempting to cope with her own grief, so too do many members of Shakespeare's audience, and the playwright himself often provides them with another version of monovision in juxtaposing diegetic losses with the destruction of those famously tall and flaming towers. And, whereas other scriptural narratives also lie behind representations of loss in Tudor and Stuart England (the story of Laban offered a familiar instance of thievery, Mary and Joseph modelled the loss of both home and haven, and so on), Eden was particularly influential.

No student of Renaissance pastoral would be surprised at claims that expulsion from that garden functioned as a paradigm for subsequent versions of deprivation and absence in early modern culture, even, or especially, those that involve falling on grass. The myth of Eden was of course the originary version of the repeated loss of God's presence through sin, the deprivation that Protestantism urged believers constantly to battle through carefully monitored stages of spiritual growth, even while its doctrine emphasized their inability to effect their own salvation and stressed the likelihood of a continuing chain of losses. But Eden is also more specifically relevant to the domestic calamities catalogued in *Shakespeare and Domestic Loss*. "So clomb this first grand Thief into God's Fold" (IV.192), Milton writes, reminding us that Satan is not just a thief but a burglar and as such deprives his victims of their home and distances them from a loving parent.[22]

The models of Eden and Troy, then, shape early modern presentations of loss in many ways and are in turn reread through and sometimes in those narratives. In both a woman is the immediate cause of catastrophic invasions, while the texts hint at a more complex gendering of guilt. Each offers details that correspond to concerns in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century culture; fire, for example, was both the source of Troy's ruin and one of the most pernicious dangers threatening the early modern household. And if domestic disasters involve place in social and spatial senses, as well as displacement and replacement, that concept is equally central to the narratives of Troy and Eden; they repeatedly demonstrate connections between losing a literal, geographical place and losing social position and emotional stability.

These stories also demonstrate the complex dynamic of loss and recovery that this book traces in so many arenas. Both narratives recount