

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



‘Scene of the Murder’: *Arden of Faversham* and Local Performance Cultures

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Introduction: Site-Specific Murder

Notions of site-specificity have become increasingly important to our understanding of early modern drama. Partly inspired by the REED project’s meticulous attention to the local contexts of performance, and partly as a response to the insistent ways in which elite household and progress entertainments feed off the spaces in which they were designed to be played, reconstructing the locations and events of performance has become a significant methodological tool for understanding early modern drama’s meaning, impact, and investment in place making. This type of work, in other words, has a great deal to tell us about both drama and location; theatrical and geographical practices and modes of thought.¹

The ideas explored here have benefitted from the wonderful working and thinking environment provided by the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at Kent, especially its Cultures of Performance group; from the thought-provoking SAA seminar on *Arden* run by Gary Taylor and Terri Bourus in New Orleans in 2016 and the generosity of the other seminarians, including Mac Jackson, before, during and after the papers; and from the insightful comments of the anonymous reviewers for this journal, who dragged me out of historical particularity and back to performance.

¹ See for instance Susan Bennett, and Mary Polito (eds.), *Performing Environments: Site-Specificity in Medieval and Early Modern English Drama* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Michael Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010) and Michael Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre / Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2001); Cathy Turner, ‘Palimpsest or Potential Space? Finding a Vocabulary for Site-Specific Performance’, *New Theatre Quarterly* 20.4 (2004), 373-90; for links to performance as research, Sarah Dustagheer, Ollie Jones and Eleanor Rycroft (eds.), ‘(Re)constructed Spaces for Early Modern Drama: Research in Practice’, special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin* 35 (2017) 173-85; and, for an inspirational reading of historicised site-specificity, Julie

On the surface, domestic tragedies in particular have much to offer to site-specific research. Often based on historical events, they can exhibit spatial and geographical specificity that is almost documentary – juridical or journalistic – in its levels of detail. Although much has been said about the spatial elements of this particularity, however, less has been done to think through how its geographical specificity might have been read in local performance, and the impact it may have had on its early modern provincial audiences in particular.² This article aims to make some interventions into our discussions of site-specificity as they pertain to *Arden of Faversham*, and to draw conclusions that might have a wider resonance in terms of the way we conceive and analyse the range of specifically early modern relationships between site and performance. It aims to explore methods that may be more generally applicable both to other ‘local’ plays – ones whose action plays out in specific geographical spaces – and to dramas that represent quotidian domestic life below the level of the elite; in other words, to both of the central elements of the definition of domestic tragedy, and more broadly to their cognate plays. In wider terms, this is an argument for taking local, provincial – both amateur and professional – performance traditions seriously as responses to plays, and for the significance of the relationship between the stories behind dramas and their staged lives, for the reconstruction of performance cultures.

Perhaps the most insistently geographically rooted of domestic tragedies, *Arden* is situated in a county with a long and rich history both of travel in and out, and antiquarian chorographical writing – two facts which rather fundamentally shaped Kent’s sense of itself as a county across the early modern period. This self-knowledge was developing in a strand of antiquarian texts that begins just before *Arden*’s murder

Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

² Interesting work on spatial aspects of *Arden* includes Gina Bloom, ‘My Feet See Better Than My Eyes: Spatial Mastery and the Game of Masculinity in *Arden of Faversham*’s Amphitheatre’, *Theatre Survey* 53.1 (2012), 5-28, plus chapter 3 of her 2018 book *Gaming the Stage: Playable Media and the Rise of English Commercial Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), where she draws attention to the connection between the ‘formal and phenomenological’ aspects of backgammon and the spatial practices of spectators in London theatres; Emma Whipday’s ‘“Marrow Prying Neighbours”: Staging Domestic Space and Neighbourhood Surveillance in *Arden of Faversham*’, where she argues that the play’s staging translates the audience into a ‘judging community’, *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 88.1 (2015), 95–110; and Julie R. Schutzman, who shows the impossibility of separating public and private in the play’s concerns, orders and disorders, ‘Alice Arden’s freedom and the suspended movement of *Arden of Faversham*’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 36.2 (1996), 289-314. These writers are excellent on the play’s particularity, but much remains to be done on its connections to the spatial identity of its provincial playing contexts.

and continues into the eighteenth century; simultaneously, the local performance cultures of the play were developing in their relationship to one another, as professional drama, as amateur performance and as a puppet play. The movement of these two tectonic plates of site-specificity against each other is the subject of this article.

In many ways, exploration of the links between antiquarian histories of place and located performance is a self-evident and uncontroversial move. Mike Pearson, in his influential work on site-specificity, has linked theatre quite explicitly with archaeology as a set of critical practices, describing the latter as ‘a material practice set in the present which works on and with traces of the past. What archaeologists do is work with evidence in order to create something – a meaning, a narrative, a story – which stands for the past in the present’.³ In what follows, I consider the ways in which site-specific enquiry might articulate the changing connections between historical narrative and chorography, and how it might deal with the ‘fluid interplay of texts and practices’ that relate the two to one another across the period from *Arden*’s first publication in 1592 to our firmest documentary evidence for it as a ‘local play’ in the mid-eighteenth century.⁴ In doing so, it is necessary to ask how *Arden*’s story moves, geographically and theatrically, as narrative: to look at the evidence we have for its significance without prioritising theatrical form, and then to explore what those movements might tell us about the role of the drama in particular – the cultural work it was doing in relation to other forms.⁵ While we cannot gather audience reactions in the direct way possible for contemporary site-specific performances, we can nevertheless meaningfully reconstruct the contexts within which those performances would have been experienced.

Kent as site

Key to our understanding of the function of such flexible performances is the palimpsestic qualities of the space in which they take place – locations ‘at which other

³ Quoted in Turner, 378.

⁴ The quote is from Julie Sanders, who discusses a ‘far more fluid interplay of texts and practices, not only between different manifestations of amateur or household theatre both within and out with specific regions, but also between commercial and amateur theatre, and therefore, by extension, between amateur and metropolitan sites of performance’ in fascinating ways (pp. 126-7). The aim here is to extend her focus on mainly elite, amateur work.

⁵ In doing so, I have built on the invaluable work done by Lena Orlin in *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), ch. 1, with the aim of extending it into the eighteenth century and relating it not only to the complex story of the historical *Arden*, but to the ways in which history was being made in Kent in the period.

occupations – their material traces and histories – are still apparent’.⁶ This is a point to which we will return later, in the context of antiquarianism, but important to note here is the blurring which such eruptions of place into spectacle might cause in the relationships between the real and the fictional.⁷ The melding of materially-present space and imagined narrative is an important part of *Arden*’s multiple site-specificities, then – the meaning making of its local performances, and the way in which it might have performed that context elsewhere: ‘To understand place requires a thick description of local knowledge and practices, laws and customs, along with an imagination of the meaning-making potential of its performance’.⁸

Whereas other counties may have been more insular in the early modern period, Kent was always open to goods, people and the transfer of ideas and skills.⁹ Travel therefore makes Kent; it defines its nature as a place connected in the north west to London, and from its quays as a way off the island – from the northern and eastern ports (including Faversham) to northern Europe, and from the south by boat to France and beyond. The county facilitates a level of travel that makes it familiar ground for soldiers returning from war, a variety of itinerant salespeople (including pedlars and players), business people conducting their affairs inside and beyond the county,¹⁰ and travelling monarchs, gentry and aristocracy, archbishops and other dignitaries with business and domestic ties both within the county and in London. Arden, Franklin, Black Will and Shakebag, Lord Cheyne and others in the play enact a series of culturally familiar journeys that spread goods, practices and visually impressive physical presences across the road networks of the county.

⁶ Pearson and Shanks, p. 23.

⁷ ‘the performance ... may play at the interface of experiences of the real and the fictional’; see Bennett and Polito, p.7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ On the increasingly vibrant early modern connections between capital and provinces see Lena Orlin (ed.), *Material London, ca. 1600* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), Mark Jenner (ed.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London C.1500-c.1750* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), Merry and Richardson (eds), *The Household Account Book of Thomas Puckering of Warwick* (Stratford-Upon-Avon: Dugdale Society, 2012), the many and various publications of the Records of Early English Drama project, and Sanders, who describes ‘rich, ongoing, multidirectional exchanges of goods, people, and ideas’ (p. 132).

¹⁰ On the latter see Ann C. Christensen, *Separation Scenes: Domestic Drama in Early Modern England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), where she argues that the plot and setting of the play both ‘pivot on his itinerant business obligations – a fact eclipsed in the criticism by Arden’s “gentle” landowning status as well as Alice’s adultery’. She sees itineracy as part of Arden’s identity, one which fascinatingly, therefore, ‘makes Will a suggestive double of the restless domestic hero’, and points out that ‘other characters, both in his household and in the community, expect his mobility and exploit his absence’ (pp. 33, 41, 34).

This makes the play rather curious in the site-specific terms of geographical particularity: it is both intensely located and fiercely mobile. In form it is a fundamentally processional drama, in which characters repeatedly enter to and then pass on by other characters who are more fixed in their location, or in which two groups of characters move alongside one another on the road, hailed in advance of encounter and then exiting their separate ways. The effect of repeated, non-linear movement is to define an area, a landscape within which the dynamics of the murder attempts play out.¹¹ What *Arden* offers its audiences is a representation of the county of Kent as a series of movements in and out, back and forth, and to and away from Faversham and home, which situate its geography as if pegging it out in the audience's mind – 'Well', Arden says to Michael, 'get you back to Rochester; but sirrah, see you / Overtake us ere we come to Rainham Down, / For it will be very late ere we get home'(9.55-7). 'Here' is usually cast in relation to multiple other locations.

The story of *Arden* is also mobile, as important work has shown.¹² As part of what Julie Sanders calls the 'cultural and social traffic' between places, we might think about the traffic between cultural forms: in this case the interplay between different tellings of the same tale. This is an interplay that works both horizontally and vertically in time; *Arden's* murder was prolonged as a subject of interest throughout the early modern period by a series of print, manuscript and performance connections that make insistent inter-textual reference to one another. Such influences make what often appear to us to be strange bedfellows (for instance sixteenth-century quartos and eighteenth-century puppet performances) in the way they associate supposedly distinct formal traditions into one 'circuit of knowledge'. This article unpicks the relationship between these textual and performative relationships by considering first the different types of early modern performance in which the story appears, second the textual traces which they have left, and third the way antiquarian writings about the town of Faversham were related to the play. In doing so, it aims to tease out the connections between domestic tragedy, site specificity and the mobility of cultural forms with respect to the *Arden* story, and to suggest some of the ways in which these might be more widely applicable.

¹¹ On the play's broader geographies and their political meanings, see Garrett A. Sullivan Jr., "'Arden Lay Murdered in that Plot of Ground': Surveying, Land, and *Arden of Faversham*", *ELH* 61.2 (1994), 231-52.

¹² Richard Helgerson, 'Murder in Faversham: Holinshed's impertinent history', in Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (eds.), *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 133-58; Orlin, *Private Matters*, ch. 1.

Forms of playing

On Christmas eve 1729, *The Kentish Post, or the Canterbury News-Letter*, a publication that had begun life in 1717¹³ and, despite its title, was not yet convinced of the value of local news, recorded only five Kentish stories filling under half of one column. Between the appointment of a new sheriff, amazement at some especially large heifers lately butchered in Cranbrook and the death of a local official from East Kent, appeared two announcements: one, that 'On Friday next, the Play-house at Dover will open again with the Opera of the Beggars Wedding', and the other, that the editors 'hear from Feversham, that a Company of their Townsmen design to Act the Tragedy of ARDEN, at the Roe-buck joining to that Place ; and to begin next Friday'.¹⁴ This is the earliest record so far found of a tradition which is probably more familiar to us from the views of the play's later eighteenth-century editor, Edward Jacob. In the Preface to his 1770 edition of *Arden*, he states that some of Faversham's 'Inhabitants have till of late, at a few Years interval, doubly murdered it, by the excessive bad Manuscript Copies they used, and their more injudicious acting; to the no small Discredit of this valuable Tragedy'.¹⁵

The eighteenth century is a particularly significant one for the history of provincial performances of the play and their relationship with productions in London and further afield. It is one of two periods in which there is an especially well-documented and lively tradition of provincial performance of *Arden* (the other being the second half of the twentieth century). In this earlier period several distinct traditions of performance, with different approaches to the representation of the play and based on divergent textual traditions, were circulating simultaneously; they were increasingly closely tied to a developing sense of the significance of antiquarian accounts of Faversham itself, and their relationship to civic pride.

The play had three main provincial lives in the early modern period: in addition to being performed by amateurs in its 'home town', it was put on by professional travelling companies who worked the circuit of East Kent theatres, fairs and races from the Medway towns (mainly Rochester and Chatham – near to the play's Rainham Down) to Margate, Sandwich and Dover on the coast, and sometimes back through West Kent. It

¹³ F. William Cock, 'The Kentish Post Or The Canterbury News Letter', *The Library* 3.15 (1913), 285-90.

¹⁴ *The Kentish Post, or the Canterbury News-Letter*, Saturday December 20 to Wednesday December 24, 1729, Numb. 1179, p.1 col. 2.

¹⁵ Preface, p. iv.

was also a very popular marionette show, put on by troupes like Collyer's and Middleton's, and later by Clunn Lewis. Middleton's claimed to be able to trace their puppet performances back to 1711, and eighteenth-century marionettes of the *Arden* story may well still have been in use in the early twentieth century.¹⁶ Clunn Lewis bought Middleton's marionettes, and ones identified with performances of *Arden* are currently part of the collection of the Musées Gadagne in Lyon.

John McCormick argues that 'For three centuries the marionette theatre had been one of the popular forms of transmission of narrative and dramatic material and in this sense was a significant part of the oral culture of Britain (and most of Europe)'.¹⁷ It had a considerable temporal reach which appears to have been in many ways at least comparable with the rise of commercial theatre in England, as there is clear evidence for a tradition of puppet playing contemporary with *Arden*'s first performances: puppet shows appear in stage plays such as *Bartholomew Fair*, and Thomas Dekker claimed 'to have attended a performance of *Julius Caesar* by *marionette* before he saw it performed by actors in 1599 at the newly built Globe Theatre'.¹⁸ There were several strong continental puppet traditions which exerted influence across the channel, perhaps most prominently the Italian one, and a long native tradition, of both whole plays and puppet versions of specific theatrical characters.¹⁹

Arthur Kinney has begun to trace a shadowy equivalent tradition for *Arden*, surfacing in a 1792 sale catalogue which mentions, as one of a list of play quartos, 'Cloy's Tragedy of *Arden of Feversham*, 1633'.²⁰ Macdonald P. Jackson suggests that the sale copy of Q3 (1633) of *Arden* had the name Cloy (or Cloys) penned on the title-page, and he

¹⁶ John McCormick, *The Victorian Marionette Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), p. 18. In the early nineteenth century, a Middleton married the widow Frisby, through whose line they may have gone back to 1711 with the marionettes: 'The portable theatre, marionettes, wagons, stage, and scenery were bought by Thomas Clunn Lewis, who then employed William Middleton as a figure-worker and musician. William Middleton's sister Lenorah was married to a musician, Richard Barnard, who died in 1858. Their son, Richard Barnard, became one of the most important marionette proprietors of the last quarter of the century.' Clunn Lewis was still playing *Arden* when he was interviewed in 1911.

¹⁷ McCormick, p. 216.

¹⁸ Susan Young, *Shakespeare Manipulated: The Use of the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare in teatro di figura in Italy*, (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), p. 9.

¹⁹ Tiffany Stern, "'If I could see the Puppets Dallying': *Der Bestrafte Brudermord* and Hamlet's Encounters with the Puppets', *Shakespeare Bulletin* 3.3 (2013), 337-52; see also Frances K. Barasch, 'Shakespeare and the Puppet Sphere', *English Literary Renaissance*, 34.2 (2004), 157-75.

²⁰ Arthur F. Kinney, 'Authoring *Arden of Feversham*' in *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*, ed. by Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 78-99 (p. 83, n. 120).

builds on W.J. Lawrence's observation of records relating to a travelling showman called Bartholomew Cloys: 'On the 27th of August, 1623, a licence was granted [by the Master of the Revels] to Barth. Cloys with three assistants to make show of a *Musical Organ*, with divers motions in it; to make show of an *Italian Motion*; to show a *Looking Glass*; to show the *Philosopher's Lanthorn*; to show a *Virginal*'. A motion was the contemporary term for a puppet show, and an Italian one indicates a continentally-inspired performance.²¹ Jackson concludes that, as Cloys was a very uncommon name, 'it seems probable that among Bartholomew Cloys' offerings as entertainer was puppet theatre, that somebody knew of a puppet version of *Arden* with which he had been associated, and that his name was written onto a copy of the 1633 quarto of the play, the catalogue misplacing the apostrophe'.²²

Textual traditions

The marionette version of *Arden* was probably the most popular of the three traditions locally, certainly by the early eighteenth century, giving credence to this suggestion of association between early modern text and puppet play. The newspaper reports that when Collyer's 'Saxonian novels', which were only 18 inches high, played *Arden* at the Cock without Westgate in Canterbury in 1737-8, the inn was 'so crowded with Company, as well as from the Country as the City, that they [Collyer's] will not go from thence till the beginning of next Week, but continue acting *Arden* all this Week'. Performing twice nightly, they apparently drew crowds from as far as ten miles away. The show also toured villages, and could be hired by individuals or groups for a guinea an evening.²³ The previous year they had performed the play in Faversham: 'Mr Henry Collyer with his puppet show has acted *ARDIN* for several Nights with great Applause being perform'd after a curious manner... He designs next for Maidstone'.²⁴ A company of German marionettes, touring the county in 1742, played *Arden* alongside *Crispin and*

²¹ Referring to correspondence in the *Times Literary Supplement* (1923-1936). For sixteenth-century evidence of Italian *marionettisti* and *burattinai* in London see Susan Young, *Shakespeare Manipulated: The Use of the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare in teatro di fuga in Italy*, (London: Associated University Presses, 1996); although see Philip Butterworth, *Magic on the Early English Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 137, for the slipperiness of the term.

²² Jackson, personal correspondence. Lawrence cited George Chalmers' 1799 summaries. Cloys was also paid five shillings the following year for putting on a show in Coventry, R.W. Ingram ed, *Coventry, Records of Early English Drama*, ed. by (1981), p. 419.

²³ Sybil Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players and Drama in the Provinces, 1660-1765* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 229.

²⁴ *Kentish Post* 1736, quoted in Rosenfeld, pp. 226-7.

Crispanus, indicating a tendency (also shared by travelling actors) to appeal to a local audience: Crispin and Crispianus, the patron saints of shoemakers (familiar to us from *Shoemaker's Holiday*), had apparently originally plied their trade in Faversham, where their feast was still enthusiastically celebrated. Acting and marionette groups were well-known locally, and often had local connections.²⁵ Both watching and performing *Arden*, then, were apparently part of a historicised sense of local place-making.

An apparently unique and largely unstudied pamphlet sheds some light on the nature of these productions, and the ways in which they were seen as a part of local culture.²⁶ A *Short Account of Lord Cheyne, Lord Shorland and Mr. Thomas Arden* was printed in 1739 in Canterbury 'for the Author', and sold at the cost of three pence. In other words it came out the year after the crowded performances of the play took place, and perhaps in anticipation of another successful winter season, as the author's name is given as Henry Collyer. The pamphlet is divided into an opening epistle 'To the Reader' (5-10), 'A Short Account of Lord Cheyne and Ld. Shorland' (11-20), 'The Characters of the Persons concerned in the Tragedy of Arden' (20-45), and a brief section headed 'This is the Manner following that it is acted by the Lilliputian Popets' (45-6).

Collyer explains his rationale for breaking into print at the start: 'The Reason of my writing of this Book is to inform you of the Story of Mr. Thomas Arden, Lord Cheyne, and Lord Shorland', suggesting that he wants to relate the narrative in order to prepare his readers for the show they are about to see. He continues, 'As the Tragedy of Arden is the principal Thing that we act in our Show, I am not like other Popet-Shows, which desire none should be acquainted with any Part of their Speeches, because so stupid; but on the contrary, could wish that every one had read this Book before they see me perform it'. The publication, then, comes partly out of snobbery for the superior linguistic skills of his production of the motion, perhaps in direct contrast to the performance of the rival marionette troupes mentioned above.

It was important to Collyer to preserve the language of the quarto play. Collyer gives evidence to support his assertion, in the form of 'some of the Speeches, in order that the

²⁵ Other plays include *The Royal Convert: the reign of Hengist King of Kent*, Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players*, p.251, and *Vertue Betray'd, Or, Anna Bullen: King Henry the 8th*, 'to be Dress'd after the true ancient manner, answering the Character', *Kentish Post* no. 2278; Middleton's toured mainly in the southeast, and were originally from Dover, McCormick, p. 23.

²⁶ Lena Orlin, speculating on its missing front cover, understandably states that 'the chapbook survives only in this incomplete copy', *Private Matters*, Figures 6 and 7, and few others have looked for it. I am extremely grateful to Mac Jackson both for his generous sharing of the reference and his insightful comments on this work on *Arden*'s different performance traditions.

Curious may pass a Judgment on the Stile of Language'. First, he gives the opening speeches of the quarto, relatively accurately rendered.²⁷ Then, he offers the following puppet response:

Franklin:

Arden, cheer up thy SPirates, be no more cast down;
Our Lord, **by Letters Patent** from the Crown,
Hath conferr'd to you and yours the Tyths and all the Rents
Of the Abby Lands at Feversham in Kent
And am I not your Friend? what more could you require?
Cheer up your Heart, and take your Soul's Desire.

Arden:

Franklyn, where Prudence, Love, and Virtue's join'd,
How beauteous is the Product of the Mind;
But where the tainted Tide doth flow reverse
'Tis Racks to Friends, and to themselves a Curse.

Franklyn:

Disburthen Friend, unfold you Grief of Heart,
Mine shall release or bear and equal Part.

Arden:

My Wife's the Cause of all my Discontent,
Mosby and she revels in Merriment:
I have warn'd him from my House, yet privately they meet;
Nay, more I fear, my very Life they seek.

Franklyn:

Be patient Friend, and learn of me
To ease this Grief, and save her Infamy;
Treat her fair, sweet Words are fittest Pills
To ease the Lust of Women's filthy Wills:
Question not her Love, forbear your Jealousie,
And strait take Horse, to London go with me,
For Women, when they may, will not do so,

²⁷ I am working in more detail on the parallels for the Arden edition of the play, but there are interesting points of connection with the Southouse text mentioned below.

But by Restraint doth **outrageous** grow;
And when return'd may ture Obedience show.

Although the overriding impression of this exchange is determined by the rhyme scheme, there are clear connections here to the quarto text which indicate that Collyer's is a creative reworking of it, in his own idiom within the puppet tradition. The connections come in several different forms, including direct address, subject matter and exact linguistic echo, the latter indicated here in bold text. It is apparently important to him that his text retains these close verbal ties to the quarto, as authentic language gives his puppet performances an added status that allows them to rise above the 'stupid' verse of his rivals. The pamphlet makes these temporal connections clear to an audience, suggesting that listening to the puppets was appreciated as an authentic, 'genuine' theatrical experience.

Exploring the ways in which this pamphlet might have circulated helps us to understand how audiences may have been attracted to local performances of Arden. The pamphlet was almost certainly printed by James Abree, who began his career in Canterbury in 1717, following a London apprenticeship.²⁸ David Shaw, who has worked extensively on Abree's output, reckons that he printed just over 100 books and pamphlets;²⁹ in order to supplement this rather meagre output over the period 1717-68, he also printed the *Kentish Gazette*, a (from 1721, rather unusually) bi-weekly publication in which the advertisements for *Arden* as performed by live actors, quoted above, were given.³⁰ Abree was well networked, both with local Kentish booksellers with whom he arranged distribution deals and fostered co-publication relationships, and with London sellers.³¹

²⁸ Apprenticed to Ichabod Dawkes, between 1705 and 1712.

²⁹ Including single-sheet ephemera: 'Retail distribution networks in East Kent in the eighteenth century', in *Worlds of Print: Diversity in the Book Trade*, ed. by John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong (London: British Library, 2006), pp. 197-205 (p. 197); see David J. Shaw and Sarah Gray, 'James Abree (1691?-1768), Canterbury's First "Modern" Printer', in *The Reach of Print: Making, Selling and Reading Books*, ed. by P. Isaac and B. McKay (Winchester, St Paul's Bibliographies, 1998), pp. 21-36 for the 'Provisional list of books printed by or for James Abree', to which this pamphlet in both of its forms can now be added.

³⁰ Shaw and Gray, states that it was 'the only example at the time of such a paper to appear regularly more than once a week' (p. 21).

³¹ 'He maintained his links with the Stationers Company in London...registering two apprentices', and his imprints show him 'working with or for a number of London booksellers, in particular James Roberts who sold sermons published by Abree in the period 1726-1739', 'James Abree...' (p. 22); 'London booksellers...provided a central (London-based) facility for members of the trade in London and other provincial towns to find out about and to place orders for Canterbury-produced books'; see David J. Shaw, 'Canterbury's External Links, Book-Trade Relations at the Regional and National Level in the

He also employed newsmen, who provided him with a local distribution system that penetrated deep into the towns and villages of the county. In addition to selling the paper, they collected advertisements for future issues, and delivered other goods. The clearest evidence is for the sale of patent medicines, including Daffey's Elixir, advertised in January 1729/30 as 'Truly prepared at London, and appointed to be sold' not only 'at no other place in Canterbury, but at Mr. James Abree's', but also at a range of local grocers.³² But these men also carried almanacs and playing cards, so it is not improbable that, in addition to offering his pamphlet for sale to the audiences at his puppet performances, Collyer intended the newsmen to take copies with them, advertising his diminutive performers as they went and drumming up future audiences.³³ The title-page woodcut, reproduced in Figure 2, would work well for this purpose – a recognisably polite eighteenth-century scene interrupted by murder, inviting a move from knowledge of the story to informed response to its animation.

Eighteenth Century', in *The Mighty Engine: The Printing Press and its Impact*, ed. by P. Isaac and B. McKay (Winchester: St Paul's Bibliographies, 2000), pp. 107-19 (p. 110).

³² In Deal, Folkestone, Thanet, Ashford, Dover, Charing, Pluckley, Sandwich, Maidstone, Rye, Ramsgate, Newington, Sittingbourne and Faversham (at Mr Rigden's).

³³ It is not the only example of the connection that Abree's business made between performance and print: the ballad 'Canterbury. A new balad. Sung by Miss Oates' was advertised in the *Post* in August 1733 in conjunction with her performances in the town.



Figure 1: *A Short Account of Lord Cheyne, Lord Shorland and Mr. Thomas Arden, Henry Collyer*, 1739, Vet. A4 e. 2201, Front Cover, by permission of The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

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These regional distribution networks suggest one of the ways in which information about the play was circulating, in its various forms, around Kent and into London, overlapping with the inns in which amateur performances were taking place, performance and text moving alongside one another around the county. They also overlap, however, with the circuits travelled by professional performers. At the end of the 1740s a company which became known as Perry's appeared on the Kentish circuit. In 1749 they played *Arden* in Canterbury in June, in Dover in November for the fair, at Canterbury again and Rochester in January, Sittingbourne and Chatham in February and March. Several aspects of these events are noteworthy. First, the company evidently thought *Arden* an appropriate (and therefore lucrative) play to put on for its first full season. They performed it regularly, suggesting its popularity and indicating a special relationship between company and story. With subsequent companies, the play remained a staple of Kentish performance throughout the century, suggesting that their

commitment to it either instigated or continued a tradition. Second, Perry's first performance, which included singing and dancing between the acts, had the principal parts played by local people.³⁴ This interaction between local amateurs and professional actors was a feature of eighteenth-century theatre more broadly, but Kent apparently had a particularly strong tradition of collaboration.³⁵ And it has interesting implications for the study of a play like *Arden*: did these individuals relish taking part in a local scandal whose fame had never really died away – how was playing *Arden* in front of one's friends and neighbours different to playing, for example, *Hamlet*?

Throughout the century, much was made of the connections between the travelling companies of actors and the London stage. In 1733, the paper was 'inform'd from London, that during the Vacation of the Theatres there, a Company of Comedians selected from both the Royal Playhouses, design to entertain this City'.³⁶ Dymer put on Havard's *King Charles the First* two months after it had opened at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and the text of a play put on at the Theatre Royal was for sale at the newspaper offices for 1s 6d; these assertions of novelty and quality were frequent refrains throughout the next few decades.³⁷ Phrases such as, 'as it was perform'd last seasons at the Theatre Royal...with great Applause' make important connections between the quality and style available in London and what a provincial audience might expect; bills mixed old favourites with new drama: 'a Sett of the best Plays... and some that have not been perfor'd here by any Company'.³⁸ Alongside local performances by amateurs, these traditions kept provincial performances closely connected to London theatrical repertoires and manners, offering a mixed approach to familiarity and novelty, but also to performance styles.

Such explicitly-drawn connections between London and provincial playing raise interesting textual questions. Mrs Haywood's version of *Arden* had opened in London in 1736, the year Collyer's puppet performances enjoyed considerable popularity in Faversham, followed by Lillo and Hoadley's version of the play in 1759, apparently based on Haywood's version.³⁹ Provincial performances from '36 onwards involving London actors could, then, have been using either the original or these very differently shaped and inflected eighteenth century versions. Lillo's edition, which makes Alice

³⁴ Rosenfeld, p. 242.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 218.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 225.

³⁷ *Kentish Post* no. 2297.

³⁸ Rosenfeld, pp. 228, 243.

³⁹ On the lacunae in the history of these texts see, James L. Steffensen and Richard Noble (eds.), *The Dramatic Works of George Lillo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), Introduction.

into a largely innocent victim of Mosby's plotting and opens after three attempts on his life have already taken place, offers a radically different take on both the characterisation of the original, and its episodic move towards climax – it is overtly eighteenth, as opposed to sixteenth, century, as one might expect from the author of *The London Merchant*.⁴⁰

A performance in Kent in March 1759 narrowly predates Lillo's London production in July, and Rosenfeld speculates that this gave the new edition its premiere. In 1765, however, the play was given in Canterbury by Smith's Company 'as originally written', as a rival attraction to the Chatham Company, who advertised that they were acting Lillo's version. Both were clearly popular. When Jacob produced his edition of the quarto text in 1770, he made explicit reference to Lillo: 'It may not be amis to inform them [his readers], that a Play lately written by Mr. Lillo, with the Title Arden of Feversham, contains many Sentiments, Expressions, and even whole Speeches taken from this very Performance' (Preface), and there is a suggestion that he produces his edition as a counter to this now more readily available text.⁴¹ But this also shows an uncomfortable relationship of connection and distance: whilst Jacob apparently sees the connection as a selling point by association, Lillo's Oxford editors call it into doubt, stating that 'phrases, words, images, and ideas are taken from the original text but almost always rearranged into new lines and speeches. Adoption of full lines is rare'.⁴² Lillo's text distances itself at all points from the original, offering a new 'modern' emotional focus to London audiences. These continuities and discontinuities, like the ones between Collyer's puppet speeches and the quarto text, strongly suggest an inter-performance awareness – each time this play was staged, it must have been received by its audience as one version among several simultaneously circulating, in ways that drew attention to the mode (puppet/actor) and the style (eighteenth-century London 'emotional'/sixteenth-century Kent 'moral') of the one attended. Such a sense of choice and 'product differentiation' suggests a rich local performance culture through which the visceral event of murder could be experienced in different modes.

⁴⁰ Lillo's *London Merchant*, a story of moral downfall ending in murder that became one of the most popular plays of the century, was based on a seventeenth-century ballad. Like his later *Fatal Curiosity*, it explored the tragedy of men and women of middling status. He subtitles his *Arden*, 'An Historical Tragedy: taken from Holingshead's [sic] Chronicle, in the reign of King Edward VI'.

⁴¹ The Folger ms copy of the play includes a page headed 'A Preface to this Tragedy it being ye earliest dramatic work of Shakespear now remaining. Mr. Lille has written many Sentiments, Expressions, & even whole speeches, from this play', and in recording this information it makes clear its debt to Jacob's edition, from which it copies this information, but also its interest in the fact that Lillo had himself been interested enough in the story to rewrite it.

⁴² Steffensen and Noble (eds.), Introduction.

It seems possible that the quarto version was kept on the stage during the seventeenth century through the relationship between travelling theatre companies and marionette troupes who both depended at least partly upon it. McCormick points out that ‘it was quite common in the earlier nineteenth century for theatrical booths touring the fairs to be joined in the summer months by actors from the London theatres’, while ‘in the winter months, the Puppet plays, the old style Fantoccinni were resorted to to get a living’. Some of the marionette men and women had also been actors, or worked in companies where the two traditions were practiced.⁴³ These connections of personnel ensured that the two traditions also shared repertoires and scripts. In the nineteenth century, cheap acting editions were heavily used, favouring the production of those plays which appeared in such series.⁴⁴ In the eighteenth century, however, ‘It is probable that puppeteers used an old and unpublished text, passed down through companies’.⁴⁵ McCormick describes a number of surviving ‘notebooks with complete scripts, parts of scripts, or short sequences of dialogue’ for other plays: ‘They are often written in pencil, tightly spaced, and clearly of little use during a performance... Scripts were memorized in the portable actors’ theatres, and the same was usually true of the marionette theatre’.⁴⁶

It is tempting to approach one of the extant eighteenth-century manuscript copies of *Arden* in these terms. Folger D.a.6 contains a densely written MS copy of the play without line breaks, plus extracts from *Hamlet*, *The Unhappy Marriage* (likely Otway’s 1680 play *The Orphan*), and *Cato* (probably Joseph Addison’s 1712 version). The name William Cook and the dates 1750 and 1751 appear in various places. While the dense writing and parts of other texts might indicate puppet performance, however, it is also possible that Cook was part of a touring company. Rosenfeld’s reconstruction of the second season of Dymer’s Company’s tour of Kent includes performances of *Cato* in Sandwich on Easter Monday, and *The Orphan* and *Hamlet* during the fair at Maidstone in February, and a London troupe also offered these three plays in 1739. But in 1748 *Cato* was performed by the young gentlemen of Dover ‘with universal applause’, and *Hamlet*, the Ghost and Horatio were ‘attempted by three Gentlemen’ of Canterbury the

⁴³ McCormick, pp. 19; 79.

⁴⁴ The popular series *The British Drama* by J. Dicks produced an edition of *Arden* in Vol II in 1865, which was advertised in *Reynold’s Newspaper* from Feb 1865 through to 1870; 7 Feb 1875 it was advertised as one of *Dicks’ Standard Plays*, ‘the most Popular Plays, by the most Eminent Writers’. But this was the Lillo version, marked up as 5 acts, to be played by 11 male and 2 female characters.

⁴⁵ McCormick, p. 114.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 112.

same year.⁴⁷ Later, in the 1751-2 season, the part of Castalio in *The Orphan* was taken by another gentleman of the town. It is also possible, then, that these part-texts could be linked to amateur performances.

The Prologue and Epilogue which the writer of the MS appends to *Arden* also suggest amateur performance, drawing attention to the poor quality of the acting – the latter including the assertion that:

The Play is O're ye Bloody scene is Gone
I know wt you'll say; 'Twas badly done,
This for Excuse say we, & all the Rest
We are sorry for't yet will we did our best

We can compare this text with the 'Southouse' MS, a neatly presented transcription of the quarto text that aims at accurate representation, but also contains much other material besides *Arden* and was named after the author of its most substantial textual source, the antiquary Thomas Southouse.⁴⁸ In many ways, the texts could not be more different: the hand in D.a.6 could in no way be called one of 'exceptional neatness and regularity' like the Southouse scribe's – it is better described as erratic. The play as written in D.a.6 is far from a direct copy of any known original,⁴⁹ indeed, the relationship between the Folger MS and early printed editions of the text is considerably more creative than the majority of the 'Southouse' text. Radically cut down, the Folger version also includes imaginative alterations and additions: at the start of the play, for instance, 'Franklyn! Thy love prolongs my weary days' is followed by these lines before it rejoins the rest of the speech from the original play:

Thy tender Love I say, and friendly care:
'Livens my heart, and burries all Despair,
For whil'st on Earth our painfull Lives we spend,
How happy's he that finds a faithfull friend!

⁴⁷ Rosenfeld, pp. 240-1.

⁴⁸ I continue to use this title, even though Nosworthy's assumptions about the author are obviously flawed because Thomas Southouse the antiquary died in 1667, long before the 1716 date given on the prologue of *Arden* in the text. See J.M. Nosworthy, 'The Southouse Text of *Arden of Feversham*', *The Library*, 5th Series, 51950, 113-29. The relationship between the two ms needs much more work, which I am undertaking for the *Arden* edition of the play.

⁴⁹ Nosworthy, p. 113. On the development of editorial principles in the eighteenth century see, e.g., Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

And yet, like Collyer's pamphlet, Folger D.a.6 does anchor itself to the bones of the quarto text, taking its shape and many of its speeches from it. Respect for early modern verse and the authenticity of transmission intermingle with other modes of telling Arden's story. Performing and watching this text was apparently intended to make a direct, audible link to the sixteenth-century folio, even while it revelled in connections to the puppet tradition.

D.a.6 also has a copy of 'A Short Account of Lord *Cheyne* and Ld. *Shorland*' bound in at the start, printed pages which are largely identical to pp. 11-20 of Collyer's pamphlet: they have the same page numbers, and are headed, as his is, with a strip of classical ornament with cherubs and fountains. But there are also differences, and they too are instructive for our understanding of the relationship between performance traditions. They begin to appear on p. 21, where Collyer's descriptions of the characters involved have a final sentence that describes their costuming in the puppet play. In each case, this information is missed out in the D.a.6 version, and the equivalent line left blank. See, for example, Collyer's description of Alice Arden, which ends 'This Figure is dressed in a Flower'd Sattin' (21), or of Black Will 'This Figure is dressed in a Great Coat, with Boots, Pistols, and a Hanger by his Side, and sometimes comes in on Horseback, and sometimes on Foot' (25). The Collyer lineation is followed until the end of the character descriptions on p. 26, each time leaving lines blank when they contained a description of the dress of the puppet characters. Here, at the end of gathering C, the lineation changes: on D1 the Folger copy states '*The End of the First Part*' and begins again with a fresh piece of cherub ornament and a large heading 'A Short Account of the Murder of Mr. Arden. *The Second Part*'. Collyer's pamphlet, however, leaves a line and continues with the story.

It appears, then, that there were two distinct copies of the pamphlet printed, probably at the same time, one with the material on the puppets and one without, Collyer as author having paid for one himself, but with no evidence left (in the absence of a title page) to tell us how the other was financed. As the latter has spaces left for information given in the former, it looks as though Collyer's version was printed first, and D.a.6's afterwards, omitting the preface but perhaps providing a new one to which the woodcut of the murder (now pasted in, severely cut down, at the end) was attached, given that the page numbers for the remaining sections begin at the same place. Abree, Collyer, or both, clearly perceived there to be a market outside the specific confines of puppet performance for the historical information about the characters involved, and this curious 'double printing' suggests contiguous traditions sharing both textual and contextual information. In each case, experiencing *Arden* in performance was connected

to knowledge of the events of Arden's real-life murder and the histories of the people involved.

The pattern apparent across Collyer's pamphlet, Folger D.a.6 and the Southouse manuscript indicates a significant interplay between quarto text and manuscript versions, amateur and professional performances, puppets and live actors, and the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, all growing out of the fertile soil of local Kentish performance cultures. The texts suggest a discerning view, in some quarters at least, of the type of characterisation that different performance traditions offered. They also indicate a sensitivity to purpose – apparently played in modern dress, with specially-written prologues and epilogues that drew attention to levels of skill and emotional veracity, these performances looked both backwards to their subject matter and forwards to the impact of their drama in the present moment of their staging. The texts contain clear evidence of their own sense that site-specificity mattered, both to the authenticity of the story and the impact of its import.

Arden as a Faversham history

We need to consider further the context within which these texts appear, if we are to understand their full significance. Collyer and D.a.6 both contain the same historical narrative of the characters involved. The Southouse MS includes over one hundred pages of transcription of Thomas Southouse's 1671 *Monasticon* (a history of Faversham Abbey); the 'murder' page from Stowe's *Chronicles*; two texts relating to James II's 1688 appearance in Faversham; a scaffold speech; and forty pages of 'A Small Calculation of the Antiquities of Canterbury. Taken out of Mr Somners and Mr Barleys Antiquities of Canterbury, and out of Lambards Perambulation of Kent/ 1717'. Given that there are around 130 pages of the play and 150 of this historical material, it is necessary to disagree strongly with Nosworthy's assertion that the 'various notes on local antiquities by Southouse and others... have no relevance to the play, and may therefore be disregarded'. It is instead possible to argue that the additional content in this MS and others is as significant to our understanding of provincial attitudes towards the play as its transcription of *Arden's* text. These gallimaufrical early eighteenth century texts have a bearing on the process of transmission of Arden and Faversham's intertwined history, and in each case, information about the figures involved and the history of the county was clearly considered significant to the full understanding and/or enjoyment of *Arden* as performed.

We can return at this point to the specific nature of Kent as a county. In addition, and perhaps in relation, to having been ‘permeable’ to outside influence and cultural exchange for longer than its more northerly counterparts, it had an especially long history of antiquarian writing. John Leyland’s *Itinerary*, a major work of peripatetic antiquarianism compiled just after the Reformation, was intended to begin with Kent: ‘Let this be the firste chapitre of the booke’, he wrote; ‘The King hymself was borne yn Kent. Kent is the key of al Englande’. Also working in the county in an early period was John Twyne, first schoolmaster of the King’s School, and writer of *De rebus Albionis, Britannicis atque Anglicis, Commentariorum libri duo*, set in Sturry, just outside Canterbury. Vine argues that ‘there is every reason to believe that there was a vibrant antiquarian circle in 1520s Canterbury’.⁵⁰ From this early start of Kentish writing about the past, there is a clear trajectory through the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, including the works of men such as John Bale, William Lambard and William Somner. Leland’s work was printed posthumously ‘first through the editorial labours of John Bale, and then, more extensively, in the eighteenth century by the Oxford antiquary Thomas Hearne’.⁵¹ In Kent, as elsewhere, this early work was discussed, refined, curated and promulgated by eighteenth-century antiquaries who saw its writers as their intellectual forebears. The Southouse MS quotes from the Canterbury section of John Weever’s 1631 *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, and from Somner’s 1640 *Antiquities of Canterbury*, bringing them into dialogue with its eighteenth-century copy of an earlier text of the play.

This trajectory is closely allied to the fate of Arden’s story which, from its inclusion in the chronicles onwards, found another path through time, repeated as part of the texture of the history of the county in which it took place. This trajectory has been extensively traced, and important points made about the nature of its place there.⁵² The role of antiquarian thinking more generally, and its connections to the extra-historical genres of our story’s transmission has, however, been less fully thought through. Antiquarianism offered a fundamentally multi-layered temporality, a celebration of the multiplicity of time through which its writers moved with dizzying speed. And those movements were

⁵⁰ The text was written in the form of a dialogue between Vives, Twyne himself, Nicolas Wotton (later Dean of Canterbury) and the last abbot of St Augustine’s, in whose summer residence it was set. See Angus Vine, *In Defiance of Time: Antiquarian Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 42.

⁵¹ Vine, p. 25. Twyne’s ‘grandson Brian was a well-known antiquarian in early seventeenth-century Oxford’, who wrote the first printed history of the university and was its first keeper of archives (p. 38).

⁵² Helgerson argues that ‘Alice’s murder of Arden has continued to stand for an alternative history of England, a history focused not on the court and the battlefield... but on the household and the local community’ (p. 157).

organised and anchored around a hub of place, a materiality which became the still point through which historical distance and proximity could be read. Place made sense of change, and made it relevant. As Daniel Woolf points out, whilst the pre-Reformation relic was ‘fundamentally timeless’, the antiquity ‘connected its collector not with eternity but with temporality, mutability, and social change’.⁵³

The remains of Faversham Abbey clearly fell into this group of places and objects that offered their services as nodes of temporal connection for antiquaries. Alongside the performance traditions outlined above, in its home town, interest in the historical story of Arden and Faversham was growing in prominence. Three key publications in the antiquarian tradition cemented the significance of the history of the town’s Abbey, and shifted the audience for such writings from the fairly narrow Humanist circle Vine indicates to a broader Kentish intellectual elite. In 1671 Thomas Southouse produced his *Monasticon Favershamiense*, which included a brief account of the murder in the context of its enumeration of Abbey properties.⁵⁴ In 1727, the antiquary John Lewis published his *History of the Abbey of Faversham*, which included Holinshed’s account of the story.⁵⁵ Finally Edward Jacob Esq, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, brought out his edition of the play in 1770, followed by his history of the town in 1774, both including an account of the murder. These texts on Faversham Abbey were intimately related to one another. Jacob mentions, in the Preface to his history of the town, his ownership of the work of Southouse, father and son,⁵⁶ and states that ‘Mr. Lewis’s history, enlarged with many of his own manuscript corrections and additions’, was ‘in his possession’. He indicates, in other words, an unbroken line of antiquarian interest

⁵³ Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 196.

⁵⁴ Southouse, 1671, p. 59.

⁵⁵ Lewis, pp. 52-61. This book was also probably printed by Abree, as an advertisement for its publication by subscription was placed in the newspaper. Weds Nov 16 to Sat Nov 19 1726: ‘NB just published, Proposals for Printing by Subscription the History and Antiquities of the Church and Abby of *Faveresham* ... &c. By John Lewis, A.M.... The Price to Subscribers is 7s. 6d. of which three Shillings to be paid down, the remainder at the Delivery of a perfect Book in Sheets. 4. The Plates being Engraven, and the Copy read for the Press, the Book shall be finished with all convenient Speed, as soon as there is a sufficient Number of Subscriptions to defray the Charge. Subscriptions are taken at the Printing Office (where the Proposals with the Specimen annexed may be had gratis,) and other Booksellers in *Canterbury*, by *J. Silver* Bookseller in *Sandwich*, by Mr *Wilkins* in *St. Paul’s* Church-Yard, and Mess. *Page* and *Mount* on Tower Hill, *London*’.

⁵⁶ He mentions ‘Many desirable acquisitions’ which had ‘occured to his diligent inquiry. Mr Thomas Southouse’s *Monasticon*, with manuscript notes’ and ‘his son Filmer Southouse’s collections (which last are owing to his obliging and learned friend Dr. Ducarel)’; Andrew Coltée Ducarel, (1713–1785), librarian and antiquary. Ducarel was admitted fellow of the Society of Antiquaries on 22 September 1737 and was librarian of Lambeth Palace Library 1757, *ODNB*.

and textual tradition in the town from Southouse to his son Filmer, to Lewis and finally his own work, in which papers were passed from one man to another.⁵⁷ These papers may well have a close bearing on the authorship of the Southouse MS, and they may also relate to the copy of the original play with which Henry Collyer was working in 1739.

A group of etchings of the ruined Abbey buildings (one of which is shown in Figure 3), increasingly aestheticised across the eighteenth century, was also produced, and they appear in various formats in individual copies of the texts. One was engraved by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck in 1735, the year before the puppet plays, in a view which showed the back of Arden's gatehouse property, and this building was left in splendid isolation two years after Jacob's edition of the play when 'the first Abbey Gate was pulled down with the lofty Tower over it... the lower Gate and Tower also were pulled down'.⁵⁸ All these antiquarian texts, then, tell the story of Arden's murder, both as part of the town's history, and as closely situated within the one surviving Abbey building. The public came to Faversham first to see Arden's body, then the print in the grass, and then, much later to see his house. This material continuity, into which temporal distinction and connection are built, shapes both place and performance.

⁵⁷ John Lewis states that 'The Reader will find in the following Papers what Mr Southouse, his son Filmer, and the late Mr Lees In an interleaved Monasticon etc communicated to me by Mr Lees and Mr Nicholas Battely had pict up and saved of the Remains of the Abbey of Faversham'.

⁵⁸ Faversham Papers, The Faversham Society.

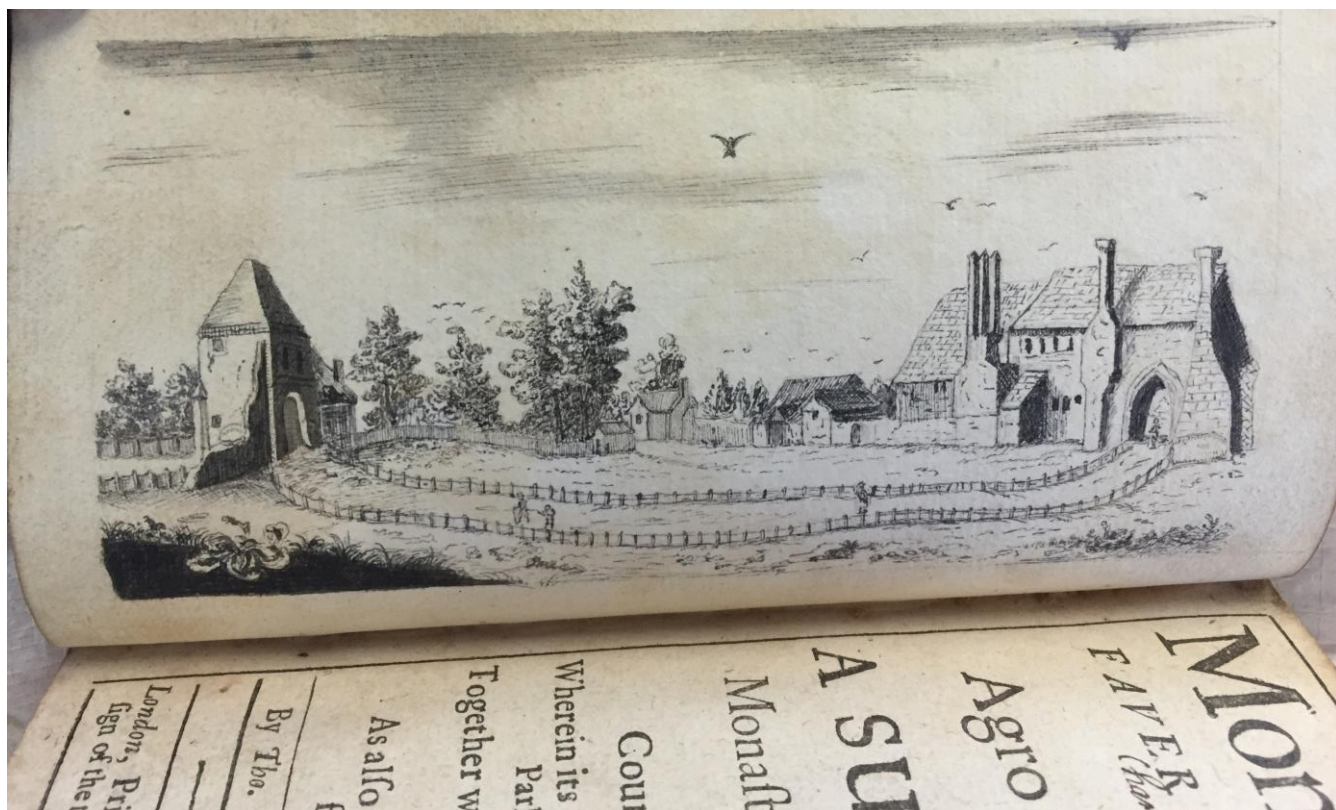


Figure 2: Image of Faversham Abbey against the title page of Thomas Southouse's *Monasticon Favershamiense*, London, 1671, © Special Collections & Archives, University of Kent.⁵⁹ This image is not covered by the terms of the Creative Commons licence of this publication. For permission to reuse, please contact the rights holder.

Such texts aim to restore this history of Faversham, its Abbey and its murder, to completeness in the contemporary mind. Peter Miller has argued that imagination was a crucial antiquarian tool: 'No attempt to reconstruct the past... was possible without the capacity to envision the broken and fragmentary made whole again... this act of the imagination lies at the heart of the antiquary's reconstructive ambition'.⁶⁰ Writing the past back to completeness – plugging the gaps between the gnomonic residues of material evidence with textual material – was an important part of the antiquarian project.⁶¹ The various circulating texts of *Arden* clearly helped here, hence their repeated appearance in Kentish histories. But time and again, the way antiquarians talk about their

⁵⁹ The image is closely linked to Stuckeley's 1722 etching (printed in *Itinerarium Curiosum*, London, 1724).

⁶⁰ Peter N. Miller, *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 31; quoted in Vine, p. 3.

⁶¹ Vine argues that text fills in the gaps between material evidence – 'many travellers', for instance, 'sought to "complete" the fragmentary ruins that they encountered on their travels through recourse to literary or textual memories' (p. 20).

endeavours sounds more like a kind of reanimation. The philologist Meric Casaubon, ‘trustie frend’ of William Somner and Canterbury Cathedral prebendary 1628–1671, talked about how ‘old things... represent to their minds former times, with as strong an impression, as if they were actually present, and in sight as it were... palpable remembrances’. John Aubrey likened antiquarianism to ‘the Art of a Conjuror who makes those walke and appeare that have layen in their graves many hundreds of yeares: and resresents as it were to the eie, the places, customs and Fashions, that were of old Time’. It might be, then, that not only texts of *Arden* but also performances of those texts formed a significant part of the recuperative project of antiquarian work. Within a county with a strong antiquarian tradition that stretched from Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries to puppet master, these performances must have worked within textual and material spaces that allowed them to speak the voices of the dead.

Plays based on historical material can be seen as types of re-enactment that are inherently both fictive and verifiably based in fact, on evidence, and they take place at the meeting point of that evidence and the imagination. Returning to Collyer’s pamphlet, it is possible to read, alongside his respect for the quarto text, some frustration with the playwrights’ interpretations of historical material: ‘they have added so many base and false Things to the True, that, in short, they have almost destr’y’d the Whole’.⁶² His evidence for the erroneous representation of, amongst others, the painter and Arden’s own character, comes from various sources. He claims knowledge of ‘the Wills of Feversham’ in which, ‘it is said, but one Year before he was kill’d, he gave great Gifts to the Poor, which the Town now enjoys’, and the rental values of the Abbey lands, ‘no more than seven Shillings a Year, therefore would cost him more to get by Force then three Times the Worth’. Collyer has apparently consulted a range of written evidence, and it is evidence that would have been available to him in large part in the antiquarian writings about the Abbey just explored.⁶³ His sense of the worth of veracity – ‘the True’ to which things have been added – and his assertion that his own puppet performance is more faithful to the characters of the historical murder than the actors’ play, indicates that the ‘facts’ to be reconstructed here are both arrived at through studying evidence, including the text of the play itself, and the documentary sources for the historical events on which it is based. Collyer’s assertions of authority are aimed partly at the play and partly at its underlying narrative, and they indicate a self-

⁶² Interestingly, Collyer felt that ‘it was done by several mean Hands, for the lowest ruffianly Parts speaks in the same Stile as the best Characters’ (Preface). See also Taylor and Egan (eds.), *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion*, especially chs. 8–10.

⁶³ He also refers to oral testimony.

consciousness about his practice, a sense that he is or desires to be reanimating both the story and its theatrical heritage every time his puppets play.

There is clearly a strong tradition, then, of seeing the play in relation to the history of the town in the eighteenth century, one which is a part of Faversham's changing identity in the period. Faversham was growing in confidence in the eighteenth century – street lights were installed in 1751, pavements provided in 1753, maces and gowns for the town officials attended to in '55 and '57, and the church altered. When the Abbey gateway was removed in 1772, Arden's House stood in significant, isolated prominence at the end of Abbey Street for the first time, a last relic of both royal abbey and horrible murder. Watching *Arden* in this prominent material context must have involved making direct connections to its post-Reformation history through the remains, but also engaging with the way the murder fed into the town's contemporary sense of its importance.

Across the eighteenth century, then, a local performance culture grew in prominence and become increasingly linked to the town's collective identity through the antiquarian connections made between the history of its abbey and the story of its most famous murder. In the twentieth century, when the tradition of local amateur performance really gets going again, it is Arden's private and domestic story which resonates, and productions start to map onto the specific buildings and spaces which Arden knew. This period sees productions in the house itself and nearby Davington Priory – *Arden* is a domestic play proper, one which links the local directly to the national, shortcutting the county.⁶⁴ In contrast, these eighteenth-century performances happen on the cusp of town and county identity. They provide an interesting meeting point between the developing interests and skills of the Society of Antiquaries and a vital performance tradition of a version of the sixteenth-century text which links amateurs and professionals, Kentish actors, Londoners and puppets.

Conclusion

Arden offers a unique route back into a narrative of Reformation change, one which has a particular but different resonance in the eighteenth century (alongside its interest in social status and the emotions of domestic life), that keeps it in the minds of the audiences of a range of different dramatic and historical texts and events. Its site-

⁶⁴ The history of these productions, being amateur and local, has yet to be written. The ones currently uncovered occurred in 1952, 59, 75, 76, 86, 92, 2000 and 2017.

specificity, temporal particularity and links to extant material remains, in other words, are part of the reason for its long-lived popularity. The connections and tensions between its various texts are significant, as are the gaps between historical narrative and performance texts. Reviving the play has a complex relationship to restoring the past as lived – performances are lucid illusions, deeply rooted in developing notions of textual veracity and in the reanimating power of drama. Each performance reanimates both the murder and the significant past, and in doing so it makes the present in a range of different registers – gives it a sense of the power of its history.

How, then, might such a specific historical and theatrical context be more widely applicable to other domestic tragedies? At least two aspects of these connections deserve further attention. First, when considering early modern play texts that have a significant amateur or non-theatre-based biography, it might not make sense to think about an early modern performance history that stops in 1642. And if we do take a longer early modern view, then we are forced to confront the problem of how stories move over periods longer than a generation – what technologies they use, human, mechanical and mnemonic.⁶⁵ We are also, I think, forced to deal with the relationship between amateur and professional activity, and to study them together in the knowledge that, in the moment of performance in a provincial context at least, they may not be entirely separable. Moving across performance, text and material culture, we need to work through the implications of the relative cultural status of the forms such echoes of past events took and the role that the changing status of textual veracity and performance genres had in shaping the movement of the play.

Second, we might need to broaden our sense of site-specificity from the particular space in which performance takes place, to include the way stories seep more broadly into geographies and spread across them. We might need to read between and across individual performances to connect up a raft of representations of the same event, each of which is anchored to place, but has not only local, unique meanings, but also a wider meaning larger than the sum of those parts – a kind of distributed history, in which performance plays a key but inseparable part alongside less lively narratives of place. We need to explore their entanglements, of text, characterisation, genre etc., for what they have to tell us about the way cultural forms adapt and develop in relation to one another. *Arden* as played locally did not exist in isolation from *Arden* as historical story,

⁶⁵ Philip Schwyzer talks interestingly about ‘cultural technology capable of bridging the gulf between the 1480s and the early 1590s’, which included ‘popular songs and sayings, major buildings, minor heirlooms, and even ways of navigating the streets of the Bishopsgate neighbourhood where Shakespeare and Richard of Gloucester lived side by side (in space if not in time)’; see Philip Schwyzer, *Shakespeare and the Remains of Richard III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 4.

nor from Kent as material location for performance and murder. Thinking about such plays as reanimations demands that we consider what type of material they stage, how they ‘bring into play’ past places, things, gestures and narratives through the configurations of present bodies in space, and how they imagine the competing temporalities of those elements.⁶⁶ In these moments, phenomenology meets history head on.

This has implications for our understanding of the geographically specific domestic tragedies in particular – ones tied to a specific location with which their narrative had the potential to make complex echoic connections. Such plays explicitly connect locality to domestic life, rooting the one within the other and making implicit arguments about how murder grows from and impacts particular communities. If we were to undertake a similar exercise for other ‘local’ plays, therefore (obvious domestic tragedies would be *Yorkshire Tragedy* or *The Witch of Edmonton*, but perhaps also the London plot of *Two Lamentable Tragedies*), then we would be in a position to make a more general argument about how this genre defines the relationship between different performance styles, local performance histories, and other ways of characterising place (antiquarian or otherwise) in the long early modern period. It would be possible to unpick a wider investment in place-making in which domestic tragedies and the communities in which they originated make and re-make one another in different ways over time, in response to changing ideas about place, text and performance.

⁶⁶ Turner asks the questions, does ‘this emphasis on the past (albeit the past-in-the-present) mean that in the tension between presence and absence, archaeological performance will tend always to point towards what is absent, fragmented, lost, and displaced? Will it pull away from theatre’s (admittedly troubled) focus on the phenomenological experience of the present, or presence?’ (p. 378); Schwyzer talks about pulling ‘the rug from under the ordinary distinction between “then” and “now”’ (p. 4), and nods towards Jonathan Gil Harris’s work on ‘untimely matter’.