

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



Domestic Liminality, The Jamestown Massacre, and *The City Madam*

Sarah O'Malley

Mahidol University International College

Email sarah.oma@mahidol.ac.th

I. Introduction

The early colonial experience in the New World was inherently liminal. Niall Allsopp attempts to ‘assert some control over the concept’ of liminality ‘by returning to its narrowly etymological meaning, in the Latin word “*limen*” or threshold’. He goes on to explore how liminal states often involve the crossing of thresholds into a space, time, or state of transformation.¹ Colonists crossed an ideological and physical threshold when they left their familiar English homes and communities and entered the unfamiliar environments of the New World. This colonial space was one in which colonists were forced to (re)negotiate the social structures and identities they left behind in England, often resulting in both intentional and unintentional transformations of these structures and identities. The creation of material infrastructure was an attempt by colonial authorities to banish this transitional, transformative liminal space and instead create a more familiar environment in which social order, hierarchies, and identities could be secured. However, this process often in fact revealed the liminality and disorder intrinsic to these more familiar spaces. This is nowhere more apparent than in the construction of domestic space and the discourse surrounding it in England’s New World colonies. In the remainder of this essay I will examine the centrality of domestic space and its thresholds to representations of England’s New World colonial venture, as well as the role domestic

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¹ Niall Allsopp, ‘Threshold Rituals in Early Modern England: A Case Study in Robert Herrick’, *The Review of English Studies* 68 (2016), 405-27 (p. 406).

space played in establishing national identities and social hierarchies. I will then demonstrate how representations of the 1622 Jamestown Massacre fundamentally challenged the position of domestic space as an anchor for identity and social order, and in fact revealed the liminal nature of this space and the transformative potential it contained. Finally I will argue that these narratives impacted representations and understandings of the home in the English playhouse through an analysis of Philip Massinger's *The City Madam* (1632) – one of the only surviving plays engaging with the New World project from this period. I suggest that narratives of the Jamestown Massacre can offer new context to readings of this play and its depiction of domestic space as a liminal and potentially threatening environment.

II. Domestic Space in England and the New World

As Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson note, the home 'was understood as the smallest of a series of interlocking spheres which formed a model of governance: the husband over his household, the mayor and magistrates over the town, the monarch over the realm'.² Production of ordered domestic space was therefore fundamental to the functioning of normative, ordered, hierarchical society more widely. My understanding of the early modern home is influenced by the theoretical conception of space as a 'process', constantly being produced in an active way by the cultural and political activities of the societies they form part of, rather than acting as static backdrops against which these activities occur.³ Equally, I understand domestic space as being beyond solely material, and instead as dynamic combinations of representation, materiality, and subjective interaction. As Hamling and Richardson articulate succinctly: 'the household in its fullest sense, as a conjunction of building, people and possessions, only ever exists as "performed", when the spaces and objects are used by individuals going about domestic activities'.⁴ Domestic space, then, is an ongoing performance that shapes and is shaped by the identities of the subjects inhabiting it.

The physical home was a crucial site through which normative identity was constructed and performed by its inhabitants and the surrounding community in early modern England. In *The English Housewife* (1619), Gervase Markham writes that the 'English

² Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life, 1500-1700* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 7.

³ For more on this theoretical conception of space see: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

⁴ Hamling and Richardson, p. 16.

housewife, who is the mother and mistress of the family... hath her most general employments within the house', and that the perfect husbandman 'is the father and master of the family [...] whose office and employments are ever for the most part abroad, or removed from the house'.⁵ The construction of these normative gender identities is dependent on spatial relationships to the physical structure of the home, namely whether the activities performed occur 'within' it or 'removed' from it. Markham acknowledges the crucial role of this material space in an earlier pamphlet of 1613, *The English Husbandman*. Here, Markham asserts that he will begin, 'before I enter into any other part of husbandry, with the husbandmans [sic] house, without which no husbandry can be maintained or preserved'.⁶ Husbandry is, as Markham positions it, the foundation of a functioning society, and the house is the foundation of good husbandry. Markham's books of housewifery and husbandry are documented as being shipped to the Virginia Colony in September 1620, suggesting that his articulation of domestic space was one colonial leaders in the New World felt would be productive to replicate.⁷

Earlier that same year, in May 1620, the Virginia Company issued a 'Proclamation for the erection of guest houses', in which it insisted to colonists that 'all other business of lesse importance laid aside, they immediately afford all possible assistance, for the raising of houses and convenient lodgings for them, with other necessary reliefe and succour'.⁸ As Patricia Seed has shown, establishing homes as a social and architectural act was a key signifier of English presence in the New World legally and culturally: 'In English law, neither a ceremony nor a document but the ordinary action of constructing a dwelling place created the right of possession. The continuing presence and habitation of the *object* – the house – maintained that right'.⁹ It was clearly a priority for those in charge that houses were built for colonists arriving in Virginia, partly to give shelter and 'succour' to new colonists, but also as an assertion of a specifically English cultural and social presence in this environment. As Paul Brown notes, 'Colonialist discourse does not

⁵ Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife*, ed. by Michael R. Best (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), p. 5.

⁶ Gervase Markham, *The English Husbandman* (London, 1613), p. 4.

⁷ Richard Berkeley and John Smyth, 'A Commission to George Thorpe for the Government of the Plantation', September 10, 1620', in *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, ed. by Susan Myra Kingsbury, 4 vols (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), III, pp. 397-400 (p. 400).

⁸ The Virginia Company, *By the treasurer, councill and company for Virginia. A proclamation for the erection of guest houses, 17 May, 1620* (London, 1620).

⁹ Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World 1492-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 19. Italics in original.

simply announce a triumph for civility, it must continually *produce* it'.¹⁰ The production of domestic space becomes a key part of the ongoing production of a 'civilized' English identity in colonial discourse and practice.

The ideas of production, process, and performance are central to the colonial project and domestic space, but also to early modern theatre. Jonathan Gil Harris has noted the connections between England's theatres and their colonial projects. Discussing Jaques's infamous proclamation that 'All the world's a stage' in *As You Like It*, Harris writes that the phrase 'has become such a cliché that we can easily lose sight of its peculiar ethnographic resonances at a time when "all the world" was opening up in unprecedented ways to European knowledge'.¹¹ Harris goes on to note the theatricality of colonial 'performance' in the New World and indeed the discourse surrounding it. Interestingly also, Harris draws comparisons between the 'contact zones' of the New World and the theatre. Mary Louise Pratt famously defined 'contact zones' as 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths'.¹² The heterogeneity of the contact zone renders it a highly liminal space where, despite sometimes vast power differentials, identity, meaning, and cultural practice are all under some form of negotiation and transformation. Harris argues that the inherent fear of this contact zone in English colonial discourse is mirrored by anti-theatricalists' fear of the contaminative potential of the theatre. He goes on to posit that the anti-theatricalists' understanding of the early modern playhouse

as a contact zone in which subjects touch and are transformed by foreign objects arguably offers us a powerful hermeneutic, one far richer than that modelled by the modern anthropological concept of 'performativity', with which to theorize early modern theatricality in general and the theatricality of cross-cultural encounter in particular.¹³

Using Harris's model, performance of domestic space becomes a key part of English colonists' attempts to prevent their 'transformation' by proximity to foreign objects and environments of the New World. I argue that analysing narratives of the Jamestown

¹⁰ Paul Brown, "'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine": *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism', in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 48-71 (p. 58).

¹¹ Jonathan Gil Harris, 'Becoming-Indian', in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. by Henry S. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 442-59 (p. 442).

¹² Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession* (1991) 33-40 (p. 34).

¹³ Harris, p. 459.

Massacre using this model reveals that representations of the event employ domestic space and conventions around its performance as a way of expressing anxieties around the capacity of domestic space to act as a stable epicentre for normative social structures and identities, and prevent their ‘transformation’ in an otherwise foreign environment. In line with Allsopp’s view that ‘liminal states very frequently coincide with the crossing of a literal threshold’, it becomes clear in narratives of the Jamestown Massacre that the crossing of the domestic threshold marks the start of a liminal state in which English and Indigenous identities and power relations are negotiated and transformed.¹⁴ In the expression of anxieties around this process the theatricality of the early colonial experience comes to the fore, as well as the inherently liminal nature of domestic space as a ‘stage’ on which multiple identities can be fashioned and performed.

III. Jamestown Massacre¹⁵

The Jamestown Massacre was a significant event in the early colonial history of Virginia, which, as Catherine Armstrong notes, ‘not only profoundly affected the policy of the English towards the original inhabitants of the region, but also sounded the death knell for the Virginia Company itself’.¹⁶ The attack, carried out by the Powhatan Native Americans, resulted in the deaths of 347 English colonists, as well as the loss of weapons, infrastructure, and crops. One of the main sources of information on the Jamestown Massacre is Edward Waterhouse’s pamphlet, *A Declaration of the state of the colony in Virginia* (1622). Waterhouse was a colonist living in Virginia, and was ‘the principal spokesman for the colonists after the American Indian insurrection of spring 1622’.¹⁷ Waterhouse begins his account by ‘setting the scene’, describing the relationship that existed between the colonists and the Powhatan before the attack. He tells the reader, ‘The houses [were] generally left open to the Savages, who were alwaies friendly entertained

¹⁴ Allsopp, p. 406.

¹⁵ The term ‘Jamestown Massacre’ reflects contemporary English representations of, and attitudes to, this event, and as such will be used to convey the sense that it is these early modern English representations that are being analyzed. Given the treatment of Native Americans by English colonists throughout the seventeenth century, the ‘massacre’ is perhaps better represented by the term ‘uprising’, as utilized by Alden T Vaughn in his article, “‘Expulsion of the Salvages’: English Policy and the Virginia Massacre of 1622”, *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (1978), 57-84.

¹⁶ Catherine Armstrong, ‘Reaction to the 1622 Virginia Massacre: An Early History of Transatlantic Print’, in *Books Between Europe and the Americas: Connections and Communities, 1620-1860*, ed. by Leslie Howsam and James Raven (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 23-41 (p. 24).

¹⁷ Andrew Lyall, ‘Waterhouse, Sir Edward (1535–1591)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28810>> (accessed 28/02/2018).

at the tables of the English'.¹⁸ Waterhouse's description of Powhatan being at 'the tables of the English' conjures up a material, domestic space that had quite specific connotations of hospitality and congenial relationships, as well as implicitly acknowledging the crossing of English domestic thresholds by the Powhatan.

As Amanda Flather notes, 'The meal table was an important arena for marking out the boundaries of belonging to the early modern household', and Richardson has shown how dining 'functions within the household to cement the bonds between individuals and to aid their formation into a community'.¹⁹ Hospitality was at the core of English social life and was crucial to forming identity in an individual and communal sense, but also in a specifically *English* sense. As Daryl W. Palmer notes, 'Whether powerful merchant, diligent baker, or mere husbandman, one's claim to holding a position in the community, perhaps even to *being English*, could be said to rest in part on the practice of hospitality'.²⁰ Indeed, Felicity Heal has argued that hospitality was even more prominent in the social relations of colonies like Virginia than it was in England.²¹ It is not surprising, then, that hospitality became central to English colonists' figurations of domestic space, as well as being key to their interactions with the Native Americans. Heal also refers to the 'theatre of hospitality' and 'roles' of guest and host, underlining not only the performativity of this domestic practice but also the added theatricality it reveals in Waterhouse's representation of this particular 'cross-cultural encounter'.²²

Waterhouse goes on to describe the attack in more detail, writing:

On the Friday morning (the fatal day) the 22 March, as also in the evening, as in other dayes before, they came unarmed into our houses, without Bowes or arrowes, or other weapons, with Deere, Turkies, Fish, Furres, and other provisions, to sell, and trucke with us, for glasse beades, and other trifles: yea in some places, sate downe at Breakfast with our people at their tables, whom

¹⁸ Edward Waterhouse, *A Declaration of the state of the colony and affaires in Virginia* (London, 1622), p. 12.

¹⁹ Amanda Flather, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2007), p. 60; Catherine Richardson, 'Properties of Domestic Life: The Table in Heywood's *A Woman Killed With Kindness*', in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. by Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 129-52 (p. 138).

²⁰ Daryl W. Palmer, *Hospitable Performances: Dramatic Genre and Cultural Practices in Early Modern England* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1992), p. 16. Italics in original.

²¹ Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 396-9.

²² Heal, p. 21.

immediately with their owne tooles and weapons, eyther laid downe, or standing in their houses, they basely and barbarously murdered.²³

As Heal also notes ‘the social interchange that is the guest/host relationship demands that both parties behave according to learned conventions about their roles’.²⁴ Despite having no knowledge or experience of these conventions, Native Americans were still held accountable to them by the English colonists whose tables they ate at, and their ‘betrayal’ of them becomes a significant part of their demonization in Waterhouse’s account of the Jamestown Massacre. His description of Powhatan in English homes, sharing breakfast at the colonists’ tables, acts as a signifier of the ideological significance of this space as one of hospitality and community. Other indicators such as the lack of weapons and items to trade also signal to the reader that the Native Americans were willingly inhabiting the role of ‘guest’ in the ‘theatre of hospitality’ – making their ultimate betrayal of these conventions seem all the more shocking. What Waterhouse’s narrative also reveals is the liminality of domestic space during displays of hospitality.

Heal discusses the inherent threat of hospitality observing that, ‘The guest, by abusing his role, could reverse the power relationship that was implicit in the giving of hospitality, and could reveal the weakness of the host who exposed himself through his generosity and openness’.²⁵ As a domestic practice that intrinsically involved the crossing of domestic thresholds and the negotiation of identity and power relations, hospitality revealed the liminal potential of the early modern English home. As Allsopp argues, ‘Threshold rituals create meaning by relating particular, individual experience to conventional, cross-temporal patterns’.²⁶ Waterhouse does exactly this in relating the ‘particular’ experience of the Jamestown colonists to the wider patters and expectations surrounding the liminal, transformational rituals of hospitality. The framing of the Powhatan uprising as a ‘violation’ of conventions of hospitality becomes an example of the threat of hospitality and liminal domestic space at its most extreme. It also reveals the capacity of the ‘contact zone’ to exacerbate the liminality of a key cultural site like the home through the mis-interpretation and manipulation of conventions surrounding it. In her discussion of a 1613 text entitled *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, written by an Andean named Guaman Poma, Pratt discusses how the text ‘mirrors back to the Spanish (in their language, which is alien to him) an image of themselves that they

²³ Waterhouse, p. 14.

²⁴ Heal, p. 192.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 199.

²⁶ Allsopp, p. 411.

often suppress and will therefore surely recognize'.²⁷ She goes on to explore the text as evidence of 'transculturation', the process 'whereby members of subordinated groups or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture'.²⁸ During this process of transculturation there is constant opportunity for mis- or re-interpretation of the dominant culture's language and practices, and indeed, as Pratt points out, for the subordinate culture to reflect back parts of the dominant culture often suppressed. I suggest that in the contact zone of the New World, Native Americans and English colonists were involved in a similar process of transculturation in which cultural and spatial practices were open to mis- and re-interpretation. The Powhatan's manipulation of English conventions of domesticity and hospitality mark a re-interpretation of this spatial practice, and one that reveals an oft-suppressed feature of English domestic space – its liminality. The Powhatan, in turning hospitality into a vehicle for revenge and the home into a site of violence, expose domestic space as a liminal site in which both order and disorder can be performed.

It is worth at this point mentioning two other accounts of the massacre that support Waterhouse's: John Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624), and Samuel Purchas' *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625). Much of the information these pamphlets contain is clearly borrowed from Waterhouse's earlier account, but it is important to note that both Smith and Purchas' wording of the attack copy Waterhouse almost verbatim. In setting the scene Smith also tells his reader 'Their houses [were] generally open to the Salvages, who were alwaies friendly fed at their tables', and Purchas makes only minor syntactical changes.²⁹ Purchas and Smith's descriptions of the actual event again mention the sharing of food at a table, with Smith writing:

they came unarmed into our houses, with Deere, Turkies, Fish, Fruits, and other provisions to sell us, yea in some places sat downe at breakfast with our people, whom immediatly with their owne tooles they slew most barbarously.³⁰

And Purchas:

they came unarmed into our houses, without Bowes or Arrowes, or other weapons, with Deere, Turkies, Fish, Fures, and other provisions, to sell and trucke with us

²⁷ Pratt, p. 35.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁹ John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia* (London, 1624), p. 144; Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, 20 vols (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906), I, p. 157.

³⁰ Smith, p. 144.

for Glasse Beades, and other trifles: yea, in some places, sat downe at Breakfast with our people at their tables, whom immediately with their owne tooles and weapons [...] they basely and barbarously murdered.³¹

Purchas and Smith use their own wording and elaboration during much of their re-telling of this event, but both include the fact that the Powhatan were always ‘friendly fed at their tables’ (in Waterhouse, entertained at their tables), and that immediately prior to the massacre they ‘in some places sat downe at breakfast with our people’. It is significant that these details are kept almost word for word, as it suggests one of two things: Smith and Purchas have either realized the powerful potential of utilizing a framework of domesticity and hospitality to portray the event, or Waterhouse’s use of this framework has been so effective that the ‘hospitable relations’ between the English and the Powhatan become a significant enough detail to warrant repeating. In either case, the importance of discourses of domesticity and hospitality to the narratives surrounding this event are clear.

The acknowledgement in all three accounts of the hospitality shown by the English colonists to the Powhatan marks an inversion of some of the earliest colonial narratives, perhaps most notably those of Smith himself. These narratives remark repeatedly that the hospitality shown to colonists by the Native Americans was a crucial part of colonies’ survival in the early days of the New World venture.³² The winter of 1609-10 was a particularly brutal one and coincided with a period of increased tension between the colonists and the local Powhatan.³³ The rescinding of hospitality towards the English by the Powhatan, which involved the withdrawal of trade and gifts of food, meant this period saw the death of the majority of colonists then living in Virginia.³⁴ The power dynamic at this point was squarely in favour of the Powhatan who had the capacity and resources to extend hospitable gestures to the English colonists. In Waterhouse’s account of the English/Powhatan relations pre-massacre there is an explicit acknowledgement of a shift in power dynamics as it is now (apparently) the English who have the resources and capacity to share food and living space with their neighbours. The threshold of the home becomes an important material marker of cultural identity and hierarchies between the colonists and the Powhatan – much like it was in Markham’s articulation of its function in the performance of gender identities in English society above. By inviting the Powhatan over the domestic threshold and into the home, the English signalled not only

³¹ Purchas, p. 159.

³² See for example John Smith, p. 44.

³³ For analysis of this period see Rachel B. Herrman, ‘The “tragicall historie”: Cannibalism and Abundance in Colonial Jamestown’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 68 (2011), 47-74.

³⁴ See George Percy, *A Trewe Relacyon* (London, 1624), *passim*.

their community with the Powhatan but also their new, empowered position in relation to them. The material boundaries of the home worked to acknowledge this power differential and also the difference between the English and the Powhatan – one as host within and one as guest outside. The disruption of this function by the Powhatan’s violation of domestic boundaries, and the associated inversion of the power dynamic the English hoped these boundaries would produce, displays once again the liminal nature of domestic space.

Of note also in all three representations of the event is the consistency of the Powhatan entering English homes ‘unarmed’. As noted above, this detail signals the Powhatan willingly inhabited the role of ‘guest’ in the performance of hospitable gestures by the English. But this detail, perhaps unwittingly, goes beyond this and further reveals the inherent liminality of English domestic space. In all accounts the unarmed Powhatan commit their acts of violence with the colonists’ ‘owne tooles and weapons, eyther laid downe, or standing in their houses’. The tools for violence already existed within English homes and the Powhatan merely chose to use them in a manner not prescribed by normative conventions, thereby ‘abusing their role’ as guest in the ‘theatre’ of the English home. In the theatricality of this ‘cross-cultural encounter’ it is not the colonists being ‘transformed by foreign objects’, but rather the familiar space and objects of the home being transformed by their (re)appropriation in this foreign, liminal, ‘contact zone’ of the New World. The Powhatan’s re-interpretation of the language and objects of hospitality and domesticity expose the home as a site of negotiation of power relations and identities, and not as a site through which English cultural dominance is fixed and manifested. In using this domestic context as a narrative device to demonize the Powhatan, all three writers sacrifice the portrayal of the home as a stable signifier and producer of English social order and superiority in the New World, and are instead forced to embrace its liminality. In doing so the home is revealed as a site that must be constantly and effectively policed if it is to serve its purpose as the foundation and bastion of English social order.

There is an acknowledgement of this idea of the need to police domestic space in Smith and Purchas’ re-telling of the event. Despite replicating and supporting Waterhouse’s narrative in many places, Smith and Purchas also contradict it in one very significant way: both writers include reference to the killing of a Powhatan warrior, Nemattanow, as a stimulus for the attack. Smith writes: ‘The Prologue to this Tragedy, is supposed was occasioned by *Nemattanow*’. Smith goes on to describe how Nemattanow lured a colonist named Morgan away to trade and then ‘murdered him by the way’.³⁵ A few days later

³⁵ Smith, p. 144. Italics in original.

Nemattanow, also referred to as ‘Jack of the Feather’ by the English, returned to Morgan’s house:

Where he found two youths his Servants, who asked for their Master: *Jack* replied directly he was dead; the Boyes suspecting as it was, by seeing him weare his Cap, would have had him to Master *Thorp*: But *Jack* so moved their patience, they shot him.³⁶

Smith goes on to write that on hearing this news Opechancanough, the Powhatan leader at this time, ‘much grieved and repined, with great threats of revenge’.³⁷ Purchas writes very similarly that the ‘fatall Massacre, some thinke to have beene occasioned by Nemattanow’, and he repeats the details of Morgan’s murder, Nemattanow’s return, and his shooting by Morgan’s servants who failed to bring him to ‘Master Thorpe’.³⁸ Purchas also notes that ‘Opachancanough was moved with his losse so as he threatned revenge’.³⁹ Whilst Smith and Purchas certainly do not portray Nemattanow as an innocent victim of English aggression, they do both explicitly state that his unauthorized killing was the catalyst for the subsequent attack. Importantly also, both writers acknowledge the ‘threat of revenge’ issued by Opechancanough, implying that the English colonists did have warning that this attack would occur. Their lack of preparedness implies poor leadership, as does the disobedience of the servants who should have brought Nemattanow to ‘Master Thorpe’. William Whately writes in his domestic manual that the husband and wife are ‘governors of an house, [who] stand in relation to children and servants’.⁴⁰ Deference of servants and children to their social superiors within and outside the home was as crucial to social order as a wife’s deference to her husband – this domestically located power structure had clearly failed to be established in Jamestown in this instance.

This connection between poor domestic governance and the attacks at Jamestown is also clearly alluded to in Christopher Brooke’s *A Poem on the Late Massacre in Virginia* (1622). Brooke was an active member of the Virginia Company in London from 1609 to its dissolution in 1624 and composed a poem commemorating the event that ‘seems to have been the company’s official lament for the massacre of the colonists’.⁴¹ In many respects Brooke’s narrative structure is comparable to Waterhouse, Smith, and Purchas’:

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144. Italics in original.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³⁸ Purchas, p. 168.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁴⁰ William Whately, *A Bride-bush* (London, 1619), p. 88.

⁴¹ Michelle O’Callaghan, ‘Brooke, Christopher (c.1570–1628)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3538>>. (accessed 30/04/2016).

he stresses the shocking and gruesome nature of the Powhatan attack and the savagery of the people carrying it out, and at the end calls for violent retribution against the Powhatan. However, unlike Waterhouse, Smith, and Purchas, Brooke does not utilize a discourse of domesticity and hospitality to frame the moment of attack. When Brooke describes the lead up to the massacre he writes:

Securitie; the Calme, before a Storme,
That hugs a fearefull Ruine in her Arme:
Security; boading to States most harmes,
In softened spirits, and disuse of Armes:
Security; the Heaven that holds a Hell,
The bane of all that in this slaughter fell;
For ever be thou ban'd and banish't quite
From *Wisdomes* Confines, and *Preventions* light.
Let this Example (in the Text of blood)
Be printed in your hearts, and understood.⁴²

As mentioned above, Waterhouse was 'the principal spokesman for the colonists' in the wake of the massacre, whereas Brooke penned the Virginia Company's 'official lament'. Whilst both these narratives are 'official' in the sense that they come from members of the Virginia Company, it is significant that Waterhouse was a colonist in Virginia and Brooke a company member in London. Brooke suggests that some of the 'blame' for the attack might lie with the colonists and the fact that they had been lulled into a false sense of security. This could be interpreted as a sign that peaceable relations and signs of friendship had been used as strategies by the Powhatan to engender this sense of security before their attack, as emphasized by Waterhouse. However, Brooke continues this suggestion several lines later in a manner that makes it more clear his barbs are aimed at the colonists themselves:

O had yee been of Wisdome so prepar'd
(Like men of Armes) to stand upon your Guard;
Or that Prevention (to your Lives availe)
Had with your vallors borne an equall skale,
This Chance had ne're befell yee; for 'tis sure,
That only vigilance makes Life secure,
Which yee did want: Chieftans should have their Eyes

⁴² Christopher Brooke, 'A Poem on the Massacre in Virginia', *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 72 (1964), 259-92 (p. 279).

Like to the *Lamia*, whereof one pries,
And for Intelligence abroad doth roame,
Whil'st th'other keepes a carefull watch at Home:
So should your Eyes have been: one in, one out,
One still at Home; the other as Scout:
But at that time, neither of them so kept;
Senses might wake, but sure your Wisdoms slept.⁴³

Brooke suggests that colonists' lack of vigilance and proper control over their own homes are contributing factors to their massacre at the hands of the Powhatan. Waterhouse was living in Virginia, struggling with its hardships, and almost certainly felt more affinity with the colonists, creating a desire to paint them in a better light and to shift any blame for the event from them onto the Powhatan. Unlike Smith and Purchas, Brooke does not mention Nemattanow's death or the threats issued by Opechancanough, but instead focuses on the failings of the colonists on the ground in Virginia. Despite not evoking a domestic context in the same way Waterhouse, Smith, and Purchas did in their (re)tellings of the attack, Brooke explicitly brings in the 'home' at this point in his narrative. Rather than using a domestic context to emphasize the depravity of those committing the attack, Brooke instead uses the home to localize and geographically situate the blame he allocates to the colonists. Brooke's poem marks an attempt by the Virginia Company to create a distinction between their own administrative capabilities in London and the failings of the Council and colonists on the ground in Virginia. The Virginia Company was dissolved only two years after the publication of this poem and I would argue that Brooke's narrative tries to position the Jamestown Massacre as a failing of colonists and leaders in Virginia, rather than the incompetence of the Virginia Company in London.

Whatever the motive, it is of interest that the pamphlets and Brooke's more traditionally 'literary' poem, all consciously engage with domestic space as a narrative device to shape their accounts of colonial disorder. As Allsopp notes, 'The connotations of moral judgment and doctrinal rigour made the threshold a place for intense moral warnings'.⁴⁴ Waterhouse, Smith, Purchas, and Brooke all invoke the domestic threshold to frame the Powhatan attack and in doing so draw on and contribute to this positioning of thresholds as sites that yield 'moral warnings'. In *The City Madam* Massinger similarly employs domestic space and conventions to provide moral commentary on social disorder in England. The connection between the threatening liminality of domestic space and the colonial contact zone are utilized to great effect in *The City Madam*, where Massinger

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 282-83.

⁴⁴ Allsopp, p. 416.

uses a New World, colonial context in order to emphasise the inherent threat of liminal domestic space if it is not carefully and consistently policed.

IV. *The City Madam*

Colonial activity and the memories of the Jamestown Massacre were stirring at the time of *The City Madam*'s first performance: 1632 saw the publication of a seventh edition of John Smith's *Generall Historie*, as well as the agreement of a peace treaty with the Powhatan after ten years of conflict. Both these occurrences brought memories of the Jamestown Massacre (Smith's version of it in particular) back into circulation, and as Gavin Hollis notes, 'Although performed a decade later, *The City Madam* can be seen as a response to the 1622 attacks'.⁴⁵ The play is set in London but engages explicitly with the Virginian enterprise through its inclusion of three characters, Sir John Frugal, Sir Maurice Lacy, and Mr Plenty, disguised as 'Virginian Indians'.⁴⁶ Sir John instigates this deception in order to restore order to his home and to reveal his brother Luke's true, corrupt nature. When the audience first meets the 'Indians', Lord Lacy (Maurice's father) introduces them to Luke as having been sent by Sir John 'to be received into your house' (3.3.74) in order to 'make 'em Christians' (3.3.77). After little protest Luke agrees and tells his 'Indian' guests: 'My house is yours, / Enjoy it freely' (3.3.123-4). When the 'Indians' next appear on stage it is to tell Luke of the true purpose of their presence in London; not religious conversion but the procurement of 'Two Christian virgins' and 'a third, married' (5.1.36-9), to be used in a bloody sacrifice to the devil in Virginia. The sight of Native Americans in English homes, discussing the murder of English people, could not have failed to evoke memories of the Jamestown Massacre. The hospitable welcoming of the 'Indians' into the Frugal household, only to have them reveal their true murderous intentions, replicates the narrative espoused by Waterhouse, Smith, and Purchas. The anxieties emerging in *The City Madam* are not that English identity may fail to manifest in a liminal colonial contact zone, but that domestic space inherently contained the potential to be infiltrated, corrupted, and violated in ways that challenge its capacity to anchor normative identities and social hierarchies.

The anxieties expressed in *The City Madam* relate directly to the context of the Jamestown Massacre narratives written by Waterhouse, Smith, and Purchas – quite literally engaging

⁴⁵ Gavin Hollis, *The Absence of America: The London Stage, 1576-1643* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 208.

⁴⁶ Philip Massinger, *The City Madam*, ed. by Cyrus Hoy (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), Act 3, Scene 3. All act, scene, and line numbers are taken from this edition.

with the fear that Native Americans could, and had, gained entry to English homes and committed acts of violence. More symbolically, the fact that it was actually English men *disguised* as ‘Virginian Indians’ in this play also engaged with anxieties over the liminality of English domestic space and the potential it already contained for violence and disruption to social order through its ‘misrule’. At the beginning of *The City Madam* Sir John’s household is out of control; his wife and daughters act above their station, dress ostentatiously, behave inappropriately and defy his attempts to control them. As he says himself, ‘What’s wealth, accompanied / With disobedience in a wife and children?’ (2.3.46-7). Susan D. Amussen and David E. Underdown have noted that ‘even more dangerous than unruly women were the fathers and husbands who failed to govern their households effectively’.⁴⁷ Sir John recognizes his own domestic ‘misrule’ and its role in the transgressive behaviour of his household. In donning his ‘Virginian Indian’ disguise Sir John visibly externalizes the threat his misrule poses from within. Sir John-as-Indian in *The City Madam* embodies a merging of the external threat of Native American violence in colonial discourse, with the internal threat of domestic misrule and a disordered household.

In his ‘Indian’ disguise Sir John inhabits a space in which he is not quite English and not quite ‘Indian’ – he walks the threshold between the two identities. His inhabitation of this liminal identity also exposes and brings to the fore the liminality of the domestic space he should be presiding over. Whilst disguised the ‘real’ Sir John is absent as the head of the household and instead present as a disruptive force within it (as is his brother Luke). The absence of good leadership and presence of threat amplifies the liminality of domestic space and creates the conditions in which transformation is possible. A similar status existed in the colonial households represented in the Jamestown narratives above – the lack of good domestic leadership from the colonists and the presence of a Powhatan threat exposed the liminality of these households in a way that allowed a violent transformation in power relations to occur. Massinger employs colonial imagery as a way of heightening the liminality of the domestic space he represents on stage, drawing on narratives of the Jamestown Massacre to emphasize the threat to domestic order of poor policing and governance. In doing this Massinger also reveals the inherent and insistent liminality of English domestic space itself, wherever in the world it is located.

Massinger suggests the possibility for the redemption of domestic misrule, and failed English (masculine) subjectivities, through Sir John’s regaining of control over his household and shedding of his ‘Indian’ disguise at the end of the play. As Brooke

⁴⁷ Susan D. Amussen and David E. Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics in England, 1560-1640: Turning the World Upside Down* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 51.

suggested in his poem, the Jamestown Massacre should act as an ‘example’ to be ‘printed in your hearts, and understood’. Once the consequences of a lack of vigilance over household affairs have been realized they should serve as a stimulus to colonists to take actions to redeem themselves and ensure these mistakes are never repeated: firstly by regaining proper control over domestic spaces and boundaries, and secondly by eradicating the Native American threat. Sir John achieves both these things by literally regaining control over his home and figuratively eradicating the Native American presence within it. This hope for redemption is hinted at again, even more explicitly, at the end of the play when Luke is told to ‘Pack to Virginia, and repent’ (5.3.145). As Hollis notes:

for the first time in early modern drama, Virginia is imagined as a transformational place where it seems possible to transform oneself from the prodigality of corruption and penury and become the hardworking subject of colonial endeavour.⁴⁸

Just as Sir John failed to properly govern his home but was able to find redemption through his ‘Virginian Indian’ disguise, so Luke can find his redemption in the landscape of Virginia where the necessity of proper household policing has proved to be a matter of life and death.

Of course, this could also be read as a critique of the kind of men inhabiting Virginia. Massinger has already revealed this strand of opinion in an earlier exchange between Luke, Lady Frugal, and her daughters, in which Luke attempts to trick the women into sailing to Virginia to live as ‘Queens in another climate’ (5.1.99). All three women balk at the idea of travelling to Virginia, telling Luke they are well aware of ‘What creatures are shipp’d thither’: ‘Condemn’d wretches’, ‘Strumpets and bawds [...] Spew’d out of their own country’ (5.1.105-10). The women’s opinion of the types of people inhabiting Virginia creates a picture of what Jowitt has called the ‘depraved and dystopic’ Virginian society of *The City Madam*.⁴⁹ However, these transgressive identities were not created by residing in Virginia, they were ‘shipp’d thither’. In the example above, and through Sir John’s ‘misrule’, Massinger suggests that the corruption associated with Virginia may in fact find its genesis much closer to home, inviting his audience to consider the threat to domestic and social order that already resides within their own households.

⁴⁸ Hollis, p. 210.

⁴⁹ Claire Jowitt, “‘Her flesh must serve you’: Gender, Commerce and the New World in Fletcher’s and Massinger’s *The Sea Voyage* and Massinger’s *The City Madam*”, *Paragon* 18.3 (July 2001), 93-117 (p. 98).

As I have discussed above, and as Hollis notes in his own analysis of *The City Madam*, ‘the play concludes with the removal of an Indian threat from an English household’.⁵⁰ Yet this conclusion is somewhat problematic as, in a sense, the threat remains. It was Sir John’s poor management of his home and family that created domestic disorder in the first place, and the play leaves the audience with only tentative assurances that this restored order will have any longevity. Sir John used existing stereotypes and stories of ‘Virginian Indian’ savagery and murder in his pretence to be acquiring Lady Frugal and her daughters as sacrifices. Yet his desire to teach them this lesson in such a violent manner came from his own imagination and this propensity for enacting violent retribution remains after his disguise is shed. As Jowitt notes, ‘the fantasy of sending the women to their death in Virginia is, importantly, one that is created by their husband and father’.⁵¹ Both domestic disorder and the propensity for misrule and violence all already existed before Sir John donned his disguise. This echoes the Jamestown narrative above in which the Powhatan entered English homes ‘unarmed’ and killed the colonists with weapons already there – the threat of violence already existed within English domestic space and was merely manifested by the Powhatan’s re-interpretations of the conventions governing this space. The Powhatan enacted a violent re-interpretation of domestic conventions in order to re-negotiate the power dynamics that existed between themselves and the English colonists; Sir John dons his ‘Indian’ disguise in anticipation of doing the same with his wife and daughters. Whilst Sir John never actually commits the acts of violence he says he will, the threat of this violence is enough to re-negotiate the power relations existing within his household. Thus the home is revealed as a liminal site of negotiation in which both amicable and violent behaviours and means of mediation are always an option.

Sir John’s rapid transition from failed domestic patriarch, to threatening ‘Indian’, to successful head of the household leaves little time for the audience to believe this transition is fixed or permanent.⁵² Rather, the play leaves the audience aware of the potential for Sir John to inhabit any of these identities at any given time. The threat of domestic space is that it has the capacity to produce and be produced by whichever of these identities Sir John inhabits – both normative and transgressive. Just as the liminality of colonial domestic space was revealed by its violent (re)appropriation by the Powhatan, so Sir John revealed the liminality of domestic space in *The City Madam* through his shifting relationship to and governance of it. Sir John’s ‘Indian’ disguise heightens the audience’s sense of the dangers inherent in liminal domesticity by reminding them of

⁵⁰ Hollis, p. 210.

⁵¹ Jowitt, p. 98.

⁵² For more on ‘failed patriarchs’ see Amussen and Underdown, *Gender, Culture and Politics*, pp. 51-76.

repercussions that occurred in Jamestown when the Powhatan used this liminality to their advantage.

Conclusion

The Jamestown Massacre was a spectacular demonstration of the vulnerability of the English colonists in Jamestown and a visceral representation of the penetrability of their perceived material and cultural strongholds in this environment. This event forced the English to recognise that the homes they had built were not infallible manifestations of material and cultural dominance, but merely sites within which dominance could be negotiated. English colonists had attempted to assert themselves through familiar languages of ideological-spatial control, but in this new environment, this 'contact zone', this language was open to (re)interpretation that exposed the liminality of domestic space. *The City Madam* evokes the liminality of the New World to explore the liminality of English domestic space. Massinger also utilises the liminality of disguise to hint at the transformative power of both colonial and theatrical contact zones, and in doing so suggests the transformative power inherent in the liminal space of the English home. What is clear from the colonial experience, both before and after Jamestown, and from *The City Madam*, is that domestic space is not a site through which social order, hierarchies, and identities are guaranteed, but a site through which they are constantly negotiated. The liminality of domestic space is at once threatening and transformative. It challenged the production of normative identities and social order, but also offered a site through which hegemonic cultural and social orders could be resisted – both at home and abroad.