

## Love and Death in Early Modern Marriage: *The Winter's Tale* and Monumental Sculpture<sup>1</sup>

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*This article attributes early modern emotional relationships between parents and children, as well as between marital partners, to the emergence in the period of family values. While the stability of the ideal family is defined in tomb sculpture, one of the period's most widespread art forms, plays tell a story and therefore depend on impediments to stability. These are dramatised in the marital jealousy and parental cruelty of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. As tomb sculpture became more lifelike, however, it began to put on display the emotional intensity of family values, and in the process came to emphasise in another way a corresponding vulnerability in the new ideal.*

### I.

As a play about the relationship between a married couple and its repercussions for their two young children, *The Winter's Tale* (1609-10) constitutes Shakespeare's most detailed depiction of the affective nuclear family. If the play thus contributes to the early modern development of family values, it also anticipates our own concerns about domestic violence, emotional and physical. The unreasoning rage of Leontes apparently causes the death of his loving wife; Mamillius, whose childish precocity is invested with its own innocent charm, dies of grief for his mother; and his baby sister, her vulnerability repeatedly stressed in the play, is exposed to die on the strict instructions of her father. Moreover, these tragic events are shown as the direct consequence of the intensity of the marital relationship itself. As a new ingredient of marriage, formerly more appropriate to the adulterous relationships between Tristan and Isolde, or Lancelot and Guinevere, romantic love is attended by anxieties that imperil the family it produces; anarchic desire destabilizes the institution it also founds.

Close attention to the emotions of the nuclear family is eccentric, however, in the Shakespeare canon. Apart from the cameo of the Macduffs, where love evidently characterizes relations between the couple and between mother and children, it is hard to think of affectionate families in Shakespeare, though there are a good many old-fashioned fathers preoccupied by lineage. Like Capulet and Egeus, parents are more commonly seen coercing their children into arranged marriages than rejoicing in a loving relationship with them. Although the Pages of Windsor are a happy couple, with two engaging children, the parents disagree with each other about who will make the best son-in-law, as well as with their daughter herself, who wants to marry for love. While the plays focus repeatedly on family relationships, they most frequently isolate for

our attention fathers and daughters (Prospero and Miranda, Lear and his children), or mothers and sons (Volumnia and Coriolanus, Cymbeline's Queen and Cloten).<sup>2</sup> Sibling rivalry in the tragedies and sibling resemblance in the comedies are sometimes important elements of the plot. Marriage, when it constitutes the theme, is often childless, or effectively so – to sidestep the classic question, ›How many children had Lady Macbeth?‹ Nuclear families with two affectionate parents and two lovable children are sufficiently rare in Shakespeare to suggest that at the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century the ideal is new enough not to be taken for granted.

Indeed, Lawrence Stone, who nearly a quarter of a century ago set the agenda for discussions of the early modern family, would locate the emergence of the nuclear model considerably later.<sup>3</sup> But Stone wrote as a social historian, interested primarily in actual practice, and he was in consequence only marginally concerned with fiction. No one would conclude that because the audience is invited to sympathise with Juliet (or Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), arranged marriages were no longer the norm in practice in the 1590s, any more than we should expect to find accurate depictions of our own sexual relationships in soap opera, romance or Hollywood movies. What we do find there, however, is the representation of our hopes, dreams, anxieties and fears: the inscription, in other words, of values. As the record of values, cultural history moves at a different pace from its fellow-discipline, social history.<sup>4</sup> Our popular romances are still commonly nineteenth-century (rewritings, indeed, of *Pride and Prejudice* or *Jane Eyre*); our practices have moved on. Conversely, Shakespeare's fictions anticipate the practices of a later epoch.

The nearest theatrical parallel to *The Winter's Tale*, chronologically and thematically, is probably John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, a play which, whether coincidentally or not, was repeatedly revived in the final years of the twentieth century, when politicians were affirming family values more loudly than ever, while reservations about the family were becoming more widespread. *The Duchess* was first performed within a few years of *The Winter's Tale* in 1613 or 14. Here, where the protagonist marries, in accordance with the emerging values, for love and not for lineage, and is explicitly identified as a caring mother to her young children, the plot of the play depends on the collision between this sympathetic affective ideal and an older, overtly dynastic and patriarchal model, in which the male head of the family expects to control his sister's sexual alliances.

## II.

Outside fiction, however, we may turn for corroboration of a story of changing values to what is probably the period's most widespread art form. Early modern tomb sculpture put on display, across the broadest geographical range, on behalf of a spread of classes – nobles, merchants and gentry, as well as others from time to time – in the place where they were most regularly visible to the whole parish, the changing meanings of the family in its various ideal forms. Funeral monuments of the period project for the world

to see the self-image that the family wishes to record for posterity, often including the grand marriages of the children, as well as the memory of those who died in infancy. Individual resemblance was not important: what mattered was much more likely to be rank, wealth and dynasty.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, idealisation was part of the project: the increasingly elaborate tombs that proliferated in the century after about 1550 provided an example for the living by memorializing the virtues of the dead.<sup>6</sup> Monuments depicting families thus give an indication of how the ideal of the family was understood. Tomb sculpture allows us to read what early modern culture perceived as appropriate relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children.

From the middle ages to 1600 and well beyond, though the materials and the sophistication of the carving varied, the iconography of the traditional English couple changed very little. Side by side, serene, pious, and usually open-eyed, though modern restorers are often unwilling to believe it, the horizontal figures face forwards, towards the east, in confident expectation of their ultimate resurrection, apparently ignorant of the death which occasions their representation. Parallel, and stiffly frontal, they attend to each other, if at all, only by clasping hands in evidence of the marital contract which binds them together for life and perhaps beyond.

The clasped hands, commonly held across the body of the woman without diminishing the distance between the couple, have more to do with property and dynasty, in my view, than with romance,<sup>7</sup> though there are late counter-examples from the 1630s, suggesting that by this time romance was recognised as a proper component of marriage.<sup>8</sup> The figures on the tombs are ideal types, of course: whatever personal affection, or whatever resentments, come to that, may have existed between individual couples, their images do not speak of them. At the beginning of the seventeenth century funeral monuments in general tend to show as acceptable an alliance which is formal and to a degree detached. Of desire they tell us nothing. The Tudor and Stuart fashion of depicting relatively less aristocratic couples kneeling in prayer and divided by a *prie-dieu* reveals the family at a more intimate moment, not on public display, but at their devotions.<sup>9</sup>

The emphasis, nevertheless, is still on piety and formality. How different, then, from Shakespeare's plays, where serene decorum seems a long way from the home life of the Macbeths, not to mention the Fords of Windsor, whose households are palpably neither dignified nor devout. There is, of course, a radical difference of genre. Tombs show what the family wanted the world to see: the plays show what they might have preferred to conceal. The tombs are formal, ceremonial: the plays are popular entertainment. But in one sense the plays and the monuments tell the same story. The project of the tombs is to transcend time and stabilise an ideal in a single image; the plays, by contrast, set out to sustain the attention of an audience by deferring stability for five acts. At the same time, the plays take it for granted that their audiences recognise the values against which deviations from the ideal can be measured.

The tombs traditionally exclude emotion. Dignified, slightly distant, kneeling figures face each other, it appears, only incidentally, in the interests of symmetrical composition, not emotional reciprocity. Their eyes fixed on a world beyond each other, they are untroubled by death. Though mortality is the cause of their tomb, it is represented

there emblematically, if at all, often as a way of showing who survives at the moment when the memorial is ordered.

The living are represented alongside the dead: as the Duchess of Malfi indicates, widows cut in alabaster kneel at their husbands' tombs. A previous wife, however, was also entitled to her place in the family. When William Knoyle's widow, Grace, commissioned his tomb in 1607 at Sandford Orcas in Dorset, she evidently thought it appropriate to include her predecessor, Phillip, along with her four dead babies (fig. 1). Phillip has her own panel, but she is the same size – and as dignified – as Grace, though she wears the headdress of an earlier date.<sup>10</sup>

When the children survive, their sorrow is generally strictly formalised. The next generation, who in the sixteenth century replace the mourners on the sides of medieval tomb chests, stand in solemn rows, pious but stoical, resigned to the inevitability of loss, their hands clasped in prayer. Dead infants are included among the living (and are sometimes the same size as their older siblings). Fecundity is evidently a virtue: the Greville tomb of 1559 at Alcester in Warwickshire shows a total of eight daughters and seven sons, in groups according to gender, divided by emblems of dynasty. When the children kneel in imitation of their parents, the same formality generally obtains, and the same gender divisions. Mourning might be indicated by costume, but the children are not generally bowed or wracked by grief. In the context of such representations of filial propriety, Cordelia's refusal to emulate her sisters' extravagant professions of love makes perfect sense – and Lear's demands that she should appear the more absurd.

But just as in painting, fashions in monumental sculpture were changing, and simulation of the living form became an increasingly important value. A tomb in Bath Abbey memorialises a wife and mother. Jane, Lady Waller died in the 1630s and an inscription records her virtues, including her holiness and, perhaps more surprisingly, her learning, wit and wisdom. Sir William Waller went on to command the Parliamentary forces in 1643, and the space for his inscription is blank. He, we may assume, commissioned Lady Waller's monument, which depicts a nuclear family, parents and two children. The Renaissance vogue for showing figures leaning on their elbows has the advantage of making Sir William eminently visible at this dark end of the south transept. It also, and perhaps inadvertently, creates a quite new spatial relationship between the couple. The bodies, that is to say, are now seen as connected with each other. His, turned towards the spectator, also faces hers; she looks up at him. Though they are fully and formally clothed, the respective positions of the figures might permit us to detect a sexual component in what is certainly a romantic interaction. Desire is legitimate within what Milton was to celebrate as ›wedded love‹. Sir William's features are defaced: it is impossible to trace the line of his gaze, though his wife's is clearly focused on him. The effigies affirm the intimacy – and the classic gender roles – of the loving nuclear couple (fig. 2).

Moreover, the children of this newly affective family, rendered in accordance with the equally new ideal of verisimilitude, are childlike, chubby and engaging. Protected from damage by the classical pillars supporting the monument, and thus better preserved than their parents, they are visible in clear detail. One child, a boy, but still in petticoats, leans his head on his right hand in the classic pose of melancholy, while the



*Fig. 1: Monument to William Knoye (d. 1607) and two wives, Grace and Phillip. Sandford Orcas, Dorset.*



*Fig. 2: Monument to Jane, Lady Waller (d. 1630s) (detail), Bath Abbey.*

other hand is idle. Meanwhile, at the other side of the tomb a little girl, evidently very young, sits on a stool, both hands unoccupied, the corners of her mouth turned firmly down. Neither infant prays. These children, we are invited to believe, are sad in a perfectly human and secular way; they are sorrowing for the loss of their mother.

Although Lady Waller is shown on her tomb as living, not dead, death is no longer excluded from the representation. It makes its appearance, however, not in the form of the emblematic paraphernalia of skulls, scythes and skeletons favoured by the period, but in its emotional implications for the children she leaves behind. The affective family is shown as vulnerable, and the vulnerability is a direct consequence of the affection. The more intimate and the more intense the relationships, the greater the investment of feeling, the more keenly the pain of loss is registered. As eminent modern British examples in the late twentieth century so copiously and so notoriously demonstrated, the family based on love is extraordinarily fragile, and the fragility is related to the high expectations the ideal elicits. In practice, the loving nuclear family constitutes a remarkably precarious basis for a stable and well-ordered society.

The historical change marked by the Waller tomb was a gradual one: traditional representations survived alongside this new image of the family. The tomb of Edward and Elizabeth Skynner at Ledbury in Herefordshire reproduces the formal distribution of the conventional kneeling figures, with mourning children in rows below. But between the couple, in place of the *prie-dieu*, is a dead baby, fully dressed in bonnet and petticoats, leaning on its elbow, its hand resting lightly on a skull. Though the presence of the infant suggests that its death was a cause of sorrow, it lies on the floor in an isolation at once splendid and pathetic, apparently ignored by the rest of the family. No one embraces this baby; no one visibly laments its death.

Edward Skynner died in 1631. Meanwhile, however, in January of that year Giles Savage, Esquire, died at Elmley Castle in Worcestershire. His elaborate tomb, carved in the fine detail characteristic of Samuel Baldwin's work, includes an effigy of his father against the far wall. All the heraldic signifiers of dynasty are in evidence, but the tomb also puts on display the pathos of the family divided by death. The inscription, in literary Latin, records that Savage left four sons, of whom the youngest, John, died in August of the same year as his father. All four are seen kneeling at the foot of the tomb. An effigy of his 'most loving' wife, Catherine, lies beside her husband, although Catherine herself lived for another forty years and died at the age of 84. Catherine Savage, who took responsibility for raising this 'monument of fidelity and obedience', embraces with both arms, the inscription explains, a beloved baby daughter, whom she bore after her husband's death. The precious little girl, all that remains of her lost father, her long dress nearly as elaborately embroidered as Catherine's, is held firmly in her mother's elegant hands. The child, too young to know the meaning of loss, holds a ball in one hand, and fingers the frogging on her mother's bodice with the other. Once again it is the vulnerability of childhood that most clearly indicates the fragility of the family.

### III.

Like the Waller tomb and the Savage monument, *The Winter's Tale* shows death invading the concord of the family unit, but unlike the tombs, the play locates death at the heart of the intimate relationship between the loving couple. Unpredicted and arbitrary, sexual jealousy dismantles a marriage; the unaccountable rage of Leontes violently displaces parental care, as Mamillius dies of grief and his newborn sister is exposed to die. There is in this instance no external cause, not even a Iago or a Iachimo to blame for the sudden reversal of emotion; Polixenes, the play makes clear, does nothing to provoke it. On the contrary, the murderous passion of Leontes springs from within the loving family itself, wells up at a moment of supreme harmony between the couple and shared courtesy towards their guest, at a time when the meaning of the family as parenthood is most clearly evident in Hermione's pregnancy.

This is a marriage based explicitly on romantic courtship and Hermione's loving response: ›I am yours for ever‹ (1.2.105).<sup>11</sup> It generates a little boy whose charm springs from his childish mimicry of grown-ups when he teases the ladies-in-waiting, who whispers in his mother's ear a powerful tale of sprites and goblins (2.1.25-8), who softens his father's rage and is the occasion of his temporary restoration to himself (1.2.120-21; 135-7; 153 ff.). The play represents childhood as later generations would come to know it: innocent, playful, disarming and, above all, vulnerable. Leontes and Polixenes, who once frisked in the sun like twinned lambs (1.2.67), now share a delight in their own young princes whose ›varying childishness‹ ›makes a July's day short as December‹ (1.2.169-70). Conversely, it is presumably the more shocking to the audience that Leontes is indifferent to the appeal of Paulina on behalf of his baby daughter as a miniature replica of himself:

Behold, my lords,  
Although the print be little, the whole matter  
And copy of the father: eye, nose, lip;  
The trick of's frown; his forehead; nay, the valley,  
The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek; his smiles;  
The very mould and frame of hand, nail, finger. (2.3.97-102)

Subsequently, Paulina's husband, Antigonus, will stress the pathos of Perdita's exposure, as he reluctantly obeys the instructions of the King:

Come on, poor babe:  
Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens  
To be thy nurses! Wolves and bears, they say,  
Casting their savageness aside, have done  
Like offices of pity. (2.3.184-8)

His abandonment of Perdita and the death of Mamillius put on display the monstrous implications for the loving family of the forgeries of jealousy.

The Victorians, who affirmed the sanctity of family values based on true love, while incidentally supporting and regulating an unsurpassed number of prostitutes in nineteenth-century London, regarded unfounded jealousy in marriage as a psychopathology, and looked for causes in an instability of character. Literary criticism, to the extent that it is still steeped in Victorian values, continues to seek characterological or psychopathological explanations for the marital jealousy of Othello, Posthumus, Master Ford, Oberon, Titania and, of course, Leontes.<sup>12</sup> The text of *The Winter's Tale*, however, is not helpful here, since it simply shows Leontes at one moment courtly and romantic, and at the next beside himself with grief and rage. Moreover, no one else in the play seems to think that anything in Hermione's behaviour justifies the anxiety of Leontes; nothing we know of his past seems to account for it.

Is it possible that a condition which recurs with varying degrees of centrality in so many of the marriages Shakespeare depicts is endemic in romantic love, and not a purely personal idiosyncrasy? Twentieth-century psychoanalysis would certainly say so. Jacques Lacan, who reserves his most dismissive moments for the moralizing tendency that masks desire as true love,<sup>13</sup> places aggressivity at the root of psychic life. The tormented space of passion is not in psychoanalytic theory a cosy enclave. Desire, which is absolute, can never believe itself adequately reciprocated. Young children learn this when they discover that they cannot have the ceaseless and undivided attention of their carers. Freud shows little Ernst throwing away the cotton reel when his mother leaves him, repeating in play his revenge for her necessary absences, which he experiences as desertion.<sup>14</sup> In so far as every intense interaction repeats the first, lovers play out with each other repressed relations, which include anger, if not necessarily on the psychotic scale represented in the *The Winter's Tale*. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the jealousy of Leontes does not need explaining: it is a perpetual hazard in the transference relationship which is affective marriage.

What psychoanalysis theorizes, early modern psychology also observes. Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* gives sustained attention to marital jealousy as one of the central dangers of love.<sup>15</sup> It is characteristic of love, Burton explains, to exceed all bounds; passion cannot contain itself, but wanders extravagantly; sometimes it enacts this process of wandering within marriage, and then it is called jealousy.<sup>16</sup> In Burton's description of the jealous person's conduct we can recognise the behaviour of Leontes, who also misinterprets, pries, ›follows close, observes to an hair, and ›through fear, conceives unto himself things almost incredible and impossible to be effected.<sup>17</sup> Like Leontes, too, Burton's victim of jealousy is deaf to good counsel and impossible to comfort: ›No persuasion, no protestation can divert this passion, nothing can ease him, secure or give him satisfaction.<sup>18</sup> Much of what follows in *The Anatomy* depicts the familiar type of the jealous husband so common in medieval literature from the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Lais* of Marie de France to Chaucer's fabliaux. This figure, often an old man, inadequate, lascivious, possessive and threatened, locks up his wife in order to secure her for his own pleasure. Descendants of the medieval stereotype survive into early modern drama in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597) and Thomas Middleton's *The Changeling* (1622) for instance, but what is new in *Othello* (1604), *Cymbeline* (1609-10) and *The*

*Winter's Tale* (as well as in the figure of Leantio in Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (c.1621)) is the direct connection between romantic marriage and sexual jealousy. Othello and Desdemona elope together: theirs is in the first instance an intensely loving union. The marriage of Imogen and Posthumus is founded on love. Leontes describes his own courtship of Hermione (1.2.102-5), and his first inexplicable outburst occurs immediately after his account of the romance that united them. There is no pause in the action or gap for reflection: only the four lines of Hermione's reply separate his courtship narrative from his agonised exclamation, ›Too hot, too hot!‹ (1.2.108). For all Burton's dependence on the old stereotype, *The Anatomy* recognises this connection too. Burton will give jealousy so much attention, he explains, because the condition is virtually co-extensive with love itself: ›as Benedetto Varchi holds, no love without a mixture of jealousy, *qui non zelat, non amat*.‹<sup>19</sup>

The love depicted in the play belongs in the first instance to Polixenes and Leontes. ›They were trained together in their childhoods, and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which‹, Camillo insists, in a notorious *double entendre*, ›cannot choose but branch now‹ (1.1.22-4).<sup>20</sup> Reassigned, by means of a figurative and very courtly Fall to women (1.2.71-86), and redeemed by the ›Grace‹ of marriage (1.2.105), affection becomes the foundation of the nuclear family, where it goes on to constitute, Leontes argues in a passage many editors have found almost impenetrable, the source of jealous delusions. The speech is addressed, at least ostensibly, to Mamillius:

Can thy dam? – May't be? –  
 Affection! thy intention stabs the centre:  
 Thou dost make possible things not so held,  
 Communicat'st with dreams; – how can this be? –  
 With what's unreal thou coactive art,  
 And fellow'st nothing: then 'tis very credent  
 Thou may'st co-join with something; and thou dost,  
 (And that beyond commission) and I find it,  
 (And that to the infection of my brains  
 And hard'ning of my brows). (1.2.137-46)

Already in the Variorum edition of the play, published in 1898, the note on ›affection‹ here runs to four pages. Capell, the earliest editor cited, offers in 1767 a fairly straightforward explanation of the speech: when ›full bent‹, that is to say, ›full *intentiveness*‹, is given to affection, Capell proposes, ›man often receives a stab in his centre, *i.e.* his heart; meaning, that he is in that case subject to jealousy, and jealousy, in turn, makes possible ›things which others hold not so.‹<sup>21</sup> Almost at once, however, alternative interpretations of ›affection‹ began to appear. Steevens thought it must mean ›imagination‹, presumably on the grounds that the speech makes affection coactive with what's unreal; Steevens was followed in this by Malone, and by Staunton and Keightley in the nineteenth century. In 1876 ›affection‹ was glossed as ›lust,‹<sup>22</sup> and this version found its way into the Arden edition of 1963, where it becomes the condition Leontes mistakenly attributes to Hermione: *her* lustful fantasies, which fellow nothing, have also co-joined with some-

thing, namely Polixenes.<sup>23</sup> The Riverside edition glosses ›affection‹ as ›jealousy‹, which might seem to stretch the meaning about as far as it will go, but the *Norton Shakespeare* adds ›rage‹ and ›suspicion‹ as well.<sup>24</sup> John Andrews and Stephen Orgel both prefer to attribute the affection to Hermione, on the basis of the punctuation given in the Folio, the only authoritative text (›Can thy Dam, may't be/Affection?‹).<sup>25</sup> But Jacobean punctuation is not always a reliable guide to syntax, and since our question mark is used in the period to indicate both questions and exclamations, this reading remains to a degree conjectural. Moreover, their version problematises the referent of ›thy‹ and ›thou‹: the delusions affection fosters – and the corresponding possibility that they are not delusions after all – surely belong to Leontes.

Stephen Orgel himself has drawn attention to the way we misread Renaissance texts if we expect them to be transparent, to deliver a single, paraphrasable meaning. Local incomprehensibility was not necessarily a vice in the texts of this period, and it was eighteenth-century editors who taught us otherwise.<sup>26</sup> It is true that this passage is obscure in detail, though not, perhaps, as obscure as some interpreters have made it; it is also true that in the early modern period ›affection‹ has a wide range of meanings, including feeling in general (*OED* 3), love (6), hate (7) and disease (9); but one of the commonest, especially in this play, is not very different from the modern meaning, or what we might call affect, to distinguish the term from the rather watery connotation that in modern English differentiates affection from love. Florizel, loyal to Perdita despite his father's intervention, is heir to his ›affection‹ (4.4.482), and if this commitment is rash, it is surely not dishonourable but, on the contrary, the evidence that their marriage is based on true love. The monument in the church at Hintlesham, Suffolk, to Captain John Timperley, who died in 1629, records that ›his loving wife caused this memorial too too little to express either his desert or her affection.‹ Evidently, the term was not necessarily pejorative: Mrs Timperley's devotion was presumably admirable, the proper sentiment of a good wife. Moreover, the childhood affection between Leontes and Polixenes is made synonymous with love (1.1.32).

But like appetite, affection was involuntary, not subject to rational control.<sup>27</sup> In the early seventeenth century affection was also distinguished from love by the essayist William Cornwallis, who saw affection as characterising the relationship between married people.<sup>28</sup> Affection, Cornwallis elsewhere insists, is not a stable condition: it is partial, irrational, inconstant, and – as if he were anticipating the play's depiction of Leontes – ›All the deformities and misdemeanours of the world are the children of affection, which binds up our sight in darkness, and leads us blindfolded.‹<sup>29</sup>

In the early modern period blind Cupid, the anarchic, mischievous child-god, becomes the basis of an allegedly stabilizing institution. Is it possible that when Leontes rounds on affection, he singles out as the cause of his torture his own passionate love for his wife, the very basis of romantic marriage, and the concomitant capacity for imagining improbabilities that characterises the lunatic, the lover and the poet,<sup>30</sup> linking them all in an intensity, or intensification<sup>31</sup> of feeling which is also a kind of madness? Iago implies a part of this story when he persuades Othello that love itself is the source of the suspicious husband's torments:



*Fig. 3: Monument to Lady Margaret Legh (d. 1603). All Saints, Fulham.*

That cuckold lives in bliss  
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger,  
But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er  
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects yet strongly loves! (*Othello* 3.3.169-72)<sup>32</sup>

When Othello is once convinced of Desdemona's infidelity, love explicitly gives way to hatred (3.3.448-52). If love is the cause of jealous rage and not its cure, is it also possible that from the eighteenth century onwards it has seemed imperative to find an alternative meaning for affection in this outburst of Leontes, because it has become unthinkable that at the core of family values there could be something coactive with what's unreal, a capacity to turn a harmless bush into a dangerous bear, and a warmth that turns so readily into its murderous opposite?<sup>33</sup> If in our own culture jealousy is thought to be pathological, how can it reside at the heart of our most precious relationship? But conceivably Shakespeare's audience was less sentimental about family values than we are, perhaps because before the institution was fully sanctified, it was possible to acknowledge the violence that so commonly occurs behind respectable closed doors. Perhaps, too, in a world where privacy was less readily available, the violence was correspondingly more visible, as it is at the court of Leontes.

But if concealment was less easy at this stage, the family had already acquired the beginnings of a sanctity which kept outsiders at bay. Camillo, Antigonus and Paulina are not entitled to put up a direct resistance to the folly of Leontes, though as if anticipating modern social workers, they intervene when his imperatives become homicidal. Contemporary illustrations of the Book of Genesis show the little family of Adam and Eve entirely alone, surrounded by what is now a hostile and dangerous world. The isolation of the family, and its right to privacy and self-determination within the law, combine to permit the cruelty that family values shelter or even legitimate.

The early modern period brings emotion inside marriage, and it sees emotion as unstable, unpredictable, arbitrary. Leontes finds it – and that to the infection of his brains and the hardening of his supposedly cuckolded brows. His remorse, when it comes, is equally extreme.<sup>34</sup> For sixteen years Leontes performs a saint-like sorrow (5.1.1-2), daily visiting the chapel where his wife and child lie buried (3.2.238-9). Hermione herself is memorialised as a martyr. She appears to Antigonus as a vessel of sorrow, 'in pure white robes, / Like very sanctity' (3.3.21-3); her repentant husband alludes to 'her sainted spirit' (5.1.57). The pain of loss is directly proportional to the ideal the family represents.

#### IV.

Tombs of the period do not record marital jealousy as a cause of death. They do, however, construct on occasions a direct relationship between affection and loss, locating death within the love they celebrate. Lady Waller's tomb in Bath was put up at least twenty years after the play; Catherine Savage memorialised her family at about the same time. But in the neighbourhood of London cultural fashions moved faster. The Parish

Church at Fulham, then a village on the Thames, houses a tomb of 1603 which is both a monument to motherhood and a record of the loss that constantly threatens to divide the family. Lady Margaret Legh sits upright, her head very slightly inclined towards the child in her arms, one hand supporting the baby, the other against her breast in a gesture of sorrow. This is an elegant, sophisticated effigy, carved with the mimetic subtlety emerging in the period (fig. 3).

The details of the story are slightly obscure. Pevsner identifies the figure as a widow, on account of the hood.<sup>35</sup> This is self-evidently not right: the inscription makes clear that the monument was put up by her husband. Arched hoods of this kind were fashionable in the period, and are not necessarily indications of widowhood. Pevsner also draws attention to the stiff babies – like mummies, he comments. Like mummies indeed, and as if they were encased in lead. My own view is that these twin babies are probably dead, like the rigid little corpses pathetically heaped up behind William Knoyle's first wife on the wall tablet at Sandford Orcas, like the infant John Windsor (d. 1588), who has his own incised slab at Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk, or like the twins held by their mother, Anne à Wode, on a brass of 1512 at Blickling in Norfolk.<sup>36</sup> The inscription on the Legh monument mentions two daughters and seven sons, of whom three died in infancy. Whether the birth of the twins, two of the deceased infants mentioned on the inscription, was also responsible for their mother's death is not made clear, but it seems possible.<sup>37</sup>

The perils of childbirth made death an ever-present threat to the enclave of the loving family. Margaret Legh's epitaph tells her (short) story:

TO THE MEMORY  
OR  
WHAT ELSE DEARER REMAINETH OF THE VIRTUOUS LADY, LADY MARGARET LEGH,  
DAUGHTER  
OF HIM THAT SOMETIMES WAS SIR GILBERT GERARD, KNIGHT AND MASTER OF THE ROLLS  
IN THE HIGH COURT OF CHANCERY,  
WIFE  
TO SIR PETER LEGH OF LYMM IN THE COUNTY OF CHESTER, KNIGHT, AND BY HIM  
THE MOTHER OF 7 SONS, PEIRCE, FRAUNCES, RADCLIFFE, THOMAS, PETER, GILBERT,  
JOHN, WITH 2 DAUGHTERS, ANNE AND KATHERINE: OF WHICH RADCLIFFE, GILBERT,  
JOHN DECEASED INFANTS, THE REST YET SURVIVING TO THE HAPPY INCREASE OF THEIR  
HOUSE. THE YEARS THAT SHE ENJOYED THE WORLD WERE 33, THAT HER HUSBAND  
ENJOYED HER 17, AT WHICH PERIOD SHE YIELDED HER SOUL TO THE BLESSEDNESS OF  
LONG REST, AND HER BODY TO HIS EARTH. JULY 29 1603.  
THIS INSCRIPTION IN THE NOTE OF PIETY AND LOVE  
BY HER SAD HUSBAND IS HERE  
DEVOTEDLY PLACED.

Text and image together constitute a perfect representation of the emergent family, fruitful, pious, loving – and potentially tragic. The serenity of the whole can be read as

an affirmation of triumph over loss, but the loss is evident in the sad husband's tribute to motherhood as the patient endurance of sorrow.<sup>38</sup> Daughter, wife and mother, Margaret Legh is memorialised as an ideal woman according to family values. Her death while giving birth to her ninth child at the age of thirty-three is the outcome of marital love, and her loss is experienced as tragic in direct proportion to its cause.

Hermione does not die in childbirth, and her husband's behaviour is brutal in a way that Margaret Legh's is presumably not, but her death is also closely related to the affection which makes it so hard to bear. In one sense, the tombs and the plays tell different stories: plays depend on plots; the tombs exclude narrative in favour of a single static image. Thus *The Winter's Tale* depicts the consecutive destruction of marriage from within the emotion that defines it, while the Legh monument shows the emotion preserved and perpetuated in alabaster. But both show the family to be tragic in direct proportion to the emotion it involves.

As *The Winter's Tale* indicates, the most helpless victims of parental love-turned-to-hate are the children, who cannot be held to blame. Mamillius, allowed to charm the audience at the beginning of the play, is not restored to life at the end. A culture that chooses to ground the family on romantic love risks revealing the unpredictable at the heart of its plan to regulate the future, and only unremitting reaffirmation of the utopian ideal in romantic fiction, marriage guidance counselling and popular psychology, it appears, can deflect the anxieties its adherents continue to experience in the twenty-first century.

#### Notes

- 1 This essay is a revised and edited extract from Catherine Belsey's book, *Shakespeare and the Loss of Eden: The Construction of Family Values in Early Modern Culture*. London 1999.
- 2 Cf. Orgel, Stephen: *Prospero's Wife*. In: Stephen Greenblatt (ed.): *Representing the English Renaissance*. Berkeley 1988, pp. 217-229; here p. 222.
- 3 Stone, Lawrence: *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. London 1977.
- 4 For a discussion of the difference between social and cultural history, see Belsey 1999, pp. 1-25.
- 5 Wilson, Jean: *The Archaeology of Shakespeare: The Material Legacy of Shakespeare's Theatre*. Stroud 1995, pp. 55-56.
- 6 Llewellyn, Nigel: *Honour in Life, Death and in the Memory: Funeral Monuments in Early Modern England*. In: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Series 6*, vol. 6, Cambridge 1996, pp. 179-200; here pp. 180-181.
- 7 For the contrary view that the medieval examples of clasped hands may indicate an increasing idealisation of emotional closeness, though in conjunction with the emerging legal practice of jointure (property held jointly by the couple) see Coss, Peter: *The Lady in Medieval England 1000-1500*. Stroud 1998, pp. 84-110.
- 8 See John Rudhall (d. 1636) and his wife, Mary at St Mary's, Ross-on-Wye, and George Monox (d. 1638) and his wife, Cirencester. Both tombs may be by Samuel Baldwin.

- 9 Wilson 1995, p. 90.
- 10 The inclusion of a previous wife was entirely conventional from the middle ages on. A brass to John Hauley (d. 1408) at St Saviour's, Dartmouth, shows two wives. Though he holds the hand of one, they are virtually indistinguishable in all other ways. A brass of 1481 at Morley, Derbs, shows Henry Stathum with three wives. Thomas Inwood of Weybridge has three in 1586. Sir Richard Fitzlewes, d. 1528 at Ingrave, Essex, has four, differentiated by the heraldry shown on their mantles. In 1470 the will of Sir Thomas Stathum specified that his marble tombstone should show brass images of himself and his two wives (quoted in Coss 1998, p. 105).
- 11 Shakespeare, William: *The Winter's Tale*. In: Pafford, J. H. P. (ed.): *The Arden Shakespeare*. London 1963.
- 12 B. J. Sokol attributes the rage of Leontes to the couvade syndrome, which in the 1950s was shown to afflict American men when their wives were pregnant. See *Art and Illusion in The Winter's Tale*. Manchester 1994, pp. 42-49.
- 13 Lacan, Jacques: *Ecrits*. Transl. by Alan Sheridan. London 1977, p. 245.
- 14 Freud, Sigmund: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The Penguin Freud Library. Vol. 11: *On Metapsychology*. Ed. by Angela Richards. London 1984, pp. 269-338; here pp. 284-286.
- 15 Burton, Robert: *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Ed. by Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling and Rhonda L. Blair. Oxford 1989-94, vol. 3, pp. 273-329.
- 16 Burton 1989-94, 3.2.1.2; vol. 3, p. 54.
- 17 Burton 1989-94, 3.3.2.1; vol. 3, pp. 297-298.
- 18 Burton 1989-94, 3.3.2.1; vol. 3, p. 29.
- 19 Burton 1989-94, 3.3.1.1; vol. 3, p. 273.
- 20 Mahood, M. M.: *Wordplay in The Winter's Tale*. In: D. J. Palmer (ed.): *Shakespeare's Later Comedies*. London 1971, pp. 346-364; here p. 347.
- 21 Furness, H. H. (ed.): *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*. Vol. 11: *The Winter's Tale*. London 1898, p. 27.
- 22 Furness 1898, pp. 27-29.
- 23 Shakespeare 1963, p. 166. Henry N. Hudson glosses it as ›lust‹, ›After a great deal of thought spent on this line‹ in his edition in *The Windsor Shakespeare*, vol. 7 (Edinburgh: T. C. and E. C. Jack, n.d.). Arthur Quiller-Couch gives ›instinct (sexual), desire‹, but does not say whose, in his Cambridge University Press edition of 1931. S. C. Boorman glosses it as ›lust‹ (Hermione's) in his University of London Press edition of 1964. Ernest Schanzer in the Penguin edition of 1969, after weighing the options, settles for ›sexual desire‹ (Hermione's). Most modern editions stay broadly within this frame: affection is generally pathological if attributed to Leontes, or lascivious if it is seen as belonging to Hermione.
- 24 Blakemore Evans, G. et al. (eds.): *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston/Massachusetts 1974, pp. 1565, 1571; Greenblatt, Stephen et al. (eds.): *The Norton Shakespeare*. New York 1997, p. 2878.
- 25 Shakespeare, William: *The Winter's Tale*. Ed. by John Andrews. London 1995; Shakespeare, William: *The Winter's Tale*. Ed. by Stephen Orgel. Oxford 1996.
- 26 Orgel, Stephen: *The Poetics of Incomprehensibility*. In: *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42, 1991, pp. 431-437.

- 27 Ward, David: Affection, Intention, and Dreams in *The Winter's Tale*. In: *Modern Language Review*, 82, 1987, pp. 545- 554; here p. 546.
- 28 ›I hope I shall not offend Divinity if I say the conjunction of man & wife is not Love. It is an allowance of God's, and so good, and the name of it, I thinke, two honest Affections united into one.‹ Cameron Allen, Don (ed.): *Essayes by Sir William Cornwallis, the Younger*. Baltimore 1946, p. 20.
- 29 Allen (ed.) 1946, p. 81. Cf. Ben Jonson: ›blinde Affection, which doth ne're advance/ The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance‹ (Pafford 1963, *The Winter's Tale*, p. 166).
- 30 Cf. Felperin, Howard: »Tongue-tied our Queen?«: The Deconstruction of Presence in *The Winter's Tale*. In: Patricia Parker/Geoffrey Hartman (eds.). *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. New York 1985, pp. 3-18; here p. 11.
- 31 Ward 1987, p. 549.
- 32 Shakespeare, William: *Othello*. In: *The Arden Shakespeare*. Ed. E. A. J. Honigman. Walton-on-Thames 1997.
- 33 Ward defends the Folio punctuation, which aligns ›what's unreal‹ with ›dreams‹. He takes ›coactive‹ to mean ›coercive‹: Leontes is driven by an uncontrollable feeling (Ward 1987, p. 552). His reading differs from mine in detail, but points in a similar direction.
- 34 Cf. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where Page reproaches Ford because his ›submission‹ is as ›extreme‹ as his previous jealousy (4.4.10-12).
- 35 Pevsner, Nikolaus: *London, Except the Cities of London and Westminster. The Buildings of England*. London 1952, p. 129.
- 36 Page-Phillips, John: *Children on Brasses*. London 1970, n.p., Fig. 31. The inscription states that they died suddenly, after a hazardous birth. Fig. 32 shows Dorothy Parkinson holding twins who closely resemble the children on the Legh monument. She died in childbirth in 1592 at Houghton-le-Skerne in Co Durham, but in this case it is not clear whether the twins also died.
- 37 Esdaile, Katharine A.: *English Church Monuments 1510-1640*. London 1946, p. 122. Nicholas Stone's monument to Arthur Croke (d. 1629) at Bramfield, Suffolk, shows his wife Elizabeth holding the baby whose birth caused her own death in 1627. Stone's workshop made the tomb of Lady Coventry (d. 1634) at Croome d'Abitot (Worcs). She leans on her elbow, holding a baby in the crook of her arm. In 1634 Sir John St John set up his own monument at Lydiard Tregoze (Wilts). The tomb, probably by Samuel Baldwin, shows two wives, the second living. The first wife, Anne Leighton, died giving birth to her thirteenth child. She clasps the baby, who survived, in her arms.
- 38 Lady Dorothy Allington died in 1613 at Horseheath in Cambridgeshire. Her tomb records that she married Sir Giles Allington and ›made him a joyful father of ten children‹, all named. The inscription adds, ›To whose dear memory her sorrowful husband, mindful of his own mortality, erected this monument.‹