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A New Interlude of Vice: *Generic Experimentation in* Horestes

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In this essay, I want to look at the way John Pickering experiments with dramatic genre in his interesting play *Horestes*, printed by William Griffiths in 1567 and probably written and performed that same year.[1] I am going to argue that he introduces two main changes to the basic genre of vernacular dramaturgy in sixteenth-century England: the interlude. The first of these is quite simple: he adds a death-scene—still quite a novelty in the late 1560s. The other is more complex: he alters the Vice's part so that his traditional roles in the merry scenes of the interlude and in soliloquy are reframed as "turns", rather than a sequence of episodes integrated into the fabric of the play. I am not sure that either of these experiments actually works, but they offer a very interesting insight into the generic complexity of Tudor drama. And here I wish to place my remarks on *Horestes* in the context of what needs to be a relatively lengthy theoretical

1. A play of "Orestes", which is surely Pickering's piece, was performed at Court in 1567. It used to be objected that a play of this "popular" kind could not have found favour at court; Chambers thought it was "too crude to be of the Court" (3: 466); the same was said about *Cambyses* (see, e.g., Adams, ed., p. 638n1, but cf. Hill). But we now think less reverently of the exalted tastes of the Tudor court, and the idea that there were two independent plays on the Orestes theme written in the same year seems a highly unlikely coincidence.

Behind my analysis of *Horestes* lies the belief that the terms *tragedy* and *comedy* are really not much use in trying to grasp the complex generics of Tudor drama. I do not say that we should discard the terms, but we need to treat them with a certain amount of disrespect. I know this will be hard: we are, on the whole, the dutiful heirs of the neo-classical tradition when it comes to questions of genre. But we need to remind ourselves from time to time that the terms *tragedy* and *comedy* have less to do with the history of Tudor drama than with the history of Tudor dramatic theory. Throughout the Tudor century, most dramatists wrote plays which were, as Philip Sidney observed in his *Apology for Poetry* around 1580, "neither right Tragedies, nor right Comedies" (p. 199). Sidney was quite right in his perception that Tudor plays were not written according to neo-classical rules, and quite wrong in his insistence that they should be. You cannot apply neo-classical terminology to plays written to the principles of early modern vernacular dramaturgy. But, of course, critics like Sidney did—and critics like us still tend to do the same.

I propose that we should experiment with new genre-systems which do not rely on the complementary pair of tragedy and comedy promoted by neo-classical aesthetics, yet still bear witness to the fact that these terms have not simply been imposed arbitrarily on the drama we study. They do have some purchase; but they are not subtle enough to cover the ground in all its complexity. So I have come up with two new terms and will apply them to *Horestes* to see what happens. For *comedy* I propose *Vice-play*; and here I take my cue from the "advertisement" of the play we now know as *Horestes*, which calls the play "A Newe Enterlude of Vice."[2] In fact, *Horestes* is the only surviving Tudor play to be called an "interlude of vice"—and I will talk about that a little later. But it seems to me a useful phrase, although I have substituted the word *play* for *interlude* because it is so much more transparent.

This etymological opacity is one of the great problems of neo-classical terminology: the terms *tragedy* and *comedy* are both derived from Greek via Latin, and they do not really tell you anything about the kind of play to which they refer. Now compare them to the German words for *tragedy* and *comedy*, namely, *Trauerspiel* and *Lustspiel*: "mourning-play" and "pleasure-play". Much better! You get something similar in Hungarian: *szomorújáték* and *vígjáték*, or "sad play" and "merry

2. By "advertisement" I mean the description of the play on its title-page, which is often rather more than the title itself.

play". These terms really tell you something about the plays they refer to in a way that *tragedy* and *comedy* do not.

This is not an idle point. I want to suggest that our new genre-labels should be regarded as experiments in neo-Formalism of the (East) European kind. The German and Hungarian terms are indices of what the Russian Formalists called the "dominant", that is, the most important component in any particular genre, here regarded either as the representation or excitement of a certain emotion.[3] For my Vice-play, the "dominant" is obviously the Vice; and to add a spurious element of quantitative exactitude here, I shall define the Vice-play as one in which the Vice has the largest part as reckoned in spoken lines. As for tragedy, we have the *death-play*. And by this I mean a play in which one or more violent deaths are enacted upon the stage. This is Shakespeare's idea of tragedy—and it has the added advantage of cutting out early neo-classical tragedies such as *Gorboduc*.[4]

Here let me explain that I do not offer these terms as new genres for old. Genres tend to be rather more entrenched in the literary system than the generic entities I am proposing, which have yet to prove their usefulness. Perhaps we could call them generic *formalisations*. Genre is traditionally considered to cover the entirety of a literary work; it is based in a notion of formal unity. But these formalisations do not claim to cover every detail of the work; they only marshall parts of it—perhaps quite a lot of it—around a dominant. This seems to me a useful way forward. The pedantic notion that tragedy and comedy are somehow "opposites" has impeded literary theory and literary criticism for centuries; it makes it hard for the neo-classicist to accept that a play can be both tragic and comic, since it cannot be both entirely a tragedy and entirely a comedy. But who would think to question whether the same play might not be at once capable of being formalised as a Vice-play and also, by shifting the dominant, as a death-play? This is why I like the idea of this new kind of genre-label. One play can exhibit many formalisations *at the same time*. One may be more "dominant" than the others; and again this is a notion expounded by Formalism in its insistence on

3. In his essay on "The Dominant", Roman Jacobson defines it as "the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components" (quoted in Duff, p. 41).

4. Of course, Shakespeare probably had a more complex idea of tragedy than this, though a glance at the way he uses the word *tragedy* and its cognates in his own work might suggest otherwise. All but one (from *Othello*) of the almost thirty instances of these words belong to the Elizabethan half of his career, sixteen of them to the five years 1590-94. The connection between tragedy and violent death is made several times in these early works (e.g., *2 Henry VI*, III.ii.194; *Lucrece*, 766; *1 Henry VI*, I.iv.76-77).

systemic hierarchisation. Indeed, according to the new dispensation, individual texts are microcosmic versions of the entire genre-system at large.

By way of concluding these remarks, I would like to draw attention to a brilliant but little known essay of 1986 by Werner Habicht called "Englische Tragikomödie im 16. Jahrhundert?" Here Habicht argues that the rise of tragicomedy in the Tudor period is the history not so much of a fusion of these two elements but of their separating out from the relatively homogeneous dramaturgy of the interlude:

> … die in den einzelnen Dramen—von den Interludien des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts bis zu (etwas) den Stücken von Robert Greene—tatsächlich anzutreffende generische Gemischtheit ist eben nicht von vornherein eine solche von Tragödie und Komödie, sondern sie besteht in der vielfältigen Überkreuzung und Verschmelzung von traditionell vorgegebenen Dramenmustern, in denen allen das Ernste und das Lächerliche untrennbar aufeinander bezogen sind.
>
> [… the generic diversity we actually encounter in individual plays from the interludes of the early sixteenth century up to, say, the plays of Robert Greene, is not primarily a mixture of tragedy and comedy, but consists rather in a multifarious intersection and blending of traditionally prescribed dramatic models, in all of which serious and ridiculous elements are inextricably bound up with one another.] (p. 18; my translation)

In some ways, this paper is just a footnote to Habicht's essay; but I hope it may still pose some interesting questions.

Horestes *as a Vice-Play*

Let us start with some charts (see Appendix). We should not place too much faith in these visual aids, perhaps, but they do help us "see" things which remain invisible when we merely read or watch the plays, relying on our well-trained aesthetic intuitions as to their formal structure. Chart 1 shows a break-down of the Vice's part in three quite similar plays from the 1560s: Thomas Preston's *Cambyses*, R. B.'s *Appius and Virginia*, and Pickering's *Horestes*. The analysis is based on five different types of scene: A is a "merry" scene without the Vice; B is a merry scene with the Vice; C is a soliloquy in which the Vice alone is on stage; D is a "sad" scene—in the old sense of "serious"—with the Vice; and E is a sad scene without the Vice. The charts show what percentage of the Vice's part falls into the three divisions of soliloquy, merry scene, and sad scene, and also what these

figures represent as percentage of the total number of lines in play (TLN). We cannot press these figures too hard, of course; but they do allows us to make some interesting observations and ask some searching questions about the role of the Vice in each of these three plays.

At first glance, it might look as if the Vice in *Horestes*, Revenge, is "stronger" than his counterparts Ambidexter in *Cambyses* and Haphazard in *Appius and Virginia*. After all, he has a greater share of the lines than they. All three weigh in at about a quarter of the total; in other words, every fourth line is spoken by the Vice (as it were). Revenge noses ahead with 27%; and so—we might think—that is why the new term "interlude of vice" was invented: to draw attention to the fact that here we have an unusually strong performance from this already well-established favourite of the Tudor stage. However, I shall argue that these charts show that Revenge is actually "weaker" than either Ambidexter or Haphazard because he has lost touch with the supporting cast of merry characters.

Again, at first sight, the contrary would seem to be true. After all, more of *Horestes* is given over to the merry scenes: nearly a quarter, as opposed to *Cambyses* and *Appius and Virginia*, which have only roughly a fifth. Revenge also just edges ahead of Ambidexter and Haphazard when it comes to the percentage of his own lines spoken in these merry scenes, which is again closer to a quarter than a fifth. But look once more at the scenic analysis, and you will see that Revenge only appears in one of the three merry scenes, the one where Revenge stirs up trouble between two clownish peasants called Rusticus and Hodge. It is the simple fact that he says so much in this one scene—97 of his 317 lines—that pushes up all the scores for his share of the TLN, the fraction of the TLN devoted to the merry scenes, and the fraction of Revenge's own part spoken in these scenes—that is, in this one scene.

But after this long scene with Rusticus and Hodge, Revenge has no more to do with traditional forms of mirth. There are still merry scenes: one features two young roisters on their way to war; another a "Girls On Top" gag where a woman captive turns the tables on her captor. Both these scenes look as if they may have been borrowed from *Cambyses* (although in these Ambidexter plays a vital and vigorous role). However, after his first encounter with the small-holders, Revenge leaves this merry world behind him, and devotes himself entirely to the serious action of the play involving Horestes's cruel revengement. In doing so, he cuts himself off from one of his main supplies of theatrical energy without an adequate alternative.

The other source of energy for the Vice is soliloquy; but here again Revenge's high score is due to one 84-line speech at the end of the play, a speech which is exactly the same length as the scene which follows it, and in which Horestes is crowned and blessed by his new bride, by the Nobility and the Commons of Mycenae, and also by Truth and Duty. Of his two other far shorter soliloquies, only one is a true speech, the one that introduces the scene with the peasants; but the other is actually a song, not a speech, without the force of direct address to the audience. Compared to Ambidexter and Haphazard, Revenge begins to look weak in this area, too. Ambidexter has no fewer than seven short soliloquies, and Haphazard has four equally snappy interventions; but Revenge hardly draws on this resource at all until he exhausts it all in one draught at the very end of the play, where, as we have seen, he indulges in an immensely long speech where other Vices would say a few words and slip off quietly.

Pickering simply seems to get the Vice *wrong*. He does not seem to realise that the Vice is the most "actorly" role in the old interlude. To carry off the soliloquy, the actor playing the Vice must have charisma: he must be able to captivate and manipulate the audience. In the merry scenes, he must be able to make people laugh, and he also needs considerable physical strength and agility, for these scenes generally involve a rough-and-tumble scuffle—which must, of course, be carefully choreographed in order not to descend into mere confusion. This is why Vices tend to be rather "roisterish" in conception. Pickering must have known what a traditional Vice was like because Revenge does all the right things in the long scene with Rusticus and Hodge: after a short soliloquy, he spies, he ruffles, he laughs, he withholds his name, he stirs up trouble, he pretends to be innocent, and finally he thwacks the hapless clowns and is off. But he does not return to this source of dramatic energy, and, ultimately, of his own dramaturgical identity. That first scene is a good "set-piece" of Vice performance; but Pickering does not follow it up at the same regular intervals as Preston and R. B.; he relies on one or two "turns", whereas they keep the Vice constantly before us, a welcome intrusion, popping up again and again to entertain us in his traditional fashion.

Why does Pickering do this? On the whole, I agree with critics who see his main interest in Revenge as a projection of Horestes's own will to vengeance—a sort of alter ego. This does look plausible when we consider the sad scenes: for example, the only person we may be sure actually speaks to Revenge is Horestes.[5]

5. Revenge speaks *at* people, witness his scolding of the condemned Clytemnestra or the mocking of Fame, but they so not reply to him or even seem to know that he is there. In this respect, Revenge

Maybe this is why Pickering does not concern himself so much with the scenes in which Revenge is represented as an independent character—that is in the merry scenes and in his soliloquies. Perhaps it is also why Pickering's merry scenes seem so closely to follow those in *Cambyses*, as if he were not so interested in these and relies on what looks like close imitation of a successful predecessor instead of making up new material here. However, let us return to what we know Pickering *did* do, rather than what we may think he did not.

We noted earlier that there was something a little odd about the phrase *interlude of vice*. Interludes almost always had a Vice, so it seems rather suspicious that the advertisement should have to draw attention to the fact that the play has a good role for this figure. It is as if the advertisement is actually trying to hide the fact that Revenge is, on the whole, a "weak" Vice. But who actually wrote this advertisement? It is impossible to tell whether this description is the work of the author or the printer, but scholars have generally plumped for the latter.[6] And I would add that there is a distinctly commercial mind at work here, since the writer seems to be dimly aware of the imminent demise of the interlude even at the height of its glory in the 1560s. Or, to be more precise: the 1560s saw the highest point of the *reputation* of the interlude as a dramatic form.

Chart 2 shows that the term *interlude* was popular as a trade term—that is, amongst printers, book-sellers, and the officials of the Stationers' Companies—from the earliest days right up until the end of the 1560s, but that it then starts to lose ground in the 1570s, and virtually disappears thereafter. It was most popular in the 1560s, when the term seems to have kept at bay combinations with other terms, especially *play* or *comedy*, which had been much more common in the pre-Elizabethan period.

On the other hand, there was some discrepancy between the way a play was described on its title-page and when it was entered in the Stationers' Register. A quarter (five out of twenty-one) of the plays advertised during the 1560s as "interludes" were entered under the more general term "plays".[7] This would

resembles the Good and Bad Angels of *Doctor Faustus* more than the traditional morality Vice, and anticipates complex psychological apparitions such as Gil-Martin in James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). However, see Norland, pp. 177-78, who suggests that textual interpolation may explain Revenge's "non-dialogue" with other characters.

6. See Craik, p. 36, and Axton, p. 96.

7. These five plays are: *Godly Queen Hester* (1561), *Lusty Juventus* (1565), *King Darius* (1565), *Like Will to Like* (1568), *The Marriage of Wit and Science* (1569). Other discrepancies during this decade are as follows: *Oedipus* (1563) = tragedy (on t.p) < history (in S. R.); *The Longer Thou Livest* (1569) = comedy < ballet; *Patient Grissel* (1569) = comedy < history.

seem to indicate that printers and book-sellers used one term amongst themselves and another when it came to selling their books to the public. Moreover, it is interesting to note that as *interlude* starts to lose out to new terms in the wording of the advertisement, especially to *comedy*, the situation is reversed: two plays in the late 1570s advertised as "comedies" are entered as "interludes".[8] And several later plays are entered as "interludes" despite being advertised otherwise right up to the end of the century: *Jack Straw* (1594), *Mother Bombie* (1594), *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (1594), *The Old Wives' Tale* (1595), and *George A Greene* (1599)—plays which may be said to represent the whole gamut of Elizabethan drama.

What I am suggesting here is that somehow Griffith was instinctively aware that this particular commodity—the interlude—was at the very height of its popularity, at the point of market saturation, as it were, on the very crest of the rise-and-fall pattern of its career as a "brand". And to add speculation to speculation, let me proceed by saying that he recognised that one threat—maybe *the* threat—to the continued dominance of the interlude was tragedy. He was well-placed to have at least an idea of the explosion of interest in neo-classical tragedy at the Inns of Court during the 1560s because his shop at St. Dunstan's in Fleet Street was right across the way from the Inner Temple. Indeed, it was no doubt this proximity which led to his printing the unauthorised first edition of Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* in 1565, whose manuscript, as John Day tells us in the authorised edition of 1570, was smuggled out to him by "some yongmans hand that lacked a little money and much discretion" (quoted in Adams, ed., p. 503).[9] And Griffith presumably had some inkling of the vogue for the new English Seneca, since Heywood's *Troas* and *Thyestes*, Neville's *Oedipus*, and Studley's *Medea* and *Agamemnon* were all published in Fleet Street in the years leading up to 1567. Now Griffith was no scholar-printer, but he must have had a businessman's eye open to the market for such wares.

8. These are *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* (1578) and *All for Money* (1578). Other discrepancies are as follows: *Damon and Pythias* (1571) = comedy < tragical comedy; *Appius and Virginius* (1575) = tragical comedy < tragedy; *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1575) = comedy < play; *Godly Susanna* (1578) comedy < ballet (1563) and play (1569).

9. If, as seems almost certain, the author of *Horestes* was indeed John Puckering, later Speaker of the House of Commons and Lord Keeper, then Griffith would have had this play, too, from the hands of a youngish member of the Inns of Court. Puckering was admitted to Lincoln's Inn in 1559, at the age of 25, and was called to the bar in 1567, the year of *Horestes*. See Phillips, who strongly urges that *Horestes* is an anti-Marian play. However, cf. Hasler for a more recent and more sceptical view of Puckering's antipathy towards Mary.

This is one reason, I suggest, for his emphasis in the advertisement of the what must have struck at least some of his original readers as the "tragic" element of *Horestes*: "the cruell revengment of his Fathers death upon his one naturall Mother". Tudor tragedy has its own lexis, and this brief phrase contains some key tragical terms: *cruel*, *revengement*, *death*, and—via "naturall"—*unnatural*. They can be found in the productions of elite neo-classical tragedy, but they also occur in other kinds of tragedy, such as popular ballads and broadsheets, where domestic violence of the kind exemplified by the events of *Horestes* was a popular staple. And this is the other reason why Griffith draws his readers' attention to Horestes' revenge on his mother: he must have known that there was a popular demand for such material and is making sure his readers know that they can satisfy their appetites for it in this new book. But there are generic problems here as well, and let us turn to another critical voice for a moment to broach this issue.

Horestes *as a Death-Play*

"The first revenge play of the English renaissance is John Pickering's *The Interlude of Vice (Horestes)*". So Robert S. Knapp in his interesting essay, "*Horestes*: The Uses of Revenge" (p. 205). Here we have another and more familiar genre-label: *revenge-play*. But why does he not say "revenge-tragedy"? The answer lies in the sentence that follows: "Unlike most revengers, Horestes ends his career alive . . .". Or, as we might say, unlike most *later* revengers. Knapp's idea of tragedy, I suspect, is based on the work of later writers such as Shakespeare, and comparisons between *Horestes* and *Hamlet* are not uncommon. So the truly tragic revenger dies: Hamlet, Hieronymo, Vindice—and so many others. The logic seems to be that if you kill, you must die. There are exceptions: Lucius in *Titus Andronicus* comes to mind. But there will always be exceptions; so long as there are not too many, the "rule" remains intact. Yet Horestes does not exactly offend against this rule, because he does not really take revenge against his mother.

This may need some explanation, and it is time now to bring in our formalisation of the death-play. When we read of Horestes' "cruell revengment of his Fathers death upon his one naturall Mother" in the advertisement of the play, we are not told explicitly that Horestes will kill his mother, but we assume that this is the case because revenge requires a death for a death. So the play can be considered in terms of two very closely related but not identical formalisations: the revenge-play and the death-play. For Knapp, if I read him aright, these

two formalisations do not quite match, because his idea of the revenge-play is dominated by the death of the revenger as a kind of *telos*. But this is perhaps a "late Elizabethan" structure, and my problem with *Horestes* is rather different. My death-play is dominated by violent death *on stage*—it is the spectacle that counts. And my intuitions tell me that what really counts here is the exemplary spectacle of righteous execution (understood with all the tedious complexities of the relationship between the words *justice* and *revenge* in this period). In other words, the emphasis is on the revenger's victim—in this case, Clytemnestra.

But we do not see Clytemnestra die. She is merely led off-stage by Revenge at the end of the second of the play's three dramatic sequences—and there is a good four hundred lines to go before we reach the final prayer. Why is this? One reason might be that Pickering was alarmed at the violence of Horestes' revenge in his source in John Lydgate's *Troy Book* (itself adapted from Guido della Colonna), which had been reprinted just a few years earlier by Thomas Marsh in 1555:[10]

> . . . he make fyrste his swoorde to byte,
> On his mother with his handes twayne,
> And ouermore to do his busy payne,
> Without pytye and no mercye shewe
> On smale peces tyll she be to hewe
> And dismembred a sonder ioynt from ioynt. (Guido della Colonna, sig. 2C2^{r})[11]

Obviously, Pickering could not have staged this scene in all its appalling ferocity (although Preston had managed a few years earlier to present the on-stage flaying of the wicked judge Sisamnes). Still, one feels he could have toned down the violence and presented Clytemnestra's execution one way or another. But he baulked at this opportunity because, I suspect, he felt that it would be simply *too* indecorous to have a son kill his mother on stage.

I do not wish to appear too ghoulish, but I think this is all rather disappointing. All along we have been led to believe that Horestes will kill Clytemnestra, but in the end we are fobbed off with Egistus instead. This is still a decent spectacle, as we see from this graphic stage-direction: "Fling him [Egistus] of the lader, and then let on bringe in his [Horestes'] mother Clytemnestra, but let her loke wher Egistus hangeth" (790.SD1-4). Egistus' death—he is hanged from the walls of Mycenae—is

10. For Pickering and Lydgate, see Merritt.

11. These lines correspond to 5.1637-44 in Lydgate, ed. Bergen.

presented as an awful spectacle for Clytemnestra to gaze upon. After he has been cut down and taken off, Clytemnestra once again begs for mercy, but Horestes once more requires her to remind herself of what she has done:

> So call to minde thou wast the cause of Agamemnons death;
> For which, as death is recompence of death, so eke with the:
> For kyllinge of my father thou now kylled eke shault be.
> This thinge to be accomplyshyd, Revenge with the shall go.
> Now have her hence, sieth that you all my judgment here do kno. (816-20)

And Clytemnestra leaves, weeping, with Revenge mocking and scolding her.

Horestes does not quite work as a revenge-play because we do not *see* the enactment of revenge upon the person of Clytemnestra: it is not *dramatised*. Still, this does not mean to say that it is not a tragedy in our slightly adjusted variation on that term: the death-play. I know it may seem offensively simplistic to reduce tragedy to violent death on stage, but that, I think, is how most Elizabethans—the young Shakespeare as well as Pickering—would have thought of tragedy. So, although in terms of the revenge-play inflection of *Horestes*, Egistus is a kind of scapegoat for Clytemnestra, the promised victim of Horestes' cruel revengement, yet he is the somewhat unexpected centre of *Horestes* in its formalisation as a death-play.

Indeed, this dislocation may reveal the superior importance of yet another formalisation: the "succession-play". After Agamemnon is murdered, Clytemnestra remains queen of Mycenae, but not its monarch, which position is occupied by the usurper Egistus. In other words, Clytemnestra does not come in the way of Horestes' succession to the throne, but Egistus does, and must be removed. But because Pickering invests so much of his resources on the psychomachic drama of Horestes' conflict as to whether he should revenge his father's death upon his mother, critics tend not to give much emphasis to the perhaps more routine relationships between young prince Horestes and *ersatz* father-figures such as Idumeus and Menelaus—and his adulterous stepfather Egistus. It is through these relationships that the main plot of the play is worked out, ending not with the deaths of Clytemnestra and Egistus, but—much later—with the coronation of Horestes as the rightful king of Mycenae. In terms of traditional generics, the tragic play of murderous revenge is enacted within a larger structure more closely related to the "romance" plot of the restitution of the dispossessed heir to his rightful place. It may be that we tend

to place a higher value on tragedy than romance, at least as a dramatic form, and so find it awkward and perverse that the much-vaunted revenge upon Clytemnestra should not be given priority over the romantic succession-play. It is easy to feel impatient with the scenes which intervene between her death and the final prayer, especially since the threat by Menelaus to revenge the death of his former sister-in-law seems so empty and perfunctory. But Pickering clearly considered it important to establish Horestes' credentials in the face of a potential challenge from his uncle and so elaborates this sequence at some length. And yet—one is still disappointed.

It seems unfair to end by concluding that Pickering's experiments do not quite work in *Horestes*. So let me say that this is still a goodish play and worth revival. Moreover, we have to place it within the larger panorama of evolutionary generics as applied to Tudor drama.[12] Now it is not uncommon to find the language of Darwinism applied to Tudor drama, but it is rarely applied correctly—at least in my view. I would argue that critics generally give us teleology rather than evolution; they see Tudor drama as a development *towards* something else—Elizabethan drama, for example, or Shakespeare. Here is an example from the pen of Norman Rabkin (1985): "how did the tragic theatre of Shakespeare and his colleagues climb with such lightning rapidity out of the unpromising slime of mid-sixteenth-century tragedy?" (p. 28). An interesting question; but the gesture towards the evolutionary process is misleading. Rabkin wants us to see plays like *Horestes* as primitive creatures which bear the same relation to *Hamlet* as our protozoic ancestors do to us. It is a conceit, but not merely a conceit. Rabkin's essay is called "Stumbling Towards Tragedy", and this very nicely points up the problem with pseudo-evolutionary literary history. On the one hand, Rabkin's "stumbling" does indeed capture the random, aleatory nature of evolution; but

12. Perhaps the first phase of this evolutionary approach to mid-Tudor drama was a little too easy. Writing in 1965, Peter Happé noted that it was "only recently" that *Horestes* and the other two plays (he calls them "moralities") were crucial to an understanding of the later tragedy of Shakespeare and his contemporaries (p. 207). And several books and articles in the post-war decades bear witness to the excitement of a new idea. Rossiter, for example, makes the evolutionary principle the "working hypothesis" (p. 11) of *English Drama* (1950), though it remains a pretty conceit rather than a fully developed idea in his study. Similar gestures, not always couched in Darwinian language, are frequent in other writers, such as when Bevington (in 1962) calls the comic figures of *Horestes* "strange vestiges in an alien environment" (p. 181). But we may need to go back to the Darwinian drawing-board and start afresh. For a salutary retheorisation of literary evolution, see Moretti's essay "On Literary Evolution" (1997).

his “towards” gives the game away. Species do not evolve *towards* anything; they only evolve *away* from what they already are. I think it is true to say that *Horestes* does not quite “work”: the important thing is to try to explain why. It cannot be that Pickering is trying but failing to write *Hamlet*. This is not to deny that *Horestes* and the other two plays we have more briefly touched on are irrelevant to the development of later Elizabethan stage-tragedy, but merely to point out that, whilst *Horestes* may tell us something useful about *Hamlet*, it is less obvious that *Hamlet* will tell us much about *Horestes*.

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Appendix

Chart 1

	Camb.	*Appius*	*Hor.*
Vice's part as % of TLN	23	24	27
% of Vice's part spoken as soliloquy	58	35	45
% of Vice's part spoken in merry scenes	21	21	23
% of Vice's part spoken in sad scenes	21	45	32
Vice's solioquy as % of TLN	13	8	12
Merry scenes as % of TLN	21	19	24
Sad scenes as % of TLN	64	72	66

N.B. These % figures will not necessarily add up to 100 because of rounding up and rounding down.

Chart 2: The Term "Interlude" on the Title-Pages of Tudor Printed Drama

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1500–59	33	11 (33)	7 (22)	18 (55)	8 (24)	7 (21)
1560s	41	21 (51)	3 (8)	24 (59)	14 (34)	3 (7)
1570s	18	3 (17)	2 (11)	5 (28)	13 (72)	ø
1580s	16	1 (6)	ø	1 (6)	11 (69)	4 (25)
1590s	98	ø	ø	ø	87 (89)	11 (11)

Key

A Total number of printed editions (including reprints)
B Title-pages which only mention the word *interlude* only
C Title-pages which mention *interlude* and some other term
D Title-pages which mention *interlude* alone or in combination
E Title-pages which mention other terms but not *interlude*
F Title-pages with no mention of any generic term at all

The number in parenthesis is a percentage of A.