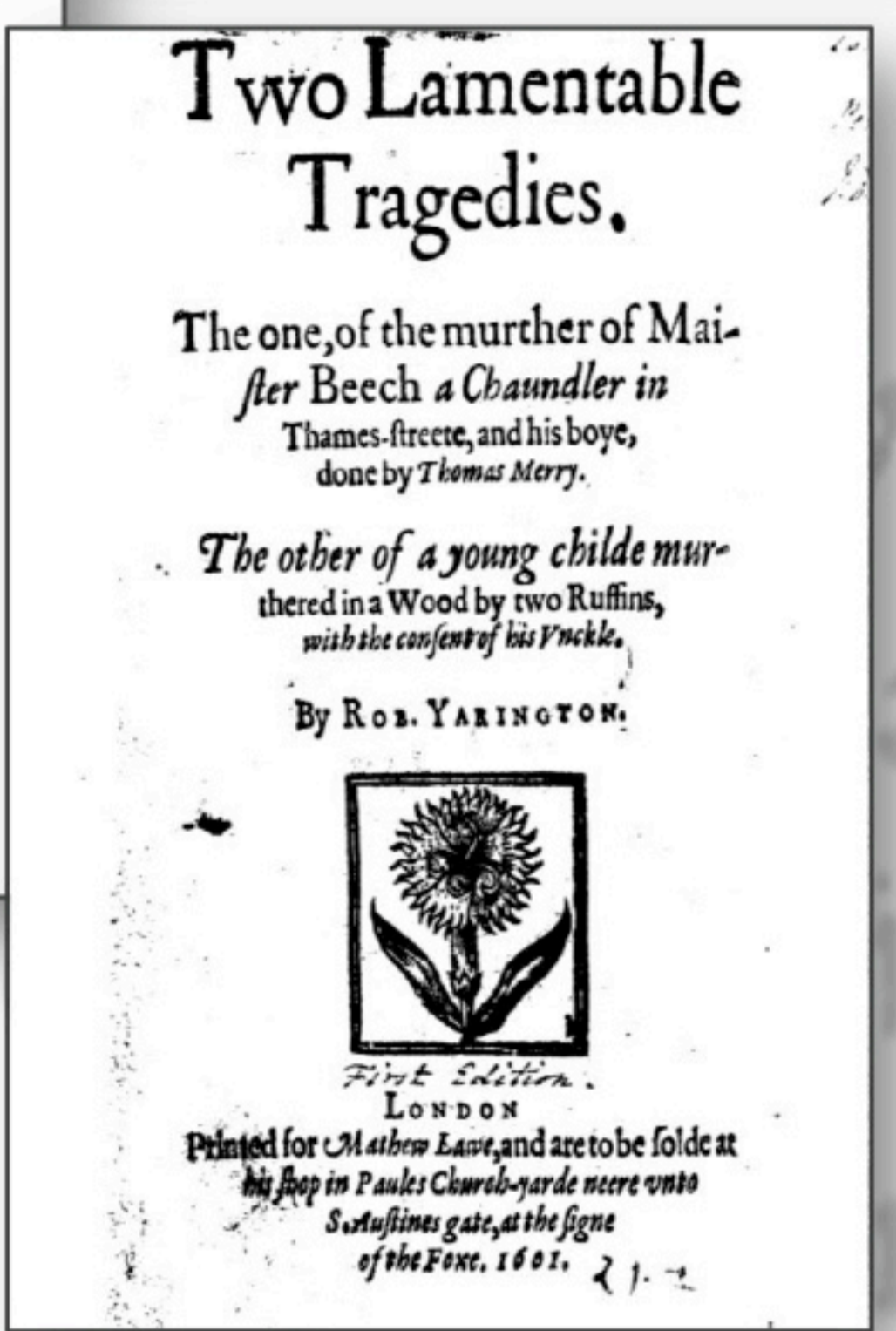
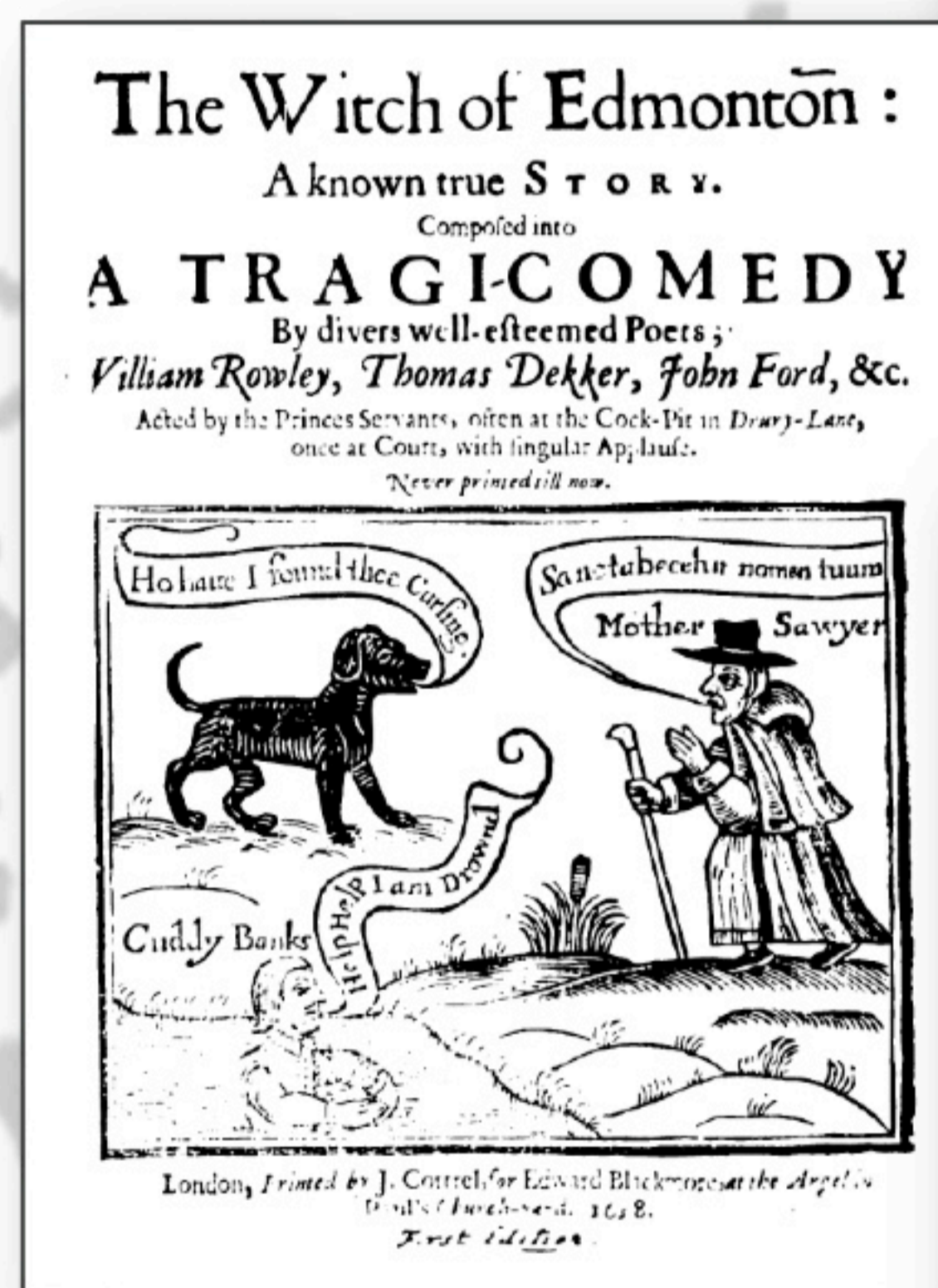
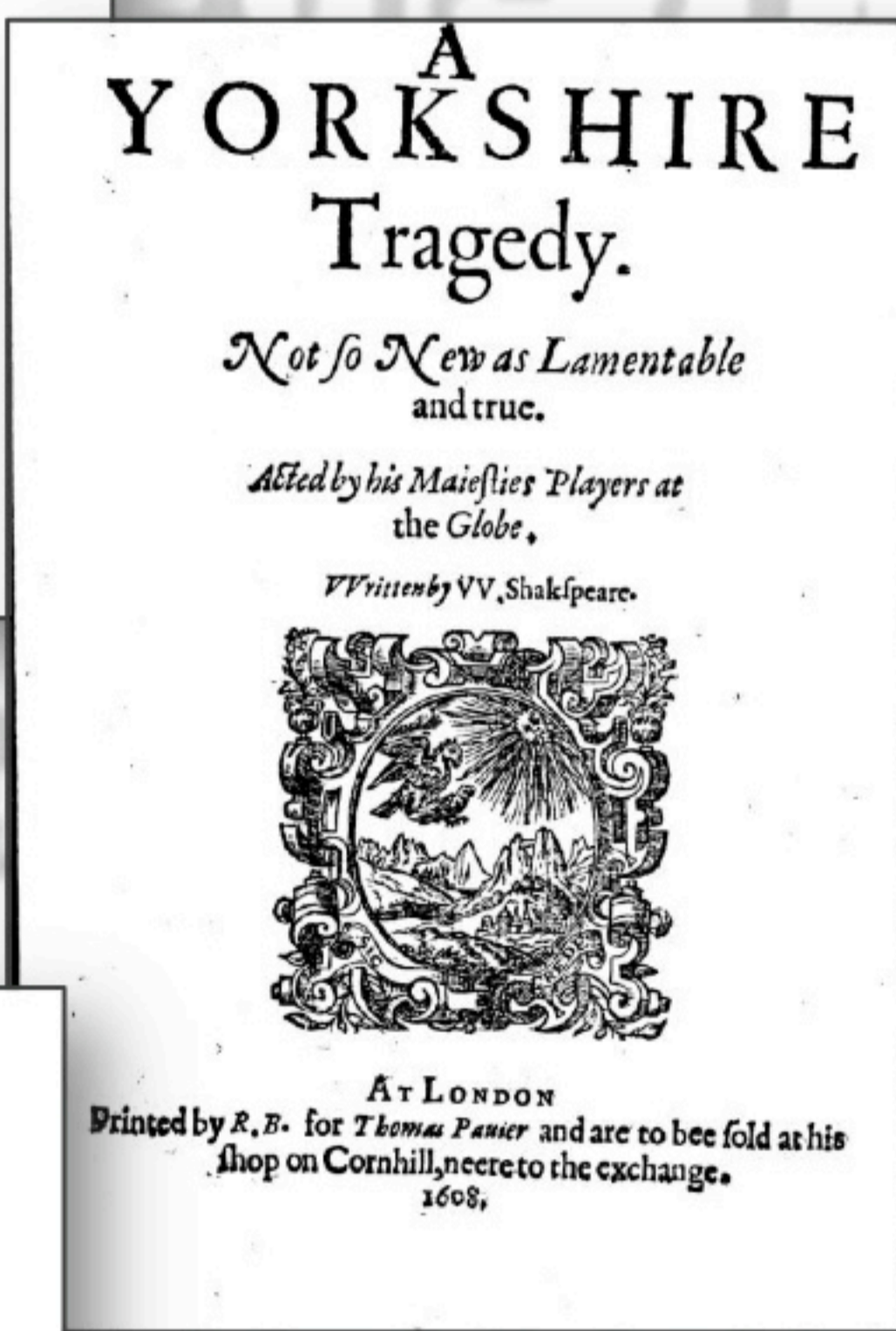
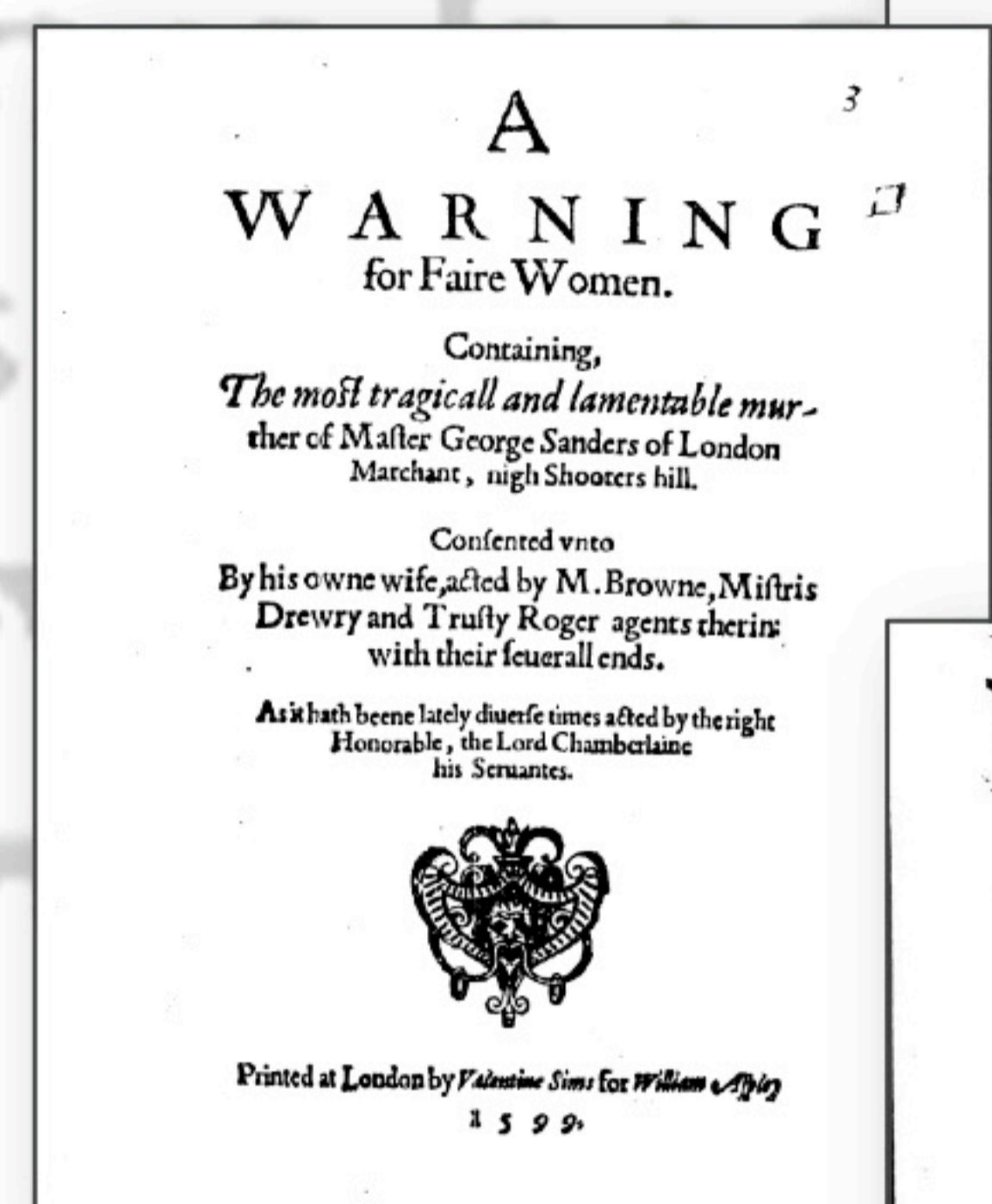
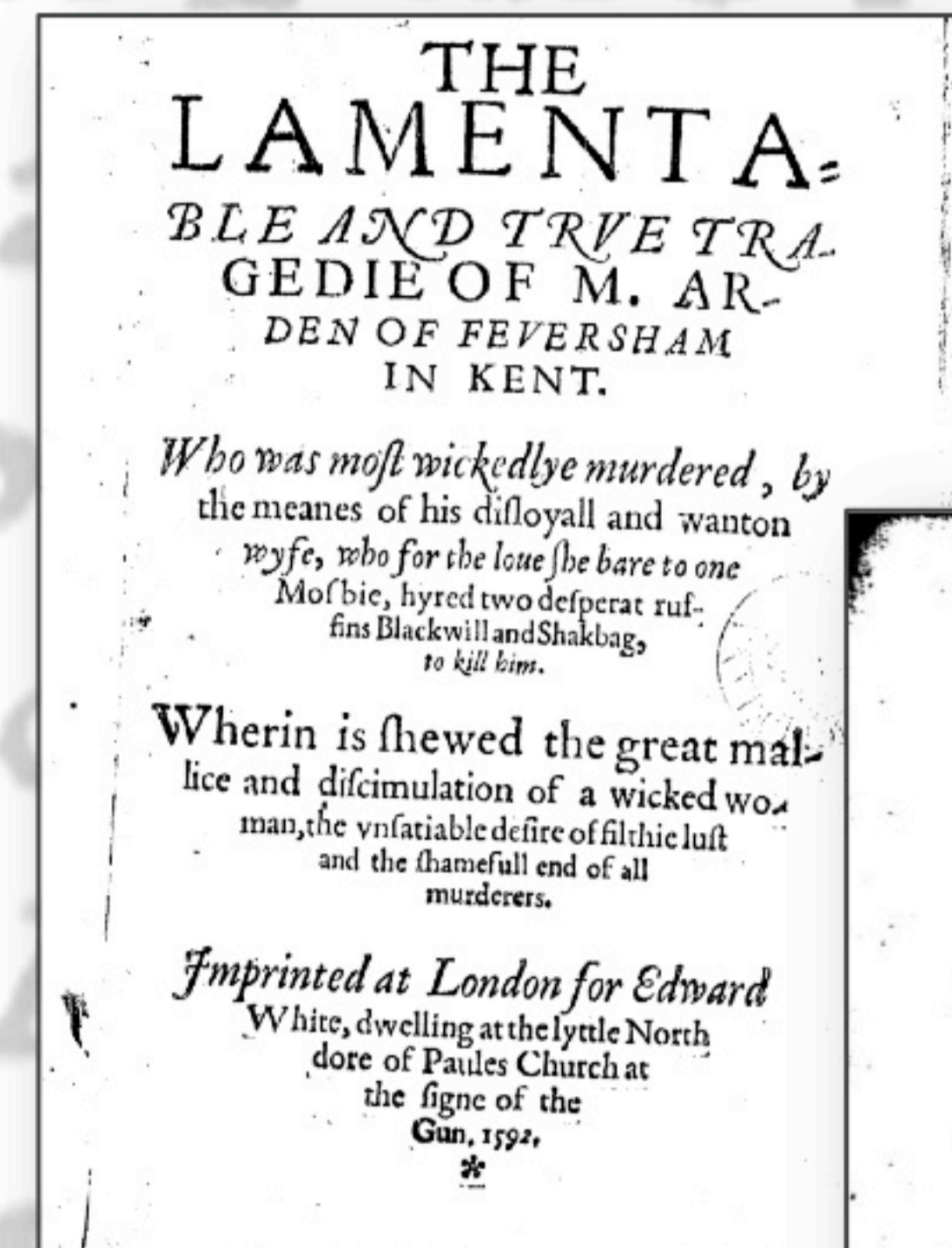


## PRIVACY & EXPOSURE: DOMESTIC TRAGEDY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND



Domestic tragedy emerged on the English stage with *Arden of Faversham*, an anonymous play published in 1592 and based on the real murder of Thomas Arden by his wife and her lover on 14 February 1551 in the town of Faversham, Kent.

*“Gentlemen we hope youle pardon this naked Tragedy”*

*Arden of Faversham (1592), J1v*

The play emphasises its distinctive nature, referring to itself as ‘naked tragedy’. Many more domestic tragedies were probably written but only about half a dozen have survived. Most of the plays are based on real events involving adultery and murder. They are distinctive for their contemporary English settings, their attention to local and domestic detail and their tragic depiction of characters from the middle ranks of society.

*“My Sceane is London, natibe and your owne”*

*A Warning for Faire Women (1599), A3r*

The genre emerged during a period in which the burgeoning ideology of private life was matched by active publication of cheap printed texts offering sensational ‘news’ stories. My thesis identifies an ambivalence between a cultural desire for privacy and a desire for exposure of others’ privacy, and situates the genre of domestic tragedy within this. By their nature, the plays participate in the dynamics of exposure and the culture of publication, and yet they betray anxiety about their role in this, figured through their concern with issues of false representation and truth.

*“For simple trueth is gracious enough:  
And needs no other points of glosing stufte”*

*Arden of Faversham (1592), J1v*

I am particularly interested in how the plays inflect the genre of tragedy as a result of these preoccupations. By examining these ‘naked tragedies’ in the contexts of the theatre debate, contemporary print culture, the law and religious belief, this thesis aims to investigate the generic innovation occasioned by domestic tragedy and the extent to which this can be accounted for by these interactions.

Above: Title pages of domestic tragedies.  
Below: Woodcut from ballad *The Complaint and Lamentation of Mistrisse Arden of Feversham*, 1633.  
Background text from Thomas Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, 1607.

