

Sillages critiques

26 | 2019 : Nouvelles perspectives sur *The Duchess of Malfi*

Studied Speech and *The Duchess of Malfi*: The Lost Arts of Rhetoric, Memory, and Death

Rory Loughnane

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Résumés

English Français

Dans cet article, Loughnane part de deux vers centraux de la scène d'ouverture de *The Duchess of Malfi* de Webster qui mentionnent le 'discours étudié' ('studied speech') des deux frères pour montrer comment les thèmes et idées principales de la pièce s'articulent à une obsession culturelle plus large pour des pratiques de préparation qui mettent en œuvre des comportements habituels. En s'appuyant une large sélection de textes de la période de la première modernité, Loughnane s'intéresse à la prévalence et à la prolifération de manuels personnels qui apprennent à leurs lecteurs à se préparer de manière optimale à toute une gamme d'activités ou de tâches. En particulier, il étudie les manuels de conduite, de rhétorique, ceux qui portent sur les arts de la mémoire ou de la mort, montrant comment leurs fins et objectifs sous-tendent la tragédie qui se déploie dans la pièce de Webster. Il interprète la fin tragique de la duchesse comme la conséquence de son incapacité à entendre l'avertissement de ses frères et de son erreur qui consiste à prendre leur 'discours étudié', dans son artificialité, pour un énoncé sans substance.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : comportement, discours, éducation, kairos, manuels de conduite, mémoire, mort, préparation, rhétorique, William Shakespeare, souvenir, théâtre, John Webster

Keywords : behaviour, conduct, death, drama, education, kairos, memory, preparation, remembrance, rhetoric, speech, William Shakespeare, John Webster

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- 1 In his epistle dedicatory to *The Second Part of Conny-Catching* (1591; STC 12281), Robert Greene states 'forewarned, forearmed: burnt children dread the fire,' alerting the reader to the value of experience in anticipation of, and preparation for, the future (sig. *4v). The advice 'forewarned, forearmed' was commonplace, its antecedent the Latin expression, *praemonitus, praemunitas*. To be prepared was an advantage in all circles of life, spiritual and social, and early modern authors wrote at length about this subject in how-to manuals of various kinds. To be prepared for what might happen next was to be prudent and proactive. It was both a quality, that spoke to the person and their character, and a practice that was habitually undertaken. When Hamlet claims 'the readiness is all' (5.2.179, 19.179) he speaks not just for the concerns of a disaffected Danish prince but for a personal and social condition of preparedness venerated, practiced, and acted upon within early modern English culture.¹ This essay is about one such form of preparatory practice, rehearsed or studied speech, and how it figures in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. Two lines from the play's opening scene will operate as the prompt for, and concern of, this analysis.
- 2 Much scholarship about Webster's play has focused on the Duchess's protracted death scene. Given that it takes up almost an entire Act of the play, the fourth, for the Duchess to be tortured and tormented in various ways, strangled, momentarily resurrected, before finally dying, this is little surprise. The Duchess's absence from the final act, not unlike Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* or Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*, creates a hole in the play's conclusion, with Antonio's sense of loss resonating with an audience's. This sense of loss is especially acute given just how present the Duchess is in the fourth Act, onstage and visible to audiences for all but 32 of 515 lines of dialogue. Not without irony, when the Duchess says 'It is some mercy, when men kill with speed' (4.1.110), it takes another 267 lines,² plus a scene break, before the Duchess is even strangled and some 383 lines before she actually dies. This Act, these scenes, are about how to the make final preparations for death, and have provided fodder for scholars interested in all things thanatological: from the artificial figures in wax which may be borrowed from contemporary funeral customs, to the Duchess's desire, *a la* Stephen Greenblatt, to speak with the dead, to the madman's song with its 'deadly dogged howl' and speeches about doomsday, to Bosola's self-identification as 'tomb-maker' and 'bellman' and his description of the newest fashions in princes' tombs, to the Executioners entering ceremonially with a coffin, cords, and bell, to the process of the Duchess' mortification, to her ready acceptance of death which contrasts so sharply with Cariola's increasingly desperate pleas to be saved, to the Christological overtones of the Duchess' resurrection and final exclamation of 'Mercy.'³
- 3 The fourth Act is a treasure trove for scholars writing about the final moments before death and practices of remembrance. But by the fourth Act, the Duchess' die have already been cast. She has remarried, bore three children with Antonio, transgressed against her brothers' commands, and, as a consequence, has been publicly shamed and privately imprisoned, separated from her husband. In this essay, I want to turn the clock back to the moment in the play when none of this has yet happened, when the Duchess weighs up the situation and asserts her right to make her own choices, to follow her own path.
- 4 In the play's opening scene, the Duchess's brothers, Ferdinand and the Cardinal, make a clear and direct injunction against their sister's re-marriage. The Cardinal's final words before he leaves her to direct her own discretion are these: 'Wisdom begins at the end: remember it.' (1.1.328) This line, the first that I wish to focus upon, offers a fine example of Webster's economic use of language, succinct yet capacious in meaning. In his Revels Plays edition, John Russell Brown glosses the line as not only a counsel of prudence but also a *memento mori*: remember our rules and remember your mortality, the Cardinal advises the Duchess, for they are inextricably tied together. Brown identifies two proverbs from which the line borrows: 'Think on the end before you begin' (Tilley E125) and 'Remember the end' (Tilley E128). Certainly, the idea that the individual should properly prepare for their inevitable death by keeping their final moments fresh in mind was commonplace in early modern England, and often reworked in Christian literature and how-to manuals. In *Dives [et] Pauper* (149), the author (Henry Parker?) advises the faithful to:

Thynke Inwardly of thy laste thynges & of thynne ende & thou shalt neuer do synne. Eccl .vij. In the begynnyng of euery

• 4 The author's authority for this advice is *Ecclesiastes*: here, from

dede thynke on the ende what ende it may haue & what may
falle therof. ([Parker] sig. Y2r) ⁴

the King James Version,
see: 'A (...)

- 5 This idea retained currency across the period, as is evidenced by three further examples spread across the sixteenth century. In *The Example of Virtue* (1504), Stephen Hawes writes:

The fyrst commaundement that I gyue the
Thynke on the ende or thou begynne
For thou by ryght may knowe the certente
That deth is fyne of euery synne (Hawes sig. B4v)

Similarly, Thomas Churchyard offers this fearful advice in *A Mirror for Man* (1552):

Beware of thre thynges, print them well in mynde
The deuyll, the fleshe, the worlde that is blynde
Feare God and thy Prince, be looth to offende
Take nothing in hande, but thincke on the ende
Let wysdom the rule, and knowledge wyth al
Than thou shalt stand fast, wher other men fall (Churchyard
sig. A1r)

And a very young Anthony Munday concludes *The Mirror of Mutability* (1579) with the historical exemplum of Zedekai, sometime King of Judea:

Fewe woords shall serue, in haste I goe my way,
And wish you well my perill to foresee:
Be rulde by trueth, let Uertue beare the sway,
Think on the end the daunger for to flée.
For I haue proou'd that which I rew with payn:
And wish to late I had not liu'd so vayne. (Munday sig. M2r)

- 6 As such examples indicate, this specific counsel of prudence—to think upon your end so as to help to guide your present conduct—has a rich history and is relatively commonplace in the early modern period. Brown glossed the line as both 'a counsel of prudence and a *memento mori*,' but in fact there is much overlap between the two: a *memento mori* is fundamentally a counsel of prudence in present action. As a cognate of the Art of Memory, to which I will turn promptly, it means, literally, 'remember to die' (as the infinitive form of the verb), but, as the *OED* records, it could also mean 'remember death' or 'remember that you must die.' As I have demonstrated elsewhere, textual references to *memento mori* experienced a boom period in the early seventeenth century, when Webster first wrote his play.⁵ In that earlier research, I noted a cross-fertilisation between the Christian imperatives of the late medieval Art of Memory, and its inheritors in early modern intellectual and popular culture, and the underlying practical theology of the *memento mori* topos. The scholastic authorities advocate artificial memory as a habitual Christian practice because of the perceived relationship between prudence and memory. As one of the four parts of virtue Cicero defines in *De Inventione*, prudence is 'the knowledge of what is good, what is bad and what is neither good nor bad.'⁶ Cicero states that the three parts of prudence are memory, intelligence and foresight. Memory was therefore understood as fundamental to virtuous behaviour. Synthesising classical ethics, new philosophy, and Christian dogma, Albertus and Aquinas thus advocated the use of artificial memory to supplement the natural often-deficient memory under the banner of the Cardinal Virtue of Prudence.⁷ Both the Christianized memory arts and the Christianized *memento mori* topos are concerned with edifying Christian habit: that is, with daily exercise to aid the faithful to keep moving along the pathway to salvation.
- 7 The proper preparation for death, which the *memento mori* topos demands, was a subject of morbid fascination for early moderns. Table One offers a representative list of some fifty art of dying treatises published by the end of the seventeenth century. Self-explanatory titles such as Thomas Lupset's *A Compendious and A Very Fruitful Treatise, Teaching the Way of Dying Well* (1534), George Shaw's *The Doctrine of Dying Well* (1628), Jeremy Taylor, *The Rules and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1663), and John Kettlewell's *Death Made Comfortable, or, The Way to Die Well* (1695), offer a flavour of their respective contents. Part theological manual, part practical self-help guide, the art of dying treatises aided the faithful in habitual Christian practice, with an eye towards ensuring their readiness for death, and guiding their actions in the final moments before death. Readers were encouraged to memorise and retain such information: as the author (the translator, R[ichard] V[erstagan]) of the
- 5 See Loughnane 2018.
 - 6 Cicero II, liiii, 160.
 - 7 See Albertus Magnus' *De Bono* and Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*. Both also had commentaries on Aristotle (...)

epistle dedicatory to the translation of da Lucca's *Dialogue of Dying Well* (1603) notes: 'only truants neglect to learn it, but attentive scholars do deeply imprint it in memory' (da Lucca sig. A3r). The advice included was primarily for each individual, but some works also helped to instruct those involved with preparations for the deaths of others.

Table 1: Representative list of art of dying treatises

#	Date	Author	Title
1	1491	William Caxton,	<i>Ars Moriendi</i>
2	1503	Anon.	<i>The Art of Good Living [and] Good Dying</i>
3	1506	Anon.	<i>Ars Moriendi</i>
4	1534	Thomas Lupset	<i>A Compendious and A Very Fruitful Treatise, Teaching the Way of Dying Well</i>
5	1548-9	John Frith	<i>A Proper Instruction Teaching a Man to die gladly and not to fear Death</i>
6	1550	John Frith	<i>The Preparation to the Cross, and How it Must be Patiently Borne</i>
7	1560	John Bradford	<i>A Fruitful Treatise and Full of Heavenly Consolation Against the Fear of Death</i>
8	1576	George Gascoigne	<i>The Drum of Doomsday</i>
9	1580	Thomas Becon	<i>The Sick Man's Salve</i>
10	1592	John More	<i>A Lively Anatomy of Death</i>
11	1595	William Perkins	<i>A Salve for A Sick Man</i>
12	1599	I. B.	<i>A Looking Glass of Mortality</i>
13	1599	William Perneby	<i>A Direction to Death</i>
14	1600	William Perkins	<i>A Golden Chain</i> ('section on Dying Well')
15	1602	Christopher Sutton	<i>Disce Mori. Learn to Die</i>
16	1603	Pietro da Lucca (translation by Richard Verstegan)	<i>A Dialogue of Dying Well</i>
17	1607	Robert Hill	<i>Christ's Power Expounded ... A Christian Direction to Death</i>
18	1611	Jean de L'Espine (translation by S. Veghelman)	<i>Three Godly Treatises... [treatise 2] Against the Fear of Death</i>
19	1612	Edward Vaughan	<i>A Divine Discovery of Death</i>
20	1614	Stephen Jerome	<i>Seven Helps to Heaven</i> (chapters on death)
21	1614	Stephen Jerome	<i>Moses His Sight of Canaan ... Directing how to live and die happily</i>
22	1618	George Strobe	<i>The Anatomy of Mortality</i>
23	1621	Roberto Bellarmino (translation by Edward Coffin)	<i>The Art of Dying Well</i>
24	1621	Jean Guillelard	<i>A Combat Betwixt Man and Death</i>
25	1622	Samuel Ward	<i>The Life of Faith in Death</i>
26	1626	I. E.	<i>A Winding Sheet</i>
27	1627	Samuel Gardiner	<i>The Devotions of the Dying Man</i>
28	1628	George Shaw	<i>The Doctrine of Dying Well</i>
29	1628	Nicholas Bownd	<i>The Unbelief of St. Thomas the Apostle ... treatise ... in the hour of death</i>
30	1629	Zachary Boyd	<i>The Last Battle of the Soul in Death</i>
31	1631	Henry Montagu, Earl of Manchester	<i>Contemplatio Mortis et immortalitatis</i>
32	1631	William Moray	<i>A Short Treatise of Death in Six Chapters</i>
		Jean-Puget de la Serre	

33	1632	(translation by Henry Hawkins)	<i>The Sweet Thoughts of Death and Eternity</i>
34	1639	John Paget	<i>Meditations of Death wherein a Christian is taught how to remember and prepare for his latter end</i>
35	1640	H. W. (and Daniel Featley)	<i>Threnoikos, The House of Mourning</i>
36	1642	Jeremias Drexel	<i>The Forerunner of Eternity, or, Messenger of Death sent to healthy, sick, and dying men</i>
37	1663	Jeremy Taylor	<i>The Rules and Exercises of Holy Dying</i>
38	1672	John Horn	<i>A Comfortable Corroborative Cordial ... a Direction how to Live and Die</i>
39	1673	Edward Pearse	<i>The Great Concern, or, A Serious Warning to a Timely and Thorough Preparation for Death</i>
40	1676	Anon.	<i>The Age of Man, or, Man's Beginning and Last End</i>
41	1679	R. Mayhew	<i>Eschatos Echthros, or, The Death of Death in the Death of Christ</i>
42	1681	Edward Bury	<i>A Sovereign Antidote against the Fear of Death</i>
43	1682	John Dunton	<i>The House of Weeping, or, Man's Last Progress to his Long Home</i>
44	1690	Anon.	<i>A Seasonable Preparation for Death and Eternity</i>
45	1692	Nathanael Ranew	<i>Practical Preparation for Death</i>
46	1692	William Sherlock	<i>A Practical Discourse Concerning Death</i>
47	1692	John Dunton	<i>The Mourning-Ring, in Memory of your Departed Friend</i>
48	1695	John Kettlewell	<i>Death Made Comfortable, or, The Way to Die Well</i>
49	1697	Anon.	<i>The Dying Man's Assistant, or, Short Instructions [for] the preparing of sick persons for death</i>
50	1700	Joseph Stevens	<i>A Golden Chain of Four Links ... Necessary Directions to Die Well</i>

- 8 The lessons taught in the treatises were culturally pervasive, also inspiring creative engagement with the preparations to be habitually made for death. Take, for example, such warnings as we find in this anonymous 1579 poem included in *A Poor Knight, his Palace of Private Pleasures*:

Prepare to dy, out of this world of woe,
 Prepare to dy, out of this sea of sin:
 Prepare to dy, to hauty heauen to goe,
 Prepare to dy, the heauenly life to win:
 Prepare to dy, to liue within the sky,
 Prepare to dy, I say prepare to dy. (sig. J4r)

- 9 There is, then, much to unpack in the Cardinal's command to the Duchess: it is a maxim, 'Wisdom begins at the end,' which offers a scripturally-based commonplace about how true knowledge is discovered at life's end, and which also functions as a *memento mori* to remember one's own mortality. The Cardinal, a figure in and of the church, commands that the Duchess should remember this, with the implication that the remembrance of her inevitable mortal 'end' will force her to act with due Christian Prudence. The Cardinal thus seeks to condition the Duchess through a multiplied act of memory: remember to remember your mortality for this memory will guide your proper Christian conduct.
- 10 The second line or so I wish to dwell upon is the Duchess's response. The Cardinal says this line, as we have seen: 'Wisdom begins at the end: remember it.' He then exits, leaving the Duchess with the unhinged Ferdinand. She says: 'I think this speech between you both was studied, / It came so roundly off.' When the Duchess speaks with suspicion of 'speech' that is 'studied,' she is inferring that her brothers have planned and rehearsed the

speech given; that they have prepared the speech to be given. She is referring to the practical techniques of the art of rhetoric.

- 11 Since the publication of Frances Yates's *The Art of Memory* (1966), there has been a critical emphasis on this one forgotten mnemonic 'art' practiced in the early modern period. In fact, the early moderns felt little hesitation about elevating many practices to the status of art, with book-length studies in everything from the 'arts' of horse-riding and swimming to prophecy and cheating.⁸ The line that is blurred here between practice and theory is symptomatic of the period; whereas in the medieval period there was a fundamental contrast between *episteme* and *techne*, or the domain of knowledge and its practical application, the early moderns identified much overlap between the two. This is an essentially Aristotelian rather than Platonic way of thinking about the world: they sought to find techniques to approach, emulate, and enhance nature, sometimes even exceeding her excellence. In this vein, the practical advice offered in the art of dying treatises previously noted fully recognizes the mortal element of the world. But, more broadly, such treatises tap into a wider cultural preoccupation with habitual preparation for taking proper action. This preoccupation is, of course, rooted in the idea of *kairos*, the Ancient Greek term for identifying and making the most of the opportune time. Whereas *chronos* refers to sequential time, *kairos* is intimately connected with the idea of *decorum*: that each thing has a time and place.⁹ *Kairos*, or opportunity, is something to be grasped. But in order to grasp it once the moment is right you need to be suitably prepared. To be suitably prepared you need to be able to hold within your memory what it is you need to do. One of the most widely-circulated conduct guides in early modern England, Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* (1528), instructs its readers in *sprezzatura*, a quality of studied nonchalance, the ability to appear effortless; such a concealed art is, of course, the result of great preparation.¹⁰ At this intersection point, between preparation, memory, and habitual practice, one finds many of the 'arts' instructed in the how-to manuals that proliferated in the period.
- 12 The art of rhetoric, a phrase and practice frequently deployed in the period, is one such forgotten art situated at this intersection point. The phrase 'art of rhetoric' is used some 286 times across 193 texts printed by the end of the seventeenth century. Indeed, there are six distinct books titled *The Art of Rhetoric* written by English authors: Leonard Cox, Thomas Wilson, John Barton, John Prideaux, John Newton, and Thomas Hobbes. Wilson's book from 1553, the most widely-read and influential, was re-issued seven times between 1560 and 1585. Wilson defines the art of rhetoric as such:
- Rhetorique is an art to set furthe by vtterance of wordes, matter at large, or (as Cicero doeth saie) it is a learned, or rather an artificiall declaracion of the mynde, in the handelyng of any cause, called in contencion, that maie through reason largely be discussed. (Wilson sig. A1r)
- 13 Wilson proceeds to outline and remediate into English the five parts of rhetoric first codified in classical Roman treatises about the subject: invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and utterance. It is the fourth of these memory, or *memoria*, from which emerges the rules for artificial memory in antiquity that I described earlier. So, to produce that 'artificiall declaracion of the mynde' (Wilson sig. A1r), Wilson, as many would-be mnemonists before him, prescribes the use of artificial memory to supplement the natural. There are detailed sections in his study about the origins and implementation of the memory arts, but I want to draw attention to another pertinent section of this study. In a chapter titled 'To aduise one, to study the lawes of Englande,' Wilson finds himself forced into a significant digression about the four 'chief' virtues—prudence, justice, manhood (that is, courage), and temperance. For he writes, 'he that will knowe what honestie is, muste haue an vnderstandyng, of all the vertues together' (Wilson sig. E1v). Earlier I noted that the medieval scholastics appropriated the art of memory under the banner of prudence, but Wilson, who completes his book during the reign of Edward VI but whose book is first published in 1553, the year of the reversion of state to Catholicism under Mary, does not make that connection explicit in his study. He does, however, note that memory is one of three constituent parts of Prudence, alongside understanding, and foresight. For Wilson, prudence is synonymous with wisdom: 'Prudence or wisdom (for I will here take them bothe for one) is a vertue that is occupied euer more, in searchyng out the truthe.' (Wilson sig. E1v) Recalling the Cardinal's injunction, Wilson's reformulation might read, 'prudence begins at the end: remember it.' When Wilson turns to the role that
- 8 Representative titles in these categories include: Astley (1584); Digby's (beautifully illustrated) (...)
 - 9 In recent scholarship, the idea of *kairos* in an early modern English context has most often been co (...)
 - 10 Castiglione's work was first translated into English as *The Courtier* in 1561 by Sir Thomas Hoby, an (...)

memory plays in Prudence he notes: 'The memorie calleth to accompte those thynges, that wer doen heretofore, and by a former remembraunce, getteth an after witte, and learneth to auoyde deceipt.' (sig. E1^v)

- 14 Wilson's reading of memory's contribution to prudent behaviour suggests that there is an innate tautology in the Cardinal's command: a speech about conduct to be remembered is itself identified as an act of remembrance; remember to remember, the Cardinal says. Prudence's other parts—understanding, that is fully perceiving what is in those 'thynges presently dooen' and 'waiyng and debatyng them, vntill [the] mynde be fully contented', and foresight, that is 'a gatheryng by coniectures, what shall happen, and an euident perceiuyng of thynges to come, before thei do come' each play their part in codifying prudent conduct (Wilson sig. E1^v). As this digression is included in a chapter advising the reader to study the laws of England, Wilson makes a clear connection between prudent conduct and subjection: to live within the laws one must understand, anticipate, and remember them.
- 15 Though memory is but a constituent part of prudence, and only one of five parts of rhetoric, Wilson leaves the reader in little doubt as to its fundamental concomitant importance for both conduct and rhetorical performance. He writes that: 'the Memorie [...] must be cherished, the whiche is a fast holdyng, bothe of matter and woordes couched together, to confirme any cause' (Wilson sig. A4^r). Differentiating between artificial and natural memory, he writes that 'Naturall memorie is, when without any preceptes or lessons, by the onely aptnesse of nature, we beare awaie suche thynges as wee heare.' (Wilson sig. Ee4^v) For artificial memory, Wilson sets out the Simonides foundation myth before offering an account of the rules for the use of places (*loci*) and images (*imagines*) in the classical tradition. Wilson is largely skeptical of the value of artificial memory, but still notes that its techniques could work ('time and exercise shall make [the practitioner] perfect', Wilson sig. Ff4^v). Commending especially the value of images for memory ('sight printeth things in a mannes memorye, as a seale doth prynte a mannes name in waxe', Wilson sig. Ff4^v), Wilson, in a far-reaching example, notes that the use of images for 'remembraunce of Sainctes' in the Catholic tradition 'serued gayly well' for the purpose of artificial memory. Wilson, a committed Protestant, observes however that it is 'well done that suche Idolles are cleane taken oute of the church,' and that which is to be remembered should be for 'good entente.' (Wilson sig. Ff4^v) Thus, both forms, natural and artificial, are seen to be of utility because of memory's greater ethical significance for the individual in helping to guide their conduct.
- 16 We can, therefore, readily understand the Cardinal's command, though repetitive in form it may be: keep in memory this command to keep in memory your own mortality to keep in memory the implications for imprudent conduct in the present and future. What seems intriguing is that the Duchess then calls attention to the mnemonic nature of the command itself: that the brothers have prepared and memorized this speech which seeks to force the Duchess to take responsibility for her conduct, to make her a director of her discretion. The Duchess's disdain for their command is expressed through her calling attention to the artificial, rehearsed, socially performative nature of their set of commands, the studied speech. The Duchess is not alone in casting aspersions against the artificial nature of such use of studied speech. Examples abound in the period, but I will draw from two works with allusions to studied speech which were written in the same decade as Webster's play.
- 17 Over two days in late January 1606, eight co-conspirators were executed for their roles in the Gunpowder Plot, the failed attempt to blow up the House of Lords with a view to assassinating James I and to inspire a popular revolt that would lead to the instalment of James's daughter, Elizabeth, as a Catholic monarch and head of state. In advance of this judgement and punishment, as part of the legal proceedings, each of the eight men had the opportunity to explain or defend his actions in an arraignment. One of the men, Ambrose Ruckwood, a well-born Catholic gentleman, sought to offer a lengthy explanation for his actions. ¹¹ During his arraignment,

Ruckwood out of a studied speech vwould faine haue made his bringing vppe and breeding in idolatrie, to haue beene some excuse to his villanie, but a faire talke, could not helpe a fovvle deed, and therefore being found guiltie of the treason, had his iudgement vvith the rest of the traytors. (T. W. sig. B4^v)

The 'studied speech', this 'faire talke', cannot excuse the 'fovvle deed'; words cannot save him, and it is implied that there is something morally dubious

¹¹ Of the eight men, Ruckwood is the orator: on the raised platform before his execution he spoke at I (...)

about how he has prepared and memorized such a speech in his attempts to do so. It is unnatural, artificial, false.

- 18 A speech, however studied, by one of the country's most notorious traitors was always likely to be regarded with suspicion. But the correlation of artificial speech and falsehood had agency beyond such contexts. In Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* we find a similar allusion to, and disparaging of, studied speech. In Act two, Scene two, Agrippa, having advised Mark Antony to take Octavia for his wife, appears to realize he has spoken out of turn. He says:

Pardon what I have spoke,
For 'tis a studied, not a present thought,
By duty ruminated. (2.2.138-140)

- 19 This distinction between 'studied' and 'present thought' is striking; Agrippa has prepared such a speech for an opportune moment—he has prepared for *kairos*—but now suspects he has misjudged the moment and that 'present thought', that is, unprepared spontaneous-albeit-well-judged speech, is what was called for. In this moment, he calls attention to his rhetorical technique, how his words are memorized to be later deposited when most opportune and persuasive, but also alerts to how he has perhaps failed in his task, how he has misunderstood the moment, the opportunity.

- 20 Drawing these disparate parts of my argument together, then, I wish in concluding to return to the Cardinal's command and the Duchess's response. The Cardinal's command that the Duchess remembers to remember to guide her present and future action sets up a choice for the protagonist. She can heed this command, realizing that the implied threat—that her mortal fate, as well as her immortal state, are dependent upon her course of action. Yet she chooses to forego the warning. Much more bluntly, Ferdinand informs his sister that she faces death should she go against their ruling, saying that if she re-marries the wedding would be 'executed,' rather than celebrated, and that he is loath to see their father's poniard look so 'rusty'. Upon the brothers' exit from the stage, however, the Duchess decides to proceed despite the warnings:

Shall this move me? If all my royal kindred
Lay in my way unto this marriage,
I'd make them my low footsteps: and even now,
Even in this hate, as men in some great battles,
By apprehending danger, have achiev'd
Almost impossible actions – I have heard soldiers say so –
So I, through frights, and threat'nings, will assay
This dangerous venture. (1.1.341-48)

- 21 She is seemingly aware of the risk but willing to take it. The three children of Antonio and the Duchess are the product of this transgression; the Duchess and Antonio's deaths, the horrible spectacles of the waxwork effigies of the children, and the later execution of the two youngest children is the resulting punishment. 'Shall *this* move me?', she asks (3.1.341, my emphasis). What she has listened to, she believes, is a contrived studied speech, out of time in that it was written to be delivered when opportune, one at odds with the very present tense to which she clings to as she nears her fate, famously asserting 'I am the Duchess of Malfi still' (4.2.141). Yet it is this moment, when the future is forecast and foresight, when that crucial part of prudence is required, she sees only contrivance and artificiality in her brothers' words. As she prepares to pursue the life she desires, this exchange reveals that which preparation could avoid. Brown is surely right in noting the Cardinal's command is both a *memento mori* and counsel of prudence, but it is the interdependence of the two that is emphasized through this remembered call to remember to remember. Recalling Robert Greene's note about once-burnt children avoiding future fires, the Duchess too is forewarned but chooses not to be forearmed.

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Notes

1 All references to Shakespeare's works are from the 2016 New Oxford Shakespeare edition.

2 All references to *The Duchess of Malfi* are taken from the revised 2009 Revels Plays edition.

3 Greenblatt's essay 'The Circulation of Social Energy' begins with the critic stating his desire 'to speak with the dead' (Greenblatt 1). Some representative criticism includes: Bergeron 331-339, Neill (esp. 328-353), Chalk and Loughnane 2013.

4 The author's authority for this advice is *Ecclesiastes*; here, from the King James Version, see: 'A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. (1) [...] Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof (8)'.

5 See Loughnane 2018.

6 Cicero II, liii, 160.

7 See Albertus Magnus' *De Bono* and Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*. Both also had commentaries on Aristotle's *De memoria et reminscientia*. See Yates 72. See the extended Introduction to Engel, Loughnane, and Williams 1-32, for a historical and critical account of the art of memory.

8 Representative titles in these categories include: Astley (1584); Digby's (beautifully illustrated) *The Art of Swimming* (1595); Perkins's *The Art of Propheying* (1607); and Walker's *The Art of Cheating* (1597), which, of course, rails against cheating while still describing how it is achieved. English titles are silently modernized throughout the essay; see bibliography for print titles.

9 In recent scholarship, the idea of *kairos* in an early modern English context has most often been connected to rhetorical practice, with scholars noting its prominence in treatises about historiography and learning by humanists like Thomas Elyot, Thomas Blundeville, and Francis Bacon. See work by Paul and Sipora.

10 Castiglione's work was first translated into English as *The Courtier* in 1561 by Sir Thomas Hoby, and reprinted in 1577, 1588, and 1603.

11 Of the eight men, Ruckwood is the orator: on the raised platform before his execution he spoke at length, asking for forgiveness from the King and all those present, and expressing his hopes for a long and prosperous reign for the King and Queen. In a final twist to the speech, however—marring, as the commentator notes, all his good prayers with an 'il conclusion—he prayed to God to make King James a Catholic.

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Auteur

Rory Loughnane

University of Kent

Rory Loughnane is Senior Lecturer in Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent. He is an Associate Editor of *New Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford UP, 2016-), for which he edited more than ten plays, and co-authored with Gary Taylor the edition's book-length study of 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works'. He is the editor of six essay volumes, as well as the critical anthology, *The Memory Arts in Renaissance England: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge UP, 2016). He is currently editing *The Complete Works of Cyril Tourneur for Revels Plays* (Manchester UP). With Laurie Maguire, he edits the monograph series *Routledge Studies in Early Modern Authorship*.

Rory Loughnane est Senior Lecturer en études de la première modernité à l'Université du Kent. Il est éditeur associé de la série des New Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford UP, 2016-), pour laquelle il a édité plus de 10 pièces et il est l'auteur avec Gary Taylor de l'étude sur 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works'. Il a dirigé six volumes d'essais, et une anthologie critique, The Memory Arts in Renaissance England: A Critical Anthology (Cambridge UP, 2016). Il travaille à l'édition des Complete Works of Cyril Tourneur pour Revels Plays (Manchester UP). Avec Laurie Maguire, il est responsable éditorial de la collection Routledge Studies in Early Modern Authorship.

School of English
University of Kent
Canterbury, CT2 7NZ
United Kingdom
Tel: + 01227826582
Email: R.Loughnane@kent.ac.uk

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