Asuka Kimura

Performing Widowhood on the Early Modern English Stage

Late Tudor and Stuart Drama

Gender, Performance, and Material Culture

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Stage directions which occur on lines separate from the text are given the number of the immediately preceding line. All stage directions in brackets are the editors'.

For the dates of plays, I follow the date "limits" of their composition or first performance in Martin Wiggins, in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue*, 9 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012–2018) up to 1636. For plays composed or first performed after 1636, the dates of the first performance are taken from the latest modern editions. I follow Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700*, rev. Samuel Schoenbaum and Sylvia Stoler Wagonheim, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1989) when there is no modern edition, or modern editions predate the *Annals*, or modern editions do not discuss the dates of the first performance. For non-dramatic works, all dates

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are those of publication. When the dates of publication are conjectural, they are given in brackets.

Dates are given in "new style," namely with the new year beginning on 1 January, not 25 March, although I retain "old style" when it is desirable to avoid confusion. For instance, 4 February 1602 in the old calendar is written "4 February 1602/03."

For the Bible, all quotations are from either *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, intro. Lloyd E. Berry (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007) or *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*, ed. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). I indicate which edition is used in footnotes.

List of Abbreviations

BL	British Library
Companion	Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, gen. eds., *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Contextual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007).
EEBO	*Early English Books Online*
EES	*Early English Studies*
EHR	*English Historical Review*
EJES	*European Journal of English Studies*
ELH	*English Literary History*
ELR	*English Literary Renaissance*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
MLS	*Modern Language Studies*
MRDE	*Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
RBO	*Richard Brome Online*
RES	*The Review of English Studies*
SEL	*Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*
SQ	*Shakespeare Quarterly*
SS	*Shakespeare Survey*
Works	Thomas Middleton, *The Collected Works*, gen. eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007).

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Introduction

In January 2014, the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse celebrated its opening with a production of John Webster's great tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–1614). This new indoor playhouse on Bankside is "a scrupulously researched re-creation of a Jacobean theatre of the kind in which Shakespeare's company performed at the Blackfriars," as one reviewer noted, and enables the modern audience to enjoy the ambience of early modern indoor productions.[1] With 340 people sitting "tightly packed" in the pit and two galleried tiers, the theatre is "small, intimate, welcoming," as another reviewer described, or perhaps slightly uncomfortable, as you have to squeeze in between strangers.[2] The stage was dimly lit by seven chandeliers of candles, and turned completely dark when they were put out. At first there was a smell of fresh oak that pleased the nostrils, but this would be soon lost after the playhouse had been in use for a while. The sound of archaic instruments, including the lute and the viol, conveyed a sense of warmth and transient beauty.

On the stage, we saw the Duchess of Malfi (Gemma Arterton) and Antonio (Alex Waldmann) discussing the Duchess's will. The Duchess was no longer dressed in mourning black, but looked elegant and attractive in a dark brown Jacobean dress hemmed with intricate golden lace. She was not a grieving widow, but a young and lively widow enjoying her autonomy and liberty. Such liveliness was stressed by Arterton's charming smile and high-pitched voice. Antonio was also dressed in Jacobean attire. He was about to draw up a will for his mistress, but found one of his eyes to be "blood-shot" (I.i.404).[3] He stood up from the wooden chair, and on the desk were blank papers and a pen. The Duchess passed over her ring to Antonio, adding vivaciously that she had vowed not to part with it unless to her second husband. Under dim candlelight, her smile appeared both subtle and innocent. Antonio was perplexed. The knowing audience laughed. While the Duchess slipped her ring onto his finger, Antonio stared at her anxiously and fell down to his knees. The Duchess soothed him with ar-

1 Charles Spencer, "*The Duchess of Malfi*, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, Review," *The Telegraph*, 16 January 2014, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/10577000/The-Duchess-of-Malfi-Sam-Wanamaker-Playhouse-review.html.

2 Michael Billington, "*The Duchess of Malfi* – Review," *The Guardian*, 16 January 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/jan/16/the-duchess-of-malfi-review.

3 John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. John Russell Brown, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009). All further references are to this edition.

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istocratic grace and raised him up, while Antonio kissed her hand fervently. When the couple stood face to face, the Duchess was slightly taller than Antonio.

I started with this virtual experience of the modern production of *Malfi* in order to demonstrate how our perception of a widow character is influenced by various non-textual factors. The actress's age, voice, and stature, her costume and facial expression, the use of props and gestures, her relationship with the actor of Antonio, as well as more general features such as the theatrical structure and capacity, the lighting and sound effects, and even the smell all affected the audience's perception of Arterton's Duchess. This recognition importantly helps us direct our attention to the material conditions of early modern theatre. Although the Sam Wanamaker production did not aim to reproduce the "original" Jacobean production of four hundred years ago, its adherence to and departure from Jacobean theatrical conventions encourage us to imagine how this widow might have looked on the original stage. For instance, one of the notable differences between the Sam Wanamaker and the Jacobean productions of *Malfi* is that the former used actresses, while the latter used boy actors for the female roles. How did the Duchess appear when she was acted by a boy actor? Did she appear more threatening or more tractable? Some reviewers of the Sam Wanamaker production dismissed Arterton's youthful Duchess, preferring previous performances by more mature actresses such as Helen Mirren and Eve Best. Compared to these actresses, who played the role in their late thirties or early forties, Arterton's twenty-eight-year-old Duchess was noticeably young.[4] On the other hand, the historical Duchess of Amalfi was twenty-seven or twenty-eight when she remarried Antonio da Bologna, and the role of the Duchess was originally played by a boy actor, whose age could be anywhere from the mid-teens to early twenties. Was the widow youthful and vivacious, like Arterton's Duchess, on the Jacobean stage? Does the reviewers' preference for the middle-aged, sexually active widow tell us anything about *our* assumptions about female sexuality?

As numerous studies published in recent years have shown, critical interest in the material conditions of early modern theatre is now extensive. Although, as David Bevington explains, some critics had already discussed the dramatic roles and symbolic meanings of props and gestures in the 1950s, the excavation of the Rose Theatre in 1989 and the opening of the Globe Theatre in 1997 made it almost requisite for critics to imagine early modern plays in the theatrical milieu

4 Spencer, "*The Duchess of Malfi*"; Michael Coveney, "*The Duchess of Malfi* (Sam Wanamaker Playhouse)," *WhatsOnStage*, 16 January 2014, http://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/reviews/01-2014/the-duchess-of-malfi-sam-wanamaker-playhouse_33173.html.

of the period.[5] The opening of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, which was celebrated by the publication of *Moving Shakespeare Indoors* (2014), edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper, has also reinforced this interest.[6] Drawing on these studies, this book will examine the theatrical representation of widows in plays written or performed between 1576 and 1642 by focusing on costumes, props, gestures, actors, and theatre structure, along with play-texts. Before pursuing this investigation further, it is helpful to give an overview of the existing historical and literary studies, in order to explain the socio-historical and critical background of my study.

Widows' Ambiguous Position in Early Modern England

Widows are recurrent figures in early modern drama. There are at least 149 extant plays with female characters associated with widowhood that date between 1576 and 1642 (see appendix). While some are clearly mentioned as widows, some are wives who lose their husbands or believe themselves to have lost their husbands in the course of the play, and some are widows who have already remarried before the play begins. This is not a low rate, considering that there are about 543 extant plays from this period.[7]

This interest in widows or widowhood has long been explained from literary tradition and male anxiety towards widows in early modern England. It is now widely accepted that the story of the Ephesian widow in Petronius's *Satyricon* and Geoffrey Chaucer's characterization of the Wife of Bath in *The Canterbury Tales* are precursors of the so-called "lusty widow" trope, in which a sexually hungry widow remarries a young virile man quickly after her husband's death.[8] More importantly, widows' unique and ambiguous position in early modern patriarchal society intrigued many playwrights. By common law, widows were entitled to "acquire and dispose of property, contract debts, make wills, [and] engage independently in a craft or trade," and this enabled them to

5 David Bevington, *Action Is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 5–17.

6 Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper, eds., *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

7 David McInnis and Matthew Steggle, "Introduction: *Nothing* Will Come of Nothing? Or, What Can We Learn from Plays that Don't Exist?," in *Lost Plays in Shakespeare's England*, ed. David McInnis and Matthew Steggle (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 1–14 (p. 1).

8 Jennifer Panek, *Widows and Suitors in Early Modern English Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 2–3.

enjoy social and economic freedom, which was otherwise forbidden for women.[9] Although such freedom was originally permitted for widows so as to minimize the cost to their communities or kinsmen, their autonomy was also a threat to patriarchal authority and often restricted in practice.[10] While we should refrain from idealizing early modern widowhood as an occasion for female liberty and independence, considering that many widows faced financial difficulties and preferred remarriage over celibacy, widows were nonetheless seen as powerful women, whose autonomy disturbed the gender hierarchy, in the popular imagination.[11]

Widows' remarriage was as problematic as their autonomy, although it was a common practice in the early modern period.[12] While remarriage rates varied according to their age, social class, economic status, and area of residence, widows generally remarried frequently, quickly, and even repeatedly. In London, where the majority of plays about widows were performed, Vivien Brodsky has shown that thirty-five percent of all women marrying by licence between 1598 and 1619 were widows, and Jeremy Boulton has found an even higher remarriage rate for poorer widows in Stepney, East London.[13] Although it is tempting to as-

9 Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 37–40; Mary Prior, "Women and the Urban Economy: Oxford 1500–1800," in *Women in English Society, 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 93–117 (pp. 102–6).

10 Amy M. Froide, "Marital Status as a Category of Difference: Singlewomen and Widows in Early Modern England," in *Single Women in the European Past, 1250–1800*, ed. Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 236–69 (pp. 244–46); Eleanor Hubbard, *City Women: Money, Sex, and the Social Order in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 263–64; Vivien Brodsky, "Widows in Late Elizabethan London: Remarriage, Economic Opportunity and Family Orientations," in *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure*, ed. Lloyd Bonfield, Richard M. Smith, and Keith Wrightson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 122–54 (pp. 141–43).

11 Brodsky, "Widows in Late Elizabethan London," p. 123; Jeremy Boulton, "London Widowhood Revisited: The Decline of Female Remarriage in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," *Continuity and Change* 5.3 (1990): 323–55 (pp. 325–26). On widows' poverty, see Sara Heller Mendelson and Patricia M. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550–1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 179–80.

12 E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541–1871: A Reconstruction* (London: Arnold, 1981), pp. 258–59.

13 Brodsky, "Widows in Late Elizabethan London," p. 128; Boulton, "London Widowhood Revisited," pp. 328–29. For widows' remarriage rates outside London, see Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 197; Barbara J. Todd, "The Remarrying Widow: A Stereotype Reconsidered," in *Women in English Society*, ed. Prior, pp. 54–92 (pp. 60–61); Pamela Sharpe, *Population and Society in an East Devon Parish: Reproducing Colyton, 1540–1840* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), pp. 186–89.

sociate these high rates with the Protestant celebration of fruitful marriage and the dismissal of the Catholic preference for celibacy, there was no direct connection between the Reformation and remarriage rates, because pre-Reformation widows remarried as frequently as post-Reformation ones.[14] Instead, these high rates indicate that widows' remarriage was widely accepted as "a necessary survival strategy" in both medieval and early modern societies.[15] Nonetheless, early modern attitudes towards remarrying widows were mixed. Although many husbands viewed their wives' future remarriage favourably, some husbands encouraged widows to remain celibate, fearing that their remarriage would disrupt the pattern of succession.[16] Widows were not only entitled to one-third of their husbands' property, but were also appointed as guardians of their children's inheritance.[17] When widows remarried, however, everything came under the control of their new husbands, and there was no guarantee that these men would protect the children's inheritance. By making their own choices regarding remarriage, widows could either secure or disrupt the patrilineal succession.[18] Remarrying widows could also threaten their new husbands' authority. Widows were at a high premium in the early modern marriage market, especially among young bachelors seeking economic independence, and many popular texts encouraged young penniless men to catch a widow by using their sexual potency.[19] Widows' sensuality was not only proverbial, but also pre-

14 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, pp. 19 – 21. On Catholic and Protestant attitudes toward widows' remarriage, see Frank W. Wadsworth, "Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* in the Light of Some Contemporary Ideas on Marriage and Remarriage," *Philological Quarterly* 35 (1956): 394 – 407; Margaret Lael Mikesell, "Catholic and Protestant Widows in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 7.4 (1983): 265 – 79.

15 Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p. 182; Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300 – 1840* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 232 – 37.

16 Todd, "The Remarrying Widow," pp. 72 – 75; Jane Whittle, "Inheritance, Marriage, Widowhood and Remarriage: A Comparative Perspective on Women and Landholding in North-East Norfolk, 1440 – 1580," *Continuity and Change* 13.1 (1998): 33 – 72 (pp. 56 – 57).

17 On widows' inheritance, see Maria L. Cioni, *Women and Law in Elizabethan England with Particular Reference to the Court of Chancery* (New York: Garland, 1985), chap. 5; Anne Morris and Susan Nott, *All My Worldly Goods: A Feminist Perspective on the Legal Regulation of Wealth* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995), pp. 22 – 29.

18 Todd, "The Remarrying Widow," p. 74.

19 Vivien Brodsky Elliott, "Single Women in the London Marriage Market: Age, Status and Mobility, 1598 – 1619," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (London: Europa, 1981), pp. 81 – 100 (pp. 83 – 84); Elizabeth Foyster, "Marrying the Experienced Widow in Early Modern England: The Male Perspective," in *Widowhood in Medieval*

sumed by early modern gynaecology, influenced by the Galenic theory of humours. In this model, both men and women were considered to produce the seed for conception, and the failure to release female sperm regularly by sex was believed to trigger uterine disease.[20] For instance, John Sadler's *The Sick Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (1636), a medical treatise on uterine disease, argues that hysteria or the suffocation of the mother caused by "the retention of the seed" can be cured by "a good husband."[21] On the other hand, the fact that widows had marital and sexual experience often made them "formidably assertive marriage partners" for their new husbands. As Elizabeth Foyster has shown, some widows frustrated their new husbands by refusing to transfer some of their property, while others undermined their husbands' masculinity more literally by denouncing their lack of sexual virility in comparison to their former husbands.[22] Although some critics have regarded remarriage as a means of re-confining widows under the dominance of male authority, remarrying widows were as problematic as autonomous widows in early modern patriarchal society.[23]

Stage Widows in Recent Scholarship

The dramatic representation of widows has long been discussed in relation to the widows' problematic status in the early modern society.[24] While Charles Carlton has dismissed such representation as invariably negative, Lisa Jardine and Linda Woodbridge have offered more nuanced readings of plays. Whereas Jar-

and Early Modern Europe, ed. Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (Harlow: Pearson Education, 1999), pp. 108 – 24 (p. 108).

20 Foyster, "Marrying the Experienced Widow," p. 111; Kaara L. Peterson, "Re-anatomizing Melancholy: Burton and the Logic of Humoralism," in *Textual Healing: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Medicine*, ed. Elizabeth Lane Furdell (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 139 – 67 (pp. 152 – 54).

21 John Sadler, *The Sick Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (London, 1636), p. 74.

22 Foyster, "Marrying the Experienced Widow," pp. 114 – 23; Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, pp. 40 – 41.

23 Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 90 – 91; Todd, "The Remarrying Widow," p. 55.

24 The earliest studies mainly focused on prescriptive literature. Lu Emily Pearson, "Elizabethan Widows," in *Stanford Studies in Language and Literature*, ed. Hardin Craig (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1941), pp. 124 – 42; Carroll Camden, *The Elizabethan Woman: A Panorama of English Womanhood, 1540 to 1640* (London: Cleaver-Hume, 1952), pp. 64 – 65, 102 – 3; Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), pp. 121 – 23, 126 – 33; Lu Emily Pearson, *Elizabethans at Home* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), pp. 498 – 516.

dine reveals how sexual slanders against the remarrying widow in *The Duchess of Malfi* reflected male anxiety over widows' influence on inheritance and succession, Woodbridge examines a wider range of plays and demonstrates that their representations of widows' autonomy and remarriage are often sympathetic.[25] It is notable that Woodbridge has almost exclusively focused on Jacobean plays and discussed their representations of widows' sexuality. Her interest has been continued by Kathryn Jacobs, Ira Clark, Jennifer Panek, and Elizabeth Hanson, all of whom have considered the popularity of the "lusty widow" trope in Jacobean comedies from a socio-historical perspective.[26] While Jacobs, Clark, and Hanson understand the theatrical figure of the widow as an allegorical figure, who embodies a male fantasy of instant wealth and social advancement, Panek highlights the complexity of widow characters by describing them as ambivalent objects of male desire and anxiety. Panek's study is particularly valuable, as it uses many historical and demographic studies published since the late 1980s and offers incisive readings of plays. Although Dorothea Kehler has more recently published her study of Shakespearean plays, which also highlights the relationship between literature and social history, Panek's work is the most comprehensive study of the dramatic representation of widows to date.[27]

Despite the fact that all of these studies are invaluable and thought-provoking, there is room for improvement. First, it is notable that their analyses are almost invariably text-based. Apart from a few references, including Woodbridge's assertion that sympathetic representations of widows were prompted by the increasing number of female spectators, the existing studies have not considered how the material conditions of early modern theatre would have affected stage pictures of widows.[28] While this is partly because some of these studies predate the critical interest in this subject, this, I believe, is also because many of these critics were influenced by the New Historicist agenda of discourse

25 Charles Carlton, "The Widow's Tale: Male Myths and Female Reality in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England," *Albion* 10.2 (1978): 118 – 29; Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983), chap. 3; Linda Woodbridge, *Woman and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540 – 1620* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), chap. 10.

26 Kathryn Jacobs, *Marriage Contracts from Chaucer to the Renaissance Stage* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), chap. 7; Ira Clark, *Comedy, Youth, Manhood in Early Modern England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), chap. 4; Panek, *Widows and Suitors*; Elizabeth Hanson, "There's Meat and Money Too: Rich Widows and Allegories of Wealth in Jacobean City Comedy," *ELH* 72.1 (2005): 209 – 38.

27 Dorothea Kehler, *Shakespeare's Widows* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

28 Woodbridge, *Woman and the English Renaissance*, pp. 251 – 52.

analysis.[29] I have no intention of undermining the importance of New Historicism. It has clearly deepened our understanding of early modern plays by encouraging us not only to read them in relation to social history, but also to understand the relationship between society and literature more dynamically, perceiving literature not simply as a reflection of social reality, but as an ideological means to maintain or change social conditions. I am myself indebted to New Historicism for its notion of literature as a site of conflict between authoritative and dissident voices, or between clashing forces of subversion and containment, as well as its strategy of historically contextualized reading. Nonetheless, New Historicist criticism is primarily concerned with the relationship between language and power, and this "language" is generally understood in its narrowest sense. However, as our own theatrical experience teaches us, knowledge in theatre is formulated not only by verbal language, but also by other sensory experiences. Considering how ideology in theatre emerges through various media, namely speech, spectacle (including body "language"), auditory and olfactory effects, it is essential to consider the material conditions of early modern theatre along with play-texts, in order to highlight the ideological role played by the theatre in the construction of images of widows.

Another limitation of these studies is that they almost exclusively focus on Jacobean plays and do not fully discuss Elizabethan and Caroline ones. There are three possible explanations for this critical tendency. First, it was during the Jacobean period that the well-known "lusty widow" trope flourished. Although the trope took root in the 1580s and appeared frequently in the 1630s and early 1640s, the fact that Jacobean playwrights appropriated it most extensively might have made their widow characters more visible than those in Elizabethan and Caroline plays. Second, critics probably found the Jacobean representation of widows particularly interesting, because the misogynist sentiment expressed by King James and other male writers, notably Joseph Swetnam, against self-assertive women in this period seems to provide a plausible explanation for the popularity of widow characters. Finally, there is a general assump-

29 For instance, see Panek's introduction. My understanding of New Historicism and cultural materialism is based on the following texts: Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Jonathan Dollimore, "Introduction: Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism," in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 2–17; Ivo Kamps, "Materialist Shakespeare: An Introduction," in *Materialist Shakespeare: A History*, ed. Ivo Kamps (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 1–19; Neema Parvini, *Shakespeare and Contemporary Theory: New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

tion that the theatrical representation of widows stayed almost unchanged during the early modern period. Admittedly, there are several critics who have directed their attention beyond the Jacobean period. While Kehler's study of Shakespeare covers his Elizabethan plays, Clark and Panek mention a few Caroline plays, though they mainly discuss Jacobean drama. Still, these critics refer to non-Jacobean plays only marginally, or more to emphasize the continuity of conventional images of widows than to explore the characteristics of each period. It is therefore important to expand our critical trajectory by discussing more Elizabethan and Caroline plays, as well as by highlighting their characteristics related to their social, political, and theatrical contexts.

Using a Materialist Approach

Bearing these issues in mind, I will consider how the material conditions of the theatre would have affected the representation of widows in Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline drama. As mentioned already, I am much indebted to materialist criticism, namely New Historicism, cultural materialism, and materialist feminism, for their emphasis on a historically contextualized reading of literature. Among these, cultural materialism has furnished me with a theoretical framework. Cultural materialism perceives every cultural phenomenon as a material product of specific social and political contexts, and tries to "materialize" or make visible the otherwise concealed labour or site of production. This idea is particularly useful when we consider early modern plays, because a stage production involves not only authors and play-texts, but also a diverse workforce including actors, as well as numerous objects such as costumes and props, all of which have long been neglected by critics due to their supposed invisibility.[30] Thanks to literary and historical studies influenced by cultural materialism, it has been made clear that material aspects of the theatre were only rendered invisible by text-oriented criticism, and that many of these aspects are accessible to modern scholars.

Continuing the recent critical interest in early modern material culture, or more specifically, material aspects of early modern theatre, my study is "materialist" in its broadest sense as explained by Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* (2002), but not neces-

30 See also Tiffany Stern's concept of play-texts or theatrical productions as patchworks of multiple documents, labours, and media. *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1–7.

sarily in its original sense, as illustrated by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield in *Political Shakespeare* (1994).[31] While cultural materialism was originally inspired by Marxism and continues to highlight the power struggle between authority and individuals in the process of cultural production, many recent "materialist" studies are in fact historical studies of early modern material culture, and do not necessarily highlight the relationship between literature and authority.[32] Although I remain attentive to this relationship through my study, especially in Chapter 5, in which I will discuss Henrietta Maria's influence on Caroline drama, I am more interested in reimagining early modern theatrical productions in three-dimensional images and considering the interaction between the audience and the stage than in picturing the conflict or negotiation between theatre and authority. In this sense, my most immediate predecessors are those critics who have illuminated stage practices in the early modern theatre, ranging from Bevington's *Action Is Eloquence* (1984) to *Moving Shakespeare Indoors* and beyond.[33] While early critics tended to discuss the dramatic roles or symbolic meanings of props and gestures without taking their histories into account, recent critics have increasingly questioned the assumption that the early modern audience perceived these objects or bodily movements in the same way as the modern audience, and have tried to reconstruct their social meanings. My aim

31 Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda, "Introduction: Towards a Materialist Account of Stage Properties," in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1–31 (pp. 17–19); Dollimore, "Introduction."

32 For instance, see Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt, eds., *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). For criticisms of materialist studies without a Marxist consciousness, see Jonathan Gil Harris, "The New New Historicism's *Wunderkammer* of Objects," *EJES* 4.2 (2000): 111–23; Alan Sinfield, "*Poetaster*, the Author, and the Perils of Cultural Production," in *Material London, ca. 1600*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 75–89. Some studies, including *Staged Properties*, combine two strands. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass, eds., *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

33 Apart from the works stated above and which will be mentioned in the following chapters, these studies include: Frances Teague, *Shakespeare's Speaking Properties* (Lewisburg: Buckness University Press, 1991); Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa, *Staging in Shakespeare's Theatres* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003); Patricia Lennox and Bella Mirabella, eds., *Shakespeare and Costume* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods, eds., *Stage Directions and Shakespearean Theatre* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

is to follow these studies and show how costumes and props, gestures, actors and casting, and theatre structure would have represented widows and their ambiguous social position on the early modern stage.

I am also interested in the material conditions that surrounded early modern widows in reality, namely clothing, accessories, mourning practices, gestures, and household items, and this makes my study pertinent to materialist feminist studies of early modern culture. Continuing the schemes of socialist feminists "who first theorised the relation between feminism and Marxism, especially in their dual attention to the importance of sex and class" in the 1970s, materialist feminism not only criticizes the capitalist and patriarchal structures that oppress women in both private and public spaces, but also argues that gender oppression cannot be discussed separately from other forms of oppression regarding race, class, and erotic practice.[34] Instead of aiming at the liberation of women as one coherent group, materialist feminism asserts that every woman is different, faces oppression in different forms, and needs to fight oppression in different ways. Although this might seem less politically effective than any collective feminist movement, this is because materialist feminism perceives gender oppression only as a part of oppression of "the other" in the capitalist, patriarchal hegemony. By making differences visible or materializing them through textual and social practices, materialist feminism demonstrates that differences including women's marginality do "matter" to historians and literary critics "as a subject with importance, as a textual presence and as a reading practice."[35] In Renaissance studies, after *The Matter of Difference* (1991) edited by Valerie Wayne, many studies inspired by materialist feminism appeared, making histories of women in different social, economic, and political circumstances available for a wider readership. While Karim-Cooper, Korda, Helen Smith, and others have unveiled the reality of women's labour in sites of economic production and biological reproduction which has never been narrated in male-centred, "official" history, Catherine Richardson and Emma Whipday, among others, have discussed the material and ideological oppression of women in the early modern household and how women resisted or evaded such oppression.[36] Many of

34 Valerie Wayne, "Introduction," in *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Valerie Wayne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 1–26 (p. 5).

35 Wayne, "Introduction," p. 1.

36 On early modern women's labour and material lives, see Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2010); Natasha Korda, *Labors Lost: Women's Work and the Early Modern English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Helen Smith, *"Grossly Material*

these scholars are also interested in how early modern theatre might have encouraged or suppressed the emergence of such an alternative history of women or "private matters" into the public sphere.[37] It is notable that these critics do not necessarily either claim that they are materialist feminist or conduct their research within any uniform agenda. This is not only because materialist feminism, like some other forms of poststructuralist criticism (including New Historicism and cultural materialism), resists theorization, but also because it self-consciously embraces differences or diversity among its practitioners or critical approaches. Following these scholars, I will demonstrate that the material lives of early modern widows do "matter" not only as an unofficial, alternative history, but also as reference points for understanding stage representations of widows more accurately. I will also remain conscious of the differences in terms of class and race as well as gender when I discuss widows either in reality or on stage.

Materializing Stage Widows: Five Steps or Chapters

In each of the following chapters, I will examine one or two theatrical aspects; the plays will be roughly organized in chronological order, in order to highlight continuity and discontinuity over the course of years. While stressing the importance of considering the material conditions of the early modern theatre, I am also a strong advocate of a more traditional method of close reading of playtexts. As Leslie Thomson contends, material aspects of early modern performances are often revealed through careful examination of stage directions, speeches,

Things": Women and Book Production in Early Modern England (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life, 1500–1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017). On the material and ideological oppression of women and their defiance of patriarchy in early modern households, see Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Emma Whipday, *Shakespeare's Domestic Tragedies: Violence in the Early Modern Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

37 I borrowed the phrase from Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

and silences in play-texts, and we can only appreciate early modern plays fully by combining these two methods.[38]

In Chapter 1, I will discuss what kind of costumes and accessories were used to represent widows. Widows were most frequently associated with mourning costume, whose designs and cultural meanings diversified over many centuries. After reviewing its history by using portraits and woodcuts, I will highlight its complex, often contradictory, stage functions as an object of *memento mori*, proof of vidual chastity, or a sign of sexual availability. I will also consider similar effects produced by accessories or other props, such as rings, handkerchiefs, and books. As a whole, these objects suggest that widows' chastity or loyalty to their husband could be counterfeited by an outward show.

In Chapter 2, I will focus on widows' lamentation and mourning gestures. From ancient times, lamentation was regarded as the most prominent feature of widows, and they were often represented as using violent, even self-injurious, gestures to express their grief for their husbands' deaths. While such an expectation for widows' outward expression of sorrow was still dominant in early modern England, these visible signs were also criticized for their theatricality and excessiveness. Like costumes and accessories, there was a constant fear that widows' lamentation might be insincere. Such gestures and their disturbing effects were theatrically potent, and Marlowe and Shakespeare incorporated them into their plays. I will consider how these playwrights appropriated widows' mourning gestures to elicit both uneasiness and sympathy from the audience.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss the staging of the husband's ghost. In late Elizabethan tragedies, including Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (1600 – 1601), widows are often driven to self-condemnation for their new love or remarriage by encountering their husbands' ghosts. After Gertrude's oblivion of her husband in *Hamlet* (1600 – 1602), however, the ghost vanished from the early modern stage. In early Jacobean satirical comedies by Chapman and Middleton, it is replaced by the comic figure of the jealous husband, who tests his wife's fidelity by staging his own death. Although these plays represent widows' lamentation and sexuality satirically, their attacks are primarily directed toward jealous husbands, who try to control their wives' sexuality even after their own deaths.

In Chapter 4, I will consider how the personal traits or relationships of actors would have affected the theatrical representation of widows in two interrelated

38 Leslie Thomson, "'Pass over the stage' – Again," in *Staging Shakespeare: Essays in Honour of Alan C. Dessen*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin and Miranda Johnson-Haddad (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), pp. 23 – 44 (p. 31).

plays by the King's Men. First, I will examine Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* by focusing on a boy actor who is likely to have taken the role in the first production. By highlighting his age, physical features, and relations with other actors, I will discuss how the widow protagonist's gender ambiguity and other forms of liminality would have resonated with the boy actor's. Then, I will take a look at Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (1621–1622), which was almost certainly inspired by *Malfi* and was probably performed after its revival(s). My aim is to demonstrate how this intertextuality would have been made visible by the actors and casting, while discussing Middleton's scepticism towards the Duchess's vow.

In Chapter 5, I will examine the representation of widows in Caroline drama, which has been mostly neglected by critics. First, I will focus on the increasing number of verbal and visual descriptions of widows' households, and discuss how this phenomenon was possibly related to the popularity of indoor theatres in the Caroline period. I will also discuss how these descriptions denote widows' authority as mistresses of their households, as well as their social and economic power. Then, I will consider the representation of an ungovernable widow in Brome's *The Court Beggar* (1640–1641) in relation to the cultural influence of Henrietta Maria. After discussing how the queen's disruption of the gender hierarchy might have given rise to this figure, I will discuss how the widow's autonomy and disobedience are punished through physical assaults and slanders.

By examining theatrical representations of widows from fresh perspectives, this book aims to reassert the complexity of widow characters, which has become stale in the two decades that have passed since Panek's ground-breaking study. As I will stress throughout my study, widows are very interesting figures whose ambiguous status between feminine submission and masculine assertion, death and life, or chastity and sexual awareness fascinated playwrights over the years. By reconstructing how playwrights and acting companies represented such complex female figures, I hope to demonstrate how focusing on widows and widowhood can broaden our understanding of early modern theatre more generally.

Chapter 1
Widows' Costumes and Accessories on the Early Modern Stage

One of the issues unmentioned in previous studies of the theatrical representation of widows is how these women looked on the early modern stage. What kind of costumes and accessories were used to represent widows? How did these items shape the audience's perception of these women? Did they affect the play as a whole? In short, what theatrical effects were expected from widows' physical appearance? Such critical oversight is understandable, considering that evidence related to this issue is scarce. The only widow character whose visual image survives is Tamora in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1584–1594). The sketch in the Longleat manuscript, attributed to Henry Peacham and thought to depict a scene from the play, shows Tamora "wearing a crown as Queen of the Goths, a loose robe with elaborately decorated sleeves, and what may be a train or cape falling from her shoulders."[1] While this is a valuable record, it is questionable to what extent Tamora's physical appearance could be perceived as representative of stage widows. Her crown, for instance, indicates that her sovereignty was more important than her widowhood as a character. Simon Forman does not refer to any costumes or accessories of widows in his eyewitness accounts of four Shakespearean plays, two of which include widows.[2] Nor are they mentioned in Philip Henslowe's diary and inventory of costumes and props owned by the Admiral's Men, although there are two interesting records. On 4 February 1602/03, Henslowe paid a tailor for "vellvet & satten for the womon gowne of black vellvet wth the other lynenges belonging*e* to yt," and on the next day, he paid "Thomas hewode" for "[a] womones gowne of black vellvett for the play*e* of A womon kylld wth kyndnes."[3] These records suggest that Anne, the adulterous wife in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603), wore a black velvet gown with linings, which could have been used as a widow's mourning costume in later plays. Since the clues outside play-texts are inconclusive, stage directions and speeches are the only reliable sources, al-

1 R. A. Foakes, *Illustrations of the English Stage, 1580–1642* (London: Scolar Press, 1985), p. 50; Richard Levin, "The Longleat Manuscript and *Titus Andronicus*," *SQ* 53.3 (2002): 323–40.

2 Forman's *Booke of Plaies and Notes* is transcribed in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), pp. 337–41.

3 Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 223.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501513893-006

though they do not necessarily give us a detailed description of each object. It is therefore helpful to look at visual images such as portraits and woodcuts depicting widows or photographs of extant objects. By showing what kind of costumes and accessories widows were associated with in reality as well as in the popular imagination, these images help us visualize widow characters.

In this chapter, I will first explore how early modern widows looked in reality by examining portraits and woodcuts. My primary focus will be on mourning costume, an item most frequently associated with widows. Since my intention is to reveal its complex cultural meanings, I will start my narrative from antiquity and scrutinize a variety of objects used by widows over the course of the years. I will then consider what kind of costumes and accessories were used to represent widows on the early modern stage by examining play-texts and visual images. I will also explore how these objects, whose cultural and symbolic meanings were multi-layered, might have made visible the ambiguous position of widows in early modern society.

Widows' Costumes and Accessories in Early Modern England

Historical Background

The association between widows and mourning costume is an ancient one. In Rome, widows covered their heads with the *ricinium*, a piece of cloth made of dark wool, for the year prescribed for mourning.[4] In the Bible, Judith, who was "in her house a widowe thre yeres and foure moneths," made "a tente upon her house, and put on sackecloth on her loynes, and ware her widowes apparel."[5] According to the *OED*, sackcloth is "the material of mourning or penitential garb," and "the coarsest possible clothing, indicative of extreme poverty or humility."[6]

In England, it is only after the Christianisation that we can trace the history of mourning costume with some confidence. Considering the biblical association between "widowes apparel" and Christian humility, it is unsurprising that the architype of mourning garments derived from nuns' costumes in the early Christi-

4 Judith Lynn Sebesta, "Symbolism in the Costume of the Roman Woman," in *The World of Roman Costume*, ed. Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), pp. 46–53 (p. 50).

5 Judith 8:4–5, quoted from the Geneva Bible. Another reference to widows' garments appears in Genesis 38:14.

6 "sackcloth, n.," *OED*, 1.b [accessed 1 March 2020].

an convents.[7] Indeed, widows were significant figures in the early Christian church. Not only did they found and maintain many convents, but also they fulfilled ecclesiastical duties, which uniquely placed them within the male-dominated church hierarchy.[8] Fulvio Androzzi, an Italian Jesuit, explains how these garments possibly reached England in *The Widdowes Glasse* (1621). It is a religious treatise applauding virtuous widowhood and published with another work by a Jesuit father, Leonardus Lessius's *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity*. The translator, John Wilson, dedicates these works to Eleanor Brooksby and Anne Vaux, the recusant sisters and priest harbourers. Brooksby was a widow who never remarried, while Vaux was an unmarried woman.[9] According to Androzzi, there was a custom in pre-Reformation England to give a special garment called a "[m]antle" and a ring to widows who "had for a certaine number of yeares, lived in Continency & widdowhood":

> It seemes that this custome was in use in our Iland long before the Conquest, above 900. yeares ago. And the first that I read of, to have brought in the same, was S. *Theodore* Archb. of *Canterbury*, sent into Engla[n]d by Pope *Vitalian*, about the yeare 660. And a little after him againe, by *S. Adelmus* Bishop of *Sherborne* amo[n]gst the *Westsaxons*, who lived in the yeare of Christ 709. of who[m] it is recorded, that he gave hallowed *Mantles* to divers, both Virgins & Widdowes who had vowed Virginity & Continency: after the taking wherof, it was not lawfull for them to marry, under payne of grievous sinne. Afterwards, the same became more frequent, & was ordinarily used throughout Engla[n]d, even untill this last age of Schisme & Heresy in the same.

A mantle, Androzzi describes, was "a lo[n]g, loose Garment, which covered them all over, & did touch the ground, made of blacke cloath ordinarily," while the ring was "Gold, or Silver, made plaine and round, like to a wedding-Ring." The recipient knelt "before the high altar, in the Church, in tyme of solemne Masse" and accepted hallowed mantles and rings from bishops.[10] Since these items were also given to virgins, they were more important as a sign of chastity and devotion than as one of mourning. Nonetheless, this account testifies to the

7 Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), pp. 66–69.

8 Gillian Cloke, *"This Female Man of God": Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, A.D. 350–450* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 89–90; Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A Women's Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), chap. 6.

9 A. F. Allison and D. M. Rogers, *The Contemporary Printed Literature of the English Counter-Reformation between 1558 and 1640*, vol. 2 (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 162.

10 Leonard[us] Lessius and Fulvi[o] Andro[zzi], *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity in Secular Persons. Also the Widdowes Glasse*, trans. I. W. P. ([Saint-Omer], 1621), pp. 341–48.

long-standing tradition of making widowhood visible through costumes and accessories.

Visual images of widows in mourning garments are available from the late fourteenth century onwards. In her study of the history of mourning costume, Lou Taylor presents two images of widows before the establishment of formal court mourning in the late fifteenth century.[11] The first image is a lithograph of a brass of Eleanor de Bohun, Duchess of Gloucester, whose tragic death is dramatized in Shakespeare's *Richard II* (1595 – 1597) (fig. 1.1). The second image is a tomb effigy of Philippa de Mohun, Duchess of York, whose last husband was slain at Agincourt in 1415 (fig. 1.2).[12] Apart from small differences, these widows are dressed similarly. Firstly, they are wearing "[a] draped head-covering" called a coverchief. Secondly, they have on a barbe, "[a] length of vertically pleated linen encircling the chin and falling to the bosom."[13] Thirdly, they are wearing a surcoat, "a Close bodyed gowne or straight bodyed gowne," as explained in one sixteenth-century manuscript showing sartorial regulations for mourning costume of ladies at court (see below).[14] Finally, they have on a mantle over the surcoat, which may be the same mantle as that mentioned by Androzzi.

Although the similarity between these widows suggests that there were already standards for the style of mourning garments, these rules were not stipulated until the late fifteenth century, when the College of Arms, incorporated by Richard III's charter in 1484, became officially responsible for arranging the funerals of monarchs, the nobility, the gentry, archbishops, and bishops. The role of the heralds was twofold. Firstly, they established the rules for heraldic funerals and conducted obsequies accordingly. Secondly, they imposed fines upon people who emulated the type of funeral reserved for higher ranks.[15] The conduct of funerals was strictly hierarchical. Not only did the procedure of a funeral change according to the rank of the deceased, but attendants at a funeral were also classified according to social class. It is therefore unsurprising that the Col-

11 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, pp. 71, 74.

12 "Philippa Mohun, Duchess of York," *Westminster Abbey*, http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/philippa-mohun,-duchess-of-york.

13 Valerie Cumming, C. W. Cunnington, and P. E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), pp. 58 – 59, 12 – 13.

14 London, British Library, Harley MS 1776, fol. 9v.

15 On the heraldic funeral, see Julian Litten, *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral since 1450* (London: Hale, 1991), chap. 7; Jennifer Woodward, *The Theatre of Death: The Ritual Management of Royal Funerals in Renaissance England, 1570 – 1625* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), chap. 1; John Brooke-Little, *Royal Ceremonies of State* ([Feltham (?)]: Country Life Books, 1980), pp. 105 – 9.

Fig. 1.1. Brass from the tomb of Eleanor de Bohun, Duchess of Gloucester, 1399. Photo: Copyright Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

lege prescribed rules for mourning apparel for each rank to protect the traditional hierarchy.[16]

The first provisions that regulated the mourning garments of ladies at court were issued by Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby and the formidable mother of Henry VII, around 1493.[17] According to these provisions, there were four basic items. Every woman put on "a surcoot wth a traine before and an other behinde," and then "a mantle wth a traine" over the surcoat. Then she covered her head with "a plaine hoode" with a tippet, a pendant tail of a hood, and she also wore a barbe.[18] On the other hand, the design of each item, the quality and amount of fabric, and the manner in which they were worn were strictly regulated by social rank. For instance, the queen was allowed to wear "the great-

16 Woodward, *Theatre of Death*, pp. 19–21; Susan Vincent, *Dressing the Elite: Clothes in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), pp. 61–71.

17 The copies of these provisions appear in two manuscripts, BL Harley MS 1776 and London, British Library, Harley MS 6064, in slightly different forms.

18 BL Harley MS 1776, fol. 8r; Cumming et al., *Dictionary of Fashion History*, pp. 121–22.

Fig. 1.2. Tomb effigy of Philippa de Mohun, Duchess of York, 1431. Photo: Copyright Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

est and longest traine because she is the greatest estate."[19] While those above "the degree of a Baronesse" could wear barbes "above the chynne," the rest had to wear them "under there throates."[20] As Susan Vincent notes, the general principle was that "those of the most elevated ranks had garments of the greatest length."[21] These provisions were repeatedly recopied by the College of Arms, and established the basic style of mourning costume in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Royal and Aristocratic Widows

It is tempting to think that the design of mourning costume hardly changed from its inception. Based on nuns' costumes, it was intentionally made unfashiona-

19 BL Harley MS 1776, fol. 8r.
20 BL Harley MS 6064, fol. 27v. This provision appears only in this manuscript.
21 Vincent, *Dressing the Elite*, p. 63.

ble, and even undistinguishable from male mourning costume, which had similarly developed "from the gowns worn in the sixth century by Benedictine monks."[22] By denying widows' femininity and sexuality, the costume visually indicated their retirement from secular pleasure and devotion to Christianity.[23] The establishment of the provisions for mourning apparel in the fifteenth century also seems to point towards the same conclusion. Contrary to our expectation, however, mourning garments were rather susceptible to changing fashions and underwent many changes.

In terms of colour, black became dominant by the sixteenth century.[24] Before then, a variety of colours were used for mourning costume. White had a long tradition as a liturgical colour signifying resurrection and rebirth.[25] Brown, the colour of ashes, was also widespread. In the fourteenth century, Chaucer mentions Criseyde's "widewes habit large of samyt broun" (I.109).[26] Taylor argues that grey and red were also in use, although no historical record of that seems to survive.[27] Black was already in use in the fourteenth century when Chaucer made Criseyde reappear in a "widewes habit blak" (I.170). Although it is not clear when black became standard, it was the norm by the time the two heraldic manuals mentioned the colour. John Ferne calls "black moorning" a respectable item for a funeral in *The Blazon of Gentrie* (1586).[28] Edmund Bolton also notes that "[t]o mourne in *black* is as nationall a custome, as for the grave, and civil to go therein" in *The Elements of Armories* (1610).[29]

While the colour was unified into black, the design was more diversified after the sixteenth century. It was royal and aristocratic widows who could enjoy the latest fashion of mourning costume. While preserving the tradition, they were quick to adopt contemporary fashions, as can be seen in the following series of portraits. In the early days, widows were dressed in traditional apparel with barbes and coverchiefs, as indicated by a posthumous copy of the only known portrait of Margaret Beaufort (fig. 1.3). It is appropriate that Beaufort, the founder of the provisions for female mourning costume, dressed herself in

22 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, p. 70.

23 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, p. 66.

24 Woodward, *Theatre of Death*, pp. 18–19; Phillis Cunnington and Catherine Lucas, *Costume for Births, Marriages and Deaths* (London: A & C Black, 1972), pp. 145–48.

25 Litten, *English Way of Death*, p. 147; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 248–49.

26 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Barry Windeatt (London: Penguin, 2003). All further references are to this edition.

27 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, p. 259.

28 John Ferne, *The Blazon of Gentrie* (London, 1586), p. 82.

29 E[dmund]. B[olton]., *The Elements of Armories* (London, 1610), p. 131.

the same traditional apparel as Eleanor de Bohun and Philippa de Mohun. However, Beaufort's portrait also marks an important departure from the tradition. Her head-dress is not exactly a coverchief, but a gabled head-dress, which was fashionable at the time of her death.[30] It is also significant that Beaufort carries a small book, which is almost certainly the Bible or a prayer book. Not only does it signify her piety, it also evokes the traditional association between nuns and widows.

The design of mourning costume was increasingly secularized and diversified in the last three decades of the sixteenth century.[31] One of the new fashions was introduced by Mary, Queen of Scots. In a portrait created between the death of her first husband, Francois II, in December 1560, and her return to Scotland in August 1561, Mary appears in her French *deuil blanc* or white mourning costume (fig. 1.4). "Deuil" means bereavement or mourning in French, and was originally spelled "dueil" in the fifteenth century.[32] It is notable that Mary wears a new head-dress called a Paris head. This was made of "closely fitted white linen, dipping over the forehead, with a panel of pleats hanging down the back of the neck." The Paris head was so popular that it was worn in mourning by all but the poorest women until the early seventeenth century.[33]

Drawings of funeral processions also help us to uncover a variety of popular fashions in the late Elizabethan period. British Library Additional MS 35324 is a collection of detailed sketches of the funeral processions of six personages, including Mary, Queen of Scots, Lady Jane Lumley, and Queen Elizabeth. Although the female mourners depicted were not necessarily widows, their appearances give us clues about how Elizabethan widows might have looked. In the drawings of Mary's procession on 1 August 1587, the women are generally dressed in the traditional costume, almost in the same manner as Margaret Beaufort. According to one contemporary account, one hundred "poore old women" attended Mary's procession, most of whom were "widowes in blacke cloth gownes, with an ell of white Holland over their heades."[34] It was customary at heraldic funerals to have the same number of almsmen or almswomen as the age of the deceased, which was occasionally substituted by one hundred, to exhibit the generosity and be-

30 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, p. 75.

31 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, p. 79.

32 Jean Dubois et al., *Dictionnaire étymologique* (Paris: Larousse, 2001), p. 219. For French terms, I have retained original spellings.

33 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, p. 81; Frye, *Pens and Needles*, pp. 45–50.

34 "The Scottish Queenes Buriall at Peterborough, upon Tuesday, being Lammas day. 1587," in *The Funeral of Mary, Queen of Scots: A Collection of Curious Tracts*, ed. R. Prescott-Innes (Edinburgh: Goldsmid, 1890), pp. 3–7 (p. 4).

Fig. 1.3. *Lady Margaret Beaufort*, unknown artist, second half of the sixteenth century, NPG551. Photo: © National Portrait Gallery, London.

Fig. 1.4. *Mary, Queen of Scots*, François Clouet, ca. 1520–1572, RCIN403429. Photo: Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020.

nevolence of the deceased.[35] These widows are depicted in one of the drawings (fig. 1.5). They all wear dresses tied at the waist, small barbes or collars without pleats, and veils or Paris heads. Many of them carry sticks, possibly indicating their old age. Another sketch shows Bridget Russell, Countess of Bedford, in a loose gown with the longest train, which signifies that she was the chief mourner

35 For other examples of one hundred almsmen, see Woodward, *Theatre of Death*, pp. 15, 30. See also a hand-written description in a drawing of Lady Lumley's procession in fig. 1.7 below: "The poore woemen Mourners in this manner to th^{e} nomber of fortie two According to th^{e} age of the deceased."

(fig. 1.6).[36] Her train is carried by Lady St. John of Basing, who wears a hood with a tippet.

Fig. 1.5. Almswomen in the funeral procession of Mary, Queen of Scots, artist and date unknown. London, British Library, MS Add. 35324, fol. 15v. Photo: © The British Library Board.

Fig. 1.6. Bridget Russell, Countess of Bedford, as the chief mourner in the funeral procession of Mary, Queen of Scots, artist and date unknown. London, British Library, MS Add. 35324, fol. 16r. Photo: © The British Library Board.

The drawings of Lady Jane Lumley's procession on 19 August 1578 illustrate four different styles of mourning garments. Firstly, the almswomen appear in the same fashion as those in Mary's procession (fig. 1.7). Such costume was probably a common item given to poor widows performing the role of almswomen. Secondly, Anne Howard, Countess of Surrey, has the longest train as the chief mourner (fig. 1.8). It is notable that her costume is much more elaborate than the Countess of Bedford's. Her black veil has a white hem. She wears a pleated front covering instead of a barbe. She also wears a narrow white ruff. Finally, the front of her mantle is elegantly looped up. Thirdly, "Mrs Coote the Queenes Woman," the Countess of Surrey's train bearer, wears the same ruff and front covering as the chief mourner, while substituting a black veil with a white Paris head. Lastly, there are "six principall Mourners" who follow the train-bear-

36 Cumming et al., *Dictionary of Fashion History*, pp. 208–9.

er. Although they have neither a train nor a mantle looped up at the front, they look almost identical to the chief mourner.

Fig. 1.7. Almswomen in Lady Lumley's funeral procession, artist and date unknown. London, British Library, MS Add. 35324, fol. 19r. Photo: © The British Library Board.

Fig. 1.8. Anne Howard, Countess of Surrey, as the chief mourner, her train-bearer, and six principal mourners in Lady Lumley's funeral procession, artist and date unknown. London, British Library, MS Add. 35324, fol. 21r. Photo: © The British Library Board.

Finally, the drawings of Queen Elizabeth's procession show two remarkable changes. Firstly, the traditional style of mourning costume was drastically changed by the Elizabethan taste for lavish, exaggerated fashion. Lady Helena Gorges, the chief mourner, wears a heavy, floor-length, wired black veil with white hems (fig. 1.9). Like the veil, the train is so heavy and lengthy that it requires three train-bearers. The upper body is typically Elizabethan, with a white ruff and cuffs, decorative stomacher, and padded trunk sleeves. The skirt, though only partially visible, is also supported from underneath by the farthingale, and adorned with gold-thread embroidery running vertically down the centre. It is also an invention that the chief mourner holds the white handkerchief to signify sorrow. Secondly, sartorial distinctions between people of different ranks or roles became less conspicuous. Most notably, the mantle with a long train is no longer restricted to the chief mourner. Indeed, she is almost undistinguishable from her train-bearers, the only differences being the embroidery on

the skirt and the white handkerchief. Even the maids of honour and of the privy chamber were allowed to wear the skirts with farthingales, ruffs and cuffs, although they have no stomacher (fig. 1.10).

Fig. 1.9. Lady Helena Gorges as the chief mourner in Queen Elizabeth's funeral procession, artist and date unknown. London, British Library, MS Add. 35324, fol. 37r. Photo: © The British Library Board.

Fig. 1.10. Countesses and daughters of earls and barons, and maids of honour and of the privy chamber in Queen Elizabeth's funeral procession, artist and date unknown. London, British Library, MS Add. 35324, fol. 38r. Photo: © The British Library Board.

In less than a decade, a completely new fashion had emerged, as evinced by the portrait of Anne of Denmark (fig. 1.11). Based on a portrait painted in her lifetime that is now lost, this posthumous copy shows Anne in mourning for her son, Prince Henry, who died in November 1612. While the mantle looks voluminous in the Elizabethan manner, the flamboyant ruff has been replaced by the delicate black lace collar. The small head-dress and lace-edged neckline were also popular items in the Jacobean and Caroline period.

It is striking to imagine that widows, in a similar manner to Anne of Denmark, began to expose their necks, shoulders, or even breasts. This is a bold departure from the traditional mourning costume, whose loose and bulky shape

Fig. 1.11. *Anne of Denmark*, unknown artist, ca. 1628–1644, NPG4656. Photo: © National Portrait Gallery, London.

concealed the wearer's body from the male erotic gaze. Widows also abandoned arched hoods and revealed their hair, another sign of female beauty. In the Jacobean and Caroline period, mourning costume gave a soft, feminine impression, like ordinary dress of the same era. It also became fashionable for widows to sit for a portrait in mourning costume, which resulted in the production of a larger number of portraits of widows than in the previous era.[37]

37 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, pp. 93–95.

One such example is the portrait of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia (fig. 1.12). Following the turmoil caused by her husband's acceptance of the Bohemian throne, Elizabeth and her family were exiled to the Hague in 1621. She lost her husband in battle in 1632 and is thought to have commissioned this portrait in 1642, in order to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of her widowhood. Although Elizabeth was deeply shocked by her husband's death, she dedicated her life to securing her children's birthright.[38] Her mourning costume and accessories are not merely signs of widowhood, but also speak of her loyalty in marriage and determination to live as a widowed mother. Although Elizabeth was living on the Continent, her physical appearance is that of an English widow in the Jacobean and Caroline period. Like Anne of Denmark, she wears a very small head-dress and shows her hair. She is dressed in the black costume whose white lace neckline exposes her neck, shoulder, and upper breast. Her sleeves are also tucked up and reveal her white arms. While the costume allows the widow to look attractive with her hair and skin exposed, the accessories emphasize her loyalty to her husband. She wears a pair of pearl earrings, which were a gift from her husband, and a ring on her left hand.[39] The fact that it is worn on her little finger, not on the fourth finger, suggests that it was not a wedding but a mourning ring, a custom "already well established in the reign of Charles I."[40] The black band on her wrist was also a common mourning item in the Caroline period (see also figs. 1.25 and 1.28 below). Apart from the costume and accessories, the portrait associates Elizabeth with symbolic images. In her right hand are two roses, "one healthy and one wilted," which indicate her liminal status as a widow between life and death. The dog also signifies the widow's loyalty to her deceased husband.[41] It is notable that widowhood can be indicated by allegorical items as well as cultural artefacts, a useful piece of information when considering the theatrical representation of widows.

Another example is this portrait whose sitter's identity is debated (fig. 1.13). Once misidentified as Lady Penelope d'Arcy, she is now thought to be either Lady Penelope Hervey, widow of Sir William Hervey, or Mary Hervey, Mrs. Edward Gage.[42] While adopting new fashions, the lady's mourning costume pre-

38 Ronald G. Asch, "Elizabeth, Princess (1596–1662)," *ODNB* [accessed 1 February 2021].

39 "Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia," The National Gallery, London, http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/gerrit-van-honthorst-elizabeth-stuart-queen-of-bohemia.

40 Charles Oman, *British Rings, 800–1914* (London: Batsford, 1974), p. 71.

41 "Elizabeth Stuart," National Gallery.

42 "Called Lady Penelope D'Arcy, later Lady Gage and Lady Hervey (c. 1594–1661)," National Trust Collections, http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/851802. Lady Penelope Her-

Fig. 1.12. Gerrit van Honthorst. *Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia*. 1642. Bequeathed by Cornelia, Countess of Craven, 1965. Photo: © The National Gallery, London.

serves many traditional features. For instance, her head-dress is a variation of a Paris head, although it is "reduced to a mere peak." She wears a black veil over her head-dress, but it does not conceal her hair properly. She wears a broad white collar, which is covered by a transparent, shoulder-length cloth fastened

vey describes herself as a widow of "S[r] William Hervey of Hengrave in the Countie of Suff[olk] Knight" in her will dated 30 August 1661 (The National Archives, PROB 11/305/21, fol. 126r).

at her throat by a small black ribbon. While concealing her shoulders, the lady reveals her white breasts and arms from white tucked-up sleeves in the same manner as Elizabeth Stuart. Though it is unclear from this reproduction, Taylor notes that she also wears pearl earrings and necklace, like Elizabeth Stuart.[43]

Fig. 1.13. *Called Lady Penelope D'Arcy, later Lady Gage and Lady Hervey (ca. 1594–1661)*, unknown artist, ca. 1640–1661. Photo: © National Trust Images.

Finally, the portrait of Henrietta Maria created after Charles's execution in 1649 is almost a catalogue of the new fashions that had emerged since the Jacobean period (fig. 1.14). Henrietta wears a black lace veil, which reveals some of her hair, and a dress with a lace-edged neckline that cuts down from her shoulders to the

43 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, p. 95.

upper breast. The exposure of her skin is minimised by a transparent white cloth covering her neck and shoulders. For accessories, she wears a pearl necklace. The three black ribbons on her dress were presumably fashionable in the Caroline period.[44] It is also significant that Henrietta wears two rings on her left hand. Worn on her thumb and little finger, these rings are probably mourning rings like Elizabeth Stuart's, although their significance might have been political as well as personal, considering that commemorative jewellery, as shown below, was widely worn by Royalist supporters after the king's execution (fig. 1.15).[45] Similarly, the fact that Henrietta carries a small book, almost certainly a religious text, makes her resemble Margaret Beaufort, a pre-Reformation widow, in an intriguing way. The book, be it the Bible or a prayer book, not only evokes the traditional association between widows and piety, but also seems to signify Henrietta's strong faith in Catholicism in the context of the Civil War.

While these portraits of royal and aristocratic widows invariably represent them in mourning costume, they did not necessarily keep wearing it for the rest of their lives. Although the customary period of mourning was not fixed until the eighteenth century, early modern prescriptive literature generally expected widows to spend at least one year in mourning.[46] While most royal and aristocratic widows conformed to this expectation, it was at their discretion how long they would wear mourning costume. Although a few continued to wear it until death to signify their spousal devotion, widows usually discarded the costume when formal court mourning was over. For instance, Mary, Queen of Scots, mourned for her first husband for forty days and then left France. When she arrived in Scotland in August 1561, she was still wearing the *deuil blanc* as testified to by one French courtier who accompanied her to Scotland: "the whiteness of her face rivalled the whiteness of her veils, and in this contest artifice was the loser, the veils paling before the snows of her skin."[47] After the Scottish court's one-year official mourning was over, Mary started wearing – or at least collecting – colourful garments. The inventory of her wardrobe dated February 1562 shows that Mary owned sixty gowns, many of which were made of cloth-of-gold. Although the majority of her clothes were still black, this was a remarkable

44 David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 441.

45 "Ring," Victoria and Albert Museum, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O126108/ring-unknown/.

46 Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 119.

47 Qtd. in Helen Smailes and Duncan Thomson, *The Queen's Image: A Celebration of Mary, Queen of Scots* (Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1987), p. 33.

Fig. 1.14. *Portrait of Queen Henrietta Maria in Mourning*, Cornelis Janssens van Ceulen, ca. 1649–1661. Photo: Used with the kind permission of Bonhams.

change.[48] Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, underwent a similar change. After the death of her husband in 1632, Elizabeth imprisoned herself in her bedroom, which was hung with black cloth, following the Continental tradition that considered death as contagious and isolated widows for a certain period of time. When this was over, Elizabeth put on mourning garments but soon replaced them with ordinary clothes "in the fashion of her day," though "never in colours."[49] These examples indicate that royal and aristocratic widows could take off their mourning costume without blame after formal court mourning, which

48 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, pp. 82–83.

49 Cunnington and Lucas, *Costume for Births, Marriages and Deaths*, p. 264.

Fig. 1.15. Ring, seventeenth-century painting with eighteenth-century setting, museum number M.1–1909. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

is completely reasonable considering that many of them remarried afterwards. I will come back to this transition from mourning to ordinary costume, or from widowhood to a new life, when I discuss plays.

Middle- and Lower-Class Widows

It should be noted that the wide range of mourning garments and accessories depicted in the portraits of royal and aristocratic widows were usually inaccessible for middle- and lower-class widows. Although some wealthy widows were able "to encroach on noble privilege" by imitating their social superiors, most non-aristocratic widows could not imagine themselves in such luxury.[50] Indeed, black cloth was an expensive commodity. According to Clare Gittings, the bills for Sir Nicholas Bacon's funeral in 1578 note that

50 Taylor, *Mourning Dress*, p. 66.

> each principal mourner had to receive 12 yards of cloth at 30s the yard for his own clothes, together with 7½ yards at 16s a yard for two gentlemen, and 1½ yards at 12s a yard for three yeomen, making a total cost of £26 14s just to equip one man and his retinue.[51]

The National Archives Currency Converter shows that one shilling in 1580 had the same purchasing power as £10.23 in 2017. This means that one principal mourner's costume cost £3682.80, one gentleman's cost £613.80, and one yeoman's cost £61.38, in today's value.[52] David Cressy writes that "[p]articipants in common funerals wore their everyday costume," and this was probably the same for middle- and lower-class widows who could not afford black cloth.[53] Although no historical record survives, some widows might have dyed ordinary costumes black. In Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1611), Leontes mentions such clothes as he condemns women as "false / As o'er-dyed blacks" (I.ii.131–32). In any case, the period of wearing such a costume was much shorter for these widows. Mourning was still the privilege of those who could afford "money and leisure," and ordinary people "returned in short order to the routine concerns of their lives."[54] Middle- and lower-class widows also remarried more quickly than royal and aristocratic widows. According to Brodsky, in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London more than seventy percent of middle-class widows remarried within one year, with almost half of wealthy widows remarrying within six months.[55]

Although there is much less historical evidence when compared to royal and aristocratic widows, there are several portraits and woodcuts that help us visualize how middle- and lower-class widows looked. It seems that widows who had either money or a connection to the court were able to dress themselves in black. There are two portraits of wealthy widows who were related to the merchant class by birth or marriage. The first is Joyce Frankland, née Trappes, who was a daughter of a London goldsmith who twice married London clothworkers (fig. 1.16). After the death of her second husband and only son, Frankland commissioned the portrait and bestowed her fortune on colleges and schools. This is one of the posthumous copies of a sitting in 1586 when she was fifty-five. Frankland appears in a typical Elizabethan fashion, wearing a black gown with white cuffs and ruff. She also holds a circular timepiece, which is presumably a me-

51 Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 181.
52 "Currency Converter," The National Archives, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/.
53 Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 438.
54 Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 438.
55 Brodsky, "Widows in Late Elizabethan London," p. 133.

mento of her husband or son. As Tarnya Cooper notes, the timepiece may also refer "to the transience of human life and perhaps to her own circumstance of a lost child and exhausted fertility." Indeed, the Latin inscription in the top right-hand corner notes how she once "seemed a blessed mother to my William" and later became "more blessed in a numerous offspring" as a patroness of scholars.[56]

Fig. 1.16. *Joyce Frankland (1531–1587), Benefactress*, Gilbert Jackson, 1629. Photo: Used with the kind permission of the Kings Hall and College of Brasenose, Oxford.

The portrait of Katheryn of Berain represents the widow's intermediate status between life and death, marriage and widowhood (fig. 1.17). It was created in Antwerp to commemorate Katheryn's marriage to her second husband, Sir Richard

56 Tarnya Cooper, *Citizen Portrait: Portrait Painting and the Urban Elite of Tudor and Jacobean England and Wales* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 107; Stephen Wright, "Frankland, Joyce (1531–1587)," *ODNB* [accessed 1 February 2021].

Clough, whom she married eight months after her first husband's death. Clough came from a mercer family, made his living as a merchant, and was "immensely rich."[57] Although Katheryn's black dress adorned with cloth-of-gold was not meant for mourning, its colour inevitably reminds us of her first husband's death. Like Margaret Beaufort and Henrietta Maria, Katheryn carries a small religious book in her right hand. What is more striking is the skull. According to Cooper, it was commonplace to have a skull in a portrait commemorating marriage in the sixteenth-century Netherlands.[58] Nonetheless, the skull bears more significance when we recall Katheryn's late widowhood. While the similarity of colour between her face and the skull makes the widow another object of *memento mori*, her seizure of the skull seems to suggest that she has overcome her first husband's death by entering into a new marriage.

Anne Turner, a physician's widow and accessory to the notorious murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, is also represented in a black costume in two woodcuts (figs. 1.18 and 1.19). Although Turner had access to the Jacobean court through her husband and established strong relationships with nobles, including Frances Howard, Countess of Somerset, for whose sake she involved herself in the murder, both Turner and her husband were of humble birth.[59] These woodcuts appeared respectively in a broadside and a pamphlet that were published in response to the discovery of Overbury's murder in 1615. In the first woodcut, Turner is shown in a typical Elizabethan mourning dress supported by the farthingale, a black veil, and white cuffs and ruff. Turner holds a handkerchief and a small Bible or prayer book to signify her contrition for the murder. At the same time, however, it is worth recalling that a small religious text was associated with Catholic widows in the portraits of Margaret Beaufort and Henrietta Maria, because Turner was overtly Catholic. The Bible or prayer book itself, of course, is not a sign of Catholicism. Indeed, it often signifies widows' religious and moral virtue in early modern plays. Nonetheless, the fact that black costume makes widows almost look like nuns often makes the religious text an ambiguous object in visual representations.[60] This association between widows and nuns, or more specifically Turner and Catholicism, is also highlighted in the second woodcut, in which Turner appears kneeling in the same costume. While rep-

57 Enid Roberts, "Katheryn of Berain [Mam Cymru] (c. 1540 – 1591)," *ODNB* [accessed 1 February 2021].

58 Cooper, *Citizen Portrait*, pp. 101, 105.

59 Alastair Bellany, "Turner, Anne (1576 – 1615)," *ODNB* [accessed 1 February 2021].

60 See also Elizabeth Williamson's discussion of the Bible as an ambiguous object on the post-Reformation stage. *The Materiality of Religion in Early Modern English Drama* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), chap. 4.

Fig. 1.17. *Katheryn of Berain, "The Mother of Wales" (1534/5–1591)*, Adriaen van Cronenburgh, 1568, NMW A19. Photo: © Amgueddfa Cenedlaethol Cymru – National Museum of Wales.

resenting her contrition sympathetically, these writings seem to stigmatize Turner as a Catholic murderess.

Another image of an ordinary widow in black appears in Cesare Vecellio's *De gli habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo* (1590) and its enlarged edition, *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo* (1598), famous Italian books on

Fig. 1.18. Anon., *Mistris Turners Farewell to All Women* ([1615]). Photo: Used with the kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

costume published all over Europe and "almost certainly [...] known to Shakespeare."[61] Both editions present the same image of an English widow in a black gown with wide sleeves, which are long enough to reach the ground (fig. 1.20). Her head-dress looks unfamiliar, but is probably a variation of a tippet, which could be wound like a turban.[62] The cloth that covers her shoulders but exposes her throat also seems to be a variation of a barbe.

61 James Laver, *The Literature of Fashion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), p. 9.
62 Cumming et al., *Dictionary of Fashion History*, pp. 121–22.

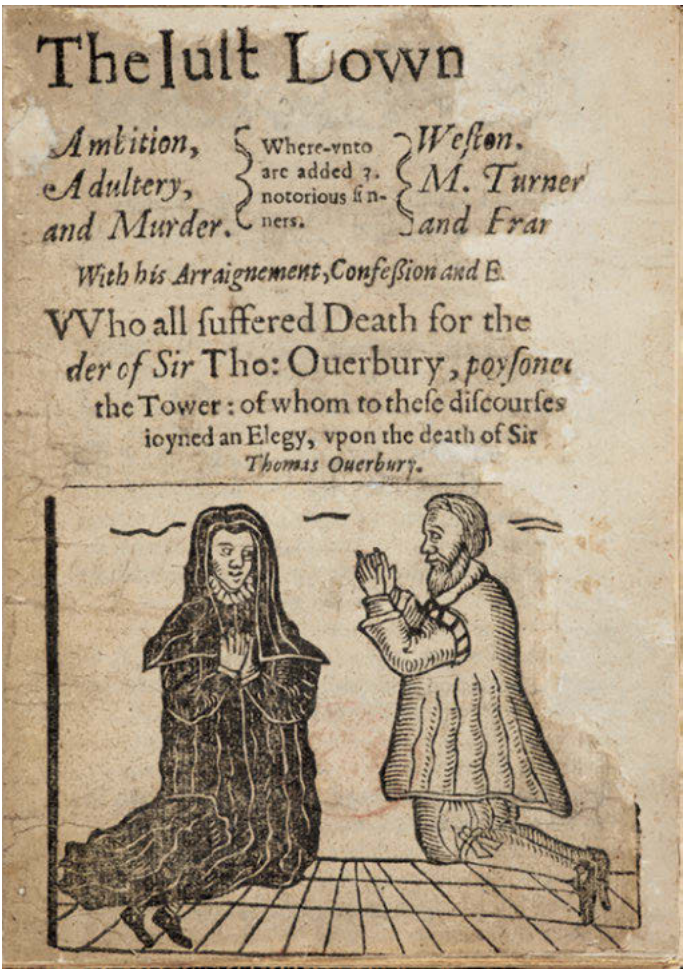

Fig. 1.19. Title page of Anon., *The Just Downefall of Ambition, Adultery, Murder* ([1616]). London, British Library, C.40.c.69. Photo: © The British Library Board.

Robert Copland's *The Seven Sorowes that Women Have When Theyr Husbandes be Dead* ([1565(?)]) represents widows' mourning garments in a unique manner. Written around 1526, this satirical treatise shows images of a widow at each stage of her seven sorrows.[63] Here, the widow faces her third sorrow as she witnesses her husband's burial (fig. 1.21).

63 Robert Copland, *The Seven Sorowes that Women Have When Theyr Husbandes be Dead*, in

Fig. 1.20. "An English Widow." From *The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe. Asia. Africa. The Americas: Cesare Vecellio's Habiti Antichi et Moderni* by Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones © 2008. Photo: Reprinted by kind permission of Thames & Hudson Ltd., London.

While the woodcut shows nothing black except the widow's hood, the verse relates that "this pore widow" is "clothed all in blacke / Of sorow" (ll. 39 – 40). Although this incongruity seems to come from the printer's attempt to save black ink, it is interesting that the printer made nothing but the widow's head-dress black. This may suggest that the black head-dress was the most common item associated with mourning widows, or that some widows actually wore black hoods even if they could not afford a whole set of mourning costume.

Robert Copland: Poems, ed. Mary Carpenter Erler (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 83 – 124.

Fig. 1.21. "The Thyrd Sorowe," from Robert Copland, *The Seven Sorowes that Women Have When Theyr Husbandes be Dead* ([1565(?)]). London, British Library, C.20.c.31.(5.), sig. B1v. Photo: © The British Library Board.

Although widows are usually depicted in black mourning costume, there are a few illustrations of widows in ordinary dress. As mentioned already, middle- and lower-class widows are likely to have discarded their mourning garments more quickly than aristocratic widows. For instance, the widow in Copland's treatise appears in her ordinary costume immediately after her husband's funeral (fig. 1.22).

Fig. 1.22. "The Fyfth Sorowe," from Robert Copland, The Seven Sorowes that Women Have When Theyr Husbandes be Dead ([1565(?)]). London, British Library, C.20.c.31.(5.), sig. B3v. Photo: © The British Library Board.

While the widow in Copland's work at least keeps her veil, the widow in Samuel Rowlands's *Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete* (1613) appears in completely ordinary apparel (fig. 1.23). Although the pamphlet was published in 1602, the illustration appeared in the enlarged 1613 edition. Dressed in the same costume as the wife, the widow has clearly finished her mourning and re-entered society. Interestingly, the same widow appears in black costume in the 1656 edition, although the reason for this alteration is unknown (fig. 1.24).

This survey of portraits and woodcuts has revealed a variety of costumes and accessories associated with widows in the early modern period. From antiquity, widows had a special connection with mourning costume, whose origin can be traced back to nuns' clothing. Although it was initially made simple and unfashionable to signify the wearer's mourning, piety, and chastity, it was increasingly secularized by the development of the heraldic funeral, and turned into a sign of

Fig. 1.23. Detail from title page of Samuel Rowlands, *Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete* (1613). Photo: Used with the kind permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

wealth, social status, or sensitivity to fashion. Still, such luxury was only available to royal and aristocratic widows. Apart from a few who had either wealth or a connection to the court, middle- and lower-class widows put on ordinary costume that was possibly dyed black, or purchased an affordable item like a veil. They also ended mourning more quickly than their social superiors to resume their daily work life or to remarry.

This survey has also highlighted useful points in discussing theatrical representations of widows. Firstly, it is notable that these portraits and woodcuts almost invariably depict widows in black mourning costume, including middle- and lower-class widows who could not afford it in reality. This suggests that black clothing was the most familiar visual icon of widowhood. Secondly, widows are associated with various accessories, including rings, handkerchiefs, and books, all of which are featured in plays. It is important to note that their

Fig. 1.24. Detail from title page of Samuel Rowlands, *Well Met Gossip: or, Tis Merry When Gossips Meet* (1656). London, British Library, C.117.b.52. Photo: © The British Library Board.

cultural and symbolic meanings could vary according to the context of each representation. Lastly, we can learn many things about widows from their physical appearance, including their social and economic status, internal lives, relationships with their husbands, or even religious and political attitudes. While the *deuil blanc* of Mary, Queen of Scots, indicates her French connection, Elizabeth Stuart's costume not only implies her knowledge about the Caroline fashion, but also underlines her self-esteem as an English princess. Whereas Joyce Frankland's ruff and cuffs reveal her keenness about the courtly fashion, the widow's ordinary costume in *Tis Merrie When Gossips Meete* indicates that she had already started a new life, drinking wine and chatting with her gossips. These visual representations enable us to imagine how widows might have looked on the stage, as well as teaching us the importance of examining costumes and accessories to understand characters accurately.

Widows' Costumes on the Early Modern Stage

Mourning Dress

As in the visual images, widows were usually dressed in mourning costume on the early modern stage. There were mainly three types of occasion on which they appeared in this outfit. The first occasion was when they attended funeral processions. In Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1591–1597), Lady Anne, the widow of Prince Edward, appears as "the mourner" as she follows the corpse of Henry VI, her father-in-law (I.ii.0 s.d.).[64] In Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604–1607), Thomasine follows the "counterfeit corse" (IV.iv.52 s.d.) of her husband with the other mourners, all dressed in "mourning weeds" (V.iii.4). Although Marston does not specify Maria's costume or her role as a mourner in *Antonio's Revenge* (1600–1601), she was almost certainly dressed in mourning costume as she followed her husband's coffin, considering how meticulously Marston reproduces a heraldic funeral in his stage direction (II.i.0 s.d.).[65] The second occasion was when widows had lost their husbands recently. In Middleton's *The Puritan* (1606–1607), Lady Plus and her relatives appear "all in mourning apparel" as they "newly come from the burial of her husband" (I.i.0 s.d.). Shakespeare's *All's Well that Ends Well* (ca. 1601–1608) also opens with the main characters "all in black," including the Countess of Roussillon, whose husband has lately deceased (I.i.0 s.d.). In T. B.'s *The Country Girl* (1632–ca. 1633), Lady Mosely has lost her husband two months ago and appears "in mourning, veild" (sig. B3r).[66] Finally, widows put on mourning garments to signify their decision to forsake remarriage. In *The Country Girl*, Lady Mosely's mourning costume indicates not only her husband's recent death, but also her vow "[t]o live, and die a Widdow" (sig. B1r). In Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (1621–1622), the Duchess of Milan has been wearing "funeral weeds" (I.i.3) for seven years, following her vow of chastity to her deceased husband. Eugenia in Chapman's *Sir Giles Goosecap* (1601–1603) is also teased by her uncle for wearing "wilful-widow's-three-years black weed" (II.i.56–57).[67]

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64 This stage direction appears only in the First Folio (1623), which gives more stage directions than the First Quarto (1597). Unless otherwise noted, all further references are from the First Quarto.

65 John Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, ed. W. Reavley Gair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978). All further references are to this edition.

66 T. B., *The Countrie Girle: A Comedie* (London, 1647). All further references are to this edition.

67 George Chapman, *Sir Giles Goosecap*, in *The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: The Comedies*, ed. Thomas Marc Parrott (London: Routledge, 1914), pp. 607–70.

Although the descriptions of mourning costume are "often generic rather than specific" and rarely explain the details, the mourning veil is often mentioned individually in stage directions.[68] As it appears in the portraits and woodcuts, it was presumably black. In Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613–1614), three widowed queens come to petition Theseus "in black, with veils stained" (I.i.24 s.d.), and "stained" probably means "dyed black."[69] Along with Leontes's "o'er-dyed blacks" in *The Winter's Tale*, this implies that some widows dyed their ordinary clothes black to use them for mourning. A widow's veil is also described as thin in *The Country Girl*. When Lady Mosely's gentlewoman appears in her mistress's "upper garment" and "mourning Veil" (sig. B4v) to deceive her suitors, one of them argues that he can see her beauty "[t]hrough this thin veile" (sig. C1r). Apart from mourning veils, widows occasionally adorned their mourning costumes with accessories. In Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625), Lady Alworth is described as wearing "costly jewels" and "rich clothes" (I.iii.89–90) even before she casts off "[t]he garments of her widowhood" (III.iii.3).[70]

When playwrights specified that widows appear in mourning, they must have expected some special theatrical effects. Firstly, they employed black mourning to create a dismal, tragic atmosphere. It is well known that black hangings were used to denote tragedy and death in the early modern theatre, especially in the Elizabethan and early Jacobean period.[71] In the Induction to *A Warning for Fair Women* (1595–1599), allegorical figures of Comedy and History surrender the stage to Tragedy after noting that "[t]he stage is hung with blacke" with "[t]he Auditors preparde for *Tragedie*" (ll. 82–83).[72] In Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 1* (1592), Henry V's funeral procession is introduced by Bedford's order,

68 Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 145.

69 William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Robert Kean Turner and Patricia Tatspaugh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 63.

70 Philip Massinger, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, in *Four Renaissance Comedies*, ed. Robert Shaughnessy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 231–312. All further references are to this edition.

71 Andrew Gurr, "'The stage is hung with black': Genre and the Trappings of Stagecraft in Shakespearean Tragedy," in *Shakespeare and Genre: From Early Modern Inheritances to Postmodern Legacies*, ed. Anthony R. Guneratne (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 67–82; Nathalie Rivere de Carles, "Performing Materiality: Curtains on the Early Modern Stage," in *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, ed. Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 51–69 (pp. 55–56).

72 Anon., *A Warning for Fair Women: A Critical Edition*, ed. Charles Dale Cannon (The Hague: Mouton, 1975). All further references are to this edition.

"Hung be the heavens with black" (I.i.1). Like these hangings, it is likely that widows' mourning garments signified death and tragedy as *memento mori*. For instance, John Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury, writes in *Defence of the Answer to the Admonition* (1574): "I see not why the wearing of mourning apparel should not be profitable to put a man in mind of his own mortality, seeing it carrieth a remembrance of death with it."[73] This dismal sign of death was often accompanied by other ominous objects. In *The Insatiate Countess* (1608–1613) by Marston and others, Isabella is "discovered, dressed in mourning clothes and sitting at a table covered with black, on which stand two black tapers lighted" (I.i.0 s.d.).[74] Though not precisely a widow, Jolenta in Webster's *The Devil's Law-Case* (1617–1619) also appears "in mourning" and sits at "[a] Table set forth with two Tapers, a Deaths head, a Booke" (III.iii.0 s.d.) after the supposed death of her fiancé.[75] These objects not only signify death, but also transform widows into *memento mori*, whose presence reminds the onlooker of his or her own death as well as their husbands. This visual effect is especially disturbing when juxtaposed with the white costume for wedding ceremonies. In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the three widowed queens' black garments are clearly contrasted with the "white robe" of Hymen's boy, "singing and strewing flowers" (I.i.0 s.d.) to celebrate the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta, who is also likely to have been dressed in white as a bride. The contrast between the blessed bride in white and the three mourning widows in black must have been striking. Shakespeare possibly used the same stage picture in *King John* (1594–1598), when Constance destroys the wedding of Blanche and Louis the Dauphin by lamenting and cursing vehemently: "A widow cries: be husband to me, heavens!" (III.i.34). Although Shakespeare does not specify her costume, it is likely that Constance is meant to appear in black in contrast to the wedding dress of Blanche, whose name evokes white (*blanc*) in French. These mournful widows disturb the audience by driving away the cheerful tone of the wedding ceremony and bringing a dark, dismal atmosphere to the play.

Considering that mourning costume evokes death and tragedy, it is appropriate that stage widows often mark the end of mourning and the beginning of a

73 John Whitgift, *Defence of the Answer to the Admonition*, in *The Works of John Whitgift*, ed. John Ayre, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1853), pp. 1–467 (p. 370).

74 John Marston, William Barksted, and Lewis Machin, *The Insatiate Countess*, in *Four Jacobean Sex Tragedies*, ed. Martin Wiggins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 1–74. All further references are to this edition.

75 John Webster, *The Devil's Law-Case*, in *The Works of John Webster: An Old-Spelling Critical Edition*, vol. 2, ed. David Gunby, David Carnegie, and MacDonald P. Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1–260.

new life by discarding the costume. In *More Dissemblers*, after the Duchess falls in love with Andrugio, she takes off her "black" clothing and commands her maid to "[s]eek out the lightest colours can be got, / The youthfull'st dressings" (II.i.1–2). By changing her costume, the Duchess liberates herself from the vow of chastity enforced by her husband and asserts her sexual desire and will to remarry. Massinger also makes the widow change her costume in *A New Way*. Sir Overreach, a mercenary suitor to Lady Alworth and villainous uncle of Wellborne, remarks on the widow's renunciation of her vidual chastity and sudden affection for his nephew as follows: "The garments of her widowhood laid by, / She now appears as glorious as the spring" (III.iii.3–4). However Lady Alworth's affection for Wellborne is merely a disguise, she eventually marries Lord Lovell, the most powerful and virtuous man in the play. Finally, the Duchess Rosauna in Shirley's *The Cardinal* (1641) has recently finished "my year of mourning" (I.ii.11) and expects remarriage. She has taken off her "ceremonious black" and appears in a "[n]ew dress and smiling garment, meant to show / A peace concluded 'twixt grief and me" (I.ii.15–16).[76] Although the Duchess's remarriage ends tragically in Shirley's play, widows' change from mourning to ordinary costume, or their entrance to a new life, are generally represented positively.

However, it is incorrect to assume that widows' mourning garments only signified widowhood, death, and tragedy, for, somewhat paradoxically, they could also denote their marriageability and sexual availability.[77] The early modern audience was probably conscious of this paradox, considering that some real-life widows expressed their inclination towards remarriage by appropriating their mourning costume. This practice was well established in early modern Italy. According to Vecellio, Venetian widows were expected to "wear a train and put on no colored clothing," when "they want to remain widowed." However, "if they decide to marry again, without blame they may wear some jewelery, though not of striking appearance, and uncover their hair to some degree, all of which serves to inform others of their intention."[78] A similar practice was possibly in use in England. The portrait of Katherine Villiers, Duchess of Buckingham,

76 James Shirley, *The Cardinal*, ed. E. M. Yearling (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986). All further references are to this edition.

77 Patricia Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature in Post-Reformation England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 27–28; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family*, pp. 249–50.

78 Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni: The Clothing of the Renaissance World, Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*, ed. Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), p. 186.

shows the widow of George Villiers, King James's and Charles's great favourite, "attired in black with a black band with a diamond on it round her wrist and a black velvet bow at her breast" (fig. 1.25).

Fig. 1.25. *Katherine Manners, Duchess of Buckingham, later Marchioness of Antrim (d. 1649)*, Anthony van Dyck, ca. 1628–1635. Photo: © National Trust Images.

While the Duchess appears as a widow *par excellence* in her mourning garment, it is notable that she wears "small red, pink and white flowers" in her hair, and "behind her to the left is a rosebush bearing large red roses – often a symbol of

love." As Karen Hearn points out, it is noteworthy that the Duchess remarried Randall MacDonnell, second Earl and first Marquis of Antrim, around the same time as this portrait was completed.[79] The portrait was probably commissioned by the Duchess to be sent to her prospective husband, which was not an extraordinary practice in early modern Europe. For instance, when Henry VIII was contemplating his third marriage, he was sent Hans Holbein's portrait of Christina, Duchess of Milan, in which she appears as a young widow completely in black.[80] These examples demonstrate how easily widows could turn their mourning costume from the visual sign of death and tragedy into a means to express their intention to remarry. This ambivalence is not totally surprising, considering that black costume was thought to enhance widows' beauty as a foil to white skin with red cheeks. [81] It was even considered as capable of enticing men. For example, Chaucer repeatedly implies that Troilus is attracted to Criseyde precisely because she is wearing black: "She, this in blak, likynge to Troilus / Over alle thing, he stood for to biholde" (I.310); "so soore hath she me wounded, / That stood in blak" (II.533–34). Thomas Edgar's *The Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights* (1632) also relates how a certain widow in black drew men's attention:

> she was faire, young, rich, gracious in her carriage, and so well became her mourning apparrell, that when shee went to Church on Sundayes, the casements opened of their owne accord on both sides the streets, that bachelours and widdowers might behold her.[82]

A widow's mourning garment, then, not only makes her a relic of her husband and *memento mori*, but also advertises the widow as a marriageable woman to potential suitors. Some stage widows also deploy their mourning costume to seduce men. Lelia, a sensual widow in Fletcher and Beaumont's *The Captain* (1609–1612), disguises herself as a grieving widow as she spies one of her suitors from the balcony: "Give me my vaile, and bid the boy goe sing / That song above, I gave him; the sad Song" (III.iv.9–10). Similarly, in *The Insatiate Countess*, Isabella's black costume and mourning objects become a means to seduce Roberto. She subtly appropriates terms and objects meant for mourning to arouse her

79 Karen Hearn, ed., *Van Dyck and Britain* (London: Tate, 2009), p. 91.

80 "Christina of Denmark, Duchess of Milan," The National Gallery, London, http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hans-holbein-the-younger-christina-of-denmark-duchess-of-milan.

81 Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Remarriage as an Option for Urban and Rural Widows in Late Medieval England," in *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, ed. Sue Sheridan Walker (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 141–64 (pp. 142–43); Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady*, pp. 129–30.

82 T[homas]. E[dgar]., *The Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights* (London, 1632), p. 331.

lover. Isabella responds to Robert's profession of love as follows: "I' faith, my lord, I had a month's mind unto you" (I.i.89). The expression "a month's mind," which is usually a funeral service held a month after death, refers to Isabella's strong desires for Roberto. She then whispers to him:

> And as this taper, due unto the dead,
> I here extinguish, so my late dead lord
> I put out ever from my memory[.] (I.i.96–98)

By extinguishing the black tapers for mourning, Isabella banishes her husband's memory and invites Roberto to her bed. Such representations of widows' mourning costumes are ironic, considering that these costumes were originally made sombre and unfashionable to deprive widows of sexual attraction.

Ordinary Dress

Although portraits and woodcuts rarely represent widows in ordinary costume, we see many instances of this in plays. When widows appear in ordinary dress, the most distinguishing feature is luxury. This is especially important for plays about a widow hunt, which dramatize mercenary men's pursuit of wealthy widows, because widows' costumes must explain their allure for such suitors. In Fletcher's *Wit without Money* (1614–1615), the Widow's wealth is described by her sister in sartorial terms: "she spreads satten, / As the Kings ships doe canvas, every where" (I.ii.11–12). The same widow later speaks of her clothes as "gay and glorious" (III.ii.83). In Shirley's *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635), Celestina, a young beautiful widow, is described by her sycophant as follows:

> She is full of jewels, madam, but I am
> Most taken with the bravery of her mind,
> Although her garments have all grace and ornament. (I.i.274–76)[83]

While these are general descriptions, more specific items are occasionally mentioned. The most common item is the ruff, which probably signified not only widows' interest in fashion, but also their wealth and power, because the lace and

83 James Shirley, *The Lady of Pleasure*, ed. Ronald Huebert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986). All further references are to this edition.

other material for the ruff were expensive, and it required a lot of hard work from servants or laundresses to keep it laundered and starched.[84] In Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–1614), the Duchess orders her maid to "mend my ruff" (II.i.105), and the Widow in Field's *Amends for Ladies* (1610–1611) scolds her maid (actually her suitor in disguise) for taking too long to pin her ruff: "hast not thou pin'd in that Ruffe yet, ah! how thou fumblest" (II.iv.44–45).[85] Another common item is the farthingale. In *Malfi*, Bosola wishes that the Duchess's "bawd farthingales" (II.i.148) would be blown up by wind so that her pregnancy will be revealed. In Barry's *Ram-Alley* (1607–1608), Sir Oliver Smallshanks, an elderly suitor, creeps under the widow's farthingale to hide away from Captain Face, her robust suitor (ll. 1250–51).[86]

While using costumes and accessories to indicate widows' wealth and status, playwrights often criticized these women's richness by associating it with vanity and moral corruption. In *Wit without Money*, the Widow is warned against vicious rumours among her suitors: "Proud of your cloathes, they sweare [you are] a Mercers Lucifer" (III.ii.78). Celestina, in *The Lady of Pleasure*, is also censured as "proud" (III.ii.248) and maliciously called "a puppet, a thing made / Of clothes and painting" (III.ii.230–31) by her treacherous sycophant. Some playwrights indicate widows' vanity by referring to specific types of ruffs. In Machin's *Every Woman in Her Humour* (1606–1608), the citizen's wife, who claims to have buried six husbands in a manner reminiscent of the Wife of Bath, flaunts the largeness of her ruffs: "Nay this is but shallowe, marrie I have a Ruffe [which] is a quarter deepe, measured by the yard" (sig. C1r).[87] A ruff of the same size is mentioned by Philip Stubbes in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), where he condemns it as "monstrous" (l. 1154) and invented by the devil.[88] In W. R.'s *A Match at Midnight* (1621–1623), Widow Wagge commands her maid to fetch a new ruff from her seamstress and asks: "did yee bid her hollow it just in the French fashion cut?" (III.i.70–71).[89] This item is also derided in Howes's expanded edition of

84 Korda, *Labors Lost*, pp. 95–97; Robert I. Lublin, *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage: Visual Codes of Representation in Early Modern Theatre and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 14–15.

85 Nathan Field, *Amends for Ladies*, in *The Plays of Nathan Field*, ed. William Peery (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1950), pp. 143–294. All further references are to this edition.

86 Lording Barry, *Ram-Alley, or Merrie-Trickes*, ed. Claude E. Jones, Materials for the Study of the Old English Drama, XXIII (Louvain: Uystpruyst, 1952). All further references are to this edition.

87 [Lewis Machin], *Everie Woman in Her Humor* (London, 1609).

88 Margaret Jane Kidnie, "A Critical Edition of Philip Stubbes's *Anatomy of Abuses*," unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Birmingham, 1996).

89 W. R., *A Critical Old-Spelling Edition of "A Match at Midnight,"* ed. Stephen Blase Young (New York: Garland, 1980). All further references are to this edition.

Stow's *Annales* (1615), which explains that the fashion actually originated in England and was called "the English Monster" by the French.[90]

An item worn by widows is sometimes associated with sexual innuendos. In *Patient Grissil* (1600) by Chettle, Dekker, and Haughton, Gwenthyan puts on a white, standing collar called a "[r]ebato" (III.ii.242) newly acquired from a Dutch seamstress. Causing a heated fight between the widow and her new husband, this starched, stiff collar symbolizes the widow's stubbornness and unruliness.[91] When the same accessory appears in Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1601), however, it is associated with a widow's sexual subjection to her robust suitor. As Widow Miniver reports excitedly, Captain Tucca has compared love to a rebato, claiming that they are both "worne out with pinning too often" (II.i.60).[92] The same phallic image of pinning appears in *Amends for Ladies*, when the suitor, who disguises himself as a maid, tries to pin the widow's ruff and pricks her by mistake (II.iv.44–45).

Considering that playwrights often associated widows' costume with vanity and sensuality, it is unsurprising that widows are often named after rich fabric. In *Ram-Alley*, the wealthy mercer's widow is called Taffata, an early form of taffeta, "[a] fine, crisp, and usually lustrous fabric of a plain weave."[93] Taffeta is repeatedly mentioned in Tudor sumptuary laws, and its use for outer garments was restricted to those who "may dispend £100 by the year" and their wives in a statute issued on 16 June 1574.[94] Miniver, in *Satiromastix*, is also named after "[a] kind of fur," used especially "as a lining and trimming for ceremonial costumes."[95] It also appears in Margaret Beaufort's sartorial regulations, which restricted its use to ladies of high rank.[96] The names of these citizen widows, both of whom try to remarry a gentleman, clearly indicate their ambition for social advancement. Though not precisely the name of a fabric, Middleton names a rich widow "Lady Goldenfleece" in *No Wit, No Help Like a Womans* (1611). Like Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, mercenary suitors pursued wealthy widows, whose great fortune was promised by their names.

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90 John Stow, *The Annales, or Generall Chronicle of England*, ed. and suppl. Edmund Howes (London, 1615), p. 869.

91 Korda, *Labors Lost*, pp. 133–36.

92 Katherine Harriett James, "The Widow in Jacobean Drama," unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Tennessee, 1973), p. 106.

93 "taffeta, n. and adj.," *OED*, A.1 [accessed 23 August 2020].

94 "Enforcing Statutes of Apparel," in *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 381–86 (pp. 385–86).

95 "miniver, n. and adj.," *OED*, A.1 [accessed 23 August 2016].

96 BL Harley MS 1776, fol. 8v.

Widows' Accessories on the Early Modern Stage

Along with costume, accessories also played significant roles in constructing the image of widow characters. Above all, rings, handkerchiefs, and books are the most common items mentioned in play-texts. Although these accessories primarily indicate widows' chastity and piety, like mourning costume, their meanings are often made ambiguous or appropriated by widows.

Rings

Widows were usually associated with two types of rings on the early modern stage: the death's-head ring and the wedding ring. A death's-head ring is a ring with a representation of a skull, which was often bequeathed to a relative or friend by the deceased as a personal memento (figs. 1.26 and 1.27). Although the custom already existed in the fourteenth century, the earliest examples of these rings survive from the late fifteenth century.[97]

These rings were objects of *memento mori*, as well as remembrance of the deceased. The inscription on the ring on the left reads: "†BEHOLD THE ENDE." In Brome's *The Northern Lass* (1629), Howdee jokes about his mistress's death's-head ring as he describes the widow's violent nature: "She broke me a tooth once with a death's-head ring on her finger. It had like to ha' cost me my life! It has been a true memento to me ever since" (II.iii.322). Some stage widows are associated with more than one ring. In William Cavendish's *The Variety* (1639 – 1642), Mistress Voluble finds "foure Deaths-heads" (p. 51) in the casket of Simpleton's old widowed mother. This implies that she has buried four husbands and is now embarking on her fifth marriage.[98] Although these rings could technically be bequeathed to widows by anyone, they were usually associated with their deceased husbands. In *The Insatiate Countess*, Mendosa blames Lady Lentulus's indifference to his love as follows: "O your husband! You wear his memory like a death's head" (II.i.79 – 80).

While the death's-head ring denoted widows' loyalty to her husband, the early modern audience would have associated the object with moral ambiguity, because it was also a common attribute of bawds.[99] In *The Old Law* (1618 – 1619) by Middleton, Rowley, and Heywood, the Clown admonishes his wife, an old

97 Oman, *British Rings*, p. 71.

98 [William Cavendish], *The Country Captaine, and The Varietie* (London, 1649).

99 Ollie Jones, "A Death's Head on their Middle Finger," *The Dutch Courtesan*, University of York, https://www.dutchcourtesan.hosted.york.ac.uk/.

Fig. 1.26. Ring, 1550–1600, made in England, museum number 13–1888. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

widow, to think on death as follows: "Sell some of thy clothes to buy thee a death's-head, and put't upon thy middle finger; your least-considering bawds do so much" (IV.i.151–53). In Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (1603–1605), Cockledemoy argues that bawds will have a good end "since their wickedness is always before their eyes, and a death's head most commonly on their middle finger" (I.ii.51–53).[100] These references suggest that bawds usually put these rings on their middle-finger, whereas widows possibly wore them on different fingers. As discussed above, Elizabeth Stuart and Henrietta Maria wear their rings on the little finger and the thumb in their portraits. Still, this is an interesting coincidence, because widows often play instigators of adultery in early modern

100 John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. David Crane (London: A & C Black, 1997).

Fig. 1.27. Ring, ca. 1600, made in England, museum number M.18–1929. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

plays. In *A Warning for Fair Women*, the widow Drury corrupts Anne, the virtuous wife, into adultery and the murder of her husband. In Middleton's *Women, Beware Women* (1621), Livia is overtly called "a damned bawd" by Bianca for assisting the Duke's illicit desire for her (II.ii.464). Although these widows are not described as wearing death's-head rings, it must have been appropriate for them to put on the same rings as bawds.

Whereas the death's-head ring possibly indicates widows being sellers of other women's bodies, the wedding ring signifies widows' sexual gift of their own bodies. As Anne Thompson and John O. Thompson suggest, rings commonly appear as love-tokens or symbolize the marriage bond in early modern plays. It is unsurprising that women were more likely to give their rings to their lovers than men, considering the common association between the ring and the female genitals. While promising sexual pleasure by giving their rings and bodies to

their lovers, widows also bound them by using these rings as manacles.[101] Wedding rings also turned into strong mementos like death's-head rings upon spousal bereavement. In the following portrait, Thomas Killigrew appears with "his wife's wedding ring attached to his left wrist by a black silk band," as he mourns her untimely death (fig. 1.28).[102]

Fig. 1.28. *Thomas Killigrew and William, Lord Crofts (?)*, Anthony van Dyck, 1638, RCIN407426. Photo: Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020.

101 Ann Thompson and John O. Thompson, "'Know You This Ring?': Metonymic Functions of a Prop," in *Early Modern Drama in Performance: Essays in Honor of Lois Potter*, ed. Darlene Farabee, Mark Netzloff, and Bradley D. Ryner (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2015), pp. 47–61 (p. 54).

102 "Thomas Killigrew and William, Lord Crofts (?)," Royal Collection Trust, http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/407426/thomas-killigrew-and-william-lord-crofts.

However, when widows show their wedding rings on the stage, these objects do not appear as mementos of their deceased husbands. Rather, they are turned into the means for widows to woo their new lovers. In Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1587–1590) in collaboration with Nashe, Dido gives Aeneas "[t]hese golden bracelets, and this wedding ring, / Wherewith my husband woo'd me yet a maide" (III.iv.62–63) to declare her new love. The Duchess of Malfi also gives Antonio her "wedding ring," although she "did vow never to part with it, / But to my second husband" (I.ii.405–7). It is difficult to determine how ordinary it was for widows to give their wedding rings to their new lovers, or the moral implications behind this exchange. Some audiences would have taken it as an indication of widows' disloyalty. In *Arden of Faversham* (1587–1592), Arden decries his wife's adultery as follows:

> Nay, on his finger did I spy the ring
> Which at our marriage day the priest put on.
> Can any grief be half so great as this? (i.17–19)[103]

On the other hand, in *Dido* and *Malfi*, widows' bestowal of their wedding rings to their new husbands is more important as a visual sign of widows' determination to leave their tragic past and move onto the next marriage. By entrusting their most precious ring, these widows venture their bodies as well as their great fortune to their new husbands.

Handkerchiefs

Handkerchiefs were also frequently associated with widows on the early modern stage. Variously called "handkercher," "muckinder," or "napkin," handkerchiefs first appeared in England in the late fourteenth century, and "became much more widespread" in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, "reaching a peak during the reign of Elizabeth."[104] Although they were most commonly "used for wiping the face or nose, the more elegant styles [were] used for display only."[105] In

103 Anon., *Arden of Faversham*, ed. Martin White, revised ed. (London: A & C Black, 2007). All further references are to this edition.

104 Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 38; M. Braun-Ronsdorf, *The History of the Handkerchief* (Leigh-on-Sea: Lewis, 1967), pp. 12, 19–20.

105 Cumming et al., *Dictionary of Fashion History*, p. 99; Korda, *Domestic Economies*, pp. 126–27.

his expanded edition of Stow's *Annals* (1631), Howes describes the handkerchiefs used as love tokens in Jacobean England:

> And it was then the Custome for maydes, and Gentlewomen, to give their favourites as tokens of their love, little handkerchiefs of about three or foure inches square, wrought round about, and with a button, or a tassell at each corner, and a little in the middle, with silke or threed: The best edged with a little small gold lace, or twist, which being foulded up in four crosse foldes, so as the middle might bee seene. Gentlemen and others did usually were them in their hats, as favours of their Loves, and Mistrisses, some cost five pence a piece, some twelve pence, and the richest sixteene pence.[106]

Again, according to the National Archives' Currency Converter, one penny in 1610 had the same purchasing power as £0.56 in 2017, which means that the most expensive handkerchief mentioned by Howes cost the equivalent of £8.96, which sounds quite accessible. Although we know almost nothing about the physical features of the handkerchiefs that were used as props on the early modern stage, they are described as "white" by widows in *Satiromastix* (IV.i.182) and Drue's *The Duchess of Suffolk* (1624) (sig. F2r).[107] The following pictures show two white handkerchiefs, which are much larger and more elaborate than those mentioned by Howes (figs. 1.29 and 1.30). Although it is unlikely that such expensive items were used as stage props, they give us some idea of how widows' handkerchiefs might have looked.

When stage widows appear with handkerchiefs, these objects are almost invariably associated with tears. In *Antonio's Revenge*, Maria and her son "wet their handkerchiefs with their tears, kiss them, and lay them on the hearse, kneeling" (II.i.0 s.d.) at her husband's funeral. In *The Puritan*, Lady Plus also wets her handkerchief with tears, as her cynical daughter remarks: "Alas, a small matter bucks a handkerchief" (I.i.122–23). Though not presented on stage, handkerchiefs are similarly associated with tears in two other plays. In Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (1603–1605), Cynthia, a seemingly virtuous widow, is compared to a monument where "all the Paphian widows shall after their husbands' funerals offer their wet muckenders" (IV.i.123–24).[108] In *The Cardinal*, Hernando describes how the widowed Duchess made her "eyes red, and wept a handkercher"

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106 John Stow, *Annales, or A Generall Chronicle of England*, ed. and suppl. Edmund Howes (London, 1631), p. 1039; Katherine Morris Lester and Bess Viola Oerke, *Accessories of Dress: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Peoria, IL: Manual Arts Press, 1940; repr. Mineola, NY: Dover, 2004), pp. 429–30.

107 [Thomas Drue], *The Life of the Dutche[s] of Suffolke* (London, 1631).

108 George Chapman, *The Widow's Tears*, ed. Akihiro Yamada (London: Methuen, 1975). All further references are to this edition.

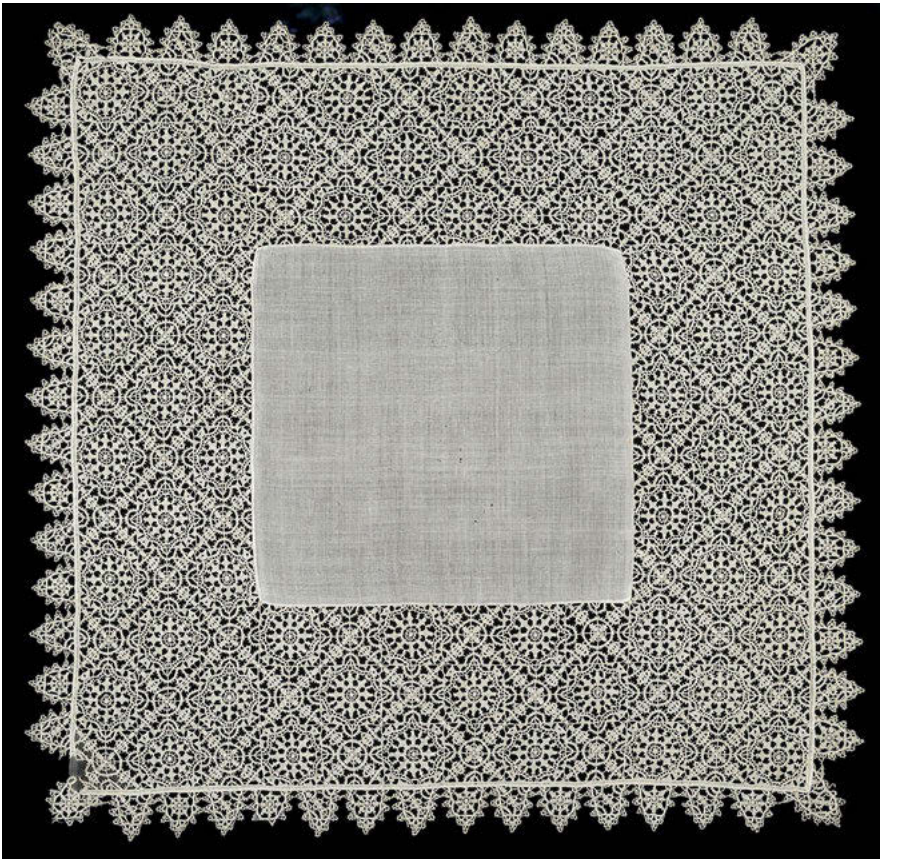

Fig. 1.29. Handkerchief, 1600–1620, made in Flanders, museum number 484–1903. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

(IV.ii.128). This association between handkerchiefs and widows' tears might have been a recent innovation. According to Stephanie S. Dickey's study of the representation of women holding handkerchiefs in seventeenth-century Dutch portraits, it was also around this time that biblical women started to wipe their tears with handkerchiefs in religious paintings. Moreover, handkerchiefs appear most frequently in portraits of widows or those presumed to be widows. Although she "would not go so far as to say that the possession of a handkerchief can identify an unknown portrait subject specifically as a widow," Dickey writes that "it would certainly seem to be especially appropriate as an attribute of widowhood, or at least of bereavement." Although it falls outside the scope of my study to discuss the relationship between these phenomena, it is interesting

Fig. 1.30. Handkerchief, ca. 1600, made in Italy, museum number 288–1906. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

that handkerchiefs began to symbolize widows' tears in two different cultures at around the same time.[109]

At the same time, however, the fact that widows' handkerchiefs almost automatically signify their tears enables some widows to pretend to feel sorrow by displaying these objects. In Shirley's *Love Tricks* (1625), Gasparo gives a lec-

109 Stephanie S. Dickey, "'Met een wenende ziel … doch droge ogen': Women Holding Handkerchiefs in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Portraits," in *Beeld en zelfbeeld in de Nederlandse kunst, 1550–1750 / Image and Self-Image in Netherlandish Art, 1550–1750*, ed. Reindert Falkenburg et al. (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 1995), pp. 332–67 (p. 351).

ture to an old country widow, who has recently come to London to marry a knight, on how to present the appearance of a virtuous widow and attract male sympathy: "have you your handkercher ready, that when a suitor comes, you may put him off with wiping your eyes, as if tears stood in them ever since your husband was buried" (p. 51).[110] In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge* (1606–1611), Bacha, a prostitute widow, appears with a handkerchief and calls herself "a widdow, full of teares in shewe" (II.ii.39) to evoke her lover's compassion. For some widows, handkerchiefs are no longer associated with mourning but with new love. In *Ram-Alley*, Taffata intentionally drops her handkerchief from the balcony to attract Boutcher's attention and seize a chance to seduce him (ll. 290–91). Although handkerchiefs are primarily associated with widows' tears, they can also be appropriated by cunning widows.

Books

It is unsurprising that widows often appear with books in early modern plays, considering that they are one of the most frequently mentioned props with "roughly 130 examples."[111] Widows are usually associated with two types of books. The first type is religious texts or, most commonly, prayer books. As Elizabeth Williamson argues, Henslowe's inventory of props of the Admiral's Men does not mention any religious book, presumably because these books could be represented by any text, for "the visual appearance of the book was important only insofar as it allowed the actor, and on another level the character, to perform the act of reading."[112] There are two types of occasion on which widows are associated with religious texts. Firstly, playwrights represent widows with prayer books to emphasize their virtue and moral uprightness. In Fletcher and Massinger's *The Custom of the Country* (1619–1620), Guiomar, the virtuous widow mother, appears on stage with a prayer book and says while kneeling:

> those devotions I am to pay
> Are written in my heart, not in this booke,
> And I shall reade them there without a taper. (II.iv.5–7)

110 James Shirley, *Love Tricks, or the School of Complement*, in *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*, ed. William Gifford and Alexander Dyce, vol. 1 (London, 1833), pp. 1–97.
111 Dessen and Thomson, *Dictionary of Stage Directions*, p. 34.
112 Williamson, *Materiality of Religion*, p. 153.

In *A Match at Midnight*, Widow Wagg, who rejects her robust suitor and is eventually reunited with her husband, appears in her night-gown and orders her maid to fetch "the prayer-booke [which] lyes within upon my bed" (IV.v.4–5). It is notable that both plays stress that these widows practise religion on an everyday basis. Although, as discussed above, religious books can be ambiguous objects especially when they are associated with Catholic widows, they are almost unequivocally visual signs of widows' chastity and virtue in these plays. Considering how widows were encouraged to dedicate their lives to prayer and religious activities in prescriptive literature even after the Reformation, it is appropriate that these virtuous widows appear with prayer books.[113]

Religious books can also signify widows' penitence for murder or adultery, as we have seen in the woodcut of Anne Turner (fig. 1.18). In *The Insatiate Countess*, Isabella enters "with her hair hanging down, a chaplet of flowers on her head, a nosegay in her hand" (V.i.66 s.d.) before her execution. The Cardinal then "gives her a book" (V.i.96 s.d.) and admonishes her to repent her licentious life and murder of her lover. Although Isabella first ignores his admonition, she eventually repents her sins. Standing on the scaffold with her religious book, this diabolical widow almost appears like an innocent martyr in the end. In *A Warning for Fair Women*, Anne gives her children "a booke / Of holy meditations, *Bradfords* workes, / That vertuous chosen servant of the Lord" before her execution (ll. 2702–4). According to Cannon, the full title of this book is *Godlie Meditations upon the Lordes Prayer, the Beleefe, and the Ten Commandments* by John Bradford, a Protestant martyr burned at the stake in 1555. The book was published posthumously in 1562 and reprinted in 1578, 1604, and later.[114] This is a unique example that specifies a religious text associated with a widow, and Bradford's book was probably presented on the stage. By associating Anne with the Protestant martyr, the author not only "reinscribes the values that were threatened by Anne's initial transgression," but also stresses her repentance and enhances the audience's sympathy towards her.[115]

A complex example appears in *The White Devil* (1611–1612), when Vittoria enters "with a book in her hand" (V.vi.0 s.d.) after Brachiano's death.[116] Vittoria, who has been accused of not appearing "like a widow" in "a mourning habit" (III.ii.121–22) at her trial for adultery and the murder of her first husband,

113 Elizabeth Thompson Oakes, "Heiress, Beggar, Saint or Strumpet: The Widow in the Society and on the Stage in Early Modern England," unpublished doctoral dissertation (Vanderbilt University, 1990), pp. 58–59.

114 Anon., *Warning*, ed. Cannon, p. 195.

115 Williamson, *Materiality of Religion*, pp. 171–72.

116 John Webster, *The White Devil*, ed. Benedict S. Robinson (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

now appears like a proper widow, holding a religious book and probably dressed in mourning garments. However, while the book seems to indicate her penitence and virtuous widowhood, the fact that Vittoria claims her contrition and sacrificial love for Brachiano to disguise her attempt to shoot Flamineo complicates our understanding of this object. Together with the widows' handkerchiefs in *Love Tricks* and *Cupid's Revenge*, Vittoria's political use of the religious book reveals the ambiguity of widows' costumes and accessories as visual signs, which can be used by widows to pretend their virtue and sorrow.

Apart from religious books, which generally indicate widows' virtue, piety, chastity, or contrition, these women are also associated with romantic, possibly amorous, books. In *Ram-Alley*, Taffata mentions two Iberian romances when she lists the conditions of marriage to Sir Oliver Smallshanks:

> shall I keepe
> My chamber by the moneth, if I bee pleas'd
> To take Physick, to send for Visitants,
> To haue my maide read *Amadis de Gaule*,
> Or *Donzel del Phoebo* to me? (ll. 1217–21)

According to Helen Hackett, Anthony Munday's translation of *Amadis de Gaule* was published around 1590, although the French translation was available much earlier. Donzel del Phoebo, or the Knight of the Sun, refers to the hero in Margaret Tyler's translation of *The Mirror of Princely Deeds and Knighthood* (1578). While these romances were regarded as fashionable and possibly dangerous in the sixteenth century, they were increasingly dismissed as "old fashioned, ridiculous, and déclassé" in the seventeenth century, and were frequently associated with a female readership.[117] Taffata's indulgence in these romances, then, might have indicated her ignorance or vulgar taste to the audience. Indeed, widows' infatuation with romances or other types of fictions, including plays, is often associated with their idleness and shallow mind. In Cokayn's *The Obstinate Lady* (ca. 1630–1642), Jaques tells Lorece that Widow Vandona "does nothing all day but read little Comedies, and every night spends two or three hours on a great Tragedy of a merry fellow *Dametas*," a buffoon steward in Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590), and is "no more houswife then you or I" (p. 302).[118] The fact that Vandona is enchanted with Lorece's account of "the South *Indies*," which is actually a

117 Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 65.

118 Aston Cokayn, *A Chain of Golden Poems, Embellished with Wit, Mirth, and Eloquence: Together with Two Most Excellent Comedies, (viz.) The Obstinate Lady, and Trappolin Suppos'd a Prince* (London, [1658]).

patchwork of various romances, including "the Knight o'th Sun, *Amadis de Guale*, and *Palmerin de Oliva*" (p. 318), also implies that she is incapable of distinguishing reality from fiction. Similarly, in Cartwright's *The Siege*, written in 1628–1638, Pyle, "A rich haughty widdow" ("The Persons"), dreams to "found a Library, which shall / Be only stor'd with Play-books, and Romances" (p. 118) after remarrying a tyrant king, who is more interested in virgins.[119]

At the same time, however, Taffata's consumption of romances is also problematic, because these stories are often explicit about female sexuality. It is important that Taffata claims to make Adriana, her chambermaid, read these stories to her. Adriana clearly shares some sexual secrets with her mistress. Earlier in the play, the widow and her maid appear together on the balcony and discuss the size of the genitals of male passers-by by referring to their "long cod-peece" and "noses" (p. 9). According to Lori Humphrey Newcomb, romance literature is often represented as "a basis for solidarity or competition between gentlewomen and their chambermaids" in early modern drama.[120] Placed between her mistress and her suitors, the chambermaid is technically given the authority to admit or refuse visitors to the widow. By closing the widow's chamber against her new husband and sharing amorous stories with her mistress, it is implied that Adriana becomes Taffata's accomplice in making her old suitor a cuckold. While widows do not necessarily carry books in these plays, Lady Love-all, in Killigrew's *Parson's Wedding* (1640–1641), enters with a French book, which is almost certainly an erotic one, judging from the widow's obscene remark on how its male author "speaks my thoughts as if he had been within me."[121]

This divergence in the moral significance of widows' books is also significant in the context of the wider issues raised by the extension of literacy. Although the Reformation promoted literacy so that new constituencies, including women and those of lower class, could read the Bible directly and develop a personal relationship with God, this new literacy also equipped them to read immoral books, creating extensive cultural anxiety around gender, class, and reading.[122] By representing widows who read erotic books as well as religious ones, these plays address such anxieties among early modern spectators.

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119 William Cartwright, *Comedies, Tragi-Comedies, with Other Poems* (London, 1651).

120 Lori Humphrey Newcomb, *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 108.

121 Thomas Killigrew, *The Parson's Wedding*, in *Six Caroline Plays*, ed. A. S. Knowland (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 433–553 (p. 462).

122 Smith, "*Grossly Material Things*," pp. 205–11.

In this chapter, I have discussed the stage representation of widows by focusing on their costumes and accessories. First, I looked at visual images such as portraits and woodcuts to list a variety of objects associated with widows in the early modern period as well as in the past. My primary focus was on mourning costume, whose designs and cultural meanings were increasingly secularized and diversified over the years. Thereafter, I examined play-texts to explore how these objects were employed on the stage and what theatrical effects were produced.

What is most striking about widows' costumes and accessories is the complexity of their social and cultural meanings. On the one hand, these objects make the widow into a relic of her deceased husband, a visual sign of death and tragedy or a paragon of virtue and vidual chastity. On the other hand, the same objects denote the widow's marriageability or sexual availability, or her intention to marry another man and start a new life. This instability highlights the liminal status of widows between death and life, chastity and sexual availability, or past and future. It is also significant that widows often appropriate or subvert the original meanings of these objects to pursue their new love. Many stage widows know that these objects are merely external signs and can be exploited for disguise and performance. Although these women often appear cunning and manipulative, their appropriation of patriarchal signs of female virtues is bold, courageous, and theatrically interesting. This theme of performativity of virtue and sorrow is also relevant to widows' lamentation and mourning gestures, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2
Lamentation and Gestures of Mourning in *Tamburlaine the Great*, *Richard III*, and *King John*

Gestures are as elusive a theatrical phenomenon as costumes and accessories. As Evelyn Tribble notes: "The actual gestures used by Shakespeare's players of course are lost, long gone, vanished."[1] The term "gesture" is also hard to define, as it can refer to diverse actions or bodily movements made by actors. As Farah Karim-Cooper observes, in the early modern theatre, "gestures were fundamentally varied: sometimes iconic, sometimes natural or drawn from everyday life; sometimes subtle, other times transgressively passionate."[2] Moreover, early modern writers often used the term interchangeably with others such as "motion" or "action." When Heywood contends that theatrical performance is superior to portraiture in *An Apology for Actors* (1612), he claims that the latter lacks "action, passion, motion, or any other gesture, to moove the spirits of the beholder to admiration."[3] In this chapter, I will use the term "gesture" in its narrowest sense, namely "movement of the body or limbs as an expression of feeling."[4] Although every gesture can be emotionally expressive in actual performances, even walking or nodding, I will focus on gestures whose expressive roles are clearly inscribed in play-texts.

In early modern plays, widows often express grief for their husbands' deaths, and sometimes their children's, by using gestures. Although there is no dedicated study on this subject, theatrical gestures on the early modern stage have been studied since Bevington's *Action is Eloquence* (1984). More recently, Karim-Cooper discusses the hand as "an expressive and versatile agent of performance," while Tribble introduces a concept of "kinetic intelligence" and imagines the early modern actor's body learning through motion.[5] Paul Menzer also argues how "the rhetoric of restraint" in early modern play-texts enabled actors to create "a powerful affective experience" with relatively static pos-

1 Evelyn Tribble, *Early Modern Actors and Shakespeare's Theatre: Thinking with the Body* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 37–38.

2 Farah Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage: Gesture, Touch and the Spectacle of Dismemberment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 78.

3 Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612), sig. B3v.

4 "gesture, n.," *OED*, 3a [accessed 4 April 2020].

5 Karim-Cooper, *Hand*, p. 6; Tribble, *Thinking with the Body*, chap. 2.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501513893-007

ture.[6] It is important that all of these critics refer to early modern uneasiness towards emotive excess and mistrust of outward show, while stressing the effectiveness of theatrical gestures.[7] The same concerns are mentioned by Patricia Phillippy and Katharine Goodland in their studies of female lamentation in medieval and early modern literature. In addition to these, Phillippy and Goodland also acknowledge the paradox that lamentation, which was supposed to indicate female softness, virtue, and compassion, often turned into "a means of authorizing and empowering women's speech."[8] Widows in early modern plays also appropriate lamentation to proclaim their wish, ambition, and desire, and the same thing can be said about gestures. Their histrionic, often violent, gestures enable them to command the stage and overwhelm the audience.

In this chapter, I will first explore what kind of mourning gestures widows were associated with in non-dramatic texts. These texts also reveal ambivalent attitudes towards widows' lamentation and mourning gestures, mixed with applause, compassion, and suspicion, in the early modern period. Then, I will examine how widows' lamentation and mourning gestures are employed in plays by Marlowe and Shakespeare. First, I will discuss Marlowe's representations of lamenting widows, mainly focusing on their violent deaths and disturbing voices in the two parts of *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587). Then, I will consider how Shakespeare appropriates conventional gestures of mourning to complicate the audience's response to widows in *Richard III* (1591–1597) and *King John* (1596–1597). Although other playwrights, notably Middleton and Chapman, also questioned the sincerity of widows' lamentation, I will discuss their plays in the next chapter along with *Hamlet* (1600–1602).

Widows' Mourning Gestures in Early Modern England

In the early modern period, there were general expectations about how widows should react to their husbands' deaths. Although the ritual of mourning was much abbreviated after the Reformation, many reformers regarded King David's mourning for Absalom and other biblical examples as scriptural sanction to la-

6 Paul Menzer, "The Actor's Inhibition: Early Modern Acting and the Rhetoric of Restraint," *Renaissance Drama* 35 (2006): 83–111 (p. 85).

7 Karim-Cooper, *Hand*, pp. 73–78; Menzer, "The Actor's Inhibition," pp. 87–91; Tribble, *Thinking with the Body*, pp. 25–26.

8 Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, p. 3; Katharine Goodland, *Female Mourning and Tragedy in Medieval and Renaissance English Drama: From the Raising of Lazarus to "King Lear"* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), chap. 6.

ment over the dead and commended moderate mourning.[9] Accordingly, widows were expected to grieve over their husbands' deaths by weeping, and this view was generally supported by both Catholic and Protestant writers. In his popular conduct book, *De institutione feminae Christianae* (1524), whose English translation by Richard Hyrde was reprinted repeatedly from the late 1520s to the 1590s, Juan Luis Vives argues that "[t]he greatest proof of a shameless and cruel mind is not to weep over a husband who has died."[10] Similarly, in his manual for epistle writing, *The English Secretorie* (1586), Angel Day gives an example of a consolatory letter to a widow, in which he praises her for having "waded sufficiently in your teares [...] in ernest love as beseemed a wife."[11]

On the other hand, widows' *excessive* mourning was condemned, although Catholic writers' views were more mixed than those of Protestant ones. Androzzi, a Jesuit priest, commends one historical widow who mourned her husband through "extreme weeping, sighing, & drowninge of her selfe almost in teares" in *The Widdowes Glass* (1621).[12] By contrast, Vives dismisses such extremity and argues that those who mourn too much are "no less guilty" than those who mourn too little:

> Let a widow mourn her dead husband with true affection, but not cry out or afflict herself by beating her hands together or with blows to her limbs or her body. In her grief, she should observe modesty and moderation and not make such show of her distress that others will see it.[13]

Day also censures those "foolish creatures, that are neither governed by wit, nor ordered by discretion," and make themselves "a spectacle to the world."[14] It is noted that both Vives and Day ground their arguments on the Christian belief in resurrection. Since God has taken away their husbands, widows should not mourn excessively: "those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will be led to eternal beatitude with the same Jesus. And so we should be of good hope."[15] Widows' excessive mourning also undermines their reputation by making them a

9 Goodland, *Female Mourning and Tragedy*, p. 5; Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, pp. 25, 129.

10 Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 299.

11 Angel Day, *The English Secretorie* (London, 1586), p. 216. For similar examples, see Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, pp. 26–27.

12 Lessi[us] and Andro[zzi], *Treasure of Vowed Chastity*, p. 314.

13 Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, pp. 302–3.

14 Day, *English Secretorie*, p. 216.

15 Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, p. 303; Day, *English Secretorie*, p. 215.

"show" or "spectacle to the world." Thomas Fuller, an Anglican clergyman, shares this view in his religious treatise, *The Holy State* (1642):

> *our widows sorrow is no storm but a still rain.* Indeed some foolishly discharge the surplusage of their passions on themselves, tearing their hair, so that their friends coming to the funerall, know not which most to bemoan the dead husband, or the dying widow.

For Fuller, widows' excessive mourning not only disturbs other funeral attendants, but also explains the shortness of their lamentation: "such widows grief is quickly emptyed, which streameth out at so large a vent."[16]

It is notable that these writers associate widows' lamentation with histrionic gestures such as beating the body or tearing the hair. Vives draws up an extensive list of such gestures as he censures them:

> They fill the air with unceasing laments over their recent bereavement and throw all into confusion, tearing their hair, beating their breast, lacerating their cheeks, striking their head against the wall, dashing themselves upon the ground, and prolonging their grief to great length, as in Sicily, Greece, Asia Minor, and in Rome – to such an extent that in the laws of the Twelve Tables and in decrees of the Senate a limit had to be set to the expression of mourning.[17]

As his reference to the classical world implies, Vives's description of widows' lamentation does not necessarily reflect the early modern social reality. Indeed, these are typical gestures associated with female lamentation in classical literature, which were then transmitted to Western religious paintings from the late thirteenth century onwards.[18] For instance, in Simone Martini's *The Entombment* (1335/40), one woman "frantically throws up her arms," while another "tears her hair in a broad impressive movement" (fig. 2.1).[19] Although similar gestures are mentioned in early modern plays, there is no historical record of widows performing them in reality.

Nevertheless, there are records of the mourning of early modern widows involving physical symptoms and visible signs and behaviours. Lady Margaret Sidney was widowed for the second time by the death of Thomas Sidney, the younger brother of Sir Philip Sidney, in July 1595. When Sir Thomas Posthumous Hoby,

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16 Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (Cambridge, 1642), pp. 24–25 (Fuller's italics).

17 Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, p. 303.

18 Moshe Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), chap. 3 and 6; Anthony Corbeill, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), chap. 3.

19 Barasch, *Gestures of Despair*, p. 78.

Fig. 2.1. *The Entombment*, Simone Martini, 1335/40, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1070A. Photo: © bpk / Gemäldegalerie, SMB / Jörg P. Anders.

the widow's husband-to-be, visited her two months later, he found her "layde complayninge of payne in her eyes and heade," which was caused by her "greate lamentacion for the losse of the worthy gentleman her late husbande." Margaret's distress was so profound that "she coulde not then speake of him without teares."[20] While the widow's lamentation seems praiseworthy as it signified deep love for her husband, this was not always the case. Frances Stuart, Duchess of Richmond, mourned her husband so excessively that her demeanour provoked criticism and suspicion.[21] In his letter dated 21 February 1624, John Chamberlain states that the Duchess took her husband's death "extreme passionatly, cut of[f] her haire that day with divers other demonstrations of extraordinarie griefe."[22] In another letter dated 10 April 1624, Chamberlain censures the same widow for preparing her husband's funeral "with more solemnitie and ado then needed." She took her husband's death "so impatiently and with so much shew of passion that many odd and ydle tales are daylie reported or invented of her." The fact that the Duchess had buried two husbands in the past also made her excessive lamentation suspicious: "many malicious people [...] will not be perswaded that having buried two husbands alredy and beeing so far past the flowre and prime of her youth she could otherwise be so passionate."[23] Although Phillippy argues that a widow's "passion of excessive grief" was "a *cultural* necessity" to displace "the more threatening sexual passions," the Duchess's excessive mourning, rather, aroused male anxiety over such passions in elder widows.[24] Chamberlain's criticism was also possibly related to the fact that her husband, Lodovick Stuart, was suspected of Catholicism.[25] As Tobias Döring notes, "extrovert performances of grief – in voice, body, gesture and behaviour" were often attacked as popish by English reformers.[26] The Duchess's excessive mourning and preparation of her husband's funeral with too much "solemnitie and ado" would have renewed this suspicion.

20 Qtd. in the "Introduction" to Lady Margaret Hoby, *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, ed. Dorothy M. Meads (London: Routledge, 1930), pp. 1–62 (pp. 28–29).

21 Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, pp. 192–93; Goodland, *Female Mourning and Tragedy*, pp. 115–16.

22 John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939), p. 545.

23 Chamberlain, *Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 551–52.

24 Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, pp. 26–27 (Phillippy's italics).

25 Rob Macpherson, "Stuart, Ludovick, Second Duke of Lennox and Duke of Richmond (1574–1624)," *ODNB* [accessed 18 July 2021].

26 Tobias Döring, *Performances of Mourning in Shakespearean Theatre and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 32.

As Chamberlain's alert response testifies, there was always suspicion that widows' outward expressions of sorrow might simply be a pretence. In his *Essayes*, first published in English in 1603, Montaigne warns his reader not to regard widows' "blubred eyes, nor that pittie-mooving voyce," but to "view that demeanor, that colour and cheerefull good plight of those cheekes, under their great vailes." Although they "may long enough scratch and dishevell themselves," a proverb teaches us: "They keepe a howling with most ostentation, who are lesse sorrowfull at heart."[27] Copland also questions the sincerity of widows' lamentation in *The Seven Sorowes that Women Have When Theyr Husbandes be Dead* ([1565(?)]). In "the fyrst sorowe," although the widow "doeth wepe so fast" (l. 87) and "wryngeth" her hands "pyteously" (l. 46), the fact that "she bereth some confeccion / As powder of peper, or a red onyon" (ll. 43–44) makes her tears untrustworthy. It is also notable that the widow's demeanour as a virtuous widow attracts many suitors: "her name is so wel spredde / That many delyteth her for to wedde" (ll. 401–2). The idea that widows tried to attract suitors by mourning vehemently is a traditional one. According to Phillippy, St. John Chrysostom wrote in the fourth century:

> I have heard that many women, forsooth, attract lovers by their mournful cries, gaining for themselves the reputation of loving their husbands because of the vehemence of their wailings. Oh, what a devilish scheme! Oh, what diabolic trickery![28]

The same idea was repeated in the Renaissance period. In *De vidua christiana* (1529), Erasmus asks:

> The woman who mourns the death of her husband immoderately – what is she doing but aiming at another marriage, failing to give the slightest thought to how lucky the change is that has come over her husband, who has traded his mortality for immortality?[29]

Since widows had no reason to lament their husbands sent to heaven, their immoderate mourning was invariably feigned and signified lechery. Wye Saltonstall's character book, *Picturae loquentes* (1631), is no less harsh. Comparing a widow to "a cold Pye thrust downe to the lower end of the Table, that has had too many fingers in't," Saltonstall comments cynically:

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27 Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes*, trans. John Florio (London, 1603), pp. 426–27.

28 Qtd. in Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, p. 15. On the medieval scepticism towards widows' gestures of mourning, see Barasch, *Gestures of Despair*, pp. 35–36.

29 Desiderius Erasmus, "On the Christian Widow / *De vidua christiana*," trans. Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 66, ed. John W. O'Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 177–257 (p. 208).

> Shee prayses much her former husband, for whom while shee mournes in her gowne shee laughes in her sleeve, to thinke how shee shall gull her following sutors with this formality of sorrow, whiles shee enforces a customary sigh as a tribute to the memory of her best deceased.[30]

These non-dramatic texts, including historical accounts of real-life widows, reveal ambiguous attitudes toward widows' lamentation and mourning gestures. While widows were expected to display their grief by showing some outward symptoms or actions, the same signs could be condemned as excessive or even theatrical. There was even fear that widows' lamentation was only feigned to attract new lovers.

It is unsurprising that plays also associate widows with diverse mourning gestures and often express the same anxieties as the non-dramatic texts. In play-texts, "[t]he cues for the performance of gestures are indicated in several ways," as Korda describes in detail, including stage directions and verbal descriptions of on- and off-stage gestures.[31] The most common gesture performed by widows was shedding tears. In Dekker's *Shoemakers' Holiday* (1599), Jane finds her husband's name in the "death's scroll" (xii.87) and cries: "Aye me, he's dead: He's dead, if this be true my dear heart's slain" (xii.90 – 91).[32] Although the audience knows that Ralph is in fact alive, her "rich tears" (xii.93) express her sorrow and arouse their compassion.

A larger number of plays, however, represent widows' mourning gestures with ambivalence. In addition to the long-standing scepticism towards widows' lamentation, early modern views on theatrical gestures were complex.[33] On the one hand, gestures were considered essential in communicating characters' strong emotion or "passion" to the audience.[34] In *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1604), first published in 1601 and augmented, Thomas Wright defines passion as a motion of the soul that alters the humours of the body and thereby induces bodily movements, such as "motions of the eyes" or "managing of the

30 Wye Saltonstall, *Picturae loquentes* (London, 1631), sig. B11v–B12.

31 Karim-Cooper, *Hand*, pp. 79 – 80.

32 Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, ed. Jonathan Gil Harris (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).

33 Tribble, *Thinking with the Body*, pp. 23 – 29; Karim-Cooper, *Hand*, pp. 73 – 78.

34 On the complexity of the term "passion," see John H. Astington, *Actors and Acting in Shakespeare's Time: The Art of Stage Playing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 15 – 16; Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 79 – 80. On its philosophical background, see Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

hands and bodie."[35] These movements are "signes of internall passions," and "thorow those windowes a man might [...] discover the secret affections of anothers heart."[36] As they transmit the performer's passion to others, bodily movements are useful for orators as well as actors, who wish to affect the audience, as if to say: "Thus we move, because by the passion thus we are mooved, and as it hath wrought in us so it ought to worke in you."[37] In *An Apology for Actors*, Heywood also claims that five essential skills for orators, including eloquence and memory, are all "imperfect without the sixt, which is *Action*":

> without a comely and elegant gesture, a gratious and a bewitching kinde of action, a naturall and a familiar motion of the head, the hand, the body, and a moderate and fit countenance sutable to all the rest, I hold all the rest as nothing.[38]

On the other hand, the transmission of passion by gestures is doomed to failure if the performer is not truly moved by the passion. Wright maintains:

> It cannot be that he which heareth should sorrow, hate, envie, or feare any thing, that he should be induced to compassion or weeping, except all those motions [...] be first imprinted and marked in the oratour himselfe.[39]

If the actor is not truly moved by the same passion as the character and fails to perform suitable gestures, these movements seem superficial and excessive. Heywood also cautions actors "not to use any impudent or forced motion in any part of the body, no rough, or other violent gesture," and the same sentiment is famously expressed by Hamlet (III.ii.1–32). It is important that actors "qualifie every thing according to the nature of the person personated."[40] Otherwise, not only do actors fail to impress the audience, but also detach their interest from characters or even from the performance.

In this context, it is noteworthy that early modern playwrights often associated widows with conventional mourning gestures, whose forms were fixed and did not necessarily reflect the true passion of an actor or a character. Although it is almost certain that the early modern audience instantly understood them as the sign of widows' sorrow, the fact that they were conventional and not directly derived from the inner passion would have accentuated the discrepancy between

35 Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (London, 1604), pp. 7–8, 131.
36 Wright, *Passions of the Minde*, p. 172.
37 Wright, *Passions of the Minde*, p. 176.
38 Heywood, *Apology for Actors*, sig. C4r (Heywood's italics).
39 Wright, *Passions of the Minde*, p. 172.
40 Heywood, *Apology for Actors*, sig. C4r.

their outward show and inner passion. Even when these gestures were expected to convey genuine grief, their theatricality might have directed the audience's attention to the covert intentions of widows, be they political or sexual.

Widows' Dissent Voices and Violent Deaths in *Tamburlaine the Great*

Although Marlowe's representation of women is often criticized as weak and monotonous, his widow characters are usually disturbing and associated with shocking actions.[41] This tendency was already visible in his earliest play, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1587–1590), presumably co-written with Nashe and attributed to the Children of the Chapel Royal. *Dido* was one of the earliest plays that explored the issues of widows' sexuality and remarriage, and probably inspired other playwrights, including Shakespeare.[42] Marlowe's Dido has been perceived as a negative embodiment of widows' infidelity and sensuality, or the precursor of the "lusty widow" trope. While Deanne Williams and Jennifer M. Caro-Barnes argue that Marlowe applauds Queen Elizabeth's celibacy "[b]y depicting Dido as a negative example of enslavement by erotic love and the desire for marriage," Diane Purkiss discusses how Marlowe's ambiguous representation of Dido reflects the male anxiety over Elizabeth's power as a female ruler.[43] Although Stephanie Chamberlain and Mary Smith do not evoke this comparison with the queen, they stress that Marlowe "rewrites the pious widow Dido" in Virgil's *Aeneid* "as an overbearing seductress."[44]

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41 Alison Findlay, "Marlowe and Women," in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, ed. Emily C. Bartels and Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 242–51.

42 Robert A. Logan, *Shakespeare's Marlowe: The Influence of Christopher Marlowe on Shakespeare's Artistry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), chap. 7; Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith, "What is a Source? Or, How Shakespeare Read his Marlowe," *SS* 68 (2015): 15–31.

43 Deanne Williams, "Dido, Queen of England," *ELH* 73.1 (2006): 31–59 (p. 32); Jennifer M. Caro-Barnes, "Marlowe's Tribute to His Queen, in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*," *EES* 1 (2008): 1–15; Diane Purkiss, "The Queen on Stage: Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and the Representation of Elizabeth I," in *A Woman Scorn'd: Responses to the Dido Myth*, ed. Michael Burden (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), pp. 151–67.

44 Stephanie Ericson Chamberlain, "'How Came That Widow in': The Dynamics of Social Conformity in Sidney, Marlowe, Shakespeare and Hooker," unpublished doctoral dissertation (Purdue University, 1995), p. 163; Mary Elizabeth Smith, *"Love Kindling Fire": A Study of Christopher Marlowe's "The Tragedy of Dido Queen of Carthage"* (Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1977), pp. 37–38.

One example of such rewriting appears in the last scene, where the widow queen is discarded by her new lover, Aeneas, and commits suicide. She asks her suitor, Iarbus, to help her "make a fire, / That shall consume all that this stranger left" (V.i.284–85). After dismissing him, Dido speaks:

> Now *Dido*, with these reliques burne thy selfe,
> And make *Aeneas* famous through the world,
> For perjurie and slaughter of a Queene[.] (V.i.292–94)

After burning "these reliques," including the sword by which Aeneas has sworn his love and the garment she has clothed him in, Dido throws herself into the flames. Although Marlowe does not specify how to "make a fire" on the stage, it is likely that "[t]he trapdoor under the stage" was used, as demonstrated by Jacqui Somerville's production at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2015.[45] By casting herself into the fire, Dido indicates the extremity of her love for Aeneas, which literally consumes her in this act of despair.

The same action appears quite differently in Marlowe's source, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and an earlier tradition of the Dido legend. Here, Dido's self-immolation is a gesture of mourning, or at least a display of constancy to her husband. In the pre-Virgilian tradition, where Aeneas has no place in the account of the Carthaginian history, Dido or Elissa kills herself in the same manner to avoid unwanted remarriage.[46] According to Justin's *Epitome of the "Philippic History" of Pompeius Trogus*, Elissa fled her own country after her husband Acerbas was killed by her brother, Pygmalion, King of Tyre. When she arrived at the African shore, Hiarbas, King of the Maxitani, endowed her with a piece of land to found Carthage. However, when he demanded that she marry him, Elissa killed herself to remain faithful to her husband:

> having raised a funeral pile at the extremity of the city, she sacrificed many victims, as if she would appease the shade of her husband, and make her offerings to him before her marriage; and then, taking a sword, she ascended the pile, and, looking towards the people, said, that "she would go to her husband as they had desired her," and put an end to her life with the sword.[47]

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45 Miranda Fay Thomas, "*Dido, Queen of Carthage* by Globe Young Players (review)," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 33.3 (2015): 531–34 (p. 533).

46 Smith, *"Love Kindling Fire,"* pp. 23–24; Purkiss, "The Queen on Stage," p. 152.

47 Marcus Junianus Justinus, *Epitome of the "Philippic History" of Pompeius Trogus*, trans. John Selby Watson (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), Book 18, 4–6, in *Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum*, https://www.forumromanum.org/literature/justinx.html.

Although this tradition was largely revised by Virgil, who placed emphasis on the love tragedy of Dido and Aeneas, Virgil simultaneously preserved the image of Dido as a faithful widow. Unlike Marlowe's Dido, who hardly seems to care about her husband, Virgil's Dido is haunted by reminiscences of him. After her husband Sychaeus was murdered by her brother, "the true form of her unburied husband / Came in a dream" and urged her to "take flight" (I.482–83).[48] Even after Cupid "make[s] Sychaeus fade / From Dido's memory bit by bit" (I.982–83) and awakens her new love for Aeneas, Dido is reluctant to "break [the] laws" of "chaste life":

> That man who took me to himself in youth
> Has taken all my love; may that man keep it,
> Hold it forever with him in the tomb. (IV.38–40)

Virgil's Dido also kills herself out of a desire to see her husband. After Aeneas's departure, Dido "thought voices could be heard / And words could be made out," which are "her husband's words, / Calling her" (IV.636–38). She then stabs herself on a funeral pyre. Dido's desire seems to have been fulfilled. When Aeneas descends to the Underworld, he sees "[t]he burning soul" (VI.629) of Dido, running away from him to Sychaeus, who "[j]oin[s] in her sorrows and return[s] her love" (VI.636–37).

Although Marlowe departs from his precursors in dissociating Dido's death from her mourning, this vivid picture of the widow's violent death would have lingered in his mind. Marlowe seems to appropriate this image in the two parts of *Tamburlaine the Great*. In each part, Marlowe shocks the audience by presenting a spectacle of the death of a self-sacrificial widow, who dies willingly after her husband's death. In Part One, Zabina, the Turkish empress, goes mad after discovering that her husband, Bajazeth, has brained himself against the cage in which he has been imprisoned by Tamburlaine. Like her husband, Zabina also "runs against the Cage and braines her selfe" (*Tam 1*, V.i.319 s.d.). In Part Two, Olympia stabs her young son after her husband has been slain in the battle against Tamburlaine's comrades, Theridamas and Techelles. She then sets fire to the bodies of her husband and son "[l]east cruell Scythians should dismember" them (*Tam 2*, III.iv.37). Although her initial attempt to stab herself is prevented by her enemies, she eventually fulfils her wish to follow her husband and son in death by tricking Theridamas, who becomes her suitor, into stabbing her.

48 All quotations are from Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (London: Campbell, 1992).

It is noteworthy that both Zabina's and Olympia's deaths are Marlowe's inventions. Although one of Marlowe's sources, Petrus Perondinus's *Magni tamerlanis scythiarum imperatoris vita* (1553), relates the braining of Bajazeth, it does not mention his widow's suicide.[49] Olympia's burning of the bodies, her trick on Theridamas, and his unexpected slaying of her were also created by Marlowe from various sources.[50] Considering his enduring "fascination with the shocking and spectacular," it is unsurprising that Marlowe tried to shock the audience by staging the violent deaths of these widows.[51]

Apart from his characteristic sensationalism, Marlowe's staging of the widows' suicidal deaths might have been induced by the play's exotic setting. As Elizabeth Oakes explains, early modern attitudes towards widows' self-sacrifice were highly mixed. Although writers often praised pagan widows who killed themselves after their husbands' deaths, widows' self-sacrifice was clearly an exotic practice for these Christian writers, in whose religion suicide was considered a sin.[52] The Asian setting of *Tamburlaine*, then, possibly gave Marlowe licence to stage many kinds of extreme and outrageous acts, including the widows' violent deaths. Indeed, it may not be a coincidence that Olympia's desire to "cast her bodie in the burning flame, / That feeds upon my sonnes and husbands flesh' (*Tam 2*, III.iv.71–72) evokes the Indian custom of *sati*, although the scene is set near the Turkish border of Syria.[53] While Olympia's speech primarily refers back to Dido's burning of her body, the association between her speech and the custom of *sati* is not improbable, considering that the custom attracted much interest in late sixteenth-century England. In *The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies*, translated into English in 1577, Pietro Martyr d'Anghiera writes amazedly that "even at this present [Indian] women use to burne them selves alyve with the dead bodyes of their husbandes" as "they did in olde time by a lawe."[54] In his popular costume book (1590; 1598), Vecellio also writes that Indian widows "love their husbands very deeply" and "have themselves burnt as well [...] saying that they are going to a better place to eat and sleep

49 Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, ed. J. S. Cunningham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), pp. 324–36.

50 Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*, ed. Cunningham, pp. 18–19.

51 Thomas Healy, "Marlowe's Biography," in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, ed. Bartels and Smith, pp. 334–45 (p. 334).

52 Oakes, "Heiress, Beggar, Saint or Strumpet," pp. 49–52.

53 Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*, ed. Cunningham, p. 265.

54 Pietro Martyr d'Anghiera, *The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies*, trans. Richard Eden, ed. Richard Willes (London, 1577), fol. 263r.

with their husbands."[55] Although critics have shown that early modern intellectuals were fairly knowledgeable about different parts of Asia, Marlowe's first audience would have readily conflated one Asian region with another.[56]

Marlowe not only uses his widow characters to satisfy the audience's desire for sensational spectacles, but also incorporates their lamenting voices and violent deaths in his morally challenging presentation of Tamburlaine. In Part One, he basically represents the downfall of Bajazeth and Zabina as a foil to Tamburlaine's magnificence. Although their lives in slavery seem pitiful, Marlowe carefully restricts the audience's sympathy by showing their miseries as just punishment for their arrogance and antagonism towards Christianity.[57] Still, Marlowe gradually shifts Bajazeth and Zabina from hateful figures to tragic ones as their slavery and the impotency of their curses drive them to despair.[58] Although the audience remains largely sympathetic to Tamburlaine, the fact that his treatment of the couple deteriorates as he proceeds with the problematic siege of Damascus complicates their response.

Marlowe stages Zabina's personal exchange with her husband to make her lamentation and violent death more tragically intense. The couple's predicaments seem to have made their bond stronger than before. Bajazeth, who has earlier described Zabina as his sons' "mother" (*Tam 1*, III.iii.103), now calls her "my wife" (*Tam 1*, V.i.264), and regrets that he has never given her

> words of ruth,
> That would with pity chear *Zabinas* heart
> And make our soules resolve in ceasles teares[.] (*Tam 1*, V.i.270–72)

Words, which have only so far been used to curse Tamburlaine, now turn into a means to share their misery and dissolve their separated souls into one stream of

55 Vecellio, *Habiti antichi et moderni*, p. 469.

56 Emily C. Bartels, "The Double Vision of the East: Imperialist Self-Construction in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine, Part One*," *Renaissance Drama* 23 (1992): 3–24; Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), chap. 4; Jane Grogan, *The Persian Empire in English Renaissance Writing, 1549–1622* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 127–34.

57 "Introduction" to *Tamburlaine*, in Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, vol. 5, ed. David Fuller and Edward J. Esche (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. xvii–liii (pp. xxxi–xxxii). On the early modern response to Bajazeth, see Richard Levin, "The Contemporary Perception of Marlowe's Tamburlaine," *MRDE* 1 (1984): 51–70 (pp. 58–59); William J. Brown, "Marlowe's Debasement of Bajazet: Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and *Tamburlaine, Part I*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 24.1 (1971): 38–48.

58 "Introduction," in Marlowe, *Complete Works*, vol. 5, pp. xxxii–xxxiii.

"ceasles teares." The same image of the couple's union appears in Bajazeth's last speech to Zabina, where he asks her to fetch some water "[t]o coole and comfort" (*Tam 1*, V.i.277) him, so that

> I may poure foorth my soule into thine armes,
> With words of love: whose moaning entercourse
> Hath hetherto bin staid, with wrath and hate
> Of our expreslesse band inflictions. (*Tam 1*, V.i.279 – 82)

Although the sexual meaning of "intercourse" did not exist before the nineteenth century, the image of Bajazeth pouring his soul into Zabina's arms blurs the distinction between the spiritual and the physical, and illustrates their union in both terms.[59] Zabina also returns loving words to her husband:

> Sweet *Bajazeth*, I will prolong thy life,
> As long as any blood or sparke of breath
> Can quench or coole the torments of my griefe. (*Tam 1*, V.i.283 – 85)

It is ironic that Bajazeth kills himself immediately after Zabina's determination to "prolong thy life." When she comes back with a vessel of water, Zabina discovers that her husband has ended his life by smashing his skull against the cage. Importantly, Zabina not only commits her body to the same fate as her husband's, but also cries before her suicide: "I come, I come, I come" (*Tam 1*, V.i.319). Although the first record of a sexual meaning of the verb appears only in the mid-seventeenth century, Zabina's suicide signifies her wish to be reunited with her husband and to have "moaning entercourse" with him.[60]

Zabina's vehement lamentation not only conveys her intense grief, but also disturbs the heroic image of Tamburlaine to some extent. As she discovers the corpse of her husband, the widow cries:

> What do mine eies behold, my husband dead?
> His Skul al rivin in twain, his braines dasht out?
> The braines of *Bajazeth*, my Lord and Soveraigne?
> O *Bajazeth*, my husband and my Lord,
> O *Bajazeth*, O Turk, O Emperor. (*Tam 1*, V.i.305 – 9)

As she goes mad, Zabina's speech collapses into prose with many fragments and confused images. Her disoriented speech in prose not only disturbs the textual

59 "intercourse, n.," *OED*, 2.d [accessed 31 July 2020].
60 "come, v.," *OED*, 22 [accessed 31 July 2020].

regularity of *Tamburlaine*, which is exceptionally metrical, but also makes a contrast with Tamburlaine's heroic speech in verse. As is often noted, Tamburlaine's strength as a character lies in his powerful, elaborate speech, which seizes the audience's heart so strongly that they often find themselves in an awkward position, "simultaneously drawn in by the poetry and repelled by the action" of the protagonist.[61] Indeed, Tamburlaine has the power to remould reality into images that are favourable to him. Even Zenocrate, who is so distressed by her lover's assault on her country that she "wip'st [her] watery cheeks" with her "haire discheweld" (*Tam 1*, V.i.139), becomes a paragon of beauty in Tamburlaine's poetic speech: "*Flora* in her mornings pride, / Shaking her silver tresses in the aire" (*Tam 1*, V.i.140 – 41). By contrast, Zabina's speech conveys what her "eies behold" plainly and directly. The vivid images in her speech not only stress the immediacy of her response, but also emphasize her role as a witness to Tamburlaine's cruelty. Although it is impossible to elucidate every meaning of her distracted speech, some fragments seem to reveal Tamburlaine's morally ambiguous actions – including his indiscriminate massacre of the people of Damascus – which are otherwise never represented on the stage: "Goe to, my child, away, away, away. Ah, save that Infant, save him, save him" (*Tam 1*, V.i.313 – 14).[62] Zabina's cry evokes the Massacre of Innocents, thereby associating Tamburlaine with Herod, a well-known villain figure and enemy to Christianity. That Zabina appears to enact the misery of a mother of Damascus is significant, because it associates her misery with that of Zenocrate and the women of Damascus. Indeed, the deaths of Zabina and her husband arouse not only pity but also anxiety in Zenocrate: "Ah what may chance to thee *Zenocrate?*" (*Tam 1*, V.i.372). As she understands correctly, the dead bodies of the Turkish couple represent what would befall her if she were to lose Tamburlaine's favour. In this context, Pam Whitfield's claim that Zabina's obscure speech, "I, even I, speake to her" (*Tam 1*, V.i.314 – 15), may be a warning to Zenocrate sounds plausible.[63] Zabina's lamentation and violent death thus create a link between women who are in different positions, but equally victimized by the "ruthlesse cruelty of *Tamburlaine*" (*Tam 1*, V.i.347).

Although Olympia in Part Two never confronts Tamburlaine, her conduct as a widow makes a clear contrast with Tamburlaine's as a widower, thereby stress-

61 "Introduction," in Marlowe, *Complete Works*, vol. 5, p. xxxv. See also David H. Thurn's useful bibliography in "Sights of Power in *Tamburlaine*," *ELR* 19.1 (1989): 3 – 21 (p. 6, n. 7).

62 Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, ed. David Fuller, in Marlowe, *Complete Works*, vol. 5, pp. 1 – 283 (p. 223).

63 Pam Whitfield, "'Divine Zenocrate,' 'Wretched Zenocrate': Female Speech and Disempowerment in *Tamburlaine I*," *Renaissance Papers* (2000): 87 – 98 (p. 94).

ing his foreign and pagan identity. Like in Part One, Marlowe associates the widow's lamentation with her genuine grief. When her husband dies in the battle, Olympia cries with her son and draws a dagger:

> Death, whether art thou gone that both we live?
> Come back again (sweet death) and strike us both:
> One minute end our daies, and one sepulcher
> Containe our bodies: death, why comm'st thou not? (*Tam 2*, III.iv.11–14)

It is notable that Olympia's suicidal desire is inseparable from her belief that she will be able to see her husband after death. However "ugly" (*Tam 2*, III.iv.16), death is a "sweet" agency that will "carie both our soules, where his remaines" (*Tam 2*, III.iv.17). Olympia's concept of the afterlife is strikingly similar to that of Christianity, and this is also visible in her dismissal of Theridamas's courtship:

> Ah, pity me my Lord, and draw your sword,
> Making a passage for my troubled soule,
> Which beates against this prison to get out,
> And meet my husband and my loving sonne. (*Tam 2*, IV.ii.33–36)

Olympia's metaphor of the body as a "prison" of the immortal soul not only associates this Muslim widow with the Christian concept of death, but also identifies her with Zenocrate, who has earlier expressed her willingness to leave her "fraile and transitory flesh" (*Tam 2*, II.iv.43) with "[t]he comfort of my future happinesse / And hope to meet your highnesse in the heavens" (*Tam 2*, II.iv.62–63). It is appropriate that Olympia, who cherishes spiritual life in heaven, disregards Theridamas's courtship. Theridamas tries to make this lamenting widow full of "brinish teares" and "sighes" (*Tam 2*, IV.ii.8–10) into a wanton, remarried widow by promising her luxury and bodily pleasure:

> Thou shalt be stately Queene of faire *Argier*,
> And cloth'd in costly cloath of massy gold,
> Upon the marble turrets of my Court
> Sit like to *Venus* in her chaire of state,
> Commanding all thy princely eie desires,
> And I will cast off armes and sit with thee,
> Spending my life in sweet discourse of love. (*Tam 2*, IV.ii.39–45)

Theridamas's reference to Venus is intriguing, because he has earlier compared Olympia to Cynthia as he parallels the influence of her "looks" (*Tam 2*, IV.ii.28) on him with "*Cynthias* in the watery wildernes" (*Tam 2*, IV.ii.30). Not only does he make Olympia an object of his amorous looks, but he also tries to pull down

this queen of chastity from heaven to Venus's earthly "chaire" by indulging her "princely eie" with luxurious objects. His reference to his "armes" is also suggestive because it seems to associate him with Mars and compare the widow's remarriage to Venus's adultery. However, Theridamas's speech does not move Olympia: "No such discourse is pleasant in mine eares, / [...] / I cannot love, to be an Empresse" (*Tam 2*, IV.ii.46–49). Her speech also restresses her constant love for her husband, who "was dearer unto me, / Than any viceroy, King or Emperour" (*Tam* 2, III.iv.42–43).

While associating Olympia with concepts of death and the afterlife that are similar to those of Christianity, Marlowe highlights Tamburlaine's foreign and pagan identity by stressing his obsession with the body and earthly life. Before Zenocrate's death, Tamburlaine seems to share the Christian concept of death as the salvation of the immortal soul, employing many biblical images and phrases to describe heaven.[64] However, his ideas change completely at her death. Tamburlaine denounces "amorous *Jove*" who "hath snatcht my love from hence" (*Tam 2*, II.iv.107), and implores the dead Zenocrate to "[c]ome downe from heaven and live with me againe" (*Tam 2*, II.iv.118). Although Marlowe is strategically ambiguous as to whether Tamburlaine is referring to the Christian God under another name or the pagan god, his impiety or paganism is stressed. It is also notable that Tamburlaine can only imagine Zenocrate's afterlife in terms of her continuing physical presence. He even refuses to bury her body:

> Though she be dead, yet let me think she lives,
> And feed my mind that dies for want of her:
> Where ere her soule be, thou shalt stay with me
> Embalm'd with Cassia, Amber Greece and Myrre,
> Not lapt in lead but in a sheet of gold,
> And till I die thou shalt not be interr'd. (*Tam 2*, II.iv.127–32)

For Tamburlaine, the fact that Zenocrate's body remains with him and will be buried together with his own in a "rich [...] tombe" (*Tam 2*, II.iv.133) is much more important than the fate of her soul. His obsession with his wife's body not only contradicts the Christian teaching of salvation, but also associates him with idolatry. Tamburlaine's treatment of Zenocrate's body appears especially problematic when compared with Olympia's burning of the bodies of her husband and son. Although this would have looked foreign or even brutal to the early modern audience, she at least manages to protect their bodies from "dismember[ing]" by "cruell Schythians." Although the body is much less impor-

64 Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*, ed. Cunningham, pp. 249–50.

tant than the soul for Olympia, it is still something to be protected from abuse and objectification. By contrast, Tamburlaine's refusal to bury his wife reveals that he perceives Zenocrate's body as an object that he can freely exploit for his own satisfaction.

In this context, it is significant that Olympia resists Theridamas's attempt to objectify her body by choosing death. Although Theridamas woos Olympia by using many images and phrases borrowed from the courtly love tradition, his intention is "onely to dishonor thee" (*Tam 2*, IV.ii.7), as Olympia tells herself. Indeed, Theridamas even threatens Olympia with rape, perceiving that "nothing wil prevaile" with her (*Tam 2*, IV.ii.50). As J. S. Cunningham maintains, "Theridamas's bullying courtship of Olympia" is "a frustrated mimicry" of Tamburlaine's "imperious seduction" of Zenocrate in Part One.[65] While Theridamas's wooing of Olympia is a debased version of Tamburlaine's seduction of Zenocrate, Theridamas's base desire to exploit Olympia's body for his own satisfaction resonates disturbingly with Tamburlaine's objectification of Zenocrate. Olympia's suicidal death, then, might have been intended not only as an indication of her virtuous widowhood, but also as a protestation against Tamburlaine's exploitation of Zenocrate's body. It is ironic that Olympia dies from Theridamas's stabbing of her "naked throat" (*Tam 2*, IV.ii.69). While seemingly signifying Theridamas's penetration of his unyielding mistress with his phallic sword, it enables Olympia to protect her body from his exploitation and to be reunited with her husband in death.

Although Zabina and Olympia are placed in quite different positions, their lamentations and violent deaths are both associated with genuine grief. While employing unconventional and even exaggerated mourning gestures, Marlowe ensures that their theatrical meanings are lucid and that the relationship between widows' outward show and inner passion is straightforward. This relationship is more vexing in Marlowe's last play, *Edward II* (1591–1593), when the widowed queen Isabella, who was complicit in the murder of her husband by her lover, tries to escape arrest by pretending to lament to her son, Edward III: "Shall I not moorne for my beloved lord? / And with the rest accompanie him to his grave?" (xxiii.87–88). Still, Marlowe reserves the conventional gestures of mourning for Edward III, not Isabella, as she reports: "he teares his haire, and wrings his handes, / And vowes to be revengd upon us both" (xxiii.18–19). Overall, Marlowe avoids questioning the authenticity of the visual expressions of widows' sorrow, which may be related to the fact that he relies

65 Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*, ed. Cunningham, p. 18; Oakes, "Heiress, Beggar, Saint or Strumpet," pp. 235–36.

heavily on the communicative power of spectacles. Still, Marlowe's widows complicate our response to the protagonist in *Tamburlaine*, and this foreshadows the disturbing uses of widows' mourning gestures by Shakespeare.

Lamenting Widows in Shakespeare's History Plays

Experiment with Conventional Gestures of Mourning in *Richard III*

Lamenting widows also appear frequently in Shakespeare's early history plays. They are almost invariably royal or aristocratic women, for whom the loss of a husband or son is equivalent to the loss of status, power, security, or even their very identities. Shakespeare's widows are more troubling than Marlowe's. Although Zabina's and Olympia's lamentation and violent deaths challenge the audience's positive views on Tamburlaine, these women have no influence on politics. By contrast, Shakespeare's widows appropriate their cries and gestures to manipulate male authority, pursue ambitions, cling onto power succeeded from their husbands, or overthrow male tyrants. Unlike Marlowe's, Shakespeare's representation of the lamenting widow has been widely discussed by critics, although the attention they have paid to mourning gestures has been limited. While Kehler, Bridget Escolme, and Gina Bloom discuss the disturbing effects of widows' lamenting voices, they do not examine mourning gestures.[66] Bevington and Döring focus on gestures, but overlook their problematic aspects by stressing widows' powerlessness or their role as the moral centre, as I will discuss below.

In representing widows, Shakespeare seems to have had two archetypes in mind. First, widows' lamentation is a recurrent motif in the Bible. Widows are usually coupled with orphans and described as helpless figures who need protection from God:

> Ye shal not trouble any widowe, nor fatherles childe. If thou vexe or trouble suche, and so he call and crye unto me, I wil surely heare his crye. Then shal my wrath be kindeled, and I wil kil you with the sworde, & your wives shal be widowes, and your children fatherles. (Exodus 22:22–24)[67]

66 Kehler, *Shakespeare's Widows*, chap. 4; Bridget Escolme, *Emotional Excess on the Shakespearean Stage: Passion's Slaves* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 188–90; Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. 85–95.

67 Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Bible in this chapter are from the Geneva Bible.

Although the crier to God is gendered as "he" in the Geneva Bible, the description of God's vengeance ("your wives shal be widowes") suggests that widows also "call and crye" unto Him. Indeed, the passage is emended as follows in the King James Bible: "If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry." It is interesting that the Bible, while stressing widows' vulnerability, associates their lamentation with formidable power to provoke God's vengeance. A similar idea appears in one of Jesus's parables. One widow visits the judge of her town and pleads with him persistently: "Do me justice against mine adversarie." Although the judge is neither pious nor humane, he decides to grant her wish because "this widowe troubleth me": "I wil do her right, lest at the last she come and make me wearie." After telling this parable, Christ asks: "Now shal not God advenge his elect, [which] crye day and night unto him [...]?" (Luke 18:1–7). Again, while supporting her claim, the Bible shows how the widow's lamentation can arouse uneasiness.

Another archetype appears in Senecan tragedies, most famously *Troades*, which is full of lamenting female voices and violent mourning gestures. These features are most prominent in the first act, where Hecuba and the Trojan women lament the deaths of Priam, Hector, and other children. Hecuba urges the women to "[l]et fall aboute your woeful neckes your hayre" and speaks: "Your garmentes loose, and have in readines / Your furious handes uppon your breast to knocke."[68] It is notable that these women perform many acts of self-injury. For instance, they cry for Hector as follows:

> Our naked armes, thus here we rent for thee,
> And bloudy shoulders, (Hector) thus we teare:
> Thus with our fistes, our heades lo beaten bee
> And all for thee, behold we hale our heare.[69]

In Phillippy's words, these are "classic gestures of immoderate mourning that display the empathy between the mourner's physical mutilation and the body's corruption in death."[70] These women's grief is so profound that they desire to identify themselves with the dead and suffer the same agony. On the other hand, these gestures are less impulsive than ritualistic, and even appear histrionic to some extent. It may be added that these women's exposure of their breasts not only emphasizes their despair, but also makes them sexually provocative.

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68 Jasper Heywood, *Seneca: His Tenne Tragedies* (London, 1581), sig. O4v.
69 Heywood, *Seneca*, sig. O5r.
70 Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, p. 134.

Shakespeare's awareness of these archetypes is evident in *Richard III* and *King John*, whose uses of widows' mourning gestures are most extensive in his history plays. While Marlowe invented uniquely violent, suicidal mourning gestures, Shakespeare associated widows with many conventional gestures that are mentioned in non-dramatic texts. As mentioned already, one of the possible sources is *Troades*, and Shakespeare's indebtedness to this classical play in *Richard III* is well-known.[71] Shakespeare is also likely to have been inspired by Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* (1548). Hall's description of Queen Elizabeth's reaction to her young princes' deaths is full of traditional mourning gestures:

> she was so sodainly amasyd with the greatnes of y^e^ crueltie that for feare she sounded and fell doune to the grou[n]d. And there lay in a great agonye like to a deade corps. And after that she came to her memory and was reuyued agayne, she wept and sobbyd and with pitefull scriches she repleneshyd the hole mancion, her breste she puncted, her fayre here she tare and pulled in peces & being overcome with sorowe & pencivenes rather desyred death then life callyng by name divers tymes her swete babes[.][72]

By referring to swooning, weeping, beating the breast, and tearing the hair, Hall presents a vivid, animated picture of Elizabeth's mourning that conveys her extreme grief. The question is whether such gestures were similarly effective in theatrical performances.

In *Richard III*, Shakespeare approaches this question by staging lamenting widows variously. The first references to such gestures appear in Anne's dialogue with Richard in Act 1 Scene 2. Anne begins to lament as soon as she enters the stage with the hearse of her father-in-law, Henry VI:

> Set down, set down your honorable load,
> If honor may be shrouded in a hearse,
> Whilst I awhile obsequiously lament
> The untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster. (I.ii.1–4)

While James R. Siemon notes that Anne's presence at the funeral is unhistorical and calls it "an act of personal and familial grief," the term "obsequiously" makes us wonder how "personal" her lamentation is.[73] Although Siemon glosses

71 William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. James R. Siemon (London: Methuen Drama, 2009), p. 76.

72 Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* ([London], 1548), fol. xxviii^v^.

73 Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Siemon, p. 148.

over the term "mournfully," the *OED* cites the speech and defines it with a sense of duty: "With dutiful performance of obsequies or due tokens of respect for the dead."[74] Although this does not discredit Anne's lamentation, the term foregrounds its formality. However poor and incomplete, the funeral takes the form of a heraldic procession led by the chief mourner and halberdiers. Anne's lamentation is also well regulated. She tells the bearers of the corpse: "And still as you are weary of the weight, / Rest you whiles I lament King Henry's corpse" (I.ii.29 – 30). As many critics have noted, Anne's public display of grief for the murdered king is a strong political statement against the House of York.[75] Although her personal sorrow should not be neglected, Anne's lamentation is more important as the fulfilment of her duty as a royal subject. Its public nature possibly makes her lamentation look ritualistic, even implying theatricality. Indeed, her lamentation is quickly replaced by her curse on Richard, which looks more passionate, persistent, and irresistible. While her mourning fails to invoke the spirit of her father-in-law, her curse calls forth Richard. When she asks, "What black magician conjures up this fiend / To stop devoted charitable deeds?" (I.ii.32 – 33), she is ironically referring to herself in black mourning.

Anne mentions another mourning gesture after encountering Richard. She continues to curse him, this time by referring to God: "O God, which this blood madest, revenge his death! / O earth, which this blood drink'st, revenge his death!" (I.ii.60 – 61). Anne's invocation of God for revenge evokes the biblical image of the lamenting widow, although her assumption of religious authority backfires in the end. To thwart Anne's direful curses, Richard excuses himself by attributing his murder of Prince Edward, Anne's husband, to this very widow:

> *Gloucester.* Your beauty was the cause of that effect,
> Your beauty, which did haunt me in my sleep
> To undertake the death of all the world,
> So I might rest one hour in your sweet bosom.
>
> *Anne.* If I thought that, I tell thee, homicide,
> These nails should rend that beauty from my cheeks.
>
> (I.ii.119 – 24)

Lacerating the cheeks is another classical mourning gesture, which marks "the empathy between the mourner's physical mutilation and the body's corruption

74 "obsequiously, adv.," *OED*, 1.b [accessed 4 August 2020].
75 Döring, *Performances of Mourning*, p. 57; Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, pp. 130 – 31.

in death."[76] Anne's reference to self-mutilation may indicate her strong desire to suffer the same pain as her murdered husband, as well as her wish to punish herself as "the causer" of his death.

While it is almost certain that Anne's lamentation is genuine, Shakespeare presents an alternative view by staging Richard's false weeping. Before offering a sword to Anne, Richard fervently speaks of his tears: "Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn salt tears, / Shamed their aspect with store of childish drops" (I.ii.151–52). As Siemon notes, Richard's "readiness to appear to weep in this play is noteworthy."[77] While shedding tears is one of the Petrarchan clichés employed by Richard in his wooing of Anne, it could also carry religious overtones, which are emphasized in the Folio text, where Richard refers to his "remorseful tear" (I.ii.155) and "humble tear" (I.ii.164). Goodland, citing George Keiser, explains that in the medieval tradition of English Pluncus or lamenting poetry, "the tears elicited by the Virgin 'cleanse and soften the heart, preparing the meditator both for a union with Jesus and for the virtuous life'."[78] Like the penitent before the Virgin, Richard kneels down, shows his breast, and claims that he is for the first time elicited to "remorseful" and "humble" tears by Anne's beauty, whom he calls "Sweet saint" (I.ii.47). By inducing Anne to play the role of the Virgin, which she has already assumed by alluding to the "law of God" (I.ii.68), Richard urges her to forgive him and accept his love, instead of stabbing him in vengeance. Although Shakespeare may have intended Richard's false tears as a foil to the widow's genuine lamentation, it also resonates with her political, if not artificial, use of tears. Richard ensnares the widow in her own trap and overwhelms her with his superior tactfulness. When Anne speaks, "much it joys me too / To see you are become so penitent" (I.ii.206–7), her meaning is ambiguous. If she is deceived by Richard's false tears, it implies her naivety. If she has chosen to partake in Richard's role-playing, she proves herself a cunning widow, whose lamentation looks suspicious retrospectively.

Shakespeare also explores the theatricality of widows' lamentation by using narrative and staging interchangeably. It is notable that Anne's laceration of her cheeks is only mentioned, not performed. Similarly, the Duchess of York's mourning gestures are narrated instead of performed. After the murder of Clarence, the Duchess enters with his orphans, who remark on her unusual behaviour:

76 Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, p. 134.
77 Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Siemon, p. 160.
78 Goodland, *Female Mourning and Tragedy*, p. 16.

Girl. Why do you wring your hands, and beat your breast,
And cry, "O Clarence, my unhappy son"?

Boy. Why do you look on us, and shake your head,
And call us wretches, orphans, castaways,
If that our noble father be alive?

(II.ii.3–7)

Again, wringing the hands and beating the breast are conventional gestures of mourning. While the Duchess's excuse, "I do lament the sickness of the King, / As loath to lose him, not your father's death" (II.ii.9–10), implies that she continues to weep, her lamentation is at least under control as she tells herself: "It were lost labor to weep for one that's lost" (II.ii.11). Like Anne, the Duchess does not perform violent gestures on the stage, and her dialogue with Clarence's children seems to create a similar effect to Hall's description. While Anne's lack of action may appear suspicious to the sceptic, the Duchess's mourning gestures reported by the third party are free from suspicion and signify her genuine sorrow.

By contrast, Elizabeth enacts conventional and histrionic gestures on the stage. She disturbs the Duchess's suppressed lamentation by entering "with her hair about her ears" (II.ii.33 s.d.)[79] and exclaiming:

Oh, who shall hinder me to wail and weep,
To chide my fortune and torment myself?
I'll join with black despair against my soul
And to myself become an enemy. (II.ii.33–36)

As Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson note, the dishevelled hair is a common stage gesture to show that the woman "is distraught with madness, shame, rage, extreme grief."[80] Elizabeth's cry might also have been accompanied by some gestures of self-injury, as she claims to "torment myself" and "to myself become an enemy." Elizabeth's extreme demeanour provokes the Duchess's criticism:

Duchess. What means this scene of rude impatience?

Queen. To make an act of tragic violence.
Edward, my lord, your son, our king, is dead.

(II.ii.37–39)

79 This stage direction appears only in the Folio text.

80 Dessen and Thomson, *Dictionary of Stage Directions*, p. 107.

The Duchess, who has refrained from exposing her own violent gestures to the public, argues against Elizabeth's vehement lamentation. Her criticism of Elizabeth's "impatience" importantly refers back to Lord Rivers' earlier admonition: "Have patience" (I.iii.1). Elizabeth's excessive mourning not only defies her brother's injunction, but also rewrites Anne's exchange with Richard. While Richard demands from Anne "[s]ome patient leisure to excuse myself" (I.ii.80), Elizabeth's "impatience" demands everyone in the theatre, including the audience, to hear *her* lamentation. In fact, the words "scene" and "act" inevitably remind us of its inherent nature as performance. This is especially explicit in the First Quarto, which uses "make" instead of "mark" as in the Folio text.[81] While informing the onstage characters and the audience of the incident ("act") of Edward's death, Elizabeth also refers to her own enactment ("act") of "tragic violence."

Such theatricality of widows' mourning gestures appears most prominently in the widows' collective lamentations. It is well-known that Shakespeare assigns the choric roles to his widow characters in two scenes, each following King Edward's death and Richard's murder of the young princes. Just as Marlowe invented the widows' suicidal deaths, Shakespeare "owed little to his chronicle sources" for his staging of widows' collective lamentations. He was probably inspired by *Troades*, whose four female characters – Hecuba, Andromache, Polyxena, and Helena – roughly correspond with the Duchess, Elizabeth, Anne, and Margaret.[82]

As is generally maintained, the widows' collective lamentations play a significant role in *Richard III*. While Richard tries to manipulate people's memories and obscure his culpability in numerous murders, the lamenting widows recall his crimes and victims repeatedly, establishing "a counter-memory" that eventually destroys Richard.[83] On the other hand, critics tend to overlook the discrepancies or tensions among the lamenting widows in an effort to stress these characters' unity and mutual compassion. For instance, Döring writes:

> The strict parallelism of the lines functions to bind the speakers together and make their voices – like their historical cases – indistinguishable, until their common cause of mourning supersedes all previous political divisions between them.[84]

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81 William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, ed. John Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 218.

82 Harold F. Brooks, "*Richard III*, Unhistorical Amplifications: The Women's Scenes and Seneca," *MLR* 75.4 (1980): 721–37 (p. 721).

83 Döring, *Performances of Mourning*, pp. 54–56; Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, pp. 126–38; Goodland, *Female Mourning and Tragedy*, chap. 5.

84 Döring, *Performances of Mourning*, p. 55.

Döring's observation is inseparable from his argument that the unity and formality of these widows' lamentations symbolize "English national identity" and "the forms of communality destroyed under Richard's rule."[85] Behind this type of criticism is an assumption that the widows' chorus in *Richard III* is a substitute for Seneca's "use of a chorus standing for *vox populi*."[86]

Although these claims carry some weight, Shakespeare does not represent the community of the lamenting widows as an unproblematic moral entity, which embodies the harmonious society endangered by Richard. As Richard Madelaine persuasively argues, there is a clear sense of discordance and competition in their lamentations. For instance, while demanding that other characters and the audience hear her lamentations, Elizabeth is indifferent to others' predicaments:

Boy. Good aunt, you wept not for our father's death.
How can we aid you with your kindred tears?

Girl. Our fatherless distress was left unmoaned;
Your widow's dolors likewise be unwept.

Queen. Give me no help in lamentation.
I am not barren to bring forth laments.

(II.ii.61–66)

Elizabeth has no interest in sharing other people's grief, nor does she wish others to share her own. Even the Duchess, who is sympathetic towards both Elizabeth and Clarence's children, insists that her sorrow is much greater than theirs. She tells Elizabeth, "Thou art a widow, yet thou art a mother" (II.ii.54), and cries:

Oh, what cause have I,
Thine being but a moiety of my grief,
To overgo thy plaints and drown thy cries! (II.ii.58–60)

The Duchess argues that her lamentation can "drown" out the complaints and cries of Elizabeth, who similarly claims to have "plenteous tears to drown the world" (II.ii.69). While combining their voices to create the tragic atmosphere,

85 Döring, *Performances of Mourning*, p. 56; Bevington, *Action Is Eloquence*, p. 85; Phillippy, *Women, Death and Literature*, pp. 126–27.

86 Marie-Hélène Besnault and Michel Bitot, "Historical Legacy and Fiction: The Poetical Reinvention of King Richard III," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 106–25 (p. 119).

these characters try to demonstrate whose sorrow is the greatest by crying more loudly than the others.[87] In other words, their lamentations are self-conscious performances to impress the audience on the metatheatrical level.

Similar complexities can be seen in the collective lamentation of Elizabeth, the Duchess, and Margaret. At first, these women seem unified by the same miseries of widowhood, maternal bereavement, and political vulnerability. This impression might have been stressed if Margaret, as she often does in modern productions, appeared in black.[88] Though unspecified by stage directions, it is likely that Elizabeth and the Duchess wear black, following the deaths of Prince Edward and the Duke of York. However, this visual image of unity is betrayed by the widows' discordant lamentation. While suffering the same predicament, Margaret's attitude towards Elizabeth is mixed:

> I had an Edward, till a Richard killed him.
> I had a Harry, till a Richard killed him.
> Thou hadst an Edward, till a Richard killed him.
> Thou hadst a Richard, till a Richard killed him. (IV.iv.37–40)

While Margaret seems sympathetic towards Elizabeth, whose loss of Edward by Richard's murder corresponds with her own, Margaret also seems satisfied by the exaction of her revenge. Edward's death is avenged by the death of another Edward, and Margaret forces Elizabeth to see their ironic resemblance: "Tell over your woes again by viewing mine" (IV.iv.36). If there is a strain of sympathy in Margaret's speech, it is immediately suppressed by the Duchess, who counters Margaret by recalling the murders of her husband and son: "I had a Richard too, and thou didst kill him. / I had a Rutland too; thou holp'st to kill him" (IV.iv.41–42). This discordance remains until the end when Margaret refuses to "help" Elizabeth's cursing at Richard (IV.iv.75). The widows' black costumes, while stressing their resemblance, do not necessarily indicate their unity.

The audience's response to the widows' collective lamentations might also have been complicated by the doubling of roles.[89] Although critics have suggested various figures for the total number of actors used in the early modern pro-

87 Richard Madelaine, "'Who intercepts me in my expeditions?': The Structural Function of the Boy-Actors' Roles in *Richard III*," *QWERTY* 9 (1999): 25–31 (p. 27).

88 Besnault and Bitot, "Historical Legacy and Fiction," p. 117.

89 The following discussion on the casting in *Richard III* was first published elsewhere. Asuka Kimura, "The Widow's Chorus and Boy Actors in *Richard III*," *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* 30.3 (2017): 142–44. Reproduced by permission.

duction of *Richard III*, they generally agree that there were four boy actors.[90] Assuming that all of the women's and children's parts were played by boys, and each boy took one female role, doubling is inevitable to cover four female parts (Elizabeth, the Duchess, Anne, and Margaret) and five children's (Prince Edward, the Duke of York, Clarence's son and daughter, and another boy in Act 4 Scene 2). In the scene following Edward's death, Clarence's children were possibly played by the actors of Margaret and Anne, because these children appear with Elizabeth and the Duchess. The factious opposition within the Yorkist party, then, might have slid into the rivalry between the Yorkist and Lancastrian widows, emphasizing the mutual indifference – or even hostility – between Elizabeth and Clarence's children. Similarly, in the scene following the deaths of the young princes, Margaret's mixed feelings towards Elizabeth might have been stressed if the actor of Margaret earlier played the Boy, who introduces Tyrrell, the murderer of the young princes, to Richard: "My lord, I know a discontented gentleman" (IV.ii.35). Since Elizabeth, the Duchess, and Anne remain on the stage until the end of Act 4 Scene 1, and the Boy enters at the beginning of Act 4 Scene 2, the only available boy must have been the actor of Margaret. If so, this doubling possibly signified the deaths of the young princes as a product of Margaret's vengeance on Elizabeth, stressing the mixed feelings between these widows. On the other hand, it is plausible that the actors of Margaret and Anne also played the young princes.[91] Since the Duke of York appears with Elizabeth and the Duchess in Act 2 Scene 4, he might have been played by either of the actors of Margaret or Anne. Although Prince Edward can be played by any actor, the fact that Elizabeth and the Duchess remain on the stage until the end of Act 2 Scene 4 and Edward enters at the beginning of Act 3 Scene 1 makes it more plausible that the role was played by the actor of either Margaret or Anne, assuming that there was no break between Acts 2 and 3. The actor of Margaret, who was probably older and/or had a lower voice than that of

90 William A. Ringler Jr, "The Number of Actors in Shakespeare's Early Plays," in *The Seventeenth-Century Stage: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Gerald Eades Bentley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 110 – 34; William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, ed. Anthony Hammond (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 62 – 63; Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Jowett, pp. 120 – 21; Brett Gamboa, *Shakespeare's Double Plays: Dramatic Economy on the Early Modern Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 240 – 41. Here, I challenge Gamboa's assertion that "[t]here are fewer aesthetic advantages to doubling in this play than in most others" (p. 240).

91 Stanley Wells discusses the possibility of the doubling between Anne and one of the princes. "Staging Shakespeare's Ghosts," in *The Arts of Performance in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Drama: Essays for G. K. Hunter*, ed. Murray Biggs et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 50 – 69 (p. 55).

Anne, might have played Prince Edward. If so, Margaret's sympathy towards Elizabeth could have appeared rather sincere, stressing the overlap between Margaret's and Elizabeth's Edwards. Although these are all conjectural, such possibilities of doubling also highlight the complexities of Shakespeare's representation of lamenting widows.

Considering the extent to which Shakespeare directs the audience's attention to the theatricality and disturbing nature of widows' lamentation, it is appropriate that he refrains from associating widows with violent gestures in the crucial scene, in which Elizabeth and the Duchess confront Richard. The widows' speeches are finally able to intimidate the tyrant. Whereas the Duchess's direful curse deprives Richard of the last remnant of his mother's love, Elizabeth's double tongue succeeds in outmanoeuvring Richard. On the other hand, their postures are rather static. While the Duchess's words, "Then patiently hear my impatience" (IV.iv.150), recall Elizabeth's vehement lamentation, her speech is profoundly moderate: "I will be mild and gentle in my speech" (IV.iv.153). Nor do they perform any gesture. This lack of vehemence is surprising after witnessing their passionate tears and gestures. It is as if the widows have been seeking the most suitable expression of sorrow, moving from Anne's formal mourning, Elizabeth's histrionic gestures, the widows' chorus, to the final tranquillity. Although this fact does not dismiss the widows' earlier lamentations as merely theatrical, extravagant, or ineffective, the widows in *Richard III* are most powerful and poignant when they are detached from violent gestures.

Constance's Eloquent Gestures in *King John*

Although *King John*, like *Richard III*, has several widow characters, their roles and relationships are quite different from the earlier play. In *Richard III*, the widows are initially not active players or manoeuvrers in politics, and they remain victims until Elizabeth tricks Richard by secretly marrying her daughter to Richmond. Even though the widows are often hostile to each other, they are at least given some occasions to share their misery. In *King John*, the widows are highly influential in the dynastic succession and diplomacy from the beginning. Queen Eleanor and Constance involve themselves in state affairs vigorously to secure the English throne for their sons, who appear less competent and tactful than their mothers. Even Lady Falconbridge disturbs the patrilineal succession by confessing adultery, allowing the Bastard an unexpected advancement. These widows are also isolated from each other. While Lady Falconbridge disappears after Act 1, the antagonism between Eleanor and Constance affords no space for sympathy.

It is well-known that Shakespeare expanded the roles of women from his sources in *King John*.[92] Although Holinshed mentions both Eleanor and Constance, they are no central figures in his narrative, and his notes on Constance are especially scarce. While explaining that Eleanor's dislike towards her grandson derived from her "envie conceived against his mother," who "would looke to beare most rule within the realme of England," Holinshed does not articulate any hatred on the side of Constance. Although she was responsible for committing Arthur "to the trust of the French king," her intention was only the protection of her son, not the acquisition of the English throne.[93] Indeed, the historical Constance remarried twice after Geoffrey's death, and Arthur was not her only child and hope. She had two elder daughters with Geoffrey, and three more daughters with her third husband, Gui de Thouars, with whom she lived happily.[94] Although Holinshed relates how she accused King John of the murder of her son, his narrative is brief and unemotional:

> But king Philip after he was advertised of Arthurs death, tooke the matter verie greevouslie, and upon occasion therof, cited king John to appeare before him at a certeine day, to answer such objections as Constance the duches of Britaine mother to the said Arthur should lay to his charge, touching the murther of hir sonne. And bicause king John appeared not, he was therefore condemned in the action[.][95]

Although the anonymous author of *Troublesome Raigne of King John* (1587–1591) depicts her lamentation more emotionally, she is given only seven lines as her sorrow is expressed through her silence: "Must Constance speake? let teares prevent her talke" (x.1160).[96] While making Constance a widow and Arthur her only child like this anonymous author, Shakespeare increases the intensity of her despair by using violent gestures of mourning.

Critics generally agree that Constance is a problematic mother whose love for Arthur and ambition for power are disturbingly intertwined, or whose dutiful

92 Goodland, *Female Mourning and Tragedy*, pp. 120–22; Janet Clare, *Shakespeare's Stage Traffic: Imitation, Borrowing and Competition in Renaissance Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 44–45.

93 Raphael Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles* ([London], 1586), p. 158.

94 Holinshed, *Third Volume of Chronicles*, p. 166; Michael Jones, "Constance, Duchess of Brittany (c. 1161–1201)," *ODNB* [accessed 18 July 2021].

95 Holinshed, *Third Volume of Chronicles*, p. 166.

96 All quotations are from Anon., *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, vol. 4 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 72–151.

love as a mother ironically drives her own child to death.[97] Naturally, the critical response to Constance's lamentation at the loss of Arthur is divided.[98] Herschel Baker dismisses her "Death" speech as excessive and suspicious: "Philip's comment on this appalling woman's rhetoric [...] is one that every reader will endorse: 'You are as fond of grief as of your child'."[99] By contrast, L. A. Beaurline praises its poignancy: "Unlike the iron-jawed queens in *Richard III*, Constance is not just a nemesis with a loud voice; her tongue stings the conscience of King Philip, and she wins sympathy in the desolation of her grief."[100] While these and other comments focus on her unruly tongue and its damaging effect on patriarchy,[101] Jesse M. Lander and J. J. M. Tobin discuss her gesture in their latest edition of the play. Drawing on Eugene M. Waith's earlier study, they demonstrate how Constance was acclaimed as "an epitome of grief" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[102] Although, as they carefully add, such enthusiasm can be largely attributed to the era's "embrace of sensibility," it implies that Constance's lamentation has the potential to arouse the audience's sympathy.[103] As I shall discuss, there are several unique features in Constance when compared with the widows in *Richard III*. Not only does she explain her passion or inner state that prompts her performance of seemingly histrionic gestures, but she also makes a strong defence of her gestures against unsympathetic listeners, who express common criticism of their excessiveness and theatricality.

It can be easily noted that Constance exploits the biblical image of the distressed widow to win support from the French king and Austria. When she first appears, she does not fit Eleanor's picture of the "ambitious Constance" (I.i.32). Unlike Eleanor, a masculine woman leading the English Army as "a soldier"

97 Kehler, *Shakespeare's Widows*, pp. 81–82; Kathryn Schwarz, "A Tragedy of Good Intentions: Maternal Agency in *3 Henry VI* and *King John*," *Renaissance Drama* n.s. 32 (2003): 225–54.

98 Goodland, *Female Mourning and Tragedy*, pp. 119–20.

99 William Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Herschel Baker, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, gen. ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), pp. 765–99 (p. 766).

100 William Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. L. A. Beaurline (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 30.

101 Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 119–33; Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, pp. 85–95.

102 William Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Jesse M. Lander and J. J. M. Tobin (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 57; Eugene M. Waith, "*King John* and the Drama of History," *SQ* 29.2 (1978): 192–211 (pp. 194–99). See also Carol J. Carlisle, "Constance: A Theatrical Trinity," in *"King John": New Perspectives*, ed. Deborah T. Curren-Aquino (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), pp. 144–64 (pp. 144–54).

103 Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Lander and Tobin, p. 56.

(I.i.150), Constance seems to be a traditional woman in need of male protection. Shakespeare stresses this contrast by paralleling the openings of Act 1 and 2, in which the male heir to the throne appears with his mother. While Eleanor instantly intervenes in John's interview with the French ambassador, Constance is less self-assertive, as she stays back and gives her son the first voice. However, once Arthur speaks to Austria, "I give you welcome with a powerless hand / But with a heart full of unstainéd love" (II.i.15–16), Constance quickly seizes on his powerlessness and purity:

> Oh, take his mother's thanks, a widow's thanks,
> Till your strong hand shall help to give him strength
> To make a more requital to your love. (II.i.32–34)

Constance's emphasis on her widowhood and Austria's response, "The peace of heaven is theirs that lift their swords / In such a just and charitable war" (II.i.35–36), indicate that they are both aware of the biblical image of the widow and orphan as afflicted and defended by God.[104] However, their seeming piety is suspicious. While King Philip's and Austria's motives are surely political, Constance knows that piety and compassion are not enough to move these men and promises "a more requital" or material reward. Constance's self-image as a sacred widow is also questioned by Chatillon's arrival. Although his arrival upon Constance's wish for peace elicits King Philip's praise, "A wonder, lady!" (II.i.50), Chatillon spoils their expectation by announcing that "[t]he adverse winds" (II.i.57) has enabled John to land on the French soil. Constance's ensuing castigation of Eleanor damages her favourable image even further:

> But God hath made her sin and her the plague
> On this removéd issue, plagued for her,
> And with her plague, her sin his injury[.] (II.i.185–87)

Constance's speech is highly confused and repetitive, and its cacophony annoys even her ally, King Philip: "It ill beseems this presence to cry aim / To these ill-tunéd repetitions" (II.i.196–97). She also undermines her son's claim to the throne by choosing words carelessly:

> His grandam's wrongs and not his mother's shames
> Draws those heaven-moving pearls from his poor eyes,
> Which heaven shall take in nature of a fee.

104 Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Lander and Tobin, p. 167.

> Ay, with these crystal beads heaven shall be bribed
> To do him justice, and revenge on you. (II.i.168–72)

While continuing the same biblical image, Constance's references to "a fee" and "bribed" imply that God would help Arthur less for justice than profit. Although her care for "this oppresséd boy" (II.i.177) is genuine, her vehemence rather provokes Arthur's cry, "Good my mother, peace. / I would that I were low laid in my grave" (II.i.163–64). Drowned by anger, Constance has lost control of her speech as well as the audience's favour.

Constance is more eloquent and powerful in gesture than speech. Although her premature mourning for Arthur is staged in Act 3 Scene 4, Shakespeare directs our attention to gestures from early on. In Act 2 Scene 2, Constance and Arthur are informed by Salisbury that King John and King Philip have concluded peace and arranged the marriage of Blanche and the Dauphin. It is notable that Shakespeare departs from his source and introduces Salisbury as a messenger. In *Troublesome Raigne*, Constance and Arthur witness the whole exchange between the kings, so no messenger is needed. Nor is there strong intimacy between the mother and the child, who is older and more independent than Shakespeare's counterpart. While Constance laments Arthur's political naivete for supporting the destructive marriage, Arthur dismisses his mother's tears as useless: "Ladies teares, and cares, and solemne shows, / Rather than helpes, heape up more worke for woes" (iv.872–73). By contrast, Shakespeare removes Constance and Arthur from the stage in the middle of the scene. Although the text does not indicate when, they are clearly off-stage when the marriage is agreed, as King Philip and the Dauphin tell us:

> *King Philip.* Where is she and her son? Tell me who knows.
>
> *Dauphin.* She is sad and passionate at your highness' tent.
>
> (II.i.543–44)

"Passionate" in this speech is usually glossed over as "sorrowful," and this is the first reference to Constance's passion that elicits ambivalent responses from characters. While King Philip shows compassion and reproaches himself for betraying "[t]his widow lady" (II.i.548), King John is clearly annoyed and ponders how to "stop her exclamation" (II.i.558). While this removal of Constance and Arthur is not well-explained and seems to complicate the staging, it enables Salisbury to enter the private sphere of the mother and the child.

The presence of this morally upright man is important, not only because his expressed sympathy teaches the audience how to respond to the afflicted mother and child, but also because his expressive gestures allow the audience to expe-

rience the same anxiety as Constance. In this intimate scene, Constance is vocal about her interiority and reveals that she is possessed by fears:

> Thou shalt be punished for thus frighting me,
> For I am sick and capable of fears,
> Oppressed with wrongs, and therefore full of fears,
> A widow, husbandless, subject to fears,
> A woman naturally born to fears[.] (II.ii.11–15)

This is an interesting mixture of the overbearing and powerless voices. As Lander and Tobin note, Constance's sickness is probably melancholy, which was considered to have a special connection with fears.[105] As noted already, repetition of words is a characteristic of Constance's speech, and it has disturbed other characters and the audience in her castigation of Eleanor. In this speech, however, the repetition is rhymed, and even harmonious, and the meaning is clear. Here, Constance wants her listeners – Salisbury and the audience – to understand her. By listing the circumstances that cause such fears, she urges them to imagine themselves in her position and mental state. Although Constance's emphasis on her widowhood continues the earlier appropriation of the biblical image, it arouses pathos for the fact that it has suddenly lost its political attractiveness and become void. Now the widow and the orphan are truly forsaken and alone. It is important that Constance's desperate speech makes Salisbury dumb and only eloquent in his gestures, which are described by Constance as follows:

> What dost thou mean by shaking of thy head?
> Why dost thou look so sadly on my son?
> What means that hand upon that breast of thine?
> Why holds thine eye that lamentable rheum,
> Like a proud river peering o'er his bounds?
> Be these sad signs confirmers of thy words?
> Then speak again; not all thy former tale,
> But this one word: whether thy tale be true. (II.ii.19–26)

Although Shakespeare often embeds stage directions in speeches, this is unusually long and detailed.[106] By pointing out every motion, Constance teaches the audience where to look, and encourages them to move their eyes as she does and read the visual signs. Although laying the hand upon the breast seems less familiar than the other gestures, it was well-known to the early modern audience. According to John Bulwer's *Chirologia, or The Naturall Language of the*

105 Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Lander and Tobin, p. 209.
106 Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Lander and Tobin, p. 209.

Hand (1644), it is "a garb wherein we affirm a thing, swear or call God to witnesse a truth."[107] Salisbury, then, may be swearing that the ominous news is sadly true, or soothing his compassion for Arthur's misery, because the heart was regarded as "the seat of affections" or passions.[108] Constance's detailed description is also indicative of her fears. Although she can sense from Salisbury's gestures that the news is true, their meanings are not definitive, and she feels suspended until they are fixed by "this one word." In *King John*, speechless gestures are sources of fear and anxiety. This is also indicated by a later conversation between Hubert and King John after Arthur's supposed death. When Hubert describes how the citizens "shake their heads" and make "fearful action, / With wrinkled brows, with nods, with rolling eyes" (IV.ii.187–92), King John cries: "Why seek'st thou to possess me with these fears?" (IV.ii.203). Although the citizens do not speak their minds, their implicative gestures are enough to shake his conscience and fears.

Constance's description of Salisbury's gestures also reminds us of their subtleness. Without her comment, some of his gestures are easily overlooked. By contrast, Constance impresses the audience by performing an emphatic, conspicuous gesture. Her reply to Arthur's soothing words reveals that she insists on his birthright not because of her ambition, but because of her unfeigned motherly love: "But thou art fair, and at thy birth, dear boy, / Nature and Fortune joined to make thee great" (II.ii.51–52). This love makes her adamant and even insubordinate to the kings:

> I will instruct my sorrows to be proud,
> For grief is proud and makes his owner stoop.
> To me and to the state of my great grief
> Let kings assemble. For my grief's so great
> That no supporter but the huge firm earth
> Can hold it up. Here I and sorrows sit:
> Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it. (II.ii.68–74)

As several critics have noted, sitting on the stage was a conventional gesture of grief in the early modern theatre. Shakespeare himself uses it in earlier history plays. In *3 Henry VI* (1587–1592), Queen Margaret throws herself on the floor lamenting her husband's dethronement: "I must take like seat unto my fortune / And to my humble seat conform myself" (III.iii.10–11). As the French king correctly reads, this is a sign of "deep despair" (III.iii.12). In *Richard III*, the Duchess

107 John Bulwer, *Chirologia, or The Naturall Language of the Hand* (London, 1644), p. 88.
108 Bulwer, *Chirologia*, p. 89.

of Gloucester urges Margaret and Elizabeth to sit down and lament with her: "Rest thy unrest on England's lawful earth (IV.iv.23).[109] In these plays, the sitting posture stresses these women's despair, powerlessness, or resignation. Although Constance's posture similarly denotes "grief" as she repeatedly claims, it is uniquely rebellious and impudent. By sitting down at the centre and refusing to budge, Constance conquers the stage as "the Queen of Sorrows" and marginalizes the kings.[110] It is noteworthy that Susan Engel, who played Constance in Deborah Warner's production in 1988, associated her sitting with protest: "sitting is what you do when you protest, in Vietnam or in Westminster."[111] Unlike Salisbury's involuntary gestures whose meanings are ambiguous, Constance knows what she is doing and her message is clear. She grieves for her son's misery and denounces the sovereignty of the faithless kings.

Constance is equally eloquent in her mourning gesture for Arthur, although her tongue once more arouses the audience's discomfort before performing it. In *King John*, whose action consists of unexpected turns of events and sudden reversals, our response to characters is incessantly oscillated, relativized, and subjected to re-evaluation.[112] Constance is no exception, and we are never allowed to sympathize with her for a long time. After impressing the audience with her sitting posture, Constance thrusts them off by vehemently accusing King Philip and Austria of perjury and cursing the marriage of Blanche and the Dauphin:

> Arm, arm, you heavens, against these perjured kings!
> A widow cries: be husband to me, heavens!
> Let not the hours of this ungodly day
> Wear out the days in peace, but, ere sunset,
> Set armèd discord twixt these perjured kings.
> Hear me, O hear me! (III.i.33–38)

Having lost her political allies, Constance now directs her lamentation to heaven, literally embodying the distressed widow calling and crying unto God in Exodus. While her accusation is just, our response is made ambivalent by the presence of

109 William Shakespeare, *The Life and Death of King John*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 172; Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Lander and Tobin, p. 213.

110 Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Beaurline, pp. 30–31.

111 Geraldine Cousin, *Shakespeare in Performance: "King John"* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 116.

112 On political and religious indeterminacies in *King John*, see Virginia Mason Vaughan, "*King John*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Histories*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 379–94; David Womersley, "The Politics of Shakespeare's *King John*," *RES* 40.160 (1989): 497–515 (pp. 500–2).

Blanche, whose marriage she tries to destroy. Indeed, Shakespeare emphasizes their antagonism by contraposing the virgin and the widow on the sides of the French king, as they both kneel to persuade him into opposite ends. Furthermore, the fact that Constance's outcry brings in Pandulph, a papal embassy who excommunicates the English king, should have vexed the early modern audience. Although Constance is granted her wish for war, it backfires, and she loses her dearest son.

Constance's lamentation is multi-faceted, personal, and unique, although it uses conventional gestures. Shakespeare carefully places it after King John's capture of Arthur and his order for Hubert to murder him. Arthur's cry, "Oh, this will make my mother die with grief" (III.iii.5), indicates not only his kind-heartedness, but also Constance's intense love. Indeed, the capture of Arthur is as devastating as his death for Constance. Although her mourning is premature, the audience take it seriously after hearing John's intention to murder the child. Like Elizabeth in *Richard III*, Constance presumably appears with her hair already dishevelled. Forsaken even by God, Constance has no-one to appeal to except Death:

> Death, Death, O amiable, lovely Death!
> Thou odoriferous stench, sound rottenness,
> Arise forth from the couch of lasting night,
> Thou hate and terror to prosperity,
> And I will kiss thy detestable bones,
> And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty brows,
> And ring these fingers with thy household worms,
> And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust,
> And be a carrion monster like thyself. (III.iv.25 – 33)

Constance's oxymoronic and extravagant speech reveals strange excitement, and even ecstasy, and seems to indicate that she is on the verge of madness. Her dishevelled hair underlines this impression, being a conventional sign of "madness" and "extreme grief." Still, there is another dimension to her disorderly hair. It is notable that Constance's speech is a grim caricature of marital consummation. As Death's "wife" (III.iv.35), she claims to lay her body on the corpse and merge into "one flesh." While her embracement of "lovely death" recalls Olympia's longing for "sweet death" in *Tamburlaine*, it is more awkward and striking for evoking marriage. Her dishevelled hair is apt for this, because early modern brides married "in one's hair" or with their hair "hanging loose" to denote their

virginity.[113] In Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII* (1611–1613), Anne Bullen appears as a bride "in her hair, richly adorned with pearl" (IV.i.36 s.d.), and this resonates with King Philip's description of Constance's hair adorned with "a silver drop" (III.iv.63). If Blanche earlier appeared in the same hairstyle at her wedding, the widow's lamentation would have overlapped with the virgin's devastation. Although these women are opposed to each other, they are after all both victims of this inconsistent world of "commodity."

While Constance's vehement lamentation could easily provoke criticism of the exaggeration and theatricality, such criticism is rather appropriated to make her lamentation look sincere and realistic. It is notable that Shakespeare presents an unsympathetic view via Pandulph and enables the widow herself to refute it.[114] When Constance claims that her dishevelled hair and outcry are natural consequences of her "passion," which is so violent as to "shake the world / And rouse from sleep that fell anatomy" (III.iv.39–40), Pandulph coldly dissociates her outlook from it: "Lady, you utter madness, and not sorrow" (III.iv.43). As is often praised, Constance condemns this misreading with a strong argument:

> I am not mad: this hair I tear is mine,
> My name is Constance, I was Geoffrey's wife,
> Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost. (III.iv.45–47)

Here, Constance explains that her dishevelled hair has been caused by tearing. As mentioned already, tearing the hair is another common gesture of mourning. While this act of self-injury signifies the mourner's intense grief, it would have been shocking to see a woman tearing her hair, which was a sign of femininity and beauty.[115] Although it is not clear from the text whether Constance literally tears her hair, such staging was certainly possible. In John Marston's *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1600), the same gesture appears in a stage direction where the heroine grieves for the assumed death of her lover: "Exit Katherin, tearing her haire."[116] While such a gesture seems to indicate insanity, Constance insists that she is perfectly sane:

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113 Sujata Iyengar, *Shakespeare's Medical Language: A Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 159.

114 On Pandulph and King John as unsympathetic consolers, see Brian Vickers, "Shakespearian Consolations," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 82 (1991): 219–84 (pp. 275–76).

115 Iyengar, *Shakespeare's Medical Language*, p. 158.

116 John Marston, *Jack Drums Entertainment* (London, 1601), sig. D3v.

> For, being not mad but sensible of grief,
> My reasonable part produces reason
> How I may be delivered of these woes,
> And teaches me to kill or hang myself. (III.iv.53–56)

As Anna Kamaralli maintains, Shakespeare shows the audience "someone they would assume was a madwoman" and then betrays their expectation by giving her a persuasive, rational argument.[117] Not only does this inversion demand the audience take the defying female voice seriously, it also questions the inhumanity, and even madness, on the side of the male authority. When she says, "My name is Constance, I was Geoffrey's wife, / Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost," she claims that it is perfectly reasonable that such a loss would cause great misery. If Pandulph does not see this simple causality, he is surely mad. Although King Philip's response to Constance's dishevelled hair is less censorious than Pandulph, it is also a mixture of sympathy and discomfort. Stung by the sense of guilt for his earlier betrayal, King Philip reads the widow's outlook more accurately:

> Oh, what love I note
> In the fair multitude of those her hairs.
> Where but by chance a silver drop hath fall'n,
> Even to that drop ten thousand wiry friends
> Do glue themselves in sociable grief
> Like true, inseparable, faithful loves,
> Sticking together in calamity. (III.iv.61–67)

While the dishevelled hair is itself a common, if not clichéd, signifier, King Philip's speech personalizes it by noting Constance's love, which is the most important characteristic of this widow. His conceited image of "ten thousand wiry friends" glued by a teardrop "in sociable grief" also emphasizes her solitariness and lack of faithful friends. It is notable that King Philip uses the adjective "fair," which reiterates his earlier description of Constance as "fair affliction" (III.iv.37). While she looks ghastly and desolate as "a grave unto soul" (III.iv.18), she is simultaneously irresistible and attractive. Constance with her dishevelled hair captivates the viewer with her oxymoronic presence like Death, both mad and sane, ecstatic and desperate, powerless and dangerous.

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117 Anna Kamaralli, *Shakespeare and the Shrew: Performing the Defiant Female Voice* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 38.

Such eloquence is also visible in Constance's binding of her hair. Unlike tearing, it was not a common mourning gesture in reality or on stage.[118] It was probably Shakespeare's invention, developed from the conventional gesture of tearing the hair. Again, there is initially a discrepancy between her outlook and utterance. Although Constance seems back to discretion as she binds her hair by King Philip's order ("Bind up your hairs" (III.iv.69)), her speech is full of anguish, enmity, and eclectic imagination:

> Yes, that I will; and wherefore will I do it?
> I tore them from their bonds and cried aloud,
> "Oh, that these hands could so redeem my son
> As they have given these hairs their liberty!"
> But now I envy at their liberty
> And will again commit them to their bonds,
> Because my poor child is a prisoner. (III.iv.69–75)

It is noteworthy that Constance has a power to transform such an ordinary gesture as binding one's hair into something meaningful and unique. This indicates that every part and movement of her body is indeed filled with grief. Although Pandulph and King Philip try to silence the widow by stating that her extremity comes from self-pity, not from maternal love, they are instantly hushed by her astute answers. Her reply to Pandulph, "He talks to me that never had a son" (III.iv.91), and her embracement of grief as her absent child ("Grief [...] / Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form" (III.iv.93–97)) must have touched many early modern parents who had similarly lost their children, including Shakespeare.[119] Although her circumstance as a widowed mother of an heir to the throne is extraordinary, Constance's sorrow is strikingly general as well as personal.[120] As she once again dishevels her hair, exclaiming, "I will not keep this form upon my head, / When there is such disorder in my wit" (III.iv.101–2), her outlook and inner passion finally coincide and create the stron-

118 I checked Dessen and Thomson's *Dictionary of Stage Directions* (p. 107); *Harvard Concordance* for "hair," "bind," and "bound"; *EEBO* for "hair" and "bind" with alternative spellings and forms in texts dated between 1580–1642. Although bound hair is occasionally mentioned in Jacobean and Caroline masques, it is not a sign of mourning. Marvin Spevack, *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1973).

119 Critics have discussed whether Hamnet's death in 1596 would have affected Shakespeare's depiction of Constance's lamentation for Arthur. Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), p. 290; David Bevington, *Shakespeare and Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 103.

120 See also Goodland, *Female Mourning and Tragedy*, chap. 4, where she parallels Constance's lamentation with *Mater Dolorosa* or the Virgin Mary grieving for Jesus in medieval drama.

gest icon of sorrow. Although it is impossible to know how the early modern audience reacted to this striking moment, its impact is testified by surviving portraits or records of actresses performing the role in later productions. As mentioned already, Constance was a celebrated role in the eighteenth century, and Sarah Siddon's performance was outstanding among others: "Siddons was commended by the novelist Elizabeth Inchbald for her 'potent skill in the delineation of woe', and so dominating was her performance that audience members would routinely leave after 3.4."[121] Her Constance appears in two portraits, one depicting her pulling her veil, another her hair (figs. 2.2 and 2.3). In both portraits, Siddons's countenance is frantic, vexed, and strong-willed. The fact that this moment was repeatedly drawn indicates how memorable her violent gesture was on the stage. Although such vehemence is less appreciated in modern productions, Constance's dishevelled hair is still a powerful icon that stresses her fragile beauty as "fair affliction." Claire Bloom in the BBC production (1984) and Kelly Hunter in the RSC production (2001) were both dressed in medieval costume with their hair totally covered.[122] Hunter looked almost like a nun, her whole body covered in black. Since their hair was completely hidden, it was all the more striking when they revealed their hair.

Although Shakespeare's portrayal of Constance is not thoroughly sympathetic, he almost certainly sought ways to make her seemingly histrionic gestures believable and genuine. Unlike the widows in *Richard III*, whose gestures are depicted as theatrical or ineffectual, and who return to a simple, calm posture in the end, Constance is always more eloquent with gestures, which are made persuasive and moving by her aptly explanatory speeches. In the inconsistent world of *King John*, where "the naked pursuit of self-interest" corrupts "all value systems," including law, monarch, and religion, Constance is the only character who is true to her name and constant in her love for Arthur, and this is impressively expressed by her gestures.[123]

In this chapter, I have discussed widows' lamentation and mourning gestures in early modern society and drama. Although widows were traditionally associated with lamentation, their voices and mourning gestures provoked ambivalent responses, namely praise and sympathy or censure and suspicion. Marlowe was probably the first playwright to realize the dramatic potential of widows'

121 Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Lander and Tobin, p. 56.

122 Kelly Hunter, "Constance in *King John*," in *Players of Shakespeare 6: Essays in the Performance of Shakespeare's History Plays*, ed. Robert Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 37–49; Carlisle, "Constance: A Theatrical Trinity," pp. 155–61.

123 Shakespeare, *King John*, ed. Lander and Tobin, p. 25; Alison Findlay, *Women in Shakespeare: A Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), p. 82.

Fig. 2.2. "Mrs Siddons as Constance in *King John*," ca. eighteenth century, Harry Beard Collection, S. 2423–2013. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

lamentation, and he presented the spectacle of mourning widows' violent deaths in the two parts of *Tamburlaine*. Although the widows' reactions to their husbands' deaths might seem extraordinary and even excessive, their self-inflicted deaths indicate that their lamentations are genuine and they are virtuous widows. On the other hand, Marlowe associates the widows' lamentations with their resistance against male tyranny, and this foreshadows more problematic widow characters in Shakespeare's history plays. Unlike Marlowe, who created

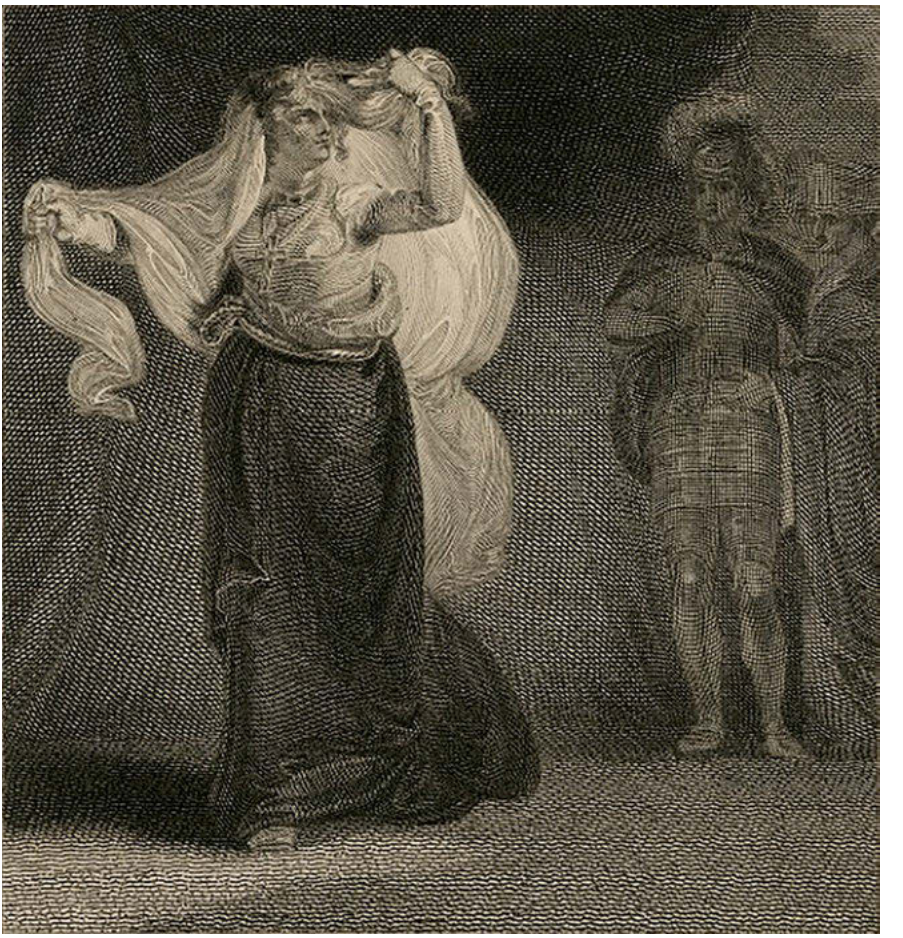

Fig. 2.3. "Mrs. Siddons [in Shakespeare's] *King John*, Const.," drawn by J. Thurston, engraved by C. Warren, 1804. Photo: Used with the kind permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

unique, arresting mourning gestures of his own, Shakespeare uses many conventional mourning gestures and explores their effectiveness. In *Richard III*, Shakespeare often highlights the theatricality of widows' lamentation. Although these widows' distresses are genuine, their expressions of sorrow are largely discordant and politically ineffective. By contrast, Shakespeare carefully constructs his text to make such conventional gestures emotionally engaging in *King John*. Although his attitude towards Constance is not always sympathetic, her gestures are generally powerful and eloquent. Their vehemence is well-matched by her extreme passion, and Shakespeare also stresses its authenticity by staging

the common criticism of theatricality and making the widow herself refute it effectively.

As quoted above, Heywood contends that, "without a comely and elegant gesture" and other movements of the body, theatrical performances are inadequate and hardly attractive. On the other hand, it is difficult to make gestures "comely and elegant" or appropriate for characters' interiority, especially when gestures were conventional ones. Moreover, widows' mourning gestures had long been perceived as suspicious, and often condemned for excessiveness and hypocrisy. Marlowe's and Shakespeare's representations, then, can be summarized as attempts to create persuasive mourning gestures for widows, although their approaches were contrasting. On the other hand, these playwrights, especially Shakespeare, were also attentive to the theatricality of these gestures, and such attention was succeeded by Chapman and Middleton, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 3
Staging the Dead Husband in Elizabethan Tragedies and Jacobean Satirical Comedies

It is often argued that women were defined in relation to men in the early modern period. While men were usually identified by their professions in legal documents or civil records, "[t]he traditional tripartite division of women's lives into before, during and after marriage – into maids, wives and widows – was not only socially but also legally defining."[1] Although many studies have shown the importance of recognizing the presence of single women or never-married women in the society, a majority of women fell into at least one of these categories in their lifetime.[2] Among the three, widowhood was widely acknowledged as peculiar. While daughters were supervised by their fathers and wives their husbands, widows were defined as such in relation to the absent male authority. Although they were often placed under the control of their fathers, brothers, or other male relatives after their husbands' deaths, their circumstances were evidently different from those of daughters and wives, whose legal identities were incorporated into men's and almost non-existent. Widows were thus considered as free and autonomous, although they were not necessarily liberated from the control of their husbands completely. As already mentioned in the Introduction, some dying husbands left wills instructing their wives to remain celibate for the rest of their lives. While this was usually intended to protect their children's inheritance, some husbands possibly feared that they would be forgotten by their beloved wives. Richard Brathwaite writes ironically in his prescriptive literature *A Good Wife* (1619), which was published together with Patricke Hannay's *A Happy Husband:*

> Lastly he may (for it is in his power)
> Now in his *Exit*, when he turnes to earth
> To make his *wife* his sole *Executour*
> And by that meanes to *begger* all his birth,
> But I should rather limit her a *dower*

1 Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 4; Joan Larsen Klein, ed., *Daughters, Wives and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500–1640* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), pp. ix–x.

2 Amy M. Froide shows that "singlewomen comprised on average 30.2 per cent of the adult female population" between 1574 and 1821. *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 3.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501513893-008

> Which might her ranke and order well befit,
> For then so soone she will not *him forget*.[3]

If one leaves his property to his wife and makes her a sole executor, she may ruin his inheritance. Still, it is better than driving her to quick remarriage and being forgotten instantly. While some widows fulfilled their husbands' wishes by renouncing remarriage and wearing mourning costumes for the rest of their lives, more preferred to be married to the living than the dead.

Playwrights often dramatized this tension between widows and their deceased husbands by using the figure of the ghost, whose liminal status between the dead and the living enabled these writers to investigate widows' ambivalent status between autonomy and subjection. In this chapter, I will first position the figure of the husband's ghost within the social and religious contexts of the time, especially in relation to the abridgement of mourning after the Reformation. After discussing how non-dramatic texts imagine the relationship between widows and their deceased husbands, I will examine late Elizabethan tragedies, in which widows are often driven to self-condemnation for their new love or remarriage by encountering their husband's ghost. Then, I will discuss Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (1600 – 1601) and *Hamlet* (1600 – 1602), whose representations of widows and their husbands' ghosts are contrasting. In the last part of this chapter, I will take a look at Chapman's and Middleton's early Jacobean satirical comedies and discuss how they rewrite the Elizabethan convention by replacing the tragic figure of the husband's ghost with the comic figure of the jealous husband, who disguises his own death to test his wife's fidelity, in *The Widow's Tears* (1603 – 1605) and *Michaelmas Term* (1604 – 1607).

Abridgement of Mourning and Emergence of Ghosts in Post-Reformation England

As many critics have shown, the ghost appears frequently in early modern literature, including drama, especially after the 1580s, and this phenomenon can be explained by the traumatic experience of the abridgement of mourning after the Reformation. It is well known that the Protestant denial of the Catholic doctrine of purgatory radically changed mourning practices. As Cressy writes, before the Reformation, "people generally believed that the soul went first to purgatory," an

3 Patricke Hannay and Richard Brathwaite, *A Happy Husband* [...] *To Which Is Adioyned the Good Wife* (London: 1619), sig. B7r (Brathwaite's italics).

intermediate place between heaven and hell, "where it suffered in proportion to its lifetime accumulation of sins." At the Last Judgement, "the fortunate soul with its newly reconstituted body would be received into heaven," while the damned soul would be "consigned to limitless hell."[4] The notion of purgatory seems to have assuaged people's fear of death to some extent. Death was not an absolute annihilation or consignment to perpetual torment in hell but a shift from one state to another, and every Christian soul, however sinful, could hope to go to heaven by purging its sins.[5] On the other hand, the torments in purgatory were imagined as so dreadful that people tried to mitigate their post-mortem sufferings by various means. Along with "the individual's devotional acts and religious good works while on earth," intercessory prayers of the living were considered as effective in reducing the duration and intensity of the purgatorial pains.[6] It was therefore a major concern of dying people to ensure that they would obtain sufficient prayers of the living during and after their funerals.[7] Praying for the dead was also considered as beneficial for the living, because it enabled them to retain some sense of connection with the dead and overcome their losses gradually.[8] It was also understood as a virtuous act in itself, helping those who prayed to earn their own place in heaven, too.[9]

After the separation from Rome, however, the relationship between the living and the dead changed completely. Reformers dismissed the notion of purgatory as unscriptural, and argued that it was a fiction created by the Catholic Church to exploit their followers in order to enrich themselves and maintain their authority.[10] Since "[t]here were now only two realms beyond the earth, the realms of salvation and damnation, heaven and hell," and the soul of the departed was predestined to either realm by "the inscrutable will of God," any

4 Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 386.

5 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, ca. 1400–ca. 1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 345–46; Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 25–26.

6 Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 386.

7 Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, pp. 32–33; Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 18–25.

8 Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 23; Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 102–3; Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 101–2.

9 Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 11.

10 Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 53–64; Greenblatt, *Hamlet*, pp. 32–35; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family*, pp. 37–39.

intercessory effort was dismissed as meaningless.[11] The first serious measure against the notion of purgatory and intercessory prayers was taken in the reign of King Edward VI. In 1547, the Chantries Act decreed "the immediate dissolution of all those institutions whose function was to pray for the dead in Purgatory," including chantries, free chapels, fraternities, and guilds.[12] The dissolution of intercessory institutions was followed by the reform of the liturgy. While the first Book of Common Prayer of 1549 preserved many traditional practices, the revision of 1552 "drastically shortened" the burial service by "omitting all psalms, prayers for the dead, and the order for Holy Communion," excising all hint of intercession for the benefit of the soul of the deceased.[13] The tenor of the 1552 Prayer Book remained almost unchanged up to the Civil War.[14] Along with these liturgical changes, many traditional practices of commemoration were abandoned. Before the Reformation, there were many occasions for the living to "remember" the dead, meaning not only to recollect, but also "to include them in one's prayers."[15] According to Gittings,

> [t]he funeral services [...] were often repeated seven days later, and again on the thirtieth or "month's mind." They occurred again after a year, at an occasion called the anniversary, twelve month's [*sic*] mind, year-day or obit. These services [...] could continue for many years or even, at least in theory, in perpetuity.[16]

Indeed, "[i]t is not uncommon to find wills ordering 'obits' to be held for ten or 20 years or even longer, 99 years being another popular length of time."[17] There were also annual feasts of All Saints' and All Souls' Days at the beginning of November, when church bells were tolled and "soul cakes" were distributed for the commemoration of the dead.[18] The Offertory in Solemn Mass on Sundays was

11 Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 387.

12 Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory*, pp. 99–100; Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 94–95; Woodward, *Theatre of Death*, p. 42.

13 Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, pp. 40–41; Woodward, *Theatre of Death*, pp. 42–43; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 472–75; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, pp. 396–98. On the importance of the Book of Common Prayer for the English Reformation and its development from the Edwardian to Elizabethan era, see *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. xvii–xli.

14 Daniel Swift, *Shakespeare's Common Prayers: The Book of Common Prayer and the Elizabethan Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 35–36.

15 Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 18.

16 Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 31; Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 18–21.

17 Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 23.

18 Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 14–15.

also "preceded by the bidding of the bedes which involved praying for the parish dead."[19] It is therefore unsurprising that many people found the reformed funeral services and rituals of commemoration inadequate and hung onto traditional practices even after they were declared illegal. According to Cressy, "the traditional month-mind and year-mind had a customary half-life in many parts of England," and "[p]rovisions for obits and month-minds and prayers for all Christian souls were not uncommon in wills of the 1550s, 1560s, and 1570s." These and other unreformed practices, including the uses of tapers, candles, and crosses, or the ringing of the bell for the departed "persisted through much of the north and west, as well as closer to London, though by the 1580s they seem to have been in sharp decline."[20] Indeed, prayers for the dead were never officially abandoned. While excising any hint of intercessory prayers from the 1552 and subsequent editions of the Book of Common Prayer, the government "openly retained" prayers for the dead in the Elizabethan Primer, published in 1559, 1560, and 1568, as well as in the 1560 Latin version of the Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer.[21] This ambiguity in government policy reflects not only what Jennifer Woodward calls "a recognition of the human need for a sublime ritual as a defence against the uncertainty and disturbance of death," but also the ambiguous position of prayers for the dead in early modern theological discourse. [22] Although praying for the dead was unscriptural and often attacked in relation to purgatory, it had a much longer history than the doctrine of purgatory, and was generally commended as a charitable deed by early Church Fathers.[23] The persistence of traditional mourning practices and prayers for the dead suggests that the reformers' campaign to sever the living from the dead was not as successful as assumed by early historians.[24]

Indeed, the abridgement of mourning seems to have made the living even more haunted by the memory of the deceased by placing them beyond the reach of their survivors and raising the question of how to mourn the dead prop-

19 Woodward, *Theatre of Death*, pp. 41–42.

20 Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, pp. 398, 400; Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, pp. 43–46; Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory*, p. 102.

21 Swift, *Shakespeare's Common Prayers*, p. 149; Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, p. 42; Lucy Wooding, "Remembrance in the Eucharist," in *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation*, ed. Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 19–36 (p. 27).

22 Woodward, *Theatre of Death*, p. 60.

23 Wooding, "Remembrance in the Eucharist," pp. 26–27.

24 Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual*, pp. 50–53; Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 4–5.

erly.[25] Many writers tried to cope with or reflect upon this traumatic experience by using the figure of the ghost. Although ghosts originally derived from folklore and classical literature, they were problematic figures in post-Reformation England because of their strong association with the doctrine of purgatory.[26] Before the Reformation, people believed that the soul of the departed would occasionally return from purgatory to this world to make specific requests for additional masses or intercessory prayers, and this view was predictably supported and propagated by Catholic priests.[27] Therefore, as Peter Marshall maintains, "in the minds of many Elizabethan and Jacobean Protestant writers, ghosts were indelibly associated with the abrogated doctrines of purgatory and intercessory masses." Some even considered that "ghosts were not some accidental waste-product of the popish purgatory, but the foundation of the whole edifice."[28] Along with purgatory and intercessory prayers, reformers tried to exorcise ghosts and the popular notion that the soul of the departed might visit the living by arguing that such an apparition was invariably the devil or a hallucination.[29] Nevertheless, ghosts repeatedly came back to early modern literature. Interestingly, as Philip Schwyzer observes, many of these writings appeared in the late 1580s and early 1590s, "the same years in which old Catholic mortuary practices were at last dying out with their practitioners."[30] In regard to drama, Huston Diehl, Michael Neill, Stephen Greenblatt, and Thomas Rist have discussed how Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies – especially *Hamlet* – dramatize the issues of mourning and commemoration of the dead by focusing on the role of the revenger as a mourner.[31] Although these studies illuminate the representation of the ghost and the issues of remembrance in early modern drama, they focus almost exclusively on the relationship between father and son, the murdered and the revenger, and do not consider the mourning – or lack of mourning – by

25 Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 244–45; Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory*, pp. 100–103.

26 Greenblatt, *Hamlet*, p. 152; Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, p. 232.

27 Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 15–17.

28 Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead*, pp. 234–35.

29 On Catholic and Protestant notions of ghosts, see Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), chap. 4. See also Thomas Rist's useful bibliography in *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 14, n. 58.

30 Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory*, p. 117.

31 Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 81–93; Rist, *Revenge Tragedy*, pp. 60–74; Neill, *Issues of Death*, chap. 7; Greenblatt, *Hamlet*, chap. 4–5.

women.[32] It is my aim to raise the question of gender by focusing on the relationship between widows and their deceased husbands.

Widows' Memory and Husbands' Ghosts in Non-Dramatic Texts

Before discussing plays, it is helpful to look at how this relationship appears in non-dramatic texts. According to Greenblatt, there are several accounts of hauntings from the pre-Reformation period, most notably *The Gast of Gy*, which relates a haunting that took place in early fourteenth-century France. The account was widespread in Western Europe, and also "aroused considerable interest" in medieval England. In this account, the widow of a renowned bourgeois named Gui de Corvo was "terrified, day and night, by the sound of something moving in her bedroom," and requested the assistance of a Dominican prior.[33] It was discovered that the sound was made by the ghost of Gui, who was eager to request extra masses and intercessory prayers to mitigate his purgatorial pains. As Greenblatt argues, the account was not simply a piece of Catholic propaganda to spread the doctrine of purgatory and encourage people to spend money on intercessory services. It can also be read as a love story between the widow and her deceased husband. While the widow expresses her love for the dead by asking the prior to pray "[f]or Gy saule, that noble man" (l. 191), the ghost answers the prior's question regarding why he visited his widow instead of religious men, whose prayers were more effective, as follows:

> I lufed mare my wyfe
> Than any other man on lyfe,
> And tharfor first to hir I went[.] (ll. 1497–99)[34]

32 An exception is Goodland's discussion on *Hamlet*, which, however, exclusively considers Ophelia's mourning of Polonius and neglects Gertrude's mourning for King Hamlet (*Female Mourning and Tragedy*, chap. 7). Steven Mullaney's important study examines the influence of misogyny on male mourning rather than female mourning *per se*. "Mourning and Misogyny: *Hamlet*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and the Final Progress of Elizabeth I, 1600–1607," *SQ* 45.2 (1994): 139–62.

33 Greenblatt, *Hamlet*, p. 106.

34 *The Gast of Gy*, in *Three Purgatory Poems*, ed. Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), in Robbins Library Digital Projects, https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/foster-three-purgatory-poems-gast-of-gy.

While the ghost suffers in purgatory to compensate for an unnamed sin committed by the couple in their bedroom – perhaps they loved each other too much, for excessive carnal desire even within marriage was regarded as sin – the widow immediately arranges masses and intercessory prayers to mitigate his pains.[35] However frightening, the emergence of the ghost indicates the ongoing relationship between the widow and her deceased husband and their unchanged mutual affections.

Although Vives does not use the term "ghost," he presents a similar idea in *The Education of a Christian Woman* (1524). In the chapter entitled "On the Memory of One's Husband," he writes:

> Death is a parting and a physical separation of body and soul, but the soul does not migrate into another life in such a way that it completely renounces all earthly things. They are sometimes heard by the living, and they know many of our actions and events [...]. Therefore, the pious widow should consider that her husband has not been altogether taken away from her, but that he is still alive with the life of the soul, which is the true and real life, and also in her constant remembrance of him.[36]

Like *The Gast of Gy*, Vives highlights the ongoing relationship between the widow and her husband, and his purpose is clearly didactic. Vives continues:

> Therefore a widow, shall cultivate the memory of her husband, not as if he were dead, but absent [...]. Let her place him as an observer and guardian not only of her external actions, as he was when confined by the body; but now relieved of this burden, a free and pure spirit, he will become the guardian of her conscience as well.[37]

Vives's discussion importantly reveals the paradoxical relationship between the widow and her deceased husband. On the one hand, the widow's memory can be oppressive for her, because it continues to keep the widow under the control of her husband, who has become a guardian "not only of her external actions" but also "of her conscience." On the other hand, the widow's memory enables her to disturb the gender hierarchy, because the deceased husband can only "exist" while he is remembered by his widow. As Vives states in his admonition to widows to remember their husbands: "They have completely died when they have been consigned to death, that is, oblivion."[38]

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35 Greenblatt, *Hamlet*, pp. 128–29; Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 247–49.

36 Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, p. 309.

37 Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, p. 310.

38 Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, p. 309.

Whereas pre-Reformation literature took it for granted that the husband's ghost could possibly come back to his widow, post-Reformation literature tried to dismiss such an idea as superstitious, although this dismissal was never absolute. As discussed in Chapter 2, Day gives an example of a consolatory letter to a widow in *The English Secretarie* (1586), where he admonishes her against excessive lamentation by invoking the Protestant ideal of moderate mourning. Arguing that there is no hope of reviving the dead, Day asks: "what great folly do we then commit in thus serching after the ghosts of our deceased frends?'[39] Still, Day does not abandon the idea of the husband's ghost completely. While expounding the Christian idea of death as a progression to heaven and salvation, Day encourages the widow to imagine how the ghost of her husband would be disturbed by her vehement lamentation:

> Suppose the ghost of your husband were here present to see you, in all this extremitie, what thinke you, would he say? [...] you might in apparance heere him, in these like speeches accusing & rebuking such your distemperate actions. And with breathing spirit to cry out unto you saying. What is it you go about? what meane you by teares to serche out for a thing so irrecuperable? why torment you your youthfull yeares, with such unprofitable, or rather as I may cal it, desperate kind of mourninges?[40]

While carefully representing the figure as fictional, Day uses the husband's ghost for a didactic purpose like Vives, although their morals are completely contrasting. It is notable that the husband's ghost blames his widow for tormenting her "youthfull yeares" with "unprofitable" lamentation. Day also uses a similar adjective to describe the widow's unchanged love for her husband: "Alas, how fruitles is this love, and zealous remembrance."[41] As already mentioned in the Introduction, it is widely accepted that attitudes toward widows' remarriage changed after the Reformation. While Catholic writers preferred widows' celibacy and condemned their remarriage, Protestant writers upheld the ideal of fruitful marriage and were also generous toward widows' remarriage. In this context, it is interesting that Day appropriates the voice of the husband's ghost to encourage the widow to leave "unprofitable" mourning and direct her mind towards fruitful remarriage. Whereas the deceased husband in Vives's work demands that his widow remember him and continue to live chastely as his wife, the same figure in Day's work encourages his widow to stop her lamentation, forget him or at

39 Day, *English Secretorie*, p. 213.
40 Day, *English Secretorie*, pp. 215 – 16.
41 Day, *English Secretorie*, p. 213.

least remember him without distress, knowing that he is in heaven, and enjoy the fruit of her "youthfull yeares."

The idea that the ghost of the deceased husband might return to his widow thus lingered even after the Reformation, and was still visible in the mid-1610s. In his addition to the sixth edition of Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters* (1615), Webster praises the widow's chastity and renunciation of remarriage in his description of "A vertuous Widdow": "Her maine superstition is, shee thinkes her husbands ghost would walke should shee not performe his Will" (ll. 9–10).[42] While carefully rejecting the existence of ghosts by referring to them as the widow's "superstition," Webster not only evokes the husband's ghost, but also uses the figure to emphasize the widow's duty to her husband. Although Webster does not associate the husband's ghost with his appraisal of widows' chastity, his message is much closer to Vives's than Day's, revealing the complexity of early modern attitudes toward widows' chastity and remarriage. On the other hand, Webster highlights the same paradoxical relationship between the widow and her deceased husband as Vives. He writes: "she hath laid his dead body in the worthyest monument that can be: Shee hath buried it in her owne heart" (ll. 22–24). While this makes the widow "a Relique" (l. 24) of her husband, the idea to which Webster's heroine famously objects in *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–1614) – "Why should only I / [...] / Be cas'd up, like a holy relic?" (III.ii.137–39) – it also makes the deceased husband dependent on his widow's memory for his continuing remembrance.

Widows' Memory and Husbands' Ghosts in Elizabethan Tragedies[43]

Before Marston and Shakespeare

This ambivalent relationship between widows and their deceased husbands was often dramatized in Elizabethan tragedies, most notably in *Antonio's Revenge*

42 John Webster, *New Characters*, in *The Works of John Webster: An Old-Spelling Critical Edition*, vol. 3, ed. David Gunby, David Carnegie, and MacDonald P. Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 439–533 (p. 478).

43 The following discussion on the Elizabethan representation of widows and their husbands' ghosts is the revision of a formerly published article. Asuka Kimura, "*Antonio no Fukushu* to *Hamlet* ni okeru otto no bourei to kafu no kioku" (The Widow's Memory and the Husband's Ghost in *Antonio's Revenge* and *Hamlet*), *Shakespeare Journal* 5 (2019): 36–51. Reproduced by permission.

and *Hamlet*. Before they were performed, many plays already depicted the husband's ghostly presence and its effects on his widow. *Arden of Faversham* (1587–1592) and *A Warning for Fair Women* (1595–1599) are both anonymous domestic tragedies based on true accounts of an adulterous wife's murder of her husband with her lover, while Peele's *David and Bathsheba* (1584–1594) dramatizes David's lust for Bethsabe, murder of her husband, and subsequent marriage to her from the second Book of Samuel. Although these plays do not represent the husband's ghost, they evoke the murdered husband in various forms to condemn his widow's infidelity. In *Arden*, the murdered husband haunts the stage in the form of his indelible blood. After Arden's corpse has been removed, Alice and Susan, her lover's sister, try to wash away his blood:

> *Susan.* The blood cleaveth to the ground and will not out.
> *Alice.* But with my nails I'll scrape away the blood.
> The more I strive the more the blood appears!
> *Susan.* What's the reason, Mistress, can you tell?
> *Alice.* Because I blush not at my husband's death.
>
> (xiv.252–56)

As Ariane M. Balizet suggests, the anonymous author makes much "of the two women's attempts to wash away the blood."[44] This becomes more apparent when we compare the scene with Holinshed's plain narrative in the second edition of *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587): "Then they made clean the parlour, took a clout and wiped where it was bloody, and strewed again the rushes that were shuffled with struggling."[45] Alice clearly perceives her husband's blood as an accusation of her infidelity and shameless murder, and cries in the pangs of conscience: "if Arden were alive again! / In vain we strive, for here his blood remains" (xiv.258–59). In *Warning*, the murdered husband reappears as a bloody handkerchief that has been sent to Anne from her murderous lover.[46] Dipped in Sanders' blood and stabbed as many times as his body, the handkerchief presents a vivid picture of her husband's corpse and drives Anne to self-injury:

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44 Ariane M. Balizet, *Blood and Home in Early Modern Drama: Domestic Identity on the Renaissance Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 73.

45 Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 2nd ed. (1587), repr. in Anon., *Arden*, pp. 113–23 (p. 119).

46 Balizet, *Blood and Home*, pp. 78–80.

> I will revenge me on these tising eies,
> And teare them out for being amourous.
> Oh *Sanders* my deare husband, give me leave,
> Why doe you hold me? are not my deeds uglie?
> Let then my faults be written in my face. (ll. 1560 – 64)

As discussed in Chapter 2, Anne's reference to the laceration of her face in *Richard III* reveals her paradoxical desire to identify herself with her murdered husband as well as to punish herself as "the causer" of his death. In *Warning*, Anne is not only "the causer" but also an accomplice in Browne's murder of her husband, and her gesture is more clearly a form of self-punishment for seducing and being seduced by Browne: "A womans sinne, a wives inconstancie, / Oh God that I was borne to be so vile" (ll. 1556 – 57). In *King David*, Bathsheba is urged to reflect upon her murdered husband when her child with David becomes sick:

> Uriah, woe is me to think hereon,
> For who is it among the sons of men,
> That saith not to my soul, "the King hath sinned,
> David hath done amiss, and Bathsheba
> Laid snares of death unto Uriah's life"? (I.v.16 – 20)[47]

Bathsheba understands her child's sickness as punishment for her betrayal of her husband. Despite the fact that she initially resists David's demand and concedes to it only in fear of incurring the king's wrath, she is regarded as a murderous adulteress and her child is termed "[h]is mother's sin, his kingly father's scorn" (I.vi.68). In these plays, the murdered husband is evoked by some object or incident, and his uncanny presence triggers the widow's self-accusation of her infidelity. Sigmund Freud explains that "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar."[48] The husband's ghost is a powerful example of the uncanny, not only because it is in itself the familiar turned into the unfamiliar, but also because it turns home into a strange, even dreadful, space. More importantly, it signifies the resurfacing of the widow's conscience, which has been buried deep in her mind or made "unfamiliar" by the widow in her pursuit of new love or remarriage. In this sense,

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47 All quotations are from George Peele, *David and Bathsheba*, ed. Mathew R. Martin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

48 Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny'" (1919), trans. Alix Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, gen. ed. James Strachey, vol. 17 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 217 – 56 (p. 220).

the husband's ghost is almost synonymous with the widow's conscience, although the fact that it takes the form of an external entity makes its relationship to the widow more complicated.

This association between the husband's ghost and the widow's conscience is also highlighted by the following account in Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* (1612). When *The History of Friar Francis*, an anonymous play that is now lost, was acted by the Earl of Sussex's Men in King's Lynn, Norfolk, in the early 1590s, a strange incident happened. In the play,

> a woman, who insatiately doting on a yong gentleman, had (the more securely to enjoy his affection) mischievously and seceretly murdered her husband, whose ghost haunted her, and at divers times in her most solitary and private contemplations, in most horrid and fearefull shapes, appeared, and stood before her.[49]

The stage figure of the husband's ghost provoked an unexpected reaction from one female spectator:

> As this was acted, a townes-woman (till then of good estimation and report) finding her conscience (at this presenment) extremely troubled, suddenly skritched and cryd out Oh my husband, my husband! I see the ghost of my husband fiercely threatning and menacing me.

Then the woman confessed "that seven yeares ago, she, to be possest of such a Gentleman [...] had poysoned her husband, whose fearefull image personated it selfe in the shape of that ghost."[50] After this incident, the murderess was duly arrested and condemned. As Heywood contends, the incident demonstrates how drama can correct vice and admonish the audience to refrain from evil acts. It also shows how the stage figure of the husband's ghost could even arouse the widow's conscience in reality.

Widows' Memory and Oblivion in *Antonio's Revenge* and *Hamlet*

This complex relationship between widows and their husbands is explored further in *Antonio's Revenge* and *Hamlet*. The similarity between these plays has long been noted by critics. In both plays,

49 Heywood, *Apology for Actors*, sig. G1v.
50 Heywood, *Apology for Actors*, sigs. G1v–G2r.

> [t]he ghost of a poisoned father appears, to tell his son of the concealed murder and urge him to take revenge. Later the ghost appears in the bedroom of his errant widow, who is being wooed by the murderer.[51]

This similarity may not be coincidental, because Marston possibly used the same source as Shakespeare, the so-called *Ur-Hamlet*, the lost play of the 1580s.[52] It is not unlikely that both Shakespeare and Marston derived the figure of the husband's ghost from this old play.[53] Five years before Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Thomas Lodge refers to the paleness of "the Visard of [the] ghost which cried so miserably at [the] Theator like an oisterwife, Hamlet, revenge" in *Wits Miserie* (1596).[54] The following passage in the Induction of *Warning* may also be a reference to the *Ur-Hamlet:*

> a filthie whining ghost,
> Lapt in some fowle sheete, or a leather pelch,
> Comes skreaming like a pigge halfe stickt,
> And cries, *Vindicta*, revenge, revenge[.] (ll. 54–57)[55]

A pilch is "[a]n outer garment made of animal skin with the fur used as a lining," and these accounts also tell us how the ghost might have looked on the stage.[56] The fact that the ghost of the murdered king does not appear in Saxo Grammaticus's twelfth-century story of Amleth or Belleforest's sixteenth-century French version makes it plausible that Shakespeare derived the figure from the *Ur-Hamlet*, and Marston might also have been inspired by the same play.[57]

On the other hand, Marston's and Shakespeare's representations of the widow's relationship with her husband's ghost are notably different. In *Antonio's Revenge*, Maria's remembrance of her murdered husband makes her susceptible to the accusation of disloyalty and lechery by her husband's ghost, and keeps her under his control until the end. From the beginning, Maria appears as a virtuous wife and loving mother as she tells her son Antonio: "How cheers my lord, thy

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51 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, ed. Philip Edwards, updated ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 6–7.

52 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Edwards, pp. 6–7; Marston, *Antonio*, pp. 16–18.

53 Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1585–91) is another possible influence. Emma Smith, "Shakespeare and Early Modern Tragedy," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, ed. Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 132–49 (pp. 134–35).

54 Thomas Lodge, *Wits Miserie* (London, 1596), p. 56.

55 Maurice Charney, *Hamlet's Fictions* (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 3–4.

56 "pilch, n.," *OED*, 1 [accessed 1 September 2020].

57 Marston, *Antonio*, p. 18; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Edwards, p. 2.

father? O sweet boy, / Part of him thus I clip, my dear, dear joy" (I.iii.105–6). Marston emphasizes this favourable image of Maria by using gestures. When she is informed of her husband's death, Maria cries out and swoons:

Mar. O, fatal, disastrous, cursèd, dismal!
Choke breath and life. I breathe, I live too long,
Andrugio, my lord, I come, I come.

Pie. Be cheerful, princess; help, Castilio,
The lady's swooned; help to bear her in.

(I.v.14–18)

As I discussed in Chapter 2, the widow's desire to follow her husband in death is possibly overlapped with sexual ecstasy by the use of the word "come" and the image of suffocation. Maria's grief is also expressed through gestures in dumb shows. At her husband's funeral, she is so distressed that she needs to be supported by two men as she follows his coffin. When the coffin is set down, she and Antonio "wet their handkerchiefs with their tears, kiss them, and lay them on the hearse, kneeling" (II.i.0 s.d.). Although Maria eventually consents to remarriage to Piero, the murderer of her husband, her initial resistance to his aggressive courting is also visualized by gestures: "PIERO [...] talks with MARIA with seeming amorousness; she seemeth to reject his suit, flies to the tomb, kneels and kisseth it" (III.i.0 s.d.). When she tries to leave her servants, who are bribed by Piero to further his suit, "PIERO stayeth her, tears open his breast, embraceth and kisseth her" (III.i.0 s.d.). Maria's lamentation and gesture of endearment towards her husband's tomb not only indicate that she is a virtuous widow, but also dismiss any suspicion of her adultery and involvement in the murder of her husband. Indeed, Maria becomes greatly distressed on the eve of her remarriage. She appears with "her hair loose" (III.iv.0 s.d.) and continues to weep: "I have a mighty task of tears to weep" (III.iv.18). It is notable that Marston associates Maria with so many gestures – perhaps the greatest in number among the lamenting widows in Elizabethan drama – and develops her character through visual images. Although her gestures seem histrionic, the fact that she also expresses her sorrow in her monologue evinces that these gestures are sincere and meant to be taken seriously. Maria's gestures also importantly make her a "visible" figure, whose interiority, psychological conflict, and changing thoughts are clearly communicated to the audience. Although her decision to agree to marry the villain may be condemnable, Maria never loses the audience's sympathy.

While the ghost in *Hamlet* appears as an uninvited guest who stalks the battlement at midnight without being invoked, the emergence of the ghost of Andrugio is strongly associated with his survivors' remembrance of him. His first ap-

pearance is elicited by Antonio's call and lamentation. Antonio visits his father's hearse at midnight to "[s]et tapers to the tomb and lamp the church" (III.i.6), and to "purify the air with odorous fume" (III.i.8). Surrounded by the same lights and scents as Antonio, the early modern audience would have felt the dissolution of the boundary between fiction and reality, theatre and mortuary, and this world and the other world. This sense, as Rist observes, must have been especially striking at St. Paul's, the venue for the play's first production, under whose floor the dead were actually sleeping.[58] When Antonio talks to his dead father and laments that his mother is wooed by Piero, the ghost of Andrugio appears. After revealing Piero's murder, he tells his son that his mother has already been won by the villain:

> Thy mother yields consent
> To be his wife and give his blood a son,
> That made her husbandless and doth complot
> To make her sonless. But before I touch
> The banks of rest, my ghost shall visit her. (III.i.39 – 43)

It is important that the ghost of Andrugio has no doubt that his widow is able to see him and listen to his injunction against her remarriage. Indeed, Maria's reunion with her husband is also triggered by her remembrance of him. After finishing her "mighty task of tears to weep" on the eve of her marriage to Piero, Maria complains as she walks towards her bed:

> O thou cold widow-bed, sometime thrice blest
> By the warm pressure of my sleeping lord,
> Open thy leaves, and whilst on thee I tread
> Groan out, "Alas, my dear Andrugio's dead!" (III.iv.60 – 63)

When she draws the curtain, Maria sees the ghost of Andrugio "sitting on the bed" (III.iv.64 s.d.) and indenting it with his "warm pressure." While Maria stands amazed, the ghost of Andrugio rails at her forgetfulness and sensuality:

> Disloyal to our hym'neal rites,
> What raging heat reigns in thy strumpet blood?
> Hast thou so soon forgot Andrugio?
> Are our love-bands so quickly cancellèd? (III.v.1 – 4)

58 Rist, *Revenge Tragedy*, pp. 76 – 81.

The ghost's strong words immediately provoke Maria's contrition, which is again expressed visually through her tears: "I pardon thee, poor soul. O, shed no tears; / Thy sex is weak" (III.v.7–8). The most significant difference between the ghosts of Andrugio and old Hamlet is that the former reveals the murder to his widow and urges her to assist her son's revenge:

> I was empoisoned by Piero's hand.
> Join with my son to bend up strained revenge;
> Maintain a seeming favour to his suit
> Till time may form our vengeance absolute. (III.v.10–13)[59]

Maria's assistance in Antonio's revenge makes her a dynamic character, who transforms from a virtuous wife, lamenting widow, and victim of the corrupting power, into a Nemesis.[60] Nonetheless, Maria's participation in her son's revenge does not necessarily indicate her agency. Maria surely appears as a disruptive figure when she subtly evades Piero's critical question:

> *Pie.* Dost love me, fairest? Say!
>
> *Mar.* As I do hate my son, I love thy soul.
>
> (V.iv.17–18)

Still, it is her husband's ghost who has ordered her to "[m]aintain a seeming favour to his suit." On the one hand, it exonerates Maria from the charge of dissemblance and protects the favourable image of her as a virtuous widow, whose "seeming favour" to the villain rather signifies her loyalty to her husband. On the other hand, it reveals that she is a passive figure simply following the order of her husband, who symbolically appears on the stage balcony "betwixt the music houses" (V.v.17 s.d.) and looks down at the main stage as the author and "spectator of revenge" (V.v.22). This high placing of Andrugio's ghost is significant, considering that ghosts in other Elizabethan tragedies, including *The Spanish Tragedy* (1585–1591), *Richard III*, and *Hamlet*, are all associated with either the main stage or the below-stage "hell." It is almost as if Andrugio's ghost

59 In the first quarto of *Hamlet*, Gertred assists her son's revenge but is not persuaded by her husband's ghost, whom she fails to recognize. On the characterization of Gertred, see G. B. Shand, "Gertred, Captive Queen of the First Quarto," in *Shakespearean Illuminations: Essays in Honor of Marvin Rosenberg*, ed. Jay L. Halio and Hugh Richmond (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), pp. 33–49; Ellen J. O'Brien, "Revision by Excision: Rewriting Gertrude," *SS* 45 (1993): 27–35; Kehler, *Shakespeare's Widows*, pp. 159–61.

60 Linda Diane Bensel-Meyers, "A 'Figure Cut in Alabaster': The Paradoxical Widow of Renaissance Drama," unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Oregon, 1985), p. 129.

has omnipotence and absolute power over the fate of other characters, including his widow. Before Antonio's closing lines, Maria speaks:

> If any ask
> Where lives the widow of the poisoned lord,
> Where lies the orphan of a murdered father,
> Where lies the father of a butchered son,
> Where lives all woe, conduct him to us three,
> The downcast ruins of calamity. (V.vi.48–53)

While Maria's remembrance of her husband and involvement in his revenge unequivocally make her a virtuous widow, she cannot define herself in any new way and continues to live as "the widow of the poisoned lord."

Shakespeare's portrayal of the widow's relationship with her dead husband in *Hamlet* makes an interesting contrast with Marston's. Although Gertrude's remarriage is roundly condemned by the ghost of old Hamlet, her obliviousness to her husband disrupts their gender hierarchy by revealing that the dead husband's authority over his widow is dependent on her remembrance of him. While Maria first appears as a virtuous wife and experiences the changes in her status during the course of the play, Gertrude has already gone through her husband's death, his funeral, the wooing by the villain, and remarriage to him before we see her on the stage.[61] By refusing to stage these events, Shakespeare clearly represents the death of old Hamlet as in the past, and this is how Gertrude wishes her son to perceive his father's death:

> Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off
> And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
> Do not forever with thy vailèd lids
> Seek for thy noble father in the dust[.] (I.ii.68–71)[62]

As Greenblatt notes, Claudius "usurps not only the kinship but also the language of Protestant mourning" by calling Hamlet's mourning "impious stubbornness" and "unmanly grief" (I.ii.94), and Gertrude follows her new husband and admonishes her son against prolonged lamentation.[63] While indicating that she is a good Protestant, Gertrude's speech makes her a "cold mother" (I.ii.77) for

61 Whipday, *Shakespeare's Domestic Tragedies*, p. 94.

62 All quotations are from "the combined text," based on the Second Quarto with interpolated lines, scenes, and passages from the First Folio, in William Shakespeare, *The Norton Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016).

63 Greenblatt, *Hamlet*, p. 247.

Hamlet, who hangs onto the ideal image of his father in his "mind's eye" (I.ii.185) and refuses to look upon a livelier image of his new "father." The contrast between the widow's and her son's attitudes towards the dead king is striking, and this is also stressed visually through their costumes. Gertrude's speech suggests that she has already "cast [her] nighted color off" and is now dressed in ordinary, colourful – if not bridal – costume, which makes a clear contrast with Hamlet's mourning garments.[64] As Döring and Catherine Richardson maintain, it is notable that Hamlet insists that his outward expressions of sorrow, including "my inky cloak" and "the fruitful river in the eye" (I.ii.77, 80), are not only something that "seems" or mere appearance, but true reflections of his deep sorrow:

> These indeed seem,
> For they are actions that a man might play,
> But I have that within which passes show –
> These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (I.ii.83–86)[65]

As I will discuss, one of the charges laid against Gertrude by her son and husband's ghost is that her lamentation at her husband's funeral might have simply been a pretence. However, the distinction between what "seems" and "that within which passes show" is not as clear cut as Hamlet assumes, and Shakespeare highlights this ambiguity repeatedly in his representation of Gertrude's lamentation.

It is interesting that Gertrude never mentions her deceased husband in the play. In Gertrude's speech, "Denmark," "the king," and "father" almost invariably refer to Claudius, and all of the memories of old Hamlet are related by Hamlet. It is not clear whether Gertrude has truly forgotten her husband or is intentionally suppressing her memory of him. In any case, it is clearly her own decision to forget her deceased husband and take a new one. In his condemnation of Gertrude's remarriage, the ghost of old Hamlet speaks as follows:

> Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
> With witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts –
> Oh, wicked wit and gifts that have the power
> So to seduce! – won to his shameful lust
> The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen. (I.v.42–46)

64 Catherine Richardson, *Shakespeare and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 74–75.

65 Döring, *Performances of Mourning*, p. 12; Richardson, *Material Culture*, pp. 75–76.

The ghost's condemnation of Gertrude as "my most seeming-virtuous queen" brings back Hamlet's accusation of his mother's hypocritical sorrow. Earlier, Hamlet denounces his mother's instant remarriage as follows:

> A little month, or e'er those shoes were old
> With which she followed my poor father's body,
> Like Niobe, all tears[.] (I.ii.147–49)

So Gertrude lamented her husband's death like a virtuous widow. Although it is impossible to tell whether her lamentation was genuine or not from this short description, the picture of a widow following her husband's corpse in tears is at least strong and moving. However, the fact that Gertrude stopped her lamentation and remarried Claudius too quickly makes her vehement lamentation suspicious retrospectively. That Gertrude might have consented to remarriage to Claudius willingly also increases this suspicion. As many editors annotate, "will" means sexual desire, and the ghost complains that "Gertrude was sexually responsive to Claudius's advances."[66] While this reading is supported by the fact that the word is juxtaposed with Claudius's "shameful lust," we should not neglect its usual meaning – intention, purpose, or determination. Although it might have been Claudius who "seduce[d]" Gertrude, it was her own "will" to accept his suit. Gertrude's "willing" acceptance of Claudius's courtship arouses the question of her agency. On the one hand, it is possible to see Gertrude as a victim of the murderer's aggressive wooing and corrupting power. This is the version represented by Hamlet in the dumb show of *The Murder of Gonzago*:

> The QUEEN returns, finds the KING dead, makes passionate action. The poisoner with some three or four come in again, seem to condole with her. The dead body is carried away. The poisoner woos the QUEEN with gifts. She seems harsh awhile but in the end accepts love. (III.ii.122 s.d.)

It is interesting that this dumb show closely resembles the dumb show of Piero's courting of Maria in *Antonio's Revenge*. As discussed above, Maria is undoubtedly a virtuous widow, but is forced to accept Piero's suit by her mercenary servants and his aggressive courtship. Marston minimizes the audience's negative response to Maria by representing her as the victim of a corrupted society and stressing her passive role in agreeing to remarry. Her passivity also seems to be stressed by the fact that her consent is attributed to her female weakness:

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66 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Edwards, p. 119; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, the Second Quarto text (London: Thomson Learning, 2006), p. 215.

"Thy sex is weak." Whereas weakness is her inner quality and that which drives her to an incorrect judgement comes from within, the fact that it is almost synonymous with susceptibility to external forces blurs the extent of her agency. *The Murder of Gonzago* represents Gertrude in a similar vein. The Player Queen laments her husband's death and rejects the murderer's courtship, but eventually accepts it. Still, it is notable that Shakespeare, unlike Marston, keeps silence about the Player Queen's, and by inference, Gertrude's willingness to accept her remarriage. The fact that Shakespeare stresses the performativity of the Player Queen's lamentation and her resistance to the murderer's temptation by describing how she "makes passionate action" or "seems harsh awhile" reveals that even this ideal image of Gertrude cannot escape the charge of theatricality and hypocrisy. Even if we take it for granted that the Player Queen's sorrow is genuine and her consent to remarry is demanded by the villain, *The Murder of Gonzago* is only a representation, not a reproduction, of the actual events; it merely "replays circumstances *approximating* King Hamlet's murder" and his widow's acceptance of the murderer's suit.[67] Indeed, Shakespeare seems to emphasize Gertrude's "active" role in her acceptance of Claudius's suit by using the word "will." Here arises another, more formidable image of Gertrude, who has forsaken the memory of her deceased husband and remarried Claudius willingly – or might have even known about his murder of her husband.

Although Gertrude's puzzlement at Hamlet's word "kill a king" (III.iv.28) and the fact that the Ghost's accusation of Gertrude concentrates on her remarriage seem to work against a charge of her culpability in Claudius's murder of her husband, Gertrude's self-determined remarriage may explain the ghost's reserved manner towards his remarried widow. Whereas the ghost of Andrugio visits Maria, castigates her in his own words, and changes her decision to remarry Piero, the ghost of old Hamlet orders his son to leave his mother to heaven:

> Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
> Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven
> And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
> To prick and sting her. (I.v.85 – 88)

Although the ghost can condemn his widow's infidelity, lechery, and lack of discretion before his son and the audience, there is nothing he can do to his widow, who has already made a decision to abandon the memory of her husband and remarry another man. This powerlessness of the ghost is highlighted most in the closet scene. After his accidental slaying of Polonius, Hamlet accuses his

67 Rist, *Revenge Tragedy*, p. 66 (emphasis mine).

mother in strong words while comparing a picture of his heroic father with that of his wicked uncle. Hamlet's castigation of his mother succeeds in arousing Gertrude's conscience to some extent:

> O Hamlet, speak no more!
> Thou turn'st my very eyes into my soul,
> And there I see such black and grievèd spots
> As will leave there their tinct. (III.iv.88–91)

Although Hamlet's words are able to "prick and sting" Gertrude's conscience "like daggers" (III.iv.95), they nonetheless fail to cultivate his mother's memory of her deceased husband. Neither in this scene nor at any time afterwards does Gertrude mention anything about old Hamlet. Indeed, Gertrude's repeated pleas for Hamlet to stop his speech about her deceased husband – "Oh, speak to me no more!" (III.iv.94) – may indicate her refusal to remember him.

It is in this context that Gertrude fails to see her husband's ghost. The ghost enters in the middle of Hamlet's accusation of his mother and tells his son:

> Do not forget. This visitation
> Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
> But look, amazement on thy mother sits.
> Oh, step between her and her fighting soul –
> Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.
> Speak to her, Hamlet. (III.iv.109–14)

Although the ghost argues that the primary purpose of his visitation is to encourage Hamlet to take quick revenge, this is immediately taken over by his concern about his widow. On the other hand, his order for Hamlet to speak to his mother may indicate his awareness that he himself cannot speak to Gertrude. Indeed, Gertrude is perplexed by her son's behaviour:

> Alas, how is't with you,
> That you do bend your eye on vacancy
> And with th'incorporal air do hold discourse? (III.iv.115–17)

Although some critics argue that Gertrude's failure to see her husband's ghost indicates her innocence in the murder of her husband, this is not necessarily correct because not one of the witnesses of the ghost – Hamlet, Horatio, or the two sentinels – is implicated in the murder of old Hamlet.[68] Rather, Gertrude's failure

68 Oakes, "Heiress, Beggar, Saint or Strumpet," pp. 220–22.

to see her husband's ghost – or perhaps her wilful blindness to him – makes the question of her agency and culpability completely unanswerable. While the widows in other Elizabethan plays confess their sins as they encounter the ghostly figure of their murdered husbands, Gertrude's failure to see her husband's ghost triggers neither her confession nor protestation of her innocence. Unlike Maria, whose interiority is literally visible to the audience, Gertrude remains a highly obscure figure until the end. The recognition that Gertrude cannot see her husband's ghost is somewhat pitiful after his caring speech about his widow, as Hamlet says:

> Do not look upon me
> Lest with this piteous action you convert
> My stern effects[.] (III.iv.126 – 28)

Hamlet's speech conveys the unutterable sorrow of the ghost, who looks down at his son piteously, possibly shedding tears. Gertrude's failure to see her husband's ghost clearly indicates her obliviousness to her husband. He is a man of the past and no longer exists for her. Although it is unclear what motivates Gertrude's obliviousness to her husband and instant remarriage to another man, her refusal to look back at the past and "will" to move forward seem to reflect the psychological condition of many widows in the early modern period, who simply had to forget and take another husband for the sake of survival and security. By dismissing the ghost as Hamlet's "very coinage of your brain" (III.iv.138), Gertrude dismisses old Hamlet's authority over her as well as his very existence. After clearly seeing that his widow no longer remembers him or belongs to him, the ghost of old Hamlet deserts the stage and this world. It is noteworthy that the ghostly figure of the dead husband stopped haunting the stage and condemning his widow's new love or remarriage after *Hamlet*. Although dead husbands are occasionally described as ghosts in later plays, they are almost invariably revealed to be alive. Gertrude's obliviousness to her husband, then, might have been an epochal moment. Again, as Vives writes: "They have completely died when they have been consigned to death, that is, oblivion."

Jealous Husbands and Forgetful Widows in *The Widow's Tears* and *Michaelmas Term*

After the husband's ghost vanished from the stage, another type of husband appeared in Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (1603 – 1605) and Middleton's *Michael-*

mas Term (1604–1607). As Panek maintains, they were both prolific writers on the theme of widows' remarriage.[69] Apart from *The Widow's Tears*, which was staged by the Children of the Chapel at the Blackfriars, Chapman depicts remarrying widows in *Sir Giles Goosecap* (1601–1603) and *The Gentleman Usher* (1602–1605), both of which were presumably acted by the same company. Middleton wrote four comedies about widows for the Children of St. Paul's, *The Phoenix* (1603–1604), *Michaelmas Term* (1604–1607), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1604–1606), and *The Puritan* (1606–1607), and continued to do so after the dissolution of the company in 1607.

It has been suggested that Chapman's and Middleton's interests in widows' remarriage developed from their personal experiences. Some early critics have explained Chapman's satirical tone in *The Widow's Tears* from his alleged failure to woo a wealthy widow. According to the copies of letters found in the early twentieth century, Chapman, who was an impoverished younger brother, perhaps courted a wealthy widow but was rejected because of his poverty.[70] Middleton's relationship with a widow is more substantiated than Chapman's, for the widow in question was his own mother. Middleton's father, who was a wealthy gentleman bricklayer, died when Middleton was six, and his widowed mother remarried Thomas Harvey in the same year; he was a debt-ridden gentleman grocer who was twenty-one years younger than her. Soon after they got married, the couple started to argue over the widow's and her children's inheritance, and fifteen years of lawsuits ensued.[71] The unfortunate marriage between Fidelio's widowed mother and the mercenary Captain in *The Phoenix* may reflect the bitter marriage between Middleton's mother and her debauched husband.[72]

It is therefore unsurprising that Chapman's and Middleton's attitudes towards widows are essentially satirical in *The Widow's Tears* and *Michaelmas Term*, and this is clearly demonstrated by their representations of widows' lamentation. Still, Chapman and Middleton do not direct their satire mainly against widows. By replacing the figure of the husband's ghost with the comic figure of

69 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, chap. 5.

70 William Thomas Davies, "The Comedies of George Chapman in Relation to His Life and Times," unpublished doctoral dissertation (Yale University, 1943), vol. 1, pp. 364–68, vol. 2, pp. 557–68. Chapman's courtship of a widow is not mentioned in the *ODNB*. Mark Thornton Burnett, "Chapman, George (1559/60–1634)," *ODNB* [accessed 19 July 2021].

71 Gary Taylor, "Middleton, Thomas (bap. 1580, d. 1627)," *ODNB* [accessed 19 July 2021]. See also Mildred G. Christian's pioneering work, "A Sidelight on the Family History of Thomas Middleton," *Studies in Philology* 44.3 (1947): 490–96.

72 Thomas Middleton, *The Phoenix*, ed. Lawrence Danson and Ivo Kamps, in *Works*, pp. 91–127 (p. 92).

the jealous husband, who disguises his own death to test his wife's chastity, Chapman and Middleton, rather, problematize the husband's irrational desire to control his wife's sexuality even after his death. While the motif of the husband's counterfeit death in Jacobean plays has been noted by critics, it has never been considered in relation to the Elizabethan figure of the ghost.[73] Although Chapman's and Middleton's cynicism and sardonic edge make their plays typically early Jacobean, their attitudes towards widows' remarriage are more favourable than their predecessors.

While endorsing Tharsalio's cynical comment, "how short-lived widows' tears are" (I.i.141–42), *The Widow's Tears* is almost certainly "pro-remarriage."[74] It is notable that Chapman dismisses the figure of the husband's ghost in the first two acts, which focus on Tharsalio's winning of the Countess Eudora, by attributing the words "spirit" and "ghost" to this aggressive suitor. When Tharsalio boasts to his brother Lysander how Eudora "has taken note of my spirit, and surveyed my good parts" (I.i.75–76) while he was serving as her husband's page, the word "spirit" no longer refers to the ghost of the deceased husband as it does in *Hamlet:* "My father's spirit in arms!" (I.ii.254). Instead, it refers to the suitor's virility and fertile seeds discharged from his "good parts." Nor is it the "spirit" of the widow's deceased husband that obstructs Tharsalio's courtship of Eudora. During his first encounter with Eudora, Tharsalio proclaims: "I dare come to you at midnight, and bid defiance to the proudest spirit that haunts these your loved shadows" (I.ii.76–78). Here, the "spirit" that haunts the widow and hinders Tharsalio's advances is not her husband's ghost, but the pride and haughtiness of Eudora, who calls him a "base companion" (I.ii.67) and "use[s] a spirit / Of my erection, with such low respect" (I.iii.11–12). To conquer "the rich and haughty Countess Eudora" (I.i.59–60), Tharsalio devises a strategy that in effect makes him into a ghost. After his first wooing has failed, Tharsalio reminds the widow:

Eud. Begone, or I protest thy life shall go.

73 Robert A. Fothergill, "The Perfect Image of Life: Counterfeit Death in the Plays of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 52.2 (1982): 155–78 (pp. 165–66); James, "Widow in Jacobean Drama," pp. 46–48; Roger Alfred MacDonald, "The Widow: A Recurring Figure in Jacobean and Caroline Comedy," unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of New Brunswick, 1978), pp. 79–87.

74 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, p. 89; Renu Juneja, "Widowhood and Sexuality in Chapman's *The Widow's Tears*," *Philological Quarterly* 67.2 (1988): 157–75 (p. 166).

Thar. Yet shall my ghost stay still, and haunt those beauties
And glories that have rendered it immortal.

(I.ii.140 – 42)

Tharsalio's reference to his "ghost" can be taken in two ways. On the one hand, Eudora's threat against his life enables us to take it literally: even if Eudora kills Tharsalio, his ghost will stay and haunt her. On the other hand, the "ghost" may refer to Eudora's remembrance of Tharsalio in his absence. Even after Tharsalio leaves Eudora, her remembrance of his impudent but impressive courtship will haunt her. Tharsalio tries to possess Eudora's mind further by sending Arsace, a bawd, to her. While seemingly warning the widow against Tharsalio's "beastlihood" (II.ii.106), Arsace stresses his virility and sexual attractiveness and arouses Eudora's interest in him.[75] Tharsalio's design is successful. Arsace's warning makes Eudora's mind even more haunted by the memory of Tharsalio: "Since your messenger's departure, her ladyship hath been something altered, more pensive than before, and took occasion to question of you" (II.iii.99 – 102). As Argus, Eudora's gentleman usher, has earlier warned his mistress, it is useless to "[s]hut doors upon him" (I.ii.154) or order "a guard [to] keep him out" (I.ii.157), because Tharsalio sneaks into Eudora's mind in an insubstantial form: "a guard of men is not able to keep him out" (II.iv.68 – 69). The ghost of the deceased husband is fully replaced by the "spirit" of the virile suitor in the last scene of Act 2. After Tharsalio has been dismissed by Eudora and forbidden entrance to her house, the widow's servants gossip about their mistress's suitors and her prospects of remarriage. While Argus and Sthenia discuss whether Tharsalio will dare to come again, Tharsalio suddenly enters and astonishes them:

Enter THARSALIO.

Arg. Well, by Hercules, he comes not here.

Sthe. By Venus, but he does; or else she hath heard my lady's prayers, and sent some gracious spirit in his likeness to fright away that Spartan wooer that haunts her.

Thar. There stand her sentinels.

Arg. 'Slight, the ghost appears again.

(II.iv.76 – 81)

75 Oakes, "Heiress, Beggar, Saint or Strumpet," p. 268.

As Akihiro Yamada notes, "Chapman in these lines is obviously making a parody of the first Ghost scene in *Hamlet*."[76] It is notable that Chapman not only replaces the ghost of the widow's husband with the lively figure of her suitor, but also merges these figures by calling Tharsalio "some gracious spirit" sent by Venus to defend Eudora from the vainglorious Spartan lord, who is associated with impotency as well as a venereal disease.[77] Here, the widow's "prayers" do not invoke her husband's ghost but her virile suitor with a "spirit," who kicks out the impotent suitor and satisfies her sexual appetite by opening "my counting house" (III.i.66) or the Countess's vagina.[78]

While dismissing the figure of the husband's ghost in the Tharsalio–Eudora plot, Chapman problematizes the anti-remarriage sentiment behind this figure by representing the jealous husband in the Lysander–Cynthia plot. The plot is based on the episode of the Widow of Ephesus in Petronius's *Satyricon*. In this episode, a widow entombs herself with her deceased husband to express her sorrow, but soon starts an affair with a soldier guarding the graveyard. When the dead body of a criminal is stolen from a cross, the widow saves her lover by hanging her husband's corpse in place of the stolen body.[79] Chapman makes this bizarre story even more disturbing by making Lysander fake his own death and seduce his own "widow" in his disguise as a soldier to test her chastity. As Panek maintains, Cynthia's "graveyard 'pleasures' after the apparent death of her husband are portrayed as utterly grotesque."[80] This grotesqueness was probably stressed more in actual performance. Lysander describes his sexual liaison with his unchaste "widow" as follows:

> In the height of her mourning, in a tomb, within sight of so many deaths! Her husband's believed body in her eye! He dead a few days before; this mirror of nuptial chastity, this vot'ress of widow-constancy, to change her faith exchange kisses, embraces, with a stranger [...] in effect, to prostitute herself upon her husband's coffin! (V.ii.35–42)

As Yamada argues, the tomb in which Cynthia and Lysander have an "affair" was probably represented by the discovery space.[81] Apart from Lysander's coffin,

76 Chapman, *Widow's Tears*, ed. Yamada, p. xxxvii.
77 Juneja, "Widowhood and Sexuality," p. 66.
78 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, p. 85.
79 Peter Ure, "The Widow of Ephesus: Some Reflections on an International Comic Theme," in *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama: Critical Essays by Peter Ure*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1974), pp. 221–36 (p. 227).
80 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, p. 86.
81 Chapman, *Widow's Tears*, ed. Yamada, pp. lxvii–lxx.

some other props might have been used to furnish the space, including tapers or incense, as can be seen in the tomb scene in *Antonio's Revenge*. As was the rule for early modern indoor theatres, the interior of the Blackfriars was presumably dark and lit by candles. Although these theatres were almost certainly equipped with windows, the amount of daylight coming through the windows was very limited, especially in winter. Some contemporary accounts even suggest that the windows might have been shuttered after the audience took their seats, in order "to create more advantageous conditions for candlelight."[82] The darkness and solemnity of the stage would have intensified the secrecy and profaneness of their liaison. The striking image of Cynthia's liaison with Lysander might also have been stressed by her mourning garments. As Döring maintains, it is notable that Chapman does not stage Cynthia's vehement lamentation, while making Lycus describe her gestures as follows:

> I never saw such an ecstasy of sorrow, since I knew the name of sorrow. Her hands flew up to her head like Furies, hid all her beauties in her dishevelled hair, and wept as she would turn fountain. (IV.i.38 – 42)[83]

As Tharsalio explains, Cynthia has even "descended with his corpse into the vault" with her maid, Ero, and "there wipe their eyes time out of mind, drink nothing but their own tears, and by this time are almost dead with famine" (IV.i.19 – 21). Although Lycus is sympathetic towards the lamenting widow, his statement that he "never saw such an ecstasy of sorrow" is as ironic as Tharsalio's cynical comment that Cynthia's lamentation is "new and stirring" (IV.i.9), because the wringing of the hands, the dishevelled hair, and the overflowing tears are all conventional, even trite, expressions of sorrow. While Lycus associates these gestures with Cynthia's "earnest passions" (IV.i.38), Tharsalio stresses their performativity by using the word "perform" (IV.i.33) and comparing the widow to "an overdoing actor" (IV.i.105 – 6).[84] Even Lycus, who protests at Tharsalio's cynicism and defends the widow, unconsciously admits the superficiality of such gestures by comparing them to apparel: "A passion thus borne, thus apparelled with tears, sighs, swoonings, and all the badges of true sorrow, to be dissembled!" (IV.i.113 – 15). Instead of making these gestures, what Cynthia

82 Martin White, "'When torchlight made an artificial noon': Light and Darkness in the Indoor Jacobean Theatre," in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors*, ed. Gurr and Karim-Cooper, pp. 115 – 36 (p. 117).

83 Döring, *Performances of Mourning*, pp. 141 – 42.

84 Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 110 – 11.

does in her mourning costume on the stage is everything that is inappropriate for a lamenting widow: drinking alcohol, devouring food, and having sex with "[a] poor eightpenny soldier" (V.i.45) in her husband's tomb. After drinking wine, Cynthia exclaims: "How excellent ill this humour suits our habit!" (IV.iii.27). The stage picture of Cynthia devouring food and male flesh in mourning garments at her husband's tomb must have shocked the early modern audience.

Although Elizabeth Hodgson argues that the performativity of gestures of mourning makes Cynthia a problematic woman whose interiority cannot be penetrated by the male gaze, this performativity does not necessarily empower the widow in *The Widow's Tears*.[85] Rather, as Panek argues, Chapman clearly punishes Cynthia's hypocrisy and celebration of vidual chastity by highlighting the incongruence between her solemn appearance and earthly actions.[86] At the same time, however, Chapman's attack is more strongly directed against Lysander's jealousy. It is notable that Chapman emphasizes the unnaturalness of Lysander's desire for Cynthia's chastity by comparing her sexual abstinence to fasting.[87] Lysander praises Cynthia's chaste widowhood as follows:

> O Cynthia, heir of her bright purity,
> Whose name thou dost inherit, thou disdain'st
> (Severed from all concretion) to feed
> Upon the base food of gross elements.
> Thou all art soul; all immortality. (IV.ii.181–85)

Here "the base food of gross elements" refers to both victuals and male flesh. It should be noted that Lysander, while praising his wife's spirituality by associating her sexual abstinence with fasting, unconsciously admits that sexual desire is as natural as the appetite for food. More ironically, the stage picture of Cynthia having sex with Lysander in disguise represents what this jealous husband has so strongly wished for. Lysander's desire to control his wife's sexuality even after his death is repeatedly described as "strange" by other characters.[88] For in-

85 Elizabeth Hodgson, "'A Fine and Private Place': Chapman's Theatrical Widow," *MRDE* 22 (2009): 60–77.

86 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, pp. 88–89.

87 Sasha Garwood, "'The skull beneath the skin': Women and Self-Starvation on the Renaissance Stage," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 145 (2009): 106–23 (pp. 117–19); Alice Dailey, "Easter Scenes from an Unholy Tomb: Christian Parody in *The Widow's Tears*," in *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama*, ed. Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 127–39 (p. 131).

88 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, pp. 78–79; Juneja, "Widowhood and Sexuality," pp. 167–68.

stance, Tharsalio considers that it is natural for his future wife to remarry if he predeceases her. He asks:

> Is it not madness for me to believe [...] that if another man of my making and mettle shall assault her, her eyes and ears should lose their function, her other parts their use, as if Nature had made her all in vain, unless I only stumbled into her quarters? (I.i.124 – 29)

Since a widow's sexual desire is natural and does not decease with her husband, it is "madness" for him to expect her to lose her senses ("eyes" and "ears") or forget how to use her sexual organs ("other parts"), while "another man of my making and mettle" makes advances to her. However, Lysander cannot tolerate this idea and demands that his wife sleep only with him, or use her senses and sexual organs only when he "stumble[s] into her quarters." Accidentally, Cynthia fulfils his irrational desire by having sex only with her husband even after his "death." While revealing the unnaturalness of Lysander's desire by presenting a distasteful picture of the widow wearing a mourning costume and having sex with her "deceased" husband in his tomb, Chapman carefully transfers an image of necrophilia from the widow to the jealous husband by representing Cynthia as a half-dead, ghostly figure, whose "pow'rs of life are spent; and what remains / Of her famished spirit serves not to breathe but sigh" (IV.ii.28 – 29). Lysander's sexual liaison with his dying wife reveals his paradoxical desire for Cynthia. Before entering the tomb, Lysander asks himself:

> Shall she famish, then?
> Will men (without dissuasions) suffer thus
> So bright an ornament to earth, tombed quick
> In earth's dark bosom? (IV.ii.11 – 14)

On the one hand, Lysander wants to make his wife into an inanimate, cold monument of chastity, whose tears are turned into "crystal, and a mirror" (IV.ii.9), so that "men may see and wonder / At women's virtues" (IV.ii.10 – 11). On the other hand, Lysander cannot tolerate the idea of losing Cynthia's living flesh. Since she is such an excellent woman, she should not turn into "earth" but must please men. It is ironic that Lysander introduces himself to Cynthia as a sentinel, whose duty is to protect "these monuments / From rape and spoil of sacrilegious hands" (IV.ii.45 – 46), for it is his own sexual desire that defaces the sacred monument of the dying, chaste widow and revives it as an earthly, sensual widow. The culpability of Cynthia's "infidelity" is also obscured by the fact that her new lover turns out to be her husband in disguise. If a widow loves another man due to his resemblance to her deceased husband, is she chaste or lecherous? Cynthia has fallen in love with the soldier, who is

not simply "another man" of her husband's "making and mettle," but is actually him. Is she still condemnable? The ambiguous nature of Cynthia's love for the soldier might have been especially stressed in actual performance, where the audience would see the same face and the same voice as Lysander's wooing his lamenting widow. While appropriating Petronius's misogynistic episode, Chapman carefully exonerates Cynthia from the audience's unequivocal condemnation, and rather, problematizes Lysander's jealousy.

Middleton's representation of the jealous husband's counterfeited death and his widow's quick remarriage in *Michaelmas Term* is much more light-hearted than Chapman's. Middleton not only lampoons Quomodo's jealousy, but also shows that Thomasine's instant marriage to Easy is ordinary and acceptable. Some critics have explained this favourable view of the widow by referring to her role as the moral centre of the play. For them, she is "a good angel," who witnesses her husband's fraud from the stage balcony and helps the gullible gentleman recover his property by remarrying him after her husband's alleged death.[89] Such a simplistic understanding of the character has been challenged by Panek and James, who have revealed the irony in this "good angel" being a lusty widow, who is actively seeking to fulfil her sexual desire for the younger gentleman like a huntress.[90] While importantly discussing how Thomasine's remarriage undermines Quomodo's authority as her husband, these critics have not highlighted the significance of the widow's remarriage in relation to the broader issue of remembrance and oblivion in the play. As I will discuss, the widow's obliviousness to her husband does not appear as extraordinary in *Michaelmas Term*, not only because her remarriage is associated with moral rectitude, but also because it is completely accepted in the play's materialistic society, where people's remembrance of others is based on their self-interest or mercenary motive.

A general attitude towards the dead in *Michaelmas Term* is introduced by the following conversation between Rearage and Salewood at the beginning of the play. Having recently arrived in London for the court season, the two gentlemen start gossiping:

Rearage. Heard you the news?

Salewood. Not yet.

89 A. L. Kistner and M. K. Kistner, "Heirs and Identity: The Bases of Social Order in *Michaelmas Term*," *MLS* 16.4 (1986): 61–71 (pp. 69–70); Aaron Kitch, "The Character of Credit and the Problem of Belief in Middleton's City Comedies," *SEL* 47.2 (2007): 403–26 (pp. 421–22).

90 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, pp. 158–61; James, "Widows in Jacobean Drama," pp. 160–63.

Rearage. Mistress Difficult is newly fallen a widow.

Salewood. Say true, is Master Difficult, the lawyer, dead?

Rearage. Easily dead, sir.

(I.ii.24–28)

It is noteworthy that "the news" is not the lawyer's death, but his wife's widowhood. Although Rearage and Salewood do not necessarily discuss the widow's inheritance or prospects of remarriage, the importance of this news for the prodigal gentlemen is apparent. For them, the consequences or potential benefits of Master Difficult's death are much more important than the death of this renowned lawyer. Although Salewood briefly reflects upon the dead lawyer and how he was killed by the intermittence of court seasons during the Bartholomew week, his recollection is soon cut short by Rearage: "He savours. Stop your nose; no more of him" (I.ii.42). The deceased "savours" or stinks if we talk too much about him.[91] The issue of oblivion and remembrance is also highlighted by Middleton's characterization of Andrew Lethe, whose family name "puns on the river of forgetfulness in Hades."[92] Like Rearage and Salewood, Lethe is completely indifferent to his deceased father, who was "an honest upright tooth-drawer" (I.ii.266–67) but "too poor a man" (I.ii.299) to educate his son to "write and read" (I.ii.300). He even tries to forget his father deliberately, in order to start a new life as a courtier: "He's forgot his father's name, poor Walter Gruel, that begot him, fed him, and brought him up" (I.ii.151–52). In *Michaelmas Term*, it is no longer a duty of the living to remember the dead; the deceased is significant only in terms of the benefits that his or her death yield for the living. Remembrance among the living is also a costly business in Middleton's materialistic London. Lethe, who has a tendency to forget his acquaintances, says:

I have received of many, gifts o'er night
Whom I have forgot ere morning. Meeting the men,
I wished 'em to remember me again;
They do so, then if I forget again,
I know what helped before, that will help then.
This is my course; for memory I have been told
Twenty preserves, the best I find is gold. (I.ii.181–87)

91 Thomas Middleton, *Michaelmas Term*, ed. Gail Kern Paster (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 67.

92 Thomas Middleton, *Michaelmas Term*, ed. Theodore B. Leinwand, in *Works*, pp. 334–72 (p. 341).

Lethe remembers people as he receives their gifts, but then soon forgets them, and demands another gift to remember them. While Lethe's forgetfulness is clearly a pretence and a means of self-aggrandizement, his speech reveals a general rule about people's memory in the play.

Similarly, when Shortyard, one of Quomodo's "spirits" (I.ii.79), disguises himself as a young gentleman called Blastfield and demonstrates to Easy how to become a London gallant, he urges his gull to invite other gentlemen for dinner in the following manner:

> *Shortyard.* This gentleman, by me, invites you all.
> Do you not, Master Easy?
>
> *Easy.* Freely, sir.
>
> *Salewood.* We do embrace your love. – [*Aside*] A pure, fresh gull.
>
> *Shortyard.* Thus make you men at parting dutiful,
> And rest beholding to you, 'tis the sleight
> To be remembered when you're out of sight.
>
> *Easy.* A pretty virtue.
>
> (II.ii.190 – 96)

"To be remembered," one needs to pay dearly and make the recipient "owe" you, so that he will return your favour by remembering you. In short, people's remembrance is something you must buy with money, because nobody wants to remember you unless there is some profit in it. In this society, there is clearly no space for the dead in the memory of the living, for the remembrance of the dead yields almost nothing profitable for the living.

In this context, it is comical that Quomodo, a prosperous "woollen draper" (I.ii.76) and an expert in this mercenary world, expects his widow to mourn his death sincerely and continue to live in chaste widowhood. After seizing Easy's land in Essex, Quomodo becomes anxious about the fate of his land, and decides to test his family's loyalty by faking his own death. Among his family members, Quomodo is especially interested in his wife's chastity: "I am as jealous of this land as of my wife, to know what would become of it after my decease" (IV.i.120 – 21). He imagines

> how pitiful my wife takes my death, which will appear by November in her eye, and the fall of the leaf in her body, but especially by the cost she bestows upon my funeral, there shall I try her love and regard[.] (IV.i.114 – 18)

Quomodo naively considers that these outward expressions of sorrow will signify his wife's "love and regard." However, Thomasine demonstrates that she can

easily lament vehemently and conduct her husband's grand funeral without true sorrow. Immediately after Quomodo's "death," Thomasine sends her maid Winifred to Easy to arrange her remarriage, while promising:

> *Thomasine.* Good girl. Thou shalt have a mourning gown at the burial, of mine honesty.
>
> *Winifred.* And I'll effect your will, o' my fidelity.
>
> (IV.iii.37–39)

As I discussed in Chapter 1, mourning garments were expensive commodities in early modern England. Here, "a mourning gown" is no longer a sign of sorrow, but a monetary reward that the widow promises her maid for effecting her "will" – her sexual desire for Easy. Thomasine also speaks explicitly about her "counterfeited" sorrow:

> I do account myself the happiest widow that ever counterfeited weeping, in that I have the leisure now, both to do that gentleman good, and do myself a pleasure; but I must seem like a hanging moon, a little waterish awhile. (IV.iii.40–44)

Unlike Cynthia, whose histrionic gestures are revealed to be superficial by cynical men, Thomasine acknowledges the artificiality of such gestures and appropriates them to pursue her own interests. During Quomodo's funeral procession, Thomasine "falls down in a feigned swoon" (IV.iv.56 s.d.) to attract Easy's attention. When he comes to rescue her, Thomasine reveals that she has "a priest ready" (IV.iv.78) to consecrate their marriage, and kisses him: "Let this kiss / Restore thee to more wealth, me to more bliss" (IV.iv.80–81). By wooing her lover in her mourning costume, Thomasine importantly subverts the pattern of a mourning widow, wooed and conquered by an aggressive suitor, as exemplified by Richard's wooing of Anne in *Richard III* and the soldier's wooing of Cynthia in *The Widow's Tears*.

The stage picture of Thomasine kissing Easy might have recalled the Courtesan's same action in an earlier scene. To boast his masculinity, Lethe brings Rearage and Salewood to his Courtesan and allows them to salute her, expecting that "she'll utterly disgrace 'em, turn tail to 'em, and place their kisses behind her" (III.i.91–93). However, he soon realizes that he has been deceived, because "she's kissed 'em both with her lips" (III.i.94). Although Middleton might seem to condemn Thomasine's lechery by overlapping her with the Courtesan, his satire is, rather, directed at Quomodo's naivety. It is notable that Quomodo assuages his fear that Thomasine might "take my death so to heart, that she should sicken upon't, nay, swoon, nay, die" (IV.iv.5–6) by recalling past times:

> I have heard of those wives that have wept, and sobbed, and swooned; marry, I never heard but they recovered again; that's comfort, la, that's a comfort, and I hope so will mine. (IV.iv.8 – 12)

Quomodo's comparison of Thomasine's virtue with that of women in past times is ironic, not only because such virtue cannot be expected in Middleton's decadent London, but also because it reveals that widows' sorrow has always been faked. In fact, Middleton never problematizes Thomasine's marriage to Easy on the day of her husband's funeral. Even in the trial scene, it is not her remarriage but Quomodo's counterfeit death that is condemned as "impious" (V.iii.11). When Quomodo accuses his wife of inconstancy, describing how her tears are dried up by "the shine of a next morning" (V.iii.49), the Judge asks:

> Did you profess wise cozenage, and would dare
> To put a woman to her two days' choice,
> When oft a minute does it? (V.iii.51 – 53)

Middleton thus indicates that Quomodo's expectation of Thomasine's chaste widowhood is as ridiculous as Lethe's expectation of the Courtesan's chastity. It is also ironic that even Thomasine's "remembrance" of her husband stops her lamentation rather than provoking it. She speaks to Rearage, who congratulates her on Quomodo's death, as follows:

> He ne'er used me so well as a woman might have been used, that's certain [...]. And though it be the part of a widow to show herself a woman for her husband's death, yet when I remember all his unkindness, I cannot weep a stroke, i'faith[.] (IV.iii.56 – 62)

Thomasine does not simply refuse to remember the dead like other characters; her memory of her husband – particularly his "unkindness" or sexual impotency – actually urges her to remarry a new man, whose "one thing" can exalt her: "What difference there is in husbands. Not only in one thing, but all" (V.i.52 – 53). Quomodo's ideal of "my most modest, virtuous, rememb'ring wife" (IV.iv.53) is thus demolished. Although Quomodo's funeral is richly furnished with "mourning weeds / Throughout his house e'en down to his last servant" (V.iii.4 – 5), these are all revealed to be seeming or empty shows of sorrow.

It is also notable that Middleton parodies the Elizabethan representation of the husband's ghost and his condemnation of his widow's remarriage in the last act. When Quomodo visits Thomasine in disguise as a beadle and finds out that she has already been remarried to Easy, he takes off his disguise and condemns his unchaste "widow":

Quomodo. Will it please you know me now, Mistress Harlot and Master Horner? Who am I now?
[*Discovers himself*]

Thomasine. O, he's as like my t'other husband as can be.

Quomodo. I'll have judgement; I'll bring you before a judge; you shall feel, wife, whether my flesh be dead or no.

(V.i.127–32)

It is significant that Thomasine not only fails to recognize her husband in disguise, but also refuses to acknowledge him even after he has revealed himself. By refusing to answer Quomodo's question ("Who am I now?") and speaking of him as someone resembling "my t'other husband," Thomasine continues to treat Quomodo as dead and rejects his authority over her sexuality. Whereas the ghost of the deceased husband often retains his authority in Elizabethan plays, Quomodo's claim on Thomasine's body is clearly revealed as effective only in his lifetime and removed simultaneously with his "death." Thomasine's refusal to identify him as her husband forces Quomodo to appeal to the Judge and prove "whether my flesh be dead or no" in order to retrieve his authority. However, Quomodo continues to be treated as dead by other characters. Easy also describes him as a ghostly figure in his conversation with the Judge:

> We are not certain yet it is himself,
> But some false spirit that assumes his shape
> And seeks still to deceive me. (V.iii.12–14)

Although the term "spirit" generally refers to Shortyard and Falselight, Quomodo's "chameleon-like assistants," in this play it can also be taken literally as Quomodo's ghost.[93] Unlike Lysander, whose feigned death is assisted by Tharsalio and Lycus, Quomodo has revealed his plan to nobody and undertaken it on his own, in order to "note the condition of all" (IV.ii.114). Ironically, this makes it difficult for Quomodo to prove that he is still alive, and forces him to remain in a liminal state between life and death. It is equally ironic that Quomodo's attempt to identify himself and to return from the dead is hindered by his obliviousness to himself:

Judge. How are we sure you're he?

Quomodo. O, you cannot miss, my lord.

93 Middleton, *Michaelmas Term*, ed. Leinwand, in *Works*, p. 340.

Judge. I'll try you.
Are you the man that lived the famous coz'ner?

Quomodo. O no, my lord.

Judge. Did you deceive this gentleman of his right,
And laid nets o'er his land?

Quomodo. Not I, my lord.

Judge. Then you're not Quomodo, but a counterfeit.
Lay hands on him, and bear him to the whip.

Quomodo. Stay, stay a little,
I pray; now I remember me, my lord,
I cozened him indeed, 'tis wondrous true.

(V.iii.19 – 29)

Only when Quomodo remembers himself and acknowledges his fraud can he retrieve his identity and authority as Thomasine's husband.

The reunion of Quomodo and Thomasine is far from felicitous. While Quomodo regains his adulterous wife and faithless "widow," Thomasine continues to insist on Quomodo's "death" and the legitimacy of her remarriage to Easy until the end. When Lethe, who is sentenced to marry the Courtesan, asks for Thomasine's mediation, she answers:

Lethe. Mistress Quomodo –

Thomasine. Inquire my right name against next time; now go your ways like an ass as you came. (V.iii.140 – 42)

As a whole, the play ends with most characters "remembering" themselves, or being reconnected to the past, which they have deliberately tried to forget. Quomodo loses Easy's property, returns to the citizen state, and is punished for his past conduct. Easy recovers his property and goes back to the quiet countryside, leaving corrupt London behind. Lethe acknowledges his humble birth and accepts his poor mother, whom he has been using as his bawd. Thomasine, however, refuses to be reconnected to her past marriage and insists on her new identity as Mistress Easy. As I discussed above, the Elizabethan representation of the husband's ghost reveals that the authority of the deceased husband over his widow is actually dependent on her remembrance of him. Middleton pushes this theme further and reveals that the authority of the *living* husband is also dependent on the wife's willingness to obey him by making Thomasine continue to treat her husband as insignificant or "dead" to her.

This chapter has discussed the staging of the husband's ghost in the Elizabethan tragedies and early Jacobean satirical comedies. As several non-dramatic texts have shown, widows' memory of their husbands was both oppressing and empowering for these women. While widows could remember the dead and continue to live as their chaste wives, they could also choose to forget the dead and start a new life. Many dramatists addressed this paradoxical relationship between widows and their deceased husbands by using the figure of the ghost. In many Elizabethan tragedies, the ghostly figure of the deceased husband often comes back to the stage to condemn his widow's new love or remarriage. After Gertrude's self-determined remarriage and obliviousness to her husband, however, the husband's ghost stopped haunting the early modern stage, and general attitudes towards widows' remarriage seem to have shifted. While revealing widows' gestures of mourning as hypocritical and untrustworthy, Chapman and Middleton indicate that widows' new love or remarriage is a natural phenomenon. They, rather, problematize husbands' irrational desire to control their wives' sexuality even after their deaths by replacing the Elizabethan figure of the husband's ghost with the comic figure of the jealous husband, who tests his wife's chastity by staging his own death. Chapman's and Middleton's favourable attitudes toward widows' remarriage were followed by later dramatists, as will be mentioned in the following chapters.

Chapter 4
Actors and Casting in *The Duchess of Malfi* and *More Dissemblers Besides Women*

In *Hamlet*, the protagonist welcomes the troupe of actors with the following speech, which I quote from the second quarto:

> You are welcome, masters, welcome all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends; O old friend, why, thy face is valanced since I saw thee last. Com'st thou to beard me in Denmark? What, my young lady and mistress! By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine; pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring. Masters, you are all welcome. (II.ii.347–54)

As is often noted, this troupe, which is said to have travelled from outside Denmark, is a miniature of an early modern English theatre company. Hamlet's hearty welcome of his "old friend" resonates with the English monarch's long-standing intimacy with major acting companies in London. His calling them "masters" implies that many actors were freemen or masters of guilds, such as the Grocers or Goldsmiths. The first folio adds another dimension by calling them "[g]entlemen" (II.ii.351), referring to their financial success and social advancement, including Shakespeare's. Hamlet also refers to the indigenous custom of the English theatre industry: the use of boy actors for female representation. His exultation at seeing "your ladyship" and concern for the boy's changing stature and voice, implicitly associated with his loss of virginity, speak of the early modern audience's fascination with boys' youthful beauty and awareness of its transience.

This chapter will discuss these actors' real-life counterparts in relation to the representation of widows in two Jacobean plays: Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–1614) and Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women* (1621–1622). Critical interest in early modern actors and casting procedures dates back to T. W. Baldwin's *The Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company* (1927). Assuming that each actor had a certain "line of parts" determined by his physical appearance and personal traits, Baldwin hastily assigned roles to particular actors. Although his work later invited criticism, it was a pioneering work on the subject, along with W. J. Lawrence's article on the practice of doubling and Edwin Nungazer's dictionary of actors and other contributors to the pre-Civil War theatre industry.[1] More refined research began with David Bevin-

1 T. W. Baldwin, *Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company* (Princeton: Prince-

https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501513893-009

ton's *From Mankind to Marlowe* (1962), which repudiated Baldwin's agenda by carefully examining the seven extant "plots" dated between the late 1580s and the early 1600s. By showing that actors often played double or even several distinct roles in one play, Bevington claimed that Baldwin's typecasting was ungrounded. G. E. Bentley's *The Profession of Player* (1984) also dismissed Baldwin's speculation and detailed all of the available sources, which are useful in considering early modern casting procedures. Meanwhile, he expanded Nungezer's work and published a dictionary of actors' biographies in the second volume of *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (1941).[2]

While continuing Bevington's and Bentley's discretion, through a careful examination of primary sources, critics have been increasingly willing to develop hypotheses about original casting or actors' relationships. T. J. King's *Casting Shakespeare's Plays* (1993) offers the minimum required number of actors and doubling possibilities for all Shakespeare's plays, and his attempt is followed by Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean's first dedicated study of the Queen's Men (1998), which tries to establish "the size and constitution of the company" by examining their extant plays.[3] McMillin and MacLean's attention to the aesthetic or thematic implications of doubling is further explored by Brett Gamboa's *Shakespeare's Double Plays* (2018), in which he argues that the disturbance of "the integrity of illusions" by doubling enhanced the audience's pleasure and offers doubling-schemes for all Shakespearean plays.[4] Along with these studies on casting, many source materials and analyses of early modern actors' lives and relations have been published since E. A. J. Honigmann and Susan Brock's invaluable *Playhouse Wills* (1993).[5] While Roslyn Lander Knutson (2001) has shown that actors were not merely colleagues or business rivals but also neigh-

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ton University Press, 1927); W. J. Lawrence, "The Practice of Doubling and Its Influence on Early Dramaturgy," in *Pre-Restoration Stage Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), pp. 43–78; Edwin Nungazer, *A Dictionary of Actors and of Other Persons Associated with the Public Representation of Plays in England before 1642* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929).

2 David M. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590–1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941).

3 T. J. King, *Casting Shakespeare's Plays: London Actors and Their Roles, 1590–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 97.

4 Gamboa, *Shakespeare's Double Plays*, p. 11.

5 *Playhouse Wills, 1558–1642: An Edition of Wills by Shakespeare and His Contemporaries in the London Theatre*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann and Susan Brock (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

bours and life-long friends, by examining their wills and parish records, John H. Astington (2010) and David Kathman (2004; 2005) have unveiled many instances of master–apprentice relationships between adult actors and boy actors, especially in the Lord Chamberlain's or King's Men.[6] While acknowledging the utmost importance of basing one's argument on evidence from primary sources, these critics do not refrain from suggesting undocumented but highly likely casting patterns or connections among actors. Such a critical approach is also espoused by Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells in *The Shakespeare Circle* (2015):

> Without wanting this book to be full of expressions such as "he must have" and "there can be little doubt that," we have not discouraged our contributors from going beyond narrowly documented evidence, relying on their familiarity with Shakespeare's life and times to exercise their imaginations in the attempt to illuminate obscure areas of his existence and experience.[7]

Although I do not claim to be as competent in balancing documentary evidence and "imagination" as these critics, I will follow their path and consider the representation of widows in relation to actors and casting.

In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss *The Duchess of Malfi* by focusing on a boy actor, Richard Robinson, who is likely to have played the Duchess in the first production. Robinson was one of the major actors and sharers of the King's Men, whose name appears in "The Names of the Principall Actors" in Shakespeare's first folio.[8] While boy actors are generally obscure figures, Robinson has attracted much attention and was discussed most recently by Roberta Barker and Simone Chess. Barker's study is another example of combining textual evidence and imagination, and she argues how Robinson or another boy actor who played the Duchess of Malfi might have learned the acting of female audacity by making observations of unruly aristocratic ladies upon their visits at

6 Roslyn Lander Knutson, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chap. 2; Astington, *Actors and Acting*, chap. 3; David Kathman, "How Old Were Shakespeare's Boy Actors?," *SS* 58 (2005): 220–46; David Kathman, "Grocers, Goldsmiths, and Drapers: Freemen and Apprentices in the Elizabethan Theater," *SQ* 55.1 (2004): 1–49. There are also studies dedicated to a particular actor. Barbara Wooding, *John Lowin and the English Theatre, 1603–1647: Acting and Cultural Politics on the Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (London: Routledge, 2016); Catherine A. Henze, *Robert Armin and Shakespeare's Performed Songs* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

7 Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, eds., *The Shakespeare Circle: An Alternative Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 5.

8 William Shakespeare, *The First Folio of Shakespeare: The Norton Facsimile*, ed. Charlton Hinman (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), p. 17.

court. Chess draws on queer and transgender studies to discuss three boy actors, including Robinson, in terms of "queer residue" or how their experiences and personas as female impersonators would have lingered even after they shifted to male parts.[9] Although my approach is more traditional than that of Chess and closer to Barker's, I will also highlight the gender ambiguity and other forms of liminality of a boy actor and consider how these characteristics would have overlapped with those of the widowed Duchess. In the second part of this chapter, I will focus on *More Dissemblers*, which was probably performed after the revival(s) of *Malfi*. As several critics maintain, these plays share many characters and themes, and it is likely that Middleton wrote his comedy in response to Webster's tragedy. My aim is to demonstrate how this intertextuality would have been made visible by the actors, while discussing Middleton's scepticism regarding the Duchess's vow.

Between Genders: Widow and Boy Actor in *The Duchess of Malfi*[10]

Like any female characters, widows were impersonated by boy actors on the early modern stage. Although modern critics have extensively discussed the theatrical effects of boys acting female characters in relation to their gender ambiguity, they have hardly explored the ways in which boys' acting or adolescent bodies might have affected the audience's perception of a particular group of women, including widows. The fact that widows were impersonated by boy actors deserves special attention, because both widows and boy actors were perceived as liminal figures in early modern society.

As Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann explain, the term "liminality," deriving from Latin *limen* or threshold, was conceived by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in *Les Rites de Passage* (1908), which was "translated into English in 1960, and became one of the most influential works of anthropological theory

9 Roberta Barker, "The 'Play-Boy,' the Female Performer, and the Art of Portraying a Lady," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 33.1 (2015): 83–97; Simone Chess, "Queer Residue: Boy Actors' Adult Careers in Early Modern England," *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* 19.4 (2019): 242–64.
10 The following discussion on the original casting in *Malfi* is based on a formerly published article. Asuka Kimura, "*Malfi Koushaku Fujin* ni okeru shounen haiyu no butaijou no kouka" (Theatrical Effects of Boy Actor's Performance in *The Duchess of Malfi*), *Kanto Eibungaku Kenkyu* 11 (2019): 39–50.

during the 1960s and 1970s."[11] According to van Gennep, liminality refers to the state of transition, confusion, and ambiguity, experienced by an individual or a group during rituals marking crucial changes or life events. Such rituals usually have three stages: the separation from a previous world (preliminal), the transitional stage (liminal), and the incorporation into a new world (postliminal). The main feature of the transitional or liminal stage is paradox and ambiguity. While van Gennep writes that those who pass from one region to another waver "between two worlds," Victor Turner, van Gennep's most influential interpreter, argues that "the most characteristic midliminal symbolism is that of paradox, or being *both* this *and* that."[12]

Boy actors were such liminal entities wavering "between two worlds," namely childhood and adulthood, boyhood and manhood, and apprenticeship and mastership. As Lucy Munro states, early modern writers often divided a man's life into several stages. In Henry Cuffe's *The Differences of the Age of Man's Life* (1607), childhood runs from birth to the age of twenty-five, at which point men usually completed their apprenticeship and entered marriage, both of which were important signs of male adulthood. Childhood is then divided into four parts. Infancy lasts until the age three or four. Boyhood runs for another five years or so. Then comes adolescence, "our *budding* and *blossoming age*, when our cheekes and other hidden parts begin to be clothed with that mossie excrement of haire, which is prorogued untill the eighteenth year." Finally, youth runs until the age twenty-five.[13] As Bruce R. Smith and Gina Bloom explain, children in adolescence and youth occupied "a precarious position in the social order."[14] Leaving home for vocational training and/or work, they were "no longer boys and thus expected to demonstrate independence, but they were not yet men and thus were still controlled by parents or parentlike masters."[15]

Boy actors in adult companies were such "precarious" adolescents and youths. According to David Kathman, these boys were "no younger than twelve and no older than twenty-one or twenty-two, with a median of around sixteen or seventeen."[16] Although Robert Barrie has shown that boys could be employed in

11 Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 39.
12 Qtd. in Bruster and Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare's Theatre*, p. 39.
13 Qtd. in Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 39.
14 Bruce R. Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 78.
15 Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, p. 39.
16 Kathman, "Boy Actors," p. 220.

several ways, the most common form was apprenticeship.[17] In London livery companies, an apprentice was bound to his master for seven years or so, during which time he lived in his master's household, received vocational training, and worked without wages. An apprentice was economically dependent on his master, who provided him with food, dress, and accommodation. In return, an apprentice's body was perceived as his master's asset and put under his control. A typical indenture stipulates that an apprentice

> shall not commit fornication nor contract matrimony within the said term. He shall not play at cards, dice, tables or any other unlawful games. He shall not haunt taverns nor playhouses, nor absent himself from the master's service day or night unlawfully.[18]

Boy actors were bound to adult companies in a similar manner. Since there was no actors' guild, a boy actor was apprenticed to an adult actor who was also a member of a livery company. A boy actor was trained in acting rather than an established profession, and when his term was over he often stayed with his master's acting company as a sharer or a hired man.[19]

It is likely that boy actors' liminality between childhood and adulthood, boyhood and manhood, or apprenticeship and mastership, manifested itself in the form of gender ambiguity on the early modern stage. Indeed, boys were often regarded as analogous to women. In the contemporary medical discourse based on the one-sex model, which perceived the male and female genitals as identical and simply reversed, boys were thought to pass "through a 'female' developmental phase" before becoming men.[20] Although this model, advocated by Thomas Laqueur, has been widely criticized for oversimplifying the early modern understanding of sex, it illustrates how boys' gender was perceived.[21] Boys were also associated with gender ambiguity in the theory of the four humours. They were considered to have small and shrill voices that were like women's, because their bodies were similarly moist and lacked the heat required to dilate their vocal organs.[22] Boys and women were also subordinated to patriarchal figures, who tried

17 Robert Barrie, "Elizabethan Play-Boys in the Adult London Companies," *SEL* 48.2 (2008): 237–57.

18 Qtd. in Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, p. 234.

19 Barrie, "Elizabethan Play-Boys," pp. 238–39; Kathman, "Grocers," pp. 2–6; Astington, *Actors and Acting*, pp. 77–79.

20 Susan Zimmerman, "Disruptive Desire: Artifice and Indeterminacy in Jacobean Comedy," in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 39–63 (p. 40).

21 Peterson, "Re-anatomizing Melancholy," pp. 143–46.

22 Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, pp. 23–24.

to control and exploit their economic and sexual resources. This point has often been made in relation to boy actors. While Lisa Jardine, Susan Zimmerman, and Peter Stallybrass have discussed how early modern acting companies deployed cross-dressed boy actors' androgynous beauty to arouse the (largely male) audience's desires, Stephen Orgel has shown that this fantasy of boy actors' sexual availability possibly derived from their social and economic vulnerability as apprentices.[23] Since boy actors lacked control over their bodies as well as other forms of autonomy, they were regarded as "lesser" men, and this gender ambiguity rendered them erotic objects of adult men.[24] It is therefore symbolic that boy actors started their careers by taking female roles and shifted to male parts as they reached the end of their apprenticeship.

Similarly, widows were perceived as liminal figures between life and death, or the past and future, in the early modern period. The Christian notion that the husband and the wife "shall be one flesh" seems to have generated the idea that widows were half-dead, half-living entities.[25] In *The Education of a Christian Woman* (1524), which was reprinted several times between the 1520s and 1590s, Juan Luis Vives argues that the husband's death is "a most grievous loss" for a woman, because "not only has half her soul perished [...] but her whole self has been wrested forcefully from her and annihilated."[26] In his religious treatise, *The Widowes Joy* (1622), William Cragge similarly calls a husband's death "the greatest griefe of all," because "*her* husband, one halfe of *her* selfe dyes."[27] Indeed, as I discussed in Chapter 1, mourning costumes and other accessories often denoted a widow's liminal state, between life and death, by making her a reminder of her husband's death and an object of *memento mori*. Widowhood can also be described as an intermediate state between the past and future, because widows could leave mourning for their husbands and start a new life, possibly with new husbands. In this sense, remarriage was a significant event or a rite of passage, in which widows were transferred from death to life, the past to the future, and tragedy to comedy.[28] In early modern plays, widows' prog-

23 Jardine, *Still Harping*, chap. 1; Zimmerman; Peter Stallybrass, "Transvestism and the 'body beneath': Speculating on the Boy Actor," in *Erotic Politics*, ed. Zimmerman, pp. 64–83; Lisa Jardine, "Twins and Travesties: Gender, Dependency and Sexual Availability in *Twelfth Night*," in *Erotic Politics*, ed. Zimmerman, pp. 27–38.

24 Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 64–71.

25 Ephesians 5:31, quoted from the King James Bible.

26 Vives, *Education of a Christian Woman*, p. 299.

27 W[illiam]. C[ragge]., *The Widowes Joy* (London, 1622), p. 8.

28 Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 159.

ress from the tragic past to the comic marriage often creates tragicomic effects, and this is especially significant in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, whose widow protagonist not only remarries but also bears children, a unique example, apart from Thomas Drue's *The Duchess of Suffolk* (1624).[29] As Emma Smith writes, the Duchess of Malfi's "excessive fertility is not just comic in terms of raising a laugh," but also "comic generically": "if tragedy is the genre associated with death and destruction, comedy is associated with rebirth, with spring, with new futures."[30] While causing her tragic death, the Duchess's remarriage enables her to challenge an old, aristocratic regime embodied by her autocratic brothers and to introduce a new, meritocratic regime by leaving an heir with Antonio.[31]

Widows were also intermediate entities between women and men in early modern England. As I discussed in the Introduction, widows were entitled to have economic and social autonomy, which was usually a male privilege and forbidden to women. Early modern English people probably perceived widows in a similar manner to Giovanni Giorgio Trissino, an early sixteenth-century Italian writer, who encourages a widow "to consider yourself born a man [*nata homo*], in spirit and in body."[32] In fact, widows were often thought to possess qualities that were unseemly for women and more appropriate for men, such as boldness or self-assertiveness. Joseph Swetnam writes in his notorious misogynist tract, *The Araignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (1615): "commonly widdowes are so froward, so waspish, and so stubborne, that thou canst not wrest them from their wills."[33]

Although widows and boy actors are described equally as liminal entities by early modern writers as well as modern critics, there is one important distinction. While gender ambiguity is regarded as a source of empowerment and emancipation for widows, it is associated with subordination, the loss of independence, and effeminacy in the case of boy actors. When a boy actor played a widow,

29 Representations of the maternal body in these plays are discussed in Albert H. Tricomi, *Reading Tudor-Stuart Texts through Cultural Historicism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), chap. 7.

30 Emma Smith, ed., *Women on the Early Modern Stage* (London: Methuen Drama, 2014), p. xvi.

31 Theodora A. Jankowski, "Defining/Confining the Duchess: Negotiating the Female Body in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Studies in Philology* 87.2 (1990): 221–45 (p. 244); Mikesell, "Catholic and Protestant Widows," p. 276; Sid Ray, "'So troubled with the mother': The Politics of Pregnancy in *The Duchess of Malfi*," in *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*, ed. Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 17–28 (pp. 23–24).

32 Qtd. in Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 71. Jordan's brackets.

33 Joseph Swetnam, *The Araignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (London, 1615), p. 59.

then, how did his or her gender ambiguity appear on the stage? As many critics have noted, the Duchess of Malfi is a highly complex, multifaceted character. While her sovereignty and widowhood endow her with autonomy and masculinity, she also displays her wifely devotion to Antonio and maternal care for her three children.[34] It is worthwhile to consider how this complexity in Webster's tragic heroine would have been enacted by a boy actor on the original stage.

Although critics have suggested various names for the actor of the Duchess in the first production, Richard Robinson is now widely accepted as the most likely candidate.[35] The first quarto of *Malfi* (1623) contains a list of actors, which is unique in showing the cast for both the first production and later revival(s) (fig. 4.1). Richard Sharpe, whose name appears on the list, was not able to play the first Duchess, as he was apprenticed to John Heminges on 21 February 1616 and had not joined the company in late 1613 or 1614, when the play was first acted.

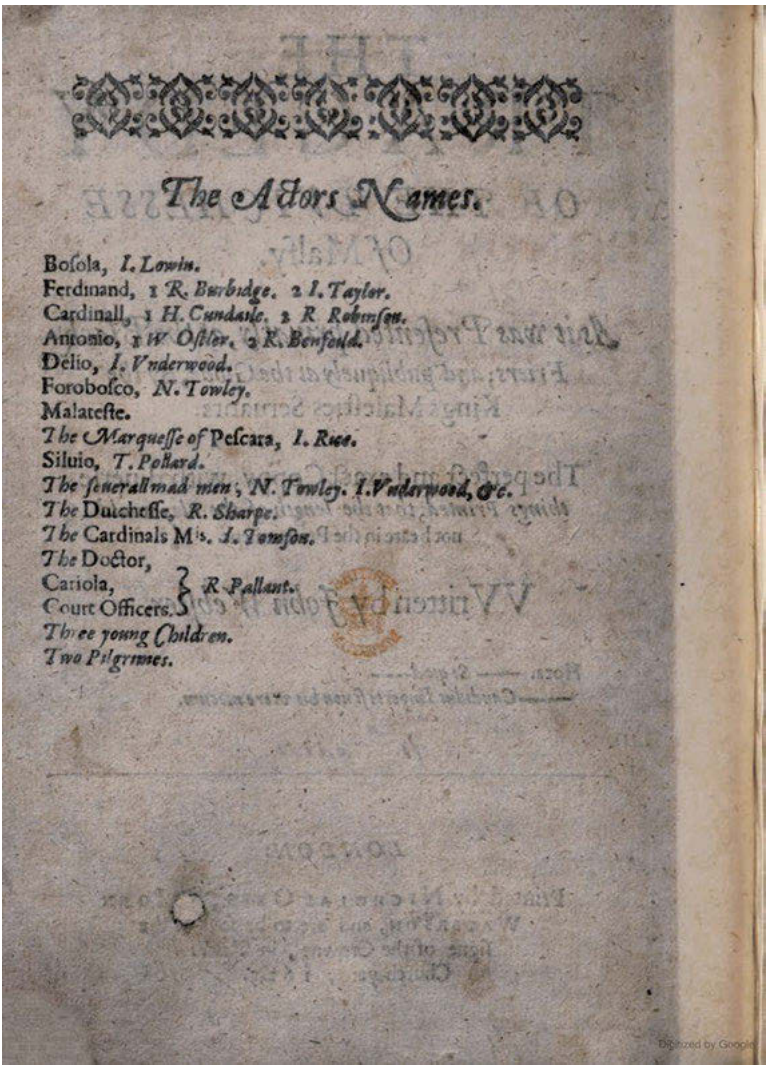
There are two pieces of information that suggest that Robinson played the Duchess. First, he played female protagonists in at least two plays acted by the King's Men before *Malfi*. The manuscript of Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy* (1611) names Robinson as the Lady: "Enter Lady: Rich. Robinson" (IV.iv.42 s.d.).[36] Similarly, he is the only actor specializing in female roles and mentioned in the actors' list of Fletcher's *Bonduca* (1613–14).[37] That Robinson played the Lady and Bonduca is noteworthy, because like the Duchess these women also challenge male authority. Bonduca disturbs the gender hierarchy repeatedly by calling manly Roman soldiers "These Romane Girls" (I.i.11). While Bonduca's resistance to the Roman invasion of Britain is likely to have been perceived favourably by

34 To name just a few: Jankowski, "Defining/Confining"; Emily C. Bartels, "Strategies of Submission: Desdemona, the Duchess, and the Assertion of Desire," *SEL* 36 (1996): 417–33; Dympna Callaghan, "*The Duchess of Malfi* and Early Modern Widows," in *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion*, ed. Garrett A. Sullivan Jr., Patrick Cheney, and Andrew Hadfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 272–86; Wendy Wall, "Just a Spoonful of Sugar: Syrup and Domesticity in Early Modern England," *Modern Philology* 104.2 (2006): 149–72.

35 David Carnegie, "Theatrical Introduction," in John Webster, *The Works of John Webster: An Old-Spelling Critical Edition*, vol. 1, ed. David Gunby, David Carnegie, and Antony Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 411–49 (p. 425); John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Brian Gibbons, 5th ed. (London: Methuen Drama, 2014), p. 6; John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Leah S. Marcus (London: Methuen Drama, 2009), p. 91; Webster, *Malfi*, ed. Brown, p. 51.

36 Thomas Middleton, *The Lady's Tragedy*, ed. Julia Briggs, in *Works*, pp. 833–905 (p. 835). Here and after, all quotations from the play are from the B-text, which is closer to a performance text.

37 Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Fifty Comedies and Tragedies* (London, 1679), p. 601 (numbered as p. 23).



The Actors Names.

Boſola, *I. Lowin.*
Ferdinand, 1 *R. Burbidge.* 2 *I. Taylor.*
Cardinall, 1 *H. Cundale.* 2 *R Robinſon.*
Antonio, 1 *W Oſtler.* 2 *R. Benfield.*
Delio, *I. Vnderwood.*
Foroboſco, *N. Towley.*
Malateſte.
The Marqueſſe of Peſcara, *I. Rice.*
Siluio, *T. Pollard.*
The ſeuerall mad men, N. Towley. I. Vnderwood, &c.
The Dutcheſſe, *R. Sharpe.*
The Cardinals M^is. *I. Tomſon.*
The Doctor,
Cariola, } *R. Pallant.*
Court Officers. }
Three young Children.
Two Pilgrimes.

Fig. 4.1. "The Actors Names," from John Webster, *The Tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy* (1623). London, British Library, 644.f.72, sig. A2v. Photo: © The British Library Board.

the early modern audience, the fact that her resistance is inseparable from her antagonism towards men, who have raped her daughters and now threaten her sovereignty, probably complicated their response. Bonduca's defiance of male authority culminates as she commits suicide with her daughters on the stage balcony, while looking down at the Romans and calling them "Ye fools"

(IV.iv.141). The heroine of *The Lady's Tragedy* also defies the notion of male superiority. The Tyrant, a usurper of the throne, tries to ravish the Lady, who is a lover of Govianus, the legitimate king. The Lady implores her lover to kill her, but Govianus swoons from fear. Dismissing her lover as "thou poor-spirited man" (III.i.150), the Lady stabs herself with his sword:

> Thou art my servant now. Come, thou hast lost
> A fearful master, but art now preferred
> Unto the service of a resolute lady,
> One that knows how to employ thee, and scorns death
> As much as some men fear it. (III.i.157–61)

While the Lady's suicide signifies her devotion to Govianus, the image of her sexual subjection to her lover is suppressed by the fact that she calls him "[a] fearful master" and his phallic sword "my servant." It is notable that both Bonduca and the Lady are associated with widowhood. While Bonduca is the widowed queen of the Iceni, the Lady is "clad in black" (I.i.92 s.d.) to bemoan the Tyrant's usurpation of the throne, and her costume is called a "widow's case" (I.i.103) and her loyalty to the overthrown king "a widow's state" (IV.ii.51). If Robinson played the Duchess, his acting of the role should have been affected by his experience of playing these strong heroines associated with widowhood. Indeed, the fact that both Bonduca and the Lady commit suicide on the stage possibly suggests that Robinson was good at performing a woman's heroic death, and this in return suggests that his acting of the Duchess's death must have been equally impressive, if he played the role.

Second, Robinson's talent as a female impersonator was well-known in the 1610s.[38] In Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass* (1616), Merecraft and Engine search for "a witty boy" (II.viii.57), who can impersonate a Spanish-bred English widow to train Fitzdottrel's wife as a lady. Engine names Robinson and praises him enthusiastically:

> *Engine.* There's Dick Robinson,
> A very pretty fellow, and comes often
> To a gentleman's chamber, a friend's of mine. We had
> The merriest supper of it there, one night!
> The gentleman's landlady invited him
> To a gossip's feast. Now he, sir, brought Dick Robinson,
> Dressed like a lawyer's wife, amongst 'em all –
> I lent him clothes – but, to see him behave it,

38 Webster, *Malfi*, ed. Brown, p. 51; Keith Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Theatre* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 102.

> And lay the law, and carve, and drink unto 'em,
> And then talk bawdy, and send frolics! Oh,
> It would have burst your buttons, or not left you
> A seam.
>
> *Merecraft.* They say he's an ingenious youth.
>
> *Engine.* Oh, sir! And dresses himself the best! Beyond
> Forty o'your very ladies!
>
> (II.viii.64–77)

As Bentley claims, Jonson's praise is "no small tribute."[39] Elizabeth M. Brennan plausibly argues that this may reflect Jonson's satisfaction with Robinson's acting in *Catiline, His Conspiracy* (1611), whose actors' list also names no female impersonator but Robinson.[40] Jonson's encomium suggests that Robinson was probably a skilful, attractive, and popular actor, who could possibly have satisfied Webster's aesthetic demands as well as the company's commercial needs, if he acted in *Malfi*.

If Robinson played the Duchess, it is likely to have affected the audience's perception of the widow in several ways. First, Robinson's adolescent body, or that of any boy actor who played the role, might have strengthened the formidable image of the Duchess by stressing her gender ambiguity. As modern critics have argued extensively, the Duchess's widowhood and sovereignty make her a problematic woman in the play's patriarchal society.[41] On the one hand, the Duchess enjoys autonomy almost equal to men as a sovereign of "[t]he dukedom, which she [holds] as dowager" (III.iv.33). She welcomes her noble guests, all of whom are men, in her "presence" chamber (I.i.82), and entertains them with jousting and "chargeable revels" (I.i.333). That Ferdinand humbly requests Bosola's "provisorship of your horse" (I.i.217) instead of demanding it also evinces the legitimacy of her autonomy. On the other hand, the Duchess is expected to obey her brothers as a woman. Ferdinand and the Cardinal's harsh admonition against remarriage ironically reveals their precarious relationship with the Duchess. Although they can discourage their sister from remarriage by stressing her noble blood and the disgraceful images of a "lusty widow" (I.i.340), they need to rely on her "own discretion" (I.i.292) in the end.

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39 Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2, p. 550.

40 John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Elizabeth M. Brennan, 3rd ed. (London: A & C Black, 1993), p. xxxii; Ben Jonson, *The Works of Benjamin Jonson* (London, 1640), p. 596.

41 See especially Jankowski, "Defining/Confining"; Callaghan, "*Duchess of Malfi* and Early Modern Widows."

As Emily C. Bartels maintains, the fact that the Duchess conceals her masculine audacity under the pretence of female submissiveness makes her a disturbing figure.[42] When her brothers admonish her against remarriage, the Duchess seemingly obeys them by proclaiming, "I'll never marry" (I.i.302). However, once her brothers are gone, the Duchess reveals her rebellious nature by speaking as follows:

> Shall this move me? If all my royal kindred
> Lay in my way unto this marriage,
> I'd make them my low foot-steps: 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[.] (I.i.341–48)

As Emma Smith explains, the Duchess's soliloquy is notably different from that of Hamlet. Whereas Hamlet discloses his thoughts to the audience and builds an intimate relationship with them, the Duchess "does not solicit our sympathy or understanding for what she is about to do – engineer her marriage to her steward Antonio." The Duchess's soliloquy is "bravado rather than shared confidence," keeping the audience at a distance, or even in awe.[43] By comparing herself to a brave soldier and her brothers to "old wives" (I.i.348), the Duchess subverts the gender hierarchy and reveals herself as an audacious widow.

If Robinson played the Duchess, her problematic status as a widow ruler might have been stressed by his adolescent body. As mentioned already, Kathman has discovered that boy actors who took female roles on the early modern stage were aged between twelve and twenty-two. Robinson had already taken female roles by 1611, when he appeared in *The Lady's Tragedy* and *Catiline*, and he had started taking male roles by 1616, when he appeared in *The Devil is an Ass*. Considering how Jonson calls attention to Robinson's "transition from playing young women to playing young men" in *The Devil is an Ass*, it is likely that Wittipol was one of the earliest male roles played by Robinson.[44] Assuming that Robinson was not an anomaly among boy actors, we can infer from Kathman's study that Robinson could have been as young as twelve in 1611, and as old as twenty-two in 1616. This means that Robinson was born between 1594 and

42 Bartels, "Strategies of Submission," pp. 420–22.
43 Smith, "Shakespeare and Early Modern Tragedy," p. 139.
44 Thomas Middleton, *The Widow*, ed. Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, in *Works*, pp. 1074–1123 (p. 1087).

1599, which roughly corresponds with the birth dates proposed by Kathman (1598) and Munro (ca. 1595).[45] If so, he was between the ages of fourteen and nineteen in 1613, or between fifteen and twenty in 1614.

Although Jonson praises Robinson's feminine beauty by describing it as superseding "[f]orty o'your very ladies," it is not unlikely that by 1613 – 1614 the boy actor's body had already displayed a number of masculine features usually developed at puberty. For instance, there were the issues of height and the cracking of the voice, as Hamlet's speech quoted above reminds us: "By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine; pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring" (II.ii.350 – 53). When Robinson appeared in *The Devil is an Ass*, he was almost certainly tall. After searching for a boy to impersonate the Spanish-bred English widow, Engine brought in Wittipol, claiming that Robinson had recommended him:

> *Merecraft.* But he is too tall!
> *He excepts at his stature.*
>
> *Engine* For that
> He has the bravest device! – you'll love him for't –
> To say he wears cioppinos, and they do so
> In Spain. And Robinson's as tall as he.
>
> (III.iv.11 – 14)

The implication, of course, is that Robinson played Wittipol.[46] As Hamlet's speech suggests, a cioppino or chopine was "[a]n over-shoe consisting of a top-cap fixed to a high sole of cork or wood," and was worn by a small boy actor.[47] Although Martin White argues that Robinson might have appeared in these "raised shoes to increase his height," the fact that Wittipol/Robinson needed to pretend that he wore cioppinos to disguise his height suggests that he was naturally tall.[48] Although Merecraft may simply mean that Robinson was too tall to play a woman, it would have been more comical if Wittipol/Robinson had been taller than the actors of Merecraft and Engine. Indeed, Jonson jokes

45 Kathman, "Boy Actors," p. 232; Lucy Munro, "Robinson, Richard (c. 1595 – 1648)," *ODNB* [accessed 13 July 2021].

46 Ben Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, ed. Peter Happé (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 128.

47 Cumming et al., *Dictionary of Fashion History*, p. 47.

48 Martin White, *Renaissance Drama in Action: An Introduction to Aspects of Theatre Practice and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 87.

about Robinson's height repeatedly. When Wittipol/Robinson appears in disguise as a Hispanophile widow, a maid of Fitzdottrel's wife – played by another boy actor – exclaims: "Oh, me! The very infanta of the giants!" (IV.ii.71).[49] Admittedly, these references to Robinson's height were made only in 1616, which was two or three years after the first production of *Malfi*, and an adolescent youth could grow greatly and rapidly over the short period of time. Nonetheless, while the fact that Jonson jokes about Robinson's height in 1616 does not necessarily evince that he was already tall in 1613–1614, it is still an interesting possibility.

Robinson might also have had a male, "cracked" voice when *Malfi* was first acted. According to Munro, both historical and textual evidence suggests that early modern boys were generally considered to change their voices at around the age of fourteen. For instance, *The Problems of Aristotle* (1595) asks, "[w]hy are boyes apt to chaunge their voyce about 14 yeares of age?," and specifies the ages of puberty as fourteen in boys and twelve in girls, a piece of information which is not found in Aristotle's text.[50] Although it has long been assumed that female roles were played only by prepubescent boys on the early modern stage, this idea has been justly challenged by recent critics. As John H. Astington and David Mann maintain, it is more likely that "some 'female' voices on stage in Shakespeare's theatre were not unbroken trebles, but lighter adult male voices, perhaps trained to attain, or retain, higher registers."[51] This argument also matches with the fact that many boy actors continued to play female roles in their late teens or early twenties.

That the Duchess was possibly played by a boy actor whose stage of adolescence combined masculine features with feminine beauty enables us to look at Webster's representation of the widow's problematic status and ambiguous gender from a new perspective. For instance, it is noteworthy that the Duchess is rather reticent until she speaks her defiant speech quoted above: "Shall this move me?" Until then, she has only three short replies to Ferdinand's recommendation of Bosola, and two short lines to Silvio, whom she sees off. Even in her conversation with her brothers, the Duchess rarely speaks: there are five speeches, all of which are less than two lines. Despite the fact that Antonio's praise of the Duchess in the opening scene is mostly dedicated to her "discourse," the audience is strangely deferred from listening to her talk, which is described as "full of rapture" (I.i.190). When the audience finally hears her speak, the Duchess astonishes them by delivering her daring speech, which

49 Jonson, *The Devil is an Ass*, ed. Happé, p. 166.

50 Qtd. in Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels*, pp. 39–40.

51 Astington, *Actors and Acting*, p. 25; David Mann, *Shakespeare's Women: Performance and Conception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 33–36.

clearly reveals that she is neither a humble, charming mistress of Antonio, nor a duteous sister of her brothers. This formidable image of the Duchess as an audacious widow might have been stressed more if the actor had delivered her defiant speech in his manly, "cracked" voice.

The boy actor's adolescent body would have appeared especially disturbing in the scene of the Duchess's wooing of Antonio. As Theodora A. Jankowski observes, the Duchess has no intention of abandoning her authority as a widow ruler or becoming Antonio's submissive wife.[52] It is symbolic that the Duchess makes Antonio kneel (or sit down) and rise up repeatedly in this scene. When Antonio kneels down to ask her about her intention to give him her wedding ring, the Duchess speaks as she raises Antonio:

> This goodly roof of yours is too low built,
> I cannot stand upright in't, nor discourse,
> Without I raise it higher: raise yourself,
> Or if you please, my hand to help you: so. (I.i.416–19)

Here, the term "raise" is clearly a double entendre, as it appears in Antonio's encomium: "She throws upon a man so sweet a look, / That it were able raise one to a galliard" (I.i.195–96). While the Duchess can raise Antonio socially and sexually, she can also put him down at her will by simply ordering him: "Kneel" (I.i.475). That Webster signifies the power relationship between the Duchess and Antonio by their relative vertical positioning is interesting, considering that the Duchess was possibly played by a tall boy actor. If Robinson played the Duchess and was as tall as the actor of Antonio or even taller than him, the stage picture of the Duchess and Antonio would have appeared disturbing. As I discussed in the Introduction, in the augural production at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in 2014, Gemma Arterton's Duchess was slightly taller than Alex Waldmann's Antonio. In a similar way to our contemporary example, the stage picture of the Duchess and Antonio in the early modern production might have visually disrupted the traditional hierarchy between wife and husband by signifying their equal relationship or even the wife's superiority to the husband.

It is also noteworthy that the Duchess often speaks in place of her husband in this scene. When the Duchess assures Antonio that "[a]ll discord, without this circumference, / Is only to be pitied, and not fear'd" (I.i.469–70), he replies: "These words should be mine, / And all the parts you have spoke" (I.i.472–73). Similarly, the Duchess speaks as she invites Antonio to the marriage

52 Jankowski, "Defining/Confining," pp. 235–36.

bed: "You speak in me this, for we now are one" (I.i.497). The Christian notion of the marital couple as "one flesh," which presupposes the incorporation of the wife's identity into the husband's, is clearly subverted by the Duchess's representation of Antonio. This subversion would have been especially striking if the Duchess had spoken these lines in her/his masculine voice. On the other hand, the same notion of the marital couple as "one flesh" was possibly stressed simultaneously, because the post-pubertal voice of the boy actor was presumably closer to the voice of the actor of Antonio than his pre-pubertal one. The resemblance between the Duchess's and Antonio's voices might have enhanced an uncanny effect of the echo scene as well. It is notable that the echo of the Duchess's voice ceases after Antonio speaks as follows:

Ant. Echo, I will not talk with thee,
For thou art a dead thing.

Echo. *Thou art a dead thing.*

(V.iii.38–39)

The similarity between the voices of the actors of Antonio and the Duchess would have stressed the ominous meaning of Antonio's speech by suggesting that he was soon to become "a dead thing" like the Duchess, with whom he had become "one flesh."

If Robinson played the Duchess, it might also have brought metatheatrical interpretations into the relationship between the Duchess and Ferdinand. Although the Duchess defies two brothers, the Cardinal and Ferdinand, I will concentrate here on her relationship with Ferdinand, which is represented with more complexity within the play and has attracted much more critical attention, and may also be interpreted in a new way by focusing on the boy actor. The Duchess's self-determined remarriage is menacing for Ferdinand, not only because he appears to have a hidden, incestuous desire for his sister, but also because it disrupts the notion of his absolute authority.[53] From the opening scene, Ferdinand repeatedly tries to reconfirm the absoluteness of his power by exercising tyrannical control over his inferiors, whom he expects to abandon their wills and act as he prescribes: "Methinks you that are courtiers should be my touch-wood, taken fire when I given [*sic*] fire" (I.i.121–22). Ferdinand's oppression of the Duchess derives from the same, but a much stronger, desire to control her. He sends Bosola into the Duchess's household "[t]o note all the particulars

53 Frank Whigham, *Seizures of the Will in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 195–96.

of her 'haviour" (I.i.253), and threatens her: "Your darkest actions – nay, your privat'st thoughts – / Will come to light" (I.i.315–16).

Ferdinand's extraordinary desire to control his sister appears more interesting when we consider the possible relationship between the actors of the Duchess and Ferdinand. As the list of "The Actors Names" indicates, Ferdinand was almost certainly acted by Richard Burbage, the company's leading actor, in the first production. The fact that Robinson might have played the Duchess against Richard Burbage's Ferdinand deserves attention because "it is not improbable that he was Burbage's apprentice."[54] Robinson witnessed Burbage's will of 12 March 1619 with Nicholas Tooley, among others.[55] Robinson and Tooley were the only members of the King's Men who witnessed Burbage's will. Moreover, Tooley calls Burbage "my late M[aste]r Richard Burbadge deceased" in his own will of 1623, and this has often been considered as evidence of Tooley's apprenticeship to Burbage.[56] If this was the case, Robinson, who was of the same generation as Tooley, was very probably Burbage's apprentice too. Although there is no historical record to testify either Burbage's membership of the Joiners, to which he was entitled by patrimony, or Robinson's and Tooley's apprenticeship to Burbage, Burbage's nomination of Robinson and Tooley as witnesses clearly shows their intimacy. Both Kathman and Munro accept Robinson's apprenticeship to Burbage as plausible.[57]

As mentioned above, modern critics have repeatedly stressed how apprentices, including boy actors, were perceived as analogous to women in the early modern period. An apprentice was economically dependent on his master, and his social, economic, and sexual freedom was restricted, because his body was his master's property. While this subordinate position of boy actors has most recently been discussed by Shehzana Mamujee in relation to the early modern concept of the child as his/her parents' property, it is incorrect to assume that apprentices were invariably subjected to or even oppressed by their masters.[58] As Paul S. Seaver and Ronda Arab have shown separately, apprentices were "the perennial culprits" in the London riots throughout the sixteenth and

54 Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2, p. 550.

55 Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills*, pp. 113–14.

56 Honigmann and Brock, *Playhouse Wills*, pp. 125, 128. My brackets. Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2, p. 601; E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), p. 347.

57 Kathman, "Grocers," pp. 20–21; Munro, *ODNB*.

58 Shehzana Mamujee, "'To serve us in that behalf when our pleasure is to call for them': Performing Boys in Renaissance England," *Renaissance Studies* 28.5 (2014): 714–30.

seventeenth centuries.[59] Gathering with other groups of dissidents "to harass prostitutes, attack brothels, assault foreigners and gentlemen, and destroy property," apprentices not only disturbed the surveillance of the Crown and the City, but also undermined their masters' authority by revealing their impotency in controlling their own apprentices.[60] Apprentices could also challenge their masters by becoming their competent rivals, especially in the case of boy actors. Technically speaking, apprentices were likely to remain less skilful than their masters during their terms, because they learned their trades step by step by imitating their masters. However, this generalization is not necessarily correct in regard to a boy actor, who took a female role and was thus "engaged in a specialism quite different from that of his master."[61] Indeed, boy actors often left a stronger impression on the audience's mind than adult actors. When a young scholar named Henry Jackson saw the performance of *Othello* by the King's Men in Oxford, in 1610, he was moved most profoundly by the boy actor playing Desdemona, as demonstrated by his note, which "focuses almost entirely on Desdemona, relegating Othello to 'her husband' who slays his wife."[62] Similarly, as Roberta Barker argues, it is notable that Middleton and William Rowley exclusively praise the actor of the Duchess in their commendatory verses printed in the first quarto of *Malfi*. While Middleton asks, "who e'er saw this duchess live, and die, / That could get off under a bleeding eye?" (ll. 17–18), Rowley writes: "I never saw thy duchess till the day / That she was lively body'd in thy play" (ll. 1–2). The fact that both writers place emphasis on their experiences of "seeing" the Duchess implies that they were very impressed by the boy actor's performance, although it is unclear which boy actor they are referring to. Despite admitting that the Duchess is the protagonist of the play, it is still remarkable that Middleton and Rowley single out the actor of the Duchess for their acclamation, while leaving out more experienced adult actors.[63] As Jonson's use of Robinson in *The Devil is an Ass* equally suggests, boy actors often made a significant

59 Paul S. Seaver, "Apprentice Riots in Early Modern London," in *Violence, Politics, and Gender in Early Modern England*, ed. Joseph P. Ward (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 17–39 (p. 22).

60 Ronda Arab, *Manly Mechanicals on the Early Modern English Stage* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2011), p. 58.

61 Mann, *Shakespeare's Women*, p. 48.

62 Scott McMillin, "The Sharer and His Boy: Rehearsing Shakespeare's Women," in *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), pp. 231–45 (p. 233).

63 Roberta Barker, "The Duchess High and Low: A Performance History of *The Duchess of Malfi*," in *"The Duchess of Malfi": A Critical Guide*, ed. Christina Luckyj (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 42–65 (pp. 43–45).

contribution to the company's commercial and aesthetic success, and in this sense, adult actors were also reliant on boy actors.

Before Webster's tragedy was staged, Robinson and Burbage might have played similar roles to the Duchess and Ferdinand in *The Lady's Tragedy*, which also dramatizes a male tyrant's attempt to possess and control the female body. Although there is no evidence that Burbage played the Tyrant, Julia Briggs's suggestion that this complex part would have suited the skilful actor "who had played the lip-gnawing Richard III, Macbeth and, probably, Leontes" sounds plausible.[64] The representation of the woman's/boy actor's body in *The Lady's Tragedy* is twofold. On the one hand, the play stresses the vulnerability of her/his body. After the Lady's suicide, her body is stolen from the grave by the Tyrant and consumed by his erotic gaze:

> O, blest object!
> I never shall be weary to behold thee.
> I could eternally stand thus and see thee. (IV.iii.61–63)

The stage picture of the boy actor's "female" body, consumed by the necrophiliac Tyrant played by his possible master, might have stressed the vulnerable, subordinate position of the boy actor. On the other hand, the play highlights the woman's/boy actor's attempt to retrieve her/his own body. The Lady not only commits suicide to protect her body from the Tyrant's sexual assault, but also haunts the stage as a spirit until she regains control of her body in the end. Although I should not push the analogy too far, it is not impossible that the Lady's endeavour to retrieve her body from the Tyrant's control paralleled the boy actor's struggle for independence from his master. The boy actor's confrontation with his invincible master must also have been appealing to the audience and commercially beneficial for the company.

If Robinson and Burbage played the opposing roles again in *Malfi*, it is likely that the Duchess's defiance of Ferdinand was construed as the boy actor challenging his master again. As in *The Lady's Tragedy*, the play's conflict centres on the boy actor's "female" body in *Malfi*. The fact that Ferdinand associates remarriage with lechery and impurity suggests that his admonition against remarriage derives from his obsession with his sister's chaste body. However, Ferdinand's desire is paradoxical because the Duchess is a sexually knowledgeable widow. As he admits, although the Duchess promises not to remarry, she "know[s] already what man is" (I.i.294), and is potentially a "lusty widow." This ambiguous state of the widow's sexuality disrupts Ferdinand's attempt to

64 Middleton, *The Lady's Tragedy*, ed. Briggs, in *Works*, p. 835.

control his sister's body. While the Lady displays that she has command over her body by committing suicide, the Duchess proves it by remarrying a man of her choice and bearing his three children.

Interestingly, the Duchess's fruitful relationship with Antonio not only vindicates her autonomous choice to remarry, but also emphasizes her brothers' sterility.[65] It is notable that Webster represents Ferdinand's sexual potency as questionable, while emphasizing the Duchess's procreativity. For instance, although Ferdinand has a nice "Spanish jennet" (I.i.115) and aspires to "go to war" (I.i.92), he is an inexpert horse rider. As Silvio remarks, Ferdinand's horse "reels from the tilt often" (I.i.119).[66] Horse riding is clearly a double entendre, and Silvio's obscene joke provokes the courtiers' laughter. Although, as John Russell Brown notes, Ferdinand demonstrates his power by "quenching [...] laughter suddenly," the courtiers' laughter also undermines his masculinity.[67] By contrast, Webster stresses the fecundity of the Duchess and Antonio by using similar images. While Antonio's "brave horsemanship" (I.i.143) anticipates his fruitful marriage to the Duchess, the Duchess proves herself "an excellent / Feeder of pedigrees" (III.i.5–6). As Michelle M. Dowd explains, Webster also emphasizes the Duchess's fecundity by creating a large time gap between Act 2 and 3. The conversation between Antonio and Delio at the beginning of Act 3 reveals that the Duchess "hath had two children more" (III.i.7) since Delio left for Rome in Act 2 Scene 2. As Delio's metatheatrical joke reveals, the duration of time between these scenes is almost equal to a "half-hour" (III.i.11). The Duchess's remarkable fertility is stressed by the fact that she has born two more children in such a short period of time.[68]

Ferdinand's sexual impotency and the Duchess's fruitfulness might have appeared somewhat disturbing when the roles were acted by an adult actor and a boy actor. As Will Fisher has shown, it was generally considered that one of the major differences between boyhood and manhood was procreativity. For instance, Francis Bacon maintains that "the characteristic property of boys" is

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65 Whigham, *Seizures of the Will*, p. 201; Mikesell, "Catholic and Protestant Widows," pp. 273–74.

66 Although there is a dispute over who speaks the line, "How do you like my Spanish jennet?" (I.i.113), a majority of recent editors, namely Brown (pp. 89–90), Gibbons (p. 15), Gunby et al. (p. 588), and Emma Smith (p. 297), assign this to Ferdinand and provide persuasive arguments for their editorial decision.

67 Webster, *Malfi*, ed. Brown, p. 90.

68 Michelle M. Dowd, "Delinquent Pedigrees: Revision, Lineage, and Spatial Rhetoric in *The Duchess of Malfi*," *ELR* 39.3 (2009): 499–526 (pp. 517–18); Smith, *Women on the Early Modern Stage*, p. xvi.

that they "cannot generate" in *The Great Instauration* (1620).[69] Indeed, as Ann Jennalie Cook shows, the ages of puberty, procreativity, and marriage were often connected in the early modern period. Henry Swinburne repeats the notion that puberty comes at fourteen for boys and twelve for girls, and adds that this "ripe Age" brings in the "natural Ability to perform the Duty of Marriage" in *A Treatise of Spousals*, which was published posthumously in 1686 after his death in 1624.[70] The fact that boy actors were often in their late teens or early twenties suggests that many of them were actually fully-grown, adult men, although their status as apprentices deprived them of freedom to marry or to have sexual intercourse. That a boy actor might have concealed his sexually mature body under the persona of a "boy" actor is interesting, considering that the Duchess also conceals her sexually active, pregnant body under the pretence of vidual chastity by claiming that she is "troubled with the mother" (II.i.117), a uterine disease associated with a lack of sex. It is not impossible that the Duchess's sexual fecundity and Ferdinand's sterility implied a boy actor's superior procreativity to an adult actor. This is at least an interesting possibility in hindsight, because Robinson married Burbage's widow, Winifred, three years after his death. Although it was fairly common for widows of craftsmen and tradesmen to remarry, to their husbands' apprentices or journeymen, it is ironic that the boy actor who might have confronted his master as a rebellious, remarrying widow won his master's widow like Antonio and "consolidated his position in the company."[71]

Ferdinand's inability to control the Duchess's body is also stressed by the fact that he needs to claim his authority over his sister by assuming the personae of her deceased husband and their dead father. Ferdinand not only takes out "my father's poniard" (I.i.331) to admonish his sister against remarriage in the opening scene, but also condemns his sister's remarriage in the name of the deceased Duke after breaking into her bedchamber:

> Thou art undone;
> And thou hast ta'en that massy sheet of lead
> That hid thy husband's bones, and folded it
> About my heart. (III.ii.111–14)

69 Qtd. in Will Fisher, "Staging the Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern English Culture," in *Staged Properties*, ed. Harris and Korda, pp. 230–57 (p. 236).

70 Ann Jennalie Cook, *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and His Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 19–20; Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Spousals* (London, 1686), p. 50.

71 Munro, *ODNB*.

According to Leah S. Marcus, the "massy sheet of lead" refers to "a coffin lined with lead to delay decomposition," which was popular among aristocrats.[72] Here, Ferdinand not only states that the Duchess's remarriage has made his heart as hard and cold as lead, but also identifies himself with her deceased husband. It is equally interesting that the Duchess later calls Ferdinand an "apparition" (III.ii.142) in her conversation with Antonio, who also stresses the ghostly image of Ferdinand by calling him "this terrible thing" (III.ii.147). Ferdinand's sudden entrance into the Duchess's bedchamber and the ominous image of him as the deceased Duke's ghost recall that a remarrying widow is often condemned by her husband's ghost in Elizabethan tragedies, as I discussed in Chapter 3. While Ferdinand's comparison of himself to the Duchess's deceased husband stresses his incestuous desire for his sister, it also raises an important question about who owns the Duchess's body after her husband's death. Ferdinand's reliance on the authority of the deceased Duke and his father ironically reveals that his own authority over his sister's body is by no means absolute.

Ferdinand's desire to control his sister's body is frustrated until the end. It is notable that the Duchess requests Bosola before her death, as follows: "Dispose my breath how please you, but my body / Bestow upon my women" (IV.ii.226–27). Again, the Duchess's request appears interesting when we recall the heroine's predicament in *The Lady's Tragedy*. Although the Lady manages to protect her body from the Tyrant's sexual assault by committing suicide, this action ironically deprives her of the control of her body, which is soon stolen from the tomb and made the object of the Tyrant's lust. By contrast, the Duchess's request for Bosola to commit her body "to the reverend dispose / Of some good women" (IV.ii.369–70) enables her to protect it from abuse by her tyrannical brothers. Indeed, although Ferdinand, like the Tyrant, steals "forth to churchyards in the dead of night, / And dig[s] dead bodies up" (V.ii.11–12) as if to search for his dead sister's body, this madman can find nothing but "the leg of a man" (V.ii.14). For Ferdinand, the retrieval of his twin sister's body proves as difficult as catching his own shadow: "how is't possible I should catch my shadow unless I fall upon't?" (V.ii.40–41). Although some critics have argued that the Duchess's reappearance as a bodiless echo indicates her diminished influence, in fact it signifies that she has successfully circumvented Ferdinand's obsessive desire to control her body.[73] If Robinson and Burbage played the Duchess and Ferdinand, and Robinson was indeed an apprentice of Burbage, the wid-

72 Webster, *Malfi*, ed. Marcus, p. 222.

73 Lee Bliss, *The World's Perspective: John Webster and the Jacobean Drama* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983), pp. 158–59.

ow's demonstration of her right to dispose of her own body and her brother's inability to control it possibly acquired extra significance on a metatheatrical level by suggesting the boy actor's successful challenge to his master.

As discussed above, critics have often regarded boy actors as analogous to women, whose social, economic, and sexual autonomy was restricted by patriarchal figures. However, when a boy actor played a widow, his gender ambiguity probably appeared disturbing. While his adolescent body and relationship with the actor of Ferdinand possibly stressed the Duchess's audacity, the widow's defiance of patriarchal authority would have resonated with the boy actor's challenge to his master. Focusing on the problematic status of widows and boy actors as liminal entities in the early modern society thus highlights the complexity of Webster's widow-character from a new angle.

Intertextuality of Actors and the Widow's Vow in *More Dissemblers Besides Women*

As mentioned already, the actors' list of *Malfi* shows not only the casting of the first production, but also later revival(s). According to Brown, the play was possibly revived in 1618, when Orazio Busino, Chaplain to the Venetian Embassy, criticised a play that is almost certainly *Malfi* for depicting "some Catholic churchman's vices and wickednesses."[74] Moreover, the fact that the list mentions Joseph Taylor as a successor of Burbage in the role of Ferdinand suggests that the play was revived after Burbage's death on 13 March, 1619, and before the play's publication in 1623. Brown argues that the later revivals must have taken place "close to the date of publication" on the grounds that John Thompson, whose name appears in the actors' list of *Malfi* as Julia, joined the King's Men only after 1621.[75]

This dating is highly relevant to Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, which I will discuss next. As John Jowett maintains, it is almost certain that Middleton's comedy was inspired by Webster's great tragedy. Both plays are set in Catholic Italy, whose preferences for celibacy and admonition against widows' remarriage are foregrounded. Their protagonists are widowed duchesses, whose new love and sexual desire become the subject of the play's conflict. Finally, both plays take a critical view on the Catholic admiration of celibacy by

74 Qtd. in Webster, *Malfi*, ed. Brown, p. 29.
75 Qtd. in Webster, *Malfi*, ed. Brown, p. 51.

depicting hypocritical Cardinals.[76] As Regina Buccola observes in her article discussing the influence of *Measure for Measure* (1603–1604) on *More Dissemblers*, Middleton often "adopted and adapted the plot strands and characters of predecessor playwrights."[77] Along with a possible glance at *Measure for Measure*, Middleton probably wrote his comedy in response to the revivals of *Malfi*, and the play was aptly performed by the same company, the King's Men. Although the date of *More Dissemblers* has been disputed, it is most likely that the play was first performed between 1621 and 1622.[78] As Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson maintain, the play shares many features with other plays by Middleton from the early 1620s, including the pregnant, cross-dressed character in *The Nice Valour* (1622–1627) and the effective use of the upper stage in *Women, Beware Women* (1618–1621).[79] Also, the "[e]asily removable facial make-up" used by the actor of Aurelia was only invented in 1621 by the royal apothecary, John Wolfgang Rumer. Since it was used "as the basis of the 'miraculous' concluding transformation in *The Gypsies Metamorphosed*," Jonson's masque first performed on 3 August 1621, the play must be dated later than this.[80] The *terminus ante quem* is 17 October 1623, when the play was entered in Sir Henry Herbert's lost office-book for relicensing.[81]

Considering these thematic similarities as well as the proximity of the performance dates, it is likely that the actors who played in the revivals of *Malfi* also performed in *More Dissemblers*. Indeed, Jonson's ingenious use of Robinson in *The Devil is an Ass* suggests that the King's Men cashed in on what Marvin Carlson has termed "the repository of cultural memory." In line with Harry R. McCarthy's discussion of the bodies of boy actors in the Jacobean children's companies, Carlson argues that "audience members typically see many of the same actors in many different productions, and they will inevitably carry some memory of those actors from production to production."[82] If so, it is probable that the

76 Thomas Middleton, *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, ed. John Jowett, in *Works*, pp. 1034–73 (p. 1035).

77 Regina Buccola, "'Some Woman is the Father': Shakespeare, Middleton, and the Criss-Crossed Composition of *Measure for Measure* and *More Dissemblers Besides Women*," *MRDE* 28 (2015): 86–109 (p. 87).

78 For a summary of previous discussions on the date, see Martin Wiggins, in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue*, vol. 7 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 361.

79 Wiggins and Richardson, *British Drama*, vol. 7, p. 361.

80 Wiggins and Richardson, *British Drama*, vol. 7, p. 361.

81 John Jowett, "*More Dissemblers Besides Women*," in *Companion*, pp. 378–79 (p. 378).

82 Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), pp. 2, 53; Harry R. McCarthy, "Men in the Making: Youth, the Repertory,

company cast actors in similar roles in *Malfi* and *More Dissemblers*, in order to highlight their intertextuality.[83] Again, although we should not speculate too far and make the same error as Baldwin, it is worth thinking about how this intertextuality would have been indicated by the actors, especially in terms of the portrayal of the widowed Duchess and her vow. As Lila Geller has discussed, the Duchess's vow of chastity is one of the main conflicts of *More Dissemblers*.[84] It is not uncommon to see widows take vows of celibacy in early modern plays. In Marston's *The Insatiate Countess* (1608 – 1613), another Italian widow renowned for her chastity rejects her ardent suitor by saying: "My doors are vowed shut, and I cannot help you" (III.i.54). T. B.'s *The Country Girl* (1632–ca. 1633) is unique in representing an English widow who has "vow'd / To live, and die a Widdow" (sig. B1r). While these plays soon forget about these vows, *More Dissemblers* keeps its focus on the Duchess's vow, beginning with praise for it and ending with its renewal.

To begin with, we can speculate on which boy actor might have played the Duchess of Milan, the heroine of Middleton's comedy, assuming that the same boy actor played the Duchess of Malfi in the revivals. Richard Sharpe is the one mentioned as the second Duchess in the actors' list of *Malfi*. Thanks to Bentley and Kathman, we have a good deal of information about this actor. Sharpe was baptised on 18 October 1601, apprenticed to John Heminges on 21 February 1616, for eight years, and buried on 25 January 1632.[85] He was one of the main actors in the King's Men, who acted in at least twenty plays from Fletcher's *The Mad Lover* (1616) to Arthur Wilson's *The Swisser* (1631). Bentley calls him "a rather dashing young actor," as he was indicted for a debt of fifty shillings in 1628, and his former master, Heminges, had to intervene and settle the matter.[86] He also impregnated one Margaret Smith and had his "base-born" son christened in 1631.[87] Although some of his male roles are recorded, mainly the romantic lead, the Duchess of Malfi is the only female role known to have been played by Sharpe.[88] The fact that Sharpe was apprenticed to Heminges is

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and the 'Children' of the Queen's Revels, 1609 – 13," *ELH* 85 (2018): 599 – 629 (p. 614). See also Inga-Stina Ewbank, "The Middle of Middleton," in *The Arts of Performance*, ed. Biggs et al., pp. 156 – 72 (pp. 156 – 57).

83 On Middleton's intertextual relations with his contemporaries in general, see Mark Hutchings and A. A. Bromham, *Middleton and His Collaborators* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2008).

84 Lila Geller, "Widows' Vows and *More Dissemblers Besides Women*," *MRDE* 5 (1991): 287 – 308.

85 Kathman, "Boy Actors," p. 233.

86 Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2, p. 570.

87 Qtd. in Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2, p. 571.

88 Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2, p. 570; Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594 – 1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 240 – 41.

intriguing, considering that Robert Pallant, who played Cariola in the revivals of *Malfi* and probably Celia in *More Dissemblers*, was also an apprentice of Heminges. Pallant was four years younger than Sharpe, having been baptised on 28 September 1605, and was apprenticed to Heminges on 9 February 1620, for eight years.[89] In other words, these boys were apprenticed at the same age, fourteen, and bound for the same length of years. It is likely that Sharpe looked after Pallant as his junior as they boarded in the same house and acted in the same plays. Indeed, Cariola almost always appears with the Duchess in *Malfi*, and acts as a catalyst to her covert feelings. When Cariola jokes to Antonio that the Duchess is "the sprawling'st bedfellow" (III.ii.13), the phrase may have a metatheatrical resonance, as these boys might well have shared their bed. Cariola also acts as a foil to the Duchess's princely death by desperately asking for her life, even to the point of counterfeiting pregnancy (IV.ii.252). This was presumably a moment in which the senior boy actor could demonstrate his superiority in acting. Like Cariola, Celia is the smallest female role in *More Dissemblers* and a gentlewoman of the Duchess. While she also helps the Duchess in her pursuit of new love, she is more actively involved in her mistress's manoeuvres than Cariola, as she provides many important pieces of information about Lactantio, whom the Duchess exploits to counterfeit her love towards Andrugio. While Celia also speaks mainly with the Duchess, the role is a little more challenging than that of Cariola, as she has a dialogue with many other characters in Act 5 Scene 1.

It is plausible that Sharpe's voice had already changed when he played the Duchess of Malfi and possibly the Duchess of Milan. When he played the Duchess of Malfi in the revivals between 1618 and 1623, he was between seventeen and twenty-two, and if he also played the Duchess of Milan, he was about the same age. Assuming that Robinson was between fourteen and twenty when he played the Duchess of Malfi in 1613–1614, Sharpe's Duchess was slightly older than Robinson's. In *Malfi*, the same auditory effects created by Robinson's male voice were probably recreated by Sharpe. In *More Dissemblers*, such effects may have been equally striking, or even more so, because Middleton carefully conceals the Duchess from the audience's view as she comes into the play. The play begins with a song that celebrates the Duchess's chastity and saintly virtues:

> To be chaste is woman's glory,
> 'Tis her fame and honour's story.
> Here sits she, in funeral weeds,
> Only bright in virtuous deeds.

89 Kathman, "Boy Actors," pp. 233–34; Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2, p. 520.

> Come and read her life and praise,
> That singing weeps, and sighing plays. (I.i.1–6)

By opening the play with "melancholy strains" (I.i.8) celebrating the widow's chastity, Middleton invites the audience into the distant world of Catholic Italy. The Duchess is a virtuous widow *par excellence*, who "has vowed so stiffly / Never to know love's heat in a second husband" (I.i.9–10) and imprisoned herself for seven years after her husband's death. As Thomas Allen Lytle observes, the audience might have actually seen the Duchess sitting on the stage balcony in her "funeral weeds," or she could have been concealed from the audience's view by the curtain, which was a common feature of the stage balcony in early modern theatres.[90] Such a relic-like appearance and tranquillity would have enhanced the sacred, inviolable image of her chastity. Middleton also stresses the divine image of the Duchess's chaste widowhood by dividing the world into two spheres, the sacred and the secular, represented by the stage balcony and the main stage respectively.[91] In stark contrast to the solemnity of the chaste, silent widow on the stage balcony, Lactantio and Aurelia, an amorous couple, enter the main stage and indulge themselves in flirtation. As Lytle maintains, the physicality of the passionate lovers' "dance" below makes a striking contrast with the metaphysical effect of the chaste widow's "music" above.[92] However, when the Duchess reappears on the stage balcony with Celia in Act 1 Scene 3 and speaks for the first time to the audience, she immediately refutes such an ideal image of a virtuous widow:

> How happily
> Might woman live, methinks, confined within
> The knowledge of one husband!
> What comes of more rather proclaims desire
> Prince of affections than religious love,
> Brings frailty and our weakness into question
> 'Mongst our male enemies, makes widows' tears
> Rather the cup of laughter than of pity. (I.iii.3–10)

Like the Duchess of Malfi's defiant monologue in the opening scene of Webster's tragedy, the Duchess of Milan's speech would have astonished the audience. Al-

90 Thomas Allen Lytle, "*More Dissemblers Besides Women* by Thomas Middleton," unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Toronto, 1976), p. 179; Dessen and Thomson, *Dictionary of Stage Directions*, p. 1.

91 Lytle, "*More Dissemblers Besides Women*," pp. lxxxviii–lxxxix.

92 Lytle, "*More Dissemblers Besides Women*," pp. xci–xcii.

though she refers to her dead husband and "religious love," her true motive for taking a vow of chastity is neither her wifely devotion nor piety. Instead, she regards it as a war against "our male enemies," who mock widows' tears as insincere and associate remarriage with lechery. As Sharpe probably spoke these lines in his male voice, the Duchess of Milan's declaration of war against male prejudice would have sounded as heroic or formidable as the Duchess of Malfi's "soldier" speech. It is not impossible that Middleton appropriated Webster's dramaturgy in *Malfi* and sophisticated it.

On the other hand, the Duchess of Milan's speech also reveals that she is not as audacious as the Duchess of Malfi, as she seems to internalize the very prejudice she tries to expel. Admittedly, she is a more self-conscious feminist than her predecessor, whose primary concern is the fulfilment of her personal desire. On the contrary, the Duchess of Milan's vow of chastity aims "to recover, with all diligence / And a true fasting faith from sensual pleasure, / What many of her sex has so long lost" (I.iii.46–48). Notwithstanding this, as Panek argues, the Duchess's speech reveals not only her latent fear of men's mockery, but also her desire to live peacefully by "conform[ing] herself to the male-designed image of virtuous widowhood."[93] In fact, while declaring that she will fight against "*our* male enemies," the Duchess tries to fortify her reputation by distinguishing herself from other women, who "proclaim desire" and remarry.[94] Like her admirer, the Cardinal, the Duchess is confident that her chastity is invincible. When the Cardinal persuades the Duchess to expose herself to the public, he alludes to one of Jesus's parables:

> 'Tis not enough for tapers to burn bright;
> But to be seen, so to lend others light,
> Yet not impair themselves, their flame as pure
> As when it shined in secret. (I.iii.38–41)

Although the parable is mentioned several times in the Bible, one of the references runs as follows:

> Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.[95]

93 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, p. 31.

94 Emphasis mine.

95 Matthew 5:15–16, quoted from the King James Bible.

Instead of encouraging the Duchess to show her chastity to others so that they may "glorify your Father which is in heaven," the Cardinal adds an extra twist and insists that her chastity remain intact while "lend[ing] others light." The Duchess also emphasizes the absoluteness of her chastity by boldly replying to the Cardinal:

> I'll come forth
> And show myself to all. The world shall witness
> That, like the sun, my constancy can look
> On earth's corruptions, and shine clear itself. (I.iii.54–57)

Instead of the humble light of tapers, the Duchess compares herself to the sun, the highest presence in heaven, to stress the boundary between the heavenly sphere to which she belongs and the lower sphere of "earth's corruptions." It is also notable that she hardly cares about sharing her virtues with others. She comes out from her lodgings to the public only to make her own "glory" (I.iii.53) absolute. The Duchess's higher position on the stage balcony no longer signifies her sacredness or high virtue. Rather, it reveals her arrogance and self-esteem.

In fact, despite the celebratory song at the beginning of the play, Middleton's attitude towards the Duchess's vow is at best sceptical. The vow of chastity was clearly a Catholic practice. According to Christopher F. Black, there were several types of vows of chastity that could be taken by widows in early modern Italy. Those who entered convents could either become fully consecrated nuns and confine themselves strictly, or take simple vows and become mediators between convents and the secular world. Alternatively, widows could take simple vows and remain chaste at home or in non-monastic institutions. This vow, which was increasingly promoted after the Council of Trent (1563), seems to be the closest to the Duchess's.[96] In England, some recusant widows, for whom entering convents was not an option, might have taken the same vow as the Duchess. In *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity in Secular Persons* (1621), Leonardus Lessius, a Jesuit father, explains that widows and virgins "who aspyring to perfection, have a desire [...] to sequester themselves," but for whom "to live in Monasteryes [...] is not so co[n]venient," can still pursue a "pious and laudable" life by "consecrat[ing] their Virginity to Almighty God."[97] As Geller explains, Protestant reformers attacked the Catholic celebration of celibacy, and a vow of chastity

96 Christopher F. Black, *Church, Religion and Society in Early Modern Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 149.

97 Lessius and Androzzi, *Treasure of Vowed Chastity*, pp. 1–5.

was one of their main targets.[98] Although their arguments were complex and multifaceted, Middleton reflects some of them in his representation of the Duchess's vow. For instance, reformers considered that it was a sinful arrogance to take these vows, because continence is not innate to human nature, but "the special gift" from God.[99] Those who bind themselves to perpetual celibacy forget their sinful nature, and proudly think that they can overcome their infirmity without God's help. They were also attacked for disparaging marriage, a God-given remedy against carnal sin. When the Duchess flaunted her invincible chastity, therefore, it is almost certain that the early modern audience would have reacted with scepticism, if not offence. Indeed, it is notable that Middleton disturbs the boundary between the two spheres, while seemingly stressing the contrast between the stage balcony and the main stage. It is important that Lactantio, the Cardinal's lecherous and hypocritical nephew, praises the Duchess's chastity for its rarity. She is a "strange great widow" (I.i.9), whose chaste widowhood can be "a rare example for our wives" (I.i.16), because "[a] month's constancy / Is held a virtue in a city widow" (I.i.13–14) and even less in the lascivious court (I.i.15). This is a society where widows' chastity is praised, but no one actually follows this obsolete precept. When Lactantio asks Aurelia if she would take a vow of chastity after his death, she answers:

> I should not have the leisure to make vows,
> For, dying presently, I should be dead
> Before you were laid out. (I.i.23–25)

As Jowett annotates, the image of death evokes orgasm in this amorous exchange.[100] These lovers prefer instant carnal pleasure to everlasting, spiritual love. While Aurelia subtly escapes from making a vow, Lactantio does not push her any further, revealing that he is actually uninterested in her chastity after his death. For them, a vow of chastity is simply a source for flirtation. While seemingly praising the Duchess's chastity by placing her higher than these lovers, Middleton in fact questions its worth in this amorous society.

Middleton also associates the Duchess's vow with idolatry through the Cardinal, a hypocritical prelate who worships her chastity. Like Sharpe's Duchess, we can speculate as to which actor might have played the Cardinal. Joseph Taylor, whose name appears as the second Ferdinand in the actors' list of *Malfi*, is

98 Geller, "Widows' Vows," pp. 287–97.
99 Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, The Library of Christian Classics, XX–XXI (London: SCM Press, 1961), p. 1272.
100 Middleton, *More Dissemblers*, ed. Jowett, in *Works*, p. 1038.

likely to have played this male lead. While dating *More Dissemblers* in the mid-1610s, Inga-Stina Ewbank's discussion about casting is thought-provoking. She argues that it was appropriate for Burbage to play the Cardinal, because he used to play Ferdinand as well as Hamlet, both of whom insist on widows' chastity and condemn remarriage as lecherous.[101] The same argument can be applied to Taylor, because not only was *Malfi* revived, but *Hamlet* was also at least considered for a court performance in 1619 – 1620.[102] Compared to Hamlet and Ferdinand, the Cardinal is the least threatening figure, whose hypocrisy is blatant but farcical. Nonetheless, his admiration of the Duchess's vow is clearly associated with idolatry. Again, Protestant reformers often attacked vows of chastity on the grounds that they were complacent and against God's commandment. Those who take vows of chastity are self-deceived, because they wrongly assume that "chastity is in itself the most praiseworthy of works in which is salvation and glory."[103] On the contrary, sinners are only justified by faith. If people take vows "to make satisfaction for thy sins, or to win heaven or an [*sic*] higher place," these vows are "plain idolatry and abominable in the sight of God."[104] In *More Dissemblers*, the Cardinal not only calls the Duchess's vow "[t]he holy mistress of my contemplation" (I.ii.5), but also worships "those abstracts of the Duchess's virtues" (I.ii.3), which he has written "in zealous praise / Of her eternal vow" (I.ii.6 – 7):

> Here I stand up in admiration,
> And bow to the chaste health of our great Duchess,
> Kissing her constant name. (I.ii.13 – 15)

The Cardinal's speech was probably accompanied by his kneeling and bowing to the abstracts, as well as his kissing them. As Lytle notes, the Cardinal's gestures would have reminded the early modern audience of Catholic priests' gestures during Mass, whose theatricality was often derided by Protestant writers.[105] His gestures are also likely to have evoked the Catholic worship of the images

101 Ewbank, "The Middle of Middleton," pp. 168 – 69.
102 Sonia Massai and Lucy Munro, "Introduction," in *Hamlet: The State of the Play*, ed. Sonia Massai and Lucy Munro (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 1 – 26 (p. 3).
103 Martin Luther, *The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows* (1522), in *Luther's Works*, vol. 44, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 243 – 400 (p. 263).
104 William Tyndale, "The Prologue into the Fourth Book of Moses Called *Numeri*" (1530), in *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Henry Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848), pp. 429 – 40 (p. 439).
105 Lytle, "*More Dissemblers Besides Women*," p. 183; Williamson, *Materiality of Religion*, pp. 85 – 86.

of saints, which, according to Alison Shell, was attacked by Middleton in *The Wisdom of Solomon Paraphrased* (1597):

> Golde was a god with them, a golden god:
> Like children in a pageant of gay toys,
> Adoring images for saints' abode.
> O vain, vain spectacles of vainer joys! (XIII.109 – 12)[106]

The Cardinal's worship of the abstracts not only associates him with idolatry, but also reveals his arrogance and self-esteem, as they have been written by him himself. It is striking that the Cardinal perceives himself as the author and creator of this virtuous widow whom he calls the "great'st perfectïon" (I.ii.46), while denouncing the imperfection of women created by God: "a creature that's so doubtful as a woman" (I.ii.17). The Cardinal implicitly challenges God's authority by trying to create a perfect woman, whom God has failed to create. Lactantio's revelation that his uncle likes the Duchess's vow and chastity in general "above his book" (I.i.58), namely the Holy Bible, is telling in this context, because the Cardinal writes and adores these abstracts and his own "book" instead of reading the Bible. Middleton diminishes the sacredness of the Duchess's chastity by unveiling it as an idol of the Catholic priest and a product of his arrogance and impiety.

The boundary between the sacred and the secular spheres on the stage collapses as soon as the Duchess falls in love with Andrugio. As Cupid descends from heaven singing in a masque-like manner, the stage is rearranged into three spheres or actions: Andrugio's triumph is welcomed by the nobility's celebratory song on the main stage; the Duchess and the Cardinal look down at this brave soldier from the stage balcony; and Cupid singing in flight cuts across the stage vertically.[107] Cupid's appearance not only indicates that there is a higher place than the Duchess's balcony, but also removes the boundary between the sacred and the secular by showing that everything is now under the control of this "little conqueror" (I.iii.77). Indeed, while the Duchess falls in love with Andrugio, Andrugio himself is occupied by his thought of Aurelia, his unfaithful lover, "whom his eye greedily sought for" (I.iii.92). The divinity of the Duchess's chaste widowhood is dismissed as she acknowledges her sexual desire: "I confess I'm mortal" (I.iii.107). The Duchess's confession not only reveals that her vow is no longer tenable, but also questions the very notion of a vow of chastity,

106 Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558 – 1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 40.

107 Middleton, *More Dissemblers*, ed. Jowett, in *Works*, p. 1035.

because the fact that the Duchess requires strict confinement to keep her vow indicates that such a vow is, after all, impossible.[108] It is also notable that the Duchess's confession, "Is not this flesh? Can you drive heat from fire?" (I.iii.110), resonates with the Duchess of Malfi's celebrated speech: "This is flesh, and blood, sir; / 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster / Kneels at my husband's tomb" (I.i.453–55). While the Duchess of Malfi declares her mortality and desire victoriously, the Duchess of Milan sees it as a humiliating defeat: "I am lost, / Utterly lost" (I.iii.117–18). Unlike Webster, whose heroine exhibits an innately heroic and rebellious nature, Middleton highlights the Duchess's psychological conflict and delineates how she overcomes her own prejudice against female sexuality and widows' remarriage.

The Duchess's conflict is highlighted in Act 2 Scene 1, where she tries to repeat her vow in front of the Cardinal. That she is split between her vow and her new love is indicated by her opening call for a colourful dress:

> Seek out the lightest colours can be got,
> The youthfull'st dressings; tawny is too sad.
> I am not thirty yet, I have wronged my time
> To go so long in black, like a petitioner. (II.i.1–4)

By referring to her specific age, Middleton stresses that it is natural for the young widow to put on "the youthfull'st dressings" or "the powder [...] rich in cassia" (II.i.5–6) to seek remarriage. The fact that the Duchess was probably played by Sharpe in his late teens or early twenties would have made her look even younger and more attractive. On the other hand, the Duchess is still in her mourning dress, and her outlook as a virtuous widow contradicts her inner passion. Her conflict is also visible in her tears: "There's no condition so unfortunate, / Poor, miserable, to any creature given, / As hers that breaks in vow; she breaks with heaven" (II.i.21–23). Even though the audience was probably critical of the Duchess's vow, her anxiety over "break[ing] with heaven" would have aroused sympathy. As Ewbank notes, the re-enactment of the Duchess's vow in front of the Cardinal looks like a play-within-a-play, and strongly evokes *The Murder of Gonzago*.[109] While the Player King in *Hamlet* calmly accepts his wife's future remarriage and admonishes her for taking a vow hastily, the deceased Duke in *More Dissemblers* is described as having suffered from "everlasting envy / Unto the man that ever should enjoy thee" (II.i.65–66) and having demanded that his wife take a vow. The old Duke's jealousy for his young wife, who was

108 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, p. 31.
109 Ewbank, "The Middle of Middleton," p. 168.

half his age (II.i.51), almost certainly looked unseemly. While the Duchess, like the Player Queen or Gertrude, fails to continue her chastity, her breaking of the vow looks more natural and less questionable. As Ewbank notes, it is important that the Duchess renounces her vow by refusing to repeat her former speech: "I can go no further" (II.i.88). She is liberated from virtuous speeches scripted by her husband and recorded by the Cardinal, and becomes a scriptwriter herself.[110]

The Duchess's mastery as a scriptwriter is exhibited in her forging of a letter from Andrugio. It is noteworthy that the scenes in which the Duchess makes Lactantio an instrument to forge the letter and then woos Andrugio run in parallel to the Duchess's wooing of Antonio in *Malfi*. In *Malfi*, the Duchess orders Antonio, "Take pen and ink, and write" (I.i.362), to transcribe her will. Similarly, in *More Dissemblers*, the Duchess orders Lactantio, "Take pen and ink" (III.ii.71), to write down her words. Unlike Antonio, Lactantio is not the one whom the Duchess is in love with, and it is comical how exuberantly he writes the letter without knowing her true intention. He even tries to arouse her desire by adding punctuation full of sexual innuendos, suggesting an erect penis and penetration: "There a colon, for colon is sharp set oftentimes" (III.ii.104); "A full prick here, at 'weapon'" (III.ii.107). However, her desire is directed towards another man, whose sensual letter she is forging. It is important that the Duchess, while allowing Lactantio to add a colon, is in full control of its content. This makes an interesting contrast with Chapman's *Sir Giles Goosecap* (1601–1603), in which the widow's words are distorted by her uncle, who urges her to marry his close friend. As Countess Eugene dictates a letter to refuse his love, Lord Momford transforms it into a letter of embracement:

> *Eug.* *I cannot but suffer you to love, if you do love –*
>
> *Mom.* Why, very good, there it is, – *and will requit your love*; say you so?
>
> *Eug.* Beshrew my lips then, my Lord!
>
> *Mom.* Beshrew my fingers but you shall!
>
> (IV.i.141–45)[111]

Although the widow first demurs, she gives up and lets her uncle have his favour in the end. On the contrary, the Duchess reprimands Lactantio even for adding "most" to "Fair Duchess" (III.ii.87, 90), and only allows her fake lover to take liberties in marginal punctuation. While the performance dates of *More Dissemblers*

110 Ewbank, "The Middle of Middleton," pp. 167–68.

111 Chapman's italics.

and *Sir Giles Goosecap* are distanced, the comparison is tempting, considering that the Duchess calls Lactantio "goosecap" (III.ii.112) behind his back. It is important that the Duchess regains her sovereign power as she commands Lactantio:

> We give you full authority from our person,
> In right of reputation, truth, and honour,
> To take a strong guard, and attach his body[.] (III.ii.114–16)

Although the Duchess's abuse of power for her private affection is problematic, this is importantly her first speech as the ruler of the duchy. As she is released from the vow and her subjection to the deceased Duke, she is regenerated as a sovereign and fills the power vacuum, in which the Cardinal and other lords had enjoyed their temporary exercise of power.

It is equally important that the Duchess makes Andrugio read the letter and stages the moment of his wooing her. Despite the Duchess's ecstatic claim, "My pleasing thraldom's near" (IV.iii.94), she clearly takes the upper hand with her lover, whom she literally imprisons: "See he be kept close prisoner in our palace" (IV.iii.198). Again, the scene strongly evokes the Duchess's wooing of Antonio in *Malfi*, where the widow tricks her lover by concealing her maid behind the arras and transforms his somewhat ambiguous speech, "I will remain the constant sanctuary / Of your good name" (I.i.460–61), into an unequivocal manifestation of love. In *More Dissemblers*, the Duchess even prepares his speech, and as she replies to it, Andrugio's wooing of the Duchess, which was initially her wishful fantasy, takes the form of reality. This is another play-within-a-play after the Duchess's failed re-enactment of the vow of chastity. She is now in charge of the script and the performance. By preparing Andrugio's script and directing how it should be delivered, the Duchess acts like a mature actor as well as a playwright, who teaches an ignorant apprentice: "Nay, on, sir; you are slothful" (IV.iii.162). In other words, the scene subverts the social as well as the gender hierarchy by enabling a boy actor to spurn an adult actor. Its comic or alarming effect would have been emphasized by the fact that Andrugio is a gallant soldier with a manly physique. When Aurelia's father and the Governor, her unwanted fiancé, unknowingly hires him to keep Aurelia under close surveillance, they speak:

> *Governor.* I like him passing well.
>
> *Father.* He's a tall fellow.
>
> (II.iii.1)

This suggests that the audience would have seen an older, taller adult actor being scolded and manipulated by a boy actor. It is also tempting to compare this conversation between the Governor and Aurelia's father with a similar exchange between Engine and Merecraft in Jonson's *Devil is an Ass*, where the two schemers underscore the height of Wittipol/Robinson (see above). Although this is highly conjectural, it is not impossible that Middleton recycled Jonson's stagecraft by assigning the role of Andrugio to Robinson. As an adult actor, Robinson somewhat lost his glare and "was not one of the most prominent of the actors in the company."[112] Andrugio is evidently handsome and attractive, but is the smallest part among the four major male roles in the play, and may have been suitable for this former boy actor. If so, this was a rare moment in which the current female lead (Sharpe) chided and wooed the former female lead (Robinson). Since Robinson is likely to have acted the powerful female ruler and wooed Antonio in the first production of *Malfi*, the change would have been striking. The former boy actor, who used to command the stage as a masculine woman, turns into an adult man, who is subjected to and imprisoned by another formidable woman played by his junior. This subversion of the gender and social hierarchy was probably a source of laughter as well as anxiety. The resemblance of the scene to *Malfi* might also have suggested the possibility of the Duchess's remarriage to Andrugio, especially in the light of Aurelia's inconstancy.

However, the Duchess's pursuit of love falls short of fulfilment, and she ends up binding herself to another vow at the denouement. Despite the fact that Middleton mocks the Catholic vow of chastity, he does not make the play into simple anti-Catholic propaganda by questioning the Protestant ideal of fruitful marriage simultaneously. It is notable that the Cardinal, a fervent adherent of the Catholic celibacy, also comes to speak for the Protestant notion of marriage as a source of procreation. Although he initially denounces the Duchess for renouncing her vow, he soon sets his "holy anger" (II.ii.2) aside and contemplates the prospect of his nephew's advantageous marriage. The Cardinal unashamedly changes his course and starts proclaiming the invalidity of the Duchess's "forcèd vow that was but knit / By the strange jealousy of your dying lord" (IV.iii.37–38). Moreover, the Cardinal encourages the Duchess to remarry by upholding the Protestant ideal of fruitful marriage.[113] In his attempt to persuade the Milanese lords in favour of her remarriage, the Cardinal says:

112 Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, vol. 2, p. 550.
113 Geller, "Widows' Vows," p. 303.

> Yet many times, when I behold her youth
> And think upon the lost hopes of posterity,
> Succession, and the royal fruits of beauty,
> All by the rashness of one vow made desperate,
> It goes so near my heart I feel it painful[.] (III.i.236–40)

Similarly, the Cardinal contends in his persuasion of the Duchess:

> Beside, fruitfulness
> Is part of the salvation of your sex;
> And the true use of wedlock's time and space
> Is woman's exercise for faith and grace. (IV.iii.31–34)

While revealing his hypocrisy and ambition, the Cardinal's speeches also indicate that he correctly understands the practical concerns and gender ideology behind the Protestant celebration of fruitful marriage, as he stresses the woman's role as a breeder and its importance for dynastic succession.

Middleton also unveils how the Protestant teaching of fruitful marriage can be as oppressive for women as the Catholic celebration of chastity by showing the predicaments of Aurelia and the Page. While Aurelia seems to enjoy her sexual liberty as she shifts her affection from Andrugio to Lactantio, whose "stuff / Will wear out two of him, and one finer too" (II.iii.95–96), she also faces a constant threat of enforced marriage to the Governor of the Fort, whose name foreshadows her future imprisonment. However incompetent, her father and the Governor are frenetic patriarchs who tirelessly pursue this unruly woman to confine her sexuality within marriage. Middleton also indicates how women can be reduced to mere breeding vessels within marriage by staging a mock wedding between Aurelia and Dondolo, Lactantio's runaway servant. Although Aurelia manages to escape from her father and the Governor by disguising herself as a gypsy, she is accidentally caught up in a community of gypsies along with Dondolo. Contrary to Aurelia's and Dondolo's expectations, the community of gypsies turns out to be neither liberal nor anarchic, but as relentless as the Duchess's court, in which male authorities pressure the Duchess with the issue of succession. Following their mock wedding, the Captain of the gypsies commands Dondolo and Aurelia:

> This doxy fresh, this new-come dell,
> Shall lie by thy sweet side and swell.
> Get me Gypsies brave and tawny,
> With cheek full plump and hip full brawny.
> Look you prove industrious dealers
> To serve the commonwealth with stealers[.] (IV.ii.166–71)

Even in the community of gypsies, marriage entails reproduction as a service for "the commonwealth," and Aurelia is only prized for her procreativity. The Page's plight also sets out a cynical view on the ideal of fruitful marriage. Conned by Lactantio's false promise of marriage, she serves her faithless lover sexually and becomes pregnant. As many critics have observed, Middleton's representation of the Page's pregnant body as she falls into labour is highly disturbing.[114] On the one hand, it arouses ironic laughter when the singing and dancing lessons, which were considered to train boys "in proper masculine gender deportment and control" and expected to make the Page "a youth apt for good things" (IV.iii.76), facilitate her labour and reveal her female identity.[115] The exclamation of Cinquepace, the dancing teacher, "By this light, the boy's with the child! / A miracle! Some woman is the father" (V.i.223–24), is also comical to some extent. On the other hand, the Page's pain and suffering are so intense that childbirth is hardly idealized. It is notable that *Malfi* has a similar scene, in which the Duchess's labour is induced by Bosola's apricots: "This green fruit and my stomach are not friends – / How they swell me!" (II.i.153–54). Before going into labour, the Duchess's pregnant body is described by Bosola as follows:

> I observe our duchess
> Is sick o' days, she pukes, her stomach seethes,
> The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue,
> She wanes i'th' cheek, and waxes fat i'th' flank;
> And (contrary to our Italian fashion)
> Wears a loose-body'd gown – there's somewhat in't! (II.i.63–68)

As Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson maintain, "[s]taging the maternal body must have depended upon costume, prosthetics and, as is clear in pregnancy portraits, an understanding of the symbolic gestures (like a hand resting on the belly) related to maternity."[116] Although the Page is wearing "masculine hose" (III.i.24), her pregnancy might have been indicated by her bluish eyelids, waning cheeks, stuffed belly, and puking as well as panting, as experienced

114 Geller, "Widows' Vows," pp. 300–301; Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 58–59; Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 165–66.

115 Amanda Eubanks Winkler, *Music, Dance, and Drama in Early Modern English Schools* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 13–15.

116 Kathryn M. Moncrief and Kathryn R. McPherson, "Embodied and Enacted: Performances of Maternity in Early Modern England," in *Performing Maternity*, ed. Moncrief and McPherson, pp. 1–13 (p. 6).

by the Duchess: "I am exceeding short-winded" (II.i.109). Considering that Sharpe and Robinson probably played the Duchess of Malfi, it is likely that the actor of the Page learned the acting of a pregnant woman from these senior actors. While both plays represent the pregnant female body as grotesque and monstrous, Middleton allows the Page to arouse the audience's sympathy to some extent. In *Malfi*, Webster keeps the audience uninformed about the Duchess's pregnancy, so that they gaze at her body with the same eagerness for a revelation as Bosola's: "how greedily she eats them; / A whirlwind strike off these bawd farthingales" (II.i.147–48). In *More Dissemblers*, the audience are the only confidants for the Page, to whom she communicates her suffering and pain: "Was ever wench so punished?" (V.i.37). As she is forced to sing a "prick-song" (V.i.2) in high pitch "above the clouds" (V.i.19) and dance with her legs open "wider, wider, wider, wider" (V.i.190–91), the audience, knowing her imminent labour, feel her pain.

Middleton's sceptical view of both the Catholic veneration of chastity and the Protestant celebration of fruitful marriage leads the play to an ambiguous ending. As several critics maintain, although Middleton follows the convention of romantic comedy by producing two marital couples, their marriages are far from propitious.[117] Andrugio marries the unfaithful Aurelia, who returns to him only after she is discarded by Lactantio. The Page has no choice but to marry the child's father, whose cruelty and hypocrisy are well-known to her. Middleton subverts not only romantic convention, but also the theatrical tradition of the "lusty widow" trope by making the Duchess renew her vow and remain celibate. As Geller explains, the Duchess's "self-imposed vow – subject to the approval of neither father nor husband – has a stature and a validity that her earlier vow could not command."[118] It might even appear that her vow is finally taken for the sake of her "religious love," as she declares:

> All my riches
> I'll speedily commend to holy uses,
> This temple unto some religious sanctuary,
> Where all my time to come I will allow
> For fruitful thoughts; so knit I up my vow. (V.ii.200–4)

However, it is questionable what more the Duchess can expect from the Catholic Church, whose authority has been diminished irrevocably by the Cardinal's hy-

117 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, pp. 32–33; Lytle, "*More Dissemblers Besides Women*," pp. clxiv–clxvi; Middleton, *More Dissemblers*, ed. Jowett, in *Works*, p. 1037.
118 Geller, "Widows' Vows," p. 305.

pocrisy and opportunism. Rather, the Duchess's decision to confine herself in "some religious sanctuary" appears to be a reflection of her weariness with her society, which is revealed as full of dissemblers and covetous people who try to exploit her body and wealth for their interest.[119] Indeed, the Duchess's final comment on her society, "[w]e all have faults" (V.ii.258), seems to echo the Calvinistic idea of total depravity, which formulates human beings as "wholly vitiated by sin" and incapable to "will or perform any good unaided" by God. Nonetheless, she refuses to commit herself to the Protestant notion of fruitful marriage, and her final position is ambiguous. By dramatizing the issues of widows' vows and remarriage in Catholic Italy, Middleton not only continues Webster's interest in the unique predicament of Catholic widows, but also reflects upon religious and social lives in his own Protestant English society.

In this chapter, I have considered how the personal traits or relationships of actors would have affected the theatrical representation of widows by focusing on the two interrelated plays acted by the King's Men. In the first part, I have discussed Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* by focusing on a boy actor who is likely to have taken the role in the first production. By highlighting his age, physical features, and relations with other actors, I have considered how the widow protagonist's gender ambiguity and other forms of liminality would have resonated with the boy actor's. In the second part, I examined Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, which was probably acted after the revivals of *Malfi* and was almost certainly influenced by this great tragedy. It is likely that the King's Men employed a similar set of actors in the revivals of *Malfi* and *More Dissemblers*, in order to highlight their intertextuality, and this possibility has enabled us to compare some important scenes in *More Dissemblers* with those in *Malfi* or other plays. I have also considered how Middleton demystifies the Duchess's vow of chastity by using the stage balcony and other theatrical features, while simultaneously questioning the Protestant ideal of fruitful marriage.

A point I have tried to be attentive to throughout this chapter is that any discussion on early modern actors or casting practices inevitably relies on a number of speculations, which are based on careful examination of primary sources, including plays. Needless to say, we should employ them carefully and never overestimate their trustworthiness. Still, such a combination of close textual reading and imagination enables us to reread a play from a fresh perspective and uncover interrelations between plays or actors, as well as some pictures of the past that were hitherto unknown. As Roberta Barker writes in her article on early modern

119 Lytle, "*More Dissemblers Besides Women*," p. clxx; Middleton, *More Dissemblers*, ed. Jowett, in *Works*, p. 1037.

boy actors, we all share "the wish to speak with the dead," be it a writer or actor, and it is hoped that this chapter has shown one of the ways to facilitate such communication.[120]

120 Barker, "The 'Play-Boy'," p. 83.

Chapter 5
"Shall I not be master of my own house?": Widows as Powerful Mistresses in Caroline Drama[1]

One of the characteristics of the early modern theatre is the development of two types of playhouses: open-air amphitheatres and indoor hall theatres. While the amphitheatres were large-scale playhouses in suburban areas and accommodated a few thousand people, the hall theatres were much smaller, rectangular-shaped playhouses, usually located in wealthy urban areas.[2] The relationship between the two types was both complementary and mutually exclusive. As Sarah Dustagheer has stressed recently, the King's Men enjoyed a rare opportunity to stage plays in both an amphitheatre and a hall theatre after the reacquisition of the Blackfriars in 1608, and the fact that they were able to continue performances even in winter gave them prominence and financial stability.[3] On the other hand, the hall theatres were not merely useful alternatives to the amphitheatres. Although they shared the basic design of the amphitheatres, such that players were able to move between the two types without much difficulty, the hall theatres had several unique features, including the use of candlelight, a small and intimate space, more select and homogenous audiences, and greater sound effects, all of which created a distinctive ambience and theatrical experience for the audience. Indeed, the hall theatres were more fashionable than the amphitheatres by the 1620s, and became the dominant type after the Restoration.

Many critics have explored how the unique features of the hall theatres would have affected playwriting, performance, and the audience's perception of plays. While early studies generally focused on the history and design of the hall theatres, especially the Blackfriars, R. B. Graves's monograph on lighting and Tiffany Stern's essay in *Inside Shakespeare*, which marked the inauguration of the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia, broadened our view by discus-

1 From *The Northern Lass*, II.iii.369.

2 Although these types are alternatively called "public" and "private," I follow Gurr's less contested terminology. Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chap. 2.

3 Sarah Dustagheer, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses: Repertory and Theatre Space at the Globe and the Blackfriars, 1599–1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 3.

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sing a variety of visual effects created by candlelight.[4] Such an interest in particular theatrical effects of the hall theatres was also heightened by the opening of the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse on Bankside in 2014, which fostered dozens of pieces of archival and practice-led research, including *Moving Shakespeare Indoors* (2014), and more recently, Dustagheer's *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses* (2018) and Will Tosh's *Playing Indoors* (2018).[5]

Incited by these studies, this chapter will explore how the increasing popularity of the hall theatres in the Caroline period would have affected the dramatic representation of widows. As already mentioned in the Introduction, the representation of widows in Caroline drama has been mostly neglected by critics. Although Ira Clark and Jennifer Panek mention a few Caroline plays, they hardly distinguish them from Jacobean ones.[6] In fact, Caroline playwrights continued many conventional images of widows, including their headstrongness and hypocritical tears. On the other hand, these images were usually adapted to the social and political contexts that were unique to this period. For example, widows in Caroline plays are generally associated with the sophisticated, often snobbish "Town," which developed in the West End of London in the 1620s and 1630s, instead of the busy commercial "City" of London or the romanticized aristocratic societies of Mediterranean countries.[7] Some widows are extremely young and almost virgin, reflecting the Caroline idealization of female chastity.

Above all, my focus in this chapter is on the representation of widows' households and their status as mistresses. Although earlier playwrights also noted such authority and freedom of widows, Caroline playwrights gave them much more emphasis and represented widows' households in greater detail.

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4 R. B. Graves, *Lighting the Shakespearean Stage, 1567–1642* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999); Tiffany Stern, "Taking Part: Actors and Audience on the Stage at Blackfriars," in *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), pp. 35–53. For earlier studies, see Irwin Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Its Design* (London: P. Owen, 1966); John Orrell, *The Human Stage: English Theatre Design, 1567–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chap. 12.

5 Will Tosh, *Playing Indoors: Staging Early Modern Drama in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018). For other examples of practice-led research, see Paul Menzer, *Shakespeare in the Theatre: The American Shakespeare Center* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); White, *Renaissance Drama in Action*, chap. 5.

6 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*; Clark, *Comedy, Youth, Manhood*.

7 On the development of the Town, see Jean E. Howard, "Dancing Masters and the Production of Cosmopolitan Bodies in Caroline Town Comedy," in *Localizing Caroline Drama: Politics and Economics of the Early Modern English Stage, 1625–42*, ed. Adam Zucker and Alan B. Farmer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 183–211 (pp. 184–85).

In the following sections, I will first discuss the possible correlation between the theatrical representation of widows' households and the popularity of the hall theatres. Then, after examining Caroline widows' wills to reimagine their households, I will consider how the plays represent widow-mistresses through household items and other possessions, including Shirley's *The Lady of Pleasure* (1935) and Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625). At the end of this chapter, I will discuss Brome's ambivalent representation of a widow-mistress in *The Court Beggar* (1640 – 1641) in relation to anxieties over Henrietta Maria's cultural influence as a powerful Catholic consort.

Caroline Theatre Industry and Pre-Eminence of Hall Theatres

Although we should not neglect the popularity and influence of amphitheatres, "the social trend moved emphatically towards the hall type of playhouse" in late Jacobean and Caroline London.[8] In 1616, Christopher Beeston, formerly of Queen Anne's Men at the Red Bull, opened a new hall theatre, the Cockpit, near Drury Lane (rebuilt in 1617 as the Phoenix). In 1629, Richard Gunnell, the leading actor at the Fortune, opened another hall theatre at Salisbury Court, not far from Blackfriars. While the Blackfriars theatre was located towards the western end of the City, in a former monastic precinct and so not under the control of the City Fathers, the Phoenix and the Salisbury Court theatres were outside the western boundary of the City Wall near the Strand. Whereas the hall theatres, located in the wealthiest and most fashionable district in London, charged much higher fees and excluded regular customers at amphitheatres, the elite audience at the hall theatres hardly visited the Red Bull or the Fortune, both located in the northern suburbs and thus London's poorest region, although some went to the Globe as well as the Blackfriars.[9] According to Martin Butler and James Bulman, the Caroline theatres saw many fewer new plays than the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres. While the Fortune and the Red Bull preferred to stage old plays, the hall theatres were much keener on trying new plays by Caroline playwrights, although they similarly kept a large number of earlier plays in their repertories.[10]

8 Gurr, *Playgoing*, p. 37; Julie Sanders, *Caroline Drama: The Plays of Massinger, Ford, Shirley and Brome* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1999), p. 3.

9 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574 – 1642*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 264 – 75.

10 Martin Butler, *Theatre and Crisis, 1632 – 1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 3, 182 – 84; James Bulman, "Caroline Drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Ren-*

Predictably, these new plays were more experimental and self-conscious about the socio-political context of this period. The distinction between the hall theatres and the amphitheatres became evident by the 1630s, when courtier poets who wrote exclusively for the Blackfriars initiated the so-called Second War of the Theatres by mocking the taste for old-fashioned plays among the citizen audience at the Fortune and the Red Bull.[11] Interestingly, these "wits" – William Davenant, Thomas Carew, and Sir John Suckling, among others – also attacked the Cockpit repertory. Not only does this reveal the rivalry between the King's Men and Queen Henrietta's Men, it also highlights the difference between courtier poets and professional writers. Professional writers – Shirley, Brome, Massinger, and Ford – began to write increasingly for the Cockpit after the King's Men strengthened their relationship with courtier poets, whose plays strongly reflected courtly tastes for pastoral and Platonic love.[12] Although plays by courtier poets were by no means void of political criticism, it was plays by professional writers that took a more ambiguous attitude towards the monarch, and interestingly, depicted widows repeatedly.[13]

This pre-eminence of the hall theatres may explain why there are many detailed descriptions of widows' households in Caroline plays. Although, as Henslowe's inventory famously testifies, amphitheatres also employed a wide range of props, there is an observable correlation between the number of such descriptions and the emergence of the hall theatres. Indeed, such descriptions are rare in Elizabethan plays, which were mainly performed in amphitheatres. In *Henry IV, Part 2* (1596–1600), Mistress Quickly laments that "I must be fain to pawn both my plate and the tapestry of my dining chambers" (II.i.123–24), to which Falstaff replies by urging her to sell "glasses" and "these bed-hangers and these fly-bitten tapestries" (II.i.128). The last two items were almost certainly reproduced on the stage to signify the widow's poverty. Greene's *The Scottish History of James IV* (1588–1592) also gives a glimpse of the widow's kitchen as she serves "the best ale in all Scotland" (II.i.168–69) to her visitor and welcomes his request for "some of your roasted capons or beef" (II.i.187–88).[14] Similar descriptions appear more frequently in Jacobean plays, especially in those per-

aissance Drama, ed. A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 344–71 (pp. 344–45).

11 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 151–53.

12 Gurr, *Playing Companies*, p. 379.

13 Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, chap. 7–8; Gurr, *Playing Companies*, pp. 155–56.

14 Robert Greene, *The Scottish History of James the Fourth*, ed. Norman Sanders (London: Methuen, 1970).

formed in hall theatres. Marston and others' *The Insatiate Countess* (1608–1613), acted at the Whitefriars, creates a dismal atmosphere of a widow's mourning house by using various props: "Isabella, the Countess of Swevia is discovered, dressed in mourning clothes and sitting at a table covered with black, on which stand two black tapers lighted" (I.i.0 s.d.). Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–1614), staged at the Blackfriars, also mentions many small objects in the widow's household. Interestingly, Webster employs these objects especially in intimate, private scenes. In the scene of the Duchess's wooing of Antonio, she makes Antonio use "pen and ink" (I.i.362) to write her will and gives him "my wedding ring" (I.i.405). Also, in the scene of her conversation with Antonio and Cariola in her bedchamber, the Duchess orders Cariola to "[b]ring me the casket hither, and the glass" (III.ii.1), and uses a comb: "my hair tangles" (III.ii.53). It is almost as if the audience's ability to see these small objects qualifies them to share the most intimate moments with the stage characters. Admittedly, such descriptions of widows' households do not appear exclusively in plays performed in hall theatres. In Fletcher's *Wit without Money* (1614–1615), presumably acted at the Hope, Lady Hartwell's servants mention "the hangings," "trunckes," "my Ladies Wardrobe," "boxes," and "the Coach Cushions," while preparing for a temporary relocation to the country (II.v.2–6). Roger's speech, "I am making up oth trunckes here" (II.v.3), suggests that the loads of trunks were actually presented on the stage. Still, it is notable that Fletcher, who indicates the widow's wealth by stressing the quantity of her possessions in *Wit without Money*, rather emphasizes their quality in another play staged in a hall theatre: his collaborative work with Massinger, *The Custom of the Country* (1619–1620), acted by the King's Men presumably at the Blackfriars. Running away from the officers, Rutilio accidentally enters Widow Guiomar's household and describes it as follows:

> This, by the largenesse of the roome, the hangings,
> And other rich adornments, glistring through
> The sable masque of night, sayes it belongs
> To one of meanes and ranke[.] (II.iv.17–20)

"[T]he hangings, / And other rich adornments" were almost certainly visible on the stage, as Rutilio "lift[s] up these hangings" (II.iv.46) to hide himself in the discovery space. The description of rich adornment "glistring" through darkness also agrees with the condition of the Blackfriars, whose use of candles created

such visual effects.[15] The audience would have deduced the widow's social and economic standing from the objects displayed on the stage as well as Rutilio's description. By providing closer proximity between the stage and the audience, the hall theatres seem to have aroused the audience's interest in the design, material, or values of these items.

Such an interest was possibly fostered by some characteristics of the Caroline theatrical industry as well. First, the connection between the court and the hall theatre companies became very intimate in this period. While the companies at the Fortune and the Red Bull were given neither royal patronage nor any opportunity for court performance, the hall theatre companies had strong connections to the royal family and the Master of the Revels, Sir Henry Herbert.[16] This might have enabled these companies to acquire props of higher value and represent wealthy households more realistically. For instance, Gurr relates two episodes that evince how much a royal or courtly personage who was enthusiastic about theatre could do for a playing company. In the first episode, after watching the Oxford production of William Cartwright's *The Royal Slave* (1636), Henrietta Maria asked Archbishop Laud, the university's chancellor, "if the costumes might be passed on to the King's Men so that they could act it for her in London." Though grudgingly, Laud consented.[17] In another episode, Suckling bestowed "eight or ten Suits of new Cloaths" upon the King's Men following his productions of *Aglaura* (1638) at court and the Blackfriars, for which he spent "three or four hundred Pounds."[18] According to a contemporary witness, these costumes were "very rich; no tinsell, all the lace pure gold and silver."[19] Although these episodes mention only costumes, not props, and the King's Men, the most prestigious company, they show how one Caroline company could have benefited materially from their connection to the court. Also, the fact that some hall theatre companies shared a commercial interest with the authorities makes such a material supply plausible. For instance, when Gunnell opened the Salisbury Court theatre, his co-financier, William Blagrave, had been a deputy of Henry Herbert in the Revels Office since 1624.[20] A contemporary account "implies that Gunnell's lease of the property from the earl of Dorset had

15 Sarah Dustagheer, "Acoustic and Visual Practices Indoors," in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors*, ed. Gurr and Karim-Cooper, pp. 137–51 (p. 144).
16 Gurr, *Playing Companies*, pp. 417–18.
17 Gurr, *Playing Companies*, pp. 381–82.
18 The Earl of Strafford, qtd. in Gurr, *Playing Companies*, p. 384.
19 John Aubrey, qtd. in Charles L. Squier, *Sir John Suckling* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), p. 63.
20 Gurr, *Playing Companies*, p. 430.

Herbert's approval."[21] Moreover, the earl of Dorset, the queen's chamberlain, who leased his estate to Gunnell and Blagrave, was eager for the theatre's financial success.[22] Both the Revels Office and the earl of Dorset might have assisted the theatre materially. Blagrave, as a Yeoman of the Revels, was almost certainly "in charge of the Revels Office wardrobe and had access to a large store of theatrical properties" like his Jacobean predecessor, Edward Kirkham, and possibly furnished the Salisbury Court company with props or costumes in custody of the Revels Office.[23] Nor is it impossible that the earl of Dorset offered some old household items to be used as props in a similar manner to Lady Frampul in Jonson's *The New Inn* (1629), in which she gives her dress to Prudence while speaking as follows: "'Twill fit the players yet, / When thou hast done with it, and yield thee somewhat" (II.i.35–36).[24]

If the connection to the court enabled the hall theatre companies to obtain high-end objects, the fact that the audience at the hall theatres largely consisted of the elite might have encouraged the companies to represent the interior of the wealthy household more realistically and elaborately. Although interest in the interior of the household was hardly new, it seems to have grown much stronger in the Caroline period. As already mentioned, the West End saw extraordinary development in the 1620s and 1630s, as the nobility increasingly abandoned their provincial estates and settled in London almost permanently.[25] According to some historians, these immigrants spent more money on household items. Linda Levy Peck, building on work by Christopher Clay, points out that,

> the symbols of aristocratic status had changed. While the gentry kept fewer servants and spent less on funerals, they increased the number and variety of their material goods, including chimney pieces, plasterwork, furniture, hangings, carpets, pictures, plate, glassware, clothing, and coaches.[26]

21 Gurr, *Playing Companies*, p. 426; Herbert Berry, "Salisbury Court," in *English Professional Theatre, 1530–1660*, ed. Glynne Wickham, Herbert Berry, and William Ingram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 649–74 (p. 649).

22 Berry, p. 649.

23 Gurr, *Playing Companies*, p. 347.

24 Julie Sanders, "Caroline Salon Culture and Female Agency: The Countess of Carlisle, Henrietta Maria, and Public Theatre," *Theatre Journal* 52.4 (2000): 449–64 (p. 459).

25 Linda Levy Peck, "Building, Buying, and Collecting in London, 1600–1625," in *Material London*, ed. Orlin, pp. 268–89 (pp. 273–77).

26 Peck, "Building, Buying, and Collecting," p. 277; C. G. A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500–1700*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 25–26.

It is often argued that the development of parks, pleasure gardens, and other recreational spots in late Jacobean and Caroline London drew people together in one place and enabled them to encounter new people.[27] Since many people were living in each other's vicinity, they might have visited each other's households more frequently than they used to in the country. This would have aroused people's consciousness about the interior of their household and encouraged them to invest more money in household items.

The interest in household items was probably fostered by the increasing accessibility of luxury goods as well. For instance, the opening of the New Exchange in the Strand in 1608 made a wider variety of luxury goods available to wealthy London shoppers. It was an "exclusive shopping arcade [...] specialized in upscale consumer goods, many of them foreign in origin," including "many kinds of porcelain China ware, glass-ware, and ostrich eggs."[28] In the New Exchange, "leases were restricted to traders in goods likely to attract a specifically high-class clientele." Although this exclusionist strategy was not successful at the beginning – "[l]ess than one-third of the shops were occupied in the early months" – the shops "began to bring in significant profits" in the 1630s.[29]

It is therefore likely that the wealthy audience at the Caroline hall theatres not only showed their interest in the interior of the household, but were also connoisseurs of household items, who could estimate the value of props and costumes presented on the stage. In his study of the Jacobean children's companies, John H. Astington notes that one of the incentives for the elite audience to pay much higher fees for theatrical performances was their desire to see and experience the same entertainment as the king and queen.[30] Although the Caroline hall theatre companies no longer claimed that their regular performances were rehearsals for courtly performances, the fact that they were frequent entertainers at court would have raised the audience's expectations. As Dorothy M. Farr has argued, the elite audience who "knew all about the masques at Court and in noble houses" possibly expected to see something fabulous and spectacular.[31] Although the early modern audience was surely accustomed to the symbolic

27 Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 163–68; Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, pp. 102–3.

28 Howard, "Dancing Masters," p. 185.

29 Janette Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595–1610: Drama and Social Space in London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 113.

30 John H. Astington, "Why the Theatres Changed," in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors*, ed. Gurr and Karim-Cooper, pp. 15–31 (p. 17).

31 Dorothy M. Farr, *John Ford and the Caroline Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 5.

stage and could easily complement the material deficiency of the stage with their imagination, it is possible that the theatres pursued realism to some extent. In conclusion, the audience's proximity to the stage, the close connection between the court and the hall theatres, and the elite audience's interest in household items would all have encouraged playwrights to give more details about widows' households.

Widow-Mistresses and Their Households in Caroline England

Although the social and economic status of early modern widows has been studied extensively, few studies have discussed the social history of Caroline widows *per se*. This is partly because widows' social and economic position did not change drastically until 1670, when the law strictly limited their inheritance to one-third of their husbands' property.[32] According to Amy Erickson, eighty-four per cent of 211 widows whose probate accounts survive in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, and West Sussex between 1580 and 1720 headed their own households.[33] While this indicates that many widows were mistresses of their households from early on, there is a uniquely positive account of widows' autonomy from the Caroline period. In *The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights* (1632), Thomas Edgar comforts mourning widows in the following terms: "Why mourne you so, you that be widowes? Consider how long you have beene in subjection under the predominance of parents, of your husbands, now you be free in libertie, & free *proprii* iuris at your owne Law."[34] While his admonition against extreme sorrow recalls prescriptive literature by Vives and others discussed in Chapter 2, his reasoning is notably different from these writers. Instead of rebuking emotional excess or invoking the Protestant ideal of moderate lamentation, Edgar stresses widows' liberty. As he expounds, *proprii iuris* means "according to (your) own law" in Latin. Although Edgar goes on to recommend that widows remain celibate, his emphasis is not on their chastity, but on protecting their rights and autonomy. He discourages widows' remarriage by giving an account of a wealthy widow, who carelessly married "a gallant gulburd lad" and was ruined by "[t]his youth within lesse than a yeere": "the bags

32 Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 178.

33 Erickson, *Women and Property*, pp. 16, 187–88. See also Peter Laslett, "Mean Household Size in England since the Sixteenth Century," in *Household and Family in Past Time*, ed. Peter Laslett and Richard Wall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 125–58 (pp. 146–47).

34 E[dgar], *Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights*, p. 232.

were all empty, the plate was all at pawne."[35] Remarriage was potentially damaging because widows were automatically forfeited of their legal possession of money and goods. Although it is unclear to what extent we may perceive this positive view on widows' autonomy as prevalent, it is interesting that such a sentiment was expressed in the period when stage widows vocally claimed their authority as mistresses and property owners.

Indeed, many widows were able to possess substantial property and exercise considerable power. In this section, I will consider how widows' households looked in Caroline England by using currently available sources, namely wills in the custody of the Registry of Durham and Erickson's study of wills and inventories in Lincolnshire, Sussex, and other counties. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the term "will" had various meanings for early modern widows. A widow inherited her husband's property according to his will or testament, cancelled this out by exercising her freedom of choice or will to remarry, and transferred her deceased husband's willed property to a new husband who was capable of satisfying her sexual "will." Here, I will consider another "will" of widows, namely legacies, which are quite literally manifestations of these women's will, desires, or intention. Although the documents featured below do not necessarily give precise pictures of widows' households in Caroline plays, whose widow characters are mostly ladies or wealthy citizens in the West End of London, they nonetheless help us imagine how widows' households might have looked in reality as well as on the stage.

Elizabeth Middleton was a wealthy widow who possessed expensive furniture and household items in Durham. In her will dated 20 July 1627, Middleton mentions "all those messuages, lands, tenements, and hereditaments, with the appurtenances [...] which I lately bought and purchased of William Bowes, Esqr."[36] Although Middleton herself was not from the gentry, she possessed considerable estates, including "appurtenances," which originally belonged to a gentleman. Moreover, it was neither her husband nor son, but the widow herself who made a decision to purchase these estates and managed them. Middleton's bequest of her properties to her children and other relatives also signifies her wealth and authority as mistress of her household. First, Middleton bequeaths to her elder son "Twelve Apostle silver spoones and two other silver spoones, the one ingraven with Barnard and the other with Gilpin, a little silver bowle." Items of silverware were valuable commodities, "the equivalent of ready

35 E[dgar], *Lawes Resolution of Womens Rights*, p. 332.

36 *Wills and Inventories from the Registry at Durham*, Part 4, The Publications of the Surtees Society, CXLII (Durham: Andrews, 1929; repr. London: Dawson & Sons, 1968). All quotations from Middleton's will are from pp. 209–10.

cash," and much more expensive than pewter or brass.[37] According to Charles G. Rupert, an Apostle spoon is a spoon bearing "the figure of one of the Apostles accompanied by his apostolic emblem" moulded at the termination of the handle. These spoons "appeared in England in the latter part of the fifteenth century," and were "seldom made" after 1680.[38] Although the use of such images on domestic objects seems surprising in light of the Protestant hostility against idolatry, Tara Hamling has shown that religious imagery was commonly "used to decorate a range of domestic objects, fixtures and furnishings" between 1560 and 1660. Although such decorations could not be totally separated from spiritual meanings or associations, they generally "served to raise the status of the object while simultaneously diminishing the spiritual power of the image, thus reducing the risk of idolatry."[39] Apostle spoons are one such example, and continued to be produced, presented as gifts for baptism, and often bequeathed in wills in post-Reformation England.[40] Middleton also possessed the two silver spoons with the engraved name of Bernard Gilpin, who was a renowned clergyman and preacher of the Anglican Church.[41] Since Gilpin had a family connection in Durham and also lived there, these spoons may indicate Middleton's connection to the Gilpin family. Apart from silverware, Middleton bequeathed to her elder son "my best bedstead and featherbedd, a paire of my best blanketts and a rugg with two pare of sheets and foure pillowbears and all other furniture, belonging thereunto," as well as "a damask tablecloth, with two chayres and two stooles all imbroided with silk." Among these, the chairs and stools "all imbroided with silk" were particularly expensive commodities. By examining inventories produced between 1560 and 1630 in the Canterbury and Worcester dioceses, Richardson shows that chairs – especially upholstered ones – were expensive and rare commodities in early modern households.[42] Middleton's wealth is also indicated by the fact that she left the same number of bedding items to her younger son along with "my next featherbed." To him, she also bequeathed "half a dozen silver spoones." Another half dozen were given to her

37 Peck, "Building, Buying, and Collecting," p. 280.

38 Charles G. Rupert, *Apostle Spoons: Their Evolution from Earlier Types, and the Emblems Used by the Silversmiths for the Apostles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 4.

39 Tara Hamling, "Reconciling Image and Object: Religious Imagery in Protestant Interior Decoration," in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*, ed. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 321–34 (pp. 321, 334).

40 Tara Hamling, *Decorating the "Godly" Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 203–4.

41 David Marcombe, "Gilpin, Bernard (1516–1584)," *ODNB* [accessed 9 February 2021].

42 Richardson, *Material Culture*, pp. 100–101.

married daughter, to whom she left "all the residue of my household stuff not bequeathed as aforesaid."

Dame Elizabeth Frevile mentions many small, valuable objects in her will, dated 1 July 1630. Unlike Middleton, who never mentions her husband(s), Frevile displays her deep wifely affection by desiring "[t]o be buryed [...] neere to the corps of my deceased husband" and "allot[ing] one hundred marks [...] for the erecting of a tombe or monument over my sayd deceased husband."[43] Apparently, the couple did not have children. Frevile agreed to sell her lands and tenements to eight persons nominated by "myne ex[ecut]or or executors," to whom she also left "[a]ll the residue of my goodes whatsoever not disposed of and unbequethed by this my will." Although Frevile does not mention many household items, she bequeathed many valuables and clothes to her relatives as remembrances of herself.[44] She gave "two dozens of my gold buttons" to her nephew's wife and "my golde chayne" to his daughter. To her niece, she left "my border of goldsmiths work," and to her another niece, "my diamond ring, my second looking glass, my velvet gowne, my damaske gowne, my satten peticoate, my scarlet peticoat and my riding suite." Although it is not clear how exactly the "border" looked, it must have been an expensive item, assuming that Frevile bequeathed equally to her nieces. Frevile had another niece to whom she gave "my best cooch and cooch horses and all thryre furniture, and my best looking glass." Frevile also left some household items to her three nephews: "my silver basen and ewer, my gilt saltselter and two guilt bowls." Richardson has found a striking image of a silver basin and ewer, which I have reproduced here (fig. 5.1). According to Richardson, the basin was usually "offered to elite guests during and after a meal, filled with sweetly scented warm rose water."[45] It indicates Frevile's wealth and also suggests that she might have hosted dinners or banquets at her house. Salt-cellars and bowls are other household items that are often mentioned in early modern wills.[46] Frevile also fulfilled her role as mistress of her household by providing for her servants. Among these, she bequeathed "two kyne and ten ewes" to one servant's widow.

Wynifride Midleton, a widow of an esquire, showed great generosity towards a particular loyal servant, Charles Sanderson, and his family in her will dated 26

43 All quotations from Frevile's will are from *Wills*, pp. 223–29.

44 On the general significance of jewellery as symbols of close emotional relationships in early modern wills, see Catherine Richardson, "'As my whole trust is in him': Jewellery and the Quality of Early Modern Relationships," in *Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories*, ed. Bella Mirabella (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), pp. 182–201.

45 Richardson, *Material Culture*, p. 130.

46 Richardson, *Domestic Life*, p. 91.

Fig. 5.1. Ewer and Basin, London, 1610–1611, museum number M.10&A-1974. Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

April 1631.[47] Midleton had a son-in-law and grandchild (her daughter was already dead) and several sisters and their husbands. She knew that her generosity towards Sanderson would arouse disputes among her relatives, especially her sisters, to whom she made bequests on the condition that they would never trouble the servant's family. The most expensive item mentioned in Midleton's will is "one great silver Bowle, with the cover belonginge unto itt, which is embossed and waved upon the syde and upon the cover and lydd thereof," which was bequeathed to her son-in-law. Midleton then gave Sanderson "half of all my whole cropp of corne" and "all my plowe geare and waine geare and whatsoever els belongeth unto husbandrie." She also bequeathed "one bed steade and a little cuppborde" along with "all the furniture, household stuff and other particular implements" in his own chamber to Sanderson, and "my old ryding suite" to his daughter. Certainly, Midleton's primary concern was her granddaughter, to whom she bequeathed "my lesser peece of guilded plate with the cover, one sil-

47 All quotations from Midleton's will are from *Wills*, pp. 232–35.

ver salte with a cover, my Brewing leade racks and spits withall, All my cubbords, tables, and Bedsteades before not bequeathed contained within my now dwellinghouse." To others, Midleton endowed her clothing as remembrances: "a paire of knit stockings" to her cousin, "my whole ryding suit, viz., Cloake, safegarde and Hoode" to an unidentified woman, "my black satin kirtle" to a wife of a vicar, and "velvet gowne" and "my blacke stuff gowne" to her sisters. It is unusual that Midleton gave "Maister Houring's workes" to "my loveing neighbour and kind frend." These may have been paintings and indicate the widow's interest in artwork and interior decoration.

While most of the wills found in the Registry of Durham are by widows of the gentry, Erickson gives a few examples of working-class widows' wills and inventories. Margaret Wenwright, an old widow of the Sussex downs, "had £33 when she died in 1629, £30 of which consisted in two debts." Her humble possessions, valued at £3, included: "her apparel and ready money, one old book and a chest, two pairs of sheets, two little tubs and two little 'ceelers'" or cellars.[48] Alice Armeston and Sythe Tokin of Lincolnshire were slightly better off than Wenwright. Armeston's inventory of £17 at her death in 1631 includes "the lease of her two-room house," "two cows and eight sheep," and "sufficient household goods." Armeston and four children "slept in two beds" in the parlour, which also stored "six scythes" for them to work in the fields.[49] Tokin, another widowed mother of five children, owned a house and household items "valued at a total of about £27" when an inventory was created three years after her husband's death. Erickson's description of the inventory reveals not only many household items but also the structure of Tokin's house:

> in the hall, a long table, stools, forms (benches) and chairs, a dishbench and cupboard with the brass, pewter and wooden utensils; in the low parlour two beds, a chest, and a kimnell (tub); in the little parlor [*sic*] two chests with the bed linen; in the milkhouse (probably a lean-to shed) some shelves and bowls.

There were three rooms in Tokin's house, which functioned as a dining room, bedroom, and closet, as well as a separate storage space. Erickson states that Tokin's husband was probably a weaver, as his inventory includes "two webs of linen cloth," "a little piece of linsey wolsey," and other similar material. Tokin might have continued her husband's profession. She also kept "four milk

48 Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 188.
49 Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 187.

cows and six young ones" to produce cheese, along with two acres of barley, an acre of peas, and a half acre of oats.[50]

While the estates of working-class widows were much humbler than those of the widows of gentry, these wills and inventories raise three points about Caroline widows' households. First, widows' households were furnished with many objects, both furniture and smaller household items, which were often accumulated over a lengthy lifetime, involving several husbands, the raising of children, and the management of servants, businesses, or landholdings. Second, the number and quality of household items reveal widows' social and economic status and the means of their living. Finally, these objects indicate widows' authority as mistresses of their households, who possessed, managed, and disposed of property at their own will. In the next section, I will examine how these points about widows' households are reflected in plays.

Widow-Mistresses and Their Households in Caroline Drama

In Caroline plays, widows' households rarely appear as houses of mourning, in contrast to *The Insatiate Countess*, mentioned above, or Shakespeare's *Richard II* (1595–1597), in which the Duchess of Gloucester describes her household as "empty lodgings and unfurnished walls, / Unpeople offices, untrodden stones" (I.ii.68–69). Although deceased masters are occasionally evoked, households are usually represented as lively when ruled by widow-mistresses. With the one exception of the widow-bawd in Brome's *The Weeding of the Covent Garden* (1632–1633), widows in Caroline plays are generally represented as wealthy. Although there are two working widows, the innkeeper Carrack in Davenant's *News from Plymouth* (1635) and the moneylender Fibbia in the same author's *The Unfortunate Lovers* (1638), most stage widows sustain themselves by managing property left by their husbands.

Unlike their predecessors, Caroline playwrights not only refer to widows' wealth, but also put emphasis on their status as mistresses of their households by representing how they manage their estates or rule their servants. In Shirley's *Changes, or Love in a Maze* (1632), acted by Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit, Lady Bird, "the rich alderman's widow" (p. 312), orders her footman:

> Go pray my uncle, sir [*sic*] Walter Cormorant,
> To dine with me to-morrow. – And, do you hear?
> 'Tis in your way, to ask if my cousin Bulfinch,

50 Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 194.

> The steward of my land, be come to town,
> He lies in Fleet-street between Hawk and Buzzard.
> I' the afternoon, remember, sirrah, that
> You go to master Kite, that lives i' the Poultry,
> And say I shall expect the thousand pound
> Was lent him upon mortgage. (p. 313)[51]

The widow dines with her uncle, whose name evokes avarice, possibly to discuss business, employs her male cousin as a steward, lends money to a gentleman, and commands her footman. Although she is later revealed to be a page in disguise, which might have relieved male anxiety over this autonomous widow, Lady Bird's speech reveals how wealth would have empowered widows and enabled them to subvert the gender hierarchy. Similarly, in Shirley's *Hyde Park* (1632), acted by Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit, widowhood is praised in terms of the rights to possess and control property and servants.[52] Carol, a scornful maid, teases her cousin and supposed widow, Mrs. Bonavent, for pondering remarriage:

> What is in your condition makes you weary?
> You are sick of plenty and command; you have
> Too, too much liberty, too many servants[.] (p. 475)[53]

Carol then gives a list of what Mrs. Bonavent has at her command: "jewels," "a coach," "a waiting-woman," "[a] monkey, squirrel, and a brace of islands," "[a] pretty wardrobe," "[a] tailor of your own, a doctor too" (p. 475). "[A] brace of islands" are "shock-dogs" from Iceland, which are often described as "the favourites of the ladies" by early modern writers.[54] These items and servants, Carol claims, "may be thought superfluous in your family, / When husbands come to rule" (p. 475). This threat to the widow's authority becomes real in Shirley's *The Constant Maid*, which was probably premiered in Dublin and revived in London after the reopening of theatres in 1638.[55] Hornet, an old usurer, tries to gain Lady Bellamy's love by demonstrating how he can rule her household "with care

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51 James Shirley, *Changes, or Love in a Maze*, in *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*, ed. William Gifford and Alexander Dyce, vol. 2 (London, 1833), pp. 268 – 364. Although Gifford and Dyce often set a passage of prose as verse, I quote as in their edition.

52 Sophie Tomlinson, *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 95 – 96.

53 James Shirley, *Hyde Park*, in *Dramatic Works*, vol. 2, pp. 457 – 541.

54 Shirley, *Hyde Park*, p. 475.

55 Richard Dutton, "The St. Werburgh Street Theater, Dublin," in *Localizing Caroline Drama*, ed. Zucker and Farmer, pp. 129 – 55 (p. 138).

and thrift" (p. 453).[56] After dismissing the delicacies provided by the widow for her guests as "a devourer" of money (p. 455), Hornet starts criticizing the "rich furniture" in her chamber:

> This room has too rich furniture, and worse
> Hangings would serve the turn. If I may be
> Worthy to counsel, costly pictures are
> Superfluous, though of this, or t' other master's
> Doing. Hang Michael Angelo and his oils!
> If they be given, you're the more excus'd
> To let them shew[.] (p. 455)

It is almost certain that Hornet is commenting on specific objects presented on the stage. The early modern audience might have seen actual pieces of "rich furniture," "[h]angings," and "costly pictures," and estimated their value or quality with their own eyes. It is interesting that Shirley specifically names Michelangelo, who was almost certainly known to the Caroline audience, as evinced by Jonson's references to him as one of the most distinguished Italian painters in *Timber, or Discoveries* (1641).[57] Like Wynifride Midleton's possession of "Maister Houring's workes," Lady Bellamy's ownership of Michelangelo's paintings (of course cheap replicas if represented on the stage) might have signified the widow's connoisseurship as well as her interest in interior decoration. On the other hand, the implications could also be disturbing, because Michelangelo created many religious artworks that could evoke Catholic idolatry, and represented naked bodies – especially those of men – repeatedly. These features of Michelangelo's works were probably well known to the Caroline audience. John Harington, in the 1607 and 1634 enlarged editions of his translation of Lodovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1591), describes the three most famous artworks by Michelangelo as follows: "one was carving of an Image of Pitie in Rome, another was a Giant in Florence, the third was a picture of certain naked men that went to wash themselves in Arno."[58] Although Harington's tone is approving, it is likely that the images of Pieta and naked men elicited ambiguous responses from the early modern reader. It is also notable that Hornet admonishes the widow not to show "either in arras or in picture / The story of the prodigal" (p. 455), claiming that it would warn young gentlemen against prodigality and undermine his

56 James Shirley, *The Constant Maid*, in *Dramatic Works*, vol. 4, pp. 445–525.

57 Leonard Barkan, "'Living Sculptures': Ovid, Michelangelo, and *The Winter's Tale*," *ELH* 48.4 (1981): 639–67 (p. 665).

58 Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. John Harington (London, 1634), p. 278.

usury business. Hornet's reference to "[t]he story of the prodigal" is noteworthy, because the "lusty widow" trope in early modern drama can be described as a variation of the biblical story of the Prodigal Son. While the Prodigal Son is saved by his benevolent father, the young spendthrift suitor is redeemed by the wealthy, sensual widow.[59] Shirley also mentions the same story in *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635), as I will discuss below. Like *Lawes Resolutions* and *Hyde Park*, *The Constant Maid* represents remarriage as a threat to the widow's right over property and her authority as mistress. It is therefore significant that Lady Bellamy dismisses Hornet's "thousand precepts" (p. 456) as follows:

> I shall not practise these in haste, and must
> Declare these precepts make not for your welcome:
> My patience was a virtue all this while,
> If you but think you have a soul, repent;
> Your rules I am not covetous to follow[.] (p. 456)

Lady Bellamy thus protects her autonomy from the domineering male figure, who urges her to marry him and "be ruled by me" (p. 452).

While Lady Bellamy renounces remarriage, Mistress Fitchow in Brome's *The Northern Lass* (1629) tries to protect her dignity as mistress by drawing up a pre-nuptial contract before her marriage to Sir Philip Luckless. The contract allows the widow "[t]o have the whole sway of the house and all domestical affairs" such as "accounts of household charges" and "placing and displacing of all servants." It also enables her to take from her husband "the command of his coach" even if his "occasions be never so urgent" (I.ii.128). While conceding to the early modern custom and law, in which widows had to surrender their property rights to their new husbands, Fitchow tries to maintain her authority as widow-mistress by taking *de facto* control of her husband's possessions. Indeed, Fitchow reveals that widows' rights over their property cannot be totally deprived by remarriage. By "carry[ing] the inventory of our goods and the gross sum of our dowry perpetually in our mouth," Fitchow contends, widows can "protest obedience" while actually "mak[ing] our husbands so" (I.ii.128). The correlation between widows' authority and their rights over property is also highlighted in Brome's *The City Wit* (1629 – 1632), which was probably acted by the King's Men.[60] When Tryman, a rich country widow reputed to be "worth seven or eight thousand pound" (II.iii.222) or even "nine thousand pound" (II.iii.257), disguises a deadly sickness, her mercenary suitors and other parasites compete with each other to offer their

59 Panek, *Widows and Suitors*, pp. 55 – 56.

60 Elizabeth Schafer, "*The City Wit:* Critical Introduction," *RBO*, §22.

services, in order to be named in her will. The estate of seven to nine thousand pounds is clearly exaggerated for a widow of "a tanner" (II.iii.228), considering that Katherine Villiers, widow of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, received "an annual income of roughly £4550 from the Irish customs and a state pension of £6000" after his assassination in 1628.[61] Again, the widow's will becomes the centre of attention. Tryman's will names a great number of rich objects, mostly silverware. She bequeaths "my best basin and ewer; two silver flagon pots, and three silver and gilt standing cups" (III.i.375) to her goddaughter. To her niece, she leaves "my second basin and ewer; a dozen of silver dishes; and four dozen of silver spoons" (III.i.378). As already mentioned, silverware was an expensive commodity, and "four dozen of silver spoons," double the number of silver spoons mentioned in Elizabeth Middleton's will, indicates Tryman's extraordinary wealth. Finally, she bestows "my wedding ring, and fifty other rings, with several stones in my trunk [...] valued at two hundred fifty pounds" (III.i.375) upon one of her suitors. Although the widow's endowment of her wedding ring seems to signify her affection to the suitor as in *Dido* and *Malfi* (see Chapter 1 above), it lacks any emotional value and appears merely as a piece of costly material, being juxtaposed with other valuables. Tryman's wealth enables her not only to become the centre of people's attention and use them like her servants, but also to reveal their avarice and baseness. Indeed, this wealthy widow is later revealed to be a page in disguise, who takes revenge on betrayers of his master by revealing their corrupt nature in this manner.

Shirley's *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635), acted by Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit, gives one of the best examples of how widows' autonomy and their social and economic status were indicated by detailed descriptions of their households. As mentioned above, widows are often represented as extremely young or even virgin in Caroline plays. In Shirley's *The Cardinal* (1641), Duchess Rosauna appears as "a virgin and a widow" following her husband's "timeless death / At sea" (I.i.5–6). In Francis Quarles's *The Virgin Widow* (ca. 1640–1642), Kettreena becomes a widow without consummating her marriage to her jealous husband and remarries King Evaldus, who has always loved her sincerely.[62] Although Shirley does not articulate whether Celestina is technically a virgin or not, she is similarly a virgin-like widow, who "did never see / Yet full sixteen" (I.i.259–60) and "now [...] shines more fresh and tempting / Than any natural virgin" (I.i.265–66).

61 Jane Ohlmeyer, "MacDonnell, Katherine, Duchess of Buckingham and Marchioness of Antrim (1603?–1649)," *ODNB* [accessed 10 February 2021]. See also her portrait in Chapter 1 (fig. 1.25).

62 Francis Quarles, *The Virgin Widow: A Comedie* (London: 1649).

It is likely that the figure of the virgin widow, which contrasts clearly with the traditional figure of the "lusty widow," was inspired by the idealization of female chastity at the Caroline court. Indeed, it may not be a coincidence that Celestina is represented as being the same age as Henrietta Maria upon her arrival in England in June 1625.[63] Celestina is the youngest among the widow characters in the early modern plays, and her extreme youth not only emphasizes her semi-virginity, but also makes her an admirable character, whose maturity and insightfulness impress the audience. On the other hand, Shirley's representation of Celestina is often ambivalent. The name Celestina itself has contradictory associations. While it is one of the poetic names used in Neoplatonic poems compiled in the verse miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler, to whose family and literary circle Shirley might have been connected, it is also the name of a widow bawd in a famous Spanish novel translated by James Mabbe in 1631.[64] As I will discuss, Shirley's representation of Celestina's household is also complex, indicating not only her social and economic status or authority as a widow-mistress, but also her magnanimity, adolescence, self-esteem, and potential sexual desire, making the widow a lady of "pleasure" in various senses.

As Julie Sanders explains, Shirley structures his play around "a virtual competition between two Strand women as to who can become most renowned for conspicuous displays of wealth and consumption."[65] While Celestina is the wealthy widow of "the honest knight / That had compassion for her youth and died / So timely" (I.i.262–64), Aretina, whose name evokes the notorious pornographic poet Aretino, is the wife of a country gentleman who has recently abandoned his country estate and moved to London to indulge his wife.[66] Shirley highlights the materialistic desires of these women by stressing "the sheer weight of material objects and purchases" in the first two scenes, which focus on Aretina and Celestina respectively.[67] The widow's social and economic status is indicated by her possessions from the first scene, when Alexander Kickshaw illustrates her wealth and liberality to Aretina by showing off his ring:

> Are they not pretty rubies? 'Twas a grace
> She was pleased to show me, that I might have

63 Caroline M. Hibbard, "Henrietta Maria (1609–1669)," *ODNB* [accessed 10 February 2021].
64 Helen Hackett, "Women and Catholic Manuscript Networks in Seventeenth-Century England: New Research on Constance Aston Fowler's Miscellany of Sacred and Secular Verse," *Renaissance Quarterly* 65.4 (2012): 1094–1124 (1115–16); Shirley, *Lady of Pleasure*, ed. Huebert, p. 52.
65 Sanders, *Cultural Geography*, p. 214.
66 Shirley, *Lady of Pleasure*, ed. Huebert, p. 52.
67 Sanders, *Cultural Geography*, p. 214.

> One made of the same fashion, for I love
> All pretty forms. (I.i.270 – 73)

Although Kickshaw seems to stress the widow's special favour towards him, Celestina's endowment of the ring upon the sycophant is as emotionless as Tryman's bequest of rings to her suitor. The implied stage direction in the speech suggests that Celestina's ring was actually displayed on the stage, and Kickshaw probably showed it off to the audience as well as to Aretina. Although the ring was not necessarily made of rubies, Shirley might have expected the audience to examine it carefully and estimate the widow's wealth and social status with their own eyes. Indeed, Shirley shows many household items to the audience as he represents Celestina's household in the next scene. The scene opens with the widow's complaint to her steward about perfume:

> *Celestina.* Fie, what an air this room has.
>
> *Steward.* 'Tis perfumed.
>
> *Celestina.* With some cheap stuff. Is it your wisdom's thrift
> To infect my nostrils thus?
>
> (I.ii.1 – 3)

References to perfume or odour are not uncommon in early modern plays.[68] For example, in Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, Lady Alworth's chambermaid offers to "[f]etch some perfumes" (I.iii.68) to disguise Welborne's bad smell. What is unique about *The Lady of Pleasure* is that Celestina describes the quality of the perfume used by her steward by calling it "some cheap stuff." Shirley may even have requested that the actors use perfume unsuitable for a wealthy town widow, and urged the audience to judge it with their own "nostrils." Here, Shirley's tactic is double-edged. While seemingly flattering the audience by asking them to smell "some cheap stuff" and scoff at the steward's baseness, he simultaneously tests the audience's connoisseurship and reveals *their* social and economic status.

Celestina's possessions signify more than her wealth and social status. After complaining about the perfume, she condemns her steward's choice of hangings as follows:

> *Celestina.* What hangings have we here?
>
> *Steward.* They are arras, madam.

68 Dessen and Thomson, *Dictionary of Stage Directions*, p. 161.

Celestina. Impudence, I know't.
I will have fresher and more rich, not wrought
With faces that may scandalise a Christian,
With Jewish stories stuffed with corn and camels[.]

(I.ii.11–15)

Celestina's opening question suggests that these hangings were actually visible on the stage. While her command to replace them with "fresher and more rich" hangings signifies her wealth, her refusal to have ones wrought with "faces that may scandalise a Christian" and "Jewish stories stuffed with corn and camels" is well worth pondering. Corn and camels are common indicators of wealth and prosperity in the Old Testament. On his death bed, Isaac prays for his younger son Jacob that God will give him "plenty of corn and wine" (Genesis 27:28). Abraham's servant also shows how "the Lord hath blesse my master greatly" by giving him "camels" along with gold and silver (Genesis 24:35).[69] Although Celestina seems to associate these items with Jewish greediness and dismisses them by calling herself a true Christian, she is actually driven by the same materialistic desire, as she craves many extravagant objects. Moreover, the fact that "corn and camels" are also indications of God's blessings makes Celestina's speech ironic. Like Aretina, who disregards prayer in the previous scene by calling it "out of fashion" (I.i.324), Celestina is clearly satirized as a member of the non-religious, materialistic society of the Strand, as she dismisses these items. Celestina's dismissal of "corn and camels" may also indicate her derision of the old forms of wealth. Indeed, it is notable that Celestina compares these hangings with "wild Irish" (I.ii.16) or "a coarse woollen cloth" that would "fright the ladies come to visit me" (I.ii.18).[70] Here and afterwards, Celestina stresses her status as a wealthy town widow by associating items prepared by her steward with less civilized, vulgar societies. Celestina's order for another set of hangings, which are made of "[s]ome silk or silver" and wrought "with "[s]tories to fit the seasons of the year" (I.ii.23), also deserves attention, not only because it signifies the widow's wealth, but also because it may refer to a specific set of tapestries, the *Four Seasons* tapestries, thought to have been woven in London after 1590 and now at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire. Again, it is not impossible that Shirley refers to this or another specific tapestry to test the audience's knowledge. The fact that the image of the *Summer* tapestry as reproduced in Michael Bath's article has a large figure of a naked woman at the centre suggests another possible

69 All quotations from the Bible are from the King James Bible.
70 Shirley, *Lady of Pleasure*, ed. Huebert, p. 71.

connotation of Celestina's order for a new set of hangings.[71] Celestina may be thinking about some classical images, perhaps erotic ones, like the "naked pictures" (II.ii.402) owned by Livia in Middleton's *Women, Beware Women* (1621). As Livia's possession of these pictures, which are shown to Bianca "to prepare her stomach by degrees" (II.ii.400) for the Duke's lust, reveals not only her moral corruption ("a damned bawd" (II.ii.464)) but also her latent sexual desire, which later drives her to woo Leantio, Celestina's desire for more luxurious hangings with images of nature and fecundity might have signified the latent sexual desire of this virgin-like widow.

Shirley, then, moves from relatively small, displayed possessions to larger, described possessions, which are evoked only in the audience's imagination. Here, Shirley seems to test the audience's taste and knowledge about fashion the most. In the first example, Celestina asks her steward whether he has refurbished the interior of her coach according to her order:

> *Celestina.* The inside, as I gave direction, Of crimson plush?
>
> *Steward.* Of crimson camel plush.
>
> *Celestina.* Ten thousand moths consume't! Shall I ride through
> The streets in penance, wrapped up round in hair-cloth?
>
> (I.ii.27–30)

The *OED* defines "plush" as "[a] rich fabric of silk, cotton, wool, or other material (or any of these combined), with a long soft nap."[72] Unfortunately, the distinction between "plush" and "camel plush," which is so crucial for Celestina, may be lost on us, for Shirley's play is the only text with a reference to "camel plush" between 1473 and 1900, according to *EEBO*. Ronald Huebert notes that "camel" is "probably an adj. form of cameline, a fabric made (or thought to be made) of camel's hair."[73] Celestina's pejorative comment that she would be "wrapped up round in hair-cloth" suggests that "camel plush" might have had an even longer nap than "plush," and was possibly "coarse."[74] Camel plush was almost certainly cheaper and less reputable than plush. Again, Celestina emphasizes the inappropriateness of this fabric for a town lady by associating it with the citizenry:

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71 Michael Bath, "The *Four Seasons* Tapestries," *Textile History* 44.1 (2013): 51–71 (p. 52).

72 "plush," *OED*, A.1.a [accessed 9 February 2021].

73 Shirley, *Lady of Pleasure*, ed. Huebert, p. 72.

74 Eric Kerridge, *Textile Manufactures in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 138.

> Sell't to an alderman; 'twill serve his wife
> To go a-feasting to their country house,
> Or fetch a merchant's nurse-child, and come home
> Laden with fruit and cheesecake. I despise it. (I.ii.31–34)

It is notable that Celestina specifically refers to a citizen who has become gentry and acquired a "country house." By associating the fabric with the arriviste, Celestina implies that camel plush is a base imitation of true gentility, which is unsuitable for an aristocratic widow. Here, Shirley seems to employ the same tactic as we have seen in the exchange about the perfume. It is worth asking whether the Caroline audience generally recognized the difference between these materials and supported Celestina's insistence upon "plush." Indeed, although "plush" and "camel plush" must have been quite different in quality and texture, they were at least interchangeable for the widow's lower-class steward.

The same thing can be said about the dispute over the gilding of the nails for Celestina's coach. According to Huebert, nails are "single gilt" when they are "covered with only one thin layer of gold [...] as opposed to the two layers implied by 'double gilt'."[75] Discovering that the nails for her coach are "single gilt," Celestina exclaims:

> The nails not double gilt? To market with't;
> 'Twill hackney out to Mile-end, or convey
> Your city tumblers to be drunk with cream
> And prunes at Islington. (I.ii.41–44)

In the seventeenth century, both Mile End and Islington were rural villages frequented by the citizenry for pleasure trips.[76] Again, Celestina disparages cheaper and less fashionable "single gilt" by associating it with vulgar places as well as "tumblers," that is, sexually promiscuous women. Like "plush" and "camel plush," the distinction between "single" and "double gilt" was probably not easily recognizable from the appearance, and wealthy citizens who tried to imitate the lifestyle of the upper class might have opted for less expensive "single gilt." Again, Shirley may have been teasing out the audience's social and economic status by referring to a distinction that could be understood only by the elite.

It is likely that such subtle differences between "plush" and "camel plush" or "single gilt" and "double gilt" were especially significant in the Caroline period,

75 Shirley, *Lady of Pleasure*, ed. Huebert, p. 72.
76 Shirley, *Lady of Pleasure*, ed. Huebert, p. 73.

when it became increasingly possible for lower class people to acquire the same luxurious items as their social superiors. According to Sanders, coaches were one such example. Introduced to England in 1564, they had become so common by the 1620s "that hiring of them was open to those of all social ranks and levels."[77] In her study of household items in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, Richardson shows how the elite often distinguished themselves from the lower sort by using better materials or a more elaborate design for their possessions.[78] The Caroline elite might well have tried to distinguish themselves in similar ways. On the other hand, while stressing Celestina's dignity as true gentility, the whole conversation about her coach also complicates the image of her as a virgin-like widow. Celestina's desire for soft upholstery and rich decoration in her coach might well have been perceived as an indication of her latent sexual desire, considering that "[t]he potential for illicit activities in the concealed space of a coach [...] was a subject for many contemporary bawdy allusions, often focusing on the female sex."[79] While enabling the widow to display some dignity, Shirley also undermines her authority by evoking an erotic image of her.

Finally, Celestina and her steward dispute the ornament of her sedan chair and the liveries for its carriers. The sedan chair was as popular as the coach in the Caroline period. As Sanders shows, these vehicles are illustrated on the title-page of Henry Peacham's *Coach and Sedan* (163[6]), which I have reproduced here (fig. 5.2).[80] Again, Celestina condemns her steward for skipping "tilting plumes at the four corners" (I.ii.54) for her sedan chair as well as embroideries for the liveries. It is especially interesting that she denounces her steward for omitting "the story of the prodigal / Embroidered with pearl" (I.ii.59 – 60) for her sedan chair. As already mentioned above, the parable of the Prodigal Son is often evoked in the early modern plays appropriating the "lusty widow" trope, in order to highlight the resemblance between the biblical figure and the mercenary suitor, who expects a wealthy widow to rescue him from bankruptcy. However, Celestina's reference to the parable is unusual, because prodigality is associated with the widow herself rather than her suitors. In fact, Celestina overtly neglects how the Prodigal Son comes to repent his extravagance at the end of the biblical story by demanding the story to be represented richly and "[e]mbroidered with pearl." It is striking how the widow's wealth enables her to reduce the moralistic tale to mere ornament for her sedan chair. Although

77 Sanders, *Cultural Geography*, p. 157.
78 Richardson, *Material Culture*, pp. 24 – 28; Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies*, p. 19.
79 Sanders, *Cultural Geography*, p. 161.
80 Sanders, *Cultural Geography*, p. 159.

it may suggest Celestina’s lack of self-awareness about her own prodigality, it is more interesting if she revels self-consciously in her own prodigality and flaunts it.

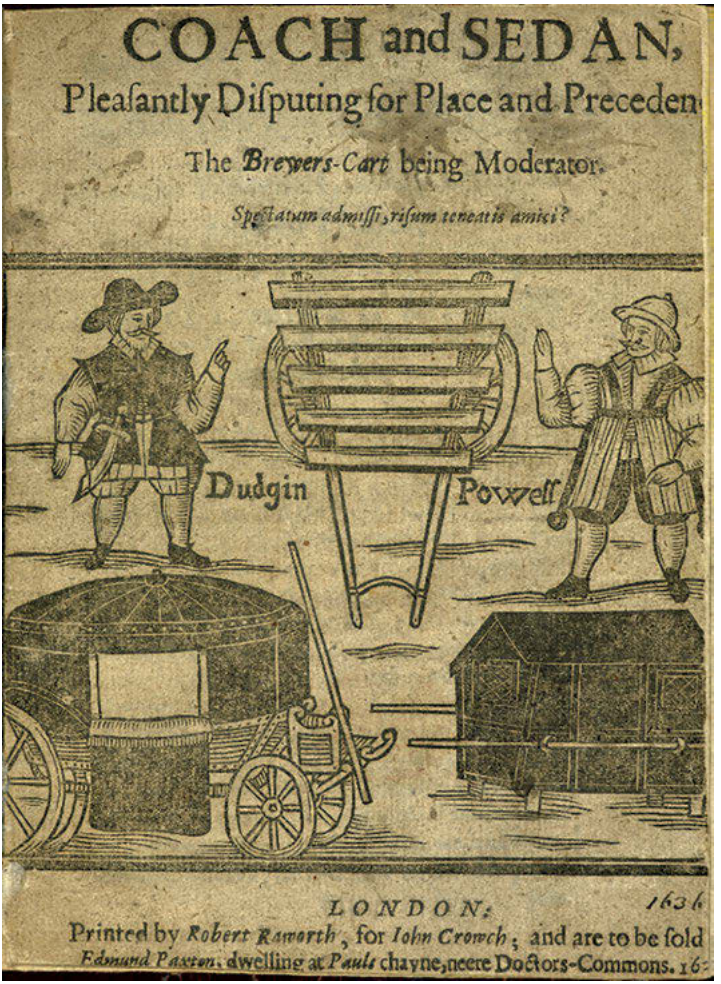

Fig. 5.2. Title page of Henry Peacham, *Coach and Sedan* (163[6]). London, British Library, 012314.ee.88 (title page). Photo: © The British Library Board.

Celestina’s boldness is inseparable from her status as a widow-mistress. When her steward admonishes her for her prodigality by arguing that it endangers her reputation and “honour” (I.ii.65), Celestina calls him an “audacious varlet” (I.ii.70) and declares:

> Here, and abroad, my entertainments shall
> Be oftener and more rich. Who shall control me?
> I live i'th' Strand, whither few ladies come
> To live and purchase more than fame. I will
> Be hospitable, then, and spare no cost
> That may engage all generous report
> To trumpet forth my bounty and my bravery
> Till the court envy and remove. (I.ii.77–84)

As several critics maintain, Shirley's attitude towards Celestina is not necessarily condemning, and needs to be distinguished from his denunciation of Aretina's vanity. As Butler writes, "Celestina is a town lady whose expense is the true image of her 'generosity' – both her financial openness and her dignified gentility." Her magnanimity is not only "the outward sign of inner gentility," which increases her fame rather than undermining it, but also an indication of her authority as widow-mistress of her household: "Who shall control me?"[81] Here, Celestina appears almost like a queen, perhaps not totally unlike Henrietta Maria. She has absolute control over her property, including her body and "honour," and can pursue her pleasures "in what shapes I fancy" (I.ii.76). At the same time, however, Celestina's ambition to supersede the court is clearly a bold one, which cannot simply be dismissed as "adolescent fantasy."[82] Being a widow of not "[y]et full sixteen," Celestina is almost an invincible female figure. She has not only natural beauty and chastity like a maid, but also intelligence, great wealth, and freedom as a widow. Although it is likely that this young, beautiful, and powerful heroine fascinated the audience, she might also have appeared as a formidable figure, who had too much authority and liberty to satisfy "my pleasures" (I.ii.75) despite her age and gender. Indeed, the Caroline audience would have found it disturbing to see Celestina strike her steward (I.ii.97–98) and condemn his disobedience, especially as this was enacted by a boy actor and an adult actor respectively. Although Shirley's representation of Celestina is generally favourable, he also complicates the audience's response to her by associating her household items and other possessions with multiple, often problematic, meanings.

In *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1625), acted by Queen Henrietta's Men at the Phoenix, Massinger represents Lady Alworth's household as a fusion of the mourning and lively types of widows' households. On the one hand, the widow's

81 Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, pp. 168–69; Sanders, *Cultural Geography*, p. 215; Ira Clark, *Professional Playwrights: Massinger, Ford, Shirley, and Brome* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), p. 129.

82 Shirley, *Lady of Pleasure*, ed. Huebert, p. 8.

grieving for her husband makes her household a proper mourning house. Alworth describes his noble stepmother as follows:

> She's such a mourner for my father's death,
> And in her love to him, so favours me,
> That I cannot pay too much observance to her. (I.i.100 – 102)

Lady Alworth's virtuous widowhood is also indicated by her humble meal. Furnace, her cook, complains that his widowed mistress "keeps her chamber, dines with a panada, / Or water-gruel" (I.ii.35 – 36), and neglects his efforts to "please her palate" (I.ii.21). According to Leonardus Lessius's *Hygiasticon*, a manual book for a healthy life translated into English in 1634, panada is a "kinde of pap or gruell, which is made of bread and water, or some fresh-broth boyled together." Plain, nutritious, and digestive, it is most "fit for weakly and aged persons."[83] Lady Alworth's abstinence from "tempting sauces" (I.ii.24) of course implies her sexual abstinence. Distanced from bodily pleasure, dressed in mourning garments, and easily moved to tears by the memory of her deceased husband, Lady Alworth is undoubtedly a virtuous lamenting widow. On the other hand, Massinger also represents her household as a lively, well-ordered community presided over by the competent widow-mistress. As Albert H. Tricomi maintains, Massinger's representation of Lady Alworth's "modest ancestral" estates is distinctly favourable. Her household is duly maintained by her faithful servants, including Order (steward), Amble (gentleman-usher), and Furnace, each of whom is given full authority over his work and executes "necessary tasks [...] happily."[84] Lady Alworth's competence as a ruler is evinced not only by her wholesome relationship with her servants, but also by her "liberal entertainment" (I.i.114) of her suitors. While "keep[ing] her reputation pure" (I.i.104) by refusing to meet any visitors, including "the best of the shire" (I.i.108), Lady Alworth fulfils her role as mistress by commanding her servants to "entertain 'em" (I.ii.61).

In fact, Massinger describes the widow's table in great detail. While critics have noted how Lady Alworth's sumptuous table signifies her hospitality, they have not discussed how details of the delicacies on her table reveal many things

83 Leonard[us] Lessius, *Hygiasticon* (Cambridge, 1634), p. 62.

84 Albert H. Tricomi, "*A New Way to Pay Old Debts* and the Country-House Poetic Tradition," *MRDE* 3 (1986): 177 – 87 (p. 178); Albert H. Tricomi, *Anticourt Drama in England, 1603 – 1642* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p. 162.

about the widow, including her social and economic status.[85] When Sir Giles Overreach, Welborne's citizen-born, avaricious uncle, comes to woo the widow with his minion, Greedy, Lady Alworth's servants excuse their mistress's absence and carry out her order to "entertain 'em" by offering food and drink of high quality. While Order stresses that Overeach and Greedy are "nobly welcome" (I.iii.6) and encourages them to taste "a pipe / Of rich canary" which "came not six days since from Hull" (I.iii.8–9) and is "of the right race" (I.iii.10), Furnace enchants Greedy by mentioning "a chine / Of beef, well seasoned," "[a] pheasant larded" (I.iii.15–16), and "[t]he fattest stag" which "came last night from the forest of Sherwood" (I.iii.19–20) and is "baked in puffpaste" (I.iii.21).

It is notable that Massinger not only stresses the freshness of these victuals, but also mentions specific places. As Julie Sanders and Gail Kern Paster observe, Massinger repeatedly reminds his audience of the play's setting in Nottinghamshire, and his references to the forest of Sherwood and the port of Hull in East Yorkshire are suitable to this geographical context.[86] In addition, these references might also have indicated Lady Alworth's wealth and gastronomy to the audience. According to F. J. Fisher, the area from which London acquired food expanded in the first half of the seventeenth century. While continuing to employ neighbouring markets including Uxbridge and Kingston, the City spread its "tentacles [...] over the provinces until by the middle of the seventeenth century they reached to Berwick, Cornwall and Wales."[87] Importantly,

> London's demands on the more distant sources of supply were selective rather than indiscriminate. It drew on each district, not so much for food in general, as for those victuals in particular which the district was best fitted to produce.[88]

85 Keith Lindley, "Noble Scarlet vs. London Blue," in *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576–1649*, ed. David L. Smith, Richard Strier, and David Bevington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 183–92 (p. 186); Huey-Ling Lee, "The Devil or the Physician: The Politics of Cooking and the Gendering of Cooks in Jonson and Massinger," *ELR* 36.2 (2006): 250–77 (pp. 269–75).

86 Sanders, *Cultural Geography*, pp. 148–51; Gail Kern Paster, "Quomodo, Sir Giles, and Triangular Desire: Social Aspiration in Middleton and Massinger," in *Comedy from Shakespeare to Sheridan: Change and Continuity in the English and European Dramatic Tradition*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller and J. C. Bulman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), pp. 165–78 (p. 166).

87 F. J. Fisher, "The Development of the London Food Market, 1540–1640," in *Essays in Economic History*, ed. E. M. Carus-Wilson, vol. 1 (London: Arnold, 1954), pp. 135–51 (pp. 136–38).

88 Fisher, "London Food Market," p. 144.

Although it is unproven to what extent canary wine imported via the port of Hull or stags from the forest of Sherwood were known to the London food market, it is not unlikely that the Caroline audience recognized these items and were able to estimate their value.

Lady Alworth's table also seems to reflect the heterogeneity of victuals on the Caroline table. It is interesting that her table offers exotic wine from the Canary Islands along with local game from the forest of Sherwood. According to Brian Dietz, the rise in luxury imports was "[a] significant feature" of Caroline England: "Wines, silks – manufactured and raw – sugar, raisins, currants, pepper and tobacco alone accounted for 43 per cent of imports in the 1630s, which was twice the proportion early in Elizabeth's reign."[89] Like the widow's earlier order for her maid to "[s]ort these silks well" (I.ii.53), the canary wine on her table possibly reflected the increasing demand for exotic items among the wealthy Caroline population. On the other hand, Lady Alworth's table also offers highly local food from the forest of Sherwood. Not only does this evoke strong Englishness through its association with the folklore of Robin Hood, but it also signifies the widow's true nobility, considering that hunting was strictly regulated by the forest and game laws, making game exclusive and aristocratic meat.[90] Such Englishness and true gentility are especially significant in *A New Way*, in which Massinger expresses his support for the English war against Spain by representing Lord Lovell's expedition to the Low Countries heroically.[91] It is notable that Lord Lovell later expresses his love for Lady Alworth as follows:

> I grant, were I a Spaniard to marry
> A widow might disparage me, but being
> A true-born Englishman, I cannot find
> How it can taint my honour[.] (V.i.51–54)

By demonstrating hospitality, one of the traditional virtues of English country houses,[92] and consuming authentic English food, Lady Alworth's household not only indicates the widow's wealth and social status, but also embodies true English identity.

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89 Brian Dietz, "Overseas Trade and Metropolitan Growth," in *London 1500–1700: The Making of the Metropolis*, ed. A. L. Beier and Roger Finlay (Harlow: Longman, 1986), pp. 115–40 (p. 126); Clay, *Economic Expansion*, p. 126.

90 On hunting and game as noble privileges, see Edward Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt: A Cultural and Social Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chap. 1.

91 Martin Butler, "The Outsider as Insider," in *Theatrical City*, ed. Smith et al., pp. 193–208 (pp. 200–202).

92 Tricomi, "Country-House," pp. 179–80; Lindley, "Noble Scarlet vs. London Blue," p. 186.

Massinger also represents various parts of the widow's house and signifies her intimacy with her visitors by using space effectively. Lady Alworth's sumptuous table does not necessarily indicate her genuine hospitality towards Overreach and Greedy. Indeed, these visitors are refused permission not only to meet the widow, but also to enter the inner part of her house, both of which make a clear contrast with her later treatment of Welborne and Marrall. While seemingly "entertain[ing]" Overreach and Greedy with decorum, Lady Alworth sets a clear boundary between herself and these visitors by forbidding them to enter too much into her house. As Huey-Ling Lee argues, here, the widow's house is synonymous with her body. Earlier, Furnace has complained that his victuals are not enjoyed by his mistress, but devoured by her mercenary suitors, who "pretend to love her, but come / To feed upon her" (I.ii.38–39). It is not a coincidence that Furnace also compares his victuals to military defence by describing how he "raise[s] fortifications in the pastry" (I.ii.25). By providing "the fattest stag" in the place of his absent mistress, Furnace is protecting his mistress from "all the harpies / That do devour her" (I.ii.39–40).[93]

By contrast, Lady Alworth allows Welborne and Marrall to enter further into her house. At first, Welborne appears to be an uninvited guest to Lady Alworth's house. Ruined by his debauchery and deprived of his inheritance by his vicious uncle, Welborne is despised by the virtuous widow and her servants, who try to banish him to "the pigsty" (I.iii.48) as he "press[es] in to the hall" (I.iii.47). Welborne's entrance to the hall where he encounters Lady Alworth and her chambermaids is clearly perceived as trespassing, and provokes the widow's resentment: "Thou son of infamy, forbear my house, / And know and keep the distance that's between us" (I.iii.80–81). However, after Welborne reminds Lady Alworth of how he rescued her deceased husband from bankruptcy in the past, "the distance" between them disappears. When Welborne visits Lady Alworth's house for the second time, the widow's treatment of him changes drastically. This time Welborne brings Marrall, another minion of Overreach, to create an impression that he is about to marry the wealthy widow, so that he can recover his estates from his uncle, who is keen to assist this advantageous marriage. When Welborne and Marrall enter Lady Alworth's house, Order instantly speaks to Welborne: "This place becomes you not; / Pray you walk, sir, to the dining room" (II.ii.63–64). While Order invites Welborne to enter further into the widow's house, Furnace offers to cook "some grouse, and turkey chicken, / Some rails, and quails" (II.ii.54–55) with a "kind of sauces best affect your palate"

93 Lee, "The Devil or the Physician," pp. 271–72.

(II.ii.56). This astonishes Marrall who has seen Welborne feed on "cheese-parings, and brown bread on Sundays" for "almost this twelve month" (II.ii.59 – 60).

Importantly, the entrance to the widow's house restores class distinctions that have been blurred by Welborne's ruin. While Welborne, who used to be "well in a barn, wrapped up in pease-straw" (II.ii.68), is now admitted to the aristocratic lady's dining room, which is more appropriate for his birth, Marrall reveals his baseness by offering to kiss Lady Alworth's foot and hesitating at her invitation to sit at her own table: "Your ladyship's table? I am not good enough / To sit at your steward's board" (II.ii.88 – 89). Marrall's "farcically ignorant behaviour at Lady Alworth's table" also exposes his humble origins and makes him the butt of the widow's servants' jokes.[94] While sitting at the lady's table, Marrall "thinks still he's at the cook's shop in Ram Alley" and "feeds so slovenly" (II.ii.123 – 25). Ram Alley was "[a] narrow passage, now called Hare Place [...] near the Inns of Court," mainly occupied by "cooks, bawds, tobacco-sellers, and alehouse-keepers" as well as boisterous "students at the Inns of Court."[95] Marrall's association with the place indicates his profession as a term-driver and his middle-class origins. When Lady Alworth "[d]rank to him for fashion sake,"

> he rises, and takes up a dish,
> In which there were some remnants of a boil'd capon,
> And pledges her in whitebroth. (II.ii.127 – 29)

While restoring the hierarchy between Welborne and Marrall, Marrall's inappropriate behaviour also blurs the class distinction by paying excessive tribute to the widow's servants. Amble speaks:

> And when I brought him wine,
> He leaves his stool, and after a leg or two
> Most humbly thanks my worship. (II.ii.130 – 32)

It is therefore dramatic when order is instantly restored as soon as Lady Alworth enters with "frowns" (II.ii.133) and warns her servants as follows:

> Let me have no more of this, I observed your jeering.
> Sirrah, I'll have you know whom I think worthy

94 Lindley, "Noble Scarlet vs. London Blue," p. 186.
95 Fran C. Chalfant, *Ben Jonson's London: A Jacobean Placename Dictionary* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978), p. 147.

> To sit at my table, be he ne'er so mean,
> When I am present, is not your companion. (II.ii.134 – 37)

It is interesting that Lady Alworth's speech does not necessarily restore the class distinction, while stressing the distinction between her guests and her servants. By claiming that even the basest can sit at her table if she "think[s] worthy," Lady Alworth demonstrates that the class distinction is less important than her own judgement. As several critics maintain, *A New Way* clearly upholds the traditional hierarchy based on birth, and represents one's worthiness and birth as almost synonymous.[96] Along with her future husband Lord Lovell, Lady Alworth is an embodiment of the traditional virtues associated with the English nobility and an advocate for traditional hierarchy. At the same time, however, her speech indicates that she can also bring in a meritocratic ideal of virtue-based-on-nature. Most importantly, it indicates the widow's independent mind or "will" (I.iii.4) and that she prefers her own judgement over social norms.

As discussed above, widows are associated with a wide range of household items and other commodities in Caroline plays. These objects not only indicate widows' social and economic status, but also emphasize their role as mistresses by showing how they manage and control their property and servants. They also inform us of widows' personalities or social relationships, and it is interesting to imagine how the Caroline audience might have interacted with and interpreted stage characters through these objects. On the other hand, these autonomous, powerful widows occasionally appear as formidable figures whose supremacy and liberty disturb the traditional gender hierarchy. In the next part of this chapter, I will consider how this problematic aspect of widows is treated in relation to anxieties over Henrietta Maria's powerful influence over Charles.

Henrietta Maria and the Formidable Widow-Mistress in *The Court Beggar*

Although Caroline playwrights generally showed positive attitudes towards widows' authority as mistresses and property owners, they also expressed anxiety over these powerful women by staging ungovernable widows. While such a figure was by no means new, as shown by Hortensio's headstrong widow-bride in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1589 – 1592), Caroline playwrights' interest was possibly

96 Lindley, "Noble Scarlet vs. London Blue"; Tricomi, "Country-House," pp. 184 – 85; Paster, "Quomodo," p. 170.

fostered by the unique social and political context of this period. Critics have long recognized that Henrietta Maria and her fascination with Platonic love had a great influence on courtly and professional theatricals.[97] Although Henrietta Maria was not a widow herself, it is plausible that Caroline anxieties about the cultural influence of this powerful queen consort, especially her dominance over men and transgressions against the gender hierarchy, had a ripple effect and provoked more general anxieties about overbearing women.

It is well-known that Henrietta Maria's Catholicism was regarded as a considerable threat to the religious and political stability of Caroline England. Importantly, this threat was often imagined in terms of the disruption of the gender hierarchy between the royal couple.[98] Although Henrietta Maria was always "an overly powerful Catholic consort," the image of her as a formidable wife shifted from one type to another over the years.[99] In the first years of their marriage, Henrietta Maria challenged Charles's authority as husband and king by displaying her intolerance of Protestant worship in an aggressive manner. Her disobedience was evident from the first night, when she refused to dance with Charles, for whom it was an important public occasion to display his newly married status and the couple's sexual compatibility.[100] This was followed by a series of defiant actions, some of which affected Henrietta Maria's public duties as queen. For instance, she refused to attend her own coronation in February 1626, objecting to being anointed by a Protestant bishop. While Buckingham warned Charles that "a king who could not command his wife would make a poor impression on Parliament," Charles also complained to Buckingham of his wife's disobedience repeatedly: "You know what patience I have had with the unkind usages of my wife."[101] Although Henrietta Maria's overt challenge to Charles was muted by his command to send away most of the French members of her household in the summer of 1626, Henrietta Maria emerged as another type of formi-

97 Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, chap. 3 and 4; Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

98 Veevers, *Images of Love*, chap. 3; Rebecca A. Bailey, *Staging the Old Faith: Queen Henrietta Maria and the Theatre of Caroline England, 1625–42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), chap. 1; Rebecca A. Bailey, "Staging 'a Queene opprest': William Habington's Exploration of the Politics of Queenship on the Caroline Stage," *Theatre Journal* 65.2 (2013): 197–214 (pp. 198–200); Sanders, *Caroline Drama*, pp. 32–33.

99 Bailey, "Politics of Queenship," p. 198.

100 Karen Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 15.

101 Shell, *Catholicism*, p. 153; Charles's letter to Buckingham, 20 November 1625, in *The Letters, Speeches and Proclamations of King Charles I*, ed. Sir Charles Petrie (London: Cassell, 1935), p. 40.

dable wife after this incident. The royal couple developed a greater mutual affection after the assassination of Buckingham in 1628, and "[t]he king's devotion and the prestige her children brought her" increased Henrietta Maria's influence on her husband.[102] While the royal couple's cordial relationship was praised as the ideal of chaste marital love in courtly theatricals, it aroused great anxiety among Charles's Protestant subjects, who feared that Henrietta Maria might proselytize Charles by exploiting his deep affection for her. Such anxiety was made explicit during the Civil War.[103] In *The Popish Royall Favourite* (1643), William Prynne grieves that "his Majesty, (now wholly alienated from his Parliament, and best Protestant Subjects, by the Queen and popish Counsellors [...]) may ere long be seduced to their Religion."[104] This is hardly surprising, writes Prynne, when Catholics "had *Queen Mary* her selfe in the Kings own bed and bosome."[105] As Rebecca A. Bailey has shown, an anonymous pamphlet published in 1644 expressed the same fear as Prynne's:

> Ordinary women, can in the Night time perswade their husbands to give them new Gowns or Petticotes, and make them grant their desire; and could not Catholick Queen Mary (think ye) by her night discourses, encline the King to Popery?[106]

These texts invariably associate Henrietta Maria with what Butler calls the "politicization of love."[107] The repeated references to the royal couple's bed not only eroticize the queen and represent her as a temptress, but also emphasize the intimacy between the couple. Charles appears almost like a doting husband, who sells his country to Rome as easily as he buys new clothes for his adored wife. It may be added that the term "curtain-lecture" or "[a] reproof given by a wife to her husband in bed" first appeared in 1633, although its relation to the queen is unknown.[108] Although Henrietta Maria "did not have much power to change Charles's mind once it was made up," in reality, the common assumption was that Henrietta Maria, with "her selfe in the Kings own bed and bosom," could exploit Charles's love to achieve her religious and political ends.[109]

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102 R. Malcolm Smuts, "Religion, European Politics and Henrietta Maria's Circle, 1625–41," in *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics and Patronage*, ed. Erin Griffey (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 13–37 (p. 20).

103 Veevers, *Images of Love*, p. 83; Bailey, "Politics of Queenship," pp. 198–200.

104 William Prynne, *The Popish Royall Favourite* (London, 1643), p. 59.

105 Prynne, *Popish Royall Favourite*, p. 56.

106 Anon., *The Great Eclipse of the Sun* ([London], 1644), p. 3.

107 Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, p. 35.

108 "curtain-lecture, n.," *OED* [accessed 10 February 2021].

109 Veevers, *Images of Love*, p. 83.

Interestingly, this negative image of Henrietta Maria as a manipulative wife, who ensnared Charles with her feminine charms and seduced him into erroneous ways, was the exact opposite of her positive self-image as a Platonic mistress. In courtly masques and pastorals, Henrietta Maria often enacted the role of a virtuous heroine, whose chaste beauty inspired her wayward lover to take the righteous path. The implication, of course, is that Henrietta Maria's virtue would lead Charles to restore Catholicism to England.[110] Such a self-image was strongly influenced by her fascination with Platonic love. According to Erica Veevers and Julie Sanders, there were two types of Neoplatonism in early seventeenth-century Europe.[111] The vogue, which originally started in the 1620s in Parisian salons, promoted ideas expressed in Honoré d'Urfé's pastoral romance *L'Astrée* (1607), including woman-worship, "in which Beauty, Love, and Virtue provided a kind of alternative religion."[112] Since female beauty was considered to signify virtue and divinity, a beautiful woman could have male admirers or "servants" with whom she developed an intimate but strictly non-sexual relationship. This was followed by the emergence of another type in the 1630s, which was associated with the court of Henrietta Maria's mother, Marie de Médicis, and inspired by a moderate school of Catholicism called Devout Humanism. While keeping a distance from "the extreme 'woman-worship'" of the salon culture, it also invested women with Neoplatonic qualities and encouraged them to exercise their beauty, love, and virtue to achieve cordial relations between the sexes as well as a social harmony based on religion.[113] Whereas the salon type usually involved a great lady dispensing her beauty and virtue to a *côterie* of "servants," who in turn immortalized her in verse, the court type could be "a more personal type between two people" and was compatible with the ideal of monogamy and chaste love within marriage.[114] Although, as Alison Shell warns, we should refrain from associating Henrietta Maria's attraction to Platonic love with her feminist intentions, the ideas of Neoplatonism entitled women to more social importance and freedom.[115] By describing them as having a power to protect their own chastity, these ideas allowed women to participate in society more actively and establish a more equal relationship with men. On the other

110 On Henrietta Maria's self-imposed Counter-Reformation mission and her political uses of courtly theatricals, see Veevers, *Images of Love*; Bailey, *Staging the Old Faith*, chap. 1; Britland, *Drama at the Courts*, pp. 6–9.

111 Veevers, *Images of Love*, chap. 1; Sanders, "Caroline Salon Culture," pp. 452–53.

112 Sanders, "Caroline Salon Culture," p. 453.

113 Veevers, *Images of Love*, p. 3.

114 Veevers, *Images of Love*, p. 19.

115 Shell, *Catholicism*, pp. 155–56.

hand, the Neoplatonic woman-worship was also a potential threat to male authority, because it associated women with moral superiority and encouraged them to correct men. The fact that Henrietta Maria could be idealized as a chaste mistress or demonized as a seductress exemplifies well this dual nature of Neoplatonic woman-worship.

In this context, it is notable that widows are often represented as salon mistresses in Caroline plays. Although Veevers and Sanders have exclusively associated Henrietta Maria with the court type of Neoplatonism, Karen Britland has more recently argued that there was actually an overlap between Henrietta Maria and salon mistresses. Henrietta Maria's "predilection for male company was noted as early as 1628," and it was also her "preference for young gallants [that] directly influenced George Conn's appointment as papal legate."[116] Conn was apparently an attractive man, whose "well-spoken, gentlemanly manner gave him great appeal with women" and helped him proselytize many ladies at the Caroline court.[117] In the same year, Gregorio Panzani, Conn's predecessor, also described Henrietta Maria's four favourites, the earl of Holland, Henry Jermyn, Henry Percy, and the earl of Northumberland, as follows:

> The earl of Holland is a person of mature age and therefore has much credit near the queen, who deeply respects his advice. The other [three] are lively young men and therefore delight the queen very much, who as a young woman loves to gossip and hear lively stories and witticisms.[118]

Though not mentioned by Panzani, the Chevalier de Jars, Cardinal Richelieu's political enemy and refugee from France, and Walter Montagu, the author of *The Shepherds' Paradise* (1633), were also among Henrietta Maria's "lively young men." Even Holland, the eldest of all of them, was described by his contemporaries as "a very handsome man, of lovely countenance and gentle conversation," or a womanizer.[119] Henrietta Maria was also surrounded by courtier poets, including Davenant, Aurelian Townsend, and Lodowick Carlell, all of whom wrote masques or pastorals to praise her. Although Sanders argues that satirical representations of salon mistresses in Caroline plays were almost invariably attacks against Lucy Hay, countess of Carlisle, who was a well-known salon

116 Britland, *Drama at the Courts*, p. 13.

117 Diana Barnes, "*The Secretary of Ladies* and Feminine Friendship at the Court of Henrietta Maria," in *Henrietta Maria*, ed. Griffey, pp. 39–56 (p. 51).

118 Qtd. in R. Malcolm Smuts, "The Puritan Followers of Henrietta Maria in the 1630s," *EHR* 93.366 (1978): 26–45 (p. 30). Smuts's brackets.

119 Qtd. in Smuts, "Puritan Followers," p. 30.

mistress and Henrietta Maria's political rival, Henrietta Maria's similarity to salon mistresses suggests that some of these representations could be directed against her.[120]

Although I am not claiming that stage widows were allegorical representations of Henrietta Maria, it is plausible that these female figures were informed by the threat to the gender hierarchy posed by the queen and her feminocentric ideas. While ungovernable widow-mistresses appear in plays by Shirley, Ford, and Jonson, Brome's *The Court Beggar* (1640–1641) deserves special attention. Not only does it visibly punish the widow's ungovernable nature, it also seems to satirize the courtly fashion of Platonic love by representing the widow as a salon mistress. Since G. E. Bentley, many critics have identified *The Court Beggar* as an unnamed play in Henry Herbert's office book, whose unlicensed performance by Beeston's Boys in May 1640 caused the closure of the Cockpit theatre and the imprisonment of its manager, William Beeston.[121] Although this view has been contested by some critics, Brome almost certainly satirizes certain courtiers and practices at the Caroline court.[122] While critics have noted Brome's hostility to courtier poets and how he lampoons Suckling and Davenant in the figures of Sir Ferdinando and Court-wit, they have not examined his ambiguous representation of Lady Strangelove in relation to his scepticism about the courtly fashion of Platonic love.[123] It is likely that Brome satirizes this fashion in *The Court Beggar*, considering that he mocked the same fashion a few years earlier in *The Love-Sick Court* (1638). When Eudina ends up promising love to both Philocles and Philargus, the noble twin brothers who equally admire her as a Platonic mistress, she cries:

> Strange love! In other's absence I took either
> And loved each best; now both at once appear,
> Neither is mine. (II.i.272)

The phrase "strange love" anticipates the widow-mistress in *The Court Beggar*. Here, Brome highlights the ambiguity of the ideal of the Platonic mistress.

120 Sanders, "Caroline Salon Culture."

121 Butler, *Theatre and Crisis*, pp. 135–36; Matthew Steggle, *Richard Brome: Place and Politics on the Caroline Stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 156; Gurr, *Playing Companies*, pp. 155–56.

122 N. W. Bawcutt, ed., *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623–73* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 70–71; Marion O'Connor, "*The Court Beggar:* A Critical Introduction," *RBO* [accessed 11 February 2021].

123 Brome's ambiguous representation of Lady Strangelove is briefly discussed in MacDonald, "Recurring Figure," pp. 43–45.

While it is honourable for women to enjoy Platonic relations with numerous admirers, the image of a woman surrounded by male "servants" can always connote her pride and sexual promiscuity. Although Eudina's inability to choose one man is attributed to the equal nobility of the brothers, her inconstancy anticipates Lady Strangelove's responsiveness to various suitors.

Brome blurs the boundary between the Platonic mistress and the love tyrant by representing Lady Strangelove as "a humorous widow" ("Dramatis Personae"). As Sir Raphael reveals in his accusation of the widow's "wilful humour" (II.i.271), despite the fact that she has made "[a] secret vow from your late husband's death / Never to marry" (II.i.271), Lady Strangelove conceals this from her suitors and "allure[s] them with assured hopes / Of love and favour" to rebuff them bitterly and "sell 'em to the world's derision" (II.i.267). One such victim is a court favourite, Ferdinando. Charissa, his unwilling fiancé, describes how this "wanton lover" has been "singularly devoted / Unto that humorous lady, the young widow" (I.i.28), and driven to madness by her whim:

> She is ambitious
> To draw all men's affections to her service,
> And then abuses all by scorns or slightings,
> And this (they say) has made him almost mad. (I.i.30)

While the widow's steadfast chastity among male admirers makes her an ideal Platonic mistress, she is more accurately a love tyrant, whose teasing and whimsical manner causes "the mishaps / Of many" (II.i.267). The ideal of the Platonic mistress is also questioned by Lady Strangelove's demeanour as a salon mistress. She summons Court-wit, Swain-wit, Cit-wit, and Dainty to her "wit-office" (II.i.303), and exercises considerable power over her male "servants." Not only can she oblige them to come over without telling them her intentions (II.i.235–36), she can also keep them waiting for her as long as she wishes, as Swain-wit complains (II.i.197). When she finally appears, Lady Strangelove starts organizing a masque and speaks to Court-wit, for whom she is a "patroness" (II.i.196):

> For a masque that I intend to have shortly, you shall perform the poetical part, your servant Cit-wit the musical, and *[to DAINTY]* by your skill and directions, the painter's office for the scenes. (II.i.345)

Although Lady Strangelove looks like a proper salon mistress as she patronizes poets and artists and organizes a cultural event, her purpose in hosting a "wit-office" is purely self-serving. Again, Swain-wit complains:

> They say indeed she is a humorous lady, and loves to busy herself. But what are we to her? Are there not greater men and lords enough for her to fool away the time with, but we must dance attendance on her humours? (II.i.237)

While a salon mistress is expected to dispense her beauty and virtue to her admirers and inspire them to morality and religion, Lady Strangelove is, rather, described by Cit-wit as "a wit-sponge, that sucks up wit from some, and hold as her own, until she squeeze [*sic*] it out on others" (II.i.242). Cit-wit also implies the widow's promiscuity by describing how she "make[s] use of ours, or any coarser wits" collected from "market-folks" or "the poor tradespeople" (II.i.242). Since the widow's aim is "to busy herself" with her male followers who can "dance attendance on her humours," it does not matter whether her "wits" are actually witty or simply gathered from the vulgar. Here, Brome seems to mock courtier poets, who called themselves "wits" and wrote exclusively for the elite audience, by associating the term "wits" with working-class people, perhaps glancing back to Davenant's origins as a vintner's son.[124] He also seems to satirize Henrietta Maria's patronage of these writers and her fascination with Neoplatonism by stressing the salon mistress's vanity.

It is Lady Strangelove's social and economic freedom as a widow that enables her to enjoy privilege as a salon mistress. Like Massinger, Brome mentions many different rooms of the widow's house to indicate her wealth and power. When Court-wit, Swain-wit, and Cit-wit arrive, Philomel, her maid, asks them to wait in "this gallery" (II.i.173), as her mistress is meeting Sir Raphael in another room. When Lady Strangelove and Sir Raphael walk into the gallery, Philomel moves the three "wits" to an adjacent room, "my lady's music room" alias "a wit-office," furnished with "a collation of good tobacco and sack and one to attend you" (II.i.247). Later, Lady Strangelove offers "[m]y garden lodgings" (II.i.403) to Ferdinando to cure his alleged madness. Being the head of her household, the widow moves freely through her spacious house and commands it. Her authority is also visible in her speech against Sir Raphael, who blames her for causing Ferdinando's madness:

> Since there is an aspersion laid upon my freeness in giving entertainment unto persons of great and noble quality [...] my resolution is from henceforth to exclude those great resorts, and friendly and freely be merry within ourselves. I have four thousand a year to spend, and will be housewife good enough to keep in compass. (II.i.320)

124 Mary Edmond, "Davenant, Sir William (1606–1668)," *ODNB* [accessed 20 February 2021].

Lady Strangelove flaunts her great wealth and liberty to entertain herself. At the same time, however, the widow's admittance of male guests also undermines her dignity by enabling them to criticize her "in her own house" (II.i.243). While her "wits" gossip about their mistress's humour behind her back, Sir Raphael censures the widow for "robbing men [...] of their wits and reason" (II.i.271). Although Lady Strangelove dismisses Sir Raphael's criticism by claiming that rumours about Ferdinando's madness "hit me not" (II.i.260), his "lectures" arouse her conscience or at least her wish to remove this scandal immediately: "This madman troubles me: / Would he were right again or I quit of the scandal" (II.i.304). After Sir Raphael's censure, Lady Strangelove allows another male authoritative figure to enter her household. The Doctor gives her an instruction that her "frequent presence may be helpful / Towards his care" (II.i.361), and she consents to provide accommodation for Ferdinando. However, such a compromise undermines her authority even further. The mad courtier not only "make[s] my house a hell" by causing a noise worse than that of "Bedlam" (III.i.477), but also disrupts her position as a Platonic mistress by attempting a sexual assault.

While a frustrated suitor's attempt to ravish a widow is depicted in many plays, including Barry's *Ram-Alley* (1607–1608), Joshua Cooke's *Greene's Tu Quoque* (1611), Field's *Amends for Ladies* (1610–1611), and the second part of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (1587), as discussed in Chapter 2, Brome's staging of Ferdinando's sexual assault on the widow is unique in that the scene itself is concealed from the audience's eye. In this scene, three actions take place simultaneously. Court-wit, Swain-wit, and Cit-wit are having a conversation in the widow's "garden" (III.ii.542) or the main stage; Lady Strangelove is visiting Ferdinando in her "garden lodgings" (II.i.403), represented by the upper stage; finally, Philomel and Dainty are having a private conversation off-stage. First, Swain-wit speaks to his fellows:

> Come out into the garden here and let them talk within. I say he shall talk with her, and his bellyful, and do with her too, her bellyful[.] (III.ii.542)

As Marion O'Connor notes, the words "bellyful" and "do with her" are evidently sexual.[125] Although Swain-wit is talking about Philomel and Dainty, the audience at first considers that his bawdy speech is addressed to Lady Strangelove and Ferdinando, because the widow has just accepted the Doctor's instruction to visit the mad lover. Brome eroticizes the widow by deliberately confusing her with the wanton maid, who has suffered from "the clap" (III.i.495) and is now

125 Note to III.ii.542, in Richard Brome, *The Court Beggar*, ed. Marion O'Connor, *RBO* [accessed 11 February 2021].

flirting with Dainty. It is notable that the wits' bawdy imagination about Philomel and Dainty is aroused by their inability to see their private meeting. Brome urges the audience to feel the same voyeuristic desire towards Lady Strangelove and Ferdinando by keeping their meeting out of sight too. Such desire culminates as the audience and the wits hear a scream:

Strangelove.	*[Screaming,] unseen, above* Help, help! Here help! Aaaaah!!!
Swain-wit.	*[To CIT-WIT]* Why dost not draw and run in upon 'em?
Cit-wit.	After you I will, sir.
Swain-wit.	A pox upon thee! Art thou down again?
Cit-wit.	*[Drawing his sword]* No, sir, I am drawn, you see.
Strangelove.	*[Still unseen above]* Help, help, a rape, a rape, murder, help! (III.ii.602–7)

Philomel and Dainty also enter the main stage. When they hear another scream, Swain-wit, Court-wit, and Dainty draw their swords and exit with Philomel to rescue the widow. Cit-wit, however, stays due to fear and stands amazed. Again, he and the audience are forbidden from seeing what is going on inside Ferdinando's chamber, while hearing noises and suggestive speech:

Ferdinand.[126]	*Above unseen* Away, Medusa! Hence, thou hast transformed me! Stone, stone, I am all stone! Bring mortar and make a bulwark of me.
Cit-wit.	Oh, that's the madman! How madly he talks!
Ferdinand.	Hold me not down.
Cit-wit.	Stones to make a bulwark, quotha! If he had but to make a brace of demiculverin bullets, they were thumpers, I think.
Ferdinand.	Hold me not down, but rear me up, and make me my own statue! (III.ii.622–26)

As O'Connor notes, Ferdinando's comparison of himself to "stone" indicates his impotency.[127] Ferdinando compares Lady Strangelove to "Medusa," whose hideous face and serpents in place of hair would turn gazers into stone, because the widow has made him "down." On the other hand, Ferdinando's metaphor also suggests his virility, because the word "stone" often signified testicles.[128]

126 Spelled as in O'Connor's edition.
127 Note to III.ii.625, in Brome, *Court Beggar*, ed. O'Connor, *RBO* [accessed 11 February 2021].
128 "stone," *OED*, 11.a [accessed 8 February 2021].

Cit-wit's argument that if Ferdinando were to make a pair of cannon bullets, they would be "'thumping' or strikingly big" also implies the size of Ferdinando's genitals.[129] By concealing the scene in question and staging ambiguous speech, Brome facilitates the audience's obscene imagination about the widow and her frustrated suitor.

The incident not only disturbs the image of Lady Strangelove as a Platonic mistress, but also questions the whole notion of Platonic love by revealing base sexual desire beneath the chaste discourse of courtly love. Indeed, such a discourse is parodied by Ferdinando prior to his sexual assault. In his alleged madness, he poses as a melancholic lover and compares Lady Strangelove with Petrarchan and Ovidian mistresses:

> Nor Laura, nor Corinna, did deserve
> To have their prayers written in such verse
> As I'll bestow on her that I adore. (III.i.431)

Though seemingly praising the widow by describing her as superior to the well-known poetic mistresses, Ferdinando's comparison is ambiguous. While Laura is a chaste, cold mistress in Petrarch's sonnets, Corinna is a sexually promiscuous woman, who is variously described as a courtesan, procuress, and adulteress in Ovid's *Amores*. It is notable that both women, though completely contrasting with each other, make their lovers "impotent." Whereas Laura's aloofness debars her lover from satisfying his sexual desire, Corinna's readiness to accept her lover's sexual advances disillusions him and makes him impotent.[130] Although Ferdinando's impotence is triggered by the widow's strong resistance, his reference to Corinna evokes the image of Lady Strangelove as a lusty widow. Ferdinando's abuse of poetic language continues as he asks for the "sweetest harmony whilst I sing" (III.i.431) in praise of his chaste mistress, and suddenly halts by exclaiming: "But, oh, she is disdainful, and her scorn / Hath blotted all the glory of her praise" (III.i.431). Ferdinando then compares the widow to the Whore of Babylon:

> What do you think of Salisbury steeple, sir,
> For a fit hunting spear t'incounter with
> The Whore of Babylon? Might I not firk her, think you? (III.i.458)

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129 A thumper refers to "[a]nything 'thumping' or strikingly big of its kind" ("thumper, n.," *OED*, 3). A demi-culverin is "[a] kind of cannon formerly in use, of about 4½ inches bore" ("demi-culverin, n.," *OED*). Both accessed 11 February 2021.

130 Alison Keith, "The *Domina* in Roman Elegy," in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. Barbara K. Gold (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 285–302 (pp. 297–99).

Ferdinando's reference to the phallic steeple and his punning on "firk" (beat, lash) and "fuck" indicate that he perceives sexual assault as a punishment for his ungovernable widow-mistress. The fact that the Whore of Babylon was a popular image used by Protestant writers to signify the Roman Catholic Church also evokes the uncomfortable connection between Lady Strangelove's vidual chastity, the notion of Platonic love, and Catholicism.[131]

Although Brome restores the widow's authority after this incident, he reveals another problematic aspect of Platonic love: the metaphoric castration of men. The fact that Ferdinando becomes impotent before accomplishing his sexual assault on the widow confirms that Lady Strangelove is indeed a Platonic mistress, whose chastity deprives men of immoderate sexual desire and inspires them to non-sexual love. Her chastity is testified to by Ferdinando himself, when he explains why he has feigned madness:

> I rather thought, she like a cunning lady
> Would have consented to a madman, who
> She might presume could not impeach her honour
> By least detection. (IV.iii.833)

Contrary to his expectation, the widow has proven her impregnable chastity. While this seems praiseworthy, it also arouses fear. The ideal of Platonic love is doubly threatening to masculinity, as it makes men not only "servants" to women, but also "impotent." Indeed, Brome associates the notion of Platonic love with impotence and castration throughout the play. Sir Raphael, "a perpetual vowed bachelor" (II.i.203), who "loves ladies" society so much, and yet has vowed virginity" (II.i.202), is reputed to have "gelt himself beyond sea" (II.i.206). Lady Strangelove also threatens the Doctor with castration for helping Ferdinando's sexual assault on her. When the wits drag the Doctor before their widow-mistress, they propose several forms of physical punishment, including hanging, opening up and washing his brain, or putting him naked into a cask with "an hundred broken urinals" and rolling it in her garden (IV.ii.733). However, Lady Strangelove orders them to bring in "a sow-gelder" (IV.ii.736) and spread the Doctor's body on the board for surgery. Her wits are clearly baffled by her willingness to see the Doctor's castration:

> Court-wit. But will you see the execution, Madam?
>
> Strangelove. Why not as well as other women have
> Seen the dissections of anatomies,

131 Shell, *Catholicism*, p. 25.

> And executed men ripped up and quartered?
> This spectacle will be comical to those.
>
> (IV.ii.741–42)

As O'Connor notes, it was actually very rare for early modern women to be onlookers of this kind of spectacle, although their own bodies were often dissected by male doctors.[132] By insisting on watching the surgery, Lady Strangelove not only claims the privileged position of the spectator that was generally reserved for men, but also makes the male authority-figure assume the "female" position, as "a sow-gelder" is one "whose business is to geld or spay sows," or female pigs.[133] Lady Strangelove thus replaces "the doctor's tragicomedy" (IV.ii.712) announced by her wits with the Doctor's castration. By suppressing the male theatricals and staging the spectacle of male castration instead, Lady Strangelove displays her authority as a salon mistress and the head of her household.

While the fact that Lady Strangelove asks the female audience for "your suffrages" in the Epilogue (1139) suggests that Brome possibly intended his portrayal of the widow to be positive, she is at best an ambivalent figure. While her self-image as a Platonic mistress is undermined by her haughtiness and self-serving purpose, her invincible chastity arouses fear rather than praise for its association with male impotency and castration. As a whole, Brome seems to imply that the courtly fashion of Platonic love is a formidable concept promoted by the Catholic queen consort.

In this chapter, I have examined the representation of widows as mistresses of their households in Caroline plays. First, I discussed how the prominence of hall theatres in this period would have increased the number of dramatic representations of widows' households. Household items and other possessions not only indicated widows' social and economic status, but also emphasized their authority as the head of their households. Then, I considered how the anxiety about Henrietta Maria's cultural influence, especially her disruption of the traditional gender hierarchy, possibly inspired the dramatization of formidable widow mistress in Brome's play. As I have stressed throughout this chapter, the Caroline representation of widows has many unique aspects, which are strongly related to the period's theatrical, social, and political contexts. Although the playwrights continued many conventions from their predecessors, they surely "found voices of their own," as Bulman writes, by skilfully adapting these conventions to their own circumstances.[134]

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132 Note to IV.ii.742, in Brome, *Court Beggar*, ed. O'Connor, *RBO* [accessed 11 February 2021].
133 "sow-gelder, n.," *OED*, a [accessed 11 February 2021].
134 Bulman, "Caroline Drama," p. 345.

Conclusion

I have examined the representation of widows in plays written or performed between 1576 and 1642 in relation to the material conditions of early modern theatre. Although existing studies have deepened our understanding of widow characters by conducting a close reading of play-texts and socio-historical research, it is also important to pay attention to material aspects of the theatre, including costumes, props, gestures, actors, and theatre structure, in order to appreciate the complexity of these characters more fully.

My discussion can be summarized as follows. In Chapter 1, I related the history of widows' physical appearance by using portraits and woodcuts, and discussed what kind of costumes and accessories were used to represent widows on the stage. In Chapter 2, I examined the ambivalent attitudes towards widows' lamentation and mourning gestures and discussed how they were dramatized in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and Shakespeare's history plays. In Chapter 3, I examined the staging of the husband's ghost in late Elizabethan tragedies, including *Hamlet*, and its replacement with the comic figure of the jealous husband in Chapman's and Middleton's early Jacobean satirical comedies. In Chapter 4, I discussed actors and casting in two Jacobean plays by the King's Men. I considered how the boy actor's gender ambiguity and other forms of liminality would have resonated with that of the Duchess of Malfi, and how the intertextuality between *Malfi* and *More Dissemblers* would have been reinforced by the casting. Finally, in Chapter 5, I examined the Caroline representation of widows, which has been mostly neglected by critics. After discussing the possible correlation between the increasing number of descriptions of widows' households and the popularity of indoor theatres, I considered how Henrietta Maria's disruption of the gender hierarchy may have inspired Brome's onstage punishment of the ungovernable widow.

My study was motivated by the belief that there remains much to explore about the theatrical representation of widows. As mentioned in the Introduction, numerous studies have undertaken close examination of play-texts and scrupulous research on social history since the early 1970s. There was even a feeling that this subject of study had reached saturation point after Panek's landmark publication in 2004, as suggested by a review of Kehler's *Shakespeare's Widows* (2009). Although the book was described as "richly informative," Kehler was felt to have struggled to make her study original, referring to the social history of var-

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ious regions in various periods in a mixed manner.[1] However, the fact that text-based character analysis is currently felt to have run its course does not mean that there is nothing more to say about widows. These women fascinated early modern playwrights and modern critics equally because of their elusiveness, ambiguity, and power to disrupt standard categories. The playwrights represented the figure of the widow repeatedly, not only because she was a popular commodity in the theatre industry, but also because she enabled them to raise many questions about gender, politics, religion, and social structure. For example, widows' economic and social autonomy testifies that the early modern patriarchal control of women was by no means absolute or inescapable, and indeed, they were even capable of causing social mobility and disrupting the dynastic succession through remarriage. Widows' remarriage was also a religious issue, which could arouse the English audience's antagonism towards the Catholic preference for celibacy and reinforce their Protestant identity. Although it is anachronistic to argue that these playwrights wrote for feminist causes, they consciously or unconsciously addressed these issues, and participated in more general controversies over women and gender. The widows' unconventional status has also urged modern feminist critics to reconsider the nature of the patriarchy in this period, or patriarchy in general, as a mere construction of male-centred ideologies.[2] By illuminating the material lives of both stage and real-life widows, I hope that this book has shown a way to revisit the complexity of the early modern representation of widows as well as to appropriate it for our own feminist objectives.

I also hope that this book has extended the current critical interest in the material conditions of early modern theatre. As I explained in the Introduction, critics have increasingly grown self-conscious about reimagining early modern performances. The establishments of the Globe and Sam Wanamaker Playhouses are both incarnations of and triggers for such studies, facilitating our understanding of early modern theatre by enabling directors and actors to experiment with numerous possibilities for staging early modern plays, as exemplified by the "Research in Action" workshops. Such opportunities, of course, are not limited to these theatres, and many performance-based research projects have been conducted in recent decades. For instance, *Staging the Henrician Court* and *Staging and Representing the Scottish Court* explored how early Tudor or Scottish court plays might have been staged by reviving them in original venues, includ-

1 Margaret Lael Mikesell, "Book Reviews: *Shakespeare's Widows*," *SQ* 63.1 (2012): 126–30 (p. 126).

2 Oakes, "Heiress, Beggar, Saint or Strumpet," pp. 18–19; Kehler, *Shakespeare's Widows*, pp. 51–55; Todd, "The Remarrying Widow," pp. 81–82.

ing Hampton Court Palace.[3] I believe that examining the theatrical representation of widows is an effective way to build on these studies and develop them, because the liminal status of widows raises many questions about stage practice in the early modern theatre, and urges us to imagine them more dynamically and creatively. Importantly, this exercise often changes our perception of conventions in early modern theatre. For instance, as I discussed in Chapter 4, although boy actors have long been regarded as vulnerable commodities exploited by acting companies and consumed by the audience, the fact that the Duchess of Malfi's defiance towards her brothers might have been overlaid upon the boy actor's challenge to his master suggests that boy actors were, like widows, potentially troubling figures in early modern patriarchal society. Similarly, as I discussed in Chapter 5, the fact that Celestina's household might have been perfumed in *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635) directs our attention to olfactory effects in early modern theatre, which have only just begun to attract critical attention.[4] Knowing about the material conditions of early modern theatre is also significant in relation to modern productions of early modern plays. Although modern productions by no means have to be reproductions of the "original" performances, our knowledge about early modern stagecraft at least gives us some hints about how to perform these plays on our contemporary stage. We can also reveal our own assumptions about gender or society by highlighting similarities and differences between an early modern production and our contemporary performance, as I suggested in the Introduction to this book in relation to the Sam Wanamaker production of *Malfi*.

As I have stressed throughout my study and in this conclusion, widows are very interesting figures because they are so ambiguous and complex that it is almost impossible to grasp them and confine them to a set of character types or images. Yet it is this very elusiveness that has long fascinated both early modern playwrights and modern critics and has driven them to write about these women repeatedly. As a number of materialist feminist studies have taught us, the only way to approach women in history, be it in reality or fiction, is to be cautious about generalization, to preserve the individuality of each woman, and to continue to write about their differences. Though this sounds simple, it is an endless, painstaking process. As Catherine Belsey wrote several decades ago, citing Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt's pioneering *Feminist Criticism and Social*

3 *Staging the Henrician Court*, http://stagingthehenriciancourt.brookes.ac.uk/index.html; *Staging and Representing the Scottish Renaissance Court*, http://stagingthescottishcourt.brunel.ac.uk/.

4 Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

Change (1985): "One of the things that materialist feminist criticism means [...] is 'more work than one is used to'."[5] In this sense, the study of the early modern theatrical representation of widows might have just started. Only if we keep writing about these women and accumulating records of their differences can we gradually materialize the complexity of early modern widows.

5 Catherine Belsey, "Afterword: A Future for Materialist Feminist Criticism?," in *Matter of Difference*, ed. Wayne, pp. 257–70 (p. 258).

Appendix: List of Plays with Widow Characters, 1538–1642

The following is a list of extant plays with widow characters between 1538 and 1642. In making this, I first combined lists in Katherine Harriett James, "The Widow in Jacobean Drama," unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Tennessee, 1973); Linda Diane Bensel-Meyers, "A 'Figure Cut in Alabaster': The Paradoxical Widow of Renaissance Drama," unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Oregon, 1985); and N. J. Rigaud, *Femme mythifiée, femme de raison: La veuve dans la comédie anglaise au temps de Shakespeare 1600–1625* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 1986). I then added plays missing from these lists using Thomas L. Berger, William C. Bradford, and Sidney L. Sondergard, *An Index of Characters in Early Modern English Drama: Printed Plays, 1500–1660*, revised ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and keyword searches of *EEBO*. For the plays written or performed before 1576, all of which are taken from Bensel-Meyers, I checked Martin Wiggins, in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue*, 9 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012–18), to see if there is indeed a widow character. When a play is listed by Bensel-Meyers but the text is difficult to access, and none of its characters is specified as a widow by Wiggins and Richardson in "Roles" or "Other Characters" sections, I put a question mark in the "Source" column. For the plays written or performed after 1576, I checked all play-texts to see if there is indeed a widow character.

For the definition of a "widow" character, I followed James and included not only women who have lost their husbands, but also supposed widows, wives who become widows in the play, and widows who are already remarried at the beginning of the play. For the style of the list, I followed Bensel-Meyers and added information about playing companies and, when available, venues, to meet the purpose of my study.

Unless otherwise noted, I follow Wiggins and Richardson up to 1636. Plays are located according to their dates of composition or first performance. When the date "limit" spans two or more years, a play is located according to the earliest possible date. When there are more than four co-authors, only the first-mentioned author is listed, followed by "et al." Titles are basically taken from the "Headings," although they are sometimes abbreviated. If a play is better known by a different title from the one mentioned in the "Headings," the alternative title is given in square brackets. For the playing company and venue, I refer first to "Original Production" in Wiggins and Richardson, and if the section is not given, I refer to "Early Stage History." When the playing company at the

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first production is unknown, but a certain company is known to have performed the play, the name of the company is followed by the conjectural date of performance in parentheses.

Unless otherwise noted, for the plays written or performed after 1636, I follow Alfred Harbage's *Annals of English Drama, 975 – 1700*, rev. by Samuel Schoenbaum and Sylvia Stoler Wagonheim, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1989). When modern editions published after 1989 are available, I use them instead of the *Annals*, and give their details in the endnote (see the "Source" column). When modern editions predating the *Annals* give information about venues, which is generally missing from the *Annals*, I also include the information in the "Company/Venue" column of my list and give the details of these editions in the endnote.

Regarding abbreviations, "lic." stands for the date of performance licence; *RBO* stands for *Richard Brome Online* https://www.dhi.ac.uk/brome/, as in the rest of this study.

Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
1538	Bale, J.	*King John*	1538 – 1539	history; moral	acted in either the London or Canterbury residence of Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury	
1550	Udall, N.	*Roister Doister*	1550 – 1553	comedy	unknown	
1553	(Udall, N.?)	*Respublica*	Christmas 1553 – 1554	moral	a boy company (unidentified)	
1554	Anon.	*Impatient Poverty*	1554 – 1558	moral	unknown	?
1566	Gascoigne, G.	*Supposes* (translating L. Ariosto)	1566	comedy	Gray's Inn	?
	G. Al., et al.	*Gismond of Salern*	1566, 1568 – 1569	tragedy	Gentlemen of the Inner Temple	
1570	Anon.	*Sir Clyomon and Clamydes*	1570 – 1593	romance	Queen's Men (by 1599)	
1583	Gager, W.	*Dido*	June 1583	tragedy	Christ Church, Oxford	
1584	Peele, G.	*The Love of King David and Fair Bathsheba*	1584 – 1594	biblical history	unknown	
	Shakespeare, W.	*Titus Andronicus*	1584 – 1594	tragedy	Pembroke's Men (?)	
1587	Marlowe; Nashe	*Dido, Queen of Carthage*	1587 – 1590	tragedy	Children of the Chapel Royal	
	Marlowe, C.	*Tamburlaine*	1587	tragedy	Admiral's Men in London	
	Marlowe, C.	*2 Tamburlaine*	Autumn 1587	tragedy	Admiral's Men in London	

Continued

Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	Shakespeare, W.	*Richard, Duke of York, and the Death of Good King Henry VI* [*Henry VI, Part 3*]	1587 – 1592	history	Pembroke's Men	
	Anon.	*Master Arden of Faversham in Kent*	1587 – 1592	tragedy	associated with members of Pembroke's Men before 1592	
	Anon.	*Charlemagne*	1587 – 1588	tragedy (?)	unknown	
	Anon.	*The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England*	1587 – 1591	history	Queen's Men	
1588	Peele, G.	*The Battle of Alcazar*	1588 – 1589	tragedy	Admiral's Men (by or in 1594)	
	Greene, R.	*James IV*	1588 – 1592	romance	unknown	
1589	Marlowe, C.	*The Jew of Malta*	1589 – 1590	tragedy	Strange's Men at the Rose (in 1592)	
	Shakespeare, W.	*The Taming of the Shrew*	1589 – 1592	comedy	Pembroke's Men	
1590	Herbert, M.	*Antonius* (translating R. Garnier)	November 1590	tragedy	unknown	
	Daniel, S.	*Cleopatra*	1590 – 1593	tragedy	privately acted (London or Kent?)	
	W. S. (Greene, R.?)	*Locrine, the Eldest Son of King Brutus*	1590 – 1594	tragedy	unknown	
1591	Marlowe, C.	*The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward II*	1591 – 1593	history	Pembroke's Men in London (probably at the Theatre)	

Continued

Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	Shakespeare, W.	*Richard III*	1591 – 1597	tragedy, history	Derby's Men (?)	
	Anon.	*The Weakest Goeth to the Wall*	1591 – 1600	comedy	Oxford's Men	
1593	Shakespeare, W.	*Romeo and Juliet*	1593 – 1596	tragedy	Chamberlain's Men at the Theatre (?)	
1594	Shakespeare, W.	*King John*	1594 – 1598	history	Chamberlain's Men at the Theatre (presumably)	
1595	Shakespeare, W.	*King Richard II*	1595 – 1597	tragedy, history	Chamberlain's Men (by 1597)	
	Anon.	*A Warning for Fair Women*	1595 – 1599	tragedy	Chamberlain's Men, presumably at the Theatre (or the Curtain, if the play is of later date)	
1596	Shakespeare, W.	*2 Henry IV*	1596 – 1600	history	Chamberlain's Men, presumably at the Theatre or Curtain	
1599	Dekker, T.	*The Gentle Craft* [*The Shoemakers' Holiday*]	Summer 1599	comedy	Admiral's Men at the Rose	
	Heywood (?) et al. (?)	*1 King Edward IV*	August 1599	history	Derby's Men, perhaps at the Boar's Head	
1600	Chettle; Dekker; Haughton	*Patient Grissil*	February 1600	comedy	Admiral's Men at the Rose	
	Marston, J.	*Antonio's Revenge*	1600 – 1601	tragedy	Children of Paul's	

Continued

Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	Haughton, W.	*The Devil and His Dame*	Summer 1600	comedy	Admiral's Men at the Rose	
	Dekker; Haughton; Day	*The Spanish Moor's Tragedy* [*Lust's Dominion*]	Spring 1600	tragedy	Admiral's Men at the Rose	
	Shakespeare, W.	*Hamlet*	1600 – 1602	tragedy	Chamberlain's Men at the Globe	
1601	Dekker, T.	*The Untrussing of the Humorous Poet* [*Satiromastix*]	Autumn 1601	comedy	Chamberlain's Men, at the Globe, and the Children of Paul's	
	Marston, J.	*What You Will*	1601	comedy	Children of Paul's (?)	
	Anon.	*The Contention between Liberality and Prodigality*	February 1601	moral	Children of the Chapel Royal, presumably at the Blackfriars	
	Chapman, G.	*Sir Giles Goosecap, Knight*	1601 – 1603	comedy	Children of the Chapel Royal at the Blackfriars	
	Shakespeare, W.	*All's Well that Ends Well*	ca. 1601 – 1608	tragicomedy	King's Men at the Globe (presumably)	
1602	Chapman, G.	*The Gentleman Usher*	1602 – 1605	comedy	presumably a boy company at an indoor theatre	
	Cary, E.	*Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*	1602 – 1609	tragedy	Unknown	
1603	Jonson, B.	*Sejanus' Fall*	1603	tragedy	King's Men, presumably for the Globe	
	Middleton, T.	*The Phoenix*	1603 – 1604	comedy	Children of Paul's	

Continued

Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	Shakespeare, W.	*Measure for Measure*	1603 – 1604	tragicomedy	King's Men, presumably for the Globe	
	Chapman, G.	*The Widow's Tears*	1603 – 1605	comedy	Children of the Queen's Revels at the Blackfriars	
1604	Middleton, T.	*A Trick to Catch the Old One*	1604 – 1606	comedy	Children of Paul's	
	Middleton, T.	*Michaelmas Term*	1604 – 1607	comedy	Children of Paul's	
	Middleton, T.	*The Revenger's Tragedy*	1604 – 1607	tragedy	King's Men, presumably at the Globe	
1605	Shakespeare, W.	*King Lear*	1605 – 1606	tragedy	King's Men at the Globe	
	Middleton, T.	*Your Five Gallants*	1605 – 1608	comedy	Children of the Queen's Revels at the Blackfriars	
1606	Middleton, T.	*The Puritan*	1606 – 1607	comedy	Children of Paul's	
	Shakespeare, W.	*Antony and Cleopatra*	1606 – 1607	tragedy	King's Men at the Globe (presumably)	
	Machin, L.	*Every Woman in Her Humour*	1606 – 1608	comedy	Children of the King's Revels at the Whitefriars (?)	
	Beaumont; Fletcher	*Cupid's Revenge*	1606 – 1611	tragedy	Children of the Queen's Revels, presumably at the Blackfriars (or Whitefriars, if after 1608)	
1607	Armin, R.	*The Two Maids of Mortlake*	1607 – 1608	comedy	Children of the King's Revels at the Whitefriars	
	Alexander, W.	*The Alexandraean Tragedy*	1607	tragedy	unknown	
	Barry, L.	*Ram Alley*	1607 – 1608	comedy	Children of the King's Revels, presumably at the Whitefriars	

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Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	Shakespeare, W.	*Coriolanus*	1607 – 1609	tragedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars (and presumably also the Globe)	
	Heywood; Rowley	*Fortune by Land and Sea*	1607 – 1609, 1619 – 1626	romance	Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Cockpit (?; or, if earlier, Queen Anne's Men at the Red Bull)	
1608	Marston; Barksted; Machin	*The Insatiate Countess*	1608 – 1613	tragedy	Children of the Queen's Revels (or, if earlier, Children of the King's Revels) at the Whitefriars	
	Fletcher; Beaumont	*The Coxcomb*	1608 – 1612	comedy	Children of the Whitefriars (?)	
	Middleton, T.	*The Witch*	1608 – 1616	tragicomedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars	
1609	Shakespeare, W.	*Cymbeline, King of Britain*	1609 – 1611	romance	King's Men at the Blackfriars and Globe	
	Fletcher; Beaumont	*The Captain*	1609 – 1612	comedy	King's Men, presumably at the Blackfriars and/or Globe	
	Fletcher; Beaumont	*The Scornful Lady*	1609 – 1612	comedy	Children of the Queen's Revels at the Whitefriars	
	Middleton; Rowley	*Wit at Several Weapons*	1609 – 1620	comedy	Prince Charles's Men at the Curtain (?)	
1610	Jonson, B.	*The Alchemist*	1610	comedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars (and Globe?)	

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Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	Field, N.	*Amends for Ladies*	1610 – 1611	comedy	Children of the Queen's Revels at the Whitefriars (?)	
	Fletcher, J.	*Valentinian*	1610 – 1614	tragedy	King's Men, presumably at the Blackfriars and/or Globe	
1611	Shakespeare, W.	*The Winter's Tale*	1611	romance	King's Men at the Globe and Blackfriars	
	Beaumont; Fletcher	*A King and No King*	1611	tragicomedy	King's Men at the Globe	
	Cooke, J.	*The City Gallant* [*Greene's Tu Quoque*]	1611	comedy	Queen Anne's Men, presumably at the Red Bull	
	Middleton, T.	*No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*	1611	comedy	Prince's Men, presumably at the Fortune	
	Webster, J.	*The White Devil*	1611 – 1612	tragedy	Queen Anne's Men, presumably at the Red Bull	
	Fletcher; Shakespeare	*All is True* [*Henry VIII*]	1611 – 1613	history	King's Men at the Globe (and presumably the Blackfriars)	
	Brewer, A.	*The Lovesick King*	1611 – 1655	history	unknown	
	Rowley (& Heywood?)	*A New Wonder, a Woman Never Vexed*	1611 – 1626	comedy	unknown	
1612	Webster, J.	*The Duchess of Malfi*	1612 – 1614	tragedy	King's Men, at the Blackfriars	
	S. S.	*The Honest Lawyer*	1612 – 1615	comedy	Queen Anne's Men, presumably at the Red Bull	
	Middleton; Rowley	*A Fair Quarrel*	1612 – 1617	tragicomedy	Prince Charles's Men, presumably at the Hope	

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Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
1613	Fletcher, J.	*The Night-Walkers*	1613 – 1616	comedy	Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Hope (?)	
	Fletcher, J.	*Bonduca*	1613 – 1614	tragedy	King's Men, presumably at the Globe and/or Blackfriars	
	Middleton (& Munday?)	*The Triumphs of Truth*	29 October 1613	civic pageant	London	
	Fletcher; Shakespeare	*The Two Noble Kinsmen*	1613 – 1614	tragicomedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars	
	Fletcher; Massinger	*Thierry, King of France, and His Brother Theodoret*	1613 – 1621	tragedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars, and perhaps also the Globe	
1614	Fletcher, J.	*Wit without Money*	1614 – 1615	comedy	Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Hope (?)	
	Jonson, B.	*Bartholomew Fair*	October 1614	comedy	Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Hope	
	Wroth, M.	*Love's Victory*	1614 – 1624	pastoral comedy	unknown	
1615	Middleton, T.	*The Widow*	1615 – 1617	comedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars (and Globe?)	
1616	Jonson, B.	*The Devil is an Ass*	1616	comedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars	
	Fletcher (& Massinger? Field?)	*The Queen of Corinth*	1616– ca. 1618	tragicomedy	King's Men	
1617	Fletcher; Massinger	*Rollo* [*The Bloody Brother*]	1617 – 1620	tragedy	King's Men at the Globe and Blackfriars	

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Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	Webster, J.	*The Devil's Law-Case*	1617–1619	tragicomedy	Queen Anne's Men, presumably at the Cockpit	
1618	Middleton, T.	*Women, Beware Women*	1618–1621	tragedy	unknown	
	Rowley; Middleton	*The Old Law*	1618–1619	tragicomedy	Prince Charles's Men at the Cockpit (?)	
1619	Rowley, W.	*All's Lost by Lust*	1619–1620 (?)	tragedy	Prince Charles's Men, presumably at the Red Bull or Cockpit	
	Fletcher, J.	*Women Pleased*	1619–1623	tragicomedy	King's Men, presumably at the Blackfriars and/or Globe	
	Massinger; Fletcher	*The Custom of the Country*	1619–1623	comedy	King's Men, presumably at the Blackfriars and/or Globe	
1621	Ford, J.	*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*	1621–1631	tragedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit	
	Ford; Dekker; Rowley	*The Witch of Edmonton*	1621	tragedy	Prince Charles's Men at the Cockpit	
	Massinger, P.	*The Duke of Milan*	1621–1622	tragedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars, and perhaps also the Globe	
	Massinger; Fletcher	*A Very Woman*	1621–1625; rev. 1634	tragicomedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars, and perhaps also the Globe	
	Middleton, T.	*More Dissemblers Besides Women*	1621–1622	comedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars, and perhaps also the Globe	
	W. R.	*A Match at Midnight*	1621–1623	comedy	Revels Company at the Red Bull (?)	

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Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
1623	Massinger, P.	*The Noble Bondman*	December 1623	tragicomedy	Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Cockpit	
1624	Drue, T.	*The Duchess of Suffolk*	January 1624	history	Palsgrave's Men, presumably at the Fortune	
	Rowley; Webster; Heywood	*A Wedding* [*A Cure for a Cuckold*]	July 1624	comedy	Prince Charles's Men, presumably at the Red Bull	
1625	Webster; Heywood	*Appius and Virginia*	1625 – 1634	tragedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit (?)	
	Shirley, J.	*Love Tricks*	February 1625	comedy	Lady Elizabeth's Men at the Cockpit	
	Heywood, T.	*A Maidenhead Well Lost*	1625 – 1634	comedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit	
1626	Webster et al.	*The Fair Maid of the Inn*	January 1626	tragicomedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars (and perhaps also the Globe)	
	Ford, J.	*Love's Sacrifice*	1626 – 1633	tragedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit	
	Ford, J.	*The Queen*	1626 – 1630	tragicomedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars and/or Globe (?)	
	Massinger, P.	*A New Way to Pay Old Debts*	1626 – 1632	comedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit	
1627	May, T.	*Antigone the Theban Princess*	1627 – 1631	tragedy	unacted	
1628	Cartwright, W.	*The Siege, or Love's Convert*	1628 – 1638	tragicomedy	unacted (?)	*Annals*
	Cokayne, A.	*The Obstinate Lady*	1628 – 1632	comedy	unknown	
1629	Brome, R.	*The Northern Lass*	July 1629	comedy	King's Men at the Globe and Blackfriars	

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Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	T. B.	*The Country Girl*	1629–1633	comedy	Prince Charles's Men at Salisbury Court (?)	
1630	Brome, R.	*The City Wit*	1630–1637	comedy	King's Revels Company (?) at Salisbury Court or the Fortune (?)	
	Shirley, J.	*The Constant Maid*	1630(?)–1640	comedy	1 Ogilby's Men, Dublin (?)	*Annals*
1632	Brome, R.	*The Weeding of the Covent Garden*	1632–1633	comedy	unknown	
	Jonson, B.	*The Magnetic Lady*	October 1632	comedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars	
	Shirley, J.	*The Ball*	November 1632	comedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit	
	Shirley, J.	*The Changes*	January 1632	comedy	King's Revels Company at the Fortune (?; or Prince Charles's Men at Salisbury Court)	
	Shirley, J.	*Hyde Park*	April 1632	comedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit	
	Heywood (& Brome?)	*The Cunning Lovers*	1632–1639	comedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit (?)	
1633	Cokayne, A.	*Trappolin Supposed a Prince*	1633	comedy	unknown	
	Nabbes, T.	*Tottenham Court*	1633–1634	comedy	Prince Charles's Men (presumably) at Salisbury Court	
1634	Davenant, W.	*Love and Honour*	November 1634	tragicomedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars (and perhaps also the Globe)	

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Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	Cartwright, W.	*The Ordinary*	1634 – 1635	comedy	unknown	
1635	Davenant, W.	*News of Plymouth*	August 1635	comedy	King's Men at the Globe, and perhaps also the Blackfriars	
	Jones, J.	*Adrasta*	1635	tragicomedy	unacted	
	Shirley, J.	*The Lady of Pleasure*	October 1635	comedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Cockpit	
	Brome, R.	*A Mad Couple Well Matched*	1635 – 1639	comedy	King's Revels' Men at the Salisbury Court Theatre or Beeston's Boys at the Cockpit	*RBO*
1636	Brome, R.	*The New Academy*	May 1636	comedy	King's Revels Company at Salisbury Court	
	Strode, W.	*Passions Calmed*	August 1636	allegory	Christ Church, Oxford	
1637	Shirley, J.	*The Royal Master*	1637	comedy	1 Ogilby's Men; later Queen Henrietta's Men (lic. 23 April 1638)	*Annals*
	Glapthorne, H. (?)	*Revenge for Honour*	1637 – 1641	tragedy	unknown	*Annals*
1638	Brome, R.	*The Love-Sick Court*	1638	tragicomedy	Queen Henrietta's Men at the Salisbury Court Theatre	*RBO*
	Davenant, W.	*The Unfortunate Lovers*	lic. 16 April	tragedy	King's Men	*Annals*
1639	Shirley, J.	*The Politician*	ca. 1639 (?)	tragedy	1 Ogilby's Men (?); Queen Henrietta's Men	*Annals*
	Nabbes, T.	*The Unfortunate Mother*	1639 (?)	tragedy	unacted	*Annals*

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Date	Author	Title	Date Limits	Genre	Company/Venue	Source
	Cavendish (& Shirley)	*The Variety*	1639 – 1642	comedy	King's Men	*Annals*
1640	Brome, R.	*The Court Beggar*	1640 – 1641	comedy	Beeston's Boys at the Cockpit	*RBO*
	Shirley, J.	*The Imposture*	lic. 10 November	tragicomedy	King's Men	*Annals*
	Killigrew, T.	*The Parson's Wedding*	1640 – 1641	comedy	King's Men	*Annals*
	Quarles, F.	*The Virgin Widow*	ca. 1640 – 1642	tragicomedy	privately acted (by 1649)	*Annals*
1641	Shirley, J.	*The Brothers*	lic. 26 May	comedy	King's Men	*Annals*
	Shirley, J.	*The Cardinal*	lic. 25 November	tragedy	King's Men at the Blackfriars	*1
1642	Cowley, A.	*The Guardian*	12 March 1642	comedy	Trinity College, Cambridge	*Annals*

*1 James Shirley, *The Cardinal*, ed. E. M. Yearling (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

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